



The rafts are towed to bays and coves, where the strings of scallop shells are lowered from the rafts and suspended in the water to collect baby oysters that attach themselves to the shells.

After several years in the salt water a string of scallop shells collects a thick mantle of grease, mussels, and as many as 150 oysters.



Suspended oysters – a first for North America

Crane Cove Oyster Farm Ltd, the first oyster farm in Canada to raise oysters by a method of suspension, is harvesting its first crop on the Eskasoni Indian reserve in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Some 1,000 boxes of oysters, valued at about \$20,000, have been cultivated on scallop shells suspended from cables in the Bras D'Or Lakes. This is the first attempt in North America to cultivate oysters commercially by this method.

Mature oysters reproduce in the month of July, giving off what is termed a "spat-fall". The young, or spat, swim freely before attaching themselves to any smooth surface, where they remain for the rest of their lives or until marketed. Instead of sinking to the bottom of the lake as has occurred for centuries, the oysters now settle on scallop shells hanging on rafts in bays and coves. Although the crop now being harvested was suspended from cables, the company has since begun using mobile rafts for the operation.

Profit expected by 1976

The company, incorporated in 1971, and owned and operated by the Indian people of Eskasoni with company shares held 'in trust' by the band council for the 1,300 members of the reserve, hopes to realize a substantial profit by 1976.

This year's harvest involves only 4,800 strings of oysters, but 75,000 strings have been used to collect the 1973 oyster spat. It takes three to four years for an oyster to reach marketable size. This year's collection of spat could result in gross sales of \$500,000 in 1976.

Indian Affairs provides funds

The Department of Indian Affairs has made available close to \$775,000 in loans and grants for development of the Crane Cove Oyster Farm, under the guidance of a board of directors. The board is made up of four Indian members, two non-Indian businessmen and an Indian Affairs representative. It is hoped that eventually the board will be composed entirely of Indians.

Market hungry for oysters

Oysters harvested this autumn will be retailed locally. However, marketing surveys have been undertaken to determine Canadian demand for the Crane Cove product and studies conducted by officials of the federal Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce suggest a high demand for oysters which, with proper promotion, could provide the company with a market for ten to 12 million pounds of oysters a year.

Fishermen employed by the Crane Cove Oyster Farm on the Eskasoni Indian reserve in Cape Breton stop for an oyster break while packaging the company's first crop of oysters.

