

WHAT CAUSED TENSIONS TO RISE?

New France tripled its population between 1713 and 1754, reaching 55 000. However, the British colonies along the eastern coast grew even faster. By 1750, one million people were living there—20 times as many as in New France. The British government actively encouraged settlement in the colonies. In addition, people in all the colonies were having large families, which helped the total population grow quickly. The increasing need for settlers to have land led to increased conflicts among the settlers, the French, and First Nations.

How might competition for land in the same place lead to rising tensions?

SEEKING FARMLAND AND FURS

As the population in the British colonies continued to grow, so did the settlers' demand for more farmland. However, all the best farmland in the British colonies had already been taken. In their search for farmland, British colonists moved westward, starting farms on First Nations territories near the Ohio River. The French were already present in that area, but they were there seeking fur. What potential for conflict do you see?

RACING TO BUILD FORTS

To expand the fur trade and maintain contact with their First Nations allies, the French built more and more fur trading posts throughout New France. Every time they built a post, they had a better chance of attracting First Nations business away from the British traders. Many of these posts were protected by the French military. Essentially, they were forts.

Examine the bar graph in **Figure 2.17**. Some of these forts were located on lands claimed by both France and Britain. At the same time, British colonists were settling on these same disputed lands. How did the French shift their fort-building efforts after 1710?

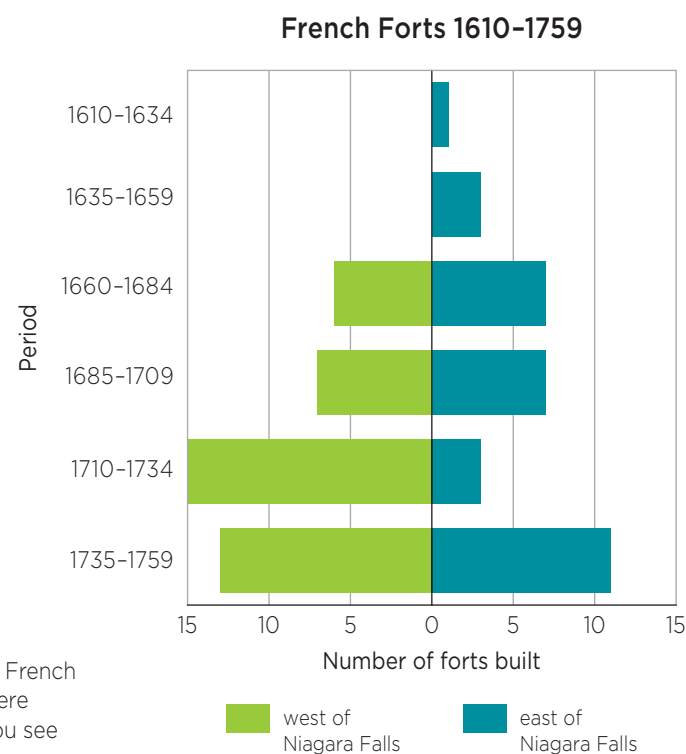


FIGURE 2.17 This bar graph shows the expansion in the number of French forts from 1610 to 1759. The two colours show where the French were building forts over six periods of time. **Analyze:** What trends do you see that might have seemed threatening to British colonists?



FIGURE 2.18 This photo shows the reconstructed French Fortress Louisbourg. **Analyze:** What would be some advantages of building a fort alongside water?

FORTRESS LOUISBOURG

In 1713, the French decided to build a fortress. They wanted it to be massive and intimidating. It would be a centre for the French fisheries, a major trading port, and the largest military base in North America. The French chose a location on present-day Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, as the site for Fortress Louisbourg. Look at **Figure 2.18**. How do you think the presence of such a fortress might have affected the tensions in North America?

By 1740, 2000 people lived behind the huge fortifications at Fortress Louisbourg. The French viewed it as a safe place for French ships to dock. The British saw it as a protector of pirates who attacked British fishing and transport ships, and a major threat to their safety.

In 1744, another war broke out between France and Britain in North America. The British captured Louisbourg in 1745. In 1748, the peace treaty that ended the war restored Louisbourg to France. The British then built their own military base about 400 km southwest, in what is known today as Halifax.

THE IMPACT OF FORTS ON FIRST NATIONS

Earlier in this chapter, you read that European forts gave First Nations more options for buying and trading goods. However, most of those forts were built in territories that First Nations considered to be their own. Imagine the difficult position First Nations were in, with two strong European powers taking over their land. First Nations were more willing to have the French on their land because the French just traded furs. The French did not settle on the land and build farms. The British, however, built farms. Sometimes, they started farming without asking permission. Other times, they tried to buy the land. Read **Figure 2.19** to learn how Chief Canasatego of the Onondaga Iroquois First Nation responded to attempts by white people to buy Onondaga land. The term *white* refers to people of European descent. Why does he think that selling the land is an unreasonable option?

“We know our Lands are now become more valuable. The White People think we do not know their Value; but we are sensible that the Land is everlasting, and the few Goods we receive for it are soon worn out and gone ... Your people daily settle on these Lands and spoil our Hunting.”
— Chief Canasatego, Onondaga Iroquois First Nation

FIGURE 2.19 Chief Canasatego spoke these words in 1742, during negotiations with the lieutenant-governor of Pennsylvania. **Analyze:** According to Chief Canasatego, how did settlement threaten First Nations in ways that the fur trade did not?

ECONOMIC TENSIONS

In the 1740s, the conflict between the British and the French focused on hurting one another economically, rather than militarily. By hurting New France's economy, Britain hoped to weaken France's military strength. The 1745 attack on Louisbourg is an example of this. All the French goods that were destined for trading with First Nations passed through this port. By capturing Louisbourg, the British cut off the supply of French goods. This was a devastating blow to the French. In desperation, some First Nations peoples attacked French forts for whatever goods might be left. Although the French regained Louisbourg in 1748, British attempts to disrupt French trade continued.

COMPETING FOR LAND IN THE OHIO RIVER VALLEY

Tensions continued to rise as the British and the French clashed in the Ohio River Valley, an area surrounding the Ohio River, shown in **Figure 2.20**. This river had long been used by First Nations as a transportation route, because it joins the Mississippi River, which flows thousands of kilometres to the Gulf of Mexico. The British and the French both wanted control of this transportation route.

The key to gaining control of the river was to control the Ohio River Valley. The French had already established forts in the area, but the British wanted to occupy the land and establish settlements. The Ohio Company was formed by people in the British colony of Virginia to create these settlements. The company began planning to establish farms and move people from Virginia to the Ohio River Valley. This brought the conflict between the French and the British to a boiling point.

In 1753, George Washington, an investor in the Ohio Company, was sent with seven soldiers to deliver a message to the French. Washington's travels are depicted in the image in **Figure 2.21**. Read an excerpt from the letter Washington delivered on behalf of Governor of Virginia Robert Dinwiddie to French Commander Legardeur de St. Pierre in **Figure 2.22**. Then read the excerpt of the French commander's response in **Figure 2.23**. What did the British want the French to do and how did the French respond?



FIGURE 2.20 Map of the Ohio River Valley in 1750. **Analyze:** What makes the Ohio River an important transportation route?

The Ohio River Valley, 1750



FIGURE 2.21 This is a hand-coloured reproduction of Alonzo Chappel's original 1857 painting. It depicts George Washington on his mission to the Ohio River Valley on behalf of the British. **Analyze:** What does the artist show you about the mission?

FIGURE 2.22 This is an excerpt from a 1753 letter sent by Dinwiddie to Legardeur de St. Pierre. **Analyze:** What words and phrases reveal the British perspective about the territory of Ohio?

“The Lands upon the River Ohio, in the Western Parts of the Colony of Virginia, are so notoriously known to be the Property of the Crown of Great-Britain that it is a Matter of equal Concern and Surprise to me, to hear that a Body of French Forces are erecting Fortresses, and making Settlements upon that River... The many and repeated Complaints I have received of these Acts of Hostility, lay me under the Necessity, of sending George Washington ... to complain to you of the ... Injuries done to the Subjects of Great-Britain... Sir, in Obedience to my Instructions, it becomes my Duty to require your peaceable Departure.”

— Robert Dinwiddie, governor of Virginia

“I should have been glad [had you sent Washington] to Canada, to see our General, to whom it better belongs than to me to set forth the Evidence and Reality of the Rights of the [French] King, my Master, upon the Lands situated along the River Ohio, and to contest the Pretensions [claim] of the King of Great-Britain.”

— Legardeur de St. Pierre, French commander

FIGURE 2.23 This is an excerpt from Legardeur de St. Pierre's response to Dinwiddie's letter. **Analyze:** What words and phrases reveal the French perspective about the territory of Ohio?

CHECK-IN

- CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE** How did each of the following increase tensions in North America? Which was the most important cause of increased tensions? Justify your position.
 - overlapping land claims
 - the construction of Fortress Louisbourg
 - competition for the Ohio River Valley
- HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE** Take the historical perspectives of a British leader, a French leader, and a First Nations leader. Use evidence from the chapter to help you describe how each leader feels about the others. Why might it have been difficult for each leader to understand the others' perspectives at the time?