

## **Early Immigration – Prince Edward Island**

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### **The purpose of the program**

The material that forms this program on the Canadian identity from the Prince Edward Island perspective is written to encompass the existence of the aboriginal people and the coming of the earliest settlers. Half of the immigration to the Island happened in the first fifty years of the 1800s. By the 1850s it had trickled to a small stream of individuals coming to seek a new life. By the end of the 1800s Island settlements grew to the point where there was outward migration to other lands such as California, and the New England states. Later migrations favored the big cities of Ontario and Quebec and now Alberta is the destination of choice. It does not cover immigration of different ethnic groups in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

### **The content of the program**

The materials that constitute this program are contained within a suitcase for easy storage and portability. This manual provides the core information. There are various supplementary resources, including books, CDs, and a PEI map. A complete listing is included at the end of the text.

### **Introduction:**

#### **Who are the people of Prince Edward Island?**

The people of this small Canadian province think of themselves primarily as "Islanders." Secondly they are Canadian, part of the fabric of the nation. With the exception of the Aboriginal People who have inhabited this land for centuries, the people who call this place home originally came from other countries.

#### **Why do people leave their place of origin and seek a new beginning?**

Throughout history the reasons have always been the same. People are seeking a better life for themselves and their families. The social and economic conditions are such that people cannot provide for their families or there may be war in their homeland, persecution, or discrimination. For some people the reason to leave home for another place is purely the desire to seek adventure and to see the world.

#### **How did early settlers arrive?**

The first settlers to North America came by sailing ships that took weeks to cross the Atlantic from Europe or the British Isles. Most had to survive close quarters, possible injury and disease, unpredictable weather conditions, and a general lack of comfort. They were a hardy group, our ancestors. Their ability to take risks and adapt to the hardships of pioneer life have shaped the geographic areas in which we live and the culture in which we thrive.

### **Where did they settle?**

Generally speaking, most of the early settlers built their homesteads near sheltered harbours or along tidal rivers. The water systems provided the settlers with a means of transportation and easy access to fish and shellfish, which was a staple food. As the coastlines became settled, later immigrants to the colony were forced inland. This was not necessarily a bad thing in that some of the best land for farming was in the land locked areas of the Island.

### **The Aboriginal People**

The Paleo-Indians came to the Maritime region following the caribou herds over 10,000 years ago. They are believed to be the first human presence on the Island and would have most likely come by a land bridge still connecting the Island to the mainland.

Archaeological sites on the north shore of the Island prove that over 3500 years ago the Shellfish people from the New England area were located there. They lived on a diet of shellfish, birds and small animals. What became of the Shellfish people is a mystery but one theory is that the women and children were assimilated by the Eastern Algonquin people who moved into the Maritimes over 2000 years ago.

The Eastern Algonquin occupied most of the eastern seaboard of North America. They separated into a number of tribes and over time became very different in their culture and language. The Mi'Kmaq made their home in the land areas that later became known as Eastern New Brunswick, Gaspé Peninsula, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

The Mi'Kmaq do not have a written language, which has made it very hard for historians to track their history. But many things are known through oral history passed down from generation to generation. The early Mi'Kmaq chose to live in small bands made up of one or more extended families. In summer they came together in large encampments of many small bands and settled along the water edges to enjoy a summer diet of shellfish and seafood and to escape the heavy infestations of summer insects found inland.

The Mi'Kmaq called what is now Prince Edward Island, **Abegweit** meaning “Cradled on the Waves” or **Minegoo** meaning “The Island.” The theory that has always been put forth by Island historians and archaeologists is that in the fall the Mi'Kmaq travelled by canoe back to the mainland and moved inland to hunt for bigger game such as deer, moose, and bear that would provide the winter food supply. However, Louis Pellissier states in writings that he did during the 1970s that the Island had good quantities of such wildlife prior to the arrival of the Europeans so it can't truly be determined if the Mi'Kmaq were only seasonal dwellers.

The Mi'Kmaq were an independent, self-sufficient nomadic people in the early days of their Maritime or Island history. Everything they needed was gathered from Mother Nature – tree poles and birch bark to construct their homes, stone and wood implements with which to hunt, construct, and cook, plants for food and medicine and animals for clothing and food. They were mainly meat eaters – seal, beaver, rabbit, porcupine,

moose, bear, deer, waterfowl, eggs, lobsters, clams, oysters, and eels. They gathered wild fruit, berries, wild vegetables, wild potato, wild herbs, nuts and maple sap. They made tea from twigs of yellow birch, maple, spruce, hemlock, and wild cherry trees. The Mi'Kmaq did not taste grain until they interacted with the Europeans.

The Mi'Kmaq civilization had its own system of governance and spirituality that served it well for centuries. The French converted the natives to the Roman Catholic faith. The life of the Mi'Kmaq was to quickly change when contact was made with the Europeans. By 1600 the French were fishing off the shores of the Island during the summer months. They were harvesting the abundant fishery resources to feed the hungry people of the homelands. The Europeans were eager to trade European goods for valuable animal furs coveted in Europe by the fashion industry.

Alcohol was one of the favourite bartering tools. The Mi'Kmaq were unfamiliar with "fire water" but quickly grew to love its taste and effect. By 1670, alcohol was creating serious breakdown in the tribal community. The Mi'Kmaq had gone from being a subsistence food gathering economy to a people harvesting skins for trade. This put considerable strain on the wildlife population. It would still be another fifty years before a European permanent settlement was established on the Island.

In 1720, the French established a settlement on Isle St. Jean. The Mi'Kmaq got along well with the French and the two became allies against the English who also had an interest in the Maritime region. Although the French considered themselves superior to the Mi'Kmaq, they were friendlier than the English, were willing to adopt aspects of the Mi'Kmaq way of life, and intermarried. Many of the French settlers fished and allowed the natives free range of the land unlike the British who later divided it into farms.

In the 1756 French census there were 309 Mi'Kmaq living on the Island, many of them at Lennox Island. In 1758 the natives lost their contact with the French settlers when approximately 5000 Acadians were expelled from the Island.

In 1763, the British won the Seven Years War with France and assumed possession of Isle St. John. They did not concern themselves with the Mi'Kmaq. There was no treaty signed and no land set aside for the natives. Seriously hard times began for the Mi'Kmaq population. The British establishment didn't want the natives roaming the Island and as more and more settlers came and started the process of clearing land and farming, the amount of wildlife available for hunting was seriously depleted. The British wanted the natives to settle down and encouraged them to farm but they didn't give them any secure land or tools to work with. It was a society in London established to promote the abolition of slavery and the protection of native people that purchased Lennox Island for the Mi'Kmaq.

By the time Prince Edward Island entered Canadian Confederation there were three reserves for the native population: Lennox Island at 1300 acres, Morell at 200 acres and Scotchfort at 140 acres. By 1900 most of the arable land on these reserves was being

farmed. The Mi'Kmaq also made baskets, oars, and axe handles that they marketed to Island farmers, fishermen and tradespersons.

From the 1930s to the 1960s the Department of Indian Affairs again took away much of the self-sufficiency of the Mi'Kmaq with their government policies of dealing with First Nations. In the 1970s the Mi'Kmaq began the long and difficult task of taking back their culture, language, and self-sufficiency. They have made tremendous strides forward in the past three decades.

### **French Settlers**

Jacques Cartier of France was the first European to sight the Island. He landed July 1, 1534. Samuel de Champlain named it Isle St. Jean in 1603. By the beginning of the 1600s French fishermen were fishing the coastal waters.

The French established a colony in North America as early as 1604. Sieur de Monts brought 120 men to a small island in the Bay of Fundy. There they spent a miserable winter in which thirty of the men lost their lives to scurvy, a vitamin C deficiency that can cause death. With the coming of spring, the survivors moved to Port Royal, today known as Annapolis, Nova Scotia and it became the first permanent settlement of Europeans north of the Gulf of Mexico. The area was named Acadia and the French settlers became known as Acadians.

Life would never be easy or peaceful for the people of Acadia. Both France and Britain wanted control of these new lands for the wealth of resources in fisheries, forests, furs, and agricultural lands. War or the threat of it between the two nations was a constant reality for the settlers as areas of land were handed back and forth.

The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 gave Acadia and Newfoundland to the British. Isle Royale, now Cape Breton, and Isle St. Jean went to the French. Some of the displaced Acadians from Nova Scotia came to Isle St. Jean but left by 1716 in fear that the unprotected Island would be attacked by the British.

The French built the Fortress of Louisburg on Isle Royale to guard their interests along the St. Lawrence from the British. As the terrain of Isle Royale was not the best for raising food to feed the people of Louisburg, the French government decided to establish settlers on the arable land of Isle St. Jean to grow the crops required.

It was 1720 before the French made a permanent settlement on Isle St. Jean. A small settlement was begun at Port La Joie, later named Fort Amherst, in which the settlers were mainly colonists from France joined by some Acadians. However, when things went poorly many of the colonists returned to France.

The French crown, over the period of its ownership of the Island, gave different people the opportunity to bring out settlers from France and start business ventures. Over time settlements spread out across the Island but they were always under threat from the British and from nature itself. One of the hardest things faced by the settlers was the

mice plagues that destroyed whole crops. The first plague of mice was in 1738. A plague of locusts in 1749 destroyed the grain crops. Despite these hardships the settlers continued with determination to make a life for themselves in the new land. Daily survival occupied the majority of their time. There was land to clear, crops to plant, gardens to tend, harvests to preserve, fish to be caught, candles to be made, wool to be spun and knitted and weaved. Entertainment consisted of the songs, music and dances of home. Religion played an important part in the lives of the Acadians and the early settlers were fortunate that a priest was often sent with a group of colonists. The meals of the early French settlers were very simple. They had fish and seafood, wild meat, domestic meat, vegetables, berries and wild fruit but the staple of their diet was wheaten bread, and soup made of dried peas.

Slowly the French population on the Island grew. The census of 1731 showed a population of 347 people. By 1734 there were 396, and by the next year 573. The growth came mainly from births in the colony and more Acadians arriving. By 1752 the population was 2,223. In 1755 after the British deported the Acadians from Nova Scotia many of the refugees fled to Isle St. Jean. By 1758, the French population of the Island stood at 4500 to 4700, but time was running out for them.

The Seven Years War between France and Britain broke out in 1756. In 1758, the Fortress of Louisburg fell and the British laid claim to Isle Royale and Isle St. Jean. Four ships were sent from Louisburg to round up the Island Acadians for deportation to France. Their farms and homes were burnt at the hands of the British soldiers. Those who had warning were able to escape by boat to New Brunswick and Quebec.

In the thirty-eight years since the French had first established settlement on the Island they had cleared 12,000 acres of land and settled 25 villages. Approximately thirty Acadian families who lived on the north side of the Island, in and around Malpeque, were able to evade the British soldiers. When Samuel Holland arrived on the Island to begin the survey for the British government he found they had settled in Rustico Bay, Fortune Cove and near St. Eleanors. They were destitute and were considered by the British to be prisoners. It is from these families that the current population of Acadians on Prince Edward Island is descended.

From 1758 to 1772, the British colonial authorities ignored the needs of the Acadians. They are said to have survived only through hard work and will power. Their plight changed in 1772 with the arrival of a group of Scottish Highland settlers. They had with them a priest named Father James MacDonald who spoke French. He began to attend to the Acadians.

As the numbers in these thirty families began to grow they moved out across the Island starting settlements at Tignish, Cascumpeque, Mont Carmel, Egmont Bay, and Miscouche. Many became tenant farmers for the absentee British landowners. They were often forced to settle on inferior farmland and many of them pursued the fisheries to make a living. The Acadians were a community that hung together and built strong support systems through their schools and churches.

Roman Catholics on Prince Edward Island were given the right to vote in 1830. Since that time, Acadians have used the power of the vote, education, hard work, and determination to become a recognized powerhouse within Island society.

It is a remarkable story for the Acadian settlers of Prince Edward Island.

### **English Settlers**

When the British assumed ownership of the Island in 1758 they changed the name to St. John Island. Forty years later, it was re-named Prince Edward Island. They sent Captain Samuel Holland, who had fought with General Wolfe at Quebec, to survey the land. Holland divided the Island into sixty-seven parcels of approximately twenty thousand acres each. He established three counties – Prince, Queens and Kings. He surveyed a town in each county to become the county capital.

In 1767, the King of England held a lottery and gave away to noble and military men, to whom the crown owed a favour, sixty-five of the sixty-seven “lots” with the stipulation that the lot owner must settle on his land, within ten years, one foreign European Protestant settler for every two hundred acres. The settlers would pay rent to the landowner who in turn would pay a quit-rent or tax for the establishment and running of a colonial government. The landowner was also to promote the fisheries. Holland was awarded Lot 28 for his service to the King.

This decision by the crown stunted the population and economic growth of the Island for decades to come. Many of the lot owners had no interest in investing money in their lots or in bringing out settlers. To them the land in the far off colony was merely for financial speculation.

In the early days of the new colony the British government did not encourage its own people to settle here. It needed them as a workforce at home and to fill the positions in the British army and navy for the continual fighting of wars.

British citizens who were already tenant farmers at home were not, for the most part, interested in coming to an unsettled colony to be nothing more than a tenant once again. Those who were willing to leave Britain were looking to go to the North American colonies where free land, or land at low prices was available.

The War of Independence in the United States between 1775 and 1783 slowed the tide of immigration from Britain to the New World.

The Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815 and with soldiers no longer needed to fight the war against Napoleon there was a surplus of workers in Britain causing high unemployment. As well, British landowners started to reorganize their land structure making bigger farms that would be more profitable. This displaced a number of small tenant farmers. Immigration became a solution. Most of the British settlers who came to the Island did so between 1815 and 1854.

Approximately 1200 English came to the Island during the ten years following the end of the Napoleonic Wars. But British immigration slowed down again in the 1820s as the British economy improved for a short period of time. The number of British leaving home peaked again in the early 1830s as a result of economic, social and political dislocation in England. The Industrial Revolution was well underway and many hand workers were displaced by the introduction of machinery. Immigration remained strong through the 1840s and 1850s and then dwindled to basically nothing.

The majority of English who came to the province were small farmers, labourers, weavers, and skilled tradesmen. Some came through the timber trade between the Island and Britain and through the shipbuilding industry as skilled tradesmen.

In the 1800s the English were a distant third in the population makeup of Prince Edward Island. They were only one-fifth of the population behind the Scottish and Irish.

Prince Edward Island was a British colony that looked to countries other than the motherland to provide the hardy settlers. Yet British rule and law was the order of the day.

### **Scottish Settlers**

The primary emigration to the British colony of Prince Edward Island was from Scotland. People from that country, mainly from the Highlands, outnumbered all other ethnic groups combined. The Scottish came because of the changes that were happening in their homeland.

By the time Prince Edward Island was being settled as a British colony, Scotland already had history centuries old. The Scots were Celts or Gaels, one of the two branches of the modern Celtic language tree that originated in Ireland before moving into the Isle of Man and Scotland. They became very powerful in Scotland when the Roman Empire fell. The Celts spoke Gaelic of which there were the three variations of Irish, Manx, and Scottish. The Celts had written language long before the English. They had a structured society that centred on the Gaelic language.

Germanic tribes moved into the lowlands of England and were powerful enough to force the Gaelic Celts up into the Highlands of Scotland. For years there were uprisings and war between the two groups. The last Jacobite Rising of 1745 resulted in the Highland Celts losing their independence to the British and Gaelic being replaced with English as the language of business and government. The term Jacobite is Latin for James and refers to King James VII of Scotland and James II of England of the Stuart line who was overthrown as king in favour of William of Orange and his wife Mary. The Stuart line had support in the Highlands and a number of uprisings were staged from 1700 to 1745 to put a Stuart back on the throne. When the last uprising failed in 1745, the British decided to make sure it didn't happen again by rounding up Jacobite supporters and imprisoning or killing them, dismantling the clan system, taking estates, and outlawing weapons, tartans and pipes.

Over the next number of decades the Highland Scots faced many stresses. Their culture was under siege and Roman Catholic Scots were being pressured to convert to the Protestant faith. Landowners were increasing rents for the tenants while other landowners cleared their properties of people in order to raise sheep. By the 1770s the Highland Scots began to leave for the North American colonies in large numbers.

The Scots had great military expertise. There had always been a military wing to the clan system, which was the underlying social unit in the Scottish Highlands made up of related families who followed the same hereditary chieftain. The British raised regiments of soldiers from Scotland to fight in the Seven Years War that ended in 1763. Many of these men decided to settle in the colonies and were given land grants.

The Island landowners, some of who were Scottish, looked to Scotland for willing families to settle in the new colony. The Scottish settlers to the Island came from every corner of the Highlands and the Scottish Islands based on the clan ties. They came from the Clanranald territories in the west central Highlands, the Outer Hebrides, Isle of Skye, Isle of Argyll, Perthshire in the eastern Highlands, and Sutherland. Extended families emigrated and stayed together when they reached the Island. The first large settlements of Scots came in 1770. The ones from Argyll, Scotland settled in the Malpeque area and the Clanranald group went to the eastern end of the Island on the north shore from Tracadie to East Point and on the south side up to Cardigan. They also went to Indian River, Grand River and the Brae in Prince County. Perhaps the best-known group to come to the Island was the Selkirk settlers from the Isle of Skye who settled in southern Queens County and King's County in 1803.

The majority of the Scottish immigration was over by the mid 1800s. There was a great deal of chain migration. This means that the first ones to come and settle encouraged other members of their family and friends to follow. This went on for generations.

The Highland Scots were shepherders at home. They didn't have the farming expertise that the Lowland Scots and English possessed. Many of them turned to the sea when they arrived in the new settlement. For the first century their diet consisted mainly of potatoes, oatmeal, salt cod, pickled herring, pork, buckwheat flour and tea. They later added pearl barley from which Scotch broth was made.

The Scots settled on the Island in close-knit communities and for an extensive period of time were able to hold onto their Gaelic culture. Many of the early settlers spoke only Gaelic. For a time the Island was more Gaelic than Scotland itself. The well-established colleges of piping were closed out in Scotland by the late 1700s. Con Douly, the piper to the MacLean family and his brother Eachan, who normally would have taught in Scotland came to the Island. [The Island songwriter Allan Rankin has written a song about his journey.] The early settlers brought with them harping which had died out in Scotland in the middle of the 1700s. They also brought the violin and their dances. When groups got together for work bees they would sing the Gaelic songs of home and in the evening play the tunes and dance the dances of the Highlands.

As in Scotland, the Gaelic culture came under pressure from the language of the public system – English. The Scots went to school where only English was spoken. Business, both government and private, was conducted in English so anyone who wanted to increase his chances of a successful career had to speak English. Gaelic was spoken at home and among neighbours but was not successfully passed down through the generations. The music and dance almost died out in the 1950s and 60s but through the efforts of some was revived and has made a strong comeback. Today some people are learning to speak Gaelic and keep the language alive.

Prince Edward Island is the most Scottish province in Canada.

### **Irish Settlers**

The second group of Celtic immigrants to come to the Island was the Irish. Between 1763 and 1880, ten thousand Irish came to the colony. By 1850 they made up one quarter of the Island population.

The Irish came to the colony in several different influxes. The first settlers, called the colonial pioneers, arrived between 1767 and 1810. They were the English speaking Irish Protestants brought to the Island to establish British law, government and institutions in the new colony. The first Governor, Walter Patterson, who arrived in 1769, was Irish, along with the government officials, businessmen and Anglican clergy. Governor Patterson and his officials brought black slaves with them to the colony. Other settlers who were part of the colonial pioneers were farmers, fishermen, carpenters and tradesmen. The Irish also served in the garrison on the Island and many stayed on after their term was up. Most of the early Irish settled in the Charlottetown area.

When the lottery for the Island land was conducted, four of the lots went to Irishmen. By 1783, the number of lots owned by Irishmen had increased to twenty-one. When they went to Ireland looking for settlers they incurred the anger of the Irish landowners who didn't want to lose their tenant farmers. Many Irish were not interested in coming to Prince Edward Island to the same situation they would be leaving at home. The land situation made it almost impossible to move the Island ahead.

The second influx of Irish was called the southeastern emigrants. They came between 1810 and 1835. The third group called the Monaghan settlers arrived between 1830 and 1850. The Irish tended to pay their own way out to the colony rather than being sponsored by a lot owner. They had a healthy skepticism of various forms of authority that they encountered. They were independent seeking more independence not unlike their fellow immigrants out from Scotland.

Contrary to popular belief most Irish who settled on the Island came before the great Irish potato famines of 1845 to 1848. The Irish forced from their country by the famines went up the St. Lawrence River to Upper and Lower Canada and to the United States.

One uniquely defined group of Irish to come to Prince Edward Island in the early to mid-1800s was popularly known as the ‘two-boaters’ meaning they had taken one vessel to Newfoundland, stayed there for a duration ranging from days to years, then for any number of reasons moved on to Prince Edward Island. Trade between the two colonies was robust and facilitated this kind of migration. They tended to be mainly from southeastern Ireland with a few from the southwest and in leaving Newfoundland they left behind a colony that was very Irish and remains so today.

On Prince Edward Island the ‘two-boaters’ settled in areas as diverse as Charlottetown, Kinkora, St Peters, Tignish, Burton and Kensington to name a few.

In the very early years prior to 1800 some observers considered Charlottetown to be mostly Irish with a goodly percentage of them being soldiers – and drunken ones at that! It was a centre of about 70 houses and apparently something of a garrison town. One observer even went as far as to call these Irish the “dregs of Newfoundland and Ireland” accusing them of being here only because they had been expelled from their own country. It was a familiar refrain of a few observers and unfortunately it was a stereotype in North America oft repeated and undeserved.

The Irish that came to PEI came from all of the 32 counties of Ireland with the greatest numbers coming out in the 1830s from County Monaghan. Except for the County Monaghan settlers most arrived as individuals or as very small family-connected and family encouraged immigrants. They settled such areas as Park Corner, Irishtown, Sea View, Foxley River, Hope River, Emerald, Kinkora, Indian River, Kildare, Shamrock – and the list goes on. They spread right across the Island.

In religious affiliation the Irish were all Protestant in the beginning years, but later influxes were entirely Roman Catholic making Irish immigration to the Island a far higher percentage Roman Catholic than in either neighbouring province of New Brunswick or Nova Scotia.

It was not an easy adjustment for the Irish settlers. They had to live in a much harsher climate than they had experienced in Ireland and the inability to own their own land kept them in poverty and insecurity. For those who arrived between 1830 and 1850 the better, more accessible lands had been claimed already so they often ended up in the hills further inland. But they persisted. They cleared land, built log houses with sod on the roofs, dealt with the wild animals and the homesickness for Ireland to build strong Island communities that still remember and celebrate their Irish roots.

### **Loyalists Settlers**

The American War of Independence brought eight hundred Loyalist families to the Island of St. John between 1783 and 1795. These were well-established families in the United States who remained loyal to the King of England when the war started for American Independence. Many of them were civilians, while others were members of the military troops that had been disbanded. In most cases they gave up everything they owned when they headed north to the colonies still friendly and loyal to Britain.

Most of the refugees had been born in America, but their racial origin was varied. Approximately five hundred of the eight hundred Loyalists that came were of Irish descent. Many of them were from other parts of the British Isles, while others had originally migrated from countries such as Germany, France, and Holland.

The Loyalists were treated much differently than the other immigrants to Prince Edward Island. Many of them received large land grants as payment for their loyalty. The Island landowners offered to give up 100,000 acres to the Loyalists in return for the end or reduction of their quit-rents. The landowners had been making these mandatory payments, as a form of tax, to the British Crown for the running of the colonial government. This put the Loyalists at an advantage over the tenant farmers but it was still not easy for them. They struggled for decades to receive clear title to the lands they cleared, fenced, and farmed.

The Loyalists, once established, like the English and the Lowland Scots, had good nutrition, as they knew how to farm. They had dairy products, beef, mutton, fowl, fruit and vegetables in their diet.

The settlement of the Loyalists proved to be a positive influence on the Island economy and culture. They were well educated and experienced in business and in agriculture. They became some of the most prominent families on the Island. The families settled mainly in Lots 49 and 50 and at Pownal, along Malpeque Bay, and in the Bedeque and Summerside areas.

Their descendants can be found all across Prince Edward Island today.

### **Syrian/Lebanese Settlers**

The Syrian/Lebanese immigrants found their way to Prince Edward Island in the 1880s. This was a result of border changes in Lebanon due to numerous military occupations.

Their story is another example of chain migration. The family is the central force for Lebanese people and extended families and entire villages came to Canada between the 1880s and World War One. This time frame was the beginning of a massive out migration of the people of Lebanon to other parts of the world. There are more Lebanese in other countries of the world than in Lebanon itself.

Lebanon is an ancient civilization associated with the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks, French, Syrians, Palestinians and the Israelis. Lebanon has experienced long years of occupation by such civilizations. The people are a mixed population of the Middle East and religion is a very sensitive matter. The country is made up of Christians, Muslims, and people of the Druze religion.

There were three main reasons for the start of the massive outward migration in the 1880s. Lebanese Christians, the majority who left the country, were facing oppression and persecution by the Turks. As well, there was an overpopulation of people in a small

homeland, limiting the available opportunities to improve life. Large numbers of Lebanese left together, keeping their families intact.

Those who found their way to Prince Edward Island faced numerous adjustments. The climate of the Island was very different from their homeland as was the language and culture. French was often the second language of the Lebanese so many of them were comfortable in French areas of the province. Many of the Lebanese who settled on the Island adopted an English spelling of their name or took an English name.

The Lebanese who came to Prince Edward Island were very hard working people and were especially successful in the field of business. Many of the young men and some women became packmen or pack peddlers. They travelled the rural parts of the Island selling goods from their packs. They called it “going to the country.” The rural people were especially glad to see them, as they didn’t often get into Charlottetown or Summerside. The peddlers started stores in the major centres once they had the resources to do so. While some started businesses in French speaking areas such as Tignish, the majority centered themselves in Charlottetown.

The Lebanese today make up less than one percent of the Island population.

### **Chinese Settlers**

The Chinese who came to Canada were discriminated against in a manner that no other ethnic group experienced. From 1858 to 1885 they were allowed free entry into the country because they provided cheap, disposable labour for the building of the national railway. However, once the railway was completed the Chinese needed to compete with other settlers for jobs in a time when the economy was slowing down. British Columbia was the first destination for Chinese immigrants and there was a strong protest in the province about the number of Chinese being allowed into the country. From 1885 to 1923 the Federal government imposed a heavy head tax on the Chinese that greatly reduced the numbers. Total exclusion started in 1923.

Most of the Chinese who came were single males hoping to make enough money to both live on and support a family back home. They were not allowed to bring family with them and with the price of the head tax spent many years repaying loans taken to get themselves into the country. They were limited to menial jobs so many worked as laundrymen and operated restaurants. Back in China, laundry work was considered women’s work, so this must have been painful for the men.

The Chinese who came to Prince Edward Island arrived via other Canadian locations such as Montreal and Halifax.

The first known Chinese person on the Island was a woman who arrived in 1850 and lived here until her death in 1888. However, the circumstances of Louisa Maria Esperanza Hooper were very different than the average Chinese immigrant. Mrs. Hooper was half Chinese, half Portuguese and was likely born in Macao, southern coastal China. According to Hung-Min Chiang in his book, *Chinese Islanders, Making a Home in the*

*New World*, she married William J. P. Hooper and they came to Prince Edward Island where they settled in Morell. Hooper was elected to the Island House of Assembly four times starting in 1870.

The second Chinese person known to come to Prince Edward Island arrived in 1891 from Halifax with a plan to open a hand laundry. This was a time of outward migration on Prince Edward Island as the economy was poor and jobs were hard to find. He was not welcomed. Within days there was a letter to a Charlottetown newspaper stating that this man would take business away from local girls and if he was encouraged through support of his laundry within a month there would be a dozen Chinese in Charlottetown. Another Chinese man joined him but, with no business support from the community, they were forced to leave after three months.

Nearly all Chinese males who came to the Island in the early days eventually left, as it was a struggle to make a living, learn a new language and cultural ways, and face the loneliness of having no Chinese women to marry. But come and go they did and they left a footprint on the Island that is explained in Hung-Min Chiang's book, *Chinese Islanders, Making a Home in the New World*.

### **Black Settlers**

The early black settlers to Prince Edward Island did not come as willing migrants looking for new opportunity and a better life; rather they came as the slaves of the British and Irish ruling class and the United Empire Loyalists. They were of African descent and considered by white Europeans to be inferior.

When France occupied the Island, slavery was allowed under French law, but there is no record of any slaves being brought to the colony.

The British and Irish ruling class brought slaves to the Island in the 1780s, as did the United Empire Loyalists. The Government of the Island wanted to attract the Loyalists escaping from the United States to the northern British colonies and was willing to allow slaves to be brought as well. The number of slaves on the Island is believed to never have been overly high but the reality of their servitude is still a part of history that has never been widely known.

Slavery was officially abolished in the colony in 1825, but most slaves had been given their freedom between the years of 1790 and 1810 due to social and religious pressure being put on their owners.

The release from slavery brought another type of bondage to the blacks of Prince Edward Island – poverty and discrimination in the work place and in society. Blacks, who were the most visible minority on the Island, were refused employment other than menial jobs. Many had to find ways to stay alive that often brought them into contact with the law. They basically had no rights.

While some free blacks moved out across the province, the majority settled together in Charlottetown in a poor neighbourhood known as “The Bog.” It was located in the area now occupied by the provincial government buildings and along Rochford Street. The Bog community was broken up starting round 1900 for redevelopment of the area.

There was no in-migration of blacks to the province in the 1800s so many of the Island blacks intermarried with whites. Like all other ethnic groups on the Island the black community experienced heavy out-migration in the years between 1871 and 1921. There was more opportunity to be had in places like the New England States.

It is only in recent years that attention has been turned to the black settlers of Prince Edward Island. Historian Jim Hornby wrote a book titled *Black Islanders* in 1991.

### **Other Early Immigrants**

People of other nations did come to Prince Edward Island in the early days but not in any great numbers. There are only bits and pieces of information available.

#### **German**

Douglas Baldwin in his book *Abegweit: Land of Red Soil* relates the story of Captain Nicholas Henckell who came from Germany in 1782, with the British Army. When he was discharged he was given land in Vernon River. His family changed their name to Jenkins to experience less prejudice. A note of interest is that during World War I, German Prisoners of War were brought to the Island to work as labourers on the ferry terminal site at Borden. Many of them requested to stay following the war but were refused permission.

#### **Italian**

An Italian named Luigi Riani who was born in 1840, in Pisa, Italy came to Prince Edward Island via Newfoundland. He settled in the western end of the province and was involved in the retail business. He changed the family name to Rennie.

#### **Dutch**

The first Dutch person on Prince Edward Island was Samuel Holland who was sent in 1765 to survey the land for the British. In the 1881 census of the colony there were two hundred ninety-two people of Dutch descent in the province. A number of them were United Empire Loyalists. The majority of the Dutch settlers currently living in the province have come since the end of World War II.

### **Questions for Critical Thought and Ideas for Further Exploration**

#### **Introduction**

- To what sort of conditions did immigrants have to adapt? What was the land like when the first settlers arrived?
- How does transportation compare today to the early methods used by the first newcomers to Prince Edward Island?

### **The Aboriginal People**

- As different groups started to settle on the Island, how did the Aboriginal people respond? How would you respond if you were in their shoes?
- What are some of the more recent struggles experienced by the Aboriginal people of Prince Edward Island?

### **French Settlers**

- Are Acadians still found in areas they first settled?
- What would it have been like to be an Acadian who escaped the deportation? Think of the fear of being caught, the loneliness of friends and family being gone, and the task of starting over.

### **English Settlers**

- Why did many English have little interest in settling the lands they had been given?
- The War of Independence slowed English immigration while the Napoleonic Wars increased immigration. What made the difference between the two situations?

### **Scottish Settlers**

- Why was it important for Scottish settlers to bring their music, dance, Gaelic language, etc. with them?
- In the 1950s and 60s, the Scottish music and dance almost died out. Why did people work so hard to keep it alive?
- The Scottish had great military expertise. How would this have helped them as they made new lives for themselves in Prince Edward Island?

### **Irish Settlers**

- Why would Charlottetown have been a desirable location for early Irish settlers?
- Are there still many Irish descendants in the areas settled by the 'two-boaters'?

### **Loyalist Settlers**

- The Loyalists were well educated. Why would this have been of such value to them as they settled on the Island?
- Why was it so important for the Loyalists to come to British North America? They had to leave their homes and in most cases give up everything they owned in order to leave. Was it worth their trouble to leave?

### **Syrian/Lebanese Settlers**

- As a newcomer to the Island, do you feel it would have been more difficult for the Syrian/Lebanese settlers to adjust to the climate or to the language?
- The Syrian/Lebanese population is less than one percent of the Island population. How would being a member of such a minority have an effect on their lives?

### **Chinese Settlers**

- If the Chinese were so poorly treated in their new home, why would they have chosen to immigrate?
- How would families back in China have felt knowing the experience their loved one was facing?
- What were the Chinese hoping for when they came to the Island? What was their experience like? What would their experience be like today?

### **Black Settlers**

- Would it have been more difficult to be a black settler under slavery, or free but living with basically no rights and in poverty, facing discrimination?
- Why was it common for those living in poverty to find living quarters in the same areas of a city such as blacks did in Charlottetown?

### **Other Early Immigrants**

- Can you think of other groups that immigrated to the Island that were not mentioned?
- Why did these other groups come in only small numbers?

### **Suggestions for Activities**

1. Look through the book titled *Geographical Names of Prince Edward Island* to discover how communities got their names. Notice the list on page six of names transferred from the British Isles. Can you find them on the PEI highway map?
2. Listen to the Allan Rankin song “When John Joe Went to the Vatican.” Can you tell his ancestry from the song? For what is he asking?
3. Listen to the Allan Rankin song “New Branches.” It tells the story of leaving home. Have a class discussion on what it must have been like for people to know they would never again see the land of their birth or the family members they left behind
4. Listen to the Allan Rankin song “Con-dulligh’s leaving the Highlands.” This young man and his brother who would have taught piping in their homeland were forced by

circumstances to come to Prince Edward Island. What does the song tell you about the role of a Highland piper?

5. Talk to relatives and find out how and why your family came to P.E.I.
6. Listen to the Patricia Murray CD as she sings in Gaelic. Read about some Islanders who have spoken the language under “Informant Biographies” on the Island Studies website [http://www.upei.ca/islandstudies/rep\\_mk\\_1.htm#list](http://www.upei.ca/islandstudies/rep_mk_1.htm#list)
7. Using George Arsenault’s book, *Acadian Legends, Folktales, and Songs from Prince Edward Island* note how stories were used to record history as well as to entertain. Is there someone in the class who could sing one of the Acadian songs for everyone to hear?
8. Use the Lebanese cookbook in the kit to make a simple recipe for the class to try. Hummus (page 9) is a popular dish on the Island. The next time you visit Charlottetown perhaps your family could dine at a Lebanese restaurant and try a Lebanese dish.
9. Pretend you are a Chinese man who has come to Prince Edward Island late in the 1800s. Write a letter home to your family about the welcome you received. Then jump ahead to the present and write what you think the welcome is today.
10. Black Islanders suffered stereotyping. What is stereotyping? Is it still common today? How does it hurt us as a society?
11. The Irish Genealogy CD included in the kit will guide those of Irish descent on researching their genealogy. What does the word genealogy mean?
12. Using the Lake Map of 1863 found at <http://www.islandregister.com/lakem/1863maps.html> select a lot and identify some of the names of early settlers by racial origin.
13. Check out websites to see who is currently coming to Prince Edward Island.

### **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 students’ understanding of the nature of immigration to the Island and other factors which played a role in shaping Canadian identity.

**Geographical Names of Prince Edward Island:** Written by Alan Rayburn, this book is helpful in discovering how different communities got their names.

**Black Islanders:** Written by Jim Hornby, this book is a part of the Island Studies series. It outlines the history of blacks and their experience on the Island including the issue of slavery, which is rarely addressed.

**Chinese Islanders, Making a Home in the New World:** Written by Hung-Min Chiang, this book examines the footprints left by Chinese immigrants on Island soil. It discusses the struggles they faced, the impact they made, and the style of life they lived.

**Acadian Legends, Folktales and Songs from Prince Edward Island:** Written by George Arsenault, this book provides wonderful examples of history that was recorded through story and song. The Acadian people used oral history as a form of entertainment that could easily be passed down from generation to generation.

**Deportation of the Prince Edward Island Acadians:** Written by Earle Lockerby, this book looks precisely at the experience of Island Acadians leading up to, including, and following the deportation.

**The Old Man Told Us:** Written by Ruth Holmes Whitehead, this book includes excerpts of Mi'kmaw History from 1500-1950 including both oral and written histories. Personal accounts and stories are included which make the book an easy and enjoyable read.

**A Stream out of Lebanon:** Written by David Weale, this book is a part of the Island Studies series that tells of the lives of Syrian/Lebanese emigrants to Prince Edward Island. Though the number of Lebanese on the Island is small, their rich culture is still very present and is outlined in this book along with numerous photos.

**Lebanese Cooking:** Written by Nita Mehta, this cookbook includes recipes for appetizers, vegetables, meats, and desserts along with beautiful colourful images. These recipes give a taste of Lebanese culture through cuisine.

**The Loyalists of the Island of St. John or Prince Edward Island:** An excerpt from a workshop presentation by Orlo Jones. This excerpt provides a great overview of the Loyalists immigration to Prince Edward Island – why they came and what they experienced.

**Irish Genealogy CD:** Compiled by Island genealogist Bill Glen, this CD will aid students in discovering what the word genealogy means. It is a great tool in assisting students with Irish descent in researching their own genealogy.

**Patricia Murray CD:** Singing in Gaelic, this CD entitled *Welcome to Prince Edward Island* is a wonderful example of a language once spoken by a number of Islanders.

**Alan Rankin CD:** Rankin, an Island songwriter and singer, sings a number of songs which tell stories of people leaving their countries for new lands, starting new lives or recounting their old ones.

**Prince Edward Island Highway Map:** There are three copies of a recent map of P.E.I. enclosed. These are helpful in identifying the regions where different immigrants to the Island settled.

### **Resources used to compile this information**

[Note: Some of the books used to compile this material may be out of print. Check your local library.]

*Abegweit was Their Home; A Sketch of the First Inhabitants of Prince Edward Island.*  
Published by Micmac Village Encampment and Crafts Limited Rocky Point, PEI

*Abegweit: Land of Red Soil*, by Douglas Baldwin. Ragweed Press, 1985

*A Stream Out of Lebanon: An Introduction to the Coming of Syrian/Lebanese Emigrants to Prince Edward Island*, by David Weale. Institute of Island Studies, 1988

*Black Islanders*, by Jim Hornby. Institute of Island Studies, 1991

*Canada's Smallest Province; a History of Prince Edward Island*, edited by F.W.P. Bolger. Nimbus Publishing, 1991

*Chinese Islanders; Making a Home in the New World*, by Hung-Min Chiang. Institute of Island Studies, 2006

*Exiles and Islanders; The Irish Settlers of Prince Edward Island*, by Brendan O'Grady. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004

*A Very Fine Class of Immigrants; Prince Edward Island's Scottish Pioneers 1770-1850*, by Lucille H. Campey. Natural Heritage Books, 2001

*Exploring Island History*, edited by Harry Baglole. Ragweed Press 1977

*Goin' to the Corner; A History of Elmsdale, Elmsdale West, and Brockton; Volume I - The Community*, by Elmsdale & Area Historical Society, Crescent Isle Publishers, 2007

*An Island Refuge; Loyalists and Disbanded Troops on the Island of Saint John*, edited by Orlo Jones. Abegweit Branch of the United Empire Loyalist Assoc., 1983

*The Story of Old Abegweit; A Sketch of Prince Edward Island History*, by George Edward Hart. Unknown publisher, circa 1937

*Three Centuries and the Island*, by Andrew Hill Clark. University of Toronto Press, 1959

*We Came, We Saw, We Stayed – The Dutch in Prince Edward Island*, by Brigitte VanVliet, 1982.

“Early Acadians” by J. Elmer Blanchard. Article in *Historic Highlights – Prince Edward Island*. P.E.I. Historical Society, 1955

“English Immigration” by Bruce S. Elliott. *Island Magazine* No.40, Fall/Winter 1996

### **World Wide Web suggestions**

Island Register <http://www.islandregister.com>

Prince Edward Island Genealogical Society <http://www.peigs.ca>

Immigrants to Canada: PEI c1821 <http://ist.uwaterloo.ca/~marj/genealogy/voyages/pei.html>

Institute of Island Studies: Gaelic in Prince Edward Island  
[http://www.upei.ca/islandstudies/rep\\_mk\\_1.htm](http://www.upei.ca/islandstudies/rep_mk_1.htm)

Images Canada: <http://www.imagescanada.ca/r1-116-e.php?trail=trail14>

Our Roots: <http://www.ourroots.ca/e/>