Portail de l'éducation de Historica Canada

Joseph Casavant

Overview

This lesson is based on viewing the Heritage Minute, "Joseph Casavant." From the first organ that he built in 1840, Joseph Casavant established himself – and his Company, Casavant Frères – as one of the leading pipe organ builders in Canada.

Aims

Students will study the kinds of music that are important to different generations, cultures, and religious groups. They will also consider the role and history of various handmade crafts.

Using the "Casavant" Minute as the starting point, students will research business history, village trades, and the history of churches in Canada.

Activities

1. Music in Religion Workshop

Music forms a part of religious ceremony in most cultures. Have students

choose different cultural or religious groups. For each, research the type of music used in religious practices. Where possible, bring examples of the music to class.

2. Musical Survey

Religious music is sometimes synonymous with popular music played in the home (from gospel music and Christian rock to Handel's Messiah). For most students, however, music means something else. This activity looks at changes in musical taste in the generations.

- Have students interview individuals of different ages (over 50 years old: 40-50; 30-40; 20-30), asking each about their favourite music, what dances they did when they were young (or still do), and what concerts they have attended. If possible, have students make a tape recording of "music through the generations."

- The project may be particularly useful in introducing non-western music to the classroom. It may also indicate the "Westernization" of newer Canadians in terms of their musical taste.

- Based on the survey, have students discuss the musical differences between the generations. Are there patterns in musical taste? Does music divide the generations? Or does it sometimes create things they have in common? Does music sometimes create stereotypes about generations? What does the music teach about styles, values, and ideas of the past?

3. Crafts today

Everything used to be handmade. Now, we treat handicrafts as special

and exotic.

- What are some examples of contemporary crafts? What makes handmade articles so appealing?

- If possible, invite a craftsperson (a potter, weaver, woodworker, glass blower, etc.) to speak or give a demonstration to the class. He or she may explain the special skills necessary for the work, and tell something about the history of the craft.

4. Business History

Casavant Frères rose from the workshop of a single craftsman to become an international company. Such spectacular success stories are common in Canadian history. Research the stories of major Canadian corporations to learn about the personal stories involved in business and the ways that the companies weathered the ups and downs of economic trends.

Interview local business operators about the histories of their companies. Include businesses that have stayed in a family for a few generations. Put the interviews together into a community business history.

5. Village Trades

Joseph Casavant began as a blacksmith, which was an important trade in small communites in Canada.

- Research the work of blacksmiths and other trades, such as coopers, carpenters, millwrights, boatbuilders, etc. Describe their work and their tools. What did each contribute to life in rural Canada, and what happened to their trades as industrialization and urbanization

progressed?

- Using the research, create a profile of a small town in your area before the turn of the century, describing the occupations of the citizens, where they got their food, their routes and means of travel, their pastimes, and other features of their everyday lives.

6. The Church Organ

Churches have always played an important part in the lives of Canadians, and church music was popular in the homes, as well as in Sunday services.

- No local history would be complete without a history of regional churches. Interview ministers for the histories of their church buildings and congregations. Churches are often among the oldest heritage buildings in the communities. Photographs and drawings of the churches will be valuable additions to the project.

- Older churches may have historic organs. During their study of the church history, have students look closely at the church organ. Where is it from? When was it made? How did the congregation buy it (sometimes a story within itself)? Be sure to photograph the organ as part of a local history project.

Resources

- Heritage Minute: Joseph Casavant

- The Canadian Encyclopedia: Casavant Frères