

The Congregation adapts to the new régime and evolves.

- Read the text on the post-Conquest years and the evolution of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame in the 1800's, then choose whether the eight statements which follow are TRUE OR FALSE.

From one régime to another... and from one century to another.

Following the Conquest, many notable and military families decided to return to France. Most of the French settlers, however, remained in the colony. Administrators, merchants, as well as settlers from Great Britain or the thirteen colonies to the south also came to live in the Province of Quebec. Many of these new colonists were Protestant and therefore hostile towards the French language and Catholic religion. The tensions among French Canadians, English Canadians and native Amerindians continued into the next century.



Children of Irish soldiers.

Illustration: Francis Back

For ten years, Great Britain had to face the growing disloyalty of its thirteen colonies that would become the United States. To avoid a potential French Canadian rebellion, it promulgated the Quebec Act in 1774. Among other things, this Act gave back certain powers to the land-owning seigneurs and the Catholic clergy. However, while it granted settlers freedom of religion, it did not assure them any new political powers.

After the American Revolution (1776), the United States also attempted to conquer the former New France! Montreal was temporarily besieged but Quebec City resisted. Once peace was restored between Great Britain and the United States in 1782, the Province of Quebec received thousands of persons who had remained loyal to the British Crown (loyalists).

The Constitutional Act (1791) divided the Province of Quebec in two provinces. Upper Canada corresponded to today's Province of Ontario, and Lower Canada, to the Province of Quebec.

The Union Act (1840) united Upper Canada and Lower Canada under one government: United Canada.

As for the Congrégation de Notre-Dame...

Not only did the Seven Years' War destroy Louisbourg but also many of the buildings of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, especially in the Quebec City area. Montreal was somewhat spared. In 1768, the Mother House of the Sisters and all their belongings were destroyed by fire. This was the second large fire in their history. Thanks to the generosity of the Sulpicians, the Bishop and other benefactors, and especially thanks to the work and sacrifice of the Sisters, the Mother House and Chapel were rebuilt.



The reconstruction years were also spent attempting to reduce poverty and worry caused by war and the change in régime. The Sisters themselves had to close two missions (Lachine and Champlain), but two more were established. In 1769, the Congregation concluded the purchase of Île Saint-Paul, whose farms financially sustained the Congregation and its missions.

During the first half of the 19th century, the Congregation saw an important increase in the number of members and new missions opening at an unprecedented pace: three in the 1820's, three in the 1830's and eight in the 1840's, namely in Kingston. Sisters also taught in French and in English public schools. At the Mother House in Montreal, they taught the children of poor Irish families.

Île Saint-Paul.

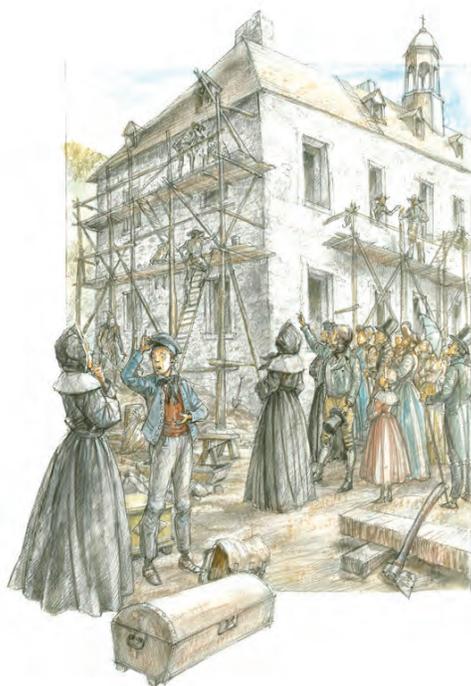
Illustration: Francis Back

The role of education in the new society.

When Great Britain began ruling its new colony, it planned to establish the Protestant religion and assimilate the French Canadians. To gradually accomplish this goal, one of the main strategies was to open English Protestant schools in every district and township.

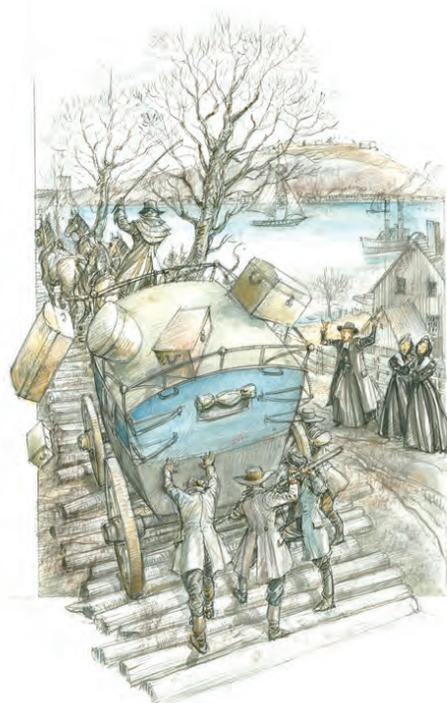
However, maintaining the clergy and Catholic schools, as stipulated in the Quebec Act, protected the Catholic religion and the French language, especially in Lower Canada. Therefore, the work performed by teachers, among them the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, played a significant historical role in the preservation of the *fait français* (French language and culture) in America.

From the 19th century, denominational schools were gradually integrated into the educational system, which was now administered by the State. The Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame continued to teach in public schools while they also administered their own boarding schools.



1823 - Mission in Sainte-Marie de Beauce.

Illustration: Francis Back



1841 - Kingston, capital of United Canada.

Illustration: Francis Back

Questions

1. The new régime, put in place after the British Conquest did not bring any change in the lives of the settlers of New France. TRUE OR FALSE?
2. 1768 was the first time that the Mother House of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame was destroyed by fire. TRUE OR FALSE?
3. War and the change in régime brought about poverty and worry among the French Canadian population. TRUE OR FALSE?
4. Farming on Île Saint-Paul financially sustained the Congregation and its missions. TRUE OR FALSE?
5. During the first half of the 19th century, the Congregation recruited an important number of members. This enabled it to open several missions. TRUE OR FALSE?
6. The Sisters of the Congregation only taught children of notable families in private schools. TRUE OR FALSE?
7. The Congrégation de Notre-Dame never opened schools outside of Quebec. TRUE OR FALSE?
8. The clergy and Catholic schools preserved the Catholic religion and the French language. TRUE OR FALSE?