



## Early European Agriculture in Saskatchewan

Students will learn the historical background of Saskatchewan from the fur trade to the settlement of early Europeans.

### Outcomes:

IN 4.2 Describe the origins of cultural diversity in Saskatchewan communities.

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

### Indicator:

IN 4.2 b. Detail the ways in which First Nations peoples supported the survival of early European newcomers to Saskatchewan.

IN 4.2 c. Trace and represent the history of European immigration to Saskatchewan including those who came for economic reasons (explorers, fur traders, homestead farmers) and religious reasons (Mennonites, Hutterites, Doukhobours).

IN 4.2 d. Articulate reasons why European immigrants left their homelands and settled in Saskatchewan, with particular emphasis upon the local community and/or the individual student families.

IN 4.2 e. Represent through speaking, writing, drama, multimedia, or other form, the challenges faced, both historically and in the current era, by First Nations people, Métis people, and immigrants to Saskatchewan.

IN 4.2 g. Compare immigration patterns in Saskatchewan in the 19th and early 20th centuries to immigration patterns in the current era.

DR4.1 c. Make inferences about why people in Saskatchewan settled particular locations, including settlement patterns before and after coming together of First Nations and European peoples using a variety of maps (e.g., near waterways, sources of water, rail lines, natural resources, low population density in rural areas).

DR4.1 f. Analyze the influence of geography on the lifestyle of people living in Saskatchewan (e.g., flora and fauna, pastimes, transportation, cost of food, type of food, occupations, availability of services such as education and health care).

DR4.1 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).



Two  
45 minute  
classes

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- \* handouts 7.1 - 7.3
- \* internet access
- \* overhead (optional)



**Questions to Guide Inquiry:**

1. Why have people from different parts of the world come to live in Saskatchewan?
2. What role did agriculture play in the decisions settlers made to settle in Saskatchewan?
3. What were the early days of settlement like?
4. What contributions have the different cultures made to the province?

## Teacher Background

"In the 1880s, the Canadian government began to "sell" the idea of western immigration in Europe. Clifford Sifton, Canada's Minister of the Interior, flooded England, the United States, and northern and eastern European countries with pamphlets like "The Wondrous West," "Canada: Land of Opportunity," "The Last Best West," and "Prosperity Follows Settlement." Sifton posted advertisements in thousands of newspapers, sent speakers to deliver glowing descriptions of the good life in Canada, and even paid popular writers to set novels in the romantic Western prairies. The offer to would-be immigrants was free land in the form of 65-hectare parcels. The offer sounded like a dream, but the reality was not always so wonderful. The immigrants sailed to Canada in crowded, dirty steamships, then boarded trains for days of dreary travel across empty land, only to arrive on a flat, dry, empty prairie. The homesteaders lived miles from tiny towns, isolated from their neighbours. Women and men worked side by side to create a life in their lonely new home." \*Taken from Historical minutes introduction. [www.histori.ca/minutes/minute.do?id=10184](http://www.histori.ca/minutes/minute.do?id=10184)

The early 1880s brought a series of natural disasters to all who tried to farm in Saskatchewan: drought, frosts, and prairie fires. While non-Aboriginal farmers left in large numbers, Aboriginal reserve farmers were obliged to stay: they could not try their luck elsewhere as they were prohibited from taking up homesteads under the Indian Act. They had fewer privileges and rights than newly arrived farmers, as they could also not sell any of their grain or other produce without a permit, and after 1885 a pass system controlled and confined movements off the reserves. Aboriginal farmers could not take out loans and they had difficulty acquiring credit from local merchants. See <http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/drought.html>

*Europeans began to immigrate to North America in the early 17th century. Louis Hebert arrived in Quebec in 1617, cleared land, and thus became the first non-indigenous farmer. But it would take almost 300 years before interest developed in the West as a place to live and farm.*



## Before Activity

Ask students to suggest what they would bring with them if they were to move to a new country. After students share some of their ideas, ask them what they think the settlers brought with them when they came to Canada in the late 1800s.

## During Activity





### Activity One

Distribute Handouts 7.1 and 7.2. Have students look over the questions on Handout 7.2 and instruct them to listen for answers, but not to write anything yet. Inform them that there will be an opportunity for that later. Read Handout 7.1 “The Fur Trade and the Hudson’s Bay Company” and “The Railroad and Settlement” aloud to students as they follow along. Pose questions and make clarifications as needed. Have a map of Canada on display to point out the areas referred to in “The Railroad and Settlement” section.

When the reading is complete, divide students into pairs or small groups and have them complete Handout 7.2. Discuss answers as a class.

### Activity Two

Share immigration posters (Handout 7.3) with students using a digital projector, overhead, or paper copies. Possibly walk students through [www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/canadian-west](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/canadian-west) as well for a history of these posters from 1890s to the 1920s. The posters can be found in the immigration menu in contact section. Invite students (in pairs or small groups) to discuss the images and their appeal.

-  What are your first impressions of each?
-  What do you like about each of the posters?
-  Why do you think each would be successful?
-  What (if anything) would you change about any of the posters?

Place students in groups. Have students imagine they are poster creators from the later part of the 19th century/early part of the 20th century. Give them some time to discuss what they think would be important to include on an immigration poster. Have them sketch out a possible design. Have them suggest colours and word choice. Groups will share their thinking with the rest of the class.

### Activity Three

Show students the Historica Minute called “Soddie” found at [www.historica.ca/minutes](http://www.historica.ca/minutes). Go to “Historica Minutes” on the top menu, select “Settling Canada” on the left side and select the video “Soddie”. Discuss the brief video encouraging students to make connections to what they have previously learned.



## After Activity

In the role of a new immigrant during the 1800s, have students write a postcard to a friend back home that captures their initial impression of Canada. Was Canada what they expected? Did Canada live up to the posters?

*You may also assess posters using Handout 53 Poster Rubric (page 103).*

## Assessment

### Teacher Checklist

- ✓ Were students able to respond accurately to the six guiding questions?
- ✓ Did students capture the main appeals contained on immigration posters?
- ✓ Did their suggestions for poster design reflect understanding?
- ✓ Did student postcard reflect understanding?

## Lesson Resources

This site has one-minute movies that provide important stories from Canada's past. This one shows a couple building a soddie, or sod house. [www.histori.ca/minutes](http://www.histori.ca/minutes).

Library and Archives Canada has images of promotional materials used to convince people to settle the west. [www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/canadian-west/052920/05292055\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/canadian-west/052920/05292055_e.html)

The Online Encyclopedia of Canada provides information on the climate of the Saskatchewan prairies. <http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/drought.html>

An image of a promotional poster advertising free farms in the Dominion of Canada. [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/canadian-west/052920/05292052\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/canadian-west/052920/05292052_e.html)

This site is a photo gallery with Saskatchewan images from before 1870 to 1930. Many useful categories to explore including the landscape, settlement patterns, life on the prairies, and agriculture. [www.sasksettlement.com](http://www.sasksettlement.com).

## Cross Curricular Connections

### ELA

Students are writing a postcard considering audience, purpose, and situation.

### Arts Education

Students are discussing the composition of the immigration posters. There is critical and creative thinking about an art work.






## Further Investigation

Investigate Who Wants to be a Pioneer? This web quest posted on Saskatoon Public School's online learning centre website may be of interest to your students. See <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/Saskatchewan100/WhoWantstoBeaPioneer/index.htm>.

Organize a class visit to one of the branches of the Western Development Museum.

Explore the following sites with students:

-  Images from Saskatchewan settlement from 1870s to the 1920s. [www.sasksettlement.com/index.php](http://www.sasksettlement.com/index.php)
-  Numerous sections of the Western Development Museum site have settlement stories. See [www.wdmprairiegamble.com/familyhistory](http://www.wdmprairiegamble.com/familyhistory) as well as the main site, [www.wdm.ca](http://www.wdm.ca).
-  Citizenship and Immigration Canada has an informative section on Canadian immigration from 1900-1977 [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca). The document "Forging our Legacy, Canadian Citizenship and Immigration, 1900 - 1977" can be found by going to Resources/Publications/About Immigration.



## Fur Trade and the Hudson's Bay Company

The fur trade was one of the earliest and most important industries in North America. The fur trading industry played a major role in the development of Canada. The Hudson's Bay Company (H.B.C.) was the most powerful company in Canada and during its first two hundred years, the Company was involved mainly in the fur trade. It set up fur trading outposts on all of the major waterways (rivers) in the country to trade with the First Nations people.

Henry Kelsey of the Hudson's Bay Company travelled along the Saskatchewan River trying to get the First Nations people to trade their furs. He was the first white man to come into the area we now call Saskatchewan. The explorers and fur traders depended on First Nations and Métis peoples to act as their guides, to bring them furs and food, and to offer them information about travel routes. The fur traders used canoes, toboggans, and Red River Carts to carry furs and goods.

The First Nations peoples shared their knowledge about how to prepare food and what plants to use as medicines. Small settlements grew up near where they traded goods.

H.B.C. photo accessed at <http://scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy>, used with permission. Historic photos accessed from <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/Sask-100gallery/index.htm> and to be reproduced for educational purposes only.



*H.B.C. Freight Canoe*



*1872-1875  
Métis traders*



*Mistahi maskwa (Big Bear ca. 1825-1888), a Plains Tree chief, trading in 1884*





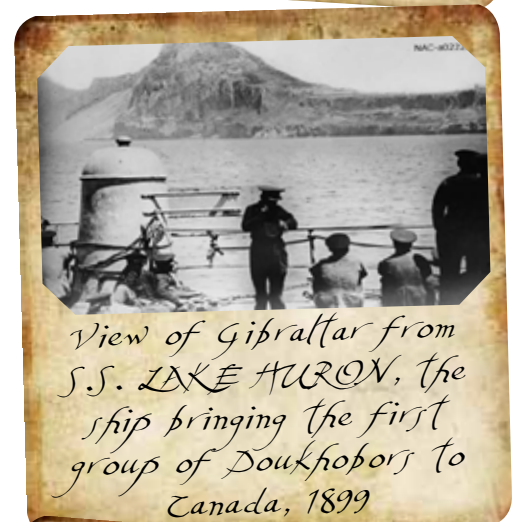
However, by the 1850s the fur trade was no longer as important and in 1870 the Hudson's Bay Company sold its lands to the government of Canada.

## The Railroad and Settlement

After 1878 the Canadian government began to push settlement in the west. The Métis began to settle and farm. It was decided by the government that a railroad be built to join the eastern provinces with British Columbia in the west. The railroad could be used to bring settlers to the west. It could be used to ship farm products back to eastern Canada. Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway began in 1872, but it was not completed until 1885.

The Government of Canada was offering free land to those who were prepared to settle on the prairies. Homesteaders began arriving. Some of the settlers who settled in early western Canada came from Ontario and Quebec. Some came from the United States. Others came from different countries in Europe.

For many, moving to Canada was an opportunity to own land and have a better life. People were also told that there were plenty of jobs available. For the people who came from Europe, the journey to Canada was a long one. The voyage across the Atlantic Ocean often took two weeks by steamship, and





even longer by sailing ships. The steamship was faster than a sailing ship, but most of the steamships were overcrowded and dirty. Many passengers became seasick.

After a ship finally docked at the ports of Halifax, Montreal, or Quebec City, the immigrants could not leave right away. They were given medical tests and their travel papers were checked. During this time, they stayed in large buildings called immigration halls. Their next journey was by train to the prairies. The journey by train from Quebec to Western Canada took from four to six days. The trains were often overcrowded and without heat. There were many delays. Passengers had to bring their own food or buy food during the trip. When they finally arrived at a town close enough to their homestead, they unloaded their belongings and got a wagon or Red River cart. Their long journey was finally over, but there was usually more hardship to come.



*Immigrants waiting to go ashore, 1911*



*Immigrants awaiting medical examination*



*New arrivals aboard S.S. ARGENTINA awaiting clearance in the Immigration Examination Hall 1952*

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





## Guiding Questions

1. How did the Hudson's Bay Company help settle the West?

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2. What was the relationship of First Nations People and the fur traders?

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3. Why was the railroad built?

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4. Why did people come to the Canadian West?

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5. What was the journey like for the early settlers when they arrived in Canada?

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6. Suggest why the Government of Canada wanted to give free land to immigrants.

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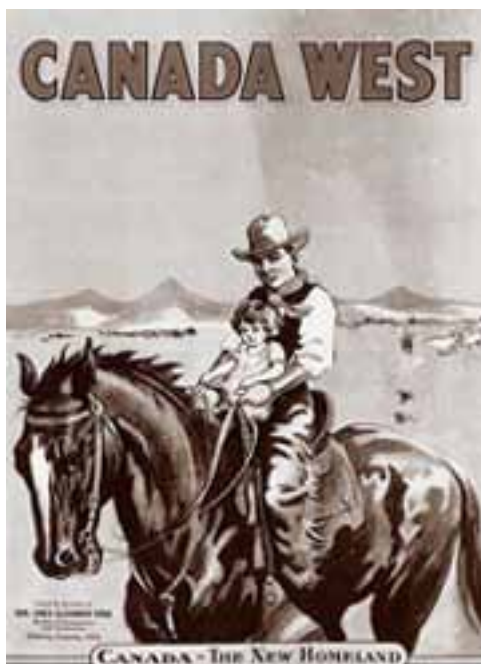
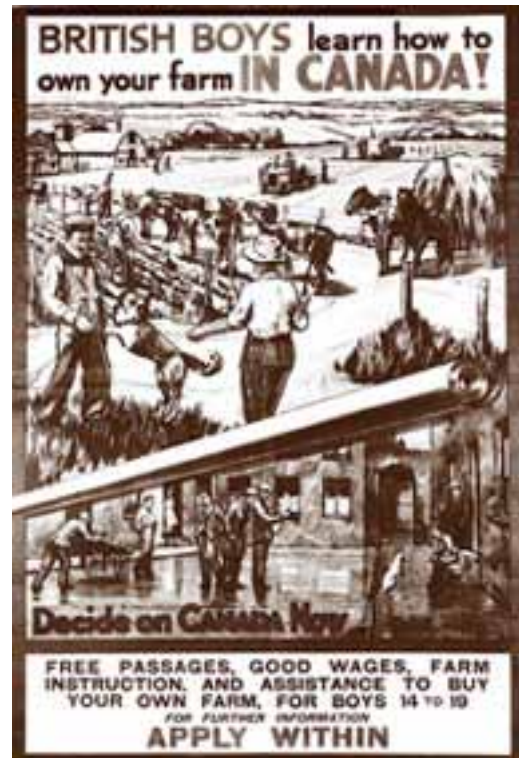
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## Posters



The images come from the following websites:

- Left side [www.cic.gc.ca/English/resources/publications/legacy/chap-2.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/English/resources/publications/legacy/chap-2.asp)
- Above [www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/legacy/chap-4a.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/legacy/chap-4a.asp)