C H A P T E R 11 THE CHANGING ORDER IN THE NORTHWEST

In Rupert's Land and the northwest, most Native people did not have to confront land-hungry settlers until the latter half of the nineteenth century. They did, however, have to face a renewed Hudson's Bay Company, which gained a strong monopoly hold on the fur trade in most areas. This enabled it to dominate many aspects of the economic lives of the northwestern nations. The principal exceptions were the Plains people. The advance of American trading companies down the Red River and up the Mississippi and Missouri rivers offered them an alternative market for their furs and buffalo robes and hides. Such highly favourable economic circumstances helped the Plains buffalo hunters reach their zenith and enabled the Métis to develop a highly diversified and prosperous economy, which supported a vibrant new culture.

THE FUR-TRADE MONOPOLY

Mounting economic and political pressures had forced the HBC and the NWC to merge in 1821. The cutthroat competition of the previous thirty years had brought both enterprises to the brink of ruin. In the boreal forests, it had led to the serious depletion of fur and game resources, particularly beaver, woodland caribou, and moose. This bleak situation left the two competitors with little choice but to join forces, particularly after the British Parliament began pushing them in this direction to end the violence between the two, and the alcohol trading. The politicians made the elimination of liquor from the business one of the terms of the monopoly trading licence it granted to the amalgamated organization.

The job of restructuring the HBC's fur trade under the new licence fell to George Simpson, an experienced HBC trader. In 1821 the London directors appointed him governor of the sprawling Northern Department, which included all of present-day Canada west of Ontario. Five years later he also took control of the Southern Department, comprising all of present-day northern Ontario. Finally, in 1839 he rose to become governor of all HBC overseas operations in British North America. These responsibilities gave Simpson an unprecedented influence over the lives of a large majority of the Native people of British North America.

Under Simpson's leadership, the company devised a complex strategy to rehabilitate the fur trade of Rupert's Land. The new governor began by introducing a program that sought to place beaver harvesting on a sustained-yield basis in the central Subarctic. It banned the sale of steel-spring leg-hold traps in 1822 (except in frontier regions where American opponents were working) and introduced harvest quotas for various districts in 1826. The company closed posts in areas where beavers were particularly scarce, and it opened new ones in places where they were plentiful. It established open and closed trading seasons for beaver pelts, discouraged beaver trapping in the summer when the skins were of little value, and encouraged Native people to hunt other fur-bearing animals, particularly muskrat, where and when ecological and economic conditions were favourable.

Most Native groups strongly opposed this radical program to reduce the trapping and trading of beaver. They depended on their beaver-trapping income to buy essential supplies, and the meat of this animal was a mainstay in the diet of those who lived in areas where hunters had depleted moose and woodland caribou. Native people also may have objected to the plan because they looked at the depletion problem from a very different perspective than did the HBC. Some

believed that every time an animal offered itself to the hunter in death, its spirit was released to create a new creature. Most believed that the welfare of animals rested with the gamekeepers of the spirit world, and that successful hunting depended on maintaining the good will of these supernatural forces by performing certain rituals. However, the gamekeepers could order the destruction of game even if such rituals were carried out. For example, the explorer and trader David Thompson wrote that the Ojibwa believed the Great Spirit had shown the Nipissing and Algonquin how to destroy beavers with castorum bait because it was angry with the animal. Although Native people often ignored the company's regulations for these reasons, the program worked sufficiently well that beaver populations did rebound. By the early 1840s, the HBC was able to revoke most of its restrictions. Ironically, by this time the silk hat had become so fashionable in Europe that the felt-hat market collapsed, sending beaver-pelt prices tumbling.

While the HBC tried to increase beaver stocks in southern Rupert's Land, it worked to create a "fur desert" in the borderlands of western British North America. The border ran along the 49th parallel between Lake of the Woods and the Rocky Mountains, according to the terms of an 1818 agreement between Great Britain and the United States. The company hoped that if fur-bearing animals along this boundary were killed, American traders would find it unprofitable to cross into its domain. Accordingly, Governor Simpson encouraged Native groups living in the prairies to strip the borderlands of furs. He also employed brigades of white "mountain men" to do the same in Oregon country to discourage Americans from entering New Caledonia. To offset reduced beaver harvests in the areas set aside for conservation, Governor Simpson tried to develop new areas, such as the fur-rich lower Mackenzie River and the upper Yukon River drainage basins. But distance proved to be a major obstacle. These regions were far removed from York Factory, which remained HBC's central supply base until the establishment of steamboat companies and railway lines later in the century. Until then, York-boat brigades carried goods inland from Hudson Bay to the main forwarding base at Norway House, north of Lake Winnipeg. The Athabasca, Peace River, and Mackenzie River district brigades brought their returns out to this post, and picked up their inbound outfits there. This labour-intensive transportation system severely limited the amount of freight that the company could haul inland. By all accounts it did not have the capacity to deliver enough goods to the Mackenzie River basin to satisfy the demand of the various Athapaskanspeaking groups who lived there. Consequently, the company's fur returns from the area remained well below their potential, and the local people were less dependent on trading posts than most other groups, with the exception of the central and western Inuit who had not yet been drawn into the fur trade.

After the merger, the renewed HBC also moved quickly to eliminate redundant trading posts and to trim its bloated labour force. Between 1821 and 1826, 1,233 men, or just over 60 per cent of the company's labour force, were laid off. Many were Métis from the parkland and grassland posts and mixed-bloods of Aboriginal-Scottish descent. Substantial numbers of these men moved to the Red River settlement with their families. During the 1820s, this migration radically transformed the character of the fledgling community. By 1831 the Métis residents numbered 1,300, and by 1870 they numbered almost 6,000 of the total population of almost 11,500. English-speaking mixed-bloods totalled about 4,000 in 1870. Europeans and French Canadians made up the balance. "Indians" were not included in the census. In addition to cutting staff,

Governor Simpson hoped to take advantage of the company's monopoly by slashing operating costs associated with long-established trading practices. He tried, for example, to eliminate gift giving, but he badly underestimated how much Native people still valued the institution. They refused to let him abolish it. Simpson had to be content with giving less lavish presents. Thus, "steady and reliable" hunters and trappers continued to receive presents—usually tea, tobacco, sugar, and a few other "trifles"—when they came to trade, or to commemorate the sovereign's birthday, or to celebrate Christmas and the New Year. A chief or "Indian of considerable influence" received a suit of clothes, and the aged and infirm were given an ammunition allowance, which they remitted to good hunters in exchange for food. Simpson also wanted to overhaul the credit trading system. He wrote: "Heavy Debts are ascertained to be injurious to the Trade and of little benefit to the Indians, it is therefore understood that no more shall be given than there is a reasonable prospect of being repaid." Once again the company's clients balked. They prevented Simpson, and all the senior managers who followed him, from eliminating this aspect of the business, because they still believed that the amount of credit the HBC provided was a measure of its good faith and trust in them.

Finally, Simpson thought, again mistakenly, that the elimination of competition would make it possible for the company to improve its profit margins by importing lower-quality merchandise. Aboriginal consumers again rebelled. In this instance the London directors backed them. They believed that the HBC had an obligation to supply their loyal customers with high-quality merchandise, particularly where basic staples such as firearms and blankets were concerned. In the end, the most important retailing change that took place after 1821 was the elimination of alcohol sales by company traders. Tea became the major substitute. Later flour became an essential item where country foods were limited or the HBC wanted to turn the attention of hunters away from large-game hunting and towards fur trapping. For the most part, Native people used flour to make an unleavened pan bread called bannock. In time, tea and bannock became the key ingredients of every trapper's bill of fare in the bush, and today they remain northern traditions. As a monopoly, the HBC seemed to hold the whip hand in the Subarctic fur trade between 1821 and 1870, but it still relied on Native people in a wide variety of ways. In particular, its survival depended on maintaining a large pool of cheap, experienced Native labour in the bush. It was this realization that forced the company's directors and managers to move cautiously with reforms. Radical changes that adversely affected the quality of bush life risked accelerating the migration of Native people from areas where resource depletion was already a problem.

The York Factory district was one of the areas from which substantial numbers of Native people emigrated. They were drawn to the growing Red Riversettlement to the southwest. Its best-known resident historian in the mid-nineteenth century, Alexander Ross, complained that the Aboriginal people "began to edge themselves in; not indeed to labour themselves, but to partake, if possible, in the fruits of our toil." Governor Simpson moved to check this influx by maintaining a small outpost at Netley Creek and another one at the mouth of the Winnipeg River. He thought that if the migrants were able to obtain food, trade goods, and credit at these posts, they would not go on to Red River. The migration slowed, but it did not stop because many of these people had kinship ties to Métis and mixed-blood residents of the settlement.

Besides offering food and shelter, Red River settlers provided summer farm work. Ross recognized that this work might encourage the nomadic hunters to take up farming, which he thought was desirable. He claimed that a Swampy Cree from Oxford House, who originally came to the settlement to visit a daughter and stepson, was the first “Indian” to settle permanently at Red River and take up agriculture. Most of the Ojibwa and Cree migrants established themselves just north of Lower Fort Garry, where the Reverend William Cockran of the Church Missionary Society had established a Native settlement. Teaching Native people how to farm was one of the society’s primary goals; however, the missionaries’ “pupils” refused to abandon their old ways entirely. Instead, like the Métis and many of the mixed-bloods, they combined the old livelihoods and the new ones—a very sound economic survival strategy.

THE METIS

While the Ojibwa and Cree were trying to find new niches in the evolving fur-trade economy, the Métis took centre stage and became the most potent economic force in the region. One of their achievements was combining buffalo hunting with farming and other activities. Their farms, like othersin the settlement and those of the St Lawrence and the Great Lakes, were laid out in long narrow lots that reached back from the wooded riverbanksto the open grasslands. River frontage providedwater,shelter in the woods, and ease of travel. At that time, no one believed that the open prairies behind the farms could be cultivated. Instead, they were used as a common hayfield. Like their Plains relatives, the Métis undertook two major buffalo hunts annually. In late summer and early autumn, they headed out into the open grasslands to hunt buffalo for hides and to make grease, dried meat, and pemmican. In winter they went out again, but during this season their primary objective was to obtain buffalo robes and fresh meat. Although their Plains roots are evident in the organization and execution of these expeditions, the Métis made several important innovations. The most obvious one was the extensive use of the two-wheeled Red River cart to haul their belongings and transport the returns of the chase. We do not know who introduced these vehicles to the area, but their appearance suggests a French-Canadian or possibly a Scottish heritage. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, they became commonplace in the Red River valley. The Métis fashioned their carts entirely from local wood held together with strips of buffalo hide. No metal was used. The earliest carts had straight-spoked wheels, but later ones used dish-shaped wheels, which provided more stability. When one side of each wheel was covered with buffalo hides, the cart could be used to ferry cargo across rivers.

In his memoirs of this period, Louis Goulet, a Métis, wrote that when the community decided to mount an expedition, “the news was announced from the pulpit and by criers in as many parishes and missions as possible, telling people that if anybody wanted to join a buffalo-hunting caravan, all they had to do was be at a certain place on a certain day at a certain time.” According to Goulet, the reason for calling the assembly “was just about always the same: to elect a first and second leader along with a council of at least twelve. We also decided on the rules of order for the march. Each member of the executive who took part in the expedition had a voice in the assembly.” The two leaders and the council served the same roles on the hunt that the chiefs and elders did among the Plains nations. They made laws that were intended to ensure everyone’s safety. Goulet said these laws usually included a ban on drinking alcohol, a prohibition against leaving camp without council authorization, and a stipulation that participants

had to wait for a signal from the appointed guides before doing anything. “The council’s decisions were law,” he noted, “entirely and everywhere, for the duration of the journey.” Councils imposed fines for minor infractions and distributed the payments they received to those in need. Violators could receive severe punishment— even a death sentence—for very serious transgressions. Goulet recounted one instance when a council ordered the execution of an entire family because it had broken all the rules including those pertaining to “robbery and immorality.”

The Métis hunting expeditions grew steadily in size over the years and brought prodigious quantities of food, hides, and robes back to Red River. Each cart carried about nine hundred pounds. In 1820 the hunters set out in approximately 540 carts; by 1840 they used just over 1,200. This represented an increase in capacity from slightly less than half a million pounds to more than one million pounds over a twenty-year period. The fresh and processed meat products of the Métis were the mainstays of their diet and prominent articles in their commerce. There is no question that the Red River colony would have failed without this food. The colonial farmers faced a seemingly never-ending succession of setbacks due to early and late frosts, recurrent droughts, plagues of locusts, and frequent floods. When they did manage to bring in a harvest, they lost most of it to vermin or poor processing and storage facilities. Another market for their meat products—the fur traders—was not as lucrative as it once had been, and the Métis had to compete with the Plains Assiniboine, Cree, and Ojibwa for a share of it. In 1840 the HBC needed 55,886 pounds (sixtytwo cart loads) of dried meat and pemmican to feed its Northern Department employees. Clearly this demand, coupled with that of the colonists, was not sufficient to support commercial buffalo hunting on the scale that the Métis practised. The market for buffalo robes and hides that developed in the eastern United States became their primary market. The Métis shipped 26,000 to 200,000 robes, which were used for carriage robes and heavy winter coats, from the northern plains annually between 1815 and 1830. The HBC was not able to be a major player in this business because of its high transportation costs. Buffalo robes were simply too bulky to export by boat to York Factory or by canoe to eastern North America.

The Métis traded at two major outlets. Fort Union, situated at the junction of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, just south of the border, was the most important one because it was in the heart of buffalo-hunting country. In 1844 the Métis also established regular contact with St Paul, on the upper Mississippi River, by building the Red River Trail. By the mid 1850s the cartmen hauled as many as seventy-five hundred robes to this alternative market. The development of the robe market had important implications for Métis women and the women of the Plains nations. Because they processed the robes, the production capacity of a hunter’s wives and daughters determined how many robes he could trade annually. This crucial role women played in generating wealth was one of the reasons Plains men took more than one wife. In the 1860s the high demand for leather in the post–Civil War United States created a market for buffalo hides that was many times larger than the one for robes had ever been. Buffalo hides made ideal belts for use in the power-transmission systems that drove mills and factory machinery during the early stage of industrialization. The rapid expansion of the hide market sounded the death knell for the once-bountiful prairie buffalo. Well before this new threat developed, however, the herds were already in retreat. The Red River hunts had begun to take their toll on

the buffalo of the southern Manitoba district as early as the 1820s. Comparatively few animals existed there after 1850. By 1860 the herds were declining sharply in the Saskatchewan River valley downstream from Fort Edmonton.
The Métis and some of their mixed-blood neighbours directed their entrepreneurial energies in other directions as well. Operating freighting businesses was one of them. The tortuous courses of prairie rivers made moving goods across the plains by boat and canoes a time-consuming and tedious chore, so the Métis contracted to haul HBC supplies overland by cart from the Red River colony to Fort Carlton in Saskatchewan country and to Fort Edmonton. On this journey, the noisy and dust-choked caravans carved deeply furrowed trails that are still visible today. While these developments were taking place, other mixed-blood people and Métis established themselves as “free traders” and competed against the HBC. A number of elements encouraged them. When American traders expanded their operations into the northern plains of the United States in the 1820s and 1830s, they threatened to take a large portion of the HBC’s business in the Rainy Lake, Red River, Swan River, and Saskatchewan districts. To deal with the threat as cheaply as possible, Governor Simpson opted to license a number of mixed-blood and Métis men as semi-independent traders. Under this arrangement, the licensed traders were supposed to buy their supplies from and sell their hides and furs to the HBC at preferential rates. The scheme failed—the Americans simply offered much better terms. Because the company refused to grant enough licences to satisfy the demand for them, a lively clandestine traffic developed between the Americans and unlicensed traders. When the HBC tried to restrict this commerce, the Métis and mixed-blood “free traders” led a free-trade movement. One of their tactics was to petition London for self-government in 1848 in the hope of undermining the company’s authority

A test of the Métis’ growing strength came with the Sayer trial, when local HBC officials tried to crack down on the offenders in 1849 by bringing a fellow countryman, Pierre Guillaume Sayer, to trial at Red River on the charges that he had violated the company’s charter by trading furs illegally. Sayer refused to appear when the court was ready to begin on the morning of May 17, 1849. Instead, he remained outside the courthouse in the protection of a large group of armed Métis and mixed-blood supporters. He sent two “delegates of the people” in his place to protest the proceedings. Adam Thom, who presided as recorder of Rupert’s Land (essentially the chief civil justice), persuaded one of the delegates, James Sinclair, known locally as the “chief of the half-breeds,” to act as Sayer’s defence counsel and the trial proceeded in the afternoon. Sayer entered the courtroom and testified in his own defence, asserting that he had not violated the company’s trust in him because he had traded only with his Métis relatives. At the conclusion of the trial, the jurors convicted him, but they recommended clemency. HBC officials now found themselves in a difficult position. With a menacing mob surrounding the courthouse, they had little choice but to accept the jury’s recommendation; otherwise, a violent outbreak was a certainty. Clearly, the Métis wielded the real power in the settlement, although the company controlled the local administration and the civil court. As the courtroom emptied, one of the jurors came to the door and shouted, “Le commerce est libre! Le commerce est libre! Vive la liberté!” Apparently the crowd outside took up the chant, which history proved to be correct. Never again did the HBC try to enforce its monopoly in the prairies. Instead, it took steps after the trial to accommodate Métis’ interests by giving them representation on the council that governed the settlement.

RACISM IN THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

Although the HBC trimmed its labour force in the early 1820s, its demand for workers increased again at the end of the decade. One reason was that the developing economies and higher wage rates of the St Lawrence valley and northern Scotland made it harder for the company to recruit workers from these traditional areas. The HBC therefore turned increasingly to the "Indian," Métis, and mixed-blood communities to meet its requirements. However, the company's policy prohibiting the hiring of Native people for anything other than seasonal (mostly summer) work or specific tasks remained in place. The majority of Native men were hired as crews on the boat and canoe brigades, as unskilled labourers at posts in the summer, and as provision hunters for posts in the winter. As fur and game depletion became widespread again later in the century, this short-term employment became vital to hunters and trappers. Without such earnings, increasing numbers of them could not afford to buy basic necessities. Post managers took advantage of the situation by awarding coveted summer work only to their most reliable hunters. In this way they developed hiring practices that reinforced the company's goal of keeping a labour force in the bush.

Native women also played crucial economic roles at the posts. They produced and repaired essential footwear (moccasins and snowshoes), chopped wood, collected canoe-birch supplies, made canoe sails, provided tanned hides and pack cords, re-dressed furs for shipment to London, grew vegetables, snared hare, and caught and preserved fish. Indeed, women made significant contributions to the larders of many posts until well into the twentieth century. In northern Ontario, for instance, the "old fisherwoman" provided Fort Severn with most of its fish in the late 1870s. Nearby, at Martin Falls Post, "Old Betsy and her daughter" fished, built smoking lodges, smoked the whitefish others brought in, and visited the various fishing stations carrying messages from the post manager to the fishers. Additionally, women continued to trap and trade furs, and they produced and sold large quantities of isinglass, a dried gelatin prepared from the air bladders of sturgeon. The HBC had promoted the isinglass trade from the earliest days of its operation, but Native women had always thought the payment they received was too low, considering how time-consuming its production was. After 1821 rising prices on the European market made this activity worthwhile. Mixed-blood employees of the HBC fared somewhat better during this period than their Native counterparts, although not as well as they had before the merger. Prior to 1821, it was possible for the men to work their way up the company ladder and become senior officers. Afterwards, the HBC developed a two-tiered structure. Mixed-blood and Métis men holding seasonal and permanent jobs occupied the rank in the labour hierarchy just above that of the Native seasonal workers. The highest position a man of mixed descent could hope to attain in the company was that of a semi-skilled or skilled tradesman—for example, a boat builder, bricklayer, carpenter, cooper, gunsmith, or blacksmith. A man learned these trades by apprenticing, often with men recruited in Scotland. Bowmen and sternmen played essential roles in the brigades and these positions continued to be held mainly by mixed-bloods and Métis.

The HBC looked for its officers outside Rupert's Land and the northwest. Most continued to come from Scotland, but a few came from Lower Canada. The officer recruits, who usually joined the firm as clerks, trained on the job under the watchful eyes of post managers. The upper echelons of the officer class were occupied by the profit-sharing chief factors and chief

traders. Collectively these men shared 40 per cent of the fur-trading profits of the company. Understandably, the men of mixed ancestry resented the new, racist arrangement, which blocked them from attaining the most prestigious and lucrative positions in the company. They were not alone. Many senior men in the officer class had married Native women and raised children with them. Predictably, they wanted their sons to have the opportunity to follow in their footsteps. Pressure from these ranking officers eventually forced the HBC to create the position of apprentice postmaster explicitly for the mixed-blood sons of officers. The trouble was that this move merely emphasized the company's discriminatory hiring practices. It was willing to hire raw European recruits as junior officers, but it expected young mixed-blood men to serve a seven-year apprenticeship, even though they had grown up around posts and were much more familiar with the enterprise than European immigrants were. Few ever completed the apprenticeship to become fullfledged officers. In the stratified labour force that emerged after 1821, a man's opportunity depended heavily on his ethnic background. Those of mixed descent were barred from the top; "Indians" were kept at the bottom.

The HBC hierarchy had a strong impact on the development of the multicultural society that evolved at Red River and around the larger company establishments throughout Rupert's Land and the northwest. Active and retired senior officers living in Red River, some with white wives, dominated the English-speaking elite. Other members of this class included the Protestant clergy, British female schoolteachers, and a handful of mixed-blood merchants and free traders. Scottish and mixed-blood farmers ranked below them. (Many of the latter also worked for the company part-time and engaged in buffalo hunting.) By cutting off advancement possibilities to mixed-blood men, the HBC also limited their chances, and those of their spouses, to improve their social status. The social status of Métis men and women was not as seriously affected because they rarely socialized with the Englishspeaking community. Their own elite included the priests, the more influential members of a small group of French-Canadian immigrants (who first arrived at Red River in 1818) and their descendants, and the most successful Métis free traders. The attitudes, racial prejudices, and social practices of Governor Simpson and the settlement's Protestant missionaries had a great impact on its residents— especially the women of mixed extraction. Although country marriages between traders and Aboriginal women had once been commonplace, by the turn of the nineteenth century it was more fashionable for wintering partners of the North West Company and officers and clerks of the HBC to marry Métis and mixedblood women, who usually were more European in appearance and behaviour. Senior officers with mixed-blood daughters often tried to arrange a match between them and promising young clerks of the company. When they retired to Canada or Scotland, these officers often "gave their wives" to their comrades at the post, a practice they called "turning off." Alternatively, the women returned with their children to their Native kinfolk. These customs provided for the welfare of the offspring of interracial unions and offered the female members of the fur-trade society a chance to enhance their status through marriage. However, in the 1820s Governor Simpson advocated new marriage customs that would make these women extremely vulnerable to poverty and social uncertainty.

Simpson's own relationships reveal the realities of what life was like for the women. In 1821, shortly after his arrival in the northwest, he formed a liaison with Betsey Sinclair, the mixed-blood daughter of a deceased high-ranking HBC officer and an Aboriginal woman. Although he had a child with her, Simpson did not regard the relationship as binding in any way.

When he grew tired of her companionship in 1823, he instructed another company officer to marry her off to a clerk. Three years later he began a relationship with Margaret Taylor, who was the mixed-blood daughter of the sloop master at York Factory and the sister of his personal servant of many years. The governor had two daughters with Margaret before he left for England in 1830, where he married his cousin, Frances Simpson. As soon as the governor returned to Red River with his English bride, he promptly arranged a marriage between Margaret and a French Canadian who was living in the settlement. Simpson then let it be known that he frowned on the practice of allowing HBC men to marry Aboriginal women or those of mixed ancestry. He took this position partly because he held Native people in extremely low regard and partly because he believed "country wives" exerted too much influence over their husbands. On an inspection tour in 1825, he complained about three senior officers in the Columbia District, saying the men were "so much under the influence of their Women … that what they say is Law and they can not muster sufficient resolution in themselves or confidence in their Ladies to be 5 Minutes on end out their presence." Finally, Simpson disliked the fact that his officers and servants were raising large families with their Native wives. Although these unions tied the HBC into Aboriginal kinship circles, and gave it access to their furs, they also created obligations that could be costly for the company. "Almost every man in the District [Columbia] has a Family," Simpson grumbled, "which is productive of serious injury and inconvenience on account of the great consumption of Provisions; but by changing men from this evil, will be remedied and the women and Children sent to their Indian relatives."

As with the other reforms he attempted, the governor learned that he could not overturn well-established practices at will without placing the business at risk. Country marriages continued because there was no alternative for most men at that time. White women would be few and far between in the northwest for many years to come. Nonetheless, the example set by Simpson and other senior men who subsequently brought European wives to their posts, or married English schoolteachers at Red River, undermined the status of the mixed-blood spouses of their fellow officers. And officers who married women of mixed ancestry had to face the reality that their career prospects would be compromised as a result. By mid-century, the furtrade accounts became filled with racist slurs against "Indian" and, to a lesser extent, mixed-blood women. Writing in 1830, the fur trader James Hargrave also blamed European women for this development, saying, "This influx of white faces has cast a still deeper shade of the faces of our Brunettes in the eyes of many." The Protestant clergy generally frowned on interracial marriages, too. Nor did they approve of marriages outside of the church à la façon du pays. As a result of the clergy's pressure, many couples eventually "solemnized" their unions in churches at Red River and other settlements. However, away from major settlements, it was impossible for the missionaries or the company to impose a more rigid social order based on class and race. Even at Red River, the task proved to be difficult, given the polyglot character of the population and its diverse economic activities. It is not clear to what extent Red River's two different groups of mixed-descent people interacted with each other or shared common goals. Some historians believe that the Protestant community of Scots and mixed-bloods had little to do with the Catholic French Canadians and Métis. Certainly these communities lived in different parts of the settlement. Most of the mixed-bloods and Scottish farmers were located on the west bank of the Red River to the north of its confluence with the Assiniboine. The French Canadians

lived in the parish of St Boniface, opposite the outlet of the Assiniboine River, and the Métis lived south of the forks along the west bank of the Red River. There also was an outlying Métis community at Portage la Prairie. Other scholars stress that in spite of their cultural differences and the physical distance between their communities, strong ties bound the two groups together. For example, some mixed-bloods participated in the buffalo hunts, and buffalo hunters and farmers continued to buy each others' products. Intermarriage also took place. Nonetheless, sectarian tensions seem to have increased over time, and the clergy were mainly responsible. Beginning in the early 1860s, immigrants from Canada West aggravated the situation. The newcomers disdained the mobile lifestyle of the Métis and did not believe that the long-time residents, or their Aboriginal kinfolk, had any valid rights to the land. They also loathed the HBC, regarding it as an impediment to their own economic interests. The Canadian immigrants were harbingers of the future. This new breed of settler dreamed of turning the prairies and parklands into wheat fields, but they did not envisage the Plains nations, the Métis, or the mixed-bloods having any role to play in the process. Their dream was incompatible with the traditional land-use practices of the Native groups, which required large open areas for buffalo hunting and extensive common grazing and hay fields behind their Red River lots.