



# ***Fur Trade***

## ***First Contact From the North***

### **Grade Nine Social Studies**



## **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

Grade Nine Social Studies, Unit Four

<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/midlsoc/gr9/94overview.html>

## **LESSON PLAN ONE: CLASSROOM INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME**

### **LESSON OVERVIEW**

Students will learn about the early fur trade. They will learn that before European contact, First Nations lived in reciprocal relationship with the environment. Contact with people living on the land of present-day Saskatchewan came first from the north, and much later in the south. Students will understand that sharing was an economic necessity and a diplomatic virtue among First Nations. Students will learn that the fur trade had positive and negative impacts on First Nation peoples. They will work independently, or in groups, to research the fur trade era and its impact first on northern First Nation groups, and later, on southern groups.



Painting depicting Charles II signing the Charter to allow the Hudson's Bay Company to open up the fur trade in North America on May 2, 1670. Manitoba Archives P-379

### **RESOURCES AND MATERIALS**

- Ray, Arthur J. *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.
- Van Kirk, Sylvia. *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada*. Winnipeg: Watson and Dyer, 1980.
- Williams, Glundwer. "The HBC and the Fur Trade: 1670-1870," a special issue of the magazine *The Beaver*. Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Company, 1987.
- "Fur Trade" and "Fur Trade Posts" by Dale Russell and "History of Saskatchewan" by Michael Cottrell in *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2005. *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* is now available online at <http://www.esask.ca>.
- "Exploration, the Fur Trade, and the HBC" at [http://www.canadiana.org/hbc/intro\\_e.html](http://www.canadiana.org/hbc/intro_e.html)
- "HBC History" at <http://www.hbc.com/hbcheritage/>
- *Pathfinders and Passageways* website from the National Library of Canada at <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/explorers>
- "In Pursuit of Adventure: The Fur Trade in Canada and the North West Company" at [http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/toolbar\\_1.htm](http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/toolbar_1.htm)
- "The Fur Trade" at <http://www.civilization.ca/hist/canp1/ca12eng.html>
- For more essays with information on the fur trade, visit the Gabriel Dumont Institute's *The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture* at [www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca).



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## **PROCEDURE**

1. Prepare to teach by reading through some of the resources recommended above.
2. Deliver information in the classroom on the fur trade era to students.
3. Break students into work groups to research and report on topics pertaining to the fur trade in present-day Saskatchewan from 1670 to 1800. Research topics can include:
  - First Nations groups in the area of present-day northern Saskatchewan before contact with Europeans - traditional areas, linguistic and cultural identities
  - First Nations reciprocal relationship with their environment
  - First Nations economic activity prior to the arrival of Europeans
  - The formation of the Company of Adventurers and Rupert's Land
  - The formation of other fur trading companies
  - Early trading posts and exploration routes on the Churchill and Saskatchewan Rivers
  - Trade goods and the arrangements between European traders and First Nations trappers
  - European adaptations to Aboriginal commerce. List specific Aboriginal trade strategies
  - The roles of First Nations women in family life and trade
  - First Nations adaptations of European technology. List the technologies that disrupted traditional economies
  - Causes of the change in relationships between Aboriginal nations
4. Allow students sufficient time to research, write and submit their reports.
5. Have students present their reports in class.

## **ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION**

1. Plan a winter camp experience to impress students with the challenges of surviving in northern Saskatchewan before down-filled jackets, insulated homes, central heating and electricity.
2. The establishment of European commerce on North American soil would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of First Nations peoples. First Nations ways were not inferior to European ways; they had been formed over generations of adapting to a challenging environment. North American and European cultures were different. First Nations were dynamic, thriving societies with developed systems of governance, education, language and culture.
  - Have students research and present the successful adaptations of First Nations to the environment and climate of the Canadian Shield.
  - Have students research and debate whether or not Europeans would have gained a successful grip on the new continent without the support of First Nations. Have them state their belief and support it.



## LESSON PLAN TWO: AT THE MUSEUM

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Students will explore the contents of a discovery box and tour exhibits in the Museum.

### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Materials and information sent to you in your Museum tour confirmation package.

### PROCEDURE

1. Prepare to teach and to tour the Museum by reviewing the resources listed. Divide your class into groups before the visit. Discuss the required number of groups with the Museum Programmer when you book your visit. Select other staff members or parents to lead the groups. Advise the group leaders about what they will have to do.
2. Students will visit a Western Development Museum in Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Saskatoon or Yorkton. The entire class will assemble for a welcome and orientation.
3. The class will be divided into two, three or more groups depending on the class size. Students will interact with artifacts, replicas and photographs located in a discovery box. A leader's script included in the discovery box will spearhead discussion.
4. The class will tour pertinent exhibits in the Museum using a tour handout to guide their exploration. This handout may be a question-and-answer sheet or a scavenger hunt. A tour script for the group leader will be sent with confirmation of your Museum tour booking.



Students will explore different aspects of the fur trade by interacting with artifacts, reproductions and images in the *Fur Trade - First Contact From the North* discovery box.



## LESSON PLAN THREE: WHEN A MUSEUM VISIT ISN'T POSSIBLE

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Students will learn that the North American fur trade was based on a reciprocal arrangement between early traders and First Nations guides and trappers. However, the arrangements were not always reciprocal. To gain an understanding of the landmass contained in the 1670 charter to the Hudson's Bay Company, each student will map the northwestern interior, clearly showing the Churchill and Saskatchewan River systems and all the "lands draining into Hudson's Bay." The map will show the extent of Rupert's Land. Understanding the physical dimension of the environment, students will chart the exploration routes of early explorers and the development of fur trading posts. The class will assess the probability that explorers would have survived without the help and support of First Nations and Métis people.



Illustration by Peter Myo depicting Métis doing business at a fur trade post. Gabriel Dumont Institute GDI-IL-0022

### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Review the resources listed in Lesson Plan One, especially the *Pathfinders and Passageways* website from the National Library of Canada at <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/explorers>.
- Consult the *Atlas of Saskatchewan*. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1999. The Atlas is available in CD-ROM and book format.
- *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2005. *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* is now available online at <http://www.esask.ca>.

### PROCEDURE

1. Prepare to teach by reviewing the resources and materials recommended.
2. In class, examine a map of North America, and the routes early explorers took from the sea coasts to the interior.
3. Ask each student to map the northwestern interior, clearly showing the Churchill and Saskatchewan River systems and all the "lands draining into Hudson's Bay." The map will show the extent of Rupert's Land.
4. Ask students to mark the exploration routes, including dates, of early explorers.
5. On their maps, have students chart the development of fur trading posts.
6. Prepare a list of early explorers. Early explorers and traders included Henry Kelsey, who travelled inland in 1690-1691; La Vérendrye in 1741; Anthony Henday in 1754-55; Peter Pond 1775-78; Philip Turner first in 1779, again in 1791-92; Peter Fidler in 1796, 1799 and 1800; David Thompson in 1786-88, 1796, 1797 and 1802.



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7. Determine small working groups. Assign one explorer to each group. Ask students to research and study their explorer, reading journal records when they exist. In a short (five minute) class presentation, each group will share information with the class about their assigned explorer. What route did he explore? Who guided him? Who provided necessities along the trail? What hardships were encountered? Did they “winter-over” in the interior? Who provided for the camp? Did the explorations result in changes in fur trade practices or territories? Did he marry a First Nations woman? Did they have children? How did they spend the remainder of their lives? Where are their descendants today?
8. After the presentations have been heard, in a general class discussion, or in a debate format, have the class assess the probability that early Europeans would have survived in North America without the help and support of First Nations and Métis people.

## **ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION**

1. Visit the Museums Association of Saskatchewan at [www.saskmuseums.org](http://www.saskmuseums.org). Various museums in Saskatchewan offer artifacts and exhibits dealing with life in the north and the fur trade. These include Wanuskewin Heritage Park near Saskatoon, the Royal Saskatchewan Museum in Regina, Cumberland House Provincial Park (the site of the first inland Hudson’s Bay Company post has a remnant of stone wall from the powder house), the Northern Gateway Museum at Denare Beach, the Museum at Creighton, Fort Carlton and the Prince Albert Heritage Museum.
2. The topic of the fur trade as a reciprocal arrangement can be supported by a host of complementary activities: journaling or writing a fictitious account of a First Nations trapper or an early trader; drawing, sculpting, or crafting an artifact replica; preparing foods over an open fire; feats of physical strength or endurance.
3. Survey your students. If any of them have a connection to a trapper, invite the trapper to the classroom to discuss his or her work. Contact Aboriginal organizations near you to assess the potential of a class visit from a modern trapper. Or, invite a Métis or First Nations Elder to discuss his or her memories of life on the trapline. For protocol, consult [www.sasklearning.gov.sk.ca/docs/native10/F\\_L\\_Objectives.html#IE](http://www.sasklearning.gov.sk.ca/docs/native10/F_L_Objectives.html#IE).
4. Show a film in class. From the National Film Board, consider *Indian Middlemen - Natives in the Fur Trade, 1990* and *The Other Side of the Ledger: An Indian View of the HBC, 1972*.
5. Assign an essay assignment to students suggesting these such as:
  - Prior to contact, First Nations people lived successfully in a reciprocal accord with the land.
  - First Nations support enabled early exploration of the continent. It enabled early traders to establish footholds on the continent.
  - First Nations people received benefits from the fur trade. Support or dispute.
  - Europeans benefitted from the fur trade. List the benefits and discuss.
  - Fur trade competition lead to increased exploration in the continent’s interior.



## LESSON PLAN FOUR: CLASSROOM WRAP-UP

### LESSON OVERVIEW

The story of the fur trade is not over. Trappers and traders live in Saskatchewan today. Students will learn about modern-day trappers and explore the current debate over trapping.

### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- *Pelts: Politics of the Fur Trade*, 1989 from the National Film Board.
- Visit the Fur Institute of Canada at <http://www.fur.ca/index-e/index.asp> for a pro-fur voice, and to view a document entitled *Aboriginal Trapping – Continuing the Heritage* at <http://www.fur.ca/index-e/aboriginal/index.asp?action=aboriginal&page=atb>.
- Visit Global Action Network at <http://gan.ca/home.en.html> for an anti-fur opinion.



The "Made Beaver Token," was used as a unit currency by the Hudson's Bay Company during the fur trade. Western Development Museum collection WDM-2002-NB-9.3.a-c

### PROCEDURE

1. Prepare to teach by studying pro and anti fur trapping opinions.
2. Show the National Film Board of Canada film, *Pelts: Politics of the Fur Trade*.
3. Discuss the fur trapping industry today.
4. Assign two debate teams to debate the pros and cons of trapping.

### ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION

1. Invite a Home Economics teacher into class to discuss the effects of fashion on the fur industry.
2. Survey your students. If any of them have a connection to a trapper, invite the trapper to the classroom to discuss his or her work. Contact Aboriginal organizations near you to assess the potential of a class visit from a modern trapper. Or, invite a Métis or First Nations Elder to discuss his or her life on the trapline. For protocol, consult [www.sasklearning.gov.sk.ca/docs/native10/F\\_L\\_Objectives.html#IE](http://www.sasklearning.gov.sk.ca/docs/native10/F_L_Objectives.html#IE).



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## **RESOURCES**

- “Fur Trade” and “Fur Trade Posts” by Dale Russell, and “History of Saskatchewan” by Michael Cottrell in *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2005. *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* is now available online at <http://www.esask.ca>.
- “Exploration, the Fur Trade, and the HBC” at [http://www.canadiana.org/hbc/intro\\_e.html](http://www.canadiana.org/hbc/intro_e.html)
- “HBC History” at <http://www.hbc.com/hbcheritage/>
- Visit the *Pathfinders and Passageways* website from the National Library of Canada at <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/explorers>
- “In Pursuit of Adventure: The Fur Trade in Canada and the North West Company” at [http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/toolbar\\_1.htm](http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/toolbar_1.htm)
- “The Fur Trade” at <http://www.civilization.ca/hist/canp1/ca12eng.html>
- For information and images related to the fur trade, visit the Gabriel Dumont Institute’s *The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture* at [www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca).
- *Saskatchewan Settlement Experience* website from the Saskatchewan Archives Board: <http://www.sasksettlement.com>
- “Saskatchewan Historical Time Line” on Saskatchewan GenWeb: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~cansk/Saskatchewan/Timeline-Sk.html>
- Fur Institute of Canada: <http://www.fur.ca/index-e/index.asp>
- Global Action Network: <http://gan.ca/home.en.html>
- Waiser, Bill. *Saskatchewan: A New History*. Calgary: Fifth House Publishers, 2005.
- *Atlas of Saskatchewan*. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1999.
- Ray, Arthur J. *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.
- Van Kirk, Sylvia. *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada*. Winnipeg: Watson and Dyer, 1980.
- Williams, Glundwer. “The HBC and the Fur Trade: 1670-1870,” a special issue of the magazine *The Beaver*. Winnipeg: Hudson’s Bay Company, 1987.
- Office of the Treaty Commissioner’s *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom* education kit in your school library.

## **FAST FACTS**

- Before European contact, First Nations groups treasured their physical and spiritual relationship with the land because from it came everything - food, clothing, shelter, tools, medicine and ceremonial objects.
- Dynamic, thriving nations existed in North America with developed systems of governance, education, language and culture.
- First Nations were diverse in terms of language, clothing styles, cultures, governance structures and livelihoods.
- All of Canada was First Nations’ land, including what is now Saskatchewan. First Nations people have been here for millennia, compared to Europeans’ short time of only a few hundred years. The first European contact with present-day Saskatchewan came from the north through the river systems, not the south.
- Rivers were the highways of the fur trade.



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- The fur trade provided the first contact between European and First Nations people. First Nations were affected and influenced by the fur traders just as much as the traders were influenced by First Nations.
- Contact with Europeans resulted in major changes in the lives of First Nations.
- Trade goods included beads, axes, kettles and blankets in exchange for beaver pelts.
- First Nations people provided vital knowledge, skill and assistance to newcomers. They knew a great deal about their environment - vegetation, rainfall, frost patterns, availability of water - and passed this information on to traders.
- The medicinal properties of plants, roots and herbs was known and shared by First Nations.
- The fur trade resulted in major changes in the lives of First Nations. Some changes were positive, such as labour-saving devices and cloth. Others, like disease, alcohol and dependency on goods, were negative.
- Early explorers and traders included Henry Kelsey, the first European to see the prairies in 1690-1691. Other early explorers included La Vérendrye in 1741; Anthony Henday in 1754-55; Peter Pond 1775-78; Philip Turner first in 1779, again in 1791-92; Peter Fidler in 1796, 1799 and 1800; David Thompson in 1786-88, 1796, 1797 and 1802. La Vérendrye, Peter Fidler and Peter Pond were born in North America.
- The Hudson's Bay Company, established in 1670, built trading posts on Hudson Bay and James Bay to which First Nations journeyed to trade furs. A fortune in furs could be had through trade with First Nations trappers.
- For almost 100 years the Company remained on the shores of the Bay until competition forced traders to move inland. Competition came from the North West Company of Montreal which had established in 1668.
- After 1763 and the defeat of the French in North America, Canadian traders from Montreal gradually took over the trading routes abandoned by the French. The traders joined together into the North West Company. They reached the northwest interior through the St. Lawrence River, Great Lakes and Rainy River system. They came to be known as Nor'Westers.
- The XY Company of Montreal joined in the rivalry for furs, along with a number of independent companies.
- As competition increased, profits decreased. The bitter conflict between the HBC and the North West Company ended in merger in 1821.
- The marriages of early traders and First Nations women eventually gave rise to a new group of "mixed blood" peoples, the Métis, "children of the fur trade," "gens du libre" or Michif. The Métis were boatmen in the fur trade.
- Marriage to a trader ensured the trader a constant supply of furs and ensured a woman's family of a constant market for their furs. When traders married First Nations women, a kinship relationship developed between him and her family. With that came the reciprocal obligation to aid kin in times of need and to provide mutual support.
- For First Nations women, there were both positive and negative aspects of marriage to a trader. In some cases, marriage meant increased prestige, reduced risk of starvation and reduced labour. Sometimes, marriage to a trader meant loss of autonomy in a patriarchal family, isolation from family if they lived at the post, and eventual abandonment when their husband returned to "civilization."
- In 1870, Canada paid the Hudson's Bay Company \$1.5 million Canadian for Rupert's Land. The Company kept 50,000 acres of land around its trading posts.