



RIVERS OF TIME

Timing: Three sessions of 50 minutes

Activity Type: Shared reading and craft

Materials:

- Two maps of Canada, one with names and borders, one without
- Small labels in the shape of canoes (to be fastened with tape) marked with the names of settlements founded in the 1800s
- The Sawmill, by Megan Lappi (Weigl, Calgary, 2004, ISBN #1-55388-038-2)
- Several Tinker Toys, or other similar building sets

Description: The students will explore the setting of early Canadian life through problem-solving and a reading of the aforementioned book. They will then demonstrate their understanding through a hands-on activity and a written response to an excerpt of the book.

Expectations:

Language: Oral Communication - L1.2, 1.3, 1.4, Reading - 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6

Social Studies: Heritage and Citizenship - 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7

Science and Technology: Matter and Energy - 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5

Teaching Strategies

1. Begin by explaining that the focus of the lesson will be early settlements in Canada (a time scale might help in introducing this concept). Use a "physical" map of Canada (one that only shows geographical features without borders or cities) to show how the country appeared 200 years ago. Place a large label above the map with the words "Canada: 1800."
 2. Give the children three small canoe-shaped labels with the names of three towns, such as Ottawa, Kingston, or Winnipeg. With the help of a nearby "political" map (one that includes place names) for reference, the children now try to place the labels on the correct place on the map. (the year of the founding can also be included on the canoe label).
 3. Look at the placement of the three towns. What do they have in common? Point out that they are all near rivers. Ask why it was important to have a settlement beside a river. Place three more labels below the title of the map with the words "no cars," "no roads" and "no electricity." Ask the students to quickly review how these constraints would have affected daily life.
 4. The canoe shape of the town name labels shows both that rivers were the main means of transportation, and also that European settlers had to rely on the help of Native peoples. Review with the class what they have already learned about native peoples, and the different ways they could have helped European settlers.
 5. Point out that besides transportation, there was one other way living beside a river helped the settlers. What could it be? Meanwhile, show two images from the book The Sawmill, one of a log cabin and the other of houses built of sawn lumber. What happened in the second picture? How did early settlers manage to cut so much wood in such a short time?
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6. While they are considering this, produce a simple waterwheel made of Tinker toy pieces and run the tap over it. A separate wheel at the opposite end of the stick is the "saw."

Application

1. Read a few chapters of the book The Sawmill by Megan Lappi.
2. Divide the class into two groups. The first one reads an additional chapter of The Sawmill to work on the vocabulary. The other half builds their own sawmill designs out of tinker toys in which the waterwheel turns another wheel at the opposite end of the "shaft." This second group can then make a drawing of their design showing the direction of the water and the direction their wheel turns (as they take turns trying out the water wheels at the sink, have them notice the difference in speed with the tap running on low and on high).
3. During the next class, the two groups trade places. Discuss other ways this technology could have impacted early settler life (i.e. flour mills). Locate old mill structures in your area, if any.

Assessment

The students' reading comprehension can be assessed by the written work based on a chapter of the book. For the hands-on building projects, the students' own drawing of the designs should have a section for observations of the speed of the mechanism ("When I turn the tap up, the wheel...")