Women and Children’s Contributions to Canadian History

Early Spring Session 2019
LIR Program: Carleton University

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Lecture 1
March 11
Today’s Lecture

Four key questions:

• What is history? What is social history?

• How do we know about experiences of the past? How much do we know?

• How do identities change over time?
What is history?

*History* is an attempt to bring order and meaning to the chaos of the past.
Social History

- Considers lived experiences of the past from the perspective of “ordinary” people
What types of evidence do we have to explore Canadian history?
The nature of historical evidence is complex:

- Evidence needs to be created
- Evidence needs to be preserved
- Evidence needs to be considered significant
- Evidence needs to be interpreted
- Evidence needs to be understood as contributing to a meaningful narrative
Words of Sophia Pooley:

“Brant had to colored men for slaves: one of them was father of John Patten, ...the other calls himself Ganseville. There was but one other Indian that I knew, who owned a slave. I had no care to get my freedom.” (The Refugee: Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada, Benjamin Drew, 1856)
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Memory as Historical Evidence

- Especially important in social history, where populations can be almost entirely invisible
- Memory provides us with details that often cannot be provided through written or visual sources (for examples, feelings)
- Recently accepted as legitimate and reliable source
- Needs interpretation and close reading (as other sources do)
Changing Meanings of Identities

Madeleine de Vercheres

Helene Boulle (Champlain)
c. 1620

Gerard Dore  (1927-1944)
Agency and Experience

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_tcCpKtoU0
Next Week: Early Settlers and Slavery