

# ***Our Land, Our Story***

*(created and submitted by Deborah Ling)*

## **Teacher's Guide**

### **Description:**

Students will take an inquiry-based approach to learning about prairie communities. By examining the artworks, students will ask questions about this "mystery community". In the process of asking these questions, students and teacher will uncover some of the learning outcomes that are central to the Grade 2 and Grade 4 Social Studies curriculum. **This activity is intended to be a springboard to their inquiry.**

*Note: Teachers have the option of combining elements from this lesson with that of Do You See What I See: a lesson on Art Criticism which walks the students through the various steps in Feldman's Method of Art Criticism in detail.*

### **Grade:**

- 2 and 4

### **Define Understanding:**

- Students will understand that stories can be told through art.
- Students will learn to "slow down" in order to observe details that they will otherwise overlook.
- Students will understand that each artist rendering represents the artist's unique perspective of reality.
- Students will learn to be more curious, inquisitive and critical in their thinking.

### **Curriculum:**

#### *Social Studies*

- General Learner's Outcome 2.1: *Canada's Dynamic Communities*

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how geography, culture, language, heritage, economic diversity and vastness of Canada's land and peoples.

- ✓ 2.1.2 Investigate the physical geography of an Inuit, an Acadian, and a prairie community in Canada by exploring and reflecting the following questions for inquiry:
  - *How does the physical geography of each community shape its identity?*
  - *What is the daily life like for children in Inuit, Acadian and prairie communities?*
- ✓ 2.1.3 Investigate the cultural and linguistic characteristics of an Inuit, an Acadian and a prairie community in Canada by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:
  - *What are the cultural characteristics of the communities?*
  - *How do these communities connect with one another?*
- ✓ 2.1.4 Investigate the economic characteristics of communities in Canada by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:

- *What are the occupations in each of the communities?*
- *What impact does industry have on the communities?*

□ General Learner's Outcome 2.2: *A Community in the Past*

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how a community emerged, and of how the various interactions and cooperation among peoples ensure the continued growth and vitality of the community.

- ✓ 2.2.6 Analyze how the community being studied emerged, by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:
  - *What characteristics define their community?*
- ✓ 2.2.7 Examine how the community being studied has changed, by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:
  - *In what ways has our community changed over time?*

□ General Learner's Outcome 4.2: *The Stories, Histories and Peoples of Alberta*

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the role of stories, history and culture in strengthening communities and contributing to identity and a sense of belonging.

- ✓ 4.2.1 Appreciate how an understanding of Alberta's history, peoples and stories contributes to their own sense of belonging and identity:
  - *Recognize how stories of people and events provide multiple perspectives on past and present events*
  - *Recognize oral traditions, narratives and stories as valid sources of knowledge about the land, culture and history*

**Artwork:**

- Prairie Homestead/Carrying Bucket by James Nicoll(1892-1986)
- Prairie School Days by Nigel Lawrence (1901-1990)

**Background Information:**

Biography

For biographical information on James Nicoll (1892-1986) and his wife Marion Nicoll, visit the following link:

[http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archivesMainResults.aspx?XC=/search/archivesMainResults.aspx&TN=MAINCAT&AC=QBE\\_QUERY&RF=WebResults&DL=0&RL=0&NP=255&MF=WPEngMsg.ini&MR=5&QB0=AND&QF0=Main%20en%20try%20|%20Title&QI0=Marion%20and%20Jim%20Nicoll%20fonds](http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archivesMainResults.aspx?XC=/search/archivesMainResults.aspx&TN=MAINCAT&AC=QBE_QUERY&RF=WebResults&DL=0&RL=0&NP=255&MF=WPEngMsg.ini&MR=5&QB0=AND&QF0=Main%20en%20try%20|%20Title&QI0=Marion%20and%20Jim%20Nicoll%20fonds)

For biographical information on Nigel Lawrence (1901-1990), visit the following link:

<http://www.albertaonrecord.ca/nigel-lawrence-fonds>

Feldman's Method of Art Criticism:

1. *Description* - Simply put, this step involves taking note of what is there or what you see. It focuses on "the fact"; therefore, it is objective, without an interpretation. Some questions may include:

- What is the name of the artwork?

- What is the medium used?
- Who is the artist?
- When was the artwork created?

2. *Formal Analysis* - This step takes the students to a deeper level of description where they examine the use of colour, shape, line, texture, etc. and the role these elements play in this artwork.

3. *Interpretation* - This step focuses on "what is the artwork about?" Students may express their own opinion but at the same time, try to support their opinion with some evidence found in the artwork.

4. *Judgment* - This step involves students judging the artwork based on certain criteria such as its emotional content or principles of design; in other words, it is an "informed" judgment. They may also compare this artwork with similar works.

## Activity:

### Day 1:

1. Introduction: Teacher talks about the different ways through which stories may be communicated: legends, myths, creation stories, narratives, oral traditions, songs, music, dance, literature, visual and dramatic arts, traditions, and celebrations. In this case, the story is communicated through visual arts.
2. Teacher discusses that each artwork represents the artist's perspective. The artist may have chosen a specific event or point in time because it may be of interest to him/her or of historical, cultural or social significance.
3. Begin Activity 1 as a whole-class activity. (*see Slide #3*) Note that the title of each artwork has been intentionally omitted. This is important as we want students to focus on what they see NOT what they think they may see in prairie communities.
4. The tasks are roughly based on Edmund Feldman's Method of Art Criticism. Task 1 is *Description*. The process of "slowing down" is very important as you wish to encourage students to pay attention to the details. Task 2 and 3 are *Interpretation*. For younger students, it may be helpful to modify the task slightly and use the following sample questions instead:
  - *What do we know about the place (e.g. the physical geography, the climate, etc.)?*
  - *What do you think the people do to make a living?*
  - *What is their lifestyle?*
  - *What is their economical status?*
  - *When do you think these people lived?***Always ask students to find evidence in the artwork to support their answer.**

### Day 2:

1. Begin Activity 2. Students may work either in small groups or in pairs. Work through all three tasks.
2. Remember this is the springboard to their Social Studies inquiry. Therefore, when working through Task #3, it is important to collect all questions generated by the students. Do not be judgmental at this stage. Our goal is to arouse curiosity and interest in their learning. These questions will help set the direction for the inquiry.
3. Reveal the title of the works. Ask students if they think the two artworks make reference to the same historical period. Why or why not?
4. (Optional) *Debriefing the process*: Students briefly comment on how the process supported their learning.

# Bibliography

AFA Art House, eMuseum  
[www.alberta.emuseum.com](http://www.alberta.emuseum.com)

Alberta on Record  
<http://www.albertaonrecord.ca/>

Implementing the Open Minds Education Concept in Your Community – a Guide  
[http://btcn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/OpenMinds\\_Handbook.pdf](http://btcn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/OpenMinds_Handbook.pdf)

# *Our Land, Our Story*



# Activity I: First You Must Learn to See...

Imagine yourself a newly arrived immigrant. You know nothing about the land in which you have just arrived or the community living here. As you are wandering around in this place that is totally foreign to you, time freezes. In front of you is the following snapshot. *(see next slide)*

# Example 1



James Nicoll (1892 - 1986)

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts



## Task 1: Describe what you see including...

- the physical geography (what kind of landscape and vegetation, body of water, etc.)
- the climate
- the activity that the person or the people are doing
- the lifestyle, etc.

Use the following sentence starters if you wish:

- *I noticed that...*
- *I see...*

Example:

- *I noticed that the land is surrounded by mountains.*
- *I see a cliff and an ocean.*

# Example 1



James Nicoll (1892 - 1986)

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

**Task 2:** Based on what you see, you are trying to get a sense of what this land or this “mystery” community is like. Use the following sentence starters to help you.

- I believe ... because
- It is reasonable for me to think that... because...

**Example:**

- *I believe this community relies on farming because I see many rice paddies.*
- *It is reasonable for me to think that this is a highly populated community because I see many houses and apartment buildings.*

# Example 1



James Nicoll (1892 - 1986)

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

# Task 3: Brainstorm a list of things that you wish to know about this community.

*I wonder...*

*Is it possible that...*

*Could it be true that...?*

## Example:

- I wonder how cold this place is given that the people are wearing heavy coats and boots.*
- Is it possible that the mother goes to work and the father stays home to take care of the children in this community?*
- Could it be true that farming is one of their most important industries since there are rice paddies everywhere?*

# Example 1



James Nicoll (1892 - 1986)

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

## Activity II:

**Task 1:** Working in a small group or with a partner, describe what you see in Example 2 including...

- the physical geography (what kind of landscape and vegetation, body of water, etc.)
- the climate
- the activity that the person or the people are doing
- the lifestyle, etc.



Use the following sentence starters if you wish:

- *I noticed that...*
- *I see...*

Example:

- *I noticed that the land is surrounded by mountains.*
- *I see a cliff and an ocean.*

## Example 2



Nigel Lawrence (1901 – 1990)

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

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## Example 2



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**Example:**

- *I wonder how cold this place is given that the people are wearing heavy coats and boots.*
- *Is it possible that the mother goes to work and the father stays home to take care of the children in this community?*
- *Could it be true that the farming is one of their most important industries since there are rice paddies everywhere?*

## Example 2



Nigel Lawrence (1901 – 1990)

# The “Grand Reveal”

*Where is this “mystery” community?*

# Example 1: *Prairie Homestead/Carrying Bucket*



James Nicoll (1892 - 1986)



## Example 2: *Prairie School Days* (ca. 1985)



Nigel Lawrence (1901 – 1990)

## Activity III:

*Do you think Prairie Homestead/Carrying Bucket and Prairie School Days reflect life from the same historical period? Why or why not?*

## Activity IV:

- Take students to the computer lab and search the AFA collection at: <http://alberta.emuseum.com>
- In the “search the collection” box, have students type in the word “prairie”
- Students will select six of their favourite works of art to create their own “collection” (exhibition) of prairie artworks
- Students will present their collection and discuss the historical period of one of their works

Please note: students must register with a username and password to use the “collection” function (this is a very simple process – students can use their school id and password)