

# LESSON PLAN

## PARLIAMENTARY STATUES: WHO & WHY



### GRADE LEVEL:

Social Studies/Sciences humaines 9 - 10

### 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 contemporary (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.

### CONTENT:

- SOCIAL STUDIES 9: the continuing effects of imperialism and colonialism on indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world
- SOCIAL STUDIES 10: Government, Indigenous governance, political institutions, and ideologies.



*(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 COMPETENCIES:

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas and data; and communicate findings and decisions.
- Explain and infer different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events by considering prevailing norms, values, worldviews, and beliefs (**perspective**).
  - Who was chosen to have a statue?
  - Why were they chosen?
  - What can we infer about the contemporary perspectives by examining the choices of statues?
- Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their significance at particular times and places, and from group to group (**significance**).
  - Who is credited/considered important with respect to BC's history? Who decided that these people were important? Why?
- Assess the justification for competing accounts after investigating points of contention, reliability of sources, and adequacy of evidence, including data (**evidence**).
  - Whose stories are told and whose stories are missing in the narratives of Canadian history?
  - Why are the majority of the statues commemorating white colonists? Who should have been included but wasn't?
- Make reasoned ethical judgments about actions in the past and present, and assess appropriate ways to remember and respond (**ethical judgment**).
  - Do the people who have statues truly deserve to have statues?

## LESSON SEQUENCE:

### 1. Background/context:

Examining the Parliament Buildings with a focus on the colonial/British influences of the building.

- a. Start by viewing the images or video of the Parliament Buildings. While students are viewing, have them write down what they notice about the architecture and style. Have students share and discuss their observations together.
- b. Next, view images or video of the Palace of Westminster in London and/or the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. Discuss the similarities and difference. Begin to touch on the role of Britain in the colonization of B.C. and Canada.
- c. Optional: Biography of Francis Rattenbury.
- d. Review the timeline of colonialism in B.C. Have students look critically at who is represented in the timeline and who is missing. The students could discuss in groups and share out to the whole class.

#### Resources:

- Slideshow with images of the [Palace of Westminster in London](#) or the [Parliament Buildings in Ottawa](#).
- [Statues and Monuments of Parliament Hill in Ottawa](#).
- Take a [virtual tour](#) of the Parliament Buildings.
- Learn about the [history of the Parliament Buildings](#) and the [Legislative grounds](#).
- Biography of [Francis Rattenbury](#).
- Timeline of [major events in the colonization of B.C.](#) (including and/or highlighting contributions of Indigenous Peoples in the development of the colonies).

### 2. Introducing the statues

- a. Examine the statues on the exterior the Parliament Buildings.
- b. Discuss the significance of having a statue. Create a list/document together for reference later and/or to be displayed in the class for the duration of the lesson.

#### Resources:

- [Images and background information](#) on the statues.
- Article about significance of monuments ([BBC News article](#)).

## LESSON SEQUENCE (CONT.):

### 3. Who are the statues?

- Examine the men who were chosen to have a statue. Distribute the biographies to students to read and then share out to the class.
- Discuss and determine what these men have in common (cultural/ethnic background, age, gender, social status, job/career, education).

#### Resources:

- Letter from Provincial Librarian ([primary document](#)).
- Biographies of the men who were chosen ([short](#) / [long](#)).

### 4. Going deeper:

Divide students into groups and assign one statue to each group. Groups will be responsible for researching and presenting one of the people to the class.

### 5. Examine what the choice of these statues tells us about contemporary perspectives.

#### Guiding questions:

- 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?

#### Extension activity:

After students have more information on the men represented by the statues, have them debate who should be added to the two empty alcoves on the exterior of the Parliament Buildings.

- Do we agree with the choices?
- Who is missing?

### 6. Final assessment



*(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 (2796 miles) 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.*

