

## Grade 8 History

Canada: A Changing Society

Aboriginal Teaching Strategy

### Important Aboriginal Women

Students research an Aboriginal woman from the past to learn about her contribution to the lives of Aboriginal women and children.

#### Related Curriculum Policy

- *The Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies, Grades 1 to 6; History and Geography, Grades 7 and 8, 2004*

#### Specific Expectations

*Knowledge and Understanding*

- describe how specific individuals and events helped change the position of women and children in Canada (e.g., Nellie McClung, Emily Carr, Lucy Maud Montgomery, Pauline Johnson; the Temperance Movement, laws establishing compulsory education)

#### Aboriginal Context

Many Aboriginal women have made positive contributions to the lives of Aboriginal people in general and to the lives of Aboriginal women and children in particular. Pauline Johnson, for example, who celebrated Aboriginal cultural values in her poetry, also shed light on the plight of Aboriginal women in several of her poems. In essays, she lamented the stereotyping of Aboriginal people.

Catherine Sutton was a leader of the Mississauga who lost her Aboriginal status when she married an Englishman, William Sutton. In 1860, she went to England and obtained a private audience with Queen Victoria to discuss the issue, but was not successful in having her status reinstated. More than a hundred years later, Aboriginal women in Canada gained the right to keep their Aboriginal status if they married a non-Aboriginal man. Although the change took place a long time after Sutton's meeting with Queen Victoria, her efforts received attention and served to throw light on an injustice affecting Aboriginal women.

#### Teaching Strategies

- Have students choose an Aboriginal woman from Canada's past who made a contribution to the lives of Aboriginal women and children.

- Have students research the woman's life and write a profile about how her actions affected Aboriginal women and children.
- Have students share their profiles with the class.  
*Teacher prompts:* What contribution did the woman make? Who was most affected? Did she improve the lives of Aboriginal women and their children in the short and/or the long term?

## Resources

*The following recommended resources and web links were accurate at the time of publication. Teachers are encouraged to check that these reference listings remain current.*

Aboriginal Canada Portal. Women.

<http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/en/ao04381.html>

Contains links to a variety of sites that provide information for and about Canadian Aboriginal women.

The Canadian Encyclopedia.

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCESubjects&Params=A1>

Includes entries for Pauline Johnson and Catherine Sutton.

Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online.

<http://www.biographi.ca/index-e.html?PHPSESSID=oeajbibm4ad4adrrp0pscmiv72>

Includes entries for Pauline Johnson and Catherine Sutton.

heroines.ca. <http://www.heroines.ca/resources/links.html>

Contains information about notable women in Canadian history and famous contemporary Canadian women.

Library and Archives Canada. Canadian Poetry Archive.

<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/canvers/t16-201-e.html>

Contains poems by Canadian English- and French-language poets, including Pauline Johnson.

Kelm, Mary-Ellen, and Townsend, Lorna, eds. *In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women's History in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

Contains essays describing how Aboriginal women found their voice in Canadian society over the past three centuries.

The Pauline Johnson Archive. <http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~pjohnson/home.html>

Contains information about the poet's life and writings, and interviews.

## Making Community Connections

- Invite Aboriginal women to class to talk about the impact Aboriginal women like Pauline Johnson have had on their lives.

### ABOUT THE TEACHER'S TOOLKIT

This teaching strategy is one component of *Aboriginal Perspectives: The Teacher's Toolkit*, a collection of resources designed to help Ontario educators bring Aboriginal perspectives into the classroom. Based on the revised Ontario curriculum, the collection includes resources for educators at both the elementary and secondary levels. Other resources in this series can be found on the ministry website, at [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca).

