

Primary and secondary sources

In this activity you are asked to identify a series of primary and secondary sources. Before you begin, review the criteria for decision-making.

Criteria for primary sources

Was the information:

- collected or created at the time of the event?
- witnessed first-hand, in person, by an observer or participant?
- based on observation of the event?

Criteria for secondary sources

Was the information:

- created after the event by someone not present?
- based on an analysis or interpretation of the event?
- created at a distance in space or time from the event?

Now begin the activity.

Determine if the following items are primary or secondary sources.

1. Data collected through participant observation

Record your answer.

Suggested answer: This is primary source information because it was collected by observing the participants themselves, in real time. It would consist of raw, first-hand data that contains no interpretive comments by a researcher or analyst.

End of suggested answer.

2. An article comparing Indigenous forms of government on the western and eastern coasts of Canada at the time of European contact

Record your answer.

Suggested answer: This is secondary source information because someone wrote about a historical issue from a remote perspective. The person who wrote the article

wasn't there when the evidence was found, but is using evidence and analysis to develop an interpretation and conclusion about these forms of government.

End of suggested answer.

3. Pictographic writing found in treaties created in the 1600s in Canada between Europeans and Indigenous peoples

Record your answer.

Suggested answer: This is a primary source because the pictographic writing would have been added to the treaties when they were originally created, back in early Canadian history. This is original writing and artwork that has not been interpreted by a researcher or analyst. It is evidence/information provided by participants themselves.

End of suggested answer.

4. A book published in 2016 that summarizes data on the state of human rights in Canada at the time

Record your answer.

Suggested answer: This is secondary source information because the author(s) include more than just the data collected. A book about the state of human rights offers an analysis of data. Such a book probably would include raw data from primary sources, but the book itself is a secondary source.

End of suggested answer.