The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom. In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.

Core Skill Sets:
These icons identify the most relevant core skills students will develop using this resource. Learn more about the WE Learning Framework at www.WE.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS
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KEY TERMS
Indigenous Peoples—The first peoples to live in a region, before the arrival of European or other colonists. In Canada, this refers to the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples.
Bilingual—The ability to speak two languages.
Multilingual—The ability to speak three or more languages.
Mother tongue—A colloquial term for the very first language or languages a person learns as a child.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
• There are more than 60 distinct Indigenous languages in Canada. However, many of these are related in groups called language “families” or “trees.” For example, Cree and Ojibwe are different languages, but they are both part of the Algonquian language family. There are 12 Indigenous language trees in Canada. (Statistics Canada)
• British Columbia is the province where the largest number of Indigenous languages can be found. There are more than 30 different languages spoken in B.C., most by less than 1000 people. (Statistics Canada)
• Of the more than 213,000 people who speak an Indigenous language, 20.9 percent live in Quebec—the largest population of Indigenous language speakers in Canada. (Statistics Canada)
• The 2011 Census found that 83,475 people in Canada speak a Cree dialect today, making it the most common Indigenous tongue. The second most-spoken language, with 34,110 speakers, is Inuktitut—the language of the Inuit peoples of the central and eastern Arctic. (Statistics Canada)
• The most endangered language in Canada is Haida—also called Xaat Kil—the language of the Haida nation in British Columbia. (HaidaLanguage.org) As few as 75 people speak Haida. (Statistics Canada)
• Many Indigenous languages have various elements that do not appear in European languages like English and French. Algonquian languages, for example, have two different types of nouns to distinguish between living and non-living things. (Canadian Encyclopedia)
• Researchers have found a connection between First Nations languages spoken in Canada’s far north, and the languages spoken by Indigenous peoples in Russia’s Central Siberia region. (Daily Mail)
• The Official Languages Act passed by Parliament in 1969 names English and French as official languages of Canada. Under this law, the federal government must provide all its services in both languages. (Canadian Encyclopedia)
THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

- **Themes:** Activism, Indigenous Peoples of Canada, Human Rights, Local Issue
- **Course Connections:** Social Studies, History

MATERIALS

- Front board
- Paper and writing utensils
- Computer/tablet with Internet access and video capability
- Video recording device (optional)

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Describe how historical events have affected the development and identity of communities of Indigenous Peoples in Canada
- Develop a sense of connectedness to local and national communities
- Consider and respect the perspectives of others

DISCUSS

1. Why was Onowa McIvor angry with her grandparents?
2. Why is language such an important part of cultural identity?
3. If a language is lost, how would that affect the community?
4. What historical factors have contributed to the potential loss of these languages?

DIVE DEEPER

Before students arrive in class, use the Word Splash strategy and write or display the following words on the board in different directions and orientations:

- English
- Mohawk
- Inuktitut
- Gitksan
- Mi’kmaq
- Michif
- French
- Haida
- Slavey

As students enter the class, give them an entry ticket, or a piece of paper, and ask them to brainstorm and write down what they know about the words on the board. What do they mean? What do they have in common? What clues do they give you about the topic that we will be discussing?

Once students have had five minutes to brainstorm, ask them to share their ideas with the class. If students have not already identified the theme of the words, tell them that all of these words represent languages that are spoken across Canada. Some of them are from a list of over 60 different languages spoken by Indigenous Peoples of Canada.


Discuss:

- Why is an immersion program like this necessary in Canada?
- What is the issue facing Indigenous languages in Canada?

As a class, read the *Global Voices* article and discuss the questions from the **Discussion** section.

Show students some or all of the following videos to explore a range of languages spoken by Indigenous Peoples of Canada:

- “Learn Inuktitut part 2” [link](www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUSwXbz7CtE) (2:30)
- “Ojibway Numbers 1-10” [link](www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnW9tkkJFmL8) (1:04)
- “The Haida Language” [link](www.youtube.com/watch?v=kO3E9Y91dul) (0:52)

Tell students that in many countries and communities around the world, more than one language is spoken. In pairs, ask students to discuss how a community can make sure that the native languages of all people are represented.

As a class, choose an Indigenous language that is spoken within your province and design a project to raise awareness for that language within the school. Consider creating a display or bulletin board, providing translations of signs around the school or developing a video.

Educator’s Note: Some Indigenous languages are oral languages and do not have a written alphabet. Consider the characteristics of the language before choosing a project.

EXTENSION

To allow students to explore these languages in different contexts, invite elders or other Indigenous people from the community into the class to share books or stories in their native language. Consider adding bilingual books to your classroom library that are written in English or French and an Indigenous language.

RESOURCES


**WE** stand together campaign [link](www.WE.org/westandtogether)