

## Background Information

**Teacher note: The purpose of this excerpt is to provide background information to support *Examining Cross-cultural Observations* MT. It is intended for use within the context of the *Modelling the Tools* resource only. Terminology found in the excerpt must be considered within the context of the historical time period.**

The following excerpt is intended to help students recognize that anthropological accounts are culturally sensitive and, as such, may reflect elements of cultural superiority, ethnocentrism and stereotyping. In this account, André Thévet (in italics) suggests that First Nations people learned the ways of civilization from Christians.

### Lifestyle

First Nations people lived according to different laws than the Europeans, and often the laws were enforced in different ways. Consequently, many Europeans were unable to perceive the kinds of laws that they did follow and the customs that governed their behaviour, religion, occupational tasks, medicine and art. Their culture looked like “nature” to many of the French visitors to America.

*America is occupied by marvelously strange and savage people without faith, without laws, without religion, without any civilities, but living like unreasoning beasts as nature had produced them, eating roots, men as well as women remaining ever naked, until perhaps such time as they will be frequented by Christians, from whom they will little by little learn to put off this brutishness to put on more civil and humane ways.*

André Thévet, *Les Singularite de la France antarctique, autrement nomée Amérique et de plusieurs Terres, et Isles decouvertes de nostre temps* (Paris, 1681).

Adapted from Ruth Sandwell et al. *Early Contact and Settlement in New France* (Vancouver, BC: The Critical Thinking Consortium, 2002), pp. 33–60. Permission granted by The Critical Thinking Consortium for use by Alberta teachers.