



Figure 2-2 This picture was taken at the end of the Victorian era in Toronto. It shows housing in one of the poorest sections of town.

soil was the cheapest, and poor immigrants bought land whenever they could. Near present-day Owen Sound, near Meaford and Orangeville, for example, areas today are still known as the “Irish Block” and the “Scottish Settlement.” While it was true that new immigrants had opportunities in Canada that simply did not exist for them in the United Kingdom or Europe, in reality they often faced disappointment and hardship.

Many Irish immigrants were Catholics, while many Scots were Presbyterians. People in the establishment, however, belonged to the Anglican Church, which was the official church of the colonies. Most towns had at least one Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Catholic church. Indeed, religion was very important to the **Victorians**. Almost everybody attended services. Churches were, in effect, communi-

ties within communities. Their leaders made decisions about education, schools, and community matters, and church congregations served as one of the few agencies that helped the destitute. People gave to the churches and helped to build or improve them, often as a way to display their own wealth.

The Native Peoples

The original people of the Eastern Woodlands—the Native peoples—were often pushed aside in pioneer Canada, especially in southern regions of the colonies. Not only were aboriginal reserves located on the edges of the main settled areas, but the Native peoples tended to be forgotten and ignored, unless, of course, Europeans wanted to buy “Indian” lands or to employ “Indian” labourers.

One way or another, the Native peoples were forced to adjust to

Victorian: someone who lived during the era of Queen Victoria, from 1837–1901

Figure 2-3 An Ojibwa chief in the 1850s



European ways of doing things. The Algonkians, for example, had traditionally relied on hunting and fishing for food. With the growth of immigrant settlements throughout

the Eastern Woodlands, they turned to small-scale fruit and vegetable gardening and even started to shop at the local food stores. The Ojibwa had never grown a single crop, and they resisted any attempts to force them into farming. Other groups, such as the Mohawks along the Grand River, were long-time agriculturalists, and had their own local governments. They were well-equipped to deal with the colonial officials, merchants, and speculators who had recently appeared on the scene.

Around this time, land claims and territorial disputes were common. Land claims may be in today's news, but they are hardly new. Many claims have histories that go back more than a century. (You will read about one such British Columbia claim, and its resolution, in Chapter 7.) By mid-century, the Ojibwa who lived in the Lake Superior region were embroiled in a

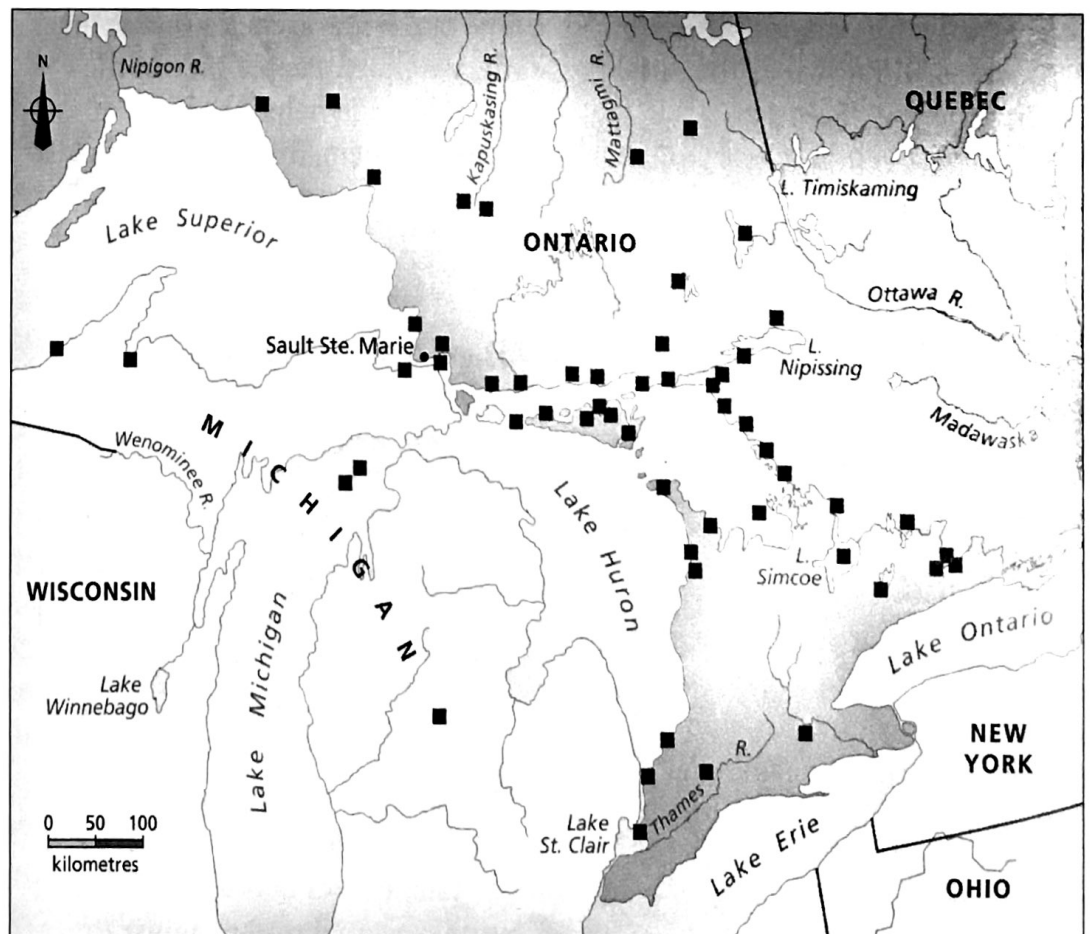


Figure 2-4 A map of Ojibwa reserves in the mid-1800s

land dispute with the new government over miners trespassing on their property. In 1845, the government had given several mining companies the go-ahead to explore the mineral wealth of the Shield. A few years later, it agreed to fund the mining operations. The new governor of the Canadas examined the Native claims and found they were “favourable to the Indians,” but this could not stop the development of the Shield—or the encroachment on Ojibwa territory.

The Ojibwa also had reserves on on Lake Huron and Georgian Bay on the edges of European settlements. As settlers moved closer to their lands, they often pressured the Ojibwa to sell their best land. Sometimes, settlers and local governments challenged the terms of previous treaties. One late-century dispute over boundaries forced the Ojibwa to meet with the colonial government at Allenford, Ontario. In the end, the government backed down and accepted the Ojibwa interpretation of their treaty.

The government also tried to persuade bands to rent out good reserve lands, and would pay an annual fee in return for land it could sell to settlers. Since many Native



Figure 2-5 In 1995, the Ojibwa challenged the municipal government to return lands used as a golf course, one frequented by members of the Canadian military, at Ipperwash, Ontario. The confrontation escalated, and actions taken by both sides in the dispute resulted in a violent confrontation.

people were desperately poor, the struggle to hold onto their lands was difficult. Much of the territory that had been recognized in early treaties was eventually lost. But in spite of the tremendous pressure to change and **assimilate** into White society, Native culture remained essentially intact. Elders kept alive many traditions and oral histories, which persist to the present day.

to assimilate: to join the majority group and give up the traditions of one's own group

ACTIVITIES

1. Create an organizer or a web diagram to display information about new immigrants to Canada in the mid-nineteenth century. Show their country of origin, where they settled, and their church affiliation. As part of your web, include information on the lives of the rich and the poor.
2. a) Do you think it was possible for a Native person to adapt to Victorian society? Was such adaptation necessary? Was it right? Why or why not?
b) Why did the settlers not adapt to Native customs and traditions?
3. What economic, environmental, and social difficulties would Native communities face as they tried to preserve their own culture?

VICTORIAN ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, while she was still in her teens. During the years that she reigned, 1837 to 1901, her tastes, values, and behaviour set the standard. In fact, people who lived in Britain and the British Empire at this time are often called "Victorians." Most Canadians, and those who lived in other colonies of British North America, were British citizens and followed Victorian values. Even Americans adopted the tone and values of the period: Victorian ideals complemented their own beliefs about morals, hard work, success in business, and power. The Victorians had what we call "attitude." They were very sure

of themselves and had few doubts about their values and beliefs.

Victorian society was distinctly Christian. The people of this era placed a high value on personal modesty and on "gravity," a kind of seriousness, particularly as the century wore on. The queen was a model for the age. After Victoria's husband, Albert, died, she wore mourning clothes for the rest of her life. But the Victorian era was not grim—in fact, it was very optimistic. The British Empire grew larger and stronger, and its armed forces, particularly its navy, were almost beyond challenge. New discoveries in medicine, science, and technology were reported almost daily. In the

Figure 2-6 Queen Victoria appears at one of her Jubilees (in either 1887 or 1897). Notice that even during a celebration she is wearing black under her robe. Several poor Irish families are shown to the left. The Catholic Irish experienced many hardships under British rule.



latter half of the century, Victorian adventurers embarked on daring journeys. These romantic quests typically involved searching for the sources of the great rivers or other mysteries of the world. The journey of Walter Cheadle and Lord Milton, excerpted in the opening "Window on the Past," typifies this yearning for romantic adventure. Understandably, newspapers were filled with accounts of British triumphs. Many Canadians enjoyed reading these stories because they thought of themselves as British. Most English Victorians had no doubt that they were superior to all other peoples, and that to be born British was "to win the lottery of life."

Victorian values included a strict moral code and an obsession with social status. The class system of Britain and Europe still operated in the US and Canada, but to a lesser extent. This meant that your occupation and social standing was still largely determined by family background and social connections. Although many Europeans had emigrated to North America to escape

the class system, they found no shortage of snobbery when they arrived.

Middle-class Victorians were very prudish, and they believed that people could be easily tempted to stray from proper behaviour. They were also extremely materialistic—they liked nice things, and spent freely on clothes, homes, and furnishings. The Victorian obsession with status extended to church buildings, which were often the largest and most important buildings in town. Many social activities took place on church property. Weddings and funerals were important community events, and helped people to build strong relationships with one another.

Fashion and Decor

Although Canadians were less formal than Europeans, keeping up appearances was important. Clothing indicated social status and Victorian values, so even labourers tended to dress formally. Women wore long dresses and aprons; men wore hats and ties, even to sporting events. The

DID YOU KNOW?

"Pale is good" has returned as a fashion statement, now that people are wise to the long-term effects of sun exposure. Too much exposure can cause both premature aging and skin cancer.



Figure 2-7 Architecture tells us much about the people of an era. After 1840, house styles in Canada West changed almost every decade, often copying English or US fashions. How do you think people earned the money to build large, lavish homes, such as this one, on Jarvis Street in Toronto? Now a restaurant, The Keg, this mansion was once the home of the Massey family.

Figure 2–8 A typical Victorian drawing room. Notice the heavy drapery and tassels.



Figure 2–9 A Victorian hairbrush

wealthy dressed extremely well. Men wore long jackets and high, stiff collars; women wore long dresses made of the finest cloth, with high collars to protect their skin from the sun. **Parasols** and broad-brimmed hats were used for the same purpose. Unlike today, a tan was a sign that a person worked outdoors and was, therefore, lower class. No one ever tried to sport a tan.

Victorians were most demonstrative about wealth. Houses of the rich professionals and merchants were large and substantial, indicating the owners' importance in the community. Large houses were also necessary because large families were

common. Often grandparents and other relatives lived in the house, as did servants. Because houses were usually heated with coal or wood fireplaces, rooms were small, with doors to keep in the heat. Victorians loved heavy, decorated furniture, heavy curtains, and knick-knacks. To modern eyes, Victorian rooms would look cluttered and overdone. Of course, the poor could not afford large houses and rich furnishings. They lived in small houses in the poorer sections of town, or in the country; and they decorated with what they could afford. Grown children often lived with their parents, sometimes even after marriage.

parasol: a fancy umbrella to keep out the sun

ACTIVITIES

1. It is important, and fair, to judge people by the standards of their own time. Make a PMI chart for Victorian values and sensibilities. (Your teacher will review the PMI with you.) Assess your own bias after you have done so, and summarize your assessment in two or three sentences.
2. Is there anything in Victorian society that strikes you as a contradiction? If so, what is it?
3. Examine Figure 2–8. Imagine you are a magazine editor compiling a list of fashion and decor "do's" for trendy Victorians. Using this scene as a model, make a list of at least six "do's".

A NEW AGE OF SCIENCE AND MEDICINE

These three things, will, work and success, between them fill human existence.

—LOUIS PASTEUR

Science and technology dominated and shaped the Western world after 1860. In the nineteenth century, people were astonished as scientists and inventors made discovery after discovery, many of which seemed almost magical. Discoveries came so fast, and many ideas were so new, that understanding was often incomplete. Scientists debated the origin of disease, the causes of which were not well understood. When germs were first seen under a microscope in the 1870s, some scientists theorized that germs (“animalcules,” as they were originally called) grew spontaneously out of liquids. Other scientists thought that they were laid as eggs by insects. Educated people took a keen interest in science and its future. As empires and trade net-

works grew, people came into contact with new, and sometimes unexpected, forms of life. Newspapers and journals carried accounts of discoveries in Africa, northern Canada, and Asia—and to stir public curiosity, journalists often mixed fiction and fact.

Exciting medical discoveries were regularly featured in the news of the nineteenth century. Aspirin, antibiotics, antiseptics, x-rays, vitamins, and hormones were discovered in the latter half of the century. Although the pioneering work on vaccinations had been done at the end of the eighteenth century, it wasn't until the Victorian era that vaccinations became available to ordinary people. Science excited people, but it also frightened them—unlike today, few people had access to reliable information and news reports. People living in Canada's cities, however, were more likely to be aware of what was happening than those who lived in isolated communities.

DID YOU KNOW?

Smallpox was eradicated in every part of the world in 1980. However, the smallpox virus still exists in two locations, both of them laboratories.

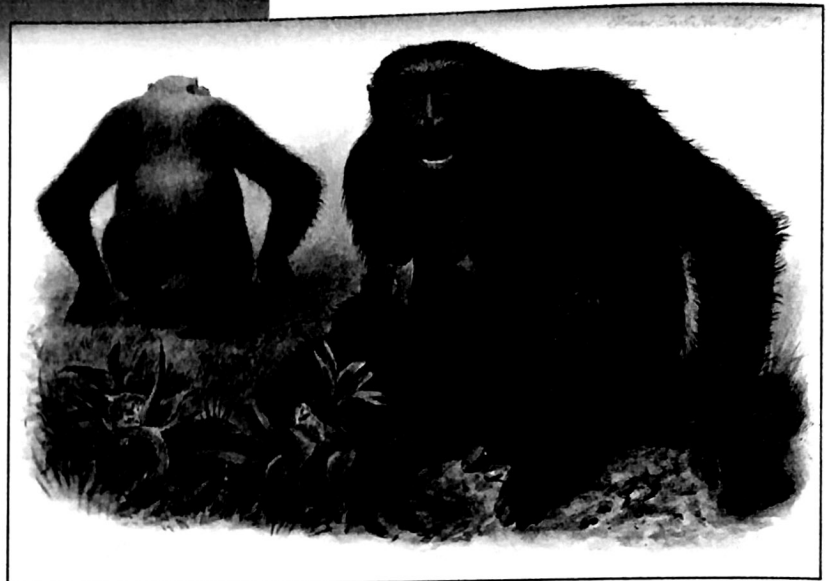


Figure 2-10 The child in the middle has smallpox, a terrible disease that left many scarred for life in the nineteenth century.

The Europeans Meet the Gorilla

Victorians were interested in learning more about the natural world, but they liked their news on the sensational side. This account, published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in the mid-nineteenth century, describes the gorilla, an animal first encountered and described by a European, a French naturalist, in 1847. How does this account compare with what is known about the gorilla today?

Figure 2-11 A Victorian-era poster of the gorilla. This one seems to have toned down the ferocity!



The gorilla is a fruit-eater, but as fierce as the most **carnivorous** animals. He is said to show an enraged **enmity** against men ... he shows a similar hatred to the elephant ... We are told that when the gorilla “sees an elephant busy with his trunk among the twigs, he instantly regards this as an infraction of the laws of property, and ... he suddenly brings his club down on the elephant’s (trunk), and

drives off the alarmed animal trumpeting shrilly with rage and pain.” His enmity to man is more terrible ...

The hideous aspect of his face (his green eyes flashing with rage) is heightened by the thick and prominent brows being drawn **spasmodically** up and down, with hair erect, causing a horrible and fiendish scowl. Weapons are torn from their possessor’s grasp, gun-barrels bent and crushed in by

the powerful hands and vice-like teeth of the enraged brute. More horrid still, however, is the sudden and unexpected fate which is often inflicted by him. Two people will be walking through one of the woodland paths, unsuspecting of evil, when in an instant one misses his companion, or turns to see him drawn up into the air with a convulsed choking cry ...

carnivorous: flesh-eating

enmity: hatred

spasmodically: in spasms

carbolic acid: an acid compound present in coal tar that can be used as a disinfectant when diluted with water

suffrage: right to vote

People hoped science would find cures for the many serious and deadly diseases that afflicted society. Cholera, smallpox, typhoid fever, influenza, and tuberculosis were very common and killed millions of people in the nineteenth century. Children were particularly susceptible to rheumatic and scarlet fevers. Childbirth was very hazardous, and many women died as a result. Yet very little was known about disease or hygiene. Until

germs and antiseptics were discovered, doctors often infected patients during operations. Surgeons performed major operations without washing their instruments or, sometimes, even their hands. Operating rooms were never sterile, and smoking in an operating room was fairly common. So many new germs were introduced into a patient’s body during surgery that it is astonishing that people survived surgery and recovered at all.

In 1857, a French scientist, Louis Pasteur, discovered the tiny organisms—the *bacilli*—that cause many diseases. Pasteur also discovered the cause of anthrax (a deadly disease that wiped out cattle and sheep and could infect humans), cholera, and rabies. He used **carbolic acid** as an antiseptic, and vaccinated people and animals against disease. Incidentally, Louis Pasteur did not become wealthy because of his discoveries, as medical researchers often do today. He chose instead to live a simple and generous life, and found satisfaction in his work.

Figure 2-12 This early Canadian photo shows conditions in hospital operating rooms in the mid-1800s. Because germs had not been discovered, the doctors have made no attempt to keep the room—or the patient, the instruments, guests, and themselves—sterile.



Breaking the Barriers: Emily Stowe

Emily Stowe, a Canadian woman, was one of the first female doctors in the British Empire. Born in 1831, she was provided with a good education by her Quaker parents. At sixteen, she became a school teacher, and at twenty-three, she became Canada's first woman school principal. Emily married John Stowe, and they had three children. When her husband became ill with tuberculosis, Emily Stowe realized she wanted to become a doctor. However, she couldn't pursue her studies in Canada—no Canadian medical school would accept a woman applicant in the mid-nineteenth century.

Stowe looked to the United States, and was accepted at the New York Medical College for Women. Upon graduating in 1867, she faced another barrier: She would have to practise illegally in Canada because Canadian law required physicians to do some training in Canada. Stowe bravely set up an illegal practice in Toronto. Finally, in 1880, the rules were changed and Emily Stowe was able to practise legally. In her spare time, she campaigned for women's **suffrage** (see Chapter 7) and other feminist issues, founded the Toronto Women's Literary Club, and helped establish the Toronto Women's Medical College. She died in 1903.



Figure 2-13 Emily Stowe was a feminist and one of the first female doctors in the British colonies. She became a physician in 1867, after studying in the United States. Many Victorians believed that women should never enter medical school because they might be corrupted as they studied the human body.

Using an Editorial as a Primary Source

Whether women should pursue higher education, including medical school, was a question frequently debated at mid-century. One newspaper published in Canada West reprinted this editorial from the *Edinburgh Review*. In it, the author argues for the admission of women to medical school.

Editorials in major publications are useful primary sources for the historian because they usually express an opinion that has attained some popularity. The fact that this editorial had been published in the United Kingdom and was reprinted by a local Canadian newspaper indicates how seriously people took the fight of women to educate themselves.



The question of the right or no right of women to avail themselves of a university education has been raised in a somewhat unexpected form at St. Andrews. A young English lady, Miss Elizabeth Garrett, visited St. Andrews during the summer, and intimated her desire to become a student of medicine.

This lady arrived in St. Andrews a few days ago and on Wednesday last applied to the Rev. Mr. Mcbean, secretary of the university, for a **matriculation ticket**, paid the usual fee, received the ticket, and signed her name in the matriculation book All this was very well, and just what might have been expected, from the distinguished and accomplished professors of this ancient and celebrated university. But, unluckily, they seem somehow to have

become alarmed at the idea of being first to take the lead ... in the so-called "innovation" of educating women in college, and in those branches of learning that have been generally confined to men, or at least not sought after by women. Accordingly, on Saturday the Senate [of the university] met and passed a resolution to the effect that the issuing of a matriculation ticket ... to Miss Garrett was not sufficiently authorized; that this novel question raised ought to be deliberately considered and decided; that the opinion of other universities and of lawyers should be taken.

It may be doubted that any Senate can exclude ladies from those universities that are established by law and funded by public money. Where do they find the right to do it? Girls are not yet pro-

hibited from attending parish schools—they are rather encouraged to attend. What difference is there, unless arising from custom, between parish schools and universities? We are not aware of any difference in law. Males are admitted and in Acts of Parliament the "male includes the female." It may have been decided by the Court of Session at some time or another that a woman was not entitled to a university education, but we have never heard of such odd decisions. Most likely the question was never raised and we presume that but for custom it is still open. A custom that regulates the measure of rights may be very important but when there has been no exercise of the right at all, there can be no custom, and it is not in every circumstance that non use of a right is followed by the loss of it ...

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. In point form, list all the arguments the writer makes in favour of admitting women to medical school.
2. What phrases are most effective in communicating the writer's viewpoint?
3. Knowing what you do about Victorian values, why do you think some people thought that women would be corrupted by studying the human body?