

1786 – 1856

nwt history

1786

Metis and the Fur Trade

- The history of the fur trade and the Metis of the NWT are bound to one another. In many ways the people were born from the trade. It can also be said that the fur trade in the North was born in large part due to the efforts of the Metis. The Metis represent the contact and relationship(s) established between Aboriginal peoples and those of European ancestry. In a similar way, Metis people have often played significant roles as go-betweens, translators and human bridges between these two very different cultures while maintaining a unique culture and identity.



photo provided by: NWT Archives

1819-22

Peace and Partnerships

- Akaitcho, Beaulieu and Mandeville.

In 1820, Sir John Franklin found himself racing toward Fort Enterprise with no supplies and his journey doomed. In the end, Akaitcho, a powerful leader of the Yellowknife Dene, rescued the explorer. Although Franklin became a British hero, very little was written about Akaitcho. The absence of Akaitcho from the history books is not uncommon. Many of the people and events that shaped life in the North were never written about. Although Akaitcho, Francois Beaulieu II and Baptiste de Mandeville are all briefly mentioned in Franklin's official records, the legacy of these three remarkable men is more important in the spoken history of the North. These three Aboriginal leaders founded communities, forged peace and created partnerships which have proven to be of far more enduring significance than wanderings of Franklin.



photo provided by: HBC Archives

1576-1906

Across the Top of the World

- Search for the Northwest Passage.

The search for the Northwest Passage is one of heroism, ignorance, national pride and disaster. A map of the NWT still shows the importance of this quest in shaping the North. Many place names and communities in the NWT are, or have been, named for early explorers in quest of the passage. The NWP was primarily a British endeavour and involved men such as Henry Hudson, Samuel Hearne, Edward Parry, John Franklin and John Rae. In the mid-1800s the British Admiralty sent several expeditions to complete the passage, among them the doomed voyage of Sir John Franklin. It was not until 1906, that the Norwegian Roald Amundsen successfully navigated the passage.

photo provided by: HBC Archives

1786

1789

1800-1840

1819-22

1821

1823

1576-1906

1845-54

1849

1850-56

Awgeenah leads Aboriginal group that assists Alexander Mackenzie on his search for the Northwest Passage. Mackenzie crosses Great Slave Lake and travels down the Deh Cho (which he names 'the River of Disappointment') to the Arctic Ocean.

The North West Company establishes numerous posts along Mackenzie and Liard Rivers; Fort Good Hope, most northerly post, is established in 1804; Fort Simpson becomes the centre of the Mackenzie Valley fur trade.

The Hudson's Bay Company takes over the North West Company, ending (for a while) competition in the fur trade.

Chiefs Edzo and Akaitcho make a lasting peace between Dogrib and Yellowknives after decades of fighting.

Franklin and crew disappear while searching for the Northwest Passage; thirty expeditions search for them in the following years. Travelling overland, using Aboriginal methods of survival, John Rae completes discovery of the navigable Northwest Passage.

The first church in the NWT was founded in Fort Chipewyan in 1849.

30,000 marten furs are exported yearly from the Mackenzie District.