



CURRICULA

FOR GRADES:
6 TO 9

CANADA'S CAPITAL TREASURES

Series Introduction

Seven classroom-ready lesson plans and five introductory videos highlight and explore the significance and importance of Canada's Capital Treasures. These treasures represent knowledge, sacrifice, commitment and ingenuity. This series of lesson plans is available for download at www.teachmag.com/curricula. These lesson plans were produced by the National Capital Commission (NCC) in collaboration with the Virtual Museum of Canada and TEACH Magazine.

LESSON SEVEN: NATIONAL ABORIGINAL VETERANS MONUMENT

Materials

National Aboriginal Veterans Association Monument video: www.canadascapital.gc.ca/capital-treasures

Learning Objectives

The learner will:

- Learn more about the contributions of Aboriginal people to Canada;
- Use visual and text elements to create a compelling poster;
- Decode symbols in a local monument;
- Determine how the structure and length of a video influences its effectiveness; and
- Create a personal lexicon of family symbols.

Keywords

Noel Lloyd Pinay; National Aboriginal Veterans Association; National Aboriginal Day

Introduction

Aboriginal people have responded to the call of war, time and again. To remember and celebrate this commitment, the National Aboriginal Veterans Association raised funds for and commissioned a monument that honours First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who volunteered in the First World War, Second World War, Korean War, and all subsequent peacekeeping missions. As seen in the National Aboriginal Veteran's Monument video, the six-metre (20-foot) bronze and granite sculpture stands tall and proud in Confederation Park, a central gathering



National Aboriginal Veterans Monument, 2004

Photo: National Capital Commission

Noel Lloyd Pinay's richly symbolic commemoration as it stands in the heart of Canada's Capital.

place in the heart of Canada's Capital. The monument reminds us that Aboriginal Canadians fought and died for our country, even at times when society did not recognize many of their basic human rights.

The National Aboriginal Veterans Association was formed in 1981 to promote the unique accomplishments and interests of Aboriginal veterans in times of war and peace. Aboriginal soldiers have served Canada for hundreds

of years and are renowned as snipers and reconnaissance scouts, utilizing the traditional skills they employed as hunters and warriors.

Artist Noel Lloyd Pinay of the Peepeekisis First Nation in Saskatchewan was inspired by the dedication and sacrifices made by his father, Noel Joseph Pinay, who was a paratrooper during the Second World War. Using traditional symbols, Pinay brings the essential Aboriginal value of harmony with nature to the forefront. All animals, plants, and humans exist in an interrelated circle of life and death under the auspices of the Creator. The spirits of living things must be honoured and respected.

Translating these traditional values into metal and stone was no easy feat. Noel Lloyd Pinay, an experienced caster of bronze statuary, worked long and hard in his prairie workshop to create the complex piece. The statue was then shipped by rail to the Capital, where the artist assembled and joined the pieces. The statue was unveiled in a special Aboriginal Day ceremony on June 21, 2001, with the Governor General in attendance.

The number four figures prominently in the spirituality of many Aboriginal peoples: four seasons, four directions, four stages of life — and Pinay has used the number extensively in his sculpture. Four animal spirits — wolf, buffalo, elk, and bear — guide warriors in their pursuit of victory and peace.

Four human figures stand facing the four cardinal directions. They represent the vast diversity of Aboriginal people in Canada and include people from the Plains, the West Coast, an Inuit person from the North, and a Métis figure. Two of the figures are male and two are female,

signifying the contributions of Aboriginal men and women to Canada's wartime efforts and peacekeeping activities. In their hands, they hold both weapons and spiritual objects, such as an eagle feather fan and a peace pipe.

Finally, a thunderbird perched atop the monument symbolizes the Creator, who unites and guides those below. By using images and symbols, Noel Lloyd Pinay has created a monument to Aboriginal Canadians that tells an important story of peace, balance, victory and wisdom.

Activity One: Write a Short Paper

Research the role of Aboriginal Canadians in conflict and in peace. Choose one veteran and discuss his or her contributions, sacrifices and achievements. How was being part of Canada's armed forces important to this veteran? What barriers did the veteran overcome to reach his or her goals? [Note: The Veterans Affairs Canada website has some very good profiles: <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/>.]

Activity Extension:

The oral tradition is extremely important to Aboriginal peoples. Through stories, they share their beliefs, values, and histories. Turn your short paper into an oral narrative. If you wish, you can add historical photos or your own sketches as visual aids. Be prepared to share your story with the class in some oral format, either live, taped, or video-taped. How does telling a story this way compare with the way in which a monument, such as the National Aboriginal Monument, shares a story?

Activity Two: Make a Poster

"The war proved that the fighting spirit of my tribe was not squelched through reservation life. When duty called, we were there, and when we were called



National Aboriginal Veterans Monument, 2007

Photo: National Capital Commission

Beneath the guiding Creator (symbolized by the eagle with wings spread outward), a warrior is flanked by a howling wolf and bellowing elk.

forth to fight for the cause of civilization, our people showed all the bravery of our warriors of old."

— Mike Mountain Horse, First World War veteran

[Source: www.vac-gc.ca. Mr. Mountain Horse was a member of the Blood Band in Alberta. The quotation is an excerpt from his book *My People: The Bloods*, p. 144.]

Using the above quote as a jumping-off point, design a poster to highlight and honour Aboriginal contributions to Canada's armed forces.

Activity Three: Using Symbolism

Noel Lloyd Pinay's monument tells a story using symbols. Often, depicting abstract ideas such as "harmony with nature" or "peace and freedom" requires artists to use concrete images and symbols. Sometimes, different cultures have different symbols. Other times, symbols can be highly personal and not easy to decode for an average viewer. Imagine that you are creating a statue to mark the entrance to your home or school.

Option 1: Entrance to your home

The statue must represent your family. What symbols would you use? How would visitors make sense of your symbols? Design your statue and present it to your class. Can everyone understand the symbols you have used?

Option 2: Entrance to your school

In a small group, brainstorm what abstract ideas are appropriate to represent your school (education, play or pride, for example). What symbols best represent these ideas? Present your group's statue design to the rest of your class.

Activity Four: Making a Brochure (Grade 7)

June 21 is National Aboriginal Day in Canada. Every year, a memorial ceremony is held at the National Aboriginal Monument on this day. June 21 is also the day on which the monument was unveiled in 2001. Research to find out more about National Aboriginal Day, including when it first began to be recognized, and why and how it is celebrated. Fold an 8 ½ x 11" piece of paper into thirds and create a brochure that informs Canadians about National Aboriginal Day.

Activity Five: Making a Map of Aboriginal Art (Grade 8)

Aboriginal peoples value the arts. Through story, song, sculpture, and dance, they pass their traditions from generation to generation. Aboriginal artists are also painters, writers, comedians, and film

makers. The Aboriginal peoples share many beliefs and values. Noel Lloyd Pinay of the Peepeekisis First Nation in Saskatchewan deliberately combined several symbols, each of significance to one or more peoples, in his one statue, the National Aboriginal Memorial. But the many diverse nations across Canada have their own specific traditions and cultures. Photocopy or print photos of samples of Aboriginal art from across Canada. You may want to choose art from a specific time period, or of a particular medium (for example, sculptures, or paintings), or with a particular subject (for example, landscape, or portrait). Find a way to display them so that it is clear to the viewer where the art is from, the name of the artist and the artist's heritage. Include at least two examples of Inuit art, two examples of Métis art, and five examples of First Nations art. Regardless of the other content, include Noel Lloyd Pinay's National Aboriginal statue on your map as well. What other questions do you still have about Aboriginal art?

Activity Six: Creating a How-to Graphic Organizer (Grade 9)

Research to find out how a bronze sculpture is made. What materials are used? What qualities of bronze make it a popular material for sculptures? What skills must the artist have? Create a simple graphic organizer that reflects what you've learned. What does it mean if the sculpture is a "limited edition?" What does it mean if the sculpture is a one-of-a-kind piece? In what ways did this exercise help you better appreciate the National Aboriginal Memorial?

Media Literacy Activity

Before you view the video "National Aboriginal Veterans Association Monument," check to see how long it is. When there are length limitations, how do videographers approach a topic? What other kinds of restrictions can there be on videos, especially ones for student audiences? Taking these restrictions into account, make a list of what you expect to learn from it. Make another list of what you hope to learn from it. Think about whether your expectations are different for an informational video than from another type of media, such as a brochure, a poster, or a television commercial, and why that might be. Now watch the video. Evaluate it according to your lists. What kind of changes, if any, would you make?