

# FACTS & OPINIONS FIRST CONTACT

MIDDLE GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES



11255 Okanagan Centre Rd. W.  
Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7

## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

1. Students will exercise their inquiry and communication skills by documenting facts and their opinions while reading a narrative about early contact between the Syilx People and European settlers
2. A great activity to help prepare students for essay writing



**BIG IDEA:** Exploration, expansion, & colonization had varying consequences for different groups; Changing ideas about the world created tension between people wanting to adopt new ideas & those wanting to preserve established traditions.

## COMPETENCY:

Inquiry, communication,  
evidence, ethical judgement

## CONTENT:

Interactions & exchanges of resources, ideas, arts, & culture between/among different civilizations; exploration, expansion, & colonization; changes in population & living standards

## WHAT WILL WE KNOW:

- How to articulate opinions in response to learning facts
- Early contact between Syilx People and European settlers

## FURTHER INQUIRY:

*Field Trip Suggestions*

1. Sncewips Museum
2. Lake Country Museum and Archives



**We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which the Lake Country Museum is situated, where this lesson was developed, is on the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples.**

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**Lake Country Heritage and Cultural Society**

**11255 Okanagan Center Road West**

**Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7**

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# Facts & Opinions: First Contact

## DISCLAIMER

The narrative included in this activity uses the term “Indian”, which is no longer correct when referencing Indigenous nations, though it is still used in governmental policies, roles, and even identities of certain Indigenous groups. You may wish to include a brief discussion with your class about this term.

<b>Learning Objective(s)</b>	Through a narrative, students will learn about the history of early contact between the Syilx and European settlers by documenting facts and their opinions.
<b>Suggested Grades</b>	Middle Grades
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fact &amp; Opinion graphic organizer (provided)</li> <li>• Narrative, one per student/pair (provided)</li> </ul>
<b>Introduction</b>	The purpose of this lesson is to support students develop an ability to communicate their factual findings and their opinions about their findings. This can be used as an introductory activity when learning about early contact between the Syilx people and European settlers.
<b>Investigating the narrative</b>	<p>Decide whether students will work independently or in pairs (we don't recommend groups larger than 2), then hand out the narrative and the graphic organizer.</p> <p>Direct students to do an initial read through of the narrative, then going in to pick out the facts.</p> <p>Once all the facts are picked out, have the students discuss the facts (in their pairs, or with a shoulder partner if working independently) and their opinions, which they will then also document in their graphic organizer.</p>
<b>Debrief</b>	When the students have completed their graphic organizer, have some students share out any facts they feel are most significant, and/or share their opinions on the narrative.

	<p>This is a great activity to include as you begin teaching students about theses/arguments, essay writing etc... We suggest using this activity as scaffolding for a larger summative writing assignment.</p>
<p><b>Historical Context</b></p>	<p>Before any Europeans arrived in Canada, the area that we now know as Lake Country was home to the Syilx Okanagan Nation, which had occupied the Okanagan Valley as far back as 10,000 years ago. Their territory reached approximately 43,000 square miles and was bordered closely by other Syilx-speakers. Historians estimate a pre-contact population of 12,000.</p> <p>The Syilx name for Winfield is <i>K'lakokum</i>, meaning “small, enclosed land” or “the land between”. The Oyama isthmus was called <i>Axts-luchus</i>, meaning, roughly, a narrow crossing with thickly entwined willows. Arrowheads and spearheads of stone have been found on the shores of Carr’s Landing, offering evidence of Okanagan ties to the area.</p> <p>The Okanagan people had and still have a strong sense of family and community identity. They are a matrilineal people, keeping very close ties with their mothers’ and grandmothers’ lineages. The Okanagan Nation is well known for its precision tools and finely woven baskets made of birch bark or cedar roots.</p> <p>The Okanagan people were known as great hunters, gatherers, and fishermen. Lake Country’s bottom and riparian lands provided lush vegetation, grasslands, wild fruits, herbs and roots which in turn supported herds of deer and other game. The late Ned Louis, one of the Indian Band Chiefs in the 1970s, stated that “a long time ago the people went to Oyama in the fall to fish in Wood Lake.” Lake Country provided everything the Okanagan People needed during the warm months and they were able to gather, preserve, transport, and store food items for the winter months. As they were a semi-nomadic tribe, they did not make a permanent home in the Lake Country area, but moved freely throughout Okanagan territory.</p> <p>The Okanagan people were great storytellers, using oral techniques to teach children and adults about their land and traditions. This meant that the Okanagan people primarily spoke their stories out instead of printing them in a book. One of the central characters of their stories is Coyote, or Sen’klip, the trickster hero of the Syilx people. Sen’klip, through his adventurous mishaps, helped teach the people how to survive on this land. Thousands of years later, this knowledge is still embedded in the Nsyilxcen language.</p>

	<p>The Okanagan people were known for their generosity and kindness. They were not a war-like nation and treated the early traders and missionaries with consideration, protecting them and sharing their store of food when they were in need. Unfortunately, the reserve system was used as a form of social control that allowed missionaries and governments to force religious and social values on the Okanagan people. From this treatment the Okanagan people are recovering, and they still desire to live cooperatively and equitably with their neighbors.</p> <p>In 1877, The BC Commissioners passed a Decision to establish Commonage in the Lake Country area, among other reserves for the Indigenous people. The Commonage was reserved for winter grazing by the cattle of both the Syilx people and the European settlers. No system for policing the cattle grazing on the Commonage was established. The system worked well, but did not last too long.</p> <p>In 1889, a new agreement was reached within British Columbia’s Chief Commissioner of Land and Works and the Indian Reserve Commissioner. The new agreement stated that the BC government would take over the Commonage and in return it would establish an Indian Reserve on the west side of Okanagan Lake. This meant that the land was no longer available for the Syilx people to use. The problem was, in the conversations that made this decision, only the European Settlers were represented, not the Syilx people</p> <p>Just over a hundred years after the change, Okanagan Indian Band leader, Murray Alexis of the Syilx Nation, brought a land claim for the Commonage area forward to the BC government. The land claim for title to the Commonage has yet to be resolved.</p>
<p><b>Further Inquiry</b></p>	<p>For further exploration and education, we recommend that you contact the <a href="#">Okanagan Indian Band Education Services Department</a>.</p> <p><i>Field Trip Suggestions:</i></p> <p>Visit the <a href="#">Sncewips Heritage Museum</a> in Westbank to learn more about the living history and heritage of the Syilx Okanagan People. Set up a tour through the museum’s website.</p> <p><a href="#">The Lake Country Museum and Archives</a> has a wide range of exhibits and activities for your class to take advantage of. There is also a playground and field behind the building and the lake nearby that students can make use of for various activities.</p> <p>There may be the opportunity for a guest lecturer to visit your classroom or be present at the museum with the knowledge of more</p>

	local history stories. If interested, please contact the Museum ahead of time.
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# Fact & Opinion Graphic Organizer

<b><u>Fact</u></b> Questions to consider: What happened? When did it happen? What is important?	<b><u>Opinion</u></b> Questions to consider: What do you think about what happened? How do you feel about this history? What do you wonder about after reading this?

# The Original People of the Okanagan

Before the arrival of European settlers, Lake Country was home to the Syilx-speaking Okanagan Nation which had occupied the Okanagan Valley as early as 10,000 years ago. Their territory reached approximately 43,000 square miles and was bordered closely by other Syilx-speakers. Historians estimate a pre-contact population of 12,000.

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The Okanagan people were known as great hunters, gatherers, and fishermen. Lake Country's bottom and riparian lands provided lush vegetation, grasslands, wild fruits, herbs and roots which in turn supported herds of deer and other game. The late Ned Louis, one of the Indian Band Chiefs in the 1970s, stated that "a long time ago the people went to Oyama in the fall to fish in Wood Lake." Lake Country provided everything the Okanagan People needed during the warm months and they were able to gather, preserve, transport, and store food items for the winter months. They were a semi-nomadic tribe and did not make a permanent home in the Lake Country area, but moved freely throughout Okanagan territory.

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(Adapted from the writing of Nikki Marchand in "The Original People of the Okanagan" from *Spirit of Lake Country: Heritage and Culture*)