

First Contact

Learning Centre Introduction

First Contact addresses many of the intended learning outcomes common to most provincial history or social studies curricula. The design of the site includes components that complement and enhance provincial prescribed learning outcomes in the areas of knowledge, understanding and critical thinking.

Dealing as it does with first contact between First Nations and early explorers and settlers, **First Contact** content of primary sources, maps, artifacts, biographical sketches and narratives presents the user with an introduction to many aspects of early Canada. These include in the areas of society and culture, economy, technology, politics and law, and the environment; the content areas for the development of learning outcomes for curricula.

An example of the appropriateness of First Contact's content to social studies curricula is illustrated by the following selections from some prescribed learning outcomes for British Columbia social studies courses.

Grade Levels

@ Grade 8

- Compare daily life, family structures, and gender roles in early and contemporary civilizations.
- Demonstrated understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural traditions and belief systems.
- Assess ways societies preserve identity, transmit culture, and adapt to change.
- Assess the impact of contact, conflict, and conquest on civilizations.
- Compare basic economic systems and different forms of exchange.
- Analyse the effect of commerce on trade routes, settlement patterns, and cultural exchanges.

@ Grade 9

- Analyse the relationship between Aboriginal people and Europeans and explain the roles of each in the development of Canada.
- Describe daily life in Aboriginal communities in New France and British North America.
- Describe how identity is shaped by a variety of factors including: family, gender, belief systems, ethnicity, and nationality.
- Demonstrate awareness of artistic expression as a reflection of the culture in which it is produced.
- Analyse roots of present-day regional, cultural, and social issues within Canada.
- Assess how economic systems contributed to early Canadian development.
- Analyse effects of colonialism on trade and conflict.
- Analyse the reasons for the initial exploration and settlement of North America.
- Identify major exploration routes and historical events in the development of Canada.
- Explain the role of Aboriginal people in the fur trade and in the exploration of North America.

@ Grade 10

- Assess the changing roles of Aboriginal people within Canadian society.
- Identify the influence of immigration on the development of Canada

@ Grade 11

- Describe the role of Canada's First Nations peoples in shaping Canadian identity.
- Describe the history and contributions of Canada's French and English cultures in shaping Canadian identity.
- Analyse the basis for the First Nation's claim to self-government, land claims and treaty rights.

Features

Applications of Social Studies

First Contact addresses the issues of applications of social studies knowledge and skills. This includes developing skills in information gathering, interpretation, issues analysis, presentation and an awareness of the role of active citizenship in our democracy. Social studies course in B.C. encourage students to:

- Make use of a wide range of information sources,
- Draw inferences from maps, documents and other primary and secondary sources, both historical and contemporary,
- Develop and defend positions on historical and contemporary controversies,
- Use various media to communicate in small and large group settings,
- Take a public stand on matters of personal concern.

With its caches of timelines, historical documents and maps for research and presentation tools such as the **Collector** and **Ways of Seeing** Digital Video, **First Contact** has the components to meet all of the prescribed outcomes for social studies applications. It provides users with an electronic library of data and sources complemented by an innovative research tool in the **Collector** and dynamic presentation possibilities in the **Movie Studio**.

Instructional Strategy and Design

"Making history online" sums up the intents of the instructional strategy of **First Contact**. Critical thinking and problem solving are innate to historical investigation and form the foundation of the educational rationale for the site. Using primary and secondary sources of historical evidence, such as maps, journal entries, artifacts, narratives, users will employ high levels of thinking, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation to develop their personal interpretations of the events. In **First Contact** the students will face questions concerning the reliability and corroboration of historical sources.

When they engage with **First Contact**, students will be encouraged to be their own historians. As such, they will develop their own unique interpretation of events. Making history online is ideal for such an approach.

Students under the direction of a teacher, or those engaged in individual research, will find content and design of **First Contact** an essential Canadian source for research projects, homework assignments, clarification of general questions, and a source of review material for tests.

Appropriate Use of New Media

Subjects such as history do not have “right answers” and must be taught to encourage students to develop their own ideas, opinions, and interpretations. First Contact will not only provide students information but also a vehicle for knowledge construction. Students using **First Contact** will hone their information technology skills including investigation, discovery, control of pace and content, case analysis and other experiences.

Because students can work on the site from home, the classroom, from the library, or a laptop with the same connectivity, First Contact can become a powerful extension of the education institution without the constraints of a formal institution. With the increasing emphasis on individual student needs and learning styles, and flexibility of programme delivery web-based learning with authoritative Canadian content has some obvious advantages to the student

These are:

- Pace of content can be controlled,
- Flexibility in times of use,
- Encourages higher order thinking,
- Promotes the development of recognized skill sets for social studies,
- Leads to knowledge creation by motivation and interest,
- Complements and enhances school-based learning.

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