

Dr. Mairi Cowan: Hello, my name is Mairi Cowan. I'm a history professor at the University of Toronto, and Chair of the Education Committee for The Champlain Society. One of my areas of research is the history of 17th-century New France, and another area of research that I undertake is how best to teach and learn history. So, I was very excited to develop resources built around primary sources about the French settlement at Quebec in 1608.

History educators are using more and more primary sources in their teaching of history, and that's great. In history, primary sources are the sources that were created at the time and in the place being studied. They are our most direct evidence about the past. They're kind of like the raw data that we can use for historical analysis.

Students learn to think historically when they are interpreting these sources for themselves but teaching with primary sources can be challenging. Teachers need to find the primary sources in the first place. They need to select which of these sources is best suited for their students and their topic, and then they need to contextualize the primary source responsibly so that students know how the evidence can and cannot be used to say something about the past.

The Champlain Society can help. Founded in 1905, The Champlain Society has a mission of opening new windows to explore Canada's past. We want students to learn history well, so we've created some free online resources. These are built around primary sources that are important, accessible, and responsibly contextualized.

These are the Teaching Resources from The Champlain Society: Primary Sources in Historical Context. Let me show you a bit about these resources and how you can use them to teach history.

We've started with two packages in our series. Both are about the French settlement at Quebec in 1608, which is a significant event in Canadian, North American, and World History. For grades 4 to 8 we have "Building the Habitation," an educational resource for teaching and learning about Samuel de Champlain at Quebec. For students in secondary schools, we have "Perspectives on the Habitation," an educational resource for teaching and learning about the place of Quebec in the early modern world. Both are in the form of PDFs that can be read online, or downloaded onto a device, or printed up and read in hard copy, whichever is easiest for what you want to do. And both are freely accessible to all. They're absolutely free to use.

Each package is built around primary sources. One of these is an excerpt from The Voyages, written by Samuel de Champlain. This primary source provides the perspective of one of the leaders of the French settlement, and it draws from the Champlain Society's own publication of The Complete Works of Samuel de Champlain. One is an excerpt from Innu oral history about the settlement of Quebec. This

primary source provides an Indigenous perspective of the event as recorded by the Innu, a people that Champlain called the "Montagnais." You can use either one or the other of these sources on its own, but I think it's even better to use them both together. The French and Innu perspectives are very similar in some respects, but they differ in significant ways as well, and it's interesting to think about why. It's also interesting and important to think about how these sources can and should be used together in order to give us a fuller sense of the past.

There are other primary sources in the packages too, along with good secondary sources that help you interpret the primary sources and place them within their historical context when teaching the history of Canada, the history of Quebec, the history of colonial North America, and the history of the early modern world.

I am now going to go to the packages themselves to show you some of the features directly. You can find these packages by going to The Champlain Society's main web page and clicking on "Teaching Resources" up here. This will bring you to a page that talks a little bit about the resources and allows you to download them as PDFs. So, let's do that. I'll go back and forth between these two packages. They share a lot of material in common, although it's adjusted for the appropriate level of the students in each case. Here we are in the in the "Perspectives on the Habitation."

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Early on in the package, we provide you with an introductory essay to give you historical context for the Saint Lawrence Valley in the early 17th century. This is designed to help teachers gain some historical background on the material. We have a beautiful map here by Samuel de Champlain, some information on the sources that will come later in the package, and, in case you want to know more right away, a few recommended further readings.

In each case, there is a lesson plan, some suggestions for questions you can ask students, some follow-up questions you may want to use to guide a discussion, sometimes other sources you can bring students to, so-- to enrich their understanding further. I'll show you what this looks like in the "Building the Habitation" plan, as well.

So again, some suggestions for what you can ask students to do and then we also have some visual sources. You can see them most fully here in the "Building the Habitation" plan. Here's an image of the habitation, this one is the one that is engraved by Samuel de Champlain himself. And we also have some more modern imaginings of what the habitation might have been like to help students visualize how it may have looked in the early 17th century. Activity sheet for the students, larger version of the image. And then we have the first substantial excerpt from a primary source. In this case, *The Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*.

At the top, some introductory information about the source and its history, the publication history, which could be important for how you interpret it, and then the source itself. The original version is published by The Champlain Society with marginal glosses that I have created to help explain some words and phrases that that may be unfamiliar to the students, or perhaps confusing because their meaning has shifted over time.

So, here is the source. There's a lot to see, and then following that is an excerpt from Innu oral history. It's presented for you both in the original French in which it was given, and then also in an authorized translation into English. After these sources, we provide some additional activities that you may want to give to your students. These activities will encourage your students to stretch their understanding in different ways. So, for example, if the students want to demonstrate their understanding beyond the forms that that have already been used in this package, we supply some suggestions for how they might want to write essays or build physical models. If they want to extend their understanding into domains beyond what is usually covered in a history class, we have some suggestions for how they may want to bring these activities into the study of contemporary politics or ecology.

These resources introduce students to some of the most important sources for one of the most significant events in early modern North American history, and they do so in a way that encourages responsible interpretation with support by reliable scholarship.

The primary sources themselves are full of fascinating information. They tell us about why the French were inserting themselves into a sophisticated Indigenous geopolitical space. They tell us about how Champlain's efforts in 1608 were connected to earlier incursions by French and other would-be colonial powers into North America. They tell us about a winter that was so hard on the French settlers, that of the 28 who first landed in the Fall of 1608, only 8 were left alive the following Spring. And they tell us about the ways in which the Indigenous peoples of the Saint Lawrence Valley sometimes helped, sometimes hindered, and always shaped French designs.

These sources can get students thinking about big questions about significance, continuity and change, cause and consequence, and the ethical dimension of historical interpretation. They can also provide evidence for the rich details of daily life more than 400 years ago. What people ate, how they tried to treat illness, what they thought of the natural world.

If you enjoy these sources and you would like to read more, you may want to consider getting a membership in The Champlain Society. Educators get a special rate. Or, you can ask your school board or library to purchase access to the digital collection. This collection contains more than 100 volumes of edited primary sources. That amounts to more than 50,000 pages, all of them fully searchable. Along

with the complete works of Samuel de Champlain, there are edited volumes of texts written by famous explorers, politicians, and military leaders, as well as the records of merchants and bankers, and the journals and letters of travelers and settlers.

Whether you're a member or not, we hope you enjoy other things that The Champlain Society has to offer, too, such as its podcast *Witness to Yesterday*. It features episodes that are probably a great interest to your students that you can use in your classes, like the history of the Bank of Montreal, or the devastating influenza pandemic of 1918 to 1919. If you're looking for additional short accessible textual sources, you may want to look at the Champlain Society's blog, *Findings/Trouvailles*. This is a series of brief essays written in accessible form, but built on solid scholarship, each centered around an individual interesting source. So, a record, for example, of a Jesuit priest in the 17th century suffering from some kind of frenetic state who was treated using both opium and holy relics, or a much more personal source of a family's grief during the First World War, and what this can tell us about the history of emotions.

Please do look at these resources and anything else you can find from The Champlain Society that you think would be helpful in your teaching. If you do use the teaching packages that I spoke about earlier, about "Building the Habitation" and "Perspectives on the Habitation," consider filling out the survey for us. We are going to use its results to help inform what packages we design next, what their topics will be, and what the packages will contain. Thank you so much for listening. I hope that you enjoy your exploration of these and other primary sources and thank you very much for caring about history.