



Manitoba Joins the Confederation

Manitoba officially became a province, under the *Manitoba Act*, on July 15, 1870. The name Manitoba comes from a Cree and Assiniboine word which means “the spirit that speaks.”

When Manitoba joined the Confederation in 1870, the entry was not a smooth one. It was filled with fighting between the Métis and the Canadian surveyors and soldiers. This area was owned by the Hudson’s Bay Company and was known as Rupert’s Land.

FAST FACT

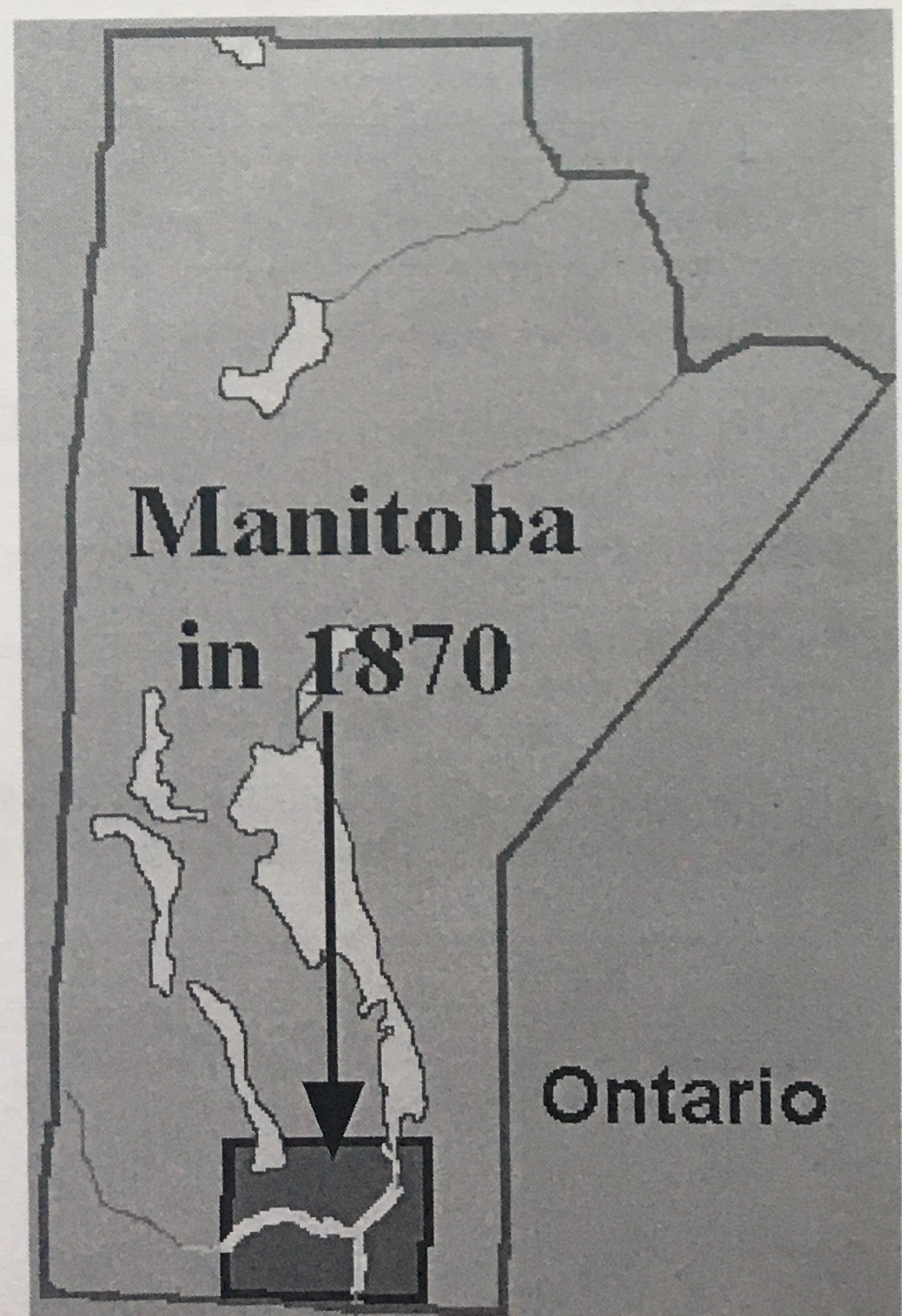
The ownership transfer of Rupert’s Land was supposed to happen in 1869, but the unrest in the area caused a delay.

Manitoba had wide-open prairies that were good for farming. This land was attractive to Canadian settlers and immigrants looking for a fresh start. Americans were also interested in annexing this land to expand their nation. To prevent annexation, the Canadian government wanted to buy Rupert’s Land from the Hudson’s Bay Company so that it could become part of the Confederation.

The original province of Manitoba was only the small settled part around Winnipeg. It was called the “postage stamp province” because of its small size and shape. The rest of the area became known as the Northwest Territories.

Some of the terms in the *Manitoba Act*:

- *The province would consist of just a small area around the Red River, which was just over 39 000 km². (today Manitoba consists of about 647 797 km²)*
- *English and French would be the official languages in the government and courts.*
- *There would be Protestant and Catholic schools paid for by the government.*
- *Only religious education was guaranteed. There was no guarantee of English or French language education.*
- *The federal government would have control over the land and its resources.*



The size of Manitoba in 1870