

## The Kanaka – the Hawaiians of Salt Spring Island

Subject: Humanities, Social Studies and/or English

Grade levels: Upper Elementary to Secondary

These activities have been left somewhat open-ended so that they can be adapted to a variety of ages and purposes.

Overview:

This unit focuses on the History of the Kanaka and their immigration to the Pacific Northwest, with the emphasis being their role in early pioneer history of Salt Spring Island and surrounding areas.

The Kanaka were one of many groups who settled in the Pacific Northwest. For years the historical focus was on the *events* such as exploration of the area by explorers and later settlement through the fur trade and gold rush. Learning about the lives of the pioneers wasn't emphasized. Hopefully, these teaching materials and ideas will enable your students to gain a broader perspective or picture of the past.

Note: the singular ***Kanaka*** means human being, the plural is also ***Kanaka***, although some reference materials use the English plural, Kanakas.

Purpose:

- To gain an appreciation that the Pacific Northwest was not just discovered and developed by explorers and the companies they represented. To foster awareness that history is made up of the stories of all of the people involved in the events.
- To learn the role played by the Kanaka.
- To personalize history and enable students to apply concepts to their own familial history.

### **Reading about the Kanaka and discussion of their importance:**

There are a number of excellent books available (see reference list). However, many of the activities suggested here can be based on the Kanaka timeline and articles by Tom Koppel and Jean Barman together with the information, pictures and files on the SSI archive website.

Suggested approach: Print one or both articles to read together in class as a starting point. Note: the Barman article is suited to older students; the vocabulary is more difficult. It should be read with the class and discussed to ensure comprehension. Hand out the Kanaka timeline and discuss.

Vocabulary Development: As a part of vocabulary development and reading comprehension have students complete the vocabulary sheets and crossword puzzle(s) for the article(s) you have selected.

Discussion and comprehension questions: Complete as written questions or use as discussion questions only. Note: Teachers should pick and choose questions that are relevant to their desired focus. They may/should be adapted to suit the class.

Worksheets or organizers included:

- Comparison/Contrast of 18-19<sup>th</sup> century Hawaii and Salt Spring Island – the intention here is so that students can see that there were differences but also similarities (ie both are islands, both used water/boats as a mode of transport, both had Pidgin type languages later replaced by English...)
- Kanaka organizer or fact gathering sheet which may be used with audio files, articles or books on the Kanaka
- Interview Analysis sheet for students to make notes while listening to audio files.
- 2 Diary/Journal sheets wherein students imagine what life might have been like
- Vocabulary sheet and crossword puzzle to assist students with the *Multicultural Canada: Hawaiians* article by Jean Barman (The link to this article can be found at bottom of Tom Koppel's article).
- Vocabulary sheet and crossword for Tom Koppel's article *Salt Spring's Hawaiian Community*. See the Kanaka section of the Multicultural Unit.
- Crossword puzzle on places and names around Salt Spring based on Tom Koppel's article *Salt Spring's Hawaiian Community*
- Biography unit - Biographies Of Salt Spring Island Pioneers (Teachers elsewhere should feel free to change this title and references to SSI to suite their locality.)

Follow-up Activities:

- Have students research and present reports on the books available on the topic. (Brief notes have been provided to indicate difficulty in reading levels in the reference list.)
- Have students search the Salt Spring Archive website for photos, family trees, audio files, St. Paul's church information as well as cemetery information. These activities will give students an appreciation of how historians research a topic. Discuss the difference between primary and secondary sources.

**Audio Files:** Interviewing, Listening to & Extracting Information from recorded interviews:

There are numerous audio files or interviews on the Salt Spring Island Archive website. These interviews give us a recorded, personalized version of the oral history of a family' or individual's life. Some are more factual, while others may include more 'folk' of family history. A topic that should be discussed with the class is verifying, where possible, the story with other sources. This could be part of an overall discussion of how

historians carry out research. Ideally this and related activities will give students an appreciation that history is made up of the actions of people, it is not just words on a page.

Purpose:

- Gain insight into and appreciation of interviews.
- Gain knowledge about the actual lives of people in the past.

Listening to a tape and extracting information from it can be rewarding and entertaining in that it makes history come alive, but also quite daunting, especially for the younger student. There is the reality that students may have to repeatedly play and/or stop the file. For this reason, it is helpful to have a generalized worksheet where notes can be written down so that students can effectively summarize or comment on the interview. (Perhaps preselect significant sections.)

Listen to Tom Koppel's presentation to the SSI Historical Society (Audio Files 46-1 and possibly 125). Discuss.

Assign the Roland interview. If completed as a class activity, select sections of the audio file. Hand out interview analysis sheet and printout of "obituary" of W. Naukana.

Discuss.

Pre-activity. Discuss what type questions are valid and useful to ask in an interview. Talk about open-ended questions i.e. "Could you tell me a bit about your grandfather, where he was born, his childhood, etc."

Extension or follow-up activities for students:

1. Interviews: Students research a Kanaka and then present a mock interview of the individual. This could be presented to the class or recorded as a radio interview. (Reader's Theatre)  
Follow-up — Students interview member(s) of their family to research their family history.
2. Timelines: (Create a timeline from the interview i.e. year of birth, date they came to the island, etc.) This activity works with personal interviews as well as overall for the Hawaiians. Pre-Activity: the Timeline History of the Hawaiians.  
Follow-up — Students write personal timelines for themselves and their family based on family interviews. See Timeline unit in Salt Spring Island Archives' lesson plan—*Putting Yourself into History*
3. Family Trees: (example: The Roland family has a family tree, traced through their ancestor, William Naukana) Show this family tree to the class as a basis for discussion. Follow-up — Students develop family trees for their own family. See Family Tree unit in Salt Spring Island Archives' lesson plan—*Putting Yourself into History*

4. Biographies: There is considerable information on some Kanaka pioneers. As a part of a larger unit on all Salt Spring Island Pioneers, use the two-page unit entitled, *Biographies of Salt Spring Island Pioneers*.  
Follow-up — Students pick a member of their family to write a short biography.  
Discussion – what to include in a biography, getting permission from the person ahead of time.
5. Journals/Diaries: Involve students in imagining the daily lives of the people they are studying, writing diary entries or journals. For example, a journal for a Kanaka-from the point of departure from Hawaii to his arrival in the Pacific Northwest. What was his life in Hawaii like? What was the weather like? Did he live by the ocean? Was he a good swimmer? What prompted him to go? What was life like on the boat? Was he homesick? Was he frightened? What did he think about the weather when he arrived? Who did they meet when they got here? What language did they speak? What problems did he have communicating? Read Susan Dobbie’s book, *When Eagles Call*. This is its theme. (Note: the Kanaka were illiterate, but they had oral traditions. Discuss with students that the purpose of this activity is to try to put them into “history” to feel or experience what they think it might have been like. Their job is to first find out as much factual information as they can to ground their imagination in some sense of reality.)
6. Poetry writing: Sometimes a story is remembered best as a song or poem. Certainly, societies such as the Hawaiians’ recorded theirs in their song and dance. Some students may want to express their creative imagining of what life was like as a poem, which may or may not be illustrated. Others may choose to use pictures showing Hawaiian nature contrasted with ‘a wild storm’ off the Pacific Northwest to illustrate the differences in their lives. These are just a few open-ended ideas.
7. Fun activity: Play word games with the word “Hawaii” or Salt Spring Island—how many words can you make out of them—turn it into a competition. Useful to fill the 5-15 minute end of period gap.
8. Pidgin became the language between the various groups in Hawaii. Chinook Jargon was the name of the mix in PNW. Students could research pidgin and try writing a sentence in it. There are many variations today.  
Follow-up: Research which place names and words used in the Pacific Northwest come from Chinook Jargon---eg Skookum, Skookumchuck, Potlach, etc.
9. Compare Polynesian folk stories to the West Coast Native ones. There are many similarities. Pick two stories on the same theme---Use a Venn diagram so students can note the differences and similarities. If this is a part of a humanities program, have students act out the folk story, or try writing one themselves.
10. Luau’s endured both in Hawaii and on Salt Spring. Research the Luau. Have a luau (supervised, school version) as an end of unit party.

These teaching ideas are presented as suggestions to make history come alive. We hope that you have found them useful, that you adapt them to yourself and the needs of your students.