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IN THE VOYAGEURS' FOOTSTEPS (GRADES 5–9)

Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site of Canada © Parks Canada



The fur trade created a connection between Aboriginal peoples and European trade almost from the time contact began about 1500. Fine furs were growing scarce in Europe, and fishermen and explorers around the Gulf of St. Lawrence found people eager to trade furs for imported, manufactured goods. The historic Canadian fur trade does not belong to a particular time or region of the country: it was a pattern of relations between peoples, their environment, and international luxury markets, which created a moving frontier that stretched from the Maritimes to Victoria, from 1500 to the 1950s. This activity focuses on why some of the major places and participants in the fur trade have national significance. The story of the fur trade in Canada is told at numerous national historic sites across the country, from Fort La Tour (New Brunswick), to Fort St. Pierre (Ontario), to York Factory (Manitoba) and Fort Langley (British Columbia).

To the Students

In this activity, you will:

- describe the impact of the arrival of the fur trade on people's lives
- explore how the gradual spread of the fur trade across the country affected settlement patterns
- examine the economic importance of the fur trade to Canada's development

PART A

1. Visit the Parks Canada Web site: www.pc.gc.ca and search the keywords "fur trade".
 2. Choose and investigate one period and geographic area in the history of the fur trade in Canada:
 - Pre-contact — Pre-1600: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, southern Labrador
 - 1600–1760 — French-English rivalry: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, southern Labrador, St. Lawrence Valley westward to The Pas,
- Manitoba
- 1760–1821 — the era of westward expansion: the Prairies, the Arctic, the Rocky Mountains
 - 1821–1870 — the Hudson's Bay Company dominance: areas across Canada where there was fur trading activity (except Baffin Island and the west coast of Hudson Bay)
 - 1870–onwards — the expansion of the fur trade in the Arctic and the decline of the fur trade in southern Canada

To the Students

- Using the Internet, books, your history textbook, and other resources available to you, investigate the era and geographic area you chose, to find out information such as:
 - major events or activities
 - who was involved and how
 - the species that were hunted and the effects of the fur trade on those species
 - successes and challenges
 - conflicts and their effects
 - the impact on people and the environment
 - the economic activity that displaced the fur trade
 - why the fur trade was significant to the evolution of Canada

PART B

- You are a voyageur working in Canada for the Hudson Bay Company. Your boss, who is located in London, England, has requested that you prepare a report about your experiences as a voyageur in the

geographic area where you are stationed. He must determine if this location is advantageous for the company and if you should remain at this location or move elsewhere. In your report, include the information outlined in Part A #3. To help your boss understand exactly where you are located in Canada, begin with a visual that shows where you are in relation to other trade centres and routes. Your report should also include pictures, maps, personal diary entries, quotations, and any other kinds of interesting visuals and text. (For this activity, your report might be an electronic one — though such technology, of course, is long in the future!)

- In addition to presenting your report to your boss, be prepared to verbally defend your position as a fur trader in Canada, including your evaluation of why the fur trade is significant to the evolution of Canada.

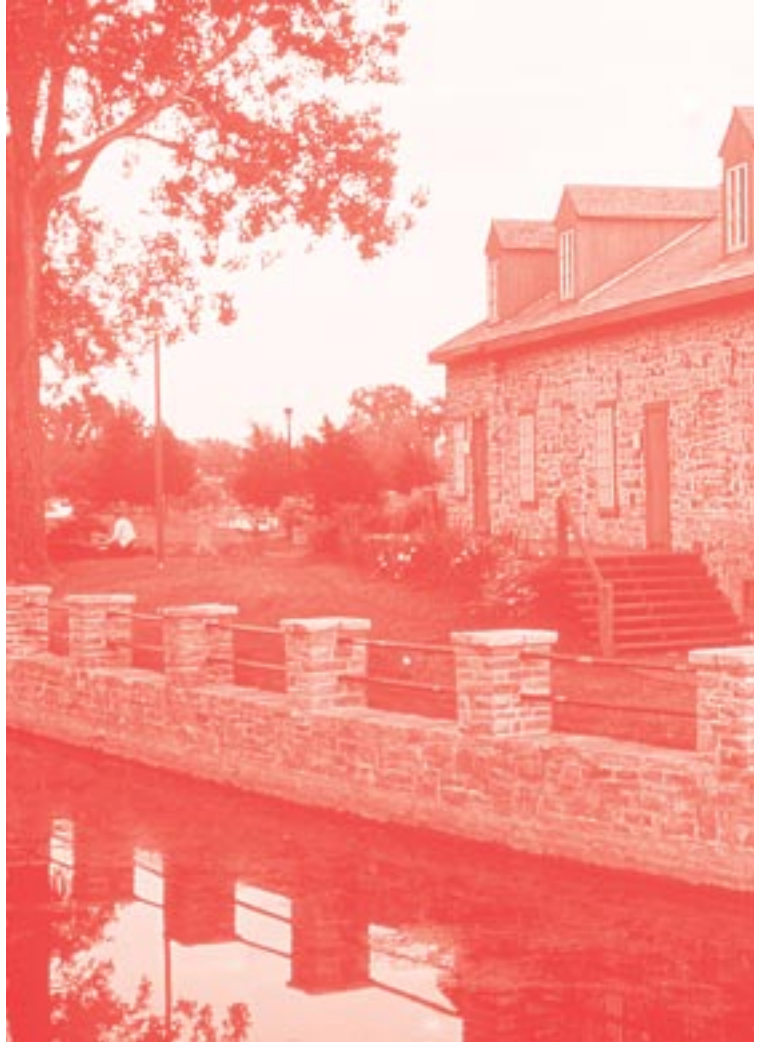
Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada © Parks Canada, photographer: F. Teegee



To the Teacher

ASSESSMENT

- Develop a simple checklist for assessing the “voyageurs” reports. Include criteria related to historical accuracy as well as style and format of the presentation. For example:
 - Information is complete and accurate.
 - The theme is consistent throughout.
 - All entries relate to the topic.
 - A variety of sources have been accessed.
 - All sources are properly cited.
 - The organization of the report is original and interesting.
 - Layout is aesthetically pleasing.
 - Visuals (pictures, drawings, diagrams, etc.) add to the overall effectiveness.
 - Captions are relevant and explanatory.
 - Most of the conventions of writing are used with accuracy.
- You will find a summary of the correlation with the curriculum for your province or territory at the end of this document, on page 60. A more detailed explanation of the links between each activity and each provincial/territorial curriculum is found on the Parks Canada Web site: www.pc.gc.ca under “Teacher’s Corner > Our Roots, Our Future.”



Fur Trade at Lachine National Historic Site of Canada © Parks Canada

RELATED ACTIVITIES

- Have students investigate the role of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in the fur trade.
- Invite students to research today’s international fur trade and compare it with the original fur trade to determine what has changed and what has stayed the same.
- Have students debate the following statement: “It is wrong to wear furs for fashion.”
- Students can find out about the lives of specific fur traders such as Pierre-Esprit Radisson, Pierre Gaultier de la Verendrye, Peter Pond, George Simpson, Nicholas Denys, and David Thompson, as well as other participants in the fur trade. (See Selected Resources.)

Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site of Canada © Parks Canada, photographer: R.E. Bill



Selected Resources

PARKS CANADA WEB SITE

www.pc.gc.ca/resource2

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES

- **administered by Parks Canada:**
 - The Forks National Historic Site of Canada
 - Fort Langley National Historic Site of Canada
 - Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada
 - The Fur Trade at Lachine National Historic Site of Canada
 - Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site of Canada
 - Port-Royal National Historic Site of Canada
 - Prince of Wales National Historic Site of Canada
 - Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site of Canada
 - York Factory National Historic Site of Canada

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY ARCHIVES

- Search the keywords “fur trade”
- Relevant Results: “Commerce is Free! Hooray for Freedom!”, “Prince Rupert Heads New Fur Company”, “The New Eldorado”, “British Capture Fort Frontenac”, “Laperouse Captures Hudson Bay Forts”, “Peace Treaty at Utrecht Changes Map of North America”, “Wife Defends Fort La Tour in Husband’s Absence”

TEACHER’S CORNER

- **Commemorating Canada’s History:**
 - **People, Places, and Events:**
 - Search the theme “fur trade”
- **Canadian Stories: The Fur Trade**

WHAT’S NEW

- **News Releases:**
 - The Dispersal of the Huron-Wendat and Their Settlement in Wendake
 - Fort Garry–Fort Edmonton Trail National Historic Site of Canada
 - François Beaulieu II
 - Okenagan Brigade Trail National Historic Site of Canada
 - Thanadelthur
- Check the bottom of the news releases for associated backgrounders.

VIDEOS

- *Places in Time* (video) — segment on the “The Forks” National Historic Site of Canada
- *Historylands* (video) — Episode 15 — “The Front Line of the Fur Trade War”

OTHER RESOURCES

- The Canoe Web site: Portraits of the Great Fur Trade Canoes
- Contrasting Worlds: Book 1 Web site
- Fur Institute of Canada Web site
- The Fur Trade at Lachine Web site
- Heroes of Lore and Yore Web site: Canadian Heroes in Fact and Fiction: Pierre-Esprit Radisson
- Historica Web site: The Adventurers Radisson and des Groseilliers
- Museum of Civilization Web site. Search the keywords “fur trade.”
- The National Atlas of Canada Web site
- Our History: The Hudson’s Bay Company Web site
- Passageways: True Tales of Adventure Web site
- The Plains Cree Part One Web site: A Historical and Ethnographic Study (information on la Verendrye)
- Statistics Canada Web site
- *Exploring the Fur Trade Routes of North America* by Barbara Huck. Heartland, 2000
- *The Illustrated Voyageur: Paintings and Companion Stories* by Howard Sivertson. Duluth, Minnesota: Lake Superior Port Cities, 1999
- “The Voyageur’s Song,” in *Canada for Kids*, Volume 1. Recorded by Michael Mitchell. Victoria, BC: MKM Music Productions Ltd.