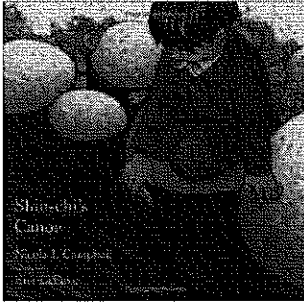


*Shin-chi's Canoe* by Nicola Campbell, illustrated by Kim LaFave



**ISBN:** 978-0-88899-857-6 (2008)

**Grade Levels:** 3 to 7

**Synopsis:**

A haunting and beautifully-written story of two First Nations children's experience at residential school.

**Pre-reading activities:**

a) Anticipation questions:

- Have you ever been sent to stay at the home of a relative whom you did not know very well? How would you feel about being sent to a boarding school?
- How about going to summer camp on your own?
- What about visiting one or the other of your parents if they no longer live together?
- Is there a difference between going to stay with people you know versus people you don't know?

b) Illustration activity:

- Tell a partner about a time you stayed with someone else overnight. Who was it? How did you feel?

**Post-reading activities:**

a) Understanding the story

- What was a residential school?
- Why did the residential schools not allow the children to use their own language?
- How do you think the two children felt at the school?

b) Transforming your thinking

- Does everyone need to always fit in and assimilate to the norms or beliefs of the majority? Explain your thinking around this issue.
- Would you still go to school to learn to read even though it meant a loss in your identity?

c) Deepening your thinking:

- What can you do about rules that you do not feel are fair in your school? At home? Who can you talk to about this?
- How can you be a change-maker when you see or experience unfair rules?

**Another related story for Intermediate:**

*Fatty Legs* by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton

ISBN: 978-1-55451-246-1 (2010)

Grade Level: Intermediate

**Synopsis:** When Margaret Pokiak was young, she really wants to go to school to learn to read. Her father tries to dissuade her as he warns her: as water wears rock smooth, her spirit will be worn down and made small.

## Activity 2.1

### Going to Indian Residential School

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#### RESOURCES

*Shin-Chi's Canoe* by  
Nicola Campbell

#### VOCABULARY

blacksmithing  
kerosene  
mass  
residential

#### Summary

This activity gives students a first look at what the Indian Residential Schools were like, using the picture book *Shin-chi's Canoe* by Nicola Campbell. The story portrays the features of residential schools in an age-appropriate manner through text and rich illustrations.

#### Key Concepts

- Many First Nations children were forced to attend residential schools where they lived apart from their families for a year or more until the age of 16.
- The treatment of many children in Indian Residential Schools was humiliating and taught them to feel unequal and ashamed.
- Writers use symbols to convey meaning in their stories.

#### Key Questions

- What are some of the features of an Indian Residential School?
- How did the way children were treated at Indian Residential Schools make them feel about themselves?
- How do symbols connect with the meaning of a story?

#### Background

- *Shin-chi's Canoe* is about Shi-shi-etko's younger brother Shin-chi, who is sent off to residential school with his sister. His father gives him a toy canoe, which he holds as a reminder of his family life during his year at school.
- Three symbols are prominent in the story. One is the canoe, an important cultural symbol for most First Nations communities. For Shin-chi, it is a personal connection with his family. Another symbol is the children's hair. To many First Nations people, a person's hair is considered sacred, especially when it is grown long. The third symbol is the sockeye salmon, which for Shin-chi was a marker of time passing before he could return home. It is also an important cultural element for most BC First Nations.
- The story portrays the features of residential schools, including:
  - travelling a great distance aboard a cattle truck
  - cutting off hair
  - regimentation of children's lives
  - enforced use of English
  - dormitory situation for sleeping
  - enforced work by children to maintain the institution
  - poor food
  - loneliness

- More background information for this text can be found at the publisher's website, [www.orcabooks.ca](http://www.orcabooks.ca)

### ***Suggested Activities***

#### **1. Reading *Shin-chi's Canoe***

##### *Reading Strategies*

- Show the cover and ask students to predict what the story will be about.
- Set purpose for listening or reading: ask students to read or listen for ways that Shin-chi's school is different from theirs.
- If you are reading aloud, ask students to predict what will happen next as you read through the book (e.g. listen-sketch-predict; question and revise)
- Post-reading discussion
  - Why did Shin-chi's parents allow him to be taken away to school? (*The laws forced them*)
  - What parts of their lives were Shin-chi and Shi-shi-etko able to control? (*They cut their own hair and put it in a special place; Shin-chi got extra food; kept his toy canoe*)

#### **2. What is the main idea?**

Ask students the question, "What is the Big Idea of *Shin-chi's Canoe*?"

- Possible strategies for deciding on the Big Idea
  - As a class or in small groups ask students to list a number of ideas from the story.
  - Which of the ideas are more important, and which are less important? Have students find clues in the book that support which are the most and the least important ideas. (e.g. the title, the illustrations, the ending.)

#### **3. Connecting Symbols with Meaning**

Discuss the title of the book. Ask students why the canoe was important to Shin-chi. (*Connection with his father, family and home.*)

- How are canoes important to First Nations people today? If possible show a video clip of a canoe gathering, especially the event that occurred at the Vancouver Truth and Reconciliation event.

#### **4. Features of the Indian Residential Schools**

What were some of the features of Indian Residential Schools?

- Help students to define "resident" and "residential." Is there a difference?
- Who were the teachers? Explain that in Shin-chi's school the teachers were priests and sisters (nuns). Point out that schools were run by different church denominations. Shin-chi's was a Catholic school; others were United and Anglican.
- Begin a list of words that describe Indian Residential Schools. You may want to construct a Word Wall and add to it over the course of the unit.
  - Begin with features of the Indian Residential school described in *Shin-Chi's Canoe*.
  - Classify the words (e.g. physical features, student rules, behaviours.)

## Activity 2.2

### Power and Authority

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#### Vocabulary

authority  
power

#### Summary

This activity helps students focus on understanding the concepts of power and authority through a personal connection.

#### Key Concepts

- As we grow older, we have more power over our own decisions.

#### Key Questions

- How do power and authority affect students' lives today?
- How does power to control your own lives change as you grow older?

#### Suggested Activities

##### 1. Power in Students' Lives

Discuss with students how power affects their lives.

- Who are the people who have power in their lives? For example, who has the power to decide what they eat for dinner? To decide when they go to bed? To choose what to watch on tv? What power do they have in their own lives?
- Discuss how a person's power changes as they grow older. Do teens have more power than children?

##### 2. Authority in Students' Lives

Explain that the person or group with the power to make a decision is called the *authority*. Discuss who the main authorities might be at home (*parents*), in the classroom (*teacher*), in the whole school (*principal*).

- Use a chart similar to the following to discuss the connection between authority and power. The class can brainstorm other authorities and the powers they use.

<i>Examples of authority</i>	<i>Power the person uses</i>
sports team coach	
playground supervisor / lunch monitor	
school principal	
band council chief or town mayor	

Response examples:

sports coach: *decides who is on team, who plays and what position they play*

playground supervisor or lunch monitor: *decides who is misbehaving*

school principal: *power to run the whole school and make decisions about what happens in the school*

band council chief or town mayor: *power to make decisions on behalf of the whole community*

## Activity 2.3

### Colonial Clash

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#### Resources

- Blackline Master 3, The Indian Act, page 32
- Blackline Master 4, Colonial Clash, page 34
- Blackline Master 5 Colonialism Across the World, page 35
- Class set of atlases or large wall map of the world

#### Vocabulary

civilize  
collectively  
colonialism  
colony  
discrimination  
inferior  
rights  
superior

#### Summary

This activity examines the reasons for discriminatory policies towards First Nations, including understanding the concept of colonialism and questioning the Indian Act.

#### Key Concepts

- The Canadian government enforced laws that discriminated against Aboriginal people

#### Key Questions

- Why has the Government of Canada treated First Nations people differently from other Canadians?

#### Background

- The Indian Act controlled (and still controls) the lives of First Nations people. As well as laws about Indian Residential Schools, other aspects of the Indian Act include:
  - The creation of Indian reserves that restrict people to small pieces of land and take away rights to their sources of traditional territories.
  - The control over identity was taken away. The government determines who has “Indian status” and who doesn’t
  - First Nations were not allowed to vote
  - Sometimes people had to have permission from the Indian Agent to leave the reserve
  - First Nations could not own property
- Many of these laws are not longer in existence (e.g. people can vote, wear ceremonial regalia) but reserves and land issues still exist, and the Indian Act is still in force.
- This topic will fit well with the content of the draft BC Social Studies 5 concepts and content:
  - Aboriginal policies and the Aboriginal response over time, including those concerning residential schools, treaties, and traditional self-government.
  - contrasting perspectives about land ownership and use.

## ***Suggested Activities***

### **1. Reading the Indian Act**

Share with students copies of excerpts from The Indian Act, Blackline Master 3. Ask them to work in pairs or groups to interpret the meaning of the legal text.

- Ask students to identify:
  - What type of source this is
  - Who wrote it
  - When it was written
  - Where it was written
  - Why it was written
- Lead a discussion about student's personal responses to some of the sections.
- Ask students how the Indian Act affected characters in the stories they have read so far in this unit.
- Ask students to generate questions that arise from their reading of these excerpts of the Indian Act.
- You may want to show students the current Indian Act, which is online at <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-5/>

### **2. Questioning the Indian Act**

Ask students to consider the question:

- Why did the Government of Canada treat First Nations, Métis and Inuit differently from other Canadians?

Strategies for investigating the question:

- Have students read, or read with them, the article on Blackline Master 4, "Colonial Clash," to discover how First Nations' relationship with newcomers in Canada came to be.
- Discuss the meaning of *colony* and *colonialism*. (Colony = a country under political control of another distant country and settled by people from the distant country.)

### **3. Mapping Colonization**

Have students identify regions of the world that were colonized as shown on the map on the Blackline Master 5, Colonialism Across the World.

- You may want students to use an atlas to identify the regions that were colonized. They might write the names on the map along the arrows, or list the regions in a legend and number the arrows.
- The regions are (left to right): North America, South America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India.
- Ask students to identify which are continents and which are countries. Point out that the continents had many individual countries that were colonized.