***Instructor’s Manual***

to accompany

*Indigenous Peoples within Canada: A Concise History*, Fifth Edition

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**Chapter 3: The Invasions of the Americas**

**Chapter Outline**

This chapter describes the history of contact between the peoples of the North American continent and other peoples, specifically those of Europe . It looks at some of the ways these early interactions began to disrupt Indigenous Peoples across what would become Canada. Prior to documented dates of contact however, there is evidence which indicates the existence of earlier cultural exchange. The eastern Arctic was the place of first contact between Indigenous Peoples, namely Dorset (ancestors of modern Inuit) and Beothuk peoples. After this time, a succession of European explorers took the shock value out of these early contacts. Despite ongoing European presence in the form of whaling and fishing activities, there was little sustained contact until the demand for fur brought more European traders and settlers. The concept of colonialism, developed in Europe, would come to shape encounters with the First Peoples of North America.

There were differences in the ramifications of these early contacts for the various Indigenous groups involved. For the ancestors of Inuit, the first primary basis for involvement with Europeans was whaling activities, and in this regard, Inuit technology for deep sea whaling soon led to the growth of worldwide whaling. From an Indigenous perspective, some of the first trading encounters with the Inuit also revealed just how strong the European desire was for the fur clothing worn by the Inuit. It was along the Atlantic coast where more direct contact and subsequent conflict and hostilities arose as European trappers began to compete with Inuit people for fur and game resources; however, the Inuit were less susceptible to significant lifestyle disruption as the harsher Arctic environment was not appealing to the Europeans.

For the Beothuk of Newfoundland, their first interactions began with European fishermen off their coastal waters. The Beothuk were known to have been extremely wary of European explorers, a sentiment likely connected to the actions of Portuguese explorer Gaspar Corte-Real, who had taken 57 Beothuks and sold them into slavery. As European fishermen began to intrude into Beothuk fishing sites, hostilities erupted and continued to become increasingly violent, especially once the Beothuk began to aggressively defend against encroachment on their natural resources. As settlement grew, the Beothuk retreated inland, but the ongoing feuding resulted in open hunting being declared on their people. By 1829, the last known Beothuk had died.

The final sections of this chapter introduce the ramifications of the rapidly advancing fur trade. European diseases that travelled along the pre-existing trade networks decimated large numbers of Indigenous Peoples before the physical arrival of traders themselves. The chapter concludes by discussing key differences between Indigenous and European ethos, indicating that these differences would lead to misunderstandings between the two groups, and that these Indigenous groups did not have diplomatic measures in place that would have allowed them to unite quickly and prevent the takeover of their lands. Furthermore, because of their diversity, the fragmented nature of Indigenous nations would be manipulated by the newcomers as a tool for European domination.

**Suggested Exercises**

1. Break students into three group and have each pick one of the following Indigenous groups studied in the chapter: Dorset, Inuit, Beothuk. Let groups explore first contacts and subsequent encounters for their selected peoples to determine what the European explorers gained by establishing a foothold there, and what the effects on those particular Indigenous groups were.

2. Have students explain how European contact could have an impact upon Indigenous communities without them having actual contact with a European person (e.g., disease, trade).

3. Divide students into two groups. Have them debate the nature of exchange discussed throughout the chapter and determine the advantages or disadvantages of trade or other modes of exchange (refer to trading relationships/Columbian Exchange/and other noted impacts from contact).

**Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss and provide examples of three separate first contacts identified in the text.

2. Discuss the two basic positions toward Indigenous Peoples as put forward within the Valladolid Debate.

3. How does Frobisher’s actions toward the Inuit foreshadow the generations of Indigenous and European encounters that follow?

4. Discuss how the adaptation of Inuit technology by Europeans led to significant changes within the European fishing industry and the long-term effect that had upon Inuit hunting patterns.

5. Discuss the nature of the interactions with the Beothuk and identify changes in the relationship that led to growing hostilities.

**Essay Questions**

1. Explore the difficulties in establishing a historical narrative that reflects past events accurately. Are written accounts of historical events more accurate in relaying information and knowledge than oral accounts? Why or why not?

**Answer:** This answer should create an opportunity for the student to explore the section “Subarctic Meetings–Different Perspectives” more thoroughly. By drawing on the specific examples of subarctic meetings, as well as accounts from explorers Cartier and Davis, students could discuss history from different cultural perspectives, and possibly the ethnocentric bias present in early European accounts, as well as oral accounts passed down from Indigenous traders and their descendants. Students can be encouraged to review aspects of Chapter 1 and 2 as well as the supplementary readings at the end of both chapters.

2. Discuss and explore the various types of impact that early contacts with Europeans had on Indigenous Peoples.

**Answer:** This answer should include discussions about the Inuit and the reasons behind the less harmful impact of contact for them. The impact on Inuit hunting patterns should be included here. The reasons behind the hostilities with the Beothuk and their eventual extinction should also be addressed. Finally, the impact of disease should also be discussed.

3. Compare and contrast the colonial models enacted by the Spanish, French, and English toward Indigenous Peoples.

**Answer:** This answer should include the distinctions between the colonialism enacted by the three listed European powers. For Spain, their invasion of the Americas meant that Indigenous Peoples were initially enslaved as a labour force for gold and silver mines. The French newcomers entered into a form of partnership with local Indigenous Peoples in order to extract fur and fish resources for the French Crown. The English, as occurred in Newfoundland with the Beothuk, sought to force local Indigenous Peoples from their traditional territories as English settlement expanded.

Students should also note the standing of Indigenous Peoples within the given colonial model. Spain’s colonial system, following the Valladolid Debate, framed Indigenous Peoples as citizens of their state that required Christian conversion to attain a second-class status as people. Both the French and English colonial models excluded Indigenous Peoples as full citizens of their colonies while also negotiating with Indigenous groups as nations.

**Short Answer Questions**

1. European explorers often used derogatory epithets to describe Indigenous Peoples after their first contact and subsequent meetings. Explain the connection between these early acts of racism and negative effects for Indigenous Peoples.

**Answer:** Students could draw on specific examples and discuss how negative perceptions of Indigenous Peoples could have affected their ability to trade fairly with Europeans. Perhaps more importantly, racial discrimination against Indigenous Peoples can be discussed as an underlying context for their removal from the land, and in the case of the Beothuk, their extinction.

2. Discuss potential connections between the Inuit word for the explorers they met—*qallunaat*—and the larger European colonial approach. If the explorers were described as “children who get angry easily”, what does that say about these first contact interactions?

**Answer:** Students could explore the presumption in the European manner of assumed cultural and religious superiority, and thus how any resistance or agency exercised by the Indigenous Peoples could be upsetting to the newcomers. For example, as the Beothuk on Newfoundland took from European fishing sites to signal the newcomers’ failure to establish diplomatic relations, the reaction from the Europeans was often violence—an outgrowth of emotion—rather than a collective and reasoned attempt to build a working relationship.

3. Chapter 3 explorers the Columbian Exchange that occurred between European and Indigenous trade networks. In your response, explore the ways this exchange was mutually beneficial and the ways that it greatly benefitted European imperial powers.

**Answer:** The concept of the Columbian Exchange is introduced via a provided “Historical Background” box; an overview of the various biological exchanges is provided. The discussion might range from a short-term benefit for both cultural groups, but ultimately could explore a shifting balance of power because of widespread disease and resource exploitation.

4. Discuss how the story of Demasduit symbolizes the effects of colonialism upon the Beothuk of Newfoundland.

**Answer:** As English settlement grew on what became known as Newfoundland, competition between European trappers and the Beothuk for game and furs increased; this often resulted in violence. Newfoundland did not become an official English colony until 1824 and prior to that, there was effectively warfare toward the Beothuk by settlers. When armed fur traders attacked a group of Beothuk in 1819, Demasduit was captured, and her husband killed. In the life of Demasduit we see the effects of growing non-Indigenous settlement on Newfoundland, restrictions upon the Beothuk’s previous lifestyle, and eventual destruction of Indigenous family bonds and the Beothuk as people.

5. What were some of the key differences between Indigenous and European attitudes toward land, which would later become a basis for misunderstandings between the two groups?

**Answer:** Indigenous Peoples believed land was to benefit everyone. In contrast, Europeans viewed it in terms of private property for the benefit of individual ownership. Therefore, in Europe, where game was considered the property of landowners, hunters who were caught taking game were punished harshly. In contrast, for Indigenous Peoples, game belonged to the entire community and skilled hunters were highly valued.

**Web Resources**

Marc Montgomery, Radio Canada International—[Uncovering Secrets of the Beothuk People](https://www.rcinet.ca/en/2014/09/02/uncovering-secrets-of-newfoundlands-extinct-beothuk-people/)

Canadian Museum of History/Musée Canadien de l’Histoire—[Inuit & Englishmen: The Nunavut Voyages of Martin Frobisher](https://www.museedelhistoire.ca/cmc/exhibitions/hist/frobisher/frint01e.html)

National Humanities Center—Gaspar Corte-Real—[Letter on the Voyage of 1591](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/amerbegin/contact/text1/gcreal.pdf)

Canadian Museum of History/Musée Canadien de l’Histoire—“Population and Identity—[The Beothuk](https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/aborig/fp/fpz4a10e.html)

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador—[Nonosabasut and Demasduit Returned](https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2020/exec/0311n10/)

**Video Resources**

[APTN Investigates: Extinction Event](https://www.aptnnews.ca/investigates/aptn-investigates-extinction-event/) Todd Lamirande. Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, 15 January 2016.

This film examines the history behind the extinction process of the Beothuk. It focuses on the capture and untimely death of Demasduit, whose skull was taken from her grave and sent to Scotland.