**Expert Group #3 The History of the Conquest Seminars – DECAPITATION THESIS:**

Maurice Seguin was born in Horse creek Saskatchewan. His parents were farmers of Quebec origin, who settled in Saskatchewan to create a French Canadian community in Saskatchewan. The family was disappointed in their experience. In order for them to live in a true French Catholic community, they moved to Montreal where Maurice grew up and studied. He became a History Professor in University of Montreal. He wrote decapitation Ph.D. thesis in 1947. This thesis started the decapitation thesis because he was the first to introduce the idea of decapitation. His Thesis was based during the time of post war / post war industrialization. Why are French Canadians stuck on the Farms when the English are making large profits in ownership of business?

**Seguin’s Thesis:** The social decapitation brought by the conquest effected French Canadian economy, factors of life in Quebec and the role of Agriculture in French Canada.

1. After being accustomed to mercantilism, French Canadians were isolated from higher reaches of trade because of the change in empire. “It was only social decapitation that reduced the French Canadians to a state of servitude; the drama of the conquest, by serving every tie with the former mother country.”
2. It was increasingly difficult for French Canadians to create relations with unknown businessmen of the metropolis. “The Canadian merchants saw their profits diminishing. Several became unable to meet their obligations.” “The French Canadian businessmen had shown themselves incapable of standing up to their English competitors.”
3. French Canadians were excluded from the primary exploitation of the great natural resources, including fur and lumber. The only resource they were able to exploit was agriculture. Therefore the French Canadians could only build up in small scale farming.
4. Trade and capital sources during the conquest were monopolized by Britain, and the French Canadians were unable to industrialize for their own benefit.
5. British had leadership and ownership of large businesses, creating business run with British ideologies and the English language.

Michel Brunet was a French Canadian historian and Professor at the University of Montréal, with a PhD in History from Clark University in Massachusetts. Brunet was a student of Historian Maurice Seguin, and developed his professor’s thesis - the ‘Decapitation thesis’ - which maintains that the political and economic advancement of the French at the time of the British conquest was stunted by the arrival of British merchants to Québec. Brunet’s perspective was developed during the post Second World War industrialization period, wherein many French Canadians were questioning why they were ‘trapped’ in agricultural roles instead of significant business ownership roles that were, in the 1940s, dominated by English businessmen instead of the French Canadians who patronized large businesses in the Province of Québec especially.

**Brunet’s Thesis:** The “*Canadien* bourgeoisie”, or capitalist class that could benefit from the labor of lower classes, should have had continuously increasing success upon the fall of French rule in Canada, but after the Conquest Britain exploited the colony with her own Anglophone entrepreneurs.

**Arguments:**

1. Disagrees that French Canadiens maintained agrarian lifestyles due to obligations to the Roman Catholic Church; time of the Conquest, French Canadiens were under “lay leadership” which failed to enforce rights and interests of politicians and entrepreneurs
2. French Canadian government went bankrupt, Bills of Exchange and paper money turned valueless, “constituted nearly the whole of their liquid capital” + barred access to credit
3. French traders lost all trade products that were in transit at time of the Conquest, could not compete with English merchants; “The Conquest had exposed them [the Canadien merchants] to a competition with unequal weapons”
4. “*Canadiens* barred from *haut commerce* were unable to acquire the habits of big business. Kept in a minority and subordinate positions in the public administration, they were deprived of obtaining government positions and of developing political traditions.”

* Colony loses “framework necessary for thee normal development of an Atlantic community…no longer benefit from the enlightened and dynamic direction of an economically independent bourgeoisie”
* “This was one of the results of the Conquest: a sociological phenomenon in no way due to the malignant designs of men. This colonial populace had lost its nourishing metropolis prematurely. Reduced to its own resources, it was destined to an anemic collective survival.”

Guy Frégault was born in Montréal in 1918. He studied for the most part at Université de Montréal but received PhD in history Loyola University in Chicago in 1949. Shortly after he became a professor of history at U de M and director of the Institut d'Histoire. Later he became chairman of the history department at the University of Ottawa. From 1961-66 and again from 1970-75 he was the deputy minister of the cultural affairs department in the Québec government. He published this piece of writing in 1962, which was the beginning of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec. At the time he was also the deputy minister of the cultural affairs department in the Quebec government.

**Frégault’sThesis:** During the years 1760-3 Canada was not merely conquered and ceded to England; it was defeated. (Defeat meaning disintegration)

**Arguments:**

1. The French Canadians had aspirations to move from the farm and into the merchant class but, as they were eliminated from politics, commerce and industry by Britain, they had to return to the farms.
2. Other historians are mistaken and there was a middle class developed in New France under France’s control.
3. New France was no different to other colonies in kind but it was in size. Both New France and the 13 Colonies had townsmen, clergy, merchants, soldiers, officials, politicians, middle class and aristocracy, however the 13 Colonies were much larger in population.

Seguin – Patricia Mikkola

Brunet – Cassandra Dodds

Fregault – Jessalyn Thompson