



Fort Walsh
National Historic Site

Discovery Booklet



Parks
Canada

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Canada

Canada



Welcome to Fort Walsh National Historic Site!

Fort Walsh was designated a national historic site in 1924 for the following reasons:

- The fort served from 1878 to 1882 as the headquarters of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP).
- The fort played a key role in imposing Canadian law from 1875–1883, in implementing Canada’s Indian policy and in supervising the Lakota who fled to Canada with Tatanka Iyotanka (Sitting Bull) after the Battle of the Little “Bighorn”.

Photo Credit: BC Archives
NWMP and First Nations gathered in Barracks Square at Fort Walsh.

The Best of Fort Walsh

The information in this booklet corresponds to points of interest featured on the map (page 4). The fort itself (stop 2) is only a small portion of the site. There is much more waiting for you to discover as you explore the site on your own!

- Explore the many buildings inside the fort and meet characters from the late 1870s.
- Become certified Fort Walsh Xplorers by completing the kids program.
- Walk the picturesque Métis Trail along beautiful Battle Creek (550m).
- Discover the new trading post and cabin located beside the fort.
- Take in the view while enjoying a refreshment on the patio of the visitor center.

If you have questions while onsite, ask one of our friendly costumed interpreters.



Some context for your visit

The Cypress Hills region experienced tremendous change throughout the 1860s and 70s. Competition for resources increased as the buffalo herds diminished. Starvation and disease, compounded by the illegal whiskey trade, had a devastating effect on many First Nations groups.

A violent event, known as the Cypress Hills Massacre, took place in 1873, 2.5 kms south of the current location of the fort. The event prompted the Dominion Government to send law enforcement to the West sooner than planned.

DID YOU KNOW?

The NWMP marched West in 1874 and established Fort Walsh in 1875. Their presence put an end to the illegal whiskey trade and the lawlessness that was wreaking havoc in the Hills.

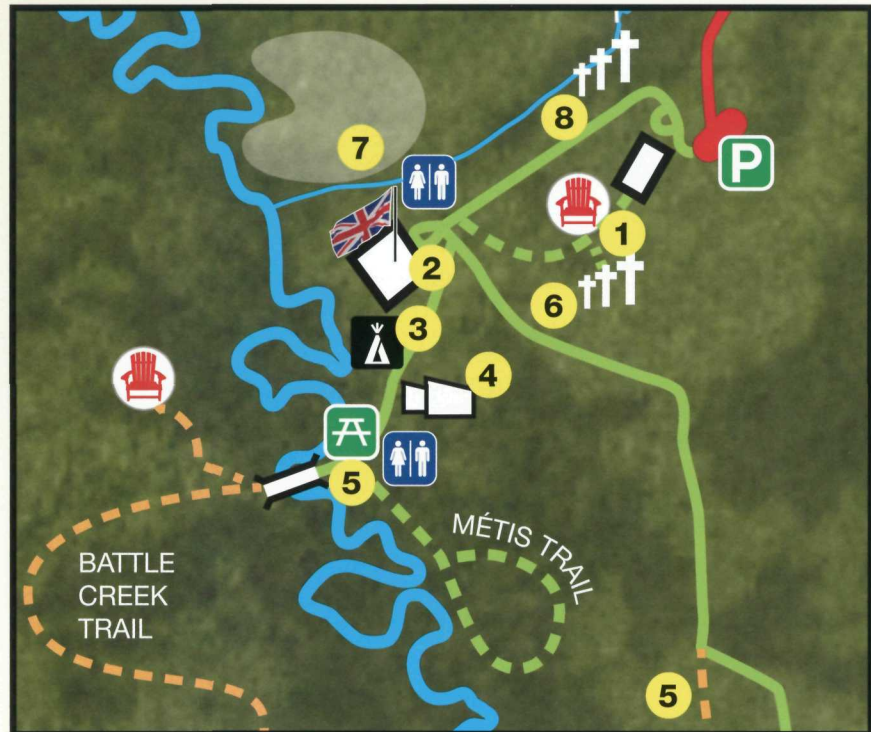
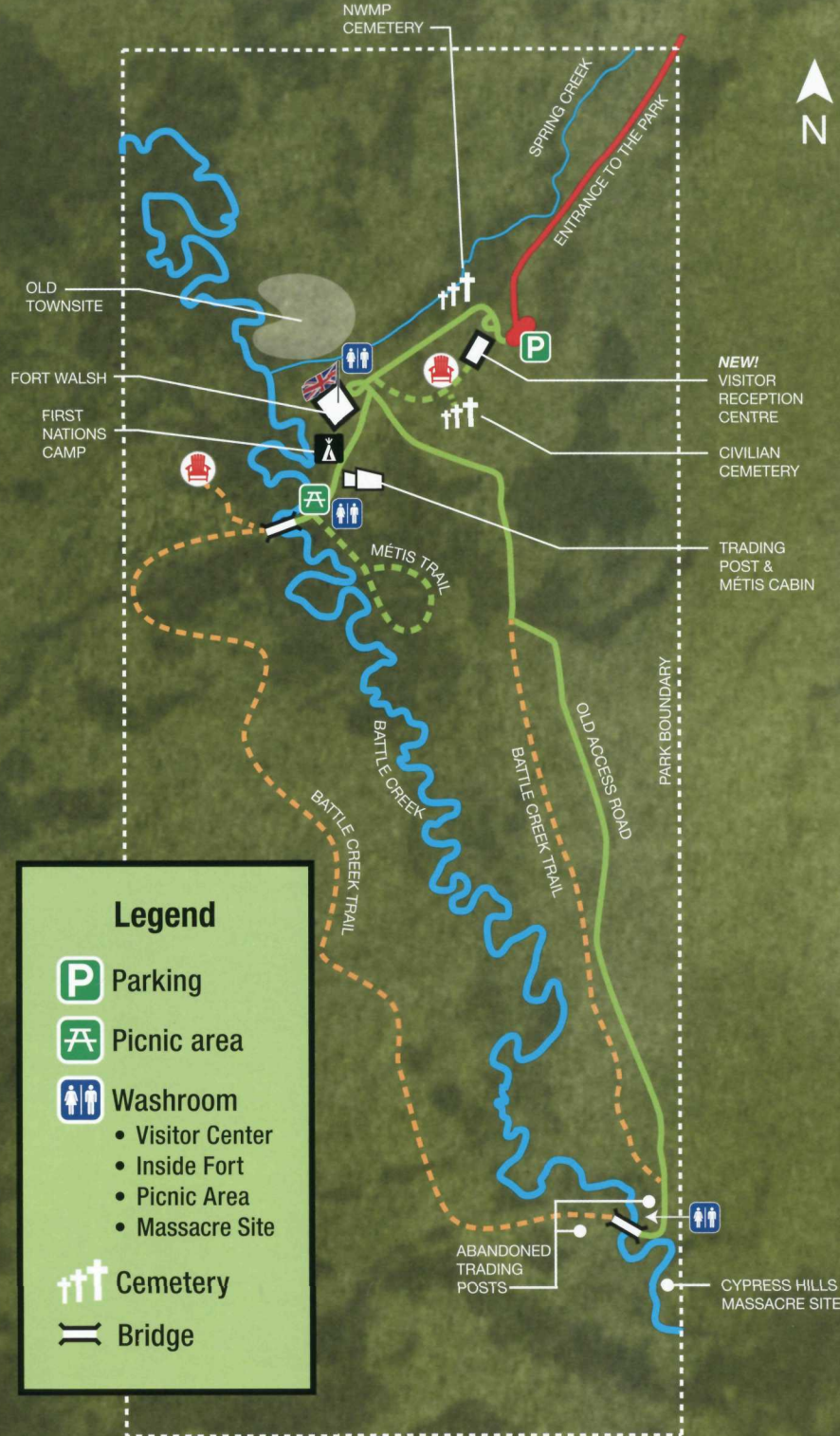
What happened at the Cypress Hills Massacre Site?

On June 1, 1873, wolf hunters who had been on the trail of stolen horses attacked a camp of Nakoda, resulting in the massacre of elders, warriors, women, and children. This hastened the dispatch of the North West Mounted Police, and led to one of the first major tests of Canada's law enforcement policies in the West.

Although it did not result in convictions, the Mounties' efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice convinced First Nations of the impartiality of the Force and the government it represented. The memory of the massacre and of their fallen ancestors reinforces the connection between the Nakoda and these lands they hold to be sacred.



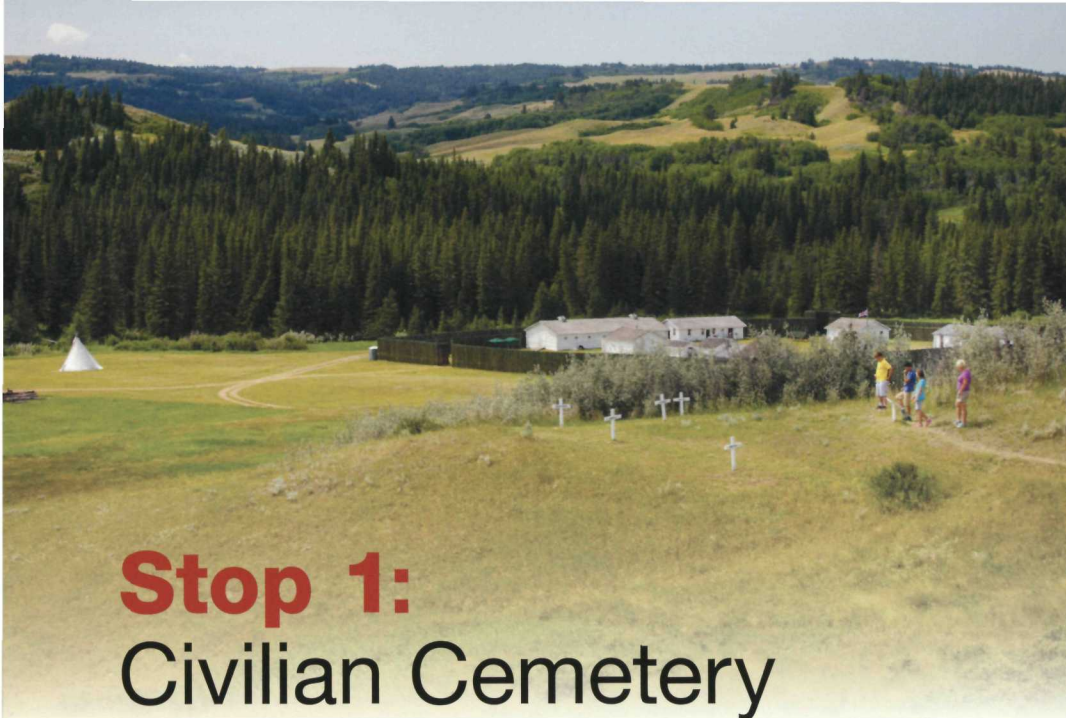
March West 1874



- Stop 1: Civilian Cemetery
- Stop 2: Fort Walsh
- Stop 3: First Nations Camp
- Stop 4: Métis Trade Cabins
- Stop 5: Trails
- Stop 6: Historic Trail Markers
- Stop 7: Old Town Site
- Stop 8: NWMP Cemetery

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1880, a Mounted Police Constable made between 50–75 cents per day, a Corporal made 85 cents per day, and Staff Sergeants made between \$1.00–\$1.50 per day.



Stop 1: Civilian Cemetery

This cemetery was used by Métis families and other civilians from the town of Fort Walsh prior to 1883. A few of the graves have been identified. Several are associated with the McKay family who had a small trading post and farm near the fort. Also buried here is Francis (Frank) Clark, the manager of the I.G. Baker store in the town of Fort Walsh. Mr. Clark fell victim to mountain fever which plagued Fort Walsh in the late 1870s and early 1880s.

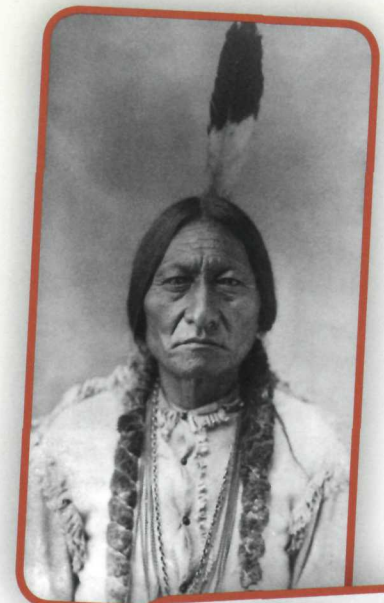
DID YOU KNOW?

Battle Creek was the original source of drinking water for the fort and area. After the town of Fort Walsh became more populated, the creek became polluted and caused many cases of an illness referred to as "mountain fever" which may have been Typhoid.

How is Fort Walsh connected with the Battle of the Little Bighorn in the United States?

After defeating Lieutenant Colonel Custer's 7th Cavalry on June 25th, 1876, a group of 4000–5000 Lakota, led by Sitting Bull, retreated north of the Medicine Line (border), to escape retaliation from the American military. The Lakota sought refuge near Wood Mountain, an outpost of Fort Walsh. The presence of the Lakota resulted in the expansion of Fort Walsh and the decision to make Fort Walsh headquarters of the force.

As a result of the good relationship between Superintendent James Morrow Walsh and Sitting Bull, the Lakota's potentially violent stay in Canada remained peaceful. Sitting Bull and the Lakota returned to the United States in between 1879 and 1881.



Sitting Bull and James Walsh

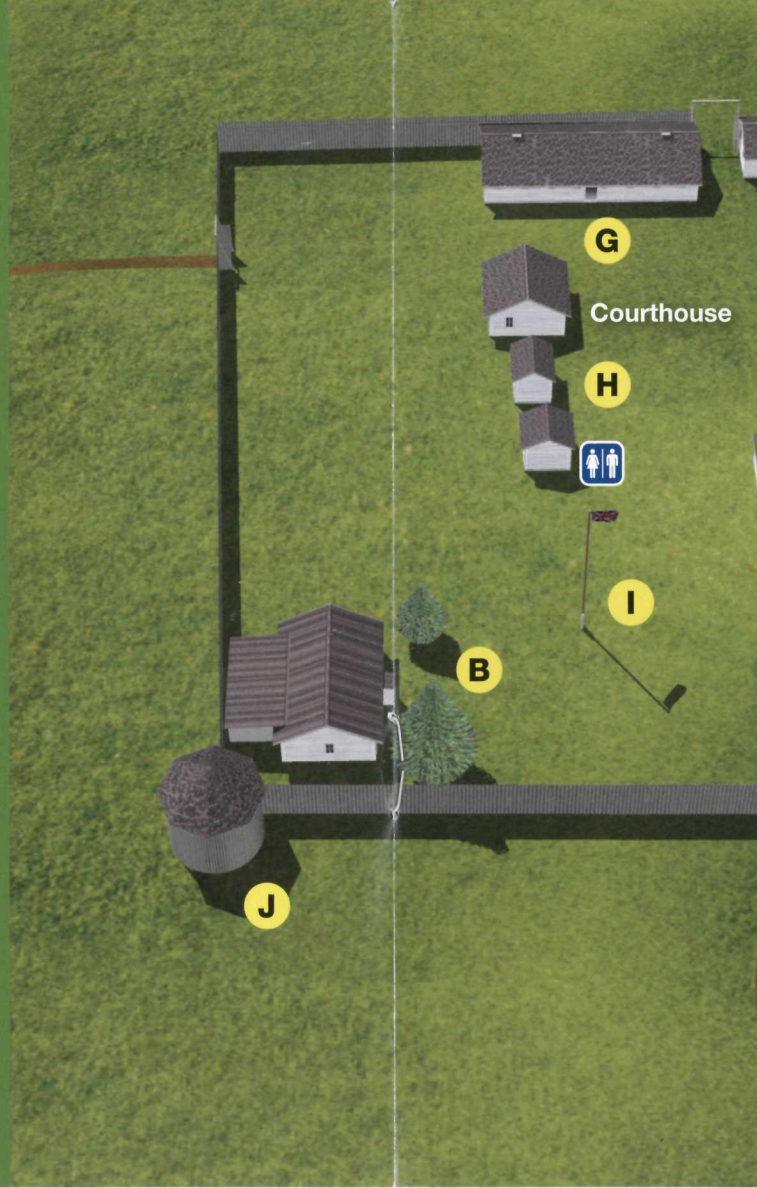
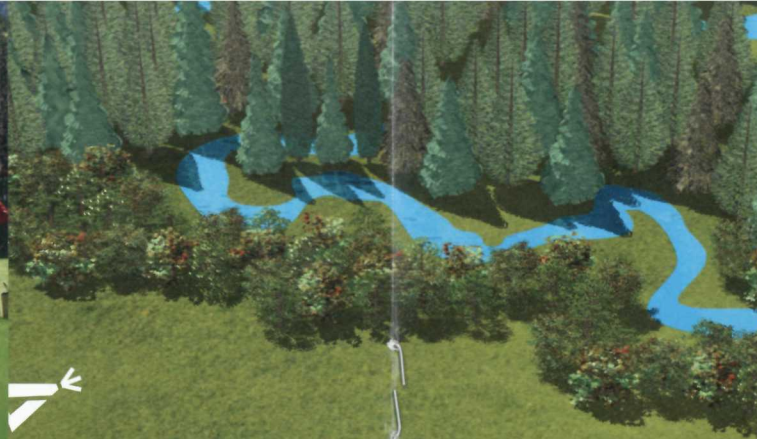


Stop 2: Fort Walsh

Imagine... In the late 1870s and early 1880s this place was a flurry of activity! At times Fort Walsh was home to over 100 men, and more were set up in and around the town that had sprung up just north of the fort.

Fort Walsh was established in 1875 to fulfill 3 goals:

- Create a Canadian Government presence to establish and maintain sovereignty in the West;
- Enforce Canadian law in the area (including crackdown of the whiskey trade); and
- Encourage First Nations to sign treaties and settle on reserves.

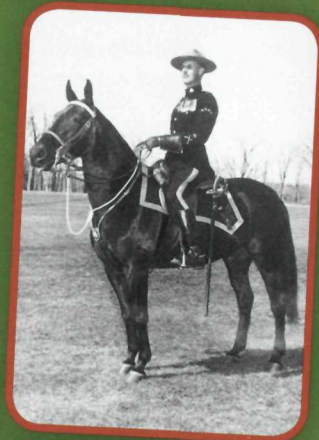


Fort Walsh's second purpose

In 1882, the headquarters of the NWMP was moved to Regina, and the following year, Fort Walsh was abandoned.

In the 1940s many buildings were rebuilt in a similar style by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) when it became a remount ranch. These are the buildings you see today.

From 1943–1968, the ranch at Fort Walsh served as the breeding and training centre for the iconic horses used by the RCMP.



Staff Sergeant Cave
on "Burmese"

DID YOU KNOW?

The most famous horse raised by the RCMP at Fort Walsh was a mare named Burmese, presented to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1969.

A. Superintendent's Residence —

This building represents the residence of Superintendent James Morrow Walsh, the fort's original Commanding Officer, for whom the fort was named. It was here that the Terry Commission met on Oct. 17, 1877 to discuss the Lakota's return to the United States.

B. Commissioner's Residence —

The Commissioner was the highest ranking officer of the force. He took up residence at Fort Walsh in 1880 when the fort became headquarters. The centre room was where official and ceremonial business took place.

C. Guardhouse —

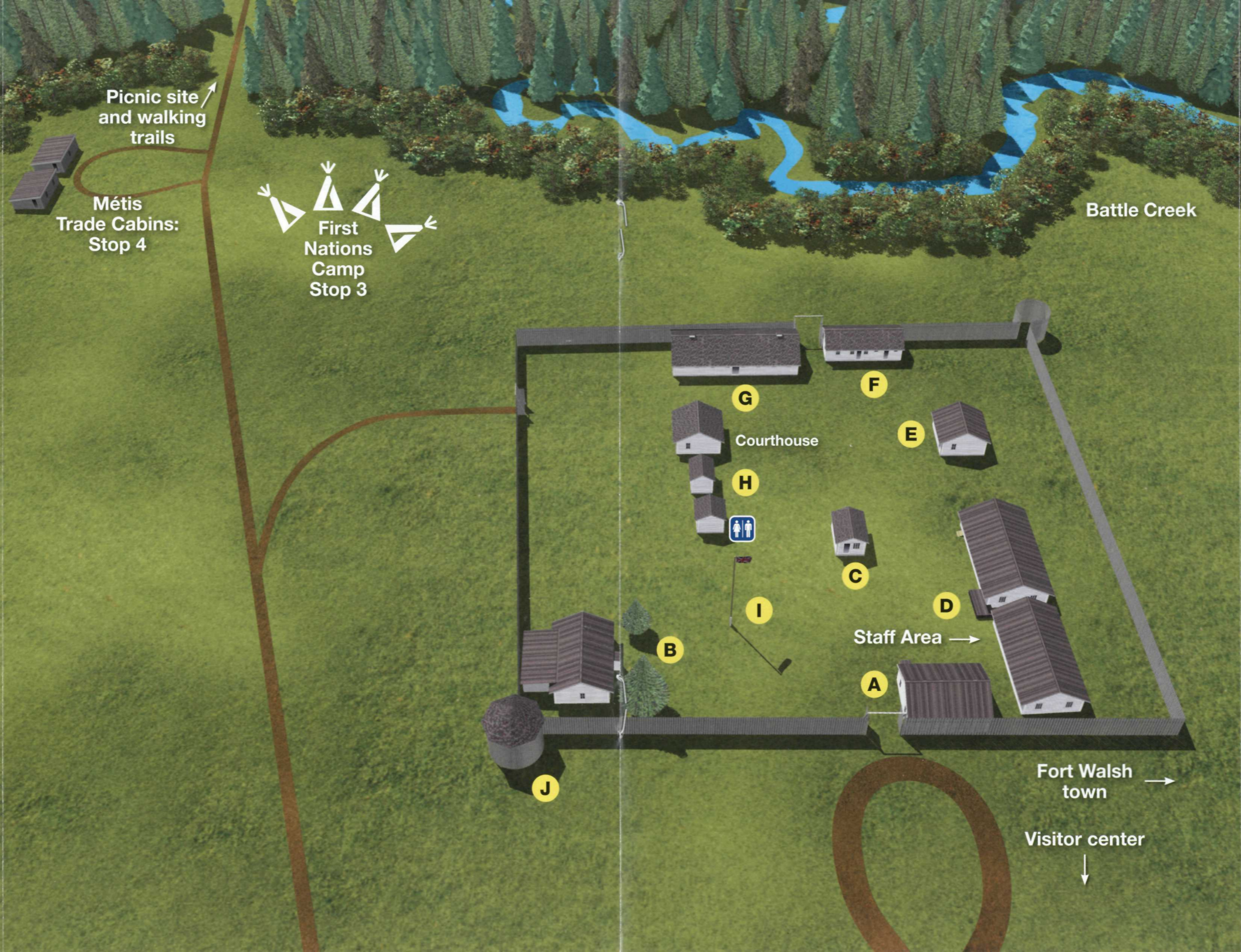
It served three purposes; guardroom, prison and asylum. Offenses included possession of alcohol and assault. For sentences longer than one year, prisoners were sent to Stony Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba.

D. Non-Commissioned Officer's Barracks —

This building housed up to 15 men and also served as a dining and recreation room. Unfortunately the damp and drafty building made living conditions uncomfortable.

E. Armourer's Workshop —

The Armoury was used for storage of firearms and the armourer was responsible for maintaining the weapons.



F. Workshops and Sick Horse Stable —

Men with specialized skills were assigned to work in the blacksmith and carpentry shops, located on the left side of the building. On the other side of the building, sick horses were quarantined to prevent infection of healthy horses.

G. Stable —

One of two stables in the fort that housed up to 80 horses which were used to help the men patrol a jurisdiction of 19,000 square miles.

H. Bath House —

The enlisted men were ordered to keep clean in an attempt to stop the spread of disease.

I. Flagpole —

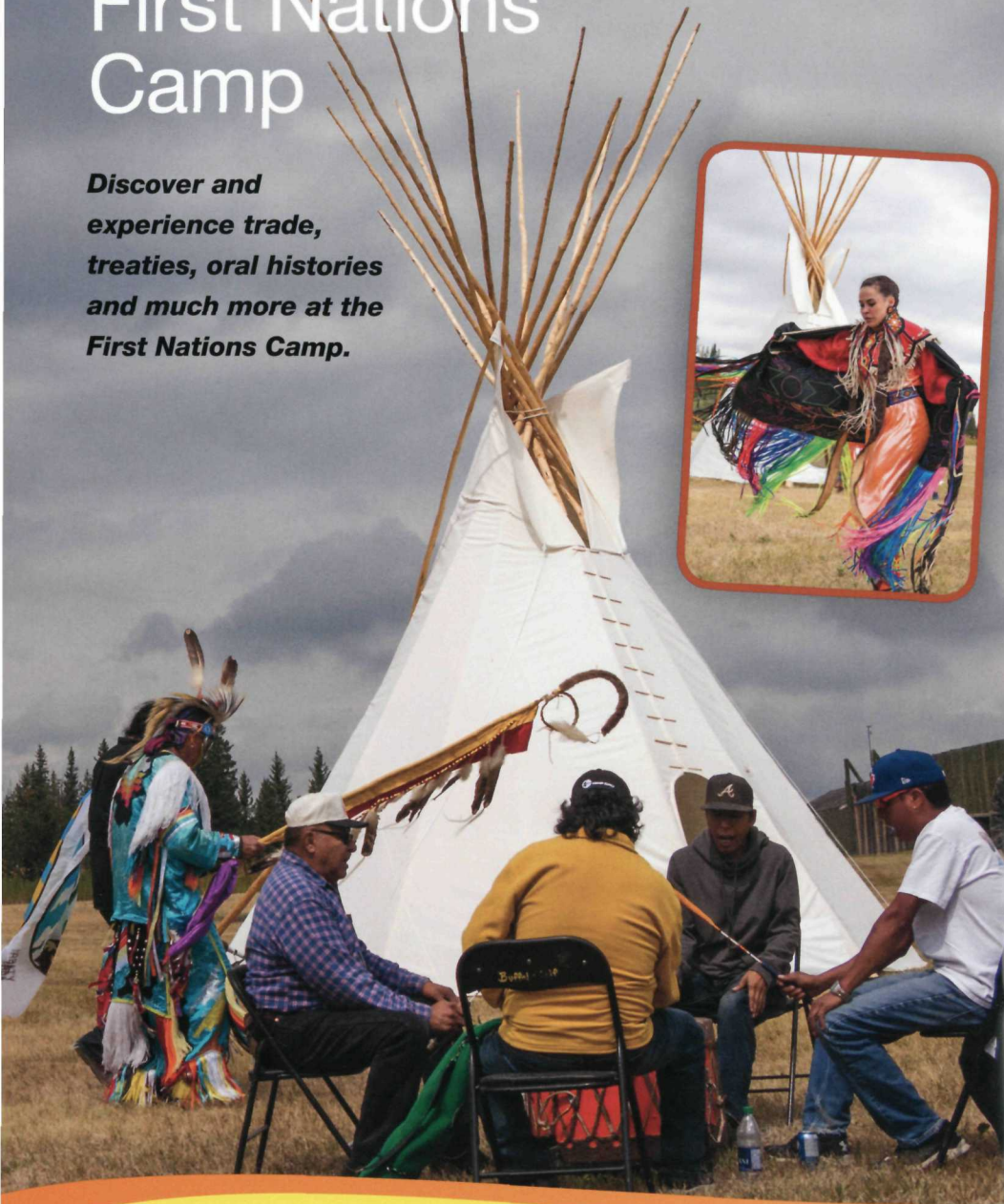
The original flagpole stood 90 feet tall, and had a crow's nest half way up. The official timepiece was a sundial located next to the flagpole.

J. Bastion —

The bastions were built for defense. If the fort was under attack, port holes opened for the field rifles to fire through. Fort Walsh was never attacked so, eventually, a roof was put over one bastion and it was used to store feed.

Stop 3: First Nations Camp

Discover and experience trade, treaties, oral histories and much more at the First Nations Camp.



Stop 4: Métis Trade Cabins

Track wild game and test your bartering skills. Feel the luxurious quality of the beaver and muskrat pelts displayed at the front of the Trade Cabin.

This structure represents a trading post from the 1870s and is near the location where Métis settler, Edward McKay, established his post in spring of 1872. The items displayed here are typical goods a trader may have had available during the early 1870s.



DID YOU KNOW?

Although it was illegal, trading with alcohol was highly profitable. It only cost a trader \$3-6 for a gallon of proof alcohol, which was diluted, spiced up, and could bring a trader almost \$50 in hides.

Stop 5: Trails

Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of the breathtaking Cypress Hills!

Both trails begin at the picnic site.

Option 1: Métis Trail

For a relaxing stroll, take the 550m trail beside Battle Creek.

Option 2: Battle Creek Trail

Explore the Battle Creek Valley as you hike the 6.5km trail through one of the highest spots in Canada between Labrador and the Rocky Mountains. Trail heads are located in the Battle Creek Picnic site as well as near the Historic Trails marker. (See maps page 4 & 5) Please ensure you have proper footwear and water for the hike. **Please note the trail may vary slightly from map depiction.*



Bull train, 1879

Stop 6: Historic Trail Markers

When walking back from the picnic site or cabins, look for the panels beside the road at the bottom of the hill that depict the history of the historic trails.

Fort Benton Trail

As you approach the panels, look to your right. This is the Fort Benton Trail which connected Fort Walsh to its supply and communication centre at Fort Benton, Montana. Rations, supplies, equipment, mail and even payroll were shipped 150 miles by bull train from Fort Benton to Fort Walsh.

Wood Mountain Trail

The trail between Fort Walsh and Wood Mountain heads east up the hill. It was a regularly travelled supply and communication route when Sitting Bull and the Lakota people lived near Wood Mountain.

Stop 7: Town

Visualize a bustling trading town of the 1870s boasting two hotels, a restaurant, two pool halls, a tailor, barber, laundress and even a photography studio!

For 8 years the Town of Fort Walsh was one of the largest permanent centres on the prairies. Population estimates have never been clearly defined due to the transient nature of many inhabitants which included:

- **Commercial Core** — They were the most permanent group, consisting of business men, their families and employees.
- **Métis Hivernants** — While inhabiting the town during the winter, many left in the late summer to hunt, trade or freight.
- **Native Groups** — First Nations were not permanent residents but were continually camped in the hills surrounding the town. Their numbers often swelled into the thousands during occasions such as treaty payments.

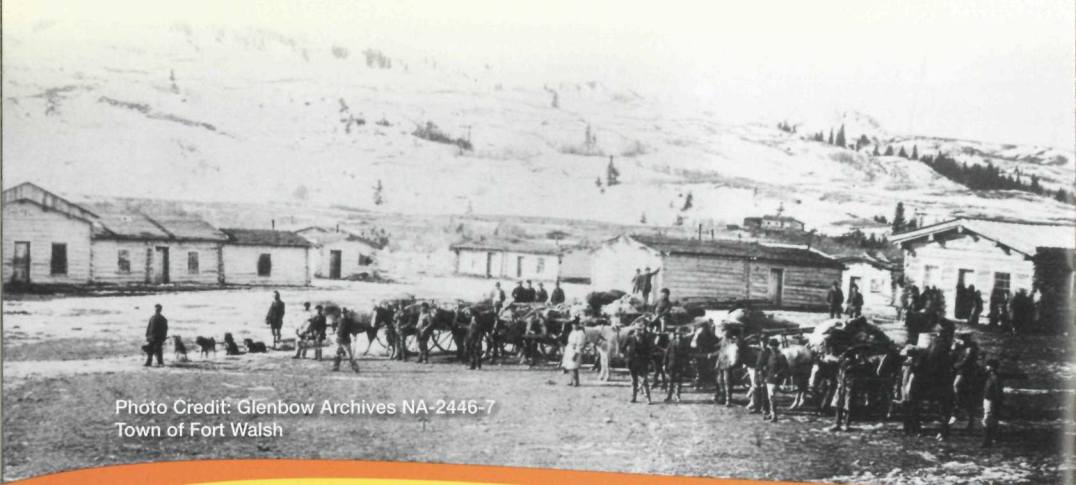


Photo Credit: Glenbow Archives NA-2446-7
Town of Fort Walsh



DID YOU KNOW?

Marmaduke Graburn was the first member of the NWMP to be killed in the line of duty in 1879, and is buried here. His murder remains unsolved.

Stop 8: NWMP Cemetery

**Visitors are permitted to go inside the cemetery.
Please close the gate when you leave.**

Originally this cemetery was where NWMP members were buried, but later, local residents were also laid to rest here. The seven graves in the chained off area are of the early NWMP and RNWMP who passed away at Fort Walsh as a result of violence, accident or illness.

L-R: Constable Alf Wilson;
Doctor John Kittson;
Colonel James F. Macleod;
Adjutant Edmund Dalrymple Clark,
(died 1880 and laid to rest in
this Cemetery). Photograph
taken outside east stockade.



The North West Mounted Police

In the 1870s the duties of the NWMP covered every aspect of the law, both civil and criminal. They acted as customs agents and border guards. They established mail routes and other communications infrastructure. And should the circumstances require, the NWMP were trained to fight.

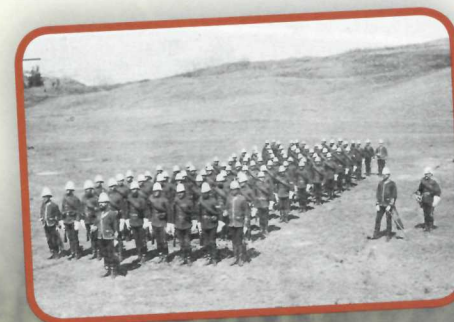
In addition, every commissioned officer was a justice of the peace. The NWMP married people, buried people, acted as health inspectors, Weather Bureau officials, and Indian treaty makers.

Above all though, they were diplomats, especially when it came to liaising between Canadian Native people and the Dominion government in Ottawa.

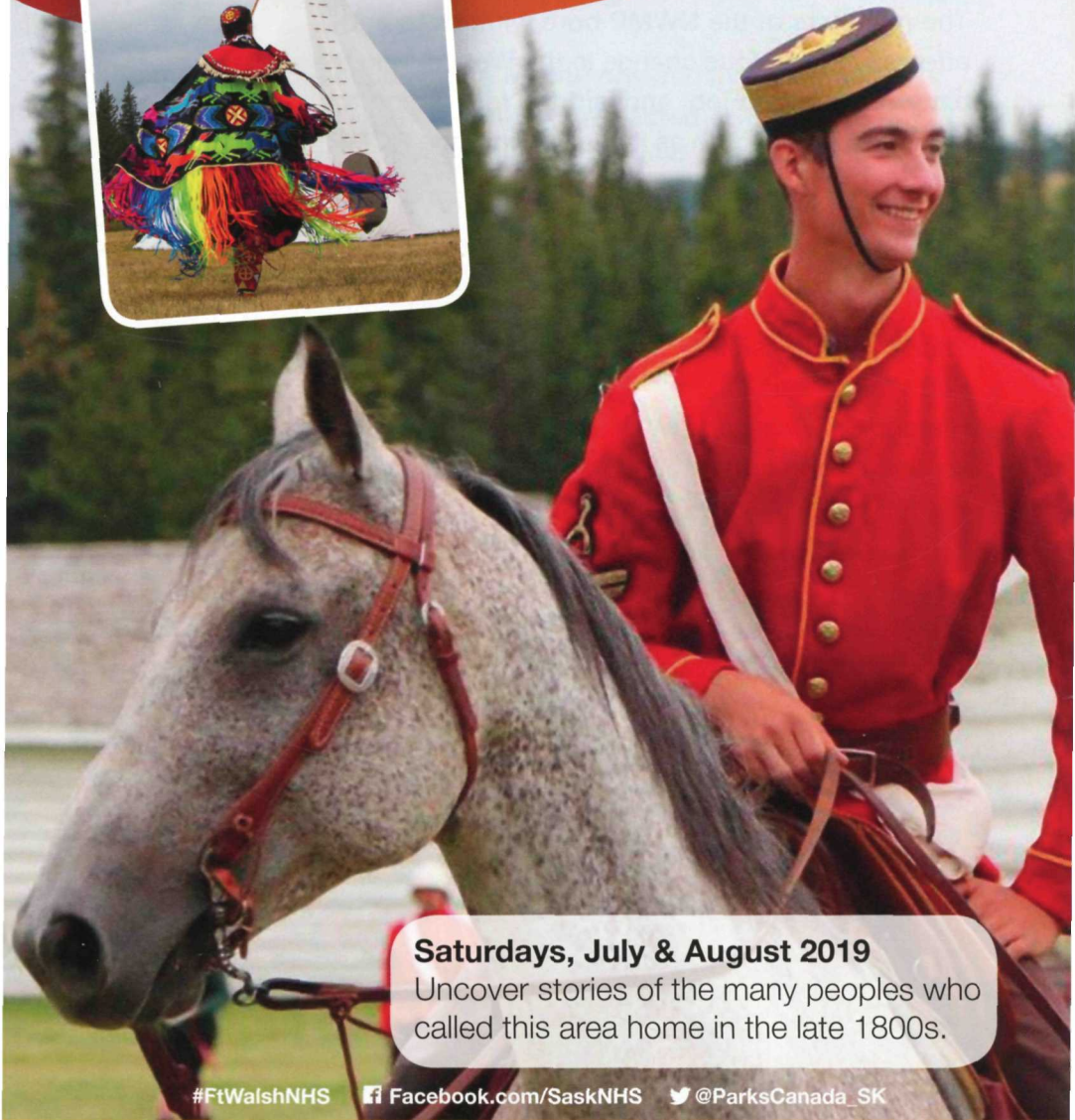
The members of the NWMP bore witness to and affected tremendous change in the West during the early years on the job, and laid the foundation for the future of the force as it evolved into the RCMP.

To learn more about the fascinating history of Fort Walsh, the NWMP and Canada, we have a variety of books available in our gift shop.

Thank you for visiting Fort Walsh National Historic Site. We hope you enjoyed your day.



Frontier Life



Saturdays, July & August 2019

Uncover stories of the many peoples who called this area home in the late 1800s.

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