

historian tries to create an account of a historical situation or event with just one source. The more independent sources you can look at, the closer you can get to what really happened” (Austin & Thompson, p. 117).

One student, for example, analyzed public opinion about John A. Macdonald at the time of the Pacific Scandal. Starting with a political cartoon vilifying Macdonald’s shady dealings with Hugh Allan, the student looked at actual election results in 1873 and 1876 (when Macdonald lost and then was re-elected) and found little difference in the number of elected seats from one election to the other. A quick look at many of the cartoons might have suggested a radical shift in public opinion against Macdonald, but what the student found was quite the opposite. She did this by using the following strategies: she checked for accuracy by considering reliable sources such as Elections Canada; she considered the purpose of the cartoon to make Macdonald look bad as being politically motivated and determined the cartoon to be biased; she looked carefully at the sources for relevant details such as the small shift in popular vote from one election to the other; and she checked if her sources corroborated each other to confirm her interpretation.

A similar process is possible in a primary classroom. Grade 1 students, for example, explored changes and continuities in their community by starting with the question, “What takes up space in our community?” and using Google Earth, current images and a community walk to determine how much space is used for different types of things (buildings, transportation, green spaces, etc.). The class then used historical maps and images of their community to determine which land uses have changed or stayed the same over time. The class used a variety of sources (maps, images, community walk), considered them for their accuracy and bias, and determined what changes took place by corroborating different sources. Although the students needed support from the teacher and from their older reading buddies for the content, they were able to follow and appreciate the strategies and explore their community using the concept of continuity and change.

Allowing students to begin with primary sources, and equipping them with the strategies and thinking concepts required to make informed conclusions about them can provide students with a rich and authentic learning experience that meets the expectations of the new Social Studies, History, and Geography curriculum. This better prepares them for the problems and puzzles they face today and those that await them in the future.

### Planning with Primary Sources

Once the learning goals and success criteria have been determined, consider appropriate primary sources for students to analyze. Some considerations for choosing primary sources include the following questions:

1. Are the primary sources appropriate to the unit? Will they get students engaged in the content and using the skills

that you plan to assess?

2. Are the sources authentic? Have you checked to see that they are accurate specimens of the time period or perspective that you are considering? Are they representative of the time?
3. Are the sources rich enough to sustain interest throughout the unit?
4. Will there be enough corroborating evidence available to support students’ interpretations of the sources?

Some ideas for using primary sources per grade include:

Grade 1	The Local Community	Local maps, images of local places, Google Earth
Grade 2	Changing Family and Community Traditions	Oral family stories, family heirlooms, migration maps
Grade 3	Communities in Canada	Pioneer village tours, images, journal images, pioneer tools
Grade 4	Political and Physical Regions of Canada	Electoral maps, images of regions of Canada, rocks from different regions, topographical maps
Grade 5	First Nations and Europeans	Elder visit or tour of local First Nations community, oral stories, artefacts, medicine garden
Grade 6	Interactions with the Global Community	Charts and graphs about imports and exports, news articles, Fair Trade products, testimonials
Grade 7	New France and British North America	Edicts and treaties, trial announcements, journal entries, treaties
Grade 8	Creating Canada	Political cartoons, news articles and ads, journal entries

### Primary Sources and the Teacher Librarian

Teacher-Librarians can play a key role in supporting teachers in the use of primary sources for inquiry. There are three main ways that teacher-librarians can provide support:

#### 1. Accessing primary sources for use in the classroom

Several archives and museums offer programs for loaning primary sources, as well as for arranging school visits to their collections. Here is a list of some of the more popular sites and exhibits: