



Remington, Frederic
Voyageur or "courier du bois" with rifle and axe, 1891
Drawing
Collection of the Glenbow Museum
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Fur Trade: Shaping an Identity Teacher's Program Guide

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Teacher's Program Guide for School Visits

Fur Trade: Shaping an Identity is an historical program designed for the Grades 4, 5 and 7 Alberta Social Studies curriculum. This program explores this dramatic time in history through the examination of artifacts, photographs and other items included in Glenbow Museum's permanent *Niitsitapiisinni* and *Fur Trade* galleries. The program begins in the Blackfoot gallery discussing the traditional way of life for Alberta's First People and how they lived off of the land and shared it with all beings. Students explore life before the fur trade and learn how the Blackfoot people traded with other First Nation groups. Once in the *Fur Trade* gallery students then explore traditional artifacts through an inquiry-based learning process to further discover how the fur trade came about and how it impacted both the Blackfoot people and the French and English people. The program culminates in students participating in a trade game and learning more about all of the changes the people, both Blackfoot and European, underwent and how these changes shaped our Canadian identity.

This guide will assist you in preparing for your visit to Glenbow Museum. It contains pre-visit lessons, vocabulary terms as well as follow up activities. Engaging in the suggested activities before and after your visit will reinforce the ideas in the program and link classroom learning to the Museum experience. Most activities require few materials and can be adjusted to meet the age and needs of your students.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies

Grade 4

4.2.1 Appreciate how an understanding of Alberta's history, peoples and stories contributes to their own sense of belonging and identity.

4.2.2 Assess, critically, how the cultural and linguistic heritage and diversity of Alberta has evolved over time by exploring and reflecting.

Grade 5

5.2.1 Appreciate the complexity of identity in the Canadian context:

- acknowledge the contributions made by diverse cultural groups to the evolution of Canada
- recognize how changes in society can affect identity

5.2.4 Examine, critically, ways of life of the fur traders by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- How are the stories of the Métis people, their culture and heritage rooted in the fur trade?
- How do stories about ways of life in fur trade forts reflect the British influence in Canada?

Grade 7

7.1.4 Assess, critically, the economic competition related to the control of the North American fur trade by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- How did the First Nations, French, British and Métis peoples interact with each other as participants in the fur trade?
- How did the fur trade contribute to the foundations of the economy in North America?

VOCABULARY

Aboriginal peoples - The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

Assimilation - The process by which an individual or minority group loses its original culture when absorbed into another culture; in the context of colonialism, a policy of total integration of colonies into the colonizing country.

Beaver- The largest rodent in Canada, weighing anywhere between 15-35 kg, the beaver had a profound effect upon the exploration, development and history of the Canadian nation. Due to a demand for the beaver pelt as a textile material in Europe beginning in the 18th century, it was the beaver that sparked the extensive exploration of North America and provided the impetus for the establishment of the lucrative fur-trade economy that became the basis of the Canadian economy. The beaver has, as a result, become a Canadian national symbol.

Coueurs des bois - Young men who left the villages of New France to live among Aboriginal peoples; they made trading agreements and collected furs, learned native languages, and became skilled at wilderness travel and the native way of life.

First Nations - Refers to the various governments of the First Nations peoples of Canada. There are over 630 First Nations across Canada, with 46 First Nations in Alberta.

Francophone - A person for whom French is the first language learned and/or still in use; a person of French language and culture.

Fur trade - An important economic activity that took place in British North America between the 16th and 19th centuries, involving the buying and selling of animal pelts, primarily beaver.

Made Beaver- One prime beaver skin, flesh removed, stretched, properly tanned and ready for trade. A beaver pelt prepared in such a manner, the Made Beaver, was a unit of currency during the fur trade era. In order to establish a European style system of trade with the North American native population, the Hudson's Bay Company devised the Made Beaver as a unit of currency that could be traded at their posts for various European trade items. The price of all items were set in values of Made Beaver or MB with other animal pelts, such as squirrel, otter and moose quoted in their MB (beaver) equivalents. For example, 2 otter pelts might equal 1 MB. During the later fur trade the Hudson's Bay Company began to issue copper tokens in denominations of Made Beaver.

Métis Nation - A group of individuals who are associated with a recognized Métis family or Community and self-identify as Métis people.

Migration - Movement of people from one region of a country to another.

Portage- A way or path by land at an interruption in a water route. During the fur trade era until the beginning of the 20th century explorers, fur traders, voyageurs and natives all traveled via water routes across North America. When there was a land break between two different water systems, these early travelers would have to "portage" or carry their cargo and boat or canoe by foot across land to the next waterway. On a long portage voyageurs would often use packhorses to carry heavier cargo.

Treaties - Legal documents between government and a First Nation that confer rights and obligations on both parties. To First Nations peoples, the treaties are sacred documents made by the parties and often sealed by a pipe ceremony.

LESSON PLANS

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

What is trade?

1. Begin a discussion by asking the students to think about something they need and share a few answers. Continue by asking them to think of something they want and share again.
 2. Discuss with them the difference between needs and wants. (*A need* is something that is necessary for survival , such as food and shelter, whereas a *want* is simply something that a person would like to have.
3. People have to make choices about what things they need and what they want. Why? (People's first concern is survival. Money is often a deciding factor as well.)
4. Have them think back in time when the First Nations came in contact with the European.
 - Did they use money then? (No, they traded)
 - What is trade? (Trade is the exchange of goods.)
 - Why do people trade? (To acquire things they do not have or can't get except through trade.)
5. Ask the students if they think the First Nations people *needed* to trade? Why or why not? Why did they trade? Have a discussion about the First Nations use of what was available to them to meet their basic needs. They did some trading with other First Nations groups before the Europeans but much of this trade was for wants such as shells and obsidian.
6. Ask the students if they do any trading? What items are traded? Do we still trade today?

7. Now have students brainstorm and make a list of objects they might like to trade (5 -10 items). Now ask them to decide how they are going put a value on items (not money but some other measure such as 1 *hockey card*=2 *Pokemon cards* or 1 *Barbie*= 3 *outfits of clothes for a Barbie.*)

Note: This will be challenging and is included to help student begin to consider how complicated the trading process was especially when trading is between different cultures.

8. Finally, ask students whether they like the concept of trading or do they prefer using money. Why or Why not?

After returning from your visit to the museum talk about what students learned about trading that will add to their ideas from the pre-visit discussion.

POST-VISIT DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

After returning from your visit to the museum talk about what students learned about trading that will add to their ideas from the pre-visit discussion.

The following activity can follow this discussion or be done at another time.

Trade still holds an important political role in modern times as nations often use trade to solidify old relationships or to create new ones. Yet, how easy is it to trade when you cannot understand one another's language or cultural differences?

The purpose of this activity is to discover the intricacies of trade by experimenting with different languages in a mock trade. Through this activity students will have a better understanding of how frustrating trade could be for the parties involved especially if you cannot understand one another.

ACTIVITY

1. Since there were English, Francophone, Blackfoot and Métis people involved in the Fur Trade, it would be optimal to have all four groups represented. If French is not a language that is spoken in your school, then using three groups is also acceptable.
2. Split your class into 4 groups representing the 4 different groups of people that were involved in the fur trade. The groups should be as equally numbered as possible.
 3. Send the English and the French into the hallway (or somewhere that they cannot overhear the Métis and Blackfoot groups.)
4. Have the English and the French decide (separately) what they are going to charge, in beaver pelts, for the following items:
 - A Hudson Bay blanket
 - A pound of glass beads
 - A hatchet head
5. Have the Blackfoot and the Métis come up with hand signals to represent the following:
 - "Can we trade?"

- “How much does it cost?”
- “I accept that price.”
- “I will not pay that much.”
- “Can we negotiate a different price?”

6. If the groups feel it is necessary, they may want to write down the prices and hand signals so as not to forget during the trade.

7. If possible, have the Blackfoot and Métis rearrange the furniture or “landscape” within the classroom and have them decide with the teacher where the trading post will be within the room.

8. Each group must also pick two representatives for their group that will do the trading. These representatives must be brave, good listeners, generous and people that you are comfortable and confident will represent your group in the best possible way.

9. Let the English and French back in the room and tell them where the trading post is in the room and let them navigate to that spot.

10. To begin the trade, have the English start with the Blackfoot; remember, the Blackfoot say no words, but use only hand signals, and ultimately cannot understand the words being said to them. (If you have an English and French group, perhaps suggest that the Blackfoot group use half of the hand signals that they have come up with for the English and save the other half for the French group.)

11. Do the same trade that was done with the English with the French group.

12. Discuss with the groups what happened in the trade and the difficulties in communicating with each other.

13. Now do the trade again and this time have the Métis group translate the words of the Blackfoot to the English and French.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What were some emotions and thoughts from the English and French groups when they came into their classroom and everything had been rearranged?
- How would this be similar to the way the English and French voyageurs would have felt when first entering Alberta?
- What were some of the difficulties of trade for the Blackfoot with the English and French traders?
- What role did the Métis play in the trade? Why was this role important?

Glenbow Museum Voyageur “Contract”

This activity can be done after coming to the museum. You can have each student fill out one sheet *included below* or have all students put their names under the name of the voyageurs. Discuss why they would or would not choose to sign a contract to work as a Voyageur.

Glenbow Museum Voyageur "Contract"

BEFORE THE NOTARIES of the Province of Lower Canada, at

(School name) _____, the Undersigned; was present

(Voyageur's name(s))

who of his/her own free will has engaged and engages him/her to:

The Glenbow Museum,

agreeing and accepting, as their first command, leaving from Montreal, in the position of voyageur, in one of their Canoes, for making the voyage, going to **Grande Portage.**

The details of the role of voyageur under the commission of the **Glenbow Museum:**

1. To carry two packs over the Grande Portage, and extra packs on leaving.
2. To have \$5 deducted from pay for each pack short.
3. To work 6 days a week.
4. Take good and due care of said packs upon the voyages.
5. To serve, obey and execute faithfully all requests brought upon by the Glenbow representative.
6. To act in a lawful and honest manner at all times.
7. To avoid damages to packs and canoes.
8. To generally be a good employee and not quit before completion of the 3 year term or under the penalties imposed by the Laws of this Province, lose his wages (approximately \$200.00 for 3 year term)
9. Obliges himself to contribute one percent of his wages for the Voyageur Fund.

Signed this _____ of _____, 20_____

(Day)

(Month)

(Year)

RESOURCES

Websites

Exploration, the Fur Trade and the Hudson's Bay Company <http://www.canadiana.org>

An interactive website with lots of information the people, stories, and the timeline of the Canadian fur trade.

Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta <http://www.glenbow.org/mavericks/>

Explore Alberta's history through the lives of different people - men and women from diverse ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds. Some are prominent figures; others are "ordinary" Albertans. But they all have one thing in common: they are mavericks. Their contributions changed Alberta, and through their stories we can learn more about our history. Also available in French.

Niitsitapiisinni: Our Way of Life <http://www.glenbow.org/blackfoot/>

"Discover their important relationships with the land, with their families, and with people from other cultures. Learn how these traditions are the foundation of their lives today." Available in French and Blackfoot.

White Oak Society <http://www.whiteoak.org>

This is a fantastic website of a non-profit organization in Minnesota that provides living history interpretation within the Great Lakes area. There is a step by step rundown of how the beaver fur hat was made, not to mention food, women in the fur trade and much more. Although it is an American website, there are a lot of useful facts and information.

Books

Encounter by Jane Yolen

A story with vivid illustrations about what happens when two different cultures come together from the perspective of a young boy.

North American Indian by David Murdoch

"Experience the rich traditions and cultures of the tribes of North America from hunting techniques and seasonal dwellings to religious rites and rituals."

Nations of the Plains and ***Life in a Plains Camp***, Bobbie Kalman

Two books that detail life on the plains for the First People, with accompanying photographs and snippets of life on the plains.

OUR COLLECTIONS

<http://www.glenbow.org/collections/>