

White Paper Seminar Preparation

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1. How can we as historians uncover and share stories about our community?

Take Historical Perspective: How can we overcome our current concerns, beliefs, and values to understand those of people in the past?

- Pierre Elliot Trudeau was born on October 18, 1919 Montreal and died September 28, 2000
- “His terms in office were marked by the establishment of diplomatic relations with China and improved relationships with France, the defeat of the French separatist movement, constitutional independence from the British Parliament, and the formation of a new Canadian constitution”
- He added bill of rights and amending formula
- Grew up in French / Scottish family in the affluent suburb of Outremont
- University of Montreal law degree 1943
- He grew up in a wealthy family, attended a prestigious university, served in both education and politics and eventually took his role of power - very similar to his son
- Founded Cité Libre monthly critical review
- Law professor at UM 1961 to 1965

- Parliamentary secretary 1966 under Lester B. Pearson
- Minister of Justice - passed stricter gun control and reform of abortion and homosexuality laws - **We have grown up with these legislations so we do not value their importance - I think we need to see from a historical perspective to grasp how much of an impact he really made**
- Lead liberal part April 6, 1968 because colourful personality
- Anti-separatist - took stand against Front de Liberation du Quebec in October Crisis -
- Secondary Research: The **Front de Liberation du Quebec was a terrorist and parliamentary group founded in the 1960's who wanted to remove quote Anglo Saxon Imperialism from power. They bombed the Montreal stock exchange and kidnapped a trade commissioner. Pierre Trudeau called upon the war measures act and forced their decline.**
- March 3 1980, became prime minister
- Worked on Partition - Canadian encyclopedia describes this as quote "allowing the country to change its Constitution without approval from Britain."
- "Economic independence for Canada, forming better trade relations between industrialized democracies and Third World nations, and urging further international disarmament talks." - What Trudeau fought for
- Feb 29, 1984 he resigned

White paper

- “Presented to the First Session of the Twenty-eighth Parliament by the Honourable Jean Chrétien Minister of Indian Affairs” - **I find it interesting how there was not a First Nations individual appointed to this position - it was kind of like how individuals like JFK had to fight for Black power as there were few Black individuals who had power at the time**

“Canada is richer for its Indian component, although there have been times when diversity seemed of little value to many Canadians.” - **I think why diversity wasn't valued is because there were different values and beliefs in society in the past that we need to understand - progress and fitting an ideal, like the 1950's American Dream.**

- “To be an Indian must be to be free - free to develop Indian cultures in an environment of legal, social and economic equality with other Canadians.”

- “Special treatment has made of the Indians a community disadvantaged and apart.”

- The perspective of this paper comes off as “we need to change relations, policies and laws to create equality and freedom from indigenous Canadians and move forward from the past”

- This paper comes from the perspective of a Government official and not of a disadvantaged indigenous Canadian

- Utilizes the word Indian instead of First Nation - a CBC article says it has been changed in recent years as “Indian” holds negative connotations

- “Many years will be needed. Some efforts may fail, but learning comes from failure and from what is learned success may follow. All the partners have to learn; all will have to change many attitudes.”
- “That the legislative and constitutional bases of discrimination be removed” - **Examples of Canadian systematic racism**
- **Extra Research - Met so intense criticism that it had to be withdrawn in the 1970's**
- **The paper “proposed to eliminate “Indian” as a distinct legal status” - It is understandable why this received backlash - people who post all lives matter to the current black lives matter protests receive harsh criticism as making a disadvantaged group “equal” by taking away their privileges but not fighting the root causes of their inequality will only cause more damage.**
- “Could go ahead with physical improvement programs now operating in reserve communities; could press forward in the directions of recent years, and eventually many of the problems would be solved. But progress would be too slow.” - **They seem to be coming from the perspective of the Government - that they want to fix the issue as quickly as possible by spending as little resources as possible**
- Indigenous rights were brought up with the civil rights movement and with their contribution to the World Wars
- The white paper had a similar goal of residential schools and sixties scoop - wanted to assimilate First Nations into white culture - all these things we label as evil today because of our values of diversity but if we consider historical perspectives

the Government truly thought these actions would be the best for the country due to the knowledge they had at that time.

- Wanted to remove First Nations status and turn reserves into private lands for sale
- Secondary Research: First Nations feared they would lose their culture - which is one of the things that warned First Nations that they had to defend their rights and demonstrate their culture to not lose it
- Encyclopedia Canada states that "Pierre Trudeau was against special status for any group of people, and fully intended to eliminate Indigenous peoples as a distinct group."
- "Successful adjustment requires that the larger groups accept every group with its distinctive traits without prejudice, and that all groups share equitably in the material and non-material wealth of the country." - A lot of "fluff talk" - not a lot of specific action being listed
- "Culture lives and develops in the daily life of people, in their communities and in their other associations, and the Indian culture can be preserved, perpetuated and developed only by the Indian people themselves."
- The Government seems to be coming from the perspective that "First Nations" is all one culture.

Perhaps individual cultures weren't as celebrated as they are today so diversity wasn't recognized in the same way.

- "They **believe** that lands have been taken from them in an improper manner, or without adequate compensation, that their funds have been improperly administered, that their treaty rights have been breached. Their **sense of grievance influences their relations with governments and the community and limits their participation in Canadian life.**" - I find it fascinating how in the Government's perspective, it is simply the "belief" that their rights have been ignored that is keeping indigenous people down when in reality their rights were objectively ignored whether they believe it or not. I believe the Government is biased towards their side of the historical story which does not consider the historical perspective of indigenous Canadians well.

3. Questions

- a) Why isn't historical perspective taught in the Truth and Reconciliation efforts at school? For example, when we discuss orange shirt day we talk about how bad residential schools are but we don't talk about the perspective of the Government and why they were put in.

- b) The White Paper states that it aims for “control of Indian lands be transferred to the Indian people.” However, today very few nations have full independence over their land. What has prevented the aims of the white paper from being actualized?

- c) Would people have had different perspectives on the 1969 White Paper if it was written and proposed by First Nations instead of the white government?

- d) How can the diversity of Canadian First Nations be honoured without making them appear as other or separate?

- e) Did the 1979 White Paper, considering both the threat to First Nations culture it posed and the reclaiming of culture it sparked, create more harm or good?

- f) Should fairness and past wrongdoings be considered in creating a better future for Canada or should only the issues at hand be dealt with?

- g) Why is it called the White Paper? Does this have anything to do with the individuals proposing it being white?