

Lesson 2.2B

New France: The Major Players

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First Level—The Sovereign Council

After 1663 New France was governed by a group of three officials known as the *Sovereign Council*. The Sovereign Council carried out the king's orders in the colony.

The Sovereign Council was made up of three officials: The Governor, the Intendant, and the Bishop.

The *Governor* was the highest-ranking official in New France. He made sure the other officials did their jobs properly, and he established relations with First Nations people. The governor was also in charge of the army in New France.

Governor



The *Intendant* managed the economy and maintained law and order in the colony. He ran New France on a day-to-day basis.

Intendant



The *Bishop* was the head of the Church in New France. He took care of all religious matters in the colony and supervised the running of the schools and hospitals.

Bishop

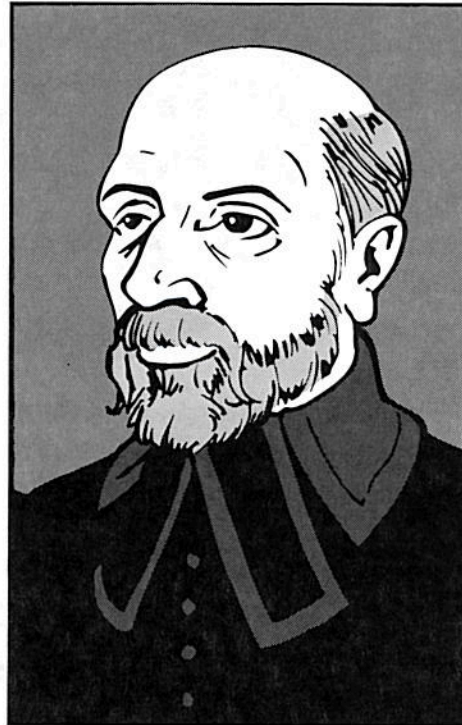


Second Level—The Clergy and the Seigneurs

The second level of society in New France consisted of the clergy and the seigneurs.

The *clergy* included *priests* and *nuns*. In the early years of the colony, priests often travelled inland with the fur traders. They were eager to meet First Nations people and try to convert them to Christianity. However, First Nations people showed little interest in these Black Robes.

Priest



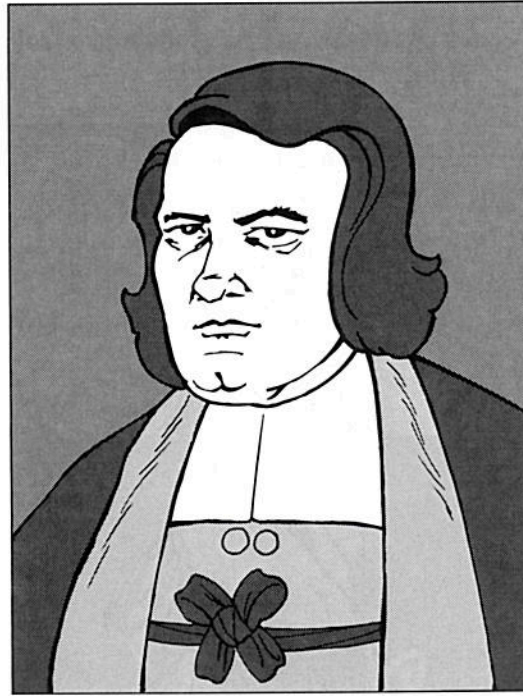
The clergy also included nuns. Nuns played an important role in education and health in New France.

Nun



The second level of society in New France also included the *seigneurs*. The seigneur was an important person. He was given a large section of land (*seigneurie*) by the king and was expected to rent sections of it to willing farmers.

Seigneur



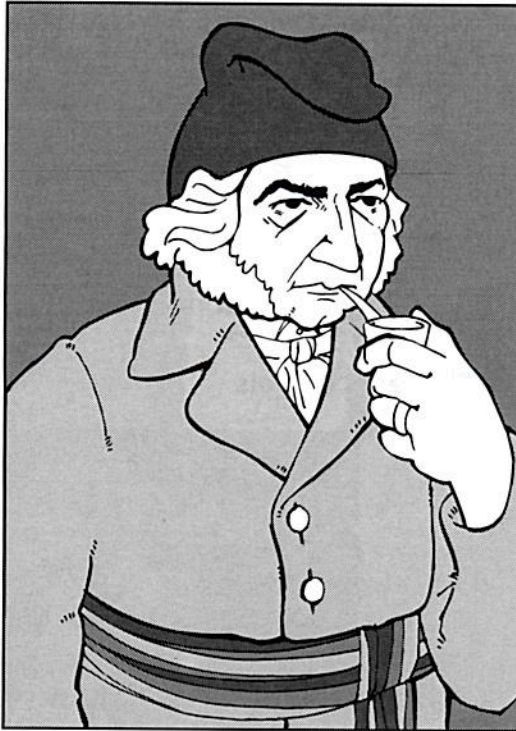
The seigneur provided his tenants with protection in the event of an attack. He also built a mill and an oven so his tenants could grind their wheat into flour and bake it into bread.

If the seigneur did not carry out these and other duties, the king could take back the land.

Third Level—Habitant, Filles du roi, and Coureurs de bois

The third level of society in New France consisted of the habitants, filles du roi, and the coureurs de bois.

The *habitant* rented a section of land from the seigneur. He was expected to clear and farm the land and provide the seigneur with a small percentage of his crops. The habitant was also expected to perform a certain amount of free labour, such as fixing roads, for the seigneur each year.

Habitant

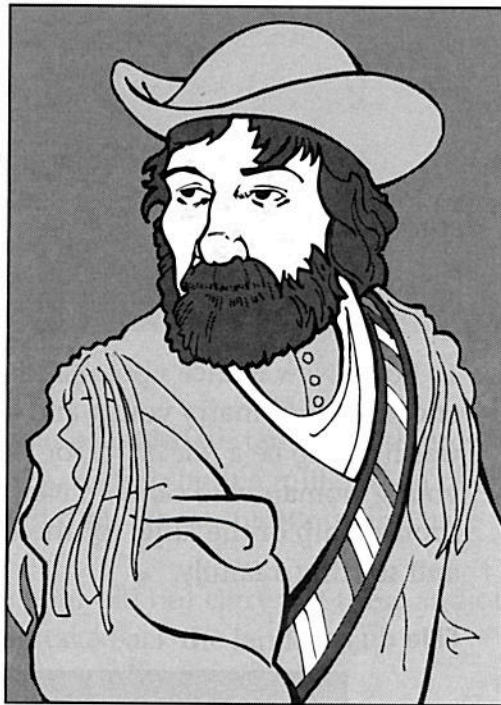
To boost New France's population, the habitant was encouraged to marry young and have many children. His wife was likely to be a *fille du roi*, or "king's daughter." This was a young woman who came to New France under the sponsorship of the king, for the express purpose of marrying and starting a family.

Fille du roi

New France had no shortage of young men willing to travel inland to trade with First Nations people for their furs. These young men were called *coureurs de bois*, or “runners of the woods.”

The *coureurs de bois* led exciting lives. They sometimes fought in battles alongside their First Nations allies. They also visited places that no European had ever seen before.

Coureurs de bois



Many *coureurs de bois* also took “country wives.” These were First Nations women who taught the *coureurs de bois* how to survive in a foreign land. These women also acted as guides and interpreters for the *coureurs de bois* as they searched for new places to trade.

Country Wives



Your textbook, *Crossroads: A Meeting of Nations*, provides further information about the three levels of society in New France. Read *pages 232–244* and make lesson notes on the important points of information found on these pages. You will need to know much of this material for the section assignments and for Test 2.