

## PROPOSITION DE CORRIGÉ

### Sujet citationnel

“Canada emerged as a political entity with boundaries largely determined by the fur trade.”  
Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956) [2e ed.: 1930].

### Introduction

The fur trade played a remarkable role in the construction of the Canadian nation as the cornerstone of its economic, social and political development for about two centuries from the European settlement. As a matter of fact, intense international competition for the fur trade monopoly inevitably led to territorial expansion and a constant reassessment of the young nation's boundaries alongside a redefinition of the colonial relationships with the indigenous populations. Canadian observer Harold Innis states that Canada's political frontiers were mostly defined by the fur trade, thus granting the original economic competition between international private companies the responsibility for shaping the future of Canada. As such, he associates the political birth of the nation to original economic concerns in the very definition of the Canadian frontiers. Therefore, this analysis shall focus on the impact of the fur trade as one of the defining elements that participated in determining the Canadian frontier and it shall show that Innis's view is incomplete. We shall start by focusing on the first encounter with the natives and how the fur trade contributed to the initial grounds for a political system. This shall lead us to consider how the fur trade allowed intruding further inland Canada with commercial as well as scientific exhibitions. Finally, we shall dwell upon the construction of political boundaries and the impact of the fur trade.

### Outline

#### 1. Trade with the natives: the fur trade and first encounters

1580 Portuguese, Spanish, English and French = expeditions for cod  
Bisons and buffaloes for food, clothes, fuel. Later beaver  
Trade with Natives for fur = harsh Canadian climate (iron or glass beads)  
Nomadic lifestyle for fur traders  
Opposition with stable agricultural subsistence  
Before 1663 = trade led by Compagnie de la Nouvelle France = Compagnie des Cent-Associés  
Alliances = 1640s, the Hurons and New France  
Conflicts = Iroquois attacks  
Huron-Iroquois war = Huron people demise  
Native population decline by 30%  
Scots and French Canadians' influence.

**Transition:** This analysis has shown that the fur trade was not only an economic question, but also entailed a measure of ethnic relationships at the basis of colonization in Canada. Hence, economic and political arrangements were sealed by ethnic relationships and encounters between different nations with diverse interests.

#### II. Fur trade and territorial discovery

1718 de Bienville in New Orleans  
1713 Acadia  
Albany.

1563, France = trading post in the Baie Française  
1600 = fur trade post.  
Hudson's Bay Company - Northwest Company  
1763-1821, explorations  
settlements and expeditions = role in construction of Canada.  
Posts = future cities  
creation of settlements (Quebec, Montreal, ...).

**Transition:** As we have seen, Innis's statement on the fundamental impact of the fur trade on Canadian frontiers obliterates the variety of elements that partook in the delimitation of Canada's boundaries. As such, scientific interests were linked to economic motivations and contributed to defining the political identity of Canada.

### **III. Construction of political boundaries**

Samuel de Champlain and Acadia in 1563.  
Political system around fur trade: nomadism vs. stability  
revocation of the Compagnie de la Nouvelle France = Royal Colony by Louis XIV: Quebec.  
Treaty of Utrecht in 1713: from trade to political rivalries  
Treaty of Paris in 1763, British North American  
Fur trade empire = 1763 and 1821.  
1820s= timber trade and the wheat production + silk  
Fur trade = political divide between English merchants and French workers.  
Impact on Quebec's share of power

### **Conclusion:**

Canada's birth as a political entity was certainly influenced by the fur trade, but not only: geographical, ethnic, political and international influences dramatically contributed to shaping Canada and its boundaries.