



CANADA HISTORY WEEK 2021
**INDIGENOUS HISTORY:
LEARNING ABOUT
INDIGENOUS LEADERS,
LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION,
AND CULTURES**

LEARNING TOOL



INTRODUCTION

This year, Canada History Week highlights stories of Indigenous leadership, languages, and cultures. This learning tool has been created to accompany the three short videos produced for Canada History Week 2021, featuring Squamish leader Chief Joe Capilano, Inuk author Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk, and Métis composer Pierre Falcon.

The topics covered in this learning tool, the Canada History Week [videos](#), and the accompanying [digital magazine](#) barely begin to scratch the surface, but we hope they can be used as a starting point for learning more about the diverse histories of Indigenous peoples in what is now known as Canada. Canada History Week encourages Canadians to reflect upon and engage with Canada's past. In doing so, we aim to help Canadians better understand the need for Truth and Reconciliation in the present, and to encourage us all to work together for a better shared future.

This learning tool was created in partnership between Historica Canada and the Canada History Fund and is designed to help students interact with this year's Canada History Week theme. Canada History Week provides all Canadians with opportunities to learn more about the people and events that have shaped the country we know today.

Historica Canada is the country's largest organization dedicated to enhancing awareness of Canada's history, culture, and citizenship. The organization offers programs that you can use to explore, learn, and reflect on our history and what it means to be Canadian. Find us online at HistoricaCanada.ca.

MESSAGE TO TEACHERS

Educators may use the lessons in sequence or as stand-alone activities. This guide is designed to complement current Canadian curricula and has been produced for use in middle and high school history and social science classrooms; the grade level varies by activity. This guide has been developed with activities that can be conducted in class, online, or in some combination of the two. Teachers may want to adapt certain elements of the activities to best suit classroom needs.

Content warning: Many of the topics covered in this guide could trigger a strong emotional response, especially among youth who are affected by intergenerational trauma. Teachers should be sensitive to individuals and the group to ensure the classroom remains a safe environment for all learners. Set ground rules for respectful discussions and consult your school guidance counsellor for additional support, if needed.

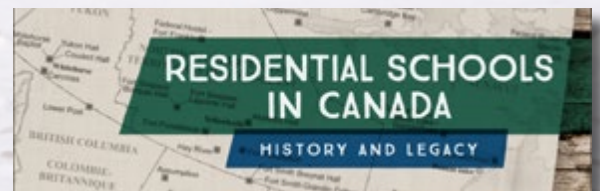
Inukshuk. Courtesy Dreamstime.com/Bernard Breton/749253.

ONLINE RESOURCES

We recommend the following bilingual research resources to support educators and students when using this guide’s activities. You may also choose to seek out supplementary resources.

- Canada History Week 2021 [videos](#) and [digital magazine](#)
- The [Indigenous Peoples Collection](#) on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*
- Historica Canada’s [Indigenous Peoples YouTube playlist](#)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: [Calls to Action](#)

This guide is by no means comprehensive of all Indigenous history in what is now known as Canada but is meant to complement the subjects and themes represented in the Canada History Week 2021 videos and to provide context for those topics. For more activities relating to Indigenous history, see our [Indigenous Perspectives Education Guide](#); [Voices from Here Education Guide](#); [Residential Schools in Canada: History and Legacy Education Guide](#); and [Treaties in Canada Education Guide](#). Find further educational resources on the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation [website](#).



NOTE ON LANGUAGE

First Nations peoples in Canada were called “Indians” by European settlers. This term is now recognized as derogatory and is rarely used, except in some legal and historical documents. “Indian Residential School” is similarly a historical term used by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and in educational documents. This guide uses “Indian Residential School” and “residential school” interchangeably to describe the system of boarding schools, day schools, hostels, and other institutions that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit were forced to attend. “Aboriginal” is a legal term that encompasses all Status and Non-Status First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Though “Aboriginal” and “Indigenous” are sometimes used interchangeably, we have used “Indigenous” in this education guide.

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Activity 1.1 - Whose Land Are You On?

Indigenous peoples have lived in what is now Canada since Time Immemorial. Indigenous territories — also referred to as traditional territories — describe the ancestral and contemporary connections of Indigenous peoples to a geographical area. Traditional territory was not static. The borders between territories shifted and changed over time. Territories may be defined by kinship ties, occupation, seasonal travel routes, trade networks, management of resources, spiritual beliefs, and cultural and linguistic connections to place. Read more in the [Indigenous Territory article](#).



1. Use [Native-Land.ca](#) to find out which Indigenous traditional territory you live on. Note that where you live may be the traditional territory of more than one Indigenous nation.

- **Tip:** Click the 'Labels' button in the bottom right corner of the map to show political boundaries to help locate where you are on the map.

2. Reflect and discuss as a group if, or how, this traditional territory is reflected in your community. Are there Indigenous street or place names? Does your school or community organization practice a land acknowledgment? Are there signs or plaques to indicate the traditional territory? Is it reflected in community art or architecture?

Try the Indigenous Peoples in Canada quizzes by the [Citizenship Challenge](#) to see how much you know. Available in [Easy](#), [Medium](#), and [Hard](#).

SECTION 2 – CHIEF JOE CAPILANO & INDIGENOUS LEADERS

Activity 2.1 - Video Discussion: Chief Joe Capilano & Leaders

1. Begin with a class discussion about what makes someone a leader.
2. Watch the [Chief Joe Capilano video](#) and read his [biography](#) on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.
3. In small groups, or as a class, discuss:
 - How was Chief Joe Capilano a leader to his people?
 - What impact did he have? What was his legacy?
 - Beyond political leaders, what other areas can people be leaders in? Think about the topics of the other two videos – [Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk](#) and [Pierre Falcon](#) – what made them leaders?



Illustration by SJ Okemow. Still from Chief Joe Capilano video (Historica Canada).

Activity 2.2 - Historical Leaders & Historical Significance

1. Choose and research a historical Indigenous leader. When choosing a leader, consider the different areas in which people can be leaders, as discussed in Activity 2.1.

For ideas of leaders, check out the [Indigenous Peoples Collection](#) on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, or conduct an online search. Consider choosing a leader from the territory you identified in Activity 1.1.

2. Consider the historical significance of the leader you chose, and fill out the chart below.

People and events have **historical significance** if they created change that affected many people over time, or if they revealed something about larger issues in the past or the present day. For more information on the Historical Thinking Concepts, visit historicalthinking.ca.

Historical Significance Criteria	Notes
Prominence: Was the person recognized as significant at the time? Why or why not? What did it mean to be “significant”?	
Consequences: What effect(s) did the person have?	
Impact: How widespread and long-lasting was the person’s impact?	
Revealing: What does the person reveal about the larger historical context or current issues? How do they inform our understanding of a historical issue or period?	

3. Using your notes from step 2, write a nomination for the leader you researched to be featured on a Canada Post stamp. Refer to the Canada Post Stamp Subject Nomination Criteria below when writing your nomination. Write 2-3 paragraphs explaining your nomination. What image or design would you use for the stamp?

Canada Post Stamp Subject Nomination Criteria

We encourage Canadians to participate in proposing stamp subjects. Suggestions should include:

- A brief description of the subject.
- Its importance in the Canadian context.
- Any significant anniversaries or upcoming events.

Your suggested subject for a stamp should:

- Have broad appeal to the Canadian population, encouraging Canadians of all ages to buy and collect stamps.
- Relate primarily to Canada and is of national significance, and should:
 - ◆ Evoke Canadian history, traditions, accomplishments, or natural heritage.
 - ◆ Illustrate the social, cultural, political, or economic life of Canada.
 - ◆ Commemorate people (generally after their death), their work, their birth, or a life event to recognize outstanding contributions to Canada.
- Enhance the high regard for Canadian stamps in Canadian and international philatelic circles.



Photo courtesy Alexander Mirt/213664519/
Dreamstime.com.

Activity 2.3 - Modern Leaders: Indigenous Youth



Cree youth walkers arrive in Ottawa (Dreamstime.com/Paul Mckinnon/30051673).

1. Across Canada, Indigenous youth leaders are advocates for many different causes. Choose an Indigenous youth leader from the list below, or research and choose someone who inspires you. You can check your local news outlets for articles about leaders in your community, or find someone on social media.

- [The Journey of Nishiyuu](#)
- [Autumn Peltier](#)
- [Shannen Koostachin](#)
- [Mumilaaq Qaqqaq](#)
- [Ashley Cummings](#)

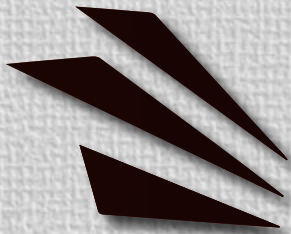
2. Using your research, answer the following questions about your chosen leader(s):

- What cause(s) do/did they support or bring awareness to?
- How did they get started?
- What means/platforms do they use?

3. Form a small group with students in your class. Make sure you all researched a different person. You will each present your chosen leader to the group, and detail the information you researched in step 2. As a group, discuss any similarities or differences you have noticed. For example, did any of your leaders support the same cause? Is there any overlap between their movements and communities? Did they use similar methods? Even if they were advocates for different movements, were they connected?

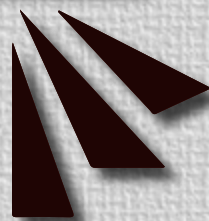
SECTION 3 – MITIARJUK NAPPAALUK & LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

Before European colonization, Indigenous peoples spoke a wide variety of languages. As a means of assimilating Indigenous peoples, colonial policies like the [Indian Act](#) and the [residential school system](#) forbade the speaking of Indigenous languages (see [Genocide and Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#)). These restrictions have led to the ongoing endangerment of Indigenous languages in Canada. In 2016, Statistics Canada reported that for about 40 Indigenous languages in Canada, there are 500 speakers or less. Indigenous communities and various educational institutions have taken measures to prevent more language loss and to preserve Indigenous languages. Read more about [Indigenous Language Revitalization in Canada](#).



Some Indigenous cultures use sign language to communicate and visually narrate discussions. Examples include Plains Sign Language, Plateau Sign Language, and Inuit Sign Language. Efforts are being made to revitalize these languages. For more information, consult [Indigenous Sign Languages in Canada](#).

The [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) published a list of 94 [Calls to Action](#), which offer specific ways that Canadian society can help address the injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples. Calls 13-17 pertain specifically to language and culture – [read them here](#).



Activity 3.1 - Video Discussion: Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk & Indigenous Language Revitalization

1. Watch the [Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk](#) video and read her [biography](#) on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.

2. Read the [Indigenous Language Revitalization in Canada](#) article.

3. In small groups, or as a class, discuss:

- What role did Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk play in preserving and revitalizing her language?
- What impacts do you think a loss of language has on Indigenous peoples and their cultures?
- Why is it important to preserve and teach Indigenous languages?
- Think about your own experience with Indigenous languages – do you know any words in an Indigenous language or that are derived from an Indigenous word (e.g., qayaq [kayak])? Do you know any place names that are derived from an Indigenous language? Have you ever read a book, watched a show, or listened to music that was in an Indigenous language?



Illustration by Erin Hill. Still from Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk video (Historica Canada).

Activity 3.2 - Lillian Elias: Language Preservation and Residential Schools

RESISTANCE AND RESURGENCE: LILLIAN'S STORY

Lillian Elias is a language advocate and former teacher. She grew up in a family of 12 children who depended on the money they received from the federal government's Family Allowance program to survive. The only way to ensure the continued delivery of that allowance was to have at least one child institutionalized at an [Indian Residential School](#).

In 1950, when Lillian was about eight years old, her parents took her to Immaculate Conception Residential School in Aklavik, Northwest Territories. While there, she was forbidden to speak her own language — she witnessed her friends being beaten for uttering even one word in Inuvialuktun. When she returned home a few years later, she realized that communication had broken down: [Elders](#) and children no longer understood each other.

Lillian became determined to prevent Inuvialuktun from being lost in her community. She became a translator in the summers to maintain the ability to speak her language fluently and to help those in her community who didn't understand English. After leaving residential school, she began teaching Inuvialuktun to young people. Because of her, many Inuvialuit grew up with a better understanding of their Indigenous language, who they are, and where they come from.

Activity 3.2 continued →

Activity 3.2 continued

1. As a class, watch the [Lillian Elias video](#) and take notes on how Lillian talks about language.

2. After viewing, have a classroom discussion and answer the following questions:

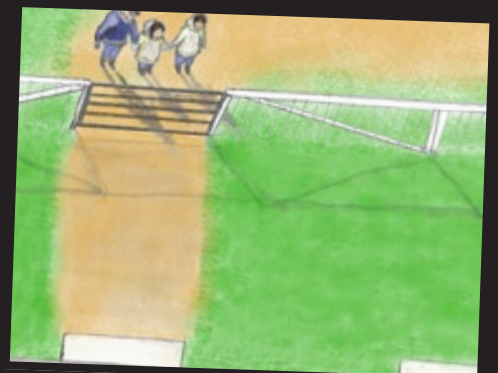
- How does Lillian see language preservation as an act of resistance?
- How does this video use symbolic imagery to represent Lillian's experience?
- How does Lillian's experience show the importance of language preservation for Indian Residential School survivors?

3. Using Lillian's story as your inspiration, research language preservation, thinking about it as an act of resistance and an example of resilience. Think about the importance of language to your own culture, and look at examples of Indigenous language preservation campaigns and initiatives to further inform your research. Using what you have learned, create a poster, song, or poem showing how language preservation is an act of resistance and resilience for Indigenous peoples. Your creation should be accompanied by a short, written description that shows your understanding of the importance of language preservation for Indigenous peoples, and explains how your work embodies their strength and resilience through generations of colonial oppression.

Language preservation is the process of preventing language loss to ensure its survival.

Language revitalization is the process of reviving an endangered language.

Illustrations by Andrew Qappik, RCA. Stills from Lillian Elias: A Residential School Survivor's Story video (Historica Canada).



EXTENSION ACTIVITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

Have students research an Indigenous musical group or musician. Ask them to share a favourite song or a word they may have learned through their research, and tell their peers about the topics and issues covered in the band or artist's music.

Activity 3.3 - Exploring Social Media and Indigenous Language Revitalization



In her video from the [Voices from Here](#) series, Gwichyà Gwich'in language activist Jacey Firth-Hagen talks about her social media language revitalization initiative, [#SpeakGwichintoMe](#).

1. Watch the [video](#) together as a class.
2. Working in small groups, conduct an online search for Indigenous language revitalization efforts (e.g., Word of the Day Twitter accounts, podcasts, hashtag campaigns, Instagram pages, meme makers, TikTok users, people who teach on YouTube, online dictionaries, or Indigenous language smartphone applications).
3. Create a short presentation about the campaign or app, including why it was created, and who it is intended for. Include contextual information about the language and who speaks it, that nation's history, and the traditional territory of the language.
4. Share a couple of words or phrases you learned with the class. Consider how the campaign or app is similar or different to what Jacey Firth-Hagen shared, and think about accessibility and other strategies to promote it.
5. Conclude by assessing the role of new media and technology in language preservation and revitalization.

TEACHER MODIFICATION: Have students share their work informally. Consider partnering students with other first-language peers (or other language learners) and give them the option to give their presentation in the way they feel most comfortable.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: As part of the daily morning announcements, introduce a new word from a local Indigenous language each day.



Courtesy Dreamstime.com/ Marcel De Grijs /85888318.

SECTION 4 – PIERRE FALCON & CULTURAL CONTINUITY

Activity 4.1 - Video Discussion: Pierre Falcon & Oral History



Illustration by Stephen Gladue. Still from Pierre Falcon video (Historica Canada).

1. Watch the [Pierre Falcon video](#) and read his [biography](#) on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.
2. Learn about the context of Pierre Falcon's *La Chanson de la Gournouillère (Grenouillère)* and analyze the lyrics on the [Canadian Museum of History website](#).
3. As a class, discuss what Pierre Falcon's *La Chanson de la Gournouillère (Grenouillère)* tells us about Métis history.
4. Read the [Indigenous Oral Histories and Primary Sources](#) article.
5. In small groups, or as a class, discuss:
 - In addition to history, what kinds of knowledge can Oral Tradition convey?
 - Can you think of examples of oral histories or Oral Traditions you have encountered?
 - What are the benefits of using oral histories to understand the past?
 - What are the limitations of using oral histories to understand the past?
 - What are the benefits of using archival or written sources?
 - What are the limitations of using archival or written sources?
 - How can students and researchers use oral history in combination with archival sources to understand history?



Activity 4.2 - Analyzing Events in Métis History

Part A: The [Pierre Falcon video](#) depicts several significant events in Métis history. In small groups, research one of the events mentioned below in more depth. Make sure to answer the 5Ws:

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- Why did it happen and why is it important?



The Battle of the Grenouillère (*Gournouillère*), also known as the [Battle of Seven Oaks](#), was part of the [Pemmican Wars](#).



[The Battle of Batoche](#) was part of the [North-West Resistance](#).



The 1938 destruction of the Métis community of Ste. Madeleine, Manitoba, led to some displaced members becoming part of [Métis Road Allowance Communities](#).

Learn more about the forced relocation of Ste. Madeleine with the *Canadian Geographic* [Re: Location map](#).

Tip: On the Re:Location website, select a language and then the 'Begin' and 'Explore' buttons. Zoom into the map and select the marker for Ste. Madeleine, Manitoba, right near the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border.

Part B: What are some other significant events that occurred in Métis history? Choose 5-7 additional events and create a timeline. Each point on the timeline should include the date, a description of the event, and 2-3 sentences on why it was significant.

Activity 4.3 - Research an Indigenous Ceremony or Gathering

Colonial policies and laws restricted or outlawed many forms of Indigenous cultural practices. For example, the *Indian Act* banned and criminalized “any Indian festival, dance or other ceremony” and subsequent amendments placed further restrictions on Indigenous peoples. Despite these restrictions, many Indigenous practices persisted.

1. Choose one of the ceremonies, gatherings, games, or other cultural practices from the list below to research. You may also choose one not listed here.

- [Dene Games](#)
- [Inuit Vocal Games](#)
- [Powwows](#)
- [Potlatches](#) (Learn more with the [Living Traditions: The Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch on the Northwest Coast](#) exhibit)
- [Sun Dance](#)
- [Smudging](#)
- [Vision Quest](#)

2. Make note of the following information for your chosen practice. You may wish to conduct additional research:

- When does it take place? Where does it take place? Who is involved? What does it consist of?
- Is the ceremony or gathering public, or only intended for a select group?
- How was it impacted by colonial policies? What were the implications of this? How did this affect those involved?
- What does it look like today? What has changed?
- Visual examples – videos or photographs.

3. Share the information you've learned with your class. You can choose to share what you've learned in the way that suits it best: for example, with a slideshow presentation, brochure, oral presentation, or news article.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Read the [Cultural Appropriation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#) article. Has the practice you researched been appropriated by non-Indigenous cultures? If so, how? What are the implications? What actions are being taken to stop the appropriation?

SUMMATIVE ACTIVITY

Activity 5.1 - Working Towards Truth and Reconciliation

By engaging with the Canada History Week 2021 materials and learning about Indigenous Peoples and their histories, you have taken steps towards Reconciliation. What are other ways you can work towards Truth and Reconciliation?

1. As a class, read the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [94 Calls to Action](#). While most of the Calls to Action are directed towards governments, the ideas and themes behind the calls can apply to individuals.
2. Read Dr. Crystal Gail Fraser and Dr. Sara Komarnisky's [150 Acts of Reconciliation](#) for ideas about how individuals or groups can contribute to the process of Reconciliation.
3. From the Calls to Action, the *150 Acts of Reconciliation*, or your own brainstorming, choose 3-5 actions that you as an individual can take to help with the process of Reconciliation. Fill out the chart below:

Action What is your goal?	Significance How does it contribute to the process of Reconciliation?	Next Steps What steps will you take to work towards or complete the action?

TEACHER TIP:

Students unfamiliar with the concept of Reconciliation can read the [Reconciliation in Canada](#) article on *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. To begin the activity, you may want to have a class discussion about what Reconciliation means and whether students have seen it in action.