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21st Century Learning – Links to Our Collection.
This online module and supplemental education guide was developed to allow access to hundreds of digitized images and lesson plans from Glenbow Museum’s collections. Our hope is to extend our vision of ‘More people, interacting with art, culture and ideas more often.’

Please visit and enjoy 21st Century Learning – The North-West Mounted Police: Policing the West.
Henri Julien  
Canadian (1852-1908)  
**A North-West Mounted Police Lancer, 1874**  
engraving published on February 18, 1875 in *L’Opinion Publique*  
Collection of Glenbow Archives  
NA-47-13

This Mounted Policeman carries a long lance or spear that has a pennon attached below the metal tip. On their first trek from Manitoba to Alberta in 1874, 22 men were assigned to carry a lance with the red and white triangular pennon. They worked as scouts, but they were also an imposing military group that impressed the First Nations, Métis and others who lived in the West.
Henri Julien
Canadian (1852-1908)

**Sitting Bull on Dominion Territory, 1877**

engraving published on September 22, 1877 in *Canadian Illustrated News*
Collection of Glenbow Archives
NA-4809-2

This political cartoon was published in a Canadian newspaper soon after Sitting Bull and his Lakota and Cheyenne warriors defeated American Lieutenant-Colonel Custer at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Sitting Bull escaped into the Canadian territories. The cartoon shows the red-coated NWMP, easily distinguished from the blue-coated American soldier, and the caption suggests that these Natives were safe while in Canada.
This unnamed NWMP Constable wears his winter sealskin hat trimmed with a yellow fabric bag worn on the right side. He holds his carbine and wears his holstered side-arm. Notice how the string lanyard is looped around his upper body and fastened to his revolver. The tight fit of the uniform was standard for the times.
North-West Mounted Police Constable William Hill Metzler, ca. 1881
photograph
Collection of Glenbow Archives
NA-2252-1

This young constable is wearing the full dress uniform now in Glenbow Museum’s collection. Look for the photograph of the tunic (C-54489 A). Constable Metzler’s helmet and gauntlets look ready for review – the brass link covered chin strap is draped across the helmet, and the gauntlets are whitened for parade. The NWMP wore full dress uniforms for special occasions such as honour guards for a visiting dignitary.
North-West Mounted Police Inspector William Denny Antrobus in Full Dress Uniform, 1879
photograph
Collection of Glenbow Archives
NA-1704-1

This photograph shows Inspector Antrobus wearing the full dress uniform and accoutrements that are now in Glenbow’s collection. Antrobus, whose Quebec family were connected to both the military and the government, joined the Mounted Police in 1873 as a Constable. He was commissioned as a Sub-Inspector in 1876 and as Inspector in 1879. A Superintendent by 1886, he commanded divisions at Maple Creek, Calgary and Battleford.
Can you ‘read’ the rank of this Mounted Policeman? What type of uniform is he wearing? He is posed for a formal photograph: his tunic has a simple Austrian knot on each sleeve; he wears the strap of the white haversack across his chest; he wears leather dress gloves and carries a crop or swagger stick and he wears the pillbox shaped forage cap at a jaunty angle. Did you guess correctly? North-West Mounted Policeman Campbell is wearing the full dress uniform of a Constable.
What rank is this Mounted Policeman? Look closely at his uniform, and especially the sleeves. He has two chevrons or v-shaped badges on his right sleeve, but there are no fancy Austrian knots on either sleeve. The two chevrons indicate that he is a corporal, one rank higher than a constable. The lack of extra trim on his sleeves and collar indicate that he is wearing his working uniform called his undress (rather than dress) uniform. We don’t know his name, but a professional itinerant photographer took this photograph about 1890.
Fred Bagley began his Mounted Police career as a bugler, and was the youngest of the ‘originals’ to sign up in 1873. In this photo, Bagley is 26 years old and has recently received a promotion. He wears his badge of rank on his right sleeve – how many chevrons do you see? The three chevrons, surmounted by a crown, indicate that Bagley was now a Sergeant in the North-West Mounted Police. He wears a full-dress uniform, complete with his sergeant’s sword.
These Policemen are wearing the blue undress tunic approved for senior non-commissioned officers about 1880. Look at the rank badges on their sleeves – the two men on the right have four chevrons, points down, and a crown, while the man on the right has four chevrons, points up but no crown. The four chevrons no and crown indicate that two of the men are divisional Sergeant Majors. The other policeman – John Genereux - is a Staff Sergeant. All three worked in the West between 1885 and 1900.
Can you ‘read’ the rank of this Mounted Policeman? His uniform shows the changes that were introduced for officers about 1880. Patterned after the British Army lancer pattern, this uniform is dark blue with black trim. Rank badges are worn on the collar – this policeman has one star on each side of front opening of the collar. That badge identifies his as an Inspector. John Moodie joined the NWMP in 1885 and was commissioned as an Inspector. He served at many posts in Alberta and Saskatchewan as well as in the Yukon before he retired as a Superintendent in 1917.
Steele and Company
Winnipeg, Manitoba
**Sam Steele, North-West Mounted Police, 1890**
photograph
Collection of Glenbow Archives
NA-2883-10

Sam Steele, probably the best known Mounted Policeman, entered the force as a Sergeant Major in 1873. He worked well in difficult situations and was promoted several times by the time this photo was taken. Notice the badges of rank on his collar — two stars indicate that Steele was a Superintendent at the time the photograph was taken. He wears his undress uniform for his work as commander in the Fort Macleod region of southern Alberta.
This officer wears two badges of rank: one is the star, the other the crown. These collar badges identify Lawrence Herchmer as the highest ranking NWMP: the Commissioner. Herchmer was appointed Commissioner in 1886 by Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, and served until 1900. He introduced regular patrols that took the Mounted Police to the ranches and farms in the West. He is also introduced the musical ride and formally adopted the cowboy or Stetson style hat.
The scarlet tunic, blue trousers and white helmet of the North-West Mounted Police were impressive and distinctive, but they were also not practical for work at isolated Police posts on the prairies. The Mounted Police soon adopted the durable clothes generally worn in the West: the sturdy buckskin jacket, a light-weight felt slouch hat that provided shade, and a bandana that protected the neck. Compare this photograph of Constable Metzler with photo NA-2252-1, the Constable in uniform.
Richard Barrington Nevitt
Canadian (1850-1928)

**North-West Mounted Police Horses sketched by Dr. R. B. Nevitt**, ca. 1876
engraving on paper
Collection of Glenbow Archives
NA-1434-10

NWMP Dr. Richard Nevitt sketched two horses saddled with the stock saddle (left) and the original British Cavalry Universal Pattern saddle (right). The stock saddle has a high horn to which the rider has fastened the reins. The artist did not show that the cantle (back of the seat) was about the same height as the horn, but he did show the wide leather skirts and large wooden stirrups. In the cold weather, those wooden stirrups did not get as cold as the metal stirrups of the cavalry saddle.
The North-West Mounted Policemen in this group are wearing three different types of hat. The men in the wagon wear a small cap, with a brim front and back, that was often worn used for stable duty and rough work. It is similar to the hat popular with British sportsmen and was called a deerstalker or a ‘fore and aft’ (referring to the two brims). Some of the men wear the regulation pillbox cap, but which hat is the most popular?
As the railway was built across Canada, temporary towns sprang up at the end of track where the workers were housed and fed. Hundreds of stores and businesses moved in to sell all sorts of things to the labourers. Liquor, a problem when it caused men to miss work, was outlawed, but the NWMP were kept busy stopping people from selling it. In April 1885, Beaver (sometimes known as Beaver Creek) was the end of track and it was a rough and rowdy place.
An artist sketched this scene of an armed North-West Mounted Police Constable guarding a prisoner as he did chores at the Police headquarters in Fort Macleod. The artist’s depiction of the Natives is fanciful, but some NWMP prisoners did wear a ball and chain to prevent them from escaping.
The North-West Mounted Police pursued and caught many lawbreakers. In this photograph, the Police are escorting their handcuffed prisoner John Cashel. He was captured after smuggling two revolvers to his brother Ernest Cashel who was in jail for murder. Ernest escaped, and the NWMP hunted him for several months before he was recaptured.
In 1885, some of the Métis in the North West Territories and their leader Louis Riel rebelled against the Federal Government’s inaction on longstanding land claims. White settlers feared that the Natives would side with the Métis and demanded that the NWMP protect them. This photo shows Superintendent McIlree (4th from the left) and eight other NWMP members in prairie order (clothing) scanning the region during the tense months of the Métis rebellion.
Sam Steele led a special scouting group as part of General Strange’s Alberta Field Force. Their orders were to find the Nehiwy (Cree) band that had killed people at Frog Lake and taken others as prisoners. Mounted Police volunteers joined selected civilians to help Steele in the search. Many of Steele’s men, including Sergeants William Fury, transferred from Beaver Creek to join him on the Campaign on the prairies. Can you find Sgt. Fury by ‘reading’ the rank on his uniform?
Oliver B. Buell
American (1844-1910)

*Louis Riel Addressing the Court during his Trial, 1885*
photograph
Collection of Glenbow Archives
NA-1081-3

Louis Riel led his fellow Métis in their disputes about land claims with the Canadian government. In 1870, Riel negotiated the Manitoba Act which attempted to protect Métis land rights. In 1885, Riel returned to the Canadian West and led the Métis’ armed campaign for their rights. His followers were defeated; Riel surrendered and was tried for treason. This photo was taken during the trial as Riel spoke to the members of the jury. Louis Riel was found guilty and executed for treason on November 16, 1885.
Cattle rustling and horse thefts were crimes that demanded the attention of the North-West Mounted Police. It was important for the Police to become familiar with the ranches and the brands in his area. The Constable also watched for diseased animals and could help settle disputes about unbranded livestock. Can you find the NWMP Constable in this photo?
Gold was discovered in the Yukon in the early 1890s, and gold seekers flooded into the area. They came from Canada and many other countries. NWMP Superintendent Charles Constantine was given the job of keeping the peace. Constantine (4th from left) and his Police staff built a log fort for themselves and got to work maintaining order. This photo shows them in non-regulation fur parkas, gauntlets and hats – to keep warm in the far north, they used locally made clothing.
Thousands of people rushed to the Klondike hoping to make a fortune. Most were poorly provisioned and couldn’t take care of themselves. Superintendent Sam Steele was in charge in 1898 and insisted that all newcomers bring enough provisions for a year. The Police in this photo are surrounded by stacks of supplies that were carried up the incredibly steep Chilkoot Pass between Alaska and the Yukon. They made sure each person had enough supplies and they collected customs duties on the goods brought into Canada.
The location of the border between Alaska and the Yukon was still undecided when the gold rush started in 1898. Sam Steele and the NWMP marked a borderline with the Union Jack (the official Canadian flag in 1898), and the Americans hoisted their Stars and Stripes near it on the Alaska side. The strong presence of the NWMP at the borders and in the towns helped keep the rush to the Yukon gold fields under control.
Thousands of people landed in the Yukon in 1898 and 1899. Many looked for gold and many made their fortune by supplying services to the miners. Restaurants, dry goods, groceries, laundry services, saloons and countless other businesses provided things the miners wanted. The North-West Mounted Police worked long hours to keep the peace in the booming mining towns.
Steele and Company
Winnipeg, Manitoba
**Officers of Strathcona Horse Corps, Ottawa, 1900**
photograph
Collection of Glenbow Archives
NA-3755-1

NWMP Superintendent Sam Steele recruited westerners for the corps he commanded – Strathcona’s Horse. NWMP officers and constables trusted Steele’s leadership, and were amongst the first to sign up for duty. This photo shows Steele (front row centre) with his officers in Ottawa before they left for South Africa. The men at the back are holding the Red Ensign and the four pennants of the Corps.
Thousands of men from western Canada volunteered for service in the South African war. Many had family roots in Britain, some were looking for adventure and others wanted to serve Canada and the British Empire. This photo shows several dozen new recruits, including NWMP, for the Canadian Mounted Rifles. How many North-West Mounted Police do you see?
The British government called for more troops near the end of the South African war. Retired NWMP Sergeant Major Fred Bagley was one of the late volunteers. Bagley was appointed to command C Squadron of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles that was made up of NWMP and other westerners. They arrived in South Africa in 1902, too late for the war.
In 1914, Canada was at war in Europe. Retired NWMP Superintendent Sam Steele had guided the training of the militia since becoming Commander of Military District 13 (Alberta and part of the North West Territories) in 1907. Steele’s leadership and legendary reputation drew thousands of westerns, including many former NWMP, to enlist for duty in the First World War.
Many of the NWMP enjoyed hunting and fishing in their new western surroundings. Bison (known locally as buffalo) were still plentiful when the Police first crossed the prairies. The hunt was considered a test of the horse and the rider, and great skill was needed to stop the big, fast bison. When the hunter was successful, he and the other Police would feast on fresh bison meat.
Inspector Steele (seated in centre) was known for his fearless handling of tough situations. The railway workers in Beaver had not been paid for many weeks, and threatened to stop work. Steele sent his men to calm the workers and get them back to work, but they ganged up on the Police and threatened to riot. Sam Steele charged out to meet the angry crowd and threatened to shoot anyone who disobeyed. The mob knew this imposing Mounted Policeman meant business, and they obeyed.
Lieutenant-Colonel Steele and the Strathcona Horse gained a reputation as tenacious, rough-riding westerners. As a mounted infantry regiment, they were ordered to do many different things. At times they rode ahead of the troops and reported on the enemy’s movements and actions. They also provided escort and engaged in battles. This photo shows Steele in his Strathcona Horse uniform and wearing the ribbons of the medals he earned during the war. The felt cowboy hat, like the one worn by the North-West Mounted Police, was chosen for the uniform because it was already identified with Canada.