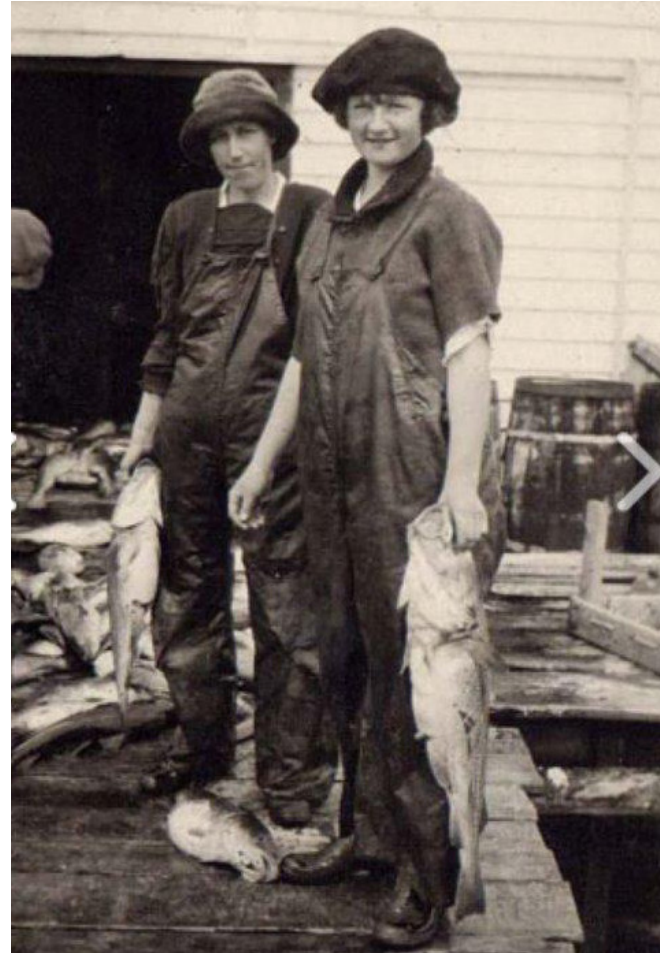


1

HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE

This lesson explains the lifestyle and perseverance of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, highlighting the essential contributions of both men and women in the community.



LESSON

Lesson Objective:

- Understand the subsistence economy of Newfoundland and Labrador in the 19th century.
- Identify the contributions of Indigenous and European populations.
- Recognize the roles of women in the 19th-century society.
- Discuss the interconnectedness of daily life, work, and survival in that time period.

Part 1: 19th Century Newfoundland and Labrador

- In the early 1800s, Newfoundland and Labrador were sparsely populated, with Indigenous peoples (such as the Mi'kmaq, Inuit, and Innu) and European settlers (English and Irish) comprising the population
- The economy was shaped by the natural environment, with the Atlantic Ocean, boreal forests, and rocky soil playing key roles in shaping daily life.
- Communities were isolated, and people relied heavily on local resources for survival.

Part 2: Subsistence Economy

- **Fishing:** Cod fishing dominated the economy. Fishermen used small boats (punt or dory) and handlines or nets. The fish were salted and dried on flakes (wooden platforms) for preservation
- **Hunting and trapping:** People hunted caribou, seals, and small game for food and clothing.
- **Vegetable gardening:** Root vegetables like potatoes, turnips, and carrots were grown in small, rocky plots, as the soil was poor and farming was challenging.
- **Cutting wood:** Timber was essential for heating homes and boat-building.
- **Boat-building:** Families built their own boats, an essential skill for fishing and transportation.

Part 3. Indigenous and European Populations

Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous groups like the Mi'kmaq, Inuit, and Innu lived in harmony with the environment. They hunted, fished, and gathered food, using traditional knowledge to navigate the land and sea.

They traded with European settlers, exchanging furs for metal tools and other goods.

European Settlers: Primarily English and Irish, settlers adapted to the harsh environment. They brought skills in agriculture, fishing, and boat-building, which blended with Indigenous knowledge. Settlements were small, and community cooperation was essential.

Class Discussion: How did Indigenous peoples and Europeans influence each other's way of life? What challenges do you think these groups faced in such a harsh environment?

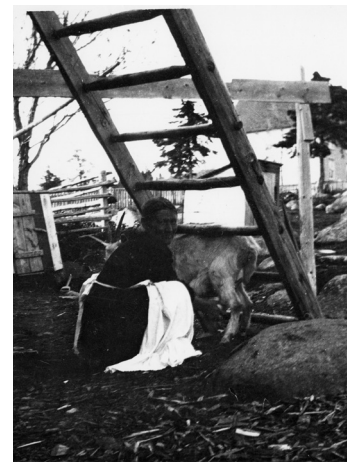


ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Download the class activity sheet [HERE](#)

Materials needed for activities: art and drawing supplies for a small diorama.

RESOURCES



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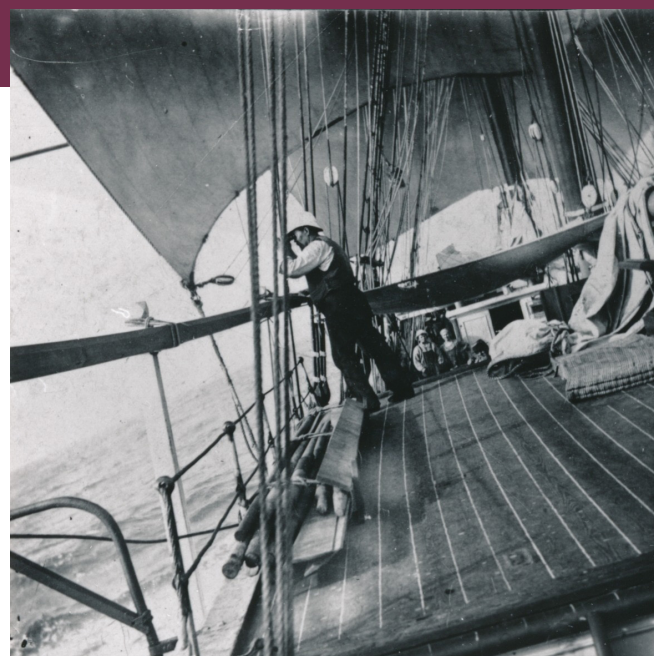
2

19TH CENTURY ECONOMY

This lesson introduces students to the important role sealing has played in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Objectives:

- Understand the development and significance of the sealing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Examine the role of St. John's as the hub of the sealing industry.
- Explore the challenges faced by sealers and the dangers of the sealing trade, especially the landsmen hunt.



LESSON

Part 1: Sealing Operations in St. John's

1. The Departure of the Fleet:

- In early spring, sealers from outport communities came to St. John's to prepare for their journey to the ice. This was a big event, marked by excitement and prayers for the safety of the crews.
- The fleet's departure was a public spectacle, with cheers and good wishes. Sometimes, sealers faced challenges, such as getting stuck in ice. In those cases, they had to chop through the ice and haul their ships through narrow passages.

2. Class Discussion:

- Discuss the significance of the sealing fleet's departure. What does it tell us about the community's connection to the sealing industry? What might have been the emotions felt by the families as they sent their loved ones off?

Part 2: Life During the Seal Hunt

1. The Return of the Fleet:

- After weeks of hunting, the sealers' return was another major event. News spread quickly about the size of the catch, any troubles or accidents, and the success or failure of the hunt.
- When the ships returned, wharves became busy with activity. Pelts were unloaded, and sealers sold their catches, often sharing the profits with other related industries like oil production and skinning.

2. Sealing Centres:

- Many towns, especially in Conception Bay like Harbour Grace, became known as sealing hubs. Local shipbuilders constructed vessels, and people from these towns worked as owners, captains, and crew members. Sealers came from all over Newfoundland to work in these centers.

3. Class Discussion:

- How do you think the sealing industry impacted the growth of towns like Harbour Grace?
- What do you think life would have been like in these communities during the sealing season?

Part 3: A Sealer's Life and Challenges

1. The Grueling Work of Sealing:

- Sealing was difficult and dangerous work. Sealers faced unpredictable weather, cold temperatures, and treacherous ice conditions.
- Their days were long and physically demanding. They carried heavy equipment across miles of ice, and a wrong step could lead to disaster.

- After a day of hunting, sealers returned to cramped quarters on their ships. Their diets were often poor, and there was little comfort. They also had other duties like freeing ships stuck in the ice or standing watch.

2. Class Discussion:

- What do you think motivated sealers to keep working in such harsh conditions?
- How would you feel about being a sealer? What kind of person do you think would be willing to take on such a difficult job?

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Download the class activity sheet [HERE](#)

Materials needed for activities: ice cubes, string, salt, paper towels (for cleanup).

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3

1914: THE GREAT SEALING DISASTER

This lesson helps students understand the extreme dangers faced by sealers in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly during the 1914 sealing disasters. By learning about the personal and community impacts of these events, students will explore the importance of safety measures in high-risk industries and the ways in which tragedy can lead to positive change.



3. Class Discussion:

- Ask students to imagine what it must have been like for the families of the men who were lost. How do you think the community would have reacted to such a devastating loss?

Part 2: The Aftermath and Impact on Newfoundland and Labrador

1. The Effects of the Disaster:

- In a population of only 250,000 people, the loss of 251 men—fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands—was deeply felt throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The impact on communities was profound, and people came together—families, churches, and charities—to help those who had lost loved ones.

2. Public Outcry and Calls for Change:

- Following the 1914 disasters, there was widespread media coverage and public outcry. People questioned how such a tragedy could happen, and calls for better safety measures for sealers became louder.
- Commissions of inquiry were held to investigate the causes of the disaster and to recommend improvements.

3. Class Discussion:

- Why do you think the sealing industry, despite its dangers, continued to be so important to Newfoundland and Labrador?

LESSON

Part 1: The 1914 Sealing Disasters

1. The March 31, 1914 Disaster:

- On March 31, 1914, a tragic event unfolded during a sealing hunt in the North Atlantic.
- 166 men left the SS Newfoundland to travel about seven miles to the SS Stephano. The weather worsened, and 34 men decided to turn back. The remaining 132 men continued, but they were lost in a blizzard.
- For 48 hours, both ship captains assumed the men had found refuge on the other ship. Sadly, 77 men perished in the storm.

2. The Loss of the SS Southern Cross:

- At the same time, the SS Southern Cross, a sealing vessel, disappeared in the storm while returning from the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The ship and its 174 crew members were lost, adding to the grief of the sealing community.

- How might the loss of so many people affect the culture and economy of the region?

Part 3: The Lessons Learned and Safety Changes

1. Safety Improvements:

- Although tragedies like the 1914 sealing disasters were devastating, they also led to important changes in the industry.
- As a result of the disaster, sealing ships were required to have wireless communication equipment and flares. These changes helped to improve safety and communication during future sealing hunts.

2. A Culture of Safety:

- The Newfoundland and Labrador sealing industry learned many hard lessons from the 1914 disaster. While dangers at sea and on the ice would always be a part of the sealing tradition, efforts were made to create a culture of safety for marine workers.
- These changes helped make the work of sealers safer, ensuring that they could return home to their families after long, dangerous seasons at sea.

3. Class Discussion:

- Have students brainstorm other safety measures that might have helped prevent the 1914 disaster. What modern technology or practices could be used to improve the safety of workers today?

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Download the class activity sheet [HERE](#)

Materials needed for activities: blank paper, colouring supplies.

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4 SEALING TRADITIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY

This lesson explains the historical and cultural significance of the seal hunt for Indigenous communities in Newfoundland and Labrador and the concept of sustainable hunting and how it has been a part of Indigenous traditions. It also shows how modern sealing practices continue traditional ways while integrating new technologies and economic opportunities.



LESSON

Part 1: Sustainable Hunting Practices

1. What Does Sustainable Hunting Look Like?

- Sustainable hunting involves using every part of the animal to minimize waste. Seals, for example, provide not only nutritious food but also valuable materials for clothing, tools, and crafts.
- Indigenous peoples have long practiced sustainable hunting, ensuring that they take only what is necessary to meet their needs and leaving the environment intact for future generations.
- Modern Technologies and Traditional Practices: While traditional methods of hunting and processing seals are still important, modern technologies have made hunting more efficient and economically viable.
- However, even with these new tools, the core tradition of respect for the land and the animals remains unchanged. Indigenous communities

continue to uphold these values while embracing new opportunities for economic development.

2. Class Discussion:

- How do you think the use of new technologies, such as better hunting tools or processing methods, might improve the efficiency of sealing practices without harming the environment?

Part 2: The Tradition of Sealing

1. Cultural Significance of Sealing:

- Sealing is a practice that has been passed down through generations, deeply rooted in the traditions of Indigenous peoples.
- For the Inuit and Innu, the seal hunt remains an essential part of their way of life, providing both food and materials for clothing, art, and crafts.

- The hunt also brings economic opportunities, with seals offering a source of cash through the sale of pelts and other products.

2. Class Discussion:

- Ask students: “What do you think it means to use a natural resource sustainably? Why is it important to respect the environment when hunting or fishing?”
- Explain that sustainable hunting means taking only what is needed, ensuring the population of animals remains healthy and can continue to reproduce for future generations. This is key to maintaining balance with nature.

Part 3: Sealing as Part of a Sustainable Lifestyle

1. Sealing as a Source of Cash and Food:

- Seals are not only a source of nutrition, providing meat for food, but also a way to earn money through the sale of pelts and other materials.

- This dual benefit—food and income—makes sealing a key part of the economy for many communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

2. Linking Past and Present:

- The traditions of sealing, which go back thousands of years, continue today as modern sealers carry forward the knowledge and practices of their ancestors.
- This connection between past and present is important for Indigenous peoples, as it helps maintain cultural identity while adapting to contemporary economic and technological changes.

3. Class Discussion:

- Ask students: “What do you think it means to ‘carry forward cultural traditions’ in the context of sealing? How can modern technologies and traditions work together?”

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Download the class activity sheet [HERE](#)

Materials needed for activities: large bowls with ice water, plastic bags/gloves, cotton balls, paper towels.

Class discussion for experiment:

- How did the insulating material affect the coldness you felt?
- How do you think seal fur works in a similar way to protect seals?
- Why would such insulation be important for sealers working on the ice?

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