



In Quarantine: *Life and Death on Grosse Île, 1832-1937*

Educational Resources

Handout 2.1

Situation and Royal Commission

Situation

By the end of summer 1832 it was reported that 51,422 immigrants had entered the colony.

Every week, more people suffering from illness arrived in need of help. According to a report by Dr. Douglas, only two weeks after it opened, the Grosse Île Quarantine Station had admitted 850 patients to its hospital and 500 more awaited admission on board ships.

In 1847, more than 100,000 immigrants arrived between Québec and Grosse Île. A total of 398 ships were inspected at Grosse Île, 26 of which arrived from Sligo. Each ship carried approximately 300 to 400 passengers.

It is estimated that more than 3,226 Irish immigrants died at Grosse Île and 2,198 died on board ships.

Statistics show a total of 5,424 Irish people are buried on the island and that more than 5,000 died at sea.

(Statistics taken from www.moytura.com/sligo1.htm)

Challenge

As members of a Royal Commission, it is your responsibility to find out what went wrong upon the arrival of thousands of Irish immigrants who tragically died at Grosse Île.

- What happened?
- How was the Canadian government involved?
- How did the British government respond?

- What role did the Irish landowners play?
- What action did ship captains take?
- How did the administration at Grosse Île handle the situation?

You will delve into history to find the answers, hear witness testimonies, and weigh the evidence. You must form recommendations and ultimately decide:

- Who is responsible?
- What should have been done?
- What should be done in the future to prevent this from happening again?

What is a Royal Commission?

A Royal Commission is a commission of inquiry appointed by the Crown at the request of the government to conduct a public inquiry. A public inquiry is a formal review of or investigation into a matter or event of public concern. It serves to establish the facts and causes of an issue or event in order to make recommendations to the government.