

Glossary of French terms

<i>Avant</i>	the man who sits in the front of a canoe (or bowman) and studies rocks, rapids and currents in order to select the route
<i>Bon à rien</i>	good for nothing
<i>Bonjour</i>	Good bye, Good day
<i>Canot de maître</i>	a large freight canoe used from Montreal through the Great Lakes to Grand Portage; going westward it carried goods to be traded to Indians and furs on the return voyage
<i>Canot du nord</i>	smaller north canoe used on rivers and lakes west and north of Grand Portage by traders and those who were spending the winter in small forts in the wilderness
<i>Capote</i>	a coat, made from a blanket
<i>Cariole</i>	a sled (or sledge) with a back, so one could sit and ride
<i>Chateau</i>	castle, or fortified stone group of buildings
<i>Comment ça va?</i>	How goes it?
<i>Commis</i>	a clerk or person who keeps records
<i>Comte</i>	a noble (like a count)
<i>Coureur des bois</i>	a free trader or trapper who was not allied with a company; some were illegal
<i>Croquemitaine</i>	an ogre (“the mitten biter”) or bogeyman
<i>Décharge</i>	the process of men guiding an unloaded canoe through a rapids by holding ropes, wading beside it
<i>Demi-chargé</i>	the process of guiding a half-loaded canoe up or down a rapids which was too dangerous for a fully loaded canoe
<i>En garde</i>	Watch out! (Be on guard)
<i>Il pays d'en haut</i>	the “upcountry,” meaning the wilderness land northwest of Lake Superior
<i>La belle France</i>	the beautiful motherland of France
<i>Le Père Lustucru</i>	an ogre or bogeyman
<i>Loup-garou</i>	a werewolf

<i>Marche</i>	to march, or move
<i>Métis</i>	people with “mixed” French and Indian blood)
<i>Noblesse oblige</i>	the rule that those who have noble birth are obliged to care for the needs and problems of those who are less fortunate
<i>Portage</i>	to carry a canoe and its contents past a rapids or between lakes; a trail for carrying canoe and goods from one lake or river to another, also called a “carry”
<i>Grand Portage</i>	the fort on Lake Superior near a nine-mile portage trail
<i>Rendez-vous</i>	the annual meeting at Grand Portage of voyageurs from Montreal, winterers (traders who’d spent the winter amassing furs to exchange) and partners from the fur company
<i>Rubbaboo</i>	a thick stew made from pemmican, eaten by voyageurs
<i>Sacre bleu!</i>	Gosh darn it! (or the stronger expression)
<i>Voilà</i>	Oh look!
<i>Voyageur</i>	an expert canoeman hired to traverse the Great Lakes or inland to trade for furs with Indian tribes

(My thanks to Nicole Kubesh for her careful attention to the usage of the French language.)