

OUR PRAIRIE PAST



GOAL

To help students understand the connection between the people of Manitoba's past and the natural environment, and attempts to illustrate how these early people depended on the prairies for their survival.

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.

Drying Rack - Used to dry meat to preserve it. Meat would quickly go bad if it was not properly prepared on the drying rack.

Pioneer/Settler – 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/ Soddie – 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 plough 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.

Stretching Frame – Used by Plains Aboriginals to stretch and tan hides.

Tepee/Tipi - 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.

Travois – a wooden A-frame attached to dogs to pull supplies.

Métis – a person descended from both European and First Nations people, especially those who established settlements and a unique culture in the Assiniboine, Red, and Saskatchewan River valleys during the 19th century. The Métis form a distinct cultural group.

Red River Cart – a strong, two wheeled cart pulled by horse or oxen, or all-wood construction. Symbolic of the Métis people, and the province of Manitoba.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

See the last pages of this document for related books and a fun crossword puzzle.

FortWhyte Bannock Recipe

5 cups of flour
5 tsp baking powder
Dash of salt
1 cup of butter softened (crumble it into dry ingredients)
1-1.5 cups of lukewarm water (add to dry ingredients)

MIX AND ENJOY!!!

FortWhyte Vegetarian Pemmican Recipe

Try making a vegetarian version of pemmican! Because this recipe contains no meat, everyone can enjoy it, and food safety concerns about raw, dried meat are not an issue.

Mix one cup Textured Vegetable Protein (available in most bulk stores) with half a handful of dried fruit (saskatoons, blueberries, cherries, etc. are most historically appropriate). Mix in one teaspoon of vegetable bouillon powder, and ½ teaspoon vegetable oil. Add enough water to make the mixture “stick” together – then dry into small cakes on a cookie sheet in a slow oven. This mixture will keep two weeks at least, possibly longer, and is far less fatty than “real” pemmican – but is a good, lightweight, multi-food-group snack, in the spirit of traditional pemmican.

Grades 1 and 2

1. Introduce the idea of thinking about the past. Ask the students what the world might have been like when their parents were kids. What about when their grandparents were kids? What about before that? What might have Manitoba looked like 200 years ago? Who might have lived here before cars, computers, lightbulbs, taps or even wheels were around? Introduce the Plains Aboriginals. *Plains Aboriginals: The first people to make Canada their home. They are nomadic people who chase their prey across the prairie. They didn't have permanent homes. They travelled in collapsible shelters called Tipis.*
2. Have students think about where they get their food. In the 1800s, grocery stores and shopping malls weren't options. What might it be like to have to hunt and gather your food? Play the hunter/gatherer game.

Hunter/Gatherer Game

Place (5-7) hoola hoops or rope circles on two opposite sides of a cleared area. Have students line up on the one end of the space and place their foot in one of the hoops (you can determine if you want 1,2 or 3 students per hoop to make it work). When you say go, all the students will run to the other side and place their foot in a hoop. Those who don't get to a free hoop are *out*.

Tell students they are hunter and gatherers and the hoops are their food. Some days/seasons/years, there is a lot of food to find, and all the communities do really well. Other times, there are very few food resources and the communities suffer. Imagine if a wildfire destroyed some of your food source. *Take a few hoops away.* Imagine you developed a new hunting technique *replace some hoops and let some students who were “out” return to the game.* Have the students run back and forth each time you change the numbers of hoops at each end. Here are some suggestions of events that might change the number of resources:

- Over-hunting destroyed your food source – the bison
- A drought dried up most berries and limited the plants you could find to eat or use for medicine
- Disease spread through the bison herd
- You found a stream filled with many fish
- You found a passage to a new area rich in food sources

3. Ask students if they think any Aboriginal/First Nation live in Manitoba today. Bring a First Nations speaker into the class or read a book on the subject (see below).

Grade 3

1. Have students look at two different aboriginal peoples. For example: Inuit, Plains and Pacific Coast aboriginals. Where do they live? What kinds of plants and animals might they find in those areas? What is the climate like? Have students build a poster collage on the computer of the different areas.
2. Introduce the students to ceremonial tools that some aboriginal groups used. Traditional rattles were used for a variety of ceremonies within the Plains Aboriginal groups. Traditionally, they were made a variety of ways using materials from rawhide, to gourds to turtle shells.
Build a ceremonial rattle with your class. Take toilet paper or paper towel rolls and decorate the tubes using paint, markers, stickers or crayon. Once the tubes are decorated, cover one end with paper, felt or cloth and tape it securely. Place rice or beans in the rattle and cover the open end.
Ask students what the rattle sounds like. What might sound like that in nature?

Grades 4 and 5

1. 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? Have students build “replifacts” of some the bison tools, clothes and other items. <http://www.anpotan.com/> is an excellent webpage to look at the uses of bison.

2. 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. How did this change with the introduction of European settlers? What happened to the bison? Make a Before and After brainstorming poster.

Grade 6

1. 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.
2. 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 favourite snacks if potato chips and chocolate bars didn't exist yet? How did they clean themselves with no showers, sinks or running water?

POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

Have your students write or describe 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 a pioneer.

Grade 1 and 2

1. To allow students to appreciate oral history, have students think back to the stories told at the Aboriginal Sharing Circles. Why were these stories told? Are stories still told today? Have students create their own oral story.
2. Discuss different ways of telling stories. Words are helpful but what if you couldn't write or speak? Not all stories are told orally, some use pictures or symbols. Tell an aboriginal story and have the students draw or paint it as they listen.

Grade 3

1. Think back at how the plains aboriginals used tipis and relied heavily on the bison. The land was very important and dramatically influenced the way of life of the aboriginals. How might life have been different if the aboriginal lived on the coast? Lived in the arctic? Refer back to the poster project in the pre-activities for some ideas.
2. Think back to the sod house game. In that game you were asked to try and match tools from the pioneer era to what we use today. Ask students to think about why and how the tools we use have changed. Ask students to pick three of the pioneer tools. How might these tools look one-hundred years from now? Draw a picture or build a 3-dimensional model and explain the reasoning.
3. 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.

Grade 4 and 5

1. 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.
2. 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 :

- a) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) 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.

- d) 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.

3. 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.

Grade 6

1. Create a comic strip describing a day in the life of a pioneer. Think of what you discovered at FortWhyte to help you create a realistic storyline. Include tools, landscape, houses, homesteads, oxen or other features of the time.
2. Create a journal written by someone immigrating to Manitoba. Who is the journal written by? Why did they choose to immigrate? What was the journey like? What are their hopes and fears? What happens on their journey?
3. Who were the Métis? Why did this group emerge in the Red River Valley region of North America, and not somewhere else? Why is the Red River Cart a fitting symbol for the Métis people?

Helpful Books

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.