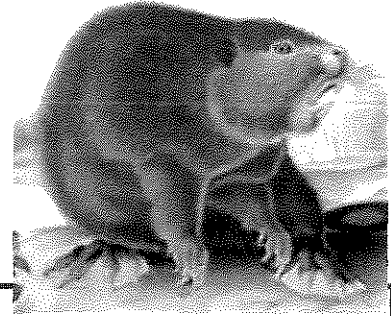


FRENCH & INDIANS & THE FUR TRADE



After Christopher Columbus' voyages to the Americas, many countries in Europe set out west to explore. France sent explorers looking for a shorter route to China with whom they wished to trade. Columbus had been looking for the same thing. Both Columbus and the French were unsure what exactly they would find in what became known as the Americas.

When the French encountered the Great Lakes region they were looking for a water passage through the continent that would lead them to the Pacific Ocean. This was known as the Northwest Passage. Little did they know, there was no water passage through North America.

What the French did find in the Great Lakes region was land rich in natural resources that were highly sought after in Europe and quite valuable. One resource was the fur of animals such as the beaver. Beaver fur was used in clothing items like hats, coats and blankets which were extremely popular at the time.

In order for the French to utilize this resource they relied on trade with the people who knew that land, nature and the trade links that had already been established. The French worked with the Native Americans (or Indians as they were called) to better access the animals and their fur.

The French were not alone as a European people to recognize the demand for fur. The British also involved themselves in the fur trade of the 1600, 1700 & 1800s. The competition over the fur trade led to many violent clashes and battles over who controlled what lands.