Lesson Overview
By examining the story of the Newfoundland Railway, students will determine the reasons why the Newfoundland Government undertook the project; the geographical problems that had to be overcome in its construction; the problems that led to its demise; and what has become of the former railway property today. This study will examine how the railway aided the growth of industry in the region, influenced settlement patterns and contributed to tourism development.

In analyzing this defunct project, students will also determine if a renewed railway of any sort is an alternate and greener source of transportation for the future.

Grade Level
Grade 9-12

Time Required
Two classes

Curriculum Connection
Atlantic Provinces Curriculum for Social Studies: Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET): Newfoundland and Labrador
Newfoundland and Labrador Studies 2205
Canadian History 1201
Canadian Geography 1202

Additional Resources, Materials and Equipment Required
- Activity #1: Brainstorming (attached)
- Activity #2: The Newfoundland Railway (attached)
- Activity #3: Historical Photos of the Railway (attached)
- Activity #4: Tourism - Then and Now (attached)
- Student Assessment (attached)
- Computers, LCD projector and internet access

Websites:
Canadian Atlas Online Tracking rail theme  
www.canadiangeographic.ca/atlas
The Atlas of Canada  
http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/index.html
Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage  
http://www.heritage.nf.ca/society/railway.html
The Trans Canada Trail  
http://www.tctrail.ca/home.php
Newfoundland Trailway Council  
http://www.trailway.ca/
Railway Coastal Museum  
http://www.railwaycoastalmuseum.ca/index.htm
Library and Archives Canada  
http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/trains/021006-2110-e.html
Main Objective:
Students will identify the reasons why the Government of Newfoundland decided at the end of the 19th century to undertake the building of a cross-island railway; the impact of the railway on the physical environment, including the growth of settlement and industry; the development and change of the railway over time; the current uses of the railroad property after its closure; and the viability of restoration of all or part in planning for the future.

Learning Outcomes:

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

- access information online to understand the economic and social reasons for the building of a railroad across Newfoundland;
- understand the geographical challenges faced by the railroad builders;
- locate the main and branch lines of the railroad;
- understand how the railroad impacted industry;
- understand how the railroad supplied employment and shaped settlement;
- understand the challenges that forced the closure of the railroad;
- understand how the former property of the railroad is being used today;
- hypothesize solutions for building sustainable transportation networks as part of future policy and development.
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<th>The Lesson</th>
<th>Teacher Activity</th>
<th>Student Activity</th>
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| **Introduction** | **Note to teacher:** Familiarity with the websites is necessary. If you prefer to use hardcover atlases showing Newfoundland and Labrador, provide them to students. At your discretion, activities may be completed individually, in pairs, or groups. Ask, "Why would the Newfoundland Government want to build a railway across the island in the 1890s?" Distribute Activity #1: Brainstorming and display the Railway page on the Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage website to guide discussion and as preparation for Student Activity #2. When Activity #1 is complete ask:  
• Why do you think the late 19th century was a railway building age?  
• What role would the railway play in uniting Newfoundlanders?  
• How did the railway help economic development in this region?  
• What geographical challenges did the railway builders face?  
• Why do you think the railway cease to exist? | Offer reasons for building the railway. Complete the brainstorming activity. Consider and offer rationales of the impact of the railway on transportation, communications and economic development. Also, focus on geographical challenges and how that might have impacted future reasons for the closure of the railway. |
| **Lesson Development** | Distribute Activity #2: The Newfoundland Railway. Allow time to complete the maps. Invite conclusions about the topic. Ask questions to tie together points made about the Newfoundland Railway. Distribute Activity #3: Historical Photos of the Railway. Upon completion, discuss how the railway builders faced geographical challenges; how the railway and the coastal boats were an integrated | Complete Activity #2: The Newfoundland Railway. Present findings as directed by teacher. Complete Activity #3: Historical Photos of the Railway. Discuss findings in class. |
transportation system; how the railway aided development of industry and how it affected the spread of settlement.

Distribute Activity #4: Tourism - Then & Now and allow time to complete (in class or on own).

Initiate a discussion on the following topics:

- Tourism as a dream of the early railroad company
- Tourism as making use of the railway today (museum, t-railway)
- Possible present uses of the former railroad property

Conclude Activity #4: Tourism - Then & Now.

Participate in the discussion.

Assessment questions.

Challenge students to consider if a railway should be reconsidered for Newfoundland and Labrador. If so, where and in what form?

Complete questions.

Offer views and rationales.

Lesson Extension

- Initiate a competition for the route and design a viable, efficient and sustainable railway of the future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Assessment

- Assess the activities and questions for completeness and accuracy.

Further Reading:

- CANADA’S STEEL ROADS poster-map
- Railway Association of Canada website http://www.railcan.ca

Link to Canadian National Geographic Standards:

Essential Element #6: The Use of Geography
- Influence of geographical features on the evolution of significant historical events and movements

Geographic Skill #2: Acquiring Geographic Information
- Systematically locate and gather geographic information from a variety of primary and secondary sources.
Student Activity #1: Brainstorming

Reasons for building the railway

The Railway

Environmental Challenges

Reasons for its Decline
Student Activity #2: The Newfoundland Railway

Review the sections of the website http://www.heritage.nf.ca/society/railway.html, to see if your ideas were accurate. On either map, label the geographical places mentioned. Be sure to draw in the Branch Lines of the Newfoundland Railway. Choose one of the towns on the railway line, research its history and write an essay on the impact that the building and closure of the railway had on its development.
http://atlas.gc.ca

© 2002. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, Natural Resources Canada.
Sa Majesté la Reine du chef du Canada, Ressources naturelles Canada.
(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Newfoundland_map.png)
**Student Activity #3: Historical Photos of the Railway**

Study the following photos below of the Newfoundland Railway and complete the chart. (Photos in the public domain - Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, Centre for Newfoundland Studies)

What geographical challenges faced the builders of the railway?

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In what manner does Photo #4 show how the builders overcame a geographical challenge? You may need further study on the Trinity Loop.

How does Photo #5 show that the railway was part of an integrated transportation system?

What does Photo #6 tell you about the technology of building and maintaining the railway?
Photo # 1
Locomotive No. 103 (460) at Topsail Pond, post-1897

Photo #2
"Humber River, 1896", railroad tracks

Photo #3
Railway track along side of the Humber, view to the North West, c. 1896 - July 1900. (Photographer: S.H. Parsons)
Photo #4
Bonavista Branch Railway, "The Loop," pre-1949, Trinity

Photo #5
Coastal boat and train, possibly Port Blandford

Photo #6
Two men with railway car on tracks by the side of the River, c.1896. (Photographer: Holloway)
Student Activity #4: Tourism – Then & Now

Source: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/trains/021006-2110-e.html

As you can see from this early pamphlet put out by the Reid Newfoundland Co. Ltd., the railway hoped that tourism would play an important role in its development. What features did the railway management use to promote Newfoundland to tourists? What types of tourists do you think they were hoping to attract?
Since the closure of the railway, the main station in St. John’s has become the Railway Coastal Museum. Examine its website, [http://www.railwaycoastalmuseum.ca/index.htm](http://www.railwaycoastalmuseum.ca/index.htm), to learn more about the history of the railway and its use today. How is modern tourism different from tourism in the early 1900s? What are some of the positive and negative aspects of tourism? Present your views in an essay.

The Newfoundland T’Railway Council is a non-profit corporation dedicated to development of a recreational trail from St. John’s to Port aux Basques using the former Canadian National railway line. Examine its website, [http://www.trailway.ca/](http://www.trailway.ca/), and see how the use of former railway property adds to tourism and recreational uses today.
Student Assessment

Answer the following:

1. What reasons did the Newfoundland Government have for wanting to construct a railway at the end of the 19th century?
2. What were some of the geographical challenges faced by the railway builders?
3. How did the railway affect various towns along its route?
4. In what way was the railway an important part in the overall transportation system in Newfoundland?
5. What were some reasons for the railway’s decline?
6. Describe the current uses of the former railway property.
7. How are raw materials and consumer goods primarily delivered to and shipped from the island of Newfoundland?
8. What are the main modes of transportation of people?
9. Do you consider the current modes of transportation viable in today’s economy and energy-conscious world?
10. For what reasons would it be feasible to rebuild the railway and what form should it take?
11. For a future railway, suggest alternate energy sources, routes, or partial connections while considering the demographics and population distribution.

(Statistical data can be found at Statistics Canada: www.statcan.gc.ca)