

## *Becoming a Western Legend*

### **Using Role Play to Understand the Maverick's Character and Perspective in Alberta History**

#### **Introduction**

Students need to understand how the stories of the early mounted police have contributed to the development and culture of Alberta. What was day-to-day life like for the early Mounties? How did they meet their basic needs? How did these Mavericks change the way people lived in Alberta? Why are they considered legendary? What do their stories tell us about Alberta and its development?

#### **Project Explanation**

In this project, students will develop an appreciation of the life and history of an Alberta Maverick by taking on their character and personality. Using one or more styles of presentation as individuals or in groups, they will thoroughly "tell" the story of a Maverick in a "First Person" format by acting as the Maverick themselves. They will research any information that they deem significant for others to feel that they truly "know" that character. The students will then assemble it into a finished presentation by gathering props, finding costumes, using accents and speech mannerisms, and deciding upon the background setting. The presentations can then be shared with the entire class.

#### **Alberta Social Studies Curriculum Unit Connections**

##### **Grade Four - Alberta: The Land, Histories and Stories**

4.2 The Stories, Histories and People of Alberta

##### **Grade Five - Canada: The Land, Histories and Stories**

5.2 Histories and Stories of Ways of Life in Canada

##### **Grade Seven - Canada: Origins, Histories and Movement of People**

7.2 Following Confederation: Canadian Expansions

#### **Materials and Resources Needed**

- *Mavericks: An Incorrigible History of Alberta* - Character Biographies and Online Artifacts  
<http://www.glenbow.org/mavericks>
- RCMP March West History Site (go to site map)  
<http://www.rcmpmarchwest.com/>

- Belongings of a Mountie in 1873  
<http://www.rcmpmarchwest.com/eng/history/general/kit.html>
- RCMP History  
<http://www.rcmp-learning.org/history/history.htm>
- RCMP Home Page  
<http://www.rcmp.ca/>
- Images Canada – Search historical and archived photographs  
<http://www.imagescanada.ca/>
- Picture books written in the first person (See list below for examples)
- Computers, iMovie, PowerPoint, video cameras (if applicable)

## Procedures

Students will create a “First-Person” role-playing presentation about a historical Maverick. Telling the story as that character (First-Person Narrative) may be introduced using picture books such as:

- *Encounter* by Jane Yolen (excellent historical First-Person story)
- *Rosie and Michael* by Judith Viorst
- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst
- *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg
- *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by John Scieszka
- *Grandfather’s Christmas Tree* by Keith Strand

Students may tell the story as the Maverick themselves, or they could tell it from the perspective of their wife, husband, child, friend, enemy, competitor or ancestor. Possible presentation formats could include:

- a live presentation
- a digital video production
- a PowerPoint presentation
- a puppet show
- a play
- poetry
- an old Mountie song

Students then brainstorm the questions they would need to find out about their Maverick. They might include:

- What was their day-to-day life like?
- What were their contributions to their field or to the province of Alberta?
- What were the challenges/hazards/obstacles they faced?
- Were they successful?
- Why were they successful? Why? (Was it their traits, skills, attitudes, special knowledge, specific event from their past, luck?)
- What do you think helped to drive them?
- What held them back?
- What did others think of them?
- Did everyone like/dislike them? Why did certain people like/dislike them?

- What was Alberta like in their time? What was their historical context?
- What was the one most important event in their life? What day will they never forget?

Research and information may be found using the *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* site, other web resources, the Glenbow Museum, primary artifacts, historical documents and photographs, and local history books.

They would then take the information they have researched and synthesize it into a presentable story with a clear beginning, middle, and end, making sure it will be interesting for their audience. Students will gather or create props, artifacts, or clothing articles that may use to add to their presentation for their classmates.

## Assessment and Evaluation

- Students and their teacher should develop their own rubric by identifying evaluation criteria for the project that will match their own learner outcomes. This allows students to understand the expectations for their work and to have input into the ongoing evaluation process.
- In groups or as a class, students may conference and debrief each other after they have presented their projects. Students should be encouraged to share their personal reflections about how it felt to speak in front of their audience.
- Students may evaluate themselves and their peers using their project rubric, examining each other's project for historical accuracy, detail, and creativity.
- Students should use their journal to reflect upon their group dynamics, how the problem solving process worked, their solutions to the problem, what could have been done differently or better, and any successes or frustrations they felt when working with their group.
- The final student presentations may be videotaped in order to be shared, re-examined, and evaluated. These may also be shared or evaluated along with their parents or be presented at student-led conferences.

## Ideas to Enrich this Project

- Two (or more) students could work together to tell the main character's story from the perspective of the whole family.
- Students could take on the roles of opposing groups and compare the different perspectives of historical characters and attempt to persuade their peers that their viewpoint was correct.