

# Overview and Rationale

## Overview

The *Newfoundland and Labrador History* course introduces students to the study of the history of the province from the turn of the 19th century to the present. It is an interesting and dynamic period of development from colony-to-country-to-province, the time when settled society and institutions were established to shape the province as it is today.

In this course, students explore and appreciate history: as part of their community, region and province; as a window to people and events of the past; as an examination of social change; and as a means of assessing the impact of the past on the present. The development of historical research methods is integrated throughout the course so that students will use the tools of the historian to take with them some understanding and appreciation of Newfoundland and Labrador history. The course has been developed for the adolescent student, so that topics and activities are designed at the appropriate level to engage students in active learning.

The following themes provide the basic structure for *Newfoundland and Labrador History*.

- *Unit 1: Introduction: History as a Lens to the Past*
- *Unit 2: Newfoundland and Labrador from the Turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century through the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century: History as a Story of People*
- *Unit 3: Newfoundland and Labrador from 1914 through 1949: History as a Story of Significant Events*
- *Unit 4: Newfoundland and Labrador through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: History as a Story of Change*
- *Unit 5: History as a Story of the Past in the Present*

The course themes are developed through a set of specific curriculum outcomes (SCOs) and delineations with each theme providing opportunities for students to engage in active learning experiences. It is expected that all SCOs will be completed. Although it is not necessary to complete all delineations, the teacher will select from them to ensure that the related SCO is adequately treated.

## **Rationale**

The word “history” has at least two meanings: it can mean simply “the past” and everything that happened in it; or the disciplined study of human activity in that past. It is the latter with which we are concerned here, since this course aims to introduce students, not only to the history of Newfoundland and Labrador, but also to how historians go about their work to gain an understanding of the past.

## **History as a Discipline**

History is essential to the search for knowledge. First, if we seek fully to understand the present, we need to know what happened in the past. History orients us in time, and helps to explain why we are living where we are, and the way we behave and are governed. It helps us understand complex current issues of public policy, thus contributing to the development of informed and active citizens.

Second, history is the study of people, both as individuals and in society, and how they behave. In the context of this course, we are studying the people who have lived in Newfoundland and Labrador for the past two centuries - their achievements and failures, their responses to and adaptations of the natural environment, their beliefs and lifestyles, and how they governed themselves. It is relevant to ask why and how they shaped their legacy, and what we can learn from their experiences. Their history contributes to our identity.

This means that historians do move beyond dates and chronologies to examine how and why things happened in the way they did. It is an historical fact, for example, that Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada in 1949, but the historian analyses the various factors that were involved in the event in order to explain it. In short, historians provide interpretations which seek to make the past intelligible to us in the present.

Historical evidence comes in a wide variety of forms - for example, material objects, letters, newspapers, photographs, maps, drawings, account books, the memories of older people, stories and songs. The good historian finds as much of this primary evidence as possible, and then begins to ask what it all means, how its parts fit together, and how many gaps must be filled. The end product will usually be a written account which presents an interpretation of the evidence.

Interpretations of the evidence, however, may vary. Accordingly, a final, definitive explanation of any aspect of the past is somewhat elusive. The relationship between past and present is always

changing and so is the evidence available. Also, the historian is a product of a given time and place and has to make judgements about the value of often flawed evidence. Nevertheless, as we find out more and more about the human past, it becomes more clearly focussed and we begin to see, perhaps, what actually may have happened. Historians are not mere storytellers.

History has one foot in the humanities and the other in the social sciences: that is, it is a hybrid, which borrows from other disciplines whatever theories and methodologies it finds useful. There are, moreover, many varieties of history, a fact which complicates the discussion even further. The traditional, broad categories are political, social and economic history, each of which overlap and have their own subdivisions. This course places primary emphasis on social and economic factors, but recognizes that the study of politics and government is also indispensable. All three areas are obviously interrelated.

Third, the important tasks of teaching history, according to Osborne (2000), are to “first, instill in students an interest in and even a love for the past while at the same time freeing them from blind obeisance to heritage and tradition; second, to give them a sense of connectedness that helps them identify with the whole human story, and to locate the present in the setting of both past and future; third, to help them think historically; fourth, to show them the range of human action and behaviour...; fifth, to show human beings as active agents in the historical process; and, sixth, to help them understand the nature of their country and of the world of which it is a part.” ( p. 431)

Such views of history have persuaded many educators and members of the general public that history is an integral part of a balanced curriculum. The introduction of this course reflects the importance which Newfoundlanders and Labradorians place on their history and heritage, and a recognition that their distinctive history is an essential part of their province’s culture and identity, and that the province’s past points to its future.

**Contribution of History to Social Studies Education**

This course upholds the concepts and ideas articulated in the *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum* document. An introductory exploration of the history of the province is integral to the citizenship development of students as they consider the place of Newfoundland and Labrador in the regional, national and global context.

The focus of this curriculum is to:

- respond to the needs and interests of young adolescents
- provide for the exploration of local/regional history topics
- provide historical background to current issues and events
- introduce specific methods and skills of history as a discipline
- foster an appreciation of Newfoundland and Labrador history and of history in general
- reinforce students' pride in their cultural identity, heritage, appreciation of cultural diversity, and sense of belonging.

## **The Teaching and Learning Context**

With the accelerating pace of change, the acquisition of facts learned in isolation will not equip students for life. Problem solving, critical and creative thinking, and informed decision-making are essential for success in the future.

## **Student Needs**

Today's students come with increasingly diverse backgrounds and experiences. An effective instructional environment must incorporate principles and strategies that support this diversity, while recognizing and accommodating the varied learning styles, multiple intelligences, and abilities of individual students. Teaching approaches and strategies must actively engage all students in the learning process, through their involvement in a wide variety of experiences. The nature and scope of history provide unique opportunities to do this. To meet these challenges, this history course must be

- student centred
- inviting and inclusive
- respectful of diversity
- participatory, interactive, and collaborative
- engaging and relevant
- challenging
- inquiry-based and issues-oriented
- reflective

## **Literacy and Social Studies**

Literacy plays an important role in the student's experience with social studies. It promotes the student's ability to comprehend and compose spoken, written and visual texts that are commonly used by individuals and groups to participate, critically and effectively in society. The multiplicity of communication channels made possible by technology and the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of the world call for a broad view of literacy and its place in the content areas.

The ability to read and view is critical for success in social studies. Reading and viewing in the content area of social studies requires that attention be given to setting the stage and using various strategies to help students gather and process information. Writing and representing in the social studies may be thought of as a process by which students communicate what they know about a particular topic. Listening and speaking also are seen as integral to learning: the former is part of the information-gathering phase, and the latter is part of the communication phase.

Reading and viewing, writing and representing, and listening and speaking help students comprehend the meaning of words, symbols, pictures, diagrams, maps and other genres; investigate a range of media in different times and places and provide many opportunities to comprehend and compose in unfamiliar contexts. Most will be able to debate, persuade and explain in a variety of genres, including the artistic and technological. The social studies program will help students become culturally sensitive and effective cross-cultural communicators.

Critical literacy includes awareness of stereotyping, cultural bias, author's intent, hidden agendas, and silent voices. Students are encouraged to view texts from a variety of perspectives and to interpret the various levels of meaning in a given text. Students are encouraged to be aware that texts are constructed by authors who have purposes for writing and make particular choices when doing so. Critical literacy approaches aid students in comprehending texts at a deeper level and also assist in the construction and reconstruction of their texts.

Literacy for active citizenship involves understanding different perspectives on key democratic struggles, learning how to investigate current issues and participating creatively and critically in community problem-solving and decision-making. Exercising civic rights and responsibilities is a practical expression of important social values and requires specific personal, interpersonal and advocacy skills.

**The Integration of  
Technology in Social  
Studies**

Technology should play a major role in the teaching and learning of social studies. Computers and related technologies (e.g., digital cameras, software, databases, Internet, bulletin boards, e-mail, CD-ROM players, video disk players) are valuable classroom tools in acquiring, analysing, presenting, and communicating data. These

technologies allow students to become more active participants in research and learning and provide numerous possibilities for enhancing teaching; for example:

- The Internet and CD-ROMs provide teachers and students with quicker and easier access to extensive and current information. Good research skills, however, are key to efficient use of these resources. Questions pertaining to validity, accuracy, bias, and interpretation must still be applied to information available on the Internet and CD-ROMs.
- Student-created websites and direct e-mail conversations provide students with connections to students and organizations from around the world. This access to first-hand information will enable students to directly employ inquiry skills.
- Students can share what they have learned with others, both in their classroom and beyond, in a wide variety of forms (e.g., graphs, maps, texts, graphic organizers, websites, multi-media presentations) that fit their learning styles.

### **Resource-Based Learning**

The Newfoundland Department of Education document, *Learning to Learn: Policies and Guidelines for the Implementation of Resource-based Learning in Newfoundland and Labrador Schools* (1991), promotes a resource-based learning approach that provides learning experiences to meet the needs of individual students and actively involve them in the learning process. To this end, the effective use of a wide range of teaching and learning strategies, supported by appropriate print, non-print and human resources is essential.

With this approach, students have the opportunity to approach a theme, issue or topic of study in ways that allow for differences in backgrounds, learning styles, needs, and abilities. Resource-based learning promotes information literacy - the ability to access, select, interpret, evaluate, organize, produce and communicate information in and through a variety of media technologies and contexts to meet diverse learning needs and purposes. When students engage in their own research with appropriate guidance, they are more likely to take responsibility for their learning and to retain the information gained.

Students and teachers make decisions about appropriate sources of information, tools for learning and how to access them. A resource-based approach raises the issues of selecting and evaluating a wide variety of information sources. The development of the critical skills needed for these tasks is essential to historical method and study.

**Instructional  
Approaches and  
Strategies**

Resource-based teaching has a special resonance for the history teacher, since many of the resources available come in the form of or draw upon historical documents. More specifically, the history teacher sees documents-based approaches as critical to teaching and learning history.

*Newfoundland and Labrador History* builds an active learning approach for students, supporting lifelong learning skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, information analysis, and informed decision-making. This program introduces methods and skills of historical research and provides a context in which students can analyse and evaluate historical evidence and make their own interpretations.

It is recognized that the most effective instructional approach is one that is eclectic in nature. The classroom teacher employs those instructional strategies deemed most appropriate, given the needs of the learner, the learning outcomes, and the resources available. One cannot be prescriptive in favour of any single teaching method in Newfoundland and Labrador History, since (1) students differ in interest, ability, and learning styles, and (2) components of the course differ in terms of intent, level of conceptual difficulty, and the relative emphases on knowledge, skills, and values. Therefore, the discerning teacher will use a variety of methods in response to a variety of instructional situations.

History teaching has long emphasized a strong transmission approach. Content was heavily factual and descriptive, and instruction relied upon (1) direct instructional methods such as lecture, didactic questions, and drill, and (2) independent study methods such as homework and recall-level questions. Curriculum developers see the need for transactional and transformational orientations in instruction. These approaches deliberately engage the learner through use of (1) experiential methods such as historical drama, roleplay, and visits to historical sites, museums and archives; (2) indirect instructional strategies such as problem-solving, document analysis, and concept formation; and (3) interactive strategies such as debates, brainstorming, discussion, and interviewing.

The rationale for a balance of transmissional, transactional, and transformational approaches rests on the following assumptions:

- Knowledge deemed to be of most worth rests less on the memorization of facts and more on the process of knowing.

- The process of knowing relies largely upon accessing and organizing information, detecting patterns in it, and arriving at generalizations suggested by the patterns.
- Transformational and transactional approaches bring high motivational value to the classroom.
- Transformational and transactional approaches allow for the active participation of students as they evaluate the relevance of what they are learning, bring their perspectives and prior knowledge to the process, and are involved in decisions about what they are learning.

While the merits of transactional and transformational orientations are clear, transmission still has a place in Newfoundland and Labrador History. Direct instruction may be used to introduce a topic, break down a complex concept into simpler constructs, review a topic, or prepare for a comprehensive assessment.

To illustrate some of the principles of effective teaching and a balanced approach to instruction, Appendices 4, 5, 6, and 7 illustrate several instructional approaches that are particularly relevant to the teaching of *Newfoundland and Labrador History*.

A number of strategies can be used to support the course goals and active learning approaches. Fundamentally, the course supports a resource-based approach. The authorized text and resources for teachers and students are intended as sources of information and organizational tools to guide study, activities, and exploration of topics. Teachers and students can integrate information drawn from local and regional sources, print, visual and audio texts, information technology and the Internet, and from the course website.

Effective social studies teaching creates an environment that supports students as active, engaged learners. Discussion, collaboration, debate, reflection, analysis and application should be integrated into activities when appropriate. Teaching strategies can be employed in numerous ways and combinations. It is the role of the skilful teacher to reflect on the course outcomes, topics, resources, and nature of the class and individual students to select approaches best suited to the circumstance.

### **Multi-Level Instructional Settings**

The multi-level classroom presents different challenges to teachers for the implementation of courses. Instructional planning may take more time and flexibility is needed in the approach to instruction and evaluation.

Suggestions for organizing instruction for students in multi-age classrooms include:

- teach all grades represented together, using the curriculum of one grade and instructional approaches which allow students to learn at their own ability level
- develop units around themes that integrate and incorporate the required concepts and outcomes from each grade level curriculum

## **Assessment and Evaluation**

Assessment is the systematic process of gathering data on student learning. Evaluation is the process of analysing patterns in the data, forming judgements about possible responses to these patterns, and making decisions about future actions.

### **Introduction**

An integral part of the planned instructional cycle is the evaluation of learning for learning. Evaluation of learning focuses on the degree to which students have achieved the intended outcomes and the learning environment was effective towards that end. Evaluation for learning, given what evaluation of learning reveals, focuses on the designing of future learning situations to meet the needs of the learner.

The quality of assessment and evaluation has a profound and well-established link to student performance. Regular monitoring and feedback are essential to improving student learning. What is assessed and evaluated, how it is assessed and evaluated, and how the results are communicated send clear messages to students and other stakeholders about what is really valued - what is worth learning, how it should be learned, what elements of quality of performance are most important, and how well students are expected to perform.

### **Assessment**

To determine how well students are learning, assessment strategies are used to systematically gather information on the achievement of curriculum outcomes. In planning assessments, teachers should use a broad range of data sources, appropriately balanced, to give students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge,

skills, and attitudes. Many sources of assessment data can be used to gather such information. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

formal and informal observations	interviews
work samples	rubrics
anecdotal records	simulations
conferences	checklists
teacher-made and other tests	questionnaires
portfolios	oral presentations
learning journals	role plays
questioning	debates
performance assessments	case studies
peer- and self-assessments	panel discussions
multimedia presentations	essay writing
graphical representations	

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation is a continuous, comprehensive, and systematic process. It brings interpretation, judgements and decisions to the data collected during the assessment phase to address key educational issues. More specifically, how valid and reliable is the data gathered? What does the data suggest in terms of student achievement of course outcomes? Does student performance confirm instructional practice, or indicate the need to change it? Are students ready to move on to the next phase of the course, or is there need for remediation?

Teacher-developed assessments and the evaluations based on them have a variety of uses:

- providing feedback to improve student learning;
- determining if curriculum outcomes have been achieved;
- certifying that students have achieved certain levels of performance;
- setting goals for future student learning;
- communicating with parents about their children's learning;
- providing information to teachers on the effectiveness of their teaching, the program, and the learning environment;
- meeting goals of guidance and administrative personnel.

Evaluation is conducted within the context of the outcomes, which should be clearly understood by learners before teaching and evaluation takes place. Students must understand the basis on which they will be evaluated and what teachers expect of them.

The evaluation of a student's progress may be classified as pre-instructional, formative, or summative, depending on the purpose.

Pre-instructional evaluation is conducted before the introduction of unfamiliar subject matter or when learners are experiencing difficulty. It gives an indication of *where students are* and is not a measure of what they are capable of doing. The purpose is to analyse the student's progress to date in order to determine the type and depth of instruction needed. This type of assessment is mostly conducted informally and continuously.

Formative evaluation is conducted throughout the process of instruction. Its primary purpose is to improve instruction and learning. It is an indication of *how things are going*. It identifies a student's strengths or weaknesses with respect to specific curriculum outcomes so that necessary adaptations can be made.

Summative evaluation occurs at the end of a designated period of learning. It is used, along with data collected during the formative stage, to determine learner achievement. This evaluation is used to report the degree to which curriculum outcomes have been achieved.

## Guiding Principles

In order to provide accurate, useful information about the achievement and instructional needs of students, certain guiding principles for the development, administration, and use of assessments must be followed. *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada (1993)* articulates five basic assessment principles:

- Assessment strategies should be appropriate for and compatible with the purpose and context of the assessment.
- Students should be provided with sufficient opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviours being assessed.
- Procedures for judging or scoring student performance should be appropriate for the assessment strategy used and be consistently applied and monitored.
- Procedures for summarizing and interpreting assessment results should yield accurate and informative representations of a student's performance in relation to the curriculum outcomes for the reporting period.
- Assessment reports should be clear, accurate, and of practical value to the audience for whom they are intended.

These principles highlight the need for assessment that ensures that

- the best interests of the student are paramount
- assessment informs teaching and promotes learning
- assessment is an integral and ongoing part of the learning process and is clearly related to the curriculum outcomes
- assessment is fair and equitable to all students and involves multiple sources of information

While assessments may be used for different purposes and audiences, all assessments must give each student optimal opportunity to demonstrate what he/she knows and can do.