

READING LOG #4

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In the 1600's Europeans explored and settled a new land, which would later be called Canada. The men outnumbered the women at that time in New France. With only the men explorers showing up to get a new life started in this western world, how were they going to populate and reproduce without women to support and bear children for them? Women from France were sent by the King to assist then men with colonizing Canada. The King paid women to get married and have children in order to solidify success in his new colony of New France. Women performed many tasks that 200 years later would only be considered male jobs, as well as started a family for the men. These women have made a huge impact on the culture we know in Canada today.

According to Leduc, most French Canadians can trace their lineage back to one or another of the filles du roi who arrived in Quebec in the mid-seventeenth century.¹ These ladies were sent overseas to find their future husbands as well as to help the men colonize New France, help set up trade partnerships and start families. As the new women arrived, men lined up to face there soon to be new bride. From the time of first sight, they quickly became married and started having kids soon after. First settling along the east coast, then eventually moving inland, the new arrivals built houses and set up farms to support there animals they used to support their families.

To survive, the populace gather grew, traded, processed, packed, and shipped its natural resources of furs, fish, marine oils, timber, earthenware, fibers and foodstuffs produced on farms or culled from waters and forest.² Living off the earth, the people of New France did a great job at sustaining themselves without much help or money. People gathered and hunted in groups to support each other and have a bigger success rate. The people of New France survived on a bare landscape that Canada provided.

Reading these stories about the women of New France in the 1600's makes me proud to be a woman. I can't imagine the hardship and struggles these ladies faced, and yet they created and supported such a big colony that led to the great country we live in today.

¹ Adrienne Leduc, "A Fille du Roi's Passage," *Beaver* Vol. 81, Issue 1 (Feb/Mar 2001), p.20.

² Jan Noel, "'Nagging Wife' Revisited: Women and the Fur Trade in New France," *French Colonial History*, Vol.7 (2006), pp. 45-60.