

In 1671 I joined the Sieur de Saint Lussion
Sault Ste. Marie was where he said we would be goin'
Sent there under orders by Jean Baptiste Talon
to lay claim to the land before more British came along

The people they all know me by the name Pierre Moreau
I am a coureurs-de-bois and that is why I chose to go
A chance to trade for furs among the natives that I know
skimming 'cross the water in those birch bark batteaux

In October 1670 we set out from Montreal
down the Ottawa, lake Nipissing, the French River and all
we canoed into lake Huron as the snow began to fall
on Manitoulin island we waited for spring thaw

In 1671 it was, on the 5th day of May
We traders, priests and government men reached Sault Ste Marie
Nicholas Perrot set out to tell the natives in Green Bay
to come and watch the Frenchmen shoot their guns and have
their say

CHORUS

Who can own the land? Who can own a man?
A tribe, a king, a government, a party or a clan?
Who can ask the question? Who can understand?
The idea is what has us in its ruthless little hand

In 1671 on June 14th a new day dawned
as Simon Francis Daumont, the Sieur de Saint Lussion
raised the cross of his religion as Vexilla Regis was sung
and 2000 natives wondered what was goin' on

The Indians watched as Simon raised some earth and then his
sword
and annexed in the name of Louis the 14th and the Lord
the land beneath their feet and all the water that poured
through the rapids of St. Mary to every undiscovered shore

Nick Perrot stood up and spoke to the natives in their tongue
some words that were supposed to tell them what had just been
done
He said, "You may not understand it but the French kingdom
has come."
All shouted, "Vive le Roy!" as the French fired off their guns

A metal plate engraved with the royal arms of France
was attached to a cedar post as the priest took up his stance
Allouez harangued the crowd and soon he put them in a trance
I drank some rum and chuckled as the bonfire flames they
danced

CHORUS

Who can own the land? Who can own a man?
A tribe, a king, a government, a party or a clan?
Who can ask the question? Who can understand?
The idea is what has us in its ruthless little hand

Some 200 years later William Warren wrote down
just what the natives heard when the Frenchmen made their
sounds
They heard a pledge of friendship in those words that flew
around
a promise of protection as those muskets shook the ground

By 1771 Louis the 14th was long gone
The British had moved in, Vexilla Regis was not sung
but traders just like me, French, English and native carried on
whoever owns the flag you find a way to sing along

CHORUS

Who can own the land? Who can own a man?
A tribe, a king, a government, a party or a clan?
Who can ask the question? Who can understand?
The idea is what has us in its ruthless little hand

Peter White © 2010