

Social Studies 10

Unit 4 Readings

The West Until 1870

Pages 1-24

- What were the working and living conditions of the people who worked in the fur trade?
- What impact did exploration and settlement have on the Native peoples of the West?
- How was the Pacific coast fur trade different from the continental fur trade?
- What was the impact on the West of the competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company?

The Fur Trade and Western Exploration

The fur trade brought the first European explorers and settlers to western Canada. The fur-bearing animals of its forests, inland waterways and extensive coastlines were the first of its many natural resources to attract the attention of the European newcomers. Not long after the founding of New France, French fur traders began moving westward from the St. Lawrence. By the mid-1600s, the French were exploring and trading in the region around the Great Lakes. In 1670, with the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company, English traders also became involved in the search for new sources of furs in western Canada. Out of this competition between the French traders and the Hudson's Bay Company would come the first European exploration of western Canada.

The Hudson's Bay Company charter had given it the exclusive right to trade in a vast region known as Rupert's Land, an area from which all rivers drain into Hudson Bay. Despite this monopoly, the French fur traders were the first to move into the West. They travelled by canoe and on foot into the area west of the Great Lakes. In western Ontario and southern Manitoba they found that the many lakes and rivers of the Canadian Shield made excellent routes along which to ship furs. (These French traders established a network of fur trading forts.) Each year, parties of traders from Montreal would travel west by canoe, stopping at the forts to get supplies. There they would also meet with Native people from nearby villages and camps who brought furs to trade.

But it was a Hudson's Bay Company man, Henry Kelsey, who in 1690 became the first European to visit the Canadian plains. He brought back glowing reports of the rich supplies of furs to be found there. He also brought back the first recorded description of the bison by a European. Kelsey's description of these great beasts must have been dramatic. Convinced that he had made up his account,

The Great Rivalry

The Hudson's Bay Company was the largest fur trading organization in Canada in the late 1700s, but it soon had a powerful rival, the North West Company. Formed in 1784, the North West Company was a partnership of independent fur traders based in Montreal. These partners were mostly English, United Empire Loyalists, and Highland Scots who had moved to Montreal after the conquest of New France. These merchants had quickly gained control over the Montreal fur trade, hiring Canadiens for their skill and knowledge of the fur trade.

There were two types of partners in this new company. One group, based in Montreal, sold the furs and provided supplies and goods to be traded for furs. The others, known as *hivernants* or wintering partners, stayed in the West. There, they lived in the fur

forts and travelled the waterways of the West, trading with the Native peoples for furs. Among them were men such as Simon Fraser, David Thompson and Alexander Mackenzie.

David Thompson had begun as a Hudson's Bay Company employee. However, frustrated at its failure to support his ambition to do further exploration and surveying in the West, he switched to the North West Company in 1797.

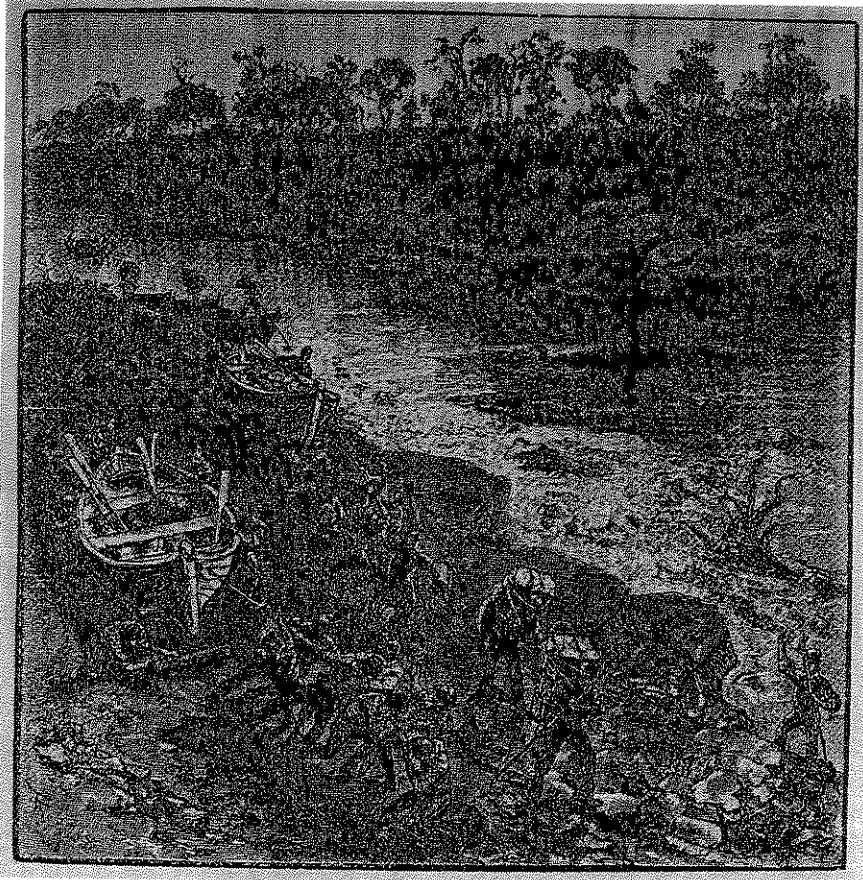
During the North West Company's short existence, its traders travelled and explored vast areas of the West. They followed the rivers and lakes of the Prairies and the Arctic, first to the Arctic Ocean, then to the Pacific. The "Nor'Westers" as the Company's men were called, became the first Europeans to enter Canada's Rocky Mountains. Assisted by Native guides, they travelled through broad river valleys and along dangerous, narrow, cliffside trails worn by years of use by Native peoples. From there they followed the westward flowing, snow-fed rivers to the Pacific. Everywhere they travelled, the Nor'Westers established new trading posts.

The North West Company was very successful. Because they were partners, the traders had a strong incentive to seek new and better supplies of furs. Each partner received a share of the profits at the end of the trading season. The Hudson's Bay Company, by contrast, was owned and run by businessmen in London, England. Most had never been to Canada to take part in the fur trade. Hudson's Bay Company fur traders were employees, paid an annual salary for their work.

As well, the Nor'Westers had the advantage of knowing the lands and the Native peoples of western Canada. At first, most Nor'Westers were Canadiens. These men lived much of their lives among Native peoples, trading for furs and learning the skills needed to survive in the wilderness. They were expert woodsmen and canoeists. They were soon joined by other adventurers, many of them Scots, hardy men eager for adventure, who quickly learned how to live and travel in the wilds of the West.

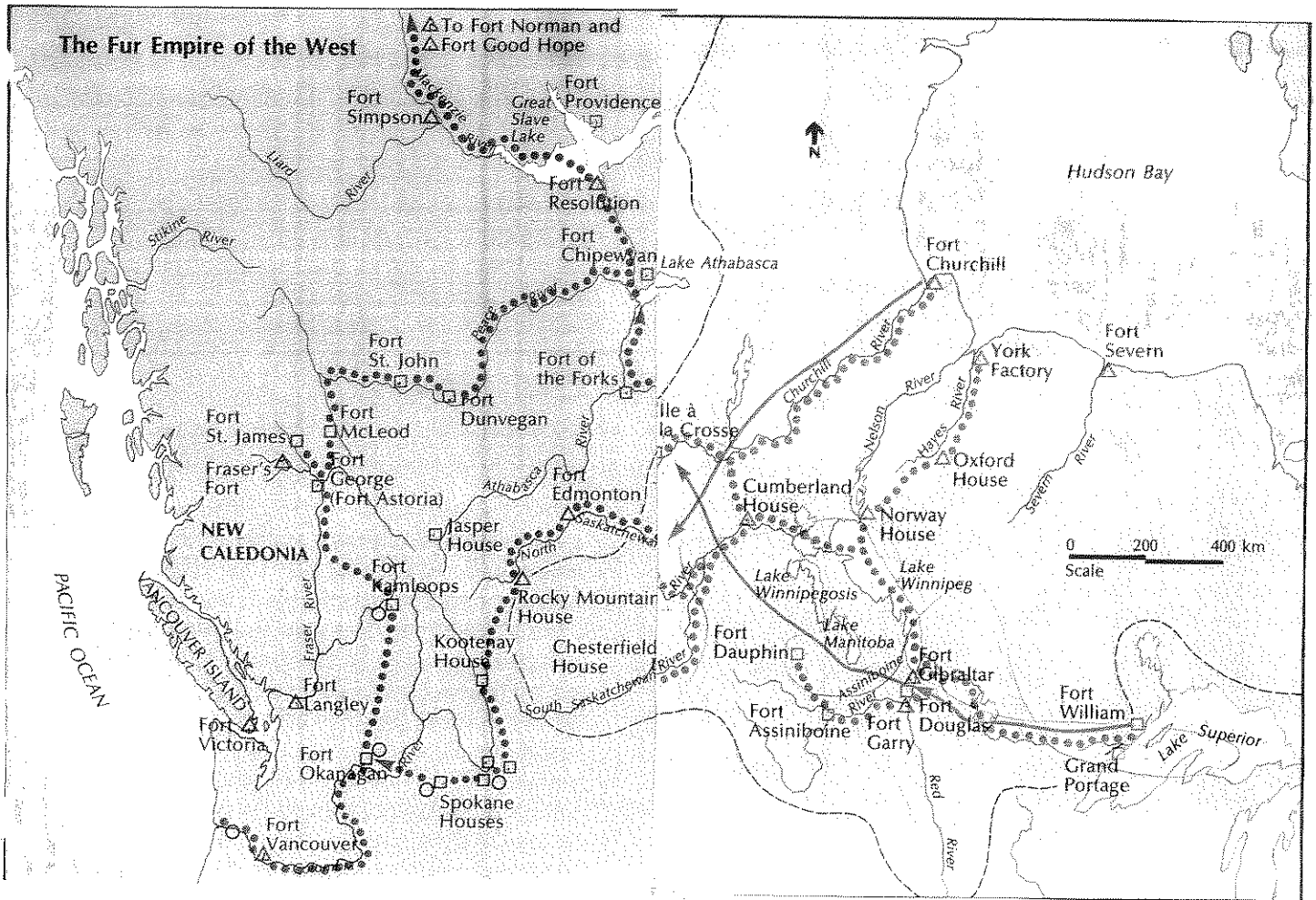
The men, known as *voyageurs*, who paddled the trading canoes were usually Canadiens or Natives. Many of the traders and *voyageurs* took Native wives. Their children were the first Métis. Able to speak English, French and Native languages, these Métis members of the North West Company played a very important part in the fur trade.

In contrast, the Hudson's Bay Company policy of having Native fur traders come to it on the shore of Hudson Bay discouraged



Both the Hudson's Bay Company and the Nor'Westers depended on river transportation to get furs from the West to the ships that would carry them to Europe. At first, both companies used canoes, usually paddled by Native crews. In 1749, the Hudson's Bay Company introduced York boats to the fur trade. Twice the size of the voyageurs' canoes, the York boats gave the Hudson's Bay Company a great advantage in getting furs from the West to the ships anchored in Hudson Bay.

exploration. For many years, its traders were caught in what one writer called "the sleep by the frozen sea." However, concern over falling profits resulting from the success of the French fur traders' aggressive expansion into the West forced the Hudson's Bay Company to change. The Hudson's Bay Company's new strategy was to set up trading posts upstream from the North West Company posts so that Native peoples bringing their furs by canoe to trade would reach the Bay men first. The Hudson's Bay Company also had a geographic advantage over the North West Company. The route from the Saskatchewan River to Hudson Bay was shorter and easier to travel than the one the Nor'Westers had to use to get furs to Montreal. Sailing ships operated by the Hudson's Bay Company brought trade goods to the posts. On their return trips, they would carry furs directly from Fort Churchill to Europe. The North West



Legend

- △ Hudson's Bay Company posts
- North West Company posts
- American Fur Trade posts
- Major fur trade routes
- ←••••• North West Company from Montreal
- ←••••• Hudson's Bay Company from England
- Boundary of Rupert's Land

FUR TRADING RIVALS

1. How many Hudson's Bay Company forts are shown on the map? How many North West Company forts?
2. Which company had forts located furthest to the west? to the north? Suggest why they were so located.
3. On what geographic features were the great majority of fur trading posts located? Suggest some reasons why the posts would be so located.

Fort William, a Fur Trading Centre

The centre of the North West Company's trading network was Fort William at the western end of Lake Superior. The area is today part of the city of Thunder Bay. The largest of the fur forts, Fort William was strategically located between the lakes and rivers of the Canadian Shield and the open waters of the Great Lakes.

Each spring, *hivernants* from the West would bring their furs to Fort William. There they would meet the large *canots de maître* which carried trade goods and supplies from Montreal. The *canots de maître* would then be loaded with furs to be shipped via the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River to Montreal, and then to buyers in Europe. Later, small sailing ships were used to carry these cargoes to and from Fort William.

The North West Company's great "wilderness depot," completed in 1807, took nearly eight years to build. Its sturdy log walls, five metres high, enclosed an area 130 m by 160 m, room for two professional football fields. Its main gate faced the waters of Lake Superior. At the water's edge were wharves and ramps where canoes and cargo ships could be loaded and unloaded. Within the walls were more than twenty buildings. In them, furs were counted and pressed into bales, trade goods and supplies stored and the fur traders fed and housed.

Ross Cox, an Irish fur trader, wrote the following description of Fort William several years after its completion:

The buildings at Fort William... consist of a large house in which the dining hall is situated, and in which the gentleman in charge resides; the council house; a range of snug buildings for the accommodation of the people from the interior [*hivernants*]; a large counting house; the doctor's residence (occupied by the first doctor west of the Great Lakes); extensive stores for the merchandise [trade goods] and furs; a forge; various workshops, with apartments for the mechanics [skilled craftsmen] a number of whom are always stationed there. There is also a prison... The whole is surrounded by wooden fortifications, flanked by bastions, and is sufficiently strong to withstand any attack from the natives. Outside the fort is a shipyard, in which the company's vessels on the lake are built and repaired. The kitchen garden is well stocked, and there are extensive fields of Indian corn and potatoes. There are also several head of cattle, with sheep, hogs, poultry etc., and a few horses for domestic use.

The country about the fort is low, with a rich, moist soil. The air is damp, owing to frequent rains. . .

At the peak of the fur trading era, as many as 3000 people would gather at Fort William each spring. The fort took on a lively, festive air as the *hivernants* arrived with furs from the winter's trading.

The dining room in the great hall, measuring ten metres by twenty metres, could hold 200 guests. With the partners gathered at the fort, a colorful and diverse group gathered there each night to dine. Wilderness-toughened traders from the West sat with the elegantly dressed Montreal partners. Old friendships were renewed, stories told and toasts drunk to the memory of traders and *voyageurs* who had not returned.

Fort William was more than just a meeting place. It was the nerve centre for all of the North West Company's activities in the West. Here, the partners would meet in the council house to plan the Company's activities for the coming year. Here, too, the supplies for a year's trading activities were gathered and organized. Trading goods, equipment and food supplies were set aside for each of the Company's western outposts and arranged by canoe loads. Early in the fall, men from each of the posts would come to Fort William, load their canoes and return for another winter of trading.

A fur trader's life meant long hours filled with backbreaking work, especially for the *voyageurs* who paddled the canoes. Ironically, paddling was not the hardest part of the job. The worst aspect of the journey was the portages, when the crew would have to carry the canoe and its heavy cargo overland to avoid rapids or waterfalls.

The men of the fur trade could carry few personal belongings with them in the canoes. Space was valuable and used to store trade goods and supplies. With little time to hunt or fish, the *voyageurs'* diet was mainly dried peas, beans, biscuits and salt pork during the journey to Fort William. Once they reached the fort, they depended on pemmican. At night, the fur traders slept under their overturned canoes drawn up on the bank of a river or lake. Their sleep was usually brief, as they had a long distance to cover each day. Many mornings they would rise at one or two o'clock to begin a day's journey that would not end until sunset.

The Founding of the Colony

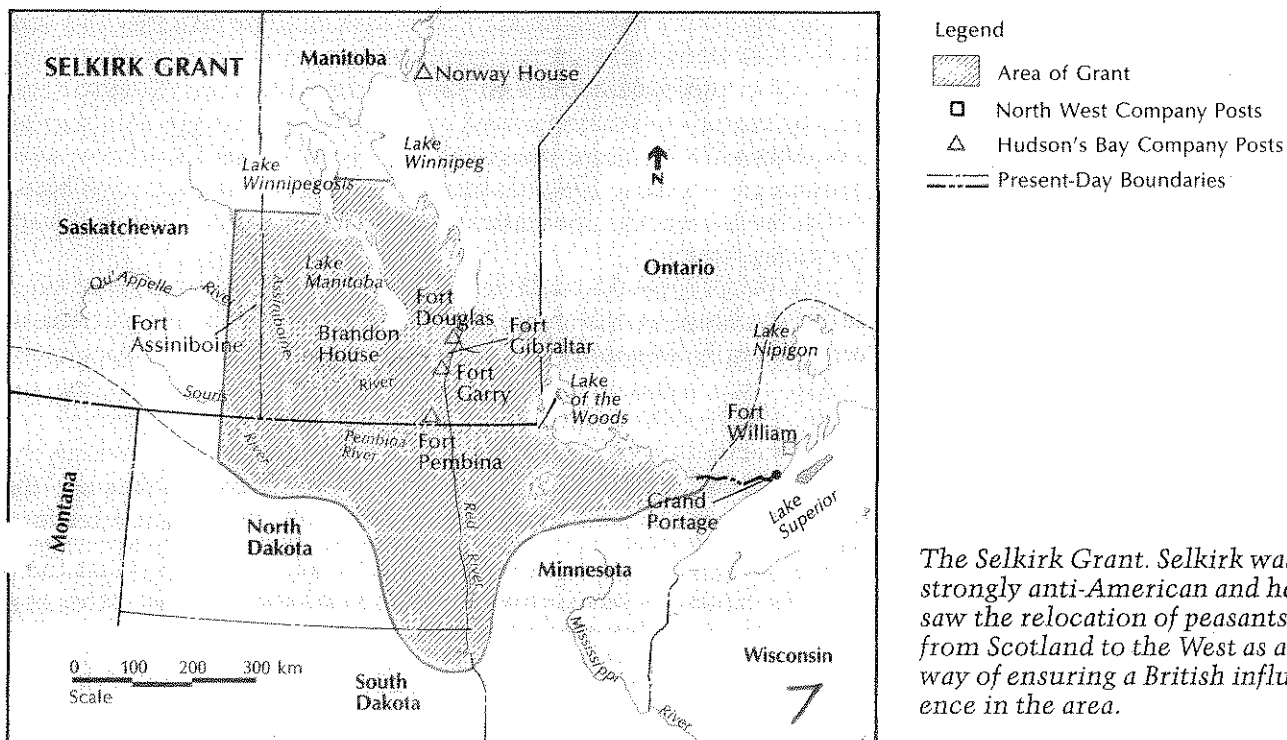
At the start of the nineteenth century the economy of western Canada was based on hunting, trapping and fishing. The numerous Native groups from the Pacific coast to the Canadian Shield depended almost entirely on hunting or fishing for the food they ate. Many of the things they used in their daily lives, including their shelter, clothing and tools came from the animals they hunted or trapped. Any goods of European origin that they used, such as iron tools, cooking pots or rifles, were obtained through the fur trade.

The Métis, like the Native peoples of the Prairies, depended on the great buffalo herds for their food. They traded surplus buffalo meat to the fur traders. For their part, the fur traders, the only Europeans in the region, depended entirely on the Native and Métis hunters and trappers of the West for their livelihood.

There was almost no agriculture in the Canadian West at this time although some of the Native peoples of the region had been farmers centuries before. After the introduction of the horse, brought to the New World by the Spanish, most Native peoples of the Plains obtained their food through hunting bison. Some of the Hudson's Bay Company trading posts had small garden plots and kept some livestock, but there was nothing that could really be called a farm west of Upper Canada. Then, in 1812, events began to take place which would change the economic life of western Canada forever.

In August of that year, a small group of Scottish settlers reached what is today southern Manitoba and began clearing land along the Red River for farms. They arrived too late to plant a crop that first year. Poorly provisioned and ill-equipped to face the harshness of the climate, these settlers barely survived their first winter.

A wealthy young Scottish nobleman, Thomas Douglas, the fifth Earl of Selkirk, was the driving force behind this establishment of a colony at Red River. Selkirk, who owned a controlling interest in the Hudson's Bay Company, persuaded the Company in 1811 to give him a grant of nearly 300 000 km² in what is now Manitoba, Minnesota and North Dakota.



The Selkirk Grant. Selkirk was strongly anti-American and he saw the relocation of peasants from Scotland to the West as a way of ensuring a British influence in the area.

Selkirk's motives for establishing the colony were rooted in the problems of the poor rural peasant crofters and farmers of his native Scotland. Evicted from their small farm holdings by landlords who wanted to create large sheep farms, the displaced peasants drifted into Britain's industrial cities, or left the British Isles. Those who emigrated often chose the United States, rather than the British North American colonies. At his own expense, Selkirk assisted many Scots to emigrate and settle in Prince Edward Island and in Upper Canada. Now, in the Red River country, he was prepared to undertake an even bigger settlement program for his countrymen.

The Hudson's Bay Company directors had mixed feelings about Selkirk's plans. To ensure the supply of furs, they preferred to disturb the Native way of life as little as possible. On the other hand, they also recognized that a permanent colony, sponsored by the Hudson's Bay Company, would help to reinforce its claim to the territory covered by the grant of 1670. They also saw that the settlement could become a source of food and men for the Hudson's Bay Company, and a place where employees of the Bay could retire and settle with their families.

Our Land: Building the West



The Earl of Selkirk

The Hudson's Bay Company also saw that farming in the Red River area would disrupt the bison-hunting economy of the Métis, most of whom lived in the Red River and Assiniboine River valleys. All the major fur trading canoe routes passed through this region. The Métis living there provided the North West Company with pemmican, the basic food of the fur trade. A mixture of dried bison meat, fat and berries, pemmican was a high-energy food that kept for a long time.

Selkirk's proposed Red River colony would occupy the same lands as did the bison on which the Métis depended for the production of pemmican. If its supply of pemmican was cut off or reduced, the North West Company would be less able to compete in the fur trade. The Hudson's Bay Company men hoped that the ploughs of the new settlers would break up the prairie grasslands on which the bison grazed. They also saw a chance for the Company to use the produce from the Red River farms to supply its own fur traders.

Conflict at Red River

The Red River colony's population increased with the arrival of another seventy men, women and children from Scotland in 1813. However, the colonists' wooden ploughs were unable to break much of the tough prairie grass that covered the fertile soil beneath. Few crops were planted, and the colonists faced another winter of near-starvation.

Miles Macdonell, governor of the Red River colony, had been both a soldier and a farmer in Upper Canada, but his experience failed him in the Red River settlement. Macdonell thought his authority extended to all residents of the Red River area. When he learned in 1814 that more colonists would be arriving from Scotland, he issued an order prohibiting the export of pemmican from

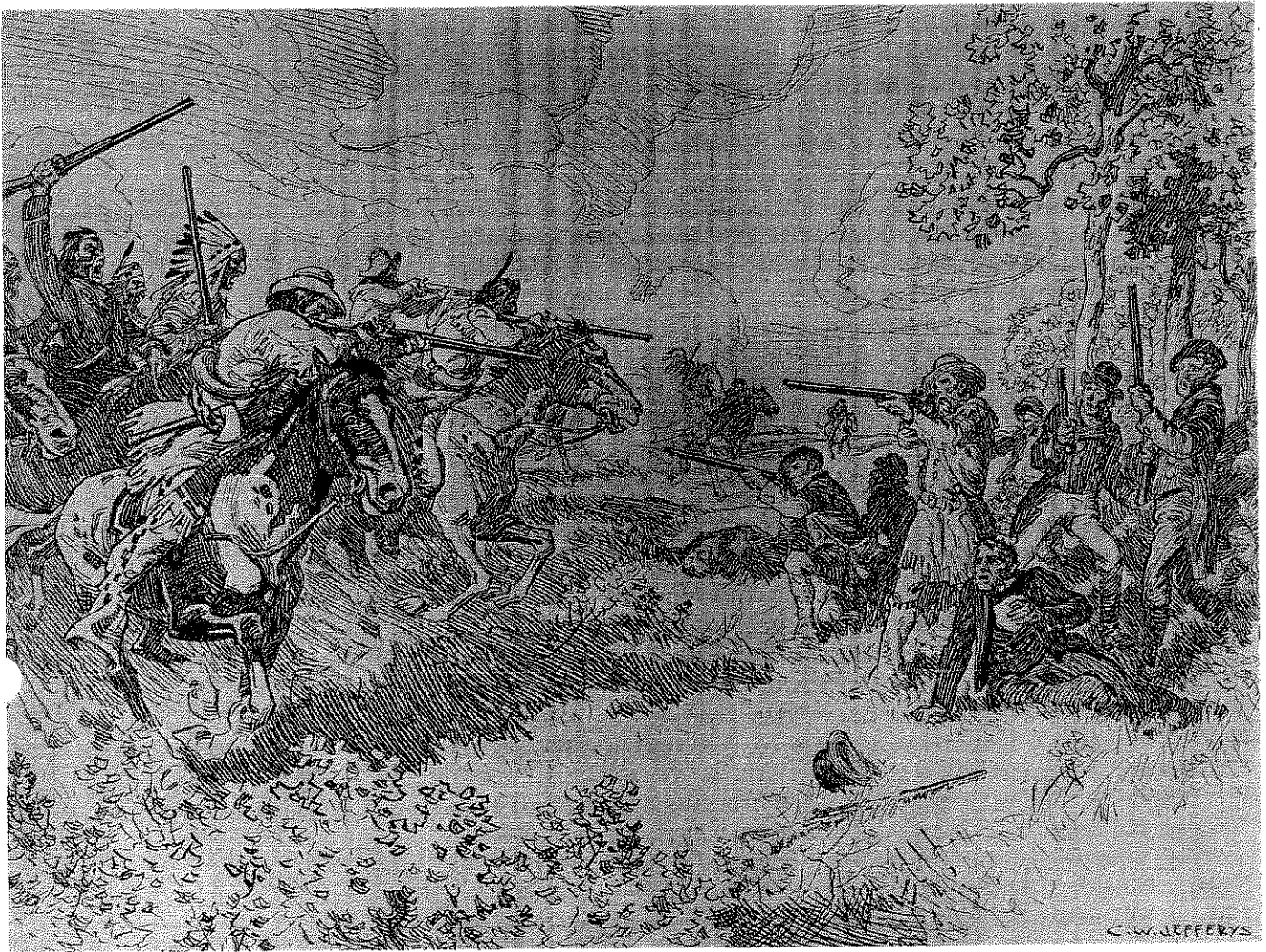
the Red River colony. Macdonell wanted the pemmican kept in the colony so the settlers would have an assured supply of food for the winter. Macdonell's proclamation outraged the North West Company. Without access to the region's pemmican supplies the Nor'Westers faced a hard winter in the Western interior. The Métis, ignoring Macdonell's orders, went on driving the bison herds, killing the animals and making pemmican to sell to the North West Company. Angered by the Métis' refusal to obey his orders, Macdonell seized pemmican supplies that had been stored by the North West Company, along with two cargo canoes. The result was the "pemmican war."

Outraged at the seizure of its pemmican, the North West Company sought revenge. Its agents encouraged the Métis to harass the colonists and drive them out of the Red River area. The Métis did not require much encouragement for they considered themselves to be the rightful owners of the lands around the Red River. They attacked the settlers' farms and homes, breaking down fences and burning crops and buildings. Macdonell was arrested and taken as a prisoner to Fort William.

With the colony in the hands of the Métis and the North West Company, some of the colonists decided to resettle in Upper Canada. The rest journeyed to Norway House, a Hudson's Bay depot at the head of Lake Winnipeg. After wintering at Norway House, the settlers returned to the Red River colony under the leadership of Colin Robertson. They were soon joined by a fresh group of immigrants and a new governor.

The Hudson's Bay Company sent the new governor, Robert Semple, to the Red River colony in the spring of 1815. Semple chose to put up a show of strength against the Métis. In March of 1816, he had an empty North West Company trading post, Fort Gibraltar, burned as a warning to the Métis. On June 19, 1816, Semple's bravado resulted in tragedy. A party of Métis was spotted passing close to the Red River colony. Semple gathered a group of twenty-one armed colonists to face the Métis, thinking that a show of courage would repel an attack.

A second group of Métis, on horseback rode out to meet the colonists, cutting Semple and the others off from the safety of their houses. For some reason, Semple reached out to grab the bridle of a Métis' horse. A shot was fired, followed by a volley of gunfire. Within minutes, Semple and the other men lay dead or dying on the ground. The settlers were evacuated and the colony burned. This incident is known as the Battle of Seven Oaks.



An artist's interpretation of the Battle of Seven Oaks.

Following this clash, the struggle for control of the Red River Valley widened. Hudson's Bay Company men clashed directly with the Nor'Westers. Each company attacked and burned posts belonging to the other.

Meanwhile, in 1815 Lord Selkirk had received news of the earlier events at Red River. In the spring of 1816, he organized a private army of one hundred soldiers in Upper Canada. On the way to Red River, news of the Battle of Seven Oaks reached Selkirk. He decided to divide his forces. Some were sent directly to the Red River colony, while Selkirk led a party of his mercenaries in a successful attack on

Fort William. There, he took several members of the North West Company prisoner and seized the entire contents of the Company's richest storehouse. Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company now took legal action against the North West Company for its harassment of the Red River colony. Despite a long and costly court battle lasting from 1817-1819, neither side won. The costs were so great that Selkirk lost both his personal fortune and his health in the process. He lived long enough, however, to recruit another party of colonists for Red River before his death from tuberculosis in 1820.

This time, settlers from Switzerland as well as Scotland were sent to the fertile valleys of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. Selkirk realized that the colony needed large numbers of settlers to be successful. He made grants of land available to the soldiers who had come west with him, to retired Hudson's Bay Company men and to the Métis.

Pioneer settlers from both Upper and Lower Canada joined the Red River colonists. These settlers were better prepared and equipped for the tasks of clearing land and farming on the Canadian frontier. Soon, the fertile Red River soil was producing crops of hay, wheat, barley and potatoes, with the Hudson's Bay Company purchasing any surplus food produced in the colony.

The agricultural settlement at Red River had shown that farming could succeed on Canada's fertile western plains. A new economic activity, potentially more valuable than the fur trade, had been established. However, the distance from major markets and the lack of land transportation would slow agricultural settlement in the Canadian West. As you will see in Chapter 8, the full benefits of the fertile Prairies would only be realized with the building of a railroad linking the West to eastern Canada. The fertile lands around Winnipeg would then truly become the crossroads of the continent.

The Triumph of the Hudson's Bay Company

The conflict between the Hudson's Bay and North West companies over the Red River greatly disrupted the fur trade. The cost of the court battle added to the companies' financial problems and neither company showed a profit for several years. By 1821, the struggle had proved too costly for the North West Company to continue the competition. In the end, the conflict was resolved by a decision to merge the two great rivals into a single company.

The Nor'Westers negotiated an agreement which appeared to give them control over the combined fur trading operation. The Hudson's Bay Company received forty-five shares [45 percent of the ownership] in the new company. The North West Company received the remainder of the 100 shares in the company. Thirty went to the Montreal partners and the *hivernants* received twenty-five shares. The new company would continue to be known as the Hudson's Bay Company, because the royal charter granting exclusive trading rights in Rupert's Land was in that name. In 1821, the British Parliament passed a bill confirming that the newly merged company would continue to have a monopoly over trade in Rupert's Land and extending that control to include the North West Territory as well.

At first it appeared the old Nor'Westers had gained control over the new Hudson's Bay Company. However, the route to Europe via Hudson Bay still proved faster and cheaper than the canoe route to Montreal, and Fort William's importance as a fur trading post lessened. The Montreal partners found themselves forced to close their doors as they no longer had furs to sell. The western fur trade remained firmly in the hands of the old Hudson's Bay Company men, but now they found themselves working side by side with old rivals.

The Hudson's Bay Company emerged from the merger of 1821 much stronger than before. It controlled, under the royal charter of 1670, all the territory drained by rivers flowing into Hudson Bay. The merger gave them an exclusive license to trade in the lands opened by the North West Company, all the unsettled lands west of the Great Lakes and north of the 49th parallel. As well, it had a complete monopoly over the fur trade in all unsettled lands north of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. The Hudson's Bay



The insignia of the Hudson's Bay Company. What symbols can you identify?

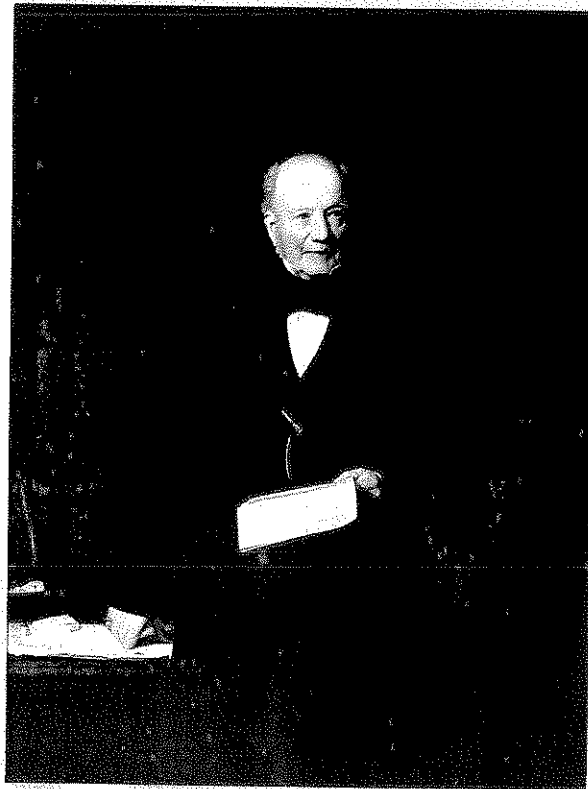
Company now controlled nearly one-third of the North American continent. It was the supreme authority, governing and controlling all aspects of trade on a resource-rich frontier covering nearly six million square kilometres.

THE LITTLE EMPEROR

From 1821 to 1860, the directors of the Hudson's Bay Company entrusted complete control over its fur trading empire in North America to one man, George Simpson. During his nearly forty years as governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Simpson showed that the directors' faith in him was well-founded. During the years that this tough, intelligent Scot was governor, the Hudson's Bay Company never failed to show a profit.

Rather than sitting behind a desk in London or York Factory, Simpson constantly travelled throughout the Company's vast territory. He crossed and recrossed the continent many times, ensuring that trading posts were being run in an efficient and economical fashion. He also took great care to ensure good relations between the traders and the Métis and Native peoples on whom they depended. The governor often acted as judge when he found that a crime had been committed or a contract broken within the Company's territories. He tried to ensure that all persons, whether British, Canadien, Métis or Native, received fair treatment. Recognizing the destructive impact liquor had on the Native peoples, Simpson actively sought to prevent its use in the fur trade. He also insisted that the Company's standards of fairness in trade be maintained at all times.

Governor Simpson's single-handed rule earned him both respect and fear. He became known as the "Little Emperor" within the Company for the way he carried out his role as "Overseas Governor of the Honourable Company." Dressed in a high beaver hat and frock



coat, Simpson would arrive at a remote trading post by canoe with a kilted bagpiper standing at the bow to pipe him ashore.

Simpson's rule not only made the Company's fur trading operation highly profitable, it also brought stability to Canada's western frontier. Simpson managed to avoid the kinds of conflict and "wild West" lawlessness that marked much of the American frontier during this period.

The New Dominion Expands

Confederation took place at the time when the United States was expanding westward and, it was hoped by many, northward. During the period 1864-1890, nine new states were established in the northwestern quarter of the United States. Four of these states lay along a broad stretch of the Canada-United States border. Of concern to the Canadians was the fact that the day after Queen Victoria signed the British North America Act, the United States purchased Alaska from the Russians.

During the late 1860s, a number of factors fuelled the expansionist mood in the United States. One was an economic boom that followed the end of the Civil War. Entrepreneurs were once again able to invest money in land, build railways and develop the resources of the American West. Many of these entrepreneurs were eager to see the United States frontier pushed north of the 49th parallel believing that it was their nation's "manifest destiny" to rule all of North America. Another factor was the lingering resentment toward Britain, which had supported the defeated Confederacy during the Civil War (see pages 96-97).

In the late 1860s, American traders and settlers began eagerly eyeing the vast and thinly populated Canadian Prairies. These lands were still largely home only to Native and Métis fur traders and hunters. American politicians and newspaper writers of this period spoke increasingly of a time when the British North American provinces and territories would become part of the United States of America.

Faced with these expansionist threats, the new Canadian government entered into negotiations with the Hudson's Bay Company to buy the lands to the north and west of Canada. These negotiations were begun even before Confederation, and provision was made in the British North America Act, Section 146, for the eventual inclusion of Rupert's Land as part of the new Dominion. Both the British and Canadian governments believed that the Americans were less likely to annex these lands if they belonged to Canada than if they remained in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company.

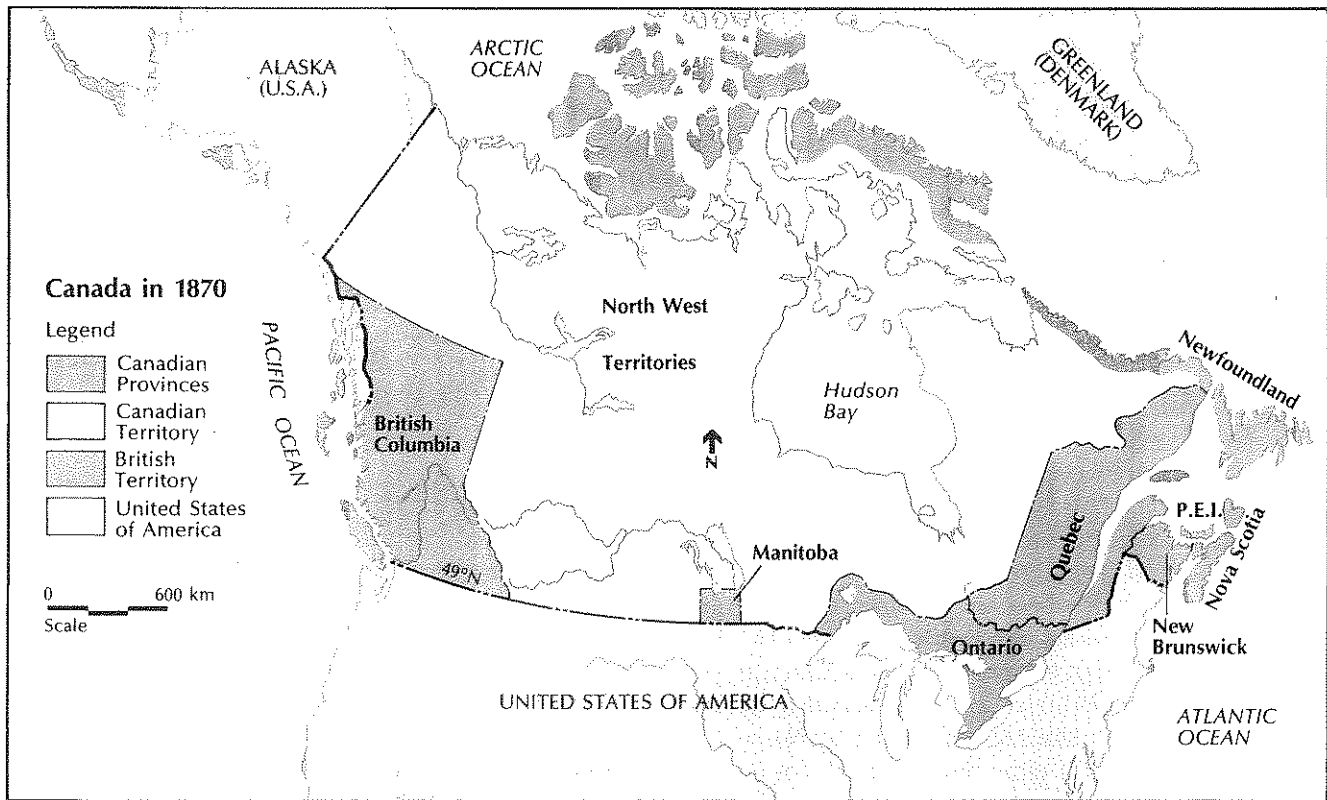
For its part, the fur trading company was finding it difficult to maintain its control over the region. American traders were making inroads into the Prairies and the western mountains, and settlers were moving into the region drawn by the gold rushes and fertile lands. Also, by this time the western fur trade was declining in importance. The Company was now turning its attention to the

profits to be made from providing supplies to miners, settlers and the crews of trading ships. Opening up the West to Canadian settlers would benefit this aspect of the Company's operations.

The Canadian government and the Company reached an agreement on November 19, 1869. It was George-Etienne Cartier (see page 92) who did most of the negotiation for the government of Canada. In exchange for Rupert's Land, the Hudson's Bay Company received £300 000 and 2.8 million hectares of Prairie farmland from the Canadian government. As well, it was able to continue its fur trading activities. Rupert's Land was officially transferred to Canada on June 23, 1870. With the addition of this land, renamed the North West Territories, Canada more than doubled in size.

The purchase of Rupert's Land brought the promise of a larger, stronger Canada. The North West Territories were rich in resources, but the acquisition of these lands also brought problems for the new nation to deal with.

What present-day provinces and territories lie within the area transferred to Canada in 1870?



THE AMERICAN POINT OF VIEW

The following statements made in the United States in the 1860s show the strength of expansionist sentiment in that country.

The first statement is from a report made to the United States Senate on the need to build a transcontinental railway.

The opening by us first of a North Pacific Railroad seals the destiny of the British possessions west of the 91st meridian. They will become so strongly Americanized in interests and feelings that... annexation will be but a question of time.

The second is a statement made by William Seward, the American Secretary of State who negotiated the purchase of Alaska in 1867. Seward's statement not only sums up the "manifest destiny" view, but also clearly states the expansionist position with regard to Canada.

I look upon Canada and see how a clever people are occupied with bridging rivers and making railroads and telegraphs. I say, "It is very well: you are building excellent states to be hereafter admitted to the American Union."

I know that Nature designs that this whole continent, not merely these thirty-six states, shall be, sooner or later, within the magic circle of the United States.

1. Use your atlas to find the 91st meridian [91° West Longitude]. Which British territories does the Senate report see falling into the hands of the United States? Which present-day provinces and territories of Canada lie within those territories?
2. In the view of the authors of the Senate report, how would completion of an American railway to the Pacific affect Britain's territories in the West?

1. Suggest reasons why Americans would consider expanding north of the 49th parallel into Canadian lands.
2. Why did the Hudson's Bay Company want to sell Rupert's Land? Why did the Canadian government want to buy the land?
3. Suppose you had been in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company during this time period. Would you have sold the land? Explain your answer.

Manitoba: Creation of a New Province

The non-Native population of the North West Territories in 1870 was only 12 000 people, most living along the Red River. Of these, 10 000 were Métis. Most were French-speaking and Roman Catholic, although some were of Scottish or English background as well.

Even before negotiations with the Hudson's Bay Company were completed, the government of Canada sent surveyors to the Red



Educated in Montreal, Riel was a serious, thoughtful person, dedicated to helping his people. While he opposed the actions of the Canadian government, he strongly resisted the idea that the Red River area should become part of the United States.

River Valley. From the surveyors, the Métis learned of the Canadian government's planned purchase of the area. This news shocked and outraged the Métis who had never been consulted by either the Hudson's Bay Company or the Canadian government during the period of negotiations. Some of the surveyors treated the Métis quite badly, responding to their protests with verbal and physical abuse and ignoring their claims to ownership of land. The surveyors' presence led the Métis to fear the Canadian government was going to take away their lands. The Métis remembered the earlier efforts of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Red River colonists to destroy their buffalo hunting lands and they had seen the slow but steady growth of pioneer agricultural settlements along the Red River.

The Métis reacted quickly to the threat posed by the Canadians. Gathering for the annual fall buffalo hunt in October 1869, they selected as their spokesman Louis Riel, a well-educated young man fluent in both French and English. Riel formed an organization called the *Comité National des Métis* to defend the rights of his people.

Many of the recent non-Métis settlers in the Red River area were from Ontario and wished to see the area added to that province. Known as the "Canadian Party," this group was led by men who were anti-French and anti-Catholic. Their leader was Dr. John Christian Schultz, a newspaper publisher. In his newspaper, Schultz called for massive immigration of English-speaking, Protestant Ontarians to the western territories. Schultz began organizing armed resistance to the Métis.

Back in Ottawa, the government at first showed little concern for the problems of the Métis. However, as reports of Métis opposition slowly made their way eastward, the leaders of the new Dominion became increasingly alarmed. They decided to delay the formal takeover of the Hudson's Bay Company lands until the issues were resolved.

William McDougall, the newly appointed lieutenant-governor for the North West Territory, was already on his way to Red River when the government in Ottawa took this decision. Therefore, he was unaware that his authority in the North West did not yet have legal status. He travelled by the only easily accessible route to Fort Garry, the route through the United States west to St. Paul, and then north. (See page 146.) McDougall attempted to enter the Red River area from the United States, expecting to declare the North West officially part of Canada on December 1, 1869. However, the Métis

met McDougall at the border on October 31 and blocked his entry into the area.

Three days later, Riel and his comrades seized the Hudson's Bay post at Fort Garry. With its strong stone walls and supply of weapons, Fort Garry gave the Métis a secure military base. By their seizure of the fort, Riel and his committee hoped to gain a better bargaining position with the Canadian government.

Riel then organized a **provisional government** to look after the region's affairs until a suitable arrangement could be made with Ottawa. A provisional government has no formal, constitutional basis. It exists for a short period of time until a properly constituted government can be established. Riel's provisional government was intended to ensure law and order in the area until an elected Assembly, comprised of local residents and recognized by the government of Canada, was created. The Métis were not opposed to becoming part of Canada. However, they were upset that the Canadian government had not bothered to discuss its plans for the area with the Métis or even to inform them of its intentions.

During their negotiations with the Canadian government, the Métis sought to ensure that the rights of all people in the Red River area should be protected, whether they were French- or English-speaking, Protestant or Catholic, Native or newcomer. Above all, the Métis wanted to be sure that their lands and traditional way of life would be preserved when they became Canadians. This would soon become a key issue, as the Métis did not issue titles or deeds to the lands their people occupied.

During the first week of December 1869, Riel and his committee held meetings in Fort Garry and at Winnipeg to discuss the terms under which the region should become part of Canada. At these meetings, they drew up a Métis "List of Rights," specifying their demands.

This List of Rights was not a declaration of independence by the Métis. In creating their provisional government, the Métis leaders had sworn allegiance to the Queen. They emphasized that their only wish was to see their rights as British subjects protected. They wanted similar protections to those given the Canadiens under the terms of the Quebec Act and other constitutional documents.

Response to the Métis provisional government came swiftly from Quebec, Ontario and the United States. The people of Quebec felt strong sympathy for the Métis struggle to preserve their rights and traditions. In Ontario, the powerful Orange Order agitated against the rights the Métis wanted protected. The Order strongly opposed

THE MÉTIS LIST OF RIGHTS

The following are some of the items on the "List of Rights" drawn up by the Métis and carried to Ottawa by their negotiating committee:

1. That the people have the right to elect their own Legislature.
2. That the Legislature have the power to pass all laws local to the Territory...
4. That all Sheriffs, Magistrates, Constables, School Commissioners, etc., be elected by the people...
6. That a portion of the public lands be appropriated to the benefit of Schools, the buildings of Bridges, Roads and Public Buildings.
7. That it be guaranteed to connect Winnipeg by Rail with the nearest line of Railroad, within a term of five years...
10. That the English and French languages be common in the Legislature and Courts, and that all Public Documents and Acts of Legislature be published in both languages.
11. That the Judge of the Supreme Court speak the French and English languages.
12. That Treaties be concluded and ratified between the Dominion Government and the several tribes of Indians in the Territory to ensure peace on the frontier.
13. That we have a fair and full representation in the Canadian Parliament.
14. That all privileges, customs and usages existing at the time of transfer be respected.

any constitutional move that would entrench the rights of Catholics, especially Catholic schools. In the United States, the Annexationists hoped that the Métis would turn to them for help in their conflict with the Canadians.

The federal government sent negotiators to the Red River in January 1870. After a series of public meetings, agreement was reached: the Red River area would become a self-governing province, separate from the rest of the North West Territory. A group of Métis leaders was chosen to go to Ottawa to negotiate the terms and conditions for joining Confederation. They carried with them the Métis List of Rights when they left for Ottawa in April 1870.

The Canadian Parliament passed the Manitoba Act on May 12, 1870, creating Canada's fifth province. The name had been chosen by the provisional Métis government for the new province. "Manitoba" was an Assiniboine word meaning "water of the prairie." It was an apt description of the region, with its vast network of lakes and rivers.

The provisions of the Act included most of the major clauses of the Métis List of Rights. All lands held by the Métis and other settlers in the area would be protected, but the rest of the territory would be the property of the Dominion of Canada. Both French and English would be the official languages of Manitoba. There would

be two publicly supported school systems, one Roman Catholic, the other Protestant. However, no provision was made for French language education in the Manitoba Act. This would later create great conflicts in Manitoba, as the Métis had assumed that Roman Catholic education would take place in French. However, under the terms of the British North America Act, the province's legislators would have to determine the language of instruction in the schools.

The Manitoba Act of 1870 now became Manitoba's provincial constitution and joined the British North America Act in forming Canada's constitution. The new province of Manitoba was to officially come into existence on July 15, 1870. At this time, the population of Manitoba was fewer than 12 000 people. According to a census conducted in 1870, there were 558 Natives, 5757 French-speaking Métis, 4083 English-speaking Métis and 1585 whites.

1. Describe the reaction of the Métis people to the purchase of Rupert's Land by the Canadian government.
2. In your own words, explain the role of each of these figures in the events leading up to the seizure of Fort Garry by the Métis: John Schultz, William McDougall, Louis Riel.
3. Did the actions of the Métis constitute a rebellion? Explain your answer.
4. What agreement did the Métis reach with the government of Canada in 1870?

The Death of Thomas Scott

While the Métis negotiation with the government of Canada was underway in the spring of 1870, an event occurred that was to affect French-English relations in Canada for a long time.

When the Métis provisional government took over, it arrested the leader of the Canadian Party, John Schultz, and some of his followers. Riel feared that the Canadian Party might invite McDougall, the appointed governor, into the region to govern it according to the wishes of the Canadian Party. However, Schultz and some of his followers escaped and began organizing an armed attack on Fort Garry. Before the attacking forces were ready, a skirmish took place between the raiders and the Métis. One man was killed on each side; however, the combatants withdrew before a full-scale battle could develop.

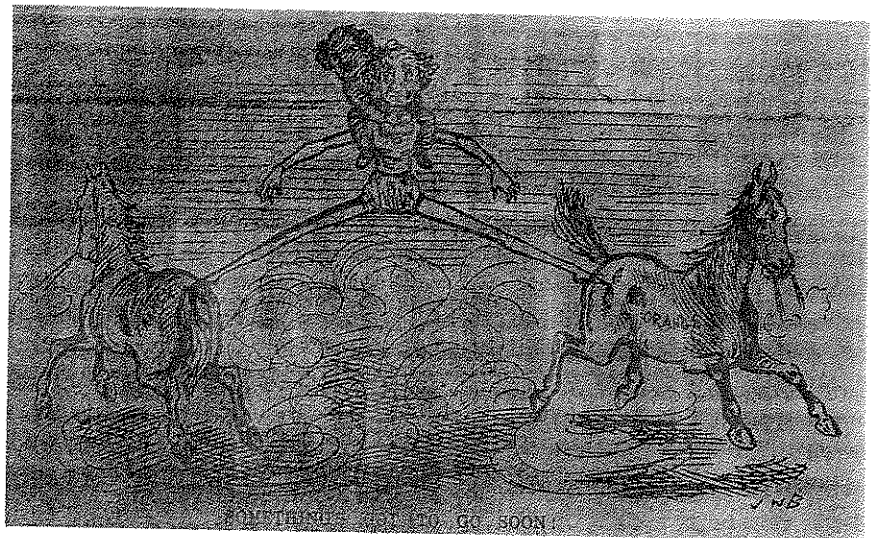
The Métis leaders decided that the Canadian Party agitators had to be detained in order to demonstrate the provisional government's authority. One of those arrested was Thomas Scott, an Orangeman from nearby Kildonan, one of the most anti-Métis members of the Canadian Party. Many of the Métis believed Scott was responsible for the drowning death of a young Métis boy after the skirmish.

While in jail in Fort Garry, Thomas Scott constantly abused his Métis guards and threatened the life of Louis Riel. Scott's abusiveness and attempts to incite the other prisoners to violence angered the Métis. He was tried, found guilty of making threats against Riel's life, abusing his guards and encouraging hostility toward the Métis. On March 4, 1870, Scott was executed by a Métis firing squad.

News of the execution of Scott reached eastern Canada after the completion of negotiations, causing a storm of angry protest. The Orange Order increased its pressure on the federal government to put down the "rebellion" in the western territory. In many Ontario towns, angry public meetings were held to protest the death of Scott. They demanded that Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald send troops to the Red River. In Quebec, the response was one of sympathy for the problems faced by the Métis. There, the death of Scott was seen as a sad but necessary part of the Métis' struggle to protect their rights.

Macdonald bowed to anti-French and anti-Catholic sentiment in Ontario. He ordered 1200 soldiers sent west under the command of

This political cartoon illustrates John A. Macdonald's situation. He is seen as stuck between two horses going in opposite directions. Riel is the "monkey on his back," an image used to refer to annoying problems that cannot be shaken off easily.



Colonel Garnet Wolseley. Macdonald's government argued that the military expedition was not intended to punish the Métis, but only to assert a strong Canadian presence in the North West, to prevent the Americans from taking advantage of events there.

In the summer of 1870, the troops set out on an arduous ninety-six day trek across the rugged landscape of the Canadian Shield, reaching Red River on August 23. Most of the soldiers were volunteers, eager to avenge Scott's death. They were disappointed when they met no resistance from the Métis on their arrival at Fort Garry. The gates of the great stone fort were open, and the place deserted. Riel had fled to the United States, and the other Métis had returned to their homes. The troops stayed on in Manitoba to ensure the orderly transfer of power to the new provincial government.

1. What reasons did Louis Riel and the Métis give to explain the execution of Thomas Scott? What reasons do you think John Schultz would have claimed for the execution of Scott?
2. In several sentences, describe how each of these groups felt about Scott's execution: the Métis, French-speaking Canadians, Ontario Orangemen.

Land and Life in the West

Manitoba's entry into Confederation differed from that of the other four provinces in one key respect. Under the Manitoba Act, Ottawa held all of the powers it was given through the British North America Act plus one extra power, control over public lands. This power, which extended to all of the North West Territory as well, was intended to ensure the orderly settlement of the West. It would prove to be a source of conflict between Westerners and the federal government for more than one hundred years.

The first to feel the impact of this provision were the Métis of Manitoba. They were unable to get legal possession of their traditional lands in the area until these lands had been surveyed by the federal government and titles issued. The survey was not completed until 1873; two years later many Métis families were issued with scrip (paper, resembling a bank note) entitling them to 160 acres (64 ha) of land. Coming from a society with no written laws, land deeds or money, and unfamiliar with the Canadian legal system, many of the Métis did not recognize the real worth of the scrip.

CHANGING VIEWS OF HISTORY

Canadian history books written in the late nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century usually portrayed the Métis, and their leader Louis Riel, as villains in the events that led to the creation of Manitoba as a province. These histories were usually written by English-speaking Protestants. In recent years, however, Canadian historians have stressed the importance of seeing the events at Red River from both the point of view of the Métis and that of the Canadians.

The Métis saw the Canadians as intruders into an area that had been their home for nearly a century. They remembered the attempt to destroy their way of life that had

been made when the Red River colony had been established a half-century earlier. The English-speaking Ontarians who moved west to settle in the area saw the Métis as primitive people who stood in the way of progress. They believed that agricultural settlement was superior to a hunting way of life. They also brought with them anti-Catholic biases and they remembered the French Canadians who had rebelled against British rule in 1837.

Given this combination of values and experiences, conflict between the two groups was almost inevitable. Problems of communication, and the failure of the Canadian government to discuss its plans for the region with the Métis, combined with these ingredients to result in the "rebellion."

Unscrupulous speculators acquired much of the Métis land, giving them whisky or a few dollars for their scrip.

Disillusioned, many of the Métis left Manitoba for the lands along the Saskatchewan River to the west of the new province. There, as you will learn in Chapter 10, the conflicts at Red River would be repeated a decade later.

1. How did the terms of Manitoba's entry into Confederation differ from those of the eastern provinces?
2. How did these terms affect the Métis?

Declining Native Population in the West

Native populations in the West declined sharply during the period 1780-1870. When the first Europeans reached the Prairies, as many as 100 000 Native peoples may have lived there. By 1880, out of a total population of 120 000, there were only about 30 000 Native people.

The major cause of this decline in population was disease, particularly smallpox. Weakened by alcohol and malnutrition, as fur trading replaced hunting, the Native peoples had low resistance to diseases brought by Europeans. Epidemics of European-introduced diseases struck the people in 1781, 1819, 1837, 1845, 1864 and 1869.

The smallpox epidemic of 1781, for example, is estimated to have reduced the population of the Blackfoot from 10 000 to 7000 in just a few months. By 1900, the number of Blackfoot was just over 4000.

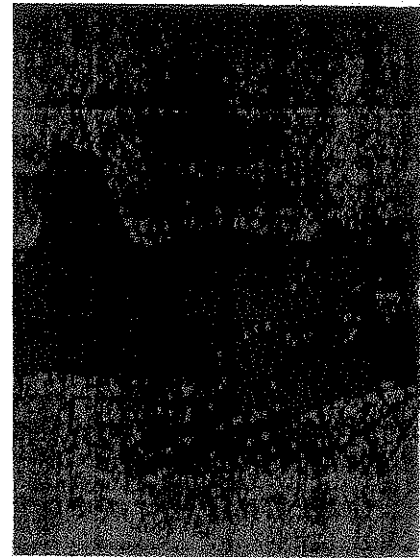
Problems of disease were compounded by the destruction of the buffalo herds, the major food source for the Métis and Native peoples. Starvation and malnutrition further reduced the Indian population of this region. Attempts to make farmers of Native people placed on reserves, usually located on the poorest soils, were largely unsuccessful. With the introduction of improved medical care in the 1930s, Native populations in western Canada began to increase again.

Summary

Manitoba was the fifth province to join Confederation. The path the people of the Red River colony took on their way to becoming citizens of Canada was very different from that taken by the colonists living in the first four provinces. This difference reflects the distinctive ways in which the lands around the Red River were settled and developed. Originally part of the Hudson's Bay Company's western operations, the Red River colony was the first part of the Prairies to experience agricultural settlement. In 1869, recognizing the region's rich potential for agriculture, and fearing American expansion into the area, Canada purchased Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company. Surveyors were sent west to prepare for the orderly settlement of the North West Territory, the new name given to the area.

This move, taken by the Canadians without the knowledge or consent of the Métis, sparked the Red River Rebellion. Led by Louis Riel, the Métis kept the governor from entering the area and set up a provisional government themselves. The Métis demands that their traditional rights be preserved led to the creation of Manitoba as Canada's fifth province in 1870. The execution of Thomas Scott during the rebellion added to conflicts between French- and English-speaking Canadians in Ontario and Quebec. A military expedition was sent to put an end to the uprising, but no battles were fought as the Métis had returned to their lands after the new province had been created.

While the Métis appeared to get all they wanted, their traditional way of life was soon disrupted. Confederation brought new settlers to the Red River, new land laws and a new way of life very different



This photograph illustrates the mingling of cultures that had unhappy consequences for the Native peoples. The Red River cart was a new technology introduced by European traders and settlers. Why would the Native people have started to use it?