

Interior Plains

Land of Open Skies



In the late 1700s, explorer and mapmaker David Thompson travelled west after exploring the Canadian Shield. He kept a journal as he travelled, and this is how he described the region that would be called the Interior Plains.

What I now relate is of the great body of dry land at the east foot of the mountains, the northern part of the forests, and the southern part of the plains, through which roll the Bow and Saskatchewan Rivers with their many branches. The Bow River flows through the most pleasant of the plains, and is the great resort of the bison and the red deer.

The snow of the glaciers of the mountains, which everywhere border the west side of these plains, furnish water to form many rivers. The rivers that roll through this immense unbroken body of land of plains and forests are beautifully distributed... The climate is good, the winters about five months, the summers are warm, and the autumn has many fine days. The soil is rich and deep... and agriculture will succeed...

Canada: Our Stories Continue

The Interior Plains is a large region that covers parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, as well as parts of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Territory. This region is fairly flat, with low hills. It has areas of grassland, wooded parkland, and large northern forests. First Nations, such as the Blackfoot, the Cree, and the Dene, have always lived here. As the fur trade expanded into the West, Francophone traders, Métis, and British explorers travelled throughout the region and built trading posts. Years later, people from different countries settled here. Communities and cities developed in the grasslands and parklands. Natural resources, such as coal, oil, gas, and forests led to the growth of communities throughout the region.

? Critical Inquiry TIP

Retrieving

Look at graphs, maps, tables, charts, and diagrams when you are doing research. They are all sources of information.

More About . . .

Prairies

Canadian explorers gave the name “prairie,” meaning “meadow,” to the vast grasslands that cover much of the region.

? Inquiring Minds

Here are some questions to guide your inquiry for this chapter:

- How did the physical geography of this region shape its history?
- How did settlers change the region?



Let's Explore the Interior



Hello! My name is Brianne Lysenko. I live on a farm in Saskatchewan's Qu'Appelle [kah-pell] Valley. My ancestors were farmers in Ukraine in Eastern Europe. They came to this region because they heard there was good farmland.



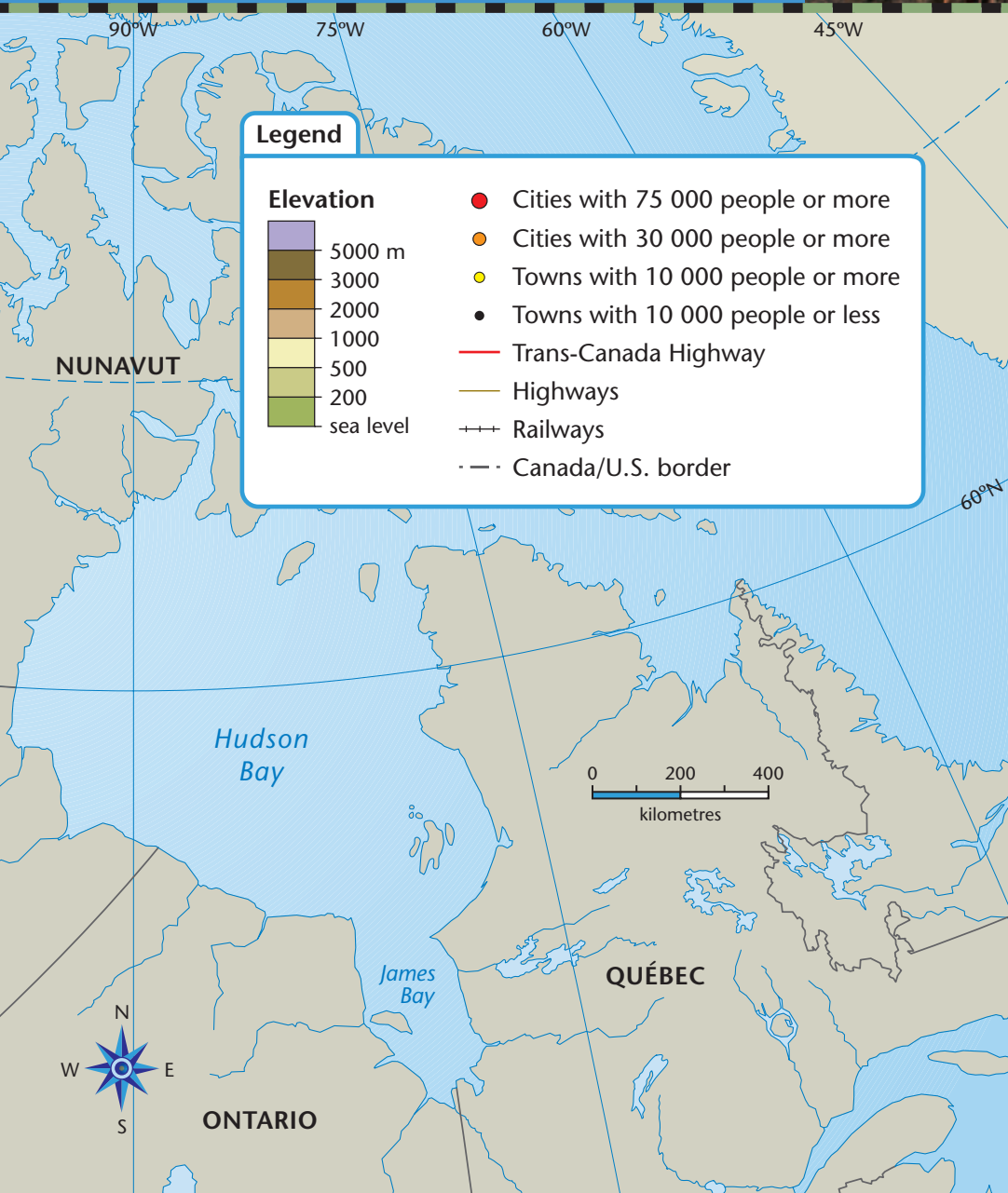
Winnipeg was built where the Red River meets the Assiniboine River.



The Cypress Hills area is unique because it is hilly. Why is it called a "prairie island"?



Plains!



This rancher moves his cattle through a forested part of the region. Why is cattle farming well suited to this region?

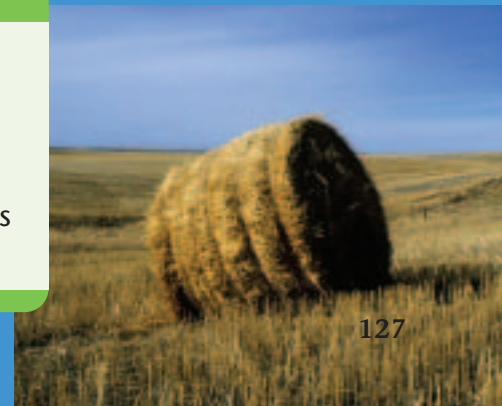


People in Fort Simpson celebrate the Beavertail Jamboree, a winter festival.

Why did so many wheat farms develop on the flat land of the region?

Thinking It Through

- Identify the major transportation routes shown on the map. Where are cities located in relation to those routes? Why do you think the cities are located there?
- Reread David Thompson's journal entry on page 124. How do his descriptions compare to the map and the images on this page?



The Interior Plains

words matter!

Droughts are long periods without rain or snow.

Bison are also called buffalo.

The Interior Plains has many natural resources, such as oil, natural gas, coal, forests, and farmland. It often has severe weather—**droughts**, flooding, tornadoes, hail, dust storms, blizzards, and ice storms.

What Are the Roots of the Region?

The Saulteaux, Cree, Blackfoot (Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai), and Dene First Nations developed ways of life on the Interior Plains, depending on where they lived. They hunted caribou, moose, or **bison**, and travelled on the grasslands or through the forests.

In the 1700s, Francophones came to explore the region and began to trade with the First Nations. Fur trading posts were set up, some of which developed into larger communities. The Cree and Métis people in the region supplied food to the fur traders and acted as guides and scouts, allowing them to travel farther west and north.

The completion of the railway in the late 1800s helped bring many settlers, including farmers, from different parts of the world to the Plains.



The Verreau family moved to Bon Accord, Alberta, in the 1890s.



Voices of Canada

Identity

What does it mean to live and work in this region?

I know that my identity is connected to that piece of Alberta that has belonged to my family for over 80 years. To me, farming and ranching are a way of life.

Gina Lorinda Yagos

Why People Live Here Today

The First Nations of the Interior Plains continue to live and work here, as do the descendants of people who came to settle in the region. Today, many other people continue to move to the region from other parts of Canada and from around the world.

Natural resources, such as coal, natural gas, and oil provide work for many people in this region. Thousands of people also work in industries related to farming. In towns and cities, people work in government, manufacturing, medicine, and education.

What Affects Quality of Life?



My older sister works at the university in Regina. When I visit, we shop and go to the museum and the parks. I'm glad that we have such a large, beautiful city close by.



Winter in Lethbridge can be hard, with lots of snow and cold winds! But that's life in the Interior Plains. The summer will bring warm temperatures and sunshine.



People working in the oil industry work long hours outdoors, sometimes in remote locations. The oil industry provides a variety of jobs.



Mountain biking is a popular pastime in the parkland areas of the region. Visitors often come to enjoy its natural beauty and bustling cities.

Thinking It Through

- Look at each example. How do the land, resources, and climate affect ways of life for people in this region?



Brianne's Inquiry



? Critical Inquiry TIP

Processing

Look at old photos as you do your research. Look carefully at what the people are wearing or doing.

Thinking It Through

- Does your family have traditions and customs that come from your ancestors or your homeland? How are they part of your life today?

Easter is my favourite time of year! My cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents get together. My favourite food is Easter bread. It's called **paska**. My family makes the best paska. We take it to church. The bread is blessed and then we take it home to enjoy.

I asked my Baba why everyone in my town does not make and eat paska. She told me that our family came from Ukraine, and making paska is our tradition. She said, "Our family has been farmers for many generations, and making special breads from our wheat shows how important that is to us."

People from other places had also settled in the Qu'Appelle Valley, some long before our family arrived. There are people coming to our community now, too! They have their own traditions.

I want to know more about the people in my community.

- Who lived here first?
- What are their stories?
- What was life like long ago?
- What is life like today?

I made a plan to find the answers. I will ask my family questions, and look in our old photo albums. I can ask students in my class why they live in our community. I will also go to the library, look on the Internet, and visit the Fort Qu'Appelle Museum.

Skill Smart

- Write down two questions you have about the people in the Interior Plains. Like Brianne, make a plan for how you will find the answers.

Understanding Photographs

When Brianne looked through her family’s old photo albums, she saw lots of pictures from the past. She looked at the photos carefully. Photographs do not tell the whole story about the person, place, or event. Important details may be missing. Long ago, people had to sit very still to have their portrait taken. The cameras used in those days took 30 seconds to take a single photograph, so people in old photos often look very serious. Try smiling and staying perfectly still for 30 seconds! Today, people can use technology to change photos. They can add or delete whatever they choose.



Practise the Skill

Look at the photos on this page and on pages 126–127. What can you learn about Canada and its stories from these photos? Think about these questions:

Type of Information	Questions
Geographic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the land like? What was the weather like when the photos were taken?
Historical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is in the photo? • What is the style of clothing, hair, or furniture? • What does this tell you about the times?
About People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the people doing? • Where do you think they are? • How do you know?
Viewpoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who took the picture? Why? How did the photographer make the photo look pleasing?

Who First Lived on the Interior Plains?



Voices of Canada

Rain and Caribou

Whenever it rains, the caribou feeds [well], and that's how it gets fat. Long ago, when it rained, people used to exclaim, "Haaaay, it's raining! That's great, for the caribou is going to be fat!"

William Sewi, Dene Elder

The Plains Cree, Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai who lived in the grasslands settled near sources of water and food. They also hunted bison for food, clothing, and other items. Bison roamed in large herds, eating prairie grasses. First Nations people who hunted the bison moved with the herds.

Just as important to the Dene were the caribou. These animals provided food and clothing. Like bison, caribou travel across vast distances looking for food. Many of the Dene travelled too, following the caribou across the north. What do the Voices of Canada on this page tell about traditional ways of life?



Deline is a Dene community on the shore of Great Bear Lake. Deline used to be called Fort Franklin. Suggest reasons why the name was changed.

What can sites such as this one at Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park, Alberta, tell us about the past?



Voices of Canada

Travelling the Land

We knew every detail of this land. Our people travelled constantly throughout it, and their trails were well marked across the grassland.

Nitsitapiisinni: The Story of the Blackfoot People

What Are the Francophone Stories?

The majority of the *coureurs des bois*, explorers, and *voyageurs* who came to the region during the fur trade were Canadiens. French was the first European language spoken in the Interior Plains. In the 1720s, Pierre de La Vérendrye, with the help of his sons and his Cree guide, set up forts along the Saskatchewan River in Manitoba.

Laurent Leroux, a Canadien from Montréal, was a fur trader who set up Fort Resolution and Fort Providence on Great Slave Lake. The trading forts became centres for fur trade in each area. Most of the people who worked in them also spoke French.



La Vérendrye established Fort La Reine, which is now the city of Portage la Prairie. The fort was the headquarters for his explorations in the West.

More About . . .

The Qu'Appelle Valley

Pauline E. Johnson, a poet from the Six Nations of the Grand River, wrote a poem called "The Legend of the Qu'Appelle Valley." In the poem, she told of a young First Nations man who heard a ghostly voice calling his name. In response, he called "Kâ-têpwêt [KAA-tay-pwayt]?" When there was no response, he called in French, "Qui appelle [key ah-pell]?" Johnson based her poem on the local legend of the Qu'Appelle Valley. The Francophone traders who built the fur trading post in the valley knew the story and called their fort Fort Qu'Appelle. The valley has also been given the name, and the lakes in the area are sometimes called the "Calling Lakes." Find the Qu'Appelle Valley on the map on pages 126–127.



Voices of Canada

First People

The first people in Alberta, after the First Nations, were the French. Most of them were farmers. They first had to clear the forest before they could cultivate the land. So from a very early time you can see the contribution of the Francophones to Alberta's growth and development.

Edmond Levasseur, Edmonton



Father Albert Lacombe was a Roman Catholic missionary from Québec. Among many other accomplishments, he played an important role in creating schools in this region. What other contributions did Father Lacombe make?

How Did Some Francophone Communities Develop?

In the mid 1800s, as the population of Francophones grew in Western Canada, Roman Catholic priests and religious sisters came to Saint-Boniface and other settlements such as Fort Edmonton and St. Albert to establish missions that had churches, schools, and hospitals. Some of them were travelling missionaries, who ministered to the Francophone settlers who had established communities in the West.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Catholic clergy realized that many Canadiens in Québec were moving to the United States to look for work. They encouraged Francophone doctors, lawyers, and skilled tradesmen to settle in the Interior Plains.



Voices of Canada

Beaumont

These stories tell of life in the Francophone community of Beaumont, around the 1930s.

[My father] had heard of a place called Beaumont, a [Canadien] settlement. He went there and he liked what he saw. He found a quarter section [of land], which he bought.

Marcel Accarias, 1980

My parents worked very hard and taught me many things about working outdoors. I learned from [them] to love and care for animals, which helped me on our farm today.

Madeleine Demers, 1983



The town became an important centre of Francophone presence in Saskatchewan.

Gravelbourg

Gravelbourg was founded in 1906 by Father Louis-Pierre Gravel, a Catholic priest from Québec. He was given the title of “missionary-colonizer” by the Canadian government. He travelled throughout the United States and Eastern Canada telling Canadiens about the new town. Many families came to live in Gravelbourg as a result. Father Gravel also created a Francophone school.

What Are the Métis Stories?

The Métis were among the first to settle in the Interior Plains. One big settlement was along the Red River, where Winnipeg is today. It was an important meeting place for two reasons: the river and Lake Winnipeg led to fur trade routes in the Canadian Shield, and the Assiniboine River led farther west.

Métis often worked at Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company forts. They worked as trappers and as bison hunters, supplying food for the forts. The first Métis settlement in Saskatchewan was at Cumberland House, an HBC fort on the Saskatchewan River.



The Red River is called the Rivière Rouge in French. What are other French names in my region?



Voices of Canada

The Métis Nation

[The Métis] are a creation of the country, and our history, when Europeans joined with First Nations people... Métis are a very diverse people. Some lean more toward the First Nations way of life, and others lean more to a European way of life. I think, more than anything, Métis are good **ambassadors** of both cultures...

Mark McCallum, Alberta Métis

words matter!

Ambassadors are people who are chosen to represent or speak for a group.



Many Métis settled in Saskatchewan. One town was named after a Métis trader and businessman named François Xavier Letendre, dit Batoche. Batoche is now an important historic site for the Métis. This painting shows what Batoche looked like in 1885. Find out two facts about Batoche that explain why the area is important to the Métis.

Métis Ways of Life

Traders and explorers from the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company relied on pemmican. These men were travelling great distances into the West and the North, and they needed preserved food like pemmican to survive. Pemmican became an important source of income for the Métis people.



Voices of Canada

Pemmican

Pemmican comes from a Cree word that means lard or grease-like. You make it by pounding dry meat (usually moose, buffalo, or elk). You can add dry berries... Then you mix the dry part half-and-half with

rendered fat. This makes pemmican. It's very nutritious and easy to carry. You can eat it just like this, or you can put it in a soup or stew. One pound will last you three or four days.



These Métis are drying moose meat to make pemmican at Île-à-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan.

Billy Joe Laboucan, Lubicon Lake Cree Nation, Alberta



Voices of Canada

The Red River Cart

The Red River cart was used by the Métis to transport goods and people across the plains. It could also float across rivers. Why would the cart be a good way to travel in this region?



Sometimes, we spent the whole day riding on the cart. The hardest part of our trip was listening to the wheels. When they turned, it sounded like thunder. My moshòm [grandfather] would play the fiddle, and we would sing. It helped take our minds off the noise!

Suzanne Cardinal

Skill Smart

- List the titles, authors, and page numbers or Web sites for three sources of information about pemmican and Red River carts.

What Factors Shaped Ways of Life on the Interior Plains?

Life changed for First Nations people of the Interior Plains when trading posts were set up. Trapping furs for the fur trade became part of daily life. By the mid-1900s, many First Nations, such as the Dene, began to live in permanent homes near the trading posts.

The Horse

Would it surprise you to learn that horses have only lived in the Interior Plains for a few hundred years? For a long time, First Nations people such as the Siksika hunted bison on foot. They call this time period the “Dog Days” because dogs helped carry people’s belongings across the Prairies. Horses arrived on the plains from the south. Spanish explorers had brought horses with them.



Horses could travel farther and faster and could carry a greater load than dogs. These Blackfoot men are using a horse and travois to carry goods and supplies.



Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, is one of the many cities

Rick Hansen visited during his journey. The Trans Canada Trail in Moose Jaw is almost 10 km of wilderness trails, where people can hike, bike, ski, and horseback ride.



This is a cattle roundup in Marchwell, Saskatchewan. How are horses still part of life in this region today?

Thinking It Through

- How did the horse change ways of life for people in the Interior Plains?

What Was the Red River Colony?

In 1811, the Hudson's Bay Company granted part of its vast territory, known as Rupert's Land, to an English nobleman, the Earl of Selkirk. Selkirk called it the "Territory of Assiniboia."

words matter!

The **Highlands** are a mountainous area in Scotland.

In Scotland, English landlords had forced many farmers off their land. Selkirk's plan was to bring these homeless farmers and their families from the Scottish **Highlands** and have them establish a new farming community in Assiniboia. These families became the settlers of the Red River Colony.

Territory of Assiniboia



This map shows the Territory of Assiniboia. What does it tell you about the land where the settlers started their colony? Why do you think it was chosen?

Thinking It Through

- Many Métis and fur traders in the Red River area were afraid that the new settlement would disrupt their way of life. Why do you think the introduction of an agricultural settlement might have an effect on these people?

Their journey to Red River in 1812 was not easy. Their ship landed at Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay. They then had to travel all the way to York Factory on foot. There, they waited out the winter.

When they finally arrived at Red River, they built a fort, called Fort Douglas. By then it was too late to plant crops. During the winter, the Scots were saved from starvation by the pemmican provided by the Métis who lived in the area. The next summer, they started to build houses and plant crops along the river. The Red River Colony had become the first farming settlement in the Interior Plains.

How Did the North-West Mounted Police Help Shape the West?

Imagine that you are a settler in the Interior Plains in 1870. The Hudson's Bay Company has just given the new government of Canada control of Rupert's Land, creating the new North-West Territories. Lately there has been a lot of trouble in your small, isolated community. Is there someone you can turn to for help?

In 1873, Sir John A. Macdonald, first prime minister of Canada, wanted a police force to bring law and Canadian authority to the new Territories. The vast distances of the new Territories meant that a mounted police force, or a **cavalry**, would be best. So he created the North-West Mounted Police. They soon became known as the "Mounties."

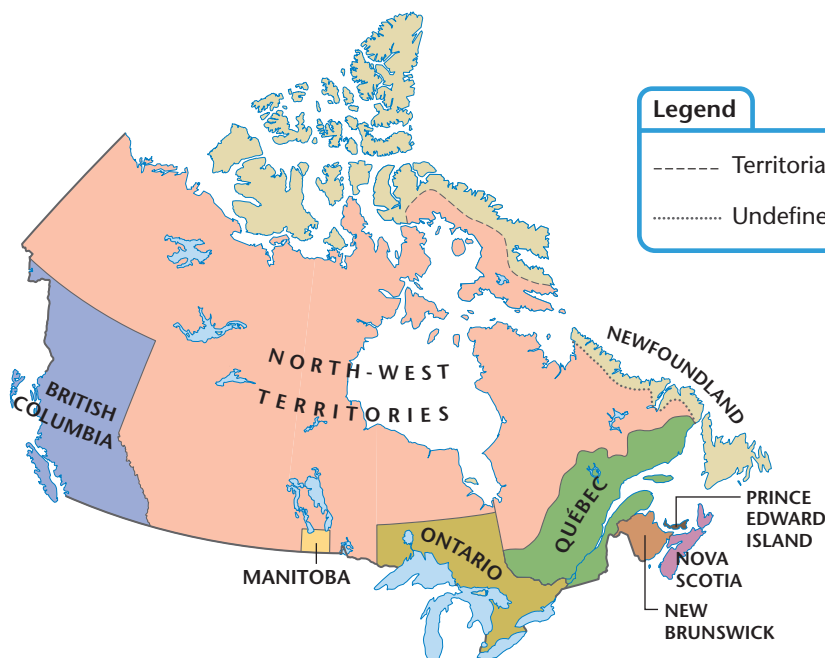


The North-West Mounted Police force was modelled after the British cavalry. Why?

words matter!

A **cavalry** is a group of soldiers or police who use horses.

North-West Territories, 1876



This map shows the North-West Territories as they were in 1876. Look at the maps on page 339 of the atlas section to see how the territories developed. Why was it necessary to have police presence in such a large area?

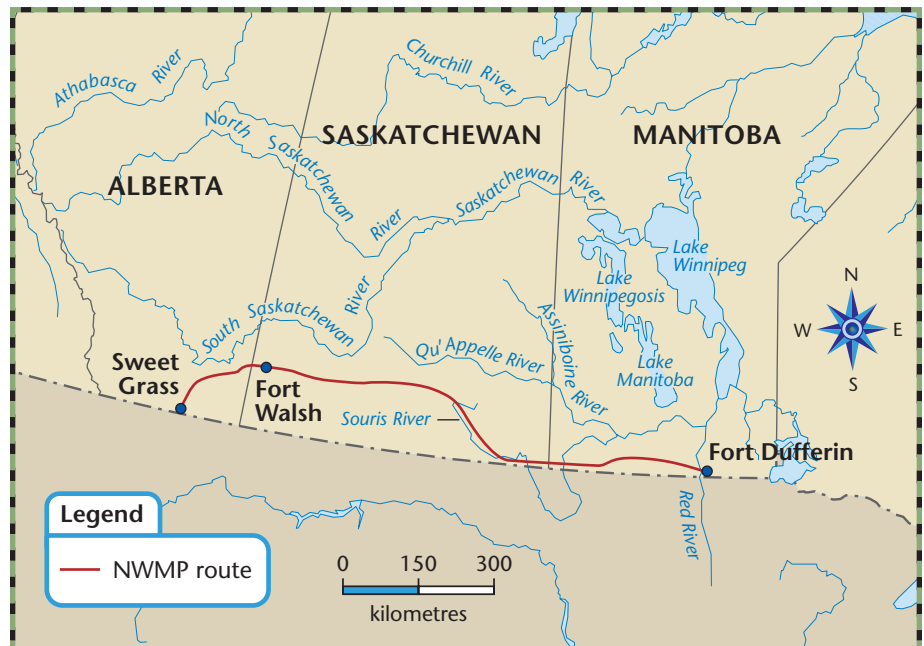
The March West

The new North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) trained in Fort Dufferin, Manitoba. Then, in 1874, a huge line (about 4 km long) of Mounties and their supplies trekked from Fort Dufferin to the Sweet Grass hills in what is now Alberta—a journey on horseback of about 1500 km.



These NWMP officers were photographed at Fort Walsh, Saskatchewan, during the 1870s. Fort Walsh became the headquarters for the NWMP in 1878.

Route of the NWMP, 1874



Voices of Canada

October 22, 1874

...I pushed on with the horse teams and had the hardest trek that I have yet undertaken. The trail was worse than any we had encountered. It was knee-deep in black mud, sloughs crossed it every few hundred yards, and the wagons had to be unloaded and dragged through them by hand.

Sam Steele

Some Mounties kept journals to record their travels. Why do these stories help us understand the NWMP?

Voices of Canada

Respect

Newspaper artist *Henri Julien* was sent to observe the march of the NWMP. This is what he wrote when the march was over.

Our mission was over. The force had accomplished its duty for which it had been sent out. I must express my respect for them as men and for the worthy manner in which they performed the arduous duties imposed on them by the government.

Henri Julien, October 1874

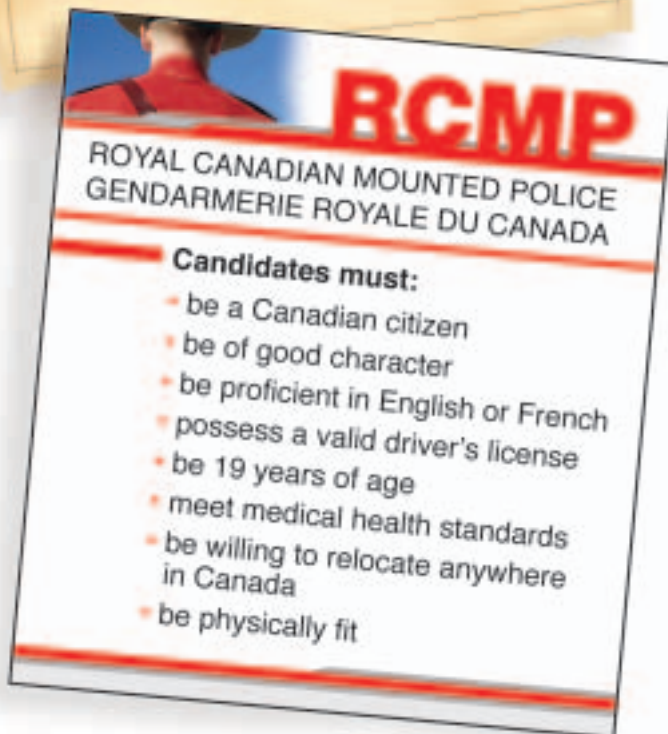
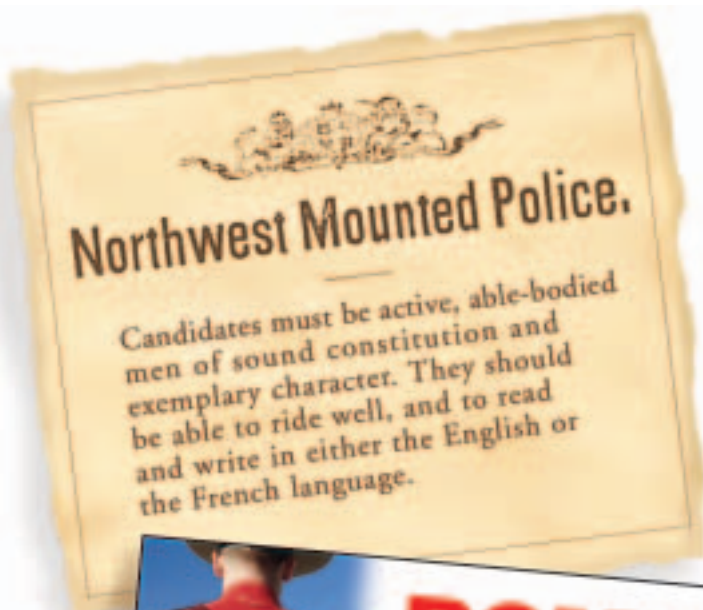
The presence of the NWMP on the Interior Plains meant that people felt safer. NWMP were stationed throughout the region, and also patrolled the isolated areas. More settlers were willing to come to create new communities.

The Mounties also enforced the new borders that were being developed with the United States. Soon the red-coated Mountie was seen as a symbol of Canadian presence in the West.



This RCMP officer is taking part in a ceremony in Victoria, British Columbia, in 2005.

The NWMP are known today as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). What was and is asked for in new members? Why do you think the name was changed?



Thinking It Through

- The NWMP brought law and order to the Interior Plains. How do you think this would help in the settlement and development of the region?

How Were People of the Interior Plains Affected by the Railway?



I've read that the bison were also hunted during this time just for their hides. I think I'll find out more about how the loss of the bison affected quality of life for the First Nations who depended on them.

Building the Canadian Pacific Railway began in 1881. The railway helped bring many settlers to the Prairies and allowed the NWMP to move quickly in times of trouble. When the railway was completed, settlers were able to ship their produce by rail to both ends of the country.

The railway also changed ways of life for the First Nations and the Métis who lived in the Interior Plains. In order to make sure the bison stayed off the tracks, railway companies encouraged people to shoot them. During the late 1800s, hundreds of thousands of bison were killed. Eventually, they were almost wiped out. For the First Nations and Métis who depended on the bison for food, clothing, and shelter, this caused enormous hardship.

Why Were Treaties Made?



Treaty 8 negotiations, Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta, 1899. The treaty upheld sharing of resources and peaceful co-existence.

First Nations people had always lived on the land on which the railway was built. They were very concerned about how and where they would live now. Their leaders and government leaders met to discuss a compromise, which became a series of treaties.

? Critical Inquiry TIP

Processing

A two-column chart, like this one, is a way to organize your research. The chart can help you see what each group of people wanted.

Government of Canada Wanted	First Nations Wanted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to build a railway and bring settlers in to farm the land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> peaceful co-existence with settlers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to secure land for settlement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to make sure the land they lived on was not taken over by settlers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to take away the rights of First Nations people and assimilate them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to make sure they would have a home and food, and to maintain their ways of life



Rights Denied

How does this quote compare to the needs described in the chart on page 142?

A lot of things happened that took away the rights of [First Nations] peoples, and tried to wipe out their language and culture... You could not even carry a drum. [First Nations] people were not allowed to gather in groups, even if you just happened to meet on the street.

Billy Joe Laboucan

Some First Nations people do not think signing the treaties was a good idea. They had always travelled freely throughout the region. With the treaties, they were allowed to live only on land provided by the government. Often the land was poor and difficult to farm. Sacred gatherings were forbidden, so they had to be held secretly. Despite these hardships, First Nations people continue to preserve their cultural heritage and traditions.

How Were the Métis Affected by the Railway?

The lives of Métis in the Interior Plains were also changing. Canada now controlled the land where the Métis had lived, including the Red River settlement. Many things made the Métis worry about their future:

- The fur trade had slowed down, and many Métis had lost their jobs with the trading companies.
- More settlers had arrived on the Prairies. They were creating communities where the Métis had once hunted, farmed, and camped.
- Bison were becoming scarce.

The Métis were given **scrip** at the same time that First Nations signed treaties with the government. Scrip was a coupon that could be exchanged for land or money. But the concept was not explained well to the Métis. Some people took advantage of them and persuaded them to sell their scrip for less than it was worth. Others forged Métis signatures and took their land. Many Métis were left with very little.

This photo shows Gabriel Dumont in Red River. Give two reasons why the First Nations and the Métis would want to preserve their traditional ways of life.



Thinking It Through

- Some people thought the treaties and scrip were a good idea. Others did not. Why do you think people might have different opinions about these issues?
- How do the offers of treaties and scrip compare to the offer given to the Acadians by the British?

How Did Settlers Shape Ways of Life in the Interior Plains?



Where can I learn more about settlers from Russia, Germany, Poland, and Ukraine?

In the late 1800s, land and work were scarce for many people in Eastern Europe. Canada offered great opportunities for people from Russia, Ukraine, Germany, and Poland. Many settled in the Interior Plains, where the government gave each family its own **homestead**. They brought with them farming techniques and ways of life. They cleared land, built schools and churches, and created communities, many of which still exist today.

Read the Voices of Canada on these pages to discover what it was like for new settlers in this region.

words matter!

A **homestead** is the land owned by a settler.

Ukrainian Settlers

The first Ukrainian settlers were mostly farmers. Education was very important, and the children of Ukrainian settlers often became teachers. Today, the University of Manitoba and the University of Alberta both have centres for Ukrainian Studies.

Voices of Canada

Homesteading

My parents arrived in 1898. From the first day on the farm [near] Sifton we all worked hard. Though the soil was light it was not as poor a land as in the stony areas farther west.

Toma Demchuk, Ukrainian settler, Manitoba. He would later help found a credit union in Sifton.



After Ukrainian settlers built their homes, they built churches. Why were churches important to communities?

Russian Settlers

Many Russian settlers were Doukhobors, a religious group that believed in peace and hard work. They settled vast tracks of land in the region. Some varieties of wheat that are still grown in the region today were brought here by these farmers.



Voices of Canada

Hardship

The hardships of the first few months of our pioneer life are unforgettable. We all lived in canvas tents which provided poor shelter against the cold, incessant rains. The tents dripped and leaked, so that everything inside was soggy and cold.

Tanya Postnikoff, Russian Doukhorbor settler, Saskatchewan. She wrote a book about her experiences.

Thinking It Through

- What can you see around you today that shows the contributions of these settlers? Think of community and street names, books, foods, organizations, or people.



The Klassen family lived in Hanna, Alberta

German Settlers

The Mennonites were the first group of German-speaking settlers to arrive in Canada. They were some of the most successful farmers in this region. In 1888, John Schultz, the child of German settlers, became Lt. Governor of Manitoba and played an important role in the development of the province.



Voices of Canada

A New Home

Our destination was Herbert, Saskatchewan. We were taken to church right away, and were given food and a house to live in.

Elizabeth Boese, German Mennonite settler, Saskatchewan. She helped her husband with his ministry.

Polish Settlers

Polish settlers farmed in the Interior Plains, and also worked in mines and in the forest industry. These settlers created community groups and associations that helped other Polish settlers when they came to Canada. Today, Polish associations offer scholarships and support the community in many ways.



Voices of Canada

Knowing a bit of the language and having some money, I decided to open a store. This was in 1903. As time went on my business was very extensive.

John Gilewich, Polish settler, Manitoba. He was the first Post Master of Elma.



The Wawel Meat Market in Winnipeg specializes in Polish food. It is located in an culturally diverse neighbourhood.

Why Did British Settlers Come?

People from Britain were also encouraged to settle in the Interior Plains during the Great Migration. Many came because Britain was crowded, and jobs were hard to find. Owning their own land was something many families wanted. Although some did not have farming experience, people like James Clinkskill would find other ways to make a living in Canada.



Voices of Canada

Making a Living

My sojourn on the prairie convinced me that I was not cut out for farming operations. I decided it was no use to start learning. I determined to try some other way of making a living. I [met] a young man from Ontario, and we agreed to combine our money, and start a store.

James Clinkskill



Voices of Canada

The Barr Colony

What could these changes have meant for the Barr Colony settlers?

In May 1903 at most one dozen tents were all that could be seen on the bare prairie and now [we have] stores of all kinds, a fine building for the bank, drugstore, a printing office... it is just marvellous.

Alice Rendell, Lloydminster, 1905

What Was the Barr Colony?

In 1903, the Reverend Isaac Barr encouraged people from England to come and settle in a new colony in Saskatchewan. About 2000 people agreed to come, but when they arrived they found that many of Barr's promises could not be kept. He also charged them money for food and necessary equipment.

Soon the colonists voted on a new leader, a man named Reverend George Lloyd. With a new leader, the colony prospered. The main community in the colony was named Lloydminster. It became a city in 1958.



The Corbett family arrives in Saskatchewan in 1911 from Surrey, England.

Has Farming and Ranching Changed in the Interior Plains?



David Thompson wrote that the Interior Plains would be a great place for agriculture. He was right!

Large areas of flat land and fertile soil meant that agriculture has been an important way of life in the Interior Plains. The first gardens in the region were at fur-trading forts. Settlers in all parts of the region, from the southern grasslands to the northern forests, raised animals and farmed the lands to support themselves.

At first, settlers farmed small areas of land. They used horses and plows, but the work was slow and hard. Many farms remained small because more land meant more work than one family could do. Ranches were often larger, since the animals needed a large area for grazing.

Farming Today

Technology has changed farming today. Where there is farmland but little rain, farmers use **irrigation** to water crops. Combines are used to harvest grain, and trucks transport the grain to buyers. Chemicals fertilize crops and prevent insect damage.

Chemicals that are used on farms can also harm crops or animals. Many people are concerned about chemicals getting into our food. Some farmers, like Marc Loiselle, have switched to **organic farming**. How might personal values affect how someone chooses to run a farm?



Areas in the northern parts of the Interior Plains are also good for agriculture. This is the Peace River Valley, in British Columbia.



Voices of Canada

Organic Farming

This farmer helps run an organization for organic farmers in Saskatchewan.

We started organic farming in 1985. The attraction to [organic] farming came from our desire to be better stewards of the land and resources, without the use of toxic substances.

Marc Loiselle, Vonda, Saskatchewan

Thinking It Through

- Check the map of agricultural areas in the atlas section, on page 350. What are the main agricultural products in the Interior Plains? Discuss how and why agriculture within the Interior Plains region might vary.

words matter!

Irrigation is water supplied to dry land using pipes, ditches, or streams.

Organic farming uses no chemicals on plants or animals.



Farms have grown since the days of the early settlers. My great-grandfather's farm was 120 hectares. Today, our farm is 520 hectares.

Ranching Today

The Interior Plains region has good conditions for raising cattle. The grasses, streams, and rivers provide food and water. In the past, sheep and cattle were raised for the settler's family. The railway made a difference, enabling larger ranches to sell their cattle and sheep to different parts of Canada.

Dangers faced by ranchers in this region were wildfires, drought, and severe storms. Disease among animals could destroy entire herds. Today, vaccinating animals helps prevent many diseases. Some ranchers are also raising different kinds of stock, such as ostriches, elk, and bison.



Why have these animals become part of ranching in this region?



What impact might a feedlot have on the environment?

Thinking It Through

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of new technologies being used in farming and ranching?

The Factory Farm

A “factory farm” is one where large numbers of only one type of animal, such as cattle or chickens, are raised. Such farms began because of the huge demand for the animal and its products. Technology on these farms makes it easy to raise large quantities very quickly.

However, some people think that factory farms are unhealthy and treat animals cruelly. The farms also cause pollution, especially from the large amounts of animal waste.

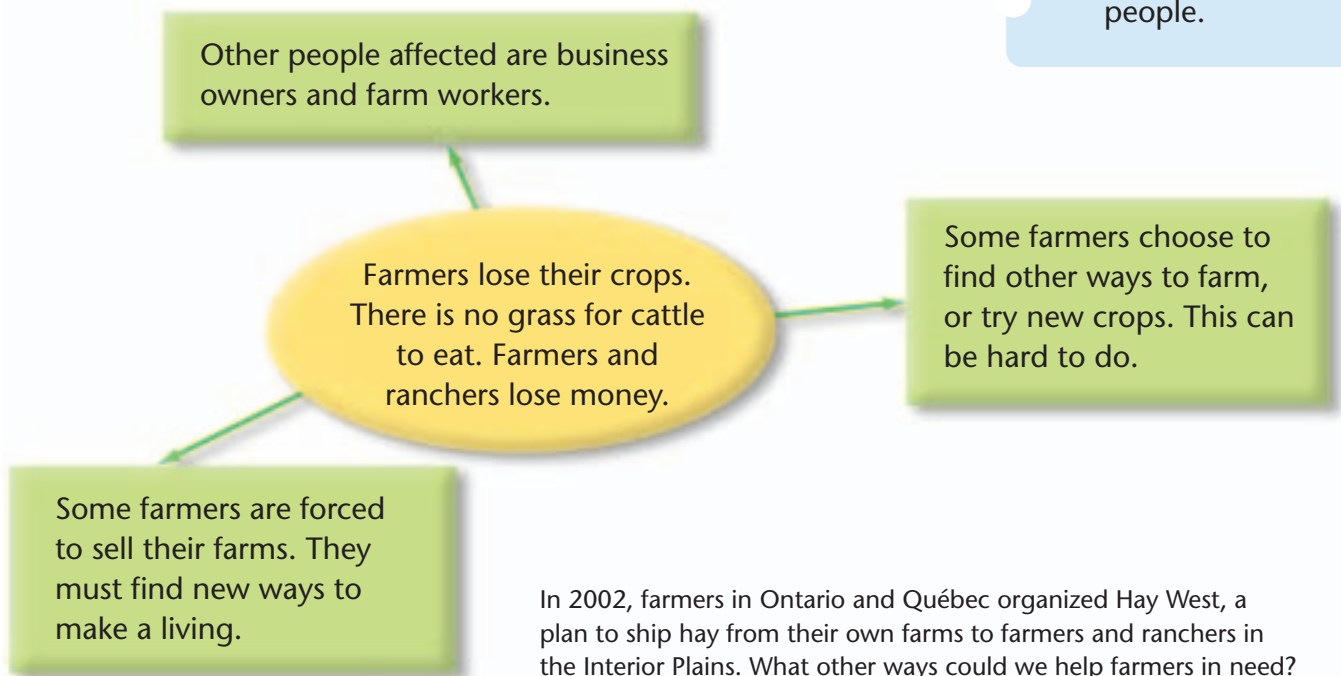
What Are the Effects of Drought?

The southern parts of the Interior Plains often have dry periods during the summer. But what if these dry periods last all year? What if there is little snow in winter? What if the spring rains do not come? This is what happened in 2002 in southern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan. The summer of 2001 was very dry, and over the next year, the earth continued to dry out.

Skill Smart

- Think of problems that farmers and ranchers in the Interior Plains face today. Make a Cause and Effect chart showing the source of the problem and the way it affects people.

Effects of Drought



In 2002, farmers in Ontario and Québec organized Hay West, a plan to ship hay from their own farms to farmers and ranchers in the Interior Plains. What other ways could we help farmers in need?



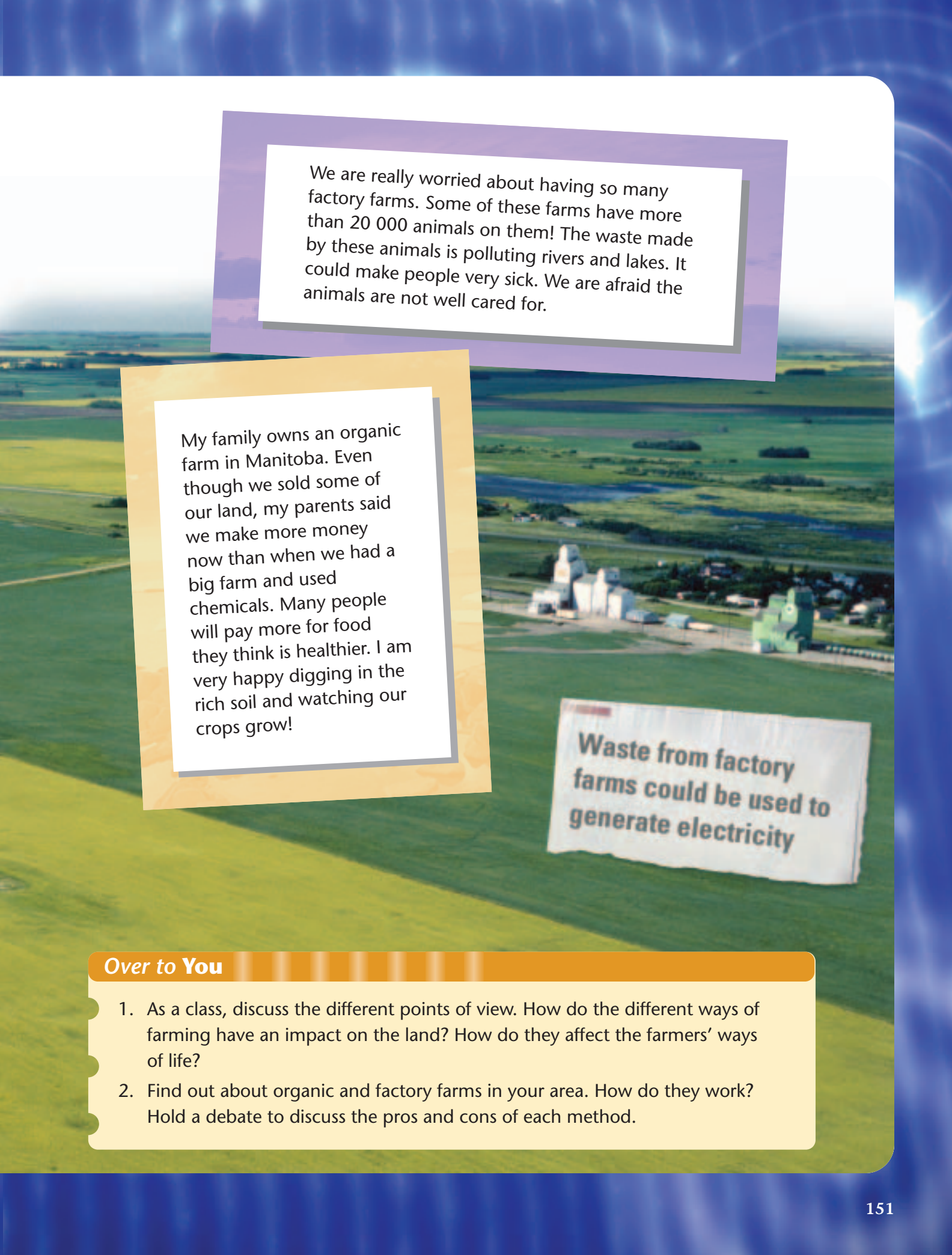
How Should People Farm on the Interior Plains?

Over time, farm equipment and farmland has become more expensive. Drought or flooding can ruin crops. The money farmers make from their crops can be barely enough to live on. People across Canada have started looking for other ways to farm. What are the advantages and disadvantages of different farming methods? Look back to pages 147–148 to review the information on factory farms and organic farming. Then read the points of view below.

We need large-scale production of livestock. We cannot satisfy the growing demand for meat from small farms alone.

New technology increases production, saves farmers money

Organic foods healthier and better for the environment

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are green fields. In the middle ground, a blue river flows through the land. Further back, there are several large white and green silos, likely part of a factory farm. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

We are really worried about having so many factory farms. Some of these farms have more than 20 000 animals on them! The waste made by these animals is polluting rivers and lakes. It could make people very sick. We are afraid the animals are not well cared for.

My family owns an organic farm in Manitoba. Even though we sold some of our land, my parents said we make more money now than when we had a big farm and used chemicals. Many people will pay more for food they think is healthier. I am very happy digging in the rich soil and watching our crops grow!

Waste from factory farms could be used to generate electricity

Over to You

1. As a class, discuss the different points of view. How do the different ways of farming have an impact on the land? How do they affect the farmers' ways of life?
2. Find out about organic and factory farms in your area. How do they work? Hold a debate to discuss the pros and cons of each method.

How Do Natural Resources Shape Communities in the Interior Plains?

words matter!

Potash is a substance that is mainly used in fertilizer. It is rich in potassium, an important nutrient for plants.



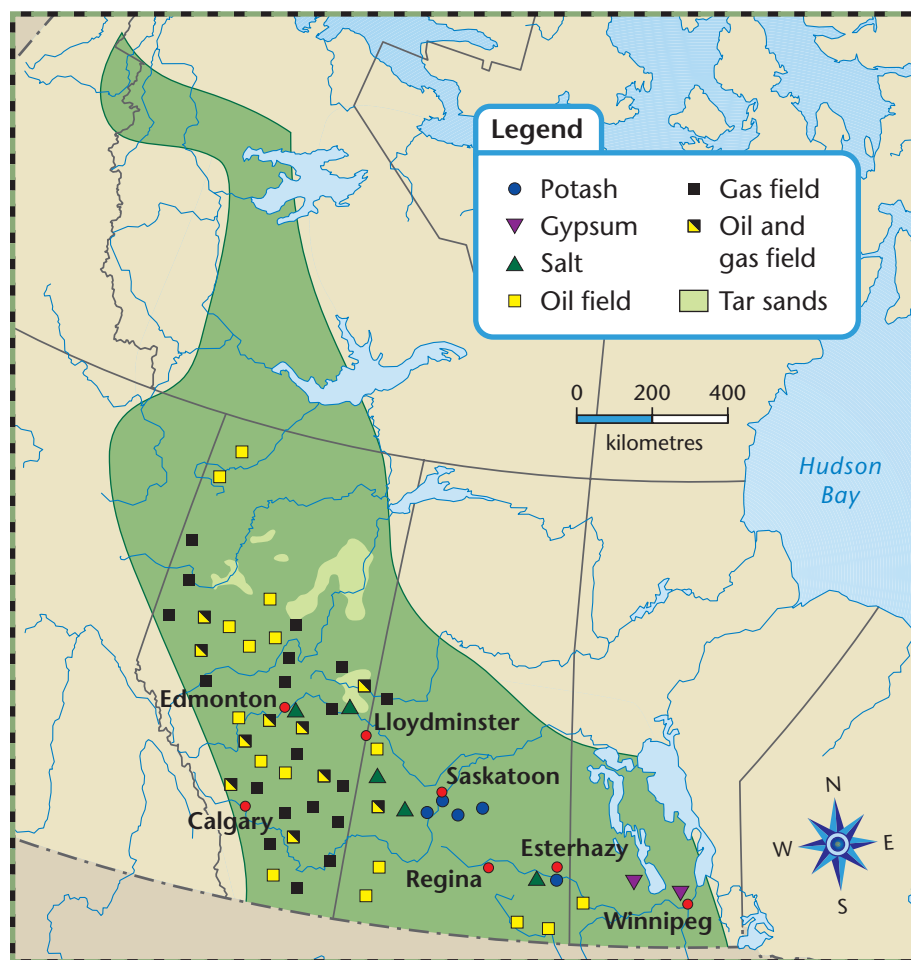
Esterhazy is known as the “potash capital” of the world! How do you think the presence of such an important resource affects the people who live here?

Thinking It Through

- How do you think the natural resources of the Interior Plains have shaped ways of life for the different groups of people who live there?

As you have seen in previous chapters, towns often develop around a place where there is a natural resource. The Interior Plains have many huge deposits of oil and gas underground. There are also large deposits of salt, gypsum, and **potash**. Other natural resources include forests, rivers, and rich soil.

Natural resources create jobs for thousands of people. As a result, communities of different sizes have developed across the Interior Plains. The map below shows mineral deposits and oil and gas sources. Compare the map below to the one on pages 126–127 to see where communities may have developed around these resources.



This map shows some natural resources of the Interior Plains. What resources are there?

Winnipeg, Gateway to the West

Winnipeg, Manitoba, began as a fur-trading post founded by Pierre de La Vérendrye in 1738. In 1876, the community adopted the name Winnipeg. Railways coming from western farms transport grain and other natural resources through Winnipeg and into Eastern Canada.

Today, Winnipeg has a population of over 650 000 and the city is a centre for government, commerce, and the arts.



Railcars transport Canadian grain to Winnipeg.

M a k i n g a D i f f e r e n c e

Protecting Natural Resources

The land west of Great Slave Lake has always been a traditional hunting ground for the Dene First Nations. The rich natural resources of the area are still important to the people who live in the area. In 2002, an agreement between First Nations people and the government of the Northwest Territories was signed. With this agreement, the government promised not to allow

development of oil or gas industries, mines, or other industries.

The area has many lakes and large patches of muskeg. It also has bird habitats and caribou. The Horn Plateau, part of the protected lands, is an International Biological Program Site because of the lichen that is found there. These unique natural resources will now be protected.



Build Your Skills!

Understand Photographs

Using books or the Internet, find photographs of early settlements and present-day communities on the Interior Plains. Examine the photos using the Skill Power information headings on page 131. Answer the questions. How do the historic and present-day photos compare?

Plan an Interview

Find out more about someone in your community.

- Why do they live here?
- What country did their family originate from?
- What languages do they speak?

Add five more of your questions to the list. After the interview, share what you learned by creating a web.

Examine a Poster

The Canadian government advertised the Interior Plains as a good place to settle. They wanted to attract many people to come there. Look at the poster on this page. Think about how a person in Europe might see this poster. How would different people see the poster? What would they think about Canada from the poster?





Putting It All Together

For part of her inquiry, Brianne used a KWL chart to record her findings about her family's history.



What I Think I K now	What I W ant to Know	What I L earned
My family came from Ukraine.	When did they come?	They came in 1896.
They made temporary homes at first.	What were they called?	My Baba called these homes burdei.

Review the inquiry questions for this chapter:

- How did the physical geography of this region shape its history?
- How did settlers change the region?

Take Time to Reflect



Before you go on to the next chapter, think about what you learned in this one. Make a cartoon to show how the land and agriculture has shaped this region. What does it mean to the identity of the region? It could show a part of history, much like David Thompson's observations in the past, or it could show something from today. Save your work for your Canada Collection.