

The Open Suitcase Series - Program Description

Early Immigration –Prince Edward Island

This program reveals the development of Prince Edward Island identity through the exploration of the life of the aboriginal people who first inhabited the Island as well as through the immigration of the earliest settlers. Prince Edward Island experienced much change during the first half of the 19th century as a great influx of immigrants made the Island their home. The nature of immigration varied for different groups and individuals; however, all came seeking a better life. Social and economic factors often played the major role when people decided to leave their homeland. Other reasons for migration were war, persecution, discrimination, or simply the desire for adventure.

This written material provides a description of the topics covered and the contents of the suitcase. Also included is a complete list of suggested activities and questions for critical thinking which accompany the program.

The written material covers the following topics:

The Aboriginal People

What did the Mi'Kmaq call Prince Edward Island? What was their relationship with the French and English settlers? How did their way of life change with the arrival of immigrants to the Island?

French Settlers

Who was the first European to sight Prince Edward Island? What did the French name the Island and in what areas did they settle? What were some of the challenges the French settlers, known as Acadians, faced?

English Settlers

The British made changes to the Island that are still in place today. How did the English settlers impact the Island and those who had settled prior to their arrival? What were some of the factors that influenced British immigration to Prince Edward Island?

Scottish Settlers

Prince Edward Island is the most Scottish province in Canada. What challenges were the Scots facing in their homeland that led them to leave for North America? What is chain migration and how did it impact the Island? When settlers arrived, they brought with them a number of traditions. How has the Scottish culture impacted PEI?

Irish Settlers

The arrival of Irish immigrants to Prince Edward Island occurred in a number of influxes due to challenging socio-economic conditions in Ireland. In what areas did the Irish tend to settle? What adjustments did they have to make to their lifestyle in order to survive?

Loyalist Settlers

Who are Loyalists and what influenced them to settle in British North America? How were Loyalists treated on Prince Edward Island? Where did most of them settle?

Syrian/Lebanese Settlers

Learn the three main reasons that influenced the out migration of the Syrian/Lebanese people to places such as Prince Edward Island. What sort of employment did they take up when they arrived? Where did the majority of them establish their roots?

Chinese Settlers

Chinese immigrants were not favorably treated in Canada and the Island was no exception. Although they were welcomed for their labour, they were not shown any respect. In what sort of jobs did the Chinese find themselves? Did many stay on Prince Edward Island?

Black Settlers

Did black settlers first arrive in search of a better life? What challenges did they face on the Island both before and after the abolition of slavery? Why did Prince Edward Island experience an out-migration of black people for a number of years?

Other Early immigrants

People of various descents such as German, Italian and Dutch also came to Prince Edward Island but in smaller numbers. What circumstances led them to choose migration? Were they able to establish prosperous lives?

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

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.