

HOW BC FARMERS GROW POTATOES



**You and your class are
growing potatoes in tubs in
school...**

**Let's find out how farmers
grow potatoes in their
fields...**



An aerial photograph showing a wide river delta with numerous small islands and channels. The surrounding land is divided into a patchwork of agricultural fields in various shades of green, brown, and yellow. A small town or village is visible along the riverbank, with buildings and roads. The sky is clear and blue.

The Soils of the Lower Fraser are Fertile...



...Excellent for growing food crops

**Farmers have been working the land
here since 1868...**





...and they are still farming it today.



The farmers' main crop is potatoes.

**They plant them in the
spring, when the
weather is beginning
to warm and the sun
spends longer in the
sky. First they plough
the soil.**



Markus Merkens



Then they disc the soil to break up the lumps and make it smooth for planting.

**The farmers plant seed potato tubers...
These sprout new shoots.**



Some farmers use jets of flame to kill weeds before the potatoes come up.



A photograph of a potato field. The soil is light-colored and heavily cracked, indicating dry conditions. Rows of green potato plants are visible, growing in the furrows between the cracked soil. The plants have several leaves and some small green buds are visible.

The potatoes start growing...

**The farmers have to hill the soil
around the plants.**



**Soon the plants in the field grow large. Some kinds
of potato plants will have flowers.**

(Warba potatoes do not flower)



A photograph of a field of white flowers, possibly daisies, with a large red ladybug in the foreground. The background is a bright, hazy sunset sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**The farmers monitor the
fields for insects that may
eat the leaves.**

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A large, rusty metal wheel of an irrigation system is the central focus, its spokes radiating outwards. The wheel is positioned over a field of potato plants that appear dry and stressed. The ground is parched and cracked. In the background, a line of farm buildings and trees is visible under a bright, clear sky. The overall scene conveys the challenges of farming in arid conditions.

**The summers are dry. Farmers
have to water the potatoes to
keep them alive.**

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In the late summer and early fall the farmers harvest their potatoes.



There are so many potatoes, they need trucks to get them out of the field.



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Farm workers ride in the harvester and sort the potatoes as they are pulled from the soil. Potatoes that are too small or too big to sell are thrown back on the field.





**The farmers grow over 50,000 tons
of potatoes per year**

After the potatoes are harvested the soil is bare. The farmer knows rain will come soon...





So he plants a cover crop to protect the soil from the rain.

The cover crop begins to grow...



A close-up photograph of a field of young, vibrant green grass. The grass is densely packed and growing in dark, rich soil. The perspective is from a low angle, looking across the field. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

**...And as it grows it covers the soil
like an umbrella, preventing the soil
from eroding.**

**As the rains come
in fall, so too do
the waterfowl...**



**...thousands of ducks, geese, and
swans.**





A vast flock of white birds, likely swans or geese, fills the sky. The birds are seen from below, showing their white plumage and dark wingtips. They are in various stages of flight, with wings spread, creating a dense, textured pattern against the clear blue background. The perspective is looking up, emphasizing the sheer number and height of the flock.

**They come from high in the Arctic,
where they spent the summer
hatching their young.**



Now they are hungry...



...and they eat the potatoes that were too small or big to sell, or were cut by the harvester...





**...and they eat the tops of the cover
crops that the farmers planted...**







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**The rains flood the fields. Shorebirds
come to the farm to find worms
and other invertebrates in the soil.**

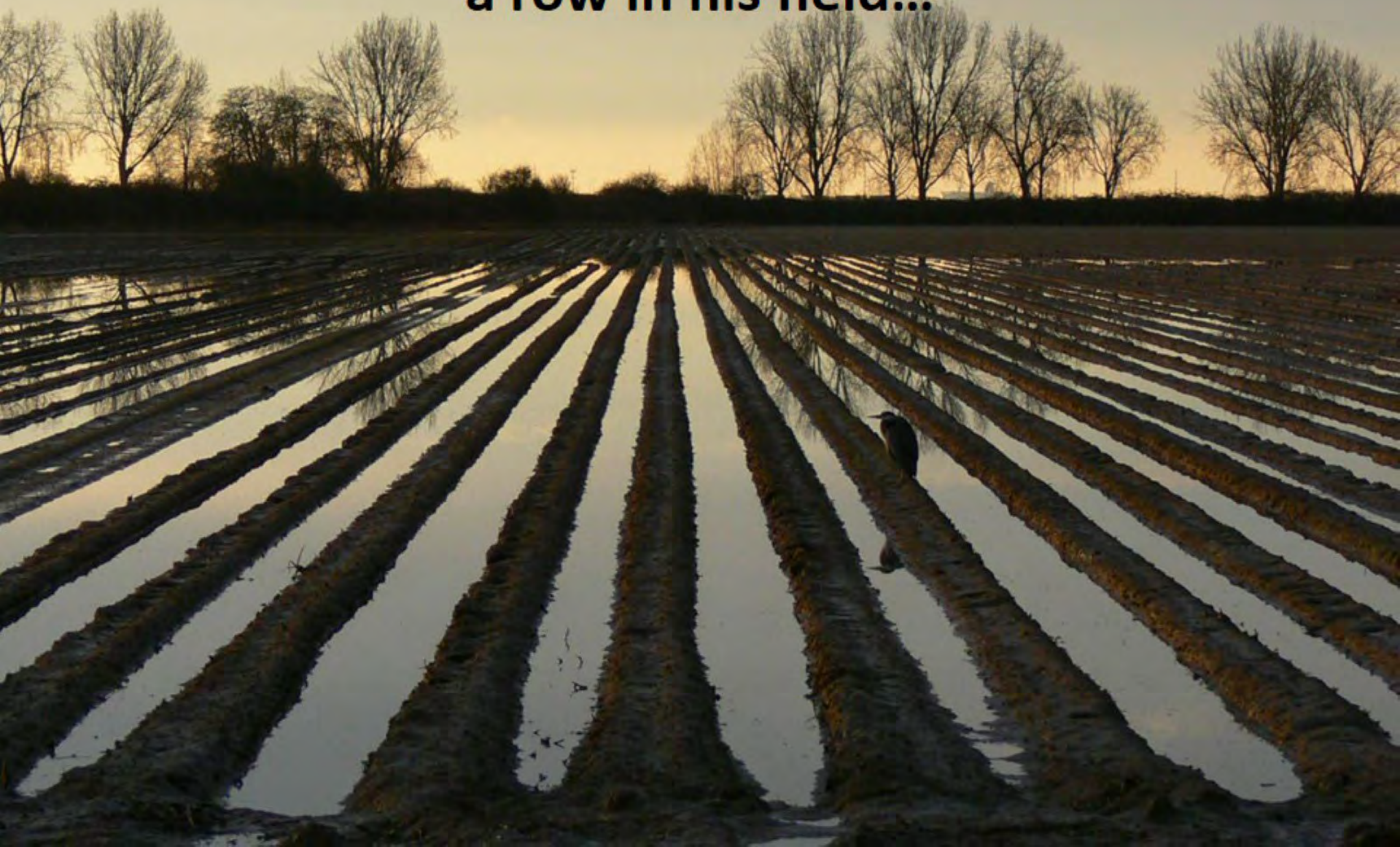




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**It is spring again, and the waterfowl
have flown north for the summer**

**This potato farmer knows he has
planted potatoes too many years in
a row in his field...**



...he knows the soil must rest...





**...to give the
earthworms time
to rebuild the
soil's structure...**

...so he plants grass and clover....

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**...and he leaves it, like a blanket for
the resting soil...**

...for up to 4 years...





**But not everything is
resting in the grass...**

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**...as the grass grows
throughout the summer, tiny
rodents called voles begin to
creep in to make a home...**



**...and
bumblebees
come to drink the
nectar of clover
flowers and eat
their pollen.**

**A Savannah Sparrow will
make its nest in the safety of
the grass...**



...and it's chicks will hatch in the
farmer's field.



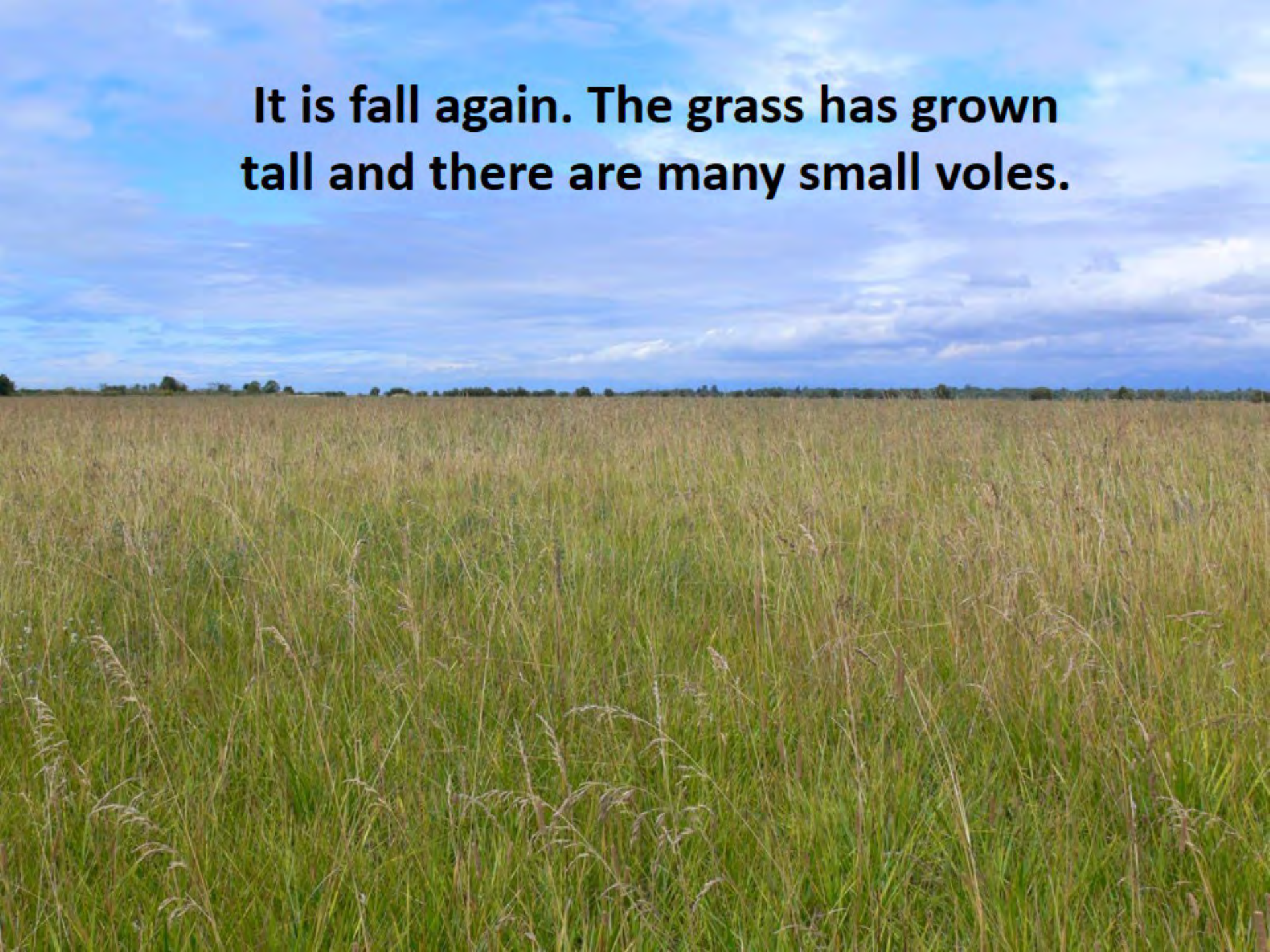
**Small shrews also raise their young in
the grasslands...**





...their young are very small.

It is fall again. The grass has grown tall and there are many small voles.





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**It is winter again.
Many different kinds
of raptors have come
to the farmer's field.
They are looking for
voles...**





**The Northern Harrier hunts by slowly
gliding on its outstretched wings. It
peers into the grass as it flies...**



**The Rough-legged
Hawk hovers in
place above the
grass, watching for
voles that scamper
in the underbrush..**

The Red-tailed Hawk perches on trees and posts, watching for voles.



A Great Egret stands in a field of tall, dry grass. The bird has a long, straight, yellowish-buff bill and a yellow eye. Its plumage is primarily greyish-brown with some lighter, downy feathers on its neck and chest. It is facing left, looking intently at something out of frame.

**Even the Heron waits in
the tall grass, hoping to
snap up a small mammal
in its bill.**

**It is dusk. And the
owls are flying.
The Short-eared
Owl has slept all
day in the
grassland...**



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...now he is awake and hunting for voles.

**It is night. The Barn Owl leaves the
farmers loft to hunt. It can hear very
well...**

**...and will bring voles back to its
chicks waiting in the barn.**



After four years of resting, the field is ready to be planted again. The potatoes are planted and the cycle starts all over again.

