

LESSON PLAN

PARLIAMENTARY STATUES: WHO & WHY



GRADE LEVEL:

Social Studies/Sciences humaines 6 - 8

SUMMARY:

In 1912, Architect Francis Rattenbury was commissioned to design two new wings of offices and a Legislative Library for British Columbia's Parliament Buildings in Victoria. One of the most striking features of the Library is the 14 statues that grace the exterior walls. The figures represented were chosen by the Provincial Librarian and each one represents a historical figure from B.C.'s colonial period. However, there remains two empty alcoves on the Library exterior that can hold another two statues.

- Students will examine who is represented and why.
- Students will be invited to analyze the choices and to make an ethical judgement on whether they are appropriate.
- Students will be invited to choose subjects for the remaining two spots that were never filled.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

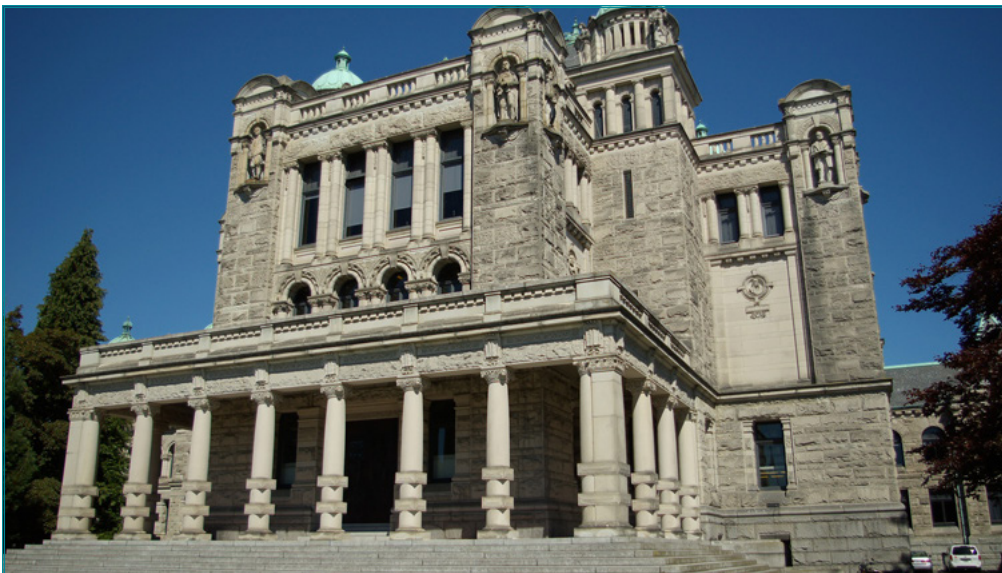
- What does the choice of statues on the exterior of B.C.'s Parliament Buildings tell us about colonial perspectives?
- How do they compare to the other statues and monuments on the Legislative Grounds or to other buildings in Canada (such as the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa)?
- Who do they represent and who is left unrepresented?
- Who could represent the population of British Columbia today and why?

LEARNING GOALS:

- Use the inquiry process to understand who is represented/depicted/commemorated and why.
- Evaluate the choice of statues.
- Propose and defend historical figures to be added to the two missing spots.

TEACHER RESOURCES:

- [Discover Your Legislature](#)
- [Virtual Tour](#)
- [Statue Biographies - Short](#)
- [Statue Biographies - Long](#)
- [Legislative Assembly Learning Resources](#)



(Left) The outside of the Legislative Library at the Parliament Buildings in Victoria, B.C. The Library's exterior is lined with numerous historical and allegorical statues, as well as with carved visages of literary figures from Europe's past.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:

SOCIAL STUDIES 6

Competency

- Take stakeholders' perspectives on issues, developments or events by making inferences about their beliefs, values and motivations (**perspectives**).
- Make ethical judgements about events, decisions or actions that consider the conditions of a particular time and place and assess appropriate ways to respond (**ethical judgement**).

Content

- Global poverty and inequality issues including class structure and gender.

SOCIAL STUDIES 7

Competency

- Assess the significance of people, places events or developments at particular times and places (**significance**).
- Explain different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues or events and compare the values, worldviews and beliefs of human cultures and societies in different times and places. (**perspective**).
- Make ethical judgement about past events, decisions or actions and assess the limitations of drawing direct lessons from the past (**ethical judgement**).

Content

- Social, political, legal, governmental and economic systems and structures, including at least one Indigenous to the Americas.

SOCIAL STUDIES 8

Competency

- Identify what the creators of accounts, narratives, maps, or texts have determined is significant.
- Explain different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events, and compare the values, worldviews, and beliefs of human cultures and societies in different times and places.

Content

- Exploration, expansion, and colonization.



(Left) A statue depicting Chief Maquinna of the Mowachaht Nation on the exterior of the Legislative Library. Chief Maquinna began a valuable trading relationship with the British in 1778, and he eventually controlled one of the most visited trading posts in Pacific Northwest.

(Right) A statue depicting Simon Fraser on the Library exterior. In 1792, Fraser traveled over 4,500 km across North America for the North West Company. He later would arrive at the Pacific Ocean in 1808, producing the first map of what is now known as the Fraser River.



LESSONS:

Teachers may prefer to choose some or all of the following lesson/activities based on interest and extent of prior knowledge.

B.C.'s Parliament Buildings

- Students (together or independently) take a [Virtual Tour](#) of the Parliament Buildings.
- Students learn about the [history and construction](#) of the Parliament Buildings.

Statuary of the Legislature

Students will investigate to develop an understanding of what sort of monuments and statues exist at the Parliament Buildings and on its grounds.

- Who appears on the [exterior of the Library](#)?
- Who are some of the other figures depicted on the Parliament Buildings and on the Legislative Grounds ([Captain George Vancouver](#), [Queen Victoria](#), [Sir James Douglas](#), [Sir Matthew Baillie Begbie](#))?
- What other [monuments](#) are found on the property?

Who and Why?

Students investigate who is currently represented in the statues on the Parliament Buildings and explain why they are there (Biographies – [Short](#) / [Long](#)).

- Who are these men?
- What role did they play in the colonization of B.C. or the establishment of our province?
- Who did they represent?
- Why were they chosen?
- What does this say about the history of our province and its evolution?

Our Province and People

Students will decide upon new figures to be placed in the empty spaces alongside the existing statues.

- Develop a list of criteria that you would use to help decide upon a figure.
- What is the one most important factor in choosing someone?
- Research your choices and defend them.

If Not Him Then...

Students, after developing an understanding of why these current statues exist, will make a decision to replace one.

- Which one would you remove and why? Justify your choice with research.
- What is the figure that would replace him and why? Justify your choice with research.

Choosing Someone New

There are currently two empty alcoves on the exterior of the Parliament Buildings. Students role play as someone they feel should be added as a statue and give a “campaign speech” to outline the reasons why. Students could hold an anonymous vote to choose the two “winners”. This could also be done for existing statue subjects - arguing why they should or should not be replaced.

- What does the decision to choose this group of people allow us to infer about the perspectives of the people making decisions?
- What does the decision to choose this group of people allow us to infer about what was valued at the time?

