

Our Heirlooms

This activity is from Historic Stewart Farm’s Immigrant Perspectives Edukit and explores tangible and intangible heritage. Students discover how immigrants to Surrey brought many things with them to help them in their new homes, but also things that were important to their families, friends, and the place they came from. Students explore how home and work life was (and is) influenced by cultural traditions, the local environment and the resources or technology available.

Curriculum Connections

This activity ties to several Big Ideas and Learning Standards from the Grade 5 and 6 Social Studies and Language Arts curriculums:

- Immigration and multiculturalism continue to shape Canadian society and identity (5)
- The urbanization and migration of people (6)
- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world (5, 6)
- Exploring and sharing multiple perspectives extends our thinking (6)

Background

The area known today as Surrey, has been home for people for thousands of years. Katzie, Kwantlen and Semiahmoo First Nations have historic and ongoing ties to this place. In the past two centuries many newcomers, from all around the world, have settled here. As people move to new homes, they carry with them the things they feel will help them settle in, and those that help maintain a connection to the place they came from. These things include stories, objects like jewelry or china, recipes, a certain way of doing something – like making soup or bread, or telling a story, or just a photograph and some memories of the people and places they left behind.

Tangible heritage is what usually comes to mind when we think about heirlooms – it includes things we can touch. Intangible heritage includes the things that we cannot hold in our hands, like the stories shared by elders, and the way we knead bread like our grandmother taught us.

All are considered heirlooms and contribute to our heritage - the cultural fabric of our lives.

Here are some examples of (tangible) heirlooms that have been shared with the Historic Stewart Farm:



Eyeglasses



Inkblotter



Spoon Rest

1. What are Heirlooms?

Share examples and an explanation of heirlooms with your students through your established communication pathway. Alternatively, complete the Heirloom Activity worksheet yourself and share with students as an example.

Discuss the difference between tangible and intangible heritage and how our culture and traditions include both.

2. Cultural fabric

Ask students to complete and return the Heirloom Activity worksheet, along with a photo of their family heirloom if possible.

Have a class discussion using your existing process. Did you find that there were any commonalities with the heirlooms shared by your students? Ask the students if they discovered anything surprising or unique.

Follow up this activity by compiling all the shared heirloom images into a mosaic “quilt” to share with the class.

3. Extension/follow up ideas

Write a paragraph about why heirlooms are important.

Imagine your family 100 years from now – what is something important to you now that they might still have then (a new family heirloom)? Write a story about it.

Are the heirlooms we hold on to today different from those people kept 100 years ago? Write a short paragraph explaining your answer.