

Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and notes on
Newfoundland and Labrador's
Intangible Cultural
Heritage Program

Dec 2012 – Jan 2013
ISSN 1918-7408

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ICH Needs Assessment Survey

By Nicole Penney

The Intangible Cultural Heritage Office will be conducting a province wide needs assessment survey in the coming weeks.

This survey will provide the ICH Office with information required to ensure we are effectively responding to community needs when it comes to the preservation, documentation and celebration of Newfoundland and Labrador's intangible cultural heritage.

We hope to speak with a range of cultural institutions across the province such as archives, museums, heritage/historical societies, churches and community groups. By surveying these groups we hope to find out which intangible cultural heritage projects they wish to take on and how the ICH office can offer assistance.

Another goal of the survey is to highlight those aspects of intangible cultural heritage that are at risk of being lost.

In order to prevent this loss from occurring, the survey also asks respondents what kind of ICH training and workshops they would find effective in their communities.

The survey will be conducted mainly over the telephone and will reach various cultural institutions from across the province. If you would like to complete the survey, feel free to contact Nicole Penney toll-free at 1(888) 739-1892 ex. 6.

Photo: Workshop participant Annie McEwen at one of the HFNL's digital audio recording workshops, 2010. Photo by Dale Jarvis.

From Inside the Cable Company: Recollections from Wallace Rendell

By Lisa Wilson

Over the past few months, the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador has been assisting the town of Heart's Content with the planning of their heritage district designation. In order to provide support to this process, I have been connecting with individuals who have their roots in this community. Many present and former residents have been sharing with me why this town is important to them, what physical and cultural changes the town has seen over time, and what vision they have for its future.

One thing that I've noticed is how much the residents respect the heritage of Heart's Content, and how they hope that this sentiment is carried into future generations. The new heritage district designation plan is just one of many ways to help celebrate local history while raising awareness about historic architecture and community development in rural Newfoundland.

My most recent visit was with Wallace Rendell, who is an advocate for the heritage district. Wallace was born and raised in Heart's Content and is one of the first people I've spoken to who had direct ties to the Western Union cable company. His father and mother both worked for the company, which gave him special access to the private tennis court and library that the cable office had for its employees and their families.

During our discussion, Wallace talked about how having access to these resources helped him to develop a worldview by showing him how much there was to discover outside of the comforts of Heart's Content.

"I was unbelievably fortunate to have access to all these things, in particular the library. I remember in our library there was a large table full of magazines. There were twenty magazines: London Illustrated News, Red Book, Harper's Bazaar...things that we had total access to all the time."



On the topic of growing up in this community, Wallace stated that "life was so incredibly full, it was unbelievable. When the spring came there was the trout fishing. We had a small boat on the pond, and we had a small sailboat on the harbour. I started my sailing career really early in this little wee boat, sixteen feet long with two sails. In addition to that there was baseball and soccer and all the ordinary games that went on, running around and exploring. I would say for a child, there was total freedom."

Wallace also spoke to me about his childhood home, which is one of a few cable staff houses that still stand in Heart's Content. These houses were built in the 1880s by the cable company to accommodate members of the staff. His family rented this historic building off of the company, and they remained there for his entire upbringing. Now privately owned, this house has

been fully restored, making it a notable icon for the Heart's Content heritage district. Wallace

described what it was like to see his childhood home again as an adult, and how it brought to mind many "...memories of such a wonderful time."

Speaking with him was interesting as his fondness of Heart's Content resonated through all of his thoughts and reflections. With his unique perspectives and stories, he was able to demonstrate the ways in which the built heritage of Heart's Content lives on to tell a story of both culture and industry in this Newfoundland outpost.

Photos by Lisa Wilson.



Newfiki: A celebration of East-European cultures in Newfoundland

By *Christina Robarts*

The Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador (HFNL) is currently working on “Newfiki” - a research project as part of a plan to explore and celebrate the culture of new East European-Canadians from the former socialist countries in Newfoundland.

“Newf” comes from “Newfoundland” while “iki”—is a common ending in Russian which helps to make diminutive forms of nouns. So, newfiki is a nice and fun way to talk about Newfoundlanders who speak Russian.

The project, in cooperation with Dr. Mariya Lesiv (Memorial University Department of Folklore), focuses on diaspora groups established by recent immigrants to Canada from the former Eastern Europe Socialist block (Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Slovakia and Poland, etc). It concentrates on the ways newcomers respond and contribute to their new locations, creating a sense of belonging and identity.

A particular focus will be placed on the ways that new immigrants selectively maintain or abandon their Eastern European beliefs and practices, while simultaneously absorbing the values and ideas of Canadian Society. This can be in the form of stories or any other means of cultural expression (music, poetry, objects, etc.).



The oral history project will take the form of interviews conducted by Christina Robarts, a public folklore intern with HFNL and a graduate student in Memorial University’s Department of Folklore.

These interviews, along with any pictures gathered, will be added to Memorial University’s Digital Archives Initiative, where they will be available to the general public.

Two events are also planned for Multiculturalism Week on March 20 and 21. March 20th is World Storytelling Day, and on that night The Rooms will host an evening of storytelling where new Canadian storytellers will be interviewed on a stage. These stories will focus on their own personal experience narratives of becoming new Canadians.

The second night will be a cultural concert night, which will celebrate music, song, story, poetry and food, allowing people to experience various aspects of different cultures. Workshops on making perogies are also planned.

“The goal is to build bridges between communities to promote intercultural understanding,” says Dale Jarvis, Intangible Cultural Heritage Development Officer with HFNL. “The sharing of stories—grounded in everyday life and including the voices of those who are not in positions of power—is linked to building a stronger civil memory and a better understanding of citizenship in twenty-first century Canada.”

If you are interested in getting involved by sharing your stories or experiences as a new Canadian, please email christina@heritagefoundation.ca

or call, toll free, 1-888-739-1892 ext. 7.

Photo taken by Christina Robarts Jan. 20 2013, of a Matryoshka doll (Russian nesting doll) owned by Irina Glazkova.

The Newfoundland Pony Sparks Interest in Local History

Newfoundland Pony Society and Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador explore the history of our oldest companion

By Joelle Carey

Long before modern farming and transportation technology were introduced to our island, the need for substantial help to survive was greater than today. The harsh climate which faced our ancestors was not easily combated, but there was one saving grace which helped create our province as we know it: an animal which evolved throughout a 400 year span of our history to become adapted to our climate and rocky terrain was there to help - the Newfoundland Pony.



In the past, Newfoundland Ponies were found throughout most of Newfoundland and Labrador but now their numbers are dwindling. This winter, the Newfoundland Pony Society (NPS), in partnership with the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador (HFNL), wants to find out how many ponies are left throughout our province by conducting a census and an oral history. The Newfoundland Pony is now viewed as critically endangered by Rare Breeds Canada and if this unique animal is to be preserved as part of our heritage, accurate numbers of living specimens must be obtained.

"This is an important project to gather and consolidate information on Newfoundland Ponies in the province, to get an accurate number of how many ponies are left on the island, and continue to build momentum for the Society," says Jack Harris, MP and NPS Board member. He was also the first to bring the issue of recognizing the Newfoundland Pony as a Heritage Animal before the provincial House of Assembly.

Working with HFNL, the NPS also hopes to document the history of Newfoundland Ponies in our province. By conducting an oral history project in conjunction with the census, the NPS will discover how these animals have been incorporated into the lives of our people as well as why they were so important to the development of our island.

"Newfoundland ponies are a part of the culture and traditions of the province," says Dale Jarvis, the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador's Intangible Cultural Heritage development officer. "We are partnering with the Newfoundland Pony Society on this project because the stories, knowledge and history associated with Newfoundland ponies are just as important to conserve as the breed itself."

Conducting the research for NPS is Joelle Carey, a Masters in Folklore student from Memorial University. If you, or someone you know, has an experience with Newfoundland Ponies that you would like to share, or if you are an owner of a pony, please contact Joelle by phoning 1-888-739-1892 ext. 5. Or by email, joelle@heritagefoundation.ca.

The Rooms is offering a 3 Day Adult Workshop

Scrapbooking your Stories

Tuesdays: February 19, February 26 and March 5

2:30 – 4:30 pm

How can objects and documents inspire your story? In this three part hands-on workshop you'll be able to start scrapbooking your personal history. Hear from experts on journaling, sketching and interviewing while preserving your memories for years to come. The workshop fee is \$60 and pre-registration is required. The fee includes most materials; please bring your own scrapbook. To register, contact Visitor Services at 757-8090.

Skateboarding Collection added to ICH Inventory

by Nicole Penney



Twenty years ago skateboarding in St. John's was a much different scene than it is today. From the 1990s to the early 2000s street skateboarding was at the peak of popularity. Although there were city by-laws, which made it an offence for a person to operate a skateboard in many public spaces, skaters vehemently resisted this.

During that time, downtown St. John's was not recognizable without pockets of skateboarders. The clack of wheels along asphalt or the scrape of a board down a metal railing were common background noises in popular skate spots like the War Memorial, Atlantic Place and the Colonial Building.

Skateboarders were looked upon as a nuisance in the city and many measures were taken to stop them. For example, fines were issued and the War Memorial was "capped" with stone while the large stair set in front of Atlantic Place was reduced to just a few steps.

As Kendra Martin states in *Portraits of Street Culture*, "deterrents have been set up around the monument and skating is supposedly not permitted. The search for a place to skate and hangout is a constant hassle, as skateboarding is not legally permitted in the downtown area."

Many of the measures to deter skateboarding in the city were ineffective and real change did not come until the first skate park was constructed behind the old Memorial Stadium in 1998. In his film, *The Monument*, Nik Sexton describes the measures taken to prevent skateboarding in St. John's, "they capped it (the War Memorial) which just messed everything up. After that everyone stopped hanging out downtown and really now it's all at the skate park."

Sexton is a local filmmaker and skateboarder who came up during the height of street skating in St. John's. Growing up in Newfoundland, Sexton began making skateboard videos under the title "Motion". Between 1998 and 2002 Sexton directed four skateboarding videos, primarily shot in St. John's, which offer a glimpse of a subculture that no longer exists.

As a means of preserving the memory of street skateboarding, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Office is excited to announce it will be making these skate videos available via the new ICH skateboarding collection on Memorial University's Digital Archives Initiative.

The four videos titled *Visual Underground*, *East Technique*, *East Coast Assassins* and *The Monument*, were only made available locally when first released. For the first time these videos will be made available for viewing in their entirety to a potential worldwide audience.

If you happen to have any archival skateboarding materials from this time, such as photographs and video, please feel free to get in touch with the ICH Office. We would love to have your materials to add to our growing skateboarding collection.

Works Cited:

Martin, Kendra. 1997. *Portraits of Street Culture*. St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Petrick, Stephen. 2002. "Skateboarders take sport to screen". St. John's: The Telegram.

Sexton, Nik. 2002. *The Monument*. St. John's.

