



Pre-visit activity for the *Silver Trade* program

General Objective

The main objective of the following activity is to prepare your students for their Silver Trade tour at the McCord Museum.

Pedagogical Objectives

**At the end of the activity
the student will:**

- Identify the basic mechanisms of fur trading exchanges between the Europeans and the First Nations.
- Understand the difference in values held by the Europeans and the First Nations towards the exchanged merchandise.
- Be able to specifically distinguish some of the fur trading merchandise.

Material

In order to prepare the required material for this activity, refer to the "Pre-game" section of the *Fur Trading Game* rules.

Preparation

Please refer to the "Pre-game" and "Preparing the Class" sections of the *Fur Trading Game* rules.

Steps in the activity

Please refer to the steps described in the *Fur Trading Game* rules.



Rules

Object of the Game

While touring the McCord Museum you will see many artefacts that were traded between Europeans and First Nations as part of the fur trade. To better understand the importance of bartering during that period you will participate in a role playing game and take a step back in time to 1750 and the great fur trading activities of New France.

Pre-game

Preparing Teaching Materials

1. Print the PDF document.
2. Photocopy and cut out the following items for the game:
 - 1 x "Gather Furs" card per First Nations team
 - 1 x "Goods Purchasing" card per travelling merchants team
 - 1 x "Value of Goods" card per First Nations team
 - 1 x "Value of Furs" card per travelling merchants team
 - 1 x "What I take back to my village" card per First Nations team
 - 1 x "What I take back to Montreal" card per travelling merchants team
 - 3 x 9-card page of furs (beaver, otter, bear and deer)
 - 3 x 9-card page of goods (firearms, pots, shirts and blankets)
 - 5 x 9-card page of furs (mink and muskrat)
 - 5 x 9-card page of goods (bartering jewellery and metal tools)

Note: You might have to adjust the number of photocopies according to the size of your group.

3. Supply each team with a 6-sided die.
4. Supply a timer (a cooking timer will do just fine).



Going Out, Col. Rhodes and Octave the guide,
Caribou hunting series
Montreal, QC, 1866
William Notman
I-19357.1

Object of the Game:

For the First Nations Groups:

Exchange all of your furs for the most quality trade goods in order to become the most prestigious.

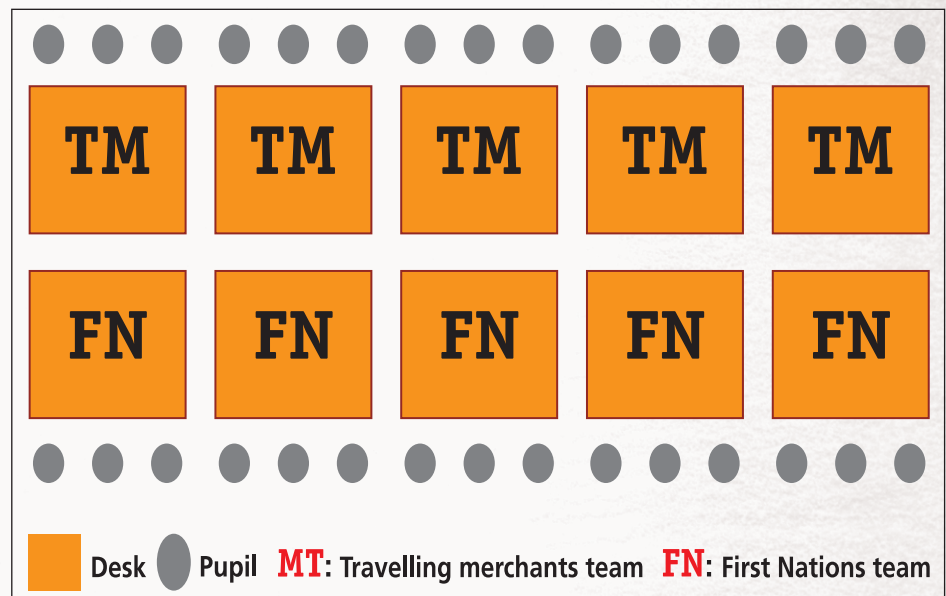
For the travelling merchants Groups:

Exchange all of your trade goods for the most quality furs in order to become the richest.

Preparing the Class

Divide the class into two groups: First Nations and travelling merchants. Then divide the two groups again into teams of **two (2)** to three (3) students maximum. It is very important to have an equal number of First Nations and travelling merchants teams.

Example for setting up a class of 30 pupils



Beginning the Game

Part 1 • Introduction

1. Explain to the students that they will either play the role of the First Nations peoples or travelling merchants and that they will discover together what might have taken place in a fur trading post when First Nations and Europeans met to barter.
2. Briefly explain how the game will proceed.
3. Clearly read the object of the game aloud.

Example

First Nations team rolls the die three (3) times and obtains a 3, 5, and 6.

The group will then take along 3 bear furs, 5 mink furs and 6 muskrat furs in its canoe.

Travelling merchants team rolls the die three times and obtains a 1, 1 and 6. The group then takes along 2 guns and 6 metal tools.

Part 2 • Purchase Goods and Gather Furs

Now each team must decide what it will bring in its canoe to the trading post.

1. Provide each of the First Nations teams with a **"Gather Furs"** card and each of the travelling merchants teams with a **"Purchase Goods"** card and a **die**.
2. Place before the First Nations **all the fur cards** and before the travelling merchants **all the goods cards**.
3. Each team takes a turn to **roll the die three (3) times** and **refers back to the card "Gather Furs" or "Purchase Goods"** in order to decide what type and how many goods and furs they can take.

Once all of the teams have gathered/purchased their goods, they are ready to set sail for the trading post. To maximize on trade negotiations, each group **keeps its goods hidden from the other groups**.

4. Once all the teams have made their acquisitions, take back the **"Furs"** cards and **"Goods"** cards, as well as the **"Gather Furs"** and **"Purchase Goods"** cards. These cards will no longer be needed for the rest of the game.



Cariboo hunting, carrying heads,
Montreal, QC, 1866
William Notman
I-19359

Part 3 • Trading Fair

A big celebration is taking place in the trading post. It is the class' opportunity to re-enact the Trading Fair, commonly referred to as the **"Rendez-vous" (Great Gathering)**.

1. To help you explain how the value system operated for the First Nations and Europeans in the fur trade, **provide the students with a brief summary of the background "The Notion of Value in the Fur Trade"**.
2. Read the introduction to the **"Trading Fair"**.
3. Before commencing trading, remind the students of the following:



Unidentified man
holding silver fox pelts
Fort Churchill, MB, 1909
Hugh A. Peck
M2000.113.6.148

- ❖ 1 gold coin = 1 prestige point. Therefore, the greatest amount of equivalent goods must be exchanged.
- ❖ There will be two chances to trade. Players may wish to wait for a better offer if the first one was unsatisfactory.
- ❖ All non-exchanged goods and furs will not be worth any points at the end of the game.
- ❖ In this game value, and not quantity, is important. As in any trade situation, each party wants to make the biggest profit. An offer must be profitable for both parties and sometimes a group might have to wait for a better offer to come along.

First Round of Trading

1. Hand out the "Value of Goods" card to each of the First Nations groups, and the "Value of Furs" card to each of the travelling merchants groups.
2. Set the timer to between 5 and 10 minutes and give the signal to start.
3. Each group negotiates and trades only with the team directly in front of it.
4. All transactions must stop once the timer rings.
5. Teams who still have their original goods get ready to participate in a second round of trading or an auction. Teams that have liquidated all their goods have finished playing.

PLAYING WITH A REMAINING **EVEN** NUMBER OF TEAMS

Second Round of Trading

1. Move down one desk the remaining First Nations teams to have them facing new travelling merchants teams.
2. Follow the same steps as in the first round of trading. You can remind the students that any non-exchanged goods left over at the end of the game are worthless.

PLAYING WITH A REMAINING UNEVEN NUMBER OF TEAMS



*Bear hunting for I.C.R.
1907 (?)
Wm. Notman & Son
VIEW-4268.0*

Auction

1. The group (First Nations or travelling merchants) with the least number of teams will present its goods or furs at the auction first.
2. For example, if at the end of the first round of trading there are two (2) teams of travelling merchants and three (3) First Nations teams, then the travelling merchants teams will **each take a turn** and present **all remaining trade goods** face up (you may draw to determine which team will go first).
3. All the remaining First Nations teams will make a counter offer to the first offer made by the travelling merchants team by placing all their remaining fur cards face up on the table.
4. The first team of travelling merchants accepts the best offer. The First Nations team and the travelling merchants team that just made this deal will then be finished playing.
5. The second travelling merchants team makes an offer to the two (2) remaining First Nations teams.
6. Continue the auction as described above until there are no teams left to trade with.

Note: Since the auction takes place with an uneven number of teams, one of the teams will necessarily not get the chance to trade its goods.

Teacher's Tip

Once the Trading Fair (and/or Auction) has ended, it might be a good idea to break for recess or lunch before moving on to the last part of the game.

Taking a break at this time will create a sense of excitement because the winners will only be declared once they return.



Cree Indians mending a canoe
QC(?), about 1900
A. A. Chesterfield
MP-1981.189.2



Women stretching moose hide for moccasins
English River, ON, about 1925
MP-0000.25.542

End of the Game

Part 4 • End of the Trading Fair and Declaring the Winners

Once the second round of trading (or the auction) is complete, each team will list its goods. This final step is more mathematical in nature and you may proceed how you wish by following one of the options below.

Option 1

Each team places its goods on the table and adds the points **by itself** by using the “What I take back to my village” card for the First Nations and the “What I take back to Montreal” card for the travelling merchants.

Option 2

Each team writes down the exact number of goods acquired during trading on the “What I take back to my village” and “What I take back to Montreal” cards and you do the necessary calculations.

Option 3

Each team returns its goods and **you add up the points** by using the “What I take back...” cards.

Declaring the winners

Once counting is complete, the First Nations team with the most points is declared the most prestigious and the travelling merchants group with the most points is declared the richest.



Amerindian portaging a canoe
Cornelius Krieghoff
(1815-1872)
M990.757.4



Mi'kmaq Canoes
William George Richardson
Hind, 1865-1875
M11443



Pipe-tomahawk
1800-1840, 19th century
M2155

Part 5 • Conclusion

Go back to the notion of value by explaining that the two teams that won did so in their own manner. Neither group is more successful than the other. The travelling merchants could very well think that they did the First Nations team out of furs by trading them shirts, pots and jewellery. In the eyes of the Europeans, these objects are of very little value because they are neither rare nor precious. However, for the First Nations, these items are highly sought after because they cannot produce them by themselves and in most cases they make their lives easier.

At the same time, the First Nations may also have the impression that they did the Europeans out of precious goods by trading them a bunch of furs, which are not considered rare by the First Nations. However, to the Europeans, who have little to no fur available on their continent and need to produce hats, the furs are highly desirable objects. In short, the value of material items is different for these two peoples on account of their different needs.



The fur Trading Game

Background “The Trading Fair”

It is the summer of 1745 in a trading post on the banks of a main water route. The post is bustling with activity. Traders, missionaries, soldiers, First Nations peoples, travellers and adventurers of all sorts have come here to meet. It is peak season at the post and time for business.

Many First Nations peoples have already set up camp on the outskirts of the trading post. Most of them are from the “North Country”, regions more to the north and the west where they have hunted over the past year. They arrived in canoes loaded with beaver, otter, deer, mink, bear and muskrat pelts and they are ready to make good deals by trading these furs for European goods.

The travelling merchant¹ come in droves straight from Montreal, bringing with them an incredible amount of trade goods, which were shipped on huge sailing vessels from Europe to the Port of Montreal. Their canoes are filled with guns, pots, blankets, shirts, trade beads, and other varied metal tools. They are ready to meet the First Nations tribe leaders with whom they will trade their goods for furs.

Travelling merchants and tribe leaders meet, but before getting down to business, they welcome each other by offering one another gifts, food and alcohol. They smoke a peace pipe for the fur trading negotiations to go well. They chat, eat, drink, and all round have a party!

Only once the festivities wind down can the negotiations begin. The First Nations peoples present their furs and the travelling merchants present their trade goods. They drive a hard bargain. Everyone wants the best products at the lowest possible price. They have to remain determined in order to do good business. Everyone wishes to liquidate their stock. The First Nations peoples do not wish to return to their villages with their furs and the travelling merchants do not wish to return to Montreal with their exchange goods.

1. The travelling merchant is the leader of the expedition and the licensed trader who did the actual buying and negotiating with the Native trappers. Not to mixed up with the “voyageurs” who worked as canoe padders, porters and general labourers.



Background

"The Notion of Value in the Fur Trade"

The fur trade was an enormous business enterprise that brought together European and First Nations peoples. Their needs were as different as their cultures and the value of the goods exchanged was not the same for these two peoples.

Different Business Culture

The Europeans are used to doing business with money. They see money as having the highest value and it is with this form of currency that they measure how rich a person or company is.

The First Nations do business by trading items, otherwise known as bartering. They are looking to acquire natural resources that they do not have or finished products that they will not have to produce. They also wish to acquire goods to distribute to other members of their community because to them, the more generous a person, the more prestigious he/she is. So they are looking to make trades that will meet their material needs and help them show how generous they are.

Different Needs

Europeans are seeking furs that they can sell in Europe at a profit in order to make

money. Beaver felt is particularly sought after because of its high resale price to European hat makers, who in turn will make beaver felt hats from the fur.

Before the arrival of European goods, the First Nations peoples had to produce everything they needed by themselves by using natural resources. They did not master techniques for making iron, glass, or woven fabrics such as wool and cotton. They are looking to acquire high quality goods that they will no longer need to produce and ones that will make their lives easier.

Different Value Systems

European negotiators know that any self-respecting bourgeois in Europe must have a beaver felt hat. It is a fashion 'must', a symbol of social status. Demand is very high for this product because it can easily be resold for a fortune in Europe.



THE fur TRADING Game

To them, beaver pelt is extremely valuable, whereas the goods they take with them to trade have very little value.

The First Nations peoples seek out European goods that they can only acquire by doing business with Europeans. Guns and animal traps made of metal make hunting for furred animals easier. Clothing, material and blankets save them from having to tan hides. Metal tools such as scissors, axes, needles, fish hooks and pots provide them with sturdy, durable goods that they will not have to produce themselves. Accessories such as trade and glass beads provide them with materials, designs and colours that they could not have discovered otherwise. To them, these goods are extremely valuable, while the furs they trade have less value.

Fair Exchange

Everyone benefits from these business dealings. On one hand, the Europeans liquidate their stock of trade goods, which are very cheap to manufacture, in exchange for furs that will provide them with a huge profit in Europe. On the other hand, the First Nations peoples liquidate their huge stock of furs in exchange for goods that make their lives easier and give them good standing in their community.



Cross, Charles Arnoldi, Eastern Woodlands
Aboriginal; Iroquois, 1779-1817
M1893.1