

Level 1
Grade 5 & up

Building Bridges

By Building Understanding Through Current Events



LesPlan

Teachers Serving Teachers Since 1990

Building Bridges

Level 1

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suggestions.

Acknowledgements:

We are grateful to the Lək̓ʷəŋən-speaking Peoples, known today as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, and to the SENĆOTEN-speaking WSÁNEĆ Nations, on whose traditional territories many of us live and create this teaching resource.

Háýsxʷ ǵə, Miigwech, thank you!

Mission Statement:

- LesPlan Educational Services Ltd. aims to help teachers develop students' engagement in, understanding of, and ability to critically assess current issues and events by providing quality, up-to-date, affordable, ready-to-use resources appropriate for use across the curriculum.

Building Bridges:

- allows for differentiated learning.** **Building Bridges** is available in two levels, and in English and French, to meet your students' varied learning needs.
- is tech-friendly.** Project each month's pdf on your Promethean or Smart Board to read articles together. Our pdfs also work seamlessly with assistive reading technology, and the Word version of the articles can be uploaded to Google Classroom and similar online platforms.
- is easy to use.** Easily access links referenced in **Building Bridges** by visiting www.lesplan.com/en/links.

Subscription Information:

Building Bridges is published five times during the school year, every two months beginning in mid-September. A full-year (5-issue) subscription costs \$150. Subscribe at www.lesplan.com.

About the cover design:

"[This design shows] two hands, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, working together through reconciliation with a ring of cedar surrounding them to represent the medicine to help through this process."

– Coast Salish artist Brianna Bear, August 2018



An Overview

Many educators across Canada have been responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action through their planning and practices. As a non-Indigenous teacher, for me this work is about learning with my students and supporting them to ask the right questions as a way to imagine bridges through our colonial past. But how do we engage in the work of reconciliation alongside curricular learning outcomes in an authentic and meaningful way?

This series of lesson plans is designed to invite you and your students into the complex dialogue that is crucial to any work around reconciliation. By teaching students the tools to ask thoughtful questions, and to think carefully and critically about the questions they ask, we begin the hard work needed to build better relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

In this publication, current events and issues will be presented as opportunities for informed discussions and classroom inquiry that ultimately encourage students to ask the bigger questions that affect the societies we live in: *Is this right? Is this just for all? What is better?*

Setting the tone

Setting a positive and empathetic tone in your classroom is essential to the exploration of Indigenous issues. For instance, at the root of

exposing Canada's investment in the Indian Act and residential schooling is the discussion of what constitutes racism and discrimination. These topics are, and should be, sensitive for your students to enter into. A classroom environment that invites perspectives, and critically examines inherited belief systems, must first establish a set of rules to live by.

Also, keep in mind that our colonial history includes some very painful memories for many Indigenous families and communities, and care must be taken to enter into and exit conversations in ways that do not cause unintended emotional upset or harm. Indigenous students should never be called upon to speak to culture or Indigenous politics in the classroom unless they have initiated the input or it is precipitated by private conversation with students and their parents.

Action: Ask your students to come up with a list of body language, words, attitudes, and behaviours that constitute a positive classroom environment. Keep these posted in the classroom as a baseline criteria for entering into the subject of Canada's treatment of Indigenous Peoples.

Creating learning environments that reflect the First Peoples Principles of Learning

Aim to nurture a learning environment that embodies the First Peoples Principles of Learning. As the First Nations Education Steering Committee expressed, these principles are not rigid terms or isolated lessons, but more, a way of being with your learners and a way of viewing learning in general. Each Nation may have its own perspectives around learning and teaching, but these principles can be seen as generally agreed-upon starting points that invite all teachers and learners to view learning through an Indigenous lens. I have these posted in my classroom, and I refer to them often.

Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions. Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

Learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge. Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

Learning involves patience and time.

Learning requires exploration of one's identity.

Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

Action: Ask your students to describe, in their own words, what the FPPL look like, feel like, and sound like in the classroom setting. Have them list their thoughts, words, and feelings on sticky notes and post their responses under each principle. Leave these up on your wall to set a tone for all learning across the curriculum.

You can learn more about these principles at:

<http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/PUB-LFP-POSTER-Principles-of-Learning-First-Peoples-poster-11x17.pdf>

<https://firstpeoplesprinciplesoflearning.wordpress.com>

Notes on assessment: Moving beyond empathy

We are trained as teachers to measure learning in students. I feel it is important in this particular endeavour that we don't reduce students' learning to a grade or a percentage. What you can measure is the depth to which your students are able to think critically about an issue, and the degree to which they can communicate their thinking through listening, speaking, and writing. Try using self-assessment tools, or a current events portfolio with an oral interview, as assessment strategies. Focus on speaking and listening as important indicators of a student's thinking and communication skills. Use dialogue, discussion, and reflection as a way for each student to express his or her own entry point and degree of critical analysis of each current event. Keep the focus on the quality of questions asked, as opposed to coming up with solutions or answers.

Watch each student's learning unfold, at his own pace, in her own words, and encourage ways to stretch individual learning.

Tasha Henry, Victoria, B.C.

Action: Ask students to keep a reflection journal to record their thoughts after each lesson. Make sure they understand that the journal is for your eyes only. Encourage them to make connections to their own life, stories, and experiences. Make sure you don't use evaluative language when responding to their journal. A simple "thank you" for allowing you to witness their journey is sufficient.

About This Issue

Introduction:

Repatriation continues to be a fraught process met with obstructions that stem back to the Indian Act and its intent to strip Indigenous Peoples of their culture, language, and history. For almost two decades the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) attempted to direct stakeholders towards the necessary protocols of repatriation in support of First Nations. Today the process is still emotionally charged and deeply rooted in the traumatic history of how and when the ancestral pieces were taken in the first place. As students examine the concept of repatriation from an Indigenous lens, they may begin to understand why this particular practice is essential to a commitment towards reconciliation.

The Indigenous Repatriation Handbook, prepared by Jisgang Nika Collison, Sdaahl K'awaas Lucy Bell, and Lou-ann Neel for the Royal BC Museum and the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kay Llnagaay, defines repatriation as a process that returns items to those to whom they belonged: "To repatriate something is to return it to the country of its origin. For museums, repatriation applies more specifically to the return of human remains and cultural objects to Indigenous communities." It seems like a straightforward process: return what has been stolen or taken to its rightful owners. However, in many Indigenous communities, the artifacts ARE ancestors, not objects, and the tracing and recovering of those artifacts can be both re-traumatizing and healing, especially when met with obstruction. In this issue, students will focus on one First Nations' journey to retrieve and recover their community's totem pole.

Learning outcomes:

I can:

- make reasoned, ethical judgments about actions in the past and present, and determine appropriate ways to remember and respond.
- determine which causes most influenced particular decisions, actions, or events, and assess their short- and long-term consequences (cause and consequence).
- recognize and identify the role of personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives, past and present.
- think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts and personal stories.
- make connections between historical, social, and cultural causes and effects.

(Adapted from the B.C. Grade 6&7 Language Arts and Social Studies Curricular Competencies)

Skills:

I can:

- demonstrate reading strategies (deciphering textual clues, questioning, analyzing, predicting, summarizing, inferencing).
- demonstrate oral communication strategies (listening, expressing with clarity, staying on topic, taking turns, perspective taking, story-telling).
- decipher main ideas from supporting ideas in a given text and provide evidence for each.
- analyze concepts with reference to different perspectives.

Essential Questions:

- What is the relationship between the Western-oriented discipline of anthropology and the work of reconciliation?
- What processes need to be established for repatriation?
- What is the difference between cultural objects and other objects?
- How is the concept of an inanimate object culturally loaded?
- What is the history of repatriation of Indigenous cultural artifacts?
- What responsibility do museums have in the repatriation of cultural artifacts to the peoples they belong to?
- What is cultural appropriation?
- How did the Indian Act and the potlatch ban affect the tracing and re-possessing of treasured cultural pieces?

Big Ideas:

- Understanding the story of repatriation is a journey into the impacts of Canada's Indian Act on Indigenous Peoples.
- Culture includes the ceremonial objects, arts, artifacts, belongings, and symbols associated with a culture.
- For many Indigenous Peoples and First Nations, cultural artifacts are viewed as ancestors, not simply objects.
- In the commitment to reconciliation, many museums have begun to repatriate cultural artifacts and remains to their Indigenous communities with uneven success.
- The history of colonization continues to affect the process of repatriation of Indigenous cultural artifacts.

A note on pronunciation:

For non-Indigenous teachers and students, pronunciation of Indigenous words can be challenging. While it's preferable to consult with Indigenous language speakers about proper pronunciation, sometimes this isn't possible. Consulting online pronunciation guides may be helpful. But when neither of these sources are feasible, it may be best to be honest about your inability to pronounce Indigenous words and use anglicized versions instead (they are usually in brackets, following the Indigenous spelling.) However, make students aware that Indigenous Peoples have their own preferred names, and consider learning, with your class, the pronunciation of the preferred name for the local Indigenous people, and the name of their language.

Territory Acknowledgement

Acknowledging the traditional territory of First Nations is a respectful practice that honours the First Peoples who have lived, since time immemorial, on the land that we now occupy. The act shows respect and recognizes First Peoples' ongoing presence on the land.

A Territory Acknowledgement is usually given at the beginning of an assembly, meeting, performance, or other public gathering. It is also an appropriate way to start your lessons.

The following resources may help you write an appropriate Territory Acknowledgement with your class:

1. Find out whose traditional territory your school or community is built on. Use this interactive map of traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples across Canada developed by Native Land to help you: <https://native-land.ca/>.
2. Learn more about the protocols for acknowledging territory by reading the information shared by Native Land at: <https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/>.
3. Look at examples of acknowledgements by various post-secondary institutions across Canada on the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) website at: <https://www.caut.ca/content/guide-acknowledging-first-peoples-traditional-territory>.

Talking Circles

Talking Circles, and other circles such as learning and healing circles, originated with First Nations leaders. They were used to ensure that all leaders in the tribal council were heard, and that those who were speaking were not interrupted. Usually the Chief would begin the conversation. Then, other members would respond and share their own thoughts and feelings.

It is appropriate to use Talking Circles to structure discussions based on the curriculum in this publication. The format highlights how everyone is connected. It also ensures that everyone taking part has an equal voice.

Before conducting a Talking Circle, students must understand and respect the process. Here are some guidelines:

- The group sits in a circle so that everyone can see each other.
- One person introduces the topic for discussion – this is usually the teacher or group leader.
- An object, like a talking stick or feather, may be passed from person to person during the Circle. Only the person holding it may speak. Any item that is special or has meaning to the class is appropriate, as long as it is only used during Talking Circles.
- Everyone listens respectfully. This means giving the speaker their full attention.
- Everyone is given a chance to speak. However, participants may pass the object without speaking if they wish.
- It is respectful to introduce oneself before speaking. Speakers should use ‘I’ statements and ‘speak from the heart’, stating what they are thinking or feeling. They should avoid commenting on what other people have said.
- When everyone has had a chance to speak, the object can continue to be passed around until the discussion concludes.

Consider giving students time to reflect following the discussion. They can think about how the discussion influenced their opinions or ideas. They can also assess how they felt during the activity, what they learned, and what they might do differently next time.

Sources:

- BC First Nations Land, Title and Governance Teacher Resource Guide, First Nations Education Steering Committee and First Nations Schools Association, c. 2019 (p. 20). <http://www.fnesc.ca/governance-2/>
- The Circle Way: <http://www.thecircleway.net>
- First Nations Pedagogy Online: <http://firstnationspedagogy.ca/circletalks.html>
- Circle protocol for teachers based on the Lekwungen Speaking Peoples’ traditional knowledge, created by the Indigenous Education Department in the Greater Victoria School District: https://ied.sd61.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/112/2019/02/Circle_Protocol_by_Sarah_Rhude__Diane_Sam.pdf

Before Reading

1. Discuss with students the meaning of the word ‘repatriation’ (*the act or process of restoring or returning someone or something to its country of origin, allegiance, or citizenship*). Then, share with them the perspective of Danica Paul, a member of the Songhees First Nation, who feels passionate about repatriating items from the collections of the Royal BC Museum back to First Nations. For her, the work of repatriating artifacts is an emotional journey: **“When I see the artifacts in the collections of the museum, I always wonder who made them, and how they ended up here? These aren’t just works of art, these items have spirits and these spirits are connected to the people and the stories of our ancestors.”**
2. Next, show students the following video depicting part of the Nuxalk Nation ceremony to welcome back their totem pole: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/nuxalk-nation-totem-pole-returned-1.6751205> [2:37]
3. After watching the video, discuss:
 - What is the tone of the ceremony?
 - Is there a cultural ceremony that you have attended that seems similar in tone and reverence to this ceremony?
 - What do you notice about how the Nuxalkmc are treating the totem pole?
 - What does this tell you about the sacredness of pole and its connection to the Nuxalkmc culture, stories, histories, and ancestors?



A Totem Pole Returns Home

On February 13, more than 100 **Nuxalkmc** traveled from Bella Coola to Victoria. The purpose of their trip? To reclaim their totem pole from the Royal BC Museum.

Some members of the group drummed and sang. Some walked through the crowd **smudging**. But all were there to witness one of their totem poles start its journey back to their community. It had been taken from a village on the central coast of B.C. over a century ago.

The totem pole is just over five metres high and a metre wide. It had been kept in the Totem Hall

on the museum's third floor. A crane moved it after the walls and windows of the museum were removed.

When the totem pole was lowered to the ground it was returning to Mother Earth. Nuxalkmc sang the Thunder Song to celebrate the big occasion.

Mara Pootlass has family connections to the pole. She said, "There is a really warm feeling in my heart... I wanted to cry for joy because I could feel the spirit."

The Snow family pole was carved by Nuxalk Hereditary Chief Deric

Snow's great-grandfather in the mid-1800s. At first, it was an entrance pole to the Snuxyaltwa family's longhouse. Later it was used as a grave post for a family grave. Eventually, in 1913, it was taken from a burial site without permission and added to the museum's collection.

"We all cried when it landed on the ground," said Chief Snow. "It was the feeling when your emotions reach the highest point of your life. I've never dreamed we would be able to do this."

Definitions

Nuxalkmc: the peoples of the Nuxalk Nation

smudging: a cultural ceremony practised by a wide variety of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and other parts of the world, involving the burning of sacred herbs (e.g., white sage) or resins

A long road to repatriation

The process of returning the totem pole began in October 2019. That was when leaders of the Nuxalk First Nation visited the museum to ask for the **artifact** to be **repatriated**. According to the museum's records, it had been sold to the museum in 1913 for 45 dollars.

Clyde Tallio is a teacher of traditional Nuxalk culture. He says this information is incorrect.

"Things like this wouldn't be sold, that's not our tradition," he stated.

At the time of the visit, Jack Lohman was the museum's CEO. He told the Nuxalk Nation the museum would return the totem pole, along with several other items. He said to the many Nuxalkmc visiting the museum, "I recognize as the leader of this museum that this pole needs to return back to its territory – that these treasures need to return back to their territory."

However, no action was taken, so in January 2022 Chief Snow launched legal action against the museum. He said the museum's failure to return his

great-grandfather's totem pole had been hurtful to members of his community.

"It's a beautiful pole," he told CBC. "It doesn't belong in the Royal Museum, it doesn't belong in any museum."

Janet Hanuse is the museum's vice president. She explained that the process had been held up because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, she pledged to restart the repatriation process.

About totem poles

Totem poles are a collection of **crests**. They are usually carved from a red cedar tree by Pacific Northwest Indigenous Peoples. These crests can be human, animal, or supernatural forms. They often tell the history of a family or an event. Many longhouses have house posts. They support the main beams of the building. Other longhouses have a frontal pole. These poles are located at the main entrance.

Raising a totem pole is a ceremonial event. The ceremony is hosted by a chief and often includes a feast or potlatch. Hosting this event is a sign of wealth in many Pacific Northwest Indigenous

cultures because food and sometimes gifts are provided to the guests. During the ceremony many gifts are given to the master carver and their assistants as well. The gifts are given to acknowledge their hard work and skill.

Before a tree is harvested for a totem pole it is honoured. Members of the community show gratitude and respect for the tree with a spiritual ceremony. When a carved totem pole falls or begins to decay, it is left untouched because it is a natural part of a totem pole's life cycle. The tree will return to the Earth and provide nutrients and shelter for many other forms of life.

Definitions

artifact: a tool or other object that was made a very long time ago

crest: a design used as a symbol

repatriation: the act or process of restoring or returning someone or something to its country of origin, allegiance, or citizenship

The Nuxalkmc Peoples

The Nuxalkmc Peoples' traditional territory is in the Pacific Northwest, in what is now called Bella Coola and its surrounding areas. The Nuxalk Nation is the government of the Nuxalkmc and consists of an elected Chief and Council system, which was first imposed on First Nations through the Indian Act. The traditional language is It7Nuxalkmc.

The journey home

The 1000-kilometre journey from Victoria to Bella Coola took seven days. Along the way, the Nuxalk Nation members and the totem pole stopped to visit other Nations.

On February 15, hundreds of tribal members at the Williams Lake First Nation in Secwepemc territory honoured this act of repatriation. Elder tribal women blessed those present with a healing song and blessed the pole with fir boughs.

Williams Lake First Nation Chief Willie Sellars explained, "As we

were drumming the welcoming song, the **Elder** women from our nation suddenly, without being asked, got up and began doing the welcoming dance... It broke me down. It got very emotional for a lot of people because we don't see these things happen often."

He continued, "The **legacy** and history of **Residential Schools** and the trauma that was inflicted on my ancestors and Elders that are still alive today has never left us. To see them still be able to hold on to our traditions and pass it down from generation to

generation makes you so proud to be Indigenous."

Then on February 16, dozens of people traveled to the outskirts of Bella Coola to witness the pole's arrival. Chief Snow explains, "We were greeted by about 50 Nuxalkmc cars, waiting for us to come down the hill. That's how excited our people were." Nuxalk member Charlene Schooner adds, "Our history is embedded in these poles, a great history, and when they're taken, it's almost as if it's like our children were taken... They are part of our history."

The importance of returning home

Later, on February 20, hundreds gathered for a ceremony at the Acwsalcta School gymnasium in Bella Coola. The event was celebrated with songs and dancing, followed by a feast.

Chief Snow stated that the return of the totem pole means that his great-grandfather's spirit, which remains inside the totem pole, can now rest. "The circle of life is we never pass away," he explained.

"We're just here for a visit and once that visit's over, we go on to another journey and my [great-grandfather] wants to continue that journey."

The Nuxalk Nation's elected Chief Councillor, Samuel Schooner, stated in an email that "the repatriation of cultural property is an important way of acknowledging and reconciling the unjust treatment First

Nations people have endured since contact." He added that the return of the totem pole is a historic moment. "It's something our families have been waiting for, waiting to be honoured and remembered in a good way and to be treated with dignity and respect, to be treated as a human."

Definitions

legacy: something such as a tradition or problem that exists as a result of something that happened in the past

Residential Schools: church-run, government-funded schools that operated between the late 1880s and 1996. Indigenous children were taken from their families and forced to live at these schools, which aimed to educate, convert, and integrate them into Euro-Canadian society.

After Reading

A. Discussion

1. What is the significance of the totem pole to the Snow family?
2. Why might the Royal BC Museum's records show that the totem pole was sold to the museum in 1913 for 45 dollars when the claim has been refuted by a member of the Nuxalk Nation?
3. How did the 1000-kilometre journey from Victoria to Bella Coola honour the spirit of Chief Snow's great-grandfather?
4. What does the honouring by the Williams Lake Elder women suggest about the resilience of First Nations people? How repatriation can be a tool of cultural revitalization?
5. As you understand it, explain how the return of the pole connects to the circle of life.
6. How does the repatriation of the pole to Bella Coola acknowledge and reconcile the unjust treatment endured by the Snow family, their community, and the Nuxalk Nation since contact?
7. From your perspective, what is the significance of Charlene Schooner's quote: "Our history is embedded in these poles, a great history, and when they're taken, it's almost as if it's like our children were taken...They are part of our history."?
8. Besides COVID, what do you think might have caused obstruction in the process of returning the pole from the Royal BC Museum to the Nuxalk Nation?

B. Exploration

1. Arrange students in pairs and distribute to each pair a copy of **The Life Cycle of a Totem Pole** organizer (p. 14).
2. Ask students to use the information in the article to complete the organizer, capturing the main stages in the Snow family's totem pole's life by considering the different roles it has played, identifying the ways it has been honoured at each stage, and inferring what it witnessed or experienced at each stage. What stories might the Nuxalk totem tell of its journey?
3. Then, challenge partners to visually represent the life cycle of the Snow family totem pole from before harvest to coming home, using the information on their organizers.
4. Facilitate a sharing circle, allowing each pair to share their interpretation.

C. Reflection

1. Finally, have students individually complete a 3-2-1 reflection, capturing: 3 things they learned...2 connections...1 question.

The Life Cycle of a Totem Pole

Stage of Life	Roles it played	Ways it was honoured	What it witnessed or experienced
Sprouted from Mother Earth			
Grew to a mature tree			
Harvested			
Carved			
Raised			
Stolen			
Displayed			
Repatriated			
Journeyed home			
Arrived home			
Returns to Mother Earth			

Extensions

1. The following links can be used to explore this story more deeply. Encourage students to capture their learning and questions using a K-W-L (Know-Wonder-Learned) chart.

Read more about this story and view photos at:

- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/items-belonging-to-gitxaala-nation-nuxalk-first-nation-to-be-repatriated-1.673403>
- <https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/nuxalk-nation-celebrates-return-of-totem-pole-from-royal-bc-museum-6551378>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/nuxalk-nation-totem-pole-returned-1.6751205>
- <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2023/02/20/totem-nuxalk-nation-returned/>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/nuxalk-nation-totem-pole-return-royal-bc-museum-1.6742581>

Videos:

- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/nuxalk-nation-totem-pole-return-royal-bc-museum-1.6742581> [3:01]
- <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2171927619807> [1:57]
- <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2195446851559> [9:00]

From an Indigenous youth’s perspective:

- <https://www.cbc.ca/kidsnews/post/return-of-nuxalk-totem-pole-is-like-loved-one-coming-home-kid-says>

2. Share Article 12.2 of UNDRIP: *“States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples concerned.”* Then, encourage students to learn about other repatriation efforts, such as:

- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/indigenous-remains-repatriation-efforts-1.5489390>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bc-first-nations-artifacts-1.3646204>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/b-c-museum-returns-indigenous-poles-in-spirit-of-repatriation-1.5156168>
- <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-repatriation-of-ancestral-remains-and-artifacts>
- <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-repatriation-the-relationship-between-indigenous-peoples-and-museums>
- <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-repatriation-andy-wilson-and-the-haida-nation>

Extensions

Finally, consider: What do these efforts suggest about institutional ignorance and awareness of this UNDRIP Article? What actions have these institutions taken that show commitment to this article? What more needs to be done?

3. Listen to one or more episodes of the Nuxalk Radio Live podcast series Using and Refusing Museums hosted by Nanutsaakas and Emily Jean Leischner, who explore questions such as: “How did our ancestors’ relations with museums, with collectors, with outsiders, make good the path for future generations? And what do museums mean for us today?”: <http://nuxalkradio.com/programs/using-and-refusing-museums-3yv>

Before Reading

1. Ask students to think of an ancestral, ceremonial or other object that is important or sentimental to their family or cultural family. Ask them to draw a picture of it.
2. On the back of the drawing, have students answer these questions:
 - Why is this item understood as a treasure?
 - What has this item witnessed?
 - What is its story of origin?
 - How many times has it been loved? Gifted? Stolen? Forgotten? Reclaimed?
 - What has it represented to its owners? What does it represent now?
 - How has it survived?
 - What is its message or teaching?
3. Direct students to share out their stories in small groups. Afterwards, debrief the activity with the class, posing these questions:
 - Are objects just inanimate objects? Or do they hold cultural memories?
 - Can objects have life stories?
 - If the culture, the people, and the objects that symbolize the culture are taken or destroyed, how does a culture rebuild?
4. As students individually read the article, or as you read it aloud, encourage them to use a highlighter to mark any words or sections that evoke strong feelings, such as confusion, anger, disappointment, frustration, sadness, or satisfaction.

Repatriation and Respect

Canadian politician Bill Casey was at a Nova Scotia cultural centre. He was admiring a beautifully embroidered and beaded robe. The Mi'kmaw **regalia** was in a glass case.

Mr. Casey was surprised to learn that he was looking at a **replica**. The original robe was in a drawer at a museum in Australia! The Nova Scotia centre had been trying to get the original back from Australia for a decade. It had been sold in the early 1840s to a British army officer. He died in Australia and left the robe and other Indigenous artifacts to the Melbourne Museum in his will.

The Mi'kmaw regalia is just one of thousands of Indigenous artifacts and remains from Canada that are in museums across the country and around the world. Most of these items were collected between 1850 and 1950.

For example, a **mortuary pole** erected in a Haisla village on the north central B.C. coast in 1872 ended up in Sweden. **Monumental poles** that once stood in villages on **Haida Gwaii**, B.C. were moved to Victoria's Royal B.C. Museum. Many ceremonial potlatch masks collected in 1881 from Kwakwaka'wakw territory on northern Vancouver Island are in a museum in Berlin, Germany.

How did these artifacts get there? Sometimes they were **legitimately** purchased or donated. Often they were stolen or taken without permission. Some collectors believed the artifacts had been abandoned by their owners and were no longer wanted.

Some ceremonial items such as ritual clothing and dancing masks were used in potlatch ceremonies. These giving feasts are practiced by Pacific Northwest Coast Indigenous Peoples. They are held to mark important events, but were banned by the Canadian government from 1885 to 1951. During the ban, potlatch artifacts were **confiscated**. Many went to museums such as the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.

When **smallpox** and other diseases brought by European settlers swept through Indigenous communities, many people died. The few that survived were often forced to abandon their villages. Collectors later took any items that were left behind, such as totem poles and burial artifacts. Some human remains were collected in the name of science. At the time, many scientists felt that grave robbing was acceptable if it was for research.

Definitions

confiscated: taken without permission or consent especially by public authority

Haida Gwaii: a group of islands off the coast of British Columbia

legitimately: in a lawfully recognized manner

monumental pole: tall cedar pole carved with figures or symbols by Indigenous Peoples of the Northwest Coast to symbolize or commemorate ancestors, cultural beliefs that recount familiar legends, clan lineages, or notable events; also known as a totem pole

mortuary pole: a type of monumental (or totem) pole that has a cavity in the top to hold a burial box containing the remains of a chief or high ranking person

regalia: traditional clothing worn for a ceremony or special occasion

replica: a copy that is not the original

smallpox: a highly contagious and serious disease caused by a poxvirus transmitted from person to person that causes a high fever, a characteristic rash, and may kill about one-third of those infected



Through a different cultural lens

To many Indigenous Peoples, these lost artifacts are not simply “things”.

“Our treasures are family,” says Kwakwaka’wakw artist Lou-ann Ika’wega Neel. She’s the **repatriation** specialist at the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria.

“To know that our family is being stored away in museum cases or in basements or attics in faraway lands has always been heartbreaking.”

Tracey Herbert leads B.C.’s First People’s Cultural Council. She is a member of the Bonaparte First Nation, and sees repatriating and

taking care of these objects as her duty.

“A lot of the objects and materials in museums hold Indigenous knowledge that we need for the **revitalization** of our own arts, cultures, and languages,” she says.

Human remains are even more sensitive. Ms Herbert says keeping them in museum drawers or examining them for science is disrespectful.

The Haida people have been leaders in repatriating ancestral remains to their homeland of Haida Gwaii. The website of their Repatriation and Culture

Committee explains why this work is so important.

“Our ancestors are our relatives and we have a deep connection to them. We are who we are today because of them. We believe that as long as the remains of our ancestors are stored in museums and other unnatural locations far from home, that the souls of these people are wandering and unhappy. Once they are returned to their homeland of Haida Gwaii and are laid to rest with honour, the souls can rest and our communities may heal a bit more.”

Winds of change

In recent years, we are seeing a global shift in the attitude of museums.

“For years, **restitution** was a no-no word in the museum language,” says John McAvity, executive director of the Canadian Museums Association. “This is changing fast, and it’s about time.”

The 2007 **UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)** states that Indigenous

Peoples have the right to have their cultural, intellectual, religious, and spiritual property returned to them.

Canada’s 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report called for museums to determine whether they are **in compliance** with the UN Declaration. In 2018, the Canadian Museums Association set up a working group to respond to this call to action.

In 2016, the Royal BC Museum launched a repatriation program in consultation with the First People’s Cultural Council in B.C. Since 2021, the museum has completed 11 repatriation requests and engaged in ten Outreach and Research Visits. Eighteen more repatriation requests are expected to be completed by 2025 and 7 more Outreach and Research Visits.

According to Ms Neel, the museum will return hundreds

Definitions

in compliance: being in agreement with the expectations, guidelines, or rules of another

repatriation: the act or process of restoring or returning someone or something to its country of origin, allegiance, or citizenship

restitution: the act of returning something that was lost or stolen to the person it belongs to

revitalization: the act of bringing again into activity and prominence

United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP): a non-legally binding declaration created by the United Nations as an aspiration for how Indigenous individuals and Peoples should be treated

of ancient remains and sacred cultural objects to First Nations communities. She says the collection includes many artifacts that were confiscated under the potlatch ban and shouldn't have been taken in the first place.

At the other end of the country, Nova Scotia MP Bill Casey has introduced a bill called the Aboriginal Cultural Property Repatriation Act. He hopes it will make it easier for Indigenous people to get their cultural

property back from museums. It provides money to pay for transferring and storing these objects.

"I do not pretend to be able to capture the entire meaning that artifacts have to First Nations peoples, but I know it is so important for them to have them back," he said.

Heather Stevens heads operations at the Millbrook Cultural and Heritage Centre in Nova Scotia

where Mr. Casey admired the replica of the Mi'kmaw regalia. She says it would be "amazing" to be able to display the actual regalia and tell visitors about its meaning.

"There are no words really to explain how I would feel to have it here," she said. "It was created by one of our ancestors and to have it back to where it originally came from just gives us that connection again to our ancestors."

Repatriation – a long and complex journey

The process of repatriation is not simple. It's not like a community can just ask for something back and the museum will hand it over. Sometimes the museum doesn't actually own the artifacts. The collection may be owned by the city or country where the museum is located.

Research may need to be done to identify which Indigenous community is the rightful owner. Members of that community must be consulted to determine how the repatriation should take place. There are practical matters to think about. Where will the items be stored? How will travel be paid for? There may also be special **protocols** and ceremonies, especially for human remains.

For example, here's how the Haida Repatriation Committees

describe their repatriation journey.

Beginning in the 1990s, the Haida approached Canadian, U.S., and British museums to request the return of their ancestors' skeletal remains. In one case, 148 ancestors were held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa. Another 160 ancestors were in a vault at the Field Museum in Chicago, USA.

How did so many Haida ancestors end up in museums? Before contact with Europeans, tens of thousands of Haida people lived in villages on Haida Gwaii. Then smallpox **decimated** many of the communities. Only a few hundred people survived. Many survivors had to leave their villages. The human remains and artifacts

left behind were later taken by archaeologists and collectors.

The Haida population on Haida Gwaii recovered and now numbers about 5000. They have established Repatriation Committees led by hereditary leaders, Elders, and band and village councils. The committees coordinate the process of bringing the ancestors home. Every part of the process is guided by the wishes of the Haida community.

The Repatriation Committees raise funds. **Delegations** travel to wherever their ancestors are held to bring them home. The delegations may include Haida Elders, chiefs, artists, and researchers.

The delegation prepares the ancestors for the journey home.

Definitions

decimated: reduced drastically in number

delegation: a group of people who represent a country, government, or organization

protocol: a set of rules for the correct way to behave on formal occasions

Then, there is a feast and signing ceremony. The Haida include museum staff in their work and ceremonies, if possible.

“By the end of each repatriation, the employees of the museum are always so thrilled to have been part of the process and you can see that they understand and are involved from their hearts.” (Skidegate Reparation and Culture website)

When they bring their ancestors home, the Haida wrap them in button blankets and cedar bark mats. They place them in

bentwood boxes painted with Haida designs. The ancestors are buried with traditional ceremonies. The community speaks to the ancestors and prays for them in their Haida language. Elders and cultural historians teach the traditional songs, dances, and rituals. The event ends with a feast in honour of the ancestors.

“And perhaps most important, after each ceremony, one can feel that the air has been cleared, that spirits are resting, and our ancestors are at peace,

and one can see that healing is visible on the faces of the Haida community.” (Skidegate Repatriation and Culture Committee website)

The remains of over 600 Haida ancestors have been returned to date. Through this process, the Haida have also built good working relations with museums across North America and in the United Kingdom. They are still working on repatriating their ancestors from European museums and private collections.

The broader picture

Repatriation is not just about lost artifacts held in museums. It’s also about acknowledging the historical events that led to the loss of this Indigenous property.

Colonial attitudes and historical injustices such as the Residential School System and the ban on potlatches played a big role. They helped create a climate where Indigenous Peoples and their cultural practices were not respected. Indigenous ways of knowing and being were dismissed and denied. That

allowed non-Indigenous people and institutions to collect and remove cultural heritage without permission. It allowed them to take artifacts and remains without worrying about Indigenous governance and property ownership.

Repatriation turns that around. It’s about **reconciling** with the past, making amends, and furthering the healing process. It’s a way of respecting the cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples.

“We’re making things right,” says Haida Repatriation Committee member Gaagwiis Jason Alsop.

Definitions

colonial: relating to a system or period in which one country or group rules another

reconciling: finding a way to make ideas, beliefs, needs, etc. that are opposed to each other capable of existing together

After Reading

A. Discussion Questions

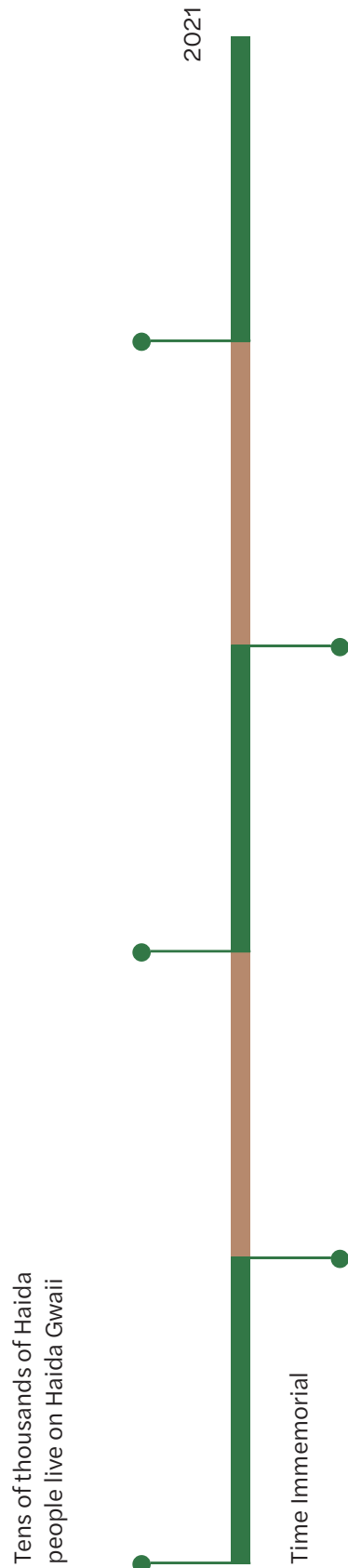
1. What observations can you make about the words or sections of the article that you highlighted? Can you identify themes or patterns? What reasons can you suggest to explain why these words or patterns were emotional triggers for you?
2. Lou-ann Neel says “our treasures are our family.” How is this statement particularly important for Indigenous communities who were intentionally dismantled through the Indian Act?
3. How would you define the difference between something that is special and something that is culturally sacred?
4. Nova Scotia MP Bill Casey states that he does not pretend to understand the spiritual significance of repatriating artifacts to Indigenous communities, but he knows it’s important for these communities to have their artifacts back. As you see it, what is important about this comment? Does a person need to understand another’s culture in order to preserve or respect it?
5. **“And perhaps most important, after each ceremony, one can feel that the air has been cleared, that spirits are resting, and our ancestors are at peace, and one can see that healing is visible on the faces of the Haida community.”** (Skidegate Repatriation and Culture Committee website) Based on this quote, why is repatriation of human remains essential to healing the wrongs of a colonial history?
6. What is the significance of the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples to repatriation? How is repatriation a human right?

B. Exploration and Reflection

1. Reread together as a class the section of the article titled ‘Repatriation: A Long and Complex Journey’.
2. Ask students what their understanding of a case study is. (*A process or record of research in which detailed consideration is given to the development of a particular person, group, or situation over a period of time.*) Suggest that this section detailing the repatriation of Haida artifacts is a case study. Invite them to read this part of the article over again carefully to themselves, noting the details.
3. Then, have students work in pairs to create an annotated timeline of the Haida People’s repatriation journey, including dates, where appropriate, and brief captions describing key events. Encourage students to note on their timeline any questions that arise as they trace the journey. If they can’t formulate a question, have them put question marks next to the sections of the timeline that feel confusing or questionable. Students may find it helpful to use the organizer **Haida Peoples’ Repatriation Journey** (p. 24) to arrange the stages in the journey.
4. Invite students to share out any questions that arose during the sequencing of events. Are there any repeating questions? What do these questions reveal?
5. Then ask students to consider: Who are the stakeholders and what are the underlying values that have affected the Haida People’s journey to reclaim their ancestors’ remains?
6. Direct students’ attention to how the Haida People’s ancestral remains are treated with a certain level of respect, as if their spirits are still living. What three gestures or actions described in the article demonstrate this respect?

Haida Peoples' Repatriation Journey

Directions: Use the events in the article to create an annotated timeline showing the repatriation journey of the Haida people.



Extensions

1. Students may be interested in learning more about the protocols for repatriation in their local communities:
 - research their local Nation’s website to find the names of personnel working on cultural reclaiming and/or preservation;
 - check their province’s protocol around finding archaeological sites. For B.C., this information is available at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/archaeology/report-a-find>;
 - find out whether their First Nations or First Peoples have already been pursuing the repatriation of artifacts;
 - read the report *Moved to Action: Activating UNDRIP in Canadian Museums* to learn the level of compliance that museum policies and best practices have with UNDRIP: <https://museums.ca/site/movedtoaction>.
2. Download the Indigenous Repatriation Handbook from the Royal BC Museum: <https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/indigenous/repatriation-handbook>. Ask students to scan pages 12-13 to determine the audience and purpose of the handbook. Then, consider the following questions:
 - Who is this Handbook written for?
 - Why is this resource necessary?
 - Who prepared this resource? Why is this important to know?
 - Examine the TRC’s Calls to Action linked in this CBC article: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/truth-and-reconciliation-94-calls-to-action-1.3362258> Which articles is this resource (The Handbook) a response to?
 - As a class, you may wish to watch this news video about the release of the handbook from the Royal BC Museum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=On2PbZ3Mww0> [3:05].
3. “Stolen Spirits of Haida Gwaii” is an award-winning documentary movie made in 2004. It follows the Haida as they repatriate remains from a Chicago museum. Find out more about this film and where to obtain it at: <http://www.repatriation.ca/Pages/Documentaries.html>.
4. As a class, examine the following report published by the Canadian Museum Association: https://museums.ca/uploaded/web/TRC_2022/Report-CMA-MovedToAction.pdf. Then, discuss the following questions: In what ways have the practices of museums interfered with human rights and freedoms? In which particular instances is the preservation of artifacts educational? Is there a difference between how human remains would be treated as opposed to art or artifacts? Explain.
5. Arrange a class visit to a local archives or museum to learn more about the artifacts and/or photographs in the exhibits. If any of the collections are of Indigenous property, learn more about the steps being taken to repatriate them to the rightful owners and how the institution is acknowledging the historical events that led to the loss of any Indigenous property.
6. Encourage students to learn about some of the repatriation projects funded by the B.C. government by reading this CBC article: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/indigenous-repatriation-projects-get-new-funding-from-b-c-government-1.5621152>

7. Provide pairs of students with a copy of one of the three repatriation case studies presented in the “Returning the Past: Repatriation of First Nations Cultural Property” resource produced by the UBC Museum of Anthropology and available at: <https://moa.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/TeachingKit-Repatriation.pdf> (Note: There are four cases studies included in this resource, but one of the cases features the repatriation of the Haida People’s remains.) Have partners read through their case study, highlighting or noting similarities and differences between their case and that of the Haida People. (You may wish to have students use a Venn diagram or comparison chart to record their observations.) Then, encourage students to work individually to answer the question: What parallels can you find between the Haida People’s journey to repatriation and your case study? As you see it, what can be learned from these shared journeys?

Culminating Activity: Art Analysis

1. Consider Brianna’s description of the artwork titled ‘Ancestors watching over’ that she created to accompany the article ‘A Totem Pole Returns Home’: ***“I wanted to honour the article by including the totem pole, but also reflecting on the thunder song they sang. This reminded me of the thunder being, the thunderbird. The thunderbird in my knowledge of it, is an animal that is a relative of the eagle and one that represents protection, connection, and strength. I thought it was an appropriate image to add to the pole being repatriated to its home; [I added] the cedar to represent the ceremony and healing it brought to the community.”***
2. Then, respond to the following questions:
 - What do you already know about the repatriation of the Nuxalk Nation’s totem pole and the impact the pole’s return had on the community?
 - Respond to the artwork. What feelings does it evoke and what thoughts does it provoke?
 - What connections can you make between the artwork and the article?



3. Research the significance of cedar bentwood boxes in Coast Salish culture. Then, study the bentwood box drawing. In the context of the article, what does the glass case signify? What feelings does the drawing evoke? What is the intended message of the image? Explain.

* You can see more of Brianna's powerful art on her Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pg/BriannaBearArt/posts/>



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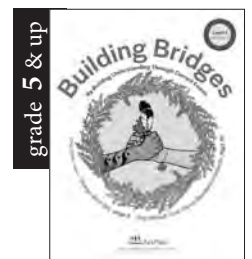
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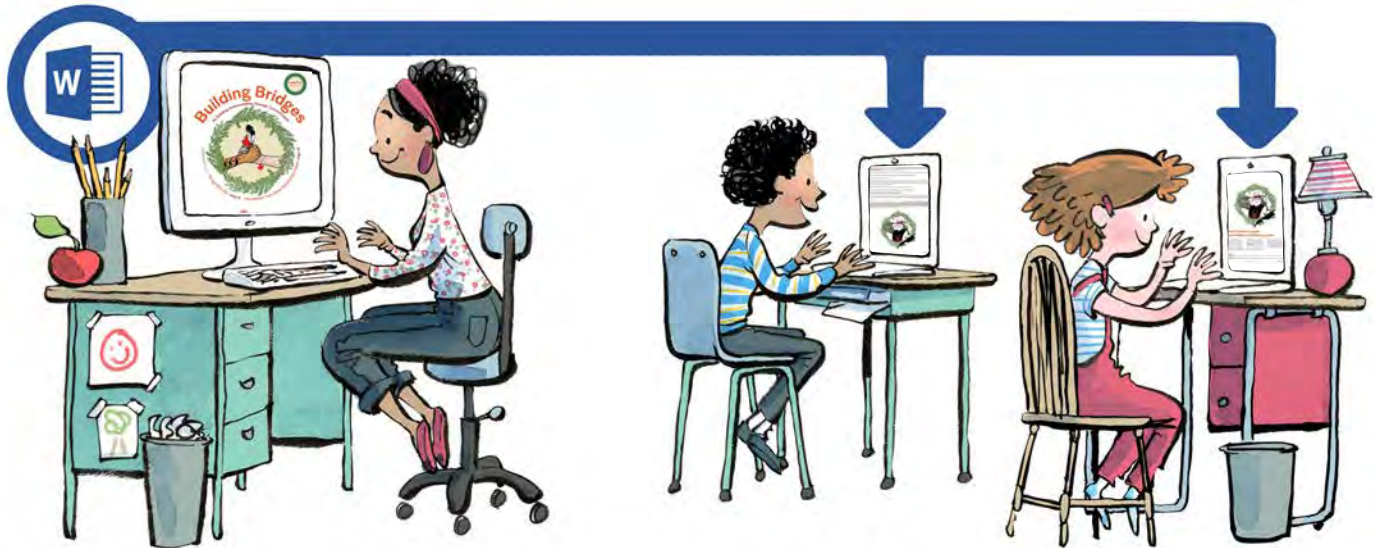
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Issue 7: April 3
Issue 8: May 15

Level 1

Issue 1: August 29
Issue 2: September 28
Issue 3: October 26
Issue 4: November 30
Issue 5: January 11
Issue 6: February 23
Issue 7: April 5
Issue 8: May 17

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• <i>Amazing Animals</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$18 each	
• <i>Animals and Us</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$27 each	
• <i>Endangered Animals</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$21 each	
• <i>Government</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$18 each	
• <i>Health</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$42 each	
• <i>Indigenous</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$27 each	
• <i>O Canada - Volume 1</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$30 each	
• <i>O Canada - Volume 2</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$27 each	
• <i>Ocean Animals</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$15 each	
• <i>Our Great Outdoors</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$15 each	
• <i>Reduce, Reuse, Recycle</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$18 each	
• <i>Space</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$21 each	
• <i>Technology</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$33 each	
• <i>The Environment and Us</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			\$24 each	
What in the World?	English	Français	Level 1	Level 2	Price Per Product	Amount
• <i>Animals</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$21 each	
• <i>Environment</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$36 each	
• <i>Government</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$27 each	
• <i>Indigenous</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$18 each	
• <i>Legislation</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$21 each	
• <i>O Canada</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$21 each	
• <i>Space</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$36 each	
• <i>Technology - Volume 1</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 each	
• <i>Technology - Volume 2</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 each	
					ON add 13% HST NB, NL, NS & PEI add 15% HST	
					All others add 5% GST	
					TOTAL	



BILLING OPTIONS

Invoice school Invoice **Bill To** address

Purchase Order _____

Please charge to: MasterCard VISA

CARD NUMBER _____

CARDHOLDER NAME _____ EXPIRY DATE (MM/YY) _____

BILL TO (if different from school information)

CONTACT _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ PROVINCE/TERRITORY _____ POSTAL CODE _____