

Activity 3



PLANNING TO MOVE TO THE HOMESTEAD

STUDY QUESTION:

What would I feel if my parents told me tonight that we were moving to an undeveloped foreign land?

THE ACTIVITY:

Students role play making plans to move to a homestead.

CURRICULUM FIT:

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Topic B - Alberta: Its People in History.
- Major factors that influenced settlement included transportation and natural resources.



MAJOR CONCEPTS

- Development, growth, change, resourcefulness, lifestyle.

LESSON CONCEPT

- The development of Alberta was the combination of human desire for change, political readiness and demand. Settlers provided the human resources to implement the Government of Canada's plans for development of the West.

AGRICULTURE CONCEPTS:

Importance of Soil and Water
Economic Importance

PURPOSE:

- To improve planning skills.
- To experience some aspects of the early Alberta settlement.
- To develop decision-making skills.
- To share experiences and feelings of the settlers who chose to move onto the homesteads in Alberta.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

Art supplies, clay, sticks.
Miscellaneous supplies which may be collected as required.
(Example: moss.)

TIME REQUIRED:

1 - 4 class periods.

BACKGROUND - For the Teacher

This activity is closely related to Activities 4 and 5. You may choose to do one or all three of these activities. The major concepts are found in the Social Studies curriculum. The emphasis is on Language Arts skills. Supplementary activities include role playing, art and physical education skills. I feel your students will enjoy experiencing pioneer life in early Alberta through some of the exercises suggested in these lessons.

The resource material in Activities 4 and 5 will assist with this lesson.

PROCEDURE

Part 1

Introduction

1. Discuss the following questions:
 - a) How would you feel if your family decided to move to another country?
 - b) How would you feel if your whole family was allowed to take only as many things as they could fit into a small van?
2. Review the background information. Read the following to the students:

In this exercise you are going to imagine that this is happening! Do you know that this actually happened to thousands of families who moved to Alberta between 80 and 110 years ago?

Moving from one home to another, changing jobs and starting fresh are huge decisions. Most of us have made one of these decisions once or twice or have known someone who has. Moving from another country to the wilderness of Alberta 80 to 110 years ago was a major decision. In spite of the many hardships, thousands made that very decision. Some were seeking adventure, but most were looking to improve some aspect of their lives. One way to begin to understand some of the thoughts and feelings of these brave people is to imagine ourselves in their place, at the turn of the century.

This activity will be successful if our imagination takes us back in time so that we can actually be one of the many pioneer families who settled in Alberta. Planning the move, selecting the fertile and sometimes harsh land, and setting out to fulfill the requirements of the Homesteading Act, will help us to relive a segment of Alberta's human history.

There was a great diversity in the early pioneers. They brought with them many skills and interests. In this lesson, we will focus on the pioneers who came to settle on the homesteads and farm the land.

Part 2

Making Plans

3. Divide the class into small family groups of 4 - 6 members.
4. Have each group choose the family members of the group. These may include grandparents, parents, children, aunts, and uncles.

Each family group will be asked to pretend that Father and Mother have decided to move to Alberta.

Groups may choose to dress up for their parts.

Part 3
Sharing

5. Review the essay on Settlement in Alberta and the Pioneer Possessions list supplied in this lesson.
6. Students will be asked to do a short skit about their family making plans and packing with others for their journey to Alberta.

At the beginning of each skit, have one member of the group introduce his/her family.

Share with the class the following information about your family.

- a) Each family member's name, relationship, and age.
- b) What country is the family coming from?
- c) What year (date) are they moving to Canada?
- d) Why are they moving to Canada?
- e) How did the family make a living in their homeland?

Follow this introduction with a short 2 - 5 minute skit about the making of arrangements to move (moving the dog, planning transportation, etc).

Part 4
Conclusion

7. Have the groups prepare a list of the things they will take with them. (Put the name of the group on the top of the list.) These may be displayed on the poster board for a few days.

Students might want to use the worksheets "Preparing a Packing List" and "Family Members' Personal Packing List" to assist them with this project.

These lists may contain pictures of some of the items.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Compare the families in this activity.
2. What would the community be like if they became neighbours in Alberta?

RELATED ACTIVITY

1. Make travel plans using the worksheet "The Planner".





Family Members' Personal Packing List

NAME: _____

**What is your relationship in the family?
(Father, Mother, Son, Daughter, Aunt, Uncle)**

AGE: _____

I would like to take

1. _____ **2.** _____

3. _____ **4.** _____

5. _____

Worksheet

Preparing A Packing List



Instructions to Students:

1. Have each member of your group list five items they would like to take with them to Alberta.
2. Make a master list.
3. Have a meeting and revise the list so that it is the most practical for your homesteading family.
4. Make a final list.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5. Compare your list with the Pioneer's Possessions list supplied with this lesson.

6. What did you forget? What may be unnecessary?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. What do you plan to purchase when you get to Alberta? How much money do you think a settler would need?



The Planner

1. What is your country of origin? _____
2. What was your occupation in your native country? _____
3. How many members are there in your immediate family? _____
4. What year are you emigrating to Canada? _____

5. **Travel Plans:**

Part 1 of the journey

Leaving date _____ Mode of Travel _____
Arrival date _____
Place of Departure _____ Place of Arrival _____

Part 2 of the journey

Leaving date _____ Mode of Travel _____
Arrival date _____
Place of Departure _____ Place of Arrival _____

Part 3 of the journey

Leaving date _____ Mode of Travel _____
Arrival date _____
Place of Departure _____ Place of Arrival _____

6. The estimated total cost of the trip is: _____

Example:

Leaving date April 3, 1907 Mode of Travel Ship
Arrival date April 21, 1907
Place of Departure Scotland Place of Arrival Montreal

Worksheet

Pioneer's Possessions



1. Spinning wheel
2. Wash board
3. Butter churn
4. Nails
5. Teeth for harrows (iron machinery parts)
6. Lanterns
7. Candle molds
8. Hunting rifle and bullets
9. Iron pots and kettles
10. Special kitchen tools
11. Special ornaments
12. Musical instruments
13. Iron
14. Sewing machine
15. Hand tools
16. Toys (dolls, model soldiers, horses and trains)
17. Mattresses and bedding
18. Tables and chairs
19. Stoves and heaters
20. Carpentry tools

A pioneer explains how much it costs to buy supplies in Alberta.

“It is absurd to think of commencing with less than \$600 or \$700. Of course, I do not mean when more than one go together. Now take my case for instance. I and another young fellow went together and we bought at the lowest possible rates, and notwithstanding, our outfit for two cost us well on the \$1,000 ...”

“Now you take down the list of articles absolutely required,” he said to the interviewer. “Yoke of oxen, \$240; wagon, \$80; plough, \$25; tent, \$12; stove, \$4; two pair blankets, \$9; Ox harness, \$15; two axes, two saws, one hatchet, two augers, nails etc., \$20; logging chain and ropes, \$15; four months provisions, \$100; total \$520.”

Pen and Plough



Interesting Facts

1. In 1878, Mormon settlers moved into Southern Alberta from the United States and began irrigation farming.
2. In 1881 there were about 1,500 white and metis people living in Alberta.
3. In 1881 surveyors were dividing the land for development.
4. Alberta towns in 1881 were Edmonton, Calgary and Fort Macleod.
5. The Agricultural Society was established in Edmonton in 1879.
6. Ranching flourished in Alberta in the foothills and Cypress Hills area (where the chinooks are frequent) from 1880 - 1900.
7. In 1883 the railroad was completed to Calgary. A stage coach made connections to Edmonton.
8. In 1891 the railroad was completed to Edmonton.
9. In 1897 Klondike gold fever hit. Edmonton became a main supply center.
10. In 1897 the railroad was completed to Lethbridge.
11. In 1911 there was record settlement. 20,000 acres were settled each day. Two new towns were founded each week. Four miles of railroad were built each day.
12. In 1912 Edmonton was a real estate empire with thirty-two real estate brokers, 135 financial agencies and 336 real estate agents.
13. In 1914 oil was found in Turner Valley near Calgary.
14. Farming population increased from 127,379 in 1906 to over 300,000 in 1914.
15. Acres cultivated increased from 650,000 in 1906 to 2,500,000 in 1914.

TEACHER RESOURCE

STUDENT RESOURCE



Homesteading in Alberta

From 1600 - 1900, Britain acquired a large network of colonies. These new lands added to the wealth of the mother country by supplying raw materials for her industries. Initially, the main Canadian export was fur. Trading posts were established and a brisk business was done in trade items such as beds, blankets and rifles in exchange for fur pelts.

Later, Canada populated the West to stabilize the Canadian economy and bring into agricultural production the vast fertile lands of the prairies. Lumber was harvested to build homes and places of business; the land was broken and seeded in the hope of providing a surplus of grain for international trade.

An extensive advertising campaign was mounted to attract settlers to develop the farm lands of the West. Extravagant claims were made regarding the potential of the land. But the best offer was of homesteads, which could be had for a fee of \$10.00 and the subsequent fulfilling of the obligation of living on the land for at least six months of the year and breaking of the land for cropping.

A brave and determined group of people arrived from all over the world to take advantage of this opportunity. Most were successful, and made a major contribution to this province. In turn they had a place to call home, and in most cases were provided with a reasonable living.

In many instances the settlers learned about this new life by doing. Most families and individuals tried to make the best preparations possible, but what they really faced was unknown. In many cases, one of the reasons for moving to Alberta was that they were in some way restricted in their homeland. They may have been unable to own land, or have political or religious freedom. If such were the circumstances, the lack of money was often a problem. Possessions were few and the limited space available for transport to Canada made the sacrifice of even more personal possessions imperative.

Some of the settlers who came to Alberta were experienced farmers, ready to take on the challenges of "Mother Earth". Many settlers arrived knowing other trades: shoemakers, blacksmiths and millers. In order to take advantage of the offer of free land, certain rules had to be met. This meant breaking the land and living on it. In many cases this also meant learning by experience. If you were lucky, there was someone to give you some good advice to help you get through the first few winters.

The cooperation of neighbours was a key to survival and the development of the land. In many communities one person would operate a saw mill while others made roads and built fences. Examples of cooperation were the building bees for barns and homes and the threshing crews which made their way from farm to farm during the harvest season. Neighbours also valued social contacts, which were often hindered by the rugged terrain which could separate one homestead from another.

People who chose to homestead in Alberta had a busy time ahead of them. Just the decision to move was enormous. Then came the planning. Which members of the family would come? In some cases all of the family would make the move, while in others, only one or two members would strike out, with the possibility of sending for the rest of the family once they were established. In any event, there were the inevitable choices of what to take and what to leave behind. Practical items such as dishes and bedding were packed alongside such impractical but cherished items as family photographs, a crystal vase, and a mirror.

Travel plans were made. Usually there would be several modes of transportation taken before reaching the final destination. Ship, train, and some form of horse or oxen drawn cart were common. The railways of Canada had a slim lead on the influx of eager settlers. Weary families were deposited at various train stations where they would start to learn the ropes of land acquisition and development in the West.

Camps of new arrivals were established at the major centers. From here, arrangements would be made to continue to their final destination. Additional supplies were purchased. Supplies such as flour, salt, and other dried goods, as well as horses and livestock, could be obtained at the larger centers. Advice was free. Leaving family members at the camp, the head of the household would travel by wagon to view the land available for homesteading. Often only a corner of the land would be seen before filing a claim. In other cases, helpful residents of the area would suggest suitable quarter sections. Some settlers were able to make excellent choices. Others, through inexperience and a lack of time, were forced to make hasty decisions. Either way, homesteads were chosen and new residents moved onto the land.

Depending on the time of arrival, the settlers began work on their property immediately. Most would arrive with some form of portable shelter, such as a tent or a wagon box. These temporary arrangements would not serve as winter protection. The second home for the pioneers was also usually temporary. Made of the materials at hand, it was small and crude. Where timber could be found and cut, the homes were constructed of logs. On the prairie, the first home was often made of sod. Many settlers spent their first very bitter winter in a partially finished shelter.

Food was another consideration. The variety was often limited to staple supplies such as biscuits made from salt and flour, and whatever game could be had.

The first spring brought a rush of activity. Gardens were cultivated and planted, land was cleared and broken, and repairs and improvements were made to the residence. Fences were constructed to contain livestock, and trails were improved to allow for easier travel. A journey to the nearest store for supplies such as coal oil for the lanterns and parts for implements might be in order.

These courageous people supported each other through the hardships of developing the homesteads. Providing assistance, encouragement and the much required relief from loneliness, they worked closely together. Some proved up their land and later sold it and moved to the towns to practice a trade, while others turned the virgin land into a profitable farming operation.

The result was homes and livelihood for thousands of people. Traditional agricultural practices were adapted to the needs of the land, and the land provided for the needs of the people. Challenges were met and overcome. Plans were made, adjusted, fulfilled and made again. Alberta's first industry was born. It remains one of the most largest and most essential today. The production and distribution of food - agriculture.

Farm Homes

*I like a kitchen big enough
To hold a rocking chair,
With windows looking to the sun,
And flowers blooming there.
I like big cupboards by the wall,
That hold a lot of things,
The cups hung up on little hooks,
A yellow bird that sings.*

*I like to do my mending there,
Where I can watch the road,
And see the teams come plodding home,
And smell their fragrant load,
Of heavy sheaves at stacking time,
Or hear the wagons creak,
And groan beneath their golden weight,
If it is threshing week.*

*I like to have the supper on,
And let it simmer slow,
With rich brown gravy bubbling up,
Around the meat, you know.
With apple pie set out to cool
And flaky new baked bread,
With golden syrup in a bowl
And jelly warm and red.*

*I like to have the lamps ashine,
With yellow glowing light,
And have the kitchen warm and clean
When they come in at night.
To make a home so snug and dear,
That when they work or play,
They hold a picture in their hearts
Of home, at close of day.*

*Beside Still Waters
- Edna Jaques*



TEACHER RESOURCE

Settlement in Alberta

By 1870 the buffalo had been driven from the plains and ranchers began to move into the southern grasslands. Soon after, in 1883, the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed to Calgary and the first immigrants began to pour into the country. Between 1901 and 1905, when Alberta was incorporated as a province, 40,000 homesteads were granted. A homestead was a grant of land, 160 acres in extent, which could be obtained for the price of \$10 and a commitment to make certain improvements during a three-year residence.

Homestead entries for 1913 were over 14,000, an area of 880,000 ha (2.2 million acres) being alienated. The federal and provincial governments which were jointly responsible for homestead policy attempted from the first to get suitable settlers. The census of 1931 gives an idea of their background:

Canada	22%
U.S.A.	17%
Great Britain	11%
Poland and Russia	5%
Scandinavia	17%
Others	28%

From this we see that most of those claiming homesteads were from other parts of Canada or the U.S.A. where they likely had some farming experience. But large numbers came from central and northern Europe where their farming experience in forested country was especially useful in Canada. The figures do not appear to reflect the actual numbers of Ukrainian pioneers whom we know to have been amongst the earliest, some arriving before the turn of the century. It is likely that they have been subsumed in another category. The Ukraine as a distinct entity did not exist when many pioneers arrived, so they gave their homeland as Austria, Russia or even Hungary, as the present-day Ukraine was then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

In the 1971 census, Alberta records a total population to 1.6 million. The major groups by country of origin are Great Britain 49%, Germany 17%, Ukraine 9%, Scandinavia 8% and France 6%.

Bad crop years with drought, poor harvesting weather, early frosts, grasshopper infestations and poor grain prices in the years after World War I and the subsequent depression of the early 1930's persuaded many homesteaders to move off the land and resettle on other farms in the newly-opened Peace River country or to live in nearby towns or cities.

The issuing of homesteads without regard to the agricultural potential of the land brought about much human suffering as farmers and their families attempted to sustain themselves under extremely adverse conditions. They faced some difficult problems. When the first traders and settlers came to the prairie provinces there were no weather records. As is now well known, the weather of this region is highly variable, not only from week to week, but especially from year to year. Soils of the open prairies were fundamentally different from those the settlers had been familiar with elsewhere. As a result of those unknowns, some extensive areas of land poorly suited to arable agriculture were plowed to raise grain. The tilling practice then used left the land bare when it was cultivated. The combination of aridity, rather low precipitation and high evaporations, and adverse soil characteristics in some areas soon led to poor yields and extensive soil erosion, about which very little was known. By about 1920 soil erosion and poor yields were such serious problems in parts of southern and southeastern Alberta and in southern and southwestern Saskatchewan that study and classification of soils were begun. An indication of the extent of the problem is given in the 1931 census which describes over 6,000 farms as abandoned or deserted, comprising 567,000 ha (1.4 m. acres) including almost 162,000 ha (400,000 acres) of improved land. In one district in east central Alberta, one-third of all farms were listed as deserted.

The provincial government soon recognized that it could not continue to permit settling of land without considering its long-term productive capacity. Thus Alberta was the first government to undertake an agricultural policy whereby land was inspected before settlement to ensure that at least 50% of the land would be suitable for cultivation.

For the last 30 years, Alberta has had the most advanced alienation policy for land of any province in Canada. This means that stringent conditions are set out under which settlement is allowed.

Helicopter Surveys: In the early 1950's forestry officials in Alberta wanted to make long-term plans for the management and development of the province's forest resources. They were eager to avoid a waste of resources and effort by planning forest activities in areas other than those which might eventually be farmed. The Alberta soil survey was therefore requested to do an exploratory soil survey of the vast areas in the northern half of Alberta which were largely unoccupied and for which there was scant knowledge regarding the soils and agricultural potential. An exploratory soil survey of northern Alberta was therefore made employing aerial photography. The aerial photos were interpreted in the laboratory, and field verification was undertaken by using helicopters to move soil surveyors from place to place throughout the whole of northern Alberta.

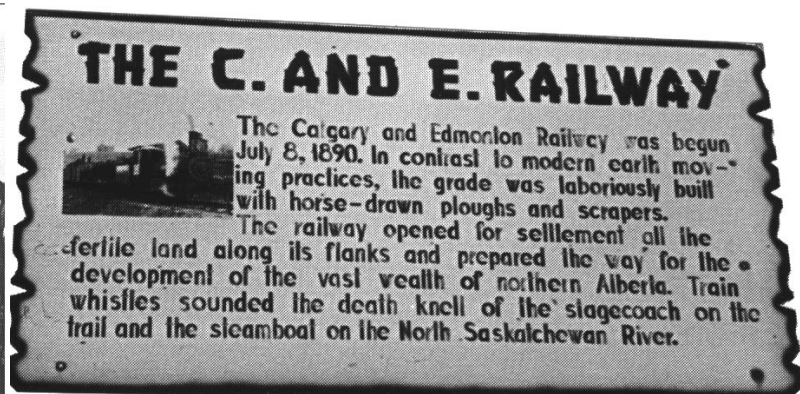
The helicopter exploratory soil survey is thought to be the first use of that technique to obtain a broad assessment of land resources in such a huge area as in the north half of the province of Alberta.

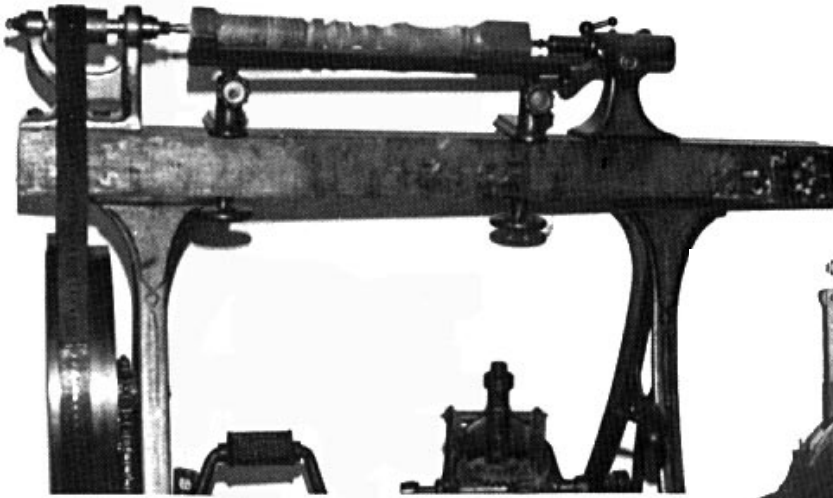
This Land of Alberta - Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development



Charles Bremmers' Mother, 1910. Provincial Archives of Alberta. E. Brown collection B413.

Settler poses in fashionable clothes.





4.

1.



2.

5.



3.

Settlers' Effects

included necessities and cherished treasures

- 1. Hand operated washing machine.
- 2. Barrel butter churn.
- 3. Hardanger violin from Norway.
- 4. Foot driven wood lathe.
- 5. Iron cooking pot.
- 6. Ornamental clock.

6.



