

A Learning and Teaching Resource

Introduction

Cape Breton Island is known for its rich heritage and diverse cultures. Dating back to the early days of settlement in the 17th century, European settlers – predominantly French and British at that time – arrived in Cape Breton in search of new opportunities. For the next three centuries, immigration patterns increased steadily, building a community of cultures that to this day still prides itself on diversity and understanding of others.

In the late 1800's and continuing into the first part of the twentieth century, people of Eastern and Central European descent ventured across the Atlantic to settle in Cape Breton, where work in the coal and steel industries was flourishing. Opportunities were plentiful, and despite adverse living and working conditions, they began to carve out a new life, usually never returning to their native lands. Most often, they settled in small communities, surrounded by others of their own culture, and preserved traditions and a way of life that they had experienced in their homeland.

In industrial Cape Breton, they settled in Whitney Pier, a community of Sydney, as well as the towns and villages of North Sydney, Sydney Mines, New Waterford, Dominion, Glace Bay and Donkin. They settled and survived by building on their rich cultural traditions of music, dance and faith to create community spirit and endure hardships that far surpassed what they had left in their homelands. Many of these communities of culture still survive today although the industries have all disappeared. Each culture lives through the descendants of the early immigrants, and the sense of pride remains as strong as it was more than one hundred years ago.

This web portal – *diversitycapebreton.ca* – tells the stories of four of these cultural groups: Croatian, Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian. Through digital archives, their stories, songs, and other artifacts are preserved for us to learn about the past and to celebrate our rich diversity. This *Learning and Teaching Resource* is intended for teachers and students to explore and understand the rich heritage of this part of Atlantic Canada. It is rooted in the current Nova Scotia curricula as well as Foundation Documents of CAMET (Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training).

For students, *diversitycapebreton.ca* provides support for learning in many content areas, including Social Studies, Language Arts, and Arts Education. This resource describes three xx-hour modules containing suggestions for learning and teaching at various levels:

- Grade 3 – 5: *Immigrating to Cape Breton Island*
- Grade 6 – 8: *Life in a New Land*
- Grade 9 – 12: *Immigration Past, Present and Future*

In each module, curriculum outcomes are identified, additional resources are referenced, and suggestions for assessment are presented. Using an inquiry-based learning approach, students will discover and explore the objects presented for each cultural group, and will make direct application to topics covered in other disciplines.

Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum (1999) states:

...social studies, more than any other curriculum area, is vital to developing citizenship...The social studies curriculum promotes students' growth as individuals and as citizens of Canada and of an increasingly interdependent world. It provides opportunities for students to explore multiple approaches that may be used to analyse and interpret their own world and the world of others... The knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed through the social studies curriculum empower students to be informed, responsible citizens of Canada and the world and, through participation in the democratic process, improve society. (p. 1)

While the modules provide a multidisciplinary approach through which students examine issues that affect their lives, it is primarily through social studies and the arts that they see the life and times of cultural groups who immigrated to Cape Breton in the early 1900s.

The modules have been developed according to specific grade levels: elementary, middle and high school. However, it is suggested that teachers read through all three to get a sense of the scope of what is possible in the classroom. This may encourage some to take a module from a different grade level and make adaptations to suit the age of the students. In other words, the module becomes a starting point for further inquiry that leads to deeper meaning on a particular topic. Expectations and desired outcomes will vary in this case, and additional classroom resources to support the learning may be different depending on the grade level.

Each module is intended to be approximately 10 hours in length, but this does not limit the teacher in extending the learning beyond the suggested times. Teachers should feel free to branch out into other areas of curriculum, and thus identify Essential Learning Outcomes or Specific Curriculum Outcomes according to the discipline that is integrated.

Above all, it is important that students experience the joy that comes with working through an integrated unit, making connections to other disciplines, taking ownership for their own work, and seeing life through personal and authentic learning simulations.

For each of the three modules that follow, students will discover and learn about the rich cultural traditions of the Central and Eastern European immigrants who settled in Whitney Pier. Because this is a living repository for archival materials, suggestions for learning, teaching and assessment to support the Croatian, Jewish, Polish, and Ukrainian cultures will be added as they are developed over time. In the meantime, many of the activities suggested can be applied to the other cultural groups with ease and minimal adjustment.

Module 1: *Immigrating to Cape Breton Island*

Grades 3, 4, 5

Background

This module is intended to provide opportunities for students to become aware of the importance of hearing stories of our past as they help us interpret how life has evolved over time. Learning about others and their past develops skills in social interaction, and teaches about differences which in turn can help anticipate the behaviour of others.

The Grade 5 Social Studies text, *Investigating Past Stories* identifies many different sources of information that help us understand the past:

- visiting museums, public archives or historic sites to examine artifacts
- interviewing people to collect oral histories
- viewing documentaries, videos and podcasts
- listening to family and community stories
- reading books, magazine articles, or blogs

Investigating Past Stories continues:

We can learn about the past by examining the physical objects people made and used, such as tools, household goods, and clothing. Physical objects written or illustrated by people who lived in the past are also sources of information, such as diaries, journals, logs, paintings, and drawings. Understanding history involves asking questions, researching, and interpreting the information we find. (p. 3)

diversity.ca is a collection of objects from the Croatian, Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian Community Archives. The original items are housed in various locations in industrial Cape Breton, including the Beaton Institute, the Whitney Pier Museum, churches in Whitney Pier, and private collections. This collection has now been amalgamated through digitization on one web portal and is accessible to the world. By examining the objects in each collection we come to know about the life of these cultural groups during the twentieth century, and through the objects in the collections we understand more about the contributions they made to the community, and the preservation of strong cultural traditions that exist today.

Module Design

This module is intended to support the Social Studies, Language Arts and Arts Education curricula. It is designed as a 10 hour unit that will lead students through a series of activities to develop in them an understanding of the importance of collections, their interpretation, and the stories they tell. It develops into a culminating class project in which students will experience the joy of building a collection, recording it, and mounting it in an exhibit. This could become an excellent project for the annual Heritage Fair, or a

celebration of an important event or anniversary in the community, province or country, such as Canada's sesquicentennial in 2017.

As teacher, it is important to use your imagination to create a learning environment that supports inquiry-based learning, and to allow the students to make decisions and guide the projects from start to finish. As teacher, you act as a facilitator of the learning by ensuring that students are focused and experiencing success in achieving the outcomes. The joy of learning comes through discovering and exploration.

Curriculum Outcomes

Through the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET), foundation documents in Social Studies, English Language Arts and Arts Education have been created to guide curriculum development in the Atlantic Provinces. General Curriculum Outcomes (GCOs) are general statements of the things that students should know and be able to do upon graduation, and through a building process, they achieve these outcomes through sequential learning experiences from P to 12. In this module, the suggestions for learning and teaching touch upon the following General Curriculum Outcomes:

Social Studies

GCO: Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the interdependent relationship among individuals, societies, and the environment – locally, nationally, and globally – and the implications for a sustainable future.

GCO: Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the interactions among peoples, places and the environment.

GCO: Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the past and how it affects the present and the future.

English Language Arts

GCO: Students will speak and listen to explore, extend, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.

GCO: Students will be able to communicate information and ideas effectively and clearly, and to respond personally and critically.

GCO: Students will be able to interact with sensitivity and respect, considering the situation, audience and purpose.

GCO: Students will be able to select, read and view with understanding a range of literature, information, media, and visual texts.

GCO: Students will be able to interpret, select and combine information, using a variety of strategies, resources and technologies.

GCO: Students will be able to respond personally to a range of texts.

GCO: Students will be able to create texts collaboratively and independently, using a variety of forms for a range of audiences and purposes.

Arts Education

GCO: Students will be expected to demonstrate critical awareness of and value for the role of the arts in creating and reflecting culture.

GCO: Students will be expected to respect the contributions to the arts of individuals and cultural groups in local and global contexts, and value the arts as a record of human experience.

GCO: Students will be expected to examine the relationship among the arts, societies, and environments.

Suggestions for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Lesson 1 (1hour)

Begin the module with a discussion about the words “collect” and “collection”. Show how one word is contained in the second word. One is a verb or action word, the other a noun or naming word. Ask guiding questions to stimulate the discussion:

- What does it mean to collect things?
- Why do people collect things?
- Does anyone in the class collect something?
- Where do you find objects to add to the collection?
- Does your mother or father or guardian have a collection? If so, what is it? (spoons, old tools, postcards, baseball cards, artwork, CDs, old records, family photos, antique cars, etc.)
- What is a souvenir? It is the French word for remembrance or memory. Where do we get souvenirs? Has anyone collected or received a souvenir?
- What about rain? Is that a collection? Some people collect rain to water plants. Can it be considered a collection?

Those who immigrate to a new land often take with them items that have significance in their lives. These could include photos of family and friends who they have left behind, religious artifacts, mementos of people or things in their homeland, etc. The objects contained in the *diversitycapebreton.ca* archives are a collection of things for four cultural groups: Croatian, Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian.

- As a class, do an inventory of the cultural groups represented by the students. You will, no doubt, discover several cultures represented in the class. Some students may have been born in another country and have immigrated here. Others will know about parents or grandparents who have immigrated. Create a chart to demonstrate the cultural diversity in the room.
- Discuss with the students if there are objects in their homes that have originated in another country and that would have been brought to Canada either by them or by a relative. Encourage them to elaborate or speculate as to why the object was brought here. Is it displayed in a prominent place in their home, or is it put away for safe keeping?
- In groups of 4 or 5, have students explore the Ukrainian Community Archive on the web site, *diversitycapebreton.ca*, and have them list five things that they learned in their exploration. Suggest that it could be about a particular person, family life in their homeland, arriving in a new land, things they did to celebrate an occasion, photos, audio recordings, etc. After sufficient time, have each group share their findings.

Assessment

For an assignment, have students ask a parent, grandparent, a relative, or a neighbour if they have a collection of items that represents their cultural heritage. If they do, have them describe the collection and tell how it got started. See if there is a story behind it. For example, a student's father is a second generation Ukrainian Canadian. His parents immigrated to Canada in the early 1900s and brought with them some mementos of their country, and these are contained in a special box that sits on a shelf in their family room. Over the years, relatives from the Ukraine sent post cards and letters or small gifts and these were also placed in the box. The contents tell stories of a cultural heritage that is strong and important to that family.

Lesson 2 (1 hour)

Next day, have the students share what they have learned from their search and the collections that they discovered. Did they learn any new stories from their conversations?

Project the photo of a suitcase and contents. This can be found by following the following tabs:

- ❖ Interactive Resources (found on the home page)
 - Curated Exhibits
 - Mnohaya'lita Exhibit
 - Immigration

Discuss with the students what they see in the photo. Explain that this particular suitcase belonged to a Ukrainian gentleman who immigrated to Canada in the early 1900's to work in the coal mines of Glace Bay. From their observations, can they identify the objects contained in the suitcase? Point out that it contains old photos, letters from friends in the old country as well as immigrant friends who moved to other parts of Canada, pay stubs from his current job, and other memorabilia.

In groups of 4, have the students discuss the contents and speculate on how the gentleman was feeling as he added items to the box. After sufficient time, have them share with the class what they discussed. Look for key points that they may mention, such as:

- He was lonely and afraid when he arrived, and kept his possessions close to him because they reminded him of home.
- He wanted to keep his valuables in one place so he would not lose them, and so when he received letters from the old country, he would place them in the box.
- Over time, as he settled into his new way of life, he might not have added as much to the collection, but he always kept it in a safe place because it told important stories of his life in a new land.
- He wanted to pass the collection on to his children so future generations would understand their heritage, and that is why he took such good care of it.
- When he met other Ukrainian immigrants, he could show them his collection and they could compare stories.

Tips for Teaching Success

As teacher it is important to preview all materials before you use them as a teaching tool. It is your responsibility to make a determination on what is suitable and what is not suitable, depending on the age of the students. For example, in this slide there is a photo in the suitcase of a baby in the coffin, and this may disturb some students. All items can be enlarged by clicking on them, so you may avoid this photo by not drawing attention to it.

Still in their small groups, have them imagine that they are siblings from a family that is moving to a new country. Ask them to make a list of what they will take with them to remind them of the life they are leaving behind. Remind them that they cannot take very much, as they are limited in what they can bring into the country.

Give each group a large piece of art paper (18" x 24") and markers. Ask them to draw a container (suitcase, chest, box) that they will use to hold their collection. Have each student in the group draw the items that they will take with them to their new land.

Lesson 3 (1 hour)

Play for the class the interview with Kaz Sawitzki. To find this interview, follow the following tabs:

- ❖ Collections (found on the home page)
 - Ukrainians
 - Browse the Ukrainian collection
 - Arriving in Canada

In this interview, Kaz Sawitzki tells about his parents immigrating to Canada. Lead a class discussion to learn more about his story by asking guiding questions such as:

- How did they travel to Canada?
- Where did they arrive when they first landed on Canadian soil?
- Why do you think they came to Canada?
- Did his mother and father travel together? Why do you think this is so?
- Where in Canada did they eventually settle?
- His mother was detained for two weeks when they landed in Halifax. Why?
- How did they get to Whitney Pier in Cape Breton?

Today, many immigrants experience the same challenges when they first arrive in Canada. It is quite likely that there is at least one immigrant family in your school community. If so, invite a student of an immigrant family to the class to tell about his/her experiences. Encourage the student to wear a native costume and bring some things that they would have taken from their home country. In advance, have the students think about questions they will ask based on what they have learned so far from this web portal, *diversitycapebreton.ca*.

Assessment

Following the presentation, have the class write in their journals their reflection of what the immigrant student told them in the presentation.

Lesson 4 and 5 (2 hours)

Show the students a map of Cape Breton and highlight that in the early 1900s, a significant number of Ukrainian and other immigrants settled in Whitney Pier, a neighbourhood in Sydney, to work in the steel plant, and in Glace Bay because there was work in the coal mines. Today, both industries have disappeared but many of the descendents of these early immigrants still live in these communities. With the class, take the virtual walking tour of Whitney pier by following the following tabs:

- ❖ Interactive Resources (found on the home page)
 - Curated Exhibits
 - Walking Tour

Following the virtual walking tour, discuss what they saw. Be sure to highlight the key points, including:

- the cultures represented
- the close proximity to each other of these cultural buildings
- the types of activities they might expect to see and hear in this neighbourhood
- the music of the Ukrainians heard in the audio clip, as well as the instruments they used
- the importance of the church, and the fact that each cultural group had its own church and hall

Point out that these are only four cultures of the many that existed in Whitney Pier at the time, many of which can still be found there, including Italian, Caribbean, and Hungarian. As a class, discuss the cultures represented in their school. You may wish to put the students in pairs and have each pair of students visit a classroom in the school to find out more precisely what cultures are represented. They can report back to the class and make a bar graph to indicate the cultural diversity in the school.

Play for the class the interview with Father Greg and Odarka Andrusyshyn which can be found by following the tabs:

- ❖ Collections (found on the home page)
 - Ukrainians
 - Browse the Ukrainian collection
 - Daily Life

In the previous discussion of the cultures represented in the school, we discovered the rich diversity that exists around us. If all these cultures are represented in the school, they must be represented in the neighbourhood(s) serviced by the school. As a class, create a map of the neighbourhood that indicates prominent buildings, and their homes. Where possible, identify any cultural connections to (buildings, students' homes thus showing the diversity in the neighbourhood.

Assign each student a culture represented on the map and ask him/her to do an Internet search to find a visual representation of that cultural group. Have the student print, copy or draw the image and bring it to class to glue on the map in the appropriate location. The representation could be a native costume, a musical instrument from that culture, an example of the culture's unique architecture, a famous landmark in that country, etc.

For a young child immigrating to a new country with his/her family, life must be very challenging, particularly in the first few years. In many instances, they cannot speak

English, so making friends can be difficult. Moreover, they would be leaving behind everything that is familiar to them, and there would be so many adjustments to be made in the new land. To reinforce this, play for the class the interview by Steve Hasiuk (Growing up in the Whitney Pier, Ukrainian School) by following these tabs:

- ❖ Collections (found on the home page)
 - Ukrainians
 - Browse the Ukrainian collection
 - Daily Life

Assessment

Ask the students to imagine what it would be like to move to a country where they knew no one and they could not speak the language. Have them write a reflection in their journals describing their experience on the first day in a new school.