

The French Fur Trade

The most important players in the early fur trade were Indigenous peoples and the French. The French gave European goods to Indigenous people in exchange for beaver pelts. The fur trade was the most important industry in New France. With the money they made from furs, the French sent settlers to Canada. These were mainly traders and religious missionaries. Missionaries worked to convert Indigenous people to Christianity.

Coueurs des bois (“runners of the woods”) and voyageurs did much to expand the fur trade. They travelled inland and traded with Indigenous peoples. Coueurs des bois were unlicensed traders from New France. A voyageur was like a coureur des bois. The main difference between them is that a voyageur had a license from the government to trade. Voyageurs appeared in the 1680s when the government introduced these licenses.

Traders and explorers often relied on the knowledge of Indigenous guides. Many of the coueurs des bois and voyageurs married Indigenous women. They did so mainly to establish good trading relations. Their descendants are called Métis. The Métis are a recognized Indigenous people in Canada.

(excerpt from [Fur Trade in Canada](#), Canadian Encyclopedia)

How did the French try to change the Indigenous peoples?
How did the Indigenous peoples influence the French traders and explorers?
Who are the Métis?