

Surviving in Rural Newfoundland

Newfoundland and Labrador Adult
Basic Education Social History Series

A Joint Project of
The Writers' Alliance of
Newfoundland and Labrador
and Cabot College Literacy Office

In This Series...

Book 1 - Timelines of Newfoundland and Labrador

Book 2 - Facing the New Economy

Book 3 - Learning About the Past

Book 4 - Desperate Measures *The Great Depression in Newfoundland and Labrador*

Book 5 - Health and Hard Time

Book 6 - Multicultural History

Book 7 - Surviving in Rural Newfoundland

Book 8 - The Struggle for Work in the Great Depression

Book 9 - How Long do I Have to Wait?

Book 10 - William Pender *The Story of a Cooper*

Book 7: Surviving in Rural Newfoundland

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Foreword

In 1994, the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador and Cabot College Literacy Office combined to produce a series of Newfoundland books on tape. Under the general title *Increasing Access to Newfoundland Literature*, the tapes and accompanying book *A Woman's Labour*, offered ABE Level 1 students and instructors, as well as the blind and the general public, an accessible and proven set of local literacy materials. The success of that project led to a second collaboration: the *Newfoundland and Labrador Adult Basic Education Social History Series*.

A major difference between the two projects is that while Newfoundland Books on Tape dealt with previously existing material, the essays in the *Social History Series* have been newly created by five professional writers. The prime objective, however, remains the same: to provide adult learners with meaningful literacy materials drawn from their own vibrant culture.

Topics in the series were chosen for their human and social interest and their importance in shaping who we are today. In addition to historical topics, current social and economic issues such as the closure of fish plants are also examined in an attempt to provide a contemporary perspective.

The five writers employed on the project carried out extensive research in public and university archives and libraries. Some also conducted personal interviews. Many of the essays contain new and fascinating historical research. Often the pieces deal with controversial subject matter: the Great Depression, Commission of Government, workfare, the erosion of social programs, poaching and the future of our rural communities. In an effort to dispel the notion that history is "dry and dull," the approach is fresh and provocative. The object is to inform, entertain and, in conjunction with the accompanying notes and questions, to effectively stimulate lively discussion among literacy students. Consequently, this series will also be of interest and practical use to the general public and, especially, to students.

The intended audience for the *Social History Series* is ABE Level 1 students. Because of the disparate subject matter, however, the essays are written in varying degrees of reading difficulty. In particular, students may need help with some of the quoted source material as this sometimes involves archaic syntax and vocabulary.

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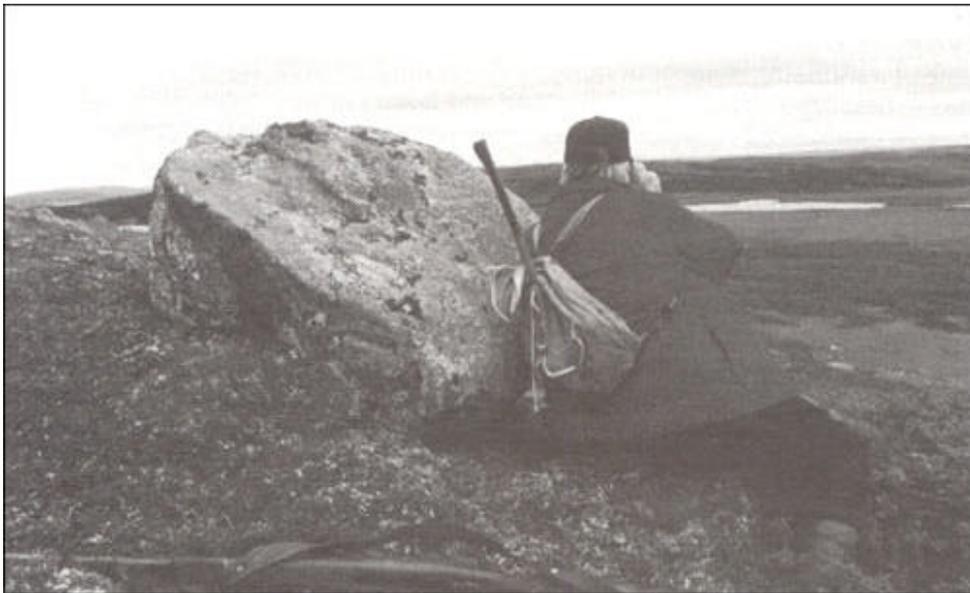
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The *Newfoundland and Labrador Adult Basic Education Social History Series* is a joint project of the Cabot College Literacy Office and the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Poachers, Jiggers and Horse Thieves
Tradition and the Law in Rural Newfoundland

by Kathryn Welbourn



Hunting and fishing are a regular part of life in rural Newfoundland.

Introduction

Rural Newfoundlanders have always made at least part of their living from the things around them. They cut wood in the winter to build their boats and to build and heat their homes. They hunted moose and birds and snared rabbits for food in the fall. They jigged cod for the winter. People kept cows, chickens and sheep for food. They picked berries and grew vegetables. They followed a cycle of work that kept time with the seasons.

In fact, during the Great Depression, rural Newfoundlanders were expected to fend for themselves. In the 1930s dole rations (social assistance) were cut during the fishing season. People in the outports were told to feed their families with fish until the end of the fall.

But the rules are changing in rural Newfoundland. **Natural resources** such as timber have been used up by pulp and paper mills. In 1992 the northern cod fishery was closed. Groundfish stocks had been destroyed by overfishing and **technology**. Rabbit populations were low and salmon stocks were just starting to come back.

At the same time, new industries such as tourism wanted a share of the natural resources. Hunting and fishing guides wanted easy access to wildlife. They wanted a share of a shrinking number of hunting and fishing licences. Towns and villages tried to beautify and **modernize** the land and homes in their areas. They hoped to bring in tourists and create new jobs in their communities. The laws for local use of natural resources and land are changing to suit these new problems and demands.

For example, the laws concerning farm animals have been changing since the 1980s. That's when many communities became towns or villages. Farm animals used to roam freely along village streets and in local meadows. They must be fenced in most communities now. Animals such as cows and chickens have been banned from many towns.

In the 1990s, the amount of firewood and the number of logs people could take were cut back. Licences were needed to catch even a small bucket of herring, mackerel or squid. In 1994, government workers began calling the cod food fishery a **recreational** or sport fishery. It was closed for the first time in Newfoundland history that year. A licence may be needed to jig a few cod for the winter if it opens again. Even the childhood pleasure of fishing for conners off the wharf became against the law.

There are thousands of new and old wildlife, fishery, and land use rules. In the 1990s the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) teamed up with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and provincial wildlife officers. Their goal was to crack down on Newfoundlanders who broke these laws. They declared a war on **poaching**.

Officers began using **infra-red glasses** so they could see poachers in the dark. They went undercover. They hid in the woods and followed fishermen out on the water. Telephone hotlines have been set up to give the public a chance to help catch poachers.

This crackdown comments on how people should and do make their living. It assumes that rural Newfoundlanders no longer need a freezer full of fish or a moose in the fall. They have UI and welfare to get them through hard times. Electricity and oil heat homes. Grocery stores provide meat and fish. Regular jobs provide cash. The **traditional** way of

life is no longer needed or wanted. The province's natural resources should be saved for businesses like logging or tourism.

But is this true? A higher percentage of people hunt and spend time hunting in Newfoundland than anywhere else in Canada.¹ A provincial report shows most Newfoundlanders who hunt and fish do so for food, not just for fun. The same report says that poaching in the province continues to be very high. Most Newfoundlanders believe their neighbours poach animals and fish for food, not for sale.²

In 1994 Newfoundlanders were charged with more than 3,000 fishery and wildlife offenses.³ The cod fishery stayed closed that year. Unemployment in rural Newfoundland was at least 20 percent. In some communities it was as high as 80 percent.

Watson Lane sees this as an attack on the traditional Newfoundland way of life. Lane is a retired school principal from Twillingate. He is the last person you would expect to thumb his nose at the law. Lane has always lived and worked in rural Newfoundland. He says local people are slowly being cut off from the natural world around them. In 1994 he started the Alexander Bay Association of Hunters and Fisher Persons. The group believes rural Newfoundlanders are being blamed for the province's problems.

"It is not the Newfoundland man, woman and child going out in the boat on Sunday afternoon that did all this," says Lane. "I think the authorities are obsessed with trying to cure all our resource and economic evils by banning our cultural **heritage**." Lane points out that while local people were being arrested for jigging, company trawlers were allowed to take a by-catch of cod. As firewood quotas were cut, pulp and paper companies clearcut forests.

Lane points out that while local people were being arrested for jigging, company trawlers were allowed to take a by-catch of cod. As firewood quotas were cut, pulp and paper companies clearcut forests.

Lane's group is not anti-**environmental**. It believes in saving the island's resources through good management. The group does not support people who poach for money. But they don't support coming down hard on local people as they try to go about their traditional work.

"The atmosphere here has become poisoned. Nobody wants to talk to anyone anymore about what they are doing, because what they are doing is often against the law," Lane says. "We have to try to get away with it. We have to watch out for the police. It puts shivers through you... men out at night so they can jig a few cod."

Ernie Collins worked for DFO in Newfoundland until 1995. Collins was brought up in an outport. He knows local people believe rural activities like cod jigging are a "God-given right." Collins has sympathy for people who are caught and charged for jigging cod and other offenses. But he defends the need to crack down on local people who break the rules. "When you have a major problem with the **conservation** of resources, you just

¹ Canadian Wildlife Service report. "The importance of wildlife to Canadians," 1993.

² Provincial report for the Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Division, Department of Culture, Recreation and Youth. "Wildlife related activities, attitudes and knowledge of the Newfoundland and Labrador public," prepared by Bonny L. Hill, August, 1984.

³ This number is a combination of provincial wildlife and DFO statistics for 1994/1995.

cannot carry on with traditions," Mr. Collins says. "Traditions will sometimes have to be changed or, indeed, ended."

This leads to an important question. What happens if the laws change but people's needs and habits do not? What does this mean for the people who live and work in rural Newfoundland?

The Turkey Lady

I admit it. I keep turkeys. I built their pen behind the shed. Several plum trees hide the pen on one side. A stack of wood hides it on the other. I piled the junks seven feet high. You'd have to stand on my front step to see those turkeys now. They are nicely hidden from the few cars that pass on the road. The dog catcher won't see them, nor will anyone else who might want to turn me in.

I'm not the only one in this little village who keeps illegal farm animals. Mike on the hill has a shed full of gobblers. Mrs. Pinsent keeps her chickens to herself. Ed got several pheasants this year. Next year he plans to sneak in a pig.

The town passed a law outlawing farm animals here in the 1980s. They passed the law about the same time they burned down all the outhouses and put water and sewer services in. They re-zoned the cove from a rural to a residential area. You can't have farm animals in a **residential** area. Animals smell. They bring the property values down. One day farm animals were a regular part of life, the next they were against the law. Just like that.

Mrs. Burns' chickens were the first to go. She was given 24 hours to get rid of them. Her laying hens, her prize roosters—everything gone in a night. Her husband had to kill them. She stood looking out the window while he did it. There were tears in her eyes. Mrs. Burns froze some of her chickens. She gave the rest away.

Old Mr. Dunphy used to keep a nice cow in the meadow. His neighbours talked about that cow all summer long. "Now there's a beautiful animal," they'd say. When Mr. Dunphy's cow was taken to the butcher, his neighbours rushed to get in line. Everyone wanted a nice piece of Bessy for their Sunday table.

Fresh eggs, ham, lamb in the spring and mutton in the fall, even wool for those who still spun it. Almost everyone had animals in this cove. They kept them for money and for pleasure.

The town has found these new laws hard to enforce. Farm animals keep creeping back in—a chicken here, a goat over there, a few geese along the road. The animals increase until someone complains. Then the town cracks down on the owners.

A few years ago the Memorial Day parade was the death of about a dozen pigs and sheep. The band came marching down the little road. Everyone was heading for the war memorial. The uniforms looked smart. The band was playing a cheerful tune. It was a splendid sight. As the parade passed the old lodge, it picked up a few new members. Mrs. King's pigs and sheep ran out of their shed and followed behind the band. They tagged along nicely, almost in single file. The crowd started to snicker. The parade came to a halt. The men in the band waved their arms and beat their drums. But the pigs and sheep kept coming. The animals followed right to the war memorial. They stayed until the service was done.

A few days later the Kings had too much pork and mutton. Mrs. King couldn't see what all the fuss was about. She said the animal laws seemed to be a nice substitute for a sense of humor.

And it's not just the animals. A few days ago I saw old Mr. Alan bring in a few cod off the water. That's illegal now. I didn't report him. I ran down to the wharf and he gave me a fish. I buy wood from young John. He has a permit to cut for his own house but he sells what he doesn't need around town. He gives some of the wood to his grandfather. It's all illegal.

What about Albert? I know he's on welfare right now. I also know he's painting Mr. Quinty's house. He's committing fraud right in front of his neighbours. Albert better not cross anyone, because that's a real problem. If you make someone angry and you've got a few chickens or you've got a few cod in the freezer, they've got something on you. This summer Mr. Jones warned me to stop complaining about the fence he is building across the old graveyard path. "You want to keep those turkeys, don't you?" is what he said.

Our little town isn't much different than any other small place in this province. We don't feel guilty about the little things we do to break the law. If we are quiet about it, it's because we don't want to get caught. We're just a bunch of criminals I guess.

(This account is based on the people and events of two small Newfoundland towns. One town is on the west coast. The other town is on the Avalon Peninsula. The names have all been changed, but the crimes are real.)

Troy Gilbert

Troy Gilbert hooked the salmon with his fly. He played it nicely but the fish struggled on the line. The fly slipped out of its mouth and the salmon twisted away. The young man had been fishing for more than three hours. It was getting cold by the river. Troy cursed and looked down into the water. There it was. The salmon was still there. It lay in a pool in the shadow of the trees. Troy cut the fly off his line. He put on a big double hook.

Jiggers are illegal. They catch fish too easily. Flies give fishermen the fun and challenge of trying to play out a salmon. They cut down on the number of salmon caught. Salmon conservation and sports fishing groups say Newfoundlanders must stop looking at salmon as food. They must try to see the fish in a different way. Salmon must be saved for sport. Sports fishermen will pay a lot of money to travel to Newfoundland to go fly fishing.

Twenty-two-year-old Troy wasn't interested in being a good sportsman. He doesn't care about tourists. He has lived in St. Fintan's his whole life. He has always caught a few salmon on the Crabbe's River. Troy wanted that fish. His mother had asked him to get one for dinner. Troy lowered the line into the water. The salmon went for the double hook. Troy jigged it. Troy wasn't alone on the river. As soon as he pulled his fish out of the water two Wildlife officers came out of the trees.

"Mr. Gilbert, stop," they called.

Troy knew he was in trouble. The young man dropped his fish. He took off into the woods. The Wildlife officers were right behind him. Troy has a limp. He was sick as a child. But Troy knows the woods. He has been hunting and fishing since he was a small boy. It didn't take him long to lose the officers. He cut through the trees. Troy made it home to his mother's house before they could catch him.

That night some local children told Troy they saw his salmon floating down the river on its back. There was a big cut in its throat.

A few days later the wildlife officers came to the door. They had been hiding in the trees and watching Troy while he was fishing. The officers had taken pictures of the young man jigging his fish. They charged Troy with illegal salmon fishing. Troy went to court and pleaded guilty.

"They treated me like I was up for murder," Troy says. "They cross-examined me four or five times. It made me feel like I was a criminal. It was like I had done something they had never heard tell of. They had me down as a real outlaw, like I had done something shocking in their eyes. But all I did was jig a salmon," the young man says.

The judge gave Troy a \$4,000 fine or 60 days in jail. Troy is not allowed to go within 300 meters of a salmon river for two years. That's part of his **probation**. Troy can't pay the fine. He only makes \$150 a week at the local dairy farm where he works. He can't keep the other part of his probation either. The Crabbe's River runs right through St. Fintan's. Troy's house is closer than 300 meters to the river.

"I'd have to stay home and sit on my step all day just to keep the probation," Troy says. "I have to go to work—it's too close to the river. I have to cut wood for Mom—cross the river again. If I was to get sick tomorrow, I'd have to die on the doorstep or cross the river. So I have to watch out for the wildlife [officers] all the time."

Troy will try to work out a deal with the court to pay his fine very slowly. If not, the young man says he's going to jail. This kind of talk upsets Troy's mother. Mrs. Gilbert's husband died recently. Troy is the last of her children left living at home. "He helps me out. I need him with me," she says. "I can't believe what they are doing to this boy. What did he do that was so wrong?"

Mr. Edwards

Mr. Edwards is in jail. He is doing time for poaching. Mr. Edwards is a tall, middle-aged man with a family to support. When the wildlife officers caught him with the illegal moose, he knew he'd be going to jail. Mr. Edwards can't afford to pay any fine. And besides, he doesn't think he did anything wrong.

"I'm not a poacher," he says. "I honestly don't think I am."

In fact, Mr. Edwards is a respected man in his community. His neighbours are upset that he has been sent to jail.

Mr. Edwards always kills a moose for the winter. He shares part of it with his relatives and the rest goes in his freezer. Mr. Edwards is proud of his ability to provide for his family. He is a skilled hunter and a hard-working man. Spending time in the woods is a pleasure to him.

Mr. Edwards didn't draw a moose licence this year. But he always carries his rifle into the woods. He saw a moose while he was checking his rabbit snares. It was a nice-sized bull moose. The animal was in close range. His family would be glad to have the meat during the winter. The temptation was too great. Mr. Edwards shot the moose and hauled it out of the woods. The officers caught him as he was putting the animal into the back of his truck.

Mr. Edwards knew that what he was doing was against the law. But he didn't think he'd get caught. Wildlife officers didn't use to patrol his community so often. Mr. Edwards believes every Newfoundlander that needs a moose for the winter should be allowed to take one. "Poacher" is a word he uses for people who kill more moose than they can eat. A poacher is someone who kills an animal for fun and leaves the meat to spoil in the woods. Mr. Edwards believes killing a moose just for a trophy is wrong. Sports hunting shouldn't be allowed as long as there are local people who need the meat, he says.

Mr. Edwards doesn't want anyone to know his real name or the name of the small village where he lives. It already appeared once in the local newspaper. Even though he says he didn't do anything wrong, Mr. Edwards feels shame about being in jail. No one in his family has ever been behind bars. He has always seen himself as a law-abiding man. He just wants to do his time quietly and then go back home to his family.

Frank McCarthy

Frank McCarthy broke the law and he doesn't care who knows about it. In July 1994, the 49-year-old inshore fisherman from Too Good Arm, Notre Dame Bay became the first Newfoundlander in history to be charged for jigging a few cod to feed his family.

Frank brings his small wooden boat to a stop. It's cold on the water today. But Frank doesn't mind. It's good to be out of the house. Frank drops his jigger over the side and starts pulling for cod. Just a few months earlier Frank was arrested for jigging on this very spot.

The inshore fisherman remembers every minute of that day. It changed his life forever. Frank had been out on the water for several hours when he saw the DFO boat. He knew they'd seen him when they turned and started "sneaking" in around the cove.

"I could have gotten away," says Frank. "But why should I run? I'm not a criminal. I just didn't think I was doing anything wrong."

In the spring of 1994 the federal government closed the food fishery for the first time ever. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) shut it down to save cod stocks. The Minister of Fisheries also said that it would be easier to convince other countries to stop fishing cod **commercially** if Newfoundlanders gave up jigging for food. Then in June DFO announced it would give out jigging licences to tour boat operators so that tourists could jig cod for fun.

At the same time, trawler companies were still allowed to take a by-catch of cod. That means that companies could catch and sell cod as a small amount of the other kind of fish they were trawling for. Inshore fishermen like Frank blame big trawlers for destroying the fish stocks. And now tourists were allowed to fish too. That was it for Frank. He was determined to get his winter supply of cod.

As Frank remembers it, he even jigged a few cod as the fisheries officers pulled up alongside him. "I kept fishing while they were reading me my rights," says Frank. "You have the right to remain silent ... well I'm not silent, I'm jigging."

The officers searched Frank's boat. They took the thirty-five fish he had caught that morning. Then they brought him ashore. They took his boat and engine as **evidence**. Frank says the fishery officers told him they wanted to search his freezer. They said if he didn't let them in they would call the RCMP and cause a big fuss in front of his house.

"We're not used to having the Mounties come to the door," says Frank. "I told them to come on in."

The officers found a bag of cod cheeks and a few more fish that Frank had in his freezer. The cheeks were for his father. The fish was for the winter. They charged Frank with fishing groundfish during a closed time-cod jigging.

You can't get a legal aid lawyer for this kind of fishery offense. The **maximum** fine for illegal jigging is \$100,000. Frank can't afford any fine. He can't afford a lawyer. He makes about \$250 a week in federal fishery aid. He has to support his wife Ruby and their two teenagers on that. He can't go to jail either. If he does, his fishery aid money will be cut off.

As he pulls in a nice-sized cod for his supper, Frank says he isn't sorry. "They should never have closed the food fishery. People need that fish for the winter. I need it—need it, want it, and I'm going to have it."

Frank was not surprised when the northern cod fishery was closed in 1992. Inshore fishermen like himself have been warning the fish stocks were in trouble for years. Frank didn't want to give up fishing, but he knew the stocks needed to rebuild. It was hard for Frank to stay off the water. At 49, the life of an inshore fisherman is the only life Frank knows. It's the only life he wants to know. Frank looks older, smaller, less alive when he's sitting at home. He says he only feels like himself when he's working out on the water. "Staying home, that's not living," says Frank. "That's just existing and a poor existence at that."

Frank starts up the engine and heads for home. On the way he passes another small boat. The two men in it are jigging cod. They don't recognize Frank's boat. It's an old one he borrowed from a neighbour. The men don't wait to find out who is coming their way. They pull in their lines and take off in the other direction. Frank says it's always like that now. Men are afraid to stop and talk to each other on the water. If they are breaking the law, they have good reason to be afraid.

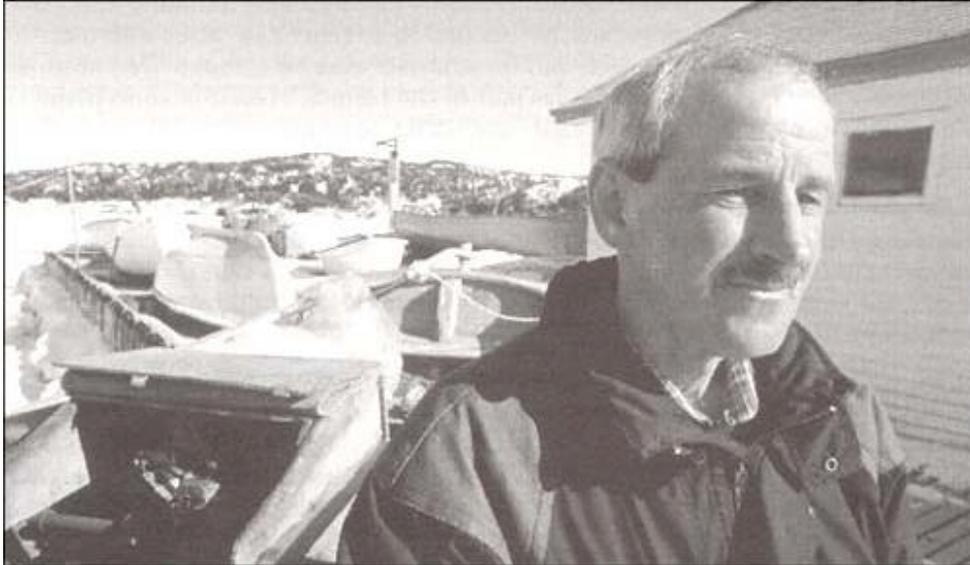
Fishery officers watched Too Good Arm all summer. Frank says they hid up in the fields over the bay. "I don't know what the hell it was like," says Frank, "they were watching you, every move you made, coming down to see if your boat was gone and asking fellas, what's this one doing, what's that one doing. It'd make anyone angry, wouldn't it, seeing them up there watching you?" Frank laughs. "There was a nice few fish jigged just the same."

Frank's trial was held during a snowstorm. Frank didn't make it to court. But he was given a fine of \$3,500 or 90 days in jail. Frank said it wasn't fair for him to be given such a huge fine when he didn't have the chance to defend himself. The judge agreed with Frank. The fisherman was given the right to appeal his case. "I'm going to tell the judge I was fishing out of necessity," he says. "Not just necessity, something I've always done. Something I want to do. You can't call this justice."

Frank's **conviction** has caused other problems. The McCarthy's marriage was already strained by unemployment. It ended after Frank was convicted. Ruby left in 1995. She wanted Frank to stop jigging. "I don't agree with what they did to Frank, but I want things to go back to the way they were," Ruby said when Frank was first arrested. Frank just couldn't stop. "They should never have let them close the food fishery," he says. "As long as I have an old wooden boat that will float, I'm going to have fish to eat and that's it."

Frank brings his small boat ashore. A neighbour meets him at the wharf.

"Fishy, fishy, fishy," the old man calls. "I had a nice one the other day. Did you get either one this morning?"



Credit: Greg Locke

Frank McCarthy was the first person in Newfoundland to be charged for jigging cod for his own table.

Horse Thieves

On a fine summer day, when all the men of Tilting were out fishing, and all the women were at work on the shore, about 30 Newfoundland ponies wandered down the road towards the town of Joe Batt's Arm.

The Tilting ponies made the five-mile trip regularly. They went in a group. They grazed by the side of the road along the way. When they got to Joe Batt's Arm they went around visiting the ponies that lived there. They went that way to mate and run wild with the dozens of ponies that lived at the end of the road.

But on this particular day, there was a trap waiting for the animals. Charles Decker was waiting for them. And the young man had not come empty-handed. He had some bait—a pretty mare tied to a long leash. Charles didn't really want to catch the Tilting ponies. He wasn't sure if it was right. But Charles had a young family to support. As town manager he had to do his job.

The town council of Joe Batt's Arm had recently passed a new animal bylaw. All animals, chickens, goats, dogs, and ponies had to be fenced in. They weren't allowed to roam free. The council said the animals were an eyesore. They were a **nuisance**. Fencing in the animals was part of the council's beautification plans. Tilting had no such law. Their

animals were still free to graze where they would, and where they would was always Joe Batt's Arm.

The men and women of Tilting had been warned. They hadn't paid any attention. They said they couldn't help where their animals chose to roam. They said there must be something very nice about Joe Batt's Arm that their ponies had discovered, even if they had never noticed it themselves. And now Charles had been instructed to capture the whole lot of them.

He waited with his mare by the side of the road, the two of them squinting into the sun. When his pony's ears started to twitch Charles knew it was time to get ready. Sure enough, about 30 ponies came wandering into view. Charles walked his mare out onto the road. He wanted the other ponies to get a good look at her. The ponies met and murmured. They snorted among each other. Charles started to lead his mare away. As Charles knew they would, all the other ponies followed his little darling right down the road and into the town compound. When the last pony wandered through, Charles shut the gate and barred them all in. The young man didn't know what would happen when the people of Tilting found their horses had been caught. He didn't really want to find out. Charles brushed the road dust off his clothes and went home for lunch.

It didn't take long. Someone from Joe Batt's Arm must have run up the road to warn the Tilting women about the capture of their ponies. The women stood on the wharf and called out to the men who were coming in for their meal.

"Our horses are gone. Our ponies are gone. They've rounded them up in Joe Batt's Arm and barred them in. If you want them back you've got to pay a fine," the women called across the water.

The men brought their boats ashore. They couldn't believe the story. Pay a fine to get their own horses back? Pay a fine to a town that had taken their horses and put them behind bars? These ponies always roamed where they would. They did not cause any harm. The men of Tilting would not pay a fine, certainly not. But they would have their animals back.

The men climbed into their trucks and drove off down the road. Joe Dwyer went with them. He meant to get his ponies back. He needed them for his work in the woods. The trucks pulled up at the compound. The men stared at their horses. They still couldn't believe their animals had been barred in. The men opened the gate and let their ponies out. Charles Dwyer and several others got out of the trucks. They started herding the ponies back to Tilting. They say it was a fine sight, men and horses marching smartly up the road on a lovely sun-lit day. Things were going nicely. And then the RCMP drove up. The police charged all the men with stealing their own horses. The police took the horses back to the compound. The town took the men to court. Joe Dwyer says the judge threw the charges out because they were so unusual.

Not long after that, the Tilting town council passed a similar animal bylaw. Then the people of Tilting really had no choice. They tried to keep their animals in a community pasture away from both towns. Joe says somehow the horses always wandered back. They were hard-working animals, but they weren't really tame. There were several hundred ponies on Fogo Island at that time. Families used to have two or three ponies each. They kept them as pets and as work animals. In the end most people had their ponies killed. They couldn't afford to pay fines and they couldn't afford to fence them in. Some of the ponies were taken off Fogo Island and sold.

That was in 1988. Today there are very few animals on Fogo Island. There aren't even many dogs. In 1995 the number of Newfoundland ponies left in Tilting was one.

Joe Dwyer isn't angry at Charles Decker anymore. He knows he was just doing his job. But what a shame it all was. People could really use their ponies today. They are a lot cheaper to look after and use than ATVs or snowmobiles. Newfoundland ponies eat what they find in the fields. They have shaggy winter coats so they stay outside most of the time. They can work for hours in the woods. The ponies can haul twice their own weight for most of their lives. They are smart and friendly.

Charles Decker is still sorry he had to round the animals up. He says the Joe Batt's Arm council was new at it's job. It wanted to make an impression. If the council could have known how it would all end, he wonders if they would have passed the animal bylaw at all.

There aren't many Newfoundland ponies left anywhere in the province. In the 1970s and 1980s the province began to **incorporate** towns and villages in rural Newfoundland. Many of the new town councils passed animal bylaws like those on Fogo Island. Most people could not afford to fence in their ponies. So they sold them to the "meat men". These men bought the ponies for as little as fifty dollars or even for a case of beer. They drove the animals to the mainland on transport trucks and then sold them in the European meat market. Pony meat is popular in Belgium and France. At the turn of the 20th century there were as many as 10,000 Newfoundland ponies in the province. By 1992 there were only about 200 left.

The Park

In the 1970s Parks Canada decided the land, sea, and mountains at the base of the great Northern Peninsula would make a wonderful nature and heritage park. The provincial government agreed. Parks bring in tourists, and tourists bring in money. Parks Canada offered to move the people who lived in the small fishing villages inside the chosen area. The federal government offered new homes and money to help those who agreed to move out.

About twelve families in the tiny community of Sally's Cove refused to leave. They protested until Parks Canada agreed they could stay. Sally's Cove was given about 13 square kilometers of land. Gros Morne National Park was built around the community. Park officials assured the fishing families who stayed that the park would not interfere with their way of life. In fact, the park would bring jobs and money to local people.

More than twenty years later, Gros Morne has become a famous wilderness and heritage area. Tourists come from all over the world to admire the beautiful scenery, to hike through the mountains and to take pictures of the wildlife. As a wilderness park, Gros Morne is a great success. But according to the people who live in Sally's Cove, "the park" has not lived up to its other promises.

It's a warm September evening in Sally's Cove. The calm blue ocean meets the calm blue sky. Margaret Laing calls this a blue water day. She and her husband, Clarence, are taking their youngest son, Jamie, out to check the herring nets. Jamie is twelve. He hopes to be a fisherman like his father one day. But he's not sure if he will be able to. If you ask him why, Jamie says "the park."

All the Laing's other children have had to move away to find work. They didn't want to go fishing. In 1995 only one person from Sally's Cove had ever been hired by the park. They could have applied for jobs in the tourist hotels and restaurants in nearby Rocky Harbour. But those kinds of jobs don't pay very well. They are hard to get and not everyone is cut out for the tourist business. Clarence Laing isn't. His life is here on the water. "I don't think I'm made for going around trying to make someone else happy, make sure tourists, if they want their slice of bread they got it, and their bed is made up right," says Clarence. "Fishing, that's what I'm made for. There will be no punching a clock and begging a boss for me."

The Laings were one of the families that protested against Gros Morne. Clarence and Margaret did not want to live inside a tourist attraction. They certainly didn't want to move away. Like most of their neighbours, the Laings built their own home and their own boat. They started with a tar paper shack right on the beach. They built up as they could afford to. Everything they have or want is right here in Sally's Cove. Clarence used to fish cod. That fishery closed in 1992. But he still makes a living as a herring and lobster fisherman.



Credit: Greg Locke.

Clarence Laing refused to move from Sally's Cove.

Clarence doesn't make much money. But the Laings don't need a lot of cash. They hunt moose and birds. They snare rabbits. They cut wood to heat their home. They freeze fish for the winter. Clarence does any repairs needed on the family truck. He mends his own fishing gear. Margaret works around the house. She goes fishing with Clarence. The Laings have never borrowed any money. They have never applied for welfare. In 1995 they were not on the federal fishery aid package. The Laings don't owe anyone a cent. But it's getting harder to be **self-sufficient**.

Moose and caribou hunting has been banned in Gros Morne. Park officials say they can't have tourists see local people out hunting in a nature area. Tourists would be upset if

they saw a dead moose or caribou in a wilderness park. The park has set out areas for local people to cut fire wood and saw logs. But the Laings say they aren't allowed to cut enough wood to heat their home properly. The trees they are allowed to cut are diseased or too small to build houses and boats. They have to stick to rabbiting and trapping areas set out by the park. These areas are away from the tourists. But they aren't the best places to catch rabbits.

Most people in Sally's Cove have had to give up their animals as well. There is not enough pasture land for grazing in the community. Animals are banned from the meadow lands in the park. The Laings had to get rid of their sheep a few years ago. That meant giving up making their own wool and having a nice supply of lamb and mutton. Instead of increasing their wealth, local people like the Laings say the park has taken away their freedom. It has come close to taking away their ability to support themselves as well.

"I don't think everyone knows what all the rules are, but I know I can't follow them all," says Clarence. "I've got to live. We just have to go on like we've always done and hope we don't get caught."

Two young men up the road have been banned from the park for two years. Clarence and Malcom Roberts refused to give up their chainsaw during an investigation. **Wardens** said Clarence and Malcom were cutting trees in the park to build their new boats. Clarence and Margaret Laing have known the young men since they were born. They are angry they've been charged for doing something the Laings believe they should be allowed to do.

"It's like living in a zoo," says Clarence. "You're fenced in by all their rules and **regulations**. It used to be clean and free here. Now you can hardly go into the woods without a warden chasing you down. They're always on top of you. It's downright harassment."

Clarence knows another man who was charged by park officials. The man was convicted of hunting moose in the park. Clarence calls the man an "honest poacher". "That man was just trying to look after his family. That's what a good man does. There are lots of moose around here," he says.

Margaret doesn't like all this talk about breaking the law. She is a quiet and gentle woman. But she says the park forces people to become poachers. "It took us all our lives to build up what we have here now," she says. "This is the proper way to live. We work hard. We love it by the water. We love to work outside. It's not right that they are trying to hem us in to please their tourists. Those people are only coming here for fun to enjoy themselves. We are trying to make our living."

Up the road from Sally's Cove is a fishermen's information centre. It was set up by the park to show tourists how fishermen used to live. The Laings find the exhibit insulting. Besides, tourists are always down on the beach in the summer. They come to watch the Laing family at work. They take their pictures and ask questions. The Laings don't mind talking to tourists. They have nothing against tourism. They have nothing against nature parks. The Laings see themselves as part of the natural world around them. They say it is their survival which is **endangered**. Their way of life is now against the law.

Word List

1. **rural:** from the country.
2. **natural resources:** things from the natural world which human beings use or make money from like water, cod, minerals and trees.
3. **technology:** man-made equipment or tools such as fishing trawlers and computers.
4. **modernize:** make up-to-date or current.
5. **recreational:** for sport or for fun.
6. **poaching:** hunting, fishing or trapping illegally.
7. **infra-red glasses:** special goggles that allow the wearer to see in the dark.
8. **traditional:** passed down from generation to generation.
9. **heritage:** tradition.
10. **environment:** the natural world around you.
11. **residential:** suburban area.
12. **probation:** punishment ordered by the court.
13. **conservation:** saving or protecting the environment.
14. **commercially:** for money.
15. **evidence:** facts or proof.
16. **maximum:** the highest or the most allowed.
17. **conviction:** ruled guilty by the court.
18. **nuisance:** problem.
19. **incorporated towns:** formally or legally make an area a town.
20. **self-sufficient:** able to provide the necessities of life without help.
21. **wardens:** wildlife officers.
22. **regulations:** rules.
23. **endangered:** in trouble, in danger, may not survive.

Issues for Discussion

1. Conservation and access to resources.
2. Tourism and local needs.
3. Rural tradition and the law.

Questions for Discussion

Introduction

1. Name some traditional activities used to survive in the past. Do you follow any of these traditions? Do you know anyone who does?
2. Why are the rules about the use of wildlife, land and fish changing in rural Newfoundland? Have you noticed these changes yourself? Have the changing rules affected your life?
3. Describe the methods used by wildlife and fishery officers and the RCMP to crack down on poachers.
4. How does Watson Lane feel about the crackdown on local resource use? What do you think about his fears?
5. Ernie Collins worked for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. How does he view the crackdown on poachers? Mr. Collins says many Newfoundlanders think jigging cod for food is a "God-given right." What do you think? Do you agree with Mr. Collins when he says traditions may have to be ended?

The Turkey Lady

1. Why did the town outlaw farm animals? What effect did the new law have on the people who lived there?
2. Why are the animal laws hard to enforce? Are there animal laws in your community? Do people obey these laws?
3. Describe how Mrs. King's animals betrayed themselves? Why does Mrs. King say the animal laws replaced her neighbour's sense of humour?
4. What does the turkey lady mean when she says "We're just a bunch of criminals I guess."

Troy Gilbert

1. Why did Troy jig the fish?
2. How did the wildlife officers catch him?
3. What do you think about the punishment Troy was given for his offense?

4. Troy's mother asks "What did he do that was so wrong?" Her son broke the law, so what does she mean?

Mr. Edwards

1. Mr. Edwards doesn't think of himself as a poacher. Why? What do you think?
2. Explain Mr. Edward's definition of a poacher.
3. Do you know people who hunt without a licence? Do you think they are poachers?

Frank McCarthy

1. Frank McCarthy says he didn't try to get away from the fisheries officers. Why does he think he should be allowed to jig cod?
2. Why was the food fishery closed? Do you agree with the closure?
3. Frank has been a fisherman all his life. He says staying home is "just existing." What do you think he means?
4. Frank is angry about being watched by fisheries officers. What effect have the officers had on Frank and other fishermen in his community? Why do you think these men keep jigging cod?
5. What consequences has Frank had to face because of his conviction? If you were the judge what punishment would you have given Frank? Would you have agreed to give Frank an appeal?

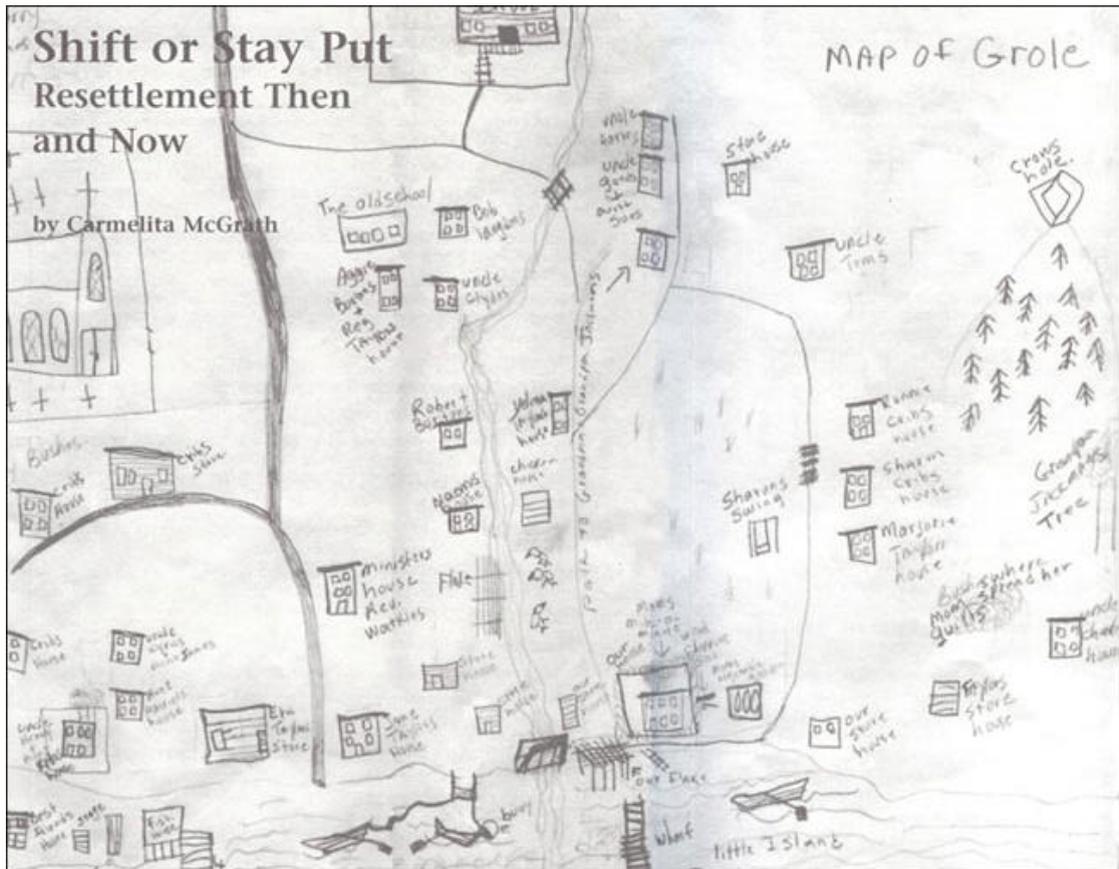
Horse Thieves

1. Why did the Tilting ponies go to Joe Batt's Arm?
2. Describe Charles Decker's pony trap.
3. The council of Joe Batt's Arm passed a law ordering animals to be fenced or leashed in town. Why? What did the people of Tilting think about the new law?
4. How did the men of Tilting react when they found out their ponies had been captured?
5. The town of Tilting passed an animal by-law. What happened to the ponies on Fogo Island after that?
6. Why aren't there many Newfoundland ponies left anywhere in the province? Is there any way these animals could have been saved?

The Park

1. Why did Parks Canada want to move people away from Gros Morne?
2. Do the Laings think the park has kept its promises of employment and prosperity?

3. Why doesn't the Laing family move away from Sally's Cove?
4. How has the park changed the Laing family's life?
5. What do you think Clarence Laing means when he says living in the park is like living in a zoo?
6. Does tourism have to interfere with local people?



This is Deborah Jackman's memory map of Grole, where she lived before her family was resettled. Drawing the map helped Deborah remember many details of her early life.

A Map of Memories

"It's all coming back to me now," Deborah Jackman says. She is sitting at her kitchen table. Sunlight pours through the window. On the table is a large sheet of paper. Deborah is drawing on the paper. "This is our house, right here," she says. Off to one side of the house, she sketches a vegetable garden. She stops drawing, thinks, then goes on:

By our house, the road sloped down. And there was a bridge. There were railings on it. And there was a little brook that ran down to the ocean. And there was our flake where we dried the fish.¹

She draws the beach, a wharf and boats tied up. The beach helps her remember digging for worms and mussels. She remembers being very small. She had the baby's carriage, and she let go the handle. The carriage rolled down to the beach. The family came running. They thought her little brother was in the carriage. Deborah laughs, remembering the fright they got.

¹ The map and the stories about Grole come from an interview with Deborah Jackman, 1996.

As she draws, Deborah speaks into a tape recorder. Her words and her drawing slowly create a picture. The many details in the picture tell about her early life.

As Deborah draws her own house, she remembers where other people lived. She draws the houses of other families, their gardens and sheds. She draws a store where she and her sister went with pennies to buy candy. She fills in marsh and rocks. She draws the bushes where her mother spread quilts to dry in the sun. On the edges of the community, she draws large buildings—the church and the school.

As she fills the houses with people, she tells a story of life in a small Newfoundland community. As a young girl, Deborah learned how to spread and dry fish. Her mother grew most of the vegetables the family ate. Her father fished in summer, and went away to work in the lumber woods when the fishing season ended.

The children picked berries and helped with chores. There were 16 children in her family. Some of the older ones had already moved away by the time the younger ones were born. The outside world the older ones moved to seemed very far away. Sometimes, Deborah's brother would phone from away. When he did, her mother would race up the road. She would take his call on the only phone in the community.

From the story Deborah tells, it may seem that we are hearing about a place and people long ago. We may think that Deborah is an older woman. We may think she is talking about a past before the modern times we live in. But Deborah is a young woman. She was born in 1962. Her story is about living in Grole. This was a small settlement in Hermitage Bay on the south coast of Newfoundland. Grole does not exist now. You will not find it on the map of Newfoundland.

The map Deborah draws is a special one. It is a memory map. We can use memory maps to help us recall places and events from our past. Drawing the map helps a person remember places, people and the details of everyday life. And, as we remember more things, we can fill in more of the map.

What happened to Grole? It was one of the many Newfoundland communities that people left in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. During this time, whole communities moved to other places. Sometimes, people moved on their own. Other times, the government tried to get them to move to larger centres. This is called **resettlement**. Deborah and her family were resettled in 1970. They moved from Grole to Harbour Breton. Everyone else left Grole too. It became another empty place that you can find off dirt roads or on boat trips, but not on the map. But the story of resettlement in Newfoundland began long before the Jackmans packed the last of their things into a truck one August day in 1970.

To Leave or to Stay

A Hard Choice to Make

Will we go or will we stay? People in Newfoundland and Labrador have had to make this choice many times. People have always moved from one place to another. There are many reasons for this. Sometimes people move to find work. They might move to a better harbour. They might go to a place with a better water supply. They may move to a place where new jobs have been created, or somewhere with better schools or medical services.

Resettlement was different. The Newfoundland government got involved in moving people. It wanted to change the face of Newfoundland. And it did. Newfoundland became a province of Canada in 1949. The new premier, Joseph R. Smallwood, had quite a job on his hands. People all over the new province were asking for better services. They lived in hundreds of small communities strung out along the coast. Many of these places had no electricity or decent roads. Smallwood had promised people a better life if they voted to join Canada. Now they were asking for that better life.

The government knew it had to provide better services for people. It wanted to make Newfoundland more modern. People all over the new province wanted changes too. They wanted to be able to make a better living. They wanted more and better services in their communities.

Some people who lived in small, isolated communities wanted to move. They wanted the government to help them do this. Some of them wrote to the government to ask for help.² Some people asked the welfare officer in their district what could be done to help them move. Often these requests for help came from families or groups of people. There seems to have been little problem with this at first. Then the government decided to ask whole communities to agree on whether they would stay or move. This was when the trouble started.

In Newfoundland today, some people get angry or upset when they hear the word resettlement. They have bad memories of a time when people who had lived together all their lives could not get along with each other because of resettlement. They remember the pressure to move. Neighbours and families disagreed over this. There were angry words. Sometimes, husbands and wives could not agree about whether to stay or go. But the main problem was that the government was getting into decisions which people felt should be their own.

In the 1950s, the government of Newfoundland had to make many decisions about where to put services. They had to decide where to put electricity, roads, schools and hospitals. It was very expensive to bring better services to some communities. Many people lived without water and sewage systems, without doctors or telephones. Some places had trouble getting teachers. Some years there were children who could not go to school because there was no one to teach them. The needs of the people were great. As always, the money to meet those needs was not as great.

There was also another problem. Many people were not able to make a living from their work. They had to depend on public relief³ for parts of the year. A lot of people were poor year after year. They did not have enough money to repair or improve their houses or boats. Sometimes when fishing gear wore out, people could not repair it. This put their whole way of life in danger.

J.R. Smallwood and his government had to make choices. How and where would they spend money? Would they put services in very small places where people had to struggle to make a living? Or would they try to get those people to move to bigger places?

We can imagine a small fishing community at that time. People were waiting for things to get better. Some felt they had waited long enough.

² Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS) Archives, Smallwood Collection, Records of the Department of Public Welfare, 3.29.001 to 3.29.007.

³ Public relief: This is what social assistance was called at the time.

Bragg's Island, 1955

We can learn more about this time in our history by looking at letters and reports. In the archives of the Centre for Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University, there are boxes of such letters and reports. We can read what people who worked for the government reported back to St. John's from all over the province. We can read the replies made by J.R. Smallwood and others in his government. By doing this, we can piece together the stories of small places. We can begin to see how resettlement came about.

In March of 1955, R.N. Belbin, the welfare officer in Glovertown, wrote to the government in St. John's about what was happening on Bragg's Island.⁴ People were asking for help to move to the mainland. Some people had already left; others were planning to go.

The winter on Bragg's Island had been a hard one. In the fall of 1954, the main merchant on the island left. That winter, people found it hard to get food and other things they needed. There had also been a problem getting teachers. There was one on Bragg's Island, a young man from the community out for his first year of teaching. But one teacher wasn't enough. It was hard to get teachers to go to small, isolated places. In those days, there were more jobs than teachers. That year on Bragg's Island, 30 children could not go to school because there was no one to teach them.



Credit: Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives, *Decks Awash* 1969.

A house is towed behind a boat to another community; a common scene during resettlement.

⁴ CNS Archive, Smallwood Collection, Records of the Department of Public Welfare, 3.29.003.

By the spring of 1955, there were only 26 families left on Bragg's island. Could they get help in moving, Mr. Belbin wanted to know? And how could this be done at the least cost? Mr. Belbin thought it would be a good idea to build a large raft out of logs and oil drums. On this, people could float their houses to the mainland. This became a common way to move houses. When many people hear the word "resettlement" today, they see a picture of a house on the water, on its way to a new place.

Mr. Belbin also thought other kinds of help might be needed. It would only be possible to move houses across the bay in the spring and summer. This was the very time when people would be working in the fishery. They would lose fishing time during the move. The fishermen might need public relief while they were moving. Some homes might need repairs because they were not in good enough shape to move. They might break apart on the trip.

The government decided to try to help people move. But, before it would help, everybody had to decide to go. The government didn't want a few people staying behind. What would happen to them if they stayed? How could the government afford to help them? And they would surely need help.

A meeting was held in the community. The people were told to make up their minds. Leave or stay: they would all have to agree.

We can follow this story through another letter from Mr. Belbin.⁵ In August, 1955, he wrote to P.H. Jardine, the Director of Social Assistance. He wrote about the meeting on Bragg's Island. He was not very happy with the result.

He said that the people could not agree about what to do. Not everyone wanted to go. Six families wanted to stay on Bragg's Island. If they were the only ones who stayed, they would have no mail or telegraph services the next winter. They would be cut off from the world.

The government wanted them all to agree on a plan. It would not offer any help to people moving unless everyone agreed to go.

We can look back today and imagine the pressure people felt. People who wanted to go would have felt that the ones who wanted to stay were holding them back. The ones who wanted to stay would have felt that the choice was being taken from them. The issue had already hurt the community. Mr. Belbin reported that one man who was trying to move could get no one to help him.

Bragg's Island is not a strange case. Resettlement often divided communities. There were bad feelings. There was pressure. There was a sense that changes were coming that people could not control.

Today, many people believe that resettlement would have taken care of itself if the government had stayed out of it. Some people would have left their isolated communities; a few others would have stayed. But the government did not see this as a solution. The small groups of people left in tiny settlements would still need services. It would cost a lot to provide these services. The government felt it could not afford to do both things: help some people move and help others stay.

⁵ CNS Archive, Smallwood Collection, Records of the Department of Public Welfare, 3.29.003.

There was also another idea behind resettlement. Joseph Smallwood had his own vision of the future. He wanted Newfoundland to have more large towns and fewer small outposts. He had big dreams of industry and new jobs. Like some leaders today, he thought there were too many people struggling to make a living in the fishery.

Some other leaders agreed with Smallwood. They urged people to resettle. People felt pressure from government workers. Sometimes, they also felt pressure from priests or ministers, or others in their communities.

By 1958, resettlement was common. The word "resettlement" had come to replace the word "move" in many letters and reports. One letter from the Deputy Minister of Public Welfare to Premier Smallwood lists 19 communities people were moving from.⁶ The heading of the list is "Housing Projects." With the letter are lists of families who had moved, and the help they got in moving—bulldozers, barges, and sometimes enough public relief to tide them over while they moved.

There was much confusion over what help people could get. Many people thought that others were getting more than they were. This was another cause of bad feelings. People wrote letters to Smallwood asking for help. One man wrote that he was not able to move his house. When would the government help him get a new one? He said that since his family moved, they all had to live in a shed.⁷

Life after Resettlement

Today, there are many different accounts of resettlement. Some people did find new jobs. They settled in communities with better services. They may have felt sad about leaving the places they called home, but they had few real regrets.

Others found that the promise of a better life turned out to be an empty one. They did not find more work or better pay. Many ended up on public relief. They did not adjust easily to living in the new places. They felt that their lives had been uprooted, and they got nothing out of it.

Many stories are a mixture of the good and the bad.

Deborah's Story

Grole and After, 1968-1970

Deborah Jackman finishes drawing her map of Grole. The map brings back many memories. Deborah was only eight years old when her family left Grole, but she talks of her childhood as "before" and "after" the move. Her childhood is made up of two different times, two very different places.

She remembers how people talked about the move. Would it be a good or bad thing? In 1968, as people were slowly leaving, everything that happened seemed to have

⁶ CNS Archives, Smallwood Collection, Records of the Department of Public Welfare, 3.29.003.

⁷ CNS Archives, Smallwood Collection, Records of the Department of Public Welfare, 3.29.003.

something to do with resettlement.

Some people were saying they did not want to go - they were not going to leave. Other people were not sure. They talked about it among themselves. Would the move be a good thing? Or a bad thing?

But most people, Deborah says, tried to be positive about it. They tried to think of it as a good thing when the "men in suits" showed up. These men were sent by the government. Their job was to explain what help people would get when they moved. They brought papers that showed people their new land.

Deborah feels that people in Grole were intimidated⁸ by the men in suits. They were a strange sight in a small fishing village where everyone wore work clothes. They stood for authority from outside. They stood for the government, which had power over people. Perhaps people felt they had to listen to them, and not say anything against their plans. Deborah says:

...I remember the big men coming in with their suits on. And Dad talking to them. And they pulled out these papers—I guess they were blueprints. And showing my father the land, how much land we were going to get and where we were going to be living, and that kind of thing. And my father saying, "Oh yes, oh yes..."

When the government men left, people talked more freely. Away from them, her father was not as sure the move was a good thing. Her mother was pretty sure it was not. Deborah's older sisters were excited. The younger children picked up the excitement. And people who didn't want to go were saying, "Bloody old government, what do they know?"

Most people would not have said this to the men sent by the government. They might not have had the nerve to question them. They might have felt that they did not have much of a say in the big changes that were being made in their lives. And Deborah says that people wanted to think of moving as a good thing.

⁸ This word means both "afraid" and "threatened." Some people feel this way around people who seem to have more power than they do.

I think that maybe there was this notion, too, that it would be good, that there'd be some hope in our lives, that there was hope for a better life, a better future.

Like many people living in Newfoundland and Labrador at the time, the people of Grole had always struggled to make a living. Maybe life would be easier if they moved. Maybe the future would bring better things for them, and for their children.

As the time grew near for Deborah's family to leave, they had to decide what to take and what to leave behind. One thing they could not take was the house they lived in. It could not be safely carried by barge to Harbour Breton. They had to buy an aunt's house, which was smaller. All the household things they would take had to be scrubbed clean and shiny. Even the children had to be clean and shiny. What was "good enough" in Grole might not be good enough in Harbour Breton. Here is how Deborah remembers getting ready:

And when we were getting ready to do the move—I'll never forget it—Mom bought us all new clothes. Mom bought us all this bright clothing, overalls and a top. The overalls were either yellow or orange, and the shirts were either yellow or orange. Four of us wore that. I think she bought us new shoes too.

We were getting ready to leave. The time was coming near, and Mom had us packing up stuff. And we had one of those old stoves, you know, the kind you burn wood in. And, of course, all of the pans were black with soot... I mean black: you'd never get it off. But Mom had us all out on the flake scrubbing those pots. And I was thinking, *where are we going? to some frigging holy land or something?* because everything had to be perfect.

The pots would have to put in a good appearance. The children would have to, too. "Now, when you go to Harbour Breton, you got to behave yourself," Deborah's mother told her.

The day of the move came. The house they would live in had already been moved by barge to Harbour Breton. Older brothers and sisters had gone too. It was their job to get the house ready for the others.

The young children dressed in their bright, new outfits. Their mother warned them to keep their clothes clean. Deborah remembers this as funny. The first part of their journey was in the back of a truck. The second part was in an open boat. At the end of the boat ride, their uncle would be waiting with his car. How could you keep your clothes clean on a trip like that?

Although Deborah was very young at the time, the feelings she had in the boat left a strong memory.

I never felt excited... I felt really sickly. And I was really sad. Looking out over the boat and at the water, and feeling really sad... But I was really frightened, and I didn't quite know why. I think it was just the move. And I think back then people didn't realize that kids could experience stress through leaving, through change. The adults were too busy worrying about their own stuff, I guess.

In Harbour Breton, the brothers and sisters had done their job. The house was ready; the beds were made. But things were strange. There was no porch on the house, only blocks that you had to step up on in order to go in.

It was Deborah's mother who got the biggest shock. The land did not look at all like it did on paper. The house backed onto a steep slope. She thought of her level vegetable garden in Grole. How could she put a garden on such a hill? This hill was to make a big change in how the family got their food. Deborah remembers how the hill changed their lives.

When we lived in Grole, see, that was how we lived—we lived off the land. And when we moved to Harbour Breton, slowly Mom stopped all that. Stopped the vegetable garden. She had little ones [gardens] after a while—she'd grow radishes and potatoes. But it was nothing like it was in Grole. In Grole, she had rhubarb, cabbage, carrots, turnips, potatoes, greens. She got more into flowers in Harbour Breton.

Every family has its own economy. This is the way the members of the family work to meet their needs. When the Jackmans moved from Grole to Harbour Breton, their family economy changed. They went from growing vegetables to buying them. There was a supermarket close by. Of course, this cost money.

To earn that money, Deborah's father changed the way he made his living. He switched from fishing to working on construction projects.

My father was a fisherman and he worked in the lumber woods when we lived in Grole. When we moved to Harbour Breton, he worked on a barge. Then he worked on the highways, and then in a fish plant. But he never went fishing in a boat after that.

All of a sudden, money became important. The children now needed uniforms to wear to school. There were more things to buy, and more places to buy them. Where would the money come from? How could you make enough? The problem of money was talked about in the house more than ever in the past. Who you were, and what your position was in the community, was now tied to money.

I remember living in Harbour Breton and all the talk was of money. Money, money, money. And I remember feeling really guilty as a kid—thinking, *we're poor, we have no money*. If Mom sent us to the shop, I'd feel guilty about taking a penny to buy a candy.

When Deborah talks about money this way, she points to something that happened to many people in Newfoundland after Confederation. For a long time, many people had lived in a world where cash was a rare thing. Families produced a lot of what they needed. They traded fish and other things for goods. But Newfoundland was going through a great change. It was moving away from an economy based on the work of a family. It was moving toward an economy based on cash. For many people, this change was not an easy one.

Deborah also recalls other changes. In Grole, people had known each other their whole lives. In Harbour Breton, there were "strangers." The new people who had moved there did not feel as free to act the way they did in their old home. Suddenly, Deborah says, you could not hang your quilts on the bushes to dry. What would people think? Mothers could not stand on the road and yell out to call their children home. After all, there were

strangers around. For the new people, the land did not seem like their own. Some of them didn't feel comfortable going hunting and fishing as they had before.

There were also new figures of authority. In Grole, people had to police themselves. In Harbour Breton, they had to "watch out for the Mounties." This was both good and bad. On the one hand, it made people who were not used to police afraid. On the other hand, Deborah is sure that it placed some controls on people who might abuse others in their families.

There were also medical services near by. Deborah recalls how strange this was for her family. When she or her brothers or sisters got bad cuts or burns, people would say, "Take her to the doctor." But usually they did not go. They treated these injuries at home. This is what they were used to doing. Doctors were for when you were really sick or having a baby.

Deborah's story of resettlement has many ideas and issues in it. Her family's story is also the story of thousands of people in Newfoundland who were resettled. As a child, Deborah did not have strong feelings for or against resettlement. Her memories are of both good things and bad things. At the age of eight, the size and nature of her world changed. But she was young; she was able to adjust to it.

Older people often had a harder time. The past was a familiar place for them. It was a place where they knew everyone. The future was a stranger.

The Ones Who Stayed

1960s-1970s

One of the places hit hardest by resettlement was Placentia Bay. We hear place names now that bring to mind pictures of empty communities and wrecked houses. These are places like Merasheen and Paradise. Today, you can go by boat past these old places. If you do this in the summer, you might see smoke coming from chimneys. You might see boats in the water. People often come back for holidays. They come from all over Canada. They are drawn back to the places they left behind.

Not everyone left, though. If you travel by boat, you will come to Petit Forte and South East Bight. These are small communities that survived resettlement.

South East Bight has an interesting story.⁹ During the 1960s, most of the people left. But a few stayed on. Then, in the 1970s, some people started to move back. For them, resettlement was full of empty promises. They found it hard to adjust to the places they had moved to. It was hard to make a living. Some of them had not wanted to move at all. They had moved because of pressure. They were afraid of ending up in ghost towns. There was lots of pressure.

Here is how three women describe what it was like in South East Bight at the time of resettlement.

⁹ The author researched the story of this community for the study *Women's Economic Lives*, 1989, conducted by Marilyn Porter, Department of Sociology, Memorial University Of Newfoundland.

There were fellows going around from the government, with papers. They had some people frightened to death. They said there'd be nothing here for anyone. My husband, well he didn't know what to be doing. I wasn't shifting. Sure the priest even came to the door one day, and he said, "Oh, you'll be gone. When the old rooster goes, the old hen will follow." And I said, "Well, the old rooster can go. I'm staying here."¹⁰

Another woman said:

We got down to only a few families. And it was some sad. The empty houses.¹¹

One woman and her family had already moved there from another community. They decided they would move no farther. She remembers the pressure on people to leave for bigger centres, and the things that were said about what would happen to the ones who stayed.

We were going to starve to death. The youngsters were going to starve to death. There'd be no milk for them to drink. And there was going to be no mail, and the steamer wasn't going to come.¹²

Such threats and fears were hard to resist. As well, the government was offering financial help to families who moved. If they did not take this help now, it might not be there later. Some people thought they would have more money than ever before. But many who left for larger towns found life hard.

In the end, six families stayed. Their determination began to pay off. The ferry service got better. The boat began to come in twice a week, more than before. So South East Bight, with its six families, survived resettlement. And soon some of those who did "shift" came back. They had found jobs scarce in the towns they moved to, and some found that they could not adjust to the change in lifestyle. They came back and moved into houses they had left behind, or built new ones. The community grew. There was a sense of pride.

Like others in Newfoundland who would not move, the people in the Bight found that they had to get organized. They had to do this to get basic services, like electricity. People learned how to form committees. They learned how to lobby the government to get what they needed. They had to fight to keep a school, then to improve it. They had to organize to get funds for a new wharf. These things happened in the days when there were many government projects. Today, people often call them "make-work" projects. Some people think these projects are not a good thing. There are few of them left. But small communities used them to build things they needed. People made an income at the same time.

South East Bight's story is a success story. But what will happen to such places without the cod fishery? Even communities that survived resettlement have had a hard time since the northern cod moratorium. Since the cod stocks went down, the whole issue of resettlement has come up again. But many people do not even want to hear the word spoken.

¹⁰ From an interview conducted by the author for *Women's Economic Lives*, 1989.

¹¹ From an interview conducted by the author for *Women's Economic Lives*, 1989.

¹² From an interview conducted by the author for *Women's Economic Lives*, 1989.

Resettlement Again?

Rural Newfoundland, 1996

There has been no government resettlement of people in Newfoundland for 25 years. But as soon as the northern cod moratorium happened, there was talk about people leaving small communities. Some of the talk sounds a lot like what was said about resettlement in the 1960s.

Since the cod moratorium, many people have gone away. People have packed up and left small communities. Some have left the province. With no fishery, many people have had to live on TAGS funding, money that is running out. The make-work projects dried up a few years ago. In many places, roads, schools and water lines are in need of repair. People have lost some of the services they fought hard for in the past.

Many people have ideas about what should be done. Governments talk about new kinds of jobs. Letters to the editor in newspapers say there is no life for small fishing communities now. Articles in newspapers have urged people to move away.

Some people say resettlement can be many things. Does closing small schools push people to resettle? Here is what a woman wrote in a letter to *The Evening Telegram* in 1996.

The government did an injustice in the 1960s with resettlement. Now they are forcing the same on us. If our children are moved out of their community, the government is really herding us toward a central location-the community to which our children are bused.¹³

This woman felt that losing a school would mean losing other things. If people lose the services they depend on, they may feel that the place where they live is not a good place any more. The closing of a school or a hospital, or a road left in bad repair, reminds people of a past when people had to move or put up with no services at all.

Resettlement brings out strong emotions in Newfoundlanders. These strong feelings can be found in the pages of *The Pilot*, a newspaper in Lewisporte. In February, 1996, the newspaper printed articles and letters about a rumour of resettlement. The rumour came from Change Islands. This is a small community close to Fogo Island. You can only get there by ferry.

In February, a woman in Change Islands sent a statement to the paper.¹⁴ She said it was time for people to think about leaving. Things were bad since the cod fishery closed down. Businesses were failing. The woman said that it cost the government millions of dollars a year to keep 430 people on the island. She thought that if they asked the government for help to leave, they might get it. She spoke of a letter going around Change Islands, asking people to support resettlement. She thought people should support it. "Press on," she said. "Support resettlement."

¹³ From a letter to the editor, *The Evening Telegram*, February 22, 1996.

¹⁴ As reported in an article in *The Pilot*, February 20, 1996.

There were many replies. In an article the next week, the mayor said that Change Islands was against resettlement. He said most people love their home, and would not leave it for any reason. He thought that people who were trying to get support for resettlement might harm the community.

On the same day, there was a letter from a woman in Change Islands. She, too, wrote against resettlement.¹⁵ She said that there were a lot worse places to live. She thought that the money used to help people stay there was money well spent.

A week later, another woman wrote:

Yes, rumours have been rampant that government will force residents to resettle with cutbacks to health, transportation, and education services. People have had to live with this fear, along with adjusting to a complete change in their way of life and cuts to the family income.

Many communities would not have survived this economic crisis; social problems were the predicted result. The silence on the water during the summer is heartbreaking. But everyone used this time to make repairs to their houses, stages and wharves, put in lawns, plant vegetable gardens, and take a family vacation—things that they never had time to do during the fishing season. When all that was completed, they started to work on the community buildings. There was always someone helping to put in a window or shingle a roof.¹⁶

The woman's letter paints a picture of hope. She sees a way of life worth keeping, even in hard times. She writes about a way of living and working that you might find in a letter from 30—or 100—years ago. But the "silence on the water" means that there are surely people who will not agree with her.

We can never know the whole story about how people felt in Change Islands in the winter of 1996. There must have been hard feelings. Some people must have worried, but kept silent. The letters and comments show how resettlement can divide communities, just as it did 30 years ago.

Some issues seem to never go away. Resettlement is one of them. It carries many pictures and emotions. People remember places they felt they had to leave. Some of these people did very well in the places they moved to, but resettlement still left a bad taste. Communities and families divided over it. Some people never made the better living that the government said was waiting on the other side of the water. J.R. Smallwood had great dreams of industry. But mostly these were just dreams. They did not create the jobs that would make moving easier. Sometimes, people were moved to places where there were not enough jobs for the people who already lived there.

But there is another reason why resettlement stirs up such bad feelings. People lost the right to choose. People have always moved, but when they are ready and for their own reasons. When people decide to move on their own, they feel free to choose the lives they will lead. Resettlement took this freedom away from many people. The government "men in suits," the politicians and priests, put them under pressure. People suddenly had a say in the lives of their neighbours. All of this got in the way of people making their

¹⁵ From a letter to the editor, *The Pilot*, February 28, 1996. 16

¹⁶ From a letter to the editor, *The Pilot*, March 6, 1996

own free choices. Most people feel that there are a few basic rights that people must have. One of them is the right to choose where to live.



A small boy stands by codfish as big as himself. For hundreds of years, the fishery gave small Newfoundland communities the will to survive into the future. Photo *circa* 1960s.

Topics for Discussion

1. Why people move from one place to another.
2. Resettlement as different from moving: government's role in deciding where people should live.
3. The survival of small, rural communities, past and present.
4. The effects of resettlement on different generations in a family.
5. Attitudes toward resettlement today.
6. Human rights: rights to free choice of where to live and work.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is a "memory map?"
2. Some places that used to be on the map of Newfoundland and Labrador are no longer on it. Why are some places no longer on the map? Can you find new places on the map of this province?
3. What is "resettlement?" How is it different from simply deciding to move from one place to another?

4. Why did the Newfoundland government want people to move away from certain places? Make a list of things about a place that might make the government want to resettle its people.
5. This essay says that problems with resettlement began when the government got involved in moving people. What were some of the problems?
6. Deborah Jackman says that the move from Grole to Harbour Breton led to both good and bad changes for her family. What were some of the good changes? What were some of the bad changes?
7. Deborah says that, in Harbour Breton, money suddenly became more important for her family. Why did this happen? Why was money more important in Harbour Breton than it was in Grole?
8. Some people who were resettled out of small communities moved back to them later. Why do you think they did this?
9. In a [part of a letter](#) printed in this essay, a woman says that taking schools out of communities is a way of getting everyone to leave. Why do you think she feels this way? What does having a school mean for a community? Do you agree or disagree with the woman who wrote the letter?
10. The issue of resettlement is still with us. People today talk of places they might "have to leave." Why is resettlement still an issue in Newfoundland? Do you think resettlement is a good or bad thing for people in communities today?

Projects

Make a memory map. Go over the section of this essay that tells how Deborah Jackman drew her memory map. You can:

- draw a memory map of a place from your past, or
- ask another person to draw a map of a place from his or her past.

Make sure that you or the other persons drawing the map can talk while drawing. Talking about places helps people remember details about them.

Imagine a family in 1996. Marie is 46; her husband, Frank, is 48. Frank used to fish in a small boat. Marie used to work in the fish plant. They have not worked since the cod moratorium. Marie's father, Jim, aged 72, has lived with them since his wife died. Marie and Frank have two children still at home: Richard is 14; Anna is 9. Now, imagine that there is talk of resettling people out of the community this family lives in. How might each family member feel? Discuss as a group, or write your ideas.