

## TIMELINE

- c.1000** Norse settlements in Newfoundland
- 1492** First voyage of Cristóbal Colón to the Americas
- 1497** Giovanni Caboto “discovers” Newfoundland
- 1534-36** Jacques Cartier’s voyages to the Gulf of St Lawrence and upriver
- 1541-43** Cartier and Roberval’s unsuccessful colonization attempt at present-day Quebec City
- 1562-98** Religious warfare in France
- c.1545-80** Disappearance of the St Lawrence Iroquoians
- 1605** Establishment of Port-Royal
- 1608** Establishment of Quebec
- 1610** Cuper’s Cove settled by the English
- 1611** Jesuits establish a mission in Acadia, the first French mission in the Americas
- 1615** Récollets arrive in Canada
- 1621** Ferryland settlement
- 1625** Jesuits arrive in Canada
- 1627** Compagnie des Cent-Associés established
- 1629** English occupy Quebec; William Alexander establishes a Scottish settlement at Port-Royal
- 1632** Acadia and Canada return to French control
- 1634** English Parliament issues Western Charter relating to Newfoundland
- 1637** Sir David Kirke and his associates granted a monopoly of trade in Newfoundland
- 1639** Ursulines and Hospitalières de Saint-Augustin arrive in New France
- 1642** Founding of Montreal
- 1649** Destruction of Huronia
- 1654** English seize Acadia
- 1659** François de Laval becomes first bishop of Quebec

# CHAPTER 3

## NATIVES AND NEWCOMERS, 1000-1663

When French explorer Jacques Cartier entered the Baie des Chaleurs in 1534, he met Natives, probably Mi’kmaq, who were clearly accustomed to trading with Europeans. According to Cartier:

As soon as they saw us they began to run away, making signs to us that they had come to barter with us; and held up some furs of small value, with which they clothe themselves. We likewise made signs to them that we wished them no harm, and sent two men on shore, to offer them some knives and other iron goods, and a red cap to give to their chief. Seeing this, they sent on shore part of their people with some of their skins; and the two parties traded together.<sup>1</sup>

Fish attracted Europeans to the northern half of North America in the early sixteenth century. Soon, a fur trade developed between the Natives and the newcomers. Initially, Europeans made only annual forays to fish and trade furs, but a variety of political and economic interests gave rise to efforts to settle in North America. In their competition for wealth, power, and glory, European rulers saw overseas colonies as a way to gain political advantage. Always short of money, they tried to build their empires on the cheap by granting monopolies over the increasingly lucrative fur trade to entrepreneurs who, in return, agreed to sponsor settlement and Christian missions in the “New World.” While leery of the newcomers and their religious practices, the Natives saw advantages for themselves in the trade and military alliances that Europeans offered.

## THE EUROPEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Europe was experiencing a period of rapid change. The feudal system, which for centuries had bound everyone—serfs, nobles, and monarchs—in hierarchical obligations, was breaking down. Slavery was widely practised, especially in southern and eastern Europe, and Portugal and Spain were beginning to engage in the African slave trade. In towns, the guilds that had once made rules to ensure security for artisans increasingly gave way to capitalist enterprises that hired workers on contract for wages. Capitalists expanded the scope of trade and sponsored explorers who were pushing the boundaries of what was widely believed to be Earth’s geography. Women, long subject to patriarchal authority in Europe, were punished if

they broke social norms, as the widespread witchcraft trials attested.

Even the Christian church, which for centuries had united Europe across local cultures, fractured into Catholic and Protestant variants. In 1517, Martin Luther, a priest in the German town of Wittenberg, led the challenge against the pope, head of the Roman Catholic Church. The “Reformation” of Christianity prompted the pope to launch a counter-Reformation, which encouraged the brutal suppression of Protestant dissenters. Wars between Catholics and Protestants swept across Europe and usually ended with only one variant of Christianity being allowed within a particular state.

These revolutionary developments were both the cause and the result of a new intellectual ferment that characterized European society at the dawn of the modern age. Just as trade was opening new vistas and challenging conventional notions about the world, scholars began questioning accepted verities. The fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Renaissance (or rebirth) of interest in the classical scholars of ancient Greece and Rome sparked debates about beliefs that the church held unsailable, including the assumption that God controlled everything that happened in the universe. Whether it was a Machiavelli expounding a secular political science or a da Vinci designing machines for human flight, Renaissance intellectuals recognized few boundaries.

Practical application of ideas was also part of the mindset that flourished in Europe during the Renaissance. Although both the Chinese and the Arabs had the technology to explore the world, it was the Europeans who led the way. Innovation in the techniques of ship construction, navigation, and armament production was a major factor in the successful overseas expansion of Europe. Other technological advances, such as the printing press, helped to spread new ideas and encourage individual initiative. In 1453, the European push to explore overseas was given new impetus when the Turks captured Constantinople, thereby blocking traders from travelling overland to the Far East, the source of many of the fabulous products that were much in demand in Europe.

By 1500, large-scale, increasingly centralized states headed by monarchs were emerging as the most powerful political institutions in Europe. Overseas ventures, along with bloody wars at home, were sponsored by rulers as part of their efforts to expand their territory and wealth. If successful, colonies would exploit Native labour, absorb

the energies of their restive citizens, and enrich the mother country by shipping back valuable resources. They might also help spread the Christian faith, which, like capitalism and the desire for power, fuelled the European drive for overseas expansion.

## A BRIEF ENCOUNTER

Although the Native peoples of the Americas may well have encountered various peoples from abroad well before the European voyages of the late fifteenth century, there is little definitive evidence to confirm it. A twelfth-century carving found in southern India depicts a figure holding what might be a cob of corn, a plant that at the time grew only in the Americas. As early as 5000 years ago, the peanut, another American plant, was grown in southeastern China, while two varieties of chickens believed to be native to Asia were being raised in the Americas when the Spanish arrived in the sixteenth century. None of this evidence is conclusive.

As for contact with Europe, accounts of early transatlantic travellers, such as the Irish St Brendan in the sixth century, remain in the realm of legend. The first contact for which there is solid proof occurred at the end of the tenth century. By this time, seafaring Scandinavians, or Vikings, had spread over much of northern Europe. One group from Norway, the Norse, had established settlements in both Iceland and Greenland. According to Norse sagas, Norwegian merchant-shipowner Bjarni Herjólfsson found himself lost along an unknown coastline while travelling to the new settlement of Greenland in 986. Leifr Eiriksson later led an expedition to the coasts described by Herjólfsson, identifying three distinct areas of North America. The first, a land of rock and ice, he called Helluland; it was probably Baffin Island. The second, Markland, was flat and wooded, almost certainly part of southern Labrador. Leifr then reached a country he called Vinland, which he described as having grassy meadows and well-stocked rivers.

The sagas indicate that Leifr made several later expeditions and that Thorfinnr Thordarson attempted to establish a settlement in Vinland. The settlement included women as well as men, and some children were born there. While the site of Vinland is still much disputed, the discovery of a Norse habitation at L'Anse aux Meadows in 1960 suggests a Newfoundland location.



Reconstruction of the Norse settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows. The architecture is typically Norse. SOURCE: CORNER BROOK WESTERN STAR/ THE CANADIAN PRESS (PAUL NORTHCOTT)

Evidence indicates that it was probably a base camp from which the Norse travelled into the Gulf of St Lawrence and perhaps beyond.

The Norse failed to take root in Vinland. It was a long distance from their home and hostilities quickly developed with the people living in the region, whom the Norse called Skraelings, a derogatory term meaning “wretches” or “savages.” Lacking the military might to subdue the local residents, the Norse retreated to Greenland. The Beothuk, Mi’kmaq, Innu, and Inuit peoples who may have come into contact with these European intruders were probably not significantly affected by this troublesome interlude.

## EARLY EXPLORATIONS

In the fifteenth century, Portugal and Spain led in the drive for overseas expansion. In 1440, Portuguese vessels had reached the Gulf of Guinea and began carrying back slaves, gold, and ivory from Africa. In 1488, Bartolomeu Dias, a Portuguese navigator, sailed around the Cape of Good Hope. Ten years later, his countryman, Vasco da

Gama, sailed around Africa to India, returning in 1498 to Lisbon with jewels and spices.

Spain hoped to outstrip the wealth of its Iberian neighbour by finding a western passage to the riches of Asia. Its conquests began with the voyage of Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus) in 1492. Seeking a passage to Asia, he landed on an island that he named Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic). Mistakenly thinking he had come ashore in India, he called the island’s inhabitants Indians, a misnomer that has survived to this day (although not without controversy) to describe the first peoples of the Americas. His voyage prompted subsequent Spanish efforts to establish colonies in their “New World.” Between 1519 and 1521, Hernando Cortés conquered the Aztec empire in Mexico. Cortés was soon followed by other conquistadores (conquerors). Initially interested primarily in the precious metals of South and Central American empires, the conquistadores quickly found that there was even more money to be earned by harnessing the agricultural labour of their new subjects. By 1600, Spanish rule extended over what is now the southwestern United States, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean islands, and much of South America.

Other European powers soon joined the race for overseas riches, including England and Holland. In 1497, mercantile interests in the English port of Bristol commissioned Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot), an Italian navigator with an apparent knowledge of land beyond the “ocean sea,” to carry out a voyage of exploration in uncharted territories and search for a more northerly route to Asia. Cabot’s “discovery” of “the new isle”—which became known as Newfoundland—and his description of the abundant cod off its shores, sparked widespread European interest.

Despite Cabot’s voyage, England at first remained largely content to fish off Iceland and only became bolder in its overseas ventures following the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. In 1607, a new colony was established in Virginia. Poor people from England were indentured—that is, committed to long-term contracts—by the Virginia Company to farm their tobacco estates. As incentive for servitude, they were promised freedom and land at the end of their contracts. Tobacco crops from Virginia found markets throughout Europe, and African slaves were eventually imported to do most of the plantation work and provide household domestic labour. The success of Virginia encouraged other colonial ventures. The Puritans, Protestants who regarded the official Church of England as too close to Catholicism in its rituals and too worldly in its outlook, began colonizing Massachusetts in 1620. This marked the beginning of European settlement in the area known as New England, on the northeastern seaboard of today’s United States.

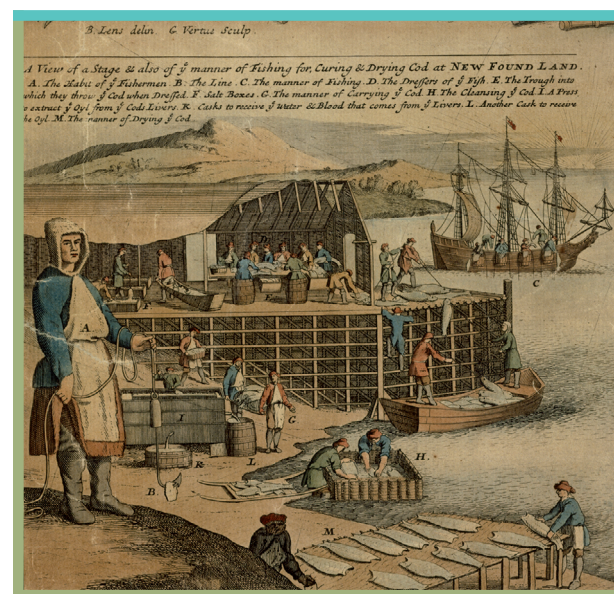
Holland, the leading sea power of northern Europe in the seventeenth century, also made earnest colonization efforts in the Americas. Englishman Henry Hudson, under the employ of the Dutch East India Company, discovered the river that bears his name in 1609. Within a few years, Dutch settlements began to appear on the Hudson River. The Dutch West India Company, established in the 1620s, brought settlers who conducted a profitable trade with local Native groups, including the Iroquois (Five Nations). New Netherland—the name given to the Dutch settlements in today’s New York and New Jersey—had a population of 10 000 by 1664, when it was captured by the English.

## FISH, FURS, AND WHALES

For Catholics, who might endure more than 150 meatless days a year, cod was an especially prized commodity. Cabot’s reports of the fish stocks off Newfoundland

were soon exploited by enterprising merchants, and French fleets joined Basque, Portuguese, and Spanish ships in making regular visits to the Atlantic fishing grounds. By 1580, more than 400 European vessels, with combined crews of about 10 000, were fishing cod in the waters off Newfoundland. It was not long before a “dry fishery” developed, involving the cleaning and salting of fish on land, which used far less salt than the “green-cure” method of salting the fish aboard ship. The dry fishery required a stay of two or three months on shore, and soon resulted in hired hands staying over winter on the island of Newfoundland and elsewhere in the Atlantic region to protect favoured fishing sites. By the end of the sixteenth century, English fishing fleets had joined in and, with the decline of Spain and Portugal, England and France dominated the North Atlantic fishery.

Conducted exclusively by Europeans for the European market, the cod fishery required little interaction with Natives. Nevertheless, trade with local inhabitants soon became a sideline of Europeans in the fishing industry. Europeans traded metal pots, knives glass beads, and other items for the furs that the Native peoples were wearing. Trade goods made life easier for the Natives who acquired them and were held in high regard, as evidenced by their abundance in burial sites. Mi’kmaq, Innu, and



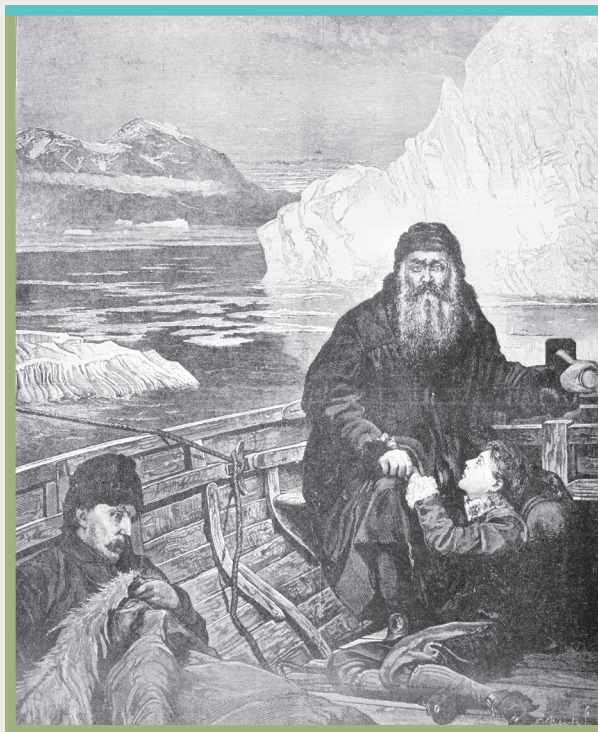
Green and dry cod fishery as practised by the French in the seventeenth century, from Nicolas de Fer’s map *L’Amérique divisée selon l’étendue de ses principales parties* (1698). SOURCE: LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA NMC 26825

## MORE TO THE STORY

### Searching for Asia

While fish and furs were the attractions for most of Europe's early excursions to North America, the search for the North-west Passage—which had drawn Europeans to these resources in the first place—continued to motivate expeditions to the Americas. Most of the European knowledge of the northern territories resulted from the continued search for a sea passage that would link the Atlantic to the Pacific and lead to the wealth of China and the East Indies. In 1576, 1577, and 1578, English explorer Martin Frobisher sailed west from Greenland in search of the elusive passage. He entered the bay that today bears his name and charted much of the eastern Arctic. Digging for ore on Baffin Island, Frobisher found little of value but managed to capture some Inuit. He offered them to Queen Elizabeth I of England, who encouraged his expeditions, as evidence of his explorations.

Like Frobisher, Sir Humphrey Gilbert raised funds from English merchants who believed the passage existed and could guarantee their trading fortunes. In 1583, on his second voyage across the Atlantic, Gilbert took possession of Newfoundland in the name of England and made plans to establish a colony. Within two months, Gilbert had drowned at sea. From 1585 to 1587, John Davis made three voyages along the Arctic coast to search for the passage and wrote sympathetically of the Inuit he encountered. Henry Hudson, after first working for the Dutch, then braved the dangers of Hudson Strait in 1610 under the English flag and sailed into Hudson Bay, thinking he had reached the Pacific. None of these expeditions were ultimately successful and three centuries would elapse before the 1903-6 expedition of Norwegian Roald Amundsen finally traversed the Northwest Passage.



This engraving from Montreal newspaper *L'Opinion publique* in 1882 was based on the painting *The Last Voyage of Henry Hudson* by John Collier (c.1881). Hudson's name has been given to a bay, a river, and a strait as a result of his explorations in 1609-1611. On his last expedition, his crew mutinied after Hudson's vain attempts to find a westerly outlet from Hudson Bay forced them to overwinter in 1610-1611 in harsh conditions. In June 1611, at the start of the voyage home, the mutineers set Hudson adrift in a small boat along with his son and a few loyal crew members; their fate is unknown. Collier's painting is a romanticized reconstruction of that unhappy event. SOURCE: LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA C-2061

other Native groups in contact with Europeans also traded European goods with peoples farther west. By 1530, European products had reached the upper St Lawrence, and before the end of the century they had penetrated the area around the Great Lakes.

Fishers sold the furs they acquired to hatters in Europe. The trade picked up at the end of the sixteenth century when a rage for broad-brimmed beaver-felted hats took hold among the fashionable set on the European continent. As the Baltic sources of fur became exhausted,

demand suddenly outstripped supply, leaving North America as the principal source. A race soon developed to secure Native trading partners.

While the cod fishery and the fur trade were the chief economic activities linking Europeans to North America, the hunting of whales was initially of equal significance. Whale oil lit most of Europe's lamps, and baleen, the large horny plates that take the place of teeth for some whales, bolstered European dresses of the period. One of the earliest and most successful whaling operations in

North America was conducted in the Strait of Belle Isle by the Basques. Their primary base was located at Red Bay on the southern coast of Labrador. At the height of the industry, from the 1540s to the 1580s, some 30 Basque ships and 2500 men came annually to hunt and process right and bowhead whales. In the wake of the Basques came French, English, and other European whalers who hunted in the waters of the Gulf of St Lawrence before 1570.

## ENGLISH COLONIZATION IN NEWFOUNDLAND

The early British presence on Newfoundland was related to the seasonal fishery. The trade was largely controlled by the great merchant families of the “West Country” of England. Operating out of such ports as Poole, Dartmouth, and Bristol, West Country merchants developed a seasonal round that began with the winter outfitting of ships and the hiring of local labour. A May arrival gave captains time to find the best fishing rooms (shore bases) and to supervise the construction or repair of stages (platforms where fish were processed and equipment stored), flakes (wooden platforms where fish were dried), and sheds to store their equipment. The summer months were devoted to catching and curing fish before the trip home in September and October. The seasonal nature of settlement also determined the structures of authority. Under the Western Charter of 1634, fishing admirals—masters of migratory vessels who acquired authority by being the first to arrive in a given harbour—had the right to settle disputes among the seasonal fishermen on the island.

The West Country merchants had no interest in encouraging permanent settlement of the island, but it did gradually begin nevertheless. Over the winter, shore facilities were vulnerable to vandalism from Europeans and Beothuk and, during wartime, from enemy ships. By leaving behind a few servants, West Country merchants protected their property, ensured a good “room” for the next fishing season, and perhaps extended the time devoted to fishing. Servants could also cut timber for fuel and construction over the winter months and manage meadows and gardens to provide food for the summer sojourners. They sometimes diversified their merchants’ interests by catching fur-bearing animals and seals. Some began to stay for several years at a time.

From the early days of discovery, immigrants also arrived in Newfoundland on their own initiative, with the goal of processing fish to sell to the merchants. These “planters”, as they were known, often began as “bye-boatmen”—small boat owners who arrived each spring as passengers, fished with their hired servants, sold the fish to the “sack ships” (large cargo vessels), and left their boats behind when they returned to England in the fall. Like the overwintering servants, some bye-boatmen and their employees took up year-round residency in Newfoundland. In the mid-seventeenth century, there were between 1000 and 2000 people living in about 30 settlements along what had become known as the English Shore, all linked to West Country ports. Around this core group of planters and other permanent residents moved a much larger, shifting, seasonal, overwhelmingly male population that during the summer helped to produce salt fish and cod oil for export.

Alongside the informal settlements, there were also more organized English attempts to settle Newfoundland in the early seventeenth century. Most ended in failure. In 1610, the London and Bristol Company sponsored a settlement at Cuper’s Cove (now Cupids), Conception Bay. It was designed to serve as a base for the Newfoundland fishery and trade in furs with the Beothuk. By 1612, the colony consisted of about 50 men and women who had cleared land, planted gardens, and built homes, surrounding their small settlement with a palisade protected by mounted guns. The colony quickly languished. It was harassed by pirates, agriculture proved difficult, and the Beothuk were not eager to trade in furs. Nor were the migratory fishermen enthusiastic about settlement on one of their prized fishing coves. These factors, added to internal dissension, led to the plantation’s breakup in the early 1620s.

The settlement in Ferryland was more enduring. Established in 1620 by Sir George Calvert, England’s secretary of state for the colonies, it had substantial financial backing. Calvert recruited mostly Roman Catholic settlers, but he permitted both Protestant and Catholic clergy to minister in the colony. Religious bickering was the least of the problems that dogged the venture. French privateers and an outbreak of scurvy made the winter of 1628–29 unbearable, causing Calvert to withdraw his active interest in the colony and leave its operation to family agents. All the Catholic settlers in the total population of under 150 people departed either for England or English colonies farther south, among them Calvert’s colony in Maryland.

While a small number of Protestant settlers remained, they were soon caught in a crossfire between the Calverts and Sir David Kirke. In 1637, Charles I made a “Grant of Newfoundland” to Kirke and some of his aristocratic associates and acquiesced in Kirke’s appropriation of the Ferryland plantation. Known as the Company of Adventurers to Newfoundland, the grantees had a trading monopoly—the fisheries excepted—with the power to tax French and Dutch vessels. Kirke set himself up as a fish merchant in Ferryland and developed a profitable transatlantic trade in fish and wine. As governor, he held courts and administered the southern Avalon Peninsula in a rough-and-ready way.

Kirke’s career in Newfoundland ended in 1651 with the victory of Parliament in the English civil war. Since he was a royalist, he was recalled to London to face a suit brought by the Calverts and died in prison in 1654. The Ferryland plantation survived under the management of his widow, Lady Sara Kirke, while her sons developed their own plantations at Ferryland and Renewes. A Dutch squadron virtually destroyed the colony in 1673, but Ferryland survived to become one of the major English settlements in Newfoundland.

The West Country merchants sought to maintain their authority over the island by resisting settlement attempts, such as those of the Kirkes and their associates. The presence of the planters also concerned them. After the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, a West Country lobby argued that the growth of a settled population on the island threatened the viability of the migratory fishery because planters and their servants pre-empted the best fishing places and destroyed fishing stages. In 1661, the government responded with an addition to the Western Charter proscribing settlement and an independent fishery, a policy that was enshrined in a new charter issued in 1671. Although the planters and other permanent residents were urged to leave the island, many of them stayed, forming the basis for the British population of Newfoundland.

## FRANCE IN AMERICA

French colonization in eastern North America was prompted by visions of emulating the success of Spain and Portugal in finding wealth in the Americas. In 1524, King François I hired Giovanni da Verrazzano to explore

the North Atlantic coast for riches and a possible passage to Asia. Ten years later, he commissioned Jacques Cartier, a sea captain from Saint-Malo, to discover and claim for France territory where gold and other precious metals might be found. Cartier undertook three voyages to North America between 1534 and 1542. The only gold he found was iron pyrite or “fool’s gold,” which he mistook for the real thing. Owing in large part to his duplicitous dealings with the Native peoples, his attempt at colonization was also a failure.

Cartier was a product of European society, which treated all pagan people with disdain and saw Natives as “savages.” In 1534, after first visiting the Baie des Chaleurs, Cartier sailed into Gaspé Bay and encountered a hunting party of St Lawrence Iroquoians from the village of Stadacona, located near present-day Quebec City. Troubles began when he claimed the territory for King François I and erected an imposing cross. According to Cartier, Donnacona, the Stadaconan chief, “made us a long harangue, making the sign of the cross with two of his fingers, and then he pointed to the land all about, as if he wished to say that all this region belonged to him, and that we ought not to have set up this cross without his permission.”<sup>24</sup> In response, Cartier first took Donnacona captive and then feasted him, convincing him to let Cartier take two of the Native leader’s sons back to France. Here, Cartier was either shrewd or lucky, as the exchange of children was an important part of Native diplomatic relations.

Returning in September 1535, Cartier again behaved arrogantly. The Stadaconans, trying to preserve their status as intermediaries between Natives farther inland and the Europeans, expressed displeasure at Cartier’s wish to travel up the St Lawrence. Cartier ignored their protests and sailed as far as the Iroquoian village of Hochelaga, near present-day Montreal. The Hochelagans welcomed the French to their fortified village, hoping no doubt to make an alliance with them, but the Europeans did not stay long.

Cartier returned to Stadacona, where he and his crew spent a difficult winter. The European party of 110 lost 25 to scurvy before Native remedies prevented the rest from succumbing as well. The Stadaconans understood the curative powers of a broth and a poultice made from the bark and needles of the *anneda* (possibly white cedar), which is rich in the vitamin C needed to prevent scurvy. Cartier showed his gratitude by meddling in internal

## VOICES FROM THE PAST

**The Ferryland Settlement in Newfoundland**

Throughout its early history, Ferryland, like other small colonies in Newfoundland, was faced with the daunting challenge of creating a defensible, agriculturally productive settlement that could provision the dry fishery of the area. In 1622, an optimistic Captain Edward Wynne, appointed commander of the settlement by Sir George Calvert, wrote to his superior indicating the steps he had taken to achieve these objectives:

After Christmas, we employed our selves in the woods especially in hard weather, whence we got home as many boord-stocks, afforded us above two hundred boords and above two hundred timber trees besides. We got home as much or as many trees as served us to palizado into the Plantation about foure Acres of ground, for the keeping off of both man & beast, with post and rayle seven foote high, sharpened in the toppe, the trees being pitched upright and fastened with spikes and nayles. We got also together as much fire wood, as will serve us yet these two moneths. Wee also fitted much garden ground for seede, I meane, Barley, Oates, Pease, and Beans. For addition of building, we have at this present a Parlour of foureteene foote besides the chimney, and twelve foote broad, of convenient height, and a lodging chamber over it; to each a chimney of stone worke with staires and a staire case, besides a tenement of two rooms, or a storie and a halfe, which serves for a store house till we are other wise provided. The Forge hath been finished this five weekes: The Salt-worke is now almost ready. . . . We have also broken much ground for a Brew-house roome and other Tene-ments. We have a wharfe in good forwardnesse towards the Low-watermarke.<sup>2</sup>

Attempts by would-be colonizers to recreate their Old World culture in North America often flew in the face of colonial realities. As Calvert himself noted in a letter to Charles I when he decided “to shift to some other warmer climate of this new worlde,” the winters were a formidable obstacle to settlement in Ferryland: “[f]rom the middest of October, to the middest of May there is a sadd face of wynter upon all this land, both sea and land so frozen for the greatest part of the

tyme as they are not penetrable, no plant or vegetable thing appearing out of the earth untill it be about the beginning of May nor fish in the sea besides the ayre is so intolerable cold as it is hardly to be endured.”<sup>3</sup>



This ornate iron cross was excavated at Ferryland and dates to the time of the settlement sponsored by Sir George Calvert in the early 1620s. SOURCE: COLONY OF AVALON FOUNDATION

Stadaconan politics; in a bid to advance a rival chief, he seized Donnacona, two of his sons, and seven others and carried them off to France, where all but one soon died.

Cartier returned in 1541 as the leader of an advance party for Jean-François de La Rocque de Roberval, a Protestant nobleman from northern France who was commissioned by the French king to found a permanent settlement near Stadacona. The Stadaconans, welcoming at first, soon became distrustful of the colonists, who spent a rough winter and then headed home with a cargo of quartz and pyrite, thinking it was diamonds and gold. Deserted by his lieutenant, Roberval tried nonetheless to re-establish a settlement at the same site during the winter of 1542–43. His settlers, most of them ex-convicts, found little favour among the Stadaconans, and after a scurvy-ridden winter, during which Roberval punished disobedient colonists harshly, they too departed.

For several decades thereafter, France gave up on the idea of settlement so far north in the Americas. There was no rationale for a colony in the region as long as its only profitable economic activity was the cod fishery. Between 1562 and 1598, France was also wracked by religious wars which absorbed the attention and the wealth of its monarchs. By 1600, the end of civil war in France and the dramatic increase in the demand for furs prompted a renewed interest in overseas ventures sponsored by the state.

## THE FOUNDING OF ACADIA

Sporadic French attempts at founding permanent settlements in North America resumed in the late 1500s, but none were successful. In 1578, Henri IV of France appointed a Breton nobleman, the Marquis de La Roche-Mesgouez, viceroy of New France. The failure of early colonization efforts and his involvement in the religious wars frustrated his ambitions, but in 1598, the French king again granted him the title of lieutenant-general of Canada, Newfoundland, Labrador, and Norumbega (an ambiguous location that includes what is now Maine and the Maritimes) and gave him a monopoly over the fur trade in the area. La Roche established a small settlement on Sable Island with 40 freed prisoners and 10 soldiers. The colonists were to fish, trade in furs, and hunt walrus (then in demand for its ivory and oil). The colony survived for a few years, but the colonists mutinied when

food supplies failed to arrive in 1602, murdered La Roche-Mesgouez's lieutenants, and returned to France, abandoning the colony.

A further attempt at settlement in Acadia came in 1603, when the French king granted the fur-trading monopoly to Pierre Du Gua de Monts, a distinguished Protestant soldier and administrator. In return, de Monts promised to settle 60 colonists a year and to promote Catholicism among the Native peoples. In 1604, de Monts and 79 colonists wintered on an island at the mouth of the St Croix River on the present border between Maine and New Brunswick. Most of de Monts's colonists were gentlemen, artisans, mariners, and labourers. Among them was Samuel de Champlain, a Catholic veteran of the recent religious wars, who would become a towering figure in Canadian history. The rigours of a Canadian winter defeated these men: 35 died of scurvy.

Unlike La Roche, De Monts persisted in attempting to establish a permanent settlement. In the spring of 1605, he moved across the Bay of Fundy to the shore of Port-Royal (now the Annapolis Basin). The cooperation of the Mi'kmaq, who welcomed the intruders, was essential to the colony's success. The French planted wheat, built a grist mill, raised cattle, and grew fruit and vegetables. Delighting in the warmer winters at Port-Royal, they developed innovative responses to the challenges of survival. Champlain founded the *Ordre de Bon Temps* (Order of Good Cheer), its chief purpose to oblige each gentleman to host a dinner and provide game for the table.

De Monts lost his trade monopoly in 1607, but by then the small colony was, however precariously, on its feet. Jean de Biencourt de Poutrincourt et de Saint-Just, who became governor of the area, returned in 1610 with his son Charles de Biencourt de Saint-Just and some 20 colonists, including a priest, Jessé Fléché. Membertou, an elderly Mi'kmaw chief, had maintained the habitation during the absence of the French. In short order, Fléché baptized Membertou and 20 members of his family, and traders bartered for the much-desired furs. Armed with evidence of both financial and spiritual success, Charles de Biencourt returned to France but Poutrincourt was unable to secure backing from the king. He found a patron in the person of the Marquise de Guercheville, whose support was tied to the condition that the Jesuits, a Catholic religious order that had become influential at the French court, would control missionary work in Acadia and become partners in the trade.

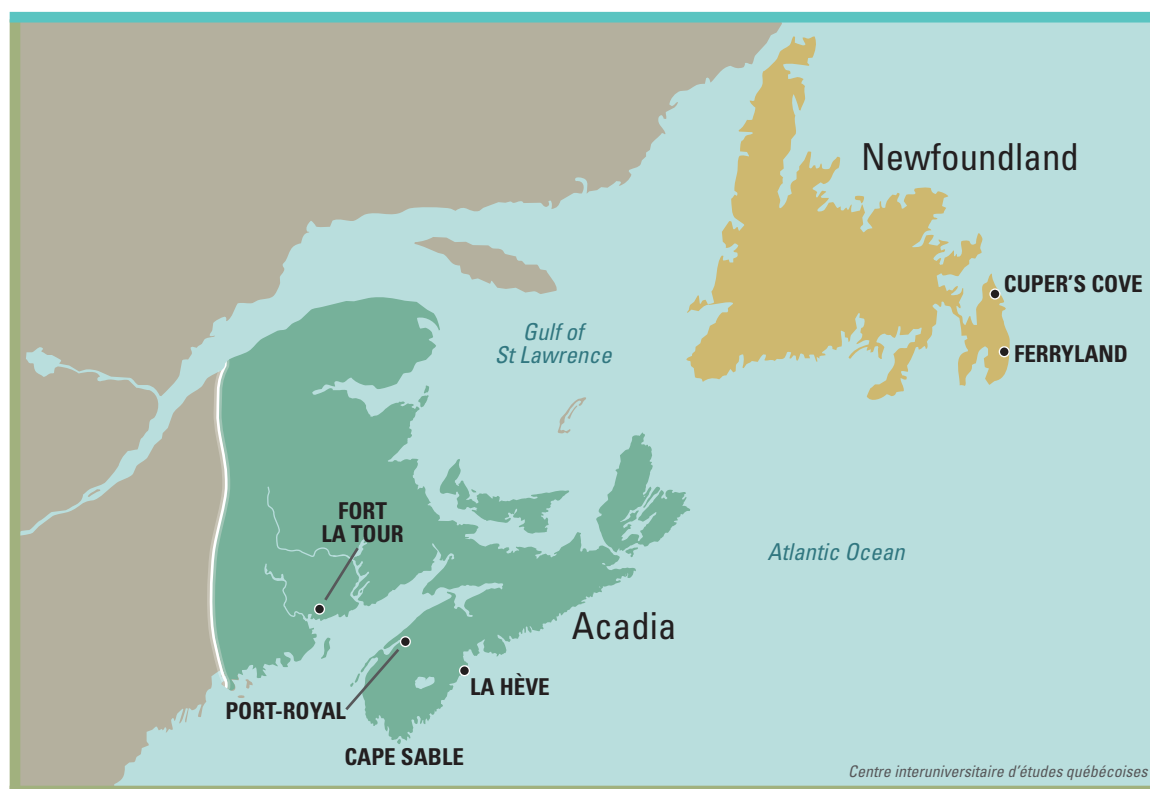
In May 1611, Charles de Biencourt returned to Port-Royal with 36 colonists and two Jesuit priests, the first mission by a French religious order in the Americas. When quarrels erupted between Biencourt and the Jesuits, the Marquise de Guercheville financed an expedition to move the Jesuits from Port-Royal to Saint-Sauveur, a new colony established on the Penobscot River in what is now the state of Maine. Opposed to French colonization on his northern flank, the governor of the English colony of Virginia, established in 1607, sent an expedition under Samuel Argall to destroy Saint-Sauveur and Port-Royal in the fall of 1613. The following year Poutrincourt took most of the colonists back to France. Only Biencourt, his cousin Charles de Saint-Étienne de La Tour, and a few others stayed on.

The Mi'kmaq and Maliseet, who had traded furs with Europeans for generations before French settlement took root, developed close ties with the French who lived among them. Not only did they gradually reconcile their spiritual beliefs with those of the persistent Catholic missionaries in their midst, they also entered marriage

relationships with the newcomers. Following the death of Biencourt in 1623, the direction of the colony was entrusted to Charles de La Tour, who, with his father Claude, continued to make Acadia their home. Charles married a Mi'kmaq woman, probably the daughter of a local chief from the Cape Sable area. Later blessed by a Récollet priest, the union produced three daughters, two of whom entered religious orders in France at a young age, suggesting that their mother may have died.

## THE FOUNDING OF QUEBEC

De Monts and Champlain, meanwhile, had directed their attention toward the St Lawrence River valley, where the fur trade had better prospects for success. Since Cartier, the area had been known to Europeans as Canada, derived from the St Lawrence Iroquoian word *kanata*, meaning “village” or “settlement.” Independent fur traders had been visiting the area since at least the 1580s, trading with Natives for furs at places such as Tadoussac,



**MAP 3.1**

European Settlements in the Atlantic Region, 1632

where the Saguenay River flows into the St Lawrence, and venturing even farther up-river. In 1599, Henri IV had granted another monopoly over the fur trade in New France, this time to Pierre de Chauvin de Tonnetuit, who, in 1600, set up a more permanent fur-trading post at Tadoussac. Like the first attempts in Acadia, this too languished; of the 16 men left to overwinter, only 5 survived, and only due to help from the local Innu.

In 1608, as de Monts's lieutenant, Champlain chose the site of today's Quebec City for the new base of operation in Canada, as the French colony based on the St Lawrence became known. Quebec had several advantages. In addition to spectacular natural defences, it was the place where the river narrowed, allowing for easier control of trade. It was also within easy reach of Tadoussac, where Europeans continued to trade with the Natives in violation of de Monts's monopoly. Finally, for reasons that historians still dispute, the St Lawrence Iroquoians encountered by Cartier had disappeared. While Algonquin and Innu (Montagnais) exercised some control over the area, the colonizers encountered less local resistance than

at the time of Cartier. Champlain would later try to make Quebec a settled, Christian community on a European model, but in 1608 his first goal was to monopolize the St Lawrence fur trade.

Quebec's beginnings were modest and inauspicious. Of 25 men who wintered there in 1608–9, only 9 were alive the following spring after scurvy had taken its toll. The credit for the colony's survival belongs in large part to Champlain, who travelled to France to seek court and financial support for the struggling St Lawrence colony. A new commercial monopoly was established and Quebec was saved. Although Champlain was never formally named governor of the colony, he headed its civil administration, enforcing the king's laws and overseeing relations with the Native peoples. He also invested a substantial sum in the colony, using the proceeds from a dowry he received on his marriage.

The survival of Quebec depended upon the goodwill of the local Algonquin and Innu. The Native peoples were absolutely necessary to fur traders; only they knew the terrain upon which beaver could be trapped at just the right

## BIOGRAPHY

### Étienne Brûlé

Hoping to better the understanding between the French and their Native allies and to create a supply of interpreters to carry on the fur trade, Champlain encouraged the men in his charge to live with Native allies and learn their languages. The first to volunteer was Étienne Brûlé, a young man in his teens who had survived the difficult winter of 1608–9. In 1610, Brûlé became the first European to live among the Wendat (Huron) around Georgian Bay and was later the first to visit Lake Superior and today's state of Pennsylvania. He learned the Wendat language and customs and was effectively adopted by his hosts, who complained nonetheless that he used the relative sexual freedom of Native society to practise uncontrolled lechery.

Brûlé served as an interpreter of Native languages for Champlain and other French traders. Branded a traitor for collaborating with the English after they seized Quebec in 1629, Brûlé was later killed and eaten by the Wendat, who, for reasons unknown, turned against him. This adventurous Frenchman became the prototype for the many young men who would live

among the Native peoples later in the century, engaging in the fur trade and adopting indigenous culture.



This 1987 stamp commemorates Étienne Brûlé's voyage to Lake Superior in about 1621–1623. The other figure represents Brûlé's companion Grenolle. SOURCE: © CANADA POST CORPORATION

time. Beaver down was thickest in winter when the animals inhabited remote lakes and streams, their lodges well hidden. Pelts worn as clothing lost their long guard hairs and became glossy and supple through contact with body oil and perspiration. They were thus ideal for felting by Parisian hatters. European experience with Aboriginal peoples elsewhere might have suggested enslaving the Natives to ensure that they became a pliant, reliable, cheap labour force. But fur trappers did not work in large numbers in a small area, making slave labour difficult to implement.

To cement his alliance with his Native commercial partners, Champlain agreed in 1609 to support them in an ongoing war with the Five Nations Confederacy of Iroquois, or Haudenosaunee. The alliance also led to contact with the Algonquin's Wendat (Huron) allies and to direct involvement in battles against the Five Nations in 1609 and 1610. Within a short time, Native and European rivalries had intertwined. The Wendat, drawing on their extensive trading network with groups farther north and west, became partners with the Algonquin and the Innu in a military-commercial alliance with the French, while the Five Nations Iroquois eventually became fur suppliers to the Dutch based at present-day Albany and New York in New York state.

## CRISIS IN NEW FRANCE

In 1627, when the population of Quebec was only 107, Champlain's efforts to build a colony on the St Lawrence received a boost from France. Cardinal Richelieu, Louis XIII's chief minister, engineered a new trade monopoly, designed to encourage trade, settlement, and missionary activity. Known as the *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* or the *Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France*, it was granted lands from Florida to the Arctic Circle and a monopoly of the fur trade and all other commerce except the fisheries for 15 years. In return, the monopoly holders would be required to settle at least 200 Catholic colonists a year for 15 years and fund missionary activities.

War broke out between England and France just as the *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* was undertaking its first overseas initiatives. David Kirke and his four brothers, financed by London merchants and commissioned by King Charles I to displace the French from "Canida," seized Tadoussac and captured the company's ships, carrying 400 colonists, off Gaspé. Blockaded by the English, Quebec surrendered to the Kirkes in July 1629. A few

French colonists stayed, but most of the fur traders, led by Champlain, departed.

By this time, French claims to Acadia were also being challenged. In 1621, King James of England granted the area encompassing Acadia to his fellow countryman, Sir William Alexander of Scotland. Under pressure from King Charles I, who ascended the English throne in 1625, the Kirkes and Alexander combined forces and founded the Company of Merchant Adventurers to Canada in 1629. Their intent was to displace France from North America. Two colonies were planned, one at Port-Royal, under the leadership of William Alexander's son, and another, more strategically located, at Port-aux-Baleines in Cape Breton, commanded by Sir James Stewart, Lord Ochiltree. Two months after its founding, the colony in Cape Breton was captured and destroyed by Captain Charles Daniel, leader of an expedition sent by the *Cent-Associés* to lift the siege of Quebec. The Scots had more success at Port-Royal. Charles La Tour's father Claude, who had been captured in 1628 by the Kirkes en route to Acadia with supplies from the *Cent-Associés*, accompanied the expedition and, shortly after their arrival, Mi'kmaq and Maliseet appeared with presents, signaling their interest in trade and friendship.

As would so often be the case in colonial matters, European diplomacy decided the fate of Scottish initiatives in Acadia/Nova Scotia. In March 1632, the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, which finally brought a formal end to the war, restored Acadia and Canada to France.

## CIVIL WAR IN ACADIA

With the return of peace, the French government was determined to re-establish control over Acadia. Cardinal Richelieu appointed Isaac de Razilly as lieutenant-general of New France and provided a force of three ships and 300 men to take possession of Port-Royal. From 1632 to 1635, Razilly laid the groundwork for a lasting colony out of his base at La Hève. One of his lieutenants, Nicolas Denys, conducted fishing and lumbering activities on the south shore of Nova Scotia, and Razilly built Fort Saint-François at the strategic port of Canso. Since Charles de La Tour also had claims to Acadia, some accommodation was necessary. Agreeing to share the profits from the fur trade, Razilly and La Tour dealt separately with the *Compagnie des Cent-Associés*, which had authority over all of New France.

Following Razilly's death in 1636, his successor, Charles de Menou d'Aulnay, proved less accommodating to La Tour's claims and the fishing and lumbering operations of Nicholas Denys. The latter retreated to La Rochelle, but La Tour was not so easily intimidated. The battle between the d'Aulnays and the La Tours for control of early Acadia plunged the region into a bitter civil war. In 1645, while Charles de La Tour was seeking assistance from the English colony of Massachusetts Bay, d'Aulnay captured La Tour's fort at the mouth of the St John River. It had been valiantly defended by La Tour's second wife, Françoise-Marie Jacquin, who was forced to watch her surviving soldiers hanged, despite d'Aulnay's assurance that he would "give quarter to all" as a condition of surrender. With Acadia out of bounds, La Tour left Boston in a vessel belonging to David Kirke (now governor of Newfoundland), jettisoned his English crew at Cape Sable, and sought refuge in Quebec.

When d'Aulnay drowned in 1650, La Tour managed to be reconfirmed as governor of Acadia. In 1653, he consolidated his territorial interests by marrying d'Aulnay's widow, becoming stepfather to her seven surviving children and producing five more offspring with her. Nicolas Denys also returned to Acadia, establishing, with the support of the *Compagnie des Cent-Associés*, trading posts from Canso to the Gaspé.

Both La Tour and Denys were hounded by Emmanuel Le Borgne, an influential merchant from La Rochelle, who claimed jurisdiction over trade in Acadia in compensation for the extensive debts owed to him by d'Aulnay. In 1651, a force dispatched by Le Borgne occupied Port-Royal and he subjected Denys's trading posts to repeated raids. The situation took another dramatic turn in 1654 when an English expedition led by Major Robert Sedgwick from Massachusetts captured Fort La Tour, Port-Royal, and Pentagouët. Taken captive by Sedgwick, La Tour was transported to England where, in yet another twist on his slippery allegiances, he established his claim to Acadia on the basis of his father's earlier acceptance of a Scottish title on his behalf.

The Sedgwick expedition was conducted in the context of a civil war in England (1642–1651), which ended with the beheading of Charles I in 1649 and the inauguration of a republic under Oliver Cromwell that lasted until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Cromwell's government, taking the view that Acadia had reverted to its former identity as Nova Scotia, recognized La Tour's territorial claims on the condition that he pay the costs of

Sedgwick's expedition. To achieve this end and to satisfy the substantial demands of his Boston creditors, La Tour sold his rights in Acadia to Sir Thomas Temple and William Crowne, who retained control of Acadia until 1667 when, by the Treaty of Breda, the colony was returned to France.

Despite the difficulties, the European population in Acadia reached about 400 by the mid-seventeenth century. Both D'Aulnay and La Tour had recruited settlers, most of them indentured labourers (*engagés*). While many *engagés* returned home once they had served their indenture, those who remained became the founding families of a deeply rooted Acadian population. When French rule was restored, the "Acadians" had become accustomed to trading with New Englanders and resisting the demands of authorities, whether French or English. This independent spirit would continue to grow in a region that remained at a crossroads of conflicting imperial claims.

Although the Mi'kmaq still outnumbered Europeans in Acadia in the 1650s, their culture was fundamentally altered. Depletion of game occurred early in the Mi'kmaw territories. By the mid-seventeenth century, there had been several famines; moose in Cape Breton and elk on Mission Island had become extinct. Fur-bearing animals, killed in large numbers to accommodate the traders' demands, became harder to find. The Mi'kmaq increasingly bought clothes from the Europeans, and as European cottons, woollens, and kettles replaced local manufacture, Native women's crucial production roles broke down. Men's skills in crafting items from stone and other indigenous materials also diminished. While some traditions survived, French missionaries increasingly defined familial, sexual, and property arrangements.

Resource depletion led the Mi'kmaq to cluster around French settlements, where they consumed unfamiliar foods such as peas, prunes, and bread. As elsewhere in North America, alcohol became a staple of the Mi'kmaw diet. The resulting physical deterioration may have contributed to their vulnerability in the face of European-imported diseases. By the end of the seventeenth century, the number of Mi'kmaq had declined to less than 4000. Kinship groups collapsed as disease decimated the population. The Mi'kmaq had not been forced by Europeans to change their way of life, they had merely engaged in trade with outsiders whose goods they wished to acquire. Eventually, the loss of their resource base meant that the Mi'kmaq lacked the option of returning to their old lifestyle.

Historians now tend to be cautious in using the term "dependence" to discuss Native relations with the

## A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DEBATE

### Cruelty versus Germs

Historians have noted the extent to which contact with Europeans resulted in the decimation of Native populations. They have also suggested that Europeans treated the indigenous peoples with unusual cruelty. Can these two observations be linked? Some historians think that microbes alone devastated the Aboriginal peoples. Others suggest that the cruel treatment meted out by Europeans contributed significantly to a physical weakening of Native people that allowed diseases to take their deadly course.

Historian Alfred W. Crosby, while not minimizing the European exploitation of the First Peoples, suggests that the unplanned European biological attack on the Americas accounted for most deaths. While Native peoples were familiar with venereal syphilis, polio, some varieties of tuberculosis, hepatitis, and encephalitis, they had no experience of or immunity to smallpox, measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, chicken pox, bubonic plague, malaria, typhoid fever, cholera, yellow fever, influenza, and other infectious diseases brought by the Europeans. As a result, whole communities often disappeared or declined precipitously even before European contact had altered their lifestyles.

Crosby observes that Europeans who wanted to enslave Natives could not have been happy to see their labourers dying like flies. There were a few diseases that passed the other way—from Natives to Europeans—but these were not as deadly. Had they been, the ability of the Europeans to conquer the Americas might have been curtailed. The failure of the Crusades, Crosby notes, was in large part attributable to the vast numbers of Crusaders who succumbed in the Muslim lands to diseases from which they had no natural protection. Combatants, in any case, were unaware of their biological impact as they intruded on new regions. Crosby adds:

Neo-Europeans did not purposely introduce rats, and have spent millions of pounds, dollars, pesos, and other currencies to halt their spread—usually in vain. The same is true for several other varmints in Neo-Europe—rabbits, for instance. This seems to indicate that humans were seldom masters of the biological changes they triggered in the Neo-Europes.<sup>5</sup>

Other historians, while not disputing that European biological warfare in the Americas was generally unintentional, argue that it only partially accounts for the decimation of Native populations. They point to the deliberate cruelty of

European labour practices. Europeans cared little about the people they encountered in the Americas and exploited them ruthlessly, importing African slaves when indigenous labourers were too few or too unwilling to perform the services required. On the island of Hispaniola, under Columbus and his successors, local people were worked to death in gold mines and on building projects. The tragedy was repeated in Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Leeward Islands, and the Bahamas.<sup>6</sup>

The germ theory, while important, fails to explain differential death rates among Native groups after contact with Europeans. In regions such as Canada, the decline in population, while considerable, was simply not on the same scale as in Mexico, for instance. In Canada, the impact of infectious diseases on population levels varied dramatically, with some Aboriginal groups regaining their population numbers within a generation after an epidemic, and others never recovering.<sup>7</sup> An important body of recent historical work has challenged the notion that population losses, especially in the long term, were solely or mainly the result of First Peoples' lack of immunity to germs that Europeans carried. Mary-Ellen Kelm, for example, in studying the health of First Nations in British Columbia, stresses that European colonizers robbed Natives of the resources that had provided their traditional sustenance and criminalized their traditional healing arts and related spiritual practices.<sup>8</sup>

Natives resisted such efforts to control their minds and bodies, but colonialism nonetheless exacted a heavy toll in Native lives and health. Maureen K. Lux, in a parallel study of the health of Prairie Aboriginal societies, argues that the Natives of this region proved able to adapt to the fur trade with Europeans. In the settlement period, however, the bison disappeared and the implementation of their treaties with Canada failed to provide for their basic human needs. Starvation and poor living conditions resulted in many deaths. Canadian authorities blamed the victims for this state of affairs. "As the diseases of poverty rushed in, those who administered their lives would frame disease as a function of their race and their supposed 'stage of civilization.' From that point on, Christianity and assimilation were the paths to good health. That the people were nearly destroyed in the process was rarely seen as a fault of the policy; rather it was the fault of the people's character and customs—of their 'race.'"<sup>9</sup>

Europeans because it implies that the First Peoples became charity cases or that they were victims rather than actors in their relations with the newcomers. In the case of the Mi'kmaq, neither occurred. If the Mi'kmaq had become dependent on French goods, the French were as dependent upon the Mi'kmaq for survival; until the French were forced out of North America, the Mi'kmaq served as an invaluable military ally against New England.

## CANADA, 1635-1663

Champlain had returned to Quebec in 1633 and the following year established a base at Trois-Rivières, farther up the St Lawrence River. When he died in 1635, the colony remained primarily a fur-trading outpost, not the settled agricultural community he had hoped to establish. Champlain had recruited a few farmers, and his French patrons had contributed a few more, but the colony's total population in 1635 was only about 400. In addition to the people engaged in the fur trade, this number included several farming families as well as officials, missionaries, and indentured labourers imported for tasks such as working the land or building houses.

The Compagnie des Cent-Associés made efforts to fulfil its charter pledges to bring colonists to New France, but the fur trade, which was meant to provide the capital to sustain their efforts, let them down. When profits collapsed in the face of Iroquois attacks on the Wendat fur flotillas in the 1640s, the company sublet the fur trade to the Communauté des Habitants, an organization composed of leading members of the colony. Although the Compagnie des Cent-Associés retained administrative control of the colony, it lost interest in colonization.

After Champlain's death, the French government gradually established a fledgling colonial administration in Canada. In 1637, it named a governor-general with ultimate military and civil authority, independent of the Compagnie des Cent-Associés, though chosen from a list suggested by the Compagnie. In 1647, a council was set up to assist the governor, which included the Superior of the Jesuits, though the governor-general retained an effective veto. The Compagnie also had its own agents and courts in the colony. These confusing arrangements often led to conflicts for political power among the Compagnie, royal officials, and others.

Another influence on the emerging colony was the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, a secret Catholic organization in France which focused on New France as a territory that could be consecrated to God. Leading figures in this organization formed the Société Notre-Dame de Montréal to establish Montreal in 1642 under the direction of Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve and Jeanne Mance. Initially named Ville-Marie, Montreal was designed by its founders to be a settlement of strict piety. Only those who could demonstrate their complete devotion to the Catholic Church's teachings would be permitted to settle in the new community. The Société enjoyed considerable autonomy at Montreal, with its own governor and its own courts.

Lobbying by the Société Notre-Dame's members in France also led to the appointment in 1659 of the Jesuit-trained François de Laval as New France's first bishop. Laval became a devoted servant of the sick and poor of the colony, but he was also a domineering individual who expected, as the emissary of both pope and king, to be obeyed by the civil authorities, the missionaries, and the colonists. With characteristic enthusiasm, Laval set out to establish a seminary to train priests and to create parishes that would administer to the needs of the settlers in the colony.

## THE EMERGING CANADIAN SOCIAL ORDER

Despite the challenges it faced, by 1660 Canada was taking on the trappings of a settled European community. Two-thirds of the 3035 settlers in the colony resided in the countryside and depended on farming for their livelihood. Land had been granted on the basis of the seigneurial system: the Compagnie des Cent-Associés granted estates to seigneurs who in turn granted farms freely to  *censitaires*, farmers who paid feudal dues to the seigneurs. Narrow strip farms stretching along the St Lawrence or its tributaries made up a seigneurie.

The seigneurial system differed from the crumbling feudalism of France in that it did not include military obligations; all land was granted without charge, and obligations between seigneur and  *censitaire* were generally stipulated in a notarized contract. Moreover, the landholdings of individual farmers, who were called  *habitants* rather than  *paysans* (peasants), were far larger



**MAP 3.2**  
New France in 1663

than those held by their counterparts in France. By 1663, 69 seigneuries had been granted, with members of the nobility holding title to 84 percent of the land.

French politics recognized three “estates”: the clergy, the nobles, and the commoners. In Canada, the first two estates included 78 and 96 members, respectively, in 1663. This left 94.3 percent of the population in the third estate. Although 68 percent of the population were members of farm or labourer households, 796 people were members of bourgeois families, including public servants, merchants, non-noble seigneurs, and master artisans.

The modest immigration to New France has sometimes been attributed to a French unwillingness to emigrate, but in the sixteenth century about 250 000 French migrated to bullion-rich Spain, where jobs were available at high wages. New France offered no such attraction. The prohibition on religious dissenters entering the colony also limited potential immigration to New France, a colony that had little appeal to most French people in any case because of its cold winters and the stories of its fearsome Native peoples. Not surprisingly, French colonies in

the West Indies, despite their unhealthy climate, drew more French immigrants than the St Lawrence.

Frontier conditions helped to create a society in which the classes mixed relatively freely during this early period of colonization. The small population was united both by external threats to the colony’s survival and by the need to clear land as quickly as possible. Nobles and bourgeois secured servants from Europe through indentures of usually three to five years, although enforcement of these contracts sometimes proved difficult. Initially, most indentured servants and labourers returned home at the end of their contracts, but after 1650, as more seigneuries opened up for prospective habitants, a slight majority of immigrants chose to remain permanently in the colony.

Peasants in France eked out a living on a few acres of land and faced harsh penalties if they tried to supplement an insufficient diet by hunting or fishing on a noble’s land. By contrast, settlers in New France were often enticed with relatively large land grants. In practice, a family could expect to clear only two acres a year, and the work of felling trees and preparing land for crops was backbreaking. The

first homes were tiny one-room cabins. They had little or no furniture and what did exist was mainly home-made. Oiled paper substituted for glass windows, and the clay chimneys and cold winters often led to destructive fires. Colonists quickly learned to become as self-sufficient as possible, which bred habits of independence, a certain pride in unskilled versatility, and opposition to any trade or artisanal organization and restriction.

The urban population, including most of the nobility and clergy, lived in the three towns of the colony: Quebec, founded in 1608; Trois-Rivières, in 1634; and Montreal, in 1642. By 1660, Quebec, the most highly developed centre, could boast a church, seven chapels, a college, a convent school for girls, a hospital, grist mills, a brewery, and a bakery. The city was surrounded by fortifications that protected its residents.

Native allies had a significant impact on the French immigrants, raising the question of whether France could successfully implant its institutions and values in North America. While the Natives clearly were attracted to European foodstuffs, alcohol, and manufactures, they did not abandon their own cultural practices, some of which found favour with Europeans. Indeed, in food, clothing, and transportation, Natives had a significant impact on French immigrants. Corn (maize); pumpkins; beaver flesh, tails, and feet; and the meat of moose, bears, and feathered game supplemented the colonists' more familiar food items. Tobacco, an indigenous crop that garnered great interest among Europeans, was also grown in New France. Without Native inventions such as the birchbark canoe, the toboggan, and snowshoes, the French would have had difficulty negotiating the unfamiliar terrain. Native medicine helped remedy scurvy and other ailments, although European prejudices prevented the French from taking advantage of the full cornucopia of Native cures.

One group of colonists was particularly influenced by the free-spirited behaviour of the Native peoples. These were the young men who spent a good part of their lives trading in the bush. Many had liaisons with Native women while they lived in the upper country. Some remained in the Great Lakes basin and never returned to Quebec. Others abandoned their Native wives when they returned to the Laurentian settlements, but a few brought their wives back with them. Champlain and, for a time, the Jesuits promoted interracial marriages as a means of encouraging assimilation.

While the men who had lived among the First Peoples rarely rejected their own religion in favour of Native religious beliefs, few behaved piously upon their return to the colony. Their drinking, rioting, and gambling, which influenced the activities of other colonists, became the cause of many unenforceable decrees and countless Sunday sermons. In a curious paradox, New France became a society marked by notable excesses of both piety and secular enjoyment.

## PREACHING THE WORD

Religious enthusiasm nevertheless sustained Roman Catholic missions designed to convert the Natives with whom the French traded. While French monarchs hoped to garner prestige for their efforts to Christianize the “heathen,” fur traders were initially leery of imposing representatives of a foreign religion on their trading allies. Eventually, they found that the missionaries could be useful in strengthening relations between the French and particular Native groups and in instilling European notions of regular work habits. Not all Natives were eager to become Christians. A common response to the missionary efforts was: “such is not our custom; your world is different from ours; the God who created yours did not create ours.”<sup>10</sup>

In the first half of the seventeenth century, Acadia was an open field for competing clerical orders. Récollet, Jesuit, and Capuchin priests conducted missions among the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet. The Capuchins were particularly active, sending at least 40 priests and 20 lay brothers to Acadia between 1632 and 1656. Most priests spent only a few years in Acadia, but they achieved their goal: a growing number of Mi'kmaq and Maliseet adopted Catholic beliefs.

The first missionaries in Canada were the Récollets, who began arriving in 1615. After failure among the migratory Algonquin, they focused their efforts on Huronia, the territory near Georgian Bay in present-day Ontario where the sedentary agricultural Wendat lived in their villages. Huronia was a significant location in both commercial and strategic terms: it was the point of exchange between the southern agricultural nations and the northern nomadic hunters. From these villages in the Great Lakes basin, travellers could have access by waterways and relatively easy portages to the far western plains,

the Mississippi River, and even Hudson Bay. It was a logical point from which to start building a Laurentian commercial empire, a missionary network, and a chain of military fortifications.

The missionaries found aspects of Native society to both praise and criticize. While they denounced the relative power of women, the permissive upbringing of children, and the sexual freedom among youth, they acknowledged Native hospitality and generosity. Brother Gabriel Sagard, writing of the Wendat in the 1620s, commented favourably on the skilled craftwork of the women and men, particularly their pottery, canoes, and weaving. Sagard also found much to criticize about the Wendat. While they were generous to a fault, they were also, in his opinion, unclean, ill-mannered, revenge seeking, incorrigible liars, and shameless belchers. The Wendat made similar complaints about the French, whom they tended to regard as greedy and untruthful.

In 1625, Jesuits began arriving in Canada, ostensibly to assist the Récollets with their missionary work, but soon to supplant them as the principal missionaries in the colony. French political intrigues meant that the Jesuits, but not the Récollets, were allowed to return to Canada in 1632. Like the Récollets, the Jesuits focused

their missionary efforts on the Wendat. In 1639, they built a headquarters called Sainte-Marie-des-Hurons to oversee their village missions. They also encouraged Christian Natives from several tribes to move to Sillery, a Jesuit-sponsored reserve established in 1637 outside of Quebec. Here it was hoped that the new converts would farm under the guidance of the Jesuits and be free of contamination by “pagan” influences. The first inhabitants of Sillery failed to adapt to a sedentary agricultural life, and alcohol and disease introduced by European intruders soon sent the reserve into a steep decline. Wendat refugees from the Huron–Five Nations war gave it a more stable existence after 1650. They punished drunks and absentees from mass and proved especially harsh with women who clung to traditional notions of their rights. One young woman, whose parents were converts, was publicly whipped for yielding to advances from a traditionalist, while another woman was chained by one foot for having refused to obey her husband.

The Jesuits quickly realized that to succeed they needed to become more flexible in their approach to missionary work. They settled among the Natives, allowing themselves to be adopted by families, and accepted that, in some circumstances, hunting must be combined with,

#### MORE TO THE STORY

##### Sainte-Marie-des-Hurons

The Jesuit ambition to spread the gospel is illustrated by the establishment of Sainte-Marie-des-Hurons, a fortified centre for mission activity in Huronia. Jérôme Lalemant, who arrived as the superior of the Jesuit mission in Huronia in 1638, conceived of such a centre as a means both of reducing missionary economic dependency on the Wendat and of providing Christian Wendat with a place of worship away from their pagan fellows.

At its height in 1648, Sainte-Marie boasted 18 priests and 46 lay assistants. Among the assistants were four lay brothers, four boys, seven domestics, eight soldiers, and 23 *donnés*—that is, men who pledged their lives to the mission’s work and received no wages but who took no priestly vows. The lay people included surgeons, pharmacists, master builders, and shoemakers as well as many handymen. The farmers tended pigs and

cows and grew crops. By 1649, although some food was still obtained from the Wendat, the diet of the French in Huronia had become similar to that of their counterparts in Quebec.

Alongside the enclosed compound, reserved for the missionaries, their lay helpers, and a few soldiers, was a Wendat compound that included a chapel, a hospital, a cemetery for Christian Natives, and a longhouse for Native visitors. While Wendat converts were encouraged to relocate to Sainte-Marie, few of them chose to abandon their villages and traditional customs, even though relations between the converts and traditionalists were becoming more strained. For the traditionalists, Sainte-Marie was a symbol of the Jesuits’ attitude of intolerant superiority toward Natives. Sainte-Marie was burned to the ground by the Jesuits in 1649 to avoid its desecration by the Five Nations Iroquois.



Champlain's map of Canada, in a 1653 version produced after his death. Huronia is shown in the centre of the map, just above Lake Ontario.  
SOURCE: LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA NMC 6333

rather than replaced by, farming. Many learned to speak the languages of the Native peoples fluently and worked hard to understand the cultures of those whom they wished to convert. Religious practices linking Native religious traditions with Christianity were tolerated. The Natives were impressed that the Jesuits, with their European technology, could foresee eclipses. Some were also fascinated by books and writing.

The extent of real conversions in the early years of Jesuit proselytizing is difficult to determine. Some converts were zealots who spurned their relatives and refused to participate in traditional religious ceremonies. Others may have accepted conversion to improve their trading position with the French. In Huronia, for example, only Christian converts received muskets in their trade with the French, who deemed converts more reliable trading partners.

The persistence of the Jesuits and their desire for martyrdom impressed even those most resistant to their

teachings. In the early years of their missions, several Jesuit priests were captured by the Iroquois and tortured to death, while others died less romantically of exposure, drowning, disease, or exhaustion. Jesuits were aware that the Natives, at least in the beginning, regarded them as strange and lacking in survival skills, and they knew that the “Savages” were determined to assert their superiority over Europeans. As Father Jean de Brébeuf, who would become one of the most celebrated martyrs, indicated in a letter to his superiors in France in 1637, “If you could go naked, and carry the load of a horse upon your back, as they do, then you would be wise according to their doctrine, and would be recognized as a great man, otherwise not.”<sup>11</sup>

The Jesuits were convinced that formal education would socialize Native peoples to European ways. Paul Le Jeune, superior of the Canadian Jesuit missions, founded a Jesuit college at Quebec in 1635 to teach lessons in Christianity to boys, among whom he hoped to find



This illustration of a missionary teaching Native converts to say their catechism, using ideograms, was prepared by the Récollet priest Chrestien Le Clercq to celebrate the work of the Gaspé mission at Miscou. Established in 1633 to convert the local Natives, the mission was destroyed by English privateers from New York in 1690. SOURCE: LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA NL-22323

potential priests. Not surprisingly, Native families were not enthusiastic supporters of this endeavour and most of the students taught in the college were children of European settlers.

## FEMALE RELIGIOUS ORDERS

Following the European practice of gender segregation, the Jesuits accepted only boys in their schools. It was therefore necessary to call on female teachers to found

schools for girls in the colony. The call was heeded by Marie de l'Incarnation, a member of the Ursulines and the first of many energetic religious women to immigrate to New France. Requiring the Native girls to board at school so they could be shielded from non-Christian influences, the Ursulines taught them prayers and simple lessons. Some of the girls were fascinated by the devout women from France and sought to emulate them, but many tried to run away from their authoritarian European teachers.

In addition to their missionary activities among Native women, female religious orders played a major role in establishing schools and hospitals to serve the settler communities of New France. Marie de l'Incarnation and her Ursuline sisters devoted their lives to teaching in both Quebec and Trois-Rivières. In 1658, Marguerite Bourgeoys, who arrived in the colony in 1653, founded a teaching community in Montreal, the *Congrégation de Notre-Dame*. Modelling her congregation on non-cloistered female religious orders in France, she concentrated on educating children from poorer families.

The first hospital in New France, the *Hôtel-Dieu de Québec*, was founded in 1639 by *Hospitalières de Saint-Augustin* under the leadership of Marie Guenet and Marie Forestier. Three years later, a *Hôtel-Dieu* was established in Ville-Marie by Jeanne Mance. Educated in France by the Ursulines, Mance participated in the founding of Ville-Marie and devoted her life to the service of the colony. As a member of the *Société Notre-Dame*, Mance was able to persuade a wealthy French woman to finance a plan to bring several *Hospitalières* from La Flèche to Ville-Marie in 1657. When Ville-Marie needed money to hire soldiers for its battles with the Iroquois, Mance went to France to persuade her patron of the urgency, even though she had recently fallen on the ice and had to be carried about in France on a stretcher.

## MISSIONS AND NATIVE CULTURE

While missionaries developed a significant presence in the colony, their attempts to convert Natives to European ways often met with hostility, especially from women. Missionary proscriptions on premarital sex and divorce and the value placed on a family life centred around nuclear, male-headed households threatened women's considerable power within Native societies. Indeed,



View of the First Monastery of the Ursulines in Quebec City (c.1847), attributed to Soeur Georgina Vanfelson, after Joseph Légaré. SOURCE: NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA 15852

several Wendat men who became Christians were barred from their longhouses by their angry mothers-in-law. The Wendat women rejected, among other things, the European view that lineage must be determined patrilineally—that is, through the male line—and that non-marital sex must be forbidden so men could be certain about the paternity of offspring.

Some Native men, by contrast, appeared to relish the new powers that the Christians claimed they should take from the women. In 1640, a group of Innu women who summered along the St Lawrence River complained to the Jesuits of the audacity of three male captains, all Christian converts, who had ordered the women to appear before them.

... they treated us so rudely that we were greatly astonished. "It is you women," they said to us, "who are the cause of all our misfortunes,—it is you who keep the Demons among us. You do not urge to be baptized . . . when you pass before the cross you never salute it; you wish to be independent. Now know that you will obey your husbands; and you young people, you will obey

your parents and our Captains; and, if any fail to do so, we have concluded to give them nothing to eat."<sup>13</sup>

Before European contact, if a group of Innu men had demanded that the women accept subordinate status and that children be obedient, they would have been dismissed as madmen possessed by evil spirits. Their threat to withhold food would have been meaningless in a society that required its members to take collective responsibility for obtaining and preparing food.

Most Native women continued to assert their traditions, but a coterie of women zealots, imitating the nuns, gained notoriety. They whipped each other, wore hair shirts, mixed ashes in their food, stood naked in snowstorms, and one

put glowing coals between her toes. Some worked to aid the poor and sick, and eventually some of these Native women were allowed to join the French women's religious orders. None survived long enough to enjoy a fruitful religious career.

## THE WENDAT-FIVE NATIONS WARS

Missionary activities, however destructive to Native culture, were overshadowed by the more serious impact of European germs and weapons. In the late 1630s, smallpox and measles wrought devastation among the French fur-trade allies, particularly the Wendat and Innu. Wendat numbers were reduced from about 20 000 to about 8000, a massive 60 percent drop in just a few years. Death on this scale robbed the Wendat of many of their leaders and played havoc with the delicate social arrangements of the four tribes of the loose Wendat Confederacy.

These arrangements had already suffered the strains of quite different responses to the Jesuit teachings and presence. Two of the tribes were receptive to the Jesuits,

## BIOGRAPHY

**Marie de l'Incarnation**

Marie de l'Incarnation was one of the most complex individuals to travel to New France in the early days of European settlement. Born Marie Guyart in Tours in 1599, she let her visions guide her life—much like the Natives whose religion she sought to supplant. Visions led her as a young widow to put her 12-year-old son in a boarding school and join the cloistered Ursulines. Another vision persuaded her to heed the call of Paul Le Jeune for nuns to open a school for Native girls in Quebec.

Like many of her Ursuline and Jesuit counterparts, she was a religious zealot who lived a life of excruciating discipline. According to one biographer, “. . . she wore a penitential shirt with knots and thorns, slept on a hair mattress that kept her always half awake, and sometimes rose at night to chastise herself, first with thongs, later with a whip of nettles. . . . She ate wormwood with her food, holding the bitterness in her mouth, and sometimes approached the fire to burn her skin.”<sup>12</sup>

The founder of Canada's first school for Native girls was more than just an otherworldly self-flagellator. She had managed a large shipping company for her brother-in-law for a decade before devoting herself fully to Christ, and the administrative skills she had acquired proved invaluable in her religious endeavours. First, she found a wealthy patron, Marie-Madeleine de Chauvigny de La Peltrie, who funded and accompanied Marie and two other Ursulines to New France in 1639. Then she supervised the building of a school for Native and French girls and a convent for the nuns. When the convent burned down in 1650, she had a larger convent built to replace it. At the time of her retirement as superior in 1669, her

convent housed between 50 and 55 people. Of these, 22, including 4 lay sisters and 3 novices, were members of the religious community.



Marie de l'Incarnation, as portrayed by Hugues Pommier (1677).  
SOURCE: LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA C-8070

while the other two proved hostile. When disease depleted their numbers, opponents of the “charcoal” men (alluding to their black robes) accused the missionaries of practising black magic to destroy them. Meanwhile, the converts increasingly refused to have their family members buried in non-Christian sites or to fight alongside non-Christian Wendat in battles against enemies.

In 1649, those enemies destroyed Huronia. The Five Nations Iroquois had become dependent on the fur trade,

but they had begun to exhaust fur supplies within their own territory and were seeking new supplies on their northern frontier. In the 1640s, the Five Nations attempted to disrupt the annual flotilla of Wendat canoes that made the long journey from Huronia to Quebec. When the attacks on fur convoys proved unsuccessful in forcing the Wendat to bend to their demands for access to furs, the Five Nations launched direct attacks on Huronia itself. They sought as well to replenish their own

numbers, also drastically reduced by disease, through the long-standing practice of forced adoption of captives.

An attack in 1648 was repulsed, but not without significant Wendat casualties. In 1649, the Five Nations broke through Wendat defences. Jesuit priests Jean de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant were brutally tortured, their tormentors baptizing them with boiling water before executing them. Terrorized by a hitherto unheard-of concentration of enemy warriors and internally divided, the survivors burned their villages and dispersed. Many took refuge with their allies, the Tionontaté (Petun) and Attiwandaron (Neutral), only to face further Five Nations raids that destroyed these nations and assimilated the survivors. One group of Wendat and Tionontaté survivors eventually moved westward to today's Michigan, Kansas, and Oklahoma. The majority of the Wendat took the lead of the converts who followed the Jesuits to an island in Georgian Bay, subsequently known as Christian Island. There, they experienced a horrendous winter in 1649–50, dogged by disease, starvation, Iroquois attacks, and ultimately death. A few hundred survivors accompanied the Jesuits back to Quebec, where they resettled with aid from the religious orders, becoming the ancestors of today's Huron-Wendat population at Wendake.

For the Five Nations, the destruction of Huronia meant they could establish settlements in new territories and trap furs to supply their Dutch and English partners. Algonkian peoples and the remnants of the Wendat still gathered furs from the nations in the western Great Lakes area and, with French aid, could still impede Five Nations access to the better fur-bearing territories. The Ojibwa were also a factor in frustrating this goal. In the period of Wendat dominance of the fur trade, they had exclusively been trappers on the parklands and plains. Now they saw an opportunity to become go-betweens. Using French arms, the Ojibwa succeeded in driving the Five Nations out of former Wendat territory in the late seventeenth century, and many stayed to settle there. Others moved north and west and served as go-betweens for the French traders and the Dakota and Assiniboine, as well as the Cree west of Lake Superior.

For the struggling St Lawrence colony, the loss of Huronia had grave commercial, military, and even agricultural consequences. Before 1649, the French involved in the fur trade could receive furs in the colony without ever setting foot in the upper country where the furs originated. In addition, their allies had protected them against hostile Five Nations Iroquois; now, those allies were gone. It would be several decades before their replacements would become a match for the Five Nations, who had begun to torch crops and kill settlers in an effort to force fur traders to recognize them as the exclusive sellers of furs to Europeans.

As a result of the collapse of Huronia, the French were forced to develop new fur-trade strategies. They began to send young men of the colony to live in the upper country to help their remaining Native allies fend off the Five Nations and to make contact with Native trappers to ensure they were not won over by the Aboriginal allies of rival European nations. French voyageurs, rather than Natives, would be in charge of flotillas that brought furs from the interior to the St Lawrence colony. Faced with hostile Iroquois, the colony would require military reinforcements from France on a large scale. The dispersal of the Wendat demonstrated that New France could not survive simply as a small fur-trading post.



*Working a Canoe Up a Rapid* (on the Ottawa River). The route followed by voyageurs in the 1600s remained in use until the early nineteenth century; this later engraving by W.H. Bartlett was published in N.P. Willis's *Canadian Scenery Illustrated* (1842). SOURCE: NEWBERRY LIBRARY

From the 1660s on, this reality would prove crucial in French policy-making regarding the colony.

The vulnerability of the French was revealed in April 1660 when Adam Dollard des Ormeaux, a 25-year-old soldier and recent immigrant to New France, 16 French men, and about 40 Wendat and Algonquin allies set off to attack Five Nations warriors and hunters along the Ottawa River. At the foot of Long Sault rapids, they came across a force of several hundred Iroquois, possibly bent on invading Canada. After a battle lasting seven days, all the French and most of their Native allies were killed.

## NEW FRANCE IN QUESTION

Despite concerted efforts to lay the foundations of an overseas colony, the future of New France looked

uncertain in 1660. Acadia, its development impeded by the battles of rival French claimants, was in English hands. Quebec was subject to raids by the Five Nations Confederacy, whose trade links with the Dutch and the English underscored the success of other European nations in developing overseas empires. England's American colonies, stretching along the Atlantic seaboard from New England to Virginia, were home to 70 000 colonists in 1660; Canada and Acadia together had less than 4000. Grumbling from within the colony convinced Louis XIV's government in 1663 that the oligarchy controlling the Compagnie des Cent-Associés was incapable of directing effective colonization. The company's property, administrative, and monopoly trade rights were revoked and replaced with royal government—that is, administration by state officials responsible to the crown. A new era in the history of New France was about to begin.

### MORE TO THE STORY

#### The Case of Dollard des Ormeaux

The basic facts of the fight between Adam Dollard des Ormeaux's group and the Iroquois are not in dispute, but historical narrative is not simply a presentation of facts. It is also an interpretation of events and, as such, is influenced, consciously or not, by the political beliefs of historians. Dollard's motivation in the case of the battle at Long Sault has intrigued historians who hold differing views of the event's significance. For some, particularly religiously inclined French-Canadian nationalists writing in the period before the Second World War, the defenders at Long Sault were martyrs to the cause of New France, motivated by a desire to free the colony from Iroquois threat.

Other historians, perhaps less sympathetic to the nationalist cause or wanting to emphasize the predominance of commercial over religious interests in New France, suggest that the young men were greedy adventurers trying to capture a shipment of Iroquois furs, oblivious to the danger—in the form of Iroquois retribution—they might thereby create for the colony. They did not challenge the Eurocentric

assumption that the Five Nations had their sights trained upon the colony. The work of historians studying the First Nations perspective on historical events suggests that the Iroquois' target was not the colony at all but their Native enemies.

A particular challenge exists in determining the motivation of Dollard and his comrades because none of the French or Native victims of Long Sault recorded their aims. Historians have had to infer their motivation from their own particular understandings of the society of early New France and surrounding Native societies. Ascribing motivation is one of the challenges of writing history. Sometimes all a historian can do is make an educated guess, especially when people left no records or when the accuracy of the records left is in doubt. In the same way that a historian must evaluate a source to determine its bias and validity, readers must be aware of the underlying political objectives or perspectives of historians and how they can affect their interpretations of events.

## A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DEBATE

### The Destruction of Huronia

What caused the destruction of Huronia? At one level, the answer seems simple: guns. The Five Nations Iroquois, with an estimated 500 guns in their possession, dispersed the Wendat, an enemy that could count on only 120 guns. The Five Nations were better armed because their Dutch allies in New Netherland increasingly traded guns for furs, whereas by French policy only the minority of Christian Wendat received guns. Given the lack of guns, Huronia became more vulnerable to Five Nations attack.

For historian Cornelius Jaenen, however, there is no conclusive evidence that Iroquois raiders made much use of guns in their attacks on the Wendat, instead using tomahawks and fire to terrorize their Wendat and French enemies. Employing solid military tactics involving concentration of forces, surprise, and sustained attack, they moved quickly from one village to the next before the Wendat could assemble and mount a counter-offensive. Since their opponents were already bitterly divided between Christians and traditionalists, the Iroquois tactics were effective.<sup>14</sup>

Some scholars have maintained that it was European trade rivalries that led to hostility between the Wendat and the Iroquois. Anthropologist George Hunt argued in 1940 that the Wendat and the Five Nations Iroquois, sharing common origins, were unnatural enemies and that the fur trade created new and more intense rivalries between them.<sup>15</sup> While Hunt's general point regarding the impact of the fur trade on the motivations for intertribal conflicts has merit, few researchers accept his claim that the Five Nations and Wendat were on good terms in the immediate pre-contact period.

Geographer Conrad Heidenreich suggests that the desperation of the Five Nations and guns alone do not explain their success in vanquishing the Wendat. The cohesiveness of the Five Nations Confederacy, whose contact with Europeans was largely restricted to traders, was in contrast to the disunity of the Wendat, whose society had been less integrated than the Five Nations to begin with and became even less so as a result of religious division and the removal of recognized leaders by diseases.<sup>16</sup> Anthropologist Bruce Trigger and sociologist Denys Delâge are still more emphatic in pinpointing the divisive nature of Jesuit activities as the cause of the destruction of Huronia.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, Jesuit historian Lucien Campeau

argues in the order's defence that the Iroquois destroyed both the Tionontaté and the Attiwandaron, and the Tionontaté had only sporadic contacts with the Jesuits, while the Attiwandaron had none at all. It was guns, Campeau says, not cultural and religious confusion that destroyed the Wendat, just as those guns also brought down the other two nations.<sup>18</sup>

A Huron-Wendat historian suggests an interesting counterthesis. Georges Sioui argues that the Iroquois understood the Europeans' threat to the Native way of life and so became engaged in a war of liberation against the French. Because they suffered a huge loss of life in this war, they could only survive as a people by absorbing new members into their nations, by force if necessary. For Sioui, the large-scale adoption by the Five Nations of the Wendat, Tionontaté, and Attiwandaron was not the unintended consequence of the attack on Huronia, but indeed the objective of the attack. Sioui also maintains that historians of European origin have exaggerated the toll of the wars on Wendat lives to disguise an essential fact: European diseases, and not Native warfare, were responsible for the sharp decline of Native populations.<sup>19</sup> As we have seen, this too is the subject of debate.

American historian Daniel Richter supports Sioui's view that the chief aim of the Five Nations was to take captives, but his research questions Sioui's claims that such an aim was part of a Five Nations effort to build Native resistance against Europeans. "Mourning wars"—that is, wars meant to take captives to replace population losses among their own people—were part of ancient Iroquois tradition, Richter argues. The decimation caused by European diseases simply intensified such warfare. Moreover, the mourning wars did not promote unity among the Five Nations who fought among themselves for the right to various groups of captives.<sup>20</sup>

Most recently, anthropologist Gary Warrick sums up the debate by distinguishing between immediate causes and broader issues. The immediate causes included guns, Wendat internal divisions, and the Wendat's mistaken belief that the French would come to their aid. The broader issues included population decline caused by disease, the search by the Five Nations to replace their own dwindling numbers, their desire to retain their privileged trading relationship with the Dutch, and their drive to maintain political control by assimilating other groups.<sup>21</sup>

## CONCLUSION

After nearly a half-century of effort, France had staked its claim to the area that would become the eastern provinces of Canada, but it had fallen badly behind in the competition to establish North American colonies. Canada and Acadia were little more than fur-trade outposts, vulnerable to internal dissension and external assault. They produced no great riches for the empire, nor were

they high on the list of overseas destinations sought by French emigrants who would rather risk contracting malaria in the French West Indies than suffer a winter in New France. If the northern colonies were to thrive, they needed strong leadership and infusions of capital. On that, all elements in the colony—administrators, church leaders, fur traders, and settlers—agreed. As we will see in the next chapter, Louis XIV, the so-called “Sun King,” would provide both—at least for a time.

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- For a comprehensive list of readings for topics covered in this chapter, please visit <http://pearsoncanada.ca/conrad>