

EARLY TRANSPORT IN THE OKANAGAN

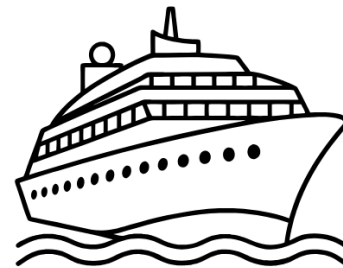


SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES

11255 Okanagan Centre Rd. W.
Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

1. Students will learn about the evolution of transportation in the Okanagan, looking specifically at the impact of the S.S. Sicamous
2. Students will then engage in a debate to convince a jury whether they should invest in boat transportation or rail transportation



BIG IDEA: The rapid development & proliferation of...transportation technologies in the 20th century led to profound changes in personal & national identities; Decision making in urban & regional planning requires balancing political, economic, social, & environmental factors; The historical development of cities has been shaped by geographic, economic, political, & social factors.

COMPETENCY:

Historical perspectives, significance, continuity & change

CONTENT:

Technological innovations & developments in the 20th century; historic settlement patterns in urban centres; decision making in the planning of cities & regions

WHAT WILL WE KNOW:

- Evolution of transportation in the Okanagan
- Purpose of sternwheelers on Okanagan Lake

FURTHER INQUIRY:

Field Trip Suggestions

1. S.S. Sicamous Heritage Site
2. Lake Country Museum and Archives



We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which the Lake Country Museum is situated, where this lesson was developed, is on the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples.

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Lake Country Heritage and Cultural Society

11255 Okanagan Center Road West

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Early Transport in the Okanagan

Learning Objective(s)	Students will explore the historical significance of boats (such as sternwheelers) in the Okanagan, specifically learning about the S.S. Sicamous. Additionally, students will explore by vessels were eventually replaced by railways and roads. Students will form their own opinions and argue for or against designated modes of transportation.
Suggested Grades	Secondary
ACTIVITY	
Introduction	<p>After learning about the evolution of transportation in the Okanagan, have students compare and contrast the different modes through a class discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were some benefits of using boats to transport people and goods around the Okanagan Valley? What were the drawbacks? • What were some benefits of using trains to transport people and goods around the Okanagan Valley? What were the drawbacks? • Which do you think was the better mode of transportation? Why? • Why did the various CPR installations (boats and railways) impact the local economy?
Debate	<p>In this activity, students will be divided into three groups: sternwheeler stakeholders, railway stakeholders, and a local government. They will then engage in a debate on which mode of transportation is better and should be invested in by the local government.</p> <p>We suggest providing time for students in each group to research/discuss the benefits and drawbacks of the methods of transportation and prepare some arguments. Students in the local government group will act as judges of the debate by choosing which mode of transportation they will invest in. They can use their preparation time to research/discuss the political, economic, and cultural climate of the Okanagan in the 20th century.</p> <p>The debate itself can include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time for each stakeholder to present their argument • Time for the local government to ask each stakeholder group follow-up questions • Time for the opposing stakeholders to present challenges/rebuttals to the other (make sure students remain respectful) • Closing statements • Time for the local government to make a decision (it may be a good idea

	<p>to require the local government to provide the reasoning behind their decision)</p>
<p>Historical Context</p>	<p>The first steam-powered vessel on Okanagan Lake was the <i>Mary Victoria Greehow</i> in April of 1886. People living along Okanagan Lake depended on the steamboat service for transportation, but soon the CPR sternwheelers took over and a new transportation era began.</p> <p>At this time, the roads were undeveloped and the closest rail connection was at Okanagan Landing, so the townsfolk, farmers, and ranchers made use of these ships as their primary means for travel. The boat service offered special excursions, such as moonlight dance cruises, picnics, regattas, and farm fairs. To those homesteading on the side of a hill, watching the boat coming around the point was highlight of their daily lives. The arrival of these boats meant mail, supplies, and perhaps the chance to catch up with old friends. As one old-timer put it, it made them feel less isolated.</p> <p>The sternwheelers are still remembered for their fine meals and comfortable accommodation. The tables were set with gleaming silver, spotless linen, and the CPR's own monogrammed fine China and glass. There was always fresh, local fruit and vegetables, and a large menu with multiple courses.</p> <p>The S.S. Sicamous was one of three CPR sternwheelers connecting the communities along the shores of Okanagan Lake. First launched in 1914, the S.S. Sicamous ran for many years. It connected the rail lines in Vernon and Penticton to numerous wharfs, including Okanagan Centre. The S.S. Sicamous operated until 1935 and can now be found on the beach in Penticton as part of a heritage shipyard.</p> <p>Other sternwheelers carrying produce, dry goods, and passengers were the CPR's S.S. Aberdeen and S.S. Okanagan. There were also smaller boats, such as the S.S. Naramata, that also provided passenger service to other settlements around the lake.</p> <p>From 1800s to the 1930s, Okanagan Centre became a commercial hub in the area as it became a major shipping point for the sternwheelers. Its wharf shipped out local apples, pears, and even cattle north towards the railhead at Okanagan Landing where it would be distributed all over the world. The wharf also brought in mail, supplies, and new settlers.</p> <p>By 1910, Okanagan Centre had two hotels, the Grandview and the Westbury, a general merchant, and a hardware store. A school was opened in the newly built church, and construction was beginning for a packinghouse and cannery.</p> <p>In 1925, the Canadian National Railway connected Vernon to Kelowna through a rail line along Wood Lake. Gradually, the transporaton corridor moved from Okanagan Lake and Okanagan Centre to the valley in the East and Winfield. The railways and, eventually, roads would replace the sternwheelers.</p>

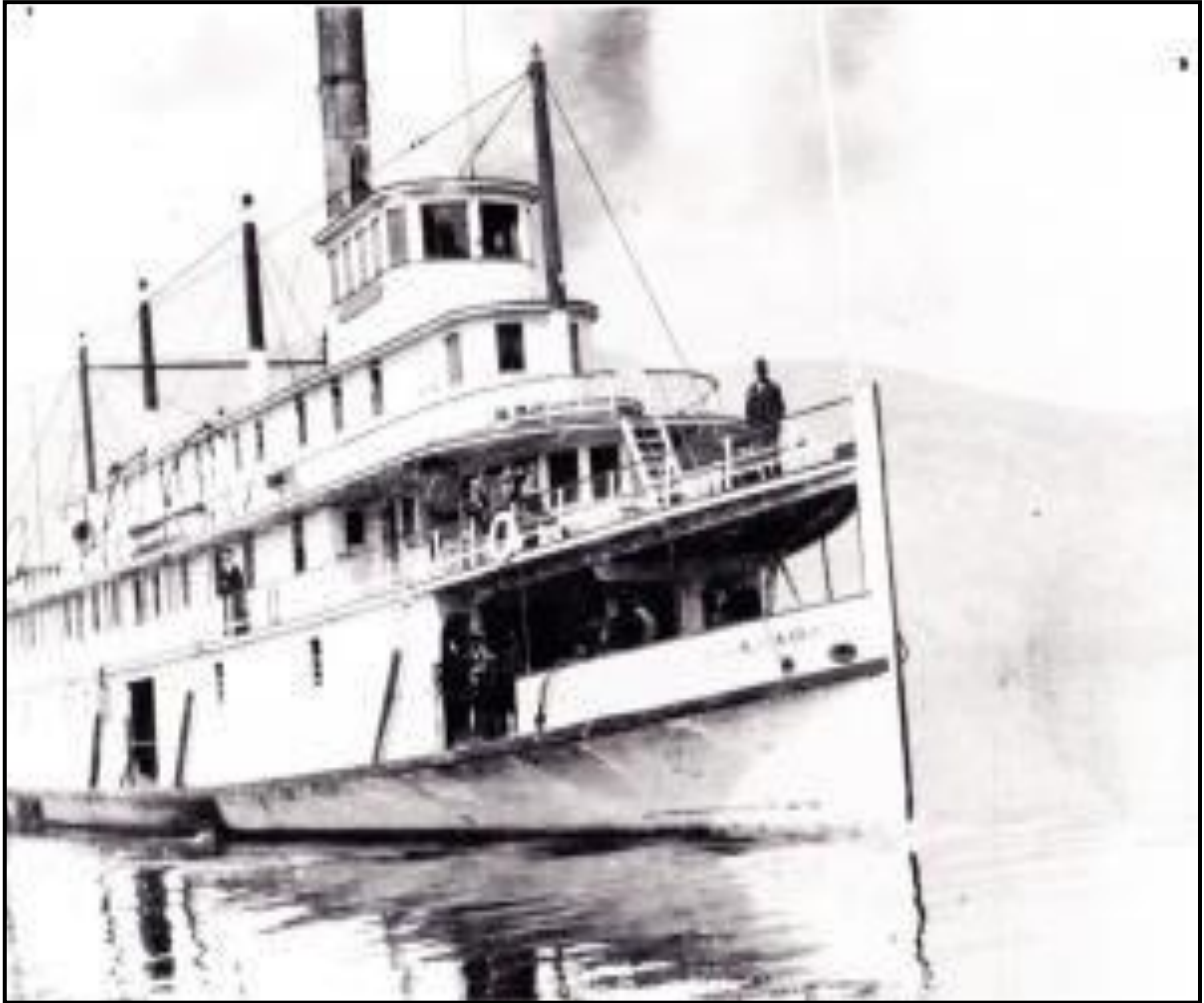
Further Inquiry

Field Trip Suggestions:

- Lake Country Museum and Archives
- *SS Sicamous* Museum/Heritage Site (Penticton, BC)

Suggested Resources:

- LCMA website resources: *Record of a Life*, by Northcote Henry Caesar, *Lakeboats of the Okanagan*, by R. Bruce Goett
- [SS Sicamous Society website](#)
- *“I Didn’t Enjoy that Meal”*, excerpt from *The Pioneer Years*, by Barry Broadfoot
- Okanagan Historical Society Reports: *Greenhow, Mary Victoria*, 5:5 6:220, *Capt. Thomas Dorland Shorts biography*, 29:145-149



SS Okanagan on Okanagan Lake. This ship was built at Okanagan Landing in 1907. (LCMA)



SS Sicamous travelling between the ice on Okanagan Lake, Winter.(LCMA)



The SS Sicamous at Okanagan Centre wharf, 1926. Mr. James Gleed, postmaster is waiting at the dock to pick up the mail. (LCMA)