



Charting the Cultural Differences Between Cuba and Canada

Canada and Cuba have some major differences, from the money we use to the size of our population. But we also have a lot in common. Like most cultures around the globe, Canada and Cuba have always relied on nature as the foundation of our communities. Our lives and livelihood are dependant on our environment.

In this activity we will look at some of the cultural differences and similarities between Cuba and Canada. We will take a special look at how our forests contribute to the history, games, tools, health, and music of both Canada and Cuba.

Our forests have shaped our culture.

> Section A) Comparing Cuba and Canada

1. Do some research using the internet or reference materials to fill in these fast facts about Cuba and Canada:

	Cuba	Canada
Capital City		
Official Languages		
Leader		
Currency		
Population		
Number of Provinces		





Name: _____

Colonial Culture in Cuba and Canada

Christopher Columbus, a European navigator and explorer, sighted Cuba in 1492 as part of his journey to the ‘New World’ (now called the Americas). He claimed the Caribbean island for Spain, although it was already inhabited by the Taino and Ciboney people who had lived there for centuries. In 1511, the first Spanish settlement was formed, and many others followed soon after – including Havana, the current capital of the island. The Spanish enslaved over 100 000 Taino and Ciboney people. Most of the indigenous population was killed by conflict, disease, or harsh labour.

Cuba has been influenced by a complex mix of Taino and Ciboney customs, Spanish traditions and the culture of slaves who were brought to Cuba from Africa.

Indigenous: native, or natural to a specific area.

European explorers have also contributed to the culture of Canada. The creation of colonies by European countries influenced Canadian history. Do some research to answer the following questions:

- i) What two European countries struggled to claim what is now Canada?

- ii) How did European colonialists influence the language of Canada?





Name: _____

iii) How is the influence of European colonialism still noticeable on our money?

iv) Name three national holidays that were brought to Canada by the European colonialists.

v) What is the name and date of the one national holiday that is distinctly Canadian and marks our independence?

vi) Slavery also had a huge effect on the culture in Canada and the United States. Who was Oliver Le Jeune?





vii) What was the Underground Railroad?

viii) What year was slavery abolished in Canada?

> Section B) Indigenous People of Cuba and Canada

When Christopher Columbus travelled across the ocean in 1492, Cuba was already populated with two indigenous cultures: the Taino and the Ciboney people. These people lived in tribes on several islands in the Caribbean, including Cuba.

Traditionally, Taino people lived in large, circular buildings called *bohio* made from wooden poles, woven straw, and palm leaves. Inside, they slept in *hamacas*, which European settlers soon imitated and called a hammock.

The Taino called the local tropical storms *hurancans*, a word the Europeans adapted to “hurricane.”

The Taino built huge ballparks lined with large stones. On these parks, they played a ceremonial ball game called *batey*, with two opposing teams of 10-30 players on each side. Since our accounts of this game come mostly from Spanish settlers, the exact rules or objective of *batey* are not known. However, we do know that both men and women could play in the game. And many believe it was a way for neighbouring tribes to resolve their differences without fighting.





Name: _____

ii) Both the Canadian and Cuban indigenous peoples relied on their forests to make boats. The Taino fished in carved wooden boats they called *canoa*. To them, the word *canoa* simply meant boat. However, the word was adapted by Europeans to mean a specific type of boat used by many First Nations in North and South America – canoes. Tribes on the west coast of Canada made canoes similar to the Taino *canoas*, but other tribes, like the Algonquin constructed their canoes differently.

Do some research using the Internet or reference materials and draw a picture of a traditional birch bark canoe built by a First Nations tribe in Canada, and a picture of a Taino *canoa*. Include labels to show and describe how each boat was made.

Taino canoa





Name: _____

Birch bark canoe

A large empty rectangular box for drawing or writing.





Name: _____

iii) The birch tree was used to make a birch bark canoe. Research and list three other ways that First Nations people in Canada depended on this tree species.

iv) What kind of tree was used to make a *canoa*? Be as specific as you can and include its scientific name. Research and list three other ways that the Taino people depended on this tree species.





> **Section C) Healing With Plants: Cuba and Canada**

1. When French explorer Jacques Cartier travelled to New France for the second time in 1535, a sickness called scurvy broke out on board the ship, and many sailors fell ill. Scurvy is a disease caused by a lack of vitamin C, and many sailors contracted it on long journeys when they had no access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Those who suffered from scurvy experienced severe swelling and bruising. Their gums bled and their teeth became loose, often falling out.

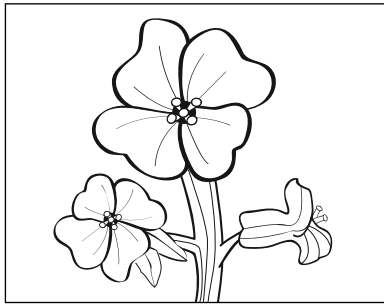
Cartier was given a treatment for scurvy by Chief Donnacona of the Stadacona First Nations tribe, who lived near what is now known as Gaspé Bay in Quebec. It was an infusion, or tea made from the bark of a tree he called *Annedda*, which we call white cedar today. The high vitamin C content in the white cedar bark helped to ward off scurvy in many First Nations communities during the winter months in Canada when fresh fruits and greens were scarce. *Annedda* was just one of many herbal remedies that Canadian First Nations tribes sourced from Canada's rich forests. Settlers in Canada brought their own knowledge of herbal remedies from Europe. Once here, they also learned about the healing properties of plants in Canada from First Nations tribes.



Name: _____

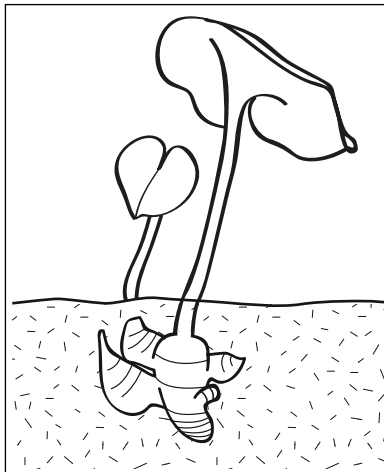
Some common herbal remedies used by First Nations tribes include:

Mustard Seed



Mustard seeds (the same stuff you put on hamburgers) were often used to treat inflammation, lung congestion, or muscle soreness. One treatment for colds was to bathe your feet in a bath of mustard seeds and hot water.

Ginger Root



Ginger was used to help cure many illnesses. It could be taken in a tea form to treat colds. It could also be used to make a poultice to treat pain from athletic injuries, arthritis, and headaches. Canadian wild ginger grows in moist forests, such as in the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec.

What is a poultice? A poultice is an ancient method of applying a substance to the skin to help cure an injury or illness. They are often made from natural ingredients, and are usually applied when warm and wet.

i) Recipe Card: Making a Ginger Poultice

As a class, try making a ginger poultice. Cut out this recipe card, and keep it with your kitchen recipes to use when you have sore muscles or a headache.





Name: _____

Making a Ginger Poultice

A poultice is an age-old remedy that can be effective in treating many different ailments. The healing herbs are absorbed directly through the skin.

To make a ginger poultice, you can use ginger powder found in the spice section of the grocery store.

- 1.** Mix ginger powder and hot water together to form a paste – enough to cover the sore muscle.
- 2.** Spread the paste onto a clean piece of linen or gauze, and smooth it over the afflicted area, paste-side directly against the skin.
- 3.** Place a warm water bottle over the gauze to maintain the heat. Leave it on until the water bottle cools. Be careful and only heat water so it is warm... not too hot!

For headaches, mix 2 teaspoons of ginger powder with some flour and warm water to make a paste. Apply directly to your temples. Leave on until it cools and dries, or your headache is gone. Wipe off with a damp cloth.



Name: _____

2. Spanish settlers who landed in Cuba also learned to use many local herbs. The Caribbean tropical forests are filled with medicinal plants and herbal remedies. Many were used not just by local healers, but by everyone in the community. Clearing rainforests for timber, agriculture or other developments often wipes out plant species that we know little or nothing about – some could hold the key to curing human diseases and ailments.

In Cuba today, natural healing methods are still a central part of public health care. The country's limited economy and strained relations with the United States make importing expensive medicines and pharmaceuticals difficult, if not impossible. For this reason, Castro has invested in herb farms and education programs to teach people about herbal treatments. This is cost-effective and sustainable. Cubans can buy herbal medicines directly from farmers at roadside stands, or they can buy prepared herbal remedies in pharmacies and hospitals.

Some of the medicinal herbs grown on farms in Cuba include oregano, ginger, garlic, chamomile, and aloe vera.

Canon



Name: _____

i) Research the healing qualities of one of the following plants using the internet or reference materials: oregano, garlic, chamomile, or aloe vera. Draw the plant and describe how it is used as an herbal remedy.

Plant: _____

ii) Recipe Card: Making Ginger Tea

Try this recipe as a class by following the instructions below. Then, keep a copy of this recipe in your family's first aid kit and give it a try the next time you have a sore throat. Make sure to make it with an adult's supervision.





Name: _____

Ginger Tea

Ginger is used as a herbal remedy in many countries, including both Canada and Cuba. Not only is ginger tea delicious, it can also help to soothe sore throats.

1. Grate one tablespoon of ginger root into a tea strainer.
2. Place strainer in a mug and carefully fill the mug with boiling water. Steep for 5 minutes before drinking.
3. Remove strainer, and sweeten with a little honey, to taste. Honey can also help to soothe sore throats.

To make a whole pot of ginger tea, peel and cut half a ginger root into cubes and place them in a pot. Fill the pot with water and bring to a boil. Let simmer for 5-10 minutes, or longer if you prefer strong tea. Pour into cups and sweeten with honey, to taste.



> **Section D) Music in Cuba and Canada**

In Cuba and Canada, colonialism and immigration brought a mix of cultures together to form musical traditions that are distinct to each country.

1. Slaves brought African rhythms and dances to Cuba. These were blended with Taino instruments, and Spanish guitars and melodies to form a type of singing and dancing called *son*, meaning sound. Latin mambo, rumba, salsa, and cha-cha-cha music all derived from *son*.

Do some research and draw four *son* instruments in the boxes below:

Claves

Bongo

Maracas

Guiro





Name: _____

2. Build a Cuban instrument: Maracas

Maracas, a set of shaker instruments used in *son*, were originally of Taino origin. Traditionally, they were made from wooden sticks and hollowed-out gourds. You can make a set using paper mache, two balloons, two unsharpened pencils, uncooked rice and some paint.

- Blow up the balloons so that each one is about the size of an orange, and tie them off with a string. Tape the string to the side of a table so the balloons hang in mid-air. Make sure the balloon isn't touching the edge of the table.
- Dip strips of newspaper into your paper mache mix (Approximate 1 part flour to 2 parts water) and smooth the wet strips over each balloon until it is completely covered except for a small hole (a little smaller than a dime) where the balloon is tied at the top. Make sure it's covered in at least two layers of paper mache so it's strong and holds its shape. Let dry.
- Once your paper mache spheres are dry, loosen the string on the balloons so they deflate, and carefully pull them through the hole.
- Pour a small handful of rice into each sphere. The weight of the rice should let you sit the spheres on the table and keep them from rolling around. Make sure the hole is at the top, facing up.
- Insert the tip of a pencil in the hole and secure it firmly to the sphere using more paper mache strips. Make sure it's secured because you will be shaking your maracas by these pencil handles! You might have to add more than one layer of paper mache. Once dry, decorate your maracas with paint.
- As a class, turn on some Cuban music and practice keeping the beat with your maracas!

Canon



Name: _____

3. In Canada, our distinct folk music comes from a mix of French, English, Irish and Scottish traditions. Styles and influences vary in different regions. Maritime music is strongly linked to Irish traditions, while Quebec music is more influenced by French culture. However, both Franco and Anglo-Canadian music feature the fiddle to create songs ranging from upbeat jigs to moody ballads. The lyrics tell stories of the Canadian experience, boasting about strong lumberjacks, telling tales of love and family, and lamenting the loss of sailors who died in terrible shipwrecks.

Below is an anonymous Canadian folk song, *Farewell to Nova Scotia*, written during World War II.

The sun was setting in the west
The birds were singing on every tree
All nature seemed inclined for to rest
But still there was no rest for me.

*Farewell to Nova Scotia, you sea-bound coast
Let your mountains dark and dreary be
For when I am far away on the briny ocean tossed
Will you ever heave a sigh and a wish for me?*

I grieve to leave my native land
I grieve to leave my comrades all
And my parents whom I held so dear
And the bonnie, bonnie lassie that I do adore.

Chorus

The drums they do beat and the wars to alarm
The captain calls, we must obey
So farewell, farewell to Nova Scotia's charms
For it's early in the morning I am far, far away.

Chorus

I have three brothers and they are at rest
Their arms are folded on their breast
But a poor simple sailor just like me
Must be tossed and driven on the dark blue sea.

Chorus

Canon



Name: _____

4. Where do you think this sailor is headed?

5. Where are his three brothers?

6. What does “briny” mean?

7. During World War II (WWII), the port in Halifax was so busy sending troops, weapons, vehicles, and food back and forth to Europe that the population in the city doubled. Almost 500 000 troops departed from Pier 21 in Halifax. There were also thousands of people who arrived at the pier from Europe to make new lives in Canada during WWII. Visit the Pier 21 website at **www.pier21.ca** to learn who some of these people were.

Describe the meaning of the term “war brides”. How many war brides passed through Pier 21 during WWII?





Name: _____

8. Write a Canadian folk song of your own that tells a true story about your family's history in Canada. It could be a tale of how your ancestors or immediate family traveled to Canada from far off lands. Or it could be a story of how your ancestors lived on the land long ago. Make up a tune to go along with your song. Share it with your class by singing or reading it aloud.

> Section E) Protecting Our Culture Through Art

You have seen how our forests influence and shape our culture. Now it is time to give back.

Using the internet or help from your teacher, find an example of a forest that is threatened, or a plant that is endangered in Canada. It could be a tree near your house, or a forest on the other side of the country. Draw, paint, or build a diorama of your chosen subject.

As a class, put on an art show! Invite others to see your work. Teach them about the importance of protecting species at risk. If you can make one other person stop and think about our environment, your show is a success!

Canon



Answers: Charting the Cultural Differences Between Cuba and Canada

Section A) Comparing Cuba and Canada

1.

	Cuba	Canada
Capital City	Havana	Ottawa
Official Languages	Spanish	English and French
Leader	President Fidel Castro	Prime Minister Stephen Harper
Currency	Peso	Canadian dollar
Population	11 382 820 (2006)	33 098 932 (2006)
Number of Provinces	14 (and 1 municipality)	10 (and 3 territories)

- i) England and France
- ii) Canada has two official languages, English and French, as a result of European colonialists.
- iii) We still have images of Queen Elizabeth II on many of our bills and coins.
- iv) Open – Possible answers include:
 - Christmas.
 - Easter (and Good Friday, Easter Monday).
 - Halloween.
 - Remembrance Day (November 11).
 - Victoria Day.
 - Boxing Day.
 - New Year's Day.
 - Thanksgiving (although we have a designated day, the tradition of celebrating the fall harvest originated in Europe).

Canon



Answers: Charting the Cultural Differences Between Cuba and Canada (continued)

v) Canada Day (July 1) celebrates the Confederation of Canada.

vi) Oliver Le Jeune (1622-1654).

- First recorded slave in Canada.
- Brought to Canada from Africa in 1628 at six years of age by David Kirke.
- Baptized in 1633.
- Like most slaves, he was renamed, and took the surname of his master.

vii) Open:

- A network of people in America and Canada that worked together to help slaves escape their owners and move to slavery—free states, Mexico, overseas or Canada.
- Network consisted mostly of routes along wagon trails. Often former slaves were transported in secret compartments in the bottom of wagons.
- Railroad continued until the American Civil War when slavery was abolished.
- Abolitionists: individuals working to free slaves and/or abolish slavery.

vii) 1833: British Parliaments Slavery Abolition Act

Section B) Indigenous Peoples of Cuba and Canada

i) Lacrosse - Open:

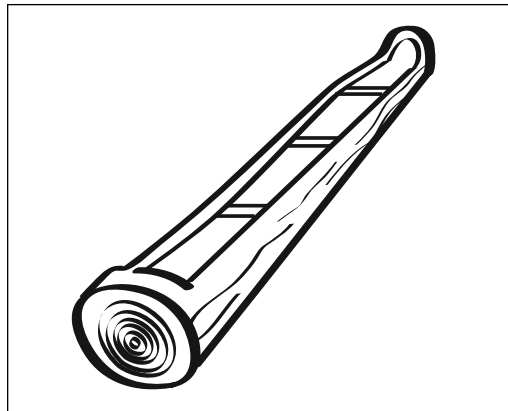
- Played by many different tribes including Iroquois, Cherokee, Mohawk, and Ojibwa.
- Called many names by different tribes. First called lacrosse by French colonialists because of the stick, (*crosse* in French) used in the game.
- Players used a long stick to hit the ball across the field to score goals. They also used the sticks to fend off players from the other team.
- Games in the early days could be quite dangerous and violent, and those who participated were considered warriors.
- Early versions of balls were made of deerskin, clay, wood, stone, and sometimes even the head of an enemy.
- At times, the game was a religious ritual played for the Creator.



Answers: Charting the Cultural Differences Between Cuba and Canada (continued)

- It was also considered training for young warriors, and was sometimes played to settle disputes with neighbouring tribes.
- Game fields varied in size, but could be many kilometres long.
- Teams were made up of anywhere from 100-1000 players.
- Games could last all day and even as long as three days.
- By the 19th century, it became less violent and more of a sport, as French pioneers began competing, using a rubber ball and netted sticks.
- Lacrosse is Canada's official national summer sport.

ii) Taino *canoa*:



Open – Includes teacher background and possible answers:

- Made from hollowed out trees, these swift boats were able to navigate treacherous ocean waters between islands. Some even carried the Taino as far as South America, Mexico, and Central America.
- Each narrow boat was carved out of a single tree.
- They felled trees by burning them, then scraping away the charred material, and repeating this process until the tree fell.
- They stripped the bark and hollowed out the boat using the same charring and scraping method.
- Finally, the wood was polished and painted.
- Small canoas were used for fishing, trading, or by small groups of hunters or warriors.
- Large *canoas* could hold up to 100 people and were the property of the chiefs.

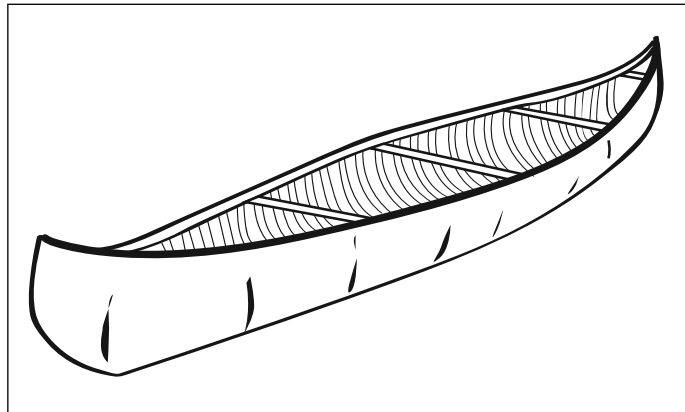
Canon



Answers: Charting the Cultural Differences Between Cuba and Canada (continued)

- They are steered by multiple oars (the number varied according to the size of the boat).
- Early Taino *canoes* were made from the ceiba tree. Felling a tree was part of a spiritual ritual. The chief first chose a tree and communicated with its spirit. It was cut down only if the tree spirit gave the chief its permission.
- The spirit of the tree remained in the canoe, so it was considered sacred.

Birch bark canoe:



Open – Includes teacher background and possible answers:

- Birch bark canoes were made by many First Nations tribes in Canada, including the Micmac, Cree, Algonquin, and Ojibwa.
- Canoes were framed in wood and covered in birch bark.
- A lightweight, ribbed wooden frame was built and set on the birch bark sheet for shaping.
- Birch bark was peeled from the tree in one long sheet, then rolled and carried back to camp.
- The bark covering was sewn on using spruce root and the seams were sealed with spruce gum to make the boat waterproof.
- The cover was decorated with a design scraped into the surface as a sign of ownership.
- Although other tree barks were used if birch was scarce, birch was the favoured covering for these canoes.
- The Dene and Kootenay Nations also built canoes. But they were covered using other barks and with slight variations in the framing.

Canon



Answers: Charting the Cultural Differences Between Cuba and Canada (continued)

- The curved shape of the ribs and frame was created by steaming or soaking the wood and bending it while soft, then allowing it to dry in the curved shape.
- Canoes were sturdy enough to navigate rivers and lakes, but light enough to portage over trails.
- They are steered by paddles. One person could navigate them with a single bladed paddle.

iii) Paper birch, also known as white or canoe birch (*Betula papyrifera*):

- Baskets or containers: Wood framed and bark covered, or hollowed out from pieces of wood.
- Cradleboards: Made from thin limbs or bark, often woven into shape.
- Wigwams or teepees: Made from limbs.

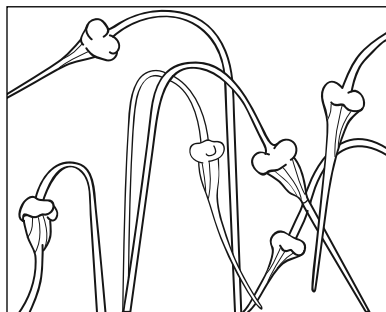
iv) Kapok or ceiba trees (*Ceiba pentandra*).

- Seed pods have a silky, waterproof fibre used as stuffing for mattresses, padding and cushions.
- The seeds, bark, roots, and limbs have been used in baths to treat fatigue, or certain kinds of poisoning.
- Large buttresses at the base of the tree were used for temporary shelter.
- Revered as a sacred tree, it was considered a link to the spirit world and a source of myths and protection.

Section C) Healing With Plants: Cuba and Canada

2.

i) Garlic



- Garlic can be eaten as a gentle antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal, or digestion aid.

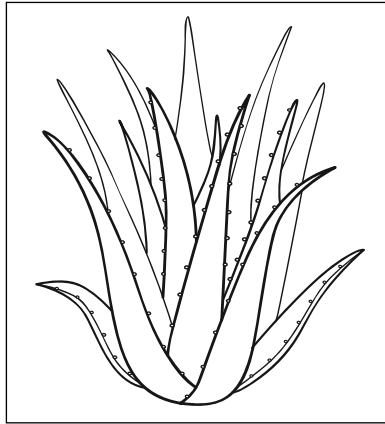
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Answers: Charting the Cultural Differences Between Cuba and Canada (continued)

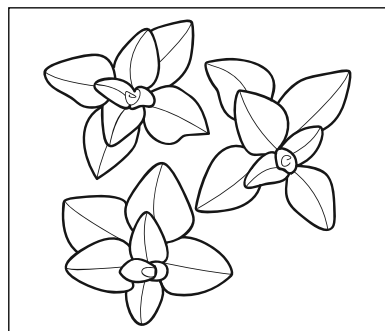
- Garlic in capsule form is reputed to help lower blood pressure.
- Eating garlic may help to prevent certain types of cancer.
- Garlic juice applied to skin can help heal acne and prevent scarring.
- Garlic juice can also treat a cough.

Aloe vera



- Aloe vera juice helps digestion, aids blood circulation, and strengthens the immune system. It may also help build healthy tissues, which could be beneficial to asthma sufferers.
- The gel found in aloe vera plant stems can be applied directly to the skin to help heal cuts and to soothe sunburned skin.

Oregano



- When pressed into oil, oregano can be rubbed on the chest to treat fevers and phlegmy coughs.
- Tea can be made from oregano to ease bloating and for urinary tract problems. It can also be used as a mouthwash or gargle.
- Oregano poultices can be used to relieve sores and sore muscles.

Canon



Answers: Charting the Cultural Differences Between Cuba and Canada (continued)

Chamomile

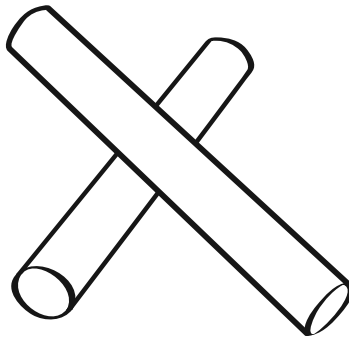


- Chamomile tea is used to treat stomach flu, cramps, nausea, and bloating.
- It also has calming qualities that help soothe you and help you sleep.
- Chamomile can be applied as a poultice to treat infection and inflammation.

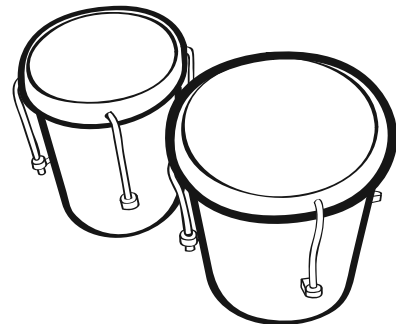
Section D) Music in Canada and Cuba

1.

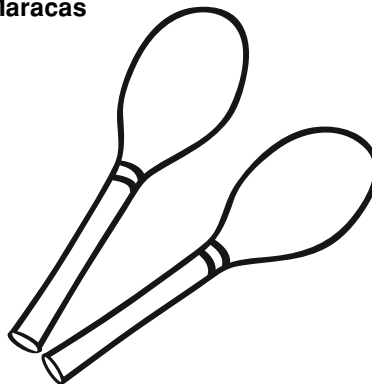
Claves



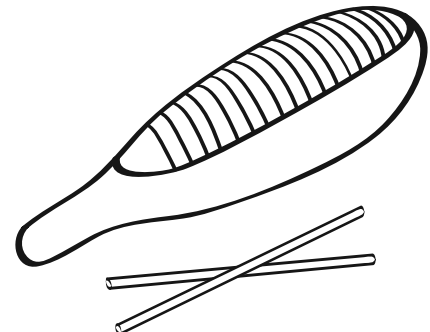
Bongos



Maracas



Guiro



Canon



Answers: Charting the Cultural Differences Between Cuba and Canada (continued)

2. Note: Arrange students in a circle to play their maracas to Cuban music.
Possible online sources:
 - Son: www.cubanfolkloricdance.com (includes footage of dancing).
 - Various Cuban music: www.netssa.com/cuba_music.html.
3. Note: To teach the song to students, teachers can access a midi file of the tune for Farewell to Nova Scotia at:
<http://www.contemplator.com/canaus/novascot.html>.
4. Open:
The sailor is heading out to fight the war in Europe.
5. Open:
His brothers are “at rest,” meaning that they have died (probably also in the war).
6. Briny means salty. Brine is salt water.
7. Open:
 - War brides were women who married Canadian soldiers abroad during WW II. Over 50 000 European war brides passed through Pier 21 to begin their new lives with their husbands in Canada.
 - Along with the war brides came their 22 000 children.

Canon