

THE NORTHWEST CHANGES

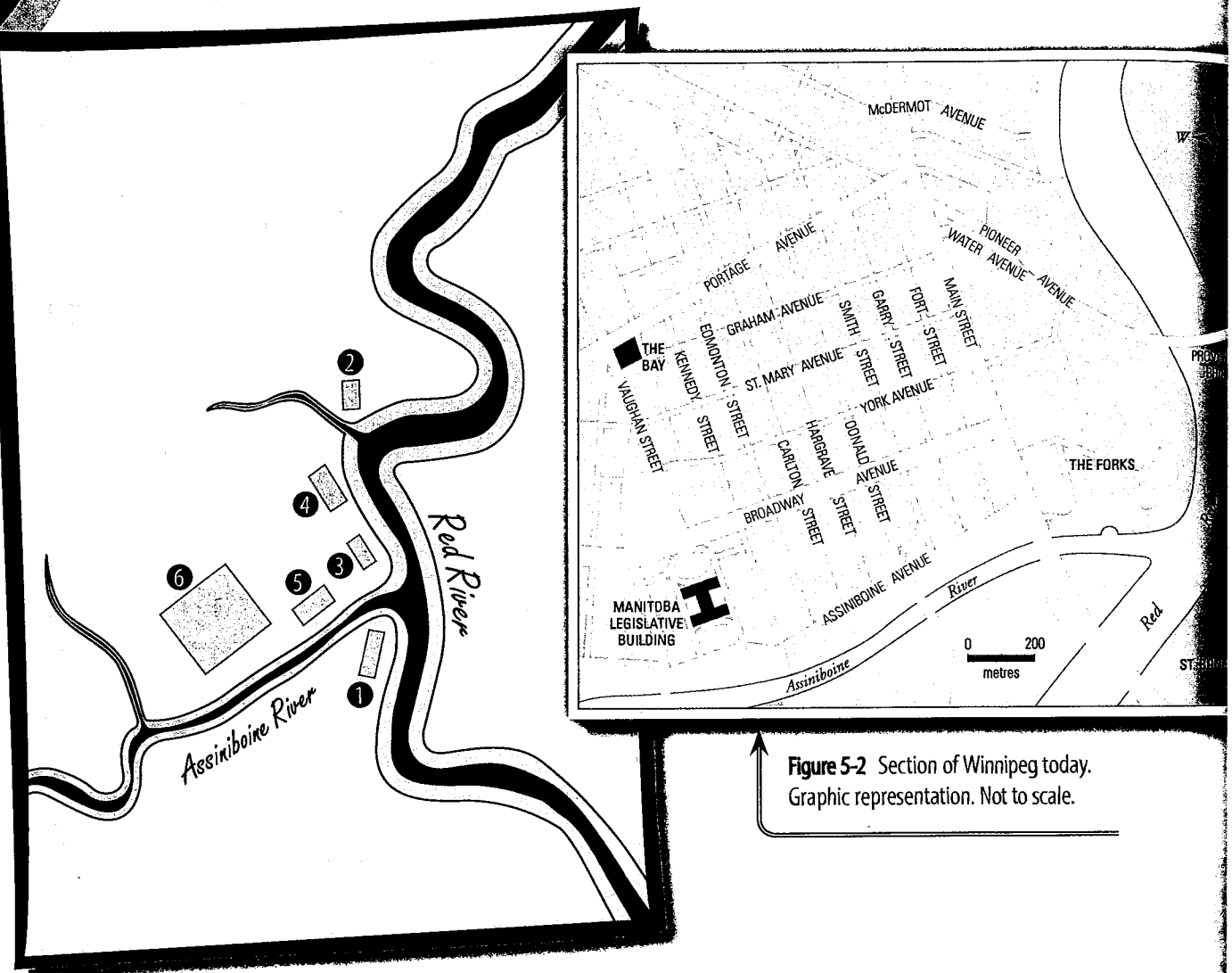


Figure 5-2 Section of Winnipeg today. Graphic representation. Not to scale.

Figure 5-1 Forts at the Confluence of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. Graphic representation. Not to scale.

- 1 Fort Rouge was built in 1738. The fort's primary purpose may have been a fur-trade depot, but it was abandoned by 1749.
- 2 Fort Douglas was an HBC fort that was built by the Selkirk settlers in 1812.
- 3 In 1809 the NWC built Fort Gibraltar.
- 4 Fidler's Fort, named after Peter Fidler, an HBC employee, was several hundred yards from the river and located between Notre Dame Avenue East (now Pioneer Avenue) and McDermot Avenue.
- 5 The first Fort Garry, also known as Upper Fort Garry, was an HBC trading post that was established in 1822. In 1826, a severe flood destroyed the fort.
- 6 Fort Garry was rebuilt in 1835 and was much larger than the original fort.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How did the fur trade, European settlement, and the rise of the Métis Nation transform life for the peoples of the Northwest?

To explore this Essential Question, you will

- explore changes occurring in the Northwest during the nineteenth century
- investigate the causes and consequences of the expansion of the fur trade
- examine the rise of the Métis Nation and the Métis way of life
- investigate the rivalry between the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the North West Company (NWC), including the competition that existed between the two companies for First Nations and Métis support
- explore the creation of the Selkirk colony

KEY TERMS

Michif
Red River carts
Pemmican
Proclamation
Battle of Seven Oaks
Palliser expedition
Hind expedition
Fraser Canyon War
reserves

GETTING STARTED







Study the two maps on the opposite page showing settlements at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. They represent part of the history of the Red River/Winnipeg region over the past 270-plus years. Consider these questions:

- How many forts were HBC forts? How many were NWC forts? What does this tell you about their rivalry?
- There were five forts built at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. Why would the confluence of the rivers be a good location to build forts and fur trade settlements?
- Compare the two maps: what evidence is there today in Winnipeg of its history as a fur-trade and settlement centre?

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples have a long history in North America and their diverse and complex cultures continue to adapt to changing conditions.
- The relationship between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and non-Aboriginal peoples moved from autonomous co-existence to colonialism to the present stage of renegotiation and renewal.
- Canada's history is shaped by economic factors such as natural resources, agricultural and industrial development, the environment, technology, and global economic interdependence.

Thinking Historically

-  Establishing **historical significance**
-  Using primary-source **evidence**
-  Identifying **continuity and change**
-  Analyzing **cause and consequence**
-  Taking a **historical perspective**
-  Considering the **ethical dimensions** of history

FUR-TRADE AND SETTLEMENT RIVALRIES

THE FUR TRADE: A REVIEW

As you learned in Chapters 2 and 3, the fur trade grew to be one of the most important industries on the North American continent. The demand for fur in Europe encouraged further exploration of North America in the search for new sources of fur. The quest for furs pushed the *coureurs de bois* and the men of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) west of colonial settlements along the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and farther inland from Hudson Bay.

The French expanded their trading activities along the St. Lawrence River and around the Great Lakes. They relied on their allies, the Wendat (Huron), for trade. The Hudson's Bay Company charter gave the HBC sole trading rights over the Hudson Bay drainage basin. HBC traders came to rely heavily on the Ininew (Cree) as partners.

Bitter rivalries drove the Hudson Bay–based traders to compete with the St. Lawrence River–based traders, first the French and then the various British and Yankee traders who took over the French trade after the fall of Nouvelle-France. This rivalry heightened in 1779, when Scottish merchants in Montréal founded the North West Company (NWC) to unite the St. Lawrence traders in their competition with the HBC. The traders of the new company led the expansion of the fur trade across what is today western Canada.


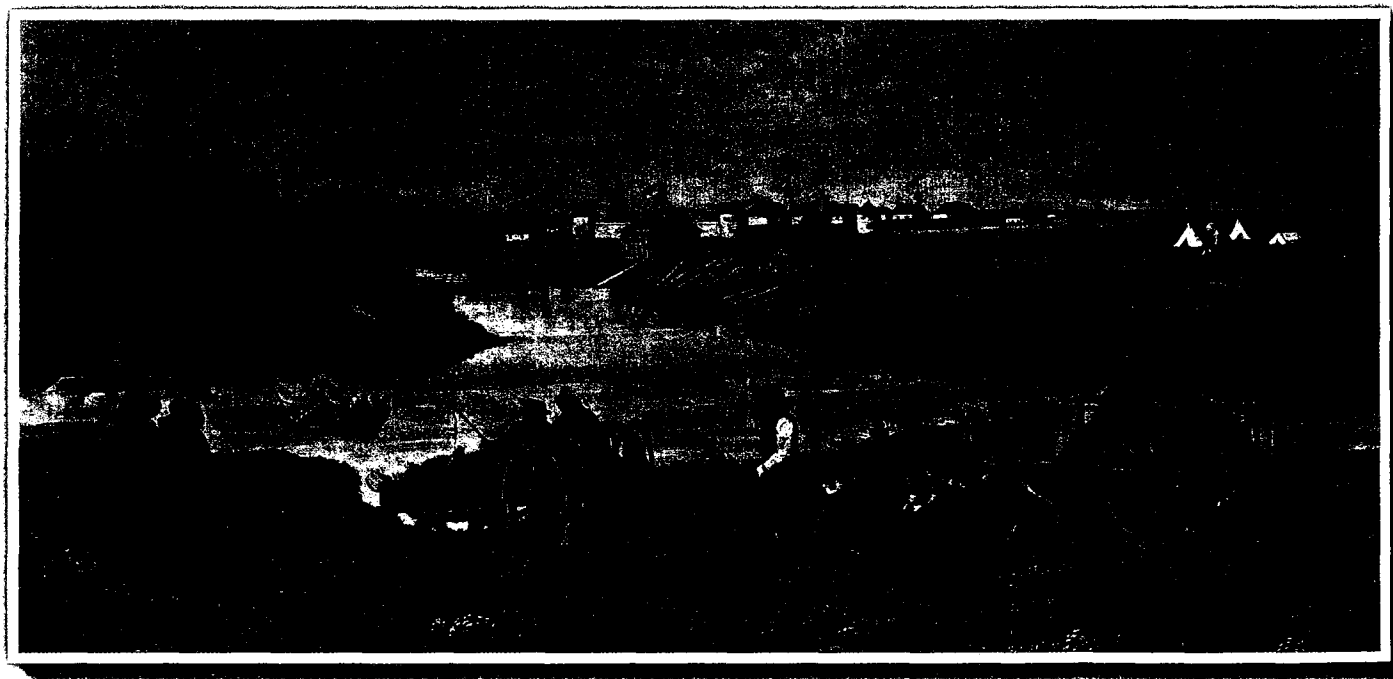
 How was the expansion of the fur trade in British North America a consequence of both environmental and human factors?

Figure 5-3 *Red and Assiniboine Rivers*, W. Frank Lynn, 1872. In the centre of the painting is Fort Garry. The confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers became a fur trading hub by the early nineteenth century.



RIVALRY BETWEEN THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY AND THE NORTH WEST COMPANY

Between 1790 and 1791, Simon McTavish (one of the NWC's founders) lobbied the British government to put an end to the HBC's fur-trade monopoly in Rupert's Land. When the British government refused to do so, rivalry between the NWC and HBC intensified.

The NWC's success depended upon constantly moving farther west and tapping into new territories for fur. Unlike the Baymen, the Nor'Westers were always on the move, pushing farther west in the true spirit of the company's motto: Perseverance.

As you learned in Chapter 3, one competitive advantage the NWC had was its partnership with the voyageurs. These men lived a life of endless paddling and difficult portages. They put in fourteen-hour days, had to carry two 40 kilogram bundles of fur at a time over portages, and rested only once per hour. Voyageurs developed a unique culture defined by their life in a canoe, the geography of the fur trade, their French language, their style of dress, their close relationships with First Nations people, and their songs, which they sang to break the monotony of paddling.

As it progressed, the rivalry between the NWC and the HBC got out of hand and, at times, violent. They destroyed each other's boats and forts. They attempted to bribe the other company's First Nations traders. The companies also competed to set better trade rates (the number of fur pelts that First Nations needed to exchange for European goods). The competition benefited First Nations traders, who could trade fewer and lower-quality furs for more goods.

VOICES

I would warmly recommend to your notice the Canadians; these people I believe, are the best voyageurs in the world; they are spirited, enterprising, and extremely fond of the Country; they are easily commanded; never will you have any difficulty in setting a place with these Men; however dismal the prospect is for subsistence, they follow their Master wherever he goes.

—A message sent by Colin Robertson to the Hudson's Bay Company London Committee in 1810 suggesting that they, like the North West Company, hire French Canadian voyageurs.

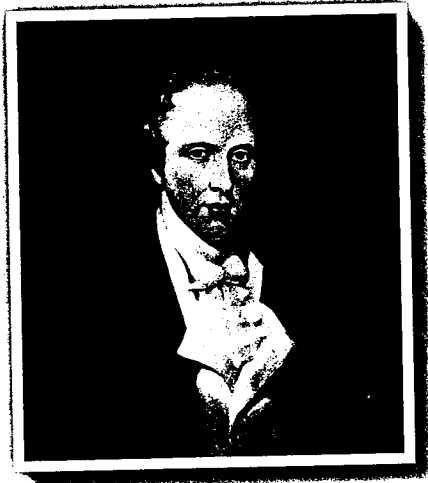
Figure 5-4 *Canoe Manned by Voyageurs Passing a Waterfall, Frances Anne Hopkins (1838–1919). Hopkins was married to an official from the HBC, and she sometimes accompanied him on trips into the Northwest.*



THE SELKIRK SETTLEMENT

As the HBC and the NWC travelled and explored the West, another development was underway that would forever change the landscape and the lives of the First Nations and Métis peoples who lived there—the first European settlements in the West.

Figure 5-5 Thomas Douglas, the Fifth Earl of Selkirk. The town of Selkirk, Manitoba, was named in his honour.



THOMAS DOUGLAS, FIFTH EARL OF SELKIRK

Thomas Douglas, the Fifth Earl of Selkirk, was born in Scotland in 1771. He was the seventh son of the Fourth Earl of Selkirk, a wealthy landowner. As the seventh son, Selkirk would not inherit the family fortune, so he was sent to Edinburgh to go to law school. While he was at school, Selkirk's attention became focused on the poor Scottish tenant farmers who had been removed from their land by wealthy landowners.

During this time, Selkirk's brothers had unexpectedly died (from various diseases), along with his father. He therefore inherited the family title and fortune. Not forgetting his experience in Edinburgh, he used his money and title to help the displaced Scottish farmers. Selkirk's solution to their woes was emigration to British North America.

Selkirk asked the British government to grant him a section of land in the Red River Valley that was part of Rupert's Land. Because the HBC held a fur-trading monopoly of that area, the government refused to give Selkirk the land. Undeterred, Selkirk bought enough shares in the HBC to let him gain influence on its decisions over land. With his new power in the HBC, he purchased 40 468 hectares of land, which came to be known as the Selkirk Concession or Assiniboia.

Figure 5-6 Assiniboia

Selkirk purchased this land in the Red River area and named it Assiniboia. His goal was to create a colony with immigrant farmers from Scotland and Ireland.



ASSINIBOIA'S POPULATION MIX

Selkirk hired Miles Macdonell, a Scottish-born North American, to arrange for immigrants to come to his colony. Macdonell's first group of immigrants, which consisted of thirty-six Scottish and Irish workers, arrived in 1812. For the first two winters, the immigrants had to camp at the HBC post at Pembina (today just outside the Canadian border in North Dakota). They were ill-equipped for the rugged landscape and harsh winters. If not for the assistance of Chief Peguis's Saulteaux people and the Métis people who gave them food and helped them adapt, few would have survived. The settlement slowly grew as more newcomers came from Scotland and Ireland.

There were already many people living at Red River before the creation of the Selkirk colony. Most people were Métis, but there were also Ininimowin (Swampy Cree) and Saulteaux peoples and Canadiens who had made their way west from Québec and settled in St. Boniface, a small settlement on the east bank of the Red River. There were also French, Scottish, and Orkney men who had been employees of the fur companies and who chose to stay in the country after their service had ended. Many of these men stayed because they had First Nations or Métis wives and children.

Selkirk's immigrants were distinct from Red River's existing population. The Métis both farmed and took part in the fur trade. The Selkirk immigrants relied mainly on farming. And unlike the British and French fur traders in the area, the Selkirk settlers did not intermarry with First Nations people.



Over the next two and a half years, the fledgling Selkirk colony faced a series of challenges. It had to establish a successful, self-sufficient colony and good relations with the local representatives of the rival fur-trading companies, the HBC and the NWC. The colonists also had to learn to live alongside the Métis and First Nations people at Red River, many of whom were wary of the newcomers.

The NWC did not welcome the Selkirk colony. The NWC had an important trading post, Fort Gibraltar, at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. From the NWC's perspective, the Selkirk land grant was a plot by the HBC to ruin the NWC's trade in the area. The Selkirk colony was situated right across the major river routes that the Nor'Westers used to transport pemmican from the bison-rich prairies to posts farther north. As you will learn later in this chapter, the conflict between the Selkirk colony and the NWC escalated over time.

Figure 5-7 *Landing of the Selkirk Settlers, Red River, 1812*, was painted by J. E. Schaflein for the 1924 HBC calendar. If you were to create your own painting of the landing of the Selkirk immigrants, how would it be different?



RECALL... REFLECT... RESPOND

1. How did the NWC intensify the rivalry between itself and the HBC? How did this affect the HBC? 
2. How did the fur trade rivalry affect the newcomers to the Selkirk colony? 
3. How do you think the perspective of the Selkirk immigrants about the presence of their colony was different from the rest of the population at Red River? 