The Seal Hunt Debate

Lesson Overview:
The culmination of this two-day inquiry project will be a persuasive paper in which each student takes and defends a position on the Canadian seal hunt. Class time should be used primarily for station-based student research. The actual writing of the paper should be assigned as homework for Social 10 classes. However, for students with special writing challenges, research can be completed on the first day; writing, editing and re-writing can be completed on the second day.

Grade Level: 10 (Can be modified for Social 13 by taking a more teacher-focused approach to the materials)

Time Required: Two classes

Curriculum Connection:
Alberta Social Studies 10
- Canada in the Modern World
  - Topic A: Challenges for Canada: The 20th Century and Today
  - Theme II: Regionalism
  - Theme III: Identity

Links to Canadian National Geography Standards:
Essential Element #1: The World in Spatial Terms
  - Students learn where the seal hunt occurs using oceanographic maps and marine atlases.

Oceans Scope & Sequence Standard #1: The World in Spatial Terms
  - Use of spatial representations and technology (e.g., apply mapping skills to observe and analyze ocean relationships including animal migration)

Essential Element #3: Physical Systems
  - Students learn about movements of sea ice, weather patterns, ocean currents, barometric pressure and temperature and their effects upon the seal hunt. Students investigate the extreme climate reasons for the great sealing disasters of the past.

Oceans Scope & Sequence Standard #3: Physical Systems
  - Processes of ocean physical systems

Essential Element #5: Environment and Society
  - Students research the types and number of seals killed with a view to understanding the environmental impact of the seal hunt.

Oceans Scope & Sequence #5: Environment and Society
Changes in world ocean resources and distribution over time (e.g., species biodiversity, endangered species)

Essential Element #6: The Uses of Geography
- Students examine how regional, national and international policies on the seal hunt converge/diverge. Students must take and defend a position on the seal hunt using their geographic knowledge of the region.

Geographic Skill #1: Asking Geographic Questions
- In order to defend their position on the hunt, students ask important questions about the hunt and anticipate a variety of responses.

Geographic Skill #2: Acquiring Geographic Information
- Students acquire information through examining accounts of the hunt in music, art, history and literature. Students read teacher-selected academic articles, newspaper and journal articles, publications by think tanks, statements from government agencies, international bodies, ecologists, economists and NGOs.

Geographic Skill #3: Organizing Geographic Information
- Students must organize their geographic research effectively in argumentative form. Students are encouraged to include any relevant maps, diagrams, tables and charts in their argument paper.

Geographic Skill #4: Analyzing Geographic Information
- Students analyze longitudinal statistics on the hunt in light of current seal population trends to decide whether or not the Canadian seal hunt is sustainable at its current level.

Geographic Skill #5: Answering Geographic Questions
- Students will have completed a persuasive essay about the seal hunt.

Additional Resources, Materials, and Equipment Required:
- Atlases and maps of the east coast of Canada and the Northern Atlantic.
- Documents that describe the climate of the North Atlantic and its effects on the seal hunt.
- Audio equipment and overhead projector
- Music and lyrics for sea shanties that tell about the seal hunt. For example: Great Big Sea’s version of the traditional “Ferryland Sealer” or various recordings of shanties such as “The Sealing Cruise of the Lone Flier”, “The Greenland Disaster”, “The Ghostly Crew” (a.k.a. “The Ghostly Sailors”) and “The Southern Cross”.
- Art and photography that portrays the seal hunt. Any graphs, charts or timelines that portray elements of the seal hunt.
- Excerpts of government documents that discuss the seal hunt.
First hand accounts of the seal harvest by sealers or spectators to the hunt.


Some other useful teaching resources include:

- Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA). *MacEdward Leach And The Songs Of Atlantic Canada*. 2004
- Also see *Songs Of The Newfoundland Outports*, Volume 3, by the National Museum of Canada, 1965.
- Selected articles from think tanks, environmentalists, economists.
- Any important newspaper, magazine clippings, current events.

**Main Objective:**
The purpose of this lesson is to encourage students to think about an ocean-related, problem-based regional issue and to consider the ramifications this issue has for regional and national identity in partial fulfillment of the prescribed Alberta Social 10/13 Curriculum.

**Learning Outcomes:** By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Generalize about how geographic factors of the hunt affect political, cultural, economic and environmental interests in the region. Students tackle such concepts as regional diversity, disparity and identity (Knowledge Objectives).
- Develop “Process Skills”. Students acquire information from print and non-print resources, record and organize information in note form, analyze and evaluate research materials for bias, as well as interpret and summarize materials. Students also hone their “Communication Skills”. They will express and defend their ideas in written argumentative form. Finally, students develop their “Participation Skills” by working at individual tasks in a group situation (Skill Objectives).

- Through independent and cooperative work, students are encouraged to appreciate the cultural-historical, political, economic and environmental importance of the debate around the seal hunt. It is hoped that all students will develop a critical attitude towards issues affecting Canada's ocean regions (Attitude Objectives).

**The Lesson:**
This lesson incorporates oceanographic study into a student position paper that addresses each of the “Six Essential Elements” outlined in the NGS “Oceans For Life” brochure.

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<th>Teacher Activity</th>
<th>Student Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson Development</strong></td>
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<td>Teacher can introduce topic using music and overhead transparencies of lyrics.</td>
<td>Students listen to music and engage in classroom discussion of seal hunt.</td>
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<td>Prior to the first period of inquiry, the teacher will have organized the classroom into four workstations entitled, “Seals and Ecology”, “The Hunting Grounds”, “The History of the Hunt” and “Policy Positions”. Each workstation should be supplied with copies of any pertinent readings, photography, art, music, statistics and maps. The teacher will divide the class into four work groups within which students may work independently or in pairs. If research for the paper is to be confined to one day, the teacher will rotate the groups through the stations every 20 minutes. If research spans two days of inquiry, the teacher rotates the groups every 40 minutes. In any case, allow ten minutes for re-organization and rotation lag.</td>
<td>Teacher circulates among groups asking questions, offering guidance and time keeping to rotate groups according to class schedule.</td>
<td>Students work at stations independently or in pairs. When proceeding beyond research phase into writing phase, they may engage in peer editing or seek direct teacher assistance.</td>
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### Conclusion

- Teacher will offer direction and editing assistance as students develop their writing and persuasive skills.
- Students will have written an effective persuasive paper.

### Lesson Extension:

Lesson could be extended or linked to discussion of native fishery and treaty fishing rights as they conflict with those of traditional non-native fishers in the Maritimes. Study of important Supreme Court of Canada cases that might further enhance student understanding of Canadian/regional/cultural identities alongside “ocean literacy”.

Modify this lesson for Social 13 by presenting each of the four categories of research through teacher-led presentations and classroom discussions directly related to the themes of regionalism and identity. Diversify classroom activities by using music, art and stories about the seal hunt as an introduction to the essay topic. Follow this introductory activity with mapping tasks and the study of longitudinal statistical information about seal populations and seal harvesting. Also include brief synopses of the most important research and perspectives on the seal hunt. Teachers may provide students with worksheets or “Effective Writing Templates” that will help them focus and organize their research on the paper topic.

### Assessment of Student Learning:

Student essays may be evaluated on a rubric.