

THE LADNERS: RESEARCHING LOCAL PIONEERS

Susan Anderson & Susan Earles, British Columbia

INTENDED GRADE LEVEL/SUBJECT AREA

Grades 4 and 5 Social Studies, Language Arts, Fine Arts, Science

CONCEPTS

- Local heritage, artifacts, international dialogue with researchers and pioneer families in other countries, immigration, pride and ownership of community, school-based link with community.

INSTRUCTIONAL OUTCOMES

Students will:

- develop critical thinking skills;
- develop an understanding of the early Canadian explorers and pioneers of a local area;
- develop cooperative skills;
- understand the relationship between people and their local environment;
- develop a life-long interest in learning;
- apply the inquiry method to their research including problem solving, computer skills, and oral speaking;
- develop mapping skills;
- become personally involved in their heritage;
- use primary documents to draw inferences and understand cause and effect.

RECOMMENDED TIME FRAME

Because of the correspondence aspect of this project, it is best if it is ongoing throughout the school year. Approximately two periods a week should be sufficient. A modified project with limited correspondence could be completed in one term.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In our grade 4/5 class, we wanted to localize the mandated curriculum to provide more relevant and hands-on activities for the students. We felt this would assist the students in better understanding the broader picture of Canada's settlement and would provide them with a personal link to our community of Ladner. This pioneer unit could be developed for any community in Canada.

We established a relationship with a researcher in Cornwall, England (this can be done through your local Family History or Genealogy Society) who visited the farm, church and local registries to obtain information on the original Ladner family. She corresponded with our class and her letters and surprise packages came to be anticipated with eager excitement by the students. With our researcher's help, we were able to recreate the immigration, travels and settlement of the Ladner family in the 1850s.

Our English researcher also managed to videotape the family that presently lives in the original Ladner farmhouse in Cornwall. The family dressed in the fashion of the 1850s and introduced themselves to our Canadian class. They provided a tour of the farmhouse and background information. They sang a song about the Ladner's nine-foot kitchen table and promised to correspond with the children.

With these resources, the students began to take a personal interest in the Ladners and they were eager to learn more about them. It was rewarding for us to experience their excitement as they made new discoveries. This enthusiasm travelled overseas to our English researcher and she spent weeks researching the family, corresponding with the students, and providing us with valuable documents. She then decided she would like to make the trip to Canada to meet the children and to see where the Ladners had at last settled. This study became a truly international project.

ACTIVITIES

Part One — World Geography

As an introduction to studying the immigration of the pioneer families to a local area, our grade 5 class located Europe, Great Britain, and finally, Cornwall, England. We studied the land, the industries and lives of the people who lived there in the early 1800s. We read stories explaining why they wanted to immigrate to Canada and the United States, and their hardships in crossing the Atlantic Ocean. We used a Station approach involving the historical documents, photographs, and videos of one of our founding families, the Ladners. The students were able to use these artifacts to become personally involved in the family and to learn about their lives in Cornwall and their consequent immigration.

Part Two — Immigration

We followed the travels of the Ladner family from their arrival in Wisconsin, across the United States to California, and up to Victoria, BC. We designed a class map and read letters and stories about their experiences at different stops along the way. We located these areas on our map and enjoyed dramatizing some of the Ladners' experiences. Included in this activity were studies of early transportation methods (e.g., Connestoga wagons), the importance of the Gold Rush in California and British Columbia, documentaries on specific experiences (e.g., The Donner Party Expedition), and a reading program focusing on immigrating pioneers that involved the completion of a Literature Response Booklet.

Part Three — Settlement

We continued to follow the Ladners from Victoria, BC to the Cariboo Gold Rush, and finally to their settlement in Delta, BC. The students studied the life of the early settlers, including their homes, schools, leisure activities, food and early industries. We examined the natural landscape to see how dyking had effected the land, the early pioneers, and our present day community. Guest speakers were invited to the class to discuss the early pioneer buildings and architecture. Archivists presented early photographs and family artifacts to the class. The students participated in a typical pioneer school day where early lessons were taught. They dressed in the fashion typical of the late 1800s, played pioneers games, and enjoyed a pioneer lunch.

Part Four — Concluding Activities

Our pioneer unit culminated with a cooperative research project on other local pioneer families. The students followed a specific outline and researched their information at the local library and museum. The cooperative groups organized their research into booklets that included maps, photographs and drawings, as well as a three-dimensional model involving some aspects of the pioneers' lives.

We invited our English researcher, the local television station, and a Ladner descendant to visit our classroom for the presentations of the projects. The students presentations included examples of pioneer food, early schools in Delta, models of transportation, weaving, art work, early pioneer artifacts used by the pioneers (e.g. irons, clothing), outlines of the Ladner family tree, pioneers research booklets, and photographs and videos of our experiences.

EVALUATION

This pioneer unit involved one year and was integrated with many of our other subject areas. Therefore, a variety of evaluation methods were used that included:

- a) Formal Testing (created to address various learning styles)
- b) Projects and Research
- c) Oral Presentations
- d) Art Activities (e.g., weaving, silhouette pictures, stencilling)
- e) Reading Strategies (e.g., predictions, cause and effect, sequencing ideas)
- f) Writing (e.g., letters, diaries, summaries, explanatory and descriptive)
- g) Spelling (e.g., pioneer words)
- h) Science (e.g., studying the Foreshore, River and Delta)

MATERIALS/RESOURCES

- Early maps of local community showing pioneer settlements and present day maps showing the use of the land space.
- Documents from pioneers' country of origin including birth, death, marriage, and baptismal certificates, records of censuses, wills, letters and diaries.
- Photographs and videos of pioneers original homes in overseas countries.
- Local publications describing the settlement of the local area.
- Human resources including descendants of pioneer families, historical architects, writers and naturalists.
- Field trip experiences including visits to local museum, archives and library.
- Access to information on natural and man-made changes in the local environment.

About the Educators

Susan Anderson and Susan Earles have made an outstanding contribution to their school and profession. They created a localized, child-centred curriculum in Canadian history by enlisting staff, students, parents and local historians. The unit

uses approaches such as guest speakers, field trips, videos and primary documents. It focuses on two major studies: Tsawwassen and the Settlement of the Ladner family, and Early Pioneers of Delta. Students study travel routes, a historical village and pioneer life. They also take part in an in-depth archaeological study of the local beaches. Finally, students look at the lives of First Nations people in the area—through storytelling, recreating myths, and investigating artifacts from the Ladner Museum in Delta.