

Grade 8: Social Studies



“She took that upon herself to correct the wrongs that were done to herself, her friends and her fellow students, and it trickled right across the country to all residential school survivors.”

- Millbrook First Nation Chief Bob Gloade

In honour of Nova Scotia Heritage Day, 2025, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is pleased to provide the biographical profile of honouree Nora Bernard. Bernard was a Mi'kmaw activist whose work was instrumental in ensuring justice, recognition, and compensation for survivors of the Canadian Indian Residential School System. Her work inspired others across the country to take actions to ensure all Canadians recognize the effects of residential schools, and to support survivors and their families.

Note to Teachers:

The table below includes a selection of Social Studies 8 outcomes that could be used to explore the biographical profile. After learning Nora Bernard's story, students can be encouraged to explore the stories of other Indigenous advocates who worked to make change for their communities.

Social Studies 8

Learners will reflect on 20th and 21st century Indigenous experiences in Canada

- Reflect on the impacts of residential schools on Indigenous peoples of Canada
- Analyse how Indigenous peoples have advocated for their rights in Canada

Inquiry question: What were the impacts of Residential Schools on Indigenous peoples, and how have they worked toward healing and justice?

As part of an inquiry, students can:

- Investigate how Residential Schools affected the culture, language, and families of Indigenous peoples.
- Discuss how Nora's personal experiences motivated her to become an activist for Residential School survivors.
- Explore how Nora Bernard's advocacy helped Residential School Survivors receive compensation from the government for the harm caused by these schools.
- Explain how her work influenced the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
- Discuss how she worked with other survivors and Indigenous communities to create change.
- Identify ways to support reconciliation today, such as learning about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action or participating in events that honor Indigenous experiences.

Suggested resources:

- *Rights and Advocacy*: Focus Question 3, “How have residential schools impacted Indigenous Peoples in Canada? (p. 27-36)
- *Rights and Advocacy*: “[Allyship](#)” case study (Social Studies 8 provincial eLearning site)

Learners will evaluate the impact of equity and inequity in a changing Canadian society

- Investigate experiences of inequity and resistance from various perspectives

Inquiry question: How have equity and inequity shaped Canadian society, and how have people worked to create change?

As part of an inquiry, students can:

- Investigate the ways Nora’s life was affected by the Indian Act and Shubenacadie Residential School.
- Explore how policies like the Indian Act or Residential Schools created inequity for Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- Research the ways Indigenous people today continue to be affected by the Indian Act and the impacts of Residential Schools.
- Investigate the role of community leaders like Nora Bernard in fighting for equity and justice.
- Discuss how resistance and advocacy efforts have brought about changes, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, public apologies, or policy reforms.
- Explore how the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action are being addressed and what steps are needed to support reconciliation. [Calls to Action English2.pdf](#)

Suggested resources:

- *Rights and Advocacy*: Focus Question 4, “How have Indigenous Peoples advocated for rights in Canada?” (p. 38-45)
- *Rights and Advocacy*: “[Indigenous Advocacy](#)” case study (Social Studies 8 provincial eLearning site)

Extension Opportunity:

- **After investigating the advocacy of Nora Bernard and the larger movement for justice for Residential School Survivors, students can explore other examples of resistance to inequity in Canada and create a response to acknowledge these efforts.**
 - Formulate a response, such as writing a reflective letter, creating a poster, or making a video to honor a community leader’s role in promoting justice and healing.
 - Develop a class or community initiative, such as a presentation, discussion, or social media campaign, to raise awareness and the need for ongoing equity work.
 - Create a project or presentation that highlights a story of resistance against inequity in Canada, explaining its importance in creating change.
 - Create a visual project, like a collage or infographic, that compares historical and contemporary examples of inequity and resistance.