

EDUCATION DAY



Canadian Aboriginal Festival

November 25, 2005 • Rogers Centre (Skydome) • Toronto

OITF/FEO



Curriculum Connections

Canoes

Grade 3 Heritage & Citizenship

- describe what early settlers learned from First Nation peoples that helped them adapt to their new environment (e.g., knowledge about medicine, food, farming, transportation);

Grade 4 Canada and World Connections

- identify the natural resources necessary to create Canadian products, and the provinces and territories from which they originate (e.g., trees/furniture/Ontario);

Grade 6 Heritage & Citizenship

- describe the attitude to the environment of various First Nation groups (e.g., Nisga'a, Mi'kmaq, James Bay Cree) and show how it affected their practices in daily life (e.g., with respect to food, shelter, clothes, transportation);
- explain how cooperation between First Nation groups and early European explorers benefited both groups (e.g., Europeans gained medical knowledge, survival skills, and geographic knowledge from First Nation peoples; First Nation peoples acquired products of European technology such as cooking pots, metal tools, blankets, and clothing; military alliances helped both groups against a common enemy);

Grade 7 History

- explain key characteristics of life in English Canada from a variety of perspectives (e.g., family life, economic and social life, the growth and development of early institutions, transportation, relationships with First Nation peoples and French settlers)

Grade 8 History

- describe the everyday life of various groups (e.g., First Nation peoples, Métis, Europeans) in western Canada in the late nineteenth century

KEY CONCEPTS

- Historically, there were 4 kinds of canoes used/made by Canada's Aboriginal and Inuit people: dugouts, kayaks, umiaks and birch bark canoes
- Canoes were used by hunters, travelers, traders and warriors
- In the 1700's, birchbark canoes became larger to accommodate the furs for the fur trade
- Aboriginal people are preserving the art of canoe building today
- Companies such as Peterborough Canoe Company and Fletcher Canoes are building canoes for many uses

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History of the Canoe

- The canoe underwent many transformations before and after Europeans arrived. Different Aboriginal peoples around North America developed the canoe to suit their needs and their environment. In the east and central parts of Canada, birchbark was used to make canoes. In the arctic, sealskin and stunted trees were used to build kayaks and umiaks. On the west coast, huge cedar and spruce were used to make dugouts. There are many traditional ceremonies that are involved when removing trees and other materials for building canoes.
- In the 1600's, early visitors to Canada such as Champlain and missionaries, hired Aboriginal guides and their canoes to take them deep into Canada in search of furs and settlement opportunities. The canoes held four or five men and their gear. The French coureurs de bois were expected to paddle and work as hard as their Aboriginal guides. In return, the Aboriginal guides, expected a better deal on their furs when trading.
- In the 1700's, birchbark canoes became larger to accommodate the furs for the fur trade as coureurs de bois had to travel further and for longer periods of time to trade furs. Travel on the Great Lakes also demanded larger crafts that were more stable. Aboriginal builders were asked to make the mercantile bark canoes larger.
- After the war between the French and English ended in 1760, the English realized that they needed many canoes for transportation inland. They continued to buy canoes made in Trois Rivieres and canoes made from the North West Company. A canoe was not expected to last longer than 2 years in the demanding fur trade requiring a constant supply.
- The voyagers used canot du maitre of thirty-six feet and the canot du nord at twenty-five feet for their travel. These canoes traveled from Montreal to Lake Winnipeg.
- In 1821, the Northwest Company and the Hudson Bay Company merged. The new company used bark canoes as freighters only in areas that the York boat could not access.
- In the 1850's, the wooden building form was invented allowing the manufacturing of canoes to occur satisfying the growing market of recreational paddlers.

- Canoes still play a major role in many Northern communities for food gathering and transportation.
- In the twentieth century, Peterborough became a centre for canoe building and today houses The Canadian Canoe museum.
- Many Aboriginal and Inuit people are relearning the craft of canoe building from Elders that have that knowledge.

TYPES OF CANOES

Canoes

- The Mi'kmaq and Maliseet on the east coast built long birch bark canoes, generally eighteen to twenty feet, with inward sloping upper sides for better stability through the large swells of the Atlantic Ocean. They had a humped look caused by the gunwale rising in the middle of the canoe. They were constructed by a rib and plank method a large part of their summer diet came from the sea such as shellfish, cod, porpoises, small whales and seals. In the winter, the Mi'kmaq moved inland and traded with hunters from the north and farmers to the south.
- The Algonquin of the St.Lawrence/Ottawa area constructed birchbark canoes that were fourteen to sixteen feet long with beams across the gunwales of approximately thirty-four inches wide. These canoes had a gradual rise of the gunwale. The rib and plank method was often used. These canoes, with long flat bottoms were stable on rough open water, but harder to negotiate through rapids.
- The Cree of Northern Ontario and Quebec built smaller canoes that were generally fourteen to fifteen feet in length with beams of thirty-two to thirty-four feet. The hull design was generally U-shaped and slightly flared with a hull rise of from six inches to one foot. The canoes with the one-foot rise looked like a quarter moon and were called "crooked canoes". These canoes were used for traveling rivers and handled well in rapids. The Cree moved between different encampments depending on the season and were often revisited year after year by the same families.
- The Dene of northwest Canada designed two kinds of canoes for use on the large rivers and lakes of this region. The smaller birch bark canoes were built in the southern regions and were not as common due to limited natural resources. These canoes were light as they were portages frequently.

In the construction of these canoes, people used small poles as stringers and the bark was used both for sheathing and waterproofing. They also made larger cargo canoes that were made from stretched moose skins over spruce frames. These held a few families and their winter catch of fur.

Dugouts

- When Europeans first visited the communities along the Northwest Coast, Aboriginal peoples often had a large number and a variety of canoes among them. They had small clam boats, flat-bottomed river canoes and large ocean war canoes. The dugouts are actually made larger than the trees from which they were carved through steaming of the canoe to make them wider than the original tree width. Since the canoes were steamed to shape, the wood fibers followed the curve of the gunwale down the midsection of its length making the canoes stronger. They use red cedar, Sitka spruce or cottonwood. Sometimes the trees are removed from the forest, but historically, the trees were often found on beaches.

Kayaks

- Since the Inuit needed a means of travel for hunting sea creatures in the Arctic Ocean and caribou and mammals along rivers, they developed the highly maneuverable kayak. The kayak has to be narrow enough that the hunter could walk over thin ice with the canoe between his legs and hop in quickly if the ice cracked. The kayak dimensions and structure vary among different communities in the north. The kayaks vary in length from fourteen to twenty-one feet. Kayaks were made from a wood frame with a completely enclosed seal or caribou skin cover. Before European contact, the wood was often found driftwood as they are above the treeline. The gunwales and stringers were secured together with pegs of wood and bone and lashings of baleen and skin.

Umiaks

- Umiaks are used for hunting big game and transportation in the arctic regions. In the Western Arctic, they were also used as war boats and whaling vessels. Umiaks typically range from eight to forty feet in length but can be up to sixty feet. The umiak is more stable and comfortable than the kayak. They are built from wood (spruce), driftwood and animals skins such as walrus and bearded seal.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Venn Diagrams

A Venn diagram is a way to compare things. It is made of two, three or four overlapping circles. The middle space has the characteristics that are the same for each of the things with the remaining circle parts containing information unique to each.

After students have learned about the different canoes, their uses and their evolution over time have them complete a Venn diagram to consolidate their learning. Several options of categories may be used:

- birchbark canoe, dugout, kayak (and/or umiak)
- birchbark canoe and canvas canoe
- uses of the canoe in the 1700's, 1800's and the present day
- methods of transportation that the Aboriginal people and early settlers used with transportations methods used today

2. Timeline

Students can create a timeline of the evolution of the canoe in Canada. They should look at uses and construction of the canoe. A class timeline can be constructed by having small groups or pairs of students responsible for a specific time period of canoe.

RESOURCES

Books

Gidmark, David. Building a Birchbark Canoe.
Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly Books Ltd. 2002.

Jennings, John. The Canoe: A Living Tradition.
Toronto, Ontario: Firefly Books Ltd. 2002.

MacGregor, Roger. Peterborough Canoe Co.
Catalogue. Peterborough, Ontario: Plumsweep
Press. 1995

Roberts, Kenneth G. & Shackleton, Philip. The
Canoe. Toronto, Ontario. Macmillan of Canada, 1983.

Web Resources

Daniel Pinock Smith - Birch Bark Canoe Builder
<http://www.kza.qc.ca/html/Lbusiness/pinock/main.htm>
Bio of Daniel Pinock Smith
[http://collections.ic.gc.ca/aboriginalgenerations/
pinock.htm](http://collections.ic.gc.ca/aboriginalgenerations/pinock.htm)

INAC Publication: Transitions 1996 - RETURN OF
THE BIRCH BARK CANOE
[http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/202/301/transition-
e/1996/trn_ap_96_e.pdf](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/202/301/transition-e/1996/trn_ap_96_e.pdf)

**The Canadian Canoe Museum

<http://www.canoemuseum.net/>

follow links to "Our Canoe Heritage" and look for
visuals of actual canoes from across Canada
Fletcher Canoes, Canvas Canoe Builder Thelma
Cameron

<http://www.fletchercanoes.com/howwebuild.html>

