

# Early European Exploration

## Dates

AD500 –  
AD700

AD995 –  
AD1000

1400s

1492, 1493  
1498, 1502

1497, 1498

Early 1500s

1524

1534

1535

1541–43

Late 1500s

1581

## Early Exploration by

Irish Monks including St.  
Brendan

The Vikings—Bjarni  
Herjulfsson, Leif Eriksson

European Fishermen

Spanish—Christopher  
Columbus

English—John Cabot  
(Giovanni Caboto)

English, French,  
Portuguese, and Spanish  
Fishermen

French—Giovanni da  
Verrazano

French—Jacques Cartier,  
first voyage

French—Jacques Cartier,  
second voyage

French—Jacques Cartier,  
third voyage

European Fishermen

French Merchants

## Reasons for Exploration

Celtic legends told of Atlantic crossings in search of “The Land of Promise.”

Norse sagas spoke of Herjulfsson reaching the coast of a new land when he was blown off course sailing from Iceland to Greenland. A few years later, Leif Eriksson explored the new land he called Vinland. This was in what we now call North America. The Vikings made some attempts at settlement but did not settle permanently.

Voyages were made to rich fishing grounds of the Atlantic by the Portuguese, Spanish, French, Basque, and English.

The Italian sea captain was sent by Spain to find a short route leading to the riches of the Far East (China) by sailing west. He landed on islands in the West Indies and explored the Caribbean and South American Coast.

The Italian explorer John Cabot was sent by Henry VII, King of England, to look for a short route to the Far East. Cabot was granted a **charter** to conquer and occupy new lands and to have a **monopoly** on trade. Voyages reached Newfoundland, establishing English claim.

Reports from Cabot’s voyages of the waters full of fish brought many Europeans to fish near Newfoundland. Some stayed over the winter in order to maintain fish-drying posts. Great profits were made from fishing.

Francis I, King of France, commissioned an Italian sea captain to find the short route to the Far East. His maps do not show a sea route to the Far East but do show a solid land mass (America). He travelled up the Eastern coast of North America from Florida to Cape Breton Island.

Cartier was commissioned by Francis I, King of France, to sail to the New Found Lands in search of a short route to the Far East. He reached the Gulf of St. Lawrence and raised on the Gaspé Peninsula a cross that said “Long live the King of France.” Cartier established political relations with the Iroquois and took two of their chiefs back to France to learn French so they could tell about their country.

The Iroquois that Cartier brought back to France with him told the King of vast riches in the Kingdom of Saguenay. Francis I sent Cartier to explore farther up the St. Lawrence for this wealth. He reached as far as present-day Montreal. He and his crew spent the winter in the New Found Land.

Francis I sent Cartier to the St. Lawrence to establish a permanent French settlement. The settlement failed.

Increasing numbers of people came to fish in the waters off Newfoundland and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Some began to trade for furs with the Native peoples.

French merchants began to organize voyages up the St. Lawrence, specifically for trading in furs.

**Charter**—written permission given by someone in authority

**Monopoly**—a right granted for one person or group to control buying and selling

## Reasons for Exploration



From 1095, for the next 300 years, European countries were involved in a series of Holy Wars called the Crusades. During the Crusades, Christians from all over Europe went to the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean to drive out the non-Christians. These wars brought Europeans into direct contact with Eastern ideas, customs, knowledge, and products for the first time. The Crusaders came to appreciate luxuries such as silks and spices from India and China, and when they returned home they wanted to have these items. European countries began to search for short and cheap routes to the riches of the Far East (India and China), and these voyages led to the exploration of lands unfamiliar to them. Power struggles occurred amongst the rival European countries for control of these territories.

In addition to the search for Eastern riches, there was a second reason for the increase in European exploration. From 1450 to 1600 there was an "age of exploration" in Europe. This was part of the historical Renaissance period, when there was renewed interest in all areas of knowledge. New ideas, combined with improved methods of building sailing ships, allowed mariners to sail more safely on longer voyages of exploration. But these voyages were still risky and cost a great deal of money. Ships could be gone for long periods of time and there was no guarantee that they would return at all or return with profitable cargo. As a result, voyages of exploration depended on European kings and queens for financial backing. Fortunately, European monarchs were not only eager to find out more about the world, but also wanted to gain power and the riches of the Far East. They hired mariners to search for a water route to the Far East. Portugal and Spain were the first European countries to try to get to the Far East by going west across the Atlantic; they were followed by England and France.



### Exploration

Seeking new lands and new routes to old lands.

## World Exploration and Mercantilism



Early European exploration and colonization of areas such as North America, South America, Africa, and India were based on a desire for profit. This was part of a trading theory, very popular in Europe, called mercantilism.



### Mercantilism

An economic theory that calls for a country to accumulate wealth in gold and silver. This was done, in part, by developing colonies as sources of raw materials and markets for finished goods.

During the 1500s and 1600s many European countries wanted to be powerful. One way for a country to be powerful was to have wealth in the form of gold and silver. Countries became wealthy by selling finished goods to other nations. The largest profit was made by countries who spent the least on raw materials and sold the finished goods for as much as possible. Colonies became very important to the practice of mercantilism as places for European countries to obtain raw materials and to sell finished goods.

The theory of mercantilism was a major reason behind European exploration and colonization of the world. The kings and queens of Europe encouraged overseas exploration and establishment of colonies for trade. Before colonies could be established, lands unknown to the Europeans had to be explored.

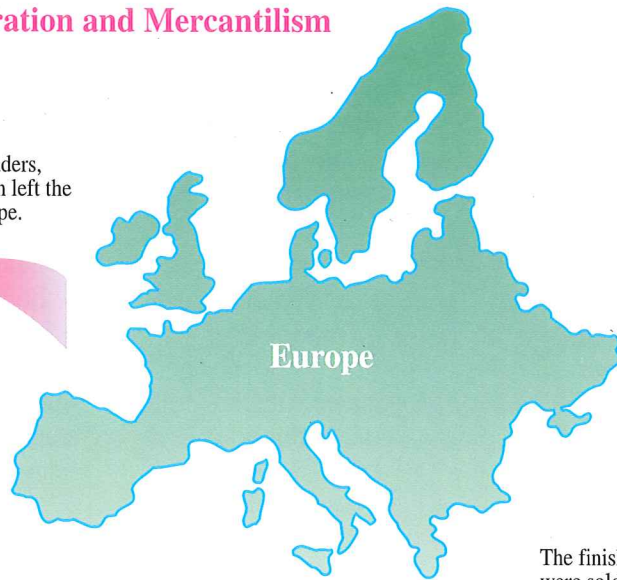
### For Your Notebook

1. Define mercantilism in your own words and include a simple sketch beside your definition.
2. Explain how early voyages of exploration were inspired by a belief in mercantilism.
3. Read the chart on page 23. Use the chart to help you write a paragraph to describe exploration and mercantilism.

## Exploration and Mercantilism



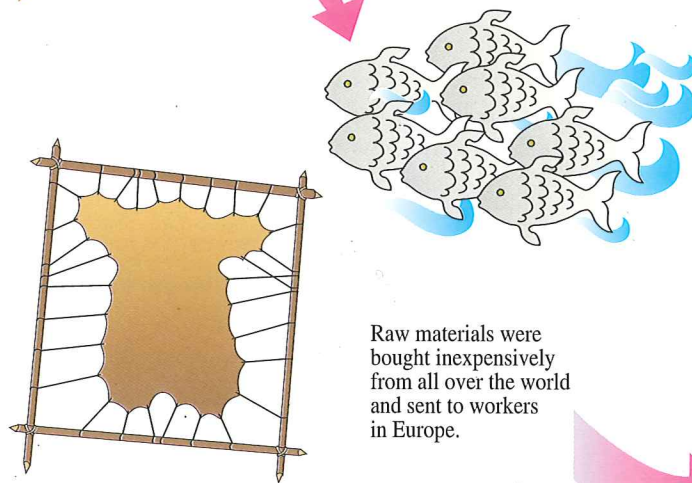
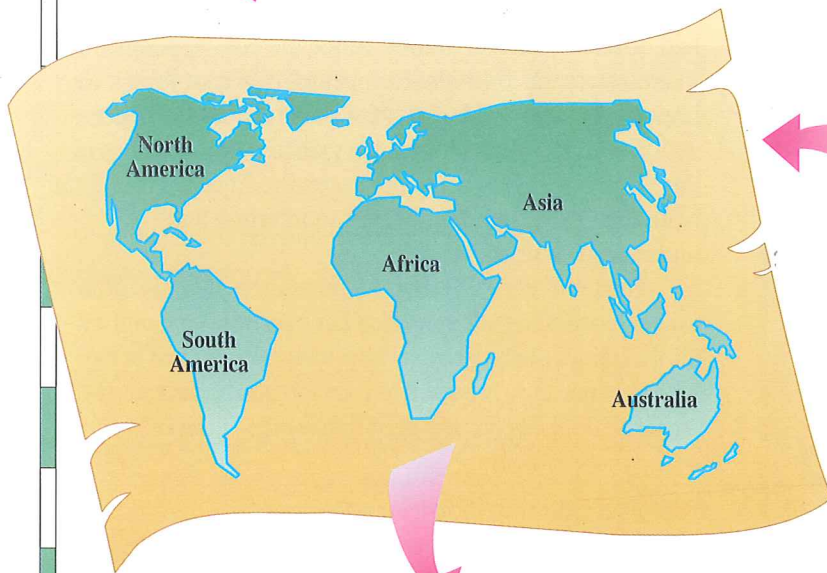
Explorers, traders, and fishermen left the ports of Europe.



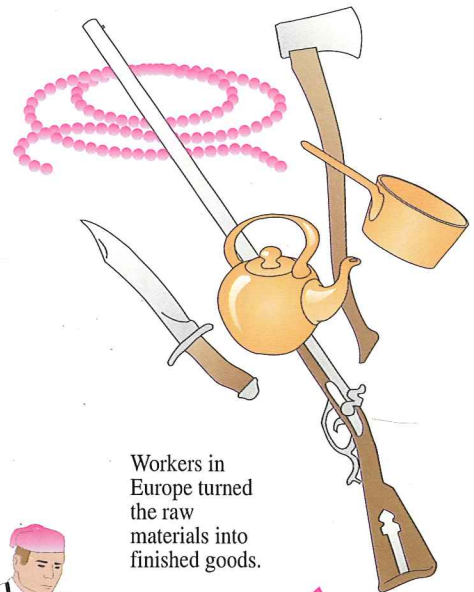
Europe

They took finished goods to people who lived in other parts of the world.

The finished goods were sold all over the world for more than had been paid for raw materials and labour. This allowed countries that manufactured the goods to accumulate wealth in gold and silver.



Raw materials were bought inexpensively from all over the world and sent to workers in Europe.

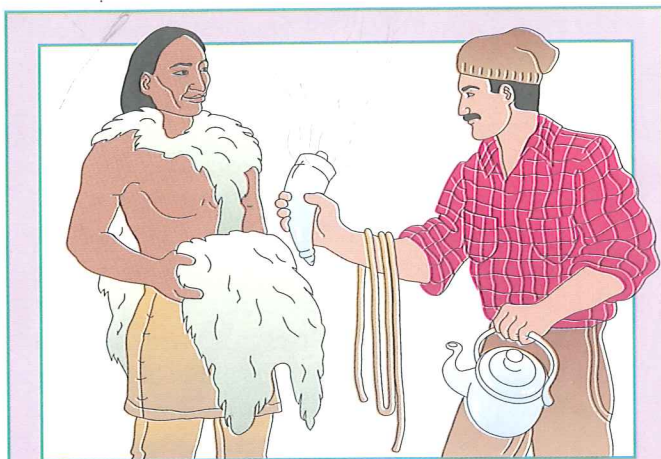


Workers in Europe turned the raw materials into finished goods.



# Native and European Interaction

Early European explorers such as John Cabot and Jacques Cartier met Native peoples who were already familiar with Europeans. This may have resulted from early contact with the Vikings, but it was more likely the result of contacts made with Spanish, Portuguese, Basque, French, and English people who came to fish on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland every summer. These people dried and salted their catch on land prior to taking it back to sell in Europe. They associated and traded with the local tribes, who lived near the ocean during the summer. The first merchants came to the New World for fish; the rapidly expanding fur market kept them there.



Items from Native culture are exchanged for items from European culture.

## Acculturation

When two cultures meet, they affect each other. The two cultures may borrow ideas from each other, or one culture may have a stronger influence on the other. Anthropologists call this process **cultural exchange**, when two cultures meet over a period of time, acculturation.

## An Exchange of Technology

The early contacts between Europeans and Native peoples in the New World could be viewed as an exchange of **technology**. The Native peoples taught the early Europeans survival skills such as hunting, trapping, snowshoeing, and canoeing. They also provided the Europeans with remedies for illnesses such as **scurvy**. Native peoples often provided Europeans with fresh food. In exchange, the Europeans supplied the Native peoples with goods such as tools, weapons, and cooking utensils.

In these exchanges, each group gave something of which they had more than they needed at that time. In return, they received something that they lacked either the technology or the raw materials to make for themselves.

## Ethnocentrism

The Native peoples encountered by the early Europeans had different cultural **values**. Since the Native peoples lived differently from the Europeans, different things were important to them. The spiritual beliefs, political organization, and technology were very different from those of the Europeans. This was one reason the Europeans and the Native peoples found it difficult to interpret and understand each other.

When two very different cultures meet there is often misunderstanding. People who have lived in one culture all their lives sometimes believe that their culture is the best because they are used to it and it meets their needs. Anthropologists call this belief, that one's culture is the best, **ethnocentrism**.

## For Your Notebook

1. Re-read the section "An Exchange of Technology." In your opinion did the items traded result in a fair exchange? Did one side gain more than the other? Discuss from the point of view of an early European explorer and from the point of view of a Native person.

**Cultural exchange**—objects or ideas passed from one culture to another

**Technology**—the knowledge and application of developments in science, manufacturing, business, and the arts

**Scurvy**—disease caused by lack of vitamin C

**Value**—a long-established idea on which one's life is modelled

## Focus On: Points of View—Cultural Differences

Read this imaginary conversation between a Frenchman and an Iroquois. Each is attempting to explain his culture. Start by reading what the Frenchman says.



### Frenchman

In France, our society is organized by a class system based on power and status. The class into which you are born determines your power and status. Many of us think it is very important to acquire power and wealth.

Our system of land ownership only allows certain classes to own land.

Permanent buildings and cities are part of our way of life in France. The most powerful people have the largest and most expensive buildings.

We have a state and a government headed by a ruler. We call our ruler a king. Our ruler and advisors make all of the governmental decisions for all of the people.

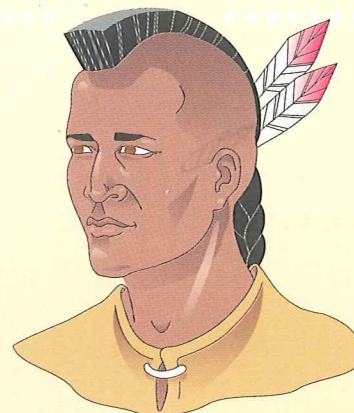
Business and industry are important in France. We have merchants who buy and sell goods. Through trade we accumulate wealth.

It is important for us to explore and conquer new lands to acquire raw materials and markets for our manufactured goods.

Our laws are written down. We also have a legal system with courts, judges, and jails.

Most of us are Christians. We build churches in which we worship our God.

Then read the Iroquois reply directly across the page. Then read what the Frenchman says next. You could try reading with different voices to create a better dialogue.



### Iroquois

Our society is organized around a belief that all are born equal. Power and wealth mean different things to us than they do to you.

We believe that we are the Keepers of Mother Earth; the land is not ours to buy, sell, or claim.

Some of our people have permanent homes, but they are unlike yours. Many of us move with the seasons and animals, so our homes are portable.

We have non-state societies. This means that the power is not in the hands of one group or one person. As a result, we hold group meetings to discuss important topics and make decisions. Our leaders may try to persuade us, but they do not have the power to make the final decision. Decisions are based on the wishes of the people. Arriving at a consensus is important.

We produce enough to meet our needs and share with our kin. We also trade with other tribes. Gift-giving is an important part of trading. Accumulating possessions is not important to us.

We believe that there is plenty of land for all. We do not need to take over new land to gain power and wealth.

Our laws are not written down. We have no need for courts, jails, or judges because wrongs are dealt with by families or individuals.

Spirituality is central to our lives, but we do not have special buildings in which to worship. We believe in a Creator.

# Colonization

## Claiming Lands



As lands in the Americas were explored, European rulers claimed ownership over them. This was usually done by planting a huge cross and/or flag of the explorer's home country into the earth of the land being claimed. This claim was recognized by other European countries.

By claiming these lands the European rulers believed they also had the right to control all the trade in the area. This was known as a monopoly. Their control also extended beyond the land and its resources, and included its people. In the Americas, the Europeans claimed the land and extended their control over the people, even though the Native peoples had been living there for thousands of years.

## Jacques Cartier

Jacques Cartier was a French mariner who was commissioned by the king of France to search for a short route to the Far East. He reached the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1534 and placed a cross on the Gaspé Peninsula that read "Long live the King of France," thus claiming French control in North America. Cartier made a second voyage to North America in 1535 and sailed as far west as present-day Montreal. He returned again in 1541 to establish a permanent French settlement as part of France's colonization process. The settlement failed. Cartier was treated with kindness and hospitality by the Native people he met upon arrival in the New World.



*Discovery of Canada*, by J.D. Kelly. Cartier is shown bartering with the Native people. Percé Rock is in the background. To claim the land for France, Cartier had a huge cross erected on the Gaspé Peninsula.

# Settling and Controlling Lands



To control the newly claimed lands, colonization was essential. Colonization involves one country (historically called the mother country) bringing another separate region under its direct control. This was often accomplished by establishing permanent settlements in the new region. These new settlements were expected to develop the region's resources and supply the European country with inexpensive raw materials or products. Colonies were also expected to provide a market for manufactured products. The raw materials were shipped to the European country to be manufactured and then were shipped back to the colony to be sold at a much higher price. Thus colonies were an important part of the European trading theory of mercantilism.

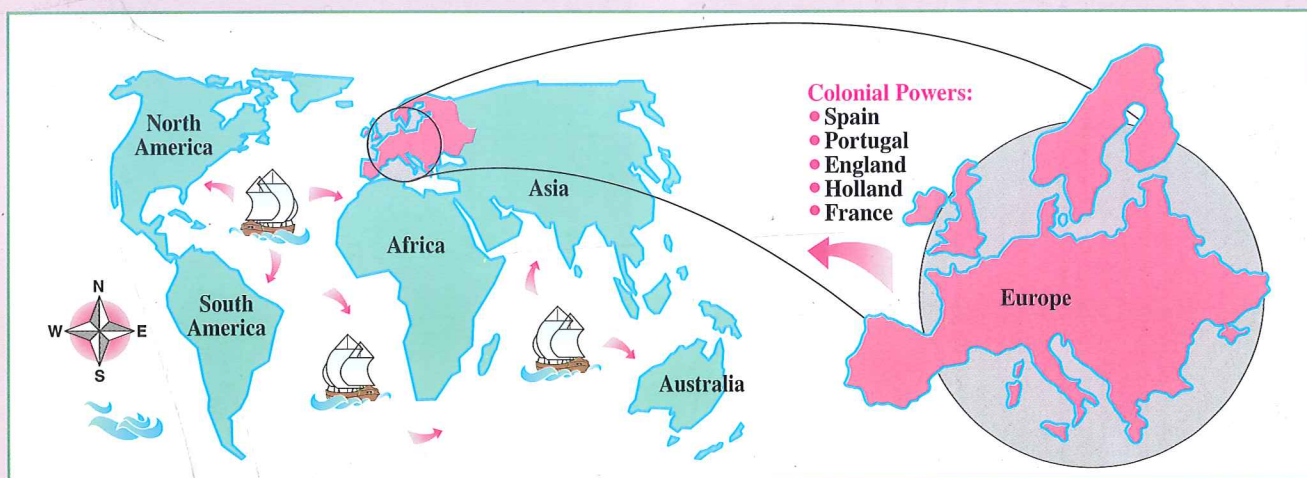
The French and the English were impressed with the Spanish success at colonization in Central and South America. They too longed to become wealthy and thus began to colonize the area of North America they had claimed.

Early colonization attempts were slowed by the fact that, unlike the Spanish colonies, North America did not immediately yield precious metals and jewels. The first prosperous industry in North America was the fishing industry. Later the fur trade became an important industry. Although these two industries supplied important raw materials, they did not necessarily require permanent settlements. The prospering fishing industry and developing fur trade in North America made many Europeans recognize that these lands were a source of potential wealth.

In European societies, wealth and power were tied to the ownership of land. Since only the aristocrats or nobility could own land, it became a mark of social status. Many settlers moved to the new colonies because land was plentiful and inexpensive. As landowners, the settlers gained status. The colonists believed so strongly in their right to hold their own land (private property) and in the agricultural way of life that these two beliefs became an important basis of Canadian society.

## For Your Notebook

1. Why would colonization be essential to maintaining authority over newly claimed lands?



## Colonization

Settling and controlling other lands

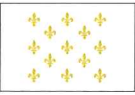
### Places That Were Colonized:

- had lands that Europeans needed to explore before they could establish colonies
- provided raw materials and cheap labour needed to produce raw materials and get them to ports from where they could be shipped to Europe
- bought finished goods manufactured in the European countries

### Countries in Europe:

- established numerous colonies in North America, Africa, Asia, and Australia
- had direct influence over the running of the colonies and decided on the types of government for them
- believed that the colonies should be patterned after the mother country
- manufactured finished goods from raw materials

# French Colonization



Prior to the 1660s, France had done very little colonization when compared with other European nations.

France had been too busy with European wars to concentrate on colonization. Also, the French mercantile economy was directed by the state (the French government) with the leadership provided by the king and his ministers. Since the money that funded colonization and expansion came from the aristocracy and the Roman Catholic Church, developments were slow and cautious.

The French government granted trading monopolies to trading companies that promised to invest a portion of their profits in colonization. But these merchants were not interested in colonization. Thus, few settlers immigrated to New France before the French government took over the colony in the 1660s.

## Rule by Trading Companies

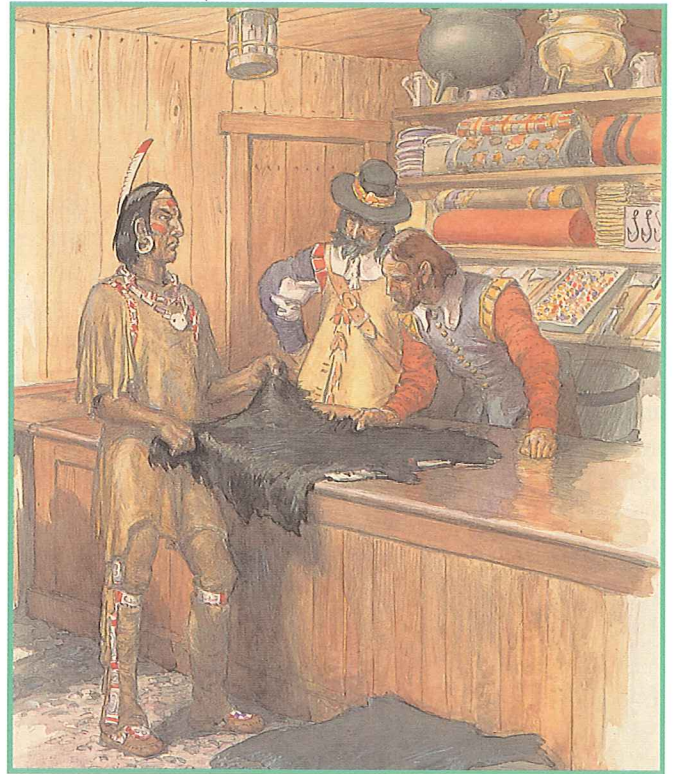
Trading companies controlled and managed the French fur trade in North America. These companies played an important role in mercantilism. The traders were the merchants who obtained the raw materials (furs) from the Native peoples, and shipped them to France to be processed and sold for higher prices. They also sold or traded European manufactured goods with the Native tribes.

That part of North America known as New France was not colonized until the early 1600s because France had been too involved in European wars to concentrate on North America. During a lull between wars, the French king realized that colonies were necessary to protect the riches of the fur trade from other European powers. Mercantilism would not work without colonies. Between 1603 and 1645, the French state granted trading monopolies to individuals and companies. Each of these was supposed to help in the colonization of New France.

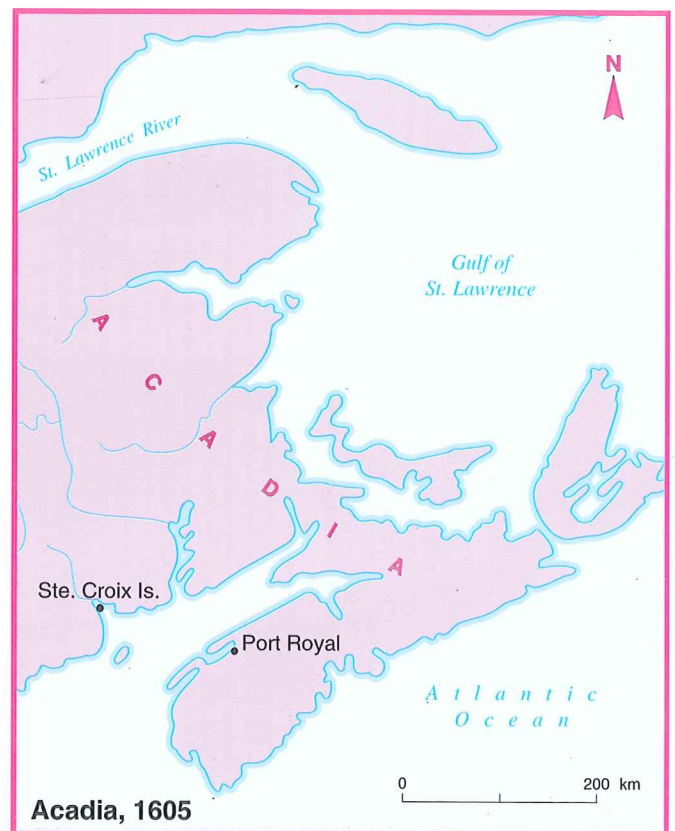
## Pierre Du Gua de Monts

### Settlement At Port Royal

In 1603, Pierre Du Gua de Monts was granted a monopoly on the fur trade in Canada. His goal was to protect his land from illegal fur traders by establishing a permanent settlement near the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. In 1604, de Monts and his mapmaker-manager, Samuel de Champlain, established a French settlement on Ste. Croix Island in Acadia. This settlement was moved to Port Royal in 1605. Unfortunately, Port Royal was poorly located. The settlement did not keep other French fur traders from establishing trading posts and trading for furs.



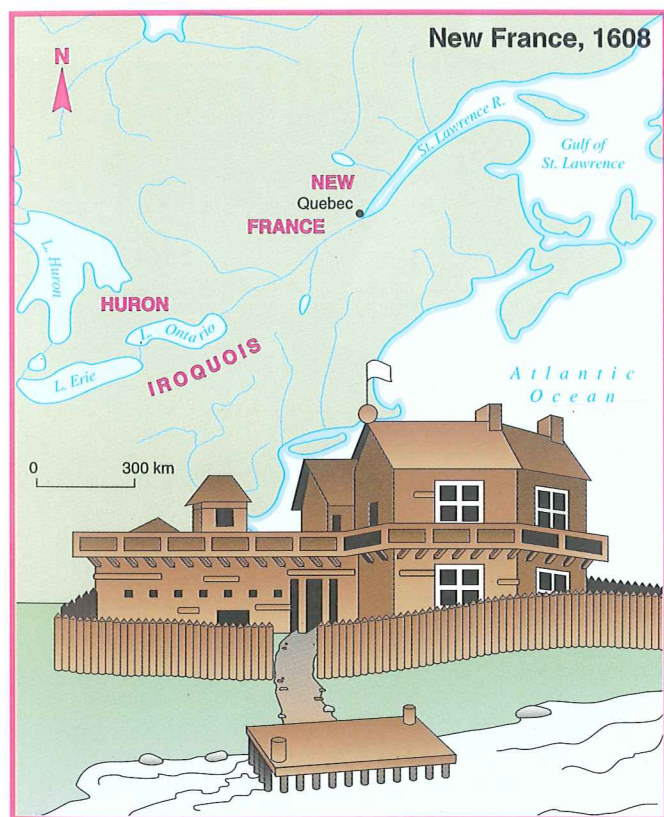
*In the Trading Room.* A Native person has brought furs to the French at a trading post to trade for European goods.



## Champlain at Quebec

In 1608, Champlain convinced de Monts to let him try to establish a settlement in the St. Lawrence valley, where there was better access to the Native peoples and the furs. Champlain went to New France as the leader of the 1608 expedition and established a habitation at Quebec. The habitation was built like a miniature European fortress. Champlain formed **alliances** with the Huron against the Iroquois in hopes of expanding the fur trade.

After 1608, the fur trade in New France grew rapidly in the hands of the trading companies. The population of New France, however, did not grow. The trading companies were interested in profits, not in settlement. Champlain realized that control of New France depended on expanding the French population. The English and Dutch were competing with the French for land and furs.\* Champlain continued to seek political and financial support from France. Several company structures were tried over the years to encourage the settlement necessary to maintain control of New France and the fur trade.



The habitation built by Champlain and his men in 1608 served as both living and working space.

**Alliance**—union formed between nations or groups of people based on an agreement that benefits both groups

\*The English and French were not the only European powers active in the New World; the Dutch also were involved in mercantile and colonial activity here. See the map on page 31 for the extent of the Dutch territory.

**Habitant**—farmer in New France, and later in Quebec



## Samuel de Champlain (1567–1635)

Samuel de Champlain was called the “Father of New France” because of the efforts he made to establish permanent settlements there. The settlements he helped to found included Ste. Croix Island, Port Royal, and Quebec City.

Champlain believed that it was part of his duty to bring Christianity to the First People. This caused him to act sometimes as a missionary for the Roman Catholic Church.

Champlain was a navigator and mapmaker by trade, and some of his maps are accurate even by today's standards.

## Hélène Boullée (1598–1654)

Born and raised in Paris, Hélène Boullée married Samuel de Champlain when she was 12 and he was 40. She moved to New France with him in 1620, when she was 22, and stayed there until 1624. Then she returned to France and entered a convent, where she remained for the rest of her life.

## Company of 100 Associates

In 1627 the French government granted the Company of 100 Associates a monopoly on the fur trade in New France. In return, the Company was supposed to bring 4000 French Catholics to settle in New France over the next 15 years. The Company allowed the settlers to trade for furs directly with the Native peoples if they sold the furs only to the Company. By 1663, due to the war in Europe between England and France, the Company of 100 Associates had gone out of business.

## Company of Habitants

In 1645 the Company of 100 Associates allowed the Company of Habitants to take over the monopoly on the fur trade in New France. The Company asked the **habitants** to cover the costs of administering the colony and settlements. Control of the fur trade was left in the hands of officials appointed by France.

# The Fur Trade and the Native Peoples

The settlement of New France was essential for control of the fur trade. The fur trade helped France remain wealthy and powerful. A fashion trend in Europe made furs very popular. Felt hats (made from beaver pelts) were considered a status symbol. The tremendous demand for beaver meant that fur merchants could make large profits.

Numerous Native tribes lived in the territory claimed by France. The Algonkian people lived in the eastern woodlands (*see* map, page 8). They included such people as the Algonquin, Ottawa, Micmac, and Montagnais. Also living in the eastern woodlands were the Huron people—a farming group.

Long before Europeans came to North America, the Huron had established an efficient trading network among the various tribes. Champlain, and later other Frenchmen, established alliances with the Huron and became part of this long-established trading system. Furs were traded for manu-

factured European goods, which were in turn traded for furs from tribes in the interior. Thus, furs from the interior finally reached the French through the Huron go-betweens.

The Iroquois tribes and the Huron had few disputes with each other before the arrival of Europeans and the fur trade. Competition for furs and alliances with different European powers strained relations between the two groups and made them enemies. Alliances with the local Native tribes were essential for the Europeans. The Native peoples supplied the Europeans with furs, food, and canoes; acted as guides and interpreters; and often saved their lives. Champlain formed alliances with the Algonquin and the Huron because they were a large group of established traders.

When Champlain allied with the Huron to invade the territory of their Iroquois enemies, a political alliance was formed. The French and Huron sided together against the English, Dutch, and Iroquois. The French needed the Huron to be their military allies to help fight the Iroquois, if the situation arose, as long as the English and French were enemies.

C-11013, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.



*The Fur Fair.* In the early days of the fur trade, the Native peoples came to Montreal each summer to trade their furs. The French and the Native peoples provided goods and services that were relatively equal in value to each other's needs.

## The *Coueurs de bois* ("runners of the woods")



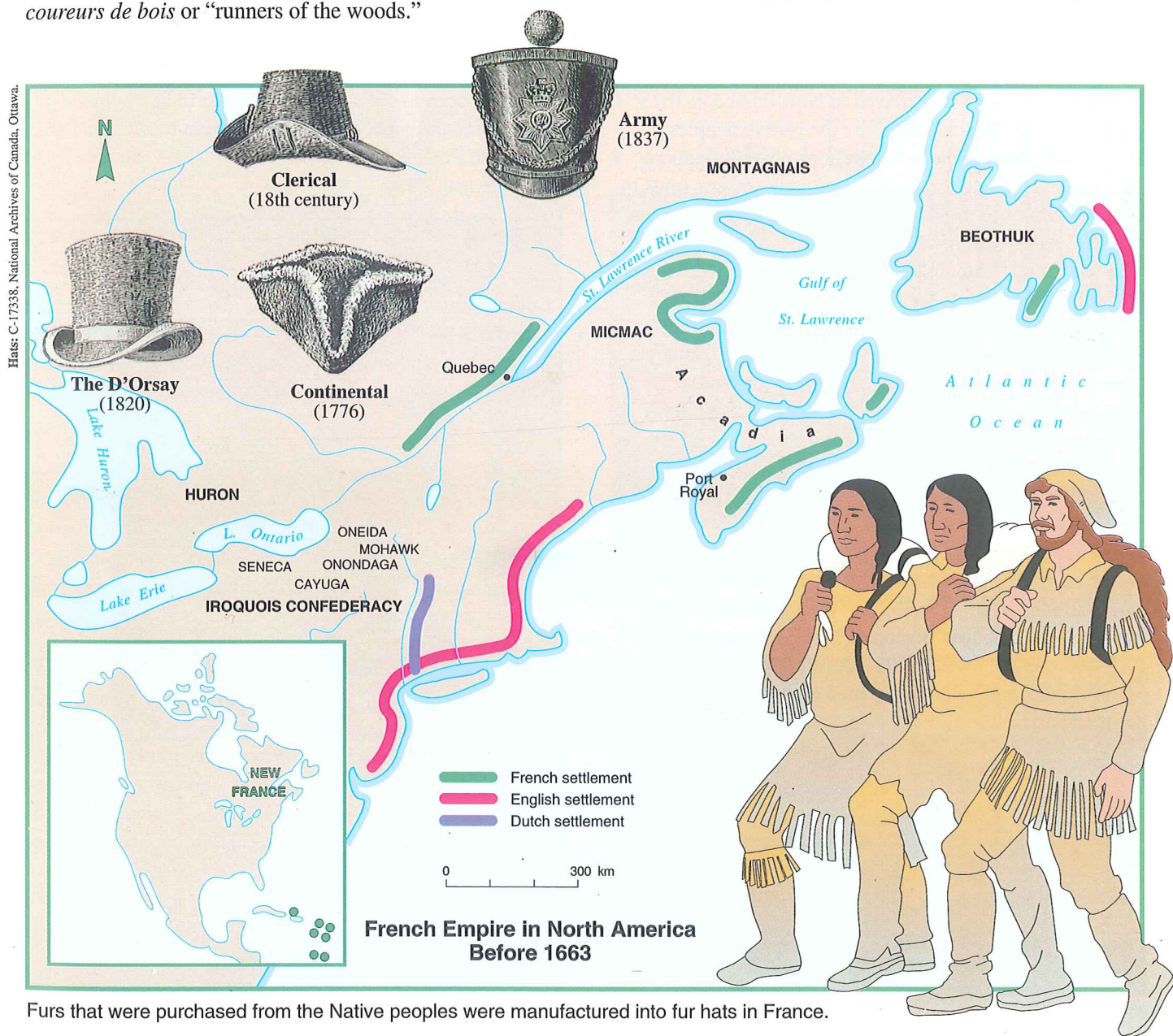
One of the reasons the Native peoples were essential to the fur trade was because they brought furs from the interior regions to the French trading posts of Quebec, Trois Rivières, and Montreal. The French could also obtain furs by going into the interior regions themselves. During times of hostilities, the safer method was to have the Native peoples bring furs to the French, but high profits could be made by Frenchmen who were willing to venture into the interior rivers and lakes and bring back beaver pelts themselves. During peaceful times, more and more young men of New France were attracted to the high profits and adventure in the fur trade.

These energetic and daring adventurers became expert canoeists and shrewd businessmen. They were known as *coueurs de bois* or "runners of the woods."

Native trading between bands was customarily done through family contacts. To become part of this family trading system, the French left young men to live with a band during the winter. These young men adapted easily to the Native way of living, often married Native women and became part of their bands. Friendships and trust were thus established between the Native bands and the French traders.

These family ties were useful in future trading sessions. Soon the French had set up elaborate trading alliances with numerous Algonquin and Huron tribes. Later the French used these trading alliances to establish political alliances against the English.

The *coueurs de bois* expanded the fur trade and explored farther and farther into the interior of the country. They did a great deal to extend French control (power) over an increasingly large amount of inland territory.



Furs that were purchased from the Native peoples were manufactured into fur hats in France.