

SPRING BREAK

challenge #9

During Spring Break, we challenge you to get out and explore Maple Ridge with your families! Every day, we will share a local historic location for you to discover, along with some great discussion and learning points to engage with local history.

We encourage you to print off pages 2 & 3 for your kids (or save this document to a mobile device), and go on a new adventure every day during Spring Break.

While you're out and about, check out the local EARTH DAY initiative at www.mrearthday.ca with dozens of other challenges and local gems to visit! Be sure to snap a photo during your adventures and share it on social media with #emergeMR for a chance to win some great prizes!



**MAPLE RIDGE
MUSEUM**
& COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

Agriculture, Industry, & Ruskin



P06675 Japanese women and children picking strawberries (1941)

To the far east in Maple Ridge, just beside Hayward Lake and the Mission border, we find Ruskin. Ruskin, another historic townsite that now makes up our city, has been an official community since 1898. It is named after John Ruskin, one of the first residents of the cooperative society that was founded there. This group of people built a settlement, which included the Ruskin Saw Mill. After a few years, the cooperative group split up, but the sawmill continued business under E.H. Heaps. This mill and the neighbourhood lumber industry grew into a huge operation!

In addition to lumber though, agriculture was also a major part of the Ruskin life. The Japanese berry farmers, especially, were very prosperous in the area. Between the two World Wars, half of the farm land in Ruskin was owned by Japanese-Canadians. Did you know that, in the 1920s and 30s, about one third of the entire population of the Maple Ridge area was of Japanese descent?

The first Japanese settlers arrived in Maple Ridge in 1907 and most of them purchased farmland for berry farming. 100 years ago, it was difficult for any non-European immigrants to find work in the local businesses as most of the managers did not want to hire outside of their own culture. So, the Japanese started their own agriculture collectives to buy, work, and cultivate fertile land. In fact, in 1927, there were 220 farms in the district of Maple Ridge that were Japanese owned! The very first greenhouses in the area were also started by Japanese families, like Tokutaro Tsuyuki of the Albion community.

The townsite of Ruskin thrived with these farms, the lumber industry, and the introduction of a railroad station. It attracted many settlers from all over and, like the neighbouring communities, Ruskin had its own school and post office as well. By 1912, when the Stave Falls Dam and Powerhouse were built, many Ruskin residents were also employed in hydro industry. These jobs became even more abundant when the Ruskin Dam was built as well in 1929.

Even though the area of Ruskin may seem like a quiet rural community today, it was certainly a hub for industry, employment, and the convergence of many cultures in our city's history!

Today's Challenge



P00713: Stave Dam in the 1920s (before the Powerhouse was built)

Take a drive out to Ruskin with your family and explore this historic rural community. While it may seem quiet and remote today, imagine what life was like 100 years ago when these industries were booming! People coming and going to the lumber and power industries, farms in full operation, and all of the services that you would need in a small community.

One of these amenities was the RUSKIN HALL. Today, it is closed for only private functions, but it is quite a remarkable building to view! The history of this building started in 1916 when the one room schoolhouse was replaced by a larger building. Then, the original school was moved across the road to become the community hall. Unfortunately though, that building burnt down in 1922, but it was quickly re-built. The hall that you see today is 98 years old!

While you are out that way, take note of the cedar and lumber companies that still exist today along the banks of the river and up 287 street. Then, find your way to Ruskin Park or Stave Falls and enjoy a quiet walk through nature.

After you return home, visit this BC Hydro website for lots of great activities to learn more about hydro power in British Columbia. <https://schools.bchydro.com/activities>

Also, watch this short video to discover how specialized strawberry farming has become in Japan today and how growing berries continues to be an important part of their culture and industry!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pns6l6lhVaY>

For more at-home learning:

A short history of Ruskin

<https://mapleridgemuseum.org/ruskin/>

Tokutaro Tsuyuki (a local berry farmer in the early 1900s)

<https://mapleridgemuseum.org/tokutaro-tsuyuki-family/>

Stave Dam history

<https://mapleridgemuseum.org/stave-dam/>

More about Ruskin Hall

<https://www.whonnock.ca/ruskin/Hall.htm>

A news story about Ruskin Hall

<https://www.mapleridgenews.com/news/ruskin-community-hall-has-more-life-but-work-needed/>



photo: Ruskin Hall as it looks today

For a searchable online database of Maple Ridge history and lots of great learning resources, visit us here! <http://mapleridgemuseum.org/>