

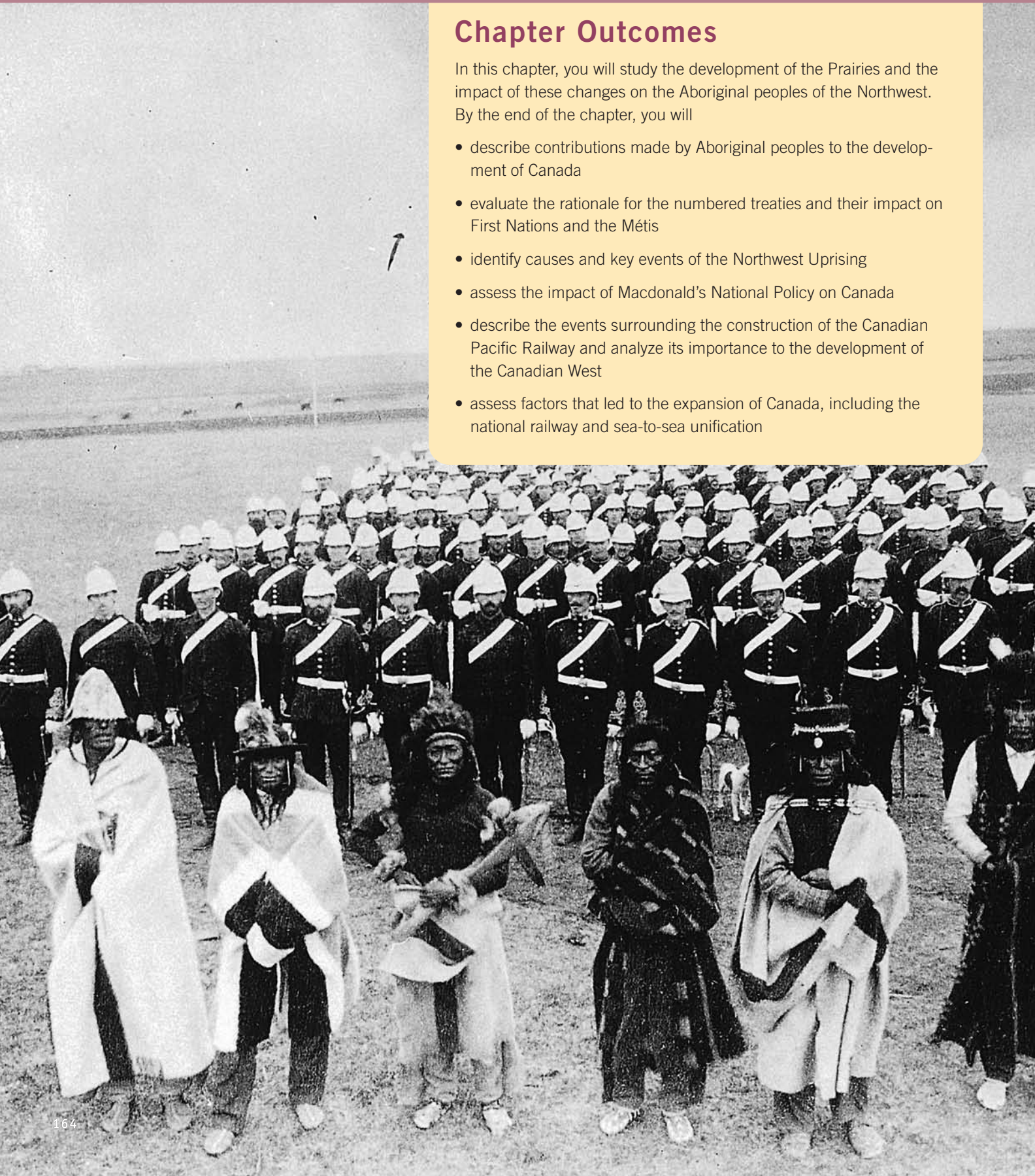
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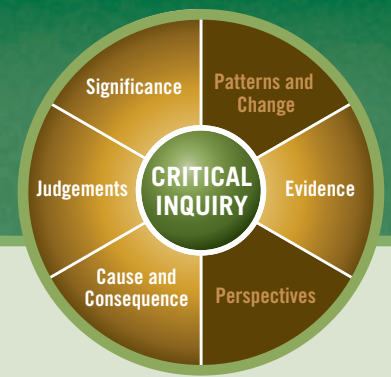
## Changes Come to the Prairies

### Chapter Outcomes

In this chapter, you will study the development of the Prairies and the impact of these changes on the Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest. By the end of the chapter, you will

- describe contributions made by Aboriginal peoples to the development of Canada
- evaluate the rationale for the numbered treaties and their impact on First Nations and the Métis
- identify causes and key events of the Northwest Uprising
- assess the impact of Macdonald's National Policy on Canada
- describe the events surrounding the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway and analyze its importance to the development of the Canadian West
- assess factors that led to the expansion of Canada, including the national railway and sea-to-sea unification





## How did the actions of the Canadian government affect people living in the West?

After Confederation, great changes were in store for the Northwest, including the creation of new territorial boundaries, the building of the railway, and the arrival of immigrants. Would everyone already living on the Prairies benefit from these changes?

### Key Terms

scrip  
 North West Mounted Police (NWMP)  
 Indian Act  
 Métis Bill of Rights  
 Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR)  
 Northwest Uprising  
 National Policy



What is the first image that comes to mind when you think of the Prairies? You might think of open spaces or fields of wheat. For those who built the transcontinental railway, the prairies may have been something to cross or to own. For them, the CPR was “progress.” How might this perspective contrast with that of First Nations leaders, shown here with Canadian troops sent to the West, or Chief Grande Oreilles, quoted below?

*What are these Landworkers? What brought them here?...it would appear that these Strangers, these makers of gardens, look upon themselves as the real possessors of these lands.*

—Grande Oreilles, a chief of the Anishinabé, in a speech to NWC partners

# The Métis in the 1870s

- What were the hopes and dreams of the Métis after 1870? What was the reality?

## TIMELINE

- 1870** ● North-West Territories is created  
● Manitoba becomes a province
- 1871** ● Treaty process with the First Nations of the Northwest begins  
● Canadian Pacific Railway Company is formed
- 1872** ● Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) survey begins
- 1873** ● “Pacific Scandal”  
● Laws of St. Laurent are formalized  
● Cypress Hills Massacre  
● North West Mounted Police is formed
- 1877** ● Treaty process ends
- 1879** ● National Policy is enacted
- 1881** ● Canadian Pacific Railway is incorporated; building begins
- 1885** ● CPR is completed  
● Northwest Uprising  
● Louis Riel is executed

**militia** civilians with military training who are called to service in times of war or unrest

## The Manitoba Act

The passage of the Manitoba Act in 1870, which made the lands surrounding the Red River the new province of Manitoba, was welcomed by many Métis. It was a remarkable achievement for Louis Riel and his provisional government, as it showed their influence on Canadian legislation. After all, much of the Manitoba Act was based on the Métis List of Rights.

The new legislation seemed to protect Métis rights, as well as those of future generations of Métis. The Act made French and English the official languages of the province, and it provided for two education systems—one Protestant and one Roman Catholic. In addition, 566 580 hectares were put aside for the “children of the Métis” as farmland, and the rights of the Métis to their existing lands were protected.

Unfortunately, any optimism proved to be unfounded. Now a province, Manitoba was firmly under the control of Ottawa and the provisional government was at an end. Following the Red River Resistance, John A. Macdonald sent Canadian troops, led by Colonel Wolseley, to Manitoba to “keep the peace.” Most of these troops were **militia** from Ontario and members of the Orange Order, the same Protestant group that had caused so much trouble for the Métis in the Red River Valley (see Chapter 4).

The militia was less concerned with keeping the peace than avenging the execution of Thomas Scott. Members committed acts of violence against the Métis, including arson, assault, rape, and murder. Although the acts were not officially permitted, the men who committed these crimes were never punished. Macdonald’s opinion was clear:

*These impulsive Métis have got spoilt by the émeute [uprising] and must be kept down by a strong hand until they are swamped by the influx of settlers.*

—Sir John A. Macdonald

## The Issue of Land

Up to this time, land ownership in the Northwest had not been straightforward or conducted in any official way. Still, the Métis had assumed that with the Canadian government now in charge, they would be confirmed as owners of land they already occupied. They also believed that they would be able to select land for their children once the new province was surveyed.

However, in order to gain title to the land that was reserved for them, all Métis in Manitoba were required to have **scrip**, a piece of paper similar to money. Two kinds of scrip were issued to the Métis—money scrip or land scrip. Money scrip had a value of \$160 or \$240, an amount based on the value of farmland. Money scrip could be converted to cash. Land scrip could be exchanged for a homesteader's land grant—160 acres. Land scrip could also be sold for cash.

The survey of land in Manitoba progressed slowly, and it was not until late 1875 that land was finally made available and scrip issued. Adult Métis were entitled to scrip valued at \$160 each; their children received \$240. However, the children's land grant was not what the Métis had expected. The land was open prairie up to 6 km away from the rivers. It was distributed by lottery, and recipients had no control over where their land grant was located.

**scrip** a piece of paper that could be used to certify possession of land or be exchanged for money

### Did You Know...

To claim land they were already living on, Métis had to prove occupation. This meant that they had to have "adequate" housing and at least two hectares under cultivation. Many claims were rejected when these conditions were not met.



**FIGURE 5-1** Métis scrip issued to Jean Baptiste Forcier. Think about what the Métis wanted to use the land for. Was all land equal in value? Why was it a problem to base scrip on the value of land?

## Land Speculation in Manitoba

Land speculation, the practice of buying and selling land for a profit, had existed in Manitoba before the Red River Resistance. Many people in Red River had taken part in land speculation, including Louis Riel. However, combined with the new scrip system and environmental factors, it became a serious problem.

### *Did You Know...*

Land speculation still takes place today when real estate investors buy land or buildings that they hope to sell at a profit. This practice is often called “flipping.”

With the militia’s intimidating presence, many Métis found life in Red River very uncomfortable. Also, by the early 1870s, the number of bison decreased significantly in the eastern Prairies. With the bison went a large part of the Métis economy, and the slow process of land distribution led many frustrated Métis to sell their land entitlements to the nearest speculator and leave. In many cases, these entitlements were sold for far less than what the scrip was worth—sometimes for as little as \$30 or \$40. Speculators who purchased these entitlements could then convert them to scrip, making a profit.

By the mid-1870s, many Métis had left Manitoba. They moved west and north, wanting to recreate the way of life they had enjoyed in Red River. Some settled in established Métis communities near Fort Edmonton, on the North Saskatchewan River. More took up land near the junction of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers near Prince Albert.



**FIGURE 5–2** This map shows the population distribution of the Métis by 1870. Research some of the communities shown here. Are any still in existence? What are they like today?

## The Métis Move North and West

In the North-West Territories, the Métis from Manitoba found established Métis communities organized in familiar ways. Farms were laid out in the traditional pattern: long lots about 200 metres across and over 3 km deep, stretching back from a river. The economy was based on subsistence farming, hunting bison, and hauling freight for the Hudson's Bay Company. (Although it had given up official administration of the region with the sale of Rupert's Land, the company was still in operation.)

However, the Métis and First Nations, such as the Blackfoot, had already noticed an alarming trend. The bison herds, which had once numbered in the thousands, were rapidly declining. Since bison was still the main source of food for Aboriginal peoples of the plains, and because the Métis continued to trade hides and pemmican, some Métis chose to take action.

In 1873, the Métis of St. Laurent, a community on the shore of Lake Manitoba, wrote down and formalized the Laws of St. Laurent. These laws, based on the informal "laws of the Prairies," governed all aspects of life in the community, including the regulation of the bison hunt.

### Did You Know...

The Métis governed themselves with councils of elected members. Those who were elected tended to be good hunters or individuals with wisdom and experience. One of these councils wrote the Laws of St. Laurent.

### Get to the Source • The Laws of St. Laurent



Evidence

Why did the Métis take the step of making their own laws? The Laws of St. Laurent were formalized by the Métis council of the village. The laws were a natural result of the Métis practice of organizing bison hunts by appointing Captains and councils. Governance was a practical solution for a group that depended on carefully organized hunts involving large numbers of people, animals, and equipment. Usually, councils came and went with the bison hunts, but in St. Laurent a permanent elected council developed.

The formal Laws of St. Laurent also extended beyond the bison hunt, covering many other aspects of life. Still, the Métis were careful to state that they had no wish to be independent of the Canadian government, even though they were

taking steps to govern themselves, as can be seen in the extract shown here.

Among other items, the Laws of St. Laurent ruled that

1. The community was to elect a council, which would have the authority to rule on any disputes in the community.

2. The Captain of the bison hunt was to regulate the hunt and all provisions.

- In the extract shown here, why were the Métis so clear in their intentions? What does this tell us about the Métis?
- Why did the Métis strictly regulate the bison hunt?

*It is well understood that in making these laws and regulations the inhabitants of St. Laurent in no wise pretend to constitute for themselves an independent state, but the actual situation of the country in which they live obliges them to take measures to maintain peace and union amongst them... But in forming these laws, they acknowledge themselves as loyal and faithful subjects of Canada, and are ready to abandon their own organization and to submit to the laws of the Dominion, as soon as Canada shall have established amongst them regular magistrates with a force sufficient to uphold in the country the authority of the laws.*

—From the Laws of St. Laurent

## Lawrence Clarke and the Laws of St. Laurent

Lawrence Clarke, the Hudson's Bay Company factor at Fort Carlton in what is now Saskatchewan, believed that the Métis were inferior to Europeans. Deliberately using his power against them, he paid Métis carriers as little as he could and made their lives as difficult as possible.

When the North-West Territories was created, Clarke requested that the Canadian government provide a **magistrate** to enforce Canadian law in his area. The government appointed Clarke, and he quickly began to use his increased authority for the benefit of the HBC. For example, any Métis who objected to low pay could be imprisoned.

The winter of 1874–1875 was very difficult for the Métis and the First Nations on the Prairies, mainly due to the loss of the bison. Tensions began to rise. That spring, a group of Métis started hunting bison before the officially sanctioned hunt had begun. Gabriel Dumont, the hunt captain, arrested and fined the participants in this illegal hunt in accordance with the Laws of St. Laurent.

The Métis charged in the incident appealed to Magistrate Lawrence Clarke, who issued warrants for the arrest of Dumont and his men. Clarke imposed only minor fines, but his ruling still made the Laws of St. Laurent invalid. This was seen as a direct attack against the authority of the Métis, and some bison hunters now felt free to ignore the Métis laws.

**magistrate** an officer with limited authority to administer and enforce the law



**FIGURE 5-3** By the age of 12, Gabriel Dumont was an expert hunter and could speak more than six languages. He later proved to be a competent military leader. Why did these skills give him standing in the Métis community?

*Everyone took their freedom and ran on the buffalo without any other guide than their insatiable keenness, passion for killing, greed, and avarice. Anarchy and self-interest reigned on the prairie. They exterminated the poor buffalo with more frenzy than ever.*

—an Oblate priest of St. Laurent



**FIGURE 5-4** A camp of Métis hunters on the Prairie. Considering the migratory behaviour of the bison and the geography of the Prairie, why do you think it might have been difficult to enforce the Laws of St. Laurent?

Were the Métis of St. Laurent unreasonable in setting out such strict rules for the bison hunt? The accounts shown here take very different sides.

*The hunters left as usual under the leadership of brave Gabriel Dumont... they began to sight buffalo which gave them courage and hope. [Then they learned] that many Métis [of another parish] without respect for the laws and rules and without concern for their brothers went on ahead. Immediately it was decided in a general meeting that it was necessary... and in the interest of everyone, to observe the laws. [Dumont], with his captains and soldiers, carried out the decision of the meeting, brought to the camp all the delinquents with the exception of two who preferred to pay [a fine] which was*

*granted to them on the condition they immediately go to Carlton. Hardly had they arrived at Fort Carlton when they complained of having been maltreated, robbed, almost assassinated. They knew whom to make these complaints to; it was to people who had looked [with suspicion] at the creation of the laws of the Colonies. If one were to believe the celebrated **knave** and his agents, the Métis of Carlton... were in full revolution against the Dominion of Canada.*

—a priest in St. Laurent

*Two-thirds of this population (150 families constituting the settlement of St. Laurent) are connected by marriage and other degrees of kinship, and have assumed to themselves the right to enact laws... which the minority of settlers are perforce bound to obey or be treated with criminal severity. From this body, a court has been constituted numbering fourteen persons presided over by a man named Gabriel Dumond [sic] who is designated president before whom all delinquents are made to appear, or suffer violence in person or property... The past spring a party of “freemen” made their way to Carlton... and having disposed of the products of their hunts, purchased fresh supplies of necessaries and started prairie wards to hunt... joining a party of other*

*hunters and Indians who were leaving for the same purpose. Dumond dispatched a courier with a letter ordering the party to retrace their steps and join the St. Laurent camp. To this the Indians and Métis [objected]; when Dumond with 40 of his bodyguards fully armed... followed in pursuit, and having come up with the party seized all the horses and carts together with provisions and effects they had secured leaving the **plundered** people on the plains naked of transport. Dumond... then returned the stolen property and, after using violent threats to individuals, levied by force a heavy fine upon the party and returned to their camp.*

—Lawrence Clarke

**knave** an untrustworthy person

**plunder** to rob someone of goods or valuables by force

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. How is each account biased? Provide examples to support your answer. Start by looking for extreme language, such as “assassinated” or “plundered.” Refer to the Skill Builder in Chapter 3, pages 98–99, for a review on recognizing bias.
2. How do these accounts support each other? How do they contradict each other?



## What Happened to the Bison?

In the 1600s, an estimated 70 million bison roamed the grasslands. Well before the 1870s, however, First Nations of the plains had begun to express concerns about the shrinking numbers of bison. The Blackfoot, Nakoda, and Sioux, and later the Métis, depended on the bison for food and shelter. Losing such a vital part of their livelihood threatened their existence.

The slaughter of bison was part of the American government's campaign to force First Nations onto reservations so that the American West could be made available to European settlers. Bison hunting by Europeans was encouraged. American General Phillip Sheridan knew that the loss of the bison would weaken the First Nations of the plains:

*Let them kill, skin and sell until the buffalo are exterminated. Then your prairies can be covered with speckled cattle and the festive cowboy.*

—General Phillip Sheridan, 1875

The trade of hides and pemmican also reduced the population of bison, and in the 1800s, the building of transcontinental railways in Canada and the United States both divided the great herds and brought in more hunters. Thousands were killed by the day, and in only decades, bison herds so large that they darkened the Prairie were becoming only a memory. First Nations and Métis struggled to maintain their ways of life after such swift devastation. A doctor for the NWMP observed:

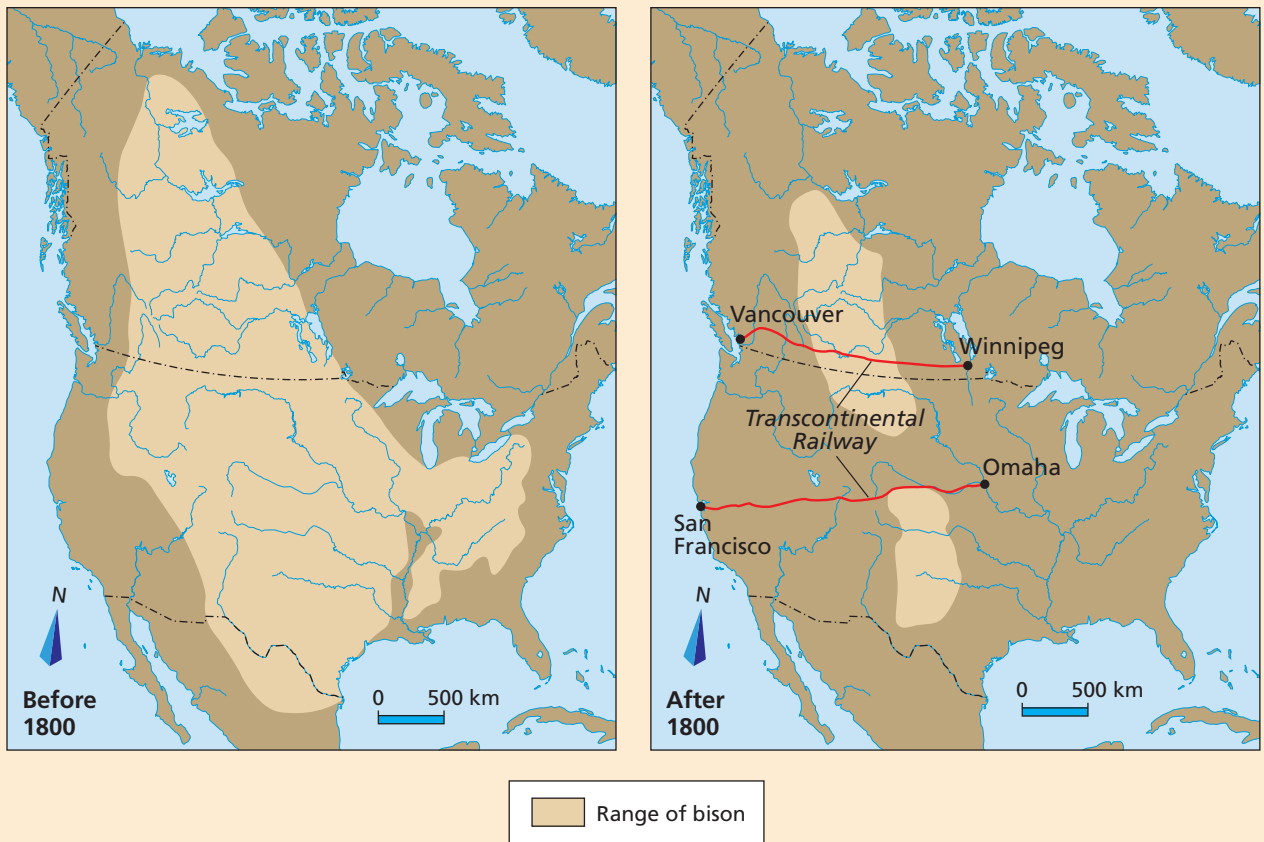
*The disappearance of the buffalo has left them not only without food, but also without robes, moccasins, and adequate [shelter]...*

—Augustus Jukes, NWMP doctor

Facing starvation, many First Nations were eventually forced to ask the government for assistance.

**FIGURE 5–5** A pile of bison skulls in Saskatoon, 1890. These bones are only a fraction of what was collected across the Prairies. In fact, Regina was first named “Pile O’ Bones.” Why did the railway accelerate the loss of the bison?





**FIGURE 5-6** These maps show changes in the range of the bison herds before and after 1800. Compare these maps to a modern map of North America. Would the range of the bison herds be any different today if their numbers had survived? Explain.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Who would have found the Manitoba land assignments unfair? Why?
2. Given what you have learned so far, suggest some reasons why the Métis were growing dissatisfied with the Canadian government.
3. With a partner, discuss what contributed the most to the Métis' loss of land and political power in Manitoba and the North-West Territories. Was it the militia, the Canadian government, the Orange Order, or the Métis themselves? Use written and visual evidence in this section to support your argument.
4. As you read further in this chapter, note the consequences of the destruction of the bison. How would these consequences affect interactions between the Canadian government and Aboriginal peoples?

# The First Nations of the Northwest

- ▶ How were the First Nations affected by the Canadian government's policies in the Northwest? Do you think people at that time would have seen the government as dishonest?

## Did You Know...

The NWMP later became the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), known today as the national police force of Canada. The RCMP is responsible for enforcing federal laws, policing some jurisdictions, providing counterterrorism security, and protecting the prime minister, the monarch, and the governor general.

### North West Mounted Police (NWMP)

Canada's national police force, now called the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

**paramilitary** a force that operates like the army but is not part of it

## The North West Mounted Police

Even though Manitoba and the North-West Territories had come under Canadian control in 1869, it took time before Ottawa's authority could be fully enforced throughout such a vast region. One of the first problems facing the government was the arrival of American fur traders. The American fur trade consisted of a number of small companies that traded strong, cheap liquor called "firewater" to First Nations trappers in exchange for furs. Although this trade was outlawed, it was very successful. The centre of the whisky trade was Fort Whoop-Up, near what is now Lethbridge, Alberta. The whisky trade devastated local Blackfoot communities, leading to widespread alcoholism, malnutrition, disease, and death.

The Canadian government was worried that the presence of the American whisky traders might lead to the loss of territory to the Americans. In 1873, the government created the **North West Mounted Police (NWMP)**. This group acted as a police force and a **paramilitary** organization for the Northwest, enforcing the law and establishing a Canadian presence in the region. Later that same year, an incident in Cypress Hills accelerated the arrival of the NWMP in the region.



**FIGURE 5-7** Fort Whoop-Up, 1874. This fort was one of many where whisky was traded for furs. How were traders in this area able to engage in illegal trade for so long?

## The Cypress Hills Massacre

In June of 1873, a group of Nakoda camping in Cypress Hills was attacked by a party of American “wolfers,” trappers who put out poisoned bison meat to kill wolves and coyotes. More than 20 Nakoda were killed, and the incident came to be known as the Cypress Hills Massacre. Outrage erupted in eastern Canada, where people saw the attack as a threat to Canadian sovereignty in the West. In response, the government sent a force of 275 NWMP to the Prairies to take control.

By the time the NWMP reached Fort Whoop-Up, they discovered that the whisky traders had fled. Hoping for stability and peace, many First Nations people thought that the presence of the NWMP would put an end to the lawlessness that had plagued the region.

*If the police had not come to the country, where would we all be now? Bad men and whisky were killing us so fast that very few of us would have been left today.*

—Crowfoot, a chief of the Blackfoot

### Did You Know...

The NWMP marching west were accompanied by 114 Red River carts with Métis drivers, 310 horses, 142 oxen, and 93 beef cattle. They were guided by Jerry Potts, a Métis.

## The Treaty Process

The Canadian government was determined to open the Prairies to European and Canadian settlers. However, this was not possible until the question of First Nations title to the land had been settled. In 1870, all land in Manitoba and the North-West Territories was still held by First Nations. The exception was land in the Selkirk Settlement, leased by Selkirk in an 1817 treaty with the Saulteaux and Cree.

The government was determined to gain control of land as quickly and as cheaply as possible. First Nations leaders, recognizing that they would have to share some land, wanted to make the best possible deal to secure the future of their people.

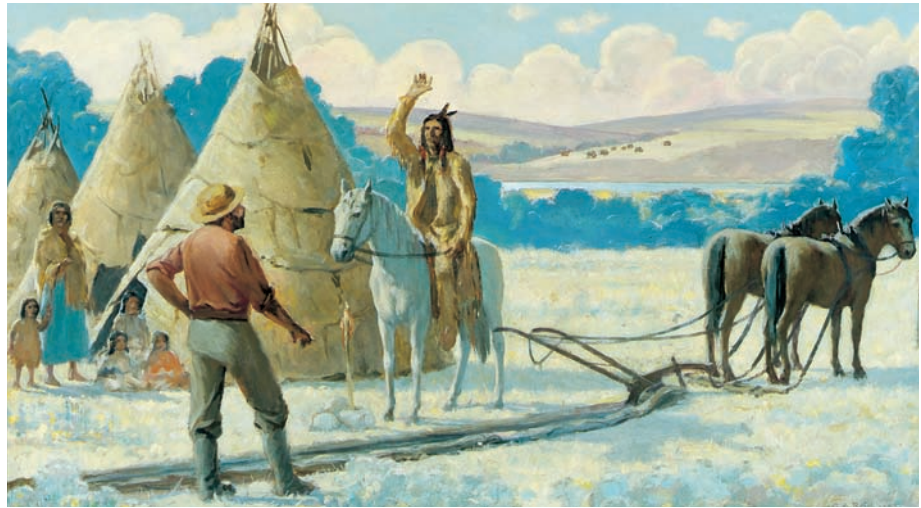
### Did You Know...

During the treaty process, the Métis were asked to identify themselves as “white” or “First Nations”; they were not seen as a distinct people with land rights of their own.



**FIGURE 5-8** RCMP officers re-enact the NWMP march west in 1999. The NWMP resembled a British military cavalry unit, complete with red uniforms. What impression do you think these uniforms would have made?

**FIGURE 5–9** This painting is called *The Treaty Line*. It was not intended to be a realistic depiction of an actual event, but it is symbolic. What does the painting symbolize? What does it show about the point of view of the artist?



First Nations had a long-standing tradition of negotiating agreements. They were accustomed to give and take, which formed a key element in successful negotiation. First Nations also tended to bargain in good faith; people stood by their word and meant what they said. When negotiating treaties with the Canadian government, they believed they were making an exchange—sharing their land for the protection and support of their people.

In 1871, the Canadian government began the treaty process with the First Nations of the Prairies. Indian Commissioner Wemyss Simpson was sent to Manitoba to begin talks with the Cree and Anishinabé. Read the two quotations below. What points of view do they express? Do you think these views would have led to successful negotiations?

*God intends this land to raise great crops for all his children, and the time is come when it is to be used for that purpose. White people will come here to cultivate it under any circumstances. No power on Earth can prevent it.*

—Wemyss Simpson, 1871

*I have turned this matter of a treaty over in my mind and I cannot see anything in it to benefit my children. This is what frightens me. After I showed you what I meant to keep for a reserve, you continued to make it smaller and smaller... Let the Queen's subjects go on my land if they choose. I give them liberty. Let them rob me. I will go home...*

—Ay-ee-ta-pe-pe-tung, 1871

Henry Prince, chief of the Anishinabé, asked how the government intended to assist the First Nations if they agreed to end their traditional way of life and settle on reserves.

*How are we to be treated? It is said the Queen wishes Indians to cultivate the ground. They cannot scratch it—work it with their fingers. What assistance will they get if they settle down?*

—Henry Prince, 1871

The Cree and Anishinabé did not want to give up all of their land. They wanted to retain control of about 60 percent of the province of Manitoba. However, Simpson had instructions to offer only 160 acres (64.7 hectares), the standard homesteader's quarter-section, for every family of five. While this offer was not acceptable to the Cree and Anishinabé, they knew that no other offer would be made. Still, they managed to include some conditions: the government eventually agreed to supply farm equipment, supplies, and instruction in farming techniques. By the end of August 1871, Treaties 1 and 2, covering the southern part of Manitoba, had been signed.



**FIGURE 5-10** Mistawasis (front row, right) and Ahtahkakoop (front row, left), negotiators for Treaty No. 6. Why did these leaders insist on receiving start-up assistance for their people?

## Zoom In > Treaty No. 6

Treaty No. 6 was a historic agreement between the Cree and the government. As you read, consider what each side gained and lost as a result of the agreement.

In the summer of 1876, Alexander Morris, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, travelled to Fort Carlton to settle a treaty with the Cree who lived in the area. The Cree insisted on using their own interpreter, Métis Peter Erasmus, when they discovered that the interpreters provided by the government did not speak their language. Initial negotiations lasted almost 10 days, longer than had been anticipated. Cree leaders discussed at length the proposed treaty terms and drew up amendments that they felt had to be accepted.

Mistawasis and Ahtahkakoop, two senior Cree leaders, both knew that eventually they would have to agree to a treaty. They felt they had little choice in the matter, since the destruction of the bison meant that many Cree were already starving, and the government promised food if the treaties were signed. Nevertheless, they wanted guarantees that assistance would be provided if their people began the task of farming on their reserves.

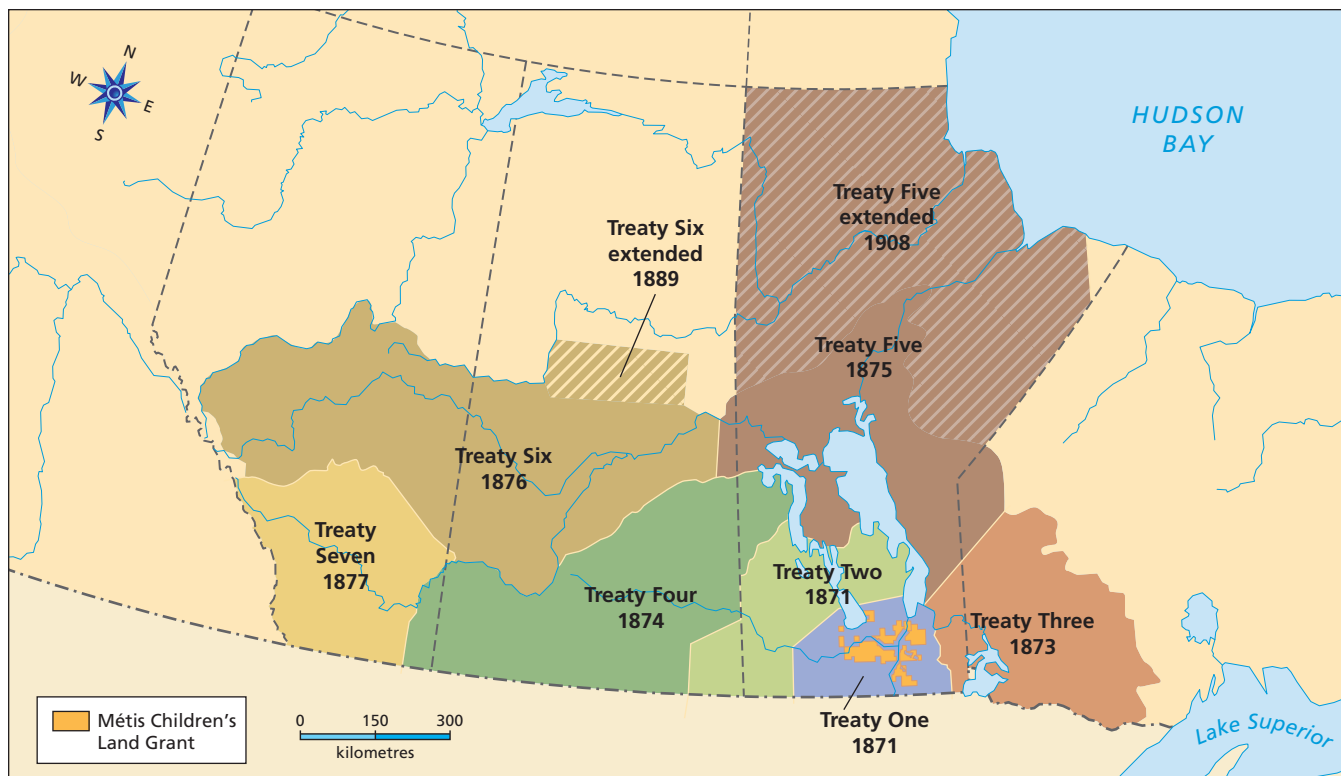
Younger leaders, like Poundmaker, argued against the

treaty. Mistawasis could only ask, “Have you anything better to offer our people?”

In the end, the senior leaders had a clause added to the treaty, which they felt provided the guarantees they were seeking: direct assistance for three years in the form of farming tools, supplies, and instruction. Morris seemed to think that the Cree wanted ongoing assistance, but Mistawasis and Ahtahkakoop were emphatic that their desire was to eventually become self-sufficient.

*Can we stop the power of the white man from spreading over the land like the grasshoppers that cloud the sky and then fall to consume every blade of grass and every leaf on the trees in their path? I think not. Before this happens let us ponder carefully our choice of roads.*

—Plains Cree Chief Ahtahkakoop



**FIGURE 5–11** Treaties signed in the 1870s (including later extensions). Reserves were created throughout the treaty areas, while the Métis children’s land grants were the only lands officially allotted to the Métis. Why was the Canadian government not yet concerned about territory farther north?

## Treaty Rights

Under the terms of the numbered treaties, and those that followed in other regions of Canada, Aboriginal peoples agreed to share their land in exchange for specific rights. These rights included access to resources, health care, and education. Many Aboriginal rights—such as the right to hunt or fish, or to self-government—can be seen as rights Aboriginal peoples have had for time immemorial. Other rights guaranteed under the treaties are part of official, negotiated agreements with the government.

Aboriginal rights in Canada are protected under the Canadian Constitution. However, there have been challenges to these rights, and many Aboriginal groups have had to fight for recognition of their treaty rights. You will learn more about some of these challenges in later chapters of *Horizons*.

## First Nations Farming

By the end of the 1870s, seven treaties were in place across the southern Prairies. Many First Nations had already been escorted by the NWMP onto the reserves, and they soon began to farm the land.

As you read in Chapter 2, First Nations such as the Ojibwa and the Haudenosaunee were successful farmers on the fertile lands around the Great Lakes. They supplemented their hunting and fishing with crops such

### Did You Know...

Treaties continue to be signed in Canada today. Most reinforce or clarify the rights of Aboriginal peoples in a province or territory. In later chapters, you will read more about modern treaties such as the Nisga’a Treaty.

### WEB LINK

Read a copy of Treaty No. 6 on the Pearson Web site.

as squash, corn, and beans. However, farming on the Prairies could be a challenge. Many farmers, both European and First Nations, struggled with poor crops, insects, and drought.

Even though he had objected to Treaty No. 6, Poundmaker also tried farming. One year, his crops died in a drought. Another year, he harvested a bumper crop, only to find that the Canadian government would not provide the mill needed to grind the wheat into flour. Poundmaker and other leaders soon realized that their people were no further from the brink of starvation than they had been before.

## Was Failure Unavoidable?

The main problem for the First Nations farmers of the Prairies was that the tools, supplies, animals, and instruction guaranteed by the treaties proved inadequate, when they appeared at all. The plows were poorly made and were useless for prairie soils. Furthermore, the oxen that were provided could not pull plows. The seed was sent too late in the year, and First Nations farmers were forbidden to use steam-powered **threshing** machines after the harvest.

It seemed as if the Canadian government and its officials wanted the farms to fail, even while telling First Nations that they should become farmers. The attitude of Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed in the 1880s can be seen as an illustration of the government's view. Reed believed that it was "unnatural" for First Nations to use machinery—although it is impossible to grow and harvest sustainable amounts of wheat without it. Nor did Reed want First Nations farmers to sell surplus wheat. According to Reed, if they grew more than what was necessary for their own needs, they were planting too much. In the face of such attitudes, and in spite of their best efforts, by 1900 almost all First Nations living on prairie reserves had abandoned farming.

**threshing** the process of separating grain from stalks or husks; the steam-powered threshing machine saved time and labour



**FIGURE 5–12** Blackfoot men sow by hand on their farm south of Calgary. What does this image tell you about the needs of First Nations farmers? How did the policies of the Canadian government lead to the failure of First Nations farms?



**Indian Act** an act created to regulate the lives of the First Nations of Canada

**paternalistic** an attitude based on a family hierarchy—the “father” makes decisions on behalf of the “children”

**ward** a minor under the care of a guardian; in this case, the government is the guardian

**WEB LINK** • .....

For more information about the Indian Act, visit the Pearson Web site.

**Did You Know...**

The potlatch, an important giving ceremony for First Nations of the west coast, was illegal in Canada until 1951.

## The Indian Act

The Canadian government introduced the **Indian Act** in 1876. This act formalized the assimilation of First Nations, providing government administration of reserves and treaty rights across the Dominion. The Act changed through time, with new regulations being applied as Canada developed. The Indian Act had an enormous impact on the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

The **paternalistic** attitude of the government, which you explored in Chapter 3, continued. In this case, the government made decisions on behalf of Aboriginal peoples. Most decisions, as seen in the case of Hayter Reed, were influenced either by prejudice or misunderstanding. The Indian Act ruled that

- First Nations were wards of the government, living only on reserves.
- First Nations were required to register with the government; if they did not, they were considered “non-status” and would lose their rights.
- Special passes were required to come and go from reserves. For some time, Europeans were not allowed on the reserves, which created a feeling of distrust between First Nations and their neighbours.
- First Nations children had to attend residential schools. As you have seen, the aim of residential schools was to assimilate First Nations people.
- Traditional ways of self-governance, such as choosing leaders, were also denied, as were important ceremonies, such as the sun dance.

Many First Nations felt that the government had failed them. Poverty, isolation, and the loss of their rights and freedoms caused profound discontent. Was the outcome of this discontent unavoidable? Find out more as you read this chapter.

## ACTIVITIES

1. How did the creation of the NWMP impact Canada? Identify and support two or three possible consequences.
2. Why did the Canadian government want treaties to be signed? Explain how the government’s attitude had an impact on the agreements.
3. Some people believe the Canadian government demonstrated bad faith in terms of treaty agreements. Others believe their actions were necessary in building a nation. What do you think? Use specific examples to support your answer.
4. Discuss the Indian Act with your class.
  - a) Did the government have the right to make decisions for Aboriginal peoples?
  - b) What effect would the Indian Act have on the identity of First Nations in Canada?
  - c) In what ways would the Act have been different if First Nations had been consulted?

# The Northwest Uprising

## ► What were the causes and consequences of the Northwest Uprising?

By 1884, the Métis in the North-West Territories were losing patience with the Canadian government. They had not been part of the treaty process, and their status under the Indian Act was unclear. They were beginning to fear that their rights would again be ignored.

After their experiences in Red River, and with the coming of the new transcontinental railway—which brought more European and Canadian newcomers to the Northwest—the Métis felt they needed to act. They sent petitions to the government, asking that their rights be recognized.

## The Métis Petitions

The Métis wanted legal title to the land they occupied, and they wanted the land to be surveyed respecting to their long river lots. The government proved to be inconsistent in this regard. In 1881, a surveyor listened to local farmers and laid out half the land in St. Laurent in long lots. The next year, another surveyor arrived to finish the job. He did not consult anyone and laid out the rest of the land using a township system.

In their petitions to the government, the Métis expressed their concerns about their land. They also asked for assistance in becoming successful farmers. Like the First Nations, they were losing their livelihood and had to adjust to farming due to the loss of the bison.

Others shared the Métis' concerns. During the late 1870s, European homesteaders had arrived in the area near St. Laurent. European farmers also found that their concerns about land title and financial assistance were not being addressed by the Canadian government.

## The Government's Agenda

The government had its own plans for the land in the North-West Territories, including land already occupied by the Métis and the European farmers. Surveys of the Prairies told the government that there were about 6.4 million hectares of farmland still available. Much of this land was already held by land speculators, but the rest could be sold by the government. The potential for profit was huge—John A. Macdonald calculated that if this land were sold, the government could collect about \$71 million. There was no way the government would risk losing this potential revenue by listening to petitions from the Métis or the homesteaders about “their” land.

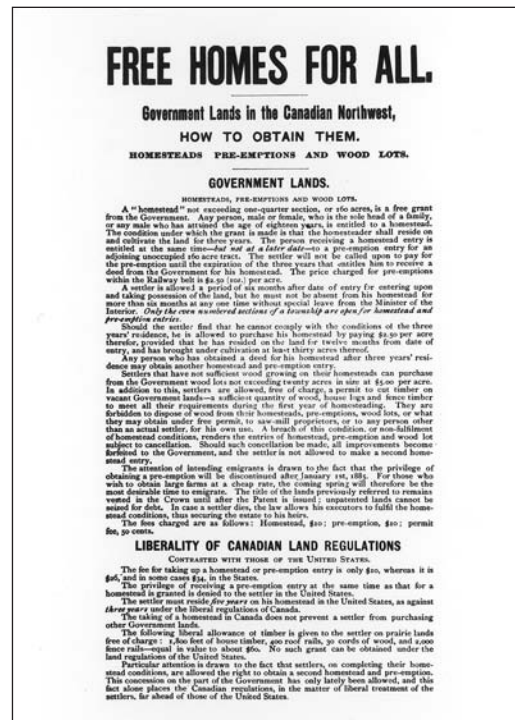


FIGURE 5-13 By 1882 the Canadian Pacific Railway was advertising that land was available for newcomers in the North-West Territories. Why might immigration put added pressure on the Métis?

### DID YOU KNOW...

Sensing trouble, the government amended the Indian Act to forbid the sale or trade of ammunition to Aboriginal peoples in the Northwest in 1884. This amendment contradicted the treaty agreements and later contributed to the future uprising.

## Did You Know...

William Henry Jackson was drawn to the Métis cause and worked as Riel's private secretary. Captured at Batoche, he was found not guilty of treason by reason of insanity and was sent to an asylum. He escaped, fled to the United States, changed his name to Honoré Jaxon, and claimed he was Métis. He collected a vast amount of information about the Métis, hoping to build a library. At the age of 90, he was evicted from his apartment, and his collection was thrown away.



FIGURE 5-14 William Henry Jackson

**asylum** a hospital that treats people with mental illnesses

**Métis Bill of Rights** a document that outlined grievances of the Métis and others in the North-West Territories

The building of the railway, which you will read about later in this chapter, also influenced the way the government treated the First Nations. As the cost of railway construction rose, the government slashed the budget of the Indian Affairs department. First Nations were now reduced to relying on the government just to survive. The government also kept control of communities by refusing assistance to those who were “difficult.” Many people were on the verge of starvation.

These actions could only lead to trouble. In 1884, a NWC clerk quoted Gabriel Dumont:

*The Government should not be surprised if we side with the Indians. They are our relatives, and when they come to us when they are starving, we have to feed them. The Government is not doing right by them... I have heard the speeches and explanations given of the Treaty [No. 6], not only they would live as well as they had before, but better... Is that taking place now? Now they are allowed to go about starving and the burden of feeding them falls on us.*

—Gabriel Dumont, 1884

## Louis Riel Returns

In the spring of 1884, the Métis decided that they needed a leader who could get the government to pay attention to their petitions. They felt there was only one possible choice—Louis Riel.

After the events of the Red River Resistance, Riel was forced into exile in order to escape being charged with the murder of Thomas Scott. During his time in exile, he turned to religion and became convinced that he was chosen by God to be the leader of the Métis. He had even spent time in an **asylum**. By 1884, Riel had recovered and had settled in Montana. He was married, had two small children, and was working as a teacher. When a delegation led by Gabriel Dumont approached him, Riel agreed to return to Canada to fight on behalf of the Métis.

That fall, Riel and William Henry Jackson, a representative of the local European farmers, collaborated on the **Métis Bill of Rights**. They hoped this document would address the Métis' grievances. Like the 1870 Métis List of Rights, which Riel had also written, it included the concerns of non-Métis people living in the North-West Territories.

The new document was far more detailed, reflecting the Métis' frustrations. It was sent to Ottawa in December 1884. The government acknowledged that it had received the document. After years of other petitions being ignored, the Métis considered this a victory. However, the celebration was premature.

The Métis Bill of Rights (different from the List of Rights set out in 1870) had a number of similarities with the Declaration of Independence, written by American colonists in 1776. Both documents laid out reasons for dissatisfaction with the government. However, the Métis Bill of Rights was not a call for revolution, but a request for equality and negotiations. Here are some key clauses:

1. That the [First Nations] are so reduced that settlers are compelled to furnish them with food... partly to preserve the peace in the Territory.
  2. That the Métis of the Territory have not received 240 acres of land, as did the Manitoba [Métis].
  3. That the Métis who are in possession of land have not received [title].
  4. That no effective measures have yet been taken to put the people of the Northwest in direct communication with the European markets, via Hudson Bay.
- The Métis Bill of Rights also detailed a number of other grievances against the government. How do these clauses inform our understanding of the Métis' needs and their desire for change?



**FIGURE 5-15** Steve Powley, a Métis from Ontario, spent 10 years fighting for his right to hunt. In 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in his favour. It was a landmark decision because the rights of the Métis had not been defined in the Canadian Constitution. Why do you think the Métis continue in their struggle for recognition by the government?

## Trouble Builds in the Northwest

Riel's return added to tensions already present in the Northwest, and John A. Macdonald's government was facing one crisis after another, most of them involving the railway. Some historians speculate that Macdonald saw a way to solve everything—secure the North-West Territories, deal with the Métis, and finish the railway—by letting Riel “make trouble.” If it happened, troops could be sent by rail to deal with it. The public would see the necessity of the **Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR)** for the nation's security, and spending government money to finish it would be acceptable.

One person who initially supported the return of Louis Riel was, surprisingly, Factor and Magistrate Lawrence Clarke. During his time in power, Clarke had become involved in land speculation and party politics. He was now a wealthy man, and he feared he would lose everything if the Métis were granted their land. Were the government to crush a rebellion, Clarke would prosper.

The government already knew that there could be trouble in the Northwest but needed more information. Clarke became the government's informant. He also started false rumours and reported on the reaction of the Métis. As a result of his actions, the level of tension, uncertainty, and distrust rose in the Métis community.

**Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR)**  
Canada's first transcontinental railway

### Did You Know...

Several people thought that Riel might accept a bribe to leave. Riel himself considered leaving, fearing that the government would not negotiate with him. He told Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney's representatives that he would accept a payment of \$35 000 to leave. Dewdney told this to the prime minister, but Macdonald rejected the idea.

### Did You Know...

During the wait to receive news from Ottawa, Riel reportedly began to pray for long periods, perhaps returning to his earlier behaviour. However, he broke with local church leaders on what course of action to take. Riel favoured fighting, while the church did not.

**Northwest Uprising** a series of battles in 1885 between the Métis and the Canadian forces, brought about by the Métis' attempts to gain recognition of their land rights

## “Justice Commands Us”

The Métis knew that the Canadian government was in possession of their Bill of Rights, and Riel decided that they should send another petition to Ottawa—one that demanded responsible government for the North-West Territories. Riel and his council picked Lawrence Clarke as their representative, thinking that with his political connections and his apparent sympathy, he was the best choice. Clarke left in February and returned on March 18 with this message: the only answer the Métis would receive for their petition was bullets. He also said that a force of 500 North West Mounted Police was on its way to arrest Riel. The first statement was probably true; the second was a blatant lie.

On March 19, Riel spoke to the Métis at Batoche. He told them that a peaceful solution was impossible and that the Canadian government was determined to make war. He concluded with the declaration, “Justice commands us to take up arms.”

## Conflict Begins

The only North West Mounted Police force in the area was the detachment at Fort Carlton, and they were too few to withstand a direct attack. Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney had sent reinforcements, but it would take a week for them to arrive. When the Métis moved on Fort Carlton in order to seize supplies, falling just short of attacking the fort itself, Lawrence Clarke did two things. He sent a message to the reinforcements, delaying their arrival by one day. He then publically accused NWMP Superintendent Crozier of cowardice. Crozier responded by riding out to meet the larger force of Métis at Duck Lake on March 26, 1885.

Angry words were exchanged, and two Métis negotiators were shot. Both sides opened fire. Twelve NWMP officers were soon dead, with another 25 wounded. Crozier evacuated Fort Carlton the next day. The **Northwest Uprising** had begun.



**FIGURE 5–16** Fort Carlton today. Now restored as a provincial park, Fort Carlton is much like it was in the past. What features in this image show why the fort would have been a good location for the only NWMP force in the region?

## Battles at Fish Creek and Batoche

The Canadian government quickly mobilized more than 5000 Canadian soldiers, and the first troops were boarding trains for the West as early as March 30—four days after the incident at Duck Lake. Most were in Manitoba within 10 days. General Middleton was in charge of the Canadian troops. He split his force into several groups, since he was worried about resistance from the First Nations. By the middle of April, General Middleton was approaching Batoche.

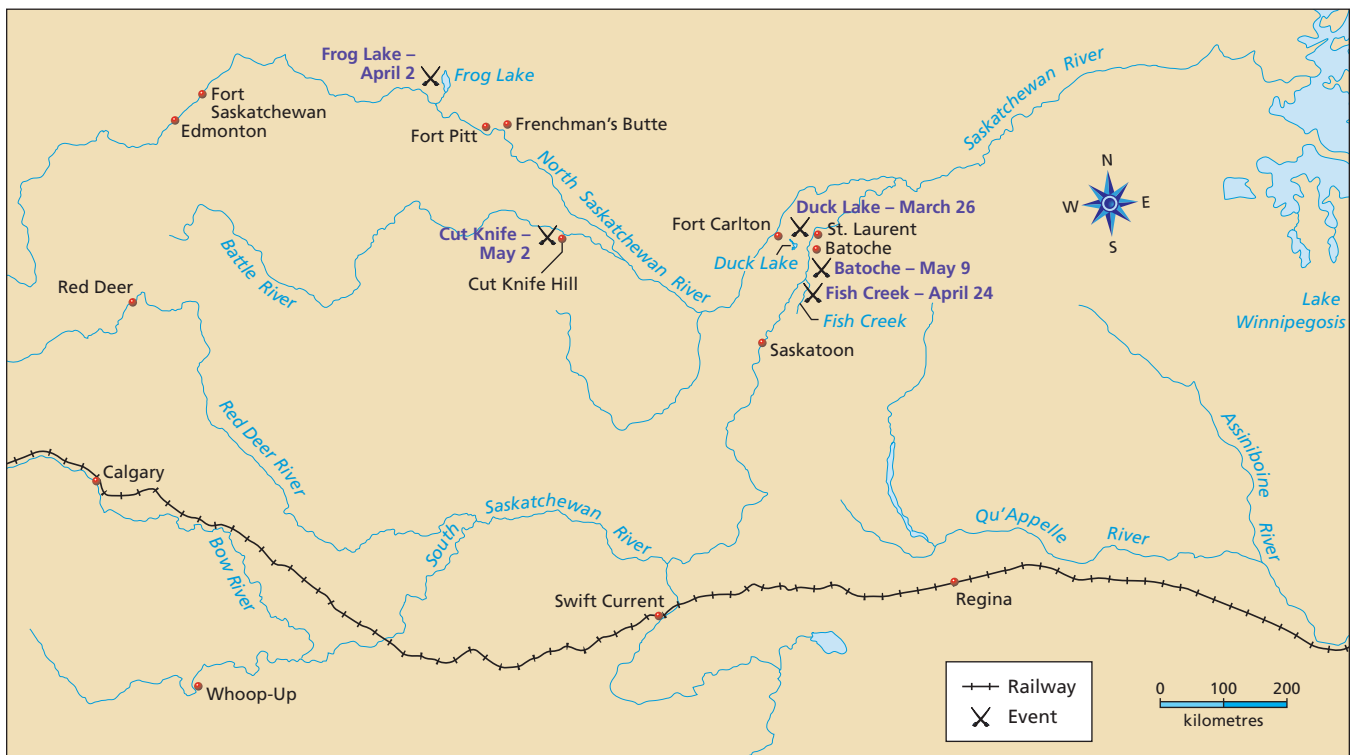
On April 24, Gabriel Dumont, who had convinced Riel that the Canadian troops should be attacked before they arrived at Batoche, ambushed Middleton's force at Fish Creek. Fewer than 300 Métis stopped the advance of 1600 militia soldiers.

On May 9, Batoche was attacked by the Canadian troops. Dumont concealed his men in rifle pits, where they could fire from cover. However, Middleton had cannons and a **Gatling gun**. He stationed the artillery around Batoche, firing from a distance.

The Métis were short of bullets. After three days, they were reduced to firing rocks and nails from their guns. Exhausted, with more than half of their number wounded, they were forced to surrender or flee. Riel was distraught over the Métis defeat and the loss of life. Dumont escaped to the United States, and Riel surrendered on May 15. He still hoped to bring the plight of his people to national attention—through a trial if necessary.

The uprising was over. Its death toll included 53 Canadian soldiers and volunteers, and about 35 Métis and First Nations people. The financial cost to the Canadian government was \$5 million.

**Gatling gun** a large, rapid-fire weapon with multiple rotating barrels, cranked by hand



**FIGURE 5-17** Key events of the Northwest Uprising. How did the railway make a difference in the outcome?

## Zoom In ➤ Poundmaker, Big Bear, Crowfoot, and the Resistance

By the early 1880s, Poundmaker was openly critical of the government's failure to honour its obligations. In response, the government refused food rations for his people. However, when Louis Riel asked for Poundmaker's support, he refused, believing that resistance was futile.

In 1885, as the Northwest Uprising began, Poundmaker led his people to Battleford for supplies. The townspeople panicked, hiding in the nearby fort. The Cree left the next day, but the town was looted and partly burned. Poundmaker was blamed.

Two months later, Poundmaker's people defended themselves when attacked by Canadian troops at Cut Knife Hill. Poundmaker then heard about Riel's defeat, and went to Batoche. He was arrested for treason and sentenced to three years in prison. Released after seven months, Poundmaker died shortly after.

Cree chief Big Bear would not sign Treaty No. 6 until he could consult with his people. His determination gave him the reputation of being "difficult." For six years, Big Bear refused to sign the treaty. Finally, starvation forced him to sign in 1882.

Big Bear also refused to join the Northwest Uprising. In April 1885, his band was refused supplies at Frog Lake. Starving and angry, the Cree's young war leader, Wandering Spirit, took nine townspeople as hostages. Through a misunderstanding, the hostages were killed. Big Bear was blamed. After several weeks, he surrendered, and Wandering Spirit was hanged for murder. Big Bear was convicted of treason and sentenced to three years. He died shortly after his release in 1888.

Siksika chief Crowfoot followed a different path. While he did not like the treaties, he was resigned to them. In 1877, he signed Treaty No. 7.

Six years later, the railway encroached on Crowfoot's reserve. He confronted the rail crews, and work on the line stopped. Father Albert Lacombe, who had lived among the Siksika since 1870, led negotiations between Crowfoot and the CPR. Crowfoot received additional land as compensation. William Van Horne, manager of the CPR, was pleased with the peaceful outcome and awarded both Lacombe and Crowfoot lifetime passes on the railway.

When the Northwest Uprising began, Crowfoot refused to take part. While he did not like the fact that Europeans were settling the Prairies, he recognized the inevitability of change and did his best to protect his people. Crowfoot died of tuberculosis in 1890.

- How did each leader's response have an impact on the development of Canada?



FIGURE 5-18 Poundmaker



FIGURE 5-19 Big Bear

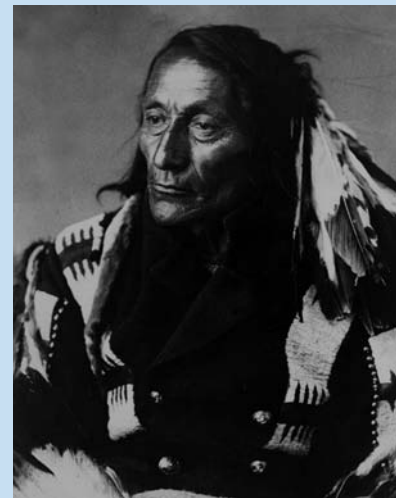


FIGURE 5-20 Crowfoot

## The Trial of Louis Riel

After his surrender, Louis Riel was taken to Regina to stand trial for treason. Riel was defended by two lawyers, one from Quebec and one from Ontario. They wanted to demonstrate that he was not guilty by reason of insanity. Riel disagreed; he wanted to show that the Métis had been goaded into their uprising by the actions of a government that wished to destroy them.

In Regina, only a six-man jury was required. Had the trial been held in Manitoba, the judge would have been a superior court justice, and Riel would have faced a twelve-person jury. Historians have suggested that the government feared a Manitoba jury, which would have included both English and French jurors who might have been sympathetic to the Métis.

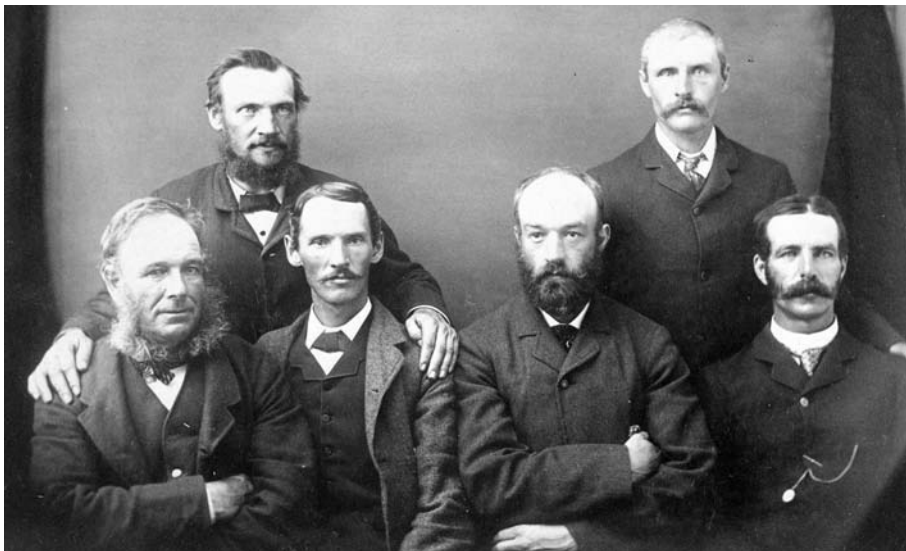
The trial began on July 28, 1885. Riel was prevented from questioning witnesses and could not make a statement until a verdict was announced. The jury found Riel guilty of treason on August 1, after only an hour of deliberation, but they recommended mercy. Riel then made an impassioned speech:

*The agitation of the North-West Territories would have been constitutional, and would certainly be constitutional today, if, in my opinion, we had not been attacked. Perhaps the Crown has not been able to find out the particulars, that we were attacked, but as we were on the scene, it was easy to understand. When we sent petitions to the government, they answered us by sending police... So irresponsible is that government... that in the course of several years, besides doing nothing to satisfy the people of this great land, it has even hardly been able to answer once or give a single response. That fact would indicate an absolute lack of responsibility, and therefore, insanity complicated with paralysis.*

—Louis Riel, 1885

### Did You Know...

When Riel's lawyers attempted to have all the Métis petitions admitted into evidence, the judge refused.



**FIGURE 5-21** The jury for Riel's trial. Although over 30 men received summons to be part of the jury, only one spoke French. Riel was tried by a jury of English and Scottish Protestants. How do you think the trial might have turned out if Riel had faced a jury representing all peoples of the Northwest?



**FIGURE 5-22** Louis Riel (standing, centre) addresses the judge at his trial. Do you think Riel should have been tried for treason? Why or why not?



### WEB LINK

Read a transcript of a speech Macdonald gave in the House of Commons about the Northwest Uprising. Visit the Pearson Web site.

Judge Richardson sentenced Louis Riel to death, as the law required. Riel's lawyers launched appeals all the way to the federal cabinet, but to no avail. Although John A. Macdonald was deluged by petitions and letters from Quebec demanding that Riel be spared, he was unmoved. Riel was hanged in Regina on November 16, 1885.

*He shall hang, though every dog in Quebec shall bark in his favour.*

—Sir John A. Macdonald, 1885

## Aftermath of the Uprising

The consequences of the Northwest Uprising would be severe for the Métis and First Nations of the Northwest. The Métis, having lost the struggle to gain title to their land, moved farther north and west into the hinterland. In order to live, they were forced to **squat** on public land reserved for roads and eventually became known as “the road allowance people.”

The Métis also faced decades of discrimination and prejudice. The word “half-breed,” which once meant “a person of mixed ancestry,” became an insult. Many Métis moved to the cities, where they could hide their First Nations heritage.

Although few First Nations people had actively participated in the fighting (and, in some cases, had only fought when attacked), 81 First Nations men were charged with treason or murder, and 44 were convicted. In court, very little translation was offered, and prisoners were not allowed to make statements in their own defence. Eight First Nations men were hanged for murder; they were executed together in Battleford on November 17. Those who went to jail usually became ill, and many died soon after release.

**squat** to settle on unoccupied land without legal title and without paying rent

First Nations were confined to their reserves. They found themselves at the mercy of a government that saw them as children who needed a firm hand, rather than as a proud, independent people. The work done by careful leaders such as Big Bear, who tried to gain some independence and self-sufficiency for his people, was undone by the conflict. Rules became harsher, First Nations communities were isolated from each other (and from European communities), and gathering ceremonies were banned. These restrictions lasted well into the 20th century.

It would take decades of struggle and determination for both the Métis and the First Nations to regain a measure of respect from the rest of the Canadian population. This struggle continues to this day.



**FIGURE 5-23** After the uprising was over, the government captured and charged more than 200 people, including these Métis and First Nations prisoners. What was the basis of a treason charge against people who had not been treated as citizens by the government?

## ACTIVITIES

1. How did the government maintain social control over the First Nations of the Northwest?
2. Summarize the Canadian government's reactions to the petitions from the Métis. What motivated such reactions?
3. Identify the key events of the Northwest Uprising. For each event, summarize the historical significance.
4. For what reasons did Sir John A. Macdonald want an uprising in the Northwest?
5. On the following pages, read the Window on Canada feature about Riel. Why do some people see him as a hero, while others see him as a villain? How do you explain such contradictory perceptions? Why might these perceptions change over time?

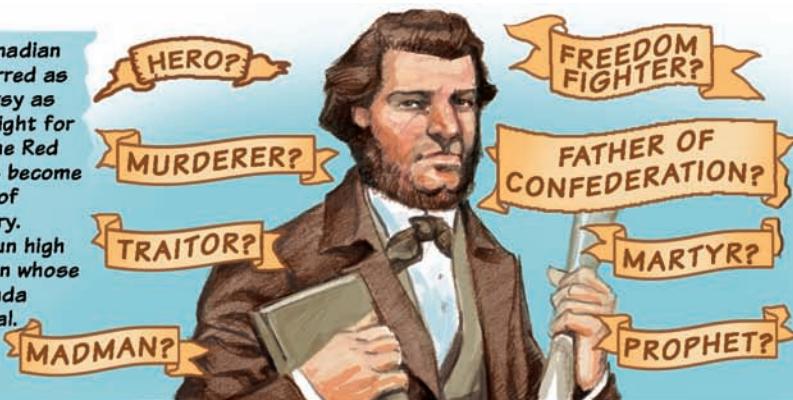
### Judgements

6. Was Louis Riel's apparent willingness to accept money to go away a contradiction of his principles? Provide reasons for your answer.

### Cause and Consequence

7. Macdonald's decision to have Riel executed had far-reaching consequences. Consider the different groups that were affected, and identify how each was affected by the government's actions. Then, with your class, discuss what might have happened if Macdonald had not decided to execute Riel.

No figure in Canadian history has stirred as much controversy as Louis Riel. His fight for the rights of the Red River Métis has become an iconic piece of Canadian history. Passions still run high around this man whose impact on Canada was monumental.



Born in Red River in 1844, Riel was a bright and well-educated child. At age 14 he was sent to Montreal and studied for 10 years to become a Catholic priest. Four months shy of his goal, he left his studies when he fell in love. The woman's family would not agree to the marriage because he was Métis, and he returned to Red River. By age 25 he was politically involved in the rights of the peoples of the North-West.

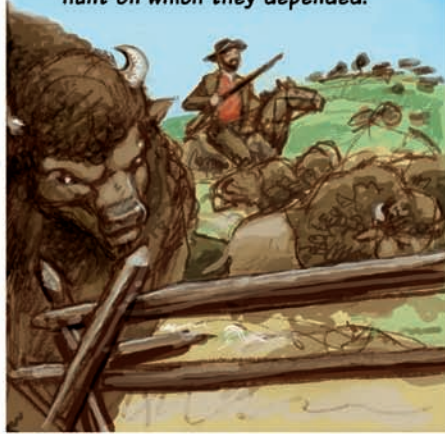
In 1869, the Hudson's Bay Company sold Rupert's Land to the Canadian government. Without consultation, Canada sent surveyors to the Red River Valley—home to the Métis—to claim the land for Protestant and English-speaking settlers. The Métis, fearing the threat to their way of life, named Louis Riel their leader and formed a provisional government.



MÉTIS PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT 1869



The Métis believed the settlers would fence the land and disrupt the bison hunt on which they depended.



Thomas Scott was part of a group that tried to attack Fort Garry. He was jailed and then executed by order of the provisional government. His death fired up religious, political, and racial tensions.



IN ONTARIO

...We call upon the government to avenge Scott's death, pledging ourselves to assist in rescuing Red River territory from those who have turned it over to popery, and bring to justice the murderers of our countrymen.



MEANWHILE, IN QUEBEC...

We pass a unanimous resolution asking the governor general to grant amnesty to Riel.



Riel was disliked in Ontario, and admired and supported in Quebec.

Riel escaped before Canadian troops arrived to arrest him for the murder of Thomas Scott.





Fearing increased tensions between Ontario and Quebec, Sir John A. Macdonald gave Riel money to go into exile.



In exile, Riel was twice elected to Parliament, but he was never able to take his seat.

Riel hid from the law for many years. He suffered a nervous breakdown, displayed erratic behaviour, and held religious ideas that were considered unconventional. He was admitted to a mental health facility in Quebec in 1876. After his release in 1878, his growing appeal as a leader was based not only on his political aims, but also on his religious vision.

**MEANWHILE...**

In 1884, Riel married Marguerite, a Métis woman.



Many Métis moved westward. Gabriel Dumont went to the United States to ask Riel to present the Métis' grievances to the government.



I am the prophet of the New World.

**THE NORTHWEST UPRISING, 1885**



Riel and his supporters set up a provisional government in March 1885, hoping to make their demands heard. Within weeks, however, Macdonald had assembled 3000 troops near Batoche. While Riel prayed, Gabriel Dumont used guerrilla tactics and won some early victories. Resistance forces were outnumbered and by June 3, it was all over. Dumont escaped to the United States, and Riel was arrested and charged with treason.



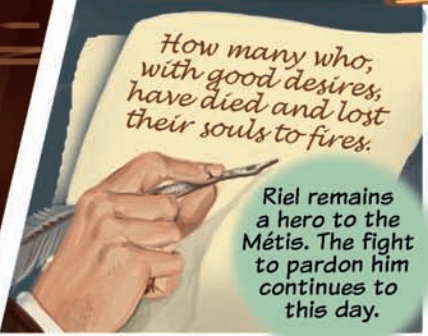
Your Honour, Mr. Riel is insane.

**TRIAL FOR TREASON**



I worked at the risk of my life to better the conditions of the people of the North-West. What you will do in justice to me, in justice to my family, in justice to my friends, in justice to the North-West, will be rendered a hundred times to you in this world, and to use a sacred expression, life everlasting in the other.

**A LINE OF RIEL'S POETRY...**



*How many who, with good desires, have died and lost their souls to fires.*

Riel remains a hero to the Métis. The fight to pardon him continues to this day.

Why do you think the views on Louis Riel, shown below, are so different? Is one view simply wrong or misguided, and the other right?

One possible reason for the contrast is that these statements were written at different times in history. People who live in different times often develop different perspectives on events or issues. Realizing that perspectives can vary plays an important part in understanding history. As you study people and events from the past, you will also develop your own perspective on what happened. Here are some tips to help you develop a historical perspective.

### Identifying Your Perspective

Before you can recognize other perspectives, you have to realize that your perspective comes from the time and culture in which you live and is not shared by everyone. Consider an issue and ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I think about the issue and the best way to resolve it?
- What are my reasons for holding these views?
- How have my circumstances, culture, or time period influenced my positions?

### Identifying Other Perspectives

People from various cultural groups develop different perspectives. Pages 175–179, for example, show conflicting perspectives on the Treaties. One historian wrote *The Past Is a Foreign Country* to point out that perspectives often change over time, just as they do across cultures. For the issue you have identified here, ask yourself the following questions:

- What perspectives (apart from my own) could there be on this issue? (These perspectives may reflect the present or other historical periods.)
- Who shares these perspectives?
- How have their circumstances, culture, or time period influenced their decisions?

*Louis Riel, you have been found guilty of the most pernicious crime a man can commit; you have been found guilty of High Treason. For what you did, your remarks are no excuse whatever, and the law requires you to answer for it.*

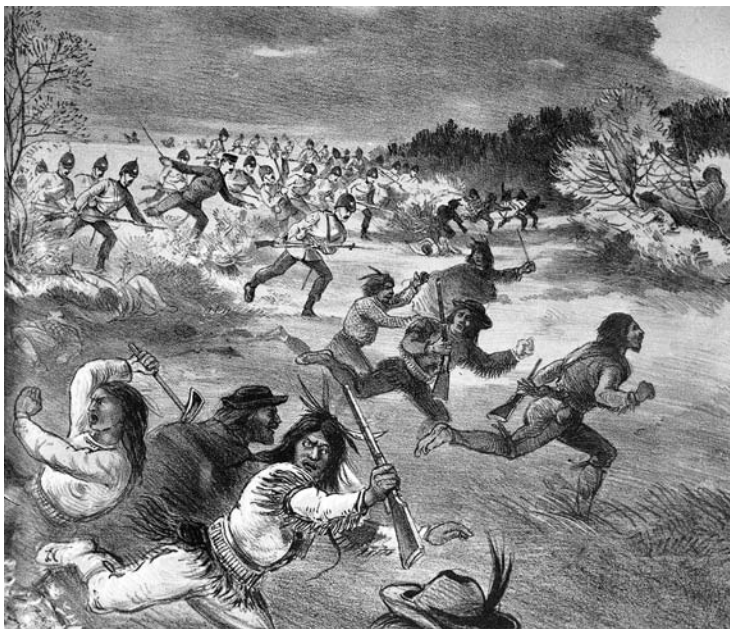
—Judge Hugh Richardson, 1885

*In 1992, the Parliament of Canada and the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba formally recognized Riel's contribution to the development of the Canadian Confederation and his role, and that of the Métis, as founders of Manitoba.*

—Plaque on a statue of Louis Riel near the Manitoba Legislature



**FIGURE 5–24** How does this image show a change in perspective on Riel? What do you think brought about this change?



**FIGURE 5–25** This 1885 sketch shows a scene from the Battle of Batoche. Whose perspective on the Métis is represented here? How might an image like this influence the perspectives of others?

## APPLY IT

1. Complete the following chart by reviewing the section of this chapter on the Northwest Uprising.

You may also do more research if you need further information.

Who were the people involved?	What was their perspective on the Northwest Uprising and the trial of Louis Riel?	What might explain why they supported those perspectives?	Evidence from the text

# The National Dream

## ► Why was a transcontinental railway built in Canada, and what were the consequences?

### Did You Know...

Threat of annexation by the United States was one reason why Macdonald was eager to connect the West to the rest of Canada. You will read more about this issue in Chapter 6.

**incentive** something that encourages action or greater effort

In 1871, British Columbia entered Confederation with the promise of a rail link to the rest of Canada within 10 years. No one at the time had any clear idea of the route the railway would take across the West or how much it would cost, but it was part of John A. Macdonald's long-held dream to create a single Dominion from sea to sea.

## Who Will Build the Railway?

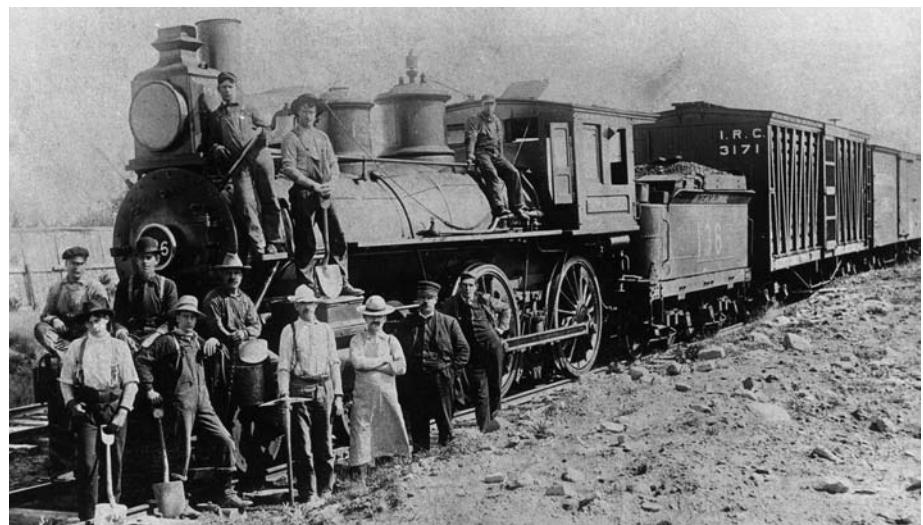
Macdonald knew that the Canadian government did not have the resources to complete such a massive project. He decided to offer **incentives** to wealthy business and railway owners who might be willing to finance the construction of the railway.

This caught the attention of Jay Cooke, an American who knew the potential of the Canadian West. American railway owners saw Canada as a natural extension of the American rail network, since Canada was a market for American goods and a source of natural resources.

The only Canadian with the means to take on a transcontinental railway project was Sir Hugh Allan, who had made his fortune in shipping, manufacturing, and railways in eastern Canada. Allan believed that it made sense to build a rail link to the West, and he joined forces with Jay Cooke.

In 1871, Allan formed the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, a company that seemed to be Canadian but was actually controlled by Jay Cooke. Also, Allan's railway would not be a truly *transcontinental* railway but a branch line of the American Northern Pacific Railway. Allan concealed these facts from the government. If word leaked out that Americans controlled the Canadian railway, it would kill the entire project.

**FIGURE 5-26** Another railway line built to fulfill Confederation promises was the Intercolonial Railway, connecting the eastern provinces with central Canada. Did this railway present the same building challenges as the proposed line to British Columbia? Why or why not?



Political scandals happen when a politician or a government behaves in a way that is either inappropriate or illegal. Sometimes, even the suggestion of some **impropriety** is enough to destroy a career or force a government to resign.

In the summer of 1872, John A. Macdonald called a general election—the first since Confederation. During the election, the Conservatives realized they needed more money for their campaign. In those times, political candidates openly made promises to secure a person’s support. Macdonald asked his Minister of Defence, George-Étienne Cartier, to find out if the wealthy Hugh Allan could help with the campaign. In return, Macdonald promised a guaranteed railway contract. Allan was agreeable. Cartier wrote two memos, one promising Allan the railway contract, the other listing the amounts needed by Conservative candidates.

The Conservatives won the 1872 election with a slim majority in the House of Commons. In

1873, the contents of the memos and the American involvement in Allan’s Canadian Pacific Railway were made public. Now it looked as though the prime minister was in the employ of both Hugh Allan and his American backers.

Macdonald denied everything, but when more hard evidence was released to the press—including a note he sent—he was forced to resign.

**impropriety** improper activity or conduct

*The friends of the Government will expect to be assisted in the pending elections and any amount which you or your Company shall advance for that purpose shall be recouped by you. A memorandum of immediate requirements is below:*

Sir John A. Macdonald      \$25 000

Hon. Mr. Langevin      \$15 000

Sir G.E.C.      \$20 000

—George-Étienne Cartier to Hugh Allan, 1872

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. What do you think of Macdonald’s behaviour? How should we judge Macdonald and the Pacific Scandal?
2. Are there still connections between big business and politics in Canada? Has a scandal such as this one happened since 1872? In a group, research a contemporary political scandal, at the provincial or federal level, and create a short presentation about it. Your presentation may include background information, photos or political cartoons, primary sources, consequences, and what kind of damage control was attempted by those involved.

## Alexander Mackenzie and the Railway

In 1873, after John A. Macdonald resigned because of the Pacific Scandal, Alexander Mackenzie led the Liberals to power. Mackenzie thought that building a transcontinental railway was a waste of time and money, especially in the current economic climate. The Liberal leader had taken office just as a major economic depression hit North America.



**secede** to formally withdraw from an alliance or a federal union

However, Mackenzie was bound by Macdonald's promise of a rail link to British Columbia, and his lack of action was not well received. British Columbian politicians complained to Mackenzie and to the Governor General. They threatened to **secede** from Confederation if the railway was not built as promised. Finally, Mackenzie decided to allow the land survey to continue. This decision gave the impression that he was doing something about the railway that was as costly as building it.

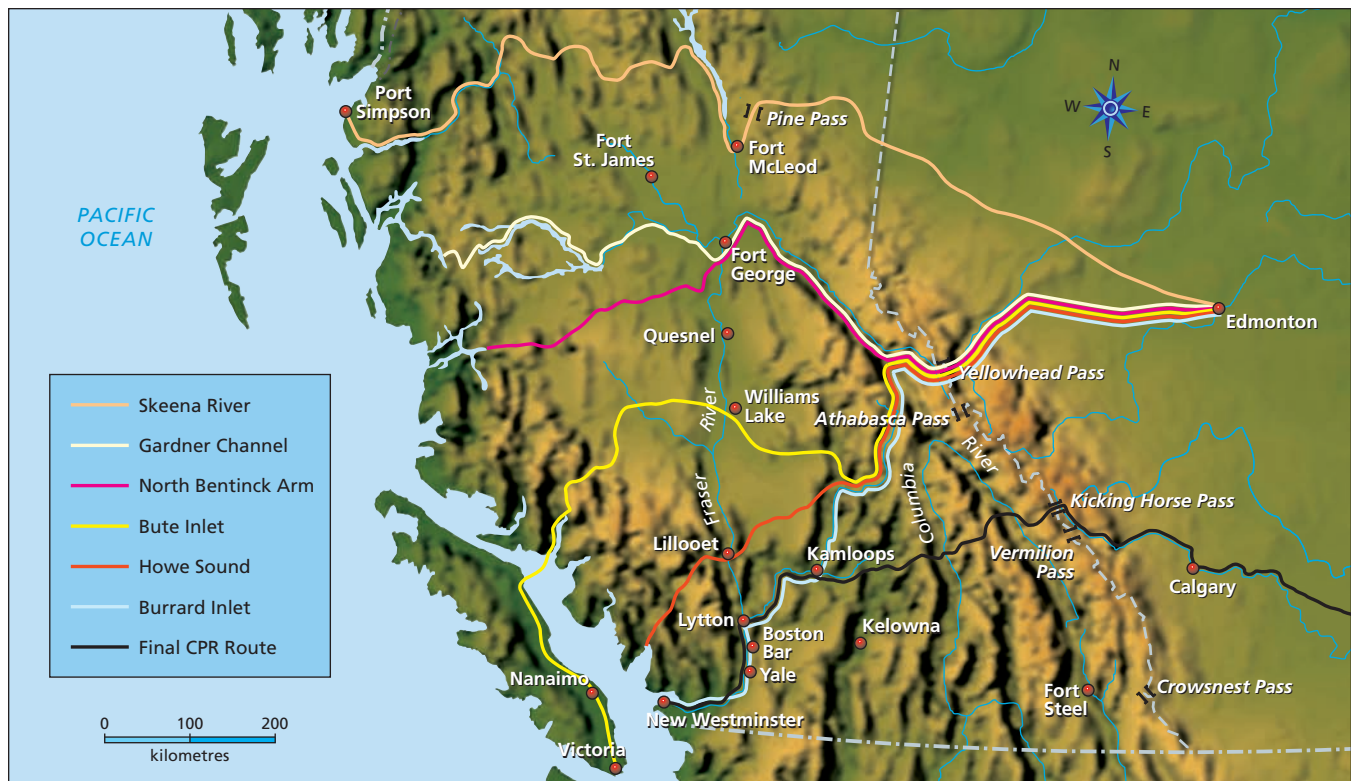
## The Railway Survey

No one really knew where the railway should go, so all possible routes would have to be explored. While building a railway line through the Canadian Shield would not be easy, the biggest challenge was passing through the Rocky Mountains. Building a railway through mountains would be difficult, and careful planning was essential.

At the time, the only major settlements in British Columbia were the capital city of Victoria and New Westminster (Vancouver did not exist yet). With mountain passes, deep ravines and valleys, lakes and rivers, and a coast cut by inlets, the best way to reach these settlements was anyone's guess.

The task of directing the survey fell to Sandford Fleming, surveyor for the Dominion. Fleming sent dozens of surveyors into British Columbia, and they brought back valuable information. While this data was used to make the first accurate map of the interior of British Columbia, the survey also led to serious disagreements—much like today, when new roads or bridges cause endless debate among those who will be affected. This debate was known as “the Battle of the Routes.”

**FIGURE 5-27** This map shows the various routes proposed by those involved in the Battle of the Routes. Why would people have wanted the railway to pass through their area? Predict why the CPR chose the route it did.



Sandford Fleming favoured a route that ran through the Yellowhead Pass and then south to Burrard Inlet, near New Westminster. This route appealed to mainland politicians in British Columbia. Marcus Smith, Fleming's deputy, proposed a route that ran through the Homathco River Valley to the head of Bute Inlet and then across a bridge to Vancouver Island. Politicians in Victoria were in favour of this route. Other people thought a route to Port Simpson in northern British Columbia made more sense because it was closer to Asia than ports in the south. In the 1870s, in spite of the intense debate, no decision was officially made about this part of the route.

### Did You Know...

One survey party was sent to investigate the Lillooet Icefield and the nearby Ring Pass as a possible route. The party disappeared and was never found.

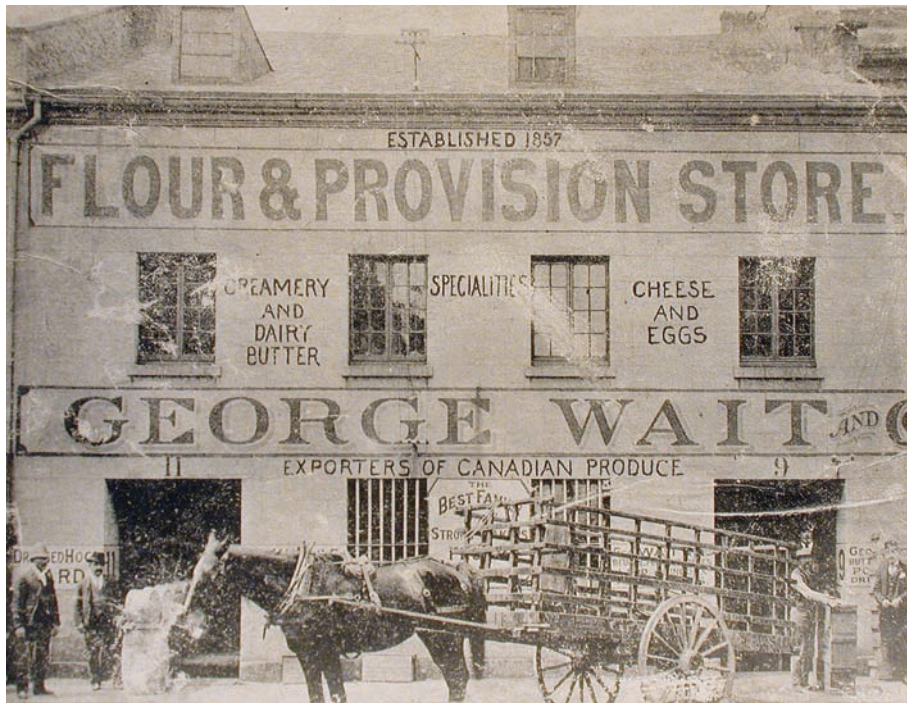
## The National Policy

Sir John A. Macdonald was out of office for five years, from 1873 to 1878. He often thought about the railway. He knew that a transcontinental railway was essential to the survival of Canada, but he needed a political platform to convince all Canadians. In 1876, he developed the **National Policy**, which became the basis of the Conservative election platform in 1878. The voters agreed with Macdonald's vision, and he and his party returned to office with a large majority.

The National Policy was not just an election campaign promise. Macdonald believed that it was a formula for successful nation building, and it remained a central part of Canadian government policy well into the 20th century. The National Policy had three main parts: a system of protective tariffs, increased immigration, and the CPR.

**National Policy** a mainly economic program introduced by the Macdonald government in 1879

### A System of Protective Tariffs



**FIGURE 5-28** During the 1870s, the Canadian economy suffered when American companies dumped low-priced goods on the Canadian market. Canadian manufacturers struggled to sell their own goods and still make a profit. Macdonald devised a system of tariffs, or taxes, that would be applied to American goods. Tariffs would protect Canadian manufacturing, mining, and agriculture by making American goods more expensive. What kind of protective system affects the Canadian economy today?

**FIGURE 5-29** Because the Prairies were suited to agriculture, the Canadian government wanted to bring in immigrants who were farmers. These farmers would produce and export grain, and would buy manufactured goods produced in Ontario and Quebec. Macdonald discouraged the development of manufacturing in the West so that farmers would remain a market for the industrial East. What effect would this policy have on the West? Can the consequences of this policy still be seen today?

### Immigration to the West



**FIGURE 5-30** The West would not develop until goods and people could be transported in and out of the region. Macdonald planned that the CPR would provide the means to ship goods across Canada to and from Asia. Once Macdonald won the 1878 election, building the railway became the government's top priority. How was the railway a cornerstone for the National Policy?

### The Canadian Pacific Railway



## The CPR Syndicate

Once he was re-elected, it took Macdonald two years to find new investors for the railway. Macdonald found the men he was looking for in George Stephen, president of the Bank of Montreal, Donald Smith of the Hudson's Bay Company, and James J. Hill. Previously, they had purchased the floundering St. Paul and Pacific Railway for just \$100 000. Within four years, they had made a profit of \$17 million.

In 1880, Macdonald made the group an offer: \$25 million in cash, a land grant of 25 million acres, and a monopoly west of Lake Superior for 20 years. In return, the new CPR **Syndicate** was to complete the railway within 10 years.

**syndicate** a group of people who combine their resources to conduct a business together

## Planning the Railway

Immediately, the CPR Syndicate changed the planned route of the railway, a route that ran through the fertile land between Saskatoon and Edmonton. Because the northern Prairies was seen as good farmland, many land speculators had moved into the area, buying land they hoped would be near the rail line. However, the Syndicate wanted total control of the project and the land the railway would cross, so they moved the line 300 km south. With no speculators or homesteaders present, the CPR had control over the location of railway stations and towns. The Syndicate also planned branch lines north into the fertile belt, managing all rail traffic on the Prairies.

The change in route made the Canadian Pacific survey useless. The new route would also have to cross the Monashee and Selkirk mountains in British Columbia, and there was no known pass through the Selkirks. Even as the CPR was being built across the southern Prairies, the route through British Columbia was still being studied.

Construction, which began in the spring of 1881, did not go well at first. Work was limited to the line between Winnipeg and Brandon, but by the end of the year, only 230 km had been built. At this rate, the line would not be completed within the promised 10 years. The Syndicate needed a new general manager for the railway—someone with exceptional drive and energy. They chose William Van Horne.

### *Did You Know...*

The southern Prairies were known as Palliser's Triangle, after the Irish explorer who had visited the area in the 1860s. Palliser thought the area was far too dry for farming. The CPR had a report from John Macoun, who had seen the area during a wet period in the early 1870s, so some thought otherwise. Today, the area is, in fact, too dry for agriculture, unless the land is irrigated.



**FIGURE 5-31** The change in route demanded by the CPR Syndicate. What advantages did this change give to the CPR?

William Van Horne (1843–1915) was vital to the successful completion of the CPR. Born in Illinois, Van Horne was only 11 when his father died. He left school at 14 after he was punished for drawing cartoons of his school principal. Since his family needed money, he went to work for the local railway. He changed jobs frequently and learned all he could about every aspect of railway work. By the time he turned 21, there was no railway job he could not do.

One of Van Horne's most remarkable accomplishments was his ability to understand Morse code as easily as a second language, unlike most people who had to transcribe the dots and dashes into a readable message.

By the age of 29, Van Horne was general superintendent of the Chicago and Alton Railway. For the next decade, he gained a reputation as a manager who could take a financially troubled railway company and make it profitable. It was this reputation that led the CPR Syndicate to hire him. Van Horne was given almost complete control over the building of the CPR.

A tall and powerful man, Van Horne was forceful, energetic, and dynamic. He slept very little, considering sleep a waste of time. Van Horne also had a photographic memory and an insatiable curiosity.

Van Horne ran the CPR as vice president, president, and chairman of the board from 1885 to 1910. In the early 1900s, while

in his 60s, he went to Cuba to help build and organize that country's rail system.

- In what ways was Van Horne historically significant? How was he an agent of change?

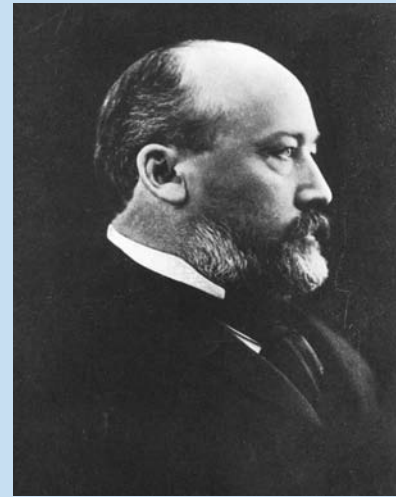


FIGURE 5–32 William Van Horne

## Building “The Impossible Railway”

Van Horne's arrival quickly energized the CPR. He immediately brought a high level of drive and efficiency into its construction. At a time when all railways were built by hand, he was able to have 800 km laid in 1882 and another 800 km the following year. With Van Horne in charge, the CPR could complete the railway within the contracted period—as long as the money held out.

### Money Troubles

One problem for the CPR was that the government paid only when each section of the line was completed, so in the meantime the CPR could not generate any revenue. By the end of 1883, the company was running out of money, and the most costly and difficult sections in British Columbia had yet to be built. George Stephen and Donald Smith each pledged their entire personal fortunes to provide cash for construction, but even that was not enough.

In early 1884, the Canadian government reluctantly passed a bill that provided another \$22.5 million for the railway. Macdonald hoped that the extra money would be enough to complete the CPR. Van Horne began cutting expenses. For example, he decided to use temporary wooden trestles and bridges to carry the line over difficult terrain. They could be built quickly, were cheaper than metal bridges, and could be replaced by more permanent structures later. However, even these economies were not enough, and by the end of 1884, the CPR was almost out of money.

## The Workforce

Thousands of men were needed to build the railway. Between 1882 and 1885, more than 35 000 workers were employed. Many of these workers came from China, which you will read about in the next chapter.

Living and working conditions were terrible. Dynamite blasts regularly blew dust and broken rock into the air. The workers lived in overcrowded, filthy bunkhouses, with no plumbing. Their diet was dull and unhealthy, with little fresh food, especially during the winter. Most men lived on a diet of porridge, beans, and bacon. There was little medical care; anyone too injured to work was automatically fired, with no compensation. Also, no one was paid when weather conditions put a halt to the work.

## The CPR and the Northwest Uprising

When the Northwest Uprising broke out in 1885, the Canadian government needed to transport troops quickly to the Northwest. The fastest way was by rail, but there were still some gaps in the line, which the troops crossed on foot. At one point, they walked 18 km across the frozen surface of Lake Superior.

Van Horne organized the troop movements with efficiency. The first troops arrived in Winnipeg in just five days, and the entire force was on the Prairies in 10 days. Thanks to the CPR, the government looked as though it could respond to a crisis quickly. Canadians who had been complaining about the high cost of building the CPR now saw why it was necessary. It also meant that the CPR could ask the Canadian government for more money, and in early July, Parliament approved the needed grant. The CPR was completed in November 1885—five years ahead of schedule.



**FIGURE 5-33** This wooden railway trestle, 33 m high and 270 m long, is in Ontario. Look closely at the landscape and the scale of the bridge. Even though it was the cheaper option, what kind of time and resources would have been spent to build this bridge? How many wooden bridges do you think were built across Canada?



**FIGURE 5-34** The official photograph of the Last Spike of the CPR, taken on November 7, 1885. Donald Smith is shown driving the last spike, with William Van Horne and Sandford Fleming standing behind him. From a historical perspective, how does this photo show which individuals were considered more important than others in the building of the railway?

Edward Mallandaine was the boy in the picture—the boy standing next to Sandford Fleming in the image of the Last Spike. Born in Victoria, he was the son of a prominent local businessman. In the spring of 1885, when he was 17, he left Victoria. He told his parents he was planning to work as a carpenter in the interior, but he was really trying to get to the Prairies to take part in the Northwest Uprising.

By the time he reached Revelstoke, the uprising was over, so Mallandaine spent the summer working for the CPR. Realizing it was almost finished, he stayed in the area to witness the driving of the last spike, and he even

managed to place himself in this famous photograph.

Once back in Victoria, Mallandaine trained as a civil engineer and worked on several railway projects in British Columbia. In 1897, he helped lay out the town of Creston, where he worked as a CPR land agent for many years. Active in the local militia, he served in the Forestry Corps in France during the First World War. As Colonel Mallandaine, he was a respected local politician, serving as mayor of Creston. He died in 1949.

- How does Edward Mallandaine’s story inform our understanding of the past?



**FIGURE 5–35** Look for Edward Mallandaine just behind Donald Smith’s left arm. Would you want to be part of a famous photograph? Why?

## ACTIVITIES

1. What was improper about Macdonald’s agreement with Hugh Allan?
2. Examine Figure 5–27. Which route would you choose?
  - a) Look at physical maps to examine the terrain of each route. Then measure each route. How would this information influence your decision?
  - b) Are there examples of similar battles over roads or bridges in British Columbia today?
3. Consider the three components of the National Policy: protective tariffs, increased immigration, and the CPR. In a chart, summarize the impact each of these had on the development of Canada. Discuss social, political, and economic considerations.
4. Examine the National Policy and determine which aspects favoured specific parts of the country. How do you think people living in various regions of Canada felt about the National Policy?

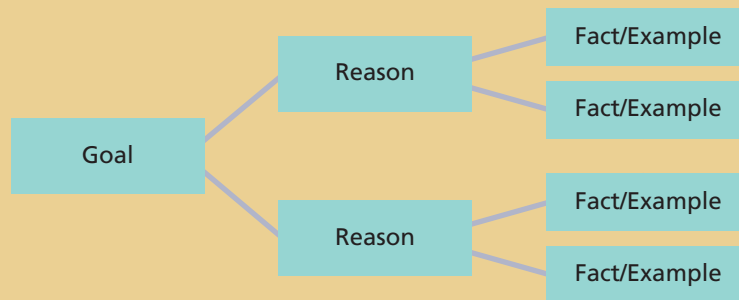
### Significance

5. What kind of narrative is the story of the CPR? Is it a heroic tale, or a scandalous one? Explain your thinking.
6. Explain the historical significance of the CPR. Consider the various elements associated with both its creation (e.g., funding, political scandal, and labour and human rights issues) and its completion (e.g., uniting Canada from sea to sea).

# Explore the Big Ideas

It can be said that the events of 1885 shaped Canada for the next hundred years. For example, the execution of Louis Riel contributed to a level of distrust between English and French Canada, and the nation is still living with the legacy of these events.

The completion of the CPR changed the face of Canada. It allowed for economic expansion and for large-scale European immigration to the West. The CPR became one of Canada's national symbols, recognized all over the world. At great monetary, political, and human expense, Macdonald's National Dream had become a reality.



1. In the 1870s, how did the actions of the Canadian government affect those already living in the Northwest? Was there a better way to handle the issue of settlement? Create a chart like the one shown here to indicate the following:
  - a) the Canadian government's goal (settlement)
  - b) reasons why settlement could have taken place with little or no negative impact on those already living there
  - c) facts or examples to support those reasons

Add to the chart as needed.

2. Research the terms of the numbered treaties. What were the consequences of these agreements? How do they affect First Nations today?
3. Today, when an event has a negative impact on the nation, the government appoints a Royal Commission to investigate. Imagine that a Royal Commission has been called to investigate the events leading up to the Northwest Uprising. You are in charge of the Commission. Determine the causes of the Uprising and recommend changes that could prevent it from happening again. Be sure to provide detailed reasons for your findings.
4. Research the current status of the Métis in Canada. Access Web sites maintained by Métis organizations, or invite a representative of the Métis community to speak to your class.
5. Who built the CPR? Rank the following individuals or groups in terms of importance: Van Horne, the CPR Syndicate, Macdonald, and the workers. Explain your rankings.
6. "The CPR is the reason Canada exists today." Assess this statement in light of what you have learned in this chapter.
7. What makes a good leader? Research the life and leadership decisions of one of the people profiled in this chapter, e.g., Poundmaker, Macdonald, or Riel. Discuss this leader's contributions to Canada. How might this person compare to another world leader?