

The account of canada before 1760 assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Short Essay Assignment History. Critical Analyses of: “ Canada before 1760”

The account of “ Canada before 1760” 1 illustrates how life in Canada is often misinterpreted before this time. Misinterpretation often occurs due to the biased portrayal, as well as debates, on such topics as frontierism vs. metropolitanism, decapitation theory vs. changing masters theory, the significance of the roles played by the natives vs. the European colonists, and also the power religion had or did not have over the native peoples.

Although, the opening sentence, in the account of Canada before 1760, is a reflection of the decapitation theory², what follows does not support the theory and is an example of how misinterpretations are often made. The author states that “ Here, as in France, the clergy and the great landlords dominated the lives of the habitants totally, the former dictating to them a moral code in which entrepreneurship was a vice, and both groups picking their pockets without restraint. ³The author describes the social structure of New France as “ similar” ⁴ to that of the Feudal system of Europe at the time, however; the only similarity was the basic structure of the system. The foundation of New France’ social structure was based on the European feudal system however; the whole essence of the new society was very different. ⁷ The true heart of the society in New France was far from the Master-Slave type structure of the motherland.

The system that developed needed to be much more enticing than that of the motherland, and the reason for this was that, it was a new land with very few inhabitants and cooperation was vital in order to survive. In addition, survival depended on new immigrants, and in order to acquire and maintain the immigrants New France needed to be as enticing as possible. In both

Countries land was distributed to the peasants by a landlord who was appointed by the Crown, they did not, however, receive equal amounts. In France the average amount of acreage distributed was rarely more than two acres, in New France amounts as much as 840 acres were given.

In France, the peasant's were often given the poorest of land and the yield would often not cover the needs of a single family, and supplementing by fishing or hunting on the Landlords land could often mean execution. 8 In contrast, New France' habitants were allowed to hunt and fish on the nobles land and, if this did not produce enough food the landlord would supplement the habitant families with part of his crop. 9 The misinterpretations continue throughout the account in this statement " as for the great land lords picking their pockets. 10 Since, the landlords in France had their own personal contracts with the peasants they could do as they pleased, and take from the peasants as they wished. On the other hand, in New France, legislation protected the habitant as long as he paid his rent; the landlord had no power over him. Eventhough the clergy may have " dictated a moral code in which entrepreneurship was a vice" 11 the habitants, with their large fertile plots were able to provide for their own families as well as other families in the near-by towns. 2 Because of this self-sufficiency, the habitants rarely needed to participate in the fur trade or for that matter needed it as " an escape" 13 as mentioned in the account " Canada before 1760. " 14 Although, the account describes the metropolis as the main control in New France and that " Only the fur trade offered an escape" " free from the reach of the ruling elites of France, " 15the habitants were free in many ways from the ruling elites of France. They were not forced to pay taxes to the motherland, and

any new laws that came from France usually did not take effect due to the long process of negotiation between the two countries. 6 The isolation from the motherland also enabled the people to live free from the rules and laws of the motherland, it would seem then, that frontierism was molding¹⁷ the new land. When referring to the fur trade it was only the *coureurs de bois* or outlaws of the fur trade who were free from the ruling elite of France and only because they were continuously “ in defiance of repeated ordinance. “
18 Who was subordinate the natives or the colonial fur traders is a subject often debated between historians.

In the account, Canada before 1760 only one side of the debate is discussed “ That the Natives were subordinate to the colonial fur traders, and that the Natives skills were required in trade; but, whose ability to influence the terms of trade was always small. “ 19 However, initially the Europeans were reliant upon the Natives and their knowledge of survival through the harsh winters, and the deadly disease of scurvy, and without the Natives the Europeans would not have survived. 20 In addition, the colonial fur traders found the natives to be very shrewd bargainers and when the natives did trade they were very particular in their tastes and value, and they demanded goods of a certain standard. 21 They were “ Far from being blindly exploited [or] taken in by inferior quality and short pleasures. “ 22 Was unfamiliarity of trade and/or warfare that caused the Natives to fall “ under the thrall of the Europeans? “ 23 No, it was not. The natives were familiar with war, they fought for vengeance, and to increase their population. 24 Trade was also familiar to the natives they had been trading amongst tribes long before the Europeans had arrived. 5 A more likely reason the natives became reliant on

the Europeans is similar to the reason the Europeans were once reliant on the Natives. The Europeans would not have been able to survive if it were not for the natives and their knowledge of the land. It was only when the colonists adapted to, and consequently depleted, and exploited what was once the native's local-resources that, they had no choice but to be dependent on the colonists and their ability to survive in a society that could no longer rely on nature. 6 The native people were far from "having few religious beliefs of their own," 27 they lived and breathed their religion. The confusion about their lack of religious convictions often comes from the inability to understand their complicated spiritual beliefs. The animals, the sky, and the earth were all sacred. 28 Because their religion was so completely integrated into the Native culture and permeated all aspects of their daily lives they were very resilient to conversion. In fact, the greatest difficulty in converting the native peoples was due to their strong beliefs.

Each Aboriginal group had its own well-established religious beliefs, and they did not believe that one set of religious views and practices applied to all people. 29 The white man was constantly struggling to convert the native people, however this led to only hatred and fear of the Christians. Because, where ever the Christians appeared, death and sickness followed. In 1647, the Jesuits admitted that the natives saw their teachings as merely superstitions that were performed in order to wipe them out. 0 The number of natives who did convert is unknown, 31 some possibly converted in order to help their status in the fur trade with the French and those who did accept the newcomers Christianity usually totally abandoned their Native way of life and in doing so they inevitably adopted "European values" 32 and "French

Consumerism. “ 33 The Natives like the people of New France lost their original way of life in this new country that was evolving. It was evolving out of the interactions of the two peoples. How this evolution took place is and will always be a debate.

The aboriginal's accounts have been handed down orally from generation to generation, and the white man's account is often biased. Therefore, the true history of Canada before 1760 will always be a debate. Works Cited Conrad, Margaret, and Alvin Finkel. *A History of the Canadian Peoples: Beginnings to 1867*. Vol. 1, 3rd ed. Toronto: Addison Wesley Longman, 2002. Finkel, Alvin. *History 224: Study Guide 1*. Athabasca, AB: Athabasca University, 2002. Garfield, Chad, ed. *The Invention of Canada: Readings in Pre-Confederation History*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitmann, 1994. 2 Alvin Finkel, *History 224: Study Guide 1*. Athabasca, AB: Athabasca University, 2002) 46. The central idea of the decapitation theory is, that “ The French connection was vital to the early development of New France,” but “ The society of New France was not a carbon copy of French society. ” 3 Student Manual. 13. 4 *ibid.* 7 Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, *A History of the Canadian Peoples: Beginnings to 1867*. Vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Addison Wesley Longman, 2002) 75. 8 *ibid.* 76 9 *Study Guide 1*, 63. 10 Student Manual, 13. 11 Student Manual, 13. 12 *Study Guide 1*, 62. 13 Student Manual, 13 14 *ibid.* 15 *ibid.* 16 *A History of the Canadian Peoples*, 91 7 *Study Guide 1*, 32. 18 *ibid.* 104 19 Student Manual, 13. 20 *A History of the Canadian Peoples*, 51. 21 *Study Guide 1*, 39. 22 *A History of the Canadian Peoples*, 115. 23 Student Manual, 13. 24 Cornelius J. Jaenen, *Amerindian Views of French Culture in the Seventeenth Century*, Chad Garfield, ed. *The Invention of Canada: Readings*

in Pre-Confederation History, (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitmann, 1994) 134. 25 A History of the Canadian Peoples, 12. 26 27 Study Guide 1, 27. 28 A History of the Canadian Peoples, 10. 29 ibid. 29. 30 Amerindian Views of French Culture, 121. 31 A History of the Canadian Peoples, 68. 32 Student Manual, 13. 33 ibid.