Indian and Metis History and Culture

These write-ups and resource links are intended to serve as the meat on the bones of the lecture outlines and PowerPoints of the Local History Teaching Aids (LHTA) materials. The goal in composing them has been for clarity, which is a key part of making the material interesting and inspiring. The material below is presented as a resource for the teacher, rather than for the students.

I. Continental Upheaval, the Ice Age, and the Arrival of People

*'Prehistory' is a difficult subject. It is important to admit the difficulties in obtaining a clear picture of the past when we have only present evidence from geology and archaeology. The most important parts of the following material are the two lists on local ice age landforms and early cultures.*

The history of the land that became Manitoba stretches back to the beginning. Lacking written records for the area, however, we can only speak in general terms and theoretical models that fall in and out of fashion. Lesson I-1 presents an overview of pre-contact history. It consistently encourages critical thinking about the process of piecing together sources for the history of the distant past.

There was originally only one continent. We call this landmass **Rodinia**. The continent broke apart in a process called continental drift. This is still happening today, only much slower. Continental drift involves the process of subduction, in which one tectonic plate slips under another in regions known as subduction zones. The Pacific Plate, for example, is being subducted underneath the North American Plate along the Pacific Coast. Also, as the North American Plate drifts away from the Eurasian and African ones, magma from the mid-Atlantic Ridge is expelled and produces new rock material for each plate. The fragments of Rodinia recombined to form a second 'supercontinent' called **Pangaea**. Pangaea then separated to form the seven continents we know today (or eight if we count New Zealand!).

**A) Continental Upheaval**

Rodinia was made up of several **cratons**. Cratons are stable chunks of continental crust that make up the core of a continent. One of these cratons was called **Laurentia**, also known as the North American Craton. It now forms the core of our continent. Laurentia underlies most of modern Canada, the United States, and Greenland. Much of the craton is exposed as the **Canadian Shield**. The Shield is also called the Laurentian Shield (from the St. Lawrence River) - hence the name "Laurentian Craton." Other material from erosion, deposition, and magma expulsion added to the cratons.

In the process of breaking apart to reach their present positions, the continents were submerged. The fossils of Mosasaurs and other marine reptiles now on display at the Morden Fossil Discovery Centre remind us of this.

Rodinia and Pangaea are the two past supercontinents whose existence seems well established. Scientists have proposed several others that range in size and number. Research is, however, limited by the destructiveness of continental upheaval. Piecing together the precise history of the continents is a grand puzzle. It involves speculation over the arrangement of the chunks that remain by using radiometric dating and paleomagnetic comparison. In the absence of written records, it is difficult to speak with certainty about more than Rodinia, Pangaea, and today's continents.

**Thinking Critically about Chronology**

**B)**

**The Ice Age**

The **Ice Age** is a more recent major event that sculpted earth's surface. It has particular bearing on our area. The ice did not cover the entire earth. Most of the Laurentian craton was frozen, with an enormous glacier extending over most of Canada and large portions of the northern United States. Manitoba was completely frozen. Northern Europe and Russia were also glaciated, along with smaller land areas in Asia, and places like Chile in the southern hemisphere. While ice built up near the poles, however, increased precipitation changed climates in lower latitudes. Researchers have found evidence that even the Sahara Desert was once green. Moreover, while the glaciers existed, ocean levels were lower. The Bering Strait land bridge that helped people cross into North America from Asia was one result of this.

Similar problems with reconstructing the past arise when we discuss the ice age. The primary sources, again, have been reduced by geological changes. The theory that there was *an* ice age began with the famous American scientist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873). From about 1900 to about 1960, however, the standard theory was that there were four ice ages. Now scientists hold there to have been thirty or more. The vast majority of evidence, however, comes from the last of these: the "Wisconsin Glaciation." Evidence for previous ones is generally of a different kind. The **glacial striations** on rocks and the debris deposits left by the advance and retreat of glaciers also confuse the picture. How the ice age started and ended is also uncertain. Scientific models are always changing. Fortunately, the important parts of the story for us concern the end of the ice age.

**Thinking Critically about the Ice Age**

As the glacier that covered Manitoba retreated, its melt water formed a lake along its edges that we call **Lake Agassiz**. This lake fluctuated in size, but eventually covered most of the province. In a colourful illustration, Barbara Huck and Doug Whiteway wrote that "At its mightiest extent, Lake Agassiz was so large you could have floated the British Isles in its frigid waters and still had room to sail around them" (*In Search of Canada's Ancient Heartland*, 40).

**Lake Agassiz and Manitoba Geography**

The shrinkage of Lake Agassiz involved dramatic episodes. One event sent large volumes of water channeling through Minnesota, down the Mississippi, and out into the Gulf of Mexico. Another instance saw water burst through an ice dam with alarming power, carving the sharp edges of Ouimet Canyon, and flooding into Lake Superior near Thunder Bay.

We can explore four results of the ice age in Red River North:

1) The **Belair Morain**. Morains are piles of rock and soil debris deposited at the edge of glaciers as they expand and contract. The Belair Morain was left by the retreat of the Laurentide ice sheet. It stretches from Elk Island and **Grand Beach** (where visitors can hike along ancient coastlines and island of Lake Agassiz) south as far as **Bird's Hill**.

2) **Lake Winnipeg**. Lake Agassiz left a small remnant of itself in the north basin of Lake Winnipeg. The south basin was not yet filled with water. Because of a process called isostatic rebound, however, the little lake in the north expanded. When the glacier had covered the province, it had depressed the land. With the glacier gone, the land began to rise again, and pushed the little lake's water south, filling the south basin of Lake Winnipeg.

**Local   
Ice Age Features**

3) The **Red River**. The Red River originally flowed into the glacial lake that formed along the glacier and became Lake Agassiz. It followed Agassiz north and kept running into the north basin of Lake Winnipeg as a much longer river than it is today. With isostatic rebound, the river reached its current location. Rebound also made its slope less steep, so the river now flows more gently.

4) The **prairies**. The flat landscape of the Red River Valley was scraped flat by the ice age and lake. The rocks and boulders sometimes found in farmers' fields and bushes in rural St. Andrews and St. Clements were left by the glacier and lake.

**C) Early People Groups Arrive**

With the arrival of the first people in our area we move from geologically-based historical study to archaeological. The picture becomes somewhat clearer, but only somewhat. We can again give only a general picture of what the past might have generally looked like. Canadian prairie historian Gerald Friesen cautioned that scholars have been "too quick to classify distinct cultural groups on the basis of their material remains." The seasonal use of the same sites by different groups resulting from different plant and animal resources, or even "personal whim," complicate matters (*The Canadian Prairies: A History*, 14).

Archaeologists use two different families of dating methods. The first are relative dating methods, which establish a sequence of events. The basic theory of stratigraphy is that older objects are found buried lower than younger objects. Disturbance of the site can sometimes affect the usefulness of this method. Typology attempts to set the general chronological context of artifacts like arrowheads and pottery by comparing them to similar ones of known ages. Absolute dating, on the other hand, uses radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology (tree rings) to set more precise dates for archaeological artifacts. They can be used separately, or to calibrate one another. One of the weak points of radiocarbon is that it is necessary to know the what the concentration of carbon was when the sample isotope began to decay. To obtain this, tree ring data are used. One problem is that trees can grow multiple rings per year under the right conditions. Researchers have used tree rings to construct different reference chronologies that fail to agree with each other. Carbon dating can be useful, but has weaknesses also.

Despite vagueness of sources, researchers have constructed a general outline of the human history of Red River North before contact. Based on pottery sherds, burial mounds, arrowheads, etc., they propose four periods:

1) The **Larter Culture** (1000 - 200 B.C.). The Larter people are the first people known to have lived in the Lockport area. The evidence for them comes from bison bones and corner-notched dart points discovered on the property of the Larter family (hence "Larter Culture") of St. Andrews in 1951.They were nomads that followed the **bison** north for the winter to the sheltered Red River Valley.

2) The **Laurel Culture** (200 B. C. - A. D. 1000). The Laurel Culture was named for fragments of pottery found in Laurel, Minnesota. This people began arriving as mixed forests replaced grassland around Lockport following the ice age. They came from the Great Lakes region. Laurel people were more advanced than the Larter Culture. They had birchbark canoes, bow and arrows, and ceramics. They lived in seasonal campsites where they hunted, fished, and harvested wild rice. Their **burial mounds** have been found around Lockport. Pottery finds extend as far north as St. Peters Church.

3) The **Dakota Culture** (A. D. 1000 - A. D. 1300). The Dakota Culture was noteworthy for practicing **horticulture**, growing large gardens of corn near present-day Lockport. The site was attractive because of the rapids that the Lock and Dam have now submerged. They were a natural bridge - including for bison - and fish spawning was plentiful. Drought and population increase in the 12th century put pressure on people living in the Dakotas, some of which then moved north. Between 300 and 2000 people occupied the site. The Dakota Culture arrived between AD 1000 and 1300. Bone and charcoal remnants at the site were radiocarbon dated to AD 1400. A plaque at the now closed Kenosewun Museum at Lockport explained that "Archaeological investigations conducted at Lockport in the 1980s unearthed charred corn kernels, hoes made from the shoulder-blades of bison, and underground storage pits which were up to two meters deep. The pottery styles discovered originated among native farming cultures of the upper Mississippi and Missouri river valleys."

**Early Local People Groups**

4) The **Selkirk** **Culture** and the **Blackduck Culture** (A.D. 900 - A.D. 1700). The Selkirk Culture people are considered to be the **ancestors of the modern Cree Indians**. Evidence for their existence was uncovered beneath the floorboards of St. Peter's Church, north of Selkirk. They hunted bison, ate wild rice, used pottery, traded with distant areas, and made mounds for burial. Selkirk Culture people lived along the forested lakes and rivers north of St. Clements, but were active along the Red River between Lockport and Selkirk. The Blackduck Culture was named for finds near Blackduck Lake, Minnesota. They were in many respects similar to the Selkirk Culture, making pottery, hunting bison, trading, and making burial mounds.

**Additional Resources on the Red River North Heritage website:**

Sutherland, Donna. "First Peoples of St. Clements Timeline." Red River North Heritage. Accessed 17 May 2018. https://redrivernorthheritage.com/first-peoples-of-st-clements-timeline/.

Laberge, Jared. "Prehistoric Inhabitants of Lockport and St. Clements." Red River North Heritage. Accessed 17 May 2018. https://redrivernorthheritage.com/the-first-peoples/.

**Other Resources:**

Huck, Barabara, and Doug Whiteway. *In Search of Canada's Ancient Heartland*. Winnipeg: Heartland, 2016.

II. The Fur Trade and Colonial Era

*The Red River North area was affected primarily by three tribes: the Assiniboines, the Cree, and the Ojibway. The last of these became particularly important. The Ojibway Chief Peguis played an important role in the early history of Manitoba.*

The **Assiniboine** people actually called themselves the "**Nakota**." They spoke a language related to that of the Lakota **Sioux** of North and South Dakota. Their oral traditions say they began as a people when they separated from the Yankton Dakota. The name "Assiniboine" may have been given to them the Cree, who called them Stone Water People ("Assee-nee-pay-tock") because of the way they used hot stones to cook their food.

**A) The Tribes and the Fur Trade**

The Assiniboine migrated north from the Mississippi to the plains of Manitoba and Saskatchewan to hunt **bison**. Their camps along the Assiniboine River gave it its name. They were present here as early as the mid-17th century, but ceramic evidence around Lockport may suggest a somewhat earlier date for their arrival.

**The Assiniboine**

The Red River North Heritage website states that "Most Assiniboine groups formed trade networks with the Plains Cree peoples and with French and English/Scottish fur traders after they arrived in the region. They became guides, traders, and interpreters. Some Assiniboine men provided food to European trading posts on the Plains, and Assiniboine women made footwear, coats, and snowshoes for those fur traders. Some Assiniboine women married Cree, French, and English/Scottish men." Today, the most Assiniboine have moved west to Alberta and Montana. There are few descendants left in our area.

**The Cree**

The **Cree** may descend from the **Selkirk Culture**. Their name was given to them by others, and is generic. There are several groups of Cree, and each call themselves by their own specific titles. In English, divisions include the Plains Cree, Swampy Cree, James Bay Cree, and others. The Cree language was an **Algonkian** tongue.

The Plains Cree were bison hunters. Cree men used lances, bow and arrows, and muskets to take game. The women would then process the kill. As tribes used every part of the buffalo that they could, there were many steps:

* Butchering the game
* Scraping hair from the hides
* Tanning the hides using the bison's brain. Water was mixed with the brain to make a paste to spread on the hide. This made it soften as it dried.
* Waterproofing the hide by smoking and tanning it while hung.
* Making moccasins, mukluks, mitts, and coats out of the hide.

Cree men in St. Clements acted as middlemen, traders, and HBC trip-makers in the fur trade. Some Cree women married Englishmen and Scots.

The **Saulteaux** Indians migrated to St. Clements from St. Mary's River (**Sault Ste. Marie**) in Ontario in the mid-18th century. The name "Saulteaux" means "people who jump or shoot the rapids." The French saw them doing this to spear fish in Ontario and gave them the title. They are also called "**Ojibway**" and "**Anishinaabee**." Like the Assiniboine, the Ojibway spoke an Algonkian language. French fur traders married Saulteaux women in Saulteaux marriage ceremonies, giving rise to **French Métis**.

**The Saulteaux/ Ojibway/ Anishinaabee**

Tribes on the plains of Manitoba patterned their years after bison hunting and the fur trade. They lived a nomadic lifestyle to hunt, fish, and trade. Their religion was **naturalistic**. They believed everything in nature was divine and sought interaction with spirits. The drum and smoking pipe were used during attempts to pray and connect with the Creator. War played an important part in plains culture, being an opportunity to prove courage, skill, and help from spirits; gain glory; take revenge; and plunder goods.

**Plains Tribes Society**

The Assiniboine, Cree, and Saulteaux formed an **alliance** that gave them a monopoly over the fur trade and an advantage over other tribes. They controlled access to European goods, including muskets. Control of the gun supply gave them a decided advantage over neighbouring tribes. Once fur trade posts and boat brigades moved inland, the tribes lost their roles as middlemen and transporters, but took up work supplying fur company employees with pemmican from buffalo hunts. Their stable monopoly on fur trade business began to fall apart as inland company activity, competition from American traders, and conflict over the southern horse trade around the beginning of the nineteenth century fractured the alliance.

Plains tribes also suffered from epidemics of **disease** to which they lacked immunity. A fierce bought of whooping cough and measles in killed as much as half of the Assiniboines (3,000 to 6,000) from 1818 to 1820. **Smallpox** hit the Mandans and Assiniboines so hard in **1837-38** that they became virtual strategic non-entities.

**Disease epidemics**

One **Saulteaux** man from Red River North had an important impact on early Manitoba. **Chief Peguis** was born in 1774 at Sault Ste. Marie to a French voyageur father and Saulteaux mother. Peguis led a band of his people west, first to Red Lake, Minnesota, and then to Pembina, North Dakota to trade with the Hudson Bay and Northwest Companies. From Pembina, they moved north to the forks of the Red and Assiniboine, and then down the river to **Netley Creek**, where they settled in the **1790s**. There was a camp of dead Cree and Assiniboines at the creek that likely succumbed to smallpox, or perhaps a Dakota Sioux raid. For this reason, they originally called Netley Creek **Death River**. The river assumed its current title by 1808.

**B) Colonial Period**

Peguis proved himself a friend of the struggling Selkirk Settlers. He took them to hunt bison at Pembina in 1814. He also helped the survivors of the skirmish at Seven Oaks in 1816. The following year, he and four other chiefs of the Saulteaux and Cree met with **Lord Selkirk** to sign a treaty that gave the settlers two miles of land on either side of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers in exchange for a yearly gift of 100lbs of "good and merchantable tobacco." The **Selkirk Treaty**, signed on **18 July 1817**, was a key moment in the establishment of the Selkirk colony.

**The Selkirk Treaty (1817)**

Peguis and his band also became known for the first Indian agricultural settlement in Manitoba. The **Anglican** **missionary** **Rev. William Cockran** was a close friend of Chief Peguis. Cockran believed that his gospel witness would be ineffective without him showing love for the wellbeing of the people of Red River. He also believed that more stable, agriculture-based living was necessary to found a lasting community where Christian faith could endure. Cockran spoke for the good accomplished by "the cordial, and legitimate union of Civilisation and Christianity; upon the Indian Race. The former the Physician of the body; the latter the Physician of the soul. Both the free gift of God to man." In 1832, he convinced Peguis to try an agricultural settlement at Netley Creek. In **1833**, Cockran, Peguis, and his band moved south and founded a village at **St. Peter's**. They put up nine houses, including a school, by the fall. **Joseph Cook** and **Catherine Sinclair Cook** came to teach boys agricultural skills and girls weaving. By 1835, the village had 35 acres of farmland under cultivation. By 1847, there were 74 kids at school and farmers were exporting surpluses. The settlement even put up its own **windmill** in 1835, and a second one in 1846. The village reached its height in the **1850s and 1860s**. In 1851, there were 87 families with 500 people living at St. Peter's.

Even though Peguis followed Saulteaux traditions of nature worship and was still skeptical about Christianity, he supported Cockran's missionary activities. The first church went up between 1835-37. The current stone building of **St. Peter's Dynevor** (1852-57) held its first service in 1854. By this time, Peguis had experienced a change of heart. He gave up three of his four wives, abstained from alcohol for two years, and was baptized on 7 October **1840**. He also took the name **William King**. His wife became Victoria King, and his children took the surname **Prince**. St. Peter's became well known as a model settlement.

**Peguis become a Christian**

**The village at St. Peter's**

**Additional Resources on the Red River North Heritage website:**

Butterfield, David. *St. Peter's Dynevor Windmill: A Graphic Recreation of an Early Nineteenth Century Industrial Landmark.* Heritage Manitoba, 2015. https://redrivernorthheritage.com/st-peter-s-dynevor-windmill/

Red River North Heritage. "Chief Peguis, also known as William King (c. 1774 to 1864)." Red River North Heritage. Accessed 22 May 2018. https://redrivernorthheritage.com/chief-peguis-aka-william-king/

Sutherland, Donna. "First Peoples of St. Clements Timeline." Red River North Heritage. Accessed 17 May 2018. https://redrivernorthheritage.com/first-peoples-of-st-clements-timeline/.

**Other Resources:**

Beaumont, Raymond M. "The Rev. William Cockran: The Man and the Image." *Manitoba History* 33 (Spring 1997). http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\_history/33/cockran\_w.shtml.

Dempsey, Hugh A.  “PEGUIS.” In *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Vol. 9. University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–. Accessed May 22, 2018. http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/peguis\_9E.html.

Foster, J. E.  “COCKRAN, WILLIAM." In *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Vol. 9. University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–. Accessed May 22, 2018. http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cockran\_william\_9E.html.

Friesen, Gerald. The Canadian Prairies: A History. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

Manitoba Historical Society. "Document - Lord Selkirk's Treaty with the Indians, July 18, 1817." *Manitoba Pageant* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1976). http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/21/lordselkirktreaty.shtml.

Shipley, Nan. "Peguis - Friend of the Pale Face." *Manitoba Pageant*  (September 1956). http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/02/peguis.shtml.

III. The Bison, Treaties, and Confederation

*By the time of Canadian Confederation in 1867, Red River was poised for major change. The disappearance of the buffalo and the impending inrush of settlers led to the signing of treaties between the Crown and Indians in the Northwest and the establishment of the reserve system. The reserve at St. Peter's prospered, but later moved out of the area after corrupt dealings.*

After years of wonderful ambition and political wrangling, the British colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Province of Canada joined together to form the **Dominion of Canada** in **1867**. Some of Canada's Fathers of Confederation, like **Thomas D'Arcy McGee**, envisioned the new Dominion literally stretching "**From Sea to Sea**" as its motto said.

**Confederation, Rupert's Land, and   
Manitoba**

**A) Opening the Last Best West**

The "National Dream" was not totally unrealistic, even if it was an incredible prospect for such a small nation. The colony of British Columbia was already established on the west coast, and the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) administered the area of **Rupert's Land** between Canada and the Rocky Mountains. Only months before the first Dominion Day (1 July 1867), however, the United States purchased Alaska from Russia. Some feared the republic would also acquire Rupert's Land. The British and Canadian governments worked with the HBC and Canada purchased Rupert's Land for £300,000 in the **largest land purchase in Canadian history**. Canada would have assumed control in 1869, but was delayed until the following year by the Red River uprising. In **1870**, Manitoba entered Confederation as the "**Postage Stamp Province**," so called for its original small, square-shaped boundary.

**British Columbia** entered Confederation in 1871, bringing Canada one step closer to growing into its motto. The new province, however, entered on the condition that a permanent land link with Canada would be constructed. **Sir John A. Macdonald's** government promised a transcontinental railway, an enormously ambitious project. A contract was awarded to build the line, but Macdonald's government fell in 1873 when it was accused of granting the contract to political supporters in what was known as the **Pacific Scandal**. **Alexander Mackenzie** succeeded him as prime minister for five years and little progress was made on the line. When Macdonald led his party back to power in 1878 on his nation-building **National Policy**, he determined to finish the railway. The railway would give real unity to the new nation. The **Candian Pacific Railway** was formed in 1880. The **Last Spike** was driven at **Craigellachie, BC** on **7 November 1885**.

Confederation and the railway meant major changes for Manitoba. With the trains would come waves of new settlers seeking new homes and farmland. Before that could happen, however, legal changes had to take place. Canada was bound by the precedent set in the **Royal Proclamation of 1763** to nullify Indian title to new lands before it could acquire them. Treaties would have to be negotiated to prepare the way for the railway and truly bring the northwest into the Dominion. Another factor that encouraged negotiations was the frequent **Indian Wars** that took place in the United States. The United States made agreements with plains tribes, but miscommunications and violations led to a number of bloody conflicts. Canada sought to avoid a forced takeover of the Northwest in accordance with its diplomatic tradition.

**Implications for Manitoba**

At the same time, Indian tribes in the new province became interested in signing treaties. One reason for this was their acknowledgment of the inevitable influx of settlers and the changes they would cause to ways of life in the Northwest. Another more serious reason was the destruction of the buffalo by overhunting. Buffalo hunting had increased considerably over the past 70 years. In 1805, the North West Company traded only 1,135 buffalo robes. Between 1830 and 1845, the **Hudson Bay Company** took 10,000. This figure was small in comparison to the 70,000 taken by the **American Fur Company** during the same period. By the end of the **1870s**, the buffalo would be essentially extinct in Manitoba. Pressure on the herds also led to conflict. The **Métis** challenged the Ojibway-Cree-Assinboine monopoly over supplying pemmican to the fur trade in the 1840s and 1850s and competed for the buffalo in the 1860s. The end of the buffalo was coming, and, due to the tribes' dependence on the herds, it would be devastating. The effects of disease epidemics and an awareness of the American Indian Wars provided additional motivations to tribes to sign treaties with the Dominion. It seemed to be the way to secure as smooth a transition as possible.

**Indian motivations for treaties**

**B)   
Treaty One**

Indian titles to areas within Rupert's Land were extinguished in the eleven **Numbered Treaties** signed between 1871 and 1921. **Treaty One** covered Red River North and most of what is now southern Manitoba. It was negotiated between 27 July and 3 August **1871** and was ratified on 12 September. The Ojibway and Swampy Cree relinquished their titles to the land in exchange for reserves with 160 acres for each family, yearly payments of $15 per family, and government-maintained schools on each band's reserve, among other things. The tribes that signed sought as much help as could be procured to survive the demise of the buffalo and adapt to the new society the pioneers would bring while still preserving something of their old way of life.

The head of the Canadian delegation was the first Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, **Adams G. Archibald**. Archibald was a Father of Confederation from Nova Scotia. He had been a delegate to the Charlottetown Conference in 1864. When he was appointed Lieutenant-Governor in 1870, he put together the province's first ministry with difficulty and essentially doubled as the first premier. Assisting Archibald was Indian Commissioner for Rupert's Land **Wemyss Mackenzie Simpson**. Simpson was the cousin of HBC governor Sir George Simpson and was a former member of parliament. The interpreter for the negotiations was **James McKay**, a huge Scottish Métis man with great influence and a seat in Archibald's cabinet. He served on the Council of Assiniboia in the Red River Colony and in the Legislative Council of Manitoba.

**People involved  
in the negotiations**

The Ojibway and Cree delegation was led by seven chiefs representing bands from St. Peters, Brokenhead, Long Plain, Roseau River, Sagkeeng, Swan Lake, and Sandy Bay. Chief **Henry Prince** (also known as "Red Eagle," or "Mis-koo-kenew"), the signer for St. Peters, was the son of Chief Peguis. He was born in 1824, baptized in 1837 at the St. Peter's mission, and attended the mission school. He married Sarah Badger in 1840 and had three sons and three daughters. He died in 1899.

The system set up by Treaty One was modified and added to in following years. In 1875, the Dominion tried to rectify complaints about promises Canadian negotiators made orally but did not write into the treaty with **revisions** to Treaty One. In **1876**, Parliament passed the **Indian Act**. This legislation brought in Indian agent and band council government on reserves, created the "Indian status" designation, and banned alcohol on reserves. Over the next several decades, support for residential schools also increased. The schools, however, were not made compulsory until **1920** by an amendment to the Indian Act.

**C)   
Post-Treaty Changes**

Probably the most significant change to Treaty One that occured in Red River North concerned the **St. Peter's Reserve**. Rev. Cockran's work had been a blessing to Peguis' band. The people of St. Peter's adapted to changing times better than most of the tribes in Manitoba that still relied on hunting and trapping when Confederation came. They were well established and prosperous as the twentieth century dawned. Their situation, however, was not entirely practical. Possessing a large amount of land in the middle of rapidly developing agricultural country, the empty outlands of the reserve were an unproductive and tempting oddity. St. Peter's experienced problems with squatters.

**The  
St. Peters Surrender**

During Macdonald's Conservative government, the squatters found little sympathy in high places. When Laurier's Liberals formed government in **1896**, though, attitudes changed. Some of the trespassers were important Liberal supporters. Additionally, the municipality of **St. Andrews** (formed in 1884) wanted to obtain rights to build "**The Great Highway**" through the reserve between **Selkirk** and **Clandeboye**. Some in Selkirk were concerned that having the reserve on their northern frontier hindered the town's development and negatively influenced Selkirk society. In 1906, **Hector Howell**, Chief Justice of the Manitoba Court of Appeal and Liberal Party helper, was appointed to study the question of the St. Peters band surrendering their reserve. Surrender was carried out the following year (**1907**). The *S. S. Chieftan* took band members and officials to survey a site for a new reserve on Lake Winnipeg. Many of the residents of St. Peters settled at **Peguis** along **Fisher River** in the northern Interlake. From there, it took ten days to trek to Gimli by oxen. It was eight miles to the nearest store. The lands of St. Peters were sold at bargain prices.

The St. Peters Surrender became the subject of controversy for a decade. In 1911, an enquiry found that it had been accomplished in a suspect manner. Problem points included the following:

* The band was given only one day's notice of the surrender meeting despite many people being away to fish on the lake

**Corruption during the surrender meeting**

* The terms of surrender were read in English only
* The meeting was conducted in a schoolhouse that could only fit half of the people inside
* The vote was conducted in a confusing manner and attempted bribery seems to have occurred

In Ottawa, Selkirk MP **George Henry Bradbury** questioned the government on the surrender. The new residents of Fisher River protested not receiving all the money from the sale of the St. Peter's lands. The government of Manitoba appointed a **Royal Commission** to investigate the affair. The municipalities encountered problems during the uncertainties, having spent money on the new lands, but not having been able to harvest taxes. In the end, the Royal Commission findings were ignored, the **St. Peters Act of 1916** confirmed the land titles acquired during the sale of reserve lands, and additional compensation was given to the Fisher River band.

**Controversy**

**Additional Resources on the Red River North Heritage website:**

Slh. "St Peters Reserve: Surrender, Land Dispute and Hay Marsh." Red River North Heritage. Accessed August 11, May 2018. https://redrivernorthheritage.com/st-peters-reserve-surrender-land-dispute-hay-marsh/.

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**Other Resources:**

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