

SOME DEFINITIONS...

SOVEREIGNTY The right to rule, control and make own decisions about territory and people. Canada is a sovereign country in the world, (it can make its own decisions). The Province of Ontario is not sovereign; it has to follow some rules outlined by the Canadian government

Some places, like Quebec, want to be recognized as Sovereign nations so they can protect their own interests, (in the same way that many Aboriginal groups/reserves/tribal organizations want to be sovereign).

SELF-DETERMINATION Similar to **sovereignty**, this is the power for a group of people to make, on their own, decisions about a nation without outside influence. This could include the control of money, land, etc.

ASSIMILATION Instead of allowing groups with different backgrounds and cultures to move freely on their own, assimilation tries to make everyone the same so that they are treated the same. The Canadian government used to have a policy, (and some argue it still does) to make Indians “less savage and more civilized”.

LEGISLATION These are laws and rules that governments pass for the people

INDIAN ACT This is a law that governs registered Indians, different bands and reserves across Canada. It is run by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. This act does the following:

- Defines who is and who is not Indian
- Outlines the rights of Indians
- Allows women to retain their status even when “marrying out”
- Controls who can vote in band elections

CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS This document outlines the rights guaranteed to every Canadian, including life, liberty, security, justice, official languages, etc. The charter is basically the top law. In the charter there is reference to Section 25, which states that Aboriginal Rights, including treaty rights, are protected.

SOME CHANGES TO THE CANADIAN INDIAN ACT...

- 1881: Amended to make officers of the Indian Department, including Indian Agents, legal justices of the peace, able to enforce regulations. The following year they were granted the same legal power as magistrates. Further amended to prohibit the sale of agricultural produce by Indians in Prairie Provinces without an appropriate permit from an Indian agent. This prohibition is, as of 2008, still included in the Indian Act though not enforced.
- 1884: Amended to prevent elected band leaders who have been deposed from office from being re-elected.
- 1885: Amended to prohibit religious ceremonies (such as potlatches)
- 1894: Amended to remove band control of non-natives living on reserve. This power now rested exclusively in the hands of the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs.
- 1905: Amended to allow aboriginal people to be removed from reserves near towns with more than 8,000 residents.
- 1906: Amended to allow 50 per cent of the sale price of reserve lands to be given to band members, following the surrender of that land.
- 1911: Amended to allow municipalities and companies expropriate portions of reserves, without surrender, for roads, railways, and other public works. Further amended to allow a judge to move an entire reserve away from a municipality if it was deemed "expedient." These amendments were also known as the Oliver Act.
- 1914: Amended to require western Indians to seek official permission before appearing in "aboriginal costume" in any "dance, show, exhibition, stampede or pageant."
- 1918: Amended to allow the Superintendent-General to lease out uncultivated reserve lands to non-aboriginals if the new lease-holder would use it for farming or pasture.
- 1920: Amended to allow the Department of Indian Affairs to ban hereditary rule of bands. Further amended to allow for the involuntary enfranchisement (and loss of treaty rights) of any status Indian considered fit by the Department of Indian Affairs without the possession of land previously required for those living off reserve. Repealed two years later, but reintroduced in a modified form in 1933.
- 1927: Amended to prevent anyone (aboriginal or otherwise) from soliciting funds for Indian legal claims without a special license from the Superintendent-General. This effectively prevented any First Nation from pursuing aboriginal land claims.
- 1930: Amended to prevent a pool hall owner from allowing entrance to an Indian who "by inordinate frequenting of a pool room either on or off an Indian reserve mispends or wastes his time or means to the detriment of himself, his family or household". The owner could face a fine or a one-month jail term.^[4]
- 1936: Amended to allow Indian agents to direct band council meetings, and to cast a deciding vote in the event of a tie.
- 1951: Amended to allow the sale and slaughter of livestock without an Indian Agent permit. Status women are allowed to vote in band elections. Attempts to pursue land claims, and the use of religious ceremonies (such as potlatches) are no longer prohibited by law. Further amended for the compulsory "enfranchisement" of First Nations women who married non-status men (including Metis, Inuit and non-status Indian, as well as non-aboriginal men) thus removing their status and that of any children from the marriage.
- 1985: Amended to allow First Nations women the right to keep or regain their status even after "marrying out", and to grant status to the children (but not grandchildren) of such a marriage. This amendment was debated in Parliament as Bill C-31. Under this amendment, full status Indians are referred to as 6-1. A child of a marriage between a status (6-1) person and a non-status person would qualify for 6-2 (half) status, but if his/her child in turn married another 6-2 or a non-status person, the child will be non-status. If a 6-2 marries a 6-1 or another 6-2, their children will revert to 6-1 status. Blood quantum is disregarded, or rather, replaced with a "two generation cut-off clause". According to Thomas King, around half of status Indians are currently marrying non-status people, meaning this legislation will accomplish complete legal assimilation in a matter of a few generations.
- 2000: Amended to allow band members living off reserve vote in band elections and referendums.

"I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department"

Duncan Campbell Scott, head of the Department of Indian Affairs, on the creation of Residential Schools in 1920.

Duncan Campbell Scott was an important Canadian politician and poet. He explored the land around Northwestern Ontario in the late 1800s – early 1900s. He helped to create the Indian Act and organize residential schools. He is also one of Canada's great poets, (though in 2007 he was voted one of the worst because of what he was saying). One of his most famous poems:

The Onondaga Madonna by Duncan Campbell Scott

She stands full-throated and with careless pose,
This woman of a weird and waning race,
The tragic savage lurking in her face,
Where all her pagan passion burns and glows;
Her blood is mingled with her ancient foes,
And thrills with war and wildness in her veins;
Her rebel lips are dabbled with the stains
Of feuds and forays and her father's woes.

And closer in the shawl about her breast,
The latest promise of her nation's doom,
Paler than she her baby clings and lies,
The primal warrior gleaming from his eyes;
He sulks, and burdened with his infant gloom,
He draws his heavy brows and will not rest.

You have to wonder... for a man who was given the job of "protecting" Indians...

- 1) Why he chose to call the woman 'of a weird and waning race'
- 2) Why he refers to her as a 'tragic savage'
- 3) Why he describes 'all her pagan passions'
- 4) Why he talks about the 'war within her veins'
- 5) Why does he say she has 'rebel lips'
- 6) Why does he give 'promise of her nation's doom'
- 7) Why does he think her baby is 'paler than she'
- 8) Why is the baby full of 'infant gloom'

How does he **really** feel about natives!?

QUESTIONS TO ASK....

There are many pieces of literature – stories, poems, plays and novels – that talk about the delicate issue of native sovereignty. It is an issue that has been around ever since Europeans started trying to control Aboriginals. Most of these pieces of literature ask these questions:

- 1) Explain why are people assimilated in the first place.
- 2) Is it possible for natives in Canada to govern themselves? What are some reasons to show how they could and what are some reasons to explain why they might not be able to do it.
- 3) Will native people ever be able to rely on themselves and become self-sufficient if they continue following traditional ways of life?
- 4) How long does Canada need to continue offering special status to Indians? Is there a disadvantage to doing this?
- 5) Who should decide what's best for Aboriginals: bands? Indian and Northern Affairs? The Government of Canada? What is good and bad about each choice?
- 6) Would giving aboriginal people sovereignty fix the problems affecting natives?
- 7) What can be done to give Native people back what has already been taken away?

SOVEREIGNTY ASSIGNMENT NUMBER ONE: Sovereignty Intro Questions

Take some time to answer the seven questions listed above. Title this assignment ***Sovereignty Introduction Questions*** and hand it in when you have finished your work.

THINGS TO READ...

The following readings from the book *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*, (wow...what a title), all touch on the topic of sovereignty...though sometimes it takes some thinking to figure that out:

- “The Cattle Thief” by E. Pauline Johnson (p. 36)
- “History Lesson” by Jeanette Armstrong (p. 228)

SOVEREIGNTY ASSIGNMENT NUMBER TWO: Sovereignty Poems

Analyze each of the above poems similar to the way that questioned were asked for “The Onondoga Madonna”. For each poem come up with:

- 1) Three questions that you would ask the poet about their description of native characters
- 2) The main idea (theme) of the poem
- 3) How the poem connects to the issue of Identity, Relationships and/or Sovereignty as we have discussed them in class. Explain your answer!

THE ABORIGINAL WRITING CHALLENGE...

We know the issue of **Aboriginal Sovereignty** has been around since Europeans came to Canada. This is history. We also know that writers have been using this issue as a means to come up with poems, plays, stories and novels. This is where the **Canadian Aboriginal Writing Challenge** comes into play.

The **Aboriginal Writing Challenge** is a national creative writing contest for young Aboriginal Canadians. It is designed to encourage Aboriginal youth to explore their heritage and creative writing skills with a chance to earn national recognition.

The **rules** are straightforward:

- Participants must be of Aboriginal ancestry (Status, non-Status, Inuit and Métis) and between the ages of 14-18 or 19-29.
- Participants submit a short story that has never before been published and between 800-1400 words (14-18 category) or 1000-2000 words (19-29 category).
- Participants entering the contest must also include a completed submission form, author's statement and letter from a teacher

Now, you're not being **forced** to enter the Aboriginal Writing Challenge... but you are being assigned to write a short story...

SOVEREIGNTY ASSIGNMENT NUMBER THREE: Aboriginal Writing Challenge

You will write a short story of between 800-1400 words. (Note: If you **DO** wish to enter the challenge and you are over the age of 19 you must write at least 1000 words.) Your short story will be on the following topic:

CHOOSE A MOMENT IN CANADIAN ABORIGINAL HISTORY AND EXPLORE IT THROUGH CREATIVE WRITING.

This means that you could pick anything from traditional legend all the way up to the present, (a historical event), and add your own creativity to it, (some fiction). This style of writing is called **historical fiction**. Movies like *Saving Private Ryan* are historical fiction. They are based on a historical event but the story covered is made up.

Though you do not need to submit your story to the Writing Challenge you will be expected to write as if you were competing. That means:

- Focus on developing an exciting, interesting, respectful, descriptive story
- Researching the historical event covered within your story
- Editing carefully for spelling and grammar

Yes, you will be marked and the marking scheme will be the same as major assignments. However, this short story is also the major writing assignment for the course so it will be worth more than the other major assignments. The **due date** for the assignment is the end of the first week after Christmas break. The **contest due date** is March 31, 2009. **If you are interested in entering your story (or any other story for that matter) let me know and I will help you with the process!**

Note that more information and last year's winning stories can be found at the contest website, www.our-story.ca/index2.html

A sample of last year's winning story is included to help you come up with ideas.

Nigel Grenier

Age: 14
North Vancouver, BC
Gitwagak Aboriginal Community
Unmasked

The **OUR STORY – ABORIGINAL WRITING CHALLENGE** winning entry from 2008 in the 14-18 category. It is just under 1400 words.

Unmasked by Nigel Grenier

Logan peered over the sheer edge of the cliff and at the river of mist drifting through the valley below. The rising sun made the glacier behind him blindingly bright. The sun's radiant beams broke through the mist forming a pair of rainbows, which arched over the emerging panorama of seven rocky peaks, and stretched across the glowing horizon. A crunch below Logan's feet broke the serene moment. The sun had melted away more than the morning mist. Underneath him, the snow gave way sending him hurtling down the seemingly bottomless chasm of ice. As his safety rope became taut, Logan slowed to a halt twenty feet down the crevasse. The gasp he let out was not because of the fall. Through the ice stared a pair of inhuman eyes.

Examining those eyes on the long drive home, Logan observed that they were thin circlets imbedded in a shard of weathered wood. Brilliant blue with turquoise ripples, their long sleep in the ice hadn't taken the shine out of them. Carefully, he slipped the wooden piece, along with other fragments found in the surrounding ice, into a labeled bag.

Logan's van pulled into the parking lot of a run down inn. It was midnight. Not a star could be seen in the sky. The reception desk was empty but the door was unlocked. Logan could pay in the morning before he continued on his journey home. He pulled the frayed edge of the bedcovers over his head and instantly fell asleep.

The night's silence was broken by a woman's voice. It was completely dark but Logan could tell that he was in the river of mist. The cool humidity of the night air brushed against his skin. He shivered and she began to speak again.

"**Damelahamid** became such a huge city that people did not know their neighbors. The people became very confident again. All of a sudden it started to rain and the shores of the water changed. The people remembered the instructions that **Simoiget Dam Laha**, our Father in Heaven, had given to them. They had one **Gilhast**, the first totem pole of the Gitksan people. They cut it down and fortified their longhouses, their **Dahks** with it. They anchored them with ropes of hide and roots and barks of trees. The people became afraid and then a stranger appeared amongst them."

When Logan woke up the next morning, the weather was fierce and a savage wind whipped his light hair across his face and into his blue eyes. Flashes of lightning lit the darkened sky. He ran to his van and turned on the radio. The old reporter's voice crackled with static as he spoke calmly from his warm, undisturbed studio.

"Canada's west coast is being hit by the worst rainstorm that it has seen in years."

Some time later, as he reached the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Logan turned off the radio. He was a climatologist at UBC and he thought some of his archeologist colleagues might be interested in the fragments of wood he had found while drilling ice cores in the glaciers of the Skeena River region. He would have left them if it weren't for the blue circlets that looked distinctly man made.



Jeremy, a young student in his twenties with dark hair and smooth features, looked up as Logan approached; "Hey Logan, how was the trip?"

"Great, look I found some fragments of wood while drilling a glacier, think you could identify them?"

Logan pulled out the fragments from his bag and Jeremy examined the thin circlets.

"These look like abalone, perfectly carved. If you hadn't found them in a glacier I'd say they were relatively new. Hmm, I'll see what I can do."

Logan walked into his office and took out the ice samples. He was curious to see what his own tests revealed and sat down to face a long day of work.

The next morning, Logan slowly swung his legs out from under the covers and put them down with a splash. In an instant, he was awake, and realized that his entire floor was flooded. He went to call a plumber but no one was open yet. He picked up his soggy backpack and went in search of some rubber boots.

Logan prayed that the rain hadn't stopped Jeremy as he pulled into a UBC parking lot. He sloshed over a soggy lawn and stepped over the sandbags feebly guarding the entrance from the elements.

To Logan's relief, Jeremy was already there. He looked up to speak as Logan approached his desk.

"I got a good look at the fragments you showed me yesterday and they're definitely man made. The wood has been carved and smoothed on one side. It's yellow cedar and there are traces of paint on several of the pieces. You should take them to the image recovery project at the Museum of Anthropology"

"Sure, thanks man," said Logan.

"Anytime," replied Jeremy, "Oh and there's something else, some of the pieces seem to fit together."

Logan placed the fragments on his desk with gloved hands. He realized that Jeremy was right and that three of the pieces joined, forming a contoured dome. Looking down at the pieces spread before him, he began to see a pattern emerging.

Several days later, when Logan was finally done all his testing, the climatology results showed mass environmental disturbances at the time the fragments originated. He was confounded to find traces of pollen from all around the world frozen in the ice. Only one thing remained, the fragments. Only, they weren't fragments anymore. They had been unified into a single piece, carved into the shape of a face long ago. It was a mask. Carefully, he picked it up and walked out of the room. Part way down the hall, he heard a voice behind him.

"I have the carbon dating on the wood you gave me. It's over 3,000 years old!" said a young woman with dark wavy hair and soft eyes.

"Thanks Maya," replied Logan.

Logan continued to the Museum of Anthropology. Icy rain clawed at his face as he stepped out and ran across to the museum, literally bursting through the entrance. A security guard led him down a ramp that brought them past the museum's great hall and off to the side to an out of the way door. Inside, he handed the mask over to a research staff member, who delicately placed it underneath an infrared lens, which would be able to see through the dirt and ageing veiling the mask.

As he walked out of the image recovery room and into the great hall, Logan examined the infrared picture of the mask. A rainbow crossed its forehead and raindrops ran down its cheeks. Or were they tears? The

researcher had told him that it was painted with indigenous paints, black from charcoal, red with ochre, yellow extracted from wolf moss, blue from copper oxide, and green from copper oxide mixed with ammonia.

A familiar voice caught his attention. It spoke gently and clearly,

"And then a stranger appeared amongst them. He was called **Waydetai** because of his light hair and eyes. He brought provisions to the people in a bottomless box and told them not to run away. The waters had covered the surface of the earth. It is told that it was a whole year since it started to rain until, one day the people observed that two rainbows appeared in the sky. As the rainbows touched the surface of the of the earth, the waters started to recede. **Hagbegwatku's Dahk**, the chief's **Dahk**, landed near Damelahamid. The second **dahk** landed on the coast. The third **dahk** broke loose in a storm; we have no idea where it went. It is said **Waydetai**, the stranger who brought provisions to the people, continued down the Skeena River to look for survivors."

Logan realized that it was the same voice that was in his dream. Amidst ancient totem poles and embodiments of timeless spirits, he walked into a crowded hall. He looked up from the picture in his hands to see the very same mask dancing before him.