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FIVE FASCINATING FILMS ON ONE VIDEO

SASKATCHEWAN SUITE



STUDY GUIDE

Saskatchewan Suite is a collection of five fascinating historical anecdotes. This landscape of endless horizons, where the unbelievable is taken for granted, is the ideal setting for this series of prairie tales.

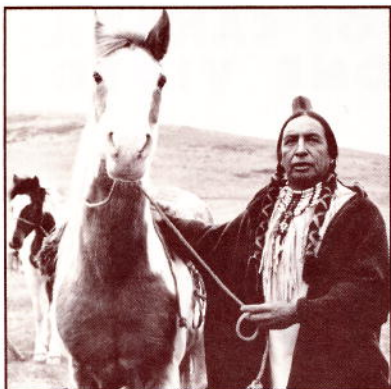
From the great Sioux warrior Sitting Bull, who sought sanctuary in Canada in the 1870s, to the disappearance of a grain elevator in the 1980s, these stories are certain to dispel the myth that Canada's Wheat Province consists merely of 'plain folk in a hard land.'

- *Medicine Line* 10 min. 20 sec.
- *St. Laurent Pilgrimage* 2 min.
- *The Giant* 2 min. 25 sec.
- *The Shipbuilder* 6 min. 14 sec.
- *The Move* 25 min. 59 sec.



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MEDICINE LINE

Sitting Bull was the chief of the Lakota Sioux, one of five divisions of the vast Sioux Nation, whose territory ranged throughout the buffalo plains.

On June 25, 1876, in an act as contemptible as it was foolhardy, Colonel George Custer, a hero of the American Civil War, and a candidate for U.S. President, attacked Sitting Bull's camp on the Little Bighorn River in Montana Territory. He believed the sleeping Sioux village would be an easy target. The 261 soldiers and officers of the U.S. 7th cavalry were annihilated within five hours, in what is now known as Custer's Last Stand. The U.S. Government instantly glorified Custer as a great American hero and martyr and ordered his "murderers" hunted down. Sitting Bull and his people fled north to Canada — across the 49th parallel, which the Sioux called the "medicine line."

The North West Mounted Police had just marched across the North West Territories (as most of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta were then known). Now they had to face something even more terrible than the prairie fires and frightening winters — an alarming invasion of angry and desperate Sioux warriors.

The man on the spot was Major James Walsh, who rode unarmed into Sitting Bull's camp, and made an astonishing alliance with the Sioux chief.

Another key player in this drama was Jean Louis Légaré, the French-Canadian fur trader who helped feed the Sioux for five long winters, while a systematic buffalo slaughter went on south of the line. Ultimately, Prime Minister John A. MacDonald refused the Sioux request for reserve lands. In July, 1881, starving and without hope, they went back across the border and surrendered to the U.S. Army. After serving a prison sentence, Sitting Bull was murdered by a policeman in 1890.

General Questions

1. a) *What was the Medicine Line?*
b) *Why do you think it was given such a name by the Indians?*
c) *Why did Sitting Bull have to cross this line into Saskatchewan?*
d) *Locate Wood Mountain district on the Saskatchewan map.*

2. Why is Saskatchewan referred to as being part of the British territories?

3. Who were the North West Mounted Police?

4. a) Who is Major James Walsh?

b) Why is he referred to as "the keeper of the White Mother's law"?

c) What is meant by a spoken treaty?

d) Why is it suggested that Walsh was "sent away"?

5. Sitting Bull sought sanctuary in Canada in 1876.

a) What were the hunting conditions like then?

b) What were they like five years later?

c) How did this affect Sitting Bull's nomadic band?

d) What role did the trader Légaré play in assisting the Sioux?

e) Why is Légaré referred to as being "almost Sioux"?

6. a) Why did Légaré urge Sitting Bull to return to the United States?

b) Why would the U.S. government ask Sitting Bull and his people to surrender their guns and horses?

Discussion and Research

1. a) In the case of the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the whites refer to it as a massacre and the Sioux refer to it as a battle. What is the distinction in meaning as applied to this event?

b) Compare this event to the Sand Creek Massacre of 1875.

c) What really happened at the Little Bighorn in Montana Territory in June, 1876?

2. Why was a native woman chosen to narrate the film?

3. Compare the Indian policies of the Canadian government with those of the United States government in the late 19th century.

4. The Sioux sought sanctuary in Canada as refugees. Since World War II, there have been numerous groups of political refugees who have been forced to repeat this pattern. Discuss with reference to the Hungarians, the Chileans and the "Boat People."

a) Consider Légaré's statement, "The Americans are too powerful. Their power can reach right across the line." Discuss the above in light of U.S. - Canadian relationships in the 1870s.

b) How relevant would the above statement be today? Consider U.S. relations with Central and South America as well as Canada.

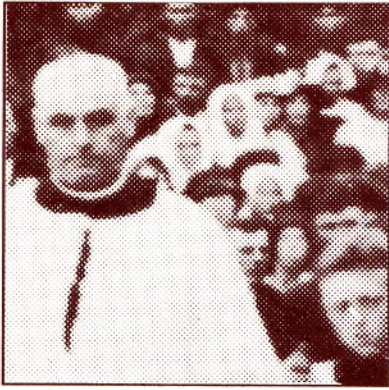
5. a) Based upon both the film and further research, describe the customs and culture of the Sioux in 1876.

b) Today?

6. a) Are there any Sioux bands living in Canada today?

b) If so, locate them geographically, and account for their presence here.





ST. LAURENT PILGRIMAGE

In the tiny Metis community of St. Laurent, a hundred-year-old religious shrine attracts thousands of pilgrims every year to "Our Lady of the Prairie," where a miraculous event occurred in 1884.

This story has a natural connection with Western Canada's most maligned patriot, Louis Riel. It was in the "Nation of St. Laurent" along the banks of the South Saskatchewan River that Riel and Gabriel Dumont proclaimed their short-lived Metis nation.

General Questions

1. Locate Duck Lake and Batoche on the Saskatchewan map.
2.
 - a) What is a shrine?
 - b) What is a grotto?
 - c) What is a pilgrimage?
 - d) What is a miracle?
3.
 - a) What miracle occurred at St. Laurent?
 - b) What draws people there even today?

Discussion and Research

1. Who are the Metis?
2. How did the Metis nation establish itself in south-central Saskatchewan?
3. The inherent ritualism, pageantry and mysticism of the Catholic Church became a natural drawing force for the French Metis.
Discuss this attraction in terms of the origins, culture and customs of this nation.
4. Three prominent Metis are mentioned in the film; Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont and Charles Nolin. Discuss the role each was to play in the Rebellion of 1885.



THE GIANT

The Willowbunch Giant, Edouard Beaupré, was — according to medical records — the third tallest man in history.

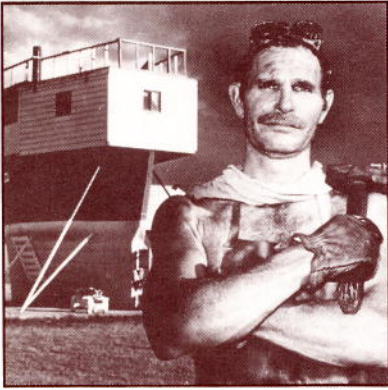
The autopsy at his death in St. Louis measured him at 8 feet, 2 1/2 inches. But life was tragic for this hulking country boy, born in Willowbunch, Saskatchewan. At the age of 17 he was taken away from home by a local entrepreneur to be shown as a circus oddity in side shows. When he died at the St. Louis World's Fair at the age of 23, his body was mummified and sent on tour until placed in storage at the University of Montreal, where it remains today.

General Questions

1. Locate Willowbunch on the Saskatchewan map.
2. a) Who was Edouard Beaupré?
b) What made him so unique?
3. a) What is a circus sideshow?
b) Why do people attend sideshows?
4. What did most people around Willowbunch do for a living at the turn of the century?

Discussion and Research

1. Compare your height and weight to that of the "Beaupré Giant," using the metric system.
2. Use the Guinness Book of World Records to research other "unique" people.
3. Edouard Beaupré died of natural causes. What are some of the possible causes of his early death?
4. a) Was it your impression that this small town country boy would have felt at home in the circus?
b) What was his favorite pastime?
c) What was his first language?
5. How could one argue that Beaupré's life was somewhat tragic? See the movie *Elephant Man*.



THE SHIPBUILDER

Finnish immigrant Tom Sukanen was a mystery to the people around Lucky Lake.

He had left his wife and children behind to take up homesteading in Saskatchewan. Initially, he was a successful and admired farmer. In the early 1930s, however, he astonished his neighbors by undertaking the construction of a 43-foot iron-clad steamship, which he built by hand for ten years. He was obsessed with the idea of returning to Suomi (Finland). Ultimately this eccentric with a genius for invention was 'put away for his own safety.' He died shortly thereafter.

General Questions

1. Locate Lucky Lake on the map of Saskatchewan.
2. Why could Tom Sukanen be referred to as both an immigrant and an emigrant?
3. a) Why did he build a ship?
b) What is so remarkable about the ship's construction?
c) Where did he get the materials?
4. a) At what is it suggested he was a genius?
b) Why was he ultimately labelled insane?
c) What is an asylum?
d) How might you account for his early death?
5. It is difficult to arrive at a full impression of Sukanen's ship from a picture of the hull alone. Use your imagination to finish the design of the complete ship for him. Consider that much of what you saw in the film would be below the water line.

Discussion and Research

1. Research your personal cultural background.
2. a) What is meant by the expression the Dirty '30s?
b) What effect did this period have on the economy of the prairies and the lifestyle of the people who lived there?
3. a) What does it mean to be alienated?
b) Could the prairie setting of the '30s have caused Sukanen's alienation? Read Sinclair Ross' "Lamp at Noon."
4. a) If Sukanen had managed to reach the South Saskatchewan River, what possible water routes could he have taken to voyage to Finland?
b) Research these river routes in terms of navigability. Where would Sukanen have run into difficulty with his steamship, of which the hull alone weighed 20 tons?



THE MOVE

The grain elevator has long been a prairie landmark, its tall silhouette the outstanding feature on these endless plains.

They are a testimony of the pioneering spirit that broke the plains and turned them into Canada's bread basket. Their numbers are dwindling, however, victims of railline abandonment, economic recession, prolonged drought, and corporate definitions of progress. As they disappear so does 'small town' Saskatchewan.

General Questions

1. What is the function of an elevator?
2. a) Why is this elevator being moved?
b) What are some of the problems raised in moving such a large structure?
c) The loss of the elevator will change the lives of the following people in what ways?
 1. local farmers
 2. the storekeeper
 3. the villagers
3. Why were elevators built along railway lines?

Discussion and Research

1. Research the elevator's general structure (size, height, etc.)
2. Describe the plight of the prairie farmer in the 1980s.
3. Is there any irony in the term 'progress' as it is used in the film to justify the move?
4. What does the "Crow rate" refer to?

This study guide was prepared by:

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