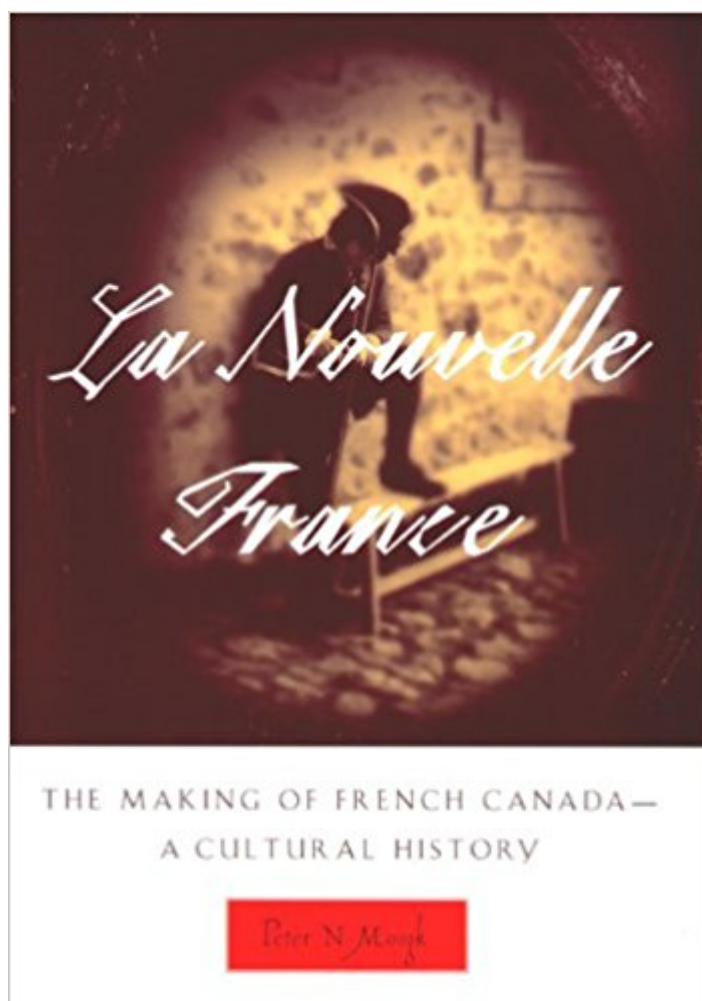


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La Nouvelle France: The Making Of French Canada--A Cultural History



Synopsis

On one level, Peter Moogk's latest book, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada – A Cultural History*, is a candid exploration of the troubled historical relationship that exists between the inhabitants of French- and English- speaking Canada. At the same time, it is a long- overdue study of the colonial social institutions, values, and experiences that shaped modern French Canada. Moogk draws on a rich body of evidence – literature; statistical studies; government, legal, and private documents in France, Britain, and North America – and traces the roots of the Anglo-French cultural struggle to the seventeenth century. In so doing, he discovered a New France vastly different from the one portrayed in popular mythology. French relations with Native Peoples, for instance, were strained. The colony of New France was really no single entity, but rather a chain of loosely aligned outposts stretching from Newfoundland in the east to the Illinois Country in the west. Moogk also found that many early immigrants to New France were reluctant exiles from their homeland and that a high percentage returned to Europe. Those who stayed, the Acadians and Canadians, were politically conservative and retained Old Régime values: feudal social hierarchies remained strong; one's individualism tended to be familial, not personal; Roman Catholicism molded attitudes and was as important as language in defining Acadian and Canadian identities. It was, Moogk concludes, the pre-French Revolution Bourbon monarchy and its institutions that shaped modern French Canada, in particular the Province of Quebec, and set its people apart from the rest of the nation.

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Customer Reviews

Peter N. Moogk is Professor of History at the University of British Columbia.

My first Quebec ancestor was a miller on the Ile d'Orleans in 1640s. I often wonder about the cultural history of my grandparents who grew up in the St. Lawrence Valley and immigrated to New England in the 1920s. This book gave great insight to the beliefs and values of French Canadiens. It offered diverse information on the history, economy, and social structure, and even mentioned a few words I grew up with that are from native Indian language, not French. It was interesting to read how much influence France's King Louis XIV had in the early years, and how strong the Catholic teachings had on everyday life and on non-Catholic immigration. Continued research on the same topics, or revision of this book to include research that was omitted in the first print would be welcome. Seems there is likely a wealth of information left to share. As for other reader comment on Quebec's recent history, it deserves much more attention than could be addressed in this book.

I have been interested in this part of the world for many years and I have read many books on the subject. This study takes a different approach which I found very interesting and informative. I did not agree with all the conclusions, but each reader can make their own decision.

I enjoyed this book. Moogk does a fine job of explaining how the people of New France created their own culture. This book is about the people of New France rather than a listing of facts about Canadian events.

Non-Traditional View of Francos: An Author Speaks By Juliana L'Heureux A recent telephone interview with author Peter N. Moogk, 60, a Canadian professor currently living in Vancouver, British Columbia, brought out a surprisingly non-traditional point of view on Franco-American culture. So much of Franco-American culture is embellished in nostalgia about the past, but Moogk cuts through the heroic veneer presented by some earlier writers like Francis Parkman. Moogk's most recent book was published in the United States in 2001, titled "La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada- A Cultural History". It's an ambitious historical effort. To his credit, Moogk provides extensive research covering the entire 400 year scope of the French experience in North America, not just a little slice of it. In a nutshell, Moogk avoids all prevailing points of view about French-Canadian culture. There's no embellishments or cultural nostalgia. Instead, Moogk's research drives home the difficult circumstances of French history in North America. Moogk teaches early French North American history at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. He's a

citizen of both England and Canada. He's not a French-Canadian but he attended McGill University in Montreal for a brief time and he speaks French. One reason he wrote *La Nouvelle France* was because he wasn't happy with what his students were learning about French-Canada. Popular Canadian histories assume that New France has no influence upon the present. The French Regime is presented as colorful but not serious. It's a sequential era of heroic missionaries, valiant warriors, explorers and hardy fur traders. But the French-Canadian culture is more complex and impressive than what's currently portrayed, he says. Not surprising, *La Nouvelle France* generated some criticism from French-Canadian history reviewers, he says. "Reviewers are critical of my analysis of the French separatist movement in the last chapter," he says. In fact, reviewers prefer talking about the last chapter and thereby tend to dismiss the exhaustive historic research throughout the rest of the text, he says. From a Franco-American point of view, the second chapter is most interesting. Moogk describes the special relationship during the colonial period between the French and Aboriginal people (i.e., Native Americans). In Canada, the Native Americans are now called "First Nations". In French, the original common word for First Nations was *les Sauvages*, meaning "Wild People of the Forests". "The word 'Sauvages' was an old interpretation and wasn't a hostile word during the 17th and 18th centuries," says Moogk. "I observed a healthy relationship between the French colonists and the Aboriginal peoples," says Moogk. "The nature of the relationship couldn't be ignored," he says. Moreover, the special relationship was learned from European attitudes towards primitive people. Colonial French settlers accepted Aboriginal people, says Moogk, because the European aristocracy readers of Greek, and Roman classics and the Holy Bible believed in a lost world of innocence, like the Biblical Eden. Colonial era Europeans believed *les Sauvages* lived a romanticized life in a golden and mythical world free to do as they pleased. They were supposedly relieved from the necessity of labor because they were surrounded by abundant food. To 17th century Europeans, the Amerindians confirmed the classic beliefs that primitive people lost their innocence when they were corrupted by luxury and artificiality. "I was struck by the number of stories about French children who were raised by the native people. It's nearly impossible to track, but the sprinkling of French children in the native culture is interesting", he says. On a positive note, Moogk likes the compassionate nature of the French culture and the strong family ties. *La Nouvelle France* is certainly a different perspective on the culture, sure to stir debate, as well it should. Juliana@MaineWriter.com

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