



Festival du Voyageur



Fort Gibraltar Live! Enrichment project for Grades 11-12



Cumberland House Journals
1806-1807. HBC Archives.



Fort Gibraltar interpreter making fishing
nets.

Welcome to Fort Gibraltar! Whether you're visiting online or in-person, this activity guide is a fun way to get to know the people of the fur trade. There are 3 activities to do before your visit, and 3 activities to do after your visit. Have fun, and Hé Ho!

Enrichment questions for Grades 11-12

We study history by using a variety of sources from all kinds of media. Most of the time, we think of history in books, journals, and other textual sources. As you've seen already in the "Women and girls in the fur trade" activity, most if not all of the descriptions of women in the fur trade come from white and often wealthy fur traders, who may not always understand Indigenous women's lives. This does not give us the full picture of life in the fur trade.

Now, many historians (some of whom are Indigenous, women, and both) are examining other sources, like archaeological artifacts, material culture, works of art, and oral history. They want to get a better understanding of how everyone lived in the fur trade.

1) What are some problems that we face in using only textual sources when studying history? Discuss this with your classmates and write down your ideas here.

2) Can you think of some benefits and challenges that historians face when examining archaeological artifacts, art, and material culture? Discuss this with your classmates and write down your thoughts here.

3) Increasingly, historians are working with Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers to learn more about Indigenous oral history. What are some of the benefits and challenges of incorporating oral history into our research? Discuss this with your classmates and write down your thoughts here.

Case studies

Examine 1 of these 4 sources and write a paragraph on how they can enrich our understanding of the fur trade. Here are some guiding questions.

- 1) Who is described in this source?
- 2) Who created it?
- 3) What can it tell us about life in the fur trade?
- 4) Is it a source that is one-sided or that misunderstands the subjects? If so, how? How can we "read between the lines" to better understand?

Case study #1

Alexander Henry was a fur trader and explorer and here, he described trading with Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) women.

In 1775, Alexander Henry the Elder reached Lake of the Woods, and once he had finished trading with the Ojibwe men, the women stepped in and gave 20 bags of wild rice as a gift, and he and his men ended up purchasing 100 bags in total by morning. He ends by saying that, "without the large quantity of rice, the voyage could not have been prosecuted to its completion."

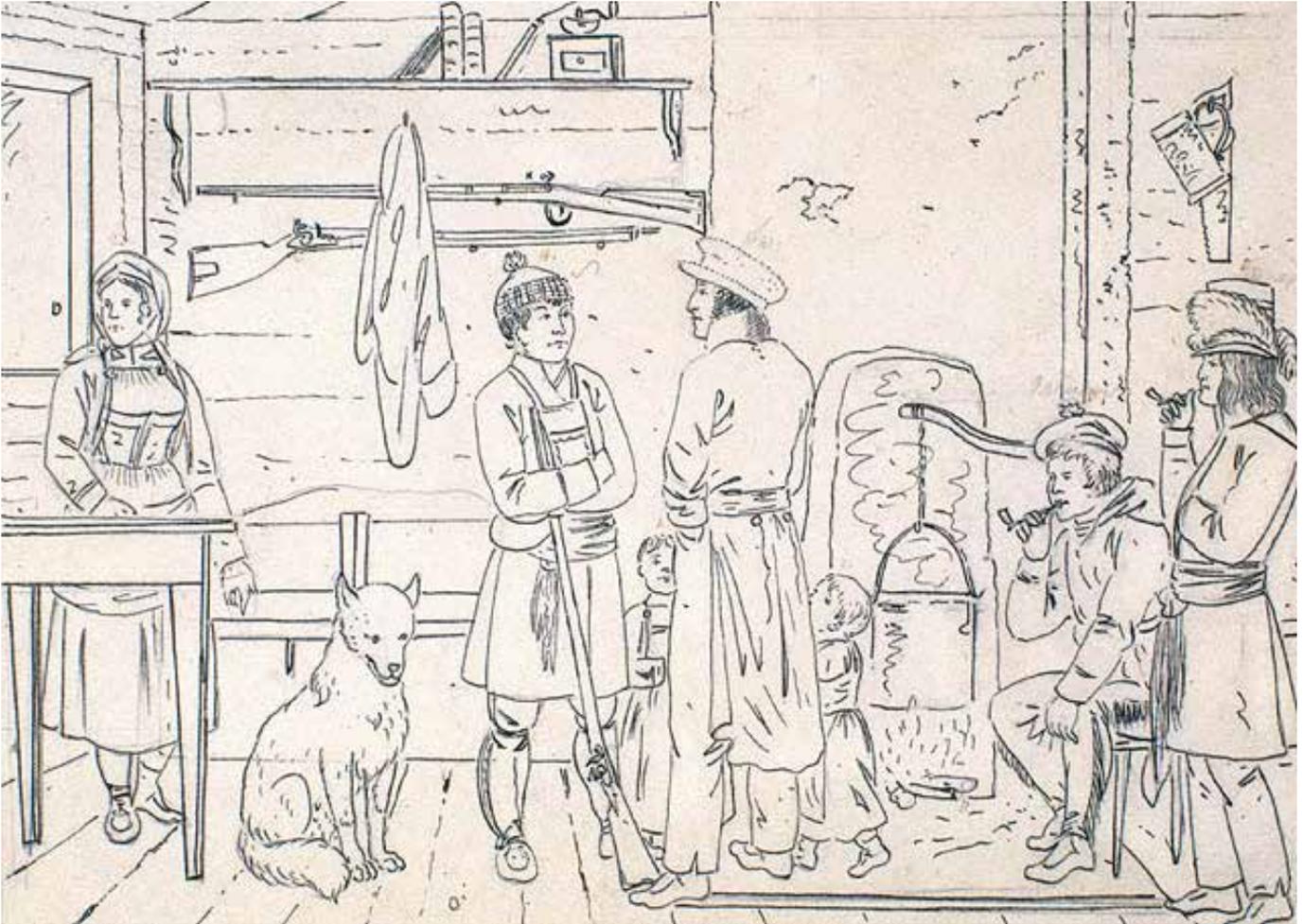
What does this citation tell us about Alexander Henry's relationship to the Ojibwe and what he thought of the women in particular?

Write your thoughts here.

Case Study #2

This is a painting by the Swiss artist, Peter Rindisbacher, who lived in Red River for several years at the beginning of the 19th century. He painted many scenes, especially of People he saw in Red River. This one is called «Colonists on the Red River of North America».

What does this drawing tell us about the all of the different people in Red River and what Rindisbacher thought of them?



Colonists of the Red River in North America, 1821, by Peter Rindisbacher. Collections Canada.

Write your thoughts here.

Case Study #3

This is a Dene-Métis dog blanket, made in the early 20th century near Great Slave Lake. Its materials are wool, glass beads, and yarn. These blankets were placed on sled dogs to keep them warm, to keep their harness from chafing, and because they are pretty!

What do these blankets tell us about dogs in Dene societies?



Dog blanket (HBC 61-156)
HBC Collections,
Manitoba Museum.

Western Subarctic, Dene early 20th
century.

Write your thoughts here.

Case Study #4

Warning: this case contains details on the material culture found in two historic Indigenous burials. If this topic makes you uncomfortable or uneasy, please skip this case study.

The following are excerpts from an archaeological report by Dr. Kevin Brownlee, an archaeologist in Manitoba, and member of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation. Also contributing to this study is Dr. Cory Willmott, an historian from the University of Southern Illinois. In this report, they describe some of what they found in two Anishinaabe burials from the early 1800s.

What do these objects tell us about the two youths, but also about how archaeology can help us understand the past?

“By contrast, neither of these youths had large weapons, only knives and flints, shot, and strike-a-lights. Both men had mirrors, and one had a comb. Both had pipes, and evidence of tobacco. The Dauphin Lake youth had significant amounts of shell hair pipe beads, the remnant of a red chief’s coat (with metallic braid trim and blue cuffs and collar), peacock and ostrich feathers, a gauze scarf and wooden spoon. He had also 28 pieces of silverworks. The Dauphin River youth had more variety in textiles (red, blue common and fine strouds, blanketing, ribbon, gartering, etc...). He also carried a copper kettle.”

“– The Red Deer River youth also had shell hair pipe beads, and silverworks, but he also had an impressive wampum belt of over 2000 mass-produced white shell beads to which more than a dozen silverworks were hung. This was worn round the neck. He also had a blue chief’s coat, with metallic braid, and red collar and cuffs. Finally, he also had a gorget with a bear motif, 2 hanks (bunches) of white seed beads, a brass neck rings, and a lead pipe bowl.”

If you want to learn more about this fascinating study, please read the full published article found here:

Willmott, C. and Brownlee, K. 2010. “Dressing for the Homeward Journey: Western Anishinaabe Leadership Roles viewed through two 19th century burials” in Podruchny, C. and Peers, L (eds) *Gathering places: Aboriginal and fur trade histories*. UBC Press.

Again, this source might be difficult to find, so don’t be afraid to ask your teacher for help! The Festival du Voyageur Heritage and Education department would be happy to provide the article so you can read it yourself.

The trading post at Fort Gibraltar contains some reproductions of the objects found in these burials, like combs, mirrors, copper kettles, beads, and silverworks. Studies like these can help us understand how to represent life in the fur trade more accurately.



Write your thoughts here.