

The background of the cover features a stylized illustration of a Native Canadian person, likely a woman, in traditional dress. She is shown from the waist up, seated or kneeling. She wears a blue garment with red and white decorative borders. Her hair is adorned with red and white beads. She has traditional face paint, including a zigzag pattern on her forehead and cheek. Her legs are also decorated with blue and white patterns. The overall style is reminiscent of traditional Indigenous art.

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR GRADES 7–12

LEARN ABOUT

DECOLONIZATION

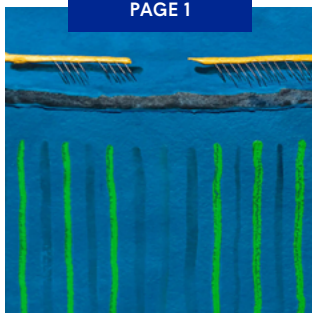
through the art of

ROBERT HOULE

ART CANADA INSTITUTE | INSTITUT DE L'ART CANADIEN

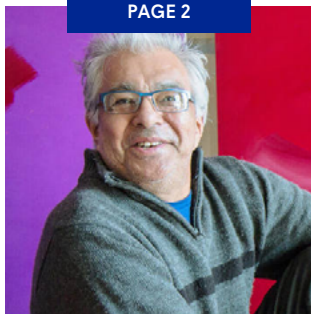
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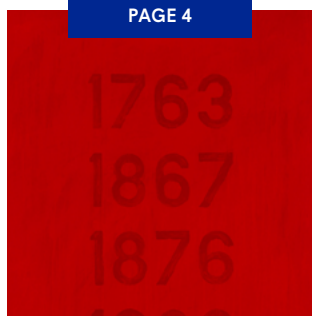
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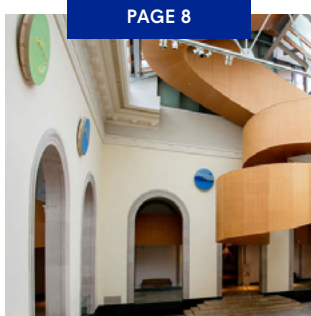
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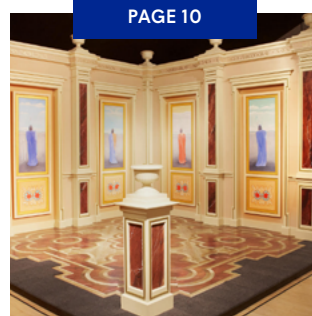
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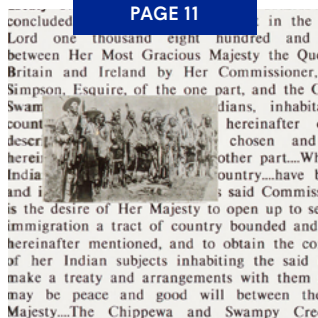
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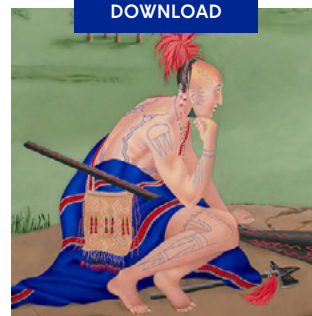
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

READ ONLINE



ROBERT HOULE: LIFE & WORK BY SHIRLEY MADILL

DOWNLOAD



ROBERT HOULE IMAGE FILE

RESOURCE OVERVIEW

This teacher resource guide has been designed to complement the Art Canada Institute online art book [Robert Houle: Life & Work](#) by Shirley Madill. The artworks within this guide and images required for the learning activities and culminating task can be found in the [Robert Houle Image File](#) provided.

Robert Houle (b.1947) is one of Canada's most celebrated contemporary artists. He is of Anishnabe Saulteaux heritage and a member of Sandy Bay First Nation, Treaty 1 Territory, in Manitoba. Houle's work examines colonialism in Canada, from events that took place decades ago to ongoing practices, and he has described his work as a form of decolonization. Decolonization has been defined in different ways (it can be a personal transformation; a literal repatriation of land, goods, or cultural objects; or a visual or symbolic change within a space, institution, or community), but fundamentally it is about confronting colonialism by challenging it and undermining it, a process that can be empowering. This guide explores how Houle has confronted colonialism by appropriating colonial images and documents and by creating artworks that focus on Indigenous experience.

Curriculum Connections

- Grades 7–8 Social Studies
- Grades 9–12 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies
- Grades 9–12 History
- Grades 9–12 Visual Arts

Themes

- Creative responses to historical events and treaties
- Decolonization
- Indigenous experiences of major historical events
- Importance of treaties nationally and within students' communities

Teaching Exercises

The exercises in this guide explore decolonization through Robert Houle's art, and they challenge students to explore their personal responsibilities to understand Indigenous history in their own communities.

- Learning Activity #1: Revisiting Ways of Representing Canadian History ([page 4](#))
- Learning Activity #2: Exploration of Robert Houle's *Premises for Self-Rule: Treaty No. 1* ([page 6](#))
- Culminating Task: Creative Response to a Treaty Text ([page 8](#))

A Note on Using This Guide

Decolonization is a complex and challenging topic, and it should be emphasized that this subject requires ongoing learning. This learning can be greatly enriched by dialogues with Indigenous people. If you are not Indigenous yourself, we encourage you to reach out to Indigenous people in your community and, if possible, invite an Indigenous speaker to visit the class ([click here](#) for advice about appropriate protocols).

While this guide focuses on decolonization and on treaties, *Robert Houle: Life & Work* by Shirley Madill discusses other critical elements of Indigenous history and experiences in Canada. In particular, Madill's writing addresses how Houle attended residential school and how in later life he was affected by a book about a boy who faced multigenerational residential-school violence and died of suicide.



Fig 1. Robert Houle, *Muhnedobe uhyahyuk (Where the gods are present) (Matthew)*, 1989. This work was created during Houle's artist residency at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. It is composed of four large panels (the other panels are titled *Philip*, *Bartholomew*, and *Thomas*); its title celebrates the origins of the name "Manitoba."

WHO IS ROBERT HOULE?



Fig 2. Robert Houle in 2015 with his triptych *Colours of Love*, 2015.

Robert Houle was born in St. Boniface, Manitoba, in 1947. Until he started school, Houle lived with his extended family at Sandy Bay First Nation, where he was surrounded by the language and ceremonies of his Plains Ojibwa, or [Anishnabe](#), Saulteaux culture. When Houle entered grade one, he had no choice but to leave home for Catholic residential school in Sandy Bay. Although the school was near his family's house, he was only allowed to go home for school vacations. He was not allowed to speak Saulteaux, talk to his sisters (who were also at the school), or practice the spiritual traditions that were part of his life at home.

After graduating from high school in Winnipeg, Houle enrolled at the University of Manitoba, receiving a BA in art history in 1972. He also took classes at McGill University, in Montreal, pursuing an education degree with a focus on teaching art. While there, Houle began making paintings that were inspired by [abstraction](#) and the geometry of traditional Ojibwa designs.

In 1977 Houle took a position as a curator at the National Museum of Man in Ottawa (now the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau), becoming the first Indigenous curator of contemporary Indigenous art. However, Houle was troubled by the perception that Indigenous art was better suited to an ethnographic museum than an art gallery and by how the museum treated historical Indigenous artifacts, ignoring their spiritual significance. He resigned in 1980.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Houle lived in Toronto. He continued to make art that combined European modernism, his Saulteaux culture, and Indigenous spiritual practices. He was increasingly interested in abstract colour-field painting and in creating multidimensional art installations. He also curated exhibitions of works by contemporary Indigenous artists. Slowly, Indigenous art was being shown in art galleries rather than only in anthropological museums, and Houle was a critical contributor to important exhibitions as he fought to be acknowledged as a mainstream contemporary artist.

As Houle witnessed major protests and confrontations between Indigenous communities and Canadian institutions in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec in the 1980s and 1990s, his art became more overtly political. He began incorporating specific references to colonial history into his work, addressing treaty rights, Indigenous representation, and his own experiences at the Sandy Bay residential school. In the twenty-first century, he has continued to make art that foregrounds Indigenous experience and spirituality and to write about the work of other Indigenous contemporary artists.



Fig 3. Robert Houle, *Sandy Bay Residential School Series (The Morning)*, 2009. Houle created a series of works that explored the difficult experiences he endured in residential schools.

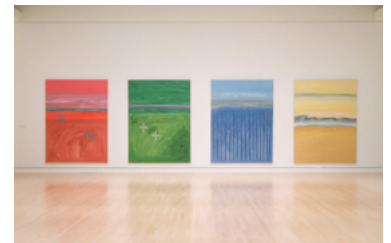


Fig 4. Robert Houle, *Muhnedobe uhyahyuk (Where the gods are present)*, 1989. These large abstract works were inspired by the Manitoba landscape.



Fig 5. Robert Houle, *Parfleches for the Last Supper (Matthew)*, 1983. Each parfleche in this work (which contains thirteen in total, one of which you see here) is named for an apostle, with one for Jesus Christ. It is a bicultural work bringing together two spiritual traditions: Saulteaux and Christianity.



Fig 6. Robert Houle, *Kanehsatake*, 1990–93. This work was inspired by Houle's response to the Oka Crisis, when Mohawks protested the encroachment of a golf course into their traditional territory and burial ground in Quebec.

NATIONAL & WORLD EVENTS



Fig 7. Leonard Marchand on the occasion of his election to Parliament.



Fig 8. Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Queen Elizabeth II sign the *Constitution Act* on April 17, 1982.



Fig 9. Closing ceremony of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at Rideau Hall in Ottawa, in 2015.

Treaty No. 1, the first of the Numbered Treaties, is signed. **1871**

The *Indian Act* is passed. With this act, the Canadian government consolidates and extends their control over many aspects of Indigenous life, including land and education. **1876**

First Nations people gain the right to vote in provincial elections in Manitoba. **1947**

On June 25, Leonard Marchand, a member of the Okanagan Indian Band, becomes the first Indigenous member of Parliament since Louis Riel. **1952**

Canada and Great Britain sign the *Constitution Act*, which recognizes and affirms existing aboriginal and treaty rights. **1953–1961**

Brian Mulroney initiates the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. **1968**

The final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples makes 440 recommendations to change the relationships between Indigenous peoples, non-Indigenous peoples, and governmental bodies in Canada. **1972**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission formally begins its work. **1975**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recognizes Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples as "cultural genocide" and offers ninety-four recommendations to amend relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Canada. **1977**

ROBERT HOULE'S LIFE

Robert Houle is born in St. Boniface, Manitoba.

Houle attends the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Hyacinth residential schools in Sandy Bay, Manitoba. In 1961 Houle begins attending Assiniboia Residential High School in Winnipeg.

Houle graduates from the University of Manitoba.

Houle graduates from McGill University in Montreal with an education degree and becomes an art teacher.

Houle becomes the curator of contemporary Indigenous art at the National Museum of Man in Ottawa.

Houle resigns from his position and dedicates himself to the equal representation of contemporary Indigenous art in institutions and in scholarship.

The Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG) hosts the first solo exhibition of Houle's work at a public art gallery, and he accepts a position as professor at OCAD, becoming the first person there to teach Indigenous studies.

Houle co-curates *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*.

Houle has a second solo exhibition at the WAG, *Sovereignty over Subjectivity*: it addresses land claims and cultural appropriation.

Houle becomes a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

Houle receives the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts.



Fig 10. Robert Houle painting *Sandy Bay* in 1999. Houle often revisited his residential school experiences in his art.

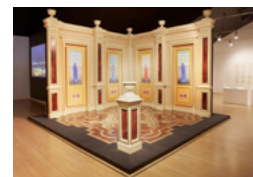


Fig 11. Robert Houle, *Paris/Ojibwa*, 2009–2010. An installation work that represents four Ojibwa dancers who travelled from Canada to Paris in 1845.



Fig 12. Robert Houle, *Everything You Wanted to Know about Indians from A to Z* (detail), 1985. For this work, Houle stencilled the letters of the alphabet onto twenty-six rawhide parfleches.



Fig 13. Cover of exhibition catalogue for *Land, Spirit, Power*, co-curated by Robert Houle, at the National Gallery of Canada in 1992.

LEARNING ACTIVITY #1

REVISITING WAYS OF REPRESENTING CANADIAN HISTORY

Canadian history often emphasizes French and British contributions and minimizes or ignores those of Indigenous populations. Benjamin West's painting *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, embodies this problematic narrative, a narrative that Robert Houle has confronted by appropriating the figure of the Indigenous warrior from West's painting and creating several art works, including *Kanata*, 1992, and *O-ween du muh waun (We Were Told)*, 2017. This activity is designed to explore the connections between these works and [decolonization](#), a concept which is important to Houle's art because, in the words of Shirley Madill, author of [Robert Houle: Life & Work](#), "Houle's intentions focus on forcing viewers to reconsider the colonial past," and he has visually asserted "an Indigenous account of a political history."

Note: If students have no knowledge of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, we recommend exploring the additional resources to provide the background story of these works.

Big Idea

Canadian history and Indigenous experiences

Learning Goals

1. I understand what it means to "marginalize" Indigenous experiences in historical representations.
2. I can explain the significance of decolonization for Robert Houle's work.
3. I can respectfully and thoughtfully analyze an artwork that is associated with decolonization.

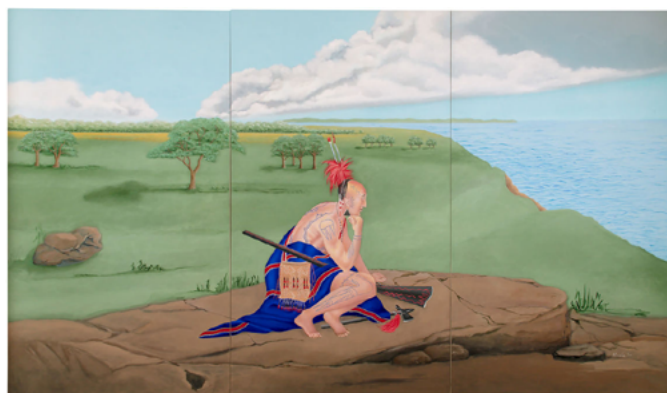


Fig 14. Robert Houle, *O-ween du muh waun (We Were Told)*, 2017. This painting was commissioned by the Confederation Art Centre in Charlottetown for Canada's 150th celebrations. It centres the Indigenous presence in Canada, effectively erasing colonial histories and making the audience question by and for whom history is written and whose voices are left out.

Materials

- Paper
- Pencils or pens
- [Robert Houle Image File](#)
- "Who Is Robert Houle?" biographic information sheet ([page 2](#))

Process

1. Begin by introducing students to Robert Houle using the biographic handout. Students should also be introduced to the terms "[decolonization](#)" and "[appropriation](#)" before continuing the activity.
2. Introduce *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, by Benjamin West. Emphasize that the painting represents a pivotal battle between the British and the French.
3. Houle's grandfather said, "Jiishin gegoo wiiseg maa akiing, Nishnaabe waabdaan" ("If history is going to happen, our people will witness it"). Introduce students to this quotation and explain that Indigenous experiences of Canadian history are critical to the works they will be exploring.

Learning Activity #1 Continued

4. Ask students to work in pairs to describe the Indigenous man (a Delaware warrior) in the foreground of *The Death of General Wolfe*. Emphasize that students should not speculate about how this person feels: they should focus on his position. Guiding questions for discussion could include the following:

- How is he behaving?
- How is he similar to and different from the other figures?
- How are other figures treating him?
- As outsiders who are viewing this scene, how do we see him?

5. As a class, review students' observations about *The Death of General Wolfe*. Students should recognize that it centres on European figures and places the Indigenous man at the outer edge, marginalizing him.

6. Show students *Kanata*, 1992, by Robert Houle. Ask students to work with their partners to compare *The Death of General Wolfe* and *Kanata*. Guiding questions for discussion could include the following:

- Why is it important that viewers recognize Houle's appropriation of West's painting? In other words, how would you feel about *Kanata* if you had not seen *The Death of General Wolfe* first?
- How would you describe the warrior in *Kanata*?

7. Ask students to compare *Kanata* and Houle's painting *O-ween du muh waun (We Were Told)* from 2017. Guiding questions for discussion could include the following:

- How do we recognize the warrior's figure in the latter work?
- What is significant about the erasure of the other figures and the depiction of the landscape?

8. Consider showing students Houle's comments about these works in *Robert Houle: Life & Work*. You can find his comments about *Kanata* in the [Key Works](#) chapter and his comments about *O-ween du muh waun (We Were Told)* in the "[Decolonization](#)" section of the Significance & Critical Issues chapter.



Fig 15. Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770. This painting depicts the death of the British general (September 13, 1759) on the Plains of Abraham—just outside the walls of Quebec City—during the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). The battle ultimately led to the British conquest of Quebec and victory in the war.

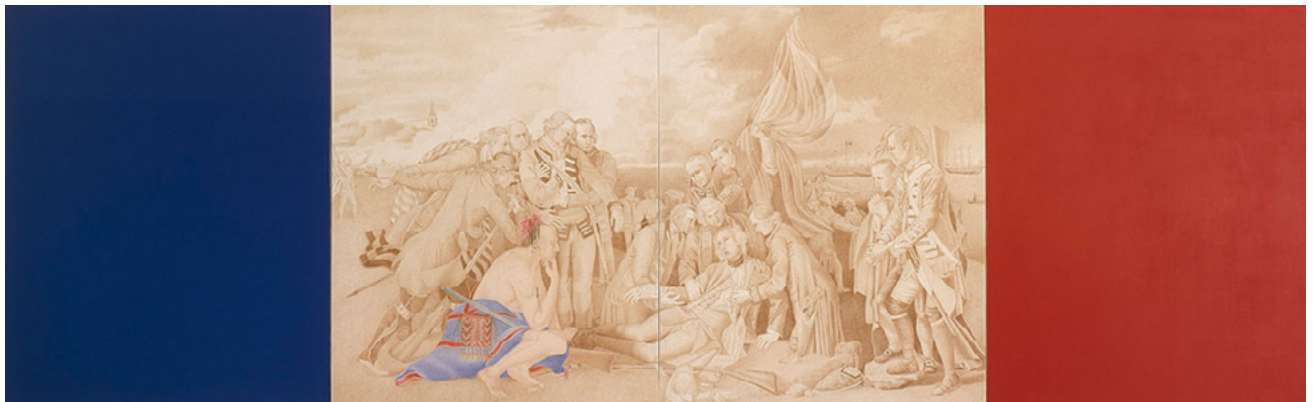


Fig 16. Robert Houle, *Kanata*, 1992. By focusing the viewer's attention on the Delaware warrior from West's painting, Houle emphasizes the place of First Nations in history and challenges representations of Indigenous peoples by non-Indigenous artists.

LEARNING ACTIVITY #2

EXPLORATION OF ROBERT HOULE'S *PREMISES FOR SELF-RULE: TREATY NO. 1*

This activity is designed to explore how Robert Houle's *Premises for Self-Rule: Treaty No. 1*, 1994, has responded to Treaty No. 1, an important colonial agreement between the Imperial Crown of Great Britain and Ireland and the Anishnabe and Swampy Cree nations. Signed in 1871, the accord was essentially about mutual obligations and peace and goodwill, but it also demonstrates that the government wanted land for settlers and First Nations were expected to cede their territories. There are ongoing controversies surrounding different understandings of the treaty and its implications, and it is important to emphasize that many treaty promises have been broken.

Note: If students have no knowledge of the numbered treaties, we encourage you to explore the additional resources and incorporate more discussion of them.

Big Idea

Understanding treaties as colonial texts

Learning Goals

1. I understand the significance of treaties.
2. I can define "colour-field painting."
3. I can describe the difference between understanding the importance of an artwork and admiring an artwork.

Materials

- Chart paper and markers or chalkboard and chalk
- Pencils or pens
- [Robert Houle Image File](#)
- Scrap paper and notepaper
- [Treaty No. 1 text](#) (see the external resources list on [page 12](#))



Fig 17. Robert Houle, *Premises for Self-Rule: Treaty No. 1*, 1994. Placing an archival image of warriors looking at a medicine bundle over the text of Treaty No. 1, Houle emphasizes the rights and histories of Indigenous peoples and subverts the legislation that was used to force Indigenous peoples to cede their territory and rights.

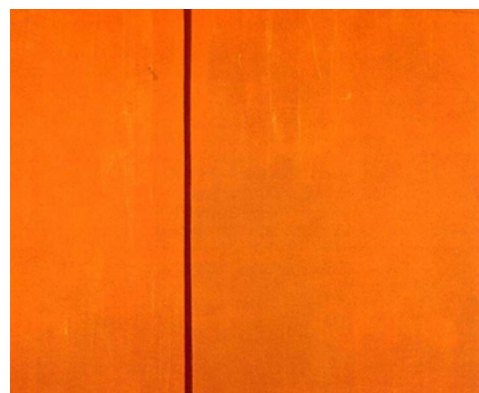


Fig 18. Barnett Newman, *Tundra*, 1950. Newman painted this bold field of colour after witnessing the great expanse of Canada's tundra. Houle's abstract paintings draw inspiration from Newman and similar colour-field painters.

Learning Activity #2 Continued

Process

1. Begin by asking students to read the first few paragraphs of Treaty No. 1. Encourage them to underline phrases that they think are important. Engage in a class discussion. What key passages did they highlight and why? What do these passages mean?
2. Introduce students to Houle's [Premises for Self-Rule: Treaty No. 1](#) from the [Key Works](#) chapter of *Robert Houle: Life & Work*. Explain that this work has three key elements:

- Selections from the treaty text that they have just read
- A photograph that was appropriated from a set of historic postcards
- A colour-field abstract painting, similar to Barnett Newman's *Tundra*, 1950

Emphasize that the photograph and the colour-field panel are deliberate creative strategies to confront the text of the treaty, which is partially hidden.

3. Ask students to write down on scrap paper what they think of the impact of *Premises for Self-Rule: Treaty No. 1*. Students should not write their names on the papers, but it is important that they write respectful comments. Comments can still be positive or negative: it is important to respect Houle's confrontation of the treaty text, but it is all right to find the work confusing (many people struggle to find meaning in abstract art).
4. Have students scrunch up their answers and toss them around the room, and then ask students to toss one of the papers that has landed near them again. (Depending on the age of the students, you may first wish to review what is acceptable when throwing things in class.)
5. When papers are thoroughly mixed up (such that students will not be able to tell who wrote what), ask students to choose papers, unfold them, and share what is written. Identify major themes and key words they have used and write them on the chart paper/blackboard: this list is an informal collective review.

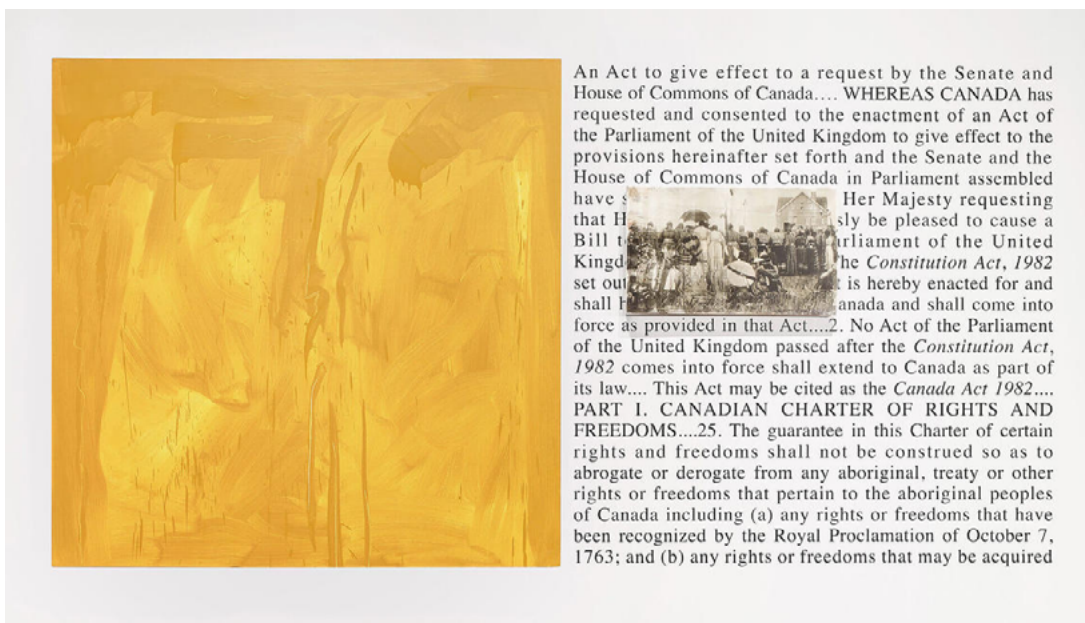


Fig 19. Robert Houle, *Premises for Self-Rule: Constitution Act, 1982, 1994*. This is another work in the series *Premises for Self-Rule*; it confronts the *Constitution Act*, another piece of legislation that is critical to Indigenous land rights.

CULMINATING TASK

CREATIVE RESPONSE TO A TREATY TEXT

In this culminating task, students will work together to research a treaty that is relevant to their local community and create an artwork to demonstrate their reflections on their personal connections to the treaty. Students will need previous experience in analyzing a variety of primary and secondary sources and synthesizing this knowledge.

Big Idea

Recognizing treaties as shared cultural heritage

Learning Goals

1. I understand the importance of treaties for all Canadians.
2. I can express my personal connection to a treaty through visual art.
3. I can describe my ongoing responsibilities to participate in treaties.

Success Criteria

To be added to, reduced, or changed in collaboration with students.

1. Project demonstrates understanding of the concept of treaties.
2. Research notes demonstrate learning about a treaty relevant to the local community.
3. Artwork clearly communicates a central idea about a personal connection to the treaty.
4. Written work clearly communicates artistic decisions and the rationale behind personal artwork.
5. Written work is thoughtful, clear, and edited.



Fig 20. Robert Houle, *Aboriginal Title*, 1989–90. This work highlights four critical dates in Canadian and Indigenous history.

Materials

- Access to online and print resources
- Access to printers
- Art materials (markers, pencil crayons, pastels, paints, etc.)
- Copies of a treaty (see “Treaty Texts” links on [page 12](#))
- Paper
- Pencils or pens
- Poster board
- Standardized cards (5 × 8 in. suggested)

Culminating Task Continued

Process

1. Give students the text of a treaty that is important to the local community (you can provide only the opening paragraphs, but it is important that students have at least three paragraphs to read and analyze).
2. Have students research the significance of the treaty. Inform students that they will be handing in their research notes, so their notes must be legible and identify sources. As part of their research, ask students to identify a phrase within the treaty that is important to them.
3. Have students share their research in small groups. Ask each small group to decide on one phrase or sentence from the treaty that they feel is especially important.
4. Bring the class back together, and have each small group share the phrase or sentence that they chose. Discuss these selections together, and as a class, decide on a single passage from the treaty to which the entire class will creatively respond.
5. Give students standardized cards and ask them to use the card to create an artwork that demonstrates their individual connection and obligation to the treaty. Students can use their cards for paintings, drawings, or collages as long as they do not change the size of the card. Explain to students that the cards will be displayed alongside the treaty text they have chosen. Emphasize that the card should be about the student's personal identity, community, and connection to the treaty text. Houle has confronted colonial treaties and legislation about land as an Indigenous artist, and his identity is fundamental to his work. Every student will approach this project differently, depending on their own background. It is important that students do **not** copy Houle's approach, though they may experiment with mediums he has used.
6. Before they hand in their cards, have students write short artist statements about what they attempted to achieve in their works; they should submit these statements along with their cards and research notes.
7. Arrange students' cards and display them alongside the passage they chose and their artist statements for the school community to view.



Fig 21. Robert Houle, *Coming Home*, 1995. This work was included in an important exhibition of Houle's work titled *Sovereignty over Subjectivity*, organized by the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 1999.

HOW ROBERT HOULE MAKES ART: STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Here are a few of the important artistic concepts that characterize the art of Robert Houle. For more information see the [Style & Technique](#) chapter of *Robert Houle: Life & Work*.

ABSTRACTION

Two of Houle's major artistic influences—[modernist](#) art and his Saulteaux culture—come together in his [abstract](#) paintings. Both of these traditions include geometric designs and use shape and colour to express spiritual or emotional experiences. For modernists like the Dutch artist Piet Mondrian, who used primary colours and a strict grid to organize his paintings, abstract work based on simple geometry was a way to express a “pure” or singular idea. Houle complicates this idea by adding designs and colours of great importance to him as a Saulteaux artist, creating a bridge between two forms of art that have historically been seen as separate.



Fig 22. Robert Houle, *Love Games*, 1972. This is one of twelve paintings by Houle based on love poems written by his friend Brenda Gureshko.



Fig 23. Robert Houle, *Red Is Beautiful*, 1970. The geometric patterns in this painting were inspired by designs used in traditional Ojibwa woven bags.

SPIRITUALITY

For Houle, art is a way to express the spiritual traditions that he grew up with and that continue to play an important role in his life. When he worked at the National Museum of Man, seeing sacred objects treated as if they no longer held spiritual significance deeply affected him, and many of his art works assert the life of these objects. Houle has emphasized the importance of items that are central to [Anishnabe](#) rituals and spiritual life, such as [parfleches](#) and spirit poles, casting them as part of contemporary Indigenous experience rather than as relics of the past.

ART INSTALLATIONS

Since the 1980s, Houle has combined painting and drawing, sculpture, sound, and texts to create multidimensional art installations that explore specific places and their history. For these works, Houle begins by looking closely at the history of the place where his installation will be located. His research has led him to explore connections between historic figures and specific sites, political and social functions of public spaces (especially institutional spaces), and the spiritual significance of sites. Houle's research then informs his art installations, and by transforming spaces, they bring together past and present.

HISTORY

Through his work, Houle has critiqued the way that non-Indigenous people have used Indigenous names and representations to erase the experiences of Indigenous people in North America. This type of historical work involves extensive research: Houle travels to archives to find historical documents related to treaty negotiations, reads books, and gathers images and references from diverse sources, from advertisements to historical works of art. The materials he collects often become the basis of particular works.



Fig 24. Robert Houle, *Parfleches for the Last Supper*, 1983. This work was inspired by Houle's devotion to the appropriate representation of Indigenous cultural objects, art, and artists in Canadian museums and galleries. It also attempts to reconcile Houle's Saulteaux traditions, like the Sun Dance ceremony, with Christian beliefs.



Fig 25. Robert Houle, *Seven Grandfathers*, 2013. Here, each drum painting corresponds to an animal spirit and imparts one of the seven sacred teachings in Anishnabe culture.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Supplementary Materials Provided by the Art Canada Institute

- The online art book *Robert Houle: Life & Work* by Shirley Madill: <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/robert-houle>
- [Robert Houle Image File](#) with artworks and images related to this lesson
- “Who Is Robert Houle?” biographic information sheet ([page 2](#))
- Timelines of national and world events and Robert Houle’s life ([page 3](#))
- “How Robert Houle Makes Art: Style & Technique” information sheet ([page 10](#))

GLOSSARY

Here is a list of terms that appear in this resource guide and are relevant to the learning activities and culminating task. For a comprehensive list of art-related terms, visit the Art Canada Institute’s ever-growing [Glossary of Canadian Art History](#).

Anishinaabe/Anishnabe

A collective term that means “the people” or “original people” and refers to a number of interconnected communities such as the Ojibway/Ojibwa/Ojibwé, Odawa, Chippewa, Saulteaux, Mississauga, Potawatomi, and others. In Canada, the Anishinaabe/Anishnabe region includes areas of Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. Robert Houle notes that, as a speaker, he prefers the spelling “Anishnabe” (as opposed to “Anishinaabe”). The spelling of certain words in this guide relates to Houle’s home or geographical location and follows Saulteaux; however, the spelling of names and terms related to other Indigenous identities varies.

abstract art

Visual art that uses form, colour, line, and gestural marks in compositions that do not attempt to represent images of real things. Abstract art may interpret reality in an altered form, or depart from it entirely. Also called nonfigurative or nonrepresentational art.

appropriation

Appropriation means taking something for your own use, and appropriation is not necessarily problematic. For example, many artists have appropriated printed images to use in collages or other mixed media images. In contrast, “cultural appropriation” is extremely problematic: as Shirley Madill explains, it “refers to a power dynamic in which members of a dominant culture take elements from a culture of people who have been systematically oppressed.”

colour-field painting

A term first used to describe Abstract Expressionist works that use simplified or minimalist forms of flat or nuanced colour, as in paintings by Morris Louis. It was later applied to works by such artists as Kenneth Noland and Barnett Newman in the United States and Jack Bush in Canada, whose geometric or abstract motifs highlight variations in colour. Post-Painterly Abstraction, a description coined by the critic Clement Greenberg, includes colour-field painting.

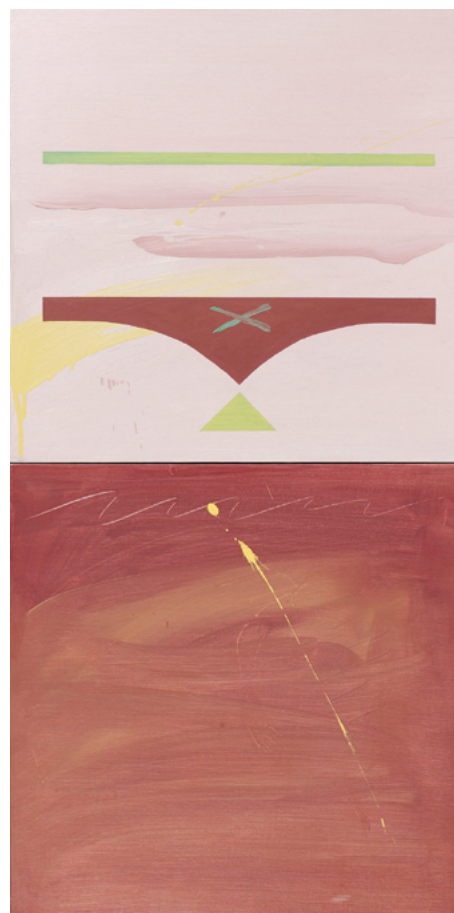


Fig 26. Robert Houle, *Parfleche for Edna Manitowabi*, 1999. In this painting Houle pays homage to an important Indigenous artist through the spiritual object of the parfleche.

decolonization

Decolonization has been defined in different ways, but fundamentally it is about confronting colonialism (including colonialism in the present), challenging it, and undermining it, a process that can be empowering. Decolonization can take many different forms: it can be a personal transformation; a literal repatriation of land, goods, or cultural objects; or a visual or symbolic change within a space, institution, or community.

modernism

A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in all the arts, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society. Modernist movements in the visual arts have included Gustave Courbet's Realism and, later, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.

parfleche

A light and durable rawhide pouch used by Plains Indigenous peoples to carry sacred objects, food, and personal items. A parfleche is often made from a single piece of dried, untanned animal skin that is folded and laced together with leather strings. The term may also refer to bags, often decorated, made from rawhide.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

The following external resources can be used to augment the learning activities and materials provided by the Art Canada Institute. They are to be used at the teacher's own discretion.

Deepening Knowledge Project: OISE's Aboriginal Peoples Curricula Database

Resources for and about Aboriginal education

<https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge/>

You may also find advice from OISE on inviting an Elder to your classroom

here: [https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge/Teacher_Resources/Curriculum_Resources_\(by_subjects\)/Social_Sciences_and_Humanities/Elders.html](https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge/Teacher_Resources/Curriculum_Resources_(by_subjects)/Social_Sciences_and_Humanities/Elders.html)

Treaty Texts, published by the Government of Canada

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1370373165583/1370373202340>

Treaty Texts—Treaties No. 1 and No. 2, published by the Government of Canada

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100028664/1100100028665>

Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba

<http://www.trcm.ca/>

"Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*," by Dr. Bryan Zygmunt

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-americas/british-colonies/colonial-period/a/benjamin-wests-the-death-of-general-wolfe>



Fig 27. Robert Houle, *Parfleche for Norval Morrisseau*, 1999. For this painting, Houle carefully chose the colour to represent the influential artist Norval Morrisseau. Houle's words, "What better way to recognize people who have played a significant role in my life?"

FIGURE LIST

Every effort has been made to secure permissions for all copyrighted material. The Art Canada Institute will gladly correct any errors or omissions.

Fig 1. Robert Houle, *Muhnedobe uhyahyuk (Where the gods are present) (Matthew)*, 1989, oil on canvas, one of four paintings, each 244 x 182.4 x 5 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1992 (36168.1-4). Courtesy of the artist. © Robert Houle.

Fig 2. Robert Houle in 2015 with his triptych *Colours of Love*, 2015, photograph by Patti Ross Milne.

Fig 3. Robert Houle, *Sandy Bay Residential School Series (The Morning)*, 2009, oilstick on paper, one of twenty-four drawings, each 58.4 x 76.2 cm or 76.2 x 58.4 cm. School of Art Gallery, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, purchased with funds from York Wilson Endowment Award (13.069 to 13.092). Courtesy of the artist. © Robert Houle.

Fig 4. Robert Houle, *Muhnedobe uhyahyuk (Where the gods are present)*, 1989, oil on canvas, four paintings, each 244 x 182.4 x 5 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1992 (36168.1-4). Courtesy of the artist. © Robert Houle.

Fig 5. Robert Houle, *Parfleches for the Last Supper (Matthew)*, 1983, acrylic and porcupine quills on paper, thirteen paintings, each 56 x 56 cm. Winnipeg Art Gallery, gift of Mr. Carl T. Grant, Artvest Inc., (G-86-460 to G-86-472). © Robert Houle.

Fig 6. Robert Houle, *Kanehsatake*, 1990–93, oil on etched steel panels, treated wood, 221 x 122 cm. Art Gallery of Hamilton, gift of the artist, 1994 (1994.40). © Robert Houle.

Fig 7. Leonard Marchand on the occasion of his election to Parliament, 1968. Courtesy Vancouver Sun.

Fig 8. Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Queen Elizabeth II sign the *Constitution Act* on April 17, 1982. © The Canadian Press/Ron Poling.

Fig 9. Closing ceremony of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015. Courtesy Aboriginal Multi-Media Society.

Fig 10. Robert Houle painting *Sandy Bay* in 1999. Houle often revisited his residential school experiences in his art, photograph by David Recollet, archive of the artist.

Fig 11. Robert Houle, *Paris/Ojibwa*, 2009–2010, multimedia installation: painted plywood, 4 panels oil on canvas, USB key containing video projection and sound component, installed: 358 x 488 x 488 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Robert Houle, 2020, 2020/3. © Robert Houle. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.

Fig 12. Robert Houle, *Everything You Wanted to Know about Indians from A to Z (detail)*, 1985, acrylic, rawhide, wood, and linen, installation of twenty-six objects, 45.3 x 735 cm. Winnipeg Art Gallery, acquired with funds from The Winnipeg Art Gallery Foundation Inc. (G-89-1501 a-cc). Detail image courtesy of McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton. © Robert Houle.

Fig 13. Cover of *Land, Spirit, Power* exhibition catalogue, 1992. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Fig 14. Robert Houle, *O-ween du muh waun (We Were Told)*, 2017, oil on canvas, triptych, 213.4 x 365.8 cm. Confederation Centre Art Gallery, Charlottetown, commissioned with the A.G. and Eliza Jane Ramsden Endowment Fund, 2017. Courtesy of the artist. © Robert Houle.

Fig 15. Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, oil on canvas, 152.6 x 214.5 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift of the 2nd Duke of Westminster to the Canadian War Memorials, 1918; Transfer from the Canadian War Memorials, 1921 (8007).

Fig 16. Robert Houle, *Kanata*, 1992, acrylic and Conté crayon on canvas, 228.7 x 732 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1994 (37479.1-4). Courtesy of the artist. © Robert Houle.

Fig 17. Robert Houle, *Premises for Self-Rule: Treaty No. 1*, 1994, oil on canvas, photo emulsion on canvas, laser cut vinyl, 152.4 x 304.8 cm. Winnipeg Art Gallery, acquired with funds from the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program (G-96-11 abc). © Robert Houle.

Fig 18. Barnett Newman, *Tundra*, 1950, oil on canvas, 182.3 x 226.1 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Artstack. © The Barnett Newman Foundation.

Fig 19. Robert Houle, *Premises for Self-Rule: Constitution Act, 1982*, 1994, oil on canvas, photo emulsion on canvas, laser cut vinyl, 152.4 x 304.8 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased with funds from the Estate of Mary Eileen Ash, 2014 (2014/1). © Robert Houle.

Fig 20. Robert Houle, *Aboriginal Title*, 1989–90, oil on canvas, 228 x 167.6 cm. Art Gallery of Hamilton, purchased with funds from the Alfred Wavell Peene and Susan Nottle Peene Memorial, 1992 (1992.3). © Robert Houle.

Fig 21. Robert Houle, *Coming Home*, 1995, oil on photo emulsion on canvas, 76.2 x 254 cm. Private collection. Courtesy of the Winnipeg Art Gallery. © Robert Houle. Photo credit: Ernest Mayer.

Fig 22. Robert Houle, *Love Games*, 1972, acrylic on canvas, 127.5 x 127.5 cm. Indigenous Art Centre, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Gatineau.

Fig 23. Robert Houle, *Red Is Beautiful*, 1970, acrylic on canvas, 45 x 61 cm. Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau (V-F-174). © Robert Houle.

Fig 24. Robert Houle, *Parfleches for the Last Supper*, 1983, (*Matthew, James the Less, Jude, Simon, Philip, Andrew, Bartholomew, Thomas, Peter, James, John, Judas, Jesus*), acrylic and porcupine quills on paper, thirteen paintings, each 56 x 56 cm. Winnipeg Art Gallery, gift of Mr. Carl T. Grant, Artvest Inc., (G-86-460 to G-86-472). © Robert Houle.

Fig 25. Robert Houle, *Seven Grandfathers*, 2013, oil on canvas, digital prints, Mylar, watercolour on paper, seven site-specific works, each 20.3 cm (diameter). Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased with assistance of the Martinsell Fund, 2016, 2015/38.1-14. © Robert Houle. Installation view of *Seven Grandfathers*, 2014, at Walker Court, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, photograph by Dean Tomlinson.

Fig 26. Robert Houle, *Parfleche for Edna Manitowabi*, 1999, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 50.8 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of McMaster Museum of Art. © Robert Houle. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.

Fig 27. Robert Houle, *Parfleche for Norval Morrisseau*, 1999, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 50.8 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of McMaster Museum of Art. © Robert Houle. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.