

Champlain's Dream: The European Founding Of North America

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Introduction

The book, "Champlain's Dream: The European Founding of North America," is authored by David Fischer. (Fischer, 2008) The book is a biography of the soldier, explorer, spy, and cartographer of French origins, Samuel de Champlain. He is regarded as the father of New France. The book focuses on the crucial role played by Samuel de Champlain in establishing the colony of the French colonial empire in the New World. He displayed great courage in overcoming the opposition of certain people in important positions, such as Cardinal Richelieu and Marie de Medici. Furthermore, he successfully negotiated with the natives in the North American continent to form a French colony in the region. His humane attitude towards the native residents greatly contributed to the very rapid colonization of the continent of North America.

Thesis Statement: The book focuses on the themes of humanism, courage, and warfare.

Roadmap

The author of the book gives a vivid elaboration on the history of the founding of the nation of Canada in North America. He highlights the approach of nonviolence and humanism adopted by Champlain and the general tension between the French explorers arriving in the newly discovered lands and the native inhabitants of the continent.

Review

The literary work of the author, David Fischer, sheds light on the aspects of the history of the founding of Canada by French settlers. This corner of history has been relatively ignored by the majority of the people. Even though the French had lost hope to practice political dominance over the newly discovered lands, in the aftermath of their devastating defeat of 1759 on the Plains of Abraham, their descendants continued to play a vital role in the development of the history of Canada. Fischer explicitly states that almost 75 percent of the entire population of the French individuals that inhabit North America today are descended from the women who came from France during the era of colonization.

However, the influence of the French over the continent of North America can be attributed to

Champlain. He never reached the status of a senior official; however, throughout his life since the 1608 foundation of Quebec, he was respected in the same way as any senior French officer would have been. It represents the theme of courage that was displayed by Champlain, which eventually led to him being referred to as the father of New France. Although he was an exceptional soldier and cartographer, his life was not entirely spent on the frontier. His courage in the face of staunch opposition from his formidable foes is what led to the continuation of royal support for his struggles in the American continent. Furthermore, the theme of courage as an important element in the foundation of Canada is further highlighted by Fischer by mentioning the 27 times that Champlain was able to cross North America over the course of merely 37 years.

Although not much was previously written on the achievements of Champlain, Fischer took it as a challenge to conduct research on the great personality. Furthermore, the theme of courage is also evident in the title of the book, *Champlain's Dream*, which sheds light on the character of Samuel de Champlain as heroic and admirable. Although some might argue that it is in stark contrast with the modern literary trend that tends to represent the historical figure in a negative light, it clarifies that Fischer is an efficient historian who did not include fiction in history.

Although a majority of the figures of the colonial era deserve to be represented in a negative light due to their cruel measures against the natives and resort to violent means to conquer the new world, Champlain was very different. In fact, his humanity and humane treatment of others are the ones that make him such a respected figure in Canadian history. According to David Fischer, Champlain tended to avoid resorting to violence whenever possible. He was highly interested in learning as much as he could from the Native Indians, and he indeed did. Also, in the majority of cases of confrontation with the Indians, Champlain never favored their exploitation. Rather, he focused on creating cooperation among the French and the natives. There are not many examples of such tolerance or kind treatment in the entire history of Canada.

Furthermore, Fisher goes on to state that in a number of cases, the treatment of the Indians at the hands of Champlain led to a similar respectful and friendly response from the Indians towards the French people. Also, being a soldier of strict discipline, he was always honest with the Indians. Therefore, the Native Canadians, who were predominantly warriors, treated Champlain with great respect and genuinely liked him.

Secondly, Fischer also explains that the character of Champlain is not merely that of a humane person, thus incorporating the theme of warfare. The author states that although inherently kind and considerate, Champlain did reciprocate the cruelty of certain Indian tribes with an appropriate response. Especially notable are the cases of the interaction of Champlain with the Algonquin, the Huron, and the Montagnais tribes. As he grew closer with these tribes, their main rivals within the Iroquois League resorted to violence toward the French. Therefore, Champlain deemed it necessary to answer the tribe's responsibility with appropriate measures. He, accompanied by merely a few Frenchmen, participated in three different campaigns against the hostile Indian tribes, first in 1609, then in 1610, and finally in 1615. Although with a scarcity of personnel, the Frenchman, under the

charismatic leadership of Champlain, fought bravely and was able to scatter the horrified Iroquois people into the wilderness of Canada by utilizing their harquebuses. Guns were new to the natives, and they were terrified and considered them to be a work of magic.

However, despite such a devastating battle, Champlain was never quite comfortable with violence. The theme of humanity or tolerance again comes into play here. According to Fischer, Champlain never intended to use war as a means of conquering the new world. Instead, his main objective behind the war was merely to frighten the Indians with some initial blows so that they would realize the might of France and would give up a futile resistance. His successful campaigns established fear of the French in the hearts of the resistant Indian tribes. Therefore, he was largely successful in effectively keeping the Indians from attacking the French population in the future. However, after the death of Champlain in 1640, the Indians again restored their previous strategy of violence against the French.

As evident in Fischer's work, it was only due to the humanistic approach of Champlain towards the Native Indians that the French were able to foster much better relations with the natives than the Dutch, the English, and the Spanish. It is also one of the main reasons that the French have widely spread across North America as far as Louisiana. His tolerant attitude also led to a number of marriages between Frenchmen and Native women. Thus, it gave rise to the Metis, the French Indian race.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the book is highlighted by the themes of humanity, courage, and warfare and their role in the establishment of the French colonies in the New World. Champlain is presented as a humane person, and it is evident throughout the book that this behavior was the most effective way to spread French people throughout North America. (Library of Congress, n.d.) Moreover, Champlain's great courage was responsible for the continuity of French royal support for the French colonial attempts in the North American continent. Hence, it can be efficiently said that the book is a masterpiece of historical research as the author has not even once resorted to exaggeration of the historical facts or tried to portray Champlain in a negative or positive light. Fischer has merely stated the historical facts and has demonstrated that tolerance can be much more effective than violence.

References

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