

# Nova Scotia Indians run oyster farm

The Eskasoni Indian band on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, has gone into the oyster farming business in a unique way.

The Crane Cove Oyster Farm Ltd. on their reserve is the first in Canada to raise oysters by suspension methods, and the first in North America to attempt to cultivate oysters by this method on a commercial basis. The first crop was harvested last November. About 1,000 boxes of oysters, worth an estimated \$20,000, had been cultivated on scallop shells suspended from cables in the Bras D'Or Lakes.

Mature oysters reproduce in July giving off a spat-fall. These young oysters, or spat, swim freely before finally attaching to any smooth surface, where they remain for the rest of their natural 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. This first crop to be harvested was suspended from cables. The company has since begun using mobile rafts instead of the cable system.

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 1300 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 season's spat collection could result in gross sales of \$500,000 in 1976 when it reaches marketable size.

The Canadian 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.

Under the terms of financial assistance, in addition to guidance from a board of directors, the company works closely with the Department of the Environment's Fisheries Resource Development Branch which has provided the company with a marine biologist.

Non-Indian project manager, Mr. Lawrence Day, and company president, Mr. Irving Schwartz, also a member of the board of directors, are assisting the Indian people in developing this enterprise on a large scale. Indian understudies for the biologist, accountant and project manager have been selected from Eskasoni to ensure that trained personnel will be capable of taking over management in the future. It is hoped the board of directors will eventually become wholly Indian in membership.

Although the project is only in its infancy, the company provided a payroll of \$78,000 in 1972 creating approximately 17 man-years of employment to residents of the reserve. The company employs 16 men on a full-time basis with an additional 30 men hired at harvest and spat-collection time.

Oysters harvested this fall were retailed locally. However, marketing surveys have been undertaken to determine Canadian demand for the Crane Cove product. Studies conducted by officials of the Canadian Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce suggest a high demand for oysters which, with proper promotion, could provide the company with a market for 10 to 12 million pounds of oysters per year.

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## Container shipping to grow and grow

Movement of goods in giant containers will increase enormously by 1980 with important benefits to the Canadian economy, says a research study prepared for the Canadian Transport Commission.

The study says the volume of import and export freight moved in container boxes will more than double by 1980 while domestic container traffic will grow even faster. It suggests railways are in a better position than lorry companies to take

advantage of container business. Railways, the study says, already have the centralized organization and major terminals important in container movement.

The four-year study was made by a group of consultants, chiefly the Swan Wooster Engineering Co. of Vancouver and Matson Research Corp. of San Francisco. A report summarizing the study was issued by the commission at the end of December.

Container handlings at Canadian ports increased to the equivalent of 318,000 20-foot containers in 1972 from 8,700 in 1967. This is expected to grow to 800,000 by 1980.

The metal containers, packed with everything from raw commodities to high priced manufactured products, are easily shifted between trains, lorries and ships and provide protection from weather and theft. They are more easily stored and handled than other transport equipment. Current restrictions on the length of road vehicles gives railways an edge in competition for container business.

Many low-value commodities like lumber and paper would not move by container except under the best economic conditions, the study says.

The potential for Canadian container traffic is 900,000 units by 1980, about 50 times the current level. But the study indicates there is some doubt about this target being reached because of existing rail boxcar and lorry competition.

### Economic advantages

There are important economic advantages of using containers. Container facilities increase movement of freight at lower labor costs. The study group found that labor at a container port is 7.5 times to 15 times more productive than labor at a comparable conventional port. Labor at inland rail or lorry container terminals is 20 times more productive than at conventional inland terminals, the study says.

High speed container ships also help reduce the time in moving freight. Because of lower handling costs at ports and land terminals, the prospect of using North America as a land bridge between Europe and Asia is more attractive, the study suggests. Shippers could move goods to Canadian ports for rail or lorry movement to west coast ports on the way to Asia.

Simpler procedures may open overseas markets to small Canadian industries that might otherwise limit themselves to the domestic market. Better protection for perishable goods like vegetables might also mean better prices at the final destination.

The study says one drawback is reduced employment because of increase automation in ports and inland terminals. Another is the danger of some containers moving empty one way. This could be costly.

But over-all, the study concludes that the advantages have outweighed the disadvantages. Five Canadian ports handle export-import container traffic - Halifax, Nova Scotia, Saint John, New Brunswick, Quebec City, Montreal and Vancouver, British Columbia.