

TORONTO STAR

CLASSROOM CONNECTION

A Bitter Legacy

TEACHER GUIDE

Canadian Press reporter Chinta Puxley looks at how Indigenous people feel about celebrating Canada’s 150th birthday. For many, to celebrate the birth of Canada is to celebrate the beginning of an abusive relationship and the continuing legacies of colonization — residential schools, reserves without clean drinking water or indoor plumbing and economic disenfranchisement.

First Nations went from important allies when European settlers first arrived to an obstacle to settlement and the exploitation of the country’s resources. Canada’s first prime minister, Sir. John A. Macdonald, made it a goal to “assimilate the Indian people in all respects” — a mindset that would last through the next century. Indigenous ceremonies were outlawed, reserves were set up and First Nations needed permission from the local Indian Agent to leave. Residential schools were established and children were removed from their homes, by force if necessary. Today, most Indigenous people don’t share in Canada’s health and prosperity. Indigenous people say Canada is only just now coming to terms with its past and predict the next 150 years will be about learning to co-exist with honesty and equality.

Additional discussion/research points:

- Research some of the examples of the legacy of colonization evident today.
- Has the mindset of Sir John A. Macdonald changed or evolved in Canada since he called for the assimilation of Indigenous people?
- Do you think Canada has come to terms with its historical relationship with Indigenous people? What is required to move forward with reconciliation for the next 150 years?
- Research a prominent Indigenous person and explore what challenges they faced to get to where they are today.
- Examine the “pass system” and explore how it was used by Canada as a means of control.
- Why were residential schools established, what did students experience there and how have they affected today’s Indigenous population?
- What can everyone do to promote reconciliation with First Nations in Canada? In the world?
- What causes are important to you? What can you do in your community to contribute?



A painting depicting the Ojibway Camp, Spider Islands, Lake Huron, 1845. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO - Library and Archives Canada.



Standoff at the Kanesatake reserve in Oka, QC. Soldier Patrick Cloutier and Saskatchewan native Brad Laroque.



Gary Alexcee, Chief Councillor of the Nisga'a from Gingolt.



Women drum following the announcement of the inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women - Gafineau, QC.

