

# OUR PLACE CALLED CANADA

WHERE MUSIC AND SOCIAL STUDIES MEET

Presented at the 2016 **Palliser District Teacher's Convention**

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## VIDEO LINKS:

These links will remain active for a period of one week following the convention. Please download only for use in your classroom or program. All videos include a lyrics display and a full performance audio track.

[Long Before](#) – First Nations Culture and world views

[Which Way Westward Will We Build?](#) – Historical debate over the selected route for the new railway.

[One Hundred Seconds](#) – The story of Frank Slide.

[Our Place Called Canada](#) – Immigration, settlement

[The Stampedin' Steed](#) – Community culture.

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# Long Before...

Ask students to close their eyes. . . Imagine being right in this same location five hundred years ago. The community that makes up your familiar surroundings would not have existed yet. What would you see from this spot? What would the landscape look like without the roads and structures that make up the view today? What would you see as you look in each direction? As you slowly turn around, you think that you caught a glimpse a person moving in the distance. However, the image disappears behind a feature in the landscape before you can be sure of what you saw. If you indeed saw someone, who would it be? What might this person be doing here?

Imagine standing alone in this location so long ago. If you wanted to have contact with other human beings, where would you go from here? What kind of people would you meet? In what kind of settlement or camp would these people live?

(Note: More specific information can be added to this discussion by including the year permanent settlement began in your community, and the reason(s) non-native people came there.)

Long before . . .

This song compares the views of our land through two different cultural “lenses”. One lens is coloured by Aboriginal values upheld for roughly ten thousand years, while the other is the early settler’s point of view. Compare the first and last two lines of each verse, and use these contrasts for discussion.

Discussion Questions:

- In each verse, which lines describe values that are most like our society today?
- What lessons can Native values and world views teach us about caring for the environment?
- What events feature or celebrate Native culture in your area?
- In what traditional Native territory or Nation is your community located?

# *Long Before...*

Long before this new land was founded,  
Long before deep silence was rare,  
Native songs and gathering drums sounded  
To the beat of the people who always were there.

Long before the tall ships were spotted,  
Long before the white settlers came.  
With their bands, these distant lands were dotted  
And the Great Spirit knew them, each one by name.

Long before there were any fences,  
Long before red River carts went by.  
Lived the ones who lived by their senses  
From the misty dark forests to the bright prairie sky.

In the morning song were the needs of the day,  
Trusting that the Spirits would hear what they say.  
And when these were granted, they danced and they chanted  
To celebrate the good things that did come their way.

Long before surveyors did measure,  
Long before the gold rush was run.  
Worthiness was not found in treasure  
But in brave and in generous deeds that were done.

Long before the miners resided,  
Long before the steam whistle blew.  
They respected all things provided  
From this bountiful land and in dreams that came true.

# WHICH WAY WESTWARD WILL WE BUILD?

*(Both survey crews)*

*Which way westward will we build*

*So our promise is fulfilled?*

*Fort Victoria wants her rails*

*Through a land with just dirt trails.*

*North, South? What shall be done?*

*The great debate had just begun.*

*So outward went the survey crews*

*Who returned and brought this news:*

(North)

**North**west, there the land is flat.

The **Great** Lake's shore is not like that.

The **wood**lands have the trees we need

So **bridges** can be built with speed.

(South)

**When** we think what route to choose

**Plan** for needs of your work crews.

**Superior's** edge will be no chore

To **ship** supplies along that shore.

(North)

To **cross** the prairies, simply stay

On **fur** trade routes from Hudson Bay.

**We** won't pass those outposts by.

They'll **soon** be cities we supply.

(South)

**Cross** the South where land is clear

**We'll** just haul those wood ties here.

**Not** much settlement down here yet?

**We** can change all that, you bet!

*(North)*

**When** the Rockies block our view  
The **Yellowhead's** the best way through.  
For **passes** to the South are steep.  
**Blasting** through there won't be cheap.

*(South)*

The **Kicking** Horse will give the most  
**Direct** connection to the coast.  
Our **point** is said within this rhyme,  
**Get** 'em there in shortest time!

*(North)*

Through **Coastal** mountains to the beach  
**Fort** Victoria's in our reach.  
Cross **Johnstone** Strait on bridge or barge.  
Those **boats**, they'll have to be quite large.

*(South)*

**Reach** Port Moody, then be through  
**With** the track and blasting crew.  
To **set** foot on the Island side,  
A **steamer's** there for one short ride.

*(Both)*

*Which way westward will we build?  
Both ways need the strong and skilled.  
By the year of '81  
This debate was finally done.  
They'd cross this country to the South  
From **Huron's** shore to Fraser's mouth.  
Steel joining what would be  
The place called "home" for you and me.*

# One Hundred Seconds

Along the brand-new Crowsnest Line beneath the entrance to the mine  
The town of Frank was doing fine in the year 1901.  
And the tremors felt deep in the hole helped the miners reach their goal  
By loosening big chunks of coal, getting part of their work done.  
But the natives had a different tale of hearing the mountain's rumbling sound  
And never camping there because they felt unsafe to stay around.

But the number-one priority was the resource-based economy.  
That made the natives number three and their words fell on deaf ears.  
So the men went in, the coal came out. That's what this business was about.  
But an April morning left no doubt of the native's greatest fears.

One hundred seconds shook the night, one hundred miles went the sound.  
One hundred feet of rock came down on a portion of that mining town.  
Neighbours jolted from their sleep peered into the black of night  
Returned to bed quite unaware of what they'd see in the morning light.

A brakeman in the railway shed knew the Spokane Flyer sped  
Toward the rocks that he just fled, such little time remained.  
He scrambled out into the night and crossed that slide with all his might.  
He found the tracks, yes, came out right and he flagged the Westbound train.

*(Instrumental – 8 measures)*

The night shift on the underside of North America's largest slide  
Knew that they must soon decide where a tunnel job can go.  
An upward seam of coal and clay through which they dug became the way  
But shock came with the light of day when they looked down below.

Where a hundred seconds shook the night, one hundred miles went the sound.  
One hundred feet of rock came down on a portion of that mining town.  
A side of Turtle Mountain split and spread across the valley floor  
Leaving little evidence of what was there just hours before.

*(Slower)*

1903 is now long gone but all the stories do live on  
Of what they saw when first light shone on a world turned upside-down.  
And when you see those massive blocks, imagine all the noise and shocks.  
The natives said that mountain walks, and it did on that small town.

# *Our Place Called Canada*

Here is an ideal song for that unit on immigration. Schools have used this song prior to its publication to accompany citizenship ceremonies to which they were playing Host. At each of these ceremonies, the uniqueness of Canada's population was explained to the students by the presiding judge. The judge's explanation included how throughout our country's history, large groups of people from all parts of the globe moved here at different times for different reasons, creating an interesting and constantly evolving mix.

Because of our ongoing effort to respect differences between one another, we have created a climate where people feel free to share in this new home the traditions and customs from their country of origin. How many students in your class would say that they are Canadian, but they also have a \_\_\_\_\_ background? Keeping this celebration of other cultures as part of Canadian culture depends upon each one of us, and how we treat people who appear to be different from ourselves. (Remember, somewhere out there is a pair of eyes that may see YOU as different!) . In what ways is this type of respect for others taught in your school? What item(s) in your school behaviour code describe this type of respect?

After allowing your students to read through the lyrics, discussion could begin with the first few general questions. After that, use the questions that are specific to each verse.

- Which verse describes what this land was like before the settlers arrived?
- Part of Canada's history involves false advertising. Which verse describes this chapter? What was the false message?
- Which chapter of Canadian History is described in verse two? (Early explorers and colonists.)
- Which verse gives the best picture of Canada as it is today?

Verse 1

- What would your area have looked like before any settlement was built there?
- What native people would have lived in your area? What did they do there?

Verse 2

- Where were Canada's earliest non-native settlements? Who settled there?
- How did settlement begin in your area? (Exploration, fur trade, the railway, etc.)

Verse 3

- Why did the new Canadian government encourage people to move out West and settle there?
- What incentives were offered to people wanting to settle out West?
- What hardships were encountered by homesteaders on the prairies or loggers and

miners in the mountains?

Verse 4

- While the United States is referred to as a “melting pot”, Canada is thought of as a “mosaic”. Explain the difference.
- What cultural group is predominant in your area? (There may be more than one.)
- In what ways have you shown respect for someone who is different from you?

# *Our Place Called Canada*

For thousands of years, silence ruled o'er these lands  
And the only human presence was the passing native bands.  
And our forests, dark and green, held their secrets still unseen.  
But some day the world would come here to a place called Canada.

Long before there was such name, Nature held the only claim.  
Then, across the broad Atlantic, the Europeans came.  
They first came here to explore, later settled on the shore,  
The first overseas arrivals to a place called Canada.

Then, the promise of the best brought the settlers to the West  
Seeking wealth beneath the mountains or the Prairie family nest.  
But the days were hard and long. Some did stay, but some moved on,  
Led here by deceptive stories of a place called Canada.

Now, our nation has a place for every colour, every race.  
People came with their own stories and their dreams of open space.  
We're now settled coast to coast, but the part that I like most  
Is the cultural mosaic in our place called Canada.  
Let's rejoice in our uniqueness in our place called Canada.

# THE STAMPEDIN' STEED

Each song presented so far has told us a story from Canada's past. Whenever such a story is shared or retold, the cultural identity (or unique characteristics) of a community is being shaped or preserved. Plus, telling a good story or celebrating a tradition leaves a person with a good feeling. One would be hard-pressed to find a community that does not have its own folklore or customs. This process has been at work in our Native communities for approximately ten thousand years, where stories and traditions are passed from one generation to the next.

The "community" mentioned here could be our country, your town or city, your family or even your school. Think for a moment about your school as a community:

- What ways of life or traditions exist in your school to make it unique from other schools of the same type?
- How is the cultural identity of your school kept alive? How are art, music, sports, repeated events and storytelling used to highlight these unique characteristics of your school?

If the same questions were asked about your city or town, your answer would probably include local festivals or celebrations. Before you think about the parade, carnival, tournaments or the fireworks, focus on the underlying theme of the whole celebration:

- How many years has this event been happening? Is it something new or is it an old community tradition?
- What stories from your community's past are brought to life by this celebration?
- In what ways are past stories retold in this celebration? (Some clues could be found in the names of individual events and in the parade.)
- In what ways could you get involved in a community celebration and help preserve your community's cultural identity?

This next song takes a humorous look at the man with the white Stetson and his white horse taking the airline (together) to his chosen community event, the Calgary Stampede. This well-known celebration began in 1886 as an annual fall fair organized by a newly-formed agricultural society. Today, Canada's fourth-largest city takes on a cowboy theme for ten days every July. Whether or not our main character in the song is really a cowboy, the Calgary Stampede is one occasion for him to put on the hat and play the role. Ever wonder how much he paid for the airline ticket to take his horse along?

# THE STAMPEDIN' STEED

A man with a white Stetson and his white steed  
Were headin' to Calgary's yearly Stampede.  
Why did they go? It's such a great show.  
And the man with the white Stetson loved rodeo.  
Now, here comes the part where we think he's insane,  
He was riding his horse when he boarded the plane.  
They both ducked quite low, through the door they did go  
And the horse read the numbers to find the right row.

**They'll give a "Yahoo!" and wave their hats, too.  
They've both got the spirit, they know what to do.  
From the flapjacks at dawn to the late evening show,  
There's more on the schedule than you'll ever know.**

The Calgary-bound duo sat side by side.  
The horse kept his silence through most of the ride.  
But when dinner was served, everyone heard him bray  
"I see you've got coleslaw, now, where is my hay!"  
All the heads turned from the pilot on down,  
So the horse gave his reasons for headin' to town.  
While the flight crew served ale, the horse got a bale,  
Through mouths full of clover continued his tale.

**We'll give a "Yahoo!" and wave our hats, too.  
We've both got the spirit, we know what to do.  
From the flapjacks at dawn to the late evening show,  
There's more on the schedule than we'll ever know.**

The word spread from regular right to first class  
Of the contests, the food, the parade that would pass.  
On the captain's command the plane soon would land  
And passengers quickly changed what they had planned.  
They forgot business, forgot their next flight.  
They got off in Calgary to see this sight.  
The plane was soon empty as they followed that steed  
And the man with the white Stetson to the Stampede.

**They'll give a "Yahoo!" and wave their hats, too.  
They've all got the spirit, they know what to do.  
From the flapjacks at dawn to the late evening show,  
There's more on the schedule than they'll ever know.**