

How Did the Fur Trade Change Alberta?

(adapted from pp. 126 ~ 127 of Voices of Alberta, Pearson Education Canada, 2006)

Imagine you are a young man in Montréal looking for adventure. You hear stories about the rugged land of the west. Rushing rivers, steep cliffs, mountains that touch the sky, forests so thick you can barely walk through them. You want to see these wonders for yourself and make your fortune. You get a job as a **voyageur** for a fur trading company, paddling a canoe.

Whatever the weather, as long as there is daylight, you and your fellow **voyageurs** paddle the canoes filled with items to trade for furs. You paddle to the beat of the folk songs like Alouette that you learned from your parents and grandparents. Between waterways you portage with the canoe. To get from one river to another you carry the canoe and the trade goods on your backs. Sometimes you would have to **portage**. The canoes are light, but when filled with trade materials they are very heavy and you must be strong to carry them. Your pack along with these goods can way as much as 150 kgs.

Think back on the National Film Board movie we watched in class on Friday and this reading. If you were this voyageur, how might you feel?

Voyageurs: Voyageurs travelled by canoe, working for the fur-trading companies. Many of them were Canadiens from Québec.

Canadiens: Canadiens were Francophones who were born in Canada. Their first language was French.

Portage: The word portage is a French word that comes from the verb 'porter' which means "to carry" To portage is to carry a canoe and supplies over land.



Shooting the Rapids by Frances Anne Hopkins (painted in 1879) Uploaded from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voyageurs>

1. What did the voyageurs bring with them on their trips?

2. What did the voyageurs do to keep up their pace when paddling their canoes?

3. Was being a voyageur an easy life? Why or why not?
