

Historica Canada Education Portal

Soddie

Overview

This lesson is based on viewing the [Heritage Minute, "Soddie,"](#) that focuses on the realities that immigrants in the 1880's faced when they arrived on the Canadian Prairie.

Aims

Students will explore the myths and realities of immigration in the 1880s. Students will create posters and speeches "selling" the idea of immigration, and will role-play the experiences that immigrants would have had once they arrived on the Canadian Prairie.

Students will compare Clifford Sifton's immigration policies in the 1880's to immigration policies today, and will examine the role of women in Prairie communities.

Activities

1. The Last Best West

Many European immigrants were drawn to the Prairies because of the

effective ad campaign by the Canadian government.

Create a poster to advertise immigration to the Prairies. Things to take into consideration:

- What will you offer?
- What will you highlight about the Prairies?
- How will you depict them visually?
- What qualities about the new lifestyle will you emphasize?
- Will you appeal to a sense of adventure?
- The romance of the West
- The offer of free land

Imagine that you are a representative from Canada and must "sell" the idea of immigration to groups of Europeans. Write and present a speech that will interest and excite these people and convince them to immigrate to the Prairies.

2. Coming to Canada

Canadian history is filled with stories of immigration.

Form small groups to research the experience of immigration. You may divide the students by the countries of origin of immigrant groups. Some textbooks include accounts written by immigrants. The teacher-librarian can assist students in finding resources.

Have each student take on the role of a member of an immigrant family (mother, father, child, or grandparent) of the group they have studied. Have them discuss the experience of arrival and settlement from the

point of view of that person. Suggested topics:

- How rough was the trip?
- Were they afraid?
- What did they bring?
- What did they eat?
- How did they make clothes?
- What work did each do?
- How did they help other family members?

Have students write a description or diary as their character. Put them together, adding pictures, title page, and family names, to create a "Family Album" of immigration and settlement.

3. Peopling the Prairies

The settlement of the Canadian Prairies is a fundamental topic in the study of Canadian history. The Soddie Minute offers an introduction to the study of immigration and gives the immigrants' stories a human face.

As part of a unit on the topic, keep journals by the characters portrayed in the Minute. The characters can become symbols of the experience of many immigrants. Students can begin their account in Europe, with the first stories or advertisements about Canada, through their travels, their arrival on their homestead, struggles to build their farm, their successes, hardships, and major events in their lives.

Compare the image of settling the Prairies given in the Minute to the realities the immigrants faced. Does the Minute "romanticize" the truth? If so, what are the purposes of such a depiction?

4. Immigration Then and Now

The Canadian government actively sought immigrants in the late nineteenth century. Policies have changed over the years.

Why was the government eager to encourage immigration from the 1880s until the First World War?

What particular groups did Clifford Sifton and the government target? Why? Read Sifton's own statements for evidence.

Compare the policies toward European immigrants to the treatment of Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian people who tried to come to Canada.

What are current federal policies on immigration? How do they reflect contemporary Canadian attitudes, economic conditions, and perceptions of world events?

5. Prairie Communities

Prairie pioneers had to work together to build their communities, and their work often spread beyond their homes.

Many important social changes came from the Prairies. How have the Prairie provinces contributed to suffrage, political parties, and medical and social policies?

Women have always been leaders in the Prairie communities. How did the experience of homesteading contribute to women's leadership roles?

Research the contributions of individual Prairie women to Canadian society.

Resources

- [Heritage Minute: Soddie](#)
- [Passages to Canada Speakers Bureau](#)