

# Rendezvous at Michilimackinac

## SCENE I



**Setting:** A hunting camp on the St. Peter's River  
(Now the Minnesota River)

**Time:** Late winter, 1775

**Characters:** Running Deer (An Ojibwa hunter)

Whispering Sky (His wife)

Louis (A western trader)

Other voyageurs

Other Ojibwa people

[Running Deer and Whispering Sky are talking as she is cooking over the fire.]

**Whispering Sky:** “The sagamity is almost ready. I need a new brass kettle. When will Louis be here to trade with us?”

**Running Deer:** “He should be here any day. We have many good furs to trade with him so we can probably get everything we want and need.”

**Whispering Sky:** “The furs are very good this year; very thick. I have cleaned so many beaver skins this winter!”

**Running Deer:** “It would be good to get a new musket and maybe some new blankets for the year.”

[Louis arrives.]

**Louis:** “Hello Whispering Sky and Running Deer. How has your winter been?”

**Whispering Sky:** “Very well. How is your trading?”

**Louis:** “Great! The furs are thick this winter.”

**Running Deer:** “Yes, it is very cold. The animals grew heavy coats of fur.”

**Louis:** “Here is a gift of tobacco I brought you.”



**Running Deer:** “Thank you. We have many furs for you; beaver, fox, and muskrat.”

**Louis:** “I brought many goods to show you.”

[Whispering Sky and Running Deer bring out their furs. Louis inspects the furs for quality and type while Running Deer and Whispering Sky look at the goods. They talk about what they would like to trade for.]

**Louis:** “These are very good furs. How do you like my trade goods?”

**Running Deer:** “You brought many items this spring. I like this knife.”

**Whispering Sky:** “It will do well to cut the vegetables and meat for our meals.”

**Louis:** “It is the finest I have. I’ll give it to you for three muskrat pelts.”

**Running Deer:** “That is a small knife, Louis, and these furs are very thick. I will give you two muskrat pelts for this knife.”

**Louis:** “It’s a trade! What else would you like?”

[Everyone continues to trade. Use the Trading Chart to find out what the values are for trade goods and furs.]

**Louis:** “We have traded well this year. You have many goods and my canoe will be full of furs this year.”

**Running Deer:** “Come back here again next winter and trade for more furs. When will you travel to Michilimackinac?”

**Whispering Sky:** “Safe journey and may good weather be at your back!”



## SCENE II

**Setting:** Montreal, Canada  
**Time:** Late winter, 1775  
**Characters:** Peter (An eastern trader)  
William (A merchant)

**Peter:** “Good morning, William. I am ready to use my credit for the furs I brought to you last fall.”

**William:** “It is always good to see you, Peter! Are you getting ready to travel west to Michilimackinac again?”

**Peter:** “Yes, it is that time of year. I am just waiting for the ice to melt. How is your family?”

**William:** “Good. My wife is busy with her dinner parties; very good to see people in the winter! My son is in school and my daughter is getting married.”

**Peter:** “It sounds like you have had a busy winter!”

**William:** “Yes, I have. Let me get my account ledger.”

[William get his account book and open’s to Peter’s account page.]

**Peter:** “I need the usual...kettles, blankets, muskets, gunpowder, musket ball, beads, fabric, knives. Oh, add some earbobs. Those will be popular.”

**William:** “Let’s see...you brought in many good furs last fall.”

[William and Peter discuss the value of the furs and the value of goods. Use the Trading Chart for trade values.]

**Peter:** “I think this is enough for my trip to Michilimackinac. I still have food supplies to get and I have to hire a crew. We will leave when the river opens. Good-bye, William.”

**William:** “Have a safe journey, Peter.”



### SCENE III

**Setting:** Stage is divided into two parts. The left side is the route from the west to Michilimackinac. The right side is the route from the east from Montreal.

**Time:** Spring, 1775

**Characters:** Louis (in a canoe with crew heading east)  
Peter (in a canoe with crew heading west)  
Other canoes and crews

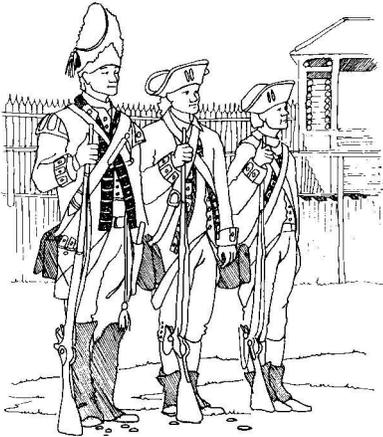
[Each canoe is pretending to paddle toward the center of the stage. They are singing songs to keep the rhythm of paddling together.]

### SCENE IV

**Setting:** Michilimackinac

**Time:** Summer, 1775

**Characters:** Colonel Evans (The commandant of Michilimackinac)  
Mrs. Evans (His wife)  
Louis  
Peter  
Private Havlena (Soldier on Guard Duty)  
Other voyageurs  
Other soldiers  
Families living at the fort



[Private Havlena fires a cannon.]

**Pvt. Havlena:** “Canoe Brigade! It’s Louis from the west!”

[Col. Evans and Peter enter the stage. A few voyageurs begin bringing in bales of goods from stage right and set them on the back of the stage.]

**Col. Evans:** “Here comes your partner, Peter. The canoes look very full.”

**Peter:** “Almost as full as my canoes were. They are being readied for your inspection.”

**Col. Evans:** “Very well. There are so many canoes arriving every day. It may be tomorrow before we can inspect yours. How did the china dishes survive the trip?”

**Peter:** “I’m afraid some of them were broken during one of the portages.”

**Col. Evans:** “My wife will not be pleased. Here she is now.”

[Mrs. Evans enters.]

**Mrs. Evans:** “Good day, Peter. It looks like you have brought my supplies from Montreal.”

**Peter:** “I have, but I have to warn you some of the dishes are broken!”

**Mrs. Evans:** “That does not surprise me. But more important, did you bring the salt pork I ordered?”

**Peter:** “I did!”

**Mrs. Evans:** “Good. I will tell my servant to plan for dinner tomorrow.”

[Mrs. Evans leaves and Louis enters. A second group of voyageurs begin unloading bales behind him. Families greet the arriving voyageurs.]

**Louis:** “Good day, Colonel Evans. Good day, Peter.”

**Peter:** “Good day, Louis. You’re finally here. I just arrived myself, but I thought you would beat me to Michilimackinac!”

**Louis:** “We were slowed down by a storm at Green Bay. But we are here finally. I think you will be happy with the furs. Colonel, I have news for you.”

**Col. Evans:** “Is it about the fighting between the Ojibwa and the Dakota?”

**Louis:** “Yes, it is getting worse. There may be no trading in that area next winter.”



**Col. Evans:** “I was afraid of that. We need to find a way to bring peace to the two tribes. If you will excuse me, I must speak with my officers.”

**Louis:** “Good day, Colonel. We will send word when our canoes are ready for inspection.”

[Colonel Evans leaves.]

**Louis:** “Peter, you will be very happy. The furs are excellent this year!”

**Peter:** “Good. I brought a lot of goods from Montreal, too. It will take a few weeks to settle our accounts and repack everything into the canoe.”

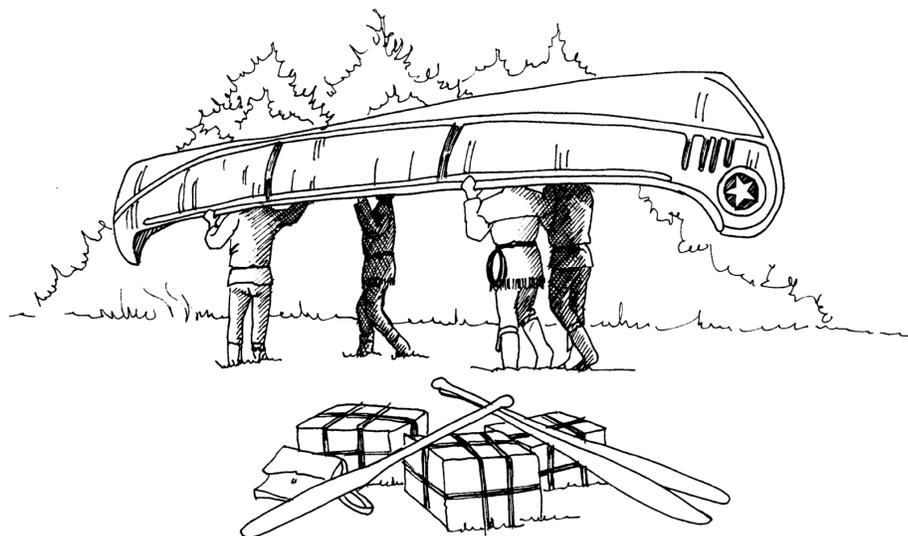
**Louis:** “When the canoes are unloaded, we can pay the voyageurs. They have worked very hard to get it all here on the canoes.”

**Peter:** “So have we! Join me in my quarters later for a celebration.”

**Louis:** “I will. We have a lot of talk about before you return east with the furs and I bring the trade goods to my winter home.”

[Peter and Louis exit stage.]

**THE END**



## Exchange Rates for Furs and Trade Goods

Today we use money to tell how much something is worth. We pay for things we buy with dollars. In the fur trade, people used furs then a lot like we use dollars today. If they wanted to buy something, people would bring furs in and trade. The chart below shows how many furs were needed to buy different things.

This chart is representative of pieces for items in the 1770s at Michilimackinac. There were different prices in different time periods (like when gas prices or milk prices go up and down) and for different places. The further west you traded, usually the higher the prices since it was harder and longer to get there. The further east you traded the lower the prices, since it was easier to trade there and there were many other trading places.

### Trade Goods

Men's large blanket  
Men's striped single blanket  
Women's worsted stockings (pair)  
Women's yarn stockings (pair)  
Children's stockings (pair)  
Gun powder (per pound)  
4 bars of lead  
12 flints  
One fathom (piece) or calico fabric  
Small knife  
Brass kettles (per pound of weight)  
Silver brooches  
Large cross  
Trade musket  
One-pound axe  
Earbobs  
Cutteau knife

### Furs

3 beaver or 4 buckskins  
2 beaver or 3 buckskins  
1 good beaver or a buck or doeskin  
1 buckskin  
1 doeskin  
1 good beaver or a buck or doeskin  
1 beaver or a buck or doeskin  
1 doeskin or 3 raccoons  
2 beavers or 3 buckskins  
1 raccoon or 2 muskrats  
1 pound of beaver  
1 raccoon  
1 buck or middling beaver  
20 beaver  
3 beaver  
1 doeskin or small beaver  
1 doeskin or 3 raccoons



# Lesson 5

Using Rendezvous at Michilimackinac

 **Read the “Rendezvous at Michilimackinac.”**

 **Discuss the following questions with students during or after reading.**

1. Why was getting a lot of good furs important for Whispering Sky and Running Deer?

*They used the furs as money. They could buy things they needed, like kettles, for the following year. If there were no voyageurs, they could not trade as much for items they needed.*

2. What do we use today to trade for items we need?

*Instead of furs, we use money, both coins and paper bills. We also use plastic cards and checks that represent the paper bills and coins.*

3. Where did Louis and Peter meet to do their exchange of goods? Why?

*Louis and Peter exchanged their goods at Michilimackinac. It was a common place in the middle of the lakes and rivers to meet. They would also have the commandant of the fort inspect the furs and the military to enforce a fair and equal trade.*

4. How did Louis and Peter travel to Michilimackinac? What did they use as “roads”?

*Louis and Peter brought news from their homes and places they traveled through. Louis told of the fighting between two Indian tribes. They also probably brought news of their families, new products they trade with and other important events.*

5. What other things did Peter and Louis bring to Michilimackinac besides fur and trade goods? What kind of information did they bring?

*Louis came from the west with his furs. The west had many animals to for fur. The American Indian tribes and others would trap for furs there. Peter came from the east and brought supplies or trade goods. The supplies were brought from the east coast, Europe or further away where they had factories and companies that made certain items.*

 **Assign parts to the students. Have them act out the play.**

Have the students act out the play. Research clothing online and have them make hats or some kind of costumes for the play. They can use Activity 16 for the fur trading scene.

 **Use Activities 16, 17 to further support the ideas in the “Rendezvous at Michili-**

## GLCEs that may be reached in Lesson 5:

**3-H3.0.5** Use informational text and visual data to compare how American Indians and settlers in the early history of Michigan adapted to, used, and modified their environment.

**3-H3.0.6** Use a variety of sources to describe interactions that occurred between American Indians and the first European explorers and settlers in Michigan.

**3-G1.0.2** Use thematic maps to identify and describe the physical and human characteristics of Michigan.

**3-G4.0.2** Describe diverse groups that have come into a region of Michigan and reasons why they came.

**3-G5.0.2** Describe how people adapt to, use and modify the natural resources of Michigan.

**3-E1.0.3** Analyze how Michigan’s location and natural resources influenced its economic development.

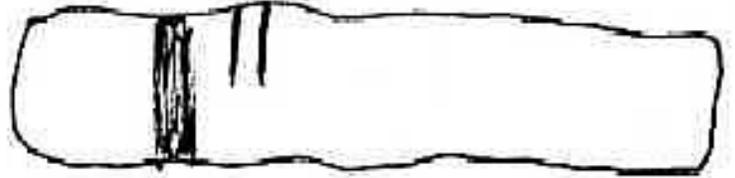
**Vocabulary Words:** rendezvous      sagamity      ledger  
salt pork      Dakota



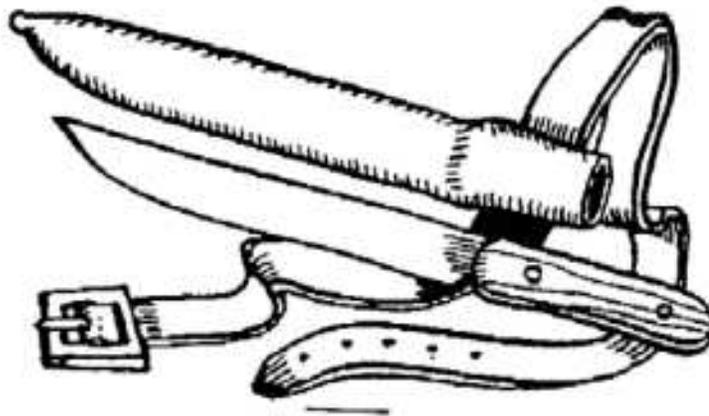
There are two people trading. One is trading furs for supplies to use during the colder months of the year. The other person is trading the supplies for furs trapped during the winter months. Use this activity as part of the play, or try it after the play. The items can be colored and cut out for use in the trading, or even enlarged on a copier! Use the chart to help you find out how much things cost. Good luck trading!



Bale



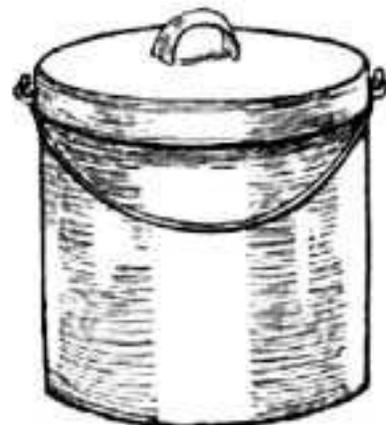
Blanket



Knife



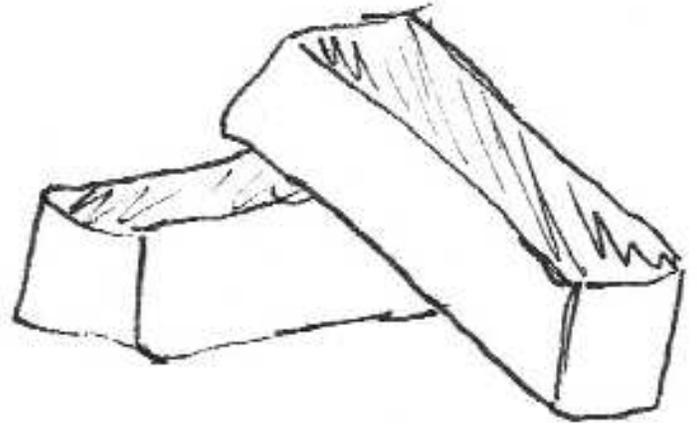
Kettle



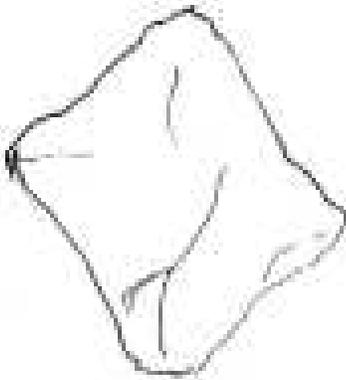
Kettle



Stockings



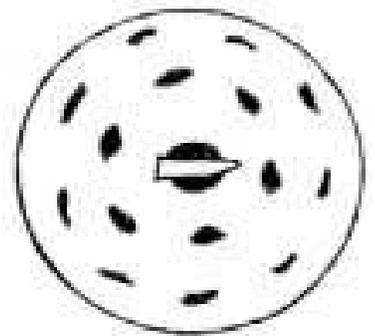
Bars of Lead



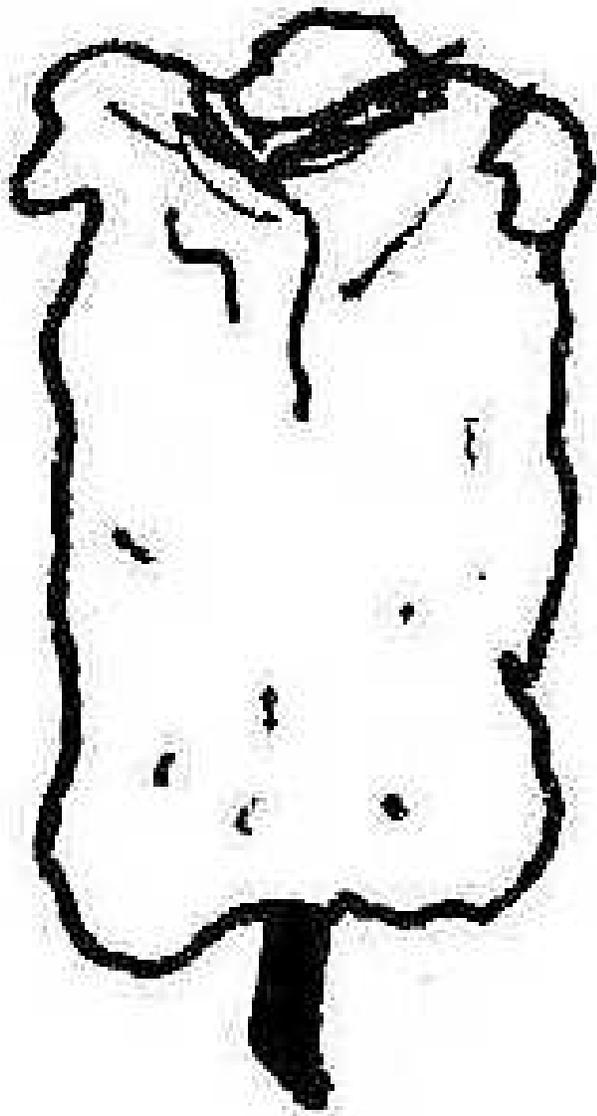
Flint



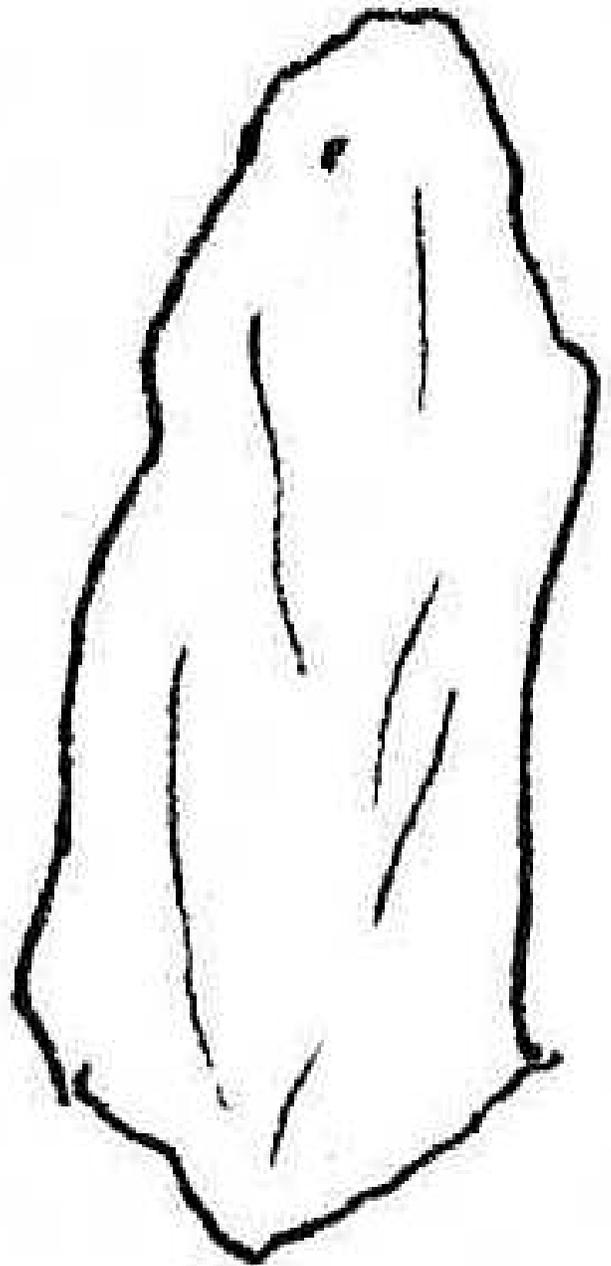
Beads



Brooch



Raccoon Pelt



Muskrat Pelt



Beaver Pelt



Since travel was done mainly by water in the Great Lakes region, one of the most important things you could own is a canoe. Canoes are a little different now than they were in Peter and Louis' time. What has changed over time? Use the **Adventures of Jacques and Pierre** and the **Rendezvous at Michilimackinac** stories to help you compare then and now (hint: the average size of a canoe now is about 16 feet and holds two to four people). Try using masking tape and tape out the size of the canoe then and a canoe now on the floor—sit in it, try to move in it, pretend to row in it and see how they compare!

	<b>THEN</b>	<b>NOW</b>
<b>Size</b>		
<b>Materials (what it is made of)</b>		
<b>Purpose</b>		
<b>Number of passengers</b>		
<b>Amount and kind of cargo</b>		

