

Prior to the transfer of Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada in 1870, the colony founded by Lord Selkirk in 1812 at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers was the major centre of population and agriculture in the Canadian Northwest. At the time of its founding the intention was to establish a commercial farming settlement that would supply the Hudson's Bay Company with provisions, but from the outset the economy was only partially based on crops and domestic animals. Repeated crop failures compelled all settlers to turn continually to the game and fish resources of the plains for part of their food supply. Hunting, fishing, and fowling, in addition to agriculture, were the supports of the colony, just as they were of the fur trade. It was the continuing uncertainty of both agriculture and the plains buffalo hunt that first created and later sustained this basic dichotomy of the Red River economy prior to 1870.

The dichotomy also reflected the disparate peoples and cultures that formed the colony. Europeans and native Indians, British and French Métis, farmers and hunters, fishermen and fur traders made up the population mix. Colonists who farmed, primarily Highland Scots but also including French Canadians, Orkney-men, and British Métis, were eventually outnumbered by people who lived chiefly by hunting, fishing, and trading furs. These were mainly French Métis but many French Canadians, British Métis, and full-blooded Indians lived in a similar manner.

**RED RIVER POPULATION**

Year	Population (Thousands of persons)
1810	0.1
1820	0.5
1830	1.5
1840	4.5
1850	5.5
1860	8.5
1870	12.0

**ETHNIC COMPOSITION**

**1870**

Scale 1:950 000

**1835**

Scale 1:850 000

Figures indicate total population.

Legend:

- Métis
- White
- Native

Locations and Populations (1870):

- St Peter's 812
- St Clement's 510
- St Andrew's 1492
- St John's 649
- St James 394
- St Paul's 325
- Kildonan 495
- Saint-Boniface 797
- Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes 302
- Saint-Norbert 1104
- Sainte-Agathe 284
- Saint-Vital 397
- Saint-Charles 377
- Headingley 291
- Saint-François-Xavier 1806
- Baie-Saint-Paul 313
- Poplar Point 611
- High Bluff 145
- Portage-la-Prairie 513
- Saint-Laurent 278

Locations and Populations (1835):

- Saint-François-Xavier 62
- St James 21
- Saint-Charles 3
- St Andrew's 94
- St Paul's 44
- St John's 54
- Saint-Boniface 95
- Saint-Norbert 72

To Fort Ellice and Fort Carlton

To Grand Coteau de Missouri and in some years as far west as Cypress Hills

The Métis population increased from 600 families in 1835 to more than 2 500 by 1870. In 1835 less than half of the male heads of households were Métis, but nearly all of the men were married to Indian or partly Indian women. As a result, by 1870 the population was more than 80% Métis.

Total population approximately 11 900

**Place of birth**

Place of birth	Percentage
North-West Territories and Manitoba	92.4%
Canada	2.4%
Other	0.4%

**Religion**

Religion	Percentage
Catholic	44.6%
Protestant	40.8%
Unknown	14.6%

**Ethnic origin**

Ethnic origin	Percentage
French M�tis	48.1%
British M�tis	34.1%
White	13.1%
Native	4.7%

[illegible]

**Red River Settlement**

- a Planting – potatoes, wheat, barley, garden vegetables
- b Harvesting and haying
- c Cultivation and husbandry
- d Domestic industry, including cart-making

**Trade and transport**

- e Fur trading
- f Trading pemmican and dried meat to Hudson's Bay Co and Red River colonists
- g Trading agricultural produce to Hudson's Bay Co
- h Freight by cart to St Paul, Swan River, and Saskatchewan. Boat tripping to York Factory and Portage-la-Loche

**Parkland**

- k Lake fishing (whitefish)
- l Goose hunting
- m Sugaring
- n Trapping and occasional buffalo hunting

**Forest**

- i Trapping and rabbit hunting

**Plains**

- j Organized annual buffalo hunts

**SEASONAL CYCLE OF THE RED RIVER MÉTIS**

**Red River Settlement**

- a Planting – potatoes, wheat, barley, garden vegetables
- b Harvesting and haying
- c Cultivation and husbandry
- d Domestic industry, including cart-making

**Trade and transport**

- e Fur trading
- f Trading pemmican and dried meat to Hudson's Bay Co and Red River colonists
- g Trading agricultural produce to Hudson's Bay Co
- h Freighting by cart to St Paul, Swan River, and Saskatchewan. Boat tripping to York Factory and Portage-la-Loche

**Parkland**

- k Lake fishing (whitefish)
- l Goose hunting
- m Sugaring
- n Trapping and occasional buffalo hunting

**Forest**

- i Trapping and rabbit hunting







**Plains**

- j Organized annual buffalo hunts

**THE SETTLEMENT BELT ca 1870s**

Settlements shown on the map include: Portage-la-Prairie, High Bluff, Saint-Paul, Saint-Boniface, Saint-Vital, Saint-Charles, Headingley, Saint-James, Saint-François-Xavier, Lane's Post, Saint-Pierre, Saint-Andrew's, Saint-Clement's, Lower Fort Garry, Upper Fort Garry, Kildonan, and Saint-Boniface.

**A** Cultivated land  
**B** Wooded land  
**C** Prairie and meadow land

-  Cultivated land
-  Long-lot survey belt to 1873
-  Long-lot hay privilege after 1873
-  Church
-  Flour mill
-  Hudson's Bay Co post
-  Trail

**PORTION OF A PLAN OF  
THE PARISH OF  
SAINT-FRANÇOIS-XAVIER  
ca 1873**

See legend for St Andrew's, above.

The parishes of St Andrew's and Saint-François-Xavier were settled about the same time and comprised nearly identical topography and soil. St Andrew's, however, was settled largely by British Métis, and formed part of the Lower Settlement, where settlers were most fully committed to agriculture. In Saint-François-Xavier the population was largely French Métis; buffalo hunting, fishing, and the fur trade were their major foci of interest, resulting in small amounts of cultivated land.