

Alberta Culture Days ²⁰¹³

Discover • Experience • Celebrate



Idea File for Schools

What is culture? You could answer in a hundred different ways. There are at least as many ways to celebrate during Alberta Culture Days!

The ideas contained in this guide will help your school get started.

Table of Contents

About Alberta Culture Days.....	3
Guiding Principles.....	4
Using the Idea File.....	5
Activity Suggestions.....	8
Share your Culture Days Memories.....	12



Alberta Culture Days

[Alberta Culture Days](#) is a three-day celebration of our unique blend of peoples and passions and the importance of culture to building healthy and vibrant communities. Now in its eighth year, Alberta Culture Days is supported by the Government of Alberta and runs province-wide September 29 to October 1, 2017. It includes events of all sizes, from impromptu sidewalk chalk art exhibitions to museum visits.



Several schools participated in Alberta Culture Days 2016 and helped set the tone for the entire weekend. Some planned a school-wide chalk art activity while others hosted musical demonstrations, dance-a-thons, story readings and more.

An Invitation to Schools

Students and teachers are invited to find innovative and creative ways to celebrate culture during Alberta Culture Days 2017, either in the classroom or by attending a local community event on Friday, September 29.

If you plan on hosting your own classroom or school-wide activity, remember that while the performing arts are important, celebrations could also include activities that explore life-long learning in the cultural activities. This document provides some ideas to help you get started. Whatever you decide, try to inspire your students to make celebrating culture part of their every day lives.

Guiding Principles

About this document

The Idea File for Schools contains inspiration for teachers, schools and administrators to:

- stimulate students' powers of imagination; and
- encourage them to start a conversation about culture that will bring enhanced meaning to their lives.

The idea file was compiled by Alberta Culture and Alberta Education. Please send us your feedback at

AlbertaCultureDays@gov.ab.ca.



Non-Standard is Standard

Alberta Culture Days is a celebration of all that is best about this province. As such, events and activities will vary from one classroom to the next and one school to the next. You may choose a short classroom activity, while others plan a school-wide event. Variety and flexibility are key to celebrating Alberta Culture Days. There are numerous ways for students to participate, all equally important: acquiring new artistic skills, creating original work, appreciating the artistic work of others, connecting to one another through cultural activities such as touring a museum or visiting a heritage site.

Get Inspired

This idea file contains plenty of inspiration that will bring your curriculum to life. However, you and your students may have cool and unique ideas of your own. If so, please send your original ideas to AlbertaCultureDays@gov.ab.ca and we may add them to this document.

Easy Does It

Taking part in Alberta Culture Days doesn't have to mean a lot of extra work, just an extra bit of imagination. If you want to plan a major activity, by all means go for it. But you can also add an Alberta Culture Days spin to things you're already doing. Consider a few possibilities:

- Your school's regular art activity can easily become an Alberta Culture Days event. Just post the pictures, stories in hallway for all students to enjoy.
- You can add an artistic touch in an unusual place, by choosing a piece of music to characterize each planet as you study the solar system.
- Imagine *Meet the Teacher* night with a cultural activity as an ice-breaker such as inviting a local musician to help set a relaxed mood and entertain parents while they wait..

A Chance for Community

Partnerships with community organizations and businesses can make events not only special, but transformative.

Using the Idea File

Here are some general directions for using this document. Remember, these are only suggestions.

- **Browse the activity suggestions** and see which ones interest you.
- **Chose a theme** or cultural activity.
- **Adapt ideas** for the needs and age of your class.
- **Devise an appropriate introduction** to the subject.
- **Consider involving students** in the planning.
- **Look for partnership opportunities** with other classrooms, local artists and cultural leaders, nonprofit organizations and even businesses.
- **Create posters** with your school's event information. Customizable poster templates are available on the Alberta Culture Days website in the [Tools & Tips](#) section.
- **Hand out take-home activities** so your students can extend their Alberta Culture Days celebration into the weekend.
- **Register your event** or activity by emailing AlbertaCultureDays@gov.ab.ca and help inspire other schools looking to participate in the future.
- **Have fun!**



Take it Outside

- **Have students create a hallway display** about culture in general, culture in their community, or highlighting culture in their school.
- **Have students write** culture-related articles for your school's newspaper, newsletter or website.
- **Invite parents** to get involved by helping the student write a story about what life was like for the parents when they were young.
- **Take a “culture-infused” field trip** to a museum, gallery, theatre, historic site, college or university arts faculty, multicultural centre, First Nations Friendship Centre, multicultural organization, etc.

Note: all [provincially-owned historic sites and museums](#) normally open during the Alberta Culture Days weekend will be offering free admission and special programming.

Reach out to the Community

There are likely plenty of cultural partnership opportunities to explore in your community, with libraries, hospitals and long-term care facilities, town and city halls, and local businesses such as cafés and malls. Partnering with a community organizations and businesses can mean free event space, as well as opportunities for students to share their talents, learn about volunteerism, and gain confidence and recognition. Ideas include:

- exhibiting artwork in malls and store windows,
- singing in long-term care facilities,
- reciting poetry in cafés or having a musical performance, etc.

Remember, Alberta Culture Days is as much an opportunity for organizations and businesses to connect with the community as it is for students to learn about culture. **And don't forget** to share the message that culture is vital to education as a key point.

Bring the Community to your Classroom

When students have the chance to work alongside professional artists, watch performers, meet cultural leaders such as First Nations Chiefs, or hear about a career in culture from a person employed in the field, it can open up their world.



- **Guest speakers are exciting** for students - consider rescheduling or “previewing” an artist residence planned for later in the autumn to the Alberta Culture Days weekend. Invite an employee from the nearest museum or historic site to give a demonstration. Invite someone with a multicultural background to speak about their heritage.
- **Explore careers in cultural related fields**, by inviting Albertans involved in dance, design, visual art, film, music composition, volunteerism, heritage preservation, etc.
- **Prompt your students** with discussion questions, cultural statements and forehand research to encourage exploration and critical thinking.
- **Students can teach students** - invite a post secondary student or a past student of your school who now works in a culture-related field to come and speak with your students about their experiences.
- **Invite elected officials** to give speeches at events.

Put the Event in Context

As part of the celebration, reflect on what the event meant to you and your students:

- **Explore the connections** between culture learning and learning in language arts, social studies, science, math and other areas.
- **Review your event photos** and write captions.
- **Hold a small ceremony** to award participation certificates and to honour students for their creativity and critical thinking. Offer positive feedback on their presentations and creations, or support for their patronage as audience members.
- **Take notes** on how it went and how you might change the activity in the future.
- **Have students document** their cultural learning. Examples include displays of the cultural process with photos and reflections, cultural statements created with the help of questions to prompt thinking, journal entries or peer interviews.

Activity Suggestions

Below is a listing of different cultural activities for schools to consider.

Visual Arts

Alberta has a rich history of visual art. Visual Arts include drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, printmaking, filmmaking and many other visual techniques and mediums.

Class Projects



- **Draw on creativity** – try an unusual approach to simple drawing, for example by copying parts of existing Alberta artworks with tracing paper (to appreciate the complexity of a finished work), or by tracing a silhouette; try a lesson in technique, for example the basics of perspective, or shading effects with different light sources; use unusual materials such as pastels or twigs and ink.
- **Draw on other subjects** – ask students to draw characters, settings and other subjects from a book they've read, or events they've studied in social studies; have them draw scientific concepts – a geography lesson could involve a cartoon showing the creation of a hoodoo; a math lesson could ask, what does a square root look like?
- **Paint** - try a lesson in technique, for example pointillism, or abstract art; portray recognizable objects with unusual colours for an expressionistic effect; have students paint portraits of each other (or their teacher!) in an old-fashioned style, such as mediaeval or ancient Egyptian.
- **Herald Culture Days** – have your students examine the symbols and history on [Alberta's coat of arms](#) and then design their own personal, family or school coat of arms.
- **“Found” sculpture** – put found (or random) objects together into exciting sculptural pieces using glue, tape, wire, Velcro straps, craft putty or any other material you can think of.
- **Take a shot at history** by choosing an historical photograph to recreate. Try the [Provincial Archives of Alberta](#), the [Glenbow Archives](#) and other sites. Or, have a student bring a picture of their parent or grandparent and recreate it in modern terms, to show family continuity.
- **A photo essay** is a photographic article or story on a particular theme: sports, travel, pets, the photographer's role models, etc. Have students choose a theme and develop their photographs into a print display or PowerPoint presentation.
- **Film** - help your students develop and shoot their own short film. Celebrate the inventiveness and artificiality of film through special effects, for example by staging a winter scene in the fall (weather permitting!), through camera tricks like stop-action animation, fast motion, or disappearance; or through the use of model cities, vehicles, aircraft, spacecraft, etc. Even a simple story based in the everyday life of the school will be a great keepsake for students and their families.

- **Starring Trex** – let the field trip come to you through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) [Travelling Exhibition \(Trex\) Program](#).
- **Art is all around** – there is a wealth of visual art out there to admire. Head to an art gallery, a craft studio or a college or university arts faculty.
- **Public art** – the AFA lends Alberta artwork to community facilities across the province. Visit your town hall, library and other community facilities to view the art in your area. (If you think there could be more art in your community, talk to your MLA and other community leaders. It could become your own Alberta Culture Days legacy project.)
- **Real, live artist** – bring in a person who considers him or herself an artist first, whether they work at it full-time, part-time or as a hobby. Have them teach a class, or just share their artistic vision.
- **Prompt your students** with discussion questions, the artist’s statement and forehand research to encourage exploration and critical thinking.

Performing Arts

The performing arts include music, dance, theatre and storytelling. Alberta has a culture of performing arts that began with our First Peoples, tens of thousands of years ago. Today, the performing arts are alive and well in every corner of Alberta.

Class Projects

- **Listen to music** – it sounds like a very basic activity, but how often do we truly listen when music is playing? Have your students listen to a piece of music. Can they separate different instrumental sections, different instrument sounds or vocal parts? What mental images does the music provoke? Ask students to draw these images.
- **Make a concert effort** – take your school band or choir to perform at an unusual venue, such as a mall, café or workplace.
- **Found concert** – there are plenty of ways to make musical instruments from “found” (common) objects. Build an avant-garde orchestra, and stage a concert.
- **Sing a new song** – students will enjoy learning traditional folk songs. Younger students will amaze you with their ability to learn a song in another language.
- **Music video** – combine music, drama and film making as your students create a video interpretation of an Alberta songwriter’s work.

- **Stage a good time** – rehearse and present a scene from an Alberta play; present a play reading, a performance without movement; add music and sound effects and record the reading as a radio play; present Shakespeare in “translation,” with one actor presenting the original text, and another the contemporary language – or project the contemporary language on a screen à la subtitles;
- **Hold a workshop** – invite students and parents to a workshop on music, drama, or dance technique. Conclude the workshop with the group presentation of a new creative technique.
- **Improvise!** – toss out ideas on the spot or play a game of theatre sports. Students will yield to suggestions and think on their feet while adapting to changing circumstances.
- **Slam a few stories** – hold a story slam, an open-floor exchange of stories based on a theme; stories can be true or otherwise; invite another class, or have students versus teachers; give prizes.
- **Rock on!** – hold a noon-hour battle of the bands performance, or sock-hop in the gym.
- **Dance-a-thon for a worthy cause** – dance as long as you can, or until the music runs out. Donate the proceeds to your students’ favourite charity.
- **Take a seat** at a concert, play, dance event or other performance piece. Prepare your students for the live experience, and to focus on the differences from movies and video.
- **Go beyond** performance and take a behind-the-scenes tour; take students to a rehearsal area, a dance studio or a college or university arts faculty; let them see the process behind the product.
- **Stick around** and speak to performers after the show – many theatres are eager to have students engage in a question and answer session with the cast of a play, and many musicians love to talk about their art.
- **Real, live performer** – bring a performer to your classroom, someone who considers him or herself a performer first, whether they work at it full-time, part-time or as a hobby. Have them teach the class a particular skill, or just share their artistic vision.
- **Prompt your students** with discussion questions, the performer’s artistic statement and forehand research to encourage exploration and critical thinking.



Literary Arts

Alberta is home to one of the most exciting literary arts scenes and strongest book publishing industries in North America. There is a lot to discover.

Today's students do a lot of writing, much of it online, and much of it with their thumbs, on telephone keypads. Is this a fleeting form of writing, or does it have the potential to become something more lasting? Will students want to know, someday, what they wrote in their younger years? Introducing students to memoirs, journals and letters, and a glimpse into the past as they move forward, may help them look at their daily communication in a new light.



Class Projects

- **Take Alberta literally** – read the works of an Alberta author. See where they take you.
- **Write now** – the best way to appreciate short stories, poetry, non-fiction, film scripts and other literary forms is to sit down and try it yourself. Guide students with a choice of themes and genres, or allow them to emulate a writer they admire.
- **Write how** – have students listen to a sound then describe on paper how it sounded to them. Encourage metaphors and comparisons. Compare the different descriptions.
- **Glorious texts** – have students take an actual text or social media message they wrote and commit it to paper. Encourage them to decorate it as lavishly as a mediaeval manuscript, to make it a true work of literary art. Does it change their perception of what they wrote?
- **Cover story** - have students design a jacket of a book they've read, or one they imagine. Have them choose artwork and font, and write a "teaser" description and snippets of reviews.
- **Write a future** - have students set up an author's webpage, detailing their future success as a world-famous Alberta author. Include descriptions of projects, photos of their jet-set lifestyle, excerpts of their masterpieces, television interviews, etc.
- **See the inspiration** – visit a place that inspired an Alberta author.
- **See the shop** - visit a writers' workshop and watch the creative process in action.
- **Real, live writer** – bring a writer to your classroom, someone who considers him or herself a writer first, whether they work at it full-time, part-time or as a hobby. Have them give a reading, or lead the class in a creative writing exercise.
- **Prompt your students** with discussion questions, the writer's artistic statement and forehand research to encourage exploration and critical thinking.

History and Multiculturalism

Help your students appreciate Alberta's storied and diverse landscape during Alberta Culture Days.

Class Projects

- **Analyze** how students' families and communities in the present are influenced by events or people of the past.
- **Examine** Alberta's changing cultural and social dynamics. How has multiculturalism in Alberta evolved over time? How do buildings and historic sites reflect the establishment and cultural diversity of communities in Alberta?
- **Reflect** on the ways of life of immigrants from the British Isles during the Great Migration.
- **Ask** a senior or new immigrant to visit the classroom. Listen to stories about their way of life and how it has changed over time.
- **Take a field trip** to one of Alberta's historic sites or museums. [Provincially-owned historic sites and museums](#) normally open during the Alberta Culture Days weekend will be offering free admission and special programming.



Volunteering

Many Albertans participate in the cultural life of their communities by volunteering their time and expertise to the service and support of cultural organizations. Consider organizing an assignment whereby students investigate ways to give back to their community.

Class Projects

- **organize** an arts activity for patients at your local hospital or senior's facility
- **lend a hand** during the Culture Days activities taking place at your local library
- **paint** a mural over unwanted graffiti

Share Your Culture Days Memories

Tells us about it!

We want to hear how you celebrated. Please send details about your event or activity to AlbertaCultureDays@gov.ab.ca. A brief event synopsis will be featured on the Alberta Culture Days website and will help serve as inspiration for other schools looking to participate in the future.

Also, consider uploading photos of how you celebrated to [Flickr](#) and share your memories through the [Alberta Culture Days Group Pool](#).