

Unit 10: Video 3 Transcript

Q4: Comment on the blurred identity of Aboriginal travellers who were of mixed heritage.

A: Where does identity become even more complicated with the experience of travel, I think, is a very good question. When I look at someone like Jones or someone like Catherine Sutton, his niece, Jones is interesting because he was already — he was of mixed race. His father was a Welsh surveyor. His mother was the daughter of an Anishinaabe chief. Jones himself spent a good portion of his youth living amongst the Six Nations. His father had contacts in that community, so Jones already had various strands to his own identity, his own sense of self.

And I don't quite like the word "hybrid." I'm not terribly comfortable with that. But I think Jones was crafting something different, something new, out of this context of social change, political change, economic change amongst the Mississauga. But when Jones went to England — and he wrote quite a lot about this both publicly in letters that were published in the *Christian Guardian* and letters that were published in other periodicals that were addressed to his brother John Jones or to his English wife Eliza who he met in England in 1830 — he would talk about the way in which he felt it was quite natural to be an Indigenous man who was a Christian, who was a Christian leader, but who at the same time always carried his medicine bag with him and always spoke out about the problems that his people were having and the need for the British government to pay attention to those problems. But he would also comment on the fact that when English people looked at him they didn't see a mixed-race man, for example, a man who also had family roots in Wales. They saw a "red Indian" and treated him in some ways like a freak. I mean, there were humanitarian members of the British government at this time because that was a fairly strong strand within the British government who were sympathetic towards Jones and treated him in more egalitarian ways. But he was quite well aware of the fact that when he went out on the streets of London or other cities that he toured, if he had any kind of Indigenous clothing, for example, that people would treat him as a member of a freak show. He was very clear about that. So I think in some

ways his travels made him even more aware of the kind of different ways in which people were perceived.

Catherine Sutton is sort of interesting in some ways because she, when she went for her audience with Victoria in 1860, she was chosen by her Band to represent them. She stated quite clearly over and over again in her public writings that she was an Indian woman, and these are the words that she used: "I am an Indian woman; I am an Indian mother. I have not given up on my Indian identity simply because I married a white man." But when she went to see Victoria she refused to wear Anishinaabe clothing. She insisted on wearing European dress and she said, you know, "I'm wearing this because I'm a good Christian woman. I'm not a pagan; I don't want to be treated as such." But I also think that there was more to that story than simply assimilation, because she in so many other ways insisted on her Indian identity. I think it's also because she was well aware that as an Indigenous woman appearing in the royal court, wearing Anishinaabe clothing she would be seen in a very one-dimensional kind of way and seen as an oddity. And I think also had benefited—she had been with her uncle on his 1837 tour—so I think she benefited from that. So I think in some ways, you know, even though people were used to being, almost performing "Indian" in some ways in Upper Canada, their travels made them even more aware of the kind of loaded and perilous nature of that enterprise when you transported it to another dimension or another country.