

## Unit 1: Video 1 Transcript

A: My name is Peter Cook, and I teach at the University of Victoria. I teach courses in Indigenous–Settler Relations in the Pre-Confederation Period and courses also more broadly on Colonialism in North America. And my principal area of research is on diplomatic relations between Indigenous nations in Eastern Canada and European colonizers in the 16th, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18th centuries.

**Q4: How has this field developed? What are the critical areas of debate and disagreement among historians?**

A: As a field of study, Indigenous–settler relations, the history of Indigenous–settler relations has developed quite a bit over the last 40 years or so. Before—I mean, I guess the old-school historians often interpreted the colonial process, to use a metaphor that one historian has used, Indigenous people were the shore, and Europeans were the ocean. And the waves of the ocean just gradually swept in and eroded Indigenous economy, and sovereignty, and culture, and eventually these sort of islands of indigeneity were simply washed over, eroded, disintegrated by the force of European colonialism. So that's a vision which no longer holds true.

Certainly it's clear to us today that not only did Indigenous cultures survive colonialism, and resist it successfully, but that they in many cases became reinvigorated or reinvented themselves in the process. On the other hand, some of the historians who were reacting to that prevailing conception of the relationship, insisted only upon resistance. And so whether it was studying economic relationships, or trade, or studying the efforts of European missionaries to convert Indigenous peoples, some historians only saw or only foregrounded Indigenous efforts to resist the European agenda. I think a bit more recently scholars have acknowledged that in some cases Indigenous peoples were quite interested in what Europeans brought. That there were Indigenous people who engaged in some very serious religious dialogues with European missionaries. Were very curious about what spiritual power Europeans might be able to offer, what insights, what knowledge. So it wasn't a completely antagonistic relationship. And there were extended moments of dialogue and cooperation.

I think more recently scholars have acknowledged that it's very difficult to make vast generalizations about Canada or North America and patterns of Indigenous–settler relations. And today much scholarship focuses on regional situations or even local context. Although it is useful to stand back

and look at broad patterns, there are—there's significant variation. And a lot of this has to do of course with the cultural diversity of Indigenous peoples themselves across Canada and across the continent. A lot of this also has to do with the range of motivations that Europeans had for coming to Canada. So the field has certainly evolved, and perhaps the most exciting recent trends are increasing efforts to really appreciate Indigenous perspectives of the encounter. And this may mean using oral traditions for the early period. Sometimes few, far between, but nonetheless these give a sense of how Indigenous peoples experienced the arrival of Europeans and the challenges they posed. And related to that, there were also few but important Indigenous language texts. Now some of these were created by Europeans. But they—because they were created using Indigenous languages, they give us some insight into the ways that First Nations people saw the world in the era of colonialism.