

**FOR TEACHERS**

**Aboriginal Artifact Gallery**

During the *fur trade*, HBC and Aboriginal Peoples developed a unique relationship that benefitted both parties.

Some of the benefits that the HBC traders realized were the skills and knowledge of the land possessed by Aboriginal Peoples, which supported them in expanding their trading network.

Initially, HBC traders exchanged goods valued by Aboriginal Peoples for beaver pelts. Over time, HBC played a role in opening markets for Aboriginal handiworks such as beaded items and art that remain viable today.



Ceremony of the Pipe (1921)

The artifacts showcased in this Gallery are part of the *HBC Museum Collection* held by The Manitoba Museum and are reproduced with permission.

For more examples of specific types of artifacts, search the Museum’s Collections database [here](#). Click on HBC and select from the list of available objects.



Pipe

**Tobacco**

Viewed by Aboriginal Peoples as a way to establish and maintain relationships, pipe smoking was an integral part of the *ceremony* that began a trading session with HBC. *Tobacco* from Virginia and Brazil became a popular fur trading item because it was superior in quality and taste to the local product.



Inuit Parka

**Beads**

Aboriginal Peoples used natural items such as stones, seeds, bones, teeth, shells and porcupine quills for decoration and jewellery. *Glass beads* from Europe became a popular trade *item* as they were colourful, durable and easy to work with. The beads were often traded among Aboriginal groups.



Tobacco Pouch

## Beadwork

---

Aboriginal Peoples used glass beads acquired during the *fur trade* to decorate many different items such as knife sheaths, bags, wall pockets, gloves and tobacco pouches. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century a market for these items developed among the non-native population. Today, *beadwork* is still an important aspect of Aboriginal culture and a source of economic benefit.



Pounder

## Tools

---

Prior to acquiring metal items during trade with HBC, Aboriginal Peoples made tools, such as shovels, fishing hooks, knives and hammers from stone, bone, skin and wood. Creating tools like these required much time, effort and skill.

Metal tools such as axe heads and knives quickly became sought after trade items by Aboriginal Peoples since they were durable, relatively lightweight and kept a sharp edge longer.



Kettle

## Metal Goods

---

Household goods like strike-a-lights, spoons, needles, thimbles, and kettles were in demand. Durability was the primary advantage of metal items, in addition to heat conductivity which made kettles and cookware much more efficient. Metal was of such value that when copper and brass kettles were no longer functional, they were reused as arrow and spear heads.



Bow

## Bows

---

Bows were used by Aboriginal Peoples for hunting and protection. They were lightweight, quiet and could withstand severe winters and rainy conditions. Although Aboriginal Peoples continued to use bows, *firearms* became a highly valued trade item.



Musket

## Firearms

---

Known as “Hudson’s Bay Fukes,” *muskets* were made in England for HBC by J.E. Barnett and Sons. The distinctive serpent or dragon side plate ornament on this musket guaranteed Aboriginal Peoples its quality.



Carving

## Inuit Art

---

For centuries Inuit art has been crafted from stone, ivory and wood. These art forms often illustrated the Inuit way of life. In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century HBC post manager Norman Ross and sculptor *James Houston* became involved in developing this tradition into a new art market. HBC’s posts and transportation network allowed the Company to become a major retailer of *Inuit art*. The Inuit acquired new opportunities for employment as craftspeople while maintaining and developing a traditional cultural pastime.



Basket

## Aboriginal Crafts and the Marketplace

---

Over the years the relationship with HBC resulted in the development of viable businesses for Aboriginal crafts that continue today.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### Big Idea

**Trade relationships can be beneficial to the parties involved.**

### Critical Questions

- What were the benefits for HBC in trading with Aboriginal Peoples?
- What were the benefits for Aboriginal Peoples in trading with HBC?
- What aspect of the trading process continues to impact the lives of Aboriginal Peoples today?

### Curriculum Connection

Social Studies  
Native/Aboriginal Studies

### Tasks

Each task focuses on one aspect of the trading relationship. Students search for information about how both HBC and Aboriginal Peoples benefitted from the fur trade. They can examine both economic and non-economic benefits.

Students choose an aspect that interests them to investigate further. Together with the teacher, students decide on questions to guide their inquiry. Then, students decide how they can share their findings to engage an audience.

#### A. Trade Benefits

Select a trade item and explain why it was valued by Aboriginal Peoples. In the explanation consider how it was used, what item it may have replaced and why it was valued. Note: The HBC Standard of Trade provides a possible list of trade items.

OR

Investigate some of the non-economic benefits gained by the HBC traders because of their relationship with the Aboriginal Peoples.

#### Questions to Guide Students' Thinking

- Why was the trade item important to Aboriginal Peoples?
- Why was the trade item favoured over what the Aboriginal Peoples were currently using?
- Why was the trading ceremony an important part of the relationship between the HBC and Aboriginal traders?
- Why were the non-economic benefits that the HBC traders gained from their relationship with the Aboriginal Peoples important?

## **B. Aboriginal Crafts in the Marketplace**

Investigate an Aboriginal craft and its presence in today's marketplace.

### **Questions to Guide Students' Thinking**

- How did Aboriginal Peoples use glass beads they acquired from the HBC fur trade?
- How has beading evolved since the time of the fur trade?
- Why is beadwork an important craft for Aboriginal Peoples today?
- How do Aboriginal works of art portray aspects of their culture?
- What role did HBC have in promoting Inuit art in the marketplace?
- What other Aboriginal works of art are evident in the marketplace today?

### **For More Information**

#### **HBC Web Resources**

[Fur Trade: Trading Ceremony at York Factory, 1780s](#)

[HBC History: Thanadelthur](#)

[Glass Beads Gallery](#)

[Teacher Resource: Glass Beads](#)

[HBC Standard of Trade](#)

[HBC International Trade and the British Empire](#)

[HBC International Trade and the British Empire Map](#)

#### **External Websites**

[Manitoba Museum](#)

[Manitoba Museum: Collections Database](#)

[Canadian Museum of History: An Aboriginal Presence](#)

[Textile Museum of Canada: The Bead](#)

[Canadian Encyclopedia: Fur Trade](#)

[McGill Digital Library: The Trade Goods](#)

[Canadian Encyclopedia: Aboriginal Art in Canada](#)

[Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage: Aboriginal Tools](#)

[Manitoba Social Studies Curriculum: Aboriginal Contributions and Inventions](#)

[Canada's First Peoples: First Peoples' Means of Travel](#)

[Queens University: Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre: Beading](#)

[McCord Museum: The Art and Technique of Inuit Clothing](#)

[Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre: First Nations Arts Gallery](#)