

## Winnipeg and the Transcontinental Railroad

### *Summary*

This lesson helps illustrate the importance of the railroad in the settlement of the west.

### *Enduring Understanding*

Students will understand the development of the Canadian West following the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

### *Essential Questions*

- What impact did the railroad have on western development?
- What impact did the expansion of the railroad have on Canada's First Nations?

### *Objective*

Analyze the factors that brought people west.

### *Activity 1*

With your class, view a political map of Canada in 1870.

**Step 1:** Ask the class to imagine that they are living in 1870 when a political map of Canada looked like this. Ask the class the following questions:

- In 1870, did Canada encompass land from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts?
- How many provinces existed in 1870?
- Why was British Columbia settled but the Prairies bypassed prior to 1870?
- Compare maps from 1870 & 1890. What accounts for the differences?

**Step 2:** Ask students to consider the following:

- Were there good water sources on the plains?
- If there were few trees, with what would settlers build? What would they use for fuel?
- What means of transportation existed at this time to either transport settlers and goods onto the plains, or transport the goods they produced to markets elsewhere?
- What means of communication existed to connect those settling the plains with people on either the eastern or western seaboard?
- What First Nation tribes lived in these areas. How did the railroad affect their lives and how might they have survived?

**Step 3:** Now ask students the final two interrelated questions of this lesson:

- How could the government play a role in enticing people to settle the Canadian West?
- While a map of Canada would show many railroads in the East in 1870, none reached across the Prairies or linked the country coast to coast. What prompted the government to want to build a railroad?

- How could railroad companies be encouraged by the government to build a railroad to service a part of the country where there was no significant population?  
Conversely, why should settlers come when there was no railroad?
- What were some of the challenges that faced the railroad builders?
- How did cities end up evolving where they are?
- What commerce spurred each city's growth?