

# HISTORICAL INQUIRY IN ACTION

You are asked to conduct a historical inquiry related to First Nations land claims. Let's look at how you might make your way through the inquiry process.

## FORMULATE QUESTIONS

In your initial research, you see the photo in **Figure I.8**. It shows a blockade in Caledonia, Ontario, by the Six Nations people of the Grand River. They are opposing a 40-hectare housing development because they believe that the land really belongs

to them. You formulate an inquiry question that is meaningful to you, open-ended, debatable, and can be answered by gathering evidence: *Why do the Six Nations believe they have a claim to the land in Caledonia?* You use the inquiry process and historical thinking concepts to help you answer this question.

**FIGURE I.8** This 2006 photo shows a blockade set up by members of the Six Nations of the Grand River. It blocks access to a construction site where houses are being built. **Analyze:** What inquiry questions can you develop, based on this photo?



## GATHER AND ORGANIZE

Next, you gather information from reliable sources. Keeping your inquiry question in mind, you make the following notes, citing your sources:

- The Six Nations of the Grand River include the Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Tuscarora nations.
- The Six Nations had fought as allies of the British during the American Revolution. Because of the war, the Six Nations lost their territories in the United States. To compensate them, the British gave them land in present-day southern Ontario.
- The Haldimand Tract was the 385 000 hectare piece of land granted by the British to the Six Nations of the Grand River in 1784.

You find a quote from the original Haldimand Proclamation (**Figure I.9**) and a map showing the original grant and the present-day land (**Figure I.10**).

“I ... authorize and permit the ... Six Nation Indians ... to take possession of and settle upon the banks of the ... Grand River ... which them and their posterity to enjoy for ever.”  
— Haldimand Proclamation

**FIGURE I.9** This excerpt is from the 1784 Haldimand Proclamation, which granted land to the Six Nations of Grand River. **Analyze:** What other perspectives might help you understand the situation?

## The Haldimand Tract, 1784–2001



## INTERPRET AND ANALYZE

You examine your evidence, including your notes, as well as primary and secondary sources you have gathered, such as the proclamation in **Figure I.9** and the map in **Figure I.10**. Look for ways that your information fits together, or doesn't. After looking at **Figure I.10**, you notice that the size of the Six Nations lands has shrunk over time. Now you have more questions. Did the Six Nations sell the land? Was it somehow taken from them? Who was involved in the events that led to this? Who were the decision makers? You decide that you need to gather more evidence.

## EVALUATE AND DRAW CONCLUSIONS

You evaluate your evidence and use your new understanding to settle on this conclusion to your inquiry question: *The Caledonia land was part of the 1784 land grant, which was promised to the Six Nations forever. They are trying to get back their land that seems to have been taken from them.* You may have also generated new questions that you could continue to investigate in a new inquiry process.

## COMMUNICATE

To communicate your conclusion, you consider a variety of options, from a digital presentation to writing a letter to the government calling for action. After thinking about what will interest your audience, you decide to create a podcast that you will play in class. As you write the script, you remember to state your inquiry question and conclusion clearly and to show how your evidence supports your conclusion.

**FIGURE I.10** This map shows the Haldimand Tract as it was in 1784 and as it is today. **Analyze:** What might have accounted for the change you see on the map?

## PRACTISING HISTORICAL THINKING

What additional questions do you have about the land claims of the Six Nations people of the Grand River? Write a new inquiry question, and research new sources to support your inquiry. Once you have examined your evidence and come to a conclusion, present your findings in a short opinion piece.

# HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

How do we decide what is important to learn when studying the past? As historians investigate the past, they make choices about what is significant enough to research. They try to choose events, people, issues, or developments that have had a major, long-lasting impact on many people. A war hero, for example, might fit those criteria. Historians also look for events, people, and developments that help us better understand an important issue. For example, knowing about the experiences of students in a one-room schoolhouse might help us understand how people learn.

When you think about the historical significance of various events, people, and developments, you can ask the following questions:

- **Did the event, person, or development create a long-lasting change?**
- **If so, how many people were affected, and were they affected profoundly or deeply?**
- **Was this the first time that an event such as this occurred or an idea such as this was introduced?**
- **Does this event, person, or development reveal something about the past that is different from the present?**
- **How did the significance of this event, person, or development vary for different people?**
- **Has the significance of this event, person, or development changed over time?**

## CASE STUDY: JOHN GRAVES SIMCOE

The first Monday of August each year is a holiday for many Canadians. This holiday is known by different names across the country. In Ontario, it is known as Colonel By Day in Ottawa, Joseph Brant Day in Burlington, and Simcoe Day in Toronto. These differences can help us see how historical significance can vary from group to group. All three individuals whose names were used had a big impact on the people of Ontario, but their biggest impact was in the communities where they lived.

For example, John Graves Simcoe was Upper Canada's first lieutenant-governor. When he arrived in British North America in 1792, Simcoe had big plans for what he called his "dream province." He gave out land grants to attract settlers. He set up a government and made laws where there had been none. He built roads through the forest. He also moved the capital of Upper Canada to York (present-day Toronto) and built Fort York. The settlement and city of Toronto grew around the fort. Today, Fort York is a National Historic Site and holds a special celebration for Simcoe Day every year, as shown in **Figure I.11**. Simcoe had a long-lasting impact on all Ontarians, but especially on the millions of people who live in or near Toronto today. Do you know of anyone who is historically significant to your community?



**FIGURE I.11** This photo shows Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario David Onley inspecting the guards at the annual Simcoe Day celebration at Fort York in 2013. **Analyze:** How does Simcoe meet the criteria for historical significance?

# CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

Why do events happen, and what are their impacts? All events have causes that make them happen and consequences that result. To better understand a significant historical event, historians try to discover all the causes of the event, especially the causes that had the most influence. Historians also try to discover all of the consequences, including positive and negative, short-term and long-term, and intended and unintended (planned and unplanned) consequences.

When you think about the causes and consequences of a historical event, you can ask the following questions:

- **What were the causes of the event?**
- **Who were the people who influenced the event?**
- **What were the social, political, or economic conditions that influenced the event?**
- **What were the ideas and beliefs that influenced the event?**
- **What were the consequences of the event?**
- **What were the intended and unintended consequences of the event?**

## CASE STUDY: GROSSE ÎLE

In 1832, officials in Lower Canada opened a quarantine facility (a building that isolates people who have been exposed to a contagious disease) where all immigrants to Lower Canada were screened for signs of illness. The facility was on Grosse Île, an island in the St. Lawrence River near Québec City, which was the main port of entry to Canada. Around 1830, about 30 000 immigrants arrived in Québec City every year.

Why was the quarantine facility opened? Cholera, a deadly disease, was sweeping through Canada. We now know that cholera is spread through contaminated water. At the time, however, no one knew what caused it or how to prevent it. Examine the flow chart in **Figure I.12**. Why do you think historians try to look at both the short- and long-term causes and consequences?

**Long-term causes:** Economic conditions in Scotland, Ireland, and England were poor in the early 1800s. Many people began immigrating to Canada. Most were Irish.

**Short-term causes:** A major cholera epidemic reached Britain in 1831. It killed tens of thousands of people. Many immigrants carried the disease to Canada.

**The Event:** In 1832, government officials opened a quarantine facility on Grosse Île to screen all immigrants.

**Short-term consequences:** All ships carrying immigrants began stopping at Grosse Île. Unhealthy immigrants were kept at Grosse Île for 3 to 15 days. Many did not survive.

**Long-term consequences:** Because screening methods were not effective, the facility did not slow the spread of the disease. By 1854, cholera had killed 20 000 people in Canada. Irish immigrants were blamed, and discrimination against them rose.

**FIGURE I.12** This flow chart shows two causes and two consequences of the opening of the Grosse Île quarantine station. **Analyze:** What were the intended and unintended consequences of the quarantine facility?

# CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

How can we make sense of the complex flows of history? To understand the past, historians look at how people's lives changed over time. They look at social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental changes. They look at the speed of these changes. Historians also identify the continuities: the things that stayed the same when everything else was changing.

When you think about continuity and change, you can ask the following questions:

- **What has changed?**
- **What has not changed?**
- **How quickly or slowly did the changes happen?**
- **Do the changes indicate progress for some groups or individuals and decline for others?**
- **What can we learn from comparing two different time periods?**

## CASE STUDY: THE LIVES OF CANADIAN CHILDREN

The painting in **Figure I.13** shows a scene in Canada, painted in 1848. What do you notice by comparing what you see in the painting with what you know about the lives of Canadian children today? You might notice the things that have stayed the same: children still do chores and they still live in heated homes. You might also note what has changed: most children do different chores today and do not live in log cabins. What other details in the painting show what has changed or stayed the same over time?

**FIGURE I.13** This 1848 painting, *Québec Settlers* by Cornelius Krieghoff, shows typical household activities on a winter's day in Canada. **Analyze:** How has the way we live changed since 1848? Why might it have changed?



# HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

How can we better understand the people who lived in the past? Historians look for evidence that helps them discover how these people thought, felt, and went about their daily lives. They research people's lives, examine the evidence, and consider the values and beliefs that were common at the time. Then they make inferences—they reach conclusions based on the evidence they have gathered. Historians are always careful to avoid judging the past using their own present-day values.

When you think about historical perspective, you can ask the following questions:

- **What were the beliefs, values, perspectives, and motivations of the people who lived in that time?**
- **How do those beliefs and values differ from today's beliefs and values?**
- **Did the people make understandable decisions, based on the information they had available to them?**
- **What beliefs, values, and ideas do I already have that affect how I think about this event, period, or person?**
- **What inferences can I make about the person's thoughts, feelings, and motivations from the evidence I have?**

## CASE STUDY: SLAVERY IN BRITISH NORTH AMERICA

If you were researching slavery in British North America in the 1700s, you would discover that the colonies enslaved fewer people than the United States. This fact might lead you to assume that British North Americans were more moral and ethical than people in the United States. You might assume that everyone in British North America had the same viewpoint we have today—that slavery is ethically wrong.

Read **Figure I.14**, an excerpt from a letter written by Élisabeth Bégon of New France. Bégon writes about Pierre and Jupitere, who are both enslaved in her household.

Then read **Figure I.15**, an excerpt from a dictation given by Hilaire, dit Lamour. Lamour had been granted his freedom after being enslaved for 25 years. His wife, Catharine, had not been granted her freedom at the same time. Use these sources to make inferences about how people felt about slavery in early Canada. Keep in mind that different people might have had different perspectives on the same issue. (Note: **Figure I.15** uses the term *Negro*, which was common at that time. Today, some people find it offensive so a preferred and more commonly used term is *Black person*.)

“Our poor Pierre is once again in the hospital ... he is little more than skin and bones. Jupitere is in similar shape and your horse is so-so. That is what I have to say, dear son, of the 3 useless pieces of furniture that you left us and that we love, having belonged to you.”  
— Élisabeth Bégon

**FIGURE I.14** This excerpt is from a letter that Bégon wrote to her son in 1748. **Analyze:** What particular phrase reveals her attitude toward the “gifts” that her son left behind?

“Be it known that I, Hilaire, dit Lamour, free Negro residing in the city of Montréal in the province of Québec, having ... purchased ... Catharine, my wife; and being desirous of proving the friendship and affection which I bear her, have granted unto her ... her freedom.”  
— Hilaire, dit Lamour

**FIGURE I.15** This excerpt was dictated by Lamour shortly after 1787. **Analyze:** What can you infer are Lamour's views on slavery?