



SELF-GUIDED TOURS: *Francophone History*



*Ad from Courrier de L'Ouest
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How to use this guide: This guide offers some tidbits of information about the history of Francophone peoples in the Edmonton area as a starting point for you to explore at your own pace. It also provides suggestions of buildings to visit and questions to ask costumed staff.

1846 Fort-

A Fort Built for Furs

In 1846, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) held a monopoly on the Fur Trade in western Canada. Francophones participated in the Trade early on, establishing interactions between Europeans and Indigenous peoples.

A language and cultural mélange: Although the HBC was a British company, its employees primarily hailed from the British Isles, Eastern Canada and the Western Plains, resulting in a variety of cultures, and languages, inside the Fort walls. During this time, fifty-six of the HBC's employees in the Saskatchewan District were of French ancestry, either "Canadien" or Francophone Métis. With such a variety of languages spoken in the Fort, how do you think HBC employees and Indigenous people communicated with each other?

Poteaux-sur-sol: This method of construction (in English "post-on-sill") was a traditional French-Canadian building technique. When the Fur Trade moved west, so did this technique. It utilized squared posts, resting on heavy squared logs which formed a frame or sill. Walls were created by placing squared horizontal logs into grooves cut into the uprights.. It was used to build the original Edmonton House in 1795, and was used for the reconstruction of the Fort. What other French-Canadian traditions can you discover in this era?

ASK AN INTERPRETER about *michif*. Ask them why so many *Canadiens* worked in the fur trade. Ask to hear a tale about a legendary Francophone fur trader.

BE SURE TO VISIT Rowand House (#5) where you can clearly see the post-on-sill construction method. The Missionary Cross (near #20), represents the original cross erected outside the Fort by two Francophone missionaries in 1838.

1885 Street-

A Blind Faith in the Future

By 1885, Canada claimed the West and transportation improvements helped lessen the city's isolation and it became a settlement of roughly 400 people. Opportunities for land brought numerous French-Canadians to the West, while recruitment in Europe and the U.S. encouraged other Francophones to settle in the Edmonton area.

An Important Prairie Presence: Edmonton has always been central to Francophone culture in Alberta. Before 1885, the majority of Edmontonians were of French descent, and in 1894 an Edmonton branch of Quebec's Saint-Jean Baptiste Society, was established. French-speaking clergy, business owners and professionals were among Edmonton's early prominent citizens. *L'Ouest canadien*, a weekly French language newspaper, began to be published in 1898.



French-Catholicism: The names of places in Alberta such as St. Albert and St. Paul reveal the impact of French-Catholicism parishes throughout the province. The Métis were eager to have missionaries come and live with them, including Father Lacombe, Bishop Grandin and Father Morin, who founded Morinville and Beaumont. In 1861, Father Albert Lacombe built a small chapel which still stands today. What other towns or cities in Alberta can you think of that are named after French-Catholic saints?

ASK AN INTERPRETER about reactions to the hanging of Louis Riel or the arrest of Laurent Garneau, both prominent Francophone Métis. Ask an interpreter at or near Kelly's Saloon (#35) about the "Hotel Wars" which included Xavier St-Jean and his Hotel du Canada.

BE SURE TO VISIT Bellerose School (#22), where the students were primarily French-speaking. The Dominion Land Office (#44), run by Pierre Gauvreau, also contains maps of Edmonton and St. Albert, where you can look for French family names.

*Thank you
for visiting
Fort Edmonton Park!*



*The Official Flag of Alberta's
Francophone Community,
adopted in 1982*

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and fill out a comment card.*

1905 Street – Thrill Ride

By 1905, Edmonton was a booming capital city. There was great prosperity - electricity, running water, and central heating became common amenities. Anglophone immigrants swiftly outnumbered Francophones during this period.



Prominent Partners, Joseph Gariepy and Prosper Edmond Lessard, were business partners. Born in L'Assomption, Québec, Gariepy moved to Edmonton and opened a general store. In the late 1890s,

Lessard was on his way to make his fortunes in the Klondike Gold Rush when he stopped in Edmonton and instead took a job with Gariepy, now an important figure in Edmonton's Francophone community.. Gariepy and Lessard contributed significantly to Alberta's Francophone communities. How do you think they made their fortune?



The Language of Luxury: Built in 1903, the Windsor Hotel (later Hotel Selkirk) was considered one of the most luxurious hotels of its time. The hotel wrote its 1910 menu almost entirely in French. Menu items included: Paté de Foie Gras, Pomme de Terre Duchesse, and Bisque de Cruelies. Later, under new management, the Windsor Hotel was renamed the Hotel Selkirk. Is the French language still used in advertising to convey luxury?

ASK AN INTERPRETER about Francophone Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier and what was significant about his visit to Edmonton in 1905.

BE SURE TO VISIT the Town Hall (#62) and look for a picture of Joseph Henri Picard. Picard was a prominent figure in Edmonton and very much involved in education. He was the first Chairman of the newly-formed (1912) Edmonton Catholic School System, a position he held for several years.

1920 Street- Tough Times, Modern Times

From 1919 to 1929, Canada experienced rapid changes and moved into the modern age. This was a decade of advancements in technology, urban growth and the development of new forms of entertainment, sports and leisure. The Francophone community was an integral part of Alberta's modernization.

St. Paul Des Métis was established as a mission east of Edmonton in 1896 by Father Albert Lacombe. The promise of land and Catholic schooling for their children attracted Métis to the settlement. In 1909, the area was opened to settlers, mostly French-Canadian, as well as a few French and Belgians. During the 1920s the town grew and saw the addition of modern amenities, including a bungalow-style telephone exchange which serviced the surrounding region. The town's name was shortened to St. Paul, and French remains the town's largest ethnic group.

LaFlèche Bros Custom Tailoring was established in 1896, when Quebec-born brothers Tripoli and Joseph LaFlèche borrowed \$600 to set up shop on Whyte Avenue. They successfully broke into the custom suit market during the First World War, and by 1921, the firm was worth between \$10,000 and \$20,000. LaFlèche Bros provided fine clothes to prime ministers, premiers, royalty and thousands of loyal customers until it closed in May 2007 after 101 years of operation. What attitude or feeling does the LaFlèche Bros billboard convey?

ASK AN INTERPRETER about the training of Edmonton soldiers and nurses in Valcartier, Quebec (still a Canadian Forces base) and their service in Belgium and France during the Great War.

BE SURE TO VISIT the Alberta Government Telephone Building (#77), originally from St. Paul.