

MONUMENTAL CANADIANS LESSON PLANS & STUDENT ACTIVITIES

**Captain Nichola Goddard:
A LIFE OF PASSION, COMPASSION & ADVENTURE,
A LEGACY OF SERVICE**



NAME: CAPTAIN NICHOLA GODDARD

BORN: May 2, 1980 (Madang, Papua New Guinea)

DECEASED: May 17, 2006 (Bayanzi, Panjwa'i District, Afghanistan)

EPIC BATTLE: Battle of Bayanzi, Panjwa'i District, Afghanistan

RANK: Captain (Army)

HONOURS: Meritorious Service Medal, Sacrifice Medal

LESSON OUTCOMES:

- Develop and practice communication skills
- Evaluate Canada’s mission in Afghanistan as a way of making the world a better place
- Practice perspective taking

ACTIVITY:

1. Make Afghan Chai (tea) for all participants (see recipe below) in advance of the lesson. Keep tea heated in a crockpot if possible. Set up a *shura* by laying out a large blanket on the floor where all participants can sit. Consider multiple blankets separated from one another if small group discussions are preferred over a large group discussion.
2. Watch Valour Canada’s Monumental Canadians Nichola Goddard video clip with students. Stop the video as needed to address difficult vocabulary, concepts and answer questions. Consider watching it again, uninterrupted.
3. Read Selected Excerpts from Nichola Goddard’s Letters (pages 2, 4 & 5) as a group, or provide the sheet for students individually or in small groups.
4. Use the questions below to guide discussion during the *shura* but encourage students to ask their own questions as well.

SHURA: a meeting to discuss an issue or issues

Nichola Goddard participated in two shuras during her time in Afghanistan. Her comments about her participation are quoted below.

Image credit: SSG Kaily Brown



Objectives:

Our Intention is to educate Canadian Citizens so that they:

- » *Appreciate the role of our military heritage in protecting Canadian interests, values and beliefs.*
- » *Understand the role our military history has had in shaping our country and the world.*
- » *Are inspired to be engaged and well-informed participatory citizens of Canada.*

**Intended Student Body:
Intermediate & Advanced
Grades**

** Activity can easily be modified for all grades and ability levels by tailoring the discussion questions as required.*

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

- Monumental Canadians Nichola Goddard Video Clip: <http://valourcanada.ca/video-documentaries/captain-nichola-goddard/> (6 minutes)
- Selected Excerpts from Nicola Goddard’s letters (pages 2, 4, & 5)
- Large blanket (optional) and space to sit in a circle
- Afghan Chai for all participants (optional): see recipe below
 - Mugs
 - Napkins

AFGHAN CHAI RECIPE:

Ingredients: (per participant)

- ~1 cup of water
- Stick or generous sprinkle of cinnamon
- Small pinch of ginger powder
- ~3 Cardamom seeds
- 1 tea bag (note: if making a large batch, each participant does not need their own tea bag, 1 tea bag can provide enough tea for 3-4 participants)
- Sugar to taste

Directions:

1. Boil sufficient water for all participants in large pot
2. Add spices, tea and sugar
3. Simmer until fragrant
4. Taste and adjust ingredients as needed



NICHOLA GODDARD AT THE SHURAS:

"...our mission was to move into isolated areas, either by foot or with our vehicles to meet with local elders and conduct shirras [sic]. Shirra is the Pashtu word for "meeting" or what we are calling "leader engagements." Essentially, a group of 30-50 soldiers shows up on the outside of town. A smaller delegation of five-to-10 soldiers and three-to-five Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers (depending on the size of the town) goes forward under the remainder's watchful eye.

They ask to speak to the village leader and/or elders. In every village that we visited (I lost track after 10), this was absolutely no problem. A group of three-to-10 men would show up, with one designated leader. They would sit down somewhere in the open, watched by the remainder of the men in the village. We would watch our emissaries very closely for security reasons. Then, the shirra would begin. In most of the villages, after about 10 minutes of pleasantries, the chai (sweet tea) and bread would be brought out. They would also bring out candy and sometimes soup. Then, the real business would begin.

I was honoured to be invited to two different shirras. I really thought that the whole female thing would be a huge issue. It was, but not in the way that I thought it would be...I am not sure how serious the discussion was before I got there, but once I arrived it quickly centered on my marriage status. The big shock was not that I was in the army, but that I was married and in the army. The fact that my husband was not also a soldier was even more disturbing...The remainder of the discussion revolved around my inexplicable lack of children. The elder offered to go inside and get me some milk and bread, as diet was probably the issue. He was 67 and had two wives and several children under the age of 10...I said that my husband would definitely say that one wife was enough. He thought that was hysterical, and I was a hit.

The second shirra that I was invited to was quite large. About 15 elders turned up with close to 20 children. We are always relieved to see children, as it means that the meeting will probably go smoothly. Anyway, here the issue was not my lack of children, but my availability. My boss was apparently asked if I was available to marry one of the elder's sons who looked to be about 15. After we'd established that I was already married, the issue turned to the all important one of baking bread. When I confessed that I could not make the delicious flat bread that they serve (like a flat naan bread) the elder asked, "Can you at least boil water to make chai?" I was quite indignant in my response "Yes!!" which amused them all."

Excerpted from Nichola Goddard's letters found in *Canada's Daughter*, by Sally Goddard

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Note: Students may be assigned to research these questions in advance of the *shura* in order to facilitate deeper discussion. Suggested resources for further research are listed below.

1. Why did Nichola support Canada's mission in Afghanistan? Do you agree with her reasoning? Why or why not?
2. Compare and contrast how Nichola's parents tried to make the world a better place with how Nichola tried to make the world a better place.
3. How did Nichola's experience in the military and in Afghanistan vary from the experience of her male colleagues? How was it the same?
4. Why did members of the Canadian military, including Nichola, take part in shuras?
5. Why did some people in Afghanistan warmly receive Canadian troops while others threw rocks at them?
6. Why did so many places want to claim Nichola as their own after her death? What about her story connects with so many people?
7. What impact did Nichola make on the world? What makes her a monumental Canadian? Consider her life and legacy.
8. How can you live a life of "passion, compassion and adventure?"

RESOURCES:

Highly recommended to assist discussion questions above:

- In the words of a soldier: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/in-the-words-of-a-soldier-1.1457640> (video, 45 min)
- Canada's Daughter, by Sally Goddard (book, contains all of Nichola's letters, digital version available through Kindle)

Other recommended resources:

- Highway of Heroes, The Trews <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrkgV5bl7kQ> (song, 4 mins)
- Sunray, Valerie Fortney (book)
- How a Canadian soldier's legacy is lighting up an island nation <http://www.cbc.ca/news/thenational/how-a-canadian-soldier-s-legacy-is-lighting-up-an-island-nation-1.4349368> (video, 11 mins)
- <http://www.nicholagoddard.com> (website, see links page)

"I didn't know it would be so beautiful. It is kind of like cutting out a piece of Manitoba, filling it with sand and putting it in Canmore's location." -Nichola Goddard



Image credit: Afghanistan, Vladimir Lysenko

SELECTED EXCERPTS FROM NICHOLA GODDARD'S LETTERS:

"Leaving KAF (Khandahar Airfield) is like moving to another world. First, we cross about 2 km of garbage. The field of garbage always has people "shopping" as Mum would say. It is quite sad. There are a couple apartment buildings that have half collapsed. When you get to the other side, you see that they don't have a back at all. Apparently, they were hit by 500 lb. bombs sometime ago. They are filled with people. The kids all run out to watch us drive by. Sometimes they wave and smile, but other times they swear at us and throw rocks. I still find it pretty shocking to see young children so full of hate at us being here. But others wave and smile and seem to want us around. It is hard to know who is right. I just have to believe that we are doing a good thing, especially when I hear our intelligence updates about the widespread violence and I see the terrible poverty.

...I can't begin to describe the poverty that I have seen here. It actually makes me sick to my stomach to see how little these people have. In the countryside, there are lean-tos made out of old tarp and almost see through cloth. It seems like dozens of people fit into them. We went to practice shooting our weapons and the locals all gathered around to watch.

That was fine, but as soon as we were done, they came to scavenge...they collected all of the used casings from our weapons. They were actually pushing and shoving each other to get at it. I have also never seen so many people maimed and wounded. People with crutches and people without them who should have them.

...I saw my first Afghani [sic] woman. She was in full burka and walking back from the gas station/bus stop. I don't know how they can see or function. I can't imagine never feeling the sun on my face or not really being able to see where I'm going. Imagine not being able to go for a run or a relaxed walk! Then I remind myself that these people are primarily concerned with survival – they would never waste energy on a run or go for a relaxed walk, there is enough walking to the nearest water source! I remind myself to be open-minded; we have some pretty whacked cultural idiosyncrasies, too.

A "female quarters" was established within our [tent]. It is sectioned off by tarp so that we are completely isolated from the males. Personally, I think that we have taken a benign situation and created a fantasy. The original intent was to move us to completely different [tent]. I wrote a memorandum protesting the move to the Commanding Officer. He actually wrote back to me personally, and agreed to compromise but wanted us in a segregated cell. I guess it is ok. Girls generally smell better than guys and I get my own bunk now so I'm not complaining too much...The females now have their own bathroom...Because there are far fewer females, we always have hot water and lots of it. That's really nice, because the guys still complain about running out all the time.

...I am afraid that this week's letter will be neither long nor particularly cheerful...I attended my second American ramp ceremony. The service was virtually identical to the first, except that it was emotionally much harder because they feeling that this wasn't going to be the last one was unavoidable...it was difficult to accept how matter-of-fact they were about the whole thing...I was in the first row behind the American troops that were lining the route, and I could hear a couple of them crying. That was really tough.

I don't want you to feel that I am depressed or defeated. Far from it. The longer that we are in theatre and the more that we actually interact with the Afghan people, the more I feel that we are serving a purpose here. I think that these people, through the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, are trying to achieve

something that we in Canada have long since taken for granted. They lay down their lives daily to try to seize something that is so idealistic it is almost impossible to define. It goes beyond women wearing burkas and children being taught to read and write. The Afghan people have chosen who will lead them.

Their new government is striving to make Afghanistan a better place. I had never truly appreciated the awesome power of a democratic government before. We are here to assist that legitimate and democratically elected government. It is easy to poke holes in that statement and say that the system is corrupt and that violence and poverty make people easy targets for our own agendas. Those statements are true; however, we have to start somewhere. With the best of intentions, we have started in Afghanistan. There is nowhere else that I'd rather be right now.

...Working with ANA and interpreters was eye-opening, to say the least. I am always astonished at the way the military acts as a great equalizer. It doesn't matter where you are from, or how much money you had growing up or the size of your family. It doesn't even matter what country you're from or your level of education. Once you're out with other soldiers, doing your thing, we are all the same. We respect each other based on ability, not background. We value a positive attitude, determination, and a good sense of humour. The ANA possessed all of those qualities to a high degree.

The ANA soldiers are very professional and competent. They are also in amazing physical shape. Watching them run up and down the mountains with all of their gear was phenomenal. Seeing how proud they are of their country and how determined they are to work towards peace was inspiring. They are paid very little and do very dangerous work – it is not rhetoric for them. They really do want to get rid of the Taliban and al-Qaida to make their country a better place.

...the interpreter came up and had a two-, three-minute conversation in Pashtu with the five men who were watching me. Then he turned to me and said, "Please excuse their staring. They are just very surprised that you are a woman working with all of these men. I have told them that you climbed over the mountain with us with your heavy bag and that you had no problems. They think that you must be very strong. I explained to them that you are just like the men, and that you can do everything that they can do the same as them.

It was perhaps the greatest statement of equality that I have ever heard – and it was given by a Pakistani-raised, Afghan male in the middle of an Afghan village that is only accessible by a five km walk up a mountain. It just goes to show that anything is possible and that stereotypes are often completely wrong.

...It seems to me that we have such a burden of responsibility to make the world a better place for those who were born into far worse circumstances. It is more than donating money to charities –it is taking action and trying to make things better. [Mom and Dad] You have both shown me that throughout my life – but here, I realize it more than ever.

My current job and role in Afghanistan is part of that – but it is more the non-government organizations that come later. They are the ones that really make the difference. I like to think that my being here means they will be able to come that much sooner, and operate more freely...It is very humbling to be here, part of something so much bigger than myself.