Lesson Plan 1: Aboriginal and Métis Influence Upon Exploration and Settlement

Generalization
Many different factors influenced the settlement and exploration of Canada.

Rationale
Traditionally, the social studies curriculum has examined the role of explorers and settlers upon the development of Canada as a nation. The following lesson plan will highlight the contributions, influence and sacrifices that Aboriginal and Métis peoples made in an effort to help settle the West, particularly Alberta.

Objective
Knowledge
- Realize that explorers, traders and settlers followed existing Aboriginal trade routes
- Identify why Aboriginal People chose to settle in specific areas
- Recognize the complex relationships between Aboriginal, Métis, British and French traders, settlers and explorers

Skills
- Trace and discover trading routes used by Aboriginal and European traders
- Interpret historical maps
- Locate specific areas/settlements on various maps

Attitude
- Develop an appreciation for Aboriginal Peoples’ knowledge of water and trade routes
- Engage positively in activities and work well with others

Teacher Information
The fur trade crossed many boundaries, changed many lives and influenced many cultures as it spread from the eastern coast of Canada across to the province of Alberta. The lives of European explorers, fur traders and explorers were influenced tremendously by Aboriginal People across the country. It is important students recognize that the early explorers, settlers and fur traders benefited greatly from the trade knowledge, experience and routes that the Aboriginal People already possessed and were willing to share. Early exploration and trade was conducted primarily with the use of the canoe (which was an Aboriginal invention) and the vast number of waterways contained in the Canadian interior. Aboriginal culture in Canada prior to European contact was thriving—people lived in a complex and rich society with governing systems bound in fundamental value and beliefs systems, spiritual beliefs and practices interwoven with daily activities. Aboriginal People had developed allies and enemies and established successful trade relationships with other Aboriginal groups. European explorers and traders lived a much
different lifestyle in comparison–coming from a society characterized by rigid rules regarding land ownership, religion and government. The development of fur trading posts in Alberta undoubtedly affected the Aboriginal way of life. However, during early contact and the explosion of the fur trade, many Aboriginal Peoples were willing to trade goods and share their knowledge of waterways and trade routes.

Introductory Activity
To introduce students to the concept of trade routes and transportation, download historical Canadian maps of early exploration from the Culture and Its Meaning Edukit website/CD-ROM. Either transfer these to overheads or make enough copies for the entire class. Allow students to view the maps and hypothesize how they think people would have travelled from one area to the next. Download the drawing of a canoe from the Culture and Its Meaning Edukit website/CD-ROM and, using it as an overhead transparency, have students identify how the canoe would have aided Aboriginal groups in transportation. Ensure students understand that waterways were the main means of transportation as there were no roads or highways at this time.

Main Lesson
Divide students into small groups of three or four members. Using historical maps as a guide, students will trace the major waterway routes in Alberta to centers of trade such as Fort Edmonton, the Hudson’s Bay trading area, Athabascan region, Red River, and the Clearwater River area on a blank map of the prairie region. Students will choose a particular route and compare it to routes used by early explorers. Students will then use this information to create a 3-D reconstruction of one of the trading posts that would have been encountered along their chosen route. The 3-D construction should mimic how a trading post would have appeared. Students must also include information on the people who would have managed and traded at the post, as well as what items would have been traded. Students may also want to include a map in their model that highlights their route in comparison to the province of Alberta. This is a major research project that allows students to express themselves creatively.

Supplementary lesson
Ask students to compare and contrast the traditional methods that Aboriginal People used at the time of contact to create, develop and manufacture a birch bark canoe. Contrast these methods with the way canoes are manufactured today. In small groups, students will develop a model of a birch bark canoe using a variety of materials such as clay, paper maché, construction paper, or wood/twigs and other materials. The group must also put together a one to two page paper that describes the changes in canoe construction over time.