

## **Relations between the French and Aboriginal Peoples: Principle of Mutual Benefit and not Exploitation**

Numerous accounts of hostilities between Native Americans and early American colonists have existed. On the other hand, armed warfare did not break out with every European group that arrived. This was not the case with the French, who enjoyed strong relations with the Native Americans almost from the beginning of their colonial endeavours in the New World. They didn't do this since they didn't want to change them. A similar reason explains their lack of interest in settling in areas already occupied by Native Americans. In the early 17th century, the French colonization of North America was a top priority (Ancestralfindings). They forged alliances with the Wabanaki and Wendat peoples in exchange for European goods and protection against the English as well as Haudenosaunee. It wasn't until 1608, one year after the English established Jamestown, that the French established their first settlement in Quebec (Ancestralfindings). Without displacing any Indians, they built their village and traded furs with them intimately. Native Americans were treated with respect and dignity by the settlers, and they respected their land and customs. Consequently, the Native Americans held high regard for the French. They had the most intermarriages with Native Americans of any European group. It is undeniable that the relationship between the French and Aboriginal people was based on mutual respect, yet at times, they do try to control Aboriginal people while establishing imperial control in North America.

According to local legend, François Gravé du Pont and Pierre de Chauvin de Tonnetuit established a French colony there in 1600 and led the colonisation effort (Belshaw 133). Merchant and nautical experience made them ideal candidates for the first European monopoly on fur trading. Samuel de Champlain visited the location in 1603 to examine its potential (Belshaw 133). A fur trade between the Wendat and Algonquins was Champlain's goal, and he jumped at the chance to get it off the ground with this arrangement. A hundred years of bloody conflict didn't stop the French from finding stable trading partners and enjoying a thriving period of trade for the next three decades. As part of the agreement between the two parties, the Jesuits were permitted to carry out their work among the Wendat communities.

In contrast to the Wabanaki people who lived to the east, the Jesuits' attempts to convert the Wendat were often fruitless. The Wabanaki were a prominent ally of the French during the 17th and 18th centuries. They had close links with the Acadian immigrants, who were French settlers. Because the Acadians in Quebec were more receptive to aboriginal culture than the French, there was a high intermarriage rate between the Wabanaki and the Acadians. "In Canada the widespread and long-lasting phenomenon of the fur trade assumes great importance in accounting for the frequency of Aboriginal /non-Aboriginal marriage" (Kirk 2).

The collaboration between the French and Aboriginal people was the byproduct of cooperation. Also, their widespread dispersal offset their low population density, making it

easy to divide the land. Due to a lack of resources, the French could not acquire territory through large-scale colonial operations and the total slavery of native populations. By adopting the indigenous culture, adopting specialized technology, and establishing Christian missionary ties with indigenous peoples, the French could compete with their imperial enemies and maintain dominance in their region. In 1632, The French could directly intensify their establishments after the treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye with the help of French-Aboriginal diplomacy. “The number of priests (almost all missionaries) in the colony more than doubled by 1658. Each of these circumstances affected the evolution of kin metaphors in French–Indigenous diplomacy” (Cook 176). These alliances were incredibly important because they allowed the French to achieve political and economic advantages against the English that the English did not have. These benefits were obtained through partnerships with the Wendat and the Wabanaki. Because of this, France achieved political authority over a wider section of North America than the English did without sacrificing as many men to the cause. This allowed France to surpass the English regarding political influence in North America.

In the 1640s, this was the scenario in the Great Lakes region. A smallpox pandemic in the 1630s destroyed the Wendat population, presumably due to long-term interaction with Jesuits and French traders. The war between the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat didn’t erupt again until the epidemic of 1640 (Belshaw 197). When the Catholic Mohawks decimated the Wendat Confederacy in 1649, France’s lack of support expedited the Wendat’s demise. Quebec partially filled the economic void left by the Wendat after Confederation’s dissolution. Finally, the colony would supply grain to the northern tribes, while the *coureur de bois* would trade directly with the Wendat pelt suppliers. “The eradication of the French trading presence would force the fur trade from the north into Haudenosaunee hands and they would hold a monopoly as middlemen to the Dutch” (Belshaw 199). Once King Louis XIV took complete control of the French throne, the French government became more interested in the colony and changed its name to New France. By transferring troops to kill the Haudenosaunee, New France was safe. At the same time, collaborations and commerce were encouraged outside of the Great Lakes area. The French, as well as other First Nations, used alliances to keep an eye on the territory and stop the English colonies from heading west (Reid 691). These partnerships were utilized during the Seven Years’ War to save New France from destruction. Nevertheless, New France withdrew from the conflict in North America since the French could not match the level of devotion shown by the British.

Even if some components of the French-Native Alliances incorporated principles of mutual benefit and reverence for both heritage and territorial sovereignty, it does not alter the fact that France was an imperialist nation. Despite the fact that they increased their political impact in various ways than other European countries and used various techniques, they had the same goals, which were geopolitical and economic growth at the expense of North American indigenous peoples.

### Works cited

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