

## Working with Old French Maps

French geographers created these maps at different points in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Though the maps are reproduced here, you may find it more useful to consult them online or to download them so that you can enlarge them to see the detail more clearly. The link for each is included by the map.

**You'll see the ways in which French and European knowledge of the area of the French Heritage Corridor changed over time.** Note the different kinds of information that we can glean from maps.

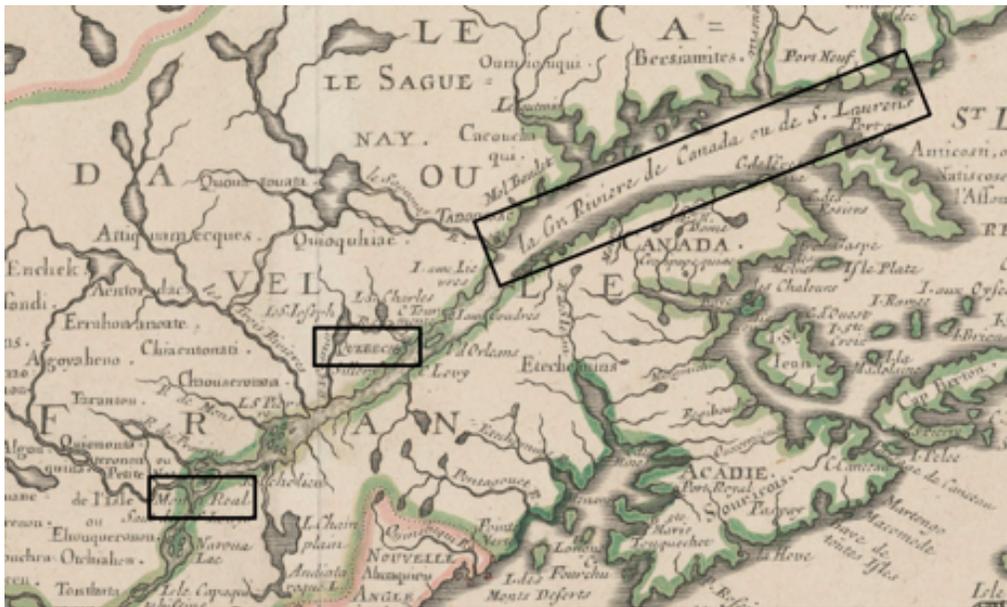
### I. The Sanson Map (1656)

Entire map available at <https://lib.msu.edu/branches/map/NAJPEGs/100-c-A-1656.jpg> :



Michigan State University Library <https://lib.msu.edu/branches/map/NAJPEGs/100-c-A-1656.jpg>

- A. An excerpt from the map: Note the two names given to the river and note the two French settlements along the river. Also note other recognizable region names: Le Saguenay and Acadie, for example.



Michigan State University Library <https://lib.msu.edu/branches/map/NAJPEGS/100-c-A-1656.jpg>

- B. A second excerpt from the Sanson map



Michigan State University Library <https://lib.msu.edu/branches/map/NAJPEGS/100-c-A-1656.jpg>

1. Note the names given to the Great Lakes, some of which are different from today's names.

2. Also, note the inaccurate shapes of some of the lakes.
3. Finally, we can guess why the shapes of the westernmost parts of the lakes are incomplete. How much did the French know about this region, in 1656?

## II. The Coronelli map (1688)

Entire map available at <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2246864> :



Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2246864>

- A. Note the variant names for Lake Michigan and Lake Superior.
- B. The cartographer, Coronelli, give information about the exploration of this region by Europeans. Here are two texts that are found on the map:



Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2246864>

Le 17 Juin le Pere Marquette, et le Sr Jolliet furent les premiers de Europeens, qui entrerent dans la Riv Missisipi par la Riv Ouisconsing, etans partis de Maskoutens, le 10 Juin avec l guide de deux Miamis.

On June 17 Father Marquette and le Sieur Jolliet were the first Europeans to enter into the Missisipi River by way of the Ouisconsing River, having left the Mascouten (territory of the Mascoutens) on June 10 with the guidance of two Miami (Indians)

---

Le premier Janvier, lan 1682 Mr de la Salle entra dans la Riv des Illinois, et la trouva glacée, il fut obligé de traisner les canots, et Esquipages, environ 60 lieues jusqu'ou la Riv estoit navigable, car le froid n'y dure que six Semaines, et il descendit en Canot jusqu'au fleuve Missisipi, vivant dans ce temps de chasse. La Riviere est aussi large et profonde que la Seine a Paris.

The first of January in the year 1682 Mr. de la Salle entered the River of the Illinois, and found it frozen, he was obliged to drag the canoes, and Equipment, around 60 leagues to where the River was navigable, for the cold only lasts six Weeks, and he descended by Canoe to the Missisipi river, surviving during this time by hunting. The River is as wide and deep as the Seine at Paris.

1. Note the Frenchmen who are named here.
2. Note the identity of those who guided Marquette and Jolliet on their trip to the "Missisipi."
3. Note the form of transport used by "Mr de la Salle" on his travels on the Illinois River.
4. Note the more familiar river to which the Mississippi River is compared.
5. Consider why the cartographer thought it useful to include these travel accounts on the map.

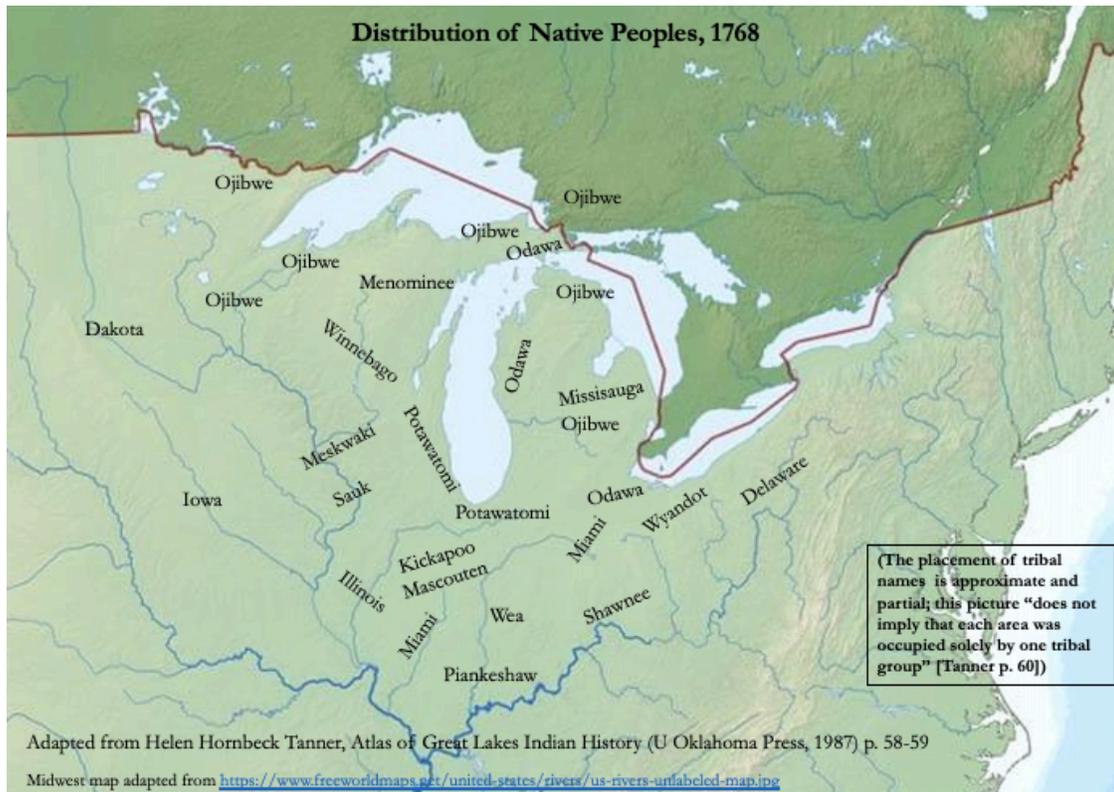
### III. The Bellin Map (1755)

Entire map available at <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2244596>



Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2244596>

1. Look carefully to see the names of the Native tribes or nations that are indicated on the map ("Pays des..." = "Country/Nation of..."). (The French word "Renards" [Fox] indicates the Meskwaki; "Hurons" indicates the Wyandot or Wendat.) How many can you find?
2. Compare these with the names of the Native groups indicated on the next map, a modern map which shows the distribution of the various nations in 1768. (Note, however, that the territory that each nation considered its home is much larger than what you see here, and that there were not "boundaries" between Native people's home lands.) Compare this contemporary map to the Bellin map. What similarities or differences do you see?
3. Consider the Native point of view regarding their home: read the words of Miami chief Mihšihkinaahkwa (Little Turtle), who outlined Miami land in a speech at the Treaty of Greenville in 1795: "It is well known by all my brothers present, that my forefather kindled the first fire at Detroit; from thence, he extended his lines to the head waters of Scioto; from thence, to its mouth; from thence, down the Ohio, to the mouth of the Wabash, and from thence to Chicago, on lake Michigan." At <https://aacimotaatiyankwi.org/2021/04/13/four-versions-of-a-little-turtle-speech-at-greenville-1795/>.



Midwest map adapted from <https://www.freeworldmaps.net/united-states/rivers/us-rivers-unlabeled-map.jpg>

#### IV. Reflection and Discussion

1. Why are so many rivers indicated on the old maps?
2. Why do the names of Native tribes, nations, and federations appear on the old maps? Why do you think this information is important for the French to know?
3. In general, what categories or kinds of information are indicated on these maps? Why do you think this information was important enough to be included?
4. Return to these maps and these questions once you have worked through the other materials in the teaching module. Do you have additional ideas about the answers to the questions in this part?

---

#### For Teachers

#### Project Ideas

- Create a map of your region with the old French names for rivers and lakes alongside the current names.
- Create a map, perhaps using ThingLink or a similar app, of a place familiar to you like your classroom, or of one you would like to explore. Include important information similar to the various kinds of information that are included on the French maps you've studied here. Think about the audience for your map, and what it's important for them to know about.

### **Learning Goals**

- Compare maps from different years and explain how French knowledge of the geography of North America developed gradually.
- Analyze the kinds of information found on the maps and infer why the various kinds of information were included by mapmakers for their audience.
- Argue for what various purposes maps are used.