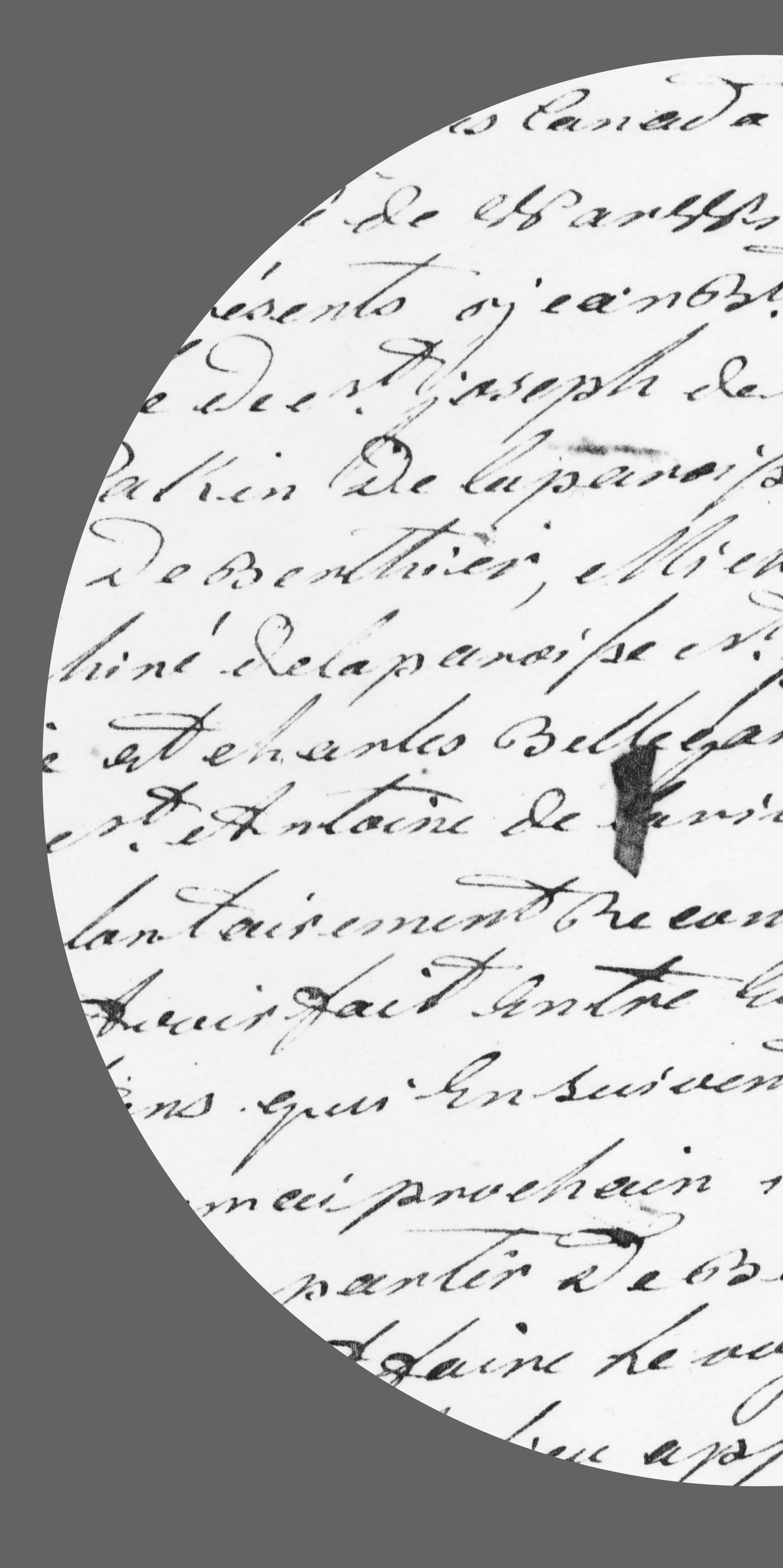
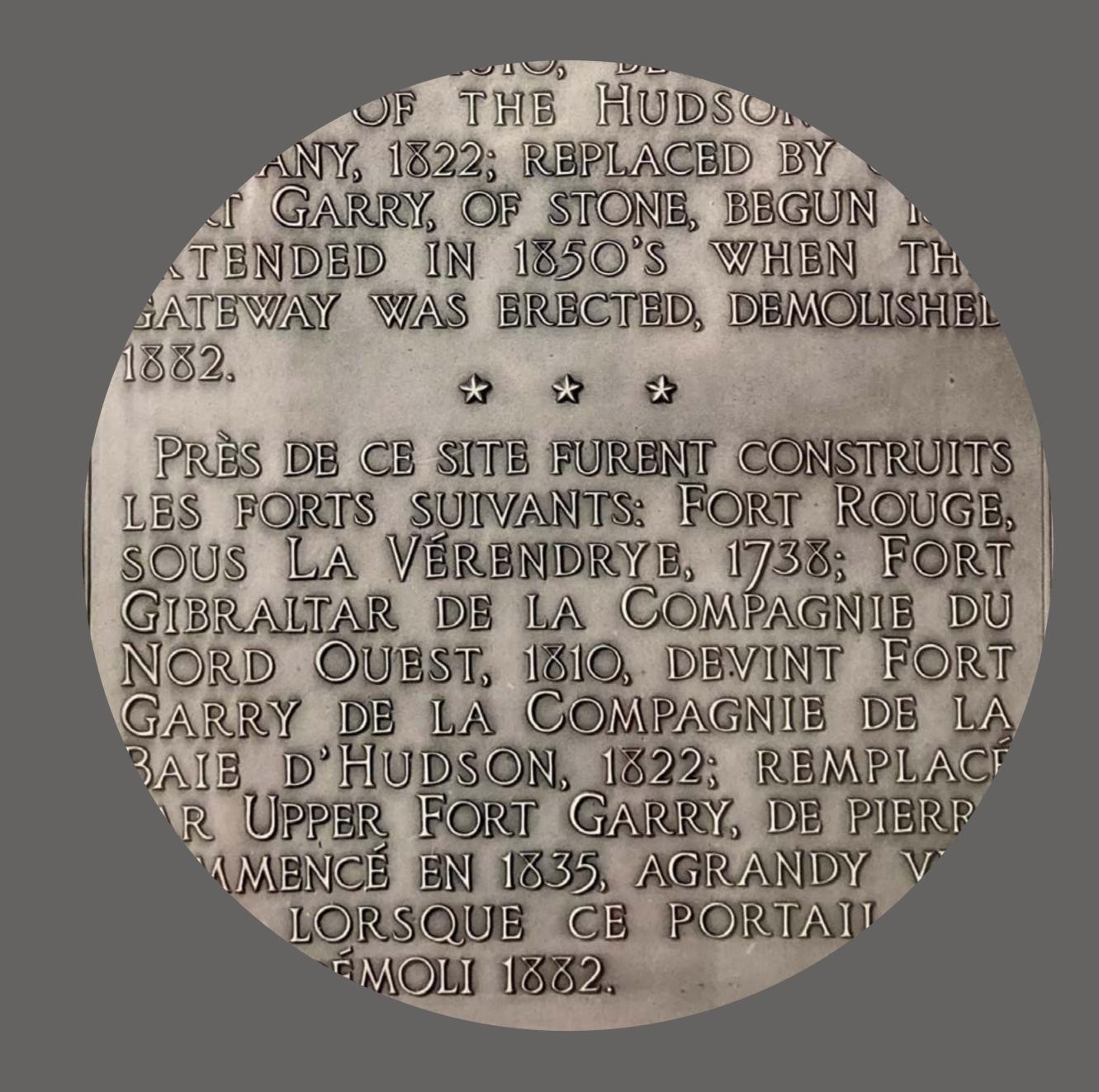
Francophone presence in the West dates back to the fur trade and the establishment of the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) in 1670. It started with exploration around the Great Lakes a few years earlier by two French explorers, Pierre-Esprit Radisson and Médard Chouart Des Groseilliers. However, few coureurs des bois attempted to venture to the region now known as Manitoba, and even fewer decided to settle there.

The first migratory influx into the West really began in 1779, when the North West Company (NWC) was founded in Montreal to develop the fur market. The company primarily hired French Canadians, most of whom were voyageurs. Many of them remained in the West to trade with the Indigenous peoples, who were the primary inhabitants of the land.

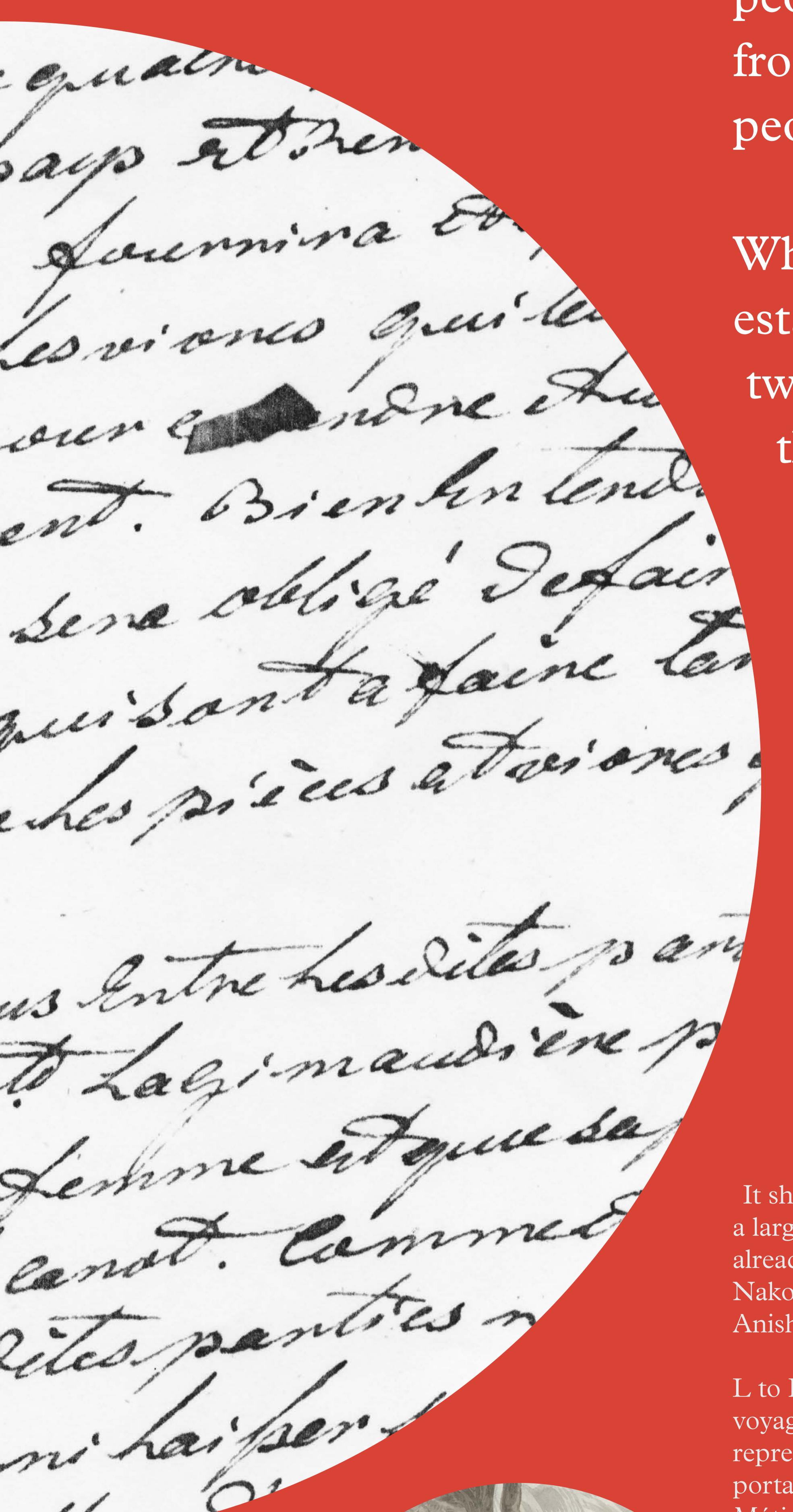
Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye (1685-1749) Born in Trois-Rivières, he organized expeditions from 1732 to 1739 in search of the western sea, during which he profited from the fur and slave trade. He had forts built that served as trading posts for the region's Cree (Nehiyawak) and Assiniboine (Nakoda Oyadebi) peoples trading fur for the benefits of the Europeans. These forts were strategically located on places that would later see a population density of Métis: Fort La Reine (1738) was built on the site of present-day Portage la Prairie, and Fort Rouge (1738) built at the confluence of the Red and the Assiniboine rivers.

L to R: Commemorative plaque erected by the Government of Canada to acknowledge the construction of the forts near The Forks (SHSB 1124). Monument recalling the passage of La Vérendrye's in the West (MSB 0357). Excerpts from Jean-Baptiste Lagimaudière's voyageur contract (copy from SHSB archives).









Conjugal unions between voyageurs and Indigenous women (known as "country marriages") helped facilitate trade and relationships with the First Nations peoples. The descendants born from these unions formed a distinct people, the Métis.

When the Red River Colony is established, thirty years – about two generations – has passed since the arrival of the first French-Canadian voyageurs hired by the NWC. The Métis are now in large enough numbers to speak of settlement. Established along the Red and the Assiniboine rivers, they found villages where French-speaking migrants will later settled.

It should be noted that in 1670, the HBC took over land in a large region of the West without any regard for the people already living there, primarily the Nehiyawak (Cree), the Nakoda Oyadebi (Assiniboines), the Dakota (Sioux) and the Anishinaabe (Nakawēk [Saulteux], Ojibwe, Oji-Cree).

L to R: Excerpts from Jean-Baptiste Lagimaudière's voyageur contract (copy from SHSB archives). Artistic representation of voyageurs doing a demi-portage [short portage]; drawing by Henri Julien in 1903 (053.G268.10). Métis en costume de chef [Métis wearing chief's clothing], artistic portrait inspired by a photo of Métis leader Georges "Cheman" Racette; drawing by Henri Julien (053. G268.05).

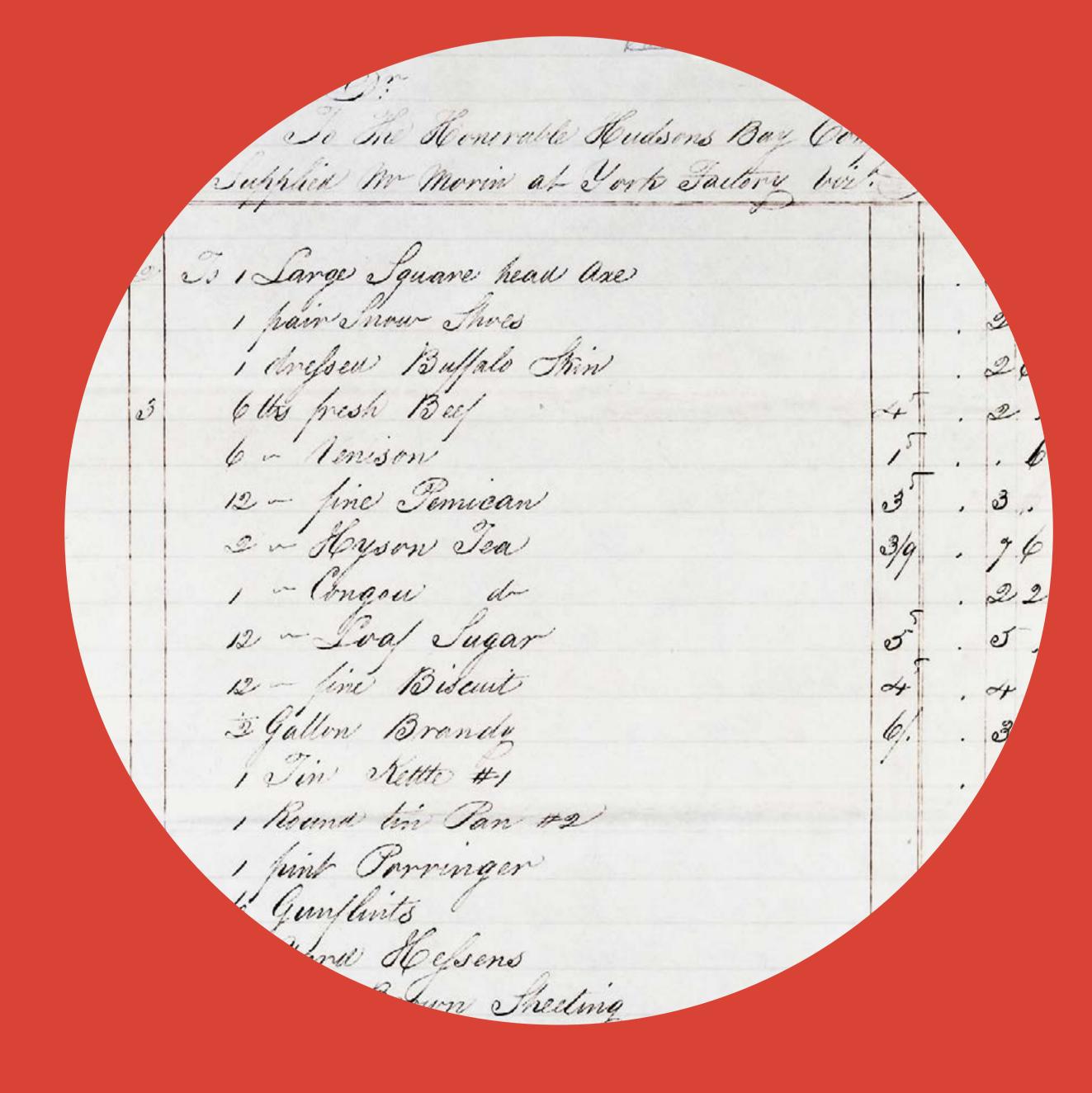


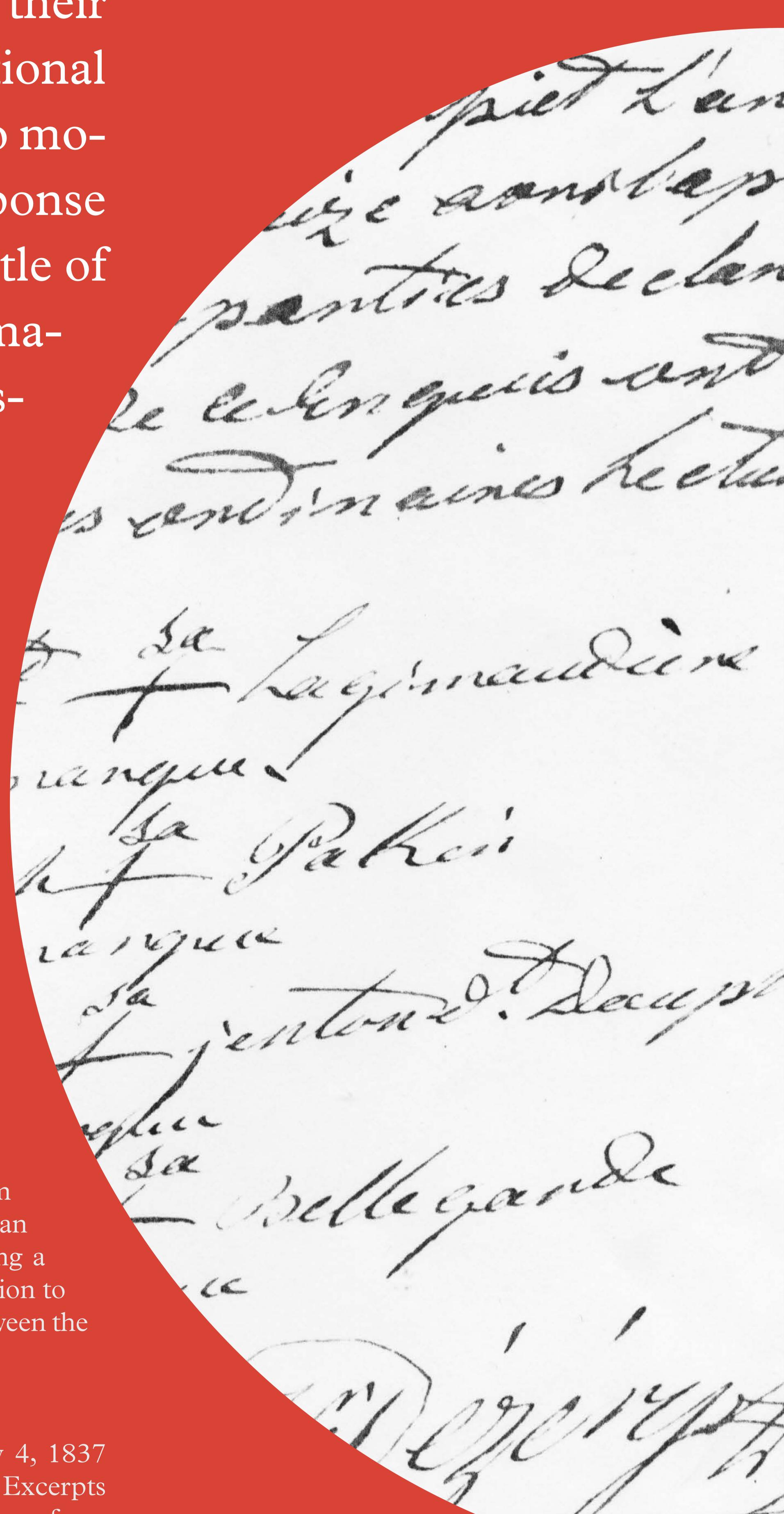
The Red River Colony was established in 1812 by Lord Selkirk from the HBC, a rival of the NWC. Two years later, the Penmican Proclamation soon made the Métis feel that the colony was encroaching on their territory. As a result of this national sentiment, the NWC was able to mobilize them to organize a response that would culminate in the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816, and ultimately in the affirmation of a distinct nation, the Métis Nation. Since French is one of the languages spoken by the Métis, this will facilitate the settlement of future French-speaking migrants in the region.

Founded under the name Assiniboia, the colony consisted of 300,000 km² of land that the Hudson Bay Company granted to Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk, whose family was a majority shareholder of the HBC.

In 1812, the first colonists, mainly Scottish and Irish, settled at the present-day site of The Forks and in Pembina. They faced many difficulties upon their arrival and their survival was due in large part to the help they received from North West Company traders and Métis from the surrounding area. However, this didn't stop Scotsman Miles Macdonell, the governor of Assiniboia, from issuing a decree in 1814 banning the export of pemmican, in addition to other proclamations that would quickly sour relations between the colony and the Métis and other NWC traders.

L to R: Supplies list for the Catholic mission, February 4, 1837 (P0329). NWC map created in 1813-14 (001.G228.15). Excerpts from Jean-Baptiste Lagimaudière's voyageur contract (copy from SHSB archives).





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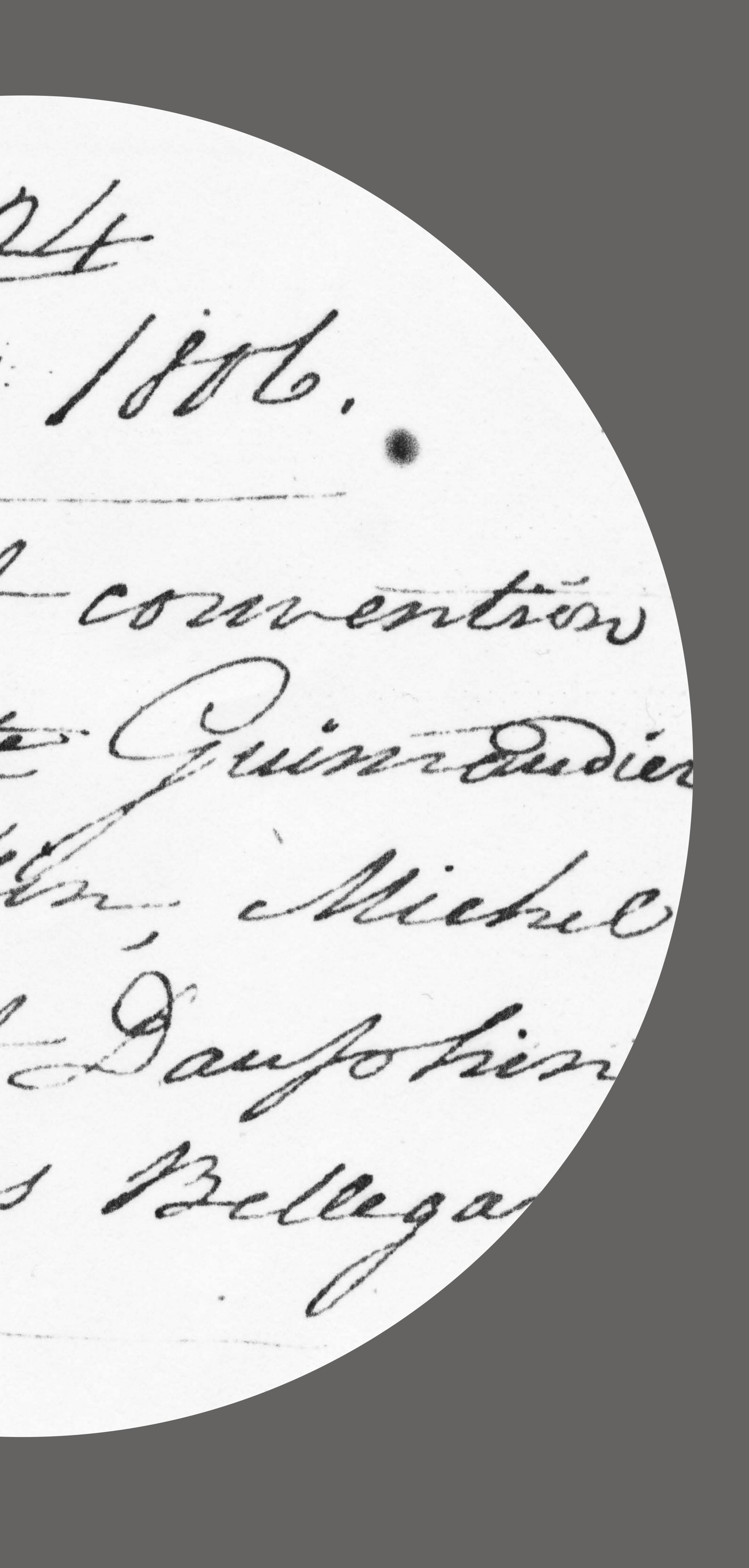
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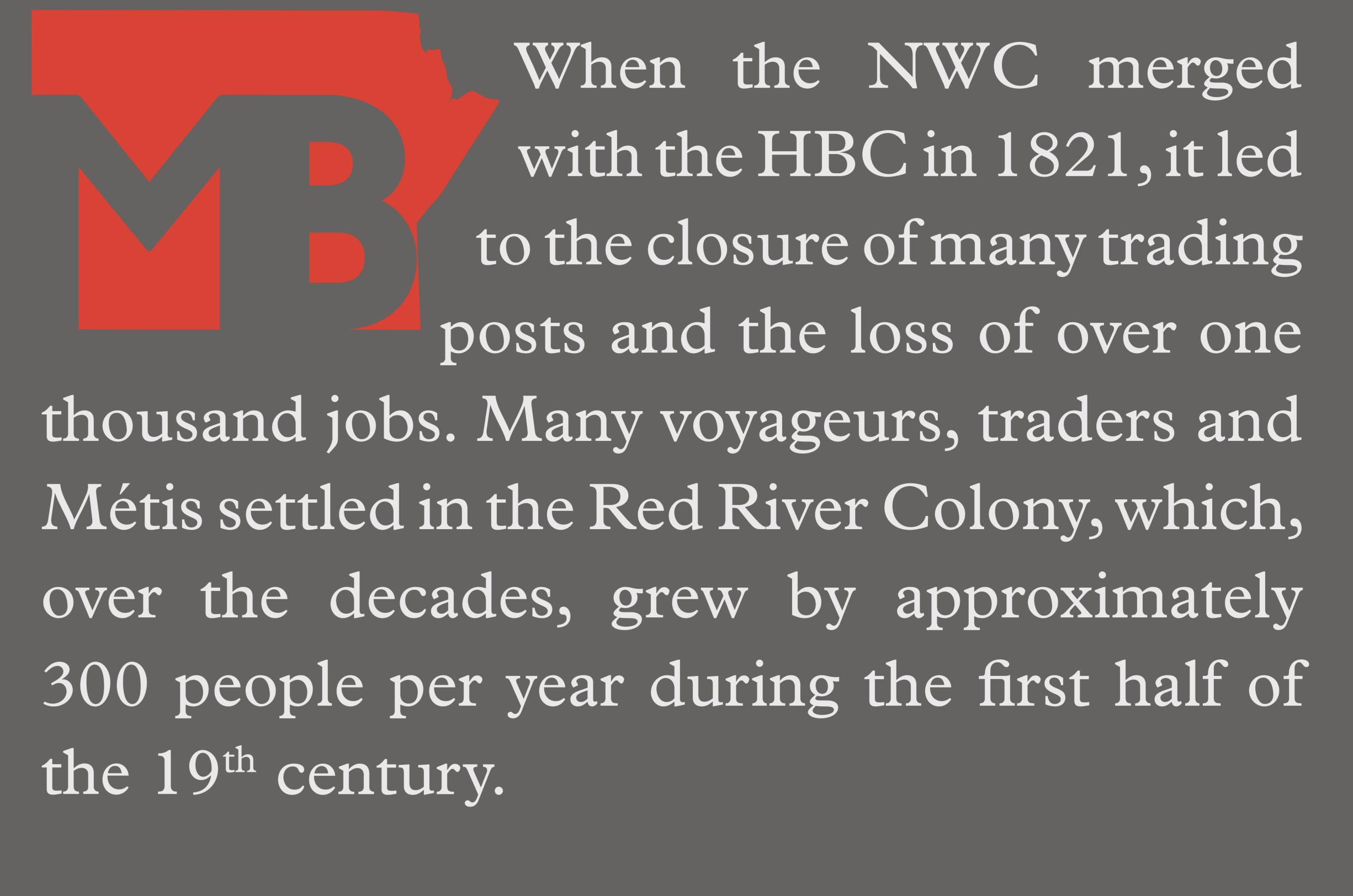
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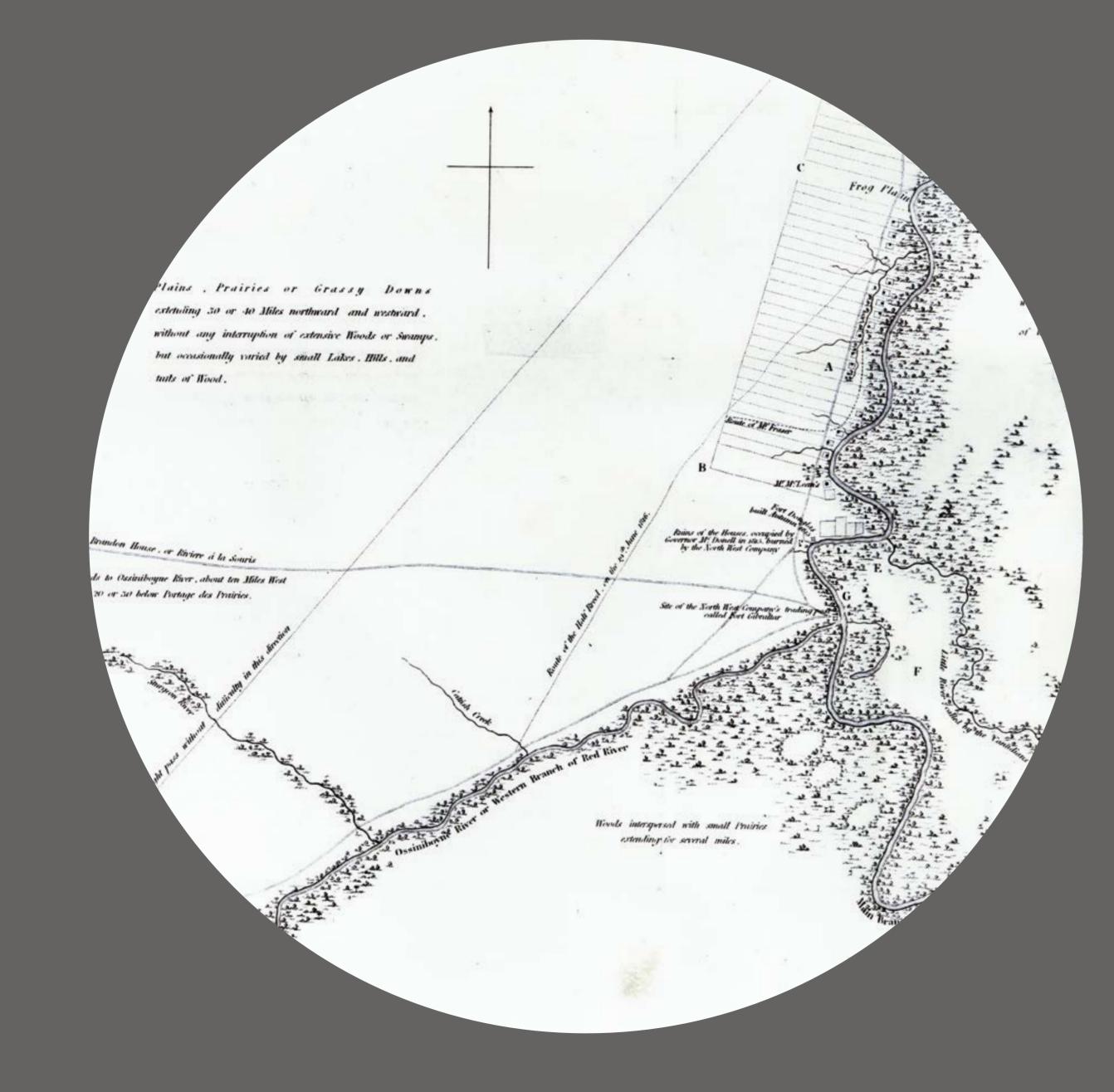




Its population reached 2,390 people in 1831, including 262 Catholic and 198 Protestant families. Twelve years later, there were 5,143 inhabitants, a little more than half of whom were Catholic. Within this population, 152 families came from Canada. Although the census data only noted origin and religion, a quick glance at the surnames—Ayotte, Beauchemin, Courchene—leaves no doubt as to the language spoken by the Catholics and those who had come from Canada. A Francophone migration had therefore joined the first Métis people.

Apart from the First Nations peoples, who were the predominant presence west of the Great Lakes, the Francophone Métis represented the majority of the colony's population until the 1880s.

L to R: Excerpts from Jean-Baptiste Lagimaudière's voyageur contract (copy from SHSB archives). Plan of the Settlement on Red River as it was in June 1816 (shsb 01.G37.13). Maria Grant and Madeleine Demarais, daughter of Cuthert Grant and spouse of Pascal Breland respectively. The former was the Métis leader who led the retaliation against the Pemmican Proclamation. He founded the village of St. François Xavier (shsb14497).





The Churchwas undoubtedly a key player in Francophone migration. In 1818, the arrival at the request of Selkirk and some Métis, of Catholic missionaries, including Joseph-Norbert Provencher, a priest who would soon become a Catholic bishop, allows the development of institutions and services to solidify the foundations of the colony: churches, elementary schools, technical school, hospital and care for the population.

Mgr Provencher's work strengthened the presence of Francophone families, especially giventhatheencouraged Catholic Francophone immigration, a mission that would live on through his successors.

Saint-Jean-Baptiste Mission, Île-à-la-Crosse

The mission was founded in 1846 by fathers Laflèche and Taché in present-day Saskatchewan. At the time of its founding, this territory was part of the Apostolic Vicariate of North-West, which became the Diocese of Saint-Boniface a year later. Trading posts had been built on this site in 1776, 1785 and 1799. Drawing by a Métis Grey nun, Sister Marguerite Marie, née Sara Riel (1848-1883), sister of Louis Riel and daughter of Jean-Louis Riel, born in Île-à-la-Crosse. This drawing represents the mission «as it was remembered» in 1860, the year the Grey Nuns founded a convent there. The Grey Nuns were present at the Red River Colony from 1844 onward. (shsb17446)

Jean-Marie LeFloc'h, O.M.I.

Many missionaries would arrive over the decades from 1818 to 1870 to do the Church's work. Jean-Marie LeFloc'h, born in France in 1823, was one such missionary. From 1857 to 1868 he was responsible for missions in Red River, where he founded the parish of Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes in 1864. (shsb9189)

Monseigneur Joseph-Norbert Provencher

Catholic priest and bishop of St. Boniface (1787-1853). He arrived at the Red River Colony in 1818. His mission was to educate the youth, evangelize the Indigenous population and encourage Catholic immigration. (msb1397)







In 1870, when the Red River Colony became Manitoba, a province of Canada, the Catholic Church was aware of the threat facing the Catholic presence in the West.

Mgr Taché, the bishop of St. Boniface when Manitoba was founded, saw first-hand the arrival of English Protestants who coveted Manitoba's fertile land and business opportunities, particularly with the railway that was being built. He also watched, helpless, as many persecuted Métis left, venturing further west to reclaim their way of life.

Mgr Taché, and Mgr Langevin after him, knew that swift and relentlessly action had to be taken to prevent the assimilation of the Catholics and, by extension, the Francophones.

The Canadian North-West
Propaganda brochure for Anglophone immigrants in the West, specifically in Manitoba. (BRO01-07)

Brochure from 1898 titled *Le Manitoba : renseignements et conseils aux Canadiens-Français de la province de Québec et des États-Unis*, [Manitoba: information and advice for French Canadians from the province of Quebec and the United States], written by M. J. Blais, O.M.I. (BRO01-26)

Plan of Rat River Settlement Manitoba, 1883, possibly annotated by Father Beaudry, a colonizer priest. (001-G258-01)





The Church organized a Catholic colonization plan among its Franco-phone populations. It targeted French Canadians from Quebec and those who had left to find factory work in the northeastern United States. However, the recruitment campaign saw the greatest results from the other side of the Atlantic. France, Belgium and Switzerland were an endless source of devoted followers of the Church.

They envisioned a Manitoba that would be Francophone, but most importantly, Catholic.

Plan of Rat River Settlement Manitoba, (detail) 1883, possibly annotated by Father Beaudry, a colonizer priest. (001-G258-01)

Convent used as a school, Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, 1896

The location where immigrants settled was often determined by colonizer priests, but also by published accounts from other colonists and word of mouth. Many colonists settled where their compatriots were already located, which explains the concentration of certain nationalities. For example, at the turn of the 20th century, the population of Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes included approximately 560 French, 160 Swiss and 120 Quebecois immigrants. (shsb63068b)

Father Gabriel Cloutier

De

Many members of the Church were working toward colonization. Among them, to name a few, were Charles-Agapit Beaudry, Dom Paul Benoit, Curé Antoine Labelle, Father Gabriel Cloutier and Father Peissard. (shsb16797)



The Diocese of Saint-Boniface enlisted help from the Canadian government and colonization societies, but the conviction of colonizer priests on the ground proved to be the most effective means of recruiting people interested in settling in Manitoba. The Canadian government provided financial resources, however the archbishops were the primary initiators of the Francophone migratory movement from 1870 to 1914.

Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the influence of accounts written by colonists. These accounts were published in Canada and in Europe, occasionally by the Canadian government, which, despite its preference for Anglophone Protestants, made a effort to promote French immigration.

St. Leon Hotel, village of St. Léon, 1881 One of the villages founded by the Métis. A number of immigrants settled in these small villages, for example St. François Xavier, St. Laurent and St. Eustache. (shsb9022)

Swiss immigrants from Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, 1921 A group of Swiss immigrants with the Swiss consul and Father Antoine Frey. (shsb4742)

Father Hubert Heynen

A cleric in Bruxelles from 1899 to 1946. Bruxelles and the surrounding area was populated by Belgian immigrants who discovered the region had land similar in quality to what they were accustomed to in Belgium. (shsb49050)





The First World War put a halt to this migration period. Francophone presence would never reach the levels that the Church and the province's secular Francophone leaders had dreamed about, especially since the Anglophone population was growing exponentially at the time. Although French was the primary language spoken by over half of the population in 1870, 11 years later this number plateaued at 16%.

Of course, the arrival of Francophone immigrants in Manitoba did not come to a full stop
at the start of the First World War. Quebecois and Francophone Europeans, as well
as West Indians and Asians,
settled in the region, but not
in high enough numbers to be
considered a migratory movement.

Charles-Agapit Beaudry

A colonizer priest as of 1887 and editor of the newspaper Le colonisateur canadien [The Canadian colonizer] from 1888 to 1893. (msb0012)

Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes

Father Maurice Pierquin, named curate of Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes in 1906, and his mother, who had both come over from Reims, France. (msb0382)

En avant la colonisation

The colonization effort was pushed forward by a series of brochures in French published by the Canadian government and written by Father J.-B. Morin, an immigration agent, to promote migration to the West. This one dates from 1897. (BRO 01-85)





Over the years, the demographic weight of the Francophone population in Manitoba slowly declined due to a steady influx of Anglophone immigrants and linguistic assimilation.

The next wave of Francophone immigration wouldn't take place until the end of the 20th century. This migration would consist in large part of Francophone immigrants from the African continent. Over 10% of Franco-Manitobans were born abroad and 15% were born elsewhere in Canada. Among French-speaking immigrants, 57% come from Africa, 28% from Europe, 9% from Asia and 7% from the Americas*.

This wave of migration continues to this day.

* Statistics from a 2020 document by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Deillon Family from Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes

Appolinaire Deillon and his wife, Emma Moret, originally from Switzerland, arrived in Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes in 1892. They were farmers and beekeepers. (shsb4731)

Gagnon Family from La Broquerie

Éloi Gagnon, Father Jos Gauvin and Henri Gagnon in La Broquerie in 1934. A French-Canadian family that had immigrated from the United States. Gagnon family members were among the first French-Canadian colonists to settle in La Broquerie in 1878. (shsb10480)

A view of Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes at the start of the 20th century. (shsb4743)





La SFM va à la source

faut battre le fer pendant qu'il chaud, dit le dicton. C'est tement ce qu'a fait la Société anitobaine (SFM) en en directeur général, er, en voyage de proc. De retour le nier a effectué uprès des sous

peg était aussi une grande ville d'ailleurs.» moderne mais plus intime.»

Outre l'arabe qui est leur langue officielle, tous les Marocains parlent aussi français. Ces derniers, ajoute Daniel Boucher, recherchent dans leur terre d'accueil un endroit où ils pourront s'exprimer dans cette langue. «Ils m'ont beaucoup posé de questions sur nos écoles inncaises, dit-il. Ils se sont aussi

Selon la directrice de Ply elles, Murielle Gagné-Ouell les immigrants francopho été nombreux dernière présenter aux b l'organisme dar trouver du tr «Nous

The Société historique de Saint-Boniface created this exhibition through a community partnership with the Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Migrations, Transfers and Francophone Communities of Université de Saint-Boniface. The Chair aims towards the advancement of knowledge of the historic migrations of francophones in North America and the factors that played a central role in the genesis and development of francophone communities.

This exhibition was made possible thanks to the Government of Canada.

La Liberté, December 4, 1998. (SHSB Archives) Benefitting from Canada's immigration policy and an agreement with the Province in 1998, the Société franco-manitobaine [today's Société de la francophonie manitobaine], the political body for Manitoba's Francophone community, worked to boost the standing of the Francophone population. Unfortunately, these ambitions were hindered due to a lack of resources.

