

FRENCH CANADIANS

History

While the organization and capitalization of the North West Company came from Anglo-Quebecers, French Canadians played key roles in the operations both in the building, management, and share holding of the various trading posts scattered throughout the country, as well as being involved in the actual trading with natives. A unique culture developed as the mixed-race descendants of early unions between Indigenous women and French settler men. Within generations the distinct Métis culture developed in central and western Canada. French Canadians came to stay; they had offspring and families. This contrasted to HBC's use of contracts and sending employees back home after a tour. The combination of HBC and NWC in 1821 meant adopting HBC's practices and the French Canadians disappeared from HBC employ, leaving Hawaiian workers dominant for a decade or more.



Legends & Lessons

When the time came to settle the international boundary, Britain's indifference made it willing to give up the entire Pacific Northwest so long as it saved face. Only the intervention of the HBC and the belligerence of a new America prevented it from doing so.



A stable workforce made the HBC enough annual profit that it wanted to remain. While French Canadians were not principal actors, their presence in the Pacific Northwest over the previous half century was critical to the outcome. Except for French Canadians' numbers, it is highly likely the Canadian province of British Columbia would not have come into being and Canada would have no Pacific Ocean shoreline.

Ethnobotanical Gardens

Native plant “starts” from Bonhoeffer Gardens (to your SW, by the I-5) illustrate 99 foods and materials available to the American peoples who lived here 10,000 years without the need to develop agriculture. Planter boxes contain:

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