

Upper Fort Garry and the First Nations Experience

Planning Template

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1. Essential Questions

Who were the First Peoples, and how did they structure their world?

-Treaties were an historical fact before the arrival of non-indigenous settlers in Manitoba.

How did the First Peoples and Europeans interact in the Northwest, and what were the results?

-The interaction between First Peoples and others on the plains was largely peaceful, with sporadic incidents of conflict, often over resources. The Dakota were traditional enemies of the Ojibwa. The Dakota clashed with the Métis as both sought to harvest the same resource... the “buffalo”/bison. A notable example occurred in 1851 at the Battle of the Grand Coteau. Peguis’s Ojibwa [Saulteaux, Anishnaabe] and several Cree groups made a treaty with Lord Selkirk in 1817 by which Selkirk’s colony might farm a two-mile strip of land along the Red and Assiniboine rivers in exchange for an annuity of tobacco and 100 pounds to each of the Ojibwa and the Cree. In the Pemmican Wars, 1816-1817, between the Northwest Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company, the Saulteaux sided with the Selkirk Settlers and against the Métis who had ties to the Northwest Company. First Peoples and Europeans formed alliances of varying durability, sometimes informal, and sometimes formalized by treaty. First Peoples traded amongst themselves and with the settlers.

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

-The Fur Trade changed the economies of the Northwest as some First Nations increased their trapping activities in order to meet the trading companies’ interest in acquiring furs [the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) and the Northwest Company (NWC)]. Some indigenous bands became middlemen acting as intermediaries between First Nations and fur traders. Other groups, notably the Métis, supplied the fur trade companies with pemmican, the staple food of the traders. After the two companies merged in 1821, the new entity (the “HBC”) made the decision to cut its work force. Many of the Métis

labourers who lost their jobs moved to Red River with their families and became the dominant force in Red River because of their numbers, outnumbering both First Nations as well as the nonindigenous settlers in the region.

The Métis became “free” traders themselves outside the monopoly of the HBC. The era of “free trade” was proclaimed after the Sayer Trail, 1849. The population in Red River was about 12,000 in 1869, 80% of whom were French and English-speaking Métis. Many of the Métis had immigrated to Red River after the 1821 merger of the HBC and NWC.

How did British colonial rule change during this period, and what was its impact on life in North America?

-In 1869, the HBC decided to sell Rupert’s Land to the Canadian government. The rule of the HBC had been challenged by local residents for a number of reasons including its inability to enforce its laws in the periods when the Settlement was not the home of a military force, notably in the years after 1861. The pending change of government, about which the peoples of the Red River settlement were not consulted, gave rise to fears of what changes the new order might bring and a determination among the Red River settlers to ensure that their rights and property would be respected under the new regime. In 1869 the Métis took up arms and occupied Upper Fort Garry.

Why did the Métis resist the westward expansion of Canada, and what were the consequences?

The Red River settlement was regarded by the Métis as their homeland. The Métis had inhabited the region around the Forks since the middle of the 18th Century. They had become farmers, traders, freighters, as well as pursuing more traditional economies such as hunting and fishing. With the pending sale of Rupert’s Land, from which negotiations they had been excluded, the Métis became fearful of what the future held and determined to protect their interests. They formed a provisional government, the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia (LAA), in order to formalize negotiations with Canada and to ensure stability within the settlement. The LAA had a military arm but armed conflict was kept to a minimum. The Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories was barred by Métis from entry into Assiniboia and a small group of dissenters, some of whom belonged to a new Ontario-based political group called Canada First, were imprisoned. Three people died violently during the nine-month rule of the provisional governments and one of these incidents, the trial and execution of Thomas Scott, stirred up anger in Ontario. The Dominion of Canada granted amnesty to some members of the LAA except for those who it held responsible for Scott’s execution, including Riel and his military leader, Ambroise Lépine. They were said to be guilty of aiding in the murder

of Thomas Scott. Riel fled to the United States to avoid retribution. Lépine stayed and was tried and sentenced to hang but was later granted amnesty. Riel was elected three times as an MP for Provencher but was unable to take his seat due to the threat of arrest hanging over him. With the influx of non-indigenous settlers from Ontario, the Métis soon became a minority in Manitoba. In 1885, the Métis in the North-West Territories again resisted the western expansion of Canada. They were defeated on the battlefield. Riel was hanged and some members of his cabinet were imprisoned.

Some consequences:

after their defeat at Batoche, the Métis did not play a significant role as a people until the Constitution Act of 1982, when they were officially recognized as one of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada along with First Nations and the Inuit;

because of the Métis action in Manitoba, Ottawa recognized Manitoba as a province rather than a territory;

the actions of the Métis may have anticipated and even precluded expansion into the Northwest by the United States.

2. Enduring Understandings

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples play an ongoing role in shaping Canadian history and identity.

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*.

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.

Canadian institutions and culture reflect Canada's history as a former colony of France and Britain.

British cultural traditions and political institutions have played a role in shaping Canadian history and identity.

The history of Canadian citizenship is characterized by an ongoing struggle to achieve equality and social justice for all.

The meaning of citizenship has evolved over time, and the responsibilities, rights, and freedoms of Canadian citizens are subject to continuing debate.

The history of governance in Canada is characterized by a transition from Indigenous self-government through French and British colonial rule to a self-governing confederation of provinces and territories.

Canada's history is shaped by economic factors such as natural resources, agricultural and industrial development, the environment, technology, and global economic interdependence.

3. Historical Thinking Concepts and Skills

- Establish historical significance
- Use primary source evidence
- Identify continuity and change
- Analyze cause and consequence
- Take historical perspective
- Understand ethical dimensions of history

4. Historical Content Focus

This lesson plan is designed for students to explore the process by which Manitoba became part of Canada. The Canadian government viewed the Indigenous inhabitants of the West as impediments to Canadian expansion. Both the Metis and First Nations would attempt to ensure their survival in the face of an uncertain future: the Metis through organized resistance, and First Nations through negotiations.

Students will analyze how the people of Red River, an extremely diverse population, organized politically and militarily in attempts to control the legal process by which Manitoba would enter Confederation and to negotiate the terms of the federal-provincial relationship. Students will explore the mindsets/ethos and the actions of all parties involved, both those of the local populations and the Canadian and British governments. History is not a single story; students need to understand the complexity of this history. Students will gain the knowledge and understanding of how and why the solutions were arrived at to include Manitoba within Confederation.

5. Student Tasks to Demonstrate Learning

- Formulate and clarify questions to guide historical inquiry
- Select and identify diverse primary and secondary sources of information
- Consider the purpose and validity of historical sources
- Interpret, analyze, and record information from primary and secondary sources
- Compare diverse perspectives and conflicting accounts of the past
- Identify underlying values in historical sources and accounts

Construct and communicate historical narratives, arguments, or other interpretations of the past using a variety of media

6. Learning and Assessment Strategies

- **Activate**
- **Acquire**
- **Apply**

7. Learning Resources

Manitoba Government: A History of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia.
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/ana/mbmetispolicy.html#item2>