

# The Changing Fur Trade in the NWT



## FUR TRADE - EDUKIT CONTENTS

### In The Bin – 4 items

1. Brown Information Package
2. “Hands-on” Items in White Plastic Bin
3. Teaching Resources in Grey Box
4. 18 Clothespins and a rope for the Timeline in ziploc bag

### Teaching Resources in Grey Box

1. 1 Teacher’s guide
2. 1 CD-Rom : “Let’s Go : Fishing, Hunting, Trapping”
3. 1 Photo Album
4. 2 VHS Cassettes
  1. “Fur : The Fabric of a Nation”
  2. “The Voyageur”
5. 2 Books
  1. “Adventurers”
  2. “The Blanket”
6. 1 Poster : “Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs Poster”
7. 1 Colouring book
8. 1 Clear envelope with 5 books
  1. “The History and Archeology of Fort McPherson”
  2. “Yellowknife Journal”
  3. “Thanadelthur” – (and Teacher’s guide)
  4. “Trapline to Trading Post”
  5. “Fur Trade Stories from Whatì”
9. 1 Audio CD : “Songs of the Voyageurs”

### “Hands-on” Items in White Plastic Bin

1. 1 Sample of Hudson’s Bay Blanket
2. 1 Beaver Pelt
3. 2 Samples of Trade Beads
  1. 1 Card
  2. 1 Bag
4. 1 Miniature Clay Pipe
5. 1 Tobacco Twist
6. 1 Métis Sash
7. 1 Sample of Beaver “felt” (used for making hats)

### Information Packages in Brown Folder

1. 1 Student Activity Book for Fur Trade Cards
2. 9 Fur Trade Information Packages
  1. **FT 1** : “The Hudson’s Bay Company”
  2. **FT 2** : “The North West Company”
  3. **FT 3** : “Stuff” of the Fur Trade”
  4. **FT 4** : “Paddling, Portaging and Working in the Forts”
  5. **FT 5** : “Cooperation and Conflict” in the Fur Trade”
  6. **FT 6** : “People of the northern fur trade”
  7. **FT 7** : “Métis of the Fur Trade”
  8. **FT 8** : “The Changing Fur Trade in the NWT”
  9. **FT 9** : “The Fur Trade Today”



For more information on Edukits and  
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*Des services en français sont disponibles*



# Fur Trade – Changing times in the NWT

## Information Packages



“Hands-on” Items



Teaching Resources

- Information Packages
- “Hands-On” Items
- Teaching Resources
- Timeline Clothesline (not shown here)

## Teaching Resources



- Teacher’s guide
- CD “Let’s go fishing-hunting-trapping”
- Photo album
- 2 VHS
- 2 Books
- 1 Poster
- 1 Colouring book
- 5 Books
- 1 audio CD



“Hands-on” Items

- Sample of Hudson’s Bay Blanket
- 1 Beaver Pelt
- 2 Samples of Trade Beads (1 card, 1 bag)
- 1 Miniature Clay Pipe
- 1 Métis Sash
- 1 Tobacco Twist
- 1 Sample of beaver “felt ”

## Contents of Edukit

## Information Packages



- Student Activity Book for Fur Trade Cards

### 9 Fur Trade Information Packages

- FT1:** The Hudson’s Bay Company
- FT2:** The North West Company
- FT3:** “Stuff” of the Fur Trade
- FT4:** Paddling, Portaging and Working in the Forts.

- FT5:** “Cooperation and Conflict” in the Fur Trade
- FT6:** People of the northern fur trade
- FT7:** Métis of the Fur Trade
- FT8:** The Changing Fur Trade in the NWT
- FT9:** The Fur Trade Today







SKIN LODGES OF THE DOGRIBB INDIANS IN FRONT OF H.B. CO'S FORT  
GREAT-SLAVE LAKE

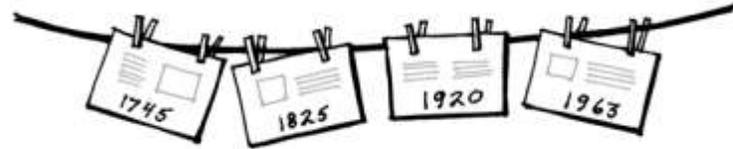
*Photo by CH. MATHERS, Edmonton.*

# The North West Company



There were two major companies in the fur trade, the Hudson's Bay Company and the **North West Company**. Find out more about the **NWC** by reading these cards.

# Timeline Clothesline



Develop a timeline card which explains the beginning of the North West Company. Decide together what information to include.

Each member of your group can pick one other event, person, place or thing related to the development of the NWC to put onto separate timeline cards.

# Ideas for Class Presentation



The North West Company was different from the Hudson's Bay Company. They paddled birch bark canoes all the way from Montreal, to what is now the NWT, looking for furs. This class activity will help everyone understand the great distances involved in this trade, and where the NWC trading routes and forts were located.

You'll start the activity by **drawing a big map of Canada**, then preparing **paper tags** with the names of the rivers, lakes and communities that are listed below. Your classmates will be using their atlases to find out where these things are located and placing the 'name tags' onto your large map.

\*Your group should prepare a smaller 'answer key map' with all of these places on it so that you know if the class is putting the name tags in the right places.

### Steps to take:

1. With the help of an overhead projector and a transparency map, make a large drawing of Canada.
  - Put the borders of the provinces and territories on it to help people understand where things are located.
  - Find the following things in your atlas and make sure they are placed on your 'answer key map'. Write the names of the rivers and lakes in blue ink and cut these out into 'name tags'. Do the same in black ink for the communities and the two portages listed below. Cut these nametags out and put them in a bag.

### Rivers

**Saint Lawrence, Ottawa, French, Winnipeg, Athabasca, Slave**

### Lakes

The **Great Lakes** (Superior, Huron, Michigan, Erie, Ontario)

**Lake Nipissing, Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, Lake Winnipeg, Lake la Loche, Athabasca, Great Slave Lake, Great Bear Lake**

Communities (for these communities, just put dots in the right places)

**Montreal, Ottawa, Sault Sainte Marie, Thunder Bay, Kenora, Cumberland House, Fort Chipewyan, Fort Resolution**

### Portages

There were 2 major portages on this route: **Grand Portage** (right by Thunder Bay), and **Methye Portage** (right by Lake la Loche in Saskatchewan).

- 2) Divide your class into smaller groups. Each group will pick 3 nametags out of the bag, and use their atlases to see where these places are actually found in Canada. You can divide your group up to give them some help if they need it.

- Once a group has found the right locations, you can have them place the name tags in the right places on the big map.

### Group Activity

Either as a whole class or as your smaller group, now you're ready to trace the route that the North West Company used to get to Great Slave Lake for furs. You might want to make some tiny canoes (out of birchbark, or paper...) that you can place along the route at important places as you trace the route.

### Some resources that might help

The map on the following Hudson's Bay website is a bit hard to follow, but combined with an atlas, it gives the general route.

<http://www.hbc.com/hbcheritage/history/acquisitions/furtrade/nwc.asp>

This site doesn't give a map, but describes the route very carefully. With an atlas you may be able to figure trace the path.

[http://ca.geocities.com/voyageurs\\_2002/fur\\_trade.htm](http://ca.geocities.com/voyageurs_2002/fur_trade.htm)

A member of your group now uses the information you have to trace the major canoe route of the NWC from Montreal to Great Slave Lake.

You might want to break the trip up into smaller chunks to help them draw this. The important pieces are:

From Montreal up the Ottawa (Outaouais) River to Lake Nipissing \_\_\_\_\_

From Lake Nipissing to Georgian Bay on the French River \_\_\_\_\_

From Georgian Bay to Sault Sainte Marie \_\_\_\_\_

From Sault Sainte Marie to Thunder Bay \_\_\_\_\_

-Grand Portage-

From Grand Portage to Rainy Lake (following the Canada/US border)\_\_\_\_\_

Rainy Lake to Lake of the Woods \_\_\_\_\_

Lake of the Woods down the Winnipeg River to North end of Lake Winnipeg\_\_\_\_\_

North end of Lake Winnipeg to Cumberland House \_\_\_\_\_

From Cumberland House on the Churchill River to Lac la Ronge \_\_\_\_\_

Lac la Ronge to Lake Ile-a-la-Crosse \_\_\_\_\_

Lake Ile-a-la-Crosse to Lac La Loche \_\_\_\_\_



# The North West Company (NWC)

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This fur trading company started in 1783 (more than 100 years after the Hudson's Bay Company began) and used a very different method to collect furs in Canada than the Hudson's Bay Company did. They went to where Aboriginal people who had furs actually lived.

The NWC was based in Montréal, Québec. Although the owners of this country were mostly English-speaking men from Scotland, most of the workers were French-speaking 'Canadiens'. This explains why many of the words which describe equipment and places of the fur trade are in French.

From Montréal, large birch bark trading canoes (up to 10m long) traveled along a whole network of rivers, meeting Aboriginal groups and exchanging trade goods for furs. By the 1790's the NWC trading routes extended thousands of kilometers.



Canôt du maître in rapids



Voyageurs waking up after another night spent under the canoes.

At the west end of Lake Superior, the large canoes (*canôts du maître*) were met by smaller canoes (*canôts du nord*), which were able to travel up and down the smaller rivers of what is now western and northern Canada. These smaller canoes brought furs from further north and west of Lake Superior to the hand-off point before returning to *le grand nord*.

It was a very challenging undertaking. In order to get the trade goods from Montréal to Lake Superior to pick up the furs from the wintering groups, the canoes were paddled almost non-stop for several weeks. It was not an easy life.

Eventually the NWC had trade routes and forts that extended all the way from Montréal to what is today called the Northwest Territories.

Although this method of trading for furs was more complicated and challenging than the Hudson's Bay approach, it had the advantage of intercepting furs 'at the source', and by the early 1800's the HBC also started to establish forts 'inland' in order to compete with the NWC. Many of the communities we see on a map of Canada today were first established as trading posts by one or both of these companies.

The North West Company was different from the Hudson's Bay Company in several ways. Because they had so far to travel by canoe, some employees lived for the winter in the area that furs were being traded for. These men were encouraged to live with people of the area, and many of these men married Aboriginal women. This helped them to learn about the people in their area, to make strong connections to these people, and even learn the languages of the people they met.

On the business side of things, all of these connections helped to promote the trading of furs for the North West Company. It also marks the beginning of the Métis people.



Because of the amount of travel that was involved in their long trade routes, the NWC had many people working for it, including voyageurs, translators, the overwintering traders and a variety of other people. This meant that the North West Company often had 3 or 4 times more people working for it than the Hudson's Bay Company did. Since the NWC would travel to where Aboriginal groups were, many of these groups started to trade their furs with the NWC instead of with the Hudson's Bay Company. (Remember, the HBC wanted the furs brought all the way to their forts.)

From the 1780's until 1821 a fierce competition developed between the two companies. Sometimes this led to fights, kidnapping, even murders.