

# NOTABLE PEOPLE

## PRE-TEACH/PRE-ACTIVITY

As a class, make a list of people who the students consider notable and discuss what the term “notable” means to them. Many Canadians are familiar with historical figures such as Jacques Cartier and Sir John A. MacDonal, as well as more recent cultural figures like A.Y. Jackson and Wayne Gretzky. However, equal consideration and attention hasn’t been granted to the important Indigenous figures who shaped history or the modern-day Indigenous personalities who influence today’s society. The very notion of “notability” reflects Eurocentric ideals and values. Within many Indigenous communities, kinship and relationships are at the core of what makes an individual notable, and emphasis is placed on their actions and commitment to family and community. For example, a grandmother looking after her grandchildren, an Elder who holds traditional knowledge, a medicine person, a residential school survivor, and a chief may all be considered to be notable people. Have students reflect on the Indigenous perspectives on “notability” and ask them to draw comparisons to what they discussed earlier.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will think critically about how a person becomes notable and the colonial values embedded in notability.
- Students will develop their own criteria of notability by considering their own definitions, families and communities.
- Students will use their own criteria of notability to critically examine the notable people card content and to develop their own notable people cards.
- Students will learn about First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders, nationally and in their local communities.
- Students will learn about the strengths of the communities, reserves, settlements and nations that the notable people come from and the contributions they have made and continue to make.
- Students will learn about issues within communities and about allyship as reconciliation in action.

## Foundational knowledge and perspectives

### FIRST NATIONS

**“We count among our leaders** the great Secwepemc Chief George Manuel. We have our own Michelangelos, like the masterful Bill Reid. Our literary community includes the lyrical Lee Maracle. We have grandfathers who teach us. Aunties who look out for us. Cousins who are line mates on the ice and best friends in school. It is a beautiful and proud thing to be Indigenous.

Across Canada and around the world, Indigenous people are emerging as clever leaders, guiding powerful social movements — forces for good, representing communities and values we need more of in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

— from *“Armageddon in Our Bones, Utopia in Our Souls: The Contemporary Indigenous Renaissance”* by Julian Brave NoiseCat, in the foreword to the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

**“Being a Chief was seen as temporary, and there were few lifetime Chiefs because they were the poorest in the community.** They were poor because their duties included taking care of the sick, old and orphans, and thinking of others before themselves. Chiefs were taught that they should be advisors to the people and that spiritual consensus is the highest form of politics.”

— from *“Governance”* by Bob Watts, in the *First Nations* volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

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## Foundational knowledge and perspectives

### MÉTIS

**“The historic Métis had a special talent for blending** Indigenous and early Euro-Settler cultures into a unique cultural synthesis. Traditionally, the Métis were excellent storytellers, fiddle players, dancers, and floral beadwork and embroidery artisans. These age-old traditions remain cherished and continue to this day. However, Métis culture has also evolved to reflect all aspects of contemporary cultural expression. At present, the Métis Nation is blessed with many talented and renowned authors, poets, singers, songwriters, actors, filmmakers, and visual artists.”

— from “Arts and Culture” in the *Métis* volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

**“Lloyd Hamilton, the great-grandson (through adoption) of Gabriel Dumont, served in the Canadian Army during the Korean War.** On one occasion, Hamilton worked with an American soldier to save 80 Korean children in an orphanage who were caught in the Korean Demilitarized Zone. For this action, Hamilton received a medal from the United Nations.”

— from “Veterans” in the *Métis* volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

**“Métis authors are well-known for writing searing indictments of colonization and racism** that have influenced Métis individual identity and peoplehood since the 1870s. Maria Campbell’s memoir, *Half-Breed* (1973), is the most poignant work relating to the unbending racism and colonization that crippled the Métis in her road allowance community in northern Saskatchewan.

Beatrice Culleton Mosionier tackled similar themes in her acclaimed novel *In Search of April Raintree* (1983). Métis poet and author Katherena Vermette continues to write in this tradition, portraying the lives of marginalized Indigenous people in inner-city Winnipeg in her critically acclaimed novel *The Break* (2016). Other prominent Métis authors include Aaron Paquette, Warren Cariou, Lisa Bird-Wilson, Cherie Dimaline and Sandra Birdsell. Award-winning Métis authors specializing in children’s and young adult books include Wilfred Burton, Deborah L. Delaronde, Leah Marie Dorion and Jacqueline Guest.”

— from “Arts and Culture” in the *Métis* volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

**“The historic Métis had a special talent for blending Indigenous and early Euro-Settler cultures into a unique cultural synthesis.”**

**“The most famous Métis dance is the ‘Red River Jig,’** or as it is known in Michif, ‘oayache mannin.’ The accompanying fiddle tune, which was very popular in the mid-1800s and was known from Alaska to James Bay, is based on the song ‘Big John McNeil’ from Scotland. French-Canadians played a variant fiddle tune entitled ‘La Grande Gigue Simple.’

The ‘Red River Jig’ is a combination of Plains Indian footwork and Scottish, Irish and French-Canadian dance forms such as stomps, quadrilles, reels and jigs. The basic jig step is danced in most Métis communities. However, dancers often add their own ‘fancy’ dance steps during certain segments of the tune. Some dancers use fancy steps to identify their home community. In 1940, Métis fiddler Frédéric Genthon made the first recording of the ‘Red River Jig’ for posterity.”

— from “Music and Dance” in the *Métis* volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*



## Foundational knowledge and perspectives

### INUIT

“Released in 2016, *Angry Inuk* is a documentary that follows Iqaluit-based Inuk filmmaker Alethea Aggiuq Arnaquq-Baril as she shines a light on the realities of the Inuit seal hunt and how sanctions from the South are impacting the Inuit way of life. The documentary has travelled the world, collecting a number of awards at home and abroad while challenging the perception of the Inuit sealing industry.

New generations of Inuit filmmakers and storytellers are being inspired by people like Kunuk, Qulitalik and Arnaquq-Baril to reclaim their image and to share their own stories with the world. These stories allow Inuit to see themselves reflected in national and international media and helps the world better understand the Inuit perspective in all its complexities.”

— from “*Filmmaking and Media*” in the *Inuit volume of the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

“The performance art of staged live theatre in Nunavut is culturally based in the ancient Inuit traditions of storytelling and shamanic ritual. The unique and often very contemporary worldview of the Inuit people is a truly fresh perspective in the dramatic narrative arts.

The most famous theatre group in Nunavut is Tununiq Arsarniit Theatre Group, based in Pond Inlet. Since its founding in 1987, members have developed their plays and performances by consensus, involving Elders as both actors and writers and always weaving Inuit language and traditional culture into every dramatic issue they tackle for the stage.”

— from “*Performing Arts*” in the *Inuit volume of the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

“The 1950s saw the beginnings of one of the most prolific printmaking studios throughout the Inuit Nunangat: the Kinngait Studios in Cape Dorset. This studio was where artists like Kenojuak Ashevak, Kananginak Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona produced some of the most iconic imagery of Inuit art. In the years following the Kinngait Studios conception, other printmaking studios and workshops throughout Nunavik and Northwest Territories were created, although Inuit in Labrador were excluded as they had joined Canada only in 1949 along with Newfoundland.

Stylistically, the prints vary from region to region. The Kinngait prints often depict the many different animals — owls, caribou, seals, polar bears, whales, arctic char — in bold and contrasting colours (Ashevak’s *The Enchanted Owl* provides a good example). Prints from the Puvirnituq region tend to be monochromatic in colour, and reflect more of the everyday life. Stories and legends also make up a large portion of these prints (Davidialuk Alasua Ammitu’s *Legend of Toongak*).

Printmaking throughout the North has changed very little in the way of technique. Inuit artists, however, are showcasing the impacts that modern technologies and urban ways of life have on the North through drawings and prints. Tim Pitsiulak’s *Family of Eight* presents us with a family riding an ATV rather than the dogsleds of the past.”

**New generations of Inuit filmmakers and storytellers are being inspired by people like Kunuk, Qulitalik and Arnaquq-Baril to reclaim their image and to share their own stories with the world.**

— from “*Visual Arts*” in the *Inuit volume of the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*



# NOTABLE PEOPLE

## Points of inquiry and activation related to the Giant Floor Map



- **Begin by placing the Notable People cards on the map and having a class discussion about why each person was selected.** Ask students to identify common characteristics among the selected people. Are there any people from or near your community? What do you know about them?
- **Have students choose a Notable People card and research the contributions that person has made to their community and to Canada.** What are the issues within their community and what are the broader implications and connections between these issues? How could students become an ally/advocate for this community?
- **Next, have students think critically about what makes a person notable, based on what they have already identified.** Work together to construct criteria for notability. Make sure to ask: What is notable? What does that mean? Who decides that? Who is heard and who is not?
- **Based on classroom criteria, have students research notable Indigenous people and make their own cards for the map using the Fill In the Blanks card as a template.** Talk about the impact of these individuals on their families and communities (local, provincial/territorial, national, international).
- **Students will share their findings with each other and discuss connections between and amongst the notable people, paying attention to common issues or themes (e.g., housing, water, child welfare, access to education).**

# NOTABLE PEOPLE

## Age appropriate application and experiential learning

### ELEMENTARY

K-6

- **Using the Fill in the Blanks card as a template, ask students to create a profile** for a notable person in their lives. Have students present their selected person to the class and celebrate their accomplishments.
- **Using the resources provided (e.g., Indspire's list of laureates), read a story** to the class about a notable Indigenous person and discuss why the actions of this person are important. Identify challenges this person may have experienced. Locate on the Giant Floor Map where this person is from.

### INTERMEDIATE

7-9

- **Ask students to select a person from the Notable People cards** who they are unfamiliar with and research more about their accomplishments, values, goals and passions. If possible, have students reach out to the individuals and interview them.
- **Have students examine current events** and identify notable Indigenous people and the key issues they are passionate about.
- **Invite an Indigenous person into your class** to talk about a person or group of people they admire and why.

### SECONDARY

10-12

- **Have students research** the process of naming things in your community (e.g., streets, schools) and discuss how these decisions are made. Research the history of naming places after notable people and when it began. Have a class discussion about whether this is the best way to recognize notable people in your community, and whether they can suggest other ways.

# NOTABLE PEOPLE



## DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING

- **Have students write** a reflection piece on what makes a person notable. Have them address the following: What qualities does a notable person have? What is it exactly that makes a person notable? Can a person be notable in life and in death?
- **Have students create** a mock Wikipedia page or a class blog about a notable person.
- **Have the students step into the shoes** of a journalist and interview someone they think is worthy of notability. Have them prepare questions, an interview location, and a short article.
- **Notable people can have positive or negative impacts on the world.** Have the students consider this in a private journal entry.



## LEARNING TO ACTION

- **Discuss with your class** what they can do to raise the profile of notable local Indigenous people, such as speaking to town council to propose name changes for buildings or streets.
- **Encourage students to become “active in allyship”** (e.g., becoming involved in and supporting campaigns, learning more about issues, teaching others, letter-writing). Have them use what they’ve learned as inspiration (e.g., Cindy Blackstock and Jordan’s Principle, Shannen Koostachin and her efforts to improve education, artist Christi Belcourt’s work to honour missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls).