

### Journey of a Beaver Fur

Native people hunted animals for meat and for fur, which they used for clothing. The Dutch depended on Native people’s knowledge of their homelands to get what they needed and for furs. The Dutch used beaver furs to make beaver-felt hats—symbols of wealth in Dutch society.



Beavers are agile and can run amazingly fast. Native people have to catch them in traps or, when the beavers lie hidden in their burrows underground, lance them with long blades mounted on shafts.

Charles T. Gehring and William Starna, eds., *A Description of New Netherland by Adriaen Van Der Donck* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008)

Native women washed the furs to remove blood and dirt. Next, flesh and fat were scraped off with a flesher tool. Lastly, the beaver pelts were placed onto a stretching frame to dry.

Adapted from Carolyn Gilman, *Where Two Worlds Meet: The Great Lakes Fur Trade* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1982), 41



*“The Beaver provides everything perfectly well. It gives us kettles, hatchets, swords, knives, bread; in short, it provides everything.”*

— Native trader, 1634

Jesuits, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Bros., 1896–1901), 297



*“The beaver is the main reason . . . for the initial settlement of this fine country by Europeans. The fur is made into the best hats that are worn . . . throughout Europe.”*

— Adriaen Van Der Donck, Dutch lawyer and landowner, 1650s

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Illustrations by Maria Wolf Lopez, coordinated by Michael Sheyhshhe (Caddo)