**SEEDS AND PIONEER LIFE IN CANADA**

**TIME REQUIRED:** 30 minutes for introduction, whole day for execution

**OVERVIEW**

When immigrants arrived in Canada from all corners of the globe they brought their own cherished seed varieties with them; turnips from England, cabbage from Russia, Okra from Africa. Native North Americans had their own existing food crops such as beans, corn and squash. Our current selection of food crops in Canada and around the world comes from a blending of cultures, tastes and generations of seed savers.

The following activity links to social science curriculum investigating the critical role seeds played in the early settlement of Canada. Students play the role of immigrant pioneer farmers responsible for keeping their seeds safe as they journey to a new life in Canada.

**MATERIALS**

* 5 seeds per student. Bean, pea, corn or other similarly sized seeds will be the easiest to work with and keep track of. Use smaller seeds for a challenge.
* A variety of materials appropriate to the time period (short pieces of twine, scraps of cotton fabric, wool, leather, paper) for making travelling seed saving kits.

**PROCEDURE**

Introduce this role-playing activity first thing in the morning. Tell the students they are early pioneers travelling across the ocean to begin a new life in Canada. They have been offered free land for farming but they will first need to get there. They will travel for 1 month across the Atlantic Ocean and another 2 months by train and horse before they reach their new land. They are leaving everything behind to start a new life as farmers. How will they grow food? In order to start a new farm and feed themselves they will need to bring their seeds with them.

Give each student 5 seeds and tell them to prepare their seeds for the voyage. Remind the students about the 3 magic conditions for safe seed keeping. The seeds must be kept under **dry**, **dark** and **cool** conditions to be saved, they don’t want them germinating on the boat!

Have students come up with ways that they would protect and transport the seeds given to them over their 3 month-long journey. Have each student decide how to carry their seeds for the day while they take part in their regular activities. Some students may decide to put seeds in the pockets of their clothing which is fine. If they use the monkey bars at recess they might find out how easy it is to lose them! **Note**: For safety concerns make sure students do not tie anything around their necks.

At the end of the day assemble the students and see how many still have all of the seeds they were given.

**DISCUSSION**

* Were the students able to keep their seeds dry, dark and cool? What were the main challenges they faced? Discuss how difficult this would be on a rocking ship in the middle of the ocean.
* Students were only given a small number of seeds. Imagine how many seeds would be needed to start an entire farm in a new land.
* Some students may have hidden seeds in their clothes or pockets. Many immigrants came to Canada with their precious seeds sewn into their clothing such as the hems of their skirts.
* View the slides in the Sow and Save *Seed Saving and Banking PowerPoint* *Presentation* to see the many ways seeds are saved around the world.