

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Jeffers Lennox

JVN [00:00:00] Welcome to Getting Curious. I'm Jonathan Van Ness and every week I sit down for a 40 minute conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I'm joined by Professor Jeffers Lennox, where I ask him: What's the deal with Canada's origin story? Welcome to Getting Curious. This is an- a major episode, I'm so excited, and it's a long time coming. Our guest is someone who has an incredibly cool name. He is Jeffers Lennox, who is an Associate Professor of History at Wesleyan University. He studies early North America from the 17th to early 19th centuries. His specific areas of interest include the British, French, and Indigenous relations in northeastern North America and the impact that Canada had on the American Revolution and the creation of the United States. Welcome, Jeffers!

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:00:52] Thank you so much for having me. This is a real thrill.

JVN [00:00:55] This is where the origin story of my curiosity for this episode came from. I need you to know. I was minding my own business, learning about what a day in the life of, like, Philadelphia was in 1775 when I learned from this historian that Canada was also, like, a colony, like, you know, the 13 Colonies, honey. They were like, "We want to break away," and Canada was like, "Honey, this is too problematic for us." And other than, like, not Justin Theroux but Justin Trudeau being very attractive, I don't know enough about my origin story of, it's not mine, I don't know enough about *the* origin story of Canada. And that's where you come in.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:01:35] Fantastic. Well I'm happy to help and you fall right into the trap that I give my students when I say: "How many colonies were there at the time of the American Revolution?" And they'll say, "Thirteen!" And I say, "No, that's wrong. Try again-"

JVN [00:01:46] 28!

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:01:47] -And they have to keep guessing. There was, yeah, well, it depends if you're looking just in North America or if you're including the Caribbean. But, if you go north of the colonies, you have Newfoundland, you have Nova Scotia, you have Quebec, which is, Quebec and Canada are sort of the same place. And then there's an Indigenous reserve behind that. There's the Floridas. You know, there's a lot of colonies that that didn't join the revolution.

JVN [00:02:10] Yeah 'cause the Floridas were Spanish, right? East and West.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:02:13] Um, ye-, eventually. They're British at the time of the revolution, but they do become Spanish after the revolution. They, they do a lot of, like, land trading at the peace.

JVN [00:02:23] Ok, so you know, ah, I got to go before the revolution in order to understand. Could you tell us Canada's story? Like, when's the first people that went up there, like, what were they about? Were they just speaking French and stuff? Tell me everything.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:02:40] Yeah ok, so I'll try not to tell you everything, but the short sort of podcast version is like all of North America, the territories that become Canada were just Indigenous homelands, right. There had been Indigenous peoples living in the Northeast for 12,000 years before settlers arrived. So the earliest kind of permanent settlements of, of settlers coming from Europe, the first was actually in Acadia, which we-, you would probably know is Nova Scotia. They settled there in 1604. Quebec, the Quebec sort of city, the fortress of Quebec is established in 1608. So it's around the same time as we're getting, you know, Virginia and some of the American colonies being established. But they're French to begin with and that's why Canada has such a strong French population. They grow slowly, right, they remain Indigenous for the most part. And then you get lots of settlers who, English settlers who come to, to the southern colonies into New England and they make their way up.

JVN [00:03:46] Oh! Wait are you Canadian?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:03:48] I am.

JVN [00:03:49] You are!

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:03:50] I am.

JVN [00:03:51] That is so cute. Ok, so um ok, so, so *our* southern colonies.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:03:58] Yeah. So the English colonies, right, they're sort of divided, right, the English settle, New England south and there's lots of imperial battles over, over territory, but it kind of divides that the French stay farther north and the English settle in the South. And then there's lots of wars over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries. But the English are never able, really, to capture French, the French parts of North America until 1763, which kind of starts the story of the American Revolution, because the French have been, the French administration has been expelled from North America.

So, the important part about 1763 is that the, the French administration is removed and the British take over new France, right. So this is a huge swath of territory. This includes present day sort of Ontario and Quebec in and around the Great Lakes, down around Louisiana, which had been thinly populated by French settlers but is now under British control because this big imperial war, Britain won and they got half of North America. The French had to leave. The Spanish still had sort of controlled, or claimed control, the second half. And it's at this point that British people in the sort of British-American colonies, the 13 colonies, think, "Good, let's move west, let's cross the Appalachian Mountains, let's get into this good farmland." And the British say, "No, we do not want you to do that. We're reserving this territory for our Indigenous allies because we don't want to have to pay for you to fight these wars against Indigenous peoples because they're very expensive." So they start, that, the settlers start getting really frustrated because they want to move west and they're not allowed.

JVN [00:05:37] So it's 1763 and Britain and France get in a gigantic fight and Britain wins and they expel the French people from, like, Quebec too? I know you just said that but I got confused.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:05:50] Yeah. So they expelled the French administration. The French settlers stay, right. They don't go back to France and that's why Quebec is still French. And if you go to Montreal or Quebec City or, you know, anywhere in Quebec and lots of places in Nova Scotia, you still, you know, it's primarily French speakers, but the administration leaves and now the British are governing this French population of, like, 70,000 settlers, plus trying to deal with all the Indigenous allies and, and Indigenous enemies who, who really control this territory, right. The French, 70,000 people spread over that many, that much space, there are little pockets of settlements within Indigenous homelands where Indigenous peoples are still sort of largely running the show.

JVN [00:06:35] So that's 1763, and then the 13 colonies in America are, like, "Ooh, we want to go west, we want to go west," 'cause I think we always learn in school that it's, like, the Tea Party or something. But really there is this other thing going on.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:06:49] Yeah. The Tea Party comes, it comes a little bit later and it's related to this war. This war between Britain and France was very expensive. So after 1763, the British say, "You know what, colonists, you're going to have to help pay for this." So this is when you start getting taxes, right. You get the stamp tax and the sugar tax and the colonists don't want to pay taxes, they just want to move west. But the British Empire is, it's like, "We just spent so much money winning this war and you have to, like, pay a little bit back." Britons in England are getting taxed, you know, in incredible amounts so they want to kind of share some of that tax burden. And that's when you get, like, the Boston

Tea Party, which is a response to this anger against sort of these British attempts to impose taxes on, on the colonists.

JVN [00:07:37] So, was there, like, Indigenous nations in North America, like, there was some that was better friends with Britain and some that was better friends with France?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:07:48] Yes, the French did a much better job making Indigenous allies, primarily because, you know, the, the dominant theory is that the French were interested in trade, whereas the English were interested in settling and farming and taking land. So Indigenous nations could really kind of benefit. They were great at trading. They'd been trading amongst each other. They had really developed trade networks. And the French were able to kind of tap into that. Whereas the English, you know, they want to farm, they want land to grow tobacco, they want to do agriculture in the northeast. So you have to kind of push Indigenous peoples off those lands, which causes all kinds of, all kinds of obviously tension and violence between the two, or between sort of a variety of Indigenous nations and the British.

JVN [00:08:35] So 1763 to 1775 there, does the United Kingdom make, like, laws that, like, the 13 colonies, like, can't move west, they're like, "No you can't, you got to stay over east?"

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:08:46] Yeah, they draw a line actually, it's called the Proclamation Line in 1763, which is basically a line that runs along the height of the Appalachian Mountains and says you can't cross that. And this is understandably frustrating for the British colonists 'cause they just fought a war to get rid of the French control of that territory so that they could move into it. And now they're being told, "No," you know, "you can't."

JVN [00:09:10] And that's because the British people were like, "Honey, that's going to really piss off these Indigenous nations and, like, we just can't go through a war with them because," like, "Ew we just can't right now."

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:09:18] Yeah, it's super expensive to fight, you know, to fight a war in North America that's being directed from Europe is very complicated. And, and they don't, they don't want to kind of invite that type of, of tension.

JVN [00:09:34] Ok, wow, well, this is ok so, wow Jeffers, I feel like I already, like, who knew, I guess, well you do-

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:09:43] We haven't even gotten to Canada yet! This is good, this is good.

JVN [00:09:46] So what was what we now call Canada at this time?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:10:50] Ok, so Canada in, you know, if you want to go right to kind of 1775, the outbreak of, right around the outbreak of the American Revolution, Canada was a shorthand that was used for Quebec. And so the province of Quebec today, if you can kind of imagine it on a map, would have been sort of understood as Canada. But one of the other things that they did to prevent the, the British from expanding West is they made Quebec huge. They extended the, the boundaries of Quebec through the Great Lakes, down the Ohio River, down the Mississippi. And the reason they did this is because in Quebec, which was primarily French and primarily Catholic, they had this idea that if we make all this territory officially kind of French and kind of Catholic, British Protestants are not going to want to go there, right. That's, the British identity is being, like, Protestant and having and speaking English. So there was this, this kind of crafty move to just make Quebec really big. And, and hopefully that will prevent some of the settlers from moving, from moving west as well.

JVN [00:11:00] And that, and it worked?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:11:02] It worked a little bit. I mean, officials couldn't do it, right. George Washington had, like, big land speculation plans that he wanted to enact in the Ohio River Valley. And officially, he couldn't do it. Settlers and squatters, I mean, you can't stop them; they moved over, and there was lots of violence as a result. But this is one of the kind of driving factors to, to launching the American Revolution. The British were so upset that they couldn't push west and that Britain was seen to sort of be favoring these French Catholics, that they're just like, "This can't be right. We need to, you know, we need to do something about this."

JVN [00:11:36] So Canada just kind of develops that name, and, and at this time was Canada, like, other than Quebec, like, was Nova Scotia and, like, the things that are, like, east of Quebec, like, was that considered, like, Canada as well?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:11:50] No so those were just considered colonies, right. There was, Nova Scotia was a colony, Newfoundland was a colony, just, just like, you know, New England and Virginia and Massachusetts and all the, all the other British American colonies.

JVN [00:12:05] So when did Canada become Canada, like, as we know and today, like, on a map?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:12:10] So that's jumping way ahead. Canada becomes a country in 1867.

JVN [00:12:15] Danggg! 1867, almost a 100 years later.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:12:22] Yeah, yeah. So we have the, you know there's, there's, there's a whole sort of series of developments that happened during the revolution and after, that give the loyal British colonies as they end up being known, right, the ones that don't join the rebellion, their own sort of sense of identity. And then over the course of the 19th century, they eventually as, as, you know, nations become more popular, they, these, a handful of colonies confederate and become part of the Dominion of Canada, as they call it.

JVN [00:12:54] Mmh ok, so when that nice historian who I interviewed about Philadelphia in 1775 said that people from the 13 colonies, like, went and, like, lobbied folks to be like, "Hey, like you should get in on this, like we're going to break away," and stuff like that. Like, did the people that they lobbied were those, like was that like British government officials who are governing French people or was that, like, French officials? Like, I don't get, like, so is Canada at this point in 1775, mostly French with English government, or was there also English settlers in Canada too?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:13:29] So, if we think about Canada as Quebec, it was primarily French with a British government, but places like Montreal, which was, like, an economic center, had a lot of sort of Anglo traders who had moved up from, from the English colonies. But when, so this is 1774, the Continental Congress gets together to talk about what we're going to do about Great Britain. And they immediately start writing letters to Quebec, like, to the people of Quebec, doing exactly as you said, you know, saying "We've got this idea, we're thinking of kind of launching a war and really trying to battle against the British, so come and join us, right, why don't you send some delegates down to Philadelphia." And they get no response. The French are not interested. The French are kind of happy with the British government because the British government protected their language, protected their religion, protected their, their civil law. And they were just, like, not terribly interested. But Congress writes them three times trying to invite them and they actually invade to, to really sort of take the kind of military approach to win Quebec to the, to the, to the rebel cause.

JVN [00:14:45] What year is that?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:14:47] So they invade in 1775.

JVN [00:14:50] The American colonists invaded Canada?!

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:14:55] You won't be surprised to learn that that sort of Americans spreading democratic ideology is, like, the first thing they did even before they were a country. But yeah, they invaded when the, when the French did not send any delegates. They, Congress sends another letter to Quebec and says, "That's fine, but just so you know, we're just going to send some troops up and probably try to conquer the British and then you'll have to join us anyway." But they fail. This is, you know, the first thing that the Amer-, the first kind of offensive act that the American, the Patriots take against the British is, is a massive failure.

JVN [00:15:32] Tell me more.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:15:32] It's 1775, they send, they send troops up and they successfully take Montreal 'cause Montreal has enough Anglos there; they don't actually really fight, Montreal just kind of surrenders. And then they focus their attention on Quebec. And Quebec is like a fortress, right, it's a fortress on the side of a cliff. It's very difficult to take. And so there's troops outside of Quebec over the sort of fall of 1775 and they, they spend, you know, weeks bombarding the Quebec fortress. They don't kill anyone. They do lots of terrible things around the countryside to try to convince people to, to join the cause. And then they launch this big attack on New Year's Eve, and it's a snowstorm. And the general, Richard Montgomery, is killed immediately. And Benedict Arnold, who you may have heard of.

JVN [00:16:26] Hell yes; we don't like him over here.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:16:30] So you did at the beginning of the war. He was good at the beginning of the war, but he gets injured. And then, you know, the, the whole campaign kind of stalls, smallpox spreads among the, the soldiers, they can't take, they can't take Quebec. And then after this, there's another letter that Congress sends that says, "You may have noticed, like we've suffered a mild setback invading you, but just so you know, like, we still, we're going to fight against the British and we think that you should join us."

JVN [00:16:58] And then that was it, and then they just didn't try to invade again?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:17:02] They don't try to invade, they, they send, in the immediate aftermath of this failed invasion, they send a commission to Canada. And this commission is led by Benjamin Franklin, who travels from Philadelphia up to, to Montreal. And their task is like, after a failed invasion let's try some diplomacy. So they're supposed to

convince people to join. And Franklin gets there, he realizes right away it's not happening. It took him a month to get there, he wanders around Montreal for, like, six days and then says, "No, I gotta go home," and heads back to, to Philadelphia. And the troops eventually kind of have to just withdraw in defeat.

JVN [00:17:44] Can you tell us a little bit more about Benedict Arnold? So we like him at the beginning, but then what happens?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:17:52] So we like Benedict, or I mean, Canadians always like Benedict Arnold. At least, you know, we like him more at the end. He is, he's part of a few successful, successful attempts. He is pretty famous for this, you know, this invasion of, of Canada. He marches his men from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Montreal. And it's this famous march you know, it was, it was kind of bad weather they're, they're, they're, like, eating their belts; they're really struggling. And then he, he, he participates in this, what's seen as this valiant attack on the British. And then the retreat happens, and it's over the next, sort of, few years that he just feels that he's being overlooked by, by the, the Patriot Army. A lot of these guys are kind of driven by being recognized and being promoted. And he eventually gets an offer to, you know, "Why not switch sides and help out the British? And if you can give us the plans for, for this fortress, we'll, we'll set you up." And he ends up sort of doing that. He switches sides. And that's why his name has become synonymous with sort of treachery and being a traitor. But he wasn't always seen that way. He was sort of a valuable patriot at the beginning of the war.

JVN [00:19:11] Ok, we need to do, like, a separate episode on, like, what his deal was, because I know this is about Canada, but, like, I need to understand more about that. So generally, like, was the relationship prior to that failed invasion between Quebec and the 13 colonies, like, nice? Like, were people kind of moving between the two and they were, like, "Oh yeah, you're cool, you're like our neighbor to the north, like, you're fine, we love each," other or no?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:19:38] There were parts of that. I mean, one of the, but I think for the most part, when, when people in the 13 Colonies saw Quebec, they saw French Catholics, right, which were their sort of mortal enemies. And so there is this, and this is sort of a tricky thing because in the 18th Century, race has not been sort of fully developed the way that we understand it now, like, the French were seen as a different race from the English. So there's lots of complicated race and ethnicity stuff going on. But they didn't like the French generally. And this is why when, when Congress is, when the Continental Congress is writing to Quebec, they seem pretty confident that the French should join sides with them because the French are supposed to hate the British. So now you've got, like, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." And so they think, "You should join us, like we

could probably line up against the British," but they just don't understand that the French are our kind of ok with the way things have been going with the British and are not terribly interested in trying to launch another war against, against London.

JVN [00:20:44] So, when, so then the U.S. says, like, "Hey, so I know it didn't go so well, we got smallpox, didn't work out, but we still might try to like come up there sometime in the future." And so then the war ends, like, the United States gets created in...

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:21:02] So the United States, the, when, even when the revolution is done, there's no country, right. In 1783, at the end of the revolution, there is a group of 13 united, independent colonies; it's not yet a country. And one of the interesting things that shows the, I guess the focus that these colonies had on Canada is, is the first governing document that these united colonies create; the Articles of Confederation is sort of the precursor to the Constitution, and it has a lot of things that are similar, like, it has, you know, "If another state is going to join us, nine of us have to agree to it," that kind of thing. But they make a special provision for Canada and they say, "At any time if Canada wants to join, they're in." So even in 1783, they hadn't given up the hope that Canada might join.

JVN [00:21:52] Ooh, fun, interest. So what did Canada say up until, like, 1783 and after that? Were they just, like, "Fuck off, we're good," like, the whole time basically.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:22:03] Pretty much, um, yeah. The French, you know, this relationship that they had developed with the British was, was largely working out. And even when the United States allied with France in 1778, they get France on side to help with the revolution, even that's not enough to win over Quebec, you know, the promise of maybe allying with your old mother country.

JVN [00:22:27] Is that because they were like, "Man, fuck that, Louis. He was, like, so rich with all of this shit and, like, Marie Antoinette and they were, like, these rich fucking aristocratic fucks and like, we're over here grinding up over here in this new world and like, they can get fucked, we don't like them either." Was that kind of what it was like?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:22:43] Err I don't know if it was quite like that. I think that, one of the, I mean I'm sure there was part of that, definitely. But one of the ironies is that, is that the Patriots ally with France, right, the Patriots, are trying to separate from a king. And what they do is they ally with an absolute monarch, like, the pinnacle of a king to do this. And that's a real you know, Patriots have to kind of, there's some ideological hoops they have to jump through to make that ok. But, in 1783, when the war is done, what happens is a lot of loyalists, people who have been living in the 13 colonies but who had not

supported the Patriots, they leave and they move to Quebec, they moved to Nova Scotia. A lot of these, these settlers come and they have enslaved people who are allowed to, you know, still considered their property by the British. So they're allowed to bring those, those people with them. There are also free Blacks who have sort of escaped slavery and fought on the side of the British and they move, they move into the colonies as well. So you have enslaved people and free Blacks, often, you know, living within a stone's throw of each other in these, you know, in Nova Scotia or in Montreal or in some of these other settlements. So it changes the demographics a fair bit.

And it's important not to give the British a pass on this in North America, because the reason that there is not, there aren't more enslaved people in the loyal British colonies is 'cause the economy doesn't really demand that kind of labor. They don't have huge agricultural projects that have to be worked by enslaved people, but they certainly have enslaved people working domestically. They do work on farms. And, of course, even the free Blacks who had escaped slavery to fight on behalf of the British are still, you know, segregated and treated terribly and subjected to all the normal kinds of racism that you would expect from, from settlers in the 18th and early 19th century.

JVN [00:24:46] Mmh, ahhh, yes. So *then*, 'cause, like, that's, like, 1783 isn't that far away from 1812, which you know, we have an entire three to six paragraphs dedicated to the War of 1812 in our sixth grade history books, so we are well versed; we know a lot about it. And I'd like to see if your, you know, academic wisdom and prowess matches up to what we were taught in public school because, like, I said, six paragraphs, a lot can happen in six paragraphs, ok. So obviously we can tell I'm not, I'm joking; I have no idea. I think I've been told, like, six sentences about that war since I graduated high school. So, can you give us, like, a gorgeous academic 'Gay of Thrones' style recap of what happened in the War of 1812?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:25:43] I can try. The great thing about the War of 1812 is it was confusing at the time and it's been confusing since. People weren't, you know regular people weren't entirely sure what they were going to be fighting about. There's some big picture issues. One is that--and this is hard for I think for a lot of people to understand--in the early 19th century, America was a very weak country that Europe didn't take terribly seriously. It didn't have a functioning navy. It, it, it offered trade goods but, you know, that you could get those elsewhere.

And one of the things that the, that there, that the Americans are concerned about is they're not being sort of respected on the sea. The British keep stopping ships and looking for British people on American ships. And then taking them from those ships. Because the British are running out of, of sailors. They need more people they, you know, they are, in

the lead up to the War of 1812 they're fighting against Napoleonic, France, they have all kinds of military obligations, and it turns out not a lot of people want to serve in the Navy because it's not a fun thing to do. So a lot of Britons would escape and go to American ships.

And the British didn't believe that you could just change your nationality. If you are born in Britain that meant even if you said you were American, and even if the United States said you were American, as far as the British were concerned, you were still British. So they would just take, like, would impress these, these sailors from ships. And so this was a huge sort of international problem for, for the Americans. And they end up, you know, often just I think as a, as a point of pride, they kind of challenge the British on this. And, and we get sort of thrown into this War of 1812, which also involves an invasion of Canada because they're still not satisfied that Canada hasn't joined yet.

JVN [00:27:36] So, ok I've never heard about this whole, like, British people taking American sailors and then making them British or whatever. So that's interest. What else? So Canada gets invaded, and that's another thing about it, and that was, like, the Americans invading Britain because Britain was still, like, governing Canada?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:27:56] Yes, um, yeah. They're, in a lot of ways people sometimes think about the War of 1812 as, as sort of the conclusion of the American Revolution, the fact that the Americans still, you know, after the the end of the American Revolution, most were worried that as long as the British were, were north of the American states, there was gonna be a war; there was no way there couldn't be a war. And so the, the War of 1812 is an opportunity to, to try to take Canada again. And Jefferson famously, you know, he says that taking Canada will be "a mere matter of marching." But when they show up and they start fighting in Canada, they realize that by this point, people living in Canada also kind of had a sense of their own identity as not American and didn't want to just join an invading force. And they fought back pretty well. Indigenous nations were central to fighting against the Americans, and even the French in French Canada fought really hard because for them Quebec is their homeland. That's their, you know, the *patrie* or however they would have described it. And so they're defending that against Americans who think they can just take it in this war.

JVN [00:29:10] So is the goal for the Americans in 1812 to take, like, Quebec or, like, was, by 1812 was, like, all of Canada, like, the Dominion of Canada yet? Or had that not happened?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:29:21] No, that hadn't happened yet. In 1812, you had, you had Upper Canada and Lower Canada, which was sort of English, upper was English Canada;

lower was French Canada. They, their, I think the, the ultimate goal is that they will take French Canada and, you know, upper and lower Canada, which would then be kind of the key to getting the rest of them. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and the rest are seen as probably going to fall if they can get the, the Canadas themselves.

JVN [00:29:54] Interest. So then 18-, how does the War of 1812 come to an end?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:29:59] So this is the best part. They just, at, at the Treaty of Ghent, which ends the war, they say, "Let's just go back to whatever was happening before the war." So no boundaries change, no territory changes hands. It's, it's kind of a draw, um, and for Canadians, it's seen as this you know, we learn about the War of 1812 because it's, we defeated the United States.

JVN [00:30:27] Fuck yeah you did and I wish you would have done it again honey. We think that we are just so cute. And then we realize when we get a little bit older that we are so problematic. We have just been swinging our proverbial dick around the Earth for all this fucking time. It is so upsett-, ok, so yeah, so what did you guys learn about it though, in 1812? I'm sorry, I freaked out.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:30:49] No, of course. But you can say the same thing about Canada, right. So Canada, after the War of 1812 develops as its own settler colonial state or continues developing as its own settler colonial state, and Indigenous peoples lose in the War of 1812, no question, because they, now the British don't need them as allies. They don't need them to fight against the Americans 'cause there's not going to be another, it, it seems pretty clear there's not going to be another war with the United States. So Indigenous people sort of lose all their leverage and, and are kind of now seen as obstacles, people we need to remove from their homelands so that we can build railways and, you know, have this sort of the creation of, like, capitalist paradigms and move west and all the things that the United States do, Canada does as well.

JVN [00:31:35] Interest. Ok, wait, so in the War of 1812, does the, like, Canadians who are in Quebec who are ultimately like French or British people, who are loyalists who, like, came up and they kind of are starting to form their own identity, do the Canadians, like, they make better inroads with native Indigenous, like, Canadian folks to fight alongside the Americans so that relationship gets better while the war is going on? But then when it's over, they're like, "Oh, like you're going to prevent us from, like, kind of competing with the Americans, like economically and, like, spreading out. So, like, all of your things aren't, like," it, I see what you're saying. Is that accurate?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:32:16] Yes. That is accurate. Yeah. Indigenous peoples go from being very valuable allies to settlement obstacles. They, they are, you know the interpretation of Indigenous nations, you know, they start to be seen not as, as sort of whole peoples who are protecting their own homelands, like, they're not necessarily fighting for the British, they're on the British side of this imaginary border, but they want to defend their traditional homelands. And, and the British need them 'cause they know Indigenous peoples aren't your allies they can be your enemies and that's worse. But as soon as the, as soon as Indigenous peoples cannot triangulate that relationship because there's not going to be any wars, it becomes a whole lot easier for, for, for British settlers in the British administration to say, "Let's try to get them on reserves. Let's try to, let's do lots of tricky stuff to steal their lands, and let's just let our kind of white Protestant capitalist society unfurl over the rest of North America."

JVN [00:33:24] So is the Canadian government's position as it's, like, created, like, it ended up being reservations and in the United States, we have this, like, blood quantum and all this other really fucked up stuff with, like, so you have kind of, like, your own version of that in Canada?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:33:36] Yeah, it's, in Canada it's terrible, right, they legislate the existence of Indigenous people. So they pass acts that define what, what an Indigenous person would be. And to this day, Indigenous peoples are, are kind of considered wards of the state. Their money is governed, you know, they have some autonomy, but not like, not like autonomy that Indigenous peoples in the United States have. And they do all the, the terrible, the colonialist things that-, that happens elsewhere. They set up residential schools to-, to separate Indigenous children from their parents and to try to, you know, "You kill the Indian but save the man." So they basically want to make sort of brown Canadians who are, who don't consider themselves different you know, they don't speak Indigenous language, that they don't follow Indigenous traditions. And so the, you know, the late 19th and then into the 20th century is this project of colonial rule in Canada that is, that is focused on attempting to eradicate sort of the Indigenous existence, but fails, right. Indigenous nations in Canada are still super vibrant and super activist and are now fighting back to, to claim the rights that had been stolen from them.

JVN [00:34:50] Which, yes, yes for Indigenous peoples, I love it. I love to see it. Take it back honey. So then what is, like, the origin, like, Liberty Bell story that, like, baby Canadians learn in school about, like, your Fourth of July and, like, that cute little story? So now, you know, a full hour and a half into our podcast, we arrive to the question. But, you know, you need context or you just don't know. Like, when do they celebrate their cute Independence Day and like, what's, like, the fireside chat that happens?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:35:26] So our Canada Day is July 1st. So it's nice living in the States because I kind of have a whole week of celebrating both sides. But the story of confederation also has this, you know, very, a strong connection to the United States, because it's, in a lot of ways it's the Civil War in the United States that helps inspire these Canadian provinces, these British provinces, to come together as a country. And that's in part because during the Civil War, the British are kind of tacitly supporting the South, not officially, but the South is sort of more economically important to them than the North is. And it becomes obvious to these British colonies that the North is going to win and then they're going to have a full army mobilized. And the British have been tacitly supporting the South. So what if they just turn their attentions north and then try to conquer Canada again? So the colonies of, of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and Canada come together to form a dominion. They think, you know, "We'll have a better economic chance, we'll have a better military chance to defend ourselves." And so they create this, this country.

JVN [00:36:36] Wait a fucking second. So the United Kingdom, after outlawing chattel slavery and, like, the transatlantic slave trade and all that and paying back all the families and all that stuff, they were supporting the South in the American Civil War?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:36:55] Not officially. No, not officially. But like they, they were-

JVN [00:37:00] "We'll block some north ships but not the south ships?"

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:37:04] Sort of, sort of, yeah. I mean, you know, this is, they're interested in making money. The, this is the, this is the challenge.

JVN [00:37:12] But even at this the expense of, like, furthering, like, a really toxic institution that they knew themselves to be, like, morally bankrupt, like, they were down to do that?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:37:20] Yes. People have been terrible for a long time.

JVN [00:37:23] So, so, so basically the thing with that in Canada was, is that, like, they were saying like, "Wait, so if the South loses, they're then going to have this, like," I guess I don't understand like why Canada was kind of, what writing on the wall they were seeing. Were they seeing that like, were they scared that the North was going to win or the South was going to win?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:37:45] They, so they knew, it becomes obvious that the North is going to win and then the concern is why won't they just then fight us and expand farther north, right. Just just keep trying to complete this project of making-

JVN [00:38:00] Oh so they thought that the north would be [CROSSTALK], so they were thinking that the North would push up again?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:38:04] Would push up again. Yeah. Yeah.

JVN [00:38:05] But why, how, why, 'cause they were like, 'cause they were, oh, why?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:38:10] 'Cause they're angry with the British. They're angry at the British for tacitly supporting the South. So why not-

JVN [00:38:15] Oooh. So where does race fit into that then? Like, weren't people more fucking--'cause you know what, that's the other thing I learned on Getting Curious from this one guy--he was, like, "There's a difference between a unionist and an abolitionist." Like all people in the North were not all abolitionists, in fact, they were, like, unionists, like they just they weren't mad that people in the South, like, it was more about keeping the union together versus, like, this issue of being furious about chattel slavery. What was Canada's stand on chattel slavery when they became a country? Like, were they, like, "Yeah, you can keep having your formerly enslaved," or like, yeah, you, like what was, what was their deal?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:39:56] So um slavery did not exist after a you know, the 1830s in in the British Empire, but, but racism did. They were, you know, lots of racism. And this is the same for, for the Northern American colonies. And we know that a lot of these people are not abolitionists because when, when slavery starts to end, instead of *freeing* an enslaved person, they are sold to the South. So it's not as if they're taking, like, the mor-, and certainly there were lots of abolitionists who were working very hard. But there is, there's also lots of indications that they took the economic route out.

JVN [00:39:35] So when Canada officially becomes Canada, they never, like, were coming away from England, they just, like, officially conglomerating like and we still are down for you crown, right? Because they're still a commonwealth.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:39:47] Yes, yeah. And the queen is still the head of state of Canada. So there's, there's not, there has not been a full separation from Great Britain. What they did was they came together as a confederation to have self-government and have sort of a better enclosed economic system. And Great Britain was ok with that because running colonies is expensive so they're able to put off some of the charge of actually-

JVN [00:40:13] But it's still theirs, like, it's still part of-

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:40:15] But it's still theirs, yeah. Yeah, absolutely. It's still part of the British Commonwealth.

JVN [00:40:18] And so because they officially joined them in 18-

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:40:24] 67.

JVN [00:40:25] -67. They were already just, like, they had, just, like, they were never down with chattel slavery since 1834 or whatever. So it hadn't existed in Canada since 1834 anyhow?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:40:36] Yes.

JVN [00:40:38] But maybe in weird pockets because it wasn't official? So, like, maybe? Like there was like a household here or there that was, like, just weird or something?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:40:44] I, I mean you can never say no, but there's lots of ways to make people work for you for free. They have debt peonage, you can run bills up and, you know, if someone owes you so much money that you say, "Oh, you can't pay this back so now you're just going to work for me." And so that was also true with Indigenous peoples, Indigenous peoples would, as, as the, the Canadian state, or the British colonies in the Canadian state, trying to convince Indigenous peoples to embrace sort of free trade and Western ideas of capitalism. One of the things they do is try to get them into debt so then they have to do things like, you know, "You can't pay what you need so we're just going to take your child to go to a residential school and we'll call it even." So there's lots of underhanded ways that the Canadian state was able to advance its, its racial ideology that didn't require chattel slavery.

JVN [00:41:34] Ok, so I think I understand a lot more now what things as a glorious, stunning historian that you are, would you just be devastated that we didn't understand or that I didn't ask, about Canadian realness.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:41:54] About Canadian realness. Well, the thing that I'm sort of most focused on, that I find most interesting and what I'm trying to promote through my, my work and my writing, is that, and I think you're a great example of this, right, someone who knows so much about a lot of things but doesn't think about Canada. And that is a fairly recent thing. Canada, at the time of the American Revolution and through the 19th century was certainly on the minds of most Americans because it was developing this sort of parallel track, right, that's so similar in so many ways, but sort of demonstrated an alternative way of sort of maintaining you know ties to Britain, different ways of handling

slavery and enslaved peoples, Indigenous relations, all this kind of stuff that, that Americans paid attention to and they would have known.

And this is why I think it's fascinating when you read about the creation of the Constitution or the, the, the lead up to the American Revolution is that they're talking about Canada constantly as this important place. So what I want people to understand--and this is kind of my, my argument--is that the creation of the United States wasn't the United States project; it was a continental project. And those who did not participate in the revolution played a fundamental role in the way that Americans came to think about themselves and then how they established a country that could then sort of foster that identity.

JVN [00:43:29] Well, you sold me on that.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:43:32] Good. I'm glad. That was, that was my task for today so I'm happy.

JVN [00:43:36] And also, I mean, but you also are, like, a stunning writer. You, you've written a lot. I mean, I think I mean, your first book, 'Homelands and Empires: Indigenous Spaces, Imperial Fictions, and Competition For Territory in Northeastern North America,' probably would have been a really good place for me to start but if I would have done too much research, I wouldn't have been able to have interrogated you as well as I did over the last hour and a half. Canada is a very important place with very interesting thoughts and it's just, I think it's a really important place for us to understand, to understand the context in our history of really where we come from. It's just absolutely fascinating.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:44:10] Yeah. And I think, you know, one of the challenges is having now lived in the States for, what, nine years and taught really bright students, you know, some of the best students in the country, they all have an idea of Canada, they have this like, "Oh, you've got healthcare and isn't Justin Bieber and Drake from there. And, you know, they get that." But they, when I teach about it, I think the challenge is understanding that it, Canada is just as complicated and as just, is just as riddled with conflict and the problems of settler colonialism and the problems with, with race and identity that the United States is. And it's not, it's not fair to assume that it's this utopic place. It's nice, it's a great, you know I like it; it's home. But it's not perfect. And I think one of the differences that I try to understand is that a lot of Canadians are constantly trying to address those shortcomings. We don't have the American thing of, like, "We're number one." That's not our default identity.

JVN [00:45:12] Feeling personally attacked. Ok, I'm sorry. I can't help it with gymnastics and figure skating, ok. And I would also just say that that's bullshit, because when it comes

to hockey, ok, I have seen some very intense Canadians when it comes around Olympic time, honey, y'all will body check a motherfucker faster than I can put on a pair of heels and run to the exit because you can get very serious about that. So it just depends. And, and I would be remiss without asking now that you bring that up. Guns, you have way better gun situation and way better health care, so those are two cuter things, like, I feel like you're less violent.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:45:52] Those were struggles, though. Healthcare was a struggle. Securing universal health care didn't happen just because people wanted it, you know, the state fought against it-

JVN [00:46:01] When did that happen?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:46:02] Uh, in the 1960s, I think it was. This is, this is getting a little bit beyond my expertise. But it was first a provincial you know, there was a socialist government in Saskatchewan that passed a single-payer healthcare for that province and then the state and, or the Canadian nation, and then realizing, "Oh people like this," this is like a successful thing. But it didn't just happen. People had to fight for it. And guns, you know, we have a ton of guns in Canada.

JVN [00:46:26] But not as much gun violence, right?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:46:28] But not as much gun violence, no, because it is more controlled and regulated as it should be. But I think that, so, and this is why I think it's important, right. it's important for Canadians to look at the United States and see all the ways that it succeeds, but also understand all the ways that it fails. And it's only fair that Americans do the same thing to Canada. And to do that requires going back to this moment at the founding of the United States in the American Revolution to see where it starts to break off and how we can understand those parallel paths as a result of that moment.

JVN [00:47:02] Well that gives me a lot of hope. I mean, I think, you know, you'd said one thing that's really important that is like on the whole and I think it's important to not generalize, folks, but you know you always generalize people right after you say it's important not to generalize, folks. So it's like, Canadians do seem to be looking towards how to address those shortcomings more often than I think most Americans are able to address those shortcomings in a real sort of systemic way that creates, like, you know, evidence of a better more equitable life, even though I know that there is still tons of problems in Canada and I think, you know, a lot of my Canadian friends and a lot of my

Black Canadian friends have been really eloquent on social media and, like, just very informative in talking about some of those Canadian shortcomings.

But I do think that it's, like, you know, we need more people just in general everywhere to be more aware of history and context and how we have come into this point in our existence. Um yeah, because there is still so much state-sponsored violence and displacement and perpetuation of poverty, you know, both above and below the Canadian border. But I also have to say, you better work Saskatchewan, ok! You are more than just a cute name. Saskatchewan, um work! So, ah, Jeffers Lennox, obsessed with you. Thank you so much for your time. You are amazing. Are you on the 'gram, are you on Twitter? Where are you most active?

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:48:25] Um, I try not to be active on either, but I'm @JeffersLennox. I'm @JeffersLennox on Twitter and JeffersLennox.com just as sort of a placeholder website.

JVN [00:48:35] Hit us with that, like, academia on Twitter about, like, Canadian history. I think you've got a lot to say, you're very passionate. I think we would really, like, to hear, like, fierce contextual historical facts about Canada and the United States on a Twitter that you ran. I think it'd be really fun.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:48:49] Well, thank you. I'll consider it. I will consider it.

JVN [00:48:51] Jeffers, thank you so much for your time, for you, just your brain, your work, and thanks for sharing it with us today on Getting Curious.

JEFFERS LENNOX [00:48:58] It's been such a pleasure. Thank you so much.

JVN [00:49:02] You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Professor Jeffers Lennox.

You'll find links to his work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on.

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