

AT HOME

Early settlers built very different kinds of houses depending on where and how they lived.



SOD HOUSE

Sod is ground that has grass growing on it. For settlers in the Prairies, it was just about the only thing around to build houses from. So they cut blocks out of sod and stacked them grass-side down to make walls. The roots grew together and made the walls of these “soddies” strong. The builders covered the inside with paper or cloth. Sometimes it and the outside were covered in white plaster. The roof was made from boards or tree branches covered in another thin layer of sod. Minuses: dirt floors, leaked when it rained. Pluses: stayed cool in summer.





LOG HOUSE

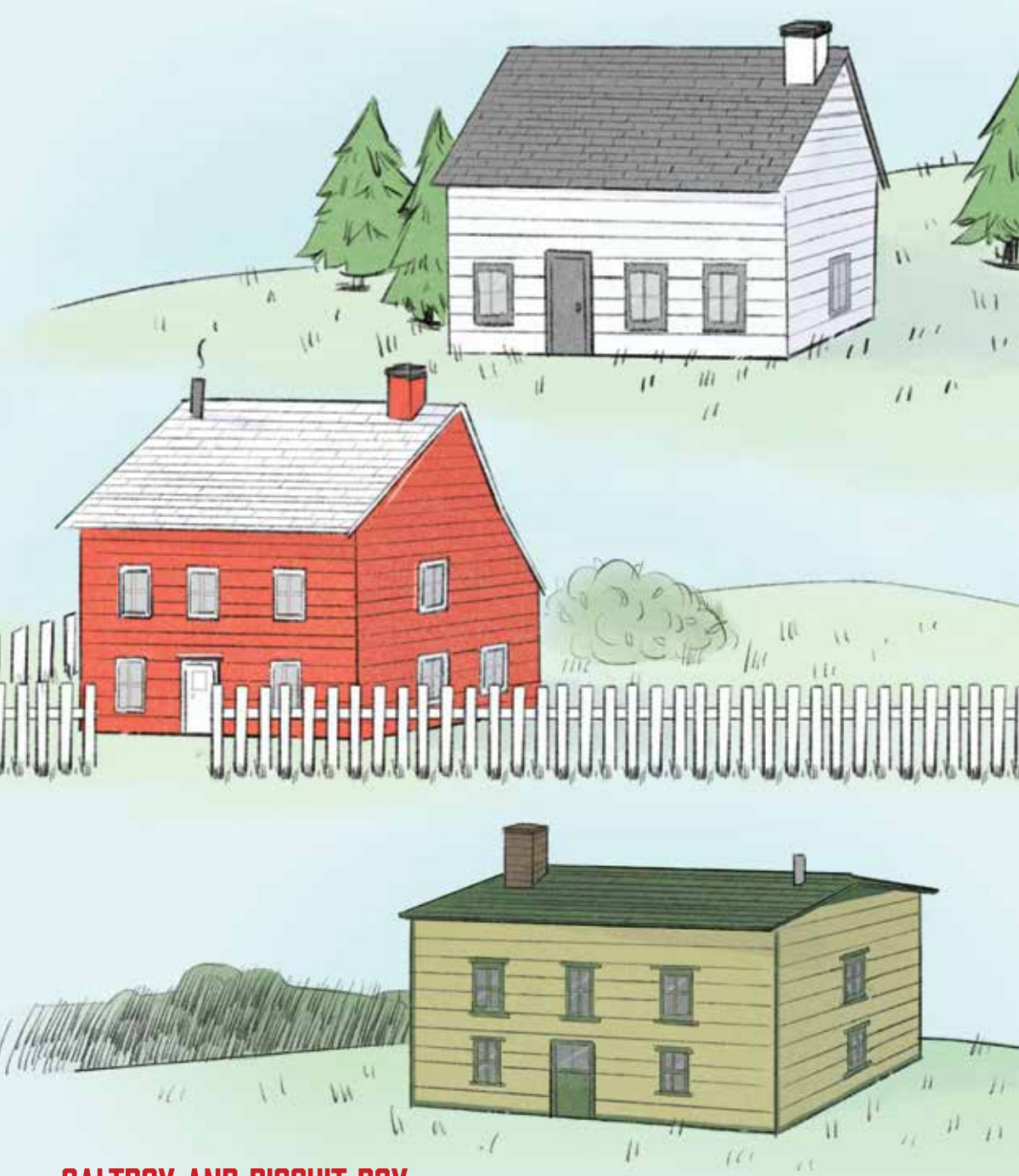
Anywhere people needed to cut down trees to make room for a place to live and maybe farm, there were log houses. The builders stripped off the bark and fitted the logs together on the corners. Sometimes the logs were squared off, and sometimes they were left round. Gaps were filled in with chinking — a kind of plaster that kept out wind, snow and bugs. Settlers' first houses were usually small, with just one room. As the family grew wealthier, they might expand the house, cover it in boards to hide the logs, or build a completely new place to live.

Illustrations: Taryn Gee

NEW FRANCE COUNTRY HOUSE

You can still see these pretty stone houses around Quebec and other areas that used to be part of New France. Many are more than 200 years old. They are made from local stone found in the fields, and are usually one-and-a-half storeys high. They often have two or three chimneys to let out smoke from the fireplaces needed for cooking and warmth. The roof is very steep to help snow slide off.

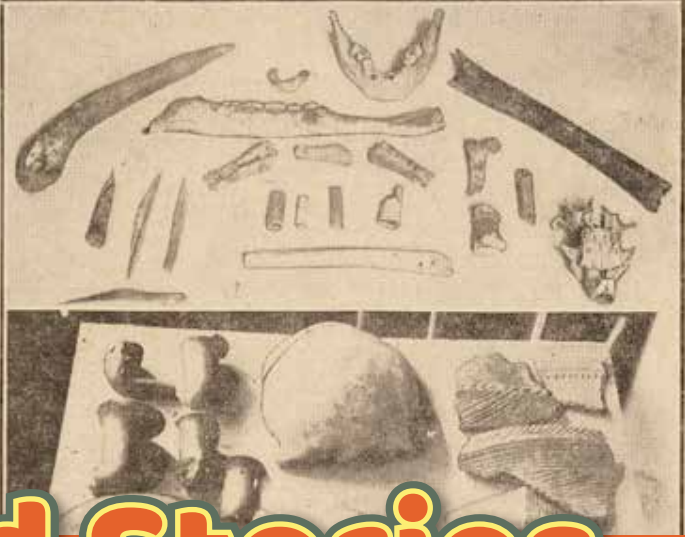




SALTBOX AND BISCUIT BOX

Nearly all old houses on the island of Newfoundland are made from wood. The first ones, built in the early 1800s, were usually one-and-a-half storeys with a steep roof. When the owners had a little more money, they built two-storey houses. In both styles, an addition was often put on the back to make more room. These houses looked like the wooden containers used to store salt, which is how they got their name. Houses built a little later still, with flatter roofs and two full storeys, were called biscuit boxes. No matter the style, they were often brightly painted and surrounded by tidy fences. You can still see these beautiful houses all over the island.





VACANT LOT IN TORONTO

Buried Stories

Indigenous settlements and gathering places are everywhere. They're hard to find, though, buried under Canada's villages, cities and towns.

Certain things led Indigenous people to meet for trade and to build homes in particular spots. People who moved around, like the Stoney Nakoda, Cree, Siksika, Assiniboine and other nations of the plains came to the same places to fish and hunt at different times of the year. People who farmed some of their food, like the Haudenosaunee, Mi'kmaq, Ojibwe and others in eastern Canada, made their homes in villages on good land. Lakes and rivers were their highways.

When Indigenous peoples made treaties, the government usually moved them off these familiar territories. The government gave them limited lands so that settlers could have farms and build their own villages. Railways cut across everything, bringing more newcomers.

As settlers created bigger communities, they often simply built on top of Indigenous places. Sometimes they moved the traces of Indigenous settlements and trading places, or dug them up and kept them.

This 1893 illustration looks north from Lake Ontario to Toronto.





The recreated Turtle Clan longhouse shown above stands in a Wendat heritage site near Toronto. The image at far left shows where a group of longhouses once stood in what is now Scarborough, Ontario. The closer image shows an archaeologist marking the site of a Wendat longhouse in the same area.

Wendat Toronto

Canada's biggest, busiest city doesn't have many traces of its Indigenous history left. But for at least 600 years, First Nations, mainly the Wendat, lived in nearly 100 villages scattered around what is now the Greater Toronto Area. They grew corn, moving their village sites as they used up the wood and the soil grew less fertile. Fighting with the Haudenosaunee drove the Wendat north to Georgian Bay and then east to Quebec. After

they left, the region that is now Toronto was home to the Seneca people and to an Anishinaabe nation, the Mississaugas of the New Credit. As Toronto grew and new sites for buildings were dug up, many First Nations items were uncovered. A century or more ago, it was common for people living in Toronto to just grab a shovel and dig around in what were the sites of former First Nations villages.

Did Indigenous people have a community or gathering place where your village, town or city now stands? How can you find out?



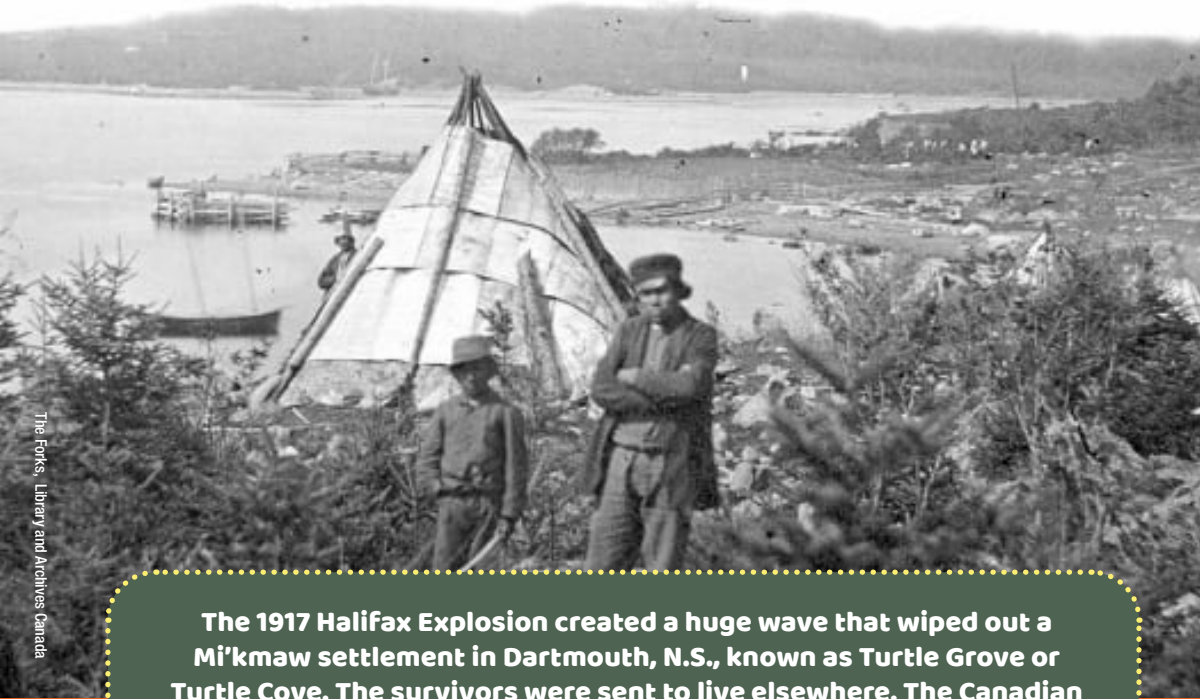


The Allandale bus and train station in Barrie, Ont., was built on top of a Wendat burial pit. Bones were discovered there as early as 1846, but construction of railway lines in the late 1880s and afterward went ahead anyway.



Pile o' Bones

Cree hunters and their families followed the bison around southern Saskatchewan for thousands of years. In one place, they piled up mounds of bison bones and named the spot *Oskana kaasateki* which means "the bones that are piled together." That area became known as Pile o' Bones, Wascana and then Regina after Treaty 4 was agreed to in 1874.



The 1917 Halifax Explosion created a huge wave that wiped out a Mi'kmaw settlement in Dartmouth, N.S., known as Turtle Grove or Turtle Cove. The survivors were sent to live elsewhere. The Canadian military built apartments, schools, stores and more on the site.



« Meeting Place

The spot in Winnipeg where the Red and Assiniboine rivers come together is called The Forks. First Nations people started camping here at least 6,000 years ago. It's now home to a busy market, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, restaurants, a children's museum, festivals and more.

Hochelaga »

The French started the settlement that would become Montreal more than 375 years ago. But there was a Haudenosaunee farming community named Hochelaga there long before that. In 1535, explorer Jacques Cartier described seeing 50 longhouses inside a wooden fence. No other proof of the settlement has ever been found.

