

## CANADIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

### CHAPTER 3, THE 7 YEAR WAR, QUEBEC ACT AND THE LOYALISTS

#### **THE GROWTH OF ANGLO-FRENCH RIVALRY**

In the 1660s two voyageurs, *Médard Chouart des Groseilliers* and *Pierre Esprit Radisson* fled to New England, exasperated by the high cost of the long haul back to Quebec and by the heavy tax on fur pelts. From there they were escorted to England, where in 1668 they persuaded a group of London merchants to attempt to gain the fur trade of the mid-continent by way of Hudson Bay. The Hudson's Bay Company, incorporated in 1670 as a proprietary company was given exclusive trading rights in all the territory draining into Hudson Bay. New France now found itself caught between the Iroquois, supported by the Dutch and English, to the south and the Hudson's Bay Company to the north.

Over the next three decades the French struggled—sometimes with success—to improve their strategic position in America. The British failed in an assault on Quebec in 1690 and were almost completely expelled from Hudson Bay by 1700.

New France enjoyed steady growth during the early 18th century. The colony nevertheless remained largely dependent on the fur trade, which, in turn, relied on keeping the west open.

#### THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

The rivalry between English and French, however, grew over the years, complicated by conflicts back in Europe as well. The first clash happened by Lake Erie. This clash marked the beginning of the Anglo-

French war known in America as the French and Indian War (1754–63) and in Europe and Canada as the Seven Years' War (1756–63).

The conflict was pursued around the globe, with fighting in India, North America, Europe, and elsewhere as well as on the high seas. Britain, which was primarily a sea power, initially did not have the land army resources to overwhelm the French in America, and instead it was forced to rely heavily on the colonial militia. However, the colonies were politically disunited, and their militia forces were neither as well organized nor as well trained as those of New France. Thus, early victories went to the French. Then greater numbers of troops and supplies and more skillful British generalship began to turn the tide.

In 1760 the British closed in on Montreal, and New France capitulated. By the terms of the **Treaty of Paris in 1763**, all of French North America east of the Mississippi River was ceded to Britain.

## EARLY BRITISH RULE AND QUEBEC ACT

Following the war, Great Britain renamed the colony the “Province of Quebec.” The French speaking Catholic people, known as habitants or Canadiens, strove to preserve their way of life in the English-speaking, Protestant-ruled British Empire.

To better govern the French Roman Catholic majority, the British Parliament passed the **Quebec Act of 1774** which marked a radical departure from the manner by which British colonies in America were governed. It granted permission for Roman Catholics in Quebec to hold public office; stipulated that an appointed council, rather than an elected assembly, would advise the governor; and legitimized French civil law, though English criminal law was to be in force. The Quebec Act also recognized the legitimacy of the French language and the Roman Catholic faith, gave the church power to enforce the collection of tithes, and formalized the authority of the seigneurs to collect cens et rentes. In

addition, Quebec's territory was greatly expanded, its western border henceforth stretching to the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

## THE LOYALISTS

In 1776, the 13 British colonies to the south of Quebec declared independence and formed the United States. North America was again divided by war. More than 40,000 people loyal to the Crown, called "Loyalists," fled the oppression of the American Revolution to settle in Nova Scotia and Quebec. Joseph Brant led thousands of Loyalist Mohawk Indians into Canada. The Loyalists came from Dutch, German, British, Scandinavian, Aboriginal and other origins and from Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Jewish, Quaker, and Catholic religious backgrounds. About 3,000 black Loyalists, freedmen and slaves, came north seeking a better life.