

Prairie Provinces

Produced by the Cartographic Division



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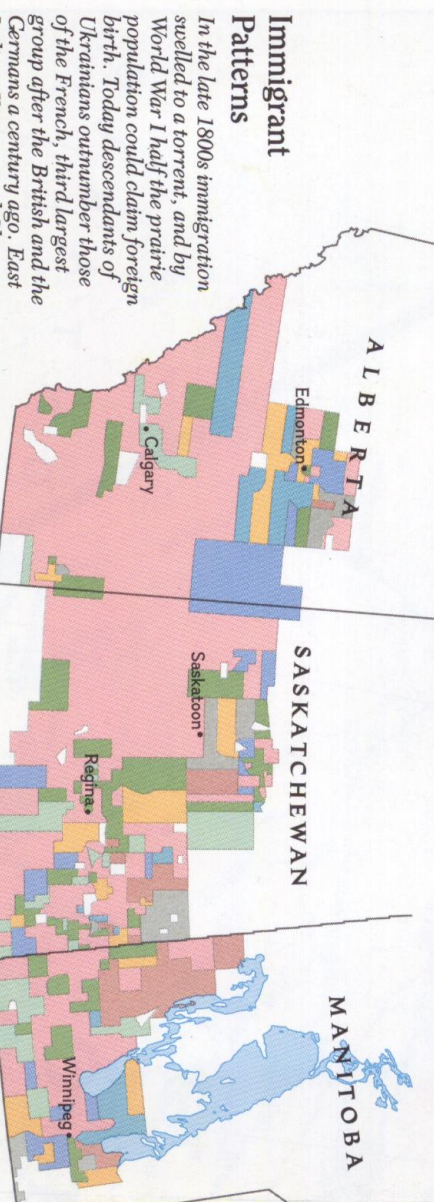
A Métis man, Louis Riel, led two ranches of Métis. Though he was hunted for treason, he is now recognized as a hero. Source: Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

Louis Riel, a Métis leader in the Northwest Territories, was a key figure in the creation of the Prairie Provinces. Source: Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

By 1855, buffalo had almost disappeared. Settlements in the Northwest Territories were dependent on the Hudson's Bay Company for food. Source: Canadian Archives, Calgary, Alberta.

Created in 1873 to maintain law and order in the Northwest Territories, the Mounted Police were the first Canadian police force. Source: Royal Canadian Mounted Police Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan.

Made of wood and buffalo hide, a Métis boat (pemmican canoe) was used to carry goods and people across the prairie. Source: Canadian Archives, Calgary, Alberta.



Immigrant Patterns

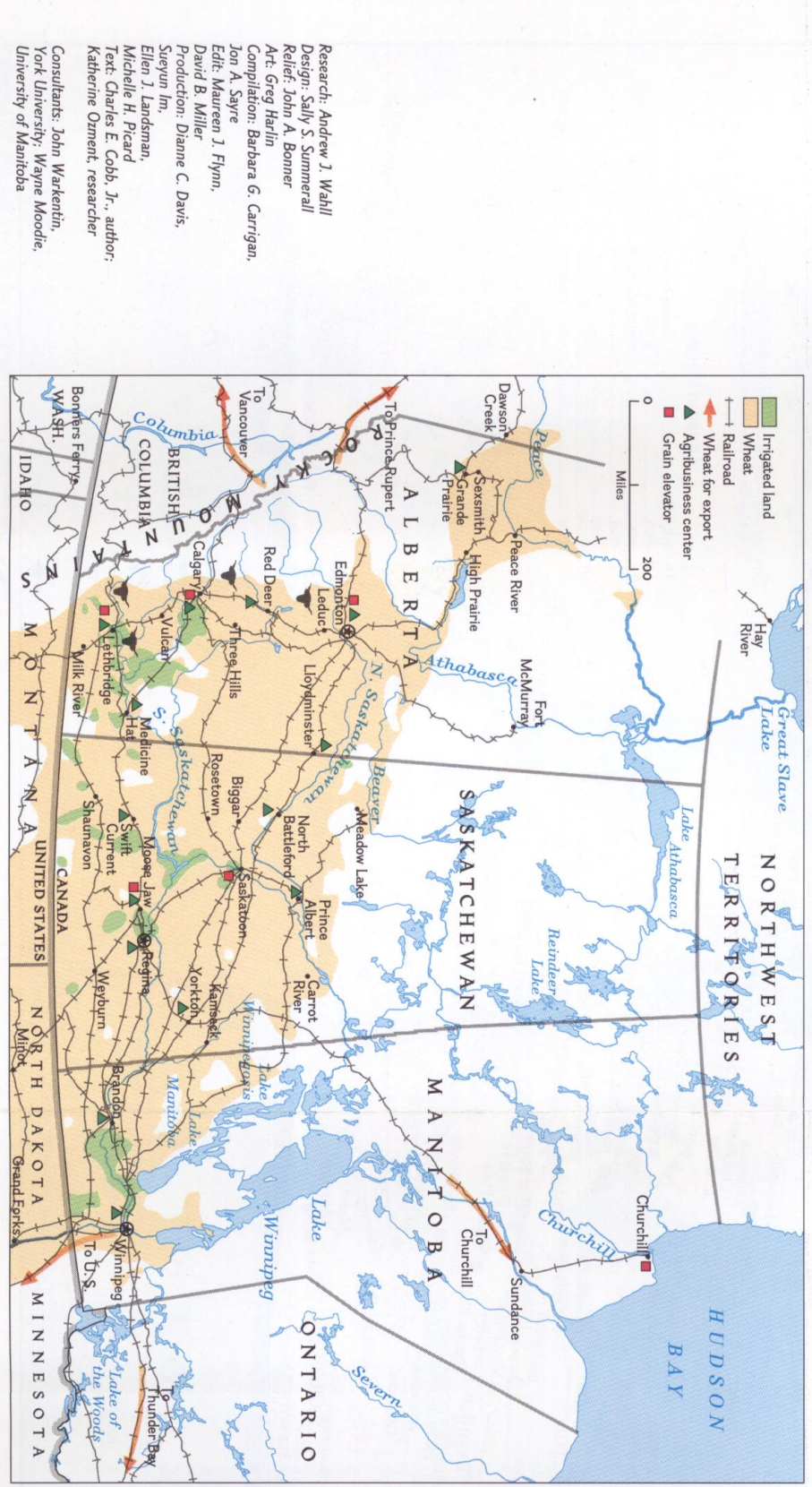
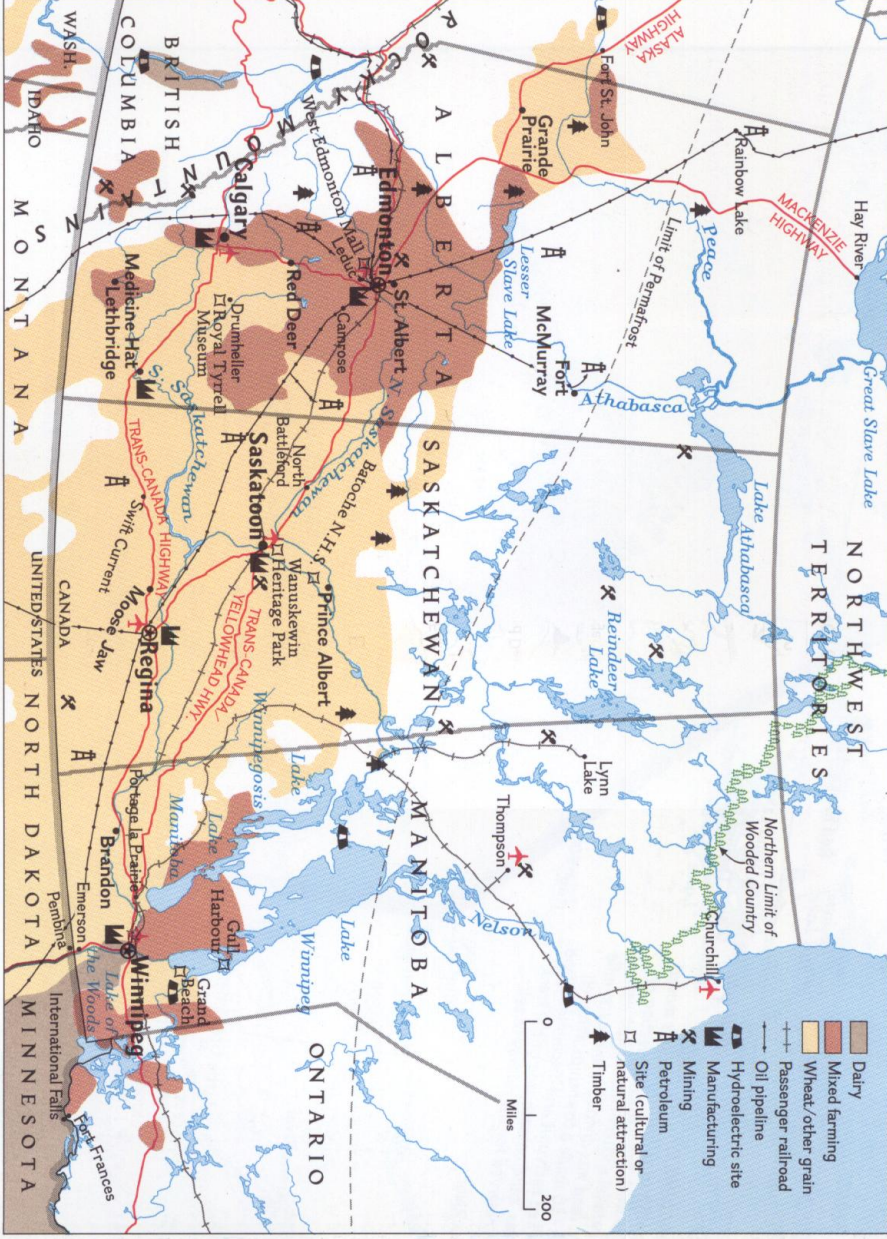
In the late 1880s immigration from Europe and the United States increased. Today descendants of immigrants outnumber those of the original settlers. The group after the British and the Germans a century ago. East Indians, Koreans, and Chinese newcomers reflect an increasing diversity among all races.



Alberta's settlement and all began in 1881. Source: Canadian Archives, Calgary, Alberta.

5 Prairie Bounty

The 1970s and early '80s saw a burst of government spending on roads, education, and health care. Then worldwide recession hit, prompting the provinces to cut back. In the north, as vast tracks of timber across much of the region. In the larger cities, manufacturers of electronic equipment are carving their own niche in the booming global market. The governments are aiming to boost their competitive edge and increase their political clout. Ottawa's regulatory control remains a sore point.



ising in low steps from Lake Winnipeg to the Rocky Mountains, the Canadian prairie owes its sweeping plains and mighty lakes to an onslaught of glacial ice that began 25,000 years ago. To the north a grassy, tree-dotted fringe gives way to the boreal forests of the Canadian Shield, bedrock core of the continent. In the heartland, with what Canadian writer W. O. Mitchell called "the skeleton requirements simply, of land and sky," empires of fur, grain, and oil were built by successive waves of people, the first arriving from Asia via the Bering land bridge at least 12,000 years ago. Then, descendants hunted buffalo, caribou, and moose, nurturing the intricate network of rivers and lakes.

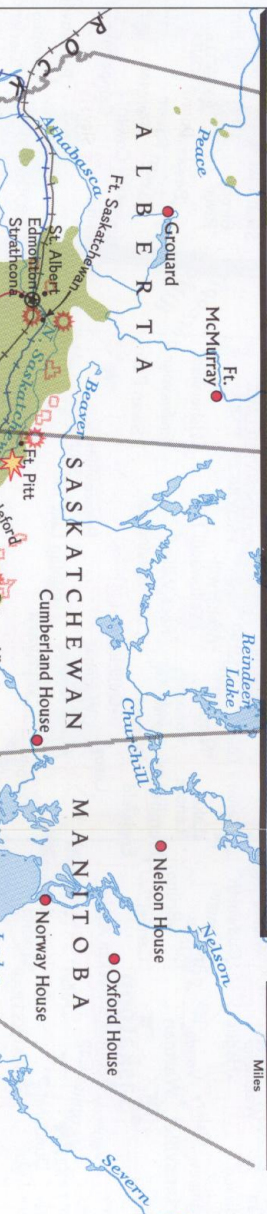
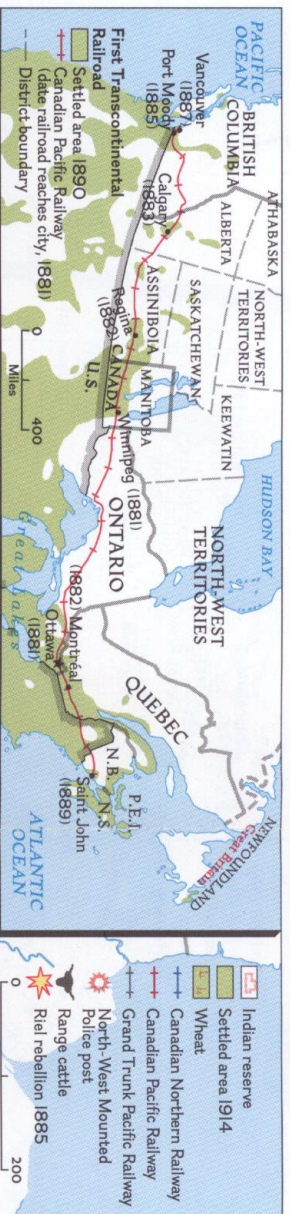
In 1670 King Charles II chartered the Hudson's Bay Company to tap the resources of a drainage basin holding a quarter of the world's fresh surface water—and an estimated ten million beavers. Fur-rich Canada also drew French traders, who came via the St. Lawrence (map 1). By the late 1700s the Hudson's Bay Company and its archrival, the Montreal-based North West Company, were battling for control (map 2). Britain, increasingly curious about the western interior, sent out an expedition under Capt. John Palliser in 1857. He reported that "a sufficiency of good soil is everywhere to be found" but decried the "extensive sandy wastes" in the south-west—known as Palliser's Triangle.

The Métis (progeny of European-Indian marriages) fought for their territory, which entered the Confederation as Manitoba in 1870. Soon a transcontinental railway stitched together the fabric of the West (map 3), and homesteaders poured in. As the 20th century began, cattle grazed where buffalo once roamed, and wheat was king of crops (map 4). Winnipeg served as a crossroads for immigrants and as a source of credit for the farmers, ranchers, and merchants settling across the prairie. Saskatchewan and Alberta joined the Confederation in 1905.

After World War II, exploitation of resources such as petroleum, uranium, and potash created a new economic landscape (map 5). Today the three Prairie Provinces represent a national government that they feel does not understand westerners and press for greater authority over the wealth from their land.

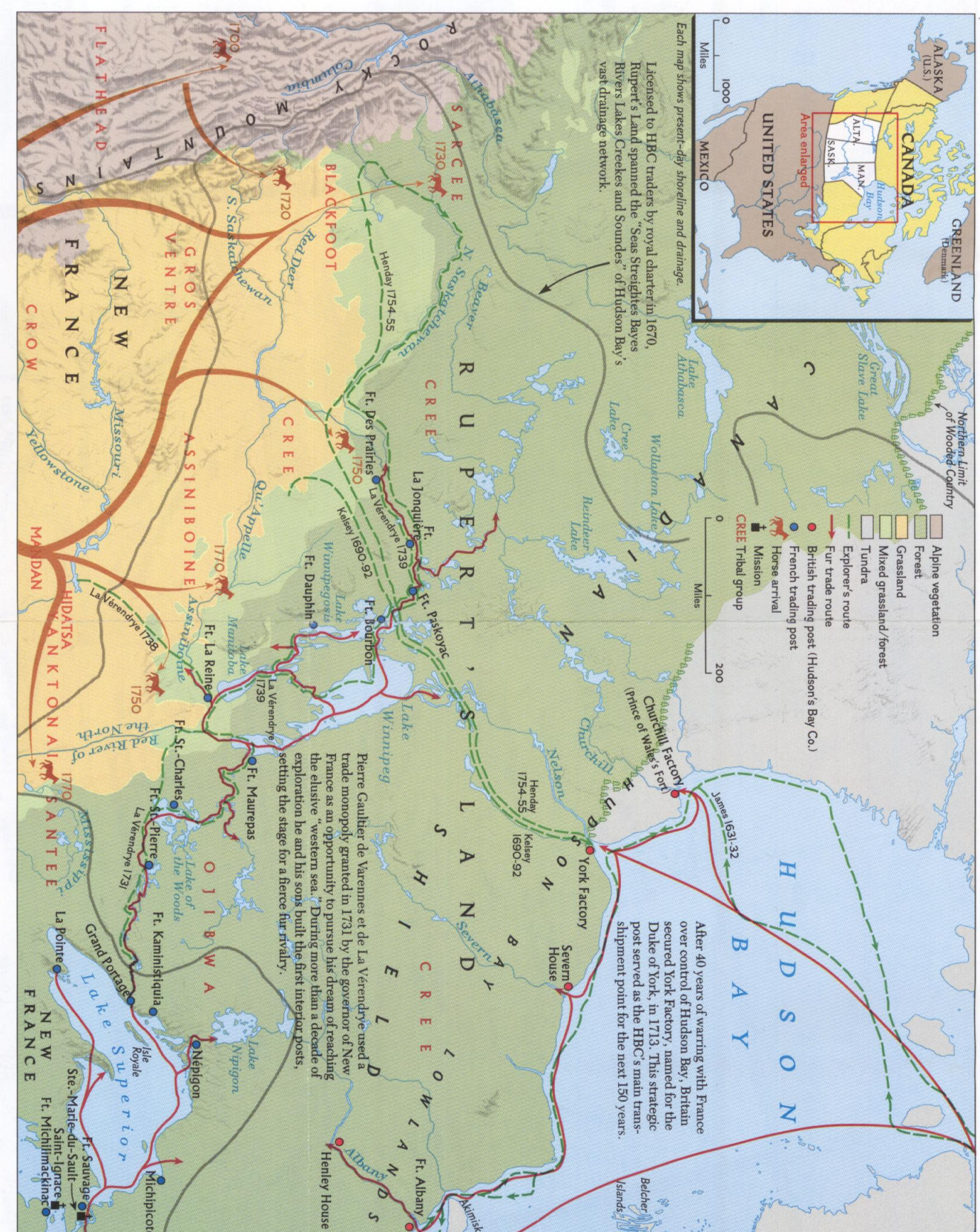
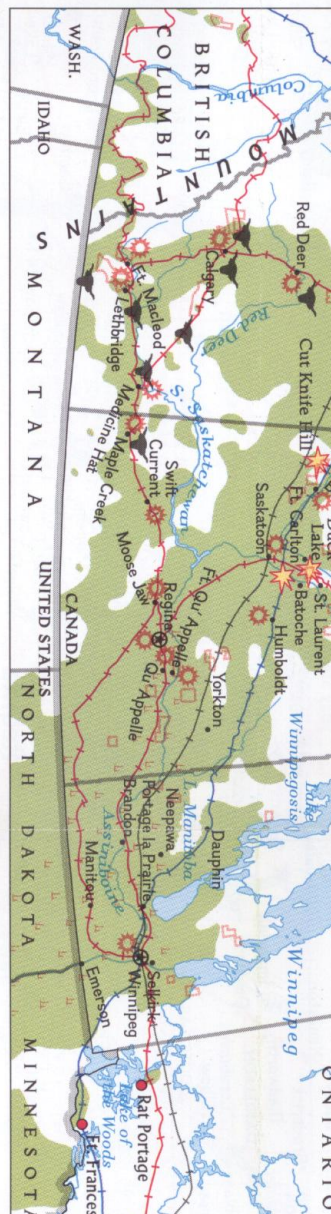
3 1870-1914 Steel Rails and Settlers

In 1881, with a grant of 25 million dollars and 25 million acres to the Canadian Pacific Railway, Canada selected its commitment to settle its vast interior. Five years later the first passenger cars crossed from Montreal to Port Moody on the Pacific. Originally planned to curve through the fertile strip north of the drier grasslands, the railway followed a shorter southern route. Optimists trumpeted their certainty that what Palliser had called desert was in fact ripe for wheat. Cheap, 160 acres for ten dollars and a promise to till the ground for three years, six-mile-square townships were surveyed, and the North-West Mounted Police rode north to keep the drier grasslands, the railway.



4 1914-Present Wheat, Wheat, and More Wheat

By the turn of the century, urban Europeans had developed a taste for pastas, pastries, and soft white bread made from high-gluten durum wheat, not the Continent's soft wheats. The Canadian government encouraged agricultural land on the first reveal of the incoming flow that had begun in 1870. The devastating effects of the Great Depression spurred governments, scientists, and farmers to cooperate on soil reclamation, irrigation, and



1 1500-1760 Indians and the Fur Trade

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God built a rat that saved all the world's animals from flood, according to a Cree creation story. Then he sent out a muskrat to find land. By the mid-1500s the Cree were conducting a thriving trade in furs, especially beaver, with the Europeans. The fur trade was a key factor in the development of the Prairie Provinces. It brought European traders and settlers to the region, and it helped to establish a network of trade routes that would later be used by immigrants and settlers. The fur trade also played a role in the development of the Canadian economy, as it provided a source of income for many people in the region. The fur trade was a complex and often controversial industry, but it was an important part of the history of the Prairie Provinces.

2 1760-1870 European Competitors

Europe's seemingly inevitable demand for beaver pelts had fueled competition. Life in an unfamiliar realm left many forlorn. One HBC officer wrote of "nine months of winter, varied by three of rain and mosquitoes." In 1763, at the end of the French and Indian War, Britain gained Quebec and the St. Lawrence trade routes.

The intense competition forced the HBC to abandon its claim to the frozen sea. "Company men opened an interior post, Cumberland House, and a string of others along the North Saskatchewan River. He planned a settlement of about 1,000 people along the Red and Assiniboine rivers, which threatened the North West Company's main supply route. The result: a skirmish between the two companies, the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816 that left 22 dead.

Pressured by the British government, the companies merged under the HBC name in 1821. The new monopoly operated much like an independent state until the formation of Manitoba on July 15, 1870.

