

## British Columbia

... of Canada's west coast has been described as the "breadbasket" of the Pacific. Simon Fraser's discovery of the gold fields of British Columbia would be described as Canada's "gold rush". Simon Fraser's discovery of the gold fields of British Columbia would be described as Canada's "gold rush".

When the European explorers, sailors and fur traders — Juan Ponce de Leon, James Cook, Simon Fraser, David Thompson, Alexander Mackenzie — discovered the B.C. coast and interior from 1774 to 1800, the land of the tall pine already had long established relations with the western world. It is probable that the first Coast Indians were the last of the "fringed" people of North America, who were first seen about 10,000 years ago. Many of the several linguistic and cultural groups that comprised the "fringed" people of the Pacific Northwest were still to be seen in the early 19th century. The first "fringed" people of the Pacific Northwest were still to be seen in the early 19th century.

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The European explorers were soon followed by the traders and an important maritime fur trade developed. This led to a period of misadventure which was ended by the Treaty of San Juan de Capatzen, signed by representatives of Britain and Spain in 1790, making the northwest coast open to all nations.

The competition between the two main fur trading companies, the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, meanwhile was increasing. The first settlement east of the Rockies, in 1791, was Fort Chipewyan. It was the first of many trading posts and forts in the northwest. Alexander Mackenzie of the North West Company was the first to reach the Pacific coast in 1791. The first settlement east of the Rockies, in 1791, was Fort Chipewyan. It was the first of many trading posts and forts in the northwest.

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