



Fur Trade

Target Group

- Grade 5

Main Idea

The fur trade was very important to the settlement of Canada. Many great explorers traveled and explored Canada due to the fur trade. The animals trapped for the fur trade have become a great resource due to fur qualities.

Subject Areas

- English Language Arts
- Fine Arts
- Social Studies

Objectives

Students will be able to describe

- Important animals in the fur trade.
- The Important qualities of fur.
- Different techniques used to trap animals for the fur trade.
- Important people in history and list their achievements.

Materials

- “**Teacher Background Information**” handout
- “**Best Fur**” handout
- “**Major Fur Trade Posts and Routes**” map
- “**Trade Posts**” photos
- Poster paper

Fur Trade Game

- “**Fur Animal**” and “**Trade Items**” cutout handout
- “**Fur Trade Game**” handout

Interviews

- “**Important People**” handouts
- “**Reporter**” handouts
- Note book
- Pencil

Vocabulary

Insulate: to separate from conducting bodies by means of nonconductors so as to prevent transfer of electricity, heat, or sound.

Repellent: serving or tending to drive away or ward off.

Stampede: a wild headlong rush or flight of frightened animals.

Deadfall: a trap so constructed that a weight (as a heavy log) falls on an animal and kills or disables it.

Extinct: no longer existing.

Voyage: a course or period of traveling by other than land routes.

Outline

1. Introduce the first project by discussing fur uses from the “**Teacher Background Information**” handout.
2. Distribute the “**Best Fur**” handout to each student. Using the “**Background Information**” discuss with students what time of the year is the best to trap animals for their fur and what animals are most important in the fur trade. While talking have students fill in the blanks on the worksheet.
3. Using “**Background Information**”, brainstorm with class ways to trap animals in the fur trade and what the definition of a Trading Post is.
4. Distribute “**Major Fur Trade Posts and Routes**” map to each student.
5. Have class examine map and distinguish trading posts created before 1821. To flourish students’ imagination of what a trading post may have looked like in the 1800’s, distribute “**Trade Posts**” photos to each student.
6. To further understand what a trading post is, have students break into groups of 4 and have them design a web of ideas on a piece of poster paper of reasons why trade posts where so important.
7. Once groups have finished, have each group present in front of the class their ideas.
8. Play **Trading Game**
9. Once back in the classroom Ask students
 - a. “Who did not trade all of their animals”
 - i. No students should put their hands up.
 - b. “Who did not trade all of their Goods?”
 - i. A few students should put their hands up.

10. Ask students what happens when all the animals have been trapped?
 - a. Students should reply with the answer “Extinct”
 - b. Use **“Teacher Background Information”** handout to further explain the term extinct.
11. Divide the class in groups of 2. Have one student take on the “Reporter Role” and the other student to have the “Historic Person Role”.
 - a. The reporter will ask the historic person questions regarding important events using the **“Reporter Questions”** handout.
 - b. The historic person will answer the reporter’s questions using information off of the **“Historic Person”** handout.
 - c. As a team both students will present to the class their findings.
 - d. As an addition groups can map out routes the Historic person may have explored on maps provided of British Columbia and Canada.
 - e. Additional information may be gathered through the internet and books.

Additional Topics for discussion/questions

1. Why are the best quality furs often found in areas with cold winters?
2. What is meant by “the fur industry”?
3. What was one problem with catching animals for their fur?

Additional Resources

<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/history/index-e.html>

<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/tod/nature/fba.htm>

http://www.hbc.com/hbc/e_hi/historic_hbc/earlyyears.htm

Wilson, Keith. Fur Trade in Canada. Toronto: Grolier Limited, 1980.

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Teacher Background Information

Fur Uses

Furs are used for many reasons. They are tanned, trimmed, and sewn into garments, rugs, blankets and ornaments, and sometimes dyed in a variety of colors and patterns. Furs are also used in fishing lures, fine hair brushes and other products. Some furs are shaved, and the hair is processed into felt for hats and other garments.

The demand for furs in Europe sparked the fur trade in Canada. Depending on the market the demand for furs was constantly changing. The market for furs was created mainly due to the needs of the fashion industry. Fashion trends changed quickly and the more expensive and greater quality of the fur, the more desirable it was. Lets think if this notion applies to us today. If you had the choice between a Nike sweater and a plain sweater, which would you choose. Most often the Nike sweater. Why? Because Nike is considered to be the “trendy” brand, therefore more expensive, therefore more desirable.

Best Fur

Most Mammals have fur and are referred to as “fur-bearing”. Furbearers possess two layers of fur. The first layer is a dense, soft, under fur that provides insulation and water-repellent qualities. The second layer is the outer layer which possesses longer, glossy guard hairs that grow through the under fur. The outer layer also protects the inner layer from matting and abrasion. Fur is the best when the guard hairs are at their longest length and the under fur is at its maximum thickness. Fur generally becomes prime in midwinter when the coat is fresh and fully grown to protect the animal from cold environments.

Trapping Animals

Before the introduction of rifles, it was hard to get close to an animal to kill it without scaring it away. Many people would stampede animals into a fenced area they had created or off a steep bank. A stampede is a wild headlong rush or flight of frightened animals into one area. Deadfall was used for killing smaller animals such as beaver. Deadfall is when an animal is lured by bait into a device where they would trigger a device, which would drop on the animal., much like a mousetrap. Spears were also used for killing larger animals such as buffalo, however, rifles were later used for killing larger animals, however, rifles were not the greatest tool to use and had its drawbacks because there was risk of damaging the fur by the bullet, causing holes in the pelt. Poisoned bait was also used to capture mammals.

Fur-bearing Animals

- a. Beaver
 - i. The beaver's fur was ideal for making felt and was always in great demand. Pelts were used chiefly in making hats, the rest for coats and trimmings.
- b. Marten
 - i. Marten pelts were of value because of the beautiful array of colors they come in, ranging from silver-gray to golden-yellow.
- c. Buffalo
 - i. The buffalo provided many needs for people. They may have been used for food, clothing, utensils and food. Traders considered the buffalo to be a valuable fur to have. Furs were usually used for robes and rugs.
- d. Mink
 - i. Fur quality is best in the northwest regions and is a soft brown color.
- e. Muskrat
 - i. Muskrat pelts are usually a glossy dark brown. Since muskrats are largely aquatic animals, their fur is waterproof.
- f. Fox
 - i. The long silky coat of the red fox was much sought after by the fur traders. The darker pelts found in the north were the most valuable.

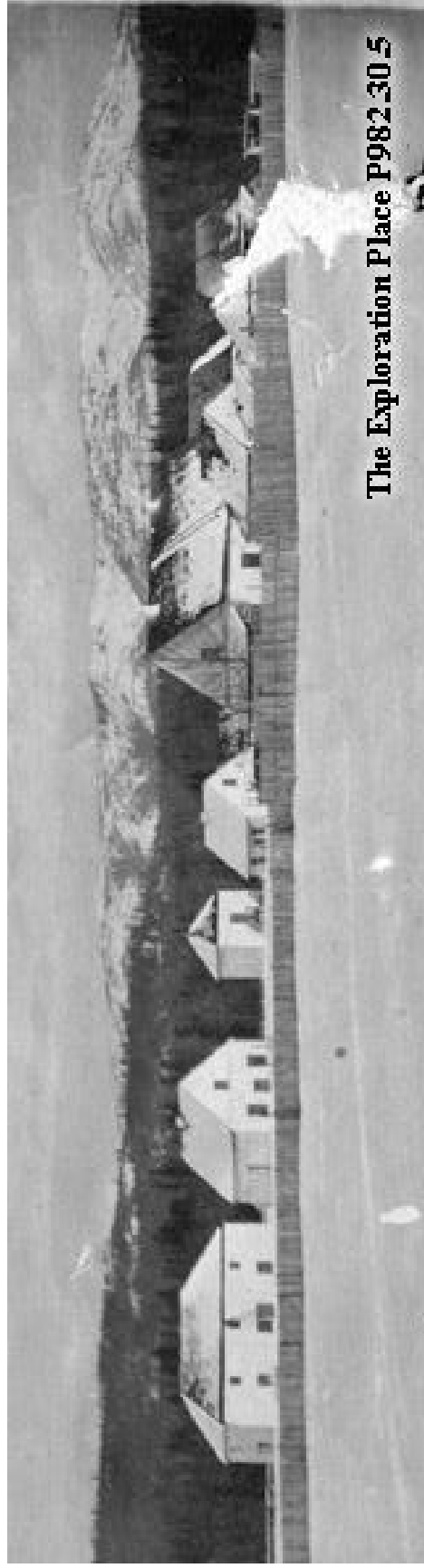
Extinction

If trappers killed as many animals as they wished, two things might happen, animals could become extinct because there are not enough to reproduce or too many furs would be sold to the flooding demand of the market and the price of them would go down.



The Exploration Place P989.1.4

The Hudson's Bay Company, Fort George, BC



The Exploration Place P982.30.5

Hudson's Bay Company at Fort St. James in the winter of 1900

Best Fur



Fill in the Blanks

Insulation
Midwinter

Protects
Fur Bearing

Longest

1. Animals that have fur are called _____.
2. The first layer of fur provides _____.
3. The outer layer of fur _____ the inner layer.
4. Fur is the best when hairs are at their _____ length.
5. The _____ is the best season for fur.

Best Fur Answer Key



Fill in the Blanks

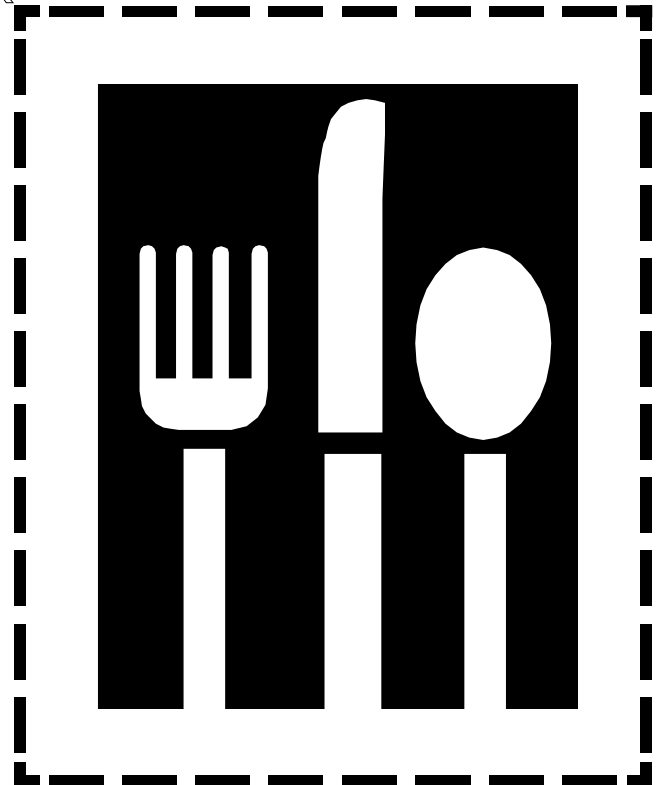
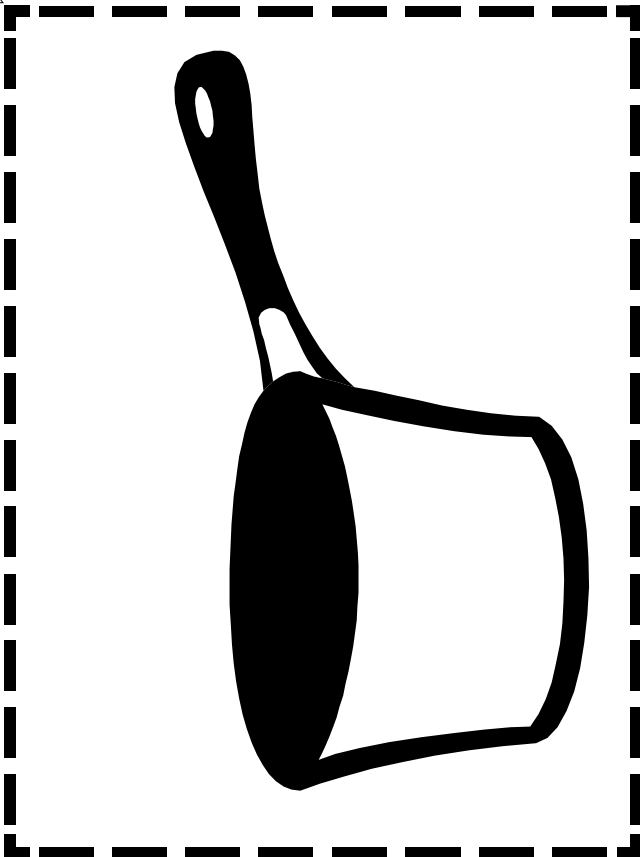
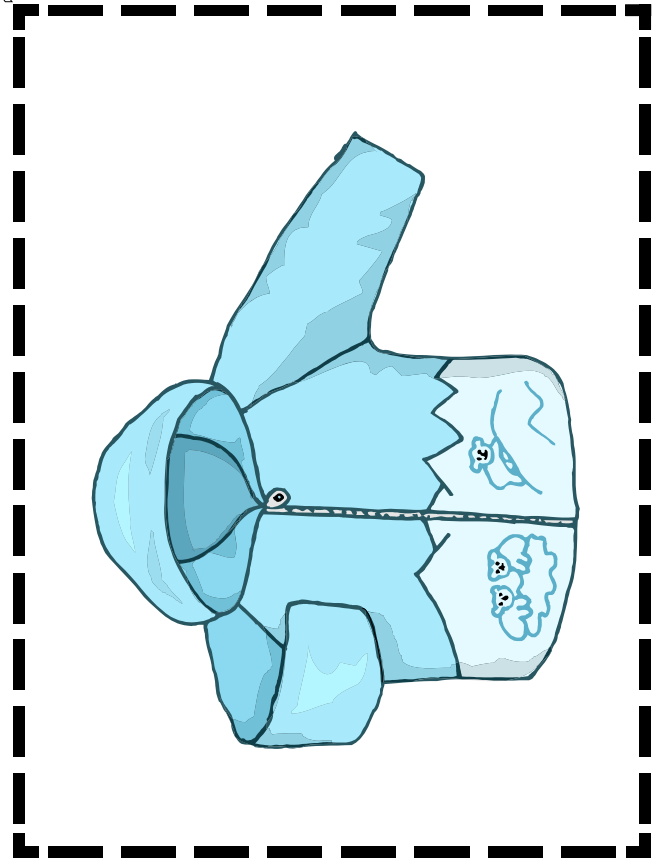
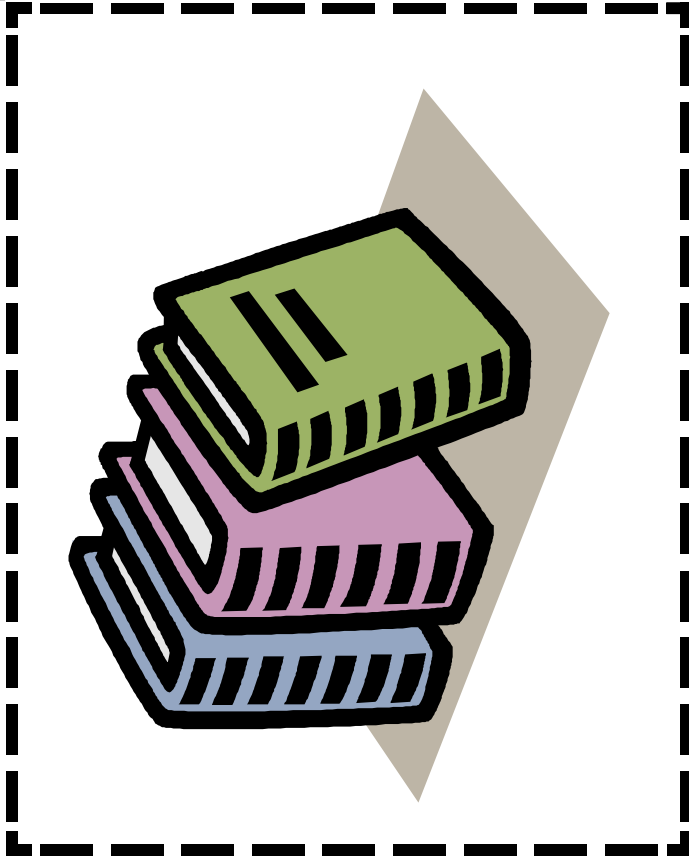
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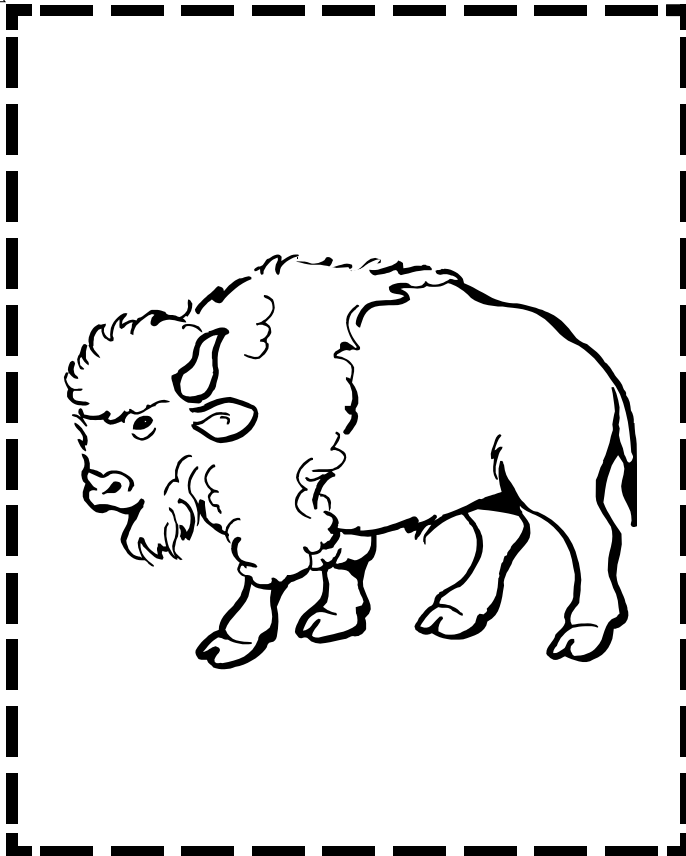
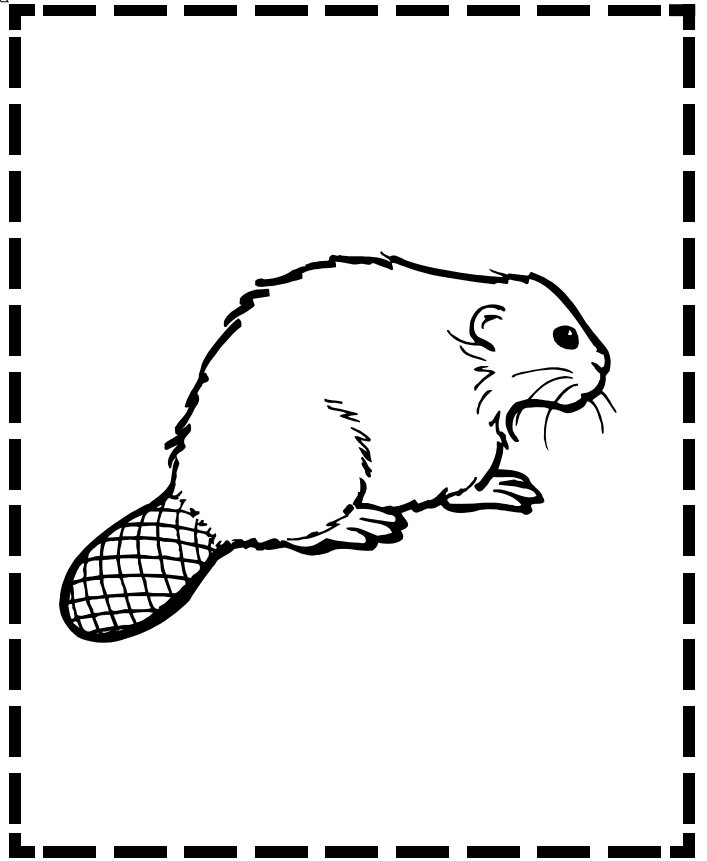
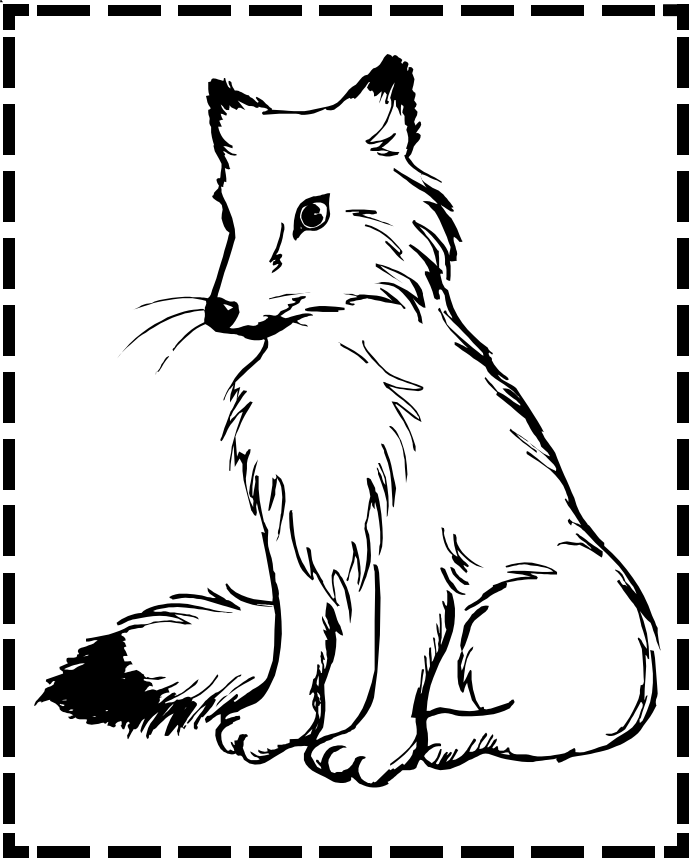
Longest

1. Animals that have fur are called _____ **Fur Bearing** _____.
2. The first layer of fur provides _____ **Insulation** _____.
3. The outer layer of fur _____ **Protects** _____ the inner layer.
4. Fur is the best when hairs are at their _____ **Longest** _____ length.
5. The _____ **Midwinter** _____ is the best season for fur.

Trade Items



Fur Animals



Fur Trade Game

General Idea

- Students will trade animals for goods. If it is a nice day, play outside, therefore students have to 'travel' the field to trade their animal for goods.
- There are two groups of students, Traders and Trade posts.
- Distribute the handout " **Fur Animals**" to each student of half the class and the "**Trade Items**" to the other half of the class. Have students color and cut out their "**animals**" or "**items**" to be ready to trade. At the end of the game there should be "Goods" left over that the trade posts could not trade because there were not enough animals to trade. (extinction)
- Give students 10 minutes to color their animals or goods and cut into squares.

Rules

- Students who are "**Trade posts**" have to be set up away from each other and must stay in the same place the entire time of the game.
- Traders must 'travel' over to the trade post to trade.
- Traders can only trade one animal for one trade item at the trade posts.
- Once ALL animals have been traded for goods, return to class.

Name: Jacques Cartier

Date of Birth: 1491

Place of birth: France

On Jacques Cartier's **first voyage**, he went to Canada in 1534 with 2 ships and 61 men to look for a passage to get to Asia. In this exploration he discovered a coast, which he called Newfoundland.

Cartier went back to Canada in 1535 with 3 ships and 110 men for his **second voyage**. The **third voyage** was because the King of England wanted Cartier to start a new colony and he left in 1541 with 5 ships and 1500 men. The winter was very cold and many of Cartier's men died due to illness. Cartier returned to France with the survivors and never returned to Canada. He became a businessman in France and **died** in 1557.

Cartier was the first European to discover the St. Lawrence River and the first European to make a map of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. He also gave Canada its name. He thought the native word "kanata" which means village, was the name of the whole land. This name began appearing on European Maps as Canada.

Name: Samuel de Champlain

Date of Birth: 1570

Birth Place: France

Champlain's **first voyage** was in 1603 where he took part in a fur trading voyage to the St. Lawrence and mapped a great amount of the shore line. In the following year he joined his **second voyage** to Acadia where he stayed until 1607. His greatest achievement was the founding of Quebec in 1608. His work was very important, as his maps of the Atlantic coast were the first accurate maps of the area, which would help many other explorers. By 1635 Champlain's health had gotten very bad and he **died** on December 25, 1635.

Name: James Cook

Date of Birth: October 27, 1728

Birth Place: England

James Cook was one of 7 children and at the age of 17 he became an apprentice for a ship owning family. He sailed along the coast of New France and mapped the river around Quebec City. Cook's **first voyage** to North America in 1768 was to travel to the South Pacific Ocean to enable scientists to see the Planet Venus move across the sun. This allowed for the measurement of distance from earth to the sun.

While exploring the south he was the first to discover Fiji and many other Islands. On his **second voyage** in 1772, Cook wanted to see if there was land at the South Pole. His ships did not reach the destination due to the packed ice, therefore he returned to England.

The **third voyage** in 1776 was due to the interest of finding the Northwest Passage. After reaching the Pacific he sailed north and was the first European to land on Vancouver Island. After Cook could go no further due to ice he returned to Hawaii where he was **killed** in a fight with Hawaiians in 1779.

Name: Samuel Hearne

Born: 1745

Born in: London

After three years on Hudson's Bay Company ships, he was put in charge of inland exploration. He made several attempts to explore the Coppermine River and finally in 1771 he became the first man to reach the Arctic Ocean over land on his **first voyage**. In 1774 he built Cumberland House, the first inland post of the Hudson's Bay Company. He was appointed governor of Fort Prince of Wales in 1775, but was forced to surrender it to the French in 1782. A year later he established a new post named Fort Churchill at the site. In 1787 he retired to England where he spent his last years writing an account of his journeys which is remarkable for its skilled observation and realism. Hearne lived to be 47 with his **death** in 1792.

Name: Alexander Mackenzie

Date of Birth: 1764

Birth Place: Scotland

Mackenzie moved from Scotland to New York with his father and then to Montreal in 1776. Alexander Mackenzie was the first explorer to cross North America. At age of 15, Mackenzie became a clerk in the North West company. His **first voyage** was in 1789 in search of a route to the Pacific Ocean. He and his crew traveled the Mackenzie river north and it soon became apparent that they would not reach the ocean. His **second voyage** was in 1792 reaching the Fraser River and eventually the Pacific Ocean. Mackenzie could not convince the company that the west was a good place to start trading and therefore he returned to England to publish a book about his travels. He **died** unexpectedly of illness in 1820 Alexander Mackenzie, fur trader and explorer was the first European to cross the north part of North America by land. He was a smart businessman who wanted to expand the fur trade across North America.

Name: David Thompson

Date of Birth: 1770

Born in: London

David Thompson attended a school for poor children, where he did so well in math and mapping that, at the age of 14, he was hired by the Hudson's Bay Company. At the end of the summer of 1790, Thompson offered his services to the Company's secretary to conduct observations along the coast of Hudson's Bay. In the spring of 1795, he learned that he had been appointed as surveyor since May 1794, with a considerable salary, but had been assigned jobs other than surveying. Frustrated at not being able to use his trade, Thompson left the Hudson's Bay Company for the North West Company on May 23, 1797.

In 1814, he drew an enormous map showing the northwest from Lake Superior to the Pacific. Thompson continued his surveying career in Lower and Upper Canada and determined the southern border of Canada.

Thompson was the first white man to travel the full length of the Columbia River. Thompson **died** in 1857.

Name: Simon Fraser

Born: May 20, 1776

Place of Birth: New York

Simon Fraser moved to Canada in 1784 and in 1792 he worked in the

North West Company, where he soon became partner in 1802. The

North West Company wanted to find an easy route to the Pacific

Coast that was easier than the one Alexander Mackenzie had found in

1793. This sparked Fraser's **first voyage** in 1805. Fraser's group did

not make it all the way until 1808 due to lack of supplies and a bad

fishing season. Although Fraser had traveled the full length of the

river he was disappointed because the route proved to be too difficult

for trading routes.

He **died** in Ontario in 1862. Few exploits surpass Fraser's passage

down the turbulent river that bears his name. He was also responsible

for the first British settlements west of the Rockies. Fraser **died** a

poor man on August 27, 1862. His wife died the next day.

Reporter Questions

What is your Name?

Where were you Born?

What year were you born in?

How many voyages did you do?

Where did you go on your voyage?

What years did you do your voyages in?

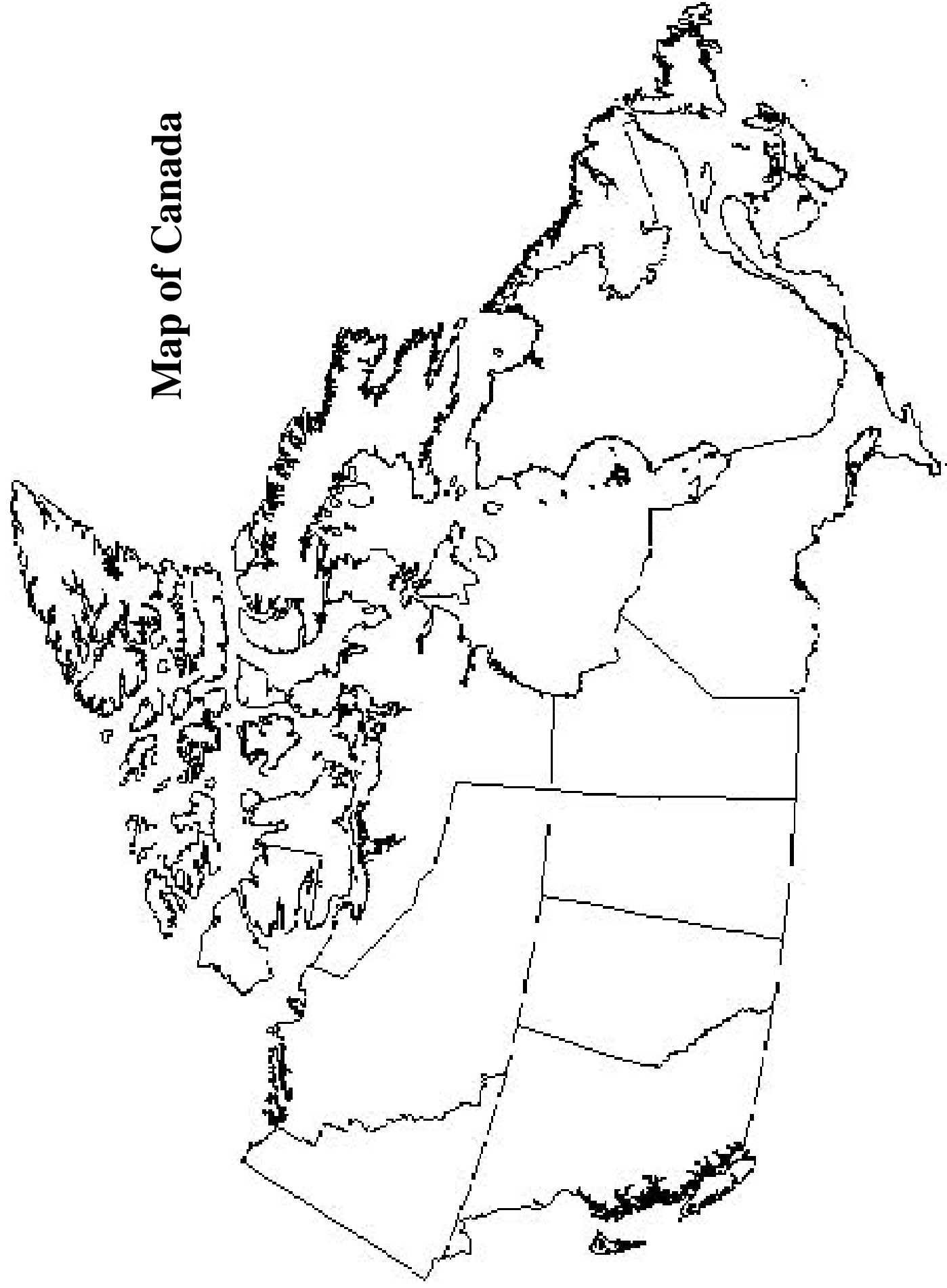
What other important things did you do?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about you?

Map of British Columbia



Map of Canada



Fur Trade Routes of New Caledonia, 1800s



Rocky Mountains

*New
Caledonia*

Fort McLeod

Fort St. James

Stuart Lake

Fort Fraser

Stuart River

Nechako River

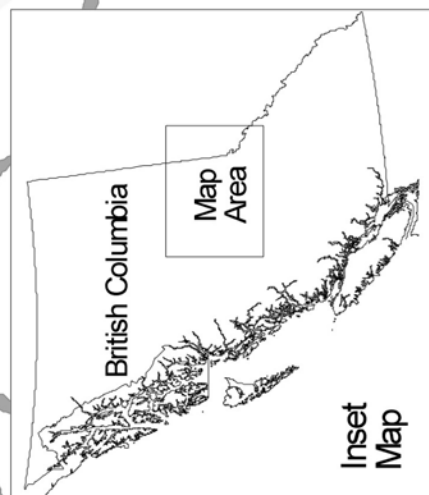
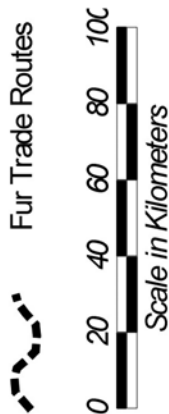
Fort George

Fraser River

Fort
Alexandria

LEGEND

Fur Trade Routes



Inset
Map