

# THE ROYAL PROVINCE OF NEW FRANCE

When Champlain died in 1635, only a few French lived in New France. The Company of a Hundred Associates had failed to bring settlers to Canada, and the Iroquois controlled much of the fur trade (after wresting it from the Hurons). They began to set higher prices and to cut French profits. For the next twenty-five years, little changed.

However, in 1661, an appeal to France for help from New France met with success. Louis **XVI** now king of France, and his minister of the marine, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, were determined to make the colony strong and profitable.

The theory of mercantilism was very popular in the seventeenth century (see feature on page 237). To Louis and Colbert, Canada needed to become a part of the French mercantile empire. In addition to the fur trade, there was talk of New France shipping barrel staves to France's colony in the West Indies, where they were needed for sugar

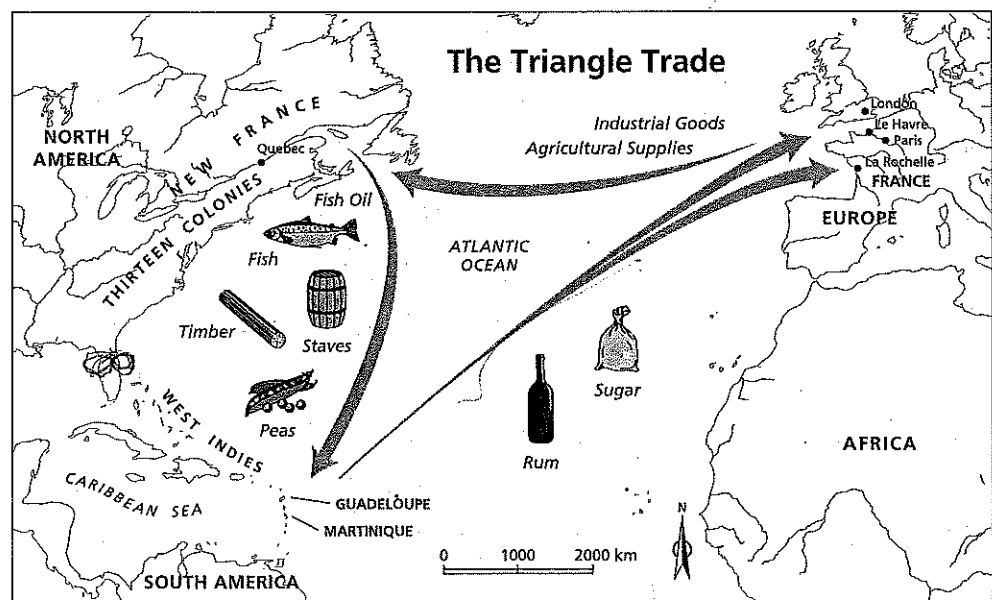
production. Wood was cheaper in Canada than anywhere else. Louis and Colbert knew they had to organize life in New France so that it could operate successfully as a commercial venture.

France responded to the colony's call for help by sending a regiment of professional soldiers. The 1100 soldiers almost doubled the population of Canada. Led by the Marquis de Tracy, they attacked and burned Iroquois villages until the Iroquois asked for peace. Both parties got what they wanted: the French would open up the fur trade to the west for themselves, and the Iroquois could devote their energies to expanding their territory elsewhere.

In 1663, the government of France made New France a royal colony. A governor was appointed to represent the king of France, supervise defence, and establish treaties with the Native peoples. A chief administrator, the *intendant*, would govern the local people. Professional soldiers were sent for protection. A Catholic bishop

staves: the narrow strips of wood in barrel

**Figure 8-16** This map shows the flow of raw materials and finished products within the French and English empires. In this type of trade, England used waste-sugar products to make rum, and traded it for furs in North America. As you study this map, consider why the French government wished to keep New France small.



would be responsible for religious affairs, and Catholic priests and nuns would continue to convert the Native peoples to Christianity. Together, the governor, the intendant, and the bishop made up the Sovereign Council—the government of New France. A few settlers were also represented on the Council.

France wanted the colony to be a small copy of the home country. The

seigneurial system, similar to the feudal system, would ensure that the colony's aristocrats would have control of the land, with the same rights they enjoyed in France. Champlain had wanted the Native peoples and the French traders to intermarry and make one nation. But this idea was slowly replaced with a new plan—a strong colony populated by French peasants.

**nun:** a Catholic woman who takes vows and enters a religious community

## The Role of Mercantilism in Colonialism

**M**ercantilism is an economic theory you read about last year in your study of global history. Mercantilism became popular in Europe in the 1500s and was the primary reason behind Europe's desire to colonize new lands.

The theory of mercantilism states that there is a certain amount of wealth in the world and that it is in a nation's best interest to accumulate it. Through wealth, a nation can achieve power. A country achieves wealth by producing and exporting more goods than it imports. These goods must be sold at a **profit** for wealth to accumulate.

Profits are large when a country spends a small amount of money on the **raw materials** needed to create a product and sells the **finished product** for a high price. It is easy to see how a new colony in North America would be the perfect place for Europeans to find a steady supply of new raw materials.

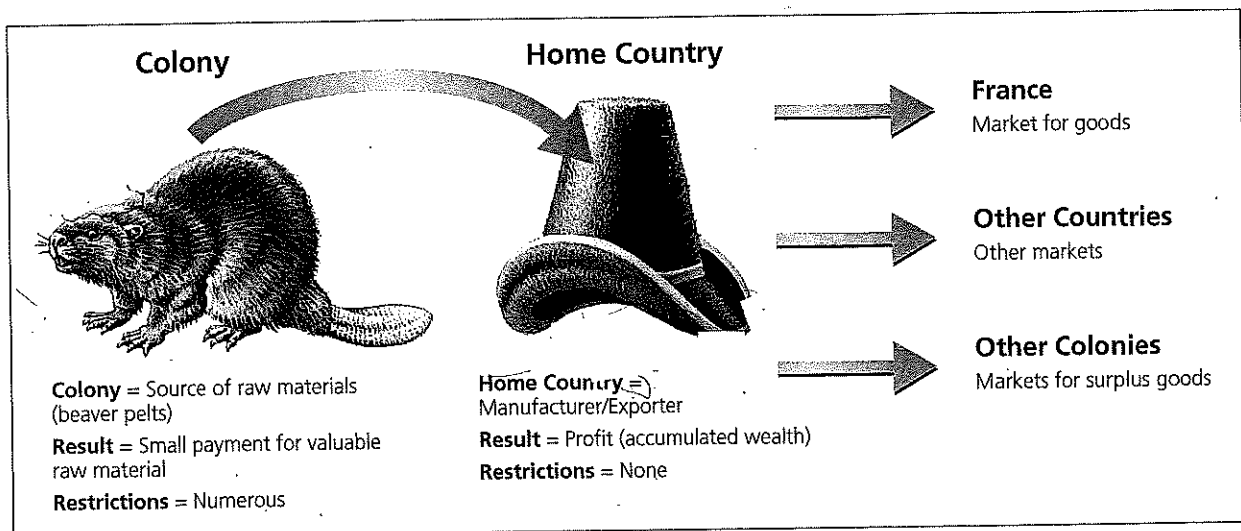
Mercantilism was meant to serve the interests of the empire, not the colony. Colonies existed for the benefit of the home country. Colonies could not sell their raw materials to anyone but the home country, and they were not allowed to manufacture anything for export.

As you continue reading this chapter, think about the political and social consequences of mercantilism and colonialism. Start by looking at Figure 8–17. As you learned in Chapter 4, the West Indies produced many goods that Europeans wanted, especially sugar. Who provided the labour in Europe's West Indian colonies? What does this say about European imperialism and the mercantilist system?

**profit:** an excess of money after spending

**raw materials:** natural sources, such as trees or furry animals

**finished product:** a product that has been manufactured



**Figure 8–17** In this diagram of mercantilism, using beaver fur as an example, pelts were bought for a low price, made into hats, blankets, and other luxuries, and sold to home and foreign markets for profit. The surplus was often sold off to other colonies.

**tannery:** a place where hides are converted to leather

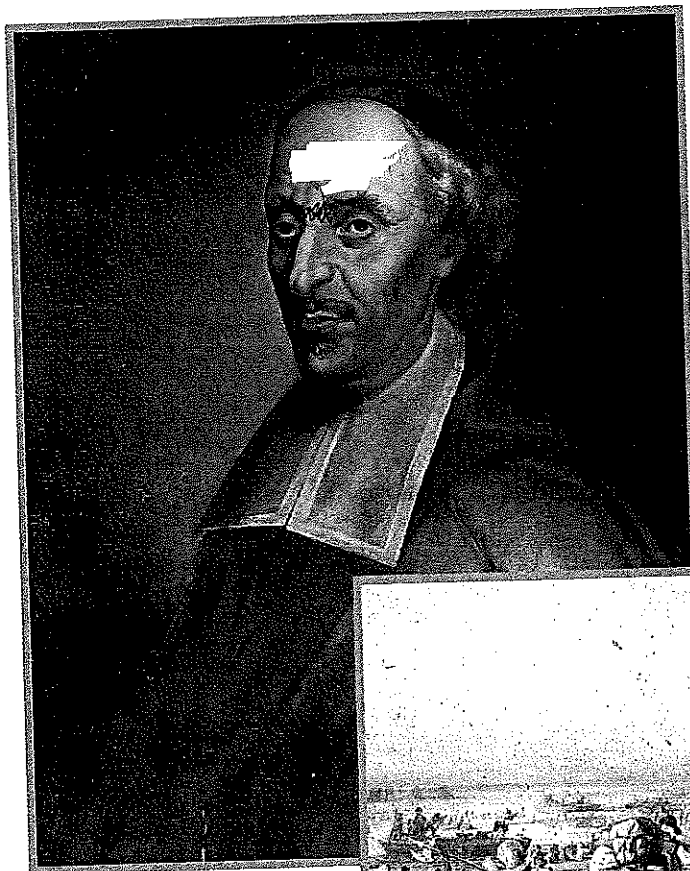
## THE FIRST GOVERNMENT

Jean Talon was New France's first intendant. He knew that New France needed settlers, a good defence system, and basic industries. The arrival of so many French soldiers made New France safer and also increased its population, since many of the soldiers decided to settle in Canada. Talon recruited women by looking to those who had the least to gain by staying in France. These women, often orphans, became known as the *filles du roi*, or the "the

king's daughters." Over the next ten years, hundreds of young women came to start new lives in Canada.

Talon also understood the role of the colony in the mercantile system. He established lumber mills, a **tannery**, and a brewery in Canada. These did not compete with French industries, but made trade within the empire easier, and life in the colony more comfortable. He also allowed small ships to be built. These improvements made New France stronger, more self-sufficient, and more profitable to France.

Frontenac, became New France's first governor. He agreed to take the posting because he needed to escape people to whom he owed money in France! Almost from the beginning, Frontenac fought with the Church and the home government. Instead of keeping the colony small, as Louis XIV



**Figure 8-18** The colony's first bishop, Francois de Laval, was an aristocrat who founded a training school for priests in New France. It later became Laval University. Laval fought very hard against the emerging trade in alcohol. Both French and English traders exchanged alcohol for furs at a large profit, a development that had a devastating impact on Native communities. This portrait shows the first bishop as a severe aristocrat. What other personality traits can you glean from this portrait?



**Figure 8-19** Frontenac cooperated with—and fought with—the Iroquois.

and Colbert wished, he ordered the *coureurs de bois* to look for more furs, thereby extending the boundaries of the empire. He also disliked the Jesuits, who were perceived to be harming the fur trade by trying to limit the use of alcohol.

At one point, Frontenac asked the Iroquois to meet with him and build a business alliance. Simultaneously, however, he was building forts to protect the French against their

attacks. The Iroquois said they would agree only if the French would not expand their territory. Frontenac's own policy of encouraging the *coureurs de bois* and other explorers to travel far beyond the borders of New France seemed highly suspicious to the Iroquois. Frontenac was recalled to France in 1682, but he was sent back several years later to lead his last campaign against the Iroquois.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Create a dialogue between a Huron chief and a Jesuit missionary in which both present their best arguments for and against allowing the Jesuits to stay and work in Huronia.
2. Outline the reasons why young French Canadians became *coureurs de bois*. Summarize the explorations of the French in central North America.
3. Outline the results of the fur trade from the points of view of both the French traders and the Native peoples whom they encountered.
4. Explain the relationship between mercantilism and colonialism (page 237). Can there ever be profit without one party being short-changed? Explain.
5. Talon, Frontenac, and Laval are often considered important figures in the early history of New France. Do you agree? Make cases for and against this proposition and draw a conclusion.
6. Explain why some young women would agree to come to the colony of New France as *filles du roi*.

## LIFE IN NEW FRANCE

Life in New France was firmly anchored in the seigneurial system. Seigneurs, or lords, were granted parcels of land, and the *habitants*, or peasant farmers, had the right to cultivate the land in exchange for providing fees and services to the seigneur. This system had much in common with the old feudal system of Europe, but it was also quite different. Both the seigneurs and the *habitants*, who lived on the land, were relatively

prosperous. Many worked part-time in the fur trade

These various enterprises gave the people of New France an attitude of independence, which sometimes irritated representatives of France. They began to think that the colonists had forgotten their place. Nevertheless, the people of New France were always loyal to France, and kept French traditions and customs.