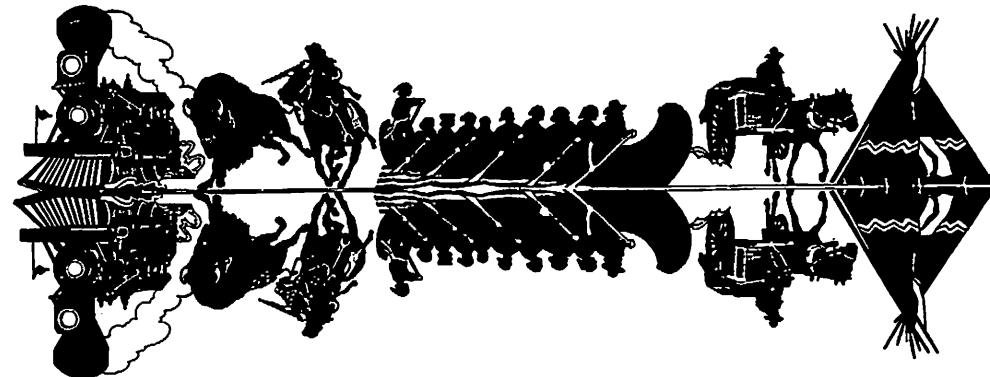


# The Forks La Fourche

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE LIEU HISTORIQUE NATIONAL



## HISTORIC THEMES

**The Forks National Historic Site**  
Parks Canada  
45 Forks Market Road  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  
R3C 4T6

Information (204) 98-FORKS  
TTY/TTD (204) 983-2007  
FAX (204) 983-2221

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Canadian Heritage Patrimoine Canadien  
Parks Canada Parcs Canada

Canada

## Land Use at The Forks in the Precontact Period

### (Theme I)

The junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers has been a focal point for human use for at least six thousand years. The Forks has served as a meeting place, fishing camp and fur-trade centre. Archaeological evidence indicates The Forks was in use hundreds of years prior to the arrival of European traders and explorers, and continued to be used by both Native peoples and Europeans after the expansion of the fur trade in the early 19th century.

The first inhabitants of The Forks were large-game hunters who stayed near this important source of water on a temporary basis to hunt and fish. The remnants of two campfires, dated to approximately 4,000 B.C., contained burnt fishbone and were discovered on the Assiniboine riverbank. By 1,000 B.C. Native groups from the vicinity and other regions in North America were camping here for extended periods of time. The two rivers provided transportation routes for groups of people from the south, north and west. Projectile points and other lithics indicate the source areas for such material came from southern Manitoba, North Dakota, the Lake Superior region and northern Texas. The tens of thousands of artifacts found show that a variety of activities occurred at The Forks, including bonework, woodwork, shellwork, tool and clothing manufacture, food preparation and food processing. This wide range of implements demonstrates the people were familiar with the area and its habitat. The Forks was a place where they fished and hunted, preserved large quantities of fish for winter, harvested plants and berries, and met and traded with people from other regions.

After A.D. 1 the technological innovation of making ceramic containers was introduced into southern Manitoba. Archaeological remains include fire hearths, broken ceramic pots of different decorative styles and several extensive centimetre-thick layers of fish scales.

Many categories of messages and activities are appropriate for The Forks National Historic Site. Program themes range from the local urban setting to the global ecosystem, from the environments of the past to our current situations. This information is to be associated with the experiences of the site's visitors and include suggestions for positive action.

If your program promotes any of the principles listed below, it is within the realm of our Environmental Citizenship theme.

### Ten Principles of Environmental Citizenship

1. Care for our planet's air, water and land.
2. Reduce, recycle and reuse.
3. Control our use of non-renewable resources.
4. Use our renewable resources wisely.
5. Safeguard our planet's diversity of life.
6. Foster appreciation for cultural and historical heritage everywhere.
7. Be sensitive to the environment in our financial decisions.
8. Foster education and understanding about our planet and our role in it.
9. Work for a healthier environment personally and in our communities.
10. Urge our government to work with others for a healthy global environment.

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By 1882 a shanty town on the northwest corner of The Forks, known as "the flats," housed a large portion of the city's destitute population of immigrants. Up to 2,000 individuals of Jewish, English, Scottish, Irish, Italian and Icelandic descent, many of whom found work in the nearby railway shops owned by the NPMR, inhabited this area. Although their tents and shanties were washed away in the 1882 flood, they were quickly replaced by new shacks in 1883-84.

During this period of immigration, newcomers continued to arrive, build housing and enter the labour pool of the West. This experience was shared by hundreds of thousands of immigrants to Canada by the beginning of the First World War. Collectively they played a central role in both the prairie's development as a major agricultural region and Winnipeg's role as a metropolis.

## **Environmental Citizenship (Theme IX)**

In 1990 the federal government launched Canada's Green Plan. As part of Parks Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage, The Forks National Historic Site is responsible for delivering the plan's messages that call for immediate environmental action. These are to have a positive impact on our air, land, water, the North, parks, wildlife, fisheries, forests, waste generation and use of energy.

"Canada's goal is to create an environmentally literate society, one equipped with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for action."

Our government cannot achieve those goals by itself. We rely on partners - individuals and community organizations - to help promote environmentally responsible decisions in the public by example, activities and messages.

Radiocarbon dates from the charcoal and animal bone associated with these ceramics range between A.D. 510 to 1450.

A group of Assiniboine, Cree and Saulteaux (Anishinabe) were camped at The Forks when the first Europeans arrived here in the 1730s. Similar encounters continued throughout the 18th century with many different Native bands including the Sioux/Dakota group who visited The Forks frequently. Archaeological traces of historic camping areas - such as fire hearths, artifact scatters, and middens (garbage deposits) of organic materials and fish, bird and animal bone - indicate the Native people continued to use the area well after the establishment of the European fur trade at The Forks.



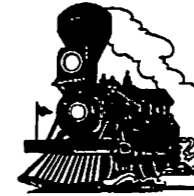
## **Native-European Contact at The Forks: 1734-60**

### **(Theme II)**

The initial sustained contact at The Forks between Natives and Europeans occurred in the 1730s. While French traders attempted to exploit the commercial potential of the lands beyond the Great Lakes basin, the Cree and Ojibwa of these areas shifted their established alliance patterns and moved into new territories to the north and west. They maintained their traditional aspects of material and domestic culture as well as still following the food sources through the changing seasons, while beginning to occupy new regions within the parkland zone (the area between the boreal forest and southern grasslands). The Forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers became a key location, serving as a transition zone between the parkland and prairies and frequented by bands of Cree, Assiniboine and Ojibwa who all viewed the area as their territory. Here they fished, foraged and hunted the bison herds that sought winter shelter at the fringe of the parkland zone. Competition among the Native groups for the abundant game resources at The Forks suggests the area was inhabited for only relatively short periods of time.

In the early 18th century French commercial interests operating from New France established a network of trade and provisioning posts throughout the North-West. This "postes du nord" policy was directed by the explorer and trader Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Vérendrye who arrived at The Forks in 1737. To help offset the costs of the search for the western sea, LaVérendrye traded for furs with the northern Ojibwa, Cree, Assiniboine and Gros Ventres living in the interior. One of LaVérendrye's business associates, Monsieur de Louvière, constructed Fort Rouge (probably on the south bank of the Assiniboine River) in 1738 as part of this trade network. Although it was abandoned around 1749, this French expansion into the West initiated further European transportation and economic links in the region.

portation system. The present-day Union Station (a beaux-arts structure built between 1908-11), the Canadian Northern bridge near the junction, the railroad tracks, the Boiler and Brake structure (The Forks NHS information office and Manitoba Children's Museum), the National Cartage Building (Johnston Terminal), the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway stable building (Forks Market structure) and the unrenovated Canadian Northern Cartage stables are visible reminders of a national railway linking the country from coast to coast.



## **The Forks and Immigration: 1870-1920** (Theme VIII)

Canada has become a nation of immigrants, and the Red-Assiniboine junction is associated with the largest population movement in the country's history. With the transfer of Rupert's Land to the Dominion in 1870, Canada acquired a vast agricultural land base that was to be occupied by immigrant settlers.

In the 1870s peoples from overseas arrived in Winnipeg via riverboat and train connections through the northern United States. In 1872 Dominion authorities built two immigration sheds at The Forks, reflecting the site's status as a major debarkation point. These sheds with detached cookhouses could accommodate up to 500 persons at a time.

## **The Junction and the Railway Era: 1886-1923**

**(Theme VII)**

Railways provided the transportation networks integral to western Canadian development. Trains were the means by which settlers arrived, shipped out their agricultural produce and other materials, and imported goods from other areas. The establishment of the CPR was one of the cornerstones of national policy for transforming the prairies into the largest agricultural region in the country.

The Forks was one of the key sites of early railroad development on the prairies. In the late 1880s the Manitoba government defied federal authority and approved a charter for the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railroad (NPMR). The construction of the NPMR shops and yards linked The Forks with the first major railroad to challenge the CPR monopoly.

With the development of the railway in Winnipeg came the arrival of organized labour movements. Labour activity was evident in the locomotive roundhouse, freight sheds and yards, while strikes in the NPMR in 1894 and Canadian Northern in 1902 marked the appearance of industrial unionism in Winnipeg and more generally in western Canada.

When Canadian Northern took over the NPMR in 1901, company president William Mackenzie established The Forks as the central terminus by building numerous structures and yard offices. In 1903 the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad was granted the right to expand westward and, together with Canadian Northern, it became the main transcontinental competitor to the CPR which strengthened the role of The Forks.

The bankruptcy of the two companies in 1923 prompted the Dominion to amalgamate them into Canadian National Railways, thus further integrating Winnipeg and The Forks into an international trans-

## **The Forks and the Competitive Fur-Trade Period:**

**1760-1821 (Theme III)**

Native and European commercial relationships in the North-West were forged during a period of intense rivalry in the fur trade. For 150 years European interest in the western interior was limited almost exclusively to the fur trade. But the Seven Year's War in Europe and North America left the French traders cut off from France, and the fur trade system was reorganized by Montreal entrepreneurs who expanded their operations to the Pacific and Arctic oceans. Independent traders or Pedlars sponsored by British and American financiers in Montreal re-established trade networks throughout the West. The strategically-placed European posts began to have an important impact on the social and economic development of the trade. After 1774 the London-based Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) moved inland from its bayside posts to compete with the Pedlars who established the North West Company (NWC) in 1784. The Cree and Assiniboine acted as commercial middlemen for these two companies, exchanging furs from inland bands for European manufactured items.

In the late 18th century the Cree and Assiniboine lost their role as economic liasons in this network. With the proliferation of inland posts after 1780, the Plains Natives assumed the role of provision suppliers, hunting bison and processing the meat and hides to help support the expansion of trade in the Saskatchewan and Athabaska districts. In 1810-11, as part of this expanding trade network, the NWC built Fort Gibraltar I, an important pemmican provisioning post, at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers to handle the transfer of goods and furs.

The emergence of a new indigenous population - the Métis, descendants of Native and French peoples - was critical to the expansion of the fur trade. The Métis supplanted the Plains Cree and Assiniboine as suppliers of pemmican and other country provisions to the trade posts

and boat brigades of the interior. After 1804 a number of these *gens libres* (the “free people”, as they referred to themselves) settled in the vicinity of The Forks where they worked as commercial bison hunters and contract freighters for the NWC.

Groups of Cree and Saulteaux also lived near The Forks, having moved into the Red River Valley from the adjacent woodlands in the early 1800s. By 1817 the Saulteaux chief Peguis signed a treaty with Lord Selkirk, giving a narrow strip of land on each side of the Red and Assiniboine rivers to the Earl’s Scottish settlers, now the districts of West and East Kildonan.

The establishment of the HBC-sponsored Selkirk Settlement at The Forks in 1812 was part of the company’s plan to disrupt the NWC’s provisioning supply line. Fort Douglas was built about 2.5 kilometres north of Fort Gibraltar I by the HBC’s Miles Macdonnell in 1813. Conflict between the companies and their allies of Selkirk settlers and Métis culminated in the destruction of Fort Gibraltar I and the subsequent Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816. Five years later the HBC and NWC united, which ended their rivalry and guaranteed the dominance of the fur trade economy in the West.



cy of immigration, settlement, and railroad promotion that saw the prairies as the main agricultural region for central Canada.

Before Confederation in 1867 western Canada was a sparsely populated territory of the Hudson’s Bay Company, largely dependent on the fur-trade economy. In response to central Canadian annexationists demands for the acquisition of Rupert’s Land, which would provide a hinterland for industrial activities, in 1870 Canada established policies to settle and develop the West for national economic growth.

After quelling Métis resistance in 1870 and 1885 and placing Treaty aboriginals on reserves, the Dominion government surveyed millions of hectares of prairie land for the anticipated influx of immigrants from Europe. Federal authorities constructed immigration sheds at The Forks, and Upper Fort Garry was selected as the temporary seat of the new Manitoba government. In 1879 the Canadian Pacific Railway’s (CPR) main line was rerouted through Winnipeg instead of Selkirk, and the city quickly grew into the financial, commercial, supply and distribution centre for the prairies. Winnipeg’s stature was confirmed by the establishment of major railway lines in 1888 and a central terminus in 1901 near The Forks.

The Forks continued to be associated with the city’s early urban development activities, such as the HBC’s construction of the Broadway and Assiniboine bridges in 1880. At the same time a shanty town and red-light district sprang up at the junction, a result of the rapid urban and industrial growth. The absence of a Native population in this area gave the illusion that Winnipeg was the first settlement at The Forks, but it was the forced displacement of the Native peoples that permitted the establishment of this city.

Canadians and Europeans who moved into the area altered Manitoba's distinctive Euro-aboriginal character and culture. Two of the most important provisions of the Act - continuity of land tenure and Native self-government - were denied. Most of the Métis land claims (a 565,000-hectare grant) were lost to speculators as the type of homestead favoured by the Métis did not conform to the imposed standards set by the Canadian government. The dispossession of the Métis was the legacy of Anglo-Canadian expansion in the North-West. Many relocated further west and reoriented their economic activities. An equally unsuccessful and final attempt of organized resistance towards the government was made at Batoche, Saskatchewan in 1885, resulting in the hanging of Riel.

Native traditions and lifestyles were also suppressed and their lands appropriated. With their primary food resource - the bison - hunted to near extinction and land being taken over for agriculture, the Natives attempted to negotiate land use with the government. Treaty No. One was signed at Lower Fort Garry in 1871 at the insistence of the Saulteaux who only wanted to give the newcomers "the right to use their lands". But the government insisted on using southern Manitoba for agricultural settlement and resource-based development. By 1900, frustrated in their attempts to maintain their autonomy and make a viable transition to agriculture on their own reserves, the Natives had become increasingly dependent, divided and despondent.

## **Winnipeg and the Junction - A Metropolis in the**

**Making: 1870-86 (Theme VI)**

Between 1870 and 1886 Winnipeg developed from a small settlement into the principal metropolitan centre of western Canada. This was a direct consequence of the Dominion government's national poli-

## **The Forks, Native Settlement and the Hudson's Bay**

**Company: 1812-50 (Theme IV)**

In 1817 the NWC rebuilt their old post of Fort Gibraltar I (referred to as Fort Gibraltar II) at a slightly different location. With the amalgamation of the HBC and NWC in 1821, this post was chosen as the main HBC post at The Forks and renamed Fort Garry, although it declined in importance when Lower Fort Garry was built in 1832. The junction became the centre of settlement in Rupert's Land and a major debarkation point for traders, explorers and Christian missionaries entering the North-West. At the Red River Settlement Cree and Saulteaux, Métis *gens libres* and Selkirk settlers were joined by retired Scottish traders and a large influx of English-speaking "country born" (descendants of Native and English peoples) and Métis *voyageurs* declared redundant after the union of the two companies. However, the colony established along the banks of the Red and Assiniboine was overwhelmingly Native in origin. These indigenous settlers pursued a mixed economy based on agriculture, bison hunting, trade and seasonal work on HBC boat and cart brigades.

Since Fort Gibraltar II was damaged in the flood of 1826 and the more northern location of Lower Fort Garry was a full day's journey, an inconvenient distance for the settlers, the larger (Upper) Fort Garry was constructed out of limestone in 1834-35. Upper Fort Garry became the trade and administrative centre of the settlement and played an integral role in the company's transshipment network in Rupert's Land. Produce from the local farms and the HBC experimental farm at The Forks, as well as pemmican from the bison hunts, were transported by Red River cart and York boat to trading posts throughout the North-West. The establishment of the main supply line between Lower Fort Garry, York Factory on Hudson Bay and Portage la Loche in northern Saskatchewan promoted the expansion of the fur trade into the Athabaska and Mackenzie districts.

From its administrative headquarters at The Forks, the HBC exerted political and economic control over the affairs of the settlement. Political power was shared between the company, the church and a small group of elite, affluent landowners. Tension arose between the HBC and the large Métis majority as a result of the latter's claims to "free trade", trading outside the company's monopoly. While many traders prospered beyond the official limits of economic activity which generated much of the settlement's growth, they were not rewarded with political power. By 1850, with the establishment of an independent Métis economy in the West, the HBC could no longer protect its trade monopoly in the region.



## **Transition at The Forks: 1850-1900 (Theme V)**

Between 1850 and 1870 the Métis at Red River diversified their fur trade activities while the "country born" engaged primarily in agriculture. Despite cultural and religious differences between the two populations of Native and European ancestry, there was considerable interaction in commerce and politics.

For the HBC these were years of "benevolent despotism tempered by riot". Its fur trade monopoly, effectively challenged by the Métis in 1849, was over by 1857. The Métis free traders' commercial activities were tolerated by the HBC although there were occasional disputes and resentment between the two. After Confederation in 1867, the Métis found they preferred the old order of the HBC to the changes advocated by the annexationists from central Canada. The HBC wanted to control the fur trade while the Canadian government wanted to control land.

The Métis' struggle for recognition of their political power and land rights culminated in the Red River Resistance of 1869-70. Frustrated by a Canadian government who ignored the established land tenure of the Red River settlers, and in response to the arrival of federal land surveyors, the Métis occupied Upper Fort Garry on 2 November 1869. From these headquarters Métis leader Louis Riel attempted to unite the settlement by drafting a List of Rights and forming a Provisional Government. Negotiations with the Canadian government resulted in the formation of the province of Manitoba which guaranteed linguistic, religious and proprietary rights of its Native and Métis citizens.

However, the terms of the Manitoba Act were not respected by the Canadian government. During 1870-1900 the province underwent unprecedented social and economic upheaval and transformation. The