# Canadian History: Pre-Confederation - 2nd Edition

# Canadian History: Pre-Confederation - 2nd Edition

John Douglas Belshaw

BCCAMPUS
VICTORIA, B.C.

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# Dedication

Dedicated to the memory of Mr. George Porges (d. 2004), whose introductory history courses at Douglas College were truly inspired.

# About the Book

*Canadian History: Pre-Confederation – 2nd Edition* was created by John Douglas Belshaw and funded by BCcampus Open Education. This book is the first in a two-part collection by this author; also see *Canadian History: Post-Confederation – 2nd Edition* (https://opentextbc.ca/postconfederation2e/).

BCcampus Open Education (https://open.bccampus.ca/) began in 2012 as the B.C. Open Textbook Project with the goal of making post-secondary education in British Columbia more accessible by reducing students' costs through the use of open textbooks and other OER. BCcampus (https://bccampus.ca/about-us/) supports the post-secondary institutions of British Columbia as they adapt and evolve their teaching and learning practices to enable powerful learning opportunities for the students of B.C. BCcampus Open Education is funded by the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills & Training (https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/advanced-education-skills-training), and the Hewlett Foundation (http://www.hewlett.org/).

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Starting in March 2020, various edits were made to the textbook. These stop well short of an overhaul. This is not a revised edition so much as a corrected edition. The changes are recorded throughout the book and can be provided on request. Possibly the most significant and wide-reaching change recognizes that the term "Indigenous" has superseded "Aboriginal." Throughout, as well, Indigenous autonyms have been introduced where needed. As the original project was reaching completion, a parallel project to create short videos by Canadian historians was getting fully underway. A small number of these videos were integrated into the original iteration and now several more have been added. Each comes with a transcript or has been closed captioned. I would like to acknowledge the contributions to this process made by Lisa Chilton and Alan Gordon.

# Acknowledgments

Preparing the first open textbook on Canadian history has been an exercise in innovation and experimentation. It has had at its heart from the start, however, a singular vision of a resource that will remove a financial barrier to students and will empower teaching faculty. It is a vision that has been shared by everyone on the team responsible for its production at BCcampus. Mary Burgess (now the Executive Director) was engaged from the start and has retained a helpful interest. Lauri Aesoph (Manager, Open Education) has been my closest daily collaborator, ally, critic, and support through this project. Clint Lalonde (then Senior Manager, Open Education) took the reins over the larger project while continuing to play the part of technical leader. He was helped throughout in this process by Brad Payne (then Web Developer-Technical Analyst) and so was I.

I am also grateful to Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning for encouraging me down this path and for making a substantial contribution to the final product. Ron McGivern, who wears several hats at TRU, gave me the first prod, and I am in his debt.

Rajiv Jhangiani teaches Psychology at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and co-authored (along with Hammond Terry) another BCcampus open text, *Principles of Social Psychology – 1st International Edition*. His experiences were important and extremely valuable to the early stages of this project, and I happily acknowledge his generosity as a mentor. (Both Kwantlen and TRU are member institutions in the Open Educational Resource Universitat (OERu) which helps explain why there is both enthusiasm and expertise on OER and open texts at the two institutions, a happy coincidence for me.)

The idea of creating open textbooks to support the most heavily enrolled courses in post-secondary institutions originated with the Provincial Government of British Columbia. The Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training invested a significant sum of money through BCcampus to accomplish this goal. Moreover, it continues to invest in this project, which means that more resources will be produced and that the resources already produced will be well maintained and capable of evolution. Good on you, Ministry.

I am grateful to colleagues who provided input, editorial, and content suggestions. I am pleased and proud to list their names and brief bios on the About the Author and Contributors page.

Finally and mostly, I am indebted to family and friends who encouraged me with their curiosity about the project and their patience. At the head of this list, as always, is Diane Purvey. Thanks, once again.

# Author's Notes

Like most instructors, I am never fully satisfied with the textbook I wind up choosing for my students. This one lacks a social-history bent, the other is regionally focused in ways I don't like, that one doesn't say nearly enough about the economy or demography, and some seem geared toward the instructor rather than the student. I have often wanted to tear out the odd-numbered chapters from one text and staple them to the even-numbered chapters from another and then pass a third through a grinder and sprinkle its cheerful spirit of enquiry throughout. Writing a course text myself did not seem to be much of an option. This open textbook project made all those scenarios possible.

This textbook is under a Creative Commons licence. It is meant to be torn apart, restitched, added and subtracted from, improved, challenged, brought up to date, and even re-imagined. It is a system of storage rooms in which you'll find information you can use or lock away. My goal has been to (A) provide a familiar framework of pre-confederation Canadian history that raises challenging questions for undergraduates, and (B) build the kind of text that I would want to use in my own classes. To that end, this open textbook is organized along lines that meet most post-secondary learning outcomes in this field while simultaneously leaving my own imprint on the final product. It is, then, both recognizably a survey text for the years to 1867 without being absent of personality. I strove to reassert Indigenous perspectives on events, and in this last regard I hope, humbly and as a non-Indigenous person, that I have achieved some success. I have, as well, endeavoured to raise the profile of both demographic and environmental history at a time when both fields require our attention and I did so, as well, in the companion text, *Canadian History: Post-Confederation – 2nd Edition* (https://opentextbc.ca/postconfederation2e/). The bottom line, however, is that the instructor and the students are in a position to make this text their own. And I encourage you to do so.

In order to make a resource like this one as widely available as possible, one has to make the greatest possible use of other open educational resources (OER). Illustrations, for example, must be free of copyright and exist in the public domain or, if copyrighted, be released under a Creative Commons licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/). Including material that does not allow for sharing limits the usefulness of the finished product. Meeting this objective structures the process of writing an open textbook in distinctive ways. OER are used liberally but the vast majority of the text is comprised of original material.

Knowing that some sections are likely to be reused more than others (and some possibly replaced more often than others), one makes judgment calls as to the length of sections so as to facilitate both processes. Learning Objectives, Key Terms, Exercises, Short Answer Exercises, a Glossary, and other features are added, knowing that they will be replaced/augmented/tweaked — and that the ability of a user to do so has to be made as easy as possible. The whole, then, is designed for re-purposing and re-crafting, a rather different point of departure than one takes when writing a conventional monograph.

Some years ago, I worked on a campus where a large patch of lawn was laid down between two busy buildings. There was a nice sidewalk around the edge, but it was obvious from the outset that people were going to walk across that grass. We watched as the path appeared, yellowed, and then became hardpacked — all in the course of only a few months. Then the facilities team showed up and laid the

sidewalk where it was meant to go — where users wanted it to go. Interestingly, it was not in a straight line. This open textbook is like that experiment. I encourage you to reuse, remix, repurpose in ways that show us where users want it to go. Be fearless and creative.

Here’s your chance to make history.

John Douglas Belshaw
February 2015

# Preface

This textbook considers the history of what becomes Canada in 1867. It is what is called a "survey text," in that it provides a framework of the larger storylines rather than examine in detail some particular aspect of Canadian history.

The thing is, what we survey is inevitably selective. Indeed, framing the story as something that leads to — or terminates at — Confederation is to suggest from the outset that there is a trail blazed from European arrival in North America to the creation of Canada. Telling the story that way is essentially flawed, from a historian's perspective. It funnels the story to an outcome — to one outcome — as though there were no others along the way, or that other events — the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the War of 1812, the Rebellions of 1837 — wouldn't work just as well as a bookend. And, obviously, when the terminus we choose happens to be a constitutional accomplishment of one group of Canadians — that is, those Canadians of European origin — we are implicitly overlooking the ongoing arc of Indigenous peoples' stories. It must be conceded that new political experiments are important, but one might as reasonably bring the tale to a pause with the onset of urbanization and industrialization, a social and economic process that redefined the lives of North Americans in the mid-19th century.

*Canadian History: Pre-Confederation – 2nd Edition* attempts to keep in view those other stories while visiting — and sometimes revisiting and reconsidering — familiar territory associated with the construction of what we call "Canada." The text was conceived with an awareness of typical learner goals in undergraduate intro Canadian courses, an understanding that many student/users are likely to be newcomers to Canada and thus may not share in some common narratives, and a commitment to critical approaches. It is not a device intended to produce patriots or better citizens; it exists to acquaint people with issues in the past, to engage them with the experiences of others, to develop critical faculties, to become knowledgable about events and societies in North America, and to develop some of the skills of a historian. The foremost of these is empathy.

## Organization

The text is organized in a roughly chronological fashion. Chapter 1 "When was Canada?" addresses historical methods and issues and then the text turns to communities and events and people in the past. The chronological approach is detoured beginning with Chapter 8 "Rupert's Land and the Northern Plains, 1690-1870." Chapters 9–11 consider, each in turn, the period from 1818 to c. 1860 in terms of economic, social, and political histories. Chapter 12 "Children and Childhood" explores an aspect of social history from before the arrival of Europeans to the industrial age. Chapter 13 "The Farthest West" considers the territories west of the Rockies, much of which is now British Columbia; this chapter, too, plunges back in time to the mid-18th century. Chapter 14 "The 1860s: Confederation and Its Discontents" caps the chronological saga with an exploration of the processes that led to a federal union of colonies in July 1867. Confederation is a watershed: not only does it mark the beginning of a colonial nation-building exercise, it signals the transfer of authority over territory and peoples from London to Ottawa. While it is the case that international policy remained a matter for Westminster, from 1867 on Canada was setting its own diplomatic course with the other nations of North America, apart from

the USA. Those "other nations," of course, being the First ones. These and other themes are pursued in the companion text, *Canadian History: Post-Confederation – 2nd Edition* (https://opentextbc.ca/postconfederation2e/).

Each chapter consists of several parts. These "subchapters" are meant to facilitate the addition and subtraction of material from the open text format. Most are linked narratively, but not so much that one cannot be omitted or replaced without dire consequences.

## Pedagogical Tools

*Canadian History: Pre-Confederation – 2nd Edition* includes several learning/teaching instruments. The first section (the x.1 of each chapter) includes Learning Objectives. These are, I think, consistent with what most introductory Canadian History courses hope to accomplish.

Almost all of the subchapters (apart from the Summary subchapters) conclude with a list of Key Points that are intended to help you identify themes that have overarching importance. But they are not exhaustive. There's more in each section and it would be a mistake to think that the Key Points are all that matters.

The Summary sections conclude with three features: Key Terms, Short Answer Exercises, and Suggested Readings. Not all Key Terms are defined in the text body, but all words that are marked as bold in the body of the text are included in the Key Terms box. A Glossary at the very end of the text collects all of the Key Terms in one place. As regards the Suggested Readings, an effort has been made to ensure that everything listed is available online through your university library.

Clearly the definition of what constitutes a "key term" or a "learning outcome" is subjective. Choices have been made. The advantage of the OpenText format is that an instructor is encouraged to make different choices.

Scattered throughout the text are Exercises. These are intellectual tasks that are meant to help you develop a historians' sensibility and awareness. They are not assignments (although they might be); they are opportunities to break from the narrative, to look up for a moment, and to see History around you. The are exercises meant to discipline and sharpen your mind just as push-ups improve your body. (Incidentally, it is a little known fact that all Canadian historians have six-pack abs.)

## Nomenclature

The names we use for people-groups in the past change over time. Sometimes that's a result of changes in jurisdictions and borders or a constitutional change. Take "England" before 1701: it's really England and Wales but it doesn't include Scotland, which was a separate country; after 1707 "Britain" refers to all three together (along with Ireland) — the distinction is important. To take another example, New Brunswickers and Nova Scotians went to bed on 30 June 1867 and woke up the next morning in Canada. In this text an effort has been made to be consistent with identities *as they were at the time*. There's no way that anyone at the forks of the Thompson and Fraser Rivers in 1808 could know that they'd be "British Columbians" fifty years later and it's a fair bet that they would have been unhappy at the prospect as well. Even in 1858 very few British Columbians would have imagined that thirteen years

later they would be “Canadians.” To push those labels backwards in time is to imply that people in history mysteriously knew an outcome that was not yet on the cards.

Names change, too, for political and cultural reasons. This is most obviously and importantly the case when it comes to Indigenous group names. Almost universally in North America the names that people of European descent use to identify Indigenous groups are not the ones First Nations themselves prefer. This situation began changing about thirty years ago and this text contributes to that process by employing nomenclature preferred by Indigenous peoples. Why is it important to do so? Because most of those European-devised names are artifacts of colonial power or terms of disrespect. “Thompson Indians” is obviously not the name that the Nlaka’pamux gave to themselves. Some Indigenous labels, such as “Eskimo” in fact derive from negative, xenophobic epithets used by their neighbours and rivals. The term “Indian” itself is evidence of European confusion and ignorance, a reminder that 15th century travellers were hoping to reach India and not the Americas.

As a rule, then, the current nomenclature officially endorsed by the people themselves is used here. In the first usage (and where it seems appropriate to do so) the most well-known alternative is presented as well. For example: Anishinaabe (a.k.a. Ojibwa); Wendat (Huron), Heiltsuk (Bella Bella). Some nomenclature offers several options and some of those are too useful to abandon. For example, the Haudenosaunee (a.k.a. Five Nations Iroquois) are also known as the League of Five Nations, which works rather well in its own right.

Exceptions are made to these rules throughout the text for the Cree. The term “Cree” derives from French terms (*Kristineaux*, *Kiristinous*, *Kilistinous*) which may, themselves, be descended from names given them by their Indigenous neighbours. The Cree in the pre- and proto-contact eras can be described as three cultures: Swampy, Woodland, and Plains. Each of these had a variety of alternate names. The Swampy Cree, for example, appear in European documents as West Main Cree and Lowland Cree and they describe themselves as *Maskiki Wī Iniwak*, *Mushkegowuk*, from which we derive Muskegon. There are eastern and western divisions within the Swampy Cree, which further complicates matters, as does migration across those two divisions. The Woodland Cree are similarly divisible between the Woods and the Rocky Cree, and nomenclature divides in this case between *Sakāwithiniwak* and *Nîhithaw*. The Plains Cree refer to themselves as *nêhiyawak.* Given the enormous territory in which the historic Cree were dominant — from the Rocky Mountains to Labrador — it is unsurprising to find significant differences in identities among these Algonkian-speakers, even at the dialect level. There is, however, a historic and pre-contact continuity across the Cree range and for that reason and to avoid confusion, the decision has been made to perpetuate the mis-label, “Cree.” For the purposes of understanding the different experiences of the fur trade in different ecosystems, the established modifiers survive as well: Swampy, Woodland, and Plains.

## Think Like a Historian

The past doesn’t explain the present. For the most part the past doesn’t even care about the present. What history reveals is complex and competing values and needs. How people dealt with those wrinkles and puzzles in the past demonstrates both their genius and their frailties. Those are the things we learn from the past and mostly they have to do with what it means to be human.

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## Current accessibility status

We are currently reviewing and updating this book to meet accessibility guidelines. The first edition of the book (https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/) is accessible, and we want to ensure the second edition is as well.

Right now, we are up to Chapter 8.5. We hope to complete the accessibility audit of the book by Summer 2022.

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**This statement was last updated October 12, 2021.**

# Chapter 1. When Was Canada?

# 1.1 Introduction

Historical studies demand that we learn something about the past but it also requires us to ask *how* it is we know *what* we think we know about the past. When you read an academic history text, you'll observe that historians typically want to prove something about events in the past. For example, they want to show that one individual played a critical role, or that environmental change was a silent but critical player, or that prejudices affecting one group had an unanticipated outcome. At the same time, however, historians are keen to prove the value of their sources. They might argue, for example, that this census record or that judicial file or some set of private correspondence offers special insights that have not before been made available.

Although it may be simplistic, perhaps too simplistic, you may find it helpful to think about the study of history as a combination of the "what" and the "how." That is, *what* happened and *how* we know it happened.

Grappling with the Canadian past is fraught with challenges and alive with exciting questions crying out to be addressed. But what constitutes the "Canadian" past? Clearly, the geographic space we call Canada is a relatively recent invention. Confederation, beginning in 1867, spread the brand beyond the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes to include other British colonies on the east and west coasts and some of the land in between. As a political idea — a country made up of provinces and territories with a constitution, flag, anthem, etc. — it continues to evolve. But in 1867 it was just one of many colonies in the British Empire and not necessarily the pick of the litter. A century and 10 years earlier it was part of a French empire that claimed influence over a much larger territory than the Canada of today. Still another century earlier, "Canada" referred to a struggling chain of frightened and fortified settlements along the St. Lawrence.

Let's push it back yet another century and more. Around 1567 the northern half of North America was a well-populated landscape made up of a multitude of diverse cultures. Their economies and relationships were continually changing while retaining core (and important shared) features from one generation to the next. The "Canada" of 1497 — one small patch of which may have been briefly visited by John Cabot and his crew — was a vastly more populous and rich human environment than would re-emerge here until the 19th century.

So whose Canada do we study? The Canada of the French? Of the Naskapi? Of the Basque whalers with their toeholds on the east coast? Of the Nuu-chah-nulth or the Acadians? When was Canada? Are there themes we can draw across generations and centuries? Are there successions of transitions as tumultuous and irreversible as rapids on a river? Who gets to tell those stories and whose voices are likely to remain silent?

It is only by asking questions such as these that history — as an activity — can be undertaken.

Learning Objectives

- Describe some of the principal concerns of historians as they undertake historical research.
- Explain the difference between primary and secondary sources.
- Demonstrate an ability to interrogate sources.
- Identify the dominant themes and debates in the telling of Canadian history.

# 1.2 The Writing of History

The telling of every country's national story is unique, and there are conflicts in that telling. Who gets to speak? Who does not? What alternative stories are there to be told? And how did it all turn out this way?

Historical writing is never without purpose. As early as the 18th century, historical accounts of New France were being produced that promoted the role of the Catholic Church and the seigneurs (the major landowners) as the custodians of the Canadien culture. These accounts were intended to buttress the position of the Church and seigneurs in the years to come as the authentic voice of Canadien ambitions. In the mid- and late-19th century, nationalist histories covering the whole of the Canadian timeline began to appear. They told the tale of the new nation, the Dominion of Canada, as something that embodied a recognizable vision of the modern state and thus provided historical legitimacy. Titles like *Colony to Nation* (1946) tell the tale: Canada had been a dependant (= a child) and now had achieved nation status (= adulthood).[1]

This metaphor of maturation is commonly used in historical writing on new or newish societies. While doing so might appear benign, think about what it implies. Its purpose is to suggest that past societies were less evolved and that the newer one is better. Ask yourself: Is that an argument that bears serious scrutiny? It's certainly a good example of how history gets used to support a particular position.

We review four issues in this chapter:

1. What is history? (#whatishistory) The answer may seem obvious, but it can be complicated. Without having some sense of what is implied by history — and historical writing (historiography) — you'll miss many of the key issues in the study of the past. It's something like watching your first foreign film. You know there's more going on than meets the eye and that the experience would be better if you just knew what it was.
2. Researching history (#researchinghistory). How historians do their research — historical method — is different from history (that is, the account that you read). Historians find their bricks and mortar somewhere, and they need to organize them in ways that will stand up over time, although history is also often revised as new evidence emerges or research methodology evolves. Not having a sense of this aspect of historical work is akin to studying sculpture without having a clue about how stone is carved or steel is forged.
3. Making histories. Historians use a great many different kinds of sources to assemble information on the past. Evidence comes in many forms.
4. The current state of historical writing in Canada. The field is rife with debates and disagreements, some of which can look like bench-clearing brawls.

1. A.R.M. Lower, *Colony to Nation: A History of Canada* (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Company, 1946).

## What Is History?

In asking what history is, you must also ask, what is **historiography**? There is a subfield of history, one in which all historians have to have some expertise, that deals with the *history of history.* Historical writing — and the study of historical writing — is correctly called "historiography," which encompasses both the *doing* (the writing of history) and the *reflecting on* (the study of history).

In the Western tradition, Herodotus (c. 484–425 BCE) is considered to be the Father of History, but the paternity of historical writing is not clear-cut, since storytelling about the past is a very old business. Historical writing in China probably began about 500 years before Herodotus was born, and everywhere human societies have appeared, there have been sagas and chronicles of some kind. Some of these were done with more literary licence than others. Brian Thom points out that the oral tradition of the Hul'qumi'num (of the Coast Salish nations) notes a difference between *syuth* (true histories) and *sxwi'em'* (fables and moral tales). This distinction is made by many cultures and is important to keep in mind: stories from and about the past take different forms and they do so to serve different purposes.[2] Written and oral histories alike adhere to two basic rules: reliability and verifiability. For the historian whose goal is to deliver as truthful a tale as possible, these rules are the gold standard for evidence.



*Figure 1.1 A fragment of the Book of Documents, which is attributed to Confucius (551–479 BCE).*

If the source is trustworthy, then it's reliable. Take the example of Bartolomé de las Casas, who was

2. Brian Thom, "Coast Salish Senses of Place: Dwelling, Meaning, Power, Property and Territory in the Coast Salish World" (unpublished PhD dissertation, McGill University, 2005), 81.

among the first Europeans in the Caribbean and who spent nearly half a century working as a priest, missionary, plantation owner, bishop, and colonial administrator in Hispaniola, Venezuela, and Mexico. When he wrote of the vicious Spanish conquest of Haiti — "My eyes have seen these acts so foreign to human nature, and now I tremble as I write, not believing them myself, afraid that perhaps I was dreaming. But truly this sort of thing has happened all over the Indies, and more cruelly too sometimes, and I am quite sure that I have not forgotten." — we are inclined to believe him, not least because he wasn't going to win himself any friends by speaking out.[3]




*Figure 1.2 Bartolomé de las Casas, c. 1484–1566.*

If historians can prove the claims made by their source, that's verifiability. The best biographies go far beyond the personal diaries and letters written by their subject and look to other sources to confirm that the subject did what he or she claimed to have done. Another example, this one drawn from population

3. Bartolomé de las Casas, *History of the Indies*, trans. and ed. Andrée M. Collard (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1971), 121.

history, shows some of the challenges of official documents. Bruce Curtis examined the early days of the census of Canada and found that Canada West (Ontario) and Canada East (Quebec) counted people differently.[4] In the former, people were counted based on where they actually were on census day; in the latter, they were counted based on where they were supposed to be. This means that Canada East's census takers included locals who were off working in factories in other jurisdictions, perhaps in New England. But in Canada West, anyone who was engaged in migrant work — wandering the countryside and towns looking for a job — or who was a recent arrival in a new town would most likely be overlooked. Without this bit of knowledge in hand, we might be forgiven for assuming that an official source like the census would be 100% reliable; however, thanks to local tax records, church registers, and other documents, we are in a position to *verify* the official numbers.

Serious historians seek to be both reliable and verifiable, which is why you'll typically find a torrent of references supporting a scholarly study. The point is to demonstrate that the writer can be trusted because he or she has done the necessary digging and cross-checking. As well, studies that are well supported by references say to the reader, "Feel free to check it yourself and, by all means, use the information I've found to further your own studies." This reflects another tendency in historical research: the desire to share discoveries. Holding back sources raises both suspicion and eyebrows in readers.

## Researching History

History just never gets old. Or does it? If historians use only verifiable and reliable sources, surely at some point we should have all the history we're ever going to need. But a paradox exists about history: it has a stale-date. Our understanding of the past is constantly subject to change. This makes history open to revision, and its practitioners (that is, all serious historians) are sometimes pejoratively called **revisionists**. There do exist some landmark studies that stand the test of time, but more often than not conclusions reached by historians a generation or more ago are subject to a second (and third and fourth) look. Why is it that history is regularly "freshened up"?

### New evidence emerges

Sometimes — although rarely — lost documents are found that shed new light on a historical event. For example, in the article "Reluctant Warriors: British North Americans and the War of 1812," author E. Jane Errington reveals previously unexamined evidence from the newspapers of the time that Upper Canadians were not the fearless protectors of the homeland that they had appeared to be in earlier accounts and in popular mythology.[5]

More usual is for new evidence to emerge through discoveries made in a different field — say, medicine — that prove to be relevant to historical studies. It is unlikely that Mary Ellen Kelm could have written *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900–50* without the

4. Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840–1875* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

5. E. Jane Errington, "Reluctant Warriors: British North Americans and the War of 1812," *The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754–1814*, eds. David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001): 325–336.

knowledge that medical research provided toward the end of the 20th century.[6] Cross-fertilization of this kind happens all the time, transforming *definitive* histories into *conditional* histories.



*Figure 1.3 In this 1896 painting, General Isaac Brock encourages the volunteer Upper Canadian troops in the War of 1812: "Push on, brave York volunteers." Recent research suggests that Upper Canadian enthusiasm for the war was, in fact, muted.*

## Ideology matters

**Ideologies** also affect our perception of history. For example, Ian McKay of Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, has been the key figure in identifying the importance of liberalism in Canadian history, both as a phenomenon and as a lens through which the past is viewed. (Note that here we are talking about small-l liberalism, as opposed to capital-L Liberalism, which is associated with the Liberal Party of Canada.) Liberalism, as a political ideology, places an emphasis on the individual. Whether in the role of consumer or voter or historical actor, the individual has been promoted as more important to Canadian history and public policy than groups or sub-nations.

Think about how this can affect our view of Canadian history. If the history of Canada is about the rise of the individual in a liberal-democratic state (one in which more and more people get the vote and in which rights are extended more and more broadly to individuals), how does that affect **collectivities** like First Nations? What about the experiences of French Canadians who, at various times in their history, have

6. Mary Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900–50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999).

demonstrated a strong predisposition for being seen as one nation first and as many individuals second? Or how does this ideology of individualism square with the history of "working-class solidarity"?

After World War II, small-l liberal values combined with a moderate form of left-wing collectivism that sought to enhance the condition of the individual by means of a larger, social welfare state. These ideals of democratic rights and a social safety net were a formative influence on nearly three generations of historians. In your lifetime there has been a growing reaction to state-liberalism from the Right. So-called neo-liberalism seeks a return to the "classical liberalism" of the 18th and early 19th centuries wherein the individual operates in a free market unfettered by government regulation and identity-group rights. The Left continues to provide a critique of liberalism/individualism, and it is more supportive of collective identities while at the same time subscribing to the essentially liberal view that individual choice in a democracy is non-negotiable. Just because these perspectives exist happily together in the mainstream does not mean they are not ideologically loaded. Historians writing from any one of these perspectives will take a different view on the past.

Other "isms" have had an effect on historical writing as well. **Marxism** and Marxist historians draw attention to the economic structures that overlay people's lives in the past. **Environmentalism** invites us to look at the history of the fur trade, resource-extraction industries like logging and fishing, and the fabric of cities in ways that recast the environment from something that was acted upon to something that has an impact on human actors. Certainly, **feminism** continues to have an enormous and laudable impact on historical thinking. Theological approaches to the writing of history are much less in vogue now than they once were, but **imperialism** (which, for centuries, had a strong theological and evangelical component) continues to influence the story of the nation-state in profound and very subtle ways. How scholars see society is one part of this ideological rainbow; how people in the past saw society — ideologically — is another. It's complicated, but it's hugely important in the context of how history is presented and written about.

Perspectives on what happened in the past may be informed by our concerns in the present, but that's not the same thing as saying that the past exists for the benefit of the present. The Maritimes historian George Rawlyk once wrote that "all historical writing is basically autobiographical in nature."[7] That is to say, the history we look for reflects the interests of our time and is constrained by the ways that our culture thinks. A society that is interested in the civil rights of women is more likely to ask questions on that topic than one that is not. By the same token, earlier generations of historians looked to the past for answers to questions that most of us today would not care to pose. The Canadian novelist William Gibson contributes this view: "The past changes. Our version of the past will interest the future to about the extent we're interested in whatever past the Victorians believed in."[8] We have concerns and perspectives that are different from past generations and from those that will be nourished by future generations. This does not mean, however, that we have a licence to shop around in the past for vindications of the present. It is in the nature of historical celebrations to claim that it is thanks to historical events that we enjoy the freedoms that we do today, or that without the fur trade, Canada as we know it simply would not exist. This is called the **presentist fallacy**. What if we view our present dimly due to high unemployment, repressive legislation, massive cuts at the CBC, and environmental disaster constantly on the horizon? Would we then say that these things are the *fault* of whatever it was

7. G. A. Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists, and Henry Alline* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1984), ix.

8. William Gibson, *Pattern Recognition* (New York: Berkley Books, 2005): 59.

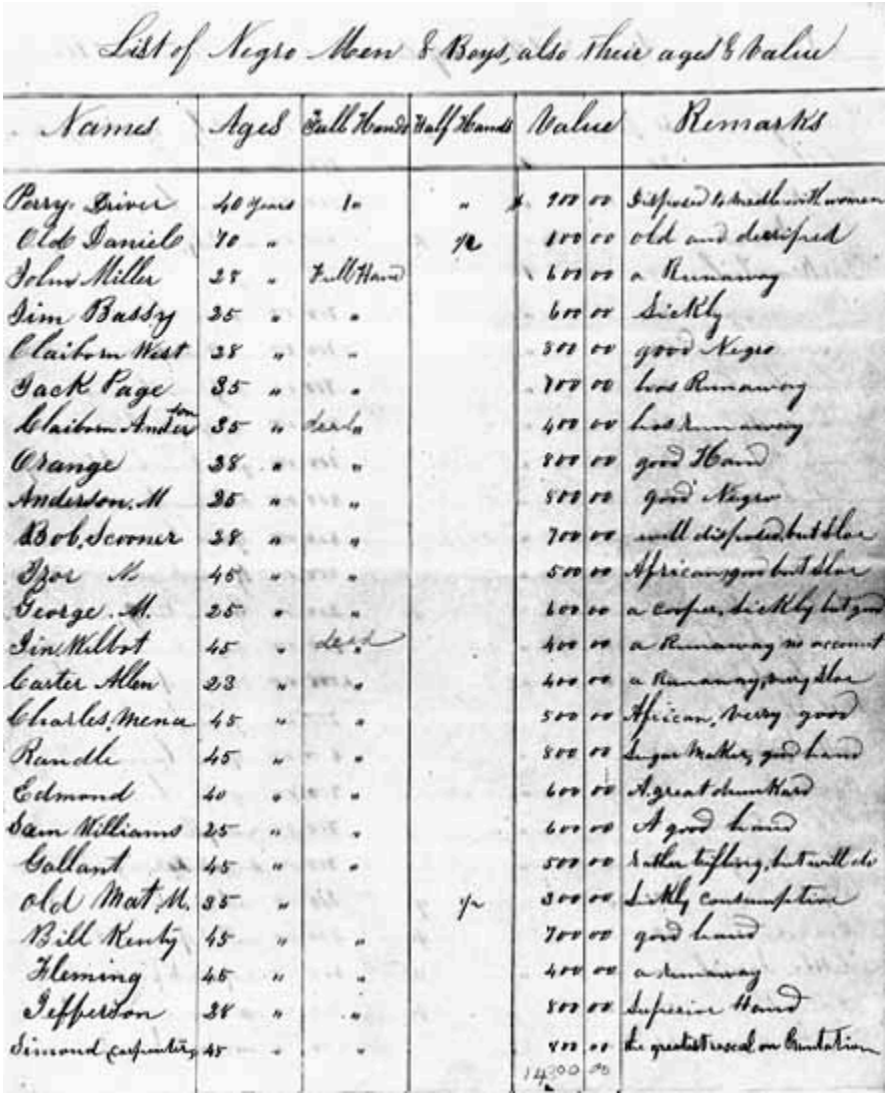
that happened 270 years ago or that the fur trade is to blame? Bias can be okay — we can be biased in our search for evidence of adolescent rebelliousness in early Nova Scotia and ignore much else that was going on at that time — but we cannot favour one outcome over another and certainly we cannot favour an outcome in our present.

## Methodological approaches evolve

It isn't enough for a historian to be a bloodhound who sniffs out the rare fact. The historian has to be a capable and versatile analyst. That means that each generation of historians will find a new way of cracking the code of the past. The application of good **quantitative historical techniques** borrowed from statistical sciences has had a great impact on the telling of history, and has sometimes completely toppled older histories. An example of an evolving approach is presented in Wendy Wickwire's article "To See Ourselves as the Other's Other," which makes the case for using **oral histories** to examine events that took place centuries ago.[9] More than 20 years before Wickwire's article appeared, Bruce Trigger made a similar point regarding **ethnohistory** and the study of the Wendat/Huron First Nation. It is largely thanks to research of this kind that Indigenous oral traditions have acquired greater and greater respect and credibility in the courtroom over the last two decades.[10] Further, **demographic historians**, especially in Quebec, have devised new ways of analyzing population information held in censuses, birth and death records, and baptismal and marriage records. The end effect is that history is constantly being rewritten with new discoveries, new information, new perspectives, and new conclusions. It all makes for a dynamic field, despite the reputation that history has in some quarters for being dusty, musty, and dull.

9. Wendy C. Wickwire, "To See Ourselves as the Other's Other: Nlaka'pamux Contact Narratives," *Canadian Historical Review* 75, issue 1 (1994): 1–20.

10. For a detailed discussion of these developments, see Bruce Granville Miller, *Oral History on Trial: Recognizing Aboriginal Narratives in Court* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).



List of Negro Men & Boys, also their ages & Value

| Names | Ages | Full Hands | Half Hands | Value | | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perry Driver | 40 years | 1 | " | 900 | 00 | Disposed to meddle with women |
| Old Daniel | 70 " | | 1/2 | 100 | 00 | old and decrepid |
| John Miller | 28 " | Full Hand | | 600 | 00 | a Runaway |
| Jim Bassy | 35 " | " | | 600 | 00 | Sickly |
| Claiborn West | 28 " | " | | 800 | 00 | good Negro |
| Jack Page | 35 " | " | | 700 | 00 | has Runaway |
| Claiborn Anderson | 35 " | dead " | | 400 | 00 | has Runaway |
| Orange | 38 " | " | | 800 | 00 | good Hand |
| Anderson M | 35 " | " | | 800 | 00 | good Negro |
| Bob Scooner | 28 " | " | | 700 | 00 | well disposed but slow |
| Izor M | 45 " | " | | 500 | 00 | African good but slow |
| George M | 25 " | " | | 600 | 00 | a Cooper, sickly but good |
| Jim Wilbot | 45 " | dead " | | 400 | 00 | a Runaway no account |
| Carter Allen | 23 " | " | | 400 | 00 | a Runaway, very slow |
| Charles Mena | 45 " | " | | 500 | 00 | African, very good |
| Randle | 45 " | " | | 800 | 00 | Sugar Maker, good hand |
| Edmond | 40 " | " | | 600 | 00 | A great drunkard |
| Sam Williams | 25 " | " | | 600 | 00 | A good hand |
| Gallant | 45 " | " | | 500 | 00 | rather trifling, but will do |
| Old Mat M | 35 " | | 1/2 | 300 | 00 | Sickly consumptive |
| Bill Kenty | 45 " | " | | 700 | 00 | good hand |
| Fleming | 45 " | " | | 400 | 00 | a Runaway |
| Jefferson | 28 " | " | | 800 | 00 | Superior Hand |
| Simond Carpenter | 45 " | " | | 400 | 00 | the greatest rascal on Cantation |
| | | | | 14300 | 00 | |

*Figure 1.4 A page from the "Book of Negros," which lists the 3,000 African Americans who departed from New York as freed loyalists in 1783. Documents like this may provide both qualitative and quantitative evidence to historians.*

Key Takeaways

- Historical sources of all kinds are subject to the tests of verifiability and reliability.
- Historical revisions are invited by new evidence and changes in perspectives and methodologies.

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# 1.3 Making Histories

Where does history come from? Historians use a great many different sources to assemble information on the past. Evidence comes in many forms.

To think like a historian, we must concern ourselves not only with what people did, but also with what they thought they were doing. In every act that humans perform, however simple or banal, they are looking toward the future. Nations don't go to war for the sake of war; they do so to obtain more territory or to secure borders or to chasten a neighbour *in the future*. Likewise, individuals make personal choices, such as emigrating or postponing marriage until they are older, because of how their decisions will "pay out" later on.

Peter Moogk, an accomplished historian of New France, encourages us to develop an deep understanding of past societies: "If a historian is not immersed in the culture of the time being studied and has not grasped its internal logic, then that scholar's reconstruction of past human behaviour will inevitably be superficial and anachronistic."[1] To study history properly, we must creep around behind people in the past and try to look at the future through their eyes. In order to do so, we must become open to the institutions and instincts of earlier eras and then consult the detritus and records of our predecessors.

The sources that historians rely upon are grouped under two headings (which sometimes overlap). The first group is **primary sources**, which are original materials that come to us directly from people in the past. Diaries, letters, and reports of government inquiries are good examples of primary materials. The other group is **secondary sources**, which generally are documents that examine primary documents and provide an interpretation. Both types are discussed below.

1. Peter Moogk, "Writing the Cultural History of Pre-1760 European Colonists," *French Colonial History* 4 (2003): 5.

## Primary Sources



*Figure 1.5 Primary sources are often held in archives.*

Primary sources are often held in **archives**, and sometimes in museums. (Often the archives are *in* a museum.) Archives may be private or semi-private, but the principal archival institutions in Canada are public and are organized by levels of government. The National Library and Archives of Canada (http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/pages/home.aspx) is housed in Ottawa, every provincial capital has its own provincial archives, and most cities have one too. Most universities have their own archives, which are sometimes called "special collections," and large public libraries very often have a room dedicated to primary documents.

In this electronic age of ours, many public archives are available online through Archives Canada (http://www.archivescanada.ca). As well, increasingly, historical photographs and maps are available online. Still, there are times when a visit to the physical place is called for. It is typically in an archives that historians do the painstaking detective work that leads to new discoveries about the past.

Exercise: Find the Archives — Wherever You Live, There's an Archives

The town or city in which you live has one. Local museums usually have some kind of archives or a set of local records, as do churches, military regiments, schools, and universities. It costs nothing to get into the archives.

Where is the provincial archives nearest to you? How many local archives are attached to museums? To churches? Regiments? Take a look at the online catalogue of any one of them. What kinds of things do they have? Pick a topic — the local breweries, the street on which you live, a home-grown artist you like — and see what they've got.

If possible, drop by and take a closer look. Ask the archivist about the collections. Tell him or her you're interested in learning what kinds of materials are collected and what most excites them. Describe in a couple of paragraphs the assets and, broadly, what makes them important resources for historical and/or community knowledge.

Finally, share what you've found with others. Go to Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page) or a community website and add that knowledge.

## Reading the records

Primary documents can get you closer to actual participants in past events, but they are not without problems. Think about it: Has anyone ever lied or embellished a story in his or her diary? Has there ever been an inquiry without a political agenda in the background? Have you ever read a letter and wondered if it reveals the writer's thoughts or what the writer thinks you will understand by it? Take the *Jesuit Relations*, for example. These are reports submitted by Jesuit missionaries in New France to their masters back home. There are many truths contained in them, but you have to keep in mind that the Jesuits who prepared the *Relations* knew that they would be read by people who had the power to cut off their supplies or to send them the reinforcements and materials essential to success. In the reports, were they overly optimistic about the likelihood of religious conversions among the First Nations? Did they dramatize or downplay daily life? Both?

**Salt and Pepper: Comparing Two Paintings**

If letters and reports can be duplicitous, what about paintings and maps? Take a look at Benjamin West's famous 1770 work, *The Death of General Wolfe* (Figure 1.6), which hangs in the National Gallery in Ottawa. Clearly it is a very romantic interpretation of what actually took place in 1759, but what truths does it reveal … despite itself?



*Figure 1.6 The Death of General Wolfe, painted by Benjamin West.*

The pepper to West's salt is *The Death of Montcalm* (https://www.gallery.ca/collection/artwork/the-death-of-montcalm) by François-Louis-Joseph Watteau, painted in 1800. It, too, hangs in the National Gallery. It shows Montcalm dying on the battlefield, despite the fact that he died in a surgeon's home.



*Figure 1.7 The Death of Montcalm, painted by François-Louis-Joseph Watteau.*

Exercise: Paintings as Primary Sources — Portrayals of Historic Events

Compare the above two famous — and canonical — representations of *real events* with three more:

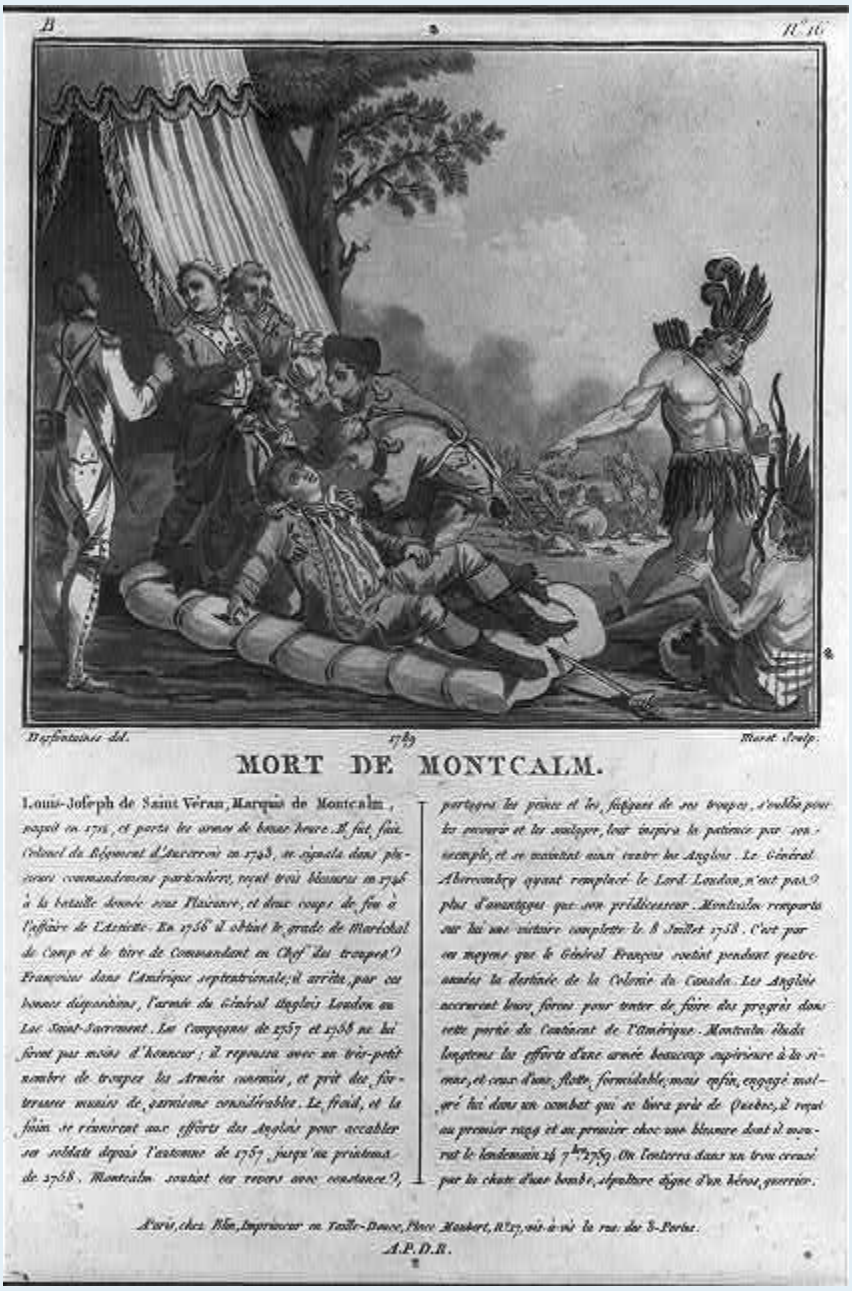


*Figure 1.8 Mort de Montcalm, created c. 1789.*



*Figure 1.9 General Montcalm, mortally wounded on the Plains of Abraham, is taken to Quebec by Louis Bombled (1862–1927).*




*Figure 1.10 James Wolfe ("The Death of General Wolfe at the Siege of Quebec") by William Grainger, published 1802. Depicts events from September 14, 1759.*

Now answer these questions:

1. What differences do you see?
2. Who was the intended audience of each?
3. What purpose was each painting meant to serve?
4. Who is in each painting? Who is not?
5. How are those in the paintings depicted?
6. In the end, who do you trust and why?

In order to appreciate and make the most of primary documents, we need to follow some basic practices of critical inquiry. The questions that follow are ones that you should ask of your sources (even secondary sources) and have been posed by the historians whose articles and books you will read.

## Identify the source

#### What is the nature of the source?

You'll want to know what kind of source it is — a newspaper, an oral history account, a diary entry, a government document, etc. — because different kinds of sources must be considered differently. For example, you might think about a written description of a fur trade post differently than you would think about a photograph of one, or you might ask different questions of census data regarding poverty in the 1830s and 1840s than you would of the recollections of Irish immigrants who arrived in the midst of the 1834 cholera epidemic. Knowing the type of source you're dealing with can help you start to think about appropriate questions.

#### Who created this source, and what do you know about them?

Knowing something about who created the source can help you determine what biases they might have had, what their relationship to the things they described in the source might have been, and whether this source should be considered credible. Keep in mind that someone doesn't have to be a famous leader or play a dramatic role in history to be a credible source. In terms of understanding the experience of the War of 1812, for example, the writings of a militia soldier may be as valuable or even much more so than the correspondence of General Isaac Brock.

#### When was the source produced?

Knowing when the source was produced can help you put it into historical perspective. A discussion of slavery in Canada, for example, would obviously be very different in the early 1700s (when most slaves in the colony were Indigenous men and women), the 1790s (when John Graves Simcoe, lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, introduced an Act Against Slavery), and the mid-19th century (when the "underground railway" was shepherding American slaves north to freedom). If you don't know when a source was written, you can't put it in historical context and understand how it connects to historical events. If you're using a first-hand account that was written some time after the events it describes, you might also take into account the passage of time in your analysis. A record of events produced at the time has the advantage of freshness and a first-hand quality; it has the disadvantage of a limited horizon and none of the benefits of hindsight. A subsequent reminiscence or recollection of events may place things in perspective but it will likely lose a sense of the context of decisions and actions and, of course, it is subject to forgetfulness.

#### Where was the source produced?

Just as it is important to situate the source in time, it's also important to identify *where* the source was produced. If you found a letter describing Acadia, it would matter quite a bit if the letter was written by someone living and working — or even visiting — the colony as opposed to an official sitting in a chateau somewhere in France.

## Contextualize the source

#### What is the historical context for this source?

What was going on in the place and time that the source was created? What significant local, regional, or global events might this source relate to? You can look for information about the historical context for your sources in many places. Sometimes sources are packaged along with descriptive information that can help you contextualize them. You can also consult secondary sources (like this textbook) to learn more about the time and place in which the source was created.

#### How were the creators of your document(s) connected to their historical context?

Gender, race, and social and economic class all matter. So does ideological position. An account of the burning of the Parliament Buildings in Montreal in 1849, for example, will be of value only if you can determine where the creator stood on the issue of the Rebellion Losses Bill. Was he or she opposed? Was the creator involved in the arsonist mob that is described in the source? Figuring out how the author of your primary document fitted into the historical context can help you think more critically and creatively about what he or she had to say.

#### Why was the source created in the first place?

You'll also want to know the motivations of the person who wrote the source, which may be easier to guess after you know the historical context. Why do you think this source was created? Was it meant to be a private document or was it intended for others to view? How do you know? If there was an intended audience, who was that audience? Family? The general public? Future generations? What did the creator of the source intend for that audience to get out of it? Was he or she trying to persuade people to a particular point of view? Simply recording daily events? Intentionally trying to deceive the audience? Trying to look good in the eyes of the readers and/or posterity?

Naturally, you'll want to extract as much factual information as you can from the source. Details are what you're after. But documents from the past are tricky and they might contain a surprise or two. What is the balance in the document between opinion and verifiable fact? Opinion isn't entirely without value, because you can then ask why the creator of the document held that opinion. Also, ask what the source is *not* telling you. What information might be withheld? Ask yourself what you expected to see that you didn't? For example, it might seem odd to find a letter written on July 1, 1867, that makes no mention of Confederation. Was that date not important to everyone in British North America?

In addition you can look at documents for unintentional messages — revelations of perspectives and prejudices that they so took for granted that they weren't necessarily aware they were transmitting them to their audience. An example is how women are regularly described in historic documents in a vocabulary of dependence and weakness. Finally, be open to being surprised; documents may disclose much more than the facts. It is often only by confronting the original documents that you may be able to do some justice to the truth of the past .

Just one example comes from the journals kept by the Hudson's Bay Company's field officers. These journals covered commerce, day-to-day life in the posts and forts, relations with Indigenous peoples, and personnel issues. The senior clerk at Fort Rupert on Vancouver Island in 1850 recorded in his journal

that he was going to discipline some of his men: “I shall put them in Irons,” he wrote. While that in itself may seem surprising, a look at the original document reveals even more: it shows us that the clerk’s mental stability was in free fall. He was so agitated that the word “Irons” is scrawled in letters nearly two inches tall and it is triple-underlined. The nib of his quill pen nearly tore through the page.[2]




*Figure 1.11 Engraving of a Hudson’s Bay Company trading post, created c. 1882 by Harry Ogden.*

**Case in Point**

2. Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, *Fort Rupert Journals* 1 (638), 28 April 1850.

*The Colonial Advocate (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonial_Advocate)* was produced by William Lyon Mackenzie from 1824 to 1834, first in Kingston and then in York/Toronto. Mackenzie was what is sometimes described as a "gadfly": someone who discomfits the comfortable. His attacks on the Upper Canadian ruling class, which he called the "Family Compact," were highly provocative and ultimately contributed to the Rebellions of 1837. Even if you know nothing of 19th-century newspapers, you'll know that they were highly different from those of today. Who would Mackenzie be writing for? Literacy was hardly universal in the 1830s. Like all publishers, he was in business to make money, so you need to ask what and who his market was. Was his combative stance part of his marketing strategy? The point is that newspaper accounts (then as now) don't occur in a vacuum. Newspapers are interpretative documents in that they try — to some extent — to make sense of events even as they report on them.

## Secondary Sources

When historians consult the works of other historians, they are using secondary sources. Overwhelmingly these are documents that examine primary documents and provide an interpretation. The shelves of libraries are full of secondary sources, which may come in the form of books or scholarly journals (such as the *Canadian Historical Review* or *Labour/Le Travail*). Every article you read on a historical topic is a secondary source (assuming that it's not just pure invention and fantasy). These are sources that *filter* primary evidence. Sometimes that's good; sometimes it's not. You, as the reader, have to be critically aware of that filter. And keep in mind that the distinction between primary and secondary is not always clear. For example, let's say that you're reading a history of New France written in 1800. It's a secondary source that made use of primary documents, but it is simultaneously itself a primary source, in that it is evidence of how people thought in 1800.

### Making sense of the past

Teodoro Agoncillo, a historian of the Philippines, captures in a few lines what most historians know (and often say):

> There is a great similarity between legal evidence and historical evidence. The only difference lies in the fact that in legal evidence it is the judge who determines whether the account of a witness is acceptable or not… The historian is prosecuting attorney and defence attorney and the judge all rolled into one, and [she or he] is the narrator and the interpreter.[3]

This is why historians say that the facts cannot speak for themselves. Our responsibility is to cross-examine the facts and to lay out clearly what they reveal. As the great British historian E. H. Carr wrote in the middle of the last century,

> The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: It is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context. It was, I think, one of Pirandello's characters who said that a fact is like a sack — it

3. Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *Talking History: Conversations with Teodoro A. Agoncillo* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1995).

won't stand up till you've put something in it. The only reason why we are interested to know that the battle was fought at Hastings in 1066 is that historians regard it as a major historical event. It is the historian who has decided for his own reasons that Caesar's crossing of that petty stream, the Rubicon, is a fact of history, whereas the crossing of the Rubicon by millions of other people before or since interests nobody at all.[4]



*Figure 1.12 E. H. Carr, British historian (1892–1982).*

Events and personalities to which we apply importance are a matter of choice. If we want to tell the story of New France from the point of view of the French, that's one perspective; if we decide, however, to tell that story from the point of view of the Wendat (on whose territory New France impinged) that will be a very different history. In other words, history doesn't exist independently of the human imagination: it is something that is created.

Key Takeaways

- Historical sources fall into two categories: primary (original documents produced by people in the past) and secondary (interpretative documents produced by people who made — and make — use of primary sources).

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4. E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 1961): 11.

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## 1.4 The Current State of Historical Writing in Canada



*Figure 1.13 Fishing weirs like this one from the Cowichan River (c. 1866) were built by Indigenous peoples across Canada long before contact. Wood — a readily available building material in northern North America — was used far more widely than stone, but it leaves less evidence behind. [Long Description] (#fig1.13)*

It's one thing to know about some of the key events in Canada's history; it's another to know a thing or two about how our history came to be written.

Part of the challenge is defining what constitutes history. For example, it is often said that Canada is a young country without much history. A response to that claim is that Canada is actually a few years older than the modern states of Italy and Germany. Doing so, however, is to fall into the trap of thinking that a constitution defines a country and its history. Others point out that the existence of New France stretches back to the early 1600s (which makes Canada quite a bit older still) and before that there was not much going on in the way of settlement. But that perspective writes off entirely the pre-contact experience of Indigenous nations. In response, some people argue that the history of Canada is limited to the literate societies in Canada, and before the arrival of Europeans there existed only illiterate societies. In other words, they argue that no written record = no history.

This viewpoint is not defensible. In Britain, historians of ancient times don't fold up their tents when they get into the pre-Roman past. If they did, nothing would have been studied about Stonehenge,

for example. The lands that have become Canada are littered with burial mounds, old fortifications, petroglyphs and pictographs, ancient foot trails, bison pounds, and fishing weirs. Intertidal fishtraps in Comox Bay on Vancouver Island have been carbon-dated to at least 800 years before the present; their scale and design are both staggering and beautiful. Oral traditions, moreover, punch a hole through that artificial barrier erected between the colonialist past and that of pre-contact times. This territory that we call Canada has so much history that the greatest challenge is how to organize it and understand it.

## Careless and Wrong: Nationalist Histories

What most people think of as the "proper subject of history" is the story of regimes. And certainly it is easy — and meaningful — to think of historical periods associated with different political organisms. Whether it is New France, Nova Scotia, or Wendake (the Huron Confederacy), each administrative era imposes certain structures on its people and their lives. Harbours get built, systems of land ownership (individual, family, collective) are recognized and sometimes imposed, alliances with neighbours are forged and broken. The little things — the things that mark the course of a lifetime — are also associated with regimes. Think of practices associated with reaching adulthood, marriage, burial, and mourning. Spiritual and religious authority has to reside somewhere, even if it is in a common set of non-institutionalized beliefs. And when regimes change, all those practices can be lost. Or, conversely, their preservation becomes a fundamental creed of the survivor population. In any event, history's focus on governments, empires, and nation states has a long pedigree.

In Canada the business of establishing a legitimate country with something like a national identity depended on the writing of national histories. The 20th century witnessed a parade of classically trained historians based in the oldest anglophone universities (University of Toronto, McGill, Queen's), developing powerful narratives of the epic of New France, the Conquest, the Loyalists, the rise of liberal-democratic processes, and the achievement of Confederation. George M. Wrong (1860–1948), Donald Creighton (1902–1979), and J. M. S. Careless (1919–2009) were key figures in this phase of Canadian historiography, and all were based in the Department of History at the University of Toronto.



*Figure 1.14 George MacKinnon Wrong (1860–1948).*

This **National School** approach was essentially small-c conservative in its ideology, Anglican in its creed, and mostly capital-C Conservative in its politics. There were regular challenges from the Left, particularly in the 1930s, but few other historians enjoyed as much influence. Certainly feminist challenges were almost impossible with the absence of women in any university history departments. The situation was even more parlous for non-Whites, non-Christians, and non-nationalists. The National School only began to face serious challenges in the 1960s, by which time there was growing dissatisfaction with it in academic circles.

## Generation gap: The new social history

The rise of the **baby boom generation** brought to universities huge numbers of young Canadians who were concerned with the histories of working people, non-Whites, and women. The topics of race, class, and gender — formerly untended — scrambled to the top of the historian's agenda. The rise of **multiculturalism** — as a fact and as an official policy — facilitated further the growth of layered histories of ethnicities, each of which had a thing or two to say about gender and social class. As well, the Canadian regions and provinces found they had tales to tell that were either subsumed within the larger national narrative or ran in very different, sometimes contrary, directions. The National History School, by contrast, gave centre stage to the accomplishments of elite groups, political leaders, industrialists, and big media. Their representatives in the pages of history books were, of course, all but 100% males and equally white. Their representatives in the history departments of Canadian universities tended to be drawn from the same demographic. Then the ground rather suddenly shifted.

The baby boom generation witnessed the creation of a new cadre of universities. In the western half

of the country alone a half dozen appeared: Simon Fraser University and the Universities of Victoria, Calgary, Lethbridge, Regina, and Winnipeg. Each of these became crucibles for new approaches to the field. The **civil rights movement** in the United States, protests against the war in Southeast Asia, the rise of **second-wave feminism**, and the appearance of what became known as the **New Left** influenced campuses across North America and beyond. While the **Quiet Revolution** was underway in Quebec, English Canada was undergoing significant intellectual and cultural challenges as well.[1] In the field of history all this played out in challenges to the National History School and took the form of the **new social history**. A rising generation of historians turned their back on themes like nation building, railways, and political biography, and produced scores of books on the history of labour, women, immigrant experiences, and Indigenous peoples. New thematically oriented scholarly journals appeared, such as *Labour/Le Travail*, *Urban History Review,* and *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, and these were joined by regional historical journals like *Acadiensis* and *BC Studies.*

## History wars

The old order of historians didn't stay quiet about these changes. As the politics of identity gained ground, some scholars began to systematically criticize the fracturing of the historical vision of the country's past. Fragmentation of the story into smaller identities, they argued, didn't enhance opportunities to learn a broader range of histories, it undermined the ability of Canadians to learn a common, core story about themselves. By the 1990s the so-called history wars were fully underway. A leading figure in that conflict was Jack Granatstein (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Granatstein), a graduate of the Royal Military College of Canada and a distinguished historian based at Toronto's York University. Foreign affairs historians like Granatstein were particularly disturbed by the rise of histories of sexualities, women's experiences, counter-nationalisms, First Nations, and many others — all of which appeared to undermine the possibility of a shared national past. Granatstein sniffed at social history as so much "housemaid's knee in Belleville"; needless to say, social historians and feminists were outraged. The CBC television series *The Valour and the Horror* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valour_and_the_Horror) (1992), about three significant battles in World War II, became a lightening rod for this debate, one that even found its way onto the floor of the Senate. Six years later Granatstein would publish *Who Killed Canadian History?*, a polemical attack on the "fragmenters" within the academy. The provocative title of his book tells you a lot about how desperate the defenders of conventional approaches had become. What that cohort longed for was a singular story of "our great nation," one that everyone — more or less — could agree to, one that new immigrants to Canada could learn as part of the fitting-in process.

Indeed, the multitude of voices that were being heard and broadcast in the 1990s on the subject of Canadians' past was cacophonous. Early in this century, however, a growing trend toward **interdisciplinary studies** marked the beginning of the process of synthesis. Ruth Sandwell (http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ctl/Faculty_Staff/Faculty_Profiles/738/Ruth_Sandwell.html), a historian of education at the University of Toronto, has addressed the tensions between fragmentation and synthesis in the classroom. She has observed that "history education in the schools has moved away from a much narrower vision of citizenship education as explicitly patriotic narrative." This opens up opportunities for historians to use their specialized knowledge — even in the narrowest of subfields —

1. On intellectual and cultural changes in English Canada in these years, see José Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English-Canada, 1945–71* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

to contribute to undergraduate knowledge and social good by focusing on "a disciplinary understanding of what history *is* and what it *does*."[2] Rather than build "citizenship" around a history of prime ministers and wars, the key is to "convey the kinds of historical understanding that scholars are suggesting 'the people' need in a pluralist democracy." University of Western Ontario history professor Alan MacEachern (http://history.uwo.ca/People/Faculty/maceachern.html) takes this a step further, In his article, "A Polyphony of Synthesizers: Why Every Historian of Canada Should Write a History of Canada" (http://activehistory.ca/papers/a-polyphony-of-synthesizers-why-every-historian-of-canada-should-write-a-history-of-canada/), he challenges historians to attempt synthesis to develop a national history — even if it comes from a fairly small fragment of the larger field. One of the most difficult specialties that nevertheless holds out much promise for a new perspective on the story of Canada would be a very broad history of childhood.[3]

**Historians on Video**

When historical research in Canada was contained to a dozen or so universities, it was a small — exclusively white and almost entirely male — club. Things changed dramatically in the 1960s, as Eric Sager (University of Victoria) recounts. Here is a link to a transcript for How has the field of Canadian history developed? [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_ES_u1_02.pdf).

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=49#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

Nothing, of course, stands still for long. The innovators of the 1960s and 1970s have themselves been eclipsed by new approaches. The most advanced and promising of these deal with **environmental history**. There is possibly no avenue of historical enquiry that is quite so interdisciplinary. Environmental history was once mainly about animals and nature; now it is more concerned with what we *think of* as nature and how that notion has changed historically. Where it was once informed heavily by geography, lately it has become more influenced by philosophy. One understanding of environmental history is provided by Jan Oosthoek, formerly a professor at Scotland's University of Stirling in What is Environmental History? [YouTube] (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkFdDPBbn20).

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=49#oembed-2 (#oembed-2)*

2. R.W. Sandwell, "Synthesis and Fragmentation: the Case of Historians as Undergraduate Teachers," *Active History.* Accessed January 4, 2015, http://activehistory.ca/papers/rsandwell/.

3. The work of Neil Sutherland on English-Canadian childhood is outstanding as is Robert McIntosh's, but a national synthesis is still needed.

Key Takeaways

Every generation writes its own history, in part, because:

- Perspectives change.
- Sources for historical analysis change.
- Methodological approaches evolve.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 1.13 long description:** A wooden fishing weir stretches across a large stream. Sticks are tied close together, standing in the river to make a barrier, and are attached to a long log, which spans the width of the stream to trap fish. [Return to Figure 1.13] (#attachment_513)

### Video Attributions

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## 1.5 Summary

> The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.
>
> —L. P. Hartley (1895–1972)

Writing history does not take place in a vacuum, nor is it a straightforward process. There are issues associated with cause and effect that have not been considered here: questions regarding what actually *can* be known, the extent to which one may draw lessons from the past, and so on. Two things may be said for certain by way of advice to an undergraduate beginning the study of Canadian history:

1. Just because a community or nation is small or young doesn't meant that its history is unimportant. This statement isn't made as a special plea in the face of grand national histories written by British or American scholars. Those great sweeping, heroic accounts are essentially a licence to engage in more sweeping and not-so-heroic escapades. Our story is not that of our leaders; our story is ours, and it matters. One may learn a great deal from a careful study of an 18th-century Newfoundland outport, a textile mill in Victorian Ontario, or a single tenement building in 1860s Montreal. Likewise, the experience of the Plains Cree over 200 years of commercial interaction with Europe reveals a great deal about adaptability and human agency.
2. Good history requires heavy lifting. Historians commit years of their lives to research in archives and libraries trying to produce something worth reading. None, however, would absolve you of your responsibility to read their studies closely, critically, and analytically. Is the evidence convincing? Do the right witnesses make it to the stand? Are the right questions being asked? You have our permission and you have a responsibility to read the material as if it matters.

Canadian history isn't one story; it is many. This chapter has reviewed some of the basics of studying history with the hope that it will open you to the possibility of different understandings of the past. What the British writer L. P. Hartley had to say about history is true and valuable. When you travel to other countries you try not to judge or to impose your frame of reference too rigidly on people who do things differently and for reasons you might not easily perceive. In that spirit, welcome to a history that you may claim as your own regardless of how exotic it may appear to be.

Key Terms

**archives**: Collections of original documents, including print-based objects like personal letters, official reports, journals, newspapers, maps, government papers, and so on. Archival collections may also include photographs, music (in a variety of forms), and textiles. Technically, your own collection of original materials

is an archive but, for the purposes of history courses, archives are official repositories that may or may not be open to the public.

**baby boom generation**: Individuals born in the post-Depression era of c. 1939 to 1964.

**civil rights movement**: In the United States, a movement principally in support of improved legal and civil rights for Black Americans. The movement is regarded as running from 1954 to 1968. It produced other movements associated with demands for rights for other groups that have historically faced prejudice and systemic marginalization.

**collectivity**: A group of people who identify as part of a social body that may or may not correspond to a political unit. For example, First Nations peoples may identify collectively as First Nations, as opposed to (or perhaps in addition to) their identity as Cree or Mi'kmaq. French Canadian identity very often exists independent of (and sometimes in contrast to) a larger bicultural Canadian identity.

**demographic historians**: A historian of population trends and mechanisms.

**environmental history**: The history of human interaction with natural and human-made settings. The environment may be a pristine one or an urban context. In some cases it is a study of how human activity impacts the environment (and vice versa); in others it studies the *idea* of the environment and how that concept changes over time.

**environmentalism**: A philosophical interpretation of human interactions with the environment. May also refer to an activist movement and critique regarding the negative impacts of those interactions.

**ethnohistory**: A branch of academic studies that bridges anthropological and historical approaches. Ethnohistory is principally concerned with non-European societies.

**feminism**: An analysis of power relations that posits the existence of systemic barriers to equality between humans based on gender identity. Feminism calls for a program of political and social action aimed at improving the conditions of women.

**historiography**: Historical writing and the study of historical writing.

**ideology**: A system of ideas and values that guides one's understanding of society and the economy and may also drive political and personal agendas.

**imperialism**: A philosophical position that encourages the extension of one nation or empire's power over other, subject peoples. May take the form of colonization, military conquest, or a campaign of propaganda and ideas.

**interdisciplinary studies**: Academic approaches that combine traditionally separate disciplines, such as biology and history.

**Marxism**: An ideology and mode of analysis associated with the 19th-century German philosopher Karl Marx. This body of theory argues that political and social relations in the past and present are determined principally by economic structures. As an ideology, it argues for changes to productive relations that will result in greater equity and the end of social class barriers.

**multiculturalism**: Both the phenomenon of the relatively equitable co-existence within a community of people from distinct cultural traditions and a policy of embracing diversity. There were, therefore, multicultural communities in pre-Confederation Canada, but multiculturalism only became widely supported in the post–World War II era.

**National School**: Sometimes called Nationalist History or National History School. Refers to accounts of the past that emphasize the growth and evolution of the nation-state as the proper focus of historical studies, as opposed to social or economic relations.

**New Left**: A political movement in the 1960s and 1970s that opposed U.S. participation in the Vietnam War and supported the civil rights movement. Influential on university campuses at mid-century, the New Left had an impact on historical and other academic studies.

**new social history**: A school of historical studies that drew attention to race, gender, and social class as defining features of historical experience. The new social history developed a view of past societies from the "bottom up."

**oral history**: A verbal account of events in the past. This could be an account provided by a contemporary of the events described or one that is part of an oral tradition, which suggests a multi-generational account that is preserved carefully in the retelling. Oral histories are particularly important in the study of non-literate societies.

**presentist fallacy**: The belief that the events of the past are directly responsible for conditions in the present. Presentism often ignores intervening events. It also tends to thank the past for positives (such as current freedoms) while it seldom holds the past accountable for liabilities (such as a lacklustre economy and continuing struggles over equality).

**primary sources**: Original historical resources, such as diaries, letters, and government inquiries.

**quantitative historical technique**: Historical methods that use statistical sources rather than (or in addition to) qualitative sources like diaries and personal letters. Tax ledgers, census manuscripts, land surveys, and many kinds of church records provide enough information for us to work toward aggregate knowledge of people in the past.

**Quiet Revolution**: A political and social phenomenon in post–World War II Quebec that saw the power of the clergy and conservative elements eclipsed by a liberal-nationalist movement.

**revisionist**: A historian who re-evaluates history and revises it based on new understandings. As a critical term, "revisionist" is sometimes used to describe historians who change histories for political purposes.

**second-wave feminism**: Associated principally with the 1960s and 1970s, second-wave feminism focused on systemic discrimination in domestic and public environments, calling for equality for women in pay and treatment in the workplace, an end to sexism, and legislation to protect women's reproductive rights.

**secondary sources**: Documents that examine primary documents and provide an interpretation. Historical studies of past events are, by definition, secondary sources.

## Short Answer Exercises

1. Where do you encounter historical messages? Stretch out your antennae for one day and make a list of every time history is invoked or you are instructed on some aspect of the past.
2. Whether in a classroom or otherwise, how many times during the day do you encounter this thing called "history"? How is history being used in those encounters? Is it to confirm something you already knew or believed? Is it being used to change your mind about something?
3. Historical research involves a careful assessment of sources. What criteria are the historian's standbys?
4. Many factors ensure that the historical record will be revisited on a regular basis. Name a few of them.

## Suggested Readings

1. Gordon, Alan. “The Many Meanings of Jacques Cartier.” In *The Hero and the Historians: Historiography and the Uses of Jacques Cartier.* Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010.
2. Greer, Allan. “National, Transnational, and Hypernational Historiographies: New France Meets Early American History.” *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 4 (December 2010): 695–724.
3. Kealey, Greg S. “Harper and Non-History.” *Labour/Le Travail* (May 2014): 213–215.
4. McKillop, A. B. “Who Killed Canadian History? A View from the Trenches.” *Canadian Historical Review* 99, no. 2 (June 1999): 269–300.

### Text Attributions

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# Chapter 2. Indigenous Canada before Contact

# 2.1 Introduction

When does the history of Canada begin? If we think of Canada as a political entity, then we will offer up one kind of answer (although, in all likelihood, we won't agree at the outset on the answer). If we think of Canada as a space roughly defined by our current borders and as a stage on which humans perform, then the answer is necessarily going to take us as deeply into the past as we can go.

Having taken on the question of *how do we know what it is we think we know?* in Chapter 1, this chapter tackles the challenge of pushing back the frontier of history. Generations of students learned that the moment of **contact** between Europeans and Indigenous peoples in the "Americas" marks the end of pre-history in this hemisphere and the beginning of the historical period. But that perspective has changed.

Learning Objectives

- Explain the various interpretations, scientific and religious, of the origins of Indigenous peoples in the New World.
- Describe the political, cultural, and social differences between the major eras of the pre-contact peoples of Canada.
- Describe the political, cultural, and social differences between the groups of the major regions of Canada.
- Identify the great empires and confederacies of the pre-contact Americas.
- Locate the many different peoples of what is now Canada and its borderlands.
- Describe the different language groups, the different economic orders of the northlands, and their interconnectedness.
- Argue critically against notions of "pan-Indianism" and speak to the advantages enjoyed by Indigenous societies in the absence of European contact.

## 2.2 History without Archives

The idea that the Americas have no history before the arrival of Europeans derives mainly from the apparent absence of a written record. European, Middle Eastern, and Asian civilizations evolved highly bureaucratic and centralized administrative functions based on the ability to write things down. The influential Canadian economic historian, Harold Innis (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Innis), described the impact of writing on the building of empires in his 1951 book, *The Bias of Communication.* He argued that there are two kinds of communications: time-biased and space-biased.

- Time-biased media seek to transcend time. They are heavy and durable, such as clay and stone. They have a long lifespan but they do not encourage the extension of empires. Think here of ancient Egypt or Sumeria as examples. Innis associated these media with the customary, the sacred, and the moral: they're heavy on gods and proclamations, light on detailed instructions. Time-biased media facilitate the development of social and economic hierarchies. They also favour the growth of religion and the hegemony that religion imposes on secondary institutions, such as education. For Innis, speech is also a time-biased medium. Speech, in the form of oral culture, can be passed down from generation to generation, yet does not encourage territorial expansion. Oral culture is concerned with preserving values and traditional knowledge. Oral cultures emphasize their past and create a collective society rich in tradition, ceremony, and custom.
- Space-biased media, conversely, seek to obliterate physical boundaries. They are light and transportable and can be transmitted over distances. They are associated with secular and territorial societies and facilitate the expansion of empire over land and sea. Paper (and papyrus) is an example of space-biased media: it is readily transported, but has a relatively short lifespan since it degrades and can be easily destroyed or lost. Writing, closely linked with paper, is also an example of a space-biased media. Writing emphasizes the present and the future, and is not localized like oral culture. Writing is grounded in technical knowledge and facilitates the growth of states, political authorities, and decentralized institutions.[1]

Many societies — perhaps most or even all — combine elements of both kinds of media, but they also privilege one over the other. Europeans in the 1400s had space-biased media at their disposal, in the form of writing. This gave them the power to pass instructions across long supply lines that wrapped their way around Africa and across the Atlantic. It gave their delegates the ability to devise documents that assigned "ownership" to lands they'd just encountered. And it was the very embodiment of their belief system, bound up in the form of the *Holy Bible*.

Indigenous peoples in this hemisphere had time-biased media, which put them at a disadvantage in many ways (which we'll explore in Chapter 3). But the important point is that they *did* have media; they had a written record, which the Europeans chose to ignore or attempt to destroy where it challenged their own media. Oral tradition was, as well, disregarded and disrespected by Europeans and, from the 19th century

1. The Libraries and Archives of Canada, *Old Messengers, New Media: The Legacy of Innis and McLuhan*. Accessed January 5, 2015, http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/innis-mcluhan/030003-1030-e.html.

on, attacked in schools and in the courts. Consequently, it is a generally, and wrongly, held belief that the Americas (as we've come to call them) had no historic record. In truth, writing, media, and historic accounts were widespread.

## The Archive of Place

One of the barriers to appreciating the depth of history in what is now Canada is our commitment to the notion of the country being "new" in the so-called New World. In fact, human occupation of the northern half of this continent began at least 14,000 years ago and probably much earlier. That is a long time indeed — long enough for any group of people to establish a profound relationship with their location, with their place. This is no less true of the indigenous peoples of Canada than it is of the peoples of the Steppe, the Gobi, the Orkneys, or Melanesia. Places themselves are a record of memory, most of which is accessible only to those who know how to read it.

In his study of British Columbia's Chilcotin Plateau, *The Archive of Place*, William J. Turkel describes the complex of **grease trails** of the region. This was the extensive system of footpaths carved out of very challenging terrain in order to facilitate communication and commerce between the west coast and the interior plateau. They were called grease trails (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grease_trail) because of the trade in **oolichan** grease (a fish oil) that was ported on the backs of hundreds of freight-bearers over hundreds of kilometres. Turkel writes,

> For the people of Ulkatcho, as for their Aboriginal neighbours throughout the Chilcotin, memory is everywhere anchored in the landscape, along the grease trails and rivers, of course, but also in the meadows and forests between. For them, there is not a single trail that connects the Fraser [River] with the [Pacific] coast or that unites provinces east and west; rather, there is a dense, lived mesh of trails and a cyclicity and seasonality of travel.[2]

Each trail, with its multitude of markers, rock cairns, and boundaries signifies to its reader a history of commerce, conflict, stability, and change. In societies with a strong oral tradition, these are stimulants to memory. They act just as a series of volumes on a shelf might.

Across Canada, there are many places similarly invested with meaning and symbols, in many forms. Lobsticks, for example, show up across the country:

> Aboriginal inhabitants of the boreal forest would shape a tall and conspicuous white spruce or pine tree by "lopping" most of its branches off. Branches that strategically pointed in the right direction would remain. The top would bush out in a tuft, making it easy to spot. Nearby trees were cut and hauled away, leaving the lobstick in rather lonely splendour. Lobsticks were used in many ways, both practical and symbolic. They were often signposts, chosen and designed to mark trails, portages, and pathways through the boreal forest, berry patches or hunting grounds.[3]

2. William J. Turkel, *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007 ), 109.

3. Merle Massie, "Lobstick: Canada's next symbol?" *ActiveHistory.com*, http://activehistory.ca/2012/10/lobstick-canadas-next-symbol/.



*Figure 2.1 Petroglyphs found near Peterborough, Ontario.*



*Figure 2.2 Petroglyphs near Bella Coola, in Nuxalk territory, British Columbia.*

Rock paintings (**pictographs**) and rock carvings (**petroglyphs**) are other visible records of storytelling and meaning, and a reminder of the long-term human occupation of Canada. These traces of memory are found in many parts of the country. Less durable examples of record keeping include the **winter counts** maintained on animal hides and other surfaces by several plains nations, especially the Lakota, one of the Sioux nations. Totemic illustrations — on poles, house faces, tipis — often announce clans and lineages, implicitly another record of past events.

## The Written Record

Written records — of a kind that compares more completely with those of Asia, Europe, and Africa — abounded in **Mesoamerica**. The indigenous Mayan civilizations in particular advanced writing to a point where it included glyphs (symbols for things or people) and syllabics (symbols that represent a sound or, indeed, an entire word). The work of the Mayans rested on the foundations established by still earlier civilizations in the region (see Mesoamerican writing systems (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesoamerican_writing_systems)). Their neighbours and successors, the **Aztecs**, had their own similar written form of communication.

Scrolls written by Aztec authors and scribes from the period both before and after the arrival of Europeans are known as **codexes**, or codices. Mayan codexes also exist, although many from both nations were destroyed by Spanish invaders who regarded these remarkable forms of writing as highly suspect, because they believed "the word of God" was written only in Latin, not Nahuatl, let alone hieroglyphics.



*Figure 2.3 Maya glyphs in stucco at the Museo de sitio in Palenque, Mexico.*



*Figure 2.4 An example of Yucatec Maya writing, c. 11th or 12th century CE from Chichen Itza, preserved in the Dresden Codex.*

The nearest equivalent or comparable script known in Canada are the birchbark scrolls prepared by members of the Anishinaabeg nation. Some scrolls found in a cave near Burntside Lake in Quetico Provincial Park, Ontario, near the Minnesota border, have been carbon-dated to the mid-16th century. It is likely that they first appeared in the **proto-contact** period if not the **pre-contact** period. The scrolls vary in size and shape: most are about 30 centimetres wide and up to 1 metre long. Some show signs of binding and indexing. Images and symbols are drawn on the soft inner surface of the bark and sometimes darkened in black, red, or blue. The subject matter ranges from the banal to the sublime, from simple instructions and maps to spiritual tales and lessons. A secret or at least semi-secret medicine society called Midewiwin was responsible for preserving and reproducing scrolls as they became more fragile or

at risk from missionaries and colonial administrators. For that reason, these documents are often called "Midewiwin scrolls."

## The Oral Record

As Innis observed, societies that write on stone but not on paper are more likely to be time-biased. One of the qualities of such cultures is that they are well suited for a strong oral tradition. Certainly these societies move around, but overwhelmingly they move within cycles and retain a deep attachment to a particular locale. They gather annually, in some cases to exchange goods, seek marriage partners, determine group responses to threats or opportunities, and indulge in oratory. Without exception, European observers in the earliest days of contact (and, in some areas, much later as well) commented on the oratorical skills of Indigenous speakers. Whether in the longhouses of the Haudenosaunee (Five Nations Iroquois) or the seaside camps of the Mi'kmaq, Europeans witnessed the fruit of a long tradition of storytelling that paid close attention to the core elements of a tale, preserving its integrity while allowing for personal style. To be able to tell a familiar tale well and with panache was highly valued among Indigenous societies. This included "true" stories of history.

Some 50 years ago, when Bruce Trigger was preparing his landmark two-volume history of the Huron/Wendat, *The Children of Aataentsic*, he demonstrated the value of what came to be known as "ethnohistory."[4] This included extensive and critical use of the **oral tradition** which, of course, meant working very closely and respectfully with Indigenous peoples, especially elders. Many years later, Wendy Wickwire demonstrated how the oral tradition — whether living or transcribed years ago — passed the historians' tests of reliability and verifiability. Comparing the oral record of the Nlaka'pamux with fur trader and explorer Simon Fraser's written account of contact in 1808, she found both remarkable similarities and revealing differences.[5] After 1492 and for the next 500 years "Old World" epidemic diseases raced back and forth across the Americas, leading to demographic disasters, which in some communities, ruptured and even broke the chain of the oral tradition. This was the worst-case scenario but fortunately, many pre-contact accounts continue to be nurtured.

**Audio 2.1**

This sound clip is of Indigenous voices retrieved from the late 19th century, specifically, the Nlaka'pamux Dance Song (recorded by Franz Boas).

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=57#audio-57-1 (https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=57#audio-57-1)*

4. Bruce Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1987).

5. Wendy C. Wickwire, "To See Ourselves as the Other's Other: Nlaka'pamux Contact Narratives," *Canadian Historical Review* 75, issue 1 (1994): 1–20.

Perhaps still more remarkable has been the survival in the oral tradition of accounts of **megafauna**, including a giant beaver that non-Indigenous people understood to be a mythical creature. We now know the stories about gargantuan beavers are true: their skeletal remains have been found throughout Canada, some of them measuring 2.5 metres in length and indicating a body weight of as much as 100 kilograms. These massive rodents became extinct about 10,000 years ago, and yet recollections of their existence appear to have been passed down orally across thousands of generations. The lesson of this scrupulous research seems clear: if you want to know something about the history of Indigenous peoples you might try listening to Indigenous historians. A further lesson for Canada as a whole would be to value storytellers more highly.

**Historians on Video**

Wendy Wickwire is an anthropologist and historian at the University of Victoria whose research into the vitality, viability, and reliability of the oral tradition has been the foundation of important changes in both scholarly and legal attitudes toward Indigenous historic knowledge. Here is a link to a transcript for Wendy Wickwire's introductory video and her video on oral history [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_ww_u1_01.pdf).



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=57#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=57#oembed-2 (#oembed-2)*

## The Archaeological Record

A further method of reaching into the pre-contact past is by digging it up — literally. Archaeology, as both a science and a school of thought, has evolved a great deal since its emergence in the 18th century. Since that time, it has become increasingly systematic, thorough, and technical. What is called the **archaeological record** contributes a great deal to current understandings of human experience in what is now Canada and elsewhere in the Americas.

Keep in mind that archaeology originally developed as a technique for studying earlier and long-gone Mediterranean societies like those of classical Rome, Greece, Egypt, and the lands stretching east from Syria through the Euphrates Valley. Its application, too, to sites in Britain and France (e.g., Stonehenge and the Ardèche caves) did not involve any local, living populations. In Europe, the archaeological study of more recent societies is usually described as historical archaeology. The modifier "historical" is, revealingly, not consistently used in North America when it comes to the study of Indigenous peoples. In the late-19th century, however, much ethnographic work was described as "salvage ethnography," in that it was presented by its Euro-Canadian practitioners as an effort to "save" evidence of an extinct people, despite the fact that those people were living just down the road. An archaeological dig on Sto:lo or Innu

territory occurs in close proximity to people whose lives are, in point of fact, continuations of the stories being excavated.

As Trigger has pointedly observed, the "ethnohistorian normally depends upon documentary evidence that was produced not by the people" who are being studied, "but by representatives of a radically different culture." This is important to keep in mind when assessing the archaeological evidence. It is isn't just that an authentic Indigenous record presents special challenges — because an authentic historic record of any kind does — but that the "view from here" is impeded by sources and perspectives offered up by contemporaries and scholars whose perspectives may be entirely different from and at odds with that of indigenous people. In short, archaeology is a filter, not a crystal-clear lens; interpretation and analysis is a necessary part of the science.

Key Takeaways

- The dearth of a written record does not mean there is no record at all.
- Oral traditions and histories are as reliable as written primary sources. They are subject to the same tests of verifiability and reliability.
- The archaeological record can complement the historical record and advance historical theories.

### Audio and Video Attributions

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# 2.3 The Indigenous Americas

The telling of Indigenous history in Canada often begins with a discussion of human migration routes into the Americas, which reflects the long-standing misperception that was held by Europeans that Indigenous societies were primitive, usually migratory, and unlikely to have been in the Americas for very long before the 15th century. This misperception, of course, served European empires in the Americas very well because it justified the dispossession of native peoples from their lands.

Twentieth-century historians and archaeologists worked hard to remedy this situation and to magnify the many Indigenous voices that said, in chorus, that they had been here "since time immemorial."

## Occupying the Americas

Human occupation of the Americas is itself a complicated tale. However, there is general agreement among scholars that modern hominids were hereabouts some 12,000 to 14,000 years Before the Present (BP).

**Dating Systems**

There are several dating systems and conventions used by historians. The one most widely used in Europe and the Western Hemisphere is based on the Christian dating system of marking years based on the year of Christ's birth: BC, meaning "before Christ" and AD**,** meaning *anno domini*, or "in the year of our Lord."

Another is **Before the Present (BP)**, which arose from the use of radiocarbon dating and uses January 1, 1950, as its baseline. Therefore, 10,000 years BP equals 10,000 years before New Year's Day, 1950.

Recently the **Common Era (CE)** and **Before the Common Era (BCE)** have become more widely used. These two terms align exactly with the Christian system, dividing time approximately 2000 years ago.

Some Christians object to the BCE/CE system as an attempt to secularize the use of BC and AD; some non-Christians retort that BCE/CE is just the Western and Christian system in disguise, imposing itself on other cultures for further generations. This debate makes it clear that dating is neither scientific nor especially logical — it is cultural.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the most precise calendrical system in the Western Hemisphere originated with the Zapotec and Olmec societies and was subsequently refined by the Mayan culture. It consists in part of a long count that begins on August 11, 3114 BCE.

For convenience, BP is used in this text when referring to events occurring more than 4000 years ago; it is most commonly used by archaeologists in conjunction with radiocarbon dating — a means of

determining the age of organic materials by measuring the amount of radioactive decay of carbon-14 in the material. Otherwise, BCE and CE are used as they are most likely to correlate with what you will read elsewhere.

Scientists and archaeologists hold several theories regarding the origins of Indigenous peoples in the Americas. By far the oldest and most widely accepted of these theories is the **Bering land bridge** migration model. This theory posits that during the last ice age (approximately 50,000 to 10,000 BP), humans were able to migrate from Siberia to Alaska over land. Evidence suggests strongly that for as many as 100,000 years, sea levels were much lower than they currently are and the Bering Strait — the body of water that separates Siberia from Alaska — was an open plain of land and glaciers (which scholars call Beringia). During a period of several millennia, about 10,000 to 14,000 BP, as many as four distinct migrations are thought to have occurred over the land bridge. People migrated from Siberia, Eurasia, and coastal Asia, following the megafauna of the Pleistocene (to about 12,000 to 11,000 BP).

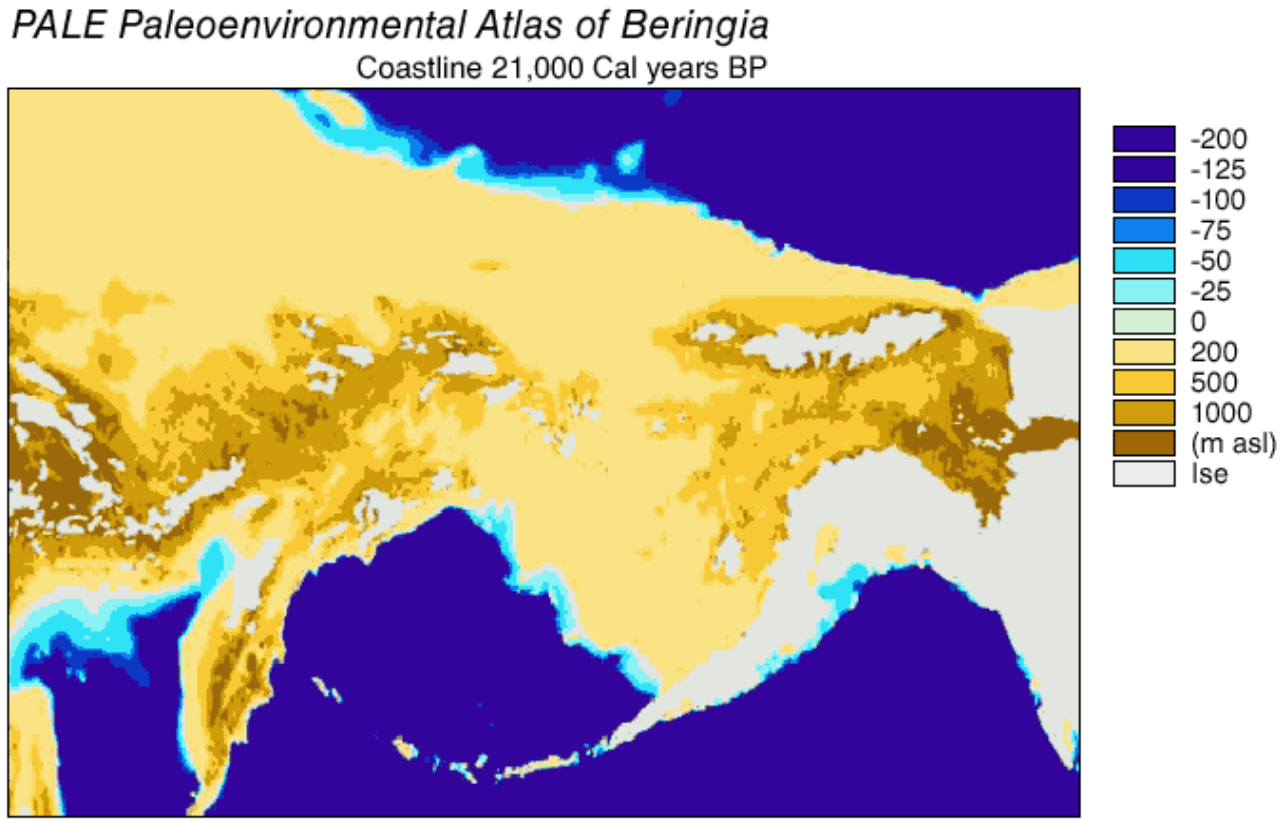


*Figure 2.5 The separation of Siberia from Alaska about 10,000 years ago can be seen in this short GIF from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.*

The greatest supporting evidence of the Bering land bridge theory is the extensive homogeneity of the North American **Clovis** culture, so named for the archaeological site in New Mexico where it was first identified. The Clovis people were long considered to be the first to inhabit the Americas.

Archaeologists theorize that the Clovis came over the land bridge and down a glacier pass to the east of the Rocky Mountains sometime between 12,000 and 11,000 BCE, eventually spreading through much of North America and into South America. Everywhere they went, Clovis people littered their camps and settlements with stone tools and weapons that bear some trademark features and suggest close cultural links.

A second theory focuses on Pacific sea travel. The **coastal migration theory** suggests that some people arrived in the Americas by following the coast of Asia and Beringia, down the western shore of North America, all the way to South America. The coastal migration theory is bolstered by the fact that the rich marine environment would have supported maritime people well. Travel by boat would also be much faster and easier than the route overland, thus allowing people to spread throughout the Americas much more quickly. The most compelling evidence supporting this model comes from archaeological sites in South America that predate the North American Clovis sites. Sites like Monte Verde in Chile date to 14,800 to 12,500 BCE; Taima-Taima in western Venezuela dates to 13,000 BCE. These two sites contradict the notion of "Clovis first." However, there are far fewer archaeological sites that support the coastal migration theory compared to the Clovis sites; there may be more but, due to rising sea levels in the intervening millennia, the coastline of the Pleistocene era now lies under the Pacific Ocean. Barring breakthroughs in submarine archaeology, further evidence of earlier coastal migration at the source is lost to us.

Although the two theories might seem to be at odds with each other, most historians and archaeologists now accept that both are probably correct, and that human migration to the Americas occurred over a very long span of time, over land and by sea. It is, however, important to note that conclusive evidence in support of either theory continues to elude us; these are still **hypotheses** only.

What is almost certain is that — however they got here — the original human inhabitants of the Americas came from Asia. Genetic evidence strongly supports this: mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) and DNA haplogroups show evidence of multiple migrations from Asia, starting at about 30,000 BP.[1] There are two important points to note in this regard:

1. There is currently no conclusive archaeological proof of human existence in the Americas before about 20,000 years ago, but the DNA evidence points to a considerably earlier period of settlement.
2. There is no genetic indication of migration from Europe or Africa, so the suggestion (which has been around since the late 15th century) that the Indigenous peoples must have some roots on the other side of the Atlantic is utterly unproven. This point is important because for hundreds of years after the arrival of Europeans, efforts were made to explain the presence of Indigenous people as the "Lost Tribes of Israel," wayward Welshmen, or some other European offshoot. DNA studies have exploded this thesis: not one study has shown conclusive proof of European genetic markers among the Native American population before 1492.

1. Jason A. Eshleman, Ripan S. Malhi, and David Glenn Smith, "Mitochondrial DNA Studies of Native Americans: Conceptions and Misconceptions of the Population Prehistory of the Americas," *Evolutionary Anthropology* 12 (2003): 7–18.

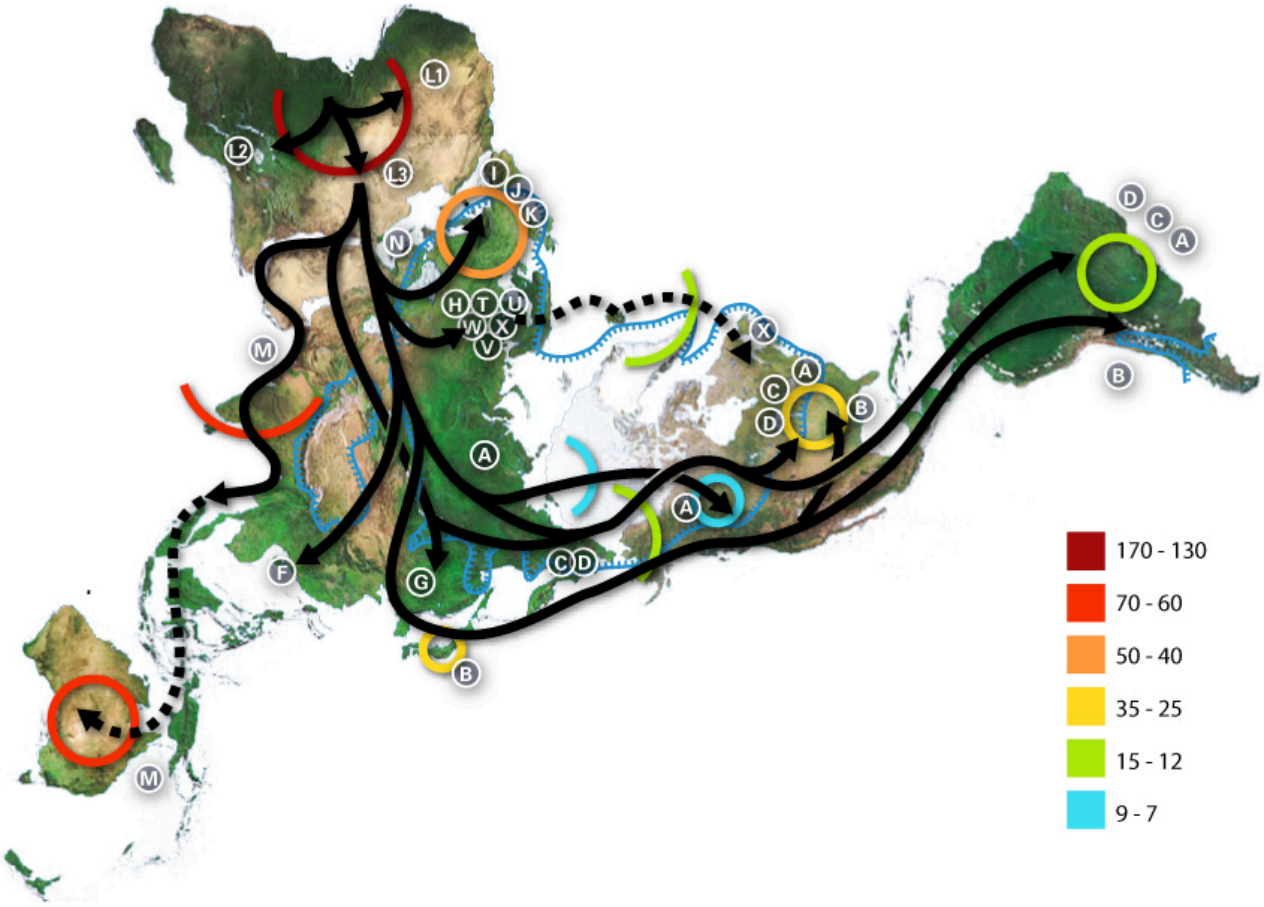


*Figure 2.6 World map of human migrations based on studies of mitochondrial (matrilinear) DNA. Dashed lines are hypothetical migrations. Numbers in the key represent thousands of years Before the Present (BP). The blue ridged line represents area covered in ice or tundra during the last great ice age. The letters are the mitochondrial DNA haplogroups (pure motherly lineages); haplogroups can be used to define genetic populations and are often geographically oriented. [Long Description] (#fig2.6)*

Indigenous people throughout the Western Hemisphere talk of their origins in oral histories, stories, and myths that link them intimately to the places they inhabit. The land, the stories commonly assert, was made for "the people," and they were made to inhabit the land. Every group has an origin story, and they vary widely while having elements of consistency. Sometimes, groups have multiple origin stories that tell differing versions of creation and the founding of the group. Origin stories often begin with a "First Person" (or First Peoples), a mythical man or woman who founded the group. These First People often are created from, or emerge from, the natural world itself. For example, the first Iroquois and Wendat/Huron fell from the sky. An elderly couple of great virtue survive various trials to give birth to the peoples of the Earth, according to the Mi'kmaq. Animals play important roles in these stories as well. In the creation story of the Haida, Raven arranges things nicely and then releases the first humans from a clamshell; the Cree tell of the Earth mother's offspring/agent Wisakedjak (a shape-changing and benign trickster whose name is widely mispronounced as "Whiskey-Jack") who peoples the world. And there are stories that involve a singular creator, such as the Blackfoot figure Napi, who moulds the world and everything in it from a lump of mud. The oral traditions of the Lenape/Delaware and Iroquoian peoples, along with records from the Anishinaabe Midewiwin scrolls, refer to "Turtle Island," a useful

convergence of origin tales that has acquired broad acceptance among Indigenous peoples since the 1970s.

These origin stories encapsulated and shaped the worldview of each group, establishing their people's purpose in this world as well as their relationship to the spirits and the world around them. In other words, origin stories are key to establishing a group identity and a deep connection with the region the people inhabit. It is also the case that these stories are invoked by Indigenous peoples as sufficient to their needs as regards history. Whether ancient peoples crossed Beringia or paddled in proto-kayaks along the west coast is perhaps interesting but no more proven and demonstrable than an allegory of cultural birth on an island of mud.

## The Paleo-Indian Period

The time between the arrival of humans in the Americas until 10,000 to 9000 BP is known as the **Paleo-Indian** period. During this time, humans spread throughout the Western Hemisphere, supporting themselves with similar subsistence patterns and technologies. Paleo-Indians were nomadic hunter-gatherers. They moved as frequently as once or twice a week, hunting the big game of the **Paleolithic**: the megafauna. These included now-extinct creatures such as the mammoth, mastodon, short-faced bear, enormous versions of the modern-day sloth, the very muscular dire wolf, and upsized editions of moose and beaver.

Paleo-Indian technology included knapped, or chipped, stone tools such as scrapers, knives, and projectile points, such as the Clovis point. These were made from a variety of materials including bone and antler, obsidian, quartz, chert, and flint. Throughout the Paleo-Indian era, the spear was the most common weapon. At first, humans used spears as thrusting weapons, which required very close engagement between the hunter and game, a dangerous prospect when dealing with giant prey and predators. Sometime during the Paleo-Indian era, humans developed new kinds of technology, including a lighter throwing spear and an implement to propel this spear much farther: the atlatl. The atlatl, or spear thrower, was one of the most important items in the late Paleo-Indian tool kit. It was a long, thin piece of wood with a notch at the end. This notch was designed to receive the end of a spear or dart. The atlatl acted as an extension of the throwing arm, enabling the spear thrower to greatly increase the velocity and range of the cast.

Paleo-Indians probably lived in groups that anthropologists call bands, small groups of related individuals, typically no bigger than 100 to 150 people. This setup allowed for a simple leadership structure, probably with one individual at the head of the group. It also allowed for easy mobility, and hunter-gatherers such as Paleo-Indians lived with only transportable and reproducible possessions. One of the greatest problems of living in such a small group, however, was finding a suitable mate. Anthropologists think that regional Paleo-Indian bands came together yearly in the summer months to celebrate religious rituals, pass along news, and exchange young women and men to ensure genetic diversity among their groups.

## The Archaic and Woodland Periods

From 10,000 to 9000 BP, Earth's climate began to warm, and the North American environment changed.

A warming world created opportunities for plants to thrive and diversify; it also created large bodies of water as glaciers and ice caps melted. Over the next 6000 to 7000 years, native cultures developed and diversified during the **Archaic** and the **Woodland periods**, 10,000 to 3000 BP and 1000 BCE to 1000 CE, respectively.

Paleo-Indians adapted to the world around them, learning to rely more on a diet rich in plant materials. For reasons as yet unknown, megafauna began to die out, and Indigenous people had to rely more on bison and other relatively smaller game animals for meat. It was near the start of this period, around 9000 to 7000 BP, that West Coast societies started organizing themselves around salmon fishing. The Nuu-chah-nulth of Vancouver Island, for example, began whaling with advanced long spears.

The **Maritime Archaic** is another expression of North America's Archaic culture of sea-mammal hunters in the subarctic. They prospered from approximately 7000 BCE to 1500 BCE (9000 to 3500 years ago) along the Atlantic coast of North America. Their settlements included **longhouses** and boat-topped temporary or seasonal houses. They engaged in long-distance trade, using as currency white chert, a rock quarried from northern Labrador to Maine.

It was, as well, during the Archaic and Woodland periods that the peoples of the Americas also began to domesticate plants, leading to one of the most important transformations in human history: the development of agriculture. The Archaic **agricultural revolution** got underway in Mesoamerica (the area between Central Mexico and Costa Rica) and in coastal Peru by the Caral-Supe (also called Norte Chico) civilization. In Oaxaca, Mexico, people tended squash vines in order to use the hard fruit as containers. Eventually, more tender forms of squash became a food source. Following the domestication of beans, around 6000 BP, Mesoamerican peoples became more sedentary. Finally, **maize** (or corn) was domesticated sometime around 5500 BP. Over thousands of years, the tiny **teosinte** seed pod, measuring about four centimetres long, was transformed though cultivation into much larger, nutritionally rich ears of corn.

The domestication of maize completed the **Mesoamerican triad**: corn, beans, and squash. The "three sisters" provided an ideal diet. Indigenous agriculturalists all over the hemisphere grew these crops as their principal foods until many years after European contact. This combination of plants proved ideal as they supported one another in growth. The corn grew tall and provided a "pole" for the beans to grow up and around, and the large squash leaves provided shade that retained moisture and inhibited the growth of weeds. As well, beans, which are "nitrogen fixers," returned nitrogen back into the soil that the corn crops stripped out during growth.



*Figure 2.7 Teosinte, the ancestor of corn, is shown on the left. In the middle is a teosinte-maize hybrid. Modern corn is on the right. [Long Description] (#fig2.7)*

It was a diet that served the Mayan civilization exceedingly well. Agricultural societies, where they are successful, witness significant population growth and a degree of urbanization. The farming societies of Mesoamerica produced some of the largest and most elaborate city states in the Americas, comparable to European, African, and Asian civilizations in many respects. Architectural styles were elaborate, city layouts were complex and aesthetically stunning, and artistic and scientific knowledge was peerless, especially in the field of astronomy.

Further, from about 200 to 900 CE the Mayan civilization crested on the strength of an infrastructure of priesthoods that was the underpinning of the whole culture. Although the Mayan Empire declined sharply in the 8th and 9th centuries CE, the Aztec Triple Alliance followed with another, more militarized, iteration of Mesoamerican power from the 1300s to the 1500s. The Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan was, in the late 1400s, one of the largest cities on the planet and possibly the most beautiful, a fact that tells us a great deal about the administrative, creative, technological, and cultural sophistication of these pre-contact civilizations.

Agricultural knowledge and techniques spread from Mesoamerica throughout the temperate parts of the Western Hemisphere in a process called **diffusion**. Although corn and beans probably came from

Mesoamerica, other peoples throughout North America contributed to the body of agricultural knowledge and accomplishment across the continent.

Less successful was the domestication of animals. There weren't a lot of suitable species available for experiments in domesticated rearing, although turkeys and dogs were notable exceptions. Horses, which may have originated in the Americas, disappeared along with the megafauna some 8000 years ago. Mountain goats and bighorn sheep are fiercely recalcitrant creatures and almost impossible to contain, let alone domesticate. There was no equivalent of the African cattle to turn into a placid source of milk, meat, and hides. Most significantly, perhaps, there were no pigs or even boars to pen up and dine on.

The ramifications of having few domestic animals was significant to the history of Indigenous peoples. The absence of large draught animals meant that land had to be cleared and prepared by human energy alone. Soil exhaustion could be postponed to some degree by composting or using fallow field practices, but Indigenous farmers lacked access to the sort of fertilizers that cattle- and chicken-rearing peoples could exploit. Turkeys, which were domesticated, have the advantage of size and ease of capture, but they do not produce as many eggs and thus offspring as prodigiously as chickens. The inability to secure a household source of protein meant that Indigenous people's diets necessarily relied more heavily on wild game and fish than was the case in much of Europe, Asia, and Africa. This resulted in a more nomadic or semi-nomadic life for many societies, and that constraint worked against large-scale and concentrated populations. Even the farming communities were obliged to augment their agrarian economy with wild meat and fish, which is much more time-consuming than slaughtering hogs. Further, the lack of dairy animals precluded women from weaning their infants onto cow, goat, or sheep milk, which meant that infants were breastfed longer, which in turn limited population fertility. Finally, the absence of domesticated animals meant that Indigenous peoples were not exposed to cross-species infections and epidemics. For 10,000 years or so, this proved to be beneficial, but after 1492, it was disastrous, the reasons for which are explored in Chapter 5.

Key Takeaways

- Two theories currently explain the arrival of humans in the Americas: the Bering Strait land bridge theory and the coastal migration theory.
- The timing of early human occupation of the Americas is uncertain and archaeological evidence keeps pushing back the arrival dates.
- Indigenous peoples' traditions point to occupation of "Turtle Island" since time immemorial.
- Agricultural societies appeared about 6000 BP and complex communities arose throughout Mesoamerica, spreading into the interior of North America.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 2.6 long description:** A map of the world before the continents separated, featuring the the North Pole at the centre. The map shows the paths of human migrations over time based on studies of mitochondrial (matrilinear) DNA. The continents in the eastern hemisphere (Africa, Europe, Asia, and

Australia) appear as if rotated about 90 degrees clockwise. The continents in the western hemisphere (North America and South America) appear as if rotated about 90 degrees counterclockwise. The northern part of North America faces the northern part of Europe: about midway down the map, Alaska and the eastern tip of Russia are almost touching.

There are multiple migration paths, all starting in Africa and branching off to different regions of the world. The first migrations started from mid-Africa around the equator between 170,000 and 130,000 BP. From Africa, the following migration paths break off to end up in the following places:

- Australia: The path goes from east Africa along the southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, then along the coast of southern Asia, and hypothetically may have continued through the islands of Indonesia to end in Australia between 70,000 and 60,000 BP.
- Western Europe: The path goes from east Africa, up through the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula, around the eastern shore of the Black Sea, and curves west toward France between 50,000 and 40,000 BP.
- Eastern Europe: The path goes from east Africa, up through the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula, along the western shore of the Caspian Sea, north to Scandinavia, and then hypothetically across the ice and tundra between 15,000 and 12,000 BP to Greenland and Iceland, and then to Quebec.
- Southeast Asia: The path goes from east Africa across the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula, curving southeast across tundra and ice in China to its southeastern coast, to approximately where modern Hong Kong is.
- East Asia: The path goes from east Africa across the middle of the Arabian Peninsula, through Iran and Afghanistan, across the ice and tundra of China, to the land in northern China that is opposite Japan.
- Northern South America: The path to goes from east Africa across the Arabian Peninsula, through Russia, across Beringia to Alaska, through the Northwest Territories and then the American Midwest, through Mexico, and across the Gulf of Mexico to Brazil, between 15,000 and 12,000 BP. An offshoot of this path heads to the southeastern United States between 35,000 and 25,000 BP.
- Southern South America: The path goes from east Africa, across the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula, through central Asia, swooping down through China and across the Korean Peninsula and Japan between 35,000 and 25,000 BP. From there, the path goes across the islands off of eastern Russia to Alaska, down the west coast of North America all the way through central America, then down through Colombia and Brazil to approximately Chile, on the west coast of South America, where there used to be ice and tundra. An offshoot of this path heads to the southeastern United States between 35,000 and 25,000 BP.
- Northern North America: The path goes from east Africa across the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula, across the Caspian Sea, curving upward through Russia and across the North Pole to approximately Alberta between 9000 and 7000 BP.

[Return to Figure 2.6] (#attachment_700)

**Figure 2.7 long description:** Teosinte, a teosinte-maize hybrid, and an ear of corn, all lined up beside

each other. Teosinte is small and green with only 12 kernels, looking more like a kind of grass than corn. Teosinte is about one-sixteenth the size of modern corn.

The teosinte-maize has many more kernels, which are brown with a white tip, but it is still only one-eighth of the size of modern corn.

The earn of modern corn is yellow and bursting with kernels neatly arranged in rows.

[Return to Figure 2.7] (#attachment_698)

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# 2.4 The Millennia before Contact



*Figure 2.8 Mound-builder societies produced functional and graceful structures, including the Great Serpent Mound in the Ohio Valley.*

Early in their encounters with Indigenous peoples, European newcomers struggled to conceive of and understand a continent teeming with (what was to them) mysterious peoples with highly unusual ways of doing things. Often the Europeans rejected the possibility that these civilizations could have arisen independently of Europe or Asia. Where the evidence to the contrary was inconvenient to their own worldview, Europeans sometimes simply stopped seeing it. Consequently, the myth developed that pre-contact Indigenous societies were unsophisticated, unchanging, and primitive. This suited the newcomers' agenda, but it was nothing like the truth.

## Early Agriculturalists in the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys

The southeastern portion of North America was an early centre of agricultural development that fostered the growth of a large, long-lasting, and influential culture known as the **Mississippian** (c. 500 to 1400 CE). This culture originated in the Mississippi River Valley and spread out to encompass an area that includes the lower Great Lakes region to the north, the Carolinas to the east, and northern Florida to the south. This culture emerged from the late Woodland Period as a significantly more sedentary culture of large-scale, corn-based agriculture. Surplus agricultural production allowed Mississippians to stave off

famines and sieges, support a dense population that included a large group of specialized artisans, and engage in trade with non-farming neighbours.

Politically, Mississippians were organized as a **chiefdom**, a form of organization based on a hierarchy of chiefs that followed the leader of the most important group. Within the chiefdom existed a high level of social stratification, with a noble class at the top. Socially, the Mississippians appear to have practised **matrilineal** descent patterns, meaning that familial relations focused on the mother's family, with property, status, and clan affiliation being conferred through the female line. A person's most important relations were his or her mother's parents and siblings; the father's relations were relatively unimportant. Boys looked to their mother's brother as an important male figure rather than to their father, and uncles passed political power and possessions to their nephews and maternal relatives rather than to their sons. This system's main advantage is that descent and clan affiliation were beyond doubt; a child's paternity may be uncertain, but a clan can be sure of a child's maternity. Matrilineality is relatively common among indigenous peoples of North America (though it is not universal), and it may explain the important roles that women often played in Indigenous political systems. (Note that this is not, however, the same thing as **matriarchy**, which is a political system in which authority resides with females. Nor can it be assumed that the Mississippians were **matrilocal**, which means that married couples reside in or in close proximity to the family/parents of the wife.[1])

The religion practised by the Mississippians is known as the **Southeastern Ceremonial Complex**. Important religious symbols included a snake (sometimes depicted as a horned serpent), a cross-in-circle motif, and a warrior-falcon hybrid. These symbols were closely related to cosmology and to elites and warriors, giving the religion a socio-political aspect that reinforced the social status and authority of the elite — including the high chieftain, lesser chiefs, and the priests. In time, elements of this iconography found their way across much of southern Canada.

One key feature of the Mississippian culture was that they were **mound builders**. They produced thousands of earthworks used in a variety of manners, including burial mounds for the elite. The chief, his family, and perhaps other members of the chieftain class lived atop some of the mounds in longhouses. Other mounds — some of the largest — appear to have been centres of worship or temples.

1. As one author writes, "Kinship and residence in Mississippian societies have been more assumed about than understood." Patricia Galloway, "Where Have all the Menstrual Huts Gone? The Invisibility of Menstrual Seclusion in the Late Prehistoric Southeast," *Reader in Gender Archaeology,* eds. Kelly Hays-Gilpin and David S. Whitley (Oxford: Routledge, 1998): 197–211.



*Figure 2.9 The Cahokia Mounds is now a State Historic Site in Illinois.*

The largest and most important Mississippian centre was **Cahokia** (c. 600 to 1350 CE) located just across the Mississippi River from what is now St. Louis, Missouri. Cahokia was a walled complex made up of 120 mounds that housed perhaps as many as 30,000 people, making it a very large city for its day, certainly as large as contemporary Lisbon, Portugal. It had many of the features one would look for in contemporary towns and cities anywhere, including community plazas, which were located throughout the complex. A woodhenge (a circle of wood posts) was built for astrological observations, with poles in the henge marked to indicate the sun's rising point on the solstices and equinoxes, making it a kind of community calendar or town-square clock. Cahokia's mounds took tremendous effort to build; labourers moved about 1.5 million cubic metres of earth in their construction. The largest of the mounds, today called Monk's Mound, is approximately 10 storeys high, covering an area of 5.6 hectares at the base. The top of the mound, the focal point of the city, housed a huge structure that may either have been a temple or the residence of the paramount chief of the Cahokia chiefdom.

Cahokia became a centre of power in part because of its location near the confluence of the Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers. This confluence allowed the chiefdom to control much of the regional commerce, giving it access to a great variety of trade items from many regions. Cahokians participated in trade networks stretching as far as the Great Lakes to the north and the Gulf Coast to the south. The town began to decline around 1300 CE and slowly dwindled in size and importance, although some aspects of it remained in the 1500s. Scholars have speculated that overhunting, deforestation, a **little ice age**, and the rise of competing centres to the south contributed to Cahokia's demise. The Ohio Valley, into which the French ventured in the 1600s and 1700s, carried many traces of the influence of the Mississippian culture; "Caouquias" appears on one of the first maps of the area, drawn in 1718 by Guillaume de L'isle. The Laurentian Iroquois of the St. Lawrence Valley and what is now southwestern Ontario (as well as the nearby Haudenosaunee or Five Nations Iroquois) would certainly have been influenced by this indigenous empire.




*Figure 2.10 The extent of Mississippian cultures, c. 1300. [Long Description] (#fig2.10)*

## The Interior Plateau

A different model of high-density population in the pre-contact era is Keatley Creek, an important site above the Fraser Canyon in present-day British Columbia, which was well removed from the Mississippian and Mesoamerican cultures, which it mostly preceded. The Stl'atl'imx people who lived there from about 2800 BCE established an economy based on the salmon runs in the river below their plateau village. A large cluster of kekuli (pit houses) — as many as 115 house-sized depressions, the largest about 20 metres across — suggest a population of several hundred. Archaeologists cannot agree on the cause of its abandonment between 800 and 1200 years ago. Old caricatures of Indigenous societies as small, unsophisticated nomadic hunter-gatherer societies are challenged and overturned by

this kind of evidence. It also provides a challenge to the model of agriculture-led town development. Keatley Creek in this respect has more in common with the Norte Chico culture of Peru (with which it was contemporary) that it does with Cahokia. Like the Mississippian tradition, Keatley Creek was a source of cultural diffusion and would have influenced many of its neighbours — by example or by force.

## The Pre-Contact Era

The two centuries before the arrival of French exploratory missions in the 1530s witnessed enormous changes in Indigenous North America. The "little ice age," beginning in the late 1200s, had severe impacts on farming communities. From the middle of the 14th century, there was widespread abandonment of the Mississippian cities and villages, and the archaeological record reveals extensive evidence of famine and dispersal of populations. Much of the desperate and violent conflict that took place between Iroquoian peoples of this period — and the peace between the Five Nations that eventually emerged — has been ascribed to the unsettled environmental conditions of the time.

## The Plains

Westward and northward movement of horticulturalists and farmers brought new populations into what is now southern Manitoba and Alberta. Some may have attempted to recreate the semi-urban environment of previous Mississippian generations as far north as the Bow River. Others introduced maize farming near the Red River and the Tiger Hills, with limited success.[2] Just below the 49th parallel on the Great Plains were more successful agriculturalists. Among the most important of these was the Mandan, whose villages along the Missouri and Knife Rivers survived until the smallpox catastrophe of the 1830s. Like many of their Siouan-speaking relations, they migrated into the region from areas associated with the Mississippian cultures. The Mandan villages acted as the commercial hub of an enormous wheel of Plains culture, one that extended into the lowlands around Hudson Bay. It included, as well, peoples who engaged in some corn farming and the harvesting of wild rice in what is now southern Manitoba and the western Lake Superior lowlands. The more nomadic peoples of the Plains in this period hunted large game, pursuing the herds on foot before the return of the horse in the **post-contact** period. Dogs pulling travois were an important asset; sometimes wolves were put to the same task. The Lakota, Cree, Assiniboine, and, further west, the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Shoshones, A'aninin (Grôs Ventre), and Ktunaxa (Kutenai) were participants in this shared Plains culture, as were later arrivals the Anihšināpē (also called Plains Ojibwa or Saulteaux).

Although the hunting economies of Plains peoples evolved in many respects over the 8000 years before contact, there were also some remarkable continuities. One of these is the **buffalo jump** phenomenon. Some 12,000 sites have been identified in Alberta alone, with the best known today being Head-Smashed-In (not far from present-day Lethbridge), which first came into use about 5700 years ago. Buffalo jumps were kill sites, where herds of bison were driven off steep cliffs. If the fall didn't crush their skulls or necks outright, they would be sufficiently stunned to allow for slaughter by hunters. The bodies would then be dragged to a nearby campsite and processed; every part of the animal was used to provide clothes (the hides), tools (the bones), and bowstrings (the sinew). Head-Smashed-In was in

2. James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: U of R Press, 2013).

use for thousands of years, into the historic period, when Blackfoot, disguised as coyote and wolves, would drive buffalo along established "drive lanes" to the cliff. Excavations at Head-Smashed-In have unearthed a deposit of skeletons, primarily of bison, measuring more than 10 metres deep. But Head-Smashed-In is only one of many jump sites that dot the Prairies; another is Clay Banks Buffalo Jump in southwestern Manitoba, which was used by the Sonata and Besant cultures as early as 2500 years ago.[3]

Warfare was endemic on the Plains. War was waged for three main reasons: to gain prestige, to obtain goods, and for revenge. The strategy and tactics of Plains warfare revolved around the concept of **counting coup**.[4] Coup was an action that demonstrated bravery and skill. The most highly valued coup was to touch a live enemy and live to tell about it. Killing an enemy was coup, too, but demonstrated valour to a lesser degree; after all, the live man is still a threat, while a dead one can do no harm. Touching a dead enemy was also a lesser form of coup. After a battle, warriors returned to the settlement to recount their stories, or "count coup."

Religious beliefs on the Plains tended to hold the bison as a central figure of the sacred Earth. Most groups kept "medicine bundles," a collection of sacred objects holding symbolic importance for the group. Often, religious celebrations centred on the medicine bundle. The concept of annual world renewal was an important one in Plains religion, and one of the chief renewal ceremonies celebrated by many Plains peoples was the **sun dance**. The sun dance was sponsored by an individual who wished to give to his tribe or to thank or petition the supernatural through the act of self-sacrifice for the good of the group. Celebration of the sun dance varied in detail from group to group, but a general pattern existed. It usually occurred in the summer and involved erecting a large structure with a central pole, symbolizing the Tree of Life. Large groups would gather to give thanks, celebrate, pray, and fast. The individual sponsoring the sun dance would pray and fast throughout the celebration, which lasted up to a week. He was the celebration's lead dancer, and the dance would continue until his strength was completely gone. Often, the dance involved some kind of bloodletting or self-torture. Participants might pierce their skin and/or chest muscles and attach themselves to the central pole by piercing pegs and lengths of leather, dancing around or hanging from it until the pegs were pulled free. Another variation involved piercing the muscles of the back and dragging buffalo skulls behind the dancer until the weight of the skull ripped the pins out of the dancer's flesh. The scars that the dancer carried after the celebration were a mark of honour. At the end of the sun dance, the world was renewed and replenished.

## The East

Northeastern Indigenous peoples were diverse and complex in many respects. Economically, they relied on both hunting-gathering and farming, as well as trade. Iroquoian-speakers — the Wendat (Huron), Tionontati (Pétun or Tobacco), and Attawandaron (Neutral) of southwest Ontario and the Laurentian Iroquois (which included the people of Stadacona and Hochelaga), as well as the Erieehronon (Erie), Onondaga, Onyota'a:ka (Oneida), Seneca, Gayogohó:no (Cayuga), and Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), whose territories were south of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence — built their societies around the

3. Olive Patricia Dickason, "A Historical Reconstruction for the Northwestern Plains," in *The Prairie West: Historical Readings* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992): 51.

4. Anthony McGinnis, *Counting Coup and Cutting Horses: Intertribal Warfare on the Northern Plains, 1738–1889* (Evergreen, CO: Cordillera Press, 1990).

planting and harvesting of the "three sisters" (corn, squash, and beans). Farming led to larger population numbers, bigger villages, more elaborate political structures to manage internal decision making and diplomacy (or war), and the capacity to store large quantities of surplus crops in the event of famine and for trade purposes. The 500 years before contact were marked by political transformations that produced confederacies and leagues among the Iroquoians, the most successful and largest of which were the Haudenosaunee (also known as the League of the Tree of Peace and Power, or the Five Nations Iroquois) and the Wendat Confederacy. These alliances were an effective means of reducing the prospect of long-running blood feuds between many bands and clans, although the creation of confederacies may have simply increased the scale of warfare between a few larger groupings.

The other eastern peoples were mostly Algonquian-speakers. These include the Abenaki, Mi'kmaq, and Maliseet (subsequently known as the Wabanaki Confederacy) in what are now the Maritimes and much of modern New England; the Innu (also known as Montagnais) on the north shore of the St. Lawrence and in the north-central Ungava Peninsula; the Nippissing (whose lands surround the lake bearing their name); and the three closely aligned factions of the Anishinaabe group: the Omàmiwinini (Algonquin), Odaawaa (Ottawa), and the Ojibwe. The existence of Algonquian alliances hint at conflict with others; many of these peoples shared a common dislike of the Iroquois long before the arrival of Europeans. Several claim to have driven them westward out of the northeast and the Gaspé and perhaps out of the St. Lawrence Valley in the years before contact and shortly thereafter. Principally foraging horticulturalists, these Algonquian-speaking peoples were highly mobile. They made extensive use of the resources of the land and the sea, with the Mi'kmaq establishing an eastward position in southern Newfoundland.

All peoples of the northeast participated in extensive networks of commerce. Many participated in a system of exchange with shells (sometimes called "wampum"). The shells, which themselves were highly valued, had a currency value but were often assembled in strings, on belts, and otherwise in patterns that served as mnemonic devices to record the details of treaties or other agreements. Similarly, the Kanien'kehá:ka — whose homeland was along the Hudson River in what is now New York State, but who are now mostly settled in Ontario and Quebec — were noted traders in flint, a commodity that made them wealthy and powerful, not least because it was used as part of the Indigenous arsenal.

Warfare played an important role in the northeast as it did on the Plains. It was the chief way to gain power and prestige, and revenge was its primary driver. A cycle of war was ensured because each group sought to avenge those killed in earlier wars or skirmishes in what became called the **Mourning Wars**. Acceptable outcomes of war could take several forms: killing the enemy, taking captives, and taking trophies of some sorts, often in the form of beheadings and/or scalping (a practice that may have been introduced to the region by Europeans). Captives would be taken back to the victors' town, where they would be handed over to the women who had lost family members to war. Ultimately, one of two fates awaited a prisoner: either being tortured to death (which could last many hours or even days) or being adopted by one of the families whose warrior-males had died in battle or were prisoners themselves. The captive who withstood the torture by showing strength and singing his "death song" so as to have a good death, would be held in high esteem and sometimes spared. Occasionally, the torturers would consume the flesh of those tortured after they had died, in order to ingest the strength of the enemy, a practice that many cultures shared. At the very least, Iroquoian and other cultures echoed sacrificial practices conducted on a large ritualistic scale by the Aztec and Maya peoples.

The Beothuk may have been an exception to many of these models and cultures. What little is known about these original inhabitants of Newfoundland and Labrador is discussed in Chapter 7

(#chapter-7-1-introduction). One distinctive element of their culture that would have a lasting impact on European perceptions of Indigenous peoples was their practice of liberally applying red ochre over their bodies. It was this custom that led to newcomers describing them as “red Indians,” an appellation that wound up being much more broadly used.

## People of the Far Northwest

The Pacific Northwest region was utterly separate from the Plains and other cultural zones. Its peoples were many and they shared several cultural features that were unique to the region.

By the 1400s there were at least five distinct language groups on the West Coast, including Łingít (a.k.a. Tlingit), Haida, Ts’msyan (Tsimshian), Wakashan, and Salishan, all of which divide into many more dialects. However, these differences (and there are many others) are overshadowed by cultural similarities across the region. An abundance of food from the sea meant that coastal populations enjoyed comparatively high fertility rates and life expectancy. Population densities were, as a consequence, among the highest in the Americas.

The people of the Pacific Northwest do not share the agricultural traditions that existed east of the Rockies, nor did they influence Plains and other cultures. There was, however, a long and important relationship of trade and culture between the coastal and interior peoples. In some respects it is appropriate to consider the mainland cultures as inlet-and-river societies. The Salish-speaking peoples of the Strait of Georgia (Salish Sea) share many features with the Interior Salish (Syilx, Secwepemc, Nlaka’pamux, Stl’atl’imx), though they are not as closely bound as the peoples of the Skeena and Stikine Valleys (which include the Tsimshian, the Gitxsan, and the Nisga’a). Running north of the Interior Salish nations through the Cariboo Plateau and flanked on the west by the Coast Mountain Range are societies associated with the Athabascan language group. Some of these peoples took on cultural habits and practices more typically associated with the Pacific Northwest coastal traditions than with the northern Athabascan peoples who cover a swath of territory from Alaska to northern Manitoba. In what is now British Columbia, the Tsilhqot’in, the Dakelh, Wet’suwet’en, and Sekani were part of an expansive, southward-bound population that sent offshoots into the Nicola Valley and deep into the southwest of what is now the United States.

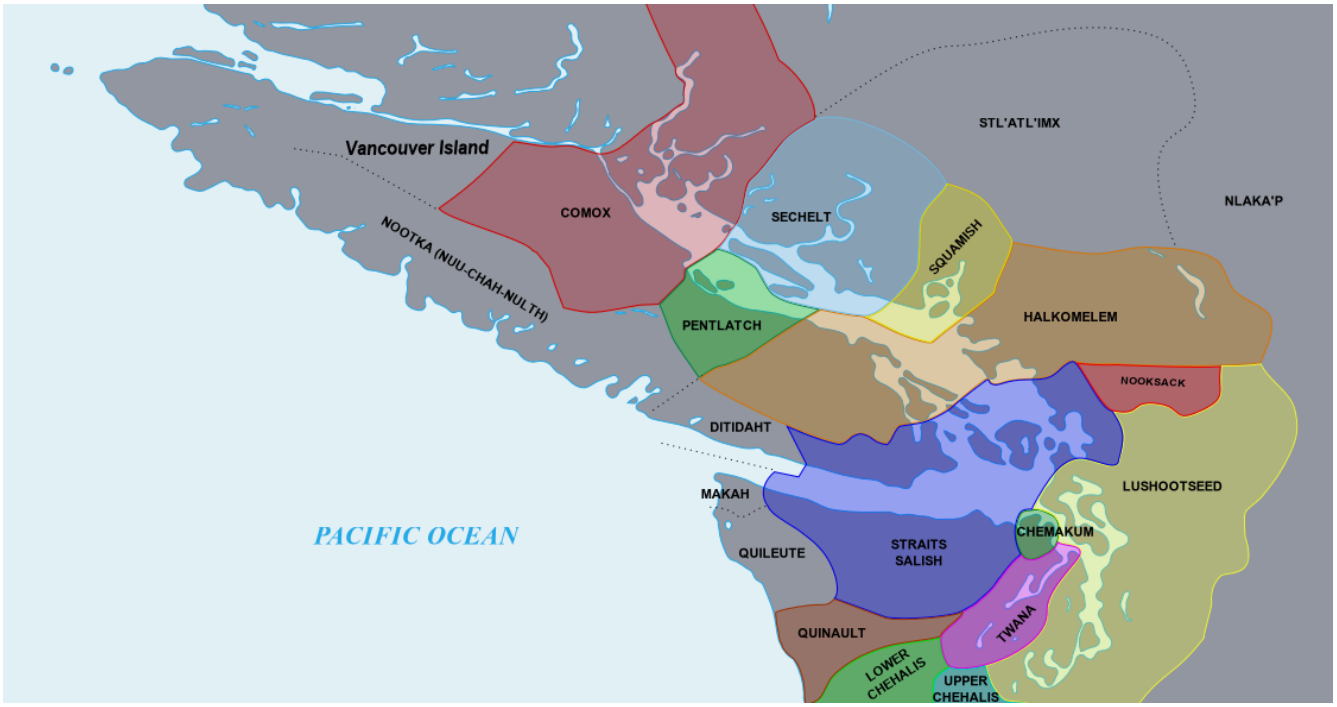


*Figure 2.11 The Salish Sea (as the Georgia Strait is now widely known) is an ecologically and culturally rich zone occupied by related but unallied Indigenous peoples, known as the Coast Salish. The Coast Salish speak many different languages, as depicted by this map. [Long Description] (#fig2.11)*

Most coastal and interior groups lived in large, permanent towns in the winter, and these villages reflected local political structures. Society in Pacific Northwest groups was generally highly stratified and included, in many instances, an elite, a commoner class, and a slave class. The Kwakwaka'wakw, whose domain extended in pre-contact times from the northern tip of Vancouver Island south along its east coast to Quadra Island and possibly farther, assembled kin groups (*numayms*) as part of a system of social rank in which all groups were ranked in relation to others. Additionally, each kin group "owned" names or positions that were also ranked. An individual could hold more than one name; some names were inherited and others were acquired through marriage. In this way, an individual could acquire rank through kin associations, although kin groups themselves had ascribed ranks. Movement in and out of slavery was even possible.

The fact that slavery existed points to the competition that existed between coastal rivals. The Haida, Tsimshian, Haisla, Nuxalk, Heiltsuk, Wuikinuxv (Oowekeeno), Kwakwaka'wakw, Pentlatch/K'ómoks, and Nuu-chah-nulth regularly raided one another and their Stó:lō neighbours. Many of the winter towns were in some way or other fortified and, indeed, small stone defensive sniper blinds can still be discerned in the Fraser Canyon. The large number of oral traditions that arise from this era regularly reference conflict and the severe loss of personnel. Natural disasters are also part of the oral tradition: they tell of massive and apocalyptic floods as well as volcanic explosions and other seismic (and tidal) events that had tremendous impacts on local populations.

The practice of **potlatch** (a public feast held to mark important community events, deaths, ascensions, etc.) is a further commonality. It involved giving away property and thus redistributing wealth as a means for the host to maintain, reinforce, and even advance through the complex hierarchical structure. In receiving property at a potlatch an attendee was committing to act as a witness to the legitimacy of the event being celebrated. The size of potlatching varied radically and would evolve along new

lines in the post-contact period but the outlines and protocols of this cultural trademark were well-elaborated centuries before the contact moment. Potlatching was universal among the coastal peoples and could also be found among more inland, upriver societies as well.

Horticulture (the domestication of some plants) was another important source of food. West Coast peoples and the nations of the Columbia Plateau (which covers much of southern inland British Columbia), like many eastern groups, applied controlled burning to eliminate underbrush and open up landscape to berry patches and meadows of camas plants that were gathered for their potato-like roots. This required somewhat less labour than farming (although harvesting root plants is never light work) and it functioned within a strategy of seasonal camps. Communities moved from one food crop location to another for preparation and then, later, harvest. A great deal of the land seized upon by early European settlers in the Pacific Northwest included these berry patches and meadows. These were attractive sites because they had been cleared of huge trees and consisted of mostly open and well-drained pasture. Europeans would see these spaces as pastoral, natural, and available rather than **anthropogenic** — human-made — landscapes, the product of centuries of horticultural experimentation.

## Summary

More than 500 identifiable groups emerged in North America during the pre-contact era (that is, from 1000 to 1492 CE). Although tremendously diverse, the groups within each region of the continent shared many common features, including subsistence strategies, kinship relations, political structure, and elements of material culture. And although there were common economic and cultural features across North America and some that were shared in Mesoamerica and South America as well, this does not in any way indicate a single monolithic Indigenous culture. In the northern half of North America alone the number of tongues spoken, artistic techniques perfected, songs and dance styles, architectural and engineering experiments, and systems of government can barely be calculated.

**Nomenclature**

"Nomenclature" is the word used to refer to a set or system of names used in a particular field of study. How do we name things? Which names are correct? Some terms fall out of favour while others rise. In the study of Indigenous history, this is particularly important.

- **Indians**: The term used by newcomers (not by native peoples) to describe and characterize all the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Indigenous peoples today sometimes describe themselves as Indians, though generally in a political context. The Canadian Indian Act, for example, uses the word "Indian" to describe native peoples, as do some native organizations (e.g., the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs). Keep in mind, of course, that there is no singular "Indian" culture, no one "Indian" language, no universal "Indian" economy. Making that assumption is an error referred to as "pan-Indianism," the mistaken belief that all Indigenous societies are essentially the same. The diversity of Indigenous cultures, languages, and economies was a fact in the past and remains a fact today.

- **First Nations, Amerindians, American Indians**: Beginning in the mid-20th century, Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples began experimenting with terms to replace “Indian.” In Canada, the term that has so far enjoyed the widest use and recognition is “First Nations.” “First Peoples” is also used, as is “Indigenous peoples” and “Aboriginal peoples.” In the United States the most widely used terms are “Native Americans” and “American Indians,” sometimes contracted to “Amerindians.” This last term is sometimes embraced by Indigenous peoples as being the most serviceable.
- **Nuxalk, Anishinaabe, Wendat, Mi’kmaq**: As 20th-century Indigenous peoples found a stronger political voice, many articulated a desire to be known by their own nation names — their *autonyms*. Bella Coola became Nuxalk, Ojibwa became Anishinaabe (Anishinaabeg is the plural form), Huron reverted to Wendat, and Micmac reacquired a breath in the first syllable and a more open consonant at the end of the second in the form of Mi’kmaq. These are only four examples. Across the country Indigenous peoples are reclaiming their names, an important step toward reclaiming their history.

Key Takeaways

- Elaborate agricultural societies with some measure of urbanization appeared in the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys around 500 CE and began to decline in the century or so before contact with Europeans.
- High density communities arose around the same time, based on maritime and riverine food resources.
- Pre-contact societies included hunter-gatherers, farmers, and seafaring mammal hunters, all of whom were engaged in commerce.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 2.10 long description:** Map showing the territorial ranges of Mississippian and related cultures. Settlements and historical sites are marked throughout the map. Many settlements are located on the banks of a river, the Mississippi or otherwise.

The cultural regions shown are:

- Oneota: A region west and southwest of Lake Michigan, including parts of Wisconsin and Minnesota. Featured sites include Point Saubie, Aztalan, Cambria, and Cloverdale.
- Fort Ancient: A region south of Lake Erie and southeast of Michigan, including parts of West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. Featured sites include Sunwatch, Fox Farm, and Clay Mound.

- South Appalachian Mississippian: A region encompassing much of the southeastern United States, including the Florida panhandle (the northwestern part of the state), Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, Tennessee, and part of North Carolina. Featured sites include Letchworth, Bottle Creek, Moundville, Bessemer, and Hobbs Island.
- Middle Mississippian: A region that overlaps the northwest part of the South Appalachian Mississippian region. It covers the area including parts of Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Illinois, and Missouri. Featured sites include Chucalissa, Mound Bottom, Towosahgy, and Cahokia.
- Plaquemine: A region covering eastern Louisiana, western Mississippi, and the southeast corner of Arkansas. Featured sites include Medora, Emerald, and Holly Bluff.
- Caddoan Mississippian: A region covering the northwest part of Louisiana, western Arkansas, eastern Oklahoma, and the northeast corner of Texas. Featured sites include Caddoan Mounds, Belcher, and Battle Mound.

[Return to Figure 2.10] (#attachment_741)

**Figure 2.11 long description:** Map of the language groups of the Coast Salish peoples of the south coast of British Columbia and northwest Washington state. Approximately from north to south, the language groups highlighted are:

- Comox
- Pentlatch
- Sechelt
- Squamish
- Halkomelem
- Nooksack
- Luschootseed
- Straits Salish
- Chemakum
- Twana
- Upper Chealis
- Lower Chelais
- Quinault

[Return to Figure 2.11] (#attachment_746)

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# 2.5 Languages, Cultures, Economies



*Figure 2.12 Pre-contact distribution of Na-Dené languages. [Long Description] (#fig2.12)*



*Figure 2.13 Pre-contact distribution of Algonkian speakers. [Long Description] (#fig2.13)*

These brief histories of Indigenous peoples and societies reveal that categorization is complicated. Take language, for example, which is often used as a key element of nationality (e.g., French people speak French and live in France and almost everyone in France speaks French). For Indigenous peoples, there are no political units that encapsulate the whole of the largest and most widespread language groups in Canada. As the maps in Figures 2.12 and 2.13 show, the two most widely spoken language groups before contact — Athabascan or Na-Dené and Algonquian — cover massive areas and include societies that were separated by huge distances. Na-Dené dialects are spoken by Apache and Navajo in the American southwest, as well as by peoples from Alaska's Łingít (Tlingit) to Alberta's Tsuu T'ina (or Sarcee) who migrated south onto the Plains in the early 1700s. Similarly the Algonquian-speakers are represented by agricultural societies, bison hunters like the Siksika (Blackfoot), and lowland fisher-hunter peoples like the Cree, the Mi'kmaq, and the Anishinaabe, as well as large populations (some of them agriculturalists) in what is now the United States. Within these two language areas, dialect differences can be very great, but the core elements of the language mostly survive.

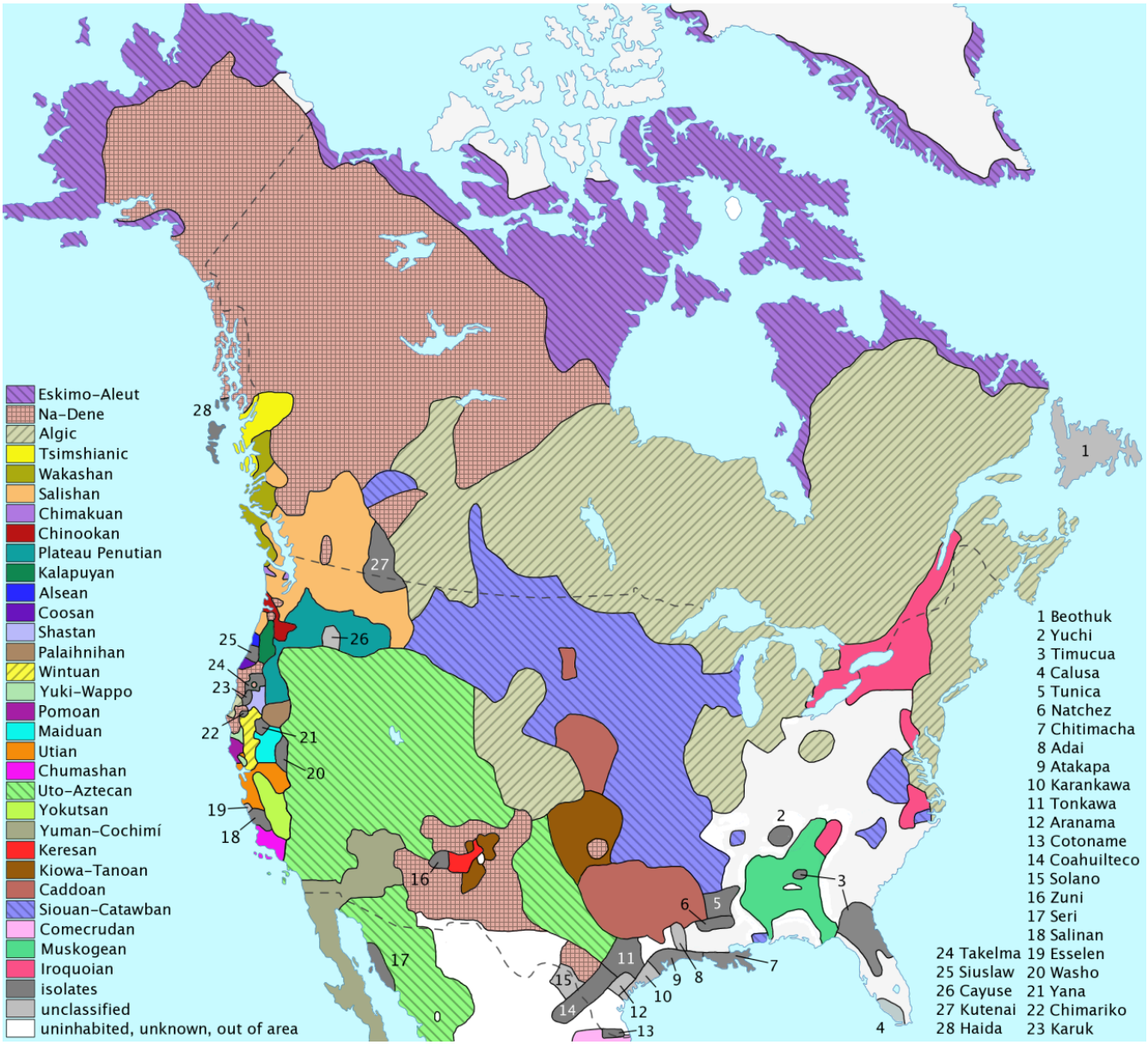


*Figure 2.14 Pre-contact distribution of Indigenous language families. [Long Description] (#fig2.14)*

One of the challenges facing anyone interested in Indigenous language groups is that European contact was a catalyst for migration, generally in a westward direction. European observers were, thus, recording the presence of language groups whose more recent homelands in some cases were somewhere else. Figure 2.14 gives a sense of the huge diversity of language groups in North America but no sense at all of the internal diversity within the broad linguistic categories.

## Pre-Contact Societies

Agriculture, horticulture, foraging, hunting, and fishing were key features of the economies of the pre-contact Americas. In Canada, rocky, stingy, or hard-packed soils (like those on the Prairies) made agriculture all but impossible (as did, of course, the climate in many zones). Despite some mastery in metalwork, as evidenced in silver, gold, and copper decorative arts, the knowledge and skills necessary

to produce iron tools that would give agriculture a lift were not available. “Digging sticks” used to drill seed holes are far more labour intensive but less demanding on the soil than wooden or metal ploughs. This is not to say that agriculture is the higher form of economic activity in a pre-industrial world. Farming societies have many advantages, such as the ability to achieve rapid and substantial growth, the wherewithal to build villages and armies, political sophistication of a particular kind, and so on. But they also have significant health issues, less flexibility in the event of famine or drought, and are at more risk of being attacked by enemies. Indigenous economies were far more adaptable in this respect than their Old World contemporaries.




*Figure 2.15 Copper was widely worked and used in pre-contact North America. On the northwest coast it was fashioned into large and beautifully-finished shields, symbolic of wealth and authority. This Kwakwaka’wakw figure, carrying “a copper,” was carved before the 1880s and is housed at the Ethnological Museum in Berlin.*

What is more, everyone participated in commerce. These were trading societies that augmented their output with goods from their neighbours. Sometimes these were raw materials, such as furs or maize, flint or wampum; other times they were crafted goods like clothing, hides, or the much-sought-after

sinew-backed bows made by the Shoshone. Everywhere one looks, the archaeological evidence turns up exotic artifacts in village sites, indicating a rich intercommunity and intercultural life that dates back thousands of years. For example, red ochre suitable for rock painting and other uses as a dye was mined for centuries from caves in the Similkameen Valley in southern British Columbia; it shows up in pictographs as far afield as Arizona.

Exercise: History Around You — Indigenous History Where You Live

In Vancouver's Stanley Park there is a clutch of totem poles arranged near the old cricket oval on Brockton Point. It is a favourite spot for tourists to stop for photographs. The display became much more complex and informative in preparation for the 2010 Winter Olympics. However, a long-standing complaint was that the poles were not examples of local, Coast Salish work, but rather, northern Kwakwawa'wakw and Ts'msyan styles. In other words, the people who used to live on Brockton Point (and whose graveyards remain nearby) were excluded from this display of "native" history.

How is Indigenous history depicted in your community? Is there a museum or gallery dedicated to the subject? Is there one on a nearby reserve? Do a mental inventory of the statues and memorials and plaques in the community: how many of those pertain to the experiences of indigenous people? Do they get it right? (If you're not in Canada, consider paying a visit to the consulate or embassy — if one's nearby. How is the nation's Indigenous heritage represented?)

## Populations

Given the fragmentary nature of the evidence, even semi-accurate pre-Columbian population figures are impossible to obtain for the indigenous populations prior to colonization. Estimates are extrapolated from small bits of data. Recent research suggests that the 13th century marked a critical break in the demographic history of North America. As the climate changed for the worse and the little ice age began, populations struggled to survive famine and competition for resources intensified. It has been suggested that peak pre-contact population numbers may have occurred two or three centuries before contact.[1]

In 1976, geographer William Denevan used the existing estimates to derive a "consensus count" of about 54 million people for the Americas as a whole.[2] There is, however, no "consensus." Estimates for North America range from a low of 2.1 million (Ubelaker 1976) to 7 million people (Thornton 1987) and even to a high of 18 million (Dobyns 1983).[3] The Indigenous population of Canada during the late 15th century is estimated to have been between 200,000 and 2 million, with a figure of 500,000 currently

1. James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: U of R Press, 2013), 2.

2. William M. Denevan, *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976).

3. Douglas H. Ubelaker, "North American Indian Population Size: Changing Perspectives," in *Disease and Demography in the Americas*, eds. John Verano and Douglas H. Ubelaker, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1992), 172–3; Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Henry F. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983).

accepted widely. These numbers are utterly conditional: on the West Coast alone estimates range from 80,000 (c. 1780) to 1.6 million, although the evidence to support either the low count or the high count is sparse.[4] Nonetheless, if the widely touted figure of 350,000 for British Columbia is reckoned as fair, then the national figures would jump up by as much as 200,000 (a 40% increase on the widely accepted figure of half a million)! Thus, there are significant discrepancies.

As we shall see in Chapter 5, the contact experience brought with it terrible disease epidemics that raced ahead of the Europeans in the proto-contact period. It is important to note here that the work of historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, and others — often supported by oral testimony from Indigenous sources — suggests that the pre-contact Americas were *not* disease-free. Contagious diseases included tuberculosis, hepatitis, and respiratory infections. Syphilis and gastrointestinal illnesses might also belong to this list. And there were, in parts of the Americas, significant numbers of parasites. With the exception of tuberculosis, however, none of these are proper epidemic diseases. Syphilis, for example, spreads only on a one-to-one basis through intimate contact between individuals; influenza, by contrast, can be transmitted by one infected individual to dozens of other hosts at a time by the simple means of coughing. For the most part, then, experience with epidemics was both limited and very different from what Asians, Africans, and European humans witnessed regularly. This lack of knowledge meant that Indigenous societies were badly unprepared for highly contagious disease epidemics. It does not mean, however, that life expectancies were particularly good. All indications suggest that, as in most human societies, a person was lucky to reach 30 years of age and very fortunate to reach 50. If infant mortality levels were higher in the Americas (and evidence suggests they were) it wasn't helped by extended breastfeeding practices. Probably in most Indigenous societies, infants were nursed for four years. This custom has an effect beyond nourishment and hydration: prolonged breastfeeding reduces fertility. Fewer infants may have generated more intensive childcare overall but, obviously, dampened fertility rates placed an upward limit on population growth rates. This would prove a critical weakness when it came time to recover from epidemic depopulations.[5]

Key Takeaways

- Indigenous societies at contact defy simple categorization by language, economic activity, or location.
- Population estimates suggest that humans were very numerous in the Americas in the late 1400s but perhaps not as numerous as they were even a century earlier.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 2.12 long description:** Before contact, speakers of Na-Dené languages could be found in most of modern northwestern Canada, including the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and the northern parts of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, but excluding Nunavut and the northern

4. John Belshaw, *Becoming British Columbia: A Population History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 72–6.

5. Roderic Beaujot and Don Kerr, *Population Change in Canada*, 2nd edition (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21.

coast of Canada's three territories. Na-Dené languages were also spoken in central Alaska, along the California coast, and in some of the southern United States. [Return to Figure 2.12] (#attachment_757)

**Figure 2.13 long description:** Before contact, speakers of Algonkian languages could be found in most of modern eastern Canada, including Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, and much of Labrador and Quebec. Algonkian languages were also spoken in parts of southern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, as well as small parts of the central and northeastern United States. [Return to Figure 2.13] (#attachment_760)

**Figure 2.14 long description:** Map showing the distribution of Indigenous languages in North America before contact. This description uses modern political terms to demonstrate where languages were spoken.

The map depicts the following language families:

- Eskimo–Aleut: Spoken along the coast of Alaska, the northern coast of the Northwest Territories, throughout Nunavut, along the northern and western coasts of Quebec, on the northern coast of Labrador, and along the coast of Greenland.
- Na-Dené: Spoken throughout the interior of Alaska, all of the Yukon, the interior of the Northwest Territories, northern British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, another sliver of Alberta near the Rocky Mountains, a few tiny areas along the coast of California, and throughout New Mexico and parts of Texas, as well as in Oregon and Washington along the Columbia River.
- Algic: Spoken in southern to mid-Alberta, parts of southern Saskatchewan, most of Manitoba, all of Ontario, nearly all of Quebec, plus New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and the eastern United States from New England to Virginia, as well as Michigan, Illinois, part of Ohio, and an area including Wyoming.
- Tsimshianic: Spoken in a small region on the coast of northwestern British Columbia, crossing just barely over the border with Alaska into the Aleutian Islands. This language family was spoken along the Skeena River and on a few small islands to its south.
- Wakashan: Spoken in parts of the southern coast of British Columbia, including the area immediately to the south of the Tsimshianic range, as well as the western half of Vancouver Island, and the northwesternmost tip of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington state.
- Salishan: Spoken throughout southern British Columbia, including the eastern half of Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, the southern Interior up until the Kootenays, and one little area on the west coast between two Wakashan regions. This language family is also spoken throughout much of northern Washington state and the Olympic Peninsula and one coastal region in Oregon, just south of the mouth of the Columbia River.
- Chimakuan: Spoken in two small regions on the west and east coasts of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington state.
- Chinookan: Spoken in Oregon along the Columbia River, which leads to the west coast of Oregon. The range of this language family culminates around Portland, Oregon.
- Plateau Penutian: Spoken in southern Washington, north-central Oregon, two regions in central and southern Oregon, the northeast corner of California, and an area overlapping the

southeast corner of Washington, the northeast corner of Oregon, and central Idaho.

- Kalapuyan: Spoken in the Willamette Valley of western Oregon, stretching south from Portland.
- Alsean: Spoken in one small area on the central coast of Oregon.
- Coosan: Spoken in one small area on the southern coast of Oregon.
- Shastan: Spoken in northern California and southern Oregon.
- Palaihnihan: Spoken in northeastern California.
- Wintuan: Spoken in the Sacramento Valley of the interior of northern California, which is just east of San Francisco.
- Yuki–Wappo: Spoken in two small areas on the coast of California.
- Pomoan: Spoken in one small area on the coast of California, wedged between the two Yuki–Wappo areas.
- Maiduan: Spoken in one mid-sized area in northeastern California.
- Utian: Spoken in one U-shaped area in central California, with one half of the U being on the coast and the other being in the interior.
- Chumashan: Spoken in one region on the southern California coast, including three tiny islands.
- Uto–Aztecan: Spoken throughout the western and southwestern United States, including southeastern Oregon, southern Idaho, much of eastern California, and parts of Nevada and Utah. This language family was also spoken in a sizeable chunk of Texas, as well as an area beginning in southern Arizona and continuing south across the border into western Mexico.
- Yokutsan: Spoken in one interior region in central California.
- Yuman-Cochimí: Spoken in the southern tip of California, western Arizona, and on the Baja California Peninsula, which is a narrow strip of Mexican land protruding from the southern part of the state of California.
- Keresan: Spoken in a small region in northern New Mexico.
- Kiowa–Tanoan: Spoken in small regions in northern New Mexico and one larger region covering parts of northern Texas and western Oklahoma.
- Caddoan: Spoken in parts of the central United States, including a small region in South Dakota, a region stretching from central Nebraska south to northern Kansas, and a larger area covering eastern Texas, southern Oklahoma, southwestern Arkansas, and northern Louisiana.
- Siouan–Catawban: Spoken in many areas of the United States, particularly the Midwest, and a few areas in Canada. Specifically, this language family was spoken in southeastern Montana, northern Wyoming, North Dakota, southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and one area in western Alberta. This language family was also spoken in South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, and in eastern Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Smaller areas where this language family was spoken include a spot on the southern coast of Mississippi and a few smaller regions in North and South Carolina.
- Comecrudan: Spoken in the northernmost part of eastern Mexico, on the border with Texas.

- Muskogean: Spoken in the southeastern United States, including parts of Alabama and Georgia.
- Iroquoian: Spoken in the eastern United States and eastern Canada. This includes along the St. Lawrence River in Quebec, around Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, and in New York state. Other smaller regions where this language family was spoken include one stretching from central Pennsylvania to Maryland, one near the coast of North Carolina, and one overlapping western North Carolina, northern Georgia, and northwestern South Carolina.

The map distinguishes language isolates (languages without evidence of being related to any other language) and unclassified languages (languages that have not been proven to be affiliated with any other).

Language isolates depicted include:

- Yuchi: Spoken in one small area in the southeastern United States, approximately around Kentucky or Tennessee.
- Timucua: Spoken in one small area in northern Alabama, within the region where the Muskogean language family was spoken, and in a larger region covering southern Georgia and northern Florida.
- Tunica: Spoken in southwest Mississippi or central Louisiana.
- Natchez: Spoken in southwest Mississippi or central Louisiana, in the area directly below the range of the Tunica language.
- Chitimacha: Spoken along the southern coast of Louisiana.
- Atakapa: Spoken in one area along the coast in southwestern Louisiana and eastern coastal Texas.
- Tonkawa: Spoken in one small area in eastern Texas.
- Cotoname: Spoken in one tiny area overlapping the border between the southern tip of Texas and eastern Mexico.
- Coahuilteco: Spoken in one area stretching from southwestern Texas across the border into eastern Mexico.
- Zuni: Spoken in one small area along the border between New Mexico and Arizona.
- Seri: Spoken in one small area along the northwestern coast of the main part of Mexico (excluding the Baja peninsula).
- Salinan: Spoken in one small area on the central coast of California.
- Washo: Spoken in one small area on the border between California and Nevada.
- Yana: Spoken in one tiny spot in north-central California.
- Chimariko: Spoken in one tiny spot in northwestern California.
- Karuk: Spoken in one small area in northwestern California.
- Takelma: Spoken in one small area in southwestern Oregon.
- Siuslaw: Spoken in one small spot on the coast of southwestern Oregon.

- Kutenai: Spoken in one small area covering part of the Kootenays in southeastern British Columbia and parts of northern Idaho and Montana.
- Haida: Spoken along the central coast of British Columbia, around Prince Rupert and south of the Aleutian Islands.

Unclassified languages depicted include:

- Beothuk: Spoken on the island of Newfoundland.
- Calusa: Spoken in southwest Florida, around where Everglades National Park now is.
- Adai: Spoken in one small area in northwestern Louisiana.
- Karankawa: Spoken in one small area in eastern coastal Texas.
- Aranama: Spoken in one small area in eastern Texas, wedged between the Karankawa, Tonkawa, and Coahuilteco language ranges.
- Solano: Spoken in one area straddling the border between southwestern Texas and northeastern Mexico.
- Esselen: Spoken in one tiny spot on the central coast of California.
- Cayuse: Spoken in one small area in northeastern Oregon.

[Return to Figure 2.14] (#attachment_763)

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# 2.6 Summary

Pre-contact North America was home to a numerous and diverse array of peoples, languages, religions, and cultures. Scientific origin theories such as the Bering land bridge and coastal migration suggest that the ancestors of these groups arrived in the Western Hemisphere at least 14,000 years ago. The origin stories of most of the groups provide another, more allegorical view, stressing the intimate relationship between “the people” and the land in which they lived. Paleo-Indians dominate the history of the period between the great ice ages and the era that began some 8,000 years before now when the Earth entered warmer, more congenial phases called the Archaic and Woodland periods.

The development of plant domestication and the beginnings of organized agricultural activities occurred in this phase, along with an eruption of village and urban settlements. The great classical civilizations of the Americas arose and the centre of this continent was dominated by an extensive urban farming complex. Many groups across North America became horticulturalists and agriculturalists, the latter relying primarily on the Mesoamerican triad of corn, beans, and squash. The surplus of food produced by farming enabled the development of large and complex communities and material cultures, as well as the ability to weather famine and siege more successfully. Regional geography also played a role in shaping groups; for instance, groups on the Plains came to be characterized by a reliance on the buffalo hunt while salmon-dependent communities appeared in the interior of British Columbia, and marine mammal hunters on all three coasts.

The Indigenous world that Europeans contacted after 1492 was not static. It was in the midst of ongoing change and historical processes. Societies like the Mississippian cultures had peaked and were now looking to new models to survive. Ideas and practices were flowing from one part of the continent to another. Everywhere we look in the Americas we find evidence of modified landscapes — anthropogenic change — that were possible only because these were mostly successful and robust societies. The era of contact has to be placed in the context of a history of change and adaptation, and of continuities as well.

Non-Indigenous peoples in Canada today (and in the United States) continue to hold many mistaken ideas about pre-contact Indigenous nations. For example, it is commonly believed that at the time of European arrival, the Americas were vast empty lands occupied by handfuls of people who still acquired their food through hunting and foraging, people who could easily just move along to another hunting ground, and then another and another. The facts are that the Americas were occupied by millions of people, and these people had achieved technological development similar to their contemporaries in Europe, Africa, and Asia and had excelled in many specific areas. Their societies, economies, and cultures did not have enormous gaps that were waiting to be filled by foreigners; they were complete and they made sense.

They did, however, have a number of weaknesses that contact exposed and some newcomers exploited. These shall be considered in the chapters that follow.

Key Terms

**agricultural revolution**: In the context of the Archaic era, the development of the first farming societies in the Americas.

**anthropogenic**: Made or modified by humans.

**archaeological record**: Any evidence regarding past societies and civilizations that is derived from the use of archaeological techniques and methods.

**Archaic period**: The era described by archaeologists and anthropologists as roughly 10,000 to 3000 years BP.

**Aztecs**: A Mesoamerican civilization and polity that collapsed in the early 16th century. The Aztecs developed many agricultural techniques and administrative customs that influenced societies around the Gulf of Mexico. Their influence may have spread up the Mississippi River as well.

**Before the Common Era (BCE)**: The time period before our current one. This term, along with CE, aligns exactly with the Christian dating system, dividing time approximately 2000 years ago.

**Before the Present (BP)**: A dating system based on the use of radiocarbon dating that uses January 1, 1950, as its baseline. Therefore, 10,000 years BP equals 10,000 years before New Year's Day, 1950.

**Bering land bridge (Beringia)**: The land form that connected Eurasia and North America between Siberia and Alaska 50,000 to 10,000 years BP. Made mostly of land that was exposed by falling sea levels, it is a possible historical route for human migration from Asia to the Americas.

**Beringia**: The open plain of land and glaciers that once filled the current gap between Siberia and Alaska.

**buffalo jump**: A kind of site found on the Plains that is associated with highly coordinated bison hunts conducted by Indigenous communities.

**Cahokia**: Thought to be the largest of the Mississippian towns/cities. Located near present-day St. Louis, it is believed to have crested around 1050 CE and collapsed around 1350 CE.

**chiefdom**: A form of organization based on a hierarchy of chiefs that followed the leader of the most important group.

**Clovis**: A prehistoric Paleo-Indian culture. Named for the archaeological site in New Mexico where it was first identified, the Clovis culture is identifiable by the kinds of projectile heads it produced.

**coastal migration theory**: An alternative to the Bering land bridge theory that posits that the first human arrivals in the Americas arrived by sea, following the arc of the North Pacific icefield and skirting Beringia.

**codexes (codices)**: Scrolls written by Aztec and/or Mayan authors and scribes from the period both before and after the arrival of Europeans.

**Common Era (CE)**: Our current time period. This term, along with BCE, aligns exactly with the Christian dating system, dividing time approximately 2000 years ago.

**contact**: The first documented encounter between Indigenous peoples and Europeans. This is a movable date because first encounters occur in different regions at different times. The contact era for some Arctic peoples, for example, only began in the 20th century.

**counting coup**: The practice, common among many Indigenous cultures, of attacking rival groups with the objective of inflicting injury, but not necessarily death, and thereby acquiring status commensurate with the humiliation meted out to the foe.

**diffusion**: The transmission of ideas, practices, or beliefs from one society to another.

**grease trails**: Trade routes that originated in the pre-contact era in what is now British Columbia. Used for transporting oolichan grease, an important Indigenous commodity.

**hypothesis**: A suggested explanation for a historical phenomenon, event, or idea. Plural is *hypotheses*.

**little ice age**: The term given to the hemispheric downturn in average temperatures that lasted from the 1600s (or as early as the late 1200s in some locales) to the 1820s. Much of North America and northwestern Europe was affected.

**longhouse**: A style of domestic building that typically accommodates an extended family and serves as a storehouse for equipment, food, and other belongings. Longhouses take many forms in Indigenous cultures in what is now Canada, use different kinds of materials, and may be fixed, movable, or something in between.

**maize**: A modified crop form of a grass known as teosinte. Commonly referred to today as "corn," maize was first developed by Mesoamerican societies.

**Maritime Archaic**: A variant on the Archaic tradition. Maritime Archaic cultures were found on the Atlantic coast.

**matriarchy**: A political system in which authority resides with females.

**matrilineal**: Of or denoting familial relations that focus on the mother's family, with property, status, and clan affiliation being conferred through the female line.

**matrilocal**: Of or denoting a social system in which married couples reside in or in close proximity to the home(s) of the wife's family or parents.

**megafauna**: Large pre-contact animals found globally whose modern descendants are considerably smaller.

**Mesoamerica**: The cultural zone that stretches across almost all of Mexico and south through much of Central America. Some of the largest agricultural and urban civilizations in the Americas prior to contact were in Mesoamerica.

**Mesoamerican triad**: Also called the "three sisters," the crops of maize, beans, and squash, which were developed in Mesoamerica and diffused across the Americas centuries before contact.

**Mississippian culture**: An agricultural, town-centred civilization that thrived from c. 500 to 1400 CE. Located at the heart of North America and connected by the river and lakes network to lands from the Rocky Mountains to the Gaspé, the Mississippian culture had a powerful impact on the societies that followed.

**mound builders**: Hopewellian and Mississippian cultures that were notable for erecting large complexes of earthworks.

**Mourning Wars**: Conflicts associated principally with the Haudenosaunee and impacting virtually all their neighbours. This wide-ranging series of conflicts covered much of what is now southern Ontario and the Ohio Valley. One goal was to acquire captives who would be adopted into the captor's community, so as to replace population lost to epidemics and earlier wars and raids.

**oolichan**: An anadromous fish prized on the West Coast for its high oil content.

**oral tradition**: Generally refers to an account of events that took place in earlier generations and that is transmitted by oral storytelling (as opposed to writing). Distinctions used to be drawn sharply between oral tradition and oral history, which was regarded as accounts of events within the lifetime of the teller. More recently, oral history has become equated with oral tradition and has been granted greater respect for its reliability.

**Paleo-Indian**: Term used to describe the peoples occupying parts of the Americas until about 8000 BP.

**Paleolithic**: The period associated with the concept of the "Stone Age," referring to human technological development before extensive use of metals. Dates vary from continent to continent and region to region.

**petroglyphs**: Images carved into rock.

**pictographs**: Images painted onto rock and other surfaces.

**post-contact**: The years after documented encounters between Indigenous peoples and Europeans. Post-contact typically describes a relatively short period. Although our current society is technically "post-contact," it makes little sense to use the term that way.

**potlatch**: A ceremonial event mounted by most Northwest Coast peoples and many in the interior of what is now British Columbia. It involves the giving away of property at an event, typically one marking a succession, a marriage, or a death. Accumulating goods for an impressive potlatch was an important mechanism for attaining social status for the host and also redistributing wealth through a system of related villages.

**pre-contact**: The period before the first documented encounters between Indigenous peoples and Europeans. Pre-contact societies may also be proto-contact societies, depending on circumstances.

**proto-contact**: The period of indirect influence of Europeans on Indigenous peoples. Some of the effects of contact ran ahead of direct encounters. For example, diseases and/or trade goods might be passed from one Indigenous community that had experienced face-to-face contact to a great many others that had not.

**Southeastern Ceremonial Complex**: The religion associated with the Mississippian cultures. Many features of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex were shared with Indigenous cultures in what is now Ontario and Quebec.

**sun dance**: A renewal ceremony celebrated by many Plains peoples. It was sponsored by an individual who wished to give to his tribe or to thank or petition the supernatural through an act of self-sacrifice for the good of the group.

**teosinte**: A variety of grass that was modified into maize (also known as "corn") by Indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica.

**winter count**: A record of events recorded in the form of pictures; associated mainly with Siouan cultures.

**Woodland period**: The era described by archaeologists and anthropologists as roughly 1000 BCE to 1000 CE.

## Short Answer Exercises

1. What kind of records exist that provide Indigenous accounts of the past?
2. What are some of the limitations of the archaeological record?
3. What are the principal theories and/or explanations that describe the original populating of the Americas by humans? What are the weaknesses and strengths of these theories?
4. What factors contributed to substantial Indigenous population growth in the pre-contact era?
5. What are the limits of using language groups to understand Indigenous communities in the past?
6. What are some of the issues involved in estimating pre-contact population numbers?
7. What are some of the major differences that distinguish the various native peoples of what is now Canada?

## Suggested Readings

1. Mann, Charles C. “1491.” *The Atlantic*, 1 March 2002. http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/03/1491/302445/.
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3. Prins, Harold E. L. “Children of Gluskap: Wabanaki Indians on the Eve of the European Invasion.” In *American Beginnings: Exploration, Culture, and Cartography in the Land of Norumbega*, edited by Emerson W. Baker, Edwin A. Churchill, Richard D’Abate, Kristine L. Jones, Victor A. Conrad, and Harald E.L. Prins (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 95–117.

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# Chapter 3. The Transatlantic Age

# 3.1 Introduction

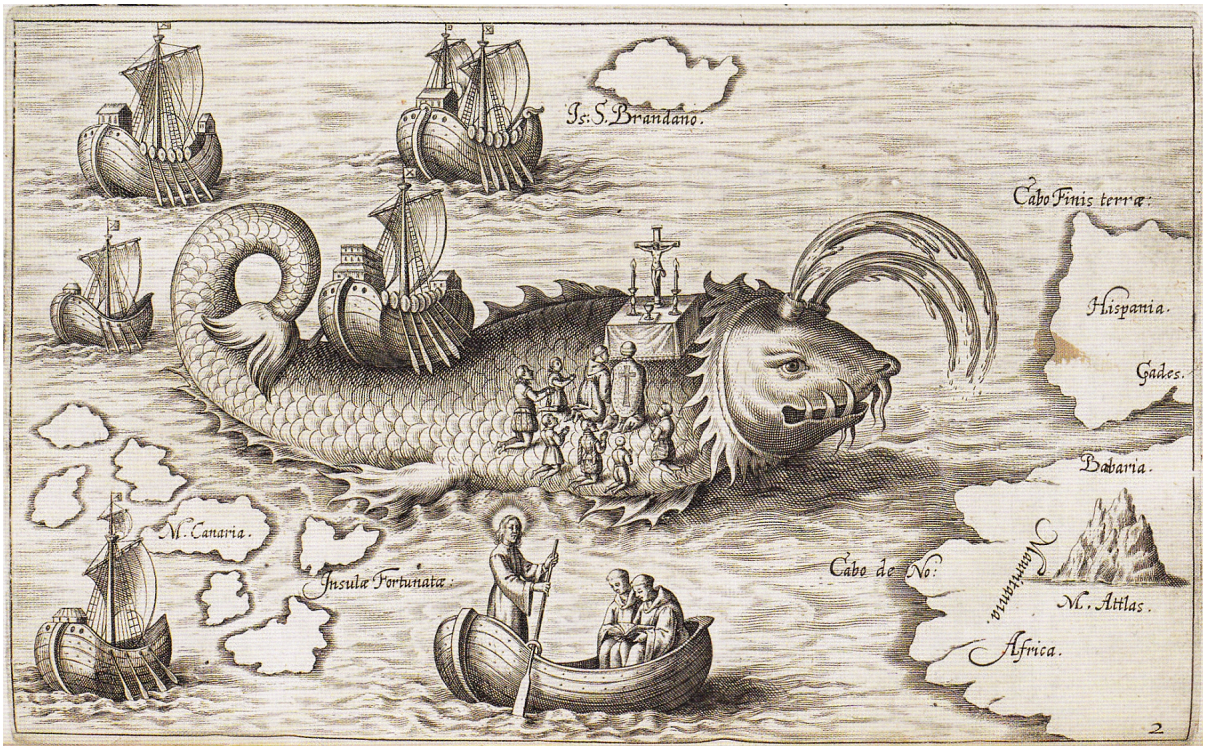


*Figure 3.1 The putative Irish explorer, St. Brendan, gets a lift from a whale.*

The 1400s witnessed the start of increasingly ambitious sea expeditions in the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans, which continued for several centuries. Countries in Eurasia and Africa developed a growing interest in exotic goods and the wider world. The western European voyages of fishermen, whalers, and licensed explorers opened up an era in which the growth of commerce, creed, and curiosity combined with an opportunity to exploit new resources in far-off lands. Different European nations used different strategies to achieve these goals.

The motivations of the European expansionists were those of their age. The pursuit of material and spiritual goals reflected the agendas of mercantile wealth accumulation and Catholic dominance. The example of Iberian colonies in Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America taunted the French: they, too, wanted easy riches and an almost effortless conquest. Instead they got long, cold winters, an Iroquois adversary that would not relent, and a trade in furs — a far cry from the silver and gold looted from the Aztec and Inca empires. As well, the French experiment in North America faced serious competition from English and Dutch Protestants in the region.

In the earliest era of contact and conquest, the Spanish dominated the New World. Their experiences largely defined early European knowledge of the Americas and its native inhabitants, the people Europeans called *los Indios* or "Indians." In the 50 years after Christopher Columbus's first voyage across the Atlantic in 1492, the Spanish established the basis for a powerful hemispheric empire. The Spanish faced two significant challenges, however: distance and time. The long journey between Europe

and the colonies meant that communication was difficult and slow. Distance and time played a key role in shaping colonial administration as well as patterns and methods of imperial control.

The direct impact of European exploration on the northern half of North America was slight until the early 17th century, with colonization and some measure of agricultural settlement occurring only very slowly. The earlier successes modelled by the Spanish and Portuguese from the Carolinas south to Tierra del Fuego had a profound effect on European attitudes and ambitions for the lands to the north.

This chapter surveys early European interest in what was called the "Americas" through the first stages of establishing colonies. It explores the various economic and political models that emerged, and the impact of this phase of transatlantic plunder on the emergence of western Europe as a centre of imperial power.

Learning Objectives

Type your learning objectives here.

- Account for the European incursion into the western Atlantic.
- Describe the factors that made European exploration and expansion possible.
- Identify the ideas and attitudes that provide the intellectual context for the "age of exploration."
- Account for the presence of the French in North America.
- Explain the evident failure of Cartier's expeditions.

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# 3.2 Beginnings of Globalism

In Chapter 2 (#chapter-2-1-introduction) we considered the very deep history of human occupation in the Americas. Here, we do the same for the Europeans.

## Northwestern Europe to 1491

The earliest human-made or anthropogenic tools discovered in France have been dated to more than 1.5 million BP, but that does not mean that there has been continuous human occupation of the region. The area's multiple climate zones and various entry points made it a crossroads for human traffic over millennia. Neanderthal populations appear around 300,000 BP but are thought to have gone extinct around 30,000 BP. Modern humans (in this case, Cro-Magnons) became the dominant hominid species. They enjoyed a long run, but glaciation scoured humans and other fauna from much of northwestern Europe until about 15,000 years ago. It was only then — about the same time humans were appearing in the Americas, if not some years later — that humans returned to northern France and the British Isles.

The emergence of agricultural societies in the Neolithic, about 4000–6000 BP, occurs at about the same time teosinte cultivation emerged in Mesoamerica. At about 2800 BCE, people in what is now France began working in bronze; evidence suggests that it was about 2150 BCE before Britons began to do the same. The so-called Iron Age, however, did not arrive for another 1000 to 1200 years.

The experience of the British Isles in the pre-contact period illustrates processes at work across Europe. What leaps out is the succession of cultures that arrived in Britain and established dominance. Indigenous British populations were subjected to repeated influxes of newcomers from the mainland of Europe, the most consequential waves beginning with the Romans about 2000 years ago. British culture was strongly influenced by successive invasions, including the Germanic arrivals of the fifth century CE and repeated incursions and immigrations from Viking homelands from the eighth century through to the 10th century (one arm of which would carry on across the Atlantic). And while the British Isles would sustain many localized seagoing, fishing economies, the core economic activity was agriculture. This was true in France as well, and the number of hunter-gatherers in both territories was insignificant.



*Figure 3.2 Pre-contact Europeans developed striking visual records of their history, like the Bayeux Tapestry.*

The indigenous Celtic cultures of northwestern Europe and the British Isles continued to be pushed to the margins in the late pre-contact period. In England and Wales that process accelerated with the arrival of the Normans (in large measure the descendants of Viking immigrants to France) in the 11th century. The society that emerged in England — and that was in place in 1492 — was thus a hybridized one dominated by an aristocracy of continental origin and a landscape of often fractious princelings/chieftains with a warrior class and clergy dominating a large agricultural peasantry. The "commoners" were themselves a mix, but in many districts in Britain throughout this period they were essentially ethnically different from their feudal masters. (Everyday artifacts of this relationship are the words used to describe meats: English peasants raised pigs, chickens, and cows, which were transmogrified in the market and on the banquet-hall table into pork (*porc),* poultry (*poulet),* and beef (*boeuf),* words derived from their conquerors' native Norman French.)

While England's boundaries were still undefined in this period and Wales resisted English domination, Scotland and Ireland were utterly distinct and their political units were mostly organized around chieftainships. What can be said of these northwestern European peoples in this period is that their political and economic conditions were very unsettled, that they had developed important technologies, and that their identities were necessarily fluid and somewhat tribal.[1]

1. For a survey of the repeated and overlapping population tides that washed across Britain, see David Miles, *The Tribes of Britain* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005).

## The First Voyageurs: the Vikings and Others



*Figure 3.3 Danes about to invade England. From Miscellany on the Life of St. Edmund from the 12th century.*

In the eighth century, Norsemen, or Vikings, began settling parts of the Faroe, Shetland, and Orkney Islands in the North Atlantic. For nearly four centuries they went wherever treasure was, trading as far as Byzantium and Kiev in the east. In the west they raided Ireland and England, continuing south to the Italian peninsula. Their gun-and-run approach — sailing into a port, seizing its gold, and murdering or enslaving its people before fleeing — belies the fact that they were also settlers. They made homes throughout the British Isles, and they began settling Iceland in approximately 870 CE. One Viking, known to us as Erik the Red (c. 950–1003), was accused of murder and banished from his native Iceland in about 980. Erik explored to the west and later founded a settlement on a poorly charted, snowy coastline. Knowing that this bleak land would need many people to prosper, Erik returned to Iceland after his exile had passed and coined the word “Greenland” as a branding ploy that he hoped would appeal to the overpopulated and treeless settlement. Erik sailed again to Greenland in 985 and established two colonies with a population of nearly 5000.

Leif Erikson (c. 970–1020), son of Erik the Red, and other members of his family began exploring the North American coast in 986 CE. Leif landed in three places, and in the third established a small settlement called **Vinland**. The location of Vinland is uncertain, but an archaeological site on the northern tip of Newfoundland at **L'Anse aux Meadows** has been identified as a good candidate. It was a modest Viking settlement and is the oldest confirmed presence of Europeans in North America. The settlement in Vinland was abandoned in struggles between the Vikings and the native inhabitants, who the newcomers called **Skraelingar**. Bickering also broke out among the Norsemen themselves, and the settlement lasted less than two years. The Vikings would make brief excursions to North America for the next 200 years, though further attempts at colonization were thwarted.

By the 13th century, Viking civilization was in retreat; Iceland and Greenland entered a period of decline during a little ice age. Christianity and the emergence of a unified Christian kingdom in Norway caused division within the Viking world. As well, Europe soon fell prey to a series of devastating epidemic diseases, and what knowledge scholars, sailors, and governments had of Viking explorations was lost or ignored. Apart from the traces left behind at L'Anse aux Meadows and the possibility that some genetic material might have found its way into the Indigenous communities of the region, the Viking legacy evaporated with their departure. Vinland was a dead end.

Other apocryphal accounts of European encounters with the Americas exist. These include stories of St. Brendan's voyages from Ireland, Prince Madoc's expedition from Wales, and the possibility of fishing fleets sailing out of Bristol, England, all the way to Newfoundland. However, none of these stories can be substantiated by evidence; neither can the suggestion that African or Chinese voyages across open seas reached the Americas. There are also tales of classical-era Romans and Egyptians, and even Old Testament "lost tribes of Israel" crossing the Atlantic. Against these unconfirmed tales, there is some evidence to suggest that Inuit sea voyagers may have washed ashore in western Europe, but none of these encounters appears to have had any significant consequences to the Indigenous North Americans or to the Europeans they may have encountered.

All of this is important to consider against the many efforts Europeans launched after 1492 to claim all or parts of the Americas. Often these claims were made on the strength of long-term connections that simply did not exist in any form other than myth. This is not to say that crossing the Atlantic from east to west was impossible before 1492, although prevailing winds and sea currents made it fiendishly difficult and dangerous. Boats sailing out of the north of Spain and the west coast of France and possibly Portugal as well pursued fish and whales into the North Atlantic and may have done so before Columbus. Indeed, the enthusiasm with which Basque, Bristol, and French whaling and fishing fleets patrolled the Grand Banks in the era of recorded voyages suggests that they were one step ahead of John Cabot's voyage in 1497 at the very least. Ultimately, European claims were principally made against one another, rather than against Indigenous occupants whose status as non-Europeans and non-Christians was critical to the very idea of imperial expansion.

Key Takeaways

- Conditions in northwestern Europe were highly unsettled in the five centuries leading to contact.
- It was not uncommon for the ethnicity and language of a ruling class to be distinct from that of the subject peoples.
- Strong seagoing traditions among the Vikings led to transatlantic explorations with what appear to be few long-term ramifications.

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- Danes about to invade England (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wikinger.jpg) © unknown is licensed under a Public Domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/) license

# 3.3 The Seafaring World of the 15th and 16th Centuries

A map of the world in 1400 reveals a patchwork of small countries and kingdoms, most of them heavily centralized, but few of them truly expansive. There are exceptions, such as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (and its successor state, the Poland–Lithuanian Alliance), which extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and the Ottoman Empire, which included all of the Balkan Peninsula and what is now Turkey. China's borders under the Ming Dynasty, although huge, were a fraction of what they had been under the Mongol and perhaps a fifth of their size today. **Absolutist** monarchical regimes with powerful religious institutions were globally the norm. In this respect, the Aztec Empire was hardly different from its contemporaries headquartered in Beijing, the Mali Empire in west Africa, or 15th century England under Henry Tudor. A few of these nations, however, had begun exploring the possibility of expanding trade networks by sea.



*Figure 3.4 A model of Zheng He's flagship beside one of Columbus's ships. Both are built to the same scale.*

The early leader in economic expansion was the Ming Dynasty under the admiralship of Zheng He (1371–1433). His fleet was one of the largest the world would see for many years, and his flagship was the largest vessel on the planet — one that dwarfed European craft. In the first half of the 1400s, Zheng pushed the maritime boundaries of Ming influence all the way to the east African coast: Chinese dialects were becoming rooted in every port town around the Indian Ocean, and piracy was virtually extinguished by Zheng's naval policing.

Around the same time, Portuguese navigators began pushing into the South Atlantic, inching one degree

of latitude a year farther south from about 1450 onwards. To put this in perspective, official European maps in the first half of the 1400s extended the world no farther south than Morocco. Africa was, apart from its Mediterranean flank, virtually unknown to Europeans. By 1488, advances in navigational instruments like the compass and the astrolabe, better ship design (like the caravel), and growing confidence allowed the Portuguese to round the Cape of Good Hope and enter the Indian Ocean. Three maritime traditions — that of Portugal, the Ming Dynasty, and the Arab ports — were now in contact. With gold pouring into Lisbon, other European nations took note. Spain in particular wanted a piece of the action but could never assert quite enough power over the Portuguese fleets to break through that monopoly around west Africa. That left the Spanish, for the time being, with only one direction in which to look.

## Spain in the Americas

The year 1492 is a watershed in human history. The changes it brought to the Americas (which we explore in some detail in Chapter 5 (#chapter-5-1-introduction)) were far-reaching and we still can feel the effects today. In Europe, 1492 had significant economic repercussions as well, as Spanish expeditions secured huge bounty in the form of precious metals. In the space of two generations, port cities that faced the Atlantic were booming. Navies grew to monstrous size, as did the industries that supported them — everything from making sails to producing dyes for uniforms to twisting enormous lengths of rope. Merchant wealth rose on a wave of price inflation, and this emergent class of traders and manufacturers began to flex a little political muscle. At the same time, it was still the age of absolutist monarchs whose power, it was thought, derived from heaven (a concept known as the **divine right of kings**). This understanding of the nature of power must be placed in its particular historic context: the Spain that ventured into the western Atlantic had only very recently been transformed politically and culturally in a manner that put religious identity first.

Spain was divided since the eighth century between a Muslim south and a Christian north. The marriage of the 18-year-old Isabella of Castille to her first cousin Ferdinand II of Aragon in 1469 began a rapid process of consolidating Spain into its current shape. What was left outside the boundaries was the Emirate of Grenada, the last toehold of what had been an extensive Muslim empire across Spain and Portugal. After a decade of bitter fighting, Grenada fell to the Catholic monarchs on January 2, 1492, and the ***reconquista*** was complete. In the space of barely 30 years, Spain was transformed, and the changes had come about under the sword and the Bible of a stridently Catholic kingdom. The country was militarized, police forces were introduced, religious tolerance fell to a low ebb, and religious chauvinism ran at full tide.

One arm of this movement took the form of the **Inquisition**. To consolidate their victory and begin the process of "purifying" their kingdoms, the monarchs issued orders for all Jews and Muslims to make a choice: convert to Christianity or leave Spain. The newly reformed Spanish identity was thus unquestionably Christian, and all subjects of the Crown were to belong to the Catholic fold. It was in this context that Christopher Columbus (himself aggressively Catholic) received support for a voyage to the West, ostensibly in search of an avenue to India that would not trespass on Portuguese routes to the south. In 1492 when he set sail, commercial, military, and religious ambitions were in play in Spain; Columbus's voyage was much more than a harmless geographic survey.

Three ships left Spain in September 1492 with fewer than 90 men, a year's provisions, and a

fundamental misunderstanding of the size of the Earth. Scholars all over Europe argued that Columbus grossly underestimated the distance to Asia. Columbus's misunderstanding, along with an egotistical demeanour and demands for great personal rewards from his expedition, made him an unpopular business partner and a difficult master at sea. On October 12, 1492, with mutiny a real likelihood, the small Spanish fleet sighted an island in the chain later named the Bahamas. Columbus returned to Spain in 1493, convinced that he had reached Asia. He described a tropical paradise and brought back enough gold and other valuables to secure permission for a second voyage.

The Caribbean quickly became the base for further Spanish reconnaissance. Within 25 years, European explorers and cartographers had sketched a remarkably accurate outline of the Caribbean and the eastern coasts of North, South, and Central America. For a time, Columbus himself served as governor of "the Indies," the name used by the Spanish for the Americas. His critics accused him of harsh rule and mistreatment of the colonists, who called him "the tyrant of the Caribbean." In fact, Columbus was arrested and returned to Spain in chains, where he was stripped of his titles and office for misrule. Columbus went to his grave believing that his voyages had taken him to Asia. Others, however, argued that he had reached a previously unknown land mass, a "New World."

While the Spanish were busy establishing themselves in the Caribbean, the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama (c. 1460–1524) made contact with India in 1498 and thus won the Iberian race to tap into the spice trade. Another emissary of the Spanish throne, Ferdinand Magellan (c. 1480–1521), confirmed Columbus's mathematical errors and fundamental cartographical ignorance in late 1520 when his fleet entered the Pacific Ocean. Magellan's fleet became the first to successfully circumnavigate the globe, returning to Spain in 1525, but the voyage took an incredible toll: of the original five ships and 237 men, only one ship and 18 men survived, and Magellan was not one of them.

The first challenge to Spanish hegemony in the New World came when the **Treaty of Tordesillas** divided what the Europeans knew of the Americas between Spain and Portugal. Part of Brazil fell within the Portuguese area of claim, leading to a growing struggle for control in the region between the Iberians. Later, other European nations entered the region, creating further complications. Some, like the Dutch, took a primarily economic interest in the American hemisphere, shaping their models of colonial administration largely around trade and piracy as opposed to conquest and plantations.



*Figure 3.5 The Cantino world map was prepared in Lisbon around 1502. In only a decade, Spanish and Portuguese landfalls in South America and the Caribbean were extensive.*

Key Takeaways

- Portugal was one of the leaders of the European "age of discovery." The Portuguese were able to successfully navigate the open sea because of technological innovations. The Portuguese explored the coast of Africa and later established trading posts up and down the coast of West Africa. Portuguese forays into the Indian Ocean marked the beginning of a powerful sea empire.
- The Spanish followed Portugal's lead after completing the *reconquista* and sponsoring Columbus's 1492 voyage. Like the Portuguese, Columbus had the goal of reaching Asia to tap into the lucrative spice trade. Columbus instead reached the "New World," and the Spanish found themselves exploring — and exploiting — as much as they could as fast as they could. Competition between Portugal and Spain eased with the Treaty of Tordesillas, which divided the Earth into two zones of influence.

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# 3.4 England and France in the Age of Discovery

In the period before contact with the Americas, the countries of England and France, as they appear on the map today, had not yet taken shape. For much of the Middle Ages, both regions faced invasions by Germanic and Scandinavian tribes from northern and central Europe and almost continuous internal instability. It was the principal goal of monarchs in England and France to consolidate their power; their expansion across the Atlantic can only be understood within this context. However, they lagged behind the Portuguese, the Spanish, and the Dutch because of the almost constant state of war across the Channel as well as the emergence of the Protestant Reformation in the early 16th century.

## England and France at War



*Figure 3.6 Pieter Bruegel the Elder's The Triumph of Death (c. 1562) represents the plague years. England and much of Europe were traumatized by epidemics and war during this period.*

While the **Black Death** (the plague) ravaged Europe in the 14th century, England and France descended into the **Hundred Years' War** (1337–1453) over the question of who would succeed to the throne of

France. The lengthy conflict had a significant political impact for both sides. In England, it strengthened the role of **Parliament** simply because Edward III (r. 1312–1377) and his successors had to turn to the representative assembly repeatedly for funds. As these meetings occurred, the two levels of Parliament — the House of Lords and the House of Commons — began to take shape. A corresponding national assembly did not appear in France because Phillip VI (r. 1328–1350) and his successors considered it repugnant; instead they worked assiduously to build a strong monarchical regime. These years of conflict had the added effect of catalyzing what would later be called "national" identities in both countries.

The Hundred Years' War also brought on a period of domestic strife in England. The War of the Roses ended when Henry Tudor (1457–1509) (subsequently Henry VII) defeated his rival in 1485. Under the Tudor dynasty, the monarchy became the main political force in England. The powers of Parliament waned, as did that of the lesser royals, called the **aristocracy**. Henry VII's governing council also dealt with recalcitrant nobles by using the Star Chamber, which was a judicial body that undermined traditions of English common law, and by promoting the interests of the middle class. Merchants, heavily concentrated in England's port towns, favoured policies that enabled and protected trade; their concerns thus became the concerns of the Crown as well. And merchants favoured seaborne trade.

It was under Henry VII, then, that England made its first official foray into overseas exploration. In May 1497 (some historians claim it was seven years later), the king allowed John Cabot (c. 1450–1499), a Venetian mariner living in London, to sail under the English flag in an attempt to find a northern route to Asia.[1] Cabot reached what he called Newfoundland in June of that year and claimed it on behalf of the king. He made a second voyage in 1498, funded in part by Henry VII who expected to reap the financial rewards of the journey. However, after Cabot's death, his crew, led by his son Sebastian, failed to find any precious metals, so Henry lost interest in overseas exploration.

While Spain and Portugal began the process of colonization, England found itself in the midst of a political and religious crisis for much of the 16th century. Events at home took precedence over any further state-sponsored oceanic voyages. However, Cabot's voyages gave England a chip they could play when it came time to match other European claims to the North American mainland.

## Religion and Politics in the 16th Century

Through most of the medieval period, secular leaders in England and France relied on a connection to the Roman Catholic Church to underwrite their legitimacy. By the early 16th century, however, the Church itself had come under fire. The intellectual currents of the Renaissance played a role in this change, but so too did the practices of the Church, including clerical immorality, clerical ignorance, and clerical absenteeism. The Church's failings led Martin Luther (1483–1546), a Catholic priest in Germany, to spark the **Protestant Reformation** in 1517. Protestant sects arose throughout northwestern Europe, including in England and France (where they were often called **Huguenots**). Breaking with Rome was a serious business and the decision to become Protestant or remain Catholic in many cases had as much to do with power struggles as it did with faith.

1. William Gilbert, "Beothuk-European Contact in the 16th Century: A Re-evaluation of the Documentary Evidence," *Acadiensis* XXXX, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2011): 24–44; R. A. Skelton, "CABOT, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 1 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed November 30, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cabot_john_1E.html.

The **English Reformation** began officially under Henry VIII (1491–1547) who ruled from 1509 to 1547 and was driven by court politics. Henry's break with the Pope led Parliament to pass legislation that made the king the head of the new **Church of England** and required all priests in England to swear allegiance to the king's church. In terms of doctrine, the new Church, also called the Anglican Church, made few changes. In terms of economic power, however, Henry VIII gained an advantage when he dissolved all the monasteries in England and confiscated their wealth as a means to build his treasury and weaken that of the Vatican.

The English Reformation did not come about without local resistance. Henry's successors kept the country divided and in a state of civil war until the late 16th century. Under Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603), some stability was achieved — enough to allow for the emergence of new sects of Protestants to appear, including the Puritans and the Quakers, both of which would play a pivotal role in the colonization of North America in the 17th century.

The French monarchy had little political reason to turn to Protestantism in the early 16th century. Enjoying relative religious stability in the 1520s, King Francis I (r. 1515–1547) looked for possible ways to catch up with the Spanish in the realm of overseas exploration and colonization. In 1524, he sponsored a voyage by the Florentine navigator, Giovanni da Verrazzano (1485–1528) to stake a claim in the New World and discover the Northwest Passage. During his voyage (1523–1524), Verrazzano explored the Atlantic coastline from modern-day South Carolina to New York. A decade later, Francis sponsored two voyages by Jacques Cartier (1491–1557). While Cartier failed to find a northern route to Asia, he did survey the St. Lawrence River and made valuable contacts with the local population. Nevertheless, the discoveries did not inspire Francis to support a permanent settlement in the western Atlantic at that time.

Soon the window of opportunity slammed shut. Protestant factions began springing up across France at mid-century, leading to religious riots. The worst of these occurred on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1572. Shortly after the marriage of Margaret of Valois to Henry of Navarre, Catholics led by Henry of Guise viciously attacked Protestants in Paris. Sectarian civil war ensued. A group of Catholic moderates finally ended the strife when they concluded that domestic tranquility was more important than religious doctrine. Moreover, the last man standing in a three-way conflict over religion and succession was the Protestant Henry of Navarre. After he ascended to the throne as Henry IV (r. 1589–1610), he joined the Roman Catholic Church. Nine years later he issued the **Edict of Nantes** in 1598, which granted the Huguenots liberty of conscience and worship and brought stability to the country. Henry IV's tentative nod to religious toleration put France at last in a position to renew efforts at exploration and transatlantic trade.

Key Takeaways

- Political conflict between France and England and internal strife forced changes in the shape and character of government in the two countries.
- Competition across the Channel extended to belief systems during the Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation.
- These conflicts deterred the English and the French from participating in the earliest stages of

transatlantic commerce and invasion.

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# 3.5 The Columbian Age

## The Iberians

Three decades after Columbus's voyages, the Spanish were in control of a vast quilt-pattern of indigenous empires. Their military prowess had been sharpened in the *reconquista* and their tolerance for non-Catholics dulled by the Inquisition. The colonization of Cuba began in 1511 and from there the attacks on Mexico began. In 1518 a small force led by the *conquistador* Hernán Cortés began the process of conquering the Mayan city states of the Yucatan, then liberating tribute-paying provinces of the Aztec Empire (which sent 200,000 of their own troops against the Aztec capital). Smallpox was Cortés' other, hidden ally and it would kill thousands upon thousands, enabling a Spanish victory. In 1521 the Aztec capital fell and the Spanish took on the administrative mantle of the ousted regime.

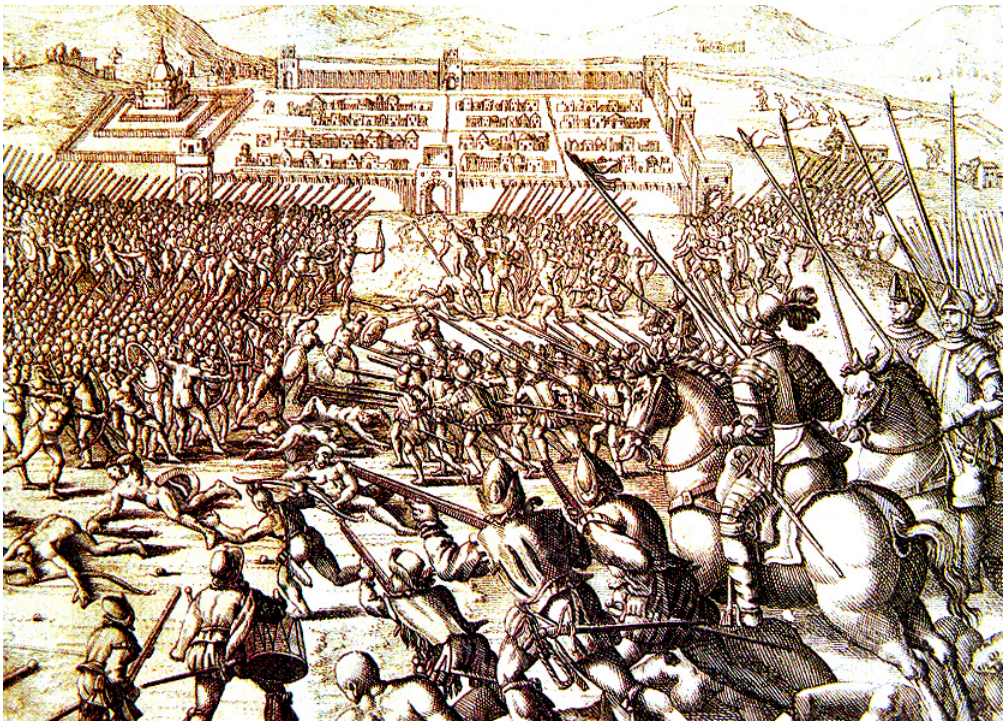

*Figure 3.7 A Spanish representation of the conquest of Cusco and the capture of Atahualpa, c. 1538.*

Similarly, a *conquistador* mission under Francisco Pizarro (c. 1476–1541) made three attempts on the Inca Empire of Peru. Pizarro succeeded in 1532 after holding the last **Sapa Inca**, Atahualpa, hostage for ransom and then executing him. Again, the Spanish appropriated the indigenous administrative structure and many of its legal practices, adapting some while replacing others. This system of conquest allowed the Spanish to take advantage of existing labour supplies and to easily divert local wealth to Spain. The Spanish Crown clearly had an interest in this process and quickly began centralizing its control of the new territories.

In 1524 the Spanish Council of the Indies was created, and **New Spain** was divided into four viceroyalties. One of these, also called New Spain, would play a role in the geopolitical struggle for North America, as it included Mexico and Central America, gradually extending into California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Its wealthy capital was Mexico City (the former Tenochtitlan).

The economic systems of Spanish America were also strictly controlled hierarchical and economic endeavours. Native labourers were provided through the *encomienda* system, which was a grant from the king given to an individual mine or plantation (*hacienda*) owner for a specific number of natives to work in any capacity in which they were needed; the *encomenderos*, or owners, had total control over these workers. Ostensibly, the purpose was to protect the natives from enemy tribes and instruct them in Christian beliefs and practices. In reality, the *encomienda* system was hard to distinguish from **chattel slavery**. The *repartimiento*, which granted land and/or indigenous people to settlers for a specified period of time, was a similar system.

In the Portuguese territory of Brazil, economic development centred on sugar rather than silver and gold. As the Europeans subdued local populations, increasing numbers of sugar plantations emerged along the Atlantic coast. Most of the labour on the sugar plantations came from native slaves, though they aggressively resisted control by the Europeans. In fact, many of the plantations failed in part because of the resistance of the natives. Vulnerability to imported diseases was a further factor, reducing the viability of enslaving Indigenous peoples. By 1600, Africans, who had developed some immunity to "Old World" diseases, were replacing indigenous peoples as slaves on the sugar plantations. Around the same time, African slaves found themselves shipped to the Pacific coast of South America where thousands worked in silver mines, such as the gargantuan operation at Potosí in Peru (now southern Bolivia).

This was the beginning of what became understood as **triangular trade**. European ships sailed to African slave markets, purchased large numbers of humans whose lives were to be given over to hard labour in the fields, shipped them across the **Middle Passage** (during which huge numbers died), and sold them to plantation owners. Sugar and other crops, as well as mineral wealth, were then loaded onto ships, which made the return trip to European markets and merchants. This model and variations on it would inform every colonial enterprise in North America and is explored in Chapter 6.

## Countermove: The Dutch

Because Spain and Portugal were the first to found colonies in the Americas, the patterns they established served as the template for other European empires. The biggest challenges that they faced in administering their colonial holdings were those of time and space. Communication between colony and the imperial centre was difficult, and it took months for messages, orders, and news to travel across the Atlantic. The distance between Europe and the Americas played a very important role in shaping colonial administration along with patterns and methods of imperial control. The ways in which the Iberian powers politically and economically administered their colonial holdings were also a reflection of the relationship between "mother country" and colony: the American holdings were settlement colonies shaped in the image of Spain and Portugal. Spaniards and Portuguese set up a direct system of governance that exerted tight control over the colonies just as absolutist monarchies at home tightly governed their own people. The Spanish and Portuguese colonies benefited the mother country

economically and colonial trade was rigorously controlled. This was the model that the Dutch and other European intruders in the Americas sought to emulate.

However much they wanted successful colonies, the Dutch also wanted to weaken the Spanish (and to a lesser extent, the Portuguese) hold on the Americas. This created a dual focus for the Netherlanders: build and disrupt. The Dutch concentrated on weakening their Spanish competitors through piracy in the Caribbean, something for which they seemed to have a true knack. As for the Portuguese, the Dutch took them on more directly, conquering small but important lands in Brazil. Ignoring the Treaty of Tordesillas, the Dutch established a colony on the Hudson River around 1614 and held onto that position until the 1660s. Their colonial economy was a mixed one, but one aspect — the fur trade with the Haudenosaunee — would bring the Dutch into conflict with New France.

Key Takeaways

- Spain's first emissaries to the Americas were *reconquista*-hardened soldiers whose understanding of war was as a means of obtaining plunder, power, and religious conformity.
- Spain's influence spread swiftly throughout Mesoamerica and along the Pacific coast of South America.
- The model of colonialism and imperialism developed by the Iberians would inform the decisions made by the Dutch, English, and French in North America.

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# 3.6 France in the Americas

The Spanish literally struck gold in the Caribbean and in the Aztec Empire. The torrent of gold and silver plunder flowing into western Europe changed the continent overnight. Until the 16th century, Iceland, the British Isles, and northwestern France were perceived by the commercial and political leaders of the great Eurasian capitals as the farthest reaches of trade networks, backwaters of economic stagnation with little to offer the rest of the world. In terms of wealth measured in spices or precious metals, northwestern Europe was regarded as impoverished and wanting. Spanish coups in the Americas (both political and economic, not to mention territorial) did two things: they invigorated the economies of Europe and fuelled interest in further imperial ventures. What if similar riches existed in the northern continent?

## French Expeditions

French imperial activity in the New World got off to a poor start. The earliest official French expeditions to North America, and particularly to Canada, were largely forgettable ventures. The first voyages, led by Jacques Cartier between 1534 and 1542, made contact with local peoples, including the Mi'kmaq, Montagnais, Algonquin, and the St. Lawrence Iroquois. Cartier's mission followed Pizarro's by only two years. Significantly, Cartier was instructed to "discover certain islands and lands where it is said that a great quantity of gold and other precious things are to be found."[1] Clearly the French Crown would have liked nothing better than to copy the success of the Spanish. These early voyages, however, established that the area contained no bounty of natural or human resources that was valuable to the French at the time. There was, simply put, no gold.

What Cartier came across instead was a region in economic transition. French fishermen had already scouted out North America at least as far as the Gaspé Peninsula, the south shore of the St. Lawrence River at its entrance to the Gulf. When Cartier's first expedition rounded the northern tip of Newfoundland and arrived in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, he found the local people eager to trade with him and clearly aware of a French interest in obtaining furs. This was a sure sign that there had already been contact between Indigenous peoples and European fishing/whaling fleets, and that some of the contact relationship involved commerce. The Algonquin people Cartier encountered indicated that they preferred some European goods over others, a sign that they were becoming knowledgable about the newcomers.

Cartier made contact with St. Lawrence Iroquois on the Gaspé, where he offended his hosts by erecting a large cross bearing the words, "Long Live the King of France." A year later he returned, venturing into the St. Lawrence River and moving westward. At this time many small villages dotted the north shore of the river in particular, especially near Île d'Orléans. Cartier's team visited the largest village, which he regarded as the "capital" of the St. Lawrence Iroquois, near the site of present-day Quebec City. This was **Stadacona** and its chief was Donnacona.

1. Quoted in Thomas McIlwraith and Edward Muller, *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent* (Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 67.




*Figure 3.8 Postage stamps became an effective way of transmitting images and understandings of the past, starting in the late 19th century. Critics complained that this 1934 stamp made Cartier look surprised to find land.*

Cartier's relationship with the St. Lawrence Iroquois, and especially with Donnacona, was not especially civil. On his first visit, Cartier attempted to abduct several of the Stadaconans, believing that they would make excellent proof of the success of his voyage. He even tried to abduct Donnacona himself, but settled for his two sons, Taignoagny and Domagaya. They travelled back to France where they spent the winter before returning to Stadacona in the summer of 1535 as part of Cartier's second voyage.

It was during this second tour that Cartier travelled farther upriver to another large settlement, **Hochelaga**. Unlike Stadacona, Hochelaga was fortified with a triple palisade of wood. The town contained about 3,000 people and was surrounded by cornfields. Its location remains a source of debate, but there is general agreement that it was near the foot of what Cartier called Mount Royal (that is, Montreal), though on which side is uncertain. A drawing made subsequently of Hochelaga by a European artist working from Cartier's descriptions suggests an Italianate order, which most likely was the artist's invention. Nevertheless, its 50 longhouses (each perhaps 30 metres deep) are represented. Hochelaga would have been an important meeting place at or near the confluence of the Ottawa/Outaouais River, the Rivière des Prairies, and the St. Lawrence, abutting Algonquin territory to the north, Mohawk lands to the south, and Stadaconan territory to the east. Those three palisades, however, strongly suggest a community living in the shadow of violence and warfare.

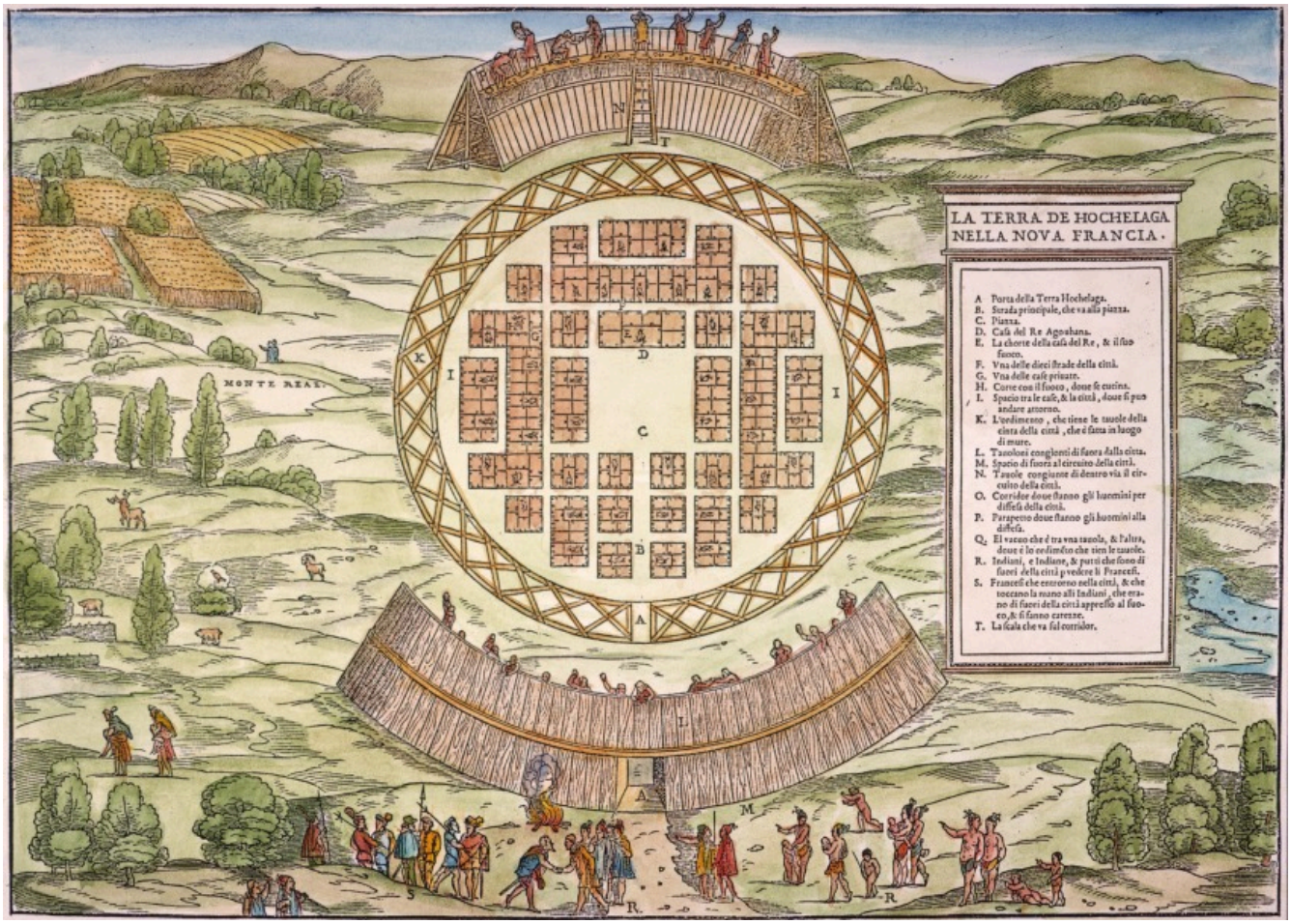

*Figure 3.9 Hochelaga village, c. 1535.*

Cartier's expedition returned downriver to Stadacona, where they spent an especially cold and difficult winter. Most of the crew died from cold and scurvy. The good news was a cure provided by the Stadaconans that mitigated the vitamin C deficiency that causes scurvy and without which the whole of the French expedition would have been doomed. Despite Cartier's erratic and consistently ungrateful behaviour toward the St. Lawrence Iroquois, and despite losing about 50 of his own men — evidently to ailments introduced by the Europeans — Donnaconna supported the foreigners through the winter. The Iroquoian leader made the mistake of telling Cartier about metal sources upriver (likely copper around Lake Superior) and this set off Cartier's gold fever. The reduced French party would have to be reinforced and in order to do that Cartier would have to first return to France and sell the court of Francis I on the idea of further investment. To that end, and with an eye to supporting a local coup, Cartier abducted Donnaconna, his sons (again), and seven other Stadaconans and took them all to France. Nine of the ten perished, and the tenth never returned to Canada.

Although Cartier received a warm welcome in Stadacona when he returned for the last time in 1541, that feeling did not last long. In that year the French made the last attempt of the century at establishing a colonial foothold in Canada. Cartier led a settlement cohort of 300 French to Charlesbourg-Royal, a site now identified as at Cap Rouge near Stadacona, but the settlement lasted barely a year, beset as it was by

bad weather and hostility from the Stadaconans whose hospitality and generosity Cartier had repeatedly scorned.[2]

Cartier's account of his 1541 voyage is silent on Hochelaga, from which scholars conclude that the town was gone by then. It may have been destroyed by enemies or disease, but it was the practice of Iroquoian farmers to move their villages every few years to find locations with better soil and to escape the accumulation of waste and vermin that beset older settlements, so it may have been dismantled and rebuilt elsewhere. At the present time — and perhaps forever — the fate of Hochelaga remains unknown.

The lacklustre interest on the part of the French in setting up a trading post in the St. Lawrence can be explained by a number of factors. First, Spain had a head start in the Americas and was vigorously protecting its foreign monopoly. This was evident even in the Gulf of St. Lawrence where, after 1543, the Basque whaling fleet — made up of very large, well-armed and generally intimidating ships — "fulfilled [Spain's] geopolitical aim of controlling the gateway to the gulf at [a] time of transatlantic rivalry…." The rise of New France in the next century allows us to lose sight of this Spanish initiative and its strength in the second half of the 15th century: "For the next 35 years, while the French shelved their explorations, the Strait was the scene of a whaling industry of unprecedented scope and intensity, centred at Red Bay" on the Strait of Belle Isle.[3] It was fortunate for French interests that the Spanish, Basques, and Portuguese overwhelmingly pursued their maritime interests in the offshore fisheries. They had enough salt at their disposal to process their catch without making landfall and, under those conditions, had no real reason to establish even a toehold. Second, Cartier disappointed his sponsors with samples of quartz and iron pyrites from Canada, which he very optimistically claimed were, respectively, diamonds and gold. (Hence the origin of the French saying, "as false as a diamond from Canada.") He never found the mythological **Kingdom of the Saguenay**, which his St. Lawrence Iroquoian hosts painted as a city of gold to rival the Inca capital at Cuzco. Finally, in the latter part of the 16th century, the **Wars of Religion** distracted the French from further overseas efforts in Canada. Anyone reflecting on the French experience in North America to 1600 would be safe in concluding that it had been a failure and perhaps was over.

## Florida

As a result of Cartier's unpromising expeditions, the French retreated from the North and spent much of the next 50 years trying to establish themselves elsewhere in the Americas. In an effort to emulate the success of the combative Dutch, the French turned their attention to Portuguese-claimed territory in Brazil. They established a position at Rio de Janeiro ("France Antarctique") in 1555 and another much later in 1612 at São Luís ("France Équinoxiale"). Nothing came of either effort.

There was slightly more promise in the prospect of a colony in Florida, which was then controlled by Spain. The ambitious goal in this instance was to weaken the Spanish political hold on the Americas as a whole. In 1564, René Goulaine de Laudonnière led an expedition to Florida, establishing **Fort Caroline** at the mouth of the St. Johns River in Timucuan territory near modern-day Jacksonville.

2. Arthur J. Ray, *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1996), 51–53.

3. Brad Loewen and Vincent Delmas, "The Basques in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Adjacent Shores," *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 36, issue 2 (2012): 223.

Florida's proximity to the rich Spanish Caribbean made it a strategically important position from which relatively easy wealth could be won. The French hoped to establish a successful settlement there, and thus a stepping-off point to contest Spanish power in the Caribbean. A foothold in Florida could also provide the opportunity to weaken the Spanish Crown through piracy; the prevailing currents and winds of the Caribbean and Atlantic ensured that the treasure fleets travelled up along the Florida coast before venturing out across the Atlantic. The settlement at Fort Caroline also reflected French concerns at home. Rising religious tensions between Catholics and Huguenots (Protestants) made it attractive to send Protestants to Fort Caroline where they could have refuge while, at the same time, serving France.



*Figure 3.10 A sketch of Fort Caroline under construction. It is regarded as the oldest fortified European settlement in what is now the United States.*

The Spanish, hearing of the French incursion into Spanish territory, established their own colony just south of Fort Caroline at San Agustín (St. Augustine). A September 1565 expedition against the French settlement quickly overwhelmed their defences and the Spanish killed many of the men, sparing most of the women and children. Twenty-five of the Frenchmen escaped, making their way along the Florida coast. The Spanish caught up to them about 15 miles outside of St. Augustine, where Pedro Menéndez de Avilés offered the Protestant Huguenots the chance to renounce their "apostate" faith and embrace Catholicism; their refusal was part of what sealed their fate. The men were executed and Spanish dominance in Florida was secured. The massacre of the French settlers and soldiers marked the end of the French experiment in Florida and their attempts to undermine Spanish political control in the area.

Failure in Florida would cause the French to revisit the possibility of colonies in Canada, although a generation would pass before a new French effort in the north came to pass. In the interim, French fishing boats were still making the voyage to the Grand Banks fisheries and they continued to encounter Indigenous people who wished to trade. French merchants soon realized the St. Lawrence region was a reliable and rich source of valuable fur-bearing animals, especially the beaver, which were becoming rare in Europe at a time when it was fashionable to wear fur hats. Encouraged by the merchants of its

Atlantic ports, the French Crown decided to colonize the territory to secure and expand its influence in America.

Key Takeaways

- The Spanish and Portuguese conquests in the Americas resulted in rapid economic growth in northwestern Europe, thus enabling and encouraging competitive missions from England, France, and other countries.
- Cartier's missions to the St. Lawrence brought back little of wealth but they represent the first sustained and documented contacts between Europeans and Indigenous peoples in what becomes Canada.
- The French failed to establish an ongoing presence in the north and in Florida. France retreated from the field for the rest of the century.

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# 3.7 Summary

Spain was clearly the force with which to contend when it came to the European race across the Atlantic, although perspective is important in making this statement. Western Europe and especially northwestern Europe constituted the outermost fringe of what its people regarded as the "civilized world." The Holy Lands, the Italian States, Constantinople, India, and even China were far more advanced technologically and economically. While the Europeans were keen to access the spice and silk stores of Asia, Asia was in no special hurry to build trade links with England, the Netherlands, or Portugal. Put simply, there was not much that western Europe had that Asia or even the eastern Mediterranean wanted. Relatively poor, often pummelled by wars, and riven by religious differences, western Europe was both highly motivated by the prospect of potential riches in the Americas and, at the same time, accustomed to competing bitterly with rivals from other polities.

The earliest expeditions from Spain inched their way out of the lower Gulf of Mexico into the Mississippi basin and across Florida before refocusing on the western flank of South America and the building of New Spain. Portugal's focus remained on South America and the west coast of Africa. The lands north of Florida were largely open for probes sent out from England, the Low Countries, France, and even Scandinavia.

The model of imperialism that the Iberians introduced took advantage of existing populations and grafted onto it the absolutist, heavily militarized, and severely Catholic features of the European homelands. Many of the Indigenous societies they encountered were hierarchical and some were strongly influenced by priesthoods of their own. These coincidences played to Iberian strengths and the early colonies did not require large numbers of emigrants from Europe to create working societies anew. In this respect, in most of Iberian America the Spanish and Portuguese were not "colonists" in the biological sense so much as they were managers and rulers.

This model influenced the northwestern Europeans but it was one that they could not follow utterly. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the English relied on emigration to (re)populate the territories they claimed. France was reluctant to do the same and it lacked the resources and the will to build much more than a replacement society along the St. Lawrence and a few outposts in Acadia and Louisiana. Certainly there are echoes of the Iberian experience in the alliance between the French and the Wendat, but there were no singular Indigenous civilizations of the stature of Mexico which the French might dominate, let alone enslave. In short, "colonization" played out differently across the Western Hemisphere: it had different qualities and moved at varying speeds toward distinctive goals.

Set side by side, the French and the English colonies present substantial contrasts. They were, of course, heavily influenced by geography. For the French, the great river and the lakes at its head were a pathway into the interior of the continent. Within slightly more than a century the French had stitched together a chain of alliances and micro-settlements all the way from Placentia to New Orleans. The story of New France is the subject of the next chapter.

Key Terms

**absolutist, absolutism**: A system of government in which authority is vested in the monarch with no provision for any kind of institutional opposition.

**Anglican Church**: See **Church of England**.

**aristocracy**: A privileged social class whose power is usually derived from birth, heredity, and almost exclusive ownership of land, as well as close connections with the clergy, the government, and with the Crown. As a form of government, an aristocracy is a system in which a small and wealthy elite holds power to the exclusion of others.

**Black Death**: Also called simply "the plague," a highly contagious disease reckoned to have reduced the total human population by 25% and as much as half of Europe's population in the 14th century. In its aftermath, there was social and religious upheaval from China to the British Isles.

**chattel slavery**: Ownership of a human being as a piece of property.

**Church of England**: Also known as the Anglican Church, the state church in England established under Henry VIII in opposition to Roman Catholicism.

***conquistador***: Term used by the Spanish and Portuguese, meaning conqueror. Covers the military and clergy leaders of the Iberian invasions of the Americas.

**divine right of kings**: A doctrine based on the belief that the monarch's power is derived directly from God and not from worldly authorities like a legislature, a council of nobles, or even the Vatican.

**Edict of Nantes**: A statement of relative religious tolerance in 1598 that brought an end to the Wars of Religion in France and extended civil rights to Protestants (Huguenots).

**English Reformation**: Term used to describe several events connected to the English break with Catholic Rome under Henry VIII.

**Fort Caroline**: Established by the French in 1564, it is reckoned to be the oldest fortified European settlement in what is now the United States.

**Hochelaga**: St. Lawrence Iroquoian fortified town at or near what is now Montreal.

**Huguenots**: French Protestants.

**Hundred Years' War**: A series of conflicts running from 1337 to 1453 related to royal successions in England and France.

**Inquisition**: A process and an institution aimed at ensuring Catholic supremacy and religious integrity in Western Europe. In Spain, it was geared toward eliminating Muslim and Jewish influences at the end of the 15th century and was an important part of the value system carried to the Americas by the *conquistadors.*

**Kingdom of the Saguenay**: According to Donnacona and other Stadaconans, a wealthy settlement north of the Laurentian Iroquois territories. Perhaps mythical, perhaps meant to distract or deceive the Europeans, the story may have legitimate roots in an oral tradition now disappeared.

**L'Anse aux Meadows**: The Viking settlement in northern Newfoundland, established c. 1000 CE.

**Middle Passage**: Shipping lanes between Africa and the Americas on which the principal cargo was captive humans, enslaved in west Africa. Mortality rates were as high as 20% on the voyage.

**New Spain**: From 1522 to 1821, a territory stretching, at its peak, from the north coast of South America

through Central America and Mexico to California, and what is now the American Southwest. It also included Florida, which was separated from the rest of New Spain by the French possession, Louisiana.

**parliament**: Generally, an elective assembly of representatives engaged for the purpose of governing the whole or advising the Crown. Specifically, the English/British elected assembly in Westminster. After 1867, this term refers as well to the Canadian elected assembly.

**Protestant Reformation**: Beginning c. 1517, a movement to reform the Catholic Church and many of its practices. Resulted in a split between reformers and the papacy and the rise of distinct sects, including the Church of England, the Scottish Presbyterian Church, Methodism, Puritanism, Quakerism, Lutheranism, and many others.

***reconquista***: Episodes of Spanish-Christian resistance to Spanish/Moorish-Islamic control of the Iberian Peninsula, lasting from the eighth or ninth century CE and culminating in the surrender of Granada in 1492.

**Sapa Inca**: Quechua for "the only Inca," the monarch of the Inca Empire. Atahualpa was the last person to hold this title.

**Skraelingar**: Term used by the Norse (Vikings) to describe Indigenous North American peoples they encountered between Greenland and Newfoundland. Probably applied to the Thule and the Innu in particular, and perhaps to the Beothuk as well.

**Stadacona**: The village of the St. Lawrence Iroquois at or near the current site of Quebec City.

**Treaty of Tordesillas**: The division in 1494 of the Atlantic world between Portugal and Spain. Portugal acquired Brazil and acknowledged that Spain had a prior claim to the rest of the Americas.

**triangular trade**: Commercial traffic beginning with goods from northwestern Europe traded into ports along the west African coast for slaves, ivory, and other commodities, which were then shipped across the Atlantic (the Middle Passage) to colonies in the Americas, where they were traded for plantation products, which were subsequently ferried north and east back to northwestern Europe.

**Vinland**: The name given by the Norse (Vikings) to the east coast of North America.

**Wars of Religion**: A series of wars fought in Europe arising ostensibly from divisions within Christianity. The French Wars of Religion (1562–1598) distracted the Crown from transatlantic enterprises.

## Short Answer Exercises

1. Why did Europeans become interested in exploring and colonizing the Americas from 1492 through the 17th century?
2. What is the significance of the religious turmoil in Europe between 1400 and 1600?
3. What factors contributed to the poor view the French had of North America in the mid-1500s?
4. Describe the extent of the impact of the Vikings' migration to North America.
5. What factors held back French and English efforts in the North Atlantic?
6. What aspects of the Spanish and Portuguese campaigns in the Americas influenced the French, Dutch, and English?
7. Explain the evident failure of Cartier's expeditions.

8. What do we learn about the Laurentian Iroquois from Cartier's reports?

## Suggested Readings

1. Axtell, James. "Trading at the Water's Edge." In *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America,* edited by James Axtell, 145–181. New York: OUP, 1988.
2. Havard, Gilles and Cécile Vidal. "Making New France New Again." *Common-Place* 7, no. 4 (July 2007). http://www.common-place.org/vol-07/no-04/harvard/
3. Loewen, Brad and Vincent Delmas. "The Basques in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Adjacent Shores." *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 36, issue 2 (2012): 213–266.
4. McGhee, Robert. "Vikings and Arctic Farmers: The Norse Atlantic Saga." In *The Last Imaginary Place: A Human History of the Arctic World.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
5. Vigneras, L-A. "The Cape Breton landfall in North America: 1494 or 1497? Note on a letter from John Day." *Canadian Historical Review* 38, no. 3 (1957): 219–228.

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# Chapter 4. New France

# 4.1 Introduction

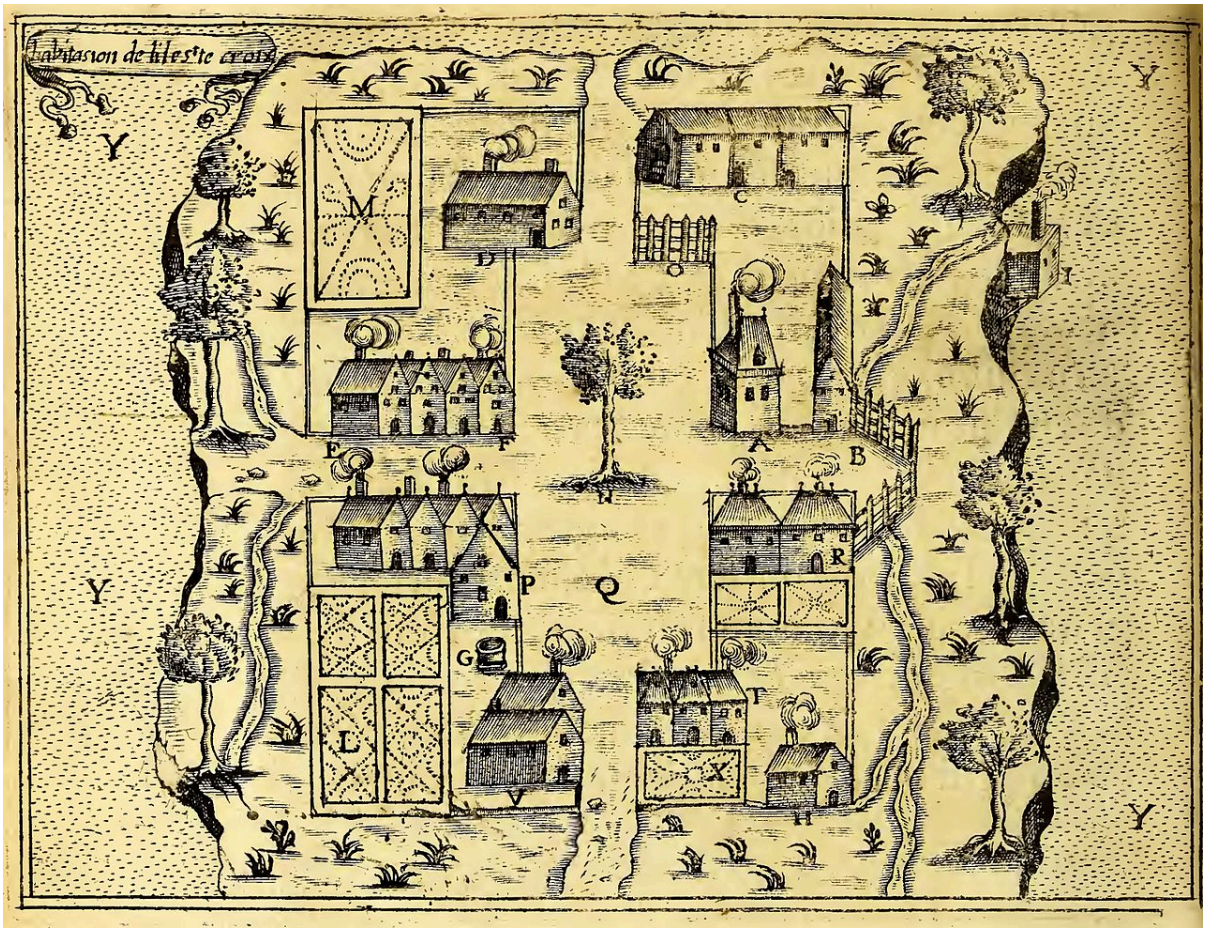


*Figure 4.1 Ste. Croix Island was the first of France's efforts at a year-round settlement. Known by the Passamaquoddy peoples as Muttoneguis, the site is now within the state of Maine.*

New France was the area nominally claimed and in some places actually colonized by France in North America. This activity began in 1605 and ended with the loss of almost all of it to Great Britain and Spain in 1763. As Louis XIV took steps to centralize authority in France and its holdings in the 1660s, the political and social structure of New France became more finely tuned and a largely homogeneous population was established. Catholic, ethnically and linguistically French, and subject to the laws of Paris and Versailles rather than local administrations, New France provides a sharp contrast to the diversity of colonial experiments in the English-speaking enclaves on the Atlantic seaboard. New France was distinct in its geography as well; rather than growing outward from a well-entrenched core, its people and its diplomacy rushed into and across the centre of the continent. At its peak in 1712, New France extended from Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains and from Hudson Bay to the Gulf of Mexico. The extent to which New France was settled by French colonists, however, was limited to a few concentrated pockets. It is best to think of New France as an enormous zone of influence, one that was divided into five colonies, each with its own administration: Canada, Acadia, Hudson Bay, Newfoundland (Plaisance), and Louisiana.

This chapter describes the establishment and growth of the colony, its economy, and its peoples. While it is easy to find ways in which New France was an extension and product of France itself, it is also important to observe the ways in which it was distinct from the “mother country.”

**Historians on Video**

Allan Greer is a professor of history at McGill University in Montreal. Here, he talks about New France and why (and what) we should learn about its history … and how its history impacts our present. Here is a link to the transcript of a video titled What should a student of pre-Confederation history know about New France? [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_ag_u4_03.pdf).

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=93#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

Learning Objectives

- Identify, locate, and distinguish between the principal colonies of New France.
- Account for the growth and setbacks of the colonial enterprise.
- Explain the implications of an economy based on staple products.
- Describe the kinds of economies and societies that emerged by the mid-18th century.
- Assess French colonial attitudes to Indigenous allies, enemies, and slaves.
- Describe the role of empire and its relationship to emergent local societies.

### Video Attributions

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# 4.2 Acadia

A half century would pass between Cartier's kidnappings of Iroquoian men along the St. Lawrence and the arrival of French delegations determined to build a sustained presence. Not surprisingly they would do so first in the lands closest to Europe and near the riches of the Grand Banks fisheries. This territory would become known as Acadia**.**

Both the Portuguese and the British briefly established positions in the region in the 16th century, but neither built lasting settlements or trading posts. The Portuguese enjoyed a singular advantage in this field: the Azores, a chain of small islands roughly halfway between the European mainland and Newfoundland. This stopping point between Europe and the Grand Banks enabled Portuguese and Basque fleets to make the voyage into the western Atlantic with relative security and was a key factor behind long-term Iberian involvement on the fisheries and whaling grounds. Their endless supplies of salt, moreover, made it possible for the Iberians to preserve their catch of cod without bothering to make landfall. Had they wanted to, they could easily have dominated Newfoundland and its waters. Doing so was, simply, unnecessary.

French missions followed in the late 16th century and were both tentative and unsuccessful at first. There were abortive efforts — on Sable Island using convict settlers in 1599, at Tadoussac the year after, and on Ste. Croix in 1604 — but a viable presence was only established in July 1605, when Port-Royal was founded on the Bay of Fundy in what is now Nova Scotia. Port-Royal was to become the hub of a French colonial territory in what 16th century European maps described as "Arcadia." The French dropped the "r" and Acadia eventually stretched from Castine (in what is now the mid-coast of Maine), across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island (**Île Saint-Jean**), and all the way to the south coast of Newfoundland.

As colonies go, what distinguishes Acadia as an administrative unit is that so much of it was water: the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Bay of Fundy, the Gulf of Maine, Cabot Strait, and a long stretch of the Atlantic Ocean. The Gulf of St. Lawrence is roughly circular and many of the key settlements were along its edge. There were exceptions, and they were very important.

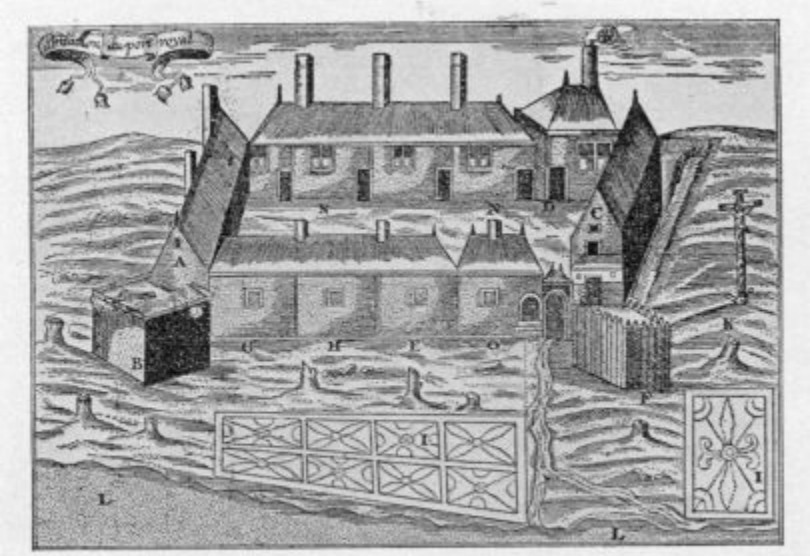


*Figure 4.2 Port Royal, Acadia, c. 1612, is based on Champlain's drawings.*

**L'Acadie**

One of the principles embraced in this book is using the group names that peoples preferred for themselves. The people of Acadia are, thus, *Acadiens.* We could go the extra step and refer to Acadia as *"L'Acadie"* but, in the interest of keeping it simple, we won't. The English-language version of the group name – "Acadian" – appears here when used in the context of British administration of or campaigns against the Acadiens. Thus, the "Acadian Expulsion" (which in French is *Le Grand Dérangement*). Many of the deported Acadiens wound up in Louisiana where their group name evolved into **Cajuns**, a small jump from *les Acadiens* but a much bigger leap from "Acadians." The Acadien people in the Maritimes have survived the disruptions of imperial and inter-colonial wars and they remain one of the strongest threads in the fabric of regional cultures. It is, indeed, the oldest continuous colonial culture in what is now Canada and the two branches of the Acadien family constitute one of the oldest European-descended cultures in North America.

## A Difficult Start

The first French settlers arrived mainly from the west-central region of France called Vienne, near Poitiers. (The later settlers of the St. Lawrence originated farther to the northwest, from around Normandy and Paris.) The colony's first hundred years were marked by conflict and troubles. Port-Royal was barely eight years old in 1613 when a British force out of Virginia burnt it to the ground.

A civil war broke out in 1640 between Acadiens based in the Port-Royal area (and loyal to Governor Charles de Menou d'Aulnay de Charnisay, a Catholic governor) and those attached to the settlement at

the mouth of the Saint John River (and affiliated with the Protestant governor, Charles de Saint-Étienne de la Tour). France had badly misunderstood the geography of Acadia and had provided two highly competitive governors for an area divided by only 23 kilometres of water. After many naval and land battles, d'Aulnay came out slightly ahead. In the siege of Saint John (launched by d'Aulnay in April 1645 when La Tour was away in New England), the "Lioness of La Tour," Françoise-Marie Jacquelin — Charles de la Tour's wife — led the defending troops. The fort fell and despite promises of mercy, d'Aulnay hanged the garrison; Madame La Tour died in captivity shortly thereafter.



*Figure 4.3 A portrait of Françoise-Marie Jacquelin (1602–1645).*

The Acadien civil war of 1640–1645, as bloody and pointless as it was, underlines the many curious aspects of life in the 17th century colony. First, it wasn't entirely the imposition of one people over another. The Wabanaki Confederacy of Penobscot, Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Abenaki peoples grafted the Acadiens onto their lives and struggles. Faced with aggressive British settlements in New England, the Confederacy accepted French fortifications and support. One has to keep in mind, however, that the Wabanaki preferred the French over the English precisely because the French posed fewer threats. This could be seen in several aspects of the colony. First, the number of French in Acadia was never as great or as worrisome as the number of English to the south. Also, the Acadien community quickly became a syncretic one, comprising Europeans and Indigenous peoples whose respective clans intermarried extensively. And where populations merged, so did cultures. By the late 17th century there were many Catholic Mi'kmaqs, perhaps as many as there were Catholic French-Acadiens. The English never made this kind of inroad into Wabanaki society nor did Wabanaki peoples find themselves in English colonial councils.

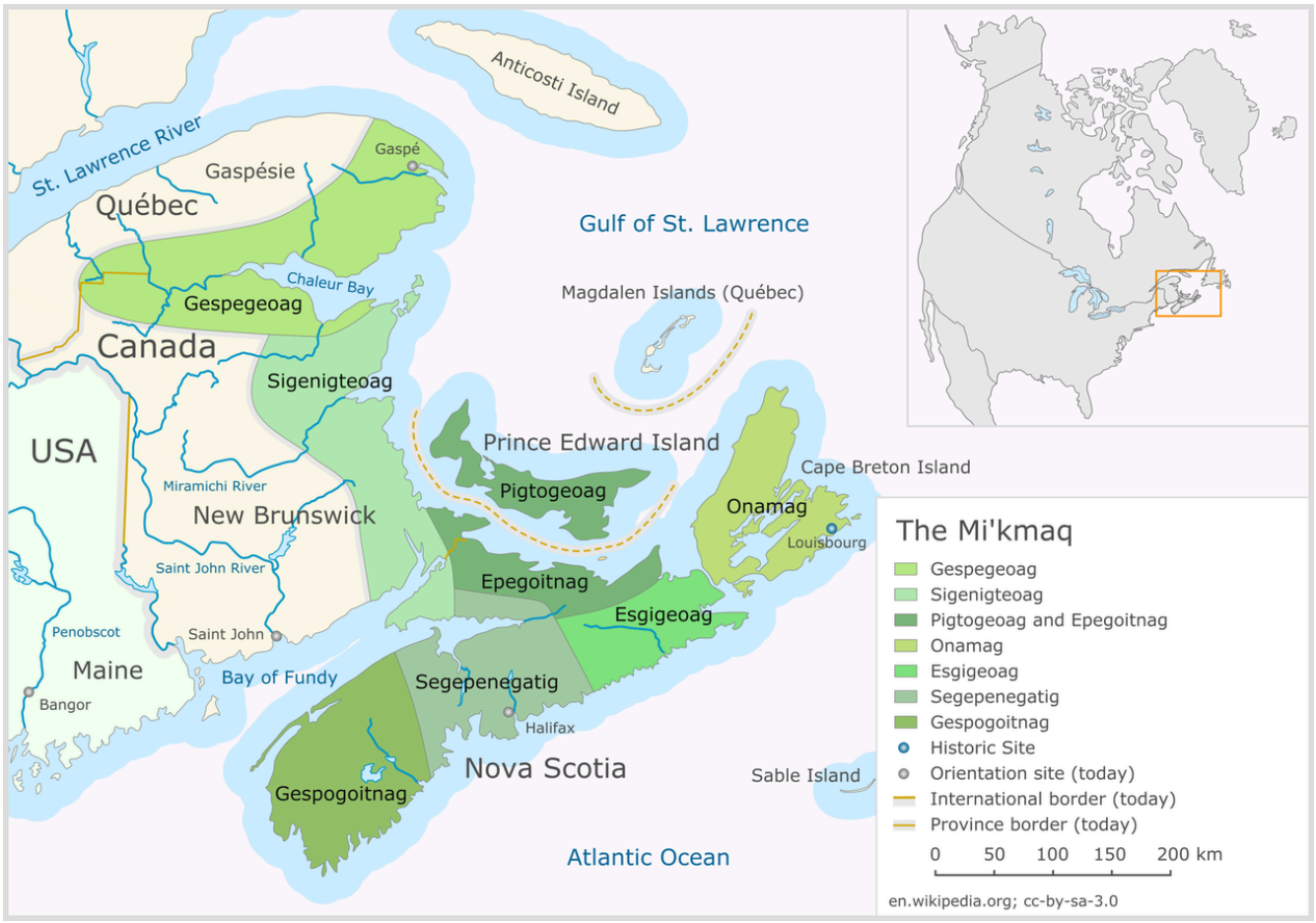


*Figure 4.4 Approximate boundaries of the traditional territories of the Mi'kmaq. [Long Description] (#fig4.4)*

Third, despite Wabanaki hostility toward New England, Acadia was a trading and seagoing community that often worked with Bostonian merchants. When La Tour's fortunes were slipping, he sought financial support and muscle from his (fellow Protestant) network in the New England port. Fourth, official French Catholicism in the colonies was not always rigid. Not only did it permit a Protestant governor but it left its people to their own spiritual devices for years at a time. Resident priests were something of a rarity. Besides, the priests/missionaries were often off leading Wabanaki troops against their Protestant English neighbours. Fifth, Acadia had an economy that was integrative and imaginative. Perhaps the highest achievement of d'Aulnay's career as governor was his support for the draining of the salt marshes, a distinctively Acadien practice that created coastal and river-mouth pasture land on which to raise substantial herds of cattle — without, importantly, alienating Indigenous land. More than any other governor in New France, d'Aulnay was successful in building a true colony (albeit one that was not entirely French). Finally, despite the horrors of the civil war (and the hangings of the Saint John garrison were especially grisly), the conflict ended with reconciliation: d'Aulnay died and La Tour married d'Aulnay's widow. This kind of "third-way" resolution was to become a trademark Acadien strategy over the century that followed the war.

In the meantime Acadia had to deal with its vulnerability issues. Its land and sea frontier to the southwest faced New England and other British colonies and its ocean frontier to the north and east was teeming with fleets of working and naval ships from England/Britain, Spain, Portugal, and still other European countries as well. Much more so than Canada, Acadia bristled with garrisons, from Fort

Castine (1615) on the Penobscot River in central Maine east through Port-Royal and **Fort Beausejour** (1751) at opposite ends of the Bay of Fundy to the heavy-weight Fortress of Louisbourg on **Île Royale**, built in 1713. The first of these stations came into use early and thereafter often as the growing British and French naval presences in the region increasingly were in conflict. Eighteenth century conflict is considered more fully in Chapter 6.




*Figure 4.5 Plan of the western part of the Chignecto Isthmus showing Fort Beausejour and the surrounding area, c. 1750.*

## Acadia and French Newfoundland

The fisheries and whaling grounds around the island of Newfoundland attracted fleets from the British West Country ports, from French harbours like St. Malo, from Portugal, and from the Basque villages on the north coast of Spain. Settlements were slow to emerge, not least because England, for example, wanted to control its fleets and sailors; England (and the other European nations involved in the fisheries and in whaling) regarded the Grand Banks and the Strait of Belle Isle as training grounds for voluntary and involuntary navy recruits. Establishing onshore settlements would work against these priorities. (See Chapter 6 for more on this topic.)

Settlement simply wasn't necessary: the salting of cod could be performed onboard the fishing vessels. Eventually and perhaps inevitably, Europeans (particularly those with a less reliable supply of salt) began landing their catch on the beaches of Newfoundland and drying the fish there before heading home. It was this process that drew French sailors to Plaisance, or Placentia, where the rocky beaches were perfect for drying fish. In 1655 the French made it the administrative capital for the half of the island that they controlled and began the process of fortifying the harbour and town in 1662. The French lost this position in the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), but as a port Placentia remained the only rival to St. John's in Newfoundland for nearly a century more.

Key Takeaways

- The establishment of Acadia marks the beginning of French colonial settlement in North America.
- The French and Acadiens were able to establish good working relations with the Wabanaki Confederacy in part because of a shared distrust of the English and New Englanders.
- The military component of the French colonial experiment existed in both Acadia and Newfoundland.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 4.4 long description:** Map of Mi'kmaq territories in the Maritimes and eastern Quebec. The following Mi'kmaq branches are identified on the map:

- Gespegeoag: Found on the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec and in the area surrounding Chaleur Bay, which separates New Brunswick and Quebec.
- Sigenigteoag: Found along the eastern coast of New Brunswick and on a sliver of the western part of Nova Scotia.
- Pigtogeoag and Epegoitnag: Found on Prince Edward Island, the northern coast of the peninsular mainland of Nova Scotia, and a sliver of the southeast part of New Brunswick.
- Onamag: Found on Cape Breton Island, which is northeast of the peninsular mainland of Nova Scotia.
- Esgigeoag: Found in the easternmost part of the peninsular mainland of Nova Scotia.
- Segepenegatig: Found in the central part of Nova Scotia.
- Gespogoitnag: Found in the westernmost part of Nova Scotia.

[Return to Figure 4.4] (#attachment_858)

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# 4.3 Canada, 1608–1663

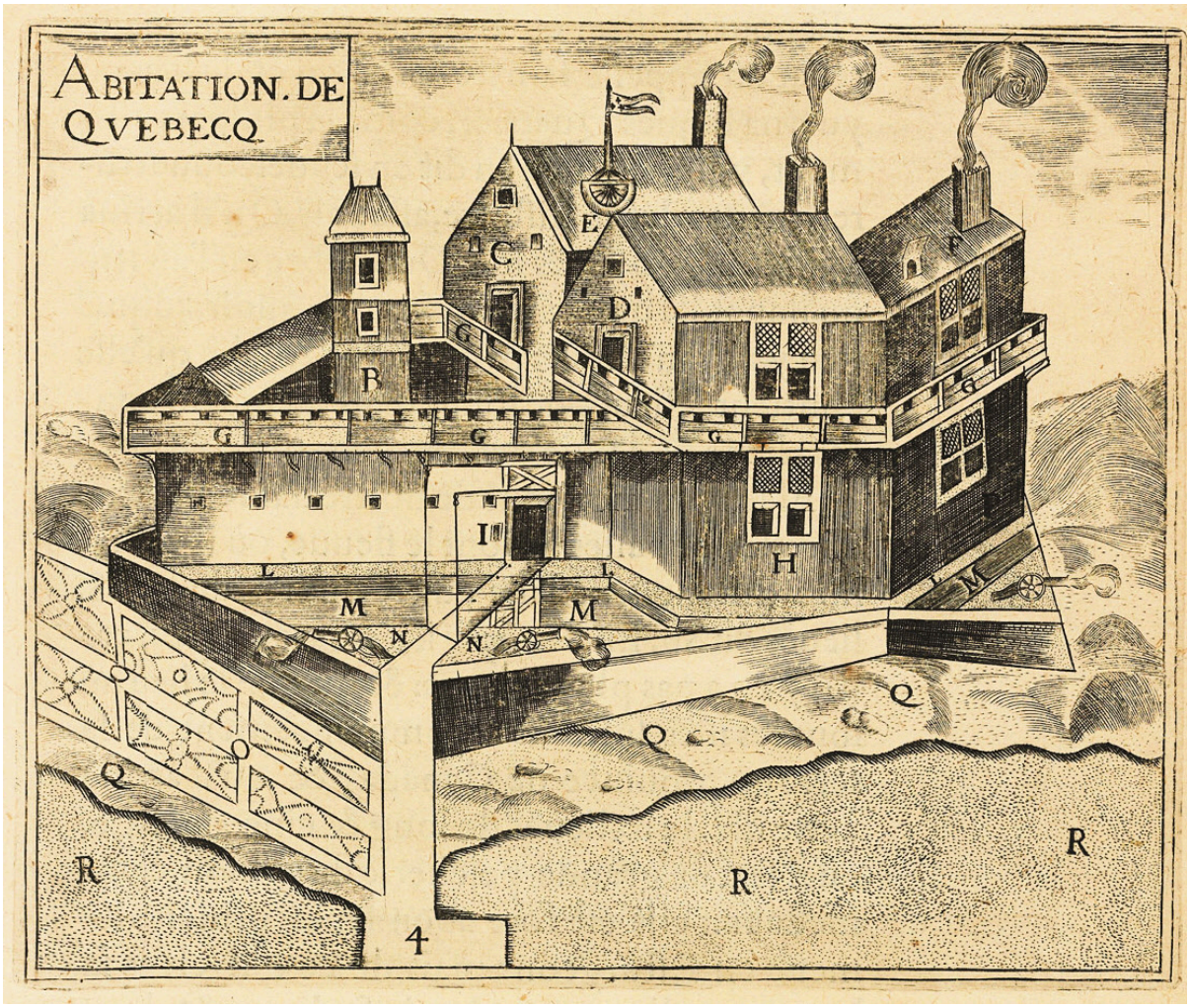


*Figure 4.6 The Quebec habitation established by Champlain, c. 1608.*

Tadoussac stands as the oldest continuously occupied European settlement in Canada. Located where the fresh water of the Saguenay River meets the salt water of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Tadoussac was an outstanding site for hunting seals and whales. The Innu (Montagnais) were doing this when Cartier visited in 1535, and the Basques did it in the same century.

The French settlement was established there in 1600 under the leadership of François Gravé du Pont and Pierre de Chauvin de Tonnetuit. Between them they had merchant and naval credentials that made them good candidates for the first fur-trade monopoly granted by a European monarch. This was a promising start but, like Cartier, they barely lasted their first winter. In 1603, Samuel de Champlain visited the site to assess its prospects. It was there that he met the Innu leader Begourat who was preparing an assault on the Mohawk, some 500 kilometres away. (Begourat's mission foreshadowed another attack on the Iroquois in which Champlain would become involved, six summers later.) Tadoussac wasn't an ice-free

port but it stayed ice-free longer than Quebec so it would have a role to play for many years to come in the development of the Canadien project.

**Go, Habs, Go!**

Anyone familiar with hockey will recognize instantly the iconic crest of the Montreal Canadiens but, outside of Quebec, not everyone knows the story of the "H" contained within the "C." Starting in 1916–1917 the team was officially the "*Club du Hockey Canadien*." The crest is thus two Cs and an H. In 1924 a New York Rangers coach claimed that the H stood for *Habitants*. This led to the nickname, "Habs," which was soon embraced by Montreal fans. These details deserve mention here because of another nomenclature issue. People in the colony of Canada referred to themselves (and were referred to as) *habitants* or as *Canadiens*. Until the Conquest there are, technically speaking, no *Canadians* (with an "a" instead of an "e"). Thereafter there are both kinds. For the purposes of consistency and respect for historical distinctions, "Canadiens" is used in this text to describe the people of the St. Lawrence Valley whose ancestry is French; "Canadians" will be used later in the text to identify people living in Upper Canada (a.k.a Canada West, Ontario) and those anglophones in Montreal after the Conquest.

## Establishing Canada

After spending some time in Acadia, Champlain began the process of establishing a forward post at Quebec in 1609. With a complement of barely 50 men, Champlain was able to achieve much to sustain the French presence. A fortified settlement — a *habitation* — was constructed and an alliance established among the Omàmiwinini (a.k.a. Algonquin), the Wendat (Huron), and the French. Iroquet and Outchetaguin, respectively leaders of the Omàmiwinini and the Wendat, initiated talks with Champlain and drew the French into a long-running conflict with the Haudenosaunee to the south. The French had signed an alliance with the Innu (Montagnais) and the Omàmiwinini against the Haudenosaunee five years earlier, so Champlain was following through with an earlier commitment to his allies. The battle at Ticonderoga — in which Champlain's first shot from his *arquebus* allegedly killed two Onondaga chiefs — was to initiate a long cycle of conflict with the Five Nations. This alliance shaped local patterns over the long term; when Champlain allied himself with the Wendat, their long-standing enemies, the Iroquois, allied themselves with the Dutch and then the British.

Was Champlain duped into these "Mourning Wars" by manipulative Indigenous allies who could see that his main reason for being in the St. Lawrence was furs and that he'd do whatever was necessary to secure a steady supply? Possibly. Champlain's vision for the colony in 1609 did not extend very much beyond exploring opportunities for wealth from trade. He had neither the mandate nor the resources to establish a colony of permanent settlers (as opposed to temporary sojourners who would return to France to enjoy their profits). The choices he made in these years have to be understood, therefore, in the context of a man who had no reason to feel confident in the future of the colony he created.

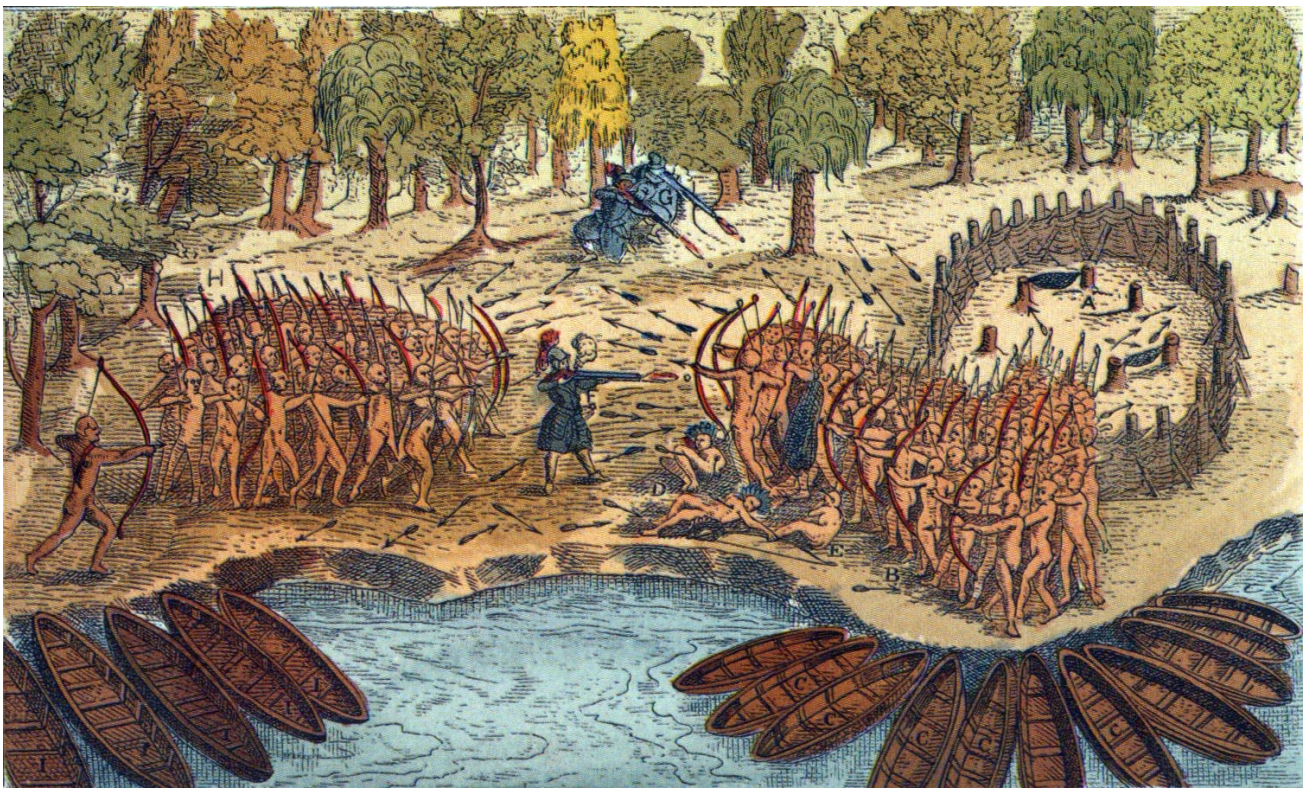


*Figure 4.7 The Wendat and Omàmiwinini armies take the battle to the Onondaga villages in 1609, accompanied by their new French ally, Champlain.*

For the first few decades of the colony's existence, the French population numbered only a few hundred, while the English colonies to the south were much more populous and wealthy. In 1627, France invested in New France, promising land parcels to hundreds of new settlers with the hope of turning what they were now calling "Canada" into an important mercantile and farming colony. Champlain, now in his late 50s, was named governor of New France. Almost immediately the cultural outlines of Canada were being managed: the colony forbade non-Roman Catholics from living there. Cardinal Richelieu's star was on the ascendant in the French court — he was by 1626 a leading figure in the Catholic Church and was Louis XIII's chief minister — and he was among the first to see the possibility of a longer-term commitment to the colony, providing it was a sanctuary for Catholics. Protestants were required to renounce their faith if they wished to establish themselves or stay in New France. Many chose instead to move to the English colonies, a trend that did nothing to increase the size of the French colonies.



*Figure 4.8 Early European depictions of the beaver showed a fearsome bipedal creature with massive teeth able to build enormous structures. By the 19th century, it had become less menacing and, of course, far less common.*

## The Fur Trade and Settlement

The economic development of New France was based on two staple commodities of the time: during the 16th and early 17th centuries, it was dominated by the Atlantic fisheries, and during the latter half of the 17th and 18th centuries, as French settlement penetrated farther into the continental interior, it was dominated by the fur trade.

Officially, the French Crown articulated a desire for a thriving colony in New France. Practically, there was little interest in (and some fear of) depopulating the countryside of France to seed the St. Lawrence Valley and Acadia. And, of course, colonies are costly. Rather than directly sponsor a colonial enterprise, the Crown opted for what we would today call a "P3 model": a public-private partnership. Monopolistic trading rights were granted to a company combined with an obligation to settle and manage its colonial claims in North America.

In 1627 responsibility for the whole of New France was handed off to the **Compagnie des Cent-Associés**, a short-lived experiment with what was essentially a joint-stock operation. Shareholders in

France were to be badly disappointed when the company's fleet was captured the following year by the English and the base of operations in Quebec fell in 1629. The *Compagnie* struggled on after the restoration of New France in 1632 but the Wendat crisis and continuous raids by the Haudenosaunee took a heavy toll. At the mid-17th century the whole of New France was little more than a cluster of trading posts with a negligible population base, one that was heavily dependent on food shipped from France or purchased from Indigenous farmers and hunters. In 1645 the *Compagnie* turned to local merchants in the colony and allowed the **Communauté des habitants** to pay them for the privilege of managing the unwieldy colony. The monopoly in trade collapsed around 1652, opening a decade of fur trading free-for-all in Canada.

Why was this first half-century of colonial activity in New France so unimpressive in its accomplishments? First, there was the Indigenous context: conflict between the Haudenosaunee Five Nations League and the Wendat-Omàmiwinini-Innu alliance was something that no colonial minister could control or do much to alter. As well, the colony was dependent on Indigenous traders in the fur trade as it had neither the manpower nor the permission of the local First Nations to engage directly in trapping. Second, Protestant hostility in the form of fur trade competition and armed raids by Dutch and English enemies was more than the French Crown was prepared to counter. Overall, the Crown saw little to be gained in investing heavily in the colony. But substantial investment was necessary. The short growing season of the northern colonies demanded support in the early years as farmers adjusted to new and alien conditions; subsidies would be needed to encourage emigration and cover the costs of clearing new land until crops started to come in. So long as the purpose of the colony was to harvest furs and minimize loss of life, under-investment in a long-term colonial vision was virtually inevitable.

Key Takeaways

- The French colony of Canada was established in the St. Lawrence Valley to tap fur resources farther inland.
- Doing so gave shape to the colony's settlement patterns and was the foundation of all relations with Indigenous peoples in the region and beyond.
- France experimented with commercial monopolies in this period.

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## 4.4 Wendake/Huronia and the Fur Trade



*Figure 4.9 Iroquoian villages, including those in Wendake (a.k.a. Huronia), were complex communities including large populations, longhouses, and defensive palisades, as well as farming operations. This is the interior of a reconstructed Huron-Wendat longhouse.*

One of the distinguishing features of Indigenous cultures in much of what is now Canada is egalitarianism. This is a broad generalization but one that applies as much to hunter-gatherer societies as it does to sedentary agricultural societies. It was rare for a nominal leader in Indigenous communities to be able to dictate direction or policy. Even when councils, which dominated the longhouse societies, reached decisions, these were not always binding on all parties. In Iroquoian societies in particular, efforts were made to develop consensus arising from discussion, but the record of the Five Nations, for example, shows many instances where one or more member nations went their own way. Individuals had similar options. In hunter-gatherer societies, leadership was as much a recognition of proven success in the field as it was of personality or birth. These cultural traits were not always understood or appreciated by Europeans. What might appear to outsiders as a political union was very often an arrangement subject to regular renewal and rejuvenation. The newcomers were accustomed to hierarchical societies headed by nobles and high clergy; not surprisingly they looked for parallels in Indigenous communities and often mistook very different arrangements for “chiefdoms,” if not kingdoms. Errors such as these led the Europeans to assume, in some instances, that they could make treaties and pacts once and for all.

Indigenous peoples, however, put an emphasis on renewal and reaffirmation: they expected gifts and declarations of loyalty from one another in commerce and diplomacy and expected no less from their European trading partners.

## Europeans in an Indigenous Marketplace

Some of these features were immediately obvious to sharp-eyed French leaders like Champlain, but not to others. Certainly European traders needed to take pains to conduct themselves according to local standards of commerce and not those of France, Holland, or England. Making that adjustment was often the surest course to success and profits, so there was a powerful incentive for the Europeans to get it right. And sometimes they did.

In many tellings of the history of New France, Champlain appears to engage the largest Iroquoian-speaking nation north of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes in a trade and military alliance. In point of fact, the Wendat approached the French. The first few years of fur trading along the St. Lawrence involved the Omàmiwinini (Algonquin) and the Innu (Naskapi and Montagnais) in particular. Both were acting as middlemen in their own right, trading goods that had been procured first by their neighbours, generally farther north. That middleman role was taken over by the more powerful Wendat.

The French placed a premium on furs that had seen some use. Contact and wear removes the guard hairs from the pelt and leaves the fur glossier and richer looking — something that the French market preferred. This single fact gave shape to the fur trade. If the French had been interested only in freshly harvested furs, their influence would have spread much more slowly. One region would be denuded of animals, then another and another, sequentially. But the demand for used furs extended the trade out in search of stockpiles already held by Indigenous families, bands, and communities. It created a series of funnels of trade that passed pelts out of one village or camp and into another and then another, coalescing finally in the hands of the ultimate middleman. From 1610 to 1649, that role was filled by the Wendat Confederacy.

## The Wendat

Wendat commerce has to be understood within its cultural context. The accumulation of goods was important and the Wendat were canny traders capable of manipulating supply and demand as needed so as to inflate prices from one season to the next. But wealth was acquired so that it could be given away: acquisitiveness and hoarding for personal use were frowned upon. Generosity and lavish gift-giving was a route to status in many Indigenous societies and the Wendat were, in this respect, no exception. Although they traded for functional goods — materials that could be used on a day-to-day basis — they also sought luxury items and exotic goods that carried special weight as gifts. So long as the material needs of the Wendat household were met, trade would focus on goods that had the potential to elevate the standing of individuals or their families.

This quality, too, was an asset as far as trade with the French was concerned. The novelty value of French goods could instantly be applied to the social competition that went on in Wendat longhouses. What was of still greater benefit to the French in their quest for large quantities of furs was the simple fact that the Wendat were sedentary. Their longhouses functioned as warehouses, too. Unlike the much more mobile

and nomadic northern peoples, the Wendat could stockpile great amounts of furs and other goods in a way that no one else north of Lake Ontario could.

The 1609 Wendat visit to Champlain's *habitation* had two purposes. First, it was meant to engage the Innu (Montagnais) in a trade relationship that was already in place between the Wendat and the surrounding Algonquin-speaking nations. Second, the Wendat wanted to scout out the newcomers whose trade goods were already finding their way into Wendake (a.k.a. Huronia). To confirm the new partnership that now included not only the Innu but the French, the Indigenous allies proposed a raid on the Mohawk village of Ticonderoga. Champlain agreed to participate, an important step toward a long-term alliance with the Wendat-Omàmiwinini-Innu but also the initiation of a long history of enmity between the Haudenosaunee and the French.

The Haudenosaunee (as discussed in Chapter 5) were engaged in an effectively endless series of raids and counter raids called the "Mourning Wars." In Iroquoian societies the murder of a member was to be avenged by family; likewise, the murderer was to be protected by *their* family. Hostages were regularly taken, some of whom might be adopted into their host community as replacements for those who had died or had themselves been captured by the opposition. Captives in warfare typically faced highly structured public torture rituals aimed at testing their courage and endurance. In the absence of a police force and/or penal system these structures gave expression to Iroquoian understandings of justice and personal responsibility. Having committed to the northern alliance, Champlain had — probably unwittingly — inserted the French into generations of revenge killings and assaults.

That was not his goal, of course. His purpose was to gain access to a lucrative supply of furs and in this he was successful. Wendake (Huronia) was 700 km of river route away from Montreal but it produced approximately half of all the furs traded in the 1620s and a substantial share even after the smallpox epidemics of the 1630s and the intensification of war with the Haudenosaunee in the 1640s. For reasons discussed in Chapter 5, Wendake (Huronia) failed to recover from the epidemics and was increasingly unable to defend itself from Haudenosaunee raids. The Confederacy was dispersed in 1649.

By that time the French had established direct contact with many of the northern peoples and had trained dozens of men — **coureur de bois** — for the task of long-distance canoeing and North American commercial protocols. The loss of Wendake (Huronia) was, however, a significant blow to their Indigenous neighbours who depended on Wendat corn in particular. The French, as an agricultural society, were able to meet some of the demand for agricultural produce, a fact that would enhance their position in the fur trade after 1663.

A final note on this phase of the colonial fur trade underlines the very important fact that the fur trade was utterly dependent on the engagement of Indigenous partners. As the 1620s opened, there were fewer than 70 French residents in Canada. Until the 1670s this would not change greatly. Canada at this stage produced little of its own food, contained a handful of biological families, and the fur trade was its entire raison d'être.

Key Takeaways

- The fur trade required the exploitation and extension of networks deep into the interior of North America.
- That network depended on the involvement of Indigenous traders and merchants, the most important to the French in this period being the Wendat (also known as the Huron) who called their confederacy and homeland Wendake (a.k.a. Huronia).
- Wendat diplomatic and commercial priorities along with their assets made them pivotal players in the early fur trade with Europeans.

**Media Attributions**

- Huron (Wendat) longhouse (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reconstructed_Huron_Wendat_long_house_at_Huron_Wendat_Museum_in_Wendake_Quebec.jpg) © 2012 by Neufast is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license

# 4.5 The Heroic Age of New France

The first 50 or 60 years of French colonial activity in Acadia and the St. Lawrence were challenging but also quite lucrative. There was a degree of independence from the Crown that allowed colonial leaders, entrepreneurs, and even common settler/traders a significant amount of latitude, for good or ill. This was, too, a period in which Indigenous neighbours and hosts were trying to decide whether they were better off with or without the Europeans. The Five Nations decided early on that the French were unwelcome, and this made the colonial enterprise all the more tenuous.

It is a reflection of these conditions that the colonial phase from around 1600 to 1663 has long been described as the "heroic age of New France." In terms of building a patriotic myth around the French presence, this has been a useful storyline. It overlooks the fact that French heroism would have counted for little had it not been for the aligned interests of Indigenous neighbours and hosts. Historians in a post-colonial era tend to eschew the idea that there was much "heroic" to an invading band of merchants whose presence resulted mainly in cultural and demographic losses among the Indigenous peoples. Chapter 5 accordingly looks at aspects of the Indigenous experience in this period. It is, however, worth considering the circumstances facing the French interlopers in this period and how they met the challenge. No one more represents the pre-royal phase than Champlain.

## Samuel de Champlain

Samuel de Champlain (1574–1635) deservedly attracts attention. His early years remain shrouded in mystery — although he was almost certainly born a Huguenot at the end of the Wars of Religion. He may have travelled with Spanish ships to Brazil and Mexico, but the evidence is uncertain. By the time he was in his 30s he was regarded as an accomplished geographer and draughtsman and was receiving a royal pension which, along with an inheritance, allowed him to pursue his interests. It was as a cartographer, it seems, that he was first sent across the North Atlantic by France. There, he quickly acquired additional responsibilities. The first winters spent by the French in Acadia and Quebec were very hard. The weather was cold beyond the expectations and experiences of the French and, 70 years after Cartier's ordeal, scurvy continued to plague them. Champlain, however, proved to be indefatigably curious, talented, and resourceful.

Faced with another long and depressing winter in Acadia in 1606, Champlain established **l'Ordre de Bon Temps** (the Order of Good Cheer), the principal objective of which was defeating the mid-winter blues with regular feasts, performances of plays, and other entertainment. In his late 30s, if not his early 40s, he joined in on regional wars as a leader and a combatant. On separate occasions he took an arrow in the neck and two in the knee. Around the same time he sought to impress his Wendat and Algonquin friends by shooting the rapids at Lachine in a canoe, which he accomplished successfully. He travelled wherever and whenever the opportunity presented itself and he drew beautiful maps of the lands he visited. He listened well to Indigenous companions and noted that his informants claimed that Hudson Bay was not the Pacific Ocean but a gulf coming off the Atlantic — many years before the British proved to the satisfaction of Europe that this was the case.

His goals were materialistic and his moral code was flexible when it came to finding wealth in Canada. Indeed, he married a 12-year-old, Hélène Boullé, in Paris not for love or even for companionship, but for the dowry she brought with her. Their marriage was not consummated (if it ever was) until Hélène was 14. She never bore any children, so Champlain adopted three daughters from the Algonquin nation in the late 1620s.

Champlain died in Quebec in 1635 at the age of 59 or 60 years, a devout convert to Catholicism who spent a lifetime skillfully walking the tightrope between sectarian division in his native France. After 30 years off and on in the colonies, Champlain had done much to shape the expectations of France and relations with Indigenous peoples, both of which had enormous implications and a very long legacy.[1]




*Figure 4.10 An example of Champlain's cartographic skills, 1612.*

Exercise: Think like a Historian — Biography and Context

Take a look at the biography of either Samuel de Champlain, the Comte de Frontenac, or Jeanne Mance in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (http://www.biographi.ca/en/index.php). Write a 200-word obituary for one of them. In doing so, assume the voice and perspective of someone who occupied a social position either above, below, or level with your subject. Also, consider what the measure of these individuals was in their time.

Feel free to present a critical account — as long as it's based on fact. As an exercise, this will help develop

1. An excellent source on Samuel de Champlain is Marcel Trudel's "Samuel de Champlain" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography.* http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/champlain_samuel_de_1E.html .

your ability to select and compress information in tight prose; it also obliges you to look at someone in the past within their historic context. For example, Frontenac didn't care whether he had voter support — he functioned in a non-democratic environment — so it wouldn't make sense to say that he should have gone to the polls and campaigned for public approval.

Key Takeaways

- The period between 1600 and 1663 is sometimes described as the "heroic age" of New France.
- The French colony was built around a particular kind of commerce in an age of religious combativeness and rising merchant power, all of which gave form to the colony of Canada.

**Media Attributions**

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# 4.6 Canada, 1663–1763

The years between 1649 and 1663 boded ill for Canada while, simultaneously, they offered new opportunities. Wendake's (Huronia's) collapse and dispersal eliminated the very backbone of the trade network on which the French relied. The Haudenosaunee weren't finished there, as they pursued their goal of territorial control across all of southern Ontario and the Ohio Valley. The loss of Wendat support sent a chill through Canadien villages and trading houses, but it also opened up the possibility of a market for colonial farm products. Canada was in a position to become what Wendake (Huronia) had been: the granary of the north. The *coureurs de bois*, moreover, had by now plunged deep into the interior of the continent by means of the river and lake systems that (including a few portages) joined the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Louisiana and Hudson Bay. The freighting service that they could provide to Indigenous trading partners enabled the French to step into the role of middlemen themselves or, to be more precise, to eliminate Indigenous middlemen altogether. There would be Indigenous trading chiefs who approximated middlemen roles but none would ever attain the stature in the trade once held by the Wendat.

Another change in circumstances was the Crown's reinvigorated interest in the colony. Louis XIV (born 1638, ruled 1643–1715) came to the throne as a child of five years but his first opportunity to take charge only came in 1661, when he was barely 23 years of age. The death of the chief minister, the gifted and well-connected Cardinal Jules Mazarin, provided Louis with a chance to take power from his mother, the regent. What looks outwardly like a break in the Richelieu-Mazarin legacy was, on closer inspection, a continuation. Louis inherited a system of governance that Mazarin had been building up for years, one that was more centralized and enabled to the Crown to exercise absolute authority. Louis XIV pushed the system farther down that path, took on the mantle of the "Sun King," made it clear that he subscribed to belief in the divine right of kings (that is, that monarchs derive their power directly from God), and set about declawing the French nobility. Louis XIV's reign had great consequences for New France: he remained in power for more than 72 years and thereby provided a degree of stability that had hitherto been lacking. Of course, no one in 1661 could know that the Sun King was going to enjoy such longevity. What New France could not mistake, however, was the king's seriousness of purpose as regards the colonies.

## The Royal Administration

In 1663 the era of private monopolies in the colonies came to an end and New France became a royal colony. Troops were sent out almost immediately to counter the Haudenosaunee threat and the men of the Carignan-Salières Regiment were given land and an opportunity to become part of the colonial elite. Immigration was stimulated, as was natural population increase by the recruitment and arrival of the **filles du roi** (the king's daughters). Roughly 800 women (most of them young) were sent out from France at the Crown's expense between 1663 and 1673. The plan was to marry them off to the men of the regiment and anyone else who might thereby be encouraged to settle down, raise a farm and a family, and become a permanent part of Canadien life. Another important category of recruit to the colony was the indentured servant or *engagé*. Almost exclusively a population made up of men in their

early twenties, *engagés* signed on for three to five years of obedient service to a master in the colony. Often the party that owned the servant's contract was a religious order. The Sulpicians of Montreal in particular made use of many *engagés* during the 17th century. The work of servants was hard, mostly thankless, and largely consisted of farm labour. For the most part, attempts at escape were punished publicly and physically. *Engagés* were too poor to marry and form households and were, in any event, prevented from doing so by law. Freed *engagés*, on the other hand, could do so, providing they had the necessary resources — which few did.

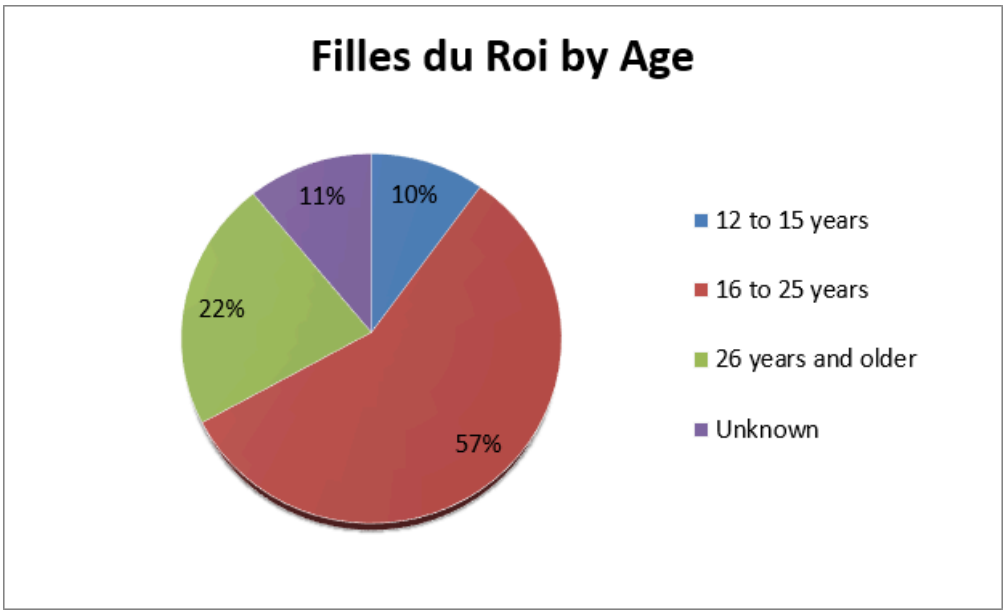


*Figure 4.11 The king's daughters (filles du roi) by age between 1663 and 1673. Data is given clockwise, starting with 12 to 15 years at 10%. [Long Description] (#fig4.11)*

These population initiatives were mostly the responsibility of Louis' new *Ministre de la Marine*, Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683). As a royal province, Canada was now viewed by Versailles as more an extension of France than a remote colony. To that end Colbert launched projects that would tailor the embryonic colony into something much more like France, ideally without the institutions that most worried the king. For example, the clergy were to carry on playing important roles (some of which would be enhanced) but they were to defer to the king rather than to Rome. Mercantilism was to become less single-minded: the colonies would continue to serve the interests of the empire first and foremost, but opportunities for economic diversification and greater self-sufficiency would be explored. To that end, Colbert created a new official position in the colonies, one that would represent the Crown's interests while promoting economic development.

The first occupant of the office of the **intendant** was Jean Talon (1626–1694). Appointed for two terms (1663–1668 and 1670–1672), Talon initiated bold and ambitious plans to improve the circumstances, potential, and viability of Canada at a time when the colony was economically and physically vulnerable. His strategy included building up agricultural output, establishing shipyards, and generally addressing the trade imbalance of New France by linking Canada with markets in the French West Indies. Very little of this came to pass but the population increased substantially under Talon and the possibility of a self-sufficient colony could now be seen in the distance. At the heart of this was the **seigneury**, a landholding system akin to French feudalism with distinctive North American modifications.

## The Seigneurial System

The key elements of the seigneurial system include the personnel and their roles, the land-use pattern involved, and the ways in which the system integrated into the rest of the economy. Seigneurs occupied a position similar to that of the French nobility, both with regard to their peasantry and the king, to whom they had to swear an oath of loyalty. (Louis XIV was careful not to create a colonial aristocracy that might challenge his authority.) The seigneurs were granted large tracts of land along the river systems of the colonies, out of which they had to carve their own farm or *domain*. They had to provide common land and long, narrow strips of land stretching back from the riverfront for the **censitaires** or habitants. The Canadien equivalent of the French peasantry, the habitants were meant to defer to the seigneur, pay a fee or *cens et rentes* annually and a tithe to the church. The seigneur was to build a manor house on the *domain*, as well as a gristmill and a church. The seigneury, then, was to become the centre of population and community along the river. Unlike New England townships (as we shall see in Chapter 6), there were no villages to speak of in the seigneurial system, only a small number of large towns/cities. "Thus," as one study concludes, "the importation of a European system of landholding led, under different geographical circumstances, to a radically modified dispersion of population and activities."[1] Theoretically, the seigneurial system would produce a linear colony, one that hugged the riverbanks and pushed back the frontiers of forest at its rear.

In practice the seigneuries saw very little settlement before the 1730s. Many of the best seigneuries were granted from 1663 to 1700 but few were actually taken up and developed by the seigneurs. Seigneurs struggled to meet their expensive obligations and often found themselves with a noble-sounding title and a peasant-sized fortune. Habitants put a premium on cleared land and were not tied to the seigneury as fully as French peasants were in Europe: they could pack up and leave for a better piece of land if they so desired. Or, as many did, they could head west and north and join the fur trade. And, of course, fear of Haudenosaunee attacks put a further damper on seigneurial expansion until 1701. Nonetheless, the French had successfully established a core population on the land and Canada inched closer to self-sufficiency. Except for the Carignan-Salières Regiment, officials, and the *filles du roi*, almost all of the population growth in the century between the start of royal governance and the Conquest came from natural increase. In the whole of Canada's colonial history from 1608 to 1760, it is reckoned that only 14,000 immigrants became part of the Canadien community.[2] By contrast Britain sent some 600,000 settlers to its colonies on the Atlantic seaboard in the same period.

## The Compact Colony

From Talon on, intendants sought measures to reduce Canadien mobility and increase their commitment to the rural economy of the St. Lawrence Valley. As New France grew more sprawling, the more difficult it became to defend. And the more menfolk there were off trading along James Bay or skirting the Great Lakes in pursuit of furs, the fewer there were at home to build up food production and defend against British attacks. The intendants, however, were swimming against the current: Canadiens —

1. Kenneth Norrie and Doug Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 74.

2. Roderic Beaujot and Don Kerr, *Population Change in Canada*, 2nd edition (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 24–25.

from the habitants to the governors — saw the colony's future as an expansive one of closely threaded alliances across an interior made up of Indigenous communities and a few French trading posts.

Louis de Buade, Comte de Frontenac (1622–1698), is probably the most outstanding example of this view. He was governor of the colony twice, from 1672 to 1682 and then from 1689, dying in office. Not only did he pursue policies that were at odds with those of Paris, he did so at the very time when Talon and Colbert were pulling in the opposite direction. Building forts further inland, encouraging René-Robert Cavalier de La Salle (1643–1687) to explore deep into the far west and down the Mississippi, and doing what he could to expand the fur trade were significant parts of Frontenac's legacy, all of which was inconsistent with the goal of a "compact colony," a Canada that was manageably small.

## Montreal and the West

The history of Montreal in these years exemplifies some of the problems facing Canada and New France as a whole. Ville-Marie was established in 1642 as a religious outpost by the Société de Notre-Dame. This was a project in which Jeanne Mance (1606–1673), a member of the Ursuline order of nuns and the founder of the Hôtel-Dieu hospital, played a leading part. Montreal's role quickly changed to fur-trade entrepôt. The population reached about 600 in 1685, many of whom were soldiers. The village was constantly under attack or seige or threat of these from the Haudenosaunee through the 17th century, and the destruction of Lachine in 1689 only a few kilometres away nearly doomed the village. From 1687 until the signing of the Great Peace of 1701 (discussed in Chapter 5), Montreal suffered from war with the Iroquois, a series of crop failures, and epidemics, which included a particularly virulent measles outbreak in 1687 that claimed 6% of the colonist population followed by another bout with smallpox in 1703. Small wonder that the opening of opportunities in the West was seized upon by many of its inhabitants: there were jobs to be had and possibly fortunes to be made in Detroit and the *Pays d'en Haut*.[3]

3. Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth Century Montreal*, trans. Liana Vardi (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1992), 59–62.

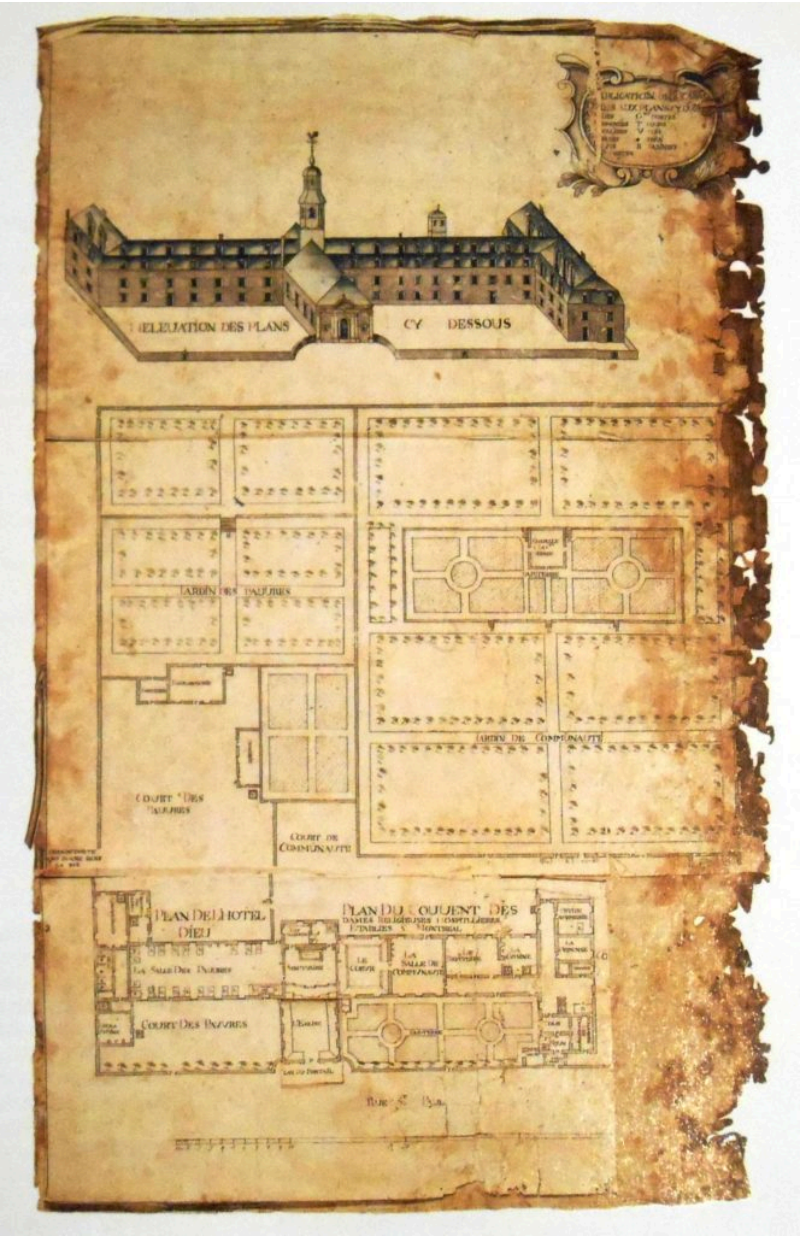


*Figure 4.12 Plans for the expansion of the Hôtel-Dieu, 1695.*

Some of the outcomes of Frontenac's efforts should have been predictable. Longer supply lines in the fur trade required new systems of administration and investment. Larger, consolidated fur trade businesses began to emerge and demands for greater protection in the West were coming in from French traders and Indigenous allies alike. Rapid expansion into the West and South also brought an expanded supply of furs and, shortly thereafter, a glut on the European market. As one study points out, the fur trade did not respond well to market forces overseas: prices fell but the need for supplies continued to rise.[4] In part, responsibility for the deteriorating economy stemmed from a crisis of control. As one historian has memorably put it (her words having been translated from French into English), "Confusion reigned as market conditions continued to deteriorate. The interior monopoly was violated, and each [Canadien

4. Kenneth Norrie and Doug Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 80–81.

trader] struggled to save his own skin."[5] Other historians have placed responsibility for the glut with Indigenous suppliers:

> Instead of fewer furs coming in in response, however, there were more. This result … reflects a particular response of some native tribes. Many of them were nomadic, and accumulation of goods presented real difficulties. Extra pots, pans, or whatever, could be burdensome during the journeys from place to place. There was, in other words, a fixed number of goods desired by many [Indigenous] bands. The higher the price for their furs, the fewer the furs that would be necessary to supply their wants. In times of lower prices, however, more would be needed and more would be supplied.[6]

There were diplomatic considerations as well. Just because the market was bad that didn't mean that New France could suddenly stop the cycle of gift-giving and commerce that undergirded alliances in the North and West. In this respect European and Indigenous markets worked at cross-purposes, and France was soon awash in furs while bills for colonial expenses piled up higher and higher. Exports tripled between 1685 and 1700.[7] Prices continued to fall after the Great Peace of 1701 and they stayed low for the duration of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714).

The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) concluded the war in North America, although it stuttered on for a few more months in Europe. It had the ironic effect of intensifying expansionist tendencies in Canada. Hudson Bay, Newfoundland, and Acadia were all handed over to the British. New France was reduced, though not severely, but in areas where the French had expended a great deal of effort. Rather than take this as a sign that the goal of a compact colony was more necessary than ever, it spurred new efforts. The loss of Hudson Bay certainly refocused French efforts along the Laurentian-Great Lakes routes and into the *Pays d'en Haut.* This situation arose in large part because France sought to use New France as a whole as a tool against Britain. By hemming in the 13 mainland British colonies, New France would frustrate British plans for continental dominance and, at the same time, limit the amount of support the British-American colonies could offer Britain in wars against France. For once, the imperial objectives of France were congruent with the more materialistic goals of the fur-trading colonists.

## Exceptional Growth

After the Treaty of Utrecht, Canada improved on its uneven agricultural record and its population expanded rapidly. Women in the colony married younger than their counterparts in New England and France; they began producing children at a younger age and continued doing so for much of the rest of their lives. Widowhood was common (thanks to risks in the fur trade, intercolonial wars, and attacks by Indigenous opponents) and they remarried quickly. The effects were remarkable: by the middle of the 18th century, completed family size averaged between six and eight children, despite high infant mortality rates.[8] A high ratio of men to women in most of this period, combined with official encouragements to marry and form families and a strong cultural disinclination to reduce fertility in any

5. Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth Century Montreal*, trans. Liana Vardi (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1992), 75.

6. Kenneth Norrie and Doug Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 80.

7. Ibid., 80–81.

8. Roderic Beaujot and Don Kerr, *Population Change in Canada*, 2nd edition (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 25–26.

way, shape, or form, yielded one of the most profoundly reproductive communities in the post-contact period.

Not only did the colony as a whole grow from about 10,000 in 1700 to nearly 50,000 people in 1760, the towns of Quebec and Montreal became somewhat more substantial. The former grew to about 8000 and the latter to 3500. The addition of the Fortress of Louisbourg and military reinforcements for the many fortifications that sprang up in the interior of the continent added still more "urban" people who were dependent on the farm produce of the Canadien seigneuries. For those habitants whose farmlands were sufficiently productive, these were good years and farm prices were healthy. For those living on newly cleared lands or in the tertiary "ranges" or *rangs* of the seigneuries, where soil was almost invariably worse and transportation more difficult, rising demand made little difference. For seigneurs — who received rents based on a share of output — the more mature farming areas were finally generating something like wealth.

Historians have maintained that the average *censitaire* in Canada was better off than his or her feudal counterpart in France. Some have argued, too, that they enjoyed greater liberties. By the same token, the seigneurs are widely thought to have been significantly less well off than even the more modest nobility in France, but were gaining on at least the lower aristocracy by mid-century. The impression remains, however, of a slow rate of change. Certainly there was no wave-after-wave of immigration as there was in the British colonies to the south, no land-hungry new arrivals whose presence alone could drive up the price of land. However impressive the natural increase of the Canadien population, the bottom line is this: the biological settler colony (as opposed to the territorial claim of New France) was vastly smaller than its neighbours.

The remainder of Canadien society presents something of a puzzle. Historians have long debated the importance of the merchant class in the colony. Insofar as their businesses remained mostly tied to the fur trade they weren't significant agents for social and economic change before 1760. French merchants continued to exert a tremendous influence and controlled much of the import-export business from their homes in La Rochelle and Bordeaux. Economic historians Norrie and Owram have argued that what emerged by the mid-18th century, if not earlier, was a metropolitan-hinterland relationship of two steps: merchants in France capitalized and made the greatest profits from the traffic across the Atlantic, and they also had a hefty influence on the merchant class of Canada — often by dint of the fact that those colonial merchants were their employees/agents. The Canadien merchants, by extension, enjoyed a similar relationship with the interior of North America as the metropolis of a further hinterland.[9] Wealthy and influential merchants in the colony were nonetheless secondary to those in the home ports on the west coast of France and only some could translate their wealth into the status of a seigneur. This meant that upward social mobility was limited.

## Canadien Society

This was a society with significant fracture lines and divisions. It wore the stamp of feudalism (however incomplete and modified to local circumstances) and had a strong military presence (with all the ranks and divisions that implies), a very large clerical presence with spiritual and everyday authority, a wealthy merchant class, and colonial managers who were regularly refreshed by new personnel from

9. Ibid., 90–92.

Louis XIV's absolutist France. The poor and the common population were expected to recognize their superiors and show them deference. Indeed, no one was free from responsibilities of this kind: an insult inflicted on an official of rank or a senior cleric by an artisan or a creditor could result in a beating or a lawsuit. Cases seeking *réparation d'injure verbale* originated in all quarters of colonial French society and could involve men and women alike as both complainants and perpetrators. Canadiens and Canadiennes alike bridled at some of the social restraints imposed on them.[10] They were notoriously lax when it came to behaviour in church and records suggest that some appropriated titles — such as *écuyer* or esquire — to which they were not entitled. In a new country where reputations could be built, rebuilt, revised, and reduced, there was both sensitivity to status and a contrary willingness to undermine it. Gossip was an important regulating force when it came to domestic relations, probably more powerful than what little police force existed in the colony.[11]

This was, then, a rapidly growing Canadien society on top of which there was an cadre of metropolitan French authorities, some of whom wrestled mightily with the question of how far one should even want to control the colonials.

Key Takeaways

- The loss of Wendake (Huronia) forced changes on the colony of Canada.
- The introduction of royal administration placed a greater priority on establishing a more self-sufficient, Catholic, and compact colony along the St. Lawrence.
- A semi-feudal system of landownership and use was introduced that made Canada unique among European colonies in North America.
- The years between 1663 and 1712 saw an aggressive expansion of fur trade operations deep into the continent's interior.
- The Treaty of Utrecht brought significant change to the shape and opportunities of New France.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 4.11 long description:** Pie chart displaying the ages of the *filles du roi* between 1663 and 1673. The below table details the age ranges and their percentage shares.

10. Peter N. Moogk, "'Thieving Buggers' and 'Stupid Sluts': Insults and Popular Culture in New France, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, Vol. XXXVI (October 1979): 524–547.

11. André Lachance and Sylvie Savoie, "Violence, Marriage, and Family Honour: Aspects of the Legal Regulation of Marriage in New France," in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, Vol. V: *Crime and Criminal Justice*, eds. Jim Phillips, Tina Loo, and Susan Lewthwaite (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1994): 143–173.

***Filles du roi* by age, 1663 to 1673**

| **Age** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|
| 12 to 15 years | 10% |
| 16 to 25 years | 57% |
| 26 years and older | 22% |
| Unknown | 11% |

[Return to Figure 4.11] (#attachment_106)

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# 4.7 Canada and Catholicism

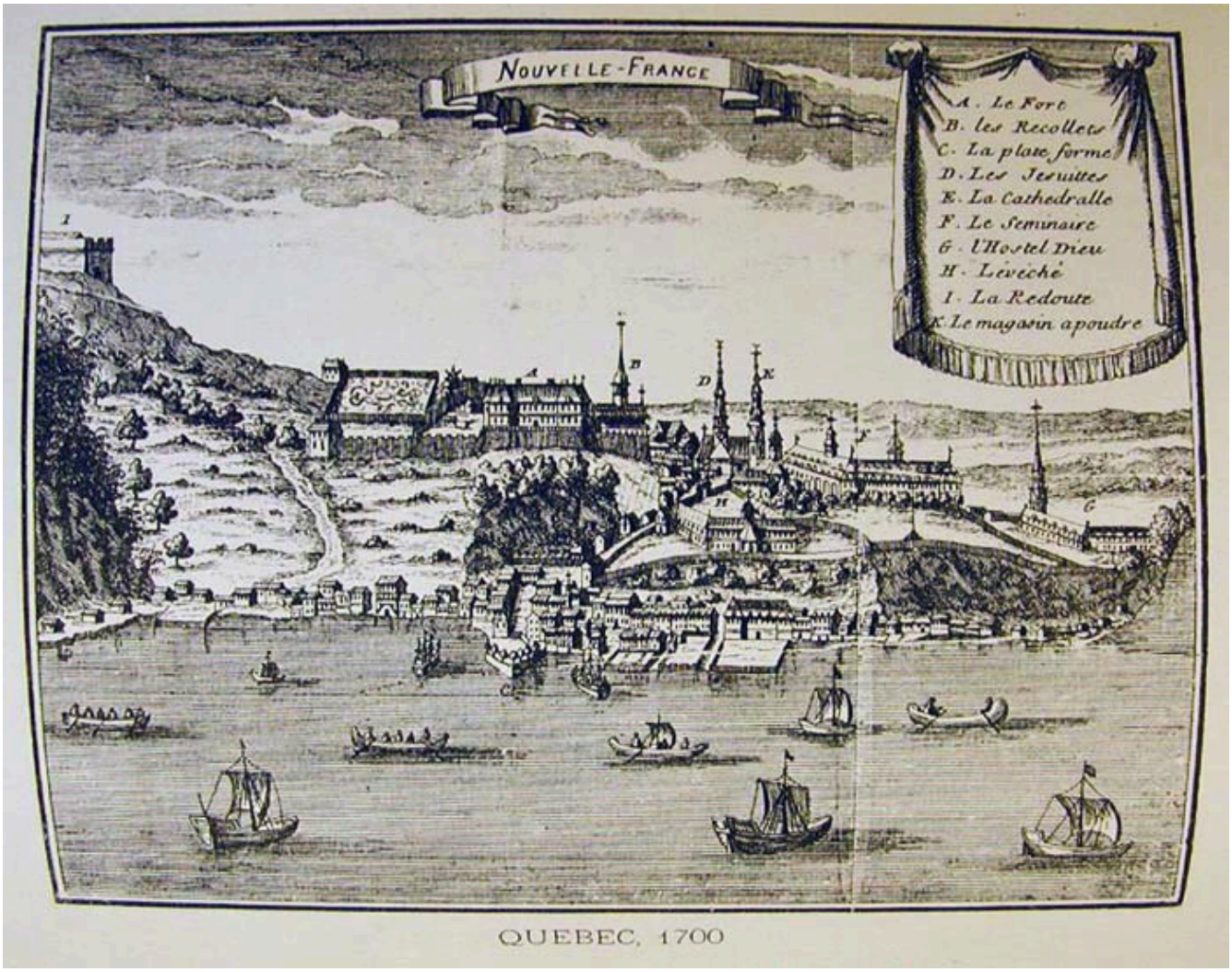


*Figure 4.13 Quebec in 1700, its skyline punctuated by church spires. The key indicates the position of the Seminaire, the Jesuits, the Recollets, the cathedral, and the Hôtel-Dieu.*

Although the early French strategy in Canada was primarily economic, there was a cultural agenda as well. The French did try to Christianize some groups of Indigenous peoples, most notably the Wendat.

## Missionaries

In 1615, the first **Recollets** (a monastic order of the Catholic Church) arrived in New France to go out among the locals — particularly the Algonquin — to Christianize them. Evicted from the colony in 1629 by the English, the Recollets were replaced almost immediately by the missionaries from the **Jesuit Order**, also known as the Society of Jesus. Over the next 20 years, the Jesuits worked among the

villages of the Wendat Confederacy in particular, learning their language and their culture. The Jesuit approach was distinct from that of most other missionary groups in that they did not try to Europeanize the Indigenous people; that is, they did not attempt to change their socioeconomic culture into something resembling European styles of living before attempting to win their souls. Instead, the Jesuits sought common cultural elements that would help bridge belief systems. To be sure, as far as the Jesuits were concerned, this was a bridge that ran one way only — toward Christianity. The efforts to convert the Wendat were largely unsuccessful, with very few converts, perhaps fewer than 10 in 50 years. However, the Jesuit experience in Canada is significant as the missionaries wrote extensive reports back to their order in France, detailing the practices and beliefs of the Wendat. Much of the information we have about the Wendat and other groups in the Quebec area comes from these letters, collectively called the **Jesuit Relations**. The Wendat experience of this initiative is considered in Chapter 5.

The modest success of the missionary efforts should not overshadow the larger Catholic agenda of the French empire in North America. Religious politics in Europe were divisive; national identity was, in many respects, secondary to sectarian identity. This was the context for the colonial project of New France: it began as a commercial enterprise sustained and managed by religious officials. Until 1663 the colony was in the hands of private commercial monopolies with imperial oversight in the hands of the king's ministers — Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin — both of whom were simultaneously high-ranking representatives of the Catholic Church. The Recollet, Jesuit, Sulpician, and Ursuline projects both before and after the royal administration were extensions of a Catholic Church agenda that sought a cultural colony as well as a settler colony. This could be seen in declining tolerance for Protestantism in New France. In 1685 Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes (1598), which drew an end to many of the civic freedoms enjoyed by Protestants in France for nearly a century. Many fled the port cities for North America, though not for New France. As the Huguenots were leaving, the Recollets' presence expanded in Canada (in 1670) and in Plaisance as well. There was to be more Catholicism, not less, in New France as it became more a mirror of the institutions and values of the imperial centre. This played out in interesting ways in Montreal.

## The Sulpicians

When Ville-Marie was established in 1642, it was as a religious centre, a role that was quickly eclipsed by the fur trade. After 1657 the **Sulpicians** came to play a key role in Montreal in particular, where they were missionaries to the settlers rather than Indigenous people. The demarcation of Church responsibilities in the colony handed the Jesuits the missionary roles among Indigenous communities, leaving the Sulpicians with more material tasks. The clergy of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice had a key administrative role more involved with municipal authority than the saving of souls. They had responsibility for the poor, physical infrastructure, schools, courts, cartography, and business, among other things.[1] They were French, not Canadien, drawn from a well-educated and generally upper-class population; many, according to historian Louise Dechêne, "had large private fortunes."[2] Some were disappointed at the lack of opportunity to salvage Indigenous souls, and some felt robbed of the prospect

1. Brian Young, *In Its Corporate Capacity: The Seminary of Montreal as a Business Institution, 1816–76* (Montreal, McGill–Queen's University Press, 1986), 3–37.

2. Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth Century Montreal*, trans. Liana Vardi (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1992), 261.

of martyrdom. The seminary itself didn't engage much in education until the mid-18th century. The main task of the Sulpicians was managing their seigneurial properties, which were extensive. When we think of the Catholic Church in the colony in this period, then, it is a rather textured thing — a bureaucratic businesslike operation that played a day-to-day role in the health and welfare of the community, produced food and created jobs, policed behaviour (in particular, relations between the troops and the local population), and of course undertook spiritual tasks.



*Figure 4.14 The martyrdom of Brebeuf, a Jesuit, at the hands of the Haudenosaunee in 1649. It was this kind of sacrifice that many of the colonial clergy sought for themselves.*

It would be a mistake to imagine the Catholic Church in New France as a monolithic structure. There was competition between the orders and there was little love lost between the Jesuits (loyal to Rome first and foremost) and the Sulpicians (whose origin and outlook was Parisian or **Gallican**). Nor were the colonists as deferential as one might expect when it came to the Church. The evidence strongly suggests that the Canadiens adopted a casual attitude toward the clergy, which could (and did) sometimes express itself as contempt. The Jesuits were frequently accused of interfering in the fur trade and commerce generally, which earned them a poor reputation with the *coureurs de bois*, voyageurs, and some merchants. The Sulpicians, for their part, had a reputation as moralistic busybodies.

The fur trade wealth that accumulated in Montreal and Quebec was sometimes spent ostentatiously: by men on houses, horses, and fine suits, and by women on extravagant dresses. These expressions of prosperity attracted clerical condemnation, which was, of course, unwelcome. The fact that the clergy were overwhelmingly French in a sea of Canadiens paved the way for snobbery and prejudice that was mutual. And on the ground, in the individual parishes, it was often the case that there were simply too few priests and nuns to go around. Seigneuries without resident clerics were probably the norm rather than the exception. The habitants were expected to pay (through tithes and subscriptions) for a

church building on their seigneury and sometimes a house for the priest as well. While there was some enthusiasm on the part of the habitants for the spiritual and civil services that a resident priest could provide, there was little enthusiasm for the costs entailed. In addition to tithes, the clergy regularly assessed charges for burials, provision of sacramental bread, and so on, and fines for a variety of offences associated with deviation from church-sanctioned practices.[3] What the colonists clearly wanted was an ongoing relationship with a *curé* loyal to their parish, a chapel or church they could call their own, a role to play in the running of the parish (something else the clergy were reluctant to allow), and a place to focus social energies and receive the sacraments of marriage, baptism, and last rights. So long as Canada was a long string of underpopulated seigneuries and not a few concentrated settlements, it would be difficult to meet these expectations.

Key Takeaways

- The French regime introduced a Christianizing agenda during its first decade of colonial activity.
- Recollets and Jesuits had different approaches to Christianizing Indigenous peoples.
- The roles played by the Catholic Church were many and diverse.

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3. Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth Century Montreal*, trans. Liana Vardi (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1992), 260–269.

## 4.8 Louisiana and the Pays d'en Haut




*Figure 4.15 Vincenzo Coronelli's 1688 map of the Pays d'en Haut.*

The Wendat Confederacy collapsed in 1649 following tragic defeats by both smallpox and the Haudenosaunee. The loss of their favoured middlemen in the fur trade, however, enabled French voyageurs to push beyond the boundaries of Wendake (Huronia) and into the upper Great Lakes. In 1659, Pierre-Esprit Radisson and Médard Chouart des Groseilliers, who would go on to lead the British charge into Hudson Bay, were the first French traders to reach the western shore of Lake Superior. The 1670s and 1680s saw missionary and exploratory activity expand in the region — known as the *Pays d'en Haut*. Still searching for a route to the Pacific, voyageurs were initially hopeful about the Mississippi system. They soon realized that they were to be disappointed. Nevertheless, in 1699 French territorial claims in North America expanded dramatically when Louisiana was founded in the basin of the Mississippi. Until 1713, the French laid claim to a trading network that extended from Plaisance through Acadia and Canada, as far north as Hudson Bay, all around the Great Lakes and down to the Gulf of Mexico. This network was maintained through a vast system of fortifications.



*Figure 4.16 The French established posts along the Mississippi like this one, Arkansas Post (c. 1689).*

## Louisiana and the Ohio

Louisiana was the southernmost administrative district of New France and was under French control from 1682 to 1763 and 1800 to 1803. The first permanent settlement, Fort Maurepas, was founded in 1699 near the mouth of the Mississippi by Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, a French military officer from Canada. An inland trading post followed in 1714 in the territories of the Natchitoches, which served as an interface between French, Indigenous, and Spanish/Mexican commercial interests in Texas. Soon cotton plantations began to appear. Louisiana originally covered a far-reaching territory that included most of the drainage basin of the Mississippi River and stretched from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Appalachian Mountains to the Rocky Mountains. The relative success of the New France project rested in the ability of the French to hem in their competition and, in this respect, Lousiana and the Ohio were as integral to the success of Canada, as Canada was to that of the *Pays d'en Haut* and the Mississippi. By means of careful diplomacy among the Indigenous nations of the Ohio Valley and the lands on either side of the Mississippi, the French were able to contain the British settlements to the east of the Appalachian Mountains until the mid-18th century. As well, they were able to exploit Indigenous dissatisfaction with British colonists even within the English colonies. This was the case in South Carolina in the early 1700s when Indigenous frustration with English trade partners and colonists made Louisiana an attractive alternative source of goods. In this way the French were able to

work through third parties to hamper their English foes. The French pursued a virtually identical strategy in the south where they competed effectively against the Spanish. French rifles and other goods spread out across east Texas and as far west as New Mexico, undermining what loyalty and/or deference the Spanish were able to command among their own Indigenous allies.

The bridges between Louisiana and Canada were the Ohio and Illinois Valleys. Inaccessible to the French until the 1700s, the territory had changed hands between Indigenous groups during the period called the "Beaver Wars." For reasons that go well beyond an interest in gaining dominance in the beaver-pelt trade, the Five Nations League expanded westward, raiding for personnel and subduing potentially dangerous neighbours. In the process, they drove off much of the indigenous population of the Ohio Valley, unintentionally making it more attractive to two groups: Indigenous peoples being squeezed out of the region east of Appalachia (across which British-American settlement was spilling) and Euro-North Americans who saw opportunities and dangers in a vacuum. French efforts were the most substantial once peace had been won with the Haudenosaunee.

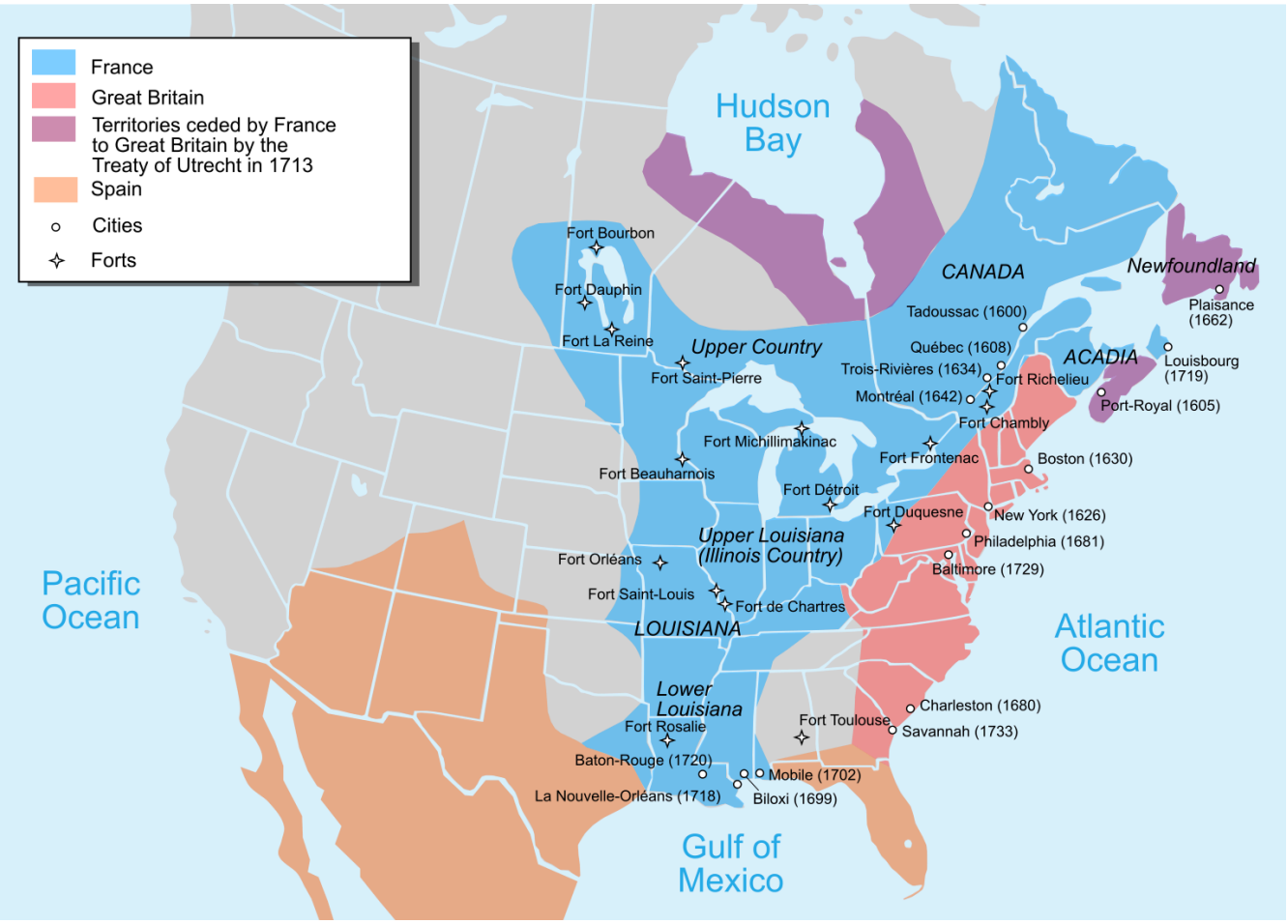


*Figure 4.17 A map of New France, c. 1750. [Long Description] (#fig4.17)*

By means of **gift diplomacy** the French hoped to guarantee Indigenous support in the region and use it to keep the British out of the Ohio. From the Ottawa Valley south to Louisiana, New France had a small population. It relied heavily on friendly contacts with many and populous local Indigenous communities. The French settlers lacked the appetite for land that characterized English settlement. Also, they relied exclusively on Indigenous peoples to supply them with fur at trading posts. Low

numbers of colonists, a limited military force of their own, and commercial dependence obliged the French to build a complex series of commercial, personal, and diplomatic connections. These enduring alliances between the French and the Indigenous communities were nurtured over decades and would have significant implications during the British-American invasion of the Ohio Valley.

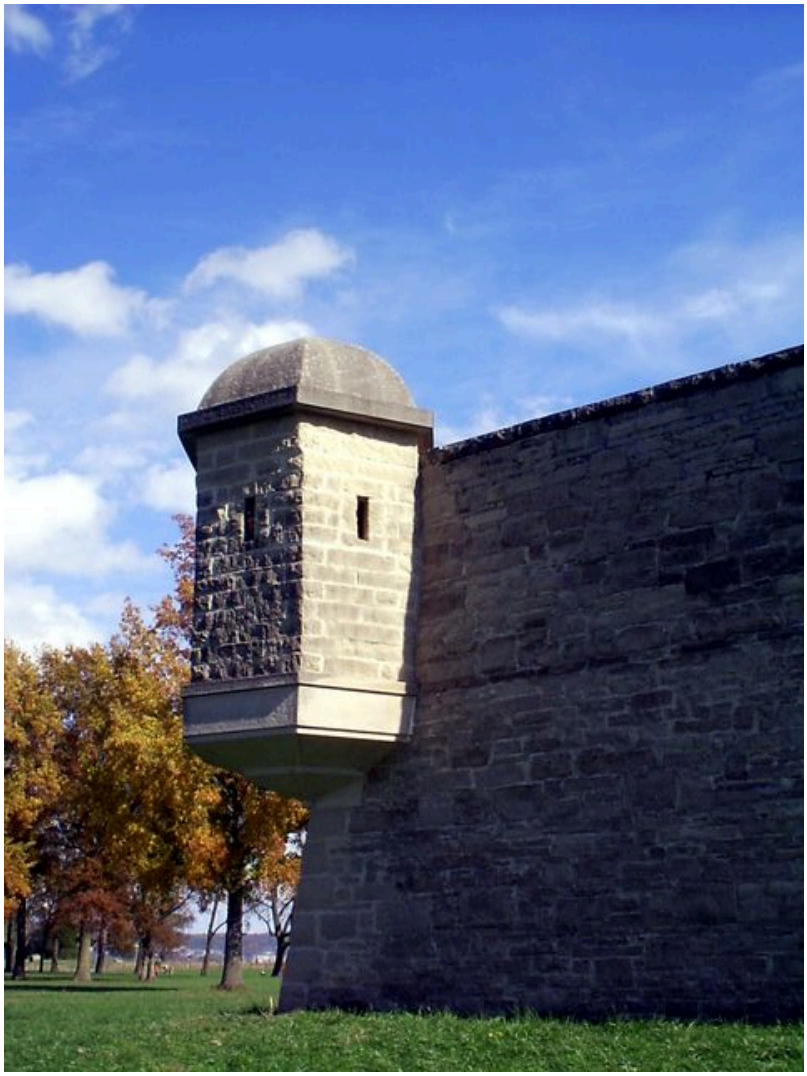

*Figure 4.18 Fort de Chartres in what is now southwestern Illinois. The fort was originally built in 1720 and then rebuilt in stone in the 1750s. It fell into ruins and was restored as a heritage site in the 20th century. This turret gives a sense of the investment made by Canadien and Louisianan authorities.*

## The South and West in New France

For historians of Canada, Louisiana is an opportunity to test certain assumptions. Individuals like d'Iberville connect the histories of the two regions, so they were not entirely isolates. News of practices in one could reach the other, while at the same time, distinctive and seemingly contradictory trends could be found. The seigneurial system never took root in Louisiana (nor was it applied to Île Royale or with any rigour to Acadia); instead, individual land title was made available. Social relations were

different as well. Colbert introduced the **Code Noir** in 1685 to regulate slavery and establish racialized boundaries in the French sugar colonies; its tenets were subsequently transferred to Louisiana to support slavery in the cotton plantation economy after about 1717. Slavery was, to be sure, found in Canada although it was more likely to involve Indigenous slaves than Africans and more likely to be domestic in character than forced agricultural labour. But what is perhaps more noteworthy is that while interracial marriage and miscegnation occurred everywhere else in New France, in Louisiana's plantation districts it was officially prohibited. Spread thinly everywhere but the St. Lawrence, Acadia, and New Orleans, the French *coureur de bois* readily married into local Indigenous communities. This was, of course, a diplomatic strategy as well as a biological/sentimental one: working in such small numbers, the French outside of the main population centres had to make an effort to be on good terms with their hosts. To turn this comparison on its head, why was slavery not the norm in Canada? The Canadien economy was simply not one that could benefit from or sustain an army of forced labour.

In some respects there were peculiar similarities between the colonies. Where Canada and its hinterland had a trade in beaver pelts and moose hides, Louisiana's chief export for many years was deer skins. The Choctaw nation was the main supplier, and they were as closely aligned with Louisiana as the Wendat had been with Canada. Another parallel was the rivalry between the Choctaw and the Chickasaw, the latter being allies and trading partners of the English in South Carolina. Both Indigenous groups found themselves trading their captive enemies to their respective European allies as slaves.[1] As the French discovered, to their chagrin, accepting a slave-gift from one allied nation meant that the slave's nation of origin was ruled out as another ally. In this way, Indigenous slave exchanges purposefully set limits on whom the French could engage with diplomatically.[2] This was particularly the case in the *Pays d'en Haut*.

Distances between the colonies within New France were so great that each region enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy. Although New France as a whole was governed out of Quebec City and, later, Montreal, Louisiana was administered principally from Mobile, then Biloxi, and finally from New Orleans. Upper Louisiana extended into the Illinois territory and was a zone in which New Orleans' authority competed with Montreal's. Throughout much of Louisiana and the *Pays d'en Haut*, administrative control was more theoretical than practical; French settlers and farmers soon found themselves integrated less into a European system and more into an Indigenous world.

Key Takeaways

- At its maximum size, New France was much more than Canada and Acadia.
- Louisiana and the *Pays d'en Haut* were principally areas of French influence, rather than settlement colonies.
- Each of the regions of New France had distinctive economic and social characteristics and a

1. Allan Greer, *The People of New France* (Toronto: U of T Press, 2000), 105–108.

2. Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 222.

degree of mutual autonomy.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 4.17 long description**: In 1750, France held modern-day Labrador, much of Quebec, southern Ontario, southern Manitoba, and a part of Saskatchewan. French territory also stretched south through the middle of the eastern United States all the way down to Louisiana and Mississippi at the edge of the Gulf of Mexico. Britain held the eastern coast of the United States from Maine to eastern Georgia and had recently acquired Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and parts of Northern Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba, along most of the shore of Hudson Bay. Spain held Florida, parts of the central United States from western Texas to Arizona and parts of Colorado and Utah, and Mexico. [Return to Figure 4.17] (#attachment_937)

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# 4.9 War in the Pays d'en Haut

The French enjoyed the support of most of the Indigenous nations in the Ohio, Great Lakes, Mississippi, and Illinois territories for several reasons. They did not demand concessions of land, they arrived as (and generally behaved as) guests, they regularly and systematically gave gifts of various kinds to maintain alliances, and they engaged in a fur trade that was lucrative for most of the Indigenous participants. However, the French record in the *Pays d'en Haut* was not unblemished.




*Figure 4.19 Detail from a map of the Pays d'en Haut in 1718. The Meskwaki and their allies, the Mascouten and the Kickapoo, controlled much of the river system to the south and west of Lake Michigan.*

## The Fox Wars

From about 1700 the French were at odds with the Meskwaki (a.k.a. Fox) who controlled the river corridor that connects Lake Michigan to the upper Mississippi valley. The Meskwaki sought to hold their position as intermediaries in trade between the Council of Three Fires (the Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Anishinaabe/Ojibwa) and their French partners and the Sioux nations to the west. The Meskwaki had little reason to love the French; it is likely that the Wendat — armed by the French — displaced them from southern Ontario in the early 17th century. The French, for their part, wanted unfettered access to the Sioux and the Plains. The Meskwaki held certain advantages at the beginning of the conflict but the tide quickly turned badly against them.

Two major conflicts erupted between the French and their allies and the Meskwaki in the 18th century in

what became known as the "Fox Wars." The first occurred in 1701 at Fort Pontchartrain (Detroit), after which a lively traffic in Meskwaki slaves opened between Green Bay and New France. War picked up again in 1712 and was more or less continuous into the late 1720s, at which point it became a genocidal campaign with even the smallest numbers of refugees from devastating battles being hunted down and executed. From 1728 to 1732 the governor of New France, Beauharnois, punished the Meskwaki. The governor's biographer attests that he

> encouraged post commanders, western allies, and mission Indians to fall upon the remaining Foxes at every opportunity, until "that damned nation shall be entirely extinguished." In 1733 the principal Fox chief, Kiala, begged for mercy. Beauharnois sent him to Martinique in slavery. If the remaining Foxes would not be dispersed among the missions within the colony, they were to be killed.[1]

Only a few hundred Meskwaki survived the Fox Wars.

It is important to note that, whatever Beauharnois might have wanted, it could not come to pass without the support of the Indigenous allies. What this grim campaign in the *Pays d'en Haut* reveals is complex. First, it puts the lie to the myth of unqualified positive relations between the French and their Indigenous neighbours. The French may not have been interested in annexing lands but they were as driven by greed and pride as any other peoples. Second, the Fox Wars were a test of the strength of French diplomacy among their allies. A test that the French passed utterly. Third, and to build on that last point, the influence of European goods, commerce, and military alliances was having far-flung impacts across the middle of North America, and not only in Canada, Acadia, or the Mississippi Delta. Generally the position of the French was strong. The same could not be said of the Virginian colonists who at this time decided to explore the possibility of expanding across the Appalachian Mountains and into the Ohio Valley.

Key Takeaways

- The *Pays d'en Haut* was a critical bridge between the two larger French settlement colonies.
- The Fox Wars constituted a test of the ability of the French to secure their goals among Indigenous communities.
- The French were, with the support of their allies, able to inflict significant losses on enemies located thousands of kilometres away from Canada and Louisiana.

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1. S. Dale Standen, "BEAUHARNOIS DE LA BOISCHE, CHARLES DE, Marquis de BEAUHARNOIS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 3 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Access October 20, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/beauharnois_de_la_boische_charles_de_3E.html.

## 4.10 Summary

From the outset, France (like the Netherlands) wanted commercial outposts, not permanent settlement. Agricultural efforts in Acadia and the St. Lawrence would take decades of effort and setbacks to take root, and this model of colonization never spread much west or south of Montreal.

The Canadien heartland of farms was itself made possible by the disappearance of the Laurentian Iroquois some time between Cartier and the arrival of Samuel de Champlain in 1608. Without firing a single *arquebus* the French inherited "widowed lands" from the indigenous peoples. They were able to fit into the economic niche of food producers that had previously been filled by the Stadaconans, Hochelagans, and — after 1649 — the Wendat. Elsewhere, the French simply lacked the wherewithal to push anyone around, let alone off their land, although they might do so with the assistance of Indigenous force (which always brought its own agenda).

Large-scale immigration was also held back by the peculiar economic conditions of northern New France. Fur trading was the biggest earner in Canada, so adult males regularly left their farms around ploughing and planting time to voyage west and north in search of trading partners. This slowed the progress of a farming frontier, even in regions where the French did not have to compete for land. (By contrast, in the English colonies to the south, especially in the plantation colonies, there was almost immediate and long-running competition with Indigenous neighbours over land for farming.) Early Canadiens were not so land-hungry — not because they were more restrained or enlightened in their respect for Indigenous property; their numbers were limited and they needed Indigenous peoples as trade partners. This relationship almost immediately embroiled the French in local conflicts in which they were obliged to participate or risk losing trade.

In sum, the French colonial model created dangers that were not helpful in attracting settlers. The long battle with the Haudenosaunee Five Nations that ran almost uninterrupted from 1609 to 1701 is the best example of this limitation. Due to their small population, their reliance on trade, and their half-hearted commitment to agriculture (and thus land), French colonists needed to develop strong ties to Indigenous communities. In part due to the assiduous cultivation of those ties for trade and security purposes, the French were eventually able to exert influence over a large territory within North America.

Spanish colonies might have enjoyed powerful local authority and so might the English (as we'll see in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7) but France remained very much in charge of New France. This was driven by the economic priorities of mercantilism, which was an economic doctrine stating that a nation's power depended on the value of its exports. Under mercantilism (as will be explored in Chapter 7), nations sought to establish colonies to produce goods for use in the home country as a chief means of acquiring economic strength. Essentially, mercantilists believed that colonies existed not for the benefit of settlers, but for the benefit of the home country. For France and Britain, the ultimate goal of mercantilism was to run trade surpluses — to haul in valuable materials from North America and use them to increase export trade in Europe — so that gold and silver would pour into Paris and London. The government took its share through duties and taxes; the remainder went to merchants. In France in particular, the Crown got much richer, as did the traders based in the coastal port cities (of which both Cartier and Champlain were representative). The Crown and the regional bourgeoisie became unlikely allies. The

French regime spent a fortune on naval supplies and shipping — as did the British government — and these navies served not only to protect the colonial investments but to threaten the colonies of the other empires as well. They also played a role in relations with the Indigenous host communities, as Chapter 5 shows.

Key Terms

**Cajuns**: Francophone settlers in Louisiana descended mostly from Acadiens.

***censitaires***: Also known as "habitants," the rent-paying tenants of the seigneurs. The rent is known as the *cens.*

***Code Noir***: Introduced under Louis XIV in 1685, the *Code Noir* established the ground rules for slavery in the French colonies. This included a prohibition of any religion other than Catholicism, the range of discipline permissible, and the conditions required for manumission (freeing of slaves).

***Compagnie des Cent-Associés***: The Company of One Hundred Associates (sometimes called the Company of New France or *Compagnie de la Nouvelle France*) was chartered in 1627 to operate the fur trade in Canada and Acadia and establish settlements. It followed two earlier chartered efforts, the *Compagnie des Marchands* and the *Compagnie de Montmorency.* The *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* ceased operating in 1663.

***Communauté des habitants***: Worked in conjunction with the *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* in an arrangement that sublet the *Cent-Associés'* monopoly to residents in the colony of Canada. Also known as the *Compagnie des habitants*.

***coureurs de bois***: In English, known as "runners of the woods." The first *coureurs de bois* were young men dispatched by Champlain to reside among the Wendat, learn the Wyandot language, and develop an understanding of local trade protocols. Subsequently, the *coureurs* were more likely to be independent or semi-independent traders seeking sources of furs among Indigenous communities across the interior of North America.

***filles du roi***: In English, known as "the king's daughters." Between 1663 and about 1673, this cohort of women (mostly young and many orphans) was recruited by the Crown's agents (mostly in Paris) for settlement in Canada. Their passage was paid for by the king, and they were provided with a dowry as an incentive to marriage.

**Fort Beausejour**: Settlement built by the French in 1751 on the Chignecto Isthmus, which connects modern New Brunswick to Nova Scotia. This was an important land corridor connecting the Fortress of Louisbourg with Acadien settlements and Canada. The fort was also intended to support Mi'kmaq allies during war. Captured by the British in 1755, the name was changed to Fort Cumberland.

**Gallican, Gallicanism**: A perspective widely held in France and its colonies from the 17th century that spiritual authority resides with the Pope, but civil authority with the monarch. Because much of what the colonial clergy attended to was essentially "civil" — farming, administering the colony generally, etc. — many of the Catholic clergy looked first to Paris for leadership and not to the Vatican. This position was challenged with some finality at the First Vatican Council of 1868, at which papal infallibility was defined.

**gift diplomacy**: In the context of European-Indigenous relations, the practice of renewing — annually or otherwise regularly — diplomatic relations and alliances by providing gifts to leadership figures. It includes the practice of "covering the dead," a round of gift-giving following wartime deaths of an ally's soldiers.

**habitants**: See ***censitaires***.

**Hôtel-Dieu**: Or "hostel of God." In Montreal the Hôtel-Dieu hospital was established and run by the Ursuline nuns.

**Île Royale**: Established as a colonial site by the French in 1713, it is the location of the Fortress of Louisbourg. Captured by the British in 1755, it was renamed Cape Breton Island.

**Île Saint-Jean**: Part of the French colony of Acadia, it was captured by the British in 1758 and renamed first Saint John's Island, and later Prince Edward Island.

**intendant**: Beginning in 1663, the administrative officer responsible for civil affairs in New France. The intendant's portfolio included judicial affairs, infrastructure, military preparedness, addressing issues of corruption, and colonial finances. Notionally the most powerful figure in the colony, in practice, the intendant was often rivalled by the governor.

**Jesuit Order**: The Society of Jesus was established in 1534 and is characterized by its fierce loyalty to papal authority in all matters. Their members first arrived in Canada in 1625 to assist the Recollets in missionary work among the Indigenous population. The Jesuits played a pivotal role in French relations with Wendake (Huronia).

**Jesuit Relations**: Reports from Jesuit missionaries in Canada and an important source of historical and ethnographical material on the Wendat and other First Nations. In part, the Relations served as a means to secure more funding from France. They were eventually published for a wider readership and were thus a source of revenue for the order.

***l'Ordre de Bon Temps***: The Order of Good Cheer was suggested by Champlain in 1606 as a means of improving morale among the residents at Port-Royal. It is reckoned that the first meeting of the Order constitutes the first performance of European-style theatre in North America.

**Recollets**: A Franciscan order whose members were the first missionaries in New France, arriving in 1615. The Recollets are credited with the first batch of beer in New France (1620) and were responsible for recruiting the Jesuit Order into the missionary field in Canada in 1625. Expelled from New France in 1629, they returned in 1670 and served until their numbers were depleted after the Conquest.

**seigneurs**, **seigneury**: The seigneurial system in New France, and especially in the colony of Canada, sought to reproduce elements of the French feudal system. Although some of the seigneurs in Canada were nobles, most were military officers and members of the clergy. Rent values were based on rates set by the Crown, not on the scarcity of land or labour. Seigneurs had to provide their tenants (*censitaires*, habitants) with a gristmill (the use of which was essentially taxed), and the tenants provided an annual round of labour (*corvée*), which might involve road building or erecting a chapel.

**Sulpicians**: Operating out of the Parisian parish of Saint-Sulpice (from which their name derives), the Sulpicians were a wealthy order without a vow of poverty. This distinguished them from the more austere Jesuits and Recollets.

## Short Answer Exercises

1. Why did France resume efforts to establish a colonial presence in North America?
2. Describe the relationship(s) between the four regions of New France.
3. What factors restricted the growth and success of Acadia?

4. What factors limited the establishment of colonies in Newfoundland?
5. What did Champlain do that facilitated the growth of the colony of Canada?
6. Why was Canada so difficult to get up and running?
7. What role(s) did the fur trade play in the colonial project in the 17th century?
8. What was the nature of the relationship between Canada and Wendake?
9. What features of Wendat society and economy made the Confederacy prime partners in New France's fur trade experiment?
10. What were some of the characteristics of slavery in New France?
11. Explain Colbert's vision of a "compact colony" for Canada. What steps did Colbert take to achieve this? Account for its failure.
12. What roles were played by the Roman Catholic Church in New France?

## Suggested Readings

1. Donovan, Kenneth. "Slaves and their Owners in Île Royale, 1713–1760." *Acadiensis* XXV, no.1 (Autumn 1995): 3–32.
2. Hynes, Gisa. "Some Aspects of the Demography of Port Royal, 1650–1755." *Acadiensis* III, no.1 (Autumn 1973): 3–17.
3. Lachance, André and Sylvie Savoie. "Violence, Marriage, and Family Honour: Aspects of the Legal Regulation of Marriage in New France." *Essays in the History of Canadian Law, Volume V: Crime and Criminal Justice.* Edited by Jim Phillips, Tina Loo, and Susan Lewthwaite, 143–173. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994.

# Chapter 5. Indigenous Canada in the Era of Contact

# 5.1 Introduction




*Figure 5.1 An 18th century Abenaki couple (artist unknown).*

For the first 300 years of contact between Europe and Canada, Indigenous communities' autonomy remained more or less intact. Displacement had occurred in some places, but the limited ambitions of New France as a settlement colony mitigated wholesale loss of lands and power. That is not to say that Indigenous life was not under threat. The proto-contact period, the contact period, and the post-contact period all witnessed changes in Indigenous peoples' life and authority that were profound. Indigenous people and societies were not, however, being acted upon. There were many Indigenous agendas: economic, political, military, and territorial. What were the priorities driving Indigenous people at a time when territory was being lost in increments to newcomers, long-time neighbours were squeezing westward and colliding with others, and epidemics were cutting a swath through populations? How did Indigenous people perceive what was taking place, and what future did they seek to create for themselves under changing circumstances?

**Historians on Video**

European accounts of Indigenous societies at the time of contact are marked by the perceptual blinkers worn by the first visitors. Peter Cook, a historian at the University of Victoria, describes how misunderstandings were as good as hardwired into the contact experience. Here is a link to the transcript of the video titled How were Aboriginal peoples depicted in early English and French travel writing? [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_pc_u4_01.pdf).

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=122#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

Learning Objectives

- Describe the ways in which Indigenous people perceived the newcomers.
- Analyze the impact of the European intrusion on the traditional patterns of Indigenous life.
- Describe the Columbian Exchange and its ramifications for Indigenous societies.
- Enumerate some of the major Indigenous political responses to invasion.
- Account for Indigenous engagement in the fur trade.

### Video Attributions

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# 5.2 The Columbian Exchange

The diversity of languages along the Pacific Northwest coast presented a barrier to trade and diplomacy. These weren't mere dialectal variants; the enormous gulf between languages was both difficult to cross and proudly guarded. Consequently, there arose a "trade jargon" — a dialect that exists only where there is trade to conduct — to use as a working language over an extensive region. How old it is remains unknown, but linguists have concluded that **Chinook** (a.k.a. chinuk wawa) existed before Europeans arrived in the late 18th century. In what is now central and northern Ontario, the language traders adopted was Wendat, because it was in the Wendat villages that most of the trademarts were held.

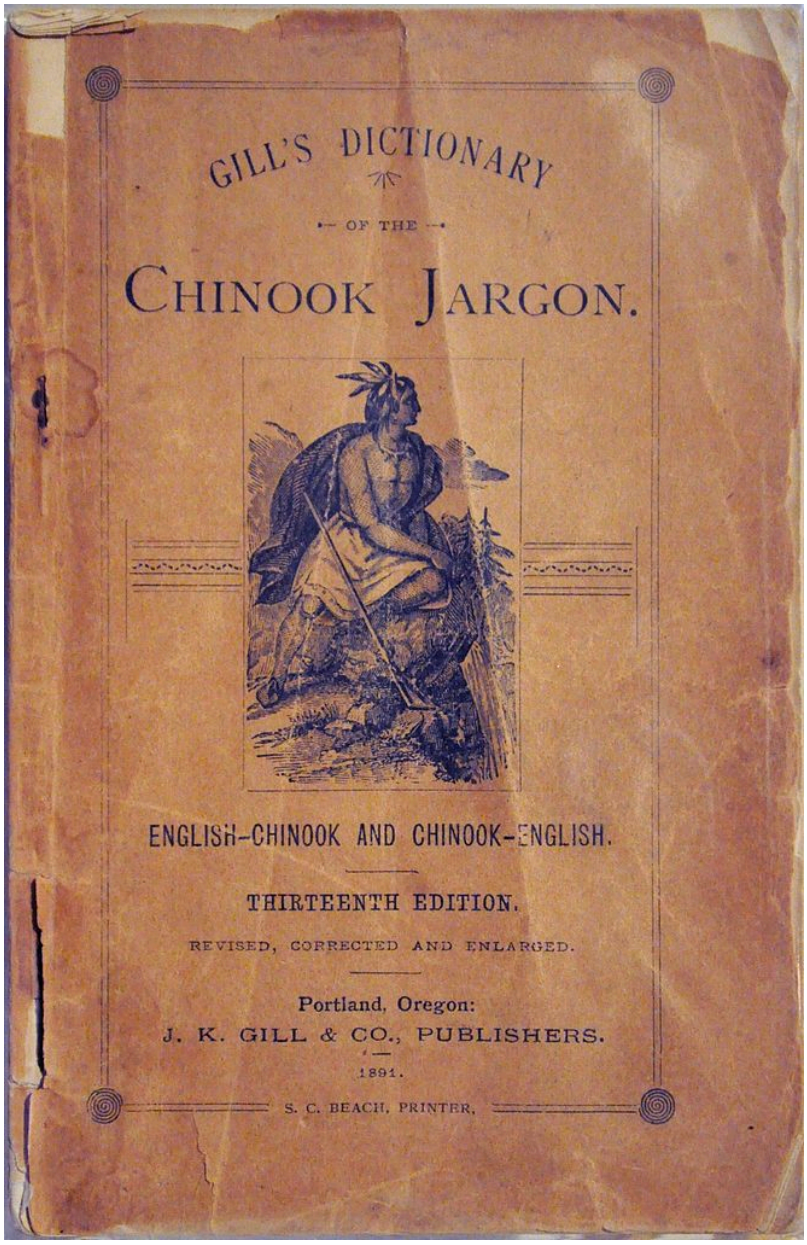


*Figure 5.2 The Chinook jargon combined elements of several northwest coast languages and grafted on English, French, Spanish, and even Russian elements as well. A trade dialect, some words are still used regularly in British Columbia. (Chinook Jargon handbook by J. K. Gill & Co., 19th century.)*

The use of either a hybrid trade jargon or the language of a dominant player in trade arose precisely because trade and alliances were critical parts of Indigenous life. When Europeans showed up, Indigenous people understood them principally in this context: as a source of goods and as possible allies or adversaries. Almost immediately, Indigenous people threw themselves into the business of acquiring imported trade goods from the "foreigners with hairy faces." The consequences for societies on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean were enormous.

For better or worse, there was no turning back from the connection forged between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of the Americas in the late 15th century. Goods, crops, mineral wealth, words, and

medicines flowed east into Europe while livestock, humans, plants, ideas, and much more travelled west into the Americas. This flow and counterflow is known as the **Columbian Exchange**.[1]

## Crops and Animals

Agricultural and horticultural civilizations in the Americas were capable of building up surpluses for local trade. Having baskets full of grain or root crops ready to exchange for flint or copper was simply part of everyday business. The lands from the Caribbean north offered products such as squash, beans, maize, tobacco, potatoes, chocolate, corn, and tomatoes, all of which were quickly taken up by Europeans. Peppers and vanilla were also soon embraced. Necessity explains European interest in some of these foods: early voyagers had typically eaten their way through their onboard stocks and were hungry, and hospitable locals fed them local specialities.

1. For a survey of this subject, see Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World* (NY: Fawcett, 1988).



*Figure 5.3 Maize was only one of many plants that would transform global diets and enable a massive increase in human and food-animal populations.*

The short- and long-term consequences of introducing these exotic crops to the European diet cannot be understated. Early exploration missions into the western Atlantic were ostensibly interested in finding a passage to Asia to acquire spices and silks; instead they acquired foods that became staples in daily living. More than that, these plants revolutionized life in the Old World: potatoes replaced grains in many parts of Europe; manioc (or cassava), while not having a huge impact on European diets, underwrote a population explosion in Africa and thus contributed to the rise and longevity of the slave trade; maize and sweet potatoes spread to China; other crops from South America contributed to the change in diet as well. For Europe, Asia, and Africa these crops — especially the starchy plants — turbo-charged population growth. The diet of the poor improved, as did birth rates.

These new crops required new land use techniques, which meant that agricultural practices and land ownership patterns changed dramatically. The quantities of food that could be produced during this "Americanized" agricultural era increased at such a rate that Old World societies were able to escape the

limits of subsistence agriculture and build more and larger cities on the strength of agricultural surpluses. As well, famines occurred less frequently.

The export of animals from the Americas to Europe was less notable.[2] The main export was the turkey; by 1524 the turkey reached the British Isles, and by 1558 it had become popular at banquets in England and in other parts of Europe. English settlers subsequently brought the domesticated turkey back to North America and interbred it with native wild turkeys in the 1600s.

The exported animal that had the greatest symbolic and visual impact on both Europe and the Americas was the lowly cochineal, a small insect that lives on cactus plants throughout the American southwest and Meso-America. Harvested in the thousands, the female conchineal's remains yield a variety of bright red dyes. The red uniforms that became the trademark of British troops owe their colour to the cochineal.

2. Victoria Dickenson, "Cartier, Champlain, and the Fruits of the New World: Botanical Exchange in the 16th and 17th Centuries," *Scienta Canadensis: Canadian Journal of the History of Science, Technology and Medicine* 31, no.1–2 (2008): 27–47.




*Figure 5.4 Harvesting cochineal beetles with a deer tail. Attributed to José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez, c. 1777.*

Food crops travelling the other way — from Europe — were of minimal interest to Indigenous peoples, as they had all the food they needed. Indeed, many of the European foods that arrived in the Americas were used to sustain settler communities, not to trade with the Natives. Reassuringly familiar items like Old World grains (oats, wheat, barley), soft and hard tree fruits (peaches, plums, pears), wine grapes, and onions all made the move west, as did olives and tea in warmer locations.

However, plantation crops had significant impact on the Indigenous population as they forced a change in diet by competing with other food crops. The cultivation of new crops also contributed to the enslavement of native people and the trade in Africans. These introduced crops included coffee, sugar, bananas, rice, and indigo — all suitable for large-scale production. None of these crops significantly improved Indigenous diets. Indeed, the plantation crops were grown almost exclusively for consumption and further refinement in Europe.

The arrival of livestock, especially horses, in the Americas had very different implications. About 4500 years after an early, Pleistocene-era horse went extinct, Spanish *conquistadors* brought their horses to North America to facilitate rapid movement across the land and lead cavalry charges. For the Indigenous peoples at the time, the very idea of a human riding another animal was so fantastic that they could barely comprehend what they were seeing. But the awe in which horses were initially held did not last long. The rulers of New Spain had to prohibit Indigenous people from riding horses, a sure sign that they wanted to do so.

Horses spread north from Mexico into what is now the American southwest, and by 1606 the Navajo were stealing them from Spanish settlements. Those horses that managed to escape from corrals found themselves in an almost ideal environment of grasslands extending from Texas to the Yukon. They went feral and multiplied rapidly.

For southwestern peoples, the horse became a commodity in their existing trade network. Horses were passed along in conservative numbers for generations until they reached the northern Plains in the 1730s. Around 1750, HBC traders observed Cree-Assiniboine riders with horses sporting Spanish brands.[3] By that time the Andalusian Mustang breed imported by the Spanish — noteworthy for its short legs and barrel chest — was being bred into something more hardy by the Liksiyu of the Columbia Plateau in what is now northern Oregon. Despite having no experience with domestic animals, the Liksiyu were able to geld their animals and selectively breed them. The animals they produced were known by the name given the Liksiyu by the French: **cayuse**. By the early 19th century, horses had reached the British Columbian plateau; the local variant name for these horses, cayoosh, refers to a pony similar to the cayuse but bred by Indigenous people to have stronger hindquarters suitable for the mountains.[4]

The horse had a profound impact on Plains culture. People who had depended on dogs (sometimes in the hundreds) to haul their belongings, infants, and foodstuffs in travois could move much more easily on horseback. A well-packed horse could carry more material goods than dogs could, and careful and stealthy herding of bison to jump sites like Head-Smashed-In was made redundant by death-defying charges on horseback. The Cree, Assiniboine, and other Plains communities expanded significantly, from fewer than 50 to more than 200 per band, simply because the horse gave them the ability to move more goods and more people and to hunt bison over a wider range. Commerce benefited, too, from the ability of horses to carry trade farther, faster and in larger quantities. The horse also changed dramatically the nature of Plains warfare and raiding (often for more horses). In every respect, the horse was a transformational force in Plains cultures.

Indigenous peoples deployed and valued horses in other ways as well. The Five Nations early identified the hauling capacity of horses and, according to historian Denys Delâge, the Mohawks and the Onondagas both asked the Dutch for horses to drag logs. He notes, too, that there was no mention of using the horses to haul ploughs, just to move stumps and other potentially useful obstacles closer to their refortified villages.[5] Horses in battle may have been effective in the grasslands of the Plains or the

3. Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 270.

4. Wikipedia: Cayuse. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cayuse_(horse)

5. Denys Delâge, *Bitter Feast: Amerindians and Europeans in Northeastern North America, 1600–64* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 160.

Columbia Basin but they would have been a liability in the hardwood forests and hill country of the Haudenosaunee.

The horse also revolutionized Indigenous lives in less obvious ways. Indigenous people had to learn — from more experienced neighbours and from direct experience — how to care for their herds. The newly learned practices of animal husbandry were passed down from adults to children, and skills to manage horses were mastered, including how best to use them as pack animals and how to ride them into battle or into a bison herd. Diets changed as a result of the horse revolution as well. Becoming more efficient bison hunters meant that some Plains nations threw themselves into that economy and, as one scholar puts it, "abandoned their 'ecological safety nets' … what they lost in diversity they made up for by increased trade with those peoples who had not abandoned the old ways."[6] The availability of horses also provided young men with more time to engage in warfare and "counting coup."

More warfare — now augmented by guns — meant more fatalities among the men and, thus, more widows. It became possible and in some regards necessary for men to take multiple wives and for widows to seek security in polygynous relationships. Under these circumstances women's condition changed radically: they went from living and being heavily overworked in a pedestrian culture in which they carried significant burdens long distances to one marked by greater chance of widowhood but, more generally, relative prosperity, less likelihood of famine, time to develop more artistic skills, and the opportunity to ride rather than walk.[7]

Other livestock also were part of the Columbian Exchange, including cows and pigs. Cattle were unknown in the Americas before the arrival of the Europeans. Evidence suggests that the Vikings brought European cattle to Newfoundland, but when their colony disappeared, so did their cattle. The Portuguese attempted to introduce cattle to Sable Island in 1518 but that colonial effort flickered out quickly. Cartier's settlement at Cap Rouge had its own little herd of two dozen, and the newcomer community ate them up within the year. The Acadiens enjoyed more success because their drained salt marshes provided cattle with the grazing and salt they required, and the farmers didn't need to clear tracts of forest land.

On the whole, cattle in subsequent centuries fared little better. Without natural grazing patches in abundance, Canadien farmers viewed their Gascony and Breton cattle as something of an expensive luxury in the mid-17th century and their numbers never grew greatly in the age of New France. Better results would follow on the West Coast. Descendants of a herd brought to Central America in 1519 by Cortés were shipped north from Alto California to Yuquot (Friendly Cove) in 1790, in the very heart of Nuu-chah-nulth territory. In the early 19th century, fur traders drove Californian cattle along the Brigade Trails into the Interior where herds thrived on bunchgrass. By 1848 there were said to be 5000 head at Fort Kamloops alone and, with the help of horses, they made short work of the bunchgrass environment in a matter of decades.[8]

Indigenous people had few opportunities and few incentives to experiment in cattle-raising, but there

6. Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 309–312.

7. Ibid., 273.

8. Ian MacLachlan, "The Historical Development of Cattle in Canada" (unpublished manuscript, 1996, minor edits 2006), 2–5. https://www.uleth.ca/dspace/bitstream/handle/10133/303/Historical_cattle_Canada.pdf?sequence=3.

are a few notable exceptions. The herds introduced to the Nicola, Thompson, and Okanagan Valleys in the 19th century were typically tended by Indigenous cowboys. Also, the Acadien-Mi'kmaq community raised dairy cattle, as did Loyalist Mohawk settlements in what is now southern Ontario. In the late 19th century, the disappearance of bison herds made cattle ranching more appealing. Overall, this introduced species neither displaced Indigenous peoples in Canada, nor did it especially excite them.

Pigs were another new species in the Americas. The Spanish explorer Hernándo de Soto brought 13 pigs to the Florida mainland. As well, Sable Island was, once more, a testing ground and it hosted the first piggeries in what became Canada. In 1598 Marquis de La Roche-Mesgouez introduced a small herd whose fate is unknown.

Pigs are an almost indestructible species and their numbers grew wherever they were introduced. Settlers liked them because their meat could be preserved in several different ways and they could eat almost every part of them. Indigenous peoples, however, were less enthused about the introduction of pigs because they easily invaded crops. Fences offer little protection against pigs, and they regularly found their way into horticultural areas. On Vancouver Island, for example, pigs destroyed camas pastures and thus threatened Indigenous survival.

Other animals that were imported from Europe to Canada included sheep, chickens, cats, rats and, evidently, honey bees. Evidence that any of these were especially sought after by Indigenous peoples in the North is difficult to find. On the whole, introduced foodstuffs did far less for Indigenous peoples than the exported plants did for the rest of the world. Native peoples found that their wild meats and plants, the products of their own gardens, and the protein that could be harvested from lakes, rivers, and oceans were infinitely preferable to the new foods brought in.

Food, however, is one of the most subtle elements in the language of imperialism. Historian Beverly Soloway has explored the ways in which the arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company in the far north in the 17th century and the introduction of a British planted-food model disrupted (and, in many cases, eradicated) indigenous plant foodways of the Cree (Mushkegowuck) in the Canadian subarctic. The consequence of this horticultural imperialism, Soloway argues, continues into the present day in the form of poorer diets and food insecurity, an indication that the Columbian Exchange is far from finished.[9]

### Exercise: History Around You — The World's Larder

What's for dinner tonight? Do a quick survey of what's in your fridge and on the shelves, and give some thought to what you've eaten over the last few days. If your diet includes prepackaged food, check out the ingredients. How much of that diet derives from foodstuffs first produced by indigenous peoples of the Americas? If you consider yourself either Asian or of Asian ancestry, what share of your diet is made up of fully Asian materials? If you are European or of European ancestry, what share consists of foods originally

9. The subject of "Transforming Indigenous Foodways (http://activehistory.ca/2014/01/transforming-indigenous-foodways/)" is investigated at ActiveHistory.ca where you can listen to Beverly Soloway's lecture (http://activehistory.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Beverly_Soloway.mp3) on 'mus co shee': Indigenous Plant Foods and Horticultural Imperialism in the Canadian Sub-Arctic.

produced by Europeans? What does the balance look like? To what extent has the Columbian Exchange become, literally, a part of your very fibre?

Key Takeaways

- Historically important crops and other goods travelled from the Americas to Europe, while invasive species made their way in the other direction in the Columbian Exchange.
- Livestock — especially horses, cattle, and pigs — had a significant impact on Indigenous landscapes, livelihoods, cultures, and health.

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# 5.3 The Widowed Land

In 1519, the Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés entered the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan, awed by its splendour. It was, he reported, "so big and so remarkable [as to be] … almost unbelievable, for the city is much larger than Granada and very much stronger … with many more people than Granada had when it was taken … [It] is as large as Seville or Cordova."[1] Cortés, however, was not an indifferent tourist eager to see the sights and then be on his way.

## The Fall of Mexico

Despite their advantages, the Spanish did not defeat the Aztec coalition outright; rather they experienced a resounding defeat at the hands of the Aztecs in 1520 and were forced to flee the capital city. Those Spaniards who were captured were sacrificed at the pyramid of Huitzilopochtli; this occurred on the night of June 30 to July 1, 1520, called La Noche Triste (the Sad Night) by the Spaniards. But this defeat was only a temporary setback for the Europeans, who received aid from two sources. The first of these was a massive army raised among the dissatisfied tribute-paying Indigenous nations whose territories lay along the road from Veracruz to Tenochtitlan. The second was much more subtle.

In 1521, smallpox struck Tenochtitlan. The disease had been introduced into the city by a Spanish slave, left behind when the Europeans retreated. An Aztec account of events (compiled 30 to 40 years later in the *Florentine Codex*) portrays the magnitude of what followed:

> After the Spaniards had left the city of Mexico, and before they had made any preparations to attack us again, there came amongst us a great sickness, a general plague. It began in the month of Tepeilhuitl. It raged amongst us, killing vast numbers of people. It covered many all over with sores: on the face, on the head, on the chest, everywhere. […] Nobody could move himself, nor turn his head, nor flex any part of his body. The sores were so terrible that the victims could not lie face down, nor on their backs, nor move from one side to the other. […] Many died of the disease, and many others died merely of hunger. They starved to death because there was no one left alive to care for them. […] The worst phase of this pestilence lasted sixty days, sixty days of horror … then it diminished, but it never stopped entirely…. And when this had happened, the Spanish returned.[2]

Those struck by the disease were too weak to move, and even if they survived, were in no condition to cultivate food. The inhabitants of the city were literally starving to death.

On August 21, 1521, the Spanish re-entered the city, overwhelmed its last defences, declared victory, and accepted the surrender of the remaining Aztec military. The conditions they encountered were horrifying. Bernal Díaz del Castillo (c. 1492–1584), a *conquistador* and eyewitness, wrote some years later that the Spaniards "found the houses full of corpses, and some poor Mexicans still in [the houses]

1. Quoted in Ray Hutchison, Mark Gottdiener, Michael T. Ryan, *The New Urban Sociology*, 5th ed. (Toronto: Westview Press, 2014), 38.

2. Quoted in Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents: The "New World" Through Indian Eyes Since 1492* (Toronto: Viking, 1992), 45.

who could not move away … The city looked as though it had been ploughed up. The roots of any edible greenery had been dug out, boiled and eaten, and they had even cooked the bark of some of the trees."[3]

Smallpox was the real *conquistador* in Mexico; Cortés and his small army simply mopped up. The collapse of the most powerful indigenous empire in North America in this manner was a foretaste of events that would follow in the territories that eventually became Canada and the United States.

## Exotic Diseases

The Americas gave the rest of the world the basis of life: easily grown carbohydrates complemented with beans, squash and, of course, chocolate. The rest of the world gave the Americas death. Unchecked by extant immunities, diseases like smallpox, typhus, measles, bubonic plague, cholera, malaria, mumps, yellow fever, pertussis (whooping cough), and influenza were responsible for the destruction of large segments of the Caribs, Arawaks, Beothuks, and Meso-American empires. These diseases worked their way across the whole of the continent. The last of the great smallpox epidemics in Canada took place on the West Coast as recently as 1862–1863, claiming around 20,000 lives. That sad episode is considered in Chapter 13, but it is a number worth pondering for a moment here: 20,000 dead in the space of less than a year represents a lot of communities utterly destroyed and huge numbers of corpses with no one to bury them. Generally, attacks of exotic diseases were worst for island-based societies like the Beothuk of Newfoundland and perhaps the Pentlatch of Vancouver Island insofar as their ability to retreat was limited by geography and the ocean.

These "new" diseases that Europeans brought to the Americas were dangerous both at home and abroad, but they were devastating in the New World, where they killed thousands. Europeans had built up varying levels of immunities over generations, which the people in the Americas had not. Europeans had had the advantage of being exposed to domestic animals, which put them at constant risk of some trans-species epidemic. (Even today we worry about "swine flu" or "bird flu," both of which may be transmuted by contact with living animals or by eating improperly prepared meat.) More importantly, millennia of exposure to these illnesses produced physical immune responses, either through first exposure to the virus, by being passed across generations via mothers' milk, or through "chance inoculation," as was the case with milk maids who were constantly in contact with cowpox (a close relative of smallpox), which gave them a greater degree of immunity to the smallpox virus.

People in the Americas had none of these advantages. Because they had few domesticated animals they had little exposure to cross-species viruses, and large urban settlements like Tenochtitlan or crowded islands like those in the Caribbean were perfect environments for smallpox to thrive. Historians do not agree on the magnitude of the devastation — there is no way to know with absolute accuracy how many people were here before the **virgin soil epidemics** and no way to know how many perished — but there is consensus that the mortality rates were astonishingly high with no parallels in the history of humanity.

Scholars currently generally agree that there were approximately 50 million people living in the Western Hemisphere in 1492. Of that number, some 6 million were living in the Aztec Empire, another 8 million in the Mayan States, 11 million in what is now Brazil, and 12 million in the Inca Empire. What is now Canada is reckoned to have had a pre-contact population of about 500,000, although high estimates run

3. Bernal Diaz del Castillo, *The Conquest of New Spain,* trans. John M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1963), 407.

to as many as 2 million. The impact of exotic epidemics on Meso-America and the Caribbean provides a benchmark for the effects on the population as a whole because the Spanish were in a position to observe some Indigenous communities as they passed through the catastrophe: the lowest estimates are of an astonishing 90% death toll by the end of the 17th century. Warfare between the European invaders and the locals claimed many lives as well. Island populations fared especially badly, some disappearing entirely. On the mainland, however, it was not much better: the last three decades of the 16th century saw the population of present-day Mexico drop from 6 million to about 1 million people. According to some estimates, it has taken nearly 500 years for the Maya population to rebound to its late 15th century level. In what is now Brazil, the indigenous population declined from a pre-Columbian high of an estimated 4 to 8 million to some 300,000. These three areas alone lost more than all of Europe during the Black Death.[4]

Some scholars estimate that between 50% and 90% of the North American population died in the wake of the Spanish voyages. Spanish explorers like Ponce de León raced back and forth across the Florida peninsula with a small herd of pigs to feed his troops: his principal legacy was a massive die-off of indigenous humans. In 1618–1619, smallpox killed 90% of the Native Americans in the area of the Massachusetts Bay. Historians believe many Mohawk in present-day New York became infected after contact with children of Dutch traders at Fort Orange (Albany, New York) in 1634. Disease swept through Mohawk villages, reaching the Onondaga at Lake Ontario by 1636.

Many of these epidemics occurred in the proto-contact period, after contact but ahead of sustained relationships. In some cases, the viruses were passed along inland to people and communities who would, in essence, never see a European with their own eyes. In other words, there are no European eyewitness accounts. One can easily imagine this situation from the perspective of New France in the 1640s: no one from that colony had ventured farther west than Georgian Bay, and therefore they couldn't know what was happening beyond Lake Huron. It is also possible that European fishing fleets introduced exotic diseases before Cartier, perhaps before Cabot.[5] If that is the case, one may speculate on how much of the natural landscape of North America was, indeed, already a land widowed for a century before resettlement began. Perhaps bison herds grew to their enormous numbers because the number of humans preying on them had fallen. Perhaps the lushness of the eastern hardwood forests was due to human neglect.[6]

4. The field of contact-era demography changed dramatically in the 1960s with the publication of Henry Dobyns' 1966 study, "Estimating Aboriginal American Population: An Appraisal of Techniques With a New Hemispheric Estimate" in *Current Anthropology* 7 (1966): 395–416. Previous estimates of one million people north of the Rio Grande were suddenly increased to 9.8 to 12.25 million. Scholars have since revised this number upward and, sometimes, downward. Some of the key and relevant studies are: Alfred W. Crosby Jr., *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, NC: Greewood Press, 1972); William M Denevan, ed., *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976); Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); and Douglas H. Ubelaker, "North American Indian Population Size: Changing Perspectives," in *Disease and Demography in the Americas*, eds. John W. Verano and Douglas H. Ubelaker (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1992).

5. Cornelius J. Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1976), 98–99.

6. On the topic of environmental changes coupled to population crises, see William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1983).

## Smallpox in Canada

Smallpox may have been the chief culprit behind the disappearance of the St. Lawrence Iroquois. From 1535 to 1542, Cartier was an occasional guest in two significant centres: Stadacona and Hochelaga. By 1600 both were gone, as were the many smaller, related settlements that lined the north shore of the river. Historians thought, for many years, that their Omàmiwinini (Algonquin) and/or Innu (Montagnais) neighbours sent them packing or that the Five Nations League assimilated them. Archaeologists have traced St. Lawrence Iroquois women to Wendake (Huronia) after 1615 on the strength of their distinctive pottery; the absence of St. Lawrence Iroquoian men's artifacts — specifically clay pipes — is taken as evidence that the Wendat killed the men and took the women as captives.[7] It is possible, too, that climate change in the late 15th century affected the St. Lawrence peoples. On balance of evidence, however, the likelihood is greater that they were raided out of existence. Keep in mind that Hochelaga was surrounded by a triple palisade, which the Hochelagans certainly did not build for its looks. No explanation for the disappearing Iroquoians, however, is as convincing as the prospect of an epidemic, which would have scoured the valley clean (leaving it conveniently available for resettlement by the French).

Historians know this is a possibility because of what happened in Wendake (Huronia) from 1634 to 1639. In those years smallpox laid waste to the towns of the Wendat Confederacy, claiming half the Wendat population. It is not known if the route taken by smallpox passed through Mohawk lands to Wendat fortress villages or whether it came via the early settlements at New France. Regardless, the high rate of fatalities caused breakdowns in Indigenous societies and disrupted generational exchanges of culture. For the Wendat this meant that a rising cohort of young warriors were lost and so too were the elders whose knowledge of the culture and diplomacy were never more needed. A decade later Wendake (Huronia) was no more. It is entirely possible that a similar scenario befell the Stadaconans, the Hochelagans, and their neighbours a century earlier.

For Indigenous communities, the disease epidemics caused, at the very least, confusion. The unfamiliar symptoms of smallpox and measles — fever, severe weakness, rashes, pustules — would have been frightening. Indigenous healers responded to the foreign diseases as they did to any other injury or indigenous ailment (like poisoning, parasites, gallstones, or tumours): they understood them as the work of an aggrieved or malicious spirit and would convene a healing ceremony in the victim's longhouse with relatives nearby for support. Of course, this response was akin to setting up a campfire in a gunpowder mill. Smallpox spreads principally through droplets expelled by breathing and coughing; offering an infected person spiritual support at close quarters was a fatal error.

The Wendat tried to determine what had changed in their world to cause the disease, and the answer was the French. In particular, many blamed the Jesuit missionaries they had hosted at the villages since the early 1630s (and on whose records we rely heavily for this information). The Wendat were partly right in determining that the epidemic came from the Europeans, although which ones we cannot say for sure in most cases. Despite the mistrust, some of the Wendat nevertheless turned to the Jesuits for spiritual answers, which resulted in villages fractured between traditionalists and converts.

The one response to the smallpox epidemic that could have helped stem the spread was quarantine, but the Wendat never attempted that. In their culture, illness was something through which people were

7. Marcel Moussette, "A Universe under Strain: Amerindian Nations in North-Eastern North America in the 16th Century," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 43, issue 1 (2009): 39.

marshalled by their shamans and their kin; leaving someone to die alone in fear and isolation would have been unforgivable. However, this laudable ethos resulted in hundreds of thousands of people dying.

The Haudenosaunee response to the 1630s smallpox epidemic was to attack Wendake (Huronia), which made sense in the light of the Mourning Wars that continued during these years. There was ample opportunity for attack as the Wendat were weakened by disease (and divided over the presence of the Jesuit missionaries). The Iroquois had economic goals in mind, too, as they hoped to improve their position in the fur trade economies of both the French and the Dutch colonies or at least act as spoilers who could undermine the success enjoyed by their rivals. Perhaps most importantly, it was common practice among the Iroquois (and many other peoples) to adopt into their communities captives taken in military campaigns, especially when a loss of population at home had left them low in numbers. Attacking the Wendat presented the opportunity for revenge, victory, profit, and adoptees to replace those Mohawk lost in the epidemic of 1634.

All of these factors would continue to play a role in Haudenosaunee military campaigns across the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes for the rest of the century. Epidemics had the effect of clearing important pieces from the chessboard. With the Wendat Confederacy out of the way by 1649, there was little to stop Haudenosaunee influence from spreading west. Within 30 years the Iroquois were on the (abandoned) doorstep of Cahokia; a generation later they were in control of the whole Ohio Valley. The so-called Beaver Wars were partly about controlling the flow of goods to the Europeans, but they were also driven by a separate Iroquoian agenda.

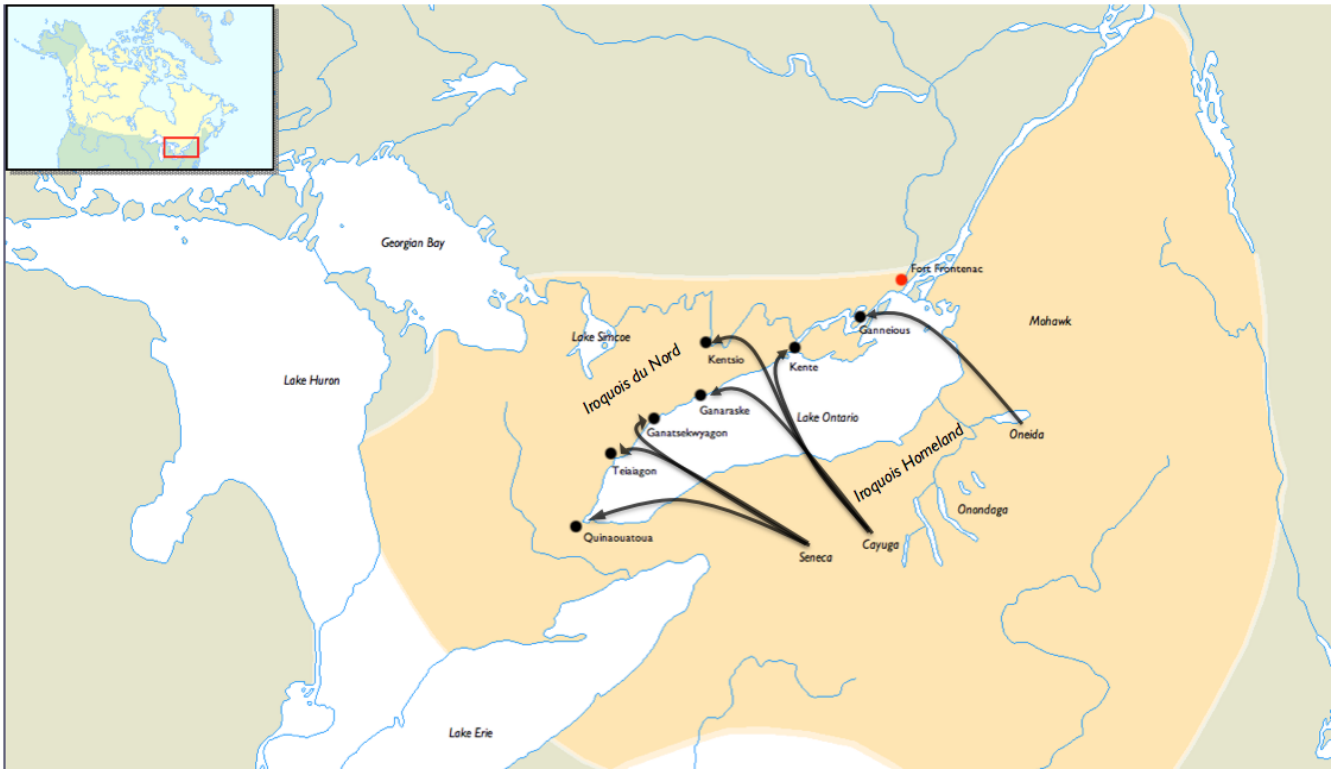


*Figure 5.5 Expansion of Five Nations Territory during the Beaver Wars. [Long Description] (#fig5.5)*

Epidemics continued to work their way across the continent. There is simply no way to know how far and how fast they spread. At least once a century there was another outbreak that shellacked Indigenous populations. An epidemic in 1702 covered most of the Great Lakes region and another in

1736–1738 arrived on the Plains, in what is now southern Manitoba. Disease, as is often the case, followed troops into the field during the Seven Years' War: from the 1750s through the 1780s smallpox turned up like a fire that could not be fully extinguished. In 1781–1782 smallpox appeared on the northern Plains, in this case originating in New Spain and carried north along the horse-trading network. In remarkably well-documented accounts from York Factory and Cumberland House in what is now northeast Saskatchewan, the HBC traders applied what little they knew of quarantine practices to isolate their Indigenous partner populations from the infected. The *Cumberland House Journal*, written by William Tomison, indicates that inherited immunities protected the European population entirely while every single infected Indigenous person died.

In the midst of the grim and tragic conditions that prevailed, there were a few acts of genuine compassion: "In their primitive and already crowded quarters at Cumberland House, Tomison's Caucasian HBC servants, under his direction, took in the dying Indians, provided them with food, shelter and 24 h care (nearly a century in advance of the arrival of Grey Nuns in the northwest), and then, in most instances, dug their graves in deeply frozen ground in midwinter." Some of the horrors are recorded in the *Cumberland House Journal*:

> 15th Tuesday. Late in the Evening a Distressed Woman and her Child came here, these are all that is alive out of one Tent, and has not yet been ailing. The News she brings is still more and more alarming … the small pox rageing amongst them with its greatest fury, and carrying all before it, they chiefly Die within the third or fourth Night, and those that survive after that time are left to be devoured by the wild beasts.[8]

Indigenous peoples on the Plains in particular were caught in the crosshairs of **disease vectors**. Ships from Britain entering Hudson Bay ensured that there was a regular supply of measles and influenza outbreaks heading west along the Saskatchewan River system; the York/Columbia Express (see Chapter 8 and Chapter 13) made it possible for infected Europeans to reach deep into the country and pass along their illnesses; likewise infectious diseases worked their way west from Montreal along trading corridors, with the two lines meeting in the north-central Plains. And then there were epidemics from New Spain that rushed north on horseback. Having acquired British or Canadian products for trade into the Indigenous economy, the Cree, Assiniboine, and Anishinaabe (Ojibwa) were moving within a vector of death in which there was no question of "if," only "when."

Similarly, the 1780s Prairie epidemic may have collided in what is now British Columbia with smallpox introduced from the Pacific coast. Some historians and archaeologists believe that Pacific Northwest populations crumbled by as much as 90%. The numbers are uncertain because there are only abandoned village sites and conflicting oral accounts to rely on. More reliable is the evidence of the impact of smallpox in the 1830s on the Plains and its destruction of the Mandan-Hidatsa farm villages and trademarts on which the Iron Confederacy (Cree, Assiniboine, Anishinaabe) largely depended. Measles likely first came ashore on Haida Gwaii at about the same time, taking 30% or more of the population.[9]

The mechanics of demographic change are important to this story. Like all societies, Indigenous nations depend on growth by having more births and immigrants than deaths. Historical demographers believe that pre-contact mortality rates in Native societies were no better than they were for pre-contact Europeans: life expectancies were not especially high and infant mortality rates may well have

8. C. Stuart Houston and Stan Houston, "The First Smallpox Epidemic on the Canadian Plains: In the Fur-Traders' Words," *Canadian Journal of Infectious Diseases* 11, no. 2 (March/April 2000): 112–115.

9. Roderic Beaujot and Don Kerr, *Population Change in Canada*, 2nd edition (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2004), 22–23.

been crippling. The difference between the two cultures, however, was that the fertility rate among Indigenous people appears to have been lower than it was in Europe, Africa, and Asia. The lack of domesticated dairy animals meant that Indigenous women likely nursed their children for two or more years, effectively dampening their fertility. Any sudden acceleration in mortality levels, then, could only be smoothed out over a longer period of time. And in the years of contact and increased conflict with neighbours, time was a commodity in short supply. Immigration from neighbouring or related First Nations — voluntary or involuntary — drew in new populations to some Indigenous communities but it did so at the price of other societies, a zero-sum proposition for the aggregate indigenous population.

Once again, the Columbian Exchange seems to have been uneven. The only affliction that Europe suffered after contact and that is thought to have its origins in the Americas is syphilis. At its worst, syphilis is a dreadful, disfiguring, and miserable illness, not something to be taken lightly. Although the origin of syphilis has been widely debated and its exact origin is unknown, Europeans like Bartolomé de las Casas wrote that the disease was well known among the Amerindians of the Caribbean in the early 1500s. Skeletal remains of Native Americans from this period and earlier suggest that here, in contrast to other regions of the world, the disease had a congenital form. Lesions on the skull and other parts of the skeleton are a feature associated with the late stages of the disease. A second theory that has received a good deal of support in the 21st century is that syphilis existed in Europe prior to the voyages of Columbus, but that it was unrecognized until it became common and widely spread in the Italian Wars that followed the discovery of the New World. Certainly the timing is suspicious: the Americas are encountered in 1492 and syphilis spiralled out of Italy and across France in 1494. The *conquistador* Cortés, the man whose expedition introduced smallpox into the heart of Mexico, was himself a victim of syphilis, which he contracted in Haiti.

Key Takeaways

- Exotic diseases introduced by the Europeans had disastrous consequences for Indigenous communities.
- The speed with which exotic diseases cleared out as much as 90% of the indigenous population in the Americas made this “New World” appear to the newcomers to be a “vacant land.”
- Nothing in the Columbian Exchange was as pivotal as smallpox and the virgin soil epidemics.
- Exotic diseases played a critical role in the early history of New France.
- Losses to epidemics provoked community responses from Indigenous peoples that included consolidation, adoption, conquest, and migration.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 5.5 long description:** Map showing the movement of Iroquois peoples from 1665 to 1701 from the southern shore of Lake Ontario (the Iroquois Homeland) to the northern shore (Iroquois du Nord) during the Beaver Wars. From east to west:

- The Oneida moved from Lake Oneida (near Syracuse, New York) northwest to Ganneious

(modern Napanee).

- The Cayuga moved from central New York state, south of Rochester, north to Kente (on the Bay of Quinte), Kentsio (on Rice Lake), and Ganaraske (modern Port Hope).
- The Seneca moved from southwest New York state north to Ganatsekwyagon and Teiaiagon (both around Toronto) and Quinaouatoua (near Hamilton).

[Return to Figure 5.5] (#attachment_966)

#### Media Attributions

- Iroquois Settlement on the North Shore of Lake Ontario, 1665–1701 (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iroquois_Settlement_on_the_north_shore_of_Lake_Ontario_1665-1701.tiff) © 2014 by Junction416 is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license

# 5.4 Strategic Encounters

Karl Marx, the German philosopher and historian, wrote that "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please."[1] We encounter the world not as we would like it to be, not "under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." Indigenous peoples in North America were not simply acted upon, they were actors. They made their history by making their own choices, but they did so in the context of early globalization and all the while carrying the burden of their own histories. In some historical accounts of the era, Indigenous people confront the technological and organizational advantages of Europeans and generally come off badly. Consider that Indigenous people were engaged in the very human business of confronting and wrestling with their own history on a stage where Europeans suddenly had a role. This complicated relationship was most often expressed in the language of trade and warfare.

## Commerce

The measure of the extent and intensity of Indigenous commercial networks is made clear by looking at the proto-contact era. We know when Europeans officially arrived in the Americas and when official voyages took place from Spain, France, England, and other countries. And we know that unofficial and irregular contact involved the fishing and whaling fleets of the north Atlantic and that some of those arrived before the chartered explorers did. We can deduce from the official reports some aspects of the contact experience in those instances. What is more difficult to know is the extent of first contact. How far inland and upriver did the ripples of contact spread?

By 1535, Indigenous peoples of the Maritimes and the Gaspé had identified the trading opportunities represented by European sailing ships. The peoples of the Gulf of St. Lawrence were integrating European iron and copper products into their hunting and domestic toolkits. These products had value in and of themselves, but they also had commercial value in the existing indigenous marketplace. Long before Europeans established trading posts, Indigenous merchants were meeting at places at or near Tadoussac to exchange exotic goods for furs. By 1580, European goods were showing up in Wendat villages — a full quarter century before Champlain met with Outchetaguin, the first Wendat representative to come calling on the French at Quebec.

1. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* In *The Portable Karl Marx*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (London: Penguin, 1983), 287.




*Figure 5.6 Algonquin couple, 18th century (artist unknown).*

Indigenous peoples from the Mi'kmaq through the Gaspé Iroquois to the Laurentian Iroquois were eager to trade with Cartier when he arrived. Twenty fur-laden Mi'kmaq canoes paddled out to meet Cartier's boats — they weren't afraid and they knew that the Europeans were open to trading. As a means of attracting the attention of the French, the "Gaspesians" (as they've come down to us) waved long poles bedecked in furs. Clearly they knew what caught the visitors' fancy, in more ways than one: Cartier noted that the locals were careful to have their womenfolk retreat to safety away from the foreshore as French ships approached, from which Cartier deduced that there had been incidents of sexual assault of some kind. Indigenous management of these encounters took several forms during Cartier's visits. On his second voyage, Donnacona (the headman at Stadacona) tried to prevent Cartier from leaving so that his village, through control of Cartier, could by extension control and dominate trade with the French.

The fur trade even at this early stage allowed Indigenous people access to metal tools that would make their lives easier. Steel knives, copper pots, and kettles replaced stone tools and ceramic pots and woven baskets. Iron axes replaced stone axes. These changes advanced the ability of Indigenous people to kill their food and/or their enemies; they facilitated food preparation; and nets, firearms, and hatchets made hunting easier and more productive. These labour-saving technologies helped them acquire more and better food, increased mobility (a copper pot is the epitome of portability), and allowed them to clear forests faster to plant more crops. In the arms race between Indigenous peoples, a metal-tipped arrow was an important advantage in its own right. Riflery — which came later and was often dangerously

unreliable but very dramatic — might further tip the scales. Indigenous women in particular benefited from metal cooking utensils, iron scraping tools, and sewing needles, all of which revolutionized their lives. In exchange, the indigenous traders had to provide the Europeans with something they had in abundance — beaver pelts — and did not particularly need.

An important feature of the trade in beaver pelts was that they were most highly valued after they had been treated with natural oils and the long and rough guard-hairs had been removed. The most effective way to do this in pre-industrial society was to wear the pelts or to sleep in them. In short, what the Europeans wanted most of all was used pelts: those that had become a shiny black by being slept on or draped across a sweaty human body. Small wonder that Indigenous traders thought they were on to a good thing: from their perspective this was new money for old rope, as the saying goes.

From an Indigenous perspective there were, to be sure, drawbacks to the fur trade. Some of the liabilities would have been noticed even in the early stages. Everyday lives were easier, but this change impacted lifeways and some modification of culture occurred. Indigenous peoples began to rely on some European goods and some individuals and communities found themselves able to discard older practices. The location of flint or obsidian quarries for arrowheads became less important; the ability to chip a rock into a usable projectile point became less valuable. As east coast peoples sacrificed more and more of their time on the seashore in order to pursue fur-bearing animals or trade partners farther inland, they came to depend on the French for foodstuffs. Increasingly, too, alcohol entered the trade equation and elicited in many places a highly disruptive change.



*Figure 5.7 The Nisga'a people developed a sculptural form that was significantly different from that of their coastal neighbours and every bit as engaging. A stone mask, made c. 1800.*

**Trade School**

Historians in the 20th century debated whether Indigenous motivations in the fur trade had been misunderstood. Generations assumed that a profit motive lay behind Indigenous trade, one that fit nicely into European notions of classical economic theory. Over and over, however, the record revealed little price fluctuation: in the eastern woodlands at least, while there were price markups from trapper through middleman to the final Indigenous trader, the price paid by the French was remarkably stable. This is explained by other historians as evidence of the importance of the social function of Indigenous commerce. The act of trade was at least as significant as the quantity being traded. Nomadic peoples — even semi-nomadic peoples — have limited use for material goods and simply cannot accumulate riches in the way that sedentary societies might. Status, however, can be acquired through trade and through economic leadership; likewise a reliable and dependable source of goods has a value in itself. Every Euro-Canadian trader's journal describes in some detail the elaborate gift-giving, speaking, and welcoming rituals that preceded trade. Days could pass between the meeting of the trade partners and the actual beginning of trade. Although some of the speeches delivered by Indigenous traders announced expectations that quality goods in fair quantity would be exchanged for pelts, at the heart of these protocols was the relationship itself. Some historians have countered that, in some regions like the Subarctic and the West, stable prices disguise increased demands in other areas by Indigenous traders: in their own specific context Indigenous merchants were driving up their profits by squeezing other Indigenous traders. Still other historians have responded with a critique that focuses on the alienation of Indigenous production from Indigenous control. Once dependency set in, it didn't matter that the Indigenous traders/communities weren't employees of the trading companies: they had become a colonized working class anyway. When we see Indigenous traders entering into commerce with Europeans from the 15th to the 20th centuries, then, it is important to be aware that the worth of the fur trade might be measured differently in each culture and context. As might success.[2]

It is hardly surprising to find that some Indigenous groups became competitive and jealous of one another's accomplishments in the trade. Once again, keeping in mind the smallness of the French settlements — only a few hundred people at best during most of the 17th century — Indigenous traders saw them more as travelling merchants showing up with goods to sell, rather than as competition for resources. The goods that Indigenous partners received, then, fit within the context of indigenous relations.

Champlain's participation in the attack on Ticonderoga in 1609 and his continued support for trade with the Wendat excluded the Haudenosaunee from access to European goods, though not for long. The arrival of the Dutch in 1615 at the mouth of the Hudson River provided the Five Nations a strong commercial monopoly of their own. Their lands, however, lacked the fur resources open to Wendat traders' partners farther north. Diverting that trade into their own hands was clearly a consideration when the Haudenosaunee launched raids against Wendat traders, travellers, and villages in the 1630s and 1640s. They were also recovering from the 1630s smallpox epidemic, which meant they were on the lookout for hostages who could be absorbed into Haudenosaunee society to replenish their

2. For a thorough survey of this field, see Michael Payne, "Fur Trade Historiography: Past Conditions, Present Circumstances, and a Hint of Future Prospects," From *Rupert's Land to Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001): 3–22.

numbers. These two strategies of aggression were to shape the Five Nations' relations with the French. Having scattered the Wendat Confederacy in 1649, the League turned its attention to the destruction of Canada. The eradication of the French trading presence would force the fur trade from the north into Haudenosaunee hands and they would hold a monopoly as middlemen to the Dutch.

For some Indigenous peoples, there was no going back. For others, there was no reason to do so. So long as trade survived so did the new technological paradigm.

## Miscegnation

Colonial societies often exhibit a badly tilted imbalance between the number of men and women. This was the case in early New France, on the western fur trade frontier, and in British Columbia from the 1840s through the 1930s. Under these circumstances it was inevitable that newcomer males — though not Catholic priests — would look to the Indigenous population for sexual and marriage partners.

Interracial sexual relations (or **miscegnation**) between Europeans and Indigenous peoples occurred from the earliest days of New France and Newfoundland. The record suggests, not surprisingly, that these weren't always consensual. More permanent heterosexual alliances, however, did not take long to appear. These were enabled by Indigenous cultural practices that included **polygyny**. As well, Indigenous men were, in some settings, comfortable with the idea of sharing their wife with newcomers, a practice that can be situated within the context of gift-giving diplomacy and the building of alliances. Indigenous women, too, were not without power in building these relationships and recognized the value of both sex and the adoption of an outsider into the family through marriage. Divorce, in Indigenous societies, was generally widely accepted and an easy thing to conclude. This gave women some ability to walk away (in some instances, literally) from a bad pairing.

As indicated above, demographic conditions among the Europeans abetted miscegnation. This was also sometimes the case among Indigenous populations, as occurred in and around Montreal and in the outlying mission settlements of Mohawks in the late 17th and 18th centuries where there were more women than men. Conditions in some of the early mixed communities of European and Indigenous peoples were generally poor. Disease continued to beat down Indigenous numbers, which had psychological as well as physiological impacts. Cultural change was also underway: the Catholic priests were not necessarily receptive to the needs or motivations of women and, according to their creed, promoted a patriarchal model of relationships that robbed Indigenous women of their traditional rights to divorce. As one historian has put it, "Women, still responsible for the heavy labour and often mistreated by husbands they could no longer divorce, began to despair. The need to love and procreate languished, along with the will to live, in these first generations torn between two worlds. 'We rarely see the natives age,' one governor remarked."[3] Fertility and longevity, as this evidence suggests, suffered as did the women whose roles were being refashioned by others.

Farther inland, away from the intense oversight of the clergy in the St. Lawrence, Indigenous-European relationships rapidly developed. Indigenous communities treated these arrangements as confirmation of commercial and military alliances; Europeans, too, understood that they were more than convenient

3. Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth Century Montreal*, trans. Liana Vardi (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1992), 7.

sexual liaisons. No Catholic priest would assent to a marriage in which one party was not Catholic, so these "marriages" were confirmed *á là façon du pays* (according to the custom of the country). And that *façon* or style was, of course, Indigenous and, as one historian has said, it "converted trader strangers into relatives."[4] These were Indigenous protocols and expectations with which the Europeans would necessarily comply. If and when it came time for the French fur trader to return to Canada and/or France, this was taken in stride by Indigenous cultures that were permissive of divorce and the end of relationships. Moreover, the matrilineal tendencies of Indigenous cultures meant that any children arising from the relationship would be raised by their Indigenous kin, so there was no question of childhood abandonment through divorce.




*Figure 5.8 Michilimackinac emerged as a leading centre of trade and cultural melding in the 18th century.*

The challenge for Indigenous peoples who viewed miscegnation as a means to secure resources, cooperation, and stability in their relationships with New France was the clergy. Missionaries were adamantly opposed to miscegnation and, of course, to any coupling outside of wedlock. They fulminated against Michilimackinac in particular, a hub of fur trade activity that they regarded as "a den of sin."[5] In

4. Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Children of the Early Fur Trades," in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 45.

5. Ibid., 46.

1709 intermarriage was forbidden in the new fur trade centre of Fort Pontchartain du Détroit by order of the governor. These prohibitions were aimed first at the Euro-Canadian fur traders, but they had an impact on the Indigenous partner community as well. Some Indigenous women at Détroit and at the more Europeanized trading centres responded by accepting baptism from the clergy as a first step toward legitimizing the union. Their motivation was the rising fertility among Indigenous women connected with fur trade society. Traditionally, the time between births was three or four years, but in mixed marriages the intervals were much shorter, no doubt due to both the expectations of the European partner and changes in diet and routine in fur trade post/fort society. The difference in birth rate was drastic; if a woman married at 18 in Indigenous society, she might have four children by the time she turned 30; if she married a European, she might have as many as seven. Under the circumstances, a strategy of inclusion that involved accepting the sacraments from a missionary might serve to both protect the woman and preserve the status of her children within an increasingly blended fur trade society. (The experience of the children of these relationships is considered further in Chapter 8, Chapter 12, and Chapter 13.)

The effects of cultural adjustment were felt across most of North America by the early 18th century: wherever Indigenous trading communities gathered in proximity to fur trade posts of the French (and, later, the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies), the risks increased of exposure to disease and alcohol. The latter was heavily regulated and its sale was essentially illegal under the French regime, but it made its way into the trade equation anyhow. In every instance we see Indigenous societies attempting to process the array of changes through well-established and largely effective cultural filters. Too many of the adjustments, however, came with a high cost. What appeared at first as opportunities consistent with familiar principles and goals too often became complicated and intractable.

Key Takeaways

- Cultural and technological change among Indigenous societies often took place in the proto-contact phase, before establishing direct relations with Europeans.
- Indigenous participants in trade saw important advantages to trade with the newcomers and acted accordingly.
- The introduction of metal tools and some manufactured goods led to some advantages and liabilities as well.
- The terms and protocols of trade were set by Indigenous participants and Europeans had to conform.
- Relationships between Europeans and Indigenous peoples frequently took the form of marriages, most of which played a role in binding the newcomer trader to the Indigenous woman's family/clan/village.

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# 5.5 Strategic Alliances

Indigenous nations' diplomacy in the years between 1530 and 1867 was complex and fluid. Alliances between First Nations were formed, served for a while, and then sometimes shattered or slowly dissolved. Looking back along the timeline one might get the impression that these alliances were in many instances short-lived, showing instability or even fickleness among partners. One need only look at the brief shelf life of European alliances (or, indeed, any in the 20th century) to see, however, that Indigenous agreements were reasonably durable. For the European intruders, the character of these alliances might not have been clear, nor was their purpose always obvious. In an era when European nation states were increasingly emphasizing common language and culture (or enforcing the same on subject groups) the fact that Algonquian-speakers did not automatically share a common purpose or that Iroquoian-speakers were clearly at odds was perplexing for some of the newcomers.

## The Wabanaki Confederacy

The area described now as the Maritimes, Newfoundland, Maine, Vermont, and the Gaspé Peninsula was among the first to experience sustained contact with Europeans. The Abenaki, Mi'kmaq, Wuastukwiuk (Malecite), Pasamaquoddy, and Penobscot (Western Abenaki) together covered much of this territory — which they called Wabanahkik — and somewhat more. They shared many cultural features and traditions, including a suite of common ancestral stories. They also shared common enemies in the Kanien'kehá:ka of the Haudenosaunee League. Wabanaki tradition indicates that they invited the French deep into their territory along the St. Lawrence with an eye to positioning them against the Iroquois enemies.

Relations with the French were thereafter very good, although the same could not be said of the English. The Pequot War in New England in 1637 gave the Penobscot cause for alarm. Their neighbours, the Naragansett, had sided with the English against the Pequot whose main village was razed by the colonists with hardly a soul left alive. The brutality of the English disturbed even the Naragansett, but they carried on with their alliance, to the disquiet of the Penobscot. Subsequently in 1675–1678, large-scale conflict broke out again in Metacomet's War (or King Philip's War). This began as an attempt to push the rapidly growing English Puritan colonists back into the sea. An imbalance of numbers (there were already more than 80,000 New Englanders and Metacomet's alliance was down to fewer than 10,000, thanks mainly to pandemics earlier in the century) and the hostility of neighbouring Indigenous peoples such as the Kanien'kehá:ka doomed the crusade from the outset.[1]

Some 3000 Naragansett Confederacy people died in this war and others were shipped off into slavery in the West Indies. It is believed that a large number fled north into the Penobscot and Pasamaquoddy territories. If the foundation of a Wabanaki Confederacy wasn't already laid in 1678 it certainly was soon thereafter. The Wabanaki Confederacy viewed the English as their principal threat and conducted

1. Harold E.L. Prins, "Children of Gluskap: Wabanaki Indians on the Eve of the European Invasion," in *American Beginnings: Exploration, Culture, and Cartography in the Land of Norumbega*, Emerson W. Baker, Edwin A. Churchill, Richard D'Abate, Kristine L. Jones, Victor A. Conrad, and Harald E.L. Prins, editors (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994): 95–117.

effective land and sea attacks for the next hundred years, earning the long-term enmity of the British regime in Halifax as well as that of their old enemies, the Puritan colonists of New England. In the 18th century, the Wabanaki Confederacy would prove to be the most important and valuable ally of the French. Catholic missionaries moved into their territories and spent at least as much time evangelizing the Wabanaki peoples as they did ministering to the Acadians. At no point in the century of conflict that followed Metacomet's War were the Wabanaki doing the bidding of the French, however much the English might have thought that was the case. The Wabanaki agenda was consistently the preservation if not the restoration of their lands in the face of English colonial growth.

## The Haudenosaunee League of Five Nations

No Indigenous political organization in North America was to play as important and as lasting a role in the post-contact period as the Haudenosaunee. Known to the French as the Iroquois and to the English as the Five Nations, the Haudenosaunee alliance came together sometime around 1450, which makes it significantly older than Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Original members of this cultural and ceremonial organization or League — the Kanien'kehá:ka (a.k.a. Mohawk), Onyota'a:ka (a.k.a. Oneida), Onondaga, Gayogohó:no (a.k.a. Cayuga), and Seneca — resolved long-standing differences by acceptance of the Great Law of Peace. The number of Haudenosaunee villages was not great at the time of contact, nor were they located close to one another. All were well fortified, an indication that peace between the League members hadn't eliminated external threats. The Onondaga villages were the geographical centre of the Five Nations and they hosted the main council. Being a matrilineal culture, the council received much direction from the women in the community, a practice that was evidently recommended by the Great Peacemaker in the mid-1400s. This prophet arose in the Wendat villages of the north and he made it his goal to end the Mourning Wars between the Iroquoian-speaking peoples. In this he succeeded only partially, as the Wendat, Erieehronon (Erie), Tionontati (Petun or Tobacco), and **Attawandaron** (Neutral) remained on the outside of the League. The Five Nations were, however, increased to six in 1722 when the Skarù:rę̀ʔ (a.k.a. Tuscarora) abandoned North Carolina and moved north to join the Onyota'a:ka.[2]

As a military organization, the League was highly effective. During the Beaver Wars (c. 1630–1701) they were able to expand their influence over much of the lands west of and some to the east of Appalachia. Indeed, it was the extension of League influence into the Carolinas that brought them into contact with the Tuscarora, a branch of the family that had been lost sight of, perhaps for centuries. The initial impetus of the Great Peace, of course, predates the arrival of the Europeans and so it has to be seen in the context of pre-contact circumstances. Although the Five Nations were arrayed across what is now upstate New York, their presence extended in the 17th century into the lands north of Lake Ontario. Their conflict with Algonquian-speakers to the east and north, and spectacularly with the Wendat to the west had its roots long before the Dutch and French ingratiated themselves into North American affairs. The strength of the French-Wendat-Omàmiwinini alliance, however, catalyzed Haudenosaunee mobilization. A century of relative success in the conflicts that followed enabled the Haudenosaunee to play a critical role in regional politics.

2. Richard Aquila, *The Iroquois Restoration: Iroquois Diplomacy on the Colonial Frontier, 1701–1754* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1983): 29–42.

## The Wendat Confederacy

The French called them the Huron, a term that either described the way they wore their hair or was derived from an Algonquin description. The Wendat (or Wyandot) were a loose but effective federation of four Iroquoian-speaking tribes or nations. The Arendarrhonons (People of the Rock), Attingueenougnahak (People of the Cord), Attignaouantan (People of the Bear), and the Tahontaenrat (People of the Deer) joined in an alliance probably in the 1500s. Archaeological evidence suggests that some of their lands were at one time along the north shore of Lake Ontario, but in the 16th century they coalesced around Georgian Bay.[3] By the time of Champlain's visit to their villages in 1615, there were some 25,000 to 30,000 Wendat in Wendake, also known as the Huron Confederacy or Huronia.

Fear of Haudenosaunee attacks in the continuing Mourning Wars may have motivated the Wendat to relocate to new territories. Relocation to Georgian Bay could have arisen, too, from commercial interests as that locale is at the confluence of several key water routes running north, south, and east. As agricultural people, the Wendat moved from time to time to new, fresh farmland but this was an arduous business that involved dismantling and rebuilding longhouses, erecting new palisades, disinterring and reburying the dead, and so on. A long-distance move, therefore, was not undertaken lightly. Whatever considerations took them to Georgian Bay, the outcome was economically favourable. They were able to trade surplus maize, other food crops, tobacco (usually obtained from the Iroquoian Tionontati to the south), squirrel skins (traded on from the other Iroquoians in the region, the Attawandaron), and manufactured products like fishing nets for meat, hides, and, of course, furs. As their population grew they became the dominant military force in the region as well. They had the commercial and physical power to lay claim to extensive trading zones and to charge tolls for passage along the many canoe routes through the interior. As the French would discover, trade in and around Wendake (Huronia) was conducted in Wyandot (a variant of Iroquois), by Omàmiwinini, Anishinaabe, and other trading peoples. This was a sure sign of who held the most influence in the trade networks.[4]

As the dominant trading hub in the region, the Wendat had a close relationship with the Omàmiwinini and Innu (Montagnais) Their alliance — less formal and more functional — was a thorn in the side of the Haudenosaunee and governed much of what the French could do in the St. Lawrence for the better part of a century. For example, when, in 1626, the French established a pact with the Attawandaron, the Wendat moved quickly to sabotage it and force the French traders back into Wendat-controlled channels.

## Council of Three Fires

Known in Anishinaabe as *Niswi-mishkodewin*, the Council of Three Fires was a venerable alliance between the Odaawaa (Ottawa) of Lake Huron's north shore, the Anishinaabe (Ojibwa) of the Sault Narrows between Lakes Huron and Superior, and the Potawatomi of what is now Michigan. Algonquian-speaking and closely related by (sometimes strategic) intermarriage, the Council was a buffer between the expansive Haudenosaunee and the fur resources of the north. They absorbed many refugees from the dying Wendat Confederacy and experienced significant growth in the century that followed. It was an

3. James F. Pendergast, "The Confusing Identities Attributed to Stadacona and Hochelaga," *Journal of Canadian Studies* (Winter 1998): 3–4.

4. Bruce G. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's 'Heroic Age' Reconsidered* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1985): 157–161.

Anishinaabe population boom that drove the Council deeper into Dakota Sioux territory on the western shore of Lake Michigan, onto the Plains (where they adapted and emerged as a distinctive Plains Ojibwa culture), and into southern Ontario, replacing Iroquoian-speaking peoples and gradually pushing back the Haudenosaunee. This last move was, in some measures, a restoration of Wendat claims.

The Three Fires controlled a pivotal part of North America: the upper Great Lakes. This gave them access to the rivers of the north, the Plains of the West, the Mississippi and St. Lawrence river systems, and the economies in each of these regions. Headquartered seasonally at **Michilimackinac**, the Council generally sided with the French in the colonial wars, although individual member tribes/communities could set their own course and often did so. In 1763 the Odawa leader **Pontiac** led a challenge to putative British control over the Ohio Valley and the *Pays d'en Haut*.[5]

## The Iron Confederacy

The alliance of Cree, Nakoda Oyadebi (a.k.a. Assiniboine), and Anihšināpē (a.k.a. Saulteaux, Plains Ojibwa, Chippewa) arose in the 17th century if not earlier. Driven in large measure by the technological advantages acquired during the early days of the fur trade, the Confederacy diffused rifles, metal blades, and metal tools across the Plains from northeast to southwest. The Cree had been at the tail end of trade originating in Canada in the 1600s, but the arrival of the HBC in their territory gave them access to newer and better quality goods. The brief advantage of their rivals (which included the A'aninin or Gros Ventres) who were first to acquire horses was reversed by the better-armed Iron Confederacy. This alliance was as much about economic power as it was about military resilience; the Confederacy could reach deep into the Missouri Valley to raid or trade for horses and also to exchange (at a considerable markup) British goods for the Indigenous products that mattered most to the Confederacy and, of course, furs.

## Chipewyan Solidarity

The Dené nations to the north and west of Hudson Bay were placed into serious peril by the acquisition of guns by their Cree neighbours and enemies. The Dënesųłiné (a.k.a. Chipewyan) were the worst affected and earliest to respond strategically. Much of the credit for this repositioning has been attributed to Thanadelthur, a singular character in Chipewyan history. Captured in 1713 during an attack by the Cree, Thanadelthur made good an escape and, finding refuge at the HBC's York Factory, developed a plan for the survival of her people. She persuaded the English traders that the Dënesųłiné had direct access to superior furs and copper and that establishing a post in their territory would benefit the company's bottom line. This plan would only work if the Dënesųłiné could get breathing room from the Cree, so Thanadelthur turned her attention to a party of Cree who were amenable to seeking peace. The mission that Thanadelthur led north into Dënesųłiné territory nearly ended in disaster but she is credited with singlehandedly persuading both parties to agree to a lasting peace. The HBC established direct links to the northern peoples, providing them with guns with which they could at last counter the Cree.

Three consequences arose from Thanadelthur's actions. First, the Dënesųłiné tightened the loose

5. See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

alliances between their own peoples, building commercial and military solidarity where before there had been little. Second, by driving the Cree back the Dënesųłiné found themselves expanding into boreal forests; soon they were adapting the canoe-based systems of transportation familiar to their enemies (which superseded their pedestrian and dog-haulage systems wherever it made sense to do so). Finally, better transportation, arms, and mutual support meant that the Dënesųłiné themselves became expansive, pushing the Dené and other western groups farther inland while exhausting beaver stocks all the way to the Mackenzie River.[6]

## The Blackfoot Confederacy

The **Blackfoot Confederacy** (Niitsitapi) is of uncertain age. Linguistic evidence (with Algonquian roots) suggests an origin in or near what is now New Brunswick and Maine. The population shifted west at least 400 years before contact with Europeans and so were well established as a Plains culture by that time. The Káínaa (or Kanai, Blood), the Siksika (or Blackfoot), and the Piikáni (also known as the Piegan or Pikuni) occupied the core of the Confederacy, which was enlarged by alliances with the A'aninin and the Tsuu T'ina (or Sarcee) made during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Niitsitapi would come to epitomize the bison-hunting cultures of the northern Plains and were early adapters of horses. Their aggressive defence of their territories and what neighbours complained of as overcharging for access to resources and travel corridors earned them the enmity of the Ktunaxa (Kutenai) in particular, who were forced out of the western Plains and into the cordillera. Niitsitapi leadership, as in many Plains societies, was more corporate and less individualistic than in some eastern woodlands societies. This made the Confederacy better equipped to counter attacks on any member and, in later years, to negotiate with a single voice when it came to diplomacy and, indeed, treaty-making.

## Across the Rockies

Alliances emerged and shifted between the Indigenous peoples of the interior plateau during the proto-contact and early contact periods. Three examples are of special importance.

The early 19th century alliance of the Syilx (a.k.a. Okanagan), Secwepemc, and Nlaka'pamux reflects a process of Interior Salishan consolidation. Years of conflict between the Syilx and Secwepemc in particular had obliged the latter to tighten their own internal alliances against their southern neighbours. Itinerant Syilx made contact with Euro-Canadians in Montana in the late 18th century and may have been motivated (and enabled) by new trade goods and access to horses to bind together their erstwhile enemies. By about 1810 the alliance was secured under the military and hereditary leadership of N'kwala.

While the Nuu-cha-nulth and Tla-o-qui-aht (a.k.a. Clayoquot) peoples were consolidating their hold on the west coast of Vancouver Island by (sometimes brutal) military means, the Kwakwaka'wakw people of Johnstone Strait were becoming a federation in every way but name. Their raiding parties pushed neighbours farther south, allowing them to colonize vacated territories. By the early 1800s their numbers were rising and the villages were many. In both cases, political realignments were underway before the

6. Alan D. McMillan, *Native Peoples and Cultures of Canada* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1988): 230–235.

arrival of Europeans, but it seems likely that the newcomers provided a further stimulus as local leaders sought to establish monopolies in trade.

Finally, and in response to Kwakwaka'wakw raids, the Hul'qumi'num-speaking peoples of the southern Salish Sea abandoned long traditions of village autonomy and established a working alliance in the early 19th century.

Key Takeaways

- Indigenous societies forged alliances among themselves against their neighbours and against the European newcomers.
- Many noteworthy alliances existed among post-contact Indigenous peoples in what is now Canada, including the Wabanaki Confederacy, the Wendat Confederacy, the Council of Three Fires, the Iron Confederacy, and the Niitsitapi/Blackfoot Confederacy. Some of these predate contact. Another alliance, the Haudenosaunee League of Five Nations, was centred to the south of Canada but had an enormous influence on Canadian history.
- Some of these alliances were motivated by or strengthened as a result of contact with Europeans.

## 5.6 Belief and Culture: The Wendat Experience




*Figure 5.9 A c. 1660 map of Wendake (Huronia), now dotted with missions and Christian place names. From the Historia Canadensis.*

Indigenous populations remained dominant — in numbers and authority — through the 17th century across most of North America, but change was upon them. It came so quickly in some instances and with such intensity that it produced a crisis of faith of sorts. Indigenous peoples began to doubt themselves and their ability to adapt successfully to new forces in their midst. The European agenda of religious conversion took advantage of this trauma, not always with success, but reliably and in ways that worsened the crisis.

### The Black Robes

The first of the French missionaries to arrive were priests of the Recollet order. From 1615 to 1629 the Recollets worked with Indigenous individuals near the St. Lawrence and in Wendake (Huronia). They were understood by Indigenous groups to be emissaries from the French with exotic spiritual ideas; the missionaries were something to be tolerated but not indulged. The focus of the Recollets was on individual conversions but even more on the needs of French traders living among the Wendat. The arrival of the Recollets' successors, the Jesuits, changed the missionary approach.

The Jesuits were closely tied to the *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* and were part of the restoration of French authority after a brief English occupation of the colony. The Jesuit approach was to convert whole communities rather than individuals. They did so by exercising greater control over the behaviour of the *coureur de bois* and working from within the host-community culture. They studied Wyandot (the language of the Wendat), represented the French enterprise in the field, and attempted (with mixed success) to live among the Wendat according to their hosts' practices, rather than imposing their own.

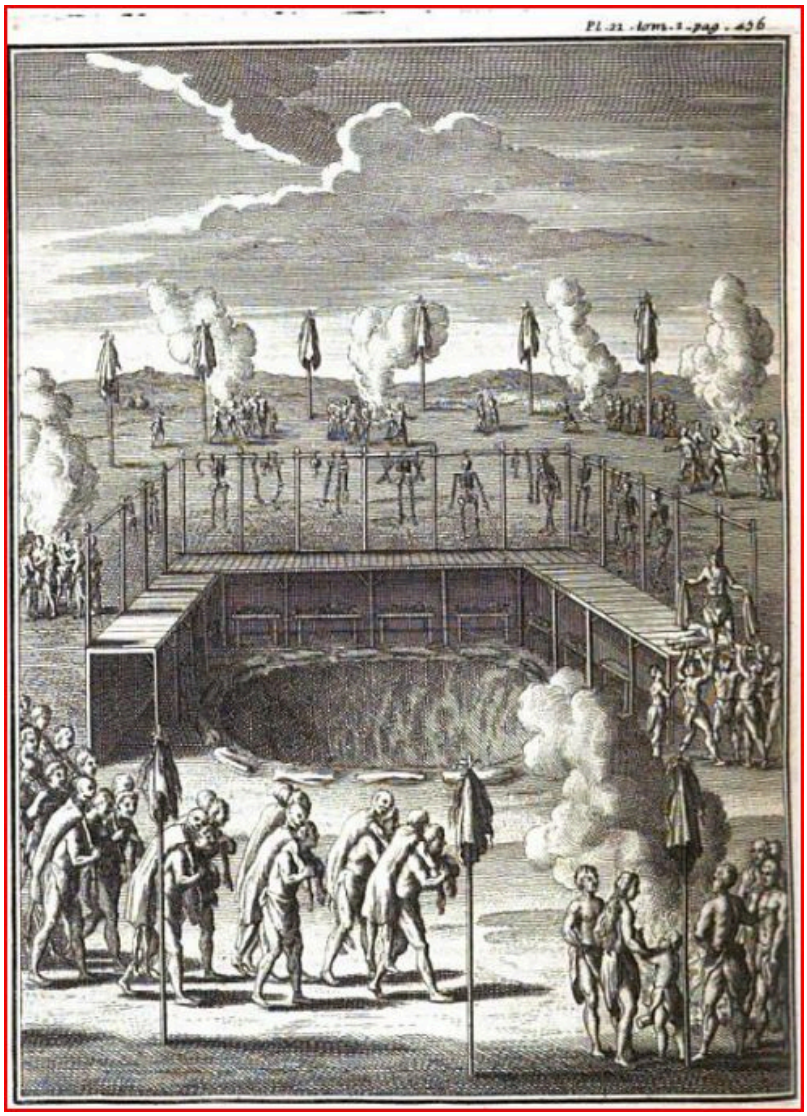

*Figure 5.10 The Wendat Feast of the Dead entailed moving remains from one ossuary to a new one as village sites moved. Missionaries were both horrified and impressed by this cultural expression of intergenerational connection, so alien to their own experience. By J.-F. Lafitau, 1724.*

The Wendat response to the clerics was mixed. On the one hand, the custom of exchanging community members had been well established in Wendat culture, so sending a few young men to Quebec to learn about the newcomers and accepting a few *coureurs de bois* or priests into their own villages just made sense. The priests' agenda of cultural change, however, was not especially welcome. Various attempts were made to encourage the missionaries to return to New France, and plots were considered that would see them murdered by non-Wendat neighbours (and then invoking plausible deniability). But

Champlain insisted on missionaries as part of the trading relationship so they were tolerated. Even the priests, however, knew that they were being judged by the Wendat and that they fell well short of being impressive. One report in the *Jesuit Relations* admits that the Wendat "gazed attentively at the Fathers, measured them with their eyes, asked if they were ill-natured, if they paddled well; then took them by the hands, and made signs to them that it would be necessary to handle the paddles well."[1]

### Exercise: Think Like A Historian — The Missionary Position

In an account of life among the indigenous peoples of the Gaspé and what is now northeast New Brunswick, Christien Le Clerq (a Recollet missionary among the Mi'kmaq from 1675–1686) described the minutest details of personal habits and relationships. [2] Take a look at these three passages:

> They never quarrel and never are angry with one another, not because of any inclination they have to practice virtue, but for their own satisfaction, and in the fear … of troubling their repose, of which they are wholly idolaters. Indeed, if any natural antipathy exists between husband and wife, or if they cannot live together in perfect understanding, they separate from one another, in order to seek elsewhere the peace and union which they cannot find together. Consequently they cannot understand how one can submit to the indissolubility of marriage. 'Does thou not see,' they will say to you, 'that thou hast no sense? My wife does not get on with me, and I do not get on with her. She will agree well with such a one, who does not agree with his own wife. Why dost thou wish that we four be unhappy for the rest of our days?' in a word, they hold it as a maxim that each one is free: that one can do whatever he wishes: and that it is not sensible to put constraint upon men. It is necessary, say they, to live without annoyance and disquiet, to be content with that which one has, and to endure with constancy the misfortunes of nature, because the sun, or he who has made and governs all, orders it thus. […] In a word, they rely upon liking nothing, and upon not becoming attached to the goods of the earth, in order not to be grieved or sad when they lose them.
>
> …[I]n fact they do not know what civility is, nor decorum. Since they consider themselves all equal, and one as great, as powerful, and as rich as another, they mock openly at our bowings, at our compliments, and at our embracings. They never remove their hats when they enter our dwellings; this ceremony seems to them too troublesome.
>
> They [the Indigenous peoples] hunt for vermin [on their bodies] before everybody, without turning aside even a little. They make it walk for fun upon their hands, and they eat it as if it were something good. They find the use of our handkerchiefs ridiculous; they mock at us and say that it is placing excrements in our pockets. Finally, however calm it may be outside of the wigwam, there always prevails inside a very inconvenient wind, since these Indians let it go very freely, especially when they have eaten much moose…..

What does Le Clerq admire and what does he criticize? Keeping in mind that he is a man of the cloth devoted to the spiritual and not the material, in what ways is he criticizing his own culture? What do these accounts reveal about French society in the late 17th century? What insights can we obtain about Mi'kmaq society through the filter of Le Clerq? Is he reliable?

1. Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 1610–1791*, XV (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1898), 163, quoted in Olive Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002), 106.

2. Christien Le Clerq, reprinted in William Ganong (ed. and trans.), New Relation of Gaspesia (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1910), quoted in Tom Thorner, ed., "A Few Acres of Snow": Documents in Canadian History, 1577–1867 (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1997): 30–44.

## The Whirlwind Years

Conditions changed in the 1630s. The Recollets had been replaced in Canada and Wendake (Huronia) by the Jesuits (although they continued in Acadia) at a time when Haudenosaunee hostilities were on the rise, as was smallpox. Of all the pivotal moments in this history none is as consequential as the arrival of exotic diseases. In 1636 smallpox swept through the Wendat villages. Over a five-year period the disease picked away at the Wendat past and future, claiming the lives of elders (who were both the story-keepers and political memory of their community) and children in particular. Wendat people who might find solace or reassurance in traditional shamanic responses increasingly turned to the Jesuits for answers. Whatever good the missionaries might have done in this respect, their efforts foundered as perhaps two-thirds of the Wendat population died in the space of four years. The Jesuit practice of administering deathbed baptisms was interpreted, too, as causing death. This was the closest the Wendat came to drawing a direct connection between the presence of Europeans and the appalling mortality rates associated with virgin soil diseases.

The Wendat system of governance, which emphasized individual freedom, played further havoc with the solidarity of Wendake (Huronia). Only converts to Catholicism were permitted to trade for French muskets and this led growing numbers to look more closely at what the Jesuits had to offer. There were trade goods, yes, but also there was a spiritual commodity on offer: many Wendat were drawn to Christianity because they perceived

> … Jesus of Nazareth as a protective spirit who was supposed to bring good fortune to the devotee and to avert misfortune. This utilitarian approach to Christ explains the quick abandonment of the new faith when the Hurons were beset by imported diseases and by Iroquois attacks. Native Christians fared no better than traditionalists, and so, when Jesus failed as a guardian spirit, disillusioned converts reverted to aboriginal practices and beliefs. Their initial view of Jesus explains why there were so many apostates among the Hurons.[3]

While traditional beliefs among Iroquoian peoples could accommodate different, overlapping, and even contradictory spirit figures, Christianity's monotheistic intolerance of other divinities meant that converts were effectively removed from their traditionalist kin and neighbours. At death — and keep in mind that 1636–1649 saw an astonishing amount of death among the Wendat — families would be eternally lost to one another rather than rejoined in the hereafter. The position of traditionalists hardened against the Jesuits and even against the converts. Those Wendat communities with less exposure to the missionaries pulled back at the very moment when military unity was essential. Wendat women also proved reluctant to embrace Christianity, for a variety of reasons. Its patriarchal values were the most obvious difficulty: a matrilineal tradition would be subverted by a belief system that marginalized female voices.

The epidemics served to make the Wendat more vulnerable to Haudenosaunee attacks, and the loss of thousands of children meant that the stock of warriors was not going to be replenished in a hurry. The Haudenosaunee Five Nations League was able to acquire rifles from their Dutch trade partners and thus posed an even more fearsome danger than before. There was a brief peace in the late 1630s that evaporated in the 1640s as the Haudenosaunee launched wave after wave of attacks on their neighbours. From the European perspective, these Beaver Wars were about acquiring better hunting grounds or, similarly, unimpeded access to trade networks that would deliver pelts to their Hudson River corridor.

3. Peter Moogk, "Writing the Cultural History of Pre-1760 European Colonists," *French Colonial History*, 4 (2003): 2.

The League's own demographic crisis probably mattered more. Like the Wendat they had lost large numbers to disease (and significant numbers in conflict with the Confederacy) and one way of rebuilding the population was by means of raiding for captives. The evidence is clear that large numbers of Wendat women and children were marched and canoed across southern Ontario in these years into the villages of the League.[4]

It is easy to imagine the Wendat in a reactive state under these circumstances. Their society had collapsed in the space of 40 years from one of regional economic, cultural, and political dominance to insignificance. And yet every step along the way was connected to a vision of sustaining and advancing Wendake (Huronia). Accepting missionaries and French trade was bound up in consolidating commercial primacy and acquiring European goods with the continuance and expansion of gift-giving diplomacy and influence; conversion was motivated by a desire to keep kin together in the afterlife or to gain better access to French weaponry.

The retreat from Wendake (Huronia) in 1649–1650 took the majority of the Wendat in one of four directions: some joined with the Tionontati and Attawandaron to the south (although that ended badly with further Haudenosaunee raids); some aligned with their longstanding trade partners in the Council of Three Fires (the Anishinaabeg in particular) and came to have considerable influence in developments in those communities; many fled to New France where they were to live under the watchful eye of the Jesuits near Quebec and provide generations of warriors in defence of the Laurentian colony; still others joined up — willingly or not — with the Haudenosaunee, where common elements of their traditional culture would have a good chance of surviving and, if so inclined, they would have a chance to avenge themselves on the French.

**Historians on Video**

Allan Greer (McGill University) has studied Tekakwitha (1656–1680), an early Haudenosaunee convert to Catholicism. Kateri (Catherine) took a vow of lifelong chastity and set about self-flagellating on a regular basis. In 2012 she was canonized as 'Saint Kateri.' Professor Greer identifies what is interesting and important about this story. Here is a link to the transcript for a video about the Mohawk Saint Kateri [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_ag_u4_01.pdf).



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=134#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

4. Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 3rd edition (Don Mills: OUP, 2002), 100–113.

Key Takeaways

- Missionary activity in New France quickly became a part of the fur trade enterprise.
- The Jesuits enjoyed somewhat more success in Wendake (Huronia) than the Recollets but their work was mostly undone by disease and warfare.
- French reluctance or inability to trade more rifles more rapidly to the Wendat contributed to fractiousness within the Confederacy and severe losses to Haudenosaunee raids.
- The missionary presence played a role in the destruction of Wendake (Huronia).

**Video Attributions**

- Dr. Allan Greer Question 1- Saint Kateri Tekakwitha. (https://youtu.be/GCtjs9pBr18) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license

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# 5.7 The Five Nations: War, Population, and Diplomacy

From the highest elevation, it might seem as though Indigenous peoples did little to resist European intrusion. Nothing could be further from the truth. Much of the history of Canada from 1600 to 1867 is marked by continual — and continually shifting — resistance mounted by the original inhabitants.

## The League of the Great Law of Peace

No Indigenous nation was to manifest such a key role in the political history of northeastern North America in the 17th and 18th centuries as the Haudenosaunee Five Nations League. The Haudenosaunee allied with the Dutch and then the English, but contained them to their seaboard markets; they tore up Wendake (Huronia) by the roots and became dominant across an area that covered what are now nine American states and all of southwestern Ontario; they expanded their League while exacting tribute from intimidated Indigenous nations all around them. They became a military, economic, and political force with which to be reckoned.

Haudenosaunee traditions of warfare were never static. Their success arose from an ability to adapt tactics of both conflict and diplomacy in ways that their neighbours could not foresee. The Haudenosaunee were able to do this in part because their councils worked so effectively. Their processes demanded unanimity and they were able to achieve that because avoiding internal fractiousness was valued so highly. Political geography was another source of strength. The League's territory included unimpeded access to the lower Great Lakes (Erie and Ontario), the St. Lawrence, the Lake Champlain corridor, and the Hudson River. They were a short voyage from New Amsterdam, as compared to the Wendat, who were hundreds of kilometres from the St. Lawrence. The Haudenosaunee could thus play a role as adversary or ally on short notice.

The French earned the enmity of the Haudenosaunee at Ticonderoga in 1610 but there were opportunities to win peace as well, although neither party was especially interested. In 1624 the League struck a peace with the Algonquin and Wendat so that they could turn their efforts against the Mahican (a.k.a. Mohican) whose lands lay along the Hudson River and who enjoyed primacy in the fur trade with the Dutch. Both the French and the Dutch were unhappy with this outcome, but it was a clear demonstration of the commercial goals of the League: they now could enter markets in both New Netherland and New England.

## The Mourning Wars

The peace with the Wendat-Algonquin alliance lasted until 1636, although peace with the French was never assured. Champlain's principal concern was to ensure the safe passage of the Wendat fur fleet in the spring. To that end he requested more troops from France and ordered the building of fortified settlements (including Trois-Rivières) along the St. Lawrence in 1634. The Haudenosaunee response was to build their own chain of fortified positions from which to better raid the fur brigades. For the

next decade the League focused its efforts on harassing and capturing the Wendat-Algonquin fleets. This process intensified in the 1640s until 1647–1648 when the focus shifted to attacks on Wendat villages. Conflict between the Wendat and the Haudenosaunee had not before this time been so comprehensive. The Mourning Wars to that point had been retaliatory and retributory, but not a scorched-earth program. Taking the war into the heartland of the Wendat was a significant change in strategy, against which the Wendat failed badly.

The change in Haudenosaunee tactics reflected new circumstances. If the French were to be starved of furs to the point that they would seek peace and commerce with the League, then clearly their Wendat supply network had to be shattered. If the impact of smallpox and other exotic diseases on the Haudenosaunee was to be survived, then the practice of adopting captives would need to be more vigorously pursued. To that end, clearing out as many captives as could be harvested from a Wendat village and then torching it made sense. The loss of homes and food stores reduced the competition's ability to serve the fur trade and made it impossible for captives to expect sanctuary at home if they were to run away. The Wendats' trading partners would look elsewhere for maize and the Five Nations aimed to be the last major farming community in the region. Furs would head across Lake Ontario to the lands of the League, Haudenosaunee numbers would be replenished, and the Dutch and English would have no incentive to look beyond the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) trademarts and merchants.

The largest share of the Wendat exiles wound up in the League. The Tahontaenrat joined the Seneca, the Arendarhonon were absorbed by the Seneca as well but also by the Onondaga, and the Attignawantan were adopted by the Kanien'kehá:ka. These realignments were complex and they had interesting outcomes. Some of the Wendat took their Catholicism with them into the Five Nations and the Kanien'kehá:ka villages in particular; subsequently there was a significant out-migration to the area just south of Montreal where offshoot pro-French and pro-Catholic villages were established. As well, some of the former Wendat became prominent figures within Haudenosaunee political and military life.[1]

By 1660 the Haudenosaunee controlled the western lands that extended from the former Wendake (Huronia) east to the Ottawa River and south around Lake Michigan through the Ohio Valley. French accounts at the time suggest that the impacts of smallpox in the 1660s — on top of war losses in the 1640s and 1650s — combined with captive adoptions to create a situation in which there were more "foreigners" in Haudenosaunee villages than natives. The League's purposes and vision did not change in the 17th and 18th centuries, but it is worth noting that by the 1660s the Five Nations was made up of very different personnel. It had, in effect, become an instrument for a more cosmopolitan Indigenous control of the region.

**Historians on Video**

Aspects of inter-cultural diplomacy are considered here by historian Peter Cook (University of Victoria). Here is a link to the transcript for the video titled What characterized the European approach to inter-cultural diplomacy? [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_pc_u5_01.pdf).

1. Bruce G. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's 'Heroic Age' Reconsidered* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1985): 259–280.

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## The Iroquois Wars

For the remainder of the century, the League pursued a complex plan to do two things: secure its southern frontiers against the rival Susquehannock nation and contain the French threat. The League established a truce with the French (1667) and with the northern and eastern Algonquin (1672). Turning their attention to the south, they secured that frontier by 1679 only to discover the French and French allies back in their western lands. This provoked the bloodiest confrontations to date between the Haudenosaunee and the French.




*Figure 5.11 Haudenosaunee conquests after the fall of Wendake (Huronia) extended deep into the Pays d'en Haut and south along Appalachia, where tribute states were established. [Long Description] (#fig5.11)*

In 1680 the League returned to raiding Canadian settlements. The French replied with new infusions of troops and, in 1687, a path of devastation across Seneca territory. On July 26, 1689, the Haudenosaunee

launched a reprisal attack on the village of Lachine, about 10 kilometres upriver from Montreal. Some 200 French and their allies were killed; the same number captured and marched off to League villages for torture and/or adoption. Lachine was razed.

The tide turned to the advantage of the French with the return of Count Frontenac, who found his forces facing both the Haudenosaunee and the English. Fortunately for Frontenac, the English were ineffectual as warriors and unreliable as allies to the Haudenosaunee. He was able to inflict a telling blow on League villages and food stores in the winter of 1694, an attack that, for once, caught the Haudenosaunee by surprise. The damage was severe and, following further French predations in 1696, the Haudenosaunee began to seek peace. The war with the French would, however, persist until 1701.

In the history of intercolonial conflict in North America the standard practice was to negotiate treaties between the European players and treat the Indigenous participants as subsidiaries. A treaty with the English was, as far as the French were concerned, binding on the Indigenous allies of the English. Frontenac broke with that practice in 1697: he regarded the Treaty of Ryswick of that year as having no purchase on the Haudenosaunee and he pressed for a separate treaty. This he won at the **Great Peace of 1701**, also known as the Great Peace of Montreal.

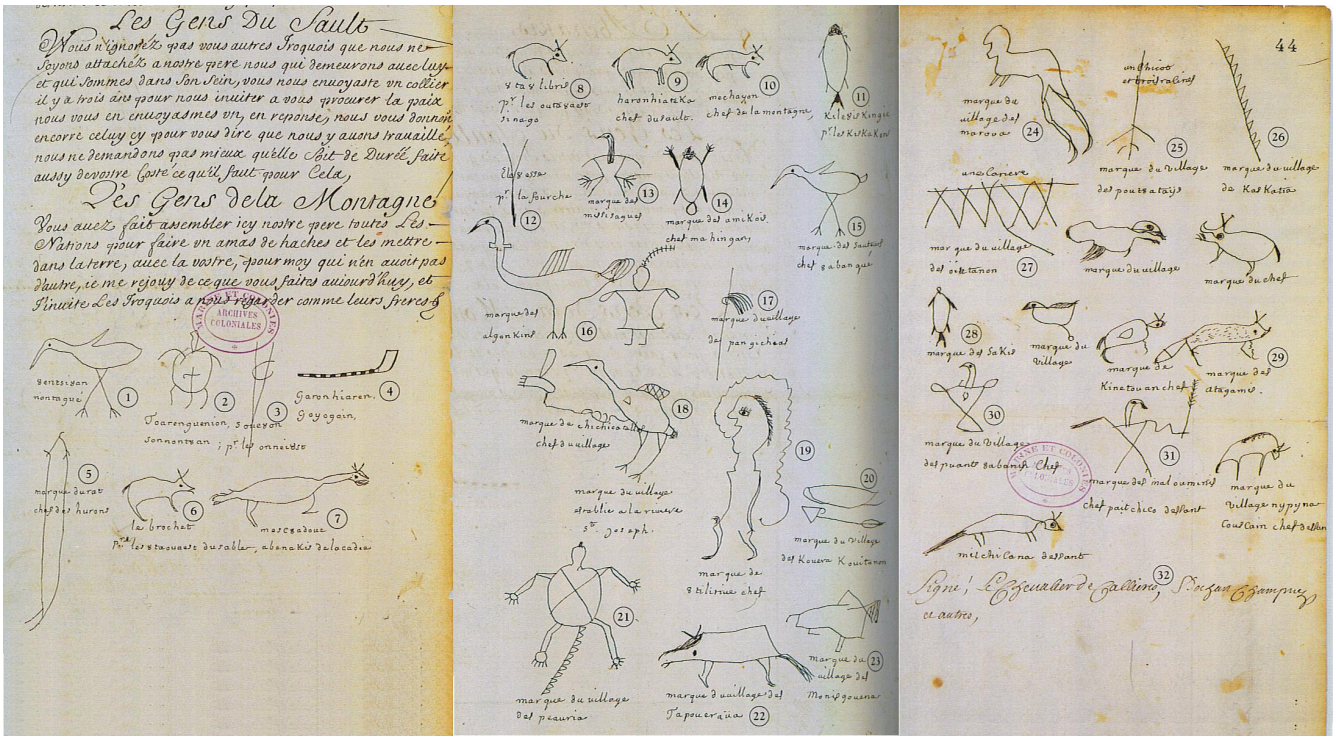


*Figure 5.12 The Treaty of 1701, which ended the Beaver Wars, signed with pictograms.*

From the Haudenosaunee perspective, the 1701 Great Peace reflected a need to reconcile conflicts within the League. It was reckoned that two-thirds of the Kanien'kehá:ka population had gone over to the French side while the remainder continued their staunch loyalty to the British. By winning a peace with the French and their allies, the Haudenosaunee were in a position to whipsaw the English against the French for trade and military support. This was confirmed when the Haudensaunee struck a separate treaty with the English at Albany in the same year. Having given the French permission to build a trading post at Detroit (Fort Pontchartrain), they secured commitments from the English to keep the French out of that very region.

It was this strategy of ostensible neutrality coupled with the Europeans' fear that the Five Nations could tip either way that the Haudenosaunee used to protect their territory. Signing two treaties with the Europeans underlined, too, the Five Nations' self-awareness as an autonomous political entity. One obvious goal of the Haudenosaunee — one that other Indigenous nations did not pursue with as much success or alacrity — was containing the newcomer settlements. So long as the Haudenosaunee were a buffer state between the French and the English, the Europeans were happy with their continued presence. The Five Nations knew this and would find ways to exploit their position in the 18th century.

At the same time, by 1712 it was clear that the League was not the force it had been. Its warrior numbers had been reduced by half, the Kanien'kehá:ka had lost as much as two-thirds of their population to villages nearer to Canada, and the League was divided over whether the English were a threat or a source of support against the French.[2]

Key Takeaways

- The Haudenosaunee League was positioned and equipped to be a resilient military force and commercial hub.
- Destroying the French-Wendat-Algonquin fur trade alliance was part of a larger Haudenosaunee agenda in the late 17th century.
- Having destroyed Wendake (Huronia), the Five Nations launched a military campaign that won them a huge territory and an advantageous position as a buffer state between the English and the French.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 5.11 long description**: Map showing the expansion of Five Nations territory during the Beaver Wars. The original homeland of the Five Nations was in what is now eastern New York state and bordered on the southern and eastern shores of Lake Ontario. During the Beaver Wars (1609–1701), the Five Nations expanded their territory along the following timeline:

- 1638: Five Nations territory expands to include more of southern New York state, westward along the southern shore of Lake Ontario and to the eastern shore of Lake Erie.
- 1649: The Five Nations claim a swath of land in southern Ontario west of Lake Ontario and east of Lake Huron, including the modern-day cities of Toronto and Mississauga.
- 1651: The Five Nations expand south to the southernmost strip of southern Ontario along the northern shore of Lake Erie.
- 1656: Territory expands to include southwest New York state, western Pennsylvania, most of Ohio, northern West Virginia, and a strip of northern Maryland.

2. Richard Aquila, *The Iroquois Restoration: Iroquois Diplomacy on the Colonial Frontier, 1701–1754* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 70–71.

- 1670: The Five Nations gain control of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, part of northern Indiana, a slice of northwest Ohio, and a small area in eastern Virginia.
- 1672: The Five Nations claim another region farther to the west in Virginia, as well as western Kentucky and a strip of northern Tennessee.
- 1677: The Five Nations expand to eastern Pennsylvania, strips of southeastern New York state, and another slice of northern Maryland.
- 1679: Territory expands to include central West Virginia.
- 1680: The Five Nations gain control of a slice of southwestern Ohio, the rest of Indiana, and eastern Illinois.
- 1700: The Five Nations expand to eastern Kentucky and a large swath of western Virginia.
- 1711: The Five Nations gain control of another pocket of southern Virginia.

[Return to Figure 5.11] (#attachment_994)

#### Video Attributions

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# 5.8 Summary

The significance of the Columbian Exchange and the sharing of foodways, technology, and cultures that resulted can hardly be overstated. While a profound social and economic revolution shook the Eastern Hemisphere as the influx of crops and mineral wealth made merchants and monarchs wealthy, the Western Hemisphere struggled to adapt to new diseases, animals, and neighbours. The arrival of new technologies — iron tools, copper pots, rifles, axes — both broadened and narrowed it Indigenous lives. As one scholar puts it, there was a "shift in subsistence strategies brought about by the fur trade as [pre-contact] exploitation of the total environment gave way to the specialized pursuit of fur-bearing animals." Under these circumstances, food supplies sometimes suffered and Indigenous peoples turned to the fur trade posts "to offset the increased danger of famine that this switch in emphasis entailed."[1] This dependence was something that the French and the English encouraged.

Similarly, traditional ideas about the structure and inhabitants of the world were put aside as Europeans and Indigenous peoples encountered and ultimately learned from each other. Genetic histories and futures, too, were inextricably intertwined. What is most important to note, however, is that these changes and adjustments did not occur in a short period of time. They are underway even now. There is a tipping point in the history of Indigenous North America, that moment at which the issue at stake is not the quality of the relationship between two peoples but how to strategize survival in the face of a European imperialism that was, ironically, bankrolled by Indigenous gold and silver and fed by New World potatoes. The shifting boundaries of conflict between the many peoples of North America is the subject of the next chapter.

Key Terms

**Attawandaron**: An Iroquoian people located in the contact and post-contact periods in what is now southwestern Ontario. Also known as the Neutral.

**Blackfoot Confederacy**: Also known as the Niitsitapi, an alliance centred in the western Plains, in territory that extended from what is now southern Alberta into Montana. Consisting of the Piikáni (Piegan), Siksika (Blackfoot), Káínawa (Kainai, Blood), Tsuut'ina (Sarcee), and A'aninin (Gros Ventre).

**cayuse**: Regional word for "horse" in the Cordillera and western Plains. Derived from the Cayuse First Nation, who were responsible for significant advances in breeding in the 18th century. Another variant is cayoosh.

**Chinook**: A trade dialect developed on the West Coast comprising elements from several Indigenous languages and subsequently adopting words from various European languages. Also known as chinuk wawa.

1. Olive Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 3rd edition (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002), 117.

**Columbian Exchange**: The traffic of goods, ideas, *matériel*, foodstuffs, technology, knowledge, and bacteria from Europe and Africa to the Americas and vice versa.

**disease vector**: A living agent that transfers a virus or bacteria from one host to another. Examples include people and mosquitoes.

**Michilimackinac**: An important centre of trade in the pre- and post-contact periods, historically dominated by the Odawa and Ojibwe. Located at the narrows between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, Michilimackinac was used as a mission centre by the Jesuits and, later, as a trading post site by the North West Company.

**miscegnation**: Derived from the Latin verb for "to mix" and the noun for "kind," the term that has been used for the last two centuries to describe interracial marriage or sexual relations between people of different races.

**polygyny**: Describes a plural marriage in which two or more women share the same husband.

**Pontiac**: Also known as Obwandiyag, Pontiac (c. 1720–1769) was an Odawa (Ottawa) leader who launched a campaign against the British at the end of the Seven Years' War in the region around Fort Detroit.

**virgin soil epidemic**: Attributed to the anthropologist/historian Alfred Crosby, the term describing a situation in which a disease, bacteria, or virus discovers a population with no natural immunity arising from previous encounters with it. Very high mortalities are a typical consequence.

Short Answer Exercises

1. What is the Columbian Exchange?
2. How did the Columbian Exchange improve life for Indigenous societies? How did it benefit Europeans?
3. How does our current understanding of exotic diseases in the Americas frame the history of Native-newcomer relations?
4. What were the immediate and short-term responses of Indigenous peoples in the northeast to smallpox?
5. How have historians come to understand motivations of Indigenous participants in the fur trade?
6. Why would Indigenous women enter into marriages with European men?
7. In what ways did Indigenous societies adjust to the intrusion of Europeans from the 1500s on?
8. Why did the Wendat tolerate the "Black Robes"? Why did some Wendat accept Christianity? What impact did this have on the entire Wendat society?
9. In what ways did Amerindians control the fur trade?
10. What motivated the Haudenosaunee in their campaigns from the 1640s through the rest of the 17th century?

## Suggested Readings

1. Gilbert, William. "Beothuk-European Contact in the 16th Century: A Re-evaluation of the

Documentary Evidence." *Acadiensis* XXXX, no.1 (Winter/Spring 2011): 24–44.

2. Moogk, Peter. "The 'Others' Who Never Were: Eastern Woodlands Amerindians and Europeans in the Seventeenth Century." *French Colonial History* 1 (2002): 77–100.
3. Moussette, Marcel. "A Universe under Strain: Amerindian Nations in North-Eastern North America in the 16th Century." *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 43, issue 1 (2009): 30–47.
4. Noel, Jan. "Fertile with Fine Talk: Ungoverned Tongues among Haudenosaunee Women and their Neighbors." *Ethnohistory* 57, no.2 (Spring 2010): 201–223.
5. Reid, John G. "How Wide is the Atlantic Ocean? Not Wide Enough!" *Acadiensis* XXXIV, no.2 (Spring 2005): 81–87.

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# Chapter 6. Intercolonial Rivalries, Imperial Ambitions, and the Conquest

# 6.1 Introduction

The markets and monarchies of Western Europe existed in very uncomfortable tension. So, too, did their religious and political alliances and identities. The conflicts of the old countries became those of the new. The colonies, however, had given birth to rivalries of their own and often set the agenda for their respective masters. The relationship between New France and Britain's American colonies was to prove pivotal in the evolution of what became the modern state of Canada. The country's origins lay along the banks of the St. Lawrence and in Acadia, but also in the port towns of **New England** and the trans-Appalachian west of New York and Pennsylvania.

This chapter surveys the military and commercial conflict that led to the Seven Years' War and British claims over most of what had been New France. It also considers the extent to which the boundaries between English, Dutch, and French colonies (populated in part by Africans as well as Europeans) blurred and the places where distinctively new communities were beginning to arise.

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate clearly an understanding of the geopolitical situation of New France and its neighbours.
- Express familiarity with Louisbourg, Acadia, New England, and Newfoundland's pluralistic frontiers.
- Analyze the strategic role assigned to Canada within the French imperial system.
- Describe the economic, imperial, and regional roots of conflict in North America.
- Understand the French-English struggle for power in North America in the 18th century.
- Explain the significance of conflict in Acadia and the expulsion of the Acadians.
- Understand how and why the conquest of Canada occurred.

# 6.2 The British Colonies, c. 1600–1700

In accounts of American history, “Thirteen Colonies” is shorthand for the English-speaking colonies arrayed along the east coast of North America, which rebelled against Britain in 1775–1783. But the term ignores the existence of two other English-speaking colonies — Nova Scotia and Newfoundland — which continued under uninterrupted British rule. It tends, as well, to confuse matters concerning Canada. The French colony was British war booty after 1763, the most culturally subjugated of all the colonies, but it did not rebel either.

These differences matter because of the critical role the American Revolution played in Canadian history. The creation of the United States of America marked, simultaneously, the destruction of an older polity and a culture of relative colonial autonomy within the empire. The pre-revolutionary society could accommodate both loyalism and democratic urges, but after the Revolution America lost the powerful voice of those who represented loyalty to the Crown. Some of the **Loyalists** were silenced, and some made their way to Britain; the largest number headed for Nova Scotia and Canada, laying the foundations for a different colonial experiment. To the extent that the British North America of 1783 (pre-Confederation Canada) and thereafter had roots that ran deep in the the Thirteen (revolutionary) Colonies, it is important to understand some of their history as well.

## Colonies of Exiles

The first century of English colonial settlement in North America can be characterized as a period in which exiles dominated. Religious sects had arisen in England in the wake of the Reformation, many of them highly critical of the new Church of England headed by the monarch. The Quakers and Puritans were among the more vocal and, although they enjoyed the better part of a century of rising influence in England, by the mid-1600s they were pitted against more powerful forces. The English Civil War (1642–1651) led to the execution of King Charles I at the hand of a Puritan-influenced Parliament. The Restoration that followed in 1660 turned the tide against the non-conformists. Charles II took an understandably dim view of the sect he regarded as responsible for the **regicide** of his father.

The New England colonies established between 1610 and the 1620s were dominated by Puritan settlers. They had chosen exile and the opportunity to build a godly “city on the hill” rather than continue under compromised circumstances in Anglican England. Likewise the Quakers of William Penn’s Pennsylvania considered themselves religious refugees. The Catholics of Maryland, too, left Protestant England in search of asylum.

Many of the earliest settlers in these colonies were criminals. For centuries the British used their colonies abroad as dumping grounds for dissidents, dissenters, and deviants (however defined). The poor, as well, were shipped out in large numbers, many of them as **indentured servants** serving terms of five to seven years (which some would not survive). In the West Indies, the English developed an economic model based on African slavery, one they later exported to the southern North American colonies. In short, a

great many early settlers in these locales were there as refugees, as property, and against their will. As a result, their relationship with England was predictably complex.

### Key Takeaways

- The history of the Thirteen Colonies represents a prelude to the early history of English Canada.
- Several of the Thirteen Colonies were established as denominational-specific refuges during an era of heightened Protestant sectarian disagreement.
- Not all of the settlers were willing immigrants.

# 6.3 Competing Mercantile Economies

It is easy to imagine the colonial world of North America as sharing many common features, made up as it was of Europeans who had gone into self-imposed (or sometimes imposed) exile from their home countries. In fact, the colonies were each organized around very different cultural and economic principles. Even among the first English-speaking colonies there were significant differences. In some instances they were also complementary.

## Mercantilism and Colonialism

One of the unifying features of the North American colonial world was mercantilism, an economic doctrine that held that a nation's power depended on the value of its exports. The role of government in a mercantilist age is to control all foreign trade to achieve a highly positive balance of exports over imports. Under mercantilism, nations sought to establish colonies to produce goods over which the home economy had monopolistic control. Mercantilists believed that colonies existed not for the benefit of settlers, but for the benefit of the imperial centre. Britain and France embraced mercantilism, hoping to run trade surpluses, so that gold and silver would pour into London and Paris. Governments took their share through duties and taxes, with much of the remainder going to merchants.

This accumulation of wealth enabled the building of remarkable navies and land armies. It led to a level of ostentatious living that had not previously been witnessed, including building palaces for monarchs and ruling classes, evident in the grand manorial estates of the era. It also stimulated the growth of a class of merchants, or **bourgeois**, based in port towns and wherever manufacturers converted colonial raw materials into value-added products. These port towns with access to colonial materials became prosperous hubs of activity protected by the monarch. The loyalty to the Crown by the merchant class was to prove pivotal in the evolution of European absolutism in the 17th and 18th centuries. It allowed Louis XIV of France to neuter the political threat posed by a troublesome **aristocracy** while intensifying a network of national economic and military purpose. It also required the establishment of banking systems to both preserve and lend out the hard currency coming into the home countries. In the 18th century, these changes were key to the emergence of both modern **capitalism** and the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution.

## Colonial Self-Sufficiency

For the colonies mercantilism had rather different consequences. Royal domination of New France from 1663 created a highly centralized and decisive colonial government, which was clearly an extension of Louis XIV's absolute power. Under Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the first Minister of the Marine (a court position that placed him in charge of the French Navy and New France), efforts were made to maximize the profitability of Canada by reducing its demand for supplies from France. That meant, first and foremost, establishing a viable, modestly self-sufficient compact colony that could feed itself. At the same time, Colbert made sure that the manufacturing sector in New France remained dependent on

French exports. The impressive iron forges at Saint-Maurice (built in the 1730s) were the exception that proved the rule: Canada was dependent on French manufacturers and was organized so that the principal economic activity was trading in fur, the **staple** product desired most from the colony by the French market. As a result, Canada developed a tightly governed economy under mercantilism with infrastructure that reflected its needs: docks and harbours, storehouses for furs, and a workforce just large enough to trade furs, fight local wars, and develop a farming sector that could meet subsistence needs. This was where colonial capital was spent, rather than on, say, wool or hemp production and mills (with skilled workers from France) that would turn raw materials into cloth or rope.



*Figure 6.1 Forges owned by businessman Matthew Bell overlooking the St. Maurice River.*

British mercantilism was somewhat different, and it mainly took two forms. First, the English established chartered monopoly firms like the **East India Company** whose purpose was antithetical to settlement and self-sufficiency. Second, English (after union with Scotland in 1707, *British*) mercantilism regulated trade. The imperial government placed tariffs on imports and gave bounties for exports of processed goods, and it banned completely the export of some raw materials. The colonies were thus captive markets for English/British industry. English/British mercantilism meant that the government and the merchants became partners with the goal of increasing political power and private wealth, to the exclusion of other empires and the colonies.

Throughout the 17th century, Parliament passed the Navigation Acts to increase the benefit England derived from its colonies. The Navigation Acts required that any colonial imports or exports travel only on ships registered in England. The colonies could not import anything manufactured outside the British Isles unless the goods were first taken to British ports, where importers paid taxes. The plantation

colonies were forbidden to export tobacco and sugar to any nation other than England. This policy continued through the 18th century as well.[1]

Colonists in English/British and French America recognized the mercantilist limits placed on them. The prospect of **free trade** was held out repeatedly as a goal of entrepreneurial colonists. **Illicit trade** between colonists in Acadia and New England, Canada and New York, and the West Indies and Newfoundland was a thriving business and, essentially, free trade by other means. Colonial merchants and traders who eluded mercantilist restrictions were an important part of colonial life in the 18th century. Nevertheless, close economic regulation persisted in Canada long after the Conquest and it was an aggravating factor in the American Revolution. Most importantly, because Canada was not able to provide for itself, it was left wholly dependent on France for a great many manufactured products, especially military supplies. Mercantilism, then, was to prove a fatal miscalculation when it came to times of war.

Key Takeaways

- Mercantilism was in place in both the French and English colonies.
- Successes in the colonies led to wealth accumulation in the imperial centres, resulting in important economic, political, and social changes.
- Legislation like the Navigation Acts favoured colonial exporters and shipbuilders but not colonial manufacturers.
- Colonists worked within the mercantilist constraints, but looked for ways to circumvent them as well.

### Media Attributions

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1. Kenneth Norrie and Doug Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 19–61.

# 6.4 International Fisheries

Fishing was the first economic activity of Europeans in what is now Canada, and it persisted for centuries. Europe's demand for fish was almost insatiable, due in large part to dietary restrictions requiring Catholics to be meat-free at least one day a week and on many holy days in the church calendar. The fisheries, however, were surpassed by other economic activities over time, and all of those successor activities — even the fur trade — required more settlement than did the fisheries. In short, other economic activities resulted in colonies being established. In contrast, the fisheries of the Grand Banks — a chain of shallows several kilometres offshore of Newfoundland providing some of the most fertile fishing grounds anywhere — actually deterred settlements on shore. These little colonies grew only slowly and very reluctantly.

At first it was an advantage to European empires to actively discourage settlement in Newfoundland and Labrador. For Britain, the Grand Banks became known as the **nursery of the navy**, as the annual fishing fleet's voyages there provided a training program that produced capable sailors for the Royal Navy. By 1620 (at which point New France contained a few dozen settlers), 300 fishing boats worked the Grand Banks, employing some 10,000 sailors. In the absence of refrigeration, the catch was preserved by salting. Some Europeans had access to salt and so could clean and pack cod on board their ships without even setting foot on land. The British had a less reliable supply of salt, however, so they erected modest stations on the shoreline where they dried the fish, and they sold their surplus to Spain and Portugal.

As the plantation economies (see section 6.5) grew in North America and the West Indies, there emerged a further market for Grand Banks fish from the burgeoning slave population. By the 1670s there were 1700 permanent residents of Newfoundland and another 4500 in the summer months. It took another century for this number to double.[1]

Newfoundland fisheries formed one leg of three-legged trade between the colony, Spain and the Mediterranean, and England. A ship of 250 tons of cod could earn 14% profit on the Newfoundland-to-Spain leg, and about the same shipping goods (wine, fruit, olive oil, and cork) from Spain to England. But crossing the stormy Atlantic Ocean was dangerous; the cost of the risk was spread mostly by selling shares, mainly to merchants based in the port towns of the northeast Atlantic.

Under these circumstances of rigid mercantilism, there was effectively no colonial presence outside of a few key harbours.[2] The requirement for government was likewise very small. Competition for prime harbour locations on which to establish fish drying racks was the driving force behind administration: whoever arrived first effectively formed the government for the season. Nowhere in North America was the relationship between economy and polity so clear.

1. Roderic Beaujot and Don Kerr, *Population Change in Canada*, 2nd edition (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 30.

2. Gordon W. Handcock, *"So Longe as There Comes Noe Women": Origins of English Settlement in Newfoundland* (1989), 23–72.

### Key Takeaways

- Long after the voyages of Cabot and Cartier, the fisheries of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Grand Banks were an international affair.
- The development of colonial settlements in Newfoundland was not in the best interest of imperial governments until the mid-18th century.
- The fisheries fit within a larger Atlantic economic order that included Europe, Africa, and the West Indies.

# 6.5 The Plantation Colonies

Plantation economies arose first in the West Indies. These produced enormous quantities of products that were essentially new to Europe. Sugar, for example, competed more with honey than with other sources of cane, so there was no displacement of an indigenous European sugar industry to worry about. Likewise the production of tobacco on island colonies added something new to the European marketplace; there were no existing producers of tobacco in Europe who might, for example, block imports of the colonial product. In the 17th century the business model of plantation farming was transported to the mainland of North America and took root from the Carolinas north to Maryland.

Of the colonies associated with the plantation economy, none matters more to the history of Canada than Virginia. First colonized early in the 17th century, it grew rapidly and was aggressively expansive. What emerged was an economy based on private land ownership that resembled in some measure the aristocratic norms of England. Large landholdings conferred power and respectability on owners, all of whom depended on armies of unpaid labour in order to plant, maintain, harvest, and ship their products.

Tobacco was the main crop of the colony from the early 17th century. Initially this labour-intensive plant was managed by indentured servants: English workers and then Africans were recruited for fixed terms as indentured servants. While this indentured servitude was an option for many people — both whites and Africans — in many colonies (including Vancouver Island in the 19th century), in the West Indies and the mainland plantation colonies, it sometimes was a death sentence. Working conditions were poor, and most workers did not adjust well to the climate and the environment. Chattel slavery and African prisoners soon became synonymous, and ubiquitous in the plantation colonies. Indigenous people were enslaved as well, though most were exported (mainly from North Carolina) to the West Indies to reduce the likelihood of them running away. It has been estimated by one American historian that the number of Indigenous individuals enslaved between 1670 and 1715 was approximately 24,000 to 50,000.[1]

Growing tobacco required large tracts of land that favoured river transportation over roads. The plantation economy therefore snaked its way deep into the colony's hinterland and, as the tobacco crop ate into the soil fertility, the leading landowners looked for new territories into which they could expand. Virginia was the first of the plantation colonies to turn its attention to New France as it sought to punch a hole in the Appalachian barrier to settlement in the West, but that did not happen until the mid-18th century.

Remarkably, perhaps, for a colony built on a foundation of inequality, Virginia was the first to experiment successfully with a kind of democratic representative government. The House of Burgesses was established in the 1620s as a legislative body that both advised and, in some measure, directed the governor. In practical terms it became a colony run by the largest and wealthiest planters; offers of free land were taken up by English emigrants but they had to have sufficient capital to make a go of it. These factors — the high costs of plantation farming, the implications of having to purchase and manage a

1. Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South 1670–1717* (Princeton: Yale University Press, 2002), 298–301.

workforce made up of African slaves, and the enormous profits that could be made from tobacco farming — sustained a gentry-style regime with strong (and very local) common interests and anxieties.

Key Takeaways

- Plantation colonies were typically organized around large estates rather than small holdings in order to better exploit slave labour.
- Colonies like Virginia combined manorial wealth with innovative traditions of democratic government.
- The land hunger that was hardwired into plantation economies led to 18th century pressures to cross the Appalachian Mountains into territories claimed by New France and its Indigenous allies.

# 6.6 Contrasting Farming Frontiers

The colonies north of Virginia were built on a model of small independent producers: farmers who owned and worked their own piece of land usually using family labour. This model was very different from the historical system of British farming under **feudalism**, which was based on peasants being under obligation to landlords. Although most coastal colonies (Newfoundland, Maine, Boston, New York) were oriented to fishing, the bulk of colonial growth from New England south to the Potomac River was based on the land ownership model of independent farmers. These colonies were not free of slavery, but it was never applied as extensively or as intensively as in the plantation colonies to the south, where the land parcels were much larger.

All the English colonies generally adhered to a block-shaped survey pattern of farmland, which was different from the seigneurial system in New France. There, farms were divided into long strips of land running back from the river and administered in a quasi-feudal relationship with the seigneur, who was obliged to provide the community of habitants or *censitaires* a mill, a church, and other built facilities in support of their farming efforts.

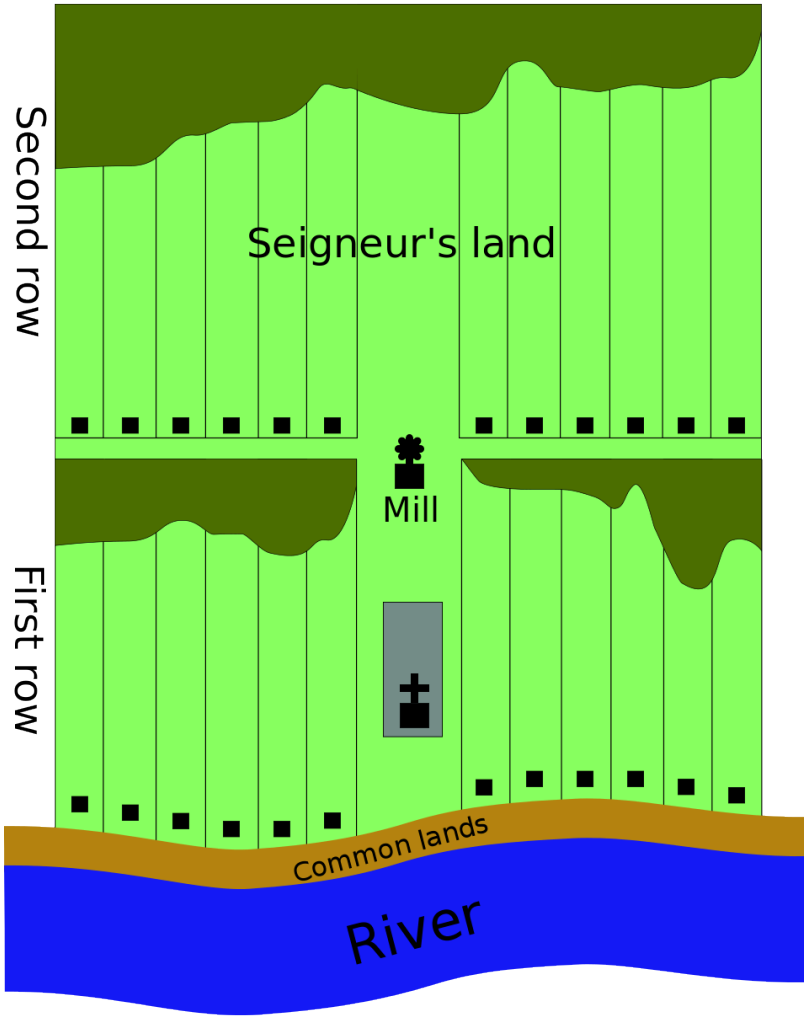


*Figure 6.2 Illustration of land distribution under the seigneurial system in Canada from 1627 to 1854.*

The different land use patterns had different implications. A colony that covered the landscape like a spreading checkerboard (the English system) was more difficult to subdue by an army, but impossible to defend against guerrilla-style offensives. Massachusetts developed in this township pattern: Boston remained pre-eminent as the colony's port and centre of commerce, and there were several smaller tidewater settlements, but the second tier of rural towns were all more or less equal, and they carpeted the colonial landscape rather than running across it in a string. Family homes in the English colonies, however, were more likely to be clustered in a village setting around a square or commons, which strengthened community ties, but also made small, individual towns a good target for raiding parties from the north.

In contrast, the French model of narrow strips of property along the river was more easily patrolled (and taxed), but also vulnerable to an invading naval force sailing up the St. Lawrence, which could — and did — systematically lay waste to one farm after the next. The river and, from the 1730s, the **Chemin du Roy** at the back of the first row or *rang* of seigneuries connected the major settlements with the markets. It also allowed neighbouring farm families to see each other's homes and promote a lively

Canadien culture. As well, it made possible the unchallenged rise of three main settlements: Montreal, Trois Rivières, and Quebec.

Exercise: History Around You — Seigneurialism's Fingerprint

Landscapes are historic documents. Take a look at the map coordinates below using satellite images such as Google Earth (https://www.google.com/earth/).

- 45°09′49.2″N 123°01′59.9″W
- 53°33′57.1″N 113°26′20.6″W
- 49°44′10.4″N 97°07′14.2″W
- 29°56′40.7″N 90°09′13.7″W
- 49°54′56.2″N 97°07′09.8″W
- 42°23′03.8″N 82°54′45.4″W

These images show evidence of French and/or Métis occupation. If you look closely, can you see where the seigneurial strips run up against other kinds of land use? What is the consequence in urban areas?

## Land and Society

Land use also impacted the family structure in the French and English colonies. Inheritance laws in New England placed a premium on **primogeniture**, the practice of leaving the majority share of the property to the eldest male heir. In Canada, **coparcenary** ensured that widows inherited half of the estate and all of the surviving children got their own share — all of which were divided in a pattern of long and progressively narrower and narrower strips. Those who had to move away might, however, find land nearby in the *deuxième* or *troisième rang*, the subsequent range or row of farms in the same seigneury. In practice, these narrow strips of land were uneconomical to farm and so they were farmed together (or one sibling might buy out another), the end effect being that more members of an extended family remained on the land. In contrast, in New England, the "secondary" offspring and the widow of the landowner often had to look elsewhere for their fortune, sometimes moving to another piece of land farther west and generally nearer to the frontier of colonial settlement.

On balance, free land without any feudal encumbrances had a greater attraction to potential settlers than did the quasi-feudal qualities of the seigneurial system. Setting aside the climate differences between New England and Canada, this accessibility to land and the lack of Old World systems of deference seems to have worked to the advantage of the English colonies, which grew much more rapidly. Economic historians have long debated whether the seigneurial system was a drag on the Canadian economy as *censitaires* transferred some of their income in the form of rents to seigneurs who, in turn, sent much of that wealth out of the colony.[1] On the whole, it seems likely that this quasi-feudal

1. R.C. Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada: A Geographical Study* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press,

relationship came at a high cost; it is difficult to determine whether the additional infrastructure costs associated with the English landholding system (the expense of building roads and of the individual farmers having to provide their own mills) had comparable negative impacts.

Farms in Acadia, as we have seen, were different again. There, drained marshland was the focus of farming efforts and individual ownership was the rule. Large families were the norm in the 18th century and yet subdividing of property did not reach a critical point before the expulsion took place. As was the case in Canada and Virginia, most Acadian properties were on waterways and towns or villages of any size were few, far between, and small.

Key Takeaways

- Agricultural colonies differed in their land-ownership systems.
- Land-use differences created and/or reinforced distinct administrative and social relations.
- Town and city growth was limited in some colonies because of their economies and economic geography.

**Media Attributions**

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1966); Allan Greer, *Peasant, Lord and Merchant* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Leslie Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

## 6.7 Triangular Trade

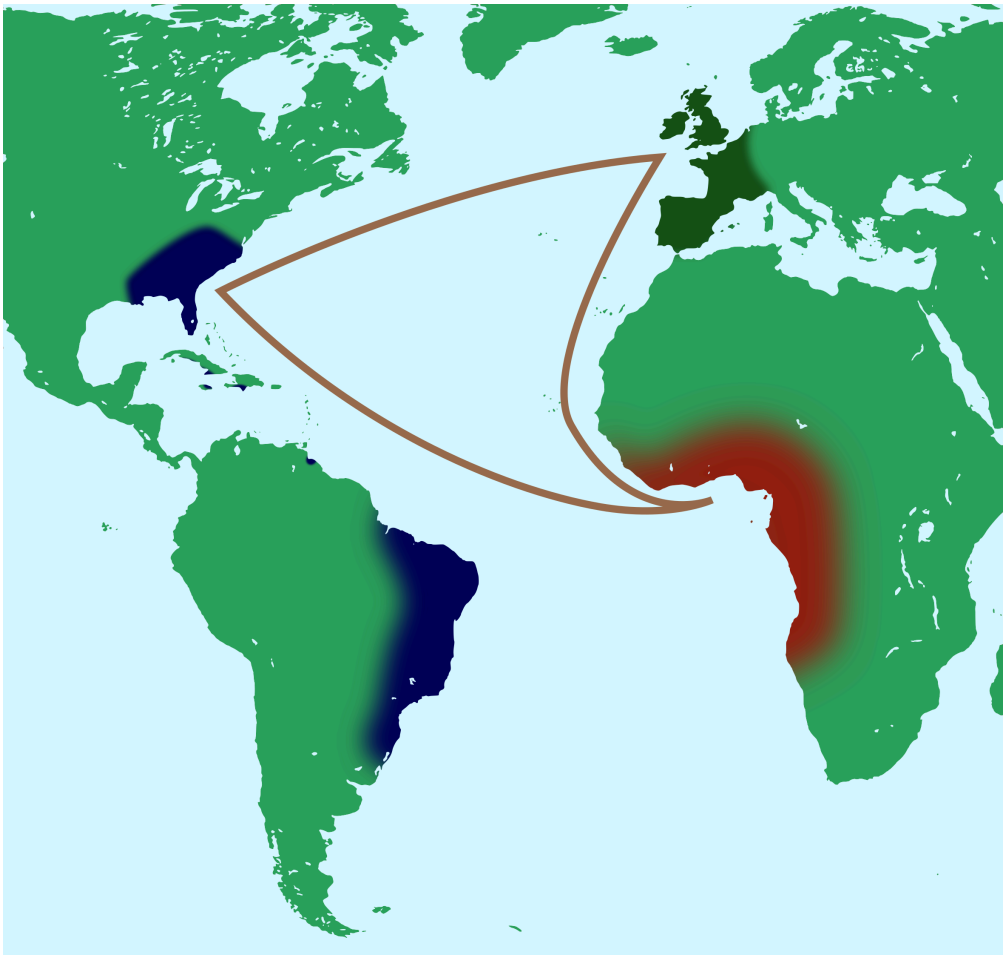

*Figure 6.3 Triangular trade is often represented in this manner, but it was more complicated and often reversed direction.*

Both the French and the English colonies participated in what came to be known as triangular trade. This involved sending goods by sailing ships from Europe to Africa, buying slaves who were then transported across the Atlantic to the plantation colonies of the West Indies, loading up on products like sugar and tobacco, taking those north to the North American colonies where some trade took place before heading on home to Europe. This, at least, was the general idea behind the model of trade developed under the mercantilist system that dominated in all of the colonies. Certainly seaborne trade in these centuries depended entirely on trade winds that circulated the Atlantic in this clockwise direction.

The trade winds that blew from Africa to the Caribbean made the **Middle Passage** of the slave trade a possibility. The **Gulf Stream** that runs from the Caribbean along the east coast of North America and curves along Nova Scotia's southern flank and over the Grand Banks of Newfoundland was critically important to the economy of the region. It made the movement of goods like sugar and molasses from West Indian plantation colonies to distillers in ports like Boston and St. John's a possibility. The

predictability of shipping routes also made piracy on the east coast an attractive prospect. The Gulf Stream, too, ensured warm ocean waters and contributed significantly to the health of the fisheries in the region.

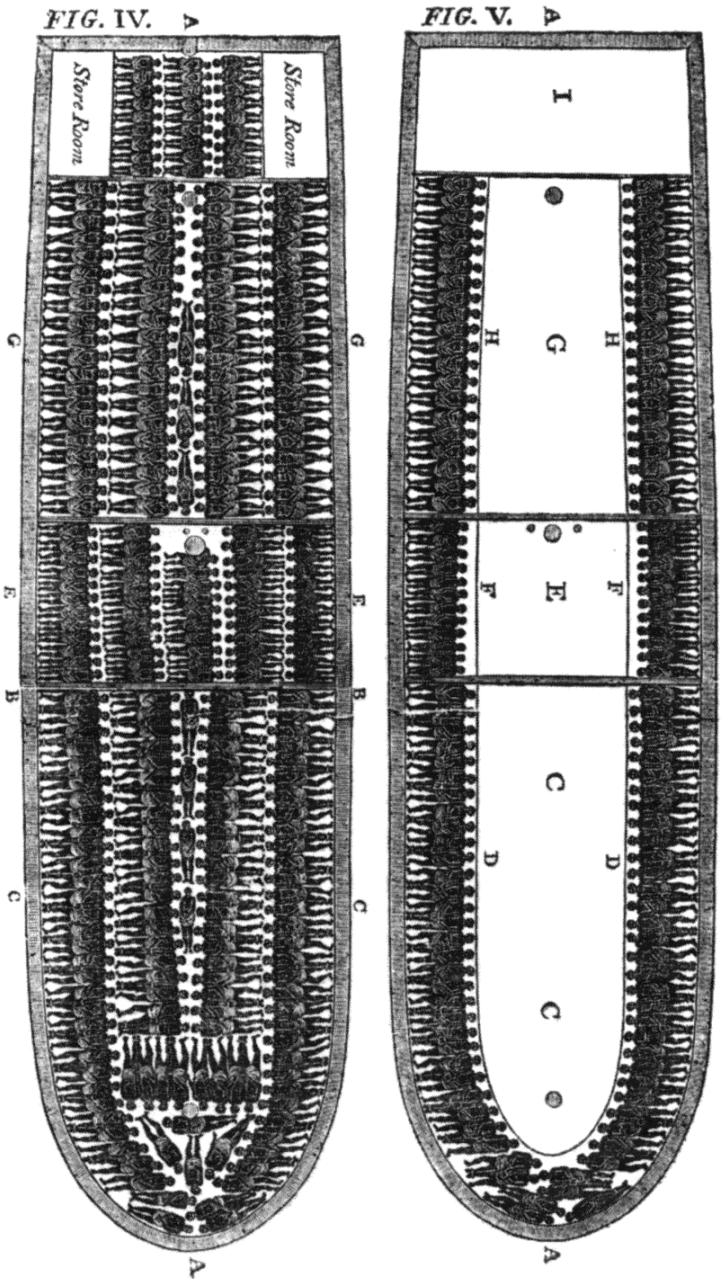


*Figure 6.4 Cutaway diagram of an Atlantic slave ship, c. 1790. Accounts of the middle passage describe closely packed human cargo shackled in place in conditions that were traumatizing, if not fatal.*

In practice, the triangular trade was almost always foreshortened. Ships suitable for carrying humans packed together for the lethal Middle Passage were not built to carry cash crops as well. Instead of cycling north they would work their way south of the equator where the winds would take them back to Africa for more human cargo. Similarly, fishing and whaling vessels such as those that formed the Portuguese and Basque fleets were able to strike out across the Atlantic from the Azores and head

straight to the Grand Banks, cruising back to Europe along the Gulf Stream. English colonial traders tacked against the prevailing winds to the West Indies where they traded timbers and textiles into a market that was meant to be fully controlled by merchants in England.[1]

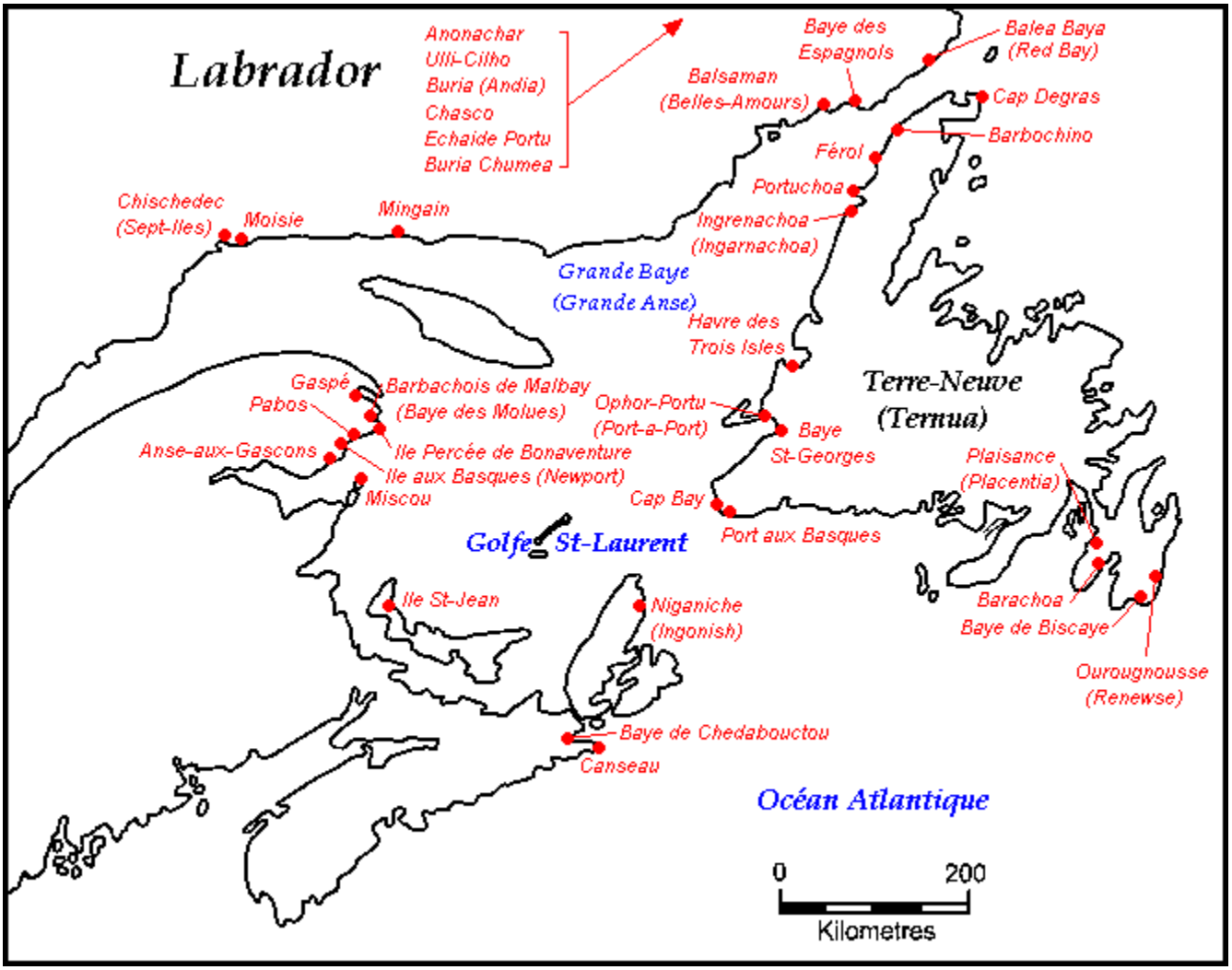


*Figure 6.5 The Gulf of St. Lawrence, showing Basque fisheries from the 16th to 18th centuries. [Long Description] (#fig6.5)*

Acadians similarly bucked the currents to reach New England ports where they had trade contacts and even political allies. The broadest pattern of trade, however, and certainly the flow of capital that made the colonial system function as it did, adhered to the triangular pattern — even if the individual ship's captains did not. Colonial success was often determined by geography: stopping points along these major routes significantly affected economies. Wealth and influence accumulated fastest in the African kingdoms along the Bight of Benin, on the largest and most easily reached Caribbean islands, in spacious and safe ports like New York, Providence, Boston, Halifax, and St. John's, and in protected European centres of merchant power like Bristol, Liverpool, Nantes, Honfleur, and St. Malo. Isolation from this important corridor largely explains the decline of England's east coast port cities (like Norwich) and the relatively slow growth of the economy of the St. Lawrence (as well as that of Île Saint-Jean). The French colonies in Canada did, however, have another asset, which is explored in the next chapter.

1. Kenneth Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Key Takeaways

- The North American colonies were all part of a trade network that connected three, sometimes four continents.
- The structure of sea travel encouraged the growth of the slave trade and, thus, enabled plantation economies to exploit that model of labour.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 6.5 long description:** Map showing Basque fisheries in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Fisheries were concentrated along the northeastern shore of Nova Scotia, the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec, the southeastern shore of Quebec and Labrador, and all around the shores of Newfoundland.

[Return to Figure 6.5] (#attachment_1048)

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# 6.8 The Fur Trade in Global Perspective

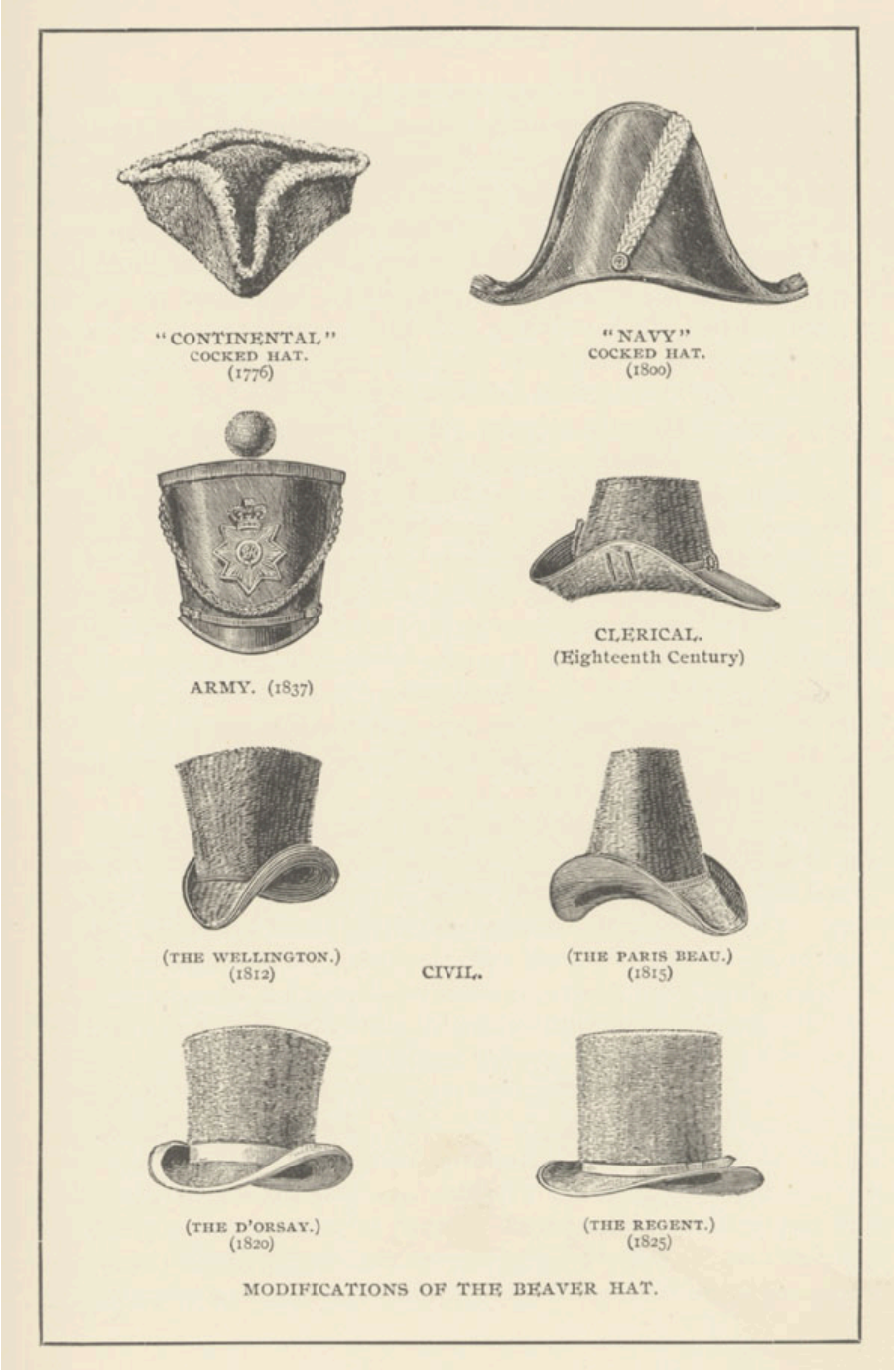


*Figure 6.6 The soft under-fur of the beaver — the felt — is what hat-makers in Europe sought. As small a change in style as an increase in brim diameter could send ripples through the whole fur trade.*

The rise of the fur trade in the colonial context is a story of both supply and demand. The aristocracy of

Europe always was a reliable market for fur, a product that was viewed as functional, fashionable, and even regal depending on the specimen and the wearer. European fur-bearing animal stocks, however, were being depleted by overhunting and by competition from expanding farming frontiers for territory. Beavers were effectively extinct in the British Isles by the 16th century; in France their numbers were similarly reduced.

## Beavers and Bourgeois

Meeting royal and aristocratic demand for furs became the task of merchants. Their principal source was Russia, but the discovery that furs could be obtained much more cheaply from North America reoriented the supply lines. Merchants on the Atlantic coast of Europe parlayed what they earned in the fisheries into fur-trading operations, and the wealth they gained fuelled the rise of a merchant class that would, itself, demand more furs. Soon the wealthiest merchants were sporting fur hats and trim on their coats. The top hat (or stovepipe hat) didn't appear until the 19th century, but its forerunners were symbols of rising merchant status, adding height to the wearer and acting as a kind of mercantile crown. This meant that even if demand for furs among the gentry was fully satisfied, there was a growing and effectively insatiable market in the cities of Western Europe where a new class of citizen — the bourgeois or bourgeoisie — was sufficiently prosperous and influential to drive the industry forward.

The French were the first into the fray, at least officially. Five years after Champlain struck a commercial and military alliance with the Algonquin and Wendat, the Dutch began to explore the possibilities of a trade along the Hudson River. This river marked the approximate boundary between Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) and Mahican territories. It connects (with a few portages) the French settlements on the St. Lawrence via Lake Champlain with the Dutch and (later) British settlements of **New Amsterdam**. Furs from Fort Orange (now Albany, New York) were transferred downriver to New Amsterdam (New York after 1667), most of which seemed to be coming from the lands around Lake Ontario. All of the North American colonies, even the Carolinas, produced some furs for markets in Europe, and there was a lively trade in furs and deer hides out of Louisiana, but the best furs were to be obtained north of the Great Lakes.

What Europeans wanted most was treated pelts that had been cleaned of the longer **guard hairs**, leaving more of the rich felt exposed and ready for use.[1] But catching, killing, skinning, and tanning beaver hides was a labourious process and that left the guard hairs in place. Indigenous peoples who had already done all the work of trapping and processing inadvertently added value: by using the pelts as blankets or clothing they wore off the guard hairs. This was a feature of the fur trade that required traders (French or Indigenous) to probe deeper into the continent in search of new supplies of worn pelts, which explains the speed with which New France penetrated the river systems of North America.

1. Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966): 12–14.

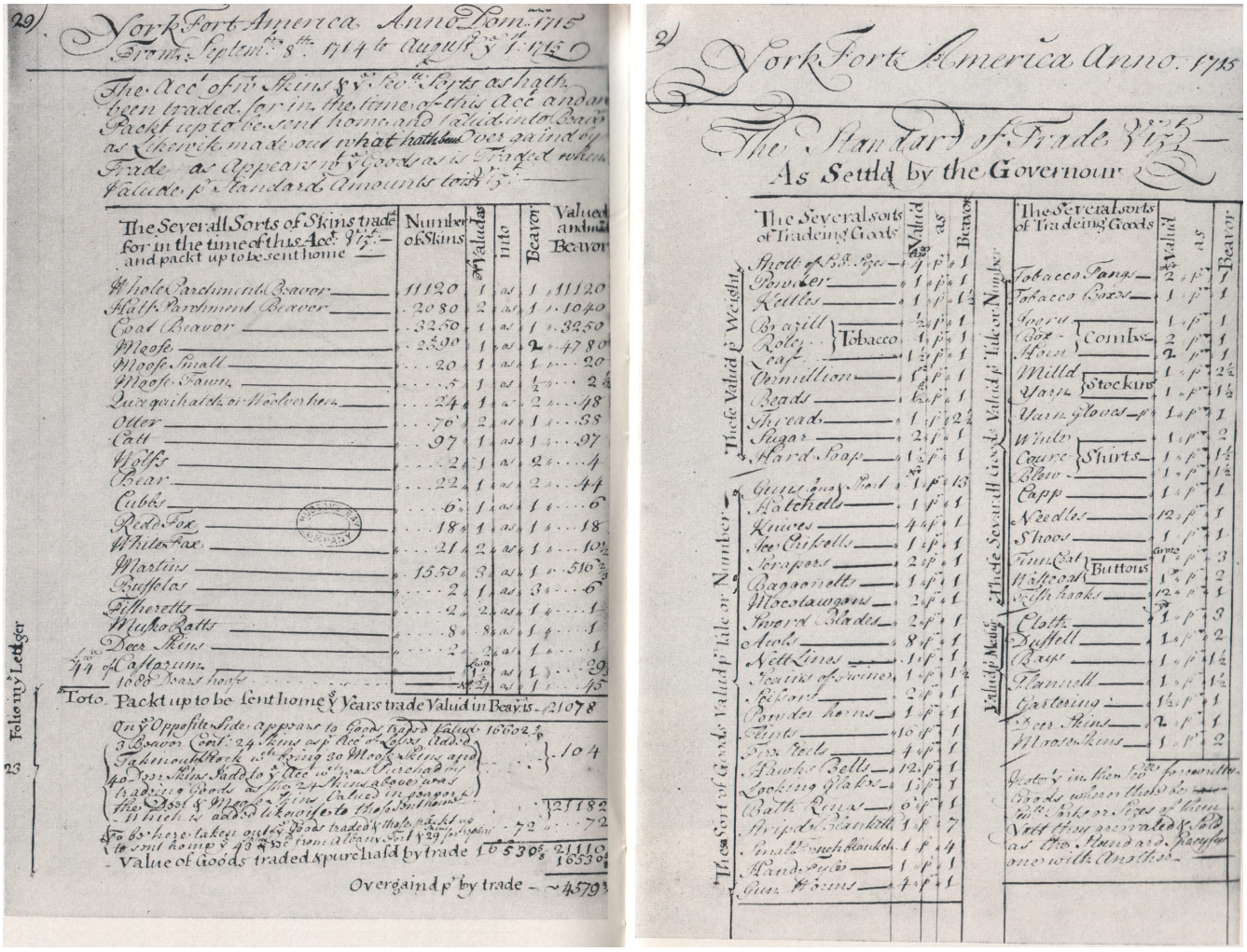


*Figure 6.7 Fur trade ledger from York Factory, September 1714 to August 1715.*

## Furs and Frontiers

As Europeans looked to their Indigenous trading partners to access pelts from farther inland, particularly in the North where colder climates produced healthier pelts, the fur trade invaded all the early colonies and dictated their size and shape. While Virginia and the other plantation and farming colonies set their foundations in concentrated areas, New France stretched its network — and then its forts, posts, and influence — farther into the interior of North America so that virtually all the major rivers and lakes of the continent were contained within its sphere of commercial influence. The English response was to attempt, repeatedly, to capture the French positions on the St. Lawrence, thinking that the fur supply would simply continue to flow downstream and into their hands. In the late 1600s the English tried a different tactic, encouraging their Haudenosaunee allies to weaken the French-Algonquin supply lines. Having pressed the French from the south, the English then turned to the far north (see Chapter 8).

From the 1670s, then, the French faced the English on two fur trading frontiers and found themselves engaged in a long-running battle with the Haudenosaunee, who were acting in their own interests and, occasionally, as clients/allies of the English. Much of the conflict between France and England in the colonial theatre related to this competition.

Key Takeaways

- The North American fur trade was a response to declining populations of fur-bearing animals in Western Europe and the cost of purchasing and importing furs from Russia.
- The qualities most sought after in beaver and other fur pelts necessitated trading farther into the interior of the continent, thus propelling New France outward from the St. Lawrence.

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# 6.9 Colonial Conflict to 1713

Any odds-maker looking at the prospects for French victory against the English in the colonial wars from the 1620s on would have to call it a long shot. The colonies all depended on naval support, and England's Royal Navy was larger than that of France or Spain by 1660. The population in the English colonies grew at a much faster rate so that by 1760 they were 20 times larger than New France. What settlement existed in New France was stretched out and difficult to defend, certainly compared to the more urban and compact colonies to the south. Many of the young Canadiens who might act as a colonial regiment were off trading for furs in the spring and summer — precisely when they were needed most at home for defence. Nevertheless, the French record against the British in North America is remarkably good.

This is, however, a two-dimensional view in a three-dimensional world. Indigenous nations were in an almost constant state of resistance against European intruders in these years. Whether it was the Beaver Wars or the Wabanaki Wars or battles too small to acquire a name, Indigenous communities in northeastern North America were struggling to adjust to a world in which trade relationships were changing, epidemics were devastating their numbers, and aggressive neighbours (European or Indigenous) were impinging on their lands. Some of these conflicts become apparent in the historical record only when they folded neatly into intercolonial or inter-imperial wars. While it is true that the French, to take one side, sought out and nurtured alliances with Indigenous partners in their struggle to contain the British and their colonists, it is also true that Indigenous nations had their own agendas and welcomed the French into their crusades, regardless of the European context.

## The End of the Iroquois Wars

As described in Chapter 5, the Haudenosaunee launched attacks against Canada in the late 1680s, one of which was a spectacular assault on Lachine. The governor, Count Frontenac, responded with raids against the settlements of the Iroquois and those of their English allies. The French forces by this time had adopted **guerrilla** tactics favoured by the Algonquin and the nations of the Wabanaki Confederacy. The raids were lightning-fast and terrifying. By destabilizing the English colonial frontier, Frontenac hoped to sever the connection between his two enemies, and he was eventually successful. This was a bloody, no-holds-barred campaign in which civilians and children were not spared.

The English colonists responded with a naval assault that captured the Acadian capital of Port-Royal and then a failed attempt to take Quebec. It was in this latter conflict that Massachusetts' future governor, Sir William Phips, demanded Frontenac's surrender, to which the latter offered to reply from the "mouths of my cannon and muskets." Phips's forces found Quebec a challenging opponent, and they became anxious about the coming winter and freeze-up on the river. They retreated with nothing to show for their efforts. Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville captained several naval sorties into Hudson Bay in an effort to root out the English HBC, but the outcomes of these battles were continually undone the next season.

The European powers were too preoccupied with their own conflicts to wade in on either side, which is

much of the reason that there was no decisive result. France and England were consumed with sectarian wars involving, among others, the Protestant alliance between England and the Netherlands against their common Catholic foe, France. The War of the League of Augsburg lasted nine years in Europe and the outcomes in North America were decided at the treaty table in 1697 (in the **Treaty of Ryswick**), not on the battlefield. This was a theme that was repeated throughout the 18th century when colonial conflicts would be fought mostly by locals and settled abroad by the mother countries after the fact.

A key outcome of the War of the League of Augsburg was the appearance of sharp divisions within the Haudenosaunee League. For the Kanien'kehá:ka, located farthest east, the British position at Fort Albany (formerly Fort Orange) was regarded as part of a deepening pact. They were not about to desert this asset and commitment. That was not the case, however, for the rest of the Iroquois. The League had played a key role in renewing hostilities with the French at Lachine, and they didn't care one way or the other about agreements made at Ryswick: they had their own agenda. The French felt similarly that Ryswick addressed European issues and that Canadian security against the Iroquois had to be resolved in battle. It took another three years for the two sides to become sufficiently exhausted by war to seek a separate peace. The agreement signed by the Onyota'a:ka (Oneida), the Seneca, the Onondaga (whose main village had been levelled), and the Gayogohó:no (Cayuga), on the one side, and the French, on the other, was the **Great Peace of 1701**. War between the two parties had been almost continuous since 1608 and now, with the exception of the Kanien'kehá:ka (which was a very big exception indeed), Canada could relax a little. For the League, however, it meant that their relationship with the English was compromised. How badly compromised would soon be revealed.

## The War of the Spanish Succession

Within a year the peace in Europe was shattered. England and France were once again at war. In North America, conflict followed quickly. In this relatively short period of time, however, much had changed. Frontenac had completed building a chain of forts deep into the Mississippi Valley and his plans for a more integrated New France were gaining ground. The forts were established both for trade and to consolidate military alliances with Indigenous nations. The Great Peace gave the French some room to manoeuvre in the Ohio Valley and build a presence and forge a role with the Council of Three Fires. Moving the principal western post from Michilimackinac to Fort Pontchartrain du Détroit (Detroit) created opportunities for closer connections with the Potawatomi and the Miami (another Algonquian-speaking group, one that had been displaced by the Haudenosaunee during the Beaver Wars and was at this time returning to the Ohio Valley). The fort attracted conflict almost immediately, especially between the Council (which regarded the Miami as intruders in their zone of influence) and various Iroquois who were now able to participate in regional trade under the protection of the Great Peace. Diplomacy on the part of the French was essential to taking advantage of the western forces that could be mustered in another war with English colonists, but this endeavour was neither smooth nor particularly successful.

As well, years of war had hardened New France. Canadien soldiers emerged as ferocious guerrilla fighters who could more than hold their own against the Haudenosaunee and take the battle to the enemy's doorstep with impunity. The administrative structure of New France was also militaristic. Frontenac had put his stamp on the whole of the colony in this respect and was able to deploy resources without difficulty. This simplified the business of building alliances with Indigenous nations. While the

individual British colonies had to work out their own alliances piecemeal, New France could speak with one voice when it came to the Wabanaki Confederacy or the peoples of the **Pays d'en Haut**.

These were important differences. While the French were establishing outposts throughout Indigenous territory and extending their commercial and military influence, they were not claiming land for their own exclusive use. New Englanders, New Yorkers, and other English colonists, however, were much more aggressive in this respect, enlarging their frontiers inch by inch in smaller conflicts with native populations. It was for this reason that the Wabanaki Confederacy aligned so strongly with the French. The presence of priests in their communities gradually and successfully introduced Catholicism, giving the Wabanaki another reason to despise their Protestant English neighbours.

The War of the Spanish Succession (also known as Queen Anne's War) began officially in 1702. The first five years were dominated by failed New England attempts to retake Port Royal (which had been handed back to France at Ryswick) and highly effective assaults by the French-Wabanaki alliance on New Hampshire and Massachusetts. The attack on Deerfield, Massachusetts, a village of hardly 300 people, saw more than a hundred prisoners being marched off to Caughnawaga (a.k.a. Kahnawà:ke and Kahnawake), a mostly Iroquois mission village near Montreal where many were adopted into their captors' population. New England responded with raids on Acadia, which had roughly the same impact. It wasn't until 1710 that a British force was brought into the struggle and was able to capture Port Royal (renamed Annapolis Royal). In 1711 Britain once again attempted to take Canada. Seven regiments along with 1500 colonials sailed into the St. Lawrence. Ten of their ships were sunk and the expedition failed.

The **Treaty of Utrecht** of 1713 ended the war and settled the disposition of territorial prizes, mostly to the disadvantage of New France. On balance, the French were right to claim victory on the battlefield, but the French colonies did badly at the bargaining table. The treaty resulted in the relinquishing of French claims to mainland Acadia, Hudson Bay, and Newfoundland, including the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. France retained Île Royale (Cape Breton Island) and Île Saint-Jean (Prince Edward Island); the Acadians remained a question mark for the British throughout their new possession, now called Nova Scotia. This outcome was, of course, very bad news for the Wabanaki Confederacy, as it was now sandwiched between two regions of British colonization.




*Figure 6.8 European claims and spheres of influence in North America, 1702 [Long Description] (#fig6.8)*

Key Takeaways

- New France was able to withstand repeated attacks from the British and the British colonies by forging alliances with Indigenous neighbours and by adapting their guerrilla warfare techniques.
- Indigenous interest in the fur trade and regional security resulted in alliances with colonial settlements and imperial powers.
- Whatever the outcome of war on the colonial battlefields, the final outcomes were settled at the treaty table in Europe.
- The Treaty of Utrecht reconfigured the colonial map in North America.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 6.8 long description:** Map showing the territory claimed by Spain, England, and France, respectively, in 1702, right before Queen Anne's War (1702–1713).

Spain controlled much of southern North America. This includes Mexico, Arizona, New Mexico, southeast Utah, much of western Colorado, a sliver of southwest Kansas, the Oklahoma panhandle, and western Texas, as well as Florida and a sliver of southeast Alabama and southwest Georgia.

England controlled nearly the entire east coast of the United States, from New Hampshire to South Carolina, ranging from just the coastal areas of the states in that region to larger swaths.

Spain and England quarrelled over who owned southeast Georgia.

France controlled portions of the south coast of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. It also controlled a streak going from northeast to southwest Illinois and eastern Missouri. France also occupied a sliver of Wisconsin that protrudes into Lake Michigan.

Most notably, France controlled a large area around the Gulf of St. Lawrence, including Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and the land in Quebec, Ontario, and New York around the St. Lawrence River. France also controlled northern Maine and the south shore of Lake Ontario in New York.

France and England disputed over southern Maine, the island of Newfoundland, and the land around Hudson Bay from northeastern Manitoba to northern Ontario to western Quebec.

[Return to Figure 6.8] (#attachment_1070)

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# 6.10 Acadia 1713–1755

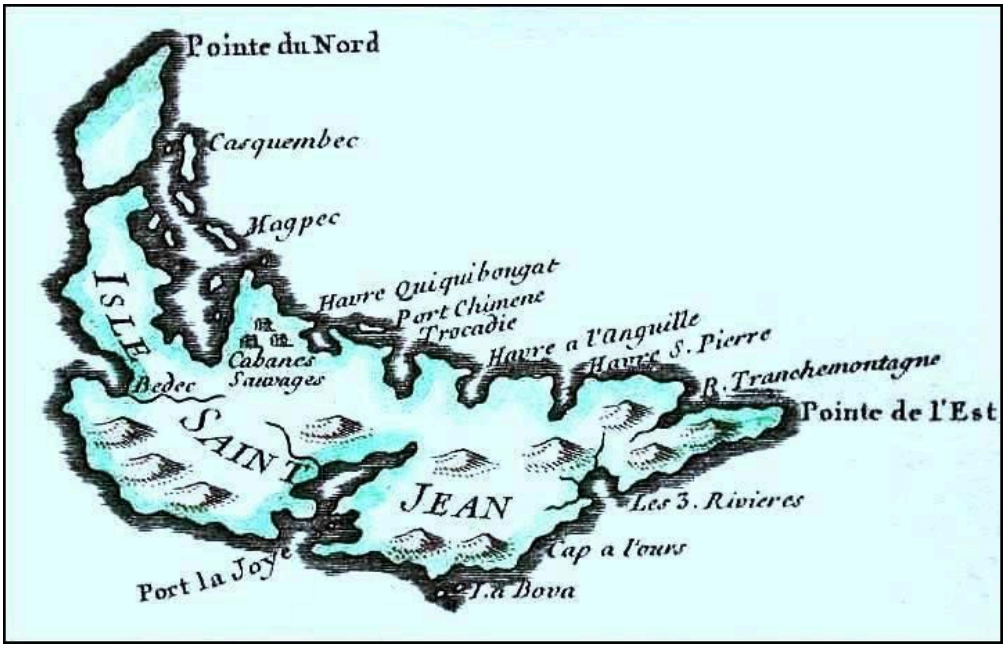


*Figure 6.9 Île Saint-Jean (a.k.a. Prince Edward Island) in the 1740s was a significant piece of the Acadian farming and seagoing frontier.*

Historians think of Acadia as a society as much as a place. After 1713, the French possessions in the region were both reduced and augmented. Île Saint-Jean and Île Royale were some distance from the Bay of Fundy where most of the Acadian settlements were located. Those were now under the nominal control of the British. The two islands held a rump population of Acadians but, soon after Utrecht, the French erected the largest of their colonial outposts on Royale: **Fortress Louisbourg**. Built in 1720, Louisbourg soon became the busiest of the French ports in North America and rivalled most of the British ports to the south in terms of volume of trade. Clearly it had both military and commercial functions. It also served as the administrative headquarters for the two colonies in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Louisbourg played a role, too, in sustaining the Acadian communities then behind enemy lines in Nova Scotia. At first the French sought to entice Acadians from the Bay of Fundy to resettle on Île Royale. The soil around Louisbourg, however, was too miserly so the Acadians opted to stay put. This pleased the British insofar as Acadian farms contributed positively to Nova Scotia's bottom line, but the question of Acadian loyalty was to trouble both sides for decades. The British were certain that Louisbourg was a disruptive factor in the internal affairs of Nova Scotia; the Acadians were exasperated by years of war and oscillations between British and French overlords, on the one hand, and enemy pirates and raiders on the other. The French, for their part, wanted some time to rebuild their position without being drawn too far into the affairs of the Acadians and the Wabanaki Confederacy.




*Figure 6.10 Fortress Louisbourg, c. 1751.*

Repeated efforts were made on the part of the British to secure an oath of loyalty from the Acadians. France, of course, did not want this but, more importantly, neither did the Wabanaki Confederacy. Pro-British Acadians, the Wabanaki concluded, would be by definition hostile to the Confederacy. Indeed, the French encouraged Wabanaki attacks on the British throughout the 18th century, happy to see the Confederacy harass their enemy.

## The Third Wabanaki War

The Wabanaki did not need much persuasion. Immediately after Utrecht they complained of British and New Englander incursions into their territory and pointed out that, regardless of what France signed away, they did not agree to any division of their lands with the Europeans. This was definitely true of the Mi'kmaq and probably the Abenaki (Malecite) as well. The New Englanders understood the situation differently and repeatedly edged into Wabanaki territory, establishing settlements and sometimes forts. This occurred over a broad geography, from Vermont to Île Royale, and the Wabanaki response was, likewise, wide-ranging. The Third Wabanaki War (also known as **Father Rale's War**) entailed serious frontier skirmishes, naval battles, assaults on fortified positions, and guerrilla attacks designed to terrorize one another. From 1722 to 1725 the Confederacy launched raid after raid on British settlements in New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and Nova Scotia. They targeted individual towns and farmhouses in an attempt to drive the New Englanders back to their pre-1713 positions and the British from their newly claimed lands. The New Englanders retaliated and the British established Fort Canso, a fishing post and defensive position across Chedabucto Bay from Île Royale, in a territory that was unambiguously claimed by the Mi'kmaq.

For the most part these hostilities — although almost continuously running and bitterly fought — were inconclusive. However, in the western theatre of war the Confederacy and New England came to an agreement called Dummer's Treaty (1727), named for the Governor of Massachusetts. The terms were

not favourable for the Confederacy but they established the principle that the Wabanaki were legitimate inhabitants of the region now described as New Brunswick and that they would have to be consulted in future diplomatic agreements.

## Acadia's "Golden Age"

Despite the conflict in Maine and eastern Nova Scotia, life in the Bay of Fundy was largely peaceful for the core Acadian settlements. Their system of governance was like that of the English colonies although with a slight seigneurial twist. A century of benign neglect by France had come with a cost in terms of security and vulnerability but there were freedoms arising from that as well. Local councils provided a largely informal administrative system, one that (after Utrecht) sent representation to the British headquarters at Annapolis. The British showed official tolerance for Catholicism, although the colony was not especially well supplied with clergy. What churchmen there were, provided a level of leadership but not authority, another distinction from what existed in nearby Canada under the royal administration.

The period from 1713 to 1748 has been described by historian Naomi Griffiths as a "golden age," one in which family sizes grew and average life expectancies improved and were better than in France, Canada, or New England. Direct involvement in war was very limited, epidemics bypassed the growing Acadian settlements, and commerce with New England was conducted in a largely effective and mutually beneficial way. Illicit trade with Louisbourg also thrived as Acadians shipped boatloads of surplus livestock to the French bastion.[1]

Some of these quality-of-life indicators can be measured and verified but, against that trend, this was also an era of significant Acadian and Mi'kmaq migration out of the Fundy Basin and onto Île Saint-Jean by the 1750s. As well, the putative peacefulness of the region was regularly jeopardized by British imperial designs and Mi'kmaq resistance. The existence throughout this period of an Acadian militia also indicated that things were not all well among the people known to the British as "the neutral French."

The story of Acadia from 1713 to the 1750s sometimes references the benefits of isolationism. By staying out of the way of wars, minimizing contact with their neighbours, and growing rapidly from internal sources, the Acadians were able to avoid combat deaths, epidemics, and internal division. This is not supported by evidence of extensive external trade and considerable immigration: a third of the individuals involved in 174 marriages at Grand-Pré in the 18th century came from France, Île Royale, and even Canada. Whatever caveats might be added to the story of a "golden age," Griffiths is right that the key to understanding the more positive aspects of this community memory is that it sustained the Acadians in what was to come after 1748.

## Nova Scotia, Acadia, Wabanahkik

European war from 1740–1748 (the War of the Austrian Succession) provided the French with an excuse to attack Nova Scotia from Louisbourg. In reply, New Englanders mounted an assault on the fortress

1. Naomi Griffiths, "The Golden Age: Acadian Life, 1713–1748," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 17, 33 (May 1984): 21–34.

and found its defences to be easily penetrated. Louisbourg was captured in June 1745 and, for the next three years, the British and New Englanders controlled the whole of the North American foreshore from Georgia to Newfoundland. They took advantage of this situation to clear Île Royale of several thousand francophones, including many Acadians. This was a grim foretaste of things to come.

The New Englanders' capture of Fortress Louisbourg was not a victory they were able to enjoy very long. The 1748 **Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle** (which restored the **status quo ante bellum**) had several immediate consequences for the Acadians and the Mi'kmaq. The first of these was pressure from the French to take their side, an offer the Acadians declined. This did not calm the British, who believed that their Acadian subjects might yet join the French. The prospect of an end to Acadian neutrality and the certainty of renewed Mi'kmaq hostilities prompted the British to establish new positions in Mi'kmaq territory. The foremost of these was Halifax, placed squarely where the British had earlier promised the Mi'kmaq they would not go: at Jipugtug (Chebucto). Its establishment in 1749 and the arrival of more than 2000 settlers resulted in another conflict that came to be known as **Father Le Loutre's War** or the Mi'kmaq War.

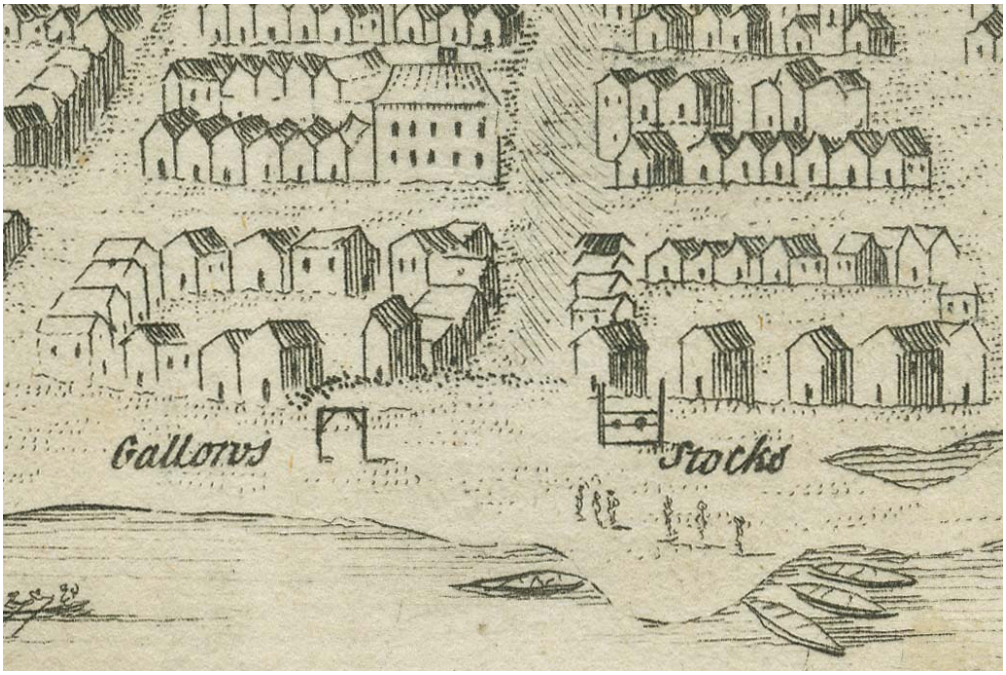


*Figure 6.11 An orderly representation of early Halifax, 1750, complete with stocks and gallows by the waterfront.*

Halifax was established under the governorship of Edward Cornwallis (1713–1776), a 36-year-old British aristocrat who started his term hopeful that peace could be established with the Wabanaki Confederacy. Initially it looked as though his goals would be realized: he had a good-sized core of British settlers, Royal Navy support, and a signed agreement with the Wabanaki. Sadly, the Mi'kmaq were not part of the treaty process. They responded with a letter that made clear their position: "The place where you are, where you are building dwellings, where you are now building a fort, where you want, as it were, to enthrone yourself, this land of which you want to make yourself absolute master, this land belongs to me."[2] Mi'kmaq attacks followed soon after.

2. Quoted and translated in L.F.S. Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists: Indian-White Relations in the Maritimes, 1713–1867* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977), 201.

Cornwallis's response was to stand his ground and, indeed, to expand the British military presence in the region. New forts and barracks went up at Windsor, Dartmouth, Grand Pré, Bedford, Mirligueche (Lunenburg), and Chignecto (Fort Lawrence). Much of this construction was in and around the Minas Basin, part of the Acadian heartland. The disputed territory to the north (the area that later became New Brunswick) bristled with French forts in response. Cornwallis's gestures may have been large but his effectiveness was questionable. In 1749 he announced a bounty on Mi'kmaq scalps. This was a practice common in New England for a century or more and the French were already offering the Mi'kmaq a bounty on British scalps. The bounty was wholly ineffective and failed to mobilize a strong response to the Indigenous militias.

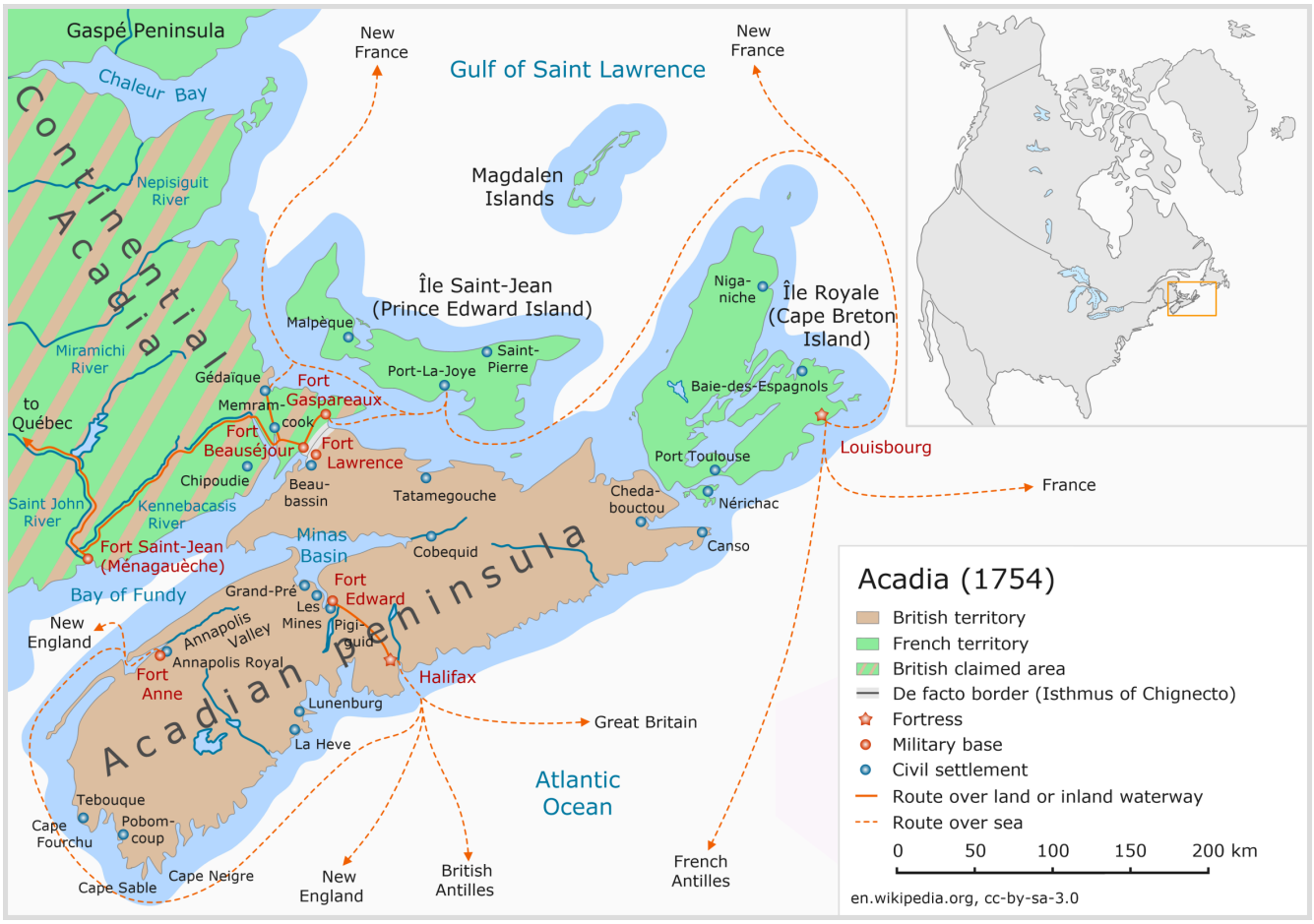


*Figure 6.12 Acadia and Nova Scotia, 1754. [Long Description] (#fig6.12)*

Father Jean-Louis Le Loutre was a Catholic priest deeply involved in the Wabanaki resistance and, when it came to English scalps, the paymaster of the French as well. In the late 1740s he organized an Acadian exodus to Île Saint-Jean. Reducing the number of Acadians in Nova Scotia was a means of weakening British food supplies, but the French/Acadians/Wabanaki were able to keep open and protect a corridor that ran across the disputed territories over the Chignecto Isthmus, making overland travel from Canada to Louisbourg possible.

Under the circumstances, Cornwallis could not gain any ground, nor could he subdue his opponents. He left the colony and the war dragged on inconclusively until 1755. The legacy of his term, however, is important: no comparably sized region in the history of British North America was ever so militarized, no conflict so intractable, and never was so much potential goodwill lost. What looks on the face of it

like an Acadian victory was in fact a disaster, one that unfolded in different ways. The Acadians who relocated to Île Saint-Jean were beset in 1749 by a plague of black mice that destroyed their crops. This was followed by another plague in 1750, this time of locusts. In 1751 drought struck. And, of course, the British were becoming increasingly exasperated with the Acadians. Hundreds if not thousands had abandoned neutrality and sworn loyalty to France. Worse news, many of the British settlers brought in by Cornwallis and his successor — some of whom were actually German and French Protestants — deserted the British and joined the Acadians and the French.

## Oaths and Exile

The new governor of Nova Scotia, Charles Lawrence (1709–1760), decided to push the issue of an Acadian oath of loyalty. The Acadians who remained in the Minas Basin and generally on the north shore of Nova Scotia were still reluctant. International circumstances had changed, however. War had broken out in the Ohio Valley in 1754 and Europe was edging toward another precipice of its own. A joint British-New England operation captured Fort Beauséjour. The Wabanaki raids, too, continued. Further Acadian refusal to take the oath in 1755 prompted Lawrence, with the support of Governor William Shirley of Massachusetts, to begin relocating Acadians to the British colonies to the south, to France, to Louisiana (where they adapted to bayou life as "Cajuns"), to wherever they could be sent.[3] The British forces set ablaze the emptied Acadian villages and then repopulated them with British American colonists called **planters** and with new immigrants from Yorkshire. The **Acadian Expulsion** (in French, *Le Grand Dérangement*) did not occur overnight. This was an eight-year long episode, during which time some Acadians returned, a great many perished, one group hijacked their captors' ship and sailed to Canada, and those on Île Saint-Jean thought, mice and locusts notwithstanding, they had made a smart move.

3. The complex context of the expulsion is considered in Naomi Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People, 1604–1755* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2005), 431–464.



*Figure 6.13 A View of the Plundering and Burning of the City of Grymross was painted in 1758 and is thought to be the only contemporaneous study of the Acadian deportation. One gets a sense of the "scorched earth" policy at work, although the scalpings are not depicted here. (Grimross is now Gagetown, New Brunswick.)*

Key Takeaways

- The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) redefined the boundaries of Acadia in such a way as to worsen tensions between the French, the British, the Wabanaki Confederacy, and the Acadians.
- The Acadian response to repeated turnovers in imperial masters and ongoing tensions was to seek a position as the "neutral French."
- Acadian communities enjoyed significant growth in this period, marked by natural population growth and increased farm productivity.
- Renewed struggles between the French and the British and between the British and the Mi'kmaq at mid-century resulted in a more militarized region and, ultimately, the Acadian Expulsion.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 6.12 long description**: A map of the Maritimes, known as Acadia in 1754. The map focuses on Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, the southern shore of the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec, as well as the Magdalen Islands north of PEI. It shows French and British territory, as well as

territory controlled by the French but claimed by the British. Also featured are fortresses, military bases, civil settlements, and routes over land, inland waterways, and sea.

In 1754, the Nova Scotia peninsula — the lower part of the province, attached to New Brunswick — was British territory. The map labels this peninsula as the "Acadian peninsula." Military bases on the peninsula include Fort Anne near the southwestern shore, Fort Edward in the interior, and Fort Lawrence near the Isthmus of Chignecto, which connects the peninsula to New Brunswick. The fortress of Halifax is near the middle of the southeastern shore of the peninsula. Out of Halifax are sea routes to Great Britain, the British Antilles, and New England.

Cape Breton Island (Île Royale), which is north of the Nova Scotia peninsula, was French territory. The fortress of Louisbourg is on the northeastern shore of the island, and from Louisbourg were sea routes to the French Antilles, France, and New France.

West of Cape Breton Island is Prince Edward Island (Île Saint-Jean), which was French territory. A few civil settlements are shown, include Port-La-Joye, which is a stop on a sea route from Louisbourg to New France. Northeast of PEI are the Magdalen Islands, which were also French territory.

West of Nova Scotia and PEI is New Brunswick, which is labelled as "Continental Acadia." This territory was claimed by the British at the time, but had been the subject of a territorial dispute between the British and the French. Military bases in New Brunswick included Fort Gaspareaux and Fort Beauséjour near the Isthmus of Chignecto and Fort Saint-Jean (modern Saint John) in southern New Brunswick on the Bay of Fundy. A route along the Kennebecasis and Saint John rivers goes from the Isthmus of Chignecto to Quebec.

[Return to Figure 6.12] (#attachment_1087)

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# 6.11 The Seven Years' War

If one looks at North American history only through the lens of British and French interests, then it is true that most of the imperial wars to 1755 began as offshoots of European conflicts. From the perspective of Indigenous histories, this was far less often the case. Certainly the War of the Austrian Succession was, in the Maritimes, much more about the ongoing Wabanaki resistance than transatlantic affairs. The Seven Years' War provides another example of this pattern.

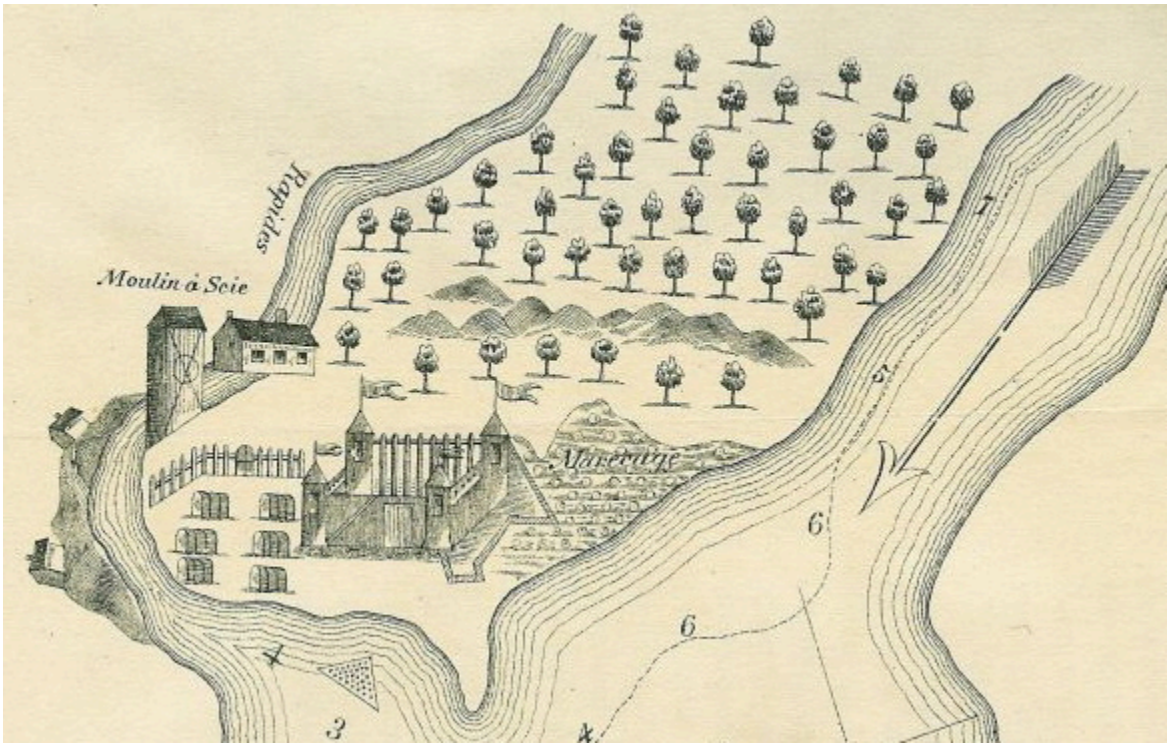


*Figure 6.14 Fort de la Présentation was built by the Suplicians in 1749 as a mission to the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawks). By 1755 it had a population of 3000 Haudenosaunee (Montreal had 4000 people) and it was being repurposed for war.*

## Conflict in the Ohio Valley

Led by George Washington (1732–1799), a scion of the Virginian gentry and shareholder in a speculative land company, a Virginian party set out in 1753 to request that the French relinquish their position in the Ohio Valley. The result was intensified French activity in the region. The following year Washington returned (once again under orders from Virginia's governor) and ambushed a French detachment. The French response (along with several of their Indigenous allies) was to pursue and capture Washington at Fort Necessity before releasing him with a clear message for Virginia: the Ohio Valley was beyond their grasp.

To this point in time, British conflict with the French had focused on the frontiers between New England

and Acadia, New York, and Canada. The other British colonies had not been involved and there were occasions, such as during the War of the Austrian Succession, where New England struggled on its own without even the help of New York. British American population and economic growth by 1754, however, had reached a point where many of the largest colonies felt friction with New France. Georgia in the south was pinched between Florida and Louisiana; Virginia was both powerful and rich as well as increasingly cramped on the tidewater side of the Appalachians; New York's ambitions for the west, along with those of Pennsylvania, pulled it into conflict in the Ohio; New England and Nova Scotia, as we have seen, continued to wrestle with Wabanaki Confederacy attacks and uncertainty about the Acadians and the future of Louisbourg. It was, perhaps ironically, the shared French threat that first brought together the disparate and disunified 13 British American colonies in an effort to work out solutions to common problems (and thus pave the way for further collaborations in 1775).

## The French and Indian War

The American name for the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) — the French and Indian War (about 1754–1763) — reflects their perception that this was a battle against two old foes, and not merely one. Despite a massive imbalance in population numbers that favoured the British colonies (there were 20 British Americans for every resident of New France), the French colonies held their own. They did so principally by having better Indigenous allies. The Council of the Three Fires — in particular, the Ottawa and the Potawatomi — were of special importance. The Haudenosaunee might have challenged French activity in the Ohio, but the British refused to support them against the expanding chain of French military/trading forts running from Lake Ontario to New Orleans.

Indeed, the Haudenosaunee were a powerful third force in the Ohio Valley. Since the Beaver Wars they had been extracting tribute from smaller client nations to the south, including the Shaawanwaki (Shawnee) and the Lenape (Delaware). Recognizing that neither the French nor the British fully respected their interest in the region, they sought to whipsaw the Europeans against one another by means of a policy of "aggressive neutrality."[1] This strategy presented its own challenges, not least because Haudenosaunee control of the region was gradually shifting. Decades of human depopulation and warfare had allowed some of the local ecosystem to recover, making it highly desirable hunting grounds once again. Other Indigenous peoples were, as a consequence, returning to the Haudenosaunee territories (to the chagrin of the Five Nations). These Indigenous "colonists" in the Ohio were at odds with one another, as well as with the League and the British-Americans. Shaawanwaki and Lenape resettlements in the Ohio were rubbing up against Myaamiakis (Miamis), Mascouten, and Kickapoos from west of the Great Lakes (they had shifted eastward to capitalize on trade with the British), and Wyandot (Wendat/Huron) remnants were huddled around the west end of Lake Erie. One scholar describes it as "a world of multiethnic villages outside of the French alliance and beyond the authority of the Iroquois Confederacy."[2] There was, therefore, little Indigenous solidarity and quite a lot of negotiable loyalties in relation to alliances with the Europeans, Canadiens, and Americans.

1. Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 16.

2. Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 331–332.




*Figure 6.15 The French and Indian War (1754–1763) in North America, sometimes known as the American theatre of the global Seven Years' War. [Long Description] (#fig6.15)*

From 1754 to 1757 the war mostly tilted in favour of New France. For the first two years it was exclusively a colonial affair, but with the outbreak of war in Europe in 1756 new strategies emerged. The British, under Prime Minister William Pitt, believed they could tie up French armies in Europe and make use of their superior navy to harass the colonies of France abroad. France by contrast, under Louis XV, stuck to the tried-and-tested strategy of conceding little and banking on a good outcome at the treaty table. After all, return to the status quo ante bellum had worked well for France in one treaty after the next.

## European War in North America

Nevertheless, France did commit regular troops to New France under the leadership of Louis-Joseph, the Marquis de Montcalm (1712–1759) in 1756. This was following a career marked by defeats and retreats in Europe. By that time the governor general of New France, the born-in-Canada Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil de Cavagnial (1698–1778), had scored several important defensive victories against the British and the British Americans. In the Ohio and along the Great Lakes, Vaudreuil's forces proved consistently more able than those of the British. The defeat of the British-American General Braddock in the Ohio in 1755 was a major coup for New France. Vaudreuil's success stemmed from effective deployment of Indigenous militias. Both Vaudreuil and Montcalm's aide-de-camp, Louis Antoine de Bougainville, promoted the use of forest combat conducted by their Indigenous allies and Canadien irregulars. As Bougainville explained, "In this sort of warfare it is necessary to adjust to their ways."[3] The only offensive the British and their colonists were able to mount successfully was that against Fort Beauséjour, mentioned above.

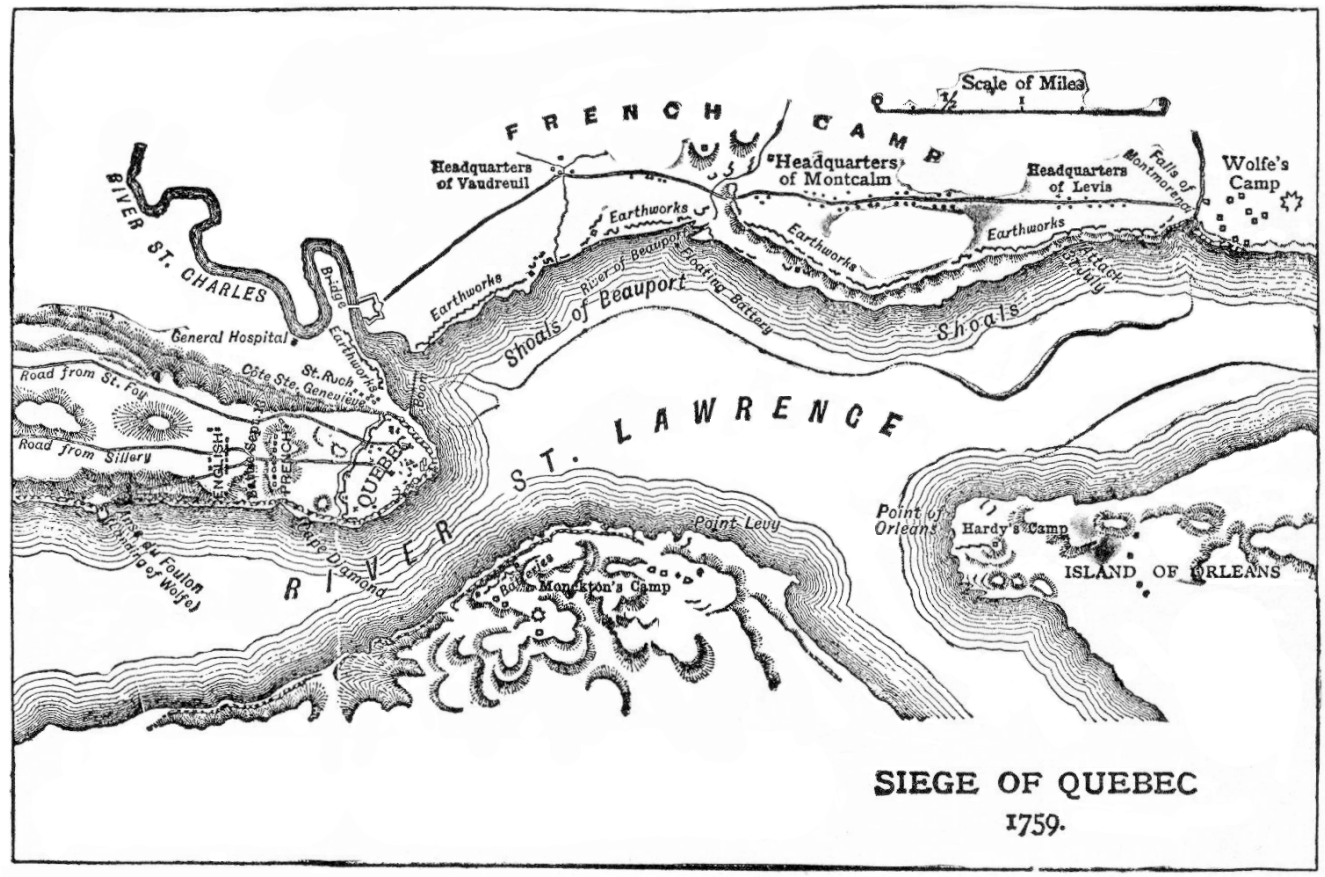


*Figure 6.16 Fortress Quebec was, as this map shows, highly defendable, and a tough nut to crack.*

Montcalm's arrival turned the colonial defence from a successful strategy of harrying the British with surgical strikes against their frontier to one of sit-and-wait. The new commander was more comfortable with set-piece battles, regarded Indigenous warfare as uncivilized and unworthy, and demonstrated an unwillingness to press his foot down on an enemy's throat. By 1758 he had lost the Ohio Valley which,

3. Ibid., 340.

in any event, he regarded as secondary to the importance of securing the St. Lawrence Valley. More than that, Montcalm went out of his way to undermine the reputations of his rival Vaudreuil and his friend, the intendant François Bigot. In 1758 Montcalm's intrigues in the palaces of Paris paid out and he was promoted to lieutenant-governor and thus placed above Vaudreuil in the command of forces in Canada.

In 1759 the Royal Navy swept up the St. Lawrence and confronted Montcalm at the citadel of Quebec. Even in this instance, Montcalm's instincts proved flawed. He thought (wrongly) that the river itself would confound the British, who were unfamiliar with its currents and hazards. He neglected to defend the height of land across the river from Quebec, which allowed the British to bombard the city into dust.[4]

The British forces, under the command of Major General James Wolfe (1727–1759), reached the Île d'Orléans in mid-June hoping for a quick victory. Although his army was smaller than he'd hoped, Wolfe nevertheless had some 7000 troops and the support of nearly 200 vessels. Exploratory attacks on Canadien positions failed repeatedly, as had the relentless shelling of the Lower Town. By mid-September Wolfe's troops were burning out the Canadien farmers, destroying their crops and thousands of homes in the hope of creating pressures on Quebec that might pay off the following year. Many of his troops had deserted, morale was low, illness was depleting the ranks, freeze-up of the river was quickly approaching, and Wolfe himself was convinced that his mission was a failure. He was ready to abandon the attack and let the French and Canadiens struggle through a winter with limited food supplies, which he hoped would soften them up for a springtime assault.



*Figure 6.17 This painting shows the devastation of the Lower Town of Quebec. It was painted by Richard Short, an officer in Wolfe's army who fought at the battle of the Plains of Abraham and Ste. Foy.*

The almost chance discovery of a landing point at a cove called L'Anse-au-Foulon was seized upon by Wolfe. On September 13, 1759, he assembled his troops on the **Plains of Abraham**. At this point, Montcalm had several options: wait for his reinforcements to arrive along Wolfe's western flank and pin

4. W. J. Eccles, "MONTCALM, LOUIS-JOSEPH DE, Marquis de MONTCALM," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography,* vol 3 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed January 12, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/montcalm_louis_joseph_de_3E.html .

down the British; send out snipers along with Indigenous and Canadien militiamen to gun-and-run until Wolfe's troops were depleted and/or demoralized; stay in the citadel and wait out a British force that had little appetite or ability for a long siege in the face of oncoming winter (and just hope for the arrival of the French fleet); or march out onto the field and confront Wolfe. He chose the last of these.

**The Blame Game**

Louis du Pont Duchambon de Vergor was born in France in the year of the Treaty of Utrecht and joined the French military in 1730. The whole of his military career was spent in New France. His principal talents were skimming money out of the colonial purse, serving as "pimp" to the intendant François Bigot, privateering a bit on the side, and underperforming spectacularly in his military duties. Mme. Élizabeth Bégon de la Cour (1696–1755), a Montreal woman of considerable influence and even more wit, described Vergor as "the most dull-witted fellow I have ever met but he knows all the angles."[5] This was, however, the man left in charge of Fort Beauséjour in 1754 and responsible for its fall to a British-New England force a year later. More than that, his actions played a role in precipitating the Acadian expulsion.

Low on credible troops, Vergor persuaded local Acadians to assist in the defence of the fort by promising that, if they were captured by the British, he would protect their official neutrality by claiming to have forced them into a compromised position. A two-week long siege, mutiny among the Acadians, and an exploding cannonball sealed Beauséjour's fate: on June 16 Vergor ran up the white flag of surrender. The outcome for the Acadians who could not escape capture was exile, their participation in the battle taken by the British as confirmation that the Acadians were merely hiding behind a façade of neutrality. Vergor's defence of Beauséjour was certainly anything but gifted. He was packed off to Canada where, in 1757, he walked away from a court martial thanks to his friend Bigot, who paid off the jury. For the next two years Vergor played a minor role in the defence of Canada, and the late summer of 1759 found him in charge of a sentry post at the Anse au Foulon. It was there, in the early hours of September 13, that Wolfe's forces found a path from the river to the Plains of Abraham, surprised the inattentive Vergor and his men, and assembled for the battle with Montcalm. Having lost Acadia, Vergor might be blamed for the fall of Canada as well.[6]

Victory, it must be added, was by no means guaranteed to the British troops that day. Wolfe seized on the worst position he could have selected and stayed there, despite better options. Montcalm's insistence on attacking in columns rather than in lines, on using regular troops and set-piece tactics rather than letting loose Vaudreuil's shock troops, cost the French dearly. It is a pivotal moment in the history of Canada, and yet it unfolds so badly that its two principal actors — Wolfe and Montcalm — were both killed or mortally wounded in battle, something that rarely happened in European warfare. Considering the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, historian William Eccles wrote many years ago that "perhaps the most overlooked determining factor in history has been stupidity."[7]

5. Céline Dupré, "ROCBERT DE LA MORANDIÈRE, MARIE-ÉLISABETH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography,* vol 3 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed December 13, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/rocbert_de_la_morandiere_marie_elisabeth_3E.html .

6. Bernard Pothier, "DU PONT DUCHAMBON DE VERGOR, LOUIS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed December 13, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/du_pont_duchambon_de_vergor_louis_4E.html .

7. W. J. Eccles, "The Battle of Quebec: A Reappraissal," *Essays on New France* (Oxford: OUP, 1987), 133.

## From Defeat to Conquest

To be sure, the war was far from over in September 1759. The bulk of the French troops retreated to Montreal where they licked their wounds. The Chevalier de Lévis, Montcalm's successor, had 7000 troops with him in April 1760 when he confronted a much smaller and rather sickly British army at the **Battle of Sainte-Foy**. The French won easily but they could not retake Quebec, and the hoped-for French fleet failed to arrive (having been sent to the bottom of the sea by the Royal Navy at Quiberon Bay). Instead, British ships reached Quebec when the river ice melted and in September, one year after the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, Montreal fell.

A great deal has been written about this battle because it represents for many a turning point in the history of Canada. It is the moment at which Canada fell to the British; it is the moment of "the Conquest." Of course it was not: that happened at the treaty table four years later. What Wolfe accomplished on the Plains of Abraham might well have been undone at the **Treaty of Paris**. Britain decided that, strategically, Canada was a better choice than one of its other prizes: the sugar colony of Guadeloupe. Keeping Canada would put an end to the hemorrhaging expense of continuous colonial war in North America. This would, of course, entail maintaining a northern colony populated by hostiles, so it was not entirely positive from the perspective of Britain. France, for its part, agreed with the decision. Canada would be hard for Britain to hold and the removal of French influence from the Ohio would be like unstopping a drain: the American colonists would become difficult to contain. Being allowed to keep the lucrative West Indian island must have seemed to the French negotiators like the best possible outcome. Besides, Quebec had fallen before in colonial struggles, and it had always been restored, a possibility that could be held out to the Canadiens and those business interests in La Rochelle and Breton whose livelihoods were closely tied to that of the colony. In other words, France had not entirely given up on Canada, nor had Canada given up entirely on France.[8] As for the British, winning New France was one thing, but holding it was another.

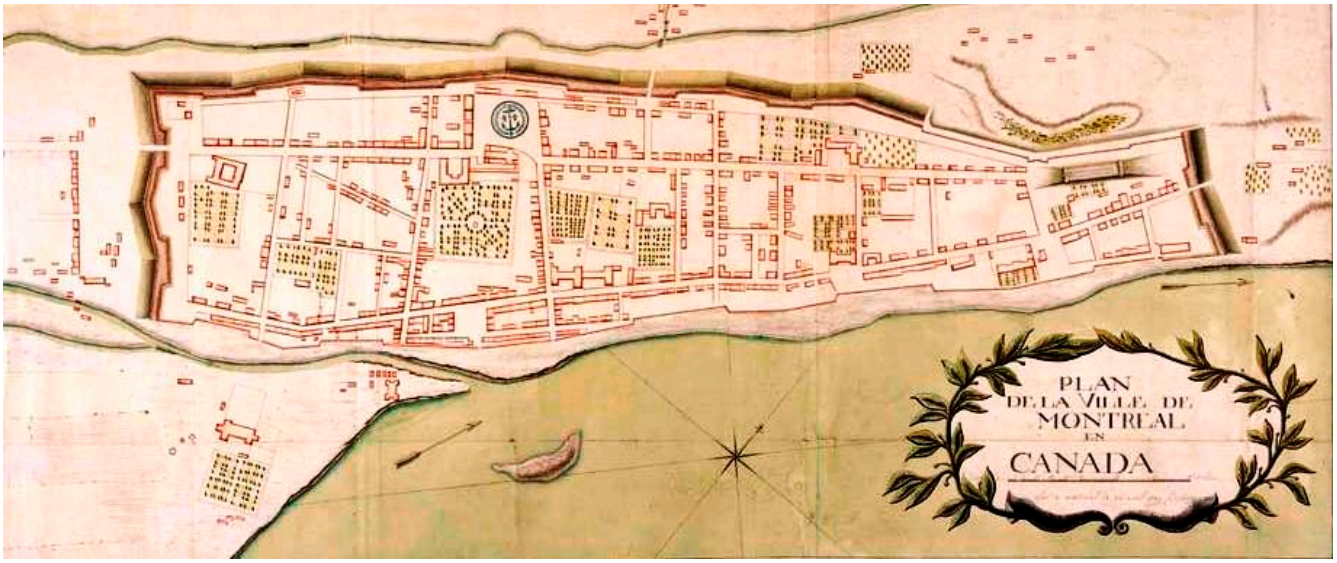


*Figure 6.18 Map of Montreal in the 1740s. The fortifications can be seen as can the gardens of the seminary and the Hôtel-Dieu.*

8. Helen Dewar, "Canada or Guadeloupe?: French and British Perceptions of Empire, 1760–1763," *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no.4 (2010): 637–660.

## The Legacy of the Seven Years' War

First, New France was at an end. The British claimed everything north of Florida. France gave Louisiana west of the Mississippi River to its ally Spain in compensation for Spain's loss to Britain of Florida (which Spain had handed to Britain in exchange for the return of Havana, Cuba). France held on to western Louisiana until 1803, but otherwise its colonial presence north of the Caribbean was reduced to the tiny islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon. Britain's position as the dominant colonial power in the eastern half of North America was confirmed.

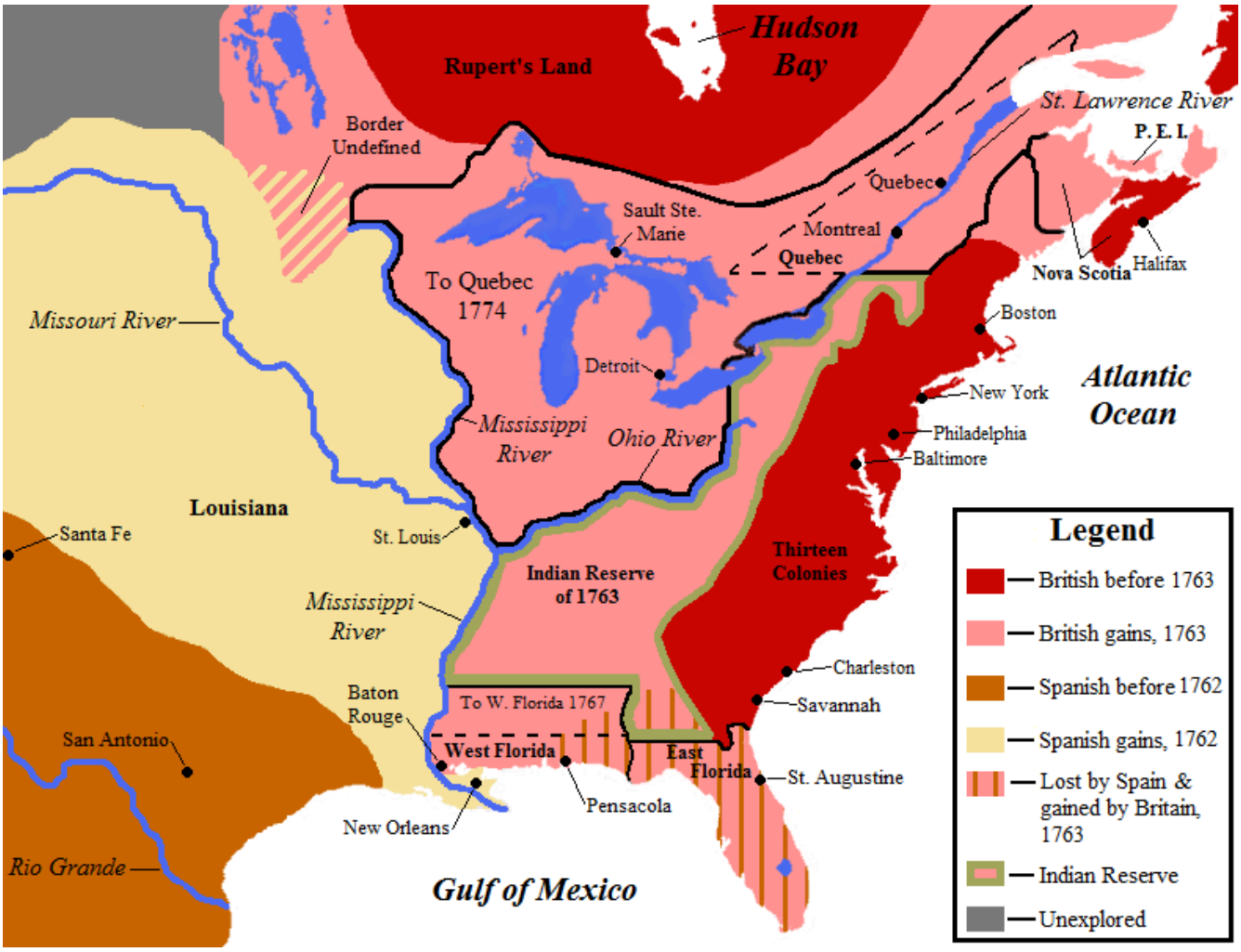


*Figure 6.19 The outcome of the Seven Years' War looked like a commanding future for Britain in North America. Everything from tidewater to the Mississippi, the Gulf to the Arctic, was British. [Long Description] (#fig6.19)*

Second, French absolutism was in trouble. The war in Europe had been expensive and the country was impoverished as a result. Many factors contributed to the French Revolution in 1789, and the Seven Years' War was one of them. This situation curtailed any hope of a restoration of French power in North America. It also led to further global conflicts and, more importantly, to the rise of secular and democratic modern society — not just in France but all around Western Europe and across the Atlantic.

Third, the outcome boded ill for Indigenous peoples. For many of the nations, the elimination of French power in North America meant the disappearance of a strong counterweight to British expansion. Most

obviously the Haudenosaunee strategy of whipsawing the two European powers against one another was eliminated. Pressures increased on Native populations from the Atlantic seaboard through the Ohio and Mississippi, producing waves of refugees as one population after the next was dispossessed. These westward-moving exiles, in turn, pushed other Indigenous peoples along as well. Tensions built swiftly and produced further conflict.

Fourth, the British American colonies felt entitled to the spoils of war. The Ohio Valley lay ahead of them, unopposed by French forts (regardless of Indigenous resistance). More to the point, the British regime was not certain that it was ready to unleash colonial America from behind the Appalachian barrier. The farther the colonies spread, the more likely it was that Britain would be called on to defend them against attacks from the first peoples of the region. The cost of the Seven Years' War was high enough and Britain's treasury needed time to recover. As well, Britain feared that an open frontier would only make the Americans more difficult to govern.

Finally, the war had provided an opportunity for militiamen from New England through Virginia to cut their teeth on battle. George Washington, for one, had gone from a brash and inexperienced soldier at age 22 to a far more confident and mature military leader, thanks to the opportunities provided him by service to Britain. The Seven Years' War was the first occasion in which the Thirteen Colonies had pursued common goals, and it gave a boost to their ambitions.

For Acadia and Canada the end of the war brought uncertainty and fear. Acadian society was shattered by the Expulsion. Its outposts on the western mainland of Northumberland Strait and in the new British colony of Prince Edward Island struggled to survive under the new administration. No doubt more than a few hoped for another exchange of imperial masters, but that wheel had stopped turning. The Canadiens, for their part, continued to hope for relief from France while watching nervously the deportation of the Acadians.

The "land hunger" that had propelled British Americans into the Ohio and into wars against the Wabanaki Confederacy was to have very direct consequences for Nova Scotia and Canada. Some of these would be felt immediately as migrants poured (in smallish numbers) into both colonies. The trickle, however, would become a torrent in less than a generation.

Key Takeaways

- The first intercolonial conflicts associated with the Seven Years' War took place in the Ohio Valley and were instigated by Virginian expansionism into territory claimed for centuries by Indigenous peoples and within the French zone of influence.
- The involvement of Virginia presaged a war between New France and the whole of the British colonies, rather than just New England, Nova Scotia, or New York.
- British success was predicated mainly on a vastly larger colonial population and a significant commitment of military resources.
- The Conquest of Canada occurred at the negotiating table.
- The outcome of the Seven Years' War had almost immediate implications for relations between

Britain and its original colonies and for the French absolutist regime. It also boded ill for Indigenous peoples in the Ohio Valley and beyond.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 6.15 long description:** A map showing the territorial claims and disputes in North America during the French and Indian War (1754–1763), sometimes known as the American theatre of the global Seven Years' War (1756–1763). This map shows the eastern half of North America. The westernmost territories depicted, from north to south, are the eastern half of Manitoba, then Minnesota, Iowa, and the easternmost edges of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

From west to east, north to south, the British had claims to Manitoba, part of northern Minnesota, north and northwestern Ontario, and northwestern Quebec, as well as most of Newfoundland (save the northern shore), and the Nova Scotia peninsula. The British also had claims to most of the states along the American east coast, from Maine to South Carolina, plus northern Georgia, northeastern Alabama, and eastern Tennessee.

From approximately east to west, north to south, the French had claims to Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, the northern shore of Newfoundland, Labrador, eastern Quebec, and southern Ontario around the Great Lakes. The French also had claims to most of the American Midwest and parts of the South, from Minnesota to Louisiana, then east to include Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, northern Ohio, and the northwest extremes of Pennsylvania and New York.

The British and the French disputed over land in southeast Ontario, central Quebec, New Brunswick, and territory stretching southwest from western New York to Mississippi and western Alabama. This includes western Tennessee, Kentucky, western West Virginia, southeast Ohio, and northwest Pennsylvania.

The Spanish had claims to Florida, the southeast corner of Texas, and the southwest corner of Louisiana.

The Spanish and the British disputed over land in southern Georgia and southeast Alabama.

The map indicates the location of several military conflicts in the war, including:

- July 3, 1754, at Fort Necessity, Pennsylvania. French victory.
- Fort Cumberland, Maryland, which was built in the fall of 1754. Marked as a British victory because of its importance to British military strategy during the war.
- August 9, 1755: Braddock's defeat in Pennsylvania. French victory.
- August 9, 1757, at Fort William Henry, New York. French victory.
- June 8 to July 26, 1758, at Fort Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. British victory.
- July 8, 1758, at Fort Ticonderoga, New York. French victory.
- August 27, 1758, at Fort Frontenac, Ontario. British victory.

- July 29, 1759, at Fort Niagara, New York.

[Return to Figure 6.15] (#attachment_1100)

**Figure 6.19 long description:** Map of eastern North America after the French and Indian War, sometimes known as the Seven Years' War, which ended in 1763. This map covers the period from 1762 to 1783.

By 1762, as shown on this map, the Spanish controlled the southern and central United States from Texas and Louisiana to southern Minnesota and South Dakota.

By 1763, the British controlled all of eastern North America, from Manitoba to the Maritimes, Maine to Georgia, Florida to Mississippi, and Mississippi to the Great Lakes. In the middle of this territory was the Indian Reserve of 1763, which extended from western New York and Vermont southwest to northern Mississippi and Alabama and western Georgia.

The border between British and Spanish territory was undefined in the area overlapping Minnesota, North Dakota, and Manitoba.

The area west of Manitoba's largest lakes (lakes Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Winnipegosis) was unexplored.

[Return to Figure 6.19] (#attachment_1107)

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# 6.12 Summary

Intercolonial conflict passed through several distinct stages. At first there was an impromptu quality to much of the conflict that was determined by the size of settlements. When Quebec City was small, it took little more than a couple of boats out of Boston to cause it grief or to capture it. In the 1600s these were settlements of a few dozen people, none of which were ferociously loyal to the towns they defended. Protecting Quebec in 1629 was more like protecting a warehouse than a community.

There is, as well, an entrepreneurial aspect to conflicts in the 17th century and among some of the wars and raids of the 18th century. Privately-funded attacks on enemy colonies were typical of raids out of New England. These were conducted by merchants, investors, and local government officials, not the British Navy. They had personal gain and the protection of their own interests at heart, rather than those of the Empire. Even George Washington's disastrous invasion of the Ohio Valley on behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia was not conducted as the business of Britain.

Threaded throughout these two centuries, too, were conflicting imperial agendas. Tensions in Europe regularly spilled over into North America: a continental war could easily become an intercolonial war. Historians of Canada have long pointed to this fact, highlighting the exception of the Seven Years' War that began in North America before being taken up in Europe. That narrative, however, often overlooks the almost continuous wars between Indigenous forces and their European neighbours. The background to some of these intercolonial conflicts is, in fact, decades-old struggles between colonial nodes and Indigenous nations. One difference is that an official European war might produce additional military or naval resources for the colonists to use against their indigenous opponents.

There is also the quality of warfare to consider, specifically the contrast between guerrilla warfare and the use of well-drilled European armies and colonial militia. The character of warfare changed through the 18th century, becoming increasingly European in style and focused much more on the role of professional soldiery and less on the use of terror and fire by both European and Indigenous participants. The latter style persisted but the standing army was only a revolution away.

Behind all of this lay a growing economic presence in North America. New France had become a functional social and economic colony. By 1759 generations had been born and raised in the St. Lawrence with no firsthand knowledge of France. The same, of course, was true of the diverse settlers and slaves in the Thirteen Colonies. The economic presence, then, was both imperial and local. The creation of successful colonies always carried with it the possibility that local sensibilities would emerge. Some of these, of course, would conflict with those of empire.

Key Terms

**Acadian Expulsion**: The removal of Acadians and other francophones from Île Royale after 1745, and

accelerating after 1755 as the British forcibly removed the larger portion of the colonist population. In French, it is called *Le Grand Dérangement.*

**Annapolis Royal**: British name for Port Royal.

**Battle of Sainte-Foy**: Battle on April 28, 1760, near the citadel of Quebec with the French/Canadien forces attacking the British. General Murray repeated many of the errors Montcalm made only months before. The British survived (but not without suffering more than a thousand casualties) by hunkering in the fortress until British naval reinforcements arrived.

**bourgeois, bourgeoisie**: Originally someone who lived in the town (French: *bourg*; German: *burg*; English: *borough*), typically associated with merchants, professionals, etc. By the 18th century, the bourgeoisie emerged as a distinct social class, a "middle class."

***Chemin du Roy***: The "King's Road," built in the 1730s; a major infrastructure project in its time. One of the longest continuous roads in North America, it connected seigneuries on the north shore of the St. Lawrence.

**coparcenary**: A system of joint inheritance of property. Compare with **primogeniture**.

**East India Company**: Established in 1600, the largest of Britain's chartered trade monopolies. It dominated trade and was an instrument of British imperialism in Asia, as well as the model on which the Hudson's Bay Company was based.

**Father Le Loutre's War**: Also called the Mi'kmaq (or Micmac) War, a 1749–1755 conflict that pitted the Mi'kmaq and some of the Acadian communities against the British and New England interests in Nova Scotia. Name derived from the role played by Catholic Abbé Jean-Louis Le Loutre, a missionary who led the French, Acadian, and Wabanaki forces.

**Father Rale's War**: Named for Father Sébastien Rale, a Catholic priest who nominally led the Wabanaki forces, this 1722–1725 conflict is known by several other names as well. It was provoked by New England expansion into unceded Wabanaki territory in what is now Maine and New Brunswick. The French were allied with the Wabanaki against the British and New England forces.

**feudalism**: An economic and landholding system of social, legal, and military customs based on notions of mutual responsibility. Land ownership was typically by a manorial elite, for which a peasantry laboured. The aristocratic landowners, in turn, owed labour to the higher nobility, including the king.

**Fortress Louisbourg**: Established in 1713 as a fishing village, an important fortified centre of trade and naval activity from the 1720s on. Louisbourg was one of the largest towns in New France by the 1740s and an important asset in French efforts to harass the British in Acadia. Twice captured by the British and New Englanders, it was largely demolished in 1758.

**free trade**: A philosophy of commerce that calls for limited or no tariffs and protectionism. Free trade is in stark contrast to mercantilism.

**Great Peace of 1701**: A treaty struck between New France and 40 Indigenous nations. The Great Peace drew to an end the long-running war between Canada and the Haudenosaunee Five Nations and what had become known in some circles as the Beaver Wars. Also known as the Great Peace of Montreal.

**guard hairs**: The barbed outer hairs found on many mammal pelts, typically longer than the underpelt and more easily shed.

**guerrilla***:* A form of warfare distinguished by the lack of structure and organization typical of formal warfare. Characterized by ambushes, small units, and lightning raids, guerrilla warfare aims to demoralize and wear down a larger opponent that lacks the same speed and mobility.

**Gulf Stream**: A strong current that runs from the Caribbean along the east coast of North America, across the

Atlantic, and along northwestern Europe. It accelerates sea traffic heading east to Europe and can impede vessels heading west to the Americas.

**illicit trade**: In the context of mercantilism, unsanctioned trade between colonies.

**indentured servant**: An individual contracted on a multi-year, fixed-term basis to work in the colonies. Usually taken up by young men and women whose passage would be paid by their employer. At the end of the indenture, young men would typically receive a new suit. Large numbers of migrants from Britain to the Thirteen Colonies are thought to have started in indentured servitude. This system was regularly abused and, in some circumstances, was barely distinguishable from slavery.

***Le Grand Dérangement***: See **Acadian Expulsion**.

**Loyalists**: British-American colonists who were opposed to the revolutionary position struck by other colonists. At the end of the Revolution, many Loyalists joined an exodus to other parts of British America, particularly Nova Scotia and Quebec.

**Mi'kmaq War**: See **Father Le Loutre's War**.

**New Amsterdam**: The Dutch colonial settlement at the mouth of the Hudson River in what was once called New Netherland and subsequently renamed New York.

**New England**: A region in the northeastern United States consisting of six states: Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Maine.

**nursery of the navy**: The Grand Banks and other fisheries in the northwest Atlantic that were regarded by imperial powers in Europe as training grounds for sailors and recruitment grounds for their respective navies.

***Pays d'en Haut***: A part of New France containing much of what is now Ontario, the whole of the Great Lakes, and notionally all the lands draining into them. Extended as far as the Upper Mississippi and the Missouri. Translates roughly into the "upper country."

**Plains of Abraham**: Located near the Citadel of Quebec, it was the site of what proved to be a pivotal battle between British and French/Canadien/Indigenous forces in September 1759.

**planters**: Some 2000 settlers in Nova Scotia in the period between the Acadian Expulsion and the 1780s, drawn from New England.

**primogeniture**: System of inheritance that favours the eldest male offspring. Compare with **coparcenary**.

**regicide**: The murder of a king.

**staple**: A raw material or unprocessed product. Fish and furs were primary staples in the early colonial economies of New France and British America. Lumber and grain were later staple exports from New France and British North America. For the **staple theory**, see Chapter 9.

**status quo ante bellum**: A term used in treaty-making meaning a return to how things were before the war.

**Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle**: Treaty from 1748 that concluded the War of the Austrian Succession. Restored the status quo ante bellum in North America.

**Treaty of Paris (1765)**: Ended the Seven Years' War. France ceded all of its territory east of the Mississippi (including all of Canada, Acadia, and Île Royale) to Britain and granted Louisiana and lands west of the Mississippi to its ally Spain. Britain returned to France the sugar islands of Guadeloupe. France retained St. Pierre and Miquelon, along with fishing rights on the Grand Banks.

**Treaty of Ryswick (1697)**: Terminated the War of the League of Augsburg; restored the status quo in North America from before the war.

**Treaty of Utrecht (1713)**: Ended the War of the Spanish Succession. French claims on territory in

Newfoundland, on Hudson Bay, and Acadia (Nova Scotia) were ceded to Britain, except for Île Royale and Île Saint-Jean.

Short Answer Exercises

1. In what ways did English expansion into North America in the 1600s contrast with New France?
2. How did mercantilism shape colonial North America as a whole?
3. What was the impact of the seigneurial system on the development of New France?
4. Why did towns remain small in Newfoundland and in New France?
5. How did the colonial world fit into the larger Atlantic Rim economy?
6. In what ways did English expansion in North America in the 1600s and 1700s challenge the French presence in North America? How did France respond?
7. To what extent were colonial conflicts a product of imperial rivalries, as opposed to local issues?
8. To what extent were inter-colonial conflicts bound up in Indigenous agendas?
9. Detail New France's liabilities and assets in confronting the English colonies from 1689 to 1760.
10. In what ways was the experience of Acadians different from that of Canadiens?
11. After initial French successes in the Seven Years' War, why was Britain able to gain the upper hand in 1757?
12. Why were the "neutral French" deported in 1755 and not at an earlier point between 1713 and 1755?
13. Why did New France fall?

## Suggested Readings

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4. Wicken, William. "Mi'kmaq Decisions: Antoine Tecouenemac, the Conquest, and the Treaty of Utrecht." In *The Conquest of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial, and Aboriginal Constructions*, 86–100. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.

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# Chapter 7. British North America at Peace and at War (1763–1818)

# 7.1 Introduction

Having won most of a continent in one war, Britain nearly lost it all in the next. The American Revolution (or War of Independence) quickly unravelled Britain's first empire and left it, ironically, defending much of what had been New France against its own people.

The 55 years following the Conquest witnessed imperial uncertainty as to how to best manage the northern colonies and what sort of relationship to build with the former colonies to the south. It was also a time of a new configuration of British colonies whose institutions were similar but not identical to those in the old Thirteen Colonies. As well, there was the principal problem of Quebec's place within the new geopolitical reality. For Britain, it was a question of control softened by appeasement on key issues; for the Canadiens, it was a balancing act between avoiding the fate that befell the Acadians and aggressively promoting claims to a future in North America as French people with a Catholic faith.

Barely a generation passed before war was renewed between Britain and the United States. In the meantime, Indigenous nations' challenges to American settlement continued, with implications for British North America and the Council of Three Fires. Colonial life in Nova Scotia was overtaken by the largest of the Loyalist waves, and the region's demographic, economic, and social order changed dramatically once again. These years witnessed the beginnings of truly urban trends in what was to become Canada, specifically at Halifax, Saint John, and Montreal. The last of these — the seat of the fur trade in the Province of Quebec — shifted rather abruptly from being the western gate of a shrunken province to the hub of an agriculturally focused settlement colony stretching into the Great Lakes. Newfoundland — the oldest site of continuous European activity in North America — only begin to grow as a colony in these years.

This chapter studies the fluidity of constitutional reforms in Quebec, the creation of two new Loyalist colonies, and the concurrent commercial and political developments.

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between the different colonial economies and societies in British North America in this era.
- Understand the ambivalent relationship between the British North Americans and the ideology of anti-imperial revolution.
- Position the Indigenous nations in their struggle for control of the interior of North America.
- Explain the emergence and survival of both Upper Canada and New Brunswick.
- Describe and account for the constitutional changes that took place between 1763 and 1818.
- Illustrate the different colonial systems emerging in each of the British Atlantic colonies.

# 7.2 Pyrrhic Victories

Britain's successes under the **Treaty of Paris (1763)** translated into wholesale control of North America. Notwithstanding western Louisiana — an area of much more concern to Spain than to Britain — everything north of the Rio Grande was now nominally British. There was, however, no time allowed for celebrations.

## Unbroken Conflict in the *Pays d'en Haut*

There existed a critical difference between the approach taken by the French and that adopted by the British when it came to outposts in the *Pays d'en Haut*. The French approached the building of their forts and trading posts as guests in the lands of others; the British viewed places like Detroit as an asset that had fallen to them as part of the spoils of war. It was their possession — not a place deep in Indigenous nations' territory. For that matter, the Indigenous population, the British believed, were every bit as conquered as their defeated French allies. As the British repopulated the French outposts this attitude quickly poisoned relations with the Indigenous peoples. As well, the giving of gifts observed annually by the French was, for the Indigenous nations involved, a means of building up the status and thus the influence of their own leaders. The British misread this convention as the issuing of bribes which, they believed, was no longer necessary with the French out of the way. They failed to follow, as well, the French practice of "covering deaths" with gifts, a way of recognizing the loss of life among allied Indigenous nations. Not surprisingly, the British soon wore out their welcome.

Pontiac's War is the name given to a long-running series of conflicts in the Ohio and Great Lakes region that stemmed from the British takeover. Despite the name, it was not all masterminded or executed by Pontiac, an Odawa (Ottawa) leader (although that is how it was portrayed in textbooks for more than a century). The conflict had its roots in British American expansion into the region, which was a key reason for Indigenous alliances with the French in the Seven Years' War. Of course, not all Indigenous peoples — neither nations nor individuals — signed on with the French. The Haudenosaunee, the Shaawanwaki (Shawnee), the Seneca/Mingo, and 10 other Indigenous nations signed the Treaty of Easton in 1758, along with representatives from Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Under this agreement the British and their colonies relinquished land in the Ohio Valley to its Indigenous owners and financially compensated the Lenape (Delaware) for their loss of lands in New Jersey. In exchange, the Indigenous signatories agreed not to side with the French in the war. In short, the Treaty of Easton recognized **aboriginal title** and committed the British and Americans to respect it in the Ohio Valley.

Even before the Seven Years' War was over, however, British American settlement in the Ohio Valley was moving forward and the terms of the Treaty of Easton seemingly ignored. Nations that had been allied to the British found themselves at odds with their erstwhile partners, but were at a loss as to how to shift the balance back. The French were a spent force after 1760, a fact that was confirmed in the Treaty of Paris in 1763. An alliance of Indigenous parties that had hitherto been in conflict seemed the only solution.

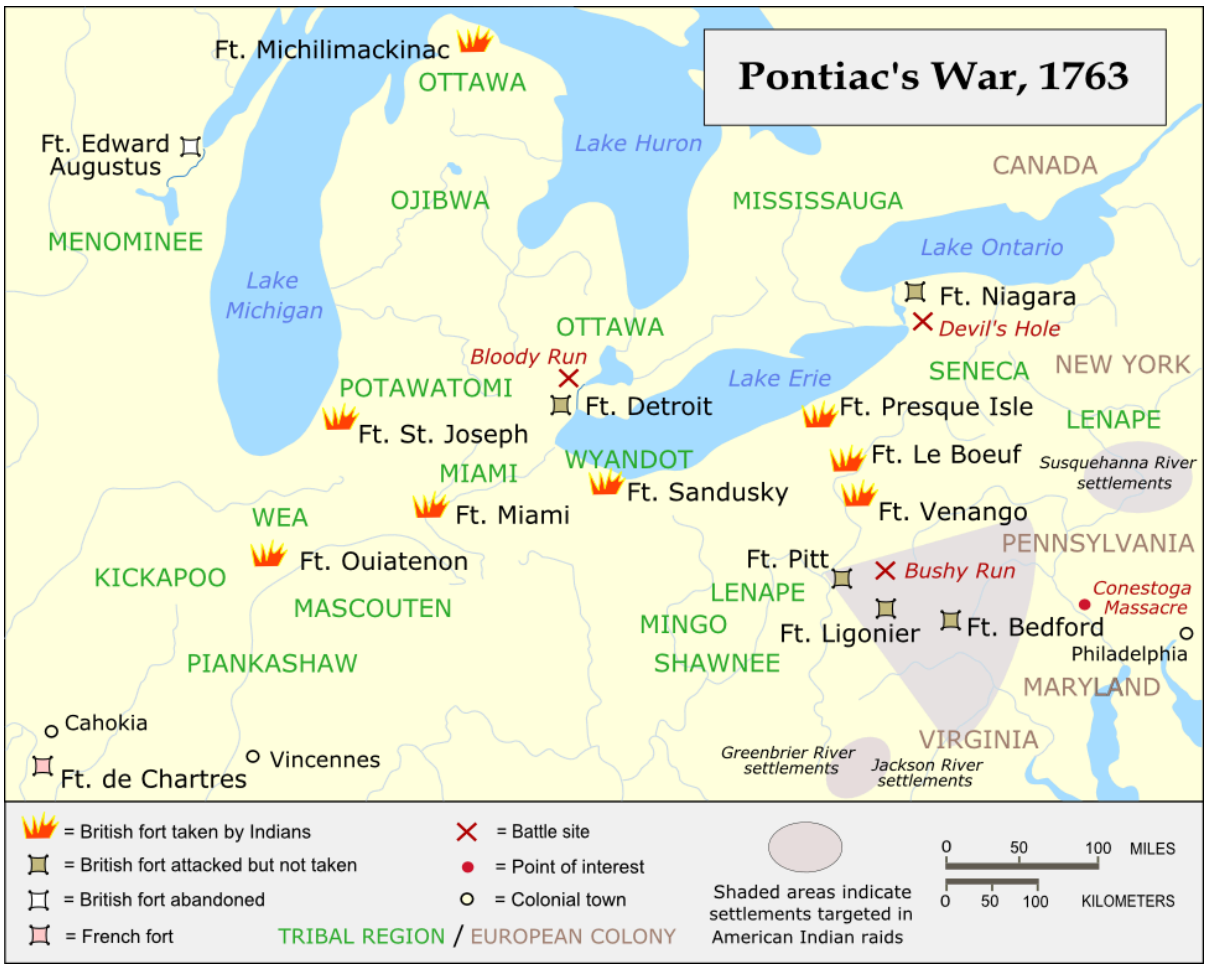


*Figure 7.1 Battle sites in Pontiac's War in 1763. [Long Description] (#fig7.1)*

Attacks on British American positions began as early as February 1763, before the Treaty of Paris had been signed. There was, in other words, no post-war period of peace in the Ohio: war continued with few breaks from before 1754 to about 1766. The Seneca broke ranks with the Haudenosaunee to join in the rising that also included the Council of the Three Fires (Odawa, Ojibwa, Potawatomi, Wendat, and others) and the peoples of the Ohio most directly affected. Intellectual and spiritual leadership was provided by Neolin the Prophet, a Lenape (Delaware) visionary whose call to reject Euro-American materialism, alcohol, and ways of living had an enormous appeal and influenced Pontiac and other 18th and 19th century resistance movements. Ready for change, the Ohioans found a field general in Pontiac, whose forces attacked and laid siege (unsuccessfully) to the British at Fort Detroit. The war spread quickly across the region as others, inspired spiritually and militarily, took up arms.

It was at **Fort Pitt** in late July 1763 that one of the most ominous chapters in North American conflict occurred. General Jeffrey Amherst (1717–1797) had badly underestimated anti-British feeling in the West and had, as a consequence, under-supplied the region with soldiers. Small forts containing only a few hundred troops and as many civilians were being reduced to ash, their commanders humiliated and then tortured to death. Amherst sent a message to Colonel Henry Bouquet, who was en route to Fort Pitt, directing him to try biological warfare as a solution: "Could it not be contrived to send the small pox among the disaffected tribes of Indians? We must on this occasion use every stratagem in our

power to reduce them."[1] Amherst had already articulated a take-no-prisoners position, and he viewed the Indigenous warriors as unworthy of the respect he would accord to a "civilized" nation's army. Soon after he wrote to Bouquet: "You will Do well to try to Innoculate the Indians by means of Blankets, as well as to try Every other method that can serve to Extirpate this Execrable Race." At Fort Pitt Bouquet initiated talks with Lenape leaders, gifting them with blankets taken from the smallpox hospital.

It is not clear whether the blankets mentioned by Amherst were responsible for a smallpox epidemic. It is, however, well known that smallpox was rampant throughout the field of battle during the Seven Years' War and that Indigenous communities continued to suffer terribly as a result. An ugly background noise to the colonial period, smallpox and its effects (death, disfigurement, blindness) were cited by Neolin as cause to push the British Americans out of the Ohio. Smallpox was evident after Fort Pitt, but we cannot be sure whether it was caused by Bouquet and his blankets. Regardless, smallpox probably did play a role in stopping Pontiac's War.

By 1767 treaties had been signed across the region, mostly by the people who were not immediately at the sharp edge of British-American expansion. Historians have observed that this conflict, one of the bloodiest in a long series of very bloody confrontations, was the first in which both sides embraced a policy of, for all intents and purposes, "ethnic cleansing." As historian Daniel Richter has observed, from the time of Pontiac on, Indigenous peoples viewed all Europeans and Americans as "whites" and the Euro-Americans viewed the multitude of Indigenous nations as, simply, "Indians."[2] This attitude produced levels of intolerance that infected the century to come and beyond.

## The Royal Proclamation

Partly in response to the terrors of the Ohio Valley, the British government crafted the **Royal Proclamation**, which it passed on October 7, 1763. The decree was principally a guideline for the governance of North America after the Treaty of Paris. It created the **Province of Quebec** as a separate colonial unit consisting roughly of the lands draining into the St. Lawrence, from Detroit east to the Gaspé. Quebec was thus cut off from the Ohio Valley and the western frontier of the former New France. Provisions were included in the decree for the imposition of English civil law, but the French civil law, the **Coutume de Paris**, survived. The British promised their French Catholic subjects that they would not be deported, nor would their religion face persecution. Catholics, however, were not permitted to hold office of any kind (as was the rule in Britain).

The Catholic clergy endured as well under the decree, although their numbers were reduced by death and emigration to France after the peace and they were not replenished. Governor James Murray (1721–1794) sought to use the clergy to his own ends, seeking by means of rewards and tolerance to secure their loyalty. He recognized their influence on the populace and was inclined to put plans for Protestantization on the back burner. Nonetheless, assimilation of the Canadiens was intended to be their fate just as expulsion was that of the Acadians.

1. Elizabeth A. Fenn, "Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America: Beyond Jeffery Amherst," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (March 2000): 1553–1554.

2. Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 208.

In the Ohio Valley the British sought to place a barrier between the two warring parties. They understood the source of friction to be American colonists' appetite for land. By guaranteeing the Indigenous nations that land title could be extinguished only by the authority of the Crown, the Royal Proclamation intended to put an end to unbridled settler expansionism. It was intended to buy peace and encourage trust among the Indigenous nations, but it was also intended to restrain the American colonists who, the British realized, could prove very difficult to manage in the trans-Appalachian west. This was a feature of the Royal Proclamation that, of course, was strongly criticized by the American colonists.

In summary, the British had fought to win Canada, but once it was theirs they began to realize what a challenge it was to govern. Having defeated the French, the British anticipated that there would be peace in the *Pays d'en Haut*; that proved not to be the case. The American colonists in particular were aggrieved: they had started the war with an incursion into the Ohio and that victory was meant to allow them westward expansion. Now the British — their imperial masters — were telling them to get back behind the Appalachians. Everywhere the British and their colonists turned, the triumphs at Louisbourg, Quebec, and the treaty table seemed hollow and pyrrhic.

Key Takeaways

- The end of the Seven Years' War did not conclude the Indigenous nations' campaign to control European settlement and commerce in the Ohio Valley.
- The Treaty of Easton recognized aboriginal title to land and other resources, an important precursor to similar provisions in the Royal Proclamation of 1763.
- British military conduct in the West included efforts to achieve victory through biological warfare. This marked a change in British attitudes toward Indigenous peoples.
- The Royal Proclamation created the Province of Quebec, reassured the Canadiens, and protected Catholic rights while limiting Canadien-Catholic engagement in positions of authority. It addressed Indigenous nations' concerns by denying American settlers access to lands west of Appalachia.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 7.1 long description:** Pontiac's War started in 1763 and took place in the Great Lakes area. Various British forts, including Fort Michilimackinac and Fort Sandusky, were taken by Indigenous people. These forts were mostly south and southeast of the Great Lakes.

Several British forts in the Pennsylvania and Virginia area — as well as a couple closer to the lakes, like forts Detroit and Niagara — were targeted by Indigenous warriors, but were ultimately not taken.

Fort Edward Augustus near Lake Michigan was a British fort that was abandoned during the war.

The French Fort de Chartres was in southwest Illinois, near the famous ancient Indigenous city of Cahokia.

Notable battle sites include Bloody Run on the northern shore of Lake Erie, Devil's Hole on Lake Erie's eastern tip, and Bushy Run in Pennsylvania.

A site of interest is a spot northwest of Philadelphia, where the Conestoga Massacre took place.

[Return to Figure 7.1] (#attachment_1123)

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# 7.3 Government

The Royal Proclamation was essentially Canada's first constitution. France never implemented anything of this order. It is noteworthy because of its (limited) tolerance, its demarcation of the Ohioan west, its recognition of aboriginal title, and its assimilationist agenda. As well, it did not attempt to reproduce in the Province of Quebec the kind of representative councils found in the colonies to the south. Canada was to be governed by governors, much as it had been under France.

## Canada under Military Occupation

The first governor was James Murray, a Scot with a long career as a professional soldier who had been at Louisbourg and was Wolfe's junior commander at Quebec. It was Murray whose forces were defeated in April 1760 at Sainte-Foy and who demonstrated prudence by sitting tight in the citadel until reinforcements arrived to restore full British authority. From 1760 to the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Murray's mandate was to keep a lid on Canadien resentment, ensure the locals (and their Indigenous neighbours) did not rise up, and be prepared in case a French fleet suddenly appeared on the St. Lawrence. And, of course, there was always the possibility that France would take back Canada at the treaty table. With all those things in mind and having been taught a lesson at Sainte-Foy, Murray looked for ways to stabilize his situation and that of Canada's.

There was, to begin, an iron-fist approach. Acadians who had fled the Expulsion to the Gaspé community of Bonaventure were to be rounded up and exiled, not least because they had — unsuccessfully — supported a small French supply fleet heading for Quebec, one that would have inconvenienced if not endangered Murray's position. Murray was, however, also tough on British troops who mistreated the locals. His strategy was to be both feared and respected. In his own words, Murray believed the Canadiens "hardly will hereafter be easi[ly] persuaded to take up Arms against a Nation they admire, and who will have it allways in their [power?] to burn or destroy."[1] To that end he allowed widespread use of the French civil law, promoted Canadien militia leaders, and even appointed Franco-Catholics to important offices. He had an understandable suspicion of the clergy: their influence was significant in the Acadian-Wabanaki resistance over the last 20 years.

As for the economy, the British introduced some changes. When the aristocracy and bourgeoisie of France looked at Canada they saw luxurious and highly marketable furs; when the British military looked at their new colony they saw supplies that were needed by navies and armies. Ship masts, pitch and tar, whale and seal oil, iron ore, and potash drew Murray's attention, as did agricultural potential. These were, however, still staple products, exports onto which little value had been added. Murray's initiatives made the economy of Quebec wider but it was hardly any deeper. The fur trade continued to dominate, regardless of new initiatives, but even in 1763 it was becoming dominated by British-American merchants whose better credit lines, superior connections to military personnel in the western

1. G. P. Browne, "MURRAY, JAMES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed August 26, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/murray_james_4E.html .

forts, and access to English-speaking markets in London enabled them to push the Canadien **marchands** to one side.

Murray's tenure was brief — he was recalled in 1766 and replaced by Guy Carleton (1724–1808) — but his half-dozen years of authority first in the city of Quebec, then over the whole of the Province of Quebec, established relationships and expectations that had a lasting impact. The clergy, under Bishop Jean-Olivier Briand (1715–1794), seized on the opportunity to preserve their influence, especially over education. Much of Quebec's Lower Town was rebuilt according to the style of the *ancien régime.* The seigneurial system, like many other elements of pre-Conquest Canadien society, was encouraged to survive. All this, however, did not diminish the most obvious fact that Canadiens were living under military occupation.

## Domination and Adjustment

Assessing the impact of these years has long been a concern of Canadian historians. Some French-Canadian historians argue that the Conquest was followed by the departure (voluntary or otherwise) of leading figures in Canadien society: not just government officials but also key actors in the economy and in society generally. This loss of significant personnel, they argue, led to a parallel collapse in Canadien economic prosperity and social capital. This perspective is referred to as the **decapitation thesis**.

Other interpretations have focused more on evidence of continuity (as can be seen in the survival of seigneurialism, the Church, and schools) and on the structural changes in the economy that disadvantaged Canadiens. Rather than point to "decapitation," these historians have argued that Canadien *marchands* were impacted by the introduction of a new currency and investment environment, the leeching of fur resources from the *Pays d'en Haut* eastward to the British American colonies and southward to Louisiana, and the replacement of a more oligarchical model of enterprise with one that was more competitive and dominated by large numbers of smaller firms. Patronage from Murray and Carleton may not have favoured the British-Americans very much, but it did so to the disadvantage of the Canadiens.[2]

The greatest controversy of the Murray regime pertains to his failure to create an elective assembly, which eventually cost him his job. By 1765 enough merchants had moved north from the old Thirteen Colonies to change the political dynamics of occupied New France. They set up shop in Montreal and Quebec hoping to siphon off wealth from the British military presence and the fur trade. They expected that, as advertised in the Royal Proclamation, they would instantly become electors and leading figures in the new British colony. Their expectations were based on the very clauses that froze Murray in his tracks. The Royal Proclamation allowed for the creation of a council that would, according to British law, permit only Protestants to hold office. But the total number of Protestants in the Province of Quebec in 1764 was minuscule. Murray estimated there were only 200 Protestant households, and he could not imagine them having authority over 70,000 Catholic Canadiens without provoking a severe backlash. He resisted calls to establish an elected assembly under these circumstances.

Rather than worsen the situation for himself, Murray — perhaps unwisely — pursued land policies that discouraged further British immigration. In doing so, he continued to fall afoul of the British Protestants,

2. José Iguartua, "A Change in Climate: The Conquest and the Marchands of Montreal," *Historical Papers* (1974): 115–134.

especially the Montreal merchants. An alarming array of charges — later thrown out of court — were brought against him and he was recalled to Britain in 1766.

James Murray's successor, Guy Carleton, was another military man, an officer who served under Wolfe at both Louisbourg and Quebec. Initially he courted favour with the British merchants of the province and split with Murray's advisors, but within a year he was following a path that Murray had blazed. Both governors looked at the demographics of the province and concluded that the Canadiens were going to dominate the region for the foreseeable future, and there was little to suggest that assimilationist policies would have much effect. They both determined that maintaining the trust and cooperation of the French settlers was preferable to conceding authority to a handful of British-American newcomers who might not have staying power in the colony. Carleton deferred and deflected demands for an assembly and did his best to reinforce the credibility of the seigneurs. Remarkably, Carleton spent four years of his tenure in London, lobbying for constitutional changes that would transition the province out of military possession and into a viable colony.

## The Quebec Act, 1774

What the British-American merchants wanted most from a new constitution was an elected assembly. They didn't get one; instead the **Quebec Act** entrenched the practice of Murray and Carleton in the form of an appointed legislative council that devised laws in partnership with and at the command of the governor. The new constitution shelved the Royal Proclamation's objective of **anglicization** and permitted Catholics to hold a greater variety of positions, including seats on the council. It entrenched British criminal law and recognized the *Coutume de Paris*. As well, British **common law** played a role in administrative matters and in some criminal cases. The church could resume collecting tithes and seigneurs could once again collect dues.

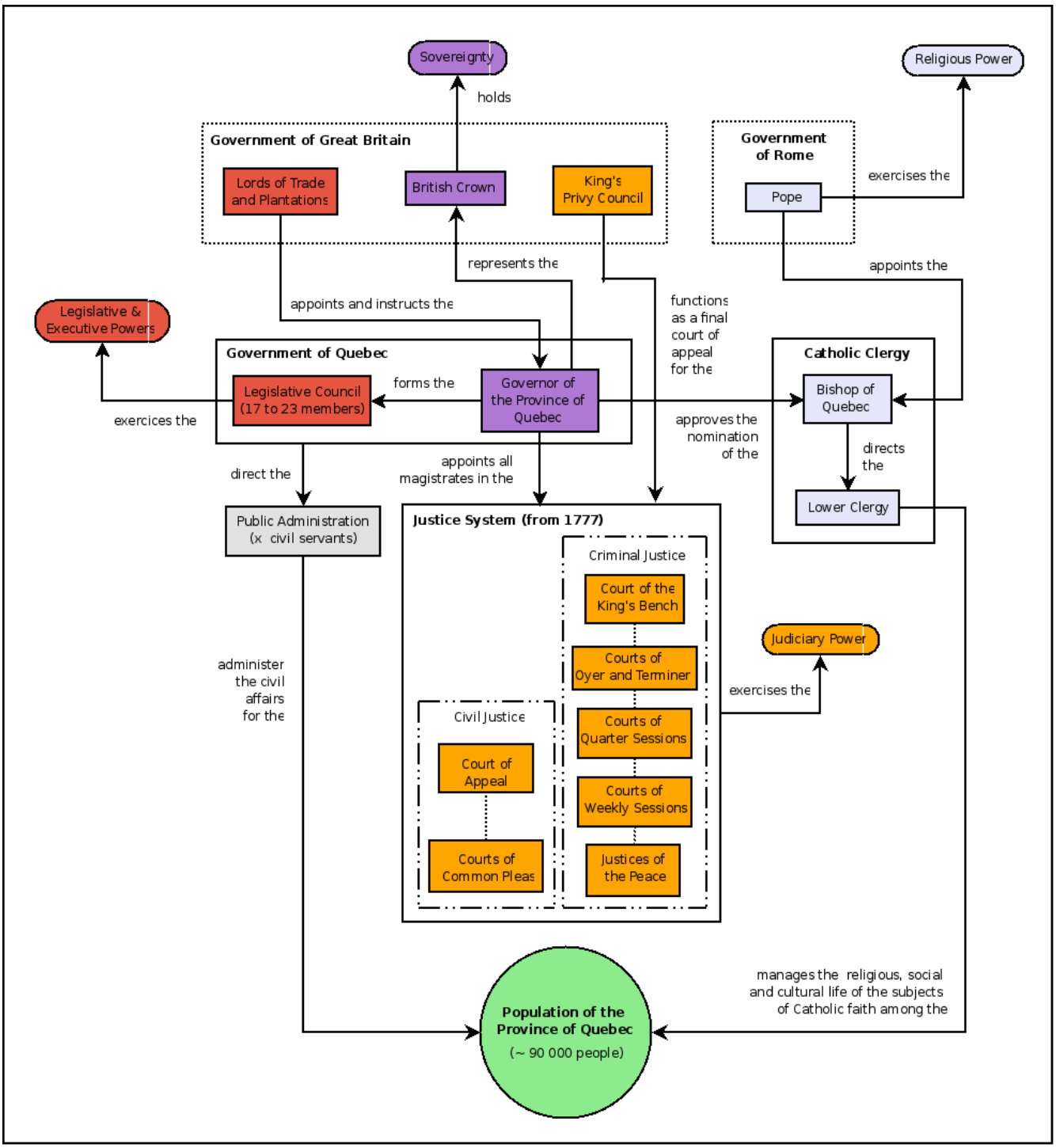


*Figure 7.2 An administrative flow chart of the Quebec Act. Note the complex judiciary and the continuing influence of the Pope. [Long Description] (#fig7.2)*

This was a constitution designed to win the support of the French-speaking majority in the colony, or at least the social and cultural leaders of that majority — the clergy and the seigneurs. Canadiens were unfamiliar with democratic institutions like the assemblies found in New England and the other British-American colonies, and they were accustomed to an oligarchically structured administration run by the King's representative in Fortress Quebec. But the *habitants* were none too pleased to see the Church and the seigneurs once again in a position to tax them. The British-American immigrants were predictably

livid at the non-elective constitution. Critics in the other British colonies joined in the chorus of voices calling for the familiar freedoms enjoyed to the south. Moreover, British-Americans worried that this rejection of an assembly boded ill for their own institutions. Britain increasingly held with mercantilist control of commerce (through taxes and tariffs); the Americans feared that their assemblies were now in the crosshairs as well.

The one feature of the Quebec Act that secured Anglo-merchant support in Montreal simultaneously inflamed British-American outrage. The new constitution extended the western boundaries of the Province of Quebec to include the Ohio Valley (see Figures 7.3 and 7.4), which gave the Montreal merchants (British and French) renewed priority and privileges in the region. Fur traders from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and New York — regarded by the Montrealers as interlopers — were now in a weaker position. The Canadien population around Detroit, moreover, made it the third- or fourth-largest town in the province (after Quebec, Montreal, and perhaps Trois-Rivières), so for the majority of the colony's population, this seemed like an appropriate reunification.

This made the fur traders of Montreal very happy, but the British-Americans regarded it as another act of British perfidy, one that joined a growing list of administrative changes that damaged colonists' interests. Coming as it did six months after Bostonians dramatically protested a stealthy British tax on tea, some British-Americans interpreted the Quebec Act as vindictive punishment, a sign that the Crown was arbitrary and ill-disposed to the colonies. It was one of several factors that contributed to the breaking of relations between Britain and the Thirteen Colonies and is classed in American histories as one of the **Intolerable Acts**.




*Figure 7.3 Province of Quebec in 1774. [Long Description] (#fig7.3)*

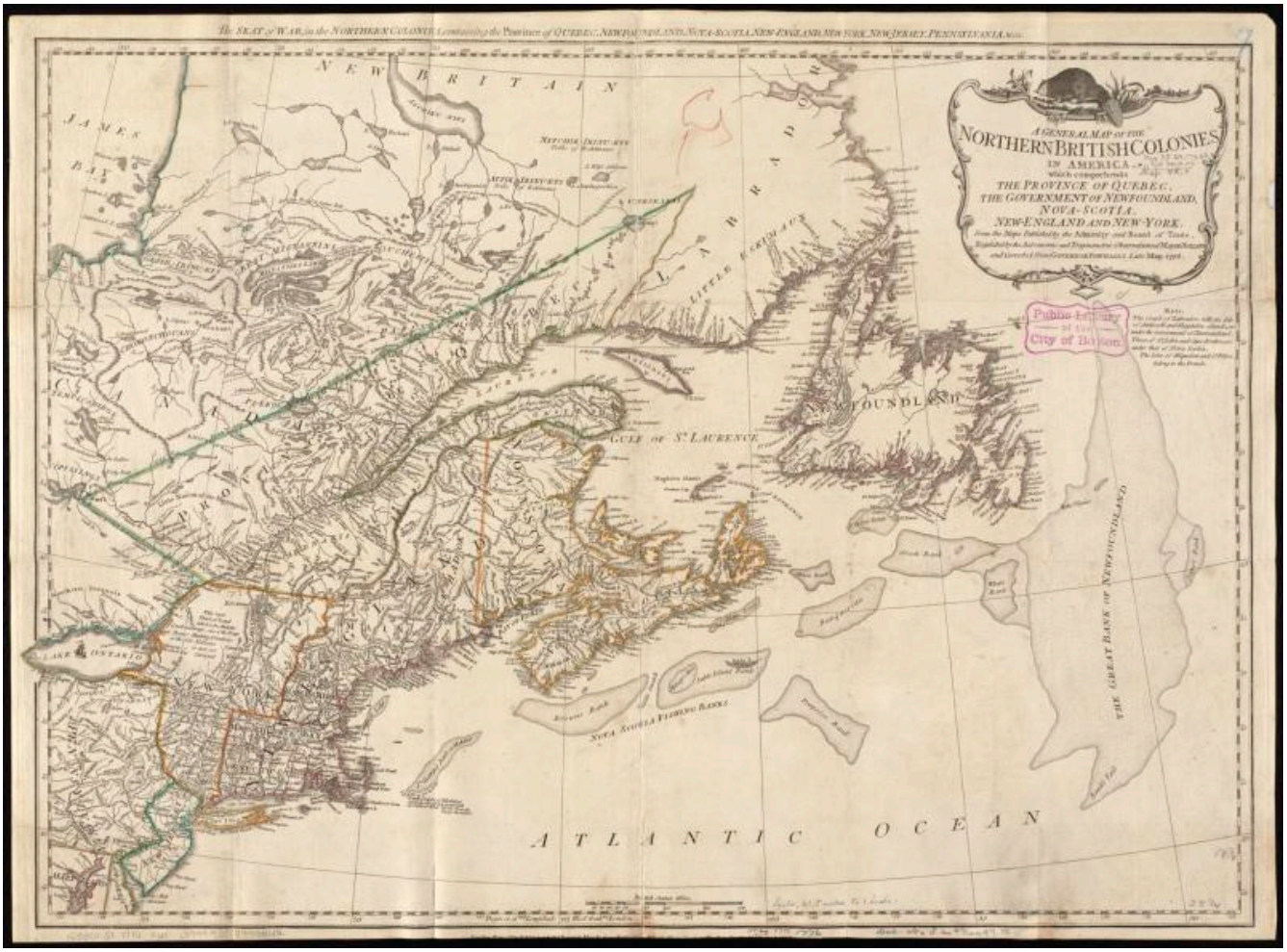


*Figure 7.4 British North America, showing the colonies from Maryland to Newfoundland, 1776.*

As enlightened and permissive as the Quebec Act appears to be toward Canadien-Catholic society and culture, there is an important caveat to note. The Act came with so-called secret instructions to the governor. When circumstances improved, he was to take steps to anglicize the population. Protestantism was to be favoured; Catholicism might be tolerated but did not extend to approving Papal instructions from Rome. There was to be only one centre of authority, and that was the British Parliament (via Quebec). Assimilation, then, was still on the cards. Within months of the Quebec Act being passed, however, the British administration in the province was doing all it could to ensure the support of the Canadiens in what looked likely to be a disruption in the normal course of colonial business for the next year or two.

Key Takeaways

- Early attempts on the part of the British to govern New France were marked by expectations of cultural assimilation and the extinguishing of Catholicism, but in practice tolerance and inclusion were viewed as necessary to maintaining a loyal population.

- Attempts to integrate the economy of the Province of Quebec into the British mercantile system resulted in the rise of a British/British-American merchant class in Montreal and Quebec where they were able to out-compete the Canadien *marchands.*
- The anglophone community countered the pragmatic compromises of Governors Murray and Carleton with demands for greater liberties for themselves, fewer for the Canadiens, and a greater role in governing the colony.
- The Quebec Act was an articulation of Carleton's policy of cautious tolerance and inclusion; it included provisions for British common law and the continuance of the *Coutume de Paris* in areas like seigneurial law. It also provoked a hostile response from the Americans.
- "Secret instructions" to the governor revealed that the policy of tolerance was meant to be a temporary measure and that cultural assimilation of the French was a long-term goal.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 7.2 long description:** A chart describing the flow of authority between Britain and Canada according to the Quebec Act of 1774. The British Crown held sovereignty and was represented in Canada by the Governor of the Province of Quebec. In addition to the Crown, Great Britain's government was made up of the Lords of Trade and Plantations — who appointed and instructed the Governor of Quebec — and the King's Privy Council, which functioned as the final court of appeal for Quebec's justice system.

The Governor of the Province of Quebec had a number of responsibilities, including appointing all the magistrates in the justice system, forming the legislative council in Quebec, and approving the Pope's nominee for the Bishop of Quebec.

The governor and the legislative council (which consisted of 17 to 23 members) made up the government of Quebec. The legislative council exercised the legislative and executive powers and directed the public administration and civil servants, who administered the civil affairs for the approximately 90,000 people living in the province of Quebec at the time.

The justice system was divided into civil and criminal justice systems, which exercised the judiciary power. The civil justice system included the Courts of Common Pleas and the Court of Appeal. The criminal justice system included the Justices of the Peace, the Courts of Weekly Sessions, the Courts of Quarter Sessions, the Courts of Oyer and Terminer, and the Court of the King's Bench.

The Pope was the head of the Government of Rome and exercised the religious power in Quebec. The Pope appointed the Bishop of Quebec, who directed the lower clergy, and together, they made up the Catholic clergy in Quebec. The lower clergy managed the religious, social, and cultural life of subjects of the Catholic faith among the population of Quebec.

[Return to Figure 7.2] (#attachment_1139)

**Figure 7.3 long description:** The Quebec Act of 1774 defined the Province of Quebec as consisting

of (in modern terms) Labrador, the eastern half of Quebec, much of southern Ontario around the Great Lakes, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and parts of Illinois and Wisconsin.

[Return to Figure 7.3] (#attachment_1141)

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# 7.4 Revolutionary British America

Carleton wasn't the only governor facing recalcitrant and angry merchants. The cost of the Seven Years' War in North America was significant and the British Treasury looked to the colonies to recoup some of the Crown's expenses. Taxing the people who were supposedly the principal beneficiaries of the Conquest (that is, the British-Americans) seemed like a good and fair idea.

## Revolutionary Colonies

The British Thirteen Colonies had been administered by what came to be known as "salutary neglect," a kind of autonomy in everything but name. Each colony's assembly was in some measure distinct and all had their own particular kind of relationship with Britain. One commonality, however, was the notion that the Colonies were not to be taxed. Resistance to **taxation without representation** had a long history in the Colonies and it flared up in the 1750s, the 1760s, and — finally — in the 1770s. As King George III's government pushed in the direction of more direct and authoritarian rule over the colonies, the colonists themselves were pulling in a different direction. Philosophical discussions regarding classical views on democratic principles and rights became widespread and informed a **Whig** challenge to imperial rule. Thomas Paine (1737–1809), an English immigrant to America in 1774 who popularized new ideas associated with human rights, provided much of the vocabulary needed to mobilize colonial support for revolution. At the same time, there were scores of merchants and investors in the main port cities who saw glory and prosperity in a future outside of British trade constraints. The Revolution, then, was spurred by a desire to conserve existing rights, an aversion to taxes, awareness of opportunities for wealth-making, and a suite of truly revolutionary ideas about who should govern whom.

Some colonists rejected the revolutionary approach. Perhaps as many as one in five Americans advocated loyalism: finding ways to continue living under British rule. The **Loyalists** took positions across a broad spectrum and were motivated by very different concerns. Some were **Tories** who rejected the ideas of Paine and the prospect of change of any kind. They were at one end of the spectrum. Others took the perspective that negotiations with Britain could improve relationships without sacrificing two centuries of deep cultural, economic, and political connection. The Haudenosaunee, for their part, had a long-standing relationship with Britain, and the Mingo (Seneca and Gayogohó:no) and Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) in particular were anxious about American colonists' hunger for their lands. Iroquois loyalists were to play a key role in the British military campaign. (Ironically, the Boston protesters of 1773 chose to disguise themselves as Kanien'kehá:ka when they attacked the tea ship, the *Dartmouth.*)

Settlers along the Ohio Valley frontier, especially German and Dutch immigrants, had survived Pontiac's War and continued threats from Indigenous neighbours only because of the protection offered by British soldiers and forts. They had little connection to the rising discontent in New England or Virginia and good cause to be favourably disposed to the British. African American slaves were promised their freedom by both sides in the conflict and a great many elected to join the British against their owners. To the north and east, whole colonies rejected the Revolution.

## Revolutionary Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland

The Patriots — the American revolutionary leadership — had good reason to expect support from the Canadiens. After all, more than any other colony they were living under British rule and an unelected, oligarchical administration. Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) famously claimed that winning Canada away from Britain was "a mere matter of marching." France — always happy to put a stick in Britain's spokes — discretely supported revolutionary feeling in the province. American agitators went from town to town cajoling and threatening Canadiens to thrust off Europe and accept a North American destiny. Keep in mind that the Anglo-Canadian merchants of Montreal were hungry for democratic institutions, so the rhetoric of the Patriots appealed to many of them. Against this backdrop, the British turned to their carefully groomed allies among the seigneurs and the clergy to encourage Canadien loyalism. Both sides were disappointed. The Canadiens failed to rise up against the British and they did little to push back the Americans' invasion.

Generations of war between New England, New York, Acadia, and Canada had taught the Americans to watch the northern frontier. The British already had a strong military presence there; if it was speedily reinforced it would become a base of operations against the Revolution. The Patriots sent their new continental army north in the spring of 1775, early in the conflict, hoping to fire up the Canadiens and dislodge the British. They failed on the first count but were able to drive Carleton's forces from Montreal and push him back into the citadel at Quebec City.

The Canadiens were not fans of the British regime but they hated — or at least deeply mistrusted — the New Englanders at least as much. Like the Acadians before them, the Canadiens pursued a self-interested neutrality, supplying both sides (sometimes at an inflated profit) and generally staying out of the way. Although Bishop Briand was disappointed by the lacklustre response of the populace to his call to arms, the clergy may have been successful in fanning the flames of anti-Protestant sentiment. Certainly the Church believed it had much to fear in the rhetoric of the Patriots. Hierarchical elements of life in Quebec, then, were factors that both dampened and incited revolutionary sympathies among the Canadiens.

Carleton, for his part, was able to repel the two-pronged American attacks on Montreal and Quebec but he was unable — even with British reinforcements — to press the advantage home. By 1777 the Patriots had given up hope of a northern front against the British, and the British had reoriented their efforts to the tidewater ports.

The situation in Nova Scotia was more complex. There, the post-Expulsion population was made up of English and Scots settlers at Halifax along with a garrison of soldiers and hangers-on, New Englanders — or Planters — who had come northeast to take up farmland, an infusion of more than a thousand farmers from Yorkshire who emigrated because of worsening economic and tenancy conditions at home, and German and other non-anglophone immigrants (some of whom were relocated **Pennsylvania Dutch**). Efforts by the Nova Scotian regime to build the population had, then, met with some success. But the towns and settlements were ethnically distinct: the Chignecto Isthmus was dominated by New Englanders who were at odds with neighbouring Yorkshire immigrants. Lunenburg was the site of German/Swiss settlement and the target of repeated Mi'kmaq and Acadian raids. The 8000 or so Planters focused on the Bay of Fundy, and the Pennsylvania Dutch worked their way up the Petitcodiac River to "the Bend" (a.k.a. Moncton). In the northeast of the colony, on the frontier of the Gaspé, returning Acadians were permitted to establish new communities. There was widespread instability throughout the

colony in the 1760s as the Mi'kmaq War continued. By the time of the Revolution, Nova Scotia was still little more than a collection of loosely connected outports and farming villages with not much in the way of a shared identity.

New Englanders in the colony were, of course, interested in how events in Massachusetts appeared to be unfolding and there was some sympathy for a local insurrection against the British. The colonial governor was never in a particularly powerful position, despite the presence of the Royal Navy. Unlike the Province of Quebec, Nova Scotia had an elected assembly. But the electorate was a small one, made up of property owners and the pool of potential assembly members was, in practice, restricted to those men wealthy enough to participate. This left the merchant class of Halifax in a position of powerful influence. Corruption in their dealings with the military and administrative establishment was widespread; attempts to expose it ultimately cost Governor Francis Legge his job. Before that occurred, however, Legge was assigned the task of raising a colony-wide levy and a militia in support of Britain's campaign against the revolutionary colonies to the west and south. This initiative was akin to prodding a hornet's nest: the New Englanders — who constituted at least 50% of the Nova Scotian population — objected to the idea of fighting their kin and called for an end to the tax and the militia campaign. Realizing that he was on the brink of inspiring rather than suppressing revolutionaries, the governor prudently backed down.

This was not enough for some New Englanders in the colony. Two incidents occurred that deserve mention: the raids launched by freebooters out of the Machias Basin, and the insurrectionary efforts of John Allan (1747–1805) and Jonathan Eddy (1726–1804) in the Chignecto Isthmus. The former were using the Revolution as an excuse to line their own pockets, and they were badly disorganized and undersupported by their own people (that is, settlers from New England). The Allan and Eddy rising was divisive even among the New Englanders, who would have preferred waiting for a liberating army from the Thirteen Colonies.

George Washington (by this time a general in the Continental Army) refused requests to intervene, citing the presence of the Royal Navy at Halifax and the strategic challenges of holding onto a prize that was in no way unified. The Yorkshiremen remained loyal to the British cause, what few Acadians and Mi'kmaq could be drawn into the conflict favoured the Patriots, but the pivotal population of New Englanders chose to remain neutral. Eddy's attack on Fort Cumberland in November 1776 failed and Nova Scotia's flirtation with revolution came to an end. Raids on outports by privateers working out of New England and New York thereafter only served to alienate the Nova Scotians further from the American cause.



*Figure 7.5 Jonathan Eddy, leader of the failed rising for independence in Nova Scotia.*

There are echoes of the Nova Scotian experience in Newfoundland. Both colonies had a British naval presence and a population that was disaffected from Britain (in the case of Newfoundland, large numbers of Catholic Irish immigrants). In Newfoundland these were not characteristics that either restrained or propelled support for the Revolution. The naval presence, for example, was an indifferent factor because it was so small and badly maintained. Newfoundland was a place where the navy harvested sailors, not one where it patrolled the waters. If there had been local discontent, it would have been difficult to muster and almost impossible to focus: the settlements were even smaller and more isolated from one another than on the mainland and there was barely any administrative presence at which to aim revolutionary fervour. In Newfoundland, the orientation of communities was toward the sea, the fisheries, and the export market, not toward one another. The population had little to do with New England and was in no way caught up in the rhetoric of the Revolution. What's more, there was money to be made in loyalism: the Americans had been frozen out of the Grand Banks early in the war and the French left it as soon as it looked likely they'd join in on the side of the Americans. This left Newfoundland's fishing fleet in a very good position to expand exports into both the West Indies and Europe. And, as was the case in Nova Scotia, the arrival of American pirates was unlikely to spark sympathy for the cause of the Thirteen Colonies. Finally, the French briefly captured St. John's in 1762, which resulted in a British counter-invasion, all of which reinforced Newfoundland's loyalty to the Crown.




*Figure 7.6 The French capture of St. John's, 1762.*

## The Loyalist Exodus

By July 4, 1776, the Patriots controlled the majority of territory within the Thirteen Colonies and expelled all royal officials. Colonists who openly proclaimed their loyalty to the Crown were driven from their communities, often violently. Bostonian Patriots set the tone in 1774 with an attack on a local customs officer, John Malcolm, and the practice of terrorizing officials and critics of the Revolution spread rapidly. Mobs, often calling themselves "Sons of Liberty," harassed and brutalized suspected Loyalists or Tories using torture techniques such as tarring-and-feathering, locking them in stockades, and forcing "riding the rail" (that is, being straddled over and tied to a long wooden rail which was carried and bounced along in order to inflict injury to their genitals and thighs). All of these treatments were accompanied by public humiliation. Loyalist regiments were assembled across the colonies in support of the British cause and what is usually described as a battle between colonists and the Crown was, in fact, a civil war between American colonists. Mortality rates among the Loyalist regiments increased and levels of brutality on both sides were high.

After the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, Patriots equated loyalism with treason and meted

out punishment accordingly. This is not to say that the British and their allies did not engage in brutal treatment of the Patriots; it is merely to point out the context of the Loyalist emigration.




*Figure 7.7 The Bostonians Paying the Excise-man, or Tarring and Feathering, attributed to Philip Dawe, 1774. John Malcolm, a tax collector, is shown. After being tarred and feathered, he was hauled to the Liberty Tree and threatened with hanging, as shown by the noose hanging from said tree in this painting.*

When the Loyalist cause was defeated, many Loyalists fled to Britain, Canada, and other parts of the British Empire. The departure of royal officials, rich merchants, and landed gentry destroyed the hierarchical networks that thrived in the colonies. Key members of the elite families that owned and

controlled much of the commerce and industry in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston left the United States, undermining the cohesion of the old upper class and disrupting the social structure of the colonies. The largest number of these exiles made their way to Quebec and Nova Scotia, although the wealthiest and those who formerly held key positions in the British administration of the colonies were more likely to head to Britain.

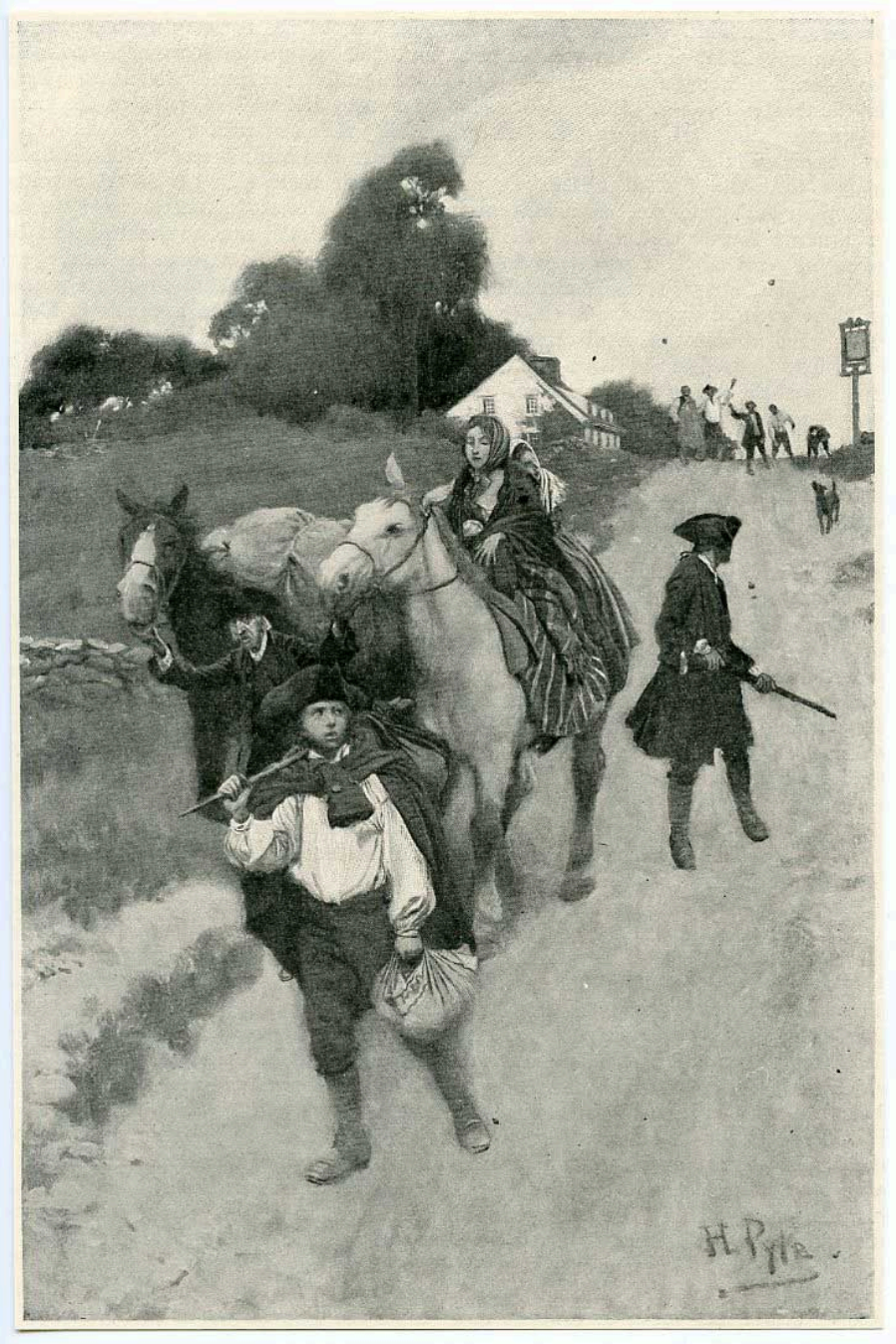



*Figure 7.8 "Tory Refugees on the Way to Canada" by Howard Pyle, 1901. This 20th century imagining of the Loyalist migration emphasizes the forced aspects of the migration.*

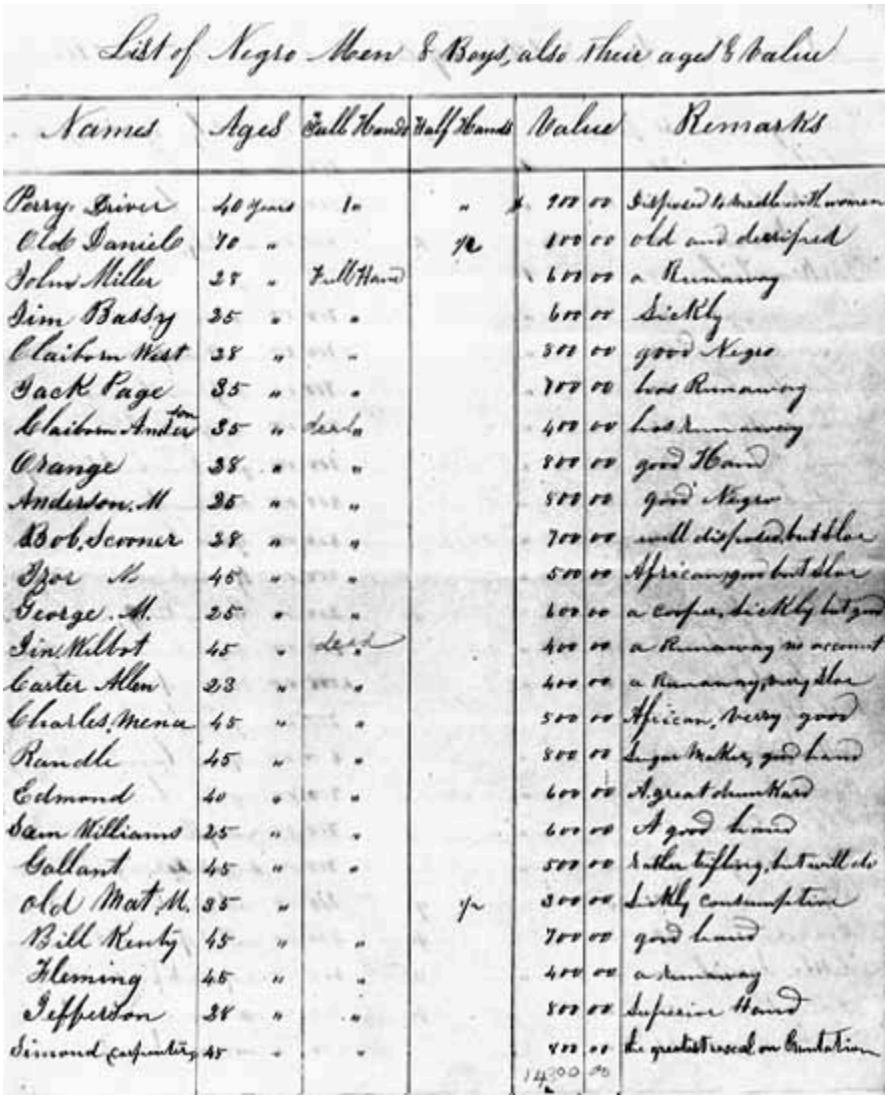
The Loyalist exodus to what remained of **British North America** consisted of a wide array of people. In a 1999 article in the journal *Acadiensis*, Barry Cahill makes an important distinction between Loyalists

of colour (of which there were fewer than a hundred by his reckoning) and "fugitive" African Americans who were "seeking refuge from slavery." This second, much larger body of migrants were opposed to being chattel property, not to revolutionary ideals.[1] Some 3000 **African American slaves** — thanks in no small measure to Guy Carleton's willful disregard for orders to obstruct their passage — travelled from New York to Nova Scotia. Most settled in and around Halifax, some taking up farming.

The refugee slaves were quickly caught in a legal grey area wherein they were regarded as "slaves" even though they might not have "owners." The British regime took no steps to emancipate the Loyalists of colour, and some of the White Loyalists who had been slave owners before the Revolution expressed a desire to restore that system of relationships. In 1787 the British government arranged for members of the Afro-Nova Scotian community to relocate to the West African community of Sierra Leone, an offer that was taken up by many who were tired of bitter winters and shoddy treatment by White Haligonians. As the Nova Scotian historian Barry Cahill points out, the story of the Black Loyalists has become part of the narrative of inclusivity in Canada, but it is mostly a fiction: "One cannot right the wrongs of history by turning Black people into honorary Whites, fugitive slaves into Loyalists. To do so is to permit the colonization of Black history by White historical myths."[2]

1. Barry Cahill, "The Black Loyalist Myth in Nova Scotia," *Acadiensis* XXIX, no.1 (Autumn 1999).

2. Ibid.



List of Negro Men & Boys, also their ages & Value

| Names | Ages | Full Hands | Half Hands | Value | | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perry Driver | 40 years | 1 | " | 900 | 00 | Disposed to meddle with women |
| Old Daniel | 70 " | | 1/2 | 100 | 00 | old and decrepid |
| John Miller | 28 " | Full Hand | | 600 | 00 | a Runaway |
| Jim Bassy | 35 " | " | | 600 | 00 | Sickly |
| Claiborn West | 28 " | " | | 800 | 00 | good Negro |
| Jack Page | 35 " | " | | 700 | 00 | has Runaway |
| Claiborn Anderson | 35 " | dead " | | 400 | 00 | has Runaway |
| Orange | 38 " | " | | 800 | 00 | good Hand |
| Anderson M | 35 " | " | | 800 | 00 | good Negro |
| Bob Scooner | 28 " | " | | 700 | 00 | well disposed but Slow |
| Izor M | 45 " | " | | 500 | 00 | African good but Slow |
| George M | 25 " | " | | 600 | 00 | a Cooper, Sickly but good |
| Jim Wilbot | 45 " | dead " | | 400 | 00 | a Runaway no account |
| Carter Allen | 23 " | " | | 400 | 00 | a Runaway, very Slow |
| Charles Mena | 45 " | " | | 500 | 00 | African, Verry good |
| Randle | 45 " | " | | 800 | 00 | Sugar Maker, good hand |
| Edmond | 40 " | " | | 600 | 00 | A great drunkard |
| Sam Williams | 25 " | " | | 600 | 00 | A good hand |
| Gallant | 45 " | " | | 500 | 00 | Rather trifling, but will do |
| Old Mat M | 35 " | | 1/2 | 300 | 00 | Sickly Consumptive |
| Bill Kenty | 45 " | " | | 700 | 00 | good hand |
| Fleming | 45 " | " | | 400 | 00 | a Runaway |
| Jefferson | 28 " | " | | 800 | 00 | Superior Hand |
| Simond Carpenter | 45 " | " | | 400 | 00 | the greatest rascal on Creation |
| | | | | 14300 | 00 | |

*Figure 7.9 A page from the Book of Negros, a tabulation of African Americans heading from New York to Nova Scotia. Note that ages are mostly rounded and that "values" are provided.*

Indigenous refugees were another group of "Loyalists" whose agenda was, like the African Americans, distinct from those of the colonial Tories. Roughly 2000 Haudenosaunee, principally Kanien'kehá:ka, left their homeland for a large swath of what is now southern Ontario under the leadership of Thayendenaga (a.k.a. Joseph Brant, 1743–1807). Thayendenaga's links with the British were diplomatic, military, and familial: he was connected to the British administration under William Johnson through his older sister, Konwatsi'tsiaienni (a.k.a. Degonwadonti, Mary Brant) who was Johnson's consort.

The Haudenosaunees' experience represents a further wrinkle or branch of what is too often presented as an unproblematic Loyalist mythology. Unlike the individual farming frontier loyalists of German and other European extraction who arrived nearby from western Pennsylvania and New York, the Kanien'kehá:ka Loyalists arrived and functioned as a group, as their own society. They injected into early southern Ontario a large and well-organized people well ahead of the settler waves that would travel up the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario.

The largest wave of Loyalist refugees — some 30,000 — headed to Nova Scotia. Like their **pre-Loyalist** Planter predecessors and Yorkshire-born neighbours, they took up land that had been cleared or drained by Acadians and began the arduous process of clearing hardwood forests for their new settlements. Many settled in areas where they might be depended upon to fight against invading American forces. The Saint John Valley in particular witnessed substantial Loyalist establishments, the most important being Fredericton. This new concentration of population led to the creation of a new colony, New Brunswick, whose political offices were immediately filled by Loyalists. Similarly, the colony of Cape Breton was briefly called into existence to administer the Loyalist arrivals there.

Roughly 10,000 Loyalists entered the Province of Quebec. There they encountered the seigneurial system of landholding, which frustrated attempts to settle the newcomers. Some went to the Gaspé and others into the Eastern Townships southwest of Montreal. The largest group that reached the St. Lawrence — some 7000 — were sent upstream to the north shore of Lake Ontario.[3]

## Bisecting a Continent

The **Treaty of Paris in 1783** reduced British North America significantly. The Province of Quebec lost Detroit and all the lands south of Lake Ontario and east of Lake Huron. There remained uncertainty about the boundary between Maine and New Brunswick; it would be unresolved for 50 years more. British forts in what the Americans now called their northwest were a sore spot for another decade as well until **Jay's Treaty** impelled the British to leave the region for good. The Loyalist exodus helped decide other territorial claims as the British were then able to convincingly settle regions that had been in dispute.

It would be many years before British North Americans would begin to conceptualize their lands as something like "Canada," but the outcome of the American Revolution nevertheless produced two separate entities. In some respects, it restored the old territorial division between England and France in North America before the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), although now Britain was playing the role in the north formerly played by France.

Key Takeaways

- The American Revolution divided colonists in all the British possessions in North America along ideological, ethnic, and sectarian lines.
- Three British colonies — Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland — did not join in the Revolution, although factions within each supported it.
- Loyalists or Tories emerged in the Thirteen Colonies who eventually abandoned the United States at the end of the Revolution and formed a core population in British North America.
- A large proportion of the Loyalist migration comprised former African American slaves and members of the Kanien'kehá:ka nation.

3. Christopher Moore, *The Loyalists: Revolution Exile Settlement* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994).

- The end of the Revolution established two separate colonial identities in North America, north of New Spain: the republican United States and the British-controlled and nominally loyal colonies collectively known as British North America.

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# 7.5 Interwar Years: The Atlantic Colonies



*Figure 7.10 Painted in 1835, this work by Robert Petley shows African American refugees — often referred to as "Black Loyalists" — near Bedford Basin, Nova Scotia.*

## Greater Nova Scotia

The population of Nova Scotia changed radically at the end of the Revolution. In 1764 there were about 13,000 people in the whole colony, which included what would become New Brunswick and Cape Breton. Halifax was easily the largest town but with only 3000 people. Up to 30,000 Loyalists arrived from the old British colonies and the pattern of settlement changed overnight.[1]

The Saint John River Valley became a particular focus of growth, as did port communities like Shelburne and the Afro-Nova Scotian community of Birchtown — the largest free Black community in North America. Saint John emerged as a modest-sized town and was the first incorporated city in what is now Canada. It was also a highly exclusive centre, with civic laws prohibiting the settling of African-New Brunswickers and barring from the trades and other occupations Whites who were neither Loyalists nor descended from Loyalists. Indeed, Loyalism was more of a fetish in Saint John than in many other settlements. The town attracted many of the most socially distinguished refugees, including the family of General Benedict Arnold (1741–1801), the Continental Army commander who switched to the British side in the course of the war.

The Saint John settlers petitioned London for a separate colony of their own, partly because they

1. Statistics Canada, *Censuses of Canada, 1665–1871*. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/98-187-x/4064810-eng.htm#part3

felt distant from and ignored by Halifax, but also because they regarded Haligonians as suspiciously democratic in their politics. Thus, in 1784, Nova Scotia was partitioned into two colonies along the Fundy-Chignecto axis. A new capital for New Brunswick was established at Fredericton, nearly 100 kilometres up the Saint John River. This position was more easily defended than Saint John, should the Americans choose to attack some day, but it divided New Brunswick society into an administrative capital and a commercial capital. Acadians returned in growing numbers but they gave the Saint John region a wide berth, preferring to settle instead on the northeast coast of the renamed colony.

The years after 1783 proved particularly disappointing for the part of the Wabanaki Confederacy living in New Brunswick. During the Revolution they had shelved their hostility toward the British and provided support against the American rebels and expansionists from Maine. After the war and the Treaty of Paris, the Mi'kmaq and Malicite were neglected by authorities in both Saint John and Halifax. The Royal Proclamation of 1763, which obliged Parliament to address aboriginal land title, was held to apply only to the Ohio Valley and not to the Wabanaki homeland. The new regimes in Fredericton and Halifax were no less anti-Catholic than was the case before 1775, perhaps more so. This didn't help the Mi'kmaq, whose people had been converting to Catholicism since 1610. Marginalized in the post-Revolutionary War years, the Mi'kmaq made common cause with other groups who found themselves out of the mainstream: African Loyalists, Irish immigrants, and Acadian returnees. Intermarriage between the groups was common, especially on the south shore of Nova Scotia.

Similar practices occurred in Cape Breton, also carved off from Nova Scotia in 1784. Returning Acadians were generally pushed along through Nova Scotia and on to the island where they settled in communities alongside Irish immigrants. Scots began arriving about the same time. Cape Breton's future as a community of Gaelic-speaking, coal-mining fiddle players was, however, still some decades away.

The economy of Cape Breton — and that of the rest of the Maritimes — enjoyed a brief surge in the post-revolutionary years. The British Navigation Acts prohibited the transport of British goods on ships that were not British-made. This meant that products of British colonies as well as in the home country could only be carried in ships built either in Britain or her colonies. When the British made it clear that the Acts were going to be applied to post-revolutionary New England (the source of much of Britain's colonial shipping capacity, lumber, and surplus fish sales), the Maritimes stepped — or fell — into the breach. Shipbuilding, mast-making, and the fisheries expanded to take advantage of the exclusive markets in the West Indies. Sadly, the region simply could not achieve the level of surpluses needed to serve and control the market. Food production in the colonies was limited and little was left over for export. Although shipping surged forward, it could not hope to fill the gap left by New England.

### Exercise: Documents — Loyalist Women in Exile

In 1787 Polly Dibblee wrote to her brother, William Jarvis, complaining of the plight of Loyalist exiles in New Brunswick.

Kingston, New Brunswick
[17 November 1787]

Dear Billy,

I have received your two Letters and the Trunk, and I feel the good Effects of the Clothes you sent me and my Children, and I value them to be worth more than I should have valued a thousand Pounds sterling in the year 1774. Alas, my Brother, that Providence should permit so many Evils to fall on me and my Fatherless Children — I know the sensibility of your Heart — therefore will not exaggerate in my story, lest I should contribute towards your Infelicity on my account— Since I wrote you, I have been twice burnt out, and left destitute of Food and Raiment; and in this dreary Country I know not where to find Relief — for Poverty has expelled Friendship and charity from the human Heart, and planted in its stead the Law of self-preservation — which scarcely can preserve alive the rustic Hero in this frozen Climate and barren Wilderness—

You say "that you have received accounts of the great sufferings of the Loyalists for want of Provisions, and I hope that you and your Children have not had the fate to live on Potatoes alone"— I assure you, my dear Billy, that many have been the Days since my arrival in this inhospitable Country, that I should have thought myself and Family truly happy could we have "had Potatoes alone" —but this mighty Boon was denied us!— I could have borne these Burdens of Loyalty with Fortitude had not my poor Children in doleful accents cried, Mama, why don't you help me and give me Bread?

O gracious God, that I should live to see such times under the Protection of a British Government for whose sake we have Done and suffered every thing but that of Dying—

May you never Experience such heart piercing troubles as I have and still labour under — You may Depend on it that the Sufferings of the poor Loyalists are beyond all possible Description— The old Egyptians who required Brick without giving straw were more Merciful than to turn the Israelites into a thick Wood to gain Subsistence from an uncultivated Wilderness— Nay, the British Government allowed to the first Inhabitants of Halifax, Provisions for seven years, and have denied them to the Loyalists after two years– which proves to me that the British Rulers value Loyal Subjects less than the Refuse of the Gaols of England and America in former Days— Inhumane Treatment I suffered under the Power of American Mobs and Rebels for that Loyalty, which is now thought handsomely compensated for, by neglect and starvation— I dare not let my Friends at Stamford know of my Calamitous Situation lest it should bring down the grey Hairs of my Mother to the Grave; and besides they could not relieve me without distressing themselves should I apply— as they have been ruined by the Rebels during the War— therefore I have no other Ground to hope, but , on your Goodness and Bounty—

I wish every possible happiness may attend you, and your amiable Wife, and Child—and my Children have sense enough to know they have an Uncle Billy, and beg he will always remember them as they deserve.

I have only to add— that by your Brother Dibblee's Death— my Miseries were rendered Compleat in this World but as God is just and Merciful my prospects in a future World are substantial and pleasing— I will therefore endeavour to live on hopes till I hear again from you— I remain in possession of a graceful Heart,

Your affectionate Sister,
Polly Dibblee[2]

Correspondences are a way of showing what one, as the author, thinks but they are also a means of changing the mind of the reader to whom the letter is sent.

What does Polly Dibblee want from her brother? How does she hope that he will understand her situation and that of the Loyalists generally? What message does she wish to convey?

Note that some words are capitalized mid-sentence — is there a pattern?

## Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island's situation was unusual in the region. Acadians from all over Nova Scotia fled to the island beginning on 1755, one step ahead of the Expulsion and war. They brought the size of the

2. Letter from Polly Dibblee to William Jarvis, 17 November 1787, Kingston, "Loyalist Women in New Brunswick, 1783–1827," *Atlantic Canada Virtual Archives*, diplomatic rendition, document no. 13_41. Audit Office, series 13, bundle 41, is available at National Archives, London.

Acadian population to more than 5000. Their conditions were difficult: housing was inadequate, food was in short supply following three bad seasons in a row, and everyone was nervous at the prospect of further deportations. They didn't have long to wait. In 1758 — in the midst of the Seven Years' War — a local expulsion began. Nearly 1000 deportees died in shipwrecks on the way to France in late 1758.

In 1767 the whole of St. John's Island, as it was then known, was divided into 67 lots of roughly 20,000 acres apiece. These were distributed in a lottery in London to aristocratic and other well-to-do investors whose responsibility it was to settle the land with farmers. Rather than wait on a natural flow of immigrants, this experiment proposed to draft settlers into a quasi-feudal tenant-farmer agricultural colony. The project failed badly. Settlers were slow in coming and the **absentee landlords** (or proprietors) sometimes abandoned entirely their obligations to the colony. From late in the 18th century until the 1870s, the Islanders would petition and demand of Britain that the unsettled and unserviced land be put up for freehold sale. Islanders were convinced that this system was a drag on their economic growth and a constraint on investment in the colony.

Efforts to seize defaulting proprietors' lands led to the recall of Governor Walter Patterson in 1786. It was out of this failed attempt to repossess the land — a process called **escheat** — that Islanders initiated a local political movement and the Escheat Party, which was clearly in opposition to the interests of the larger landowners and their British sponsors. In 1798, in order to avoid confusion with St. John's, Newfoundland, and Saint John, New Brunswick, the British government changed the colony's name to Prince Edward Island. The colony developed strong links with British markets and was an early tourist resort for wealthy travellers from late 18th century England and for ships sailing out of New England.

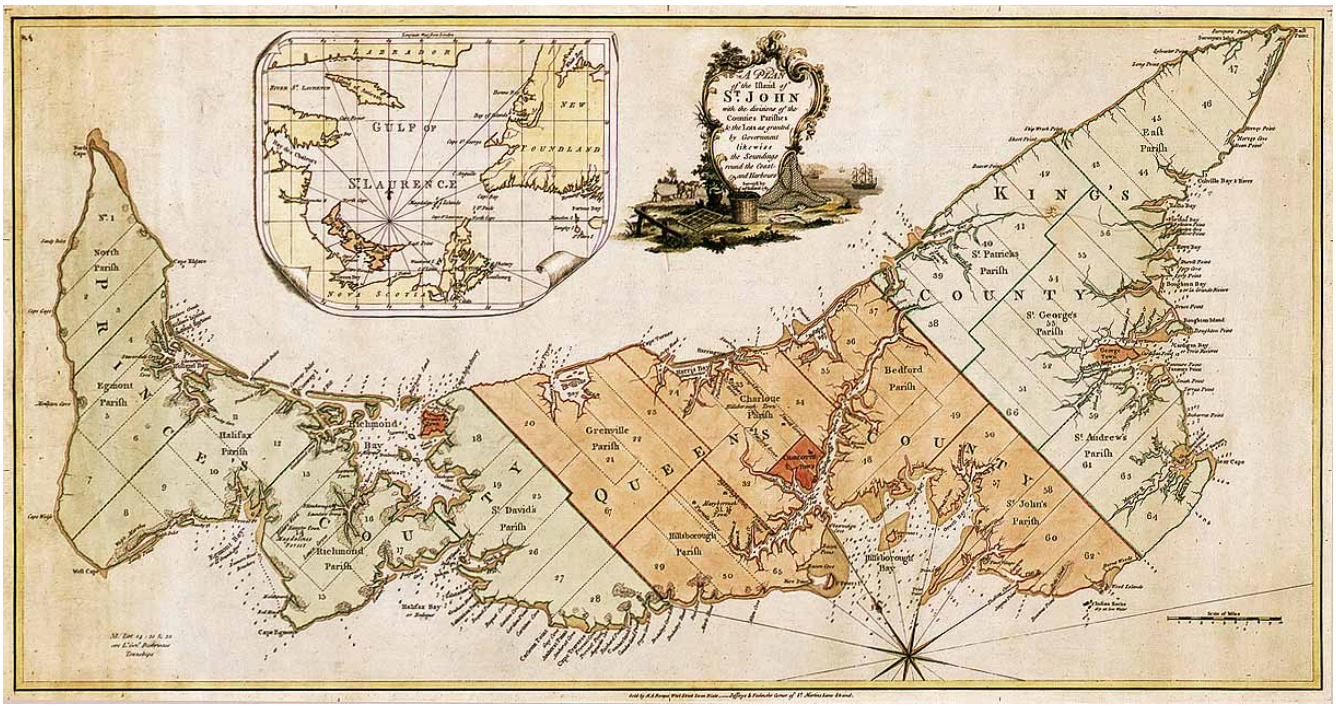


*Figure 7.11 Prince Edward Island in 1775, showing the proprietors' land parcels.*

## Newfoundland

The War of Independence was a pivotal time for Newfoundland. The fisheries economy of the colony

was always exposed during wartime because of the demand created for naval sailors, many of whom were plucked from Newfoundland's cod industry. As well, Newfoundland shipping was increasingly vulnerable to American privateers who could, by seizing Newfoundland craft, hurt the British economy, reduce the size of the Newfoundland fleet, deny the Royal Navy some sailors, and head for home with a valuable supply of cod. The loss of food supplies from New England in the early years of the war was an even more significant trauma for the island colony, one that provoked famine conditions for two years.[3]

The population of Newfoundland was made up mostly of transient fishermen, people who worked with the fleets from Europe without sinking roots into the outport communities and the resident community. The transients left in large numbers as wartime conditions worsened. For the first time, Newfoundlanders were mostly residents.

Increasingly, the residents became merchants. The business model of the transient or migratory fishery had been irrevocably damaged by the war and Britain could no longer run the colony as a fishery station. Now there was room for residents to engage more fully with the fisheries and with import/export economies, as was made clear with two developments.

First, St. John's emerged as a hub of commercial and administrative activity. At the end of the Revolution there were barely a thousand people in St. John's; less than 30 years later there were more than 10,000. Second, the population of the colony as a whole expanded dramatically, rising to 20,000 in 1800. Fed mostly by Irish immigration (both Catholic and Protestant), the population continued to grow into the mid-19th century.

3. "Exploration and Settlement," *Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage.* http://www.heritage.nf.ca/exploration/amer_rev.html.

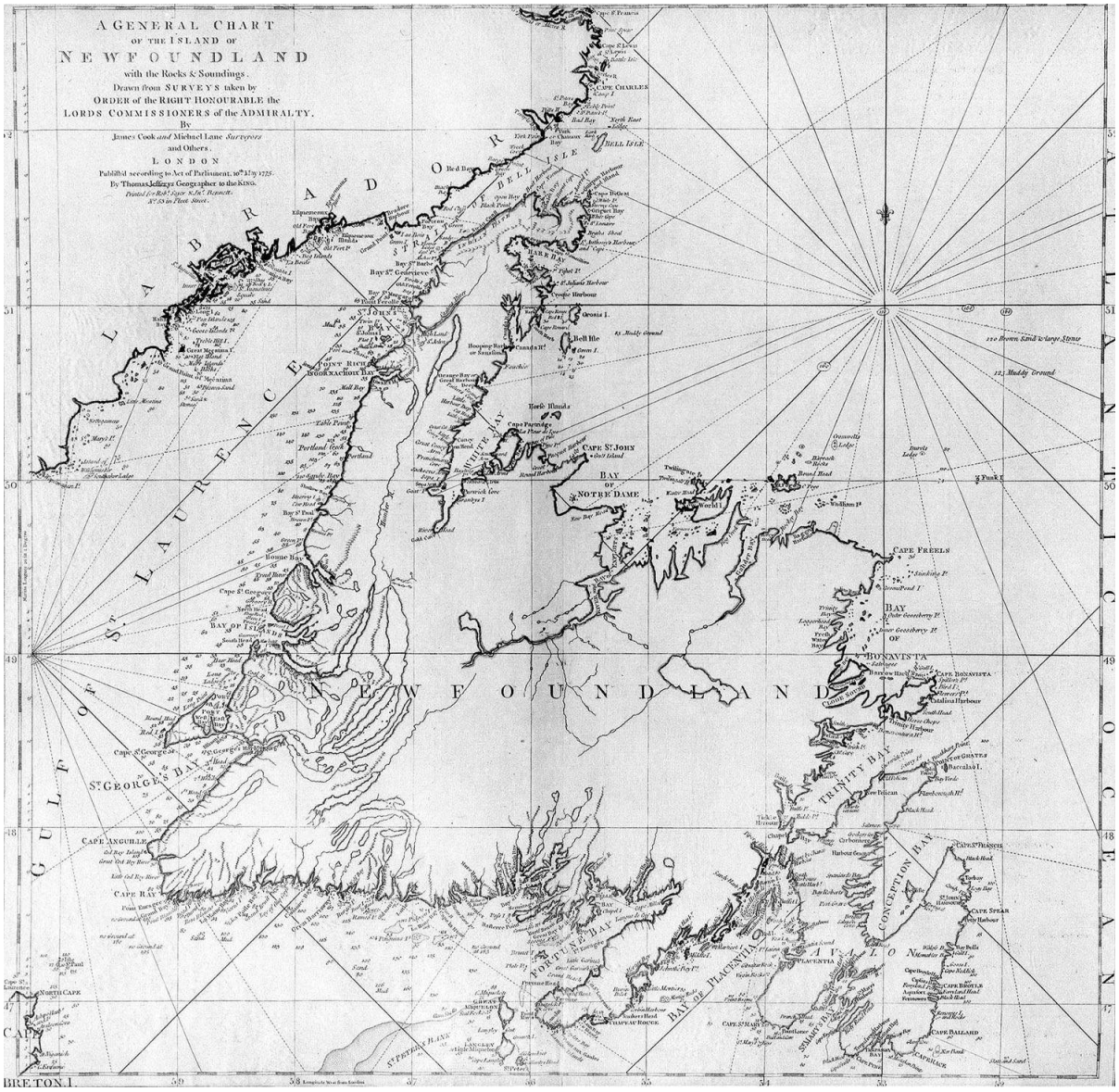


*Figure 7.12 James Cook's map of Newfoundland, published 1775. Three years later, Cook was charting the Pacific coastline of North America.*

Tension existed within this community because Newfoundland lacked a formal, elective type of government; in its place it had a small elite of St. John's merchants (mostly Protestant) and an officers' corps, both of which advised the governor. This arrangement alienated some of the Irish and others in the community, and led to a failed coup in 1800, which ended with the execution of eight members of the conspiracy.

More subtly, the demographics of Newfoundland did much to shape the community that evolved. At the start of the century one legacy of the transient fisheries was still evident: the distorted ratio of men to women. Because Britain did not (officially) want to stimulate settlement and colonial population growth, it had discouraged female immigration. As residency grew, this constraint was lifted and the number of women in Newfoundland increased, resulting in an intensification of permanent settlement in individual outports.

Regular traffic between Newfoundland and Ireland enabled men to find brides at home and bring them to the colony. It also produced generations of children, something that had not been witnessed in the Euro-Newfoundlander population in any significant numbers before 1800. For the first time, education became the focus of attention. As Willeen Keough has shown, the arrival of Irish women on the southern Avalon created a cadre of females who were part- or full-owners of fishing businesses (called "plantations"), employers of fisheries "servants," active in the shore crews, owner/operators of small businesses, farmers, and key to the emergence of a household economy consisting of more than one generation.[4]

These changes in Newfoundland society had a visible impact on the landscape. Forests along the foreshore were cut down and used for lumber and fuel. Even before the great boom in Newfoundland's forest industry in the 19th century, more and more rock was emerging from underneath the stumps of former tree stands. Whaling, which had been a pastime of the Basque fleet for centuries, had severely reduced cetacean numbers and may have stimulated the health of the cod population as they were no longer prey or competitors of the large sea mammals. The capture of foreshore positions for fishing stations and deforestation had another impact: it reduced Indigenous peoples' access to traditional resources.

The Beothuk, an Algonkian-speaking group about whom little is known, engaged in trade and scavenging but increasingly avoided direct contact with Europeans as the fleet-sizes increased.[5] They retreated inland when the European fishing crews were on shore, and then raided their abandoned sites for metal nails from which they could fashion their own tools. There was armed conflict between the Beothuk and the Europeans, and also against the Mi'kmaq who had settlements along the south coast of Newfoundland. The Beothuk depended heavily on the migratory caribou herd, which was impacted by European settlement on the Avalon Peninsula, and on the spawning routes of the salmon fishery, which was disrupted by Euro-Newfoundlanders' logging along the island's river systems.[6]

4. Willeen Keough, "The Riddle of Peggy Mountain: Regulation of Irish Women's Sexuality on the Southern Avalon," *Acadiensis* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 38–70.

5. William Gilbert, "Beothuk-European Contact in the 16th Century: A Re-evaluation of the Documentary Evidence," *Acadiensis* XXXX, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2011): 24–44.

6. Ralph T. Pastore, "The Collapse of the Beothuk World," *Acadiensis* XIX, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 59–64.



*Figure 7.13 A miniature portrait of Demasduit by Lady Henrietta Hamilton, c. 1819.*

Exotic diseases cut a swathe through their population, especially tuberculosis. By the start of the 19th century, the resource base of the Beothuk was badly depleted and they were facing famine. In 1819 and 1823, two women from a shrinking Beothuk population established the longest known relationships with Europeans. The first, Demasduit, was captured in a brutal assault that claimed the life of her husband and doomed her infant child. She nevertheless lived in St. John's for nearly a year before perishing from tuberculosis. Shanawdithit and two members of her family were on the brink of starvation when they threw themselves on the mercy of the European community. Her relations died soon after — again, from tuberculosis — and Shanawdithit succumbed herself after six years among the Europeans. Much of what is known about the Beothuk derives from these two brief encounters. By 1829, or possibly not long after, the Beothuk were extinct.

The Beothuk were among the first Indigenous peoples to encounter Europeans. Their disappearance in the early 19th century had a number of impacts on colonial understanding of Indigenous peoples. The Beothuk were characterized for generations as a primitive people, a Paleo-Indian branch that was backward by Indigenous standards and thus doomed to disappear. Explaining their extinction implicitly involved exculpation of European guilt: if they were doomed, they were doomed and nothing that Europeans did to slow or hasten that outcome would matter. What's more, the Beothuk — the original

"red indians" — as a "fated" people were invoked as foreshadowing of what awaited Indigenous people across North America.[7]

Key Takeaways

- The Loyalist migration transformed and complicated the population and political geography of Nova Scotia and Quebec, producing new colonial configurations and social problems.
- The colonial landscape of Prince Edward Island was swept clean and was marked by a unique absentee landowner class.
- Newfoundland's settler society was spurred on by the commercial possibilities created by the Revolution and it started to grow in earnest.
- The fate of the Beothuk points to the ecological incompatibility of the newcomer and Indigenous societies on Newfoundland.

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7. Donald H. Holly Jr. and Paul Sant Cassia, "A Historiography of an Ahistoricity: On the Beothuk Indians," *History & Anthropology* 14, issue 2 (June 2003): 127–140.

# 7.6 Interwar Years: The Canadas



*Figure 7.14 The first elected assembly in Lower Canada, 1793, debating whether to use English, French, or both in debates. The governor's chateau can be seen out the window and up the hill.*

In 1791 the **Constitutional Act** replaced the Quebec Act and redefined the province's boundaries. What had been the heartland of old Canada, stretching east from the Ottawa River's junction with the St. Lawrence to the Gulf, became Lower Canada. Everything to the west became Upper Canada. Excluded from these borders were the 1.5 million acres to the north and west that drain into Hudson Bay and which remained under the control of the Hudson's Bay Company. (See Chapter 8 (#chapter-8-1-introduction).)

## Bisecting Canada

Britain had several goals in mind with the Constitutional Act. First was to establish consistency in administrative structure in each of the colonies of British North America, and the creation of the colonies of New Brunswick and Cape Breton in 1784 provided a template for this purpose. As well, there was a desire to create some consistency within the British Parliamentary system: the British were starting to conceive of their model as an idea that could be exported around the globe.

The second goal was to ensure the power of the executive over elected representatives, which in some measure contradicted the first goal. The governor's powers were, in fact, to increase at the head of an appointed executive council. An elected legislative council could draft legislation and recommend action, but it was the executive (over which the governor ruled) that made the key decisions.

What Britain sought, then, was the *form* of parliamentary government (an elected assembly, a royal representative in council), but its *function* would be defined by its loyalty to the Crown. Clearly the

events in the American colonies had an impact on this thinking: there would be less autonomy allowed to colonial governments, not more.

The third goal of the Constitutional Act was to cut imperial costs by making it possible for the local governments to raise funds for local projects. This seems a small thing, but in the context of mercantilism it represented a break with the policy of heavy dependence on the mother country. Having self-sustaining but beholden colonies was the new objective.

Finally, the drafters of the new constitution envisioned two separate cultures in the Canadas, one that was predominantly Catholic and francophone (Lower Canada), the other made up chiefly of anglophones and influenced strongly by the Church of England (Upper Canada). To that end, the **Clergy Reserves** were created in the Constitutional Act: one-seventh of all lands in Upper Canada were granted to the Anglican Church. Moreover, land in Upper Canada would be surveyed according to British land-use practices: in blocks rather than in the narrow seigneurial strips. Dividing the colony thus addressed religious differences in Canada and land-use issues as well. It also attended to the issue of civil law. Upper Canada would have British common law while Lower Canada would continue to use the *Coutume de Paris* where appropriate.

This provision for separate legal codes had an interesting impact on electoral regulations. In both colonies the vote was available to almost any adult over the age of 21 years who owned a rather modest amount of property. Even tenants in the towns could vote, providing they paid enough in rents to qualify. This made for a fairly broad **franchise**. Because of the peculiarities of property law in Lower Canada, however, it also meant that women could vote. While women in Upper Canada were sealed off from the franchise by British common law (which restricted their property rights), those barriers didn't apply in Lower Canada. That fact, coupled with land title and inheritance laws that made a great many women property owners meant that for nearly 60 years some women in Lower Canada could vote.

The Constitutional Act would ultimately prove flawed. In less than a generation it was criticized for the way it favoured the Anglican elite in both colonies. Appointments to the executive councils were filled mostly by leading merchants and a sampling of the emergent local aristocracy, creating a pair of oligarchical governments. In Lower Canada this included many powerful anglophone merchants from Montreal who were, of course, a tiny but privileged ethnic and linguistic minority in the colony. In Upper Canada the council was dominated by military men, key Loyalists with wealth, and beginning in 1813, Bishop John Strachan (1778–1867). The 35-year-old Rector of York (later Toronto) was to become pivotal in building a tight network of elite leaders.

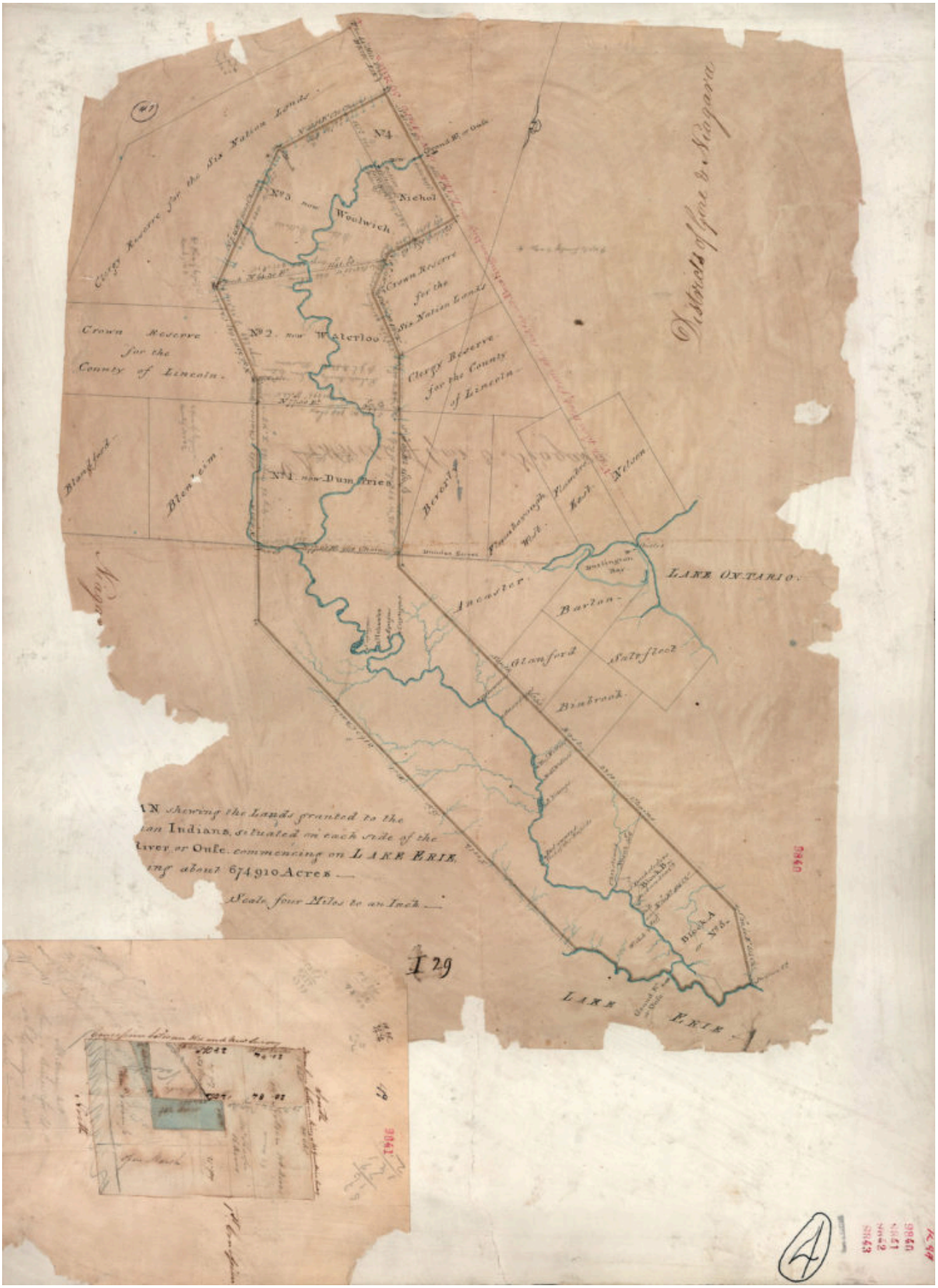
In Lower Canada the dominance of the anglophone-dominated executive was referred to disparagingly as the **Chateau Clique**, a reference to the fact that this tight little group met at and ran the colony from the governor's residence. In Upper Canada the parallel term was **Family Compact**, but it was only coined in the 1820s. Both groups gained more authority after the War of 1812 when, for a while, the lustre was back on loyalism and Toryism.

## Upper Canada

The period from 1784 to around 1818 can be described as one of readjustment and resettlement. Indigenous nations' claims to territory in the region were more tenacious than ever, having lost so much

south of the Great Lakes to the Americans. One branch of the Anishinaabeg (a.k.a. the Mississauga) sold a huge tract of land north of Lake Ontario so that the British could resettle non-Indigenous Loyalists. Further purchases were made north of Lake Erie along the Grand River to make way for the Loyalist Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) (see Figure 7.15). Along with non-Indigenous Loyalists, the Kanien'kehá:ka were making their way across what is now upstate New York, heading for the Niagara Escarpment between Lakes Ontario and Lake Erie.

The map of Upper Canada became a patchwork of treaties — effectively bills of sale by which aboriginal title was extinguished. Often this was done in a hurry and details were not well addressed. Indigenous signatories focused on promises made verbally; British-Canadian officials would later emphasize what was (and wasn't) written down. These arrangements were further compromised by uncertainty about annuities (annual payments by the British to the Anishinaabeg that look something like rents) as opposed to once-and-for-all purchase payments. No specific lands were set aside or "reserved" for Indigenous participants: there was thought to be sufficient unclaimed land to the west in Upper Canada so the Anishinaabeg quietly moved along to a different locale.


Districts of Gore & Niagara
Clergy Reserve for the Six Nation Lands
No 4
No 3 now Woolwich
Nichol
Crown Reserve for the Six Nation Lands
Crown Reserve for the County of Lincoln
No 2 now Waterloo
Clergy Reserve for the County of Lincoln
Blandford
Blenheim
No 1 now Dumfries
Beverly
Flamborough West
Flamborough East
Nelson
Burlington Bay
LAKE ONTARIO
Ancaster
Barton
Glanford
Saltfleet
Binbrook
Niagara
IN shewing the Lands granted to the
ian Indians situated on each side of the
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ing about 674910 Acres
Scale four Miles to an Inch
I 29
LAKE ERIE
9840
9841
9842
9843
9841
4

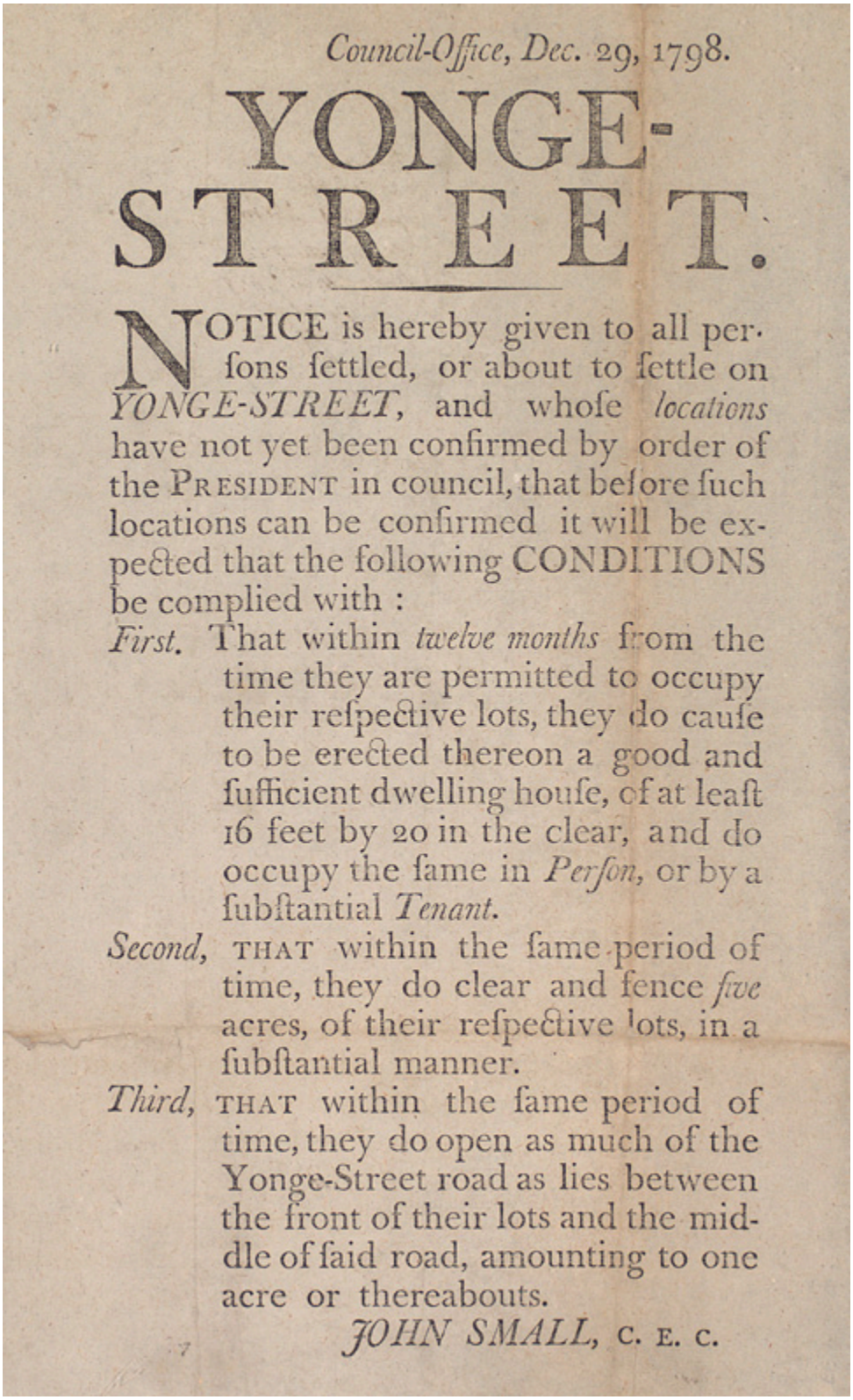
*Figure 7.15 Thomas Ridout's map of Grand River Lands held by the Mohawk Nation, 1821. [Long Description] (#fig7.15)*

Upper Canadian society from 1783 to the 1820s has been characterized as one of intensifying settlement, land clearing, and organization. Keeping in mind that the territory was barely marked by French settlement before 1759 and that between 1763 and 1791 the British merely replaced the French in their forts and posts, little of the land had been cleared, and there was essentially no infrastructure. It has been noted that Upper Canada was the first British colony anywhere that lacked a seaport.[1] Whatever was produced in these years had to make it to the rapids at Lachine and from there, with some difficulty, to Montreal. Resolving the difficulties of shipping goods in and out of the colony occupied a central part of the political debates in Upper Canada for many years and continued after 1867 to inform political discourse in Canada.

The first Loyalist settlements in the colony were essentially engrossments around existing military positions. The Niagara frontier as well as the eastern end of Lake Ontario were both strategically important and convenient. Garrisons provided a market for farm surpluses as well as a sense of security in the event of further conflict (whether with the Americans or the Indigenous populations).

Settlement in Upper Canada was encouraged to 1820 by free land grants, but these were not allocated evenly. Officers in the British forces could claim as much as 5000 acres while just about everyone else received 200 acres. With the Clergy Reserves taking up valuable waterfront space and officers' grants also occupying choice locations, typical settlers often had to head to less convenient or viable sites while the best land sat idle. And settlers were expected to achieve clear — if difficult — goals within a year of arriving, as can be seen in Figure 7.16.

1. Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 162.



*Council-Office, Dec. 29, 1798.*

# YONGE-STREET.

NOTICE is hereby given to all perſons ſettled, or about to ſettle on *YONGE-STREET*, and whoſe *locations* have not yet been confirmed by order of the PRESIDENT in council, that before ſuch locations can be confirmed it will be expected that the following CONDITIONS be complied with :

*First.* That within *twelve months* from the time they are permitted to occupy their reſpective lots, they do cauſe to be erected thereon a good and ſufficient dwelling houſe, of at leaſt 16 feet by 20 in the clear, and do occupy the ſame in *Perſon*, or by a ſubſtantial *Tenant*.

*Second,* THAT within the ſame period of time, they do clear and fence *five* acres, of their reſpective lots, in a ſubſtantial manner.

*Third,* THAT within the ſame period of time, they do open as much of the Yonge-Street road as lies between the front of their lots and the middle of ſaid road, amounting to one acre or thereabouts.

*JOHN SMALL,* C. E. C.

*Figure 7.16 The long straight road heading north from York (Toronto) attracted farming settlers before it became urban. [Long Description] (#fig7.16)*

Growth depended heavily on immigration and, perhaps ironically, much of that came from the United States. Claims to land across New York were made through the 1780s and 1790s with the effect that the

best land was quickly spoken for. This obliged many American would-be farmers to become Canadian farming pioneers.

By 1800 the population of Upper Canada had grown from a few thousand to as much as 25,000, a significant number being **Late Loyalists**. To some extent the new farms could sell some of their surplus south of the border to nascent American settlements, but the goal for most at this stage was mere subsistence. What sustained many farm families in these days was British commitment to the colony. The Loyalists had earned support and the British government felt a moral obligation (and political pressure) to provide it. They had lost their homes and businesses and were waiting on compensation claims against the United States (most of which never came), and they needed defending. Britain provided direct subsidies and stimulated economic growth by maintaining garrisons throughout the colony.

One has to imagine the possible complexities of identity among some of the settlers in Upper Canada at this time. New York Patriots who fought against the British and drove terrified Loyalists from their homes in order to win lands in the Ohio Valley now moved into British North America and back under British rule. There they were neighbours to established **United Empire Loyalist** families and mostly dependent on the British garrisons to buy their farm surpluses. Joseph Brant's Kanien'kehá:ka community might have scratched their collective heads as well: they had resisted (unsuccessfully) American expansionism, abandoned their ancestral lands and moved to the Grand River where a main source of wealth came from selling off parcels of their grant to American migrants.

The first generation of Upper Canadians was distinguished by their relative wealth coming into the colony. Some of the Late Loyalists who arrived across the New York–Niagara frontier into what is now southern Ontario were beneficiaries of land speculation. Some had started farms, which they then sold at a profit before heading west in search of free Canadian grants. Coupled to British subsidies, this was a cohort that started well, had a safety net of sorts, and had an artificial local market in the garrisons; they would turn to wheat as their principal cash crop. The **Napoleonic Wars** created new demand for wheat from the colonies so Upper Canadians (and some Maritimers) did well by this. Also, there appeared early on in the Canadas the means of adding value to grain and preserving it for later consumption by **brewing**. John Molson opened his first brewery in Montreal in 1786 and, thanks largely to thirsty garrison troops in the Canadas, he quickly amassed a fortune. Other brewers and distillers appeared across the Upper Canadian landscape in the decades to come, particularly around the area of London and York (Toronto).

The principal model of economic and social organization in these years was the family farm. This resulted in the arrival of Euro-Canadian children and, almost immediately, concerns regarding education. As historian Jane Errington has observed, these events coincided with a growing concern in the English-speaking world regarding the role of women in domestic settings, in towns, and in the nurturing of knowledge in children. Restrictively domestic notions of womanhood worked for a while against the education of girls but soon went by the wayside, while at the same time women struggled to secure teaching jobs before the War of 1812. Universal education of some kind for boys and girls was an accepted principle by the first years of the 19th century in Upper Canada and the size and sophistication of the local school came to be a measure of local progress.[2] Some of these schools were private operations and thus a source of currency in an economy where cash was not always easy to come by. (For

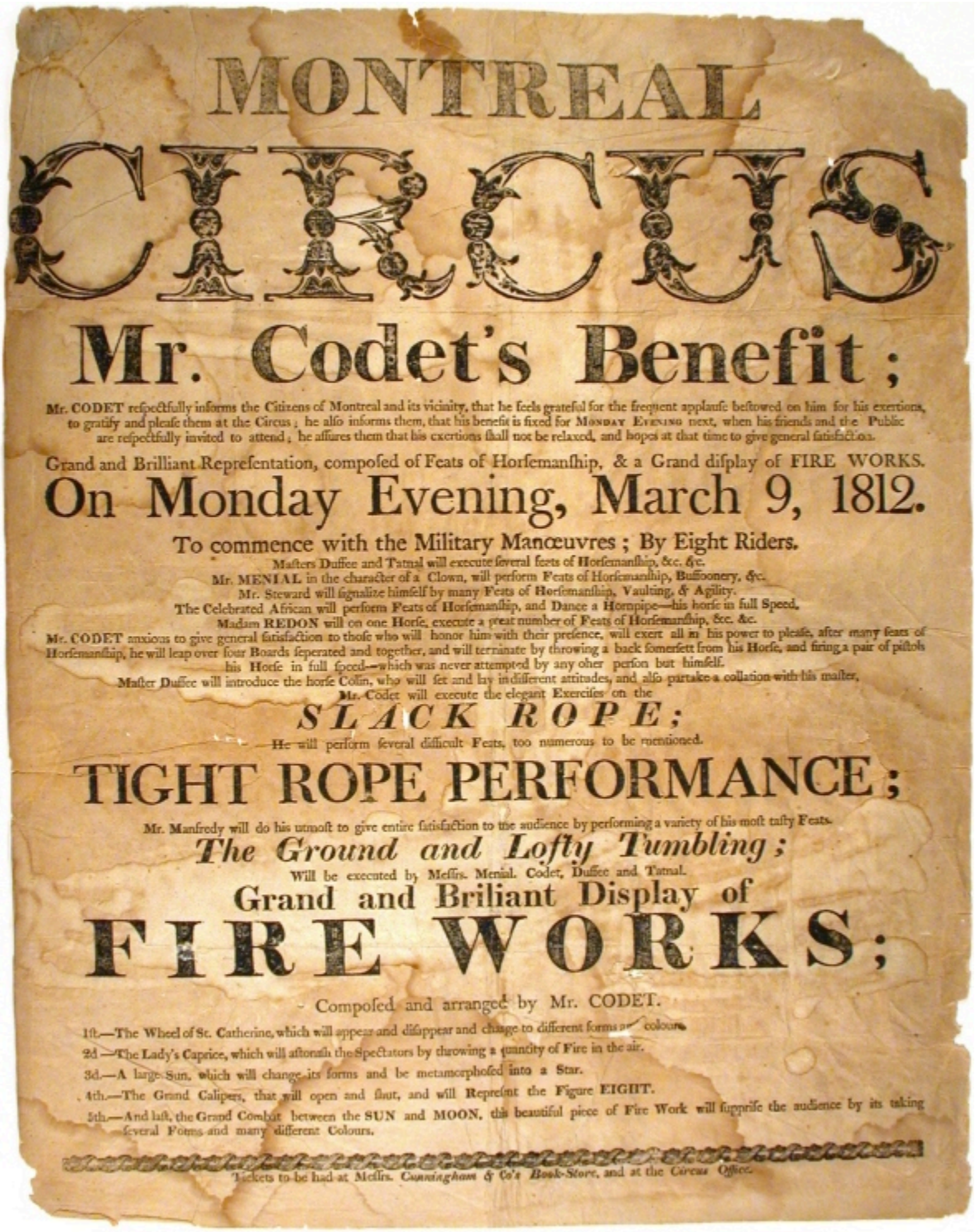
2. Jane Errington, "Ladies and Schoolmistresses: Educating Women in Early Nineteenth-Century Upper Canada," *Historical Studies in Education* 6, issue 1 (1994): 71–96.

a further discussion of education initiatives, see Chapter 10 (#chapter-10-1-introduction) and Chapter 12 (#chapter-12-1-introduction).)

## Lower Canada

The American Revolution confirmed Quebec's status as a British province. This occurred in two ways. First, there was the lack of interest shown by the Canadiens who might have joined or at least supported more vigorously the cause of the Continental Army. Second, although France in 1778 joined the Thirteen Colonies in their fight against the British, they played no role at the treaty table, and there was no hope of restoring Canada to France. Denied that possibility, the Canadiens found themselves cut off from the Ohio as well by the Treaty of Paris (1783). The Constitutional Act (1791) did further territorial damage by restricting Lower Canada to the St. Lawrence Valley.

Montreal's role changed as well. It was no longer attached to its hinterland, much of which was now being administered by a separate colonial regime in Upper Canada (although that would prove to matter very little in practical terms). And with the Constitutional Act, Montreal's British merchant elite lost the possibility of establishing an anglophone-Protestant population capable of shifting the cultural balance of power in the Province of Quebec. Île de Montreal was once again an island of English-speakers in a francophone colony. However, the border between Upper and Lower Canada took time to firm up. Loyalists settled most heavily in and around the Bay of Quinte, establishing the town of Kingston. These communities depended heavily on Montreal as their cultural and commercial metropolis and continued to do so for decades.


MONTREAL

CIRCUS

Mr. Codet's Benefit;

Mr. CODET respectfully informs the Citizens of Montreal and its vicinity, that he feels grateful for the frequent applause bestowed on him for his exertions, to gratify and please them at the Circus; he also informs them, that his benefit is fixed for MONDAY EVENING next, when his friends and the Public are respectfully invited to attend; he assures them that his exertions shall not be relaxed, and hopes at that time to give general satisfaction.

Grand and Brilliant Representation, composed of Feats of Horsemanship, & a Grand display of FIRE WORKS.

On Monday Evening, March 9, 1812.

To commence with the Military Manœuvres; By Eight Riders.

Masters Duffee and Tatnal will execute several feats of Horsemanship, &c. &c.

Mr. MENIAL in the character of a Clown, will perform Feats of Horsemanship, Buffoonery, &c.

Mr. Steward will signalize himself by many Feats of Horsemanship, Vaulting, & Agility.

The Celebrated African will perform Feats of Horsemanship, and Dance a Hornpipe—his horse in full Speed.

Madam REDON will on one Horse, execute a great number of Feats of Horsemanship, &c. &c.

Mr. CODET anxious to give general satisfaction to those who will honor him with their presence, will exert all in his power to please, after many feats of Horsemanship, he will leap over four Boards seperated and together, and will terminate by throwing a back somersett from his Horse, and firing a pair of pistols his Horse in full speed—which was never attempted by any other person but himself.

Master Duffee will introduce the horse Colin, who will set and lay in different attitudes, and also partake a collation with his master.

Mr. Codet will execute the elegant Exercises on the

SLACK ROPE;

He will perform several difficult Feats, too numerous to be mentioned.

TIGHT ROPE PERFORMANCE;

Mr. Manfredy will do his utmost to give entire satisfaction to the audience by performing a variety of his most tasty Feats.

The Ground and Lofty Tumbling;

Will be executed by Messrs. Menial, Codet, Duffee and Tatnal.

Grand and Briliant Display of

FIRE WORKS;

Composed and arranged by Mr. CODET.

1st.—The Wheel of St. Catherine, which will appear and disappear and change to different forms and colours.

2d.—The Lady's Caprice, which will astonish the Spectators by throwing a quantity of Fire in the air.

3d.—A large Sun, which will change its forms and be metamorphosed into a Star.

4th.—The Grand Calipers, that will open and shut, and will Represent the Figure EIGHT.

5th.—And last, the Grand Combat between the SUN and MOON, this beautiful piece of Fire Work will supprise the audience by its taking several Forms and many different Colours.

Tickets to be had at Messrs. *Cunningham & Co's Book-Store*, and at the *Circus* Office.

*Figure 7.17 Montreal was the centre of culture and urban excitement in the Canadas on the eve of the War of 1812. [Long Description] (#fig7.17)*

Like the Maritime colonies, Lower Canada benefited somewhat from the post-Revolutionary War boom in British shipbuilding and shipping. As the most mature of the agricultural economies still under British control, Lower Canada fed many of the newer settlements to the east and to the west. This was reflected in substantial population growth, almost all of which came from natural increase. The crude birth rate (CBR) in the towns (Montreal, Trois-Rivières, and Quebec) rose from 22.1 per 1000 women (aged 15 to

45) in 1790 to a high of 37.5 in 1811, falling a bit then surging to 43.8 in 1818. The rural CBR was vastly greater, rising from 47.5 per 1000 in 1790 to the mid-50s through most of the period, with peaks of about 56 in both 1795 and 1818. The growth of towns was significant but not staggering. The number of town-dwellers rose from 32,000 in 1786 to 41,042 in 1818. The countryside, however, more than doubled in size in the same years from 114,502 individuals to 283,433.[3]

A nagging problem in Lower Canada, one that would only get worse, was the availability of land. One reason for moving the Loyalists west was the difficulties entailed in fitting them into the seigneurial landscape. British and British American settlers wanted to be freeholders, not tenant farmers of any kind (another provision of the Constitutional Act). What's more, the best riverfront land was already spoken for. From the perspective of the habitants, too, there were limits. Successive generations had carved the farms into less and less viable lots. Generations were parting ways as sons and daughters sought land in other parts of the colony. Further, operating costs were rising: even before the Seven Years' War observers commented on how the Canadiens had cleared the forest far back from the river, using the wood for construction, fencing, and fuel. The effect was dramatic: by 1791 there was hardly a tree within a kilometre of the St. Lawrence. The amount of labour and money that had to be set aside for building materials and fuel rose, all of which had to be transported farther from forest to farm.

This clear-cutting of the valley had other ramifications. Habitat changes reduced the number of forest birds and thus increased the population of mosquitos. Wildlife generally was depleted and wildfowl in particular. The Canadien diet became less reliant on game and more on domesticated animals for protein. This, of course, required reassigning crop resources as feed or fields for grazing rather than for sale or the production of cash crops.[4] Historian Colin Coates has found evidence of marginal farm incomes in an interesting change in social behaviour. Coates observed a spike (from about 1800) in requests that clergy permit marriages between cousins. He argues that this arose because poorer families sought tighter internal alliances in order to better deflect loss of land and resources to people outside the extended family. Alternatively, Coates proposes that *cousin-cousine* marriages were a sign that the pool of possible marriage partners was shrinking as newcomers to seigneuries were kept away by the lack of available land.[5]

The colonial economy also began to change around 1800. The fur trade through Montreal was increasingly challenged in the West by the Hudson's Bay Company, adding some uncertainty to its future. As is described in Chapter 8 (#chapter-8-1-introduction), turmoil and outright fur trade warfare had an impact on lives in the West; it also impacted fortunes in Lower Canada. Secondly, the timber trade in all of the colonies was stimulated by the Napoleonic Wars, which had the effect of redirecting Canadien labour from farms to forests. This produced some wealth and helped household incomes in the seigneuries as well, but it created new problems and patterns in its own right. Finally, the British market at last accepted grain from British North America and the United States, and a new market

3. T.J.A. Le Goff, "The Agricultural Crisis in Lower Canada, 1802–12: A Review of a Controversy," in *Perspectives on Canadian Economic History*, ed. Douglas McCalla (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 25, 32.

4. Colin M. Coates, *The Metamorphoses of Landscape and Community in Early Quebec* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000), 32–41.

5. Ibid., 67–68.

thus appeared overnight in the 1790s for farm surpluses.[6] This marked a significant opportunity for growers and shippers of Canadian farm produce, although it also brought with it increased dependency on the British marketplace and a reorientation away from markets as distant as the Mediterranean.

Key Takeaways

- The Constitutional Act created the colonies of Upper and Lower Canada and established conditions for executive and oligarchical rule.
- The constitution was the subject of criticism from about 1800 on.
- Upper Canada grew rapidly from a core group of Loyalists to which were added Indigenous and American migrants as well as British immigrants.
- The farming frontier in Upper Canada was a source of wealth attributable to farm output and the sale of lands.
- Population increases by natural means in Lower Canada placed pressure on the landscape.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 7.15 long description:** Land survey of Six Nations land, completed in 1821. Featured in this survey is the Grand River, which is west of Lake Ontario in southern Ontario. Named but not depicted is Lake Erie, south of the river. A label running alongside the map reads “Districts of Gore and Niagara.”

Along the banks of the river are neatly divided parcels of land. Near the northern part of the river are a clergy and Crown reserve each for Six Nation lands and the County of Lincoln.

Several of the parcels of land along the river are numbered and named. From north to south, these numbers and names are Number 4, Nichol; Number 3, Woolwich; Number 2, Waterloo; Number 1, Dumfries. Then there is a considerable length of land that contains small riverbank settlements for the Cayugas, Mohawks, Aqugas, the Delawares and the Onandagas, among others; then there is Block B; and finally, just north of Lake Erie, there is Block A or Number 5.

East and west of the Grand River are square land parcels, presumably for settlers. These land parcels are named such things as Blandford, Blenheim, Beverly, Ancaster, Glanford, Saltfleet, and Barton.

[Return to Figure 7.15] (#attachment_1195)

**Figure 7.16 long description:** Notice from Council-Office, dated December 29, 1798. Titled “Yonge-Street.”

It reads, “Notice is hereby given to all persons settled, or about to settle on Yonge-Street, and whose

6. T. J. A. Le Goff, “The Agricultural Crisis in Lower Canada, 1802–12: A Review of a Controversy,” in *Perspectives on Canadian Economic History*, ed. Douglas McCalla (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 10.

*locations* have not yet been confirmed by order of the President in council, that before such locations can be confirmed it will be expected that the following CONDITIONS be complied with:

1. That within *twelve months* from the time they are permitted to occupy their respective lots, they do cause to be erected thereon a good and sufficient dwelling house, of at least 16 feet by 20 in the clear, and do occupy the frame in *Person*, or by a substantial *Tenant*.
2. That within the same period of time, they do clear and fence *five* acres, of their respective lots, in a substantial manner.
3. That within the same period of time, they do open as much of the Yonge-Street road as lies between the front of their lots and the middle of said road, amounting to one acre or thereabouts."

Notice is signed John Small, C.E.C.

[Return to Figure 7.16] (#attachment_1197)

**Figure 7.17 long description:** Notice from the Montreal Circus about Mr. Codet's Benefit.

It reads, "Mr. Codet respectfully informs the Citizens of Montreal and its vicinity, that he feels grateful for the frequent applause bestowed on him for his exertions, to gratify and please them at the Circus; he also informs them, that his benefit is fixed for Monday Evening next, when his friends and the Public are respectfully invited to attend; he assures them that his exertions shall not be relaxed, and hopes at that time to give general satisfaction."

The notice promises "Grand and Brilliant Representation, composed of Feats of Horsemanship, & a Grand display of Fire Works" on Monday evening, March 9, 1812.

The evening is detailed as such (transcribed verbatim):

- To commence with the Military Manoeuvres; By Eight Riders.
- Masters Duffee and Tatmal will execute several feats of Horsemanship, etc., etc.
- Mr. Menial in the character of a Clown, will perform Feats of Horsemanship, Buffoonery, etc.
- Mr. Steward will signalize himself by many Feats of Horsemanship, Vaulting, & Agility.
- The Celebrated African will perform Feats of Horsemanship, and Dance a Hornpipe—his horse in full Speed.
- Madam Redon will on one Horse, execute a great number of Feats of Horsemanship, etc., etc.
- Mr. Codet, anxious to give general satisfaction to those who will honor him with their presence, will exert all in his power to please, after many feats of Horsemanship, he will leap over four Boards separated and together, and will terminate by throwing a back somerset from his Horse, and firing a pair of pistols, his Horse in full speed—which was never attempted by any other person but himself.
- Master Duffee will introduce the horse Collin, who will set and lay in different attitudes, and also partake a collation with his master.
- Mr. Codet will execute the elegant Exercises on the slack rope; he will perform several

difficult Feats, too numerous to be mentioned.

- Tight rope performance; Mr. Manfredy will do his utmost to give entire satisfaction to the audience by performing a variety of his most tasty Feats.
- The Ground and Lofty Tumbling; will be executed by Messrs. Menial, Codet, Duffee and Tatmal.

Also featured will be a "Grand and Brilliant Display of Fire Works; composed and arranged by Mr. Codet," the program for which follows:

1. The Wheel of St. Catherine, which will appear and disappear and change to different forms and colours.
2. The Lady's Caprice, which will [astonish?] the Spectators by throwing a quantity of Fire in the air.
3. A large Sun, which will change its forms and be metamorphosed into a Star.
4. The Grand Calipers, that will open and shut, and will Represent the Figure Eight.
5. And last, the Grand Combat between the Sun and Moon, this beautiful piece of Fire Work will supprise [*sic*] the audience by its taking several Forms and many different Colours.

Tickets to be had at Messrs. Cunningham and Co's Book-Store, and at the Circus Office.

[Return to Figure 7.17] (#attachment_1198)

#### Media Attributions

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# 7.7 Slavery

African slavery existed in the colonies of New France and British North America for over 200 years, yet there remains a profound silence in classrooms and teaching resources about Canada's involvement in the trade and ownership of humans. According to available historical documents, at least 4000 Africans were held in bondage in the two centuries of colonial settlements in New France, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Upper Canada. Thayendenaga (Joseph Brant) owned slaves. Other Loyalists brought their slaves with them into exile. In the absence of plantations, most slaves were held in small numbers and likely worked principally in household roles. Their living conditions varied dramatically and, whatever humanity was shown them on a day-to-day basis, they were chattel slaves and could be sold. Family members could be sold separately. The absence of plantation conditions does not mean that the lot of slaves was much better in New France or British North America than it was in the American South.

## Slavery & Indigenous Peoples

Similarly, enslaved Indigenous individuals could be found throughout New France, many of them acquired as captives from the Fox Nation and, before that, from northern Louisiana. In the southern reaches of New France in particular the currency for slaves was rifles and horses, and some Indigenous nations, like the Caddoans, were fearsomely well armed as a result.[1] Although Indigenous slaves were forbidden in Louisiana, they were not in Canada and Acadia. Giving slaves as gifts was commonly practised by many of the Canadiens' Indigenous allies in the *Pays d'en Haut* and, especially after the Great Peace of 1701, this was a means of reaffirming the relationship. Captives scooped up in raids on Plains nations were handed on by Indigenous slavers to allies nearby and as far east as the Wabanaki Confederacy, typically with some ceremony. In some cases, western Indigenous slaves were exchanged for English captives who were then returned to Boston.

Slaves certainly appeared in greater numbers in the St. Lawrence Valley in the early 18th century. Typically, the enslaved Indigenous people found in the Laurentian settlements (and very heavily concentrated in Montreal) were male, obtained when they were around 14 years old, and originally from the Illinois country. When furs and slaves from the West were taken to South Carolina for trade with the English, the French regime sought to stop the practice quickly. Furs and slaves were part of the diplomatic relationship on the frontier; if Western nations were happy trading or giving slaves to the English, the alliances might crumble. For that reason, ostensibly, slave owning in Montreal was actively encouraged to offset the Carolinian demand.

One study points to an irony in the slave-trading business in the *Pays d'en Haut*. Originally, in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, it was grease for the wheels of diplomacy, a means of ensuring a continuance of the Great Peace between the French and their allies and, as well, among their allies.

1. Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 317.

But growing demand for Indigenous slaves in the towns and farms of Canada meant that Indigenous allies were motivated to engage in war against their neighbours to obtain prisoners. Further, Indigenous torture practices associated with captives began to change and even fade away because the injuries that were traditionally inflicted on prisoners (even those who might become adoptees) reduced their value to French buyers and allies. More war but less torture is a trade-off of sorts, but not a great one if the motivation is to enslave greater numbers.[2]

The context of slavery in eastern woodland Indigenous societies has already been explored: it was closer to adoption than to chattel slavery. For the French, however, ownership was complete and included the children of slaves in perpetuity. Nevertheless, freedom could be obtained and there is evidence to suggest adoption-like conditions in some Canadien households. On the West Coast, Indigenous societies maintained slaves as chattel, some of whom were executed during potlatches as a symbolic disposal of property.

## African Slavery

The arrival of liberated African slaves from the American colonies in the 1770s and 1780s complicated the issue of slavery. As **freedmen** (and women) they became critics of the abuse of African slaves in particular. In the early 1790s this became a greater public issue and Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe (1752–1806), the first lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, from 1791 to 1796, championed legislation intended to bring a gradual end to slavery in Upper Canada. This was a remarkable initiative in that it was the first limitation on slavery in the British Empire. It was, however, also a slippery piece of law that did not prohibit slave owners from selling their people to buyers in the United States, keeping the children of slaves in bondage, and holding the slaves already in their possession until their death. What it did do was prohibit the import of new slaves. The "peculiar institution," as 19th century Southerners who were averse to the word "slavery" called it, continued in Canada until the British Parliament voted for **abolition** in 1834.

**Marie-Joseph Angélique**

Among the most famous of Canadian slaves is Marie-Joseph Angélique. She achieved notoriety in her lifetime by tragedy and arson, and in our time by the work of historians of New France curious about the extensive labour force working in bondage on farms and in the fur trade. Angélique was born into slavery in Portugal and arrived in Montreal via New England in 1725. She was a young adult, about 20 years of age, and, although she was unmarried, she had three children while the property of a prosperous Montreal fur trader, François Poulin de Francheville. Her owner died in 1733 and Angélique evidently took a lover from among the White indentured servants (who themselves occupied a position near to slavery). Learning that Thérèse de Couagne, Francheville's widow and heir was planning to sell her, Angélique and her lover made a run for it. Angélique was captured and returned to de Couagne, which was a mistake. The young woman wreaked vengeance on de Couagne

2. Brett Rushforth, "'A Little Flesh We Offer You': The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 60, no. 4 (October 2003): 777–808.

by setting fire to the house. The flames spread rapidly, destroying 46 buildings and the convent and hospital, the Hôtel-Dieu. Suspicion fell immediately on Angélique. Denying her guilt to the end, she was convicted and sentenced to execution but not before a post-trial round of torture and public shaming. The executioner strangled Angélique and then hanged her from the burnt-out rafters of de Couagne's ruined house. Her executioner was another slave, Mathieu Léveillé, brought to Montreal from Martinique when the position came open a few years earlier.[3]

### Key Takeaways

- Slavery in British North America was commonplace and involved holding Indigenous and African people as property. Their labour was frequently used in domestic environments but also on farms.
- Much of the slave trade in New France involved captive Indigenous individuals sent east from allied nations in the *Pays d'en Haut* and were considered to be diplomatic gifts.
- Steps were first taken toward abolition under the leadership of Lieutenant-Governor John Simcoe, whose 1793 legislation was the first of its kind in the British Empire.

3. Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007).

# 7.8 The War of 1812

The situation in Europe had changed drastically by the end of the 18th century. Inspired by the American Revolution and especially by its democratic ideals, the common people of France took up arms against their absolutist rulers. From 1789 to 1793, the French Revolution took the form of civil war and bitter infighting. France exported its violence in the French Revolutionary Wars that ran from 1792 with little in the way of breaks until the first years of the new century. An increasingly militarized state, France reverted in 1803 from republic to empire, with General Napoleon Bonaparte its new emperor. What followed was a near-global series of conflicts known collectively as the Napoleonic Wars.

Britain declared war in 1793 and one of the first consequences was a tightening of the Navigation Acts that closed off American access to the West Indies. The Americans responded with the **Embargo Act** (1807). The effect of these changes was to lift the Maritime economy once again. Baltic sources of lumber were soon closed off to Britain, which benefited the New Brunswick forest industry. On the whole, the Napoleonic Wars were very good to British North America's economy. Conflict on land and sea in North America, however, put a damper on things. The first of these conflicts was a resumption of unfinished Indigenous business in the Ohio Valley.

## Tecumseh's War

The first **Northwest Indian War** (or Little Turtle's War) followed hard on the heels of the American Revolution and lasted until the defeat of Indigenous forces by American soldiers at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. Indigenous people thereafter ceded most of the Ohio Valley to the United States, moving farther west into the "Indian Territory" or "Indiana." In the years that followed, many leaders of Indigenous tribes (that is, smaller units of organization) in the American "Northwest" tried to adapt to the newcomers' ways. They signed treaties ceding lands in Ohio and Indiana to the United States, thus allowing for American settlers to move in and slowly expand American territory.

The chiefs who supported peace with the United States dominated the Amerindians of the area, such as the Shaawanwaki (Shawnee), Myaamiaki (Miami), and Lenape (Delaware), until 1805 when smallpox, influenza, and other illnesses swept through the Indigenous population. Among the dead was a Lenape leader, Buckongahelas, who had shepherded his tribe from Delaware to Indiana to escape American expansion years before. He and others like him did not trust the Americans and did not want contact with them, due in part to the history of violent conflict between the newcomers and the Lenape. With the death of Buckongahelas, new leaders rose from the tribes in the region, including two brothers from the Shaawanwaki: Tenskwatawa (1768–1836), also known as "the Prophet," and his brother Tecumseh (1768–1813).



*Figure 7.18 A portrait of Shawnee leader Tecumseh by Owen Staples, based on an engraving by Benson John Lossing.*

Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh both opposed American expansion into the region and what they saw as an unhealthy American influence on their people. Tenskwatawa had himself been a heavy drinker before having a transformative experience during an illness in 1805. From then on, he promoted a return to the old ways, calling upon Indigenous peoples of the Ohio and the Northwest to throw off Euro-American technologies, products, clothing styles, and cultural adaptations. This included rejecting Christianity. In this respect he was following in the footsteps of Neolin the Prophet. Tecumseh's contribution was to argue for a unified, pan-Indigenous front that ignored the ancient distinctions between First Nations.

The leader of a large and extensive confederacy of mostly Algonquian-speaking peoples in the Ohio and lands to the west, Tecumseh's message was one of common ownership of Indigenous land, as opposed to individual tribal treaties that signed away, piecemeal, the Ohio and then the rest of the continent. As the brothers rose to prominence and attracted followers, they drew American attention and contempt, which, in turn, created problems for pro-American Indigenous peoples who sought a peaceful co-existence with the settlers.

In 1808 the brothers and their followers moved westward and established Prophetstown on the Wabash

River where it joins the Tippecanoe River, south of Lake Michigan. There, in November 1811, the Americans launched an attack on what had grown into a community of more than 3000 Indigenous people. Tecumseh was away on a recruiting mission and Tenskwatawa led his people to defeat. Tecumseh wasted no time in rebuilding the alliance, pointing to Prophetstown as an indication of what lay in store for Indigenous people who did not resist American incursions. Tecumseh sought out support from the British, which he secured. It was for this reason that the Americans accused the British of stirring up trouble on their western frontier.

## The Second American War of Independence

Meanwhile, the British were harassing American shipping headed to France. The Royal Navy tried to starve France of imports and American shipping was an easy target. As well, the British were looking for British sailors who jumped ship to American vessels. There were plenty and they provided an excuse for the Royal Navy to seize American ships. An attempt to stop the American vessel *Chesapeake* in 1807 resulted in American casualties (including three dead) and the seizing of four alleged British deserters. The **Chesapeake Affair** pushed the so-called **War Hawks** in the U.S. Congress to agitate for war with Britain. It took nearly five years but they got a declaration of war on June 1, 1812. For the Americans this seemed like an enormous risk, one requiring a lot of bravado. But it wasn't. Britain was not prepared to turn the full force of its military might on the United States; it was too busy in Europe fighting France. In fact, the British government had not wanted a war with the Americans at all. The actions of British admirals on the high seas reflected the needs of the Royal Navy, not the desires of the British government.

Nor did the rise in hostilities necessarily reflect the desires and interests of settlers on either side of the border. Trade across the frontier between British North America and the United States had, in fact, been stimulated by the Napoleonic conflict. Rising British demand for wheat could not be met by British North America alone, and American producers and shippers took advantage of the situation to export their grain through Canadian ports (as well as Halifax and Saint John). According to contemporaries, American grain shippers smuggled sledges over snow and ice to Montreal in winter and in summer, "gigantic rafts loaded with the produce of forest and farm and guarded by armed men were floated down the Lake Champlain route from Vermont north."[1]

Upper Canadian settlers in the Niagara Escarpment included a great many Americans who had simply migrated westward and paid little heed to the border between the two countries. Likewise, Canadian exporters on the north side of Lakes Erie and Ontario shipped goods across the water to American ports. Families in exile since 1783 were in some instances reunited by these economic linkages before 1812. War, in these circumstances, was bad for business, even if one's business was subsistence farming. Such concerns did not, of course, factor into the thinking of Britain or Washington.

The Americans could not attack Great Britain directly; an invasion of the British Isles was out of the question. To conduct the war, the Americans had to find British military targets at sea, in the form of the Royal Navy, and on land in North America, where the first obvious target was Canada. By 1812, some Americans believed that an invasion of Canada would trigger a Canadian revolt and help ensure

1. T. J. A. Le Goff, "The Agricultural Crisis in Lower Canada, 1802–12: A Review of a Controversy," in *Perspectives on Canadian Economic History*, ed. Douglas McCalla (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 22.

an American victory, which might even bring the war to a quick end. They were wrong. The former American president Thomas Jefferson famously claimed that the "acquisition of Canada" would be a "mere matter of marching." The war in the north went badly for the Americans at every stage.

Although the United States had declared war, Britain was better able to communicate to their colonists in North America about the outbreak of official hostilities. For this reason, the American garrison at Fort Michilimackinac was surprised when a British force arrived in July 1812 and demanded their surrender. The British force was small, consisting of the garrison from St. Joseph Island along with Indigenous warriors from several nations and some Canadians. The fort fell without a shot being fired. It was an inauspicious start for the Americans, and it sent a signal to Tecumseh that it was time to ready his troops for a coordinated attack on the Americans.

British relations with the Indigenous nations of the Great Lakes had improved after 1783. Rounds of gift-giving and quiet support for anyone who was harassing the Americans repaired Britain's reputation in the Ohio and the Northwest. (The War Hawks were right in their suspicions in this regard.) Keeping the Americans off-balance in the West was undoubtedly in the best interests of the British and Canadians, although the settler society was hardly anti-American. Efforts to drum up support and voluntarism among the Upper Canadians was, as historian Jane Errington has demonstrated, largely a failure.[2]

## The War in Canada

Tecumseh joined General Isaac Brock (1769–1812) near Detroit in an effort to jointly capture Detroit. Victory followed quickly on August 16, 1812, one that demonstrated a shared genius on the part of both commanders for psychological warfare. Through clever ploys and simple deception, they were able to convince the Americans that their forces were much larger than they actually were, and they both preyed on the Americans' fear of an unbridled Indigenous attack. Brock had nothing but good things to say about Tecumseh. "A more sagacious or a more gallant Warrior does not I believe exist," he wrote.[3] The fall of Detroit meant that the whole of the American Northwest was vulnerable. More Indigenous troops were emboldened to rise against the Americans and support the British, and they were all further encouraged by the subsequent fall of Fort Dearborn (Chicago) to a force of Potawatomi. Neither Tecumseh nor Brock would have long to savour these victories.

Tecumseh's path took him into battles along the Lake Erie frontier. His forces were obliged to follow in the wake of Major General Henry Procter, a commander who lacked Brock's resolve and imagination. Following setbacks on the lake and at Amherstburg, Procter led a retreat up the Valley of the Thames repeatedly refusing to take up offensive positions. Finally, at Moraviantown on October 5, 1813, Procter stopped running. His troops were, however, much depleted and demoralized. Against an American force three times that of the British-Indigenous-Canadian alliance, the outcome was almost certain. Tecumseh was one of the casualties of the battle. With his death the Confederacy and the dream of a unified Indigenous peoples' homeland in the Great Lakes region perished as well. The Indigenous warriors from across the region dispersed and thereafter played only a minor and supporting role in the war.

2. E. Jane Errington, "Reluctant Warriors: British North Americans and the War of 1812," in *The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754–1814*, eds. David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 325–336.

3. Herbert C. W. Goltz, "TECUMSEH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed August 30, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tecumseh_5E.html .

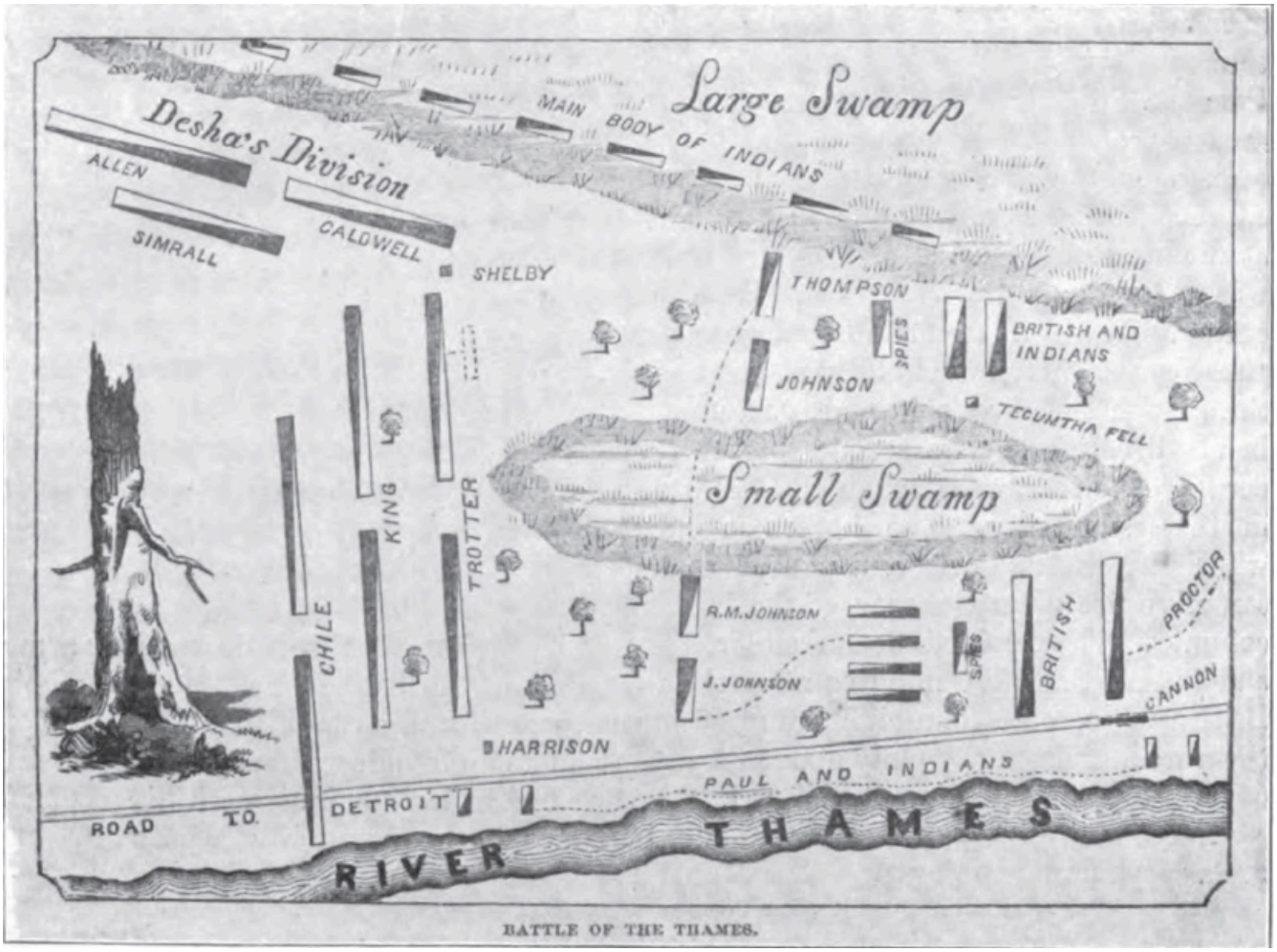


*Figure 7.19 A sketch of the troops arrayed at the Battle of the Thames in 1813 that shows where Tecumseh fell.*

Brock peeled off from the western frontier to defend the Niagara Peninsula in October 1812. An American assault on Queenston Heights failed badly with 1000 American soldiers captured, but Brock died leading an attempt to dislodge the Americans from the hilltop. In April 1813 the Americans launched a new cross-lake offensive, briefly capturing, burning, and looting York, then the colony's capital. This was the first instance of destruction of public buildings for which the Americans would repeatedly pay a high price in 1815. The main focus of battle then shifted back to the Niagara Peninsula where Fort George fell to the Americans, but the Indigenous forces — alerted by Laura Secord, a local woman who had overheard American officers laying out their plans — were able to repel them at Beaver Dams on June 24, 1813. British regulars and Canadian militia played a larger role at Lundy's Lane on July 25, but the outcome was largely inconclusive. This became a theme of naval battles on the Great Lakes in the year that followed.

The Americans were clearly exploring the pinch-points of Canada's supply lines. Capturing the Niagara would have controlled the flow of supplies between Lake Erie and downstream Lake Ontario. Likewise the eastern end of Lake Ontario at Prescott became a target in an effort to cut off Upper Canadian troops from Montreal suppliers. The Battle of Ogdensburg, however, provided another victory for the British. The American garrison withdrew and commerce across the border resumed as though there was no war. Likewise the American attacks in late 1813 failed along the Champlain corridor. (Champlain Lake issues into Champlain River and then into the St. Lawrence and was a Haudenosaunee invasion route

for centuries.) Battles at Chateauguay and Crysler's Farm went well for the British forces. Importantly, Chateauguay was fought mostly by Canadien Voltigeurs, a volunteer regiment bolstered by promises of significant land grants at the end of the war, along with Kanien'kehá:ka from near Montreal.

**Historians on Video**

Cecilia Morgan (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto) has written a good deal on the creation of Canadian heroes in the 19th century. In this video she considers the elevation of Laura Secord a nationalist icon and an ideal of femininity. Here is a link to the transcript for a video about Laura Secord's hero status in Canadian history [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_cm_u10_05.pdf).



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## Heading to a Draw

By 1813 American attacks on the Canadas ended. Abandoning their position around Fort George, the Americans decided to torch the town of Newark (now Niagara-on-the-Lake) and did so with the enthusiastic support of pro-American Canadians led by a member of the legislative assembly of Upper Canada, John Willcocks. The burning of Newark — and the subsequent deaths of civilians from exposure in metre-deep snow — led to the retributive assault on Lewiston, New York, which was only halted by Tuscarora warriors who interceded on behalf of American settlers. This moment stands out in the War of 1812 because it reflects the lack of the pan-Indigenous vision that Tecumseh had in mind: the troops stopped by the Tuscarora — the sixth of the expanded Six Nations Iroquois — included a large contingent of Kanien'kehá:ka warriors. Disunity among the Haudenosaunee clearly had not improved since 1783.

**The Burning of Newark**

Newark was Upper Canada's original capital, but Governor Simcoe thought it was too vulnerable to attack and so moved the seat of government to York. He was prescient. The Americans were withdrawing from the Niagara Peninsula in the second week of December 1813. Their Canadian allies, led by John Willcocks, were exasperated at this turn of events and demanded that Newark pay a price for Upper Canada's resistance. Willcocks and his volunteer regiment, overseen by the American troops, razed the town by fire. One eyewitness, a 16-year-old girl named Amelia Ryerse, subsequently reported on what she had observed: "When I looked up I saw the hillside and the fields as far as the eye could reach covered with American soldiers… My mother knew instinctively what they were going to do. She entreated the commanding officer to spare her property and said that she was a

widow with a young family. He answered her civilly and respectfully and regretted that his orders were to burn… Very soon we saw a column of dark smoke rise from every building and what at early morn had been a prosperous homestead, at noon there were only smouldering ruins."[4] Accounts claim that 149 homes were destroyed. The burning of Newark as well as the American raid on Port Dover in May 1814 (which was also burned) and the attempt to raze York (Toronto) contributed to the British decision to later torch the American capital.

The war dragged on for another year and a half, but the theatre of conflict was no longer along the British North American frontier. The Royal Navy's attempts to press Britain's advantage at sea on the east coast was intended in part to draw American troops away from Canadian targets. These new tactics, however, led only to gestures and stalemates, such as the burning of Washington and the shelling of Baltimore. British failure at New Orleans early in 1815 failed to dislodge the Americans from the Mississippi Valley holdings they had recently acquired from France in the **Louisiana Purchase**.

Historians are divided over the outcome of the war, although everyone agrees that the Indigenous peoples of North America lost. Tecumseh's Confederacy fell to pieces with his death, the Haudenosaunee remained divided, and even if the British and Americans could agree to provide a sacrosanct Indian territory in the midwest there was no one of Tecumseh's stature left to pull it together. Continental domination, in any event, was within the grasp of the Americans and this was certainly confirmed by the outcome of the war. Indigenous populations across the northwest and the southeast were forcibly relocated to Kansas and Oklahoma, part of which is remembered as the "Trail of Tears." The Wyandot — a coalition of Wendat (Huron) and Tionontati (Petun) — were among those removed to Kansas in the 1840s. British commitments to their Indigenous allies grew stale and a centuries-old partnership turned into something more like guardianship in the decade that was to follow.

Canada was a victor in that it did not lose any territory. Britain didn't concede anything at the **Treaty of Ghent**, so it can be argued that the American failure to punish Britain for the Chesapeake counts as a British win. But the Americans had inflicted serious wounds on Canada, on British forces, on Indigenous alliances, and on the British Treasury. It was back to the status quo ante bellum after Ghent, but America was a changed nation. British North America's survival was earned and deserved, but it lived with the consequences of 1812–1815 for many years to come.

## Rush–Bagot, Republicanism, and British North American Identity

In 1817 the British and Americans signed the Rush–Bagot Treaty, which demilitarized the Great Lakes. Rather than a zone of conflict they became a zone of commerce. This worked splendidly for small and large merchants alike. Ideologically, however, it represented a significant change.

The elites of British North America were distinguished by a number of qualities, one of which was their Toryism. Loyalists from 1783 and their heirs were reinforced by a mythological legacy of 1812–1815

4. Quoted in Alistair Sweeney, *Fire Along the Frontier: Great Battles of the War of 1812* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2012), 187.

when, it was claimed, brave Canadian militiamen repelled American armies. This account purposely underplays the lack of interest (if not distaste) many Canadians felt toward fighting with their southern neighbours, but it served to legitimate the Chateau Clique in Lower Canada and the Family Compact in Upper Canada and the Maritime colonies. It was also a foil to brandish against those more republican-minded British North Americans who were outspoken in their admiration of American political institutions. To be a republican — rather than a Tory — was to climb into bed with the enemy to the south, not to mention the enemy in France. Toryism and privilege were safe for the time being.

No one was completely fooled by the more exaggerated claims of Tory myth-makers; there was no chance that a British North American militia could hold off an American assault without British support. British North Americans would continue, therefore, to thread their Western Hemispheric identity with one that involved Britain. Certainly the economy would continue to point in that direction as the colonies strove to survive and advance in the depression years after the Napoleonic Wars.

**Historians on Video**

The question of English-Canadian identity and its links to the War of 1812 are considered here by Jack Little (Simon Fraser University). Here is a link to the transcript of Jack Little's introduction and video on English-Canadian identity in relation to the War of 1812 [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_jl_u7_01.pdf).

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Key Takeaways

- The years between 1783 and 1815 were marked by almost continuous Indigenous resistance to American expansion into the Ohio Valley and what the Americans described as the "Northwest."
- Americans suspected the British of stirring up and provisioning Indigenous resistance which, combined with British attacks on American shipping, contributed to a growing call in Washington for a "second War of Independence."
- The initial stages of the War of 1812 went well for the British/Canadian/Indigenous forces but significant setbacks at Moraviantown and along the Niagara Escarpment resulted in an inconclusive outcome.
- The War of 1812 became a myth-building moment in the development of an Anglo-Canadian identity.

**Video Attributions**

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# 7.9 Summary

In the half century or so between the Conquest and the end of the War of 1812, colonial North America was essentially reinvented. New France disappeared from the maps, although the people of New France were still a prominent part of the landscape. British authority spread out across the continent and then snapped back to, ironically, the boundaries of pre-1713 New France (less the Ohio, the *Pays en Haut*, and Louisiana). Nova Scotia, similarly, expanded, divided, contracted. New colonies were carved out of what had been Canada and Acadia. Newfoundland became less "a great ship moored off the Grand Banks" and more a settlement colony with permanent residents and a formalized system of colonial administration.[1]

The greatest change, of course, came in the form of the new republic comprising the Thirteen Colonies. Their War of Independence was simultaneously a civil war, one that resulted in the exodus of 80,000 to 100,000 Loyalists, roughly half of whom made their way to the remaining colonies. The Loyalist legacy is a complex issue. As an infusion of population and especially families, the Loyalists very abruptly accelerated the settlement process of the northern colonies. Looked at another way, they accelerated the process of displacing Indigenous peoples, removing them from their traditional lands, overwhelming their numbers, and thus outweighing whatever threat they might still pose to newcomer communities, whether in the Maritimes or around the Great Lakes.

Administratively, the Loyalists brought particular demands. They were loyal to the Crown but they were accustomed to a degree of self-government in the old Thirteen Colonies. This necessitated the creation of New Brunswick and Upper Canada, two colonies in which Loyalist agendas would dominate political life for the better part of a century. The Loyalists brought with them a suite of values, as well, that informed British North American life. Among the elite there was a strong tendency toward conservative principles and a deep-seated mistrust of democratic and republican ideals. Many of the frontier farmers, Kanien'kehá:ka, German settlers, and freed slaves who were part of the migration north, however, came with different political positions in their cultural baggage. It is commonly claimed that the Loyalist legacy in modern Canada is detectable as a strain of patriarchal and aristocratic conservatism distinct from what is found south of the border. However true that may be, historians and political scientists agree, too, that there were contrary tendencies within the exile community.

At the very least, the Loyalist migration defined the revised British North America in opposition to the United States. Enmity, suspicion, lingering attachment, and admiration were all part of the range of emotions felt toward the United States by this cadre of refugees and those who joined them in later generations. By 1815 British North America had demonstrated a convincing unwillingness to disappear. The War of 1812 brought to the surface tensions that existed between Loyalists and Late Loyalists, between the official notion of a British colony and a transplanted community of Americans, especially in Upper Canada. It also drew to an end the military role of Indigenous peoples in the Great Lakes colony and farther east. Some alliances, like the Council of Three Fires, continued but the military value of Indigenous allies was no longer a currency in Indigenous-European diplomacy in British North America.

1. Jerry Bannister, "Naval Government 1729–1815," on *Silk Gowns and Sou'westers: History of the Law and the Courts* (2000). Accessed 23 December 2014, http://www.heritage.nf.ca/lawfoundation/articles/naval.html .

Key Terms

**abolition**: Refers to putting an end to the institution of slavery. In Britain, a single piece of legislation resulted in the abolition of slavery in 1834. Abolition in Upper Canada was initiated by John Graves Simcoe in 1793.

**aboriginal title**: Indigenous ownership of land, territory, or other material resources.

**absentee landlords**: Also called **proprietors**, the main landowners on Prince Edward Island, whose land was allocated to them in a lottery held in London in 1767. Few of them visited the island and few attended to the responsibilities they were given as landlords. Most, however, attempted to charge significant rents to their tenant farmers in the colony. See also **escheat.**

**African American slaves**: Chattel slaves, principally from Africa, who worked primarily on plantations. Slavery occurred throughout North America in both European and Indigenous communities. Some African American (as opposed to African Caribbean) slaves were later freed (see **freedmen**) depending on their role in the American Revolution.

**anglicization**: British policy of replacing French culture — language, customs, laws, and Catholic religion — with those of Anglican/Protestant Britain.

**brewing**: The production of beer, like the distilling of whisky, was a means of adding value to surplus grain being grown in Upper and Lower Canada beginning in the 1780s. John Molson of Montreal was an early participant in brewing and — like many Canadians who followed in his footsteps in the liquor production trade — amassed a great fortune.

**British North America**: Term used intermittently after 1783 to describe the colonies left to Britain after the Revolution. Initially, these included Newfoundland, the Province of Quebec, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia. Subsequently, the list would increase to include new colonies (Cape Breton Island and New Brunswick), a partitioned colony (Upper and Lower Canada), and — in very general terms — Rupert's Land (which was not administered by a Crown delegate). Vancouver Island and British Columbia would also be regarded as part of British North America before Confederation.

***Chateau Clique***: A highly influential cadre of economic and social leaders who fashioned themselves politically as the British (or Tory) Party in Lower Canada. Their numbers included prominent merchants like James McGill and John Molson. Their agenda included assimilation of the French Catholic population and perpetuating a hierarchical social and political order.

**Chesapeake Affair**: A British attempt during the Napoleonic Wars to reduce American shipping to France by capturing U.S. shipping vessels and impressing (forcing) sailors into the British Navy. In 1807, the USS *Chesapeake*, a warship, was bombarded and captured by the HMS *Leopard*; four sailors were seized and tried for desertion from the British Navy, one of whom was subsequently hanged. The Americans regarded this as an act of aggression, and the incident fomented war fever in some quarters. For more information, see **War Hawks**.

**Clergy Reserves**: Created by the **Constitutional Act**, land parcels set aside (one-seventh of all public lands) in Upper Canada for the use of the Church of England (a.k.a. Anglican Church). There were smaller Clergy Reserves in Lower Canada as well.

**common law**: British code of laws dealing with property, contracts, and other civil matters.

**Constitutional Act**: The 1791 legislation that created two colonies — Upper and Lower Canada — out of what was left of the Province of Quebec after the Treaty of Paris, 1783. In Upper Canada, the British common

law was applied, while the *Coutume de Paris* survived in Lower Canada. Both colonies received their own administrative structures.

***Coutume de Paris***: A code of civil law developed in and for Paris and extended to New France. Addressed land ownership and use, family relations, and inheritance.

**decapitation thesis**: Historical theory that explains the apparent loss of Canadien leadership in the colony after the Conquest as the result of an exodus of leading commercial, administrative, and social figures to France.

**Embargo Act**: Federal legislation that was passed in the United States in 1807 to effectively close off all exports to foreign ports, in an attempt to force the British and French to respect American shipping. The objective was to starve the importing nations of American goods and thus oblige them to cease preying on American shipping. The act was repealed in 1809.

**escheat**: A movement to force unimproved lands on Prince Edward Island back into the hands of the Crown. The Escheat Party made the land issue the dominant one in the colony in the 19th century.

**Family Compact**: An association of leading individuals and families in Upper Canada devoted to the suppression of republican tendencies in the colony and perpetuating an oligarchy in government.

**Fort Pitt**: Site of modern-day Pittsburgh. Replaced the French establishment, Fort Duquesne.

**franchise**: The ability and right to vote in a democratic society. It is always arbitrarily determined and is defined as much by who it excludes as by who it includes. "Universal adult male suffrage" was never achieved in British North America before Confederation, forget the extension of the franchise to women or Indigenous peoples generally.

**freedmen**: Slaves who were freed from slavery, either by manumission or by emancipation.

**Intolerable Acts**: A number of taxes and tariffs introduced by the British government during the Seven Years' War that targeted the American colonies in an effort to recover financial losses. Following American protests, Parliament passed more laws that gave Britain greater powers in the colonies. It also introduced the Quebec Act, which reattached the Ohio Valley and the Northwest to the Province of Quebec and enhanced the rights of the Catholic Church; both provisions were provocative in the Thirteen Colonies. Together, the Intolerable Acts catalyzed the revolutionary movement in the colonies.

**Jay's Treaty**: A 1794 treaty that resolved several issues outstanding from the Treaty of Paris (1783). With this treaty, the Americans were keen to address the continuing British presence and role in the Ohio/Northwest, and the British wished to secure American neutrality in the French Revolutionary Wars and clarify the boundaries with Canada.

**Late Loyalists**: American immigrants who arrived in British North America in the years after the Revolution, especially in the 1790s and the first decade of the 19th century. Their "loyalism" was never certain, and they were often outspoken critics of Toryism.

**Louisiana Purchase**: The sale of the Louisiana Territory by Napoleon to the United States in 1803. In 1800, Spain returned to France the territory it had ceded to Spain in 1762, which encompassed the western half of the Mississippi drainage (that is, from New Orleans to southern Alberta and Saskatchewan). Less than three years later, France decided to forgo attempts to rebuild New France and sold the territory to the United States.

***marchands***: The Canadien merchants of Montreal, as opposed to the post-Conquest British and British-American merchants who arrived to take over the fur trade.

**Napoleonic Wars**: A series of wars involving France and much of the rest of Europe from 1803 to 1815. The War of 1812 was a chapter in the larger conflict.

**Northwest Indian War**: Conflict from 1785–1795. Part of an ongoing attempt by the Indigenous

Northwestern Confederacy to insulate the Ohio Valley and what the Americans referred to as their Northwest Territory against American invasion. Also known as Little Turtle's War. Followed Pontiac's Rebellion and anticipated Tecumseh's War.

**Pennsylvania Dutch**: German settlers in Pennsylvania, many of whom moved to Nova Scotia shortly after the Conquest.

**pre-Loyalist**: Term for non-francophone settlers in British North America who arrived before the Loyalist migration in 1783–1784. Almost exclusively associated with settlers in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

**Province of Quebec**: Created by the Royal Proclamation (1763), the province included lands from Detroit to the Gaspé Peninsula, but removed the Ohio Valley and the west from Quebec's (Canada's) control.

**Quebec Act**: Also called the British North America Act, 1774 (not to be confused with the British North America Act of 1867), it was the legislation that restored the Ohio Valley and the northwestern *Pays d'en Haut* to the Province of Quebec, provided official recognition of the rights of Catholics in the colony, and restored the *Coutume de Paris* and the ability of the Catholic Church to collect tithes. It recognized the rights of seigneurs and irritated the Thirteen Colonies where it was seen as cheating the Appalachian colonies of their prize in the Ohio. It was grouped with the other Intolerable Acts. It is regarded as a partial cause of the American Revolution.

**Royal Proclamation**: The legislation passed on October 7, 1763 that created the Province of Quebec and recognized aboriginal title in the west. The Act angered American settlers because it hampered westward movement into the Ohio Valley.

**taxation without representation**: A principle espoused by American colonists in the 1770s articulating the view that British law forbade the seizing of a citizen's property by the state without his consent (which could be given by an elected representative in Parliament). As the colonies had no representatives in Parliament, the colonists maintained that they could not be taxed.

**Tories**: A term associated with Loyalists in the American Revolution whose philosophical position was opposed to the Whiggish/republican stance of Thomas Paine and the Patriots. Also a term sometimes used for British and Canadian conservatives today.

**Treaty of Ghent**: Intended to end the War of 1812 between Britain and the United States. The treaty was agreed to in 1814, but not signed into law by the U.S. Senate until February 1815. The treaty restored the status quo ante bellum between British North America and the United States, which meant that Britain was removed from the American Northwest, leaving Indigenous peoples without an ally to help defend their interests.

**Treaty of Paris (1783)**: The 1783 treaty that ended the American Revolution (War of Independence). Not to be confused with the 1763 Treaty of Paris. Britain recognized the independence and sovereignty of the United States of America. Boundaries were established (and later disputed) between the United States and British North America. The United States was to compensate Loyalists for lost property, which never occurred. See also **Jay's Treaty**.

**United Empire Loyalist**: An honorific title taken by Loyalists and their descendants to celebrate their migration to British North America at the end of the Revolution. Typically signals a strong Tory bent.

**War Hawks**: American politicians mainly from the South and the West who were angered by British predations on American shipping out of their ports and harassment of American settlers and regiments by British-Indigenous armies. In 1812, their enthusiasm for war finally won out over New England's caution.

**Whig**: A mutable term associated with the British Whigs (a radical/liberal political party), the American Patriots/Whigs (revolutionaries in 1775–1783), and 19th century Canadian liberals. Common features include a challenge to the prerogatives of the Crown, a suspicion of Catholicism, and belief in individual rights and liberties. In the American colonies, it developed into a form of republicanism.

Short Answer Exercises

1. What was the significance of continued Indigenous resistance to the British in the West?
2. Of what significance was the Royal Proclamation of 1763 to Indigenous nations, to the Canadiens, and to the new, English-speaking settlers of Canada?
3. Why did Governor James Murray choose not to persecute the Catholic Church? In what other ways was he conciliatory to the colony's French-speaking population and why?
4. In what ways did the British regime change the economy of Canada and Nova Scotia?
5. What was the Quebec Act and what was its importance?
6. Characterize the Nova Scotian population and economy in these years.
7. What developments precipitated the American Revolution?
8. Who were the Loyalists? To what were they "loyal"?
9. Why did Canada and Nova Scotia not join in the Revolution?
10. What impact did the arrival of the Loyalists have on the Maritime colonies?
11. Why was the Constitutional Act considered necessary? What problems did it seek to address?
12. Who were the Late Loyalists and what was their impact on life in Upper Canada?
13. How and why was the landscape of the Canadas undergoing change?
14. What was the nature and character of slavery in British North America before 1818?
15. In what ways did the Napoleonic Wars benefit the Maritimes, Newfoundland, and the Canadas?
16. What was the character of Indigenous resistance to American westward expansion?
17. In what ways did British and Indigenous agendas vis-à-vis the United States correspond?
18. What were the outcomes of the War of 1812?

## Suggested Readings

1. Bannister, Jerry. "Convict Transportation and the Colonial State in Newfoundland, 1789." *Acadiensis* XXVII, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 95–123.
2. Fenn, Elizabeth A."Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America: Beyond Jeffery Amherst." *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (Mar., 2000): 1552–1580.
3. Keough, Willeen. "The Riddle of Peggy Mountain: Regulation of Irish Women's Sexuality on the Southern Avalon, 1750–1860." *Acadiensis* XXXI, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 38–70.
4. Morgan, Cecilia. "'Of Slender Frame and Delicate Appearance': the Placing of Laura Secord in the Narratives of Canadian Loyalist History." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 5, no. 1 (1994): 195–212.
5. Pastore, Ralph T. "The Collapse of the Beothuk World." *Acadiensis* XX, no. 1 (Autumn 1990): 52–71.

6. Reid, John G. “Pax Britannica or Pax Indigena? Planter Nova Scotia (1760–1782) and Competing Strategies of Pacification.” *Canadian Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (December 2004): 669–692.

### Text Attributions

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# Chapter 8. Rupert's Land and the Northern Plains, 1690–1870

# 8.1 Introduction

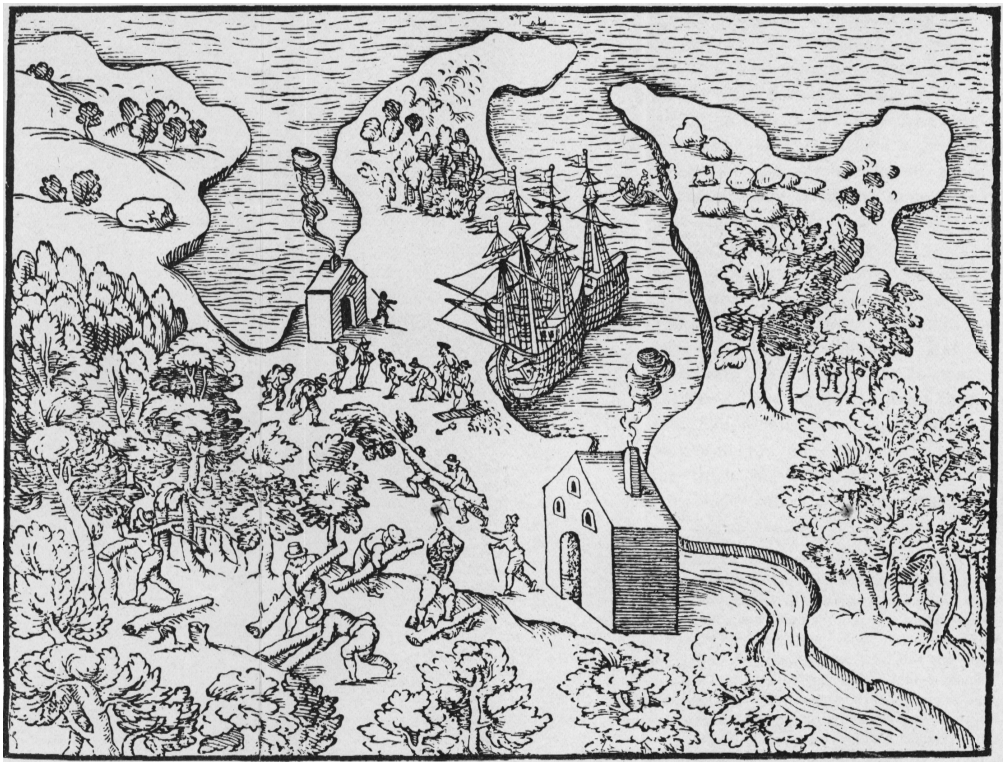

*Figure 8.1 A fanciful map of Churchill Harbour on Hudson Bay, c. 1624, by Jens Munck.*

Canada, as we have already seen, is a series of histories that sometimes intersect and collide. There is some similarity in the themes of eastern woodlands histories in part because the environment supported agriculture and other food resources to such an extent that human populations could thrive from the Saguenay south to the Carolinas, from the Gaspé west to the Plains. Physical conditions in the North — the subarctic and the Arctic — and across the parklands and Prairies to the Rocky Mountains are significantly different. They challenge human ingenuity, resourcefulness, and resilience in many ways and support a widely distributed population more easily than a concentrated, agrarian society. The multitude of lakes and marshes also sustain beaver populations in massive numbers.

The Indigenous world of the West and the North was introduced to European goods at first indirectly via trading middlemen like the Innu, the Wendat, and the Anishinaabeg. The proto-contact phase thus lasted for a century or more, much more in some instances. The arrival of the newcomers at first intensified existing practices and then led to modification and finally to outright changes. For Europeans, the North was not the passage they'd been seeking, but it was a gateway.

One way of reaching the interior of North America from Europe was along the St. Lawrence, but the voyage across Hudson Bay took newcomers deeper into the continent's heart. New products and the arrival of horses transformed life in the lowlands around the bay and across the Plains. The emergence of the "new nation" — the Métis — and their neighbours the "country born" gave substance to the

concept of fur trade society. The Inuit, by contrast, experienced little in the way of intrusion — cultural or physical — in these years. This chapter looks at the region not as a frontier of imperial commerce but as a hub of trade and relationships that extended outward in many directions. The impact of the fur trade and generations of conflict following the arrival of Europeans in the North and West is also considered.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the motives and methods of European and Canadian fur traders.
- Establish what the Indigenous societies and their leaders hoped for their future and how their lives were changed by the fur trade.
- Become familiar with the landscape and peoples of the North and the western Plains of what becomes Canada.
- Identify separate British and Canadien, and combined British/Canadien commercial, social, and imperial agendas and activities in Rupert's Land.
- Develop an appreciation of how the Indigenous world across the West and the North functioned as a social and economic environment.

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# 8.2 Northerners

The carrying capacity of a landscape refers to the quantity, quality, and distribution of resources necessary to support human populations. This is implicitly a reflection of other environmental considerations like climate, water supply, and soil quality, and it is independent of external factors like enemy populations or the presence of predators (e.g., bears, big cats, wolves). The carrying capacity of northern Canada presents severe upward limits on the size of the population that can exist in pre-industrial conditions.

Indigenous peoples in the North typically organized themselves into small family-based groups, all of which harvested food and material resources extensively rather than intensively. As hunter-gatherer-fisher societies rather than farming societies, their survival depended on their knowledge of the landscape, seasonal and immediate weather, travel routes, and the movement of migratory animals. Inuit populations, which faced some of the most daunting environmental challenges on the planet, were necessarily small and isolated, only coming together seasonally and even then not in very large numbers.[1] There are no indications of major population concentrations or villages north of the treeline prior to contact, and the evidence continues to suggest that transmission of trade goods across the Arctic was much, much slower than was the case in the southern half of what became Canada.

1. Roderic Beaujot and Don Kerr, *Population Change in Canada*, 2nd edition (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21.



*Figure 8.2 Sadlermiut man paddling an inflated walrus or seal skin, drawn by George Lyon c. 1830.*

## Pre- and Proto-Contact

The indigenous social landscape of the Arctic reveals much about the character of human migration. Between 900 CE and 1500 CE the **Thule** people moved steadily across the Arctic Ocean's shoreline and islands from Alaska to Labrador. Their advance was slowed but not halted by the **Dorset** people, whose members may have encountered Norse expeditions before being effectively overwhelmed by the Inuit. Notwithstanding what may well have been a surviving enclave of Sadlermiut to c. 1903, the whole Dorset culture was gone by the early 16th century. The timing of the final collapse of the Dorset may indicate the impact of early European contact and the possibility of yet another disease frontier. In any event, Inuit culture — descended from Thule traditions — dominated the arctic rim of North America from c. 1500 to the present. A hunting and gathering people, they participated in Indigenous trade networks and had a fully developed trade dialect, but were slow to integrate into the European fur trade system. In part this is because, like the Beothuk, they could obtain much of what they needed by raiding and/or picking over fishing and whaling sites abandoned by Europeans. Passing fishing fleets, as well, acted as informal trading partners with the added bonus that they did not represent competition for land resources.

European interest in the North was muted for centuries in part because the landscape did not support significant populations of beaver. However, once the market appeared for other species, such as the arctic

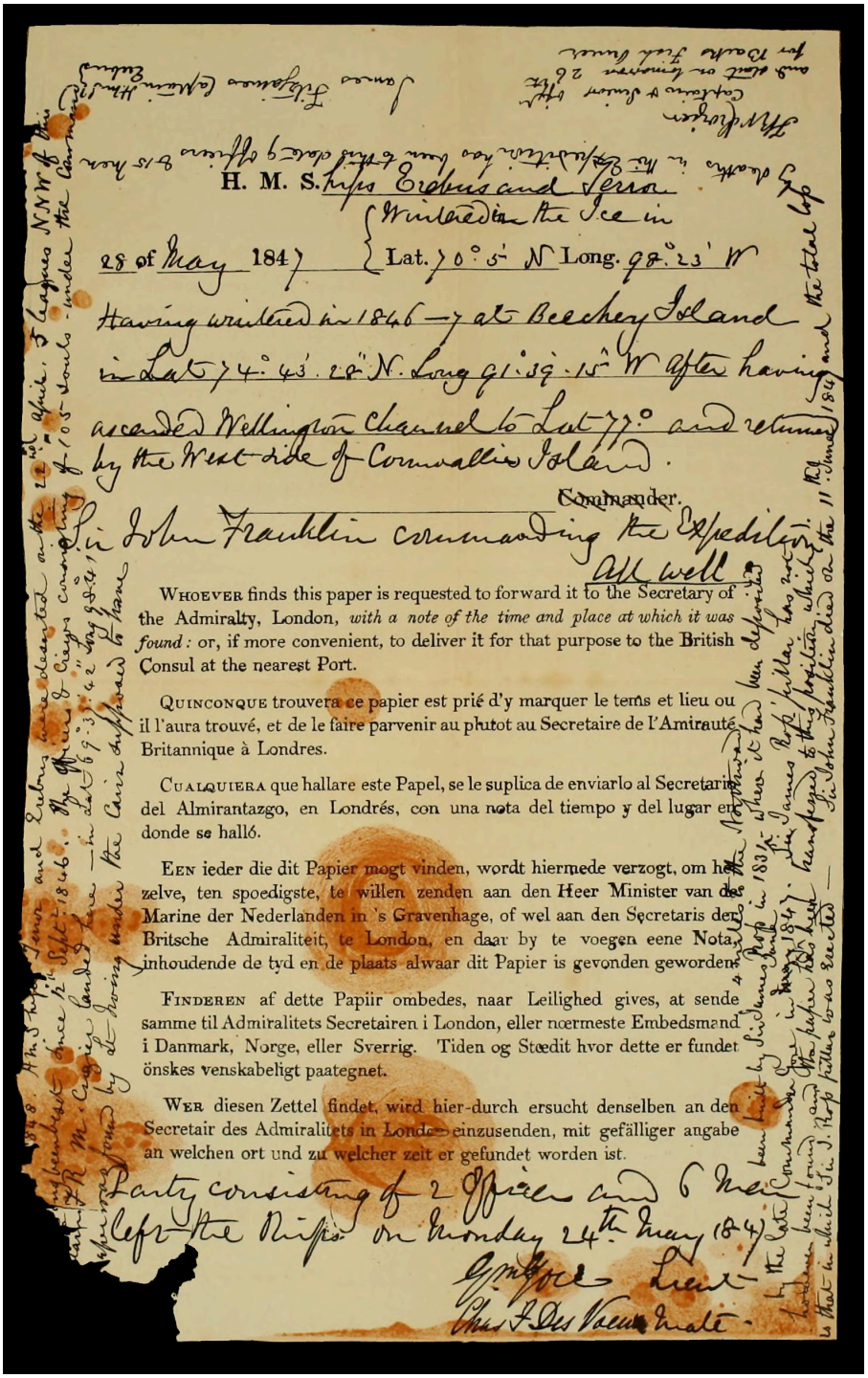
fox, the Euro-Canadian presence grew. As a result, the proto-contact period in the North lasted much longer than it did anywhere else in North America.

Trade between Inuit and Europeans occurred around Hudson Strait from 1611 if not earlier, and fur supply ships on their way to posts in Hudson Bay often stopped to trade along the north coast of Ungava. The first long-term European presence among the Inuit, however, did not arrive until the Moravian mission of 1811 at Kuujjuaq (a.k.a. Fort Chimo), fully two centuries later.[2] The Inuit farther west were from time to time impacted by a European presence that they did not necessarily see or meet. For example, the early struggles between the French and the English at the south end of Hudson Bay resulted in 1686 in the closing of three HBC posts, and six years later Prince of Wales Fort was closed. These events and an outbreak of disease on the west coast of Hudson Bay prompted the Cree to explore opportunities to the south, and the Chipewyan (a.k.a. Denesuline) followed suit. The Inuit, in turn, moved into the vacuum that was left by the Chipewyan.[3] They were seizing an opportunity, one they probably did not realize arose in part from European naval battles a few hundred miles away that had repercussions throughout the region.

The Arctic fur trade was simply a bridge too far for Europeans and Canadiens in the 18th century. The same was true for most of the 19th century. Wintering on the Arctic Ocean did not appeal to the outsiders, and there was not enough time in the year to complete an annual circuit from York Factory or Fort William. The expeditions of John Franklin in 1819, 1825, 1826–1827, and 1845 give some indication of the difficulties encountered by Europeans in the North. Two of Franklin's voyages were famous disasters and the others failed to fully complete their missions. They were organized along all-male, naval/military lines, and the shipping technology placed a premium on size, weight, and sails. On land they travelled with the destination — rather than survival — foremost in their minds. The Inuit, by contrast, made use of light, fast, minimal draught paddle-powered kayaks that did not rely on wind; their itineraries were based on the location of food supplies, regardless of detours, and they travelled in family units in which all members contributed to success in many ways. Women in particular ensured the survival of their people on long journeys by preparing food, clothing, hides for shelter, snowshoes, and moccasins; snaring small animals; and helping repair canoes. Samuel Hearne learned this lesson the hard way in the 1770s, but it was a lesson seemingly lost to his 19th century successors. The inability of the newcomers to penetrate and survive in this region slowed their advance, moderated some aspects of cultural change among Indigenous peoples, and proved to be an advantage to the Indigenous population in many ways.

2. Keith J. Crowe, *A History of the Aboriginal Peoples of Northern Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1974), 98–101.

3. Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 3rd edition (Don Mills: OUP, 2002), 137–138.



H. M. S. Ships Erebus and Terror
Wintered in the Ice in
28 of May 184 } Lat. } 0° 5' N Long. 98° 23' W
Having wintered in 1846 — } at Beechey Island
in Lat } 74° 43' 28" N. Long 91° 39' 15" W after having
ascended Wellington Channel to Lat 77° and returned
by the West side of Cornwallis Island.

Commander.

Sir John Franklin commanding the Expedition.
All well

WHOEVER finds this paper is requested to forward it to the Secretary of the Admiralty, London, *with a note of the time and place at which it was found:* or, if more convenient, to deliver it for that purpose to the British Consul at the nearest Port.

QUINCONQUE trouvera ce papier est prié d'y marquer le tems et lieu ou il l'aura trouvé, et de le faire parvenir au plutot au Secretaire de l'Amirauté Britannique à Londres.

CUALQUIERA que hallare este Papel, se le suplica de enviarlo al Secretario del Almirantazgo, en Londrés, con una nota del tiempo y del lugar en donde se halló.

EEN ieder die dit Papier mogt vinden, wordt hiermede verzogt, om het zelve, ten spoedigste, te willen zenden aan den Heer Minister van de Marine der Nederlanden in 's Gravenhage, of wel aan den Secretaris der Britsche Admiraliteit, te London, en daar by te voegen eene Nota, inhoudende de tyd en de plaats alwaar dit Papier is gevonden geworden.

FINDEREN af dette Papiir ombedes, naar Leilighed gives, at sende samme til Admiralitets Secretairen i London, eller nœrmeste Embedsmand i Danmark, Norge, eller Sverrig. Tiden og Stœdit hvor dette er fundet önskes venskabeligt paategnet.

WER diesen Zettel findet, wird hier-durch ersucht denselben an den Secretair des Admiralitets in London einzusenden, mit gefälliger angabe an welchen ort und zu welcher zeit er gefunden worden ist.

Party consisting of 2 Officers and 6 Men
left the Ships on Monday 24th May 184

G. M. Gore Lieut
Chas F. Des Voeux Mate

*Figure 8.3 Missions to discover the fate of the 1845 Franklin expedition did not return empty handed. An 1859 team recovered this message with marginal notes indicating the ships were trapped in the ice, the remaining officers and crew had set off on foot, and Franklin was dead two months later. The Erebus was finally located in 2014. Read the plain text version of the Franklin expedition note (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Franklinexpeditionnote.jpg) online (see "Summary" at the link provided).*

Key Takeaways

- Indigenous life and trade in the North is structured differently from what we have seen south of the treeline.
- The landscape, climate, and fur resources placed limits on direct European engagement in the region.
- European attempts to penetrate the North before the 20th century were largely unsuccessful.

**Media Attributions**

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- Franklin Expedition Note (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Franklinexpeditionnote.jpg) © 1845 by John Franklin is licensed under a Public Domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/) license

## 8.3 Intrusions during the 17th Century

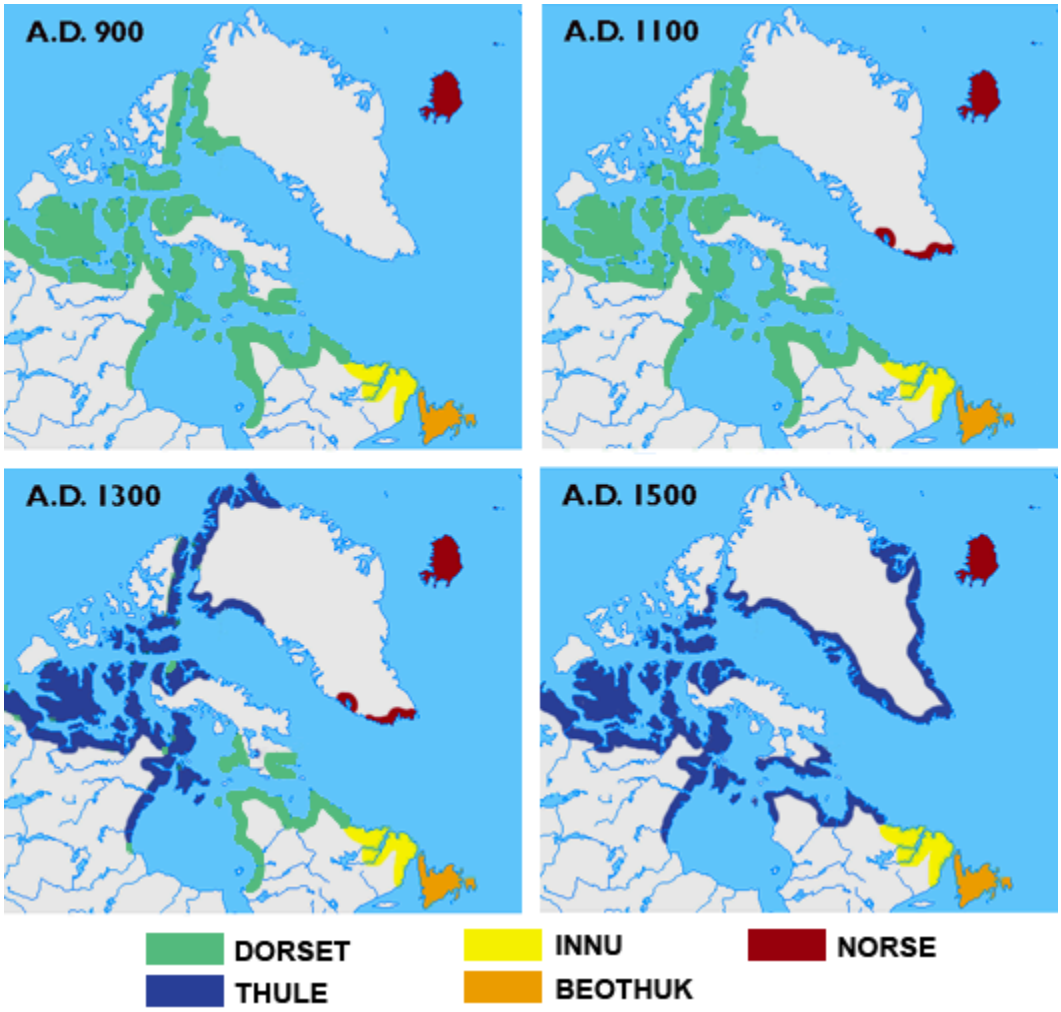


*Figure 8.4 Cultures present in the Arctic, 900 to 1500 CE. [Long Description] (#fig8.4)*

Until the 1690s, Europeans made only small forays into the lands of the Innu (Montagnais and Naskapi), the Cree, the Dënesųłįné, and the Inuit. Existing networks of traders and middlemen (such as the Wendat and the Innu) made it unnecessary for the French to extend their reach farther north. Another factor that limited the French intrusion in the North was the persistent belief that a body of water bisected the continent. Given how deeply the St. Lawrence penetrates North America and how much farther still the Great Lakes basin can be followed inland, this makes some sense. What massive river must somewhere feed into the Great Lakes and thus into the St. Lawrence? Would it just be a matter of finding the right portage? Somewhere between the Missouri and the Assiniboine, it was reckoned, there was a river that was to the west what the St. Lawrence was to the east. That hope that a waterway to the Pacific and then to China existed was difficult to shake and it served to delay French movement northward from the colony of Canada.

The British were similarly impelled to hunt out a **northwest passage**. They, however, came at the problem from the North, via Hudson Strait and then Hudson Bay.[1] The first documented attempt to do so was that of Henry Hudson in 1610–1611. It ended badly for Hudson: his crew mutinied and cast Hudson, his son, and his remaining loyal crew adrift. Efforts to find a northwest passage would continue for more than two centuries but, in the meantime, there were renewed fur trading opportunities in the North.

It is likely that the Cree first encountered Europeans before Hudson's ill-fated expedition. A single Cree male, without being urged to do so, offered Hudson and his crew deer and beaver pelts and then withdrew them when goods offered in exchange were not to his liking. This story is taken by some scholars as evidence that the Cree trader was familiar with European goods and their value relative to Indigenous products.[2] For the next 40 years, Cree furs would find their way into the hands of merchants on the St. Lawrence via Anishinaabe and Algonquin middlemen and the Wendat trademart. The destruction of the Wendat Confederacy closed that outlet, although their first-tier middlemen were still mostly in place.

The prospect of direct trade was attractive to the Cree. Price markups that were added as goods passed south along the way to New France meant that the original suppliers on Hudson Bay received far less than their commercial allies closer to the St. Lawrence. And the goods the Cree received in return were costly and of poorer quality. With that in mind, Cree trappers attempted from the 1670s on (if not earlier) to draw the attention of the French to their rich stock of fur animals in the North. The French, however, were in the midst of their compact colony experiment and were concerned that opening posts on "the frozen sea" would undermine what little progress had been made in the development of the St. Lawrence Valley.

Two French fur traders (and brothers-in-law) — Pierre Esprit-Radisson (1636–1710) and Médard des Grosilliers (1618–1696) — held a different perspective. They tried to demonstrate the value of this new market intelligence by heading straight to James Bay. They returned with a daunting number of high-quality pelts. Rather than receive a hero's welcome, however, they were disciplined for ignoring the governor's strictures against trading farther north. Subsequently Radisson and Grosilliers took their knowledge to Bostonian merchants and then to the English. They found an interested party in Prince Rupert of the Rhine (1619–1682), an entrepreneurially astute German-born cousin of King Charles II. In 1670 a monopolistic charter modelled on the East India Company was granted to "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay," known more economically as the **Hudson's Bay Company** (or simply, the HBC). The territory involved was a massive drainage basin, which the Crown named **Rupert's Land**.

1. Historically, the possessive is used, i.e., Hudson's Bay. In the 20th century the possessive gradually fell out of use for the place, but not for the company. Thus: Hudson Bay and Hudson's Bay Company.

2. Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 3rd edition (Don Mills: OUP, 2002), 73.




*Figure 8.5 Approximate boundaries of Rupert's Land.*

## Into the Bay

Looked at straight on, the map of North America shows Hudson Bay as a gut that sags into the middle of Canada. For navigators, however, it is a vast inland sea with a huge coastline, a gulf that opens through the wide channel of Hudson Strait into the North Atlantic. In nautical miles, the distance between Bristol and York Factory is almost exactly the same as between La Rochelle and Montreal. There was hope, too, that one of the river systems that empties into the western bay might lead to a Pacific opening. On this score the British (and the French) were disappointed. Once in the bay, however, European fur traders had direct access to the principal Indigenous trappers and traders with whom the French had been dealing second-hand down south. This cheered them up.

In 1668, two years before the formation of the HBC, the English established a fort in an area on James Bay (known to the Cree as Waskaganish) and named it Rupert House (a.k.a. Charles Fort). The HBC followed up with two other James Bay posts: Moose Fort (a.k.a. Moose Factory) in 1673 and Fort Albany in 1677. The French launched a response almost immediately. In 1672, in a case of foreshadowing that was ignored by the English, a Jesuit priest (Charles Albanel) and a small party of French from Canada crossed Innu territory from Tadoussac via the Saguenay and reached Rupert House.

The intent of this mission was evidently diplomatic but it was inconclusive: no one was at home at the HBC fort, so the Jesuit left a note and his party returned to Canada.

A more robust response came in 1686 when Chevalier de Troyes, a French captain recently arrived in Canada, led an overland expedition to James Bay. The attack on Moose Fort was successful and de Troyes (along with the d'Iberville brothers) went on to capture Rupert House and then Fort Albany. This hat-trick campaign took place when France and England were officially at peace, another case where colonial agendas superseded imperial interests. The English returned in 1688 but failed to win back the forts; they were more successful in 1696. The Treaty of Ryswick the following year settled very little and war on the bay resumed in five years' time. It was not until the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) that French claims on both James Bay and Hudson Bay were formally relinquished.

More than two generations of intermittent conflict and what the Cree experienced as useful competition between the Europeans around the bay finally came to a close. The 18th century would see the French presence expand in the West and the HBC would follow suit. Thanks to wars in the eastern woodlands and in Europe, as well as skirmishes in the bay itself, the cultural and other consequences of commerce between Indigenous and non-Indigenous parties in the West and North were at this stage not yet extensive. Things would quickly change in this regard.

### Exercise: Documents — Beaver Fever

The fur trade in the interior of North America is about beaver. In countless museum exhibits, films, re-enactments, and so on, it's about beaver. The crest of the HBC proudly incorporates a beaver. Truth be told, the HBC (and the North West Company) were pretty open-minded when it came to other kinds of pelts. Certainly beaver pelts were at the heart of the industry and some of the confusion arises from what might be called the "exchange rate" of the fur trade: the "made beaver." This standard was based on an adult male beaver taken in winter, when the fur would be at its thickest.

All commodities traded in or out of Rupert's Land were reckoned in terms of their "made beaver" value. Look at this record of furs traded at Fort York (York Factory) in 1714–1715 (see Figure 8.6). The left-hand ledger shows the quantity of furs purchased at the fort and their relative value in "made beaver." The right-hand ledger shows the value of European goods reckoned per "made beaver." For example, while red fox pelts were accepted at par with "made beaver," white foxes were only half as valuable. And one "made beaver" could purchase two "scrapers." Just looking at the columns (and not the very-difficult-to-read material at the bottom), how many different animal remains were being traded at Fort York and what was the most valuable? Looking at the right-hand column, what does 21,078 "made beaver" buy?

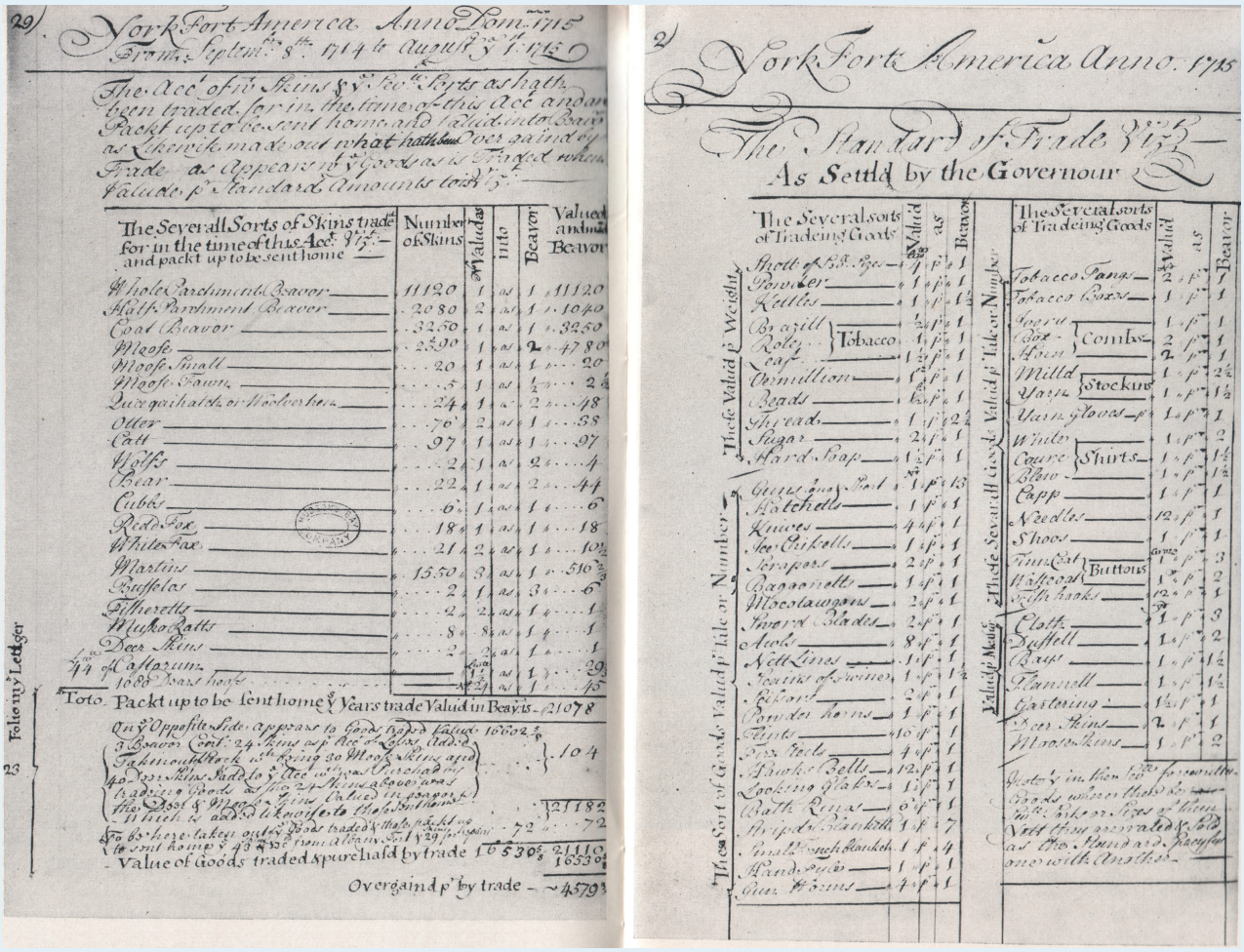

*Figure 8.6 Fur trade ledger from York Factory, September 1714 to August 1715. [Long Description] (#fig8.6)*

Key Takeaways

- French forays into the Hudson Bay drainage before the late 1600s were largely unnecessary and less promising than explorations into the West.
- British interest in the region resulted in the creation of a chartered monopoly and the erection of forts along the edge of Hudson Bay.
- The HBC monopoly was not a deterrent to French incursions and competition, all of which worked to the advantage of Cree and Innu traders.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 8.4 long description:** Four maps of the Arctic showing the territorial ranges of five cultures — the Dorset, Thule, Norse, Innu, and Beothuk — between 900 and 1500 CE. In order:

- **900 CE**: The Dorset occupy the coasts and islands of northwestern Quebec, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories, as well as a small portion of the coast of Greenland. The Norse occupy Iceland. The Innu occupy northeastern Quebec and Labrador. The Beothuk occupy Newfoundland.
- **1100 CE**: The Norse now occupy the southern coast of Greenland, plus Iceland.
- **1300 CE**: The Thule have taken over much of Dorset territory on the coasts and islands of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, plus a larger portion of the northern coast of Greenland. The Dorset still occupy the northwestern coast of Quebec, a few isolated areas of islands in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, parts of the southern coast of Baffin Island, and one sliver of coast near the north of Manitoba.
- **1500 CE**: The Thule occupy virtually all of the territory that used to belong to the Dorset, with minor variations. The Thule are the sole occupants of Greenland, holding about three-quarters of its coast. The Dorset are completely gone from the Arctic. The Norse hold Iceland; the Innu hold northeastern Quebec and Labrador; and the Beothuk hold Newfoundland.

[Return to Figure 8.4] (#attachment_1428)

**Figure 8.6 long description:** A photocopy of a trade ledger showing two tables. The first table is a list of skins traded from September 8, 1714, to August 1, 1715, by the Hudson's Bay Company at Fork York (York Factory) in Ontario. The second table shows the value of European goods in units of "made beaver," which was the "exchange rate" of the fur trade.

**The several sorts of skins traded for in the time of this account and packed up to be sent home**

| Skin | Quantity | Skin to Made Beaver Ratio | Value of Quantity in Made Beaver |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Whole parchment beaver** | 11,120 | 1 to 1 | 11,120 |
| **Half parchment beaver** | 2080 | 2 to 1 | 1040 |
| **Coat beaver** | 3250 | 1 to 1 | 3250 |
| **Moose** | 2590 | 1 to 2 | 4780 |
| **Moose, small** | 20 | 1 to 1 | 20 |
| **Moose, fawn** | 5 | 1 to ½ | 2½ |
| **Quickhatch or wolverine** | 24 | 1 to 2 | 48 |
| **Otter** | 76 | 2 to 1 | 38 |
| **Catt**[3] | 97 | 1 to 1 | 97 |
| **Wolves** | 2 | 1 to 2 | 4 |
| **Bear** | 22 | 1 to 2 | 44 |
| **Cubs** | 6 | 1 to 1 | 6 |
| **Red fox** | 18 | 1 to 1 | 18 |
| **White fox** | 21 | 2 to 1 | 10.5 |
| **Martens** | 1550 | 3 to 1 | 516⅔ |
| **Buffalo** | 2 | 1 to 3 | 6 |
| **Fishers** | 2 | 2 to 1 | 1 |
| **Muskrats** | 8 | 8 to 1 | 1 |
| **Deer skins** | 2 | 2 to 1 | 1 |
| **Castoreum** | 44 | 1½ to 1 | 29⅓ |
| **Deer hooves** | 1080 | 24 to 1 | 45 |
| **Total** | N/A | N/A | 21,078 |

3. Possibly “bobcat.”

**The Standard of Trade as Settled by the Governor**

| Trading Good | Good to Made Beaver Ratio |
|---|---|
| Shot of [illegible] sizes | 4 to 1 |
| Powder | 1 to 1 |
| Kettles | 1 to 1½ |
| Tobacco, Brazil | 1 to 1 |
| Tobacco, rolls | 1 to 1 |
| Tobacco, leaf | 1½ to 1 |
| Vermilion | 1 to 1 |
| Beads | ½ to 1 |
| Thread | 1 to 2½ |
| Sugar | 2 to 1 |
| Hand soap | 1½ to 1 |
| Guns [illegible] | 1 to 13 |
| Hatchets | 1 to 1 |
| Knives | 4 to 1 |
| Ice chisels | 1 to 1 |
| Scrapers | 2 to 1 |
| Bayonets | 1 to 1 |
| Mocotaugons | 2 to 1 |
| Sword blades | 2 to 1 |
| Awls | 8 to 1 |
| Net lines | 1 to 1 |
| Skeins of twine | 1 to 1½ |
| Scissors | 2 to 1 |
| Powder horns | 1 to 1 |
| Flints | 16 to 1 |
| Fire steels | 4 to 1 |
| Hawk bells | 12 to 1 |
| Looking glass | 1 to 1 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Bath rings | 6 to 1 |
| Striped blanket | 1 to 7 |
| Small French blanket | 1 to 4 |
| Hand file | 1 to 1 |
| Gun worms | 4 to 1 |
| Tobacco tongs | 2 to 1 |
| Tobacco boxes | 1 to 1 |
| Combs, ivory | 1 to 1 |
| Combs, box | 2 to 1 |
| Combs, horn | 2 to 1 |
| Stockings, milled | 1 to 2½ |
| Stockings, yarn | 1 to 1½ |
| Yarn gloves | 1 to 1 |
| Shirts, white | 1 to 2 |
| Shirts, [illegible] | 1 to 1½ |
| Shirts, blue | 1 to 1½ |
| Cap | 1 to 1 |
| Needles | 12 to 1 |
| Shoes | 1 to 1 |
| Buttons, tin coat | 1 to 3 |
| Buttons, waistcoat | 1 to 2 |
| Fish hooks | 12 to 1 |
| Cloth | 1 to 3 |
| Duffle | 1 to 2 |
| Bays | 1 to 1½ |
| Flannel | 1 to 1½ |
| Gartering | 1½ to 1 |
| Deer skins | 2 to 1 |
| Moose skins | 1 to 2 |

[Return to Figure 8.6] (#attachment_1400)

**Media Attributions**

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- List of skins traded at York (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hudson%27s_Bay_Company._List_of_skins_tradet_from_Sept._8th,_1714_to_Aug._1st,_1715_and_Standard_of_trade_decreed,_by_Governor_James_Knight_in_1715.jpg) © 1715 by Hudson's Bay Company is licensed under a Public Domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/) license

# 8.4 Commerce, Collusion, and Conflict in the 18th Century

Hudson Bay represented a commercial zone rather than a colonial environment until the 19th century. The Cree and the Dënesųłįné (a.k.a. Chipewyan) brought furs from across the drainage basin of the bay to the HBC's shoreline posts. The Europeans huddled in their forts, living off food supplies from Britain, and bracing themselves against the climate, mosquitos, isolation, and the fearsome sound of pack ice on the northern sea. It was an unambitious but lucrative strategy, because even a fraction of Rupert's Land had the potential to produce huge quantities of beaver pelts. The HBC traders thus acquired a reputation for "sleeping by the bay" and their apparent inertia continued until 1775, when they had to burst out of the coastal sanctuaries and push into new trading relationships.

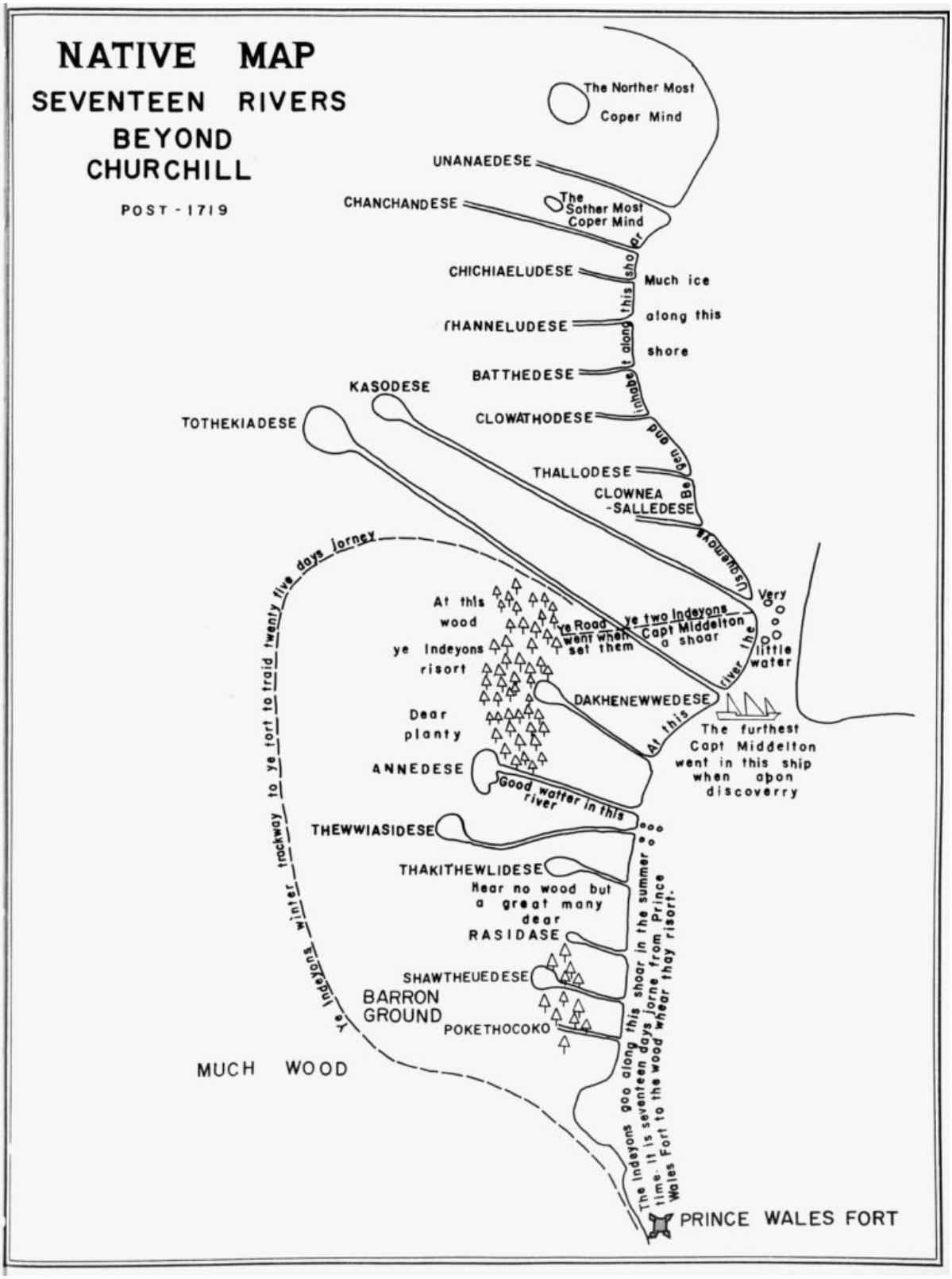


*Figure 8.7 A complex map of the Dënesųłiné territory north of Prince of Wales Fort, c. 1719. It derives from Indigenous sources (the topographic features) and British observations about navigational and human migration features.*

## The Swampy/Lowland Cree

Cree trade goods continued to head south to New France (and, after 1760, to British Canada), and Indigenous traders around the bay developed alternative strategies for success. Establishing a middleman cordon around the HBC forts — called a **home guard** — ensured that bands that had a prior claim to the territory enjoyed first access to trade goods. And they could charge a tariff on other, visiting Indigenous traders. The HBC encouraged this arrangement because it improved their access to skilled hunters and, thus, fresh meat.[1] For the lowland Cree and the Dënesųłįné it provided access to trade goods, including foodstuffs imported from Britain.

Relations between the Cree and the Europeans were uneven. Cree priorities were critically important. Treaties or agreements of some kind were reached by the Cree with the 1668 exploratory expedition that resulted in Fort Charles (Rupert House). Those documents have not, however, survived. Whether written or verbal, agreements were sought and reached at every site occupied by the English and the Cree alike. The Cree were looking for reliable and long-term commercial alliances, not incidental trade opportunities.

Conflict in this environment was both familiar to and distinct from what occurred in the eastern woodlands. As one study points out, "Living conditions in the North did not allow for wars: Amerindians and Inuit may have killed each other on sight (if they could), or even raided each other, but this never led to military campaigns as such."[2] Another scholar of the region, however, points to the advantage enjoyed by the Cree in battle because of their access to British guns and how they used these very effectively against the Dënesųłįné and other Athabascan-speakers.[3]

What historians agree on is that there were no "wars" but there was "warfare," and it was both bloody and nearly catastrophic for the underequipped and badly outnumbered Dënesųłįné. Their numbers may have been reduced by hundreds if not thousands. Henry Kelsey's expedition into the parkland of north-central Saskatchewan via the Nelson River in 1690–1692 reported almost continuous conflict between the Cree and their northern neighbours. Athabaskan slaves were regularly encountered in and around York Factory, a sign of the effectiveness of Cree raiding parties. The predations by the Cree extended deep into the subarctic.

In 1715 HBC regional Governor James Knight sought to put an end to the conflict and placed his trust in an escaped slave of the Cree, an adolescent Dënesųłįné woman named Thanadelthur (c. 1697–1717). Knight hoped she would act as an intermediary between a large party of Cree and representatives of the Dënesųłįné, whom they would have to seek out. For her part, Thanadelthur's aims included opening a supply line of arms to the Dënesųłįné and some commercial success for her immediate family. The success of the peace mission has always been ascribed to the oratorical skills and persuasive powers of Thanadelthur who is said to have entreated both sides for hours until her voice failed.

The Dënesųłįné had much to gain — including the promise of an HBC post in their own territory and a

1. Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 3rd edition (Don Mills: OUP, 2002), 117.

2. Ibid., 120–121.

3. J. Colin Yerbury, *The Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade, 1680-1860* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 18.

supply of guns to level the balance of power in the North — but they had much to lose as well. The Cree were more than capable of overpowering the Dënesųłįné, and it is almost certain that the former were relinquishing access to territories to which they had some ancestral claim (real or imagined). Discerning motivations in 1715 is difficult in part because so many of the key pieces on the board are difficult to identify.

## A Changing Indigenous Geography

What we can say with some certainty, however, is that the 50 years after the fall of Wendake (Huronia) and the course of the Beaver Wars had witnessed significant change in the Cree situation. Populations from the Great Lakes were heading west in large numbers. These included the Anishinaabe (Ojibwa) with Wendat refugees in their midst, along with some Woodland Cree, whose most recent homeland was between the Innu, Nippising, and Anishinaabe to the south and the Lowland or Swampy Cree to the north. As the Great Peace (1701) took hold, populations began to recover, which added to increasing resource pressures. The Sioux, the A'aninin (who are variously identified as the Grôs Ventre, Snake, Atsina, or Hidatsa but not all three at once), Arapaho, and Nakoda Oyadebi (a.k.a. Assiniboine, Nakota, Nakota Sioux) were all being pushed west as a result. The Cree, who had the best access to British guns, enjoyed a period of population growth and aggressive expansion out of the lowlands, across the parkland and onto the Plains. In the North they harried, as we know, the Dënesųłįné but also the Dogrib (Tlicho) Dené and the Dane-Zaa (another Athabascan-speaking people who were driven westward into what is now British Columbia). Even the Plains Cree were being negatively impacted by a coming generation of newer Plains-bound Cree.

The Cree-Dënesųłįné peace of 1715 enabled a rapid extension of Cree and British influence from Prince of Wales Fort (a.k.a. Fort Churchill) on Hudson Bay to communities deep in the subarctic, the spread of guns and iron products into the North, and growing trade dependence on the part of the Dënesųłįné. Achieving peace in the North cost the Cree little and allowed them to hold the line of their expansion at the Churchill River. And from 1717 to 1759 the Cree were able to act as middlemen between the HBC and Athabaskan-speakers as far west as the Peace River District. None of this should lead us to think there was a common "Cree agenda." Neither the Lowland, Woodland, Subarctic, nor Plains Cree had the kind of political unity that allowed for a single diplomatic purpose in the North, on the Prairies, or with regard to the Europeans. This disunity was also flexibility: unlike the Niitsitapi or even the Anishinaabe, the Cree bands could develop several strategies at once, and they had the numbers to make a difference.

The arrival of European technologies in the North did not occur in a static physical or social environment. Around 1700 the North American climate was changing, becoming colder overall. Areas of human occupation were shrinking or moving south, something that was apparent in the high Arctic where the Thule abandoned ocean islands and concentrated on the mainland coast. This produced some unusually large communities, such as Kittigazuit, a Siglit village at the mouth of the Mackenzie River, whose population reached 1000 to 2000 individuals. This was the largest collection of households between Siberia and Greenland. What's more, the architectural challenges of living in a colder climate saw the end of stone- and/or turf-constructed dwellings, and the appearance of igloos and tents.[4] These developments were all part of the transition from the older Thule culture to the emergent Inuit culture, one that depended on smaller bands hunting for caribou and muskox on land, and whales, walrus, and

4. Donald Purich, *The Inuit and Their Land: The Story of Nunavut* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1992), 26.

seals at sea. The guns of the 18th and 19th centuries would have been useless to whalers; people with a more eclectic appetite would find more use for firearms.

## A Plurality of Markets

Similarly, the Cree market for European goods related to their own needs but also to evolving conditions in the West. Principally the Cree sought European goods that they could trade to other partners. As much as they wanted some European products, their chief goal was to obtain Indigenous products from neighbours to the south and west. What they traded for in the North, therefore, had to have an appeal beyond the Cree themselves. The loss of Wendat farm products had the effect of refocusing northern trade toward the last major Indigenous agricultural societies in the region: the Mandan-Hidatsa. These midwestern settlements were also where the Cree and other northern peoples would find access to Spanish trade goods, including horses. In short, some of the material the Cree traded for at Hudson Bay might have limited or no value to the Cree; demand for British imports in trademarts more than a thousand kilometres inland determined their currency value.

Guns offer a good example. English-made guns in this era were muzzle-loading. They required powder and shot. The flintlock was, in the 18th century, just overtaking the matchlock musket and both kinds of guns could be found in the West and the North. The metal from which the English guns were made did not perform especially well in extremely cold temperatures. Stories of misfires blinding the shooter are common enough, as are examples of guns being repurposed into spears and other tools. In short, they were awkward to use, dependent on imported supplies like gunpowder that could run out and thereby render the musket just dead weight, and on the whole were unreliable. They could, however, fetch a good price in the Mandan-Hidatsa villages.

This is what made the Iron Confederacy so successful in the 18th century and into the 19th as well. The Cree could access British goods, the Nakoda Oyadebi had entry into the central Plains marketplace, and the Anishinaabe, for their part, could secure French/Canadien/Canadian goods. The ways in which that eastern trade system integrated into the West and North was to drive cultural and commercial evolution across the region.

Key Takeaways

- The HBC trading strategy was to build strong, fortified posts on Hudson Bay with substantial warehousing capacity and to wait for the furs to come to them.
- Indigenous groups in the North — especially the Lowland/Swampy Cree — operated their own monopolies in trade that extended from the bay to the Peace District and the Upper Mississippi.
- Indigenous traders were motivated to engage with the Europeans by their desire to own products generated by other Indigenous peoples, including horses.

**Media Attributions**

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## 8.5 The Montrealers versus the HBC




*Figure 8.8 More than a half century would pass between Henry Kelsey's exploration of the South Saskatchewan River in 1690–1692 and Alexander Henday's 1754–1755 voyage across the northern plains. Samuel Hearne's two 1770–1772 journeys took him north of the treeline and into the Coppermine River basin. [Long Description] (#fig8.8)*

Although the French were blocked from directly reclaiming territory on Hudson Bay, there was nothing to stop them from extending a string of trading posts in the Ungava Peninsula and the West. This strategy allowed them to block the supply of furs heading downriver to the bay.

### Before the Conquest

This chapter opens in 1727 with the western expeditions of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de La Vérendrye. His mission represents, in part, a resumption of French efforts to find a northwest passage to the Pacific. His contacts around Lake Superior included Tacchigis, Ochagach, and Mateblanche, three Cree informants who provided La Vérendrye with intelligence and maps of the lake and river systems

across the West. Complications arose when the Cree-French party encountered the Dakota Sioux at Lake of the Woods. There was long-standing enmity between the Dakota and the Cree, but also a recent alliance between the Dakota and the French in the *Pays d'en Haut*. The Dakota responded to this new French-Cree configuration as a betrayal on the part of the Europeans and slaughtered 19 in La Vérendrye's group, including one of his sons.[1]

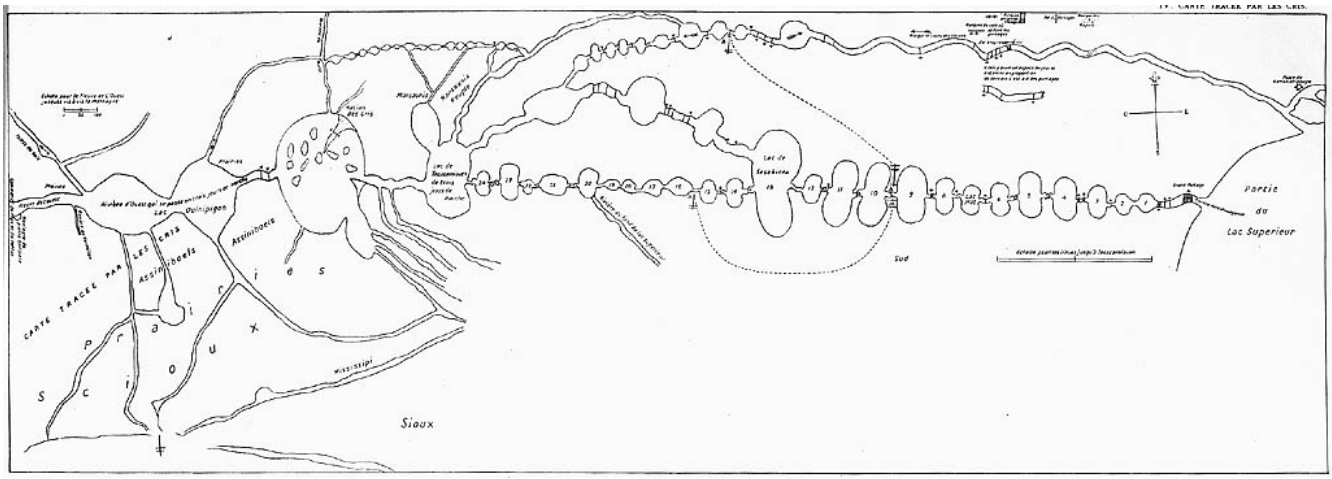


*Figure 8.9 Ochagach's c. 1730 map of the chain of rivers and lakes between Lake of the Woods and Lake Superior has been likened to a subway station map in that it compresses distances and focuses on destinations.*

These French incursions and uncertain relations with some of their own Indigenous trading partners obliged the British to launch ambitious building projects on Hudson Bay. The most outstanding of these, though never completed, is Prince of Wales Fort at the mouth of the Churchill River. Begun in 1731, it was taken by the French in 1782 (during the American Revolution) without a shot being fired. The structure was partially demolished by the French before they handed it back to the British a year later. This was a minor setback for the HBC and the French were, in any event, out of the picture after the War of Independence (1775–1783). But it was part of a larger emerging competitive era, one which had its centre along the St. Lawrence.

1. Arthur J. Ray, *I Have Lived Here Since The World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People* (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1996), 79–81.



*Figure 8.10 Prince of Wales Fort, built in the 18th century, is still an imposing stone structure ringed with cannons.*

## The Rise of the Montreal Merchants

After the Conquest the main players in the fur trade out of Montreal were British-American merchants. Their trading houses absorbed elements of the old French operations, and the largest and most successful of the new conglomerate enterprises to emerge was the **North West Company (NWC)**. Its leaders were mainly Scots who (like its founder, Simon McTavish) arrived in Canada after the Treaty of Paris (1763) and before the arrival of the Loyalists (1783). They had deftly avoided taking the American side in the War of Independence but that didn't make them warm friends of the English regime. Nor did their Presbyterian creed stop them from marrying French-Canadian Catholic women. Between the Conquest and the end of the American Revolution they worked in competition with one another in the near-west and the *Pays d'en Haut*. The outcome of the Revolution and the Treaty of Paris (1783) encouraged them to band together; they were further obliged to develop new strategies for an area north of the 49th parallel after Jay's Treaty (1794) reduced their ability to work in what was now the American northwest. Hard-headed businessmen with strong connections in New York, the Nor'Westers were a fluid and sometimes fractious set of partnerships that did their level best to subvert the HBC and evade the monopoly held in Asia by the British East India Company.

There may have been discontinuities in entrepreneurial leadership in Montreal, but the fieldwork remained structured much as before. The main corridor of trade was along the Canadian Shield via the site of Wendake (Huronia), into the northern Great Lakes, on to Michilimackinac, and then to the NWC's main posts at, first, Grand Portage then at Fort William (now part of the city of Thunder Bay). Canadiens continued to play an important role in the actual trading and transshipment process, as did Iroquois, and Métis trip men and **voyageurs**. (Looking at a typical personnel list from any western expedition, it is difficult to imagine that it would be conducted in any language other than French.) The NWC pressed far

into the interior of North America, seeking out furs. This expansionism was a direct challenge to their chief competitors, the HBC, which was just breaking out of its shoreline redoubts and heading upriver.

Another feature that distinguished the NWC is that it operated on a profit-sharing basis. A trader in the company could easily amass a good deal of wealth and had the motivation to do so. The **wintering partners** — the prominent NWC employees who spent the year in the West — were also part of the decision-making processes of the company. Sometimes also called *hivernants*, they would meet annually with the Montreal agents at Fort William where company-wide plans would be made in council. The family connections within the NWC — with McTavish at its centre — contributed a patriarchal structure to the decision making.



*Figure 8.11 At the junction of the Red and Pembina rivers in what is now North Dakota, an HBC fort (left) opposes an NWC fort (right). This Peter Rindisbacher painting is of the border of Anihšināpē, Lakota Sioux, and Nakoda Oyadebi territories, c. 1822.*

The consultative approach and shareholder system of the NWC was a stark contrast to the hierarchical business model of the HBC. Headquartered in London, the HBC was led by individuals with no direct experience of the fur trade who have been described, consequently, as "cautious, even timid." Its employees were called "servants," a title that reflects the deferential and status-conscious relationship they had with their "officers." Indeed, many of the "servants" were working off seven-year indentures and could look forward at the end to a good letter of reference and a suit of clothes. "But," as one scholar of the HBC says, "if the Hudson's Bay Company was at times sluggish, it was never inert. Rigor mortis was not setting in. When it embarked in new directions the Company moved forward relentlessly, and

all its advantages of organization and experience made it a formidable competitor."[2] And when the HBC seemed most on the ropes — as it did in the first two decades of the 19th century — it bounced back.

Key Takeaways

- By the mid-18th century, French traders were making headway into the West.
- The post-Conquest fur trade saw the rise of British and British American merchants in Montreal.
- The two principal fur trade companies were organized very differently and each had specific strengths and weaknesses.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 8.8 long description:** Map showing the routes that Hudson's Bay Company explorers Henry Kelsey, Samuel Hearne, and Anthony Henday took while journeying across the interior of what is now known as Canada.

From 1690 to 1692, Henry Kelsey travelled southwest from York Factory at the mouth of the Hayes River, which feeds into southwest Hudson Bay. Kelsey followed the Hayes River southwest, past Lake Winnipeg in southern Manitoba and across Saskatchewan. Then, Kelsey looped back around to return to York Factory.

The map shows that Samuel Hearne took two journeys from Fort Prince of Wales, which is north of York Factory on the shore of Hudson Bay and right next to modern Churchill, Manitoba.

Hearne's first journey in 1770 went west and north of Fort Prince of Wales and looped around Dubawnt Lake, which is on the modern border between Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, a few hundred kilometres north of the point where Saskatchewan meets Manitoba, a few hundred kilometres south of the Arctic Circle. Then, Hearne travelled southeast to return to Fort Prince of Wales.

Hearne's second journey was from 1770 to 1772. Hearne travelled northwest from Fort Prince of Wales across Manitoba and Saskatchewan to about 200 kilometres north of Lake Athabasca, which is on the border of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Then, he went north, past the eastern shore of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories, past the Coppermine River, to a small bay near modern Kugluktuk, Nunavut, on the shore of the Arctic Ocean.

On the return journey, Hearne travelled south the way he came, then went southwest so that he cut across Great Slave Lake, then travelled east and eventually southeast to return to Fort Prince of Wales.

From 1754 to 1755, Anthony Henday travelled southwest from York Factory across modern Manitoba

2. Daniel Francis, "Traders and Indians," *The Prairie West: Historical Readings*, eds. R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992), 69.

and Saskatchewan into Alberta. He reached Red Deer, Alberta, just east of the Rocky Mountains, then headed northeast along the North Saskatchewan River to return to York Factory.

[Return to Figure 8.8] (#attachment_1468)

### Media Attributions

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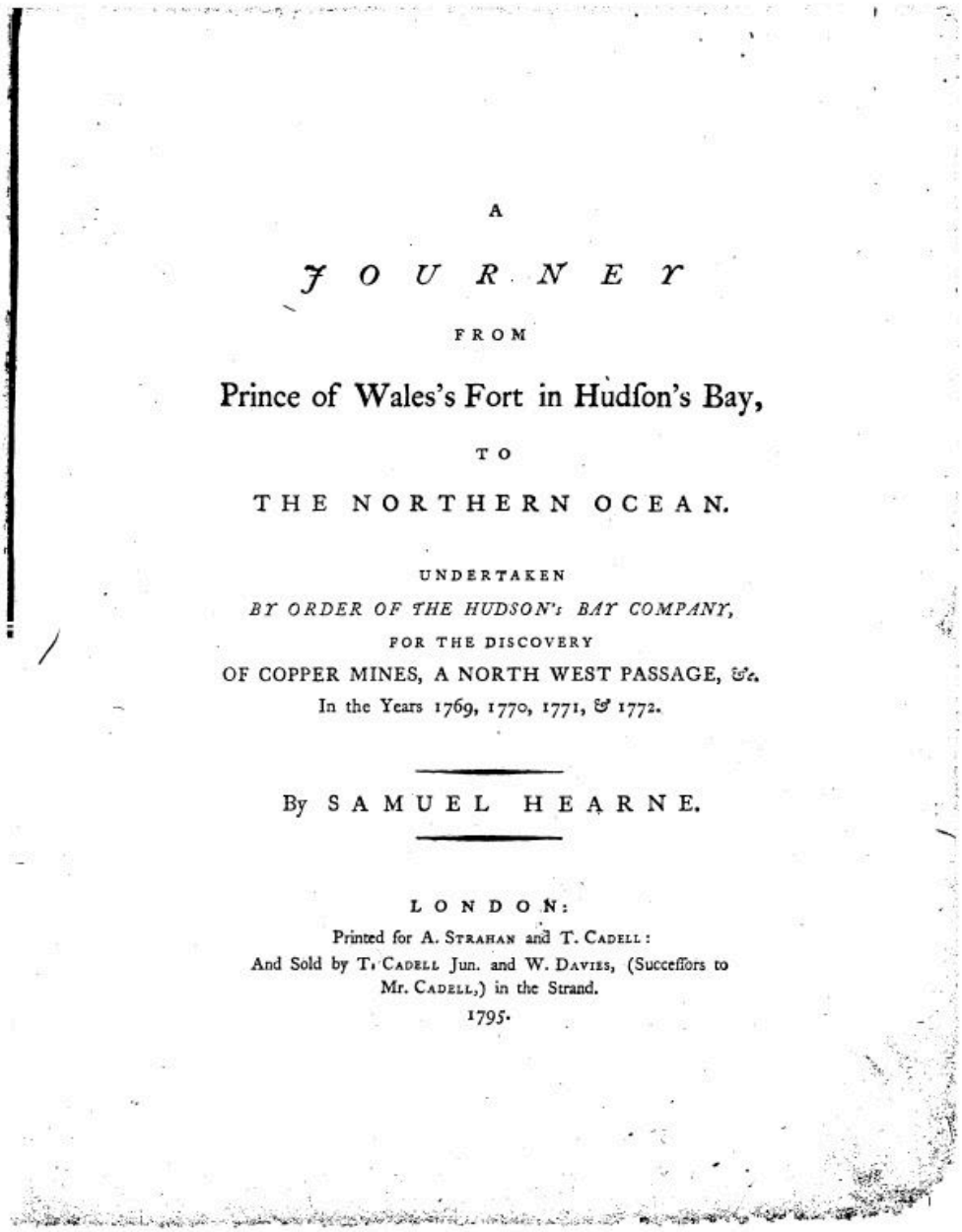
- View of the two Company Forts on the level prairie at Pembina on the Red River, and surprise by the savages at nightfall of May 25, 1822 (http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.redirect?app=fonandcol&id=2835805&lang=eng) © 1822 by Peter Rindisbacher is licensed under a Public Domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/) license

## 8.6 Fur Trade Wars



A

JOURNEY

FROM

Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay,

TO

THE NORTHERN OCEAN.

UNDERTAKEN

*BY ORDER OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY,*

FOR THE DISCOVERY

OF COPPER MINES, A NORTH WEST PASSAGE, &c.

In the Years 1769, 1770, 1771, & 1772.

By SAMUEL HEARNE.

LONDON:

Printed for A. Strahan and T. Cadell:

And Sold by T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, (Succeſſors to Mr. Cadell,) in the Strand.

1795.

*Figure 8.12 The title page of Samuel Hearne's account of his travels in the North. Eighteenth century explorer literature had a growing market in Britain and it became, in these years, a means for an old fur trade hand to earn a living in retirement. [Long Description] (#fig8.12)*

The two companies found themselves increasingly in conflict in the West. NWC forts and trading posts glared across rivers at their HBC opposites, strange mirror images of Euro-Canadian commercial activity

in a land dominated by Ojibwa and Cree. Competition between the English company and Montreal traders had been bloody since before the Conquest; the fact that they were both saluting the Union Jack after 1763 did little to ameliorate feelings. Moves were made in 1790 on the part of the NWC's leadership to have Britain end the HBC monopoly, but that effort came to nothing.

## The Montreal Factions

Relations within the NWC itself were hardly placid. The costs associated with long-distance transportation of goods and personnel to and from Montreal ate into profits. Tensions rose between the "winterers" and the agents, resulting in reorganizations and then, in response, breakaway partnerships such as the XY Company (a.k.a. the New North West Company). The 1790s and the first decade of the 19th century saw the Nor'Westers' profitability and share of the fur supply rise while their unity fractured and healed. Their accomplishments in the West were hurried and impressive.

The pace had been set by people like Peter Pond (c. 1740-1807), a bizarre and homicidal individual whose efforts in the West in the 1780s took him into the Athabasca system, a first for a non-Indigenous person and a seminal moment in the history of the NWC. A decade later (making good use of Pond's maps) Alexander Mackenzie (1764-1820), another NWC agent, explored the river than now bears his name and then, four years later, he crossed the whole continent, emerging near the main village of the Nuxalk (Bella Coola). (Mackenzie was the first European to cross the continent; his accomplishment predates the American expedition of Lewis and Clark by a decade.)

The NWC subsequently sent out two other missions: one headed by Simon Fraser (1776-1862) in 1808 and the other by David Thompson (1770-1857) in 1811. In the process the company moved into what is now northern British Columbia, what Fraser called **New Caledonia**. A few years later they closed the loop by purchasing John Jacob Astor's **Fort Astoria** in 1812, which transferred to the NWC the **Pacific Fur Company's (PFC)** control of posts reaching as far north as Thompson Rivers Post (Fort Kamloops). This expansion on the part of the NWC carved a path running northwest from Lake of the Woods to the Mackenzie River, right across the southwesterly course of the HBC's growth. Repeatedly the companies' representatives would come to blows.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/Franklin_map_fur_route_3751971809_c0c67ca7d3_o_huge_map_2.jpg)

*Figure 8.13 A detail from a map arising from John Franklin's disastrous 1819-20 expedition from Hudson Bay to the Mackenzie Delta. Note the presence of NWC and HBC posts on Methye Lake.*

## The Western Nations

This situation was not assisted by a change in Indigenous attitudes toward trade. For peoples like the Dënesųłįné (Chipewyan) and the most northwestern of the Cree, having a trading post on their doorstep or even just somewhat nearer to their territory was an important advantage. Mackenzie reported that such groups normally travelled hundreds of miles to trade, journeys that took them away from their homelands, their hunting, and their other customary practices. They were, therefore, happy to encounter forthcoming traders who would "relieve them from such long, toilsome, and dangerous journies; and were immediately reconciled to give an advanced price for the articles necessary to their comfort and convenience."[1]

Others were not so favourably impressed. The Niitsitapi and A'aninin (Grôs Ventres) nursed a growing hostility toward the fur traders who were supplying their Cree adversaries with arms. Conflict broke out sporadically. Events in the cordillera region took a similar turn from 1795 when the Ktunaxa (Kutenai) and Salis (Flathead) acquired guns from the NWC and American traders for use (successfully in 1810 and 1812) against their Piikáni (Piegan) enemies. The Piikáni thus joined the ranks of First Nations embittered against the newcomers. Even the Cree turned on the Euro-Canadians. In 1779 at Fort Montagne d'Aigle on the Saskatchewan River and again in 1781 at Fort des Trembles on the Assiniboine River, the Cree demonstrated their unwillingness to be cowed by arrogant traders.[2] The possibility arose in 1779-80 that the western Plains people — whose lands were increasingly saturated with fur traders of varying moral quality — would turn the newcomers out of the Plains entirely. Smallpox intervened in 1780 and further serious talk of a clearing of the West did not arise.

Conflict in the northwest was endemic after the fall of Wendake and the Beaver Wars, as Indigenous peoples worked toward a readjustment of territory and resources. The 18th century witnessed British American expansion into the trans-Appalachian west, causing further disruptions in traditional territories and invasions by displaced populations. Pressures were growing from all sides and they would not be relieved by landscape-scouring epidemics. Movement into new territories required adjustments and usually the occupants put up a fight. Some of the social and cultural changes that came with these movements and activities can only be described as revolutionary.

Key Takeaways

- Montreal traders were setting the pace in the West and entering into direct competition with the HBC in Rupert's Land, regardless of the latter's monopoly.
- Political and social changes in the Western nations were manifest in changing attitudes toward the Europeans and Euro-Canadians.

1. Barry M. Gough, "POND, PETER," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed November 26, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/pond_peter_5E.html .

2. Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 3rd edition (Don Mills: OUP, 2002), 175-6.

## Attributions

**Figure 8.12**
A journey from Prince of Wales's Fort, in Hudson's Bay, to the northern ocean : undertaken by order of the Hudson's Bay Company for the discovery of copper mines, a north west passage, & c. in the years 1769, 1770, 1771 & 1772 (http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.35434/3?r=0&s=1) by Samuel Hearne (http://eco.canadiana.ca/search?q=au%3A%22Hearne%2C+Samuel%2C+1745-1792.%22) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 8.13**
Franklin map fur route 3751971809 c0c67ca7d3 o huge map (2) (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Franklin_map_fur_route_3751971809_c0c67ca7d3_o_huge_map_(2).jpg) by Kayoty (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Kayoty) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

## Long descriptions

**Figure 8.12 long description:** Title page of Samuel Hearne's account of his travels in the North. The account is titled, "A journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay, to the Northern Ocean. Undertaken by order of the Hudson's Bay Company, for the discovery of copper mines, a north west passage, etc., in the years 1769, 1770, 1771, and 1772." The account was published in London in 1795.

[Return to Figure 8.12] (#attachment_1476)

### Media Attributions

- A journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay, to the Northern Ocean. (https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.35434/4?r=0&s=1) © 1795 by Samuel Hearne is licensed under a Public Domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/) license

# 8.7 Cultural Change on the Plains

Among the transformative forces that jolted the Plains in the 18th and 19th centuries, none was more sweeping than the arrival of horses, which happened on the northern Plains in the 1730s.

## A Mounted Revolution

Horses reached the Iron Confederacy and the Niitsitapi around 1750 and were available to the Métis shortly thereafter. Horses allowed the Niitsitapi and Nakoda Oyadebi to refine an existing Plains culture and they had even deeper impacts on the Cree. The culture of the Great Plains was being made over in a southwest to northeast direction. The Nakoda Oyadebi adopted the horse culture shortly after the Shoshone and then coached their Cree allies. The hundred years that followed would see elements of the Woodland and Swampy Cree move farther and farther into the Plains. Mounted, the Cree became a cavalry capable of raiding neighbours with speed and impunity. This era, sometimes called the "Horse Wars," had a revolutionary effect on Plains culture.

The horse had its own needs, potential, and limitations. It could not flourish in the subarctic or in the swampy lowlands. Where it did well, however, it made possible a burgeoning of Plains people's arts and crafts. The feathered headdress or war bonnet so utterly associated with Plains peoples in 20th century popular culture came into widespread use in these years simply because it could be carried from place to place more easily and it was no longer competing with other goods and belongings for space on a dog-pulled travois. As a weapon in war and in the harvest of bison, the horse knew no peer on the Plains. As an instrument leading to an improved quality of life, it was unprecedented. And it would, as well, contribute to a coming catastrophe. By 1818 horses were everywhere in abundance and literally eating into the bison range.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/Caitlin-caravan.jpg)

*Figure 8.14 George Catlin's c. 1850s sketch of Sioux making use of dogs and horses to move camp.*

Despite the arrival of horses, the Plains Cree still made use of enormous numbers of dogs in the mid-19th

century. Nakoda Oyadebi dogs — thought to be either wolves or recent descendants of wolves — were also used in their hundreds. Although hunting dogs worked and lived closely with Indigenous men, the larger pack was the responsibility of women in Plains culture; they had to attend to everything from their feeding to training as pack animals to the culling of litters and preparing dog flesh for ceremonial feasts. It appears that the arrival of the horse enabled Plains populations of dogs to grow. Accounts survive of as many as a thousand dogs in one encampment, and many European travellers commented on the howling and whining of Indigenous peoples' hounds.[1]



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/Karl_Bodmer_Travels_in_America_49.jpg)

*Figure 8.15 The Mandan villages were protected from bison herds by the clever use of topography, including rivers, cliffs, and canyons that isolated the fields. (Painted by Karl Bodmer, c. 1839.)*

## Power on the Plains

Historians remain divided on the character and depth of alliances and animosities on the Plains. This disagreement arises from inconsistencies in the written record and gaps in the oral accounts. What is certain is that the Cree emerged as a powerhouse in the parkland and farther north in the early fur trade period (c. 1680-1750). Their effective monopoly on HBC goods paired with Anishinaabeg control over much of the trade coming out of Montreal before the Conquest, and Nakoda Oyadebi military strength meant that the Iron Confederacy members moved from being on the geographic and economic periphery of the North American trade system to being leaders. The Spanish would not trade guns to the nations of the south and southwest, and the French had issues with some of the Plains nations. The British-supplied Cree and Anishinaabeg — along with their partners the Nakoda Oyadebi — enjoyed a privileged position. And being better armed they were able to protect that interest as they moved in greater numbers onto the Plains.

1. On dogs in Plains societies, see J.J. Audubon, *Quadrupeds of North America* III (New York: J.J. Audubon, 1854) and D.G. Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree. Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 37, part 2 (1940), cited in "The Dogs of the Great Plains Nations," in *Dog Law Reporter: Reflections on the Society of Dogs and Men.* Accessed November 30, 2014, http://doglawreporter.blogspot.ca/2012/01/dogs-of-great-plains-nations.html .

One of their rival groups, the Shoshone, felt the effects of this changed balance. The Shoshone had an outstanding reputation as makers of sinew-backed bows, a commodity they had customarily traded northward to the Niitsitapi, the Cree, and others. With iron arrowheads, these bows were lethally accurate weapons in war and in hunting, much more so than pre-19th century guns. (As late as 1811 it was reported that Piikáni of the Niitsitapi Confederacy reckoned that a Shoshone bow was worth a horse or a gun.) The Shoshone also had, by the early 18th century, access to Spanish horses via southern neighbours and allies, and used them for raiding. The horse gave them a great advantage in battles in the 1730s against the Niitsitapi and the Cree, not least because of the shock value of these alien animals.

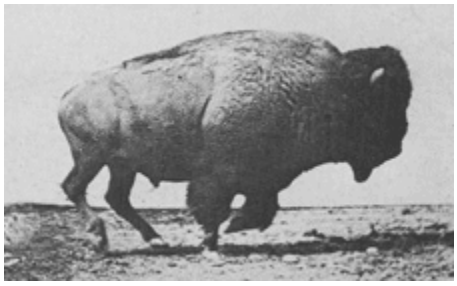
Shoshone raids deep into the South Saskatchewan River drainage in the mid-18th century, however, found the Cree well armed with English guns and very effective as marksmen. Guns turned the tide of Shoshone dominance on the northern Plains. The Cree armed their sometimes-allies the Niitsitapi, and the Shoshone were driven south. Once the Iron and the Niitsitapi Confederacies acquired horses of their own, the balance of power between those two sides shifted. Without a common enemy to their south, the Niitsitapi and the Cree-Nakoda Oyadebi found themselves in conflict over trade, the supply of horses, access to gunpowder and shot, and the locations of British and Canadian fur trade posts.[2]

These developments collectively contributed to the emergence of a common “Plains Indian” culture in the late 18th century. Mounted, well-armed, and capable of riding and shooting in large numbers — whether at enemies or bison herds — the Cree, Nakoda Oyadebi, Anihšināpē, and the Niitsitapi became a different kind of society. Better food supplies allowed their population to grow and life expectancies to improve. The stratifications in Niitsitapi society became more elaborate; the size of tipi rings enlarged; encampments grew from 50 to 200 individuals.

For women, it is likely that the bison tradition emerging in the late 18th century was a setback. The hunt and warfare became a greater preoccupation and source of prestige for men, while women’s work increased in the butchering and preparation of meat. Nevertheless, the changes that occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries were partly a product of women’s roles. Warfare and raids often entailed the capture and abduction of women and, of course, sometimes women moved from one society to another under less violent circumstances. They brought with them their skills in making handicrafts, clothes, tipis, and food, as well as their language, as they settled into a new, perhaps married, life in the adoptive community. These aspects of material and non-material culture were the property of women and were diverse and changing. Women in Niitsitapi culture, for example, were recognized as conduits for change and agents of adaptability.[3] The emergent Plains culture owed almost as much to women as it did to horses and guns. Indigenous women played a comparable transformative role in fur trade society as well.

2. John S. Milloy, *The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988).

3. Blana Tovias, *Colonialism on the Prairies: Blackfoot Settlement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2011), 86-8.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/Muybridge_Buffalo_galloping.gif)
*Figure 8.16 19th century English photographer Eadweard Muybridge took an interest in the gait of animals in motion. His study of a bison gives a sense of its mass and power.*

**Key Points**

- The arrival of horses on the northern Plains had a revolutionary impact on Indigenous cultures, economies, and relations with neighbours and newcomers.
- The power and influence of the Woods and Plains Cree increased dramatically in the years after the arrival of horses, gradually making them the most numerous and dominant force on the Plains.
- The emergence of common elements of a Plains culture in the 18th and 19th century was tied to increased dependence on the bison herds.

## Attributions

**Figure 8.14**
Band of Sioux Moving Camp (http://americanart.si.edu/images/1985/1985.66.482_1a.jpg) by George Catlin (http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artist/?id=782) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain). This image is from the Smithsonian American Art Museum (http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=3893) and cannot be used for commercial purposes.

**Figure 8.15**
Karl Bodmer Travels in America (49) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Karl_Bodmer_Travels_in_America_(49).jpg) by John Sweeney (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:John_Sweeney) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 8.16**
Muybridge Buffalo galloping (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Muybridge_Buffalo_galloping.gif) by Leonid 2 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Leonid_2) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 8.8 Fur Trade Society and the Métis



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/7931397138_4e2d68ed54_o.jpg)

*Figure 8.17 Métis style went beyond a mix of European and Indigenous elements to produce something distinctive. [Long Description] (#fig8.16) (Painting by Peter Rindisbacher, c. 1825-26)*

The dynamic of the northwestern fur trade was different from what was observed in the south and even around the Great Lakes in several ways. One of these was the contrasting patterns of migration. The wintering partners of the NWC and their Montreal-based competitors struggled across hundreds of miles of river, rapids, and portages with their long freight canoes in order to reach Lake Superior every spring to hand over their furs and collect new trade goods. Then, after a relatively brief stay, they'd return to the northwest. This ordeal would take the better part of spring and summer, depending on how far into the region their trade post was located. Similarly, the HBC traders in the field after 1775 raced across the North each spring and summer to reach Hudson Bay before the ice arrived. Indigenous people, for their part, might journey long distances once a year to trade at the post before heading back into their home country to, among other things, capture more fur-bearing animals. In other words, the trading post, depending on its size and importance, might be the focus of concentrated activity for a brief part of the year and more or less abandoned at other times.

The larger forts, however, offered a different scenario. Home guards were established on or close to their doorstep, a reliably accessible source of labour, food, and intelligence for the Euro-Canadians. For the Indigenous community itself, proximity to the fort gave them control over which other Indigenous traders might gain access.

It was in the context of these two broad types of interaction that a fur trade society emerged. In cases where there was an established home guard, the Europeans and Canadians had to concede that their ability to trade was limited. The HBC could claim to have a monopoly but so too might the Cree home guard. In the late 18th century, when northwestern peoples began to sour toward the traders, the home

guard bands constituted an important line of defence: they were allies whether the HBC wanted it to be so or not. The head office in London, however, wanted to keep Indigenous partners at arm's length and was particularly critical of romantic and/or sexual relations between the personnel and Indigenous women.

## Country Marriages

At the smaller posts farther inland, the situation was a little different. From the viewpoint of the European, marrying an Indigenous trader's daughter (or wife or sister) meant that the band would return reliably each year with new shipments of furs; from the perspective of Indigenous people, intermarriage ensured privileged access to European products. Indigenous women also brought with them skills necessary to succeed in the fur trade and the northern environment. They manufactured snowshoes, moccasins, tents, mitts, and other goods without which the European trader would do badly — if not perish. Of course, they also provided a sexual partnership and an intimate human relationship — without which the European trader might despair. The benefits arising for Indigenous women were considerable. They had direct and generous (though rarely unimpeded) access to trade goods, many of which were designed to ease the work of women in particular: cooking tools, sewing needles, and knives figured high on this list.

This position as a "woman in between" gave them status in their Indigenous community and influence in the European establishments as well. That position might be compromised or eliminated, however, if the fur trader spouse returned to Europe or Canada. In many instances the Indigenous women remarried other traders, which allowed them to continue in their roles. (In the worst case scenarios in the 19th century senior HBC fur traders introduced European/Canadian women to fur trade society, a move that decreased the status of Indigenous women in an increasingly race-conscious environment.)

The children born of these unions did not follow a singular path. In the 18th century the HBC denounced and forbade liaisons between its servants and Indigenous women, which may have simply driven the practice into the shadows. There were substantial numbers of children at the forts around 1750. By 1800 other solutions were being explored, including resettlement of the offspring. Daughters whose fathers were important officers in the HBC were married when they reached adulthood to young European traders. They were thus drawn into a complex kin network that stretched to, perhaps, the Orkney Islands on the one side and the Coppermine River on the other. For reasons associated principally with the structure of year-round life at HBC posts and with the HBC management's efforts to limit intermarriage, these relationships developed along lines that favoured British influences in important ways. The offspring of intermarriage involving the HBC, in short, developed identities that were more strongly British than not; some, however, were utterly Indigenous. But there was not much in the middle.

The contrast with the experience of Canadien men and Indigenous communities is sharp. In the more transiently populated forts on the French/Montreal frontier around the Great Lakes, it was more likely that Canadien traders would return to Canada annually or after a few years in the field. Relationships under these circumstances were more casually structured and a female partner would sometimes be handed on to a retiring trader's successor. As postings in the West lengthened and particularly as succeeding generations of voyageurs/winterers became more contemptuous of the soft life in Canada, marriages were more likely to be at least confirmed *à la façon du pays* (in the custom of the country). As the influence of the clergy in the West increased, clergymen sometimes also formalized them further with conversion rites and the sacrament of marriage.

In the French and then the post-Conquest Montrealers' posts, intermarriage and miscegnation occurred regularly enough to become a concern for both priests and managers. There were so many offspring (and widows and abandoned wives) of traders living in and around forts from Detroit north through Michilimackinac, Fort William, and onto the Plains that the NWC was regularly faced with requests for support when its men left the field. The Catholic clergy played an important role in the socialization of the **Métis** ("mixed-blood") children and by the late 1700s there were sufficient numbers — a cultural critical mass — to generate a distinct group of people.[1]

## Fur Trade Dialects

A sure sign of the emergence of a self-sustaining culture was the appearance around 1800 of a Métis language, **Michif**, which mainly combined French nouns with Cree verb phrases. (This was an almost unique phenomenon in North America which, outside of the Russian-Aleut communities in Alaska, constitutes the only true "mixed language," as opposed to a trading dialect or a pidgin. By contrast, **Bungee** arose around the English-speaking settlements of Red River, layering elements of Anishinaabe/Ojibwa atop a substantial foundation of English and Gaelic to create what linguists call a "creole.") Michif, along with a distinctive style of dress, manner of living, and awareness of shared interests, set the Métis apart from their Indigenous and European cousins and sent them down a path toward nationhood in their own right. Between 1800 and 1820, the Métis advanced their own economic interests as carters, voyageurs, farmers, bison hunters, trappers, and manufacturers of pemmican. Their great technological contribution to Western life — the **Red River cart** — enabled the Métis to freight large quantities of pemmican and trade goods across the open prairie and even across rivers, something that was beyond the means of Indigenous and European traders alike.

1. Jacqueline Peterson, "Many roads to Red River: Métis genesis in the Great Lakes region, 1680-1815," *The New Peoples: Being and becoming Métis in North America*, Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown, eds. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 37-72.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/Manitoba_Settlers_House_and_Red_River_Cart.png)

*Figure 8.18 Red River carts were amphibious craft consisting of a flatbed attached to two large, convex spoked wheels. No metal was used in their construction and the wheels could be removed and strapped to the bottom so that the vehicle became a raft. They were invariably pulled by oxen. (Painting by William Hind, c. 1862)*

It was the pemmican trade that became the Métis niche, especially in what is now southeastern Manitoba and North Dakota. It was to define their relationship with newcomers on the northern Plains and it would become an important part of the "New Nation's" identity.

**Métissage**

The terminology used to describe liaisons between European men and Indigenous women has evolved a great deal since the contact era. In 17th century New France, there was enthusiasm at official levels for building a colony of people drawn from both societies (so long as they were Catholic) and there was, as a consequence, little opprobrium attached to children who were the product of miscegenation. In Spanish colonies the term for the children of native and European parents was (and is) *mestizo.* In French colonies the term most often used today is *métis.* Note that it is not capitalized in this instance, because it describes a heritage, not a culture. When *métis* people in North America achieved a consciousness of a separate identity, they became Métis. So, it is possible to speak of someone who is *métis* but not Métis.

Most, but not all Métis (and *métis* too) were the descendants of French and French-Canadian traders and Indigenous women (mostly Anishinaabeg or Cree). By contrast, the children of British men and Indigenous women were described in a number of ways. Historians, looking at that population retrospectively, use the term *country born***.** There was a time when *half-breed* was not necessarily a derogative term, but by the middle of the 19th century it very commonly was. As notions of race and immutable race differences became more widespread, the terminology became more derisive and was hurled as an insult. Other terms such as *bois-brûlés* (which means "burnt wood") was used by

francophones and still occasionally makes an appearance. *Métissage* is an attractive word sometimes used to describe the mixing of European and Indigenous cultures in these populations. It is certainly a better choice than *mixed-race marriages*," which perpetuates obsolete and discredited notions of racial categories.

**Key Points**

- The Western fur trade in the early 19th century was long-ranging, defined by chains of forts and posts that covered thousands of kilometres and created many intersections for different peoples.
- Relations between Indigenous and European/Euro-Canadian participants in the fur trade frequently included sexual and/or marital partnerships.
- The role of the Indigenous and *métis* women in these relationships was often critical to the success of the fur trade business.
- The people arising from these relationships began to define themselves as different from both Indigenous and European ancestries.

## Attributions

**Figure 8.17**
A halfcast [sic] and his two wives / Un Métis et ses deux épouses (https://www.flickr.com/photos/lac-bac/7931397138/in/photostream/) by LibraryArchives (https://www.flickr.com/photos/lac-bac/) is used under a CC BY 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/) license.

**Figure 8.18**
Manitoba Settler's House and Red River Cart (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manitoba_Settler's_House_and_Red_River_Cart.png) by Geo Swan (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Geo_Swan) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

## Long descriptions

**Figure 8.17 long description:** The women wear long dresses and colourful pants. One woman has a shawl wrapped around her body and over her head. A man wears a decorated top hat, a patterned vest, a long tunic, and leggings. [Return to Figure 8.17] (#attachment_2084)

# 8.9 Community and Crisis at Red River



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/York-Factory.jpg)

*Figure 8.19 Driven from their homeland by poverty and loss of land, the Red River settlers found themselves caught up in similar issues in North America.*

The HBC continued to trade in all the lands around the bay but increasingly it pushed into the Prairies in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1811 it established a fort and settlement at Red River in response to NWC incursions into what the Royal Charter made clear was territory covered by the HBC monopoly.

### The Selkirk Colony

This was done under the leadership of the HBC's Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk (1771-1820), a Scot who had engaged in several other settlement schemes in British North America (all with mixed results). Selkirk was moved by the situation of the Highland and Lowland Scots who were forced off their lands by the **clearances** — the consolidation of feudal lands to enable the building of greater sheep flocks and thus feed the ravenous woollen industry in industrializing Britain. While touring the Canadas he was feted by the largely Scottish Montreal merchant establishment, which included representatives of the NWC. Knowing something of the strengths and weaknesses of their operations, he returned to Britain where he secured an influential number of shares in the HBC and then convinced the old monopoly to move into the Red River Valley. The **Red River** or **Selkirk Colony** (also called **Assiniboia**) was intended to absorb Highlanders, retired HBC employees, and (eventually) demobilized Swiss mercenaries. The fact that it straddled the NWC's main access routes and trading territories provoked a decade of hostilities between two already deeply competitive firms.

The Selkirk Colony was enormous, four times the size of New Brunswick and 20% larger than Upper Canada. It contained both NWC and HBC posts. It was, as well, home to large numbers of Métis, some of whom were farmers but most of whom earned at least part of their living from the **pemmican** trade

with the NWC. A high-protein mash of dried bison and berry jerky, pemmican was the staff of life for Western fur traders and was literally the fuel that drove the fast-moving, long-distance NWC canoe brigades. One estimate claims that "several million kilograms of pemmican were consumed in the fur country each year."[1] The enormous scale of the bison hunts in the 18th and 19th centuries were, in this respect, mobile food-processing operations in which Indigenous women were a central part. Far from being just a matter of diet, the production, sale, and storage of pemmican was a huge business that operated symbiotically with the fur trade. Neither economy could survive without the other.

The Red River Colony imposed on that economic order and, when famine threatened the settlement in mid-winter 1814, Governor Miles Macdonnell (1767-1828) issued what became known as the **Pemmican Proclamation.** This law was meant to stop the export of pemmican to NWC forts in the West and retain it for the HBC settlers. If it had been successful it might have ruined the NWC and it certainly would have impoverished the Métis, at least temporarily. Tension between the Métis and the NWC on the one hand and Macdonnell, the HBC, and the Selkirk settlers on the other had been simmering; the Pemmican Proclamation pushed the colony to boiling point. A fearful two-thirds of the settlers prudently left the colony that spring, assisted by an NWC that was only too happy to see them off. The remainder were more or less chased away and the settlement was razed. Selkirk, not to be outdone, found another group of settlers to send to Red River in 1816, along with a new governor, Robert Semple (1777-1816).[2]

**Historians on Video**

Setting up a European-style farming society at Red River encountered significant environmental challenges. Environmental historian Sean Kheraj (York University) describes some of the processes involved. Here is a link to a transcript of Sean Kheraj discussing the introduction of plants and animals to Canada during colonization [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_sk_u8_01.pdf).

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=225#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

## Seven Oaks

Matters came to a head on June 19, 1816, at the **Battle of Seven Oaks** (in present-day West Kildonan in Winnipeg). A party of Métis, having recovered pemmican from HBC posts farther west, were on their way to a rendezvous at an NWC post when they confronted a party from the Red River Settlement, one that included Semple himself. The result was a bloodbath. Semple and 19 others of the HBC people were killed in the shootout; only one of the Métis party died.

1. Daniel Francis, "Traders and Indians," in *The Prairie West: Historical Readings*, eds. R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992), 71.

2. Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 22-90.

Seven Oaks is important in the history of the West and of Canada for at least four reasons. First, it aggravated already very poor relations between the two companies. The fur trade wars were then at full tilt, with HBC and NWC personnel murdering one another across the whole of the West. Second, this chaos was destabilizing and expensive: it stretched both companies to their limit, leading to amalgamation in 1821 under the Hudson's Bay Company name. Third, it marked the emergence of the Métis as a self-aware nation. The Selkirk Colony gave the Métis an issue on which they could start to imagine a political destiny and it framed an issue of rights to which the Métis would aspire.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/Cuthbert_grant.jpg)

*Figure 8.20 Cuthbert Grant, 1793-1854.*

Much of the legwork in this process has been ascribed to their leader at Seven Oaks, Cuthbert Grant. The son of a Scottish trader and a woman of Cree or Nakoda Oyadebi (Assiniboine) background, Grant was well educated, intelligent, and articulate. According to his biographer, he mobilized Métis feeling in the years leading to Seven Oaks, creating a viable force out of what had been a largely disparate population. The fact that he did so to enable the success of the NWC — with which he and his father had long been associated — takes nothing away from this accomplishment.[3] At Seven Oaks Grant led them to their first "wartime" victory and, as is often said, got "blood on the flag." The Métis, consequently, would grow as a force on the Plains in the 19th century.

Fourth and finally, Seven Oaks was an important military, commercial, and cultural event. It also resonates as an environmental turning point, as the next two sections argue.

3. George Woodcock, "GRANT, CUTHBERT (d. 1854)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography,* vol. 8 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed August 29, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/grant_cuthbert_1854_8E.html .

**Key Points**

- In the early 19th century the HBC moved inland from its seaboard forts and confronted its principal competition.
- The Red River Colony was located at an intersection of conflicting interests in the fur trade.
- The Métis at Red River had a distinctive economic and political role to play.

### Video Attributions

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### Media Attributions

- **Figure 8.19**. Historic dock, engraving by Schell & Hogan (http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/lhn-nhs/mb/yorkfactory/natcul/histo.aspx) from Picteresque Canada, vol.1, pg. 317 (Toronto, 1882). This reproduction is a copy of the version available at parkscanada.gc.ca (http://parkscanada.gc.ca) and cannot be used for commercial purposes.
- **Figure 8.20**. Cuthbert Grant (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuthbert_Grant#mediaviewer/File:Cuthbert_grant.jpg) by Jonasz (http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedysta:Jonasz) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

### Media Attributions

- Charlotte_Trottier_Desrivieres-240×300-1

# 8.10 The New HBC and the New Nation to 1860

In the days and months after Seven Oaks, the colony at Red River was more divided than ever. The Métis under the leadership of Cuthbert Grant had taken an important step toward becoming a self-aware and tightly knit nation in their own right. Their allies in the NWC (and their head office in Montreal) were buoyed by the apparent weakness of the HBC and its bothersome colony. The HBC, on the other hand, had the support of the British government; the death of Governor Semple hardened their commitment to the HBC.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/08/Selkirks_land_grant_Assiniboia.jpg)

*Figure 8.21 The Selkirk or Red River Colony on the eve of the Treaty of 1818.*

Some resolution was achieved in the **Treaty of 1818,** a lesser-known agreement that came to have a lasting impact on the shape of Canadian history. Also known as the Anglo-American Convention, it tidied up a few issues left outstanding from the Treaty of Ghent (1814). Specifically, it addressed the issue of boundaries in the West. The treaty makers drew a straight line across the continent along the 49th parallel from Lake of the Woods to the Columbia River. The United States ceded to the British some territory in what is now southern Alberta. More critically, the Red River Colony lost its southern drainage and the important village of Pembina; the lands of the Red River Valley — the homeland of the Métis — were thus partitioned.

Geopolitical change told only part of the story. The year 1818 saw the return of plagues to the

Prairies, accompanied by famine and armed conflict over diminished resources. Severe climate change and fluctuations aggravated matters. Massive demographic disasters ensued and the fur trade came close to a total collapse.

These new conditions set the stage for the merger of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company in 1821. The merger was both an act of desperation and an inspired reorganization.

## Merger: HBC

Despite the distances involved in freighting trade goods from Montreal to the West and back again over land and by rivers and lakes, the NWC was arguably the stronger company in 1816. By 1818, however, some rot was beginning to show. Disaffection with the Montreal leadership was leading to desertions to the HBC and American competitors. The arrest and trial of several NWC employees and allies for the murder of Semple turned out badly for the HBC — everyone charged was acquitted and an independent investigation concluded that the HBC's people fired the first shot. A counter case against Lord Selkirk demoralized the colony's leader and he died in 1820 at 49 years of age. The British government was exasperated by the fur trade wars and insisted on a merger. Selkirk's death, confusion at the head office of the NWC, and general battle fatigue among the wintering partners cleared the way for a single monopoly. In 1821 the companies became one: the NWC disappeared, redundant posts were dismantled, pensions were issued, and the NWC's business model of shareholding traders became the norm in the new HBC.

The appointment of Sir George Simpson as governor of the HBC in 1822 brought significant changes. Simpson's style was autocratic and it took time for him to win the support and (as an outsider) respect of the traders in the field. Many of the former NWC employees remained rightly mistrustful of the HBC. Simpson initially regarded with contempt the Canadiens he inherited from the NWC and sought their dismissal. Two years later, after observing the usefulness and work ethic of the Canadiens, his opinion softened somewhat. He did, however, limit the possibilities for promotion for Canadiens and Iroquois.

One of Simpson's other initiatives was the **York Factory Express** (also called the **Columbia Express**), a route that connected York Factory to Fort Vancouver by combining the assets and knowledge of the two former competitors. The 4,000-plus kilometre route combined the use of **York boats** — heavy, wide draught wooden dinghies with sails — and horse brigades. The York boat fleet travelled between Hudson's Bay and the foothills of the Rockies along the North Saskatchewan River, a route that included heavy and awkward portages that looked nothing like the days of birchbark canoes. Between the mountains and the sea the Express made use of ponies set out along well-developed brigade trails (many of which are highway routes today).




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/08/York-Factory-Express.png)

*Figure 8.22 Map of the route of the York Factory Express, 1820s to 1840s.*

A growing American presence south of the 49th parallel, however, compromised the monopoly. New limitations on the trade in liquor in Rupert's Land and Assiniboia created a vacuum into which American whisky traders moved. This was how American and Métis traders in the southern half of the bisected Selkirk Colony encouraged the diversion of furs away from the HBC. Efforts to stamp out these "free traders" would culminate in the trial of Guillaume Sayer (c. 1801-1849).

An NWC employee in his youth, Sayer spent much of the 1820s and 1830s working for the HBC. In 1849 he was caught trading furs to Americans at Pembina, formerly part of the Selkirk Colony. Sayer's trial at **Upper Fort Garry** (Winnipeg) became a major public event. It was bound up in public resentment toward the monopolistic HBC and, also, in the ideal of Métis liberty. Sayer's cause was taken up by Louis Riel Sr., a Métis whose fame would be eclipsed one day by his son and namesake (a mere five years old at the time of the trial). Under Riel Sr.'s leadership and encouragement, the Métis gathered in large numbers at the fort's courthouse, demanding a fair trial for Sayer. Although he was found guilty by a jury of his peers, the judge — Adam Thom — was intimidated by the armed crowd outside. He decided not to sentence Sayer and gave him back his freedom (which he enjoyed for three months and then died). The trial's outcome was a signal that the Company's monopoly was broken and it was a further advance in the formation of a national consciousness among the Métis. Riel Sr.'s fame arising from the trial would serve his son well.

## Grand Couteau

Two years after the Sayer Trial, a battle between the Sioux and the Métis fixed the reputation of the latter as a fighting force deserving respect. The annual (sometimes biannual) Métis bison hunt had grown in size and efficiency since the late 18th century. By 1851, however, the bison herds were shrinking. Overhunting and the westward migration of Indigenous peoples pushed along by the arrival of American settlers below the 49th parallel were wearing down the bison numbers. The Lakota Sioux determined to reduce European predations on what they regarded as their herds. From a Sioux perspective, as well, the Métis were not observing basic conservationist principles. Pemmican continued to be produced at surplus rates in the 1840s and 1850s even as a market for bison robes and hides was opening up. Métis

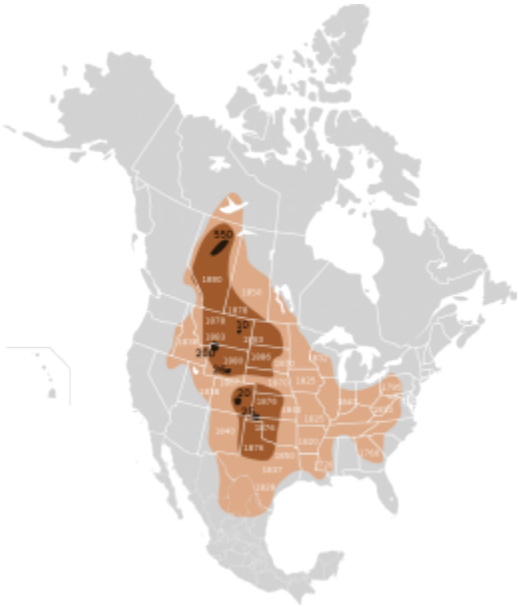
exploitation of the bison as a commercial resource to complement their slowly advancing agricultural settlements to the north no doubt impacted the herd populations in the eastern and central plains.

**Grand Couteau**, a plateau in central North Dakota, has multiple layers of significance for North American history. It was the site of the first major conflict between the Métis and another Indigenous nation. Both laid claim to the right to hunt herds, the Métis deploying a European notion of property (that is, livestock that are not fenced in cannot be said to "belong" to anyone in particular) while sustaining a Plains hunting culture very similar to that of the Sioux. Both the Sioux and the Métis arrived at Grand Couteau in armed and mounted cavalry formations. The Métis, moreover, had an advantage in the form of Red River carts that could be flipped up or on their side to provide cover from sniper fire. Both were tightly organized and capable of showing incredible cool under fire. What's more, the Métis bison hunting parties had evolved into very large endeavours. (There were said to be more than a thousand participants and a similar number of carts heading to Grand Couteau, although not all were present at the battle.) Managing those numbers meant that military discipline was the norm. It was, as well, potentially brutal and sometimes remorseless. Against this were 2,000 Sioux warriors in the field that day in early July 1851 when Sioux scouts encountered outriders from one of three Métis hunting parties. The end effects proved significant to both parties.

The Métis emerged victorious, their discipline and philosophy of sacrifice to the needs of the larger community vindicated; their confidence was high and Grand Couteau would stand for many years as a symbol of their potential.[1] For their part, the Sioux fared less well and would adopt different strategies for survival in a world of shrinking resources, the most immediate of which was signing their first treaty with the United States a mere two weeks after Grand Couteau.

As for the bison, their numbers continued to shrink. Grand Couteau was, in this regard, a case of closing the metaphorical bison pen after the last buffalo had bolted. As the map in Figure 8.23 indicates, the herds were hunted out of the Dakotas and southern Manitoba until what little was left could be found in the borderlands of Alberta and Montana in the late 1860s.

1. Irene M. Spry, "The métis and mixed-bloods of Rupert's Land before 1870," *The New Peoples: Being and becoming Métis in North America*, Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown, eds. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 95-118.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/08/800px-Extermination_of_bison_to_1889.svg_.png)

*Figure 8.23 Extermination of the bison to 1889. This map is based on William Temple Hornaday's late-19th-century research. Dark numbers indicate the population of bison as of January 1, 1889. Light numbers give the date of local extermination. Light brown indicates original range, brown shows range in 1870. Dark brown shows remainder in 1889. [Long Description] (#fig8.22)*

**Key Points**

- The Treaty of 1818 began to give shape to what emerged eventually as Western Canada. It also bisected the Red River Settlement, the Métis communities, and the Blackfoot Confederacy, among others.
- Exhausted by battle and legal wrangling, the HBC and NWC merged in 1821.
- The Sayer Trial of 1849 spelled the end of the HBC monopoly in trade and opened commerce across the West.
- The Battle at Grand Couteau signalled the rise of the Métis as a militarized force on the Plains and the coming crisis of shrinking bison herds.

## Attributions

**Figure 8.21**
Selkirks land grant (Assiniboia) (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d1/Selkirks_land_grant_%28Assiniboia%29.jpg) by J Hazard (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:J_Hazard) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 8.22**
York-Factory-Express (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:York-Factory-Express.png) by Pfly (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-admin/Pfly) is used under a CC BY-SA 4.0 International (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.

**Figure 8.23**
Extermination of bison to 1889 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Extermination_of_bison_to_1889.svg) by Cephas (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Cephas) is used under a CC BY-SA 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en) license.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 8.23 long description:** Originally, bison could be found throughout almost the entire United States and up into Alberta, Saskatchewan, Southern Manitoba, and southern Northwest Territories. However, by 1889, the bison numbered no more than 800 and could only be found in a few locations. [Return to Figure 8.23] (#)

# 8.11 Environmental Apocaplyse

It may seem melodramatic to describe the situation as apocalyptic. But for the Indigenous peoples of the region and for the animals on which they depended for survival, it could hardly be viewed otherwise. Famine conditions broke out at Red River in 1816 in part because of a temporary poor climate pattern. But the writing was on the wall even beforehand: the bison herds on which so many Plains cultures (including the Métis) depended were being obliterated in the northeastern Plains. The fur trade, too, was moving farther and farther west. Swans had disappeared from around James Bay by 1785 due to over-hunting (for their skins and feathers); rabbits, geese, and deer were consumed in prodigious amounts by all of the HBC and NWC posts; partridge were vastly reduced in number and getting harder to find.[1] The signs were everywhere that the situation and many species were no longer sustainable.

Further, the explosion of Mount Tambora in faraway Indonesia in 1815 threw tons of material into the atmosphere, blocking out light and polluting the air, causing the **Year Without Summer.** A disastrous year for crops and grazing animals in 1816 was only the worst of several successive years of severe hardship. For Indigenous people, the loss of game was a terrible burden. Faced, too, with measles, smallpox, whooping cough, and tuberculosis in these years, whole communities disappeared while others fled their home territories in search of better prospects elsewhere.

These environmental conditions had a significant impact on bison herd numbers as well. The largest numbers of animals continued to move west. This meant that pursuit of the herds became even more imperative than before. Mounted hunts inevitably increased the radius of individual bands and made conflict over territory and resources inevitable, not least because horseback hunters were more effective in reducing bison stocks. Horse travel also made it possible to move bacteria and viruses long distances in record time. The possibility of quarantining part of the Plains during epidemics had passed. Indigenous peoples looked at these changing conditions and some decided to explore other strategies for survival, including Prairie farming and treaties with their neighbours and with newcomers.

The beaver population was also in dramatic decline. The NWC system, being more democratic than the top-down business model of the HBC, made it possible for young men to make a fortune as fur traders; but these fortunes could only be made by mining out the very last beaver in any give territory in short order. One response was to look farther afield, to plunder furs west of the Rockies, but that, too, was a short-term solution. More promising still was the advance made into the **North-Western Territories** by the HBC. The Company's new licence to these expanded territories extended its monopoly and presence from the Arctic to California and from the Pacific to Hudson Bay, including the whole coastline of what is now northern Quebec. The impact on animal populations was almost immediate.

The cataclysmic changes of the period from 1816 into the 1820s and the unification of the fur trading companies meant that the HBC became the de facto government of the Prairie West (and large parts of the trans-mountain West). While this was not good for the wildlife, it did put the Company in a position to launch an inoculation campaign in an effort to curtail epidemics (which it did), put an end to the trade in alcohol (which it mostly did), and experiment with conservation measures (which it did clumsily).

1. Laurel Sefton MacDowell, *An Environmental History of Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 34.

It also worked to limit farming in the West, viewing the possible influx of settlers as detrimental to its relationship with the Plains peoples in particular and to its interest in fur-bearing animals.

Another force stood in the way of a farming frontier across the West, and it stands as a further wrinkle in the story of large mammals thundering across the Plains. As we have seen, the number and size of Indigenous farming societies had been falling since the 15th century. These higher density settlements would have had an interest in managing bison populations; otherwise attempts at agriculture would be frustrated. Coupled with climate change, the disappearance of the Mississippian farmers and even farming villages as far north as Alberta reduced obstacles to the growth of bison numbers. The massive herds were themselves an historic anomaly, in part a product of changes in the human ecology on the Plains. The bison posed a major challenge to agriculture: they were notorious for trampling crops and a herd could make short work of a farmer or hunter caught in the open.[2] It was only their removal by over-hunting (and the development of cold-steel ploughs) that made the agricultural revolution on the Plains in the late 19th century conceivable.

## Disease and Indigenous Populations

The saga of invasive diseases was far from over in the 18th century. Epidemics continued to take a toll and force change upon Indigenous societies. Outbreaks of influenza (an exotic disease) struck the Dënesųłįné (Chipewyan) and northern Cree in 1748-49. Those who did not die from the sickness faced starvation in its aftermath.[3] Smallpox made a continent-wide appearance in 1781-82, distributed on horseback; it was devastating for Plains and parkland peoples alike. Faced with high mortalities from this outbreak and by a mounted and well-armed Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) enemy, the Shoshone retreated from what is now southern Alberta. Disease thus allowed the Niitsitapi to extend their range into Montana. Winners in these conflicts were, nevertheless, themselves greatly reduced by epidemics and not all enjoyed a speedy recovery.

We have seen how, in the 18th century, trade networks across the Plains focused on the Mandan-Hidatsa villages. For the Cree and their neighbours, the Mandan villages were the key to survival to the 1830s, the last link to the ancient Mississipian farming cultures. It was their position as a hub of trade that doomed the Mandan-Hidatsa villages and many of the people with whom they traded. Smallpox struck the Mandan in 1837-38 and was thus passed along to many in the trading community. It then spread north to the Nakoda Oyadebi. Some of the Cree communities fared relatively well because the HBC traders inoculated many people along with numbers of the Anihšināpē (Saulteaux). The Nakoda Oyadebi, whose population was historically much larger and their individual bands inflated since the arrival of horses if not earlier, however, were easy targets for smallpox. The Mandan, likewise suffered horrendously: they were a village population with no hope of retreat in the face of, first, whooping cough, then cholera and tuberculosis, and then smallpox. The 1837 smallpox epidemic killed 6,000 of the Niitsitapi as well, who were subsequently forced westward. Hundreds if not thousands died in the famines and dislocations that followed the 1830s disaster. Indigenous communities folded into one another and whole populations fled still farther west.

2. Olive Patricia Dickason, "A Historical Reconstruction for the Northwestern Plains," in *The Prairie West: Historical Readings* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992), 53.

3. J. Colin Yerbury, *The Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade, 1680-1860* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 39.

Smallpox and then scarlet fever pursued these populations even as they pursued one another. Both diseases devastated the Plains Cree of the Qu'Appelle Valley twice in the 1850s and the Niitsitapi suffered from scarlet fever, possibly introduced into the region by the Hind Expedition (see Chapter 14 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/14-1/#chapter14)). One historian has suggested that the Niitsitapis' "recent abandonment of the centuries-old practice of maintaining fresh water supplies by conserving beaver stocks" worsened their situation.[4] The environmental impact of the fur trade and Indigenous competition cut deep.

The westward exodus of both the Niitsitapi and the Plains Cree culminated in further catastrophe. Nearly a century of raiding by the Cree embittered the Niitsitapi against their northeastern enemies. Although the two nations temporarily worked out an alliance of their own, by the mid-19th century the Cree were determined to secure primacy over the Plains and the remaining bison herds.[5] The Niitsitapi, for their part, had their backs to a wall of mountains. The Ktunaxa (Kutenai), another historic Plains peoples, had already been pushed across the Rockies (perhaps by the Niitsitapi); the Niitsitapi were not about to follow them. Conflict between the Cree and Niitsitapi increased through the 1850s and 1860s, culminating in the Battle at Oldman River (a.k.a. Battle of the Belly River) in what is now southern Alberta in the autumn of 1870. The Niitsitapi repelled the ambush launched by the Cree, Anihšināpē, and a much-reduced Nakoda Oyadebi, and the Iron Confederacy suffered extensive fatalities. The two sides agreed to peace soon thereafter.

4. James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: U of R Press, 2013), p.75.

5. Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999): 123-49.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/Piapot.gif)

*Figure 8.24 Piapot (a.k.a. Payipwat, Kisikawasan) became an important Plains Cree leader in his 40s and was influential in Cree politics from the 1860s to the early 20th century.*

The cumulative and complementary effects of epidemics, warfare, and the extensive deaths associated with the work of the American **whisky traders** (who pushed as far north as Fort Edmonton) were truly horrific. Pockets of the Plains turned into genuine boneyards. Desperation was the order of the day. It was in this context of exhaustion and vastly depleted population numbers that the people of the Plains approached the prospect of annexation by Canada and the possibilities held out in the **Numbered Treaties** of the 1870s.

**Key Points**

- The new and expanded HBC adapted many features of the NWC and extended its systems to incorporate trading posts and forts from the Hudson Bay to the Pacific Ocean, around the Great Lakes, and on the Ungava Peninsula.
- The fur trade proved to be unsustainable, as was the bison hunt, producing food shortages

and even famine.

- The return of epidemics and the arrival of new exotic diseases had disastrous effects on Indigenous populations.
- A shrinking resource base, demographic calamities, and fear of starvation pitted Indigenous communities against one another and challenged the survival of the fur trade.

## Attributions

**Figure 8.24**
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## 8.12 Summary



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/3213606740_9e642903a4_o.jpg)

*Figure 8.25 European perspectives on the northwest are made clear in this c. 1750 map by Robert Sayer. Is there a northwest passage through "Parts Unknown"? The mythical "River of the West" holds out some hope, as does all that terra incognita.*

The Napoleonic Wars, of which the War of 1812 was a part, barely touched the Prairie West. The Battle at Seven Oaks was an entirely separate event, one that reflected the isolation of the region from global events. Having said that, the region was fully vulnerable to global trade, and it was competition in Atlantic marketplaces that brought the HBC, the NWC, and their respective allies to blows in 1816. The theme of competing visions of the economy and orientation of the economy of the West was, in fact, to dominate debate and life on the Plains for the next 60 years. The consolidation of the NWC into the HBC left many of the Métis on the outside looking in. The fur trade's best years, however, were behind it and the years ahead were nothing like those that had passed. The subsequent crash of beaver and, slightly later, bison populations brought to an end nearly a century of flourishing Plains cultures, culminating in some of the bloodiest wars in Canadian history and, thereafter, the arrival of a new imperial master from the east and the signing of treaties.

Overall, we may characterize the history of the West and the North in the years from 1670 to 1870 as an age of Indigenous dynamism and continuity and European/Canadian intrusion on an almost haphazard basis. It is one region in what is now Canada where we can observe Indigenous agendas playing out over a sustained period of time without being drawn into intercolonial wars. The transformation of pedestrian and clannish people from the Hudson Bay Lowlands into a mounted and armed Plains cavalry capable of reaching far greater numbers and conducting dramatic raids and hunts across a huge range tells us two things. First, Indigenous peoples were never static and always adaptable and that there is no single typology for historic Indigenous peoples that suffices. Second, it shows how the world that Canadians encountered in the West in the late 19th century was a changed place, turning on a series of revolutions in social and economic organization. The Canadians who arrived on the scene in the 1860s and 1870s, however, would mistake what they saw for a timeless and primitive land of warring and starving Natives

lorded over by an autocratic HBC. This unsophisticated view would lead the Canadians to make a series of fateful errors as they sought to expand their own vision of a unified British North America.

Key Terms

**Assiniboia:** Synonymous with Selkirk Colony or Red River Colony. The Treaty of 1818 divided it at the 49th parallel, thereby reducing Assiniboia significantly. After Confederation and the creation of the province of Manitoba, the name was applied to a new regional administrative unit in the **North West Territories**. This District of Assiniboia ran horizontally across the southern Canadian Prairies and was bounded on the east by Manitoba, on the south by the 49th parallel and the United States, on the west by the District of Alberta, and on the north by the District of Saskatchewan.

**Battle of Seven Oaks:** On June 19, 1816, a battle of two parties made up of HBC employees (including Governor Robert Semple) and Red River settlers against a party of Métis, Canadiens, and Indigenous peoples connected with the NWC. This was a violent chapter in the **Pemmican War** and was provoked by a food shortage and the HBC's consequent attempt to control the movement and sale of pemmican.

**Bungee:** Dialect that arose around the English-speaking settlements of Red River, layering elements of Anishinaabe/Ojibwa atop a substantial foundation of English and Gaelic to create what linguists call a "creole."

**clearances:** The consolidation of feudal lands to enable the building of greater sheep flocks that would thus feed the ravenous woolen industry in industrializing Britain. The Highland Clearances resulted in the displacement of large numbers of Scots, as did the Lowland Clearances, contributing to a massive out-migration in the 18th and 19th centuries.

**Columbia Express:** Route connecting York Factory to the mouth of the Columbia River by combining the assets and knowledge of the HBC. Also called the **York Factory Express**.

**Dorset**: The Paleo-Eskimo culture that existed in the Canadian Arctic from c. 500 BCE–1500 CE. Succeeded by the Inuit culture.

**Fort Astoria**: Established at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1811 by John Jacob Astor's **Pacific Fur Company**, Astoria was the first American position on the northwest coast. It was soon sold to the North West Company.

**Grand Couteau:** Plateau in central North Dakota, the site of a key battle between Métis and Sioux bison-hunting parties.

**home guard**: Middleman cordon formed around the HBC forts by Indigenous groups that had a prior claim to the territory. Ensured that they enjoyed first access to trade goods.

**Hudson's Bay Company (HBC)**: In 1670, a monopolistic charter modelled on the East India Company that was granted to "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay." Also known as the HBC.

**Métis, *métis*:** Capitalized, it refers to people of mixed ancestry (European and Indigenous) who self-identify with a synthetic culture that evolved mainly around the Great Lakes and on the Plains. Not capitalized, it is sometimes used to refer to people in British North America (and sometimes in the United States) of combined European and Indigenous ancestry.

**Michif:** A hybrid language used by the Métis.

**New Caledonia**: Technically, the north-central part of what is now mainland British Columbia, as well as an

administrative centre at Fort St. James. In practice, “New Caledonia” was used to refer to most, if not all, of the mainland colony.

**North West Company** (**NWC**): A joint-stock fur trading company established in Montreal after the Conquest and led by British American and Scottish merchants. The principal competition to the HBC. The NWC’s agents were called North Westers or Nor’Westers.

**northwest passage**: The water route connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean via the Arctic Ocean.

**North-Western Territories:** Lands draining into the Arctic Ocean and thus not within the charter of the HBC. Includes much of northern British Columbia and Alberta and what are now called the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

**Numbered Treaties:** A total of 11 treaties negotiated between Canada and Indigenous peoples (principally in the West) in the post-Confederation period.

**Pacific Fur Company**: Fur trade venture created by New York–based entrepreneur John Jacob Astor. It established **Fort Astoria** on the northwest coast, but lasted for less than three years in the face of increased competition in the North American fur trade. Also known as the PFC.

**pemmican:** A food made mainly from bison meat and fat and berries, which was the staff of life for western fur traders and was literally the fuel that drove the fast-moving, long-distance NWC canoe brigades.

**Pemmican Proclamation:** Imposed by the Red River Colony when famine threatened the settlement in mid-winter 1814, issued by Governor Miles Macdonnell (1767-1828). Was meant to stop the export of pemmican to NWC forts in the West and retain it for the HBC’s settlers.

**Red River Colony:** Selkirk Colony, also called Assiniboia.

**Red River cart:** Two-wheeled vehicle with large spoked and detachable wooden wheels on an axle supporting a flat-bed. Sometimes covered, usually pulled by oxen. Wheels could be removed to enable floating as a raft across rivers and streams. Definitive technology arising from Métis culture.

**Rupert’s Land**: According to the HBC’s charter of 1670, all the lands draining into Hudson Bay. Includes northwestern Quebec, northern Ontario, most of Manitoba, some of central Saskatchewan and Alberta, as well as southeastern Nunavut.

**Selkirk Colony:** Red River Colony, also called Assiniboia.

**Thule**: Arctic culture that evolved into Inuit culture. The Thule migrated across and occupied the Arctic mainland and islands beginning c. 1000 CE and reached Labrador and Greenland c. 1300 CE.

**Treaty of 1818:** A treaty signed by Britain and the United States recognizing the 49th parallel from Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains as the boundary between the United States and British North America; also established the Columbia District (a.k.a. Oregon Territory) as an area of joint jurisdiction for a period of 10 years.

**Upper Fort Garry:** Located near the heart of what is now Winnipeg. Lower Fort Garry and Upper Fort Garry were important administrative and shipping centres along the Red River system.

**voyageurs**: Members of the fur trade whose principal task was to move furs, people, and materials across great distances. Some voyageurs were also traders. Also called trip men.

**whisky traders:** Principally independent American fur traders whose principal stock was alcohol.

**wintering partners**: The prominent NWC employees who spent the year in the West. As part of the decision-making process, they would meet annually with the Montreal agents at Fort William, where company-wide plans would be made in council. Also called *hivernants.*

**Year Without Summer:** The summer of 1816, marked by a very poor growing season caused by the explosion of Mount Tambora in Indonesia.

**York boats:** Heavy wide draught wooden dinghies with sails that travelled between Hudson Bay and the foothills of the Rockies along the North Saskatchewan.

**York Factory Express:** see **Columbia Express.**

Short Answer Exercises

1. In what ways did the arrival of the Europeans in the late 17th century alter the way of life of Amerindians?
2. Explain the difference in the French and English approach to westward exploration in the 1700s.
3. What were the motivations of Indigenous traders in the West?
4. What changes took place in Indigenous societies, economies, and cultures during the 18th century? How were these connected to and/or independent from the arrival of Europeans and Canadiens/Canadians?
5. What were the relative strengths and weaknesses of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company?
6. What were the sources of violent conflict between the competing fur trade companies and their allies?
7. What was pemmican and why was it important to the western fur trade?
8. In what ways did the Métis constitute a "New Nation"? In what ways were they distinct from the country born in the 19th century?
9. What roles did Indigenous women perform in the western fur trade?
10. Why did the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company merge? What was the impact of the merger?
11. What were some of the environmental and demographic consequences of the fur trade?
12. What strategies did Indigenous societies adopt in the face of changing circumstances?
13. What is the significance of Seven Oaks and Grand Couteau in the history of the Métis nation?

## Suggested Readings

1. Macdougall, Brenda and Nicole St-Onge. "Rooted in Mobility: Métis Buffalo-Hunting Brigades." *Manitoba History* 71 (Winter 2013): 21-32.
2. Peers, Laura. "'Almost True': Peter Rindisbacher's Early Images of Rupert's Land, 1821-26." *Art History* 32, no.3 (June 2009): 516-544.
3. Podruchny, Carolyn. "Unfair Masters and Rascally Servants? Labour Relations Among

Bourgeois, Clerks and Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1780-1821." *Labour/Le Travail* 43 (Spring 1999): 43-70.

4. Van Kirk, Sylvia. "From 'Marrying-In' to 'Marrying-Out': Changing Patterns of Aboriginal/ Non-Aboriginal Marriage in Colonial Canad." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 23, no.3 (2002): 1-11.

## Attributions

**Figure 8.25**
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# Chapter 9. Economic Transformation and Continuity, 1818–1860s

# 9.1 Introduction

The Napoleonic Wars ended French hegemony in Europe and provided Britain with newfound elbow room in an evolving world economy. British North America, too, could afford to relax a little: American expansionists along the eastern seaboard turned their hungry eyes from the North to the West. The wars of the early 19th century were fought on battlefields and at sea, but they were also in the new workplaces that would come to be known as "industrial manufactories." The half century that followed 1818 would see the spread of new ideas and practices, some of them associated with empire, others with the scientific and technological enlightenment that would lead into economic and **industrial revolution**.

While there were many significant changes in the economies of British North America, continuity still existed. Agriculture was a leading force in the economy, as was the fishery. These were joined by other staple production activities that gave shape to the colonies and their societies just as the fur trade informed much of life in New France.

What most distinctly marks the period from 1818 to 1860 is British North America's changing relationship with the world marketplace. The loss of preferential tariffs in Britain changed the economic stakes, but it also changed the psychology of trade. If the empire wasn't the raison d'être for the colonial economies, what was? Even if industrialization and social change took place slowly in British North America, that wasn't the case in Britain. There, British North Americans could see from a distance a future comprising densely populated cities whose purpose was not commerce but production of goods. They could see, too, changes in infrastructure and sources of energy: wood and wind would give way to coal and steam by Confederation. The colonial economies of 1818 would either evolve significantly by 1860 or they would be on the precipice of enormous change. Either way, in both the United Kingdom and the United States, British North Americans had examples to which they could turn. These models were both physical and intellectual: this was an era of changing economies and changing minds.

Learning Objectives

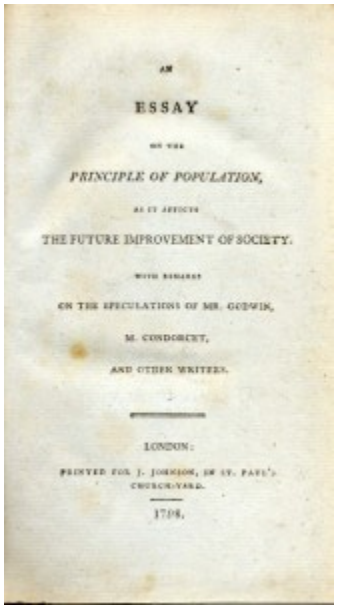
- Describe the broad economic trends of the era.
- Account for important changes in the British North American economy.
- Account for continuities in the British North American economy.
- Demonstrate a rudimentary understanding of how economic structures pertain to social and political change.
- Correlate changing economic times with emergent economic policies.
- Identify the economic ideologies and ideas of the era and how they informed debate and direction in the economy of British North America.

# 9.2 The Dismal Science

The late 18th century was a period of unprecedented intellectual excitement. Revolutions associated with political power structures were driven by new ideas that were themselves revolutionary. Political ideas like **democracy** and those set out in Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* proposed to overturn the fundamental relationships between social classes and centuries-old notions of both deference and noblesse oblige. At the same time, new fields of study were emerging that would challenge the power of older institutions. Geology threatened the Christian belief in a world that was a mere 4,000 years old; three centuries of refining navigational tools had produced the equipment necessary to look into space and into individual cells. The world was about to become much older, much newer, much larger, and much smaller at the same time.

Economics, as well, was about to emerge as an arena of serious study and debate as early practitioners searched for overarching principles and values that would help them formulate the right questions before rushing off in search of the right answers. Two influential British figures in this respect deserve mention: Thomas Malthus and Adam Smith.

## Malthus and the Agricultural Revolution


AN

ESSAY

ON THE

PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION,

AS IT AFFECTS

THE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIETY.

WITH REMARKS

ON THE SPECULATIONS OF MR. GODWIN,

M. CONDORCET,

AND OTHER WRITERS.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1798.

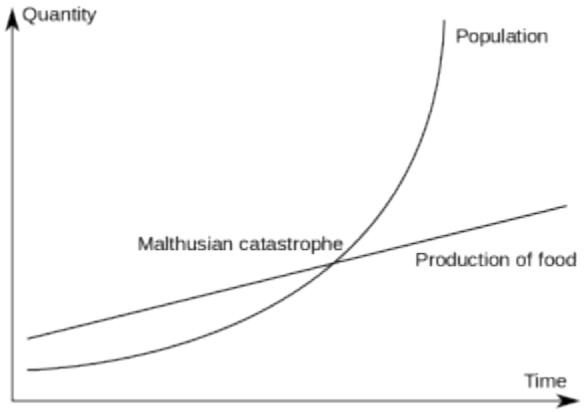
(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/An_Essay_on_the_Principle_of_Population.jpg)

*Figure 9.1 Malthus's Essay on the Principle of Population was a pioneering attempt to apply scientific principles to the workings of the economy.*

Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) was a smalltown vicar concerned with the relationship between famine and population growth. In 1798 he published *An Essay on the Principle of Population,* in which he argued that population growth would always be reined in by positive restraints that raise the death rate and negative checks that lower the birth rate. It is thanks to Malthus that economics acquired the title "the dismal science," because he could see no morally defensible way around a cycle of increased food production followed by population booms and then by famine and collapse. (As a vicar, he could not entertain the notion of birth control, although he did advocate for personal sexual restraint.)

Malthus was proved wrong, at least for two centuries. Food production could increase more rapidly than he anticipated and fertility rates would, simultaneously and against all predictions, drop significantly in the industrializing world. But Malthus provides an important window into how people in the late 18th and early 19th centuries understood the world around them. Famines had wracked Europe for centuries and Malthus's generation bore witness to them. And the last major famine in the British Isles — the **Irish Potato Famine** of the 1840s — was yet to come. People who thought about economies understood shortages not as mere inconveniences that might run the price up a bit, but as terrible events they had seen in their lifetimes, the kind of thing that led to violence, starvation, and mass die-offs.

Malthus posited a scientific system for understanding why this was so, why prosperity and growth seemed always to be followed by starvation, war, and mortality.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/800px-Malthus_PL_en.svg_.png)

*Figure 9.2 Malthus reckoned that population increased much faster than food production and that famines were thus inevitable. [Long Description] (#fig9.2)*

There was something else that Malthus observed without necessarily realizing it. When he wrote about increases in agricultural output he did so in the context of the agricultural revolution. Food productivity had been climbing steadily in Europe and North America since about 1700. More effective farming techniques and different landhold patterns lay behind these changes, as did improved infrastructure and thus better communication between markets and farmers. Whether he knew it or not, the rate of agricultural increase that he described as a fact was, in reality, part of his own historical context. Earlier generations simply could not have imagined the rate of food production growth that lay at the heart of Malthus's model.

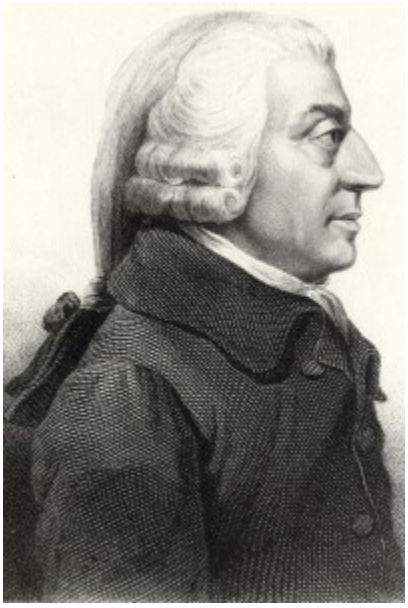
Malthus and many of his contemporaries were keenly aware of one other truth: Britain's population was surging. It had nearly doubled in the 18th century; more than 4 million people had been added. It was this growth that would spur enormous economic changes in Britain and provide the fuel for an explosion of immigration to British North America and other colonies.

## An Economic Revolution

In short, ideas about the economy were evolving at a time when the economy itself was transforming. In our own era, we are accustomed to the idea of change, not least because we can look back on a record of nearly 300 years of significant change. But in the late 18th century change was still rather frightening. Centuries of feudal relations and food production were only just beginning to face challenges. Absolutism was, until the 1780s, impregnable across Europe. Colonies followed the direction of empires and both France and Britain were very conservative in this respect. The vast majority of humans lived on the land. With the exception of small numbers of emigrants to the colonies, farming people stayed put; people mostly lived, married, and died in the village of their birth. It was rare for Europeans to travel far unless they were wealthy or in an army.

North America changed all of that. Revolution in the British colonies was both stimulated by and responsible for emergent ideas about government and citizenship. What followed in France was more than an echo in that it rocked to its foundations the very idea of absolutist government and an aristocracy. Additionally, the Americas were the scene of widespread experimentation with non-feudal landholding systems that produced dramatically higher surpluses. The modest family farm of New England and Upper Canada would be a conceptual force strong enough to topple whole regimes in Europe. The mass production possible in slave colonies, moreover, created a need for bigger and better freight shipping, warehousing, and processing. In the 1770s and 1790s important technological changes in the processing of raw cotton and the weaving of cotton cloth transformed overnight the plantations of the American South, causing an explosion in technology that would lead ultimately to wholesale industrialization around the North Atlantic.

The principal beneficiaries of all this activity were the advocates of mercantilism. The merchants and shipowners of Europe's westward-facing ports had enjoyed 200 years of accumulating wealth in trade between North America and the empire. Their money — their **capital** — was now substantial, and they were beginning to invest in projects that had nothing to do with fishing boats or beaver pelts. What British historian Eric Hobsbawm called "the age of revolution" that began in the second half of the 18th century would, thus, have many and widespread ramifications, not the least of which were economic.[1]



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/640px-AdamSmith.jpg)

*Figure 9.3 Adam Smith, author of The Wealth of Nations and a severe critic of mercantilism.*

1. Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (NY: Vintage Books, 1962, 1996).

## Classical Liberal Economics

Adam Smith (1723-1790) had a thing or two to say on these topics. His 1776 book, generally known by the shortened title *The Wealth of Nations*, argued for the free movement of investment. Removing constraints and allowing capital to be invested where profits are likely to be greatest would produce economic growth for the greater good of the nation, he argued. This was a revolutionary proposition in a world governed by tariffs and Navigation Acts; it was revolutionary, too, in that it called for the betterment of "the nation" rather than the Crown. To much of the European and even the North American establishment, wealth rightly belonged to those of good birth and royal favour. Handing power over the economy to mere merchants and **capitalists** was akin to handing them a loaded gun. Nevertheless, new schools of economic thought advocating a liberal approach were on the rise and they challenged efforts to conserve the old order of economic power.

The wars in Europe arising from the French Revolution and then the Napoleonic era postponed the peacetime necessary to test some of the theories of Malthus and Smith, but it was during this 30-year period of instability that many of the key economic changes took root. As is often the case, the wars presented opportunities to build capacity for production because the state reliably demanded large quantities of goods for its troops. Wool production increased in Europe; cotton production increased in the American South; timber, shipping, and fisheries production increased dramatically in British North America. Then, in 1818, it all collapsed.

The 19th century opened, then, with a flurry of new ideas. The United States was a democracy, a republic, and a nation state. There was no crown to enrich or serve, no suggestion that the president was infallible due to the kind of divine right enjoyed by Louis XIV in France. Britain might be known as the United Kingdom, but the power of its kings had never been more compromised than it was under George III. France, of course, had become a republic and would spend the next hundred years reinventing itself as a secular democracy and, again, a nation state. What then was the purpose of the economy in a colony? How might it grow and to what end?

**Key Points**

- The 19th century arrived on the heels of challenging new ideas about the nature of the economy, the relationship between the individual and the state, and how best to meet the needs of growing populations.
- Merchants in Europe and North America were in a position to provide investment capital that could finance independent and state projects without the involvement of the Crown.
- There was growing interest in eliminating tariffs so that British producers could compete more aggressively in global markets.

## Attributions

**Figure 9.1**
An Essay on the Principle of Population (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:An_Essay_on_the_Principle_of_Population.jpg) by Lupo (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Lupo) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 9.2**
Malthusian catastrophe (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malthus_PL_en.svg) by Kravietz (http://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=User:Kravietz&action=edit&redlink=1) is used under a CC BY-SA 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en) license.

**Figure 9.3**
AdamSmith (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AdamSmith.jpg) by Protonk (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Protonk) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

## Long descriptions

**Figure 9.2 long description:** A graph comparing the rate of population growth and the production of food, according to Malthus. The production of food rises at a steady but gradual rate while population grow exponentially. The point on the graph where population surpasses food production is labeled, “Malthusian Catastrophe” [Return to Figure 9.2] (#attachment_2770)

# 9.3 British North America between the Wars

The war in Europe and the War of 1812 were over in 1815. British North America would not face another external threat to its survival until the American Civil War in the 1860s. It is worth remembering that a generation had been raised in Europe in the shadow of the French Revolution and war, followed by Napoleon's expansionism. And a generation of British North Americans had found jobs building ships, stitching sails, winding ropes, casting cannons, and supplying food to huge armies and fleets abroad. Suddenly that came to an end. As the armies of Europe demobilized, the economies of the North Atlantic adjusted to peacetime. For the most part, it was a very uncomfortable transition.

What most of British North America had in common was an ample supply of available land. Not all of it was of the same quality. Newfoundland's agricultural potential was very limited and so it never experienced that "farming frontier" settlement boom found in other colonies. Nova Scotia, too, was limited by thin soil outside of the valleys along the Bay of Fundy. Population poured into Lower Canada's Eastern Townships but the limits of that territory were reached in a few decades. The big winner was Upper Canada, whose population grew almost entirely on the strength of new farm settlement, rising from 14,000 in 1791 to 95,000 at the end of the War of 1812. By 1824 it had grown again by 50%, and by 1840 there were more than 430,000 people in the colony.[1] Immigration dominated the engines of population growth in the colony and the few thousand Loyalists who founded the colony were quickly and severely outnumbered.

Until the War of 1812, however, the ability of British North American farmers to make much economic headway was limited by landscape. Clearing heavily treed land was difficult work. One estimate reckons that a single farmer (perhaps making use of some **extended family** labour) could clear 1.5 to 3 acres a year and that a minimum of 3 acres was needed to achieve subsistence.[2] This produced a colony of **subsistence farming** right down to the end of the war, by which time the colony began to round a corner.

## The Economic Impact of 1812

Several aspects of the economy changed with the War of 1812. First, the war was itself a dissuasive force when it came to continued American immigration into British North America. The Late Loyalists were American migrants who reached the limits of upstate New York and simply crossed into the Niagara Peninsula. After 1812 that traffic slowed significantly. The fall of Tecumseh's forces opened up lands in the Ohio and farther west for Americans and, of course, the border now meant more than it did before the war. The colonial administration of Upper Canada, feeling insecure and vengeful, cut off land grants to Americans, effectively freezing economic growth in the Niagara for a generation. Immigration sources would have to change. Britain offered up new possibilities: in this new post-war age, however, they would arrive by the boatload and not as individual migrants or families. The

1. Douglas McCalla, "The 'Loyalist' Economy of Upper Canada," *Social History* 16, no.32 (November 1983): 285.

2. Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 168.

population boom of the 18th century — which had seemed at the time like a huge increase in national wealth and power, insofar as it provided an enormous number of troops to fight against France — was now a liability. The British government decided to direct the outflow of population to reduce unemployment and suffering at home and to increase the economic capacity of its colonies abroad. For a decade waves of state-sponsored emigrants departed Britain and wound up in British North America.

Secondly, the British economy was badly beaten up by the conflict in Europe and the North American theatre of combat. Certainly there had been growth sponsored by the war itself and there was already evidence of the coming industrial revolution. But, beginning in 1815, a recession settled in. Unemployment spread throughout the British Isles and demand for British North American exports declined sharply. Recovery was in the near future, but the post-war crash was a foretaste of the kind of economic volatility that the new industrial economy had in store for the whole Atlantic rim.

**Key Points**

- The end of the Napoleonic Wars witnessed a significant downturn in the North Atlantic economy.
- British North America's agricultural sector was marked by subsistence farming through the War of 1812 and thereafter grew only slowly.
- British North America's recovery would depend on Britain's recovery.

# 9.4 The Lower Canadian Economy

As the oldest settlement colony in British North America, Lower Canada had certain advantages. The infrastructure of banks, warehouses, shipping capacity, merchant houses, schools and hospitals, and the military were all much more evolved than in any of the other colonies. Against that, much of the best arable land was spoken for by 1818, some farmland was in need of rest and fertilizing, and the demographic model of large, often extended farm families meant that greater resources had to be dedicated to subsistence than was the case with smaller families in the English Protestant colonies.

Although wheat remained an important share of Lower Canadian farm production throughout the first half of the 19th century, the colony never developed the same degree of dependence on grain as did Upper Canada. Nor did it achieve the same surpluses for export. By the 1830s Lower Canada was a net importer of wheat (overwhelmingly from Upper Canada). This reflects three things: a move to mixed farming geared to feeding Lower Canada first, a rising population that effectively ate up the surplus, and soil exhaustion. It has to be said, too, that Lower Canada's farm belt was less well suited to wheat than was Upper Canada's.

Growth in the colony's economy was stimulated by the trade in timber. The Napoleonic Wars, as we have seen elsewhere, stimulated growth in logging camps and the squaring of timbers. This trend continued into the 1820s and 1830s. The tributaries of the St. Lawrence — including the Ottawa River Valley — hummed with activity as logging camps spread along the fringe of colonial settlement. It has been observed that farming in Lower Canada took place at the heart of the colony, the fur trade far beyond its limits, and logging right at its edge.[1] Each of these sectors was organized differently: from the family farm, to the far-ranging fur trade in which *voyageurs* and *coureurs de bois* predominated, to the typically all-male logging camp in which wage labour was the norm. This last mode of production — wage labour with a large number of semi-skilled workers — would emerge as a characteristic of British North America as a whole in the 19th century.

Agriculture remained at the heart of the economy in Lower Canada throughout the 19th century because culturally and socially there were pressures to stay on the land. The clergy and the state alike were heavily invested in the administrative and confessional units bound up in the seigneuries, as were, of course, the seigneurs. The question then arises, why was the Lower Canadian farming sector seemingly stagnant?

One school of thought places the blame on cultural timidity, a *mentalité* among farmers that was unprogressive. This was the stand taken by Fernand Ouellet in a study published in 1980.[2] Historical geographer Cole Harris took the same view, saying that by the 1820s, "French-Canadian agriculture, inflexible, uncompetitive, and largely subsistent, was incapable of supporting a growing population."[3] Harris has since changed his view and has joined the ranks of historians who argue that the pre-1850

1. Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 146-7.

2. Fernand Ouellet, *Economic and Social History of Quebec, 1760-1850* (Ottawa: Gage, 1980).

3. Cole Harris, "Of Poverty and Helplessness in Petite-Nation," *Canadian Historical Review* 52, issue 1 (March 1971): 23-50.

farm economy in Lower Canada was, in fact, diversifying, that there is evidence of experimentation and growth.[4] The issue arises as to whether stagnation (or growth, come to that) was related to the "peasant" condition of Canadien farmers. Their farms were much more organized around subsistence than commercial sales, so breaking out of that pattern (one that dates back to the 1660s) was a unique challenge.[5] The rise of larger cities and concentrated lumber industries meant new growing markets for farm surpluses, and this was no doubt critical in the move to a commercialized agricultural sector. The archetypal rural cash crop in Lower Canada — maple syrup — would clearly benefit from an urban or working-class marketplace.

Regardless of the historical forces that abetted or obstructed change on the seigneuries, there remained the critical shortfall of the farming sector in Lower Canada: the colony was unable to support its rapidly increasing population. The principal results would be movement within the colony — mostly to the towns and cities but also to more marginal, newly opened seigneurial lands — and emigration. They found a welcome of sorts in New England. By the 1830s industrialization was underway in Massachusetts and demand for labour in the state's textile mills was expanding more rapidly than could be met by the local labour supply. Rather than move to more marginal farm land in, say, the Saguenay Valley or off to a farming frontier in another part of British North America — that is, to an anglophone, Protestant colony — Canadiens found it easier to sojourn in New England where wage labour was good.

The limits of Lower Canadian agriculture and its ongoing vulnerabilities were issues in the political unrest of the 1830s. So too was the outmigration to New England and the movement off the land into the towns of Lower Canada. From a cultural perspective, economic worries and depopulation of the countryside looked like a threat to the survival of the Canadien fact. Together these social issues would produce political tensions that came to a head in 1837-38.

**Historians on Video**

Farming and country life were at the heart of the Lower Canadian economy throughout the 19th century. Rural people and their lives are described in the first video below by historian Frank Abbott (Kwantlen Polytechnic University). In the second video, Dr. Abbott takes up the theme of the colony's farming economy as a whole. Elements of the economic order of New France persisted well into the 19th century. Historian Jack Little (Simon Fraser University) talks about the seigneurial system and class systems in the third interview. The transcripts, respectively, may be found here: transcript for video describing people in 19th century Quebec [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_fa_u9_01.pdf), transcript for video on the farming economy of Lower Canada [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_fa_u9_02.pdf), and transcript for videos addressing questions about the seigneurial system [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_jl_u9_01.pdf).



4. Cole Harris, *The Reluctant Land: Society, Space, and Environment in Canada Before Confederation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 242-259.

5. See also Serge Courville and Normand Séguin, *Rural Life in Nineteenth-Century Quebec* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1989). I am grateful to Frank Abbott for his insights into this debate.

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=241#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

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*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=241#oembed-4 (#oembed-4)*

**Key Points**

- The transition out of a subsistence-oriented farming economy into a commercialized agricultural sector was more complex in Lower Canada than elsewhere in British North America because of well-established practices and conditions.
- The growth of the timber economy provided an outlet for surplus labour and a market for farm products.
- Constraint in the farming sector was a catalyst for migration to cities and towns and to New England mills.

**Video Attributions**

- Dr. Frank Abbott Question 4 – Rural Quebec in the early 19th century. (https://youtu.be/YHUVVsiNUwM?si=fWGvD2yldChJQWRG) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license
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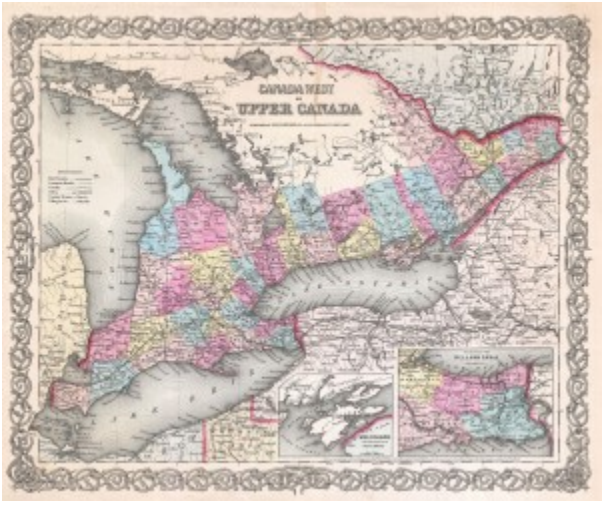
# 9.5 Building the Wheat Economy in Upper Canada




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/1855_Colton_Map_of_Upper_Canada_or_Ontario_-_Geographicus_-_Ontario2-colton-1855.jpg)

*Figure 9.4 An 1855 map of Canada West (formerly Upper Canada) by Joseph Hutchins Colton. The counties are easily visible as are the growing number of towns and villages.*

Upper Canada was the principal beneficiary of British emigration in these years — the destination of choice.[1] One consequence was that the sale of lands (and the speculation in land values) was a major source of wealth. Immigrants with a bit of money could buy ready-cleared properties or better located farms facing water routes that positioned them to realize success either in farming or in land resale. Against this setting, the market for British North American grain had taken a tumble after the end of the war, especially in 1820, and prices fell badly. Up to about 1816 the rapid growth in the British population discussed earlier needed feeding and had been the source of wealth for anyone who could produce a surplus of wheat. After two generations of slow pioneering farm expansion, Upper Canadians were finally in a position to do well on that market. The post-war economic crisis, coupled with increased production of wheat in the colony (much of it coming from post-war immigrants) made for increased competition in a shrinking market and, therefore, economic uncertainty.

## Colonial Grain in Imperial Markets

Things were made more complex by the **Corn Laws,** which were protective tariffs put in place as part of the mercantilist system that channelled colonial products to imperial ports and limited colonial imports

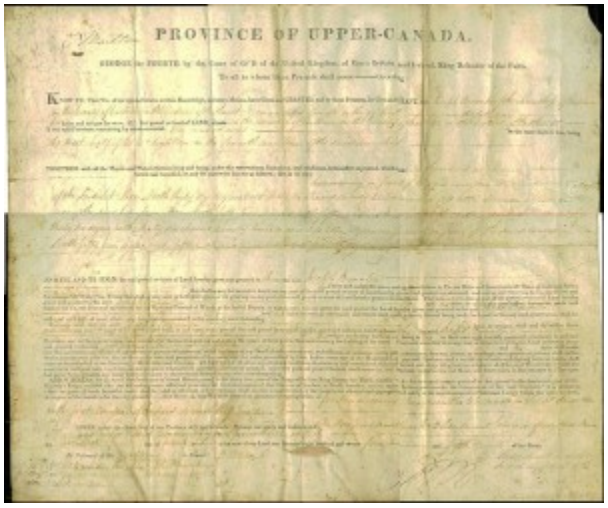
1. Hugh J.M. Johnston, *British Emigration Policy 1815-1830: "Shovelling Out the Paupers"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 51–4.

from non-imperial sources. The Corn Laws were introduced in 1815 and, for five years, British North American grain enjoyed the same privileged status on the British market as homegrown grain. Then, in 1820, British grain output improved and Upper Canadian wheat growers found their product reduced to the same status as "foreign" grain. For the next seven years farmers in British North America struggled along until their privileged status was restored. A **wheat boom** followed that lasted into the 1850s.

These developments further encouraged people to move into farming. The number of larger farms increased, and the number of acres under plough nearly doubled from 1826 to 1832. Farmers, too, stretched their productive capacity to take advantage of their place in the British market, which could mean going into debt.

Related to the growing farm economy was the rise of a colonial merchant class in Upper Canada that specialized in the wheat business. Their profits were tied to bulk shipping, so these merchants were inclined to support infrastructure improvements that benefitted the movement of bulk freight. Mostly this meant storage facilities, docks, shipping capacity, and eventually canals. Farmers, however, were more likely to want improvements in local roads. Some of the merchants discovered, too, that there was money to be made in transshipping American wheat and flour. Once the foreign product was in British North America it was treated as though it were covered favourably by the Corn Laws. When it came to raising revenues for government, business merchants (through the dominant political oligarchy) invariably supported property taxes and taxes on land sales while farmers (who were most hard hit by taxes) preferred duties charged on trade (which was anathema to merchants). These developments resulted in tensions between farmers in Upper Canada and merchants.

The **staple theory**, already discussed in terms of how it applied to resources like fish and furs, can be used to understand the **wheat economy** as well. The lack of diversification in the Upper Canadian farming economy is a symptom of the limits of a staple-dominated system. Tobacco was a popular crop in the 1820s, as was dairy production, but neither came close to wheat as a principal product. Wheat, unlike fur, is not a luxury product: a lot of wheat is needed to turn a profit. It is what economists refer to as a high-bulk, low-value product. It requires larger ships to move a greater volume, and that investment in specialized shipping does not necessarily support the movement of any other goods. In other words, grain ships are grain ships, not container ships that can carry a multitude of different products. Nor are they smaller, faster vessels designed to transport textile products. Further, any shipping requires the infrastructure of waterfront docks, warehouses dedicated to stockpiling grain, and improvements in shipping routes. Since the vast majority of British North American grain originated in Upper Canada, the priority was building canals in order to load up barges on Lake Ontario or even Lake Erie and send them downriver to Montreal or, better still, put the grain onto ships that could head straight out into the Atlantic.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/723px-Province_of_Upper-Canada_land_deed.jpg)

*Figure 9.5 An 1824 land deed from Upper Canada. The buying and selling of farmland was a critical part of the colony's economy and an important function of the government.*

The Upper Canadian wheat economy comprised, therefore, several elements: profitable and speculative land sales; the business of land clearing (forestry) and preparing for farming (or sale); farming itself; and shipping. Given the privileged character of land grants in Upper Canada and the obvious fact that shipping is not something in which farmers are typically involved, most of the money in the wheat economy was made by people who did not actually work the land. Farmers did well and some did very well, but not so well as those who owned the infrastructure and the merchant houses responsible for the movement and sale of wheat.

It has to be added, too, that not all farmers were beneficiaries of the wheat economy. It has been observed that the self-sufficient farm in pre-Confederation British North America is something of a myth: farmers everywhere turned from time to time to other sources of income or revenue. In Upper Canada it was the larger and better capitalized farms that could afford to specialize in grain sufficiently to profit by the wheat economy. Rather than "mining wheat," as it has been called, Upper Canadian farmers more often grew a variety of crops destined for the growing townships nearby with their expanding non-farming populations.[2] Obviously, for the multitude of smaller farming households, the construction of canals was of little value: they needed roads to transport their wheat to town markets.

2. Marvin McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses in Ontario Farming, 1860," in *Perspectives on Canadian Economic History,* ed. Douglas McCalla (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 55.

**Key Points**

- The Upper Canadian economy was based on a combination of wheat farming and land sales, which had a reciprocal relationship.
- The wheat economy was highly vulnerable to changes in the trade environment with Britain, and this was beyond the control of the colonials.
- Buying and selling land, along with marketing wheat in the Atlantic, generated a merchant and financial elite in the colony.
- The character of the wheat economy determined where resources would be spent to build up infrastructure.

## Attributions

**Figure 9.4**
Canada West (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1855_Colton_Map_of_Upper_Canada_or_Ontario_-_Geographicus_-_Ontario2-colton-1855.jpg) by BotMultichillT (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:BotMultichillT) is in the public domain (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

**Figure 9.5**
Province of Upper-Canada land deed (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Province_of_Upper-Canada_land_deed.jpg) by BrianJGraham (http://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=User:BrianJGraham&action=edit&redlink=1) is used under a CC BY-SA 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en) license.

# 9.6 The Atlantic Colonies

As was the case with the Canadas, the Maritimes and Newfoundland also enjoyed an economic boom during the war years. After the war, they staggered and struggled until eventually entering an unparalleled period of prosperity. Expanding Atlantic markets would, overall, usher in an age of **wind, wood, and water** for the four colonies, even as steam-driven shipping was chugging across the ocean.

## Wood

Various imperial **tariff policies** favoured wood products from British North America, most of which came from New Brunswick. Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland profited as well in the short run, but New Brunswick enjoyed two key advantages over the other colonies in this regard. First, it had better and bigger forests; second, it was criss-crossed by rivers that allowed logging camps to move deep into the interior in search of more trees.

While all four Atlantic colonies engaged in the lumber trade, they did so in different ways. Prince Edward Islanders depleted their own forests and then shipped out to New Brunswick in large numbers to work as **seasonal labourers** in the mainland logging camps. As well, Prince Edward Island manufactured some of the largest and most diverse ships associated with the forest industry. Newfoundland, too, produced large numbers of ships from its own forest supplies, but these were overwhelmingly in service of the fisheries industry and not meant to serve other exports. Newfoundland's forest industry would grow on the Avalon Peninsula in particular in the 19th century but, like Nova Scotia, it faced limitations based on access. With few rivers that reached deep into either colony's interior, the forests along the foreshore were denuded and the industry's advance slowed until new investment and technology made inland tree stands more accessible.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/09/1024px-New_Brunswick_map_general.png)

*Figure 9.6 The Miramichi and Saint John River systems alone provided access to most of New Brunswick's forests.*

In New Brunswick logging and sawmilling became year-round activities, spawning smaller milltowns along the Saint John River in particular. Demand for New Brunswick lumber was so great that the port towns (St. Andrews and Saint John especially, but also the settlements at the mouth of the Miramichi) began to produce ships designed specifically to carry **squared timber**. On arrival in British ports, these boats were either sold as shipping capacity or for their timber. With the exception of some brief market downturns (including, in 1821, a fire that burned across the middle of the province from the Miramichi through Fredericton) and some uncertainty from time to time about tariffs, the forest sector as a whole grew until 1860.

Imperial tariffs and other protectionist measures ensured privileged access to West Indian markets for Maritimers. During these years the links between the Atlantic colonies and British (and Spanish) Caribbean colonies strengthened. With New England frozen out of the British West Indies, the opportunity arose for Maritimers to stock them with fish, farm surpluses, and shipping capacity. Prince Edward Island benefited mainly from the market for farm products as none of the other three colonies had the same agricultural potential. Charlottetown in particular benefited from the need for more shipping capacity.

## Wind and Water

Shipbuilding throughout the region was a leading sector, supported heavily, of course, by the timber industry. Saint John was home to the largest fleet and Charlottetown was second. Both ports built, registered, and chartered out their vessels. Some of these ships were bound for distant parts of the world such as the eastern Mediterranean and the west coast of South America. There, they would carry freight from one port to the next under the command of notoriously tough "bluenose" (Maritimer) skippers whose reputation for cutting costs was eclipsed only by that of their ship owners.

Wealth accumulated in Yarmouth, Halifax, Charlottetown, and Saint John, especially in the pockets of shipbuilders and owners. Their view of the world was not narrow and parochial: they were shipping in very distant waters and trafficking in exotic goods. More than that, their ships were themselves products for market. At mid-century, ships built in Charlottetown were being sold to buyers in Britain and the West Indies; more often than not island shipbuilders sold their output to Canadians and Newfoundlanders.[1]

Newfoundland began to tap more into the fisheries and seal colonies of Labrador as well and provided most of the fish that was traded abroad. Markets in Britain continued to be strong, although French competition returned to the Grand Banks from their base on St. Pierre and Miquelon. Tariff changes badly undermined Newfoundland cod exports to Spain (formerly its major marketplace) and forced a reorientation toward Portugal and the Italian states. Even Brazil, a Portuguese colony with Portuguese tastes, emerged in the early 19th century as a viable market for Newfoundland salt cod.

The internal workings of this industry changed in the first quarter of the century when the **truck system** arose. St. John's merchants provided fishermen with credit to purchase nets and other essentials of the codfishing trade in exchange for their catch. The merchants bore the bulk of risk if the market failed, but the fishermen faced comparable risks if they borrowed too much and/or the catch was not big enough to settle accounts. On the face of it, this may seem to be a symbiotic relationship, one in which the success of one side depends ultimately on the success of the other. In practice, merchants and codfish buyers, or **cullers**, often took advantage of their knowledge of the marketplace to fix a lower price for the catch so that they could maximize profit. Fishermen were thus faced with two threats: the size of the catch might fall short and, even in good years, it might fetch a lower price than usual. Indebtedness and merchant financial worries became ongoing themes in the St. John's and Newfoundland economies.[2]

1. Eric W. Sager, "Atlantic Canada and the Age of Sail Revisited," in *Perspectives on Canadian Economic History,* ed. Douglas McCalla (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 99-100.

2. Sean T. Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 87-116.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Nova_Scotia_stamp.jpg)

*Figure 9.7 By mid-century all of the colonies had their own postal systems. An 1851 Nova Scotia one shilling stamp.*

Overall, the Atlantic colonies experienced the first half of the 19th century as years of growth and relative prosperity. Merchants in the main towns took on many of the aspects of the old Bristol merchants of early mercantilist days. They wanted to work in protected markets, they saw themselves benefiting from their colonial/imperial connection with the Crown, and they engaged in a kind of triangular trade involving the Caribbean plantation colonies. They also had a growing influence over colonial and imperial policy and came to form a powerful political force. These connections enabled the establishment, too, of financial institutions in the Maritimes, including the Bank of New Brunswick (founded in 1820 as the first chartered bank in British North America), the Bank of Nova Scotia (1832), and the Newfoundland Savings Bank (1834). These institutions facilitated the accumulation of colonial capital and its reinvestment in public and private enterprises.

Exercise: Documents — France in America, 1852

Victor Levasseur was part of a generation of cartographers whose work was meant to stimulate the mind in several ways. On the map in Figure 9.8 he shows what little is left of the French presence in the Americas, including St. Pierre and Miquelon, the little island chain south of Newfoundland that enables France to remain a presence in the Grand Banks and the Gulf of St. Lawrence to this day. Apart from the rather abashed looking tiger (embarrassed, perhaps, because he's meant to be on a different map), what does Levasseur want you to take away from his document?




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/1852_Levasseur_Map_of_Guyana_Miquelon_Newfoundland_and_St._Martin_-_Geographicus_-_GuyaneMiquelon-levasseur-1852.jpg)
*Figure 9.8 [Long Description] (#fig9.e1)*

**Key Points**

- The Atlantic colonies enjoyed certain advantages in the timber trade and were able to parlay these into an expanded shipping and shipbuilding sector.
- New Brunswick was the leading timber exporter from the region, providing jobs for migrant seasonal workers from Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.
- The interconnectedness of the Atlantic colonies with Britain, the West Indies, and farther afield were features of the colonial economies that distinguished them from the Canadas.

## Attributions

**Figure 9.6**
New Brunswick map general (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:New_Brunswick_map_general.png) by Qyd (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Qyd) is used under a CC BY-SA 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en) license.

**Figure 9.7**
Nova Scotia stamp (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nova_Scotia_stamp.jpg) by File Upload

Bot (Magnus Manske) (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:File_Upload_Bot_(Magnus_Manske)) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 9.8**
Colonies françaises (en Amérique) (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e7/Colonies_fran%C3%A7aises_%28en_Am%C3%A9rique%29_%28H%C3%A9misph%C3%A8re_bor%C3%A9al%29_-_Fonds_Ancely_-_B315556101_A_LEVASSEUR_095.jpg) by AncelyBot (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:AncelyBot) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

## Long descriptions

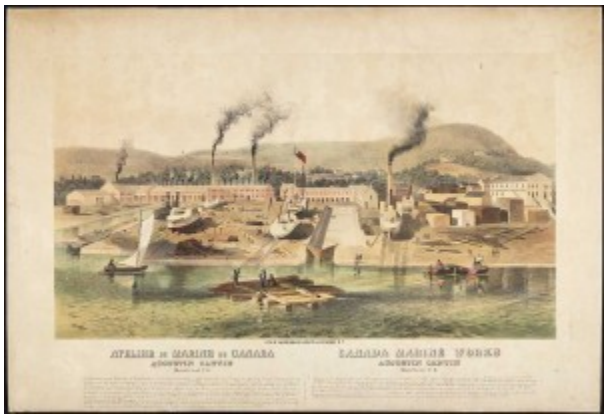
**Figure 9.8 long description:** A map framed by a scene of floral. Below the map, a man sits with his arms crossed and a dejected expression. Around him are animals and supplies. In the top corner, ships are sailing away. [Return to Figure 9.8] (#attachment_5087)

### Media Attributions

- Mr. Bell's Forges on the St. Maurice River, near Trois-Rivières (http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.redirect?app=fonandcol&id=2836929&lang=eng) © 1844 by George Seton is licensed under a Public Domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/) license

# 9.7 The Canal Era

The first Canadian canal was built at Lachine, toward the western end of the island of Montreal. It opened in 1825, bypassing the Lachine rapids, long a barrier to navigation and the site of a now-ancient portage. The **Lachine Canal** had an important impact on the economy of Montreal: it changed the city from being the westernmost head of navigation in Lower Canada to being the port of exit for goods coming out of Upper Canada, a way station at the mid-point between southern Upper Canada and the Atlantic. Because the canal joined the higher levels above Lachine to the lower levels to the east of Montreal, the water flow was fast enough to generate power through water wheels. Industries relocated from the old town centre of Montreal and even Quebec to take advantage of the power supply that could be used to run sawmills and flour mills.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/1280px-Canada_Marine_Works.jpg)

*Figure 9.9 The Canada Marine Works at Lachine, c. 1875, by Peter Winkworth.*

The Lachine Canal served the towns and ports of Lake Ontario. The expanding frontier of farms along Lake Erie, however, had to deal with the Niagara River and the famous cataract there. American investors first found a way to evade Niagara Falls by building the Erie Canal, completed in 1825 — the same year as the Lachine Canal. They followed up with the Oswego Canal four years later, and the American system then connected Lake Ontario and Lake Erie to the ice-free port of New York.

Meanwhile, Canadian investors did not stand still. The **Welland Canal** opened in 1829, linking Lakes Erie and Ontario, although it was plagued by problems with both route and financing. But as the 1830s opened the Canadians could claim to have kept pace with the Americans during what might be called the “canal race.”

The more defence-oriented **Rideau Canal**, completed in 1826, was built by the British government as

a public venture and was an early indicator of the close link between infrastructure and public funding in British North America. Other Canadian canals soon shifted from private hands to government control.[1]




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Welland_Canal_-_First_Canal_Port_Colborne.png)

*Figure 9.10 The first Welland Canal (in blue) was criticized as being slow and inefficient and more likely to benefit American farmers on Lake Erie than Upper Canadian farmers. The current canal route is marked in grey.*

The canals were technological and engineering marvels in their time but they had real limitations. Although shipping bulk goods by water was much cheaper and faster than by road, that was only true when the water was not frozen. Only so much grain could be moved at the end of one autumn harvest before the ice set in; after that, this harvest had to wait until the following spring before making it to market. Consequently, storage and credit became increasingly important considerations.[2] As well, the three Canadian canals were built by different companies and, not surprisingly, their specifics varied greatly. The Rideau Canal, for example was only half as deep as the Welland, which limited the ships that could use it and their ability to survive commercially — or even just to stay afloat in Lake Ontario. Canal-related debt was considerable and, given the involvement of the colonial administration, it left the government of Upper Canada unable to fund ancillary projects like road construction. Pro-canal merchants proposed more taxes on property to address the situation; anti-canal farmers responded that these big projects benefited merchants principally, so trade should be taxed instead to cover the debt.

However much debt the Canadian canals might have acquired, none was as disastrous as Nova Scotia's Shubenacadie Canal. Construction began in 1826 and ceased abruptly in 1831 when the Shubenacadie Canal Company collapsed in bankruptcy. Twenty-three years passed before the project could be

1. Gerald Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years 1784-1841* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1963), 153–60.

2. James T. Angus, *A Respectable Ditch: A History of the Trent-Severn Waterway 1833-1920* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1988), 3-71.

renewed, and it took seven more years to complete the route between Halifax and the Bay of Fundy. The canal was used for a decade and then shut for good in 1871. By then, railways and even roadways had overtaken canals as the most viable infrastructure in eastern and central British North America.

As a final note on the golden age of canal-building, it is no surprise that they had unintended environmental consequences. The four western Great Lakes flow into one another but they are blocked from Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence, and the sea by Niagara Falls. The opening of the Welland Canal joined the two ecosystems and the Lachine Canal similarly circumvented the rapids at Lachine. This allowed different species of fish and parasites to mingle for the first time. Developments in shipping — especially in bilge systems — and the rise of industrial pollution would worsen this situation in the 20th century, but the process began in the early 19th century.

**Key Points**

- The era of canal-building in British North America ran from 1825 to the 1830s.
- Canals facilitated the movement of bulk goods on shipping. Opponents of canals argued that this served shippers' interests but not necessarily those of farmers.
- All of the canals built in British North America acquired significant debt and thus put a hold on other infrastructural experiments.

## Attributions

**Figure 9.9**
Canada Marine Works (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Canada_Marine_Works.jpg) by Soul scanner (http://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=User:Soul_scanner&action=edit&redlink=1) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 9.10**
Welland Canal – First Canal Stage One (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Welland_Canal_-_First_Canal_Stage_One.png) by Qviri (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Qviri) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:public_domain).

# 9.8 Economic and Social Change



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Molson_Bank_Montreal_-_John_Henry_Walker.jpg)

*Figure 9.11 Chateau Clique leader John Richardson opened the Bank of Montreal in 1817. Thirty-three years later, brewer and industrialist John Molson opened his own. The Molson Bank, c. 1860.*

Building the canals required two things of critical importance to the economic, social, and political history of Upper and Lower Canada: money and a workforce.

## Banks and Locks

First, banks were required because all that debt had to reside somewhere. An agency was needed to both store the growing amounts of capital in the colonies and to act as a lender to entrepreneurs and governments. These early banks also coined the local currency. The Bank of Montreal appeared first, in 1817, followed by the Bank of Quebec and the Bank of Canada (also in Montreal), and then the Bank of Upper Canada. All were chartered in the years between 1819 and 1822, and other banks would be established — a flurry of them in the 1830s — though not all lasted more than a few years. The Bank of Upper Canada held a monopoly position in the colony for nearly a generation, and it was very much an

instrument of the Family Compact: the Bank's directorship was dominated by members of the colony's executive council.[1]

The interests of the bank were thus indistinguishable from those of the political elite in the colony and the colonial elite was very interested in canals. The bank's inaugural president, William Allan, was also an active investor in and a director of the Welland Canal Company. Allan was not alone in this regard. The interlocking directorships between the bank, the government's executive council (which overlapped, too, into the legislative council), and the Church of England under the leadership of the Reverend John Strachan became the source of the Family Compact's unquestionable authority in the colony and a target for critics in the 1830s.[2] As a consequence of this effective strategy on the part of the Family Compact, the Bank of Upper Canada was instantly a force with which to reckon in colonial policy making.

Second, the canal-building projects required a large workforce, more than could be mustered in the colonies. The arrival of several hundred Irish Catholic canal builders or **navvies**, some of them veterans of similar projects in the British Isles, changed the demographics of Montreal for generations. The 500 or so employees of the Lachine Canal Company were the largest non-military workforce ever assembled in Canada. The conditions under which they worked were appalling (see Chapter 10 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-9/#chapter10)); they represented, however, a small army of wage earners whose survival depended on the emergence of a service economy in Montreal and Lachine.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/CANADA_BANK_OF_UPPER_CANADA_1857_-ONE_PENNY_a.jpg)

*Figure 9.12 The Bank of Upper Canada issued its own currency (minted in England) in the 1850s.*

1. Douglas McCalla, *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada 1784-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 245–7.

2. Albert Schrauwers, "The Gentlemanly Order & the Politics of Production in the Transition to Capitalism in the Home District, Upper Canada," *Labour/Le Travail* 65 (2010): 22-5.

New immigrants are always a convenient target for blame when economic conditions tumble and competition for jobs intensifies. When the canal projects were completed by 1830 (setting aside various expansions and improvements in the years to come) hundreds of economically vulnerable Irish navvies found themselves out of work. This happened at a time when wheat prices in Britain were falling and sales of farmland in Upper Canada were in decline.

In the years between 1800 and the 1830s there had arisen, predictably, an array of businesses associated with the production of lumber for houses and fences, nail-makers, and importers of cotton textiles, rope, and furniture — all of whom serviced the growing farm population. Blacksmithing generally was of critical importance. When immigration slowed all of those secondary industries and services were affected. And, of course, farmers who had staked their property on the future of wheat were hardest hit.

The second wave of immigrants in the 1830s, which followed the navvies from Ireland, was doomed to travel in atrocious conditions aboard lumber boats (known at the time as **coffin ships**) and in the company of cholera. This proved to be the worst possible time for these immigrants to arrive, as the 1830s generally was a time of economic struggles in Lower and Upper Canada alike. By 1837 — a fateful year in the Canadas politically — Upper Canada's debt was so great that the colony was nearly bankrupt.[3] (For more on the social and political impacts of this time, see Chapters 10 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-9/#chapter10) and Chapter 11 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-13/#chapter11).)

Britain's response to this debt crisis (and to the political crisis of which it was a part) was to unite the two Canadas (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 11 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-13/#chapter11)). Naturally, Lower Canadians, who inherited Upper Canada's debt, were none too pleased. Britain also appointed as governor of the united colony Charles Poulet Thomson, the first governor with significant financial experience and an understanding of the emerging industrial world.[4]

## Colonial Cities

Changes in the Corn Laws in the 1840s restored Canada's superior position in relation to the United States, and as American cities began to grow, there were even markets south of the border for Canadian wheat. Overall the decade witnessed a dramatic recovery in exports and immigration: the population of Upper Canada (called Canada West after the joining of Upper and Lower Canada) nearly doubled and a significant presence at Toronto was inevitable.

Urbanization generally in British North America changed the rhythm of the economy. Generations of Canadiens had successfully mixed farming with the fur trade: ploughing and planting before heading off into the North and the West before late spring. This pattern of seasonal labour persisted well into the 19th century. Logging camps operated during the winter months even while the rivers — their supply line and highway — were frozen. Farmers often undertook construction work on roads or jobs in sawmills while they waited for their crops to mature; fishing was very seasonal and sometimes augmented with seal hunting (in Newfoundland); wherever there was logging there was squaring of

3. Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 194.

4. Ibid., 195.

timbers and the need to build ships in which to transport the lumber. Cities provided another market for surplus labour. As farming became more economically marginal in Lower Canada in particular, where growing families pressed against the limits of farm productivity, more and more young men and women moved into the towns and cities.

The social aspects of this urbanization are considered in Chapter 10. It is worth noting here, though, that Lower Canada's cities appeared where the Anglo-Protestant community was most heavily concentrated and in such numbers and with such wealth as to represent a powerful economic, political, and social elite. Montreal caught up with and finally passed Quebec City in population size only in the 1820s. Government, the garrison, the lumber trade, and (relatedly) shipbuilding dominated the economy of Quebec City. Montreal, on the other hand, began to diversify with the completion of the Lachine Canal. And, of course, it had always been an important seat of commercial power for the interior of the continent (more lately for Upper Canada). As Upper Canada grew, so too did the role played by Montreal merchants in provisioning frontier settlers.

**Key Points**

- The ability to mount major infrastructural crusades required new financial instruments, including banks.
- The arrival of Irish labourers for canal projects was pivotal in the development of the Canadian working class.
- The growth of cities in these years reflects adjustments in the economic order of the colonies.

## Attributions

**Figure 9.11**
Molson Bank Montreal – John Henry Walker (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Molson_Bank_Montreal_-_John_Henry_Walker.jpg) by Jeangagnon (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Jeangagnon) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 9.12**
CANADA, BANK OF UPPER CANADA 1857 —ONE PENNY (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CANADA,_BANK_OF_UPPER_CANADA_1857_---ONE_PENNY_a.jpg) by Geo Swan (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Geo_Swan) is used under a CC BY-SA 2.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en) license.

# 9.9 Manufacturing, Railways, and Industry: Early Days

Manufacturing — the process of adding value to raw materials by turning them into something else — was limited in British North America by continued mercantilist attitudes in Britain and by American restrictions. Nonetheless, there were examples of manufacturing to be found, such as rope making in Halifax, hat making in Quebec City, and shipbuilding in almost every port town. The canal excitement of the 1830s fed demand for locally produced tools like shovels and wheelbarrows, some of them made in workshops that would become agricultural implement factories.[1]

But the markets were small in British North America so the growth of local manufacturing depended on access to external markets. Britain didn't need much of what British North America had to offer apart from raw materials. And in 1828 the United States introduced a system of tariffs that was meant to protect embryonic industries in the northern states (New England was a particular beneficiary). Most of the industrial manufacturers that were targeted came from Britain; British North American exports suffered as well.

For the first 50 years or so of the 19th century, therefore, manufacturing growth took place principally in areas of production that served the British North American market itself. One example was the cotton mill established in Sherbrooke (the first joint-stock company to be incorporated in Canada) in 1845, but the biggest driver of economic change was railway development.[2]

Railways were to the mid-19th century what freeways and airports were to the 20th. That is, they were potentially very efficient means of moving goods and people, they were enormously expensive to construct and typically required government involvement (whether directly or indirectly through loans), and they were the mark of an up-to-date economy and country (or colony). As well, railways didn't suffer from cold weather as waterways did — they offered the potential of year-round service and they could, theoretically, go wherever they were needed, unlike canal systems which depended on water routes.

The first railways in Canada were temporary structures, usually made of wooden rails and used to move quarried rock. One such railway was built at Louisbourg in the early 18th century and another — more like a steam-winch-powered cable car — was used to build the new Quebec Citadel in 1820. The first true railway, however, appeared in the 1830s, running about 36 kilometres from La Prairie (across the St. Lawrence from Montreal) to the head of Lake Champlain. From there water transportation took over as goods were transferred to boats and sailed downriver to New York. The second railway built in British North America was shorter still: a 9.5 kilometre line from Albion Mines to Pictou, Nova Scotia.

Much more significant was the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad, which opened in 1853. It was important for three reasons: first, it was broad gauge (rather than standard) and thus set the standard

1. Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991*, 2nd edition (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992), 38-9.

2. Jean-Pierre Kesteman, "GALT, Sir ALEXANDER TILLOCH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12 (University of Toronto/ Université Laval, 2003). Accessed December 2, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/galt_alexander_tilloch_12E.html .

for future railroads in Canada until the 1870s; second, it addressed the centuries-old irritant of Montreal merchants who longed for an ice-free port by joining the largest Canadian city with Portland, Maine; third, it was an international railroad, the first in the world.

The Great Western Railway (1855) subsequently linked Windsor and Detroit to Toronto, Hamilton, and the Niagara district, while the Toronto, Simcoe, and Lake Huron Railway (also 1855) further locked in Toronto as Canada West's hub city. The largest and most ambitious of the pre-Confederation railroad projects, however, was the **Grand Trunk Railway**, which eventually connected Montreal and Toronto, in part by leasing or otherwise absorbing these smaller independent railways. Fortunes were invested in these projects and a whole generation of British North American capitalists and banks made even larger fortunes back. Land and material sales were key to profits, most of which appear to have been made before the first train chugged down the line.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Grand_Trunk_Railway_of_Canada_Victoria_Bridge_now_constructing_across_the_St._Lawrence_River_at_Montreal.jpg)

*Figure 9.13 The Victoria Bridge was part of the Grand Trunk Railway's infrastructure and, at the time of its completion in 1857, the longest span on Earth.*

The value of railways in Canadian economic history is often misunderstood. Railways in many respects duplicated what had already been accomplished by canals and added little to the infrastructure that was truly new. Some of the earliest experiments were, in fact, referred to as "canal railways" because they paralleled existing water routes. This was certainly the case with the 12-kilometre Montreal and Lachine Railroad, built in 1847. In British North America, the first railways have been described as a duplication and extension of the **Empire of the St. Lawrence**, corridors of trade that echoed, rather unimaginatively, the trade routes first developed under New France (if not under the Wendat and Haudenosaunee). It was for this reason that railways were perilous investments: in British North America they were necessarily very long, they competed with existing water transportation routes, and they offered little to emerging manufacturers.

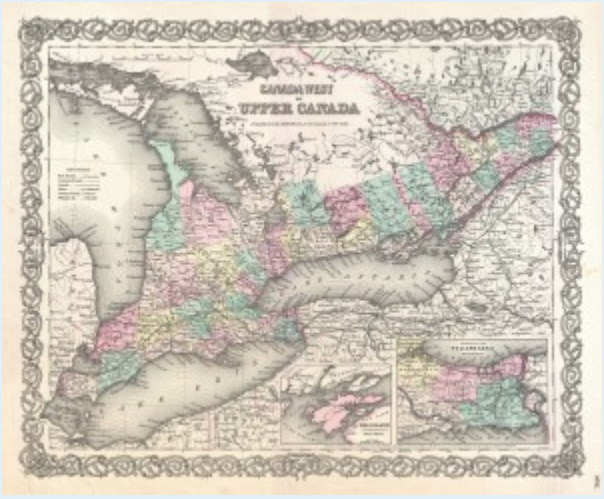
Exercise: Documents — Canada South

It may be west of Montreal and Old Canada, but Canada West is very definitely farther south than much of the rest of the country, including all of what is now Western Canada. These two maps (Figures 9.14 and 9.15) show the same region in the 1850s.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/1850_Tallis_Map_of_West_Canada_or_Ontario__includes_Great_Lakes__-_Geographicus_-_WestCanada-tallis-1850.jpg)

*Figure 9.14 John Tallis' c. 1850 map of Canada West.*




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/1855_Colton_Map_of_Upper_Canada_or_Ontario_-_Geographicus_-_Ontario-colton-1855.jpg)

*Figure 9.15 John Hutchins Colton's 1855 map version of Canada West.*

They are, however, profoundly different representations of southern Ontario.

What changes can you see? What is being emphasized in the first that was not so important or interesting to the cartographer and artist who produced the second?

## Beginning an Industrial Revolution

What railways did offer (and what is easy to overlook) is a stimulus to heavy industry, to say nothing of demand for squared timber for ties and trestles. Steel for rails, rolling stock, and engines represented a major new demand factor in the economy. Iron and steel foundries appeared and gradually diversified. The availability of surplus iron and steel stimulated growth in other kinds of manufacturing, principally associated with working implements. Shovels, axes, and pickaxes — the trademark tools of the farmer, the logger, and the miner — were beneficiaries of the railway industry. They were needed in such enormous quantities that investment in metal-bashing shops became very attractive and tools became more generally available.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Toronto_Rolling_Mills.jpg)

*Figure 9.16 The Toronto Rolling Mills produced iron rails from 1857 to 1873, when steel production took over.*

The Newcastle Foundry and Machine Manufactory provides a useful example of how industries complemented each other. Established in 1847 in Newcastle, Canada West, by Daniel Massey, this was the chrysalis from which **Massey** Manufacturing and then **Massey-Harris** and, in the 20th century, **Massey-Ferguson** would emerge. Massey began by pioneering the production of mechanical **threshing machines**, which was possible only because of the availability of all kinds of metal products, everything from iron ingots to nails. From Newcastle, Massey could ship up and down Lake Ontario, but there was limited roadway access to the interior of the colony. By the mid-1850s the company relocated to Toronto where it had improved access to raw materials, nearby foundries, and farmers to whom it could sell its products. This small industrial revolution, so intimately related to the agricultural well-being of

the colony, had an almost immediately perceptible effect. One observer in 1860 commented that "an American machine is now as great a rarity as a Canadian one was a few years ago."[3]

This focus on, and success in, the manufacturing of agricultural implements followed on the continued Upper Canadian belief in an expanding farm frontier as an engine of growth and the wheat economy. Implement manufacturing, then, was something of an advance in terms of industrialization, but it ultimately preserved the staples orientation of the wheat economy and did not lead to agricultural diversification. That is to say, a threshing machine does nothing to push a farm economy from monoculture to robust self-sufficiency and, say, wool production.

## Creating a Working Class

The rise of farm implement production had an unintended impact on the Canadian economy: it reduced the need for farm labour. In doing so it freed up younger members of farm families, specifically those who were not in line to inherit the farm. Some of these men and women looked west to new farming opportunities in Upper Canada while others moved to the towns and cities to pursue wage labour. Put less charitably, perhaps, farm machinery created circumstances in which the big farm family was not needed; some families had to shed a few members, sending them off to take their chances, perhaps working for Massey in Toronto. This change marked the emergence of a locally produced market of **free labour**: "free" in the sense of being removed from other obligations and free to move to wherever the jobs and opportunities arise.

Whatever factories came into existence in British North America before Confederation were not, to be sure, very large. One study claims that "the average Upper Canadian manufactory employed less than five workers."[4] The railway companies were the largest employers — some of them marked by the **vertical integration** of foundries, equipment manufacturing, line construction and maintenance, connections with ports and shippers, and even the housing of their workers. By 1871, nearly 3,000 British North Americans worked for the principal railway firms.[5]

## Environmental Costs

These numbers hint at the scale and breadth of production necessary to keep these industries moving. As railways extended the reach of industry deeper into rural areas, new resources could be tapped. Logging for the manufacture of railway ties accelerated, and with it came soil erosion and stream damage. Fish spawning grounds were impacted as rivers silted up. Even the production of sawdust in industrial quantities affected water quality. As well, iron and steel production required a mining industry to supply the key ingredients: iron ore and coking coal. Iron mines opened around Lower Canada and coal mines

3. Quoted in Richard Pomfret, "The Mechanization of Reaping in Nineteenth-Century Ontario: A Case Study of the Pace and Causes of the Diffusion of Embodied Technical Change," in *Perspectives on Canadian Economic History,* ed. Douglas McCalla (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 81.

4. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*, 38.

5. Paul Craven and Tom Traves, "Canadian Railways as Manufacturers, 1850-1880," in *Perspectives on Canadian Economic History*, ed. Douglas McCalla (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 127-8.

in Cape Breton. By mid-century hundreds were employed as wage labourers underground and in iron forges.

The production of coke — coal from which impurities have been removed — began in earnest in Canada in these years and augmented the production of charcoal (coke is much better in the smelting process but the tar residue is much greater and much more toxic, as 20th century Nova Scotians would discover to their sorrow). Steam engines, whether on rails or on the water or in mills, increasingly required coal as well. The needs of the Royal Navy often determined the location and success (or failure) of coal mines, as was the case in Cape Breton and on Vancouver Island. Coal tips (piles of waste earth, stone, and unmarketable small pieces of coal), began to grow on the landscapes abutting Sydney, Nova Scotia, and Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island. Dust from the tips and from the coal heaped on the docks was in the air where everyone — even those who never ventured underground — would breathe it in. Many from those communities were exposed to the toxins, and at risk for developing — and dying from — silicosis.

No one at the start of British North America's industrial revolution could have imagined the millions of tons of material that would be won from under Earth's surface in the decades ahead, nor could they know the full environmental consequences of their actions. By 1860, however, the purity of water and soil and cellular matter was already being severely compromised in areas of early industrialization.

**Historians on Video**

Changes in energy sources in the 19th century began what was to become a long-term dependence on fossil fuels. In the first of two videos, historian Ruth Sandwell (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto) describes how changes in energy sources create and reflect changes in the economy generally. In the second, she looks at how the move to inorganic energy sources changed day-to-day life. The transcripts may be seen here: Transcript for Video 1 [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_rs_u9_01.pdf) and Transcript for Video 2 [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_rs_u9_02.pdf).

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=259#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

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**Key Points**

- Lack of access to larger markets limited the scale of manufacturing experiments in British North America before the mid-19th century.

- Railways became the key to unlocking industrial potential, linking producers to markets, and creating demand for heavy industrial output.
- Agricultural implement production otherwise dominated industrial output and helped advance the farming sector.
- Industrialization and the improvement of farming technology led to a migration from farms to cities in search of seasonal and then full-time employment in wage labour.

#### Video Attributions

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- Dr. Ruth Sandwell Question 9 – Impact of fossil fuels on life in the 19th century. (https://youtu.be/RG1r47QnyzE?si=lKZkhMqVqHvLLVXk) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license

#### Media Attributions

**Figure 9.13**
Grand Trunk Railway of Canada, Victoria Bridge, now constructing across the St. Lawrence River at Montreal (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grand_Trunk_Railway_of_Canada,_Victoria_Bridge,_now_constructing_across_the_St._Lawrence_River_at_Montreal.jpg) by Skeezix1000 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Skeezix1000) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 9.14**
West Canada (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/48/1850_Tallis_Map_of_West_Canada_or_Ontario_%28_includes_Great_Lakes_%29_-_Geographicus_-_WestCanada-tallis-1850.jpg) by BotMultichill (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:BotMultichill) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 9.15**
Canada West or Upper Canada (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1855_Colton_Map_of_Upper_Canada_or_Ontario_-_Geographicus_-_Ontario2-colton-1855.jpg) by BotMultichill (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:BotMultichill) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 9.16**
Toronto Rolling Mills (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Toronto_Rolling_Mills.jpg) by Skeezix1000 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Skeezix1000) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 9.10 Reciprocity and Free Trade

By the middle of the 19th century Britain was well established as the leading industrial economy on Earth. An alignment of domestic resources (especially iron and coal), innovations in harnessing new energy sources (from hydraulics through to steam), developments in the mechanization of looms, access to raw materials from colonies and non-colonial suppliers, an abundance of local free labour, and the extent to which British merchants as well as naval fleets ruled the waves produced and perpetuated a high-speed transformation of the economy of the British Isles. Western Europe as a whole played catch-up (some countries better than others) while the United States exploited its own natural advantages and ploughed ahead at a dramatic pace. The days of rough equality with France were well within living memory for many British leaders and capitalists; they could recall a time when mercantilism made sense. By the 1840s they and their younger counterparts were wondering whether it should continue. After all, British goods were in demand everywhere, and Britain had the economic and military muscle to impose commercial arrangements where needed. Increasingly influenced, as well, by free market economic theories that held to the view that one should always buy in the lowest market and sell in the highest, capitalists in particular thought that preferential tariffs interfered with the natural workings of the marketplace. What became known as **laissez-faire** capitalism was coming into fashion.

This was, of course, terrible news for a British North American economy that had been finely crafted to work within the comfort zone of protectionism. Under mercantilism (French and English alike) there were direct and indirect disincentives to diversification: some kinds of production were simply not allowed or not worth attempting. A thriving market in Britain for unprocessed products from the sea or the forests gave settlement and society its shape; the smart money went after those opportunities and little investment was sunk into manufacturing.

The staple theory describes how the pursuit of natural resources both expands and restricts an economy, both spatially and structurally. Whether they were chasing beaver pelts or trees, British North Americans followed rivers deeper into the interior rather than building up market towns with a healthy surplus of labour that could be used in small, artisanal factories of five to 20 people, the sort of operation that might expand to 50 or 100 employees one day. Staples, moreover, tend to favour what are called **backward linkages**: harbours, warehouses, some shipping capacity. These are things that are useful in any economy but they don’t propel it forward. A dock is a dock; it cannot be redeployed into the production of new kinds of goods. **Forward linkages** are more likely to arise from basic manufacturing: iron production begets iron tools, tools lead to machinery, machinery leads to manufacturing of shoes or clothing. In each of those steps value is added to the product as is the potential for movement into entirely different economic activities (e.g., the iron foundry becomes the parent of the cotton textiles industry). By mid-century, the colonies of British North America were breaking out of the staple economy, but only tentatively. The end of British protectionism would necessitate accelerated change.

Exercise: History Around You — Staple Theory

Does the staple theory still have anything to tell us about our current economic order?

Look up your province's or territory's most recent economic information (if you live outside Canada, pick a province or territory). What's the principal export? Which sector employs the greatest number of people? From what sector does the economy derive the greatest income?

If a staple or two haven't leapt to the top of your list, identify a classic staple that your area exports. Just pick one. Now follow its economic implications: What does that staple require? Mills? Railways? Ports? Smelters? Pipelines? Is there any processing done here or is it mostly done abroad? Is the real value added done elsewhere?

## Sudden Adjustments

The end came quickly. In 1842 the tariff on squared timber was amended and exports fell by 25% the very next year.[1] In 1846 Britain abolished the Corn Laws; now grain and flour produced in the United States competed toe-to-toe with the British North American (more specifically, Upper Canadian) wheat economy. Fears grew across the colonies that farmers, shipping interests, dockworkers, freight handlers, and millworkers would all suffer.

The difficulty at the time facing policymakers in British North America was twofold. First, they needed to decide how to respond to changes in tariffs when the legislative power to do so still resided mainly with the mother country. Second, they needed to determine with some certainty whether free trade was a bad thing or a good thing. British North America was a world leader in the production of squared timber: would it not benefit from a more open market? As well, it was easy to confuse the causes for economic troubles: did sales of staples fall because of free trade or because of falling demand? To what extent were those factors related? In the 1840s and 1850s, political and financial leaders in the colonies didn't have the statistical information to guide them (or mislead them). What they did know was that tariffs were falling away and everything had to be considered in light of that fact.

Overall, despite a few setbacks, the British North American economies performed well after the shock of tariff removals. From the late 1840s through to the 1860s shipping production continued to grow in the Atlantic colonies (serving American demand for additional capacity) and wheat exports from Canada West increased. Demand for grain in famine-stricken Ireland helped matters after 1847, as did British military needs during the **Crimean War** of 1854-56 and American requirements during the **Civil War** in the early 1860s.

## The First Free Trade Agreement

Although British North America was not an early adopter of industrial processes, the United States was, and demand for raw materials accelerated there by mid-century. The forests of New England were badly

1. Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 208.

depleted, agricultural lands were no longer sufficient to supply the rapidly growing manufacturing towns and the major cities, and the British North American colonies could provide both timber and food. As well, the British North American ports were a good source of materials derived from British markets and other British colonies. This made the northern colonies very attractive partners to the Americans and it made the American marketplace more attractive to British North America's leading capitalists. In return, the Americans could provide agricultural implements, textile products, and other goods that were less conveniently sourced from Britain. And often they could do so much more cheaply. The **Reciprocity Treaty** signed by Britain and the United States in 1854 thus opened up trade between the colonies and the Americans while constituting a further step in Britain's efforts to create a world without trade barriers. This was, however, a short-lived experiment.

Protectionist interests in the United States, combined with anti-British feeling at the end of the Civil War, led to the treaty being terminated in 1866. For 12 years, however, Canadian products enjoyed unprecedented access to American markets.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/800px-Philip_V_Coin.jpg)

*Figure 9.17 British North American colonies used the Spanish dollar (pictured here) as the basis of their currency. Each dollar was worth eight shillings, hence "pieces of eight." In 1861 Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick moved to the American dollar/decimal system. Newfoundland developed its own system.*

It is worth underlining again that, whatever the inherent benefits of reciprocity, the context is critical. Had it not been for the additional and dramatic demand created by the Civil War south of the border, it is unlikely that British North America would have benefited as much as it did. After Confederation until the Great War (1914-1918) there would be nostalgia for reciprocity in some Canadian political circles but it would tend to ignore that important piece of the equation.

**Key Points**

- The rise of laissez-faire capitalism threatened the tariff-dependent economies of British North America.
- Despite short-term panic, exports recovered quickly.
- Increased familiarity with the American market led to a reciprocity agreement with the United States and a consequent continental reorientation of the British North American economy.

## Attributions

**Figure 9.17**
Philip V Coin (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Philip_V_Coin.jpg) by Coinman62 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Coinman62) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 9.11 Summary

By the 1840s industrial capitalists in Britain and the United States were a force with which to be reckoned. Along with their merchant and investment allies, they demanded a liberation of trade, an elimination of tariffs, and an opening of new markets, whether the markets and suppliers in question wanted it or not. For British North America, this meant an end to automatic support from Britain, a reduction in imperial governmental investment, loss of protected markets, and an opportunity to pursue new challenges.

Across Canada and the Maritimes the economic response was both entrepreneurial and innovative, and also sluggish and conventional. The establishment of financial institutions and embryonic industries helped transition the economy into a new capitalist stage of production. At the same time, staple industries remained at the core of the economy for years to come.

Key Terms

**backward linkages:** Economic inputs (often infrastructure) that support the production of the principal staple. In the case of the fur trade, backward linkages include warehouses, docks, and fur trade posts. In the case of the wheat economy, the linkages include silos, means of transporting grain, seed, and farm implements. Compare with**forward linkages.**

**capital, capitalism, capitalists:** Capital is the portable wealth that can be applied to the economy in the form of investment. Prior to capitalism, wealth was manifested almost entirely in land and agricultural production. Investment was, in effect, reinvestment of output. Outsiders did not generally invest their wealth in the farms of others, certainly not in the pre-modern, feudal era. The mercantile era created a merchant class with excess capital (money, wealth), which was stored, invested, and made available for borrowing for investment. Capitalism is the system in which the means of production (farms, factories, etc.) are privately owned and capable of being bought and sold. It generally depends on wage labour. Capitalism is, too, a system of social relations based on the right of the individual to move capital to wherever it will generate the greatest benefits. A capitalist is someone who works within the capitalist system, whose wealth is based not on inherited and immovable property but on the ability to move wealth from one investment to another.

**Civil War:** The war between the southern and northern American states from 1861 to 1865. Seven southern slave states seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America. The continuance of slavery and “states’ rights” were the key catalysts to the crisis. The number of war dead totalled more than 100,000, and at the end of the war the United States had the largest standing army on Earth.

**coffin ships:** Lumber boats that carried immigrants from Ireland to Canada in the 1830s. Many died during this trip as hygiene and overcrowded conditions aboard the boats were atrocious.

**Corn Laws:** Regulations governing the import and export of grain in Britain. A system of tariffs that benefited colonial and domestic producers and disadvantaged foreign producers in the British marketplace.

**Crimean War:** A multinational conflict centred on the Crimean Peninsula and the city of Sevastopol on the Black Sea. The war pitted Britain, France, and Turkey (the Ottoman Empire) against Russia. Noteworthy

are the magnitude of deaths (roughly half a million) and the beginnings of the military field hospital (under Florence Nightingale), which produced important innovations in battlefield medicine.

**cullers:** Codfish buyers in Newfoundland ports, especially St. John's.

**democracy:** A form of government translated roughly from its Greek roots as "rule by the people." The complicating factor is that "the people" is a slippery concept that is historically contextualized, and the extent of "rule" is also negotiable. Democracy was long associated with cities and towns, but not with nation states or empires, over which monarchies and oligarchies ruled. The emergence of representative democracy at a national level in the late 18th century — first in the United States, then in France — constituted a revolutionary change in organizing "the people's" voice. In British North America, legislative assemblies might be elected but they did not rule, not until the 1840s. The majority of adults were "enfranchised" or legally able to participate in a democratic election only in the 20th century. It is still the case, of course, that people under the age of 18 years are not able to participate in democracy, so the vote is not "universal" by any stretch.

**Empire of the St. Lawrence:** A phrase coined by historian Donald Creighton in the 1930s, it refers to the economic and political influence of Quebec and Montreal merchants and colonial governments over a region that extended, at its peak, across the whole of North America to the Pacific Ocean.

**extended family:** Generally refers to three generations or more of one family. Another form, the consanguineal family, includes adult siblings.

**forward linkages:** Secondary developments in an economy arising from the production of a staple or other goods. For example, while cotton requires backward linkages like farm equipment, a labour force (possibly a slave trade), and warehouses, it might generate forward linkages like cotton mills and a textile industry. Lumber — a classic Canadian staple — requires many backward linkages but it can feed into the development of mills, the paper sector, furniture making, and so on.

**free labour:** Working people who are free of feudal or other similar bonds.

**Grand Trunk Railway:** A rail system that linked Canada West (Ontario) and Canada East (Quebec) in the 1850s. It was extended through spur lines and the purchase of other railways to Portland, Maine.

**industrial revolution:** A transition in systems of production associated with the rise of machine-assisted labour, non-organic sources of energy (water power, steam power, electricity), and large manufacturing and mining settings. Occurred first in the British Isles beginning in the late 18th century, spreading to most countries in the North Atlantic by the mid-19th century. Is "revolutionary" in that it supplanted older systems of production and the social relations on which they were based. It also changed the focus of Western economies from agricultural and craft production to industrial production of (mainly) textiles, metal products, and energy.

**Irish Potato Famine:** A four-year famine (1845-1849) in Ireland brought on by the heavy reliance on potatoes as a core element of the diet. When blight (a plant disease that affects potatoes) struck, food stocks were quickly exhausted. During this famine, perhaps as many as 2 million Irish emigrated, mostly to the United States but also to British North America, Australia, and elsewhere.

**Lachine Canal:** The canal built at the rapids at Lachine; first attempted in 1689 but it wasn't until 1825 that a functioning system of locks was in place. The name, Lachine, references French hopes of a waterway across North America to China (*la Chine*). Lachine confirmed Montreal's position as a leading port in and out of the interior of North America and Lachine itself became an important focus of industrial growth in the mid-19th century.

**laissez-faire:** A philosophy and/or system of policies that minimizes government management of the economy. In practical terms it means elimination of tariff barriers, duties, taxes, and regulations beyond the minimum required to protect property.

**Massey, Massey-Harris, Massey-Ferguson:** Founded in 1847 by Daniel Massey, as the Newcastle Foundry and Machine Factory, it merged in 1891 with A. Harris, Son & Company, and then with the Ferguson Company in 1953, becoming Massey-Harris-Ferguson, which was shortened a few years later to Massey-Ferguson. The various incarnations of the Massey industrial project have been global leaders in the production of farm equipment and a major employer of industrial labour in central Canada.

**navvies:** The men who laboured on the earliest British navigation canals. Many were Irish and, subsequently, Irish Catholic labourers on large projects (canals, railways) were referred to indiscriminately as navvies.

**Reciprocity Treaty (1854):** An agreement struck between Britain and the United States that enabled the free movement of raw materials between the United Stated and the British North American colonies of Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island.

**Rideau Canal:** Completed in 1826, an Upper Canadian canal linking Bytown (Ottawa) with Kingston. Unlike the Welland and Lachine Canals, the principal purpose of the Rideau Canal was colonial defence. In the event of an American invasion of the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes, troops could be moved between Montreal and the Kingston area via the canal.

**seasonal labour, seasonal labourers:** Agricultural and resource extraction industries in particular depend on the seasonal availability of labour. Spring for planting, autumn for harvesting on farms; winter for the seal hunt and for logging in the 19th century; summer for salmon runs. Pre-industrial societies often depend on the seasonal work but it continued to be a feature of life in the industrial era.

**squared timber:** Logs that have been "squared" so that they can be stacked more tightly for shipping. During the Napoleonic Wars the usual sources of lumber (needed especially for naval shipbuilding) were closed to Britain by French blockades. Timber producers in British North America were called upon to rapidly increase production, and stacking them tightly maximized the number of logs that could be shipped to Britain. .

**staple theory:** Or "staple thesis," argues that an economy based on natural resources or other simple, unprocessed goods will develop along certain lines. In the case of New France and British North America, the dominant economic activities were obtaining and exporting a limited number of staples: furs, fish, timber, and some minerals. None of these required a significant population in the colony; none were processed in North America; all value added occurred in Europe, as did most consumption. The Canadian economic historian Harold Innis argued in the 1930s that the staple focus of the economy constrained colonial and national development, held back industrialization and diversification, and shaped government and social relations.

**subsistence farming:** The style of farming that provided enough quantity and a sufficient variety of crops to sustain its operators (typically, the farming family). Because it does not produce a surplus (beyond, perhaps, enough to engage in barter with other farms), the farm owner does not have anything to sell. The ability to add capacity through capital investment is thus highly limited.

**tariff policies:** A tax imposed on imported goods. Generally this is done to make the purchase of domestically produced goods more attractive.

**threshing machine:** Mechanism for separating grain from straw and chaff. First developed in the late 18th century, threshing machines became more effective in the second quarter of the 19th century. They were usually powered by horses, sometimes by wind. Mechanization of threshing significantly reduced the amount of labour needed per acre of wheat at harvest time. It also created a specialist, itinerant workforce: the threshing crew.

**truck system:** A system of credit extended to workers by employers or buyers. Sometimes company stores would extend credit to company employees, deducting the amount owing from the next payday. In the Newfoundland fisheries, merchants would provide fishing crews with credit for nets and other necessities for which they would be reimbursed with a share of the catch. Like all credit systems, the truck system worked better for the creditor than the debtor.

**vertical integration**: A production model in which the various stages in a supply chain are owned by the same individual or company. For example, 19th century railway companies sometimes owned iron and coal mines, foundries where steel was produced and cast, machine shops that manufactured the rolling stock (all of which was owned by the railway — and not just the tracks), and warehouses, grain elevators, and hotels at all the major stations along the route.

**Welland Canal:** Opened in 1829, linking Lakes Erie and Ontario.

**wheat boom, wheat economy:** The appearance of a widespread monoculture in farm output, in this case the rise of wheat as the principal crop or staple that dominated the economy, including exports and economic policy making.

**wind, wood, and water:** A shorthand term for the Maritime economy of the 19th century, which was dominated by timber production, (wooden) shipbuilding, and the export sector, which was based on sailing vessels.

Short Answer Exercises

1. In what ways were economic ideas undergoing change in this period? Why?
2. How did the Napoleonic Wars and their end impact British North America?
3. In what ways were the economies of Upper and Lower Canada similar? Distinct?
4. What aspects of the Atlantic colonies' economies dominated and grew in this era?
5. What was the impact of infrastructural development on the colonies?
6. How did early industrialization impact British North America?
7. In what ways were political elites associated with the dominant economic agenda?
8. What was the relationship between agricultural expansion and industrial growth?
9. What is the staple theory and why does it matter to Canadian history?
10. How did tariffs and free trade impact British North America?
11. How was the physical environment impacted by the emerging proto-industrial economy of British North America?

## Suggested Readings

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# Chapter 10. Societies of British North America to 1860

# 10.1 Introduction



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/The_Port_of_Halifax_1830_-_1840__Unknown_Canadian_painter.jpg)

*Figure 10.1 Cities went from garrison towns to diverse and rapidly expanding centres of trade and industry.*
*(The Port of Halifax, 1830-1840, artist unknown.)*

Changing economic conditions contributed to and worked in tandem with changing social relations and experiences. Even in those places in British North America where lives continued along paths that had existed for centuries — in fishing communities, on farms, and among bison hunters — social changes were taking place. Technological innovations arose and a population explosion was underway around the North Atlantic. Some of these changes came so fast that people caught in their midst could not see them. Take William Lyon Mackenzie, for example. In the 1830s he was fighting on the streets of Toronto for greater democratic rights. Mackenzie's city — a commercial centre typical of British North America's major towns, if a bit larger than most – was undergoing a messy and complex rebirth. Cities were looking up the hill of a long growth curve that would continue for more than a century and would transform city dwellers into a constituency that Mackenzie would hardly recognize. Just as his political career reached its peak, the oppressed majority he spoke for were in the process of becoming a minority in their own towns.

This new era of urbanization was fed by immigration and rural abandonment and was fired by coal and steam. The ideal member of society, which was held to be the independent landowner and the yeoman farmer, was being overtaken by events and a new society.

This chapter considers some of the major social changes taking place in the middle of the 19th century. This period — the dawn of the age of steam — was also the proving ground for 20th century modernity. Cities, working-class neighbourhoods, labour organizations, gender issues, environmental decay, and public health and welfare were all topics of conversation and concern, especially as the 1860s

approached. This chapter offers an introduction to some of the concerns of social historians looking at the 19th century. It also introduces some of the approaches taken in scholarly histories.

Learning Objectives

- Identify the underlying economic and human factors driving social change in the period 1818-1860.
- Describe the main social classes and their relationship to one another.
- Outline the main cities of British North America in the 19th century and why they were growing.
- Sketch the ways in which gender roles and the experiences of children were changing.

## Attributions

**Figure 10.1**
The Port of Halifax (1830 – 1840) (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Port_of_Halifax_(1830_-_1840_)_Unknown_Canadian_painter.jpg) by Tetraktys (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Tetraktys) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

## 10.2 Demographics

Detailed records pertaining to population characteristics and behaviour were kept under the *ancien régime,* but it was during the 19th century that the bureaucratic machinery necessary to running a regular census appeared. Aggregate totals generated in these years (as today) reflect the ability and competence of the census takers and the registration machinery. Births and deaths were often registered only at the parish level, census takers had to do their work on foot and were not always welcomed by local residents (for fear that being surveyed meant being taxed), and people sometimes just lied.

Broadly speaking, however, we know that between the 1820s and the early 1850s the population of every colony except those on the West Coast rose significantly. Newfoundland's and Lower Canada's doubled; Nova Scotia's did slightly better than that. New Brunswick and PEI posted a trebling and Upper Canada (Canada West) grew sixfold. Within each of these colonies there were more men than women living in areas of resource extraction, but otherwise the sex ratio was relatively even. (This was not the case in British Columbia from 1858 on, when the gold rush transformed demographics.) See Table 10.1 for details of the earliest census counts, by region.

***Table 10.1 Census counts, by region, 1820s-1850s.***[1]

| [Skip Table] (#table10.1) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *****Figures for Assiniboia (a.k.a. Northwest Territories) reflect only the settler populations. There were at least another 30,000 Indigenous people on the northern Plains and in Rupert's Land in the first half of the century. ******Of this number, perhaps 4,000 were non-Indigenous. | | | | |
| **Region** | **First Census** | **Second Census** | **Third Census** | **Fourth Census** |
| Upper Canada | 150,066 (1824) | 213,156 (1830) | 432,159 (1840) | 952,004 (1851) |
| Lower Canada | 427,465 (1822) | 553,134 (1831) | 650,000 (1841) | 890,261 (1851) |
| New Brunswick | 74,176 (1824) | 119,457 (1834) | 156,162 (1841) | 193,800 (1851) |
| Nova Scotia | 123,630 (1827) | 199,906 (1837) | *not available* | 276,854 (1851) |
| Prince Edward Island | 24,600 (1824) | 32,292 (1833) | 47,042 (1841) | 71,490 (1855) |
| Newfoundland | 55,719 (1825) | 73,705 (1836) | 96,295 (1845) | 101,600 (1851) |
| Assiniboia***** | *not available* | 3,356 (1834) | 4,871 (1846) | 6,691 (1856) |
| BC and Vancouver Island | *not available* | | | 55,000 (1851)****** |

Details from the early part of the 19th century are difficult to access and assess, but we know that 1851 British North America was dominated by those under 19 years of age (56%). In the absence of more

1. Statistics Canada, "The 1800s ( 1806-1871)," http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/98-187-x/4064809-eng.htm#part1, accessed 15 December 2014; F.H.Leacy, ed., Historical Statistics of Canada, 2nd edition (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983) Series A2-14, Population of Canada, by province, census dates, 1851 to 1976.

precise numbers, we can only guess the distribution of the young population itself, but it is entirely reasonable to imagine that three-quarters were under the age of 15, which means that the **dependent population** (which includes the 2.7% over the age of 65 years) made up about 45% of the total.[2] (Keep these figures in mind when considering the ubiquity of child labour in these years, as discussed in Chapter 12 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-15/#chapter12).)

## Mortality

Fertility, migration, and mortality are the three elements that govern population growth or shrinkage. Beginning in the early 19th century, mortality rates around the North Atlantic began a long-term decline. This was not immediately evident in British North America where the **crude death rate (CDR)** moved downward only irregularly. This contrary trend was likely because it was a period of urbanization, and mortality rates are generally higher in cities. The evidence suggests that rural Lower Canada, for example, was experiencing an improvement in life expectancy while Montreal's numbers distorted the pattern for the colony as a whole. In 1821-30 the CDR for Lower Canada was 25.86 per thousand; for Montreal it was 44.30. Twenty years later the figures were 22.99 and 51.1 respectively. Matters improved somewhat in the 1850s, but the CDR rebounded in the first decade after Confederation.[3]

Mortality rates in the 19th century owed much to the difficulty of surviving infancy. The first five years of life were perilous. In places where the water supply was inconsistently safe — which is to say, in most towns and cities — infants were vulnerable to catching the various bugs in circulation and to suffer (often mortally) from diarrhoea. For a child born in 1851, life expectancy at birth was 43 years (that is, roughly half of what it is today). But if he or she could make it to 15 years of age, there was greater likelihood of living longer.

The risks associated with childbirth also affected female mortality rates. Two-thirds of girls born in 1801 reached adulthood but fewer than half of the original cohort made it to 45 years and the greatest risk they faced in those intervening 25 years was pregnancy.[4]

There were several mortality spikes in the 19th century arising from highly infectious and contagious disease epidemics. Of these the foremost was cholera. The Canadas experienced epidemics in 1832, 1834, 1849, 1851, and 1854. Each of these began in Quebec City, where immigrant ships carrying cholera first put into port; most of the epidemics made their way upriver and into the Great Lakes. The worst year — 1832 — witnessed about 2,000 deaths in Montreal, a city of roughly 32,000 individuals at the time. That is to say, one out of every 16 Montrealers succumbed to cholera.

The numbers are horrifying enough, but the disease itself was far more so. Michael Bliss, a historian of disease epidemics in Canada, describes the disease:

2. Roderic P. Beaujot and Kevin McQuillan, "The Social Effects of Demographic Change, Canada 1851-1981," in *Perspectives on Canada's Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*, eds. Frank Trovato and Carl F. Grindstaff (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1994), 43.

3. Roderic Beaujot and Don Kerr, *Population Change in Canada*, 2nd edition (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2004), 35-6.

4. Ellen Gee, "The Life Course of Canadian Women: An Historical and Demographic Analysis," in *Perspectives on Canada's Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*, eds. Frank Trovato and Carl F. Grindstaff (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1994), 50.

> When the cholera struck a community, nightmarish events occurred. Apparently normal and healthy people would start vomiting and defecating uncontrollably, sometimes at work or in the street. Putrid liquids poured from bodies racked by spasms and cramps. Dehydration caused eyes to sink into their sockets, skin to wrinkle and wizen, the voice to become low and husky. The body turned black and blue as capillaries ruptured. For more than half the victims death came in one or two days, sometimes in only a few hours. Sometimes bodies spurted poisons, aged, withered, and died, seemingly in minutes, the way they do in horror movies today.[5]

In the first half of the century no one knew with any certainty what caused epidemics. As a consequence there seemed to be little urgency to attend to open sewers, contaminated water supplies, the large number of horses in any colonial city (and their manure and urine), and the slaughtering of beef cattle and other animals in the streets by butchers (and thus the flow of blood everywhere). Public health was a concern but not yet a policy area. People were left with a fear of the unknown, a certainty that cholera or some other nasty epidemic would return, and a belief that it would be brought in all likelihood by immigrants — and no one was doing much about it.

## Fertility and Nuptiality

Fertility rates across the colonies were, by 21st century standards, very high. Anecdotally, one finds accounts of many families with eight to a dozen children. Certainly it was not unusual for women to marry young and carry to full term six or more pregnancies. Infant mortality rates, however, were also high. A comparative study of two leading Victorian-era families (one in Red River, the other on Prince Edward Island) reveals that the former produced "at least thirteen children" and the latter eight, of whom only four made it out of childhood.[6] For farming families, of course, children were a source of labour and security: they constituted the workforce from an early age and they were depended upon to provide for aging parents in an era when pensions and social welfare did not exist. In the early towns, too, children played a role in building up the **household wage**. On the mid-century Vancouver Island coalfield, a skilled miner with two or three sons over the age of eight years could double his income by taking them into the mines.

But the pattern was more complex than this. In mid-19th century Hamilton, for example, the average age at first marriage for women was about 22 years. Only one-quarter of the female population married before the age of 20, though nearly three-quarters were married by the time they turned 25. This represents a significant delay in the onset of marital fertility, so much so that the fertility rate (the number of children under 15 years of age divided by the number of women aged 15 to 45 years) was a modest 2.3 to 2.9. Irish Catholic women, defying stereotypes of high fertility, occupied the middle range: around 2.5 children per woman. Catholic women did tend to marry younger and therefore had more of their children at an earlier age than their Protestant contemporaries.[7]

Across British North America, however, one pattern that leaps out is the universality of marriage: in a population where there were about 96 men for every 100 females, **nuptiality** (the incidence of marriage)

5. Michael Bliss, *Plague: A Story of Smallpox in Montreal* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1991), 19.

6. J.M.Bumsted and Wendy Owen, "The Victorian Family in Canada in Historical Perspective: The Ross Family of Red River and the Jarvis Family of Prince Edward Island," *Manitoba History* 13 (Spring 1987): 12-13.

7. Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 32-35.

for women born between 1832 and 1866 was in the range of 88% to 91%. [8] This matters to the story of fertility because colonial laws were especially punitive of sex outside of marriage.

Less consequential to fertility but indicative of how long it took for males to secure their economic footing, the age at first marriage for men was high and getting higher. In 1851 it was about 26 years in the Province of Canada and 10 years later it was closer to 27 (and 28.8 years in Nova Scotia). Just after Confederation the average age at marriage for men was 29.4 in Nova Scotia, 28.8 in New Brunswick, 26.9 in Quebec, and 28.4 in Ontario.[9] A trend toward postponing marriage is apparent from these figures.

Larger patterns of fertility are worth noting. The population of French Canada in the century before Confederation doubled every 25 years, which follows the Malthusian model of natural population growth exactly. Keep in mind that this growth occurred in the absence of significant immigration into the French-speaking community — and considerable migration out, especially to New England. This growth was sustained by a high rate of marriage, at least until 1820. At that time the crisis in land availability dampened the possibility of marriage for many young people in Lower Canada.[10]

**Voluntary family size limitation**, or what we refer to colloquially as birth control, had only a minor impact on population growth before Confederation and only much later still in French Canada. In 1851 the **total fertility rate (TFR)** per woman was 7.02 and there were 120.3 children under the age of five years for every 100 women between the ages of 20 and 44. (By the late 20th century this last ratio had dropped to 40 per 100.) We know that women's mean age at first birth was 25.4 years and that the mean age of last birth was 35 years. With six to seven births per married woman, these figures tell us that women spent those years between their mid-twenties and their mid-thirties either pregnant or wrestling with newborns.[11]

Over the longer term the high fertility rates can be seen to be in retreat. The **crude birth rate (CBR)** in Lower Canada was close to 60 per 1,000 population in 1811 and fell to about 45 by 1861. At mid-century this might seem like a significant decline, but with the benefit of hindsight we can see that British North America was marching in step with the fertility transition underway across Western Europe and in the United States. The Canadian CBR would continue to fall with very few reversals (although there were more in Quebec than in English Canada) until the 1930s. In fact, Canada's current below-replacement-level fertility is nothing less than an outcome of this two-century-old trend.[12]

8. Gee, "The Life Course of Canadian Women, 50-1.

9. Ellen Gee, "Marriage in Nineteenth-Century Canada," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 19 (1982): 311-25.

10. Jacques Henripin, "From Acceptance of Nature to Control: The Demography of the French Canadians Since the Seventeenth Century," in *Perspectives on Canada's Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*, eds. Frank Trovato and Carl F. Grindstaff (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1994), 27-8.

11. Roderic P. Beaujot and Kevin McQuillan, "The Social Effects of Demographic Change, Canada 1851-1981," *Perspectives on Canada's Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*, eds. Frank Trovato and Carl F. Grindstaff (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1994): 36-7, 41.

12. Anatole Romaniuc, "Fertility in Canada: Retrospective and Prospective," in *Perspectives on Canada's Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*, eds. Frank Trovato and Carl F. Grindstaff (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1994), 216.

**Key Points**

- The first half of the 19th century saw substantial population growth in eastern British North America, driven by a combination of births and immigration, both of which had to compete with a high mortality rate.
- The population at mid-century was divided roughly evenly between dependants and adult providers.
- Nuptiality rates were very high: marriage was the common experience of almost all women.

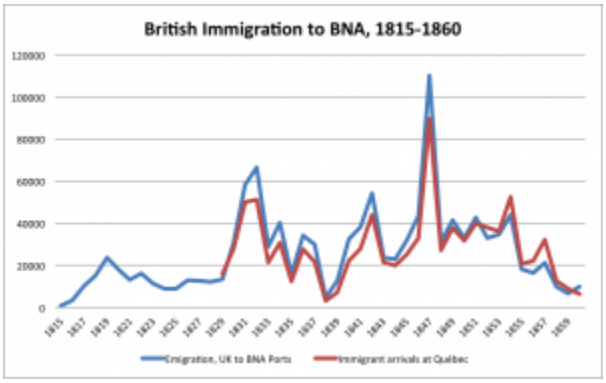
# 10.3 Immigration

From 1783 until 1812 the most important source of immigrants to British North America was the United States. Movement across the border was easy and the host community was, outside of Lower Canada, overwhelmingly and increasingly North American in its accents and values. That ended with the War of 1812. After 1815 British North America became much more British than it had ever been before.

Emigration from the British Isles was the single greatest source of settlers in the Atlantic colonies, a fact that distinguishes their society from that of the Canadas in these years. Scottish settlers under the guidance of Lord Selkirk descended upon Prince Edward Island to take up farms in the early days of the century, and they were followed in the years to come by many others. Mostly these were Highland Scots, removed from their ancestral farmlands by the process known as the "clearances." They were followed by Irish immigrants who came to represent a significant share of colonial population by 1850.

## Irish Immigrants

Ireland produced the largest waves of emigration of any European country during the 19th century. This phenomenon is often associated exclusively with the **Famine Irish**, the millions of refugees from the potato famine that wracked their homeland in the late 1840s. Irish migration to British North America, however, began in earnest much earlier. In the dying days of the Napoleonic Wars, Irish immigrants began arriving in east coast ports in large numbers. The towns of Newcastle, Chatham, and Miramichi saw hundreds arrive before 1820. Not all were Catholics but almost all were economically on the margin. Sectarian hostility between the Irish Protestants and Catholics who arrived around the same time soon spread to the larger host population.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/British-Immigration-1815-60.png)

*Figure 10.2 Quebec was the main point of entry for immigration to British North America through the pre-Confederation period. Spikes in Irish immigration meant that some of the traffic went to other ports. [Long Description] (#fig10.2)*

Further Irish immigration tended to be badly timed, and the reception of the host communities was predictably muted at best, hostile at worst. The post-Napoleonic War years witnessed economic downturns in many parts of the British Isles, including Ireland. In the 1820s, as the farming frontier was growing in Upper Canada and in Lower Canada's Eastern Townships, Irish immigrants arrived. Some of these had enough money to make a go of it. They were followed in the 1830s, however, by less prosperous countrymen and women who were fleeing more severe hardship at home. Overwhelmingly Catholic, they arrived in large numbers in the St. Lawrence, and the mortality among passengers was severe.

In June 1832, Irish immigrants brought with them a hidden passenger onboard the *Carrick*: cholera. Having killed tens of thousands in Britain, the disease came ashore at Quebec City and spread rapidly to Montreal and then Upper Canada. More than 9,000 Canadians — Upper and Lower — died, the largest concentration being in Montreal.

Cholera is associated with human waste, and at the time, sewers in the towns were very poorly developed; it was common practice to dump buckets of sewage into the streets where it mixed with an abundant supply of horse manure. The Irish — poor and almost immediately shunned by the locals — found themselves in shantytowns with even worse drainage or in quarantine facilities (specifically on **Grosse Isle**) where sanitation was appalling. As a result, the Irish immigrants themselves died in huge numbers. (This was a near-global epidemic, one that originated in India and by 1835 had made landfall on the northwest coast. There, cholera joined measles, mumps, and other introduced diseases that easily claimed 25% to 35% of the Indigenous communities they infected.)[1]

Another consequence of the cholera epidemic was social and political turmoil, which was especially acute in Lower Canada where fear of a British plot to eradicate the Catholic Canadien population survived from generation to generation. Were the Irish merely instruments of British contempt for the Canadiens? Many thought so at the time. The Irish were, therefore, ostracized and discriminated against while the clergy and other spokesmen for the Canadiens whipped up feeling against the British generally. The cholera epidemic was, then, one factor among several in the 1830s that led to growing support for a rebellion.

Irish immigration in the 1840s must be placed in this context. Fear of cholera and diseased immigrants was a reality. As well, the Irish Canadians had moved into fields of work such as canal construction, which were generally regarded dimly by most English and French Canadians, and this increased the anti-Irish sentiment. The independent farmer was the antithesis of the low-wage-earning, work-camp-dwelling proletarian. "Townies" viewed the Irish navvies as rough and uncivilized and a danger to their safety. Worse still, the land boom in Upper Canada that had sustained the economy alongside the wheat boom was in a trough in the late 1840s. Immigration had been much sought after when there was a lot of land available and when it fetched a good price; when the Famine Irish arrived they were too poor to buy land, the market was depressed anyway, and no one was enthusiastic about more competition. Things, of course, were much worse for the Irish themselves. Those who were quarantined on Grosse Isle and on Partridge Island in the Bay of Fundy in 1847 had to further contend with an outbreak of typhus. Thousands died.

1. Geoffrey Bilson, *A Darkened House: Cholera in Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/1024px-View_of_Montreal_1852.jpg)

*Figure 10.3 The scale of St. Patrick's Cathedral hints at the size of the Irish population in Montreal by 1854.*

Even in Upper Canada voices could be heard criticizing the British government for shovelling out its poor into British North America. Immigration from Ireland transformed Toronto from an essentially anglophone and Protestant city to one of pluralities: by 1860 there were comparable numbers of Catholics and Anglicans, followed by smaller numbers of Presbyterians, Methodists, and still smaller denominations.[2] Almost all of these Catholics were Irish. Their presence gave purpose to the **Orange Order**, whose lodges stood as expressions of Protestant authority and xenophobic reaction to the immigrant masses. This arose, in large part, because the Irish tended to settle in urban areas, though not necessarily in tight ethnic enclaves. In Montreal they dominated St. Anne's Ward, but in Toronto they were spread throughout the east and west ends, wherever affordable housing could be found.[3]

**Historians on Video**

The 'Famine Irish' dominate much discussion about the Irish diaspora but there were many arrivals in Canada before the famine. Historian Mark McGowan (University of Toronto) looks at both waves and considers some aspects of their impact. Here is a link to a transcript for videos about Irish immigration to Canada [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_mm_u10_01.pdf).

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=269#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

2. Peter G. Goheen, "Currents of Change in a Canadian City, 1850-1900," in *The Canadian City: Essays in Urban and Social History*, eds. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F. J. Artibise (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1984), 93-4.

3. John Zucchi, *A History of Ethnic Enclaves in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association Booklet no.31, 2007), 3.

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=269#oembed-2 (#oembed-2)*

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*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=269#oembed-4 (#oembed-4)*

**Key Points**

- The British Isles contributed the largest number of immigrants to British North America between 1818 and 1867, the Irish constituting a major share.
- Many of the 19th century immigrants were refugees from landlessness, and poverty, and/or famine.
- Conditions for immigrants were typically poor and worsened by the presence of epidemic diseases.
- The Irish, Scots, Welsh, and English immigrants of these years contributed to the diversification of cultural institutions as well as sectarian hostilities.

**Video Attributions**

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### Media Attributions

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British Immigration to BNA, 1815-1860, by John Belshaw is used under a CC BY 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license.

**Figure 10.3**
View of Montreal 1852 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:View_of_Montreal_1852.jpg) by Skeezix1000 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Skeezix1000) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

## Long descriptions

**Figure 10.2 long description:**

| Year | Emmigration, UK to BNA Ports | Immigrant arrivals at Quebec |
|---|---|---|
| 1815 | 0 | |
| 1817 | 10,000 | |
| 1819 | 22,000 | |
| 1821 | 10,000 | |
| 1823 | 11,000 | |
| 1825 | 10,000 | |
| 1827 | 16,000 | |
| 1829 | 17,000 | 18,000 |
| 1831 | 40,000 | 40,000 |
| 1833 | 45,000 | 45,000 |
| 1835 | 16,000 | 16,000 |
| 1837 | 30,000 | 21,000 |
| 1839 | 2,000 | 2,000 |
| 1841 | 39,000 | 24,000 |
| 1843 | 21,000 | 20,000 |
| 1845 | 30,000 | 21,000 |
| 1847 | 110,000 | 90,000 |
| 1849 | 23,000 | 23,000 |
| 1851 | 26,000 | 26,000 |
| 1853 | 32,000 | 37,000 |
| 1855 | 57,000 | 42,000 |
| 1857 | 21,000 | 18,000 |
| 1859 | 7,000 | 7,000 |

[Return to Figure 10.2] (#attachment_940)

# 10.4 Country Life



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/131089991_b7f75d9aac_o.jpg)

*Figure 10.4 Water-powered grist mills like this one near Waterloo, Ontario, were common features in the countryside.*

Life on the land in the 19th century was not insulated entirely from changes occurring elsewhere. In fact, the countryside was often where change originated. It was also where intensely conservative impulses could be found.

In a study of seigneury communities near Trois-Rivières, historian Colin Coates reveals the connections between landscape, community, social relations, and economic transformation. At Batiscan attempts were made at the beginning of the century to establish an ironworks, something which would have provided seasonal, part-time, and full-time/year-round work for locals. This was an attractive proposition in part because the habitants' farmlands had been so severely divided across generations that their productivity was quickly diminishing. These conditions were a product of rising human fertility and family size in the Lower Canadian countryside; in a Malthusian sense the growth that food production had made possible could not now keep pace with the population it produced.

Young men found it more and more difficult to establish the kind of economic security that would allow them to marry, which forced some to leave the land for opportunities in the woods or in the towns, ideally to find land grants elsewhere, perhaps nearby, but these options were increasingly unlikely. Some of the seigneuries thus became densely packed rural enclaves in which community members were heavily dependent on one another while also quite competitive. The Batiscan ironworks held out the hope of wealth from something other than the finite resource represented by land. The failure of the ironworks project wasn't a disaster, but it set back the hopes of the seigneury for a while.

All this happened in less than a single generation, and the result was country life returning to its agricultural focus.The countryside continued to generate food but it was increasingly focused on

subsistence. In a sense, it became even more intensively agricultural than it had been during the days of the fur trade. An outsider visiting for the first time in the 1830s might mistake it for a very traditional agrarian landscape. In truth, the "tradition" only went a generation or so deep. In 1790 there were fewer than a thousand people in Saint-Anne and 1,281 in Batiscan; in 1825 the numbers were 2,175 and 2,454 respectively. The two communities were doubling in size at a roughly Malthusian rate. They were, as well, shedding large numbers: nearly 500 people left Batiscan between 1790 and 1825 — a fifth of the total population in 1825. What is more, household sizes were rising. At Batiscan in 1784 the average family size was about five; in 1825 it was around six.

Coates identifies one of the consequences of these changes: "As households grew larger and young men and women remained dependent on their parents for longer periods, hierarchical relations within the family were strengthened."[1] This hints at the changes in the status of elders and the roles of mothers and fathers. Rather than being viewed as a place in a state of stasis, these seigneuries (and they are probably exemplary of many more) were undergoing profound changes.

## Class in the Countryside

Class relations were also under pressure. As Cole Harris observes, land shortages played into the hands of seigneurs. Too many people and too little land meant that labour costs fell, making it more feasible for seigneurs to hire workers to improve their own lands. Between 1791 and the 1830s, seigneurs were more likely to insist on payments of debts, which they lacked the leverage to do in previous decades. They even increased the *cens et rentes*, something they were unable to do under the *ancien régime's* regulating hand. One effect was the rise of a seigneurial class that was more aristocratic (at least in its wealth and its manorial lifestyle) in the 19th century than it had been in the days of New France.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=271#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

Harris notes that Lower Canada was, perhaps perversely, becoming more rural than urban in the 19th century. At the end of the French regime, one-fifth to one-quarter of the population of the St. Lawrence Valley lived in the towns, a figure that dropped to one-twentieth "of the French-Canadians" by 1815. This change took place in an era where the population as a whole jumped from 70,000 to more than 300,000. The main cities were becoming more English and less welcoming to francophones, but that doesn't mean that the Canadien population retreated into the countryside. In order for those numbers to work, they only had to stay put on the land, have more babies, and stay out of the cities, which is exactly what happened. Small wonder that Canadiens saw the institutions of the countryside (the parish church and the parish priest, the seigneur and the manor house, the *Coutume de Paris* with its focus on family rather than individual) as fundamental to their way of life, even if each of those was at one time or another exploitative of their rural existence.[2]

The situation in the English-speaking world was quite different. While the economic model of the family farm was found throughout all of British North America, it meant something different in the patrilineal

1. Colin M. Coates, *The Metamorphosis of Landscape and Community in Early Quebec* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000), 58-60.

2. Cole Harris, "Of Poverty and Helplessness in Petite-Nation," *Canadian Historical Review* 52, issue 1 (March 1971): 23-50.

nuclear family households of the anglophones. The availability of land in the western stretches of Upper Canada ensured that competition for inheritances would not produce painfully small subdivisions of farms. Communities stood in for families when it came time to depend on group labour for harvests, threshing, road building, and barn raising. The same was not always true in the Atlantic colonies, where poorer soil conditions and limited availability of arable land created pressures on locals to find other sources of income. In Prince Edward Island farming was an easier proposition, but often Maritime farming families looked to sawmills and mines to provide part-time and seasonal work. The family farm and the small market towns persisted, but they were rapidly becoming less typical of Maritime social organization.

Some of the changes occurring at the urban level diffused to rural areas, so much so that the clear cultural boundaries between town and country began to blur. Large edifices appeared, many of them made of brick and stone, to house new industries and institutions. In the early 19th century industry went to where there was water power: hydraulics were key to driving early factories. Once again, the river courses — especially the most difficult portage sites because that's where the water power was to be found — were determining the shape of Canadian life.

**Key Points**

- Social relations in rural British North America were directly impacted by the availability of land and competition for space.
- Land shortages in Lower Canada reinforced and enhanced the authority and wealth of seigneurs.
- The countryside was not impervious to industrial life.

#### Video Attributions

- Dr. Jack Little Question 7 – Class system. (https://youtu.be/2AAX_7gyMyo?si=vA6rH0O591T4ti_E) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

#### Media Attributions

**Figure 10.4**
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# 10.5 City Life



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Provincial_Asylum_Toronto.jpg)

*Figure 10.5 This grand structure embodies the neo-classical institution of the era. In this case, it is the Provincial Lunatic Asylum in Toronto, opened in 1850.*

At the start of the post-Napoleonic era cities in British North America were mostly large towns. They were small in population and area, they served very local markets, and their people consisted mainly of merchants, artisans, physicians and lawyers, government and military officials, clergy, and not much more. Until the 1840s, Halifax, for example, was essentially a city built of wood; in the generation that followed, its centre would be largely rebuilt in stone and brick. By the 1860s, the most dynamic cities had grown significantly and were much more complex places.

## The Modern City

**Civic buildings** became common and were a source of pride for the citizens. There was confidence and ambition in a young city that invested in stone buildings; the resident merchants and professionals located their mansions near the centre of town where they could be pointed to as evidence of community wealth; infrastructure like waterworks, board sidewalks, and a firehall were indicators of a commitment to the future and an enterprising attitude. The optimism of the age — the belief that a community's citizens were building a glorious society with a long life expectancy — was embodied in the move to neoclassical design in these new public and civic spaces that suggested (not very modestly) a common and timeless connection with ancient Greece and Rome.

Few of these small cities had rows of shops just yet — they typically had **public markets** where grocers, butchers, fishmongers, and bakers hawked their wares. There was space as well for farmers from the nearby countryside to sell cash crops to the growing town population.

Michael Katz studied the people and patterns of life in mid-century Hamilton and he closely observed the transition that was underway there (and in many other cities):

> [B]y 1861 some men could see that the future lay not only in trade but even more in manufacturing. By that time advocates of industry had begun a campaign to persuade the entrepreneurs of the city that the future lay in the factory as much, or more than, in the countinghouse. At first their successes remained modest. In 1861 the Wanzers moved their sewing-machine factory to Hamilton from Buffalo; someone partially manufactured shoes which were finished by hand; there were a prosperous factory that made pianos, one that manufactured hats, and, of course, the yards of the Great Western Railway and the construction of locomotives. Overall, in 1861 Hamilton remained a commercial city, though the future already was clear to anyone who read the signs. The ambitious little city would become the Birmingham [England] of Canada.[1]

By mid-century some cities were ready to leave behind Katz's "commercial city." For less than a century they had developed as nodes of commerce and local trade, sometimes tentatively reaching out into a larger global economy but (with the exception of Montreal and perhaps Quebec and Saint John), as commercial towns they had reached their upward limits: Toronto held about 40,000 and Hamilton a little more than 10,000; Halifax was creeping up above 20,000 and Charlottetown 7,000. Montreal was the giant with a population around 90,000 and was thus an example of where the future might lie.

Industrialization in these days, however, meant consolidation of some producers, heavy secondary manufacturing like an iron foundry, and other similar operations that might hire a few dozen employees at best. Full-on industrialization would come later in the century and, with it, massive growth in city size and a complete overhaul in what it meant in practical terms to be a citizen.

It is worth noting, however, that from 1851 to 1861 about 13% of British North Americans lived in cities of 20,000 or more, which put the emergent confederacy above the world average of 5%. The proportions in New Brunswick and the Province of Canada were highest, at around 14% living in cities in 1851, with Canada West accelerating to 18.5% in 1861. These numbers show that more British North Americans were moving to a handful of large centres and, simultaneously, more centres were passing the 20,000 threshold to qualify as cities. Some people, in other words, "urbanized" by sitting still. [2]

1. Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 4-6.

2. Leroy O. Stone, "Urban Development in Canada," in *Perspectives on Canada's Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*, eds. Frank Trovato and Carl F. Grindstaff (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1994), 372.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/1024px-Toronto_1856_-_1.jpg)

*Figure 10.6 A photograph of Toronto, 1856. Government House looms in the upper left while artisanal factories take up the foreground. Pianos were a mark of sophistication and in high demand in middle-class households. Note, too, the board sidewalks.*

**Historians on Video**

Urban spaces created a public domain in which people gathered to celebrate, protest, and mourn, among other things. Royal visits are an example of this, something that would have been largely unthinkable in an entirely rural environment of farmland, hamlets, and villages. Historian Ian Radforth (University of Toronto) considers such events in the first video below and then, in the second video, addresses the far more regular phenomenon of public displays and spectacles. The transcripts, respectively, may be found here: transcript for introductory video and video on royal visit of 1860 [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_ir_u10_01.pdf) and transcript for video on street spectacles [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_ir_u10_02.pdf).

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=275#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

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## Sin City

The emergence and growth of cities brought to light many social problems — crime, poverty, and alcoholism being the most obvious. There were, as well, so-called moral issues like unwed motherhood, gambling, and prostitution (the last of these was not always regarded as a criminal activity in the 19th century). The response was the creation of institutions such as prisons, insane asylums, orphanages, and shelters for the poor. The protection of property (manifest in police stations, courts, and jails) and care for the weakest members of society (in asylums and hospitals) was part of a continuum of middle-class values that patrolled deviance and enforced the emerging standards. The wide support for these values was evident by the sometimes-competitive frenzy of funding and building the institutions that would mark a city as a "go-ahead" place. In the 1850s alone Halifax added to its list of government buildings the Lunatic Asylum, the City Hospital, Rockhead Prison, the Halifax Court House, and the County Jail.[3]



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/North_side_of_King_Street_from_Toronto_to_Church_Streets.jpg)

*Figure 10.7 The Toronto Jail in 1835 was one of many solid-looking urban institutions that spring up around British North America.*

The mid-19th century witnessed the emergence of **philanthropy** as a social phenomenon in British North America. To be wealthy was one thing; to be a **philanthropist** was something else altogether. Philanthropy had deeper roots in England where money had accumulated in the cities a century or two earlier. It was informed by Protestant values that placed a premium on doing good deeds as a means of achieving personal spiritual growth. And where one or two philanthropists could not make a project come together, an organization might. The Ladies Benevolent Society and the Hamilton Orphan Society, for example, addressed a constellation of concerns and were backed by middle-class Protestant women in Hamilton, Canada West. Their projects included a home for elderly women and an orphanage as well as a social work visitors initiative.[4]

In Montreal and Quebec, most of these institutions were Catholic, but there were Protestant operations as well. As Montreal grew, so did the Catholic institutional presence; the Protestants had to play catch-

3. Susan Buggey, "Building Halifax, 1841-1871," *Acadiensis* X, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 90.

4. Carmen J. Nielson, *Private Women and the Public Good: Charity and State Formation in Hamilton, Ontario, 1846-93* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014).

up. Civic leaders faced issues like poverty with mixed feelings: charity and care were needed but leading Protestants were fearful that their efforts would lead to more poverty and less individual effort on the part of vulnerable populations. But also, "the Montreal Protestant community was torn between the need to create its own relief network to alleviate destitution, in order to avoid forcing Protestants to compromise their souls by using the Roman Catholic system, and the prevalent ideology against making relief too easily available or too abundant."[5] The result was a **House of Industry** in the 1860s that distinguished between the "deserving poor" (such as the elderly) and the able-bodied poor who could work for their keep. The division in Canada East between Catholic social work institutions and privately funded Protestant institutions kept the state out of the system for the most part (unlike in Canada West and the rest of English-speaking British North America), a fact that would come to have some bearing on the shape of Canadian federalism in the years to come.

**Historians on Video**

The development of institutions is a manifestation of what historian Ian Radforth (University of Toronto) refers to as "state formation." Here is a link to the transcript for video on state formation [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_ir_u11_01.pdf).



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=275#oembed-4 (#oembed-4)*

**Key Points**

- British North American cities were taking on the trappings of bourgeois towns the world over, including investment in substantial civic buildings.
- Manufacturing — and the desire to have more factories — was a feature of the emerging early Victorian city.
- British North American society was, overall, more urban than most countries, even though it was very rural.
- Social problems and how to address them were the focus of attention from many urban leaders.

**Video Attributions**

- Dr. Ian Radforth Question 1 – Introduction (https://youtu.be/AcIM03T8h9o?si=DqTS0_p-

5. Janice Harvey, "Dealing with 'the destitute and the wretched': The Protestant House of Industry and Refuge in Nineteenth-Century Montreal," *Journal of the CHA 2001 Revue de la SHC*,12 (2001): 74-5.

aHvN7om6) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

- Dr. Ian Radforth Question 6 – 1860 British royal visit to Canada. (https://youtu.be/raMa4NKyilo?si=YAmh8yRRujWEy6kl) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)
- Dr. Ian Radforth Question 7 – Street spectacles and displays of public opinion. (https://youtu.be/GitS_zPjxNM?si=k2rfG2CYONJ2Ma6Q) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)
- Dr. Ian Radforth Question 2 – State formation in British North America. (https://youtu.be/dDBfgqCYlhQ?si=0dCDI-Nma2mYGHbO) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

### Media Attributions

**Figure 10.5**
Provincial Asylum Toronto (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Provincial_Asylum_Toronto.jpg) by Skeezix1000 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Skeezix1000) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 10.6**
Toronto from the top of the Rossin House Hotel (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Toronto_1856_-_1.jpg) by Skeezix1000 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Skeezix1000) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 10.7**
North side of King Street East, from Toronto to Church Streets (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North_side_of_King_Street_from_Toronto_to_Church_Streets.jpg) by Skeezix1000 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Skeezix1000) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 10.6 Social Classes

The social classes of British North America at mid-century were a mix of old and new elements. The seigneurs of New France survived into the 19th century, their ranks inflated by the arrival of British gentry who bought up seigneurial titles and lands. And, of course, seigneuries depended utterly on the perpetuation of feudal relations with *censitaires.* It wasn't until 1854, with the passage of An Act for the Abolition of Feudal Rights and Duties in Lower Canada by the now-united Province of Canada, that the system truly began to disappear. It would take another 80 years before it was wound up completely, but 1854 marks the beginning of the end of feudalism in British North America.

The seigneurs and *censitaires* had roots that ran deep into the history of New France, as did the merchants (or burghers or bourgeois) whose claims to legitimacy might go as deep as the fur trade. The seigneurs retained importance politically and socially, but it was the merchants who emerged in the 19th century as the leading social class. By the 1820s, **liberal professionals** were beginning to make a significant appearance (especially in the towns and cities), and throughout this period the clergy were effectively a social class in their own right, one with considerable clout in all colonies.

Farmers and artisans remained, by far, the largest social category, but by the mid-19th century their numbers were being challenged by a growing working class, or proletariat. (The latter became more organized and significant in size only after Confederation.)

Self-awareness or **class consciousness** is what makes social classes matter. Not all of these social classes were able to act with a singular will, although their interests were often quite clearly distinct.

Exercise: Documents — Fashion Plates

One of the features of vernacular (or folk) culture is that it is slow to change. Below are five visual records of the clothing styles of Canadien men and women in the 19th century (Figures 10.8 to 10.12).

To what extent are they durable? What changes do you notice? What elements stand out?

All of these illustrations were made by Anglo-Canadians or British army personnel. What do you think they saw when they looked at their subjects?



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/WinterDressInCanadaBySemproniusStretton.jpg)

*Figure 10.8 Sempronius Stretton's 1805 depiction of a Canadien man and woman in winter clothing.*



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/LAMBERT1816_1.401_A_FRENCH_CANADIAN_LADY_IN_HER_WINTER_DRESS_AND_A_ROMAN_CATHOLIC_PRIEST.jpg)

*Figure 10.9 John Lambert's 1816 illustration of a Canadienne and a Catholic Priest in winter dress.*



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/LAMBERT1816_1.217_HABITANS_IN_THEIR_SUMMER_DRESS.jpg)

*Figure 10.10 John Lambert's 1816 depiction of "Habitants in their Summer dress."*



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/Canadian_Habitants_John_Crawford_Young.jpg)

*Figure 10.11 John Crawford Young's c. 1825-36 watercolour of "Canadian Habitants".*




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/FAH_Canadian.jpg)

*Figure 10.12 Frances Anne Hopkins, "Canadian Habitant in Winter," ca . 1858-59.*

## The Clergy

While it is the case that the clergy shared a common identity, this identity was fractured by denominations. There was much more solidarity in Lower Canada (Canada East) where the Catholic clergy was tightly organized, engaged in a wide range of social and educational services that went far beyond the saving of souls, and — perhaps most importantly — was aware that their sect existed at the sufferance of the British-Anglican imperial establishment. Belonging to an organization that had these qualities was attractive to many Canadiens, not just as members of congregations but as people seeking a career. Whether in nursing or education, ministering to the poor, serving as missionaries among Indigenous populations, or working as far afield as the Prairies or the West Coast, the Catholic church offered career opportunities for men and women alike that offered social status, influence, a community of peers, a sense of inclusion, security from cradle to grave, a chance to travel, and a role in protecting and advancing the culture of the Canadiens. In this respect Lower Canada was distinct from France: there, the nobility and the clergy had lost much of their influence during the Revolution, while in Canada they still enjoyed prominence and respect.

The situation for clergy in the Anglo-Protestant colonies was different. Sectarianism was loaded with meaning and sometimes vitriol. The Anglican establishment in Toronto, led by the Reverend (Bishop from 1839) John Strachan, represented the elite, the English, the Crown, and Toryism and took the form of the Family Compact. They regarded Methodists with suspicion and the Presbyterians hardly less so. In 1820 the Family Compact was able to institute a body for managing the Clergy Reserves, one-seventh of the public land. All of this land and the profits from its sale was claimed by the Church of England. Opposition to this arrangement grew through the mid-19th century, and in 1824 the Church of Scotland (the Presbyterians) won a share of the Clergy Reserves, but it remained outside of the local power structure and was a factor in the 1837-38 Rebellions.

William Lyon Mackenzie (1795-1861), a Presbyterian, aligned in his legislative career with Egerton Ryerson (1803-1882), a prominent Methodist minister in Toronto, in pursuing equity of the Clergy Reserves. Mackenzie was reputedly strongly influenced by the **anti-clerical** views of his mother, Elizabeth Mackenzie, and he was a lifelong advocate of the separation of church and state as a result.[1]

Competitiveness among the various sects was evident in some of the other colonies as well. In Newfoundland, outports were generally defined by the presence of one or two churches to the exclusion of other denominations, but in Prince Edward Island, rivalries between denominations appeared within individual villages. Island Presbyterians, Anglicans, Catholics, and Methodists found themselves squaring off against Congregationalists and Baptists. Each sect offered up larger and larger village churches as a sign of their competitive strength. By mid-century, the Tories on Prince Edward Island had become the party of Protestantism while the Liberal opposition spoke for Catholics and some of the smaller denominations.[2]

Elsewhere in the Maritimes sectarian distribution reflected waves of immigration and movement.

1. Frederick H. Armstrong and Ronald J. Stagg, "MACKENZIE, WILLIAM LYON," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed October 9, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mackenzie_william_lyon_9E.html .

2. Edward Macdonald, "Who's Afraid of the Fenians? The Fenian Scare on Prince Edward Island, 1865-1867," *Acadiensis* 38, no.1 (Winter/Spring 2009).

Catholicism followed the Acadians back to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and it was reinforced by the arrival in Cape Breton of Highland Scots and everywhere by Irish immigrants. Presbyterianism came with the Lowland Scots, and Congregationalism — a vestige of the New England Planter migration in the 18th century — was a minority sect in the 19th century mostly found in New Brunswick.

The end effect of this plurality in Atlantic Canada was to weaken claims of primacy by any one sect. This made it impossible, however, for the colonies to avoid sectarian disputes such as those associated with the funding of schools. And sectarian education, of course, made the imposition of a single curriculum impossible.

Generally, the clergy enjoyed significant social status and influence, in both the French and English areas. The Catholic establishment in Lower Canada had an infrastructure that must have been the envy of other denominations. But religious identity was just as important to Anglo-British North Americans. Sometimes this was tied to ethnicity — such as Scottishness and Presbyterianism or Welshness and Methodism — but more broadly denominational commitment was associational. That is, it was akin to belonging to an exclusive club, one that had its own history and heroes and took care of its members in this life and the next. Robert Barry (c. 1759-1843) provides one example: press-ganged into the British Navy at no more than 15 years of age, he jumped ship in New York, joined a local Methodist chapel, and was part of the Loyalist migration to Nova Scotia in 1783 where, as one biography has it, "his promotion of Methodism…aided his integration into the pre-existing mercantile structure through select business ties."[3]

## The Capitalist Class

The merchant elite of the Canadas and the Maritimes may have been competitive in their business dealings but they soon recognized a common cause in many aspects of business. And, of course, they were united by Anglicanism, Toryism, and language (English). As early as the 1820s, capitalists had achieved a degree of **hegemony** in the English-speaking colonies. Being Tory, Loyalist, patriarchal, and hierarchical were the dominant values, largely by default. There was no nobility (other than the governors) or local aristocracy to challenge them from above, the Presbyterians were increasingly onside, and there was not yet a large enough class of artisans or industrial workers who might generate a viable critique of emergent Canadian capitalism. Farmers, smaller entrepreneurs, and urban professionals (discussed below) had something to say about this situation, as did some journalists, but there was a line to be toed and it was drawn by the well-to-do bourgeoisie of Toronto, Montreal, Quebec, Halifax, and Saint John.

3. Allen B. Robertson, "BARRY, ROBERT," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed January 15, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/barry_robert_7E.html .



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/1024px-Ravenscrag.jpg)

*Figure 10.13 Ravenscrag, the Montreal home of shipping tycoon Hugh Allan, c. 1865.*

The leading spokesmen of this class were, of course, men. However, their web of connections points firmly at female networks that were every bit as important and sometimes gave the men upper-class pretensions. For example, James McGill (an Ayrshire-born son of a metalworker) arrived in post-Conquest/pre-Revolutionary Montreal, entered the fur trade, and promptly married Marie-Charlotte Guillimin (1747-1818), whose father had been a member of the Sovereign Council of New France and a judge in the Courts of Admiralty, and whose maternal grandfather was a giant among the seigneurial class. Sarah Vaughan (1751-1829) fell on very hard times at the end of the Revolution and fled to Montreal as a propertyless Loyalist, where she met, cohabited with (for 15 years), and finally married the brewing magnate, John Molson. Molson himself came from gentry stock in England but Vaughan's family included the 1st Earl of Lisburne and the Duke of Atholl. Another example from Montreal is Marie-Marguerite Chaboillez (1775-?), the daughter of a leading fur trade *marchand* who was a founder of the exclusive Beaver Club and who married the Scottish fur trader Simon McTavish. Insulated by wealth and borrowing some of the glow from relatives' titles and accomplishments, the capitalist elite formed an almost impregnable leadership class in the main towns of the colonies.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Charlotte_Trottier_Desrivieres.jpg)

*Figure 10.14 Charlotte Trottier Desrivières, sister-in-law of Marie-Charlotte Guillimin McGill.*

However much the merchants and leading manufacturers wished to cast themselves in the mould of "old money," they were North Americans as well and they endorsed hard work and determination. As one study puts it, "Profit, loss, extensive growth, efficiency, and a myth of individualism pervaded the Canadian economy and the Canadian political scene…."[4] There were enough examples of self-made men in the ranks of leading capitalists — Alexander Keith (a brewer), John Redpath (construction and sugar), McTavish and McGill (fur traders) — to give substance to the notion of individual accomplishment through hard work. These values became deeply embedded in the Canadian culture, reinforced by Britain's turn to laissez-faire capitalism, the rise of American capitalism south of the border, and a Protestant clergy whose views were not wholly dissimilar.

## The Agrarians and Artisans

Farming was the bedrock of the colonial economies of the Canadas, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Farming mattered in Nova Scotia as well, but as was the case in Newfoundland, the fisheries continued to exert more power there.

The relationship of farmers to the rest of society was complex. Under the model of the independent farm, a household invested labour and its capital in order to maximize production, making the most of an environment in which winters arrived earlier and left later than in American grain belts. In Upper Canada and in New Brunswick, the farming frontier was organized around townships, which became places of interaction, commerce, stockpiling grain output, and combining to improve infrastructure. The

4. Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 234.

surrounding towns were also where artisans associated with agrarian society located: shoemakers and dressmakers served basic consumer needs, and ironmongers and blacksmiths contributed to the success of farming. In the agricultural monoculture of wheat that existed in Upper Canada (Canada West), competition with other producers was largely meaningless: when everyone grows wheat, everyone hopes for the same rising tide.

For artisans, being a member of a craft signified a degree of structured and regulated training. Stonemasons, for example, were part of a tradition of builders arising out of the Middle Ages who trained as child apprentices, became journeymen, and eventually achieved the status of master craftsmen. They might belong to a guild or an association that limited the number of craftsmen in the market at any time, thereby assuring a reasonably good income. They were mostly independent workers, hiring themselves out on contracts, not as wage labourers. They often had their own shops although some were itinerant.

Shoemakers are among the best studied artisans of the time. They had a strong collective identity, celebrated annually on October 25 during marches for St. Crispin, the shoemakers' patron saint. As early as 1830 the shoemakers of York (Toronto) organized and went on strike for higher prices, which were locally regulated. According to one study by Greg Kealey, there were 68 shoemakers in the city in 1833 and 49 shoe shops (which may have combined retail with the manufacturing processes) in 1846; by 1851 there were two "shoe factories." Montreal shoemakers, however, dominated the trade for many decades and were the first to see their work broken into components: women assembled the leather from home, and men added the soles in small shops. Eventually the process was brought under one roof where the newly invented sewing machine was introduced.[5] Again, this part was women's work: less skilled, lower paid, and more aggressively supervised.

The 1861 census of Canada West tells us that there were 221 boot- and shoemakers in the eastern districts of the colony. Of those, 141 were independent, typically working from their homes or a nearby shop. The work was slow and hard: a single shoemaker was unlikely to complete more than 150 pairs in a year. As the population grew at mid-century, so too did demand for shoes. The factories responded by expanding output which, at the same time, increased pressure on the producer-artisan in the small towns. An advertisement in the Halifax *Citizen* newspaper of February 20, 1864, called for "20 Workmen on Pegged Work" for the Truro Boot & Shoe Factory.

The effects of industrialization were being felt by the crafts far beyond the big cities. One of the factors necessary for this change was the rise of the dairy industry and beef cattle farming. A shortage of cowhide and tanneries would doom the shoemaking business, so an ecology of supply and demand had to evolve to sustain both the early and the industrialized operations. (In this way, shoemaking also encouraged the cheese business.) Of course, advancements in transportation meant that shoe leather could be obtained from American sources too, especially at mid-century under the terms of reciprocity. With supplies secured and a post-reciprocity market guaranteed, one of the largest operations in British North America, Sessions, Carpenter and Company in Toronto, employed 250 men, women, and children on the eve of Confederation.

In this way, craftsmen's work became **proletarianized**. Even if skilled artisans were needed to complete the final product, the **division of labour** now included children and women, with as much as a third of

5. Gregory Kealey, "Artisans Respond to Industrialization: Shoemakers, Shoe Factories and the Knights of St. Crispin in Toronto," in *Age of Transition: Readings in Canadian Social History*, ed. Norman Knowles (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 161-4.

the workforce in the largest factories being made up of women. Unionization would follow early in the post-Confederation era in an attempt to win back what had been lost in terms of control of work and incomes by the shift from craft to industry.

The transition from craft to unskilled **sweated labour** was even more rapid in the production of textiles. Montreal was the centre of clothing production business by the 1820s and 1830s. A business that had been dominated formerly by tailors and seamstresses became centralized in early factories where ready-made clothing was produced in large quantities. This entailed, again, a division of labour that supplanted skilled artisans with lower-paid women, men, and children. And according to one study, it did more than disrupt the existing generation of artisans: by dismantling the system that sustained the apprenticeship and journeyman system, it severely impacted the survival prospects for the trade as a whole.[6]

## The Middle Classes

As farm families accumulated money from land speculation and wheat production, some were able to advance their position in society. Likewise, some artisans shifted from being independent producers of goods or services to hiring others to play that role: shoemakers grew from being small-shop cobblers to running small- or medium-sized shoe factories; blacksmiths produced a range of agricultural tools, not just horseshoes. As well, a generation of fur traders who, if they had survived the fur trade wars, settled into communities across British North America as people of comfortable means.

As colonial administrative structures became more complex to meet the needs of growing and changing populations, there were opportunities in a very broadly defined **civil service**. Similarly, as financial institutions became larger they produced opportunities for regional and branch managers. And there also emerged a class of liberal professionals**:** lawyers, physicians, notaries, journalists, printers and publishers, surveyors, and engineers.

Together these categories made up an emerging **middle class** that occupied a socioeconomic and cultural space between the old elites of the Loyalist Family Compacts, the military leadership, and the vice-regal governors on the one side, and the agrarian and working classes on the other. Shared values of the middle class included enthusiasm for literacy and schooling, moral advancement, the primacy of the individual as the key unit in society, the growth and spread of institutions, democratic principles, patriarchy, and the separation of public and private spheres.

In some ways, these values mimicked the upper class, but the middle class also believed in social mobility and the fluidity of social structures, a position that Tories detested. For the upper classes, everyone had a more-or-less fixed, assigned role to play in the social order. For the middle classes, education and (adult male) equality were the keys to advancement and a better society as a whole. As one historian writes of the middle class emerging in Halifax in the second quarter of the century, “growing in absolute numbers, increasingly literate, with ever more disposable income and leisure time, members of these strata tended to become, over time, increasingly self-conscious and ambitious.”[7]

6. Robert McIntosh, “Sweated Labour: Female Needleworkers in Industrializing Canada,” in *Age of Transition: Readings in Canadian Social History*, ed. Norman Knowles (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 178-80.

7. David A. Sutherland, “Voluntary Societies and the Process of Middle-Class Formation in Early-Victorian Halifax, Nova Scotia,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 5 (1994): 239.

One example was the Red River patriarch Alexander Ross, who started out as an amateur schoolmaster in Lower Canada, rising through the fur trade to become sheriff of Assiniboia. His son James attended university in Toronto and became a journalist, while another son, William, became a postmaster (a bureaucratic position that only came into existence with the invention of the organized postal system). A contemporary in Prince Edward Island, Edward Jarvis, trained as a lawyer in New Brunswick and London and ascended to the post of chief justice on the island colony. His sons Munson, Henry, and William were destined for careers in law, medicine, and the clergy, respectively.[8]

The British North American middle classes left a definite fingerprint on the mid-19th century. The houses they lived in displayed a scaled-down architecture from those of the elites: they were designed with the nuclear family in mind and included "transition zones" from the public space — the parlour — to the private spaces in the rest of the structure. As one study describes the situation, "Middle-class family life in the Victorian era was characterized by two related developments. The first is generally referred to as the 'domesticization' of the household, a clear separation of work-life and home-life and the withdrawal of the various household members into the privacy of the home, which became the central social unit for 'the transmission of culture, the maintenance of social stability, and the pursuit of happiness.'"[9] The house gave form to the lives of its inhabitants and was both the academy and the factory floor on which girls learned domestic skills. The role of hostess was held by the matriarch until age and/or health compromised her ability to be the public face of the family in the private space of the home. The eldest daughter would then typically step into that position, thus playing a role in the oversight of household accounts, any servants the household might employ (e.g., cooks, nannies, governesses), and entertaining guests. The scale of these duties should not be minimized as they were often physically demanding and usually unceasing. Many young Canadian women could not escape these roles and faced spinsterhood rather than abandon the responsibilities of the patriarch's hearth and home.

**Key Points**

- Old social classes survived into Victorian British North America while entirely new social categories appeared.
- Differences in social class became more widely felt, especially with the middle class and the upper class.
- Sectarian loyalties and rivalries marked life across British North America as did growing anti-clericalism.
- The growing trend toward proletarianization increasingly challenged the position of artisans and craftsmen/women.
- A middle class with common features emerged, and it was increasingly critical of the

8. J.M.Bumsted and Wendy Owen, "The Victorian Family in Canada in Historical Perspective: The Ross Family of Red River and the Jarvis Family of Prince Edward Island," *Manitoba History* 13 (Spring 1987): 12-18.

9. Ibid., 15.

power appropriated by the well-off merchant classes and Loyalist elites.

## Attributions

**Figure 10.8**
Canadian Man and Woman in their Winter Dress (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WinterDressInCanadaBySemproniusStretton.jpg) by Victuallers (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Victuallers) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 10.9**
A French Canadian Lady in her Winter Dress and a Roman Catholic Priest (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Habitants#mediaviewer/File:LAMBERT(1816)_1.401_A_FRENCH_CANADIAN_LADY_IN_HER_WINTER_DRESS_AND_A_ROMAN_CATHOLIC_PRIEST.jpg) by Metilsteiner (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Metilsteiner) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 10.10**
Habitans in their Summer Dress (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Habitants#mediaviewer/File:LAMBERT(1816)_1.217_HABITANS_IN_THEIR_SUMMER_DRESS.jpg) by Metilsteiner (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Metilsteiner) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 10.11**
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**Figure 10.12**
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# 10.7 Gender Roles

Patriarchal authority was the norm in the colonies, less so among some Indigenous communities, but even there missionaries were making changes. Property ownership in Upper Canada and the Atlantic colonies favoured men and, given the link between property ownership and the franchise, it favoured them politically as well.

## Women and Girls

The role of women in the first half of the 19th century was diverse, ranging from life in a religious order to working in a logging camp.

Even though many industries at the time were very male oriented, women helped in woodlot management and harvesting on their family farms. Even in the logging camps, women might find work as cooks, laundresses, and boarding-house keepers. Villages like Bytown (Ottawa), however rowdy and dangerous they were at their worst, contained a substantial female population. Similarly, mining towns were heavily male enclaves but not entirely bereft of women. It was rare to find females working in underground coal mines in British North America, even though in England women laboured in pits until prohibited by law in 1842, and in Belgium for decades after that. Women did, however, find work in haulage and at the pithead; Indigenous women in particular played a role in Vancouver Island's coal industry loading the ore from the minehead in cedar baskets and then down the long hill to the waterfront and onto ships.

In the days before factories, fine work associated with textiles and shoe manufacture was often performed by women. Since most artisanal operations were independent — that is, run by families or small employers — the living and working spaces were often closely connected if not overlapping. The manufacture of wool — carding, spinning, and weaving — was **cottage industry** work in which both men and women participated, but in which women predominated. Likewise the manufacture of dairy products (milk, butter, cheese) was an important component of female farmwork, as was canning preserves. Women made these products not simply for themselves but for sale. Fall fairs presented opportunities for women to show off their products under the scrutiny of their peers; a coveted blue ribbon would mean orders from local grocers and thus were an important source of cash. Because farm produce was often sold under a system of credit, any cash a woman brought in might be a household's chief source of hard currency. The household was, therefore, much more than a place of domesticity: it was a site of production.

There is an interesting parallel to be drawn between the impact the fur trade had on pre-contact Indigenous skillsets and the industrialization of "women's work" in the 19th century. During the fur trade, copper pots made handwoven cedar baskets obsolete; in the era of industrialization, textile mills dealt a fatal blow to **homespun** clothes-making. (Indeed, the term *homespun* changed in meaning from denoting artisanal skill to a derisory adjective meaning unsophisticated and unlovely.) In both cases, manufactured goods were substituted for time-consuming crafts and the one gradually squeezed out the other.

But women's work remained significant to the social economy of early British North America, particularly in farming, logging, and fishing. New farmland in many cases had to be carved out of the forests, so while the men did the hard work of clearing the land, the women tended to the early planting, weeding, and some animal rearing. If logging was lucrative, men might carry on with that seasonally or over a longer term to accumulate money for the farm. The frontier farm women thus perpetuated the near-independence experienced by habitant women married to fur traders in New France: their men were off elsewhere earning money so the farm was the woman's domain. Even after the farms matured into more stable economic propositions, women's work was critical to their success.

Many other women during this time operated boarding houses and laundries. In communities centred on resource-extraction, generally dominated by men, there was high demand for good accommodations, a daily meal or two, and clean clothes. Women who provided these services brought in cash to contribute to the household economy. In **single-industry** and/or **company towns** from Cape Breton to Vancouver Island where workers were paid with scrip or credits to be spent at the **company store**, a woman's income might be critical. Where possible, women opened and operated saloons (perhaps capitalized by their wage-earning husbands) and small stores. Sometimes these were temporary measures, part of a plan calculated to provide an income when the husband could no longer manage heavy work. Amanda (Gough) Norris's experience illustrates a similar cross-generational experience: she was one of the first English immigrants to Vancouver Island in the 1850s and she worked alongside her husband in his print shop until their sons were old enough to take her place.[1]

In other cases, women raised chickens, pigs, and even cows on very small urban properties. Taking in boarders, even in cramped little homes and tenements, was another possibility, one for which women were usually responsible. These were all financial survival strategies that reduced costs and provided hard-to-come-by cash.

As support grew in the early 19th century for formal education, the need arose for teachers. Although the Catholic tradition in French Canada provided generations of educator development, there was nothing in the way of formal training for English-speakers in British North America. Women took on many of the early teaching responsibilities in Upper Canada, most seizing on it as an opportunity to improve their incomes. Teaching typically took place in the teacher's home, although small academies also appeared, especially after 1820. For these "lady teachers," expertise came with experience, although many — perhaps most — never intended to teach for more than a few years until they were married. Widows and lifelong spinsters, to take a different **life-course** view, came to teaching as a survival strategy and a means to attain financial security.

By the 1840s education was becoming more regulated, so the setting of the independent teacher-proprietor working out of her home declined. Female teachers were generally restricted to teaching girls and boys below the age of puberty. Older boys were the responsibility of male teachers. To be clear, however, most boys and girls did not proceed very far in formal education: the advantages of literacy and numeracy were not appreciated by many agricultural and/or industrial families. The emergent middle classes, however, placed a high value on literacy. Their growing wealth made the business of opening a small school a worthwhile venture.

As **ideals of womanhood** changed mid-century, middle-class parents wanted their daughters to be

1. John Douglas Belshaw, *Colonization and Community: The Vancouver Island Coalfield and the Making of the British Columbian Working Class* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2002), 105-107.

educated and provide some “refinement” and a domestic sensibility. Middle-class families demonstrated their success by sending their daughters to school, and girls who turned into literate, organized, respectable young women were more likely to marry good middle-class lads, thereby ensuring the family’s security for another generation. As more girls received this kind of education, demands grew for more specialized skills that moved beyond literacy and behaviour. Musical and artistic education was added to the mix, making daughters even more attractive as prospective brides. An education that extended into the girl’s mid- to late teens might prepare her for a career as a teacher-proprietor.[2]

The Catholic French-Canadian experience offered different opportunities to women. Despite its strict hierarchical structure and gender roles, the Catholic Church nevertheless contained room in which a woman could manoeuvre. Whether it was in health care or education, a number of full-time and lifelong career paths were available to women of all social classes. Almost entirely, these positions involved taking religious orders, vows of celibacy, and possibly poverty as well. Certainly women who “took the veil” gave up much, but they also gained security within the largest corporate organization in the colonies and the possibility of making independent and consequential decisions on a daily basis.[3]

Women also found work on the legal margins of society. The sex trade was alive and well, usually concentrated in brothels somewhere near the docks. Dancehall girls — women who were paid for a dance — blurred the edges between the suggestion and the provision of sex as a business proposition. In gold rush towns of the Cariboo, the acrobatic “hurdy gurdy girls” charged a dollar a dance, which mainly involved being thrown into the air, sometimes upside down. Clearly the prospect of spending time with and being in physical if not sexual contact with a woman had a great appeal to the multitude of men working in resource towns. Dancehall owners exploited this to the point that dance girls were often and very wrongly equated with prostitutes. In Victoria these roles were often filled by Indigenous women, so they faced the double opprobrium of the moral and, inevitably, racial prejudices held by crusading journalists, politicians, and clerics alike.[4]

More generally, the experiences of Indigenous women were different from those of non-Indigenous women. On the West Coast they traditionally worked in food preparation: fishing and hunting was usually done by the men, but the women were responsible for dressing and preparing the food. The skills developed propelled Indigenous women into the multitude of salmon canneries that appeared on the West Coast in the late 19th century.

These women also worked in horticulture and were quick to seize on earning opportunities in the fields of settler-farmers. Indigenous women on the coast had a long-established claim to their earnings, which were not necessarily shared with the men in their lives. As well, child-rearing and care responsibilities were often the lot of “the infirm,” to use one historian’s phrase. This was particularly the case when traditional work became industrialized, such as when Indigenous women (and mothers) worked in

2. Jane Errington, “Ladies and Schoolmistresses: Educating Women in Early Nineteenth-Century Upper Canada,” *Historical Studies in Education* 6, issue 1 (1994): 71-96.

3. Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Québec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: UTP, 1987).

4. Jean Barman, “Aboriginal Women on the Streets of Victoria: Rethinking Transgressive Sexuality during the Colonial Encounter,” in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal Women and Settler Women in Canada’s Colonial Past*, eds. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 205-27.

the canneries.[5] While child-minding might not always be available to non-Indigenous at least it was sometimes enjoyed by First Nations women.

Indeed, the responsibility of reproduction fell to women in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies. In households containing extended families, mothers might receive assistance raising their children; women in nuclear family households fared less well. Daughters were trained into motherhood by taking on responsibilities for younger siblings, which, given the fertility rates of the period, they were likely to have. From the *filles du roi* to Confederation, there were significant social and economic pressures on women to marry and have children. In rural areas, children contributed significantly to the business of farming; primogeniture left a widow vulnerable to the prospect of expulsion from her home, so having children with whom she could live in old age was a practical strategy.

**Historians on Video**

An early centre of Irish immigration in British North America was Newfoundland. There, as historian Willeen Keough (Simon Fraser University) describes in the two videos that follow, economic and social roles were gendered in ways that reflected ethnic divisions in the colony. The transcripts may be found here: transcript for video on gender roles in the 18th and 19th centuries [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_wk_u10_01.pdf) and transcript for video on the historical status of women [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_wk_u10_02.pdf).

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=284#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

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## Men and Boys

In a study of manliness in 19th century Nova Scotia, Janet Guildford identifies three ideals of masculinity. These rose sequentially though they overlapped significantly, existed concurrently, were in conflict with one another, and sometimes even blended together.

The first is the “masculine achiever,” a character who subscribes to the view that by hard work and ambition he would be rewarded with wealth and success. This ideal keeps his feelings to himself for the most part, is driven, and believes very much in the value of individual autonomy. The second is the “Christian gentleman,” a variant that appears around the mid-century and is more likely to display sympathy and even empathy, less likely to measure his manliness by his wealth, and more concerned with proprieties (as he understands them). No less hard working, he is the embodiment of “evangelical Christianity,” a movement that took root after the 1830s across the English-speaking world. Finally,

5. John Lutz, “After the Fur Trade: The Aboriginal Working Class of British Columbia, 1849-1890,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (1992): 69-93.

there is the “masculine primitive,” the muscular and physically powerful male who represents the success of the “race.” It is not a coincidence that the masculine primitive appears around the same time as Darwinian theories about the survival of the fittest.[6]

These were types favoured and promoted and dissected in middle-class literature, in the pulpit, in newspapers, and in theatre. And they had their uses for the emerging colonies. Missionary zeal augmented and tempered mercantile muscle while physical prowess made for a strong militia in a strong empire. While each might critique the weaknesses of the other, they were distinctively 19th century creations. In the dominant heterosexual narrative of the day, each one had to be able to turn his abilities into the sort of earnings that would win him a bride and a family — the twin pillars of Victorian society.

Men often walked away from this domestic ideal. After all, ideals of personal autonomy were not necessarily compatible with the binding role of patriarch. This was part of the appeal of heading off to goldfields and forest frontiers. When the American writer Mark Twain had his character Huck Finn say that he’s going to “light out for the territories,” he was speaking of this chance to escape the grasp of “sivilization” and routine. If one considers a boy being born in the 1820s when the farming and logging frontiers were expanding rapidly, then reaching adulthood in the 1840s and 1850s, by which time towns and cities were growing and opportunities for independent action shrinking, it is easy to imagine him wishing for a life he knew second-hand from his elders. As the number and size of farms available to homestead or to buy in the Canadas and the Maritimes shrank, the western frontier on the Plains became more attractive.

And economic and demographic factors often forced their hand. Opportunities to marry are closely tied to the ratio of men to women: where there is an imbalance (and there was a radically stark imbalance in British Columbia among the newcomer population after 1858, running as high as 200 men to every non-Indigenous woman), lifelong bachelorhood was likely for some. Very local economic conditions also affected men’s options in these years. In Lower Canada in the 1820s, as the availability of new farmland for young families diminished and as prosperity on existing seigneuries slipped, the nuptiality rate dropped as well. If there was a pioneering option nearby, regardless of how poor the soil might be, marriage numbers rebounded. And, perhaps most significantly, if there existed a reliable source of part-time — perhaps seasonal — labour for men, possibly in logging or fishing, then marriage once again became a possibility.[7]

In something like a mirror image of women’s experiences, men were also expected to follow certain gender roles in work and other socioeconomic activities. The commercial seal hunt in Newfoundland and Labrador provides one example. In the 1700s this was an activity that involved both men and women. Seals were hunted near to shore and whole families participated. Then, in the late 18th century, the work became organized on a larger scale. Vessels set out in the spring to hunt seals in more commercially viable numbers, in part because of rising demand for seal oil. At this point, women were excluded from the process and it became “men’s work.” By the middle of the 1800s, according to historian Willeen Keough,

6. Janet Guildford, “Creating the Ideal Man: Middle-Class Women’s Constructions of Masculinity in Nova Scotia, 1840-1880,” in *Age of Transition: Readings in Canadian Social History*, ed. Norman Knowles (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 141-2.

7. Colin M. Coates, *The Metamorphoses of Landscape and Community in Early Québec* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2000), 142.-3.

> the dominant cultural understanding of the seal fishery [was] an exclusively masculine space — where men and boys tested themselves in a harsh, frozen landscape; where cruel sealing masters drove their crews to exhaustion while greedy merchants urged on their fleets with the toast "Bloody decks and a bumper crop"; where countless ships were crushed in the ice and thousands of men lost their lives.

There was a huge appeal, nonetheless, in the machismo, heroic, mythic features of this business, and males young and old competed for a chance to join the fleet.[8] Most importantly, there was money to be made and sealing was as good a way to do so as any along Newfoundland's northeast coast. Being gendered into the role of seal hunter meant, conversely, being gendered out of other possibilities. The individualistic striver, risking life and limb for a good catch so as to cover the family's costs, was never objectively the best of all possible options.

Boys had to make choices from an early age. Apprenticeships, as we have seen, and labouring jobs as well often began by age seven or eight. Boys pursuing a trade were usually "apprenticed out" to another household where they were trained and, for all intents and purposes, raised.

As the overwhelming majority of British North Americans either lived on the land or in fishing villages, the typical boyhood involved hard labour that followed the hours of daylight rather than a clock on the wall. Until the 1870s, working people in towns had only one day of rest a week: Sunday. This left little time to recharge small bodies — which they badly needed, given the beatings regularly administered by overseers in some of the colonies' truly Dickensian workplaces. The physical demands of boyhood were high in this period, possibly higher than they had been at any time before in human history outside of plantation slavery. Formal schooling, moreover, offered little in the way of relief.

## Marriage and Divorce

English common law was used throughout anglophone British North America, although not always uniformly. The Maritime colonies' traditions were heavily influenced by those of New England and New York, from where so many Loyalists had come, whereas Upper Canada tended to follow British traditions. The effect was to produce a patchwork quilt of civil law legislation across British North America, which was reflected in the divorce laws of the day.

Nova Scotia, for example, established parameters for divorce in the late 1750s that were more generous than those in place in English law. Divorce could be pursued because of adultery under both legal realms, but in Nova Scotia wives and husbands could also file for divorce on the basis of impotence, physical abuse, and too close a familial connection (also called "consanguinity"). In New Brunswick "cruelty" was replaced by "frigidity" in 1791 legislation. Prince Edward Island copied the New Brunswick legislation in 1833, making a few changes of its own, including allowing wives to retain a "common law right to a life interest in one-third of the real property at the death of their husband," even after divorce. All of the Atlantic colonies sought to punish "fornication" (heterosexual relations outside of marriage) and adultery. On the whole, they were all relatively even-handed in their treatment of men and women.

Upper Canada followed a path more consistent with English law, which made divorce a matter for Parliament itself to decide on a case-by-case basis; for all intents and purposes, divorce was an

8. Willeen Keough, "(Re-)telling Newfoundland Sealing Masculinity: Narrative and Counter-Narrative," *Journal of the CHA 2010 Revue de la SHC*, New Series 21, no.1 (2010): 133-4.

impossibility in Upper Canada. In Lower Canada the hostility of the Catholic clergy to the concept of divorce was seemingly unchanged from the pre-Conquest era; it was simply illegal and immoral. It was possible after 1839 to dissolve individual marriages in Lower Canada by statute, which drew the two Canadas closer together in practice.

In 1857 Parliament in London introduced the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act, and the colonies of British North America spent some of the next 20 years struggling with how they might conform to this single model. It proved impossible and, although Canada West finally allowed for the possibility of divorce, it was even more cumbersome than was the case in Britain. The British legislation, moreover, introduced the "notorious double standard for cause," which made it so much easier for husbands to secure relief from an adulterous wife than vice versa.[9] Long after Confederation the responsibility for divorce remained a provincial matter and an artifact of the distinctive experiences of the individual colonies.[10]

**Key Points**

- Notwithstanding the core patriarchal values of the era, mid-19th century women played important economic roles.
- Changes in the production of food and cloth impacted women by reducing the value of their domestic output. Some women turned instead to providing services like lodging, meals, or laundry.
- The roles of men and boys were equally gendered and the expectation was every bit as great that they would marry and produce other colonists.

**Video Attributions**

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9. Wendy Owen and J.M. Bumsted, "Divorce in a Small Province: A History of Divorce on Prince Edward Island from 1833," *Acadiensis* XX, no.2 (Spring 1991): 86-94.

10. Roderick Phillips, *Untying the Knot: A Short History of Divorce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 136-9).

# 10.8 Race and Racism

Ethnicity became a common dividing line in British North American society in the mid-19th century. This was associated most acutely with the Irish immigrants, who were viewed by established settlers as competing for jobs, compromised by cholera, heavily addicted to alcohol, inclined to brawling, and mostly Catholic. Take out the specifics and one has the outlines of **nativist** responses to newcomers for generations: economic threat, health threat, moral threat, physical threat, and spiritual threat. Nativists — that is, British North Americans whose claim to precedence might go back generations or only a matter of years — repeatedly stirred up panic about new immigrants, most of whom were unskilled and badly connected to the local society.

Of course the living conditions and hygiene were poor (although hardly different from the rest of the working population), but all of these prejudices combined to keep newcomers in generations of poverty. In Saint John, New Brunswick, in the late 1840s, this situation provoked violence when Catholic Irish descended on the town, fleeing poverty during the Great Famine. The **Orange Order**, a local branch of an international organization that fought Catholicism in Europe (but especially in the largely Protestant counties of northern Ireland), spoke for nativist interests by trying to drive out Irish immigrants.[1]

Similar confrontations occurred along the Ottawa Valley, where the Irish Catholics turned on the host society. In a running battle that lasted from 1835 to 1845, Irish Catholic logging camp workers were incited by one employer, Peter Aylen (1799-1868), to attack Canadien loggers and logging operations. Using violence as a tactic to gain advantage, Aylen and the Irish asserted their authority over the whole of Bytown in what was known as the Shiners' War. The reign of terror lasted only two years, but the violence took another eight years to end.[2]

Ethnic bias could be found in other circumstances, too. Certainly Canadiens often found themselves at the sharp end of prejudice in English Canada. This played out in any number of venues, not the least of which was the legislature of the united colony of Canada after 1841. Acadians, too, faced anglophone hostility in the Atlantic colonies. The Jewish population of Lower Canada faced a kind of double discrimination as British law forbade their entering political life unless they took an oath to the Christian god, and the Catholic church was actively hostile. Ezekial Hart's case illustrates the situation. A seigneur at Trois-Rivieres, Hart and his family were active in the fur trade and local life for many years before he was elected to the Lower Canada assembly in 1807. He was repeatedly blocked in his attempt to take his seat because of the aforementioned oath. Among those opposed to his presence in the assembly was a young Louis-Joseph Papineau. Hart left politics but embarrassed his opponents by serving as a lieutenant at the Battle of Chateauguay in 1813. Twenty years later Papineau, as Speaker of the Assembly, would demonstrate a change of attitude toward Hart and championed an Emancipation Act (1832), the first of

1. Scott W. See, "The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Saint John," *Acadiensis* 13, issue 1 (Autumn 1983): 68-92.

2. David Lee, *Lumber Kings & Shantymen: Logging and Lumbering in the Ottawa Valley* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 2006), 157-196.

its kind in the British Empire. This Act expanded Jewish rights significantly, though it did not by any means put an end to anti-Semitism.

There is a line between ethnic, sectarian, and racial division that is often unclear. Were Franco-Catholics targeted by Anglo-Protestants because of language, culture, or creed?[3] Or a combination of all three? Certainly Lord Durham claimed that he found "two nations warring in the bosom of a single state," a phrase that has long outlived the man but which complicated the discussion by juxtaposing "nation" and "state." For people like Durham, nation equated with race and state with an administrative unit. "Nations," in Durham's time were identifiable peoples with distinctive cultural qualities and beliefs and inclinations, not a great leap from the essentials of "race." Durham's use of the terms "nation" and "state" reflects the rise in his lifetime of the idea of the "nation state," a political and geographic unit that supersedes the old absolutist arrangements that might have Bourbon monarchs ruling over disparate parts of Europe.

The values associated with these terms changed dramatically in the next century. Between 1800 and Confederation, attitudes about the inferiority of certain "races" became popular, even among scholars. What became known as **scientific racism** postulated measurable differences in intelligence, barbarity, and morality (although spirituality had by this time slipped off the agenda). It also argued that the more numerous and less valuable "races" needed managing by superior peoples, lest their near-subhuman characteristics spread across continents and undermine civilization itself. In this respect, "racism" is not merely a set of discriminatory attitudes or a belief in the inferiority of certain identifiable groups of humans: it is a call to action, to resist at every turn the possibility of inferior people destroying the accomplishments of superior people.

This attitude prevailed at the time for a number reasons. First, it was the age of Britain's Second Empire. Expansion into Africa and Asia was helped along by a theory of the human race that legitimized conquest and subjugation. Just as Europeans in the 15th and 16th centuries were armed with their Christian beliefs to strengthen their assault on people in the Americas, the British, French, German, Belgian, Dutch, and American expeditions abroad in the 19th century used racism. Second, the Darwinian theory of natural selection that explained the diversity of species within a population was misapplied to humans — using skin pigment, physique, and place of origin to establish a hierarchy of humanity among human races. Dislike of foreigners — xenophobia — was given a scientific veneer, whether that was Darwin's intention or not. And, of course Darwin was not the only celebrity scientist of his age whose ideas were brought to bear on the issue.

While racism was used in New Brunswick and elsewhere to lend legitimacy to attacks on Irish immigrants, it flourished most fully on the West Coast. In retrospect, the era of the HBC monopoly looks like an age of tolerance and mutual respect (although geographers like Cole Harris have characterized it as one of brutality and efforts at subjugation of employees and Indigenous peoples alike by HBC traders).[4] Beginning in the 1840s and the start of colonization, White attitudes toward other peoples in the region started to shift. At first the prejudices that emerged had much more to do with religion

3. This was never a one-way street. In 1853 Catholic crowds in Montreal responded to the visit of a prominent anti-Catholic speaker with violent protest. See Dan Horner, "'Shame upon you as men!': Contesting Authority in the Aftermath of Montreal's Gavazzi Riot," *histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 44, no.1 (2011): 29-52.

4. Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 31-67.

and spiritual issues. Missionaries who arrived in those years were quick to point out the heathen state of the locals, but they were also in conflict with one another. Oblate (Catholic) missions were among the earliest, arriving from the Oregon Territory at mid-century and extending to the central coast and the Cariboo Plateau before 1870. The Anglicans were an established presence under the HBC and the Crown colony regime. Other Protestant denominations showed up along with the gold rush, so that by 1860 in Victoria there were Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians. The plurality of sects had the effect of sapping any one faith of sufficient adherents to become the leading church in the new colonies. By the 1860s this situation produced a political compromise in which secularism and non-denominationalism in education and other activities guided the thinking of government officials.

The gold rush itself, however, produced a distinctive human landscape. The arrival of many Chinese miners, along with smaller numbers of people from other parts of Asia, significant numbers of African Americans, Mexicans, and others elevated the issue of race locally. Arriving in the colonies from San Francisco, the original Chinese were followed by immigrants from Guangzhou (a.k.a. Canton) and Taishan counties. Initially Vancouver Island and British Columbia (united in 1866) were inclusive in their democratic institutions. By the 1870s, however, almost all non-Whites had lost the right to vote. As well, Chinese settlers were discouraged from owning property or residing outside of demarcated quarters known as **Chinatown**.

The Chinese immigrants were overwhelmingly male and motivated to make money in a hurry and return to China. Discrimination and hostility impeded some of their efforts, although Chinese miners left a distinctive mark on the gold rush landscape. Thoroughly washing off every rock they lifted from the gold-bearing streams, they stacked them in huge piles along the riverbanks; evidence of this practice may be seen in many old gold rush towns. The Chinese needed to be meticulous because they were regularly challenged over their claims. Numbers came to matter in the goldfield, however, and roughly half of the population of Barkerville at its height was Chinese. Some of this population, particularly the Taishan immigrants, would make their way to Nanaimo and Wellington on Vancouver Island where they would later find work in the coal mines.

Racism was articulated within the context of a discourse tied to evolutionary theory, but it had a longer pedigree. African slavery did not require 19th century science to produce laws and behaviours that spoke to ideas like superiority and inferiority. Imperialism had, for more than two centuries, reinforced those ideas as was clear from the marginalization of African Nova Scotians on poorer land or in underserviced urban enclaves.[5] However, the mid-19th century iteration of racism was different in that it became a generalized way of looking at the world. The age of steam power had something to do with this: more peoples were crossing paths with one another than had been the case in the past. Asia, too, was breaking out of its long, self-imposed isolation. The distinctions were sometimes subtle.

There were important contradictions here as in all social relations. At the very moment that racism was on the rise, the anti-slavery movement was as well. At the same instant that British North American middle classes were agitated over the future of the British "race," they were condemning slavery in the United States, backing the Underground Railroad, and in some cases publicly endorsing African Canadian involvement in the body politic. The career of Mary Ann Shadd (1823-1893) offers an example. She and her brother fled the United States after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law (1850),

5. John Zucchi, *A History of Ethnic Enclaves in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association Booklet no. 31, 2007), 3.

taking up residence in Windsor, Canada West. There she published *The Provincial Freeman* and built a base of support for racial integration and the exodus of African Americans to Canada and Vancouver Island. In the West Coast colony, some of these immigrants formed the all-Black Victoria Pioneer Rifle Corps, and one of their number (Mifflin Wistar Gibbs, 1823-1915) became a highly influential merchant and political broker in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Gibbs's counting house, however, was only a few metres away from Victoria's Chinatown and a stone's throw from the Songhees reserve, neither of whose occupants were invited to participate in the new democratic civilization.

One place in British North America where the nuances and contradictions of racism could be seen — and mattered greatly — was in relations between the expanding settler communities and Indigenous communities. This theme is pursued in Chapters 11 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-13/#chapter11) and Chapter 13 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/12-1-introduction/#chapter13).

**Key Points**

- Ethnic and sectarian intolerance divided many communities in Upper Canada and the Maritimes following the arrival of Irish immigrants.
- Religious intolerance was widespread.
- British North Americans invoked the language of race to disadvantage minority groups and Indigenous peoples.
- The diversity of the immigrant community continued to expand through the 19th century provoking further instances of systemic and formalized racism.
- At the same time, there were strange contradictions, the most outstanding being White British North American attitudes toward African Americans, which were generally much more tolerant than for any other group.

# 10.9 Education

Formal education has a complicated history in Canada. Loyalists and other American immigrants brought with them a stronger tradition of education than what existed in New France (outside of the main towns), which much of British North America inherited. This was evident in the West during the first two decades of the 19th century when the HBC established schools at Red River for the mixed-blood offspring of its employees and when North West Company men lobbied for a school at Fort William or Rainy Lake for the education of their métis children. A basic education was regarded by these men as a critical and fair demand; they valued fundamental reading and writing skills in particular.[1]

## Parochial, Private, Public

In contrast, illiteracy was the norm in rural Lower Canada. Many Canadiens saw little value in formal education. Farm life was trying, subsistence farming even more so, and all hands were required to work. Even children worked at farm labour from a very young age.

In 1846 the united Province of Canada passed the Common School Act, which took education out of private hands for the most part, but the legislation had little impact in smaller, poorer districts. The law called for a tax assessment on residents to cover school construction, and the execution of the policy was to be guided by locally elected school commissioners. Poor farmers greeted the new levy with resentment and the commissions attracted the few literate residents in a community, individuals who weren't always typical of the larger population. Suspicion of education as a tool for assimilation of French speakers by the dominant English regime was rampant (and, in Lower Canada in the aftermath of the Durham Report, that was a reasonable response).[2]

In the growing towns of the Canadas, formal education remained something only a minority enjoyed at mid-century. In Hamilton, for example, it is estimated that barely half the population between the ages of 5 and 16 attended school. The share only crept above 40% between the ages of 7 and 13.[3] Education could, of course, be delivered by private tutors in the homes of the better-off citizens, and being schooled abroad was an option for the children of the elites. Throughout the 19th century, the children of the more senior HBC traders and their Indigenous wives were often sent to Britain for their education.

## Educational Reform

The rise of widespread, publicly supported schooling in mid-century was one more expression of a growing democratic sentiment, one that linked education to individual accomplishment and social

1. Jennifer S.H. Brown, "Children of the Early Fur Trades," in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 57.

2. Cole Harris, "Of Poverty and Helplessness in Petite-Nation," *Canadian Historical Review* 52, issue 1 (March 1971): 23-50.

3. Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 38.

improvement. A better educated society was better equipped to handle democratic responsibilities and promised to be more economically dynamic. As well, it was believed that schooling could address in some measure the perceived problems associated with unemployed, disruptive, perhaps criminal, and possibly pauper children on the streets of the growing towns and cities. In the same way, too, public schooling was wielded as a weapon against social disorder that might follow in the wake of immigration. These motivations reflect a particular urban, Anglo-Saxon, and moralistic perspective on both childhood and Irish immigration.

Not everyone subscribed to the view that either concern was significant, but enough did together that they shaped the language and legislation around schools.[4] That said, what education most boys in British North America received prior to mid-century was informal and limited. "Sunday schools" became highly popular in England in the 18th century and soon spread to British North America: these were the only educational venues many boys and girls would ever see, despite the changing views in support of formal learning.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/NormalSchoolGould.jpg)

*Figure 10.15 Toronto Normal School, c. 1856.*

In the 1840s growing interest in a common project of secular education raised questions about teacher training. **Normal schools** began to appear across the colonies and the colonial administrations began to take an active role in developing curriculum and education systems. This process should be viewed in the context of the broader ethos of reform as it was emerging in the mid-century. As we shall see in Chapter 11 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-13/#chapter11), reform took a particular shape when it came to formal politics, but more generally it called for the betterment of a broader slice of society. Old social relations were being tested. Demands were rising for greater opportunities to improve those things thought to be essential to personal achievement. Education certainly fell into this category. But, as historian and social scientist Bruce Curtis has indicated, it was a potentially divisive if not explosive issue:

> Educational reform … was inextricably connected to questions of the form of the colonial state. All the fundamental questions concerning educational organization — who needed to be taught, who could educate

4. Chad Gaffield, "Children, Schooling, and Family Reproduction in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," *Canadian Historical Review* 72, no.2 (June 1991): 157-191.

> them, what they needed to know, how they should learn it, who should pay for it — these and other questions were answered only by answering at the same time questions concerning the state: who would rule, how, of what would rule consist, how would it be financed. The struggle over education was at once a struggle over political rule.[5]

Tories, of course, wanted an education system that taught deference and loyalty. Reformers preferred a locally controlled model headed by school trustees elected by parents, and it was this model that succeeded and thrived across British North America. Its purposes were different from colony to colony, but at its heart it sought to create a commonality of experience and thus a citizenship. As Curtis points out, this kind of policy-making wasn't imposed on the public: it "constructed a public." It had a strong moral undercurrent that resonated with Protestants, elements of deference to authority that appealed to Tories, and a step toward universality that spoke to Reformers. The state, as Curtis indicates, was in the process of making civil society.

## Colleges and Universities

**Higher education** expanded dramatically in these years. Before 1818 there existed, in addition to the Séminaire de Québec (later Laval University), only the University of New Brunswick and King's College (established first in Windsor, Nova Scotia, and then moved to Halifax). Over the next 40 years, several more institutions were established, of which nine were full universities from the start. Nearly all of them were initially associated with a single denomination:

- Catholic: Laval, St. Mary's, Ottawa, Saint Francis Xavier, Windsor College (much later the University of Windsor), and Collège de Saint-Boniface (very recently renamed the Université de Saint-Boniface)
- Church of England: King's College (in Halifax), UNB, King's College (later the University of Toronto), and Bishop's University
- Baptist: Acadia
- Methodist: Mount Allison
- Presbyterian: Queen's

Only two universities in this period, McGill and Dalhousie, were non-sectarian or non-denominational, although in the case of McGill, an English-language institution in a largely francophone city, "non-denominational" may be read as "Protestant." Half of this list comes from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where denominationalism was a powerful force in the 19th century, one that had a significant claim on a person's identity and opportunities.

5. Bruce Curtis, "Preconditions of the Canadian State: Educational Reform and the Construction of a Public in Upper Canada, 1837-1846," in *Age of Transition: Readings in Canadian Social History, 1800-1900*, ed. Norman Knowles (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 246.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/McGill_College_Sherbrooke_Street_Montreal_QC_about_1859.jpg)

*Figure 10.16 McGill College, Montreal, c. 1859.*

These early universities emphasized the liberal arts and theology as fields of study. Mathematics was a speciality at the Séminaire de Québec from the days of New France. Some, including Queen's and Dalhousie, modelled themselves on the Scottish universities where sciences were a key part of the curriculum. However tolerant they might be in terms of denominationalism, the Protestant universities in particular were finishing schools for the colonial elite. These were not institutions designed to advance the opportunities of the common man and particularly not the common woman. The Catholic institutions were, of course, training centres that prepared seminarians for careers in the Catholic establishment: clerics, nuns, social workers, and teachers alike all came out of the Séminaire de Québec, for example.

**Key Points**

- Formal education was transitioning in the mid-19th century from being run by the clergy or offered privately by untrained women or men to being increasingly standardized and professionalized.
- Educational reforms reflected changing social values, which included growing support for widespread literacy.

## Attributions

**Figure 10.15**
Normal School on Gould Street (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NormalSchoolGould.jpg) by Finavon (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Finavon) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 10.16**
McGill College, Sherbrooke Street, Montreal, QC, about 1859 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:McGill_College,_Sherbrooke_Street,_Montreal,_QC,_about_1859.jpg) by Jeangagnon (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Jeangagnon) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

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# 10.10 Leisure and Recreation

One social historian, Bonnie Huskins, has shown how public feasts became opportunities to link the middle-class element with a larger world while, at the same time, instructing citizens in the rules of good behaviour. After the French Revolution and the dispersal to other capitals of Parisian chefs, cuisine became a novel matter. The upper classes promoted its diffusion but it was really the middle classes, with their dense networks between cities in North America and Europe, who were best positioned to adopt and promote the styles associated with high-style feasting. Multi-course meals, the paring of wines with meats and fish, and even the banqueting halls themselves — not to mention the embryonic beginnings of something truly new, the restaurant — were standard features, and they were reproduced faithfully from one city to the next. A banquet of community leaders in Saint John was purposely as similar to one in Toronto or Bristol as possible so as to demonstrate a belonging to the Victorian bourgeoisie.[1] Conformity was a good thing.

The notion of **leisure time** took on new meaning in the 19th century. "Old money" — the wealth that used to be the monopoly of the very powerful — always enjoyed leisure, but the people of the cities and towns and farms expected very little leisure time. The middle classes experienced increased leisure first, as they found themselves in a position to hire others to do tasks that freed them up to indulge in interests outside of work.

## A Night at the Opera

Middle-class British North America was, in some regards, an extension of new middle-class values spiralling outward from Europe from the late 18th century on. One can chart, for example, the spread of opera houses around the Atlantic rim in these years as an indicator of how **high culture** or **high style** was emerging from palaces and manor houses and into public facilities (usually operated with a profit in mind). Theatres and music halls are further examples of this expression of bourgeois values.

These venues provided opportunities to people to show off their disposable wealth and the availability of leisure time; they were also a way to promote civic and cultural values. Halifax's two Grand Theatres first appeared in the 1780s and were known for their productions of West End farces from London, only tending toward more serious stuff 50 years later. In 1825 a grocer and a merchant in Montreal convinced John Molson to join them in building the city's first theatre, the Theatre Royal, where Shakespearean drama predominated.[2]

Similarly, public museums began to appear. Abraham Gesner (a physician, geologist, New Brunswick's first provincial geologist, and the inventor of kerosene) established the Museum of Natural History, now the New Brunswick Museum, in Saint John in 1842. It was, significantly, part of the **Mechanics'**

1. Bonnie Huskins, "From *Haute Cuisine* to Ox Roasts: Public Feasting and the Negotiation of Class in Mid-19th-Century Saint John and Halifax," *Labour/Le Travail* 37 (Spring 1997): 9-36.

2. Owen Klein, "The Opening of Montreal's Theatre Royal, 1825," *Theatre Research in Canada/Recherches Théâtrales au Canada* I, issue 1 (Spring 1980). http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/tric/article/view/7539/8598

**Institute** building, a landmark in most British North American towns of any size, one dedicated to the educational uplift of skilled working men.[3]



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Theatre_Royal_Montreal_1825.jpg)

*Figure 10.17 Molson's Theatre Royal in Montreal, c. 1825.*

## A Day at the Races

Working class or proletarian tastes were different. While the middle and upper classes frequented classical theatres and parlour performances of music, those who were poorer were drawn to circuses, competitions featuring feats of strength, and races between humans, animals, and boats. Gambling was widespread and gained popularity through the century both as a kind of skill but also as a means of improving one's financial situation in an instant. Rural people in particular competed with and through their livestock and pets for reputation and money: everything from horse races to cockfights, dogfights, and bear-baiting endured in the countryside and even in some lower-class urban saloons.

Two features united these working-class leisure activities and the historical processes working on them. First, they were principally about individual skills, abilities, or fortune. They were not team sports, which was a style of recreation that was introduced with vigour in the 1870s and 1880s by middle-class reformers disturbed by working-class and agrarian pastimes. Second, industrial capitalism reduced the time available for leisure activities from 1818 on. The post-Confederation battle to reduce the length of the work day in industrial settings — the nine-hour day movement — arose because employers in the early decades of the century felt entitled to keep people at work for as much as 14 hours a day for six days a week. Leisure time, in this context, was often regarded by employers and the middle classes as subversive. Its visibility receded to the physical margins of towns and cities, out of sight and out of mind. When it reappeared in town settings, it became heavily critiqued and policed and in some instances banned.[4] This was nowhere more clear than in the regulation of drinking and gambling.

3. *New Brunswick Museum*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Brunswick_Museum

4. Alan Metcalfe, "Leisure, Sport and Working-Class Culture: Some Insights from Montreal and the Northeast Coalfields of England," in *Leisure, Sport and Working Class Cultures: Theory and History* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1988), 70-1.

**Public houses,** or **pubs,** were an important part of town life from the 18th century but as evangelical Christianity gained more strength, drinking establishments fell afoul of emerging ideas of respectability. From the mid-19th century, pubs became increasingly a working-class or plebeian phenomenon. They also had an important role to play for travellers as these were among the first hotels in British North America. The "Mile Houses" of the Cariboo Wagon Road in British Columbia that ran from the Fraser Canyon to the goldfields were hotels and "watering holes," as were the great many inns along the main roads of the older colonies.

The battle against drink itself became an important leisure time activity in the 19th century. **Temperance movements** appeared throughout British North American but rose first in the Maritimes. Amherst, Nova Scotia, contends for the title of cradle of temperance, because its Baptist congregation took up the cause as early as 1829. The appeal of temperance resided in the opportunities it presented for civic engagement by people often on the margin (like members of minority sects), a chance to criticize the moral laxity of the snobbish wealthy (who were both hefty consumers and commercial producers of liquor), and an opening for Christian proselytizing of Indigenous peoples, the poor, and working men and women.

The popularity of drinking in some communities could be explained in its own right by the appalling state of water supplies. As suspicion of foul water as a source of disease spread so did preference for beer and liquors. Temperance was also a kind of self-policing in the absence of anything like a police force. If drinking lay behind domestic and public violence, vandalism, and disorder, and if there was no one to round up the drunks, then persuading people to give up drink seemed like a good strategy.[5]



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/CurlingonDonRiver.jpg)

*Figure 10.18 Curling on the Don River in Toronto, 19th century. Painting by John G. Howard.*

## The Sporting Life

Organized sports was another expression of leisure in the 19th century, although most of the organized sports familiar to us now appeared after Confederation. The wilderness sports (canoeing, snowshoeing),

5. C. Mark Davis, "Small Town Reformism: The Temperance Issue in Amherst, Nova Scotia," in *People and Place: Studies of Small Town Life in the Maritimes*, ed. Larry McCann (Sackville: Acadiensis Press, 1987), 125-8.

the more bucolic sports (curling, horse racing), and some inherited British sports (cricket, some of the Highland sports), and one sport readily associated with Indigenous people (lacrosse) dominated. Wrestling and other forms of hand-to-hand battle were also popular. Logging camps, of course, begat logging competitions. Any structured, spectator-oriented event was typically also a drinking and gambling event. If a fight or foot race was staged, it would draw a crowd for miles and a substantial purse, perhaps as much as a week's wages. Less-structured pastimes included fishing and hunting, recreational activities that doubled as a source of food and perhaps income. In colonial society women were discouraged from participating in many of these activities; mid-century organized sports in particular were male-only propositions. Women's presence as spectators at competitions was criticized by middle-class reformers who regarded the ubiquity of gambling as corrosive to morality generally.

Class and ethnic divisions were also apparent. For example, the Montreal Curling Club was established in 1807 by and for the local Scots, and membership fees and vetting ensured the club remained exclusive. Efforts were made, as well, to make organized tournaments like horse racing a private and better-class affair but, as one historian notes wryly, "attempts to enclose race courses had only mixed results since the working class was as capable of climbing as it was of drinking."[6] Racial as well as class boundaries were patrolled by the organizers of sporting and recreational events. Afro-British North Americans faced a "colour line" in a variety of sports: in 1835 a Niagara horse racing club specified that "no Black shall be permitted to ride on any pretext whatsoever." Historian Frank Cosentino points out that there are different ways of reading that prohibition as it could have arisen from a broad racist prejudice, or it could have been aimed at one particularly good rider; likewise it might have stemmed from a class prejudice, as all African Canadian riders would have been drawn from a working or servant (or even former slave) class and would therefore have been unwelcome in a race made up of "gentlemen" and their grooms. Attempts to bar William Berry (a.k.a. Bob, Black Bob, "the coloured giant") from rowing competitions in 1860s Toronto seems to have stemmed more from his social class (which, of course, was informed by race) than by his skin pigment.[7]

There were other instances in which sport worked as an expression of racial and imperial values. The development of lacrosse in mid-century is an example. The modern game was appropriated from Indigenous traditions by the non-Indigenous community and modified significantly. The Montreal Olympic Club — a gentlemen's recreational association — began promoting the newly structured game in 1844. The Montreal Lacrosse Club was established in 1856 and produced the first set of written rules of the game a decade later. These all-White, all-male, all-gentlemen's clubs and teams would, from time to time, play against Iroquois teams from Kahnawake and Akwasasne — and typically lose. However, Victorian society took poorly to the idea of White gentlemen failing to overcome Indigenous teams, so the results were sometimes fiddled to the disadvantage of the more skilled Indigenous sides.[8]

6. Frank Cosentino, *Afros, Aboriginals and Amateur Sport in Pre World War One Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association Booklet no.26, 1998), 3-4.

7. Ibid., 6-7.

8. Ibid., 15.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Montreal_Lacrosse_Club_1867.jpg)

*Figure 10.19 The Montreal Lacrosse Club in 1867, made up entirely of non-working-class men whose wealth afforded them the privilege of play.*

## Recreational Travel

Tourism as a popular recreational activity developed in the 1820s, principally at Niagara Falls. The early canals and railways made it possible for large numbers of people to make their way to either the American or the Canadian side of the Falls. Beginning in the 1820s, daredevils made an appearance and by the 1830s whole ships were sent over the edge of the falls and smashed to pieces on the rocks below to entertain large crowds. In some instances animals — some local and domestic, others exotic — crammed these doomed vessels, a feature that somehow made the spectacle more exciting.

## Social Life

The rise of cities and towns made it possible for people to come together behind common causes and interests. In the larger cities, men mimicked their British and American counterparts by establishing **gentlemen's clubs,** which were usually housed in elegant buildings near the centre of the business district. Membership was exclusive and selective. The Beaver Club in Montreal was the gathering place of leading figures in the post-Conquest fur trade who wanted to socialize, dine, and conduct business. The Toronto Club was established 50 years later, in 1837, as the commercial capital of Upper Canada began to consolidate its power, and the Halifax Club was established in 1862 in a grand building a block from the waterfront.

If gentlemen's clubs were bastions of patriarchal upper-class maleness, other **voluntary associations** were far less so. The first half of the century saw the spread of Mechanics' Institutes: centres for adult literacy education, debate, and access to reading materials. Many of these subsequently became British North America's earliest public libraries. They were established in the major centres of the eastern colonies, and they even appeared across British Columbia in the 1860s. Generally the objective of the Mechanics' Institutes was to "ensure that men's leisure hours were spent in sober self-improvement rather than 'the morbid attractions of billiard tables, and saloons.'"[9] In some communities, Halifax for example, the Mechanics' Institute "welcomed anyone, male or female, who could pay an annual membership fee of 10 [shillings]."[10]

Other voluntary associations vied for popularity. **Freemasonry** (a.k.a. the Masonic Lodge) had deep roots in North America and attracted, by the early 19th century, a constituency that was more professional than skilled labour. Other similarly semi-secret **benevolent societies** also gained ground: the **Oddfellows** and **Foresters** grew in popularity from mid-century. According to one source, "more than one-third of the Orange Lodges that existed in the 19th century were established during the 1850s, when approximately 550 were formed."[11] Given the population of British North America at the time, it is likely that there wasn't a town with more than 1,000 people in it that didn't include an Orange Lodge and other societies as well.

Part of the popularity of these organizations lay in the rapid rate of urban growth at mid-century: so many people were newcomers and strangers that voluntary associations offered a ready-made community. They also offered links across the country. When George Walkem (1834-1908), a future premier of British Columbia, first arrived from the east in Kamloops, he walked straight from the train station to the Masonic Lodge. There he found connections who could help him find lodgings and work. Walkem wasn't the only Mason who would parlay his association life into political success. Alexander Keith (1795-1873), the Nova Scotian brewer, rose to the rank of Grand Master of Halifax Freemasonry, a position that put him at the head of parades, in front of crowds, and made him a spokesman for his brethren in the temple.[12] Even if the Masons did not conspire to promote Keith politically, his connections across the whole of middle-class Halifax via the Lodge put him in a good position: only property owners could vote and that constituency was the same as the Masons.

A further advantage of being attached to a social group was financial: many of the benevolent societies maintained cooperative insurance funds that covered the cost of funerals, widows' pensions, and the like. Of course one key attraction was simply the opportunity to socialize with other men in a convivial environment.

Most of these associations were open to men only. Their position on the spectrum of class awareness is more complex. Some nurtured — intentionally or otherwise — a growing consciousness among workers

9. Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia* (Toronto: UTP, 2001), 64.

10. David A. Sutherland, "Voluntary Societies and the Process of Middle-Class Formation in Early-Victorian Halifax, Nova Scotia," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 5 (1994): 241-2.

11. Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991*, 2nd edition (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992), 95-7.

12. David A. Sutherland, "Voluntary Societies and the Process of Middle-Class Formation in Early-Victorian Halifax, Nova Scotia," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 5 (1994): 245.

that their interests were not always aligned with those of their employers. The men's groups were also critical in the development of a sense of **respectability** as part of a civic-minded men's organization, a trend that impacted mid- and late-19th century ideals of masculinity. Most were self-consciously Christian and, at the same time, mostly anti-clerical. The Masons were, for this reason, a target of the Lower Canadian Catholic clergy's criticisms through the 19th century. The Orange Lodge, of course, was based on a strident anti-Catholicism that was the enmity of the Catholic clergy. Some of the values of these organizations eventually migrated to the embryonic labour associations of the era.

Artisans had long organized in **guilds**, some of which dated back to the Middle Ages, and these served as social supports as well. The tradition of the guild travelled to the European settlements across the Americas, but faced challenges in the 19th century with the beginnings of industrialization. Nevertheless, some guilds enjoyed boom times. Urban population and commercial growth fed the construction trades, especially carpenters whose services were in such high demand that planing and moulding mills sprang up to prefabricate some of what carpenters had been doing by hand.

As cities grew more densely packed, moreover, the risk of fire expanded. This was addressed by civic ordinances calling for more stone and brick construction. Effectively, the carpenters' success was their undoing, but stonemasons and bricklayers saw their numbers increase dramatically. In Halifax, for example, the number of carpenters quadrupled from a little over a hundred in 1838 to 408 in 1861; in the same years, the number of stonemasons grew from 50 to 223.[13] Organizations that advocated for the stonemasons kept pace.

Women's associations tell a somewhat different story. In the absence of professional and public roles for women in the early 19th century cities and towns, there was little demand for associations that promoted and nurtured women's enterprise. Women's public engagement in voluntary associations was, therefore, frequently aligned with community and self-betterment and generally in a Protestant context. The temperance movement, already mentioned, provided an important early outlet for middle-class women's public spirit. In 1844, Halifax was home to a Female Temperance and Benevolent Society. Organizations like this one were pivotal in developing a civic sensibility.

Just as the men's associations welded mutual interest and urban respectability, the women's organizations (small though they were in number) were an opportunity to promote women's roles as nurturers within a patriarchal context and to do so within the relatively new context of city dwelling. These early female associations would bloom into more politically focused movements after Confederation.

**Key Points**

- The wealth of the merchant elite and the urban middle-classes supported the creation of cultural institutions like theatres and museums.

13. Susan Buggey, "Building Halifax, 1841-1871," *Acadiensis* X, issue 1 (Autumn 1980): 102-3.

- Plebian recreations like drinking and gambling fit within the context of limited leisure time and attracted criticism from other social classes.
- Associations and clubs were important agencies of social welfare, sites of networking, and instruments of political engagement.

## Attributions

**Figure 10.17**
Theatre Royal Montreal 1825 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Theatre_Royal_Montreal_1825.jpg) by Jeangagnon (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Jeangagnon) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 10.18**
Curling on the Don River (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CurlingonDonRiver.jpg) by Skeezix1000 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Skeezix1000) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 10.19**
Montreal Lacrosse Club 1867 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Montreal_Lacrosse_Club_1867.jpg) by Jeangagnon (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Jeangagnon) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 10.11 Summary

In 1815 the agricultural economy in British North America was just beginning to take off. The colonies had had a good war, on the whole. The Napoleonic years had, too, confirmed the primacy of the Tory oligarchies in each colony. While some of the old guard had been born into or fallen into their privileged positions, some — particularly the merchants and traders involved with the NWC and the HBC — had got there by hard graft and dangerous labour. Their sense of entitlement and the rightness of their leadership was palpable. And they felt threatened: the tide of history was against them (as seen in one revolution after the next), America was clearly a menace, and in Lower Canada there was always the French majority to fear. The Anglo elite sought to create social orders that would ease their concerns and enable their expansion.

By 1860 the Georgian Tory towns had been replaced (and in one important case, renamed). The urbanization of North America was still only in its early years but the rise of the city and town was underway. Middle-class men and women were beginning to impose their values and visions on the country from their seats in the media-rich port towns along the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence, around the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and in Victoria, and New Westminster.

Even as this class of Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists was finding its voice, another population was pushing its way forward. The demographics of British North America were as dynamic in the second quarter of the century as they would be in the years between 1891 and 1914. The population was more diverse and sometimes conflicted. Issues of who belonged and how to treat those who did not arose in different venues and with varying degrees of force. Irish and Chinese alike would feel the limits of British North American generosity and welcome. Working people were another new variable: never before had there been so many people fully or at least heavily dependent on wages. Indigenous people, too, found themselves exposed to the controlling impulses of middle-class and elite British North Americans who faced the future with both excitement and dread.

At the same time, the emerging middle classes sought conformity among their social inferiors and even the local aristocracy. The cities they were building and everything from their institutions (jails, schools, asylums) to the layout and naming of the streets reflected a growing middle-class consensus in British North America as to what citizenship looked like. The old bonds of deference to the gentry were giving way to a different order. The evolution of this tension from 1818 to 1860 is the subject of the next chapter.

Key Terms

**anti-clerical:** Associated with the secularist movement of the 18th and 19th centuries, anti-clericals took the position that the role of the church was the saving of souls and not schools and other institutions and certainly not politics.

**benevolent societies:** Also called “friendly societies” or “mutual societies,” a kind of cooperative organization in which the members pay subscriptions as insurance against illness, injury, widowhood, etc. Benevolent societies still exist but many have been supplanted by insurance companies and state welfare systems.

**Chinatown:** Urban areas dedicated to the housing and businesses of Chinese immigrants and their families. Some Chinatowns appeared spontaneously and were built by the Chinese community; others were imposed by the dominant Euro-Canadian regime as a means of containing the Chinese population.

**civic buildings:** In the 19th century, usually refers to city halls, local jails, and courthouses. Art galleries and museums as public facilities appear later. The erection of impressive civic buildings was a statement of civic pride, a means of promoting the community, and a statement regarding the growing power of municipalities.

**civil service:** Employees of the state/colonies/municipalities. Includes surveyors, land officers, postmasters, and a few other positions in the 19th century. The number and types of civil servants expanded with the size of the state in mid-century.

**class consciousness:** Awareness of one’s socioeconomic status (or “class”) and how it (a) creates and limits opportunities, and (b) is experienced by others as well and constitutes a set of common interests.

**company store, company towns:** Many 19th and 20th century resource-extraction and construction industries were situated outside of established communities; under those circumstances a great many provided housing, supplies, groceries, work clothes, fuel, churches, and any number of other services so as to attract, retain, and (when necessary) discipline their workforce.

**cottage industry:** A manufacturing process in which all or component parts of a product are assembled in a worker’s home. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries this was particularly associated with textile and clothing production.

**crude birth rate (CBR):** The number of births per 1,000 population.

**crude death rate (CDR):** The number of deaths per 1,000 population.

**dependent population:** The share of population under the age of 15 years and over the age of 60 or 65. The notion of “elderly” dependant varies over time depending on life expectancies and population health generally.

**division of labour:** In a system of production, the isolation of certain tasks that are assigned to individuals working cooperatively to generate a certain product. In shoe production, for example, one person may be responsible for the uppers and someone else for the soles and a third for stitching them together.

**Famine Irish:** Emigrants from Ireland who fled the Great Famine of 1845-52.

**Foresters:** The Ancient Order of Foresters (AOF), a benevolent society founded in England with branches globally and a focus on members’ insurance.

**freemasonry:** A fraternal organization dating from the 14th century, which serves principally as a network system between communities. It is a secret society with rituals derived from the medieval guild system. Freemasonry experienced rising popularity in English America from the 18th century and has always been regarded with suspicion and hostility by the Catholic Church and some other denominations, but not by the English Church.

**gentlemen’s clubs:** Organizations and facilities designed to support networking between business and society leaders. These were usually housed in elegant buildings near the centre of the business district. Until the late 20th century virtually none admitted women and most had sanctions against members of ethnic and religious minorities.

**Grosse Isle:** A small island in the mid-St. Lawrence River, about 50 kilometres downstream of Quebec City. Synonymous with quarantine of immigrants and epidemic mortalities.

**guilds:** Medieval institutions mostly organized at the local level around crafts, professions, and commerce. Merchants' guilds often functioned as the civic authority while artisans' guilds were a kind of trade union that defined the requisite skill levels for each craft and established controls on who and how many might be allowed to practise the craft. Increasingly criticized in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as being at odds with free trade.

**hegemony:** Control by one empire, class, faction, or religion over all others.

**high culture, high style:** Terms referring to the development of elite cultural activities, fashions, tastes, and practices in contrast with "folk," "vernacular," or "popular" culture. Examples include opera and classical music, baroque architectural styles, formal clothing, and elaborate culinary practices. High culture and style are typically enjoyed by a select number of people across a large — even global — expanse and the styles tend to change frequently; low culture or "vernacular," by contrast is long-lasting and experienced by large numbers of people but typically in a small area. The cultural practices of Highland Scots, defined by durability and plainness of cooking and art, provide an example of a folk culture with limited external appeal.

**higher education:** College or university education. In the 20th century some vocational and trades training is included as well.

**homespun:** Originally referred to wools or other fabrics produced in the home but extends to full textile products also produced in the home. Synonymous with plain and simple, the term went from being a signal of artisanal skill to a derisory adjective meaning unsophisticated and unlovely.

**House of Industry:** First established under the British Poor Law as a refuge for the impoverished and/or bankrupt. The ideal of hard work even while receiving charity is reflected in the name. These were, as well, referred to as "workhouses."

**household wage:** The combined income of all individuals residing as a household. Typically does not include unrelated boarders but does include servants.

**ideals of womanhood:** The dominant values in any given society pertaining to the most acceptable ways in which women should behave, the sort of character they should develop, etc. What falls outside of the ideal was often defined as deviant.

**leisure time:** Time left over after work obligations are completed. In 18th and 19th century agricultural societies, leisure time was associated with seasonal lulls between harvest and seeding, and sometimes between seeding and harvest. In early urban societies working people were assumed to have little leisure time outside of Sundays, which was officially or ideally given over as a day for prayer and reflection.

**liberal professionals:** Typically lawyers, physicians, notaries, accountants, journalists, printers and publishers, surveyors, and engineers. A cadre of urban skilled workers who were neither wage labourers nor members of the merchant elite or landed gentry (like the seigneurs).

**life-course:** A way of understanding and studying the lives of people in history by highlighting changing contexts, needs, abilities, and roles at different points in life.

**Mechanics' Institutes: C**entres for adult literacy education, debate, and access to reading materials.

**middle class:** Also called the bourgeoisie. Ranks include liberal professionals, small merchants, and educators. Distinct from the the working class (who subsist on wages) and the upper class (whose wealth derives mainly from property and position).

**nativism, nativist:** The privileging of established residents over newcomers. Nativists take the position that their own rights are greater than that of immigrants because they have been resident longer (though sometimes not for very much longer).

**normal schools:** Teacher training institutions.

**nuptiality:** The incidence of marriage in a population.

**Oddfellows:** One of the oldest benevolent or friendly societies. May have sprung out of the guild movement. The Oddfellows developed personal and medical insurance schemes for their members.

**Orange Lodges, Orange Order:** Founded in the 1790s in Northern Ireland, a severely anti-Catholic fraternal society that advances the privileges of Protestants. Characterized as well by its loyalty to the Crown.

**philanthropist, philanthropy:** Equates very closely to charity, though on a significant scale. A philanthropist is someone with sufficient wealth to engage in charitable works.

**proletarianized:** The deskilling of work and work processes.

**public houses, pubs:** Facilities providing food, drink, and often a place to stay.

**public markets:** A space — sometimes a structure — built by the local municipality to provide for the sale of farm and food products.

**respectability:** A notion of moral character. As new social class structures took shape in the 19th century the ideal of respectability gained importance as a way of offsetting snobbery.

**scientific racism:** A form of racism that relies on categorization of racialized qualities/traits and measures physiological and genetic features as a means of demonstrating inherent differences in intelligence, morality, and ability. Distinct from earlier forms of racism based on religious belief, for example, scientific racism gained popularity from the mid-19th century on.

**single-industry towns:** Often also **company towns**, communities in which one industry predominates and is even exclusive. Mining and other resource-extraction communities are often single-industry towns, but a concentration of productive capacity around textiles or metal manufacturing might also manifest the qualities of a single-industry town.

**sweated labour:** An industrial workplace in which the labour is hard, the hours long, and the wages low. Sometimes associated with piecework that might be completed at home and not in the factory itself.

**temperance movement:** A crusade to reduce or even end the consumption of alcohol. Became a widespread phenomenon during the 19th century with the increase of visible urban drunkenness. The movement was characteristically championed by middle- and upper-class women.

**total fertility rate (TFR):** The number of births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 45 per year.

**voluntary family size limitation:** Also referred to as “birth control.” The attraction of building smaller families grew in the 19th century as the wage-earning potential or economic potential of children declined.

**voluntary associations:** See **benevolent societies.**

## Short Answer Exercises

1. How did economic change impact British North American society?
2. What were some of the main features of the demography of British North America?
3. What were the main sources of immigration? What impact did newcomers have on British North American society?

4. In what ways did life in rural British North America change?
5. What were some of the new features of 19th century cities? What were their principal challenges considered to be?
6. Why did the mid-19th century see a sudden increase in the creation of institutions like universities, asylums, orphanages, and prisons?
7. What were the principal social classes and groups to be found in British North America at mid-century?
8. In what ways were social and economic roles gendered?
9. How did sectarian violence and racism become part of the fabric of British North American culture and life?
10. What was the role of formal education in the mid-century? What were its goals?
11. How was leisure time understood at mid-century? How did organizations and associations figure into recreation?

## Suggested Readings

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# Chapter 11. Politics to 1860

# 11.1 Introduction



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Monument_Nelson_Montreal.jpg)

*Figure 11.1 The Nelson Monument in Montreal, c. 1830. Painting by Robert A Sproule.*

Admiral Horatio Nelson, the victor of the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, was memorialized shortly after his death by pedestal columns erected around the empire. The Nelson Monument in Montreal was the first in British North America and elicited different reactions from the Anglo-Protestants and the French Catholics. Completed in 1809, the column provides Nelson with a good view over the city, is visible for miles, and functions as a daily reminder of the triumph of British naval (and commercial) power both across the Atlantic and in North America. At 69 feet tall, it is not the tallest of the Napoleonic Columns (the one in Trafalgar Square in London stands 170 feet high), and Brock's Monument is taller still.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Brocks_Monument.jpg)

*Figure 11.2 The original Brock's Monument.*

The first memorial to General Isaac Brock was erected on the Niagara River at Queenston Heights in the

1820s, when the War of 1812 was still very much a recent memory. It originally stood 135 feet tall and was easily visible from the American side of the Niagara gorge. The column — with a viewing platform at the top — became a pilgrimage site for Upper Canadians. For Tories it had a special meaning as the place where, at the cost of Brock's life, the American invaders were repelled. In the budding myth of English Canadian nationhood it would mark the spot where the new nation bloodied its neighbour's nose. The fact that the Canadian militia was a tiny and reluctant fraction of the troops involved was neither here nor there; growing the legend of loyalism and duty was the point of the exercise. This narrative was perpetuated in song in 1867 by Alexander Muir (1830-1906) in "The Maple Leaf Forever," often regarded as Canada's first national anthem. In the second verse, Muir wrote:

> At Queenston Heights and Lundy's Lane,
> Our brave fathers, side by side,
> For freedom, homes and loved ones dear,
> Firmly stood and nobly died;
> And those dear rights which they maintained,
> We swear to yield them never!
> Our watchword evermore shall be
> "The Maple Leaf forever!"

Muir was a Scottish immigrant whose father could not possibly have stood firmly or any other way alongside Brock. Setting that literary exaggeration aside, what Muir wished to convey is that Canadians in 1812 had fought for freedom from American republicanism while protecting their families from a savage Yankee attack.

In part, Muir was reflecting his own experiences. At 45 or 46 years of age, he was a member of the Queen's Own Rifles, a Toronto regiment that served in 1866 at the Battle of Ridgeway, the year before both Confederation and his writing of "The Maple Leaf Forever." Ridgeway is barely a day's march south of Queenston Heights, on the same Niagara frontier that Brock defended successfully 50 years earlier. For Muir, a loyal Orangeman and a proud Scot, fighting the Fenian Invasion of 1866 was a matter of saving Canada from the barbarian Irish and Irish-Americans, and as far as he was concerned Brock had done nothing less in 1812.

Not everyone felt the same way. To some, Brock was representative of the haughty and corrupt Family Compact, the Tory cabal that wrapped itself in the flag of loyalism and exploited an extensive system of patronage for its own gain. Repeated efforts were made to achieve political reform through peaceful means, but they failed on every occasion. Opponents of the regime were expelled from the colony; some were imprisoned. In the 1830s republican sentiment in the colony was growing and exploded in a brief and doomed rebellion. The rebels who weren't captured, imprisoned, or hanged were driven across the border into the United States. In 1837 some made their way to Navy Island in the Niagara River, in Canadian waters. They declared a provisional Canadian Republic and plotted, unsuccessfully, an invasion. One of the armed exiles was an Irish-Canadian named Benjamin Lett (1813-1858). As the rebel movement lost steam in 1840, someone — many believed it was Lett — set off an explosion that tore the top off of Brock's Monument.

The decapitated and ruined tower was transformed in an instant into a very different memorial. Its shattered profile became a powerful testament to the tensions that existed in Upper Canadian society between those whose history was bound up in anti-revolutionary Loyalism, oligarchical authority, and the power of the local garrisons on the one hand, and those colonists who saw themselves as North

Americans first, heirs to a tradition of relative colonial autonomy, advocates for democracy, and even foes of the monarchy.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/1st_Brocks_Monument_damaged.jpg)

*Figure 11.3 Brock's Monument after the bombing of 1840.*

A new monument to Brock was completed in 1860. At 184 feet, it is comfortably taller than Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, making it the tallest of all the Napoleonic Wars towers. It would have been six years old during the Battle of Ridgeway, and there's some possibility that Alexander Muir passed within view of it as his regiment marched south to face the Fenians. Perhaps he saw it again as his unit retreated in haste after the first volleys near Fort Erie. The Queen's Own Rifles were mocked by their peers as the "Quickest Out of Ridgeway," but they faced a force of Irish-American nationalists hardened by three years of Civil War service. The battle cost the lives of 32 Canadians and was an embarrassment for the authorities in Canada West, even though the Fenians abandoned the attack. In other words, it was no Queenston Heights and there were no retroactive attempts to mythologize it.

Among the embarrassed parties after Ridgeway was the Minister of the Militia, none other than John A. Macdonald (1815-1891). Macdonald was then a young and inexperienced militiaman (not unlike the composer Muir). He was visiting Toronto from Kingston and was called up to disperse the rebels led by the radical reformer William Lyon Mackenzie (1795-1861). It is possible that the future prime minister even exchanged fire with Benjamin Lett, who may have been present among the rebels during the Battle of Montgomery's Tavern.[1]

In the 20th century Canada acquired the epithet, "the peaceable kingdom." As we've seen, the period

1. The fact that Macdonald was exchanging fire with the grandfather of future prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King is worth considering as well.

up to 1820 was marked by anything but peace. The historical record bulges with accounts of inter-empire warfare, ongoing battles between the Indigenous occupants of North America and newcomers everywhere from Newfoundland to the West Coast, and struggles between settler societies. There were also violent conflicts between British North Americans, such as the fur trade wars and anti-Irish riots. If we think of the Niagara River as the sharp edge of Canadian-American relations, there were three occasions when blood was shed there in the half-century between 1812 and Confederation — once for each of three generations. What happened along the Niagara frontier consistently involved questions about Britain's relationship with its colonies and where power resided in the colony itself. And, of course, each struggle pointed to the challenges inherent in British North America's relationship with the United States, one of many important issues that drove political debate in the 19th century.

This chapter places the critique of the established oligarchy in the context of larger political changes taking place across the Atlantic world. The protests that led to rebellion, bloodshed, the Durham Report, the Act of Union, and a nascent Canadian political culture are examined, as are the changes and continuities to be found in the Atlantic colonies.

Learning Objectives

- Learn about the political culture and climate in British North America from 1818 to 1860.
- Identify the major ideological threads running through British North American political culture.
- Describe the principal institutions of power in this period.
- Describe what "reform" meant in the context of the 1820s and the 1830s, and how it changed.
- Detail the main features of the constitutions of the colonies.
- Comment on the changed political role of Indigenous peoples and how they were perceived by Euro-Canadians.
- Explain the goal and meaning of responsible government.
- Illustrate how ostensibly non-political factors — immigration, cholera, urbanization, debt, sectarianism, etc. — contributed to rising calls for rebellion and an overthrow of the old oligarchical order.
- Critically assess the external forces affecting the political climate.

## Attributions

**Figure 11.1**
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**Figure 11.2**
Brocks Monument (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brocks_Monument.jpg) by YUL89YYZ

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**Figure 11.3**
1st Brock's Monument damaged (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1st_Brock%27s_Monument_damaged.jpg) by pload Bot (Magnus Manske) (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:File_Upload_Bot_(Magnus_Manske)) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 11.2 Politics 1818–1860



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Halifaxnsgovthouse.jpg)

*Figure 11.4 Government House, Halifax, 1819, the home of the governor and thus the seat of government for the colony.*

The history of politics is like a sausage that can be sliced several different ways.[1] One way is to look at the politicians of the day, the prominent figures who led the debates around policy and strategy. Personality matters as a force in history and we cannot know the contexts of decisions made without knowing something about the players.

Another way is to look at power itself, which is ultimately the business of politics. Where did power reside in this society and why? What forces were being mobilized that would raise or ruin the likelihood of this group or that having more agency in making their own history? It's not enough to say, for example, that women had little political power because they couldn't vote; they couldn't vote because their power itself was limited, and we need to understand why.

There is, as well, the question of ideology to address. What ideas and values drove people in their struggles for power? This relates, too, to the language of politics: words like *democracy* and *freedom* clearly have meanings that change over time. As heirs to a long tradition of liberal democracy, we need to appreciate that its practices came into being as part of a movement, and that those who advocated greater democracy in one generation might have been appalled at where those changes went in the next.

Finally (and this is not an exhaustive list of topics), there is the media to consider. As the colonies became larger and more complex, the influence of the press also grew. It isn't just the case that we should

1. The German militarist and politician Otto von Bismarck famously made the connection between politics and ground meats when he said, "Laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made."

pay attention to what journalists had to say; we need to know what it was that newspapers were trying to be in the 19th century.

With economic and social change after 1818 came demands for political transformation. An oligarchy with roots deep in the pre-Conquest soil of Canada and New England was at odds with a rising bourgeois class in the towns and cities. In an age defined by new theories of social relations and power, by the rise of democratic and socialist ideas in England, and by technological advances that sped up communications, people across British North America debated change: should it come and, if so, how much and how fast?

## Governments and Constitutions

Not all of the colonies of British North America were governed similarly. It is true that their constitutions derived from a combination of American traditions and practices, on the one hand, and British parliamentary models on the other. Loyalist refugees brought with them a powerful expectation of continuity of American practices in the Maritimes as British colonies appeared there after 1713, and many believed the absence of a local assembly in Nova Scotia deterred some potential migrants from New England, at least until 1758. Cape Breton (independent of Nova Scotia until 1820) never had its own representative assembly, nor did Newfoundland until 1832. Tension between Catholics and Protestants in Newfoundland reached such a pitch mid-century that half of the seats in the colonial assembly were stripped from the electorate and filled with appointees. Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick both inherited much of their administrative structure from Nova Scotia, to which they were both for a time attached. Prince Edward Island's assembly was made problematic by the landholding system on the island: most of the landowners were absentees. This and tenant-farmer unhappiness put their assembly at jeopardy on several occasions.

Nova Scotia got its first elected assembly in 1758, but its ability to control government expenditures — money bills — was limited. The legislative council, an appointed body, was able to alter or amend legislation arising in the assembly, a practice that was unusual by British American standards and offensive to the New England element in the colony. It was, as well, out of step with Westminster's ability to control expenditures. Nova Scotia in the late 18th century thus became a testing ground for all the constitutional issues that would face the rest of British North America in the years ahead.

By 1808 the Nova Scotia Assembly controlled much of the government's spending. Executives, however, retained control of external revenue sources and that allowed them to spend money outside of the assembly's purview. Political appointments and rewards were commonly used to secure support for the regime and for advancing the interests of the Church of England. These appointments were paid for through the "civil lists" — public appointments — over which all the British North American assemblies desired control. Governors and executive councils realized that assembly control of the civil lists would put an end to patronage and would undermine paternalism. In the 1830s a compromise was struck peacefully in the Maritimes in which the assemblies gained control over money bills (that is, legislation that involved expenditures) with the exception of the civil list.

Unlike the Canadas (which are considered in the next section), the Maritimes had no formal constitution until the 19th century. Reflecting the military orientation of the Atlantic outposts, the governors of these colonies were simply supplied with "instructions" from the Crown for the term of their appointment. Of course, these could be renewed or changed or rescinded over the course of a term in office.

Political Vocabulary

**Elected assembly**

All of the assemblies in British North America were elected. The extent of their authority varied over time and between colonies. The electorate also varied. Only property owners could vote and, since Catholics could not own property outside of a special dispensation, Acadians and Canadiens were initially not enfranchised. This soon changed in Lower Canada, but the law would stay in place in Nova Scotia until the 1820s. Further, elections were not conducted by secret ballot: they occurred in public view, providing opportunities for opposing sides to sway electors by means of drink, bribes, threats, and beatings. Only a small fraction of the adult population was able to vote in the pre-Confederation period and, outside of Lower Canada, the electorate was entirely male. Assemblies were sometimes split between advocates and opponents of deference to the governor. At times in the 19th century, individuals who wished to change the relationship between the governor and the assembly dominated the House; these individuals were called Reformers.

Legislative council: In Nova Scotia prior to 1758, the council was created as a committee to devise legislation for the governor. Its members were appointed from a network of local elites. More like Britain's appointed and hereditary House of Lords than the House of Commons, the legislative council constituted the political upper class in the colony. With the introduction of assemblies, the council's role changed to proposing and revising legislation that was debated by the assembly. It was this power of revision that some members of the assemblies most disliked, specifically as it applied to money bills.

**Executive council**

While governors might be inclined from time to time to appoint into the legislative council someone drawn from outside the Anglican Tory elite, the executive was consistently an appointed body of the highest Tories and Loyalists. In Lower Canada their number were increasingly dominated by the Montreal fur-trading establishment and early capitalists. The executive was responsible only to the governor, but that didn't stop them from biting the hand that fed them. Sir George Prevost (1767–1816), the governor of Lower Canada during the War of 1812, was effectively hounded from office by his own appointees.

**Governor**

The title of this position varies between governor, governor general, and lieutenant-governor. Defending Nova Scotia against the French or Upper Canada against the Americans was part of the job description. To deal with civil matters — everything from road construction to education, from civil order to land titles — governors appointed an executive council to provide oversight and a legislative council to write the laws. Governors were appointed by the Crown (in practical terms, the British cabinet). They came from three sources: most in the 18th century were high-ranking military men with battle experience; some of the early governors and more in the 19th century were from the British aristocracy; a few in the late 18th century were North Americans who cut their administrative teeth as governors in the Thirteen Colonies. All of them were Anglicans. Sir John Sherbrooke (c. 1764–1830), the lieutenant-governor of Nova Scotia from 1811 to 1816 and governor general of British North America from 1816 to 1818, for example, rose to the rank of Lieutenant General in the British Army. He was first sent to Nova Scotia to improve its defences and, later, to mount an attack on American territory. (Ironically, he was better as a civic administrator than as a military figure and made peace between difficult factions in Lower Canada in only two years.) Lord Durham and Lord Sydenham provide mid-century contrasts: the former was an aristocrat sent to British North America to

referee the conflicts of 1837-38, and the latter was a commoner who had risen to political and bureaucratic prominence as treasurer of the Royal Navy (he lasted in Canada from 1839 to 1841).

**Key Points**

- The political conflicts and transformations of the mid-19th century reflect changing social relations and economic conditions.
- Not all of the colonies of British North America were governed similarly.

## Attributions

**Figure 11.4**
The Government House in Halifax (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Halifaxnsgovthouse.jpg) by WayeMason (http://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=User:WayeMason&action=edit&redlink=1) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 11.3 Upper and Lower Canada

The Constitutional Act of 1791 created two colonies — Upper and Lower Canada — that were intimately linked. Notwithstanding American canals and, later, railways, the reality was that almost everything that was shipped out of Upper Canada had to pass through Lower Canada. Likewise everything coming into Upper Canada from Britain — including a great many immigrants — did so by sailing up the St. Lawrence first. Much of the investment capital available to Upper Canadians came from banks in Montreal, and much of the wealth of the Lower Canadian merchant elite was derived from activities in Upper Canada or even farther west. In terms of government, the two Canadas were separate and autonomous; in practical terms their relationship was close and complicated.

British-American immigrants who came to Canada after the Conquest advocated for the kind of representative institutions they had left behind in the Thirteen Colonies. But an elected assembly of any kind would have been an entirely new experience for the Canadiens, and Governor Carleton delayed. Whether the British thought this was a bad idea in 1765 or not hardly mattered: within a decade they were fighting revolutionaries whose elected institutions were calling for an end to British rule in the Americas. In that context they were loath to extend the right to representative institutions. In 1791 the British changed their mind. Revolutions continued to ring around them, but they nevertheless decided that it was time to introduce representative bodies to Canada.

The new administrations in each of the two newly separated colonies reflected practices developed in Nova Scotia. There was an elected assembly, an appointed legislative council comprising property owners (who were, in practice, men of wealth), and an appointed executive council to advise the governor. The governor general occupied this top tier in Lower Canada, while the lieutenant-governor performed the same task in Upper Canada. While the assemblies were permitted to introduce money bills, nothing could be enacted without the agreement of the governor. It is worth noting that women could vote, providing they were property owners — and some in Lower Canada qualified. Few women, however, exercised the vote and laws were passed in 1834 and 1849 to restrict their rights in this respect.

The assemblies soon found themselves in a difficult situation: if they were ineffective they could be voted out by the electorate, but they lacked access to the levers of power to become effective. By contrast, both the councils were populated by men appointed for life. They could not be dismissed by anyone other than the governor himself. The executive council, which advised the governor directly, was for all intents and purposes the real local authority.

Opposition to this arrangement was not slow in coming but it was for many years easily repressed.

**Key Point**

- Despite being separate colonies, Upper and Lower Canada were closely linked economically and politically.

# 11.4 The Tory Oligarchy

## The Château Clique

In Lower Canada the political elite that controlled the executive and legislative councils met at the governor's château and were known as the Château Clique. Their other label, the "British Party," reveals a second distinguishing feature. In a colony dominated demographically by French-speaking Catholics, the Tory leadership was drawn with few exceptions from the anglophone and Anglican population. A few francophone seigneurs rounded out the councils, but otherwise the voice of the Canadien majority was heard only in the assembly. As well, the councils controlled appointments to the judiciary and the civil service so they were in a good position to reward friends and punish opponents.

The most prominent members of the Clique were John Molson and James McGill, although McGill (a key player in the NWC) died in 1813. Their influence was powerful and typical of the Tory leadership. Even when Britain seemed likely to make concessions to the assembly, the Clique stood in its way. As merchants based mainly in Montreal, this tight network of friends and relations sought to perpetuate and expand their influence in the colony. They regarded the Catholic Church with suspicion (as did perhaps most Protestants), and they were continually concerned that the French culture represented a weakness, the soft underbelly of British North America. Keeping in mind that these Tories came of age in the years when France was supporting the American Revolution and throughout the Napoleonic Wars, it is easy to see how they might fear a reassertion of French power in Lower Canada. Their ongoing attempts after 1791 to undermine French and Catholic culture must be viewed in that context.

Supported by the governors,the Clique was able to deflect opposition from the assembly. Delay tactics by the elected members could only hold things up so long, and Britain's interests were best served by the Clique. While the reformers were building momentum in the 1820s and 1830s, it was the Clique that would emerge intact and its assimilationist plans evidently realized in the **Act of Union** (1841).

## The Family Compact

The situation was different in Upper Canada. There, the same instruments of government were in place: assembly, two councils, and (reporting to the governor general) a lieutenant-governor. The newness of Upper Canada ensured that there was nothing like a seigneurial class that might act as a lightening rod in opposition to the councils. Nor, of course, was there a linguistic/cultural divide across the colony to match the gulf between the anglophone Protestant elites and the francophone Catholics in Lower Canada. There were, however, important class, denominational, and geographic divisions.

The political elite in Upper Canada was strong on loyalism and fearful of change. Governor John Graves Simcoe brought together a group of leaders made up of Loyalists whom he knew were solidly Church of England men of wealth and aristocratic aspirations if not actual breeding. With these individuals he populated the executive and legislative councils. Simcoe's successors went one step further: they used bullying and fear tactics to ensure that the assembly, as well, was dominated by their people. All four levels of the Upper Canadian government, then, was part of what would come to be called the Family

Compact. They weren't concerned about a return of French power, but they shared a collective dread of American republicanism and expansionism. This anxiety was matched by a fierce loyalty to the Crown and the ideals of a hierarchical society.

The institutions they built in these years were mainly geared to perpetuating their privilege while strengthening the colonial economy. The Bank of Upper Canada, the canal companies, King's College (later the University of Toronto), and Upper Canada College were instruments for economic growth and the preservation of the Anglican ethos of the Family Compact. Under Bishop Strachan of Toronto, the Family Compact consolidated its authority through the Church, the judiciary, the government, and the support of those Upper Canadians for whom loyalism became a watchword after the War of 1812. These initiatives were part of a strategy and were not incremental or coincidental. An education system that perpetuated Tory values among an elite of young men, a patronage system that rewarded loyalism, and an economic strategy that reinforced consistently the central authority of Toronto and Kingston met the needs of the Family Compact first and foremost. Consider where their budgets and initiatives did not go: they avoided investment in education for the general public, there were no educational institutions for women, and they purposefully neglected the road system so as to force wheat traffic into the Great Lakes and canals corridor. These strategies were clearly meant to reinforce the status and authority of the colony's elite and simultaneously stifle opposition.[1] On this latter point, vandalism and assaults on critics of the regime were further instruments of Tory power.

In some respects both the Château Clique and the Compact could not resist the liberal trends of the day. These were men who might like to see themselves as part of a Canadian aristocracy, but they were mostly merchants and investors – capitalists and entrepreneurs – who mostly made their fortunes through commerce, finance, and shipping.[2] Few belonged to the emergent professional classes and fewer still were Methodists or Presbyterians. Their Tory ideals attracted sufficient support because of their commitment to a hierarchy that was meant to look after the weak (noblesse oblige) while expecting deference in return. These leading families were, after all, at the forefront of philanthropy. And yet there was a "best-before date" on Toryism. Larger towns and a more complex judiciary necessitated the creation of a professional class of lawyers, surveyors, engineers, journalists, etc. However indebted to Toryism these professionals might have been for their income, they would come to represent an alternative voice, even for conservatism in Upper Canada.

**Key Points**

- The Family Compact and the Château Clique were cabals of the most powerful figures in the colonies outside of imperial administrators.

1. G. M. Craig, "STRACHAN, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed March 25, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/strachan_john_9E.html (http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/strachan_john_9E.html)

2. Jane Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology*, 2nd edition (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queens University Press, 2012), 220-21.

- Governors might come and go but the oligarchs were an element of continuity in the colonies.
- The Tory elites depended on and developed a class of liberal professionals whose services they needed and whose loyalty they often commanded, but this middle-class cohort was also the most vocal source of criticism of the oligarchies.

# 11.5 Ultramontanism and Secularism

Beginning with the Revolution in France in the 19th century, there arose a division between the Catholicism of Canada and that of France. In Europe, the Church that recovered from the French Revolution was a much weaker organization, one that had been removed (along with the French monarchy) from the principal corridors of power. Catholic clergymen in Canada struggled with this situation. Some were inclined to support and take their lead from the more liberal and politically progressive Gallican church in post-revolutionary France. The majority of Canadien clergy, however, despised the Revolution and its anti-clerical bias; for them, the true source of power was in Rome, at the Vatican, in the hands of the Pope. These clerics looked beyond Alps to the Holy Father for both spiritual and political guidance. For this reason they were called **ultramontanists.** They entered political life convinced that whatever form government might take in the Canadas, it had to include the Catholic hierarchy.

The ultramontane element was not exclusive to the Church. There were many laymen and laywomen who supported these ideals as key to preserving Canadien institutions and values.[1] But secularism was on the rise, even in Lower Canada (Canada East). The ultramontanes were suspicious enough of the anglophone Protestant politicians but they were especially critical of francophone politicians who advocated a more modern sensibility and a compromise on the power of the Church. The Church found it easier in many instances to deal with British governors and the Château Clique, who appreciated the role of the Church in containing dissent, than with the francophone liberal professionals who were secularists, like Louis-Joseph Papineau.

**Key Points**

- Despite the apparent unity of the Catholic Church in Quebec, there were factions with closer allegiances to Rome than to France, let alone Britain.
- The interests of the Catholic Church were, from time to time, best served by working collaboratively with the British regime, rather than with anti-clerical/secularist Canadiens.

1. Susan Mann, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec*, 2nd edition (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2002), 119-22.

# 11.6 Republicanism in Canada

The depth of authentic loyalist feeling in the Canadas is difficult to measure. Even the most radical reformers were known to preface their demands for change with a reassuring statement of their affection for the king. **Republicanism** as a movement that aimed to topple the monarch seemed to have had limited appeal in political circles; republicanism as a system of democratic rule, however, seemed to be more effective at delivering growth and political unity. Canadian merchants and professionals regularly travelled to the United States, and there they could see a growing and prospering economy in which freedom of speech seemed (for their social equivalents anyway) much more generous. The War of 1812 and predictable demands at the time for intensified loyalism in the colonies would stifle demands for reform until the post-war years. The bottled-up envy of merchants, republicans, reformers, and other critics of the oligarchies would bubble forth in peacetime after 1818.

In the 1820s and 1830s, the call for more civil liberties was heard in many countries, including France and Britain. Colonies in the Americas broke with their imperial motherlands. The American revolution was followed by Haiti's break with France in 1804. Hardly a decade later, the Spanish Empire in South America was collapsing. Mexico declared its independence in 1821. Continent-wide revolutions led or inspired by Símon Bolivar culminated in the 1830s in the emergence of post-colonial regimes. In July 1830 the streets of Paris were the scene of a three-day uprising. The July Revolution deposed Charles X and established the principle of a constitutional monarchy.

The reform movement in Britain was very different. It drew its strength from both the middle class and the emerging working class. The Reform Act of 1832 was meant to extend the vote very broadly, but a cautious British government allowed only half-measures: middle-class males got the vote but not the lower classes. Poor and working-class Britons reacted with further protest and quickly suppressed risings. This movement rallied around a charter of rights; the goals of the **Chartists** included universal male suffrage, annual elections, secret ballots, and no property restrictions on candidates. For the most part, the early Chartists took the position that parliamentary democracy was essentially sound but that it needed upgrading, not toppling.[1]

The position and experiences of the British Chartists were not entirely different from those of the reformers in the Canadas. And it is clear that the former influenced the latter. Claims made on the Family Compact and the Château Clique for greater democratic rights echoed global movements. Of course, it was precisely against these worldwide trends that the Tory elites proposed to stand immovable.

1. See Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Ashgate, 1986).

**Key Points**

- The early 19th century saw anti-monarchical and anti-imperial movements spread through the Americas and Western Europe, some of which enjoyed a degree of success.
- Even in Britain there were growing calls for greater democratic government.
- These trends and intellectual developments influenced and contextualized protests against oligarchy in British North America.

# 11.7 The Press

Newspapers and their earlier incarnations as pamphtets (produced by “pamphleteers”) can only thrive in a particular environment. To state the most obvious requirement, they need readers. That means they do well in large towns or urban centres or, possibly, across a rural area where distribution is manageable. A printing press and someone with the skill necessary to operate it are also required. Printers in the 18th and 19th century were a guild and a craft unto themselves, highly regarded and very conscious of their artisanal expertise.

Newspapers also require something worth reading about. Typically newspapers emerge where there exists an educated, literate middle class who are interested and engaged in civic debate. The pages of the press become a forum in which government policy, moral issues, and local developments are debated. They are, one might say, a means of policing power and community behaviour by creating a common language and a shared conversation. In this respect, the press lends itself well to critiques of established authority.

In colonial times, such critique was not always easy. The earliest post-Conquest newspapermen in British North America were often persecuted by representatives of British power and Loyalism.


LE CANADIEN.

Fiat Justitia ruat Cælum.

No. 1] SAMEDI LE 22 NOVEMBRE, 1806. [Prix]

No. I.

No. II.

(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/12/Le_Canadien_Nov_22_1806.jpg)

*Figure 11.5 Le Canadien was the mouthpiece of the Parti Canadien from 1806 to 1810. It's motto was "Nos institutions, notre langue et nos droits" (Our institutions and our language, our laws). It exemplifies the professional, middle-class values that were at odds with Anglo-Toryism and the oligarchy.*

## The Fourth Estate

In all of the colonies the press provided an effective platform for dissent and criticism. Newspapers were easily and widely distributed. Robert Gourlay (1778-1863) used the *Niagara Spectator* as an instrument of political opposition. Haligonian Joseph Howe (1804-1873) was more Tory than Reformer when he took over the *Novascotian* in 1827, but it served him well when he became a critic of the colony's Family Compact. The *Parti Canadien* — the opposition to the ruling British Party — used the newspaper *Le Canadien* beginning in 1806 to speak on its behalf; some 20 years later Papineau's more militant *Parti Patriote* acquired *La Minerve* as a mouthpiece for its issues and its critique of the Château Clique. In Upper Canada, Francis Hincks (1807-1885) published the Toronto *Examiner* with the masthead, "Responsible Government," William Lyon Mackenzie's *Colonial Advocate* was a pulpit for radical-reform sentiment, and their near-contemporary George Brown (1818-1880) was the brains and drive behind the very ambitious *Globe* and the leader of the **Clear Grits.** These three newspapermen were instrumental in creating the language of opposition to the Tory establishment and, importantly, to the less radical elements on the Reform spectrum.

At the tender age of 19 years, Edward Whelan (1824-1867), an Irish-Catholic immigrant and former

apprentice to Joseph Howe, started the first of his several newspapers and journals on Prince Edward Island. Whelan's declared goal was "to investigate and assail, if not remedy, the evils which have grown out of the Landocracy System, a system whose principle is 'monopoly,' whose effect is oppression."[1] He, like Howe and Brown, would become a Father of Confederation.

Similarly, on the West Coast, Nova Scotian Amor de Cosmos (born William Alexander Smith, 1825-1897) established Victoria's *Daily British Colonist* in 1858, and John Robson (1824-1892), an Upper Canadian on the mainland colony, took charge of New Westminster's *British Columbian* in 1861. Both men launched withering attacks on Governor James Douglas and other members of what they identified as British Columbia's own Family Compact. Both were early advocates, too, of responsible government and a continent-wide union of British North American colonies. Both eventually became premiers in British Columbia.

The importance of the press as a political instrument was lost on no one. In 1864-65 John Schultz (1840-1896) took over the *Nor'Wester,* Red River's first newspaper, using it as a bully-pulpit against the HBC. By 1869, however, he had switched directions and became a spokesman for Canadian interests on the Prairies. Schultz played politics with bare knuckles and his sleeves rolled up, but his understanding of what the press could accomplish was perhaps of unparalleled importance in Canadian history.[2] Some editions of the *Nor'wester* reputedly never made it to the streets of Red River: he sold the lot in the political hothouse of Toronto, cynically cultivating interest in annexing Rupert's Land and whipping up opposition to the provisional government led by Louis Riel.[3]

Newspapers in the first half of the century tended to be small, running to no more than eight pages. The first successful news-focused newspaper was Brown's *Globe*. His objective was to produce a document containing the freshest and most important developments from everywhere, and in this way expand his readership. He was so far ahead of his competition that even his political enemies had to read the *Globe*. News became easier to gather with the availability of **telegraph** technology; mass production of the *Globe* raced ahead with the early application of steam-powered presses in the 1860s. Brown's predecessors and smaller competitors had more in common with 18th-century pamphleteers than with the newspapermen of the late 19th century.

1. Ian Ross Robertson, "WHELAN, EDWARD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed October 10, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/whelan_edward_9E.htm l.

2. Lovell Clark, "SCHULTZ, Sir JOHN CHRISTIAN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed March 25, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/schultz_john_christian_12E.html (http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/schultz_john_christian_12E.html)

3. J.M. Bumsted, ed. *Reporting the Resistance: Alexander Begg and Joseph Hargrave on the Red River Resistance* (Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2003), 30. See also J. M. Bumsted, *Trials and Tribulations: The Red River Settlement and the Emergence of Manitoba 1811–1870* (Winnipeg: Great Plains, 2003).

**Key Points**

- Newspapers reflected, created, shaped, and mobilized opposition to the oligarchical regimes.
- Journalists and publishers were part of an emerging middle class that advocated greater individual rights and freedoms.
- The distance from the printing press to an active career in politics was often a short one.

## Attributions

**Figure 11.5**
Le Canadien Nov 22, 1806 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_Canadien_Nov_22,_1806.jpg) by BeatrixBelibaste (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:BeatrixBelibaste) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 11.8 Labour and Its Discontents

We have seen in Chapters 9 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-10/#chapter9) and Chapter 10 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-9/#chapter10) how work processes were changing with the economy in the 19th century and the impact this had on social relations. By the 1820s, old artisanal traditions of apprenticing as a child to the household of a master, being raised as part of that family, and eventually moving on as a journeyman were weakening. The British **Master and Servants Acts** were enforced in British North America and reinforced by local legislation in both Nova Scotia (1765) and Canada West (1847); these laws made clear the duty owed by an apprentice to his master and ensured that wage-labour employees could not simply abandon their jobs. That these laws were passed suggests that apprentices and wage earners were, in fact, eager to enjoy the freedom to leave a bad employer or pursue better opportunities.

In some situations, such as logging camps, the employer might provide everything from housing to company stores and schools, and the "boss" stood at the top of a social pyramid built around notions of paternalism. In the best circumstances, paternalistic artisanal masters or major employers could create a good environment for their workers. But, as labour historian Craig Heron indicates, "It was a system ripe for cruelty and abuse."[1] Heron points out that it wasn't until the 1860s and 1870s that organized labour became widespread; before that, what historians describe as "the crowd" was the main expression of working people's power and frustration. These were inclusive events in which women and children participated, calling on mine or mill owners to change their policies, improve pay, or show more equity in their treatment of their employees. This was particularly the case in company towns like Albion Mines, Nova Scotia, or Nanaimo on Vancouver Island, where there was effectively one industry, one employer, and one workforce.

## The Genesis of Unions

The changing economy created a new social order made up increasingly of men, women, and children who worked for wages year-round. This move away from seasonal work eventually presented an opportunity for labour to organize and find a political voice. Working people, of course, had no entitlement to the vote at any level, not unless (in the rare case) they were also property owners.

It is striking, when looking at this period between 1818 and 1860, to note the extent to which employers scrupulously ensured that their employees would *not* find a voice. The company towns could cut off credit, and evict and exile troublemakers at will. The early textile mill owners in Montreal brutalized their workforces of women and children with beatings and fines. It could not be said for a moment that the early capitalist elite's vision of a British North American democracy included their workers.

For some workers, the friendly societies were the answer; for others nothing short of organization would suffice. Early workers' associations first arose in skilled, town-based industries. As already noted, there was hardly a town in British North America without a shoemaker, a printer, a tailor, and carpenters and

1. Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1989), 4.

joiners. Each of these crafts depended on a master's ability to employ steady journeymen. As towns increased in size so did the aspirations of some masters, resulting in deskilling the jobs and lowering wages. Embryonic unions thus appeared in all of these crafts.

The printers were among the first to organize, and a particularly well-known dispute occurred in Toronto in 1836. There, the printshop owners — led by the publisher William Lyon Mackenzie — confronted and defeated the printers' demands for better wages and guarantees for apprentices. The intolerance for the discontent of workers was echoed a decade later by Mackenzie's Grit/Reformer nemesis, George Brown, at the *Globe*.[2] Brown fulminated against the organization of labour while, at the same time, championing the Printing Employers Association in Toronto.[3] On this point as on so many others, John A. Macdonald and George Brown disagreed: after Confederation Macdonald introduced legislation to legalize unions. In the meantime pressures were growing for some kind of representative organization in the workplace or in communities.

Craft unions began to appear in the 1850s. By this time some work in the craft sector had been routinized but mechanization had not progressed very far. Craft members became increasingly concerned about the the internationalization of industrial work. They had grown up in a world where, for the most part, labour stayed close to home and prices were determined locally. Now skilled labour was on the move across North America, looking for a better wage and using the new transportation technologies to expand their search. Employers were in a better position to fix wages beyond their immediate vicinity. Locals were buying manufactured goods that were made in British and American factories hundreds of miles away. British and American workers were ahead of most British North American craftsmen on this issue, so the earliest unions were — in English British North America at least — extensions of British and American organizations.

As industrialization grew so too did the size of the proletariat: people dependent on wage-paying jobs to survive. This expanding common experience would prove to have greater impact after Confederation than before. It is worth noting, however, that the advocates for greater democracy in 1830s Upper and Lower Canada in no way envisioned a day when the vote would be extended to a Canadian working class.

**Key Points**

- The emergence of larger workplaces — mines, mills, logging camps, and factories — in different ways stimulated the growth of organization among working people.
- Craft unions were the first to appear, building on the specificity of artisanal skills and the workers' ability to control the supply of skills.

2. Ibid., 7.

3. Greg Kealey, "Work Control, the Labour Process, and Nineteenth-Century Canadian Printers," in *Workers and Canadian History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1995), 212-213.

- Working people’s political engagement occurred, but outside of the ballot box.

# 11.9 Early Reformism and Reformers

Several attempts were made to expand the influence of the Lower Canadian assembly before and during the War of 1812. As Canadien assemblymen became more adroit at using their legislative powers to block and delay bills, they sought trade-offs that would at the very least limit the authority of the executive. Pierre Bédard (1762-1829), a leading francophone lawyer and co-founder of the opposition *Parti Canadien*, called for Colonial Office oversight of the executive. Bédard's request indicated that the assembly was not calling for an end to British rule, and that it trusted London more than it trusted the governor and his clique. That recommendation went nowhere, and the second decade of the 19th century witnessed a hardening of positions in the government of Lower Canada. A handful of dominant personalities emerged at that time who would be influential in government politics for the next generation or two.

### *Parti Canadien*

Louis-Joseph Papineau (1786-1871), a seigneur and lawyer, began his rise to leadership of the Canadien cause in the assembly around 1815. His father, Joseph Papineau (1752-1841), had been a member of the assembly and a notary as well. An exploration of their two lives and trajectories reveals some of the profound changes that were underway in Lower Canadian society.

Joseph was a monarchist, a position that was consistent with anti-revolutionary sentiment in Canada. The murder of Louis XVI was an affront to many in Canada, as the king of France had occupied the position of protector of the colony, was the undisputed head of state, and was thought to rule by the will of God (divine right). Men like Papineau Sr. found it easier to transfer loyalty to a British monarch (who was, in any event, a Hanoverian with deep roots in Germany) than to be sentimental about France after the Revolution. Joseph did, however, break with the *ancien régime* in one respect: he renounced his Catholicism, something that should have made him a favourite of the assimilationist Château Clique. But Papineau Sr. was ideologically the enemy of the executive. His philosophy was increasingly liberal, meaning that he favoured opportunity for individual Canadiens to prosper and thus to challenge established elites.

Louis-Joseph carried these attitudes forward. (In at least one respect, however, he circled back on Joseph: Papineau Jr. embraced seigneurial feudalism as being in the best interest of Canadien culture.) He entered politics in 1810, just as French-Canadian nationalism was beginning to take shape, and he campaigned for the preservation of traditional Canadien institutions. Of these, the Catholic Church occupied a conflicted position. Louis-Joseph was educated in the Séminaire de Québec but he followed his father's path of renouncing the faith. The ideals of the Church were by this time seen as too conservative and reactionary to sit well with the liberal professionals. Also, reformers viewed the Lower Canadian Church as a buttress to the Château Clique. By 1815 Papineau's popularity in the *Parti Canadien* was enough to see him elected Speaker of the Assembly, a position that came with

a nice salary.[1] Without real authority beyond the assembly, the *Parti* did what it could to thwart the assimilationist urges of the Clique; in turn, this obstructionism hardened the resolve of British Party (a.k.a. the Château Clique, the Lower Canadian Tories) to achieve the elimination of French-Catholic culture.

In 1822 members of the Château Clique proposed the union of Upper and Lower Canada. This was clearly another try at assimilation that would weaken the French-Canadian hold on the assembly and thus on the laws around culture, education, and language. Papineau and an anglophone ally, John Neilson (1776-1848), travelled to London to persuade the House of Commons to reject the union. The Clique's initiative failed and Papineau was able to take credit for this setback. The idea of union as a means to achieve the end of French-Catholic culture did not, however, go away. Through the 1820s and the 1830s the Château Clique advocated for a reunification of the Canadas. The separation imposed by the Constitutional Act had cost Montreal its western hinterland, so there was an economic issue, but principally the goal of the Clique was to swamp the francophone population with the rapidly expanding number of anglophones to the west.

## Robert Gourlay

Reformers in Upper Canada faced similarly obdurate opponents in the Family Compact. One of the first to challenge the Tory elite was Robert Gourlay. Not long after he arrived in Upper Canada from Scotland in 1817, Gourlay began building a coherent reform movement. Gourlay was an early statistician (Malthus used his work on British farmers), and his innovative survey of farmers in the Niagara district revealed that Tory economic and political priorities were holding back land sales, farm development, and general prosperity. By banning American settlers from the region they were cutting off Canadian landowners from prospective buyers. Land that should be in production, therefore, was not. Gourlay's strident criticisms of the Family Compact and his many efforts to effect political change were unsuccessful. After spending some time in jail and in exile, he became a spent force in Upper Canadian affairs. His technique in confronting authority was never especially pretty: "Through the columns of the *Niagara Spectator* he poured out an extraordinary torrent of abuse against 'the vile, loathsome and lazy vermin of Little York,' and others hostile to him."[2] Still, he opened the floodgates of criticism in the colony and they would not be shut again for several decades.

**Key Points**

- Reformers in Lower Canada sought to empower Canadiens and vouchsafe their culture while taking a secularist position in opposition to the clergy.

1. Fernand Ouellet, "PAPINEAU, LOUIS-JOSEPH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed October 6, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/papineau_louis_joseph_10E.html .

2. F. Wise, "GOURLAY, ROBERT FLEMING," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed October 6, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gourlay_robert_fleming_9E.html .

- The leading reformers in Lower Canada were drawn from the liberal professionals and the seigneurial class.
- Reform in Upper Canada began as a critique of Toryism and its efforts to manipulate the land market.

# 11.10 Rebellions, 1837–1838

## Lower Canada




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Lower_Bas_Canada_City_Bank_One_Penny_Deux_Sous_Bank_Token_1837.jpg)

*Figure 11.6 A Lower Canadian one penny (or deux sous) coin issued in 1837 and showing a Habitant in traditional dress.*

Papineau's continued attempts to reconcile the interests of Canadiens with those of the empire were doomed to fail. Partly as a mark of the *Parti Canadien's* frustration with the Château Clique, the organization changed its name to the *Parti Patriote*. This was something of a red rag to a bull. To be a "patriot" is to be loyal to the land of one's birth first and foremost; the American revolutionaries had branded themselves "patriots" knowingly and so too did Papineau's group. Dropping "Canadien" was also a sign of growing inclusiveness. The *Parti* became home to Irish and American immigrants, the Canadien peasantry and seigneurs, the liberal professionals, and those smaller anglophone merchants whose interests were not best served by the Clique. It was in this context, too, that Papineau introduced the Emancipation Act of 1834 that extended new rights to the Jewish population in the colony. This broadening of the movement's reach was also felt at an ideological level.

Radical reformers within the *Parti Patriote* increasingly called for a more revolutionary approach. After all, Papineau and company had been fighting the same battle against the Clique for 20 or more years, with little to show for it. Despite having a majority in the assembly for years (and a landslide victory in 1834), they were unable to press their case. Papineau's popularity was at an all-time high, but his defence of the French civil law, the seigneurial system, and the importance of the Church in the preservation of Canadien culture put him increasingly at odds with those who wished to see an overhaul of the entire social order. For those rivals within the *Parti*, the seigneurial system was an offensive holdover from a feudal system with which even much of Europe had dispensed, the clergy's loyalties were to themselves and to Rome, and the *Coutume de Paris* was what undergirded the lot.

As a political figure, Papineau is elusive. He seems to have stood firmly against compromise of any kind, but by 1830 he was a fan of Jacksonian democracy. He was, as one biographer describes him, "violently

anti-clerical" and a staunch critic of the Church's powers and privileges, yet he defended the Church against what he saw as attacks aimed at reducing the cultural integrity of the Canadiens. He seems, as well, to have been tugged by contrary and momentary winds. If popularity lay in that direction, then off he went in search of it. While it is true that he had some authority as Speaker, Papineau and his fellow members of the assembly had little real power. They could afford to posture while the Château Clique attempted to govern.

In 1834 the *Patriotes* compiled the **Ninety-Two Resolutions**, an extensive shopping list of reforms that they put before the British government, along with a petition of nearly 90,000 signatures. Its tone was one of frustration and growing anger; it contained pledges of loyalty coupled with not-very-veiled threats of rebellion. The British had other matters before them, so they delayed and then brushed the petition off in March 1837 with Lord John Russell's much more succinct **Ten Resolutions**. These countermeasures hardened the divisions in Lower Canada's government by giving the executive more power over revenues and turning back any reforms that would increase the authority of the assembly.

The British response outraged the more radical elements in the *Parti Patriote*. While other reformers considered legal options, the radical part of the movement steeled itself for a confrontation with the governor and his forces. Meetings across the colony in 1837 whipped up support for the cause. At the largest of these, the Assembly of the Six Counties at Saint-Charles, some 4,000 to 6,000 people gathered to hear Papineau and the *Parti's* other leaders. Although Papineau invoked Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* and called for an uprising, he had feet of clay. His indecisiveness may have reflected disappointment at the size of the rally at Saint-Charles (he had evidently hoped for more). Regardless of why he hesitated, it cost the movement some of its momentum. Rather than face the British forces in Montreal or Quebec, Papineau and his supporters fled into the countryside south of the St. Lawrence to avoid arrest.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Assemblée_des_six-comtés_painting.jpg)

*Figure 11.7 The Six Counties Assembly, October 1837. Note the orange, white, and green flags of the Patriotes.*

The response of the authorities was to suspend the constitution, declare martial law, and send British troops into the region in November 1837. Their first battle, at Saint-Denis, cost the British and the rebels (under the leadership of Dr. Wolfred Nelson) a dozen dead apiece. Subsequently, the rebel tactics became more desperate and the British response more bloody. Rebels at Saint-Charles were executed on the spot when they bluffed a surrender; buildings throughout the Richelieu Valley were burned to the ground. In December the battle turned north to Saint-Eustache where a force of roughly 200 rebels were defeated by a superior British force augmented by Loyalist volunteers. Nearly half the rebels died at Saint-Eustache, some of them burned alive in the church after it was set ablaze by the British troops.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Battle_of_Saint-Eustache.jpg)

*Figure 11.8 A formalized representation of the Battle of Saint-Eustache, with the church burning in the background.*

Papineau and other leaders fled to the United States. Papineau in particular was fleet of foot, having run out of Saint-Denis within minutes of the first volleys being fired. His quick retreat was to cost him followers and credibility in exile. There was talk of launching a second rising from the United States, but this came to nothing apart from two minor skirmishes near the border. In November 1838, rebellion sparked again on the south shore, this time at Beauharnois. An imprudent rebel attack on the Iroquois community at Kahnawake (a.k.a. Sault du Saint-Louis and Caughnawaga) ended in the capture of 60 rebels who were then handed over to the British.

The underlying causes of the Lower Canadian Rebellion are complicated, which is why it is worth considering Papineau's own perspectives. As a seigneur he had a vested interest in stability and continuity, as a notary he had an interest in the preservation of the French civil law, and as an educated francophone he acknowledged a debt of gratitude to the institutions of the Catholic church. At the same time, he viewed representative government as the best guarantee of cultural survival, he opposed the modernizing economy (mostly because it was in the hands of the British Canadians), he railed against clericalism, and he took steps to create a state-funded education system. Papineau broke down barriers that had stood against Jewish people in European societies for centuries and in this he was progressive; he also took steps to strip the vote from those female property owners in Lower Canada who were entitled to the franchise.

For the general population this was a time of economic uncertainty and fear of change. The arrival of large numbers of Irish immigrants threatened the demographic integrity of the Canadiens; the fact that the Irish inadvertently brought cholera with them did far worse. Some speculated that the Irish immigrants and cholera were both sent to Lower Canada to destroy Canadien society. Many of the rebels simply wanted a bigger slice of the pie. The fact that the Rebellion manifested elements of ethno-linguistic division along with sectarianism should not blind us to the fact that it consisted of many more factors as well.

**Historians on Video**

Historians disagree on which forces drove forward discontent in Lower Canada. Frank Abbott (Kwantlen Polytechnic University) points out that the rural parishes he has examined showed little interest in the events of 1837-38. Here is a link to the transcript of a video on the rural population's views on politics [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_fa_u11_01.pdf).



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=312#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

In this video, Jack Little (Simon Fraser University) discusses how historians' perspectives have changed and presents some of his own theories. Here is a link to the transcript of a video on the Lower Canada Rebellion [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_jl_u11_01.pdf).



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=312#oembed-2 (#oembed-2)*

## Upper Canada

The rebellion in Upper Canada had similar roots to that in Lower Canada. It sprang out of dissatisfaction with the same constitution. It featured an oligarchy of wealth and privilege and a populist reform movement inspired by liberal principles. It was influenced by current events in Europe and the Americas that were pointing toward greater democracy and anti-imperialism. These underlying causes were furthered by specific grievances associated with the Family Compact's economic strategy (which benefited Toronto but not necessarily the farming community) and division between the Church of England establishment and adherents of other denominations.

As in Lower Canada, the little power that the assembly might exert on the councils was limited by revenue sources over which the elected representatives had no control, which came from the sale of Crown lands, the revenues from which were at the disposal of the lieutenant-governor and the executive council. These monies were used in part to further the government's canal-building strategy, a plan that did little to help inland farmers who would have preferred an aggressive road-building program. Many of these settlers were, moreover, adherents of Methodism and some of them were Presbyterians. These two denominations were the principal challengers to Family Compact efforts to see the Church of England become the **established church**. Armed with the Clergy Reserves as well as Crown lands, however, the Compact was in an excellent position to further the interests of the Anglican Church to the exclusion of the smaller denominations.

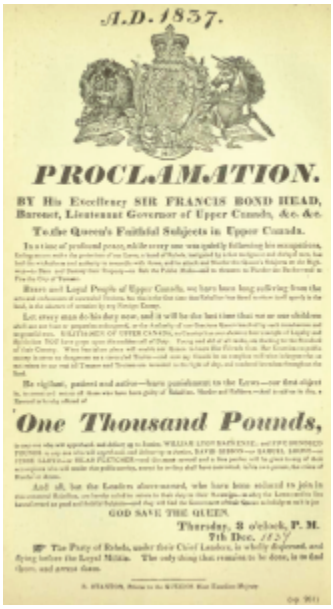
William Lyon Mackenzie was the leader of the cause in Upper Canada. His newspaper, the *Colonial Advocate*, was both a vent for radical-reformer positions and a target of Tory opponents. In 1826 a gang of Tories descended on Mackenzie's offices in York, grabbed his printing presses and threw them into Lake Ontario. Intimidation was part of the Family Compact's stock in trade, but events like this only served to legitimize the more radical positions offered by Mackenzie and his allies.

Not everyone in the reform movement shared Mackenzie's position. The moderate wing continued to advocate a pro-monarchical position and was alienated by the radical side's increasingly republican and pro-American language. Although the Reformers were able to control the assembly through most of the decade before the rebellion, they were viewed as ineffectual by Radicals (by then emerging as a separate camp entirely). The tension between the two factions grew as the 1830s witnessed insincere concessions by the lieutenant-governor, Sir Francis Bond Head (1793-1875). His strategy was to admit onto the executive two prominent Reformers — Robert Baldwin (1804-1858) and John Rolph (1793-1870) — and then to ignore their advice. Resignations followed, the assembly tightened its limited grip on the colony's finances, and in 1836 Bond Head dissolved the assembly and called an election.

This was a turning point. Governors to this point had stood aloof in election campaigns, even if the Family Compact had not. But Bond Head waded in, describing the Reformer and Radical elements as American in their sentiments and loyalties. These were strong words from the Crown's representative: he was accusing Mackenzie and company (the moderate Baldwin included) of treasonous ideals. Bond Head's tactics were regarded, even in Britain, as excessive, but he succeeded in mobilizing the vote among recently arrived British immigrants who joined with the Loyalist establishment in defeating the Reform element.

Mackenzie, presumably tired of being called a republican, decided to publicly embrace the values of the United States and call for the overthrow of the regime. In early 1837 this was all still talk but then events in Lower Canada forced everyone's hand. Bond Head sent his troops east to participate in the suppression of the rebellion there, leaving Upper Canada vulnerable. Rebels gathered in London and in York with an eye to striking while the opportunity presented itself.

The events that followed were profoundly anticlimactic. Mackenzie's group mustered at **Montgomery's Tavern**, about seven kilometres north of Toronto's waterfront on Yonge Street. Over the next two days they would engage Loyalist volunteers twice and would collapse both times. Along with John A. Macdonald, the militia units included the retired fur trader and explorer Simon Fraser, heading up a regiment of the Stormont Militia. The troops captured several rebels and torched the inn. Mackenzie fled to the United States, as did most of the rebel party in London.


A.D. 1837.

PROCLAMATION.

BY His Excellency SIR FRANCIS BOND HEAD, Baronet, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, &c. &c.

To the Queen's Faithful Subjects in Upper Canada.

One Thousand Pounds,

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

Thursday, 8 o'clock, P. M.

7th Dec. 1837

(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/1837_Proclamation.png)

*Figure 11.9 By December 7, 1837, a very large bounty was posted for the capture of William Lyon Mackenzie and four other rebels.*

There was one last battle in the Upper Canadian Rebellion. Near Prescott, roughly midway between Montreal and Kingston and across the river from Ogdensburg, a force of exiled rebels and American sympathizers (together known as **Hunter Patriots** or the **Hunter Lodges**) attempted an assault on Fort Wellington. Although they held their position for four days, holed up in a stone windmill, the attack failed.

In the aftermath of the Upper Canadian Rebellion, the Family Compact had an opportunity to bare its teeth. Nine of the Toronto rebels were hanged along with 11 from the Battle of the Windmill. Prison sentences awaited over 1,000 of the rebels and exile (or “transportation”) to Australia awaited 100 more.

## The Atlantic Colonies

Curiously, the Maritime colonies received much of what reformers in the Canadas demanded without mounting so much as a protest march. In 1837 Britain conceded to the colonial assemblies the right to control money bills with the proviso that the civil list — the very heart of the patronage machinery — remain in the hands of the executive. New Brunswick took up the offer first and Nova Scotia followed soon after; Prince Edward Island had it imposed on them in 1841. Settlements of this kind served to legitimize rather than marginalize the Reformers in Maritime society. The case may be made that Nova Scotia and New Brunswick achieved responsible government in large measure because of what happened in the Canadas. But change was already taking place in the Maritime assemblies before the

rebellions; they were marching to a different beat. And for people like Joseph Howe, that meant greater credibility and a wider audience for his demands for an assembly that governed the executive branch.

Howe presents an interesting case because he changed his views on government. Until the 1830s he regarded it as a consensus-based process in which goodwill and commonsense would prevail. In this he was not greatly different from many other Reformers. But this was an age of ideologies and increasingly it was becoming clear that Old Tory privilege and hierarchy was at odds with the emergent liberal, middle-class views of individual opportunity and equality. In the pages of the *Novascotian* he lambasted assembly members he thought weak, and civic officials and a judiciary that he regarded as corrupt and venal. In 1835 he was charged with libel and celebrated his victory in the courtroom with the proclamation that "the press of Nova Scotia is free." And indeed it was: free to criticize the regime without fear of reprisals.

Thereafter Howe ramped up his attacks on Nova Scotia's oligarchy and sought elected office himself. In the wake of the Durham Report he wrote to the Colonial Office, "the Colonial Governors must be commanded to govern by the aid of those who … are supported by a majority of the representative branch."[1] Throughout these years, however, Howe was distrustful of party politics, which he believed tended toward narrow factions. Nonetheless Howe gets credit for so significantly changing the political culture of Nova Scotia that Reform majorities were elected in 1836 and 1840. This last victory prompted what may have been the only act of violence in Nova Scotia's march to responsible government. According to Howe's biographer, "His success so antagonized the official faction that [Howe] was forced to fight a duel with John Halliburton, son of the chief justice, on 14 March 1840; Halliburton missed and Howe fired his pistol into the air."[2]

Howe was not the first to do so, but he articulated as well as any other British North American leader in his generation the shift to an ideologically informed position and plan for the future. While ideology did exist in the pre-1830 period, afterwards it became clearer in the colonies that visions for the future were at odds.

**Key Points**

- The 1830s saw the *Parti Canadien* rebrand itself as the *Parti Patriote* and launch an increasingly broad-based campaign against the oligarchy under the leadership of Louis-Joseph Papineau.
- Refusal on the part of the oligarchies to make concessions to assembly demands for more authority pushed reform elements toward radical republicanism.

1. "Joseph Howe's Letters," ed. J.M. Bliss, *Canadian History in Documents, 1763-1996* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1996), 65-69.

2. J. Murray Beck, "HOWE, JOSEPH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed January 15, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/howe_joseph_10E.html (http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/howe_joseph_10E.html)

- The rebellions of 1837 and 1838 failed to either attract widespread support or mount effective battle plans. They failed badly and were violently suppressed.
- Reform arrived in the Maritimes with only one shot being fired.

#### Video Attributions

- Dr. Frank Abbott Question 5 – British political administration in Quebec. (https://youtu.be/q9N5oPwLJrc?si=8NPkqUGU3Lyyzq6K) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)
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# 11.11 Durham and Union

What had the rebellions accomplished? On the face of it, not much. The old order seemed as powerful as ever, reformism had been shown to have neither the guts nor the guile to effect change, and popular support for the rebels failed to materialize. Within a decade, however, the reformers would see the tide of history pull in their direction.

Britain's response to Lower Canada's Ninety-Two Resolutions had been a perfunctory, 10-point refusal. Parliament's reply to the 1837 rebellions was a little more ambiguous. It took the form of John Lambton, 1st Earl of Durham (1792-1840). Nicknamed "Radical Jack" for his support of the British Reform movement, Lord Durham was nonetheless an aristocrat and an ostentatious one at that. When he came ashore at Quebec City to take up his new responsibilities as governor general of all of British North America, it was in full regalia and on the back of a white horse. Durham's remit was to explore the causes of the rebellions and recommend solutions. He spent almost all of his time in Lower Canada and only briefly visited Upper Canada. He met with some of the leaders of the moderate reform movements, specifically Robert Baldwin in Upper Canada and Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine (1807-1864) in Lower Canada. His two aids, Charles Buller and Edward Gibbon Wakefield, played a significant role in writing Durham's final report to Parliament, and Wakefield would go on to become a leading figure in colonization theory.

Buller, Wakefield, and Durham shared the same response to Lower Canada, and it was a negative one. They saw the Canadiens as a backward people, opposed to economic progress, and blinded by their Catholic faith. Durham distilled the rebellion in Lower Canada into a simple English versus French dichotomy. In a famous line from the **Durham Report**, he claimed, "I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state." Baldwin's brand of reformism he found acceptable, but that of Papineau and Lafontaine he did not. He was not persuaded by the oligarchical claims of the Château Clique, but he gave them something for which they had been clamouring: union of the two colonies. With the other hand, he recommended responsible government.

Union would settle Upper Canada's crushing debts and, with an equal number of seats from what would thereafter be Canada West and Canada East, the balance in the assembly would be tipped definitively toward the anglophone side. The endgame was to put an end to French-Catholic culture in North America by means of an anglophone-dominated regime and to double-up on that by increasing immigration from the British Isles. Swamped and politically marginalized, the institutions that sustained Canadien culture (which Durham described as one without history and thus no legitimate claim on survival) would be erased. And that, he thought, would put an end once and for all to unrest in the Canadas.

Then Durham blotted his own copybook by sending into exile in Bermuda eight Lower Canadian rebels just released from prison. Also, he put a sentence of death on any of the rebels in exile in the United States (including Papineau) should they return to Canada. This was a move calculated to inflame opinion in Lower Canada, and, perhaps surprisingly, it was accepted by the locals. But it was regarded in London as stepping beyond his powers and Durham's enemies closed on him. He resigned his commission in the autumn of 1838, only months after reaching Canada and before the battles at Prescott and Beauharnois.

## Union

The British Parliament agreed to reunite the colonies and made it official in 1840 with the Act of Union. But it demurred on responsible government. Looked at from the position of the Château Clique, this was decidedly two points in the win column: the western frontier had been restored and, with it, a far stronger English presence in the united colony, one that could take real steps toward eliminating the French fact. The Family Compact was less happy because they had lost their pre-eminent position or, at least, would have to share it with the Tories of Montreal. What's more, Durham's call for responsible government was interpreted by the Upper Canadian elite as a criticism of their regime. The fact that London refused to allow it must have comforted them somewhat, as did the fact that Lower Canada (with a better treasury) was obliged to absorb the debts that the Family Compact had run up in building their canal system.[1]

In Nova Scotia, Joseph Howe read the Durham Report with interest and corresponded with the minister for the colonies on the subject. Howe enthusiastically supported the idea of responsible government and hoped that it would be extended to the Maritimes. The British cabinet, however, feared that responsible government would lead to imperial disintegration, whether in tumultuous Canada or placid Nova Scotia.

**Key Points**

- Lord Durham was dispatched to the Canadas to act as governor and to investigate the causes of the rebellions, for which he was to prepare a report.
- His two principal recommendations — union of the two colonies and the introduction of responsible government — aimed to advance attempts to assimilate the French-Catholic population into the growing Anglo-Protestant culture.
- Britain agreed to union but not to responsible government.

1. Janet Ajzenstat, *The Political Thought of Lord Durham* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1988), 13-15.

# 11.12 Responsible Government

Durham's perspective on the goal of eradicating the Canadien culture was presented very clearly in his report. There was nothing subtle about it. But to what were they to be assimilated? As a liberal parliamentarian, what Durham saw in the Canadas was an anglophone middle class in Quebec City and Montreal that was being held back from a natural economic leadership role by a peasant sub-stratum. The three pillars of *la survivance* — Catholicism, language, and an agrarian tradition that included seigneurialism — had to be swept away to put Canadiens on the path to a liberal democratic society.

The principal mechanism of this strategy was to be government. The executive for the united Province of Canada was, as before, drawn from the colonial elite although now its members could be dismissed by the governor. The same was true of the legislative council, which now had two dozen members. The assembly, of course, increased substantially to include elected representatives from what was referred to as Canada West and Canada East. Each received 42 seats in the assembly. Given the presence of a sizable propertied anglophone electorate in Canada East (especially in Montreal), anglophones would instantly dominate the elected body.

At first this seemed to work as planned. Charles Poulett Thomson (later Lord Sydenham) replaced Durham as governor general and moved quickly to achieve assimilationist goals. He relocated the seat of government from Quebec to Kingston, an anglophone town with strong Loyalist roots, safe from Canadien agitation. English was decreed the only language of debate and government business. He created additional safe seats for English-speaking candidates and encouraged immigration from Britain. He didn't flinch at the use of violence against French voters and candidates where needed to secure a favourable (i.e., English-speaking) outcome. The assembly seemed destined to function along English versus French, Protestant versus Catholic lines with the Anglo-Protestants in the metaphorical driver's seat.

## Fractures and Alliances

This arrangement began to fracture quickly under the weight of ideologies. Toryism had always been present in the assemblies of the Canadas and its power under the new constitution appeared to be growing. It was, however, changing. Conservatives like John A. Macdonald were different. His conservativism borrowed elements of liberalism and he regarded the Tory element as "old fogeys." The Anglican core of the party reciprocated by viewing the marginally successful Kingston lawyer as a Presbyterian outsider and unwelcome social climber. It is for these reasons that one of Macdonald's biographers has said that he had to "gatecrash [the] local elite."[1] Fissures like these — cracks that ran along the lines of ideological, sectarian, and social class difference — were opening up on the Tory side of the assembly.

On the Reformer side, matters were hardly better. For every pro-parliamentary moderate Reformer like Robert Baldwin, there seemed to be a pro-American-republicanism Radical. Recognizing these

1. Ged Martin, *John A. Macdonald: Canada's First Prime Minister* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2013), 21, 30.

divisions, astute Canadien politicians like Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine agreed to build bridges across the linguistic divide to shore up Reform numbers and to obtain the support needed to acheive responsible government. More conservative elements on the Canada East side of the assembly of course objected, although they found it hard to find in their ideological cousins — the anglophone Tories — much that would work to their advantage.

In 1842 Francis Hincks (another leading Reformer in Toronto) achieved his goal of building an alliance between French and English Reformers. With Lafontaine and Baldwin he was appointed to the executive council. This was a pivotal moment in the political history of Canada: English and French politicians collaborating to achieve a greater degree of democratic accountability. Durham had been unimpressed by Lafontaine, which was clearly an error on his part. Faced with Westminster's assimilationist policy and its refusal of responsible government, the Canadien reformer found the means to subvert plans for the former and to advance the cause for the latter. Lafontaine was bringing responsible government within reach.

The governor at the time, Sir Charles Bagot (1781-1843), was in some respects acting as though responsible government was a done deal. He and his Conservative advisors feared that the assembly's increasingly Reform-oriented membership would censure his administration. Bowing to pressure from Lafontaine and Baldwin he appointed an executive that was dominated by Reformers from Canada East and Canada West but in which no single political party held a majority. The Colonial Office was shocked by what it regarded as too great a concession to the colonials and especially by Bagot's admission that "whether the doctrine of responsible government is openly acknowledged, or is only tacitly acquiesced in, virtually it exists."[2] The new administration, led by Baldwin and LaFontaine but consisting of a mix of moderates, French, English, and Tories, continued in office under Bagot's successor.

These events constituted a turning point because they indicate how far the project of isolating and assimilating the French had failed, the extent to which political parties governed by ideologies were emerging (something the British had also wanted to avoid), and the effective arrival in fact if not in law of responsible government. There would be attempts in the 1840s to roll back these changes, none of which had any lasting impact.

In the winter of 1848, formal and official responsible government finally arrived — in Nova Scotia. In the spring it was proclaimed in New Brunswick. In the following year it was no longer deniable: the Province of Canada had responsible government. Prince Edward Island followed in 1851 and Newfoundland in 1855. Manitoba and British Columbia would only achieve this benchmark when they joined Confederation.

And what makes responsible government a benchmark? The prospect of an executive that is responsible to the assembly rather than the governor reversed the natural flow of power in a colonial regime. Authority no longer derived from the Crown, but from the voters (however small or large the electorate might be). It was a model with roots in the British parliamentary system and so it might be considered an obvious outcome (as it was by Lord Elgin at the time), but imperial power was weakened once colonies claimed to be self-governing. Under responsible government, the empire might retain its power over international negotiations and defence issues and the appointment of governors, but suddenly the rest was up for grabs.

2. Jacques Monet, "BAGOT, Sir CHARLES," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 7 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed February 15, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bagot_charles_7E.html .

## Historical Explanations

It might be argued that Britain could not resist the increasing pressure to allow responsible government, in which case it becomes an achievement of Canadian politicians. But Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had the same privileges sooner, and the pressure there was not nearly so intense. The case has been made that Britain grew fearful that it would lose what remained of its North American empire if concessions were not made: Britain, in this scenario, blinked first.

Some historians take a more economic approach. They argue that Britain's willingness to grant a significantly greater degree of colonial authority — and to perform an about-face on the imperial position announced after Durham — arose not in the colonial legislatures but in British trade policy. The move to laissez-faire capitalism and the end of the Navigation Acts together signalled a change in attitudes about the colonies. In this interpretation, colonial demands worked to the advantage of the empire and events in Canada were merely allowed to unfold. Certainly the Colonial Office was displeased with Bagot for conceding a share of authority to the partisan Baldwin-Lafontaine Reform administration, but they didn't recall him. Nor was his successor instructed to reverse the situation and apply a firm hand to the opposition. It was, in fact, the Colonial Office that had introduced, as early as 1841, the principle that the executive council be subject to the approval of a majority of the assembly. For all intents and purposes, this was the no-frills model of responsible government. The further refinements of a cabinet composed entirely of elected officials drawn from the assembly is really all that was added in 1848-49.

Read in any of these ways, responsible government — the principle that the executive serves at the pleasure of the majority of the elected assembly — had serious implications in a colonial setting. Were they self-governing colonies secure within the embrace of the world's largest empire or had they been cut adrift? Was British North America finding its feet or about to fall on its face? The 1850s suggested the latter.

**Historians on Video**

The events of the 1840s did much to transform Canadian life. As historian Jack Little (Simon Fraser University) argues, government structures appeared not only at the level of the new, united 'Province of Canada,' but also at the municipal and county level. These developments led to changes in economic infrastructure and the means to build a democratic society. Here's a link to the transcript of a video on the formation of the Province of Canada [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_jl_u11_02.pdf).



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=314#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

**Key Points**

- Union was meant to pit a larger number of Anglo-Protestant members of the assembly against a smaller number of Franco-Catholic Members. The ideological fractures in the Anglo-Protestant side undermined that alignment.
- Reformers from Canada West and Canada East found they had goals in common and built effective alliances.
- Conservative elements in French Canada knew how to work with Anglophones from Montreal, but the Anglo-Tories from Canada West were a different matter.

**Video Attributions**

- Dr. Jack Little Question 4 – Formation of the Province of Canada. (https://youtu.be/v5SpwjuNPwo?si=Ixvxn_EJhr5gRxQu) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

# 11.13 Seats of Government

When reform-minded movements have a limited set of reforms on their agenda, the question arises: what happens when those reforms are achieved? In the case of single-issue reformers the answer is usually not much. Having achieved the reform they were after — responsible government — some of the Reformers turned out to be quite conservative. For some, clearly, responsible government was a panacea, a cure-all, the key to better and more effective government and the endgame. For others, it meant pushing aside the existing Family Compact/Château Clique elites so that the Reformers could have their own turn at the trough of power and privilege. For still others, it was a first step along a path of more extensive changes to the political structure and culture of British North America.

## A Compromise on the Capital

Kingston was the seat of government until 1843, when it was moved to Montreal. This would prove to be a fateful decision. It took several more years — and a few other locations — before Ottawa was finally settled on as the capital.

The achievement of responsible government in 1848 primed the Tories in the assembly to be outraged by the power now in the hands of their Canadien rivals and the Reformers from Upper Canada. They were further enraged by the passing of the Rebellion Losses Bill, which proposed to compensate financially those whose property was destroyed or damaged by British troops during the suppression of the Lower Canada rebellions. LaFontaine's bill was based on a report accepted by the government nearly three years earlier, and his aim was to defuse growing radical support for the Papineau wing of the Reform movement in Canada East. At the same time, the bill was a clear demonstration of the power now at the disposal of a block of Canadien votes in the assembly. Lord Elgin (1811-1863), the governor, signed the bill into law on April 25, 1849, and two days of rioting began. Elgin's carriage and home were attacked and windows were smashed at the homes of Reformers from Canada East and Canada West as thousands of Anglo-Montrealers took to the streets. The Parliament Building in Montreal was torched and completely gutted. The whole of the libraries from both Upper and Lower Canada had only recently been gathered there and now they were reduced to ashes.[1]

1. Ian Radforth, "Political Demonstrations and Spectacles during the Rebellion Losses Controversy in Upper Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, 92, 1 (March 2011): 1-4.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Incendie_Parlement_Montreal.jpg)

*Figure 11.10 Burning of the Parliament in Montreal, a painting attributed to Joseph Légaré, c. 1849.*

If the only significance of the Montreal riot had been the burning of the Parliament Building, it would have been enough. But what the Rebellion Losses crisis flushed out was the negotiable loyality of "Loyalists." The Montreal *Gazette* was especially hostile to the bill and called for Elgin's dismissal, recall, or overthrow. There was a great deal of talk among the Tories of abandoning the British connection altogether. John Redpath, who built a fortune around canal construction, the industrialization of Lachine, and shipping (though not yet sugar), was among the wealthy Mount Royal Tories calling for a break with Britain. In his case — and probably in others — his Scottish roots made a difference: his affection for the English ruling class was muted and he was genuinely unimpressed by the way Britain treated the colonies. The local elite's loss of influence in government and the decision to compensate people they regarded as enemies of the state and the Crown pushed the colony's wealthiest cohort into an unusual stance: some began calling for a new association with the United States. The Montreal Annexation Manifesto appeared in the autumn of 1849, signed by more than 300 blue-ribbon entrepreneurs in the city; subsequently — and ironically — it was endorsed by Papineau and his followers. For the first time there was in the Canadas a declared and open movement in favour of secession from Britain and union with the United States.[2]

The response was to move the seat of government away from potentially disloyal Montreal. For the next decade, it was shuttled between Quebec City and Toronto, but that proved to be an unworkable solution. In 1857 it was decided to make Ottawa (until 1855 known as Bytown) the new and permanent capital of the province. The reasons for this choice say a great deal about the concerns of the day: Ottawa was small enough to be managed and/or policed; it was fractious and even rowdy, but arguably less explosive than Montreal; it was defensible against an American attack, given that it was farther north of the border and farther up-river, and there was a resident regiment and a military canal that could speed reinforcements along if necessary; and it was the only community of any size located on or near the boundary between Canada West and Canada East.

Kingston was disappointed. A hotbed of Loyalism and the constituency of Conservative Party leader

2. Jack Little, "The Short Life of a Local Protest Movement: the Annexation Crisis of 1849-50 in the Eastern Townships." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 3 (1992): 45-67.

John A. Macdonald, it was, however, even more exposed to potential American attacks than Montreal. The more hardline Reform element in Toronto made demands for the right to host the colonial administration but this option was, predictably, unacceptable to everyone in Canada East from Montreal down the St. Lawrence. And, of course, Kingstonians objected to it as well. The final candidate was Quebec City: fortified, facing the Atlantic, close to the rest of the British North American colonies, and the seat of government for Canada since Tadoussac ceased to be the leading trading post in New France. This option fell afoul of the numbers: the bulk of the population of the province was now much farther inland.

## Representation by Population

As the 1850s opened, it became clear that the population of Canada West was outstripping Canada East. The former had doubled from about 400,000 in 1840 to more that 950,000 in 1851; Canada East had gone from an estimated 717,000 to just 890,261. Anglophone politicians in the western half of the colony who formerly didn't pay any attention to these figures began a long agitation for r**epresentation by population**. If the campaign succeeded, the bulk of the colony's legislators would come from Canada West. More than that, they would be mainly from southern Canada West, in a triangle marked roughly by Hamilton, Windsor, and Georgian Bay. As capitals go, Quebec City was too remote (and too French and too Catholic) for Upper Canadian tastes. If not Toronto, then certainly not Quebec.

Insofar as Ottawa has since become symbolic of Confederation and the Parliament Buildings are part of the nationalist baggage of Canada, it is worth remembering that the choice was unpopular with just about everyone at the time. George Brown's *Globe* deserves the last word: the Toronto newspaper predicted that Ottawa would fail and would soon be "abandoned to the moles and the bats."

### Key Points

- The Rebellion Losses Bill generated a lot of heat and it also sheds light on the authentic loyalties of some members of the colonial elite. For all their talk of Loyalism and Toryism, a significant number were prepared to make a break with Britain and join the United States.
- In a strange reversal of roles, reformers stepped forward as champions of the imperial connection.
- The relocation of the capital to Ottawa was an act of compromise, but it was also strategic.

## Attributions

**Figure 11.10**
Incendie Parlement Montreal (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Incendie_Parlement_Montreal.jpg) by Jeangagnon (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Jeangagnon) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 11.14 The 1850s

Tories on an arson rampage in Montreal, annexationists popping up in what had hitherto been Tory circles, and **responsible government** breaking out in three — soon all five — British North America colonies in the east. It was on this note that the 1850s opened. In the history of formal politics in Canada, no decade has such a record of discord, frustration, and dysfunction. It was also one that witnessed innovation, invention, and growing political sophistication.

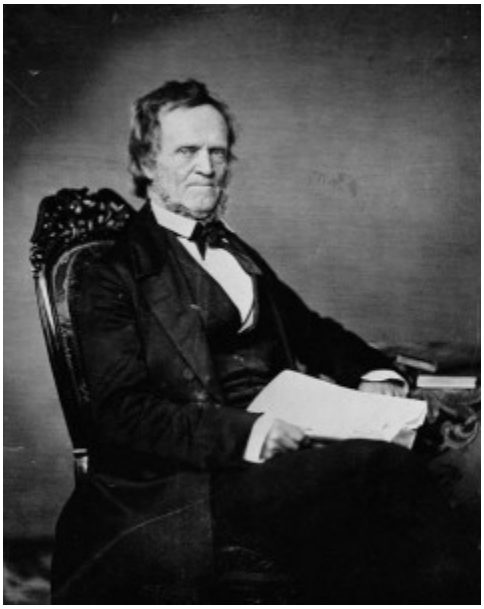
The Act of Union was the Province of Canada's constitution for only 26 years, only half as long as the Constitutional Act of 1791. Many historians have viewed this as a period of stalemates and failures, one that led via a chain of crises to Confederation. This perspective held sway down to the 1980s, by which time historians were observing that the constitution also presented opportunities and in some cases forced opportunities upon politicians.

Three issues stand out in the political history of the Canadas in the 1850s. First is the emergence of political parties and coalitions. Second is the stymied attempts at the cultural assimilation of French Canada, and third is the rise of railway politics.

## Party Lines

Several issues animated political discourse in this decade, but annexationism wasn't really one of them. It peaked in 1849-50 and thereafter remained a fringe movement, even if that fringe did include some of the most powerful people in Montreal and Toronto. Part of the anger in the late 1840s stemmed from disappointing and frightening economic times, which many associated with Britain's move to free trade. As the economy improved, so did Tory support for the new political situation. Besides, fractures in the Reform movement were starting to show.

Radicals from Canada West were once again led by William Lyon Mackenzie. Like Louis-Joseph Papineau, Mackenzie had returned from exile and leapt back into politics. He still commanded a following but it was quickly commandeered by others on the radical wing of Reform, most notably by George Brown. Their position was one of continued opposition to the Family Compact (now more-or-less repackaged as the Tory Party) and to the Montreal merchant Tories as well.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/479px-WilliamLyonMackenzie.jpeg)

*Figure 11.11 William Lyon Mackenzie, c. 1851-61. Regarded as a "gadfly" and a "firebrand," Mackenzie was uncompromising and often difficult.*

Radicals found it hard to stomach the moderate reformers who found their economic plans (and personal interests) increasingly aligned with the old enemies. Brown made clear what he thought the Reformers lacked when he called for a party of "men who are Clear Grit," meaning morally upstanding and firm. This was a strangely anti-materialistic movement that reflected rural suspicion of the cities and towns, Anglicanism, Catholicism, big business, and Montreal as a whole. The Grits, moreover, remained a bastion of anti-French feeling, a position that would be expressed most clearly in their position on the composition of the Assembly.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/John_A_Macdonald_in_1858.jpg)

*Figure 11.12 John A. Macdonald in 1858.*

One of the challenges of studying this decade of colonial politics is the speed with which political leopards changed their spots. Take John A. Macdonald, for example. In 1849 the 34-year old lawyer from Kingston and Conservative member of the legislature supported the call for "no French domination;" six years later he was forging a coalition with George-Etienne Cartier (1814-1873) and his moderate-reform party, the *Parti Bleu*. This is the same Macdonald who, as we know, carried a rifle against the rebels in Upper Canada, now going into political partnership with a man who had fought his way out of the siege of Saint-Denis, laid low for a year, and fled into exile with Durham's death sentence hanging over his head. More than that, Macdonald was able to co-opt much of the Reform Party from Canada West and bring them into his party. By 1851, even the bulk of Papineau's adherents had become more comfortable with the establishment and they built their own coalition with (formerly despised) Reformers. The saying that politics makes strange bedfellows certainly applies to Canada in this decade.[1]

By the end of the decade these swirling fractions had coalesced around two party banners: Liberals (made up mostly of Grits and disaffected Reformers from Canada West, and the *Parti rouge* from Canada East) and Conservatives (the Macdonald-Cartier group). The order that arose from what was essentially a chaotic decade proved durable: these two parties have dominated Canadian politics with few rivals to the present day, and no other party has formed government at the national level.

It is remarkable how quickly politicians in the two Canadas came to an understanding on how they might best proceed. United though the two colonies were, they retained sufficient internal differences and distinctions that one could identify three parties in each of Canada West and Canada East. No single

1. Ged Martin, *John A. Macdonald: Canada's First Prime Minister* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2013), 58.

party could hope to achieve a clear majority outside of a coalition. Even two-way partnerships were not enough: a healthy plurality was the best any party alliance could hope for and what a stable government required. The ability to broker deals was critical to a ministry staying in office, and few could pull it off. Macdonald's palpable talent in this regard is what most suited him for success in Canadian politics across more than a generation.

## Assimilation

Nothing underlines the loss of absolute certainties in Canadian politics like the issue of assimilation. In 1838 Durham laid down a goal and a game plan for the assimilation of French Canada into what he viewed as the more aggressive, forward-looking, and democratic English Canada. The assembly itself was to be the most important instrument of this assimilation process. As we've seen, the ability of the Canadien members to close ranks against assimilation was greater than the ability of Canadian members to mount a united front against French Catholicism. Partly this was a numbers game: when Union began in 1841, the two halves of the Province of Canada had the same number of seats, which meant, despite larger numbers of anglophone-dominated ridings, it was a close thing.

At the time, anglophone politicians were deaf to complaints from Canada East that its population was larger and so deserved more representation, particularly in the French-speaking regions. The 1851 census — the first coordinated census of the united colony — revealed that Canada West's numbers were significantly higher and, as we've seen, the Grits responded with a call for representation by population. More seats in anglophone Canada West would enable the assembly to do what Durham designed it to do: drown out the Canadiens, strip them of their current political advantage, and impose the measures necessary for assimilation. It would also improve the possibility of Radical control of the government because it would inevitably create additional seats in Reform- and Grit-friendly areas, not in Tory hotbeds. This is, presumably, one reason why the Anglo-Tory elements were not enthusiastic supporters of representation by population. And without the support of members of the assembly from Canada East — who were not prepared to endorse their own political disaster — representation by population was a non-starter and the Grits were relegated to the governmental sidelines.

The political heirs of the *Parti Patriote* — the *Parti rouge* — did, however, share Grit concerns regarding the emergence of railway politics, a phenomenon involving conservatives and reformers alike. The *Rouges* remained fearful of anything that threatened Canadien culture and in this the Grits and *Rouges* were obviously at odds. But they shared some other interests and goals. The *Rouges* were supporters of republicanism (which echoed Grit sentiments), and they were anti-clerical/secularist (which, when aimed at the Catholic Church, appealed to Orange feeling among the Grits). Mostly they shared a lack of confidence in the moderate Reformers led by Baldwin. Consequently, alliances that spoke to common issues were forged across the linguistic divide between these two parties while, for the moment, guaranteeing that truly offensive legislation would be kept off the table.

This was the furthest thing from what was intended in the Act of Union. The proposition that anglophones would find more in common with francophones based on political goals and values was essentially unthinkable. These developments, however, raise the question again: assimilation into what?[2] If the goal of Durham and Britain was to extinguish French language, habitant culture, and Catholicism in Canada, then clearly they had failed. And one might reasonably wonder whether the Anglo-Canadians

2. Katherine Fierlbeck, *Political Thought in Canada: An Intellectual History* (Peterborough: Broadview, 2006), 142-144.

and their British governors ever had the right tools to accomplish that task. But if we look again at Durham's critique of Canadien feudalism as the principal obstacle to economic and political progress in the colony, how then does the Act of Union measure up? What becomes of Canadien quasi-feudalism?

In 1854 the assembly passed An Act for the Abolition of Feudal Rights and Duties in Lower Canada. This occurred with the support of assembly members who had rallied at the Six Counties in 1837 and who saw the institutions of the Canadien countryside as critical in the preservation of culture. Through the 1850s francophones in the assembly were key to making coalitions succeed. As we shall see, their engagement in industrial enterprises was second to none. In these ways the Canadiens were, indeed, assimilated by 1860, not in terms of language or religion (although the anti-clericalism of the *Rouges*/Liberals was never understated), but in terms of a reorientation away from feudal values to those of a modern, commercial, industrial, and democratic polity.[3]

### Exercise: Documents — William Lyon Mackenzie's Toronto

Well into the late 19th century, city maps were extravagant ways of charting progress, advertising prosperity, and both capturing and inspiring a sense of place. This 1842 map of Toronto drawn by James Cane (see Figure 11.13) does a number of things well. It shows the city's advance away from the waterfront and to the west, the retreating forest to the north, the few large estates that will be swallowed up, and the future location of the University of Toronto. The coat of arms at the top (see Figure 11.14), which Mackenzie had a hand in developing, invites some reflection. What does it convey?

3. This is the position argued by Janet Ajzenstat, *The Political Thought of Lord Durham* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1988), 4-12.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/Toronto_Cane_map_1842.jpg)

*Figure 11.13 Topographical plan of the city of Toronto, surveyed, drawn and published by James Cane in 1842.*

The profile of the city (at the bottom of the map in Figure 11.13) gives you a sense of the skyline. Toronto in 1842 may have been the largest city in Upper Canada (a.k.a. Canada West) but it was really just a village. The offices of Mackenzie's *Colonial Advocate* were located a block in from Front Street on Frederick Street. It was from there that Tory vandals dragged his printing press and threw it into the lake. In later years, the former mayor of Toronto was provided with a home for his retirement at 82 Bond Street, between Yonge and Church, just north from Shutter Street — on land which in 1842 was only just surveyed (and which is reputed, by the Toronto tourism industry, to be intensely haunted). Otherwise, what does this map reveal about the people and place of Toronto at mid-century?




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/Screen-Shot-2015-02-26-at-2.05.20-PM.png)

*Figure 11.14 Coat of arms at top of Toronto map by James Cane. [Long description] (#fig11.e2)*

## Railways

These newly minted perspectives found their clearest expression in railways. The 1850s, as seen in Chapter 9 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-10/#chapter9), was the decade in which railway-mania first exploded across British North America. Railroads were about economic development and diversification, a make-work project, a brilliant way to win votes in the communities through which they might pass, and a stick with which to beat opponents. The rivalries between Montreal and Quebec, Toronto and Kingston, meant that the Grand Trunk Railway went around Kingston and never reached Quebec. That was neither an accident nor oversight. In an age where the notion of conflict of interests was not fully tested, leaders like Cartier and Alexander Galt (1817-1893) were fully invested in the colonial railway projects. The public showed more concern when evidence arose of payoffs to Canadian politicians by railway promoters, a trend that would continue after Confederation.

The railways and the possibility of obtaining additional railway charters would dominate much of public discourse in these years. While they were, in a sense, a licence to print money, they were also enormous sinkholes of debt. They could make or break a community and, it was feared, even a whole colony. Their costs and possibilities would continue to inform political life in British North America for the rest of the century.

## Election Day

Democracy in these years was a limited thing. Property ownership was the price of entry and, outside of Lower Canada, maleness a condition of membership. The franchise extended only to permanent residents in a community so transient workers and people who rented or were tenant farmers or owned only small amounts of land were excluded from the electorate. With the exception of Lower Canada, where women could own property, there was no female suffrage. Broadly speaking, across British North America, this kind of democracy was more akin to shareholders voting on a company directorate.

The conduct of public voting revealed further limitations in British North America's democratic culture, wherein the small number of electors were always and vastly outnumbered by other adults who were not eligible to vote. Consider this scenario. In 1863 the coal mining town of Nanaimo had a population of about 500, making it the second largest city in the colony of Vancouver Island; the local electorate consisted of seven men and none of them were coal miners. On election day that year only five of the electors voted (in a public meeting with a show of hands) and the outcome was a near thing: a 3-2 win for Charles Bayley. The successful candidate reported subsequently that, within minutes, "the usual festivities commenced and being duly cheered by the people [I] was carried to my residence."[4] The "people" — the miners and their neighbours and families — were present and involved, but not as voters. It is fair to ask in this context whether this kind of politics mattered much to them, or whether other struggles for power and/or survival took precedence.

Engagement in political events was limited in other ways as well. When we look at the rebellions, it is their failure as popular uprisings that leaps out. Papineau rallied 4,000 or more at the Six Counties but there were never that many involved in the sieges at Saint-Denis or Saint-Eustache. The countryside did not rise up to support the rebels. Nor did Upper Canada's independent farmers turn out in numbers

4. *British Columbia Archives*, Charles Alfred Bayley, TS, Reminiscences: "Early Life on Vancouver Island" [1878?], 22.

to support Mackenzie. Contrast this with the hundreds who participated in Orange Riots aimed against Irish Catholic immigrants in New Brunswick in the late 1840s. Certainly the rebels of 1837-38 were fighting the established authority while the Orange Lodges in Saint John were not, but the Tory arsonists of Montreal in 1849 were heaving rocks at the governor himself. The extent to which British North Americans were enthusiastic about orthodox and constitutional politics remains in question.

Perhaps the stakes were too low. Whether as voters or as members of a legislative assembly or an executive council, there was only so much British North American political participants could do. Responsibility for formal education and health care — the critical elements of today's provincial administrations — was small because publicly funded schools and hospitals were few and far between (although that was just starting to change in this period). Foreign policy and defence were both very much in the hands of Britain. The colonial administrations were responsible for two things that mattered a great deal to colonists: the nature of land ownership and taxation. And the colonial regimes were not very good at either of these. Complaints ran throughout this period regarding the inefficiencies of land registration — a key element of any agrarian economy and a source of conflict in the mining sector. Taxes were highly divisive and the greatest source of recurrent political tensions. In Canada, a tax on trade was anathema to merchants while a tax on land was repugnant to farmers; and if the latter were taxed to pay for canals that benefited the former, the political heat was instantly dialled up. This was briefly a lightning rod for political energies but it became dulled by changes in the economy.

In other words, democracy was something directly experienced by a minority, and it produced governments with limited powers whose ability to do what mattered to colonists was limited. What mattered more were jobs and investment, something in which governments participated sparingly. Infrastructure projects were the clearest manifestation of public spending but these were sporadic and Britain could be turned to for support (sometimes with success). The kind of political rivalries that existed in the 1840s to 1860s led to the "spoils system" becoming a trademark of Canadian (though not Maritime) politics. Holding office and being part of an administration meant securing contracts for construction in one's constituency and appointing supporters to the few public offices available. This would become a more powerful feature of Canadian political culture after Confederation.

**Key Points**

- The emergence of political parties complicated the possibility of an English-French dichotomy in the assembly.
- Ideological commonalities came to play a greater role, as did pragmatism about potential alliances.
- Despite its significant shortcomings, the Act of Union forced Canada's politicians to seek out partnerships across old barriers.
- The goals of linguistic and spiritual assimilation were never met, but a modernization of Canadien economic and political life did occur within less than a decade.
- As Indigenous peoples were pushed off of highly desirable farmland, confrontations

shifted to the mineral and timber resource sectors.

- The declining living and economic conditions of Indigenous peoples that arose from colonialism became the newcomer societies' rationale for limiting investment in the welfare of First Nations.

## Attributions

**Figure 11.11**
William Lyon Mackenzie (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WilliamLyonMackenzie.jpeg) by Mortadelo2005 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Mortadelo2005) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 11.12**
John A Macdonald in 1858 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_A_Macdonald_in_1858.jpg) by Jbarta (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Jbarta) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

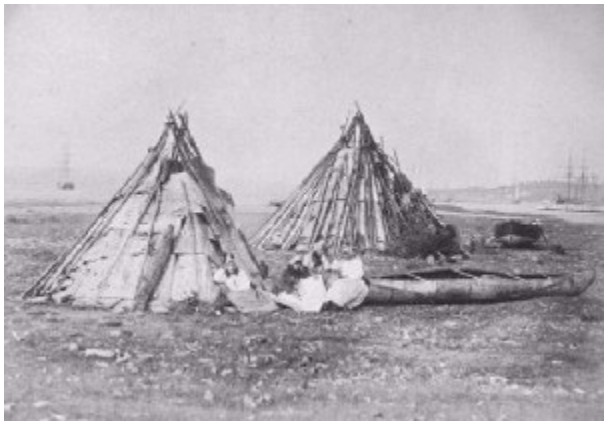
**Figure 11.13**
Toronto Cane map (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Toronto_Cane_map_1842.jpg) by Schrauwers (http://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=User:Schrauwers&action=edit&redlink=1) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 11.14**
Revised from Toronto Cane map (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Toronto_Cane_map_1842.jpg) by Schrauwers (http://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=User:Schrauwers&action=edit&redlink=1) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain). This version is released under a CC BY 4.0 International (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 11.14 long description:** An Indigenous man and a woman holding a shield stand on each side of the coat of arms. A beaver sits above it. Underneath them reads, "Industry, integrity, intelligence." [Return to Figure 11.14] (#attachment_5668)

# 11.15 Indigenous Politics at Mid-Century



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Micmac_camp.jpg)

*Figure 11.15 Mi'kmaq camp near Sydney, Nova Scotia, 1857. Photo by Paul-Émile Miot.*

Important changes in the relationship between Indigenous and colonial peoples began in the 1830s. As early as the mid-18th century there was an appetite in Britain and in some of the North American colonies for the abolition of slavery, but not much came of it. We have seen how Governor John Graves Simcoe made some modest moves in this direction in the 1790s. In 1807 Parliament in London passed the Slave Trade Act, which put an end to the legal trafficking in slaves across the empire. In 1833 Britain passed the Slavery Abolition Act.

## Improvement

The rise in support for abolitionism in the 1830s pertains to Indigenous people because it was a landmark in a movement that came to be known as **humanitarianism**. Generally, British opinion shapers and political leaders were in the process of developing a more egalitarian perspective generally.[1] In part this sprang from the acceptance of individualism as an ideal. The link between individualism and humanitarianism may seem like a contradiction, but the connection was simple: Enlightenment-era individualism stressed the autonomy and value of the individual. If everyone had an equal moral significance then, regardless of race or culture, colour or religion, they were entitled to equivalent treatment or at least respect. This principle played out in many different ways when it came to Indigenous people globally, but in British North America it mostly took on the flavour of "improvement" and "civilization" of Native societies, one individual at a time.

After the War of 1812 and the end of Indigenous power around the Great Lakes, there appeared growing enthusiasm on the part of Euro-Canadians to "improve" Indigenous peoples by settling them in colonial-

1. Peter Stamatov, *The Origins of Global Humanitarianism: Religion, Empires, and Advocacy* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 137.

style villages, modifying their housing styles, teaching them farming and animal husbandry, setting up European-style schools, and enforcing Euro-Canadian-style gender relations. Missionary activity in British North America had been largely neglected since the Conquest, Protestants being evidently less interested in the task than were the Catholics. But from the 1820s on Protestant missionary activity accelerated in Upper Canada and the Maritimes, as it did throughout the rest of the British Empire. By the 1840s the missionary movement had made it all the way to the West Coast.

Set in that context of humanitarian thinking and expanding missionary interest in Indigenous societies, the timing of Britain's mid-decade Select Committee on Aborigines is important. The Select Committee conducted a study of the treatment and condition of Indigenous peoples around the empire. What it found, of course, was that settler societies everywhere dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their lands and their means of making a living. Where Indigenous lands were at the disposal of Indigenous individuals or the community as a whole, there were also sales and further alienation of lands being made.

This created a potential contradiction. On the one hand Euro-Canadian reformers and Tories alike favoured private ownership of land and implicitly the ability of a landowner to sell whenever they got a good price; on the other hand, the loss of tribal lands in this manner stood to undermine the economic self-sufficiency of Indigenous communities and so should be stopped.

The urge to protect Indigenous peoples from what (imperialist authorities took to be) their own irresponsibility won out. The Crown Lands Protection Act (1839) prevented Indigenous landowners from selling off property to newcomers by effectively stripping Indigenous communities of their title. And people without land in this era were people without citizenship. The colonial authorities had decided to act in what they thought were the best interests of Indigenous people, who would be guided into citizenship via assimilation. The Act was thus an important step along the road to converting Indigenous peoples from neighbours and sovereign peoples into disempowered subjects whose affairs were held in trust by the state as a **guardian**. This legislation marked the arrival of a new kind of paternalism, one in which Indigenous peoples had much the same rights as children and usually fewer than Euro-Canadian women.

## Administrative Opacity

Until 1860, responsibility for Indigenous affairs resided with the British government assisted by personnel on the ground in the colonies to advise and administer matters directly. In other words, the responsibility was in Britain but practical authority was in the field. Funding lines were, moreover, confused and complicated. Indigenous influence, too, was at a low ebb. Key decisions were being made far away, in London, while day-to-day decisions were being made locally in the colonies for which the imperial regime might not take ownership. Under these circumstances it is easy to see how Indigenous issues became disregarded or poorly addressed by British North America's mid-century generation of politicians: it was neither their responsibility nor was it made pressing.

Olive Dickason, a historian of the First Nations in Canada, made these observations about the situation across the colonies and in London:

> Herman Merivale, permanent undersecretary of the Colonial Office in London, 1847-60, developed the concept of regional approaches rather than an overarching policy applying to all. This meant almost as many policies

> as there were colonies: in the Maritimes, it was one of 'insulation' of the Amerindians; in the Canadas, 'amalgamation'; in Rupert's Land and on the Northwest Coast, support of HBC administration, which in the latter case was tempered by [Governor James] Douglas' concern for Amerindian rights. In other words, in spite of good intentions, centralized imperial administration was not coping very well with the myriad local problems of colonial government. Neither did goals always synchronize: where the Colonial Office was concerned with rationalizing imperial administration in economic terms, in the colonies it was all too evident that Indians no longer fitted into imperial plans and that programs to ameliorate their situations would be costly. Attempts at enforced change were not getting very far, and the voices of the Natives themselves either were not being heard or were being ignored.[2]

These conditions were well understood in British North America. The Bagot Commission of 1842-44 looked at the situation through a humanitarian lens and called for a unified Indian policy, reminded government of its obligations under the Royal Proclamation of 1763 regarding the integrity of aboriginal land title, identified the need for more thorough and proper land surveys, and advocated for a program of economic cultural change that would see Indigenous peoples become successful ranchers and farmers. There was more, as well, but little of it got funded so the point soon became moot.

There were two forces at work within newcomer society that pulled in opposite directions. First, there was an administrative and fiduciary obligation to Indigenous communities and individuals to protect their interests, and also a vested interest in reducing Indigenous peoples' dependence on government resources. Chronic poverty would be a burden on both Indigenous and newcomer communities. Second, however, was the mindset of a developing colonial frontier, the belief that land and resources were there to be developed and that development and settlement of newcomer families produced revenues and wealth for all. There was, too, a bias in the marketplace: competition was good, but not competition between Indigenous peoples and newcomers, not competition that the Indigenous participants might win.[3]

The outcome was poor for Indigenous peoples. Increasingly their numbers were too small to set a limit on Euro-Canadian expansion. They were pushed to the side or sent elsewhere. The Mi'kmaq fell on particularly hard times as traditional resources were either depleted, negatively impacted by the timber industry frenzy, or no longer accessible because of newcomer intrusion. On Prince Edward Island, the 1767 lottery of lands had neglected to include any provision for Indigenous residence. In a blink, all Indigenous peoples on the island were rendered landless. The patchy and inefficient efforts to settle Prince Edward Island bought the Mi'kmaq some time, but it wasn't until 1859 that anything like a reserve was established.

Generally, the response of the Maritime colonies to Indigenous peoples' hardship was to treat the Mi'kmaq much as they would paupers, with handouts. Nova Scotian and New Brunswick lands that were notionally allocated to the Mi'kmaq were not properly surveyed and, therefore, never registered; squatters moved in time and again. Efforts to take up farming were a failure; moreover, newcomer efforts to force the Mi'kmaq to become farmers were culturally insensitive, unrealistic given the land situation, and oblivious to the costs entailed in starting a community agricultural enterprise (as opposed to a family farm). In the 1840s the Mi'kmaq chief and elder Paussamigh Pemmeenauweet (1755-1843) made a direct approach by correspondence to a young Queen Victoria. Joseph Howe played a leading role in producing the Nova Scotia Indian Act of 1842 thereafter, the thrust of which was guardianship

2. Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 3rd edition (Don Mills: OUP, 2002), 227.

3. Arthur Ray, *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1996), 159.

of a "helpless race."[4] At this time there were thought to be fewer than 1,500 Mi'kmaq and Howe was predicting their extinction within two generations. Successive administrations took the view that to invest in schools or economic salvation of the Mi'kmaq was to throw good money after bad.

From the 1820s and accelerating in the 1830s, similar processes were underway in the Canadas. Kanien'kehá:ka claims to the whole Ottawa Valley were brushed aside as incompatible with the goal of building a thriving farming colony. Setting aside lands for hunting grounds — as opposed to ploughing them up for wheat — was antithetical to the dominant colonialist views of the day. Although governors and colonial administrations made an effort to observe the principles of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, they did so without enthusiasm. Extinguishing aboriginal title was often a matter of imposing the outcome on the Native communities effected, not negotiating a sale or rent.

Lands set aside for Indigenous communities – known as "reserves" — begin to show up at this time. The immigrant and fertility explosions among the colonial peoples in the Canadas finally caught up to more remote arable lands. Resistance by Indigenous peoples was difficult because of continuing population declines among Natives, successive loss of land title (which left Natives with little in the way of bargaining chips), and the elimination of historic allies in the face of American westward expansion. That's not to say resistance did not occur. The Mica Bay War on Lake Superior in 1848 stands out as an example. The territory in question was entirely owned by the Ojibwe and none of it had been surrendered. Heedless of this fact, the government issued mining licences to non-Indigenous people. The Ojibwe responded by burning down a mining operation.

Indigenous leaders argued for annuities and royalties on resources tapped in their territories; the Province of Canada was only prepared to pay for land cession. The outcome was the Robinson Treaties of 1850 — one on Lake Huron and the other on Lake Superior — which included a purchase payment plus annuities in exchange for the entire foreshore of Lakes Superior and Huron. Indigenous people would enjoy unfettered Indigenous people's access to hunting and fishing in the region, which was thought to be reasonable given the limited agricultural potential at the edge of the Canadian Shield. Manitoulin Island emerged as settlement hub for native peoples as a result. It is important to add that Métis peoples who made claims at this time (and whose claims were supported by the Ojibwe leadership) were disregarded by the Canadians. It is also worth noting that Indigenous people's interest in farming was regarded as marginal, regardless of what plans and ambitions Native peoples themselves might have.

Indigenous people in the Maritimes and the Canadas complained that they were being characterized as "lazy" and dependent but that they couldn't cut a tree on their lands without the permission of a bureaucrat. Worse, no one seemed interested in stopping colonists from taking timber from native lands. Half-hearted attempts were made to address this question. Legislation in the 1850s tried, with mixed results, to protect timber stands on Indigenous communities' reserves from the incursion of logging camps. The logging industry, however, was something of a wild free-for-all and this initiative was badly policed. The laws lacked teeth.

Another act that aimed to further protect the property of Indigenous peoples in Canada East in 1851 would come to have very important long-term ramifications. The legislation attempted to define who could be regarded as an "Indian." Initially very broad and inclusive, it was revised soon after to include

4. Ibid., 147.

categories like **status** and non-status, and to limit the extent to which Indigenous communities could identify who qualified for membership. The **patrilineal** traditions common in European societies were impressed on Indigenous people's identity so that the offspring of a registered Indian father inherited status while the children of a non-Indigenous male married to an Indigenous woman were, simply put, not Indians. Humanitarianism had become much more paternalistic, protective, and assimilationist, a trend that is most clear in the Province of Canada's An Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes of the Canadas (1857). The goal was to enfranchise adult Native males one at a time, thereby removing their Indian status; monitor their moral character (as part of a Christianization initiative); and turn them into independent landowners (at the expense of reserve land). In the 20 years that followed only one Indigenous person in the united colony took up this offer.

At the heart of this there were different goals. Indigenous peoples generally wanted to adapt to new circumstances. In some quarters — among the Mississauga, for example — there was real interest in farming and a willingness to indulge the newcomers' enthusiasm for "model villages" made of European-style houses on reserves. Other Indigenous groups like the Lenape (Delaware) had an ancient agricultural tradition of their own; they didn't need to become farmers, they needed land. This was not, however, about assimilation into newcomer norms; this was about adapting as Indigenous people to changing circumstances. But Euro-Canadians and Nova Scotians wanted Indigenous peoples to assimilate. Schooling and farm education were never, thus, about equipping Indigenous peoples with the tools they wanted. These initiatives were meant to stop Indigenous people from being Indigenous people.

Unable to gain much ground in either political or cultural inclusion, the state began a long campaign of legislating against behaviours. The fact that this coincided with the rise of racist thinking in the Western world is probably not a coincidence. Restrictions on the sale of liquor to Indigenous peoples, for example, revealed a belief in Indigenous susceptibility and then rooted that in "Indian-ness" rather than proximate causes like tragedy, trauma, economic dislocation, etc. (This law remained in effect until 1951.)[5]

The 1860s would witness further changes in the relationship between British North America and the Indigenous peoples of the northern half of the continent, most of which could be characterized as intensified neglect. The humanitarian moment had passed; belief in the impending disappearance of "the Indian" was becoming more general.

**Key Points**

- There was confusion regarding Euro-Canadian responsibility to Indigenous peoples, which arose from the belief that this was a matter for Britain to address.
- Modification of Indigenous behaviour and living conditions — addressing visible issues — became the main thrust of "Indian" policy.

5. Dickason, *Canada's First Nations*, 212-13, 229-30.

- Newcomer interest in Indigenous land intersected with concerns that Indigenous people might become landless through individual alienation of territory. The policy solution may have accelerated the process it intended to stop.

## Attributions

**Figure 11.15**
Micmac camp (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Micmac_camp.jpg) by Achim Raschka (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Achim_Raschka) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 11.16 Summary



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/12/c000610.jpg)

*Figure 11.16 Bytown/Ottawa was selected as the site of the new capital of the Province of Canada in 1858. Site development was underway (as seen here) by the early 1860s.*

Politics between 1818 and 1860 was very much like the economy. It was fluid and evolving while remaining deeply unchanged. Some Tory values, which included a deep dislike for republicanism, survived and percolated out to influence groups that were their dedicated foes. Papineau, for example, embraced loyalty to the Crown for most of his career and Lafontaine did so as well. The Tories themselves were not a fixed point: they changed from being the landed gentry in most colonies into a commercial class with heavy investments in infrastructure, distilleries, and breweries. They required the support of a professional class of lawyers and notaries who would, in turn, challenge the various Family Compacts around British North America.

The commercial and capitalist orientation of the Haligonian and Montreal elites became obsessions of this new liberal professional class as well. There is much to be learned about the nature of British North American society through a close study of the life of someone like John A. Macdonald, and nothing is as revealing as his pilgrimage from the periphery of Toryism as a francophobic Scottish Presbyterian lawyer in deepest Loyalist Kingston to the leadership of a dualist Conservative Party. A contrary tide took many of the most staunchly Tory elements in Montreal into the arms of republicanism in the late 1840s as, feeling abandoned by Britain, they nearly turned their back on the monarchy to seek a future exclusively in North America. One expects positions to change; the speed with which British North American political leaders dramatically adjusted their thinking and their priorities in these years makes the 20th century look static by contrast.

At least one other feature of this period deserves careful thought, because it is so often dismissed in

a cavalier way. The Constitutional Act of 1791 may have had structural weaknesses that provoked and hardened opposition and demands for reform, but it lasted for 50 years. There wasn't a single constitution in France that lasted that long before the 20th century. The Act of Union had a lifespan of 26 years. As historians we must ask what features of the Constitutional Act created conflict; we must also ask what features made it so durable under the circumstances.

These are questions to keep in mind as we consider the steps taken to achieve Confederation in 1867. What values lay behind the movement to bring together the colonies and what external forces played a role? What was happening and what did people believe was happening? What was the level of public engagement in this process? How did this take place in the utter absence of any involvement of Indigenous representation? Who were the disenfranchised of this period and how was their status reflected in the constitutional arrangements worked out in Charlottetown, Quebec City, and London?

Key Terms

**Act of Union, 1841:** The constitutional arrangement for the Canadas that replaced the Constitutional Act of 1791. Its main features were union of Lower and Upper Canada, creating one colony and one colonial government and an identical number of assembly seats for both partner colonies, with an eye to subsuming the French-Catholic community. The Province of Canada retained some regional divisions, and the old colonies perpetuated their separate identities as Canada East and Canada West.

**Chartists:** A movement for political reform in Britain during the 1830s; the supporters of the People's Charter of 1838 — the Chartists — called for universal adult male suffrage, equitable constituencies, and other innovations, which would radically broaden British democracy.

**Clear Grits:** Reformers in Canada West who coalesced in 1850 behind a platform of universal adult male suffrage and attacks on privilege. Principally rural at first, it became more urban under the leadership of George Brown in the late 1850s. Its founders called for men who were morally incorruptible, "all sand and no dirt, clear grit all the way through." The Clear Grits joined with the Reformers and subsequently became the Liberal Party.

**Durham Report:** The *Report on the Affairs of British North America* of 1839 was the product of Lord Durham's investigation in 1838 into the causes of the crisis in Canadian politics.

**established church:** The single official institutionalized religion of a state or nation. In the case of France prior to the Revolution and New France prior to the Conquest, it was unquestionably the Catholic Church; in Britain and its colonies, it was the Anglican Church (or Church of England). Post-Conquest attempts to impose the Anglican Church on the Canadas as the established church failed.

**guardian:** In the case of Indigenous relations with the state, the Crown (effectively, the Government of Canada) acts as the caretaker of Indigenous lands and property in a capacity roughly comparable to that of a parent or guardian of a child. The process of creating this role began in 1839 with the Crown Lands Protection Act and was fleshed out after Confederation in the Indian Act of 1876.

**humanitarianism:** A movement and philosophy that enjoyed particular support in the first half of the 19th century. Humanists argued that every individual shared a common moral significance. It was, as a movement, opposed to slavery and advanced the cause of working-class rights. It also sparked a renewed interest in the condition of Indigenous peoples.

**Hunter Lodges, Hunter Patriots:** Lodges formed by 1837-38 rebels who sought sanctuary in the United

States and proposed to launch attacks on the Province of Canada from across the border. Members of the Lodges were called Hunter Patriots.

**Master and Servants Acts:** A suite of laws dating from the 18th and 19th centuries that sought to regulate the relationships between employers and employees. Formed the bedrock of industrial relations law, although these Acts were heavily weighted to the advantage of employers and were designed to minimize the ability of labour organizations to interfere with the ability of business to act freely.

**Montgomery's Tavern:** The site of the main confrontation between Radical-Reform rebels and colonial troops in Upper Canada in 1837.

**Ninety-Two Resolutions:** A list of demands put forward by Louis-Joseph Papineau and the *Parti patriote* in 1834 calling for extensive political reforms. Britain replied with the **Ten Resolutions.**

**patrilineal:** Lines of inheritance that descend through fathers to their children. Compare with matrilineal (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/summary-4/#matrilineal).

**representation by population:** A series of demands assembled by the *Parti patriote* under the leadership of Louis-Joseph Papineau in 1834.

**republicanism:** In British North America, a pro-democracy movement; anti-monarchical and modelled on the American republic and, to a lesser degree, the French republic.

**responsible government:** The principle that the executive council should be subject to the approval of the elected assembly and that, should it lose that approval, the executive council can be dismissed by the elected assembly. Under the Constitutional Act of 1791, the executive council was entirely appointed; under the Act of Union of 1840-41, the executive was in practice elected.

**status:** In the context of laws affecting Indigenous peoples from the mid-19th century on, the notion that some Indigenous people have official standing as Indigenous peoples and that the criteria behind this "status" is determined not by the Indigenous community but by the state.

**telegraph:** Communications technology that permits the transmission of a message electronically across significant distances. Characterized in the Victorian era by the use of lengths of telegraph wire, which ran on posts parallel to the railroads and thus kept stations in touch with one another.

**Ten Resolutions:** In response to the *Parti patriote's* Ninety-Two Resolutions, the British Colonial Secretary, John Russell, submitted to Parliament a counter-proposal that ignored all of the *Patriotes'* demands.

**ultramontanism, ultramontanists:** In British North America, Catholic clergy who took their institutional, spiritual, and political leadership from the Vatican.

## Short Answer Exercises

1. How did the Constitutional Act create oligarchical regimes?
2. Who were the main critics of the Constitutional Act?
3. Who were the leading figures in government and who were their critics?
4. What solutions were proposed to the constitutional crisis in the 1820s and 1830s?
5. What was the role of media in the mid-19th century?

6. What were the objectives of the rebellions of 1837-38? How did Lord Durham understand these events?
7. What were the goals of the Act of Union?
8. What is “responsible government” in the context of 19th century politics?
9. How did the forces of Toryism respond to the new constitutional conditions in the Act of Union years?
10. What was the role of political parties in these years?
11. How did working people, Indigenous peoples, and women figure into the political culture?
12. What weaknesses were built into the Act of Union? What strengths?

## Suggested Readings

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5. Radforth, Ian. “Political Demonstrations and Spectacles during the Rebellion Losses Controversy in Upper Canada.” *Canadian Historical Review* 92, no.1 (March 2011): 1-41.

## Attributions

**Figure 11.16**
Canal locks and Major’s Hill 1860 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Canal_locks_and_Major's_Hill_1860.jpg) by Skeezix1000 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Skeezix1000) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# Chapter 12. Children and Childhood

# 12.1 Introduction



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Edward_S._Curtis_Clayoquot_girl_British_Columbia_ca._1915.jpg)

*Figure 12.1 Tla-o-qui-aht (Clayoquot) girl, Vancouver Island, c. 1915.*

Histories of childhood present special challenges. First, assuming that one is fortunate enough to pass through childhood and not succumb to the many dangerous diseases, it is a transitional phase in life. However much it might define one, it will only do so for a certain period of time and then it is left behind. One may be a female or an Indigenous person or a farmer for the entirety of one's life, but no one is a child for more than the first few years.

The second challenge is how to define childhood. Clearly there's the period of utter dependency that most societies would agree constitute infancy and that usually lasts four to six years. After that, what distinctions does a society and culture make between a seven-year-old, for example, and a 14-year-old? What criteria are used to define the qualities of childhood and its end? Across the many cultures of British North America and Indigenous Canada and across many centuries, the definition of childhood has been both diverse and fluid.

Third, the history of childhood is limited by the lack of personal records. Most children in the past were insufficiently literate and rarely self-reflective enough to provide first-hand accounts of their lives. This changed somewhat in the 19th century when institutionalized education emerges as a shared aspect of

child development, one that taught children how to give voice to their experiences. Nevertheless, the record in past centuries is patchy at best. And our own values and prejudices about childhood come to bear. As historian Robert McIntosh recently wrote,

> The history of childhood has been reconstructed through studies of adults and their activities – and children's responses to these. Only rarely is the agency of children recognized in the historical literature: children tend to be portrayed as passive beings who are the objects of welfare and educational strategies. The history of childhood becomes the history of the efforts of others on children's behalf. [1]

What becomes clear in a study of childhood over even a relatively brief stretch of historical time is how the experience is historically contextualized. Childhood, probably more than adulthood, reveals the extent to which we are shaped less by biology and family and more by historical forces. Nature and nurture are important but it is history's hand that rocks the cradle.

Learning Objectives

- Describe what defined childhood in the past.
- Identify possible sources of information on historical experiences of childhood.
- Demonstrate awareness of different historic experiences in New France and British North America.
- Describe the role of education and schooling in the lives of children.
- Explain the relationship between childhood and work in different economic and social contexts.

## Attributions

**Figure 12.1**
Clayoquot girl (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edward_S._Curtis,_Clayoquot_girl,_British_Columbia,_ca._1915.jpg) by BotMultichillT (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:BotMultichillT) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

1. Robert McIntosh, "Constructing the Child: New Approaches to the History of Childhood in Canada," *Acadiensis* XXVIII, no.2 (Spring 1999).

# 12.2 Childhood in a Dangerous Time

It has been estimated that a quarter of all infants in 18th century New France failed to make it to their first birthday and that nearly half died before they were 10 years old.[1] Matters were no better a century later: mid-19th century Montreal witnessed infant mortality rates of 250 per thousand live births. The rate was even higher on the other side of the continent; in Victoria, Kamloops, and Nanaimo near the end of the century the rate was almost 300 per thousand.[2] (In comparison, the Canadian rate is now below five per thousand live births.) Conditions varied sharply from place to place but it is likely that childhood mortality (that is, dying between one's first and fifth birthday) was nearly as bad. In short, it is possible — and certainly plausible — that a third to a half of all live births in late 19th century British North America ended in death before the age of five.

Historians of childhood have struggled with these figures. What were the implications of such a high death rate for relationships and the experience of childhood? Some historians have taken the view that the high incidence of infant death (along with stillbirths and miscarriages) impacted the development of strong emotional bonds between parents and children. As one study claims,

> Parents resisted making large emotional investments in their children until they demonstrated their ability to survive. The delay in naming infants and the practice of giving the name of a child who had died to a subsequent child are cited as practices which demonstrate this relative lack of attachment. Thus, a situation of high infant mortality is in a sense a vicious circle, with children valued less because they are less likely to survive, and with the lower emotional investment in children reducing their survival chances.[3]

Not everyone agrees with this perspective. Anecdotal accounts do not reveal emotional stinginess on the part of bereaved parents; quite the contrary. John A. and Isabella Macdonald lost their first born — John Jr. — just after his first birthday. As John A.'s biographer writes, "Of course, his parents never fully overcame their grief. Moving house in Ottawa in 1883, Macdonald's second wife discovered a mysterious box of toys: her husband quietly identified them as 'little John A.'s.'" Isabella, who had given birth at 37 years of age after a difficult pregnancy made tolerable by opium, was pushed by her grief into depression and addiction; she died eight years later.[4] Now, it might be countered that middle- and upper-middle class couples had fewer children on the whole and so experienced infant loss differently from, say, farmers who had to be more dispassionate about tragedy. This presumption remains to be proved, and it assumes a lot about the stereotype of stolid farmers.

Clearly material well-being was an important consideration in the lives of children. In societies based on

1. Jacques Henripin, "From Acceptance of Nature to Control: The Demography of the French Canadians Since the Seventeenth Century," in Perspectives on Canada's Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues, eds. Frank Trovato and Carl F. Grindstaff (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1994), 25-6.

2. John Douglas Belshaw, *Becoming British Columbia: A Population History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 180-1.

3. Roderic P. Beaujot and Kevin McQuillan, "The Social Effects of Demographic Change, Canada 1851-1981," in *Perspectives on Canada's Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*, eds. Frank Trovato and Carl F. Grindstaff (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1994), 40.

4. Ged Martin, *John A. Macdonald: Canada's First Prime Minister* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2013), 48-51.

subsistence agriculture, horticulture, hunting and gathering, or the harvest of food from the sea, the line between success and failure was thin, and children were especially vulnerable.

## The Threshold to Adulthood

Despite the persistent belief by many that the average age of marriage — one indicator of achieving "adulthood" — was much lower in past generations, the evidence points in the opposite direction. Historical demographer Jacques Henripin found that the mean age at first marriage for women in 1700-1730 Canada was 22.4 years (26.9 for men).[5] The age of marriage was even later in the 19th century. The median age at first marriage for women born in the 1830s was 25.1 years, and girls born in the 1840s married later still, at 26.0 years. Thereafter the age at first marriage would drop, almost steadily so that women born in the 1930s married at 21.1 years.

To be sure, there is a good likelihood that more 14-year-olds married in the 1850s than in the 1950s, but those were — then, as now — exceptions.[6] Youthful marriage, in any event, ought not be mistaken for early physical maturation, which in fact was often delayed by poor or inconsistent diets. [7] And some marriages involving children were arranged, being more about diplomacy that intimacy. Samuel de Champlain married Hélène Boullé when she was just 12 years old. Boullé's marriage contract stipulated that the marriage would not be consummated for two years; the fact that the couple never had any children suggests that perhaps it never was.

In New France the most important threshold in childhood appears to have been around the age of 15 or 16. This was a demographic watershed as well, as nearly half the population was under the age of 16 years. In Acadia in 1698, nearly 400 of a total population of 789 colonists were under 16. It is no surprise, then, that 16-year-olds were made into militiamen.[8] Nevertheless, the age of maturity in the *ancien régime* was 25, and people as old as 20 were often (and officially) considered to be children. Parents thus had a continuing and ongoing responsibility for their children well into what we would consider adulthood today.

Indeed, this responsibility could run quite deep. The patriarchal model of French colonial society was firmly and formally established, and men were entitled to physically discipline both their children and their spouse providing it was not outright brutality. The checks on domestic violence included the judiciary and the clergy, both of which upheld the necessity and the sanctity of marriage, and neither of which recognized wives as anything other than dependants. Gossip was probably a more powerful instrument of social control in these situations, because social censure could hamper the survival chances of a whole family.[9] Parents performed a critical role in the colonial marriage market because, in New

5. Cited in Peter Moogk, "Les Petits Sauvages: The Children of Eighteenth-Century New France," in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 19.

6. Ellen Gee, "The Life Course of Canadian Women: An Historical and Demographic Analysis," in *Perspectives on Canada's Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*, eds. Frank Trovato and Carl F. Grindstaff (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1994), 56.

7. Neil Sutherland, "History of Childhood" in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Toronto: Historica Canada, 2006). http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/history-of-childhood/#h3_jump_0

8. Moogk, "Les Petits Sauvages," 20.

9. André Lachance and Sylvie Savoie, "Violence, Marriage, and Family Honour: Aspects of the Legal Regulation of Marriage in New

France, a new son- or daughter-in-law (and their offspring) could become dependants with a legal claim on family property. A poor reputation in these circumstances was something to avoid and something to watch out for.

**Key Points**

- High rates of infant and childhood mortality meant that childhoods were abbreviated in at least a quarter of all cases.
- The threshold between childhood and adulthood was delayed in New France, even though children could marry at a young age.

France," in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law, vol.V, Crime and Criminal Justice*, eds. Jim Phillips, Tina Loo, and Susan Lewthwaite (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1994), 143-173.

# 12.3 Childhood in New France and Lower Canada



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Louis-Joseph_Papineau_10_years_old.jpg)

*Figure 12.2 Louis-Joseph Papineau at 10 years.*

As we have seen, the French colonies of Acadia and Canada developed along rather different geographical lines. Acadia's salt marsh farms along the Bay of Fundy provided small nodes of population, genuine communities in which children would be raised surrounded by an extended family, although the communities themselves were relatively isolated, accessible principally by water. This was an environment in which agricultural work in a family setting was a powerful defining feature of life for young people. On reaching maturity they would generally try to find a place to live near their family and few would head out to the frontier of Acadia, wherever that might be.

In Canada, the long corridor of the St. Lawrence worked against "the formation of villages [so] community life did not develop strongly along the valley, and the festivals and communal work patterns of Old France did not become entrenched."[1] Here, too, kin became the focus and locus of childhood. And the seigneurial system — until about 1820 — offered young adults the possibility of obtaining their own land close to their parents' home. Historian Peter Moogk has shown how this environment of propinquity impacted parenting, which tended toward less disciplinarian paternalism than was found in Old France; by the 1700s, evidently, this was another way in which Canadiens were distinct from

1. Joy Parr, "Introduction," in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 10.

the French of France. The irony is that early French visitors to North America commented critically on Indigenous peoples' parenting styles, which they regarded as far too lenient and soft.

In both Acadia and Canada children were rarely sent off to apprentice in another household from a young age. While the youth of France were testing the rules in the homes of strangers, the children of the two colonies were both supported by and contained within a network of relatives. It was only when the availability of nearby land dried up that this pattern of growing up in a multi-generational kin-based community began to fracture. From the early 19th century, children were raised knowing that they would have to move away from the familial enclaves and try to develop kin networks of their own. This change signified a break with nearly 200 years of Canadien culture. It gave external, non-familial entities like the Church or the employer more authority and influence, extending to the youngest members of the community.

## Church and Childhood

This connection between clergy and child-raising was most obvious in education. In 1642 Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620-1799) established a teaching order in Montreal for the education of girls — both Indigenous and Canadien. A separate school appeared in 1664 for boys (only colonists, though). In both institutions the clergy either provided the instruction themselves or selected lay people to do so. Social class lines were observed, and fees were charged that put the best education beyond the reach of most children. Those pupils who came from poorer households were more likely to be taught domestic skills or trades than reading and writing.[2]

A greater focus on basic literacy for both boys and girls arose in the first half of the 18th century. Girls continued to be taught needlework and domestic skills, but they were also more likely to learn how to read and write. Some critics at this time expressed the concern that this "expanded" education would turn good farm girls into fine ladies who would shirk their role in building up the agrarian colony.[3] However, the rates of nuptiality and fertility in the colony certainly don't suggest that happened. The marriage rates show that there was a population of spinsters, but their status as "never married" can be explained in part by the number of girls who opted to join the Canadien nuns, a career path that was both respected and sought after. There were few similar opportunities for boys to be trained into the clergy. The Sulpicians, for example, recruited in France, but not Canada.

For the earliest generations of Canadien children, there is evidence to suggest a strong generational cohort. The arrival of the *filles du roi* between 1663 and 1673 resulted in a rash of marriages and births. Thus there was a decade in which a large number of first borns arrived on the scene. Twenty years later demographic historians have found evidence of a population boom echo: "Montreal had been peopled almost at one stroke … so that practically all the immigrants' daughters reached the age of marriage and the period of highest fertility at the same time."[4] Surrounded by numerous peers, the children of

2. Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth Century Montreal*, trans. Liana Vardi (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1992), 269-71.

3. Peter Moogk, "Les Petits Sauvages: The Children of Eighteenth-Century New France," in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 38-9.

4. Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants*, 55.

the children of immigrants would be responsible for forging some of the most distinctive features of Canadien culture.

**Key Points**

- Childhood was spent surrounded by near relatives in Acadia and Canada.
- These arrangements changed in the post-Conquest period when apprenticeships and servitude in other households became more commonplace.
- The clergy in New France played an important role in raising and educating colonial and Indigenous children and were a strong influence on notions of ideal childhood, girlhood, and womanhood.

## Attributions

**Figure 12.2**
Louis-Joseph Papineau 10 years old (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis-Joseph_Papineau_10_years_old.jpg) by BeatrixBelibaste (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:BeatrixBelibaste) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 12.4 Childhood in the West



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/YoungLouisRiel.gif)

*Figure 12.3 Louis Riel, at 14 years, preparing to leave Red River for Montreal.*

Historian of childhood Jennifer Brown pointed out years ago that the fur trade society brought together people who had experienced highly different childhoods. Many of the officers of the HBC were themselves orphans "recruited through the Grey Coat charity schools" of London.[1] Their connections with their peers in the company were strong, as were their relationships with Indigenous women and wives. The HBC officers who settled at Red River did so with an eye to establishing a society near The Forks, an intergenerational community at the confluence of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. They insisted that the company set aside resources for schooling, and when that was not forthcoming, they exercised what patriarchal authority they had in a strange land and had their *métis* sons shipped off to Britain for their education. Daughters stayed closer to home where they spent their childhood in a more Indigenous-inflected environment.

The NWC traders did something similar. Those with connections to Montreal sent their sons and daughters alike to the St. Lawrence towns at a relatively young age. The work of Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer Brown on this topic suggests that Indigenous mothers were highly critical of packing off

1. Jennifer S.H. Brown, "Children of the Early Fur Trades," in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 44-68.

children to remote educational institutions, which were, in any case, alien to their own experiences.[2] There was, however, the expectation that the children would return, not least so they could provide for their parents in retirement in the Red River Colony. Although the history of the fur trade in the West provides many examples of traders on fixed-term contracts who arrived, had relationships, and then departed, perhaps leaving their wives and children in the care of Indigenous in-laws or a freshly appointed Euro-Canadian trader (a process sometimes called "turning off"), the record is also clear that many of these relationship (husband/wife; father/children) were anything but casual.

Indigenous women approached parenting differently. First, the evidence suggests that they were accustomed to rearing fewer children. As Brown writes, Indigenous families "were usually small, and children were commonly born three, four, or more years apart, owing to long periods of nursing that reduced the mothers' fecundity and sometimes to post-partum taboos on sexual relations."[3] Under these circumstances an Indigenous child could expect something close to undivided maternal attention (certainly compared to the lot of their European contemporaries). Second, Indigenous women engaged in co-mothering, at least outside of fur trade society. Once they were brought into the fold of the European posts and forts, Indigenous mothers often found themselves caring singlehandedly for their young while the pressures to have more children in closer succession increased.

Fertility rates in the fur trade society were by all indications closer to the habitant model than to traditional practices among, say, the Anishinaabe. For children of the fur trade this meant having many siblings, and likely a good supply of uncles, aunts, and cousins as well. Some, usually the boys, identified more strongly with their European ancestry and culture, while others, particularly the girls, viewed themselves more as Indigenous, although it is important to underline that no one rule applied.[4]

One can only imagine the cultural and linguistic complexity of many of these communities as they became intersections not only for European and Indigenous relationships but Scots and Anishinaabe, French and Cree, Nakoda Oyadebi and Lakota Sioux, English and Hawaiian, Iroquoians and Secwepemc. By contrast, life in Toronto, Quebec, or Halifax may seem two-dimensional.

Childhood was critical to the formation of the Métis nation. French fathers commonly deserted their Indigenous wives and children, as their understanding of marriages *à la façon du pays* was that they were not permanent and that the women might one day return to their families. This was, according to historians, the pattern, and for Indigenous communities that recognized matrilineal descent, this was not (theoretically at least) a problem. In French fur trade communities like Fort Detroit, Michilimackinac, or Green Bay, however, there were other elements of European culture present: specifically, the clergy remained there for the long haul. The Church missions helped with housing, education, and culturally orienting significant numbers of Métis children of these marriages, which grounded them in a common vocabulary of Catholicism. Economically they were traders and hunters. Socially and culturally they were linked by very long tendrils to Montreal, pre-revolutionary France, and Rome.

2. See, for example, Sylvia Van Kirk, "'The Custom of the Country': An Examination of Fur Trade Marriage Practices," in *Canadian Family History: Selected Readings*, ed. Bettina Bradbury (Mississauga: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992): 70-75.

3. Ibid., 48.

4. Ibid., 56.

**Key Points**

- In the 19th century fur trade society put a greater emphasis on formal schooling, a sign of the influence of European participants.
- Marriages between European men and Indigenous women tended to produce larger families, which had an important impact on the experience of childhood.

## Attributions

**Figure 12.3**
YoungLouisRiel (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YoungLouisRiel.gif) by Ras67 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Ras67) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 12.5 Children at Work

In almost all parts of colonial British North America, children began to work at a very young age, whether officially for an employer or to help support the family. In fact, children passed from a period of dependence and into active engagement as early as six years of age. Puberty, when it came, was a dividing line between childhood and adulthood, though not necessarily the first one crossed.

## Young Labourers

Examples abound, in the 18th and 19th centuries, of children engaging early in economic activities. Some straightforward jobs were assigned to the very young. Indigenous children were introduced to artisanal crafts and traditions from the moment they were able to participate in the simplest productive process, which is to say as young as four years. The same was true of most farm children in settler society: in New France very young children on farms were tasked with scaring birds away from crops.

However, a child's social and family circumstances or their environment often required that more complex work be taken on. Splitting fish was often the task of six year olds in outport Newfoundland during the 18th and 19th centuries. Processing fish was a wage-earning job undertaken by girls of 10 years, as was domestic labour.[1] Orphaned children under the age of six years were bound or indentured to non-relatives where they became household labour or servants. The loss of a parent in these cases necessitated an early start to a labouring life.

Seven-year olds in the anglophone British North America colonies were subject to English common law, which treated them as adults as far as work was concerned until later in the 19th century. This often meant difficult and potentially dangerous labour for working children. For example, eight-year-old boys (and sometimes younger) were considered old enough to work underground in British North America's coal mines. By 1866 there were, conservatively, 450 boys working in the mining pits of Cape Breton and Vancouver Island.[2]

In a colonial world that depended heavily on seagoing transportation and in which almost every town of any size was effectively a port town, it is inevitable that we would find boys were put to sea on fishing boats, in merchant ships, and in naval vessels. They did so at 10 or 12 years of age. Although most of the working children from this period are unknown to us, some we know by name. George Vancouver went to sea when he was 13 and José María Narváez at 14 years of age. Both were born into comfortably well-off families and so began their careers in their early teens; children of less privilege joined up younger. David Thompson, the son of a poor Welsh couple in London, was apprenticed (more correctly, indentured) to the Hudson's Bay Company at 14 years of age. Thompson's experience was not entirely extraordinary: the HBC was London-based, orphans were plentiful in 18th and 19th century London, and the company's patriarchal ethos was consistent with the role of guardian.

1. Robert McIntosh, "Constructing the Child: New Approaches to the History of Childhood in Canada," *Acadiensis*, XXVIII, No.2 (Spring 1999).

2. Robert McIntosh, *Boys in the Pits: Child Labour in Coal Mines* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000), 7.

Farm families were large because child labour was useful and necessary. Artisanal families, too, made use of all members of the household, although typically at lower levels of reproduction. The rise of industrial workplaces and urbanization changed some of these familial relationships, some of which were very old indeed. Factories and growing towns placed working families into situations where more and more members had to go out to find work. The home was no longer also the workplace. This applied to children as well as adults.

What do we know of child labour in these years and how do we know it? Individual and anecdotal accounts of childhood work and life tend to provide more evidence than official records, especially as regards the youngest workers. In later years — in the mid-Victorian era — this would be because employers were reluctant to reveal how many extremely young or officially "underage" children they had working for them. Before then, however, it was more likely the case that very young children were not reported (or under-reported) because their contribution was necessarily small. A child whose tasks consisted of stacking wood, for example, might not be considered to be in an apprenticeship, even if that was what it was, in the early stages of unfolding. A further — and more direct — deception involved girls in what was technically boys' work; this comes through very clearly in reports from navies and merchant fleets where girls disguised themselves as boys in order to hold onto jobs at sea.

Many of these areas of employment carried huge risks. Handling domestic animals on the farm and horses in towns presented a constant hazard; many boys died underground in mines in the 19th century; children drowned or were murdered in battles at sea; slave raids or hostage-taking during warfare between Indigenous peoples posed a millennia-old threat to children. In the mid-19th century the emergence of factory labour put children in completely new and unfamiliar environments where they were subject to mechanical hazards and oppressive supervision.

One study shows that a third of boys in a Montreal working-class ward in 1861 were employed. On the whole, boys were likely to earn more — from mine, mill, or factory work — than girls and so were sent out to work more often than their sisters:

> The enlistment of thousands of children as workers in Montreal businesses reveals an aspect of industrial society that has nearly vanished today, but was fundamental to 19th century manufacturing. For many working families, basic survival was a daily challenge. Supplementary income was needed as families grew and more mouths had to be fed. Children's wages provided an important second income. And for sons of working-class families, joining their fathers in the factories was the only option. Limited schooling would have to suffice for children whose horizons were limited to urban factories. Accordingly, the Industrial Revolution expanded the industrial enslavement of children. Montreal, no less than any other industrial city of the day, did not escape this reality.[3]

It was a short step from agricultural labour that included all members of a family to industrial labour in which children would participate. But in this setting they were no longer being supervised by a parent or relative, nor were they part of an apprenticeship relationship in which their master fed and clothed them. The imposition of disciplinary regimes, however subtle, were part of life in every factory, even if fines and beatings were not. Children were being moulded into industrial workers by their employers: they were expected to be punctual, focused, efficient, and deferential.[4] In this setting, employers were

3. Jean de Bonville, *Jean-Baptiste Gagnepetit, Les travailleurs montréalais à la fin du XIXe siècle (*Montreal: Les éditions de l'Aurore, 1975), 55.

4. Bettina Bradbury, "Gender at Work at Home: Family Decisions, the Labour Market, and Girls' Contributions to the Family Economy,"

shaping not merely their workforce for the day but their workers for the future. At the end of the pre-Confederation period, factories were, in truth, manufacturing workers from children.

There were, too, independent or near-independent jobs to be had. Running errands, selling newspapers, helping in a small grocery — these were low-skill jobs that were available in a number of towns. Other children engaged in "penny capitalist" enterprises like selling fruit or household fuel.[5] Girls who went into domestic service — and their number was enormous in Victorian Canada — sometimes did so on a part-time basis in several households at once, as laundress's assistants, for example.[6]

## Childhood without Parents

What is less often considered is the almost universal alienation of children from their parents. Orphanhood — whether marked by the loss of one or both parents before the child reached puberty — was extremely common. Peter Moogk suggests that nearly half of all adolescents in New France had only one parent.[7] In the early Victorian era, when women on average had about six children before they themselves reached 35 years of age, life expectancy for adults was barely half what it is today, so it was almost certain that the youngest children would not have left home before the death of at least one parent. In some cases orphaned children under the age of six years were bound or indentured to non-relatives where they became household labour/servants.

This pattern helps to explain the rise of the orphanage as a major urban and social institution in the 19th century. There was a long tradition in French Canada of such facilities run by the Catholic Church, but during the period from 1820 to 1860 there was a wave of purpose-built facilities for orphans. Many of these were the work of Ladies' Aid Societies, which established Protestant Orphans' Homes. As one study clarifies, "the name 'orphan home' is misleading insofar as most housed more non-orphans than orphans. Children were commonly temporarily consigned to an institution by a single parent unable to manage, or by a family undergoing a short-term crisis."[8] For a child consigned to an orphanage, whether temporarily or permanently, this marked a significant break with family life and probably the beginning of a highly structured existence. It may have been the first and only opportunity to obtain some formal schooling.

That is, however, to put a gloss on the larger social history of the orphan experience. Dr. Barnardo's Homes were first established in 1866 in London by the Irish physician, Thomas John Barnardo, with the founder advocating what he called "philanthropic abduction" of the children of the poor. In some instances British children whose parents had entrusted them to the care of an orphanage were shipped off to the colonies (including British North America) where they became essentially indentured servants

in *Canadian and Australian Labour History*, eds. Gregory S. Kealey and Greg Patmore (Sydney: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History and the Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1990), 119-40.

5. John Benson, *Entrepreneurism in Canada: A History of 'Penny Capitalists'* (Queenston, ON: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

6. Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 220-1.

7. Peter Moogk, "Les Petits Sauvages: The Children of Eighteenth-Century New France," in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 25.

8. McIntosh, *Boys in the Pits*, 20.

to foster families.[9] Children in Canadian cities were likewise "plucked" from the streets by early social reformers who were more distressed at social decay than they were by the welfare of the children themselves.

**Key Points**

- Child labour took a multitude of forms and it was not unusual to find very young children engaged in demanding labour.
- Farm children worked from an early age; apprentices took on responsibilities from about the age of eight years. Children working in industrial circumstances, however, marked a significant break from past practices.
- Children were statistically at risk of being orphaned.

9. Craig Heron, "Saving the Children," *Acadiensis* 13, no.1 (Autumn 1983): 172.

# 12.6 Childhood under Attack

The mid-19th century witnessed a moral panic over the condition of, and the perceived threat posed by, children in the streets of British North America's major cities. The same situation existed in British and American cities at the time, sparking campaigns to improve the lives of children. (Charles Dickens' novel, *The Adventures of Oliver Twist*, published in serial form from 1838 through 1839 served as an inspiration for increasing policing and philanthropy alike.)

**Street arabs** or urchins, as impoverished children were known, were viewed as criminals or criminals-in-the-making. They fell below contemporary hygiene standards (which were, by all accounts, pretty low to begin with) and were perceived as unsupervised. Many "child-savers" believed a solution was to put them to work; better to have them spend long days in a factory or be fostered out to a household, even if they would be exploited and ill-treated, rather than let them remain on the streets, or so the thinking went at the time. As one review of the literature put it:

> The child-savers … made proper parenting in a natural family setting the central precept of their endeavours; yet, in practice, their programmes seldom allowed such a relationship. In the final analysis they expected the regeneration of children to take place through work: for the evangelicals hard, manual labour shaped appropriate personal discipline and morality, and for the child-savers, it turned aimless street arabs into productive workers.[1]

Initiatives to improve the lives of children included the promotion of education and concern for public health. In the third quarter of the 19th century the child's body became a battleground for imperial fitness. Generations of weak urban children, it was feared, would produce equally enfeebled national armies. This concern percolated out of Britain and into British North America. The reshaping and policing of childhood in the early Victorian era (a movement that would persist for the next century or more) arose out of these concerns and created much of the framework on which we continue to mount our own measure of life before adulthood.

**Key Point**

- Social movements in the Victorian era, including the spread of formal education, were manifestations of a moral panic about unsupervised children, particularly in urban areas.

1. Craig Heron, "Saving the Children," *Acadiensis* 13, no.1 (Autumn 1983): 173.

## 12.7 Children as Historic Actors



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/hbcurlingf.jpg)

*Figure 12.4 Children can be seen at play in this painting, "Curling on Lake Banook."*

To what extent is it possible to think of children in past centuries as having agency in their own lives? Feminist historians have corrected the widespread misconception that women were mere shadows in the past; historians of First Nations have likewise shown that Indigenous people were actors and not merely acted upon. Post-colonial and feminist critiques have moved those goal posts — can the same be done for the history of childhood?

Certainly children faced constraints in past societies. Paternal authority in law was unquestioned in both French and English civil and common law; children had no independent rights whatsoever. What's more, as property, they were able to be reassigned to other owners, whether temporarily (as in the custodial care of an orphanage) or permanently (as in "binding" as an apprentice to a master or to the navy). Children who had become impoverished and thus dependent on the state or parish could be bound by either to an employer/master. In instances like these the permission of parents wasn't needed. For the least fortunate in Upper Canada, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland, the British Poor Laws applied. Boys and girls were mixed in with adults of all ages in circumstances that provided them little in the way of safety from harm. An 1832 inquiry into the Halifax Poor Asylum revealed "that the seventy-four orphan children in the institution slept with adults 'without any regard to fitness of health or morals.'" Conditions did not improve in a hurry: in 1849 it was discovered that boys and girls — some as young as eight years old — were regularly whipped with rawhide while incarcerated at the Kingston Penitentiary.[1] There is no doubt, then, that children were vulnerable and frequently exploited and harmed.

But that is not the same thing as being powerless or without influence. The discourse around the rise

1. Robert McIntosh, *Boys in the Pits: Child Labour in Coal Mines* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000), 29-30.

of “street arabs” is clear about one thing: urban adults felt menaced by children. That is not to say that street children were a force for chaos and danger, but that they resisted the self-appointed moral authority of the state and adults. Faced with dangers themselves, children often found strength in groups of peers and they resisted institutionalization. They fled and taunted; they spoke up for one another. Solidarity occasionally occurred.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of childhood agency comes not from the emerging cities of the early Victorian era but from Wendat society before the Confederacy’s disruption in 1649-50. Ceramics was an important part of the cultural and artistic life of the Wendat. As a non-nomadic farming people, the Wendat had both the capacity to store large numbers of ceramics and had many uses for containers. Ceramic production was, therefore, a central part of village life. An archeological study from 2006 demonstrates that children were involved in the making of pottery variously known to scholars as “juvenile,” “baby,” or “toy” ceramics. “These small ceramic vessels are … categorically different, in formation and design from the typical, widespread ‘adult’ pots.” What a careful examination of these artifacts reveals is that children were not merely learning the art of ceramics: they were introducing stylistic change.[2] Childhood creativity, invention, and innovation were forces for change within pre-contact Wendat societies and, we can safely assume, in all those societies that followed.

## Attributions

**Figure 12.4**
Curling on the lake, near Halifax, N (https://www.flickr.com/photos/28853433@N02/11354545243) by Library and Archives Canada (https://www.flickr.com/photos/lac-bac/) is used under a CC BY 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/) license. This image is available from Library and Archives Canada (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_and_Archives_Canada) under the reproduction reference number C-041092.

2. Patricia E. Smith, “Children and Ceramic Innovation: A Study in the Archaeology of Children,” *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 15 (2006): 65.

## 12.8 Summary

It is in the nature of childhood to be a part of the life course that is subject to external forces. Infants are nursed into childhood proper with no say as to how that should happen. Behaviours and expectations, rewards and punishments are administered in such a way that children quickly misperceive their world as the only possible way in which childhood might be constructed; it is a period of socialization into adulthood but first into childhood. These are features that make childhood in the past a challenge to research and also an extremely important subject to pursue.

The experiences of children in pre-Confederation Canada varied from one region to the other, from one century to the next, and from one cultural group to another. Just defining the period known as "childhood" and the experience of "childhood" thus becomes a slippery business. What we can say for sure is that childhood was fraught with health hazards and cluttered with work obligations. The family — particularly in rural areas — was the forge in which children were fashioned. In New France the clergy played an important role as well and in the 19th century institutions like orphanages, schools, and prisons began to challenge the primacy of kin in moulding young minds and bodies.

It is easy, however, to underestimate the role that children play in the making of these societies. Their numbers are crucial to their military histories. The loss of children in the 1630s smallpox epidemics, as we have seen in earlier chapters, was crippling for Wendat society when it needed warriors to fight against the Haudenosaunee in 1649. As the nation-state emerges in British North America and as the Empire relinquishes both control and obligations, young people are where armies will come from. Increasingly they become viewed as assets that must be managed by the state in some way or another. The story of modernity — which has its roots in the late 18th century and its foundation in the institutional structures erected in the 19th century — is in many important ways the story of childhood.

### Key Terms

**street arab:** An impoverished and underprivileged child who survives by means of begging or stealing.

### Short Answer Exercises

1. What are some of the constraints faced by historians in their study of children?
2. Why were rates of infant mortality in the 18th and 19th centuries consistently high?
3. How did pre-Confederation societies define "childhood"?

4. What role(s) did the clergy play in shaping childhood?
5. To what extent were children "property"?
6. In what ways was childhood in New France different from the experience of childhood in 19th century British North America and the West?
7. What role did the state play in the lives of children?
8. To what extent were schools a response to moral panics?

## Suggested Readings

1. McIntosh, Robert. "The Making of Modern Childhood." In *Boys in the Pits: Child Labour in Coal Mining*, 14-41. Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2000.
2. Moogk, Peter. "Les Petits Sauvages: The Children of Eighteenth-Century New France." In *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, edited by Joy Parr, 17-43. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982.
3. Nootens, Thierry. "'For Years We Have Never Had A Happy Home': Madness and Families in Nineteenth-Century Montreal." In *Mental Health and Canadian Society: Historical Perspectives*, edited by James Moran, 49-68. Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2006.

# Chapter 13. The Farthest West

# 13.1 Introduction




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/1280px-Plano_del_Archipielago_de_Clayocuat_1791.jpg)

*Figure 13.1 Clayoquot Sound as mapped in 1791 by Francisco de Eliza.*

Historical approaches to British Columbia follow imperial avenues. From a Canadian perspective, we approach it along the routes of the North West Company (NWC), through the northern Rockies and along valleys and passes to Bella Coola or the Columbia River. From a British or Spanish perspective, we come at it from the sea and from warmer waters to the south, perhaps via Hawaii. Had Russia successfully annexed everything on the West Coast, the historical approach would reflect that northern intrusion — a story of Siberian traders from Kamchatkan ports, incrementally working their way from Alaska to California. An American imperial approach focuses on the mainland, specifically on the Oregon Trail, though it should make room as well for the multitude of entrepreneurial Bostonian captains sailing around Cape Horn on long-haul trade expeditions. The American view would also observe the enormity of Washington, D.C.'s claim on the territory and the impact of Americans throughout the gold rush years.

Once it was determined to the satisfaction of Europeans and Euro-North Americans that there was no water passage through the territory, they started to think of it in terms of ports, coves, forts, and corridors. What is missing from these competing imperialist views is an appreciation of the region as a human space, a dense patchwork of cultural territories for which "getting in" and "getting out" are irrelevant concepts.

Historian Jean Barman coined the phrase "the West beyond the West" to describe the territories that would eventually coalesce into British Columbia by 1871. Other terms that have been used include Trans-Mountain West, the Cordillera, New Caledonia, New Albion, the Pacific Northwest, and Cascadia (this last one lumps together British Columbia with the American states of Washington and Oregon). None of these labels are perfect, not least because British Columbia covers such a vast territory, one that includes the prairie lands of the Peace River District in the northeast, the rolling and almost pastoral Cariboo plateau, and the desert and semi-desert terrain of the Okanagan and Thompson Valleys, as

well as the mountainous landscape throughout and the fjords and islands of the coastlands. Much of the region is as unlike the "Pacific Northwest" as can be imagined. More to the point, British Columbia is, with the exception of the Peace District, utterly separate from the Prairies. For that reason, Barman's "West beyond the West" works nicely to remind us that there is a whole world of regions within a region that lies outside the more easily conceptualized prairie landscape we refer to simply as "the West."

The period from 1740 to 1874 in the farthest west was a time of Indigenous cultures adapting and adopting European and Asian technologies and *matériel* successfully. It also encapsulates a catastrophic loss in populations brought on by epidemics of exotic diseases. While European and American merchants struggled to find the sweet spot in a fur trade with potentially enormous profits but very high costs, Indigenous communities found themselves confronting internal competition and conflict as well as **gunboat diplomacy**. European impact on the region was, nevertheless, limited until the 1858 gold rush, at which point the local contact period accelerated very suddenly and in ways unseen elsewhere in British North America. Combined with the arrival of an industrial revolution, these changes drove significant political changes at a record pace. There was no "pioneer stage" in the West, just a race to industrial scales of production that began in the Victorian era and overshadowed nearly a century of regional commerce. Toward the end of this period, a single colonial regime had emerged along with many familiar themes associated with power and elitism. Throughout it all, Indigenous people took a stand against the newcomer populations and cultures (in the 1860s in particular), and many of the issues they addressed then remain unresolved in the 21st century.

Learning Objectives

- Broadly describe regional Indigenous cultures and their differences.
- Explain outsider interest in the region from 1740 to Confederation.
- Describe some of the advantages and disadvantages held by, respectively, the Russians, the Spanish, the British, and the Americans.
- Demonstrate an understanding of Indigenous nations' autonomy and resistance from the 18th century through the 1860s.
- Explain the colonial administrations' approach to Indigenous peoples.
- Describe the economies of the two West Coast colonies.
- Account for and describe the social and political fracture lines in the region.
- Describe and comment on the gold rush and its effects.

## Attributions

**Figure 13.1**
Plano del Archipielago de Clayocuat 1791 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plano_del_Archipielago_de_Clayocuat_1791.jpg) by Pfly (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Pfly) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 13.2 Indigenous Societies in the 18th Century



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/haacp18b.jpg)

*Figure 13.2 For two years after his death, Haida leader Skowl's body lay in state, surrounded by evidence of his wealth, including coppers (shields) and his slaves. (Photo by Albert P. Niblack, 1883)*

Simon Fraser's arrival at Camchin (Lytton), at the confluence of the Thompson and Fraser Rivers was foretold. Among the Nlaka'pamux around the end of the 18th century there was a prophecy that foreigners would arrive from the east — although in some respects, they had already arrived.

## The Proto-Contact Years

The fur trade on the Plains and the intrusion of Spanish goods — including horses — impacted Indigenous peoples in the northern reaches of the Columbia basin (the Okanagan and Thompson Valleys) and in the Kootenay valleys. Knowing this, it is possible — indeed, probable — that smallpox arrived in the Cordillera long before the first European appeared. Epidemics in the 1730s and 1760s could have been passed along trade or raid routes, especially once so many of the neighbours to the south and east were able to travel on horseback. The 1780s smallpox epidemic definitely made an appearance. And when Fraser arrived in 1808 he found evidence of European trade commodities among the Nlaka'pamux, proof that there was no such thing as total isolation in this region. It remains uncertain as to when the proto-contact period precisely began in the Interior of what is now British Columbia, but we can be confident that the world encountered by Euro-North Americans from the 1770s on was one undergoing great change.

Notwithstanding the proto-contact experience, Indigenous societies in the Pacific Northwest enjoyed prolonged isolation from the European invasion taking place in Mexico, the Mississippi, the parklands of the North, and the eastern woodlands. From 1500 to the 1740s, Indigenous cultures and populations continued to thrive. There is nothing in the written, oral, archaeological, or geological record to suggest any catastophes to rival the volcanic explosions of about 2,000 and 1,000 years earlier; nothing that

would force a massive migration wave. (It is the case, to be sure, that seismic issues are a fact of life in the region. One local traditional understanding of their cause conveys a very usable image of what contemporary science believes occurs: “According to the Nuxalk … a giant supernatural being held the earth in ropes. When he adjusted his grip, or when the rope slipped in his hands, the Nuxalk could feel the tremors and performed a ceremonial earthquake dance.”)[1] The southward movement of Athabaskan speakers appears to have been complete by 1400. After this time the pattern of culture groups seems to have coalesced into the form that enters the European record from the 1740s on.

There are three culture areas in what is now British Columbia: Subarctic, Northwest Coast, and Interior Plateau. Each of these extends beyond the province’s boundaries to, respectively, the East and North, the Columbia Basin, and from California to Alaska. Each group made use of winter villages, which tended to be larger concentrations of population that combined food and fuel resources to make it through the season. Most, too, had summer villages or summer ranges where resources of all kinds would be gathered or harvested. This pattern implies the regular migration of significant numbers of people to sites of economic and cultural importance. A large range of land- and seascapes could be utilized without establishing permanence in any of them. Even the huge cedar longhouses that are the trademark of coastal cultures could be dismantled almost entirely and the heavy planks floated to another site. Records from the contact era of what appear to be abandoned villages continue to provoke debate among scholars and in the courtroom: were they truly abandoned, just swapped out temporarily for a second location, or ruined by war and/or disease?



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/849fe058-f14c-4b6f-bc7f-237f44873ea8-A26448.jpg)

*Figure 13.3 Despite efforts to rehouse Indigenous people in Euro-Canadian structures, longhouses were still be built in the 20th century. This one is under construction in the Vancouver area around 1912.*

## Village Cultures

The longhouse was a defining feature of Indigenous life on the coast. Great numbers of people associated with distinct clans occupied these buildings that could be the size of a modern football field. As storehouses, homes, and theatres for celebrations and performances, longhouses were among the largest

1. William J. Turkel, *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 122.

and grandest structures in North America into the 19th century. The Northwest Coast culture developed along stratified, hierarchical lines that included a nobility, a commoner class, and slaves; their relative status was reflected in their living space in the longhouse.

The complexity and sophistication of longhouse decoration was also important. Population health and size was almost guaranteed by the wealth of food sources available along the coast — including whales on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Over time, large and prosperous populations developed a culture reflected in arts, sculpture, dance, storytelling, and specialized roles in hunting, fishing, and warfare. Village populations often grew to be more than 1,000 people, and the larger ethnic zones might include 10,000 to 20,000 individuals. Opitsaht in 1792 was said to contain "200 houses, generally well built" with an estimated population of 2,500.[2]



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Nakoaktok.jpg)

*Figure 13.4 This 'Nak'waxda'xw woman's abalone earrings and inscribed metal bracelets mark her as a member of the Kwakwaka'wakw nobility. Photo by Edward Curtis, c. 1910.*

Subarctic culture groups were much smaller and tended toward an egalitarian model. Families constituted the basic social unit and the favourable seasons were devoted to a wide-ranging hunting-gathering routine. Recent research has demonstrated that Subarctic peoples also engaged in horticulture, refashioning the landscape with fire to encourage the growth of berry patches and roots.

Interior Plateau peoples focused on riverine resources, particularly the salmon runs. In the winter, they

2. John Boit,1792, quoted in George Woodcock, *British Columbia: A History of the Province* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990), 57; Daniel W. Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 132.

lived in the *kekuli* or pithouse. Populations were never as high as those on the coast, but winter villages were substantial and numbers were higher than among the Subarctic peoples. Access to the Columbia River system put this group into closer contact with peoples of the Plains tradition and with cultures deep in the American southwest.

Trade across these three culture regions was extensive and regular, and they shared both linguistic and political connections: Interior peoples like the Nlaka'pamux had connections with Stó:lō peoples in the lower Fraser Valley, commercial and military alliances that were facilitated by their common language group (Salishan). In other instances, common language was no more a guarantee against rivalry than being part of the Iroquoian language pool protected the Wendat from the Haudenosaunee. And alliances crossed lingustic and culture zones: the Tsilhqot'in (Athabaskan speakers) and the Nuxalk (Salishan speakers) brought together Northwest Coast, Subarctic, and Interior Plateau traditions when they gathered for trade and support.[3]



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Stolo_with_dipnets.jpg)

*Figure 13.5 Stó:lō men dip netting for salmon on the Fraser River. Prime locations for fishing like this were the property of lineages to use and share as they liked.*

What marks the region as a whole is diversity of peoples and languages and a similarity of economies and food traditions. Almost everyone harvested salmon from the rivers and hunted for large land mammals. And everyone traded.

On the coast in particular the accumulation of wealth was especially important because it served the ceremony known as the **potlatch**. Principally, the potlatch involved gift-giving to mark a key event, such as a succession, a coming of age, or a political anniversary. The scale of the gift-giving — the magnitude of generosity and hospitality — reflected the status of the host. These events also served as a means to announce changes or events of some importance, and the guests as recipients of gifts would be expected to bear witness. The potlatch was also a means of redistributing wealth. When the salmon runs were strong (at least once every four years), canyon peoples built up substantial surpluses; when the runs

3. Robert J. Muckle, *The First Nations of British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 32-7.

failed, as they did from time to time, coastal peoples were better positioned. Potlatching in this context was a kind of mutual support system.[4]



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Speaker_Figure_19th_century_05.588.7418.jpg)

*Figure 13.6 A 19th century potlatch "Speaker Figure." An announcer would have stood behind the figure, calling out the names of guests through the mouth.*

## The Contact Era

The arrival of the trans-Pacific sea otter trade, which opened up the West Coast to intercontinental commerce, had a significant impact on Indigenous societies, not least of which was the introduction of exotic diseases. Although most if not all of these nations were impacted by smallpox (beginning probably in the 1780s, perhaps earlier), the magnitude of the mortality is both unknown and likely uneven. In some cases it was disastrous. (The Sinixt people of the Arrow Lakes are thought to have been reduced by 80% in the 1781 smallpox epidemic, for example.) As well, recovery rates are completely a mystery. Further and cataclysmic epidemics occurred in the 1830s and the 1860s, some of which are considered later in this chapter.

Scholars, Indigenous peoples, and the courts debate the probable pre-contact numbers west of the Rockies. Some estimates are modest, ranging from 80,000 to 100,000. Others are as high as 350,000, and there are outlier estimates in excess of 1 million. The matter is complicated by eyewitness accounts like those of George Vancouver, who saw abandoned villages, half disassembled, and assumed they indicated a disaster involving loss of life. But the business of seasonal movements between village and resource

4. A useful discussion of potlatching can be found in Turkel, *The Archive of Place*, 131.

sites can account for some of the empty lands that were reported. Archaeological research has yet to provide a reliable means of estimating the pre-contact numbers. Nor can we be sure when smallpox first struck, partly because it doesn't leave a "fingerprint" on the victim the way some skeletal diseases or bone trauma from combat might.

What we know for sure is that wherever Europeans went on the coast, they reported the existence of large villages with equally impressive longhouses. Communities may have been farther apart in the Interior, but some were, according to NWC reports, nodes of 1,000 or more. We can also be confident that, given what we know about virgin soil diseases, those well-developed village communities with their high densities and even the *kekuli* pits of the Interior were a good environment for highly contagious diseases to thrive in. Around 1860 there were maybe 80,000 Indigenous peoples in the region; not only did they outnumber the newcomers, they outnumbered all the other Indigenous peoples in British North America combined. Their number at the time of contact could only have been larger.

These numbers and the complexity of the Indigenous world west of the Rockies would insulate Indigenous cultures from externally imposed change for a while. Historians disagree on this point, but it is safe to say that much of the cultural change that occurred along the Pacific Northwest coast until the 1840s was controlled mainly by the Indigenous peoples and not by the Europeans.

**Key Points**

- Indigenous societies west of the Rockies faced little to no direct exposure to Europeans prior to the 1740s.
- Indigenous cultures can be grouped into three broad categories: Subarctic, Northwest Coast, and Interior Plateau.
- While each share some common features, there are important distinctions as well.
- Trade between Indigenous communities and nations was extensive both in terms of the distances travelled and the commodities exchanged.
- The potlatch is an important feature of the regional economy, political and social order, and wider cultural life on the West Coast, into which newcomer goods fit very well.
- Populations west of the Rockies and especially on the northwest coast were larger than anywhere else in North America.

## Attributions

**Figure 13.2**
Haida (http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/aborig/haida/haacp01e.shtml) by Albert P. Niblack is from the Canadian Museum of History (http://www.historymuseum.ca/home) and cannot be used for commercial purposes.

**Figure 13.3**

Interior of longhouse under construction (http://searcharchives.vancouver.ca/interior-of-longhouse-under-construction) by Matthews, James Skitt, Major (http://searcharchives.vancouver.ca/matthews-james-skitt-major) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain). This image is available from City of Vancouver Archives (http://searcharchives.vancouver.ca/) under item: In P105.2.

**Figure 13.4**
Nakoaktok (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nakoaktok.jpg) by Para (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Para) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 13.5**
Stolo with dipnets (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stolo_with_dipnets.jpg) by Themightyquill (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Themightyquill) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 13.6**
Speaker Figure, 19th century (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Speaker_Figure,_19th_century,_05.588.7418.jpg) was uploaded as a donation by the Brooklyn Museum (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Brooklyn_Museum), and is considered to have no known copyright restrictions by the institutions of the Brooklyn Museum.

# 13.3 Fur Trade and Empires



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/800px-Sea_Otter.png)

*Figure 13.7 This unflattering depiction of a sea otter comes from James Cook's account, A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean (1776). (Attributed to S. Smith, after John Webber.)*

## The Russians

The catalyst for European interest in the Pacific Northwest in the 18th century was Russian exploration. The *Sv. Petr*, under the command of Vitus Bering (1681-1741) arrived in the Aleutian Islands in 1741 as part of an exploratory expedition. The ship was wrecked, Bering died, and just enough of his crew survived to get home in a makeshift boat cobbled together from what was left of the *Sv. Petr.* They went back with sufficient **sea otter pelts** to win a small fortune. Russian entrepreneurs and shipowners were soon following in Bering's path. Enslaving much of the indigenous Aleut (a.k.a. Unangan) population and terrorizing much of the rest, the Russian traders established a presence that eventually stretched south to California. These events occurred against a backdrop of growing Russian expansionism. Under Elizabeth of Russia and her successor, Catherine the Great, Russia's imperial ambitions and aggressive posture grew. All this alarmed the Spanish (see below), who first heard of the move into Alaska in the imperial Russian court.

Bering and his successors may have had the blessings of the empresses, but they also faced great challenges, the first of which was supply lines. The huge cost of running their operation out of Okhotsk limited the Russians, which is one reason why they were largely uninterested in settlement until the 1780s and 1790s. The agricultural potential of Alaska, with its short growing season, was another impediment to self-sufficiency. The Russians faced further disadvantages in the marketplace. They were

denied access to Guangzhou and had to carry their pelts across Siberia to Kyakhta, south of Lake Baikal, where they could cross the border into China. This added further costs.[1]



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/320_w_full.jpg)

*Figure 13.8 Aleut (Unangan) seal hunter off the Alaskan coast, as painted by the Ukrainian artist, Louis Choris, c. 1815-18.*

Some of the competitive elements of the Russian trade began to consolidate by the 1780s. In 1799 Czar Paul I decreed a Russian-American border at 55°N (near the southern limit of the Alaskan panhandle) and chartered a joint stock company to take monopolistic control of the fur trade: the **Russian American Company** (RAC). Almost immediately the company's chief manager, Alexander Andreyevich Baranov (1746-1819), adopted a policy of contracting out to American ships in the region. In 1803 two Russians and some 40 Aleuts and Alutiiq otter hunters sailed to Baja California on board an American ship. Over the next decade, it is believed that tens of thousands of otters were captured along the California coast by Alaskan Indigenous workers in the employ of — or, more typically, enslaved by — the RAC and working from American ships.

The first permanent Russian (and thus the first European) settlement in Alaska was established at Novo-Arkhangelsk (New Archangel, or Sitka) in 1804, which hardened Russian claims to the territory. As well, in 1812 the Russians were able to leapfrog their British and American competition and establish Fort Ross (a.k.a. Fortress Ross) in what is now northern California. All of these events coloured the Russians as something of a wildcard on the coast: the vulnerabilities to RAC's supply line sustained independent and sometimes reckless traders; Russian relations with the Łingít (Tlingit) were terrible and poisoned Indigenous-newcomer relations south of the panhandle; and the Russians never entirely lost sight of the possibility of a Californian colony — Fort Ross remained in Russian hands until 1841.

1. James R. Gibson, "Bostonians and Muscovites on the Northwest Coast, 1788-1841," in *British Columbia: Historical Readings*, eds. W. Peter Ward and Robert A. J. McDonald (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1981), 70.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/1827_illustration_of_Castle_Hill_Old_Sitka_Alaska_by_Postels.jpg)

*Figure 13.9 Old Sitka, c. 1827. The most heavily fortified trading establishment on the northwest coast reflects the poor relations its Russian occupants had with Łingít neighbours.*

## The Spanish

In 1774 a Spanish naval expedition under Juan Pérez (c. 1725-1775) worked its way north from California in an effort to assess the threat posed by the Russian presence in Alaska. According to the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), the whole of the West Coast was Spain's to lose. The Portuguese honoured the treaty but the rest of Europe did not. Nor did the Indigenous people of the northwest coast. And why should they? Spain had not ventured north of California, apart from the disputed 1592 voyage of Juan de Fuca in search of the legendary Strait of Anian.

Word of the Russian intrusion worried the Spanish sufficiently that in 1767 they established a naval station at San Blas and posts at San Diego and San Francisco two years later. Five years after that, the Spanish mustered Perez's small expedition to chart and claim the North Pacific. Although the Spanish made their way as far north as Alaska and erected a cross there, they made no other landfall north of what is now Washington State. The Spanish were satisfied that there was no Russian presence between Mexico and 57°N.

A second expedition set out in 1779 under the Peruvian-born Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra (1744-1794), sailing north again to Alaska. On this occasion the Spanish were looking for the outlet of a "northwest passage" that would lead to the Arctic Ocean or perhaps to the Saskatchewan or the Missouri Rivers. They sailed to 61°N and went ashore to ritually claim the territory, then returned home, assuming the job was done and that they could now relax or at least focus on the freshly announced war with Britain.

Having run up the flag on the northwest coast in 1774 and 1779, the Spanish were surprised to find they needed to monitor and perhaps defend their position, though not, as they might have expected, against Russia. Britain's appearance in 1778 in the form of James Cook's third expedition alerted the Spanish to the need to establish a fixed position on the north coast. In 1788 a pair of Spanish ships made

another voyage to Alaska, this time finding the Russians and discovering that they had plans to establish a post on Nootka Sound in the territory of the Mowachaht. Returning to Mexico, the Spanish launched yet another expedition, intent on claiming Nootka Sound for their own. When they arrived they found two American ships and one British; the Spanish banished the latter and then seized the *North West America*, a vessel owned by the British independent trader, John Meares, and built on Nootka Sound by a crew of Chinese workers brought to Yuquot by Meares — the first Chinese arrivals in British Columbia. The Spanish put the Chinese to work building Fort San Miguel, thereby creating a physical statement of sovereignty. These aggressive efforts to assert Spanish sovereignty provoked what became known as the **Nootka Crisis**, which began in 1789 and lasted five years.

In terms of developing Indigenous-European interaction, the Spanish had one advantage over their contemporaries: they alone of the European and North American visitors to the North Pacific had an interest in territory first and commercial ventures second. Once the British were disabused of the existence of a northwest passage their only concern was furs. The same was true, only more so, of the Russians and Americans. In contrast, Bodega y Quadra was looking at the long term, and therefore thinking about building lasting relationships with the Indigenous people. This was what he hoped to do at Fort Miguel in 1791-93.

Bodega y Quadra was, by all accounts — and certainly by George Vancouver's account — charming, curious, and smart. The leading figure among the Mowachat, Maquinna (c. 1795), was particularly impressed with Bodega y Quadra's ability to assimilate local customs and to show respect to the local leaders. And Bodega y Quadra's reports on matters in Nootka Sound from 1790 to 1793 were insightful. These include his belief that Euro-American traders cynically stirred up trouble in order to improve the market for guns and ammunition; that syphilis was spreading unchecked from British and American ships to the Indigenous population; that traders from abroad were never above plundering the Nuu-chah-nulth villages if they didn't get what they wanted under terms that they wanted; and that the European responses to minor thefts or single murders by the Indigenous population was typically a violent overreaction. Bodega y Quadra spent two years repairing relations after Callicum, one of the Nuu-chah-nulth leaders and a close relation of Maquinna, was shot dead by the Spanish (under circumstances that remain unclear).




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/Callicum_und_Maquinna.jpg)

*Figure 13.10 A contemporary engraving shows Callicum and Maquinna greeting one another. Callicum's murder at the hands of the Spanish nearly revived the European nation's 300-year old reputation for brutality in its relations with Indigenous peoples.*

Like the Russians, the Spanish operated under several important disadvantages. While they could trade into Chinese seaports (unlike the Russians) their objective was to obtain Asian mercury to support their gold and silver processing operations in Mexico. The sea otter trade was, for the British, Americans, and Russians, about selling cheaply acquired pelts and obtaining highly desirable Chinese products — tea, silk, porcelain — for sale at a further profit in Europe. For the Spanish, it was about enhancing gold production in Mexico. The "Mercury Fleet," as it was known, from Europe, however, could deliver materials more cheaply than the Spanish could in the Pacific.

As well, the Spanish could hardly muster sufficient resources to blast British, American, and Russian competition off the coast. For that reason, and because they sensed that Mexico's security might be compromised by Britain and/or America, they retreated.[2] As one historian has put it,

> The Spanish regime lacked the motivation or the population to maintain its sovereign claims to the coastline and ocean north of California. Other than the northwest coast Natives sent to Mexico and perhaps a few mestizos born at Nootka Sound, the Spanish efforts left little impact upon the Native societies. […] Even before [the last of the Spanish and British ships left Yuquot in 1795], Maquinna's people were hard at work erecting

2. Christon I. Archer, "The Transient Presence: A Re-appraisal of Spanish Attitudes Toward the Northwest Coast in the Eighteenth Century," in *British Columbia: Historical Readings,* eds. W. Peter Ward and Robert A. J. McDonald (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1981), 37-65.

house posts for their summer village.[3]



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/08/Spanish_fort_San_Miguel_at_Nootka_in_1793.jpg)

*Figure 13.11 Fort San Miguel at Yuquot, 1793.*

The Nuu-chah-nulth would continue to trade with Europeans for decades, but they did not permit the outsiders to re-establish themselves anywhere on their coast. Fort San Miguel would be the last European toehold on Vancouver Island until the 1840s.

## The British

European claims to a territory could have the most tenuous foundation. In 1577 Sir Francis Drake (1540-1596) sailed from Plymouth Harbour in England with orders from Queen Elizabeth I to terrorize and pillage the Spanish gold fleet in the Pacific Ocean. The mission evolved into England's first circumnavigation of the globe but, more importantly for the history of the Pacific Northwest, it allowed Britain to lay claim to lands north of Mexico. Drake's account puts him just north of San Francisco Bay in 1579, which he named Nova Albion (New Albion). Scholars continue to debate whether Drake ventured farther north, but this 16th century interlude was the basis on which Britain built its claim 200 years later. When he mapped a place on the northwest coast in the 1790s, Captain George Vancouver's notations would include the phrase "from that part of New Albion."[4]

In 1774, James Cook (1728-1779) led a British expedition into the Pacific Northwest. Cook's ships rounded South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, set out for Hawaii, then reached the Americas at Alta California. Sailing north, he narrowly missed both the Columbia River and Juan de Fuca Strait but found his way to Yuquot (Friendly Cove).

Cook spent a month there enjoying the hospitality of the Nuu-chah-nulth and becoming acquainted with their self-confident and sharp trading practices. The people of Yuquot and Tahsis weren't satisfied with the cheaper goods that had been traded with the Hawaiians, and they controlled the terms of trade throughout. When they were done, Cook's two vessels continued north and successfully rounded the North Pacific before heading back to Hawaii, where the captain was killed by the locals. The *Resolution*

3. Christon I. Archer, "Seduction before Sovereignty: Spanish Efforts to Manipulate the Natives in Their Claims to the Northwest Coast," in *From Maps to Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver*, eds. Robin Fisher and Hugh Johnston (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 159.

4. Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 31.

and the *Discovery* continued the voyage home, stopping in Guangzhou (Canton). There they discovered what the Russians already knew: the sea otter pelt market in China was extremely lucrative. British and American interest in the region was thereafter stimulated.[5]



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/The_launch_of_the_North_West_America_at_Nootka_Sound_by_John_Meares.jpg)

*Figure 13.12 The launch of the North West America at Nootka Sound shows Europeans (presumably John Meares) and Indigenous observers, but the Chinese labourers who built the ship are conspicuous by their absence.*

Cook's voyages provoked the Spanish to press their regional claims. The British pressed right back. The two countries nearly went to war over the question of whose claim was the stronger. Captain George Vancouver (1757-1798), was the British representative on the scene at Yuquot; Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra represented the Spanish. Various accounts of this meeting have been written, at least one fictionalizing the encounter. What they have in common is Vancouver's moodiness and obstinance compared with Bodega y Quadra's smoothly seductive hospitality. Events in Europe were to overtake them: in 1792 the French Revolution was threatening to spread beyond the borders of France, and the Spanish decided to sacrifice their northwest coast claim in exchange for British goodwill. As a result, the British gained nominal control of everything between Alta California and Russian Alaska. The negotiators at Yuquot agreed to mark the event by naming the island after themselves. For many years it appeared on European and American maps as "Bodega y Quadra and Vancouver's Island" (shortened later to Vancouver's Island, and finally Vancouver Island).

**In the Navy**

5. Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations, 1774-1890*, 2nd ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 1-23.

James Cook and his contemporaries were some of the most remarkable cartographers of all time. Their maps are still reliable today, and Cook's 1760s maps of Newfoundland were the gold standard into the 20th century. Their careers intersect with the stories of British North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii. Cook was at Louisbourg when it fell in 1755 and commanded a ship under Wolfe at the Battle of Quebec four years later. George Vancouver joined the Royal Navy at 13 and served with Cook from the age of 14. William Bligh was only seven when he was signed up with the navy and his career would see more than the usual amount of drama.

Cook once declared that his goal was to go "farther than any man has been before me, but as far as I think it is possible for a man to go." Both Vancouver and Bligh had a chance to study under Cook and were with him on the last of his three voyages. They all kept their pencils pressed against map paper constantly. They were together on the *Resolution* in Hawaii when Cook made the fatal choice to go ashore one time too many. Vancouver's career was just starting. He was barely 20 years old when he was given command of the *Discovery*, a four-year mission to explore the Pacific in greater detail, and a mandate to settle the practical terms of the Nootka Convention. Along with two Spanish captains, Dionisio Alcalá Galiano and Cayetano Valdés y Flores, he charted the Strait of Georgia (the Salish Sea) and passed within sight of the peninsula on which the city bearing his name was later built. Bligh, for his part, has an island bearing his name in Nootka Sound. He would take command of the *Bounty* in 1787, a ship irretrievably associated with mutiny.

Having sovereignty on paper, however, did nothing to enhance the British position. They continued to engage in trade, but that didn't stop others parties from arriving on the coast. Like Quadra, Vancouver had little use for the travelling fur traders, particularly those who were selling guns. He regarded their tactics as deplorable and wrote to his superiors:

> I am extremely concerned to be compelled to state here, that many of the traders from the civilised world have not only pursued a line of conduct, diametrically opposite to the true principles of justice in their commercial dealings, but have fomented discords, and stirred up contentions, between the different tribes, in order to increase the demand for these destructive engines… They have been likewise eager to instruct the natives in the use of European arms of all descriptions….[6]

In terms of imperial diplomacy, the British had come out ahead, but the Americans (see below) had the whip in hand when it came to trade. The British would have to change their strategy dramatically and the incentive to do so would come from Canada. By 1830 British traders were back in the game, supported by forts on the Columbia River and at Langley. It would be another 10 years before they could claim real regional domination over the other intruder traders. Authority over the Indigenous population would take longer still.[7]

6. George Vancouver, A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean, and Round the World: In which the Coast of North-west America Has Been Carefully Examined and Accurately Surveyed : Undertaken by His Majesty's Command, Principally with a View to Ascertain the Existence of Any Navigable Communication Between the North Pacific and North Atlantic Oceans, and Performed in the Years 1790, 1791, 1792, 1793, 1794, and 1795, in the Discovery Sloop of War, and Armed Tender Chatham, Under the Command of Captain George Vancouver : in Three Volumes, Vol.2 (London: G.G. & J. Robinson, 1798), 364.

7. James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The Maritime Fur trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1992), table 1, pp.299-310.

## The Americans

Even as the American Revolution was raging it was clear to shipowners in East Coast ports that their access to British markets might be in danger. Britain took steps to prohibit American access to the West Indies market, a move that favoured the new British North American colonies and that left American ship captains looking farther afield. Necessity took them out of the North Atlantic and into the Mediterranean and North Africa, down the east coast of South America and round Cape Horn into the Pacific. It found them trading in the South China Sea and, almost inevitably, along the northwest coast.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Columbia_Winter_Quarters.png.jpeg.png)

*Figure 13.13 "Winter Quarters." by George Davidson (c. 1793), depicts the American Captain Robert Gray and the crew of the Columbia Rediviva on Clayoquot Sound.*

There were two aspects to the American trade in the region. The first was its maritime face. The Americans put more ships into the region than any other nation. Although British ships dominated from 1785 to 1792, they were increasingly competing with American vessels (one-to-one in 1791 and 1792), as well as the occasional French or Portuguese ship. In the two decades that followed, the British presence slipped well behind that of the Americans. In 1801 more than 20 American vessels found their way to the Pacific Northwest; in the same year only three British ships and one Russian ship were in the area. Soon the British were down to one ship a year, although it was usually the same ship making repeat visits. The American fleet, by contrast, was made up of competing traders; often their name appears only once in the register. Continuity was an issue because one-timers tended to behave in ways that were not necessarily in the best interest of long-term trade relations. The sales of guns and alcohol were a particular problem. [8]

In short, as far as the maritime trade was concerned, the Americans had the edge. It was, however, an uncoordinated edge. The independent ships from Boston and other New England ports had no imperial mandate, nor were they acting on behalf of the new republic. Later American claims to the territory

8. Ibid.

might invoke some of the earliest expeditions in the region, but the fur trade fleets were of little value in this regard.

The land-based trade posed different advantages and liabilities. John Jacob Astor (1763-1848), a German immigrant to the United States who saw an opportunity in shipping Canadian furs through New York to Europe in the 1790s, amassed a substantial fortune in just a few years and was eager to involve himself more directly in the fur trade. He developed a multi-pronged strategy, one part of which was the Pacific Fur Company (PFC) and the prospect of a fort on the Columbia River, which he named for himself. Astor's company seemed fated from the outset. The *Tonquin* disaster (see section 13.7 Identity Crisis (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/the-farthest-west/)) was the worst of it, but another of the PFC's ships proved to be not seaworthy, a third was badly beat up by a storm, and a fourth was wrecked off the coast of Maui. One study estimates that the PFC lost 61 men in less than two years. The trade conducted from Fort Astor was negligible. Astor's own employees were quickly turning against him, and war had broken out between the Americans and the British in North America.[9] A quick sale to the NWC in 1813 was the outcome.

One legacy of Astor's expeditions was picked up by several American traders — that of provisioning other fur trading outposts, regardless of who owned them. The cost of establishing, maintaining, and provisioning a trading post in the region was all but prohibitive, but American suppliers offered a solution. Every post in the Pacific Northwest at some point took advantage of the opportunity to restock with American goods, even though doing so was essentially underwriting the costs of the competition. Severing this link between American suppliers and the Russian traders in particular was key to British success in the region, but that goal was only achieved in the 1830s. Thereafter the prohibitively high costs of trade in the region combined with sharply declining sea otter stocks to reduce American shipping to no more than a couple of ships a year.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Stamp_of_Russia_2012_No_1633_Fort_Ross.jpg)

*Figure 13.14 A Russian stamp commemorates the 200th anniversary of the establishment of Fort Ross.*

9. Richard Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1997), 15-16.

**Historians on Video**

The early relationship(s) between European and American visitors and the Indigenous peoples of Vancouver Island are considered by John Lutz (University of Victoria). Here is a link to the transcript of a video about early contact between Indigenous peoples and Europeans [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_jltz_u5_02.pdf).



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=356#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

## The Imperial Coast

At some point, Spain, Russia, Britain, and the United States all claimed the Pacific Northwest. Spain dropped its interests with the Nootka Convention of 1793. Russia's RAC reinforced its positions from Sitka north and west, marking a boundary at 54'40″N latitude in agreements with the United States and Britain in 1824 and 1825 respectively. American claims to the "Columbia Department" — which included New Caledonia (that is, most of modern British Columbia) along with the future states of Washington and Oregon — were to prove a problem in the 1840s, but otherwise American interest in the region was made up of individual merchant ships. British claims were based on prior discovery, exploration, and treaty rights. As is explored in the next section, the most important imperial agency was the Hudson's Bay Company, which built on a foundation established by the NWC and engaged in active trade from the Lower Columbia River north to the Arctic Ocean. From 1816 through to the 1840s, few Americans and Europeans settled in the region and it remained — for these outsiders at least — a venue for trade and they had aspirations to do little more. The Canadians were a different matter.

**Key Points**

- European interest in the Pacific Northwest increased in the mid-18th century with the arrival of Russian sea otter traders in Alaska.
- Russian ambitions in the region included the establishment of permanent posts, subjugating much of the Native population and extending their reach to California.
- The Spanish were spurred into action in the northwest by the Russian presence and were far more interested in sovereignty than commerce.
- Nootka Sound (Mowachaht) was the intersection of commercial and diplomatic interests including the host Mowachaht/Nuu-chah-nulth people of Yuquot (Friendly Cove), the Spanish, the British, and nominally independent traders.
- The resolution of the Nootka Crisis gave Britain the pre-eminent European claim to

Vancouver Island and the mainland coast from California to Alaska, but it would be nearly 40 years before they established a post in what is now British Columbia.

- American traders were the dominant force in the maritime fur trade into the 1830s and their supply lines sustained the Russian presence, making it difficult for the British to turn a profit.
- The American Pacific Fur Company was the first to establish a fixed presence on the mainland, at Fort Astoria, although this soon fell to the Canadians.
- The establishment of British forts from Fort Vancouver north to Fort Stikine was a response to the mobile American fur trade.

#### Video Attributions

- Dr. John Lutz Question 4 – Early contact between Aboriginals and explorers. (https://youtu.be/iPlL-71CeTw?si=06MjexIQnoJtcJH-) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

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1827 illustration of Castle Hill (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1827_illustration_of_Castle_Hill_(Old_Sitka,_Alaska)_by_Postels.jpg) by File Upload Bot (Magnus Manske) (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:File_Upload_Bot_(Magnus_Manske)) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

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**Figure 13.11**

Spanish fort San Miguel at Nootka in 1793 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spanish_fort_San_Miguel_at_Nootka_in_1793.jpg) by Onofre Bouvila (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Onofre_Bouvila) is in the public domain (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

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The launch of the North West America at Nootka Sound (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_launch_of_the_North_West_America_at_Nootka_Sound_by_John_Meares.jpg) by PawełMM (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Pawe%C5%82MM) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

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**Figure 13.14**
Stamp of Russia 2012 No 1633 Fort Ross (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stamp_of_Russia_2012_No_1633_Fort_Ross.jpg) by Dmitry Ivanov (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Dmitry_Ivanov) is not an object of copyright.

# 13.4 The Canadian Cordillera

David Thompson (1770-1857) is famous for two accomplishments: his work as an explorer and surveyor (which includes crossing the continent and descending the Columbia River to its mouth, as well as mapping a prodigious amount of North America) and for having the longest marriage on record in the history of pre-Confederation Canada (58 years).

Thompson was raised in poverty in London, indentured to the HBC at 14 years, and spent much of the rest of his life in the fur trade. In 1797 he literally walked away from his job with the HBC, trudging 80 miles in the snow from one trading post to another where he took up work with the NWC. It was in his capacity as a surveyor for the Montrealers that he was dispatched to the far west in 1806 in order to block American plans to exploit the route mapped by Lewis and Clark, and to access the sea otter resources that had been enriching fur traders from other nations.

Thompson arrived at the mouth of the Columbia on July 14, 1811, only to find Astor's crew of Americans and defected Nor'westers already on the scene, building Fort Astoria. Their arrival preceded Thompson's by a few months, but events in the east were to catch up with the Astorians. The War of 1812 would result in the loss of much of Astor's operations in the Great Lakes and in the far west, to the benefit of the NWC.

### The NWC in the Interior

The Montrealers purchased Astoria and its tributary posts in 1813 and changed the name to **Fort George.** They then renewed and extended a chain of forts up the Columbia with one branch heading east through the Arrow Lakes to the southern Prairies and the other through the Okanagan Valley to Tk'əmlúps (a.k.a. Kamloops), where they established Thompson Rivers Post in place of the PFC's Fort Cumcloups. This early land-based fur trade was, thus, linked back to Canada and not to Britain. On the ground the NWC in the farthest west was mostly Canadien, not Canadian, with a large and growing share of Métis women as well. Regardless of its Laurentian links, it was very much a British claim nevertheless.

One of Thompson's contemporaries in the NWC, Simon Fraser (1776-1862), made a comparable assault on the far west in 1803-1808. Fraser came to Canada from New York as a child in the Loyalist diaspora, but he was conscious of his ancestral Scottish roots. While in the north he applied the name "New Caledonia" to the region, which later would have a broader use, covering much of what is now British Columbia. Before descending the river that now bears his name, Fraser's expedition, made up of mostly Canadiens, Métis, and some Iroquois, established a chain of posts that included Fort St. James and Fort George (later Prince George). In 1808 the voyageurs took on the river, stopping briefly at Camchin (Lytton) where the Nlaka'pamux impressed them with their hospitality, their string of about 1,000 ponies, and a robust human population of roughly 1,200. Fraser and his crew carried on to near the mouth of the river where they irritated the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (a.k.a. Xwméthkwiyem or Musqueam), who chased them back up the river. Regardless of Fraser's failure to complete his mission, he had laid the groundwork for the northern leg of a chain of forts that would complete the link between Fort George of

the north and Fort George of the south (formerly Fort Astoria) and British North America. This was the setup that the HBC inherited in 1821.

Fur trade society in New Caledonia and the Columbia District was consistent in many respects with personnel and practices east of the Rockies: Canadiens and Iroquois provided much of the muscle while direction was in the hands of a closely connected set of Anglo-Scots-Canadians and their métis or native wives. After the merger in 1821, the HBC's structure made these distinctions even more apparent: the chief traders and factors were all drawn from the Anglo-Protestant side of the house while the voyageurs and traders were overwhelmingly Canadien, Métis, and Iroquois. Hierarchical social stations were reinforced through a dress code, the layout of the forts, and the size and state of employee accommodations. This sort of physical display of paternalistic rank was intended to impress upon the "servants" of the HBC their relative position; it was also ritualized in ways to impress the Indigenous trading partners.

The Interior posts were remarkably fragile. At the far end of supply lines originating in Montreal or perhaps even London, they were vulnerable to any number of events that might delay or prevent the arrival of food, gunpowder, clothing, and trade goods. Every one of the inland forts at some time or another depended heavily on local salmon fisheries, all of which were zealously controlled by Indigenous peoples. And they were isolated from one another: boats could make it down the Columbia from the lower Okanagan (south of the 49th parallel) to the sea and canoe travel that was possible between Alexandria in the Cariboo to Stuart's Lake in the north, but all of the rest required packhorses. Famine was common, as was the consequent eating of horses and dogs.[1] According to one historian,

> New Caledonia (mainland British Columbia) was particularly despised for its "misery and privation" and "poverty of fare." Chief Factor John Tod recalled that in HBC Governor George Simpson's Day (1820-1860) the district was "looked on in the light of another Botany Bay Australia; the men were in dread of being send there."[2]

Fines, beatings, and jailings were part of life in the forts of the far west. Relations with the Indigenous neighbours and trading partners were also often characterized by brutality.[3]

Obviously the Interior trade was not concerned with sea otters. Whatever was brought in at the Columbia River posts was part of the package sent northeast to Hudson Bay each spring, but beaver, wolf, wolverine, muskrat, and a great variety of other hides came from the inland posts. As for imported goods from European and Euro-North American sources, there was the usual stock of rifles and shot, blankets and axe heads. There was also a thriving trade in leather: whether for ecological reasons or due to overhunting, the Interior Plateau was home to few large mammals, so the import of moose, deer, elk, and bison hide was quickly regarded as essential. As one study states, "in the 1827-28 outfit year, New Caledonia required two thousand fathoms [3650 metres] of pack cords, seventy bounds of babiche [string], and thirty pounds of sinews."[4]

1. Tina Loo, *Making Law, Order and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 28-9.

2. Ibid.

3. Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 44.

4. James R. Gibson, *The Lifeline of the Oregon Country: the Fraser- Columbia Brigade System, 1811-47* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 26.

## The HBC on the Coast

The newly unified HBC after 1821 had growing concerns regarding the leakage of furs from the Interior to the coast, where they fetched higher prices. As well, the company under the leadership of George Simpson wanted to improve its position on the coastal market. So long as First Nations trading villages were prepared to wait for two or more competing vessels to arrive in port before initiating trade, they would be able to play off the newcomers against one another and drive up prices. American ships in particular were prepared to pay premium prices for furs, a practice that was hurting the HBC bottom line.

The solution to this was the establishment of **land-based trade** in centres that would entail a shift from a **maritime-based trade** strategy. The HBC established regional headquarters at **Fort Vancouver** in 1824-25 and at Fort Langley among the Stó:lō and Kwantlen in 1827. Two successive forts, both named Fort Simpson, were erected in Ts'msyan territory in 1831 and 1834, Fort McLoughlin was built on Heiltsuk lands in 1833, and Fort Taku (a.k.a. Fort Durham) in 1830 and Fort Stikine in 1840 were both in Łingít territory. The north coast posts were intended to provide a permanent trading presence in the hope that a deeper commitment to the locale, better intelligence on the marketplace and supply lines, and lowered costs (due to an end to wandering trading vessels) would result in higher profits. By the late 1830s the strategy was deemed a success. American shipping and competition in the region declined sharply.

This had two collateral effects. First, the Russians in Alaska were affected. The Lingít nation of what is often referred to as the Alaska panhandle resented Russian posts and resisted their presence in a long-running war. In the absence of friendly local suppliers and faced with intolerably long supply lines back to Russia, the Russian American Company purchased foodstuffs from American captains. Second, the Americans, for their part, could only afford to pay high prices for sea otter and beaver if their costs were covered by Russian purchases of groceries.[5] The new forts were intended to be self-sufficient and to produce a food surplus that could be sold to the Russian forts cheaply. This cut directly into the American coasters' trade, removed them from the northwest coast equation, and made the Russians dependent on the HBC.

Whatever the forts may or may not have become over time, the agenda of the HBC was never colonization. That was something forced upon them by the Colonial Office in the 1850s; the HBC was simply interested in business on the coast. However much fur trade society might have been evolving within the walls of the forts along the coast, there is no denying that they were little citadels. A description of Fort Simpson from 1850 provides a sense of the traders living uncomfortably in Indigenous territory:

> The gates were massive structures about six or seven inches thick, studded with large nails, to guard against their being cut down by the natives. There were small doors within so as to admit only one person at a time…. The pickets surrounding the establishment were of cedar, about twenty-two feet long by nine to twelve inches thick; they were square internally, to prevent bullets from passing between…. An inside gallery ran around the whole enclosure of pickets at about four feet from the top, and afforded a capital promenade and a means of seeing everything…. A regular watch was kept all night in a small turret, surrounded by the flagstaff, over the gate.[6]

5. James R. Gibson, "Bostonians and Muscovites on the Northwest Coast, 1788-1841," in *British Columbia: Historical Readings*, eds. W. Peter Ward and Robert A.J. McDonald (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1981), 77.

Fort Simpson was conceptualized by HBC Governor George Simpson as a means of starving out Russian and American traders in the region. Even if the returns on investment were not especially good, at least the furs traded at Lax Kw'alaams and from upcountry sources were not finding their way into the hands of competitors. Certainly the size of the traffic at the fort suggests the strategy was working: in 1841 roughly 14,000 Indigenous people — mostly Ts'msyan but also Haida — came to Fort Simpson, and about 800 Ts'msyan formed the homeguard.[7]

While Governor Simpson played a very direct role in choosing a direction for British trade on the coast, the day-to-day operations and initiatives came from officers, Canadiens, and Métis. These were the people who forged relationships with the local people, and whose marriages to Indigenous women changed their circumstances. As Cole Harris points out, "As time went on, they learned Native languages and had kin in Native villages."[8] Fur trade society on the coast and in the Interior was invariably made up of women and men who had travelled across great distances, who had witnessed incredible landscapes and hardship, whose mothers may have spoken Cree, and whose fathers may have lived in stone houses in Montreal. The local women drawn into these relationships were often part of the local nobility and so came from backgrounds of some privilege. The company might object from time to time — after all, more marriages with Native women meant more profitless gift-giving to their families — but even Simpson perceived these arrangements as loss leaders, a cost that would be repaid with security and a guarantee of trade.

Innovation and adaptation spread to business as well. Trade on the West Coast presented opportunities to handle different goods in different markets. Salmon, flour, and lumber were wanted in Hawaii and furs had markets in Guangzhou and London. The profits from the fur trade amassed in London and Montreal, not in the HBC's trading posts on the Pacific; what they needed in return for their exports included sugar, molasses, tobacco, and salt in particular.[9] The sustainability of any of the northwest coast forts was a stretch until the 1840s, certainly were it not for the support of Indigenous traders.

**An Account of Trading at Fort Simpson in the 1830s**

> The Indians coming from distant parts to this fort, have large canoes, from thirty to fifty feet long.… Besides containing numerous Indians, their canoes are piled up with goods for barter. They remain mustered here for some weeks, making the fort a complete fair. It requires strict and good management, at this time, by the companies of officers, to protect the fort. On landing at the fort, their canoes are piled up in large heaps, covered over with mats, to keep the sun from cracking them. They bring provisions with them, to last during their stay and journey home. Feasts are given by the chiefs; and invitations sent regularly round to the different guests. Should any of the officers of the fort be invited, stools are placed by the side of the fire, covered over with cloth and fine calico; and they are introduced with great ceremony – the chiefs standing to

6. Captain David Wishart quoted in Daniel Clayton, "Geographies of the Lower Skeena," in *Home Truths: Highlights from BC History,* eds. Richard Mackie and Graeme Wynn (Madeira Park: Harbour, 2012), 111.

7. Richard Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1997), 129.

8. Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 47.

9. Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 250-3.

receive them. Skins are given, as presents, to the officers; and in the course of a day or two, the trader returns the compliment, by making them presents of British manufactured clothing.

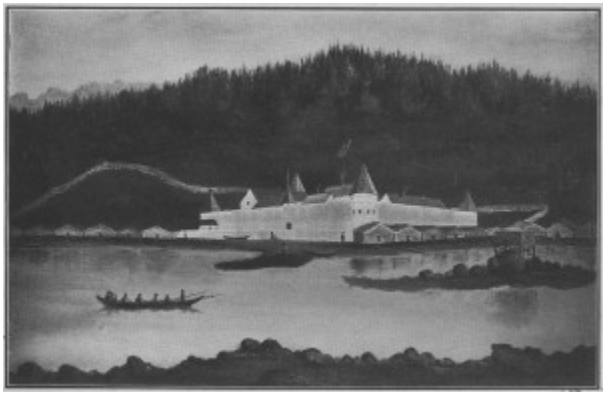
—John Dunn, *History of the Oregon territory and British North-American fur trade; with an Account of the Habits and Customs of the Principal Native Tribes on the Northern Continent* (London: Edwards and Hughes, 1844): 281-2.[10]

### Key Points

- The NWC's presence in New Caledonia and events in the War of 1812 led to the temporary elimination of American interests from the Columbia District and the Canadianizing of a chain of fur trade posts from the mouth of the Columbia north through the Okanagan, the Cariboo, and the Peace District as well as through the Arrow Lakes.
- New Caledonia was considered by many in the NWC/HBC as a hardship post.
- The HBC's post-1821 strategy of building trading posts on the coast was intended to intercept furs headed from the Interior to the maritime-based trade for higher prices.
- The HBC's land-based coastal trade strategy broke the back of American seaborne trade and crippled the Russian traders' business model.
- Fur trade society west of the Rockies witnessed extensive intermarriage in the context of an often marginal trade. The HBC diversified in the 1830s and 1840s and did more to connect the peoples of the Pacific Northwest with those of Hawaii and China.

10. Quoted in Ibid., 130-1.

# 13.5 Indigenous Traders



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/1280px-Fort_Simpson_B.C._in_1857._-_NARA_-_297310.jpg)

*Figure 13.15 Fort Simpson (Lax Kw'alaams), c. 1857. Note the longhouses abutting the flank of the fort. (Painting by Sir Henry S. Wellcome.)*

Indigenous trade leaders who would do much to set the tone and character of trade through the first half of the 19th century emerged across the region. The Legaic (or Ligeex) lineage in the Ts'msyan (Tsimshian) territories in the northwest, Kw'eh (or Kwah, c. 1755-1840) of the Dakelh (Carrier) whose lands surrounded Fraser's posts, and N'kwala (a.k.a. Hwistesmetxe'qen, c. 1780-1865) in the Okanagan, Thompson, and Nicola Valleys dictated the location and circumstances under which fur trade posts could be established. In the case of the Legaics, they used marriage between daughters of the lineage to European traders (for example, between Sudaał and Dr. John Kennedy of the HBC in 1832) to secure long-term advantage and monopolies. This strategy of co-opting or adopting into a network of relations was coupled with tactics of bluster and power. Fort Simpson, near present-day Prince Rupert, provides another example. The HBC's original plan was to build a fort on the Nass River, and while this might meet British trade objectives, it wasn't satisfactory to the Ts'msyan who insisted that the first iteration be moved a substantial distance south to Lax Kw'alaams, a territory they preferred.[1]

### Regional Powerhouses

Mostly these trade strategies reflected centuries-old commercial practices among Indigenous peoples on the Northwest coast. The arrival of European goods, however, created a new kind of wealth that brought the possibility of cultural and political innovations. Regional political relationships were certainly in flux. Competition for primacy in the the new global commerce prompted the consolidation and sometimes the growth of alliances and areas of sovereignty. Mowachaht domination of northern

1. Clarence Bolt, *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet Too Large* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992): 15.

Vancouver Island under the leadership of Maquinna extended east from Yuquot from the 1790s through the 1820s to incorporate the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples, the 'Namgis (Nimpkish), mostly by means of commercial and diplomatic agreement. By contrast, Maquinna's cousin Wikaninnish launched a violent campaign that created a tribute zone through the Broken Group Islands and across Clayoquot Sound. This bloody campaign, which is referred to as the Long War, predates direct contact and continued almost unobserved by Europeans through the 1840s. In the second decade of the 19th century the focus of the fur trade had moved along, but the Mowachaht and Tla-o-qui-aht (Clayoquot) systems continued to evolve, driven not by European directives but by their own agendas.

Similarly, regional power in the Interior was not static. In 1823 N'kwala, the hereditary leader of the Okanagan-Tk'emlups alliance, stormed across the southern valleys into Stl'atl'imc (Lillooet) territory at the head of what was reported to be a mounted cavalry of 500. The goals of the Okanagan were only partly informed by competition for fur trade primacy; the issues behind these conflicts had longer personal, diplomatic, and commercial histories. When the dust settled, N'kwala was confirmed by conquest and heredity as the head man of four nations with lands stretching from the Fraser River into the Rockies and from Soda Creek (Xats'ull) to Okanagan lands below the 49th parallel. All of these developments have in common the utilization of introduced assets: horses in the Interior, European vessels on the coast, and rifles at both places

By the 1820s the fur trade was shifting away from the coast. So long as the trade was conducted seasonally by visiting ships from Britain or the United States, the annual routine of Indigenous communities remained largely unchanged. The same was true at the few trading posts in the Interior when supplies arrived via the Columbia Express or Brigade Trails each spring. As far as Indigenous communities were concerned, the threats and opportunities presented by immediate neighbours remained more constant than the traders and, therefore, more important. Political influence and economic power could be exerted as before but now with greater force — and not entirely in the service of maximizing profit in the fur trade. Indigenous agendas remained vital and somewhat aloof from Euro-North American concerns. At the same time, Indigenous peoples found ways to turn the newcomers' trade strategies against the foreigners.

Indigenous traders recognized that fur fetched higher prices on the coast than in the Interior if there was competition by two or more trading ships in port. The price differential was sufficient to make it worthwhile for Interior traders to redirect their pelts down the grease trails to coastal markets. Coastal Indigenous traders were thus positioned to gain more in this relationship, and they sought access to inland fur resources from the early 19th century. This had two effects. First, it rather obviously reduced the amount of furs available for trade to the NWC and HBC in the Interior. Second, it accelerated a process of what has been called "coastalization" among inland cultures. Coastal crests and clan systems were adopted as were potlatches and the labret.[2] Interior NWC and HBC traders, if they wanted to recover their position, would be obliged to offer more for furs.

2. James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The Maritime Fur trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1992), 270.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Voyage_autour_du_monde_-_planche_XIII_-_Jeune_Femme_des_Isles_de_la_Reine_Charlotte.jpg)

*Figure 13.16 Portrait of a Haida woman with a labret, from George Dixon's 1789 visit to Haida Gwai'i.*

Conditions for the fur trade were different in the Interior. There the societies were more egalitarian, and there was less likelihood of just one leader monopolizing the Indigenous side of the trade. Euro-Canadian numbers were insignificant, so the newcomers had to either acquiesce to local practices or demonstrate absolute intolerance of transgressions.[3] There was certainly no hope of a gunboat sailing up the saltchuck, let alone a cavalry unit coming over the nearest hill to bail out troubled Euro-Canadians on the upper Columbia River, along the Thompson River, or north of the Cariboo Plateau. And while life in Interior Indigenous communities might have been marked by egalitarianism, that was not the case in the HBC establishments. There, hierarchies prevailed and working conditions were demanding. Interior Indigenous traders had to work within these constraints and were exposed to risks that were rare on the coast.

The HBC's transition to a coastal, land-based trade began in the 1820s and expanded in the 1830s. As we have seen, this served HBC interests, but it also worked to the advantage of Indigenous trade leaders. Instead of allowing the HBC to select sites based on its priorities and needs, Indigenous influence was exerted so that the setting for trade maximized control over the Europeans. Indigenous clans established homeguards around the forts, ensuring that any furs that arrived from other Native groups had to pass

3. Duane Thomson and Marianne Ignace, "'They Made Themselves Our Guests': Power Relationships in the Interior Plateau Region of the Cordillera in the Fur Trade Era," *BC Studies* 146 (Summer 2005): 3-35.

through local middlemen. In this way leaders like Legaic were able to filter trade in and out of locations like Fort Simpson to ensure their continued prosperity and authority.

## Cultural Change

The focus of the HBC west of the Rockies was, perhaps not surprisingly, the fur trade. The number of personnel in the field was small, their familiarity with local conditions was patchy, and they were often placed in locations that were inhospitable. In places like Boat Encampment on Kinbasket Lake, on the York/Columbia Express route, the spring came late and the autumns were short: the Company's business obviated the possibility of raising sheep or planting hayfields. Coastal fort sites, by contrast, were chosen on the basis of defensibility, harbour depth and shelter, and proximity to trading partners; gigantic Douglas Firs and rocky terrain were clear impediments to agriculture. In short, the intruders lacked the time, knowledge, and resources to raise their own food. This was a constant lament into the 1840s. For these reasons the regional traders depended heavily on food resources provided by Indigenous peoples. Salmon (fresh and dried), roots, and berries were an essential part of the fur trade, albeit one that literally ate into the profits.[4]

Faced with supply-line issues similar to those that were breaking the Russian American Company (RAC), the HBC encouraged local agriculture. The Fort Simpson Ts'msyan and even the Haida across Hecate Strait began growing potatoes, which they traded with fort personnel. Similarly, around Fort Langley  the local population began raising chickens and European vegetables in the late 1820s. In this way, as much as was possible, Indigenous merchants/chieftains sought to establish, maintain, and — when needed — re-establish Euro-Canadian dependence.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/800px-H-1._B._Co._Fort_Langley_left_bank_of_Fraser_River._Langley_Buttes_in_the_distance_-_NARA_-_305495.jpg)

*Figure 13.17 Fort Langley, c. 1857-62, with the Kwantlen village across the river and "Langley Buttes" (Golden Ears) in the distance.*

As new farming practices emerged among Indigenous communities, so did new cultural practices. The

4. William J. Turkel, *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 150-1.

shift to different tools of labour that had to be either manufactured or obtained and to new ways of working had a ripple effect on food preparation, diet, and the approach to land use and proprietorship. More immediately visible cultural changes were also occurring, particularly regarding the potlatch.

Potlatches grew to become spectacles by the second decade of the 19th century. This occurred for several reasons. European implements enhanced the output of traditional goods for redistribution. Iron tools enabled more rapid production of elaborate wood carvings like house-poles and finer metalwork, resulting in greater art production and creativity generally. Weaving of blankets — a currency in the traditional economy — increased, too. Styles modified to include new elements as coastal and interior artisans took advantage of what some scholars have identified as an efflorescence of regional artistic expression.

As well, exotic goods quickly worked their way into the heart of the potlatching culture. Maquinna's 1803 potlatch, for example, "dispensed 400 yards of cloth, 100 looking-glasses, 100 muskets, and 20 kegs of gunpowder."[5] Massive displays of material wealth (and exotic material wealth at that) enhanced the status of the host.

But the potlatch was changing due to local demographic conditions as well. The loss of population and particularly leaders through fur trade violence and disease created something of a scramble for position. Rivals tried to outdo one another, and village loyalties were divided by various claims to some chiefly status.[6] Potlatches became larger occasions with vast amounts of exotic goods being distributed to guests and delegations. These events became competitions: more material wealth, whether manufactured locally or abroad, led to more ostentatious potlatches and "fighting with property."

The coastal fur trade impacted local cultures in other less obvious ways. For example, Maquinna's brother Hannape and his four sons all learned both Spanish and English at the time of the Nootka Crisis. The speed with which they achieved facility in two foreign languages is remarkable. Elements of European languages were incorporated into the Chinook trade jargon but it is easy to overlook the widespread Indigenous accomplishment of learning the newcomers' tongues.

As well, new ideas about technologies and the wider world worked their way into communities. Wickaninnish of the Tla-o-qui-aht and Tatoosh of the Makah at Neah Bay conspired (unsuccessfully) to seize a European vessel. One study speculates that their intention was to establish direct trade between the peoples of the northwest coast and the Chinese markets. And why not? They had heard a great deal about China from the Europeans and Americans and were sharp enough traders to realize where they stood in the larger economic relationship. What's more, the rogue trader John Meares introduced the Nuu-chah-nulth to about 130 Chinese labourers in 1788. Contact between the Nuu-chah-nulth and China was, in this sense, an established fact.

Contact with the outsiders and the diplomatic attentions of the British and Spanish in particular had the additional effect of challenging leadership norms in the region. Maquinna emerged as a powerful and popular leader because he headed a confederacy of partners who may, from time to time, have challenged his primacy but who generally approved of his consensus-based approach. Wickaninish, on

5. Gibson, *Otter Skins*, 270.

6. Ibid., 270-1.

the other hand, was an oligarch whose regime was much more centralized and, thus, more vulnerable.[7] The Europeans' dealings with Wickaninish were generally less predictable and less mutually satisfying, which worked to the advantage of Maquinna's federation. Strategies of governance were in this way questioned and destabilized.

Probably the key factor influencing the pace of change was the impact of exotic diseases, especially smallpox and measles. Epidemics caused by exotic viruses may have occurred as early as the 1780s.[8] There is no evidence to suggest these were all-encompassing, so some communities and sub-regions were weakened more than others. Venereal diseases may or may not have been endemic to the Pacific Northwest but the presence of fur traders and sailors certainly didn't help matters. It is thought that the establishment of Fort Langley (and, by extension, any fort) resulted in a local epidemic of sexually transmitted infections.[9]

Loss of life to disease created instabilities in leadership and military preparedness. It could reduce the fertility of a population and therefore oblige some consolidations of communities. Epidemic mortalities may also explain the apparent rise in slave-raiding from Lekwitok territory in the upper Strait of Georgia into the Juan de Fuca Strait and the Fraser Valley. On southern Vancouver Island in 1839 it was reckoned that slaves nearly outnumbered nobles and commoners among the Lekwungen, an indication perhaps that slaves were filling in gaps left by disease. At the very least it shows that slavery was not the exception to the rule.[10] In each of these cases, cultural change or adaptation was necessary. These were, however, changes that were guided by Indigenous principles and priorities, not by missionaries or colonial officials. Circumstances in this regard would begin to change in the 1840s.

**Key Points**

- Indigenous communities and leaders used a variety of strategies to exert control over the fur trade and over the foreign traders.
- Power structures in Native communities were continually evolving, though now with assets derived through trade with the newcomers.
- Indigenous peoples largely controlled the cultural changes that arose because of contact.
- The potlatch, which was at the centre of economic, political, and social life on the coast, intensified and changed as a result of contact and trade.

7. Yvonne Marshall, "Dangerous Liaisons: Maquinna, Quadra, and Vancouver in Nootka Sound, 1790-5," in *From Maps to Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver*, eds. Robin Fisher and Hugh Johnston (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 165-9.

8. Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999).

9. Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 77.

10. John Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 61.

## Attributions

**Figure 13.15**
Fort Simpson, B.C. in 1857. – NARA (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fort_Simpson,_B.C._in_1857._-_NARA_-_297310.jpg) by US National Archives bot (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:US_National_Archives_bot) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

**Figure 13.16**
Voyage autour du monde (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Voyage_autour_du_monde_-_planche_XIII_-_Jeune_Femme_des_Isles_de_la_Reine_Charlotte.jpg) by Spinster (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Spinster) is in the public domain (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

**Figure 13.17**
H. B. Co. Fort Langley, left bank of Fraser River (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:H._B._Co._Fort_Langley,_left_bank_of_Fraser_River._Langley_Buttes_in_the_distance_-_NARA_-_305495.jpg) by US National Archives bot (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:US_National_Archives_bot) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

# 13.6 Boundary Disputes and Manifest Destiny




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/800px-Oregoncountry2.png)

*Figure 13.18 The Oregon or Columbia District included parts of modern-day British Columbia, Idaho, and Montana as well as all of Washington and Oregon. This map shows, too, the respective claims of the British (42 degrees) and the Americans (5440').*

Beginning in the early 1840s, "Oregon Fever" gripped the United States. Oregon was touted as a land of pleasant climates and fertile soil. Several thousand American settlers began a westward migration over the Oregon Trail. By the mid-1840s, some 5,000 Americans had populated the southern half of the Columbia Department, thus strengthening the U.S. claim to Oregon, and in 1843 the Americans declared a provisional government. The HBC's James Douglas wrote to his superiors that "An American population will never willingly submit to British domination."[1] Britain's tenuous hold on the whole region was in danger of slipping away. Oregon Fever, moreover, fuelled the idea of **Manifest Destiny** in America, popularizing the  the notion that it was God's will that the republic should control the whole of the continent.

1. James Douglas to George Simpson (private correspondence), 23 October 1843, quoted in Daniel W. Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 219.

## Fifty-Four Forty

American territorial expansion became one of the paramount issues of the U.S. election of 1844. Democrat James K. Polk, a protege of the expansionist Andrew Jackson (president, 1829-37), won office in an election that revolved largely around the issues of the possible annexation of Texas and acquiring some or all of the HBC-administered Columbia Department, which the Americans referred to as the Oregon Territory. Polk won the election by a narrow majority, but the Democrats took both houses of Congress, causing many to read the result as a mandate for expansionism.

Many Americans, Polk among them, set their sights on taking the Mexican provinces of New Mexico and California in addition to the Oregon Territory, which at that stage constituted most of the territory between California and the Alaska panhandle — that is, almost all of what is now British Columbia. Polk's priority, however, was the Mexican territories and so he needed to quickly settle with the British on the issue of the Columbia Department in order to have the military strength for a war against Mexico. The process was further complicated by signs that Britain was considering an alliance with the Mexicans in Texas, so getting the British out of the picture was a priority.

On taking office, Polk initiated talks with Britain. The president quickly found himself a prisoner of his own expansionist rhetoric: public opinion over the Oregon Territory had grown increasingly heated with expansionists demanding nothing less than the whole package and threatening war in the far northwest in order to achieve their ends. The slogan **Fifty-Four Forty or Fight!** was coined at this time, referring to the northernmost latitude of the territory that America might claim, some 30 kilometres north of present-day Prince Rupert.

## 49th Parallel

British enthusiasm for war in the Pacific Northwest was understandably tepid. In 1845 and 1846 the fur trade was becoming less profitable and alternative economic engines were slow to emerge. Few politicians in Britain were prepared to go to bat for the monopolistic HBC, which was widely regarded as a bloated artifact of a pre-free trade era. There was little sign — not along the Fraser River or even in California — of the gold rushes that would transform the West Coast. Nor was there any indication of the potential coal mines of Vancouver Island. In this light it is not surprising that the British were prepared to concede as much as they did. Conveniently for the British, President Polk was more than willing to accept a boundary line along the 49th parallel.

In terms of the British interest, as represented in the field by the HBC, the circumstances had changed since the Treaty of 1818, paving the way for joint occupation of the Columbia District. The fur trade in the whole region was in decline and the corridor that ran from York Factory to Fort Vancouver at the mouth of the Columbia had lost much of its significance. In its place, as historian Richard Mackie notes, the HBC had built a network of deep-sea trade that linked ports in Hawaii, Alaska, Guangzhou, and California to Fort Victoria. The mouth of the Columbia was treacherous with shifting sands and channels; Fort Victoria was better suited for this new kind of commerce under Britain's growing philosophy of free trade.[2] Holding the line at the 49th parallel and keeping Vancouver Island

2. Richard Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 256-61.

was sufficient to the needs of the British and, if it could be done through diplomacy rather than at gunpoint, a peaceful outcome was preferable to war.

Two important results of the **Oregon Treaty of 1846** were not committed to any legal document. First, the principles by which Europeans had sorted out who owned what in the New World shifted. The British claim was based on commerce and, indeed, every expression of British policy in the region from the 1780s to the 1870s hinged on commerce. When the British laid claim to the region based on occupation, they were using the word to mean "business"; in other words, they were occupied with commerce in the region. For the Americans occupation meant settlement, and sending in thousands of squatters to take up land was a precursor to annexation. With that American interpretation in mind, the HBC moved in the late 1840s toward a policy of building settlements on Vancouver Island to forestall any American forays into the region.[3] It was, as well, a lesson that James Douglas would remember at the right moment in 1858 and one that would focus Canadian minds when it came to holding Rupert's Land against American intrusion from 1869 on. The map in Figure 13.19 shows those areas where American expansion in the West was a source of concern for British and Canadian interests.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/08/UnitedStatesExpansion.png)

*Figure 13.19 American expansion in the Red River Valley, the Cypress Hills, the Oregon Territory, and southern British Columbia. [Long description] (#fig13.19)*

The other result of the Oregon Treaty was a severely changed political landscape for Indigenous nations. The 49th parallel cut through Native communities like a knife, effectively trapping populations on either side within rapidly emergent imperialist administrative structures. The change was not immediately apparent: the swoop of a pen 4,000 miles away makes little noise. By the late 19th century, however, both the American and the British-Canadian governments in the region were aggressively managing border peoples, some of whom found their societies divided.

3. Clayton, *Islands of Truth*, 222-3.

**Key Points**

- American imperial aspirations in the second quarter of the 19th century included annexation of the whole Pacific Northwest.
- The Oregon Treaty of 1846 resolved the potential conflict between Britain and the United States by continuing the border with British North America all the way to the West Coast and throwing in all of Vancouver Island on the British side.
- The HBC and the Colonial Office had to develop new strategies to continue exploiting and claiming the territory between the American and Russian territories.

## Attributions

**Figure 13.18**
Oregon Country (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oregoncountry2.png) by Kmusser (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Kmusser) is used under a CC BY-SA 2.5 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/deed.en) license.

**Figure 13.19**
United States Expansion (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:UnitedStatesExpansion.png) by Peteforsyth is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

## Long descriptions

**Figure 13.19 long description:** American expansion from the original 13 states ceded by Great Britain in 1783 to the west coast. 1803 marked the completion of the Louisiana Purchase from France. In 1819, the Spanish ceded three southern states. Texas was annexed in 1845. In 1846 and 1848, America gained all of the western block of what is now the United States. In 1867, America bought Alaska from Russia. [Return to Figure 13.19] (#attachment_358)

# 13.7 Identity Crisis

National histories tend to draw straight and uncomplicated lines. If one of the functions of a national history is to define or distill a national identity, then simplicity is of the first order. Loyalties ought to point in one direction, though occasionally a character in the past may be torn somewhat. But we have come to think of national and ethnic loyalties as instinctive and not all that negotiable. This is part of a tendency to essentialize people in the past: they behave as they do because of what they are in essence.

One of the virtues of West Coast history is the ease with which those narratives may be broken up and thrown aside. People from around the globe collected on the West Coast in the 18th and 19th centuries, in assortments that were, for their time, unique. What's more, the individuals themselves reveal interestingly complex backgrounds. The ways in which their lives bump up against those of others and then ricochet off in an unexpected direction remind us that stories are not highways but threads that bind and fray.

Take the example of Marguerite Waddens (sometimes spelled Wadin) who was born in Montreal in 1775. Her father, Jean Étienne Waddens, was Swiss and a founding member of the NWC; her mother, Marie Josephe DeGuire, was Cree. Marguerite was a product of a fur trade marriage *à la façon du pays*, a late-18th century métis born in the East.[1] Two of the men in Marguerite's life would meet their ends in spectacularly violent ways. Her father died at the hands of fellow NWC trader and cartographer Peter Pond when an argument overheated. Marguerite's first husband, Alexander MacKay (1770-1811) died under even more exceptional circumstances.

1. One of Marguerite's sisters, Veronique, would marry the Rev. John Bethune; two of their descendants are Dr. Norman Bethune (the Canadian physician who achieved legendary status in the Chinese Revolution) and the accomplished actor, Christopher Plummer.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Marguerite-Wadin-McLoughlin.jpg)

*Figure 13.20 Marguerite Wadin McLoughlin in her twilight years.*

MacKay was a child when his Loyalist parents became refugees in the Canadas. Entering the fur trade as a youth, he joined Alexander Mackenzie's expedition to the Pacific coast (and was thus one of the first Euro-North Americans to cross the continent). MacKay amassed a fortune in the service of the NWC, married Marguerite, and retired to Montreal at 38 a wealthy man — probably without Marguerite. In 1810 the American fur trader and entrepreneur John Jacob Astor (1763-1848) signed MacKay to work with the Pacific Fur Company — an emergent American rival to the British HBC and the Canadian NWC. Sailing on the *Tonquin* to the West Coast, MacKay was killed along with all but two of the ship's crew when it stumbled into a political stew in Clayoquot Sound in 1811. Wikaninnish's fleet made short work of the American crew, killing as many as they could lay their hands on. This may have been one of Wikaninnish's attempts to obtain a European-style vessel. If so, it failed: perhaps as many as a hundred of the Tla-o-qui-aht raiders perished when a *Tonquin* crew member detonated the ship's gunpowder.

Marguerite and Alexander's son, Thomas, narrowly missed sharing the horrors of the *Tonquin* because his father chose to leave him behind for a few days at the PFC's new fort on the Columbia.[2] The widow Marguerite remarried around 1810, which suggests that she had been abandoned by MacKay (a common enough experience for "country wives"). Her new husband was another fur trader, John McLoughlin

2. Jean Morrison, "MacKAY, ALEXANDER," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed January 18, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mackay_alexander_5E.html .

(1784-1857). Born Jean-Baptiste in Trois-Rivières in 1784, McLoughlin came from Irish immigrant stock (his father) and Canadien ancestry (his mother). Raised by his Scottish uncle, McLoughlin's spiritual life charted a course from Catholicism to Anglicanism and back. His marriage to Marguerite was not McLoughlin's first: he was himself a widower, having been married briefly to a Chippewa woman who died giving birth to their son Joseph in 1809.

Within a year of marriage (again, *a la façon du pays*), Marguerite and John had a son, John Jr. The family continued to grow while they were stationed just west of Lake Superior. During this period McLoughlin senior's relationship with his stepson Thomas deepened. Indeed both men were at Selkirk in the employ of the NWC during the Battle of Seven Oaks. McLoughlin was even implicated in the killing of Governor Semple, although the charges were later dismissed. He was a key player for the NWC side at the negotiations that led to the merger of the two fur trade giants in 1821.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Fort_George.jpg)

*Figure 13.21 Fort Astoria (also known as Fort George), c. 1813-1818.*

About seven years later, Marguerite Waddens MacKay McLoughlin relocated with her husband and both sons to the Columbia District where McLoughlin built Fort Vancouver, across the river from Fort Astoria (the PFC base in which Alexander MacKay played a small role). Fort Vancouver was as cosmopolitan as any HBC post and then some. Trade between the Columbia and the Hawaiian (or Sandwich) Islands brought Kanakas (Hawaiians) to Fort Vancouver in large numbers. Trade with Guangzhou occasionally brought Chinese men as crew to the West Coast, and Marguerite's nephew, Angus Bethune, travelled to China on behalf of the HBC. Marguerite would have been on hand in 1834 when news of three shipwrecked Japanese sailors on the Olympic Peninsula reached Fort Vancouver. Enslaved by the Makah on Juan de Fuca Strait, the three men included a 15-year-old named Otokichi, who — thanks to the intervention of McLoughlin — was brought to Fort Vancouver. Otokichi would go on to play a small part in diplomatic efforts to open Japan to Western trade. (And, like Marguerite, Otokichi's wide-ranging life would be marked by complete disregard for racial or national categories: his first wife was English, his second Malay.)



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Otokichi.jpg)

*Figure 13.22 A drawing of Otokichi on his return to Japan, wearing his disguise as a Chinese traveller.*

Marguerite was well acquainted with James Douglas, McLoughlin's junior at Fort Vancouver. Born in the British colony of Demerara (Guyana), Douglas had both Scottish and African ancestors. He worked his way through the NWC into the HBC and at 25 years of age he married Amelia Connolly, a *métis* woman. Shortly after the Douglases were reassigned to Fort Vancouver where James worked under McLoughlin. Douglas observed in these years on the "respect and affection" that McLoughlin held for Marguerite.[3] Douglas grew fiercely loyal to McLoughlin, even against Governor Simpson right up until 1846 at which point their paths diverged. McLoughlin decided to stay put on the Columbia and thus become an American after partition of the Oregon Territory.

John Jr. carried on the family tradition for travel, moving to Paris to take up medical studies. In later years he would acquire a reputation for drunkenness and violence (John Sr. had a temper as well, according to Governor Simpson), which might provide a clue to why he left Paris under a cloud. Difficult to place in the HBC system, he found his way to Fort Vancouver for a spell, then to Fort McLoughlin (on the central coast and named for his father). Finally he was sent to Fort Stikine in the north. There, it was reported, he so terrified his colleagues that one of them shot him through the throat. He died from his wounds at barely 30 years of age.

Thomas MacKay, for his part, had a better record, of sorts. Marguerite's son by Alexander McKay

3. Margaret A. Ormsby, "DOUGLAS, Sir JAMES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed August 7, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/douglas_james_10E.html .

married well in the Columbia District, partnering with Timmee, the daughter of Chinook chieftain Comcomly.[4] He played a key role in realizing Governor Simpson's vision of a "fur desert" south of Fort Vancouver, a landscape completely denuded of commercial wildlife so as to block American trade in the region. This war against nature was for naught, as it simply made it easier for American settlers (rather than fur traders) to move into the region.

Not much is known of David, Marguerite's second son by John McLoughlin, except that he received some training in Paris as an engineer, spent much of his life in the Columbia District, and married a Ktunaxa (a.k.a. Kutenai) woman named Anne Grizzly. Less still is known about John McLoughlin's son from his first marriage, Joseph, and Marguerite's three daughters by Alexander MacKay. Marguerite and John's daughter Marie Eloisa McLoughlin, however, attained some prominence at Fort Vancouver. Born in 1817 at Fort William, Eloisa was educated in Canada and headed west in the 1830s. Young and energetic she took on many of the hostessing tasks that typically would have belonged to her mother. She and her husband opened Fort Stikine around 1841 and narrowly missed overlapping with her ill-fated brother John Jr. at that same location in 1842.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Oregon_Territory_Centennial_3c_1948_issue.jpg)

*Figure 13.23 Having spent his career trying to keep the Americans at bay, McLoughlin is celebrated in this 1948 U.S. stamp as a founder of Oregon.*

The loss of British sovereignty south of the 49th parallel in 1846 was overseen by McLoughlin, the French-Irish-Scots Catholic-Anglican Canadian who went on to become an American and is celebrated in the United States as the "Father of Oregon."[5] Marguerite's final public role — she died in 1860 — was that of mayor's wife in Oregon City, where the couple are buried side-by-side. The Swiss-Cree Protestant-Catholic mother of seven children and stepmother to another (some of them, like their fathers, Scots-Irish or French or Loyalist), mother-in-law to women drawn from Indigenous nations from the north coast to Idaho, and aunt to members of the Family Compact in Upper Canada, Marguerite's life

4. Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 131.

5. W. Kaye Lamb, "McLOUGHLIN, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed January 18, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcloughlin_john_8E.html .

took place on a stage of enormous distances and great risks, one that involved a multitude of actors from across the globe. Tug on any one thread and any number of narratives unfold.

**Key Points**

- The notion of national or ethnic identities of individuals in the Cordilleran fur trade prior to the 1850s is inherently problematic.
- Canadiens — who were often simultaneously *métis* — played a key role in what is often mislabelled the British fur trade in the farthest West.
- Remote posts were often connected by the presence of family members and within post communities themselves there was often a dense network of relationships between Euro-North Americans and Indigenous peoples.

## Attributions

**Figure 13.20**
Oregon Historical Society (http://www.ohs.org/) (OHS) #bb006496. This photo has been released under a CC BY 4.0 International (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license by the OHS for this textbook.

**Figure 13.21**
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**Figure 13.22**
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**Figure 13.23**
Oregon Territory Centennial 3c 1948 issue (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oregon_Territory_Centennial_3c_1948_issue.JPG) by Gwillhickers (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Gwillhickers) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

# 13.8 The Island Colony



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Fort_Victoria_watercolour.jpg)

*Figure 13.24 The southwest bastion of the HBC fort at Victoria, 1860. (Watercolour by Sarah Crease.)*

The loss of the Oregon Territory was a blow to the HBC but not necessarily to British ambitions in the region. The former remained resilient while the latter remained modest. The HBC had experimented with commercial diversification for years, expanding its network across the Pacific. The arrival and employment of Kanakas throughout the Pacific Northwest reflected the diversity of marketplaces into which the HBC reached.[1] It was clearly about much more than beaver and sea otter pelts.

One noteworthy (if Pyrrhic) victory in this regard was the **Puget Sound Agricultural Company (PSAC)**, a barely-at-arm's-length subsidiary of the HBC created in 1840 and centred at Port Nisqually (Tacoma) in what is now Washington State. The PSAC had several goals, including the establishment of a loyal British settler community in the face of American intrusion into the Oregon Territory, improved self-sufficiency in terms of food supply to the northern forts, and an experiment in settler colonialism. Like Lord Selkirk's project at Red River, the HBC conceived PSAC in part as an attractive retreat for retired employees and their families. The Oregon Treaty ended the PSAC experiment but its objectives were to continue to the north, on Vancouver Island.

## Fort Victoria

Fort Camosun opened in 1843 and its name changed to Fort Victoria in 1846 in honour of the new queen. This was the first settlement of Europeans on the island since the Spanish abandoned Fort San Miguel at Yuquot in 1795. The HBC feared the Lekwungen (Songhees) and their neighbours, and there was little confidence that even a simple landfall would succeed. The priorities of the Lekwungen, however,

1. Tom Koppel, *Kanaka: The Untold Story of Hawaiian Pioneers in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1995).

included incorporating the British operations into their own. Some 300 to 400 Indigenous men took on the task of building the fort and the band provided all the lumber required for the task. Historian John Lutz argues that this apparent welcome was a kind of appropriation by the Lekwungen. In their society, housebuilding was a communal activity and it was one that signified, importantly, community ownership of the structure. Building the HBC fort, therefore, signified a Lekwungen stake in the affair.[2]

Relations between Indigenous peoples and the HBC entered a new phase after the construction of Fort Victoria. There were confrontations, some of which involved what Barry Gough describes as gunboat diplomacy.[3] Often the source of irritation was cultural differences. Many northwest coast peoples were horticulturists, though not farmers in a sense that newcomers instantly recognized. Europeans often witnessed them clearing the land with fire in order to create meadows, so the newcomers knew that land management was underway. For example, the West Coast camas bulb was an important source of food for Indigenous peoples and a trade good in its own right. But the camas bulb is one of many local foodstuffs that did not gain admittance to the Columbian Exchange: Europeans never really came to like its flavour. If they had, they might have done more to protect camas patches against the newly introduced cattle and pigs. Of course, a cleared patch of land is more attractive to a farming settler than a stand of towering Douglas firs: the gardens of northwest coast peoples were much sought after and were quickly seized by newcomers. Indigenous peoples, for their part, regarded anything on four legs as potential game, which was predictably bad news for livestock and for the newcomer-Native relationship, but good news for the banquet table.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/c033449.jpg)

*Figure 13.25 The gundeck of the steam-powered vessel, the HMS Sutlej. Along with the aptly named Devastation, the Sutlej razed nine native villages in one mission during the 1860s.*

2. John Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 70-71.

3. Barry M. Gough, *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1856-1890* (Vancouver; UBC Press, 1984).

## The Colony of Vancouver Island

In 1849 the British extended to the HBC a 10-year lease on the proprietary colony of Vancouver Island, conditional on its settlement by newcomers. The new colonial paradigm was difficult for the HBC to accept. Settlers and furs and Natives were not viewed as a good mix, not by the HBC's officers and not by the Indigenous populations. The Whitman Massacre of 1847 was still at the forefront of everyone's minds. Aware of the possibility of foot-dragging on the settlement front, the Colonial Office dispatched Richard Blanshard (1817-1894) to serve as governor.

Blanshard was probably the only non-Indigenous person on the whole island who did not work for the HBC and, as he was soon to discover, the company did not work for him. In the space of 10 years the HBC had experienced an enormous shift, one that had seen the end of their Oregon and Californian enterprises along with the loss of Fort Vancouver and the York Factory Express route. The company's local operations were headed by Chief Factor James Douglas but he now had to take orders from London and the Colonial Office. What's more, Westminster instructed the HBC to bring in significant numbers of non-company personnel to become settlers; it was likely that the newcomers' relationship with the Indigenous nations would be different from — which is to say, at odds with — that of the fur trading company. It is hardly any wonder, then, that Governor Blanshard found himself isolated and frustrated. If that weren't enough, his timing was spectacularly bad.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Blanshard.gif)

*Figure 13.26 Richard Blanshard served briefly as the first governor of Vancouver Island.*

**Gold fever** had erupted in California in 1848. By 1849 eager prospectors were streaming into San Francisco, some of them from Fort Victoria. At around the same time, the HBC decided to pursue more aggressively a coal mining possibility at the northern tip of the island. The company established **Fort**

**Rupert** in the late 1830s at Beaver Harbour, a Kwagu'ł (Kwakiutl) village site called tsax̱is. This was the company's only fort that existed for purposes other than trading furs or growing food. Kwagu'ł men and women dug out the coal or gathered it along the beach and traded it to the HBC, thus expanding their range of commerce. By 1848, however, the company was preparing to lurch into the industrial age by bringing out a party of experienced Scottish coal miners. The experiment was a disaster. It outraged the Kwagu'ł and they made common cause with the miners against the HBC. In 1850 the Scots were either chained up in the fort's bastion or preparing to make a run for it.

As this drama unfolded, another came into view. Two British sailors who hoped to hitch a ride to San Francisco and the riches of the Californian El Dorado jumped ship in Victoria and then, mistakenly, onto a vessel headed north. Arriving in a troubled Fort Rupert, they fled into the forest where they were murdered by parties unknown. Blanshard's response was to sail a gunboat into Beaver Harbour and shell the nearby Nahwitti village as he pursued the killers. Fed up with his low wages, poor living conditions, and lack of real authority, he returned to Fort Victoria and submitted his resignation — which London was happy to accept, given his rampage at Nahwitti.




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/619px-Edward_Gennys_Fanshawe_Indians_at_Fort_Rupert_Vancouvers_Island_July_1851_Canada.jpg)

*Figure 13.27 A depiction of Kwagu'ł and Ts'msyan people at Fort Rupert on the north end of Vancouver Island, 1851. (Painting by Admiral Edward Gennys Fanshawe.)*

Douglas was now governor of the colony with orders to take material steps to settle the island with colonists loyal to the Crown. Recruitment efforts were modest, not least because the prospect of new settlers was viewed as inconsistent with diplomatic and commercial relations with the Indigenous peoples. There was a veneer of theory applied to this hesitance. In the early 1850s the colonial theories of Edward Gibbon Wakefield (1769-1862) — one of members of Lord Durham's expedition to the Canadas — gained wider support. Wakefield's views resonated nicely with the HBC establishment

on the island: he thought it was better to reproduce in colonies the kind of social relations found in Britain's hierarchical culture than to open up the land to homesteading and an influx of commoners. As a result, land prices were set at a level that was seen as attractively exclusive. Only a certain class of settler would, in effect, be admitted. In the face of free land policies south of the border, the Wakefieldian approach on Vancouver Island failed.[4] The number of land sales was acceptable, but the number of settlers was never great. What's more, those HBC servants who might have had it in mind to achieve some independence on the land were kept in their social class by this expense, thus preserving a pool of labourers. Finally, the hierarchical society that Wakefield (and James Douglas) had in mind for Vancouver Island led to the creation of the "squirearchy," an HBC-connected elite that occupied all the key appointed positions in the colony, including the whole of the judiciary.

The Crown had been reluctant to hand authority to Douglas for fear that he was in a conflict of interest. Indeed he was. Douglas was mistrustful of settlers and defensive of aboriginal rights as he saw them. He negotiated a suite of 14 agreements, known as the **Douglas treaties**. These were initiated under Blanshard's watch and Douglas continued pulling treaties together through the decade. Each aimed at obtaining lands deemed suitable for settlement or HBC enterprise. The treaties preserved First Nations village sites intact and allowed for one-time compensation payments. Some First Nations actively sought treaties from the HBC but Douglas had a limited budget at his disposal and no interest in obtaining territory where there was no immediate likelihood of use by newcomers. These treaties stand as the only ones negotiated west of the Rockies until very recently.

## West Coast Industrialization

The experiment in coal mining at Fort Rupert was a disappointment. The Kwagu'ł claimed ownership of the coal and obstructed the use of Scottish miners. The immigrant coal miners — who constitute the first group of foreigners delivered to the region for the purpose of settling or doing a particular job since Meares's Chinese shipbuilders — objected to the way the work was organized, the conditions under which they were mining, and the whole culture of HBC fort life. The operation was wound down and a promising coal seam to the south was explored. Many of the miners subsequently wound up at Fort Nanaimo in the Sneneymuxw territory. Douglas signed a treaty with the Sneneymuxw in 1854 and in that year a shipload of English miners from Staffordshire arrived, along with their families. In total, the HBC sponsored the immigration of 435 individuals for the coal mining projects until 1855, 85 of which were children. These immigrants and those who followed them were exceptional in the history of Canadian population: they were working-class people drawn from isolated communities in Britain and their voyage west by sea took them around the southern tip of South America, to Hawaii, and then to the island colony. There was effectively no going back. In a colony where the "squirearchy" looked down its nose at agricultural labour, the status of the miners and their families was lower still.

The success of the coal mining enterprise was slow in coming. It was helped along, indirectly, by the Russians. The island's proximity to Russian waters pulled the colony briefly into the orbit of the Crimean War (1854). A joint British-French assault on the Russian Pacific port of Petropavlovsk ended in disaster and the injured troops were evacuated to Fort Victoria. These events advanced the case for a Royal Navy base and one was established next to Victoria Harbour at Esquimalt in 1865. Naval officers subsequently developed close links with the coal mining operations around Nanaimo. As more steam-

4. Tina Loo, *Making Law, Order and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 38.

powered naval vessels arrived in the Pacific, the coal resources became more important; as the coal mines grew in strategic significance so too did the value of having a naval base nearby to protect them.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/Nanaimo_Mine_Explosion-1.jpg)

*Figure 13.28 Coal miners at the Nanaimo mine pithead, c. 1870.*

The gold rush on the mainland also helped the coal mines, as did the growing demand for household fuel in San Francisco and Victoria. In the early 1860s the HBC sold its interest in Nanaimo to a London-based company and the chartered company gave way to industrial capitalism. A former HBC employee, Robert Dunsmuir, found his own coal seam nearby in 1869 and began building an industrial empire and dynasty. Two years earlier the first Chinese mine workers arrived at Nanaimo, the beginning of a migration wave that would continue through the rest of the century. By the third quarter of the century Nanaimo and environs was one of the largest industrial nodes in British North America.

## Christianizers

Missionary activity on the coast also began at the mid-century. William Duncan (1832-1918), a controversial and mercurial representative of the Church of England's **Church Missionary Society (CMS)**, arrived in 1857. He set up shop at Fort Simpson (also known as Lax Kw'alaams and Port Simpson, near current-day Prince Rupert) and subsequently relocated hundreds of Ts'msyan to a mission town of his creation: Metlakatla. "Duncan shaped a landscaped place," at Metlakatla, according to one source, "with rows of identical, single-family dwellings. Each house had a small garden, glass windows, sash curtains, and was fitted with beds and clocks. The church and other public offices were Metlakatla's largest and most imposing buildings." The overall effect was that of a European community built around ideals of individualism, the nuclear family, and "slum clearance."[5] Duncan aimed to change people by changing their environment first: notably his idea of appropriate housing, individualism, and patrilineal inheritance was a direct critique of local culture. Duncan took the view that good Christians came out

5. Daniel Clayton, "Geographies of the Lower Skeena," in *Home Truths: Highlights from BC History*, eds. Richard Mackie and Graeme Wynn (Madeira Park: Harbour, 2012), 114-115.

of nuclear households with a strong patriarchal legal and belief system in place.[6] While cultural change among Indigenous people on the northwest coast had been occurring throughout the fur trade period, the arrival of missionaries like Duncan and his successor at Fort Simpson, the Methodist Thomas Crosby (1840-1914), witnessed the first concerted efforts by newcomers to transform Indigenous societies and beliefs on the West Coast.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/William_Duncans_church_Metlakahtla_B.C._-_NARA_-_297830.jpg)

*Figure 13.29 St. Paul's the Anglican church at Metlakatla, n.d.*

The 1850s were marked, then, by a rising colonial administrative presence, the beginnings of cultural assaults, some increase in newcomer settlement, and further decline in the fur economy counterbalanced somewhat by increased diversification of HBC activities. Where Fort Rupert failed as a mining operation, Fort Nanaimo succeeded and new arrivals from British coal fields continued the process of industrial resource extraction. The decade also witnessed diversification of Indigenous economies, a greater number of Indigenous peoples trading their labour for goods, and significant instances of resistance to newcomer transgressions. All of this change would be very suddenly eclipsed by events in 1858.

6. Clarence Bolt, *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet Too Large* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 24.

**Key Points**

- The HBC established the Colony of Vancouver's Island to replace Fort Vancouver and as a starting point for a joint HBC-Colonial Office settlement project.
- The presence of newcomers in their midst both enriched and endangered Indigenous peoples of the island and the central coast.
- Agriculture, harvesting coal, and other economic activities were undertaken to further trade with the foreigners and also to increase their dependence.
- Settlement in the colony took two forms: a patriarchal and pastoral echo of the relationship between British gentry and commoners, and an industrial, proletarian townscape.
- The industrial revolution arrived on Vancouver Island in the late 1840s and spread in the 1850s to the mid- and south island.
- Missionary efforts on the West Coast accelerated in the 1840s, richly funded in the first instance by the CMS.

## Attributions

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**Figure 13.25**
HMS Sutlej gun deck LAC (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HMS_Sutlej_gun_deck_LAC_3399340.jpg) by Rcbutcher (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Rcbutcher) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

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**Figure 13.27**
Edward Gennys Fanshawe, Indians at Fort Rupert, Vancouver's Island, July 1851 (Canada) (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edward_Gennys_Fanshawe,_Indians_at_Fort_Rupert,_Vancouver's_Island,_July_1851_(Canada).jpg)by KAVEBEAR (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:KAVEBEAR) is in the public domain (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

**Figure 13.28**
Nanaimo Mine Explosion-1 (http://miningwiki.ru/

wiki/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:Nanaimo_Mine_Explosion-1.jpg) by Drovosekk (http://miningwiki.ru/wiki/%D0%A3%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA:Drovosekk)is used under a CC BY-SA 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.ru) license.

**Figure 13.29**
William Duncan's church, Metlakahtla, B.C. (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Duncan's_church,_Metlakahtla,_B.C._-_NARA_-_297830.jpg) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain). This image is available from the holdings of the National Archives and Records Administration (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/National_Archives_and_Records_Administration), cataloged under the ARC Identifier (National Archives Identifier) 297830.

# 13.9 The Gold Colony



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/BC-New_Eldorado.jpg)

*Figure 13.30 A whimsical, almost Tolkein-esque map of "The New El Dorado."*

Tranquille Creek pours into Kamloops Lake about 15 kilometres west of the HBC's fort at the confluence of the two branches of the Thompson River. In the 1850s the Tk'emlúps people retrieved small quantities of gold from the creek and canyon and offered it in trade at Fort Kamloops. After amassing a considerable nest egg's worth of minerals, the HBC traders became concerned that it might be nothing more than fool's gold. James Douglas (who still played the role of leading trader on the mainland, as well as governor of Vancouver Island) quietly shipped out a sample to the mint at San Francisco for assaying. Word of the gold's quality leaked out of the mint within hours of testing and the **Fraser River gold rush** was underway.

## The Rush

The earliest phase of the Fraser gold rush included production of gold by Indigenous labour on a commodity-trade basis from 1856, if not earlier. The Nlaka'pamux in particular were industriously pulling gold ore from their river (which appeared on European maps as the Thompson beginning in the 19th century) in 1857 and were already fighting off Americans from the old Oregon Territory who had followed rumours of gold in the north. What happened in 1858, however, was of a different order of magnitude.

No other event in Canadian history so transformed a region and its people in such a short period of time. This story goes well beyond the 15,000 to 20,000 who sailed out of San Francisco to Victoria and the mainland in the summer of 1858. It is much more than the administrative and political changes entailed in the creation of the new Crown colony of British Columbia, the appointment of Douglas as its first

governor, and the establishment of a capital at New Westminster. And it goes well beyond the thousands of newcomers who added to the existing non-Indigenous community as permanent residents.

The gold rush had severe environmental implications. Miners compromised salmon runs by flushing sand and silt into the spawning grounds as they tried to extract gold. They stripped hillsides of trees needed for mine posts, flumes, and houses; erosion followed. Extensive and sterile rock piles throughout the interior even now indicate where Chinese miners painstakingly piled river rocks after they had been carefully washed clean of gold dust.

There was, too, bloodshed in the Okanagan by American prospectors accustomed to killing off Indigenous people who got in their way, and that was followed by warfare in the Fraser Canyon as the Nlaka'pamux resisted foreign incursions.[1] The Fraser Canyon War was instigated by French miners who allegedly raped a Nlaka'pamux girl; their bodies were subsequently found downstream, decapitated. Claims at the time of huge mortalities must be taken with a grain of salt, but it is clear that skirmishes did take place, lives were lost, and the event could have easily cost Britain its new colony.

Douglas could not afford to wait for the Colonial Office to send instructions. He raced a gunboat to the mouth of the Fraser and imposed a licensing system on the incoming miners, a way of demonstrating British sovereignty and gathering revenues. Shortly thereafter the Colonial Office made Douglas governor of the new colony of British Columbia and insisted he cut his ties with the HBC. A new capital was established at New Westminster (at the Kwantlen village of Sxwoyimelth) and Fort Langley enjoyed a brief renaissance. A corps of Royal Engineers were introduced and acted as a kind of police force throughout the colony. Steamboats were soon plying the river to the height of navigation at Yale.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/a125990.jpg)

*Figure 13.31 Chinese miners introduced machinery like this "rocker" on the Fraser River c. 1875.*

1. Daniel P. Marshall, "No Parallel: American Miner-Soldiers at War with the Nlaka'pamux of the Canadian West," in John M. Findlay and Ken S. Coates, ed., *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 64-65.

## The Cariboo

The gold frontier rapidly spread north, one arm diverting east to reincorporate Tranquille Canyon and the main part headed into the Cariboo Plateau. Barkerville emerged in these years as the largest centre of population in both British Columbia and Vancouver Island with numbers in excess of 10,000 (Victoria held barely 6,000 in 1863). The boomtowns of Likely, Richfield, and Quesnel also appeared at this time, many of them heavily populated by Chinese miners from Taishan.

Few of the gold prospectors made the fortunes they'd hope to. The cost of supplies was grotesquely inflated, the miners chased off much of the game they might have lived off, and Indigenous communities tended to give them a wide berth. Survival became the chief preoccupation of many prospectors. Shopkeepers and saloon keepers, however, did quite well, though never well enough to pay for the infrastructure needed to sustain the gold rush. The **Cariboo Wagon Road** was the major government initiative of the day, connecting Lillooet and Lytton (Camchin) with Barkerville. Way stations appeared (the many Mile Houses of the interior) and the whole was policed by a regiment of British Royal Engineers, called the Sappers.

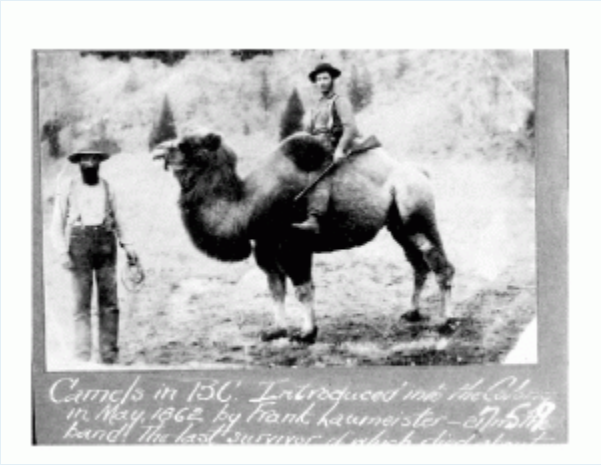



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/Barnards_Express_at_Yale.gif)

*Figure 13.32 The Cariboo Wagon Road made possible the much more rapid movement of people, goods, and colonial power through the interior of British Columbia.*

The Fraser and Cariboo gold rushes peaked in 1863 and were in decline by 1865. Thousands of newcomers drawn from dozens of countries remained in its wake, some continuing to prospect in the area of Likely and Quesnel Forks. There are two noteworthy aspects of this population influx. First, despite the appearance of a map of newly named locales, very few of the gold rush towns were, in fact, new human settlements. New Westminster (the capital of the new mainland colony), Hope, Yale, Port Douglas, and Lillooet were — like Kamloops — Indigenous village sites before they were newcomer villages and towns. Barkerville and its neighbour Richfield were exceptions, being two of very few entirely new settlements. Second, this population infusion was overwhelmingly young and male, a foretaste of life in a resource-extraction and industrial frontier. The pattern would be reinforced by smaller gold rushes in the Boundary District in 1860, on the Stikine River in 1861-62 (which briefly produced the separate administrative district, Stikine Territory), and in a few smaller pockets in 1871.

Exercise: History Around You — Invasive Species




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/Cariboo_camel.gif)

*Figure 13.33*

Thanks to the widely circulated photograph in Figure 13.33, Frank Laumeister has the unfortunate distinction as the man remembered for bringing camels into the Cariboo in the 1860s. He was, no doubt, thinking of their ability to handle freight, their durability in hot climates (which describes the Interior Plateau in the summertime), and the fact that miners used them in California before the B.C. goldrush. The soil, however, was too rocky for their soft feet, the winters were hard on them, and they terrified the horses and mules. These "Cariboo Camels" did not, however, leave much of an impression on the B.C. environment: the last one died around 1905. Thinking of where you are or where you've been in Canada, what other "introduced" species of animals and plants might one encounter regularly? Which, if any, have had a serious impact on the local ecology?

## *Gum Shan*, the Gold Mountain

This was, too, the most international community that would be seen in any part of British North America for a century. Thousands of Taishanese could be found in the Cariboo, the two colonial capitals, and the coal mines of Nanaimo. Kanakas were working and living everywhere and increasingly in concentrations on the Gulf Islands. African Americans fleeing slavery and its possible extension to California arrived in large numbers, some establishing a volunteer rifle regiment in Victoria. Continental Europeans, Scandinavians, and even Australians fleshed out the population made up mostly of British, Americans, and even Canadians and Maritimers.

The majority of the gold rush influx, however, exited. For colonists and colonial political figures, the loss of the newcomers meant that the colony was bankrupt and teetering once again on the brink of annexation by the United States. The feeling that British Columbia's days as a Crown Colony were numbered was particularly strong after the Americans purchased Alaska in 1868. The trappings of imperial power — a few officers of the judiciary (including Judge Matthew Baillie Begbie, who was unafraid of applying gallows law), a Royal Navy base at Esquimalt, and a small legislative council

in Victoria — were not entirely reassuring. Voices in the Colonial Office suggested that it was time to cut their losses and hand over the region to the Americans. The Asian population found itself increasingly marginalized physically in the towns and cities as "Chinatowns" appeared, reflecting Euro-North American policies of containment and exclusion. Indeed, as discussion over the wisdom of "confederating" with other British North American colonies and provinces developed, the peoples of British Columbia were roughly a third each of Indigenous, Asian, and European (with Kanakas and Blacks mostly counted among the Whites).

## After the Gold Rush

By the mid-1860s, the Indigenous world was in the midst of seismic transformation. The whirlwind of the gold rush years changed much in the region. Newcomer towns appeared and newcomer institutions arose. Newspapermen arrived with their printing presses: the *New Westminster British Columbian* and the *Victoria Daily British Colonist* gave voice to familiar Euro-North American ways of understanding law, order, civilization, politics, and power. Catering to a newcomer population, they had little or nothing to say to the majority of people in the region who were Indigenous. According to a study of the impact of colonization on one Indigenous nation,

> The most enduring effect of the gold rush was the entrenchment in language and thought of two categories of people, "shama" (semeʔ) and "Indian." Within a short time the Nlaka'pamux language also had specific terms for Chinese, African American, and Jewish people, but all were shama. Before the arrival of Europeans, the concept of "Indian" simply did not exist. People were simply seyknmx.[2]

The colonial regime certainly distinguished the groups of people under its watch. It was suspicious of Americans, contemptuous of the Chinese, dismissive of Canadians, and uncertain about what it should do with or to the Indigenous population. Douglas did not bring his treaty process to the mainland colony. Historians have theorized that he lacked the budget to do so, needed a larger bureaucracy to manage the time-consuming negotiations (the Nanaimo Treaty took two years to work out), and determined that drawing up generous reserves was a better and more effective way to address the problem than treaties.[3] In 1864 Douglas retired, leaving the outlines of a Native policy but little more. Joseph Trutch (1826-1904) was appointed chief commissioner of Lands and Works and worked under Douglas's successor on the mainland, Frederick Seymour (1820-1869), to move Indigenous peoples out of the way of settlers and ranchers. When Seymour died, Anthony Musgrave (1828-1888) was appointed to the office of governor, with a mandate to unify the colonies. Musgrave married Trutch's sister and the brothers-in-law worked to minimize aboriginal title, a process that carried over into the Confederation era.

Almost overnight, Indigenous people lost a variety of liberties and freedom of movement. Douglas had promised to protect their villages, farms, and homes; Trutch actively sought to dispossess them. How could this happen only a few short years after the Nlaka'pamux, the Secwepemc, and the Syilx (Okanagan) demonstrated considerable military ability and capacity? The answer is a familiar one: smallpox.

2. Andrea Laforet and Annie York, *Spuzzum: Fraser Canyon Histories, 1808-1939* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 56-7.

3. Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 32-37.

**Key Points**

- The British Columbia gold rush consists of distinct phases including the pre-1858 mining of gold by Indigenous people, the 1858-59 stampede into the Fraser Canyon, and the 1860-63 Cariboo phenomenon.
- The gold rush brought roughly 20,000 newcomers into the mainland colony. This population comprised people from around the world.
- The presence of large numbers of Americans posed a threat to British sovereignty, and the Colonial Office responded with strategies aimed at entrenching British power.
- New colonial institutions and the physical disruption entailed in the gold rush had severe repercussions for Indigenous peoples in south and central British Columbia.

## Attributions

**Figure 13.30**
BC-New_Eldorado (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BC-New_Eldorado.jpg) by DarkEvil (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:DarkEvil) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 13.31**
Chinese man washing gold (https://www.flickr.com/photos/lac-bac/4574232997/) by LibraryArchives (https://www.flickr.com/photos/lac-bac/) is used under a CC BY 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/) license.

**Figure 13.32**
Barnards Express at Yale (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barnards_Express_at_Yale.gif) by Ras67 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Ras67) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 13.33**
Cariboo camel (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cariboo_camel.gif) by Magnus Manske (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:File_Upload_Bot_(Magnus_Manske)) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 13.10 A Shrinking Indigenous Landscape in the 1860s



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/Kwakwakawakwgirl.jpg)

*Figure 13.34 U'magalis (Margaret Wilson Frank), c. 1914, a Kwagu'ł woman posed in pre-contact style by 20th century photographer Edward S. Curtis. Her abalone shell earrings indicate her noble status.*

We begin this chapter with a photograph (Figure 13.34) by well known "Native" photographer, Edward Curtis. His work has attracted controversy and criticism because of the way in which he staged each shot to create, in his view, a sense of "timelessness" and lack of progress.[1]

### Smallpox, 1862-63

In the spring of 1862 "patient zero" stepped off a ship from San Francisco and into the streets of Victoria, the capital and trademart of the Colony of Vancouver Island. He was carrying smallpox and the harbour was crowded with Indigenous traders. Rather than quarantine that community and apply the

1. See Margaret B. Blackman, "'Copying People': Northwest Coast Native Response to Early Photography," BC Studies, 52 (Winter 1981-82): 104.

kinds of practices modelled 80 years earlier at Cumberland House (see Chapter 5 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-5/#chapter5)), the colonial administration ordered the encampments cleared. They sent traders home to their villages up the coast, which proved to be a lethal error. Smallpox travelled with them and claimed about 20,000 lives, virtually all of them Indigenous people. A third to two-thirds of the Indigenous population was gone almost overnight.

This isn't merely a statistical note: the psychological trauma can barely be imagined. Kekulis (pithouses) piled high with the dead were simply abandoned and allowed to collapse on themselves; above-ground houses and whole villages were torched in the hope that doing so would halt the march of smallpox. Survivors, particularly children, starved to death with no one left to feed them. There were literally bodies everywhere. One account from the Cariboo gold district describes seeing canoes floating past on the Fraser River, filled with bloated corpses. This was near-extinction for many communities and some of them have never recovered.

Smallpox made subsequent appearances in British North America and post-Confederation Canada, but they were minor events by comparison. The 1860s epidemic was, for once, well documented by newcomers and as a result historians have a good sense of its enormity, particularly for those who survived. In the Pentlatch village on Vancouver Island, there was one survivor. That individual was adopted into the K'ómoks (Comox), a Kwakwakw'wakw band that moved south into the vacuum left behind by smallpox. But the K'ómoks themselves were badly reduced. There was no Indigenous community in the Comox Valley strong enough to resist the intrusion of newcomers in the decade that followed. The colonists stripped the hillsides of cedars and firs, they opened up the ground and its seams of coal, they claimed the fisheries, and confined the indigenous people to a postage-stamp sized reserve.

The experience of the K'ómoks was fairly typical of events as they unfolded on Vancouver Island and in British Columbia. Smallpox made space. The newcomers were themselves fewer in number than they had been at the height of the gold rush but some were optimistic about colonialism.

## The Chilcotin War

The smallpox story continued with the Bute Inlet crisis (also known as the **Chilcotin War** or Bute Inlet Massacre). Thinking that a road to the Cariboo goldfields from the central coast would save both time and money and would open up new areas for resource extraction, a party of surveyors was sent up Bute Inlet in 1864 with an eye to exploring possible routes. When they encountered some resistance from the Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin) people, the White surveyors threatened to introduce smallpox. Given the recent plague, this was both a cruel and stupid strategy. The Tsilhqot'in responded by killing 14 road workers and two other Whites in the region. In the colonial capital of New Westminster there was outrage, but it was tempered with concern that "civilized" people should respond to "savagery" with justice, not blind vengeance.

With this event, as historian Tina Loo has demonstrated, the colonialists were defining themselves as representatives of British (not American) values and as bearing the responsibility to create what they regarded as a better society atop what they saw as a declining, irredeemable, and doomed Indigenous world.[2] The White response to the incident was largely ineffectual until the leader of the Tsilhqot'in

2. Tina Loo, "The Road from Bute Inlet: Crime and Colonial Identity in British Columbia," in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, vol.5: *Crime and Criminal Justice*, eds. Jim Phillips, Tina Loo, and Susan Lewthwaite (Toronto: Osgoode Society, 1994), 112-42.

party, Klatsassin, and his immediate followers voluntarily surrendered themselves to the commissioner at Quesnel Forks on the understanding they would be treated as prisoners of war. Presumably they hoped to move to a diplomatic phase in the disagreement, but this did not occur. The colonial power arrested the eight men, charged most of them with murder, and hanged Klatsassin, his son, and three others.

These two events — the smallpox epidemic of 1862-63 and the Chilcotin War of 1864 — point to a severe and abrupt reduction in Indigenous power in the farthest West. But they also point to continued resistance to newcomer authority and newcomer willingness to exert authority through violence. From the perspective of the Tsilhqot'in, a people whose system of justice was traditionally more personal and whose system of government was kin-based, the very concept of a state that would seek out and execute people in their own territory who were, in their minds, guilty only of protecting that territory, could hardly have seemed more alien. The repressive laws that followed — restrictions on where Indigenous peoples might live and what land they might own (the reserve system) — was only possible because of the epidemic. And it was made necessary (as the colonialists saw it) by the potential for violence and disorder on the part of the people whose lands were being seized.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/12/753px-Charles_Gentile-Lillooet_Indians.jpg)

*Figure 13.35 In the 1850s the colonial regime in British Columbia started carving out reserves and reducing the mobility of Indigenous people like the St'at'imc of the Lillooet area. In the next decade the colony would reduce many of the reserves and then happily hand over responsibility for "Indian Affairs" to a distant and underinformed bureaucracy in Ottawa.*

The execution of Klatassin and his son Pierre, is conspicuously inconsistent with the character of Indigenous-newcomer relations in the early part of the century. There were, to be sure, instances of gunboat diplomacy in earlier decades but the colonists' discourse surrounding the Chilcotin War was one of conquest, not co-existence. Newcomers took full advantage of the space cleared by smallpox and reserves in the late 1860s. The colony, however, remained a nervous place. For Indigenous people the fear of smallpox, measles, whooping cough, and other diseases, as well as the armed might of

the newcomers, made them more receptive to the blandishments and promises of missionaries and government officials.

## Missionaries on the Mainland

Missionary work across most of British North America until the mid-19th century was conducted by Catholics. The rise of the "non-conformist" denominations changed the landscape in Canadian and Maritime towns. In British Columbia, however, there was a missionary stampede to compete with the gold rush.

Unofficially, the HBC regime favoured the Anglican Church and it was clearly preferred among the colonists. In the missionary field, however, the Anglicans faced the forces of the Oblate (Catholic), Methodist, Presbyterian, and even Salvation Army missionaries (although this last group did not arrive on the scene until after Confederation). The governors who succeeded Douglas — Seymour for the mainland, Arthur Edward Kennedy (1809-1883) for the island, and Musgrave for the united colony — were tolerant of all sects in terms of their mission activity. Their reasoning was that more missionaries meant a greater likelihood of "peace and order among the colony's Natives."[3] Put in other terms, missionaries brought acceptance of the new colonial regime and compliance. The message of peace was not, however, consistently modelled by the missionaries. Competition broke out between the clergymen and accusations of poaching were not infrequent. Indigenous groups were subjected to one largely intolerant version of Christianity after the next. In more than a few instances, however, Indigenous peoples sought out missionary support.

Oblates set up chapels throughout the interior of the colony but, in most locations, priests came by only infrequently. Enthusiasm for the latest missionary was, therefore, easily dissipated. In the case of the Nlaka'pamux at Lytton, their relationship with the Oblates soured when the itinerant Catholic clergy demanded control over the chapel; the Nlaka'pamux believed it was their property. The Oblate neglect of Lytton and their misunderstanding of Nlaka'pamux notions of ownership resulted in the band rejecting one set of missionaries and seeking out an Anglican alternative.[4]

As was the case with Duncan and Crosby on the island and on the north coast, Interior missionary activity was usually predicated on a welcome from the Indigenous community. Those looking for explanations for the cataclysmic experiences they were witnessing turned to ministers who claimed to have answers. The spiritualities of Indigenous cultures, moreover, was not monotheistic, so a European belief system (or elements of it) could be grafted on to traditional ideas. Missionaries, perhaps more than anything else, could function as cultural intermediaries. Throughout the fur trade era Indigenous protocols applied; almost overnight British civil and criminal law was being enforced across British Columbia and up and down the coast as well. A resident cultural interpreter who might also provide some English language training was viewed in many communities as an asset.

These were transformational days indeed. The naval base at Esquimalt tilted the power balance definitively toward the newcomers, at least on the coast. In the Interior, "Hanging Judge" Begbie

3. Brett Christophers, *Positioning the Missionary: John Booth Good and the Confluence of Cultures in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 10-14.

4. Ibid.

was able to stifle Indigenous resistance and enforce conformity to colonial law. As the populations thinned, these executions had greater and greater impact. One historian, Jean Barman, has described the policing of Indigenous women's morality on the streets of Victoria in the 1860s. Viewed as sexually "transgressive," they were characterized as prostitutes and treated as such by the colonial legal system. More than that, their reputation (earned or not) made them useful bait in newcomer-run dance halls (where miners and dockworkers could be parted from their money) and in the pulpit (where clergymen could rail on about the moral dangers of frontier life).[5]

The 1860s saw, as well, continuing decline in settlers' acceptance of intermarriage. Prominent women like Lady Amelia Douglas, who grew up speaking Cree (her mother's language) and Canadien French (her father's), was only 16 when she married a rising HBC trader. In her dotage she would be exposed to the pearl-clutching racist snobbery and outright racism of settler society, despite being the late governor's widow. The advent of prejudices of this kind paved the way for the marginalization of Indigenous people generally in the last quarter of the 19th century.

**Key Points**

- The 1862-63 smallpox epidemic claimed one- to two-thirds of the Indigenous population in British Columbia and Vancouver Island, significantly reducing the ability of the indigenous peoples to resist further colonial intrusion.
- Efforts at resistance continued, as in the Chilcotin, but these were met with executions of the leadership.
- The process of cultural change imposed by the colonial regime took many forms, including missionary Christianization, Western-style education, new land-ownership strategies, stripping of resources, and the application of a foreign judicial system.

## Attributions

**Figure 13.34**
A Kwakwaka'wakw girl wearing abalone earrings and a cedar bark cloak (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kwakwakawakwgirl.jpg) by Magnus Manske (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:File_Upload_Bot_(Magnus_Manske)) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 13.35**
Charles Gentile-Lillooet Indians (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles_Gentile-Lillooet_Indians.jpg) by Themightyquill (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Themightyquill) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain). This image cannot be used for

5. Jean Barman, "Aboriginal Women on the Streets of Victoria: Rethinking Transgressive Sexuality during the Colonial Encounter," in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal Women and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past,* eds. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 205-227.

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# 13.11 Summary



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/Edward_Curtis_image_6.jpg)

*Figure 13.36 A staged photograph from a Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch in the early 20th century shows the survival and resilience of northwest coast cultural practices. (Photo by Edward S. Curtis, c. 1915.)*

The territory that became British Columbia joined the Canadian federation in 1871. Until that time, however, Canada was very distant and rather foreign and mostly irrelevant. The orientations of the Pacific Northwest were toward Asia, the Pacific Islands, Mexico and Chile, and round Cape Horn to England. For the many Indigenous peoples and cultures in the region, Canada was a country with which they had effectively no contact and hardly more knowledge. The challenge, then, is to understand these pre-Confederation years as an era in which other priorities and possibilities presented themselves.

The colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island were expensive to maintain, especially as the gold rush ended and the population diminished. From a peak of 10,000 the Cariboo population fell to about 1,000 by 1870. It is estimated that there were only about 2,000 Chinese left in the colony. The Cariboo Wagon Road had cost the mainland colony dearly and pitched it into debt. The capital at New Westminster — dominated by merchant houses, a colonial elite, and a Royal Engineers' community ensconced at Sapperton — was desperate to hold onto its administrative role.

In 1866 the mainland and the island colonies were consolidated. Bits and pieces of New Caledonia, the Stikeen Territory, the Colony of the Queen Charlotte Islands, and the post-Rupert's Land North-Western Territory had been gradually grafted onto British Columbia and this was the final piece. And — much like Lower Canada in 1841 — Vancouver Island inherited British Columbia's debt.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/John_Robson.jpg)

*Figure13.37 Newspaperman John Robson imported the vocabulary of Upper Canadian reform politics to New Westminster.*

The political culture that developed west of the Rockies was, like the population, multifaceted. There were powerful British themes promoted by the Colonial Office alongside Canadian traditions brought west by Upper Canadians like the reformer John Robson. There was a democratic tradition that can be ascribed, in part, to the Americans and Nova Scotians, such as Amor de Cosmos, a harsh critic of the squirearchy in Victoria. The HBC's tradition of hierarchy and discipline was increasingly caricatured as a West Coast variant of the Family Compact. It was in some respects — in terms of the close bonds between the chief administrator and the members of the Victoria elite — even more of a family compact than ever existed in Upper Canada. Well-positioned individuals like Joseph Trutch were vitriolic in their opposition to democratic reforms. The four years after Confederation in the East would see the colonists in British Columbia pulled in different directions.

While that debate was underway, Indigenous communities continued to stagger from hardship to hardship. As early as 1852 Douglas had witnessed privation and perhaps starvation among the Lekwungen with whom he had signed an early treaty. They were no longer at the centre of the local economy, a change that had taken place in a matter of 10 years.

It is possible to argue that the fur trade on the West Coast was a period of mutual benefit. This is the position taken by Robin Fisher in his landmark book *Contact and Conflict*, in 1977.[1] He argues that both sides profited from the trade and whatever cultural change occurred in Indigenous societies was mediated and controlled by Indigenous peoples themselves. The absence of missionaries and/or imperial

1. Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations, 1774-1890*, 2nd ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992).

power until the 1840s is at the heart of this argument. Other historians have taken the position that the epidemic waves beginning in the 1780s, if not earlier, meant that the odds were stacked against Indigenous communities' ability to adapt. Still others point to the extent of Indigenous authority in the fur trade, the extent to which Indigenous people were able to exploit newcomer dependence, and the ways in which Indigenous peoples managed newcomer behaviours as a sign of ongoing autonomy.

The gold rush of 1858 and the smallpox epidemic of 1862 rendered much of this moot. A territory over which Britain and Spain were once prepared to go to war had so fallen off the European radar that the events of 1858-63 threw it all up in the air again. As Douglas and his colleagues in the HBC retired from public life and passed away, links with the pre-gold rush past evaporated. For the British Columbians of 1858-1871 there was not much in the way of a history to their colony, and what history they saw they generally didn't like. The future was the thing, and they would sacrifice much to get there.

**Historians on Video**

Historian John Lutz (University of Victoria) describes ways in which scholarly historians have changed their understanding of Indigenous-Settler relations in the colonial era on the west coast. Here is a link to the transcript of a video on relations between Indigenous peoples and settlers [PDF] (https://barabus.tru.ca/hist1121/hist1121_jltz_u1_03.pdf).

*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation2e/?p=387#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)*

Key Terms

**Cariboo Wagon Road:** A road constructed from 1860 to 1885 to connect the Lower Mainland of British Columbia with the Cariboo goldfields. The original 1860-63 road ran from Port Douglas at the north end of Harrison Lake via Lillooet to Clinton and then north across the Cariboo Plateau to Alexandria. An amended version in 1865 connected Yale to Ashcroft and then Clinton and the older road, having passed through the Fraser Canyon.

**Chilcotin War:** Also referred to as the Chilcotin Massacre, Chilcotin Uprising, and Bute Inlet Massacre. Occurred in 1864 when Tsilqot'in people asserted their control of their ancestral territory by murdering several members of a road-building crew and some colonists. The colonial authorities responded with a fruitless and expensive campaign that only ended when several of the Tsilqot'in leaders presented themselves for negotiations and were summarily arrested and subsequently hanged.

**Church Missionary Society (CMS):** Established in London, England, in 1799. Began sending Anglican missionaries to Rupert's Land in the 1820s. In 1857 William Duncan was dispatched to the northwest coast on behalf of the CMS.

**Douglas treaties:** Also known as the Fort Victoria Treaties, 14 agreements between the Colony of Vancouver

Island (under the leadership of James Douglas) and Indigenous communities. These were one-time land purchase treaties that protected Indigenous village sites and fields, as well as access to resources.

**Fifty-Four Forty or Fight!:** Slogan coined in 1844 or 1845 by American expansionists eager to claim the whole of the Oregon Territory to the Alaska panhandle (54°40'N).

**Fort George:** The name of two forts in the Pacific northwest. The first replaced the American Fort Astoria near the mouth of the Columbia River (at what is now Astoria, Oregon), and the second was established in 1807 by Simon Fraser at the site of what is now the city of Prince George, British Columbia.

**Fort Rupert:** Located at the north end of Vancouver Island near modern-day Port Hardy. Established by the HBC as a coal harvesting/mining experiment. It is an important Kwagu'ł community today and should not be confused with the city of Prince Rupert, much farther north on the mainland, nor with Waskaganish in northern Quebec, which was formerly called Fort Rupert.

**Fort Vancouver:** An HBC fort established in 1824-25 about 60 kilometres up the Columbia River from Fort George (formerly Fort Astoria). Now the site of the city of Vancouver, Washington. The city of Vancouver, British Columbia, was never a fort and there is no relation between the two other than the name.

**Fraser River gold rush:** A mining boom beginning in 1858 characterized by large numbers of independent prospectors using simple mining technologies to extract gold flakes, dust, and nuggets from the Fraser River. This gold rush was superseded by better finds in the Cariboo in the 1860s.

**gold fever:** Term used to describe the opportunistic individualism found in gold rushes. Gold was discovered and mined by independent prospectors around the Pacific Rim beginning in Australia from the 1840s, California from 1848, a brief flurry in Haida Gwaii in the 1850s followed by the British Columbia rush from 1858-63, and New Zealand in the 1860s. After Confederation there were smaller rushes in British Columiba and these were surpassed by the Klondike/Alaska gold rush of 1896-1909. The close succession of gold rushes meant that many of the personnel in the goldfields had experience in other gold rushes and many of the gold field institutions followed in their wake.

**gunboat diplomacy:** The achievement of colonial political goals in dealings with Indigenous communities by means of superior naval firepower.

**land-based fur trade:** Refers to the HBC's strategy in the 1830s to establish permanent fur-trading establishments on land, rather than rely on ships cruising the coast looking for trade. (See **maritime-based fur trade**.)

**Manifest Destiny:** Widespread belief in the United States during the 19th century that America was destined — that is, intended by God — to conquer and occupy most if not all of North America.

**maritime-based fur trade:** The European and American practice dating from the 1770s of trading up and down the coast from ships, rather than establishing fixed positions on land.

**Nootka Crisis:** A diplomatic incident due to conflicting between Spanish and British claims to sovereignty and the right to trade along the Pacific northwest coast. The disagreement was resolved in the Nootka Conventions of 1790-1794. Despite the negotiations taking place at Yuquot, Mowachat interests and claims to sovereignty were disregarded.

**Oregon Treaty, 1846:** Settled the boundary between the United States and the British territories west of the Rockies at 49°N.

**potlatch:** A ceremonial event common among Indigenous cultures across the Pacific Northwest. Involves the giving of gifts by the host to mark a life event like an inheritance or succession.

**Puget Sound Agricultural Company (PSAC):** Established in 1838-39 by the HBC to provide food for its posts and surpluses for sale to the Russian American Company.

**Russian American Company (RAC):** Chartered in 1799, the RAC was principally focused on the sea otter fur trade and also established outposts in Alta California and Hawaii.

**sea otter pelts:** On the West Coast the principal fur traded by Indigenous communities to European and American buyers for sale in the Chinese marketplace.

Short Answer Exercises

1. How did Indigenous peoples on the northwest coast and on the mainland respond to contact with Europeans from the 1740s to the 1840s?
2. What impacts did the sea otter trade have on northwest coast cultures?
3. How did Britain emerge as the leading imperialist presence on the West Coast north of the Columbia River and south of Alaska?
4. In what ways was the fur trade west of the Rockies different from what occurred to the east?
5. How was the maritime fur trade on the northwest coast different from the land-based trade (both on the coast and in the Interior)?
6. What were some of the demographic impacts of contact on the northwest coast from the 1780s to the 1860s?
7. Why did the HBC move its operations to Fort Victoria and what were the expectations of both London and the local Indigenous communities?
8. In what ways did the HBC diversify its activities on the northwest coast after the 1830s?
9. Why was there a coal industry on Vancouver Island in the 1850s and 1860s?
10. How did Indigenous societies resist colonialism?
11. How did the gold rush impact colonial development?
12. What was the demographic character of the gold rush?
13. What was the character of local colonial government from the 1840s to 1870?
14. How did Native-newcomer relations change from the 1830s to the 1860s?

## Suggested Readings

1. Barman, Jean. “Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race, 1850-1900.” *BC Studies*,115/116 (Autumn/Winter 1997): Audio (http://bcstudies.com/?q=full-site-search&search_api_views_fulltext=Taming+Aboriginal+Sexuality%3A+Gender%2C+Power%2C+and+Race+in+British+Columbia). http://bcstudies.com/?q=full-site-search&search_api_views_fulltext=Taming+Aboriginal+Sexuality%3A+Gender%2C+Power%2C+and+Race+in+British+Columbia
2. Belshaw, John Douglas. “The West We Have Lost: First Nations Depopulation.” In *Becoming British Columbia: A Population History,* 72-90. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010.

3. Harris, Cole. “The Native Land Policies of Governor James Douglas.” *BC Studies* 174 (Summer 2012): 101-122.
4. Perry, Adele. “Hardy Backwoodsmen, Wholesome Women, and Steady Families: Immigration and the Construction of a White Society in Colonial British Columbia, 1849–1871.” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 33, no.66 (November 2000): 343-360.
5. Wickwire, Wendy C. “To See Ourselves as the Other’s Other: Nlaka’pamux Contact Narratives.” *Canadian Historical Review* LXXV, no.1 (March 1994): 1-20.

## Video Attributions

- Dr. John Lutz Question 6 – Aboriginal-settler relations. (https://youtu.be/yofwd3k2MBM?si=a6ia_k2PiJNqNaaW) © 2015 by TRU Open Learning (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9TuI09di8EcXWaJx-IUhA) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

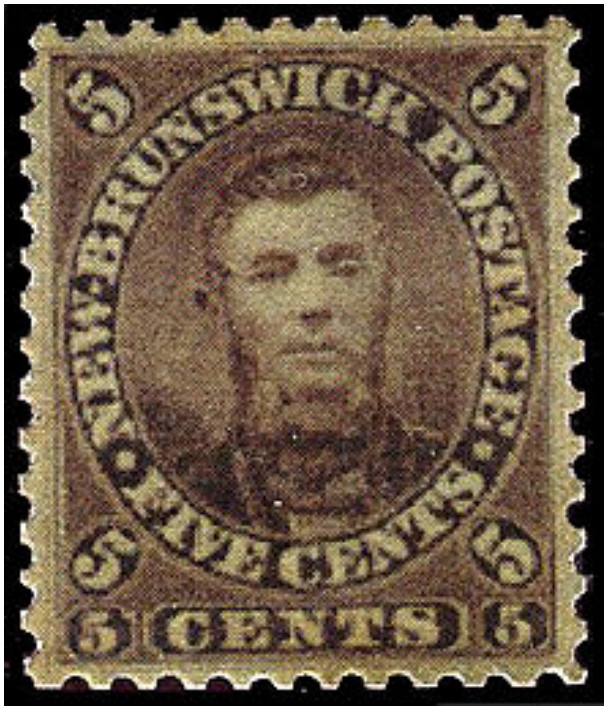
## Media Attributions

**Figure 13.36**
Showing of masks at Kwakwaka’wakw potlatch (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Edward_Curtis_image_6.jpg) by User:Deadstar (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Deadstar) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 13.37**
Portrait de John Robson (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_Robson.jpg) by Digging.holes (http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Digging.holes) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# Chapter 14. The 1860s: Confederation and Its Discontents

# 14.1 Introduction




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/220px-Charles_Connel.jpg)

*Figure 14.1 Images on stamps were common and widely shared representations of an emerging British North American identity.*

In the 1850s and 1860s, cracks began to appear in the relationship between British North America and Britain. The 1859 New Brunswick stamp shown in Figure 14.1 makes two revealing breaks with imperial norms. First, its value is shown in cents, not British pence. Currency issues had plagued colonies in the West Indies and the rest of the British Empire for centuries, and there was no unity on this subject even among the colonies of British North America at mid-century. Second, the new postmaster for New Brunswick, Charles Connell, unsure of the shifting protocols, scandalously chose to put his own face on the stamp, rather than Queen Victoria's. This was too much change far too soon, and Connell demonstrated remorse by buying up as many of the stamps as could be found and burning them on his front lawn.

Connell wasn't the only one receiving mixed signals from Britain. The Colonial Office was increasingly demanding loyalty while services and benefits were being systematically withdrawn. Free trade and greater political autonomy obliged the colonial leadership in British North America to think more strategically about their future, including alternative political structures. But it would be a mistake to think that Confederation was the only outcome being considered, or that it was an inevitability. It was neither.

Several options presented themselves, the foremost being joining the United States. Together or separately, by the 1860s all of the colonies at some point considered annexation. Barely a decade had passed since the campaign for annexation had been at the height of popular discourse and held its widest appeal. Since then, the idea had lost much of its support, but there were still many enthusiasts for the idea. As we shall see, it was an option considered very seriously in the Red River Colony as the prospect of union with the Americans held the allure of better access to large and expanding markets. Even in Canada it was easy to see that union with, say, Prince Edward Island would never have the same economic impact as closer trade ties with the United States.

Another option was the status quo, which was the choice Newfoundland made for another 80 years. Carrying on without change in the Province of Canada would mean thrashing through some pernicious constitutional and operational difficulties, but couldn't be ruled out. Those who supported this option looked to other jurisdictions — Italy comes to mind — that had survived and even thrived under governments made of fragile coalitions. Many of Confederation's critics, Nova Scotia's Joseph Howe for one, argued for this: "Now my proposition is very simple," he said, "It is to let well enough alone."[1]

Smaller unions were also considered. Maritime union was, briefly, a very real prospect, one that would have created a single colony out of three (four if Newfoundland joined in). Union was thrust on the two West Coast colonies in 1866: Vancouver Island became just another region in the colony of British Columbia, although it did win the capital away from the mainland. And in Canada proper, George Brown made it clear that the minimal change he would accept in exchange for his cooperation was a federal reorganization of Canada West and East. This would have necessitated the dissolution of the Act of Union only to create a voluntary union of equal partners with separate legislatures and a central administration. From eight separate colonies in 1865, four could have coalesced by 1867.

One must ask, too, if any of these solutions really addressed the question at hand. If the issue was replacing British trade and/or American reciprocity, then the colonies could have pursued a customs union (sometimes called by the German term, *zollverein*). If it was the business of getting a loan to build a railway, then better finances, not a constitutional change, would do the job. If the issue was the defence of British North America against the Americans, who housed a huge post-Civil War army, then the only conceivable answer was closer ties with Britain, not semi-independence.

In short, under these alternative scenarios, the 1870s could have opened with a federal Canada stretching from Lake Huron to the Gaspé, a reunited Acadia on the East Coast, and Red River (or perhaps Assiniboia) added on to the U.S. Midwest. British Columbia could well have vanished into what, in the 20th century, was promoted as Cascadia, a region stretching from California to Alaska. Or the colonies might have clung more tightly to the hem of Mother Britain's skirt in an **imperial federation** and eschewed any kind of union at all.

Every one of these options was serious considered in the 1860s. The solution at which political leaders arrived was influenced mainly by external factors and specific ambitions. This chapter surveys those elements and the implications of the new constitutional configuration. It also explores the emerging relationship between Canada and the West, without which the proposal for a union of colonies might not have proceeded. (Turning it on its head, if there had been no colonial union, there would likely

1. Quoted in Ged Martin, "The Case Against Canadian Confederation 1864-1867," in *The Causes of Canadian Confederation* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 27.

have been no Canadian annexation of the West either.) Finally, this chapter pays some attention to the changes underway in the economy among Indigenous peoples and culturally in British North America as the 1860s drew to a close. It is important to realize that while this decade is usually dominated in Canadian history by the achievement of a new constitutional arrangement, it was also a springboard for vast, sweeping changes in social and economic life. By the 1880s, Canada as a whole was experiencing a full-blown industrial revolution while Indigenous peoples on the Plains faced famine and landlessness. These and other critical moments in Canada's history have their roots in the 1860s.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/10/Behind_Bonsecours_Market.png)

*Figure 14.2 William Raphael's Behind Bonsecours Market, Montreal (c. 1866) shows women and children in a public space, ships under sail and steam, farm products, and a sense of both busy-ness and leisure.*

Learning Objectives

- Describe the alternatives available to British North America's politicians on the eve of Confederation.
- Critically assess the internal and external forces leading to a new constitution.
- Identify the processes involved in achieving Confederation.
- Identify the attractions and limits of Confederation in the Canadas, the Maritimes, and the West, respectively.
- Position Confederation as a solution to historically specific issues and as a vision of what the future might hold.

## Attributions

**Figure 14.1**
Charles Connel (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles_Connel.jpg) by Сдобников А. (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/

User:%D0%A1%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2_%D0%90.) is in the public domain (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

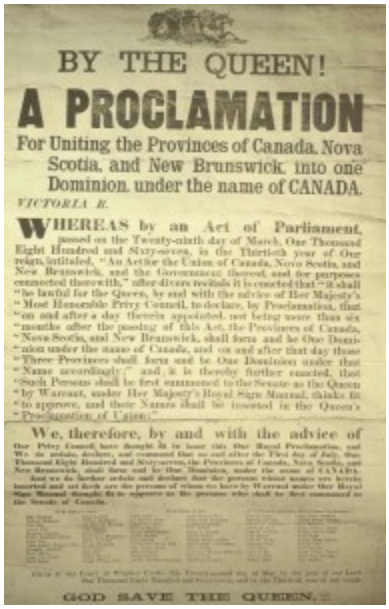
**Figure 14.2**
Behind Bonsecours Market (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Behind_Bonsecours_Market.png) by File Upload Bot (Magnus Manske) (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:File_Upload_Bot_(Magnus_Manske)) is in the public domain (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

# 14.2 Considering Confederation

As we saw in Chapter 11 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/introduction-13/#chapter11), political life in the united Province of Canada in the 1850s was marked by frustration and stalemate. No single party commanded enough seats to enjoy a majority in the assembly. There were divisions along ideological lines, principally between liberal urban professionals and the wealthy merchant class in the Reform, Grit, Radical (and sometimes *Rouge*) parties and those Conservative-Tory-Bleu members whose support was located among the colonial elites. There were those who advocated extending democratic rights to the greatest number (of adult males) and others who argued that such innovations would only lead to mob rule. There were others — specifically the Grits — who eschewed compromise, a position that arose from their very principled outlook on political and economic life but which also made them extremely difficult to work with. The British Parliament had enjoyed centuries in which to develop a common language of political discourse; in the Canadas this had not yet happened and the factions presented in the asssembly only served to intensify some of the dividing lines.

Another important fracture, one that was embedded in the mission of the Act of Union, was sectarianism. Durham and many of his predecessors regarded the Catholic Church in the St. Lawrence Valley as an impediment to progress, democracy, and good government. Every such pronouncement, of course, had the effect of reinforcing the belief among Catholics that the Protestant denominations wished to to destroy one of the key institutions of Canadien life. The fact that the powerful Orange Lodge said so regularly made it impossible for even the most inclusive Canadian leaders to shrug off the Canadiens' concerns.

The achievement of Confederation in 1867 can be seen as the culmination of effort on the part of colonial leaders and elites to find a way forward past substantial obstacles. It might also be understood as simply following British marching orders, the logical outcome of free trade, and the withdrawal of a British military presence. What can be said for certain is that the three founding colonies, along with Prince Edward Island whose representatives did much to give the conversation its shape, were able to do something extraordinary in the context of their colonial status: they designed their own constitution. Until 1867 every constitution in British North America since 1774 had been imposed by Britain. Here, then, was an instance where the colonials took charge. They were given permission to do so, but the result still constitutes a landmark.


BY THE QUEEN!

A PROCLAMATION

For Uniting the Provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, into one Dominion, under the name of CANADA.

VICTORIA R.

WHEREAS by an Act of Parliament, passed on the Twenty-ninth day of March, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty-seven, in the Thirtieth year of Our reign, intituled, "An Act for the Union of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, and the Government thereof, and for purposes connected therewith," after divers recitals it is enacted that "it shall "be lawful for the Queen, by and with the advice of Her Majesty's "Most Honorable Privy Council, to declare, by Proclamation, that "on and after a day therein appointed, not being more than six "months after the passing of this Act, the Provinces of Canada, "Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, shall form and be One Domi- "nion under the name of Canada, and on and after that day those "Three Provinces shall form and be One Dominion under that "Name accordingly;" and it is thereby further enacted, that "such Persons shall be first summoned to the Senate as the Queen "by Warrant, under Her Majesty's Royal Sign Manual, thinks fit "to approve, and their Names shall be inserted in the Queen's "Proclamation of Union;"

We, therefore, by and with the advice of Our Privy Council, have thought fit to issue this Our Royal Proclamation, and We do hereby declare, and command that on and after the First day of July, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty-seven, the Provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, shall form and be One Dominion, under the name of CANADA.

And we do further ordain and declare that the persons whose names are hereto inserted and set forth are the persons of whom we have by Warrant under Our Royal Sign Manual thought fit to approve as the persons who shall be first summoned to the Senate of Canada.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/12/Proclamation_Canadian_Confederation.jpg)

*Figure 14.3 Official declarations took the form of posters like this one, announcing the union of three colonies. Note that it says nothing about a federal structure. [Long Description] (#fig14.3)*

## The Great Coalition and Union

In 1862, when faced with yet another possible stalemate in the Canadian assembly, George-Étienne Cartier turned to his nemesis, George Brown, with an appeal for support. The Cartier government (in which John A. Macdonald was attorney general) was made up of the *Parti Bleu* and the Conservatives but was incapable of mustering a majority without drawing in another party caucus. Brown's Clear Grits, however, had been virulently critical of the administration and there was little love lost between them.

Four years earlier Brown's own administration had fallen on a technicality. When sitting members of the assembly were appointed to the executive as cabinet members, they were obliged to resign their seats and stand in a by-election. Brown's new government did so and Macdonald pounced on the diminished Grit caucus in the House with a successful vote of non-confidence. Brown was out; Macdonald was in. The Conservative Party then exploited a loophole that allowed formerly appointed cabinet ministers to be appointed to new ministries without a by-election. Macdonald shuffled his cabinet in one direction for 48 hours, then shuffled them back to their old offices: this was called, for obvious reasons, the **double shuffle**. In this way he avoided having to call the by-elections that would have put his administration in peril, but at the same time he earned the lasting enmity of Brown.

The challenge facing Canada's co-premiers Macdonald and Cartier in 1862 was the need for a **double**

**majority**, that is, a majority of votes among the representatives of Canada West and Canada East respectively. Patching together a coalition that could perform this trick was one thing; finding a lasting solution was another. Brown's unlikely cooperation was the key and the Torontonian was prepared to put aside his hostility toward Macdonald on the condition that they pursue a constitutional reform that would undo the handcuffs into which Durham and the Act of Union had locked the Canadian government.

Brown's cooperation came with further conditions. His personal and political vision of a renewed British North America was bigger than Macdonald and Cartier's: Brown saw it extending from the western limits of Rupert's Land through Newfoundland. His newspaper, the *Globe*, for years sharply criticized the HBC and called for Britain to surrender Rupert's Land to Canada. In addition to an imperialist agenda, Brown brought to the table the germ of federalism. Brown had chaired a constitutional committee of the legislature that had advocated, in a 17-3 vote, a federal arrangement between Canada East and Canada West. (One of the three opposed was Macdonald.) Brown was also intransigent about representation-by-population. The population of Canada West in 1861 passed the 1.3 million mark and Canada East was trailing by 200,000. Based on these numbers, Brown believed, Canada West should have a significantly greater number of seats in the House. To Canadien politicians like Cartier, this was a warning flag: any central administration in which Canada West easily dominated would be resolutely opposed to the cultural interests of francophone Catholics. Macdonald's preference for a unitary state: a single province with a single government and one capital could potentially be worse. Representation by population combined with legislative union would give Canada West (soon to be Ontario) utter dominance over Canada East (i.e., Quebec).



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/12/M930.50.7.492.jpg)

*Figure 14.4 George Brown inspired strong feelings among his followers and his enemies. This 1850 cartoon by John Henry Walker suggests that the highly principled Brown cannot resist temptation, especially when it comes to spreading falsehoods in the Globe.*

The only way everyone was going to get most of what they wanted was through a carefully crafted federal structure. If Ottawa could retain responsibility for areas of common interest while the provinces

took charge of matters specific to their respective communities, both sides might be able to live with the deal. The challenge, then, was determining how to parcel out these jurisdictions, which was no small matter. Canada East, or at least the French and Catholic part of Canada East, wanted exclusive authority over education, health care, and social welfare. These were areas over which the Catholic Church had a near monopoly in the lower province and considered necessary to preserving the culture. Fear of assimilation into an anglophone majority was front and centre in Cartier's calculations. Only by containing schools, hospitals, and welfare within the prerogative of Canada East could politicians like Cartier begin to countenance Brown's demand for representation by population at the central level.

Realizing that the possibility of safeguarding French-Catholic culture was achievable allowed Cartier to consider what had previously been unthinkable: adding more Anglo-Protestants. If francophone Canada's key institutions could be preserved in a federal arrangement, it wouldn't matter how many English-speaking colonies joined the new country. Adding on the Maritimes might, in fact, strengthen the Canadien side, as there were large numbers of Catholics in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, and there were Acadians spread throughout the three colonies as well. Brown, of course, saw the Maritimes as a zone of anglophone Protestantism that would reinforce the cultural agenda and values of Canada West. For Macdonald, by contrast, the principal consideration was the economic prospects of a larger union — such as ice-free ports in the Maritimes.

For their part, the Maritimes approached the whole conversation with skepticism and coolness. There is room to debate their motivation, i.e., did they jump or were they pushed? It is a fact that the Colonial Office in London made it plain that the time had come to consider Maritime union: an amalgamation of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia.

A century of separate histories and no small amount of competition, however, made the respective colonial administrations wary of one another. They were different places in many respects, as shown in the 1861 census. New Brunswick's population was 16% British-born and 79% New Brunswickers; Nova Scotia's population was 89% homegrown. Catholics made up 44% of Prince Edward Island's population, about a third of New Brunswick's, and only 27% of Nova Scotia's. Prince Edward Island had little in the way of manufacturing, but nearly a third of Nova Scotians were considered part of the "industrial class," nearly 50% percent more than in New Brunswick.

The export markets were different as well, as statistics from 1865 demonstrate. New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island sent 40% and 68% of their shipping, respectively, to one another and to Nova Scotia, but Nova Scotia was sending barely a third to its Maritime neighbours. More than 50% of Nova Scotian shipping was headed to the United States, the destination of only 37% of New Brunswick's exports, and a mere 17% of Prince Edward Island's. Alone of the three colonies, New Brunswick continued to ship a significant share of its capacity — 15% — to Britain.

The value of shipping out of New Brunswick had grown by a very respectable 83% over 1850-65, but it underperformed Canada (at 162%). Prince Edward Island's exports, however, nearly quadrupled and Nova Scotia's grew by 452% over the same 15 years. In dollar terms this meant that in 1865 Canada shipped out $42.5 million in goods while the Maritimes together exported about $16 million, a very favourable comparison from the Atlantic perspective.[1]

1. Ralph C. Nelson, Walter C. Soderlund, Ronald H. Wagenberg, and E. Donald Briggs, "Canadian Confederation as a Case Study in Community Formation,"in *The Causes of Canadian Confederation*, ed. Ged Martin (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 62-75.

The makeup of the Maritime legislatures was also different: farmers, lumbermen, and shipbuilders dominated in Charlottetown; lawyers and merchants, bankers, and manufacturers held more than 60% of the seats in Fredericton; and shipbuilders combined with lumbermen and lawyers constituted a majority in Halifax.

Overall, the Maritimes were doing better than Canada in terms of economic growth: they had more diversified markets, and they'd achieved a degree of complementarity as revealed in the amount of traffic between the three colonies and their respective market specializations. Culturally they were different, however, and politically they had distinctive issues as well. Whether Maritime union would ever have been possible is a question we now can never answer. As the three colonies prepared to meet in the summer of 1864, they were approached by the Canadians with a request that they be included in the conversation and that the possibility of a larger union be considered.

**Key Points**

- Confederation represents in part the outcome of frustrations in the Province of Canada arising from the difficulty of building lasting and stable governments.
- George Brown's cooperation was both necessary and formative: his conditions included a federal union to replace the unitary union and the annexation of Rupert's Land.
- Federalism had the potential of preserving Canadien culture against assimilationist tendencies.
- Maritime interests in Confederation were distinct and strongly reflected external pressures.

## Attributions

**Figure 14.3**
Proclamation Canadian Confederation (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Proclamation_Canadian_Confederation.jpg) by Voyager (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Voyager) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

**Figure 14.4**
Engraving (http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/collection/artefacts/M930.50.7.492) by Walker, John Henry (http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/scripts/explore.php?Lang=1&tableid=1&tablename=artist&elementid=00268__true) is used under a CC BY-NC-ND (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/ca/) license. This image is available from McCord Museum (http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/), under number M930.50.7.492.

## Long descriptions

**Figure 14.3 long description:** A poster reading: By the Queen! A proclamation for uniting the provinces

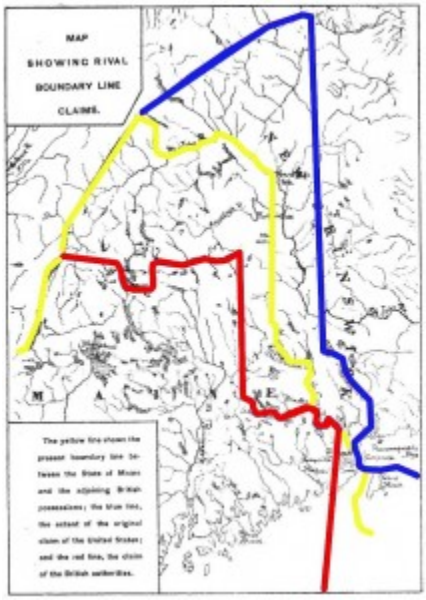
of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick into one Dominion under the name of Canada. [Return to Figure 14.3] (#attachment_2302)

# 14.3 Confederation as a Cure-All

The late 19th century saw the rise of the patent medicine industry in North America. Backed by anecdote and perhaps some folk-remedy pedigree, the patent medicines promised to cure anything and everything. At best they might have a benign placebo effect. Confederation was a bit like these cure-all medicines. It promised to address everything that was wrong with British North America, but closer examination suggests that it was neither necessary nor effective.

Apart from the political stalemates in Canada, there were three issues that drove the discussion forward — issues that made Confederation seem both imperative and the best solution. First was the concern that the United States threatened the welfare of the colonies. This was mostly a theoretical danger; the Fenian element made it more real. Second was the argument that some effort was needed to replace the recent loss of markets in Britain and, in 1866, the end of freer trade with the United States; might a single colonial marketplace compensate for some of those losses? And third was the issue of infrastructure and, specifically, an intercolonial railway.

## America: Threat or Menace?




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/12/MaineBoundaryDispute.jpg)

*Figure 14.5 In the 1840s the Americans gobbled up chunks of New Brunswick, the Columbia District on the West Coast, and an important part of the Red River settlement.*

British North Americans had conflicting sentiments about the United States. Their rivalries had historically been with New England and New York, and a little with Virginia. There were plenty of New Brunswickers alive who remembered the Aroostook War (1838-39) and the loss of a substantial western flank to the state of Maine in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842. They might find a market for their timber products in the United States, but their feelings toward New England were generally cool.

Further, despite its own opposition to slavery, Britain supported the southern Confederate states during the Civil War. This left British North America exposed to the Northern/Union States' ire. British North Americans might not have agreed with Britain's actions in this instance, but they recognized that the ability of the empire to set international policy remained unchallenged. There was, for British North America, no diplomatic channels it could pursue directly to defuse the situation.

The American bogeyman was a more real source of fear for British North America in the 1860s than it had been since the 1837-38 rebellions. It posed a threat in three ways: the future of reciprocity, the implications of the Civil War, and the Fenian threat.

### Reciprocity

The Canadian-American Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 had offset the worst aspects of the loss of preferential treatment in British markets and inevitably drew the British North American economy closer to its neighbour. The treaty was held to be a great success, especially after 1861 when Civil War broke out and demand for goods from south of the border grew.

The northern states, however, viewed British North America as a stalking horse for British manufactures. That is, they feared that less expensive and more competitive British products were being brought into the United States via British North American ports. If this was the case, it would sap the vitality of American industries. (American exporters had pursued an identical strategy earlier in the century, smuggling their grain into Canada and then passing it off as Canadian products in the British market.) Canada managed to put in place a tariff to protect its own manufacturing base and this, too, annoyed the Americans.

### Civil War

The northern states were emerging as industrialized competitors to Britain in the North Atlantic at the very moment that British cotton mills were relying more and more on the products of southern plantations. Morally, British support was with the Union (the northern states) and against the Confederacy (the South) on the issue of slavery; economically, it supported the Confederacy. Both Britain and British North America were officially neutral, but both jurisdictions were slippery on this point.

The British very nearly leapt into the fray at the very beginning of the Civil War. Two envoys from the South were heading across the Atlantic on the British steamship the *Trent* in November 1861, bound for diplomatic talks in London. A Northern naval vessel stopped the steamer and seized the envoys, precipitating a crisis that could have plunged British North America into war. Subsequently, the Confederate Navy ship, the CSS *Alabama,* which had been built in the early days of the war in a shipyard near Liverpool in England, terrorized Northern shipping and drew outrage from Union politicians. Britain, they argued, had taken sides and the prospect of a transatlantic war inched closer.

Some Northerners called for the capture of British North America in compensation. Tensions rose again when, in 1864, a small band of pro-Confederates in Canada East ran a raid across the Vermont border on the town of St. Alban's. They cleaned out the local bank, escaping with what was then the enormous sum of $200,000. They were arrested in Canada, but a Montreal judge freed them on a technicality. Again, the Union states were outraged.

Faced with the threat of an American attack on British North America, the British dispatched some 14,000 troops, the largest contingent since the War of 1812. While this calmed colonial nerves to some extent, it also served to highlight their vulnerabilities. Deploying the troops along the American frontier was difficult and the troops struggled to get from Halifax to Canada. Observers and authorities alike realized that a land route, ideally a railroad, was badly needed. The North rattled sabres but did not attack, at least not militarily. Instead, it cancelled the Reciprocity Treaty.

The U.S. Civil War had benefited British North America economically by increasing demand for raw materials, and the colonies' balance of payments improved as a consequence. So although the Civil War might have given British North Americans cause for concern when it came to diplomatic crises, it was decidedly good for business. In the United States, as everywhere else, the lobby in favour of freer trade was countered by a protectionist interest. At the end of the Civil War, in 1866, the protectionists joined with those Northerners still irate about the *Alabama* affair and the St. Alban's raid to force an end to reciprocity. This happened very late in the development of constitutional proposals in British North America, so it cannot be said to have catalyzed the process. Nevertheless, it served to push public opinion in British North America further toward the view that an inter-colonial economic alliance was in order.

#### The Fenians

The final issue coming out of the United States that influenced the talks on Confederation came from the Irish-American community. There was some talk in the United States after the Civil War, in the spring and summer of 1865, of turning the troops northward and capturing British North America, and one group of war-hardened veterans took up the challenge. Irish-British relations on the other side of the Atlantic were poor, and Irish-American citizens viewed British North America as the soft underbelly of the empire. Known as Fenians, they formed their own regiments and launched their attack in April 1866.

The first invasion came at Campobello Island on the seaward border between New Brunswick and Maine, but it was chased off easily by a Royal Navy response out of Halifax. A more serious threat followed on the Niagara Peninsula in June 1866, marked by the Battles of Ridgeway and Fort Erie. These, too, were repulsed, although the Canadian militia regiments embarrassed themselves against the much better disciplined and tough Irish. A final foray saw Pigeon Hill in Canada East, less than 40 kilometres from St. Alban's on the Vermont border, captured briefly.

In each instance the American government was quick to denounce the Fenians, whose stated goal was to hold British North America hostage in exchange for Ireland's liberation from Britain. Nevertheless, British North Americans quite rightly recognized what the Fenians had demonstrated: the American border was porous and that whatever a well-drilled gang of raiders might accomplish would be as nothing compared to a full-blown American invasion.

The Fenian and American threat genuinely troubled British North Americans. The American frontier was an issue regardless of the Fenians and heightened vulnerability during the Civil War was only

temporarily offset by increased exports from British North America to the Union and Confederate States. When the first meetings to discuss a union of British North America colonies took place in 1864, no one could know for sure how long the war to the south would persist. At some point it would have to end and demand for colonial products would shrink, unless they were sustained by reciprocity. No one in 1864, too, could have anticipated the Fenian element two years later. What was clear from the outset is that uniting the colonies seemed logical in light of the possibility of an attack from the south. The obvious criticism of that argument is that there were almost as many people enlisted in the Union and Confederate armies in 1866 as there were in the whole of British North America. Defending the Canadian frontier against further Fenian attacks, let alone United States Army depredations would require much more than a few militia movements to turn the tide.

The question of an American threat was a real issue; the proposal of a federal union, however, was not a real answer. That leaves the trade relationship to consider.

## The Balance of Trade

The most palpable, fundamental, and pressing of the problems facing all the colonies was the loss of protected markets abroad. The introduction by Britain of free trade and the threatened (and eventual) loss of reciprocal access to American markets hurt all of the colonies and the Atlantic colonies especially. Presumably a united single colony would facilitate expanded intercolonial trade. Freer access to Maritime markets would benefit Canada East (Quebec) in particular; a "national" marketplace that included Ontario and Montreal might, too, galvanize the Atlantic colonies' economies. Confederation might thus prove to be an economic engine that could substitute for declining markets elsewhere.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/StateLibQld_1_73487_Marco_Polo_ship.jpg)

*Figure 14.6 The Marco Polo was built in Saint John in 1851 and gained renown as the "fastest ship in the world."*

This proposition suffered from two principal weaknesses. First, there was the lack of complementarity. Trade, almost by definition, implies that the participants come to the table with goods that the other parties do not have, which was not the case in British North America. Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick all had fisheries, so they were hardly going to trade the same fish back and forth. If New Brunswick was to benefit from access to Canadian markets, it would be in its area of strength: forest products. But the Canadas had their own forest industry and they were, moreover, inclined to protect it. There did exist some areas of specialization, but what is most striking is the lack

of differentiation between the colonial economies. And while it is true that Canada produced more manufactured goods than the Maritimes, the addition of the Atlantic colonies could hardly replace the loss of either American or British markets. There were only about 800,000 people in the three Maritime colonies together, a far cry from the millions to whom Upper Canadian grain had once been sold in the United States.

Having to buy from Ontario and Quebec, moreover, might prove to be a liability to the Maritime economies, as Canada was industrializing much faster than the Atlantic colonies. Reciprocity provided a break in tariffs, but the dread remained in Canada that her infant industries would be strangled in their cradle by foreign competition. Maritime farmers and manufacturers who were competing against New England industries would want, naturally, to purchase lower-priced American produce (that is, ploughs or engines) to keep their costs down. Caught behind a Canadian tariff wall they would have to buy higher-priced Canadian products, almost all of which would come from Ontario or Quebec.

The Canadian tendency toward protectionism was countered by the Maritimes' preference for anything that stimulated trade and traffic. Nova Scotia, for one, wanted freer trade because the colony operated in a larger, ocean-based marketplace. And in Prince Edward Island, as one study has pointed out, colonial revenue came overwhelmingly (75%) from customs duties (compared to Canada, where customs duties contributed only a third of revenues). Confederation was not likely to resolve this problem of shrinking international markets and a stagnant balance of trade.[1]

## The Intercolonial Railway

We have already seen how the 1850s spawned a generation of railroad enthusiasts. The speed, size, and power of the new locomotive technology caught the imagination of thousands. Politicians in jurisdictions worldwide made hasty promises to their constituents that railway construction was just a vote away. New Brunswick Premier Charles Tilley was one of these. From the 1850s on he had been fighting for an intercolonial railroad that would connect Canada with an ice-free port in Saint John. In 1861 it became clear that troop movements would be vastly slower than on the other side of the border, should the Americans ever decide to chance an attack on the colonies. With expanded trade and improved security in mind, Tilley had lobbied in London for loan guarantees and had pleaded with banks; the necessary commitment from Canada, however, proved elusive. New Brunswick's support for Confederation, he believed, could be made conditional on a firm buy-in from the Canadians. And if London really wanted British North America to make its own way in the world, the Crown could guarantee the loans needed.

The appeal of the intercolonial railway was undeniable. An early problem was, however, that there were at least two imagined versions. The first sped along the eastern border of New Brunswick, linking Quebec City and Saint John; the other looped eastward, closer to the coastline near the Mirimachi before heading south. The first was fast and, as it would be significantly shorter, comparatively cheap, but entirely exposed to attack. The second would be more expensive to build and longer (therefore slower in getting goods to market) but far enough inland that it could not be easily cut by American invaders. In short, the alternatives were cheap but vulnerable versus safe but expensive; neither was optimal.

1. Canada, Parliamentary Debates on the Subject of the Confederation of the British North American Provinces, 3rd Session, 8th Provincial Parliament of Canada (Ottawa: 1865): 342-3.

So the railroad might not be a solution at all, but if it was going to be built anyway, Confederation was seen as the answer to the problem of funding, and the colonies had been within a hair of getting that funding in 1862. Guarantees were in hand and the Maritimes were ready to get started. The Canadians, however, backed out for political reasons. In other words, it wasn't federal union that was needed to secure a railway, it was a firm agreement between partner colonies.

The conventional causal explanations of Confederation, very clearly, can be criticized. Improved defence, expanded markets, and the intercolonial railway were either beyond the ability of colonial union to deliver or could be achieved through other means. This reveals two things: The first is that the psychological importance of issues like defence exercised such a powerful force on public opinion that elites and voters alike overlooked the fact that the colonies could never overpower the United States. The same was true when considering the trade arrangements between the colonies; all parties likely hoped for the best and for improved economic conditions. At least, they had to believe they would not be worse off for having come together (although many anti-Confederationists argued just that point).

The second is that it pays to look at political decisions from different angles. The intercolonial railway might prove to be a white elephant, but its construction would entail much job creation and vast orders for steel. Defending the realm might prove a fool's errand, but in the interim those garrisons would need feeding. However the leaders of British North America in 1864-67 imagined these problems and their solutions, whether reasonable or not, a host of politicians chose to pursue unification. Their first stop was Charlottetown in the autumn of 1866.

**Key Points**

- Three issues dominate the march to Confederation: the threat posed by the United States; finding a response to British free trade and the loss of reciprocity with the Americans; and the question of railways.
- The American Civil War and the Fenian invasions represented a psychological and material cause for concern in British North American politics.
- Free trade created both economic and political challenges for British North America.
- The intercolonial railway must be understood as the material manifestation of Confederation.

## Attributions

**Figure 14.5**
MaineBoundaryDispute (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MaineBoundaryDispute.jpg) by Magicpiano (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Magicpiano) is in the public domain (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

**Figure 14.6**

Marco Polo (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:StateLibQld_1_73487_Marco_Polo_(ship).jpg) by State Library of Queensland (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Library_of_Queensland) is used under a CC BY-SA 2.5 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/) license.

# 14.4 Crafting a Constitution

## The Charlottetown Conference

Two dozen delegates attended the first meeting in Charlottetown to discuss the possibility of a federal union. The fact that the idea of *federalism* was put on the table at the outset is important. The United States was a federation and its example was obvious and important to consider. But Britain was a legislative union: there was parliament at the top and the next level of government down the chain was municipal. Macdonald, for one, favoured legislative union partly because he was a fan of British institutions generally (like many of his Victorian peers). But also, he distrusted federalism because of where it had led the United States. He had a point: in 1861 the Union had been dissolved in war and, as the conflict raged south of the border, more than 600,000 lives were lost. Every day the meat-grinder of the Civil War churned on, Macdonald could point to it as an argument in favour of a strong central administration rather than the weaker bonds of federalism.

Cartier, however, would not consider anything other than a federal structure which, from the perspective of the Maritimers, was a happy coincidence. The delegates from Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick knew that they were going to be giving up some authority to Canada in any kind of union; better that they should keep some for themselves than to be utterly subsumed beneath an ambitious Canada West and a culturally alien Canada East. Brown, Macdonald, Cartier, and Canadian finance minister (and, 20 years later, Albertan railway magnate) Alexander Galt led the Canadian charge and won agreement in principle to the proposal to "confederate."

This meeting, known as the **Charlottetown Conference,** took just over a week, from September 1 to 9, 1864, during which enormous amounts of liquor, food, and cigars were consumed. The wives of the delegates have been credited with smoothing much of the ego-strewn road to agreement and goodwill.[1] It is worth noting that this pivotal meeting in the evolution of a new constitution competed (rather badly) with a travelling circus that was visiting Charlottetown the same week. There was no room for the Canadian delegation in the local hotels, and they were obliged to spend their nights on board their ship.

1. Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "National Unity and the Politics of Political History," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association,* 3 (1992): 3-11.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/12/1280px-Charlottetown_Conference_Delegates_September_1864.jpg)

*Figure 14.7 Looking a bit worse for wear, the Fathers of Confederation gather for one of Canada's first photo-ops. (Note Macdonald, sitting.) Photo by George P. Roberts.*

## The Quebec Conference

A month later, in October, an expanded delegation met in Quebec City to resolve the finer points of the agreement. These took the form of the **Seventy-Two Resolutions** (a.k.a. the Quebec Resolutions), 50 of which were believed to have come directly from the pen of John A. Macdonald. Certainly his taste for a more powerful central government worked its way into the resolutions, but he knew better than to alienate Canada East and the Maritimes. The colonies, it was agreed, would become provinces. Canada would be once again severed at the Ottawa River, and Ontario and Quebec would emerge as provinces in their own right.

Also agreed was that the central administration would be responsible for agriculture, the post office, fisheries, criminal law (but not civil law so as to safeguard French-Canada's distinct tradition in that area), and the final word on immigration. The federal government would retain **residual powers** that covered everything necessary for the **peace, order, and good government** of the country.[2] The breadth of the residual powers has been subject to intense legal and political debate ever since.

The provinces received jurisdiction over education (which allowed local authorities to address the incendiary issue of separate schools for Catholics and Protestants on their own terms), health care, and most natural resources. While Ottawa would be able to tax trade through tariffs, the provinces could raise revenues through resource extraction royalties and property taxes. Roads and other infrastructure were nominally a provincial responsibility but in practice any highway or railroad that was of national importance became a federal responsibility.

Two other areas of jurisdiction fell to the federal administration: marriage and divorce, and exclusive responsibility for Indigenous lands and reserves. As well, Ottawa had the power of "disallowance," that

2. This phrase, shortened to POGG in discussions among constitutional experts, was plagiarized from the New Zealand constitution.

is, the ability to reverse provincial legislation that it did not like. In this respect, Macdonald and others who valued a strong central state were successful: Ottawa was to be the senior level of government rather than the first among equals.

The elements of the federal government included an elected assembly (the **House of Commons**) built on the principle of representation by population. As this set-up would leave the Maritimes vastly outnumbered, concessions were made at the level of the appointed (that is, not elected) upper house, the **Senate**, where each of Ontario, Quebec, and the three Maritime provinces together would have 24 seats. Naturally, the principles of responsible government would prevail and the form of government would thus very closely resemble that in Britain.

## From Proposal to Approval

There were two avenues for passing the Seventy-Two Resolutions: via the people and via parliament. The delegates agreed that a popular referendum was a bad idea, given that public support was strong only in Canada West. The parliamentary alternative was to take the package to each colonial legislature for approval before sending it on to London. This strategy had drawbacks, too, because each assembly contained articulate and persuasive opponents to the proposal. Nevertheless, this was the route taken.

In Canada East the prospect of federal disallowance in a House of Commons dominated by Anglo-Protestants (many of them rabid anti-Catholics drawn from the ranks of the Orange Lodge) was like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse. (Canada East's Protestants, it should be stated plainly, felt the same way about a Quebec provincial legislature dominated by Catholics, and predicted the doom of their own denominations.) Antoine-Aimé Dorion, the leader of the *Parti rouge*, led the opposition to the scheme, describing it as assimilation by other means. Cartier's response was to emphasize the extent to which Quebec would have control over its key cultural levers, that bilingualism was going to be official at the federal level (as well as in the Quebec Parliament — though not in any other), and he reminded his colleagues of how the ongoing stalemate in government that was the principal legacy of the Act of Union was not going to cure itself. If Canada East wanted effective and ethnically fair government, he maintained, it would have to come through Confederation. Cartier received support from the Catholic clergy, which feared the assimilationist possibilities outlined by Dorion but feared the *Parti rouge* even more. Canada — West and East, English and French — voted in favour of the constitutional agreement, although francophones were the least enthusiastic.

### Key Points

- Alternative forms of union were considered; a federal state was one.
- The Seventy-Two Resolutions set out that the federal state would divide its powers between the provinces and Ottawa in such a way that culture (education, health care, welfare) would be provincial while trade, fisheries, and common concerns like the post

office and defence would belong to Ottawa.

- "Residual powers" were barely defined and were to reside with Ottawa.
- Not everyone agreed that Confederation was a good idea, not even in Canada.

## Attributions

**Figure 14.7**
Charlottetown Conference Delegates, September 1864 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charlottetown_Conference_Delegates,_September_1864.JPG) by Skeezix1000 (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Skeezix1000) is in the public domain (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/public_domain).

# 14.5 Atlantic Canada and Confederation




(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/12/Atlantic-Canada-1860.jpg)

*Figure 14.8 An 1860 map of the Atlantic colonies shaded by counties.*

Confederation was, very clearly, an idea arising in Canada as a solution to Canadian problems and it was meant to give advantage to Canada first and foremost. It did not derive from the ambitions of Prince Edward Islanders, nor was it an expression of the dreams of Newfoundlanders. Nor too was it a scheme hatched in Fredericton or Halifax. Our understanding of the outcome of the Confederation discussions must begin with that reality, which raises the question, Why did some Atlantic colonies believe the federal union was worth joining while others did not?

There were vested interests in the East that saw a union of colonies as a route to profit. And to some of those leaders who envisioned the possibilities of a larger and more complex and technological political entity, we can confidently ascribe the title “modernizer.” Their values became dominant in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as modernization was widely accepted as a goal inseparable from the nation state. It is important, too, to recognize that the decision to join in a federal union was made by politicians and not by referendum. Doing so obliges us to come to grips with contrary interests among political elites and between political elites and the people they nominally represented.

Clearly there were different economic agendas at work. One study of Maritime support for Confederation found it to be strongest among those who envisioned a continental and international industrial economy and weakest among those who were at the heart of the established shipping industries of the region. This apparent dichotomy hides the presence of contrary voices on both sides but it should alert us, too, to one of the hoariest myths of Confederation: that is, Maritime opposition sprang out of conservative, backward-looking parochialism. In fact, the shipping industry was a hotbed of

innovation and was highly aggressive in its marketplace.[1] Certainly there was new money going into industrial proposals, but that does not necessarily mean it was characterized by youth and vigour while the established elite was being old and unimaginative.

The Maritime colonies approached Confederation from a position of weakness. Not only were their numbers, economies, and assets a fraction of the size of Canada's, their political vision was not nearly as unified. Canada's "great coalition" existed precisely because a new constitutional arrangement was needed to get beyond the political impasse in Ottawa. Brown, Cartier, and Macdonald had a lot at stake in their mission, and they were motivated, therefore, to speak with something like a single voice in favour of the structure they envisioned. The same was not true for the Maritimers. In each East Coast colonial assembly there was substantial division and no mandate to reconfigure the whole of British North America. Had they first achieved Maritime union, perhaps they might have stood as one. As it was, Prince Edward Island, to take one example, never had the chance to get past feeling dwarfed by Nova Scotia and New Brunswick before being overwhelmed by the Canadas.

## Newfoundland

Newfoundland, for its part, viewed the whole proposition with bemusement if not outright hostility. After all, there was nothing that an island colony across the St. Lawrence Gulf would get from a federal union: no railway, no bridge, and few economic advantages that it did not already enjoy. And the potential costs — loss of political authority to a centre 1,000 kilometres to the west, paying for a railway between Halifax and Montreal, and being dragged into Canadian-American affairs — were too high. A Newfoundland opponent of Confederation famously warned that if Ontario was again under attack from the United States, the national government would call upon the rest of the unified British North America to assist, and the cream of Newfoundland youth would leave "their bones to bleach in a foreign land." As one historian wrote, "Secure behind a wall of water, the island had its independence guaranteed by the Royal Navy."[2]

In 1869, after the other colonies had joined as one Canada, pro- and anti-Confederation politicians took their arguments to the electorate. There were other, more immediate, issues before the voters, but the rejection of Confederation was resounding. As the outcome was announced,

> …the fishermen and mechanics of St. John's …put together a large coffin labelled "Confederation," which was placed on a vehicle draped in black, and this was drawn by scores of willing hands through the town, headed by a band playing the Dead March, and escorted by an immense crowd to the head of the harbour, where a grave was dug below high-water mark and the coffin solemnly interred therein….[3]

Newfoundland continued to seek its destiny in the mid-Atlantic and kept its back turned to Canada.

1. Phillip A. Buckner, "The Maritimes in Confederation: A Reassessment," in *The Causes of Canadian Confederation*, ed. Ged Martin (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 103-105.

2. Frederick Jones, "'The Antis Gain the Day': Newfoundland and Confederation in 1869," in *The Causes of Canadian Confederation*, ed. Ged Martin (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 146.

3. Quoted in Ibid., 143.

## Nova Scotia

In Nova Scotia there was little solidarity on the topic of Confederation. The ability of the proposed federal government to establish tariffs and run the fisheries was a major hurdle for a seagoing community. As well there was Joseph Howe to factor into the equation. A highly popular political figure, writer, and journalist, Howe had long envisioned Nova Scotia's future within a more integrated British Empire. He was, however, a strong advocate for railroad construction and may have undermined his own position by whetting a public appetite for lures like an intercolonial railway. The Nova Scotian premier, Charles Tupper (1821-1915), was exposed on other fronts as well. There were issues before the Halifax assembly that were entirely unrelated to Confederation but which drained his support. Seeing that a protracted debate would likely kill the initiative and certain that he would lose an election on the issue, Tupper forced the resolution through the assembly in April 1866.

Howe travelled to London to fight the British North America Act but he received a cool reception. The Act was passed into law. Three months later Howe was premier, Tupper was out, and the anti-Confederates began an unsuccessful campaign to reverse the process.

## Prince Edward Island



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/01/e006580837-v6.jpg)

*Figure 14.9 Steam ferry boat and rafting timber booms on Saint John River near Fredericton, New Brunswick. Watercolour by William Smythe Maynard Wolfe.*

The hosts of the Charlottetown Conference proved to be the least amenable to the new union, partly because of the terms on offer and partly because of the peculiar conditions of the smallest colony. Talk of a railroad and the threat of American invasion both played poorly in Charlottetown. Much of the island's economy was oriented toward the West Indies so even the end of reciprocity mattered less to the population than to others in British North America. Also, and unique among the colonies, Prince Edward Island had a land-tenure arrangement dating back to 1767 that put much of the island in the hands of absentee landlords. The Tenant League, a movement formed in 1864 to end absentee landlordism and to avoid paying rents along the way, carried forward the work of the Escheat Party in this regard. This issue was so important that it overshadowed talk of union. Unless the other colonies could speed up the process of dismantling the proprietor-tenant system, Islanders would remain aloof.

The Fenian threat did, however, have an impact on the island. Prince Edward Island was far from the Maine frontier, farther away from New England ports than the vulnerable harbours of Nova Scotia, and mostly insulated from the outside world by a nearly frozen sea. That didn't stop a Fenian panic from spreading through the colony. It was alleged by the ruling Conservative Party that the Fenians were an enemy within. Careful not to tar all Catholics with the same brush, or to call out all of the Irish settlers on the island (and nearly half of Charlottetown at the time was Irish), the Conservatives used the opportunity to harden Tory sensibilities at the expense of the more Catholic Liberal Party and the Tenant League. The League was branded as disloyal and sympathetic to the Fenian cause. The Liberals called this cynical fear-mongering: "Stripping the militia of its arms, mobilizing the garrison, mounting a citizens' guard over the Benevolent Irish Society, and generally giving credence to the St. Patrick's Day panic: all were portrayed as a studied insult, inviting Protestants to suspect their Irish Catholic neighbours."[4]

In this way the Tories hoped to marginalize the Tenant League without actually attacking them and to create conditions under which the British might be persuaded to maintain a garrison presence for a little while longer. The effect on Prince Edward Island's attitude to Confederation was mixed. Some felt that, as the British were making an exit, the new federation could offer up its own military presence; others felt it was more likely that a homegrown militia would be called on to defend more vulnerable border colonies. On balance, the threat of Fenian invasion served to aggravate internal discord on Prince Edward Island while adding little to the colony's enthusiasm for Confederation.

Prince Edward Islanders' reluctance to join the new federation, then, reflects a lack of "pushes." There were, as well, few "pulls" that spoke directly to the colony's needs. The Canadians were not interested in giving the colony special considerations in the federal structure, and Islanders recognized that a small colony with limited resources would soon lose its voice in a larger nation. Continued colonial status and a direct relationship with Britain had some potential, but only if Nova Scotia and New Brunswick stayed out of the new state as well.

After Confederation in 1867, the Islanders found themselves surrounded by this new Canada and its waters. Reality set in quickly and by 1869 Prince Edward Island had abandoned pounds, shillings, and pence in favour of the Canadian decimal system. Their objections that the Seventy-Two Resolutions did not provide enough guarantees for the smallest colony were an annoyance to the other parties in 1864, but by 1870 the Canadians returned with updated proposals. In 1873, they gave Prince Edward Island much of what it had asked for originally, and the colony became a province in Confederation.

## New Brunswick

More than any other colony, New Brunswick was being shoved and dragged into Confederation by the issues of Fenians at its doorstep, the loss of protection in British markets, the end of reciprocity, and the promise of an intercolonial railway. The premier, Leonard Tilley (1818-1896), imagined New Brunswick nicely placed as the keystone colony, the only one bordering on three others and the United States. From this position and with a growing economy in Canada, he hoped to craft a thriving trade and traffic. More than this, Tilley — of all the Fathers of Confederation — probably had the most fixed view of the country as one that reached the West Coast. He maintained that the political leaders of British

4. Edward Macdonald, "Who's Afraid of the Fenians? The Fenian Scare on Prince Edward Island,1865-1867," *Acadiensis* 38, no.1 (Winter/Spring 2009).

North America should endeavour "to bind together the Atlantic and Pacific by a continuous chain of settlements and line of communications for that [was] the destiny of this country, and the race which inhabited it."[5] (Tilley was a devout practising low-church Anglican. It is widely thought that it was he who referenced the passage from Psalm 72:8, "His dominion shall also be from sea to sea," which led to Canada being called the "Dominion.") Unfortunately for Tilley, New Brunswick voters did not share his vision.

In 1865, in what came as the greatest threat to the Confederation project, Tilley's government was routed by the anti-Confederation forces in the colony. His opponents seized on the necessary vagaries of the Seventy-Two Resolutions. Where would the railway go? To Saint John, Moncton, or the Miramichi? Or, worse, to Halifax? What would the Ontario Orange Lodge — in the person of George Brown — do to Catholic rights in the federated country? Would New Brunswick manufactures be protected in the new confederated marketplace or swamped by cheap products from Ontario and Quebec? There were other issues that had alienated Tilley's support; his Liberal party had, after all, been in power for quite a while, his efforts to introduce severe regulation of liquor were divisive, and Albert Smith (formerly an ally, now an adversary and an outspoken opponent of Confederation) was on the ascendant. Tilley lost, Smith won, and the whole Confederation project was in jeopardy. If New Brunswick, the keystone colony, dropped out of the plan, it was doubtful the rest would bind.

Barely a year later, in May 1866, Smith resigned in protest over the highhanded behaviour of Lieutenant-Governor Arthur Hamilton Gordon (who was pressing Britain's case that Confederation ought to proceed with alacrity). Gordon offered Tilley the government, which he took, another election was called and it served as a referendum on Confederation. Tilley's restoration was helped along by a timely Fenian raid on the St. Croix River in April and an endorsement from the colony's Roman Catholic bishop.[6] Even Smith conceded the point. The irony, of course, is that unstable governments were the bane that a changed constitution promised to resolve, but without the instability of the New Brunswick legislature Confederation might not have come to pass at all.

**Key Points**

- Interest in Confederation in the Atlantic colonies varied and was typically divisive.
- Newfoundlanders and Prince Edward Islanders were not persuaded that Confederation addressed their concerns or that it would in any significant way make them stronger. Indeed, there was a strong sense that Confederation would expose them to new threats.
- Nova Scotia and New Brunswick voters were critical of the proposal.

5. C. M. Wallace, "TILLEY, Sir SAMUEL LEONARD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed February 17, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tilley_samuel_leonard_12E.html .

6. C. M. Wallace, "TILLEY, Sir SAMUEL LEONARD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed December 4, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tilley_samuel_leonard_12E.html .

## Attributions

**Figure 14.8**
New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Id (http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~1656~130015:New-Brunswick,-Nova-Scotia,-Newfoun)is used under a CC BY-NC 2.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/ca/)

**Figure 14.9**
Steam ferry boat and rafting timber on St. John River near Fredericton (http://data2.archives.ca/e/e264/e006580837-v6.jpg)by William Smythe Maynard Wolfe. Library and Archives Canada (http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Pages/home.aspx), Acc. No. 1985-3-70. Copyright expired.

# 14.6 Canada and the West

George Brown entered into a coalition government with John A. Macdonald and George-Étienne Cartier with a grocery-list of conditions. One of these was that Canada — in whatever form it was to take — would annex Rupert's Land. There was no talk in 1867 — no serious talk at least — about adding the newly unified colony of British Columbia to the mix. After all, as the crow flies, Victoria was as remote from Toronto as British Honduras; a sea voyage to New Westminster from Halifax could take months. The West, however, had been a part of the Canadian economy since the days of New France. The HBC's comprehensive monopoly since 1821 had developed something of an administrative structure so that in the mid-19th century Rupert's Land was conceptually more than a drainage basin: it was a badly underdeveloped political unit. Ontario land was becoming scarce, and the same was true in the Dominion's other three founding colonies. Adding on the West would mean free land for generations. Ontarians in particular were anxious about this because of trends toward migration out of Canada and into the United States.

Without question, there were long-term Canadian interests in the West. Competition between the NWC and HBC mirrored conflicts between New France and Britain that stretched back to the late 17th century. The principal players, however, changed to such an extent that they were almost unrecognizable. The diversity of nationalities and syncretic cultures arising from fur trade society influenced life in the Canadas. In Montreal, in the parlour rooms of the leading capitalists and merchants in leafy Mount Royal, one regularly found women and men who were themselves of Indigenous birth or, more often by the mid-19th century, descendants of the Cree, Anihšināpē/Anishinaabe, Nakoda Oyadebi (Assiniboine), and Dené/Dënesųłiné (Chipewyan). Rich and influential, some of these figures would become vocal supporters for annexation of the West. Keeping in mind the profound connection they had with the lands beyond Lake Superior, it probably looked to them less like annexation and more like reunion or even retention.

In 1857 the British government sent out an exploratory party to perform a reconnaissance of the Prairie West. It was led by John Palliser (1817-1877), an Irish-English aristocrat whose love of travel at the fringes of European influence was matched only by his enthusiasm for shooting things. In the words of his biographer, "The ruling preoccupation of Palliser, and most of his brothers and friends, seems to have been travel 'in search of adventure and heavy game.'"[1] Palliser had hunted bison on the Plains in 1847-48, returned to Britain, became a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and began gently lobbying for greater British interest in the West. The society took forward the proposal to the Colonial Office, which provided Palliser with a shopping list of goals, one of which was to determine the agricultural potential of the region. To his credit Palliser was clear on one thing: southern Alberta and Saskatchewan suffered from a want of rain and an oversupply of dust. This was the region that would famously carry his name, Palliser's Triangle.[2]

1. Irene M. Spry, "PALLISER, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). Accessed August 13, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/palliser_john_11E.html .

2. Irene M. Spry, *The Palliser Expedition* (Calgary: Fifth House, 1995).

The Canadians were not to be outdone. They organized their own expedition under the leadership of Henry Youle Hind (1823-1908) in 1857 and 1858 that took in the Red, Assiniboine, and South Saskatchewan River Valleys.[3] Hind's published report was widely circulated and, combined with his fervour for the idea of Confederation, it played a role in developing the Canadian expansionist agenda. Also, the people of French-Catholic Canada had been told for years by Catholic missionaries that the region was a challenging and even frightening place in which to settle.[4] Hind (without the warnings provided by Palliser) countered that view. Through the 1860s, Anglo-Canadian expansionist ambitions, then, would inform relations between the West and Canada. At the Charlottetown Conference and again at the Quebec Conference, the prospect of an expansive and clearly imperialist Canada dominating the West was touted. This was clearly a position that Westminster accepted.

Canadian political culture came with its own agenda, mostly distinct from that of the West. Friction between Protestants and Catholics, anglophones and francophones, existed in every colony. The desire of francophobes like Brown to encircle and overwhelm Quebec with Anglo-Protestant populations was no secret. Toronto-based advocates agitated for annexation of the West, many of them with an outspoken assimilationist agenda. Canadiens weren't opposed to annexation, but they feared that Anglo-Protestants would interfere in what should be a reunion between two branches of the Franco-Catholic family.

Change was upon the Westerners, whether they wanted it or not. London was preparing in 1867 to relieve the HBC of its trade monopoly and administrative role in Rupert's Land. The Americans were a wild card: they wished to see the territory fall into their own lap and would back whichever side seemed most likely to see that happen and no one could rule out a forced annexation, not after the U.S. Civil War, the American purchase of Russian Alaska in 1867, and the U.S. Cavalry's running war against Indigenous resistance in the lands just south of the 49th parallel.

Westerners responded to these plans with skepticism if not hostility. Their future may not be under the rule of the HBC, but in the late 1860s few were satisfied that joining the "Dominion of Canada" — a small cobbled-together country made up of four colonies that struggled to pay its own bills — was worth considering.

## Red River on the Eve of Confederation

Despite Métis qualms about a post-NWC West after 1821, and regardless of the activities of Métis free-traders, the settlement at Red River continued to grow under the management of the HBC's **Council of Assiniboia**. The community became increasingly Europeanized, at least outwardly. Churches sprang up and all the principal denominations were represented. Schools appeared as well. There was a growing middle class that included lawyers and journalists, people whose livelihood depended on their ability to speak for others. To the west of the colony the landscape became a cultural checkerboard of Franco-Catholic Métis holdings and Anglo-Protestant country-born properties. Much of the Métis farming

3. I.S. MacLaren, "Aesthetic Mappings Of The West By The Palliser And Hind Survey Expeditions, 1857-1859," *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne*, vol.10, no.1 (1985).

4. Donald Swainson, "Canada Annexes the West: Colonial Status Confirmed," in *Riel to Reform: A History of Protest in Western Canada*, ed. George Melnyk (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1992), 66.

occurred on strips of land running perpendicular to the course of the rivers, a pattern that echoed the seigneurial strips of New France. These were lands vulnerable to annual floods.

Historical accounts of relations between the Métis and the country born are sometimes contradictory, no doubt because every attempt to draw a composite picture is complicated by the existence of numerous and compelling exceptions. Sectarian boundaries were probably more critical in the mid-19th century than language, and persistent Scottish-French sympathies complicated things further. Broadly speaking, however, Westerners of Anglo-Protestant heritage viewed themselves as politically on the ascendant, mainly because of increased Anglo-Canadian interest in the region. This led to significant divisions among the métis communities of the Red River. Other historical interpretations have the two communities recognizing more fully their shared interests, being increasingly subject to the rising racist feeling out of Canada West. Certainly this was the dawn of modern racism: increasingly, what Anglo-Canadians saw when they looked at the country born were inferior "**half-breeds**" rather than co-religionists or champions of Anglo-Celtic culture. As for the the Métis in these years, the Anglo-Canadians had only more contempt for them.

The community would, in 1869, resist Canadian annexation and demand provincial status. Red River was, in some respects, daring. It had grown dramatically in the 1860s but only to about 12,000 people (about one-eighth the size of Prince Edward Island). The majority was still Métis, followed by Scots and country born, but many of their neighbours were Ontarian Anglo-Protestants drawn by the promise of cheap land and the prospect of being pioneers in the colonization of the West by English Canada.

**The Ross Family of Red River**

One family's story illustrates an example of the difficulties facing the country born and of the relative unity of the entire West in this period. Alexander Ross entered the fur trade via the Pacific Fur Company and established Fort Okanogan in the Columbia District (in what is now Washington State). He married a Syilx (Okanagan) woman, Sally. The Rosses moved to Red River in the 1820s where they produced a large number of children, many of whom died early in adulthood.

Raised as strict Presbyterians, the daughters mostly married White men. Of the sons, James was the best educated and the most Canadianized. He spent years in Toronto as a student, a graduate student, a bright and promising young lawyer, and a journalist with George Brown's *Globe*. In 1868 James was asked by his employer to return to the West and play a leading role in the annexation process. Like his sister, Jemima (who married the local Presbyterian minister and had to endure taunts from White settlers that her racial inheritance was a moral drag on her husband), James was extremely sensitive to racism.

Historian of fur trade society Sylvia Van Kirk has shown how James's response to racial discrimination was to be better than his critics and certainly better than their stereotypes. A supporter of Canadian ambitions in the West, he found himself drawn to the side of Louis Riel precisely because he felt more solidarity with the métis peoples of which he was one, than with the Canadians. "At first the ardent champion of the Canadian cause, he ended up as Chief Justice of Riel's provisional government. Ross was won over by Riel's appeal to racial unity; the *métis* were fighting not solely for

> their own rights, but also for the rights of all the indigenous people of Red River. […] Nothing was worth a civil war against 'brothers and kindred'."[5]

## Louis Riel and the Western Resistance

There are two events in the history of the West with which Louis Riel (1844-1885) was associated. The first began in 1869 at the Forks, the heart of the old Red River Colony; the second began in 1885 across a broader canvas — the whole of modern Saskatchewan. Both are referred to as Métis uprisings, rebellions, and even wars; sometimes called the First and Second Riel Rebellions. While it is true that Riel played a pivotal role in both incidents, there is much more to the story than one individual.

The context of Canada's annexation of Rupert's Land tells a tale in its own right. Red River was a community in a period of severe and traumatic adjustment. The loss of the bison herds had impacted the Métis and had weakened their power on the Plains; Indigenous peoples were struggling to adapt to an economy without the fur trade; everyone was brutalized by the cascade of epidemics witnessed since the 1830s; a plague of grasshoppers in 1867-68 had pushed the colony to the edge of famine.

The British proposed to buy out the HBC's monopoly for the sum of £300,000. Given that the Sayer Trial of 1849 (see section 8.10 (http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/the-new-hbc-and-the-new-nation-to-1860/#chapter810)) had shot the monopoly full of holes, it can be argued that Britain got nothing for their money. In any event, this enabled the Crown to hand over responsibility for the territory to the new Confederation. The Canadians promptly made four critical errors. The first was appointing a lieutenant-governor, William McDougall (1822-1905), a former Grit who served in Macdonald's Liberal-Conservative Cabinet, before the deal was closed. The second was McDougall's precipitate decision to send in land surveyors in July 1869, six months before Canada had any authority in the region. (Even the outgoing HBC governor of Assiniboia, William Mactavish (1815-1870), was offended.) Attempts to redraw the land-use maps of Assiniboia into blocks of 160-acre sections threatened to chop up the old seigneurial-style lots of the Métis in particular. Although the HBC had done much to administer British common law after 1821, formal land title was something that had been ignored. The Métis and the country born, along with many of their other neighbours, thus regarded the Canadian surveyors as the advance guard of a civilization antithetical to their own interests, and in August 1869 began chasing them off the land. The third was a failure to address British requirements for treaties with the Indigenous population on the Plains. Fourth and finally, the Canadians did not consult with any of the colony's residents. When McDougall's party showed up on the 49th parallel south of Fort Garry (he had to cut through American territory to reach Red River) they were met by representatives of the Métis National Committee and turned back.

The Canadians' actions inflamed feeling in the colony. Initially the Métis, anglophone, and country born communities were suspicious of one another's agendas. Louis Riel — a 25-year-old who more or less fell into a leadership role among the Métis — made several demonstrations of the Métis

5. Sylvia Van Kirk, "'What if Mama is an Indian': The cultural ambivalence of the Alexander Ross family," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 207-14.

community's resolve (such as seizing Upper Fort Garry) and in November called a convention of the colony that included 12 Métis and the same number of anglophones/country-born. Three weeks later, after suppressing a possible anti-Métis rising among the Canadian settlers in the colony, a **provisional government** was declared; John Bruce was named its first president and Louis Riel its secretary. The provisional government had a mandate to negotiate terms of entry into Confederation.

Insofar as the Canadians could not claim to have truly annexed the territory yet, the provisional government did not constitute a rebellion per se. There was nothing to rebel against other than an incomplete hostile takeover by a foreign country hardly different from, say, the United States. Negotiations began soon after and, as Riel's position in the provisional government changed from secretary to president, the Red River team's goals became progressively larger. They were no longer bargaining just for Red River: they wanted provincial status for the whole of the northwest, which would include — as with the four charter provinces — control over resource revenues.

The greatest challenge facing the provisional government was the Canadian population. Led by Dr. John Schultz (a physician who ran a prosperous, if ill-regarded, trading and land-sale business), Charles Mair (paymaster to the survey crews and married to Schultz's niece), and Thomas Scott (a 27-year-old road labourer from Northern Ireland), they were able to mobilize a significant number of newcomers from Ontario. Schultz and Scott had in common a connection to the Orange Lodge: Schultz founded the Lodge in Red River and Scott was rabidly anti-Catholic. Efforts to whip up a confrontation between Canadians and the provisional government mobilized a small but easily defeated force. Schultz fled and Scott, with others, found himself jailed at Upper Fort Garry. Riel's administration issued pardons to one Canadian after the next, but Scott's malignant and inflammatory attitude toward the Métis landed him in front of a court martial in 1870. He was subsequently executed by order of a tribunal. Riel might have stayed his sentence but by this time the provisional government felt sufficiently harassed by the Canadian settlers that a message, it was thought, needed to be sent.

The execution of Scott was to prove Riel's undoing. Orange Lodges across British North America howled for Riel's capture. In the spring and summer of 1870 the provisional government and Ottawa were able to hammer out the Manitoba Act (1870), legislation that created the new province and provided for bilingualism and a publicly funded system of separate schools (Catholic and Protestant). What Manitoba did not receive was full control over resource revenues, which placed the province at a serious disadvantage. Nor did the provisional government receive full amnesty for its leadership. Riel fled the colony only days ahead of an Ontarian militia, which had in mind lynching him.

Throughout, Riel maintained his loyalty to the Crown, although the threat of seeking annexation to the United States was a card that everyone knew he could and might play. But, taking him at his word, his goal was the negotiated entry of Red River into a union with the new country. Riel, we need to remember, was a man only in his twenties, playing the role of the prodigal son and peacemaker in a community known for its faultlines and engaging in diplomacy with seasoned Canadian scrappers like Brown and Macdonald.

**Louis Riel**

Louis Riel's personal history is instructive. The son of a Franco-Métis lawyer and leader and Julie Lagimonière, the White daughter of a French-Canadian couple who had settled at Red River, Riel was born and raised in the parish of St. Boniface. His education for the priesthood in Montreal was abandoned shortly after the death of his father in 1864. Riel has been described as a young man of much talent and intellectual brilliance and as a charming personality; he is also described as melancholic, possibly manic-depressive. Certainly he seems to have suffered from depression on several occasions and, at the time of his father's death, he was still reeling from a failed marriage engagement to a Canadienne whose parents withheld their blessing (most likely because of Riel's mixed background). After a couple of years in the American Midwest, Riel returned to Red River where he did not fully fit into the bison-hunting culture of his Métis neighbours. His ability with languages and his intellectual capital, however, made him an obvious figure to play an important role in the National Committee.[6]

**Key Points**

- Canadian interest in the West involved an imperialist urge to annex territory for farmland and a Canadien desire to formalize the centuries-old connections between the St. Lawrence and the people beyond the Great Lakes.
- The context of this transaction includes tensions between the Catholic Métis and the Orange Lodge. It also includes a growing racist sentiment.
- Canadian efforts to rush along the annexation led to provocative steps that led to Métis/country-born/Red River resistance and the establishment of a popular provisional government.

6. For a survey of the ways in which Riel has been depicted by historians and used as a symbol by successive generations, see Douglas Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," *Louis Riel: Selected Readings*, Hartwell Bowsfield, ed. (Mississauga: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988), 11-29.

# 14.7 On the Brink of Industrialization

Confederation enabled the creation of a changed investment environment. Like all such environments, it had more to do with subjective confidence than with any objective reality. Nevertheless, the years after 1867 were marked by heavy investment in railroads, the growth and maturation of the banking system, and the rise of an urban-industrial Canada that was only hinted at in mid-century, although the dye had certainly been cast.

The dramatic political/constitutional changes of the 1860s were nothing compared to some of the economic transformations underway. The value of production in agricultural implements — one sector of industrial manufacturing that would be central to the Canadian industrial revolution — exploded in the 1860s from $413,000 in output in 1861 to $2,685,000 in 1871, according to the Canadian census.[1]

In some regions, industrialization overwhelmed old practices and old economic orders. On the face of it, that's what happened in Atlantic Canada when the age of wind, wood, and water came up against a new generation of larger and steam-powered iron- and steel-hulled ships in the last quarter of the century. It was not the case, however, that shipowners in the region stood still. They adjusted for changes in the economy and changes in demand for their ships by making them more efficient. Innovative adaptations took place right at the moment when capital investment in new modes of production might have been more appropriate. But this was not foolishness on the part of Atlantic Canada's shipping magnates. One study of the industry puts it this way:

> In retrospect the decision to deploy wooden sailing vessels in trades soon to be overwhelmed by iron and steam may seem a short-sighted gamble. But shipowners were businessmen, not economists or social engineers. They were not planning the economic future of the Maritimes within Confederation; they were making profits in a business which they understood thoroughly and in which most had worked for two decades. They continued to make profits and they adjusted the supply of vessels to meet a dwindling demand.[2]

What would come to matter more in short order was the mining of coal (as a fuel for engines, as a source of household heat, and as a necessary element in the production of strong metals) and iron. British North America was already bookended by collieries in Cape Breton and on Vancouver Island, both of which represented industrial frontiers rather than agrarian frontiers, and both of which involved isolated urbanization and the development of powerful working-class cultures. These were going concerns and their prosperity would be lifted higher by the new constitutional and economic framework of Confederation.

1. Richard Pomfret, "The Mechanization of Reaping in Nineteenth-Century Ontario: A Case Study of the Pace and Causes of the Diffusion of Embodied Technical Change," in *Perspectives on Canadian Economic History,* ed. Douglas McCalla (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 81.

2. Eric W. Sager, "Atlantic Canada and the Age of Sail Revisited," in *Perspectives on Canadian Economic History,* ed. Douglas McCalla (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 99-100.

## A Dying Fur Trade

Ecologically, nothing could be less sustainable than the fur trade. We have already seen how the need to tap fresh beaver populations drew the French and then the British (or at least their influence) farther and farther inland at rates much faster than any settlement frontier made up of homesteading farmers. We have seen, too, how the imprint of the fur trade on the North and the Plains was not always readily apparent: the HBC and its competitors didn't leave behind a patchwork of farmhouses, barns, roadways, grain mills, and fenceposts the way a farmer-settler society would. They did, it is true, build some impressive forts, small citadels armed to the teeth with cannons, but these were relatively small and distant footprints, pinpricks on a vast canvas of territory. As we have seen as well, the fur trade rapidly depleted populations of fur-bearing animals, which had consequences for the larger environment.

For Indigenous hunters and families, the declining sea otter and beaver populations had both direct and indirect consequences. Less fur meant less to trade, which meant limited access to exotic goods and manufactures that had become essential. The collapse of beaver and other mammal populations invited, as well, conflict between Indigenous hunters over territories. There were other less obvious implications as well. The loss of beaver populations affected water reservoirs on the Plains to such an extent that the Niitsitapi suffered seriously from lack of drinking water in the mid-19th century.[3] It also impacted fish populations and diminished opportunities for species that depended on both: weasels, martens, minks (all commercial fur-bearers). The moose population, which provided a major source of meat across Canada, was also affected.

As conventional fur stocks shrank, American traders increased demand for bison hides (the leather was used for high-quality drive belts in the industrialized centres of New England and Pennsylvania) and wolf skins. This latter trade has been characterized as especially vicious in large measure because it involved whisky traders from below the **medicine line.** Riots were frequent, the most notorious being that at Cypress Hills in 1873, which resulted in a massacre of Nakoda Sioux (Stoney).

Still other resources were negatively impacted by the fur trade. Large posts exploited local stands of trees for their construction and fuel. By the time of Confederation all of the forests across a radius of 160 kilometres inland from Moose Factory and York Factory were severely reduced. Swampy Cree and country-born foresters had to be employed to head upriver every summer to cut, raft, float, and haul timber into the two forts. This created opportunities for wage labour among the Indigenous communities but it also — quite obviously — had further ecological impacts on wildlife species in the region.[4]

Falling demand in Europe reoriented business practices in the northwest. By the end of the 1860s the HBC was looking to introduce steamboats on its river systems across the northern woodlands, a move that undercut the high labour costs associated with Indigenous packers and York Boat crews.[5] All the advantages once enjoyed by the Swampy Cree were swiftly evaporating: first access to European products, the privileged and influential position as homeguard, and the opportunity to pick up seasonal work for the HBC.

3. James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: U of R Press, 2013), 75.

4. Arthur J. Ray, *I Have Lived Here Since The World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People* (Toronto: Lester/Key, 1996), 286-7.

5. Ibid.

A similar situation confronted Indigenous groups on Vancouver Island from the 1840s to the 1860s: the Kwagu'ł of Fort Rupert and the Snuneymuxw of Nanaimo enjoyed a few years as labourers in and around the HBC's coal mines before being squeezed out of the best paying jobs by imported British colliers. In some sectors, such as freight-handling on waterfronts from Victoria through New Westminster and the emerging commercial fisheries, Indigenous people's wage labour was critical.[6] Victorian modes of production offered a transitional opportunity as the fur trade declined, albeit usually a temporary one.

It was in the context of these changes, including starvation among Plains peoples as the bison herds expired, that the Canadians began to exert their influence as an imperialist force. Treaties (negotiated by Ottawa, not London), reserves, and residential schools were on their way.

**Key Points**

- Confederation was led by a generation accustomed to moderate industrialization and familiar with market towns with roots in the last century.
- The fur trade, which had been the core element of life and economy in the northern half of the continent since the 15th century, was on its last legs.
- The new country came into existence as a new economic order was preparing itself for its debut.

6. Andrew Parnaby, "'The Best Men That Ever Worked the Lumber': Aboriginal Longshoremen on Burrard Inlet, BC, 1863-1939," *Canadian Historical Review* 87, issue 1 (2006): 53-78.

## 14.8 Summary



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/1280px-YorkBoat_FEP.jpg)

*Figure 14.10 The York boat (on which the York/ Columbia Express depended) is descended from the yole, a type of fishing boat found in the Orkney Islands, from where many HBC servants came. The yole, for its part, is descended from Viking boat design. The York boat has elements of design continuity that stretch back from the 19th century to the time of Vinland and earlier.*

History is a complex dance between continuity and change. Both, however, are deceptive. What appears to be continuity can, from time to time, be the reappearance of a practice or belief, one that had been suspended for a time. A single element of material design might be perpetuated for centuries for reasons that no one recalls except that it works. Historical study teaches that one cannot count on continuity to be anything but slippery, and yet perceptions of the past are more comfortable with simple, slow-moving narratives than fluidity. Keith Matthews, a historian of Atlantic Canada once took his colleagues to task for presenting "Newfoundland's history as timeless." He argued that "Although groups changed in characteristics and importance, historians nevertheless perceived eternal and unchanging conflict raging for more than 200 years."[1]

1. Quoted in William Gilbert, "Beothuk-European Contact in the 16th Century: A Re-evaluation of the Documentary Evidence," *Acadiensis* XXXX, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2011): 44.



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2014/11/Bodmer_-_Blackfoot_Indian_1840-1843.jpg)

*Figure 14.11 This mid-19th century representation of a Blackfoot warrior suggests the timelessness of the mounted Plains culture. But that culture was, itself, only a few generations old when this image was created. (Painting by Karl Bodmer, c. 1840-43).*

Who were the people of the new Dominion? Negotiations took place between colonial leaders and ignored Indigenous peoples entirely, as well as the Métis. As a mechanism for expediting business transactions between colonies/provinces and creating administrative efficiencies, Confederation held out some promise; as a representation of the aspirations of the people across most of the territory to which it laid claim, it must have seemed baffling.

What's more, the "people" were a moving picture, not a photograph. They were being changed by forces many could not yet see. Industrialization and urbanization were the foremost of these.

In a matter of a few years the typical Canadian life course would include living in growing and industrial cities and working for wages. The majority of Canadians would continue to live on the land for another 60 years, although some provinces would cross the threshold into being principally urban much sooner. In other words, the impression is inescapable that the people for whom Confederation and all its aspects was crafted would soon be overwhelmed by a different society. The extent to which a united British North America would recognize and serve well the interests of those people, those Canadians, is the test that lay ahead in the post-Confederation period.

Key Terms

**Charlottetown Conference:** Convened by the leaders of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia for the purpose of discussing Maritime Union on September 1-9, 1864; discussed the possibility of a union that would include the Province of Canada. Laid the groundwork for the Quebec Conference.

**Council of Assiniboia:** An unelected council created by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1835 for the administration of Rupert's Land.

**double majority:** In the Province of Canada, an attempt to break the gridlock under the 1840 constitution by means of multiple majorities: a majority in the 84-seat assembly was required along with majorities in the Canada West and Canada East segments of the assembly (42 seats each) for a bill to pass into law.

**double shuffle:** The practice under the 1840 constitution that new, incoming cabinet minsters in a government were obliged to resign their seat in Parliament and seek re-election in a by-election. The idea was that electors had a right to acknowledge and approve the change of status in their representative. In 1858 John A. Macdonald took advantage of this rule to vote out George Brown's temporarily depleted government; he then merely moved his own ministers around — twice — to avoid having to go to by-elections. This cabinet "shuffle" thus became a "double shuffle."

**half-breeds:** A term that was once descriptive but soon became pejorative to describe individuals whose ancestry includes both European and Indigenous elements.

**House of Commons:** The Canadian House of Commons, modelled on the British House of Commons. Its members (referred to as Members of Parliament or MPs) are elected and the principle of representation-by-population generally prevails. Legislation dealing with expenditures or taxes can only be introduced in the House and the House of Commons has, at the end of the day, pre-eminence over the appointed Senate. The government is, in principle, based on the party that has elected the largest number of members. That party is referred to as the "governing party;" ministers — including the first minister, or prime minister — are appointed from the ranks of the majority governing party and constitute the executive council, or cabinet.

**imperial federation:** A proposal to restructure the British Empire along federal lines, creating a more equal partnership in place of a colonial relationship. This idea gained a significant and influential following in Canada in the 1880s and 1890s.

**medicine line:** Reputedly a Plains Indigenous term for the 49th parallel boundary between the British-Canadian Plains and the American west.

**peace, order, and good government:** A phrase from Section 91 of the British North America Act, 1867, and sometimes abbreviated to POGG. This is the residual powers section of the Act. Section 91 states that, beyond what is clearly allocated as provincial responsibilities and federal responsibilities, anything otherwise necessary to the "peace, order, and good government" of the country is to be handled by Ottawa.

**provisional government:** Generally, an emergency or interim administration. In the case of Red River (Manitoba) the government established under Louis Riel's leadership when the Council of Assiniboia dissolved and before the Canadian administration was able to legitimately seize power.

**residual powers:** Responsibilities not clearly demarcated and described in the constitution. In a federal system the residual powers typically belong to the central government. This was the intent of Section 91 of the British North America Act.

**Senate:** The appointed upper chamber of the Canadian Parliament, similar to the House of Lords in Britain. Distribution of seats was intended to be unrelated to population so that each province (or at least each region) would have significant representation. The chief role of the Senate is to review legislation and, where needed, suggest refinements. Because senators do not have to report to an electorate they are, theoretically, free to consider laws without bending to local pressures. It is for this reason that the Senate is sometimes referred to as the "house of sober second thought."

**Seventy-Two Resolutions:** Also known as the Quebec Resolutions, the proposals drafted (mostly by Macdonald) at the Quebec Conference in 1864. These were forwarded to Britain where they were further refined at the London Conference of 1866. They formed the outlines of the federal constitution as presented in the British North America Act of 1867.

Short Answer Exercises

1. What motivated Canadian politicians to explore a federal arrangement?
2. Why were the premiers of the Atlantic colonies interested?
3. If federalism was the answer, what was the question?
4. What other options were available?
5. To what extent was Confederation a British idea?
6. What was the role of the United States in advancing the cause of colonial union?
7. How did Rupert's Land figure into the dialogue about Confederation in 1864-67?
8. What were the sources of opposition to Confederation? How were they addressed?
9. Why did Nova Scotia and New Brunswick both eventually agree to join Confederation?
10. Why did Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland elect to stay out of Confederation in 1867?
11. What were some of the main features of the proposed federal union?
12. What was the response of westerners to Canada's annexationist move?
13. In what ways was Canada in 1867 a society poised on the brink of change?

## Suggested Readings

1. Ajzenstat, Janet. "Human Rights in 1867." In *Canadian Founding: John Locke and Parliament*, 49-66. Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2007.
2. Smith, Andrew. "Toryism, Classical Liberalism, and Capitalism: The Politics of Taxation and the Struggle for Canadian Confederation." *Canadian Historical Review* 89, no.1 (March 2008): 1-25.

## Attributions

**Figure 14.10**
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**Figure 14.11**
A painting from life by Karl Bodmer (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bodmer_--_Blackfoot_Indian,_1840-1843.jpg) by El Comandante (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:El_Comandante) is in the public domain (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).

# Appendix – Glossary

This glossary is a summary of all key terms that appear at the end of each chapter.

Glossary

**abolition (ch 7):** Refers to the abolition of the institution of slavery. In Britain a single piece of legislation resulted in the abolition of slavery in 1834. Abolition in Upper Canada was initiated by **John Graves Simcoe** in 1793.

**aboriginal title (ch 7):** Indigenous community/nation ownership of land and/or territory and/or other material resources.

**absentee landlords (ch 7):** Also called **proprietors**, the main landowners on Prince Edward Island whose land was allocated to them in a lottery held in London in 1767. Few of them visited the island and few attended to the responsibilities they were given as landlords. Most, however, attempted to charge significant rents to their tenant farmers in the colony. See also **escheat.**

**Acadian Expulsion (ch 6):** The removal of Acadians and other francophones from Île Royale after 1745,and accelerating after 1755 as the British forcibly removed the larger portion of the colonist population. In French it is called ***Le Grand Dérangement***.

**Act of Union, 1840-41 (ch 11):** The constitutional arrangement for the Canadas that replaced the Constitutional Act of 1791. Its main features were union of Lower and Upper Canada, creating one colony and one colonial government and an identical number of assembly seats for both partner colonies, with an eye to subsuming the French-Catholic community. The Province of Canada would retain some regional divisions and the old colonies perpetuated their separate identities as Canada East and Canada West.

**African American slaves (ch 7):** Chattel slaves, principally from Africa, who worked primarily on plantation economies. Slavery occurred throughout North America in both European and Indigenous communities. Some African American (as opposed to African-Caribbean) slaves were later freed (see **freedmen**) pending on their role in the American Revolution.

**agricultural revolution (ch 2):** In the context of the Archaic era, the development of the first farming societies in the Americas.

**Anglican Church (ch 3):** See **Church of England**.

**anglicization (ch 7):** >British policy of replacing French culture — language, customs, laws, and Catholic religion — with those of Anglican/Protestant Britain.

**Annapolis Royal (ch 6):** British name for Port Royal.

**anthropogenic (ch 2)**: Made or modified by humans.

**archaeological record (ch 2)**: Any evidence regarding past societies and civilizations that derives from the use of archaeological techniques and methods.

**Archaic period (ch 2)**: The era 10,000 – 3,000 years BP.

**Archaic Woodland (ch 2)**: The era described by archaeologists and anthropologists as roughly 1,000 BCE – 1,000 CE.

**archives (ch 1):** Collections of original documents, including print-based objects like personal letters, official reports, journals, newspapers, maps, government papers, and so on. Archival collections may also include photographs, music (in a variety of forms), and textiles. Technically, your own collection of original materials is an archive but, for the purposes of history courses, archives are official repositories that may or may not be open to the public.

**aristocracy (ch 3):** A privileged social class whose power is usually derived from birth, heredity, and almost exclusive ownership of land, close connections with the clergy and government, and with the Crown. As a form of government, a system in which a small and wealthy elite holds power to the exclusion of others.

**Assiniboia (ch 8):** Synonymous with Selkirk Colony or Red River Colony. The Treaty of 1818 divided it at the 49th parallel, thereby reducing Assiniboia significantly. After Confederation and the creation of the province of Manitoba, the name was applied to a new regional administrative unit in the North West Territories. This District of Assiniboia ran horizontally across the southern Canadian Prairies and was bounded on the east by Manitoba, on the south by the 49th parallel and the United States, on the west by the District of Alberta, and on the north by the District of Saskatchewan.

**Attawandaron (ch 5):** An Iroquoian people located in the contact and post-contact periods in what is now southwestern Ontario. Also known as the Neutral.

**Aztecs (ch 2)**: A Mesoamerican civilization and polity that collapsed in the early 16th century. The Aztecs developed many agricultural techniques and administrative customs that influenced societies around the Gulf of Mexico. Their influence may have spread up the Mississippi River as well.

**baby boom generation (ch 1)**: Individuals born in the post-Depression era of c. 1939 to 1964.

**backward linkages (ch 9):** Describes economic inputs (often infrastructure) that support the production of the principal staple. In the case of the fur trade, backward linkages include warehouses, docks, and fur trade posts. In the case of the wheat economy, they linkages include silos, means of transporting grain, seed, and farm implements. Compare with**forward linkages.**

**Battle of Sainte-Foy (ch 6):** Battle on April 28, 1760, near the citadel of Quebec with the French/Canadien forces attacking the British. General Murray repeated many of the errors of Montcalm only months before. The British survived (having suffered more than a thousand casualties) by hunkering in the fortress until British naval reinforcements arrived.

**Battle of Seven Oaks ( ch 8):** On June 19, 1816, two parties made up of HBC employees (including Governor Robert Semple) and Red River settlers against a party of Métis, Canadiens, and Indigenous peoples connected with the NWC. This was a violent chapter in the Pemmican War and was provoked by a food shortage and the HBC's consequent attempt to control the movement and sale of pemmican.

**Before the Common Era (BCE) (ch 2):** This term, along with CE, align exactly with the Christian dating system, dividing time approximately 2,000 years ago.

**Before the Present (BP) (ch 2)**: a dating system based on the use of radiocarbon-dating, which uses January 1, 1950, as its baseline. Therefore, 10,000 years BP equals 10,000 years before New Year's Day, 1950.

**benevolent societies (ch 10):** Also called a "friendly society" or "mutual society." Benevolent societies are a kind of cooperative organization in which the members subscribe money as insurance against illness, injury, widowhood, etc. Benevolent societies still exist but many have been supplanted by insurance companies and state welfare systems. See **voluntary associations**.

**Bering land bridge (ch 2):** The land form, made mostly of land that was exposed by falling sea levels, that

connected Eurasia and North America between Siberia and Alaska 50,000 to 10,000 years BP. A possible route for human migration from Asia to the Americas. Also called Beringia.

**Beringia (ch 2)**: The open plain of land and glaciers that once filled the current gap between Siberia and Alaska.

**Black Death (ch 3)**: Also called simply "the plague," a highly contagious disease reckoned to have reduced the total human population by 25% and as much as half of Europe's population in the 14th century. In its aftermath there was social and religious upheaval from China to the British Isles.

**Blackfoot Confederacy (ch 5):** Also known as the Niitsitapi, and alliance centred in the western Plains, in territory that extended from what is now southern Alberta into Montana; consisting of the Piikáni (Piegan), Siksika (Blackfoot), Káínaa (Kanai, Blood), Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee), and A'aninin (Gros Ventre, Atsina).

**bourgeois, bourgeoisie (ch 6):** Originally someone who lived in the town (French: *bourg*; German: *burg*; English: *borough*), typically associated with merchants, professionals, etc. By the 18th century the bourgeoisie emerged as a distinct social class, a "middle class."

**brewing (ch 7):** <The production of beer and the distilling of whisky, this was a means of adding value to surplus grain being grown in Upper and Lower Canada beginning in the 1780s. John Molson of Montreal was an early participant in brewing and, like many Canadians who followed in his footsteps in the liquor production trade, amassed a great fortune.

**British North America (BNA) (ch 7)**: Term used intermittently after 1783 to describe the colonies left to Britain after the Revolution. Initially these included Newfoundland, the Province of Quebec, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia. Subsequently the list would increase to include new colonies (Cape Breton Island and New Brunswick), a partitioned colony (Upper and Lower Canada), and in very general terms Rupert's Land (which was not administered by a Crown delegate). Vancouver Island and British Columbia would also be regarded as part of British North America before Confederation.

**buffalo jumps (ch 2):** Sites on the plains associated with highly coordinated bison hunts conducted by Indigenous communities.

**Bungee (ch 8):** Dialect that arose around the English-speaking settlements of Red River, layering elements of Anishinaabe/Ojibwa atop a substantial foundation of English and Gaelic to create what linguists call a creole.

**Cahokia (ch 2):** Thought to be the largest of the Mississippian towns/cities. Located near present-day St. Louis, it is believed to have crested around 1050 and collapsed around 1350.

**Cajuns (ch 4):** Francophone settlers in Louisiana descended mostly from Acadiens.

**capital, capitalism, capitalists (ch 9):** Capital is the portable wealth that can be applied to the economy in the form of investment. Prior to capitalism, wealth was manifest almost entirely in land and agricultural production. Investment was, in effect, reinvestment of output. Outsiders did not generally invest their wealth in the farms of others, certainly not in the pre-modern, feudal era. The mercantile era created a merchant class with excess capital (money, wealth) which was stored, invested, and made available for borrowing for investment. Capitalism is the system in which the means of production (farms, factories, etc.) are privately owned and capable of being bought and sold. It generally depends on wage labour. Capitalism is, too, a system of social relations based on the right of the individual to move capital to wherever it will generate the greatest benefits. A capitalist is someone who works within the capitalist system, whose wealth is based not on inherited and immovable property but on the ability to move wealth from one investment to another.

**Cariboo Wagon Road (ch 13):** Constructed from 1860 to 1885 to connect the Lower Mainland of British Columbia with the Cariboo goldfields. The original 1860-63 road ran from Port Douglas at the north end of Harrison Lake via Lillooet to Clinton and thence north across the Cariboo Plateau to Alexandria. An amended version in 1865 connected Yale to Ashcroft and then Clinton and the older road, having passed through the Fraser Canyon.

**cayoosh, cayuse (ch 5):** Regional words for "horse" in the Cordillera and western Plains. Derived from the Cayuse First Nation, who were responsible for significant advances in breeding in the 18th century.

***censitaires* (ch 4):** Also known as ***habitants***; the rent-paying tenants of the seigneurs. The rent is known as the *cens.*

**Charlottetown Conference (ch 14):** Convened by the leaders of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia for the purpose of discussing Maritime Union, the 1-9 September meeting agenda was expanded to include discussion of a union that would include the Province of Canada. Laid the groundwork for **the Quebec Conference.**

**Chartists (ch 11):** A movement for political reform in Britain during the 1830s, the supporters of the People's Charter of 1838 – the Chartists – called for universal adult male suffrage, equitable constituencies, and other innovations which would radically broaden British democracy.

**chattel slavery (ch 3)**: Ownership of a human being as a piece of property.

***Chateau Clique* (ch 7)*:*** A highly influential cadre of economic and social leaders who fashioned themselves politically as the British (or Tory) Party in Lower Canada. Their numbers included prominent merchants like James McGill and John Molson. Their agenda included assimilation of the French Catholic population and perpetuating a hierarchical social and political order.

***Chemin du Roy* (ch 6)*:*** The "King's Road," built in the 1730s; a major infrastructure project in its time. One of the longest continuous roads in North America, it connected seigneuries on the north shore of the St. Lawrence.

**Chesapeake Affair (ch 7):** During the Napoleonic Wars, a British attempt to reduce American shipping to France by means of capturing US shipping and impressing (forcing sailors) into the British Navy. In 1807 the USS *Chesapeake*, a warship, was bombarded and captured by the HMS *Leopard*; four sailors were seized and tried for desertion from the British Navy, one of whom was subsequently hanged. The Americans regarded this as an act of aggression and it fomented war fever in some quarters. See **War Hawks**.

**chiefdom (ch 2)**: A form of organization based on a hierarchy of chiefs that followed the leader of the most important group.

**Chilcotin War (ch 13):** Also referred to as the Chilcotin Massacre, Chilcotin Uprising, and Bute Inlet Massacre. Occurred in 1864 when Tsilqot'in people asserted their control of their ancestral territory by murdering several members of a road-building crew and some colonists. The colonial authorities responded with a fruitless and expensive campaign that only ended when several of the Tsilqot'in leaders presented themselves for negotiations and were summarily arrested and subsequently hanged.

**Chinatown (ch 10):** Urban areas dedicated to the housing and businesses of Chinese immigrants and their families. Some Chinatowns appeared spontaneously and were built by the Chinese community; others were imposed by the dominant Euro-Canadian regime as a means of containing the Chinese population.

**Chinook, chinuk wawa (ch 5):** A trade dialect developed on the west coast comprising elements from several Indigenous languages and subsequently adopting words from various European languages.

**Church of England (ch 3)**: Also known as the Anglican Church, the state church in England established under Henry VIII in opposition to Roman Catholicism.

**Church Missionary Society (CMS) (ch 13):** Established in London, England, in 1799 the CMS began sending Anglican missionaries to Rupert's Land in the 1820s. In 1857 William Duncan was dispatched to the northwest coast on behalf of the CMS.

**civic buildings (ch 10):** City halls, local jails, and courthouses are the most common "civic buildings" in the 19th century. Art galleries and museums – as public facilities – appear later. The erection of impressive civic

buildings was a statement of civic pride, a means of promoting the community, and a statement regarding the growing power of municipalities.

**civil rights movement (ch 1)**: In the United States, a movement principally in support of improved legal and civil rights for African Americans. The movement is regarded as running from 1954 to 1968. It produced other movements associated with demands for rights for other groups that had historically faced prejudice and systemic marginalization.

**civil service (ch 10):** Employees of the state/colonies/municipalities. Includes surveyors, land officers, postmasters, and a few other positions in the 19th century. The number and types of civil servants expanded with the size of the state in mid-century.

**Civil War (ch 9):** The war between the southern and northern American states from 1861-1865. Seven southern slave states seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America. The continuance of slavery and "states rights" were the key catalysts to the crisis. The number of war dead totalled more than 100,000, and at the end of the war the United States had the largest standing army on Earth.

**class consciousness (ch 10):** Awareness of one's socio-economic status (or "class") and how it (a) creates and limits opportunities, and (b) is experienced by others as well and constitutes as a set of common interests.

**Clear Grits (ch 11):** Reformers in Canada West who coalesced in 1850 behind a platform of universal adult male suffrage, and attacks on privilege. Principally rural at first, it became more urban under the leadership of George Brown in the late 1850s. Its founders called for men who were morally incorruptible, "all sand and no dirt, clear grit all the way through." The Clear Grits joined with the Reformers and subsequently became the Liberal Party.

**clearances (ch 8):** The consolidation of feudal lands to enable the building of greater sheep flocks and thus feed the ravenous woolen industry in industrializing Britain. The Highland Clearances resulted in the displacement of large numbers of Scots, as did the Lowland Clearances, contributing to a massive out-migration in the 18th and 19th centuries.

**Clergy Reserves (ch 7):** Created by the **Constitutional Act (1791)**, land parcels set aside (one-seventh of all public lands) in Upper Canada for the use of the Church of England (a.k.a. Anglican Church). There were smaller Clergy Reserves in Lower Canada as well.

**Clovis (ch 2):** Named for the archaeological site in New Mexico where it was first identified, the Clovis tradition is identifiable by the kinds of projectile heads it produced.

**coastal migration theory (ch 2):** An alternative to the Bering land bridge theory, which posits that the first human arrivals in the Americas arrived by sea, following the arc of the north Pacific icefield and skirting Beringia.

***Code Noir* (ch 4)*:*** Introduced under Louis XIV in 1685, the *Code Noir* established the ground rules for slavery in the French colonies. This included a prohibition of any religion other than Catholicism, the range of discipline permissible, and the conditions required for manumission (freeing of slaves).

**codexes (codices) (ch 2)**: Scrolls written by Aztec and/or Mayan authors and scribes from the period both before and after the arrival of Europeans.

**coffin ships (ch 9):** Lumber boats that carried immigrants from Ireland to Canada in the 1830s. Many died during this trip as hygiene and overcrowded conditions aboard the boats were atrocious.

**collectivities (ch 1)**: Groups of people who identify as part of a social body that may or may not correspond to a political unit. For example, First Nations peoples may identify collectively as First Nations, as opposed to (or perhaps in addition to) their identity as Cree or Mi'kmaq. French Canadian identity very often exists independent of (and sometimes in contrast to) a larger bicultural Canadian identity.

**Columbian Exchange (ch 5):** The traffic of goods, ideas, materiel, foodstuffs, technology, knowledge, and bacteria between Europe and Africa (on the one hand) and the Americas (on the other).

**Columbia Express (ch 8):** Route connecting York Factory to the mouth of the Columbia River by combining the assets and knowledge of the HBC. Also called the **York Factory Express**.

**Common Era (CE) (ch 2):** This term, along with BCE, aligns exactly with the Christian dating system, dividing time approximately 2,000 years ago.

**<common law (ch 7):** British code of laws dealing with property, contracts, and other civil matters.

***Communauté des habitants* (ch 4):** Also known as the "*Compagnie des habitants*"; it worked in conjunction with the *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* in an arrangement that sublet the *Cent-Associés'* monopoly to residents in the colony of Canada.

***Compagnie des Cent-Associés* (ch 4):** The Company of One Hundred Associates (sometimes called the Company of New France or *Compagnie de la Nouvelle France*) was chartered in 1627 to operate the fur trade in Canada and Acadia and establish settlements. It followed two earlier chartered efforts, the *Compagnie des Marchands* and the *Compagnie de Montmorency.* The *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* ceased operating in 1663.

**company store, company towns (ch 10):** Many 19th and 20th century resource-extraction and construction industries were situated outside of established communities; under those circumstances a great many provided housing, supplies, groceries, work clothes, fuel, churches, and any number of other services so as to attract, retain, and (when necessary) discipline their workforce.

***conquistador* (ch 3)**: Term used by the Spanish and Portuguese, meaning conqueror. Covers the military and clergy leaders of the Iberian invasions of the Americas.

**Constitutional Act (1791)(ch 7):** The legislation that created two colonies out of what was left of the Province of Quebec after the Treaty of Paris, 1783: Upper and Lower Canada. In Upper Canada the British common law was applied while the *Coutume de Paris* survived in Lower Canada. Both colonies received their own administrative structures.

**contact (ch 2):** The first documented encounter between Indigenous peoples and Europeans. This is a movable date because first encounters occur in different regions at different times. The contact era for some Arctic peoples, for example, only began in the 20th century.

**coparcenary (ch 6):** A system of joint/shared inheritance of property.

**Corn Laws (ch 9):** Regulations governing the import and export of grain in Britain. A system of tariffs that benefited colonial and domestic producers and disadvantaged foreign producers in the British marketplace.

**cottage industry (ch 10):** A manufacturing process in which all or component parts of a product are assembled in a worker's home. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries this was particularly associated with textile and clothing production.

**Council of Assiniboia (ch 14):** An unelected council created by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1835 for the administration of Rupert's Land.

**counting coup (ch 2):** The practice, common among many Indigenous cultures, of attacking rival groups with the objective of inflicting injury but not necessarily fatality and to thereby acquire status commensurate with the humiliation meted out to the foe.

***coureurs de bois* (ch 4):** In English, known as "runners of the woods." The first *coureurs de bois* were young men dispatched by Champlain to reside among the Wendat, learn the Wyandot language, and develop an understanding of local trade protocols. Subsequently the *coureurs* were more likely to be independent or semi-independent traders seeking Indigenous sources of furs across the interior of North America.

***Coutume de Paris* (ch 7):** A code of civil law developed in and for Paris and extended to New France. Addressed land ownership and use, family relations, and inheritance.

**Crimean War (ch 9):** A multinational conflict centred on the Crimean Peninsula and the city of Sevastopol on the Black Sea. The war pitted Britain, France, and Turkey (the Ottoman Empire) against Russia. Noteworthy of the magnitude of deaths (roughly half a million) and the beginnings of the military field hospital (under Florence Nightingale) which produced important innovations in battlefield medicine.

**crude birth rate (CBR) (ch 10):** The number of births per 1000 population.

**crude death rate (CDR) (ch 10):** The number of deaths per 1000 population.

**cullers (ch 9):** Codfish buyers in Newfoundland ports, especially St. John's.

**decapitation thesis (ch 7):** Historical theory that explains the apparent loss of Canadien leadership in the colony after the Conquest as the result of an exodus of leading commercial, administrative, and social figures to France.

**democracy (ch 9):** A form of government translated roughly from its Greek roots as "rule by the people." The complicating factor is that "the people" is a slippery concept that is historically contextualized, and the extent of "rule" is also negotiable. Democracy was long associated with cities and towns, but not with nation states or empires, over which monarchies and oligarchies ruled. The emergence of representative democracy at a national level in the late 18th century – first in the United States, then in France – constituted a revolutionary change in organizing "the people's" voice. In British North America, legislative assemblies might be elected but they did not rule, not until the 1840s. The majority of adults were "enfranchised" or legally able to participate in a democratic election only in the 20th century. It is still the case, of course, that people under the age of 18 years are not able to participate in democracy, so the vote is not "universal" by any stretch.

**demographic historians (ch 1)**: Historians of population trends and mechanisms.

**dependent population (ch 10):** The share of population under the age of 15 years and over the age of 60 or 65. Clearly the notion of "elderly" dependant varies over time depending on life expectancies and population health generally.

**diffusion (ch 2)**: The transmission of ideas, practices, or beliefs from one society to another.

**disease vectors (ch 5):** Viruses and bacteria transferred from one living host to another. Examples include droplets (like those produced in coughing or sneezing), parasites (like fleas or mosquitos), food, animal bites, and sexual intercourse. May also refer to the territory covered by a disease as it moves through a geographical area.

**divine right of kings (ch 3)**: A doctrine based on the belief that the monarch's power is derived directly from God and not from worldly authorities like a legislature, a council of nobles, or even the Vatican.

**division of labour (ch 10):** In a system of production, the isolation of certain tasks that are assigned to individuals working cooperatively to generate a certain product. In shoe production, for example, one person may be responsible for the uppers and someone else for the soles and a third for stitching them together.

**Dorset (ch 8):** The Paleo-Eskimo culture that existed in the Canadian Arctic from about 500 BCE – 1500 CE. Succeeded by the Inuit Culture.

**double majority (ch 14):** In the Province of Canada an attempt to break the gridlock under the 1840 constitution by means of multiple majorities: a majority in the 84-seat Assembly was required along with majorities in the Canada West and the Canada East segments of the Assembly (42-seats each) for a bill to pass into law.

**double shuffle (ch 14):** It was the practice under the 1840 constitution that new, incoming cabinet minsters in

a government were obliged to resign their seat in parliament and seek re-election in a by-election. The idea behind this was that electors had a right to acknowledge and approve the change of status in their representative. In 1858 John A. Macdonald took advantage of this rule to vote out George Brown's temporarily depleted government and then he merely moved his own ministers around – twice – so as to avoid having to go to by-elections. This cabinet "shuffle" thus became a "double shuffle."

**Douglas Treaties (ch 13):** Also known as the **Fort Victoria Treaties**, these are fourteen agreements between the Colony of Vancouver Island (under the leadership of James Douglas) and Indigenous communities.

**Durham Report (ch 11):** The *Report on the Affairs of British North America* of 1839 was the product of Lord Durham's investigation in 1838 into the causes of the crisis in Canadian politics.

**East India Company (ch 6):** Established in 1600, the largest of Britain's chartered trade monopolies. It dominated trade and was an instrument of British imperialism in Asia and was the model on which the Hudson's Bay Company was based.

**Edict of Nantes (ch 3)**: A statement of relative religious tolerance in 1598 that brought an end to the Wars of Religion in France and extended civil rights to Protestants (Huguenots).

**Embargo Act (1807) (ch 7):** In an attempt to force British and French respect for American shipping, federal legislation that was passed in Washington that effectively closed off all exports to foreign ports. The objective was to starve the importing nations of American goods and thus oblige them to cease preying on American shipping. It was repealed in 1809.

**Empire of the St. Lawrence (ch 9):** A phrase coined by historian Donald Creighton in the 1930s, it refers to the economic and political influence of Quebec and Montreal merchants and colonial governments over a region that extended, at its peak, across the whole of North America to the Pacific Ocean.

**English Reformation (ch 3)**: Term used to describe several events connected to the English break with Catholic Rome under Henry VIII.

**environmental history (ch 1):** Charts the history of human interaction with natural and human-made settings. The environment may be a pristine one or an urban context. In some cases it is a study of how human activity impacts the environment (and vice versa); in others it studies the *idea* of the environment and how that concept changes over time.

**environmentalism (ch 1):** A philosophical interpretation of human interactions with the environment. May also refer to an activist movement and critique regarding the negative impacts of those interactions.

**escheat (ch 7):** A movement to force unimproved lands on Prince Edward Island back into the hands of the Crown. The Escheat Party made the land issue the dominant one in the colony in the 19th century.

**established church (ch 11):** When a state or nation has a single official institutionalized religion, it is referred to as the "established church." In the case of France prior to the Revolution and New France prior to the Conquest it was unquestionably the Catholic Church; in Britain and its colonies, it was the Anglican Church (or Church of England). Post-Conquest attempts to impose the Anglican Church on the Canadas as the established church failed.

**ethnohistory <(ch 1)**A branch of academic studies that bridges anthropological and historical approaches, ethnohistory is principally concerned with non-European societies.

**exotic diseases (ch 2):** Infectious and highly contagious viruses introduced in the proto-contact and contact eras. Indigenous people had little in the way of natural immunities to diseases they had never before encountered.

**extended family (ch 9):** Generally refers to three generations or more of one family. Another form, the consanguineal family, includes adult siblings.

**Family Compact (ch 7):** >An association of leading individuals and families in Upper Canada devoted to the suppression of republican tendencies in the colony and perpetuating an oligarchy in government. <

**Famine Irish (ch 10):** Emigrants from Ireland who fled the Great Famine of 1845-52.

**Father Le Loutre's War (ch 6):** (1749-1755) Also called the Mi'kmaq (or Micmac) War, a conflict that pitted the Mi'kmaq and some of the Acadian communities against the British and New England interests in Nova Scotia.

**Father Rale's War (ch 6):** (1722-1725) Known by several other names as well, a conflict provoked by New England expansion into unceded Wabanaki territory in what is now Maine and New Brunswick. The French were allied with the Wabanaki against the British and New England forces.

**feminism (ch 1):** An analysis of power relations that posits the existence of systemic barriers to equality between humans based on sexual identity. Feminism calls for a program of political and social action aimed at improving the conditions of females.

**feudalism (ch 6):** An economic and landholding system of social, legal, and military customs based on notions of mutual responsibility. Land ownership was typically by a manorial elite for which a peasantry laboured. The aristocratic landowners, in turn, owed labour to the higher nobility, including the king.

**"Fifty-four Forty or fight!" (ch 13):** Slogan coined in 1844 or 1845 by American expansionists eager to claim the whole of the Oregon Territory to the Alaska Panhandle (54°40'N).

***filles du roi* (ch 4):** In English, known as "the king's daughters." Between 1663 and about 1673, this cohort of women (mostly young and many orphans) was recruited by the Crown's agents (mostly in Paris) for settlement in Canada. Their passage was paid for by the king and they were provided with a dowry as an incentive to marriage.

**Foresters (ch 10):** The Ancient Order of Foresters (AOF), a benevolent society founded in England with branches globally and a focus on members' insurance.

**Fort Astoria (ch 8):** Established at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1811 by John Jacob Astor's**Pacific Fur Company**, Astoria was the first American position on the northwest coast. It was soon thereafter sold to the North-West Company.

**Fort Beausejour (ch 4):** Built by the French in 1751 on the Chignecto Isthmus, which connects modern New Brunswick to Nova Scotia. This was an important land corridor connecting the Fortress of Louisbourg with Acadian settlements and Canada. The fort was also intended to support Mi'kmaq allies during war. Captured by the British in 1755, the name was changed to Fort Cumberland.

**Fort Caroline (ch 3)**: Reckoned to be the oldest fortified European settlement in what is now the United States; established by the French in 1564.

**Fort George (ch 13):** There are several Forts George in the history of the Thirteen Colonies, BNA, and the Pacific northwest. In the farthest west there were two: the first replaced the American Fort Astoria near the mouth of the Columbia River (at what is now Astoria, Oregon); the second was established in 1807 by Simon Fraser at the site of what is now the city of Prince George, BC.

**Fortress Louisbourg (ch 6):** Established in 1713 as a fishing village,an important fortified centre of trade and naval activity from the 1720s on. Louisbourg was one of the largest towns in New France by the 1740s and an important asset in French efforts to harass the British in Acadia. Twice captured by the British and New Englanders, it was largely demolished in 1758.

**Fort Pitt (ch 7):** Site of modern-day Pittsburgh. Replaced the French establishment, Fort Duquesne.

**Fort Rupert (ch 13):** Located at the north end of Vancouver Island near modern-day Port Hardy, Fort Rupert was established by the HBC as a coal harvesting/mining experiment. It is an important Kwagu'ł community

today and should not be confused with the city of Prince Rupert, much further north on the mainland, nor with Waskaganish in northern Québec, which was formerly called Fort Rupert.

**Fort Vancouver (ch 13):** Established by the HBC in 1824-25 about 60 km up the Columbia River from Fort George (formerly Fort Astoria). Now the site of the city of Vancouver, Washington. The city of Vancouver, BC, was never a fort and there is no relation between the two other than the name.

**Fort Victoria Treaties (ch 13):** see **Douglas Treaties**.

**forward linkages (ch 9):** Secondary developments in an economy arising from the production of a staple or other goods. For example, while cotton requires backward linkages like farm equipment, a labour force (possibly a slave trade), and warehouses, it might generate forward linkages like cotton mills and a textile industry. Lumber – a classic Canadian staple – requires many backward linkages but it can feed into the development of mills, the paper sector, furniture making, and so on.

**franchise (ch 7):** The ability and right to vote in a democratic society. It is always arbitrarily determined and is defined as much by who it excludes as by who it includes. “Universal adult male suffrage” was never achieved in British North America before Confederation, far less the extension of the franchise to women or to Indigenous peoples generally.

**Fraser River gold rush (ch 13):** A mining boom beginning in 1858 characterized by large numbers of independent prospectors using simple mining technologies to extract gold flakes, dust, and nuggets from the Fraser River. This goldrush was superseded by better finds in the Cariboo in the 1860s.

**free labour (ch 9):** Working people who are free of feudal or other similar bonds.

**free trade (ch 6):** A philosophy of commerce that calls for limited or no tariffs and protectionism. Free trade is in stark contrast to mercantilism.

**freedmen (ch 7):** Slaves who, by manumission or by emancipation, were freed from slavery.

**freemasonry (ch 10):** A fraternal organization dating from the 14th century which serves principally as a network system between communities. It is a “secret society” with rituals derived from the medieval guild system. Freemasonry experienced rising popularity in English-America from the 18th century and has always been regarded with suspicion and hostility by the Catholic Church and some other denominations, but not with the English Church.

**Gallican, Gallicanism (ch 4):** A perspective widely held in France and its colonies from the 17th century that spiritual authority resides with the Pope but civil authority with the monarch. Because much of what the colonial clergy attended to was essentially “civil” — farming, administering the colony generally, etc. — many of the Catholic clergy looked first to Paris for leadership and not to the Vatican. This position was challenged with some finality at the First Vatican Council of 1868 at which papal infallibility was defined.

**gentlemen’s clubs (ch 10):** Organizations and facilities designed to support networking between business and society leaders. These were and are usually housed in elegant buildings near the centre of the business district. Until the late 20th century virtually none admitted women and most had sanctions against members of ethnic and religious minorities.

**gift diplomacy (ch 4):** In the context of European-Indigenous relations, the practice of renewing — annually or otherwise regularly — diplomatic relations and alliances by providing gifts to leadership figures. It includes the practice of “covering the dead,” a round of gift-giving following wartime deaths of an ally’s soldiers.

**gunboat diplomacy (ch 13):** The achievement of colonial political goals in dealings with Indigenous communities by means of superior naval firepower.

**gold fever (ch 13):** Term used to describe the opportunistic individualism found in goldrushes. Gold was discovered and mined by independent prospectors around the Pacific Rim beginning in Australia from the

1840s, California from 1848, a brief flurry in Haida Gwaii in the 1850s followed by the British Columbia rush from 1858-63, and New Zealand in the 1860s. After Confederation there were smaller rushes in BC and these were surpassed by the Klondike/Alaska gold rush of 1896-1909. The close succession of gold rushes meant that many of the personnel in the goldfields had experience in other goldrushes and many of the gold field institutions followed in their wake.

**Grand Couteau (ch 8):** Plateau in central North Dakota, the site of a key battle between Métis and Sioux bison-hunting parties.

**Grand Trunk Railway (ch 9):** A rail system that linked Canada West (Ontario) and Canada East (Quebec) in the 1850s. It was extended through spur lines and the purchase of other railways to Portland, Maine.

**grease trails (ch 2):** Trade routes that originated in the pre-contact era in what is now British Columbia, used for transporting oolichan grease, an important commodity.

**Great Peace of Montreal, 1701 (ch 6):** Also called the Great Peace of Montreal, a treaty struck between New France and 40 Indigenous nations. The Great Peace drew to an end the long-running war between Canada and the Haudenosaunee Five Nations and what had become known in some circles as the Beaver Wars.

**Grosse Isle (ch 10):** A small island in the mid-St. Lawrence River, about 50km downstream of Québec City. Synonymous with quarantine of immigrants and epidemic mortalities.

**guard hairs (ch 6):** The barbed outer hairs found on many mammal pelts, typically longer than the underpelt and more easily shed.

**guardian (ch 11):** In the case of Indigenous affairs, the Crown (effectively, the Government of Canada) acts as the caretaker of Indigenous lands and property in a capacity roughly comparable to that of a parent or guardian of a child. The process of creating this role begins in 1839 with the *Crown Lands Protection Act* and is fleshed out after confederation in the *Indian Act* of 1876.

**guerrilla (ch 6)*:*** A form of warfare distinguished by the lack of structure and organization typical of formal warfare. Characterized by ambushes, small units, and lightening raids, guerrilla warfare aims to demoralize and wear down a larger opponent that lacks the same speed and mobility.

**guilds (ch 10):** Medieval institutions mostly organized at the local level around crafts, professions, and commerce. Merchants' guilds often functioned as the civic authority while artisans' guilds were a kind of trade union which defined the requisite skill levels for each craft and established controls on who and how many might be allowed to practice the craft. Increasingly criticized in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as at odds with free trade.

**Gulf Stream (ch 6):** A strong current that runs from the Caribbean along the east coast of North America and across the Atlantic into northwestern Europe. It accelerates sea traffic heading east and can impede vessels heading west.

**habitants (ch 4):** See ***censitaires***.

**half-breeds (ch 14):** A term that was once descriptive but soon became pejorative; used to describe individuals whose ancestry includes both European and Indigenous elements.

**hegemony (ch 10):** Control by one empire, class, faction, or religion over all others.

**high culture, high style (ch 10):** These terms reference the development of elite cultural activities, fashions, tastes, and practices in contrast with "folk" or "vernacular" or "popular" culture. Examples include opera and classical music, baroque architectural styles, formal clothing, and elaborate culinary practices. High culture and style are typically enjoyed by a small, select number of people across a large – even global – expanse and the styles tend to change frequently; low culture or "vernacular," by contrast is long-lasting and experienced by large numbers of people but typically in a small area. The cultural practices of Highland Scots provides an

example of a folk culture with a limited external appeal and which is defined by its durability and the plainness of its cooking and art.

**higher education (ch 10):** College or university education. In the twentieth century some vocational and trades training is included as well.

**historiography (ch 1):** Historical writing and the study of historical writing.

***hivernants* (ch 8):** see **wintering partners**

**Hochelaga (ch 3)**: St. Lawrence Iroquoian fortified town at or near what is now Montreal.

**home guard (ch 8):** Middleman cordon around the HBC forts established by Indigenous groups that had a prior claim to the territory. Ensured that they enjoyed first access to trade goods.

**homespun (ch 10):** Originally referred to wools or other fabrics produced in the home but extends to full textile products also produced in the home. Synonymous with plain and simple, the term went from being a signal of artisanal skill to a derisory adjective meaning unsophisticated and unlovely.

**Hôtel-Dieu (ch 4):** Or "hostel of God." In Montreal the Hôtel-Dieu hospital was established and run by the Ursuline Nuns.

**House of Commons (ch 14):** The Canadian House of Commons is modeled on the British House of Commons. Its members (referred to as Members of Parliament or MPs) are elected and the principle of representation-by-population generally prevails. Legislation dealing with expenditures or taxes can only be introduced in the House and the House of Commons has, at the end of the day, pre-eminence over the appointed Senate. The government is, in principle, based on the party that has elected the largest number of Members in its "caucus." That party is referred to as the "governing party;" Ministers — including the First or "Prime" Minister — are appointed from the ranks of the majority, governing party and constitute the "Government" or "Executive Council" or "Cabinet."

**House of Industry (ch 10):** First established under the British Poor Law as a refuge for the impoverished and/or bankrupt. The ideal of hard work even while receiving charity is reflected in the name. These were, as well, referred to as "workhouses."

**household wage (ch 10):** The combined income of all individuals residing as a 'household'. Typically does not include unrelated boarders but will include servants.

**Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) (ch 8):** In 1670, a monopolistic charter modelled on the East India Company that was granted to "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay."

**Huguenots (ch 3)**: French Protestants.

**humanitarianism (ch 11):** A movement and philosophy which enjoyed particular support in the first half of the 19th century, humanists argued that every individual shared a common moral significance. It was, as a movement, opposed to slavery and advanced the cause of working-class rights. It also sparked a renewed interest in the condition of Indigenous peoples.

**Hundred Years War (ch 3)**: A series of conflicts running from 1337 to 1453 related to royal successions in England and France.

**Hunter Lodges, Hunter Patriots (ch 11):** Sometimes pluralized into "Hunters Lodge" (with or without a possessive apostrophe), the lodges were formed by 1837-38 rebels who sought sanctuary in the United States and proposed to launch attacks on the Province of Canada from across the border. Members of the Lodges were called Hunter Patriots.

**hypotheses (plural); hypothesis (singular) (ch 2):** Theories that offer explanation for historical phenomenon, events, or ideas.

**ideals of womanhood (ch 10):** The dominant values in any given society pertaining to the most acceptable ways in which women should behave, the sort of character they should develop, etc. What falls outside of the "ideal" is often defined as deviant.

**ideologies (ch 1):** Ideas and values that guide our understanding of society and economy and which may also drive political and personal agendas.

**Île Royale (ch 4):** Established as a colonial site by the French in 1713, it is the location of the Fortress of Louisbourg. Captured by the British in 1755, it was renamed Cape Breton Island.

**Île Saint-Jean (ch 4):** Part of the French colony of Acadia, it was captured by the British in 1758 and renamed Saint John's Island and then Prince Edward Island.

**illicit trade (ch 6):** In the context of mercantilism, unsanctioned trade between colonies.

**imperial federation (ch 14):**A proposal to restructure the British Empire along federal lines, creating a more equal partnership in place of a colonial relationship. This idea gained a significant and influential following in Canada in the 1880s and '90s.

**imperialism (ch 1):** A philosophical position that encourages the extension of one nation/empire's power over other, subject peoples. May take the form of colonialization, military conquest, or a campaign of propaganda and ideas.

**indentured servants (ch 6):** Individuals contracted on a multi-year, fixed-term basis to work in the colonies. Usually taken up by young men and women whose passage would be paid by their employer. At the end of the indenture young men would typically receive a new suit. Large numbers of migrants from Britain to the Thirteen Colonies are thought to have started in indentured servitude. This system was regularly abused and, in some circumstances, was barely distinguishable from slavery.

**industrial revolution (ch 9):** A transition in systems of production associated with the rise of machine-assisted labour, non-organic sources of energy (water power, steam power, electricity), and large manufacturing and mining settings. Occurred first in the British Isles beginning in the late 18th century, spreading to most countries in the north Atlantic by the mid-19th century. Is "revolutionary" in that it supplanted older systems of production and the social relations on which they were based. It also changed the focus of Western economies from agricultural and craft production to industrial production of (mainly) textiles, metal products, and energy.

**Inquisition (ch 3)**: A process and an institution aimed at ensuring Catholic supremacy and religious integrity in western Europe. In Spain it was geared to eliminating Muslim and Jewish influences at the end of the 15th century and was an important part of the value system carried to the Americas by the *conquistadors.*

**intendant (ch 4):** Beginning in 1663, the administrative officer responsible for civil affairs in New France. The intendant's portfolio included judicial affairs, infrastructure, military preparedness, addressing issues of corruption, and colonial finances. Notionally the most powerful figure in the colony, in practice the intendant was often rivalled by the governor.

**interdisciplinary studies (ch 1):** Academic approaches that combine traditionally separate disciplines, such as biology and history.

**Intolerable Acts (ch 7):** A number of taxes and tariffs introduced by the British government during the Seven Years' War that targeted the American colonies in an effort to recover financial losses. Following on American protests, Parliament passed more laws that gave Britain greater powers in the colonies. It also introduced the Quebec Act, which reattached the Ohio Valley and the northwest to the Province of Quebec and enhanced the rights of the Catholic Church; both provisions were provocative in the Thirteen Colonies. Together, the Intolerable Acts catalyzed the revolutionary movement in the colonies.

**Irish Potato Famine (ch 9):** A four-year family (1845-1849) in Ireland brought on by the heavy reliance on

potatoes as a core element of the diet. When blight (a plant disease that affects potatoes) struck, food stocks were quickly exhausted. During this famine, perhaps as many as 2 million Irish emigrated, mostly to the United States but also to British North American, Australia, and elsewhere.

**Jay's Treaty (1794) (ch 7):** A treaty that resolved several issues outstanding from the Treaty of Paris (1783). The Americans were keen to address the continuing British presence and role in the Ohio/Northwest. The British wished to secure American neutrality in the French Revolutionary Wars and to clarify the boundaries with Canada.

**Jesuit Order (ch 4):** The Society of Jesus was established in 1534 and is characterized by its fierce loyalty to papal authority in all matters. Their members first arrived in Canada in 1625 to assist the **Recollets** in missionary work among the Indigenous population. The Jesuits played a pivotal role in French relations with Wendake.

**Jesuit Relations (ch 4):** Reports from Jesuit missionaries in Canada and an important source of historical and ethnographical material on the Wendat and other First Nations. In part the Relations served as a means to secure more funding from France. They were eventually published for a wider readership and were, thus, a source of revenue for the order.

**Kingdom of the Saguenay (ch 3)**: According to Donnacona and other Stadaconans, a wealthy settlement north of the Laurentian Iroquois territories. Perhaps mythical, perhaps meant to distract or deceive the Europeans, the story may have legitimate roots in an oral tradition now disappeared.

**L'Anse aux Meadows (ch 3)**: The Viking settlement in northern Newfoundland, established c. 1000 CE.

***l'Ordre de Bon Temps* (ch 4):** The Order of Good Cheer was suggested by Champlain in 1606 as a means of improving morale among the residents at Port-Royal. It is reckoned that the first meeting of the Order constitutes the first performance of European-style theatre in North America.

**Lachine Canal (ch 9):** The canal built at the rapids at Lachine; first attempted in 1689 but it wasn't until 1825 that a functioning system of locks was in place. The name, Lachine, references French hopes of a waterway across North America to China (*la Chine*). Lachine confirmed Montreal's position as a leading port in and out of the interior of North America and Lachine itself became an important focus of industrial growth in the mid-19th century.

**laissez-faire (ch 9):** A philosophy and/or system of policies that minimizes government management of the economy. In practical terms it means elimination of tariff barriers, duties and taxes, and regulation beyond the minimum required to protect property.

**land-based fur trade (ch 13):** Refers to the HBC's strategy in the 1830s to establish permanent fur trading establishments on land, rather than rely on ships cruising the coast looking for trade. (See **maritime-based fur trade**.)

**Late Loyalists (ch 7):** American immigrants who arrived in British North America in the years after the Revolution, especially in the 1790s and the first decade of the 19th century. Their "loyalism" was never certain and they were often outspoken critics of Toryism.

***Le Grand Dérangement* (ch 6)*:*** See **Acadian Expulsion**.

**leisure time (ch 10):** Leisure or "free" time is what is left over after work obligations are completed. In 18th and 19th century agricultural societies leisure time was associated seasonal lulls between harvest and seeding, sometimes between seeding and harvest. In early urban societies working people were assumed to have little leisure time outside of Sundays, which was officially or ideally given over as a day for prayer and reflection.

**liberal professionals (ch 10):** Typically lawyers, physicians, notaries, accountants, journalists, printers and publishers, surveyors, and engineers. This was a cadre of urban skilled workers who were neither wage labourers nor members of the merchant elite or landed gentry (like the seigneurs).

**life-course (ch 10):** Refers to a way of understanding and studying the lives of people in history by highlighting changing contexts, needs, abilities, and roles at different points in life.

**little ice age (ch 2):** The term given to a hemispheric downturn in average temperatures that lasted from the 1600s (earlier in some locales) to the 1820s. Much of North America and northwestern Europe was affected.

**longhouse (ch 2):** A style of domestic building that typically accommodates an extended family and serves as a storehouse for equipment, food, and other belongings. Longhouses take many forms in Indigenous cultures in what is now Canada, use different kinds of materials, and may be fixed, movable, or something in-between.

**Louisiana Purchase (ch 7):** The sale of the Louisiana Territory by Napoleon to the United States. n 1800 France briefly reacquired the territory, which encompassed the western half of the Mississippi drainage (that is, from New Orleans to southern Alberta and Saskatchewan). Less than three years he ater decided to forgo attempts to rebuild New France and sold it back to the United States.

**Loyalists (ch 7):** British-American colonists who were opposed to the revolutionary position struck by other colonists. At the end of the Revolution, many Loyalists joined an exodus to other parts of British America, particularly Nova Scotia and Quebec.

**maize (ch 2):** Commonly referred to today as "corn," a modified crop form of a grass known as teosinte. Maize was first developed by Mesoamerican societies.

**Manifest Destiny (ch 13):** Widespread belief in the United States during the 19th century that America was destined – that is, intended by God – to conquer and occupy most if not all of North America.

***marchands* (ch 7):** The Canadien merchants of Montreal, as opposed to the post-Conquest British and British-American merchants who arrived to take over the fur trade.

**Maritime Archaic (ch 2)**: A variant on the Archaic tradition. Maritime Archaic cultures were found on the Atlantic coast.

**maritime-based fur trade (ch 13):** The European and American practice dating from the 1770s of trading up and down the coast from ships, rather than establishing fixed positions on land.

**Marxism (ch 1):** An ideology and mode of analysis associated with the 19th-century German philosopher, Karl Marx. This body of theory argues that political and social relations in the past and present are determined principally by economic structures. As an ideology it argues for changes to productive relations that will result in greater equity and the end of social class barriers.

**Massey, Massey-Harris, Massey-Ferguson (ch 9):** Founded in 1847 by Daniel Massey, as the Newcastle Foundry and Machine Factory, it merged in 1891 with A. Harris, Son & Company, and then with the Ferguson Company in 1953, becoming Massey-Harris-Ferguson, which was shortened a few years later to Massey-Ferguson. The various incarnations of the Massey industrial project have been global leaders in the production of farm equipment and a major employer of industrial labour in central Canada.

**Master and Servants Acts (ch 11):** A suite of laws dating from the 18th and 19th century that sought to regulate the relationships between employers and employees. Formed the bedrock of industrial relations law, although these acts were heavily weighted to the advantage of employers and were designed to minimize the ability of labour organizations to interfere with the ability of business to act freely.

**matriarchy (ch 2)**: A political system in which authority resides with females.

**matrilineal, matrilinear (ch 2):** Familial relations that focus on the mother's family, with property, status, and clan affiliation being conferred through the female line.

**matrilocal (ch 2)**: A social system in which married couples reside in or in close proximity to the family/ parents of the wife.

**Mechanics' Institutes (ch 10):** centres for adult literacy education, debate, and access to reading materials.

**medicine line (ch 14):** Reputedly a Plains Indigenous term for the 49th parallel boundary between the British-Canadian plains and the American west.

**megafauna (ch 2):** Pre-contact animals found globally whose modern descendants are considerably smaller.

**Mesoamerica (ch 2)**: The cultural zone containing some of the largest agricultural and urban civilizations in the Americas prior to contact, Mesoamerica stretches across almost all of Mexico and south through much of Central America.

**Métis, métis (ch 8):** Capitalized, it refers to people of mixed ancestry (European and Indigenous) who self-identify with a synthetic culture which evolved mainly around the Great Lakes and on the Plains. Not capitalized, it is sometimes used to refer to people in British North America (and sometimes in the United States) of combined European and Indigenous ancestry.

**Michif (ch 8):** A hybrid language used by the Métis.

**Michilimackinac (ch 5):** An important centre of trade in the pre- and post-contact periods, historically dominated by the Odawa and Ojibwe. Located at the narrows between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, Michilimackinac was used as a mission centre by the Jesuits and, later, as a trading post site by the North West Company.

**middle class (ch 10):** Also called the bourgeoisie. Ranks include liberal professionals, small merchants, educators. Distinct from the working-class (who subsist on wages) and the upper class (whose wealth derives mainly from property and position).

**Middle Passage (ch 3)**: Shipping lanes between Africa and the Americas on which the principal cargo was captive humans, enslaved in west Africa. Mortality rates were as high as 20% on the voyage.

**Mi'kmaq War (ch 6):** See **Father Le Loutre's War**.

**miscegnation (ch 5):** Derived from the Latin verb for "to mix" and the noun for "kind," the term that has been used for the last two centuries to describe interracial marriage.

**Mississippian culture (ch 2):** An agricultural, town-centred civilization that thrived from c. 500-1400 CE. Located at the heart of North America and connected by the river and lakes network to lands from the Rocky Mountains to the Gaspé, the Mississippian culture had a powerful impact on the societies that followed.

**Montgomery's Tavern (ch 11):** The site of the main confrontation between Radical-Reform rebels and colonial troops in Upper Canada in 1837.

**mound builders (ch 2)**: One of the distinguishing features of the Hopewellian and Mississippian cultures was the erection of large complexes of earthworks.

**Mourning Wars (ch 2):** Associated principally with the Haudenosaunee and impacting virtually all their neighbours. The wide-ranging series of conflicts that covered much of what is now southern Ontario and the Ohio Valley. One goal was to acquire captives who would be adopted into the captor's community so as to replace population lost to epidemics or earlier wars/raids.

**multiculturalism (ch 1)**: Both a phenomenon (that is, the relatively equitable co-existence within a community of people from distinct cultural traditions) and a policy (i.e.: one that embraces diversity). There were, therefore, multicultural communities in pre-Confederation Canada but *multiculturalism* only became widely supported in the post-World War II era.

**Napoleonic Wars (ch 7):**A series of wars involving France and much of the rest of Europe from 1803-1815. The War of 1812 was a chapter in the larger conflict.

**National School (ch 1)**: Sometimes called Nationalist History or National History School. Refers to

accounts of the past that emphasize the growth and evolution of the nation-state as the proper focus of historical studies, as opposed to social or economic relations.

**nativism, nativist (ch 10):** Nativism is the privileging of established residents over newcomers. A nativist takes the position that their own rights are greater than that of immigrants by dint of having been resident longer (though sometimes not for very much longer).

**navvies (ch 9):** The men who laboured on the earliest British navigation canals. Many were Irish and, subsequently, Irish Catholic labourers on large projects (canals, railways) were referred to indiscriminately as navvies.

**New Amsterdam (ch 6):** The Dutch colonial settlement at the mouth of the Hudson River in what was called New Netherland. Subsequently renamed New York.

**New Caledonia (ch 8):** Technically the north-central part of what is now mainland British Columbia and an administrative centre at Fort St. James. In practice, "New Caledonia" was used to encompass most of (if not all) of the mainland colony.

**New England (ch 6):** In the pre-Revolutionary years refers to the British colonies of Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, along with the territory roughly described now by the State of Maine.

**New Left (ch 1)**: A political movement in the 1960s and 1970s that opposed the U.S. action in the Vietnam War and supported the civil rights movement. Influential on university campuses at mid-century, the New Left had an impact on historical and other academic studies.

**new social history (ch 1)**: A school of historical studies that drew attention to race, gender, and social class as defining features of historical experience, new social history developed a view of past societies from the "bottom up."

**New Spain (ch 3)**: From 1522 to 1821, a territory stretching, at its peak, from the north coast of South America through Central America and Mexico to California, and what is now the American Southwest. It also included Florida, which was separated from the rest of New Spain by the French possession, Louisiana.

**Ninety-Two Resolutions (ch 11):** A list of demands put forward by Louis-Joseph Papineau and the *Parti patriote* in 1834 calling for extensive political reforms. Westminster replied with the **Ten Resolutions.**

**Nootka Crisis (ch 13):** Conflicting Spanish and British claims to sovereignty and the right to trade along the Pacific northwest coast culminated in a diplomatic incident that was resolved in the Nootka Conventions of 1790-1794. Despite the negotiations taking place at Yuquot, Mowachat interests and claims to sovereignty were disregarded.

**Nor'Westers (ch 8):** See **North West Company.**

**normal schools (ch 10): Teacher training institutions.**

**North West Company (NWC) (ch 8):** A joint-stock fur trading company established in Montreal after the Conquest, led by British-American and Scottish merchants. The principle competition to the HBC.

**Northwest Indian War (ch 7):** (1785-1795) Part of an ongoing attempt to insulate the Ohio Valley and what the Americans now referred to as their Northwest Territory against American invasion. Also known as Little Turtle's War. Followed on Pontiac's Rebellion and anticipated Tecumseh's War.

**northwest passage (ch 8):** A search-for water passage connecting the Atlantic with the Pacific.

**North-Western Territories (ch 8):** Lands draining into the Arctic Ocean and thus not within the charter of the HBC. Includes much of northern British Columbia and Alberta and what are now called the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

**Numbered Treaties (ch 8):** A total of 11 treaties negotiated between Canada and Indigenous peoples (principally in the West) in the post-Confederation period.

**nuptiality (ch 10):** The incidence of marriage in a population.

**nursery of the navy (ch 6):** The Grand Banks and other fisheries in the northwest Atlantic that were regarded by imperial powers in Europe as training grounds for sailors and recruitment grounds for their respective navies.

**Oddfellows (ch 10):** One of the oldest benevolent or friendly societies, the Oddfellows (or Odd Fellows) may have sprung out of the guild movement. The Oddfellows developed personal and medical insurance schemes for their members.

**oolichan (ch 2)**: An anadromous fish prized on the west coast for its high oil content.

**oral histories (ch 1)**: Non-written accounts of events in the past. These can be accounts provided by contemporaries of the events they describe or part of an oral tradition, which suggests a multi-generational account that is preserved carefully in the retelling. Oral histories are particularly important in the study of non-literate societies.

**oral tradition (ch 2)**: Generally refers to an account of events that took place in earlier generations and which is transmitted by oral storytelling (as opposed to a written version). Distinctions used to be drawn sharply between oral tradition and oral history, which was regarded as accounts of events within the lifetime of the teller. More recently oral history is equated with oral tradition and has been granted greater respect for its reliability.

**Orange Lodges, Orange Order (ch 10):** Founded in the 1790s in Northern Ireland, the Orange Order is a severely anti-Catholic fraternal society that advances the privileges of Protestants. Characterized as well by its loyalty to the Crown.

**Oregon Treaty, 1846 (ch 13):** Settled the boundary between the United States and the British territories west of the Rockies at 49°N.

**Pacific Fur Company (PFC) (ch 8):** Created by the New York-based entrepreneur, John Jacob Astor, the PFC established **Fort Astoria** on the northwest coast but lasted for less than three years as competition in the North American fur trade.

**Paleo-Indian (ch 2):** The peoples occupying parts of the Americas until about 8000 BP.

**Paleolithic (ch 2):** The period associated with the concept of "stone-age," referring to human technological development before extensive use of metals. Dates vary from continent to continent and region to region.

**parliament (ch 3)**: Generally, an elective assembly of representatives engaged for the purpose of governing the whole or advising the Crown. Specifically, the English/British elected assembly in Westminster. After 1867, refers as well to the Canadian elected assembly.

**patrilineal (ch 11):** Lines of inheritance that descend through fathers to their children. Compare with **matrilineal**.

***Pays d'en Haut* (ch 6)*:*** A part of New France containing much of what is now Ontario, the whole of the Great Lakes, and notionally all the lands draining into them. Extended as far as the Upper Mississippi and the Missouri. Translates roughly into the "upper country."

**peace, order, and good government (ch 14):** Refers to Section 91 of the *British North America Act*, 1867, and sometimes abbreviated to "POGG." This is the residual powers section of the act. Section 91 states that, beyond that which is clearly allocated as provincial responsibilities and federal responsibilities, anything that is otherwise necessary to the "peace, order, and good government" of the country is to be handled by Ottawa.

**pemmican (ch 8):** A food made mainly from bison meat and fat and berries, which was the staff of life for western fur traders and was literally the fuel that drove the fast-moving, long-distance NWC canoe brigades.

**Pemmican Proclamation (ch 8):** Imposed by the Red River Colony when famine threatened the settlement in mid-winter 1814, issued by Governor Miles Macdonnell (1767-1828). Was meant to stop the export of pemmican to NWC forts in the west and retain it for the HBC's settlers.

**Pennsylvania Dutch (ch 7):** German settlers in Pennsylvania, many of whom moved to Nova Scotia shortly after the Conquest.

**petroglyphs (ch 2)**: Images carved into rock.

**philanthropist, philanthropy (ch 10):** Philanthropy equates very closely to charity, though on a significant scale. A philanthropist is someone with sufficient wealth to engage in charitable works.

**pictographs (ch 2)**: Images painted onto rock and other surfaces.

**Plains of Abraham (ch 6):** Located near to the Citadel of Quebec, the site of what proved to be a pivotal battle between British and French/Canadian/Indigenous forces in September 1759.

**planters (ch 6):** Some 2,000 settlers in Nova Scotia in the period between the Acadian Expulsion and the 1780s drawn from New England.

**polygyny (ch 5):** Describes a plural marriage in which more than one woman share the same husband.

**Pontiac (ch 5):** Also known as Obwandiyag, Pontiac (c. 1720-1769) was an Odawa (Ottawa) leader who launched a campaign against the British at the end of the Seven Years' War in the region around Fort Detroit.

**potlatch (ch 2):** A ceremonial event mounted by most Northwest Coast peoples and many in the interior of what is now British Columbia. It involves the giving away of property at an event marking, typically, a succession, a marriage, or a death. Accumulating goods for an impressive potlatch was an important mechanism for attaining social status for the host and, also, redistributing wealth through a system of related villages.

**post-contact (ch 2)**: The years after documented encounters between Indigenous peoples and Europeans. Post-contact typically describes a relatively short period: although our current society is technically "post-contact" it makes little sense to use the term that way.

**potlatch (ch 13):** A ceremonial event common across the Pacific northwest. Involves the giving of gifts by the host to mark a life-course event like an inheritance or succession.

**pre-contact (ch 2):** The period before first documented encounters between Indigenous peoples and Europeans. Pre-contact societies may also be proto-contact societies, depending on circumstances.

**pre-Loyalists (ch 7):** <Non-francophone settlers in British North America who arrived before the Loyalist migration in 1783-84. Almost exclusively associated with settlers in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

**presentist fallacy (ch 1)**: The belief that the events of the past are directly responsible for conditions in the present. Presentism often ignores intervening events. It also tends to thank the past for positives (such as current freedoms) while it seldom holds the past accountable for liabilities (such as a lacklustre economy, continuing struggles over equality, etc.).

**primary sources (ch 1)**: Original historical resources, such as diaries, letters, and government inquiries.

**primogeniture (ch 6):** System of inheritance that favours the eldest male offspring. Compare with **coparcenary.**

**proletarianized (ch 10):** The de-skilling of work and work processes.

**proprietors (ch 7):**See **absentee landlords**.

**Protestant Reformation (ch 3)**: Beginning c. 1517, a movement to reform the Catholic Church and many of its practices. Resulted in a split between reformers and the Papacy and the rise of distinct sects, including the Church of England, the Scottish Presbyterian Church, Methodism, Puritanism, Quakerism, Lutheranism, and many others.

**proto-contact (ch 2):** The period of indirect influence of Europeans on Indigenous peoples. Some of the effects of contact ran ahead of direct encounters. For example, diseases and/or trade goods might be passed from one Indigenous community that had experienced face-to-face contact to a great many others that had not.

**Province of Quebec (ch 7):** Created by the **Royal Proclamation (1763)**, included lands from Detroit to the Gaspé but removed the Ohio Valley and the west from Québec's (Canada's) control.

**provisional government (ch 14):** Generally, an emergency or interim administration. In the case of Red River (Manitoba) the government established under Louis Riel's leadership when the Council of Assiniboia dissolved and before the Canadian administration was able to legitimately seize power.

**public houses, pubs (ch 10):** Facilities providing food, drink, and often a place to stay.

**public markets (ch 10):** A space – sometimes a structure – built by the local municipality to provide for the sale of farm and food products.

**Puget Sound Agricultural Company (PSAC) (ch 13):** Established in 1838-39 by the HBC to provide food for its posts and surpluses for sale to the Russian American Company.

**quantitative historical technique (ch 1)**: Many historical methods take advantage of statistical sources rather than (or in addition to) qualitative sources like diaries and personal letters. Tax ledgers, census manuscripts, land surveys, and many kinds of church records provide enough information for us to work toward aggregate knowledge of people in the past.

**Quebec Act (1774) (ch 7):** Also called the British North America Act, 1774, not to be confused with the British North America Act of 1867, the legislation that restored the Ohio Valley and the northwestern *Pays d'en Haut* to the Province of Québec, provided official recognition of the rights of Catholics in the colony, and restored the ***Coutume de Paris*** and the ability of the Catholic Church to collect tithes. It recognized the rights of seigneurs and irritated the Thirteen Colonies where it was seen as cheating the Appalachian colonies of their prize in the Ohio and was grouped with the other **Intolerable Acts.** It is regarded as a partial cause of the American Revolution.

**Québec Resolutions (ch 14):** See **Seventy-two Resolutions.**

**Quiet Revolution (ch 1)**: A political and social phenomenon in post-World War II Quebec that saw the power of the clergy and conservative elements eclipsed by a liberal-nationalist movement.

**Reciprocity Treaty (1854) (ch 9):** An agreement struck Britain and the United States that enabled the free movement of raw materials between the United Stated and the British North American colonies of Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island.

**Recollets (ch 4):** A Franciscan order whose members were the first missionaries in New France, arriving in 1615. The Recollets are credited with the first batch of beer in New France (1620) and were responsible for recruiting the **Jesuit Order** into the missionary field in Canada in 1625. Expelled from New France in 1629, they returned in 1670 and served until their numbers were depleted after the Conquest.

***reconquista* (ch 3)**: Episodes of Spanish-Christian resistance to Spanish/Moorish-Islamic control of the Iberian peninsula, lasting from the eighth or ninth century CE culminating in the surrender of Granada in 1492.

**Red River Colony (ch 8):** Selkirk Colony, also called Assiniboia.

**Red River cart (ch 8):** Two-wheeled vehicle with large spoked and detachable wooden wheels on an axle supporting a flat-bed. Sometimes covered, usually pulled by oxen. Wheels could be removed to enable floating as a raft across rivers and streams. Definitive technology arising from Métis culture.

**regicide (ch 6):** The murder of a king.

**representation-by-population (ch 11):** A series of demands assembled by the *Parti patriote* under the leadership of Louis-Joseph Papineau in 1834.

**republicanism (ch 11):** In British North America a pro-democracy movement; anti-monarchical and modelled on the American republic and, to a lesser degree, the French republic.

**residual powers (ch 14):** Responsibilities not clearly demarcated and described in the constitution. In a federal system the residual powers typically belong to the central government. This was the intent of Section 91 of the British North America Act.

**respectability (ch 10):** As social class structures congealed in the 19th century the notion of "respectability" gained importance as a way of offsetting snobbery with visible demonstrations (through physical appearance, hygiene, etc.) of moral character.

**responsible government (ch 11):** Responsible government is often misconstrued for 'government that is responsible to the people;' it is something significantly different from that. It is the principle that the executive council should be subject to the approval of the elected assembly and that, should it lose that approval, the executive council can be dismissed by the elected assembly. Under the *Constitutional Act* of 1791, the executive council was entirely appointed; under the *Act of Union* of 1840-41, the executive was in practice elected.

**revisionist (ch 1)**: Historians who re-evaluate history and revise it based on new understandings. As a critical term, "revisionist" is sometimes used to describe historians who change histories for political purposes.

**Rideau Canal (ch 9):** Completed in 1826, and Upper Canadian canal linking Bytown (Ottawa) with Kingston. Unlike the Welland and Lachine Canals, the principal purpose of the Rideau was colonial defence. In the event of an American invasion of the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes, troops could be moved between Montreal and the Kingston area via the canal.

**Royal Proclamation (1763) (ch 7):** The decree that created the **Province of Quebec** and recognized Indigenous title in the west. The decree angered American settlers because it hampered westward movement into the Ohio Valley.

**Rupert's Land (ch 8):** According to the HBC's charter of 1670, all the lands draining into Hudson Bay. Includes northwestern Quebec, northern Ontario, most of Manitoba, some of central Saskatchewan and Alberta, as well as southeastern Nunuvat.

**Russian American Company (RAC) (ch 13):** Chartered in 1799, the RAC was principally focused on the sea otter fur trade and also established outposts in Alta California and Hawai'i.

**Sapa Inca (ch 3)**: Quechua for "the only Inca," the monarch of the Incan Empire. Atahualpa was the last person to hold this title.

**scientific racism (ch 10):** A form of racism that relies on categorization of racialized qualities/traits and measures physiological and genetic features as a means of demonstrating inherent differences in intelligence, morality, and ability. Distinct from earlier forms of racism based on religious belief, for example, scientific racism gained popularity from the mid-19th century on.

**sea otter pelts (ch 13):** On the west coast the principal fur traded by Indigenous communities to European and American buyers for sale in the Chinese marketplace.

**seasonal labour, seasonal labourers (ch 9):** Agricultural and resource extraction industries in particular

depend on the seasonal availability of labour. Spring for planting, autumn for harvesting on farms; winter for the seal hunt and for logging in the 19th century; summer for salmon runs. Pre-industrial societies often depend on the seasonal work but it continued to be a feature of life in the industrial era.

**second wave feminism (ch 1)**: Associated principally with the 1960s and 1970s, second wave feminism focused on systemic discriminations in domestic and public environments, calling for equality in pay/treatment in the workplace, an end to sexism, and legislation to protect women's reproductive rights.

**secondary sources (ch 1)**: Documents that examine primary documents and provide an interpretation. Historical studies of past events are, by definition, secondary sources.

**seigneurs, seigneury (ch 4):** The seigneurial system in New France and especially in the colony of Canada sought to reproduce elements of the French feudal system. Although some of the seigneurs in Canada were nobles, most were military officers and members of the clergy. Rent values were based on rates set by the Crown, not on the scarcity of land or labour. Seigneurs had to provide their tenants (*censitaires*, habitants) with a gristmill (the use of which was essentially taxed) and the tenants provided an annual round of labour (*corvée*), which might involve road building or erecting a chapel.

**Selkirk Colony (ch 8):** Red River Colony, also called Assiniboia.

**Senate (ch 13):** The Senate was conceived as an appointed upper chamber similar to the House of Lords. Distribution of seats was intended to be unrelated to population so that each province (or at least each region) would have significant representation. Members of the Senate are described as senators, not as Members of Parliament, even though the Senate is a part of Parliament. The role of the Senate is to review legislation and, where needed, suggest refinements. Because senators do not have to report to an electorate they are, theoretically, free to consider laws without bending to local pressures. It is for this reason that the Senate is sometimes referred to as the "house of sober second thought."

**Seventy-Two Resolutions (ch 14):** Also known as the **Québec Resolutions**, these were the proposals drafted (mostly by Macdonald) at the Quebec Conference in 1864. These were forwarded to Westminster where they were further refined at the London Conference of 1866. They formed the outlines of the federal constitution as presented in the *British North America Act* of 1867.

**single-industry towns (ch 10):** Often also company towns, these are communities in which one industry predominates and is even exclusive. Mining and other resource-extraction communities are often single-industry towns but a concentration of productive capacity around textiles or metal manufacturing might also manifest the qualities of a single-industry town.

**Skrælingar (ch 3)**: Term used by the Norse/Vikings to describe Indigenous North American peoples they encountered between Greenland and Newfoundland. Probably applied to Thule and Innu in particular, perhaps to Beothuk as well.

**Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (ch 2)**: The religion associated with the Mississippian cultures. Many features of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex were shared with Indigenous cultures in southern Canada.

**squared timber (ch 9):** Logs that have been "squared" so that they can be stacked more tightly for shipping. During the Napoleonic Wars the usual sources of lumber (needed especially for naval shipbuilding) were closed to Britain by French blockades. Timber producers in British North America were called upon to rapidly increase production, and stacking them tightly maximized the number of logs that could be shipped to Britain. .

**Stadacona (ch 3)**: The village of the St. Lawrence Iroquois at or near the current site of Quebec City.

**staple (ch 6):** A raw material or unprocessed product. Fish and furs were primary staples in the early colonial economies of New France and British America. Lumber and grain were later staple exports from New France and British North America.

**staple theory (ch 9):** Or "staple thesis," argues that an economy based on natural resources or other simple, unprocessed goods will develop along certain lines. In the case of New France and British North America, the dominant economic activities were obtaining and exporting a limited number of staples: furs, fish, timber, and some minerals. None of these required a significant population in the colony; none were processed in North America; all value-added occurred in Europe, as did most consumption. The Canadian economic historian Harold Innis argued in the 1930s that the staple focus of the economy constrained colonial and national development, held back industrialization and diversification, and shaped government and social relations.

**status (ch 11):** In the context of laws affecting Indigenous peoples from the mid-19th century on, the notion that some Indigenous people have official standing *as* Indigenous peoples and that the criteria behind this "status" is determined not by the Indigenous community but by the state.

**status quo ante bellum (ch 6):** A term used in treaty-making meaning a return to how things were before the war.

**street arab (ch 12):** An impoverished and underprivileged child who survives by means of begging or stealing.

**subsistence farming (ch 9):** The style of farming that enough and a sufficient variety of crops to sustain its operators (typically, the farming family). Because it does not produce a surplus (beyond, perhaps, enough to engage in barter with other farms), the farm owners does not have anything to sell. Their ability to add capacity through capital investment is thus highly limited.

**Sulpicians (ch 4):** Operating out of the Parisian parish of Saint-Sulpice (from which their name derives), the Sulpicians were a wealthy order without a vow of poverty. This distinguished them from the more austere Jesuits and Récollets.

**sun dance (ch 2)**: A renewal ceremony celebrated by many Plains peoples. It was sponsored by an individual who wished to give to his tribe or to thank or petition the supernatural through an act of self-sacrifice for the good of the group.

**sweated labour (ch 10):** An industrial workplace in which the labour is hard, the hours long, and the wages low. Sometimes associated with piece work that might be completed at home and not in the factory itself.

**tariff policies (ch 9):** A tax imposed on imported goods. Generally this is done to make the purchase of domestically produced goods more attractive.

**<taxation without representation (ch 7):** A principle espoused by American colonists in the 1770s articulating the view that British law forbade the seizing of a citizen's property by the state without his consent (which could be given by an elected representative in Parliament). As the colonies had no representatives in Parliament, the colonists maintained that they could not be taxed.

**telegraph (ch 11):** Communications technology that permits the transmission of a message electronically across significant distances. Characterized in the Victorian era by the use of lengths of telegraph wire which ran on posts parallel to the railroads and thus kept stations in touch with one another.

**temperance movements (ch 10):** A crusade to reduce or even end the consumption of alcohol. Became a widespread phenomenon during the 19th century with the increase of visible urban drunkenness. The movement was characteristically championed by middle- and upper-class women.

**Ten Resolutions (ch 11):** In response to the *Parti patriote's* **Ninety-Two Resolutions**, the British Colonial Secretary, John Russell, submitted to Parliament a counter-proposal which ignored all of the *Patriotes'* demands.

**teosinte (ch 2):** A variety of grass that was modified into maize by Indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica.

**threshing machines (ch 9):** Mechanism for separating grain from straw and chaff. First developed in the last 18th century, they became more effective in the second quarter of the 19th century. They were usually

powered by horses, sometimes by wind. Mechanization of threshing reduced significantly the amount of labour needed per acre of wheat at harvest time. It also created a specialist, itinerant workforce: the threshing crew.

**Thule (ch 8):** Arctic culture that evolved into Inuit culture. The Thule migrated across and occupied the Arctic mainland and islands beginning about 1000 CE and reached Labrador and Greenland c. 1300 CE.

**Tories (ch 7):** Associated with Loyalists in the American Revolution whose< philosophical position was opposed to the Whiggish/republican stance of Thomas Paine and the Patriots.

**total fertility rate (TFR) (ch 10):** The number of births per 1000 women aged 15-45 per annum.

**Treaty of 1818 (ch 8):** A treaty signed by Britain and the United States recognizing the 49th parallel from Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains as the boundary between the United States and British North America; also established the Columbia District (a.k.a. Oregon Territory) as an area of joint jurisdiction for a period of 10 years.

**Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748) (ch 6):** Concluded the War of the Austrian Succession. Restored the status quo ante bellum in North America.

**Treaty of Ghent (1814-1815) (ch 7):** Intended to end the War of 1812 between Britain and the United States. The treaty was agreed to in 1814 but not signed into law by the American Senate until February 1815. The treaty restored the status quo ante bellum between British North America and the United States, which meant that Britain was removed from the American Northwest, leaving the Indigenous population without an ally to help defend their interests.

**Treaty of Paris (1765) (ch 6):** Ended the Seven Years' War. France ceded all of its territory east of the Mississippi (including all of Canada, Acadia, and Île Royale) to Britain and granted Louisiana and lands west of the Mississippi to its ally Spain. Britain returned to France the sugar islands of Guadeloupe. France retained St. Pierre and Miquelon along with fishing rights on the Grand Banks.

**Treaty of Paris (1783) (ch 7):** Ended the American Revolution (War of Independence). Not to be confused with the Treaty of Paris, 1763. Britain recognized the independence and sovereignty of the United States of America. Boundaries were established (and later disputed) between the United States and British North America. The United States was to compensate Loyalists for lost property, which never occurred. See also **Jay's Treaty**.

**Treaty of Ryswick** (**1697) (ch 6):** Terminated the War of the League of Augsburg. Restored the status quo ante bellum in North America.

**Treaty of  Tordesillas (ch 3)**: The division in 1494 of the Atlantic world between Portugal and Spain. The former acquired Brazil while the latter was acknowledged by the other to have a prior claim to the rest of the Americas.

**Treaty of Utrecht (1713) (ch 6):** Ended the War of the Spanish Succession. French claims on territory in Newfoundland and on Hudson Bay were ceded to Britain as was Acadia (Nova Scotia) except for Île Royale and Île Saint-Jean.

**triad (ch 2):** Also called the "three sisters," the crops of maize, beans, and squash, which were developed in Mesoamerica and diffused across the Americas centuries before contact.

**triangular trade (ch 3)**: Commercial traffic beginning with goods from northwestern Europe traded into ports along the west African coast for slaves, ivory, and other commodities, which were then shipped across the Atlantic (the Middle Passage) to colonies in the Americas where they were traded for plantation products, which were subsequently ferried north and east back to northwestern Europe.

**trip men (ch 8):** See **voyageurs.**

**truck system (ch 9):** A system of credit extended to workers by employers or buyers. Sometimes company stores would extend credit to company employees, deducting the amount owing from the next payday. In the Newfoundland fisheries, merchants would provide fishing crews with credit for nets and other necessities for which they would be reimbursed with a share of the catch. Like all credit systems, the truck system worked better for the creditor than the debtor.

**ultramontanism, ultramontanists (ch 11):** In British North America, Catholic clergy who took their institutional, spiritual, and political leadership from the Vatican.

**United Empire Loyalists (ch 7):** An honorific title taken by Loyalists and their descendants to celebrate their migration to British North America at the end of the Revolution. Typically signals a strong Tory bent.

**Upper Fort Garry (ch 8):** Located near the heart of what is now Winnipeg. Lower Fort Garry and Upper Fort Garry were important administrative and shipping centres along the Red River system.

**urban professionals (ch 10):** See **liberal professions.**

**vertical integration (ch 9)**: A production model in which the various stages in a supply chain are owned by the same individual or company. For example, 19th century railway companies sometimes owned iron and coal mines, foundries where steel was produced and cast, machine shops that manufactured the rolling stock (all of which was owned by the railway – and not just the tracks), and warehouses, grain elevators, and hotels at all the major stations along the route.

**Vinland (ch 3)**: The name given by the Norse/Vikings to the east coast of North America.

**Virgin Soil Epidemics (ch 5):** Attributed to the anthropologist/historian Alfred Crosby, the term describing a situation in which a disease/bacteria/virus discovers a population with no natural immunities arising from previous encounters. Very high mortalities are a typical consequence.

**voyageurs (ch 8):** Members of fur trade business whose principal task was to move furs, people, and materials across great distances. Some voyageurs were also traders.

**voluntary family size limitation (ch 10):** Also referred to as “birth-control.” The attraction of building smaller families grew in the 19th century as the wage-earning potential or economic potential of children declined.

**voluntary associations (ch 10):** See **benevolent societies.**

**War Hawks (ch 7):** American politicians mainly from the south and from the west who were angered by British predations on American shipping out of their ports and harassment of American settlers and regiments by British-Indigenous armies. Their enthusiasm for war finally won out over New England caution in 1812.

**Wars of Religion (ch 3)**: A series of wars fought in Europe arising ostensibly from divisions within Christianity. The French Wars of Religion (1562-1598) distracted the Crown from transatlantic enterprises.

**Welland Canal (ch 9):** Opened in 1829, linking Lakes Erie and Ontario.

**wheat boom, wheat economy (ch 9):** The appearance of a widespread monoculture in farm output, in this case the rise of wheat as the principal crop or staple that dominated the economy, including exports and economic policy making.

**Whig (ch 7):** A mutable term associated with the British Whigs (a radical/liberal political party), the American Patriots/Whigs (revolutionaries in 1775-1783), and 19th century Canadian liberals. Common features include a challenge to the prerogatives of the Crown, a suspicion of Catholicism, and belief in individual rights and liberties. In the American colonies it developed into a form of republicanism.

**whisky traders (ch 8):** Principally independent American fur traders whose principal stock was alcohol.

**wind, wood, and water (ch 9):** A shorthand term for the Maritime economy of the 19th century, which was

dominated by timber production, (wooden) shipbuilding, and the export sector, which was based on sailing vessels.

**winter counts (ch 2)**: A record of events recorded in the form of pictures; associated mainly with Siouan cultures.

**wintering partners (ch 8):** The prominent NWC employees who spent the year in the West. As part of the decision making process, they would meet annually with the Montreal agents at Fort William where company-wide plans would be made in council. Also called ***hivernants***

**XY Company (ch 8):** the New North West Company.

**Year Without Summer (ch 8):** The summer of 1816, marked by a very poor growing season caused by the explosion of Mount Tambora in Indonesia.

**York boats (ch 8):** Heavy wide draught wooden dinghies with sails that would travel between Hudson Bay and the foothills of the Rockies along the North Saskatchewan.

**York Factory Express (ch 8):** see **Columbia Express.**
**anti-clerical:** Associated with the secularist movement of the 18th and 19th centuries, anti-clericals took the position that the role of the church was the saving of souls and not schools and other institutions and certainly not politics.

# About the Author and Contributors



(http://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/02/johnstill03-copy.jpg)

**Dr. John Douglas Belshaw** is a settler-Canadian who currently resides and works on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish peoples (the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh, Stó:lō and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh Nations). He has degrees in history from the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and the London School of Economics, and has been associated with Thompson Rivers University in several capacities, more or less continuously, since 1989. He is a specialist on British Columbia history, and is the author of *Colonization and Community: The Vancouver Island Coalfield and the Making of The British Columbian Working Class, 1848–1900* (2002) and *Becoming British Columbia: A Population History* (2009). He is also the co-author (with Diane Purvey) of *Private Grief, Public Mourning: The Rise of the Roadside Shrine in Rural British Columbia* (2009) and *Vancouver Noir: 1930–1960* (2011), and he is the editor of *Vancouver Confidential* (2014). He is the author, too, of the open textbooks *Canadian History: Post-Confederation* and the co-author (with Sarah Nickel and Chelsea Horton) of *Histories of Indigenous Peoples and Canada*.

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# Versioning History

This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.01. If the edits involve substantial updates, the version number increases to the next full number.

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| Version | Date | Change | Details |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.01 | April 14, 2015 | Book added to the BC Open Textbook Collection. | |
| 2.01 | October 24, 2016 | Entire book revised for accessibility. | Alt tags and long descriptions added to images. Tables reformatted for accessibility. Link text edited to be descriptive. |
| 2.02 | March 14, 2017 | Name spelled wrong. | In section 2.6, *Nayland, Susan* has been corrected to say *Neylan, Susan.* |
| 2.03 | August 30, 2018 | Minor errors corrected. | Section 7.2 and Glossary: "Proclamation Act" and "Act of Proclamation" corrected to "Royal Proclamation." Proclamation Act is incorrect because it wasn't a piece of legislation, but a decree. It fell under royal prerogative, so it is just a proclamation by the king.<br><br>Thank you to Alan Gordon at the University of Guelph for these corrections. |
| 2.04 | June 4, 2019 | Updated the book's theme. | The styles of this book have been updated, which may affect the page numbers of the PDF and print copy. |
| 3.01 | October 7, 2020 | Second edition published. | |
| 3.02 | October 12, 2021 | Accessibility updates. | Accessibility updates have been applied up to chapter 8.5. |
| 3.03 | March 21, 2025 | Corrected link. | Updated the link for Transcript for Video 3 in section 9.4 The Lower Canadian Economy. |
| 3.04 | May 16, 2025 | Changed video links. | Changed video links from those on a TRU server to YouTube links in order to decrease the file size of export formats. |

# Glossary

**abolition (ch. 7)**

Refers to putting an end to the institution of slavery. In Britain, a single piece of legislation resulted in the abolition of slavery in 1834. Abolition in Upper Canada was initiated by John Graves Simcoe in 1793.

**aboriginal title (ch. 7)**

Indigenous ownership of land, territory, or other material resources.

**absentee landlords (ch. 7)**

Also called proprietors, the main landowners on Prince Edward Island, whose land was allocated to them in a lottery held in London in 1767. Few of them visited the island and few attended to the responsibilities they were given as landlords. Most, however, attempted to charge significant rents to their tenant farmers in the colony.

**absolutism (ch. 3)**

A system of government in which authority is vested in the monarch with no provision for any kind of institutional opposition.

**Acadian Expulsion (ch. 6)**

The removal of Acadians and other francophones from Île Royale after 1745, and accelerating after 1755 as the British forcibly removed the larger portion of the colonist population. In French, it is called Le Grand Dérangement.

**African American slaves (ch. 7)**

Chattel slaves, principally from Africa, who worked primarily on plantations. Slavery occurred throughout North America in both European and Indigenous communities. Some African American (as opposed to African Caribbean) slaves were later freed, depending on their role in the American Revolution.

**agricultural revolution (ch. 2)**

In the context of the Archaic era, the development of the first farming societies in the Americas.

**anglicization (ch. 7)**

British policy of replacing French culture — language, customs, laws, and Catholic religion — with those of Anglican/Protestant Britain.

**anthropogenic (ch. 2)**

Made or modified by humans.

**archaeological record (ch. 2)**

Any evidence regarding past societies and civilizations that is derived from the use of archaeological techniques and methods.

**Archaic period (ch. 2)**

The era described by archaeologists and anthropologists as roughly 10,000 to 3000 years BP.

**archives (ch. 1)**

Collections of original documents, including print-based objects, like personal letters, official reports, journals, newspapers, maps, government papers, and so on. Archival collections may also include photographs, music (in a variety of forms), and textiles. Technically, your own collection of original materials is an archive, but for the purposes of history courses, archives are official repositories that may or may not be open to the public.

**aristocracy (ch. 3)**

A privileged social class whose power is usually derived from birth, heredity, and almost exclusive ownership of land, as well as close connections with the clergy, the government, and with the Crown. As a form of government, an aristocracy is a system in which a small and wealthy elite holds power to the exclusion of others.

**Attawandaron (ch. 5)**

An Iroquoian people located in the contact and post-contact periods in what is now southwestern Ontario. Also known as the Neutral.

**Aztecs (ch. 2)**

A Mesoamerican civilization and polity that collapsed in the early 16th century. The Aztecs developed many agricultural techniques and administrative customs that influenced societies around the Gulf of Mexico. Their influence may have spread up the Mississippi River as well.

**baby boom generation (ch. 1)**

Individuals born in the post-Depression era of c. 1939 to 1964.

**Battle of Sainte-Foy (ch. 6)**

Battle on April 28, 1760, near the citadel of Quebec with the French/Canadien forces attacking the British. General Murray repeated many of the errors Montcalm made only months before. The British survived (but not without suffering more than a thousand casualties) by hunkering in the fortress until British naval reinforcements arrived.

**Before the Common Era (BCE) (ch. 2)**

The time period before our current one. This term, along with CE, aligns exactly with the Christian dating system, dividing time approximately 2000 years ago.

**Before the Present (BP) (ch. 2)**

A dating system based on the use of radiocarbon dating that uses January 1, 1950, as its baseline. Therefore, 10,000 years BP equals 10,000 years before New Year's Day, 1950.

**Bering land bridge (ch. 2)**

The land form that connected Eurasia and North America between Siberia and Alaska 50,000 to 10,000 years BP. Made mostly of land that was exposed by falling sea levels, it is a possible historical route for human migration from Asia to the Americas. Also called Beringia.

**Black Death (ch. 3)**

Also called simply "the plague," a highly contagious disease reckoned to have reduced the total human population by 25% and as much as half of Europe's population in the 14th century. In its aftermath, there was social and religious upheaval from China to the British Isles.

**Blackfoot Confederacy (ch. 5)**

Also known as the Niitsitapi, an alliance centred in the western Plains, in territory that extended from what is now southern Alberta into Montana. Consisting of the Piikáni (Piegan), Siksika (Blackfoot), Káínawa (Kainai, Blood), Tsuut'ina (Sarcee), and A'aninin (Gros Ventre).

**bourgeois (ch. 6)**

Originally someone who lived in the town (French: *bourg*; German: *burg*; English: *borough*), typically associated with merchants, professionals, etc. By the 18th century, the bourgeoisie emerged as a distinct social class, a "middle class."

**brewing (ch. 7)**

The production of beer, like the distilling of whisky, was a means of adding value to surplus grain being grown in Upper and Lower Canada beginning in the 1780s. John Molson of Montreal was an early participant in brewing and — like many Canadians who followed in his footsteps in the liquor production trade — amassed a great fortune.

**British North America (ch. 7)**

Term used intermittently after 1783 to describe the colonies left to Britain after the Revolution. Initially, these included Newfoundland, the Province of Quebec, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia. Subsequently, the list would increase to include new colonies (Cape Breton Island and New Brunswick), a partitioned colony (Upper and Lower Canada), and — in very general terms —

Rupert's Land (which was not administered by a Crown delegate). Vancouver Island and British Columbia would also be regarded as part of British North America before Confederation.

**buffalo jump (ch. 2)**

A kind of site found on the Plains that is associated with highly coordinated bison hunts conducted by Indigenous communities.

**Cahokia (ch. 2)**

Thought to be the largest of the Mississippian towns/cities. Located near present-day St. Louis, it is believed to have crested around 1050 CE and collapsed around 1350 CE.

**Cajuns (ch. 4)**

Francophone settlers in Louisiana descended mostly from Acadiens.

**capitalism (ch. 9)**

Capitalism is the system in which the means of production (farms, factories, etc.) are privately owned and capable of being bought and sold. It generally depends on wage labour. Capitalism is also a system of social relations based on the right of the individual to move capital to wherever it will generate the greatest benefits.

**cayuse (ch. 5)**

Regional word for "horse" in the Cordillera and western Plains. Derived from the Cayuse First Nation, who were responsible for significant advances in breeding in the 18th century. Another variant is cayoosh.

**censitaires (ch. 4)**

Also known as "habitants," the rent-paying tenants of the seigneurs. The rent is known as the *cens*.

**Chateau Clique (ch. 7)**

The *Chateau Clique* were a highly influential cadre of economic and social leaders who fashioned themselves politically as the British (or Tory) Party in Lower Canada. Their numbers included prominent merchants like James McGill and John Molson. Their agenda included assimilation of the French Catholic population and perpetuating a hierarchical social and political order.

**chattel slavery (ch. 3)**

Ownership of a human being as a piece of property.

**Chemin du Roy (ch. 6)**

The "King's Road," built in the 1730s; a major infrastructure project in its time. One of the longest continuous roads in North America, it connected seigneuries on the north shore of the St. Lawrence.

**Chesapeake Affair (ch. 7)**

A British attempt during the Napoleonic Wars to reduce American shipping to France by capturing U.S. shipping vessels and impressing (forcing) sailors into the British Navy. In 1807, the USS Chesapeake, a warship, was bombarded and captured by the HMS Leopard; four sailors were seized and tried for desertion from the British Navy, one of whom was subsequently hanged. The Americans regarded this as an act of aggression, and the incident fomented war fever in some quarters.

**chiefdom (ch. 2)**

A form of organization based on a hierarchy of chiefs that followed the leader of the most important group.

**Chinook (ch. 5)**

A trade dialect developed on the West Coast comprising elements from several Indigenous languages and subsequently adopting words from various European languages. Also known as chinuk wawa.

**Church of England (ch. 3)**

The state church in England established under Henry VIII in opposition to Roman Catholicism. Also known as the Anglican Church.

**civil rights movement (ch. 1)**

In the United States, a movement principally in support of improved legal and civil rights for Black Americans. The movement is regarded as running from 1954 to 1968. It produced other movements associated with demands for rights for other groups that have historically faced prejudice and systemic marginalization.

**Clergy Reserves (ch. 7)**

Created by the Constitutional Act (1791), land parcels set aside (one-seventh of all public lands) in Upper Canada for the use of the Church of England (a.k.a. Anglican Church). There were smaller Clergy Reserves in Lower Canada as well.

**Clovis (ch. 2)**

A prehistoric Paleo-Indian culture. Named for the archaeological site in New Mexico where it was first identified, the Clovis culture is identifiable by the kinds of projectile heads it produced.

**coastal migration theory (ch. 2)**

An alternative to the Bering land bridge theory that posits that the first human arrivals in the Americas arrived by sea, following the arc of the North Pacific icefield and skirting Beringia.

**Code Noir (ch. 4)**

Introduced under Louis XIV in 1685, the *Code Noir* established the ground rules for slavery in the French colonies. This included a prohibition of any religion other than Catholicism, the range of discipline permissible, and the conditions required for manumission (freeing of slaves).

**codexes (ch. 2)**

Scrolls written by Aztec and/or Mayan authors and scribes from the period both before and after the arrival of Europeans. Also known as codices.

**collectivity (ch. 1)**

A group of people who identify as part of a social body that may or may not correspond to a political unit. For example, First Nations peoples may identify collectively as First Nations, as opposed to (or perhaps in addition to) their identity as Cree or Mi'kmaq. French Canadian identity very often exists independent of (and sometimes in contrast to) a larger bicultural Canadian identity.

**Columbian Exchange (ch. 5)**

The traffic of goods, ideas, *matériel*, foodstuffs, technology, knowledge, and bacteria from Europe and Africa to the Americas and vice versa.

**Common Era (CE) (ch. 2)**

Our current time period. This term, along with BCE, aligns exactly with the Christian dating system, dividing time approximately 2000 years ago.

**common law (ch. 7)**

British code of laws dealing with property, contracts, and other civil matters.

**Communauté des habitants (ch. 4)**

Worked in conjunction with the *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* in an arrangement that sublet the *Cent-Associés*' monopoly to residents in the colony of Canada. Also known as the *Compagnie des habitants*.

**Compagnie des Cent-Associés (ch. 4)**

The Company of One Hundred Associates (sometimes called the Company of New France or *Compagnie de la Nouvelle France*) was chartered in 1627 to operate the fur trade in Canada and Acadia and establish settlements. It followed two earlier chartered efforts, the *Compagnie des Marchands* and the *Compagnie de Montmorency*. The *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* ceased operating in 1663.

**Constitutional Act (ch. 7)**

The 1791 legislation that created two colonies — Upper and Lower Canada — out of what was left

of the Province of Quebec after the Treaty of Paris (1783). In Upper Canada, the British common law was applied, while the *Coutume de Paris* survived in Lower Canada. Both colonies received their own administrative structures.

**contact (ch. 2)**

The first documented encounter between Indigenous peoples and Europeans. This is a movable date because first encounters occur in different regions at different times. The contact era for some Arctic peoples, for example, only began in the 20th century.

**coparcenary (ch. 6)**

A system of joint inheritance of property. Compare with primogeniture.

**counting coup (ch. 2)**

The practice, common among many Indigenous cultures, of attacking rival groups with the objective of inflicting injury, but not necessarily death, and thereby acquiring status commensurate with the humiliation meted out to the foe.

**coureurs de bois (ch. 4)**

In English, known as “runners of the woods.” The first *coureurs de bois* were young men dispatched by Champlain to reside among the Wendat, learn the Wyandot language, and develop an understanding of local trade protocols. Subsequently, the *coureurs* were more likely to be independent or semi-independent traders seeking sources of furs among Indigenous communities across the interior of North America.

**Coutume de Paris (ch. 7)**

The *Coutume de Paris* was a code of civil law developed in and for Paris and extended to New France. Addressed land ownership and use, family relations, and inheritance.

**decapitation thesis (ch. 7)**

Historical theory that explains the apparent loss of Canadien leadership in the colony after the Conquest as the result of an exodus of leading commercial, administrative, and social figures to France.

**demographic historian (ch. 1)**

A historian of population trends and mechanisms.

**diffusion (ch. 2)**

The transmission of ideas, practices, or beliefs from one society to another.

**disease vector (ch. 5)**

A living agent that transfers a virus or bacteria from one host to another. Examples include people and mosquitoes.

**divine right of kings (ch. 3)**

A doctrine based on the belief that the monarch's power is derived directly from God and not from worldly authorities like a legislature, a council of nobles, or even the Vatican.

**Dorset (ch. 8)**

The Paleo-Eskimo culture that existed in the Canadian Arctic from c. 500 BCE–1500 CE. Succeeded by the Inuit culture.

**East India Company (ch. 6)**

Established in 1600, the largest of Britain’s chartered trade monopolies. It dominated trade and was an instrument of British imperialism in Asia, as well as the model on which the Hudson’s Bay Company was based.

**Edict of Nantes (ch. 3)**

A statement of relative religious tolerance in 1598 that brought an end to the Wars of Religion in France and extended civil rights to Protestants (Huguenots).

**Embargo Act (ch. 7)**

Federal legislation that was passed in the United States in 1807 to effectively close off all exports to foreign ports, in an attempt to force the British and French to respect American shipping. The objective was to starve the importing nations of American goods and thus oblige them to cease preying on American shipping. The act was repealed in 1809.

**English Reformation (ch. 3)**

Term used to describe several events connected to the English break with Catholic Rome under Henry VIII.

**environmental history (ch. 1)**

The history of human interaction with natural and human-made settings. The environment may be a pristine one or an urban context. In some cases, it is a study of how human activity impacts the environment (and vice versa); in others, it studies the *idea* of the environment and how that concept changes over time.

**environmentalism (ch. 1)**

A philosophical interpretation of human interactions with the environment. May also refer to an activist movement and critique regarding the negative impacts of those interactions.

**escheat (ch. 7)**

A movement to force unimproved lands on Prince Edward Island back into the hands of the Crown. The Escheat Party made the land issue the dominant one in the colony in the 19th century.

**ethnohistory (ch. 1)**

A branch of academic studies that bridges anthropological and historical approaches. Ethnohistory is principally concerned with non-European societies.

**Family Compact (ch. 7)**

An association of leading individuals and families in Upper Canada devoted to the suppression of republican tendencies in the colony and perpetuating an oligarchy in government.

**Father Le Loutre's War (ch. 6)**

Also called the Mi'kmaq (or Micmac) War, a 1749–1755 conflict that pitted the Mi'kmaq and some of the Acadian communities against the British and New England interests in Nova Scotia. Name derived from the role played by Catholic Abbé Jean-Louis Le Loutre, a missionary who led the French, Acadian, and Wabanaki forces.

**Father Rale's War (ch. 6)**

Named for Father Sébastien Rale, a Catholic priest who nominally led the Wabanaki forces, this 1722–1725 conflict is known by several other names as well. It was provoked by New England expansion into unceded Wabanaki territory in what is now Maine and New Brunswick. The French were allied with the Wabanaki against the British and New England forces.

**feminism (ch. 1)**

An analysis of power relations that posits the existence of systemic barriers to equality between humans based on gender identity. Feminism calls for a program of political and social action aimed at improving the conditions of women.

**feudalism (ch. 6)**

An economic and landholding system of social, legal, and military customs based on notions of mutual responsibility. Land ownership was typically by a manorial elite, for which a peasantry laboured. The aristocratic landowners, in turn, owed labour to the higher nobility, including the king.

**filles du roi (ch. 4)**

In English, known as "the king's daughters." Between 1663 and about 1673, this cohort of women (mostly young and many orphans) was recruited by the Crown's agents (mostly in Paris) for settlement in Canada. Their passage was paid for by the king, and they were provided with a dowry as an incentive to marriage.

**Fort Astoria (ch. 8)**

Established at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1811 by John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company, Astoria was the first American position on the northwest coast. It was soon sold to the North West Company.

**Fort Beausejour (ch. 4)**

Settlement built by the French in 1751 on the Chignecto Isthmus, which connects modern New Brunswick to Nova Scotia. This was an important land corridor connecting the Fortress of Louisbourg with Acadien settlements and Canada. The fort was also intended to support Mi'kmaq allies during war. Captured by the British in 1755, the name was changed to Fort Cumberland.

**Fort Caroline (ch. 3)**

Established by the French in 1564, it is reckoned to be the oldest fortified European settlement in what is now the United States.

**Fort Pitt (ch. 7)**

Site of modern-day Pittsburgh. Replaced the French establishment, Fort Duquesne.

**Fortress Louisbourg (ch. 6)**

Established in 1713 as a fishing village, an important fortified centre of trade and naval activity from the 1720s on. Louisbourg was one of the largest towns in New France by the 1740s and an important asset in French efforts to harass the British in Acadia. Twice captured by the British and New Englanders, it was largely demolished in 1758.

**franchise (ch. 7)**

The ability and right to vote in a democratic society. It is always arbitrarily determined and is defined as much by who it excludes as by who it includes. "Universal adult male suffrage" was never achieved in British North America before Confederation, forget the extension of the franchise to women or Indigenous peoples generally.

**free trade (ch. 6)**

A philosophy of commerce that calls for limited or no tariffs and protectionism. Free trade is in stark contrast to mercantilism.

**freedmen (ch. 7)**

Slaves who were freed from slavery, either by manumission or by emancipation.

**Gallican (ch. 4)**

A perspective widely held in France and its colonies from the 17th century that spiritual authority resides with the Pope, but civil authority with the monarch. Because much of what the colonial

clergy attended to was essentially "civil" — farming, administering the colony generally, etc. — many of the Catholic clergy looked first to Paris for leadership and not to the Vatican. This position was challenged with some finality at the First Vatican Council of 1868, at which papal infallibility was defined.

**gift diplomacy (ch. 4)**

In the context of European-Indigenous relations, the practice of renewing — annually or otherwise regularly — diplomatic relations and alliances by providing gifts to leadership figures. It includes the practice of "covering the dead," a round of gift-giving following wartime deaths of an ally's soldiers.

**grease trails (ch. 2)**

Trade routes that originated in the pre-contact era in what is now British Columbia. Used for transporting oolichan grease, an important Indigenous commodity.

**Great Peace of 1701 (ch. 5)**

A treaty struck between New France and 40 Indigenous nations. The Great Peace drew to an end the long-running war between Canada and the Haudenosaunee Five Nations and what had become known in some circles as the Beaver Wars. Also known as the Great Peace of Montreal.

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**guard hairs (ch. 6)**

The barbed outer hairs found on many mammal pelts, typically longer than the underpelt and more easily shed.

**guerrilla (ch. 6)**

A form of warfare distinguished by the lack of structure and organization typical of formal warfare. Characterized by ambushes, small units, and lightning raids, guerrilla warfare aims to demoralize and wear down a larger opponent that lacks the same speed and mobility.

**Gulf Stream (ch. 6)**

A strong current that runs from the Caribbean along the east coast of North America, across the Atlantic, and along northwestern Europe. It accelerates sea traffic heading east to Europe and can impede vessels heading west to the Americas.

**historiography (ch. 1)**

Historical writing and the study of historical writing.

**Hochelaga (ch. 3)**

St. Lawrence Iroquoian fortified town at or near what is now Montreal.

**home guard (ch. 8)**

Middleman cordon formed around the HBC forts by Indigenous groups that had a prior claim to the territory. Ensured that they enjoyed first access to trade goods.

**Hudson’s Bay Company (ch. 8)**

In 1670, a monopolistic charter modelled on the East India Company that was granted to “The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson’s Bay.” Also known as the HBC.

**Huguenots (ch. 3)**

French Protestants.

**Hundred Years’ War (ch. 3)**

A series of conflicts running from 1337 to 1453 related to royal successions in England and France.

**hypothesis (ch. 2)**

A suggested explanation for a historical phenomenon, event, or idea. Plural is *hypotheses*.

**ideology (ch. 1)**

A system of ideas and values that guides one's understanding of society and the economy and may also drive political and personal agendas.

**Île Royale (ch. 4)**

Established as a colonial site by the French in 1713, it is the location of the Fortress of Louisbourg. Captured by the British in 1755, it was renamed Cape Breton Island.

**Île Saint-Jean (ch. 4)**

Part of the French colony of Acadia, it was captured by the British in 1758 and renamed first Saint John's Island, and later Prince Edward Island.

**illicit trade (ch. 6)**

In the context of mercantilism, unsanctioned trade between colonies.

**imperialism (ch. 1)**

A philosophical position that encourages the extension of one nation or empire's power over other, subject peoples. May take the form of colonization, military conquest, or a campaign of propaganda and ideas.

**indentured servants (ch. 6)**

An individual contracted on a multi-year, fixed-term basis to work in the colonies. Usually taken up by young men and women whose passage would be paid by their employer. At the end of the indenture, young men would typically receive a new suit. Large numbers of migrants from Britain to the Thirteen Colonies are thought to have started in indentured servitude. This system was regularly abused and, in some circumstances, was barely distinguishable from slavery.

**Inquisition (ch. 3)**

A process and an institution aimed at ensuring Catholic supremacy and religious integrity in Western Europe. In Spain, it was geared toward eliminating Muslim and Jewish influences at the end of the 15th century and was an important part of the value system carried to the Americas by the conquistadors.

**intendant (ch. 4)**

Beginning in 1663, the administrative officer responsible for civil affairs in New France. The intendant's portfolio included judicial affairs, infrastructure, military preparedness, addressing issues of corruption, and colonial finances. Notionally the most powerful figure in the colony, in practice, the intendant was often rivalled by the governor.

**interdisciplinary studies (ch. 1)**

Academic approaches that combine traditionally separate disciplines, such as biology and history.

**Intolerable Acts (ch. 7)**

A number of taxes and tariffs introduced by the British government during the Seven Years' War that targeted the American colonies in an effort to recover financial losses. Following American protests, Parliament passed more laws that gave Britain greater powers in the colonies. It also introduced the Quebec Act, which reattached the Ohio Valley and the Northwest to the Province of Quebec and enhanced the rights of the Catholic Church; both provisions were provocative in the Thirteen Colonies. Together, the Intolerable Acts catalyzed the revolutionary movement in the colonies.

**Jay's Treaty (ch. 7)**

A 1794 treaty that resolved several issues outstanding from the Treaty of Paris (1783). With this treaty, the Americans were keen to address the continuing British presence and role in the Ohio/ Northwest, and the British wished to secure American neutrality in the French Revolutionary Wars and clarify the boundaries with Canada.

**Jesuit Order (ch. 4)**

The Society of Jesus was established in 1534 and is characterized by its fierce loyalty to papal authority in all matters. Their members first arrived in Canada in 1625 to assist the Recollets in missionary work among the Indigenous population. The Jesuits played a pivotal role in French relations with Wendake (Huronia).

**Jesuit Relations (ch. 4)**

Reports from Jesuit missionaries in Canada and an important source of historical and ethnographical material on the Wendat and other First Nations. In part, the Relations served as a means to secure more funding from France. They were eventually published for a wider readership and were thus a source of revenue for the order.

**Kingdom of the Saguenay (ch. 3)**

According to Donnacona and other Stadaconans, a wealthy settlement north of the Laurentian Iroquois territories. Perhaps mythical, perhaps meant to distract or deceive the Europeans, the story may have legitimate roots in an oral tradition now disappeared.

**L'Anse aux Meadows (ch. 3)**

The Viking settlement in northern Newfoundland, established c. 1000 CE.

**l'Ordre de Bon Temps (ch. 4)**

The Order of Good Cheer was suggested by Champlain in 1606 as a means of improving morale among the residents at Port-Royal. It is reckoned that the first meeting of the Order constitutes the first performance of European-style theatre in North America.

**Late Loyalists (ch. 7)**

American immigrants who arrived in British North America in the years after the Revolution, especially in the 1790s and the first decade of the 19th century. Their “loyalism” was never certain, and they were often outspoken critics of Toryism.

**little ice age (ch. 2)**

The term given to the hemispheric downturn in average temperatures that lasted from the 1600s (or as early as the late 1200s in some locales) to the 1820s. Much of North America and northwestern Europe was affected.

**longhouse (ch. 2)**

A style of domestic building that typically accommodates an extended family and serves as a storehouse for equipment, food, and other belongings. Longhouses take many forms in Indigenous cultures in what is now Canada, use different kinds of materials, and may be fixed, movable, or something in between.

**Louisiana Purchase (ch. 7)**

The sale of the Louisiana Territory by Napoleon to the United States in 1803. In 1800, Spain returned to France the territory it had ceded to Spain in 1762, which encompassed the western half of the Mississippi drainage (that is, from New Orleans to southern Alberta and Saskatchewan). Less than three years later, France decided to forgo attempts to rebuild New France and sold the territory to the United States.

**Loyalists (ch. 6)**

British-American colonists who were opposed to the revolutionary position struck by other colonists. At the end of the Revolution, many Loyalists joined an exodus to other parts of British America, particularly Nova Scotia and Quebec.

**maize (ch. 2)**

A modified crop form of a grass known as teosinte. Commonly referred to today as “corn,” maize was first developed by Mesoamerican societies.

**marchands (ch. 7)**

The *marchands* were the Canadien merchants of Montreal, as opposed to the post-Conquest British and British American merchants who arrived to take over the fur trade.

**Maritime Archaic (ch. 2)**

A variant on the Archaic tradition. Maritime Archaic cultures were found on the Atlantic coast.

**Marxism (ch. 1)**

An ideology and mode of analysis associated with the 19th-century German philosopher Karl Marx. This body of theory argues that political and social relations in the past and present are determined principally by economic structures. As an ideology, it argues for changes to productive relations that will result in greater equity and the end of social class barriers.

**matriarchy (ch. 2)**

A political system in which authority resides with females.

**matrilineal (ch. 2)**

Of or denoting familial relations that focus on the mother’s family, with property, status, and clan affiliation being conferred through the female line.

**matrilocal (ch. 2)**

Of or denoting a social system in which married couples reside in or in close proximity to the home(s) of the wife's family or parents.

**megafauna (ch. 2)**

Large pre-contact animals found globally whose modern descendants are considerably smaller.

**Mesoamerica (ch. 2)**

The cultural zone that stretches across almost all of Mexico and south through much of Central America. Some of the largest agricultural and urban civilizations in the Americas prior to contact were in Mesoamerica.

**Mesoamerican triad (ch. 2)**

Also called the "three sisters," the crops of maize, beans, and squash, which were developed in Mesoamerica and diffused across the Americas centuries before contact.

**Michilimackinac (ch. 5)**

An important centre of trade in the pre- and post-contact periods, historically dominated by the Odawa and Ojibwe. Located at the narrows between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, Michilimackinac was used as a mission centre by the Jesuits and, later, as a trading post site by the North West Company.

**Middle Passage (ch. 3)**

Shipping lanes between Africa and the Americas on which the principal cargo was captive humans, enslaved in west Africa. Mortality rates were as high as 20% on the voyage.

**miscegnation (ch. 5)**

Derived from the Latin verb for "to mix" and the noun for "kind," the term that has been used for the last two centuries to describe interracial marriage or sexual relations between people of different races.

**Mississippian (ch. 2)**

An agricultural, town-centred civilization that thrived from c. 500 to 1400 CE. Located at the heart of North America and connected by the river and lakes network to lands from the Rocky Mountains to the Gaspé, the Mississippian culture had a powerful impact on the societies that followed.

**mound builders (ch. 2)**

Hopewellian and Mississippian cultures that were notable for erecting large complexes of earthworks.

**Mourning Wars (ch. 2)**

Conflicts associated principally with the Haudenosaunee and impacting virtually all their neighbours. This wide-ranging series of conflicts covered much of what is now southern Ontario

and the Ohio Valley. One goal was to acquire captives who would be adopted into the captor's community, so as to replace population lost to epidemics and earlier wars and raids.

**multiculturalism (ch. 1)**

Both the phenomenon of the relatively equitable co-existence within a community of people from distinct cultural traditions and a policy of embracing diversity. There were, therefore, multicultural communities in pre-Confederation Canada, but multiculturalism only became widely supported in the post–World War II era.

**Napoleonic Wars (ch. 7)**

A series of wars involving France and much of the rest of Europe from 1803 to 1815. The War of 1812 was a chapter in the larger conflict.

**National School (ch. 1)**

Sometimes called Nationalist History or National History School. Refers to accounts of the past that emphasize the growth and evolution of the nation-state as the proper focus of historical studies, as opposed to social or economic relations.

**New Amsterdam (ch. 6)**

The Dutch colonial settlement at the mouth of the Hudson River in what was once called New Netherland and subsequently renamed New York.

**New Caledonia (ch. 8)**

Technically, the north-central part of what is now mainland British Columbia, as well as an administrative centre at Fort St. James. In practice, “New Caledonia” was used to refer to most, if not all, of the mainland colony.

**New England (ch. 6)**

A region in the northeastern United States consisting of six states: Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Maine.

**New Left (ch. 1)**

A political movement in the 1960s and 1970s that opposed U.S. participation in the Vietnam War and supported the civil rights movement. Influential on university campuses at mid-century, the New Left had an impact on historical and other academic studies.

**new social history (ch. 1)**

A school of historical studies that drew attention to race, gender, and social class as defining features of historical experience. The new social history developed a view of past societies from the “bottom up.”

**New Spain (ch. 3)**

From 1522 to 1821, a territory stretching, at its peak, from the north coast of South America through Central America and Mexico to California, and what is now the American Southwest. It also included Florida, which was separated from the rest of New Spain by the French possession, Louisiana.

**North West Company (NWC) (ch. 8)**

A joint-stock fur trading company established in Montreal after the Conquest and led by British American and Scottish merchants. The principal competition to the HBC. The NWC's agents were called North Westers or Nor'Westers.

**Northwest Indian War (ch. 7)**

Conflict from 1785–1795. Part of an ongoing attempt by the Indigenous Northwestern Confederacy to insulate the Ohio Valley and what the Americans referred to as their Northwest Territory against American invasion. Also known as Little Turtle's War. Followed Pontiac's Rebellion and anticipated Tecumseh's War.

**northwest passage (ch. 8)**

The water route connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean via the Arctic Ocean.

**nursery of the navy (ch. 6)**

The Grand Banks and other fisheries in the northwest Atlantic that were regarded by imperial powers in Europe as training grounds for sailors and recruitment grounds for their respective navies.

**oolichan (ch. 2)**

An anadromous fish prized on the West Coast for its high oil content.

**oral history (ch. 1)**

A verbal account of events in the past. This could be an account provided by a contemporary of the events described or one that is part of an oral tradition, which suggests a multi-generational account that is preserved carefully in the retelling. Oral histories are particularly important in the study of non-literate societies.

**oral tradition (ch. 2)**

Generally refers to an account of events that took place in earlier generations and that is transmitted by oral storytelling (as opposed to writing). Distinctions used to be drawn sharply between oral tradition and oral history, which was regarded as accounts of events within the lifetime of the teller. More recently, oral history has become equated with oral tradition and has been granted greater respect for its reliability.

**Pacific Fur Company (ch. 8)**

Fur trade venture created by New York–based entrepreneur John Jacob Astor. It established Fort Astoria on the northwest coast, but lasted for less than three years in the face of increased competition in the North American fur trade. Also known as the PFC.

**Paleo-Indian (ch. 2)**

Term used to describe the peoples occupying parts of the Americas until about 8000 BP.

**Paleolithic (ch. 2)**

The period associated with the concept of the "Stone Age," referring to human technological development before extensive use of metals. Dates vary from continent to continent and region to region.

**parliament (ch. 3)**

Generally, an elective assembly of representatives engaged for the purpose of governing the whole or advising the Crown. Specifically, the English/British elected assembly in Westminster. After 1867, this term refers as well to the Canadian elected assembly.

**Pays d'en Haut (ch. 6)**

A part of New France containing much of what is now Ontario, the whole of the Great Lakes, and notionally all the lands draining into them. Extended as far as the Upper Mississippi and the Missouri. Translates roughly into the "upper country."

**Pennsylvania Dutch (ch. 7)**

German settlers in Pennsylvania, many of whom moved to Nova Scotia shortly after the Conquest.

**petroglyphs (ch. 2)**

Images carved into rock.

**pictographs (ch. 2)**

Images painted onto rock and other surfaces.

**Plains of Abraham (ch. 6)**

Located near the Citadel of Quebec, it was the site of what proved to be a pivotal battle between British and French/Canadien/Indigenous forces in September 1759.

**planters (ch. 6)**

Some 2000 settlers in Nova Scotia in the period between the Acadian Expulsion and the 1780s, drawn from New England.

**polygyny (ch. 5)**

Describes a plural marriage in which two or more women share the same husband.

**Pontiac (ch. 5)**

Also known as Obwandiyag, Pontiac (c. 1720–1769) was an Odawa (Ottawa) leader who launched a campaign against the British at the end of the Seven Years' War in the region around Fort Detroit.

**post-contact (ch. 2)**

The years after documented encounters between Indigenous peoples and Europeans. Post-contact typically describes a relatively short period. Although our current society is technically "post-contact," it makes little sense to use the term that way.

**potlatch (ch. 2)**

A ceremonial event mounted by most Northwest Coast peoples and many in the interior of what is now British Columbia. It involves the giving away of property at an event, typically one marking a succession, a marriage, or a death. Accumulating goods for an impressive potlatch was an important mechanism for attaining social status for the host and also redistributing wealth through a system of related villages.

**pre-contact (ch. 2)**

The period before the first documented encounters between Indigenous peoples and Europeans. Pre-contact societies may also be proto-contact societies, depending on circumstances.

**pre-Loyalist (ch. 7)**

Term for non-francophone settlers in British North America who arrived before the Loyalist migration in 1783–1784. Almost exclusively associated with settlers in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

**presentist fallacy (ch. 1)**

The belief that the events of the past are directly responsible for conditions in the present. Presentism often ignores intervening events. It also tends to thank the past for positives (such as current freedoms) while it seldom holds the past accountable for liabilities (such as a lacklustre economy and continuing struggles over equality).

**primary sources (ch. 1)**

Original historical resources, such as diaries, letters, and government inquiries.

**primogeniture (ch. 6)**

System of inheritance that favours the eldest male offspring. Compare with coparcenary.

**Protestant Reformation (ch. 3)**

Beginning c. 1517, a movement to reform the Catholic Church and many of its practices. Resulted in a split between reformers and the papacy and the rise of distinct sects, including the Church of England, the Scottish Presbyterian Church, Methodism, Puritanism, Quakerism, Lutheranism, and many others.

**proto-contact (ch. 2)**

The period of indirect influence of Europeans on Indigenous peoples. Some of the effects of contact ran ahead of direct encounters. For example, diseases and/or trade goods might be passed from one Indigenous community that had experienced face-to-face contact to a great many others that had not.

**Province of Quebec (ch. 7)**

Created by the Royal Proclamation (1763), the province included lands from Detroit to the Gaspé Peninsula, but removed the Ohio Valley and the west from Quebec's (Canada's) control.

**quantitative historical techniques (ch. 1)**

Historical methods that use statistical sources rather than (or in addition to) qualitative sources like diaries and personal letters. Tax ledgers, census manuscripts, land surveys, and many kinds of church records provide enough information for us to work toward aggregate knowledge of people in the past.

**Quebec Act (ch. 7)**

Also called the British North America Act, 1774 (not to be confused with the British North America Act of 1867), it was the legislation that restored the Ohio Valley and the northwestern *Pays d'en Haut* to the Province of Quebec, provided official recognition of the rights of Catholics in the colony, and restored the *Coutume de Paris* and the ability of the Catholic Church to collect tithes. It recognized the rights of seigneurs and irritated the Thirteen Colonies where it was seen as cheating the Appalachian colonies of their prize in the Ohio. It was grouped with the other Intolerable Acts. It is regarded as a partial cause of the American Revolution.

**Quiet Revolution (ch. 1)**

A political and social phenomenon in post–World War II Quebec that saw the power of the clergy and conservative elements eclipsed by a liberal-nationalist movement.

**Recollets (ch. 4)**

A Franciscan order whose members were the first missionaries in New France, arriving in 1615. The Recollets are credited with the first batch of beer in New France (1620) and were responsible for recruiting the Jesuit Order into the missionary field in Canada in 1625. Expelled from New France in 1629, they returned in 1670 and served until their numbers were depleted after the Conquest.

**reconquista (ch. 3)**

Episodes of Spanish-Christian resistance to Spanish/Moorish-Islamic control of the Iberian Peninsula, lasting from the eighth or ninth century CE and culminating in the surrender of Granada in 1492.

**regicide (ch. 6)**

The murder of a king.

**revisionist (ch. 1)**

A historian who re-evaluates history and revises it based on new understandings. As a critical term, "revisionist" is sometimes used to describe historians who change histories for political purposes.

**Royal Proclamation (ch. 7)**

The legislation passed on October 7, 1763 that created the Province of Quebec and recognized aboriginal title in the west. The Act angered American settlers because it hampered westward movement into the Ohio Valley.

**Rupert's Land (ch. 8)**

According to the HBC's charter of 1670, all the lands draining into Hudson Bay. Includes northwestern Quebec, northern Ontario, most of Manitoba, some of central Saskatchewan and Alberta, as well as southeastern Nunavut.

**Sapa Inca (ch. 3)**

Quechua for "the only Inca," the monarch of the Inca Empire. Atahualpa was the last person to hold this title.

**second-wave feminism (ch. 1)**

Associated principally with the 1960s and 1970s, second-wave feminism focused on systemic discrimination in domestic and public environments, calling for equality for women in pay and treatment in the workplace, an end to sexism, and legislation to protect women's reproductive rights.

**secondary sources (ch. 1)**

Documents that examine primary documents and provide an interpretation. Historical studies of past events are, by definition, secondary sources.

**seigneury (ch. 4)**

The seigneurial system in New France, and especially in the colony of Canada, sought to reproduce elements of the French feudal system. Although some of the seigneurs in Canada were nobles, most were military officers and members of the clergy. Rent values were based on rates set by the Crown,

not on the scarcity of land or labour. Seigneurs had to provide their tenants (*censitaires*, habitants) with a gristmill (the use of which was essentially taxed), and the tenants provided an annual round of labour (*corvée*), which might involve road building or erecting a chapel.

**Skraelingar (ch. 3)**

Term used by the Norse (Vikings) to describe Indigenous North American peoples they encountered between Greenland and Newfoundland. Probably applied to the Thule and the Innu in particular, and perhaps to the Beothuk as well.

**Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (ch. 2)**

The religion associated with the Mississippian cultures. Many features of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex were shared with Indigenous cultures in what is now Ontario and Quebec.

**Stadacona (ch. 3)**

The village of the St. Lawrence Iroquois at or near the current site of Quebec City.

**staple (ch. 6)**

A raw material or unprocessed product. Fish and furs were primary staples in the early colonial economies of New France and British America. Lumber and grain were later staple exports from New France and British North America. For the staple theory, see Chapter 9.

**status quo ante bellum (ch. 6)**

A term used in treaty-making meaning a return to how things were before the war.

**Sulpicians (ch. 4)**

Operating out of the Parisian parish of Saint-Sulpice (from which their name derives), the Sulpicians were a wealthy order without a vow of poverty. This distinguished them from the more austere Jesuits and Recollets.

**sun dance (ch. 2)**

A renewal ceremony celebrated by many Plains peoples. It was sponsored by an individual who wished to give to his tribe or to thank or petition the supernatural through an act of self-sacrifice for the good of the group.

**taxation without representation (ch. 7)**

A principle espoused by American colonists in the 1770s articulating the view that British law forbade the seizing of a citizen’s property by the state without his consent (which could be given by an elected representative in Parliament). As the colonies had no representatives in Parliament, the colonists maintained that they could not be taxed.

**teosinte (ch. 2)**

A variety of grass that was modified into maize (also known as “corn”) by Indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica.

**Thule (ch. 8)**

Arctic culture that evolved into Inuit culture. The Thule migrated across and occupied the Arctic mainland and islands beginning c. 1000 CE and reached Labrador and Greenland c. 1300 CE.

**Tories (ch. 7)**

A term associated with Loyalists in the American Revolution whose philosophical position was opposed to the Whiggish/republican stance of Thomas Paine and the Patriots. Also a term sometimes used for British and Canadian conservatives today.

**Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (ch. 6)**

Treaty from 1748 that concluded the War of the Austrian Succession. Restored the status quo ante bellum in North America.

**Treaty of Ghent (ch. 7)**

Intended to end the War of 1812 between Britain and the United States. The treaty was agreed to in 1814, but not signed into law by the U.S. Senate until February 1815. The treaty restored the status quo ante bellum between British North America and the United States, which meant that Britain was removed from the American Northwest, leaving Indigenous peoples without an ally to help defend their interests.

**Treaty of Paris (1763) (ch. 6)**

A 1763 treaty that ended the Seven Years’ War. France ceded all of its territory east of the Mississippi (including all of Canada, Acadia, and Île Royale) to Britain and granted Louisiana and lands west of the Mississippi to its ally Spain. Britain returned to France the sugar islands of Guadeloupe. France retained St. Pierre and Miquelon, along with fishing rights on the Grand Banks. Not to be confused with the 1783 Treaty of Paris.

**Treaty of Paris (1783) (ch. 7)**

The 1783 treaty that ended the American Revolution (War of Independence). Not to be confused with the 1763 Treaty of Paris. Britain recognized the independence and sovereignty of the United States of America. Boundaries were established (and later disputed) between the United States and British North America. The United States was to compensate Loyalists for lost property, which never occurred. See also Jay’s Treaty.

**Treaty of Ryswick (ch. 6)**

Treaty from 1697 that terminated the War of the League of Augsburg and restored the status quo in North America from before the war.

**Treaty of Tordesillas (ch. 3)**

The division in 1494 of the Atlantic world between Portugal and Spain. Portugal acquired Brazil and acknowledged that Spain had a prior claim to the rest of the Americas.

**Treaty of Utrecht (ch. 6)**

Treaty from 1713 that ended the War of the Spanish Succession. French claims on territory in Newfoundland, on Hudson Bay, and Acadia (Nova Scotia) were ceded to Britain, except for Île Royale and Île Saint-Jean.

**triangular trade (ch. 3)**

Commercial traffic beginning with goods from northwestern Europe traded into ports along the west African coast for slaves, ivory, and other commodities, which were then shipped across the Atlantic (the Middle Passage) to colonies in the Americas, where they were traded for plantation products, which were subsequently ferried north and east back to northwestern Europe.

**United Empire Loyalist (ch. 7)**

An honorific title taken by Loyalists and their descendants to celebrate their migration to British North America at the end of the Revolution. Typically signals a strong Tory bent.

**Vinland (ch. 3)**

The name given by the Norse (Vikings) to the east coast of North America.

**virgin soil epidemic (ch. 5)**

Attributed to the anthropologist/historian Alfred Crosby, the term describing a situation in which a disease, bacteria, or virus discovers a population with no natural immunity arising from previous encounters with it. Very high mortalities are a typical consequence.

**voyageurs (ch. 8)**

Members of the fur trade whose principal task was to move furs, people, and materials across great distances. Some voyageurs were also traders. Also called trip men.

**War Hawks (ch. 7)**

American politicians mainly from the South and the West who were angered by British predations on American shipping out of their ports and harassment of American settlers and regiments by British-Indigenous armies. In 1812, their enthusiasm for war finally won out over New England's caution.

**Wars of Religion (ch. 3)**

A series of wars fought in Europe arising ostensibly from divisions within Christianity. The French Wars of Religion (1562–1598) distracted the Crown from transatlantic enterprises.

**Whig (ch. 7)**

A mutable term associated with the British Whigs (a radical/liberal political party), the American Patriots/Whigs (revolutionaries in 1775–1783), and 19th century Canadian liberals. Common features include a challenge to the prerogatives of the Crown, a suspicion of Catholicism, and belief in individual rights and liberties. In the American colonies, it developed into a form of republicanism.

**winter count (ch. 2)**

A record of events recorded in the form of pictures; associated mainly with Siouan cultures.

**wintering partners (ch. 8)**

The prominent NWC employees who spent the year in the West. As part of the decision-making process, they would meet annually with the Montreal agents at Fort William, where company-wide plans would be made in council. Also called *hivernants*.

**Woodland period (ch. 2)**

The era described by archaeologists and anthropologists as roughly 1000 BCE to 1000 CE.