

Module 3: Change In Empire 1756-1791

Population and settlement:

As a result of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Great Britain officially took possession of all French Territories in North America except for two small islands off the coast of Newfoundland, St. Pierre and Miquelon, which were kept by France for fishing rights.

The British renamed New France "The Province of Quebec" and its territory was limited to the area around the St. Lawrence valley; it was very small compared to the size of New France before 1763

At the time of the treaty, the population of N.F was around 70 000 people. About 99% of the people were Canadien (French Catholics) with about 1% of the people being from Britain (English Protestant). The population also included Aborigines and Blacks who were both slaves and free.

In 1763, having taken possession of N.F, Britain created a set of laws (constitution) for the people of the Province of Quebec. It was called the **ROYAL PROCLAMATION**. Under this constitution, Canadiens are **NOT HAPPY**.

The new governor of the colony, James Murray, was sympathetic (kind) towards the 99% French majority and refused to enforce the rules of the Royal Proclamation; the constitution called for the assimilation of the Canadiens and the restrictions of their rights.

The few British Merchants who had moved to the colony were angry that British laws were not being upheld. They wrote to the British Government and published newspaper articles calling for James Murray to be recalled (sent back) to Britain.

The British Merchants succeeded in having Murray sent back (fired) but the new governor, Guy Carleton, had no more luck at assimilating the Canadiens and he ended up being sympathetic towards them as well, as Murray had before.

As time went on, the territory and laws of the population of Quebec would change several times as would its name.

In 1774, the territory of Quebec grew as a result of the Quebec Act.

The British were worried that the Canadiens might rebel against the British authority if they were not guaranteed the right to protect their language, laws and culture.

In order to secure the loyalty of the Canadiens in the likely event of an American Revolution, Britain gave Quebec the area surrounding the Great Lakes and secured their French language, Catholic Religion and French legal rights (civil laws).

Indeed, an American Revolution did start in the 13 colonies with the “Declaration of independence” in 1776. And, true to their word, Canadiens did not join in the Revolution as they had little to gain.

As a result of the Revolution, thousands of Loyalists (people from the 13 colonies who stayed loyal to Britain) had to leave the 13 colonies

As many as 6 000 loyalists moved to Quebec; mostly East and West (Eastern Townships/Ontario) of Montreal and the population of English people in Quebec rose to 10% leaving 90% French Canadiens

Loyalists, not happy to be living in a VERY French colony, started to complain to the British Government about the lack of English language rights, lack of Protestant Churches, and the continued use of French civil law by the Canadian population. They also preferred to use the “Township” system of land division instead of seigneuries.

In order to make the English Loyalists happy as well as the French Canadiens, Britain created a new constitution in 1791 called the **CONSTITUTIONAL ACT**

The Constitutional Act of 1791 split The Province of Quebec into two separate colonies: Upper and Lower Canada. Upper Canada would be for the English and Lower Canada for the French. Upper Canada was located in what is now Ontario while Lower Canada was located in present day Quebec.

At this point, the population of Lower Canada was about 160 000 people. Again, most were French Canadiens with a minority of British people living in the Eastern Township and some Aboriginals and Blacks.

Economy and Development:

At the Start of British rule (1760-1763), fur trading was the major economic activity. The two main companies involved were the **HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY** and the **NORTHWEST COMPANY**

The Hudson's Bay Company got most of their furs from Aboriginal peoples around the Hudson's Bay area (“Rupert's Land”). The Northwest Company however got most of their furs from the territory around the Great Lakes. The areas where there was overlap became tense with competition for furs.

After the conquest there was the new **BRITISH MERCHANT CLASS WHO TOOK OVER THE BUSINESS SIDE OF THE FUR TRADE IN QC.** But, Canadiens were still the main workers in the trade. They knew the landscape and territory well and were hired as **VOYAGERS** for the Northwest Company.

The Northwest Company rapidly expanded into the Great Lakes region with a series of trading posts and provided fierce competition for the HBC (The Bay). This expansion led to the “**OVER HARVESTING**” (over hunting) of beaver fur until there was little left.

Decline of the Fur Trade

Eventually the fur trade would start to decline after almost 200 years of dominating the early economies of N.F and British North America (BNA)

There were 2 main reasons for the decline of the fur trade:

1. the fur trade had become increasingly expensive to operate
2. The trading territories were becoming more and more remote as traders had to go further looking for beaver

As a result, the Northwest Company could no longer compete and was taken over by the Hudson's bay Company. therefore, most furs were being shipped out of the Hudson Bay region rather than going through Montreal. This would have a negative economic impact on Montreal for certain

Culture and Thought:

At the end of the 18th century, many new ideas were spreading around the world. One of those ideas was **LIBERALISM**. Liberalism is the ideas of individual rights and freedoms; this goes against the ideas of Absolutism and Imperialism

The concept of Liberalism led to the revolutions in France and the 13 colonies against their Absolutist and Imperialist Kingdoms or Monarchies

These "revolutionary" thoughts carried over into other parts of the world such as here in Quebec. The newspapers of Quebec spread Liberal ideas and the people, both French and English, began to make demands of the British government. This led to several changes in government and even open rebellion. The old, imperial style of governing the colony was coming to an end. Freedom and Democracy (Responsible Government) was not far away...

Power and Countervailing Powers:

Great Britain conquers N.F in 1763. They change the borders of N.F, making it smaller, and change its name to Quebec. They also create a new constitution for the colony called the Royal Proclamation

The goal of the Royal Proclamation was to **ASSIMILATE** the French Canadiens by imposing on them the Protestant religion, english laws and the English language. however, Governor James Murray did **NOT** enforce the laws of the Royal Proclamation and was kind to the French; allowing them to remain Catholic, speak French and use French civil laws.

In an effort to secure the loyalty of the French in the case of an American Revolution, the British created a new constitution called the Quebec Act of 1774 which gave back all the rights that the French lost under Royal Proclamation

After the start of the American Revolution, Loyalists fled the 13 colonies and arrived in Quebec. Along with the French middle class (petite bourgeoisie) they demanded the right to vote and have a Legislative Assembly.

Another new constitution, the Constitutional Act of 1791, divided Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada and granted Loyalists and Canadiens their wish for a Legislative Assembly. However, things were not truly "free" or democratic because the Governor still had the right to "Veto" and have a Legislative Assembly.

Power structure from 1763 to 1791

The leader in Canada during the entire British Regime was the Governor General (GG). The GG was appointed by the British Monarchy (King or Queen); he was not "elected" by the people of the colony

The GG took orders from Britain and had to enforce those orders in the colony with the help of the Legislative Council (group of friends the GG appointed; again **NOT** elected)

Relationship Between the Church and State

By 1760, right after the Conquest, the Catholic Church was in a bad position in QC. They could no longer collect the church tax (Tithe) and had no leader (Bishop). They **HAD** to be nice and work with the British authorities or else they would not survive in QC.

From this point on, a strong relationship grew between the Church and the British Government; the Church would always support the government and encourage the Canadiens to do the same and, in return, the government would allow the Church to collect taxes and have a Bishop in the colony

Relationship between British Merchants and the State

By the 1760s, as the first new British citizens arrived in the colony (mostly merchants), they had a harsh attitude towards the Canadiens

The British merchants decided that the colony should be English, not French. They wanted English laws, English language, Protestant religion and the end of the seigneurial system and tithes (church tax). They also wanted a Legislative Assembly that would exclude French Canadiens

Governors Murray and Carleton opposed these demands as they were too harsh on the French who were the 99% of the population

These British merchants, although few in numbers, had connections in London and were able to get Murray fired. However Carleton was the same as Murray as he treated the French well.

However, overtime these Merchants gained influence and power with the Governors and using their money, influenced all the actions of the government for their benefit. They became the governor;s closest advisors and a major reason why the people of Upper and Lower Canada felt the government was corrupt and undemocratic