

Contact and Change

Get ready to practise your bargaining skills!

From 1600 to 1900, the fur trade was an important part of life in Canada. During this time, the fur trade created a way of life that had many benefits for both Aboriginal peoples and European merchants. At first, Europeans had to fit into Aboriginal ways of doing things. In time, though, Aboriginal peoples found that contact with Europeans caused many changes to their cultures.

In this chapter, you can learn more about how the fur trade worked and find out what trade items were important in British Columbia. You can also investigate some of the challenges that Aboriginal peoples faced as their lands became the country called Canada.

Exchanging Goods

There are two main ways of exchanging goods:

bartering and **buying and selling**. When you barter, you trade one thing for another.

When you buy and sell, you give someone money. In return, that person gives you what you want.

Bargaining

In the fur trade, Aboriginal traders and European merchants bartered for goods. Furs were exchanged for goods from Europe. The merchants kept records of the prices paid for certain goods, but **bargaining** was always possible.

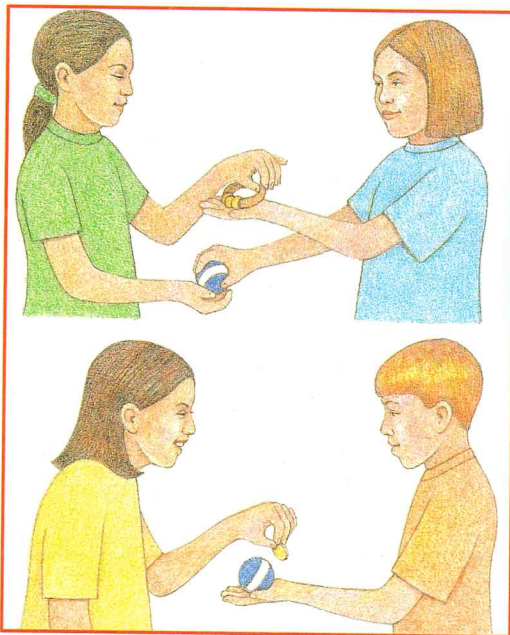
In bargaining, the buyer tries to pay the lowest price. The seller tries to get the highest price. A hunter could argue that his furs were of a high quality and so were worth more. A merchant could argue that there were many furs this year so he could pay less to somebody else. In the end, they might agree on a price somewhere in the middle.

Trading Customs

To trade with Aboriginal groups, Europeans had to learn Aboriginal

trading customs. Trading could take place when a trader visited an Aboriginal community, or when Aboriginal people came to a trading post.

In most Aboriginal communities there was a **trading captain**. This person spoke for the group. He played an important role in the ceremonies and watched over all the trading to make sure everything was done fairly. In many communities, though, women did the actual bargaining.



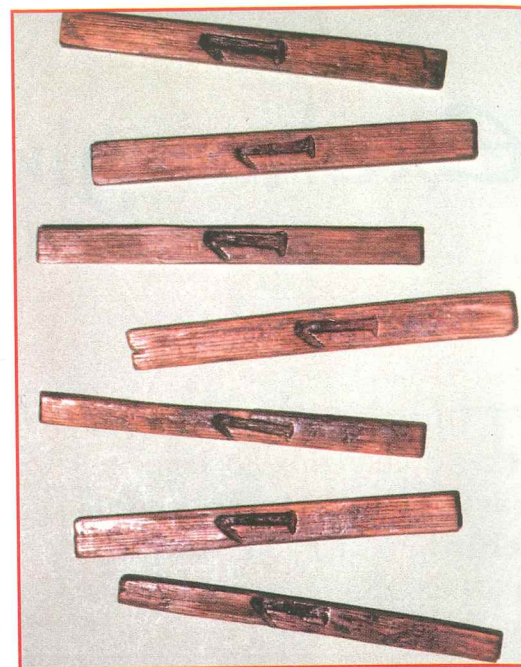
What other reasons do you think a trader could give for getting a higher price? What reasons could a merchant give for a lower price?

Which people are bartering and which are buying and selling? What is one thing that is the same in these two ways of exchanging goods? What is one thing that is different?

A **made beaver** was a top-quality beaver pelt. Sometimes the Hudson's Bay Company gave out tokens that could be used later in trade at the trading post. In what way were these tokens like money? In what way were they not?

Sample Prices

- 11 made beaver = 1 gun
- 2 made beaver = 1 axe
- 2 made beaver = 1 black fox fur
- 1 made beaver = 5 fish hooks
- 1 made beaver = 2 white fox furs
- 1 made beaver = 9 martin furs



In The Words Of...



Charles Lalemant

This description was written by a European priest, Charles Lalemant (sharl LA-luh-mah(n)), in 1626. It describes trading between the French and a group of Aboriginal peoples. These customs remained the same for most of the fur trade.

When you read this, notice that the writer calls Aboriginal peoples "Indians." Why do you think he did this? Think back to what you know about Christopher Columbus.

The day of their arrival [the French merchants] erect their huts and the Indians arrive in their canoes.

The second day the Indians hold a council and present their gifts. Gifts are always given when people visit each other. The French give presents then to the Indians.

The third and fourth day the Indians trade and barter their furs for blankets, hatchets, kettles, capes, little glass beads, and many similar things. It is a pleasure to watch them during this trading.

When it is over they take one more day for the feast which is made for them, and the dance. Early the next morning the Indians disappear like a flock of birds.

The Jesuit Relations.

Think For Yourself

Work in partners to role-play trading. Decide who will be an Aboriginal trading captain and who will be a merchant. Follow the ceremonies for trading and try to get the best price you can for your side. Then switch sides.

After you have finished role-playing, write a journal entry from the point of view of either a trading captain or a merchant. Explain why you want furs or why you want European goods.

Voyageurs

Voyageurs worked for the big fur-trading companies. They took trade goods to Aboriginal communities and brought back

furs. *Voyageurs* were proud of their ability to paddle large trading canoes all day and carry heavy loads around rapids.

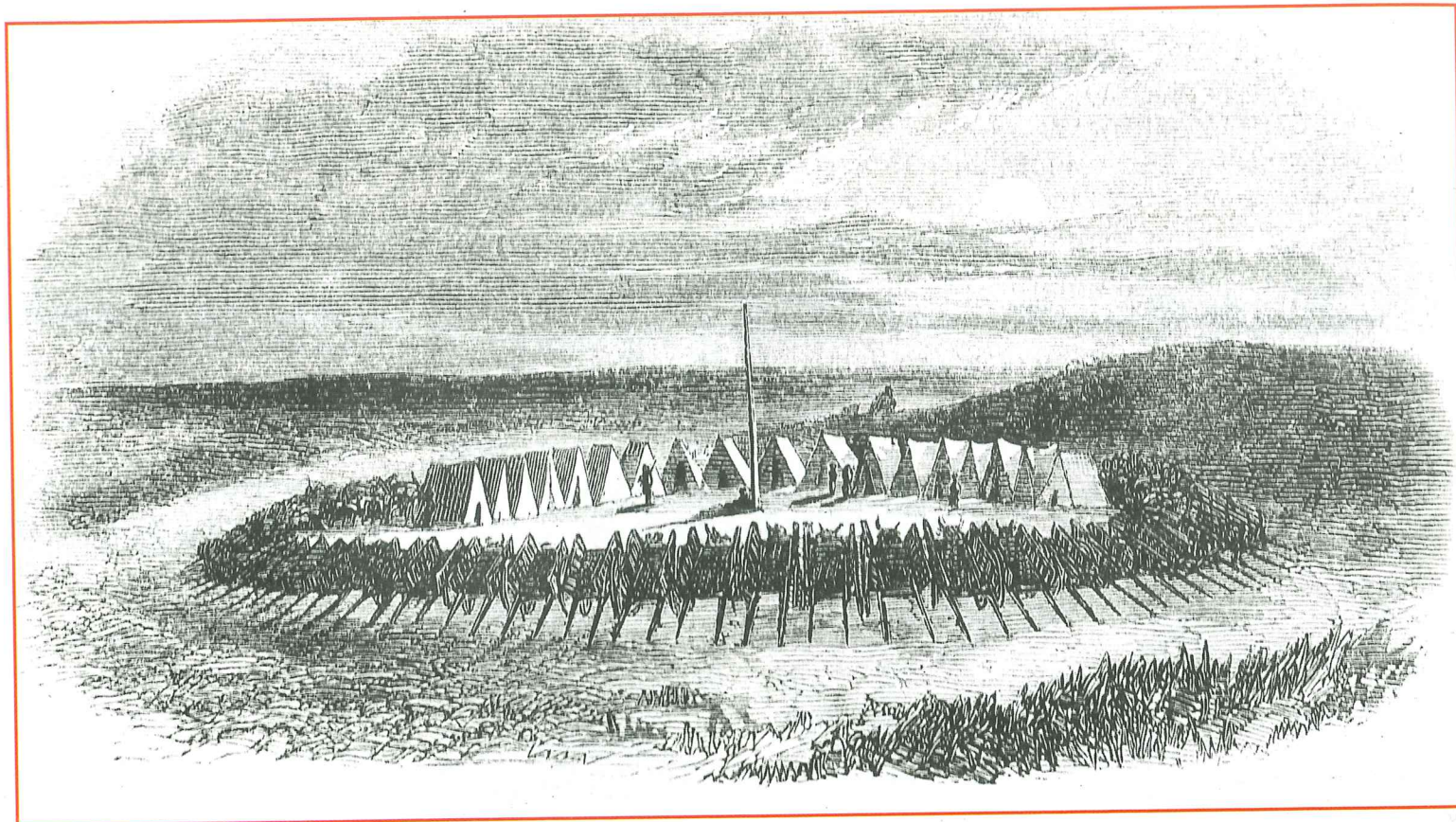


This painting of *voyageurs* [voy-uh-ZHURZ] is by Frances Ann Hopkins. Her husband worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. She made many trips with *voyageurs*.

The Métis

The fur trade created a whole new culture in North America: the **Métis** [may-TEE]. The Métis are people of mixed Aboriginal and European heritage. The first Métis were the children of Aboriginal women and European traders. Later, many Métis worked as *voyageurs*.

The fur trade required a great deal of pemmican to feed travellers. Métis communities supplied much of this. They traded buffalo pemmican for other goods they wanted.



This shows a Métis camp preparing for a buffalo hunt. They organized great buffalo hunts twice a year. Many Métis lived on farms.

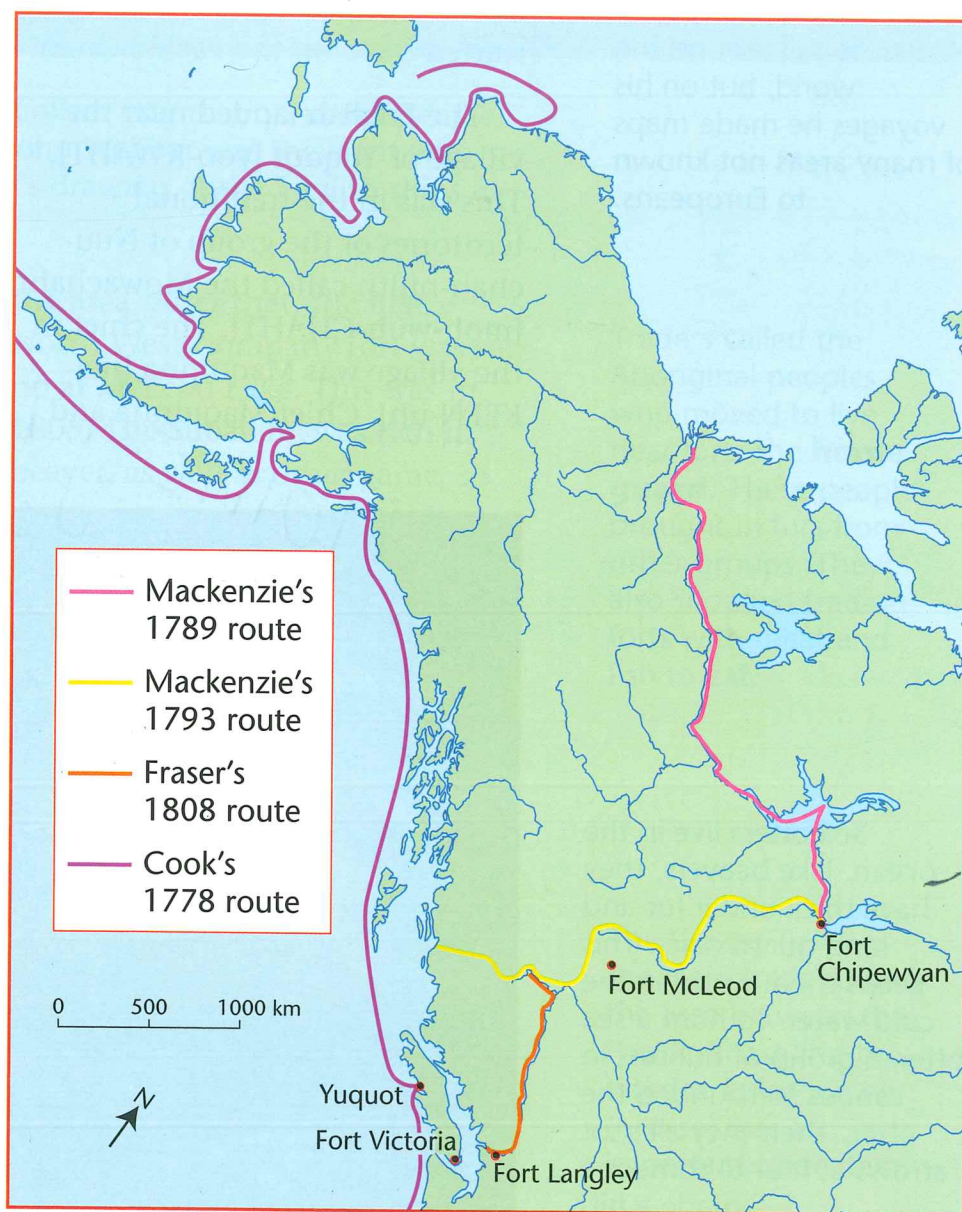
Find Out

Form a group to put on a "talk show" in which a group of Métis people discuss their parts in the fur trade. Your "guests" on the show could take on these roles: a buffalo hunt captain, a woman who makes pemmican, and a *voyageur*. Prepare for the show by researching each of these roles.

Otters, Beavers, and Salmon

The fur trade got to British Columbia almost 200 years after it first started in Tadoussac on the St. Lawrence. It took the explorers longer to get here because this part of North America is the furthest from Europe.

Many parts of the fur trade were the same in British Columbia as in other places, but some things were different. The big difference was that beaver wasn't always the most important trade item.



This map shows you explorers' routes and some of the places you can read about in this section.



Captain Cook was one of the greatest explorers of his time. He wasn't the first to sail around the world, but on his voyages he made maps of many areas not known to Europeans.

The Sea Otter Trade

In 1778, two English ships, led by Captain James Cook, arrived at the coast of British Columbia. Cook and his crew were trying to find the Northwest Passage from the Pacific side. It had been a long journey. They had sailed from England around the bottom of Africa, and then across the Pacific Ocean. Spanish sailors had made the trip a few years earlier. It was Cook's visit, though, that really started trade on the Pacific Coast.

The English landed near the village of Yuquot [yoo-KWAHT]. This was in the traditional territories of the group of Nuuchah-nulth called the Mowachaht [moh-wuh-CHAHT]. The chief in the village was Maquinna [ma-KEEN-uh]. Chief Maquinna and

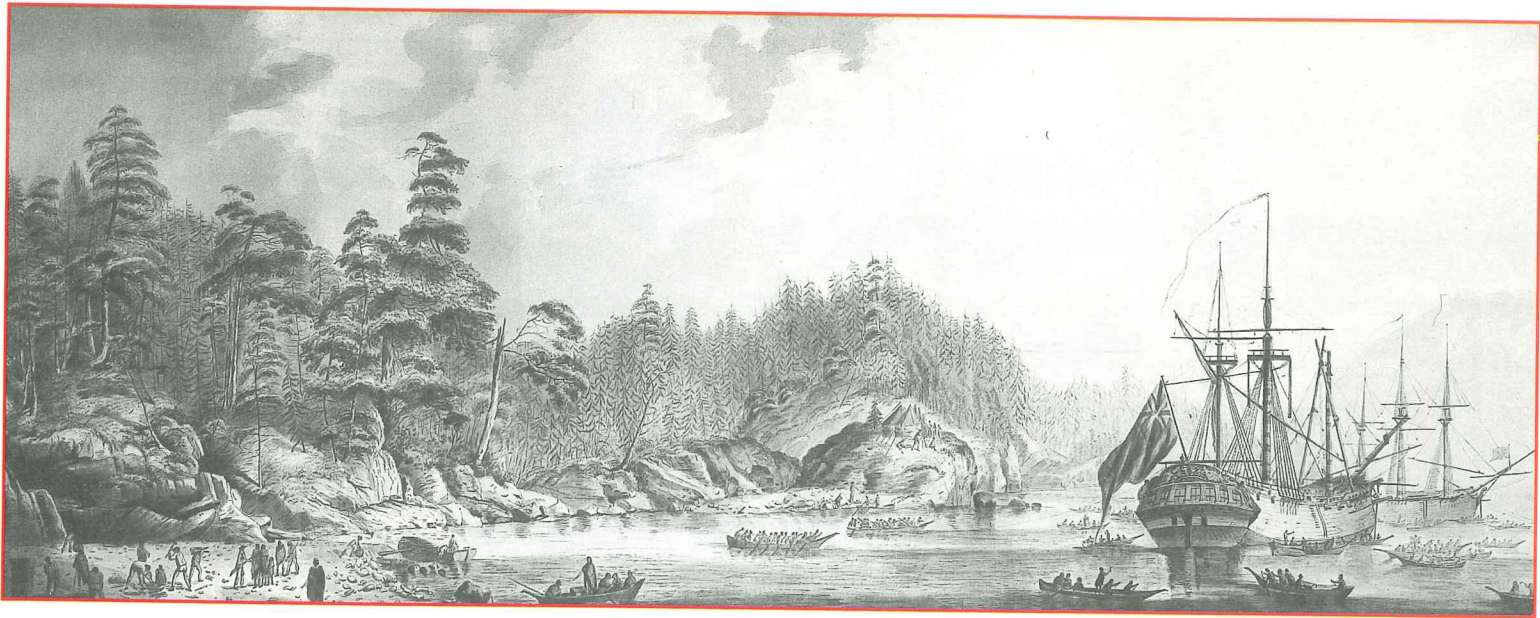
his people welcomed the English—even though at first they thought they might be the spirits of fish in human form because they were so pale!

The English stayed for a month to repair their ships. During this time, the Mowachaht and the English traded many goods. One thing Europeans got in trade were **sea otter** furs.

On their way back to Europe, the English visited China. There they discovered that they could get a lot of money for sea otter furs. At the time, they didn't know this in Europe. When they found out, the sea otter trade became big business. By 1792, many ships were calling at villages up and down the Pacific Coast each year.

Sea otters live in the ocean. Like beavers, they have thick under fur and long guard hairs. This keeps them warm in the cold water. To hunt a sea otter, a group of hunters in canoes surrounded the otter. Then they all shot arrows at it until someone made a hit.





One purpose of Cook's voyages was to collect information about people, plants, and animals around the world. John Webber was the artist who recorded what they saw. This is Webber's drawing of the English ships at Yuquot.

Fur Trade by Land

The people of the Subarctic region of BC first came in contact with Europeans in 1793. This is when the explorer Alexander Mackenzie travelled through their lands.

Mackenzie was making a long journey from the east to the Pacific Ocean. On the last part of his journey he was guided by the Dunne-za [duh-ne-ZAH], Sekani [sik-AN-ee], Wet'suwet'en [wet-SOO-wet-en], Dakelh [da-KEL], Nuxalk [nu-HALK], and Heiltsuk [HILE-tsuk]. For Mackenzie, it was a great adventure in an unknown land. For the Aboriginal peoples, it was just another trip along the **Grease Trail**.

Later, another explorer named Simon Fraser travelled through

the area. After that, the first North West Company fort was set up at McLeod Lake. This was in 1805. The Subarctic was rich in beaver, as well as other game, so there were many furs to trade.

Aboriginal peoples usually welcomed forts being set up in their territories because they could be the go-betweens in trade with other groups. By the 1830s, there were several forts all through the Interior, and there was much trading.

Fort Langley

One fur-trading fort that didn't work out the way the Europeans planned was Fort Langley. This fort was built in Stó:lō territories in 1827. The Stó:lō didn't want to

Traders called the Aboriginal peoples who moved to live near forts the **home guard**. These people brought in furs from other groups. They also supplied trading forts with meat and fish to eat.

The Grease Trail was the main trade route in the area between the Pacific Coast and the Interior. Eulachon oil (grease) was an important trade item.



Fort Langley was built like most fur-trading forts. How would you describe it?

change their way of life to spend more time trapping animals for the fur trade. They wanted to fish as they had always done.

At first the European traders were disappointed. Then they realized how many salmon there were in the area and how good they were to eat. Salmon became a valuable resource. The traders began shipping the fish to Europe and other places.

Think For Yourself

Here's a **BIG QUESTION** about the fur trade that you could discuss in a group:

- *Based on what you know, do you think Aboriginal peoples chose to be part of the fur trade, or did they have to be part of it once the Europeans came? Why do you think this?*

Here are some **SMALL QUESTIONS** to get you thinking:

- *What might have happened if Aboriginal peoples had not brought furs to the forts or the sailing ships?*
- *What might have happened if some groups traded and others did not?*

Find Out

Do some research to find out more about trading forts near your community. Before you start, focus your research. Think about **BIG** and **SMALL** questions that would help you to understand what went on at the fort. Remember to consider the European and the Aboriginal points of view about trade in the area.

When Cultures Change

All cultures change a little over time. For example, you might know that fashion and music were different when your parents were young than they are now. These are small changes in culture.

Some events cause big changes to a culture, though. For Aboriginal peoples, European technologies and the fur trade changed some of the ways they did things. Other things that came with the fur trade caused even bigger changes. These things were diseases, missionaries, and European settlement.

Diseases

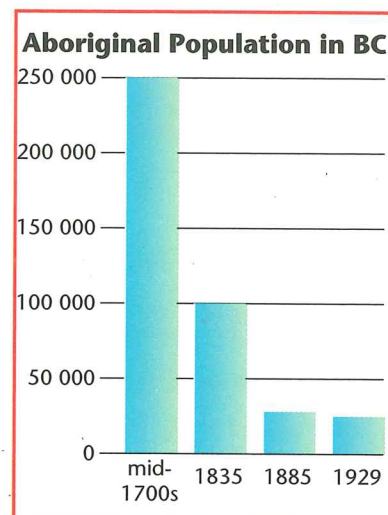
Aboriginal peoples had no **resistance** to European diseases. Once European diseases got into an Aboriginal community, many, and sometimes most, of the people died. This is called an **epidemic**.

Missionaries

Missionaries [MISH-uh-nair-eez] were Europeans who came to Canada to teach Aboriginal peoples about Christianity. They also set up schools to teach Aboriginal children to read and write European languages. They tried to convince Aboriginal peoples that their beliefs and traditions were wrong.

Settlers

In time, many Europeans decided to live in North America. They took over the traditional territories of Aboriginal peoples for their farms and towns. When this happened, the Aboriginal peoples had to move to smaller areas of land called **reserves**.



A **bar graph** is one way to compare numbers. What numbers does this bar graph compare? What can you figure out if you know that large smallpox epidemics happened around 1800, near 1840, and in the 1860s? (Figure out where these dates fit on the graph.)

Resistance is what makes your body able to fight off disease. The disease that caused the most deaths was **smallpox**. People with smallpox get sores all over their bodies and high fevers.

Think For Yourself

What are your first ideas about the changes that disease, missionaries, and settlers might have caused in Aboriginal communities? Make a few notes. You can check your ideas after you read the next section, "Facing Challenges."

Facing Challenges

Jn this section, you can find out about the challenges Aboriginal peoples faced because of contact with Europeans. Most of this information is about Chief Maquinna's people, the Mowachaht.

All across Canada, Aboriginal groups first benefitted from the fur trade. Then they faced hard times when the fur traders moved to find new trading partners. The story of the Mowachaht is just one example.

To make sure we make things better in the future, it is important to understand some of the challenges people faced in the past.

Good Times

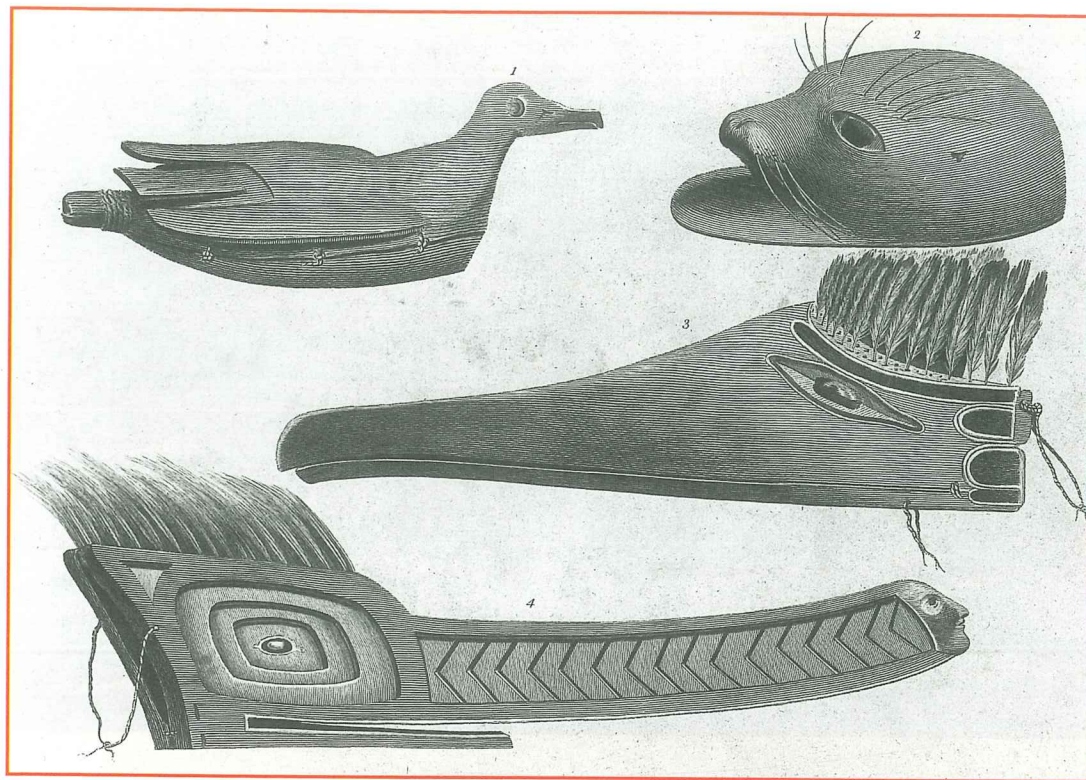
The beginning of the sea otter trade was good for Chief Maquinna and his people. There were plenty of sea otters and Europeans paid a high price for their furs. The Mowachaht sold the furs they got. They also acted as go-betweens for other groups who did not live near the coast.

REAL PEOPLE: CHIEF MAQUINNA

Maqinna is an ancestral name of the Mowachaht. The Chief Maquinna who welcomed Captain Cook was the man who had the name and the rights and honours that went with it at that



time. A Spanish priest who visited the area around the same time drew this picture of Maquinna. It shows him wearing the special whaler's hat that only chiefs could wear.



These drawings of Nuu-chah-nulth masks were made by Captain Cook's artist, John Webber. The masks were carved out of cedar. Can you spot the sea otter?

The goods the Mowachaht got in exchange for furs made parts of their lives easier. For example, it was easier to cook in a copper pot than to heat rocks. They also enjoyed luxury items. For example, sometimes they cut up pots to make bracelets.

Maquinna became a more important chief because of all the wealth he got from trading. He added to his name by giving huge potlatches where he gave away European goods such as blankets and clothing.

European goods also helped Aboriginal artists. Metal tools made it easier to carve, and many beautiful works were created. Coastal communities carved more totem poles than before. Artists

also started making smaller works to trade with Europeans.

New Ways

It wasn't long before the people of Yuquot spent most of their time working in the sea otter trade. They either hunted for sea otters, traded with other groups to get furs, or fought to protect their trading spots.

People were so busy with the sea otter trade that they didn't have time to harvest resources in the traditional ways. Soon the Mowachaht came to depend on European goods to meet their basic needs. They started to use flour, for example, in their cooking. Because they traded away so many furs, they

This photograph of a coastal community was taken in 1899. The people have gathered for a potlatch. Can you see the big pile of blankets? What traditional ways of doing things do you see in this photograph? What new ways do you see?



depended on European blankets to keep warm.

Another change was that wars between groups along the coast became more dangerous. Many more people were killed with guns than with the traditional weapons of arrows and clubs. At one time Chief Maquinna had an army of 300 to 400 men.

Smallpox

The first smallpox epidemic to hit Nuu-chah-nulth territories was in 1804. By the 1860s, half the people in the area had died. Along the coast, whole villages disappeared.

Many Elders died, so there were few people left to pass on their history. Many stories and customs were lost. People also lost

faith in their beliefs. This was partly because the Christian missionaries told them that their beliefs were wrong. It was also partly because shamans could not protect the people from the smallpox epidemics.

No More Sea Otters

The Mowachaht wanted to get as many furs as possible. They hunted all the animals they could find, not just those they needed to meet their basic needs. By 1840, there weren't many sea otters left in the area.

The European traders figured out how to get to other groups who still had furs. Now the ships no longer stopped at Yuquot and the Mowachaht lost their jobs as go-betweens.

Today, we have **vaccinations** to fight diseases like smallpox. These "shots" make sure your body can resist certain diseases.

When Maquinna's people no longer had any furs to trade, they were in trouble. They had changed their way of life. Now they *needed* European goods, but they had nothing to trade for them. Even if they wanted to return to the traditional ways, they couldn't. So many people had died from diseases that there weren't enough people left to do the work.

Settlers

In 1849, Vancouver Island became a colony of England. The capital was Fort Victoria. This meant many settlers arrived who wanted

to own land. Aboriginal peoples were forced to move onto reserves.

At first, the Mowachaht lands were too far away from Victoria to interest anyone. After awhile, though, the Mowachaht also had to move onto reserves.

The reserve lands were not big enough to provide all the resources the Mowachaht needed. There were also new laws about fishing and chopping down trees. By 1900, life for the Mowachaht was very hard. Many people were poor and hungry, and they were often sick.

In time, sea otters became **extinct** on the BC coast—they were all killed. Wildlife experts brought sea otters from the United States to British Columbia. Slowly, the number of sea otters in BC is growing again.

Try This

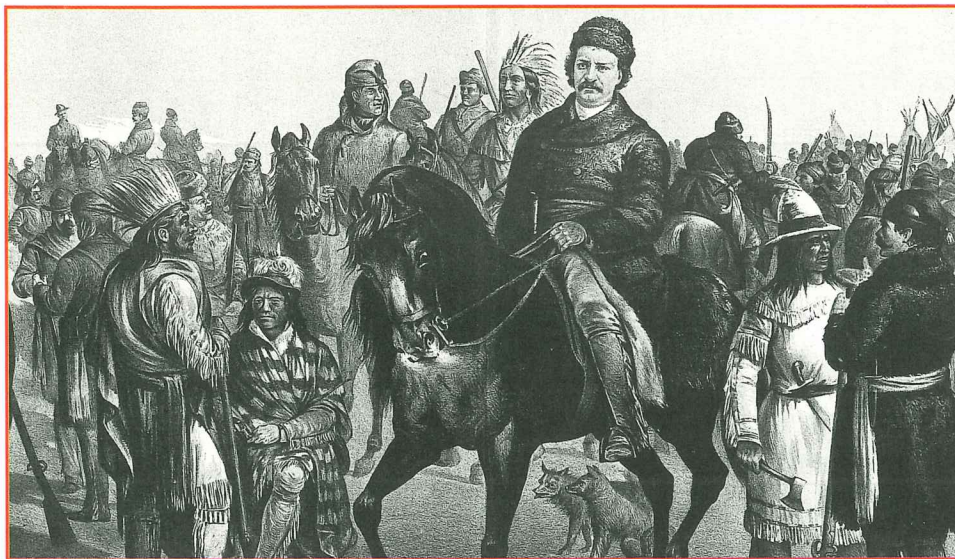
Describe one way each of these events changed Mowachaht life. These could be changes for the better, or changes for the worse.

- the fur trade
- European technologies
- European diseases
- missionaries
- European settlement

Fight or Negotiate?

A treaty is an agreement between two groups of people. Negotiating is like bargaining. For awhile, the government gave each of the main treaties a number. There were 11 of these treaties altogether.

Louis Riel [loo-EE ree-EL] was a Métis leader who believed his people had the right to form their own country. He led fights against the government in 1869 and 1884. He was arrested and hanged for this in 1885.



After awhile, Aboriginal peoples realized that contact with Europeans had caused things to change for the worse. So many people had died of diseases they didn't have much power. Still, some tried to fight. Others tried to **negotiate treaties**.

Fight

When Aboriginal peoples fought, the governments they fought against saw them as criminals. They didn't see them as people of one nation defending their rights against another nation. So when they lost, they were punished like criminals.

There were many small fights in different parts of British Columbia. One of the biggest events happened in 1864. Some European miners and settlers were building a road through the Tsilhqot'in [tsil-KOH-tin] lands in the Interior. The settlers had already taken over some land. The Tsilhqot'in didn't want to lose any more land because they were afraid they wouldn't be able to meet their basic needs. So a group of Tsilhqot'in people killed 13 of the miners and settlers. The leaders of the group were captured and hanged.

At times, there were fights between the crews of trading ships and villagers along the coast. Sometimes the traders started it. Other times the villagers started it. None of these battles ever became very big, though.

Negotiate

In some areas, Aboriginal groups negotiated treaties with the government. The idea was that the treaties would give Aboriginal peoples lands and other rights

that were theirs. Settlers would have the rest of the land. Many Aboriginal leaders worked hard to protect the rights of their people through these treaties.

In British Columbia between 1851 and 1854, the government of the colony negotiated treaties with some groups on Vancouver Island. (These treaties were not numbered.) In 1899, the Sekani,

Dunne-za, and Dene-thah [de-ney-TA] became part of Treaty 8 with other Subarctic groups.

Aboriginal groups in other parts of the province kept asking the government to negotiate with them, too. But the government put off making any decisions.



Chief Crowfoot advised his people to sign Treaty 7 instead of fighting the settlers. The Siskasa [sis-KAH-suh] are Plains people who traditionally followed the buffalo herds. They agreed to move onto reserves in exchange for help setting up farms and ranches.

Find Out

Do a research project to find out more about Louis Riel or Chief Crowfoot. Use one of these **BIG QUESTIONS** to focus your research.

- *Was Riel a hero or a traitor?*
- *Did Crowfoot make the right decision when he signed Treaty 7?*

In this chapter, you saw how trade worked between Aboriginal peoples and European merchants. You also looked at some of the challenges Aboriginal peoples faced after contact with Europeans.

How do you think studying the events of the past can help us understand the issues in our communities today?

Looking Back