

Share: Through the Eyes of a Fur Trader (Grades 2-5)

Program Description:

The fur trade industry was the most profitable business in Grand Rapids for over 150 years. Presented via first-person costumed interpretation, the *Fur Trader* program introduces students to the meeting between European fur traders and Native Americans in Michigan, focusing on the beginnings of the bartering system between Europeans and Native Americans and how the contact impacted both parties. Demonstrations and hands-on activities with artifacts will help students explore how materials and tools differ between pre and post-contact time periods.

What content standards align with this program?

Michigan Social Studies Strands: H1 The World in Temporal Terms: Historical Habits of Mind, H2 Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, Now and Long Ago, H3 The History of Michigan and the Great Lakes Region, H4 The History of the United States, H5 The History of Peoples from Many Cultures Around the World, U2 Colonization and Settlement, G1 The World in Spatial Terms: Geographical Habits of Mind, G2 Places and Regions, G4 Human Systems, G5 Environment and Society, E1 The Market Economy, P1 Reading and Communication, P2 Inquiry Research and Analysis
ELA Common Core Standards: Speaking and Listening

Museum Program Strand:

- Cultivate a community of empathetic contributors who value diversity
- Help learners tell, interpret, create, and share compelling stories so no history is ignored or untold

This program is aligned with the following Museum Learner Outcomes:

Holders of Foundational Knowledge	Masters of Fundamental Literacies	Original Thinkers for an Uncertain World	Generous Collaborators for Tough Problems	Learners For Life	
X	X			X	

What will students know and be able to do after completing this program?

- Learners will be able to describe the food, clothing, shelter, transportation and technology of the Anishinabek and Europeans prior to their meeting, during the fur trade era, and afterwards.
- Learners will be able to understand the economics of bartering and the value of goods; they will be able to explain what made a good trade between fur traders and Michigan Native Americans.
- Learners will be able to imagine what it was like to be a French voyageur transporting goods along Michigan rivers.

What questions will students answer?

- How and why did the fur trade industry begin?
- What role did the Grand River and the Great Lakes play in the fur trading industry?
- What makes a good trade?
- What is the value of an item when currency is not used?

- What was the relationship like between fur trader and Native Americans?
- What were the different roles of the fur traders?
- What impact on each other's materials did the fur traders and Native Americans have?
- Why did fur trading stop?

Key Vocabulary

Anishinabek
 Fur Trade
 Barter
 Voyageur

Materials List and Setup:

Artifacts from Fur Trading era
 Fur Trader clothing
 Canoe form
 Paddles
 Song sheets for Alouette

Program Activities: 90 minutes

1. Introduction and Expectations
2. Discuss beginnings of fur trade industry
 - a. How and why was Michigan involved?
 - b. Handle beaver pelts and beaver fur products such as top hats
3. What makes a good trade?
 - a. Mutually beneficial bartering system based on wants and needs
 - b. How were various Anishinabek tasks completed before and after European contact?
 - i. Discuss and show examples in the areas of: fur preparation, clothing construction, food preparation, making fire, transportation over waterways, hunting,
 - ii. Demonstrations and activities incorporating artifacts--cooking utensils, clothing materials, decorative items, pelt scrapers, guns, traps, fire starters, glass
4. What was life like for Voyageurs?
 - a. Who were they? What did they wear? How did they travel and live?
 - b. Perspective-taking activity in the canoe form, paddling in sync as a class and singing traditional songs
5. Why did fur trade come to an end?
 - a. Discuss changes in the fashion industry from fur to silk
 - i. Show examples of silkworms and artifacts made of silk