



The annual Aboriginal Arts & Stories deadline is March 31. Please note that the contest accepts submissions year-round; post-deadline, submissions will be considered for the following year's contest. The contest is open to Canadians of Indigenous ancestry (self-identified, Status, Non-Status, Inuit, and Métis) between the ages of 9 and 29. We ask Indigenous youth to create a piece of writing (max. 1,000 words) or art that explores Indigenous heritage or culture.

Your entry into the Aboriginal Arts & Stories competition must include a 200-400 word writer's statement that explains how your piece explores Indigenous heritage and culture and tells us a little about yourself. The prompts in the Writer's Statement section are guidelines; you may choose to express yourself differently.

You may enter online at our-story.ca or by mail.



▲ The group of Cree youth that walked 1600 kilometers from their home in Whapmagoostui, Quebec to bring attention to Indigenous issues at the end of their journey on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ontario. Part of the Idle No More Protest. ID 30051673 © Paul Mckinnon | Dreamstime.com

ACTIVITY 1: Standing Your Ground

A. Introduction to the Project Idea

Indigenous people have faced many challenges over the last 150 years, including racism, residential schools, the loss of their lands, and the loss of their rights. Throughout that history, however, Indigenous people have stood up for themselves, protesting and fighting for justice.

Write a piece about a time that an Indigenous person (or group of people) stood up for their rights. This could be an event from Canadian history, such as the story of Louis Riel, or a modern issue like protecting the resources of a traditional territory. It could be the story of one person's fight, like Elijah Harper, who stood alone to reject the Meech Lake Accord, or Nora Bernard, who was one of the first to bring the issue of residential schools to the courts. It could also be a small act done by a friend or neighbour. Your writing may be fiction or non-fiction.

B. Process: Understanding, Thinking and Writing

1. Research past events that are important examples of how Indigenous people have stood up for their rights. You can focus your research on your local area, or on another Indigenous community. You may already have some ideas, or you may want to do some additional research by talking to family members, community members, or other adults.
2. Think about what style you will use for your writing. Here are some suggestions:
 - A newspaper article reporting on an event, the actions of an individual, or a group. Imagine you are a reporter on the scene.

- A biographical piece about a person that has inspired you by standing their ground. For example, Kahn-Tineta Horn, the leaders of the Idle No More movement (Nina Wilson, Sheelah Mclean, Sylvia McAdam, and Jessica Gordon), Deskaheh (also known as Levi General), Frank Calder, or Louis Riel.
- A fictional story of a person involved in an event. You might imagine yourself standing beside a great leader or marching with others in a protest.
- A story about what makes a person take action and stand up for their rights. What triggers the protagonist to take action? How do they stand their ground?

See the Alternative Writing Styles Guide for other ideas.

C. Writing Your Story

1. Write your first draft. Make sure you give a clear picture of what the injustice was and why the person (or people) felt they had to speak out. Check to make sure your piece fits the style you have chosen. For example, a newspaper article should just report the facts, but a fictional story could include characters' inner thoughts.
2. Think about what feelings your writing may evoke. Will a reader be inspired? Will they be angry? Will they understand something important about Indigenous rights and justice?
3. Revise the draft of your story and write a final version to submit.

D. Writer's Statement: 200–400 words

I wrote about this person/group/series of events because...

I find this period of history inspiring because...

This is an example of Indigenous people standing up for their rights because...

ACTIVITY 2: Respecting Mentors and Elders

A. Introduction to the Project Idea

Elders and mentors are some of the most important people in Indigenous communities. People show them respect and listen to their knowledge. Elders are often spiritual leaders and pass along lessons to younger people. Mentors are community members who show leadership skills, but may not be formally considered Elders. Anyone you look up to can be considered a mentor.



▲ Blackfoot Elders opening the traditional Indigenous Village at the Calgary Stampede in Calgary, Alberta. A Blackfoot ceremony is held daily. Photo taken on July 10, 2005. 36643179 © Jeff Whyte | Dreamstime.com

B. Process: Understanding, Thinking and Writing

Explore the roles Elders and mentors play in your community by writing about respecting Elders or learning lessons from Elders and mentors. You may want to write about an Elder or mentor you know and show how they inspire you. You could also write a fictional story in which people showing respect to an Elder or mentor plays a significant role.

1. What are some qualities that Elders or mentors usually have? You may think of Elders who you know, or you can find other ideas in books or online. How do these qualities help support Indigenous communities and their culture?
2. What is respect? Think about what it means to you. What are some ways that people show respect to one another? Why is respect important?
3. Think about an Elder or mentor that you know. How do people in your community show them respect? Have they ever helped you or given you advice? What feelings arise when you think about the Elders or mentors who have guided you or your community?
4. Make a concept map to come up with ideas for your writing. Put *Respecting Elders and Mentors* in a circle in the middle of the page. Connect words to the circle that this topic brings to mind. Add links between words and connect new words as your ideas grow. Then, decide what your story will be about. Will you write about an Elder you know? Or will you write a fictional story in which people show respect? Think about the audience for your story. Who are you writing for?



▲ *Grandma*, Catherine Blackburn, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Patuanak. Aboriginal Arts & Stories Winner, 2013.

C. Writing Your Story

1. Create your writing. It can be in any form you choose, including a story, a poem, a letter, or a play.
2. Write your first draft. Use the audience you decided on (who this writing is for) to guide you. Think about the feelings and ideas that you are trying to communicate and the important ideas you are trying to pass along.
3. Revise your draft story to make it ready for submission. Does it show the importance of Elders to your community? Does it reflect the idea of respecting Elders and mentors?

D. Writer's Statement: 200–400 words

This Elder/mentor is significant to me because...

I believe that Elders and mentors are vital to our communities because...

ACTIVITY 3: Following Trails

A. Introduction to the Project Idea

What is a trail? It might be a pathway through the forest that crosses your traditional territory. It could be a journey taken by a group of Indigenous people at some time in their history. It may be more of an idea, a path opened up by an Indigenous role model or leader for others to follow. Decide what this topic means to you and follow your own path to create an original piece of writing.



Trailblazer and award-winning Inuit Throat Singer Tanya Tagaq. ID 19854327 © Howard Sandler Dreamstime.com

B. Process: Understanding, Thinking and Writing

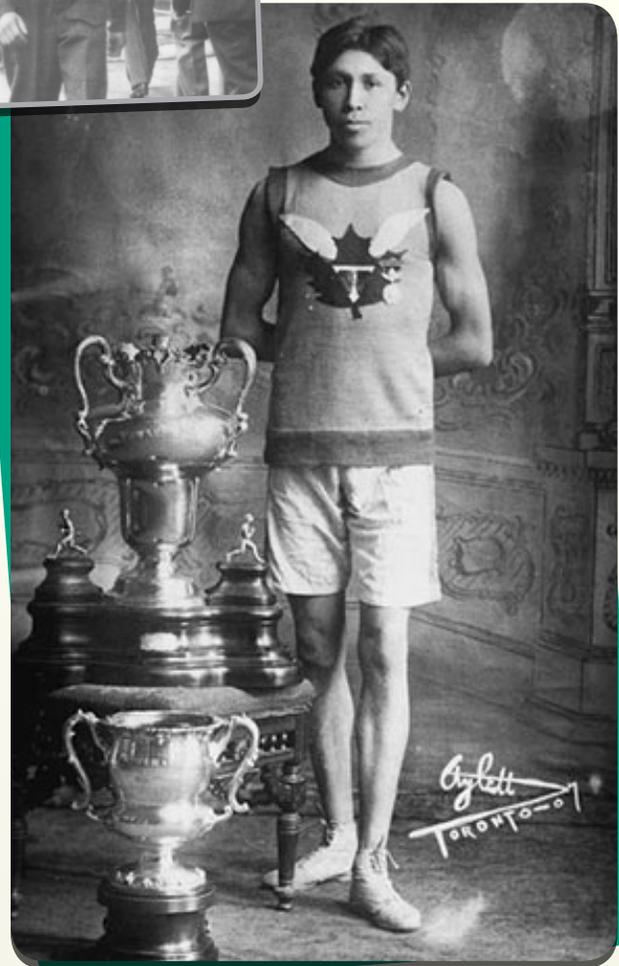
Create a piece of writing on the theme “following trails.” Make connections between the theme and your understanding or experience of Indigenous culture and heritage. You can interpret the theme in any way that inspires you.

1. Brainstorm what “following trails” means to you. What type of trail are you referring to? Is it a nature trail or an animal trail? Maybe it isn't a literal trail, but a conceptual or metaphorical path taken by a person. Can you have a trail in your imagination? When could following a trail be a good thing? Could it be bad or dangerous? What risks might there be if you follow it? What is at the end of a trail?
2. Think about trails metaphorically. A trail doesn't have to be a real path you can walk down. Research Indigenous people who are known as “trailblazers.” That is, people who are among the first to accomplish something. By doing so, they open up new opportunities for others to follow. Are there any trails that you might follow?
3. How can you create a story that has a trail that is both a real path and a metaphor? What might your characters learn by following this trail?
4. After you have explored ways to develop this theme, jot down some ideas for a story. Will it be fiction or will it tell the story of a real person who has inspired you? Remember to make connections with Indigenous culture and heritage and choose a style that suits your ideas. It could be a letter to a role model, a poem about a dream, or a well-plotted story about you and your friends following a trail. Check out [Alternative Writing Styles](#) for inspiration.



◀ Alex van Bibber, Private Alex van Bibber on his first day in uniform. 19 August 1944. Photo from [The Memory Project](#) archive.

▼ Tom Longboat, runner, with his marathon trophies, c 1907 (courtesy Library and Archives Canada/C-014090).



C. Writing Your Story

1. Write your first draft. Some writers like to make an outline first, while others like to jump right in and see where the story takes them.
2. Read over your first draft. Can you improve it by making parts clearer, using more action verbs, or adding some description?
3. Revise your story and write a final version for submission.

D. Writer's Statement: 200–400 words

The theme “following trails” inspired me to write about...

I believe it's important to follow the trails of others because...

“Following trails” means _____ to me because...

ACTIVITY 4: Trickster Tales

A. Introduction to the Project Idea

Most Indigenous cultures in Canada include stories about a character known as the Trickster. The Trickster has many names: Coyote, Glooscap, Iktomi, Nanabush or Nanabozho, Raven, Wisakedjak. Each culture's Trickster has its own name and qualities, but the Tricksters do share some quirky habits and personality traits.

Tricksters usually show both the best and worst human qualities. The Trickster can be brilliantly smart one moment and utterly foolish the next. Frequent bragging, greed, and even failing at their own tricks are all common Trickster characteristics. Other times, the Trickster is a creative force bringing shape to the world or teaching new ideas and skills to humans. Usually the Trickster character can transform shape, appearing as a human, an animal, or even a supernatural being.

B. Process: Understanding, Thinking and Writing

Create a modern story including a character who shares some qualities with a Trickster. The qualities you pick should play a major role in the plot of the story. The story should also have some other connection with Indigenous culture and heritage.

1. Do you know the Trickster who is important in your Indigenous culture? Do some research to find some stories about the Trickster in a specific Indigenous culture. You may want to find out about other Tricksters to compare them. You can research Tricksters online, in books, or perhaps by speaking to members of your community.
2. Make a list of some of the main qualities of the Trickster. Which of the qualities do people also sometimes possess? Pick one or two qualities that you think would be interesting to give to a character in your story.
3. Develop ideas for a story. It will be a story about a person who acts in some way like a Trickster. However, it won't be a traditional Trickster story. You will create your own characters and write a story about what happens to them. For example, you could have a boy that is extremely greedy, or a mother who teaches something new to her children.
4. Decide if the Trickster will be the main character, or if they will do something that affects your main character. What other characters will be in your story? What different qualities will they have?
5. Develop the plot for your story. What kind of trouble do your characters get into? What do they do to solve their problems? What is the setting of the story? Where does it take place? Try to make connections with Indigenous culture and heritage in some way when imagining the setting.

C. Writing your Story

Write your story. Have fun explaining what happens to your characters.

1. Write your first draft. Imagine the story in your mind's eye: try to see what the characters are doing and saying.
2. Read over your first draft. Do your characters have strong, distinctive personalities? Can you add to it by including things like sounds and smells that help make the setting come alive?
3. Revise your story and write a final version to submit.

D. Writer's Statement: 200–400 words

I researched a specific Trickster before I wrote my story and I learned about...

I chose to write about a Trickster who illustrates a lesson about...

An important lesson that I have learned from a Trickster story is...



Haida raven. ID 27321300
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