

Contact with Europeans

The fur trade was a profitable enterprise that benefited both the Europeans that came to Canada and the Aboriginal peoples. As Aboriginal peoples did not have iron-making technology, they were eager to trade with the Europeans for goods such as metal tools and pots. In exchange, the European traders got furs.



Interaction between Aboriginal Peoples and Europeans

To the Europeans, Aboriginal peoples were both teachers and friends because they taught them how to make canoes, snowshoes, and toboggans. They also showed them the best trails and canoe routes.

Aboriginal peoples also took up jobs that the Europeans could not or did not want to do, such as mail delivery between trading posts. As the territory had not been mapped, only the Aboriginal peoples knew their way around.

In the foreign land, many Europeans would not have survived without the help from Aboriginal peoples, who often provided them with food and showed them how to cure diseases like scurvy. Aboriginal women also showed the fur traders how to live in the freezing climate by sewing mittens and leggings.

Problems as a Result of the Fur Trade

The fur trade led to many unexpected problems for the Aboriginal peoples. Because of competition created by the trade, many Aboriginal groups were at war with one another. In the 1600s, for example, the Iroquois wiped out their main rivals and became the most powerful tribe in the east.

Then as the Europeans moved across the land, they brought with them diseases that the Aboriginal peoples had no immunity to. In fact, smallpox had killed as much as 75% of the Aboriginal peoples.

Compounding the problem was the change in the Aboriginal peoples' way of life. Many of them turned to new ways of living and some became addicted to alcohol.

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Look at the following items and read what the Aboriginal chief and the European man say. Then sort the items and answer the questions at the bottom.

The Fur Trade

Items

- metal knives
- metal axe heads
- sewing needles
- knowledge of plant medicines
- knowledge of the lakes, rivers, and forests
- furs
- copper pots
- firearms
- cloth
- alcohol



1

What Aboriginal peoples want are tools, weapons, and other manufactured goods.

2

What Europeans want are raw materials and survival skills.



3

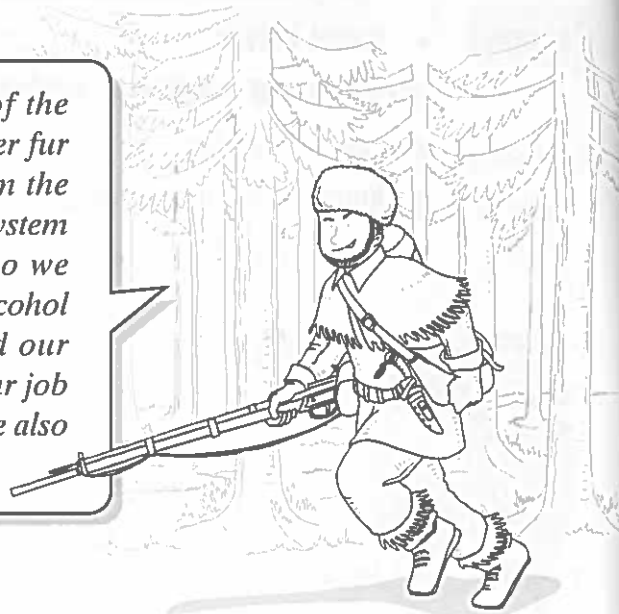
We use a lot of the furs from the trade to make a fashionable item. Do you know what it is?

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Read what the young man says. Then write the correct answers.

“Coureurs de Bois”

We're the “coureurs de bois”, meaning “runners of the woods”. We used to trade European goods for beaver fur from the Aboriginal peoples without approval from the French authorities, but later, the authorities set up a system that controlled the number of coureurs de bois, so we became “voyageurs” with permits. We love drinking alcohol with friends every now and then. We love life and our personality is like a free spirit! That's why we love our job so much. Though we're often exploring the woods, we also know how to use the canoe on rivers and lakes.



1. “coureurs de bois” in English: _____
2. what they gave Aboriginal peoples: _____
3. what they got from Aboriginal peoples: _____
4. the beverage they enjoyed: _____
5. their vehicle on water: _____
6. a later name for them: _____

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Read what Jonathan says. Then read about the differences between the Aboriginal and the European cultures. Think whether each difference would lead to a huge or small conflict. Write "H" or "S".

There were many differences between the Aboriginal and the European cultures. Conflicts inevitably arose, and the Aboriginal peoples were greatly affected after the Europeans' arrival.



	Aboriginal	European	Conflict
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nature was a spirit being; all creatures had a soul 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one god 	<input type="radio"/>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • needs were met by the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some needs were fulfilled by natural resources; others by manufacturing 	<input type="radio"/>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • everyone learned at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most learned at home; some went to school 	<input type="radio"/>
Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no ownership; more of a stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • land could be owned as "property" 	<input type="radio"/>