Two of the most significant events in Canadian history framed the world of New France: the arrival of Champlain and the first few French immigrants in 1604 and the fall of New France in 1760. Throughout this period, the fur trade in the colonies contributed to the wealth and power of France, and European wars for empire spilled over into North America. Seen as a threat to British control, the Acadians were expelled from their homeland and the battle of the Plains of Abraham came at the end of a war among the great European powers.

The story of New France is also the story of the Aboriginal Peoples who helped the settlers survive, who taught them about their new country, and who formed trading and military alliances that lasted until the fall of New France. This changed the cultural identities of both French Canadians and Aboriginal Peoples. As a result of their relationship with the French, some Aboriginal Peoples lost their traditional way of life and many of their people to European diseases for which they had no immunity.

For the early French settlers, living in Canada was very different from living in France. Generations of habitants, seigneurs, coureurs de bois, and clergy became more independent of France and developed a distinct culture in the towns and countryside of New France. In spite of—or perhaps because of—the frequent conflicts the French settlers suffered, they became a separate, resilient people whose culture would endure.
Chapter 4
The First French Settlements
1603–1663

Chapter 5
Life in New France Under Royal Government 1663–1738

Chapter 6
Acadia 1621–1755

Chapter 7
The Fall of New France
The First French Settlements
1603–1663

Ever since the King had the goodness to extend his care to this country...we have seen noteworthy changes in Canada, and we can say that it is no longer the country of horrors...that has been described so unfavourably, but a real New France.

—FATHER FRANÇOIS-JOSEPH LE MERCIER

With the arrival of Pierre du Gua de Monts, Samuel de Champlain, and the first French settlers into the land they called New France, the lives and culture of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada changed. The new French arrivals—backed by royal, aristocratic, and merchant investors—formed lasting trading and military alliances with the Mi'kmaq Nation in Acadia and with the Montagnais and Huron in Quebec. The Aboriginal Peoples helped the newcomers survive in the dangerous country about which the French knew so little. With the rise of the beaver-hat fashion in Europe, the fur trade became more important than ever. Trading companies brought out settlers and established an economic base that would last—for both Aboriginals and Europeans—until the fall of New France in 1760.

Following Champlain’s founding of Quebec, more settlers began to arrive. Some came as seigneurs, some came to farm, some to make their fortune in the fur trade, some to live and trade among the Huron Nation and to fight against the dreaded Iroquois Nation, and some to convert the Aboriginal Peoples to Catholicism. Among those early missionaries were the Jesuits who were determined to live among the Aboriginal Peoples, to learn their language, to study their traditions, and especially to convert them to Catholicism. Among the earliest women to arrive in the colony were Jeanne de Mance, who established the first hospitals, and Marie de l’Incarnation, who founded schools for French and Aboriginal girls.
By the end of this chapter, you will be able to

- analyze the principal characteristics of the French and English colonial experiences in Canada
- explain why and how Aboriginal Peoples helped European colonists adapt to their new environment
- analyze the impact of European contact on the lives of Aboriginal Peoples and evaluate the responses of Aboriginal Peoples
- compare the colonizing policies of the French and the British in colonial Canada
Champlain and the Beginnings of Settlement in New France

As Canadian historian Christopher Moore says, “Europeans had been crossing the Atlantic since 1000 A.D., and there had been a century of regular visits to Canada before 1608. But it was Champlain who transformed transient contact into a permanent European presence in Canada.”

Samuel de Champlain (1567–1635) first arrived in Canada in 1604 and since then he has become a major figure in our Canadian cultural heritage. However, in all his private and published writings, he left little information about his personal life. We know him only through his actions and accomplishments. Champlain was born in the town of Brouage in the southwest of France in 1567 and he started his career as a soldier. He was an experienced and successful seaman who made twenty-three voyages across the Atlantic Ocean. He was an explorer who, before he came to Canada in 1604, had already sailed on a Spanish ship along the coast of South America and on a French expedition that travelled up the St. Lawrence River to the Lachine Rapids. He was a skilled geographer and cartographer whose maps of the east coast of Canada and the St. Lawrence River are still valid today. He was a colonizer at a time when most people were only interested in the wealth they could gain from trade in North America. He was a skilled negotiator who successfully forged alliances with the Mi’kmaq, Maliseet, Montagnais, and Huron peoples. He was a writer and promoter whose books on his experiences in Canada persuaded people in France to invest in future expeditions and eventually to come and settle in Canada.

Champlain’s map of 1632 was made with the help of the Aboriginal Peoples who taught him about the geography of the Atlantic coast, the St. Lawrence River, and the Great Lakes region. Champlain drew the map to accompany his History of New France, which was published in Paris in 1612.
Those early expeditions from France in the seventeenth century were sponsored by royal, aristocratic, and merchant investors. They were looking primarily for riches by discovering mineral deposits within the country, by finding a sea route to the Orient, or by trading in furs with the Aboriginal Peoples of North America. During those early days, some Europeans had an exaggerated sense of the wealth that could be found in Canada. Sieur de Côbes, writing home to France in 1609, reported that the land held by France “is one of the wealthiest countries of the land of Canada . . . where there are mines of gold and silver in great abundance, which are very rich. And even all along the rivers one sometimes finds . . . little pebbles of fine gold, many precious stones, diamonds and other riches.”

This was the impetus for the early expeditions. France was, of course, not alone in looking for wealth in what Europeans called the “New World.” European countries had seen Spain grow wealthy and politically powerful because of the gold that the conquistadors had taken from the Incas, Mayans, and Aztecs of South America. The Portuguese and the Dutch were gaining wealth from the products of the East Indies. At the same time, advances in navigation and sailing ships made the voyages safer, surer, and faster than they had been in previous centuries. The sea astrolabe, developed after 1470, allowed greater accuracy in measuring latitudes and following an established route to a destination. The discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo had helped redefine astronomy, a science that was still important to sailors in the seventeenth century. Ship designs had been improved; ships now had rudders and tillers, three masts, square sails, and better rigging than in the past.

But for at least one hundred years, the French had been fishing off the coast of eastern Canada and trading for furs with the Aboriginal Peoples. So, why the change to colonization? The colonies were intended to help establish French interests in North America. There were competitors in this northern region of the continent: English, Spanish, Basque, Dutch, all were trying to establish their rights to territory and claim land—in spite of the Aboriginal Peoples who lived on the land. By 1607, the English had a colony in Jamestown, Virginia, and by 1620, they had other colonies in Massachusetts. They were also trying to establish colonies in Newfoundland and Acadia. By 1626, the Dutch were established in New Amsterdam in what is today New York.

The king of France, Henri IV, sponsored the French expeditions in the hopes that his kingdom could regain some of the glory and wealth that had been lost during the religious and civil wars between Protestants and Catholics in previous decades. There had been wars between the British, the French, and the Spanish in Europe for many years. Henri IV was less interested in conquest than in acquiring wealth to replenish his depleted coffers. In addition, with the defeat of the Spanish Armada by the English fleet in 1588, the seas were safer for the French and English expeditions to the “new” world. Now settlers could be sent out to establish posts for trade with the Aboriginal Peoples and priests could be sent to convert them to Catholicism.

Acadia

In the spring of 1604, Pierre du Gua de Monts set out from Le Havre in France for Acadia intent on establishing a French colony and permanent trading post. De Mont brought with him two Roman Catholic priests, a Protestant minister, artisans and carpenters, masons and stone-cutters, soldiers, vagabonds, several noblemen—and Samuel de Champlain to act as the voyage’s geographer and cartographer.

De Monts’ mandate from King Henri IV was to establish settlements in New France in exchange for an exclusive right to trade with the Aboriginal Peoples of the regions. Along with his trading
monopoly, he was appointed lieutenant general “of the coasts, lands and confines of Acadia, Canada, and other places in New France”. In return he was to establish sixty colonists a year and to convert the Aboriginal Peoples to the Christian faith by supporting Catholic missionaries.

De Monts and Champlain knew that other efforts at colonization in the seventeenth century had failed. In the years prior to 1604, they had both visited the now abandoned settlement at Tadoussac at the mouth of the Saguenay River. So, after Champlain and de Monts negotiated peace and friendship agreements with the resident Mi’kmaq and Maliseet chiefs, they chose Île Ste. Croix at the mouth of the St. Croix River, which is today on the boundary between the U.S. and Canada, as the place to build their settlement. The island was centrally located, had a harbour deep enough for their ships, and could be defended against attack. Also, the members of the French expedition were running out of time before winter. Champlain quickly drew up a plan for the habitation. While some of the group worked on constructing the buildings, others planted gardens on the island and on the nearby mainland.

That winter in Acadia was unusually severe. The first snow fell on October 6 and the snow was still high on the ground late in April. In addition, the ice flows in the river were so thick that the crossing was treacherous. The settlers suffered greatly as they ran out of nourishing food and endured the cold and isolation. Many developed scurvy, a disease caused by lack of vitamin C in the diet which leads to exhaustion and, if not treated, to death. During that first winter, almost half of the expedition died.

In 1605, de Monts and Champlain decided to move their settlement to Port Royal. Having learned from their experience the previous year, the would-be colonizers chose a more sheltered spot along the Bay of Fundy, which they called Port Royal. Now that they knew about the cold, the snow, and the wild winds that accompanied winter on the east coast of Canada, they knew better how to prepare for future winters. As Champlain noted in his diary, “It is impossible to know this country without having wintered here, for in arriving in autumn everything is very pleasant owing to the woods, the fine landscape, and the good fishing for cod and other species which are found. But winter in this country lasts for six months.”

This time, they built homes and storehouses that were more suitable for sustaining them over the long cold winter. They also located their habitation close to a forest so that they would have wood to use as building materials and firewood throughout the winter, and they planted wheat and vegetable gardens.

De Monts had to return to France to buy fresh supplies, to persuade his investors to continue
supporting the new colony, and to fight off the intrigues of other merchants who were trying to break his monopoly so that they too could trade legally in New France. These Atlantic crossings for supplies and financial help from investors and royal patrons were an ongoing feature of early life in New France. The French settlers remained dependent on economic and military support from France for many years. It would be a long time before the French settlers in Canada were able to be self-sufficient. At this time, the funds from France were needed to keep the colonies and the colonists alive.

Port Royal was abandoned in 1607 when de Monts’ trading monopoly was revoked. The habitation was left under the care of Membertou, the Mi’kmaq chief. De Monts returned to France, and Champlain set out to head up a new colony on the St. Lawrence River. However, France was not ready to abandon its claims in Acadia. The French government wanted to keep a settlement and trading posts in the region to keep alive its claim to the fishery and the fur trade. By 1609, Jean de Biencourt de Poutrincourt returned to Port Royal as seigneur, was welcomed by Membertou and found the habitation just as it had been left. In 1611, the king sent two Jesuit missionaries with Biencourt to convert the Aboriginal Peoples there. Gradually, settlers started to arrive and maintained themselves by doing some farming, fur trading, and serving the needs of the French fleets who came to fish in the region each year.

Recreation at Port Royal
To help keep up the spirits of the isolated group of men over that first winter at Port Royal, Champlain founded the Order of Good Cheer. As Champlain noted in his Voyages of 1613, the Order seemed to contribute to the well-being of the settlers,
We spent this winter very pleasantly, and had good fare by means of the Order of Good Cheer which I established, and which everybody found beneficial to his health, and more profitable than all sorts of medicine we might have used. This Order consisted of a chain, which we used to place with certain little ceremonies about the neck of one of our people, commissioning him for that day to go hunting. The next day it was conferred upon another, and so on in order. All vied with each other to see who could do the best, and bring back the finest game. We did not come off badly, nor did the Indians who were with us.7

The celebrations were held in the common room of the settlement, on its large wooden tables. Visiting Mi’kmaq often shared in the feast, as well as supplying some of the fresh game. The food—which might include smoked beaver tail and boiled moose nose, otter, bear, rabbit, and sturgeon as well as freshly baked French bread—was cooked over the large kitchen fireplace. And this year the celebrants also had a good supply of Bordeaux wine, unlike the previous winter when the wine had run out. The feast ended with music, old favourites and new compositions.

Also during this time, Marc Lescarbot, who had arrived at Port Royal from Paris in 1606, wrote the first European play performed in Canada. Lescarbot was a Parisian lawyer who had come to Port Royal with one of his clients, Jean de Biencourt de Poutrincourt, but he was also a published author with books of poetry and biography to his credit. To celebrate the safe arrival of Poutrincourt from one of his voyages to France, Lescarbot wrote *The Theatre of Neptune in New France*, which was staged out of doors. The play, written in verse and performed by both French and Mi’kmaq actors, depicts Neptune coming in a ship across the Port Royal basin to welcome the traveller home and to sing the praises of the colony and of the French king to the accompaniment of trumpets and cannon fire.

After returning to France in 1607, when de Monts’ monopoly expired, Lescarbot published histories of the French and Mi’kmaq peoples he had met in Acadia. His *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*...
went through three editions, was translated into French and German, and was influential in fostering French enthusiasm for colonialism and New France that grew throughout the seventeenth century.

**Aboriginal Alliances in Acadia**

At the time of Champlain’s arrival in Port Royal, Membertou was the Chief of the Mi’kmaq peoples of that area and the Grand Chief of the seven Mi’kmaq districts in what is today Nova Scotia. As was customary among the Mi’kmaq, Membertou held his authority because the Mi’kmaq people of that time had decided he was most worthy to do so. By both French accounts and Mi’kmaq oral tradition, he was a strong leader who had convinced his people of his leadership capabilities by his actions, his powers of healing, his ability to foretell the future, and his persuasive speaking ability. Lescarbot, in his history of Acadia, said that had under him a number of families whom he rules, not with so much authority as does our King over his subjects, but with sufficient power to harangue, advise, and lead them to war, to render justice to one who has a grievance, and like matters. . . [H]is reputation is far above that of all the other Sagamores of the country. 8

Membertou and his people received Champlain and his men graciously and offered their assistance. They helped them find food, taught them techniques for surviving in the land, and assisted Champlain in his explorations down the coast of the Atlantic seaboard. The Mi’kmaq people placed great emphasis on hospitality. Giving food and lodging to strangers was a matter of honour among them. As Chrestien Le Clercq, a Roman Catholic priest said, the Mi’kmaq make almost no distinction between the home-born and the stranger. They give lodging equally to the French and the Indians who come from a distance, and to both they distribute generously whatever they have obtained in hunting and in the fishery, giving themselves little concern if the strangers remain among them for weeks, months, and even entire years. 9

What the Europeans saw Aboriginal non-resistance to their taking over the land was in fact an extension of this hospitality. This Aboriginal policy allowed the French to gain a foothold in the region and was to have unforetold and disastrous repercussions for the Mi’kmaq and other Aboriginal Peoples.

**Quebec**

Champlain became more and more interested in establishing a lasting colony in New France. He argued successfully to King Louis XIII that such a colony could serve to christianize the Aboriginal Peoples, a powerful argument at that time after the religious wars that had caused such chaos in Europe. There was also the old argument of trade advantage with the Aboriginal Peoples, and there was still the possibility that the St. Lawrence would be the route to the riches of Asia. As the future would tell, Champlain’s establishment of the settlement at Quebec would be of major importance in the history of New France for the next 150 years.

Champlain, who had the leadership role in this new colonizing venture, decided on the site of Quebec because it was an advantageous location for trade, it was a beautiful and fertile site, and, with a 98-metre high cliff facing the river, it was defensible in military terms. The site also had the advantage of being uninhabited at the time. The earlier village of Statacona that Cartier had visited was gone, as were the Iroquoian, Donnacona and his people. Champlain was able to make alliances with the Montagnais and Algonkian peoples who used the region for trade with the European ships that came up the St. Lawrence. He had already met the Montagnais Chief Anadabijou at Tadoussac in 1603 and had sealed a pact of friendship with him and his people. This agreement allowed the French to settle on Montagnais territory but did not give the French any title to the Montagnais lands. 10

In the summer of 1608, Champlain and his crew set about building a fortified trading post, which he called the Habitation of Quebec. Using
wood from the nearby forests, the settlers first built a storage site for their supplies and then went on to construct a warehouse and buildings for residences, all with ditches and palisades. They also erected platforms for their cannons, which were positioned to fire into the St. Lawrence.

Their first year was not without peril as Basque and Spanish competitors plotted to kill Champlain and the long cold winter and scurvy again took their toll on the settlement. By the end of the winter of 1609, only eight of the original twenty-eight men survived. With no knowledge of what caused scurvy, they were helpless against the disease. Champlain puzzled that “Scurvy attacks those who take proper care of themselves as well as the most miserable people.” Eventually, the French settlers would learn from the Aboriginal Peoples that a tea made from the bark of the white cedar tree could be used during the winter months to keep scurvy at bay.

The English Kirke brothers destroyed Quebec in 1629 and took Champlain back to England as a prisoner. On his return to Quebec in 1632 the settlement had to be completely rebuilt, but Champlain’s settlement at Quebec remained the major centre for French colonial power until it was lost finally to the English military in 1760.

Aboriginal Alliances at Quebec

While at Quebec, Champlain sought, and obtained, advantageous fur-trading alliances with the Montagnais, Algonkian, and Huron peoples. The Aboriginal Peoples in this region—like the Mi’kmaq and Maliseet in Acadia—were already accustomed to trading with the Europeans who arrived each summer by ship. The Huron themselves were traders who served as middlemen in a vast trade network. With the Aboriginal hunting peoples, the Huron traded their farm produce for beaver furs. With the Europeans, they traded the beaver furs for
European goods, some of which they then traded with the Aboriginal hunters. The extent of this trade network has been proved by archaeological finds in Aboriginal settlements very far removed from the St. Lawrence and Acadian regions.

Champlain’s alliances were established, according to Aboriginal custom, by gift distribution and feasting. He cemented these alliances with his allies—the Montagnais represented by Chief Anadabidjou, the Algonkian represented by Chief Yroquet, and the Huron—by helping them attack and defeat the Iroquois in 1609 at the battle of Ticonderoga Point south of Quebec. The conflict between the Iroquois Confederacy and the peoples north of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes had been going on for a long time, and would continue into the next century. The powerful Huron and Iroquois Confederacies both wanted control of the fur trade, which was bringing more and more trade goods into their country.

At this battle, the use of European firearms was a deciding factor. Champlain’s allies told him how he could identify the three chiefs of the opposing army, and he and one of the other French soldiers in his party killed the chiefs at the outset of the battle. The Iroquois, who had no guns, “lost courage and fled into the woods.”12 This victory temporarily assured peace for trade. Champlain’s Aboriginal allies were satisfied, and they believed they had made a good bargain in allowing the French to settle because they gained not only trading advantages but also a military advantage against the powerful Iroquois Confederacy. However, the victory would have far-reaching repercussions. It was not long before the Iroquois were able to acquire guns from the Dutch who had settled at Albany (Fort Orange). They remained the enemies of the Huron and helped cause the destruction of that nation; they also remained enemies of the French right up to and including the last days of the French regime in Canada.

Champlain’s Aboriginal allies also helped him explore the region around the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. Not only did he have a mandate from the French king for this exploration, but “discovering” unknown territory remained a passion for Champlain throughout his life. As he said, “The great love I have always had for making discoveries in New France made me more and more eager to travel this country so as to have a perfect knowledge of it.”13 Arriving in Huron lands he discovered a world more sophisticated than he had expected.

In this stretch of land there are eighteen villages. They have a total of 30 000 souls. Their cabins are covered with the bark of trees, and a space at one end where they keep their corn. In one cabin, there is a place for twelve fires and twenty-four families. The men go out to other nations to trade and to barter what they have for what they lack.14

Truchements/Coureurs de Bois

In the early days of the Quebec settlement, Champlain decided to send Frenchmen among the Huron people to explore their lands and to learn their language, their tactics for survival, and their culture. Champlain called them *truchements* and they were the forerunners of the *coureurs de bois* of the 1660s and following years. In later years, their actions would be condemned by King Louis XIV and his colonial administrators who tried to insist—to little effect—that they settle down and engage in farming as they were supposed to be doing. However, in these early days their learning was prized. With the *truchements*’ help, the European fur traders’ reach would be extended, alliances between French and Aboriginal Peoples would be strengthened, and the colonial administrators would have someone who could translate between French and Huron speakers.

One of the earliest *truchements* was Étienne Brûlé who was only eighteen years old when Champlain allowed him to go to live with the Huron. Brûlé had already proved himself to be a survivor; he was one of only eight original settlers who had survived the winter of 1608. From his Huron hosts, Brûlé learned a great deal that was
useful to Champlain and the others at Quebec: he explored their territory with Huron hunters, learned the strategies of forest warfare from their warriors, learned about the laws and language from Huron women, and about the traditions of the people from the elders.\footnote{15}

**Montreal and Jeanne de Mance**

In 1642, a lay Catholic missionary society led by Paul de Chomeday de Maisonneuve arrived in New France. Against opposition from the governor and clergy in Quebec, he and his party set out to establish Ville-Marie at what is today Montreal. The goal for this settlement was to convert the Aboriginal Peoples by having them live among the French and assimilate them into Catholic French society.

Among his party was Jeanne de Mance, one of the first lay women (that is, not a member of a religious order) to settle in New France. Educated by the Ursuline nuns in France, she is thought to have received her nursing training in Langres, helping the wounded in a charity hospital during the Thirty Years War. Arriving in New France, she stopped in Quebec to study the administrative and medical procedures at the Hotel-Dieu hospital and to learn the Huron language. Then she moved on to Ville Marie where, with funding received from the French widow Angélique de Bullion, she opened a hospital in her home and took care of settlers and Aboriginal People. This first hospital was small, with only six beds for men and two for women, and it was surrounded by a defensive stockade. But in spite of the size of her establishment, she was much appreciated by the people of Ville Marie who called her the “Angel of the Colony.”

In time, de Mance returned to France to recruit nuns to staff her proposed new and larger hospital and to raise funds for the venture. Through her years in Ville Marie she would return to France a number of times to raise money for both her hospital and for the colony at Ville Marie. Before she could build the new Hotel-Dieu hospital of Ville Marie, she had to do battle with the powerful Bishop Montmorency de Laval of Quebec. He wanted to send nuns from the

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Called the “Angel of the Colony,” Jeanne de Mance set up the first hospital in Ville-Marie (present day Montreal) in her own home. She would go on to open a Hotel-Dieu hospital in 1644, caring for both French and Aboriginal people for seventeen years.

In 1974, the Government of Canada proclaimed in its National Symbol of Canada Act the “the beaver is a symbol of the sovereignty of Canada.” By so doing, it recognized the cultural importance of this familiar rodent as part of the historical identity of Canadians.
Hotel-Dieu hospital in Quebec to staff the new hospital, rather than have it run by de Mance from Ville Marie. But once again, de Mance persisted in her own plan and was finally able to open her Hotel-Dieu hospital in 1644. She went on to administer this hospital for seventeen years and to take care of the French and Aboriginal victims of the Iroquois attacks of the 1640s.

By 1650 the mission at Ville Marie had failed for lack of Aboriginal interest in the enterprise, but Jeanne de Mance’s Hotel-Dieu hospital was a success. Although her original building was destroyed by fire in 1696, the Hotel-Dieu hospital was rebuilt and still exists today.

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**Review...Reflect...Respond**

1. What reasons did Champlain give to convince France to support a colony in New France?

2. How did Champlain transform “transient contact” into a permanent European presence in Canada?

3. How did Champlain and the European presence forever alter warfare between the Aboriginal groups?

**The Fur Trade**

In Europe, during the late 1500s, a fashion trend began that was to change the map of the world and human history. Hat-makers discovered that the felt material made from beaver skins could be used to make strong, durable hats that could be moulded into many different shapes. And people bought the hats. Well into the 1800s they bought beaver hats in all shapes and sizes. To satisfy the demand, many beaver skins were needed. The source of the best skins was the forests of Northern Canada, from the Aboriginal hunters who trapped them, and the Aboriginal women who prepared the skins for market. Because of hat fashions, ships went out from Europe across the Atlantic, alliances were made and broken, wars were fought, peoples were destroyed or at least had their culture changed forever, and colonists left Europe to settle in a new land.

The fur trade was very important in the development of Canada, as it was the major economic activity in the early years. If there had not been a market, the fur trade would never have existed. The early investors and sponsors of expeditions and colonizing ventures were banking on commercial success. That’s why they participated in the risky ventures.
The Business of the fur Trade

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<tr>
<td>Pre-1604</td>
<td>There were no monopolies, just open competition among different French merchants as well as Basque and Spanish. The Europeans traded with Aboriginal Peoples from their ships. For the prized beaver pelts, they traded beads, mirrors, and bells and later needles, knives, kettles, and blankets.</td>
<td>The Montagnais people traded beaver furs with the Europeans at Tadoussac at the mouth of the Saguenay River. The Mi’kmaq of Acadia adapted to the fur trade and acted as middlemen between the hunters of the north and the European traders. Both groups of Aboriginal Peoples considered themselves the equals of those they traded with.</td>
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<td>1603–1608</td>
<td>Gua de Monts has a monopoly from the king of France that extended from Acadia through the St. Lawrence Valley. The condition for the monopoly was that he establish 60 settlers a year in Acadia and support missionaries among the Mi’kmaq. French merchants purchased shares in the venture.</td>
<td>This monopoly was defied by some French merchants trading illegally, as well as by Dutch and Spanish traders. The Mi’kmaq established a successful fur trading relationship with the French in Acadia based on their sophisticated trading and fur-gathering system with other Aboriginal Peoples. They traded furs with Europeans and received European goods in exchange; they traded those European goods with the fur-hunting peoples.</td>
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<td>1608</td>
<td>Groups of merchants in France engaged in more or less free trade and paid little attention to colonizing. De Monts and Champlain at Quebec continued with their combination of trade, exploration, and colonizing efforts.</td>
<td>The Montagnais continued to trade with the French. The Hurons begin to take the major role in the fur trade through Quebec.</td>
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<td>1612</td>
<td>De Monts, Champlain and their financial partners win a monopoly for trade out of Quebec with French noblemen as investors. They continue to emphasize settlement and exploration, as well as the fur trade.</td>
<td>The Huron traders are the principle source for furs, arriving at Quebec each spring in large flotillas of canoes.</td>
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</table>
The Aboriginal Peoples were essential to the success of the fur trade. They formed trading partnerships with the French merchants and their representatives, including Champlain and de Monts. The Mi’kmaq in Acadia, and the especially the Hurons in New France, had been trading with other Aboriginal nations for a long time before the Europeans arrived, but now they became the essential middlemen, or, as Arthur Ray called them the “aboriginal trading specialists.”

They were well accustomed to trading with Europeans aboard ships. As historian, Olive Dickason, says, “By the second decade of the seventeenth century, as many as 1,000 ships annually are estimated to have been trading and fishing along the North Atlantic coasts and the Gulf of St. Lawrence.”

In the early years of the settlement at Quebec, the Huron brought the furs to the merchants as the Europeans did not have the skills, the knowledge, or the alliances to go to the furs. Each spring, flotillas of approximately sixty canoes and two hundred men would come down from Huronia to Quebec. These canoes were between six to eight metres in length, held four or five men, and ninety kilograms of goods. If conditions on the river were good, the Huron traders could travel up to one hundred kilometres a day, in about four weeks the traders could get to Quebec and return home to Huronia.

At its height, the Huron were reported to account for 50 percent of the French fur trade. These statistics show that the Huron were skilled not only as traders but also at forming alliances since they had to cross territory of other Aboriginal Peoples on their way from Huronia to Quebec.

### The Company of One Hundred Associates (1627)

With so much wealth at stake, there were many people interested in investing in the trade of New France, in spite of the risks. Few investors were interested in settlement. The fur trade was the main focus in the late years of the sixteenth and the early years of the seventeenth centuries. Why go to all the expense and trouble of establishing colonies, when you could just trade with the Aboriginal traders from the deck of your ship? But France was also interested in colonization and religious conversion.

During the early years, a number of different business arrangements were formed around the fur trade. By April 1627, the powerful Cardinal Richelieu helped a group of one hundred French investors gain a royal charter for their company. Richelieu’s objective was to establish a French empire in North America for the purpose of trade,
settlement, and the conversion of the Aboriginal Peoples to Catholicism. He modelled this company on the successful British East India Company, which was founded in 1600.

The Company of One Hundred Associates was given administrative control over the territory that France claimed, from what is now Florida to the Arctic Circle. Each of the members of the group contributed three thousand livres—about $9,000 in today’s money—to the venture. In return, the company was given full seigneurial ownership of New France and a monopoly over all business in Canada for fifteen years. Over the terms of their contract, the company was supposed to bring out two to three hundred settlers in 1628 and four thousand more Roman Catholics to New France over the next fifteen years and it was to maintain Roman Catholic clergy in the settlement. No Protestant settlers were to be allowed.

The Missionaries

When Catholic missionaries arrived in Acadia and Quebec, they came from an environment of religious conflict and intolerance. After all, it had been less than one hundred years since Martin Luther had started Protestantism by posting his demands for reform on the church door in Wittenburg. It had been even fewer years since Henry VIII had started the Church of England and English people had to pay fealty to the English king rather than to the pope. In France, Huguenot Protestants had been at war with Catholics from 1562 to 1598. This was a time of religious intolerance for the spiritual beliefs of others—only Catholics were allowed to settle in Acadia and Quebec at the beginning of European rule—and of militant commitment to saving the souls of the those who were considered unbelievers. Two of the religious orders that made a large impact on New France were founded during those turbulent times: the Ursuline nuns in 1535 and the Jesuit priests and brothers in 1540.

The Jesuit Mission to the Huron

In 1633, once Quebec was back in French hands after being captured by the British in 1629, the Jesuits were the principle male missionary order in Canada. By this time, these “soldiers of Christ” as they were called, had already had success in converting people in Asia, Africa, and South America. King Louis XIII of France intended to combine the advance of French colonization and trade advantages with the conversion of the Aboriginal Peoples to Catholicism.

Originally the Jesuits had agreed with the Récollet missionaries’ plan of moving Catholic Aboriginals to the farming community that had been established at the Sillery reserve just outside Quebec. But the Jesuits soon realized that the Sillery assimilation strategies were not working, and they believed that by living among the Huron people in their own lands, learning their language, and studying their culture, they would have a better chance of converting them to Catholicism. Initially, the Huron were not interested in having the Jesuits live among them; they would rather have had allies who were hunters or soldiers and who carried French guns. Eventually, the Huron gave in after they were convinced that if they didn’t accept the Jesuits, they would lose their fur trading advantage with the French.

Father Jean de Brébeuf and three other missionaries arrived in Huronia in 1634 to found the mission of Ste. Marie among the Hurons. The Jesuits decided to focus their conversion efforts on the Huron because they were more numerous than other Aboriginal nations. Also, being farmers as well as traders, the Huron were more settled than some of the other available conversion prospects. The Jesuits intention was to live among the people, learn their ways, and convince them to become Catholics. Eventually, after nine years Brébeuf learned the Huron language and compiled a grammar of the language. The building of the actual mission began in 1639, and when it was finished it contained a chapel, a hospital, stables, and homes for both the French and the Huron converts.
But what it didn’t have was many converts. The Huron people showed little interest in the French God. The practices of the Catholic religion were inimicable to their own beliefs and way of life. They saw no reason why all people should follow one spiritual path, after all, they had their own beliefs and did not try to convert the French. And they also saw that although the Jesuits preached against theft, dishonesty, and drunkenness, there were dishonorable thieves and drunks among the French traders with whom they dealt. Many Hurons also could not understand why the missionaries were so concerned about the power that Huron women had in their society or about the freedom their children enjoyed. Nonetheless, the Huron put up with the Jesuits because they believed that otherwise they would have lost their trade advantage with the French.

The epidemics that followed in the wake of the Jesuits arrival led the Huron to believe that the priests had somehow brought the smallpox and influenza that killed so many of their people from 1634 to 1639. In 1641, a Huron woman told Marie de l’Incarnation that her people believed the Jesuits had caused these epidemics. “They came into a village where everyone was doing just fine: as soon as they arrived, everyone died. . . . [I]t is only the places where they never set foot that have been spared death and illness.”20 Because they had no natural immunity, the Huron loss of life from these diseases was enormous. The people were outraged, and by the end of 1637 the Jesuit mission was nearly destroyed. There were more clashes between the few Catholic Huron converts and the more numerous Hurons who followed their traditional faith.

As time went on, more Hurons converted to Catholicism, and the converts often came into conflict with those who followed the traditional ways of their people. The Catholic Huron would no longer join in rituals that the majority believed was necessary to maintain the health of individuals and of the nation as a whole. In addition, the Catholic converts were given guns by the Jesuits and the French; the non-Catholic Hurons were not. Eventually, these internal conflicts caused the Huron people to become a house divided against itself.

By September of 1644, the simmering conflict between the Huron and Iroquois people was again open warfare. Now with the advantage of the firearms they had obtained from Dutch traders and recognizing that the Huron ranks had been cut down by the epidemics of the past decade, the Iroquois Confederacy attacked all across New France. The
Iroquois had more guns at their disposal; only Huron Catholics were allowed to have guns. Throughout the years from 1644 to 1648, the Iroquois blocked trade routes along the rivers, attacked French settlements, and killed many French and Huron peoples. Then they attacked Huron villages, and finally in 1649, they reached the heart of Huronia destroying the villages of Saint-Joseph II (Teanaostaiaë), La Conception (Ossossanë) and Sainte-Marie. Brébeuf, after dedicating fifteen years to the conversion of the Huron, and Gabriel Lalemant, were captured, tortured, and killed. It was the end of the Huron Confederacy. Survivors found refuge with other Aboriginal Peoples or fled in small groups. The Jesuits abandoned Ste. Marie, setting fire to the buildings as they left with the remnants of the once powerful Huron people. As one Huron chief said to a Frenchman, “My brother, your eyes cheat you when you look at us; you think you are seeing living beings, whereas we are only the spectres and souls of the departed.”

**Ursulines**

The Ursulines, led by Marie (Guyart) de l’Incarnation of Tours, France, came to Quebec in 1639 to educate French and Aboriginal Catholic girls in the practice of the Catholic faith. The Ursuline convent that she founded in Quebec is the oldest institution of learning for women in North America. Marie de l’Incarnation was accompanied by Madame de la Peltrie, a rich widow from Normandy who provided funding for the venture. At the request of the Jesuits, she opened her school to the children of the Sillery reserve. The children were expected to board at the Ursuline school so as to be more readily kept under Catholic influence. But this was not very successful. Marie and her teaching sisters were unused to the free ways of Aboriginal children and were quite unprepared when the children ran away, back to their parents.

Although Marie was a visionary who wore an uncomfortable shirt made of knots and thorns to mortify her flesh, she was also a practical businesswoman who had managed her brother-in-law’s shipping company in France before entering the Ursuline order. She was skilled in finding—and persuading—wealthy patrons to support her convent in New France. She oversaw the construction of her convents, the original one and a replacement that was built after the first was destroyed by fire. Marie suffered through the trials of the colony, including hunger, deprivation, and the Iroquois attacks in 1661 and 1662. She successfully battled with the Bishop of Quebec, Montmorency de Laval, when he
tried to change her order’s constitution. And through all of these struggles, she still managed to find food and other supplies for her community.

Marie de l’Incarnation also learned Aboriginal languages and wrote dictionaries, histories, and catechisms in the Algonkian and Iroquoian languages. She wrote letters to her son and others in France—an estimated twelve thousand letters in all—telling her correspondents about the culture and courage, the struggles and achievements, of the people of New France. Throughout her thirty-two years in New France, Marie de l’Incarnation remained what the Dictionary of Canadian Biography calls “a monument of practical and supernatural wisdom, . . . a mystic imbued with a sense of action.” Her view of the future for her people was always influenced by this practical realism and by her deep faith and sense of hope for the future of her new country.

There are many poor people here and the reason is that when a family creates a household, it takes two or three years before they have enough to eat, not to mention enough clothing, furniture and a whole range of little things needed for the upkeep of a household; but once these hardships are behind them, they start to feel more comfortable, and if they conduct themselves well, then they become rich over time, as much as a new country like this will allow.

Review...Reflect...Respond

1. Why were Europeans consumed with the belief that Aboriginal Peoples must be converted to Catholicism?

2. How would conversion of Aboriginal Peoples to Catholicism cause divisions within the Aboriginal Peoples themselves? How would attempts to convert Aboriginal Peoples extend into the twentieth century?

3. If there had not been a fashion demand for beaver pelts in Europe, how do you think this would have affected colonization in New France?
Notes

6. CSOH, p. 38.
13. Quoted in Moore’s article (p. 113) but with no reference to its source.
15. Ibid.
17. Olive Dickason, Canada’s First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times, p. 84.
19. Ibid.
Chapter 4 Review

Knowledge & Understanding

1. Identify these people, places, and events, and explain their historical significance to Canada’s developing culture and identity:
   - Mi’kmaq’s idea of hospitality
   - religious conversion
   - assimilation
   - founding of Port Royal
   - founding of Quebec
   - the battle of Ticonderoga Point
   - building of Ste. Marie among the Huron
   - Marc Lescarbot
   - Membertou
   - Jeanne de Mance

2. Think/pair/share the similarities and differences among the Canadian colonial experiences of a) the early French settlers, b) the fur traders and truchements, and c) the missionaries. Consider factors such as their economic situation, settlement challenges, adaptation to the environment, and their relationship with the Aboriginal Peoples and colonial administrators.

3. Create an extended concept web to show how the Mi’kmaq, Huron, and other Aboriginal Peoples helped French settlers adapt to life in Acadia and Quebec.

5. In this chapter, you read Champlain’s complaint about Canadian winters. How has this element of the Canadian experience and environment contributed to Canadian culture and identity through the years?

Application

6. Imagine that you have survived the destruction of the mission of Ste. Marie Among the Hurons. You have been taken in by a group of people who are interested in hearing the story of the events leading up to the final battle. In the role of either a Jesuit or a Huron, prepare and present an oral rendition of your story.

7. Page 102 illustrates one way the beaver is used as a symbol of Canadian cultural identity. Select another Canadian symbol and prepare an illustrated timeline to show its development to the present day.

Communication

8. European religious intolerance, ignorance, and disrespect for the spiritual beliefs of others led to injustices against the Aboriginal Peoples of New France. Write an editorial in which you compare such injustices of the past with similar injustices today.

9. Working in small groups, prepare research notes that could be used as the basis for a report on the survival skills that early French settlers learned from the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. Search for reliable primary and secondary print and online sources that would be helpful in answering your research question. Prepare an annotated list of at least ten sources that could be used in the report.