

11

Worldviews in Conflict



FIGURE 11-1 Spanish architecture and Aztec ruins.
How does this photograph illustrate contact across cultures and times in Mexico?

WORLDVIEW INQUIRY

How does cultural contact between two societies affect their identity and worldview?

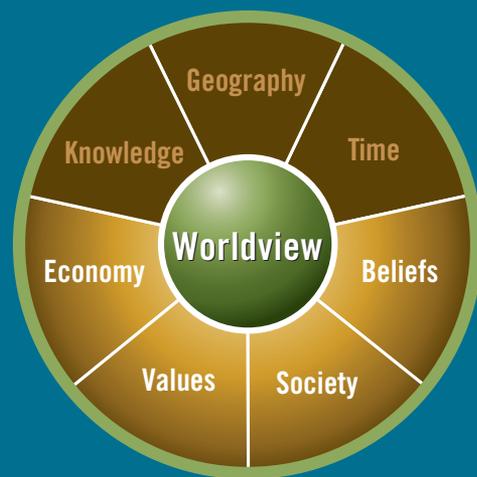
Today, Mexico City, the site where Tenochtitlan once stood, is one of the largest and busiest cities in the world.

Imagine you are visiting the bustling centre of Mexico City with a Spanish-speaking friend. You have visited many excavated Aztec ruins, but all day you have not seen a single monument honouring the conquistador Hernán Cortés.

Then late in the day, you come to a small square with a grassy area that is kept neat and clean. There, something catches your eye—a metal **plaque**, a historical marker, set into a stone wall. You ask your friend to tell you what the writing on the plaque says. “The place where the slavery began,” she reads. “Here the Emperor was made prisoner in the afternoon of 13 August 1521.”

You realize you are standing on the very spot where, 500 years ago, Cortés’s men captured the last Aztec emperor, Moctezuma. You have discovered one of the few monuments in the city referring to the defeat of the Aztec Empire by the Spanish.

From which perspective is the text on the historical marker written? What does this suggest about Mexico’s society today?



In This Chapter

Most wars involve more than a physical struggle. Wars are often clashes in which one **ideology**, or set of values, challenges another. What happens once a war is over? Do the “winners” always make the “losers” give up their traditions and beliefs? Or do both sides adopt parts of one another’s worldview? What happened in Mexico after the conflict between the Aztecs and the Spanish?

Changing a Worldview

How can losing a war affect a conquered people's worldview?

Think IT THROUGH

What world event in your own time do you think had a similarly far-reaching effect on people's worldview? Be prepared to defend your choice.

Think of an event or person that seriously challenged or even changed some element of your worldview. What did this event change about your thinking or behaviour? How did this event make you feel?

What sorts of things could lead or force a whole society to make substantial changes to its worldview? Like the Black Death in Europe, the Spanish conquest was a **catastrophe**, or disaster, for the Aztecs. It affected almost every aspect of their way of life, forcing them to rethink the way they looked at the world. To what extent was the Aztec identity affected by the conquest? To find an answer, you will explore two elements of the Aztec worldview—religion and economy.



FIGURE 11-2 Seeing the Earth from space has affected many astronauts' beliefs and attitudes. Here is what astronaut Donald Williams said: "For those who have seen the Earth from space, and for the hundreds and perhaps thousands more who will, the experience most certainly changes your perspective. The things that we share in our world are far more valuable than those which divide us." How might applying Williams' thoughts change how people treat the planet and how the world's nations interact?

SKILL POWER

An **educated guess** is based on past knowledge and can be an important tool for reading comprehension. It is also an important element of historical thinking. Based on what you know from Chapters 9 and 10, what do you think the Spanish would do once they conquered the Aztecs? Read the following possibilities, decide which option makes the most sense to you, and explain your reasoning.

- They decided to live in harmony with the surviving Aztecs.

- They took all the gold they found and returned to Spain.
- They remained in New Spain, adopting the Aztec religion and lifestyle.
- They forced the Aztecs to convert to the Catholic religion and used them as workers in their mines and farms.

Apply the technique of making educated guesses as you consider why events in the past happened as they did.

A New Religion

During the final siege of Tenochtitlan, Aztec priests kept telling their leaders that if the Aztecs continued their sacrifices and prayers, the gods would lead them to victory. Afterwards, when the Aztecs looked back on their suffering during the war and the defeat that followed, many felt that the gods had abandoned them. Here is an Aztec poem that expresses their mood of despair.

Cortés wrote to King Carlos, asking him to send “religious persons of goodly life and character.” Three years after the conquest, priests dressed in the plain grey robes of the **Franciscan order** came off a Spanish ship at Veracruz. Franciscan priests vowed to live in the poorest conditions, never to get married, and always to obey their superiors without question. Thin from fasting, and barefoot, they started walking through the jungles and over the mountains to Mexico City (formerly Tenochtitlan), about 500 kilometres away. When they arrived weeks later, Hernán Cortés knelt in the dirt and kissed the hem of each priest’s robe. The Aztecs who witnessed this meeting were amazed. They had never seen the conquistador treat anyone with such respect.

We are crushed to the ground; we lie in ruins.

There is nothing but grief and suffering in Mexico and Tlatelolco, where once we saw beauty and valour.

Have you grown weary of your servants? Are you angry with your servants, O Giver of Life?

Miguel León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears*.



FIGURE 11-3 What details in this image help you identify these individuals as Franciscans?

Destroying Aztec Temples

The Franciscans and other missionaries gradually converted many of the surviving Aztecs to the Catholic faith. During this time, they destroyed the Aztec temples and burned all the Aztec codices they could find. Bernardino Sahagun, a Franciscan priest, described some of the actions of his order this way.

Think IT THROUGH

1. Why were these actions necessary from the Franciscan perspective?
2. In Chapters 7 and 8, you read how important religion was to the Aztecs. How might the destruction of their temples have affected their sense of identity?

We took the children of the caciques [Aztec chiefs] into our schools, where we taught them to read, write, and to chant. The children of the poorer natives were brought together in the courtyard and instructed there in the Christian faith. After our teaching, one or two brethren took the pupils to some neighbouring temple, and, by working at it for a few days, they levelled it to the ground. In this way they demolished, in a short time, all the Aztec temples, great and small, so that not a vestige [trace] of them remained.

LINK UP

Just as some Muslims and Jews practised their religion in secret in Christian Spain (Chapter 9), some Aztecs continued some of their religious practices after conversion. ■



FIGURE 11-4 This image shows a featherwork design on an Aztec shield from before the Spanish conquest.



FIGURE 11-5 The image above shows a featherwork design for the cover of a chalice (a metal cup used to hold wine during the Catholic Mass) in New Spain. What do these two images suggest about how some Aztecs responded to Christianity?

Zoom In > Totem Pole Comes Home

As well as having their religious buildings destroyed, the Aztecs and many other Indigenous peoples of the Americas lost many objects that had spiritual and religious importance. Some of these objects are now being returned to the people from whom they were taken. In 1929, for example, a totem pole was secretly cut down in Kitamaat village in British

Columbia and sent to Sweden. There it was a popular display at a national museum. The totem pole had been commissioned and erected by Chief G'psgolox of the Haisla people in 1872 to commemorate a meeting he had with a spirit. The pole was finally returned to the Haisla in 2006, after several years of negotiation with the Swedish government.



FIGURE 11-6 Gerald Amos of the Haisla Nation described his reaction to the pole this way: “The power (l) felt from it was indescribable. It is a symbol of hope that is going to live with us forever.”

- Why do you think the museum in Sweden wanted to display the pole?
- Compare the perspectives of First Nations peoples on objects such as the totem pole with those of non-First Nations people.

FAST FORWARD

Liberation Theology in Latin America

Liberation theology is a way of thinking about the role of the Church in society that began in the 1960s among Roman Catholics in Latin America. The roots of this movement began in the Spanish colonies with people like Bartolomé de Las Casas who tried to improve the situation of Indigenous peoples.

Modern followers of liberation theology think that it is the duty of the Church and religious

believers to work for economic and social justice among poor and oppressed people. Some people in the Catholic Church thought that liberation theology was too political in its outlook.

Think IT THROUGH

The main goal of liberation is freedom. How are poor and oppressed people not free?

New Economy

In addition to changing their religion, the Aztecs were also forced to become part of a completely new economic system. In Chapter 7, you saw that the Aztecs based their economy on farming, trade, war, and tribute. Each of these elements not only increased the Aztecs' wealth, it also strengthened the bond between the people and their gods.

But was it the ideal system from a political perspective? Over time, the Aztecs demanded more and more tribute from the people they conquered. These people came to hate the Aztecs, and as you saw in Chapter 10, the Spanish recruited them in their war against the Aztecs.

A System of Slavery

As soon as the Aztecs surrendered, the Spanish changed the economic system in Mexico by introducing the *encomienda* system. It was the same economic system the Spanish set up in all their colonies in the Americas. With each piece of land, the settlers were allotted a number of Aztec workers. Although the Spanish did not pay these workers, in theory, they had legal rights. The landowners were supposed to treat them well and educate them in the Christian religion. In practice, many landowners abused their workers. The Spanish Crown passed laws to stop these abuses, but the colonies were so far away that the laws had little effect.

The economy in Mexico no longer worked like a wheel increasing the riches of the Aztecs as it turned. Instead, the system resembled the ladder with the Spanish at the top and the Aztecs at the bottom.

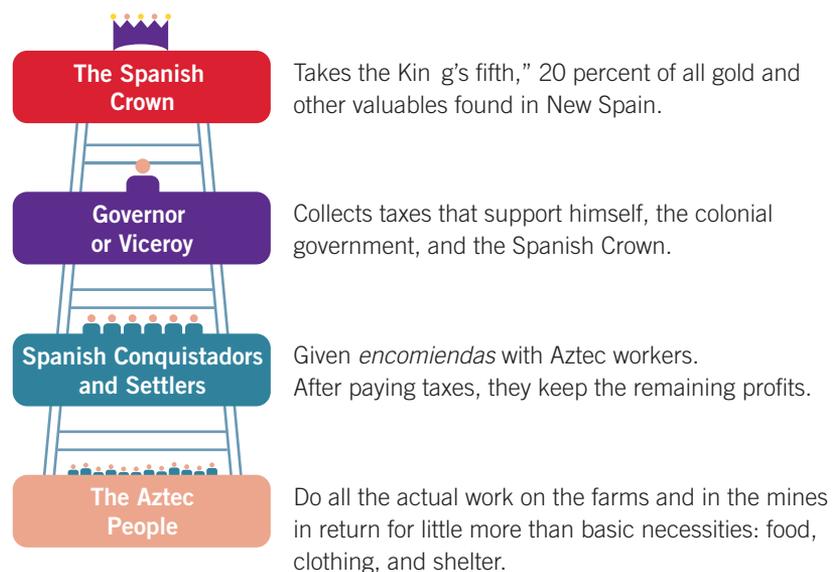
What's in a WORD?

Encomienda is a Spanish word that means "give in trust," and referred to the land grants that Spanish settlers received when they arrived in a colony.

Think IT THROUGH

What effect would such radical changes to their economic system have on the Aztecs' sense of identity, the way they thought of themselves, and their position in the world?

FIGURE 11-7 The economic system that was introduced by the Spanish. What effect did this arrangement have on the Aztecs' ability to create wealth for themselves?



Making a Comparison Organizer

Organizers are useful tools for comparing people, things, or historical events. By using a comparison organizer, you can see how different things relate to each other, or what their similarities and differences are.

You can use a comparison organizer to help you answer an inquiry question such as: Who had the advantage in the war between the Spanish and the Aztecs and why?

	Spanish	Aztec	Who had the advantage?	Why?
Religious Views				
Economic Motivations				
Leadership				
Geography				

How Does It Work?

1. To make a comparison organizer, first decide what you want to compare. In this organizer, it is the factors that influenced the Spanish and Aztec in their war against one another.
2. Next, choose the criteria or categories you will use to compare your subjects. Here the categories are religious views, economic motivations, leadership, and geography. Once you have filled in the information about each category for the Spanish and Aztec, consider *Who had the advantage?* and *Why?*
3. Make a comparison organizer like the one above. Think carefully and fill in the blank spaces for each category.
4. Once you have answered the questions for the different categories, your orga-

nizer will allow you to draw a general conclusion. How did you determine who had the overall advantage in war?

Try It — On Screen!

If you have a word processing program on your computer, making a comparison organizer is easy and can save you time.

1. Once you have opened a document in your word processing program, look at the toolbar at the top of the screen. Click on the Table function.
2. When the drop-down menu appears, choose Insert and then Table. A window labelled Insert Table will appear on your computer screen.
3. In this window, indicate how many columns and rows you want your organizer to have. For instance, the comparison organizer shown here has five columns and five rows. Once you have entered the number of columns and rows, click OK.
4. The blank organizer will automatically appear at the cursor point in your document. Now you can enter your headings and text. Usually, the headings appear in boldface type and the text in regular type.
5. Do not be afraid to make changes to your comparison organizer. You can merge or split cells, show or hide your gridlines, and change the number of rows and columns.

Your organizer will be a powerful tool for presenting comparisons in an easy-to-read format.

The *Dominion Lands Act*

Under the *Dominion Lands Act* of 1872, the Canadian government sold settlers 65 hectares of land for only \$10. Once a settler paid a registration fee and built a house on the land, he or she was responsible for farming a portion of it for three years. Farmers began to arrive to southern Alberta in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

From 1896 to 1914, rural Alberta's population expanded dramatically. The rail system grew enormously, better grain handling and marketing systems developed, and technology and agrarian science advanced. Irrigation was an important element to successful farming throughout southern Alberta.

**Calgary & Southern Alberta /
The Applied History Research Group /
The University of Calgary Copyright © 1997,
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Alberta was on its way to becoming a prosperous farming province.

The “Road Allowance People”

The Métis in Canada are a people of mixed Aboriginal and European descent. They are among the groups we call Aboriginal in Canada: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Starting in the 19th century, the Canadian government encouraged European immigrants to settle on Aboriginal lands in Western Canada. When land is granted to people emigrating from another country, what happens to the people who had been living on the land?

For the Métis, the *Dominion Lands Act* was disastrous. Many tried to homestead but met insurmountable obstacles. Métis homesteaders were not treated the same as immigrant homesteaders. They could not get good plows, oxen, or modern steam-driven equipment. In contrast to the immigrant homesteaders, Métis homesteaders were often forced to rely on

only hand tools. The Métis became so poor they could not succeed.

In her book *Half-breed*, Métis author Maria Campbell tells what happened to Métis families in Saskatchewan under the *Dominion Lands Act*.

Fearless men who could brave sub-zero temperatures and all the dangers associated with living in the bush gave up, frustrated and discouraged.

Gradually the homesteads were reclaimed by the authorities and offered to the immigrants. The [Métis] then became squatters on their land and were eventually run off by the new owners. One by one they drifted back to the road lines and Crown lands where they built cabins and barns and from then on were known as “Road Allowance People.”

Think IT THROUGH

1. Why do you think the Métis were not treated the same as immigrant homesteaders?
2. How was this conflict the result of different worldviews coming into contact?
3. Do you think something like this could happen in your community today? Why or why not?



FIGURE 11-8 Métis author and activist Maria Campbell

Zoom In > New France and the Seigneurial System

Jacques Cartier, the French explorer, planted a cross on the Gaspé Peninsula and took control of Canada in the name of the King of France. Just as Cortés called Mexico “New Spain,” Cartier called Canada “New France.”

In New France, there was an economic system similar to the *encomienda* system in New Spain. It was called the *seigneurial* system. It worked as follows: a large area of land was given to a landlord or *seigneur*. He was responsible for finding French farmers who would come and settle on his land. The farmers paid goods and money to the *seigneur* as rent for the land; in exchange, they got a place to live where they could grow food. The government of New France liked this system because it made good use of the land, and the population increased

because of the increased farm production. Once populations grew, churches were built and communities grew. Most of the land that the *seigneurs* received was along the St. Lawrence and Richelieu rivers.

- Compare the *encomienda* system and the *seigneurial* system. Who do you think benefited the most with both systems? Who do you think benefited the least? Explain.

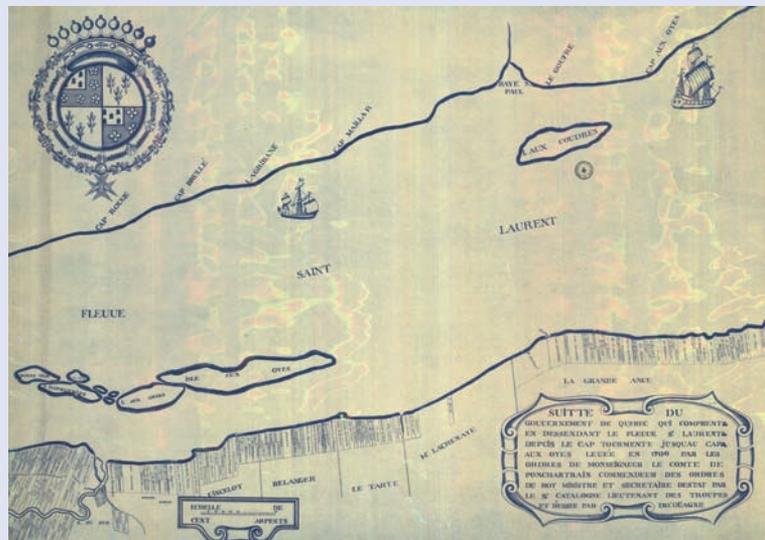


FIGURE 11-9 This map of the area between Québec, Beauré, and the tip of Île d'Orléans shows the strips into which land was divided on the *seigneuries* in New France.

Over to YOU

1. To what extent did the Aztecs' economy and religion change after the conquest? Place an A on the following continuum to show your opinion.

Economy: Total Change _____ Minimal Change

Religion: Total Change _____ Minimal Change

- a. What evidence do you have to support your opinion?
- b. Share your position with a partner. Discuss any differences in your opinions. If your opinions differ, does the other person's evidence make you change your mind?

- c. To what extent did the economy and religion of the Spanish change after the conquest? Using a different colour, place an S on the same continuums to show your opinion.

2. Recall the story that opens this chapter. The situation in Canada is different from that in Mexico. Here, there are many statues in public places of early European explorers and soldiers. However, there are far fewer statues of First Nations leaders. Why do you think this is so? In a letter to the Prime Minister, explain which Aboriginal leader you think deserves a statue and why.

A New Worldview Emerges

How can intercultural contact produce a new society that combines aspects of both original societies?

To understand better what happened in Mexico after the Conquest, think for a moment about Canadians today. In Canada, there are about 6.7 million people whose first language is French. Do you think Francophones in Canada—Québécois, Acadians, and Francophones living in other provinces—all have the same worldview? Or is the worldview of each Francophone group different? In the same way, do Anglophones in Toronto have the same worldview as English-speaking people in Vancouver? Or is their worldview also different and unique?

Keep these questions in mind as you explore a few of the changes that took place in Mexico from the time of the conquest until today.

EXPLORING SOURCES

“Plus de frontières”

In French:

Quand j’pense à nos pionniers

Qui ont tant sacrifié

Leurs peines et leurs pleurs, et toutes leurs prières (2)

À tous ceux qui avaient la foi,

À ceux qui nous disaient

Crois-moi, crois-nous, on l’aura!

In English:

When I think of our pioneers

Who sacrificed so much

Their pain and the tears and all of their prayers (2)

Of all those who had faith

Who told us believe me, we will succeed!

Crystal Plamondon

Crystal Plamondon was born in Northern Alberta. She is a bilingual Francophone, speaking French and English. In her song “Plus de frontières,” she expresses her pride and gratitude to those who came before her.

- What words and phrases in the excerpt help to convey her gratitude for her ancestors?
- Do you think Francophones living in other parts of Canada would identify with this song? Explain why or why not.

Setting up a Colony

You have already seen how the Aztecs' way of living and thinking were affected by the Spanish. Would you be surprised to learn that after the war was over the Spanish had to change their thinking too?

Plundered Gold

How would you feel if you invested in a company that made millions of dollars and you never received a penny? What might you do? As soon as the Aztecs surrendered, Cortés's men threatened to rebel. In Cuba, before setting out to Mexico, Cortés had promised to make them rich beyond their wildest dreams. In Tenochtitlan, they had seen Montezuma's treasure rooms, loaded with gold and silver, and heard rumours of much more. During the long siege of the city, however, most of this treasure was sent back to Spain.

The Spaniards had been fighting for years with no pay except what they could take in battle from the Aztecs. Cortés agreed that they deserved more and even wrote to Spain asking for their payment.

Cortés's goal was to stay in Mexico and make it a colony of the powerful Spanish Empire. He needed his fighting men to help him in this mission. What could Cortés give these men to reward them for their hardships and keep them in New Spain?

Cortés's Solution

Cortés put two policies in place to solve this problem. One was the *encomienda* that you read about earlier. Cortés also passed a "marriage law": Every Spaniard in New Spain either had to bring his wife over from Spain or marry an Indigenous woman. Any man who did not have a wife within six months would lose his *encomienda*.

FYI...

Unlike the Europeans of the time, the Aztecs did not particularly value gold except for its beauty. Today gold is one of the world's most precious resources. It is valuable because it is rare. It is also a relatively soft metal and easy to make into decorative objects such as jewellery.



FIGURE 11-10 Today the **biodiversity**, that is the vast number of plant species, in the ecosystem of Mexico is known as "green gold." In the future, the genetic material from these plants may be as valuable a commodity as Aztec gold was in the past.

The *Encomienda* System

Shortly after Cortés gave his men *encomiendas*, King Carlos I of Spain banned the *encomienda* system on moral grounds. He was responding to the pleas of priests such as Bartolomé de Las Casas, who took part in the conquest of Cuba in 1513 and was shocked by the abuse of the Indigenous peoples that followed.

Las Casas blamed the *encomienda* system for the deaths of 15 million Indigenous people over the first half of the 1500s. He wrote:

As long as these encomiendas last, I ask that God be a witness and judge of what I say: the power of the monarchs, even were they on the scene, will not suffice to keep all the Indians from perishing, dying off, and being consumed; and in this way a thousand worlds might end, without any remedy.

Las Casas' *General History of the Indies*.

Cortés refused to take back the land grants, arguing that they were necessary for the colony to succeed. Read the arguments each of these leaders made.

King Carlos I: *Encomiendas* are bad for the Indigenous peoples.

King Carlos gave the following reasons for banning the *encomienda* system in New Spain:

- It had greatly harmed the Indigenous peoples on the Caribbean islands of Hispaniola and Cuba.
- It caused resentment among the Indigenous peoples, making them more difficult to convert to Christianity.
- Church leaders ruled that God created the Indigenous peoples “free and not servile.” They should not be forced to work like slaves.

Cortés: *Encomiendas* are necessary for the success of New Spain.

In refusing to ban *encomiendas*, Cortés used the following arguments:

- The Spanish settlers had no other means of supporting themselves. Without *encomiendas*, they would all return to Spain and the king would lose his colony.
- Banning the *encomiendas* would not free the Indigenous peoples. They were actually freer in the new system than they had been under the Aztec emperor and nobles—for example, the Spanish did not practise human sacrifice.
- Cortés had lived in the Caribbean for 20 years and felt he knew how to avoid the abuses that had occurred there. He promised that the Aztecs would not be used as slaves on large plantations or in the gold mines.

Think IT THROUGH

1. What criteria did King Carlos I and Cortés use in making their arguments for and against the *encomienda* system? Choose the argument you think is the strongest for each side and explain why you think as you do.
2. In the 1520s, the only way to send a message from Mexico to Spain was by ship. This took about two months, and to get a reply would take another two months. Why would this make it easier for Cortés to ignore the king’s order? What long-term effects might this slow communication process have had on relations between Spain and Mexico?
3. Today, we use e-mail and the telephone to communicate with people quickly. We’re used to having our questions answered and our needs met as soon as possible. How might faster communication have affected the relations between Spain and Mexico?

A Changing Worldview

What did Cortés achieve by giving his soldiers land grants and getting them to marry? First, he shifted their focus from short-term goals—finding gold and returning to Spain—to the long-term project of colonizing New Spain. Second, Cortés knew that if the men married Indigenous women, it would strengthen their ties to the colony. The children they had with their Indigenous wives were the beginning of the **Mestizo**, the mixed-race people who now form the largest part of Mexico’s population.

What sort of worldview would the Mestizo children have? Would it be mainly Spanish, mainly Aztec, or something entirely new: a combination of the two?

What's in a **WORD**?

The Latin word *mixtus*, meaning “mixed,” is the same root for both *Métis* and *Mestizo*.

FYI...

Since the 1990s, *mestizo* has also been used to describe a new kind of music. *Mestizo* music is a mix of urban Spanish, Latin, Salsa, Reggae, Punk, and Rock.

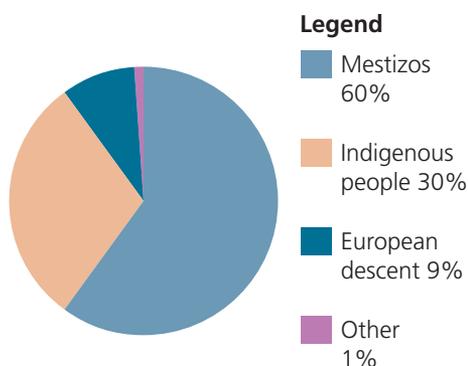


FIGURE 11-11 Ethnic origin of the population of Mexico in 2006. How do Cortés’s policies affect the population of Mexico today?

The Independence Movement

Just as Cortés was busy turning his soldiers into settlers, King Carlos took the governorship of New Spain away from him. He gave the job to one of his most trusted councillors, Don Antonio de Mendoza. Mendoza became the first **viceroy**, or royal representative, in New Spain.

Why did King Carlos take away Cortés’s authority? The conquistador had fought bravely and skilfully to conquer the Aztec nation. Many modern scholars think that perhaps he was a little *too* good at what he did. The king may have feared that Cortés would declare himself king of the colony he had founded and separate from Spain. At best, the king may have assumed that Cortés would look after his own interests first and those of the king second.



FIGURE 11-12 Don Antonio de Mendoza deliberately limited Cortés’s power and kept him away from Mexico City. Based on what you know about Cortés, make an educated guess about his reaction to having his power undermined.

Discontent in New Spain

By appointing a viceroy to govern New Spain, King Carlos made it clear that the colony was under the direct control of the Spanish Crown. Governing the colony meant keeping a steady stream of tribute—gold, silver, and farm products—flowing to Spain to pay for the king’s European wars.

The people of New Spain—even the Spanish settlers—could see that what was good for the king was not necessarily good for them. The colony was making Spain extremely wealthy, but New Spain itself had a shortage of good roads, schools, and housing. Discontent arose among every class of society, and in 1821, Mexico became independent from Spain.

FAST FORWARD

Canada’s Governor General

Did you know the role of the Governor General in Canada today is similar to that of the viceroy in New Spain? Even though the prime minister is the head of government, the Queen of England is still Canada’s official head of state. The Queen’s representative in Canada is called the Governor General. Appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the prime minister, the Governor General’s official duties include opening and closing Parliament and serving as a cultural ambassador for Canada around the world.



FIGURE 11-13 Charles Monck was Canada’s first Governor General after Confederation.



FIGURE 11-14 Michaëlle Jean was appointed Governor General of Canada in 2005.

Think IT THROUGH

1. After Confederation, the Governor General post alternated between Francophone and Anglophone Canadians. Why do you suppose this happened? What does this suggest about Canada’s changing identity?
2. Research the role that Canada’s first Governor General, Sir Charles Monck, played in bringing about Confederation. How did Sir Charles Monck help to unite and stabilize Canada as an independent country?



FIGURE 11-15 The modern Mexican artist Juan O'Gorman called this painting *The War of Independence*. It hangs in the National Palace in Mexico City.

The Indigenous Peoples

The following excerpt is from a letter written to the Spanish king in 1560 by the people of Huejotzingo (way-hot-SEEN-go), Indigenous allies of Cortés in his war against the Aztecs.

We are afflicted and sore pressed, and your town and city of Huejotzingo is as if it is about to disappear and be destroyed. Here is what is being done to us: now your stewards the royal officials and the prosecuting attorney . . . are assessing us a very great tribute to belong to you The tribute we are to give is 14 800 pesos in money, and also all the bushels of maize.

Ambergris Caye History.

The Mestizos

Many Mestizos grew up in great poverty and felt Spain was exploiting Mexico and giving nothing in return. José Maria Morelos was the Mestizo leader of the Mexican independence movement in the early 19th century. His army of Indigenous peoples and Mestizos defeated the better-equipped Spanish forces many times. The Spanish eventually captured and executed Morelos. He is now revered in Mexico as a national hero.

The Creoles

The descendants of Spanish settlers in Mexico were called **Creoles**. They were the most privileged and wealthiest class in Mexico, but—tired of increasing taxes and inspired by revolutions in France and the United States—they also came to support the independence movement.

Think IT THROUGH

Look at Juan O'Gorman's painting in Figure 11-15. How does the artist show that all three groups of people—Indigenous, Mestizos, and Creoles—cooperated to win Mexico's independence from Spain?

Mexican Culture Today

Modern Mexico's culture is a fusion of Indigenous, Mestizo, and Spanish traditions. Where do you think it would be easiest to trace the way these different traditions came together? Surprisingly, it is in the Roman Catholic churches of Mexico. Although the Spanish introduced Catholicism to Mexico, church festivals today include Aztec traditions that were developed long before the arrival of the Spanish.

Zoom In > The Day of the Dead

Every year, Roman Catholics around the world celebrate All Souls Day on November 1 by praying for family members who have died, hoping that their prayers will help the souls of the dead get to heaven. In Mexico, November 2 is celebrated as the Day of the Dead.

The Aztec tradition

In his *Florentine Codex*, Bernardino Sahagun recorded several Aztec traditions.

[The Aztecs] also used to place the image of the dead on . . . grass wreaths. Then at dawn they put these images in their shrines . . . There, they offered them food [and] incense from an incense burner

David Carrasco, *Daily Life of the Aztecs: People of the Sun and Earth.*

The family altar

Every Aztec house had a shrine that contained statues of the gods and offerings of food, water, and incense. In Mexico today, many families have an altar where they place religious statues and pictures of their dead relatives. In the days before November 2, the altar is decorated with papier mâché skeletons and little skulls of crystallized sugar. People put out offerings of food and burn candles and incense.

The day before

On November 1, the family takes baskets of marigold flowers to church where the priest blesses the flowers with holy water. The family then creates a trail of flower petals to lead the dead back to the family's house. Once home, the family closes the altar room so the souls can enjoy the presents collected for them.

The Day of the Dead

On the evening of November 2, the whole village or neighbourhood walks out to the cemetery. There, a band plays music while people sing sacred songs and pray for their dead relatives. They light candles and place them on the headstones so the souls will find their way back to their graves.

- Note how the Aztec practices Sahagun is describing resemble the Day of the Dead ceremonies. What does the survival of these traditions tell you about the worldview of Mexico today?



FIGURE 11-16 A family sits in their altar room which is decorated with marigold flowers.

SKILL POWER

You can use a comparison organizer to help you gather information to write a paragraph in which you show how things are alike and how they differ. Your task is to compare the factors that led the different groups in Mexican society to get involved in the struggle for independence from Spain.

- **Plan the headings for your organizer.** This is a two-step process. First, consider what things you are comparing. Use these as the column headings on your organizer. Second, consider what aspects of these things you are comparing. Use these as the row headings on your organizer.
- **Gather information for your organizer.** In this case you could refer to pages 249–251 in the text. You might also wish to refer to other sources of information. Record the relevant information in point form on your organizer.
- **Write a comparison paragraph based on your organizer.** Choose clear-cut similarities and differences for your comparison. Highlight the similarities by using expressions such as: *similarly*, *both*, *and*. Highlight the differences with expressions such as: *but*, *on the other hand*, *whereas*.

Mexican Artists and Writers

Another way to see how the Mexican culture has fused together the Aztec and Spanish traditions is to look at the work of the country's artists and writers.



FYI...

The Day of the Dead is a festive time, rather than a morbid occasion.

FIGURE 11-17 The Mexican artist Diego Rivera favoured subjects of pre-conquest and modern Mexico. He called this mural *The Day of the Dead in the City*. What parts of Diego's mural remind you of his images of the Aztecs? Why?



FIGURE 11-18 Frida Kahlo dressed in the style of Indigenous or peasant Mexicans.

Think IT THROUGH

Why do you think Frida Kahlo dressed the way she did? Why factors influence the way you dress?

Frida Kahlo

The daughter of a Mestizo mother and German father, Frida Kahlo was a skilled and influential painter. From a young age, she was fascinated by Mexican folk art and the sculpture and architecture of the country's Indigenous peoples. As a teacher, she often took her art students to the ruins of Aztec temples. "[S]o they would appreciate what magnificent builders their great ancestors were," she wrote. Her husband, Diego Rivera, painted many murals of Aztec life before and during the conquest. You have seen some of his paintings in this unit.

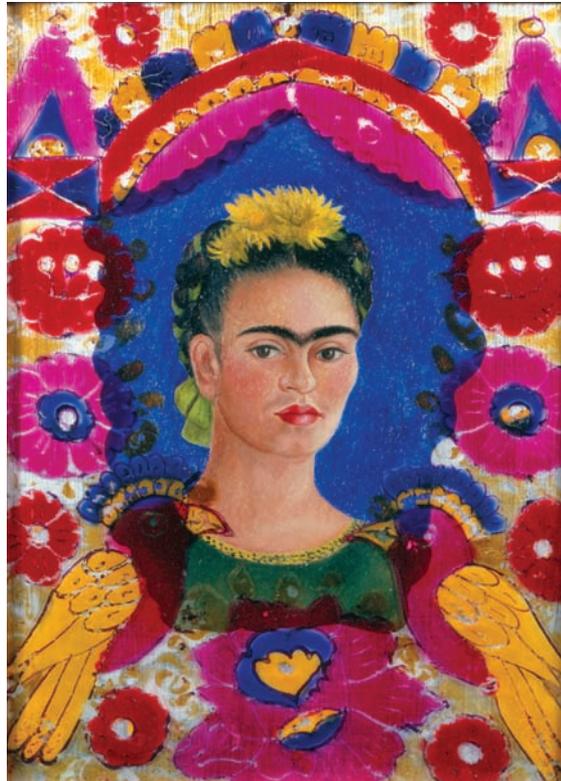


FIGURE 11-19 Frida Kahlo's *Self Portrait (The Frame)*, 1938. In her paintings, she often used techniques and colour schemes borrowed from Mexican folk artists. This painting was purchased by the Louvre in Paris and was the first painting by a Latin American artist in this famous gallery.

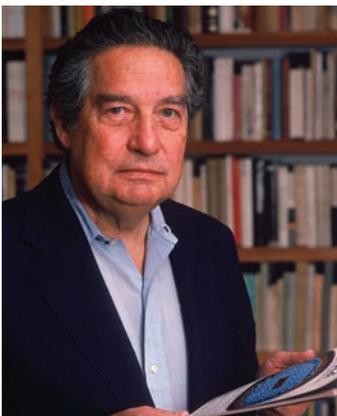


FIGURE 11-20 Octavio Paz travelled the world for many years as a Mexican diplomat. He studied the art and literature of France, the United States, Japan, and China, but never lost his enthusiasm for Aztec art and culture.

Octavio Paz

Octavio Paz was the best-known Mexican writer of the 20th century. He believed that only by studying the history of Mexico's Indigenous peoples could a person understand what was happening in present-day Mexico.

As a poet, he turned frequently to Aztec culture for inspiration. He modeled his longest poem, called *Sun-Stone*, on the Aztec calendar stone you looked at in Chapter 8. The poem has the same four lines at the beginning and end, giving it a circular structure just like the stone. Also, the poem's **imagery**, or choice of symbols, comes from the images that the Aztec artists carved into the calendar stone.

EXPLORING SOURCES

Aztec History Survives

As an essay writer, Octavio Paz explored the way Aztec art and traditions have survived in the present-day Mexican worldview.

In Mexico, the Spaniards encountered history as well as geography. That history is still alive: it is a present rather than a past. The temples and gods of pre-Columbian Mexico are a pile of ruins, but the spirit that breathed life into that world has not disappeared; it speaks to us in the . . . language of myth, legend, forms of social coexistence, popular art, customs.

Octavio Paz's acceptance for the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1990.

- Explain in your own words what Paz means when he says that Aztec history is “a present rather than a past.”

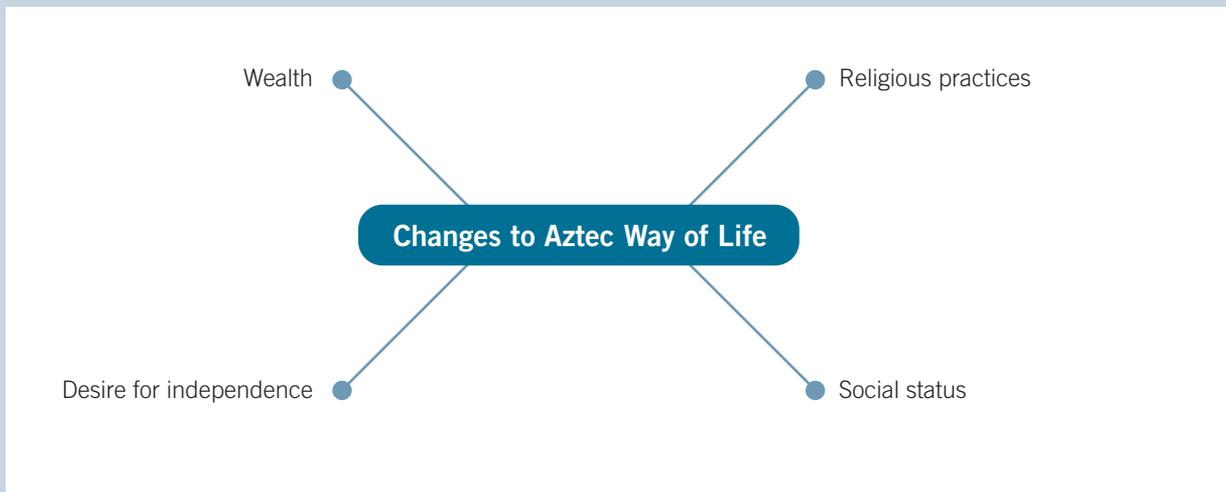
Over to YOU

1. Based on what you have learned about Mexico after the Conquest, describe how religion and the arts reflect a combination of both Aztec and Spanish societies in the country.
2. **Consider a dilemma:** King Carlos I saw the *encomienda* as being harmful to the Aztecs and tried to have it banned. If you were King Carlos, how else could you protect the Aztecs? If you could change one other thing about the way the Spanish treated them, what would it be? Copy the following cause–effect diagram to show what impact this would have upon the Aztecs' worldview.
Cause → Effect → Effect
Example: Aztecs could maintain their own religion → able to find strength from their gods → maintain pride in their culture
3. Research in newspapers, on television, and through the Internet to find places in the world that are currently experiencing different sorts of change. Apart from peace and conflict, what other agents or reasons for change do you find? Are the changes positive or negative? Create a map showing these “hot spots” for change and what you have determined about them.
4. **a.** Create a series of images (illustrations or collage) and text to show how intercultural contact in Alberta has influenced various aspects of our culture: language, cuisine, dance, art, literature.
b. Compare your point of view on the influence of intercultural contact in Alberta with those of your classmates. What similarities and differences do you notice?

Explore the Big Ideas

The catastrophe that the Aztecs experienced caused a radical shift in their way of life and how they looked at the world.

- a.** Compare your point of view on the influence of intercultural contact in Alberta with those of your classmates. What similarities and differences do you notice?



- b.** How would these changes in their way of life have influenced how they looked at the world?
- c.** Based on your reading of this chapter, how would you describe Mexican culture today?

- 2.** Select a quotation from any Exploring Sources features in this chapter. Create a visual to explain what your selection tells you about the worldview of the person at the time of the quotation.
- 3.** To understand the meaning of culture, it is important to understand your own. On your own, complete this personal cultural worksheet² by answering the following questions:

- a.** What language(s) do you speak?
- b.** What music do you listen to?
- c.** What foods do you eat at home?
- d.** At home, what manners have you been taught? What is considered polite and rude?
- e.** What do you wear on special occasions?
- f.** How often do you see your extended family?

- g.** What holidays and celebrations are important to you?

Based on the answers in your worksheet, how would you describe the culture that you are a part of?

- 4.** Create a collage to show how the following values are rooted in our past as Canadians—understanding, tolerance, respect for the opinions of others, courage in the face of difficulties, a wish for unity in spite of differences.

² Adapted from the Peace Corps Culture Worksheet: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/WWS/bridges/lesson2/worksheet2.html>