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## Indigenous people and the Second World War

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## Indigenous people and the Second World War

### Designing Language-Learning Opportunities

When reading through literature and archives that mention Indigenous Peoples, it is important to understand that the literature and archives during this time was not written by Indigenous peoples. The narrative of Indigenous peoples in Canada during World War 2 is written from a western narrative. This means that when teaching about World War 2 it is important to take a trauma informed approach.

Through looking at archives of World War 2 provided, a trauma informed approach will be provided as well. Trauma informed approaches are highlighted as a means to teach in a way that will be inclusive of Indigenous peoples. In order to be inclusive, it is important to have a critical analysis of literature provided. This resource will help educators walk through steps that will look at these historical archives with students critically.

### The Process

*Daily readings* from Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War: the politics, experiences, and legacies of war in the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand by R. Scott Sheffield that reads around Canada. When reading from this literature it is important to understand this can be traumatic for Indigenous youth as their ancestors faced this oppression. In order to be able to deliver this literature is it important to take a trauma informed approach.

The reason the book Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War: the politics, experiences, and legacies of war in the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand is chosen for this resource is to highlight what the realities Indigenous people were enduring during the time of World War 2.

In order to grasp what realities were for the Indigenous population in Canada during this time, a deep reflection into why you may not see Indigenous people written about in most World War 2 literature is needed.

Indigenous men and women across Canada did partake in fighting in the war. This information can be found at libraries on first nations across Canada. upon research to find literature regarding veterans, my home community of Kettle and Stony Point has a book about all of our veterans and their stories. I would share this book but, in order for this teaching resource to have relevance to your area it is important that a quick search of your closest Indigenous community library will be fair more helpful.

This research led to another important reality of Indigenous people even in my home community, the war measures act. This act was also a daily reality in my own community, and I found that this was something that went along with the ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples during this time. Another reading provided will be the Ipperwash inquiry on the historical background that includes the war measures act.

These particular passages read aloud to the class will help establish a foundation of understanding of the realities of Indigenous peoples during World War 2. When reading these passages, it is again important to take a trauma informed approach when generating discussions around these topics. When taking trauma

informed approaches, it is important to ask ourselves as educators questions such as “How would I have felt if I were an Indigenous person during this time?” “How might this impact our Indigenous youth?”.

*Responding to particular passages with construction or art.* Indigenous art takes many different forms, but a popular form of art across Indigenous communities in Canada over the years is beadwork. Beadwork is significant in that it is more than just art for many indigenous people. Beadwork is also a means of healing. To provoke learning in how beadwork is significant to indigenous peoples a beaded poppy like the photo provided is a way to establish this foundation.



(<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/indigenous-veterans-day-beaded-poppies-1.6239424>)

A podcast regarding beaded poppies is available on this link provided.

Beaded poppies daybreak north cbc listen <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/indigenous-veterans-day-beaded-poppies-1.6239424>

have the students do an activity in which they color in the beads of a beaded poppy in the sheet provided. As they bead/color in the poppy have them think about how Indigenous peoples might have felt going away to war and leaving their families behind in a country that is trying to oppress and assimilate them through various tactics discussed in the reading.

The goal of this exercise is to help the students develop a meaning behind Indigenous beadwork and how Beadwork can be a way to help develop better reflective processes.

[file:///Users/nolageorge/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/Head and Heart Research Fellowship/Beaded Poppy Activity.docx](file:///Users/nolageorge/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/Head%20and%20Heart%20Research%20Fellowship/Beaded%20Poppy%20Activity.docx)

*Using prompts such as photos, objects, and poetry to generate writing.* Present a storybook to help students understand what indigenous life was like back home for families. A story book provided is about residential schools as this was a reality of Indigenous peoples during this time.

Storytelling is a big part of Indigenous culture in means of learning and expression. One book that would help the students to get a better understanding of the realities of Indigenous people in Canada during World War 2 is *I am not a Number* by Jenny Kay Dupuis and Kathy Kacer. This book will discuss residential schools so approaching this reading in a way that is trauma informed is important. The reason this book is chosen is due to how during World War 2 children who were indigenous were sent to residential school as a means of assimilation.

*Learner generated projects.* Encourage the students to present the ways they have learned about Indigenous peoples fighting the second world war. Use pictures from the book *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War: the politics, experiences, and legacies of war in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand* by R. Scott Sheffield to provoke learning and understanding. An example would be to bring the children as a class trip to a veteran's memorial at your local Indigenous community to talk about Indigenous peoples and the second world war.

*The assembly.* Students can use different ways to showcase their learning such as events like Remembrance Day to highlight Indigenous peoples in the Second world war. It is important that the students understand that although Indigenous people experienced a great deal of oppression that they still fought in the war. Throughout these learning exercises the students should be able to have a better understanding of Indigenous people and the Second World war.

## Functions of Language

### 1. Instrumental

*Oral.* Have the students showcase their learning through learner generated projects such as responses to the photographs present to the class.

*Written.* Through the learner generated projects have the students create materials showcasing their learning and have them share in ways they want to express.

### 2. Regulatory

*Oral.* Have the students interact in small groups to generate ways in which they would feel trying to fight in the war while experiencing oppression in ways mentioned from the readings.

*Written.* Have the students make lists of ways in which express how they would feel in fighting in world war 2. Then have them share this with the small groups.

### 3. Interactional

*Oral.* When the students do the beaded poppy activity have them share in small groups what they reflected on as a means of interaction with other students.

*Written.* Have the students exchange what they shared and maybe reflect with each other about what they would feel like if they were indigenous people fighting in World War 2.

### 4. Personal

*Oral.* When the students reflect on "how they would feel going to war as an Indigenous person feeling oppression at home" this will prompt meaningful reflection on a personal level when they share in small groups.

*Written.* The beaded poppy reflection prompt will help student express themselves in written ways through the reflection exercise.

5. **Heuristic**

*Oral.* One way the students can learn something new on their own is by having them discuss with their family members at home what they might know about Indigenous people fighting in World War 2. This can prompt learning through what their parents may know about Indigenous veterans and World War 2.

*Written.* Have the students reflect on the story I am not a Number with a writing prompt such as “how would you cope with having a number instead of being known by your name by your teachers at school?” “how would you feel leaving home for school while your parents may have been fighting at war?”. This will prompt meaningful reflection in ways that the children likely wouldn’t have thought about.

6. **Imaginative**

*Oral.* Have the students create an illustration based on their learning that could be gifted to your local Indigenous community in some way. This could be an opportunity for students to create something meaningful using their imagination.

*Written.* Have the students write poems based on the readings about Indigenous people and the second world war reading. Use prompts for a bases for writing poems such as “reflect on how you would feel if you were leaving for war while the government is taking your children to school”.

7. **Representational**

*Oral.* Have the students share in meaningful ways that they wish to share their work on this project. Due to these reflections being personal, have students express in how they wish to share their learning in representational ways.

*Written.* If the students wish to share poems with the class have them do so. These poems may spark some emotion so have the sharing process be at the student’s discretion.