

Lost voices : how european immigrants and especially british colonialization dama...

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Aboriginals have inhabited the region of "Canada" as far back as historical records exist. From the first contact, Europeans have had a negative impact on Aboriginals. Disease and loss of land contributed to the rapidly declining number of Native peoples prior to the development of Canada. As opposed to the French influence, the English colonial culture was especially destructive. Aboriginals achieved some benefits by allying with the French. During New France times, the French lived among the Aboriginals and learned their culture and way of life. After the American Revolution, the British acquired land treaties with Aboriginal nations to support their growing immigration to Canada. Today, Aboriginals are still fighting for their rights and to have a bigger voice within Canada. Currently, Aboriginals make up approximately 3% of the Canadian population. Before Confederation, both the French and English had alliances with various Native peoples. Generally, Aboriginals preferred to be allied with the French rather than the English. They benefited more by being allies of the former and were treated with considerably more respect. During the Seven Years War, the French treated the Aboriginal peoples as independent nations. The allies of France gained advantages in trade and influence over other Aboriginal nations. On the other hand, during the American Revolution, the Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca Peoples of the Six Nations Iroquois Alliance fought on the British side because they believed that this would allow them to retain their territory in the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes regions. These tribes were fighting for survival. At the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and Treaty of Paris, which ended the war, Native peoples were not considered or mentioned. The lands west of the Ohio Valley and south of the Great Lakes

were given to the United States with no protection offered to the Aboriginals who had lived on the now American lands. These people had no chance to regain their land, many were killed and their settlements were destroyed. In the negotiations, the British made no effort to protect their Native allies. Loss of Aboriginal culture has been an ongoing problem. Both English and French immigration contributed to this, however, the English influence was more destructive. French Jesuits went on missions, living among the Huron people in their own lands, learning their language and studying their culture. Even though the Jesuits did this in order to convert the Huron to Catholicism, they at least showed respect for the original culture. The British were much more arrogant in their attitudes. There were language barriers between the British and the Native peoples, which were ignored by the British and some land agreements were not recorded or were lost. Some of the translators were not dependable or were dishonest. In many treaties, Aboriginal nations were not considered or mentioned, leaving a feeling of betrayal. Both English and French colonization contributed to the loss of Aboriginal culture, but the English influence was more damaging. After there was peace between Britain and the United States at the end of the American Revolution, a huge wave of European immigrants and British Empire Loyalists arrived in Canada. Treaties with the French had been for trade and peace, however, subsequent treaties with the English were effectively land transfers to provide land for these new immigrants. Joseph Brant, a Mohawk chief, and other Native Canadians realized that the only way to survive was to sell or lease land to these new settlers. The Six Nations reserve sold 154 385 hectares of their reserve to settlers and were often not paid the agreed upon price. This can

be contrasted with the behavior of the French during the Seven Years War. The French, with only forty three thousand people, did not try to settle in Aboriginal lands and instead, treated the Native peoples as trading partners. Throughout the nineteenth century, the lands, which the Aboriginals had, once claimed as their homeland, were taken over by the advancing European settlement. These European immigrants eventually became the majority within Canada. The real losers in the European settlement of Canada and associated wars are the Aboriginal peoples. Fighting among themselves, the European colonists took over land , that was claimed by Native peoples long before their arrival. Even though both French and English were destructive influences, the English immigrants proved to be more harmful to the Native culture and way of life. This can be seen by considering the treatment of native allies during wars, the differing amount of respect accorded to Aboriginal culture and traditions and the damaging impact of English land agreements. In 1867, Confederation connected the different colonies together, under one name. This combination of different societies within a single nation has created a unique cultural identity for Canada. However, the culture and traditions of Canada's native peoples were overwhelmed by the European influence long before Canada became a nation. Aboriginal Canadians still seek to find their lost voice.