

PEOPLE OF THE PRAIRIES



GOAL

To understand the connection between the past peoples of Manitoba and the prairie ecosystem.

OBJECTIVES

Students should be able to :

1. Visualize what the prairies looked like approximately 200 years ago.
2. Identify three different groups of people on the prairies, including the Plains Cree, pioneers and fur traders.
3. Recognize the first people's dependence on the natural world.

VOCABULARY

Bison - A large hairy animal resembling an ox, but with massive head and shoulders and a humped back. Bison were once common in North America and Europe, but are now mainly found in protected areas only.

Fur trader - An employee of the North West Company or the Hudson's Bay Company. Both companies traded with Aboriginals for furs, mainly beaver, to send back to Europe. Employees were expected to paddle the boats, build and maintain forts and trade with Aboriginals.

Grasslands – Plains with dense grasses, few trees and sometimes an abundance of herbaceous (small and leafy) plants. Grasslands provide ideal habitat for a rich variety of herbivores and their predators.

Nomadic - A quality of both bison and the people who followed them. Bison roamed from place to place for pasture, moving an average of two kilometers a day. Aboriginal peoples, who relied on bison for sustenance, moved camp frequently except during the winter, when they usually built more permanent camps in wooded river valleys. Bison also often took shelter in these areas, and when they did, people did not have to go far from camp to look for game.

Pemmican – A mixture of dried bison meat, berries and fat, which was a main food source for fur traders.

Pioneer – A person who goes into previously uncharted or unclaimed territory with the purpose of exploring it and possibly colonizing or settling it.

Plains Aboriginals - A broad term used to designate all Indigenous peoples who inhabited the Great Plains of the United States and Canada combined before and at the time of European contact. Many of these groups relied heavily on the bison for subsistence and so are often referred to as Peoples of the Buffalo. For the purposes of this program we use this term specifically in reference to that population in Manitoba. Plains Aboriginals in Manitoba include the following groups: the Nakota, (also known as the Assiniboine, whom occupied the most land here), the Dakota (also a group of the Siouan language speakers), the Plains Cree, the Plains Ojibway and the Métis.

Prairies - North American grasslands.

Sod house – A house with walls made of strips of sod laid horizontally in layers like bricks. Sod houses were common in the frontier days on the plains of Canada and the United States,

where wood and stone were scarce. The sod, turned by the plow and held together by roots, was lifted in strips and usually cut in 3-ft (1-m) lengths (sods). The walls were hewn smooth with a spade and were often plastered with clay.

Tepee - A conical tent built around several long branches or wooden poles that meet and cross at the top. A tepee is traditionally made of animal hide and used as a dwelling by Plains Indians and some other Native North American people.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

1. Native Canadian culture underwent a radical change with the coming of the Europeans. Get ideas from your students on what daily life was like in a Plains Aboriginal community before the arrival of the first European settlers in Canada. What did they eat, wear, and what activities did they participate in? Have your students research various topics such as traditional crafts, games, music, legends, and share their findings with the rest of the class.
2. The bison was a dominant animal on the prairies and played a critical role in the survival of Plains Aboriginals. Explain to your students that, in those days, large stores such as Walmart did not exist. The Plains Aboriginals relied on bison and native vegetation to meet the majority of their needs. Have your students brainstorm on ways in which bison and plants were used by these people. For example, how did Plains Aboriginals make blankets? What did they use instead of plastic containers or water bottles? With what did they comb their hair? Use the Bison Chart in this kit to help illustrate how the Plains Aboriginals used every part of the bison to satisfy their needs.
3. Have your students research their family trees. Where did their ancestors come from? Why did they come to the prairies? Create a map showing all the various countries of origin for your students' ancestors. Students with Aboriginal backgrounds may have had ancestors that lived here before Canada was a country. Everyone else's ancestors were immigrants.
4. Have your students brainstorm what it would be like to live in pioneer days. You may want to divide your students into groups and present each group with a scenario. Some examples are : how did pioneers cook and refrigerate their food without stoves, refrigerators or electricity? How did pioneer children keep themselves entertained without television? What would have been their favorite snacks if potato chips and chocolate bars didn't exist yet? How did they clean themselves with no showers, sinks or running water?
5. Who were the fur traders? Why did fur traders come to Canada? Have your students research this group of people. What were some of the requirements for becoming a fur trader? What kinds of furs were they looking for? What items did they trade to acquire furs? Why were furs important in pioneer days?

6. Prairie Peoples Game. Find the following words in the puzzle below.

atl atl	grasslands	Plains Aboriginals
bison	hunt	Prairies
bedstraw	licorice root	Red River cart
cord grass	Métis	Sodhouse
dog travois	nomadic	Tipi
fur trader	pioneer	Willow

P	R	A	I	T	G	C	R	E	T	I	P	I	U	W	E	R
L	L	D	V	E	N	R	S	E	R	O	J	P	A	O	M	E
H	C	A	H	R	B	I	A	B	S	I	N	R	L	E	I	D
U	X	T	I	G	T	B	I	S	O	N	T	R	E	S	O	R
N	A	L	L	N	A	O	K	N	S	S	Y	P	V	O	Y	I
T	L	A	C	Q	S	Z	E	R	D	L	D	I	L	D	A	V
B	E	T	I	H	G	A	E	E	R	W	A	O	C	H	C	E
W	I	L	L	O	W	D	B	D	V	A	R	N	I	O	J	R
I	A	R	D	M	A	B	C	O	W	C	R	E	D	U	T	C
L	E	L	I	R	P	F	S	G	R	P	O	E	I	S	Y	A
K	V	U	T	I	P	E	D	T	A	I	L	R	S	E	V	R
I	T	R	Z	Y	I	B	O	R	U	N	G	M	L	L	A	T
O	U	C	O	R	D	G	R	A	S	S	L	I	A	S	U	J
F	U	R	I	N	E	L	O	V	M	É	T	A	N	G	M	I
B	H	A	U	Z	Y	Q	N	O	M	A	D	I	C	A	B	P
I	R	D	L	I	C	O	R	I	C	E	R	O	O	T	L	A
P	C	E	O	M	É	T	I	S	W	A	I	R	J	F	X	S

7. Storytelling was and remains an important educational tool in Aboriginal and other cultures alike. Here are some books of traditional stories about bison, Plains Aboriginals, pioneers or other related themes:

A child's day, by Bobbie Kalman, Crabtree Publishing Company, 1994.

A pioneer story : The daily life of a Canadian family in 1840 , by Barbara Greenwood, Ticknor & Fields, 1995.

Bones in the basket : Native stories of the origin of people , by C.J. Taylor, Tundra Books, 1994.

How we saw the world : Nine Native stories of the way things began , by C.J. Taylor, Tundra Books, 1993.

If you lived in colonial times, by Ann McGovern, Scholastic Inc., 1992.

If you were a pioneer on the prairie , by Anne Kamma, Barnes & Noble, 2003.

Kindle me a riddle : A pioneer story , by Roberta Karim, Greenwillow Books, 1999.

Native Canadians Today and Long Ago , by Elma Schemenauer, Nelson Canada, 1985.

The Adventures of Nanabush: Ojibway Indian Stories , compiled by Emerson Coatsworth, Doubleday Canada Limited, 1980.

Keepers Of The Earth---Native Stories and Environmental Activities for Children, by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac, Fifth House Publishers, 1989.

Keepers Of The Animals---Native Stories and Wildlife Activities for Children, by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac, Fifth House Publishers, 1991.

Keepers Of Life---Discovering Plants Through Native American Stories and Earth Activities for Children, Fulcrum Publishing, 1994.

NB: The three above books also have separate teacher's guides available.

Pioneer crafts , by Barbara Greenwood and Heather Collins, Kids Can Crafts, 1997.

Pioneer dictionary, by Bobbie Kalman and Jane Lewis, Crabtree Publishing Company, 2000.

Pioneer recipes , by Bobbie Kalman and Lynda Hale, Crabtree Publishing Company, 2000.

Schoolyard games , by Bobbie Kalman and Heather Levigne, Crabtree Publishing Company, 2001.

Spirit of the White Bison, by Beatrice Culleton, Peguis Publishers, 1985.

Anytime Stories, by Leo Sawicki, Penumbra Press, 1988.

The Secret of the White Buffalo, by C.J. Taylor, Tundra Books, 1993.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

1. Have your students write a story about their FortWhyte Alive experience. Which people did they learn about? How were the lives of Plains Aboriginals and pioneers different? How were they the same? Encourage your students to explain why they would or would not want to be a Plains Aboriginal or pioneer.
2. This activity may be done individually or in pairs. Have your students design their own pioneer gadget! Their creation must be an object that could have been used by pioneers to fulfill an everyday task. They may either draw their gadget or make a 3-dimensional model to present to the class.
3. Host a gallery walk in your classroom to share your experience at FortWhyte Alive! Have students make art displays of any kind with the theme of Plains Aboriginals and pioneers or other elements of your visit. You can even appoint a curator for the event, or every student can be their own.
4. The fur traders and pioneers learned a great deal from the Plains Aboriginals-- for example, how to make showshoes, birchbark canoes, moccasins, toboggans, clothes and pemmican, and how to harvest wild rice. See how many other things your students can come up with. Discuss the significance of these things to the lives of the fur traders, the pioneers and our lives today. For a treat, try making some bannock, or have the students make their own snowshoes from spruce boughs.
5. Try decorating the pioneer way! Pioneers used leaves or dry plants to spatter paint designs on wooden chairs and chests. Your students can use the same process to create gift boxes, cards or wrapping paper.

You will need :

leaves, ferns and grasses
newspaper
sheets of paper, bags, boxes or cards to decorate
wire sieves or small squares of wire screening
old toothbrushes or stiff-bristled paintbrushes
tempera paint in several colors

Directions :

1. For patterns, have your students collect interesting shapes from nature. Use leaves and grasses while they are fresh or press them between books to keep them flat.
2. Spread newspaper over your students' work space. Have your students place their paper or cardstock over the newspaper. They can arrange their leaves in a pattern on the paper. Ensure they weigh each leaf down with small stones.
3. Direct your students to hold their sieve or screening about 8 cm above their paper. Then have them dip their toothbrushes into the paint, tap off any drips and run their brushes over their sieves. If they don't have sieves or screening, they may hold their toothbrushes over the paper and drag their fingers along the bristles.
4. After your students have let the paint dry, they may try spattering a second color. When they are finished, they may carefully pick off the leaves.

Other Ideas :

For a feathery pattern, your students may outline their image using an almost-dry brush. Have them dip their brushes into the paint, then wipe most of the paint off on the newspaper. Holding their image down with their finger, they then brush the pattern out to the paper.
NOTE : this works best with single, large leaves.