

# The Fur Trade School Program



The History Museum  
808 W. Washington St.  
South Bend, Indiana 46601  
574 235 9664

School Programming Information contact:  
[education@historymuseumsb.org](mailto:education@historymuseumsb.org)  
For Tour Booking and Information contact:  
[tours@historymuseumsb.org](mailto:tours@historymuseumsb.org)

## Forward

*“This region before the advent of the white man was occupied by the Miamis and Potawatomes. It was made historic by the early explorers and missionaries who used the Kankakee-St. Joseph River portage.”*

This curriculum material is for your use to prepare your students on a study of early northern Indiana and southern Michigan. I hope this information is useful for your study of local history and hope your students find local history exciting and challenging.

Feel free to contact me at any time with questions or concerns. Your students can also benefit from using The History Museum as a resource for study and research. On The History Museum’s website ([historymuseumsb.org](http://historymuseumsb.org)) your students can find an online history of Indiana and St. Joseph County, Indiana. They can also learn about Indiana’s statistics, symbols and significant dates in Indiana history. You and your students can also find links to our staff that are always willing to help students with their research, study or homework.

*Travis Childs*

Director of Education  
The History Museum  
808 W. Washington St.  
South Bend, IN 46601  
(574) 235-9664, ext. 242  
[education@historymuseumsb.org](mailto:education@historymuseumsb.org)

**\*\*\*On the day of your program make sure your students wear old and comfortable shoes. Also, make sure your students dress appropriately for the weather conditions on the day of your scheduled program.**

# The St. Joseph and Kankakee Portage

Shortly after Easter Sunday, 1675, the sick and dishearten priest, Father Jacques Marquette, left the Indian village of Kaskaskia to return to his beloved St. Ignace by a new route, which many scholars believe to have been via the Kankakee River. In that case it is very probably that he and his two faithful attendants made use of the portage between the Kankakee and St. Joseph Rivers—a carrying place of between four and five miles. The portage landing on the St. Joseph River is two and three-quarters miles northwest of the courthouse, as South Bend, St. Joseph County, Indiana (modern day Riverview Cemetery, 2700 Portage Avenue). The portage then extends in a southwesterly course to three small ponds that were the nearest sources of the Kankakee. The basins of these ponds are still clearly defined.

Early in December 1679, LaSalle with Father Hennepin, Tonty and others, journeyed over this portage on their way to the Illinois country. It seems very probable that the explorer Allouez used it also, but some scholars deny this.

The earliest mention of this historic route is found in the writings of Father Louis Hennepin, Henry de Tonty and Rene Robert Cavelier Sieur de LaSalle, who first made use of it as stated above in December 1679. We are led to believe, however, that Louis Joliet, companion of Marquette and co-discoverer of the Mississippi, knew of this portage as early as 1673.

In the early days the region in the vicinity of the portage, the valleys of the St. Joseph and the Kankakee, abounded in a great variety of fur-bearing animals. It was well known among the Indian tribes on account of its excellence as a hunting ground. Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac writing of the lower Peninsula of Michigan in 1701, says: "There are so many vast prairies dotted with woods, thickets and vines where the waters of the streams keep the shores always green and the reaper has left unmown the luxuriant grasses which fatten buffaloes of enormous size." The plain along the eastern bank of the St. Joseph River south of Niles, Michigan, was a noted buffalo resort known to the French as "Parc aux vaches," and to the Indians as "the cow-pasture" or "cow pens." Further up the river the field west and south of the portage landing was called at the time of the visit of Charlevoix in 1721, "La Prairie de Tete la Boeuf" (Buffalo Head Prairie). Along with the buffalo were found the bear, the elk, the deer, the beaver, otter, marten, raccoon, mink, muskrat, possum, lynx and the fox.

## **LaSalle's First Landing at the Portage**

LaSalle and half of his men circled around the southern shore of Lake Michigan, until they reached the mouth of the St. Joseph River. Here Tonty (one of LaSalle's guides) was to have rejoined him, with twenty men, making his way from Michillimackinac (Michigan), along the eastern shore of the lake; but Tonty was nowhere to be seen when LaSalle and his men got to the mouth of the St. Joseph. It was the first of November. Winter was at hand and the streams would soon be frozen. The men clamored to go forward, urging that they should starve if they could not reach the village of Illinois (Indian tribe) before the tribe scattered for the winter hunt. LaSalle would not

be moved, he wanted to wait for Tonty. The men grumbled, but obeyed; and, to divert their thoughts, he set them at building a fort of timber, on a raising ground at the mouth of the river.

They had spent twenty days at this task and their work was well advanced, when at length Tonty appeared. He brought with him only half of his men. Provisions had failed; and the rest of his party had been left ninety miles behind, to sustain themselves by hunting. LaSalle told him to return and hurry them forward. Tonty set out with two men. A violent north wind arose. He tried to run his canoe ashore through the breakers. The two men could not manage their vessel, and he with his one hand could not help them. The boat began to take on water and was quickly swamped, rolling over in the surf. Guns, baggage and provisions were lost; and the three voyagers returned to the Miamis, subsisting on acorns by the way. Happily, the men left behind, excepting two deserters, succeeded, a few days after, in rejoining the rest of the party. However, LaSalle was still waiting on the *Griffith*. Plenty of time had passed for the ship to make it around the portage of the Niagara (Falls) and back again. He could not wait any longer for the replenishing supplies that the *Griffith* held below her decks. LaSalle sent two men back to Michillimackinac to meet her, if she still existed, and pilot her to his new fort of the Miamis, and then prepared to ascend the river, whose weedy edges were already glassed with thin flakes of ice. The *Griffith* was never heard from again.

On the third of December, the party re-embarked, thirty-three in all, in eight canoes, and ascended the chill current of the St. Joseph, bordered with dreary meadows and bare gray forests. When they approached the site of the present village of South Bend, they looked anxiously along the shore on their right to find the portage or path leading to the headquarters of the Illinois. LaSalle's Mohegan Indian guide was absent because he was hunting for the group and the group passed the entrance of the portage without seeing it. LaSalle landed to search the woods. Hours passed, and he did not return. Father Hennepin and Tonty grew uneasy, disembarked and camped ordering the guns to be fired and sent out two men to scour the woods. Night came, but not their lost leader. Muffled in their blankets and powdered by the thick-falling snowflakes, they sat speculating as to what had befallen him; nor was it until 4:00 the next afternoon that they saw him approaching along the margin of the river. His face and hands were covered with charcoal; and he was farther decorated with two possums, which hung from his belt, and which he had killed with a stick as they were swinging head downwards from the limb of a tree, as they have a habit of doing. He had got lost in the forest, and had been forced to make a wide circle around the edge of a swamp (evidently the swamp at Mishawaka); while the snow, of which the air was full, added to his perplexities. Thus he pushed on through the rest of the day and the greater part of the night, until about 2:00 in the morning he reached the river again and fired his gun as a signal to the rest of the party. Hearing no answering shot, he pursued his way along the bank, when he presently saw the gleam of a fire among the dense thickets very close to him. Not doubting that he had found the camp of the exploring party, he quickly ran to the spot. To his surprise, no human being was to be seen. Under a tree beside the fire was a heap of dry grass impressed with the form of a man who must have fled but a moment before, for the makeshift bed was still warm. It was, no doubt an Indian, who was scared away by LaSalle's firing his weapon. LaSalle called out in several Indian languages; but there was dead silence all around. He then, with admirable

coolness, took possession of the small camp he had found, shouting into the darkness that he was about to sleep in his bed; and laid down and slept until morning.

LaSalle's Mohegan guide had rejoined the party before LaSalle's return and with his aid the portage was soon found. Here the party camped. LaSalle, who was fatigued, created and occupied, together with Hennepin, a wigwam covered in the Indian manner with mats of reeds. The cold forced them to start a fire, which before daybreak set the mats in a blaze; and the two sleepers narrowly escaped being burned along with their hut.

In the morning the party shouldered their canoes and baggage and began their march for the sources of the Illinois River, some five miles away. Around them stretched a desolate plain, half covered with snow, and strewn with the skull and bones of buffalo; while, on its farthest verge, they could see the lodges of the Miami Indians, who had made this place their home. They soon reached a spot where the oozy, saturated soil quaked beneath their feet. All around were clumps of alder bushes, tufts of rank grass and pools of water. In the midst, a dark and lazy current, which a tall man might walk, crept twisting like a snake among the weeds and rushes. Here were the sources of the Kankakee, one of the heads of the Illinois. They set their canoes on this thread of water, embarked their baggage and themselves and pushed down the sluggish current of water.

## René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle (1670-1687)

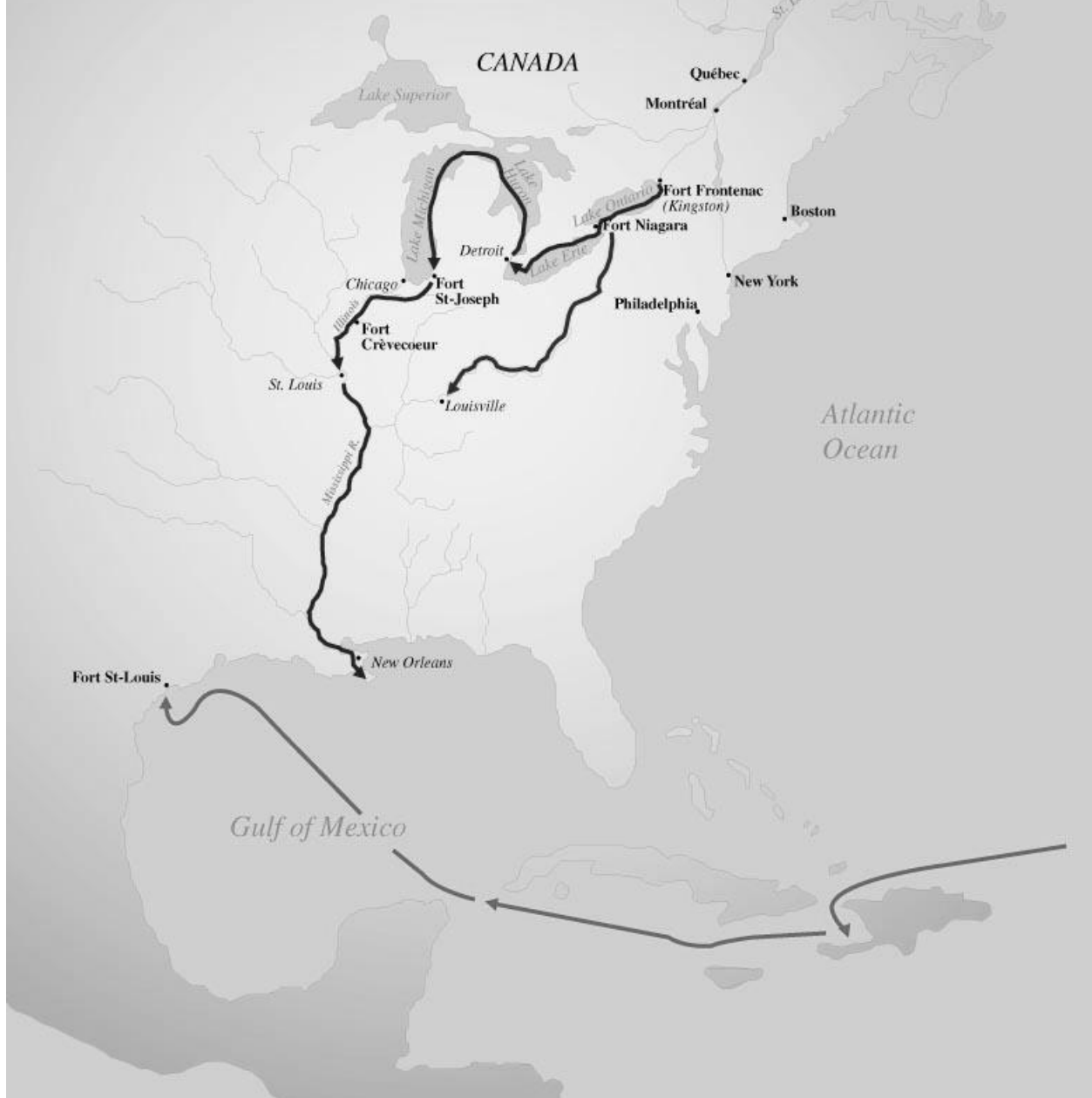
→ : the explorer's route in 1670

→ : the explorer's route between 1679 and 1682

→ : the explorer's route between 1684 and 1687

**Québec:** towns, settlements and forts of the colonial era

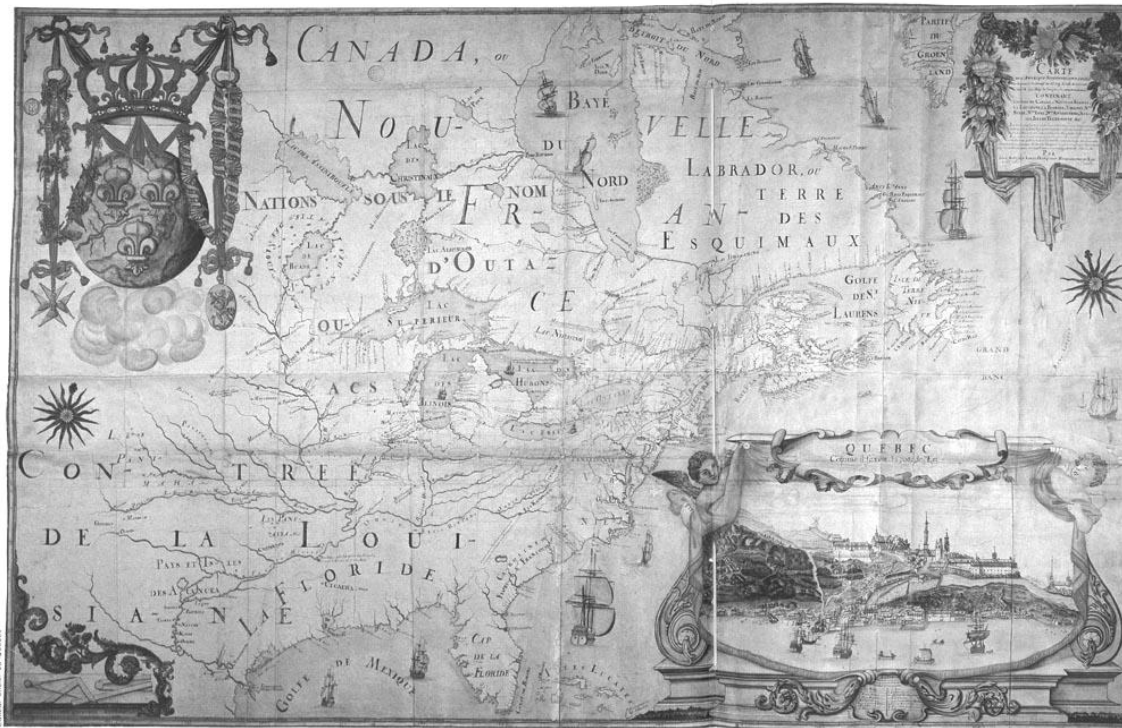
*Detroit:* future towns



LaSalle's route from Fort Frontenac to New Orleans.

# The Fur Trade

New France established its subsistence on the economic foundation that became its first and main source of revenue: the commerce of furs.



This commerce generated an attractive and lucrative economic activity based on barter, namely the fur trade. The Natives traded pelts and fur skins for trading goods manufactured in Europe and offered by the French.

The activities of the *coureurs des bois* contributed to the rapid expansion of the territory of New France, north of the Great Lakes to Hudson Bay, and south to the Gulf of Mexico. At the end of the XVIIth century, they journeyed regularly on the main rivers in northern Québec and Ontario, as well as to the south and southwest. Long before they were named, several large American States, such as Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana had been visited by the *coureurs des bois*.

In the early XVIIth century, the Native nations that traded with the French belonged to two distinct linguistic families: the Algic or Algonquian family and the Huron-Iroquoian family.

At the time, the nations of the Algonquian family were nomads and they roamed over the greatest part of what is today Québec. The most populous nations were the Micmacs, Montagnais, Attikamek, Cree and Algonquins. On the other hand, the nations

of the Huron-Iroquoian family were sedentary and lived southwest and west of the current territory of Québec.

Comprised of five nations, the Iroquois lived in the region that is today the northern part of the State of New York. There were four Huron nations living on a territory located east of the great lake that was named after them. The Neutrals lived around Lake Erie and the Petum, on the Bruce Peninsula.

When Samuel de Champlain founded Québec in 1608, the Iroquois were already at war with the Algonquian nations. After 1640, they intensified their attacks against the Hurons, who had become the main suppliers of furs to the French by then. In the middle of the XVIIth century, Huronia was practically annihilated.

Early in 1653, Native conflicts paralyzed the trade. According to Jesuit missionary François-Joseph Le Mercier, New France was on the verge of bankruptcy:

*"At no time in the past were the beavers more plentiful in our lakes and rivers and more scarce in the country's stores [...] The war against the Iroquois has exhausted all the sources [...] the Huron flotillas have ceased to come for the trade; the Algonquins are depopulated and the remote Nations have withdrawn even further in fear of the Iroquois. The Montréal store has not purchased a single beaver from the Natives in the past year. At Trois-Rivières, the few Natives that came were employed to defend the place where the enemy is expected. The store in Québec is the image of poverty".*

The Iroquois, who had been attacking isolated colonists for a number of years, were threatening the very existence of the colony. Montréal was especially vulnerable; being located so close to Iroquois territory. Its population amounted to about sixty people at the time, only a third of who were capable of bearing arms.

However, hope was revived when the Iroquois proposed to make peace with the French and when it was learned that the Ottawa, a Nation occupying a territory beyond Huronia, was coming to trade in the Saint Lawrence Lowlands.

In November 1653, nearly 140 individuals arrived in Montréal to settle there. This sudden increase in population plunged Ville-Marie in a great state of euphoria.

Before 1652, the fur trade was the exclusive monopoly of the various merchant companies operating successively in New France. Only the clerks employed by these companies were authorized to trade. The inhabitants of the colony could procure themselves furs, but only in exchange for the product of their harvests or trade. The bartering of trading goods was strictly forbidden to them.

Joined to the liberalization of the laws regulating trading activities by the inhabitants in 1652, the events of 1653 contributed to the emergence of the *coureurs des bois* and extended their field of action considerably, because trading ceased to be confined to the major establishments in Québec, Trois-Rivières and Montréal.



The Natives had come each year to these great trading posts to exchange their furs for goods. From then on, the *coureurs des bois* went directly to their suppliers to collect the pelts. They mostly went to the regions of the Great Lakes and the upper Mississippi, named the "Pays d'en Haut" ('upper country') because to get there, one had to navigate upstream from Montréal.

Jesuit priest Le Mercier was the first to write about this turn of events in the fall of 1653. He described the sudden trading fever that seized the youth of the colony:

"[...] our entire French youth is planning to go trading with the Nations, who are disseminated all over the territories and they hope to come back with beaver pelts from many hunting seasons."

Jean de Lauson, Governor of the colony, was the first to act in order to cool this great eagerness. On April 28, 1654, he decreed that no one would be allowed to go trading "*with the Hurons or other Nations without our previous written consent, under penalty of a fine*" Officially, he simply wanted to know "*the number and quality of the individuals who wish to embark on these voyages*".

Governor Jean de Lauson was himself quite interested in pelts, but his motives went beyond simple accounting. During the winter, he learned that the peace proposal of the Iroquois was predicated by their wish to capture a group of Hurons who had fled to Québec. In April, a little time before he published his decree, a young surgeon from Montréal had been abducted and kept in captivity by the Oneida, one of the five Iroquois nations. The Iroquois menace having been confirmed by this event, the Governor was in fact acting in such a way as to be able to control and limit the number of people who left the colony, in order to have a maximum number of men capable to bear arms.

A few months later, the Iroquois returned their prisoner to Montréal and re-stated their intention of concluding peace. At the end of June and early in July, a flotilla of canoes carrying about a hundred Petum and Ottawa tribesmen came to Montreal. When they left on August 6, they were accompanied by "*two young courageous Frenchmen who had obtained the permission of monsieur le gouverneur of the country*".

One of them was no doubt Médard Chouart Des Groseilliers, whose adventures made him as famous as the Hudson Bay Company, which he was instrumental in founding. The second was probably Nicolas Forget alias Despatis (Forget) who, on the day of the departure, put his signature on what could have been the very first partnership agreement for a 'trading run'. They were the first *coureurs des bois* to go to the Pays d'en Haut. When they came back at the end of August 1656, with 50 canoes filled with pelts, they were welcomed as heroes: "*Their arrival caused universal joy in the entire country*". In Québec, gun salvos were fired in their honor, and the population was exhilarated.

In September 1672, a short time after his arrival at Québec, Louis de Buade de Frontenac, the new Governor of New France, published a decree reinstating the trading

leave system. The offenders would be severely punished: those who equipped the *coureurs des bois* or who bought their pelts would pay fines and their merchandise would be confiscated. As for those who went 'wood running' without a leave signed by the Governor himself, they would be flogged or even condemned to the galleys.

This decree gave birth to two groups of traders: those who held legitimate licenses or leaves; these individuals soon adopted the name "voyageurs" to differentiate themselves from the *coureur des bois*, who were henceforth trading illegally. From the hero he was some fifteen years before; the *coureur des bois* became an outlaw.

In November 1674, two years following his decree, Frontenac was exhilarated. He wrote to Minister Colbert that he had been successful in suppressing wood running, and that the hanging of one *coureur des bois* intimidated the others to such an extent that there were but five left in the whole of Canada.

However, the marquis de Frontenac took care not to reveal to the Minister of the Colonies of Louis XIV that, since his arrival in the colony, he had been trying to control the trade for his own profit. For many years, regardless of their position, most administrators in New France had their eyes set on the profits generated by the fur trade.

This phenomenon endured until the end of the XVIIth century and it was one of the reasons why the numbers of *coureurs des bois* kept increasing. The Governor extended trading leaves to those voyageurs that he gained over to his cause. The others, among who were many merchants and even the Governor of Montréal, were forced to call upon the *coureurs des bois*.

Nevertheless, the first act of the story of the *coureurs des bois* was coming to an end. During the 1670s, the expansion of the reservoir of pelts led the *coureurs des bois* to the west and the southwest. In the early 1680s, some traders settled on the shores of Hudson Bay. These movements naturally produced increases in the numbers of furs and pelt harvested.

Thus, from 1675 to 1685, the average annual production of beaver pelts was about 89,500 pounds (weight); that number rose to 140,000 pounds from 1685 to 1687. Two years later, 160 canoes arrived in Montréal with a cargo of about 800,000 pounds of beaver pelts. However inexhaustible the source, the French market could only absorb 40,000 to 50,000 pounds of pelts per year.

In 1690, the metropolitan authorities deplored such surpluses. Their complaints were ignored in the colony, because the French merchants were obliged to pay a fixed price for all the pelts brought to their stores by the Canadian traders. Year after year, the unsold pelts piled up and rotted in the stockrooms.

In 1696, Louis XIV published a decree virtually restricting the trading activities to the establishments located along the St. Lawrence River. This document was a turning

point and signaled the end of the first generation of *coureurs des bois*. Trading leaves were abolished and it was henceforth forbidden

"to every person, regardless of rank or condition, to leave on a trading trip or to go inland for any reason, under pain of the galleys; and requires all Frenchmen settled with or visiting the Natives to take their leave and return, or they will be liable of the same punishment."

## The Voyageur

It is unlikely that more than about one hundred ordinary settlers and sons of settlers became voyageurs. The voyageurs were generally single and relatively young, most of them in their twenties. Some were born in France, others in the colony. Some of them resided on the Island of Montréal and the surrounding region, but it appears that most of them lived in Trois-Rivières and the neighboring villages: Batiscan, Champlain and Cap-de-la-Madeleine. The latter two villages in particular were the homes of many voyageur families: Aubuchon, Chorel, Crevier, Foisy, Gatineau, Lafond, Pépin, Provencher and Trottier.

Finally, the *coureurs des bois* were mostly recruited among trade less young men, called "volontaires"; these were generally soldiers or hired men whose contract had expired. Having little or no money, no family and no relations, they traded on a small scale for a short time before returning to France or attempting to settle in the colony.

The great majority of the *coureur des bois* belonged to one of two categories of individuals: those who made a career of it and those who wanted to accumulate a certain sum of money to help them settle.

### ***Michel Accault***

Michel Accault was a colorful individual, the archetypal career *coureur des bois* whose behavior was so often chastised by the authorities of New France.

He arrived in the colony in 1665 or 1666, and he settled as a colonist in Beauport, near Québec. In 1673, he borrowed 568 livres from some individuals and left for the Pays d'en Haut. He never returned to Québec. A good canoe man, he accompanied Robert Cavalier de La Salle. He was captured by the Sioux and freed by Daniel Greysolon Dulhut, whom he accompanied for some time thereafter in the capacity of guide and right-hand man.

A price was later put on his head, and he managed to escape from the authorities. Unscrupulous and disorderly, he had natural-born children in several tribes. In 1693, he married the daughter of the chieftain of the Kaskaskias tribe. He settled in the village bearing the same name, became a chieftain himself and became an exemplary head of family. He supported the missionaries and he was often named godfather to the

children of his old mates, who also married Illinois women and settled in the same location. Accault died in 1702.

### ***Nicolas Desroches***

Nicolas Desroches was the typical *coureur des bois* for whom the fur trade was but a prelude to a settled life in the colony. He was 32 years old when his father died in 1684 and by then, he had probably already been in the Pays d'en Haut for some years. He traveled for two more years, during which he settled the debts of the estate amounting to 625 livres, a considerable sum at the time.

His brother, who until then had taken over from their late father, married in 1686 and left the paternal home. Left alone with young children, Nicolas Desroches' mother then asked him to come and support her. In exchange for his help in maintaining the estate, she gave him her own half of the communal wealth. Nicolas bought back the other half from his brothers and sisters. He then abandoned the life of the *coureur des bois*, maintained the household, and finally married and founded his own family. He did all this with the savings he had accumulated in the Pays d'en Haut.

## Portages

The continent was immense and nearly all covered in forests. Therefore, the *coureurs des bois* and *voyageurs* had to navigate the lakes and rivers in bark canoes, which were fragile rafts that could get damaged by hitting the slightest obstacle and capsize at the smallest false movement.

Two to three months of hardship were required to cover the distance from Montréal to Michillimakinac. To get there, the *voyageurs* first traveled the Ottawa and Mattawa rivers upstream to Lake Nipissing, which they crossed to the river French, which in turn took them to the north of Georgian Bay, in Lake Huron.

This journey required at least 30 portages. The canoes and cargo were hauled to the shore. The men then carried them on their backs to the next navigable point, through sand, shoals and woods and along the rock formations. Sometimes, the men had to cover a few kilometers on land. In such cases, each man carried two bales weighing up to 200 pounds, held by a strap around the head.

Portages were made both ways and the weight of cargo was more or less the same, whether it was comprised of trading goods or the furs that were obtained in exchange. In the XVIIth century, a canoe could contain 1,000 pounds weight of cargo; that load was tripled with the introduction of larger canoes after 1715.

# Teaching and Lesson Ideas

Here are some teaching ideas and lessons that may help your students' study of the fur trade and early explorers to this area.

## Follow an Explorer

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**Theme Project:** Choose a route of an explorer. Think about what you would see today if you traveled that route.

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**1. Choose an Explorer** Search through the unit or do additional research to find an explorer who interests you. Select one of his journeys to focus on. Write the explorer's name and the beginning and ending locations of the route he took on his journey.

The explorer I chose for the Theme Project is: \_\_\_\_\_.

Born: \_\_\_\_\_.

Died: \_\_\_\_\_.

The route I will study:

Starts in \_\_\_\_\_

Ends in \_\_\_\_\_

Passes through what is now \_\_\_\_\_

**2. What to Wear?** Research what people like your explorer wore. Also, think about where the explorer is going on the journey. Write a description of some of the clothing you would pack for your journey with this explorer.

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**3. Draw a Map Showing Change** Create a map with illustrations that show how things have changed from the time the explorer made the journey to today. Think especially about how the land and the people who live there are different. To help prepare to make your map, answer the following questions:

Who lived in the land when the explorer arrived?

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Who lives in this land now?

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What was the land like when the explorer arrived?

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What is the land like now?

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Some features I want to have on my map are:

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Map completed

**4. Write a Story** Write a story about the people you meet on the journey. To help plan your story, answer the following questions:

The main idea of my story is:

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Here are some things that might happen in my story:

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Here are some ideas about how my story will end:

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The title of my story might be:

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Draft completed

Final completed

**5. Make a Transportation Collage** Think about the kinds of transportation you might need as you travel. List them below. Modes of transportation can include ships, horses, mules and your own feet. Make drawings or find pictures that represent the types of transportation you will be using. Arrange the pictures and drawings on posterboard to create your collage. Choose a title for your work and add it to the collage.

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Collage completed

**6. Display Your Work** With your teacher and classmates, choose an "Explorers' Show-and-Tell Day," so you can share your work. You might even want to dress in a costume. Show your classmates your map and explain your route. Tell what the land was like when you first saw it. Then read your story about the people you met. As you hear your classmates tell about their journeys, discuss how the journeys were the same or different.



# NATIVE AMERICANS TRIBES

There were several tribes that called Northern Indiana and Southern Michigan home throughout several centuries. What follows is a description of these tribes and some of their more peculiar habits and lifestyles. Some of these tribes LaSalle and his men would have (or may have) encountered in their explorations to this area.

## **Mascouten**

Jacques Marquette, who made a long journey by canoe by way of the Illinois River to the Mississippi and down that river to Arkansas, visited the Mascouten tribe in 1673.

Marquette has left an account of this voyage in his journal. He found the Mascouten in their village at the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin rivers, living with the Miami and Kickapoo. Marquette mentions that the Mascouten and Kickapoo were a ruder type of people than the Miami and seemed peasants by comparison. He also observed that they lived in cabins made of rushes, which didn't afford them much protection. They could be rolled up, however, and were easily transported whenever necessary.

Louis Hennepin, a missionary who claimed to be the first to descend to the mouth of the Mississippi, though this claim is open to dispute, also mentions the Mascouten. He describes the Mascouten as being very clownish and differing distinctly from the Miami. It is believed that the Mascouten, along with the Kickapoo, had a reputation for treachery and deceit, and were of an uneasy and warlike nature. These missionaries said that the Mascouten worshiped the sun and thunder, but did not practice rites nor honor a variety of minor deities, as did many Indian tribes.

In 1712 the Mascouten and Kickapoo joined the Fox as allies against the French. In this same year the Potawatomi and other northern tribes attacked the Fox and the Mascouten at the siege of Detroit, taking prisoners and killing almost two thousand Fox and Mascouten. By 1780 the Mascouten seem to have faded into history. Probably the Sauk and Fox absorbed the northern group and the Kickapoo the southern group.

## **Miami**

The Miami probably occupied the western portion of Michigan at an early time in history, although they later left this area for reasons unknown. The Jesuits arrived at the St. Joseph River in 1673, naming it "River of the Miamis," because it ran through the country of these Indians. Although the Miami still inhabited the area, it is believed they were not very numerous.

The major village of the Miami was on the Kankakee River, which rises in northern Indiana and flows westward through southern Illinois. LaSalle, famous French explorer, visited this village while he tried to make peace with the Indians of the area. LaSalle accomplished his goal, but the peace was short-lived, for the Miami feared the approach of Iroquois war parties. In 1680 a party of Iroquois was returning from a foray with one of the Illinois tribes, and while traveling back toward their country they surprised a small band of Miami and killed them. They then built crude forts with brush and trees right in

the center of the Miami country. The Miami appealed to LaSalle to help them rid their country of the Iroquois. Responding to their pleas, he met a band of Iroquois warriors and so completely bewildered them by his threats that they waited for dark to steal away in the safety of the night. After this unusual victory by LaSalle, the Miami gave their allegiance to the French. They also agreed to make peace with the Illinois and in 1681 removed themselves to an area near Lake Peoria.

Father Louis Hennepin when visiting a Miami village wrote:

This village, as I have intimated, consists of three several nations, viz. Miamis, Maskoutens and Kikabeaux. The first are more civil than the other and better shaped, as well as more liberal. They were long hair over their ears, which looks well enough. They are accounted valiant men amongst their neighbors; but are so cunning, that they seldom return from their warlike expeditions and booty. They are apt to learn anything, for they love to hear the European's talk; and Father Allouez told me, that they had such a violent desire to be instructed, that they often disturbed his rest to ask him questions about what he had told them the day before. They go stark naked in the summertime, wearing only the kind of shoes made of skins of bulls; but the winter being pretty severe in their country, though very short, they wear gowns made of skins of wild beasts, or of bulls, which they dress and paint most curiously as I have already observed.

Miami men were of medium height, well built, heads rather round, composure agreeable, and swift runner. The women wore deerskins, while the men were usually tattooed from head to foot. The lodges they lived in were covered with rush mats. They did most of their traveling by land rather than canoe. The Miami worshiped the sun and thunder, both of which played an important part in their lives, for they realized that sun and rain were needed to make their crops grow.

## Potawatomi

Closely related to the Ottawas and Ojibwas, the Potawatomis are an Algonquian-speaking people who originally inhabited the Great Lakes region. Initial French records suggest that prior to 1640 the Potawatomis occupied the southwestern quadrant of the lower peninsula of Michigan, but during the Beaver Wars, which began in the 1640s, they fled attacks by the Neutrals, first seeking refuge from the Neutrals and Iroquois. By 1675 the Potawatomis had emerged as one of the dominant tribes in the Green Bay region. During the colonial period Potawatomi warriors consistently supported the French in their warfare against the British, often journeying to Montreal to join French expeditions against New England. Meanwhile, many Potawatomi women married French traders or *coureurs des bois*, and those unions produced growing numbers of mixed-blood or Metis children, many of whom assumed positions of leadership within the tribe.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century many Potawatomis moved back toward their old homeland, occupying the region from modern Milwaukee through Chicago and across southern Michigan to Detroit. Potawatomi tribespeople also established villages down the Illinois River as far south as Lake Peoria, and at the headwaters of the Kankakee, Tippecanoe and Maumee Rivers in Indiana. Participants in the fur trade, Potawatomi villages

continued to raise small crops of corn, beans, and pumpkins, and to take fish from lakes and streams and deer from the forests, but by 1750 they were dependent upon European traders for muskets, gunpowder, metal instruments, and other trade goods that once had been luxury items.

Many Potawatomis, particularly those living in northern Indiana and southern Michigan (the Wabash band) continued to adopt white ways following the War of 1812 and a coterie of mixed bloods emerged as influential and wealthy traders. Yet as American settlement flooded the upper Midwest the Potawatomis were forced to cede much of their homeland, and between 1816 and 1832 they agreed to 12 major land cessions, relinquishing most of their territory in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. In consequence, the federal government removed the tribe piecemeal, first resettling tribespeople from Illinois and Wisconsin (the Prairie band) in northwestern Missouri and western Iowa, then removing the Wabash band to the Osage River Subagency from Kansas. In 1846 all the Potawatomis in the West were consolidated on a new reservation along the Kansas River, just west of modern Topeka. Meanwhile, Potawatomis who had fled removal gathered at Walpole Island, across from Detroit, or scattered through the forests of northeastern Wisconsin. In addition, followers of Simon Pokagon, an acculturated Roman Catholic leader, remained on their privately owned lands near Niles, Michigan, while another smaller community continued to reside on the Huron River in eastern Michigan.

In early times the Potawatomi made their clothing of tanned animal hides and furs. The men wore moccasins, leggings, breechcloths, garters, leather shirts and sometimes belts. On their heads they wore feathers, fur turbans, and roaches. They wore fur robes and carried bandoleers over their shoulders. Clothing was decorated by painted designs and dyed quillwork. Later, when trade goods were introduced, glass beads and appliqué work decorated their clothing. Finger-woven sash, a muslin-like material, was worn as a turban, across the shoulders, and around the waist as a belt. They carried bags that resembled the sleeve of a woman's ruffled blouse with a drawstring at the top.

Potawatomis hunted deer, elk, bear, beaver, muskrats, and probably all of the other available animals, by means of bows and arrows, spears, snares, and traps. Fishing was important too. Fish were caught with hook and line, nets, and spears. Hunting and fishing were male occupations, whereas planting of crops and the women did harvesting. Digging sticks and wooden hoes were the only agricultural implements. The women also collected wild foods such as nuts, roots, berries and wild rice. Both men and women, at least in later times, collected the sap from maple trees and converted it into sugar. Equipment used consisted of wedges, wooden troughs, birch bark buckets, wooden vessels and probably pottery.

The villages of the Ottawa and Potawatomi were occupied primarily in the summertime. Dwellings were dome-shaped wigwams made of saplings covered with mats and large bark-covered houses similar to those of the Huron. Circular palisades of upright logs protected some villages. Ottawa and Potawatomi villages, unlike those of the Hurons, were located along waterways navigable by canoes. The dome-shaped wigwams were used not only in the villages but also in the winter hunting grounds.

The Potawatomi tribe was subdivided into a number of bands that possessed their own territories and were politically independent of one another, although closely connected by ties of clan, kinship and language.

A clan was a group of actual and assumed blood relatives, tracing their descent from a hypothetical, single ancestor through the male line. Every tribal member belonged to a clan. One could not marry a member of the same clan, thus in any given family a father and his children belonged to one clan-the mother to another clan. And since these different clans were distributed among all the bands, they gave each tribe a certain unity because fellow clansmen recognized one another as close relatives even when they belonged to different bands.

In addition to the close ties of kinship and family, there were numerous affinal relatives obtained by intermarriage between families belonging to different clans and even different tribes. Polygamy was common, at least in the period before 1800. Therefore a man could have two or more wives, and although in many instances these wives might have been sisters, in some instances they were not. Thus, in the instances of plural wives who were not sisters, the husband and his relatives would have acquired a larger number of affinal relatives than is possible under the European-American system of marriage.

The religion of the Potawatomis consisted of an organized body of beliefs and ritual practices involving a concept of a "Great Spirit," deities of fire, sun, and sea, as well as gods of the four directions; manitous (a term used by Algonquian Indians to mean the mysterious and unknown powers of life of the universe), or supernatural power in natural objects, such as rocks, plants, and animals; and personal manitous, or guardians, who were acquired by an individual through fasting and dreaming. It was believed that the human body had but one soul or spirit, which at death followed a trail over the Milky Way to the west, where there was a heaven.

The power of deities and manitous was visualized by the sacred clan bundles; Medicine Society bundles, medicine bags, and other sacred objects or charms, as well as by ritual and ceremonies which involved dancing to the music of drums, rattles, and whistles and the eating of dogs especially raised for ceremonial feasts. A large body of mythology also served to make real the power of the deities and manitous.

The dead were buried with ceremony, sometimes after having been placed on a scaffold for an indefinite period.