

31 DAYS OF

HANDS-ON CANADIAN HISTORY



#1

FIRST NATIONS

HANDS-ON CANADIAN HISTORY



Pre-European Canada was full of cultural groups of varying native communities. Peoples like the Iroquois, Inuit, Algonquin, Blackfoot, and Haida, amongst many others. The traditions and culture of the First Nations people are rich and vibrant, their stories are beautiful and wise, and their artwork is stunning.

There are many options for hands-on activities for studying the First Nations peoples of Canada before the Europeans arrived, but I decided to focus on the people who live on the West Coast – the Tlingit and Haida. The natives here are famous for their artwork and creativity of their [totem poles](#) – huge tree trunks carved into many animals and faces representing various spirits.

West Coast art from the Haida and Tlingit people is bold and powerful, usually characterizing animals in a highly stylized form. Although it seems that most of the art in the West was in the carvings of the totem poles and other items, today you can find many beautiful pieces of flat art. Colours typically involve a dominating black, with various pink and thin lines, coupled with red and a teal-like blue, with white space showing. They use a lot of oval shapes throughout the body of the art, creating a neat stacking block kind of effect.

Here are some [examples of the artworks of the Tlingit](#). (Pinterest actually has many amazing examples of this beautiful work.)

Want to know more about what the symbols found in this artform mean? Visit the [Spirits of the Northwest Gallery](#).

Activity: Make First Nations Inspired Art

Materials Needed:

- Canvas
- Pencil
- Paint brushes
- Black, Red, Blue, and White paint
- An inspirational image

1. Pick an animal you would like to paint. Find an example of what it could look like and sketch your design onto your canvas lightly with pencil.
2. Paint your design, using black as the main outline. I recommend waiting for each colour of paint to dry before adding the next colour. Touch up with white paint as needed.

Remember, the important thing to encourage is just to use the style as inspiration. There is no need to stress about perfection, or making an exact replica of the art of others. Just use it as a guideline for how you can craft something beautiful.

Additional Resources

[First Nations Traditional Units](#): Lessons intended to teach First Nations children about their cultural history. Includes content which might not be suitable for everyone – as it involves hunting.

[Four Directions Teachings – Five First Nations Narratives](#): Creation and other stories told by elders of the five nations.

- [Pinterest Board: First Nations](#): My collection of First Nations resources on Pinterest.
- [Strong Nations](#) – a place to buy books by Indigenous peoples.

#4

THE FUR TRADE

HANDS-ON CANADIAN HISTORY



The fur trade was the original basis for the growth, foundation, and success of Canada's beginning. Wealthy Europeans were eager to buy hats made of beaver and the supply here was plentiful. The demand lasted nearly 200 years.

Quality beaver pelts set the value of what things were worth and it seems that most trades were based on this value. For example, 1 beaver pelt could be traded for: coloured beads, gunpowder, a shirt, a set of knives, or even some sugar. It cost 11 beaver pelts to get a musket. Find out more about [beaver pelts and what you could trade them for.](#)

Additional Resources

This video from the [Hudson's Bay Company about the fur trade](#) is a good one to explain how it all worked.

Activity: The Trading Post: A Fur Trade Game

This printable game is based on the examples of how the trading system worked. Beaver pelts were the most sought after fur of all the animals, but other furs were traded too.

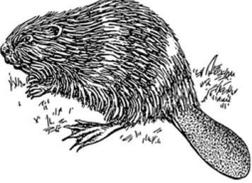
The game is essentially a scavenger hunt, with one person being the shopkeeper and the others trappers out on the hunt. First you print out the animal cards and ledgers – if you have several kids playing, you might consider making a double copy of the animals so they can hunt longer. Once they have all been cut out, the shopkeeper hides them all around the house before the game begins.

When the game starts, trappers head out hunting for animals. At first, all they can collect are deer and raccoons. 3 deer cards or 2 raccoon cards can be traded in to be equivalent to 1 beaver card. Trappers can choose to trade in 1 beaver pelt for a knife (allowing them to now collect beaver cards), or 8 beaver pelts for a musket (that they can use to collect bears.) The goal of the game is to collect the most beaver pelt value.

The shopkeeper is in charge of using the ledgers to keep track of everyone's furs. After all the cards have been collected (or all the ones you find during the game, because it's likely you will find some stragglers after the game is over), the trading post totals up everyone's card values, subtracting the cost of the weapons they've bought, to see who was the most successful.

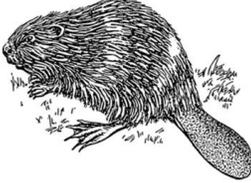
This game was oodles of fun in our house and all the kids participated – from Pre-K to Grade 7.

One interesting side lesson from this was giving a great visual example of how prolific wildlife was when settlers first arrived and how soon it became scarce, demonstrating exactly how the fur trade really caused havoc and endangered the beaver.



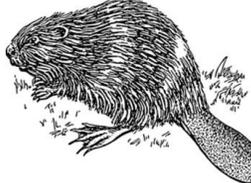
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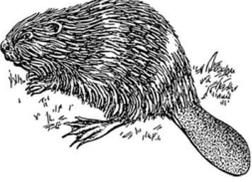
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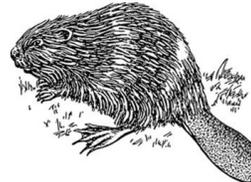
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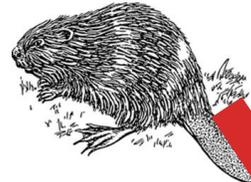
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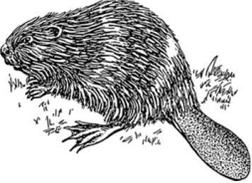
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LEDGER

Trapper: _____		Trapper: _____	
Beaver Tally		Beaver Tally	
Raccoon Tally (2 raccoons = 1 beaver)		Raccoon Tally (2 raccoons = 1 beaver)	
Deer Tally (3 deer = 1 beaver)		Deer Tally (3 deer = 1 beaver)	
Bear Tally (1 bear = 1 beaver)		Bear Tally (1 bear = 1 beaver)	
Purchases:		Purchases:	
Knife (-1 beaver)		Knife (-1 beaver)	
Musket (-8 beaver)		Musket (-8 beaver)	
Total Beaver Value:		Total Beaver Value:	

SAMPLE

#6

SEVEN YEARS WAR

HANDS-ON CANADIAN HISTORY



The Seven Years War, also known as the French and Indian war, was a battle between Britain and France that caused fighting here in Canada as Britain and France fought for the land. The battle on the Plains of Abraham outside Quebec was a pivotal moment for our Canadian history as we moved from a French country to an English one.

Before the war, French held the [majority of the land here in Canada](#). When fighting raged on all over the world, the British forces laid siege to the city of Quebec for several months before mounting an attack which occurred on the Plains of Abraham. Soldiers from the British sneakingly making their way down the river then climbing the cliffs to surprise an unready French army. The battle itself only lasted 15 to 20 minutes, and both the French general (Montcalm) and the British general (Wolfe) died as a result. The British take possession of the city and hold it for the rest of the war, claiming the land for Britain. When the war officially ended, the French signed North America over to Britain.

Additional Resources

I found this great, descriptive narrative that very eloquently recreates the fight on the plains: [On the Plains of Abraham](#).

- Check out the [great artwork](#) painted that depict this battle.

Activity: Recreate the Battle of the Plains of Abraham

To recreate the fight you need:

- a French army & general
- a British army & general
- Plains of Abraham
- Binder Clips

Print and cut out the soldiers and generals. The team with grey and blue uniforms are the French, the red ones are British. Add a binder clip to the bottom of each – this will help them stand up while you play (although it's not perfect. The soldiers liked to keep falling over!)

Get a big piece of paper and have your kids draw a battlefield. Draw a river along one side of the page with a brown rectangle to be cliffs and a path. The rest was just green grass. Put the French on one side and the British on the other. Let the battle begin.

You can allow the kids to free-play or have them actually copy the battle.



#31

PRIME MINISTERS

HANDS-ON CANADIAN HISTORY



Activity: Canadian Prime Ministers Guess Who

Want a fun and interactive way to learn the Canadian Prime Ministers? Here's Guess Who!

Included are all current Prime Ministers and The Queen – a neat way to learn and recognize each of the leaders of Canada.

This game was designed to use in the [Guess Who board game from Hasbro](#). There are two editions included.

The first edition is for the original flip up game board. Print out a page for each player, cut each card (including the white space underneath), and slide them into the flip ups. Play as usual.

The second is for with red and blue boards with yellow doors that attach together with a hinge and blue cards that slide into the top. For this edition, simply print out the boards for each player, trim along the bottom, and insert into the board frame, on top of the game card that came with the tray. Follow the usual rules for the game of Guess Who.

NOTE: Select "no scaling" or uncheck the "Print to Fit" box in your print options window to make sure they print the correct size.

Additional Resources

- [Prime Ministers of Canada Notebooking Pages](#)
- [Prime Ministers of Canada Series](#)