

Mentality vs. *Mentalité*: Competition Between the British Frontiersman and the French *Coureur*  
*de Bois* in Colonial North America, 1600-1763

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In 1632, when Samuel de Champlain published his famous collection of journals as *Les Voyages du Sieur de Champlain* after multiple expeditions to North America, he began by writing to King Louis XIII about the stunning possibilities offered by the newly christened colony of “New France.” Champlain emphasized to the king that, despite eighty years of brief contact and attempts at exploration, “They have returned to you with nothing so commendable in your kingdom, nothing so profitable for the service of your Majesty and your subjects...like the coasts, harbors, riveries, and the situation of the places.”<sup>1</sup> The realization that the New World and its abundance of resources could be an engine to fuel the imperial dreams of the Kingdom of France was entrenched in Champlain’s mind after his travels, and in his writings he did his best to emphasize this to the royal court. In the earliest years of European colonization, time was of the essence, as France’s neighbors had already begun similar efforts, and unsurprisingly this would bring them into conflict with their English rivals. The two powers would push and pull over the Northeastern part of the Americas for decades, culminating in the climatic Seven Years’ War. Walter D. Edmonds begins his 1968 book *The Musket and the Cross: The Struggle of France and England for North America* with a rather blasé statement on the conclusion of this struggle, about one hundred and thirty years after Champlain’s publication: “Two hundred years ago three British armies came together early in September in front of Montreal to end forever the rule of France in North America,” a conclusion the author describes as an “ironic anticlimax” of competition.<sup>2</sup> After over a century of raids to diplomatic overtures, and finally war, the tug of war over supremacy that was waged between the two European colonizers would be won by the British Empire.

But why did the largest professional military force in North America at the time bear down on a settlement a fraction of its modern-day size? The discovery of the New World by the two powers would

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel De Champlain, *Les Voyages Du Sieur De Champlain* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1966), ii. “ils n’ont rien rendu de si recommandable en votre Royaume, n’y si profitables pour le service de votre Majeste...comme peuvent les cartes de costes, havres, rivières, et de la situation des lieux.” (All translations from the original text are my own).

<sup>2</sup> Walter Dumaux Edmonds, *The Musket and the Cross: the Struggle of France and England for North America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968), 3.

unravel into perhaps their largest conflict since the Hundred Years' War, begot by the realization of profit in the newly settled lands. While the gold sought as early as Columbus was not to be found, the colonies that would become Canada and the United States boasted an array of other valuable resources that were either depleted or non-existent in Europe. Possibly the most desired of these were furs, especially the pelts of beavers, which had been essentially extinct in Europe by the 16th century.<sup>3</sup> As each party sought to take ownership of this new market, along with existing tension over expansion, they increasingly became at odds with each other. In seeking to conquer nature, there would not be cooperation between competitors. Both sides needed to become masters of their new surroundings in order to come out on top, but to do so would require time, blood, and sweat. Finding reliable allies, the European settlers began to learn about the land and the resources, but how could they manipulate it to their advantage? Whether through increasingly efficient hunting and trapping, adapting agricultural practices, making use of new and unknown flora and fauna, or new military tactics, the seemingly endless wilderness provided ways for Frenchmen and Englishmen to create a new breed of professional expertise: the frontiersman. Meanwhile, their indigenous comrades, drawn into this dangerous game of brinkmanship, would seek to settle old scores and advance their already existing agendas. Though both sought profit, the British adopted a vision with a taste for conflict, and a desire to directly control larger swaths of land for a rising population, pushing aside any man, animal, or plant in their way. In contrast, the French, compounded by much lower numbers in their settlements, exercised a more indirect view that relied on local allies to provide the manpower for their endeavors, and a slow burn of religious conversion and commercial partnerships to gradually build influence in the area. Each aimed to use North America's resources for their nation's benefit, but at a different pace determined by their capabilities and worldviews that made them very distinct even if sharing similar inspirations. The

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<sup>3</sup> T. Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica "Beaver," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 2, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/animal/beaver>.

constant attempts to outdo each other over about a hundred years would leave the Northeastern Atlantic World radically changed: thousands would be dead through violence and its effects, Britain would be recognized as the area's preeminent ruler, and the depletion of its habitat, would steadily continue.

This paper examines the transnational history of the U.S and Canada through a cultural analysis of the effects of settlement of the Americas on the development of distinct colonial identities, specifically along the Northeastern coast and Great Lakes areas, between 1600 and 1763. I argue that the different reasons the British, French, other Europeans, and indigineous peoples had for participating in systems of exchange fostered unique identities that over time became different than the ones carried over from Europe and that existed before the arrival of the white settlers. This is partially revealed in the differences in French and English policy in the extraction of resources, the rates of which their colonies grew in size, and developments in the social structure of their societies. In each respective sphere of influence, a type of explorer with a complex connection with the natural world would begin to appear: the English pioneer or ranger, a frontiersman who looked to push outward from the colonies in search of more land to settle and manipulate while brushing aside any resistance from its inhabitants, and the French *coureur de bois*, translated to "runner of the woods," an individualistic trapper, hunter, soldier and merchant all in one that led the charge of penetrating new lands alongside their native allies all the way to the Mississippi in the search for more resources for France and personal profit. These men embodied the vision of the settler that grew more accustomed to North America, sought to learn its ways and harness it for profit while modifying it to suit their preferences, and increasingly became less reflective of the overarching goals of their patron empires. The writings and actions of colonial European frontiersmen reveal a clear desire to dominate and own the natural world, manifested to incredible heights that would form the basis of political and cultural identities independent from their homelands. Great Britain's victory over the Kingdom of France in their century and a half long conflict

would allow the frontiersman and their worldview to eclipse the *coureur de bois*. The vision propagated by the Anglo-American, continuously seeking out more lands to farm, settle, and bend to their will, while coming into increasing conflict with the native peoples that occupied, would open the continent to an aggressive and exploitative relationship with nature in contrast to an equally ambitious, but slower and smaller in scale one created by the French.

Previous scholars' work focused on well intentioned efforts to discuss Native Americans and their worldviews regarding the environment in a passive light, instead of discussing the complexity of their values and the stereotypes around them. The 1970s in particular were marked by attempts to humanize and give agency American Indians that often fell short. "The European Impact on the Culture of a Northeastern Algonquian Tribe: An Ecological Interpretation," written in 1974 by historian Calvin Martin, embodies these earlier methods of studying environmental and indigenous history. He attempts to dispel ideas of "weakness" amongst the tribes when faced with European contact, calling such categorizations of their culture as "cavalier."<sup>4</sup> Yet, they fall victim to the stereotypical trends of the decade, seeing "the pre-Columbian North American Indian as a sensitive member of his environment."<sup>5</sup> While well-intentioned, Martin's efforts exacerbate perceptions of Native Americans as peaceful early environmentalists, which would lead to the desire to move away from researching and writing about indigenous people in this way. I look to this source as a demonstration of why my work is relevant today, with a large volume of previous works falling into these same traps, while not discounting the author's description of flora and fauna as well as effects that colonization had on them.

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<sup>4</sup> Calvin Martin, "The European Impact on the Culture of a Northeastern Algonquian Tribe: An Ecological Interpretation," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 31, no.1 (1974): 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

Later research often included new lenses in viewing these topics, offering new insights to the visions of the colonial empires and their motivations. In the 1980s, historians began to add on new perspectives that slowly moved the needle to a more nuanced understanding. R.T Naylor incorporates economics into the history of colonial expansion in North America in *Canada in the European Age: 1453-1919*, written in 1987. They see the history of the continent's exploration and colonization as being nearly impossible without the fur trade, which provided the financial incentive to continue expeditions, and saw settlements arise in the areas cleared and developed by indigenous peoples for trade routes.<sup>6</sup> It also emphasizes how the profits and competition over furs was the lifeblood of New France, keeping it afloat and encouraging more exploration, exploitation, and military conflict.<sup>7</sup> The author also stresses the connection between military and commercial relationships between settlers and native partners. They specifically explore the largest ally of the French, the Huron-Wyandot, and how the establishment of an alliance affected exchange, growth of French and Huron power, and how this eventually led to their destruction in wars with rivals like the Iroquois.<sup>8</sup> It also provides further evidence that Europe saw these colonies as abundant, self-sustaining, deep wells of resources that would buoy their empires and project economic power.<sup>9</sup> These powers were not unaware of overstretching and exploiting resources until they had dried up, hence their desire to expand, and contact with the New World was not as much a perfect storm as it was an opportune moment for the growth of capitalism. Naylor's recognition and discussion of North America's inhabitants as crucial actors in the continent's history demonstrates how steps were taken away from the concept of passive inferiority marked in years prior.

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<sup>6</sup> R.T Naylor, *Canada in the European Age: 1453-1919* (Vancouver: Star Books, 1987), 80-81.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-100.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-74.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-79.

Twenty years later, William Beinart and Lotte Hughes provide the fruits of modern advances in environmental history regarding Native Americans and their various worldviews. In their 2001 book *Environment and Empire*, the authors give a much more nuanced view of the fur trade and indigenous peoples, treating them as people with objective reasons for taking part in and influencing this exchange, rather than characterizing them as passive or submissive groups who offered no resistance.<sup>10</sup> Building upon new revelations since the 1990s, this book acknowledges the differences in indigenous versus European views on economics, the land, and resources, while refuting the harmful stereotypes that paint pre-contact North America as a land without harmful environmental outcomes (such as the extinction of the mammoth).<sup>11</sup> Bringing modern environmental history into the larger political history of the British Empire is a guiding light for those looking to build off of these advances in the field.

As these studies have evolved, it has inspired others to take a revised look at the established understandings of the earliest years of permanent European settlement in North America. The availability of more detailed information about Native American societies and their beliefs encouraged research about the spaces occupied by both them and colonizers in the earliest years of European presence. Historians like Richard White have addressed this shared world in works like his 1991 book *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* and provides inspiration for critical analysis of these encounters. White elaborates that the establishing of these relationships created a space for peoples both indigenous and colonist where, though often violent and unforgiving, systems of exchange and communication were established that initially allowed for the benefit of multiple parties, before

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<sup>10</sup> William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 40-41.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

breaking down over the years.<sup>12</sup> Most importantly, we must understand that these understandings came to be in conjunction with existing infrastructure in the Americas, honed through years of experience and practice by its inhabitants. Daniel Richter's 2001 work, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America*, emphasizes this perspective while demonstrating how to reorient colonial history with the inclusion of complex native societies. He specifically discusses how by positioning the Americas as "the Old World," Europe as the "new," and making the story about the many peoples with long histories, and how they fell to a new and strange force is more compelling than the idea of the Americas trapped in time, waiting ripe for the conquest.<sup>13</sup> In recent years, calls to embrace the ilk of Lotte, Hughes, Richter and White have been growing. James Rice's 2014 article, "Beyond 'The Ecological Indian' and 'Virgin Soil Epidemic': New Perspectives on Native Americans and the Environment," outlines the current state of the field, and suggests ways to reconcile these studies along these lines. He points to the 1970s and early 80s-era scholarship that categorized native peoples being "natural," or leaving no ecological footprints, as well as harmful anthropological studies that viewed these "primitive" people as essentially having no major impact on the world.<sup>14</sup> As these beliefs unraveled through advances in aligned fields (archaeology, sociology, etc.), Native American environmental history declined since 1990, instead becoming splintered amongst other studies with larger goals, such as focusing on a larger relationship beyond "first contact."<sup>15</sup> Rice argues that historians would benefit from including more environmental history for a fuller picture of American history, and the history of North America's relationship with the natural world. Through research like theirs,

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<sup>12</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), XXV-XXVI.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: a Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 8-10.

<sup>14</sup> James D. Rice, "Beyond 'The Ecological Indian' and 'Virgin Soil Epidemics': New Perspectives on Native Americans and the Environment," *History Compass* 12, no. 9 (September 2014): 746-748.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 749-753.

we understand that there was a time in which co-existence between the native peoples of the Americas and Europeans was not only possible, but profitable for both, despite varying levels of equality in the returns.

Modern research on North America's colonization looks to find a way to acknowledge and discuss economic, political, and environmental histories, showing how complex the identities formed in the New World became, and continues to disprove harmful stereotypes about colonial power dynamics. The work of Martin and others from the 1970s can be admired for its dedication to ecology, while recognizing its flaws in categorizing Native Americans. Those like Naylor in the 1980s, in introducing economics and the role these people played in an important trade, added to this increasingly detailed while still lacking some introspection. Lotte and Hughes then brought together these two ideas along with their own, and showed the growth of the field in these thirty years. Further, scholars like Richter and White look to incorporate multiple understandings of these histories, painting a more complete picture, and in turn molding the crux of its argument. Today, those like Rice challenge historians to further embrace the importance of the environment, a fitting theme for the 21st century.

Any excellent secondary research requires thorough selection and understanding of critical primary documents. With this topic, a common issue in colonial studies arises: European sources by explorers, soldiers, missionaries, and merchants, dominate Early American History. However, these are the most complete surviving sources on the topic and cannot be disregarded outright. Many of the records left behind include detailed descriptions of the land and other physical features, important events such as battles or discoveries, and treaties or other agreements struck between different parties. Instead of dismissing them for their prejudice and motives, being aware of this informs the opinions that can be drawn as a result. A sadly

unavoidable issue is the lack of competing primary sources by native actors, which simply are not available. There may be kernels of truth to European accounts of native peoples and their actions, but they are largely sullied by a general sense of dismissiveness. Instead, we must rely on the work of scholars to inform us based on years of clarification regarding America's inhabitants. Using sources like Richard White's book and especially Daniel Richter will allow native viewpoints to be brought into the conversation in a less than ideal, but extremely helpful manner with the benefit of recent changes in studies of the diverse societies of North America. Acknowledging these concerns, my argument will pay special attention to factors such as tone, purpose or motivation of authors, and word choice to help illustrate my arguments and not fall prey to the subjectivity of the material itself.

While the given scholarship is abundant on the individual concepts of environmental, economic, and political history, it also lays the groundwork for new studies. This is in part inspired by the work of the Annales school of history, and their concept of *histoire des mentalités*, or a history of attitudes. The founders of this type of thought, such as Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, emphasized a focus on concepts of climate, agriculture, demographics, social groups, and mentalities in place of politics, diplomacy, and war, and to view events through the roles of ordinary people.<sup>16</sup> The role of these *mentalités* loom large over my work, and gave insight as to how to approach this history from the bottom up rather than the top down. While some studies, like those of White and Richter's ilk, have made admirable attempts to include similar concepts, a further examination of these concepts is the objective of this paper. I am particularly interested in what the relationship with the land held by these parties tells us about

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<sup>16</sup> T. Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Annales school," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 19, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Annales-school>. For further reading on Annaliste theory, please see the following works by Marc Bloch: Bloch, Marc. *The Historian's Craft*. New York: Vintage Books, 1964. Bloch, Marc. *French Rural History: An Essay on Its Basic Characteristics*. Berkeley, Calif: Univ. of California Press, 1970.

identity, worldviews, and the trajectory of the societies that would come to be. The result is a cultural history centered around the differing worldviews of Britain and France in North America personified by the frontiersman or pioneer and the *coureur de bois*. The story of why one triumphed over the other is a long and complicated tale, and would eventually lead to the creation of attitudes unique to their respective colonies. By examining the different situations that gave rise to the characteristics of English and French colonists, it is possible to see the legacy of their worldviews in the pre-United States and pre-Canada societies of North America.

French sources that describe in detail the resources of the landscapes they came across help to illustrate their worldview as they began serious attempts of colonization. Among the important examples of European perspective are the writings of Samuel de Champlain from about 1604-1616, compiled into a book, *Les Voyages du Sieur de Champlain*. Champlain was the second of two major early French explorers in North America, following Jacques Cartier about a century earlier. The Frenchman's journals include descriptions of time spent amongst native peoples, the politics of founding New France, and his explorations of Eastern Canada. A mixture of personal reflections and amateur ethnography, Champlain's writings describe these events in detail, ranging from skirmishes to the apparent vastness of the frontier in front of him. He was also instrumental in establishing some of the first trading companies in North America, encouraging more and more competition internally within the colony, and with their British and Iroquois rivals. This source provides insight into the explorer's perceptions of the new world, those who lived there, and the potential for profits and other advantages.

Similar to Champlain are the papers of Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, an officer whose records help to demonstrate the evolution of French worldviews many years after Champlain's tenure in Canada, and coincidentally the man a young George Washington was sent

to negotiate with at the beginning of the Seven Years' War, as tensions reached their climax over claims in the region. A French officer born in New France about a century after Champlain's explorations, Saint-Pierre's career demonstrates the growth and importance of the fur trade. Many of his comrades had already recognized this, as posts in Canada and the Ohio Valley became increasingly attractive over the years. Recognizing the profit to be made, commanders and officers became business partners and managers in their own rights. I examine this source as a sample of exchange and exploitation in the new world, relations with natives in this trade, as well as the history of frequent conflicts over furs.

The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents are a collection of compiled records left by French missionaries in Canada from their arrival in the early 17th century to shortly after the American Revolution in 1791, and illustrate an important aspect of the French worldview in the Americas, that being religion and conversion. These are essential to any research about French Canada, due to the Jesuits' important reading and writing skills. They often served as dignitaries or scribes, recording minutes of meetings, conferences, treaties, and personal encounters. Many also lived among France's allies like the Abenaki and Wyandot, hoping to convert those willing. Much like the soldiers and politicians, some Jesuits were not opposed to enriching themselves through the fur trade, and described in great detail the profits to be made to everyone from friends to the government back in France. These documents contain correspondence about these efforts, as well as maps and illustrations of indigenous peoples, settlements, and the land in New France. These writings show how important the Jesuits were in remembering the agreements made between the French and their new allies, as well as outlining the multiple motivations had for forming them.

The rival English also took to mastering this new world, perhaps best shown in the journals of British-American Major Robert Rogers, originally published in 1765. Born in colonial New Hampshire in the early 1700s, Rogers provides the perspective of France's rival for power in North America through his published journals. He fought in multiple conflicts for Britain that took him through different environments and seasons, modeled his famous rangers after experiences fighting with and against Native Americans, and campaigned for finances to search for the legendary Northwest Passage. Rogers became entangled in many business ventures, like his French counterparts, not ignoring the opportunity to enrich himself through battle and command post. His journals provide a detailed account of the flora and fauna his troops came across in their travels, as well as descriptions of battles and experiences with Native Americans both friend and foe. Rogers' works are a great example of colonists learning from the people and environment of the New World, and applying these lessons for personal gain through war and economics.

While there is a lack of primary sources from the native perspective in this period, there are ways to infer aspects of their various visions and understandings from what is available. First of all, those like Champlain, the Jesuits, and Rogers spent significant time living, working, fighting and otherwise engaging with their allies. They may not speak overly well of their new "friends," but they still describe in detail their experiences, and each side's reactions to different events, entreaties, and other decisions. This thick and descriptive writing, in conjunction with the outlook of several centuries of study and perspective, will partially help see through the biases and ulterior motives that are all too present. Most importantly, drawing from secondary sources will assuage part of this lack of a voice. Specifically, the more recent studies that have the advantage of newer archaeological and anthropological studies about Native Americans since

1990 (such as *Environment and Empire*) will be of great service. It is a less than ideal situation, but the absence of as many direct counterpoints to European works further proves the point of North America's complete and total conquest, and the work of recent historians to bridge this divide is important to highlight.

The development of two competing cultural identities was an unintended extension of a larger conflict over the right to shape the New World between two old rivals and their worldviews. The rivalry between the Kingdom of France and England was a driving force in the rush to conquer and control North America. As seen in many instances earlier and later throughout history, this infamous international competition would guide the majority of the political history in the region. Each power would compete for resources, land, access to ports, friendship of tribes, and religious influence over the roughly 100 years in which their colonies would butt heads.

An immediate question to answer is why the fostering of these spirits were derived from only two major European nations in this area in a time of great exploration and colonization, as many nations looked to expand their worldview beyond their homelands. While the Americas were subjugated by multiple states, the Franco-British struggles for hegemony dominated the lands that would become Canada and the Eastern United States. The other major imperial players in Europe, Spain, the Netherlands, and Portugal, had little to no role in this area due to a combination of internal and external factors. Of the three, only the first two posed any sort of serious challenge to this duumvirate of power in the North Atlantic. Spain possessed the most potential threat to French and English claims, but was in no position to by 1700 as their empire struggled with colonial upkeep and a sluggish economy, instead deciding to focus on maintaining

their earlier Central and South American colonies.<sup>17</sup> The Dutch, with a naturally smaller nation and population, were mostly players in the emerging North American trade through their naval prowess, looking to find and open up new markets for their domestic use. From about 1609 to 1664, a network of settlements by the Netherlands, consisting largely of trading posts and other small forts and outposts in the Hudson Valley area, the largest of which was of course New Amsterdam in modern-day Manhattan, were established, and they preceded the English in forming partnerships with the powerful Iroquois Confederacy.<sup>18</sup> While they began important strings in colonial history, the disparity of power between Holland and their larger opponents prevented them from a serious investment on a similar scale, and they would be squeezed out of direct holdings rather quickly. With no other serious challenges, the stage was set for another entry in a longstanding Anglo-French competition, as they each endured difficulties and forged new paths in their quest to become the preeminent voice in North America.

The arrival of European explorers and colonists in North America heralded stark changes in North America, and the effects of their arrival is noticed perhaps most dramatically in their worldviews concerning the environment. Dreams of dominance over nature arrived with the swords, ships, and settlements of every expedition since Columbus. The Old World had already experienced the fruits of this labor, with the local populations of many animals suffering the effects of growing consumerism. Famously, the European wolf population was brought to its knees through years of systematic hunting across the continent.<sup>19</sup> While a longstanding fear and concern for livestock played a role, so did a latent desire for their pelts, a fashionable commodity. Other animals were affected by the fur craze as well, with the most famous being the

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<sup>17</sup> "France in America: France and Spain," Library of Congress, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://memory.loc.gov/intldl/fiahtml/fiatheme.html>.

<sup>18</sup> "Dutch Colonization," National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/kingston/colonization.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> T. Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Gray Wolf," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 5, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/animal/gray-wolf>.

beaver, hunted to near extinction in Eurasia by the 20th century.<sup>20</sup> Increasing demands furthered the interest in searching for a new deposit, looking to the relative unknown of the Western Atlantic. When Europeans landed on the shores of North America, it was a veritable wonderland as far as they knew. Imagine land stretching as far as one could see, full of seemingly endless supplies of resources that were either completely foreign, or in such drastic supply in contrast to the steadily rising extirpation and commodification of nature in their homelands. The royal palaces in London and Paris must have rejoiced at the sheer number of resources that were now within grasp, waiting to buoy their economies and empires. It appeared as though the area would just be another extension of their rivalry, a piece on the proverbial chess board. However, these territories were not uninhabited, and the realization of this threw a wrench into dreams of free markets and profits. The new arrivals were now faced with a hurdle they had not entirely planned on, originally thinking they would arrive in the at least somewhat known continent of Asia. How would they coexist with peoples that they essentially nothing about, and who seemed so unaware of everything that the worlds of Africa, Asia, and Europe had learned about each other through years of trade, war, and a general exchange of information and ideas? After all, each side was essentially making contact with extraterrestrials to the best of their knowledge, peoples which they knew nothing about, and had no playbook to base their decisions off of. France and Great Britain would take different approaches to answering this question, and how to include it in their worldview. Though each would make allies out of necessity, the French would find themselves often reaching out to tribes that could support their imperial ambitions and offset low populations in their colonies, realizing they could not immediately control the vast territories they claimed without the assistance of these local contacts. Meanwhile, the British took to clearing out any sort of opposition that they could outnumber and overpower, especially as their enemies

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<sup>20</sup> “Beaver.”

extended olive branches to an increasingly large alliance. The struggle to establish this rapport would dominate the early years of colonization, as the agendas of the various native peoples and the multiple empires of the Old World would overlap and collide in an environment where various factions tried to learn about each other while attempting to both stay relevant and survive in a harsh environment.

As time progressed from the earliest establishment of settlements on the continent, its inhabitants began to shape the land according to their worldviews, which in turn would be modified in turn by the experiences of the settlers in this strange new world. Gradually, their desires and objectives became more centered on their own self-interest, breaking away from the earlier goals that served the greater empires of which they were a part of. These changes were spurred by the often ruthless nature of power and control in the New World, and a need for more resources to spark their growth and keep their royal sponsors placated while turning a blind eye to unceasing expansion. In this contentious and competitive landscape, the holdings of the British and French in what is today Northeastern Canada and the United States gave way to the formation of new cultural identities amongst the expatriate population. As more and more time passed between generations, the links between progenitor and spawn would become more frayed, and while sharing similar interests and heritage, they would become primarily shaped by their lives on the often fluid and contested borders of a wild and untamed North America. This created a fusion of imported European ideas and systems, and uniquely colonial lived experiences. However, even in the New World, differences persisted in old rivalries, and this was reflected in the two competing powers' visions. Seen through the records of Samuel de Champlain, Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, and various Jesuit priests, a distinct Francophone culture would emerge centered around Montreal and Quebec, bringing together political, economic, and

religious desires for a quieter form of hegemony. In the British colonies along the eastern seaboard, the American frontiersman would be birthed through combat and a desire for “more,” and in the writings of Major Robert Rogers these choices and their consequences are recounted in their later stages. By comparing and contrasting these sources, it is possible to realize the differences in each party’s approach to the same objectives: control over the continent of North America in every conceivable way, to exploit its resources for the benefit of the Kingdom of France, the Native American allies of all sides, and Great Britain, and the way that their competing visions, worldviews, and understandings informed the strategy of all of these parties to this end. The French emphasized assimilation and conversion to Catholicism of their allies to rectify a low population in their search for deposits of resources, the English were driven by a fierce desire for exponential growth and the acquisition of new lands for their personal profit, while the Hurons, Iroquois, and others involved with these two European nations saw them as another tool in their existing systems and intertribal competition.

The center of the French colonial world began to the north of present-day New York, from which they would project their worldview over the years into vast swaths of land in North America. Eventually spanning over Eastern Canada, Acadia, and parts of the Midwestern United States, their arrival mirrored that of the Dutch in many ways. Both sought to take advantage of the abundance of resources offered in the Americas, such as the significant fur trade, as well as grow their own colonial abilities as Spain, Portugal, and later the English began to reap the benefits of their endeavors. France had first explored the area in the 16th century with Jacques Cartier’s failed attempt to found settlements in Canada in the 1530s after several initial expeditions. Hindered by pressure from the royal court to show a return on investment and a hostile relationship with local Iroquian tribes, Cartier would be the last significant effort to

explore and settle the area for nearly 70 years, as France grappled with internal religious conflict that pushed exploration to the backburner until a peace was concluded in 1598.<sup>21</sup> In this period between efforts, the French approach to exploration would change dramatically. The harsh realities of their previous failures in North America and a rapidly competitive landscape influenced the attempts of a new wave of explorers.

While not the first or last to come in hope of creating a lasting legacy, Samuel de Champlain's arrival on the shores of Eastern Canada marked the beginning of the French quest for hegemony of expanding their *mentalité* over the vast wilderness of this previously little explored world. In 1603, the future governor of the colony would begin his journeys in modern-day Canada, and is remembered as being instrumental in two major achievements for the French colonial empire: the founding of New France, and the building of relationships with local inhabitants.<sup>22</sup> A latent desire to subjugate nature is a powerful subtext for Champlain's *Voyages*, the most intact publishings of his records and other writings about his time in North America. Covering his journeys from 1604-1613, the middle of his adventuring career, Champlain detailed his findings from the coast of Nova Scotia and New England, to the inner areas of Quebec and the aptly named Lake Champlain, to Ontario using the Ottawa river. Along the way, his descriptions of the people and environment around him give way to an unflattering tone. In August of 1604, Champlain and several compatriots, while sailing down the St. Croix River in the Maine-New Brunswick area, discussed the range of trees in the area as being "pines, firs, and other sorts of inferior wood."<sup>23</sup> While he had traveled to the continent before, and such trees have similar variants in Europe, his quick dismissal of these towering trees is telling in its cavalier

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<sup>21</sup> "France in America: Exploration and Knowledge," Library of Congress accessed November 20, 2020, <https://memory.loc.gov/intldl/fiahtml/fiatheme.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Champlain, 41.

message. Since it did not possess the same perceived “strength” or other characteristics of other woods, these had less value in Champlain’s mind beyond the shock value of a new world.

With the driving force of French exploration at this time being in search of new sources of materials, their worldview was often focused on the abundance of the Americas. These early journal entries reflect this understanding, and inform much of what explorers like Samuel Champlain would report back to the royal court. In multiple instances, Champlain comments on the density and numbers of different species of both flora and fauna, and apparently takes pleasure in describing their cultivation and exploitation. During an earlier section exploring Acadia, he remarks on the sheer volume of wildlife, describing birds both familiar (like ducks and geese) and not (such as penguins), seals, cod and other seafood like crustaceans, and various other game, as well as natural resources such as an “abundance of wood” and deposits of iron that he immediately envisions as mines.<sup>24</sup> Though certainly impressed with the variety of living creatures, Champlain’s background and objectives are revealed here once again. When describing the noted examples, there are always allusions to the overarching theme of control. While he did detail his experiences in his notes, he also has a sense of joy as he writes about their use of these newly found resources. All of the animals just mentioned were “pleasantly” hunted in his own words to the extent they could carry, often mentioning the hunting practices and grounds of the native peoples in comparison (and criticism), as well as outlining physical features that support or deter the establishment of ports, harbors, and permanent settlements.<sup>25</sup> Through this, he passes judgment on the locations and peoples of this world as they explore, based on their viability to not just support a colony, but turn a profit for king, colonist, and country. Understanding only through an internalized system of valuing the world and its

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<sup>24</sup> Champlain, 12-16.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

resources in relation to the larger goals of the Kingdom of France, Samuel de Champlain showed the collective hand of all those who came before and after him, looking to further exploit the closed system that is Earth.

This tone reflects the overall attitude and vision of the earliest waves of French colonization, the search for suitable lands for occupation and exploitation. Understanding this context, the logical conclusions drawn by Champlain begin to make more sense if looking through his eyes. When one is tasked with finding more natural resources to fuel a growing empire, stumbling across land populated by a mixture of both amazing and less useful species of plants and animals, and primarily inhabited by peoples who seem oblivious to the knowledge one arrives with would confound likely any adventurer. The question lies not in the way Champlain arrived at his conclusions, but in the existence of his presumptions beforehand. To clarify, the realities of the world at the time of these writings must be acknowledged: though the Americas were known in Europe by time of Champlain's trips, they were a relatively recent revelation, and there was no certainty about its complete picture. Since he, like any of his counterparts, were then exploring these strange locales and filling in blank spaces on the maps, it was perhaps a natural instinct to apply accepted scientific truths and realities to these continents: after all, wouldn't anyone try to find some sort of comfort in conformity when thousands of miles from home? Where one can fault him and others is in their values themselves, and the goals associated with them. The language used by Champlain is not just that of a flowery nature, an author trying to stretch the page to meet a requirement. It is a clear speculation on the value on the elements that make up North America, based on the same standards used in Europe that had been refined over years of economic developments. The tree notorious for its "weakness" in France must then be weak in Quebec also, as does the animal, the crop, and everything else under the sun.

Likewise, those not known to the European can only initially be judged by appearances. If it looks a bit like a strong tree that may have marked the forests back home, then maybe it is also of a high quality. Yet, it is also naturally less trustworthy due to its unknown capabilities, and would have to be tested to be certain. If the meat was tasteful, the land treatable, and the plant profitable, then they could be rubber stamped for further cultivation. While one could appreciate these sights for their abundance, their beauty, and their originality, such comments were always punctuated by how quickly they could benefit the imperial efforts of the French monarchy, and those in his employ in these expeditions. This *mentalité* dominated Samuel de Champlain's outlook, and his records confirm the hyperfocus on utility, profit, and strength that was prevalent amongst the arrivals from Europe as efforts to permanently establish a presence in North America intensified.

With the realization that the New World could truly offer meaningful benefits to France, Champlain's primary objective shifted from searching for deposits of resources to securing them through settlement, in accordance with France's vision for the continent. With orders to create a new colony for France that could direct flow of the growing fur trade, in 1608 he erected fortifications on the Saint Lawrence that would become the city of Quebec.<sup>26</sup> The challenge now would be to sustain and protect this fortress. It was not a simple task to accomplish: anyone who has lived or visited in the area is familiar with the often unpleasant winters of the Northeastern United States and Canada, and in a world without modern amenities and a different climate reality, they were often deadly. Beyond natural obstacles, the French had reason to fear the inhabitants of the area around the Saint Lawrence. Jacques Cartier's attempts to put down roots in Canada at least in part succumbed to the attacks of Iroquoian people who would certainly

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<sup>26</sup> "France in America: The Colonies," Library of Congress, accessed March 7, 2021, <https://memory.loc.gov/intldl/fiahtml/fiatheme.html>.

remember the hostile relationship shared between the two.<sup>27</sup> To abet these concerns, Champlain employed a new diplomatic style than his predecessors. The hard truth was that the French attempting to settle Canada at the time were vastly outnumbered by the native peoples living around them, and their survival depended on managing their choices very carefully. A repeat of Cartier's follies would have dented French morale severely, and Champlain could be almost assured of no lasting glory or power to come from his exploration. The Europeans needed allies to provide a buffer for this vulnerable camp, and fortunately the Iroquois who had repelled earlier colonization attempts had plenty of other enemies native to the Americas who were eager to join forces with them. Champlain would spend significant amounts of time in his trips seeking out these relationships, and learning who could prove themselves most valuable to the French dreams of empire. The most fruitful of these partnerships was with the Wendat people, whom the French gave the more popularized name, "Huron." Though Iroquoian-speaking, this rival confederation had little love for the Haudenosaunee of the Five Nations, and after diplomatic overtures were made, encouraged Champlain to join them in combat against their mutual enemies. The benefits for both sides were tempting: for the Wendat, a threat to their regional supremacy could potentially be removed with their new comrades, and the French, who were desperate for time and security, could learn more about the New World from its inhabitants who could also provide them the numbers to One of the most famous stories left behind by the Frenchman came as a byproduct of this cooperation. In the summer of 1609, Champlain and two others from Quebec accompanied about 60 of their native allies (mostly Hurons) on an expedition to attack an encampment of about 200 Iroquois somewhere in New York state along the Iroquois River (now the Richilieu).<sup>28</sup> After a long journey, they made contact with their

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<sup>27</sup> "Franco-Indian Alliances."

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

enemies and prepared for battle, an encounter that would become a landmark decision in Franco-Indian history. Champlain recounts the order of battle on July 29th, 1609 as follows:

“Immediately upon landing, they began running some two hundred paces towards the enemies, who stood firmly, not yet noticing my companions, who had gone into the wood with some savages. The others started to call me with loud cries: and, in order to give me passage opened in two parts, and me at the head, marching twenty paces in advance until I was something of 30 paces from the enemies, who noticed me, and looked at me and I at them. When I saw them moving to fire on us, I rested my arquebus, and aimed at one of the three chiefs, and with the same shot two of them fell to the Earth, and one of their men who was wounded would die a time afterwards. I had loaded four balls into my arquebus. When the others (his companions) saw the shot was favorable for our side, they began to let out loud cries so loud that one could not have heard thunder.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Champlain, 230-231. “Aussitôt que susmes à terre, ils commencèrent à courir quelque deux cens pas vers leurs ennemis qui estoient de pied ferme, & n’auoient encores aperçu mes compagnons, qui s’en allèrent dans le bois avec quelques sauvages. Les nostres commencèrent à m’appeler à grands cris: & pour me donner passage ils s’ourrirent en deux, & me mis à la teste, marchant quelque 20. pas deuat, jusqu’à ce que je susse a quelque 30. pas des ennemis, ou aussit ils m’aperceurent, & firent alte en me contemplant, & moy eux. Comme je les veis esbranler pour tirer sur nous, je couchay mon arquebuse en joue, & visay droit à vn des trois chefs, & de ce coup il en tomba deux par terre, & vn de leurs compagnons qui fut bleffe, qui quelque temps après en mourut. J’auois mis quatre balles dedans mon arquebuse. Comme les nôtres virent ce coup si favorable pour eux, ils commencèrent a letter de si grads cris qu’on n’eust pas ouy tonner.”



Figure 1. This painting from the late 19th century depicts the confrontation between Champlain and his allies against the Iroquois, and the moment of his infamous musket shot. His decision to seek out allies against the people that had previously driven Cartier away in Canada may have seemed obvious at the time, but would come to define the existence of New France for decades to come. The Huron-Wendat people would become strong allies that ensured the early survival of French Canada, and allowed the Europeans to tap into an extensive network of trade for furs and pelts, particularly the alluring beaver and its castor oil. Alternatively, he won the long lasting enmity of the powerful Iroquois Confederacy who would remember his actions and seek out alliances with other foreign powers in seek of vengeance and safety from further attacks. "Champlain's Battle with the Iroquois, Ticonderoga, July, 1609," NYPL Digital Collections (New York Public Library), accessed April 25, 2021, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-554a-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

Champlain and his party had successfully intimidated their mutual opponents, and clearly defined the lines between friend and foe. With the Iroquois temporarily backing down, the survival of Quebec was more certain than ever, and allowed the Europeans to focus on sustaining themselves and growing their own numbers over time. Champlain's expeditions and success in founding what would become Quebec marked a change for the French presence in Canada. These settlements were permanent and sustainable now, supported by their network of friendly tribes, a mutual target for expansion in the Iroquois, and had a clear benefit to the larger colonial

empire of France. The bridgehead for further French expansion in Canada for the time being was blessed with the protection and cooperation of a strong intermediary in the Hurons.

It is important to understand that many factors played into these choices that would help shape the French colonial identity and divergent worldview. By no means does their friendly relations with numerous tribes imply that the French were “the best” of the colonizers: they all came to pillage and plunder the land and its resources. Part of the reason that the French structured their territories in these ways was the composition and population of their settlements. Though New France covered large swaths of lands, they were outnumbered by the British holdings in part because they focused largely on trade and missionary work and their farming was less adaptable due to its feudalistic influences (versus the small “family farm” identity that Anglo-Americans would develop), which in turn both required and attracted less permanent population (particularly French women) versus opportunistic soldiers, explorers, and missionaries.<sup>30</sup> In comparison, the New England and New York colonies embraced a mentality of “never enough” in regards to their new homes. In the former particularly, an extremely varied economy arose that was in constant need of supplies for its now steadily growing population after the initial hardships, ranging from fishing, logging, and crucially farming, which was never quite developed the same way in French Canada with its less permanent habitants.<sup>31</sup> In the long run, it would prove to be a large part of France’s undoing in the continent as well as Great Britain’s ascendancy. Yet, the French were insulated for many years due to an advantage they carried for themselves throughout the entirety of their continental empire.

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<sup>30</sup> “New Spain and New France,” History Hub, accessed November 20, 2020, <http://sites.austincc.edu/caddis/new-spain-new-france/>.

<sup>31</sup> “New England 1620-1692,” History Hub, accessed November 20, 2020, <http://sites.austincc.edu/caddis/new-spain-new-france/>.



The bulk of France's continental empire was initially ruled *de jure* by the league of friendly native peoples that was formed as early as Champlain's first journeys with the Hurons, and their role in colonial endeavors left a lasting influence on French worldviews in North America. They were France's avenue to the fur trade, the interior of the continent, what is today's Midwestern United States and, conceivably to the 17th century explorer, to endless lands and riches as far as the eye could see. As discussed earlier, the missteps of Cartier inspired change in France's native policies, and upon their return they took a (relatively) more welcoming path. Their choice of the Huron-Wyandot people as principal partners was by no means a mistake: in fact, the French came across the proprietors of an intricate system of exchange orchestrated by their new brothers-in-arms. These Iroquoian people, living along the Great Lakes area, maintained extensive and efficient agricultural practices, hunting, and trapping that they then exchanged with other nearby tribes (notably the fellow Iroquoian-speaking Neutral tribe and various Algonquian ones), and would end up supplying the necessary supplies and goods to maintain the growing commercial agreement they would form with the arriving *coureur de bois* and other Frenchmen, most importantly of course being furs, which they had been exchanging before the arrival of Europeans.<sup>32</sup> With ample access to sources, and a familiarity with how to most efficiently gather furs, the French had found an operation that could grow quickly with their finances and technology. It was almost the perfect storm for France: with all the existing infrastructure, they could simply build off the established trade routes, and assist in expanding efforts to commercialize furs and any other desired commodity. By far the largest advantage this offered to the French was the manpower provided by the Hurons and other allies, which would offset their own low numbers. But once again, this was not to last, as the Hurons would find themselves embattled with an all too familiar foe.

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<sup>32</sup> Naylor, 68-71.

The people often referred to colloquially as “the Iroquois” may have played the largest role in shaping colonial history in Northeastern North America, as their worldview came into direct conflict with France and its allies. Often referred to as the Iroquois Confederacy, or Haudenosaunee, they had been set up to oppose the French from the moment Champlain fired his arquebus on their warriors alongside the Hurons. Their existing struggle with the Wyandats was now compounded by their French allies, and it did not take long for the Confederacy to become aligned with first the Dutch and later the English.<sup>33</sup> As they cemented these ties, a new tool brought over from Europe would become available for their use: gunpowder weapons, specifically the musket. The French would again make a crucial error in their decision making when it came to trading of weapons. While the Dutch and English furnished the Haudenosaunee many guns in exchange for pelts and other items, the French made this offer limited and conditional on conversion to Catholicism to their enemies.<sup>34</sup> This restriction put the Hurons severely behind their opponents in both inventory and familiarity with flintlocks, and it would have deadly consequences. Edmonds opined that “No Indians ever adapted themselves to the use of firearms more readily than the Iroquois,” and from 1645-1655 the six tribes certainly agreed, essentially wiping the Huron-Wyandats, Neutrals, and other French allies or otherwise rivals off the map (whose survivors largely fled to places like Montreal), only stopping at firm resistance from the Erie tribe and likely saving what was left of the French commercial empire.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> “France in America: Franco-Indian Alliances,” Library of Congress, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://memory.loc.gov/intldl/fiahtml/fiatheme.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Roger Carpenter, “Making War More Lethal: Iroquois vs. Huron in the Great Lakes Region, 1609 to 1650,” *The Michigan Historical Review* 27, no. 2 (2001): p. 45-46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20173927>.

<sup>35</sup> Edmonds, 12-15.

# GREAT LAKES TRIBES

CIRCA 1600

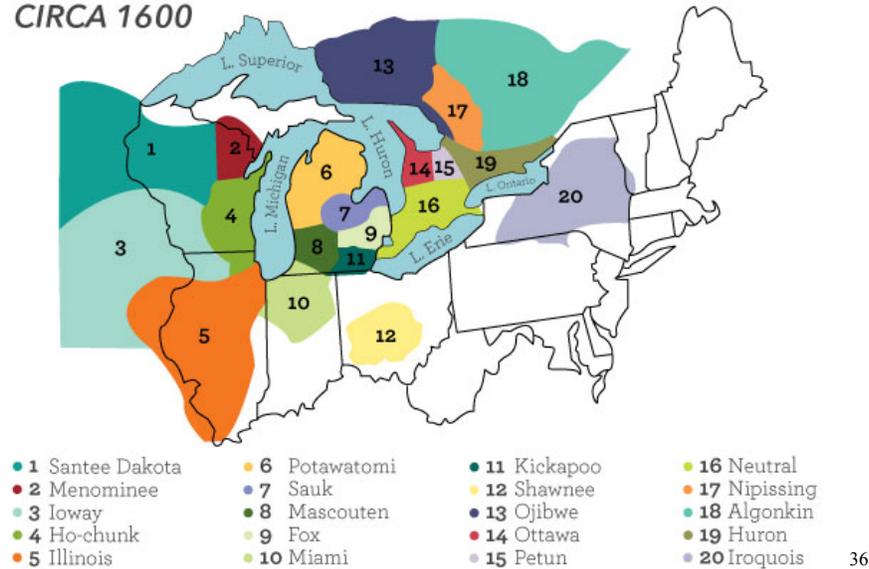


Figure 4. This map of significant tribes in the Ohio Valley and Northeastern America helps illustrate just how wide ranging and impressive the Haudenosaunee's attacks were. France was allied or collaborating with nearly every tribe in this map (the Fox being a notable exception), and many more not pictured including the Susquehannock and the Erie. Yet, the Five Nations were successful in shattering the power of the Huron and Neutrals, pushing further north and west before the Erie and others finally halted their advance with French support. While the Confederacy itself gained significant prestige and power, it also expanded the range of their fur trade with the English, expanding the borders seen in the previous map. Their location and size made them powerful allies for Great Britain, and their attacks were a bloody climax of a long, tense relationship with their northern rivals.

While France was not vanquished yet, the absence left by the Hurons would be felt for the final hundred years or so of their time in North America. It would push them to invest more time and money into territories that still lacked as heavy a European population as their British counterparts could boast, between bolstering their own garrisons and seeking out new allies to replace the decimated Hurons, ultimately a fool's errand.

Though the prime avenue of asserting the French worldview came through the exploitation of the land and its resources, the inhabitants who aided and abetted this process

<sup>36</sup> "Great Lakes History: A General View," Milwaukee Public Museum, accessed December 13, 2020, <http://www.mpm.edu/content/wirp/ICW-21>.

would not be ignored despite their loyalties lying with France. This of course would occur through waves of conflict, from the smallest skirmishes to full scale wars between the colonizers and native peoples. However, the French brought with them another important tool for a quieter approach, a fifth addition to the axis of fortuity. Similar to the Spanish in their settlements, French North America was marked by a significant number of missionaries and religious individuals, coming to convert and align their new allies. In particular, the Catholic religious order known as the Jesuits were notable in their activity during French colonization of the Americas, eventually coming to play an important role in New France. The Jesuits had two important characteristics that made them desirable for the colonial government: they were among the most educated and literate of the times, making them excellent emissaries and record keepers, and they were willing to travel to and live in often undesirable places and circumstances. Notably, the Jesuits also spent significant time amongst the Hurons and other aligned tribes, describing them in detail and their efforts to spread Christendom to these people in such desperate need of “saving.” The lasting records of The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents compile examples of these efforts, and reflect the importance and scope of their activities, as well as the lengths they would take to undertake their mission to God and country. These documents contain various formats of information, ranging from book excerpts, correspondence, basic ethnographic works, and biographical accounts. Though they each carry the dominant themes of religious fervor and conversion, these desires reveal the lens through which the Jesuits and their collaborators viewed the people and places of North America, and especially their worth. In a section taken from a book entitled *The Conversion of the Savages* published in 1610, the Jesuit Marc Lescarbot explains in disturbingly plain language what was to his order the greatest “issue” facing the New World, that being the presence (or lack thereof) of the Christian faith. Saying that

“It remains now to deplore the wretched condition of these people who occupy a country so large that the old world bears no comparison of it,” he laments the destitution he imagined life must be defined by without Christendom, where “dense ignorance prevails in all these countries.”<sup>37</sup> Yet, his language in discussing the colonies and resources surrounding them strikes a very different tone. In the same excerpts, he describes the French settlement of Port Royal in present-day Nova Scotia as “the most beautiful earthly habitation God has ever made,” and rains praise on its abundance of food sources such as plentiful species of fish, seals, shellfish, crustaceans, and mammals like porpoises.<sup>38</sup> Clearly there were features about the Americas that Lescarbot found to be astonishing and worthy of this celebratory overtone, yet he leveled underhanded criticism and pity towards those that had lived amongst such wonders longer than he or any other Frenchman.

Of course the importance of religion in French culture and understanding of the world played a factor in this derision, but why else would one not link the two together if a society had arisen next to such amazing gifts from the heavens? The disconnect is revealed only a few lines later, when he begins to comment on several of the surrounding tribes and their available resources. In his notes on the Armouchiquois, a tribe who lived further inland and west from the Port Royal Colony, a tinge of almost jealousy can be detected from the man of God. He specifically points out the presence of grapevines, of which he remarks “if only they knew how to make use of this fruit, which they believe (much as did our ancient Gauls) to be poisonous,” as well as noting their abundance of hemp, several tree types such as oak, walnut, and chestnut (interestingly not dismissed as inferior like those Champlain described), and fruits unknown to

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<sup>37</sup> M. Bertrand, Pierre Biard, Joseph Jouvency, Marc Lescarbot, and Ennmond Massé, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites, translated by Crawford Lindsay, “The Jesuit Relations And Allied Documents: Travel and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791,” (1896), accessed October 16, 2020. [http://moses.creighton.edu/kripke/jesuitrelations/relations\\_01.html](http://moses.creighton.edu/kripke/jesuitrelations/relations_01.html).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

him.<sup>39</sup> The emotional difference in these descriptions are laid bare in this section: Lescarbot is infatuated with what crops and materials surround these people, and dismissively disappointed that the local tribes had not “appropriately” utilized them in the ways he understands. Just a few lines later, he acknowledges that the immediate area around Port Royal is not blessed with these fruits, but believes that “the land is productive enough to make us hope from it all that Gallic France yields to us.”<sup>40</sup> The imagery of Ancient Roman times is not coincidental either: the author is clearly drawing parallels between France and Rome, from which the French king would naturally draw inspiration and claim heritage, and the Native Americans of the New World and the Germanic and Celtic peoples that populated the frontiers of Rome’s empire, characterized as brutal and uncivilized savages. While the Romans may have feared these “barbarians,” they also found ways to utilize them in the growth of their empire, whether through slavery, alliances against common enemies, supplemental military forces, religious conversion, and various other exploitative methods. It is not surprising then, that Lescarbot makes this connection for his readers: for the royal court, it provides them with an excuse and a roadmap for increasing activity in North America, and for the common man, makes them fearful of these peoples thousands of miles away, willing to accept any injustices carried out on them.

The relationship between the Frenchman and the Native American would grow more and more complicated in the years following the first major experiences shared together, as their worldviews co-existed but did not absolve them of friction. The various visions between multiple tribes and their white allies may have overlapped and even gleaned new ideas from each other, yet were not always on the same page. To begin to understand these choices, there are questions that one may grapple with in understanding this relationship that should be answered. The crux

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

of these queries can likely be summarized like so: what would the Hurons, or any native peoples, gain from allying with the French, British, or any other colonial power? It is easy to ask this in retrospect after the decimation of both these peoples and their lands that is all too familiar today. Remembering the political and cultural realities of their time helps to explain this confusion to a modern audience. A specific example of this is the trade for furs and animal products that the indigenous peoples participated in. This often conflicts with the popular idea of the Native American: a stoic, wise man with a deep respect and understanding of the Earth beyond our Western conventions. How then could this “first conservationist” support an industry knowingly harmful to the planet? Benjamin Kline’s book *First Along the River: A Brief History of the U.S. Conservationist Movement* tackles this myth by discerning fact from fiction, and succinctly describes the challenges in categorizing native peoples this way. He points out that the variety between different tribes meant there was no uniform identity in economy and land management, and most importantly that to many Native Americans, though they used as much as they could from a killed animal, they had systems that reinforced the idea that their supply was endless, such as the Plains Indians who believed buffalo routinely emerged from another world beneath the ground, and as such were not averse to sometimes killing more than was needed.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the values and beliefs of aboriginal peoples actually contributed, however unwittingly, to the very same deprivation of balance in the ecosystem of the continent. In their position, there was little reason to fear this outcome, and how could they imagine it? A world that was teeming with millions of mammals, billions of birds, forests that stretched to the horizon, and a host of other sights did not seem like a closed system to its inhabitants for thousands of years. The decision to entertain European offers then was not one of self-defeating foolishness, but of an ignorance that

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<sup>41</sup> Benjamin Kline, *First along the River: a Brief History of the U.S. Environmental Movement* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 18-20.

there was no reason to challenge. Different and complex societies in North America had their own reasons to do so, and while their prime motivations may have been numerous, it was unified in an understanding of the world there was little evidence to disprove.

Let us not forget that certain arrivals from the Old World were also very welcome to the Native Americans, a relationship that informed the worldviews of both parties with access to previously unknown commodities. Just like any society, they had dreams and desires that may have outpaced their capabilities, and the opening of the Columbian Trade changed this. Images and associations like the horseback-riding warriors of the Sioux Wars dominate American culture and mythos. While there is truth in these popularized ideas, the peoples of the Americas had various reasons for adopting new practices and tools introduced by the Europeans. Beinart and Hughes explain how new commodities did not immediately change the values and practices of differing native cultures, but instead they were able to fit within existing ideas of exchange and status separate from the colonists' thoughts.<sup>42</sup> In New France, this symbiosis existed as well, and the Hurons' ambitions were large. They now had access to European capital and tools to rapidly expand their trading networks, as well as push their influence to its limits. While the allies of the French engaged in this trade and networking, friction would still arise, and eventually expose weaknesses within their realm of control along the frontier.

The definition of the relationship between the French and the Native Americans was alternatively defined by each side: the white men of course saw themselves as the dominant partner, emboldened by racial prejudice and technological superiority. The native perspective was extremely complicated due to the various customs and beliefs of their various communities as previously described. What unified them was the bargaining chips they held in exploiting the lands in which they co-existed. The sharing of power between France and the Wendat people and

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<sup>42</sup> *Environment and Empire*, 44.

other allies was a rather uneasy arrangement at times. This balance would not last however, and there soon became an evening of the playing field. Distrust of their native allies was a byproduct of French prejudice, and they became uneasy at the arrival of migrants and other peoples attracted by the relative safety of the French zone of influence. White explains how France tried to incorporate groups like the Delaware and Shawnee into their alliances, but the people that arrived often came in small fragments, such as multiple families from a village in one place while others moved to another, and were not tied to larger political entities like their Huron allies or Iroquois enemies, leaving large, multi-ethnic conglomerates within their territory with innumerable beliefs and desires that they could not keep track of.<sup>43</sup> A byproduct of the French attempt to quietly coerce and use their allies, these divides existed in both the secular and religious realms, and would be defined and changed by the changes in geopolitics of the region. Focusing at first on the influence of indigenous worldviews, the economic and political situation of the early French colonies led to terms that were at least initially amenable to Native Americans, and their retention of much agency. At the heart of the diplomatic agreements struck between the French and their allies was the idea of kinship, and a shared identity. In Peter Cook's article, "Onontio Gives Birth: How the French Became Fathers to Their Indigenous Allies, 1645-73," the complicated nature of these partnerships are explained in depth. As Cook states, kinship was a dominant theme of the early relationships forged between the French and their allies and an important fixture in indigenous diplomacy, resulting in the declaration that the parties were bound by fraternal links, making them "brothers."<sup>44</sup> While it was a great achievement to foster these fruitful connections, it was also a recognition of the balance of power that currently existed between the allies. The French may have agreed to these terms early on to

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<sup>43</sup> *Middle Ground*, 188-189.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Cook, "Onontio Gives Birth: How the French in Canada Became Fathers to Their Indigenous Allies, 1645-73," *Canadian Historical Review* 96, no. 2 (June 2015): 165-167. doi:10.3138/chr.2917.

cement their agreements, but they were uncomfortable with, in their eyes, the illusion that they were equals. Fraternity implied this, and while they may have resented it, the more pressing matters of mutual enemies and a lack of population prevented them from pressing the issue. The hard truth was that there simply were not enough Frenchmen in Canada to sustain a direct rule of the colonies, and those that were there did not yet have the knowledge to develop them enough to turn a profit. The reliance on native expertise and skills in hunting and trapping meant that the French needed time to learn their tips of the trade, and the need for these specialized skills in the early years of colonial economy levied heavy negotiating powers to the Hurons and others that entered into pacts with France.<sup>45</sup> Their importance to French dreams of empire were indisputable at this point, and tribes successfully recognized the benefits that came from their knowledge of the land and how to learn its secrets. With this level of political capital, the earliest years of France's presence in the Northeast saw high levels of Native American agency and responsibility.

The low population of the settlements in Quebec also played into the hands of France's newest allies and the influence of their vision in the early days of the alliance. A large portion of New France's struggles in attracting more settlers was the slow development of agriculture in the area. Other European settlements encountered this issue as well, and much of it came down to simple differences in practice. Daniel Richter points us towards one explanation for why Europeans struggled to work the land in the earlier years of colonization, comparing what he calls their more fixed systems to the more mobile ones of the Native American societies. He elaborates that indigenous systems were able to maintain more varied fields of crops of items like beans, squash, and maize, which also produced larger returns with less land required per specific item, compared to European crops (especially wheat) that needed larger and denser

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<sup>45</sup> *Environment and Empire*, 56.

concentrations of plants, as well as large, cleared and permanent areas to cultivate them.<sup>46</sup> These requirements for the Western style of farming, combined with considerations such as the often harsh weather in the north and the large amount of forested land versus arable land, as noted by those like Samuel de Champlain, meant that the French colonies relied on the fortunes of their allies' harvest and hunts, and learned their ways out of necessity. While not particularly unique in concept (the heavily popularized story of Squanto at Plymouth Bay comes to mind), the implications for the French were different than in Massachusetts or other North American colonies. The processes of clearing land for European-style farming's requirements were arduous, and the time it took to do this while adjusting to available native cereals and native game affected both the attraction of more settlers and the growth of the existing French population. It would not be an understatement to say that the colonists were not particularly enthusiastic about incorporating much of these new foods into their diet in comparison to tried and true options, and these realities were serious considerations especially for the upper classes of society. However, with little other option, New France listened and learned from their Native American allies about foods to plant, hunt, and fish for a large majority of the 17th century. Both outnumbered and out of their element, necessity forced the Frenchman's hands, giving way to White's "middle ground," a realm of European and Native American societies working together for separate goals but similar purposes. Cooperation persisted because force was inadequate as a solution if they were to go their separate ways, but together their shared visions could be co-opted to serve each other, and expand their operations deeper into the frontier.<sup>47</sup> While this was a less than idyllic situation, it is undoubtedly preferable to the events that would succeed it. Though it would take decades before the tables could be re-oriented in greater favor of the

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<sup>46</sup> *Facing East*, 55-58.

<sup>47</sup> *Middle Ground*, 52.

French, their dream for supremacy would shatter this blended world, partially due to their own choices.



Figure 5. This 1891 by Frederic Remington painting depicts a French *coureur de bois*, a French equivalent of the American frontiersman, and a native comrade shaking hands while off in the midst of the hunt for furs and pelts. While likely romanticized, the verity of the “middle ground” was somewhere between this view and the most pessimistic one. *Coureur de bois* were perhaps the most integrated Frenchmen in native cultures, and many learned their languages and enjoyed profitable partnerships with Native Americans. Though partially out of respect for their commercial endeavors, other benefits came from learning the land and tongues of North America, as many of these men would find employment as guides, translators, and negotiators between various parties. While officially frowned upon the Crown, fur trapping was so in demand that these men became very common across Canada and the Great Lakes, and over time became unofficial contacts for proper colonial channels, as generations of French explorers would raise families and come to forge their own identity and understanding of the New World. Naomi Musch, “The Coureur Des Bois -- Rebel Adventurers of the Colonial Frontier,” (Colonial Quills), accessed April 25, 2021, <https://colonialquills.blogspot.com/2019/03/the-coureur-des-bois-rebel-adventurers.html>. “The Courier Du Bois and the Savage,” (Sid Richardson Museum , February 12, 2020), <https://sidrichardsonmuseum.org/collection/the-courier-du-bois-and-the-savage/>.

Where the French focused more of their efforts in asserting their worldview would be in the religious domain. To accomplish this required the assistance of the Catholic Church, and they were more than a willing ally, as many other indigenous peoples across the Americas could attest to. In their own holdings, the relentlessly zealous efforts of the Jesuits had caused friction with the Wendat Confederacy, with spiritual debate raging over the benefits and drawbacks of converting to Christianity. The French desire to permanently settle and “frenchify” their allies was not always accepted, but between the work of missionaries to relate Christian doctrine to native beliefs, and the introduction of diseases and resulting epidemics, small fractures emerged

as the pressure mounted on native populations.<sup>48</sup> With their power weakened, an increasing number of Frenchmen arriving in Quebec, and the discoveries of new allies in their increasingly frequent journeys further west (such as in Louisiana)<sup>49</sup>, the benefits of partnership with the Hurons were outweighed with the temptations of their dominance. The final blow would be dealt by renewed attacks from the Iroquois in the mid-17th century. While the British would quickly exchange a musket for a pelt or some other commodity, the French often refused to sell weapons to the Native Americans, or made it conditional on one's conversion to Christianity.<sup>50</sup> The resulting destruction and migration of the Huron and other allied peoples closer to the colonies was quickly seized as an opportunity to tip the scales. Primarily, the French did not hesitate to change the terms of their alliance to center around paternity, as the governor of New France began to be called the "father" of their coalition, pushing forth the idea of their supremacy and authority over decisions and priorities, importing the way in which European patriarchal societies were organized.<sup>51</sup> While they may not have envisioned the scale of their defeat by their mutual opponents, the fact remained that the decline of the Huron was directly beneficial in the short term to the colony of New France. With less resistance to assimilation and conversion, and a more submissive role in commercial and military decisions, the hierarchy of the Franco-Indian Alliances was brutally achieved. With a more firm control over the Quebec region, the growth of New France would trend upwards approaching the 18th century, and the French holdings would continue to grow outward from Eastern Canada in search of even more new partners to influence and resources to bring to market in the Saint Lawrence Valley.

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<sup>48</sup> "Franco-Indian Alliances."

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> "Iroquois' Destruction of Huronia," CBCnews (CBC/Radio Canada), accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/history/EPCONTENTSE1EP2CH5PA5LE.html#:~:text=Iroquois%20destruction%20of%20Huronia&text=In%201649%2C%20the%20Iroquois%20attacked%20and%20massacred.&text=They%20benefitted%20from%20the%20weakened,refused%20to%20sell%20to%20them>.

<sup>51</sup> "Ontio," 172-173.

The first half of the 1700s would see the evolution of the French worldview in North America, as a distinct identity of the French-Canadian *coureur de bois* would start to emerge to the forefront, encouraged by the rise in stability and autonomy of the colonies. Slowly enough, populations increased, and by the early 18th century, many years after Champlain's death, the spirit of his search for profit lived on in the now sustainable colony of New France. A famous example of a man who reaped the fruits of this labor was Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, known to most observers as the French commander who received a message from George Washington during the prelude of the Seven Years' War. Saint-Pierre, like many of his French-Canadian counterparts, are largely forgotten by the greater arch of American history, and as such most attention is given to the military campaigns that led to France's expulsion from the mainland. His personal records and correspondence are of great value to illustrating the maturation of resource exploitation in the French colonies. By the time of Legardeur's first appointment to a military command in 1729, Canada had seen an explosion of opportunistic individuals, taken by the allure of wondrous riches in the seemingly endless woodlands, begin to penetrate more territory especially in search of furs, as well as any other discovered commodities along the way. Being a member of the army did not prevent one from taking part in this profiteering either, and Saint-Pierre followed in these footsteps. As an officer, his responsibilities often required him to cooperate with native allies in maintaining and protecting the valuable fur trade, as well as identifying locations for further harvesting. Additionally, he possessed a strong understanding of native languages and cultures, stemming from his youth, where he assisted his father in similar endeavors during his time as a fellow officer.<sup>52</sup> Combining this valuable intelligence with a strong grasp on the land and its inhabitants put Legardeur in a unique position

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<sup>52</sup> Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, *Jacques Legardeur De Saint-Pierre: Officer, Gentleman, Entrepreneur*, edited/Translated by Joseph L. Peyser (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press), 1996: 4, 10.

to leverage information from his missions into the frontier to make a significant profit on the side. In September of 1733, he entered an agreement with two men, an older captain named Denys de la Ronde, whom he had replaced in command, and Montreal merchant Louis Damours, in which they split the rights to a nine-year monopoly over fur trade and possible copper mining at a trading post near Lake Superior.<sup>53</sup> This incredible agreement, while small in scope and eventually failed, is a remarkable sign of growth among the domination of nature in the North American colonies. Where Champlain had arrived on the shores with assumptions and rules brought over the ocean, Jacques Legardeur had years of his own experiences, and those before him like his father, to quickly identify what was and was not profitable in the natural world. The collaboration between the public and private spheres of New France to take advantage of these deposits demonstrates the evolution of European endeavors to make the New World bend the proverbial knee.

Legardeur's records can help to establish the changes in the French worldview that emerged from their colonies. By time of his death, the end was nigh for New France, but a distinct culture had been established in the region of present-day Quebec. Much like their colonial rivals to the south, American-born Frenchmen were a unique people defined by the challenges and rewards of expanding European power in the New World. Jacques Legardeur would not exist without the exploration of Cartier, the founding by Champlain, and the hundreds if not thousands of *coureur de bois* who ventured out into the Canadian wilderness. These hunters and frontiersmen would make connections with friendly tribes, bringing them into the fold of a growing and extremely profitable network of quid pro quo. Those who hesitated would face not only existing rivals, but the growing power emanating from Montreal. Their fates became entwined as did their lives, as the Frenchman learned from the Huron, and quickly

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<sup>53</sup> Legardeur, 20-24.

learned how to maximize their advantage in a highly competitive scramble for the Americas. They both learned how to better hunt, trap, track, travel, mine, settle, and fight. Others lived amongst them, learning their customs while imparting their own in the quest for conversion and religious purity. He then passed this on to his higher ups, the officer class of a man like Saint-Pierre, men who had connections reaching farther than that of the forests. Using the military, more expeditions could be authorized to seize desirable lands and protect those who had sought it out and hoped to live there. Finally, this information could be given to the merchant class, with deep pockets only growing larger over the decades. Coffers would be emptied and filled repeatedly in the search to find more furs, timber, ores, arable land, food, and more. This five-pronged alliance of opportunity created and enforced the unspoken rules of French Canada, an often harsh world beyond the bitter winters, and ripe for the bold and shameless.

Quebec's founding and survival story helped to define the Frenchman in America as a new identity branching off from their ancestry, as they tried to create their own understanding of their surroundings while mastering them. Compounded by political realities, the Frenchman had to adapt a unique policy towards the native people and lands that were, in their eyes, ripe for the taking. Without the numbers to initially deter any threats from inhabitants they had already provoked or would soon, they had to rely on and learn from strategic partnerships with regional powers like the Wendat Confederacy. White writes how the lines between the French and their allies were often "blurred" in this way, living side by side in a mixture of "French" or "Indian" styles, with both sides content in their own beliefs and fitting each other into their hierarchies and beliefs, a necessity to maintain both a good working relationship and uphold their social norms.<sup>54</sup> The fruits of this relationship would allow an early foothold to sustain itself in modern-day Canada, as their native allies not only buffered them from serious threats, but linked

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<sup>54</sup> *Middle Ground*, 50.

the French into an extensive network of trade and further exploration. The combination of European technology and indigenous knowledge of the land would have a devastating effect on the animals and plants that were sought after by markets overseas, and a quick decline would follow. This would mirror the fall of the Hurons as the earliest major French ally, succumbing to the indifference or ignorance of their brothers as disease, war, and religious pressure tore their society apart. Their collapse and the response of the Quebecois gives insight into the core tenets of the colony and its inhabitants. Firstly, the people that had shown them how to make a profit were no more expendable than the tools they used to harvest furs and other goods. When the Huron were weakened and became more dependent on the French, they wasted no time in replacing them after years of soaking in their knowledge of the land, and pushed out in search of new intermediaries that they could work with. In *Canada in the European Age, 1453-1919*, R.T Naylor outlines how with the Huron gone, French exploration increased, with the *coureur de bois* leading the charge to take over a larger role in their reading empire, as well as push out beyond previous borders.<sup>55</sup> Secondly, the French culture was flexible in how it would position itself as superior to convert the peoples of North America . A Frenchman could become good friends with a native person, work together against common foes and towards similar goals, and even have children with them, as long as it came with the price tag of cultural assimilation if not submission. Relationships across racial barriers were even encouraged, a system known as *métissage*, in the hope that fathering children of shared descent would help the process of Frenchification in Canada.<sup>56</sup> Though this had mixed results, as many retreated closer to the colonies after the Huron's defeat, it was too irresistible to the zealous Catholic Church and its adherents who continued to push these ideas on now battered people.

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<sup>55</sup> Naylor, 80-82.

<sup>56</sup> "Franco-Indian Alliances."



Figure 6. This painting by Alfred Jacob Miller from 1845 is titled *Bartering for a Bride* or *The Trapper's Bride*, depicts an indigenous woman holding hands with her fur trapper husband. Unofficial marriages like these were not looked down upon in New France, as they often led to commercial gains in new trading partners and allies. Both sides could profit from these arrangements, and this can be seen as the man on the woman's right gestures her forward towards the *coureur de bois*. While there is debate over the extent of empowerment Native Americans gained from this, and specifically native women, it is likely that it at least mitigated any hostile advances from the French and opened up advantages for tribes over rivals, and they assisted in roles like translators and guides. This eventually led to a large community of mixed-race peoples known as the Metis, sharing values from their French and native parents, and giving rise to a new identity amongst the inhabitants of Canada. "The Trapper's Bride," Fur Traders and Rendezvous (The Alfred Jacob Miller Online Catalogue), accessed April 11, 2021, <http://www.alfredjacobmiller.com/artworks/the-trappers-bride/>. David J Wishart, ed., "WOMEN IN THE FUR TRADE," (Encyclopedia of the Great Plains ), accessed April 11, 2021, <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.gen.043#:~:text=Native%20women%20were%20the%20primary,translators%2C%20traders%2C%20and%20guides.>

While the French goals of imperium were much like those of their competitors and any empire throughout history, the unique choices in maintaining and growing their power through economic and social spheres helped foster what it meant to be Canadian in New France. As Naylor notes, the exploration, exploitation and development of the colony was in service of the greater goals of the French Empire, and as such early narratives formed around efforts in service to it.<sup>57</sup> In

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<sup>57</sup> Naylor, xv.

contrast to the developments in the British colonies, where objectives of the settler did not always line up with that of the royal government, the strategies in maintaining and growing New France helped avoid these tensions, and was more lenient towards the individual actors penetrating the continent in the name of the Lord and the king. These choices help to define early Canadian identity as one of quiet opportunism, as they learned the ways of the New World through trade, interpersonal relationships, the mixing of cultures and ideas, and voyages, all the while planning to turn the tables on the hierarchy of power as their strength grew and whenever it was most profitable or necessary to do so.

The French were not the only ones who imported their worldview overseas, and their longstanding rivals in England would not take long to start extending their vision across the Atlantic as well. In many ways, they would follow a similar pattern as their hegemony over local peoples and land grew. Like Champlain, trailblazers like the Mayflower voyagers, John Smith, and others first brought their values and worldview to the Americas, and in turn manipulated what they learned from its inhabitants to fit this mold. England's colonization efforts in North America, and particularly the Northeast, did not begin very well. They watched as Spain and Portugal divided up Central and South America, France gained footholds in Canada, and the Dutch eyed further expansion with their growing naval prowess. Early attempts proved chaotic: Roanoke's disappearing settlers became a famous mystery and Jamestown nearly starved to death multiple times, only succeeding through the revelation of tobacco and the timely arrival of supplies. The English presence in the North Atlantic began in 1620 with the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts. They would face the common issue of starvation, as well as tense relationships with an initially friendly local population that quickly soured on their presence once their aggressive intentions showed.<sup>58</sup> Overcoming the same trials as their Virginian comrades, the

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<sup>58</sup> Edmonds, 209-210.

colony would continue their expansion past Massachusetts into the rest of today's New England. The Dutch holdings in New Amsterdam and the surrounding areas watched this growing presence above them nervously. Previously in 1609, Englishman Henry Hudson had led a mixed Anglo-Dutch force that explored the eponymous Hudson Valley in New York in the name of the Netherlands, and there was a high level of familiarity between these people, including sponsoring the same tribes, notably the Iroquois.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately for them, there was little room for unselfishness in colonial competition, and England desperately desired to force themselves into a position of power in North America. With a larger population and military, once the English made up their mind, there was little the Dutch could do. In 1664, as Colonel Richard Nicolls descended upon New Netherland with five hundred professional soldiers, and a host of colonial militia, against which Dutch governor Peter Stuyvesant could muster only at best four hundred men, the colony was surrendered peacefully and renamed New York.<sup>60</sup> Now with a competitor eliminated, and a large swath of land in their hands, English settlers would pick up on a devastating effort begun by their subjugated Dutch neighbors.

Whereas the French had learned brutal and sobering lessons about this new land and its inhabitants from the failures before Champlain that informed the Canadian worldview, the Dutch, and now the English, were much more ruthless in their vengeance-like pursuit of God, glory, and gold. Though none of the three could be called benevolent, the latter two offered no real mask of friendliness to this strange New World. Apart from the large and powerful Iroquois Confederacy, recognized as a regional power almost sheerly out of their size, any tribes unfortunate enough to encounter Anglo-American settlers, and the habitat around them, would

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<sup>59</sup> Edmonds, 10-12.

<sup>60</sup> Edmonds, 149-152.

face irreparable damage. The historian Walter D. Edmonds succinctly describes this divide in approach by European settlers:

To the mind of the New England settler, the wilderness was a hostile and relentless force that had to be destroyed if it was not to destroy him. It had confronted him as he came ashore, still unsteady from the long sea voyage; a few steps brought him to the edge of it; and from that moment it obsessed his waking hours and haunted him while he slept. He did not have the Frenchman's gift for adapting himself to strange conditions; it would have been utterly impossible for him to cast aside the ethics and constraints of what he considered civilized life as the *coureur de bois* did...and made himself at home in woods a thousand miles away as the native Indians did.<sup>61</sup>

Here we see a divide in theory between these rival empires, differences in their vision for maintaining their new sprawling territories. The French preferred indirect control, working with and learning from their more numerous allies who became extremely effective middlemen, while the British would push onward on their own, engaging in many bloody conflicts with their indigenous neighbors for many years after the Mayflower's arrival for the purpose of seizing further developable land. While each style provided its own benefits, there were serious drawbacks as well, as each would learn over the next century and half as their game became increasingly deadly.

These ideological choices led to the development of a distinct American culture in the English colonies, contrasting with the French-Canadian worldview forming around the Saint Lawrence River. A premier example of this development can be found in the journals of Major Robert Rogers. Known primarily as a soldier, Rogers' life shares many features with his French counterpart Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, such as the fact both men were born in the

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<sup>61</sup> Edmonds, 145.

colonies (1731 and 1701 respectively) rather than arriving directly from Europe. Perhaps his most lasting legacy was aiding in the popularization of military formations known as “rangers,” seen still today in major armed forces around the world. While this innovation is impressive in its lasting legacy, it is also emblematic of the main sources for such inspiration: fear and power. Rogers’ Rangers was a response to a fear of the unknown, epitomized in the wilderness of North America and those who dwelled within them. Rogers wastes no time to address this in his *Journals*, writing in the introduction that he hoped his records would be of aid to Britain and its subjects, “should the troubles in America be renewed and the savages repeat those scenes of barbarity they so often have acted on the British subjects, which there is great reason to believe will happen.”<sup>62</sup> Though the British Empire had triumphed in the Seven Years’ War and Pontiac’s Rebellion, both of which he served in, it did not completely assuage the tension on the American frontier, one which he was acutely familiar with in his upbringing on the New Hampshire frontier. In response, his philosophy developed during the war was centered around diving into this aversion head first. Combining his knowledge of tactics, landscapes, tracking, and leadership with that of his native allies and enemies was the perfect concoction for the English frontiersman.

In his journeys, Rogers writes a stunningly thick description of the North American wilderness alongside his orders and objectives that also reveal the ingrained mentality of the English colonists when gazing upon the New World. The reader is clearly able to see what Rogers is doing, why he is doing it, and how he accomplishes his objectives. However, there is a noticeable difference between how the infamous ranger describes the world and those like the Jesuits. As *Journals* largely recounts military endeavors, most of his analysis of the physical landscape is seen from this perspective. There is emphasis on size, strength, utility, and similar

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<sup>62</sup> Rogers, iii.

qualities that would be considered important to an officer like Rogers or his superiors, as well as those curious back in Europe about the qualities of this other world. An example of this observation came in battle against the French, where the New Hampshire native would comment on the natural features of the battlefield and their influence on the outcome. On January 15th-23rd, Rogers' company maneuvered around, scouted, and engaged a host of French and native warriors in the area around Lake George and Ticonderoga, New York, having marched northward from Fort Edward. Under orders to seek out an impending threat, the English were fired upon from a hill, causing Rogers to order a retreat to another position of high ground in order to "post ourselves to advantage," during which he was injured, holding out long enough to escape by "being sheltered by large trees."<sup>63</sup> Though this may seem like simple battlefield tactics, at the time it was the advent of new innovations in the art of war. In an age known in Europe dominated by the lines of brightly colored troops containing certain "rules" or other honorable agreements in combat, the entanglements between Rogers' Rangers and the French were stark contrasts to the gentlemanly officer. Being of more modest origin in the colonies, these ideas came much more quickly to Major Rogers and in general many who were born in the New World.

Consider the defining characteristics of the American frontiersman and the worldview of their society at the prelude to the coming revolution: a man forged from now generations of conflict between himself and the French *coureur de bois* and their native allies. In the constant pursuit of pushing out of given borders, in search of more land, food, and profit, one had to also learn to survive and eventually dominate any opposition from man or beast. The ranger embodied these traits, and turned into some of the fiercest and most feared fighters bred in the Americas. Rogers' *Journals* are not a description of epic battles on grand scales, with noble,

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<sup>63</sup> Rogers, 28-31.

heroic generals on white horses directing troops in an orderly fashion, engaged in a life or death chess game. His confrontations were fierce, explosive, up-close, and sometimes brief clashes of musket and powder, arrow and sword, tooth and nail. He even speaks rather manner-of-factly in recounting his stories, almost as if giving a classified report to a superior. While the glory of battle is not necessarily the focus, the results of participating in one are a highlight in the major's view. It can be assumed that Rogers not only thought highly of himself for his leadership, and certainly that of his comrades who took up arms alongside him. When noting the casualties of the earlier skirmish, the choice of adjectives by the author supports this idea. Lavishing praise on the bravery of his now experienced survivors, he asserts that they "seemed to vie with each other in their respective stations who should excel."<sup>64</sup> The tone of reverence and admiration struck by Robert Rogers is yet another example of the importance of proving oneself through combat and adversity, and the making of the American frontiersman. As Rogers' Rangers were made of colonists, and not British regulars, there is a stronger tie to the question of early American identity. To Rogers, and later military superiors and observers, their ferocity and adaptability in warfare would become one such defining trait.

To a reader of these *Journals* back in England, the stories of these engagements and their participants might have read almost like folk stories, populated by a whole new branch of English-speaking peoples with an entirely new culture and vision for the future of the colonies. In an often bloody fashion, local agents like Rogers' Rangers helped cement the growing unique differences between the English colonies of North America and their homeland. Their formation was emblematic of the quandary that would become the colonial United States: while they had a shared heritage with their motherland, with imported customs, beliefs, language, and much more, the experience of living on the edges of the known world added a new dimension to their shared

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<sup>64</sup> Rogers, 32.

identity. As Benjamin Kline puts it, by the mid 18th-century, the Thirteen Colonies had developed their own interconnected narrative of domination and exploitation of the continent and its peoples, looking to “subdue nature.”<sup>65</sup> They had fought many brutal wars against various Native American tribes, who justifiably tried to repel advances on their homes by the English over the years, creating long lasting enmity between the two. Friends, family, and neighbors had succumbed to harsh weather, fearsome new creatures, and land that refused to be worked under the systems they knew upon arrival. These encounters taught the English colonist that would become the American frontiersman many lessons, most notably that the world would envelop them if they did not fight back. To the American, there was little to be learned about this land out of interest: rather, it needed to be understood so it could be conquered, and changed to best suit them. Regardless of what was already present, if it could be farmed it had to be, if it could be settled it must be, if it could be extracted it should be. This was the life their ancestors had known in Europe, and that they had learned was the singular way life was to be lived. If the Americas did not look like England, and did not seem to support their survival the same way, then it had to be broken to do so. By combining earlier thought from Europe with an unparalleled experience of surviving the hardships of what for all intents and purposes was another world entirely, generations of British colonists would learn from this hybrid of opportunism and the extremes of socio-cultural pressures how to bend North America to its will.

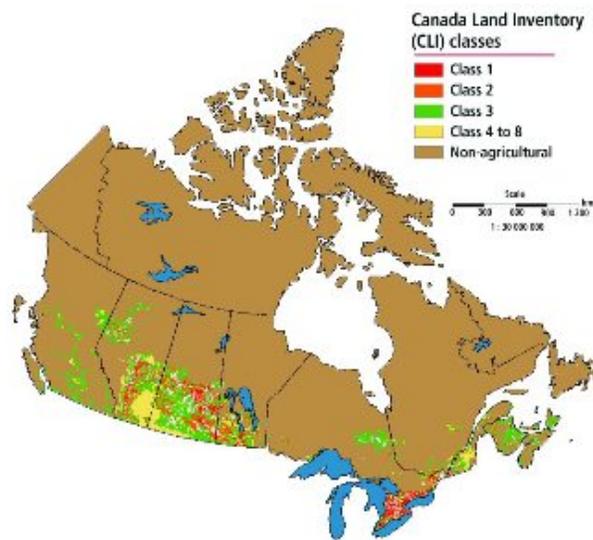
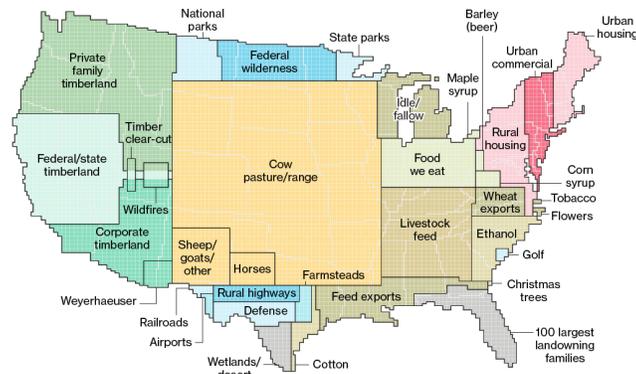
Though they did not know it yet, New France and the French-Canadian *mentalité* was likely doomed from the moment the first war party of the Iroquois League descended on an unprepared Huronia. The French government simply could not sustain the increasingly large claims they acquired through suzerainty over more and more native tribes, whether it be financially or militarily. By placing so much responsibility on their coalition of tribes, yet

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<sup>65</sup> Kline, 24.

preparing them poorly in comparison to the rapidly aggressive British presence, they constructed the equivalent of Eastern North America's first glass house. They were able to hang on for longer at first, as Europe still seized both nations' attention first and foremost, and the sheer number of peoples they befriended in the New World was enough to deter serious attacks for the time being. But by the time the Thirteen Colonies lusted for the land now known as the Ohio Valley and the Seven Years' War erupted, the battle was essentially over in North America before it started. Great Britain now had reaped the benefits of furs, tobacco, and cotton coming from their American colonies, as well as a bustling hub of settlers eager to seize more and more land. Large amounts of professional troops arriving in North America was no longer inconceivable: it was inevitable. Though the war is often referred to as the French and Indian War, "Indian and French War" would perhaps be a more appropriate title. France's North American empire was not just impossible without the Hurons and countless other tribes who aligned themselves with Paris, they were an active and integral part of its operation. Still, there was little more they could do when General Amherst descended on Montreal with his thousands of soldiers. Both they and France were already beaten, bleeding out from a series of self-inflicted wounds aggravated by ferocious antagonization over decades of competition.

Edmonds' earlier description of this as an anti-climatic end to French prospects of dominance over the worldview to rule North America is true from a political perspective. Concerning the environment, however, this is best described as a change in management. With the submission of the French, their hopes for the supremacy of their worldview were stamped out, and the dominance of the English frontiersman would be firmly established. While the French in Canada may have taken a slower and more incremental approach to understanding and then conquering nature, if not by choice as much as necessity, the Anglo-American colonist



Figures 7 and 8. These images show recent estimates of the distribution of land usage in the United States, and suitable land to be worked in Canada. The overarching similarity in these charts is the predominance of agriculture over land usage, with nearly a billion acres being used for pastures and feed in the United States alone, dwarfing all other categories of land. In Canada, the list of higher classed lands are unsurprisingly related to the largest concentrations of population, as the problems faced by the earliest settlers in conquering the vast forests and harsh weather conditions still plague them today. Nonetheless, both nations have dedicated their resources to finding the most suitable land for further agricultural development, and the importance of cultural habits (such as diet and understandings of land and soil) have played a large role in these choices. Dave Merrill and Lauren Leatherby, “Bloomberg.com,” Bloomberg.com (Bloomberg, July 31, 2018), <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2018-us-land-use/>. “Soils Information for Planning Purposes,” (Province of Manitoba), accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/environment/soil-management/soil-management-guide/print,soils-information-for-planning-purposes.html>.

blazed forward like a comet in the starry night. In turn, their desire for the extension of their understanding of the world and system of beliefs and way of understanding the world would find them increasingly pushing out into the fringes of the known world. The tensions between these goals and the larger picture of the British Empire would give way to the outbreak of the American Revolution, and many years later the independence of Canada, nations molded in the image of their patron but with their own identities and cultures. British majority rule over the continent may have backfired on the empire when America declared independence, but the resulting nation wasted no time in pushing towards the western coast, and Canada was not far behind, though still under the British yoke for several decades more. Generations of Americans and Canadians would grow up looking out to the Pacific, with dreams of unending land, resources, and wealth at their fingertips, only requiring strong individuals to rule it with a firm hand.

Within a century or so after France's withdrawal from the continent, nearly every stretch of land that laid within the borders of today's states was exploitable for the teeming masses of European descendants that had exploded across the continent, and bringing with them the Anglo-American inspired worldview for the subjugation of nature. The effects of these developments continue to this day, and the lessons learned on the frontier in the quest to bend nature to man's will have allowed the rapid growth of population and industrialization in North America. For example, the land use of the two nations today, as shown in Figures 7 and 8, reflect the importance of dietary preferences among the settlers, and the introduction of European-style farming to help them better acclimate to their newly taken lands. As they learned how to efficiently subdue the land to feed a rising population, the search for new lands exploded in the decades following. Today, the United States and Canada are home to about 360 million people

combined, and an entire agricultural infrastructure has been erected to support them and their rising numbers. The unceasing acceleration of these processes to date can be accredited in part to the reign of the American frontiersman, who beat out his French counterpart, and opened up millions of acres of land to entirely new ways of using them at a greater scale than any of North America's previous inhabitants had ever come close to. When Montreal lowered the fleur-de-lis, it simultaneously symbolized the end of French rule in the Atlantic world and the delivery of a stark warning: North America's political, economic, and environmental conquering would not be achieved quietly and through the veiled smiles of Jesuits and the *coureur de bois*, but rather through the unapologetic, brash, and unceasing efforts of the Anglo-American frontiersman and pioneer.

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