

## Unit 11: Video 1 Transcript

**Q2: What is meant by state formation in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century British North America? What was involved?**

A: State formation really means a number of different things, and it can be a little bit confusing, I think, to puzzle out what historians mean by it. Sometimes we mean that the government grew. That the authorities at the centre, at the top, gained more and more power and influence over the public. We mean that some of the things that people had done for themselves as individuals or as families, some of the things that had been done by church groups or voluntary associations, were now being taken over by the state. The state, some people would say, was intruding into people's lives increasingly over the course of the 19th century. And we could say into the 20th century too.

But state formation can also mean a kind of cultural revolution that took place in the 19th century, and that's what some historians mean by it. That is to say people came to see the state and its authority as natural in a way that they hadn't before. They came to accept the values that authorities at the top of society and in official circles had and expected people to follow. So over the course of the 19th century people became used to the idea that the state provided important leadership in terms of ideas, in terms of cultural values, in terms of their behaviour. They were expected to obey the law, of course, and it became natural to obey the law. The laws didn't seem foreign and imposed. They seemed what we would expect and what we come to live with on an everyday basis. And that hadn't always been the case.