

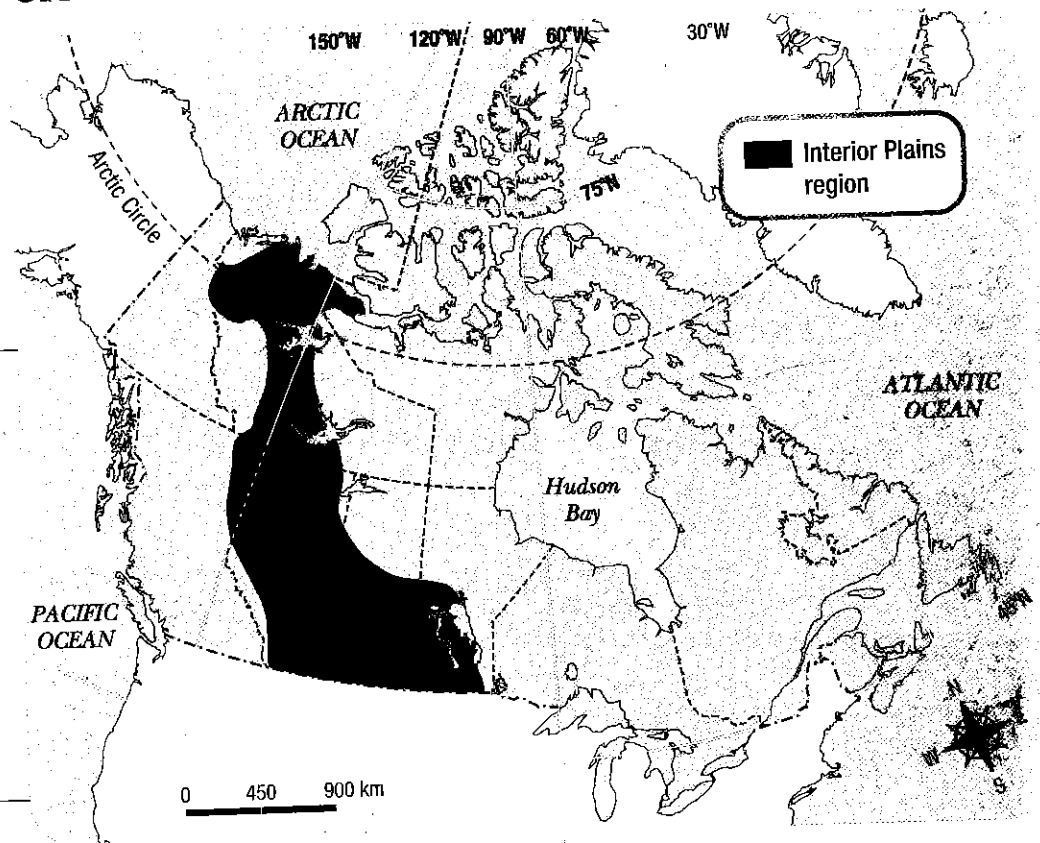
**Predict**

What would it be like to live in a region of rolling land and rivers?

This map shows the Interior Plains region. Parts of which provinces and territories are in this region? Based on this map, between which two lines of longitude is most of this region?



# The Interior Plains Region—Rolling Land and Rivers



What do you know about the Interior Plains region? What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about this region? When people from outside the Interior Plains region think about it, they usually think about its open, flat lands, farms of golden wheat, and big blue skies. Actually, the region has many different kinds of landscapes, waterways, and resources.

### Chapter Focus

- How does the land shape identities?
- How do rivers affect life?
- In what ways does climate affect life?
- Why are natural resources important?
- Why should we protect land and resources?

## How Does the Land Shape Identities?

The land shapes the way we live, our quality of life, and the way we see ourselves. Here is how some students from the Interior Plains region describe where they come from and how the land that surrounds them shapes their identities.

Which of these communities have you heard of? What do you know about them?

“ I am Anishinabe and my people have lived in the Selkirk area for a very long time. The area around my community has some of the last natural prairie vegetation left in the Interior Plains. The tall prairie grass is one type of this vegetation—some of it is even taller than me. Sometimes I like to just sit quietly among the grass and listen to the sounds around me. It’s like Mother Earth is speaking to me. ”

“ My family has a wheat farm near Aberdeen, Saskatchewan. I love standing on the wide-open prairie with my eyes closed. I can feel a warm breeze on my face, and all I hear is the wind, the whir of insects, and the call of the Redwing Blackbird. I know I’m home. I like visiting cities, but I like living on the farm the best. ”

### Some Communities in the Interior Plains



A prairie is a large flat area that has few trees and is covered with different types of grasses, such as tall prairie grass, low shrubs, and wild flowers. All of the southern part of the Interior Plains region was once covered by prairie vegetation. Today, most of it has been replaced by settlement or turned into farmland.



**Rob**

Selkirk, Manitoba



What do you notice about how the land is used in this photograph of the town of Aberdeen?



**Natasha**

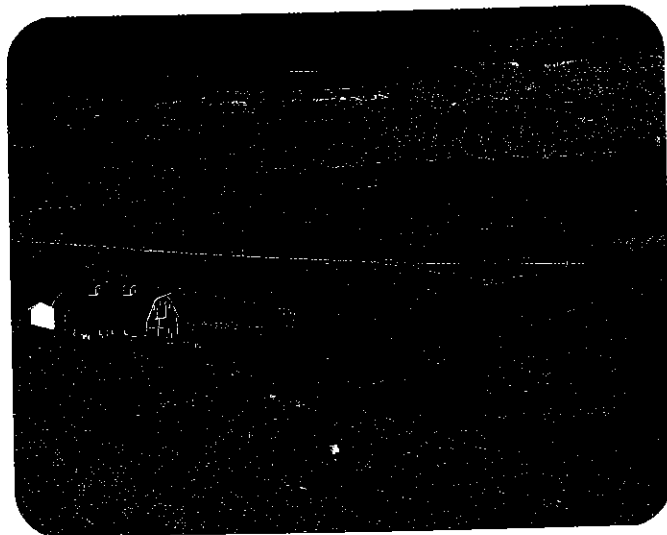
Aberdeen, Saskatchewan



Sandra

Hay River,  
Northwest Territories

“ My home is Hay River, Northwest Territories. My people are Dehcho (deh-cho). Hay River is on the south shore of Great Slave Lake at the mouth of the Hay River. The land around here is covered with evergreen forests. This kind of forest is called “boreal.” To my community, forests are part of Mother Earth. They give us life. They clean our air. Our Elders have told us that we are responsible for taking care of the forests. We must let them grow tall and protect them for future generations. ”



Flood water from ancient lakes and rivers wore away the land leaving large rock formations, such as Castle Butte.



Boreal forest surrounds the town of Hay River. Much of the northern part of the region is covered with this type of forest.

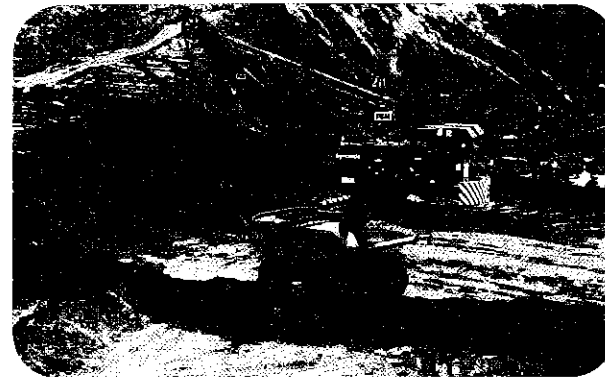


Ben

Coronach, Saskatchewan

“ I live in Coronach in southern Saskatchewan near Castle Butte. Our home is near an area called the “Badlands.” The early French explorers called it “les mauvaises terres” (lay moh-vez tare) meaning “bad lands.” They don’t seem bad to me, but it’s true that we get hardly any rain or snow. Many farmers in the area have to irrigate their crops.

My parents take tourists on horseback to show them the rock formations and unique plants and animals that live here. They can also see **petroglyphs**, or rock carvings. These rock carvings are particularly interesting because archeologists can’t say for sure who carved them. They just know that they are very old. I really enjoy trips to the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller, Alberta, which is also part of the Badlands. The museum shows how it was when the dinosaurs lived here. It’s also fun to hunt for dinosaur bones. ”



Oil sands, or tar sands, are rich in a substance called **bitumen**. Bitumen is thick, sticky tar, which can be refined into crude oil.



Chantal

Fort McMurray, Alberta

“ Bonjour! I live in Fort McMurray, Alberta, way up north. My dad drives a truck in the oil sands. Fort McMurray is in the middle of a forested area. It has been here for a long time, but it has really grown recently because of the oil sands. It’s exciting. People come here from all over the world. ”

### Voices

First Nations peoples have a spiritual connection to the land. Pablo Russell is a member of the Kainai Nation in southern Alberta. He explains his people’s connection to the land:

Our hair is the grass on the prairie; our bones are the mountains; our veins and arteries are rivers, streams, creeks; our breath is the wind; our heart is the middle of the Earth.... So for us Mother Earth is more than just a provider. For us, She’s our teacher, our protector; we learn from Her...we heal from Her.

Excerpts from an interview with Pablo Russell.

Claire Fortier is from Jossard, Lesser Slave Lake area in northern Alberta. This is how she describes her connection to the land:

To hear the wind rustling the leaves and the birds in the trees, I know I am home. To smell the lake air and wild mint, I know I am home. To feel the soft, green grass under my feet and black earth in my hands, I know I am home.

I grew up and live in the area my Cree ancestors have called home for hundreds of years—to look at the lake and live on this land links me to my Cree heritage. I want my future generations to feel this connection to the sounds and sights of living on this lakeshore surrounded by trees—to pick the berries, eat the fish, and be a part of the nature that surrounds them.

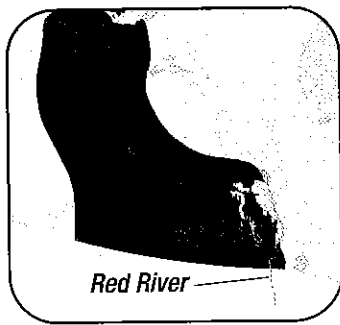
Claire Fortier, Woodland Cree, Treaty 7, Lesser Slave Lake, November 29, 2006.



Dené Tha’ (de-nay-thaa) use the drum to sing prayers, communicate with the Creator, and to honour people and nature.

### Pause

1. How is the land connected to a person’s identity?
2. How does the place where each student lives compare to where you live?



Red River

## How Do Rivers Affect Life?

Rivers and lakes have played an important role in the Interior Plains region. First Nations peoples, Métis people, and European explorers and traders used them for transportation. Many communities along the waterways in this region began as First Nations gathering places, fur trading posts, and forts. The waterways are still important for transportation today. Two of the most important rivers in this region are Red River in Winnipeg and Mackenzie River in Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

### Pause

1. Perspectives are values and ideas shared by a group of people. What perspectives did different people have on the floodway plan? What were their reasons?
2. How do you think floods affect people and businesses?

“ I don't think it's fair to demand that farmers give up their land in order to build dams and channels. ”

“ A flood control system will save people's homes and property, and could save lives. ”

“ Do you realize how terrible the flood was? My family and I lost everything. We need to find a way to help control floods. ”

In the years since the flood control system was built, Winnipeg has had numerous floods, including a major one in 1997. Even though many people's property was damaged, the 1997 flood could have been worse without the floodway. Today, the floodway is being expanded to protect other communities.

In 1997, Winnipeg experienced its worst flood since 1852. Thousands of people from across Canada came to Winnipeg to help sandbag, cook, move farm animals to safer areas, and patrol dikes. How can you show care and concern for people during difficult times like this?



## Mackenzie River

In the Dene language, the Mackenzie River is called Deh Cho, which means “big river.” It is the longest river in Canada and one of the longest in the world. The Mackenzie starts at Great Slave Lake, winding its way through the Mackenzie Valley to the Arctic Ocean in the north.

Hay River, a community on Great Slave Lake, is the northernmost place in Canada that is connected to the rest of the country by rail. Goods arriving in Hay River can be shipped up the Mackenzie River on barges to communities in the north. (See the map below.) However, the Mackenzie River is only ice free for five months of the year. Ice roads are used on some parts of the river during the winter.

### SKILLS at Work

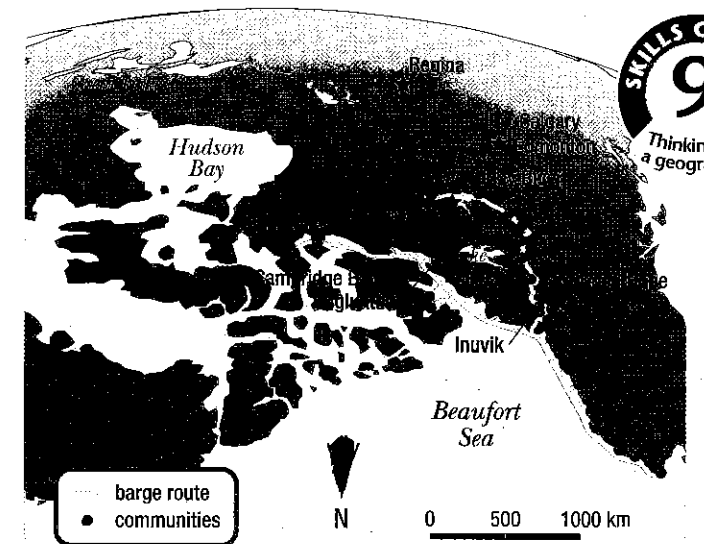
Create a chart to describe the location and the challenges of living on the Red River and Mackenzie River.



### Thinking Like a Geographer

#### The Northerners' Perspective

People tend to think of the place where they live as the centre of the world. When they draw a map, they put their area in the middle of the map, and then locate the places to the north, south, east, and west on the map. This reflects their view, or perspective, of the world around them. This map shows the way that people who live in the northern part of the Interior Plains region might think about the land.



#### You Do the Geographer

1. Why is the Beaufort Sea large and important on this map? Why are the Great Lakes small and far away?
2. How would people who live in the southern areas of the region draw this map? Find an example of this map showing a southern perspective.

What do you notice about where many of the communities are located? Why would it be easier to reach these communities by water than by land?

### Pause

1. What are some of the benefits of living on a river or a lake?

## In What Ways Does Climate Affect Life?

The climate across the Interior Plains region varies from area to area, affecting people differently. In the northern part of the region, the weather is colder than in the south, with less precipitation. In the southern part, it is warmer than in the north with a longer growing season for crops. From this description, in what part of the region would agriculture be more important?

This region is one with a wide range of temperatures. In winter, it can be extremely cold, at about  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and in summer, very hot, sometimes as high as  $40^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The region gets more sun than any other region in Canada. How do you feel on a sunny day? How do you feel on a rainy day?

In the far south, the climate can be desert-like. Medicine Hat in Alberta is the driest place in Canada. One reason for the dryness there is that it is far from large bodies of water. It also receives little rain. The mountains in the west block the clouds carrying moist air from the Pacific Ocean. By the time these clouds reach the Interior Plains region, they have released their moisture. Sometimes there is not enough moisture. These times are called **droughts**, and they are very hard on farmers because crops cannot grow. Droughts also affect forests and the forest industry.



### Pause

1. Remember the Badlands? What other factor might have helped give this area its nickname?
2. What winter and summer sports do you think people in the Interior Plains enjoy?



In dry areas, some farmers use a system of pipes and ditches that brings water from wells, rivers, and lakes onto their farms. This is called **irrigation**. Pictured here is a farm in southern Manitoba.

## Living with the Climate

The Interior Plains region experiences extremes in weather. However, like in any other region, people adapt to their climate. Climate shapes how people live with the environment and their quality of life.



### CONNECT

What memories do you have about experiencing extreme weather?

Residents enjoy a cold winter's day, skating and playing hockey in downtown Winnipeg.

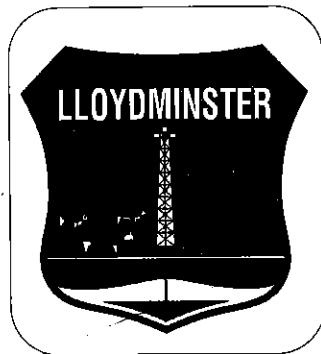
## Childhood Winters

I grew up in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. I have many memories of the long, cold winters there. I don't think that a person can truly understand what  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  feels like until it is actually experienced. The exhaust from cars and smoke from chimneys would just hang in the air, rising very slowly. But it's also difficult to explain how beautiful and still these mornings can be. When out walking, bundled up in a parka, with warm mittens and snow boots, I always felt a sense of excitement. I knew it was very cold, and yet I was warm and protected.

The cold didn't stop us from having fun. Some of my earliest winter memories are of being on outdoor skating rinks. When I was 4 years old, my dad would bundle me up, lace up my skates, and take me out to the skating rink he built in the backyard. He cut the backrest off my old wooden highchair so I could hang onto it as I pushed myself around the ice.

Years later, my friends and I would spend hours on the outdoor rink at the East Hill Community Hall. We'd skate no matter how cold it was. We'd skate until we couldn't feel our fingers and toes, and our cheeks and ears burned. Then we'd go down into the basement of the community hall to warm up. Our toes would hurt so badly as they warmed up, and then they'd begin to itch. But after about 20 minutes, we'd put our skates back on and off we'd go again.

Kelly Cochrane, December 2006.



This is the crest of Lloydminster, which lies on the border of Alberta and Saskatchewan. It is the city's symbol. Look at the details on this crest. What do the images on this crest tell you about the resources that are important to the city?

## Why Are Natural Resources Important?

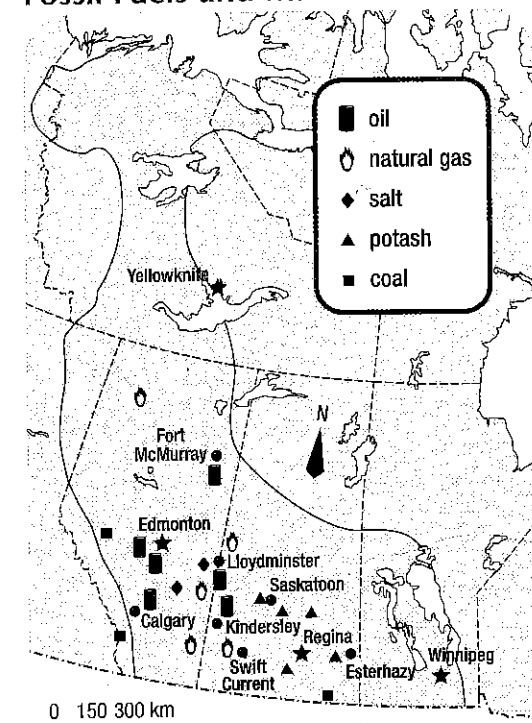
The Interior Plains region is rich in natural resources. Many people have jobs in mines, oil fields, and other industries related to these resources. Many also work on farms and farming-related industries.

Natural resources are so important that they have become part of the symbols of the provinces in the Interior Plains region. Structures, such as oil pumps, remind people of the land and fossil fuel resources that are important to their communities.

### Resources under the Surface of the Land

Oil, natural gas, and coal are fossil fuels. The Interior Plains region is Canada's largest source of these fuels. What are some uses of these fossil fuels? Which province is known for oil and natural gas? Look at the map to help you.

#### Fossil Fuels and Minerals in the Interior Plains



This map shows some locations of the key natural resources in this region. Use the map legend to locate oil and natural gas. Describe where potash is located.



The oil and natural gas industry of this region is growing rapidly and providing thousands of jobs. These men are working at a rig in a field near Devon, Alberta. Devon is just south of Edmonton.

### Pause

1. If you were to draw a crest of your community, what would it contain? Why?

## Kids Speak

"I am Plains Cree. My dad works at a potash mine just outside Saskatoon. Saskatchewan has one of the largest deposits of potash in the world. Potash is a type of salt that is used in fertilizers, soaps, and detergents. Sometimes my mom and I will go and meet my dad at the mine. I love going there. It seems small from the highway, but when you get near it, the buildings are huge."



Mike

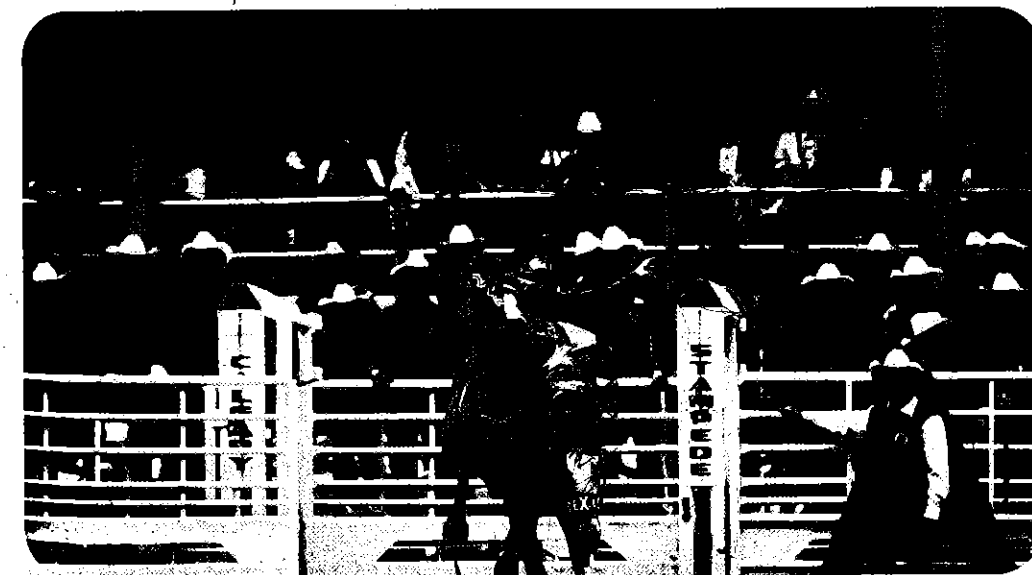
Saskatoon,  
Saskatchewan

### Making a Living on the Land

The deep, rich soil and the flat, open land of the southern plains are excellent for growing crops and raising farm animals. Agriculture is one of the main industries in the southern part of the region.

Farming became a major activity in the late 1800s and early 1900s. During these years, many settlers came, including people from the United States, the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence region, and Europe. They cleared the land, and farmed. Today, this region is often called the "breadbasket of Canada." The main crops are grains, such as wheat, oats, and barley.

Besides crop farms, the southern part of the region is also known for its ranchlands. The prairie grass provides food for horses and cattle, while the flat land is well suited to ranching.



For 10 days each July, people gather at the Calgary Stampede and Exhibition to celebrate their ranching history and way of life. The main event is a rodeo, and it is one of the largest in North America.

### CONNECT

Have you ever grown anything or helped in a garden? What is needed for crops to grow?

### Pause

1. Ranches are common in the foothills of Alberta. What do you know about Alberta's foothills? How would you describe this land? What would make it so good for raising cattle?

### The Changing Face of Farming

Today, there are fewer people making a living farming in this region. New farm technology has caused changes. One farmer can now do work it took many to do in the past. Because of the expense of many of these technologies, it is often difficult for small family farms to make enough money. Many family farms have been sold, and many people who once farmed for a living have moved off the land into urban centres. However, there are still some small thriving farms today.



On the left is a 1908 photograph of a farmer working the field in Kerrobert, Saskatchewan. Compare this photograph with the one on the right, which shows a modern-day farm in Manitoba. What can you learn about how agriculture has changed from these photographs?

### The Grain Elevators at Inglis, Manitoba

The sweet smell of prairie grain brings back powerful memories. At the Grain Elevators National Historic Site of Inglis, Manitoba, visitors are taken back in time to when this site was a busy place.

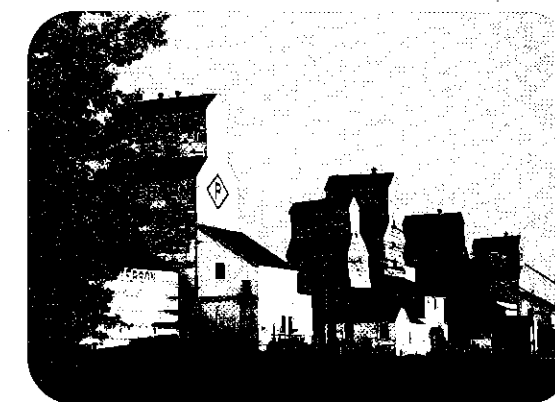
"I'm in the 1920s again," says a recent 93-year-old visitor as he looks at the old weigh scale inside a grain elevator. He takes a deep breath of the familiar sweet smell that still remains after 70 years of storing grain.

The elevators were built alongside the old Canadian Pacific rail line. The rail line is no longer in use. At one time, it carried grain to the seaport, where it was loaded on ships and sent all over the world.

One woman came to visit the elevators in late fall, after the harvest. A smoky haze from stubble burning in the fields hung silently in the still crisp air. It was absolutely quiet. She said that this special place reminded her of her childhood, when she and her father walked hand in hand along the rail line collecting dry autumn flowers.

"These elevators were central to a way of life. There were thousands of them on the Prairies." They have been called the Prairie Giants.

Adapted from "Sweet Memories Brought Back to Life," Inglis Grain Elevators National Historic Site.

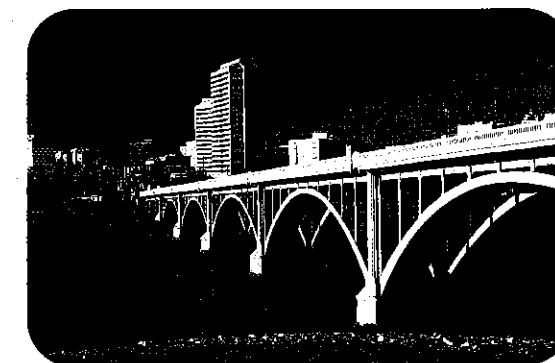


These old wooden elevators of Inglis are among the last of their kind. They are slowly being replaced by concrete grain elevators. Why do you think many people are attached to these grain elevators?

### Natural Resources and Urban Communities

Natural resources shaped most of the urban centres in the Interior Plains region. Many started as suppliers of goods to nearby farmers and ranchers. Others grew around mines and oil fields. Those communities that are on transportation routes, such as waterways and rail lines, became important shipping centres. These centres, including Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, and Regina, grew quickly.

Larger centres also became a place for processing the natural resources in the surrounding area. For example, Winnipeg became a major food-processing centre because of the rich surrounding farmlands, and Calgary became a major meat-processing centre because of the ranchland that surrounds it.



Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, developed along the South Saskatchewan River. Soon after the first railway arrived there, Saskatoon became a major distribution centre for surrounding agricultural communities.

### Pause

1. Imagine that your family has farmed for generations, but you and your family are now selling your farm and moving to a city. How do you think moving from a farm to a city would affect your identity?

### Voices

Francophone farmer Paul Vielfaure (vyel-for) is one of the owners of the Hytek Farm in La Broquerie (lah brok-ree), near the city of Steinbach, Manitoba. Hytek is the second-largest hog farm in Canada. Vielfaure describes how family farms today are different from those many years ago.

The definition of what's a farm has changed a lot...today a farm is a high-tech business, 200 hectares, 200 000 hogs, \$100 million in sales, and 300 employees...there are four owners, [including] the Vielfaure family and the Johnson family, and they're the ones that built Hytek into what it is today.

Excerpts from Agriculture in French Manitoba web site.

## Thinking Like a Geographer

### Why and How Do Populations Change?

Some geographers study why and how populations of communities change. They explore ideas such as:

**Urbanization:** The movement of people from farms into cities, or urban centres

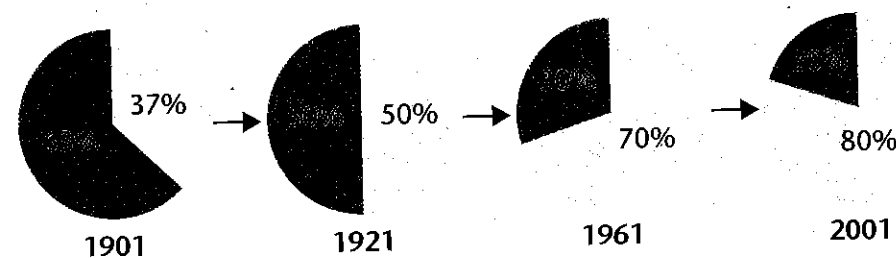
**Immigration:** The movement of people into a country from other countries

**Immigrants:** People who come to live in a country from another country

Today, urban centres in the Interior Plains region are growing faster than ever. Many people living on farms have moved to cities. As well, many people from other countries have made their new home in the cities of this region. Most immigrants today settle in larger urban centres.



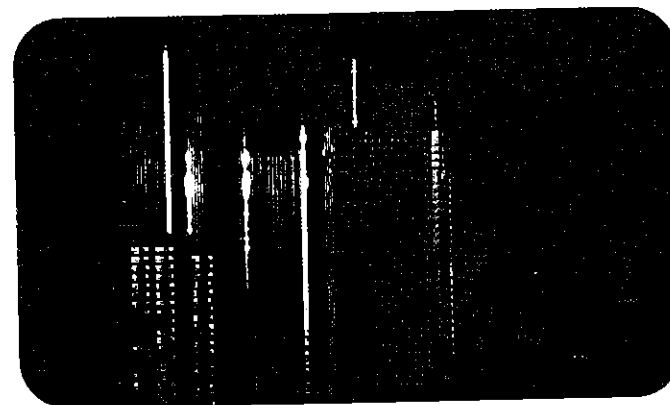
Percentage of Canadian Urban and Rural Population, 1901 to 2001



Statistics Canada.

Urban ● Rural

These pie graphs show how urban and rural populations changed over 100 years in Canada. This change is also reflected in the Interior Plains region.



Calgary in 1900 was a growing community. More than 100 years later, Calgary is a very different city. What changes do you think the people who lived in Calgary experienced as Calgary grew into a city?

### You Be the Geographer

1. How has the settlement of people across the Interior Plains shaped rural and urban communities? What influenced the changes of rural and urban communities? Create an organizer to show this information.

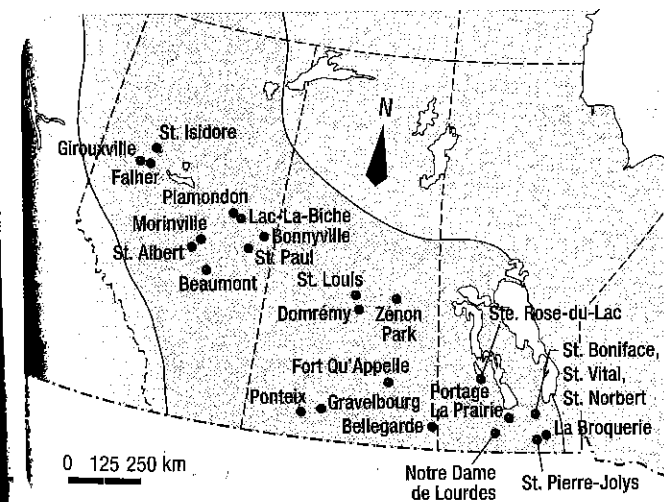
## Francophone Presence in the Interior Plains

Francophone fur traders, settlers, and merchants have played an important role in building communities in this region. The search for fur-bearing animals was what brought the first French people to this region. In 1738, an explorer from Québec named Pierre Gaultier de La Vérendrye (vay-ron-dree) travelled to what is now Manitoba. He built Fort la Reine on the Assiniboine River where Portage-la-Prairie is now located. From this point, fur traders portaged, or carried their canoes and supplies overland, to Lake Manitoba. Fort la Reine continued to be an active French trading post until 1760.

Francophone communities continued to develop in western Canada. For example, by 1898, there were more than 2200 Francophones living just in the Edmonton area. Other communities were settled in the 1900s. One of the last Francophone communities to be settled is St. Isidore in the Peace River area in 1953. A group of farmers moved there from the Saguenay-Lac-Saint Jean area in Québec. With this move, Québec's Francophones were trying to start new Francophone communities in the west. At the time, the Alberta government was only interested in promoting British cultures. Francophones in the west needed a larger population to protect their language and culture.

Today, the names of many towns across western Canada are reminders of Francophone presence.

### Some Communities with French Names



This map shows some of the many communities in the Prairie provinces that have French names. St. Boniface, St. Vital, and St. Norbert are neighbourhoods of Winnipeg.

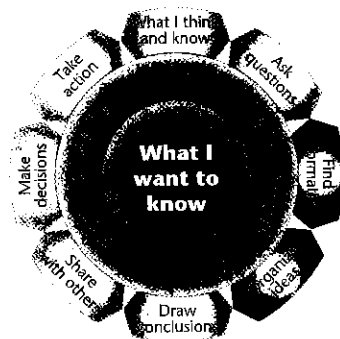


The town of Bonnyville was named after a Catholic priest, Reverend Father Francis Bonny. He arrived in the area in the early 1900s. On July 1, 2007, the town celebrated its 100th birthday.

## Why Should We Protect Land and Resources?

The Interior Plains region is one of the most changed natural environments in Canada. Industries have changed its landscape.

### Inquire

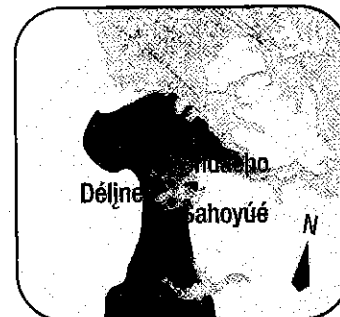


### How Are Land and Resources Connected to Identity?

Sahoyúé-?ehdacho (saw-you eh-da-cho), Grizzly Bear Mountain and Scented Grass Hills, is on Great Bear Lake, Northwest Territories. This area contains a very important, lush northern boreal forest and wildlife habitat. It is also a very important cultural area for the Sahtu Dene (sah-too deh-nay).

Many of the Sahtu Dene live in Déline (deh-le-nay). Since 1991, the people of Déline have been working to permanently protect Sahoyúé-?ehdacho from future development. In 1998, Sahoyúé-?ehdacho was made a National Historic Site, but this did not offer it permanent protection. The people of Déline worried about this area's future because industry and business can develop and change the land.

In March 2001, the government promised that this land would be protected and would become part of the National Parks system.



“We want to preserve the stories and the land of Sahoyúé-?ehdacho. Without the land, the stories die. To tell Canadians about our stories requires that the land be healthy.”

Déline's Vision

“Sahoyúé is very important to us for our livelihood. It is good for fish, moose, caribou, and beaver. There are also many good boat harbours, which are important when you're travelling in the summertime.”

George Kodakin, Déline

Quotations are from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Northwest Territories Chapter, web site.

### Inquire

1. How are the land and resources of Sahoyúé-?edacho connected to the identity of the people of Déline?
2. Work with a partner or in small groups to find out more about Sahoyúé-?ehdacho. What steps in the inquiry model would you take to complete your work? Think about the ways that you might present your findings.

## ← Looking Back

The Interior Plains region is an immense spread of rolling plains that have been greatly changed by the ways that people have adapted to the natural environment. From a land of prairie grass and forest, it has become an agricultural and urban region. What are some ways of life of this region? How do people use their natural resources?

On your own, with a partner, or in a small group:

- Review the Predict question at the start of this chapter: *What would it be like to live in a region of rolling land and rivers?* What predictions did you make? What new things did you learn that you could add to your predictions?
- Choose one of the following to tell about the lives of people in this region of rolling hills and rivers:
  - \* Write a short poem.
  - \* Create a painting or another type of visual.
  - \* Write your own "Kids Speak."

In your work, think about how the land shapes identities. To start, you may want to reread pages 67-69 to help you.

## Building the Travel Canada Tour



Continue to add ideas to help you build the *Travel Canada* tour. In this chapter, we learned about the Interior Plains, the region in which you live. If you were to persuade tourists to visit your region, what would you tell them? Which communities would you want them to visit? Think about what you found most interesting about this region. Compared with other regions, what did you find unique about this region? Jot down your ideas and save them for the *Travel Canada* tour.

## → Looking Forward

The next region of Canada we will learn about is the Cordillera region. Unlike the relatively flat Interior Plains region, the Cordillera has mountains. What do you think ways of life might be like in the Cordillera region? How might they be different from or similar to those in the Interior Plains region?