

Historica Canada Education Portal

Cemetery Studies

Overview

The public has long been fascinated with cemeteries. This program will make use of this fascination to engage the students while they learn. Cemeteries can be primary sources of information for much more than just social studies. This program will make use of the information available in local cemeteries to meet aspects of the mathematics curriculum.

Aims

Students will collect primary data found on the headstones and organize the data. Students will make use of a variety of methods to organize and display the data collected, such as tally charts and frequency tables.

The students will analyze the data using the different methods of central tendency and identify and describe trends in graphs.

Activities

Time Allowance: 4 to 6 hours

Procedures:

1. Pre-field trip discussion.

Before heading to the cemetery, teachers should discuss cemetery safety and respect. Remember, this is a cemetery and there may be grieving people visiting graves of relatives. If you are visiting a cemetery with older headstones, students must be made aware of the fragile nature of the stones and that they could topple over onto a student if they are touched without care. Hand out the work sheets to each student and review the necessary information they will need to collect to complete the work sheets.

Of note, most cemeteries no longer allow stone rubbings as this damages stones and could cause the stone to topple over. If you wish to have your students make stone rubbings contact the cemetery prior to the trip to determine if this is permitted.

2. Field Trip

Divide the students into small groups of three or four. Have the students make their way through the cemetery gathering the necessary information to complete the worksheet (attached below). Remind the students of the fragile nature of the older headstones and that they are not to write on the headstones.

Perhaps there is someone associated with the cemetery available to provide a brief guided tour of some of the areas of the cemetery.

Research this possibility when arranging the trip.

3. Post-field trip discussion

Marked worksheets are handed back to the students and the answers are discussed.