The Red River of the North

Grade Level: 6-8

Classroom Time: 60 minutes

Materials:

Red River of the North
Red River Basin worksheet and key
Streamgages in the Red River of the North Basin in U.S. and Canada map

Objectives:

1. Given instruction and maps, students will identify the rivers of the Red River Basin.

Teacher’s introduction to the material:
The Red River Basin covers area in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Manitoba. Assist students to find the rivers within the Red River Basin.

Instruction:

1. Read the article on the Red River.
2. Answer the questions in the article.

Skills: Geography, Physical Science, Reading comprehension.

Vocabulary: Confluence, Meander.

Red River of the North

North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota all have rivers that drain into the Red River drainage basin. In North Dakota 22,820 square miles of waterways flow into the Red River, in Minnesota 17,806 square miles, and South Dakota 573 square miles.

1. Add the drainage basin mileage to discover the total area encompasses by the Red River drainage basin in the United States; _______square miles.

The Otter Tail and the Bois de Sioux rivers join at Wahpeton, North Dakota to form the Red River. Elevation only changes 350 feet from Wahpeton, North Dakota to the Canadian border. The Red River meanders north across the flat prairie traveling 394 river miles to reach Canada; a straight-line distance of 186 miles. The Red River joins the Assiniboine River in Winnipeg, Manitoba and drains into the Lake Winnipeg. Waters from Lake Winnipeg flow to the Hudson Bay making the Red River part of the Hudson Bay drainage system.

Looking at the Red River in the United States, there are 8 principal rivers from the west and 7 principal rivers from the east that drain into the Red River. (Don’t be confused. There are two rivers with the same name. A North Dakota river is named Wild Rice and a Minnesota river is also named Wild Rice.) In North Dakota find these 8 rivers within the Red River drainage basin: Wild Rice, Sheyenne, Elm, Goose, Turtle, Forest, Park and Pembina.

2. In Minnesota find these 7 rivers on the map: Wild Rice, Buffalo, Sandhill, Red Lake, Snake, Tamarac, and Two.

3. The Sheyenne River has two key streams entering it, the Maple River and the Rush River. Can you find them?

Before the confluence of the Pembina River and the Red River there is the confluence of the Tongue River and the Pembina River.

4. Find the Tongue River.

The Two River is a uniquely named stream in Minnesota. It is called the Two River because it enters the main river stem after its North Fork is joined by its South Fork.

5. Find the confluence of the North Fork and South Fork.

Tributaries of the Red River Valley were important during the fur trade era; as a source of beaver and muskrat pelts and as a means of canoe travel through the prairie region. Although the Red River Valley is a prairie landscape, trees are naturally found along waterways and provided voyageurs (fur traders) with wood for campfire fuel. Pretend you are on the Red Lake in Minnesota with a canoe full of fur pelts.

6. What route would you take to Pembina?