

# TIME CAPSULES

Educational Resource

June 2020

## A Tale of Three Time Capsules

In 2012 the Legislature Building celebrated the centennial of its official opening. Among the many celebrations and events, a time capsule which had been placed in the cornerstone during construction was opened. Artifacts in the capsule from 1909 included newspapers, coins, lists of Members and dignitaries of the day and a photograph of the trowel used to cement the cornerstone. A new time capsule placed in the same spot as the original time capsule will be opened in 2112.

### What's Happening at the Legislature in June?

*Following the most recent update by Alberta's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, a number of precautionary measures are being implemented. All tours and public events are suspended and general public access to the Legislature Building and Edmonton Federal Building (which houses the Visitor Centre) is restricted. July 1 Canada Day celebrations on the Legislature Grounds are cancelled. Please visit [the Assembly website](#) for updates.*



Alberta Legislature

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# 1909 Time Capsule Unearthing, June 2012

When His Excellency Earl Grey, Governor General of Canada, laid the cornerstone for the Alberta Legislature in 1909, he said about the new home of Alberta's government, "...it should assume an importance not only of your province but of the world, with a sense of your belief in the greatness of your destiny."

The Alberta Legislature Building was a visual and symbolic start for the province, but there was another expression of destiny and hope that didn't take centre stage: a time capsule was placed behind the cornerstone, with the intention that it be opened in 100 years.

Within the time capsule were placed items that reflected what was important to the people of Alberta at that time. Those who placed items in the time capsule had no idea what the future of the province would be like. But they no doubt believed that it had a strong and hopeful start, based on hard work, confidence and faith in the future.

## Did You Know?

**Not everything in the 1909 time capsule stayed well preserved. Some items made of paper disintegrated over the period of more than 100 years that the capsule was buried, likely because it was poorly sealed.**

## 2012 Time Capsule: Respecting Our Past, Embracing Our Future

To continue the tradition and to provide future Albertans a glimpse into our time, a new time capsule became part of the centennial celebrations in September of 2012. Albertans helped to choose the items that would go into the capsule, voting on their top five from a pre-determined list. Nearly 6,000 people voted, selecting these items:

- Student letters with predictions about the future
- A roll of 2012 pennies and a coin set
- Current newspapers
- Photos of the unearthing of the 1909 capsule
- Photos of the 2012 School at the Legislature classes

Other items of significance were added to those voted upon. In total, there are 50 items placed in the time capsule. On display are a few duplicate items. The gold-plated trowel seen here was created for the Speaker, the Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, to use when placing the 2012 time capsule behind the cornerstone of the Legislature Building. The time capsule will be unearthed on Saturday, September 3, 2112, in time for the bicentennial celebration of the Alberta Legislature Building.



The 1909 time capsule in the Agora Interpretive Centre. Many of the paper materials in the capsule were crumbled and ruined by the time of its opening in 2012.

## 2112 Time Capsule: What Do You Think Alberta Will Be Like In 100 Years?

Time capsules are messages to the future, and the items within might reflect world events, reveal our current preoccupations, or preserve something forgotten. These boxes contain both the past and the future in one – messages from a society that is gone to a society only imagined.

Time capsules are not only for the people of the future. Before we seal a time capsule for its hundred-year hibernation, we come together to select items that are meaningful to us – items that demonstrate who we are and what we value or that represent how we think of ourselves and what we want others to know about us.

Imagination is at the core of this endeavor. When we opened the 1909 capsule, we imagined what the people who buried it were like. When we buried the 2012 capsule, we imagined who would open it 100 years in the future. We imagine what the Alberta of 2112 will look like, who those Albertans will be, and what will be important to them.

And maybe, if our imaginations are very good, we can speculate on what the 2212 time capsule – Alberta's fourth – will contain.



The 1909 time capsule gets removed from under the Legislature Building in 2012, with Speaker Gene Zwozdesky and Minister of Culture Heather Klimchuk attending the event.

## Activities

The following suggested activities<sup>1</sup> ask students reflect on the meaning of time capsules and how they can connect us to history and personal experience. Refer to the resource links and videos for more activities and background information.

## Your Time Capsule Today

Future generations will look back on 2020 and wonder how people managed to get through the many challenges that COVID-19 has presented us. Have students consider what they would save in a time capsule to represent their experience of this time. Students can spend time over the course of a week taking note of their routine, the objects they use the most, the media they consume, the people they communicate with, and the activities that keep them busy. Not everything needs to be extra special—household items and regular correspondence like text messages to friends can say a lot about a time period or an experience. After a week of observing and reflecting, students can begin creating a time capsule, either a virtual or hands-on version. Students should express why they chose their items, in writing or orally.

A key message for students to understand is that a primary source such as a time capsule can help people understand the past by allowing us to think about it through a historical perspective, thus enabling students to develop a sense of time and place that will define their own identities as Alberta citizens. Time capsules are by design a window into history, so students should keep in mind that their time capsules will represent part of their own history.



The opening of the 1909 time capsule

## Time Capsule Tips and Ideas

- Time capsules should be personal and meaningful. Each capsule should represent the individual student and their experience.
- Teachers can set out categories for the items to fit into such as You, Your School, Your City, Your Country and Your World. Categories can also be chosen by students or together as a class.
- Consider exploring digital time capsules as a class assignment that is easy to share remotely.

Suggested reflection questions for group discussions or writing exercises include:

- What are the similarities and differences between what students chose for their time capsules?
- What can we learn from everyday items saved in time capsules? What about with rarer or high-value items?
- How do we ensure that physical items stay well preserved inside a time capsule? How do we ensure that digital content from a virtual capsule stays accessible for a long period of time, as technologies change?
- Choose a particular item from either the 1909 or 2012 Legislature time capsules and write about why it might have been considered important enough to preserve. Who might have chosen that item? Does it represent a particular person or group of people in Alberta?

## Resource Links

[Ask an Expert](#)

[Citizen's Guide](#)

[Mock Legislature Resources](#)

[Century-Old Time Capsule News Story](#)

[Time Capsule Activities](#)

[Edmonton Public Library Time Capsule Project](#)

[Canadian Mom creates COVID-19 Time Capsule workbook](#)

## Resource Videos

[Speaker's Corner](#)

[Alberta Legislature Building Time Capsule Unearthing June 18, 2012](#)

[Time Capsule unearthing time lapse](#)

[3D Printed Time Capsule](#)

[Historic Calgary City Hall Time Capsule Opening](#)

# Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Use primary sources to interpret historical events and issues (Social Studies, 6.S.2)
- Use historical and community resources to understand and organize the sequence of historical events (Social Studies, 6.S.2)
- Design and follow a plan, including a schedule, to be used during an inquiry process, and make revisions to the plan, as necessary (Social Studies, 6.S.7)
- Listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences (English Language Arts, General Outcome 1)
- Communicate ideas and information in a variety of oral, print and other media texts (English Language Arts, General Outcome 3)

Alberta Education Program of Studies

## Contact Us

Please let us know if you enjoyed this resource and found it helpful, and if there are any other topics you would like to see covered.

Also, if you tried any of the suggested activities, we would love to see pictures or examples of your students' work!

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Unless indicated otherwise, the included information has been taken directly from the Legislative Assembly Office's *The Citizen's Guide to the Alberta Legislature* (9th edition, 2016) or from the Legislative Assembly Office's Agora Interpretive Centre.

1. Portions adapted from "A Tale of Two Time Capsules", Visitor Services, Alberta Legislative Assembly Office, uploaded May 6th, 2013. Accessed May 26th, 2020, [https://www.assembly.ab.ca/visitor/teachers/pdf/TimeCapsule\\_Activities.pdf](https://www.assembly.ab.ca/visitor/teachers/pdf/TimeCapsule_Activities.pdf).

