

The Open Suitcase Series – Program Description

The History of Commercial Fishing in Prince Edward Island

This program explores the history of the second largest industry on Prince Edward Island and its origins, development, resources, and changes over time. Discover what is being fished on the Island, and learn the various techniques that have been developed over centuries.

Listed are descriptions of the topics covered and the contents of the suitcase. Also included is a list of suggested activities and questions for critical thinking which accompany the program.

The written material covers the following topics:

The Origins of Fishing

Learn the definition of fishing and the methods and tools developed and used by early civilizations.

Overview of Fishing in Prince Edward Island

Fishing plays an important role in the Prince Edward Island economy in both the commercial and recreational areas. Learn the difference between these two fishing industries and discover their economic impact.

The Beginning of the Commercial Fishery on Prince Edward Island

This program traces the commercial fishing industry, beginning with the Palaeo-Indian period, through the 1500s, 1600s, 1700s, 1800s, and 1900s. Discover which people were fishing on Island shores and find out about government incentives that were granted and treaties that were signed.

Fishing Vessels

Explore the different types of Island boats and fishing vessels that have been used over time. Learn of the change from sails to motors and other advancements that impacted the industry.

Species of Fish

Discover the different types of fish that have been caught on Island shores over the years including ground fish, pelagic fish, crustaceans, and shellfish. Learn about the different fishing techniques for the varying species, the value and economic impact of different fish, along with their popularity in export markets. The harvesting of Irish Moss is also included in this program.

Processing and Marketing

Learn the processes of salting and smoking as means of preservation. Explore distribution methods and how they changed over time.

Risks of being a Fisherman

Inclement weather, equipment and supply prices, and market prices, etc. are all risk factors that fishermen cannot control. Find out about some of the measures taken to overcome these obstacles.

Times are Changing

The commercial fishing industry still has its troubles today. Learn about some of the more recent challenges Island fishermen are facing including issues such as Polar Quick Freeze, competitive markets, transportation costs, etc.

Questions for Critical Thought and Ideas for Further Exploration

The Origins of Fishing

- What sorts of tools were available for early PEI fishermen? Were they effective and efficient?
- Over-fishing is not a new problem. If people know of its negative impact on the environment, why is it a continuing issue?

Overview of Fishing in Prince Edward Island

- Why is sport or recreational fishing popular on Prince Edward Island?
- If fishermen experience a difficult year, how are other Islanders affected?

The Beginning of the Fisheries on Prince Edward Island

- Why was the Island so full of numerous types of fish *before* the Europeans discovered America? What influence did the Europeans have?

Palaeo-Indian period

- Did the Palaeo-Indians have a healthy diet?
- Were the Palaeo-Indians innovative?

1500s

- Was fishing off the coast of P.E.I. and Newfoundland easy for the European fishermen who came all the way across the Atlantic to make their catch? What might be some of the challenges they faced?
- Why would the fishing stocks off the coasts of North America have been so plentiful prior to European discovery?

1600s

- Why did the French carry out both the green cod fishery and the dry cod fishery?
- Why would the Government of France be interested in financing companies to settle in Prince Edward Island? Why was the right to the fisheries so important?

1700s

- Why did the wealth from the fishery off the Island's shores never make it into the hands of Islanders? Was that fair? Who was responsible for this occurrence?
- What might be some implications or consequences from the exploitation of the fishery off the coast of the Island? Why did the British allow this to happen?

1800s

- Farming used to be seen as a higher class of work than fishing. Is this still true today? Why did that stereotype exist? What sorts of stereotypes exist today regarding different types of employment?
- Why were the Americans able to make good money at fishing while Islanders could not seem to do the same?
- What were the benefits of co-operatives? How did they help fish catchers and fish consumers?
- What did Islanders like about the inshore fishery? Was this a positive change in direction for the industry?
- How did the government's role in the fishing industry change throughout the 1800s? What were some of the causes that influenced the changes?

1900s

- Which major event of the 1900s would have had the most positive impact of the Island fishing industry? Which had the most negative impact?
- What might Island fishermen have thought of the government taking control of the industry? Did they find it helpful or hurtful?

Fishing Vessels

- Fishing vessels have advanced greatly over the years. What do you think was the most important change?
- What are some aspects of fishing vessels and equipment that have remained the same over the years?

Species of Fish – Ground Fish

- Why might these fish be referred to as “ground” fish?
- The method of fishing ground fish can be very harmful to the environment as can be over-fishing. However, many Island fishermen depend on this species for their livelihood. What might be some solutions to this problem? How can we protect the environment and allow fishermen to make a living?

Pelagic Fish

- Why might these fish be grouped under the title of “pelagic” fish?
- What might be the benefit of these fish swimming in large schools?
- If tuna fishing is a risky business on which to depend, why might it be so popular?

Crustaceans

- Why might the name “crustaceans” be given to this category of aquatic creatures?

Lobsters

- Why might the lobster have developed such an essential role in the fishing industry?
- Why is it desired by consumers?
- What factors have either a positive or negative influence on the lobster fishing industry?

Snow Crab

- The snow crab fishery is said to provide “...a good deal of economic and employment benefits and spin-offs.” What might some of these include?
- Why is it vital that a quota be in place?

Shellfish

- Why would early settlers have depended heavily on shellfish compared to other types of fish?

Oysters

- What motivates fishermen to get involved in oyster fishing? Has this motivation changed over time?
- Why is licensing an important protection and preservation initiative for the fishing industry?

Mussels

- Why might those involved in growing mussels be called “aqua culturists”?
- Why was the government eager to discover how to make mussels appealing to consumers?

Quahaugs

- Why were quahaugs never developed and marketed around the world like oysters?

Scallops

- Experimentation to grow bay scallops is currently taking place on the Island. Why would fishermen be interested in this development?

Clams

- Have you ever heard of the expression a “feed of clams”? What does this mean?
- When digging for clams, it is important to make sure the area is not contaminated. What might be the cause of some of the contamination?

Irish Moss

- The collecting of Irish moss is considered part of the fishing industry. Why might this be the case?
- Where does Irish moss come from? How is it gathered?

Processing and Marketing

- Which of the three processing methods, salting, smoking, or freezing, would be the most economical?
- Why did the selling of fresh fish door-to-door stop in the 1980s? How would this have affected fishermen? What about Island consumers?

The Risks of being a Fishermen

- Is becoming a fisherman worth all the risks?
- The price of a fishermen’s catch depends on market demand. Why might there be a higher demand some years and not other years?

Times are Changing

- How does the licensing method affect young fishermen trying to get into the business?
- The Island is a small producer in the world market. Why is this a disadvantage?

Suggestions for Activities

1. A lobster license has to be purchased from someone retiring from the industry. Before the restriction was put on the number of licenses available, a new fisherman could purchase a lobster license for approximately one hundred dollars. Find out the current price of a lobster license. Once you know the cost of your lobster license, find out how much it would cost to buy a fishing boat, equipment and traps. How would you finance your entry into the industry? At what cost would you be borrowing the money? What would your yearly payments be to the bank?

2. What Island species of fish do you think would be your best choice of entry into the industry?
3. Is there a way Islanders involved in the fishing industry could be adding more value to their catch before they bring it to the marketplace?
4. Invite a local fisherman into the classroom to talk about his career and his likes and dislikes of his choice of livelihood.
5. Bring an oyster into the classroom to determine its age. This is done by counting the number of rings in the outer shell.
6. Find out how you go about leasing an oyster bed. What is involved in stocking it with spat? Would this be a cheaper fishery to consider entering than the lobster or scallop fishery? How does the cost of entry compare to the return of money that can be made?
7. Take a walk along the shoreline and collect some wild mussels. Compare them with the cultured mussels. Maybe cook up a pot of cultured mussels.
8. See what you can discover about the nutritional value of mussels. Are they a good food to add to your diet?
9. Can you think of any species in Island waters that are not currently fished and marketed and could be successfully developed?
10. As you learned through this program, early Islanders sat back and permitted outsiders to grow rich off their natural resources. Have a class debate centered on the following question. Are current day Islanders more willing to develop their own resources or do they still allow others to make the money?
11. Listen to Stompin' Tom's song about gathering Irish Moss. It gives a good overview of the industry and tells a great deal about our history and living environment.
12. Investigate the following website to see maps of the snow crab fishing regions.
http://article.pubs.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/ppv/RPViewDoc?_handler_=HandleInitialGet&journal=cjfas&volume=60&calyLang=fra&articleFile=f03-076.pdf

Items in the suitcase

Besides the written material contained in the binder, a number of other materials have been gathered for the suitcase that will increase the student's understanding of the commercial fishing industry and how it has evolved over time.

Name That Fish: This matching game encourages students to identify different fish and sea creatures by matching their name to their picture. This game can be played in an association method, or as a memory challenge elimination game where the cards are

turned face down and flipped to find a matching pair. This game includes eighty colourful laminated cards and a convenient Answer key.

Fishing for Trivia: With fishing rod in hand, this game gives students the chance to fish for questions and test their knowledge about fish and the Island fishery. All questions are multiple-choice and are taken from program material. Game includes five fishing rods and thirty questions on brightly coloured laminated fish. Answer key provided.

Articles: The binder containing the program “The History of Commercial Fishing on Prince Edward Island” also contains articles from local newspapers related to the industry including a 1981 article on fishing growth limits, a 2002 article on the professionalization of the fishery, and one on the development of Polar Foods International. Also included are the 2008 Angling Summary and a deep-sea fishing info brochure; both of which provide info on identifying different types of fish.

Activities: A couple activities including a crossword puzzle and a fish facts section are included on top of the list of suggested activities in the written material. The East Coast Reader, a Nova Scotia Newspaper that worked alongside Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Habitat Protection and Sustainable Development Division, Maritimes Region, and the Nova Scotia Department of Education produced these activities in their March 2008 issue.

Photographs: The binder containing the program “The History of Commercial Fishing in Prince Edward Island” also contains photographs from the early to mid 1900s relating to the industry. Images of oyster barrels, fishing dories, lobster traps and canning factory, smelt shacks, etc. give students a look at some of the early days of the industry.

Photo CD: All of the photographs are also provided on a CD for easy classroom viewing.