Colonizing New France

Critical Challenge

Critical question
Did traders or missionaries have a greater impact on colonization in New France before 1663?

Overview
This challenge examines the roles of fur traders and Church missionaries in colonizing Aboriginal peoples in New France prior to 1663. After identifying indicators of “colonization” such as growth of population, social institutions and local economy, students examine the effects of the fur trade and missionary work on colonial development. Students then determine which group—traders or missionaries—contributed more significantly to the colonization of New France.

Objectives

Broad understanding
Commerce and religion were powerful forces in the colonization of New France.

Requisite tools

Background knowledge
• knowledge of colonizing roles of traders and missionaries in New France
• understanding of colonization and immigration

Criteria for judgment
• criteria for successful colonization (e.g., increased population, development of social institutions, economic growth, local knowledge, assimilation or removal of local cultures)

Critical thinking vocabulary

Thinking strategies
• data chart

Habits of mind
**Suggested Activities**

**Session One**

► Put up on the overhead a transparency of the map *Aboriginal and European presence around 1650* (Blackline Master #1). Point out all the major Aboriginal peoples that surrounded the few tiny European settlements at the time. Remind students that North America was occupied by a number of large and powerful ancient cultures when the Europeans arrived in what became New France in the 16th century.

► Ask the class why, if Aboriginal populations lived in North America before any others and greatly outnumbered early European settlers, we are not now living according to Aboriginal laws, in Aboriginal-style shelters and following Aboriginal religious practices. Record students’ answers on the board. The following issues might be included:

- Europeans had technology, such as guns, to overpower Aboriginal people;
- Aboriginal people wanted to improve their living conditions, and so adopted what they felt were superior ways of life;
- disease killed off most of the Aboriginal populations;
- Aboriginal people were persuaded or forced to believe in the Christian God, and the rest of the cultural practices followed.

► Explain that the emergent dominance of non-Aboriginal culture stems in large measure from a difference in motivation between the Europeans who came to North America five hundred years ago and the immigrants who arrive nowadays. This difference is captured in the distinction between immigrants and colonizers.

- **Immigration**: The movement of people (such as present-day Europeans moving to Canada) into a new area with the intent of participating in its culture, society and economy, and abiding by its laws.

- **Colonization**: The movement of people (such as the French and English in the 17th century) into a new area with the intent of developing the economy, religion and culture primarily for the benefit of its members back home.
Invite students to imagine that they are in charge of colonizing New France. Ask students to suggest strategies they might employ. On the board or the overhead, compile a list of student-generated suggestions, labelled “Colonizing strategies”. This list is likely to include the following:

**Colonizing strategies**

- increase the foreign population;
- develop European-style social institutions (e.g., schools, churches);
- create or control a local economy;
- learn about the territory;
- assimilate the Aboriginal peoples;
- eliminate the Aboriginal peoples.

Ensure that students understand the difference between assimilation and elimination. With assimilation, the local people are amalgamated into the colonizing culture whereas, with elimination, the local people are killed or driven away. Explain that the root of assimilation is “similar” so when one assimilates he/she becomes similar to someone else. Often historians discuss assimilation as one group’s acceptance (voluntary or enforced) of the cultural traits normally associated with another group. Point out how students are assimilated into (not destroyed by) the culture of middle/high school when they make the transition from elementary school. To survive in these new surroundings students change their language, adjust their fashions and learn new routines (e.g., homeroom, lockers, timetables, course electives).

Explain that historians believe that two major groups of people—traders and missionaries—affect the mass settlement or “colonization” of North America by non-Aboriginals, but they do not agree which group had the greater impact. Display an overhead of Colonizing effects (Blackline Master #2) and walk through with the class an example of one of the colonizing strategies—the elimination of Aboriginal peoples. Draw students’ attention to evidence of the ways each group may have contributed to or reduced the
elimination of Aboriginal peoples. The following chart illustrates some of the evidence about fur trader and missionary roles in eliminating/protecting Aboriginal peoples:

### Colonizing effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elimination of Aboriginal peoples</th>
<th>Fur trade</th>
<th>Church and missionary work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fur traders took part in wars with Aboriginal peoples.</td>
<td>• Aboriginal children died at Christian missions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The fur trade contributed to hostilities among Aboriginal groups that led to Aboriginal warfare.</td>
<td>• Missionaries brought European diseases to Aboriginal communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Traders brought European diseases to Aboriginal communities.</td>
<td>• Missionaries operated hospitals that may have saved Aboriginal lives.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Goods received from trading furs (e.g., food, blankets) may have helped Aboriginal people keep healthy.</td>
<td>• Tensions between Aboriginal groups who adopted Christianity and those who rejected it may have created hostile relations between Aboriginal peoples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>• Goods received from trading furs (e.g., alcohol and guns) may have endangered Aboriginal people’s health.</td>
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</table>
Divide the class into teams of three students each. Distribute to each team a copy of briefing sheets Traders and missionaries (Blackline Master #3A–B) and Blackline Master #2. Ask students to read Blackline Master #3 looking for evidence of the colonizing effects of both the fur traders and missionaries. As a team, students should record evidence of factors that aided and slowed colonization. Suggest to students that they ignore the rating scale (−2 to +2) until after they have shared their evidence with fellow students.

**Session Two**

Once each team has recorded relevant information from the briefing sheets, discuss as a class the major findings. Invite each team to add to its list of evidence on Blackline Master #2. Once students have identified many of the colonizing influences of each of the two groups, ask each team to rate each group’s relative influence. Explain the scale to the class, and ask each team to record its rating for each indicator on Blackline Master #2.

Once all teams have rated the effectiveness of the fur traders and missionaries on colonization, pose the critical question:

*Did traders or missionaries have a greater impact on colonization in New France before 1663?*

Ask students to compare the colonial influence of traders and missionaries on Influential colonizers (Blackline Master #4) and give reasons for their decision.
When each team has completed the task, invite students to share their conclusions with a partner, small groups or in a whole class discussion.

**Evaluation**

Assess students’ completion of the data chart *Colonizing effects* (Blackline Master #2) using the rubric found in *Assessing the evidence* (Blackline Master #5). According to this rubric the assignment is worth 5 marks based on coverage of main points.

Assess each student’s decision and justification of the more influential colonizer recorded on *Influential colonizers* (Blackline Master #4) using the rubric found in *Assessing the justification* (Blackline Master #6). According to this rubric the assignment is worth 10 marks and is assessed on two criteria:  
- supporting evidence;  
- sensitivity to the other options.

**Extension**

Engage the class in researching and/or discussing the following topics:

- What are the major colonizing influences today—religion, television, feature movies, music, computers, ease of travel, global trade? Discuss the relative importance of each.

- Is the United States colonizing Canada and, if so, what are the most influential forces? What could be done to stem this trend (e.g., Canadian content requirements, subsidies)?
Aboriginal and European presence around 1650
After recording evidence for the effects of each colonizing strategy, rate the effectiveness for each group using the following scale:

-2  -1  0  +1  +2

-2  -1  0  +1  +2

-2  -1  0  +1  +2

-2  -1  0  +1  +2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colony</th>
<th>Fur Trade</th>
<th>Church and missionary work</th>
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New France

The Critical Thinking Cooperative

Contributed to European population growth

Sustained local economy

Provided social services

Presented institutions and social services

After recording evidence for the effects of each colonizing strategy, rate the effectiveness for each group using the following scale:

-2  -1  0  +1  +2

-2  -1  0  +1  +2

-2  -1  0  +1  +2

-2  -1  0  +1  +2

Colonizing effects
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increased geographic knowledge</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
<td>+1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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**Eliminated Aboriginal peoples**

**Assimilated Aboriginal peoples**

**Knowledge**

**Increased geographic knowledge**

**Fur trade**

**Church and missionary work**
Traders and missionaries

The desire to colonize

Before 1627, France saw the colony of New France primarily as a means of generating money through the trade in furs. In the early 1620s, fewer than 60 non-Aboriginals lived in the colony. There was little incentive for Europeans to move there. Wars with Aboriginal groups made life dangerous, and the climate was harsh and dangerous. There were no markets for farm produce, no roads to transport people or goods, no community or family to support a European community, and very few women. Even places of worship did not exist.

In 1627, Cardinal Richelieu, first minister to Louis XIII, worried that the colony of New France was not developing as it should. He feared that the British and Dutch colonies to the south would take over New France. Richelieu decided that a more permanent settlement in New France would protect France’s position in the continent, and help develop the trade and commerce that would bring more money and benefits to the mother country. Such a settlement would spread French legal and commercial institutions throughout the new land, and with them, French culture. For the devoutly religious Catholic majority of Europeans, North America provided an opportunity to spread the Christian word and, in so doing, save thousands of souls from eternal damnation.

Contributions of fur traders

In order to create more permanent settlements, Richelieu decided to encourage trade in the manner common at that time: he organized a trade monopoly—the Compagnie de La Nouvelle-France. It had 100 associates—French noblemen—who provided the capital for the trade, and who were given exclusive rights to all of the furs traded out of New France, and all trade in the colony. They were given the rights to all lands in New France, and the right to transfer land to noblemen (seigneurs) wanting to take-up land in the colony. In return for the profits from this trade, monopoly holders were required to increase the colony’s population and develop its society by bringing at least 200 Catholic colonists a year for 15 years to New France, and fund Catholic missions to convert and assimilate Aboriginal peoples. Protestants were banned from the colony.

Profits from fur trading were difficult to find in these years. The fur trade itself was suffering serious difficulties. In 1627, France and England were at war, and the French in New France had to battle to hold onto their lands. The English gained control of Quebec between 1629 and 1632, causing the suspension of the French fur trade. Wars between the English and their Iroquois allies, and the French and their Algonquin allies, ravaged the territories occupied by New France. Early in the 1640s, the Iroquois attacked Huron fur trade lines, disrupting trade, killing allied Aboriginal groups, and taking the lives of European traders. Even without the wars, it was difficult attracting settlers to New France. Clearing land and trying to establish farms on uncultivated lands was very hard work. The threat of attack by Aboriginals on both people and new farms made it almost impossible to attract and keep settlers.

As a result of these conflicts, the Compagnie de La Nouvelle-France decided in 1645 to “sublet” the fur trade to the Communaute des Habitants, an organization comprised of several leading men of the colony. The rule of the colony fell into the hands of the other key non-Aboriginal group in New France—the clergy.

Work of the missionaries

When Samuel de Champlain established trading posts on the St. Lawrence, he imagined a new and permanent society emerging in New France. He thought that religion would provide the impetus for increased trade. He believed that the Algonquins would convert to Christianity and inter-marry with the French settlers, creating large European-style settlements that would benefit the fur trade. This did not work out as he had hoped. The first missionaries assigned to the task of conversion were the Récollects, who established a small seminary at Quebec in 1615. Finding that the Aboriginal peoples were not interested in assimilating into French Catholic culture, they closed their doors soon after.

In the 1620s, the Récollects sought financial help from an order called the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits. This order was comprised of highly educated men who had worked throughout Europe trying to stem the tide of Protestantism. They were willing to take on the difficult task of Christianizing the New World. In 1632, in keeping with
the mercantile model of doing business, Cardinal Richelieu
gave the Jesuits a religious monopoly in New France.

Even with the financial and moral support of the French
government, the Jesuits had little success in Christianizing
the Aboriginal people. Parents refused to send their
children to be educated in the Catholic missions unless
bribed, and the children who remained frequently ran away,
grew ill or died. The Jesuit practice of corporal punishment
(using physical means of punishing misbehaviour) was
foreign to Aboriginal child-raising practices. Marie de
l’Incarnation started the Ursuline Order in France, and was
invited to New France by the Jesuits in the hope that the
Ursuline Order would be more successful in converting
Aboriginal people to Catholicism, or to a European way of
life. The hospitals they established were more successful
than the schools, however, and a number of Aboriginal
people agreed to leave their sick and aged in what they
called the “House of Death” (due to its high mortality rate)
rather than leave them to die during summer migrations, as
was their culture. These hospitals, which were originally
created to meet the health needs of Aboriginal
communities, began caring for the slowly growing French
Canadian population. These religious hospitals became the
primary source of medical care for French Canadians until
late 20th century in Quebec.

The Jesuits started the first schools in Quebec. In 1635
they established a school for Native boys, which became
the first institution of higher learning north of Mexico.
Their tradition of educational excellence continued. The
church continued to be the primary educational institution
in New France, Lower Canada, Canada East and Quebec.
Catholic nuns and priests provided the vast majority of
French Canadians with their education until the mid-20th
century.

In addition to providing charitable medical care and
education, the religious orders also brought non-religious
personnel to New France, to help with the construction of
buildings, farming and other tasks. As was common at
that time, they paid the fare of young men to come to
New France, with the agreement that these people would
work for nothing more than room and board for a total of
three years. These “contract labourers” or engagés
brought important skills to the colony. They also created
a market for local agricultural produce, stimulating
production and trade. While many returned to France
after their three years, some stayed to create their own
farms and build the new communities of New France.

The colony grew slowly from 1627 onwards. In the early
1640s, the growing colony was the home of the
Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, a secret organization of
religious “zealots” who saw New France as a new and
holy land to be occupied by the faithful. This group
arranged for the appointment of Francois de Laval-
Montigny as New France’s first Bishop. Laval began a
moralistic crusade against “blasphemy, gambling,
fornication” and drinking so common in New France. He
wanted to excommunicate from the Church anyone who
traded liquor with Aboriginal people. The government
did not like the strong religious stance; it feared that the
requirements of a sober, moralistic and religious colony
would destroy both the fur trade and the colony that
depended on it. This group also supported Paul de
Chomedey de Maisonneuve, a soldier who took up the
spiritual mission to establish a settlement in New France.
In 1642 he brought thirty settlers with him to a site that
they named Ville-Marie. While the tiny settlement grew
very slowly in the first few years, due in part to constant
attacks by the Iroquois, it later grew into Montréal, one of
Canada’s greatest cities.

The effects of early efforts

In 1663, the population of New France was 3,035 non-
Aboriginals. Most lived in the countryside, on land
owned by seigneurs to whom they paid feudal dues.
Two-thirds of the population were members of farm or
labourer households. The rest were business people or
members of the clergy. The “bourgeoisie” often had
Aboriginal or black slaves; other servants were brought
from France. Some seigneurs gave land grants to new
colonists to encourage them to come. Historians estimate
that about ten percent of the population spent their lives
trading in the bush, in fur trade, and were “influenced by
the Aboriginals’ free spirited behaviour”, often marrying
Aboriginal women. Their “uncivilized” behaviour—
drinking, rioting and gambling—caused much concern in
the settled areas. New France became well known for
both extremes: piety and rowdiness.

Louis XIV decided in 1663 that Compagnie de La
Nouvelle-France was not effective in overseeing
colonization. The Compagnie’s monopoly was revoked,
and it was replaced by state officials responsible to the
crown. From this date on, the colonization of New
France began in earnest.
Influential colonizers

As colonizers:

- [ ] traders were much more effective
- [ ] traders were somewhat more effective
- [ ] traders and missionaries were equally effective
- [ ] missionaries were somewhat more effective
- [ ] missionaries were much more effective

I think this because:

- 
- 
- 
- 

However, [ ] traders were also effective in various ways, such as
- [ ] missionaries

- 
- 
- 

But I believe that they were not as effective as the group I identified because
Assessing the evidence

Use this rubric to assess student’s record of evidence of the colonizing effects of traders and missionaries. Award intermediate marks for answers falling between the descriptors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coverage of main points</th>
<th>Underdeveloped</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Well developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentions very few important ideas about the influence of colonization.</td>
<td>Mentions approximately half of the main ideas about the influence of colonization.</td>
<td>Mentions all of the main ideas about the influence of colonization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:

TOTAL / 5

Assessing the justification

Use this rubric to assess each student’s justification of the most influential colonizer. Award intermediate marks for answers falling between the descriptors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting evidence</th>
<th>Underdeveloped</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Well developed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides no plausible reasons for the recommendation.</td>
<td>Provides at most two plausible reasons for the recommendation.</td>
<td>Provides four or more very plausible reasons for the recommendation.</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitivity to other options</th>
<th>Underdeveloped</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Well developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shows no sensitivity to the other option.</td>
<td>Identifies at most two plausible aspects of the other option.</td>
<td>Identifies four or more plausible aspects of the other option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:

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