

SERVICE AND SACRIFICE HONOURING FALLEN RCMP MEMBERS

By Bonnie Kiliwnik

EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore the history of the RCMP and its importance to Canadian society, both past and present;
- Learn about the contributions of women in the RCMP;
- Expand their understanding of Indigenous representation in the RCMP and the impact of Indigenous RCMP members on the organization and Canada as a whole;
- Recognize the sacrifices made by RCMP members and pay tribute to those who have given their lives in the line of duty;
- Develop a greater understanding of the values of service, courage, and integrity that the RCMP upholds in Canadian society.

KEY CONCEPTS AND THEMES

History of the RCMP, Honouring Fallen RCMP Members

KEY VOCABULARY

Commemorate, Courage, Duty, Fallen, Heroism, Honour, Legacy, Memorial, Mourning, Service, Remembrance, Respect, Sacrifice, Tribute, Valour

GRADES

6-8

DURATION

4-5 classes

SUBJECTS

History

English

Social Studies

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- [Riding Through History website](#)
- Prepared **Worksheets #1-5**
- Computers or devices with Internet access
- Paper, pencils, markers, and other art supplies

BACKGROUND

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), also known as the Mounties or Gendarmerie royale du Canada (GRC), is Canada's federal law enforcement agency. Originating in 1873 as the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP), it was established by Sir John A. Macdonald to uphold law and order in Canada's western frontier.

The force has a rich history linked with Canada's development and played a key role in asserting Canadian sovereignty in the West, establishing relationships with Indigenous peoples, and maintaining order during times of social and political upheaval—such as the [Klondike Gold Rush](#) and the North-West Resistance.

The NWMP transitioned into the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1920. Initially focused on frontier policing, the RCMP has since expanded its role to become the national police force of Canada, entrusted with enforcing federal laws, maintaining community safety, and delivering policing services nationwide. Recognized by their iconic Red Serge uniforms, for many the RCMP symbolizes Canadian values such as integrity, professionalism, and dedication to serving the country.

Scan the QR code to access all the links in this lesson plan



STEP ONE

A BRIEF HISTORY

Begin by brainstorming with students what they know about the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP). Record their responses on the board.

Next, provide students with a brief overview of the NWMP's history, including its establishment in 1873 and its role in maintaining law and order. Introduce several of the key events on the [RCMP timeline](#). (Students will have the opportunity to continue exploring the timeline on their own when completing **Worksheet #1**.)

Distribute the worksheet and have students conduct additional research on the early history and roles of the NWMP in order to answer questions 1-4.

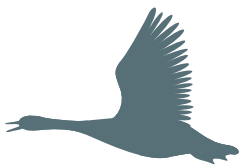
Resource links:

- www.rcmp1873.ca/timeline

RCMP CORE VALUES:

Act with Integrity, Show Respect, Take Responsibility, Demonstrate Compassion, and Serve with Excellence.

The RCMP's motto is "Maintiens le Droit," which is French for "Maintain the Right" or "Uphold the Law."



STEP TWO

MEMORIAL AND RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

Ask students what “sacrifice” means to them. Record their responses on the board.

Explain that a fundamental aspect of being a member of the RCMP involves sacrifice, as officers commit themselves to upholding public safety and the rule of law, often placing themselves at risk of injury or even death in the line of duty to protect their communities.

Introduce students to [Sub-Constable John Nash](#), the first fallen member of the RCMP. He was one of the original NWMP members of the March West in 1874 and was accidentally killed while on duty near Fort MacLeod, Alberta. He is buried in Union Cemetery at Fort Macleod and his name is commemorated on the [first page](#) of the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Honour Roll Book*. Explain to students that the book is a way to honour RCMP members who lost their lives in the line of duty.

There are many other honours and recognition programs for fallen RCMP members. As a brief introduction, show the class [this video](#) depicting the RCMP National Cemetery Main Monument, and/or part of [this video](#) from the 2023 RCMP National Memorial Service.

Then, divide students into nine groups and assign each group one of the following memorial programs to research:

- Canadian Virtual War Memorial
- RCMP Cenotaph
- RCMP Commemorative Pathway Plaque Program
- RCMP Honour Roll
- RCMP Memorial Mementos
- RCMP Memorial Wall Plaques
- RCMP National Memorial Cemetery
- RCMP National Memorial Service
- The Silent Partner Program

Using **Worksheet #2** the groups will conduct research about their assigned program. They will then present their findings to the class.



NWMP officer with a horse.

Source: Cantwell, George C. Circa 1901. NWMP Officer with a Horse. Adam & Larkin Fonds. Yukon Archives.



The RCMP training academy in Regina, SK.

Credit: Lund, Chris. 1957. Library and Archives Canada.

Resource links:

- www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/80004157
- www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/books/page?page=1&book=8&sort=pageAsc
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJMG-68IsWY&t=2s
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oGCvj_D8Ec

STEP THREE

THE LEGACY OF WOMEN IN THE RCMP

Begin by discussing with students the role of the RCMP in our society and the importance of diversity within police forces. Ask students how many female members they think serve in the RCMP, then distribute **Worksheet #3** and look at the table in **Part A** that depicts the breakdown of diversity groups within the force.

Ask students to consider some of the challenges that female officers may face. After they have recorded their answers on the worksheet, encourage them to share their responses with the class.

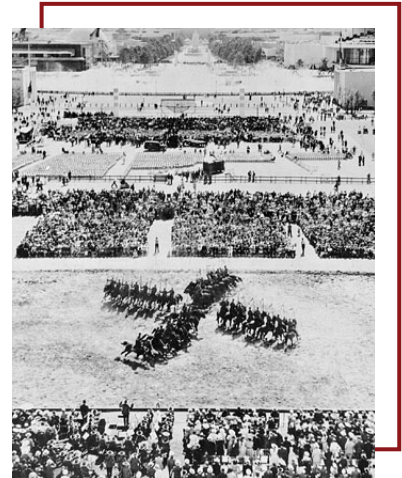
Afterwards, have students read **Part B** of the worksheet, where they'll learn more about the history of women in the RCMP and be introduced to several notable female officers.

You may also wish to show the class some or all of [this video](#) celebrating the history of women in the RCMP.

On their own, students will explore the "[Women in the RCMP: Features](#)" page on the RCMP's website. Then, to complete **Part C** of their worksheets, they will write a letter, poem, or short story to commemorate a female officer. Through their writing, students should express their gratitude and appreciation for the officer's service, sacrifice, and contributions to the community.

Resource links:

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cq6R6koJwIw
- www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/features



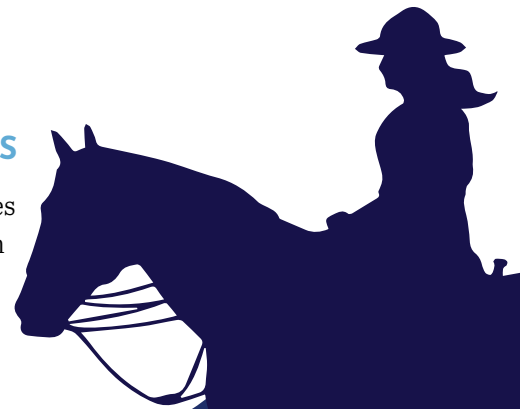
The RCMP Musical Ride unit performing at the New York World's Fair, 1939.

Credit: PA-202186. 1939. Library and Archives Canada.

STEP FOUR

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF INDIGENOUS OFFICERS

Explain to students that both the RCMP and Indigenous communities have had important impacts on Canadian history. The connection between the RCMP and Indigenous peoples has faced many challenges and difficulties, but despite this, Indigenous individuals



have also served within the RCMP, contributing to law enforcement and community policing.

Hand out **Worksheet #4** and have students read **Part A**, where they will learn more about the early history between Indigenous peoples and the RCMP. They will then explore the online exhibit “[We took care of Them](#)” from the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, in order to answer questions 1-4 on the worksheet.

Introduce students to [Edward “Hawk” Kelly](#) from the Ch’iyáqtel (Tzeachten) Nation near Chilliwack, BC. He became the first Indigenous RCMP officer in 1959.

Share the tragic story of [Constable Dennis Strongquill](#), who was shot and killed during a routine traffic stop in Manitoba in 2001. In 2016, a lake was named after him to recognize his hard work and sacrifice.

Tell students that in recent years, efforts have been made to reconcile and address historical grievances between Indigenous peoples and the RCMP, with initiatives focused on building trust and improving relationships. You may wish to showcase several of these initiatives, such as:

- [The RCMP National Eagle Staff](#)
- [The eagle feather initiative](#)
- [The RCMP Ribbon Skirt](#)

For **Part B** of their worksheets, students will come up with a thoughtful, culturally-appropriate design for a postage stamp, in order to recognize and commemorate the contributions of Indigenous peoples to the RCMP.

Resource links:

- www.nwtexhibits.ca/navigator/RCMP/en/chapter-1.html
- www.theprogress.com/news/first-ever-indigenous-person-to-join-the-rcmp-to-be-honoured-in-b-c-1894125
- www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/strongquill-lake-manitoba-mountie-1.3408482
- www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/eagle-staff
- www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2019/manitoba-rcmp-announces-eagle-feather-option-swear-legal-oaths
- www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2024/further-information-the-rcmps-inclusion-the-ribbon-skirt-the-approved-ceremonial-dress?fe



RCMP Special Constables in Ellesmere Island posing with their children.

Credit: McKeand, David L. A102190. 1936. Library and Archives Canada.

STEP FIVE

HONOURING FALLEN SERVICE MEMBERS

Now that students have learned about different ways to commemorate RCMP members, they will be honouring a fallen member of the NWMP or RCMP themselves for this lesson's culminating activity. Distribute **Worksheet #5** and explain to students that sharing details about RCMP officers who have fallen in the line of duty is a way to pay tribute to their service and ensure that their contributions are remembered.

Students may select an officer from the [RCMP Honour Roll](#), or another member of the force based on personal connection or interest. They will conduct research about the officer's life and career through a variety of sources, including news articles, obituaries, biographies, and official reports. Students will then use those details to create their posters. (Note that they may choose to make either a physical or digital poster.)



An RCMP officer on horseback.

Credit: Rowed, Harry. 1944. National Film Board / Library and Archives Canada.

Create a class Honour Wall with the finished posters, or combine the digital posters into a PowerPoint as a virtual memorial.

Resource links:

- www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/hon/honour-honneur-roll-tableau-eng.htm

Optional Extensions to this Lesson

- Arrange for local RCMP members to address the class.
- Organize a class memorial service.
- Present the class Honour Wall and/or share the class PowerPoint with the greater school community.



Bonnie Kiliwnik is the Director of Student Services for Park West School Division in Manitoba. With 30 years of educational experience she is a passionate advocate for inclusion, championing innovative and supportive practises to ensure the success of all students.



RUBRIC

Assessment	Level 1 (50-59%)	Level 2 (60-69%)	Level 3 (70-79%)	Level 4 (80-89%)	Level 4+ (90-100%)
Knowledge and Understanding	Student demonstrated a limited knowledge and comprehension of the key concepts, issues, and themes.	Student demonstrated some knowledge and comprehension of the key concepts, issues, and themes.	Student demonstrated a good knowledge and comprehension of the key concepts, issues, and themes.	Student demonstrated a great knowledge and comprehension of the key concepts, issues, and themes.	Student demonstrated an outstanding knowledge and comprehension of the key concepts, issues, and themes.
Thinking and Inquiry	Student's planning and processing skills were not evident; student demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes with limited proficiency.	Student's planning and processing skills were somewhat evident; student demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes with some proficiency.	Student's planning and processing skills were evident; student demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes with good proficiency.	Student's planning and processing skills were very evident; student demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes with great proficiency.	Student's planning and processing skills were extremely evident; student demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes with outstanding proficiency.
Communication	Student communicated their understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes with limited proficiency.	Student communicated their understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes with some proficiency.	Student communicated their understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes with good proficiency.	Student communicated their understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes with great proficiency.	Student communicated their understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes with outstanding proficiency.
Application	Student used knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes to complete their assignments with limited proficiency.	Student used knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes to complete their assignments with some proficiency.	Student used knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes to complete their assignments with good proficiency.	Student used knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes to complete their assignments with great proficiency.	Student used knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, issues, and themes to complete their assignments with outstanding proficiency.