

# 8

## For the Good of the People



**FIGURE 8-1** As chief priest of the Aztecs, Moctezuma had to perform important religious rites. He also had to interpret omens and dreams in order to carry out the will of the gods. What details of this image reflect Aztec thinking about religion?

## WORLDVIEW INQUIRY

*How does a society's way of looking at the world influence its customs, choices, and decisions?*

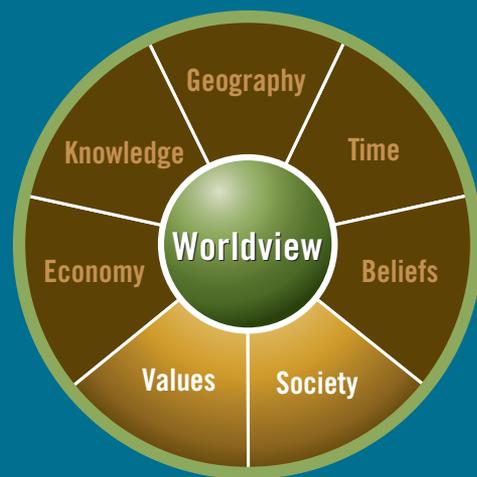
1519. In the centre of Tenochtitlan (Teh-noch-TEE-tlahn), Moctezuma stood alone on the roof of his palace, observing the stars.

Moctezuma, the leader of the Aztec people, was known as The Great Speaker. One of his many responsibilities was to watch the night sky for signs that might tell of future events and interpret these for his people. His decisions as emperor were influenced by the movements of heavenly bodies.

Lately, there had been some bad **omens**, or signs, for Aztec society. Many people had heard a strange voice in the night that sounded like a mother wailing for her children. Then one day the lake waters surrounding the city turned as red as blood. And, of course, there was the ever-present threat of the fifth sun being destroyed by an earthquake.

Moctezuma turned his gaze from the sky to the Great Temple just across the square from his palace. Could it really be possible that this building, the centre of the Aztec universe, might someday soon lie in ruins? Then suddenly there was a terrifying sign. Flaming across the night sky, was what the Aztecs called a “star serpent,” a comet with a fiery tail. This was a terrible omen, foretelling death and destruction.

The Aztecs had a strong belief in fate—that life was destined to follow a certain path. How might a belief in fate affect the action an emperor might take?



## In This Chapter

In the last chapter, you saw how geography, religion, and contact with neighbouring peoples shaped the Aztec worldview. Now you will see how Aztec ideas about the structure of society, education, and citizenship reflected this worldview. What kind of people did this society produce? What was it about their society that enabled the Aztecs to become a superpower in their part of the world?

# The Aztec Social Hierarchy

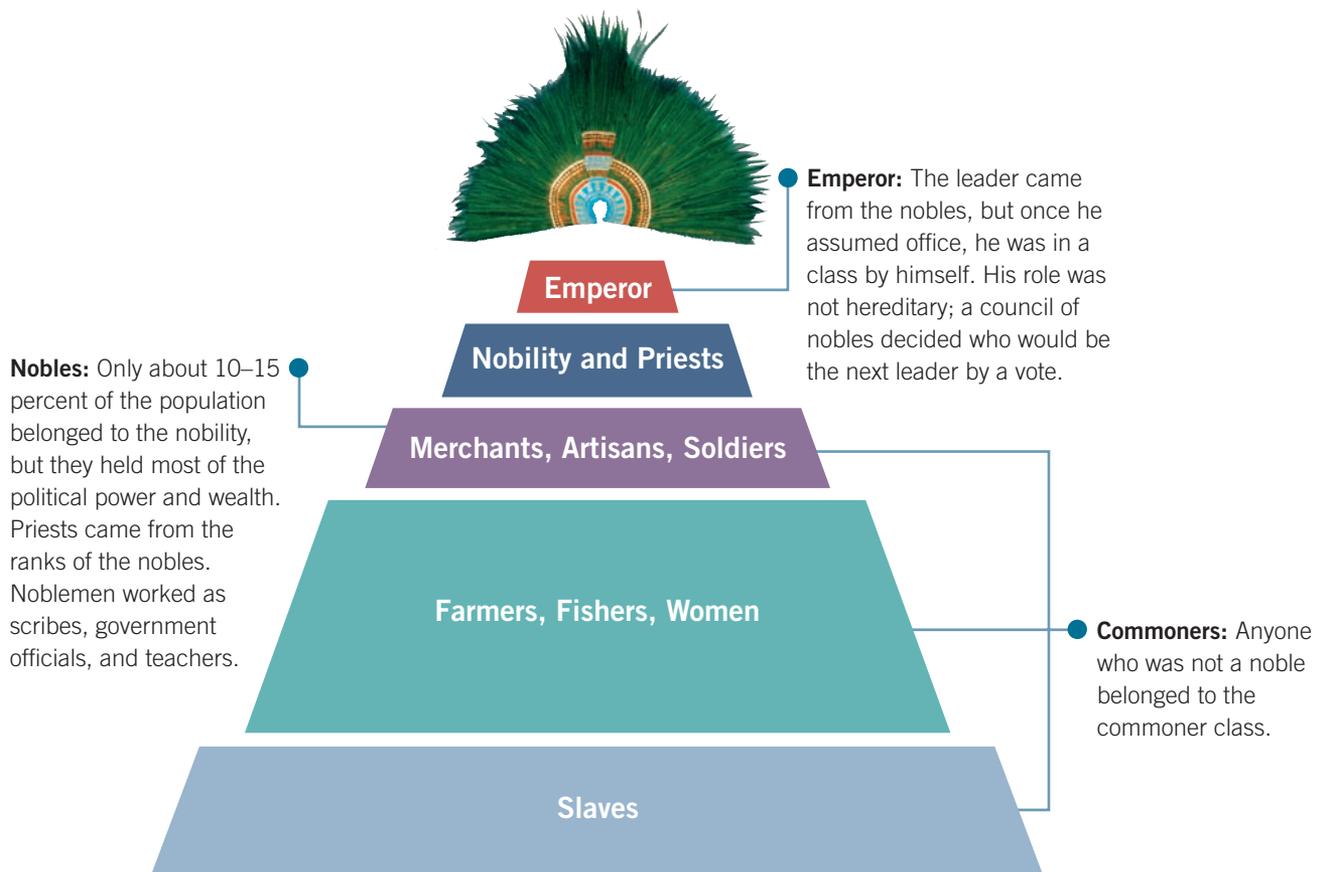
*How did the structure of the Aztec society tell us what was important to the Aztec people?*

## LINK UP

Compare the hierarchy of Aztec society with that of medieval society that you read about in Chapter 1, page 18. ■

The diagram below shows the hierarchy of Aztec society. As you can see, there were two main classes—nobles and commoners. A person's position in society was generally determined by which class he or she was born into. However, as you will see, people were able to work their way to a higher level through their own efforts. Both classes had their own subdivisions, with some people having more wealth and power than others within the same level.

The Aztec social structure was unlike that of most First Nations north of the Rio Grande. With the exception of the West Coast, First Nations of North America were notably non-hierarchical.



**FIGURE 8-2** Each rank in society had its own responsibilities and they all contributed to the good of the Aztec Empire.

## The Role of the Emperor

At the top of the Aztec hierarchy was the emperor, who had the title *Huey Tlatoani* (way tlah-toe-AH-nee) which means “Great Speaker.” Even though the Aztecs knew that their emperor was a human being, they treated him as if he were a god. The Aztecs showed respect by obeying him without question and by giving the emperor every possible privilege and luxury. He lived in an enormous palace with spectacular gardens and a private zoo. Servants carried him through the streets on a screened platform draped with **ocelot** skins. Other servants ran ahead, sweeping the street. Yet with all his privileges, the emperor’s responsibilities as chief priest, commander-in-chief, and head of state were just as great.

### FYI...

An ocelot is a nocturnal wildcat that has a greyish or yellow coat with back spots.

### Commander of the Army

In his role as commander-in-chief of the Aztec army, the emperor had to be a skilled warrior himself. He had to know military strategy and how to lead others.

### Head of State

Before the emperor would make an important decision, he would call together his council of priests and nobles and ask their advice. The ultimate decision, however, was his alone. The good of the entire empire rested on his shoulders.



**FIGURE 8-3** This bas-relief shows the Aztec emperor taking a defeated king captive. What qualities would a military leader need to have?

### SKILL POWER

Taking notes in an organized manner as you read can help when you need to gather information for an inquiry. You could use an organizer like the one below to summarize Moctezuma’s privileges and responsibilities.

Privileges	Responsibilities

### Think IT THROUGH

In modern texts we refer to Moctezuma as the “emperor” of the Aztec people. But to the Aztecs he was the “Great Speaker.” What do the differences in titles suggest about how Western society views Moctezuma’s role compared with how the Aztec people viewed it?



**FIGURE 8-4** Maize, or corn, was the most important food of the Aztecs. This farmer is planting seed. What can you tell from this image about Aztec agricultural technology?

## Family Clans

Aztec society was organized into units called *calpolli* (call-POLE-lee). Members of a *calpolli* lived in the same neighbourhood and worshipped at the same temple. Some *calpolli* were based on the work that people did. For example, a group of goldsmiths might form a *calpolli*; feather workers might form another. Other *calpolli* were groups of people who had close family ties.

The *calpolli* owned the land where its members lived and farmed. Each *calpolli* elected a captain and a council. The council of the *calpolli* assigned land and houses to its residents and collected taxes. It also had the important responsibility of keeping the neighbourhood clean, washing the streets, and painting and scrubbing the buildings. Electing their local leaders gave commoners some measure of political power.

## Merchants

The merchants made up the richest *calpolli* in Tenochtitlan. As you read in Chapter 7, merchants went on trading expeditions into the far corners of the Aztec Empire. They brought back prized goods and acted as spies for the Aztecs. Their detailed knowledge of geography and layout of foreign cities made them valuable advisors to generals planning attacks during wartime. On their return to the city, the merchants sold their goods in Tenochtitlan's markets. The taxes they paid on their profits enriched the Aztec state.

### SKILL POWER

Being a critical reader means being an active reader. It means:

- *thinking about what the writer is saying* What are the main ideas? What support does the writer give for these? How is the information organized?
- *analyzing the content* What is the writer's point of view? How does the writer support it? Does the writer use valid reasoning and logical arguments? What is fact and what is opinion in this piece of writing?

Recognizing fact and opinion is often challenging because writers often mix the two. A **fact** is something that can be proven and backed up with evidence. An **opinion** is someone's belief, view, or feelings about something. Sometimes a writer's language helps you know that an opinion is being given. Words such as *best*, *should*, *important*, *believes*, and *argues* may appear in an opinion.

Decide whether the following statements are facts or opinions. Discuss your answers with a small group and explain your thinking.

- The author argues that the Aztec empire fell because Moctezuma was an indecisive leader.
- There were no horses in the Americas before the arrival of Europeans.
- On his last voyage, Columbus met a seagoing canoe full of people and goods that may have been travelling from the Yucatan to Costa Rica or Panama.
- In 2006, Evo Morales, a member of the Aymara people, was elected president of the South American country of Bolivia.

Find two more facts and two opinions in this book.

## Farmers

Farmers did more than just grow the crops that fed Tenochtitlan's population. They were also skilled hunters and fishers. They sold much of what they caught in the market to add to the family income.

For the Aztecs, paying taxes was one of the most important responsibilities of citizenship. Farmers gave up a share of their produce in taxes. They didn't grow crops just for themselves, but as a useful service that helped the state to survive. They might also have been expected to donate a certain number of hours of labour to working on projects for the state.

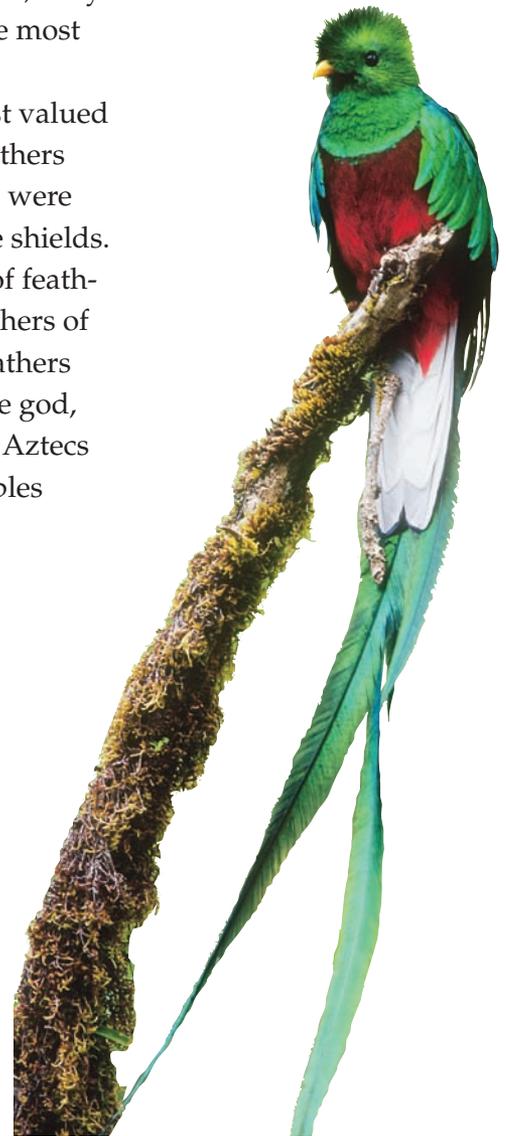
## Artisans

In a large and wealthy city like Tenochtitlan, there was a constant demand for the finer things in life, including fashionable clothes and works of art. This kept the Aztec **artisans**, or skilled craftworkers, busy. Mask makers, goldsmiths, and feather workers were among the most respected artisans.

The beautiful creations of the feather workers were the most valued items in Aztec society. Tropical birds with brightly coloured feathers were hunted and raised in captivity by the Aztecs. The feathers were worked into fans, headdresses, and tunics and used to decorate shields. Only members of the nobility were allowed to wear garments of feathers. The most-prized feathers were the iridescent turquoise feathers of the **quetzal** bird, which lived in tropical rainforests. Quetzal feathers were sacred to the Aztecs because they were associated with the god, Quetzalcoatl (kets-ahl-COH-ah-tl), the "feathered serpent." The Aztecs obtained feathers as part of the tribute they collected from peoples whom they ruled.



**FIGURE 8-5** These men are harvesting the corn.



**FIGURE 8-6** The Aztecs revered the quetzal and included it in their art and mythology.



**FIGURE 8-7** Moctezuma gave a feathered headdress like this one made of quetzal feathers to the Spanish leader Cortés. What does this suggest about how Moctezuma viewed Cortés?

## Zoom In > The Tlatelolco Market

The largest market in the Aztec Empire—in fact, one of the largest markets in the world at the time—was held daily in Tlatelolco (tlah-teh-LOL-co) the market district of the city of Tenochtitlan. It was located in a huge outdoor square. Cortés wrote King Carlos I (Charles I) of Spain that the market could hold up to 60 000 people at a time. Historians estimate that on an average day 25 000 people visited the market.

Vendors had a wide variety of goods on display, including fabric, clothing, weapons, pottery, jewellery, and food. As you can see from the chart on the right, it was run mainly on a barter system. Cacao beans were so valuable that they were used as a kind of money.

The market was more than just a place to buy and sell merchandise. It also served as a social centre where Aztecs from every walk of life could come together and catch up on the latest news, hear music, or buy a snack.

The market had its own police force to keep order, and it also had a court of 20 judges. The police brought suspected thieves before the judges. Vendors who cheated their customers had their goods confiscated and were sold into slavery.

The market was a source of great pride for the Aztec society. When the Spanish arrived in Tenochtitlan, the market at Tlatelolco was the first



**FIGURE 8-8** This is a detail from the image you saw in Chapter 7. In the foreground is the market district of Tenochtitlan.

place the Aztecs showed them. Here one of the Spanish soldiers recalls his amazement at the size and order of the market square.

*We stood there looking . . . at the great market and the swarm of people buying and selling. The . . . murmur of their voices talking was loud enough to be heard more than three miles [4.8 km] away. Some of our soldiers who had been . . . in Constantinople, in Rome, and all over Italy, said that they had never seen a market so well laid out, so large, so orderly, and so full of people.*

**Bernal Diaz del Castillo,  
The Conquest of New Spain.**

The city of Cahokia was the largest city north of Mexico. Its location near the Missouri, Illinois, and Mississippi rivers put it at the centre of a First Nation's trading network that extended from Lake Superior to the Gulf of Mexico, and Oklahoma to the Carolinas.

- What similarities in the Aztec and Spanish worldview are reflected in their attitude toward the market?

### What could you buy at the Tlatelolco market?

Item	Price
cotton cloak	100 cacao beans
dugout canoe	one cotton cloak or 100 cacao beans
a load of red dye	two cotton cloaks
a slave	30 cotton cloaks
a slave who could sing and dance	40 cotton cloaks

## Analyzing Issues

“What’s your opinion?” “What do you think about this?” “Where do you stand on this issue?” Every day in school and in your life outside of school you are asked to give your response to ideas and issues. Sometimes you respond by giving information; other times you simply state your opinion.

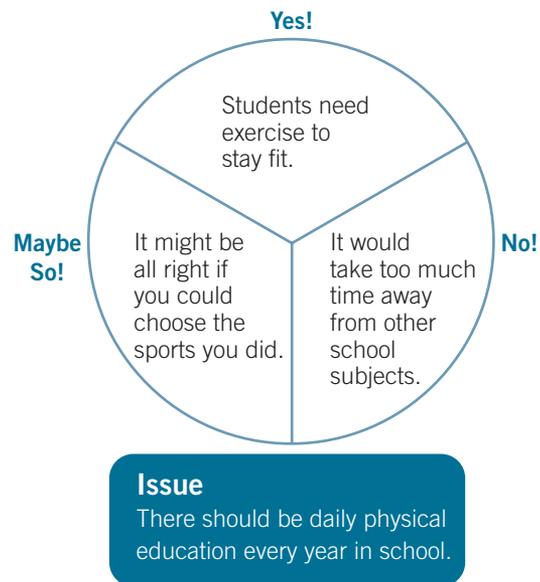
Suppose your class is discussing the subject of physical fitness among young people. You might come up with a statement that expresses one way of looking at the issue, such as: “There should be daily physical activities every year in school.” You can then brainstorm this issue and use a Tri-Pie chart to record the responses.

A Tri-Pie chart allows people to respond in three different ways: **Yes!** **No!** or **Maybe So!** If you feel strongly one way or the other, your response goes in the **Yes!** or **No!** section.

If you have an idea that qualifies as a “maybe” or if you want to pose a question about the issue, your response can be put into the **Maybe So!** section.



1. Brainstorm the issue and record people’s responses in the appropriate sections of the pie.



**FIGURE 8-10** A Tri-Pie Chart

2. Read over the responses in each section of the pie. As a class, discuss which section contains the strongest arguments or facts. People should be ready to defend their choices.

### Try It!

Now decide on an issue that might affect students in your school. For example, should students lose marks for missing deadlines on projects?

**FIGURE 8-9** Do you think females should be allowed to play in male sports leagues and should boys be allowed to participate in female sports?

## LINK UP

Re-read page 27 about the sumptuary laws in Renaissance Europe. Most of these laws tried to control spending by the growing middle class. Can you see a link between these social laws in European and Aztec society? Explain. ■

## Think IT THROUGH

To what extent does clothing define the identities of students at your school? Does your school have any rules about the clothing you can wear? Why do you think these rules are in place?

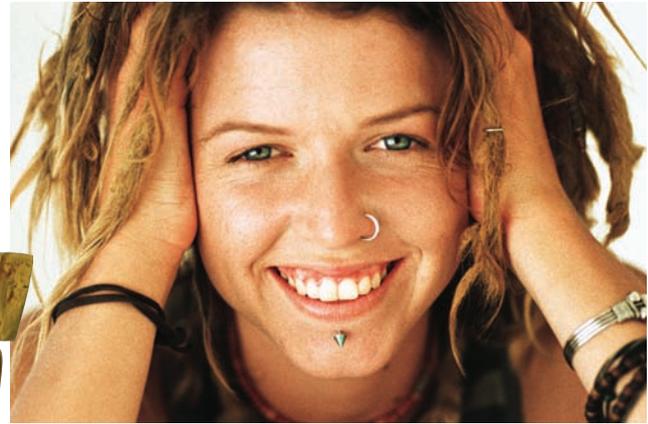
## Signs of Status

Imagine you are on a busy city street in Canada watching people go by. Can you tell at a glance who the rich people are? Could you identify a judge, a teacher, or a business person just by the clothes they wear? In Aztec society, the three most common ways of indicating your position in society were by your clothing, your jewellery, and by the size and location of your house. For clothing, the quality of the cloth and the patterns printed on it were both determined by the wearer's position in society.

The Aztec attitude toward wealth is in stark contrast to the attitude of most First Nations, for whom displays of wealth are considered selfish.



**FIGURE 8-11** An Aztec goldsmith made the warrior statue to the right. Note that the man is wearing one ornament in his nose and another in his lower lip.



**FIGURE 8-12** In Canadian society today, does jewellery show a person's social status or do people wear it for other reasons?

## EXPLORING SOURCES

### Clothing and Housing Laws

Here are two Aztec laws that were still in effect when the Spanish arrived.

*The common people will not be allowed to wear cotton clothing, under pain of death, but only garments of maguey [cactus] fibre. No one but the great noblemen and chieftains is to build a house with a second storey, under pain of death.*

**The editors of Time-Life Books, *The Aztecs: Reign of Blood and Splendor* (Wings of War).**

- Why do you think it was important for the Aztecs to be able to tell commoners and nobles apart just by looking at them?
- Why do you think the nobles might be the only ones able to add height to their homes? Before answering, think back to what you read in Chapter 7 about the height of pyramids.



**FIGURE 8-13** This page from an Aztec codex shows the way a warrior's uniform changed by the number of prisoners he took in battle. At the beginning, the warrior wears a simple loincloth and tunic, but after taking four prisoners, he becomes a noble and can wear the uniform of a jaguar warrior. Can you think of any parallels in modern society?

## Moving up in Society

The main way to move up in Aztec society was by achieving success on the battlefield. For the Aztecs, killing the enemy was not the point of going to war; what they wanted were prisoners they could sacrifice to honour the gods. A warrior who took four enemies prisoner immediately became eligible for membership in a higher social status. If the warrior was a commoner, he also could rise to the nobility.

**Think IT THROUGH**

What is a "status symbol"?  
 What were status symbols in Aztec society? What are modern status symbols?

## Over to YOU

- Review the Aztec social structure pyramid at the beginning of this chapter. Based on this pyramid, what was important to the Aztecs? Explain your thinking.
  - What are some factors that determine social status in your community? Look at the list of keywords below and rank them in order of importance. Which ones do you think determine social status the most? The least?
    - Marital Status
    - Education
    - Appearance
    - Job Skills
    - Gender
    - Religion
    - Age
    - Wealth
  - In a small group, explain the criteria you used in ranking the keywords the way you did.
  - How might other communities determine social status? Consider, for example, First Nations and Inuit groups and societies and cultures in other parts of the world.
- As a class, discuss how developing strong ties among people can have positive effects on the community.
  - How did a *calpolli* benefit the community? How would a *calpolli* shape the way Aztecs understood the world?
  - Create a bumper sticker or slogan to encourage either teens or adults to take on specific roles requiring some degree of responsibility and commitment to the community.
- Research current newspaper articles to find an example of how a leader can express or represent a society's worldview. How does that society's worldview influence its choices, decisions, and interactions with others? Present your findings to the class.

# Aztec Education

How are a society's social structure and its educational system related?

Aztec children were educated at home until they started school. Estimates on when school began range from ages 10 to 15. Imagine not going to school until you were 15. How might this affect your life?

Codices tell us that all classes in Aztec society pampered their children until the age of three. After that, they were expected to be hard-working and obedient; if not, they were harshly punished. The aim of this discipline was to turn them into citizens with “a stone heart and a stone face.” What do you think this means? How does it fit in with your own idea of citizenship?

Education was valued in Aztec society; all schooling was free and every child went to school. There were two types of schools, the *calmecac* (call-MEH-cahk) for nobles, and the *telpochcalli* (tell-poach-CALL-lee) for commoners.



## Schools for Nobles

The *calmecac* was located in neighbourhoods where nobles lived; it was often attached to a temple. Students studied codices to learn about their society. Religious training was an important part of their education.

**FIGURE 8-14** To punish children who misbehaved, some Aztec parents threw handfuls of hot chili peppers into a fire and forced them to inhale the fiery smoke. They believed that they were doing what was best for their society and their child. How have attitudes regarding what is best for children changed?

**FIGURE 8-15** Judging by this chart, how did the *calmecac* help the nobility to keep their hold on political power in Aztec society?

CALMECAC	
What they studied (their curriculum)	What they trained to be (their careers)
Astronomy/Astrology	Generals in the Army
Mathematics	Judges
Reading	Priests
Writing	Scribes
Music	High government officials
Law	Diplomats
The Calendar	Teachers

## Mandatory Military

### Conscription

In Aztec society, military service was mandatory, and being an able warrior was a source of great pride. In Canada, however, military service is voluntary, that is, people volunteer to join the armed forces. When people in a country are required by law to serve in the military, it is called **conscription**.

### Looking at the Issue

Conscription is also known as “the draft.” You may have heard of the term “draft dodger,” which refers to someone who avoids military service by illegally leaving the country or going into hiding. Draft dodger became a popular term during the Vietnam War, when many American citizens came to Canada to avoid fighting in a war they thought was wrong.

Countries that have mandatory military service today include Austria, China, Egypt, Israel, Mexico, and Sweden. In the United States, males between the ages of 18–25 are required to register “in order to provide manpower in case of an emergency.” In Canada, the draft has never been enacted in times of peace.

### Different Points of View

*For conscription:* It provides jobs and valuable training to a large number of citizens.

If the country goes to war, it has a trained fighting force ready to call up.

It is democratic. People are called on to serve regardless of their wealth, education, etc.

*Against conscription:* It is the same as slavery since it is forced work.

It goes against a citizen’s basic human rights.

Women should not be expected to serve in the military.



**FIGURE 8-16** These soldiers are practising the use of a grenade launcher. Some countries that draft women into the military are China, Taiwan, North Korea, Peru, Malaysia, Israel, and Libya.

### Think IT THROUGH

1. What is your response to the arguments for and against conscription? How do you think serving in the military might affect someone’s attitude toward war? Can you think of any other arguments for either side?
2. Should military service be mandatory in Canada as it was for the Aztecs? Support your position with three reasons.
3. If conscription were enacted in Canada, do you think women should be drafted as well as men? Explain your thinking.
4. In Canada, the government brought in conscription for World War I and World War II. The result was the Conscription Crisis of 1917 and the conscription crisis of 1944. Choose either of these conscription crises. Do research to find the answer to the following questions: What reasons did the government give for enacting conscription? What values do those reasons reflect? Do you think that in the decades since conscription, those values have changed? Explain.

### What's in a WORD?

Pictures or symbols used in writing are called "glyphs," from the Greek word for "carving." The ancient Egyptian system of hieroglyphics is one of the best-known systems of symbol writing.

## Reading, Writing, and Counting

The Aztecs based all of their higher education on the ability to read and write using a system of pictures, called **glyphs**, instead of letters. Only nobles learned how to read and write. Commoners received all their instruction by the spoken word, rather than reading. How would this fact enforce the Aztec social order?

Our counting system is based on the number 10, because before the invention of writing, people used their fingers to count. The Aztecs used their fingers *and* toes to count, so their system was based on the number 20. In fact, this number was so useful to the Aztecs that it took on a sacred meaning. In the Aztec calendar descriptions in Chapter 7, you saw that every month had 20 days.

**FIGURE 8-17** Can you spot the beak, wings, and talons in this image of a member of the eagle order? Based on what you know about the founding of the city of Tenochtitlan, why would an eagle warrior's uniform be so powerful?



## Military Training

At school, all boys trained as warriors to defend the Aztec state. Once he knew how to fight, a boy would serve as a soldier's servant and follow the army to learn how warriors conducted themselves in battle. At age 15, boys became warriors themselves and took an active role in battle. The eagle and jaguar were the most prestigious military orders.

## Zoom In

### National Aboriginal Veterans' Monument

On June 21, 2001, then-Governor General Adrienne Clarkson unveiled the National Aboriginal Veterans' Monument (Figure 8-18). The monument honours the contributions of the more than 12 000 First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and non-status Indians who served Canada in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. The eagle, or thunderbird, at the top of the monument symbolizes the creator.

- Conduct research to determine why artist Lloyd Pinay chose the animals he included.
- The contribution of Aboriginal peoples to Canada's military history is significant. Using online sources such as the CBC and Veterans Affairs Web sites, or the resources of your school library, select one Aboriginal individual and prepare a newspaper report on his or her activities during wartime. You may choose from



**FIGURE 8-18** What figures can you identify in the monument?

the war of 1812, the Boer War, World War I, World War II, or the Korean War. Follow the steps of the inquiry process outlined on pages 8–9 of your text book.

## Education for Commoners

The commoners' schools were called *tepochcalli*. Since commoners did not learn to read and write, all instruction at the *tepochcalli* was spoken; students needed to learn their lessons through rote memorization. Teachers gave them oral lessons in Aztec history, religion, and citizenship duties. Since music was important in their religion, they learned to play flutes and drums and dance the sacred dances. Boys spent much of their time at school doing hard physical labour, digging ditches and carrying firewood. Boys and girls also received practical instruction from their parents at home to prepare them for the family trade.

## Educating Aztec Women

As in many cultures at this time, Aztec women had little political power. The emperor and every member of his council were men. Unlike many other societies, however, the Aztecs thought it was important for girls to get a good education.

Every young girl regardless of her social rank attended school. At age 16, most Aztec girls got married and moved in with their husbands. Then they, in turn, educated their own children until they were old enough to attend school.

Even though women could not hold public office, this did not mean Aztec society undervalued them. In some cases, women went with the army as doctors and healers because they had the most knowledge about medicinal herbs. Some girls chose to be priestesses. People consulted them to choose a lucky day to set out on a journey or get married. Older women acted as matchmakers, bringing young people together for marriage, and they also served as midwives.

### Think IT THROUGH

The Aztecs used education to create more "ideal" Aztec citizens and powerful warriors. What is the purpose of education today?

### FYI...

When an Aztec girl was born, her parents buried her umbilical cord beneath the family fireplace, dedicating her to the household. In the previous chapter you read that boys' umbilical cords were buried in battlefields. What does this suggest about how the Aztecs viewed male and female roles in society?



**FIGURE 8-19** This page from the *Codex Mendoza* shows Aztec parents instructing their children at home. The number of dots indicates the child's age. Boys are shown on the left and girls on the right. What are they learning to do?

## An Aztec mother advises her daughter

This excerpt from a mother’s speech to her daughter comes from Sahagun’s *Florentine Codex*. This Aztec mother is providing advice about what her daughter should wear in public and how she should speak and walk. In what ways might the advice of a Canadian mother today be similar, or different?

*Take care that your garments are such as are decent and proper; and observe that you do not adorn yourself with much finery, since this is a mark of vanity and of folly. As little becoming is it that your dress should be...dirty, or ragged, since rags are a mark of the low...When you speak, do not hurry your words...speak deliberately and calmly. In walking...see that you behave becomingly, neither going with haste, nor too slowly; since it is an evidence of being puffed up to walk too slowly, and walking hastily causes a vicious habit of restlessness and instability.*

**FIGURE 8-20** Matlal Ilhuitl’s name comes from the Nahuatl (NAH-wahtl) language that was spoken by the Aztec people. Matlal identifies herself as Aztec and she and her family are part of a movement to bring back ancient Aztec culture through dance, song, and other arts. They gather regularly to perform traditional dances in elaborate costumes.



## Over to YOU

1. a. Use an organizer to record information about Aztec schools for nobles and for commoners. Include information about what was taught, how the students spent their time, when children started school, and when they finished.

Calmecac	Telpochcalli

- b. What types of jobs did the educational system prepare Aztec students for?
  - c. How were the educational system and social structure related?
2. You read that Aztec society wanted citizens to have “a stone heart and a stone face.” What kind of citizens do you think modern Canadian society wants? Discuss this question in a group and then share your thinking with the class.

3. Nelson Mandela, the former president of South Africa, said: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” What did Mandela mean?
    - a. Given the Aztec people’s educational system, do you think they were more interested in maintaining their way of life, or changing the world? Explain.
    - b. Write a paragraph giving your response to Nelson Mandela’s idea.
  4. Education in Aztec society was free. According to a CBC report in 2006, university fees in Canada have tripled since 1990–91. Conduct research on the rising cost of education in Canada and present your results using a variety of media.

# Contributing to Society

The phrase “peace, order and good government” or in French “paix, ordre et bon gouvernement” are principles on which the Canadian Confederation was founded in 1867. Compare this motto with those of France “liberté, égalité, fraternité” (liberty, equality, brotherhood) and the United States “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” What different worldviews are suggested by these national mottos? If you could choose any three items from any of them to make into a motto that would best represent your worldview, which three would you choose?

How can a society promote good citizenship?

## Aztec Citizenship

Aztec society was focused on producing citizens who would contribute to the community. Lessons in good citizenship were part of Aztec children’s education.



**FIGURE 8-21** These students are skateboarding across Canada to raise money for breast cancer research. How have they chosen to contribute to society?

## EXPLORING SOURCES

### Lessons in Citizenship

Students had to memorize lessons on religion and good behaviour. One of the lessons that has been preserved says:

*Revere and greet your elders. Console the poor and the afflicted with good works and words. . . . Do not mock the old, the sick, the maimed, or one who has sinned. Do not set a bad example, or speak indiscreetly, or interrupt the speech of another.*

**Alonso de Zorita, 1512–1585, AztecNet™.**

*Treat all your neighbours and everybody with respect regardless of skin colour, religion, or their beliefs. Help your neighbour or anyone who needs help. This makes for a better society.*

**Hank Cunningham, Métis Elder.**

- What values do these lessons promote? Which of these values do you think are still promoted in modern society?

## Honorary Canadian Citizens

On rare occasion, Parliament has given honorary Canadian citizenships to outstanding foreigners. Only three had been awarded as of 2006.

In 1985, Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat who saved the lives of many thousands of Jews during World War II, was given honorary citizenship posthumously (after death).

Nelson Mandela fought against apartheid in South Africa, was imprisoned for 27 years, and eventually became president of South Africa. He was given honorary Canadian citizenship in 2001.

The Dalai Lama is the head of state and spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. He was honoured in

2006 for spreading his message of peace and non-violence around the world.

### Think IT THROUGH

1. What aspects of “peace, order and good government” do these three honorary Canadian citizens represent?
2. Choose a non-Canadian, past or present, whom you would recommend for honorary Canadian citizenship. Write a paragraph explaining your choice and giving reasons to support your candidate.
3. How do you think this award promotes good citizenship in Canada?



FIGURE 8-22 Raoul Wallenberg

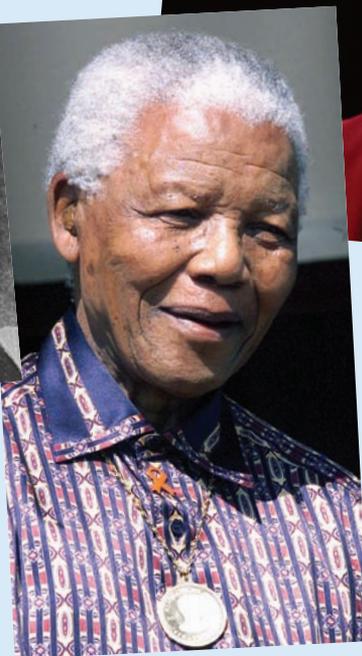


FIGURE 8-23 Nelson Mandela



FIGURE 8-24 The Dalai Lama

## The Ideal Aztec Citizen

The definition of an ideal citizen varies greatly between cultures and communities. The Aztecs had a very clear notion of what ideal meant to them.

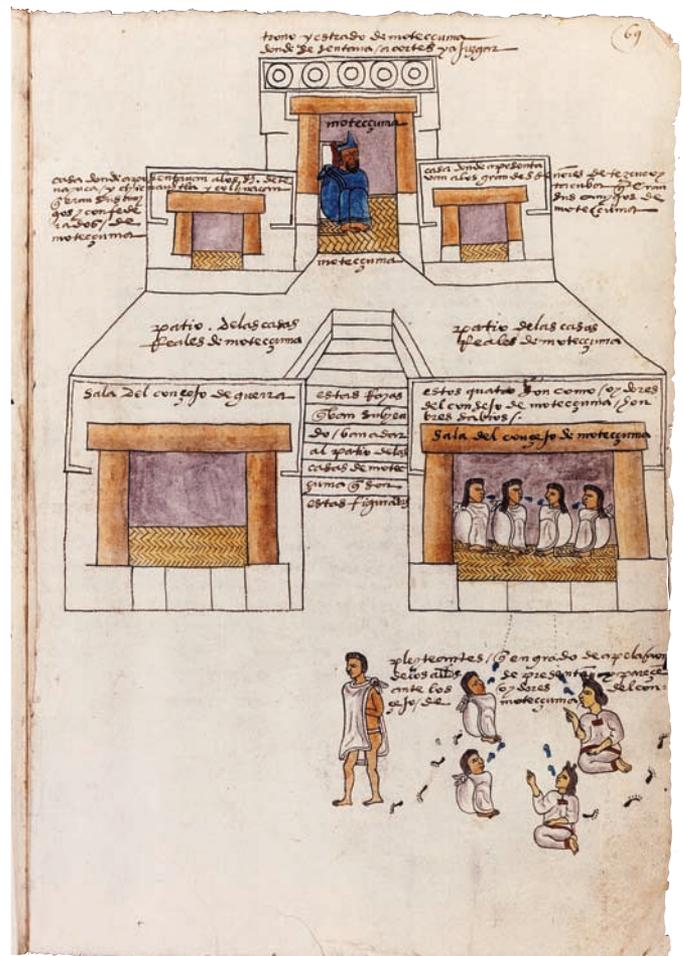
### Virtues of the Ideal Aztec Citizen

Courage	Self-sacrifice	Modesty	Clean Living	Obedience
Aztecs were expected to show courage and deal with hardships without complaining, because it made the army strong.	The group was considered more important than the individual. Every Aztec had to be willing to sacrifice possessions, comfort, and even life itself, for the good of society.	No one, not even the greatest warrior, was to boast about personal achievements or do anything else to stand out from the crowd.	People had to keep themselves healthy and avoid indulging in food and drink. The Aztecs harshly punished what they considered evil behaviour.	Everyone had to obey superiors without question, because this helped preserve the social order.

## Laws and Lawmaking

The Aztec people had their rights protected by a system of written laws. The legal system was a powerful tool for maintaining order in their society. It served to remind people of their responsibilities as citizens to be honest and obedient. Every citizen, even nobles, had to obey the laws. Since nobles were expected to set a good example for everyone else, the law often judged them more harshly than commoners.

The illustration to the right shows Moctezuma, who is the head of the legal system, sitting on his throne at the top of his palace. Below in the room to the right are the judges of the high court of the empire. If someone was not satisfied with the verdict from a lower court, he or she could appeal to the high court and finally even to the emperor himself.



**FIGURE 8-25** How does the Aztec legal system protect the rights of a person accused of a crime?

## Aztec Law

*Before the reign of Montezuma [sic] the administration of public affairs had not been done systematically until he, being a prudent [sensible] and able ruler, drew up a code of common law; those who disobeyed were severely punished. This did not interfere with the restricted liberty which his subjects had, on condition that they minded their own business.*

**Codex Mendoza.**

### FYI...

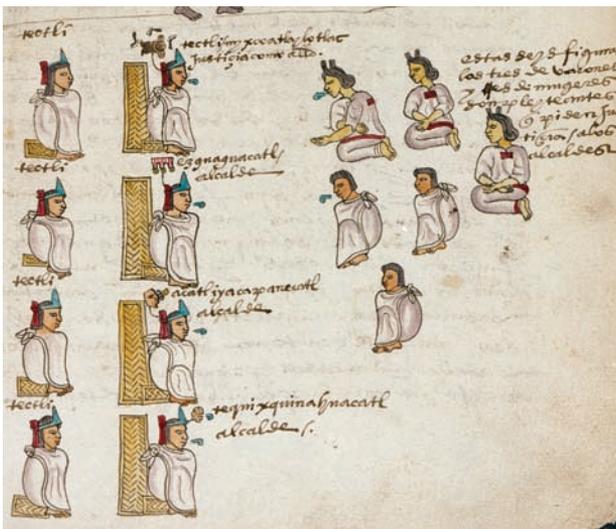
Although laws were not written down as in European societies, First Nations were governed by unwritten customs and codes of conduct. For example, Plains First Nations made decisions through a Chief and a Council of Elders. The Chief was usually chosen because of his skill as a hunter or warrior.

- Why might a ruler who set up a code of law for his people be called “prudent and able”?
- Laws make people behave in a certain way and punish them if they disobey. In this sense, they “restrict the liberty” of people. Why do we, as citizens, agree to let laws restrict our liberty this way?

Just as in modern courts, Aztec judges based their decisions on the evidence that was presented to them. According to the *Florentine Codex*:

*There were the judges and noblemen. Every day the common folk laid complaints before them. Calmly and prudently they heard the complaints; in the picture writing that recorded the case, they studied the complaints. And when they tested their truth, they sought out and inquired of informers and witnesses who could size up the plaintiffs, [who knew] what had been stolen and what was charged.*

Once the judges had reached their decisions, they handed down their sentence. For lesser crimes, the guilty person was fined or sentenced to slavery. The Aztecs did not have prisons, so punishment for serious crimes, including theft, was often death.



**FIGURE 8-26** This is an Aztec law court with four judges and their junior helpers behind them on the left. Six criminals—three men and three women—sit on the right.

### Different Ideas of Justice

As in Aztec society, in most societies today people who break the law are punished. They may be fined, or put in jail, or even put to death. This way of dealing with law-breakers is called **retributive justice**.

The arguments for retributive justice are:

- Committing a crime against others is committing a crime against society. Therefore, society has the right to punish you.
- If you treat others badly, you deserve to be treated badly yourself.
- If you are punished, then you will not commit another crime because you don't want to be punished again.

Another way of dealing with people who break the law is called **restorative justice**. This kind of justice is becoming more popular, especially in dealing with young people. The arguments for restorative justice are:

- When you commit a crime you need to repair the harm you have done.
- An offender commits a crime against a person and against the community. All three parties should be involved in the process of repairing the harm.
- If you understand how your crime affects others you will be less likely to commit another crime.



**FIGURE 8-27** Youth crime consists mostly of property crimes such as break and enter. Why might restorative justice be particularly effective in such cases?

Restorative justice is being used in some First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, with some First Nations, Métis, and Inuit offenders, and occasionally with non-Aboriginal offenders.

### Think IT THROUGH

1. In a group, discuss the pros and cons of these two forms of justice. Record your thinking on a chart. Share and compare your ideas with another group or your class.
2. What kinds of crime do you think can best be dealt with by restorative justice? Explain your thinking.

### Slave Laws

The Aztecs realized that slaves performed much necessary work. For this reason, they also had laws to protect their rights. If a noble beat a slave so severely that the slave died, the noble could be executed. If slaves sold in the marketplace could escape and run to the emperor's palace—a distance of about one and a half kilometres—they would immediately win their freedom.



There are two things to remember about the way the Aztecs looked at slavery. First, they did not think it was shameful to be a slave. It was more a matter of bad luck. Second, they did not consider it a permanent condition. Slaves could keep their property—including their own slaves—until they paid their debts and took their place in society again. Children born to slaves were free.

**FIGURE 8-28** This is a portrait of Itzcoatl (eats-COH-ahtl), one of the greatest Aztec emperors. Even though he was born the son of a slave woman, he reached the highest position in Aztec society. What does this say about opportunities for upward mobility among the Aztecs?

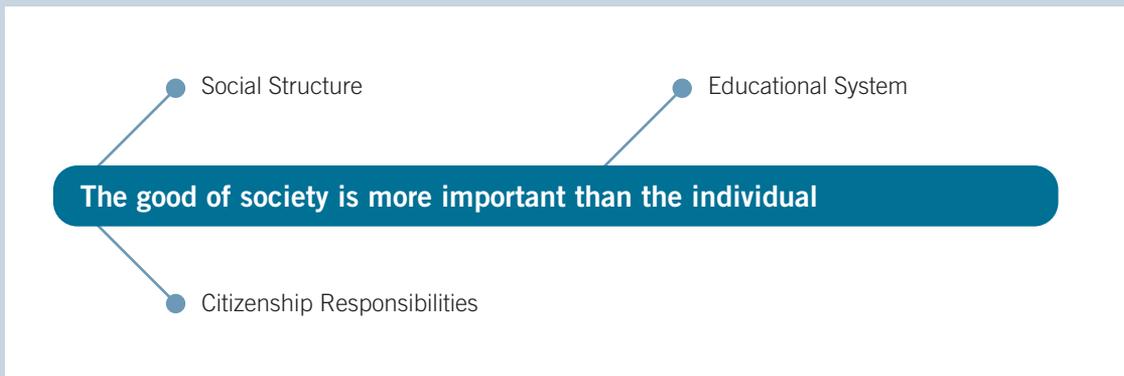
## Over to YOU

1. **a.** As in Aztec society, all Canadians have responsibilities to be good citizens. Place your list of responsibilities on the following continuum:  
  
 Responsibilities to  
 self      family      community      country  
**b.** In 15 years, how will your responsibilities change? Create an illustrated poster that compares your responsibilities now with your responsibilities in 15 years.  
**c.** As a class, discuss how responsibilities shape worldview. How does worldview shape responsibilities?
2. Many schools across Canada have a service-learning requirement. Students must spend a certain number of hours volunteering in the community.
  - a.** Work with a partner or small group to brainstorm the values and responsibilities represented by volunteering.
  - b.** Hold a debate on the topic “Should volunteering be made a requirement for passing Grade 8?”
3. What do you learn at school about citizenship? What do you learn at home about citizenship? Make a collage of what good citizenship means to you and present it to the class.
4. **a.** The chart on page 187 gives five virtues of the ideal Aztec citizen. Do you think these same virtues are important in Canadian society today? Why or why not? Which virtues would you add? Which would you remove?  
**b.** List the three virtues you think are the most important.  
**c.** Why do you think these virtues are important?  
**d.** How might these virtues be demonstrated in the life of a 13-year-old today?
5. Conduct a media survey: Look in local and national newspapers and magazines to find examples of community builders in Canada, for example, politicians, teachers, volunteer organizations.
  - a.** Bring in one example to display on a bulletin board or present in the classroom. For each example, write a sentence or two explaining how this individual or organization is contributing to a better Canadian community.
  - b.** Review the examples classmates brought in. What criteria led classmates to use them as examples of good citizenship?
  - c.** Develop a class list of three to five criteria that individuals and organizations can use to earn the designation “good citizen.”

# Explore the Big Ideas

Aztec society was organized like a pyramid, with a broad base and a narrow top. Every Aztec citizen had a clearly defined role within society, with certain duties they were expected to perform. Every citizen was expected to work hard and contribute to the empire in some meaningful way.

1. The Aztecs thought the good of the people as a whole was more important than any individual. How was this view reflected in its social structure, educational system, and perspective on citizenship responsibilities? Use a fishbone organizer to gather your information.



- a. Why was their social structure so rigid?
- b. How did their social structure honour the gods?
- c. How did their educational system maintain their social structure?
- d. How would you describe the relationship between the Aztec gods, fate, and social hierarchy?
- e. The Aztecs thought their disciplined structure protected them from other societies. How would this belief influence their future conflict with the Spanish?

2. Look back at the three political mottos at the beginning of the last section on page 185.

- a. Work with a group to make up a three-word motto that you think represents the Aztec worldview. (Tip: You don't need to use any of the words in the three mottos.)
- b. How do you think the Aztec social structure and educational system supported and contributed to this worldview?

3. At the beginning of this chapter, the Aztecs were referred to as a "superpower." What does that mean to you? Today, some people think the United States is the only superpower, while others disagree, saying that China, the European Union, Russia, and India are also superpowers.

- a. How does a country get ranked as a superpower? What criteria made the Aztecs a superpower 500 years ago?

b. Use your criteria list to determine which countries today are superpowers. Explain your reasoning.

c. With your class, discuss the following question: Are any provinces within Canada "superpowers"?