

Free Farms for the Million!

Investigating the West's History by Exploring and Creating Canadian Advertising for Immigrants

Introduction

Students need to understand how what is now Alberta was very different in the late nineteenth century. The Canadian West had a very sparse population and therefore advertising was used by the Canadian Government to lure immigrants to settle in Western Canada. How did they advertise? How did they make immigrants want to come to the western provinces? Where did they advertise? Was the advertising accurate and factual?

Project Explanation

In this project, students will develop an appreciation of Alberta's geographic, cultural, economic and historical characteristics and how they have changed since the late nineteenth century. Students will research advertising practices of the time and examine actual artifacts and documents that were used to advertise Western Canada to other countries. They will create their own historical poster that reflects the methods, language, print styles and formats that were used to promote Alberta to the citizens of another specific country.

Materials and Resources Needed

- [Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta](#)
- Glenbow Library and Archives Digital Collection – Search Immigration Posters
<https://digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca/CS.aspx?VP3=DamView&VBID=2R3BXZV8OP5D&PN=1&WS=PackagePres&RW=1235&RH=552>
- Poster paper, pencils, art materials, rulers
- The Last Best West – Advertising for Immigrants to Western Canada (Main Site)
<https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmce/exhibitions/hist/advertis/adindexe.html>
- Western Immigration Promotional Posters
http://www.collectionscanada.ca/canadian-west/052920/05292052_e.html
- Western Immigration Information
http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0529/052902/05290203_e.html
- Google Images - Search images of Pioneer Life
<https://www.google.ca/imghp?hl=en&tab=ri&authuser=0&ogbl>
- MediaSmarts - Canada's Centre for Media and Digital Literacy
<https://mediasmarts.ca/>

Procedures

Students will create an authentic, historical poster or pamphlet promoting the Canadian West to potential settlers from another country.

Students will begin by researching why the Canadian Government would need and want to advertise to lure immigrants to Western Canada. Using the “*Last Best West*” and poster sites in the resources sections, they will determine the reasoning for the ads, their audience, the message they tried to get across, and some of the techniques used to have people leave their country to come to Canada. Using the *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* “Newcomers” and “Ranching” content areas, they will look for the enticements to the Alberta way of life that could be used to attract people from other countries.

As a group, have students come together to identify the crucial elements that would be needed for the historical posters or pamphlet they will be creating. These should include a slogan or title, crucial information and details, the person or group they should contact, who created the poster (Canadian Government, CPR, Allan Steamship Line, etc.), vivid artwork, and a persuasive writing paragraph explaining why they should come to Western Canada.

The students, either individually or in groups, will create their own historical poster or pamphlet that reflects the advertising methods, style of language and print, and artistic impression that were used to promote Alberta. They will choose a specific country’s citizenry to act as their audience. It must be persuasive and market settling in Western Canadian to others.

Another option is to have each student or group research and create their posters from the unique perspective of one specific group. Possibilities could include the Federal Government, the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Allan Steamship Line, the First Nations (Tom Three Persons), the big ranchers (George Lane), settlers who were already here, American immigrants or ex-slaves (John Ware). For example, the big ranchers did not want settlers coming to the west, as it would begin to divide the land and force an end to the open range. Would their poster promote immigrants to come to settle the west or attempt to deter them? What message might it attempt to get across?

The media used by students may be specified by the teacher or left to choice. Options could include pencil crayon, felt, a drawing program on a computer, a collage using photos of Alberta and its characteristics, or any other media available. Photographs or artifact pictures may be printed from the [Glenbow Library and Archives Digital Collection](#) or [Google Images](#). Ensure the students include proper credit with each of the images used.

As students complete their projects, they can then consider how the same goals might be accomplished in today's society. Does the Alberta Government still create advertisements? Who are they aimed at? Why would they choose to spend money on trying to get their message across? Was it effective for that audience? How has advertising in general changed since those first, early posters promoting the Canadian West?

Assessment and Evaluation

- Students and their teacher should develop their own rubric by identifying evaluation criteria for the project that will match their own learner outcomes. This allows students to understand the expectations for their work and to have input into the ongoing evaluation process.
- Individually or in small groups, students might evaluate the work of two or three other students in order to gain insight into how their peers approached the project.
- After completing the project, students may talk or journal about what they felt they did very positively, what they had difficulty with, and how they would change how they would approach a similar project in the future.

Ideas to Enrich this Project

- Students could explore the idea of migration and how it has changed in the past 100 years. Where will be the next place we will be pioneering? What would the advertisements for immigrants look like then? Will it be Mars? A city under the ocean? A space station? A planet outside our solar system?
- Using the [MediaSmarts](#) - Canada's Centre for Media and Digital Literacy site, conduct a study looking into how various aspects of advertising affect our viewpoints. There are many excellent and very usable resources in the "Teacher Resources" link on media literacy and web awareness.
- A mathematical survey or data collection could be taken from each student as to which is the most persuasive poster or pamphlet. Students could then analyze the data in order to determine the results