

Enquiry-Based Learning Session #2 - Early Examples of Ecological Awareness In-Class Exercise

History 3355: Nature, Culture and the Canadian Environment
18 July 2012

Today's EBL session will revolve around an in-class exercise with primary documents, so this week's EBL readings should be considered as contextual readings for this exercise. The reading from Richard Judd's book provides the bit of theoretical background that you need for today, while Graeme Wynn's article provides some useful economic and demographic information about pre-Confederation New Brunswick.

In your small groups, you will examine a series of primary documents from early colonial New Brunswick, and you will use the "points for consideration" listed below to help guide your group discussions. All of the primary documents are from the New Brunswick House of Assembly Sessional Records, 1786-1833, at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, and they are all examples of citizens' petitions to the House of Assembly during the first few decades after New Brunswick was made an official colony of British North America (1784). During this period, citizens petitioned legislators when they wanted new laws created or amendments passed to existing laws.

All of the primary documents contain some elements of the early conservation ethic based on utilitarian conceptions of nature that Judd examines in his book *Common Lands, Common People*. While not all of the petitioners in these documents are "countryfolk," we can still use the documents to gain insight into some of the conservation and ecological debates in early colonial New Brunswick. Thus, in your small groups, you will examine the documents for any signs of early ecological awareness, plus you will consider the general contexts in which the petitions were written and the possible identities of the petitioners. After a defined period of time, we will reconvene for the larger class discussion.

Directions to Access Documents:

Proceed to the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick website (<http://archives.gnb.ca>), choose your preferred language, and then choose the "search" option. Under the "other" list, choose "House of Assembly Sessional Records 1786-1833," and you will once again choose the "search" option. You are now at the point on the website where you will be able to access all of the primary documents listed below. In each case, choose a couple of keywords from the title of the document to search for it; I have also included the document number to ensure that you find the correct document.

Primary Documents:

Note - Documents 1a and 1b are grouped together, that is, they are somehow related.

1a. "Petition from the inhabitants of Tracadie in Northumberland County regarding fisheries. 21 Feb. 1792" - Document #S6-P3

1b. "Petition from the inhabitants of the City of Saint John for regulating fisheries. 23 Feb. 1792" - Document# S6-P9

2. "Petition from the inhabitants of the Parish of Lincoln in the County of Sunbury requesting fences be erected to preserve the banks of the Saint John River. 17 Feb. 1795" - Document #S9-P8

3. "Petition of Moses Gerrish of the Island of Grand Manan praying for an act for the preservation of moose. 30 Jan. 1810" - Document #S20-P1

4. "Petition of William Greenslade and others of Hampton and Springfield Parishes, Kings County, praying that an act might pass to grant a bounty for the destruction of bears in the Province. 16 Feb. 1828" - Document #S36-P17

5. "Petition of Alexander Stewart Sr. and others of Northumberland County, praying an act for preservation of the Gaspereaux fishery in Miramichi River. 11 Feb. 1833" - Document #S43-P53

Points for Consideration (for each document):

1. What appears to be the general context/situation in which the document was written? (e.g. what sort of general debate was occurring in New Brunswick at the time?)

2. Who are the petitioners? What are their positions (employment, class, etc.) within New Brunswick society (if possible to determine)?

3. What are their specific requests in the petitions?

4. Is there are a possible correlation between their positions within society and their requests within the petitions?

5. What examples of ecological awareness are present in the document?