



## Home Sweet Home: Settlements in Saskatchewan

Students will examine the living conditions of early Saskatchewan settlers.

### Outcomes:

DR 4.1 Correlate the impact of the land on the lifestyles and settlement patterns of the people in Saskatchewan.

RW4.1 Analyze the strategies Saskatchewan people have developed to meet the challenges presented by the natural environment.

### Indicators:

DR 4.1 e. Identify the impact of geography on the architecture of Saskatchewan, including how styles, materials, and cultural traditions have been affected by interaction with the land and other people in the province.

DR 4.1 g. Conduct an inquiry investigating how residents of Saskatchewan came to occupy the land that is now our province (e.g., First Nations, early Europeans, and Métis).

RW4.1 a. List the challenges and opportunities climate presents for residents of Saskatchewan.

RW4.1 f. Research past and present technologies used to withstand the Saskatchewan climate.

### Questions to Guide Inquiry:

1. What were the challenges faced by early settlers?
2. How are our lives in Saskatchewan today different from those of the settlers to the province?
3. In what ways are our lives in Saskatchewan today similar to the lives of the early settlers?

## Teacher Background

Familiarize yourself with Student Handout 8.2. Visit some of the websites listed under the Lesson Resources section.



About three  
45 minute  
classes

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- \* Books on early explorers, settlers, and the prairies
- \* internet & digital projector
- \* Handouts 8.1 & 8.2
- \* poster paper and art supplies



## Before Activity

Have students complete the 'what I think I know' section of the KWL sheet (Student Handout 8.1) recording what they think they know about pioneer homesteads. Compare as a class. Individual students will add to this section as others contribute their ideas.

*Columbus packed wheat on his ships during his second voyage to the New World.*

## During Activity

### Activity One

Play the 14 minute presentation of Home Sweet Home to students.

<http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/Saskatchewan100/s-theme-pioneerhomes.html>. Instruct the students to add to the 'what I have learned' section as a result of viewing the presentation. Instruct students to share briefly with a partner.

### Activity Two

Distribute Student Handout 8.2 to students. Read as the students follow along. Pause in the reading and have students respond to the questions which are listed in italics.

### Activity Three

Divide students into small groups and have them sit at a table or on the floor. Each group is given a piece of poster paper which is placed in front of them. Instruct students to imagine they are early settlers. Each will sketch an image representing their life on the homestead. Students will explain their images to their group. Students may ask for suggestions from other members of their small group.

## After Activity

### Activity One

In their small groups, students will discuss key differences between their home life in modern day Saskatchewan and pioneer home life. They will also consider any similarities. Each group will appoint a spokesperson to share two or three major similarities and/or differences to the entire class.

### Activity Two

Discuss some of the fiction and non-fiction materials students have been reading independently.



## Assessment

Adapt the Project Rubric to assess the written assignment

Teacher Checklist

- ✓ Could student view video and understand?
- ✓ Could student effectively retrieve information from print sources?
- ✓ Do student representations demonstrate understanding?
- ✓ Could student explain representations to others?
- ✓ Could student identify significant differences between their lives and those of the pioneers? Significant similarities?
- ✓ Could student incorporate meaningful feedback into their writing?



## Lesson Resources

For an easy to read explanation of the homestead in Western Canada, see [www.aitc.sk.ca/educational-resources/saskschools](http://www.aitc.sk.ca/educational-resources/saskschools). This site has great images to share with students.

There are several research papers on the following website which will provide background information. See <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/Saskatchewan100>.

[http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/ndfahtml/hult\\_sod.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/ndfahtml/hult_sod.html) has great images of the settlers' sod houses.

## Cross Curricular Connections

### Arts Education

Examine the art of local painters like Sharon Strand Sigfuson [www.artincanada.com/sharonstrandsigfuson/index.html](http://www.artincanada.com/sharonstrandsigfuson/index.html) or Doug Welykholowa [www.prairiegrass.ca](http://www.prairiegrass.ca). Have students paint picture of old farm buildings or equipment from pictures or real life.

## Further Investigation

Do a resource scavenger hunt. Students go outside and look at what type of natural material is in the environment that could be used to create shelter. What could be used? What might be important to bring from your original country if you were an early settler?

Inform students about settlers who dug caves into the river banks for their homes. There is an archaeological site close to Blaine Lake which offers student tours of the Doukhobor caves. See [http://doukhobordugouthouse.com/about\\_location.html](http://doukhobordugouthouse.com/about_location.html).

Ensure students have seen some of the visuals of early homes at [www.sasksettlement.com/display.php?cat=LifeonthePrairies&subcat=Early%20Shelter](http://www.sasksettlement.com/display.php?cat=LifeonthePrairies&subcat=Early%20Shelter).

Visit a branch of the Western Development Museum



## Early Homesteaders

What we **KNOW**



What we have **LEARNED**






## Pioneers of Saskatchewan

The pioneers of Saskatchewan arrived with little else but what they had in their trunks and what was on their backs. They had to use their resources in order to survive. Life was not comfortable by any means, but it was bearable. The settlers' lives revolved around work, church, and family. Every family member had to pitch in and help the family survive through hard times.

*As you listen to the following, look for differences between the life style of the settlers and your lives.*

### The Pioneer Homes

When the settlers first arrived, their top priority was to build a home. The people on the treeless plain built sod homes, or soddies, and those who lived in a wooded area built log homes.

 *Why would a home be a pioneer's top priority (most important task)?*

#### 1. Sod Houses

The family shared the responsibility of building the home. The turf or sod was cut in strips, two feet wide and three inches thick, with a flat spade or axe. The younger members of the family then carried the sod blocks from the field to the site where the house was being built. The pieces of sod were arranged and handled like bricks, and when piled on top of each other, made solid walls to keep out heat and cold.







The floor was packed dirt and the interior walls were whitewashed. The roof was supported by poplar poles which were, in turn, supported by a central ridge pole. Sod was laid shingle-like over the poles for the roof. These soddies, as they were called, provided comfortable, well-insulated homes for the settlers.

- 🌱 What is 'sod'?
- 🌱 Convert two feet wide and three inches thick into metric measurement.
- 🌱 What might be some disadvantages of a packed dirt floor?

## 2. Log Houses

Log shacks were built by pioneers settling in the areas with dense trees. When the land was cleared, the trees were hauled to the cabin site where they were carefully cut and put in place. Once in place, the logs were plastered with mud inside and out. The mud coating was then whitewashed with lye and water. The lye was made from wood ashes.

- 🌱 How might they have hauled the logs to the cabin site?

## 3. Frame Houses

Frame houses were built from purchased supplies which had to be hauled to the site of construction. Framework for these houses was similar in construction to the houses today. The walls consisted of studs and lumber with tarpaper between.



*W.T. Logan - First morning in the homestead near Beadle, SK. 1911*



*Mrs. Violet McNaughton, with her husband John, in front of their sod house near Harris, SK 1905*



*Log cabin, circa 1915.*



*Women and dogs outside of wooden home, 1910*



#### 4. Combinations

Quite often, the pioneer dwellings used a variety of materials in their construction. For example, a combination of logs, plastered with a mixture of straw and sod was used for roofing material. The logs for the walls of the house were chinked with mud. These houses were quite warm in the winter and remained cool in the summer.

### Religion

In the very early days before separate churches were built, travelling clergyman might visit settlements. When these people arrived, a church service would be held either at the meeting house (possibly the school) or a private home. People of different religions often worshipped together.

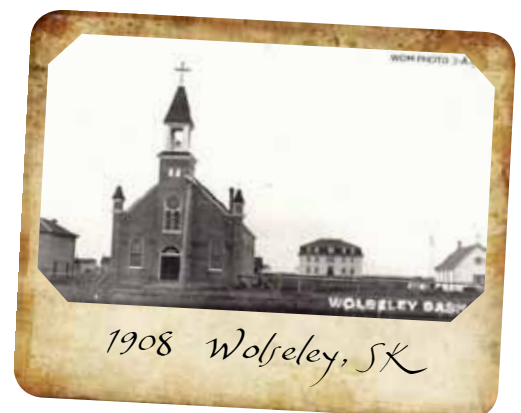
When separate buildings were built, they were frequently dark and chilly places. One pioneer remembers it this way:

"The old-time church was a cold, cheerless building which the pastor kept warm by delivering a fire and brimstone sermon that lasted for a least an hour. Foot warmers were used in the cold pews. Box stoves were installed in the churches when they became available, and the members of the congregation sitting near these were expected to replenish the fire during the service" (as cited in "Harness in the Parlour" by Audrey Armstrong).



*Stone & mud house with  
sod roof, on road between  
North Battleford and  
Saskatoon, 1922.*


*While the sod house has  
become a symbol for the  
early prairie settlers,  
there were many other  
methods used to seek  
shelter. The style of  
shelter ranged from  
caves and tents to  
stone houses.*



*1908 Wolseley, SK*



However, the church was often the centre of the community. Pioneer families faced hard times. Many may well have given up if not for their faith. Plus, a pioneer family's social life often revolved around church activities.

 *What has changed about churches since the days of the pioneers?*

## Work

The tasks involved in working a homestead were many and varied. In order to get everything done, these tasks were shared by all members of the family, regardless of age. There was never much time left for play.

A pioneer woman's day started very early and continued until all members of the family were in bed. Her tasks included anything that was remotely related to the kitchen. The amount of work depended on the time of year. At harvest time there was a large amount of food preparation. Feeding the threshing crew, as many as thirty men, involved a lot of hard work. As well, harvest time was the time for preserving fruits and vegetables from the garden in preparation for the long winter months.

 *What is a threshing crew?*

The men of the family had plenty to do as well but their labours were directly related to the farming operations and similar activities. The livestock were also their responsibility.







The children's duties began at age three with feeding the chickens. This activity was followed closely by water carrying, garden weeding, finding kindling, splitting wood, horse feeding, barn cleaning, as well as cow catching and milking.

The mother and children often helped the father in the breaking of land, seeding, and harvesting. Family members spent the vast majority of their time together on the farm, and special events such as a church dance or other social event was a welcome change from the hard life at home.

When all the chores were done for the day, and if there was any time left, the family might gather around the fire and listen to stories. There wasn't very much leisure time because after a long day of hard work, bedtime came early, with early morning chores following close behind.

🌱 *Why would a family gather around a fire at night?*

Adapted from <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/de/saskatchewan100/WDM%20Teacher%20Guides/Pioneer%20Recreation/Recreation%20-%20then%20and%20now.doc>



*1899 Doukhobor women are shown breaking the prairie sod by pulling a plough themselves, Thunder Hill Colony*



*1905 Three horses pulling a two wheel "sully" plow. Fall plowing on the prairies about 1905.*



*Haying near Scott, SK around 1910.*

Historic photos accessed from <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/Sask100gallery/index.htm> and to be reproduced for educational purposes only.