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THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Canada's federal police force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, is a modern organization as well as a living tradition and a colourful reminder of the romantic aspects of its country's past.

Originally formed to keep order in the vast expanse lying beyond the western boundaries of Manitoba, the RCMP now enforces federal laws in all ten Canadian provinces and polices the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. Under contract, it also acts as the provincial police force in eight provinces and does local policing for about 150 municipalities. Directed and administered from headquarters in Ottawa, 11,500 uniformed members, civilian members and special constables are complemented by 2,500 public servants and civilian employees.

Soon after the passing of the British North America Act in 1867, the newborn Federal Government acquired from the Hudson's Bay Company an enormous and potentially rich territory stretching from the Red River Valley in Manitoba west to the Rockies and north from the United States border to the Arctic archipelago. However, before these resources could be developed, law and order had to be established throughout this vast region. The Government at Ottawa needed an instrument for the assertion of its authority, the enforcement of the laws of Canada and eventually the safe construction of a transcontinental railroad -- British Columbia's price for entering Confederation.

North West Mounted Police

Credit for the peaceful settlement of Western Canada rightly falls to the North West Mounted Police, who were organized in 1873 to administer justice in the regions ceded by the Hudson's Bay Company. In July 1874, 275 men rode westward from Fort Dufferin, Manitoba, their mission to pacify the warring tribes and protect the plains country from adventurers. By autumn of the same year, they had made their presence known as far west as the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Two years later, the force had become firmly established and had won the confidence and respect of native chiefs and their people. Devoid of the arrogance and brutality so often displayed by newcomers to the West, the NWMP endeavoured to make law-abiding citizens of both white and red men.

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