**Bucket Brigade**
Activity Time: 45 minutes

**Objectives:**
This activity aims to educate and empower students to become active guardians of their water supply. It is designed to demonstrate the importance of a water supply for historical fire fighting methods.

The students will be able to:
- Describe firefighting methods used by early settlers
- Compare methods used by early settlers and present-day firefighters

**Introduction:**
**Earliest Fires**
First Nations and pioneers in this area benefited from the use of fire in numerous ways including heating, resource management, and blacksmithing. They were also challenged often by the destructive force of fire. Earlier communities had no fire-fighting equipment and had to organize a bucket brigade as their only response; but alas this method was usually ineffective and often there were no neighbours nearby to help. A fire out of control meant almost certain destruction of property and even the loss of life. Care and prevention was the best protection from fire, as it still is today.

The first recorded fire in the Brampton area occurred in December, 1822, the McVean log home burned to the ground and only a few precious items were saved. If hand pumpers, or engines as they were called, can be thought of as heralding the advent of modern-age firefighting, then the purchase of a pumper for Brampton Village in 1853 was the humble beginning to Brampton's fire protection equipment. With the invention of the hand pumper, the process of fighting fires was greatly advanced, especially since one pump could do the work of 40 people on a bucket brigade. (City of Brampton Emergency Services [www.city.brampton.on.ca/fire](http://www.city.brampton.on.ca/fire))

The Peel Water Story book chronicles the local history that gave rise to modern fire hydrants and explains how fires were “great promoters of waterworks.” The first municipal water works in Peel County was in the County Town of Brampton, which in 1882 constructed a system of 30 fire hydrants spread about town.

**Materials:**
- buckets (approximately 10)
- access to water
- playhouse representative of burning building
- stop watch or other time piece
Procedure:
You will be helping the students to simulate historic fire fighting methods. You will explain to the students that water is important not only for our health but also for safety since many fires are extinguished with water.

There should be enough buckets for each pair of students. Everyone will get into formation for a “bucket brigade” to put out the fire. This activity illustrates the manual labour involved in firefighting before municipal water, fire hydrants, and trucks came to be used in Canada.

Point out a spot to the students that you have chosen to represent the building on fire (e.g. playhouse). When the leader yells “FIRE!!” start the clock and have the students rush to form a line from the “lake” to the “fire.” They will then start to hand the buckets along the line in order to move water from the “lake” to throw onto the fire.

To bring more drama to this activity set a timer and tell the students you have ten minutes before this building will burn down to the ground. You may want to empty the water into a container to see how much water they can move to “extinguish” the fictitious fire in the time allotted.

Debrief:
Recap by asking the students what they would do if they discovered a fire and ways to prevent fires. Visit the website for your local Fire Department:

http://www.city.brampton.on.ca/fire/education_centre.html
http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/fire
http://www.caledon.ca/townhall/departments/fire/index.asp

Source: Developed by Region of Peel’s, Environment, Transportation and Planning Services Department, Public Education & Outreach.

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