Telling the Story of Canada’s Railway

Lesson Overview
On November 7, 2010, Canadian Pacific (CP) and Parks Canada hosted a public celebration commemorating the 125th anniversary of the driving of the Last Spike and the completion of Canada’s first transcontinental railway. In this lesson, students will write the script for a CP video that has no narrative accompaniment.

Grade Level
Grade 11

Time Required
Two 60 minute classes

Curriculum Connection (Province/Territory and course)
Alberta – Social Studies

Additional Resources, Materials and Equipment Required
- Access to a whiteboard, blackboard or Smartboard
- Appendix A: Background Information (attached)
- Computers with access to the internet

Websites:
- Video: CP Rail Highlight pack Last Spike History
  http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/rail/videos/
- Alberta Online Encyclopedia – Historical Overview: Railways
  http://www.coalking.ca/industry/railways.html
- Canadian Pacific
  http://www8.cpr.ca/cms/English/General+Public/Heritage/default.htm
- Canadian Encyclopedia
  http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=a1ARTA001322
- Library and Archives Canada – History: Building the Canadian Pacific Railway
  http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/settlement/kids/021013-2031.3-e.html
- Vancouver Public Library – History of the CPR
  http://www.vpl.ca/cpr/history.html

Main Objective
Students will apply their knowledge regarding the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway to a video with audio.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the lesson students will be able to:
- identify the challenges faced when constructing the railway;
- distinguish between geographical/land-based challenges, human/labour challenges and technological challenges that occurred during the construction of the railway;
- recognize the connection between the building of the railway and its relationship to the physical building of Canada as a nation;
- recognize the connection between the building of the railway and its relationship to the building of Canadian nationalism and identity.
### Introduction
Ask students what they know about how the Canadian Pacific Railway was formed. Record this information on the white board.

Provide background information on how the railway system in Canada developed (see Appendix A).

Respond to questions as necessary.

**Student Activity**
- Brainstorm and provide answers to the question.
- Listen to the background information and ask questions as needed.

### Lesson Development
Advise students that they are going to write a script to accompany a short video that shows CP Railway clips, including the Last Spike.

Show students the video in its entirety. Encourage students to take notes. Replay and pause the video if necessary, based on students’ needs.

Pose these questions to the class after watching the video. Record answers on the whiteboard. Encourage students to take notes as well.

**Questions:**
- What challenges did the rail company face when constructing the railway? Let’s divide these challenges into categories as follows: geographical/land-based, human/labour, technological.
- How was the building of the railway connected to the building of Canada as a nation – physically and philosophically?
- What is the role of the railway in Canada today? In ways is it similar/different from the past? What do you see for its future?

**Student Activity**
- Watch the video. Ask questions when necessary.
- Participate in the discussion and take notes.
| Escort students to a computer lab with internet access. Ask students to research what occurred during the construction of the CP Railway so that they are better able to write their scripts. | Conduct research. |
| Instruct students to write their scripts based on their research and the images in the video. Distribute Appendix B: Script Writing Rubric at this time so that students can see how their scripts will be assessed. | Produce a script. |

**Conclusion**

| Ask students to share their audio scripts with a peer. Once they have shared their scripts, choose a few to share with the entire class. | Share the script with a peer. Participate in the class sharing session and discuss the scripts. |

**Lesson Extension**

- Visit the Alberta Railway Museum, 24215 - 34 St. Edmonton, AB, Box 70014 LRPO, T5C 3R6; (780) 472–6229, [http://www.albertarailwaymuseum.com/index.htm](http://www.albertarailwaymuseum.com/index.htm)

**Assessment of Student Learning**

Use a script writing rubric to assess the students’ work. A example of this type of rubric can be found at [http://www.mrbrooks.ca/rubrics/rubric_script.htm](http://www.mrbrooks.ca/rubrics/rubric_script.htm).

**Further Reading**

- CANADA'S STEEL ROADS poster-map
- Canadian Atlas Online Tracking rail theme [www.canadiangeographic.ca/atlas](http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/atlas)
- Rail Association of Canada website [http://www.railcan.ca](http://www.railcan.ca)
- The Last Spike (novel) – by Pierre Berton
- Chinese-Canadian Genealogy Site [http://www.vpl.ca/ccg/Basics.html](http://www.vpl.ca/ccg/Basics.html)

**Link to Canadian National Standards for Geography**

Essential Element #2: Places and Regions

- The importance of places and regions to individual and social identity
- Changes in places and regions over time

Essential Element #3: Human Systems

- Impact of Human Migration

Geographic Skill #2: Acquiring geographic information

- Systematically locate and gather geographic information from a variety of primary and secondary sources.
Appendix A: Background Information

Canada was in desperate need of a way to link the east of the country with the west, in order to strengthen trade and settlement. When Sir John A. MacDonald came back into power as Prime Minister in 1878, the construction of the railroad was way behind schedule. As a lure to get British Columbia into the Confederation, MacDonald’s government promised BC that the transcontinental railway would be completed in 10 years. It was apparent that this might not occur due to significant delays and so, William Cornelius Van Horne, future general manager of the Canadian Pacific Railway was hired to complete the prairie section of the railroad. He intended to have the railway completed by May 1891. He hired many more workers to get the job done. Among those, as was common with the rail projects around the world at the time, were Chinese workers, who received only $1.00 a day for their contributions compared with “White” workers who received between $1.50 and $2.50 per hour. The Chinese workers were also given the worst and most dangerous jobs to do and as a result, many were killed. Their hard work resulted in the transcontinental being completed 5 years ahead of schedule and in May of 1887, the first passenger train pulled into Vancouver.

Sources:
Alberta Online Encyclopedia – Historical Overview: Railways
http://www.coalking.ca/industry/railways.html
Canadian Pacific
http://www8.cpr.ca/cms/English/General+Public/Heritage/default.htm
Canadian Encyclopedia
http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=a1ARTA0001322
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