

Grade Two: Communities in Canada

2.2 A Community in the Past

General Outcome

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how a Jewish Farming Community (The Montefiore Colony) emerged. In addition, students will learn how the various interactions and the spirit of cooperation among the community members and between members of the Jewish community and non-Jewish community contributed to building the Calgary Jewish Community and the province of Alberta in general.

Background Knowledge

The Montefiore Colony was formed in 1910, around the area of Sibbald, just inside the Alberta south east border and adjacent to Alsask, Saskatchewan. The colony was named for Sir Moses Montefiore, a Jewish-British philanthropist (1784-1885) who financially assisted Eastern European Jews to escape persecution and oppression and enabled them to emigrate to welcoming countries.

The Jews who built the Montefiore Colony fled Russia during the early 1900's under the auspices of the French Jewish philanthropist, Baron De Hirsh's Jewish Colonization Association and the Canadian Government's immigration incentives to farmers to populate the west. Canada hoped that the new immigrants would flourish and help to build the three western provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Although by 1867 the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed from the eastern provinces to British Columbia, nonetheless, there was fear at the time that the United States would take over the western provinces if there was not sufficient Canadian population in these areas.

Located northwest of the village of Sibbald, the Montefiore Colony together with its Jewish population occupied about 12 sections of land. Jewish farmers wanted to have land near to each other when they came to Canada in order to continue their communal way of life with regard to culture, tradition and religion. Under the Land Settlement Act of Canada, each prospective farmer who filed on a homestead in the early 1900's was given 160 acres of land with the promise that if the farmer cultivated a crop for three years and built a home on the land that in turn the farmer was entitled to purchase the adjacent 160 acres for \$1 an acre. In many areas of the province of Alberta, this enticement would have been sufficient to ensure the homesteaders remained on the land, however, lack of rainfall and poor soil conditions along with the fact that very few of the settlers had any previous farming knowledge resulted in all of the farmers and their families leaving the Colony. By 1927, all of the Montefiore Colony's farms were sold or abandoned with its inhabitants moving to Petaluna, California, Calgary, Edmonton or other smaller centres in Alberta.

Even though the inhabitants of the Montefiore Colony wished to remain true to their Jewish roots and formed their own Jewish farming Cooperative, nonetheless they did take part in the wider community in which they lived. Children from the Colony attended the University District School which opened in

1914 and young men enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces during the First World War. Although the Jewish farmers from the Colony belonged to their own farming cooperative, many also participated in the United Farmers of Alberta Cooperative (UFA), the organization which helped farmers sell their products for a fair and reasonable price.

Like all farmers in the area, the Montefiore Colony farmers were involved in mixed grain farming and had few cattle on their homesteads. Conditions were extra difficult for the Jewish farmers when they first came to Canada because they had no skills in terms of farming. When they lived in Eastern Europe, the governments in power at the time would not allow Jews to own land so they were never able to develop the knowledge and skills needed to live an agricultural way of life. They were reliant on their non-Jewish neighbors to teach them and help them with regards to clearing, cultivating and growing crops. The Jews in the Colony must have felt they had come to the “promised land” because their non-Jewish neighbors were friendly and helpful, the Jewish settlers could own land and they were allowed to practice their religion openly and without persecution.

At the focal point of their Jewish way of life was the Montefiore Institute, a synagogue (otherwise known as a Jewish house of worship) built in 1916 by the settlers. The synagogue (or shul as it would have been called in those days) was used for reading the Torah on Monday and Thursday as well as for services on Saturday. In addition to its use in terms of prayers, the Montefiore Institute was also used as a library, housing over 1000 books written in at least three languages, and it was also used as a school for religious education (learning to read Hebrew in order to be able to read the Torah) and learning to read and write Yiddish. Due to its prominence in the community, the Montefiore Institute served as a social hall for both the Jewish and non-Jewish community and even at one point was converted to an isolation hospital during an influenza season.

Specific Outcomes

- **Values and Attitudes**

Students will:

2.2.1 appreciate how stories of the past connect individuals and communities to the present (descendants visits, documents written by settlers)

2.2.2 appreciate how the Jewish Colony in Sibbald influenced the development of our Jewish Community in Calgary and Edmonton

2.2.3 appreciate the importance of collaboration amongst the Jewish settlers and with their non-Jewish neighbours and how this collaboration contributed to building harmony within and throughout the area

2.2.4 appreciate how their Jewish connections contributed to their identity as a people

2.2.5 appreciate how the cultural, linguistic and religious exchanges connected the Jewish community to their non-Jewish neighbours

Knowledge and Understanding

Students will:

2.2.6 analyze how the Montefiore Colony emerged by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:

- * What characteristics define a Prairie Community?
- * What was unique about the Montefiore Colony?
- * What were the origins of the Montefiore Colony?
- * What were the reasons for the establishment of the Montefiore Colony?
- * What individuals or groups contributed to the establishment of the Montefiore Colony?
- * How were the people on the Montefiore Colony connected to their neighbours – other settlers in the area, Calgary Jewish Community, Winnipeg Jewish Community?
- * How did various individuals and groups contribute to the Colony and areas outside of the Colony?
- * What were the cultural characteristics of this Colony (special symbols, languages spoken, traditions, schools, synagogue)?

2.2.7 by exploring and reflecting upon questions for inquiry, examine why the Montefiore Colony changed over time and what led to its demise

Questions for inquiry:

- In what ways did the Montefiore Colony change over time (languages spoken, traditions, religious adherence , farming practices, etc.)?
- What caused changes in the Montefiore Colony?
- How is the presence of the Montefiore Colony origin reflected in the Calgary Jewish Community today(heritage preservation, language, religion)?
- What natural resources existed in the Sibold area from 1910- 1927?
- What were the occupations of the settlers living on the Montefiore Colony?
- What types of goods and services were available to the Colony during the time of its existence and where could they be found?

Skills and Processes for Grade Two

Dimensions of Thinking

Students will:

2.S.1 develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:

- * compare and contrast information from similar sources (print, electronic) with that of verbal accounts by descendants

2.S.2 develop skills of historical thinking:

- * correctly apply terms related to time (i.e. long ago, before, after)
- * arrange events, facts, changes in practices with regard to language, religion and tradition in sequence

2.S.3 develop skills of geographic thinking

- * use a map to locate Calgary on the map of Alberta, the Calgary Jewish Community by population, the Siballd Colony in the province of Alberta
- * determine distance on a map using relative terms such as near/far, here/there
- * apply the concept of relative location to determine locations of people and places
- * use cardinal directions to locate the Montefiore Colony in relation to Calgary

2.S.4 demonstrate skills of decision making and problem solving:

- * apply ideas and strategies to determine how the settlers in the Colony may have made the decisions they did
- * propose new ideas and strategies for solving the problems of the Colony

Social Participation as a Democratic Practice

Students will:

2.S.5 demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building:

- * demonstrate the ability to deal constructively with diversity and disagreement
- * share information collected from various sources to add to group work

2.S.6 develop age-appropriate behaviour for social involvement as responsible citizens contributing to a community such as:

- * envisioning what Jewish communal social life and outside communal life must have been like for children their age living on the Montefiore Colony in 1910 - 1927
- * participating in activities that enhance their sense of belonging to the Calgary Jewish Community (attending age appropriate functions at the Jewish Community Centre)

Research for Deliberative Inquiry

Students will:

2.S.7 apply the research process:

- * participate in formulating research questions
- * develop a plan to complete an inquiry
- * access and retrieve appropriate information from various sources
- * organize information
- * process information from more than one source to retell what has been discovered
- * formulate new questions as research progresses
- * draw conclusions from organized information
- * make predications based on organized information

Communication

Students will:

2.S.8 demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:

- * prepare and present information in their own words
- * respond appropriately to comments and questions
- * interact with others in a socially appropriate manner
- * create visual images
- * display data
- * use technology to support presentation

2.S.9. develop skills of media literacy:

- * identify key words from gathered information
- * compare information on the same topic from various media