

# VOYAGEURS

As an integral part of the Canadian fur trade, voyageurs transported furs by canoe from indigenous villages and trading posts to larger metropolitan areas. Once there, the furs were sold by large corporations, such as the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. The job required strong navigational skills and an understanding of Aboriginal languages, as voyageurs often had close relationships with the local indigenous populations that they encountered. They ate significant amounts of pemmican, a dried meat product that was easily transportable and did not expire during long periods of travel. This fuel gave them the energy to travel more than 100 kilometres per day by canoe. They also used portages, or inland trails, to cross the distances between rivers or lakes.

After a brief rest each night, they would then wake before sunrise to repeat this rigorous routine. Due to the physical stress of the job, voyageurs occasionally suffered broken limbs or hernias while working. Many of the frequented routes led to Montreal, which was a major hub for trading. The journey to Montreal involved travelling through the Ottawa or St. Lawrence Rivers to reach the Great Lakes, mainly Lake Huron. Thus, the Windsor-Essex area, with access to the port of Detroit, was significant to the growth and success of the fur trade by way of the Detroit River. Windsor relied on the fur trade to support its economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and voyageurs were known to stop in the area before continuing on their journey north.

