



The Canadian Academy of
Travel & Tourism:

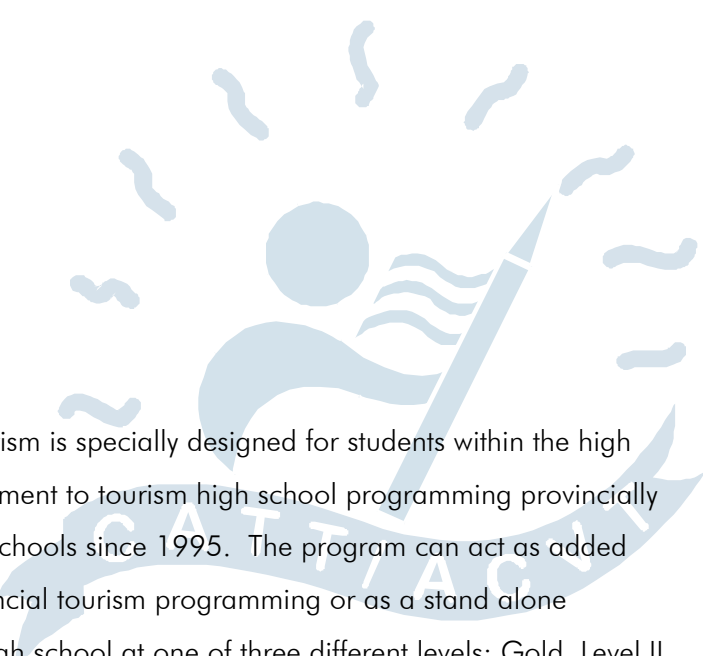
a focus on

Kensington Intermediate Senior High School

Kensington, Prince Edward Island



CATT Background



The Canadian Academy of Travel & Tourism is specially designed for students within the high school system as an introduction and/or enrichment to tourism high school programming provincially and territorially. It has operated in Canadian schools since 1995. The program can act as added value or enrichment to existing local and provincial tourism programming or as a stand alone course/credit. CATT can be introduced in a high school at one of three different levels: Gold, Level II and Level I.

CATT aims to promote the national importance of tourism among young people, to highlight the career opportunities in tourism and to develop skills through national standardized learning outcomes associated with curriculum learning activity sets for educators to use academically and experientially in their high schools.

Its mission is to introduce and promote careers in the tourism industry while students pursue their high school studies. Students enrolled in the program follow regular high school curriculum with a “specialization” in tourism. Academy students demonstrate learning outcomes referenced to the National Occupational Standards for Transferable Skills established by the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council, the Employability Skills 2000+ assembled by the Conference Board of Canada and Human Resource and Social Development Essential Skills.

Canadian Academy of Travel & Tourism: A Case Study

The following is an in-depth look at the Academy Gold-level program independently run within a secondary school setting. With a commitment to tourism studies and exploring careers in the industry, each Academy program is a unique operation, flavoured by the culture and the spirit of the surrounding community.

The School and the Community

Kensington Intermediate Senior High is a small school with a substantial commitment to the CATT Gold School Program. The school is located in the community of Kensington, halfway between Summerside and Charlottetown in central Prince Edward Island. Kensington has a total student population of 430 from grades 7 to 12. Of those, more than 50 are currently participating in the CATT Gold School Program.

Over one million tourists visit tiny PEI each year and Kensington is ideally situated for a travel and tourism program. The town of 1400 sits in a spot traditionally known as the “five lanes”, where five main roads converge. Each road leads to another town, and Kensington is no more than 20 minutes away from most of PEI’s main tourist attractions including Avonlea, the Anne of Green Gables house and Cavendish Beach.

Tourism is just one aspect of the PEI economy. The CATT Gold School Program focuses on the travel and tourism industry, but graduates of the program come away with a set of Essential Skills that will benefit them regardless of the career paths they choose. Essential Workplace skills are those skills that have been identified as the most important for successful employment. Rather than being specific to one industry, Essential Workplace skills are “transferable” to any career and throughout life.

Community and Industry Involvement

Kensington is a close knit town with a high level of community involvement. This sense of community is reflected in the fact that teachers and administrators have built community activities into almost every component of the CATT Gold School program. While on their work placements, Academy students interact with community members and have the opportunity to see first hand the benefits of volunteerism and community support, meeting program requirements at the same time. They are in high demand by community event organizers because of their skill set and level of commitment.

Kensington Intermediate Senior High CATT Gold School Program teachers and administrators have developed a number of opportunities for participants to interact with the local community and the wider tourism industry.

Community:

- **Community Brunch** Every two weeks, the community of New London holds a Community Brunch. Academy students regularly take part, working with organizers, creating advertising, and helping out with the brunch itself. This bi-weekly event gives students a chance to complete their work placements on a year round basis – an important opportunity in an area where the availability of placements is limited and most of the tourism is seasonal.
- **Relay for Life** The Relay for Life is a major annual fund raising event of the Canadian Cancer Society. During the relay, teams of participants gather at schools, fairgrounds or parks and take turns walking or running around the track all night long. The event requires a large number of volunteers for planning, advertising, operation, set-up, and tear-down. When local organizers realized that most of their core volunteers were over age 60, they approached the CATT Program and asked for advice on ways to attract younger volunteers. A community partnership developed and now CATT students, under the direction of school staff advisors, have taken over the event. They execute the planning, promoting, and running of the event and have adapted this hands-on experience as a CATT Event Planning module. In the time since CATT participants have become involved, money raised by the Relay for Life has increased nearly tenfold.
- **The East Coast Music Awards** The East Coast Music Awards are a major event for the Canadian music industry. Traditionally, the event was marketed to an adult demographic, with alcohol served at most functions. When event organizers decided to make the event more suitable for younger music fans, they created some all-ages activities and designed a poster to promote a concert by a local musician aimed at youth. As part of the poster development, organizers took the mock-up to Kensington to get the opinion of CATT students. The students gave the poster design a failing grade, but continued to work with music awards promoters. CATT students designed a different poster, which was adopted by the awards group. Interest in the event grew, and CATT students partnered with the provincial SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving) organization to create awareness and interest in the event, and to sell tickets.

Industry:

Working in partnership with the business community provides useful and relevant experience for the Academy students. In addition to providing a “good fit” for co-operative education placements, a relationship with a local business also provides students with practical experience which can be applied to projects and programs completed at school. In addition, volunteer work placements give students an introduction to the world of work, and a good idea of what is expected of employees on the job.

Local Industry Involvement:

Kensington students participating in the program are in great demand by local tourism businesses because of their knowledge of the industry, the hands on experience that they have gained in the community, and industry certificates that they earn as part of the program. This small community is an ideal setting for CATT and industry to work together. Many parents of students in the program own local tourism businesses and offer a supportive environment for the students while they complete their co-op placements.

Over the years, local businesses have come up with some unique ways to take advantage of the knowledge and enthusiasm of Kensington's Academy students. The local author of a new book on customer service worked with CATT Gold Students to field test the text book. This collaboration gave the students the opportunity to see another tourism-related industry at work, and the author incorporated the student's feedback into the final copy.

CATT staff at Kensington also work closely with the Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island (TIAPEI). This organization of travel and tourism industry professionals is dedicated to the promotion and development of all kinds of tourism in PEI. TIAPEI provides Kensington with resources, speakers and suggestions for curriculum.

CATT and the Kensington Curriculum

The CATT Gold School program has been offered at Kensington since 2000, and travel and tourism teachers at Kensington take full advantage of the on-line and paper based modules provided directly by the CTHRC. They also rely heavily on training and certification resources developed by the CTHRC and industry professionals, especially *emerit* Tourism Essentials.

Over the years, the ten teachers involved in the program have also looked for "natural links" between CATT requirements and provincial curricula. After initially taking two years to "ramp up", teachers found ways to meet both the program requirements and PEI provincial curriculum. While the connections between travel and tourism and geography, history, computers, economics, and French are obvious, instructors at Kensington have come up with some creative ways to build CATT components into almost every subject in the curriculum.

- **English** Students in the program learn and practise the important skills of summary and critique by working with an article from a business magazine. English takes on a new relevance when students work on current, informative materials that they have chosen themselves.
- **Biology** The study of bacteria is included in PEI provincial curriculum. Bundling the study of bacteria with the CATT Food Safe component gives students an opportunity to combine the academic study of bacteria with the CATT requirement. Students also leave the module with a transferable job skill since the FoodSafe certificate is a nationally recognized credential.
- **Physics** The Ramada Crystal Palace is a major tourist destination in Moncton, New Brunswick. The property includes themed suites and an indoor amusement park with dozens of rides, movie theatres, indoor golf, and a roller coaster. Since the provincial physics curriculum already includes "roller coaster" motion physics and Moncton is a short drive from Kensington, a field trip to the resort gives students an opportunity for hands-on application of motion physics while examining the operation of a major resort and its economic impact on a local community.

The CATT program offers teachers a new perspective on education, emphasizing the current focus on transferable workplace skills, which Academy graduates can apply in their future careers and in their day-to-day lives. Teachers and administrators at the school have used the CATT philosophies of focused learning, practical hands-on experience, and a "tool kit" of transferable essential workplace skills as the basis of their own unique Agricultural Certificate program. Parents and students recognize the benefits of an education that combines focused training and transferable skills with academic studies. Nearly 80% of all students in Kensington now take part in either the CATT or Agricultural program.

Kensington Students

Students in Kensington have embraced the CATT program over the past ten years. The program is well-respected by the community, and it is not unusual for two or three children from one family to complete the certificate. Academy students and graduates say that the hands-on experience, workplace skills and certificates that they receive in the CATT program help them in summer and full-time employment, and in many aspects of their lives after finishing their education.

While few students from Kensington go directly into college or university travel and tourism programs on completion of the CATT Gold School certificate, a large number apply the skills that they have developed in the program to tourism related careers after completing other college or university programs. Graduates of the Kensington program have gone on to careers in event planning, portfolio development, and business. Most students in the program are academic achievers, and a high percentage of students who complete the program have been awarded scholarships in PEI, other provinces in Canada, and Britain because of the skills, knowledge and volunteer experience that they gained through the program. Students who do not go on to post-secondary studies find that the personal and life skills they learn in the CATT Gold School program help them to live fuller, more productive lives by increasing their knowledge of event planning, budgeting, safety awareness, communications, and a variety of other skills.

Those involved in CATT develop a sense of “family” within the program and learn to appreciate all members of their community. Students are given opportunities to travel to other provinces and abroad, bringing geography, cultures, and economies to life. Two of the most important outcomes of the Kensington CATT Gold School program are the communications skills and self-confidence that students develop.

Opportunities to develop and demonstrate skills are an important part of the CATT Program. A career portfolio is a permanent record of a student’s academic accomplishments, transferable skills, experience, certificates, and work samples. They are much more in-depth than resumes, and provide proof of a student’s accomplishments. Career portfolios are quickly becoming an important tool used by job seekers and students who are applying for post-secondary education and scholarships. The creation of a personal portfolio is an essential element of the CATT Gold School Program, and one of the final outcomes of the Gold Program is a complete, professional quality career portfolio.

In 2009, an unexpected opportunity to use communications skills and knowledge gained in the Gold program developed for Kensington students. In the weeks before students were scheduled to attend an International Students Conference in Charlottetown, they had been working on the portfolio module of the program. An outside consultant worked with the students to be sure that their portfolios were complete and professional, and that they had a good understanding of the way portfolios work and how to maintain them. The consultant was scheduled to speak about Career Portfolios at the conference, but was prevented from attending by unforeseen circumstances. The consultant had gained enough confidence in the knowledge and presentation skills of the Kensington group that she asked them to present her workshop to the conference.

The other international students at the conference were given an opportunity to see what students in their age group could accomplish, and the Academy students were able to demonstrate the presentation skills and accomplishments that they had developed through the CATT Gold School program.

Ongoing Benefits of CATT in Kensington

Kensington Intermediate Senior High continues to be an important member of the growing CATT family. The Gold School program is flexible enough to meet the unique needs of this school and its community. The obvious benefit is to the CATT students, who graduate from the program armed with the skills they need to succeed in life and the workforce, whether they pursue a career in tourism or in another field. The CATT program also offers advantages to the entire town by providing energetic, enthusiastic workers for tourism businesses now and in the future, and by fostering a growing sense of community through involving the students in local events and charity work. The CATT Gold program at Kensington Intermediate Senior High will continue to grow in its school and community for years to come.