



The War of 1812 in the West The Oregon Country Legacy

**Learning Materials for Teachers,
Museum Educators, and Students**

A resource provided by the Osoyoos Museum Society

**Ken Favrholt, Executive Director/Curator,
Osoyoos & District Museum and Archives
and
Wayne Melvin, Historian**





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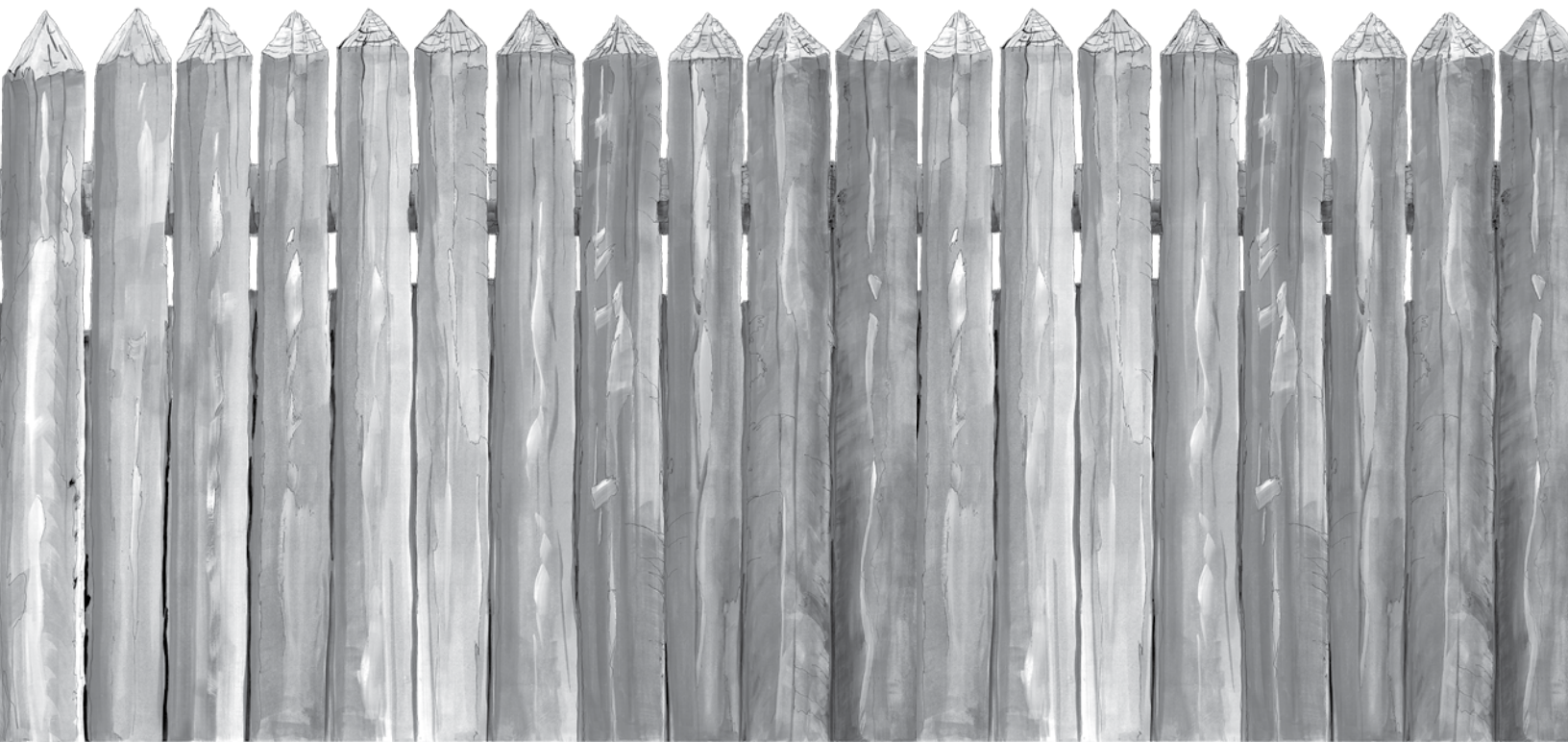
With financial assistance from the Department of Canadian Heritage
War of 1812 Commemoration Fund





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Introduction

The War of 1812 project commemorates the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812. This project includes a travelling exhibit – a panel exhibit and a bilingual banner exhibit, as well as a virtual online exhibit (also bilingual) and learning materials. This document represents the learning materials which are directed at teachers, museum educators, students and the general public interested in the history of Canada and the War of 1812.

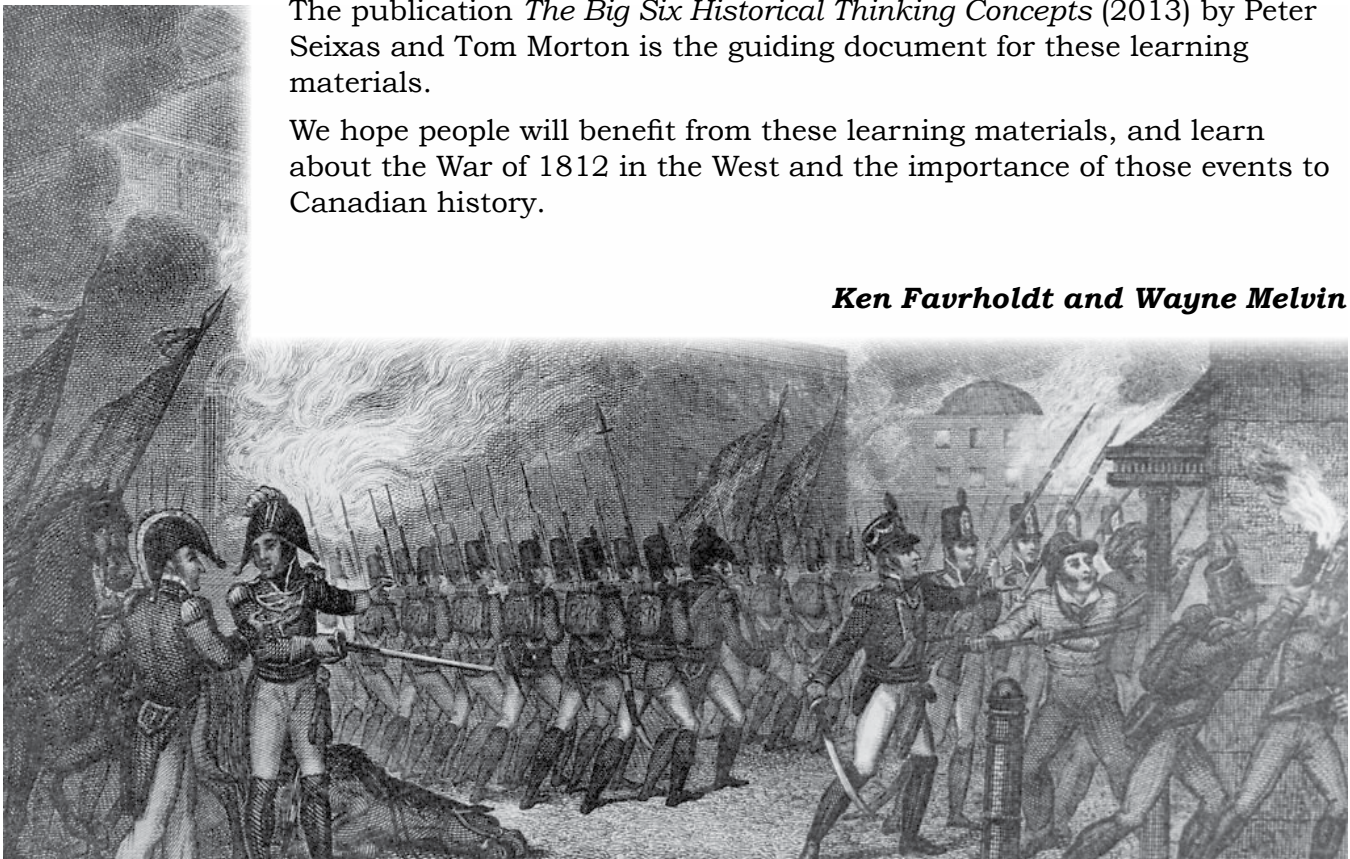
The War of 1812 in the West: The Oregon Country Legacy is the project of the Osoyoos Museum Society with funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage and support from Fort Langley National Historic Site, Parks Canada

The authors of these learning materials – Ken Favrholt and Wayne Melvin – both attended the Historical Thinking Project Summer Institute at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education led by Dr. Peter Seixas of UBC and Jill Colyer, Senior Program Advisor for the Historical Thinking Project. To Peter and Jill and fellow colleagues (teachers and museum educators) we also acknowledge their inspiration and understanding of the Historical Thinking Concepts. Mr. Favrholt saw the opportunity to use the concepts in the War of 1812 in the West project. How could these learning concepts be applied to the teaching of this period of Canadian history in an informal museum environment?

The publication *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts* (2013) by Peter Seixas and Tom Morton is the guiding document for these learning materials.

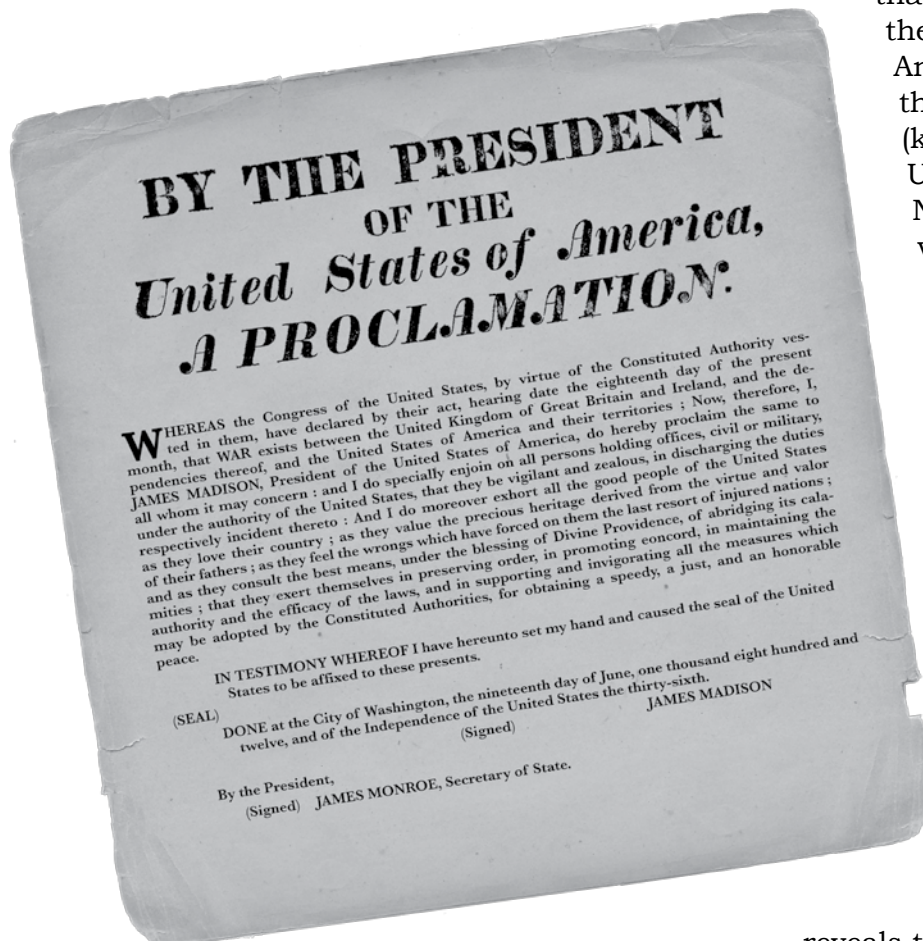
We hope people will benefit from these learning materials, and learn about the War of 1812 in the West and the importance of those events to Canadian history.

Ken Favrholt and Wayne Melvin



History of the War of 1812

The War of 1812 in North America is commonly viewed as a conflict between Great Britain and the United States. But the war had its origin in Europe in the great struggle between Napoleon's France and Great Britain, drawing in other nations to take sides.



It is commonly stated that neither side won the war in North America, and that the First Nations (known in the United States as Native Americans) were the real losers. Indeed the War, ended by the Treaty of Ghent, gave neither side new land nor possessions, according to the status quo ante bellum clause.

Historian Alan Taylor in his excellent book *The Civil War of 1812* (2011)

reveals the complexity of the War. The reason for his intriguing title refers to the fact that the War was really a war against related peoples – Americans living in what is now Canada.

The War of 1812 in the West was in many ways an extension of the war centred in eastern Canada and the United States – although no shots were fired in anger. When Fort Astoria was threatened by a hostile takeover, two competing fur trade companies made a deal – the Pacific Fur Company sold the fort and other possessions to the North West Company to prevent violence. Indeed, many of the men of the two companies knew each other – why would they want to fight one another?

When Fort Astoria was threatened by a hostile takeover, two competing fur trade companies made a deal

The War of 1812 in the West

News of the War of 1812 in the West did not reach the Pacific Coast until January 1813, seven months after the war was declared in June 1812.

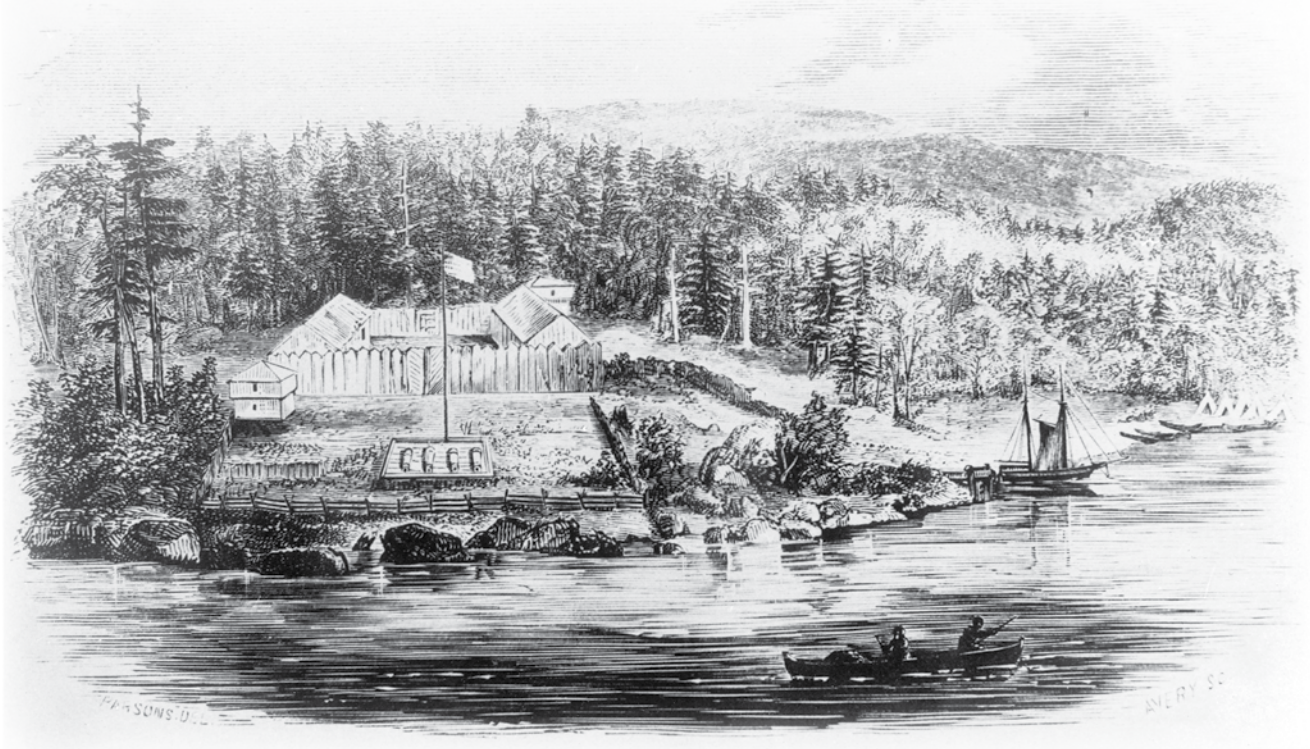
Communications in 1812 were slow, by ship across the Atlantic Ocean and from the Eastern seaboard to the Pacific. The overland communication was as slow, by boat through the Great Lakes, by keelboat and then by horseback and foot across the trails through the Rocky Mountains.

The events that unfolded in the Pacific Northwest, centred on a place called Fort Astoria, is the focus of our story. Although there was no warfare, there were antagonists – Americans and British who were brought into contact at this small fur trade settlement. But instead of conflict, compromise was the order of the day when the two rival fur trade companies came to an arrangement to sell the possessions and cut their losses instead of the Americans possibly being captured by the enemy.

As it turned out, the end of the War created an unusual scenario. The Columbia region, at least the lower part of the river valley, reverted to the United States but in actuality, it was the North West Company who continued their operation and after 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company held sway for the British crown.

It would not be until the 1840s that American expansionism gradually usurped the once hegemonic control of the Hudson's Bay Company over the Oregon Country.

***As it turned out,
the end of the
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unusual scenario.***



Thinking Like a Historian

***(Stories, Memories, Mysteries, Meaning,
Imagination, Personalities, Purpose)***

“Histories are the stories we tell about the past. They can be simple stories about going shopping yesterday; they can be complex stories about how nations formed or global trade developed.

But the past itself is gone. By definition it is no longer present, so we can’t observe it directly. We have a need for meaningful, coherent stories about what came before us. Yet a gap exists between the present we live in and the infinite, unorganized, and unknowable “everything that ever happened.” How we overcome that gap gives rise to history.”

*– Dr. Peter Seixas & Tom Morton,
The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts*

The “Past” Is Unknowable....

All the events that took place a day ago, an hour ago, or even a moment ago vanish almost instantly in a fog of memories and competing interests and demands on our time and attention. Not only is the past already overwhelmingly vast but it is infinitely expanding. Days, years, centuries, aeons, geological ages rush by and human lives – even the life of entire countries - seem almost insignificant on this grand scale of life. Yet, as humans, we have a primal need to tell stories to try and make sense of this strange, wonderful, sometimes terrifying, and always fascinating world that we live in.

Through stories and shared memories we try to make sense of the past – to learn from history – to gain value and meaning and purpose from the experiences, of our ancestors and ourselves. This is where historians like Dr. Peter Seixas and Tom Morton come in - to fill in the gaps and to help us make sense of a very complex world. But this job is too big - too important – too much fun – to leave to professional historians alone. There is a role for all of us in solving the great mysteries of life!

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We Are All Historians

In a very real sense we are all historians. We all ask questions (who, where, what, when, why and how?). We observe and we think. We analyze, reason, and interpret. We look to the past to try and comprehend our present day world and plan for the future. So if the past is too large to be fully understood or even imagined – what role does history play in gaining an understanding of reality? Historians soon realize that they cannot hope to comprehend all that has gone before. To even understand one moment in time – a year or a decade – or one small location – a factory or a town – or a single person – a mill worker or a Prime Minister – or one event - a battle or a war - can take a lifetime of work and still only scratch the surface.

Why do we work, live, love, evolve and die the way that we do. For example, why are some people friends and some countries allies while others turn into mortal enemies?

To help make sense of the past historians slice it into manageable segments. They limit what they look at by clearly defining questions and then creating theories and arguments that are testable. These theories and arguments must have strong evidence to support them. The historian must also provide clear guidelines on how they conducted their research and they must provide citations so others can also look at the evidence and follow up on their work. Over time a large body of work can then develop on important historical issues and events. Each historian adds to this growing picture – and we all benefit from their insights. This whole process starts with curiosity about something that happened in the past. Then come the questions!

The Importance Of Asking Questions

What happened to us to make us the way we are? Why do we work, live, love, evolve and die the way that we do. For example, why are some people friends and some countries allies while others turn into mortal enemies? What happened to First Nations people after Europeans and Asians arrived on the continent of North America and started dividing up the lands and resources. Why are people living in Canada Canadians and not Americans, or British, French or Spanish? Why are some people remembered in the history books and others forgotten? How can one event – even a seemingly insignificant one – change the course of history? Why do some things change and other things stay the same for vast periods of time? Great nations, even entire civilizations fade from memory and disappear with time. Yet many traditions and values and ethical beliefs carry on for thousands of years.

These are but a few of the infinite number of historical questions and mysteries worth pondering. The answers to some of them can mean the difference between life and death, success and failure, war and peace, the birth of nations and collapse of empires.

This exhibit, *The War of 1812 in the West: The Oregon Country Legacy* touches on some of these important questions.

See if you can analyze and interpret the events of this important time period to understand why it is of such importance to both americans and Canadians — as well as to first nations/native American people — on both sides of the border.

Questions help get us started thinking like a historian, but there is more to the profession than idle curiosity. If you want useful and meaningful answers to your questions then some further skills and training are essential. This is where “historical thinking” becomes so important. It is a special way of looking at the past and organizing our thinking about historical events and issues. Just like scientists, mathematicians and computer programmers, professional historians use certain tools, techniques and even shortcuts to understand at least part of the past. In recent years, Dr. Peter Seixas and his colleagues have put together a set of powerful analytical “tools” to help us all to organize and understand history a little better.

The **“BIG SIX HISTORICAL THINKING CONCEPTS”** allow us to look at history through special lenses or windows just as an astronomer uses a telescope to study the cosmos, or a biologist looks through a microscope to study microscopic life, or an artist studies a view of Paris from the window of her loft. Each of these tools allows us to focus our view from an infinite number of choices and to tune in to what we want to study today. Tomorrow, who knows what we will look at or study then? Here, is a brief overview of the six fundamental concepts historians like to use.

Each of these tools allows us to focus our view from an infinite number of choices and to tune in to what we want to study today.

Using The Big Six To Make Sense of the War Of 1812 In the West

We will use these concepts to specifically examine the War of 1812. More specifically, we will use them to see how this war shaped the lives of people on the West Coast of North America in what was once called the “Oregon Country,” a loosely defined region that included areas that we now know as the American states of Oregon and Washington and even parts of British Columbia. We will also try and see if we can learn some valuable historical lessons from this dramatic time in the creation of Canada and the United States of America. These two countries shared a continent, but also had a common heritage. Most of the newcomers to North

The Big Six

1. Historical Significance
2. Evidence
3. Continuity and Change
4. Cause and Consequence
5. Historical Perspectives
6. The Ethical Dimension

America came from common ancestors in Europe, mostly Great Britain and France, spoke the same one or two languages, were of similar racial backgrounds and the same mix of economic and social classes, yet they developed into two distinct countries with a sometimes troubled relationship between them.

FOCUSING ON: Historical Significance, Evidence, Cause and Consequence, and Historical Perspectives

While all six of these concepts are vital to a full understanding and appreciation of historical events, issues and ideas in the War of 1812 and how it influenced the history of the Oregon Country, we will concentrate on four of them in conjunction with this exhibit: **Historical Significance, Evidence, Cause and Consequence, and Historical Perspectives.**

Questions: After looking at the exhibit or the website, reading the text and studying the maps and images, you may begin to answer the questions related to the four learning concepts.



1. Historical Significance

How do we decide what is important to learn about from the past?

Using the Historical Thinking Concepts we can begin to analyze the past in a critical and methodical way. There are two criterion of historical significance: “Events, people or developments have historical significance if they resulted in change, that is, they had deep consequences for many people over a long period of time.”

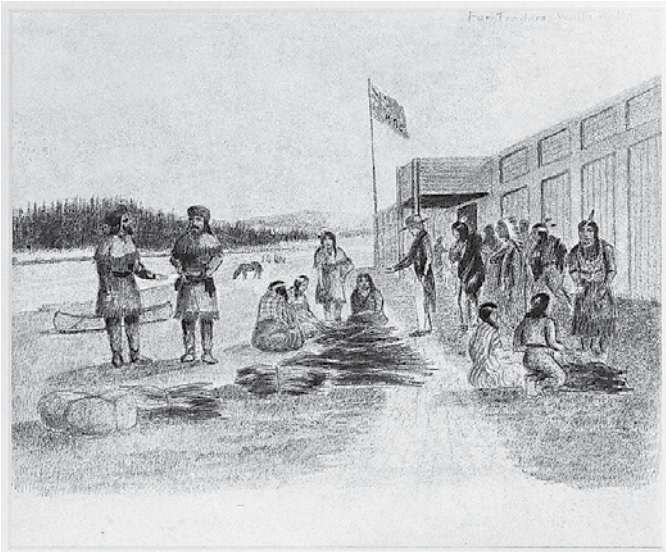
Significance is measured by the impact of an event or individual. The impact of the War of 1812 on the Oregon Country, we assert, is the effect that the transfer of Fort Astoria, from an American company to a British (Canadian) company had on the events that followed. If this event had not taken place, then we argue the Oregon Country would have been taken over by the Americans more quickly and over a larger area than what happened.

Questions related to Historical Significance

1. Why was the transfer of Fort Astoria from the Americans to the British significant?
2. Why did Captain Black “retake” the fort?
3. Why did some of Astor’s men stay on after the British takeover?
4. Was the War of 1812 of “Historical Significance”? Why do you think that it was important or not important?
5. What was the “Historical Significance” of John Jacob Astor’s establishment of the American Fur Company in the U.S.A. (Think about who their rivals were in the lucrative fur trade in North America?)
6. Astor’s ship, the *Tonquin*, arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River on March 22, 1811 – the year before the outbreak of the War of 1812. His employees quickly set to work building Fort Astoria. Was the timing of this fortification project of “Historical Significance”? Why do you think that?
7. Can you guess where Franchère is from? What nationality was he? Is his nationality of any historical significance? Why?
8. Sometimes we know from business, from comedy and from history, “Timing is everything”. In the section of Panel 4, entitled “The Fate of Fort Victoria”, we note that news of the outbreak of the War of 1812 only arrived in Fort Astoria a full seven months after hostilities commenced, which gives us some idea of the isolation of this remote Pacific outpost. Was this long delay in getting this important news of any historical significance? What if news had travelled faster?
9. Do you think the writings of William Black of the *HMS Racoon* was of “Historical Significance”?
10. What was the “Historical Significance” of this treaty? In other words, how important an agreement was it? Whose lives did it affect?
11. What is the “49th Parallel” and why is it of “Historical Significance”?
12. One of the important historical documents the HBC saved is the map depicted on Panel #7. Look at it closely. What kinds of information can you see in the map that is of “Historical Significance”? (Look at the where the boundaries are drawn. Notice the rivers and other natural features of the landscape. Also note the names of forts and other settlements. Can you think of some reasons why these details might be important to our understanding of the War of 1812 in the West?)
13. Some Americans also adopted the slogan “54-40” or Fight” in their boundary disputes with the British? 54-40 is a geographical reference to the line that marks the southernmost geographical

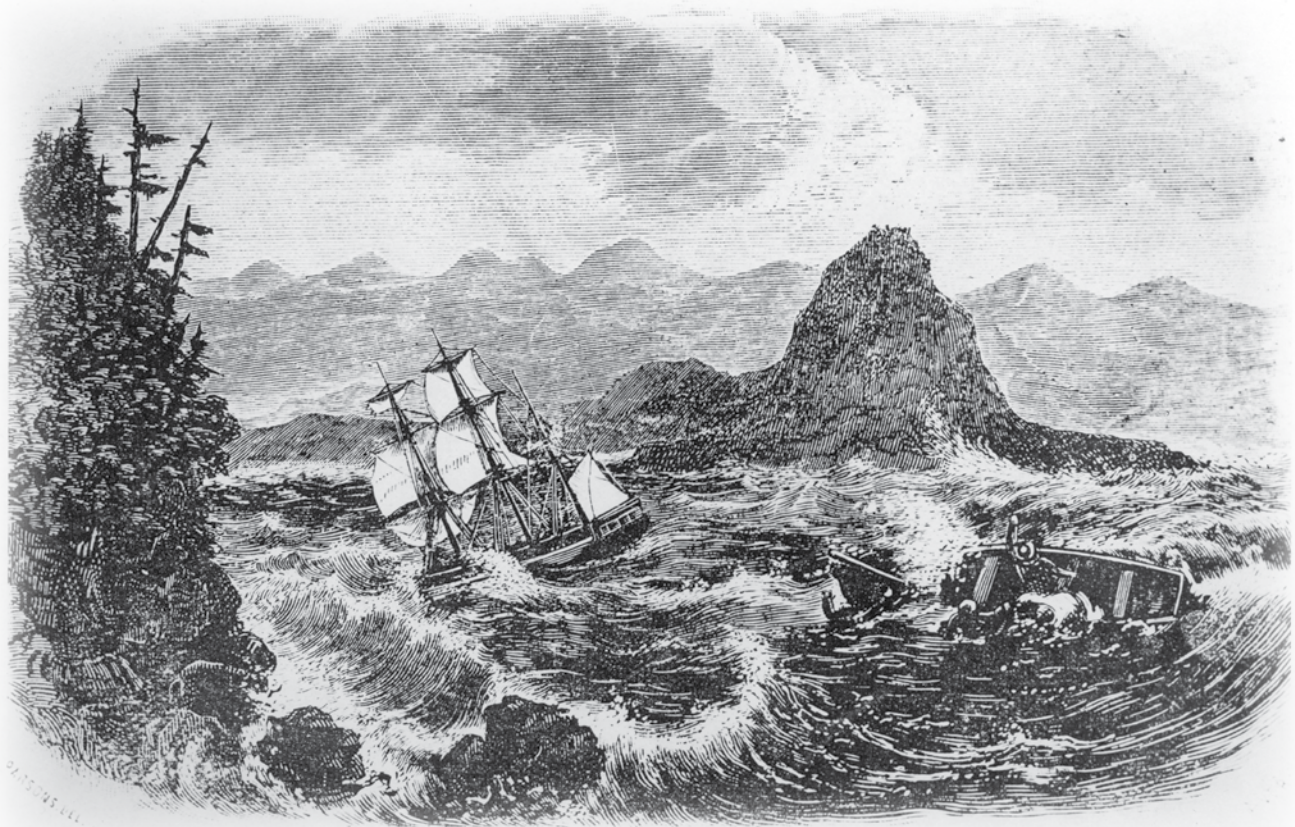
boundary of “Russian America”. Can you see where this border was located and determine why it was of “Historical Significance” - to both the Americans and the British?

14. What historical event is commemorated with the “Peace Arch” located on the American-Canadian border near Blaine, Washington?
15. What do you think are the important historical lessons we can learn from the “Legacy of the War of 1812 in the West”?



Left: The Hudson's Bay Company post of Fort Nez Percés in 1841.

Below: The Tonquin crossing the dangerous bar at the mouth of the Columbia River, 1811.



2. Historical Evidence

How do we know what we know about the past?

“Primary Source Evidence” refers to first-hand accounts of historical events, created at the time an event occurred. The history of **The War of 1812 in the West** relies on first-hand accounts such as journals, letters, and other manuscripts, as well as maps and drawings. To get a full picture of the war we also want to look at “Secondary Sources”. These are books, articles, biographies and other writings that are important because of the analysis and interpretation they provide about events and issues of the past.

How do we know what is true about what has been written about the historical events? Academics and scholars, who write history about a country or an event, undertake a great amount of research to tell a story from a new perspective. Indeed all history is an interpretation of the past, from a particular point of view. It is usually wise to question our sources – no matter who wrote them. Even the most seemingly accurate or unbiased documents can contain inaccuracies, gaps of information, official propaganda, outdated interpretations or outright lies or deceptions. Sometimes new sources come to light that totally changes our understanding of history.

Questions about sources of information include: who created the source; when was it created; what was the reason or purpose for creating the source. Asking the right questions about historical sources is vital to a full understanding of issues and events in the past. Even official government records can be very misleading, depending on who created those documents and why. Can the records be trusted? Is there other evidence that we should be looking at that tells a very different story? We also have to ask ourselves about missing evidence. Is it hidden away - Why? Was it destroyed - Why? Is there some other ingenious way to uncover that evidence? By asking questions like these, the historian becomes a bit of a detective sifting through evidence – always suspicious – always curious – always open to surprises. Sometimes what historians uncover can change lives or alter the affairs and fates of entire nations.

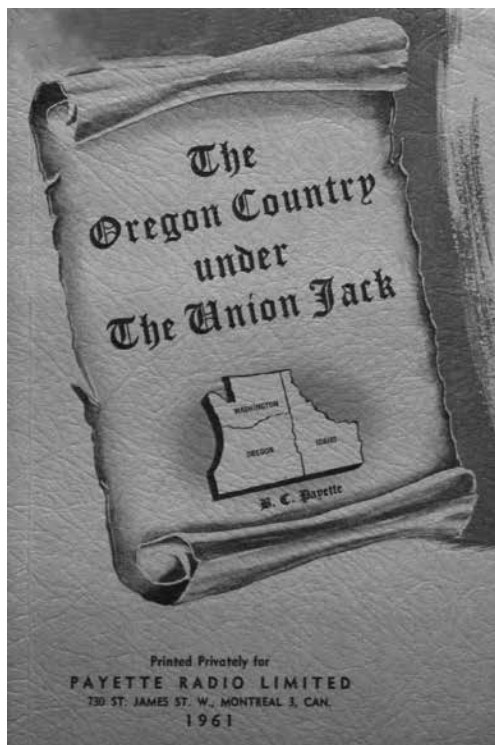
Corroborating evidence is the task of verifying what is accurate or true. A social science technique called “triangulation” is one method where three or more sources, primary or secondary, are used to affirm what is true.

Seixas and Morton also emphasize that a source should be analyzed in the context of its historical setting, in other words, the state of the world and the actors at the time the source was created. People’s attitudes and beliefs change over time – sometimes very dramatically. Decisions that might have made sense 200 years ago can seem very outdated, foolish or disastrous from today’s vantage point. Attitudes towards religion, politics, commerce, race, sex, the environment and the military can also be very different from one generation to the next. Is it fair, then, to interpret past events from today’s perspective? How do we avoid unfairly judging historical issues, events and people from the past? Professional histori-

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ans frequently struggle with these problems. It is their responsibility to not only question evidence – but also to question themselves and their own motivations and personal biases.



One of the best sources of primary documents about the history of the Oregon Country in one book is the compilation by B.C. Payette, *The Oregon Country Under the Union Jack - A Reference Book of Historical Documents for Scholars and Historians* (1961). It is available online:

<http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/12547/OregonCountryUnderUnionJack.pdf?sequence=1>

This book features important historical materials found in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, the Public Archives of Canada (now called Library and Archives Canada), the Montréal Municipal Library and the Payette Papers.

The Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA), a division of the Archives of Manitoba, is home to one of Canada's national treasures - the records of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). You can find their web site at: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/>

There are many other sources of information about what happened in the Oregon Country at the time of the War of 1812.

See the sources for the exhibit on **The War of 1812 in the West** at the end of the online exhibit. These are selected sources but represent some of the best of the sources that are available.

There are also many other online sources for general information about the history of the War of 1812 listed near the end of this document.

Questions related to Primary Historical Evidence

1. What country first proclaimed war, in the War of 1812?
2. Who did they proclaim war against?
3. Who signed that Proclamation?
4. What was the date on which it was signed?
5. Looking at the background image of Panel #1 we see part of a famous painting called "The Battle of Queenston Heights", painted in 1896. Is this date important? Should this painting be considered "Primary Historical Evidence"? Why, or why not?
6. The North West Company (NWC) was a Montréal-based fur trading enterprise. They were once a major rival of the Hudson's Bay Company, but later merged with them. The NWC helped open up Oregon Country to the fur trade. In Panel #5, "Captured for King

and Country”, we see the Coat of Arms of the NWC. Is it an example of “Primary Historical Evidence”?

7. What can you learn about the NWC by looking closely at the symbols depicted in their Coat of Arms?
8. On the panel, underneath the Coat of Arms, we see the added dates, 1783-1821. Are these dates important? What important event for the NWC happened in 1821, a few years after the end of the War of 1812?
9. What other example of “Primary Historical Evidence” can you find depicted in Panel #5?
10. What important agreements do you think would have been included in this treaty (another kind of “Primary Historical Evidence”)?
11. In Panel #6 we see a formal painting called “The Signing...” and a lithograph of Fort Vancouver. Are these both examples of “Primary Historical Evidence”? What kinds of information can we learn from them – and what kinds of questions do they present to historians trying to study them?

3. Cause and Consequence

Why do events happen and what are their impacts?

A simple but illustrative way of looking at **“Cause and Consequence”** is to think of dropping a stone into a pond of water and seeing how the resulting waves ripple across the pond in ever-widening circles until they strike the far off shores. What changes did that dropping of the pebble cause to plants, insects, birds and fish of that pond. Perhaps the changes caused by the dropping of a pebble in a pond was of little consequence to humans, but had major significance to some of the creatures that inhabited those waters. Maybe a duck was startled by the disturbance and flew away only to be shot down by a hunter? Maybe the dropping of the pebble was an innocent act by a child amusing herself, but which had unexpected consequences for the duck. Maybe the dropping of the stone was a deliberate act by the hunter to secure his evening meal?

Causes and Consequences of the War of 1812

Now think of a tsunami and how those waves can transform people’s lives, alter coastlines, destroy cities and transform the affairs of entire nations. It is all a matter of scale. War, even a relatively small one, can have a catastrophic impact on people and places. That influence can last hundreds of years. That is why we are still looking at the lasting impact – or consequences - of the War of 1812 on Canada and the United States.

Historians employ the concept of **“Cause and Consequence”** to gain some insight into how large and small events effect the present and shape the future. This means looking at “causes” - such as a declaration of war, a military victory or loss, the passing of a specific law, the giving of a powerful speech by a politician, preacher or revolutionary, a natu-

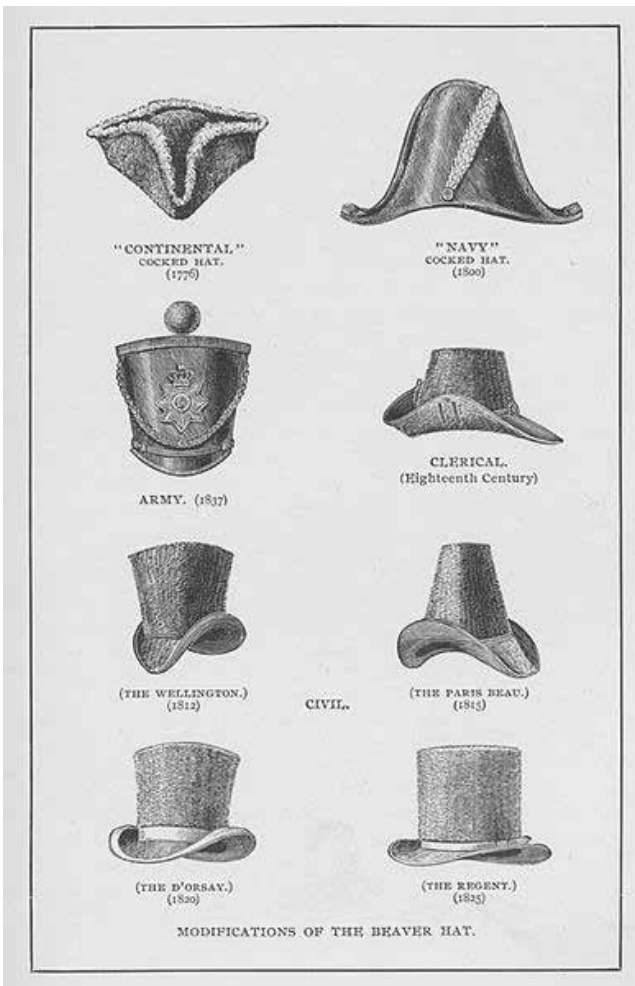
ral or man-made disaster - and then examining “consequences” of that action – such as a country going to war, loss of life or territory in battle, the start of a revolution, or the near extinction of the cod fish, buffalo or Columbia River salmon.

The Impact of A European Fashion Craze on the People, Animals and Lands of North America

Sometimes the consequences of an action are intended or predictable, but sometimes there are unintended or very unpredictable consequences. For example, when beaver hats became fashionable in France and

England then French-Canadian voyageurs from Quebec travelled throughout North America to trade for furs from the high Arctic, down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico and then across the Rocky Mountains and into the Oregon Country. The seemingly innocuous fashion craze in the capitals of London and Paris thus opened up the entire North American continent to settlement.

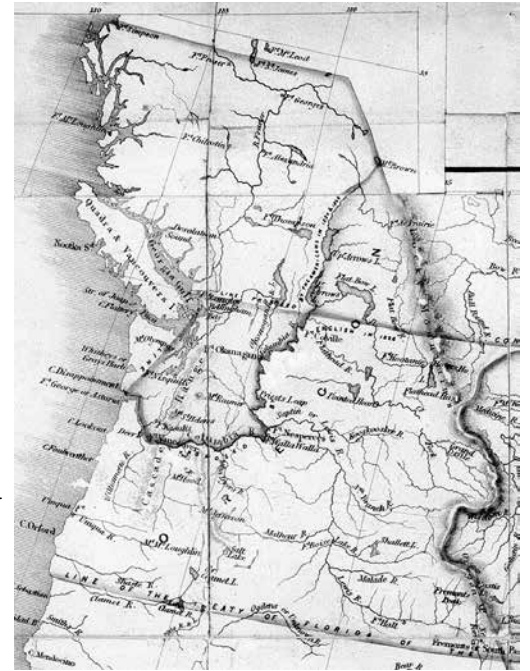
This, in turn, caused the displacement and sometimes killing of Native inhabitants, the over-hunting of beaver, buffalo and other animals, and the eventual clearing of forests and grass lands for agriculture. One dramatic consequence of this trade in beaver pelts furs was the introduction of deadly diseases to First Nation’s people such as smallpox which was easily spread through contaminated trade goods like blankets. The North American landscape and its people were changed forever because of European gentlemen having an insatiable demand for silly looking top hats made from the fur of a North American rodent. Who could have predicted that?



Beaver fur also gained popularity in China where they were made into luxurious robes for status-conscious mandarins. This led to John Jacob Astor’s fateful decision to open up Fort Astoria on the remote West Coast of North America in order to tap into this Oriental market – and our own examination of how his business decision ties into the War of 1812.

Questions About the Causes and Consequences of the War of 1812

1. Why and how did the War of 1812 happen? What were its causes? And what were the consequences or fallout of the war?
2. How were Canadians, Americans and First Nations (Native Americans) changed by the war? Were those changes positive or negative? Who were the winners and losers?
3. Why is part of “Oregon Country” now part of the U.S.A. and another part included in Canada? Who decided on the borders and were those decisions the right ones?
4. In order to try and understand historical events, historians often look at “Cause and Consequence”. In other words, what caused an event to occur and what were the historical consequences of that event. As you view the rest of the exhibit, ask yourself: “What caused the War of 1812 – and what were the consequences of the war? (Would we still have a Canada if the war turned out differently?)
5. On October 16, 1813 Fort Astoria was sold to the North West Company based in Montréal, thus transferring the strategic location from American to British interests. The deal was negotiated by “Canadians” working for both companies. What were the “Causes and Consequences” of this sale?
6. Sometimes a seemingly innocent business decision can have far-reaching historical consequences for the affairs of an entire nation – or even several countries. Do you think that Astor’s fateful decision to hire a majority of native-born Canadians for his American fur trading company had historical consequences? Look for clues to the answer as you proceed through the exhibit.
7. “Cause & Consequence”: What was the reason (cause) for George Simpson to build Fort Langley on the banks of the Fraser River, in British Columbia – and what was the eventual result (Consequence) of that action?
8. American settlers started immigrating to Oregon Country around 1839. What were the “Causes and Consequences” of this migration of ranchers, farmers and merchants into the region?
9. What were the “Causes & Consequences” of the American policy of “Manifest Destiny”?
10. What do you think were the “Causes & Consequences” of the Oregon Treaty?
11. After looking at this exhibition, do you think the selling of Fort Astoria to the North West Company changed the course of history?



4. Historical Perspectives

How can we better understand the people of the past?

“Historical Perspectives” simply means that different people have different views of various issues and events. There is seldom if ever one agreed upon interpretation of what happened in the past. Winners and losers see wars differently. Men and women often see history through a different lens of gender. First Nations (Native American) people see the colonizing of the “New World” very differently than European settlers. We can expect no less of a difference of opinion when it comes to the War of 1812. The British, Americans and various First Nations tribes are bound to see the war and its outcome from very different perspectives.

Sometimes these varying perspectives can produce some surprising results. For example, Tecumseh was a Shawnee Chief from the Ohio Country who opposed the Americans in the War of 1812. Despite this, he is considered a respected war hero in the United States with many schools and other institutions named after him. He is also seen in Britain as a martyr giving his life to preserve the British Empire. In Canada he has become an iconic folk hero symbolizing Canadian resistance to American military aggression and expansionism into Canada. To First Nations he is honoured as someone fighting to preserve an ancient way of life being overwhelmed by waves of immigrants.

The Canadian Perspective - Before Canada was Born – Exploring a Vast Continent

It should be emphasized that the War of 1812 happened before there was even a “country” called Canada. During the time period of the War the region of North America that we now call Canada was still a loose collection of colonies that were still firmly part of the British Empire. Even Quebec and Acadia were now under British control. Huge parts of North America were still wilderness with canoes being the chief mode of transportation into these uncharted territories. Explorers like David Thompson were still creating maps of the West and few “white people” ventured as far as the Rocky Mountains. Even fewer dared venture across the mountain ranges that stretched down from Alaska and the Yukon, British Columbia, and the vast Oregon Country to California and Mexico.

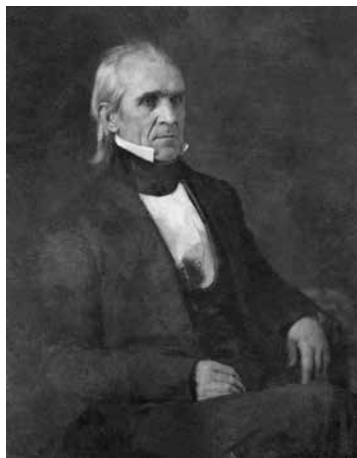
As the current exhibit shows us, nation building is a complicated and sometimes violent process. The U.S.A. was born out of revolution in 1776 when a loose collection of British colonies rejected rule by Great Britain and united to form the United States of America. It was nearly another century, in 1867, before three of the remaining British North American colonies joined together to form Canada (and creating the four provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia). Other colonies were added to Confederation later, such as British Columbia in 1871.

For many Canadians the War of 1812 has come to mean a successful resistance to American military might (no matter that much of the fighting

was done by British troops or First Nation's warriors). Although some people were sympathetic to democratic principles and were even opposed to rule by the British King, many others in Britain and Canada were suspicious of American revolutionary thought.

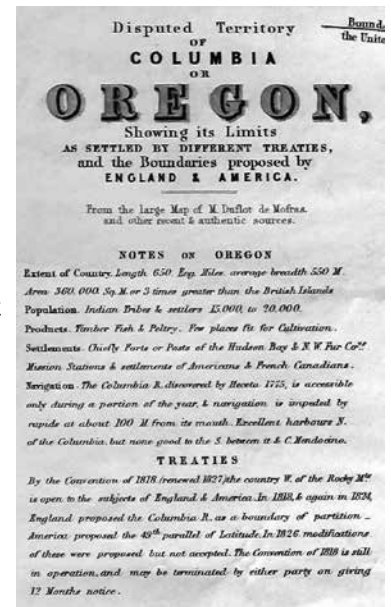
Questions to Ponder:

1. Do you think Canadians are justified in seeing the War of 1812 as a victory for Canada – even though Canada was not formalized as a country yet
2. Do you think “Canada” would be a different place today if the Americans had won a clear victory? How do you think the lives of Canadians would be if the Americans were successful? Would we be better or worse off financially, socially or in other ways?
3. Did the actions of a few French-Canadian voyageurs change the outcome of the War of 1812 on the West Coast?
4. When they transferred ownership of Fort Astoria from American to British hands did they prevent a disaster and the loss of many lives?
5. What would the world look like if ownership of Fort Astoria had not been transferred to the North West Company and the British took the fort by force – as they had planned to do?
6. Would the bloody war in the East have extended into the Oregon Country?
7. Would this have changed the war and its outcome? (Would there still be a Canada?)
8. The 200th anniversary of the War of 1812 has inspired many different people and organizations to take a fresh look at those events of two hundred years ago. Do you think it is a good idea to re-visit this war in the hopes of learning something new – or is this just opening old wounds amongst good friends and neighbours



(U.S.A. & Canada)? In Panel #3, The Establishment of Astoria, we see a dramatic painting called “Smoking Star” and in the top right hand corner we see where the painting gets its name – after The Great Comet of 1811. Do you think this natural phenomenon was seen as a good or bad omen by First Nations (Native American) people when it coincided with the arrival of Europeans in Oregon Country? Did superstitious newcomers see it as a symbolic event or divine sign as well?

President James Polk, who considered going to war to expand the United States northward to 54° 40' North latitude.



The American View of Things

Many Americans, especially after the American Revolutionary War, thought they had almost a divine right to rule over the North American continent. In the south and west, they successfully took over large tracts of land from Mexico and their attacks on Canada were meant to strip Britain of lands in the north. Even after the War of 1812, there were further expansionist plans to take over British-held lands. “Manifest Destiny” was the popular conviction held by many Americans in the 19th century that the United States was destined to expand across the continent.

“Fifty-Four Forty or Fight” became a war cry by Democratic presidential candidate James K. Polk. He successfully ran for president using it as his campaign slogan. In 1818, after the end of hostilities in the War of 1812, the United States and the United Kingdom who still controlled British Canada established a joint claim over the Oregon Country. This vast region was located west of the Rocky Mountains and between 42° North and 54°40’ North (the southern boundary of Russia’s Alaska territory). While joint control worked for over two decades, the agreement broke down and the two parties set out to divide the territory. Polk’s plan was to claim the entire territory for the United States and to again go to war with Great Britain to enforce his demand.

The American view of North America (both before and after the War of 1812) was obviously not shared by Great Britain or most people living in British North America (Canada). But Britain was also not eager to engage the Americans in another bloody war. Instead, there were delegations sent from both sides to negotiate the contentious border issues.

Eventually the dividing line stretched from East to West along the 49th Parallel. A few jigs and jogs meant some variations in the international boundary, such as the one that allowed southern Vancouver Island and Victoria to remain in British Columbia. Other disputes, such as those concerning the San Juan Islands again threatened to bring armed conflict to Oregon Country. Nevertheless, a stable peace was established that endures to this day.

Questions to Ponder – Keeping the American Perspective in Mind:

1. Were Americans justified in their demand to all of Oregon Country right up to Alaska?
2. Were the ultimate international borders that were established between Canada and the United States fair for both parties? Or, was Canada unfairly treated.
3. Should the Columbia River, that flows into the Pacific Ocean at Astoria, Oregon, be considered the natural boundary between Canada and the USA?
4. If, after the War of 1812, the USA went to war again and won, what would “British Columbia” be called today? Would they have named it after President Polk? Can you come up with a suitable re-naming of this “new American state”?
5. What does the Peace Arch symbolize for you?

But Britain was also not eager to engage the Americans in another bloody war. Instead, there were delegations sent from both sides to negotiate the contentious border issues.

The First Nations (Native American) Perspective

At the time of the War of 1812, the western part of North America was still sparsely populated by European settlers and traders with the fur trade dominating the economy. First Nations (Native American) tribes up and down the coast had been decimated by European diseases such as smallpox. Some tribes lost almost all their people and many once thriving villages were abandoned. This meant that they could offer little resistance to colonizing forces. Many of the survivors chose to participate in the fur-trade which provided access to highly desirable European trade goods such as guns, metal axes, knives and pots, but also other more harmful products such as alcohol. In any case, politicians, business people and military leaders were preoccupied with more densely populated regions around what are now the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. This is where most of the major battles of the War were fought.



A group of Chinookans of the Lower Columbia River painted by traveller Paul Kane in the early 1800s.

The Impact of Europeans on the First Nations in the West

By the time Europeans started to occupy and then settle the Pacific Northwest region that now includes Oregon, Washington and British Columbia, and a bit of Idaho and Montana, the two superpowers of Europe – Great Britain and France had already been engaged in many battles and wars in North America carving up the spoils between them. They divided the First Nations (Native Americans) into warring factions allied to one side or the other and they placed a tremendous impact on the natural environment as they expanded their commercial, political and military empires. The fur trade was the economic driver for expansion along the rivers, mountain passes and ever-expanding system of trails and roads throughout the continent.

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The Importance of the Fur Trade in Opening the West

At the beginning of the 19th century, “ownership” of the West was still not clearly defined with competing claims by both the British and the Americans but with powerful fur-trading companies. The most important of these was the North West Company, established in 1779 and headquartered in Montréal. This company was later taken over, in 1821, by its fierce rival, the London-based Hudson’s Bay Company. The HBC is one of the oldest companies in the world, founded in 1670 and still

operating today. Then there was the Pacific Fur Company founded by American millionaire John Jacob Astor in 1811. It had a western base in Astoria, Oregon, but was controlled by Astor from his offices in New York, along with many other business interests.

These fur trading companies not only functioned as commercial enterprises, but they also acted with many of the powers usually associated with governments – including military force. Major decision-making was done in London, Montréal and New York with the appointed leaders of trading posts and forts having some local authority backed by their cannons and guns. The everyday work was done by French-speaking voyageurs from Quebec, various First Nations people from across the continent, and also Métis people, the mixed-blood children of British or French fathers and Native women. They often served as translators because of their familiarity with both Native and European languages.

While some First Nations and Métis certainly worked for the large fur companies or actively traded with them, one could also argue that they paid a heavy price for the occupation of their lands by the Europeans. The War of 1812 divided many First Nations against each other particularly in the areas surrounding the Great Lakes region and along the St. Lawrence River. Active hostilities in Oregon Country were minimal and the First Nations (Native Americans) were not called to take sides as they were in the East.

While some First Nations and Métis certainly worked for the large fur companies or actively traded with them, one could also argue that they paid a heavy price for the occupation of their lands by the Europeans.

Questions to Ponder – Keeping the First Nations Perspective in Mind:

1. Do you think the fur trade and European expansion into Oregon Country was mostly good or mostly bad for First Nations and Métis people?
2. What were some of the positive effects they experienced?
3. What were some of the negative experiences they had?
4. Do you think the Natives were fairly treated by the fur companies and by the British and the Americans?
5. Did the War of 1812 change the lives of First Nations people in Oregon Country?
6. Or, would they have been treated the same no matter who won the war – the British or the Americans?

There are no clear answers to some of these questions. In fact, there is not even a clear agreement on who won the war with both the USA and Great Britain claiming victory – and with Canadians and First Nations people still struggling to come to terms with the legacy of the conflict. Nevertheless, we can examine these questions and gain some important insights into the causes and consequence of the War of 1812 on the West Coast.

Conclusion

The use of the **Historical Thinking Concepts** in learning about the impact of the War of 1812 on the Oregon Country is the conjunction of a new and critical way of teaching social studies with a topic of current interest. The concepts aim to provide a more robust and deeper understanding of history focussing on an important yet little-known period of Canadian history.

The concepts are now being integrated by more and more teachers in public school systems across Canada. But the use of the concepts is not limited to high school students. The virtual online exhibit is accessible globally, of course, to anyone interested in this subject. The exhibit itself, for the first time, presents a detailed, resource-rich, international and bilingual perspective of the history of what became known as the Oregon Country, and is now known as the Pacific Northwest.

The website includes a series of new maps that, for the first time, present the evolution of the region before and after the War of 1812.

Sources

Seixas, Peter and Tom Morton. *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts*. Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013.

Payette, B.C. *The Oregon Country Under the Union Jack, A Reference Book of Historical Documents for Scholars and Historians*, Payette Radio Limited, Montréal, 1961.

Taylor, Alan. *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels & Indian Allies*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011.

Links to other resources:

Parks Canada Teacher Resource Centre

The War of 1812

http://www.pc.gc.ca/apprendre-learn/prof/itm2-crp-trc/htm/1812_e.asp

The War of 1812 Activity

http://www.pc.gc.ca/apprendre-learn/prof/itm2-crp-trc/crp-trc5_e.asp?ID=239

1812history.com

<http://www.1812history.com/>

The War of 1812 – Education Guide

https://www.historica-dominion.ca/1812/pdf/1812_english.pdf

A project of Historica Dominion Institute sponsored by TD

The Agenda

Guest Post: Three Countries' Perspectives on the War of 1812

by Mark Brosens Wednesday June 27, 2012

<http://theagenda.tv.org/blog/agenda-blogs/guest-post-three-countries-perspectives-war-1812>

PBS The War of 1812

A Canadian Perspective on the War of 1812

<http://www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812/essays/canadian-perspective/>

A Native Nations Perspective on the War of 1812

<http://www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812/essays/native-perspective/>

A British Perspective on the War of 1812

<http://www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812/essays/british-perspective/>

An American Perspective on the War of 1812

<http://www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812/essays/american-perspective/>

Personal journals from the War of 1812

<http://www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812/essays/american-perspective/>

War of 1812 Historical Thinking Lessons

<http://historicalthinking.ca/war1812>

For copying -- Questions by Panel numbers

Panel #1

“Primary Historical Evidence” includes documents created at the time an event occurred. For example, these could include a diary, personal correspondence, a photograph, a bill of sale or other legal agreement, a Peace Treaty – or a Declaration of War. Such original material is vital in the study of history and so they are included in as one of the “Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts”, which are key ideas that historians use to learn the lessons of the past.

In Panel #1 of the exhibition (“Introduction”), we see a copy of a primary document from the War of 1812, entitled “By the President of the United States of America, a Proclamation”. Look at the document closely to see what important information can be found there.

1. What country first proclaimed war, in the War of 1812?
2. Who did they proclaim War against?
3. Who signed that Proclamation?
4. What was the date on which it was signed?
5. Looking at the background image of Panel #1 we see part of a famous painting called “The Battle of Queenston Heights”, painted in 1896. Is this date important? Should this painting be considered “Primary Historical Evidence”? Why, or why not?
6. In order to try and understand historical events, historians often look at “Cause and Consequence”. In other words, what caused an event to occur and what were the historical consequences of that event. As you view the rest of the exhibit, ask yourself: “What caused the War of 1812 – and what were the consequences of the war? (Would we still have a Canada if the war turned out differently?)

Panel #2

Another of the Big Six is the concept of “Historical Significance.” Why do we pay special attention to certain, people, events or issues and ignore others. Sometimes certain events, like the War of 1812, are almost forgotten until historians or others decide that it is important to re-examine the events in light of new evidence or new theories or interpretations of what happened. Think about this historical thinking concept when you look at Panel #2 and the rest of the exhibit.

1. Was the War of 1812 of “Historical Significance”? Why do you think that it was important or not important?
2. The 200th anniversary of the War of 1812 has inspired many different people and organizations to take a fresh look at those events of two hundred years ago. Do you think it is a good idea to re-visit this war in the hopes of learning something new – or is this just opening old wounds amongst good friends and neighbours (U.S.A & Canada)?
3. What was the “Historical Significance” of John Jacob Astor’s establishment of the American Fur Company in the U.S.A. (Think about who their rivals were in the lucrative fur trade in North America?)
4. Sometimes a seemingly innocent business decision can have far-reaching historical consequences for the affairs of an entire nation – or even several countries. Do you think that Astor’s fateful decision to hire a majority of native-born Canadians for his American fur trading company had historical consequences? Look for clues to the answer as you proceed through the exhibit.
5. It is well known that men’s top hats were very fashionable in Europe and the best of these fedoras were of felt made from luxurious beaver fur. Now, why do you think Astor also wanted to set up a West Coast fur trading empire to trade beaver pelts - to China?
6. It has been said that Astor was America’s first multi-millionaire. Is this fact relevant to an understanding of the War of 1812 in the West? In other words, did his wealth, status and political power influence the War in any significant way?

Panel #3

1. In Panel #3, *The Establishment of Astoria*, we see a dramatic painting called “Smoking Star” and in the top right hand corner we see where the painting gets its name – after The Great Comet of 1811. Do you think this natural phenomenon was seen as a good or bad omen by First Nations people when it coincided with the arrival of Europeans in Oregon Country? Did superstitious newcomers see it as a symbolic event or divine sign as well?
2. Astor’s ship, the *Tonquin*, arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River on March 22, 1811 – the year before the outbreak of the War of 1812. His employees quickly set to work building Fort Astoria. Was the timing of this fortification project of “Historical Significance”? Why do you think that?
3. Astor’s men also established fur-trading posts far inland from coastal Fort Astoria. They even travelled all the way north to Kamloops, in what is now British Columbia. (Canada would still not come into existence until 1867, more than half a century later. B.C. joined Confederation in 1871.) Do you think the establishment, in 1812, of this northern outpost of an American company might have had consequences for the territorial claims and ambitions of the Americans during and after the War of 1812?
4. Another of the Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts is “Historical Perspectives.” This means that different people have different views or interpretations of historical events and issues. Men and women often see issues differently. So do rich people and poor people. As do different races or nationalities. In other words, who the good guys are and who the bad guys are sometimes simply depends on whose side you are on.
5. With this in mind, do you think the First Nations people in Oregon Country saw the fur traders and settlers as a positive or negative influence on their traditional lands and way of life? (Now think of the same situation from the viewpoint of a wealthy entrepreneur like Astor, a voyageur fur trader from Quebec, or a poor American settler seeking a small piece of farmland on which to raise a family.)
6. What were some possible positive benefits and what were some negative impacts of the establishment of the fur trade in Oregon Country? (Who were the winners and losers?)
7. Do you think that land and natural resources were mostly of economic importance to the various people living in Oregon Country? Or, do you think for some people there were more important considerations – such as the environmental, cultural or spiritual significance of land, water, plants and animals? (Why do some people place more value on certain things than others?)

Panel #4

In the drawing by Gabriel Franchère, of “Astoria, as it was in 1813”, we see one of the first known depictions of this historic trading post. By “reading” this work of art as a “Primary Historical Document” we can try to determine if it contains any information of “Historical Significance”.

1. For example, ask yourself if the year it was drawn, 1813, is significant in any way. Would it make a difference if the date was 10 years earlier or even one year later? (Does this date make the drawing a “Primary Source Document”?)
2. Can you guess where Franchère is from? What nationality was he? Is his nationality of any historical significance? Why?
3. What flag is flying over the fort? Is this information relevant?
4. In the drawing, we can see several defensive strategies in force. Who were the people in the fort trying to protect themselves from?
5. Sometimes we know from business, from comedy and from history, “Timing is everything”. In the section of Panel 4, entitled “The Fate of Fort Victoria”, we note that news of the outbreak of the War of 1812 only arrived in Fort Astoria a full seven months after hostilities commenced, which gives us some idea of the isolation of this remote Pacific outpost. Was this long delay in getting this important news of any historical significance? What if news had travelled faster?
6. On October 16, 1813 Fort Astoria was sold to the North West Company based in Montréal, thus transferring the strategic location from American to British interests. The deal was negotiated by “Canadians” working for both companies. What were the “Causes and Consequences” of this sale?

Panel #5

1. The North West Company (NWC) was a Montréal-based fur trading enterprise. They were once a major rival of the Hudson’s Bay Company, but later merged with them. The NWC helped open up Oregon Country to the fur trade. In Panel #5, “Captured for King and Country”, we see the Coat of Arms of the NWC. Is it an example of “Primary Historical Evidence”?
2. What can you learn about the NWC by looking closely at the symbols depicted in their Coat of Arms?
3. On the panel, underneath the Coat of Arms, we see the added dates, 1783-1821. Are these dates important? What important event for the NWC happened in 1821, a few years after the end of the War of 1812?
4. What other example of “Primary Historical Evidence” can you find depicted in Panel #5?
5. Do you think the writings of William Black of the HMS *Racoon* was of “Historical Significance”?
6. What kind of “Historical Perspective” do you think he represents in his writing and who do you think might have a different perspective on the events and issues he writes about?

Panel #6

The Treaty of Ghent was signed on Christmas Eve in 1814, formally ending the War of 1812.

1. What important agreements do you think would have been included in this treaty (another kind of “Primary Historical Evidence”)?
2. What was the “Historical Significance” of this treaty? In other words, how important an agreement was it - whose lives did it affect?
3. After years of fierce competition the North West Company of Montréal merged with the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), based in London, England. This merger created a fur-trade monopoly throughout much of North America. Also, the areas once controlled by the NWC in Oregon Country now came into the possession of the HBC. Do you think this merger was a good move – from a business point of view? Do you think the First Nation’s fur traders share that “Historical Perspective”? Why or why not?
4. “Cause & Consequence: What was the reason (Cause) for George Simpson to build Fort Langley on the banks of the Fraser River, in British Columbia – and what was the eventual result (Consequence) of that action?
5. What is the “49th Parallel” and why is it of “Historical Significance”?
6. In Panel #6 we see a formal painting called “The Signing...” and a lithograph of Fort Vancouver. Are these both examples of “Primary Historical Evidence”? What kinds of information can we learn from them – and what kinds of questions do they present to historians trying to study them?

Panel #7

The HBC was founded in 1670. This makes it one of the oldest companies in the world. Their corporate archives preserve a vast storehouse of “Primary Source Evidence” that tell the stories of three-and-a-half centuries of North American history, including that of Oregon Country.

1. One of the important historical documents the HBC saved is the map depicted on Panel #7. Look at it closely. What kinds of information can you see in the map that is of “Historical Significance”? (Look at the where the boundaries are drawn. Notice the rivers and other natural features of the landscape. Also note the names of forts and other settlements. Can you think of some reasons why these details might be important to our understanding of the War of 1812 in the West?)
2. American settlers started immigrating to Oregon Country around 1839. What were the “Causes and Consequences” of this migration of ranchers, farmers and merchants into the region?
3. Do you think the “Historical Perspectives” about this migration would be different if you were British or if you were American? How about the First Nations – what do you think they felt about all these newcomers flooding into their traditional territories?
4. What were the “Causes & Consequences” of the American policy of “Manifest Destiny”?
5. Some Americans also adopted the slogan “54-40” or “Fight” in their boundary disputes with the British? 54-40 is a geographical reference to the line that marks the southernmost geographical boundary of “Russian America”. Can you see where this border was located and determine why it was of “Historical Significance” - to both the Americans and the British?
6. What do you think were the “Causes & Consequences” of the Oregon Treaty?

Panel #8

1. What historical event is commemorated with the “Peace Arch” located on the American-Canadian border near Blaine, Washington?
2. After looking at this exhibition, do you think the selling of Fort Astoria to the North West Company changed the course of history?
3. If the sale had not gone through, do you think the Americans and British would have fought another war over Oregon Country?
4. Do you think the current boundaries between Canada and the USA are fair – from an American Perspective – a British Perspective – a Canadian Perspective – a First Nations Perspective?
5. What do you think are the important historical lessons we can learn from the “Legacy of the War of 1812 in the West”?
6. Did this exhibition change your “Historical Perspective” in any way?

Please copy this page for use by teachers, students and the public.

DEAR VISITOR to OUR EXHIBIT:

**We welcome feedback and comments about
The War of 1812 in the West: The Oregon Legacy.**

Please fill out this form.

Feedback questions:

What is your knowledge of the War of 1812 in general?

() None. () Very Little. () Not much. () A lot. () A great deal.

What is your knowledge now about the War of 1812 in the West
after seeing this exhibit?

What is the most interesting thing you learned in the exhibit?

What would you like to learn more about? _____

Any other comments?

THANK YOU!

Osoyoos Museum Society