

ISLAND STUDIES AT UPEI: THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Below, you will find an excerpt from the UPEI Strategic Research Plan, demonstrating Island Studies' role in the University's research activity. This document was drafted in 1999. New developments, of course, are expanding our capacity.

1. Background and performance at UPEI: Island Studies is both an existing and an emerging area of strength at UPEI. In the most general sense, Island Studies could be defined to include all research focussed on Prince Edward Island. Increasingly, however, the term has come to be understood in the comparative context; that is, the study of Prince Edward Island in relation to other small islands world-wide. This expanded conceptual framework owes much to work undertaken by UPEI's Institute of Island Studies and supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. In all, the Institute has received four Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grants (a total of \$100,000), culminating in 1996 in the first-ever grant for an International Summer Institute to be awarded to an Atlantic Canadian university. Building on this core research funding, the Institute has been able to raise more than \$1million from numerous other sources in support of its international small-island initiatives. The result has been dozens of scholarly articles (in peer reviewed publications, as book chapters, or as invited contributions to international public policy journals); three books, one of them published by Macmillan, UK; and the creation of a powerful international network linking us with island-based academic activity in all parts of the world.

2. Foci, themes, and collaborations: To date, the leadership at UPEI in comparative Island Studies has come from the Department of Political Studies. As a result, a good deal of ground-breaking work has been done on the political economy of North Atlantic islands, with an emphasis on the creative use of jurisdictional capacity. In co-operation with the Department of English and the [L.M. Montgomery Institute](#), the Institute of Island Studies hosted (in 1998) the first in a series of international scholarly conferences on the Literature of Small Islands. UPEI has also been a leader in pioneering the use of electronic communications for island-based research. An area of emerging importance is that of island ecosystems, with an emphasis on environmental issues and sustainability. In co-operation with the United States National Research Council, the Institute has also been active in assessing knowledge economy capacity for Prince Edward Island. In short, research in Island Studies has the potential to include all major areas of academic enquiry as they pertain to islands, from issues of island governance and culture, through to environmental sustainability and emerging areas such as health research and innovation and technology.

3. Impact and Relevance to Prince Edward Island and Canada: The promise of Island Studies is that it has the power to combine two mutually reinforcing foci: *we can maintain and strengthen our research emphasis on Prince Edward Island while making a vital contribution to the emerging international field of small island studies.* In fact, we have the opportunity to help define the discipline. One major impact for Prince Edward Island, and the region, will be public policy insights resulting from a substantial body of

first-rate interdisciplinary research. The long-term objective will be to establish the University of Prince Edward as Canada's centre of excellence for the study of islands. To achieve this, we will need to move aggressively to build on the present infrastructure—including the Institute of Island Studies, the existing Academic Minor in Island Studies and the Master of Arts in Island Studies Program—by building upon existing research capacity and deepening the links with the various departments, schools, and faculties at UPEI.