

Preserving the Best  
Newfoundland's Cultural Movement, 1965-1983

by  
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## Abstract

This study analyzes the cultural movement in the visual arts, theatre and music that occurred in Newfoundland between 1965 and 1983. Artists from the various artistic genres were influenced by both internal and external factors, and reacted to rapid political changes occurring in Newfoundland and artistic, musical, and theatrical trends that were popular in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. Members of the cultural movement reacted against modernization, urbanization, and industrialization that occurred during the period that Joseph Smallwood was Premier. Artists thought several of the choices made by this government led to an erosion of Newfoundland culture, and thus felt they needed to help preserve traditional culture. Yet, while artists viewed themselves as anti-authoritarian, they were aided in their artistic endeavours by institutions such as Memorial University, in particular Extension Service, which encouraged the preservation of heritage and promoted cultural productions. Music was one of the genres that artists used to help preserve the culture they feared was disappearing, and to demonstrate that Newfoundland culture was just as good as that anywhere else. Theatre was also important in the movement, and helped artists bring attention to the political issues they viewed as important. This study examines how Newfoundland artists reacted to a perceived loss of culture and identity. It also demonstrates that cultural developments do not happen in a vacuum and that in order to fully understand the Newfoundland Renaissance it is important to look at all the various cultural aspects that influence or impact a society.

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## Introduction

In 1976, Sandra Gwyn brought Canadian attention to cultural developments occurring in Newfoundland in her *Saturday Night* magazine article “The Newfoundland Renaissance.” Her discussion focused on “the revival of art and theatre” in the 1960s and 1970s, and artists active in the visual arts, theatre, music, and literature. A Newfoundland-born journalist then living in Ontario, she referred to this movement as “the Newfcult phenomenon,” and argued that the artists involved were expressing their reaction to the political, social and economic changes that were caused by Newfoundland’s Confederation with Canada in 1949.<sup>1</sup> Gwyn also pointed to the role of federal cultural funding and government programs, such as resettlement, that arguably led to social and economic dependency, the declining fishery, and “the decay of the old way of outport life.” Gwyn suggested these artists were fighting to preserve “the best” of Newfoundland culture. One of those she interviewed for the article, Newfoundland painter Gerry Squires, who had left Newfoundland as a child and returned as an adult, for example, spoke about this surge of “creative energy.” “In 1949, Newfoundlanders were made to feel the most inferior people in North America,” he said, “as if there were some great monster out there telling us we were 200 years behind the times. But now we’re starting to get our identity back. And our dignity.”<sup>2</sup>

Newfoundlanders often perceive the province as culturally different from the rest of Canada. Some commentators, including artists and some politicians, have romanticized

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<sup>1</sup> Sandra Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” *Saturday Night* 91, 2 (April 1976), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” pp. 40 and 45.

Newfoundland culture – lamenting the loss of a “traditional” culture and past once it became part of Canada and began to modernize.<sup>3</sup> This interpretation became particularly prevalent in the latter part of the twentieth century due to the rapid political, social, and cultural changes that were occurring, and is often credited to a reaction to Newfoundland’s Confederation with Canada in 1949 and such government programs as resettlement, a program that sought to centralize, urbanize, and modernize rural parts of the province. The cultural movement that began in the late 1960s, labeled by Gwyn as a “renaissance,” embodied a renewed interest in outport folk culture and local history as a basis for new artistic creations.<sup>4</sup> This thesis argues that the movement, perceived as organic by observers such as Gwyn, was more heavily influenced by cultural movements in Canada, North America and Europe than much of the literature acknowledges.

### **The Broader Cultural Influence**

The movement in Newfoundland was similar to cultural revivals elsewhere and somewhat paralleled the counterculture movement in the United States. The 1960s were a period of cultural change in North America and Western Europe, witnessing civil rights, antiwar, and feminist movements. Many young people rejected “the nuclear family, corporate capitalism, and military aggression, expressed through the embrace of sex,

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<sup>3</sup> See Jerry Bannister, “The Politics of Cultural Memory: Themes of History of Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada 1972-2003,” Royal Commission Report, 2003; Jerry Bannister, “Making History: Cultural Memory in Twentieth-Century Newfoundland,” *Newfoundland Studies* 18, 2 (Fall 2002): 175-194; Jerry Bannister, “Whigs and Nationalists: The Legacy of Judge Prowse’s History of Newfoundland,” *Acadiensis* 32, 1 (Autumn 2002): 84-109.

<sup>4</sup> James Overton, “Towards a Critical Analysis of neo-nationalism in Newfoundland” in *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada*, edited by Robert Bryn (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1979), p. 229.

drugs, and rock and roll.”<sup>5</sup> A large part of the counterculture in the United States was the protests against the Vietnam War.<sup>6</sup> College students and young intellectuals, who were part of a radical leftist movement active in the 1960s and 1970s, sought changes in political, economic, and social systems, such as racial equality, wanted individual empowerment and believed their politics should be relevant to their personal lives. The New Leftists believed that “the ‘personal is political’ as a general principle.”<sup>7</sup> They were also inspired by the hippie counterculture, which started around 1965, particularly in the San Francisco area, and soon became widespread throughout the nation’s youth and in other countries as well. It was a dissenting movement that rejected authority and questioned the values of the dominant middle class, promoted sexual liberation and the use of psychedelic drugs to expand one’s consciousness. Hippies also used alternative art, folk music, and rock music to express their feelings, ideas, protests and values. The New Left and the hippie movements were both “rooted in cultural discontent,” an emotion tapped into by many young Newfoundland artists in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>8</sup> Just as there was an anti-military feeling in the United States, there was an anti-“Establishment” sentiment among young people in Newfoundland. Many young people active in the cultural movement expressed their opposition to political developments at the time and also the social conventions that defined their parents’ generation.

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<sup>5</sup> Marilyn B. Young, “Foreword,” in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and ‘70s* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 2-3.

<sup>6</sup> Young, *Imagine Nation*, pp. 2-3; see also James E. Perone, *Music of the Counterculture Era* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), p. ix.

<sup>7</sup> Doug Rossinow, “‘The Revolution is about Our Lives’: The New Left’s Counterculture,” in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 99-100; see also Perone, *Music of the Counterculture Era*, p. 71.

<sup>8</sup> Rossinow, “The Revolution is about Our Lives,” p. 100.



The issue of identity was important to participants in Newfoundland's cultural movement, just as the "concepts of self and identity" were central to other social movements.<sup>9</sup> They sometimes sought to change the "self-conceptions and societal conceptions" of its members. Several social movements, including the civil rights groups, arose to transform preconceptions and definitions of stigmatized attributes, which sought to replace "shame with pride."<sup>10</sup> These factions transformed identities and emotions. They are often induced into action by negative feelings of anger, frustration, guilt or shame that move individuals to publicly express discontent. Movements are characterized by "feelings of group belongingness, solidarity, common purpose and shared memory."<sup>11</sup> This parallels Newfoundland in the 1970s and 1980s when artists argued that the negative image of the "Newfie stereotype" pervaded people's perceptions of Newfoundlanders. Some artists hoped to rectify this. They were also dealing with the inferiority that some Newfoundlanders felt in the wake of rapid political and societal changes following what they saw as the loss of responsible government.

### **Focus of Thesis**

While there has been some preliminary examination of the "Newfoundland renaissance," there has been no systematic analysis of it. Was this movement unique to

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<sup>9</sup> Sheldon Stryker, Timothy J. Owens, and Robert W. White, "Social Psychology and Social Movements: Cloudy Past and Bright Future," in *Self, Identity, and Social Movements* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 5; see also David A. Snow and Doug McAdam, "Identity Work Processes in the Context of Social Movements: Clarifying the Identity/Movement Nexus," in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 41-67.

<sup>10</sup> Lory Britt and David Heise, "From Shame to Pride in Identity Politics," in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 252.

<sup>11</sup> Ron Eyerman, "How Social Movements Move: Emotions and Social Movements," in *Emotions and Social Movements* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 42.

Newfoundland or did it fit into the wider pattern of folk revivals occurring in other areas? I argue that the cultural movement in Newfoundland was part of the broader folk revivals and social movements occurring in North America and the United Kingdom. Closer to home, there were similar developments occurring in the other Atlantic provinces, in areas such as Cape Breton and Halifax. Music and theatre developed on similar lines at the same time, but historians have not yet examined these movements. There were unique elements to the local manifestation of these broad trends; the artists in Newfoundland were reacting to unique political and societal changes occurring in the province, such as Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada and resettlement. Yet, while these issues were important in the art of the period, the participants of the movement would very likely have become artists anyway. Many of the creative people I examine travelled to larger centers such as Toronto, Nashville, and Los Angeles to pursue their artistic careers. Later they returned to Newfoundland, and produced work that reflected their opinions on the developments that had occurred in Newfoundland during the Smallwood era. Many of the artists were dealing with the sense of inferiority felt by their parents' generation after the loss of responsible government in 1934 and Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada. The movement was caused by several things, including a sense of loss of rural culture from Confederation and resettlement, increased exposure to North American culture with radio and the introduction of television in the 1950s, the North American and United Kingdom folk music revivals of the 1950s and 1960s, and was also aided by institutional support from Memorial University and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

This thesis examines the local, international, and institutional context of the movement. While I do discuss some of the art, my thesis is a discussion of the context of the movement rather than an analysis of the art itself. The art is discussed not in terms of art analysis or criticism, but rather to demonstrate how the local and international context influenced it. My thesis illustrates that all members of the cultural movement of the various genres were influenced by similar ideas, emotions, and experiences. These artists, from the various artistic genres of visual art, theatre and music worked together to express similar ideas.

### **Newfoundland in the 1950s and 1960s**

Newfoundland's introduction into Canada meant the 1950s was a decade of change. Those years brought many financial, as well as cultural changes. Historian Raymond Blake argues that in a society where poverty, hardship and deprivation were the norm, the social welfare programs from Ottawa provided guaranteed income. Family allowances, old age pensions, unemployment insurance, and other federal benefits came to Newfoundland immediately after Confederation.<sup>12</sup> This helped solidify the change from the traditional truck, or credit, system to a cash economy, a development that had begun during World War II.

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<sup>12</sup> See Raymond Blake, *Canadians At Last: Canada Integrates Newfoundland as a Province* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

There were cultural changes underway at the time as well. Television was introduced to Newfoundland in 1955 with the opening of CJON, a form of media which had an immense influence on the younger generation growing up in Newfoundland.<sup>13</sup> As historian Sean Cadigan states, television and radio fuelled “a nostalgic romanticization of home ... From Newfoundland clubs in places such as Toronto, expatriates such as Harry Hibbs sang sadly about the homes they had given up. Much of this nostalgic popular culture painted an overly rosy picture of outport life, but the resentment underlying such nostalgia was very real.”<sup>14</sup> This increased exposure to Canadian and American popular culture, inspired a generation of artists who watched television shows such as the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Musician Sandy Morris, for example, remembered that when he was growing up in St. John’s in the 1950s and 1960s television, and media in general, was prominent and popular, exposing youth to national and international influences. Morris argued that during his youth there

was a big cultural revolution in the world as well as in Newfoundland of course right in that period ... The *Ed Sullivan Show* was a huge influence on the culture in Newfoundland more than you think because you got to see everyone on there. You got to see the Beatles, you know Topo Gigio, and all that foolish stuff that, that was the real world, that what was going on in the real world and you always wanted to be like that. That was the goal you wanted to get to was the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Still trying to get there.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Newfoundland Historical Society, *A Short History of Newfoundland* (St. John’s: Boulder Publications, 2008), p. 139

<sup>14</sup> Sean Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 251.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 21:48].

Similarly, Greg Malone argued “my parents wanted to be a modern American couple. You know, that’s what they wanted to be. And so did all their friends, right. They wanted to be part of the modern North American world.”<sup>16</sup>

Artists dealing with local identity and history were also part of the broader movement with folk groups elsewhere reclaiming identity through folk music, and theatre groups, such as Toronto’s Theatre Passe Muraille, writing and performing material about local history. Thus, it was a combination of outside influences, such as the broader folk revival, and internal factors, such as politics, modernization and urbanization, that led to Newfoundland’s cultural movement. What occurred in the Newfoundland arts scene between 1965 and 1983 would not have transpired in the same way without both the internal and external factors.

### **Newfoundland’s Cultural Movement**

The members of the cultural movement were primarily urban, middle-class artists who viewed rural Newfoundland, or areas outside of St. John’s, as part of their identity and felt that Smallwood threatened rural life. Culture was important in creating a national identity, something members of the cultural movement saw themselves as attempting to do. They were reclaiming Newfoundland, reacting to negative feelings in Newfoundland caused by the political and social changes that had occurred so rapidly in the province. Many artists declared the culture was just as good as that anywhere else, and set out to

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 2, 7:55].

prove it. In addition, some members of the cultural movement were reacting to the negative stereotype of Newfoundlanders they experienced while living in mainland Canada. These young people saw themselves as living through social and economic change and reacted to it in different ways.

It is important to study this topic. If scholars look at various regional manifestations of the broader cultural movement, they will be able to ascertain how people influenced the development of the arts in different areas. The established literature, following Sandra Gwyn, gives the impression that the phenomenon was led by a group of young radicals opposing the “Establishment” and attempting to dispel their concern that Newfoundlanders were perceived as a “joke” by mainland Canada. While in part this is true, the movement was more complex. Artists had differences of opinion with the Division of Cultural Affairs, but were supported by Memorial University’s Extension Service, the Provincial Art Gallery, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Thus, while there is a common mythology that struggling artists were unappreciated by bourgeois taste, the reality was much more complex.

I have also chosen to examine this group of artists because of the professionalization of arts during this period. There were government-sponsored manifestations of culture such as the Symphony Orchestra, but while some of the members were professional, most were volunteers. I wanted to look at individuals that through their own volition began to write and perform or collect material about Newfoundland that promoted their views of Newfoundland politics and Newfoundland culture. These individuals were members of groups that were experimental. These groups,

such as Figgy Duff and CODCO, were also the most closely identified with the cultural movement.

This study looks at the period from 1965 to 1983. The year 1965 witnessed the completion of the Trans-Canada Highway across Newfoundland. On 2 November 1965, the Trans-Canada Highway across Newfoundland was completed, making travel across the island easier than it had been in previous generations. Thus, as Richard Gwyn, Smallwood's biographer, puts it: "the most glaring material disparity between island and mainland had disappeared. That event, more clearly than any other, marks the transition from the old Newfoundland to the new."<sup>17</sup> The following year, the provincial government held a Come Home Year, during which the government encouraged expatriate Newfoundlanders to come home and see for themselves the improvements and modernization that had taken place in Canada's newest province. It was these improvements, advertised as progress by the province, that many in the cultural movement argued were destroying the culture they were attempting to protect and preserve. I end my study in 1983, as many elements of the cultural movement had ended by this time. The Mummers Troupe, a local theatre group formed in 1972, disbanded in 1982, followed by the Wonderful Grand Band in 1983. CODCO, as a theatre troupe, had disbanded in 1976, yet did continue to perform at charity events from time to time. The local musical group Figgy Duff was still together after 1983, and remained together until 1993, yet two of their most traditional albums were recorded prior to 1983. Following this

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Gwyn, *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974), p. 278.

their albums contained their own compositions. The membership of Figgy Duff went through various incarnations in the early 1980s, thus, by 1983, many of the groups that had defined the cultural movement had ceased to exist, although the individuals involved continued to work. During this period professionalization among the arts increased. There had been extensive amateur music and theatre prior to this period; however during the 1970s and 1980s people began to be regularly paid for their performances. This trend had been solidified by the end of the period.

This study focuses mainly on artistic developments in St. John's. While there were some participants from other areas in Newfoundland, such as the central region of the province, resettled areas such as Placentia Bay, and also mainland Canada, the vast majority were from St. John's. The movement was comprised largely of urban youth who had nostalgic ideas about rural life. While these groups traveled the island and Canada performing to a certain extent, they were primarily based in the St. John's area. It was only in the capital city that there was a local market and the institutional support that made it possible to make a living as an actor or musician.

The cultural movement of the 1970s and 1980s encompassed several artistic genres: visual arts, theatre, music, and literature. There were influential writers active in Newfoundland in this period, including Kevin Major, Harold Horwood, Cassie Brown and Farley Mowat.<sup>18</sup> Writers of this period also helped aid the professionalization of the arts in Newfoundland. While there were important advancements in literature during this

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<sup>18</sup> See Patrick O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed: Studies in the Literature of Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979). O'Flaherty does a good job of discussing the history of literature up to the beginning of the period.



period, I have decided not to focus on this element. While poets and novelists were extremely important in the cultural revival, their work was often solitary rather than interconnected with the actors, painters, and musicians.

### **Sources**

The movement was connected to political developments and cultural policy in the province. While scholars, discussed in detail below, have examined some aspects of this movement, there has not yet been a study drawing these elements together that is based upon both archival sources and oral history. This study builds on the existing literature and contributes a cohesive analysis of the movement. My thesis employs archival sources, including documents from the Library and Archives Canada, The Rooms Provincial Archives, Archives and Special Collections, The Memorial University Archives, and the MUN Folklore and Language Archive. These include government documents, personal papers, and university papers. There are challenges with the sources. For example, the plays created by the Mummers Troupe and CODCO were improvisational and were not performed exactly the same twice. There are a few personal collections that are not yet available and some government collections are not yet open due to the recent historical period I have examined.

Oral interviews were helpful in addressing these issues. I spoke with people who were instrumental in creating the visual art, music, and plays, which helped me understand what their message was and what they hoped to convey through their work.

Interviewing members of government during this period helped provide insight into the government's approach to the arts at this time. I interviewed both artists and government officials to get both perspectives on the development of the cultural movement. I personally contacted interviewees by email and/or telephone to ask if they would be willing to be interviewed. If they consented, a time and place was decided upon. Interviews were recorded on video or cassette tape, depending on what the interviewee was most comfortable with. The interviews were based on a questionnaire of open-ended questions approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research. I allowed interviewees to answer questions uninterrupted and listened to their responses. I actively followed up on any unexpected or interesting ideas that came up during the interviews.

One of the challenges with oral history is the skepticism scholars express about human memory and the ability to rely on its accuracy.<sup>19</sup> Memory can be fluid and change over time.<sup>20</sup> As Folklorist Bruce Jackson points out, people are telling their stories through retrospection, having “a sense of what things seem to have meant.”<sup>21</sup> It must be acknowledged that the interviews conducted for and cited in this thesis took place over thirty years after the activities discussed. Therefore, people are reflecting on their past experiences. These challenges of working with oral history must be acknowledged,

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<sup>19</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History A Practical Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2003), p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> Joan Tumblety, “Introduction Working with memory as source and subject,” in *Memory and History Understanding Memory as Source and Subject*, edited by Joan Tumblety (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Bruce Jackson, *Fieldwork* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), p. 294; see also Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

however it is an important method of learning about the personal experience and aspirations of those active in the cultural movement.

Much of the scholarship on the Newfoundland Renaissance has relied on oral history, such as Lise Saugeres's work on Figgy Duff, Janice Drodge's examination of nationalist theatre in Newfoundland, and Patricia Cook's study of national cultures and theatres in Newfoundland and Quebec.<sup>22</sup> Folksongs and folk music have also been studied by folklorists Neil Rosenberg, Peter Narváez, Gerald Pocius, and Cory Thorne, sociologist James Overton, and Terry McDonald. The only memoir written by a participant is *A Public Nuisance*, Chris Brookes's personal account of his time in the Mummers Troupe.<sup>23</sup> While Overton has used some archival sources, there has not yet been extensive archival research on this period and this movement. Thus, this study will add to the discussion concerning the cultural movement and the academic literature of various disciplines, including folklore, sociology, and history.

### **Historiography**

While the historiography and literature will be discussed in the relevant chapters, there are some concepts and themes, such as "invented tradition" and "imagined communities," that will be common throughout. As the Newfoundland folk revival was in part a nationalist movement, Benedict Anderson's and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence

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<sup>22</sup> See Lise Saugeres, "Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture" (M.A. Thesis: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1992); Janice Drodge, "A Heritage Portrayed: Nationalist Theatre in Newfoundland, 1972-1982" (M.A. Thesis: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982); Patricia Margaret Anne de Gruchy Cook, "National Cultures and Popular Theatre: Four Collective Companies in Quebec and Newfoundland" (M.A. Thesis: Institute of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, 1986).

<sup>23</sup> See Chris Brookes, *A Public Nuisance: A History of the Mummers Troupe* (St. John's: ISER, 1988).

Ranger's theories of constructing the ideas of nation and tradition are helpful.<sup>24</sup> Many fundamental concepts of modern society are, in fact, invented or constructed. This is certainly true of the intangible ideas of nationalism, traditions, and the folk. All three authors suggest that nationalism, tradition, and the folk are constructed, that they are often utilized to define one group against the other, and that the romantic "irrational" element that unites and stabilizes these invented communities.

The central issue in each of these works is the invention or construction of nationalism and identity. Benedict Anderson focuses on the nation and nationalism. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger examine how and why traditions are invented. These works are very broad-ranging in their scope, examining these issues in a global context. Both books acknowledge that the constructed concepts are predominantly invented by the intelligentsia for their own ends.<sup>25</sup> Anderson primarily views this as a political development. While he acknowledges that nationalism is the product of "cultural artifacts," he defines a nation as an imagined geographic and sovereign political community.<sup>26</sup> Yet Anderson oversimplifies this phenomenon by focusing so explicitly on politics. While he acknowledges that culture, economics, and social transformations played a role in this development, he places them within a political context. For example, in his discussion of the increase of "intra-European nationalist movements" in the nineteenth century, he states that they resulted from capitalism and the expansion of

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<sup>24</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); see also Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>25</sup> See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; see also Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.

<sup>26</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.

dynastic states, and created “cultural and therefore political” problems for dynasts.<sup>27</sup>

Hobsbawm, on the other hand, tends to view invented traditions as important to the development of the ideas of nation, nationalism, national symbols, and history, yet believed they are socially engineered.<sup>28</sup>

Ian McKay’s *Quest of the Folk* offers the most comprehensive study of the construction of a supposedly traditional society in Canada. While the other two books acknowledge the role the intelligentsia played in such developments, McKay’s book explicitly deals with the manner in which the urban middle-class bourgeoisie invented the concept of the country folk “as a romantic antithesis to everything they disliked about modern urban and industrial life.”<sup>29</sup> He examines this in a more focused manner than the others, specifically dealing with the idea of the folk in Nova Scotia in the twentieth century. McKay examines social, economic, and political developments in this period to obtain a more inclusive idea of why and how the folk were invented. He explores this idea by examining the main producers of the concept of the folk, in particular Helen Creighton, Nova Scotia’s first professional folklorist, and Mary Black, who was the supervisor of the Department of Industry and Publicity.<sup>30</sup> The idea of the folk in Nova Scotia was developed in the 1920s, during the interwar period when people were reacting against modernity and the ills of the postwar society. This paralleled Hobsbawm’s argument that invented traditions are commonly constructed during periods of instability

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<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 83.

<sup>28</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in the Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, pp. 152-153.

or rapid change as a bid to give the impression of continuity and calm.<sup>31</sup> The Scottish element of Nova Scotia's culture developed from economic and political considerations in the 1940s and 1950s, when Premier Angus MacDonald wanted to promote tourism as well as the romantic concept of Nova Scotia's Scottish heritage.<sup>32</sup> However, one thing missing in McKay's "quest of the folk" is the voice of the folk. Hobsbawm states it is often easier to document the motives of those who are able to formally institute change and innovation rather than the voices of those who are not.<sup>33</sup>

Each of these key publications presents the idea that nations and cultures are constructed in opposition to an "Other." Anderson argues that nations are imagined as all members will not know one another, yet will feel connected through the image of their nation.<sup>34</sup> People are able to define themselves within their "elastic boundaries" as beyond this are other nations.<sup>35</sup> This ideology is further enforced in his discussion of nationalism as the successor of the cultural systems that proceeded, such as the religious and dynastic systems that predated the eighteenth century. Nations are not only constructed to define themselves against other nations, but against their own past and preceding ruling systems. This idea is also presented in *The Invention of Tradition*. In the chapter examining the Highland tradition in Scotland, Hugh Trevor-Roper argues this was partly developed from the Scottish desire to differentiate themselves from the Irish. One way they attempted this was to borrow literature from Ireland claiming that it was Scottish, and as such created a

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<sup>31</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, p. 160.

<sup>32</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, p. 206.

<sup>33</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, p. 303.

<sup>34</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

new history.<sup>36</sup> Akin to Anderson, Hobsbawm demonstrates that nations differentiate themselves through cultural means from preceding administrative systems. For example, Bastille Day was developed in France in 1880 to celebrate France as a nation. Yet, this was to celebrate the Third Republic and, as such, avoided using symbols that represented the First, such as “goddesses of reason.”<sup>37</sup> McKay also reiterates the idea that the concept of the folk can only work if there are those who are not folk. The folk were seen as essentially natural and rooted to the landscape, in opposition to those seen as “unnatural, cosmopolitan, uprooted, and unwholesome.”<sup>38</sup>

It becomes apparent in these works that there is a romantic element to the construction of nationalism and identity. Hobsbawm states that “irrational” elements were important in maintaining “social fabric and social order.”<sup>39</sup> Anderson suggests that the cultural products of love, such as music and poetry, showcase the affection that cause people to sacrifice for their country. While Anderson places this in a somewhat skeptical light referring to it as “political love,” this is one area where he does a good job of demonstrating that other factors are important.<sup>40</sup> He states there must be a primordial element to this, as national love must be based upon something natural and seemingly unchosen such as birthplace. McKay’s definition of the folk parallels Anderson’s idea of “political love” as the folk were seen as natural and “closer to nature.”<sup>41</sup> They were romanticized and viewed as treasure troves of folklore. McKay demonstrates this in his

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<sup>36</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, pp. 271-273.

<sup>38</sup> McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, p. 268.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 141-143.

<sup>41</sup> McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 12.

description of Helen Creighton's visit to Devil's Island, a desolate island off the coast of Nova Scotia. Here she met Ben Henneberry, a man who for her epitomized the idea of the folk. He was as unattractive as the island he lived upon, yet was friendly and obliging. He also knew a great deal about local lore and knew a number of folk songs. Thus, as McKay states, this desperate unappealing landscape, and man, had been transformed into "a fascinating, enriching, romantic haven of the folk."<sup>42</sup>

Gillian Mitchell, who examined the folk revival in Canada and the United States between 1945 and 1980, argues that Anderson and Hobsbawm's ideas are integral to examining folk revivals. She writes that Anderson's idea of nations as "ideas rather than as fixed concepts," is important. It was during the "turbulent years of the 1960s and 1970s," that Canada and America experienced "dramatic and significant changes" that caused a "re-evaluation of national culture."<sup>43</sup> There was also a connection between national identity and the folk revival. The folk music of the early 1960s was mainly an urban phenomenon, and usually involved middle-class youth, including many university students. While part of the appeal was political protest, it was also a "rediscovery of 'obscure' forms of folk music, often from less economically developed, but culturally 'rich,' areas such as the Maritime Provinces in Canada or the Appalachians in America."<sup>44</sup>

Regionalism was also important as early folk revival participants and enthusiasts were fascinated with "regions of their continents," and the "musical 'treasures'" that might be found in more remote places. This renewed interest in "folk music and 'the

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<sup>42</sup> McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>43</sup> Gillian Mitchell, *The North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945-1980* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), pp. 6-7.

<sup>44</sup> Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival*, pp. 11-12.



folk” was inextricably linked to a “sense of place” and regional diversity. The folk revivals grew stronger in the 1970s, and appeared to be a “personal quest for roots and a display of nostalgia for the romanticized world of one’s forebears, real or adopted, as well as a reaction against the alleged, often-lamented banality of the music industry and its heavily commercialized character.”<sup>45</sup>

Susan Newhook correctly points out that McKay argues that preservationists of “traditional ‘folk’ culture” were motivated by “the desire for self-aggrandizement, corporate profit, and tourist appeal” failing to “give serious consideration to the deprivation and oppression within that history” and as such cannot be used to analyze cultural developments in Newfoundland as a whole.<sup>46</sup> Yet some of McKay’s ideas are applicable to Newfoundland’s post-Confederation period. McKay explicitly deals with the manner in which the urban bourgeoisie in Nova Scotia invented the concept of the country folk.<sup>47</sup> There are several components to McKay’s “Folk ‘formula,’” elements of which have been discussed in the literature on Newfoundland’s cultural movement. First, McKay suggests that it was “preoccupied with essence,” looking for “genuine wisdom,” original folksongs, and cultural forms unaffected by modernity. The folk were also representative of a “Golden Age” and cultural producers felt they were “conducting a last-minute salvage operation” to collect these important cultural artifacts before they disappeared. This formula also attempted to transcend class divisions, as “both the techniques through which the Folk were produced and what they were made to say bore

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<sup>45</sup> Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival*, p. 15.

<sup>46</sup> Susan Newhook, “Six Degrees of Film, Social, and Cultural History: The Fogo Island Film Project of 1967 and ‘Newfoundland Renaissance,’” *Acadiensis* 39, 2 (Summer/Autumn, 2010), p. 59.

<sup>47</sup> McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 4.

witness to the truth of the pastoral ideal, that of a beautiful relation between rich and poor.” It also had an economic element as well, as the folk were constructed in a time in which there was a demand for products that were primitive.<sup>48</sup> McKay argues that the Folk were helping Nova Scotians answer the question urgent in a time of social instability – “who are we?” The answer was traced to a vanishing “Golden Age of Folk authenticity.”<sup>49</sup> In part, this was also the question that led to Newfoundland’s cultural movement.

James Overton asserts that the golden age was less representative of Newfoundland and more an attempt to express feelings of alienation. People viewed the past as the “good life” and valued the rural society and communities.<sup>50</sup> Overton argues that folk culture was influenced by and in turn influenced the sentimental view of Newfoundland. He maintains that contemporary “folk culture” was informed and influenced by a “nostalgic and sentimental view of Newfoundland.”<sup>51</sup> Tourism promotion also affected the interpretation of “Newfoundland’s traditional culture” during the period of 1965 to 1983. Overton explicitly asserts that Newfoundland’s culture promoted through tourism was “best thought of as an ‘invented tradition.’”<sup>52</sup> His collection examines the role business played in the development of a Newfoundland culture and identity by focusing on tourism. Tourism strategies commodified the “real Newfoundland,” attempting to attract visitors, including expatriates, and economic gain by presenting romantic and picturesque images of rural areas, including fishermen

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<sup>48</sup> McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, pp. 275-276.

<sup>49</sup> McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, pp. 306-307.

<sup>50</sup> James Overton, “Coming Home: Nostalgia and Tourism in Newfoundland,” *Acadiensis* 14, 1 (Autumn 1984), pp. 88-90.

<sup>51</sup> Overton, “Coming Home,” p. 97.

<sup>52</sup> James Overton, *Making a World of Difference: Essays on Tourism, Culture and Development in Newfoundland* (St. John’s: ISER Books, 1996), p. x.

mending their nets in the unspoiled nature consisting of ocean breezes and the unmistakable freshness of salt sea air. However, Newfoundland was not an ideal society without problems as there was massive unemployment, and people were concerned about their livelihood.

Overton argues that Newfoundland expatriates were central to the creation of the image of a Newfoundland utopia in a bid to deal with their displeasure with their current situation and “longing for a more satisfying life.”<sup>53</sup> For many of these people who had been forced to leave their homes for economic reasons, “the old way of life and the place they leave often continues to exist as a spiritual home, a world of friends, families, landscapes and communities which has been lost but which might in the future be recaptured.”<sup>54</sup> When facing difficulties and uncertainties, the “old home” was used to measure the present and the future, even if these people would never return on a permanent basis.<sup>55</sup>

While Newfoundland tourism often centered around the idyllic rural setting, during Smallwood’s era there was also an attempt to entice people to visit by showcasing the immense modernization and industrialization that had taken place during his leadership. Overton argues that the examination of Newfoundland “popular culture” could help further the understanding of Newfoundland’s neo-nationalism.<sup>56</sup> Since the 1960s there had been an increase in nostalgia for a rural way of life that had disappeared.

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<sup>53</sup> Overton, *Making a World of Difference*, pp. 105-110 and 129.

<sup>54</sup> Overton, *Making a World of Difference*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>55</sup> Overton, *Making a World of Difference*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>56</sup> James Overton, “Living Patriotism: Songs, Politics and Resources in Newfoundland,” *Canadian Review in Studies in Nationalism* 12, 2 (Fall 1985), p. 239.

This was not unique to Newfoundland, as such sentiments had also developed in Europe and the rest of North America. The promotion of this idea became an industry in itself, accompanied by revivals in folksongs, folk culture, and crafts.<sup>57</sup> Nostalgia is a feeling of loss, longing for a home that no longer exists or has been created as a romantic notion within one's own imagination. As Svetlana Boym argues, nostalgia is "a yearning for a different time" – that of childhood or of a slower pace of life. The sentiment of nostalgia can cause people to attempt to turn history into a collective mythology, people try to replace longing with belonging and a sense of loss with a rediscovery of identity.<sup>58</sup>

Some other terms require definition as well, such as kitsch, authentic and romanticization. Cory Thorne points out that the term "kitsch" is not negative in and of itself. "Kitsch" helps develop a sense of place and community through "the embracement of everyday, privileging of tradition, and focus on localized cultural construction."<sup>59</sup> "Kitschy" Newfoundland music was meant to evoke a sense of nostalgia, or longing, for a utopian community that did not exist. Historian Stuart Pierson uses novelist Milan Kundera's definition of "kitsch," which states

Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass!  
The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running in the grass!  
It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Overton, "Living Patriotism," p. 250.

<sup>58</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), pp. xiii-xv.

<sup>59</sup> Cory Thorne, "Gone to the Mainland and Back Home Again: A Critical Approach to Region, Politics, and Identity in Contemporary Newfoundland Song," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 22, 1 (Spring 2007), p. 61.

<sup>60</sup> Stuart Pierson, "Newfoundland in Photographs," *Newfoundland Studies* 1, 2 (1985), p. 230.

“Kitsch” then is not about the material itself, but rather more about how the material is presented and interpreted. The different representations of Newfoundland culture were simply different ideas of what represented Newfoundland, and were not a case of one form being more aesthetically or politically better than the other. For the purposes of this thesis “kitsch” refers to traditional Newfoundland music that members of the cultural movement believed perpetuated a negative stereotype of Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders. This included the better-known canon of Newfoundland music consisting of songs such as “I’se the B’y,” “Kelligrews Soiree,” and “Jack was Every Inch a Sailor.”<sup>61</sup> In opposition, members of the cultural movement viewed the art that they were creating and songs that they were collecting as more “authentic” and representing “true” and “real” Newfoundland culture and tradition. For example, the folk songs being collected by members of the cultural movement were lesser-known and in this way were more authentic than the more well-known canon including the songs listed above. Members of the cultural movement romanticized outport culture, viewing it through an idealized lens and as more substantive than urban culture. Members of the cultural movement attempted to preserve the older outport culture that they thought was disappearing and thus more valuable than modern Newfoundland culture.

Gerald Pocius’s examination of mummering, primarily Simani’s “The Mummers Song,” provides insight into the issue of cultural selection. Pocius argues that since the 1970s, Newfoundland witnessed a “nativistic movement.” Many Newfoundlanders

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<sup>61</sup> Thorne, “Gone to the Mainland and Back Home Again,” p. 57.

became interested in reviving aspects of the culture that they viewed as distinct.<sup>62</sup> He further argues that “nativist movements” do not focus on an entire culture, but instead certain aspects of culture are “selected for emphasis and given symbolic value.”<sup>63</sup> These distinct aspects were often valued based on their uniqueness in comparison to other cultures the society is in contact with. Practices that were considered ordinary in previous generations become “objectified symbols of the very culture” during nativist periods. Such transactions are often started by various elites who define “what should be considered as authentic Newfoundland culture, a role that they have played in many other cultural revivals.”<sup>64</sup> In Newfoundland, as in other cultural movements or revivals, artists and academics were at the forefront of such developments.<sup>65</sup>

Pocius cites Raymond Williams, who argues that “what a culture decides is traditional is tied directly to present-day values: ‘The traditional culture of a society will always tend to correspond to its contemporary system of interests and values, for it is not an absolute body of work but a continual selection and interpretation.’”<sup>66</sup> Williams argues that selective tradition “begins within the period itself” when things are selected for “value and emphasis.” Such selections were governed by special interests, including “class interests.”<sup>67</sup> Williams affirms that just as social situations governed “contemporary selection,” the historical change and development of the society determined “the selective

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<sup>62</sup> Gerald Pocius, “The Mummers Song in Newfoundland: Intellectuals, Revivalists and Cultural Nativism,” *Newfoundland Studies* 4, 1 (Spring 1988), p. 58.

<sup>63</sup> Pocius, “The Mummers Song,” p. 59.

<sup>64</sup> Pocius, “The Mummers Song,” p. 59.

<sup>65</sup> Pocius, “The Mummers Song,” p. 59.

<sup>66</sup> Pocius, “The Mummers Song,” p. 75.

<sup>67</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1961), pp. 41-42.

tradition.”<sup>68</sup> David Whisnant’s study of cultural selection in the Appalachians region also offers helpful insights. He argues that “the ‘culture’ that is perceived by the intervenor ...is rarely congruent with the culture that is actually there. It is a *selection*, an *arrangement*, an *accommodation* to preconceptions .... Thus the culture that is ‘preserved’ or ‘revived’ is a hybrid at best.”<sup>69</sup>

My understanding of the cultural movement is informed by these scholars’s insights that selection, preservation, and popularization are a reflection of contemporary ideas. The culture preserved during the cultural movement was itself an invented tradition, as artists decided what represented Newfoundland culture to them. Thus, they decided what aspects of Newfoundland culture should be salvaged. They also used modern influences in music and theatre to present traditional material in a new way that in essence changed the song or idea from its original version. Thus, as Whisnant argues, what resulted was a hybrid of the culture artists hoped to preserve.

### **Chapter Outlines**

There are seven chapters in this study, including the introduction and conclusion, which are organized thematically, discussing government policy, Memorial University’s role in the cultural movement, music, and theatre. Chapters 1 and 2 discuss the internal developments that the members of the cultural movement were exploring in their work, while Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate how the external and internal influences fused

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<sup>68</sup> Williams, *The Long Revolution*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>69</sup> David Whisnant, *All that is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), p. 260.

together to create the cultural movement. Chapter 5 illustrates how the cultural movement began to change in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and eventually came to an end.

Chapter 1, “The Antecedents of Newfoundland’s Cultural Movement,” examines the institutional environment of the cultural movement, and analyzes developments in both the federal and provincial governments and how they affected it. While this chapter does not deal explicitly with artistic endeavours during this period, it outlines the important internal developments that influenced artists and their work, a connection that is more explicitly explored in the chapters dealing with specific artistic genres.

The federal government provided funding to establish Folk Arts Councils throughout the country as part of the Centennial Celebrations of 1967. This was meant to highlight “the diversity of Canadian culture.”<sup>70</sup> This chapter also examines the cultural policy of the provincial government under Premiers Joseph Smallwood, Frank Moores, and Brian Peckford. These developments include Come Home Year in 1966, which Ronald Rompkey argues “created a link between public funding and the arts, and entrenched the idea that traditional outport life could be commodified and marketed.”<sup>71</sup> The opening of the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John’s in 1967 is discussed, as it was part of the Centennial Year Celebrations, and was also meant to help develop the arts in Newfoundland. This chapter also looks at the institution of the Division of Cultural Affairs in 1971, under the direction of John Perlin. The artists discussed in this thesis both worked within this context and reacted to it.

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<sup>70</sup> Jean Hewson, “A Brief History of the SJFAC” (St. John’s: Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Council, 2007).

<sup>71</sup> Ronald Rompkey, “The Idea of Newfoundland and Arts Policy Since Confederation,” *Newfoundland Studies* 14, 2 (Fall 1988), p. 267.



Chapter 2, “Preserving the Best of Newfoundland Culture: Memorial University, Extension Service, and the Cultural Movement,” explores the role the university played. While this chapter includes an examination of the visual arts, its primary goal is to outline the importance of Memorial University (MUN) and Extension Service on the work of young Newfoundland artists that is discussed in the subsequent chapters. The university was growing rapidly at this time, and Newfoundland studies were becoming increasingly important. Many of the artists active in the movement met at Memorial, and Newfoundland topics and the scholars investigating them influenced artists and what they were doing.

Developments at Memorial University also influenced this movement, such as MUN’s Extension Service, which in cooperation with the National Film Board (NFB) was responsible for the project that became known as the Fogo Process. This process of using film to aid community development showed Newfoundland cultural producers that the unique culture in rural Newfoundland should be explored through different media.

While the Fogo Film Process was important, Extension Service’s role in the cultural movement was more wide-ranging and multi-faceted, with the Art Gallery, St. Michael’s Printshop, the Community Artist-in-Residence Program, and Bond Street facilities all under its auspices. Artists also found a champion in Edythe Goodridge, who worked as the curator of the Art Gallery. She made the Gallery a place where artists of all genres would meet, gather, discuss projects, and so forth. Her guidance and confidence in their abilities cannot be overestimated. Programs developed and run by Extension played an important role in the cultural community. This chapter explores the many ways in

which MUN was involved in the arts, the importance of Extension Service in shaping the cultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and the role it played in helping develop an artistic industry and sector.

Chapter 3, “Newfoundland’s Musical Evolution,” focuses on the musical development in the province. The younger generation rebelled against the previous representations of Newfoundland music, such as those by Harry Hibbs, Dick Nolan and Omar Blondahl. They felt this music was “kitschy” or garish and non-representative of “authentic” Newfoundland music. Lukey’s Boat, a popular Newfoundland band in the 1960s, founded by Noel Dinn, was instrumental to the cultural movement and the popularization of Newfoundland “trad-rock,” as was his subsequent group Figgy Duff, formed in 1975, comprised of Dinn, Pamela Morgan, Anita Best and others. They released influential albums during this time, including *Figgy Duff* in 1980 and *After the Tempest* in 1982. This chapter also explores the influence that other folk revivals in the rest of North America and in the United Kingdom had on the musical developments that occurred in Newfoundland.

Chapter 4, “A Reflection of Ourselves: Newfoundland’s Theatrical Developments,” concentrates on theatrical developments in the province. One important theatrical group was the Mummers Troupe, which was active from 1972 to 1982. Its founder, Chris Brookes, later claimed that they were reacting to the Anglo-centric culture that was being perpetuated by the provincial government, and the “cloned plastic-wrapped homogeneity of North American consumer capitalism.”<sup>72</sup> CODCO was another

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<sup>72</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 11.

theatre troupe that was instrumental to the cultural movement, particularly in terms of its plays from 1973 to 1976, which commented on issues such as Newfoundlanders in Toronto, and the building of new infrastructure in historic downtown St. John's.

The Mummers Troupe and CODCO fit into the pattern of alternative theatres in Canada in the 1970s, basing their performances on collective creations that centered on local history. What occurred in Newfoundland fell into the theories of social movements. As Hank Johnston writes "culture is *both* socially performed and cognitively based." Members of and participants in cultural movements have "values, norms, attitudes, beliefs, and ideological orientations" that they bring to movement performances. After these performances "they take the social experiences with them, stored in memory, to be invoked again in subsequent encounters."<sup>73</sup> This chapter also places these theatre groups within a larger Newfoundland context, examining the Newfoundland Traveling Theatre Company, and the development of the St. John's Resource Centre for the Arts.

Chapter 5, "The Beginning of the End: The Decline of Newfoundland's Cultural Movement," examines the slow demise of the groups and zeitgeist that had characterized the movement. It looks at the changes in music and theatre that illustrate the evolving values of members of the cultural movement as well as the integration of members of the movement with the institutions they once rebelled against. The Wonderful Grand Band, another influential group, was formed in 1978 during a production of *The Root Cellar*. This was written by Mary Walsh and Greg Malone, along with musician Sandy Morris. The Wonderful Grand Band released its popular album *Living in a Fog* in 1981.

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<sup>73</sup> Hank Johnston, "Protest Cultures: Performance, Artifacts, and Ideations," in *Culture, Social Movements, and Protest* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), p. 21.

There were connections between the institutional elements of Newfoundland's cultural movement and these musical groups. The Wonderful Grand Band was showcased on CBC. Ryan's Fancy, another influential musical group, also had a show that aired on CBC. Interestingly, this show was researched by Wilf Wareham, who was a faculty member in the Department of Folklore. The show was written by Al Pittman, who was writing about resettlement, and was also a co-founder of Breakwater Books.

Local theatre was also changing. Rising Tide Theatre was formed in 1978 by former members of the Mummers Troupe. Rising Tide represented a further evolution in professional theatre during this period, as the group performed both scripted plays, local and international, and collective creations that reflected local issues. The group also formed a closer relationship with the Division of Cultural Affairs than its predecessors.

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Artists active in Newfoundland's cultural movement saw themselves as attempting to revive Newfoundland's dying rural culture, which some of them saw as superior to the modern, industrialized society Smallwood had envisioned for Newfoundland. The cultural movement occurred amongst a small number of cultural producers, some of whom came from away while others had spent time away.

Newfoundland's cultural movement occurred at a time when the province was experiencing great political, economic, and social change. Not only was the province adjusting to its new role within the Canadian federation, the people were also experiencing rapid modernization and resettlement. During this transitional period, Newfoundland witnessed an explosion of creative energy. While Newfoundland artists reacted to the changes occurring internally, the cultural developments in Newfoundland

parallel movements in other areas as well, such as Canada, America, and Western Europe. Just as youth in other areas were challenging political, family and social establishments, so too were the youth of Newfoundland. They were part of a larger movement questioning the changing political and societal norms.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Internal Antecedents of Newfoundland's Cultural Movement**

#### **Introduction**

The 1960s and 1970s were decades of change and social unrest in many parts of the western world. The catalysts ranged through war, the civil rights movement, and feminism. Newfoundland was no exception; the youth of the province were influenced by the cultural changes they saw in the United States, Canada, and Europe. However, the catalysts for change in Newfoundland also included the rapid political changes that occurred in the province beginning in the 1930s. In 1934, Newfoundland lost responsible government and was governed by a British-appointed Commission of Government until joining Canada in 1949. The man often viewed as more responsible for Confederation with Canada than anyone else was Joseph Roberts Smallwood, and as Premier from 1949 to 1971 he dominated the politics of the province. Smallwood's politics following Confederation were central to the cultural movement, as many artists involved protested against the modernization, industrialization, and urbanization promoted by the Smallwood government. Smallwood symbolized many of the changes that had occurred and continued in Newfoundland. Artists reacted to Smallwood's modernization and industrialization plans, especially the poor economic decisions made by government, which made artists feel he was undervaluing Newfoundland rural culture and destroying rural Newfoundland – the “real” Newfoundland. As historian S.J.R. Noel suggests, Confederation saw Newfoundland progress from essentially the nineteenth-century into

the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> As historian Sean Cadigan convincingly argues, Smallwood had promised Newfoundlanders a better life but the province became increasingly dependent on federal transfer payments “and the courtship of big business to aid in natural-resource development.”<sup>2</sup> Smallwood had hoped to transform Newfoundland into a modern consumer society with a higher standard of living and ability to consume goods and public services. Smallwood thought an industrial economy would support such developments. Many people in the province hoped the economic prosperity experienced during World War II would continue with Confederation. However, as Cadigan argues, it soon became evident that Smallwood’s promise would not become reality.<sup>3</sup>

Although many people embraced modernization, some Newfoundlanders saw it as destructive to Newfoundland culture and society. Smallwood worried about people leaving the province and wanted to inspire people to have faith in their prospects. He wanted to convince Newfoundlanders that the province was a place that they did not have to leave, where a young person could have a bright future, find gainful employment, raise a family, and have a good life. Yet, in order to achieve everything he believed Newfoundland was capable of he felt the province had to develop. Smallwood avowed prior to the first Provincial General Election that his government was determined to make Newfoundland a prosperous and progressive province that would enjoy a higher standard of living than before. He sought to explore and develop Newfoundland’s natural

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<sup>1</sup> S.J.R. Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Cadigan, *Newfoundland & Labrador*, p. 235.

<sup>3</sup> Cadigan, *Newfoundland & Labrador*, pp. 235, 242 and 251.

resources.<sup>4</sup> He promoted a cement mill, gypsum plasterboard mill, an insulating material mill, footwear factory, metal products mill, plywood mill, fiberply mill, phosphorous factory, shipyards, a talc mill, an iron ore mill and mines, asbestos mill and mines, copper ore mines, zinc mines, among others.<sup>5</sup> He tried to attract foreign interest in developments in Newfoundland as well.<sup>6</sup> As architectural historian Robert Mellin points out, Smallwood was not interested in specific types of progress, but rather simply progress itself.<sup>7</sup>

This drive for progress provoked a reaction. Sociologist James Overton argues that one key ideological foundation of the cultural movement was the belief by some Newfoundlanders that there was a distinct Newfoundland culture, centered on outports that had been “undermined by industrialization, the welfare state, urbanization, and the introduction of North American values.”<sup>8</sup> He argues that the movement was a reaction on the part of a largely urban middle-class youth to the threat of extinction of Newfoundland culture, a lamentation for “a vanishing way of life,” and an attempt to defend and recreate it.<sup>9</sup> While Smallwood’s plans were well-intentioned, they often did not have the positive results that Smallwood had promised. Smallwood, once heralded for the benefits of Confederation, such as family allowances, old-age pensions, and unemployment

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph R. Smallwood, *I Chose Canada: The Memoirs of the Honourable Joseph R. “Joey” Smallwood* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1973), pp. 342-346.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph R. Smallwood, *No Apology from Me* (St. John’s: Newfoundland Book Publishers Ltd., 1979), pp. 54-55.

<sup>6</sup> Gerhard Bassler, *Alfred Valldmandis and the Politics of Survival* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 220-228 and 246.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Mellin, *Newfoundland Modern: Architecture in the Smallwood Years, 1949-1972* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011), pp. 254-256.

<sup>8</sup> James Overton, “A Newfoundland Culture?” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 23 (Spring-Summer 1988), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Overton, “A Newfoundland Culture,” p. 9; see also Overton, “Towards a Critical Analysis of neo-nationalism in Newfoundland,” pp. 222-223.



insurance, was later criticized by politicians, such as Brian Peckford, and also the arts community, for failed industrialization, destroying Newfoundland culture through resettlement and ignoring Newfoundland's staple industry, the inshore fishery.<sup>10</sup> Critics viewed Smallwood as an egomaniac, power-hungry, and more concerned with political control than doing what was best for the province. The decisions made during Smallwood's time as Premier heavily influenced the cultural movement. Even though he was no longer Premier after 1971, which is relatively early in the period studied, the changes that began under his government continued and inspired the new generation, the first to grow up as Canadians, to rebel against and reject the changes in Newfoundland society. While this chapter does not deal exclusively with artistic expressions of the cultural movement, it discusses some of the influential internal developments that later informed the work of local performers.

### **Newfoundland in the 1940s**

During the 1940s Newfoundland cultivated closer military and cultural ties with North America. Historian Peter Neary argues that Canada and the United States became more integral to Newfoundland throughout the war, making Newfoundlanders want a more modern lifestyle. He asserts that in the 1940 military crisis, Canada had to admit that it was inextricably linked with Newfoundland, and an interdependent relationship was forming.<sup>11</sup> Another historian, David MacKenzie, argues that air flight was primarily

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<sup>10</sup> Blake, *Canadians At Last*, "Sharing the Wealth: Canadian Social Programs Come to Newfoundland," pp. 70-93.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), p. 178.

responsible for the increasing strategic link between Newfoundland and Canada. By the end of the war Canada and Newfoundland “were locked into the maps of world air strategy.”<sup>12</sup> This development influenced Canadian policy in aviation and also demonstrated the potential of Newfoundland.<sup>13</sup> Americans also became increasingly influential during this time as well, especially in terms of defense spending.<sup>14</sup> This impacted Newfoundlanders, as the prosperity experienced pulled “Newfoundlanders more than ever before away from the sea and towards North American tastes, habits, and values.”<sup>15</sup> Canada began to take a greater interest in Newfoundland and believed having the colony join the country would be best for Canada, fearing Newfoundland would develop closer relations with the United States.<sup>16</sup>

Undoubtedly, the arrival of American servicemen in World War II had a great impact on Newfoundland culture.<sup>17</sup> Yet, Jeff A. Webb argues that while many people believe that Newfoundland transformed from a “backward area” into a “capitalist and innovative” place because of the influence and presence of “American business and military might,” this was not entirely accurate. Prior to the arrival of American servicemen in World War II, Newfoundlanders had been aware of American culture, including jazz and country music, through “phonographs, movies, live music, travellers, and radio.” However, the program of the Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) and the

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<sup>12</sup> David MacKenzie, *Inside the Atlantic Triangle: Canada and the Entrance of Newfoundland into Confederation 1939-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), p. 126.

<sup>13</sup> MacKenzie, *Inside the Atlantic Triangle*, p. 126.

<sup>14</sup> MacKenzie, *Inside the Atlantic Triangle*, p. 179.

<sup>15</sup> MacKenzie, *Inside the Atlantic Triangle*, p. 236.

<sup>16</sup> Terry Bishop-Stirling and Jeff A. Webb, “The Twentieth Century,” *A Short History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John’s: Boulder Publications, 2008), pp. 121-123.

<sup>17</sup> Jeff A. Webb, “Gate Keeping and Newfoundland Culture,” in *Occupied St. John’s: A Social History of a City at War, 1939-1945* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), pp. 191-192.

American servicemen increased the awareness of American popular music during the war. Radio stations played a key role in exposing Newfoundlanders to outside influences as well, as civilians listened to the station in addition to American servicemen.<sup>18</sup> While Newfoundlanders consumed American popular culture prior to World War II and on Newfoundland stations, AFRS “also unintentionally reproduced a taste for American mass-produced popular culture among civilians.”<sup>19</sup> Not only was there American popular culture on the radio, the United Service Organizations also brought in American entertainers such as Edgar Bergen and Bob Hope.<sup>20</sup> The southern blues influenced local musicians who heard this music at the American bases as well.<sup>21</sup>

By the end of World War II, the British government decided that Newfoundland could not continue on with Commission of Government and that a new constitutional status would have to be decided upon.<sup>22</sup> A National Convention was elected to discuss options for Newfoundland’s political future and put Confederation with Canada forward as an option. Confederation won in a second referendum by a small majority. Subsequently some Newfoundland nationalists viewed Confederation as a conspiracy, complete with tales of tampered votes and manipulated results.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Webb, “Gate Keeping and Newfoundland Culture,” pp. 217-218.

<sup>19</sup> Jeff A. Webb, “VOUS – Voice of the United States: The armed forces radio service in Newfoundland,” *Journal of Radio Studies* 11, 1 (2004), p. 87.

<sup>20</sup> Webb, “VOUS,” pp. 97-98.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Lynk, “A Wonderful Grand Musician Still on the Rock,” *The Sunday Express*, 10 April 1988.

<sup>22</sup> Jeff A. Webb, “The Way it Was Done: How Newfoundlanders Chose Confederation,” *Aspects* 37, 1 (December 2002), p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> James K. Hiller, *Confederation: Deciding Newfoundland’s Future, 1934-1949* (St. John’s: NHS, 1998), p. 63.

### **Joseph Roberts Smallwood**

Historian James Hiller credits Smallwood for the success of the confederate campaign. Newfoundlanders were anxious about resuming responsible government, especially fearful of experiencing “economic collapse in the postwar period,” and wanted to maintain the improved standard of living to which they had become accustomed. Smallwood argued that Confederation was an answer to these anxieties.<sup>24</sup> Following Confederation, the federal government appointed Smallwood to form an interim government. He established, and became the leader of, a provincial branch of the Liberal Party of Canada. He aimed to modernize the province. Smallwood decided to industrialize the provincial economy, viewing the sea as responsible for “Newfoundland’s backwardness.”<sup>25</sup>

Part of Smallwood’s success in the Confederation campaign was his familiarity with Newfoundlanders and his genuine concern for the people. Smallwood was a complex man who had a varied career before he entered politics. He worked as a journalist for many years, writing for St. John’s newspapers *Plaindealer*, *Spectator*, the *Daily News*, and the *Evening Telegram*. He also worked in Halifax at the *Halifax Herald* in 1920, in Boston for the *Boston Herald-Traveler*, and later moved to New York in 1921 where he wrote for the socialist newspaper *The Call*. He returned to Newfoundland in 1925 and helped reorganize Local 63 of Burke’s International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers in Grand Falls and later organized another branch, Local 64, in Corner Brook. Smallwood was also deeply interested in politics, even before

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<sup>24</sup> Hiller, *Confederation*, p. 62.

<sup>25</sup> Hiller, *Confederation*, pp. 126-127.

Confederation. In 1926, he went to England and became involved in Labour politics. Once back in Newfoundland in 1927, he worked for the Liberal Party, helping Prime Minister Richard Squires prepare speeches and policy statements. He unsuccessfully ran for the Liberal Party in Bonavista Centre in 1932. Following this, Smallwood spent time writing about Newfoundland, including producing *The Book of Newfoundland*. This two-volume collection consisted of articles on local history and institutions. Smallwood hoped that the volumes would “restore the faith of Newfoundlanders in their country.”<sup>26</sup> The intellectual study of Newfoundland history, society, and culture became an important impetus for the cultural movement. It is interesting that although artists would credit university professors as instilling the idea that Newfoundland was worth studying, Smallwood, enemy of the artistic community, had been doing this much earlier.

In the late 1930s, Smallwood was best known for his newspaper column and radio show called “The Barrelman,” with the slogan “Making Newfoundland Better Known to Newfoundlanders.” Smallwood had a great knowledge of Newfoundland. The material for these media came from many sources including newspapers, colonial records, mail from listeners, and stories told to him by people.<sup>27</sup> Smallwood wanted to use the Barrelman to instil pride and faith in Newfoundlanders. Smallwood described the Barrelman as

a peculiar blend of Newfoundland history, geography, and economic information, with stories of courage, endurance,

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<sup>26</sup> Baker, “Smallwood, Joseph Roberts,” p. 211.

<sup>27</sup> Leo Moakler, “The Barrelman: Making Newfoundland Better Known to Newfoundlanders,” in *Call Me Joey* (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1990), pp. 19-20; Gwyn, *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary*, p. 53; Philip Hiscock, “The Barrelman radio programme, 1937-1943: the mediation and use of folklore in Newfoundland” (Ph.D. Thesis: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1994).

hardship, inventiveness, resourcefulness, physical strength and prowess, skill and courage in seamanship, and a hundred other aspects and distinctions of our Newfoundland story – all of them ‘making Newfoundland better known to Newfoundlanders’ and intended to inspire them with faith in their country and in themselves.<sup>28</sup>

He wanted to find examples of Newfoundlanders who had been successful, becoming “admirals, generals, bishops, and archbishops, Members of Parliament, mayors of cities, presidents of universities, industrial leaders, financiers, artists, actors, and singers.”<sup>29</sup> Every night on his broadcast he wanted to present evidence that Newfoundland was a fascinating place with a resourceful population who could accomplish anything they wanted and had the opportunity to do so. Smallwood also claimed to love the outports, stating that he loved the time he spent traveling around rural Newfoundland.<sup>30</sup> Christopher Pratt recalled several years later listening to the Barrelman and remembered that Smallwood “would come on and he would extol the beauties of Newfoundland and the grandeur of Newfoundland and everything Newfoundland. I mean he preached Newfoundland. And I learned, I got a sense of Newfoundland from my uncles on both sides of the family but also from the Barrelman, from Joey Smallwood, what a wonderful place it was, what wonderful potential it had, how vibrant the people were, how strong the people were, how independent the people were.”<sup>31</sup>

So, while Premier Smallwood later had many charges leveled against him by political opponents and artists, for example that the economic prosperity he promised did

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<sup>28</sup> Smallwood, *I Chose Canada*, p. 206.

<sup>29</sup> Smallwood, *I Chose Canada*, p. 206.

<sup>30</sup> Smallwood, *I Chose Canada*, p. 210.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Christopher Pratt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 January 2010 [Cassette 1B, 1:00]

not become reality and that his policies destroyed rural Newfoundland, he did have affection for Newfoundland. Smallwood was an interesting and complex man - someone who loved Newfoundland, but also wanted to modernize and change it for what he saw as the betterment of the province. Despite Smallwood's love for Newfoundland, his role in bringing about Confederation and Confederation itself continues to spark the imaginations of Newfoundlanders, inspiring films, plays, and much-heated debate. Confederation had an influence on the first generation of artists who grew up as Canadians. Many of the artists active in the cultural movement claimed they felt a sense of inferiority because of the loss of self-government and Confederation. Although many members of the artistic movement of the 1960s and 1970s were not born when Confederation occurred, or were too young to remember it, it had a tremendous impact on them. As Sandy Morris, a musician and St. John's native born in 1948, reflected in a 2009 interview "certainly [for] my parents' generation it was really pivotal. There was... grief over the fact everybody felt that we were ripped off, that we didn't get the proper election results, that the votes had been tampered with, that Newfoundland had been duped again. So that was a really heavy emotional thing for my parents' generation....I wasn't thinking about Confederation or Newfoundland's place, but like I say to you, there was this whole undercurrent of shame and grief around the whole Confederation thing that you certainly felt and had to fight against."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 32:32]; Morris was a member of The Wonderful Grand Band, and also wrote scores for CODCO plays. His personal and professional influences are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Their parents were looking elsewhere – to American popular culture. Greg Malone, a founding member of CODCO, born in St. John's in 1948, recounted over 30 years later that his parents wanted to be the “modern American couple ... and so did all their friends.”<sup>33</sup> He further claimed that they were “just tired of the rest of it you know, of the misery before that.” Incidentally, America was the “the cultural guiding light” and not Canadian culture.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Kelly Russell, a musician who was born in 1956 and grew up in St. John's, reiterated the idea that there was a feeling that Newfoundland had not gotten a fair deal. Russell professed “I think that a lot of us felt that Newfoundland had gotten the short end of the stick way too many times, that we were being ridiculed by the rest of the country.” So, it was not just a feeling of taking “back our culture” but “strong attitudes that ... perhaps we should be running this place ourselves.” Canada was not being fair “or treating Newfoundland as an equal to Ontario or Quebec.”<sup>35</sup> In addition, Russell claimed that Newfoundlanders lost a lot through both Confederation and later resettlement, not only important cultural elements but their actual homes and communities and “Smallwood [was] largely to blame for it and his cronies.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 2, 7:55]; Malone was an influential member of the cultural movement, whose work was influenced by his experiences while living in Toronto. His work and connection to the cultural movement will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 2, 8:09]; see also Greg Malone, *You Better Watch Out: A Memoir* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2009), p. 338.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 31:00]; Russell was a member of groups such as The Wonderful Grand Band and Figgy Duff, and also actively involved in collecting folksongs. Russell's personal life may have also influenced his connection to the cultural movement, as his father, Ted, had been a member of Smallwood's cabinet and left politics because he disagreed with Smallwood's policies. Kelly Russell's personal and professional influences are discussed later in this thesis.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 34:00].



Not only were these feelings pervading the households of these future artists, but they also felt that they were being criticized by Canadians. While Malone did not expect to experience any prejudice when moving to Toronto in the early 1970s to pursue his career, once he arrived there he was asked questions such as “Do you live in an igloo? Have you ever seen a tv?” In a 2010 interview Malone reported to me that it grew tiresome after a while and influenced what he and the other members of CODCO wanted to discuss in their work.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, Mary Walsh, another member of CODCO born in St. John’s in 1952, asserted that there was a feeling among her colleagues that they were being put down by Canadians. As Walsh said, Smallwood’s dream of industrialization had not been successful and

we kind of turned our backs on our old ways and then the new ways weren’t really getting anywhere. And so we’d gone from being ... the doormat of Britain to becoming Canada’s laughing stock and people would try to pretend they weren’t from Newfoundland. People would deny Newfoundland three times before the cock crowed. So, there was that whole feeling of trying to stand up again, to be what we were, and ... to stop trying to be what we weren’t, which seemed to be a kind of general Zeitgeist in the society at the time.<sup>38</sup>

In 2009, Anita Best, a musician born in Merasheen in 1948, reflected that in the 1960s and 1970s people in other areas of Canada were condescending to Newfoundlanders. One example was the “Newfie” joke. Best declared she never heard “Newfie” jokes as a child but “as soon as you go to Halifax or Toronto, boom. And people would laugh if you said

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 8:47].

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 13:00]; Walsh, an actress in the comedy troupe CODCO, will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

you were from Newfoundland ...they'd start laughing. It's just like their attitude towards us was really patronizing and like we were the cute ... picturesque little caricatures.”<sup>39</sup>

Malone argued that in the 1970s his generation was “always in revolt against poor Joe.” Malone and his cohorts felt the government, and Newfoundland society, was “too nepotistic” and “needed to be opened up a bit.” So, they supported anything that voiced opposition in Newfoundland to the government. Malone and his generation opposed “the whole cap-tip you know attitude or style of Canada, Newfoundland’s incorporation into Canada.”<sup>40</sup> They were “disgusted” by that approach by the Smallwood government and the fact that Smallwood seemed to think Newfoundlanders should be grateful that Canada “took” the province into Confederation. Malone argued Canada “should be grateful to us, not us to them. And that was our job to prove.”<sup>41</sup>

### **Smallwood’s Industrial Failures**

It is important to understand Smallwood’s industrial endeavours, as his policies heavily influenced artists’ opinion of Smallwood. Both developments at Long Harbour and Churchill Falls are good examples of the failures of Smallwood’s policies, and these projects became focal points for criticism on the part of some artists.

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 12:00]; Best was an early member of Figgy Duff and heavily influenced by Smallwood’s policies such as resettlement. She will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Three.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 36:38].

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 37:23].

A phosphorus plant established at Long Harbour by the Electric Reduction Company of Canada in December 1968 cost \$40 million.<sup>42</sup> The chemical emissions from the plant led to pollution in the water and atmosphere surrounding Long Harbour. Many observers believed that the provincial government had overpaid for the economic benefits of this project, and had been too hasty in its willingness to supply electricity at a low price. The agreement contained no clause for escalation and the price was quickly below the cost of production. The government argued they could not have foreseen the pollution or the increase in the cost of oil and hydro power.<sup>43</sup> The lack of long-term thought of escalation in energy prices supports Richard Gwyn's claim that Smallwood did not have analytical skills and tended to see everything in terms of black and white. Smallwood had not attended university and his formal education was equivalent to grade nine. Thus, as Gwyn argues, while he had acquired a "lust" for books and knowledge he did not gain the logic or analytical skills often developed through formal education.<sup>44</sup>

Not only did the phosphorus plant cost the Newfoundland government financially, it also cost fishermen in the area their livelihood. Because of the pollutant in the water the fish began to die.<sup>45</sup> In 1969, the fish plant in the area closed while purifying equipment was installed, causing 400 people to lose their jobs. Jack Davis, the Minister of Fisheries, stated it would not reopen until "99 percent of the pollutant" had been eliminated. The federal fisheries department also closed half the bay to fishermen due to the pollutant,

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<sup>42</sup> Frank Howard, "Moving's not a Newfie Joke," *Globe and Mail*, 7 June 1969.

<sup>43</sup> Frederick William Rowe, *The Smallwood Era* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1985), pp. 24-25.

<sup>44</sup> Gwyn, *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary*, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Carla Krachun, "Long Harbour-Mount Arlington Heights," *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 3 (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1991), pp. 365-366.

affecting between 200 and 300 fishermen.<sup>46</sup> Developments like this angered artists and inspired their feelings, commentaries, and work. For example, visual artist Frank Lapointe created a piece that expressed his feeling about the Long Harbour development. In it, he used polluted water from Long Harbour. Lapointe's piece was displayed at the Provincial Art Gallery, which prompted the provincial government to ask that it be removed because of its political commentary.<sup>47</sup> As Mary Walsh pointed out many years later, the industrialization Smallwood had promised did not come to fruition and Long Harbour was an example of this. She argued that "Joey's whole dream of industrialization had really fallen through" and by then Newfoundlanders had "turned our backs on our old ways and then the new ways weren't really getting anywhere."<sup>48</sup>

The development of Churchill Falls hydro power in Labrador was another controversial decision during the Smallwood era. The project cost over a billion dollars by the time of the official opening in 1972.<sup>49</sup> However, the situation would become more dire with the unforeseen escalation in oil prices. Quebec was therefore able to resell the power to the United States at significantly higher prices than the purchase cost. While Quebec received hundreds of millions in profits, Newfoundland, on the other hand, only received "its fixed 50 cents per horsepower and its 8 percent tax on profits – paltry,

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<sup>46</sup> Frank Howard, "Moving's not a Newfie Joke," *Globe and Mail*, 7 June 1969; see also Ian Adams, "The Emperor's Last Stand: A Portrait of Joey Smallwood Today," *Maclean's Magazine* 83, 4 (April 1970), pp. 52-55.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 46:00]; Lapointe was born in 1942 in Port Rexton, Trinity Bay, and later attended the Ontario College of Art and Design. His work is further discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 13:00].

<sup>49</sup> Rowe, *The Smallwood Era*, p. 34.

indeed, by comparison.”<sup>50</sup> Newfoundlanders became infuriated by the situation. Most of their anger was toward the Liberal government, and especially Smallwood who made “the agreement with Brinco in the early 1950s.”<sup>51</sup> Opponents of Smallwood, including artists, accused Smallwood of giving Newfoundland’s resources away and people expressed their concern that Brinco was only interested in profit and had no real concern for Newfoundland.<sup>52</sup>

### **Smallwood, Celebration, and Cultural Developments**

Smallwood’s government developed cultural policies, many of which continued through the administrations of Frank Moores and Brian Peckford. The provincial government established the Arts and Letters Competition, for example, in 1951 to help broaden interest and activities in the arts. Catering to amateur artists, the categories included in the competition were history, poetry, short story, portrait painting, best landscape painting, best script, and best play.<sup>53</sup> The Smallwood government also promoted events such as Come Home Year in 1966 and Centennial Celebrations in 1967, which also contributed to an increased interest in Newfoundland and its culture. The Centennial Year was a great moment of Canadian nationalism. The St. John’s Folk Arts Council formed in 1966 as part of the Centennial projects across Canada. The federal government provided funding to establish folk arts councils throughout Canada intended

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<sup>50</sup> Rowe, *The Smallwood Era*, p. 35.

<sup>51</sup> Rowe, *The Smallwood Era*, p. 35.

<sup>52</sup> Rowe, *The Smallwood Era*, p. 35.

<sup>53</sup> Christine M. Bown, “Arts and Letters Competition,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 1 (St. John’s: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Ltd., 1981), p. 81; see also Rompkey, “The Idea of Newfoundland and Arts Policy,” p. 267.

to highlight the diversity of culture within Canada. Interest in the folk arts, including dance, music, storytelling and folklore, became heightened by the Come Home Year and Centennial Celebration preparations, and folklore classes at MUN. The objective of the Folk Arts Council was “to preserve our Folk Arts heritage and to encourage creative expression of these arts” and “encourage the setting up of similar Councils in other parts of the Province.”<sup>54</sup>

Come Home Year was held in 1966 because the Trans-Canada Highway across the province had been finished in 1965 and 1967 was the year of the Centennial Celebrations. The provincial government wanted Come Home Year to be its own celebration, not blanketed with a national celebration, and to mark the progress that had been made in Newfoundland since 1949.<sup>55</sup> Former Newfoundlanders and people of Newfoundland descent in other parts of Canada and the United States were invited to return to Newfoundland to see the progress made in the province. The provincial government also hoped that the publicity would entice other tourists to come as well.<sup>56</sup> Smallwood wanted to showcase the progress that Newfoundland had made since joining Confederation. More schools, teachers, a higher standard of education, and new industries had been developed, health care had improved, new roads had been built, and more people had access to modern services, such as electricity, and water and sewerage.<sup>57</sup> Yet,

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<sup>54</sup> “St. John’s Folk Arts Council, 23 November 1966,” File 14, Box 12, GN55/1, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

<sup>55</sup> James Overton, “Research Note: Coming Home: Nostalgia and Tourism in Newfoundland,” *Acadiensis* 14, 1 (Autumn 1984), p. 95.

<sup>56</sup> “Come Home Year,” Address Given to the St. John’s Rotary Club by Hon. Dr. F. W. Rowe, Minister of Finance, April 22, 1965, File 3.24.080, Collection 075, The Smallwood Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> General Introduction, File 3.24.082, Collection 075, The Smallwood Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-2; see also “By

the government also attempted to showcase the “old” qualities of Newfoundland. Quoting a Come Home Year Newsletter from September 1966, Overton points out, “the old and the new together was the message: ‘But even with all the changes and progress, our people remain the same as always; friendly, hospitable, proud and happy, the traits that have made us so well-known.’”<sup>58</sup>

One of the main objectives of Come Home Year was to have a large number of tourists and expatriates visit Newfoundland, enjoy their stay, and leave with the intention to return to Newfoundland in the future.<sup>59</sup> In addition to these developments, a volunteer group formed under John Perlin. Born in St. John’s in 1934 to journalist Albert Perlin and his wife Elizabeth Crosbie, he later became director of the Arts and Culture Centres as well as the director of Cultural Affairs, and produced performing arts events for Come Home Year in 1966.<sup>60</sup> The government hoped Come Home Year would be one of the biggest affairs in the province’s history.<sup>61</sup> It wanted the celebrations to not only provide publicity for the province, but “entice many varied new industries to our area [which] would mean millions of dollars going directly into the pockets of the people.”<sup>62</sup> Come Home Year and the Centennial Year also brought economic stimulus as “community

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Honourable Joseph Smallwood., D.C.L., LL.D., D. Litt., M.H.A. Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador,” File 3.24.081, The Smallwood Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Overton, “Coming Home,” p. 96.

<sup>59</sup> C. Edwards, Chairman, Central Region, 12 April 1965, File 2, Box 12, GN55/1, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

<sup>60</sup> Rompkey, “Newfoundland Arts Policy,” p. 267

<sup>61</sup> “Message from Premier Smallwood Regarding the Official Opening of Come Home Year,” Press Release 15 June 1966, File 1, Box 19, GN55/1, The Rooms Provincial Archives, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> “Article by Dr. Rowe for Board of Trade Journal,” Press Releases, File 1, Box 19, GN55/1, The Rooms Provincial Archives, p. 1; see also Overton, *Making a World of Difference*, pp. 134-136; Rompkey, “Newfoundland Arts Policy, pp. 270-271; Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, p. 251.

halls, recreation centres, libraries, and hockey rinks went up all over the island.”<sup>63</sup> In some sense, it commodified Newfoundland, as it was a bid to promote the province and its culture as a tourist attraction.<sup>64</sup>

The Centennial Celebrations in Newfoundland, in general, were meant to help incorporate Newfoundlanders into Canada. A report from the Office of the Premier in 1966 acknowledged that as Newfoundland had only been a part of Canada for 17 years, the people of the province still thought of themselves as Newfoundlanders. The government instructed the Centennial Committee to keep this in mind. The provincial government further hoped that by keeping the Centennial in the media, such as on the radio and in the newspapers, it would make Newfoundlanders “Centennial minded” if not “Canadian minded.”<sup>65</sup> Thus, even if they did not feel part of Canada, they would feel as if they were part of the Centennial Celebrations at least.

The Centennial Celebrations also highlighted a struggle between elite and popular culture in Newfoundland. In most cultures there have been struggles between high or elite culture and low or popular culture. As historian Jonathan Vance argues, elite or high culture provided moral and spiritual improvements as well as enjoyment. Some people among political, social, and economic elites felt that high culture should be circulated as widely as possible. Not everyone agreed. For many who did not believe culture was about “truth and beauty,” culture may have meant “a hand-carved toy, dime novel, a vaudeville

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<sup>63</sup> Gwyn, *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary*, p. 284.

<sup>64</sup> Gwyn, *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary*, p. 284.

<sup>65</sup> “Proposed Programme for the First Four Months of Centennial Year in Newfoundland,” File 3.10.071, Collection 075, The Smallwood Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.



show, or a dialect song learned from a grandparent: these cultural artefacts arguably contained more truth than a comedy of manners or a rhyming quatrain.”<sup>66</sup> Many others wanted the arts to be entertainment rather than “intellectual engagement.”<sup>67</sup> Artists could even make fun of the people seeking their betterment. People in the cultural movement in Newfoundland were doing the last of these, demonstrating that culture was not just for the educated elite.<sup>68</sup> Chris Brookes, founder of the Mummers Troupe, argued the government promoted national groups, such as the Canadian Opera Company, to show Newfoundlanders what defined culture.<sup>69</sup> However, through his work, Brookes wanted to demonstrate that there was an indigenous Newfoundland culture that was just as important, entertaining, and worthwhile as British, American, and Canadian elite culture.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, Malone wanted to portray Newfoundland culture, including flawed characters, to the province and the rest of the country. It was a political reaction against prejudice that the members of CODCO had experienced in Canada.<sup>71</sup>

### **Arts and Culture Centres**

While several members of the cultural movement, including Brookes, Malone, Morris, Best, and Lapointe viewed Smallwood as responsible for the economic changes

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<sup>66</sup> Jonathan Vance, *A History of Canadian Culture* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. viii.

<sup>67</sup> Vance, *A History of Canadian Culture*, p. viii.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 21:00].

<sup>69</sup> Brookes was an actor born in St. John's in 1943. He spent time in the United States and other parts of Canada before returning to Newfoundland to form the Mummers Troupe in 1972. He is further discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1B, 14:00].

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 11:29].

they viewed as detrimental to rural Newfoundland and the province's traditional culture, John Perlin was often held responsible for cultural policy and developments. The tension between Perlin and artists represented in part the tension between elite and popular culture versus folk culture and agitator propaganda. Perlin had a background in theatre, and was involved with the Dominion Drama Festival (DDF), and in fact, at one point, served as the president of DDF.<sup>72</sup> The DDF was "inspired by the international 'art' theatre movement, Drama Leagues in Britain and the United States, and a blossoming of the arts in Canada."<sup>73</sup> It began in 1932 and partly formed to connect the "Little Theatres" that had been established in many parts of Canada prior to World War II. Founder Vincent Massey, among others, wanted to improve the "level of theatre, thereby enhancing the quality of life in Canada, fostering a national drama consistent with the maturing nation, and countering the overwhelming influence of American-based commercial touring."<sup>74</sup> While Perlin's background in theatre included involvement with government-sponsored formal organizations, the groups developing in Newfoundland during the 1970s differed from organizations such as the DDF, as they were collective creations written by all members of the group, often improvisational, and their scripts/shows dealt with local issues. These alternative theatres questioned organizations such as the DDF, which performed scripted plays written by a single playwright.<sup>75</sup> Brookes represented one of the best examples of the new ethos, alleging "there were what you call regional theatres and

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 12:00].

<sup>73</sup> Richard L. Plant, "Dominion Drama Festival," in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press Canada, 2004), p. 183.

<sup>74</sup> Plant, "Dominion Drama Festival," p. 183.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 13:00].

they looked like great big versions of the Dominion Drama Festival amateur scene where they would do British and American plays and get tax-payers' money to do it.”<sup>76</sup>

This tension between official cultural policy and participants of the cultural movement became heightened with the construction of the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's. A Centennial project, the Centre opened on 22 May 1967, just a few years prior to the development of local professional theatre in the province. It was Smallwood's idea as a project commemorating the Centre paid for by the provincial government.<sup>77</sup> The Arts and Culture Centre cost \$8 million, with a \$3 million increase from the original budget. The project was rushed at the end to be open in time for the DDF in May 1967.<sup>78</sup>

Several artists accused the DDF “of perpetuating social and colonial values and retarding the evolution of the professional theatre that supplanted it.”<sup>79</sup> For them it represented elite culture and the type of government-endorsed cultural events they opposed. The Wonderful Grand Band, for example, had an episode of their television show that was entitled “Drama Festival” that parodied the material that was performed at the DDF, such as traditional British and American plays. The group, referred to as the Crusty Players of Corner Brook, performed a “traditional” eighteenth century farce entitled “The Two for a Penny Opera.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 14:00].

<sup>77</sup> John Perlin, “Arts and Culture Centres,” Arts and Culture Centres, Vertical File, Centre for Newfoundland Studies.

<sup>78</sup> Plant, “Dominion Drama Festival,” p. 183.

<sup>79</sup> “Newfoundland and Labrador Drama Festival,” Centre for Newfoundland Studies Vertical File, pp. 2-3.

<sup>80</sup> *The Best of the Wonderful Grand Band DVD*, Volume 2, Episode 3 “Drama Festival,” 1981.

Tension between the arts community and the provincial government continued to mount following 1967. The objective of the Arts and Culture Centre was to “provide the broadest possible base for all the Arts and in doing so appeal generally to the people of Newfoundland.”<sup>81</sup> The Arts and Culture Centre was to be used not only for theatre but popular music groups as well, such as the Carlton Showband, and the provincial government meant the Centre to aid in the Canadianization of Newfoundland. While local groups were tried to foster a Newfoundland identity, the provincial government hoped the Centre would foster a Canadian identity through the constant exposure to artistic expressions of the “Canadian nation” and also to develop a “closer identity” between Newfoundland and mainland Canada.<sup>82</sup>

After discussing the Arts and Culture Centre with Smallwood on several occasions, Smallwood invited Perlin to run it. Smallwood had initially considered getting the university to run the Arts and Culture Centre but Perlin argued this would create an elite centre rather than the community-based centre Smallwood had hoped it to be.<sup>83</sup> Perlin did not think it was a wise decision to have the university run the Centre, as Smallwood envisioned it being used by the public and the university would have its own agenda. Smallwood wanted the Arts and Culture Centre to be “the cultural heart of the province... a people’s place, and not merely for the arty-arty people, as important as they

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<sup>81</sup> No Author, “Arts and Culture Centre,” File 10, Box 2, GN/163, Arts and Culture Centre St. John’s Administration, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

<sup>82</sup> Resume, Extension, File 3.09.048, Collection 075, The Smallwood Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-2.

<sup>83</sup> Roger Bill, “Culture vs policy vs culture: Four decades of making cultural policy,” *Newfoundland Quarterly* online exclusives, 2010.

are, but for the toiling masses.”<sup>84</sup> Therefore, Smallwood said he would not give it to Memorial if Perlin would run it.<sup>85</sup> Smallwood did not provide any instructions on how to operate it. Perlin eventually ran the six Arts and Culture Centres established throughout the province and also headed the Division of Cultural Affairs created in 1971. Roger Bill argues that during Perlin’s tenure as the Director of Cultural Affairs the government’s cultural agenda was evident from the programming at the Arts and Culture Centres.<sup>86</sup> Smallwood was not interested in “cultural matters” and perhaps because of this did not interfere in the operation of the Centres.<sup>87</sup>

Perlin had a philosophy; he hoped the Centres would be places where significant cultural events, such as music, theatre, and so on, would take place. He also felt that they should be community centres, meaning “that if you liked the Carlton Showband you should be able to come and see the Carlton Showband at the arts centre.”<sup>88</sup> Members of the cultural movement, such as the members of the Mummers Troupe and CODCO, criticized Perlin for frequently booking shows such as Peter Reveen, a Canadian-based stage hypnotist and illusionist originally from Australia, but these shows were successful. Perlin argued segments of the community wanted to see such things. Reveen could run for two weeks and “a large body of people” would come to see it. If people had the money and could buy a ticket, they were welcome. Perlin decided on potential acts based on what he thought the majority of his audience wanted to see, and felt that he could not

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<sup>84</sup> Mellin, *Newfoundland Modern*, p. 156.

<sup>85</sup> Bill, “Culture vs policy vs culture.”

<sup>86</sup> Bill, “Culture vs policy vs culture.”

<sup>87</sup> Bill, “Culture vs policy vs culture.”

<sup>88</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 39:00].

“impose [his] likes and dislikes necessarily on the public.”<sup>89</sup> Therefore, he created a Consultant Committee which consisted of people he had personally invited to join, but he believed he had “invited a group of people that [he] felt provided a cross-section of life in St. John’s.”<sup>90</sup> Perlin felt this worked well because, although he made the final decisions, he did not think he should be the only person to decide on programming and he believed it provided a broad cross-section of programming.<sup>91</sup>

Which acts they booked were not the only source of dissent. There were questions about the financial viability of the Centres. Perlin claimed one problem with running the Arts and Culture Centre was that it was not designed to run under government strictures. So, any money the Arts and Culture Centre made went to the Province’s consolidated revenue. Therefore, even after a highly successful year, the Centre could not get money back from programming. The more programming the Centre did, the more labour costs increased because of an increased need for technicians, among other things for every performance. The money ran out quickly.<sup>92</sup> Perlin stated that “if they were designed to make money ... they should never have been built.”<sup>93</sup> Perlin viewed his role as trying to “really to keep the red ink as low as possible.”<sup>94</sup> Perlin argued that the Centre would aspire to make money, which came from “ticket prices, theatre rentals, and the granting of concessions to the restaurant and bar facilities.”<sup>95</sup> Perlin’s “main pre-occupation” was

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<sup>89</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 42:00].

<sup>90</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 42:00].

<sup>91</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 42:00].

<sup>92</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 11:00].

<sup>93</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 18:00].

<sup>94</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 18:00].

<sup>95</sup> John Fraser, “The White Elephant Kicks Up Its Heels,” *Evening Telegram*, 16 August 1968.

getting “first-rate entertainment,” which he claimed had “always been a difficulty in Newfoundland for a host of reasons.”<sup>96</sup> Perlin wanted to book entertainment that he felt would sell, like Reveen.<sup>97</sup> It represented entertainment for entertainment sake rather than having a cultural message. However, Perlin’s desire to make sure the shows were financially successful seems to be in tension with the idea that the Centre meant to support the arts rather than return a monetary profit.

The struggle between Perlin and the arts community represented the struggle between official cultural policy and what members of the cultural movement wanted. As Anita Best stated in 2009

that whole Arts and Culture thing was another issue that we had to struggle with in the ‘60s and ‘70s because the Arts and Culture Centre was built and it flew in the face of how things were done in Newfoundland you know. It was not, it was not a people’s art centre. It was an elitist art centre that followed models that were not really Newfoundland models and so I think for years, artists have been complaining about the Arts and Culture Centres and that’ll go on until they disappear I’m sure. You know, but it was um, the government didn’t pay much attention to art *per se*. I mean they still don’t pay enough. It’s lumped in with tourism and recreation.<sup>98</sup>

Perlin decided who got funding and also who got on the main stage. He felt that the Arts and Culture Centre supported local theatre by developing spaces for them to perform. Perlin opened a small “Basement Theatre,” an idea he claimed to have gotten from playwright Michael Cook and writer Al Pittman. Sylvia Wigh, who came to

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<sup>96</sup> Fraser, “The White Elephant Kicks Up Its Heels.”

<sup>97</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 40:00].

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2010 [Cassette 1B, 20:00].

Newfoundland as part of the London Theatre Company, a traveling theatre company popular in St. John's in the 1950s, ran classes there and taught among others, Tommy Sexton, a founding member of CODCO. Perlin claimed there was considerable activity in the Basement Theatre despite accusations that he did not do anything to support local theatre and local artists. Bob Joy, another member of CODCO, to take another example, performed in the well-known late nineteenth-century farce *Charley's Aunt* (by Brandon Thomas) in the Basement Theatre. Perlin argued that many people performed there and the space helped foster the arts despite accusations by Brookes, members of CODCO, Best, and other members of the cultural movement to the contrary.<sup>99</sup>

Many actors and musicians did not consider Perlin supportive of the arts community. Chris Brookes, Greg Malone, Mary Walsh, Andy Jones, and Anita Best, among others, thought that he had an elitist attitude about the arts, clashing with artists who self-identified more with the working-class and socialism within the arts.<sup>100</sup> Many of the artists grew up in the middle-class, but in the 1960s saw themselves as working-class. They also made little money in their artistic pursuits, and, akin to the New Left and Hippie movements, believed in sharing ownership of their work, shared homes, and that the arts should be a reflection of real people.<sup>101</sup> Best stated several years later, "[Perlin] didn't understand the kind of, if I can call it socialist nature of arts in Newfoundland. Like

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 44:00]; Sexton was born in St. John's in 1957, and moved to Toronto as a teenager to pursue acting. It was there he became a founding member of CODCO in 1973. He is further discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 18:00 and 23:00]; see also Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1B, 24:00].

<sup>101</sup> The issues listed will be further discussed in later chapters.



arts in Newfoundland hasn't been an elitist thing like it has, like it is in a lot of places. It's a very... you don't see the artists in Newfoundland in tuxedos and ball gowns that much. There might be a few of them. They're mostly working class people you know ... But I think the model for it in other places is an elitist model.”<sup>102</sup> Brookes made scathing comments about Perlin in a 2009 interview, stating he “single-handedly did more to set back the cause of indigenous Newfoundland arts here in the ‘70s than anybody else. It’s murderous what he did. He was obsessed with British culture.”<sup>103</sup> Artists had respect for rural Newfoundland and the people in rural areas. For example, the Mummers Troupe created plays about working-class issues, such as the 1959 I.W.A. strike.<sup>104</sup> Many people from this younger generation of artists rebelled against the “Establishment” which in their minds was represented by the Smallwood regime, and particularly Perlin. Brookes contended that Perlin probably disliked local artists and groups because they produced Newfoundland material instead of performing plays by Americans, such as Arthur Miller. Brookes further argued that local artists did not receive provincial funding.<sup>105</sup>

CODCO did not receive much assistance from Perlin either and publicly taunted him about it. In fact, during performances the troupe would announce “thanks to and no thanks to John Perlin because [the Division of Cultural Affairs was] never supportive.”<sup>106</sup> Brookes recounted that Perlin would have loved it if CODCO had performed to a smaller audience “hidden in the basement of his Arts and Culture Centre,” but they wanted to

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<sup>102</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1B, 24:00].

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 18:00].

<sup>104</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 143-148.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1B, 18:00].

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 9 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 30:00].

perform on the main stage. Brookes claimed Perlin did not want the Mummers Troupe and other local groups to play there. Local groups had to rent the Arts and Culture main stage at standard commercial rates while British productions would come in at great expense, paid for by Perlin and the Arts and Culture Centre.<sup>107</sup> Walsh also argued that Perlin did not support the arts community and had “a different set of beliefs than the community.”<sup>108</sup> Andy Jones, echoed this claim, yet he was more diplomatic. While he argued that the arts community criticized Perlin for not supporting or approving locally produced work, he thoughtfully reflected, over three decades later, that Perlin may demonstrate this was not the case. However, Jones conceded that during the cultural movement he felt that the staff at the Arts and Culture Centre put off a sense that local artists “weren’t good enough in a kind of way.”<sup>109</sup> Yet, this lack of support did not matter because the artists “had a sense of ourselves which was very strong and we had a very strong belief in Newfoundland and a great sense of pride in our own culture. We realized that Newfoundlanders were great storytellers and we had beautiful architecture, and we had a great music and stuff like that. So I think we found it in ourselves.”<sup>110</sup>

Yet, Perlin argued that while some artists criticized his choices, his job was to entertain people and the shows he brought in, such as Reveen, sold out. He felt he was just doing his job. Furthermore, protocol was important to Perlin. He had worked as a protocol officer for the provincial government during Royal Visits (as of 2010, he continued to act as a protocol officer at Government House, the official residence of the

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<sup>107</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1B, 17:00].

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 30:00].

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2009 [DVD 19:22].

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2009 [DVD 20:14].

Lieutenant Governor).<sup>111</sup> Perlin wanted there to be a certain *modus operandi*. He said artists, whether dramatic or musicians, would come to him and expect to be given monetary aid for their artistic endeavours. Perlin wanted to be approached in a particular manner. He wanted artists to come and say they had raised so much and how could he help them with the rest. He wanted to see them helping themselves first.<sup>112</sup> It is easy to understand why some artists considered this condescending and why they assumed that Perlin was not supportive of their artistic goals. This was especially true of people like Brookes, who considered himself a Marxist and essentially anti-authoritarian.<sup>113</sup> Perlin had a strained relationship with many in the arts community. Kelly Russell argued that artists considered Perlin condescending; Perlin allegedly referred to artists as “the great unwashed,” and many artists felt such harsh criticism was not warranted.<sup>114</sup> Brookes claimed in an undated letter to an unknown person (located in the Resource Foundation for the Arts collection in Archives and Special Collections) that Perlin sued Mike Jones, filmmaker and brother of CODCO members Cathy and Andy Jones, and CODCO for defamation of character. While Brookes’s letter does not provide any more details, the significance of the statement is that it demonstrated the tensions in the relationship between the government and the arts community, and on a more personal level between Perlin and members of the community.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 40:00].

<sup>112</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 30:00].

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2010 [Cassette 1B, 11:00].

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 34:00].

<sup>115</sup> Letter from Chris Brookes to unknown, n.d., File 1.01.006, Correspondence Out, 1977-78, Collection 126, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummars Troupe), Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Frank Lapointe, curator of the Provincial Art Gallery from 1972 to 1973, experienced problems with the Division of Cultural Affairs as well. The Art Gallery, located in the Arts and Culture Centre, was right across the hall from the Director of Cultural Affairs, and Lapointe had frequent conflicts with Perlin. Lapointe felt that Perlin did not support what the Mummers Troupe and CODCO were doing, and reported to me several years later that “anyone who delved in abstract art or anything in the current contemporary genre were not accepted at all.”<sup>116</sup>

Many of the visual artists, theatre troupes and musicians were delving in abstract art or using contemporary techniques to voice their opposition to political developments in Newfoundland. In the early 1970s, Lapointe and other artists formed the Great Northern Auk Workshop (GNAW), which was a group meant to “gnaw” at government regulations. The group, who were all anonymous, even entered the Arts and Letters Competition. Members of the cultural movement viewed the Arts and Letters Competition as part of the Smallwood regime. The regulations of the competition placed restrictions on the material that could be used and thus some members again felt that the regulations excluded those who created abstract art. GNAW entered the competition with entries that blatantly disregarded the regulations that governed the competition; that was one way artists voiced their opposition to the way the Division of Cultural Affairs operated.<sup>117</sup> Lapointe told me several years later that

we gnawed at certain government aspects, regulations. We made fun of things through that. We exhibited but we were all anonymous.

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<sup>116</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1B, 2:00].

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1B, 3:00].

When we won a couple of awards at the Arts and Letters Show, we went up and accepted to awards dressed in ... penguin suits. People didn't know who we were but we made some pretty strong political statements concerning what was happening. We could do that see and it wouldn't be ... deducted I suppose from our standard way of working before that. The Great Northern Auk Workshop ... Then of course the great auk was extinct. So, this was another thing, we felt that certain government policies were making the arts extinct or that would be their focus to do that, to shut us up, you know.<sup>118</sup>

Artists, particularly some visual artists, felt there was no sympathy with what the Art Gallery was doing, and there was a definite divide between the two.<sup>119</sup>

While many people did not receive funding from the Division of Cultural Affairs, some did, including Kelly Russell. When interviewed many years later he was diplomatic when discussing Perlin. Russell acknowledged provincial funding was limited and artists rarely got funding, but Perlin provided assistance when Figgy Duff went to Ireland in 1977, for example. While Russell was unsure if this money had come directly from Perlin or from another source, Russell did feel that Perlin was supportive.<sup>120</sup> Russell stated in 2009 that “bottom line I'd have to speak highly of John.”<sup>121</sup> However, there may be more to consider in Russell's success in acquiring funds. Ted Russell, Kelly's father, who is discussed in greater detail in later chapters, was a member of Smallwood's cabinet. He left government over his disagreement with Smallwood's economic plans and

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<sup>118</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1B, 1:00].

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1B, 3:00].

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 14:00].

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 14:00].

policies. While there is no such evidence, these interpersonal connections may have influenced some decisions.

Pat Byrne, a musician and academic born in Paradise, Placentia Bay in 1943, also diplomatically discussed Perlin. Akin to Russell's claim, when interviewed in 2010, Byrne pointed out that Perlin was a civil servant and as such answered to the Minister of Culture, which Byrne argued was the "least important portfolio in the government."<sup>122</sup> Yet, while there were attempts to put procedures in place to help guide arts policy, personal ideas and attitudes may have influenced decisions in this area.

### **Resettlement**

In addition to the attempts to rapidly industrialize the province and cultural developments in the mid-1960s, the government's controversial resettlement program upset many Newfoundlanders. Sandra Gwyn argues that resettlement was the catalyst for the creative energy of the 1960s and 1970s. It was "a policy devised ... to make the province 'economically viable.'"<sup>123</sup> Newfoundland had a large number of small communities with relatively low populations along the coastline. The inshore fishery remained the major source of employment despite the development of industry, mines, and paper mills.<sup>124</sup> The Newfoundland government faced challenges in attempting to

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<sup>122</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2010 [DVD 2 Part 2, 11:26].

<sup>123</sup> Gwyn, "The Newfoundland Renaissance," p. 40.

<sup>124</sup> Noel Iverson and Ralph Matthews, *Communities in Decline: An Examination of Household Resettlement in Newfoundland* (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1968), p. 2.

provide modern services to people in these scattered coastal communities. It was difficult to provide roads, electricity, telephone, and postal services to people in these areas because of the inaccessibility of the tiny communities and off-shore islands. The government had concerns about the ability of the inshore fishery to support fishermen. It therefore encouraged industry and developing an offshore fishery using modern trawlers.<sup>125</sup> After becoming a province of Canada, Newfoundland experienced a lot of development in transportation and communication facilities and a flood of Canadian development resources, producing new jobs and also leading to higher expectations in the standard of living.<sup>126</sup> Some people moved to larger towns, while others, unable to move because of costs involved, approached the government for assistance to move. In response to this the government set up the Resettlement Program in 1953.<sup>127</sup>

Newspaper columnist Don Morris once referred to resettlement as the “mass exodus from isolation.”<sup>128</sup> Smallwood claimed that “Newfoundland would become a stronger province if residents of 500 settlements would move voluntarily into places where there [were] better roads, water and sewer facilities, good schools, and hospitals.”<sup>129</sup> The intention behind resettlement was to move residents to areas with “public services, and medical care more readily available.”<sup>130</sup> Smallwood promised it “would be a godsend to the children,” and give them a greater chance in life if they

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<sup>125</sup> Iverson and Matthews, *Communities in Decline*, p. 2.

<sup>126</sup> Ralph Matthews, “Studying Social Planning: The Investigation of Community Resettlement in Newfoundland,” Paper Presented to a Conference on “The Researcher, The Community, and Social Policy,” York University, 1 March 1973, pp. 1-2.

<sup>127</sup> Matthews, “Studying Social Planning,” pp. 1-2.

<sup>128</sup> Don Morris, “Ocean-going houses as ‘outport’ people move,” *Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1962.

<sup>129</sup> “Province would be stronger if 500 settlements move,” *Evening Telegram*, 10 March 1966.

<sup>130</sup> “Centralization move continues: 99 families assisted last year,” *Evening Telegram*, 27 November 1963.

moved to an area with more modern amenities.<sup>131</sup> Smallwood believed if coastal communities were resettled into 300 large communities, the government could offer these people the modern conveniences of electricity, paved roads, more schools, and better medical services. Smallwood declared that isolation was “a deadening thing, a paralyzing thing, a cruel thing.”<sup>132</sup> In 1957, Smallwood maintained that this plan could move as many as 50,000 Newfoundlanders from isolated outports.<sup>133</sup>

While the idea behind resettlement was well-intentioned, descriptions of the program often give the impression that outport life was backward or undesirable. Noel Iverson and Ralph Matthews argue that it “aimed at providing a better life and a better future for more Newfoundlanders” and moving people from “isolation and privation” into larger centres “where they may enjoy the advantages of twentieth century life.”<sup>134</sup> While some of the phrases used when discussing resettlement could be considered insulting, the resettlement program had admirable goals. Resettlement aimed to provide better education for children so that they would have the necessary skills and education to find employment in the changing industrialization of Newfoundland. They would also receive a better education than in their small community. The adult population would benefit as well. Families would benefit from modern housing, including electricity, indoor plumbing, and so on. It would allow for better medical care, better road access, and, ultimately, a better standard of living. The government hoped that resettlement would provide better employment opportunities so people would not have to accept welfare

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<sup>131</sup> “Province would be stronger if 500 settlements move,” *Evening Telegram*, 10 March 1966.

<sup>132</sup> Cyril Robinson and Bert Beaver, “A House Goes to Sea,” *Weekend Magazine* 10, 5 (1960), p. 11.

<sup>133</sup> Robinson and Beaver, “A House Goes to Sea,” pp. 11-15.

<sup>134</sup> Iverson and Matthews, *Communities in Decline*, p. 136.



payments. People were encouraged to move where their skills and talents could be best utilized.<sup>135</sup>

However, despite the good intentions behind the program, members of the cultural movement reacted to the problems associated with resettlement. As Pat Byrne said, it was not the idea of resettlement that was necessarily the problem, but the way it was carried out. The government helped people move but offered no support once people had moved.<sup>136</sup> While the government may not have meant to coerce people to move, many people felt coerced. As Iverson points out “by granting insufficient funds for moving, paying relocatees only when they ha[d] completed their move, and restricting the removal of former dwellings, the provincial government ha[d] in effect been playing a coercive role, for it severely narrow[ed] the range of alternatives open to householders. Hence, their complaint [was] legitimate.”<sup>137</sup> The government occasionally appeared forceful in communities it wanted resettled by taking away services, forcing people to choose resettlement.<sup>138</sup>

However, there were other reasons why people may have felt coerced. A speech given by Smallwood in Bonavista in the early 1950s made people in that area feel pressure to move. Some respondents in a study by Ralph Matthews argued that statements

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<sup>135</sup>Iverson and Matthews, *Communities in Decline*, pp. 136-137; see also Cyril Robinson and Bert Beaver, “A House Goes to Sea,” *Weekend Magazine* Vol. 10 (5) 1960, pp. 11-15; “Education top aim of resettlement: Rowe,” *The Daily News*, 6 December 1968.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2010 [DVD 2 Part 1, 0:56].

<sup>137</sup> Iverson and Matthews, *Communities in Decline*, p. 137.

<sup>138</sup> Bishop-Stirling and Webb, “The Twentieth Century,” pp. 127-132.

made by Smallwood in this speech influenced them to move. An unidentified respondent is quoted by Matthews as saying

We couldn't move to a fishing village because we thought the same thing would happen again. Joey himself said on the radio to burn your flakes. I couldn't afford to go anywhere big. Joey drove me off the island. Joey came and made them move. He told the women to get off the flakes. Some of them did so fast they left their shoes. Joe Smallwood was saying that the fishing was done for. Now Joey is saying the opposite. They're begging the old age pensioners to go back to fishing. Joey had two jobs for every man but there was only poverty when they came here.<sup>139</sup>

Such reports shaped people's view of Smallwood. Problems also existed in the communities receiving resettled families. Some reception communities lacked the preparation in industry and outreach to receive the resettled population and help them adapt to their new community and find employment, and again, Smallwood was the focus for anger.<sup>140</sup>

Resettlement did not fix all the problems, as Smallwood had promised. While some people adjusted to the change, others did not and "many discovered to their dismay that they had to return to their old homes in the summer to make ends meet."<sup>141</sup> Some people who resettled felt they were paid to move and then forgotten. When people moved they could no longer practise subsistence agriculture. They could no longer grow their own vegetables, or keep animals such as sheep or cattle, which were "customary means of

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<sup>139</sup> Letter to Joseph Smallwood from Ralph Matthews, 18 March 1971, File 3.09.049, Collection 075, The Smallwood Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 2.

<sup>140</sup> Iverson and Matthews, *Communities in Decline*, pp. 136-137.

<sup>141</sup> Harry Thurston, "Out Port [sic] Renaissance," *Equinox*, Jan/Feb 1982, p. 68.

maintaining their former standard of living.”<sup>142</sup> In addition, people had to buy oil instead of cutting their own wood. In essence, people had to acclimatize themselves to a cash economy.<sup>143</sup>

Some urban-based artists feared that resettlement had destroyed the rural way of life. Critics claimed “the resettlement program ... is a slow but certain way to destroy much of what we know of Newfoundland life.”<sup>144</sup> While a majority had to agree to move and it may have “pleased the majority of inhabitants invariably it left behind people who were disturbed and saddened by the turn of events.”<sup>145</sup> Iverson and Matthews argue that government could have taken a greater advisory role in this process. Rather than just explaining the process, they could have had community development workers travel to communities interested in moving and explain the opportunities that were available in other areas of the province, giving the people better knowledge of their options.<sup>146</sup>

Many years later, Anita Best openly acknowledged her disdain for Smallwood, his resettlement program, and her perception of what he had done to rural Newfoundland. She felt he had “completely wiped out all the places.”<sup>147</sup> She spoke of finding reports that falsified information about communities such as her hometown of Merasheen. While it is uncertain if these reports still exist, Best claimed they underrepresented the resources of the area, such as the number of livestock, the amount of subsistence agriculture, the value

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<sup>142</sup> Iverson and Matthews, *Communities in Decline*, pp. 137-139.

<sup>143</sup> “Resettlement of the Outports,” *Canada and the World*, April 1971, p. 16.

<sup>144</sup> Paul Sparkes, “In Newfoundland, Resettlement issue still controversial,” *The Vanguard*, 5 June 1974.

<sup>145</sup> Sparkes, “In Newfoundland.”

<sup>146</sup> Iverson and Matthews, *Communities in Decline*, pp. 137-139.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 8:00].

of land, the number of boats people had and so on. She argued resettlement angered people and resulted in the growth of nationalism.<sup>148</sup> According to James Overton and Sandra Gwyn, a nostalgic reaction to resettlement was one of the main focuses of the cultural movement. Some of the harshest criticism of Smallwood centered on resettlement, as many felt Newfoundland culture “had been sacrificed to Smallwood’s ‘develop or perish’ philosophy.”<sup>149</sup> Gwyn argued that resettlement, in particular, had a psychological effect on the Newfoundland psyche, as “a way of life, the Newfoundland way of life, had been foreclosed.”<sup>150</sup> The sense of loss that resulted from this event “permeated the consciousness of every artist working there, and suffuse[d] every art form.”<sup>151</sup>

Part of Smallwood’s broad industrialization policy included industrializing the fishery and reflected the ideology of the period. Miriam Wright argues that many politicians and fisheries planners believed that industrialization would lead to prosperity, and thus placed faith in “the ability of private capital, technology and rational state planning to create a better world.”<sup>152</sup> This would have serious consequences for Newfoundland, as the increasing number of frozen-fish plants in Newfoundland led to a “cycle of technological escalation in Newfoundland.” She argues that “the logic of fisheries development is that the more money you spend on capital development, the

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<sup>148</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 9:00]; artists’ reactions to resettlement will be further explored in subsequent chapters.

<sup>149</sup> Overton, “A Newfoundland Culture?” pp. 8-9.

<sup>150</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 40.

<sup>151</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 40.

<sup>152</sup> Miriam Wright, *A Fishery for Modern Times: The State and the Industrialization of the Newfoundland Fishery, 1934-1968* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 6, 70-71 and 79-80.

more fish you have to catch and process to pay for it.”<sup>153</sup> Smallwood’s modernization agenda and his resettlement program shaped the political consciousness of the young generation of artists, and thus the artistic movement of the 1970s was shaped by the experience of earlier times.

### **Smallwood’s Defeat and Moores’s Administration**

The problems faced by Smallwood at the end of his premiership really began in 1969, only three years after his greatest election victory, in which he gained 39 of the 42 seats.<sup>154</sup> However, the recession of 1968 had worsened. Unemployment had risen to 15%, Smallwood had raised taxes and also cut government spending by \$27 million. The government cut Memorial University’s budget alone by more than \$3 million. Smallwood had committed to promoting education and had instituted a free tuition program in 1965. This ended up being one of the main cuts in the budget. This greatly upset students who protested, marching the street with a jeep towing a black coffin with the banner “Funeral For Education.”<sup>155</sup>

The decision to reverse that government policy without public debate or knowledge upset many students.<sup>156</sup> This appeared to be a turning point for many young

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<sup>153</sup> Wright, *A Fishery for Modern Times*, p. 103.

<sup>154</sup> Gwyn, *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary*, p. 281.

<sup>155</sup> Gwyn, *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary*, pp. 293-294

<sup>156</sup> Brief Submitted to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador by the Students of Memorial University of Newfoundland Concerning University Education in Newfoundland, 22 April 1969, File 3.09.057, Collection 075, The Smallwood Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 3.

Newfoundlanders who expressed their displeasure that “too many cabinet ministers when faced with a choice between their political loyalty to maintain the present government and their human loyalty to the advancement of the Newfoundland people, have chosen the former course.”<sup>157</sup> They accused politicians of making decisions “designed to make the biggest political splash” and not to “better the economic and social conditions of Newfoundlanders.”<sup>158</sup> Yet, they also blamed the Newfoundland electorate for the province’s “economic ills” and expressed displeasure that they had not “demanded honesty in the Government. We have asked to be deluded. We have wanted to be told lies, to be told that all is well and God’s in his heaven.”<sup>159</sup>

The younger generation, and university students in particular, most vehemently challenged Smallwood’s authority. It became increasingly clear that “younger Newfoundlanders were not enthralled by Smallwood’s grand visions – paper mills, refineries and fishing developments that promised two tons of codfish in every net – largely because they produce a constant state of anticipation but less frequent realization.”<sup>160</sup> Smallwood claimed that the faculty at Memorial had turned students against him.<sup>161</sup> It is somewhat ironic that education generally, and the university

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<sup>157</sup> Brief Submitted to All Members of the House of Assembly by the Students of Newfoundland, 22 April 1969, File 3.09.057, Collection 075, The Smallwood Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

<sup>158</sup> Brief Submitted to All Members of the House of Assembly by the Students of Newfoundland, 22 April 1969, File 3.09.057, Collection 075, The Smallwood Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

<sup>159</sup> Brief Submitted to All Members of the House of Assembly by the Students of Newfoundland, 22 April 1969, File 3.09.057, Collection 075, The Smallwood Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

<sup>160</sup> “Newfoundland: A Message for Joey,” *Time The Weekly Newsmagazine* 92, 3 (19 July 1968); see also Adams, “The Emperor’s Last Stand,” pp 52-55.

<sup>161</sup> “Newfoundland: A Message for Joey,” *Time The Weekly Newsmagazine* 92, 3 (19 July 1968).

specifically, was so important to Smallwood, and yet students most heavily questioned Smallwood and also helped vote him out of office in 1971.<sup>162</sup> As Sandy Morris recalled, artists and students would protest and felt that Smallwood was not the visionary people had believed. There was a “very strong sentiment against Joey and everything he stood for.”<sup>163</sup> In addition to that, faculty at the university criticized government policies such as resettlement and students began to look toward the Progressive Conservative Party, hoping “it could provide a generational change in provincial leadership.”<sup>164</sup>

The provincial election in 1971 ended in a tie. Smallwood delayed calling the legislature into session in order to try to convince some of the opposition members to join him. However, Smallwood eventually resigned and the Progressive Conservatives under Frank Moores won a majority in the 1972 election.<sup>165</sup> Not much appeared to change during the Moores administration in part because Moores inherited several of Smallwood’s projects that were failing or were proving to be not as beneficial as Smallwood had hoped, including the controversial Churchill Falls development and the Liner Board Mill. Moores also inherited high unemployment, a large provincial debt, and “tough labour conflicts in one-industry towns.”<sup>166</sup> Moores admitted he had a lot to deal with, and stated upon his election that “I do not plan or expect to do miracles overnight

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<sup>162</sup> “Newfoundland: A Message for Joey,” *Time The Weekly Newsmagazine*, 92, 3 (19 July 1968).

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 11:37].

<sup>164</sup> Bishop-Stirling and Webb, “The Twentieth Century,” p. 131.

<sup>165</sup> See Janice Wells, *Frank Moores: The Time of His Life* (Bolton: Key Porter Books, 2008); see also Bishop-Stirling and Webb, “The Twentieth Century,” pp. 132-133.

<sup>166</sup> Rob Bull, “Nothing Worse Than Doing Nothing,” *Ottawa Journal*, 24 August 1973.

but my government will immediately start on long-term and short-term programs over the advancement of Newfoundland.”<sup>167</sup>

He had difficulty overcoming the problems he inherited from Smallwood. Four years after Moores entered office several similar problems continued to exist. Despite his hope to increase Newfoundland’s prosperity, by 1976 Newfoundland was the most heavily taxed province in Canada with the highest rate of unemployment. The \$1.1 billion debt inherited by Moores rose to \$1.5 billion. The Churchill Falls development had “stalled for lack of private funds.”<sup>168</sup> There was a ban on government construction in 1976. Moores had also not introduced any major new industry into the province.<sup>169</sup>

While Moores faced many of the same challenges that Smallwood had, he did announce the end of the resettlement program in 1973.<sup>170</sup> He argued that ““while [this decision] may be a burden on social services, it’s worth it,” he says, adding vehemently, “we’ve got to stop forcing people into jobs they don’t really want to do.”<sup>171</sup> Yet, controversy over the program did once again develop in 1974, when “residents of several south coast fishing communities asked the Newfoundland government for assistance in moving to larger centres.”<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Bull, “Nothing Worse Than Doing Nothing.”

<sup>168</sup> John Porteous, “Frank Moores: The B’y Who Knows Fish,” *Financial Post Magazine*, February 1976, p. 7.

<sup>169</sup> Porteous, “Frank Moores,” p. 7.

<sup>170</sup> “Ottawa agrees to plans to cancel outport move,” *Times News*, 30 April 1973.

<sup>171</sup> Porteous, “Frank Moores,” p. 7.

<sup>172</sup> James H. Hussey, “Newfoundland Residents Moving to Larger Centres,” *Timmons Press*, 16 August 1974.



Continuity existed with the provincial government's role in cultural matters, with Moores and later with the election of Progressive Conservative A. Brian Peckford as Premier in 1979, in part because Perlin remained at the helm of cultural affairs during the Moores and Peckford administrations. The cultural community believed that provincial funds continued to be used to bring in outside acts. Brookes angrily argued in 2009 that such shows "lost whacks of money but that's what taxpayers dollars got spent on."<sup>173</sup>

However, there were some developments in terms of cultural policy. Ronald Rompkey argues that "after Smallwood's defeat in 1972, the Moores and Peckford governments took new measures based on an appeal to nationalist sentiment."<sup>174</sup> Moores transferred responsibility for the Arts and Letters Competition to the Division of Cultural Affairs, and established an Outport Art Foundation to help train new artists. The government also had a celebration for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation under the direction of Moores's brother-in-law, English-born Robert Nutbeam. Nutbeam used the anniversary "as an opportunity to promote Newfoundlanders as a 'special race.'"<sup>175</sup> He declared "we are a very special race of people but in danger of losing this culture and so the first concept was that we would try and get people to practice being what they naturally are, Newfoundlanders."<sup>176</sup> Such a statement voiced the persisting fear, particularly among artists, that in accepting Confederation, Newfoundland would lose its own culture.<sup>177</sup> This is important, as it represented the beginning of a shift within

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<sup>173</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 20:00].

<sup>174</sup> Rompkey, "The Idea of Newfoundland and Arts Policy," p. 272.

<sup>175</sup> Rompkey, "The Idea of Newfoundland and Arts Policy," p. 267.

<sup>176</sup> Rompkey, "The Idea of Newfoundland and Arts Policy," p. 267.

<sup>177</sup> Rompkey, "The Idea of Newfoundland and Arts Policy," p. 267.

government, as members of the government began voicing concerns similar to that of the members of the cultural movement. While not much changed during the Moores administration this did represent the beginning of a change that would come to fruition with the Peckford administration, a shift further discussed in Chapter Five.

### **Conclusion**

Because of the rapid political and social changes that occurred in Newfoundland, including Confederation and resettlement, people became disappointed and disillusioned with Smallwood, and artists reflected this in their productions.<sup>178</sup> Smallwood's rapid industrialization and urbanization policies turned some people against Smallwood and led many people to vote against him in 1971. These young voters included the cultural community who used their art to voice their opposition to the changes Smallwood had brought to Newfoundland culture. While musician Kelly Russell reasoned that revolting against the "Establishment" was part of the status quo of being teenagers, it was intensified in this generation because they felt they were saving Newfoundland's culture and identity. They had a mission. Artists accused Smallwood of wanting to "get rid of this antiquated culture."<sup>179</sup> Artists were standing up for themselves and voicing their opposition to "bad development schemes," resettlement and a "slow erosion of culture."<sup>180</sup> In addition, artists reacted against what they viewed as the government's

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<sup>178</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2009 [DVD 24:06, 28:46 and 39:30].

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 26:00].

<sup>180</sup> Brief submitted to the Federal Review of Cultural Policy by Donna Butt, May 1981, File 0413, Box RG 97, Vol. 237, Library and Archives Canada.

interpretation of culture as manifested through the Arts and Culture Centres and the Division of Cultural Affairs. Not much changed when Frank Moors succeeded Smallwood as Premier in part because he was dealing with several projects and problems inherited from the Smallwood administration. While government developments were not the only elements that were driving artists, they did have an immense impact on what artists were doing and the type of art they were creating, something that will be further explored in the forthcoming chapters.

## Chapter 2

### Preserving the Best of Newfoundland's Heritage Memorial University and Extension Service

#### **Introduction**

Developments at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) had a major influence on the artistic community, not least being the fact it played a key mentoring and financial role in the cultural movement. The university grew rapidly during the 1950s and 1960s, and Newfoundland studies were becoming increasingly important. Newfoundland topics, and the scholars investigating them, provided positive examples for artists. Mary Walsh, a member of the Newfoundland comedy troupe CODCO, for example, suggested scholars, such as George Story and Herbert Halpert, whose work illustrated “Newfoundland culture was important imbued people like Greg Malone [with an interest in Newfoundland culture]... They inspired people who inspired you.”<sup>1</sup> Memorial’s influence was broad-ranging and had a direct impact on the development of the arts in Newfoundland. The development of the Department of English Language and Literature, the Folklore Department, and the Folklore and Language Archive was important to the advancement of the cultural and artistic community. Perhaps even more important was MUN’s Extension Service, which reached out to the community in a number of ways, and invested in artistic and cultural developments. Relatively little has been written on Extension Service, and much of what has been published has focused on the Fogo Film

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 9:00].

Process, which was a community development project started in 1967 by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and Extension Service.<sup>2</sup> As Susan Newhook suggests, the literature on the Fogo Film Process largely omitted the Extension Service, exaggerated the role of the NFB, and was inconsistent and often incorrect with details of the Fogo Island Project.<sup>3</sup>

Extension Service played an immense role in the cultural movement; it encouraged the preservation of heritage, promoted cultural productions which fit with its community development agenda, and financially supported the development of a cultural scene. Artists were influenced by the idea, often espoused by Extension workers, that there was something in Newfoundland culture worth preserving. Extension Service's role in the cultural movement was wide-ranging and multi-faceted, with the Art Gallery, St. Michael's Printshop, the Community Artist-in-Residence Program, and Bond Street facilities all under its auspices. Each of these helped with the professionalization of the arts. Through such programs, Extension provided artists with financial support enabling them to work full-time as artists and make their living solely from their craft, and also provided spaces where artists could work and display their final product. This chapter will explore the many ways in which MUN, particularly Extension, helped shape the cultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

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<sup>2</sup> See Jeff A. Webb, "The Rise and Fall of Memorial University's Extension Service, 1959-91," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 29, 1 (2014), pp. 84-116.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Newhook, "The Grandchildren of Fogo: The Fogo Island Films and the 'Cultural Revolution' in Newfoundland and Labrador, 1967-1977" (MA Thesis: Dalhousie University, 2008), p. 15; see also Thomas Waugh, et al, eds., *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), p. 4.

## **Memorial University**

From its genesis, the university was to have a role throughout the province. It originally opened as Memorial University College in 1925 and was granted university status in 1949, the year of Confederation. It certainly reflected Smallwood's hope of the influence it would have on Newfoundland's development and standing within Canada. Smallwood's government was determined to industrialize the province, and attempts to diversify the economy were not always successful. However, thousands of people availed of the benefits from new federal services such as improved roads, welfare payments, and better health care. With this rise in living standards, people also demanded better education. Memorial University expanded during the 1950s and 1960s. It grew steadily throughout the 1950s, with enrolment increasing from 308 in 1949 to 1150 in 1958.<sup>4</sup>

The grandiose opening ceremony on 9 October 1961 of the new campus of the university may have signified to young people in particular that better things were to come. It also fit into Smallwood's broader pattern of large projects. However, in light of the many changes in the province, such as industrialization, urbanization, and modernization, people began to feel disillusioned. Smallwood wanted to make the opening of the university's new campus "one of the epic dates in our Newfoundland history."<sup>5</sup> In a letter to financier Edmund de Rothschild, Smallwood wrote about the scale

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<sup>4</sup> "A Historical Review of Extension Service – 1917 to 1982," File: Extension Reports, General Binder 3-5, Box 47, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 6-8; see also Malcolm MacLeod, *Crossroads Country: Memories of Pre-Confederation Newfoundland, at the intersection of American, British and Canadian Connections* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Edmund de Rothschild from J.R. Smallwood, File 3.09.045, Smallwood Papers, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1; see also Press Release, 1 May 1961; Press Release, 23 June 1961, Press Release, 4 October 1961, File

on which he hoped to celebrate the opening of Memorial. The Government of Newfoundland was building a new campus and was going to “pass it over to the university in a grand ceremony.” His ambition was to make it one of the “most elaborate single ceremonies seen in Canada for many years indeed.”<sup>6</sup>

Smallwood heralded the greatness of Confederation during these celebrations as well. A release prepared for the *Daily News* signed by Smallwood, declared that every Newfoundlander was proud of the university, which was just one of the “blessings” resulting from Confederation. The university was “the pride and joy of people and Government.”

Tens of thousands of young Newfoundland men and women will pass through these halls, and will be better Newfoundlanders for it. The contribution to the upbuilding of Newfoundland will be of incalculable benefit to the Province’s future. The influence of the University will be felt for generations to come in every nook and cranny of the Island of Newfoundland and the Peninsula of Labrador. By its means Newfoundlanders will be raised in the sight of all Canada. By its means Newfoundlanders will be raised in their own sight, which is perhaps even more important.<sup>7</sup>

Smallwood was correct on this account. The university would celebrate Newfoundland culture and bequeath this excitement and curiosity on to the students.

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3.09.036, Smallwood Papers, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collection, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>6</sup> Letter to Edmund de Rothschild from J.R. Smallwood, File 3.09.045, Smallwood Papers, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-3.

<sup>7</sup> For *Daily News*, File 3.09.036, Smallwood Papers, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

### **Academic Study of Culture**

During the 1950s, academic research on the folklore, language, and history of Newfoundland began at the university. The surge in academic interest in Newfoundland history and culture at the university legitimized Newfoundland as a topic worth studying, analyzing, and preserving. One of its leaders, E.R. Seary, born in England in 1908, came to Memorial University in 1952, and served as head of the Department of English Language and Literature. He helped develop Newfoundland studies at Memorial and was particularly interested in toponymy.<sup>8</sup> George Story, a Newfoundlander who had studied at Oxford University, agreed that the Department of English Language and Literature should initiate studies in Newfoundland, in particular in the areas of toponymy, dialect, and folklore.<sup>9</sup> Story was born in Newfoundland in 1927, and witnessed the changes that occurred in Newfoundland during World War II and following Confederation. As historian Jeff A. Webb argues,

during the 1950s Story, and his contemporaries, assumed that Newfoundland's oral culture was being eroded by the mass media and economic changes, and that they needed to record it before it was gone. As he later commented, 'it is hard now to convey a sense of the urgency we felt about this matter during the decade following confederation [with Canada] when Newfoundland seemed hell-bent on jettisoning its inheritance for the new-found delights of a new-era.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Allison Bates, "Seary, Edgar Ronald," *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. 5 (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1994), pp. 127-128.

<sup>9</sup> Herbert Halpert and Neil V. Rosenberg, *Folklore Studies at Memorial University: Two Reports*, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Department of Folklore, Reprint Series, No. 4, 1978, pp. 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> Jeff A. Webb, "Cullers of Words: Writing the Dictionary of Newfoundland English," in *Dictionaries: Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America* 33 (2012), p. 62.



These scholars and their collaborators were committed to Newfoundland and Newfoundland studies. Story turned down the opportunity to compete for Chair of the English Department at McGill University because of his commitment to these developments. In a letter to Joyce Hamlow at McGill in 1962, Story wrote he had reluctantly decided not to compete for the McGill Chair because he believed that within the next few years, the faculty at MUN would move to the level of work being done at other high profile universities. While the program was relatively small at the time, he believed that would change and wrote that MUN was “a very exciting place to be.”<sup>11</sup> Story was not ready to leave Memorial because it was “a young and vigorously growing university, and sufficiently stimulating to attract a young teacher who enjoys helping to create a tradition and establish students in his field.”<sup>12</sup> While Story was a younger member of the department he had the seniority to help guide the organization. He also asserted that his own interest in philology was mostly in Newfoundland dialects, and thus it would be difficult to conduct his research outside of the province.<sup>13</sup>

The enthusiasm for, and commitment to, Newfoundland culture displayed by scholars at the university was subsequently passed to their students and others in the community. Coming from a period of political uncertainty and instability that led to

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<sup>11</sup> Letter from George Story to Professor Joyce Hamlow, 6 December 1962, Professional Correspondence H, 1962-1964, File 2.01.001, The Papers of George Morley Story, Collection 243, Archive and Manuscript Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from G.M. Story to Rev. C.P. Crowley, Department of English, Assumption University, 15 December 1959, File 2.01.003, Professional Correspondence, 1958-1981, Collection 243, The Papers of George Morley Story, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from G.M. Story to Rev. C.P. Crowley, Department of English, Assumption University, 15 December 1959, File 2.01.003, Professional Correspondence, 1958-1981, Collection 243, The Papers of George Morley Story, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

feelings of inferiority and inadequacy, the passion and interest in Newfoundland exhibited by these scholars fuelled a younger generation of creative and artistic Newfoundlanders who felt and wanted to prove that they and their culture were worthwhile.<sup>14</sup> As Andy Jones, a member of CODCO, told me in 2009, “the work of George Story and ... Story’s own analysis of Newfoundland and our culture was so important to all of us.”<sup>15</sup> Musician Anita Best echoed the importance of the interest in Newfoundland studies. She remembered that the environment at the university encouraged Newfoundland studies. Young people became interested in political activism and “getting people’s voices heard.”<sup>16</sup> She further stated it “added to the whole cultural questioning and not accepting what you were told.”<sup>17</sup>

Many participants in the cultural movement also met each other at MUN.<sup>18</sup> Best first became involved in the arts through the MUN drama society. During her time at Memorial she befriended Neil Murray and Noel Dinn, who were both influential in the music industry in Newfoundland at this time, discussed in the following chapter.<sup>19</sup> Greg

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 10:07].

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2009 [DVD 30:59].

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 10:00].

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 2A, 4:00].

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 37:00]; see also Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 2:18]; Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 6:41]; Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 4:00].

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 5:00]; Murray was an important man in the music community of this period, as he introduced Dinn to British traditional rock bands as well. Dinn met Murray through Laverne Squires. Murray was born in 1943 in Dorset, England, to a Newfoundland father who had been stationed there and an English mother. In 1945, he moved with his family to St. John’s, where he attended school until grade six. He went to high school in England, returning to St. John’s to complete a BA and MA in English at Memorial University. He later attended Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar; Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland,” pp. 7-8; Noel Dinn was in the forefront of the musical revival and was a founding member of Figgy Duff. He will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Malone was also a student at MUN during this time, and was president of MUDS, the Memorial University Dramatic Society. He reminisced that at the university he was surrounded by many “wonderful musicians,” including Bryan Hennessey, Noel Dinn, and Derek Pelley, who later formed Figgy Duff, and also Sandy Morris, a founding member of the Wonderful Grand Band, of which Malone was also a member.<sup>20</sup>

Much of the cultural community of St. John’s at this time was based around MUN. Over thirty years later Sandy Morris recounted “that’s where we all went.” While he never graduated himself, he still spent time on campus because “that’s where everyone I knew was.”<sup>21</sup> Andy Jones felt the university was very influential in the development of the Newfoundland arts scene. While he was not a student, he hung around the campus a lot. He said that he would go to the library to write or find an empty classroom to work. It was at the university, for example, that he wrote much of the feature film *The Adventures of Faustus Bidgood*, which he co-wrote with his brother Michael, a director and producer. Andy Jones also met other members of the arts community. Like Best and Malone, it was there that he met Murray and Dinn. Jones also argued that the Folklore Department was “hugely influential in Newfoundland’s arts” because of the stories being collected and “the activities that they were doing.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 2:06]; Derek Pelley was born in St. John’s in 1950 and was instrumental to the early development of the musical revival, and was a member of bands such as The Philadelphia Cream Cheeze Band. He will be further discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 6:44].

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2010 [DVD 30:38].

Folklorists showed an interest in Newfoundland, and folklore became a significant subject of study at Memorial. Herbert Halpert and the founders of MUN's folklore department believed that folklore material could be collected by the students as part of their studies.<sup>23</sup> Halpert was an American folklorist who had visited Newfoundland between 1943 and 1946 when he served in the United States Army. During the visit he used some of his spare time to research folk traditions of Newfoundland. In 1962 Halpert was appointed Associate Professor of English at MUN with the hope he would establish the first folklore courses.<sup>24</sup> Under Halpert's leadership MUN developed an active program of collecting folklore. Students were given questionnaires to complete while visiting their homes on breaks and their written reports provided information on the "customs, beliefs, legends, folktales, ballads, songs and folk crafts of the Island."<sup>25</sup> The fact that faculty such as Story and Halpert were studying folklore encouraged a generation of young students to consider the oral culture of rural people worthy of celebration.

In addition to these questionnaires, Halpert and John Widdowson, a linguist and fellow member of the Department of English Language and Literature, travelled to rural areas in the summer to collect and tape record material beginning in 1963.<sup>26</sup> Folklore courses were taught in the Department of English Language and Literature before the university established a Folklore Department in 1968. This act reflected "the long-

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<sup>23</sup> Halpert and Rosenberg, *Folklore Studies at Memorial University*, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> David G. Pitt, "Halpert, Herbert," *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 2 (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Ltd., 1984), pp. 782-783.

<sup>25</sup> Halpert and Rosenberg, *Folklore Studies at Memorial University*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Halpert and Rosenberg, *Folklore Studies at Memorial University*, pp. 1-2.

standing involvement of Newfoundlanders with their own past and culture.”<sup>27</sup> Halpert became head of the department, and was an integral part of developing academic programs in folklore offering degrees at the Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral levels. He also encouraged colleagues and students to collect materials about Newfoundland folklore, which became the basis for the Folklore and Language Archive, also established in 1968.<sup>28</sup> Several other folklorists such as Neil Rosenberg, who arrived in 1968, and Peter Narváez, who came to Memorial University in 1973, were also interested in music and were accomplished performers too.<sup>29</sup> The Folklore Department was established in part from a desire to preserve Newfoundland culture and heritage before modernization and American consumer culture destroyed it.<sup>30</sup>

### **Extension Service**

While academic units at Memorial encouraged attention to Newfoundland society and culture, MUN’s Extension Service was crucial to many aspects of Newfoundland’s cultural development and was a central part of the university. Smallwood hoped the university would reach all people of the province, not just those at the St. John’s campus, and was determined to have a great Extension Service. Smallwood believed in some ways it was more practical to have the university go to the people rather than expect all the

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<sup>27</sup> Halpert and Rosenberg, *Folklore Studies at Memorial University*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> Pitt, “Halpert, Herbert,” pp. 782-783.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 7:05].

<sup>30</sup> Edward Cohen, “New Foundland Seeks to Preserve English and Irish Folklore,” *New York Times*, Sunday, 22 December 1968, File Faculty of Arts – Folklore Department 1968-1983, Box E-7, President’s Office, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

people to come to St. John's. Extension was meant to work in communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador with an emphasis on rural areas. It was to provide access to continuing education that met the particular needs of that community's commercial and social development.<sup>31</sup>

While all of the developments at the university were important, Extension was central to artistic growth in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. University President Raymond Gushue appointed S.J. Colman, who had experience with field work in Kenya, as the first director of Extension in 1959. Gushue suggested in his annual report of 1959 that the university should work beyond "the confines of its campus" and it should, when and where appropriate, go to the people.<sup>32</sup> Under Colman's guidance, Extension took form, developed a program of "education by television, organized a wide variety of non-credit courses to meet the needs of adult residents of Newfoundland, assumed an activist role in community development, and began work on the stimulation of the arts in the Province."<sup>33</sup> Extension's program also promoted the preservation of Newfoundland's heritage and culture. A report on Extension from Colman to Smallwood proposed that Extension's program "would encourage the survival of what [was] good in

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<sup>31</sup> "The Extension Service of Memorial University of Newfoundland," File: Extension Reports, General Binder 4-5, Box 47, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1; see also H. Anthony Williamson, "The Fogo Process, User-Oriented Communications Systems, and Social Development: The Canadian Experience," File: N.F.B. Fogo Island Film and Community Development Project, Box 22, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> "A Historical Review of Extension Service – 1917 to 1982," File: Extension Reports, General Binder 3-5, Box 47, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Donald Snowden, Report on Extension Service sent to Premier Joseph Smallwood, 16 February 1967, File: Extension Reports, General Binder 4, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-4; see also "Background Notes for Dr. A.A. Bruneau on Extension Requirements Today," File: Extension Reports, General Binder 2, Box 47, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

Newfoundland's inheritance from the past, and should play a major part in determining the direction of changes already rapidly gathering momentum."<sup>34</sup>

Members of the cultural community later picked up these ideas as well, as they wanted to preserve "the best" of Newfoundland culture in their own way. Mary Walsh reflected that her work was not a romantic longing for the past, but rather a way to "cherish and celebrate all the good things" in the culture.<sup>35</sup> As Dave Panting, a musician and member of the influential group Figgy Duff, argued in a 2009 interview, there was a sense that Newfoundlanders had a culture that was just as good as that anywhere else, and his group sought to preserve the musical element of that culture.<sup>36</sup> Kelly Russell also echoed this sentiment, claiming that he felt a sense of pride in playing music he could call his own, and that had been preserved through several generations. Russell argued that while there was no conscious mission to preserve the culture or national identity, there was a sense of reclaiming ownership of "your birthright."<sup>37</sup> It was a career choice that has given him great satisfaction, but also led to a sense of responsibility to be involved in cultural preservation.<sup>38</sup> Anita Best stated that "our stuff was just as good as anybody else's and in fact it was unique. And if we didn't present it, who the hell would."<sup>39</sup> Just as Story and his colleagues feared the loss of language, Russell and his comrades felt a

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<sup>34</sup> Report on Extension, n.d., File 3.09.045, Smallwood Papers, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 21:00].

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Dave Panting conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 7 December 2009 [DVD 32:11].

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1B, 11:00].

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1B, 12:00].

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 2A, 17:00].

responsibility to preserve various elements of Newfoundland culture through music and theatre.

From the beginning, MUN's Extension had field representatives that lived in communities in rural areas "working with the people to improve social, economic and cultural aspects of Newfoundland life."<sup>40</sup> The field workers were an important element of Extension's work.<sup>41</sup> Due to the efforts of these field workers new types of organizations were created helping to promote community and regional development, providing a basic structure to help local people work together with government and other private institutions.<sup>42</sup>

Extension workers aspired to provide people with whom they worked a sense that through Extension they were "taking a personal part in the development of the Province."<sup>43</sup> Colman wanted Extension to be identified as part of the development which

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<sup>40</sup> "Fogo Island: Film and Community Development Project," National Film Board of Canada, May 1968, File: Fogo Island – The Fogo Process, Box 35, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1; see also Michel Guité, "Film, Videotape and Community Development in Newfoundland," File: Film, Videotape and Community Development, Box 22, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives; Donald Snowden, "Film and Community Development: A Report on a means of using film to establish important communications links among the deprived and between the deprived and others," Prepared for the Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D.C, File: Film and Community Development, D. Snowden, 1968, Box 22, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

<sup>41</sup> "Fogo Island: Film and Community Development Project," National Film Board of Canada, May 1968, File: Fogo Island – The Fogo Process, Box 35, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-3.

<sup>42</sup> "The Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland," File: Extension Report, General Binder 6, Box 46, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-4; see also H.A. Williamson and D. Snowden, "Aspects of Community Development in Newfoundland: The Views of the Extension Service of the Memorial University of Newfoundland," 22 December 1967, File: Extension Reports, General Binder Field Services 1, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives; Douglas Fowlow, et al, "Discussion Paper on Courses, Conferences and the Arts, May 26, 27, 1975," File: Extension Reports from Community Education Program, Box 45, Extension Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

<sup>43</sup> Report on Extension, File 3.09.045, Smallwood Papers, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 6.



had been ongoing in Newfoundland over the 1940s and 1950s. Thus, he argued that it should operate throughout the Province, in rural areas and fishing communities as well as larger areas, and work with as many people and organizations as possible to encourage cooperation and make a long-term program succeed. In a 1961 report on Extension Colman spoke of “continuing the development of the nation.”<sup>44</sup> He suggested it was somewhat odd to speak of a nation when talking about a province that was part of a federation but it was not so outrageous in light of Newfoundland’s unique history, character, and problems.<sup>45</sup>

Donald Snowden succeeded Colman as Director of Extension in 1965, after Colman left for a position as Associate Dean at Scarborough College, University of Toronto.<sup>46</sup> Snowden had a reputation in community development, having worked in the Department of Northern Affairs and as a consultant to the Co-operative Union of Canada and ARDA as well as the Industrial Division of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources of the Federal Government.<sup>47</sup> Under his guidance many of the programs characteristic of Extension, such as the Fogo Film Process, began.<sup>48</sup> This

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<sup>44</sup> Report on Extension, File 3.09.045, Smallwood Papers, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Report on Extension, File 3.09.045, Smallwood Papers, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Press Release, 5 May 1965, File 3.09.045, Smallwood Papers, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Press Release, 5 May 1965, File 3.09.045, Smallwood Papers, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Donald Snowden, Report on Extension Service sent to Premier Joseph Smallwood, 16 February 1967, File: Extension Reports, General Binder 4, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-4; see also “Background Notes for Dr. A.A. Bruneau on Extension Requirements Today,” File: Extension Reports, General Binder 2, Box 47, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

program was not only important in terms of the development of Extension Service, but for the cultural community as well.

Members of Extension recognized that the arts were not only recreational but also “an effective means of communication and of stimulating creative thinking.”<sup>49</sup> The support Extension received from the university helped bring arts appreciation to the community. A report written by unknown member(s) of the Visual and Performing Arts Division argued that Newfoundland culture should be appreciated and “this can only be ‘sparked’ into existence by a reawakening of feeling and appreciation for what is good in our history, our song and our dance, and in all other aspects of our folklore.”<sup>50</sup> Extension Service promoted the idea that Newfoundland had a vibrant folk culture that, in the 1960s, was being “steadily sapped by the impact of North American values and popular art forms foreign to Newfoundland, and by economic forces which make rural life increasingly difficult.”<sup>51</sup> In a 1974 report, George Lee and Jake Harries, members of Extension Service, claimed that since Confederation, Newfoundland had been attempting to “catch-up ... with the rest of Canada in terms of economic development and living

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<sup>49</sup> Visual and Performing Arts Division, “Submission for Support of the Visual and Performing Arts,” A Proposal from the Extension Service, Memorial University of Newfoundland, to the Department of the Secretary of State, 28 July 1972, Extension Reports, File 7, General Binder 1, Box 49, Memorial University Archives, pp. 1-3.

<sup>50</sup> Visual and Performing Arts Division, “Submission for Support of the Visual and Performing Arts,” A Proposal from the Extension Service, Memorial University of Newfoundland, to the Department of the Secretary of State, 28 July 1972, Extension Reports, File 7, General Binder 1, Box 49, Memorial University Archives, pp. 1-3.

<sup>51</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, “The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974,” File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 1.

standards.”<sup>52</sup> Yet, this goal was a “mirage, less enviable than it looked, inappropriate and perhaps unattainable in any case.”<sup>53</sup> Their report proposed that the material progress had cost the province in other ways with “monumental damage to the social and cultural fabric of the rural communities which still contain half of the province’s population. The uprooting effect of centralising outport families into small urban areas, for example, has been compounded by neglect and decline of the traditional economic base, the inshore fishery, in the remaining outports.”<sup>54</sup> These sentiments are similar to those espoused by members of the cultural movement who were, as previously stated, significantly influenced by individuals at Extension Service.

In the mid to late 1970s, Extension experienced financial difficulties and constraints which ultimately threatened its role in cultural development. Things were changing in Extension, not only in the arts but everywhere. For example, the role of the field workers as communicators, once the most unique element of Extension, was altered as politicians became more active in local problems and issues.<sup>55</sup> Yet, Lee recognized that

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<sup>52</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, “The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974” File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, “The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974” File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, “The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974” File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> “The Extension Service, Memorial University of Newfoundland, June 1979,” File: Extension Reports, General Binder 2, Box 47, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 5.

it would be Extension's role in cultural developments that would be challenged due to fiscal restraint.<sup>56</sup>

### **Fogo Film Process**

One of the best known Extension initiatives began in 1967, when the National Film Board (NFB) and Extension Service entered a three-year agreement to pioneer a "new approach to film in community development."<sup>57</sup> The NFB, established in 1939, had a mandate "to initiate and promote the production and distribution of films in the national interest and in particular to produce and distribute (and to promote the production and distribution of) films designed to interpret Canada to Canadians and to other nations."<sup>58</sup> The NFB's function was to produce and distribute films that would help Canadians in various parts of the country understand the lives of those in other regions. The NFB had "directed its efforts to the development of cultural and social identity among the peoples

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<sup>56</sup> "Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland Five Year Plan and Budget Prediction," Submitted to Dr. A. A. Bruneau, Vice-President Professional Schools and Community Services, 4 April 1978, File: Extension Reports, Box 45, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 22-23.

<sup>57</sup> "Extract on Fogo Island Project from Proposal to Health and Welfare Canada," General Binder, Box 35, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 3; see also Donald Snowden, Director of Extension Service, "Film and Community Development: A Report on a Means of Using Film to Establish Important Communications Links Among the Deprived and Between the Deprived and Others," Prepared for The Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D.C., 1968, Box 22, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives; Michel Guité, Section de Communication Université de Montreal and Institute for Communication Research Stanford University, "Film, Videotape and Community Development in Newfoundland," Box 22, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives; "Fogo Island Project: Background," File: Binder – Extract on Fogo Island Process from Proposal to Health and Welfare Canada Extension Service 1977, Box 35, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 2-3.

<sup>58</sup> "Memorandum to the Task Force on Canadian Unity from Andre Lamy, Government Film Commissioner and Chairman of the National Film Board," File 4040-7 Part 2, Cultural Affairs, Task Force on Federal Cultural Policy General, Vol. 422, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada.

of Canada.”<sup>59</sup> Beginning in 1967, Extension Service used film and videotape in rural areas to help develop local resources and meet local needs. Tony Williamson, the director of Extension Community Development Program, argued the process used “film, with a knowledgeable fieldworker, as a reflector for self-analysis, for people to look at themselves and their communities objectively, if at all possible to arrive at a consensus, and to start dealing with problems.”<sup>60</sup>

The community used the films as a tool for communication to discuss problems that they experienced. Individuals were asked to talk on camera about their community, screened their own comments and would then have to give their consent to publicly show their comments to others in the community. The films were then used as a basis for discussion. This process helped residents discuss issues that were “often neglected or not talked about in traditional face-to-face community communication channels [and] can be brought into the light on film, and subsequently discussed.”<sup>61</sup>

The use of film for community development began with the NFB. The Fogo Film Process in connection with the NFB and its Challenge for Change Program, was mandated to help prepare “Canadians for social change.” It was part of the innovative programs that developed in the 1960s, such as Opportunities for Youth, Company of

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<sup>59</sup> “Memorandum to the Task Force on Canadian Unity from Andre Lamy, Government Film Commissioner and Chairman of the National Film Board,” File 4040-7 Part 2, Cultural Affairs, Task Force on Federal Cultural Policy General, Vol. 422, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>60</sup> Michel Guité, “Film, Videotape and Community Development in Newfoundland,” File 18-1 Extension Services: Film, Videotape and Community Development in Nfld., Vol. 18, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Michel Guité, “Film, Videotape and Community Development in Newfoundland,” File 18-1 Extension Services: Film, Videotape and Community Development in Nfld., Vol. 18, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 4.

Young Canadians, and Local Initiatives Program. The process was different than most documentary films in that the participants were able to view the footage and eliminate anything they felt was embarrassing or they did not want shown. People at the NFB and Extension believed this changed the “usual exploitative and predatory relationship between media technician and subject and handed over editing authority to people in the film.”<sup>62</sup> The program was meant to create confidence in the people when expressing and articulating their problems, allowing them to understand the problems and ultimately solve them. Members of the community decided on the topics discussed and helped to edit the films when they were replayed for the community, and thus were given considerable agency throughout the process. The NFB and Extension chose Fogo because its problems were typical of rural Newfoundland. It had no local government, many of the people were on welfare, fishing methods were out-dated and marketing organization was lacking. The work done by MUN’s Extension field worker Fred Earle had also advanced the community development process to the point where action could be effected.<sup>63</sup>

The university president, Moses Morgan, sought advice on the potential reaction of Newfoundland politicians to the films. Upon favourable advice, the university arranged

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<sup>62</sup> Boyce Richardson, “Film in the service of the people,” File 17-3 Extension Services: Fogo Process Report, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>63</sup> Extract on Fogo Island Project from Proposal to Health and Welfare Canada,” General Binder, Box 35, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 2-5; see also Donald Snowden, Director of Extension Service, “Film and Community Development: A Report on a Means of Using Film to Establish Important Communications Links Among the Deprived and Between the Deprived and Others,” Prepared for The Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D.C., 1968, Box 22, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives; Michel Guité, Section de Communication Université de Montreal and Institute for Communication Research Stanford University, “Film, Videotape and Community Development in Newfoundland,” Box 22, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives; “Fogo Island Project: Background,” File: Binder – Extract on Fogo Island Process from Proposal to Health and Welfare Canada Extension Service 1977, Box 35, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 2-3.

for the films to be shown to members of the cabinet and the response was largely positive to the views the people expressed in the films.<sup>64</sup>

Sandra Gwyn, who first brought Newfoundland culture to the attention of Canadians through her article “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” also had a connection to Extension. She wrote a report detailing the importance of film in community development, and argued that while seeing oneself onscreen was a frightening prospect, it often strengthened one’s sense of self and emphasized a sense of dignity. The process could “create identity where none existed” and also self-respect, “a quality which has been defined as the willingness to accept responsibility for one’s own life. Often, that willingness is the foundation on which consensus for social change can be built.”<sup>65</sup>

The Fogo Process was not only important to the development of Extension but also to the cultural movement itself. Greg Malone worked as an intern on the Fogo Island Film Project, and while he did not pursue a career in documentary filmmaking, he did use the experience on Fogo Island in CODCO’s play “Cod on a Stick,” from character names to actual scenes. Music for the films was created by Bryan Hennessey, another young intern, and Sandy Morris, and Noel Dinn, who later went on to form musical groups

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<sup>64</sup> Letter to the Editor, *Globe and Mail*, from Donald Snowden, 20 April 1981, File 17-3 Extension Services: Fogo Process Report, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada; Born in Blaketown, Trinity Bay, in 1917, Morgan served as president pro tem of MUN from 1966 to 1967, and became President following Lord Stephen Taylor’s departure in 1973. He continued to hold this post until 1981. Otto G. Tucker, “Morgan, Moses,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. 3 (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1991), pp. 617-618.

<sup>65</sup>Sandra Gwyn, “Film, Videotape and Social Change: A Report on the Seminar,” Printed by Extension Service, 1972, p. 2.

central to the cultural movement, such as Lukey's Boat, Figgy Duff, and the Wonderful Grand Band.<sup>66</sup>

The exposure to filmmaking led to the foundation of the Newfoundland Independent Film Cooperative (N.I.F.C.O.) in 1975 by Michael Jones, who was the brother of Andy and Cathy Jones of CODCO, John Doyle, a member of the Mummers Troupe, Paul and David Pope and Derek Norman, all of whom worked with the Extension Film Unit.<sup>67</sup> N.I.F.C.O. was founded to provide easy access to equipment and with a desire to make a variety of films in the province. The founding members of the co-op placed emphasis on supporting first-time filmmakers. N.I.F.C.O. also provided education to aspiring filmmakers through training programs, workshops and lectures. The co-op also collaborated with other artists "to encourage the development of indigenous cultural expression," and encouraged film as an art form and economic activity in the province.<sup>68</sup>

The success of film and videotape in other areas of Extension work led to a belief that communication would be furthered through the arts, including theatre, music, and the visual arts. The community development element of Extension Service influenced members of the cultural movement, especially Chris Brookes, who also used tape recordings and film to aid in the development of his community-based collective creations, further discussed in Chapter Four.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Susan Newhook, "Six Degrees of Film, Social, and Cultural History: The Fogo Island Film Project of 1967 and 'Newfoundland Renaissance,'" *Acadiensis* 39, 2 (Summer/Autumn 2010), pp. 63-65.

<sup>67</sup> Newhook, "Six Degrees of Film," pp. 63-65.

<sup>68</sup> "NIFCO Info," Vertical File, Centre for Newfoundland Studies; see also Mark Vaughn-Jackson, "Nifco marks 25 years," *Evening Telegram*, 16 June 2000, p. 11.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 28:00].



### **Visual and Performing Arts Section**

In 1974, officials at Extension Service suggested that the arts in Newfoundland needed to be fostered. George Lee and Jake Harries felt that Newfoundland's contribution to cultural development "must be two-fold."<sup>70</sup> The members of Extension believed that it was important to preserve and revive the folk culture of the province "both for their own sake, as elements of the individuality and vitality of the Newfoundland character, and for their contribution to the themes and style of the fine arts in Newfoundland."<sup>71</sup> The specific artists they mentioned were visual artists Gerry Squires, Frank Lapointe, Heidi Oberheide, a print-maker from Germany who moved to Newfoundland and played a key role in St. Michael's Printshop, and theatre artists Chris Brookes and Dudley Cox, a founding member of the Newfoundland Travelling Theatre Company. The report emphasized the importance of folk culture from which these artists derived inspiration for their work, expressed fear that the folk arts such as "the ancient mummers play at Christmas, as well as community drama throughout the winter, traditional music and dance" were becoming increasingly threatened by television.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, "The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974," File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, "The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974," File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, "The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974," File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 3.

The interest in the mummers play represented a link between the university and the arts community as well. Halpert and Story were interested in preserving and studying Newfoundland topics, such as mummering.<sup>73</sup> The Mummers Troupe, likewise, was attempting to preserve Newfoundland culture and show Newfoundlanders how exciting their culture could be. The group's very first artistic endeavour was to resurrect the mummers' play, which also contributed to the naming of the troupe.<sup>74</sup> The mummers' play was performed as part of the Christmas tradition of mummering while visiting homes disguised during the twelve days of Christmas.<sup>75</sup>

The Visual and Performing Arts Section of Extension offered recreational arts courses to the public, fostered art appreciation, and offered art courses at a more professional level for those considering a career in art. This assisted and encouraged the development of professional artists and craftspeople. It was meant to provide, among other things, a support system for professional artists.<sup>76</sup> People involved with the Visual and Performing Arts Section of Extension Service took a similar view of the Arts and Culture Centres as many artists did – that the Centres did not help promote Newfoundland indigenous culture. While the Centres were a “recent and valuable addition to the cultural life of Newfoundland,” they were mostly attended by urban populations, particularly “middle and upper class Newfoundlanders who indulge a passive, leisure-oriented

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<sup>73</sup> Herbert Halpert and George Story, eds., *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology, Folklore, and History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969).

<sup>74</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 13 and 55.

<sup>75</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 53-55; see also Pocius, “The Mummers Song,” pp. 61-64.

<sup>76</sup> Reports and Objectives of the Visual and Performing Arts Section, no date, File 1.02.004, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service Visual and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-4.

approach to the arts.”<sup>77</sup> Extension workers acknowledged that it was valuable to see the “Comedie Francois or the Royal Winnipeg Ballet” for people who enjoy “impressive displays of European fine art forms.”<sup>78</sup> However, “this fulfilment in no way cultivates the forms of artistic expression indigenous to Newfoundland and Labrador.”<sup>79</sup> Lee and Harries argued that the Centres were too few and centralised to “serve as the focus for cultural development within this province.”<sup>80</sup> Extension Service, on the other hand, had “community development programs aimed at enhancing the viability of rural life and preserving the cultural heritage of this Province.”<sup>81</sup> Both Extension workers and artists equated Newfoundland indigenous cultural with rural, working-class values and attempted to both help preserve this and represent it in their work.

Extension Service wanted to help maintain the culture of Newfoundland. An undated draft of a proposal to Canada Council declared that “the fulfillment of

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<sup>77</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, “The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974,” File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, “The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974,” File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, “The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974,” File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 4.

<sup>80</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, “The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974,” File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 5.

<sup>81</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, “The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974,” File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 5.

Newfoundland's community and cultural needs," was a major objective of this Section.<sup>82</sup> The Visual and Performing Arts programs were most active during the summer in the 1970s, holding workshops and other activities for young people and adults in various areas including Milton, King's Cove, Twillingate, Harry's Harbour, Rose Blanche, River of Ponds, Square Islands, St. Fintan's, Lourdes, and Port Rexton. The events ranged from "a media van touring the streets of St. John's to the testing of local clays for suitability for pottery making in Milton."<sup>83</sup> Extension Service wanted to extend this program, and thereby increase contact with the growing number of artists active in the province. Such contact would create a greater availability of services and tutoring to those wanting to explore or improve their artistic skills throughout the province.<sup>84</sup> Many areas fell within this Section including the Art Gallery, the St. Michael's Printshop, the Community Artist-in-Residence Program, and the Bond Street arts centre, all of which attempted to support fledgling artists and foster a greater appreciation of the arts.

### **Art Gallery**

The Provincial Art Gallery began in 1961 under the direction of Christopher Pratt, a Newfoundland artist, who was hired as the Specialist in Art and as such acted as the

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<sup>82</sup> Visual Proposal to Canada Council, File 2.03.002, Canada Council Funding 1973-1990, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> Visual Proposal to Canada Council, File 2.03.002, Canada Council Funding 1973-1990, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> Visual Proposal to Canada Council, File 2.03.002, Canada Council Funding 1973-1990, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-2.

curator of the Gallery, although Pratt did not realize he would be curator until after he had taken the position.<sup>85</sup> Born in St. John's in 1935, Pratt grew up in St. John's, but spent a lot of time in Bay Roberts, Topsail, and all around the Avalon Peninsula. He studied at Mount Allison University, and was appointed Specialist in Art at Extension while a fourth-year student.<sup>86</sup> Colman had intended, as with other areas of Extension, to put people involved with the arts throughout the island. Pratt was originally to live in Grand Falls and teach art classes there. However, there was a room in the MUN library which was designated as an art gallery. Pratt recalled in a 2010 interview that Smallwood had promised the Art Gallery Association of Newfoundland and Labrador an art gallery because none existed in Newfoundland at this time.<sup>87</sup> This Association had been formed in 1960 to stimulate interest in art exhibitions as well as to campaign for a provincial art gallery.<sup>88</sup> Pratt claimed that when this room was designated in the library "Smallwood essentially said well there's your art gallery."<sup>89</sup> There was no director, so Extension officials decided that one of Pratt's responsibilities would be to run a program in the Gallery. Pratt had a small budget of \$500.00 per year and did everything himself, including hanging the pieces. The first exhibition at the Gallery included a number of pieces that Pratt had borrowed from the National Gallery of Canada, including works by the Group of Seven – Tom Thompson, A.Y. Jackson, Franklin Carmichael, and Lauren

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<sup>85</sup> Interview with Christopher Pratt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 January 2010 [Cassette 1A, 6:00]; see also Christopher Pratt, *Ordinary Things: A Different Kind of Voyage* (St. John's: Breakwater, 2009), pp. 24-25.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Christopher Pratt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 January 2010 [Cassette 1A, 10:00].

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Christopher Pratt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 January 2010 [Cassette 1A, 7:00].

<sup>88</sup> Patricia A. Greene, "Art," *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 1 (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Ltd., 1981), p. 78.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Christopher Pratt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 January 2010 [Cassette 1A, 7:00].

Harris. Pratt was exhibiting pieces that were more Canadian, rather than exhibiting work by local artists. There were only a couple of artists working in Newfoundland at that time. The growth in the number of professional local artists did not occur until after Pratt had left the gallery. Pratt argued “there basically was no solid tradition of visual arts in Newfoundland.”<sup>90</sup>

Art was something a few people did as a hobby in Newfoundland in the early 1960s. Pratt argued there was no art scene, and no arts community, but that began to change in the 1960s in part because of the activities of Reginald and Helen Shepherd.<sup>91</sup> One of the first professional visual artists in Newfoundland, Reginald Shepherd had been born in Portugal Cove and studied art at the Ontario College of Art from 1944 to 1949. He returned to Newfoundland along with his wife Helen, also an artist and native Newfoundlander, in 1949. They established the Newfoundland Academy of Art, the first such school of its kind in Newfoundland, and ran it until 1961. They wanted to live in the province, and since there was not a large market for art, they decided to start an art school modelled on the Ontario College of Art, where they had both studied.<sup>92</sup> The Shepherds influenced the next generation of artists and made people believe they could make a living and be respected as artists. They also had an impact on developments at Extension Service. Edythe Goodridge stated that

the Academy affected my work at Memorial University Extension. The Shepherds taught me to stimulate art practice in the community: that was their influence. That was the major stimulant for me to get art programming

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<sup>90</sup> Interview with Christopher Pratt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 January 2010 [Cassette 1A, 15:00].

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Christopher Pratt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 January 2010 [Cassette 1A, 15:00].

<sup>92</sup> Ronald Rompkey, ed., *Reginald Shepherd: Helen Parsons Shepherd: A Life Composed* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 2005), pp. 20-21.

going within Memorial University Extension on Bond Street, summer camps for kids in high school, touring exhibits to schools. I credit them, even though I stopped working at art in my twenties.<sup>93</sup>

Pratt recalled that the objective of Extension and the Art Gallery at its inception was “to make art appreciation and participation in the arts a kind of a hobby level more widespread and accessible throughout the province.”<sup>94</sup> As artist Patricia Grattan, curator of the Art Gallery following Edythe Goodridge, points out, there was no professional art gallery prior to 1961 and its establishment created a legitimacy for visual art and the ability to bring national attention to Newfoundland art.<sup>95</sup> Pratt was curator for two and a half years and in that time also tried to run some instructional classes and a couple of minor shows in other parts of Newfoundland.<sup>96</sup> He resigned from the university in 1963 to work as a full-time artist.<sup>97</sup> Pratt would eventually become an extremely successful and influential Newfoundland artist whose work, in part, celebrated Newfoundland culture. He also designed the current Newfoundland flag introduced in 1980.

Extension Service hired Peter Bell to succeed Pratt as curator in 1963, a role he continued until 1972. Bell was born in Lincolnshire, England in 1918, and emigrated to South Africa in 1947, where he obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts. He became department head at the Ndalen Art School, but his position was terminated in 1963 and Bell was forced to leave the country due to pressure from the government over his vocal opposition

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<sup>93</sup> Rompkey, *Reginald Shepherd*, p. 108.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Christopher Pratt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 January 2010 [Cassette 1A, 17:00].

<sup>95</sup> Patricia Grattan, *City Seen: Artists' Views of St. John's 1785-2010* (St. John's: WinterPlace Projects, 2011), p. 52.

<sup>96</sup> Greene, “Art,” p. 78.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Christopher Pratt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 January 2010 [Cassette 1A, 22:00].

to apartheid. He then immigrated to Newfoundland to become curator of the Art Gallery.<sup>98</sup> The Gallery relocated from the university library to the St. John's Arts and Culture Centre in 1967 at the invitation of the Provincial Government. It also began to expand at this time as well, showing exhibitions in Corner Brook in 1969, in Grand Falls and Gander from 1971, and in the Arts and Culture Centre in Stephenville from 1976, and later in Happy Valley.<sup>99</sup> Essentially, the hiring of Peter Bell as curator marked a change in the Art Gallery. As Pratt argues, Bell was more interested in running the Gallery and supporting the professionalization of the visual arts. Bell realized that running the Gallery was a full-time job and he also convinced the university to bring other artists to the province, including Don Wright, who would later play a major role in the establishment of the St. Michael's Printshop.<sup>100</sup>

Bell took more of an interest in the position and a more aggressive role in acquiring art for the gallery. He began a collection for the Gallery of contemporary Canadian, post-World War II, art. He traveled across the country, visiting Emily Carr College in British Columbia, the Alberta College of Art, the Ontario College of Art, and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, among others. Every year he traveled the country acquiring art, building up the Gallery's own collection.<sup>101</sup> Bell also co-founded

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<sup>98</sup> Christine M. Bown, "Bell, Peter" *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 1 (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Ltd., 1981), p. 170.

<sup>99</sup> Memorial University Art Gallery, submitted to President L.D. Harris by Elayne Harris, Director of Extension and Patricia Grattan, Curator of Art Gallery, on 7 April 1983, File Art Gallery E. Harris, 1983-1984, Box 5, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-2.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Christopher Pratt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 January 2010 [Cassette 1A, 23:00].

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Edythe Goodridge conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 24 October 2010 [DVD 1 Part 1, 22:39].



the Atlantic Provinces Art Galleries Association, which helped facilitate the touring of Newfoundland art outside the province.<sup>102</sup>

While Pratt acknowledged that during his tenure as curator of the Gallery there was a sense in St. John's that art was a hobby, Bell did not want to cater to amateur painters and wanted the Gallery to have a professional focus.<sup>103</sup> In addition to collecting contemporary Canadian art from other provinces, Bell supported the work of professional artists in Newfoundland.<sup>104</sup> He argued that it was significant that the work being done by these artists was all of Newfoundland, and while it was regional it was not parochial. It reflected the artists' relationship with their environment and landscape yet it was not restrictive and people from other regions could interpret and relate to the work being produced in Newfoundland. Bell argued that "all good art is regional in that it reflects the response of the individual artist to his own experience."<sup>105</sup>

Although the Art Gallery moved to the new Arts and Culture Centre, Memorial University continued to manage it. The decision to give the university administrative control of the Art Gallery led to considerable conflict between the curator and the Director of Cultural Affairs, John Perlin. Perlin had an antagonistic relationship with the curators of the Art Gallery between 1967 and 1982, but perhaps most particularly with Peter Bell.<sup>106</sup> When interviewed in 2010, Perlin acknowledged that he had problems with

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<sup>102</sup> Grattan, *City Seen*, p. 52.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 5 minutes].

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 35 minutes].

<sup>105</sup> Peter Bell, "Graphic Newfoundland," *Graphic Newfoundland: A Survey of Contemporary Prints and Drawings in Newfoundland* (Burnaby, BC: Burnaby Art Gallery and The Simon Fraser Gallery, 1982), p. 3.

<sup>106</sup> Letter to Peter Bell from J.G. Channing, 15 January 1968, File 3.09.048, Smallwood Papers, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Bell, whom he claimed made disparaging remarks about Newfoundland, such as “once describing Newfoundland as the only floating seaweed piss pot left in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.”<sup>107</sup> Perlin had several run-ins with Bell, as did the university president at the time, Lord Stephen Taylor.<sup>108</sup> Lord Taylor, President of MUN, disagreed with Bell’s approach as well. Taylor was a British physician and former politician whom Smallwood personally selected to be president of the university.<sup>109</sup> Bell believed that the Gallery should have a professional focus and not cater to amateur painters. Taylor disagreed, and this was one of the reasons that he eventually fired Bell and put the Gallery under his own administrative control.<sup>110</sup>

Perlin requested that Bell be removed from the position of curator in 1971. Perlin felt he was placed in a difficult position that could not be resolved unless Bell was fired. He believed if Bell was removed it “would be possible to run a cooperative program...” with the Art Gallery.<sup>111</sup> Perlin objected to Bell taking over a large general office in the Centre for picture storage, a function for which it was not designed. Perlin felt this office was needed by the Centre and would be used in future. The Art Gallery also

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<sup>107</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 41:00].

<sup>108</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 41:00].

<sup>109</sup> Ian Rusted, “Taylor, Lord Stephen,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 5 (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1994), p. 342; see also Letter to Joseph Smallwood from Lord Stephen Taylor, 9 March 1966; Letter to Lord Stephen Taylor from Joseph Smallwood, 23 March 1966; Letter to Joseph Smallwood from Lord Stephen Taylor, 25 March 1966; Letter to Lord Stephen Taylor from Joseph Smallwood, 19 April 1966; Letter to Joseph Smallwood from Lord Taylor, 9 June 1966; Letter to Joseph Smallwood from Lord Stephen Taylor, 14 April 1966; Letter to Joseph Smallwood from Lord Stephen Taylor, 6 September 1966, File 3.09.063, Collection 075, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 5 minutes].

<sup>111</sup> Letter to H.J. Coombs, Deputy Minister, Department of Provincial Affairs from John Perlin, Director of the Division of Cultural Affairs, 21 April 1971, File 12, Box 2, GN 163 Box 2, Arts and Culture Centre: St. John’s Confidential Report by Perlin, The Rooms Provincial Archives, p. 3.

“consistently” blocked corridors and fire exits despite repeated verbal and written warnings about this. Perlin also once caught a “welder using a welding torch” to repair a sculpture in the corridor surrounded by flammable material “without any regard whatsoever for the dangerous fire hazard that was involved.”<sup>112</sup> Perlin insisted that Bell had been confronted about this but acted as if this were a “trivial” matter and that the Art Gallery was able to do as the curator, Bell, wanted. Perlin claimed this attitude was typical of the way Bell treated not only Perlin, but the other members of the staff as well. Bell considered that he was a “law unto himself in this environment.”<sup>113</sup>

Another problem Perlin had with Bell was his “laissez-faire attitude towards office routine and administration.”<sup>114</sup> Perlin suggested to government that he take over the Art Gallery, and suggested that he could run it more economically as he was already attempting to keep costs low. He assured H.J. Coombs, Deputy Minister of the Department of Provincial Affairs, he was not interested in “empire building,” but his only goal was “to provide the broadest possible exposure base for any programs conducted by the Arts and Culture Centres for the greatest good culturally of the people of the Province.”<sup>115</sup> In the end, it was decided that the university would operate the St. John’s

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<sup>112</sup>Letter to H.J. Coombs, Deputy Minister, Department of Provincial Affairs from John Perlin, Director of the Division of Cultural Affairs, 21 April 1971, File 12, Box 2, GN 163, Arts and Culture Centre: St. John’s Confidential Report by Perlin, The Rooms Provincial Archives, p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> Letter to H.J. Coombs, Deputy Minister, Department of Provincial Affairs from John Perlin, Director of the Division of Cultural Affairs, 21 April 1971, File 12, Box 2, GN 163, Arts and Culture Centre: St. John’s Confidential Report by Perlin, The Rooms Provincial Archives, p. 3.

<sup>114</sup>Letter to H.J. Coombs, Deputy Minister, Department of Provincial Affairs from John Perlin, Director of the Division of Cultural Affairs, 21 April 1971, File 12, Box 2, GN 163, Arts and Culture Centre: St. John’s Confidential Report by Perlin, The Rooms Provincial Archives, p. 3-4.

<sup>115</sup> Letter to H.J. Coombs, Deputy Minister, Department of Provincial Affairs from John Perlin, Director of Cultural Affairs, 21 April 1971,” St. John’s Confidential Report by John Perlin, File 12, Box 2, GN 163, The Rooms Province Archives, p. 5.

Gallery as well as those in the Arts and Culture Centres across the province.<sup>116</sup> The issue of administration arose mainly because of Perlin's dislike of Bell.<sup>117</sup> Eventually, Bell was made Painter-in-Ordinary, from 1972 to 1973.<sup>118</sup> Perlin's problematic relationship with Bell contributed to debates over whether the university or the government should operate the Gallery. Situations such as this further created tension between the provincial government and the artistic community.

After Taylor fired Bell in 1972, he appointed Frank Lapointe as curator of the Art Gallery. Lapointe was born in Port Rexton in 1942 and spent his high school years in Badger, a central Newfoundland logging community. His interest in art began at an early age, and growing up he was often told stories of art he created as a young toddler. He was a student at Memorial University briefly before attending the Ontario College of Art, graduating in 1966. While he was curator of the Art Gallery from 1972 to 1973, he, like Bell, also experienced problems with both Taylor and Perlin. Lapointe initially returned from Ontario at the request of people at Extension. He first worked as assistant curator and a teaching instructor. He enjoyed working at Extension, describing it as "fabulous" and "energetic." He felt they were doing great things. However, he did not like the politics at the university. Lapointe alleged over three decades later that the Art Gallery was too professional for some, especially for Taylor. Taylor wanted to be involved with the Gallery, to have an influence over its direction, and he wanted to cater more to local

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<sup>116</sup> Memorial University Art Gallery, submitted to President L.D. Harris by Elayne Harris, Director of Extension and Patricia Grattan, Curator of Art Gallery, on 7 April 1983, File Art Gallery E. Harris, 1983-1984, Box 5, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-2.

<sup>117</sup> Bown, "Bell, Peter," p. 170

<sup>118</sup> Bown, "Bell, Peter," p. 170.

amateur painters rather than professionals.<sup>119</sup> As Pratt had claimed, prior to the cultural movement visual art was viewed as a hobby.<sup>120</sup>

While Lapointe was curator, the administration of the Gallery was taken from Extension Service and henceforward Lapointe reported directly to Taylor. Taylor placed demands on Lapointe that, as a professional artist, Lapointe felt he just could not accept. For example, at the time the Art Gallery was part of APAC, the Atlantic Provinces Art Circuit. This group would meet once a year in a city in the Atlantic Canada region. At these meetings, “all the galleries would have at least one, maybe two or three shows [they were] willing to submit to other members of the association so they could form a traveling exhibition circuit with those shows throughout the region” and even into Central Canada.<sup>121</sup> Lapointe was asked by Taylor not to present any art at this meeting, which Taylor believed would alleviate any obligation to exhibit shows from other galleries and areas.<sup>122</sup> It is unclear why Taylor wanted to avoid a sense of obligation to other galleries. However, cost may have been a factor, as well as his belief that amateur work, or the art of those who pursue art as a hobby rather than a profession, should be the focus of the Art Gallery.

According to Lapointe, Taylor dismissed much of the abstract art that was being produced at the time in Newfoundland. He wanted to focus on amateur painters, one of the reasons he fired Bell. When Lapointe arrived at the APAC in Halifax and said

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 5:00].

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Christopher Pratt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 January 2010 [Cassette 1A, 15:00].

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 6:00].

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 6:00].

he did not have any art to show, members of the organization asked him why. He told them that he could not book an exhibit without bringing slides back to show Taylor and get his approval. Lapointe did not have the authority to book a show. That responsibility lay with the President. Lapointe decided he did not want to continue in this position. So, he wrote a letter indicating this was not acceptable and unless the Art Gallery started to be run on a more professional level it would become “a laughing stock” and he could not stay. He gave them three months notice and left. Taylor became ill shortly after this, and left the university in 1973. Taylor’s departure influenced not only the Gallery but the rest of the arts community, because when he left the Gallery was returned to Extension Service and Edythe Goodridge in 1974.<sup>123</sup>

Goodridge was born in St. John’s in 1937, and following high school, she attended college in London, England, and later studied at the Ontario College of Art and the University of Toronto.<sup>124</sup> She was curator of the Art Gallery from 1974 to 1982, a time when the arts in Newfoundland grew exponentially.<sup>125</sup> Goodridge had a strong personality, was energetic and had an evident passion for Newfoundland culture, art and artists. She shared many of the same views as other members of the cultural movement and believed in what they were trying to achieve. In her address at MUN’s convocation when she was awarded an honorary degree by the university in 1998, she argued that government programs, such as resettlement, “disrupted our traditional way of life.”<sup>126</sup> She

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<sup>123</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 8:00].

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Edythe Goodridge conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 24 October 2010 [DVD 1 Part 1, 1:08].

<sup>125</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 41.

<sup>126</sup> Edythe Goodridge’s address at Memorial University’s Fall Convocation 1998, in possession of the author.

declared that “a large contingent of artists” voiced opposition to such programs and what they saw as destructive to Newfoundland culture. She argued that some artists attempted to rescue folksongs and folklore, while others celebrated Newfoundland traditional arts and crafts. In her opinion, artists were “demonstrating the dignity of our traditional skills and labour.”<sup>127</sup>

Artist Gerald Squires remembered in 2010 that “when [Goodridge] became the head of the art gallery she looked around and she said, well who’s here, who do we got, what have we got to go with. And she discovered ... Newfoundland was very rich in its visual and theatre and so forth. So she supported it ... She started working with CODCO and started working with the film people and you know, she wasn’t just looking after the visual part of it, except that she was running the gallery, but still, you know, it wasn’t just visual, it was everything, poetry and everything.”<sup>128</sup> Lapointe agreed, reporting that Goodridge said the art gallery should be the meeting point, it should “be the sounding board for all the different arts and not just the [visual] arts ... There were playwrights and actors and painters and poets and architects and conservationists. Anyone who wanted to come in Edythe would welcome with open arms and quite often the coming and going there’d be a cross-reference of people you’d be meeting. It became to the Newfoundland artists what the cafés of Paris were to [artists there].”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Edythe Goodridge’s address at Memorial University’s Fall Convocation 1998, in possession of the author.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 57:29].

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 9:00].

Goodridge, herself, affirmed her support for visual and theatre artists. She argued that theatre troupes, such as the Mummers Troupe and CODCO, were producing powerful new drama that reflected Newfoundland history and current events. She argued that, “coupled with the appearance of a host of revival and contemporary musicians, they added a brave and forceful dynamic to the art scene forged by the visual artists. Their combined commentary and presentations created a new discourse and debate, seriously lacking in the social and political arena of the era.”<sup>130</sup> Goodridge also promoted Newfoundland art on the mainland and convinced the Canada Council to fund more activities in Newfoundland and Labrador.<sup>131</sup> The Art Gallery helped to dictate what was art, particularly under the guidance of Goodridge. She had strong opinions about Newfoundland. As musician Anita Best recalled, Goodridge, artists, and people at Extension were also having conversations about Newfoundland and their opinions about “why Newfoundland was the way it was and why we were the way we were.”<sup>132</sup>

Goodridge argued that Moses Morgan becoming president at the university was a positive for both her and the arts community, as Morgan supported the arts community in a way Taylor did not.<sup>133</sup> However, controversy continued to shroud the Art Gallery. In 1973 Perlin again attempted to take control of the Art Gallery. Perlin wrote to Premier Moores on 20 December 1973 suggesting that the Division of Cultural Affairs should take over the Art Gallery. He argued that the Gallery had no provision made to display

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<sup>130</sup> Edythe Goodridge, “Setting the Scene,” a draft of a paper, in possession of the author.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 35:00].

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 2A, 1:00].

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Edythe Goodridge conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 24 October 2010 [DVD 1 Part 2, 19:22].



the work of amateur artists, one of the issues that had led to the termination of Bell only a year earlier. Perlin also claimed that Newfoundland artists had only been offered exhibitions if they had been in favour with either Bell or, later, Lapointe. An example provided by Perlin was that while in 1971, the Gallery had hosted an exhibition of postage stamps, under Lapointe the following year he refused to exhibit the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce's coin collection. This, according to Perlin, demonstrated a lack of policy for operating the Gallery. He argued that if the Gallery were placed under the direction of the Division of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Tourism, the Gallery would serve the public interest, as the Arts and Culture Centre was supposed to, and not the university's agenda. He also maintained that while Taylor had set up an Art Gallery Advisory Board when he had taken over the Art Gallery in 1972, Perlin would establish a more "representative and meaningful Art Gallery Advisory Committee" that would help define the policies of the Gallery and "help them fulfil their very definite necessary function in the artistic life of the people of the Province."<sup>134</sup>

Perhaps, in fairness to Perlin, he was reacting to pressure from some people who did not appreciate the artists. In an editorial in the *Daily News* in December 1975, an author writing under the name Anti-Arty Crafty wrote that he had attended a "fine production" at the Arts and Culture Centre:

but was disgusted at the mass confusion I was expected to wade through in order to reach the theatre. The upper concourse resembled the worst sort of Petticoat Lane, with long haired creeps, grannie-gowned females, the usual assortment of blue-jeaned freaks; the whole thing

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<sup>134</sup> Letter to Premier Frank D. Moores from John Perlin, 20 December 1973, File "Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives, pp. 1-5.

was billed as a sort of folk art display, which it was in more ways than one. I think it was appalling. I'd like to see any other Arts and Culture Centre in Canada so despoiled by such a collection of riff-raff.<sup>135</sup>

The complainant went on to say that he or she doubted many of these offenders were actually Newfoundlanders, and that the “long-haired unwashed freaks” resembled “the Manson tribe.”<sup>136</sup> He ended his diatribe with “no more of this please, Mr. Perlin.”<sup>137</sup>

Perlin had support among some local artists, most notably from Reginald Shepherd and David Blackwood.<sup>138</sup> Blackwood, unlike the Shepherds and other artists, was based in Ontario. Yet, he became an important Newfoundland artist in the 1960s and 1970s, and he also commented on issues at the Art Gallery. Blackwood was born in Wesleyville in 1941, and fished with his father as a child. Between the ages of 15 and 18 he would paint during the winters and sell his art to visitors in the summer. He studied art at the Ontario College of Art.<sup>139</sup> Blackwood was also elected to the Royal Canadian Academy “in recognition of his outstanding achievements in the field of art.”<sup>140</sup> Much of Blackwood's work concentrated on Newfoundland and commented on many of the same issues and themes as that of Squires, Lapointe, and others, such as resettlement. Blackwood remembers the controversy over Confederation and resettlement. He recalled

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<sup>135</sup> “Arts, Culture Centre despoiled,” *Daily News*, 12 December 1975.

<sup>136</sup> “Arts, Culture Centre despoiled,” *Daily News*, 12 December 1975.

<sup>137</sup> “Arts, Culture Centre despoiled,” *Daily News*, 12 December 1975.

<sup>138</sup> Helen Parsons Shepherd, *Helen Parsons Shepherd and Reginald Shepherd: Four Decades* (St. John's: Art Gallery, Memorial University, 1989), pp. 3 and 6; see also James Wade, “Shepherd, Reginald,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. 5 (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1994), p. 160.

<sup>139</sup> Ettie L. Gordon Murray, “Blackwood, David,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 1 (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Ltd., 1981), p. 204.

<sup>140</sup> “Artist Blackwood Honoured,” *Daily News*, 9 December 1975.

the trauma of people uprooted from their homes, “and the response of his grandfather, who locked himself up and refused to leave.”<sup>141</sup> He decided as a young adult to devote his professional life to “recording his early memories” of Newfoundland and to assist “in the preservation and restoration of Wesleyville,” so the way of life and the values and cultural heritage of the community and surrounding areas “would be passed down.”<sup>142</sup> Blackwood echoed Perlin’s claim that there was favouritism shown in the Gallery, arguing that it existed “mainly to further the ‘careers’ of individuals or to support a small group of ‘artists’ who approve of its administration.”<sup>143</sup>

Blackwood felt he had been mistreated by the Gallery and by both Bell and, later, Goodridge. He argued that in 1967 he had provided a collection of 33 works to the permanent collection. When he requested to view these pieces to be used in a book of his work that was to be published by McClelland and Stewart in 1973, it was discovered that many of these pieces were either missing or damaged. He also claimed that he had never received a letter of appreciation for the pieces he had sold to the Gallery but had received several “insulting” letters from Bell and Goodridge “demanding I send work for the Permanent Collection.”<sup>144</sup> His comments were more scathing in a letter to Premier Moores, in which Blackwood declared that the Gallery “currently exists as a cultural welfare officer to a very small group of individuals with questionable ability and

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<sup>141</sup> Katharine Lochnan, *Black Ice: David Blackwood Prints of Newfoundland* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2011), p. 9.

<sup>142</sup> Lochnan, *Black Ice*, p. 9.

<sup>143</sup> Letter to Moses Morgan from David Blackwood, 22 June 1976, File Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives, p. 1.

<sup>144</sup> Letter to Moses Morgan from David Blackwood, 22 June 1976, File Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives, p. 2.

intention.”<sup>145</sup> He voiced his support for Perlin and felt that Perlin would have the best interest of the province at heart rather than simply the St. John’s vicinity.<sup>146</sup> Shepherd also agreed with the proposition, although made no pejorative remarks about the Gallery or its curators. Instead, he simply claimed that he thought Newfoundland should have both a university gallery and a provincial gallery.<sup>147</sup>

There were several other artists who opposed the Division of Cultural Affairs taking over the operation of the Art Gallery. The government received petitions from the Canadian Artists’ Representation Newfoundland (CAR), a branch of the national visual artist union that negotiated with public galleries to pay artists a fee for their work, arguing that nowhere else in the country had any government claimed that they “will take control of the arts.”<sup>148</sup> The members of this organization feared that if the Director of Cultural Affairs had control of the visual arts, these artists would encounter the same frustrations experienced by their colleagues in the theatre arts, an area which was under Perlin’s management. CAR also claimed a lack of funding for these groups, particularly the “newly formed professional companies [that] operate almost entirely on federal funding.”<sup>149</sup> Mary Pratt, a well-known Newfoundland artist originally from New Brunswick and the wife of Christopher Pratt, also supported the university being in

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<sup>145</sup> Letter to Moses Morgan from David Blackwood, 22 June 1976, File Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives, pp. 1-2.

<sup>146</sup> Letter to Moses Morgan from David Blackwood, 22 June 1976, File Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives, p. 1.

<sup>147</sup> Letter to Frank D. Moores from Reginald Shepherd, 20 January 1976, File Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives, pp. 1-3.

<sup>148</sup> Letter to Frank D. Moores from the Canadian Artists’ Representation Newfoundland, 25 November 1975 File Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives, p. 1.

<sup>149</sup> Letter to Frank D. Moores from the Canadian Artists’ Representation Newfoundland, 25 November 1975 File Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives, p. 2.

charge of the Art Gallery.<sup>150</sup> She argued Goodridge was a hard worker, who understood the arts and treated artists well. Under Goodridge, local artists were encouraged to show their work at the Gallery. Pratt contended that artists from different mediums and with different points of view had found acceptance at the Gallery. This environment had led the government of Newfoundland to be viewed as one of the most generous in Canada among artists. She emphatically claimed that both she and her husband did not think Perlin should have control of the Art Gallery.<sup>151</sup>

In a 2010 interview, Goodridge described Perlin as “a neo-colonial,” asserting “the best thing he would bring to the Centre was the Carlton Showband,”<sup>152</sup> a popular Irish-Canadian band. Perlin already had a contentious relationship with many in the arts community, but his bid to take over the Gallery made him their target. Goodridge explained Perlin’s attempt to take over the Art Gallery was a “revenge trip.”<sup>153</sup> She claimed any complaints the cultural community or arts community had would go to the Minister of Culture, to the Deputy Minister, the Assistant Deputy Minister and then to Perlin, who would, according to Goodridge, “go on his little revenge trips.”<sup>154</sup> Goodridge claimed that in his attempt to take over the Gallery, Perlin “mounted his own private little

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<sup>150</sup> Letter to Office of the Premier from Mary Pratt, 5 December 1975, File Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives, pp. 1-3.

<sup>151</sup> Letter to Office of the Premier from Mary Pratt, 5 December 1975, File Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives, pp. 1-3.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with Edythe Goodridge conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 24 October 2010 [DVD 1 Part 2, 2:19].

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Edythe Goodridge conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 24 October 2010 [DVD 1 Part 2, 3:56].

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Edythe Goodridge conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 24 October 2010 [DVD 1 Part 2, 3:41].

campaign with his few friends from CBC.”<sup>155</sup> In reaction to Perlin’s bid to control the Gallery, the visual artists protested by mounting the Black Exhibition. For this exhibit, every artist produced a piece that was black. The “Gallery boys,” the staff who framed and installed the exhibitions, also contributed. They built a black coffin and filled it with documents and catalogues from the Gallery. Lapointe made a shelf on top of which he placed polluted water from Placentia Bay.<sup>156</sup> These represented the pollution that was occurring in Newfoundland because of industrialization projects.<sup>157</sup>

However, it was not just visual artists who opposed Perlin’s takeover of the Gallery but also actors, writers, and musicians as well. There were petitions sent to government signed by artists from these various genres, including Lynn Lunde and John Doyle, founding members of the Mummers Troupe, folklorist Neil Rosenberg, and visual artists Heidi Oberheide, Frank Lapointe, and Don Wright.<sup>158</sup> At this time, Goodridge declared that Moores called her claiming he was receiving hundreds of calls per day from artists against Perlin’s proposed takeover of the Gallery. Goodridge asserted over thirty years later that “we won our case. There was no way we could lose it. We had an army of the most verbal and articulate, committed, intense residents from all over the island ... They wanted the university to have the Gallery.”<sup>159</sup> The Gallery remained under the

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<sup>155</sup> Interview with Edythe Goodridge conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 24 October 2010 [DVD 1 Part 2, 6:47].

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Edythe Goodridge conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 24 October 2010 [DVD 1 Part 2, 11:58].

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 46:00].

<sup>158</sup> A Petition sent to Frank Moores concerning the Gallery, 5 March 1976, File: Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with Edythe Goodridge conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 24 October 2010 [DVD 1 Part 2, 16:11].

administration of the university. However, there were some compromises made. For example, there would be a more extensive Art Gallery Advisory Board, which would include the Minister of Tourism, as well as representatives from the arts community and the general public. Nevertheless, Moores was “firm in his view” that the administration of the art galleries in the Arts and Culture Centres across the province should be under the control of the university.<sup>160</sup>

This outpouring of support for the Art Gallery may have reflected the respect and affection many members had for Goodridge, who not only supported visual artists but theatre artists, musicians, and writers as well.<sup>161</sup> Sandra Gwyn wrote in her article “The Newfoundland Renaissance” that the Art Gallery was “the crossroads and command post for Newfoundland’s cultural revolution,” as it was “sort of an open forum and information exchange for painters, sculptors, actors, directors, fiddlers, poets, playwrights, community planners, architects, folksingers, film-makers, photographers, visiting feds, ecology freaks, conservation nuts, and anyone else who happened to be on the go.”<sup>162</sup> When interviewed many years later, many artists agreed with this statement. Lapointe proposed that the “whole beautiful explosion” of the arts community happened when Goodridge was curator of the Gallery.<sup>163</sup> Squires averred Goodridge was “one of us

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<sup>160</sup> “Memorandum to Executive Council Reference: Operation of Art Galleries,” 2 June 1976, File: Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-37, The Rooms Provincial Archives, pp. 1-2; see also “Memorandum to Executive Council Reference: Art Galleries,” 25 May 1976, File: Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-37, The Rooms Provincial Archives, pp. 1-2.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 9:00]; see also Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1 57:29].

<sup>162</sup> Gwyn “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 41.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 9:00].

whereas John [Perlin] never was.”<sup>164</sup> This could also represent a class division as well. Many artists saw Perlin as part of the upper class in Newfoundland, while they self-identified as working-class. Perlin was part of the “Establishment,” friends with Smallwood, and attended government functions and so forth, while artists were opposing the “Establishment” and were generally not from affluent backgrounds.

Just as Extension was attempting to reach rural Newfoundland, so too was the Gallery. Its support for Newfoundland culture reflected the curator’s responsibilities to the Gallery and also Extension’s Visual and Performing Arts Section. This was particularly true under the curatorship of Goodridge.<sup>165</sup> Goodridge had a great rapport with the arts community; she not only supported visual artists, but also theatre artists and musicians as well. For example, members of CODCO invited Goodridge to watch their rehearsals to get her opinion on their shows.<sup>166</sup> Goodridge also promoted professionalization of the arts, and the idea “that artists should be paid for their work.”<sup>167</sup>

Officials at Extension believed that the Art Gallery was promoting and supporting the arts in Newfoundland. Arguably, as Elayne Harris and Patricia Grattan put it, “it is difficult to prove but not difficult to believe that such validating of their basic culture assisted Newfoundlanders’ new determination to expand their economy, their educational

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<sup>164</sup> Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 58:59].

<sup>165</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 9:00]; see also Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 59:20].

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Edythe Goodridge conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 24 October 2010 [DVD 2 Part 1, 45:34].

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1B, 18:00].



systems, and all other opportunities for development of people here.”<sup>168</sup> In the 1970s, the Gallery was able to bring in exhibitions from other provinces and also exhibit the work of Newfoundland artists elsewhere in Canada. Thus, not only was the Gallery exhibiting outside work to Newfoundland audiences, but was also bringing Newfoundland art to a wider audience. Federal funding was used for special projects and Newfoundland-centric exhibits. The exhibits organized during Goodridge’s curatorship (1973-1982), offered a balanced approach, showing work of professional arts, folk arts, and also outside artists. Goodridge heavily focused on the work of professional artists in Newfoundland. Yet, the Gallery also presented folk art and traditional crafts. The Gallery promoted the importance of Newfoundland folk culture and community life which was an important aspect of Extension as a whole. The Gallery displayed non-Newfoundland work as well and gained a strong reputation for the quality of work it was doing. Thus, the Gallery was offered exhibitions by other major galleries, including the National Gallery of Canada. The Gallery had an extensive array of peripheral activities with concerts, readings, and films. It was a space where not only visual artists but also writers and musicians received exposure they would not receive elsewhere.<sup>169</sup>

The administrative staff at the Art Gallery, and most of the visual artists, wanted the Gallery to be educational, showing the audience work from other regions and also different philosophical points of view as well as different time periods. In addition, and

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<sup>168</sup> Memorial University Art Gallery, submitted to President L.D. Harris by Elayne Harris, Director of Extension and Patricia Grattan, Curator of Art Gallery, on 7 April 1983, File Art Gallery E. Harris, 1983-1984, Box 5, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-2.

<sup>169</sup> Report on the Art Gallery, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Submitted to Extension Service, 29 January 1981, by Patricia Grattan, Acting Curator, File Art Gallery, E.M. Harris, 1982-1983, Box 5, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-2.

perhaps most importantly, the Gallery's exhibits of historic and contemporary art from Newfoundland and Labrador allowed people to see reflections of themselves, their community, and culture. There was a history, environment, and imagination in Newfoundland that was underlying the work of artists practising here. For example, Lapointe's Newfoundland Postcard Series included images and messages about the past, Heidi Oberheide displayed the environment with paintings of whales, gannets and tide pools, and both Gerald Squires's *Boatman Series*, and David Blackwood's *Bragg's Island* etchings presented two viewpoints on the changes in traditional culture and society taking place in the province. The visual artists of Newfoundland spoke about the place through their work.<sup>170</sup> Like artists before them, those in Newfoundland were using images of the past to illustrate the present and how society and culture had drastically changed over the course of a few decades.<sup>171</sup> The visual artists also had a tangible influence on other genres of art as well. Chris Brookes met Don Wright in the early 1970s, who Brookes felt opened his eyes "to what this place really looked like when you really looked at it."<sup>172</sup>

The early 1980s witnessed several staff changes at the Art Gallery. Most notably Goodridge, who had an immense influence and connection with the arts community in Newfoundland, left to assume a new position as head of the Visual Arts Section with the Canada Council in 1982. The report from Extension detailing the year of 1981-82 professed that "during her years with Extension, her energy, vision and dedication have

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<sup>170</sup> Memorial University Art Gallery, submitted to President L.D. Harris by Elayne Harris, Director of Extension and Patricia Grattan, Curator of Art Gallery, on 7 April 1983, File Art Gallery E. Harris, 1983-1984, Box 5, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 4-6.

<sup>171</sup> Ross King, *The Judgement of Paris: The Revolutionary Decade That Gave the World Impressionism* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2006), p. 23.

<sup>172</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 6:00].

generated much interest in Newfoundland artists outside the province and have contributed greatly to the development of the arts in Newfoundland and Labrador.”<sup>173</sup> The departure of Goodridge seemed to the artists to leave a void. Things were changing at the Art Gallery. It was no longer the epicentre of artistic developments it had been. The staff and artists themselves did not seem to connect with the new curator Patricia Grattan in the same way. Goodridge was not just a curator but a friend who was always willing to listen to her staff and artists of all disciplines.<sup>174</sup> People did not feel the same affection toward, or affiliation with, Grattan. Some artists, particularly those that had felt supported by Goodridge, felt that Grattan did not associate as closely with artists, musicians, writers and actors but instead was friendly with Perlin, whom many in the community mistrusted.

Many artists considered Goodridge to be a champion of the arts and supportive of creative expression in various artistic genres. However, some artists, including Gerry Squires were diplomatic when discussing Perlin, arguing he “is a different man today than he was then.”<sup>175</sup> Artists did not like the way he ran the Arts and Culture Centre. Squires argued in 2010, in part, this was because artists were free-spirits and “we want to do it

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<sup>173</sup> Annual Report of Extension Service, Art Gallery, File E. Harris, 1983-1984, Box 5, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 15; see also Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 14:00]; Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 10:00]; Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 1:00:22].

<sup>174</sup> Letter to Elayne Harris, Director, Extension Service, from Carl Morrissey, Art Gallery, 24 November 1982, pp. 1-2; see also Re: 9 November Memo from Gwendolyn L. Kerri, Secretary to the Curator; Letter to Elayne Harris, Director, Extension Service, from Brian Murphy and Edward J. Janes, 24 November 1982; Letter to Elayne Harris, Director, Extension Service, from Debbie Morrissey, Art Gallery, 25 November 1982, File: Extension Reports Elayne Harris’s Briefing Book, Box 45, Extension Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives; Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 10:00]; Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 58:40].

<sup>175</sup> Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 56:24].

and we want to do it now.”<sup>176</sup> While artists felt Perlin could have helped, he did not. However, artists felt supported by Goodridge when she became curator of the Art Gallery. Squires argued Perlin could have done this too but he did not. Squires did not dislike Perlin but maintained Perlin did not have the vision Goodridge did. Goodridge did not help just the visual arts but also the writers, theatrical groups, and filmmakers.<sup>177</sup>

The negative reaction to Grattan is not so much a reflection of Grattan as a person or curator, but the state of Extension at the time. There was a prevailing feeling that Extension was “floundering,” that it was doomed, and there was a longing for the “good old days.”<sup>178</sup> Extension was changing. Donald Snowden was no longer director and thus the enthusiasm and charisma he brought to the unit diminished. Greater emphasis was being placed on courses and conferences than community development.<sup>179</sup> There were also fiscal changes in the early 1980s. The Annual Report of Extension of 1980/81 reported that the Gallery’s operations were inhibited by spending restrictions. Such fiscal cutbacks affected the visits to the other exhibition centres across the island, and the Gallery’s ability to add to its permanent collection.<sup>180</sup> However, Grattan suggested that the Art Gallery be separated from the Visual and Performing Arts Section because at that

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<sup>176</sup> Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 57:12].

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 58:40].

<sup>178</sup> Letter to Elayne Harris, Director, Extension Service from Edward Cadigan, Co-ordinator of Operations, Art Gallery, 25 November 1982, File: Extension Reports Elayne Harris’s Briefing Book, Box 45, Extension Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

<sup>179</sup> Letter to Elayne Harris, Director, Extension Service from Edward Cadigan, Co-ordinator of Operations, Art Gallery, 25 November 1982, File: Extension Reports Elayne Harris’s Briefing Book, Box 45, Extension Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

<sup>180</sup> Annual Report of Extension Service, Art Gallery, File E. Harris, 1983-1984, Box 5, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 15.

point they had separate heads and also “the President [of the university] may want to use the gallery’s provincial mandate to look for more funding.”<sup>181</sup>

Leslie Harris, President of Memorial from 1981 to 1990, decided in 1982 that in reorganizing Extension he would separate the management of the provincial art galleries from under the Visual and Performing Arts Section. The management of the galleries was placed under the Art Gallery Advisory Board in the hopes that it would take a more active role in promoting the work of the Gallery and thereby making artists more accessible to Newfoundland communities. Harris claimed that in selecting members for the Board, those involved in the selection process attempted to gather people who had an interest in the visual arts and also offered geographic representation. The members of the Advisory Board included John Green (Chairman), Isobel Blackmore (Gander), Jean Crane (Happy Valley), Donna Ewing (Corner Brook), Elayne Harris (Director of Extension), Winston Lane (Clareville), John Perlin (Director of Cultural Affairs), Christopher Pratt (St. Mary’s/Visual Artist), Violet Ruelokke (a member of MUN’s Board of Regents), and Peter Walker (a representative of C.A.R.).<sup>182</sup> The Statement of the Purpose of the Art Gallery claimed the Art Gallery was to promote interest in and knowledge and appreciation of the visual arts in the community it served and

To accomplish this, the Art Gallery shall engage in the exhibition of works of high quality and in the operation of extension and education programmes. To support these functions, the Art Gallery shall acquire and care for works

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<sup>181</sup> Letter to Elayne Harris, Director, Extension Service, from Ms. Patricia Grattan, Curator, 19 January 1983, Miscellaneous, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

<sup>182</sup> Letter to Ms. Elayne Harris, Director of Extension Service, from Leslie Harris, President of Memorial University, 31 August 1982, File Art Gallery, E. M. Harris, 1982-1983, Box 5, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

of art, primarily by contemporary Canadian artists, with special but not exclusive reference to Newfoundland and Labrador. The Art Gallery shall promote interest in the visual arts of Newfoundland and Labrador within and outside the province.<sup>183</sup>

Extension had already been doing this through its Visual and Performing Arts Section; however, in the early 1980s, and with the departure of Goodridge, there was a decline in the frequency and variety of various artists from different genres at the Gallery.<sup>184</sup>

### **The St. Michael's Printshop**

The St. Michael's Printshop was another important development in the cultural movement. The Printshop opened in 1972, although its impetus began five years earlier. Don Wright was the Assistant Specialist of Art, a position he took in 1967. At that time, Bell, the curator of the Art Gallery, suggested creating a Printshop.<sup>185</sup> Wright set up a small print area in the Education Building of the university, but this was not conducive to productivity as there were other activities such as pottery making going on there at the time as well. Wright established programs and classes, broadening the art program to include community involvement.<sup>186</sup> Heidi Oberheide had been teaching silk-screening, which was more portable because it did not use presses. However, it became apparent to

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<sup>183</sup> Minutes of the Art Gallery Advisory Board Meeting, 20 November 1982, File Art Gallery, E. M. Harris, 1982-1983, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 3.

<sup>184</sup> Report on the Art Gallery, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Submitted to Extension Service, 29 January 1981, by Patricia Grattan, Acting Curator, File Art Gallery, E.M. Harris, 1982-1983, Box 5, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 4.

<sup>185</sup> "Proposal for a Printmaking Workshop," 5 May 1972, File: Extension Proposals, Box 44, Extension Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1-5; see also "Submission to the Canada Council in respect of proposed Print Shop for Professionals in St. John's, Newfoundland," by Peter Bell, 10 April 1972, File: Extension Proposals, Box 44, Extension Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 8:00].

her that there was no space left for other printing activities and the “constant flow of people through these small rooms created chaos for those artists who required a more isolated space in which to develop their ideas.”<sup>187</sup>

Bell argued that Wright was the first “overt print-maker” in Newfoundland. Wright taught art courses for Extension in the late-1960s, and “prepared the community for the later acceptance of the printshop.”<sup>188</sup> Oberheide, originally from Germany, arrived in 1972 and was an accomplished printmaker. She settled on the Southern Shore, as Wright, Lapointe, and Squires had done. Bell suggested this was because of her attraction to the “wildness and primitiveness of the coast.”<sup>189</sup> At her insistence Extension Service sponsored a Printshop with financial assistance from Canada Council. Bell argued that there had always been a difference of opinion between artists and the university regarding the Printshop. Artists “looked upon it as an artistic retreat where visiting participants might work, literally, in magnificent isolation.”<sup>190</sup> The university, on the other hand, would have liked the Printshop to have been located in the city, catering to amateur artists. Bell argued if this had happened, neither Wright nor Oberheide would have administered it and few artists from outside the province would have visited.<sup>191</sup> In 1972, George Lee, Assistant Director of Extension, presented a proposal to the Canada Council to establish a Printshop. Lee recommended this facility be established in a small

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<sup>187</sup> Letter to Andy Farquharson, Acting Assistant Director to Resident Printmaker, St. Michael’s Printshop, from Heidi Oberheide, regarding the history of the Printshop, 17 January 1976, File: Printshop Letters of Support, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-2.

<sup>188</sup> Bell, “Graphic Newfoundland,” pp. 4-5.

<sup>189</sup> Bell, “Graphic Newfoundland,” p. 7.

<sup>190</sup> Bell, “Graphic Newfoundland,” p. 7.

<sup>191</sup> Bell, “Graphic Newfoundland,” p. 7.

community outside St. John's, which would then have the potential to become a centre for working artists. He suggested that "the influence it may have on the curriculum of the school system and the general attitude towards fine arts in the area has exciting possibilities."<sup>192</sup>

The St. Michael's Printshop was opened under Extension Service through funding provided by the Canada Council. The Printshop was endorsed and supported by several well-known artists including Oberheide, Manfred Buchheit, Frank Lapointe, Ken Pittman, Mary Pratt, Christopher Pratt, Gerald Squires, Don Wright and Peter Bell. The Printshop was to provide professional facilities for intaglio and lithographic printing for the artists in Newfoundland and those visiting.<sup>193</sup> Situated in St. Michael's, an outport near St. John's, many artists who endorsed the Printshop lived on the Southern Shore. Oberheide also claimed that a unique setting in an outport would attract visiting artists. Visiting artists were able to stay in the apartment above the shop and work extensively in the Printshop.<sup>194</sup>

People at the Printshop attempted to reach out to the community. Lapointe, Wright, and Oberheide tried to develop a regular program with high school students. Lapointe taught basic printing techniques to high school students at the Printshop once a

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<sup>192</sup> "Proposal for a Printmaking Workshop," 5 May 1972, File: Extension Proposals, Box 44, Extension Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1; see also "Submission to the Canada Council in respect of proposed Print Shop for Professionals in St. John's, Newfoundland," by Peter Bell, 10 April 1972, File: Extension Proposals, Box 44, Extension Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

<sup>193</sup> "Proposal for a Printmaking Workshop," 5 May 1972, File: Extension Proposals, Box 44, Extension Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1-5.

<sup>194</sup> Letter to Andy Farquharson, Acting Assistant Director from Resident Printmaker, St. Michael's Printshop, Heidi Oberheide, regarding the history of the Printshop, 17 January 1976, File: Printshop Letters of Support, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-2.



week. The Printshop also had national connections and connections to art schools such as Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Guelph University, the Ontario College of Art, and other studios in Canada, which helped local artists establish markets for their work. As Oberheide wrote in 1976, “the prints from the printshop are being recognized nationally by the Canada Council and several galleries in Ontario and the Maritimes, making it more attractive for local artists to use the shop since markets for the work will be established.”<sup>195</sup>

The Printshop continued to be active throughout the 1970s. Like all aspects of Extension’s work, the Printshop became integrated into community life in St. Michael’s. While the Printshop provided accommodation, local residents also offered board and lodging to visiting artists. Bell claimed that Oberheide had “frequent ‘open-days’ for the general public, on which occasions local people often [brought] in cookies and home-made sweetmeats. A warm mutuality [had] grown between the Printshop and local residents.”<sup>196</sup> Activities for the local community were held in the Printshop. In 1974 to 1976, Oberheide held open houses for local people. In 1975, during one of these, Wright showed slides of two local men building a boat. Open houses were also held to exhibit and sell prints by local artists.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Letter to Andy Farquharson, Acting Assistant Director from Resident Printmaker, St. Michael’s Printshop, Heidi Oberheide, regarding the history of the Printshop, 17 January 1976, File: Printshop Letters of Support, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1.

<sup>196</sup> Bell, “Graphic Newfoundland,” p. 7.

<sup>197</sup> Letter from A. H. Roberts, Director to Ms. Anne Marie Hogue, Visual Arts Officer, The Canada Council, 11 March 1977, File 6.06.001, St. Michael’s Printshop Correspondence, 1977-1978, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service Visual and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Shortly after it opened, officials at Extension feared that the Printshop would be closed due to funding cutbacks at the university, and suggested moving the Printshop to its facility on Bond Street in St. John's. Oberheide argued that there was great interest in the shop and the work being done there and "obviously the printshop has been accepted as an important contribution to the community activities by the local people and that fact is certainly one of the justifications for its existence .... To remove the shop or close it down now would only again reinforce the long standing controversy that everything is anchored in St. John's and is used by a group of middle class people."<sup>198</sup> As Oberheide stated, there was a feeling that services were centred in larger areas, particularly St. John's. This was also the era of resettlement, when smaller communities were moved to larger growth centres to have greater access to services and modern conveniences. Opposition to this program and the idea that smaller areas needed to be abandoned to improve quality of life influenced the cultural movement. In addition, members of the cultural movement wanted to preserve their idea of Newfoundland culture, much of which they believed existed mainly in the outports, beyond the city overpass.

Wright also felt that despite the Printshop's financial difficulties it should not be moved to Extension facilities at Bond Street. He feared that if this happened the Printshop would cease to function as a professional facility. The space would not be conducive to the type of work being done and he was doubtful that artists using the Printshop would continue to do so. Wright argued "there are more serious people involved at St. Michael's

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<sup>198</sup> Letter to Andy Farquharson, Acting Assistant Director to Resident Printmaker, St. Michael's Printshop, Heidi Oberheide, regarding the history of the Printshop, File: Printshop Letters of Support, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-2.

now than ever worked at the Education Building over six years.”<sup>199</sup> Artists felt that to set up the lithography and intaglio equipment at Bond Street “would be an extravagant move” that would waste space and material. Wright further argued that the equipment could not share space with other activities and it required continuous use and maintenance to function properly.<sup>200</sup> Oberheide argued that if the present Printshop relocated to St. John’s issues of inadequate space would arise and the need for privacy and crowded conditions would lead to a deterioration of the work being done as the shop would not attract serious artists either locally or from away.<sup>201</sup>

In 1976, officials at the university decided that over the course of at least three years the Printshop would be transferred from the university to a group of Newfoundland printmakers who formed an independent Printmakers Cooperative centred at the St. Michael’s Printshop.<sup>202</sup> The memorandum for this Association was signed by Wright, Oberheide and Lapointe.<sup>203</sup> Other cultural programs, such as Extension’s Artist-in-

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<sup>199</sup> Letter to Andy Farquharson, Acting Assistant Director, from Don Wright, regarding the Printshop – St. Michael’s, 16 January 1976, File: Printshop Letters of Support, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1; see also Letter to Andy Farquharson, Acting Assistant Director, Extension Service, from Gerald L. Squires, 17 January 1976, File: St. Michael’s Printshop History, Box 8 Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-2.

<sup>200</sup> Letter to Andy Farquharson, Acting Assistant Director, from Don Wright, regarding the Printshop – St. Michael’s, 16 January 1976, File: Printshop Letters of Support, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 2.

<sup>201</sup> Letter to Andy Farquharson, Acting Assistant Director to Resident Printmaker, St. Michael’s Printshop, Heidi Oberheide, regarding the history of the Printshop, File: Printshop Letters of Support, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 2.

<sup>202</sup> Annual Report of the Visual and Performing Arts Section of Extension Service 1976, File 25 Extension Reports, Box 49, General Binder 1, Extension Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 4.

<sup>203</sup> Memorandum of Association of St. Michael’s Artists – Printmakers Association, File St. Michael’s Printshop History, Box 8, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1.

Residence program ended around this time as well.<sup>204</sup> This represented a major change that would have a lasting impact. The university withdrew direct support for the arts and the development of an arts co-operative – support which had done much to foster a cultural scene.

### **The Community Artists-in-Residence Program**

The Community Artist-in-Residence, which began in 1973 with financial assistance from Canada Council, further demonstrated Extension's attempt to foster and encourage Newfoundland interest and development in visual art and theatre. The program sought "to foster the development of individual artists and to stimulate artistic expression in rural communities through the creative inter-action of artists and the residents of isolated settlements."<sup>205</sup> Newfoundland visual artists, such as Squires, Lapointe, Oberheide, and Wright, created art that reflected images of the land and sea they were confronted with. Such images were evident not only in the visual arts, but also in the cultural expressions of music, dance, theatre, and craft. Artists viewed the cultural experience as damaged by outside forces such as "the introduction of the North American

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<sup>204</sup> Letter to Elayne Harris, Director, Extension Service, from Ms. Patricia Grattan, Curator, 19 January 1983, Miscellaneous, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-3.

<sup>205</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, "The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974" File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, pp. 7-8.

consumer values.”<sup>206</sup> Artists and members of Extension feared that these indigenous cultural expressions were being lost with the new generation.<sup>207</sup> Not only did the Artist-in-Residence Program help develop the arts in Newfoundland, it also provided tangible financial backing for artistic developments.<sup>208</sup>

Lee and Harries hoped that “the mere presence of a working, professional artist, resident in a community for a full year and active in community cultural affairs, [would] promote vivid, mutual learning.”<sup>209</sup> Officials at Extension hoped the experience would benefit both the artists and the community, as artists would gain perspective and different perceptions of community life and the community would gain an appreciation of “art in daily life” and also recognize art as a “legitimate and rewarding” career. The Program was meant to clarify “the bond between the fine arts and the folk arts, to the enrichment of both.”<sup>210</sup>

The Extension Service’s Community Artist-in-Residence Program was part of Extension’s emphasis on the arts and another example of how the Visual and Performing

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<sup>206</sup> Proposal to Secretary of State, 1973, File 2.02.002, Proposals to the Secretary of State, 1973, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service Visual and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. i.

<sup>207</sup> Proposal to Secretary of State, 1973, File 2.02.002, Proposals to the Secretary of State, 1973, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service Visual and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. i-iii.

<sup>208</sup> “Community Artists,” File: Community Artists in Residence Proposals to Canada Council, Box 9, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 46-53.

<sup>209</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, “The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974” File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 7.

<sup>210</sup> George E. Lee and Jake Harries, “The Visual and Performing Arts A Force in Community Development A Description of the Arts Program of the Extension Service Memorial University of Newfoundland, November 1974,” File 17-17, Extension Services: George E. Lee Report The Visual and Performing Arts, Vol. 17, Donald Snowden Papers, MG 31, Library and Archives Canada, p. 8.

Arts Section, as well as Extension in general, reached out to people in rural areas. The artists would reside in a community and become active in community cultural affairs. The Program helped artists learn and develop their portfolio, and the community gained an appreciation for art.<sup>211</sup> Wright asserted that the Artist-in-Residence Program provided artists “a chance to work more intensely at their art and make a contribution to community life either by teaching or more often by making their work accessible to the people of their community.”<sup>212</sup> The Program was important as it helped bring the arts to new audiences in the province. The visual artists employed in this program had to give a number of their works to the university’s permanent collection, had to respond to requests for classes and workshops in their region, and had to help in Extension’s summer arts program.<sup>213</sup>

This Program, as in other areas of community development, challenged people to see everyday things in a new way. For example, Lapointe was an Artist-in-Residence in Tors Cove in the mid-1970s. He felt that he was “a sort of catalyst of visual information – a visual mirror.”<sup>214</sup> One such project that he did was “Ice Report,” which documented sea ice. He collected images and synchronized sound of the “phenomenon of ice ‘build-up’ and decay, from the early stages of sish ice, through the slob, pancake, ballycater, and

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<sup>211</sup> “Community Artists,” File: Community Artist in Residence Proposals to Canada Council, Box 9, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1.

<sup>212</sup> Memorandum to Elayne Harris, Director of Extension from Don Wright, Specialist in Art, 29 October 1982, File: Summer Program 1975: Correspondence with Artist, Box 9, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1.

<sup>213</sup> Proposal – Community Artists, Box 9, Extension Service Collection. Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-8.

<sup>214</sup> “Community Artists,” File: Community Artists in Residence Proposals to Canada Council, Box 9, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

drift pack development to the majestic icebergs.”<sup>215</sup> Lapointe’s report was shown at the MUN Art Gallery and several local people came to see it, curious what Lapointe had been doing photographing ice in the depths of winter. They gave favourable reviews and, as one man, Jim Colbert, said, “‘Frank, I’ve lived with ice all my life but I never seen it like you had it before, it was beautiful.’ It took the slide show to show people a way of looking at ice that had not occurred to them previously.”<sup>216</sup>

In 1973, Gerry Squires was also hired as a visual artist, and Chris Brookes as a performing artist, by the Artist-in-Residence Program. In the mid to late 1970s Squires worked out of Ferryland, a community 50 miles south of St. John’s. He was able to continue on with his own work and produced a series of sculptures and completed new paintings. He was able to fully equip his workshop, and also set up a pottery area in the lighthouse he lived in. This allowed him to broaden his teaching capacities, with a pottery course being offered to members of local communities. Brookes, as founder and director of the Resource Theatre Foundation, travelled throughout rural Newfoundland developing shows through collective creation using local history and cultural material, something he engaged in while working for Extension, as well as after. Brookes showed that a professional theatre group was able to make money, while at the same time tackle issues that were relevant in Newfoundland. For example, by recording opinions of the inhabitants of Sally’s Cove area about their reactions to the social upheaval resulting from the establishment of Gros Morne, he developed a play that was “a catalyst for community

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<sup>215</sup> “Community Artists,” File: Community Artists in Residence Proposals to Canada Council, Box 9, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

<sup>216</sup> “Community Artists,” File: Community Artists in Residence Proposals to Canada Council, Box 9, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives.

concern about this situation.”<sup>217</sup> In 1973, Brookes also prepared a traditional Newfoundland mummers play which was toured in the St. John’s area over the 12 days of Christmas from 1972 to 1982. He researched and also developed sources of Newfoundland historic and folk material for a series of productions, and much of this was done with financial help from Extension.<sup>218</sup>

### **Growth of Professional Artists and Their Work**

The number of professional artists in Newfoundland grew during the 1970s. Gwyn argued that at the beginning of that decade, Christopher Pratt epitomized Newfoundland visual arts, while six years later there were about 25 full-time professionals. She compared Newfoundland artists to the Canadian Group of Seven, claiming that “like the Group of Seven before them, Newfoundland artists [were] creating a visual mythology for their own time and place.”<sup>219</sup> I think Gwyn was correct in her assertion that some artists were “more intense and more political.”<sup>220</sup> Pratt’s “austere clapboard houses and blank windows” represented “visual laments for a nation.”<sup>221</sup> Lapointe’s series of lithographs of pictures and messages from Newfoundland postcards were an attempt “to

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<sup>217</sup> Proposal to Canada Council, Appendix A, File 2.03.002, Canada Council Funding, 1973-1990, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service Visual and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

<sup>218</sup> Proposal to Canada Council, Appendix A, File 2.03.002, Canada Council Funding, 1973-1990, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service Visual and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-2.

<sup>219</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 44.

<sup>220</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 45.

<sup>221</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 45.



come to terms with various aspects of Newfoundland's history."<sup>222</sup> Resettlement was a major theme in Blackwood's prints and Squires's *The Boatman*.<sup>223</sup>

Resettlement was one of the most controversial programs under the Smallwood government. Many artists have voiced their views of resettlement and their work reflected their perceptions of the impact resettlement had on Newfoundland culture. This is evident in the work of musicians, theatre artists, and visual artists. Lapointe was influenced by Newfoundland, the place, the landscape, and the politics; he argued in 2010 that the resettlement program was the catalyst that brought artists together and made them realize there was "more here than making imagery about landscapes," that "we're losing a way of life."<sup>224</sup> Again, he reiterated the idea espoused by other artists that the act of Confederation had made many Newfoundlanders feel "insignificant" and that "we were so far behind, we had to catch up at any price."<sup>225</sup> There was also, again, the perception that people were coerced into resettling, as services, such as postal services and teachers for schools, would be taken away thus making people feel forced to move. There was also an element of pitting neighbour against neighbour, as such a high percentage of people had to agree to move before others would receive their stipend to move. All of this led artists to agree "let's make it known that this is happening and it should stop. Let's show people what they're losing, even though it might be too late."<sup>226</sup>

Gerry Squires likewise claimed that resettlement "struck the, the soul of

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<sup>222</sup> Gwyn, "The Newfoundland Renaissance," p. 45.

<sup>223</sup> Gwyn, "The Newfoundland Renaissance," p. 45.

<sup>224</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 40:00].

<sup>225</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 41:00].

<sup>226</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 43:00].

Newfoundland and uh, the destruction of that, the breaking down of that, uh that culture that was so intertwined and so meshed together, you know, and so much a real, it was so real that culture that, uh, when that was happening that was a great inspiration. And that's what happened to me of course, uh, because it became, it became, I couldn't ignore that. I had to, had to say something, you know."<sup>227</sup> His *Boatman Series* was in some ways a reaction to the loss of a traditional culture through resettlement as well. Squires was born in Change Islands in 1937. He moved around frequently as a child because his mother was a Salvation Army Officer. During his childhood, he lived on Exploits Island, in Bonavista and in Corner Brook, before moving to Toronto in 1949 when he was twelve years old. However, as Squires reported to me in a 2010 interview, when he thinks of his childhood he identifies most with Exploits. After graduating high school he worked as an editorial artist with the *Toronto Telegram* and attended classes at the Ontario College of Art. During this time, he was constantly painting. Squires returned to Newfoundland in the 1960s to become a full-time painter. He was not sure why, but home suddenly meant something to him.<sup>228</sup>

Squires claimed that his work was not political, even questioning whether the series itself was about resettlement. "Maybe it is," he said in an interview in 2010.<sup>229</sup> Yet Squires opposed Smallwood's policies, even while maintaining that he never disliked Smallwood. He just never understood his "theory on Newfoundland and how to help Newfoundland."<sup>230</sup> Squires felt Smallwood was misguided in pursuing resettlement but

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<sup>227</sup> Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD 1 Part 1, 29:20].

<sup>228</sup> Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 6:03].

<sup>229</sup> Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 31:01].

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 53:53].

he thought that wealth was the best thing that could happen for the people.<sup>231</sup> Squires himself found these paintings from the *Boatman Series* incredibly dark and difficult to look at. Perhaps this was because they do not only speak to the politics of the time and a loss of a traditional way of life, but also reflect a personal tragedy that occurred during this period as well. In March of 1972, Squires's newborn son passed away from a respiratory illness just three days after his birth.<sup>232</sup>

Historian Bonaventure Fagan's article "Images of Resettlement" illustrates the differences between the "neutral" images of resettlement presented by the government and the images of departure and abandonment presented by artists in opposition. Fagan also argues that the work artists were doing made government and people more aware of rural values that were taken for granted. Fagan points out, in *Boatman #4: All that remains of the sea is its sound* there was a "clear demarcation between the natural life of the outport and the rotting and unnatural process of political interference."<sup>233</sup> There were three scenes in the upper section which emphasized the coastline and fishermen earning their living from the sea.<sup>234</sup> The fishermen were presented as part of the landscape. However, the lower half of the painting consisted of politicians who "worm their way out of the beach as maggots that feed on the dead."<sup>235</sup> In the left of the painting were images that represent the lament of the loss of a way of life and also the way the government was treating the arts. There were perverse images of two figures copulating, one a skeletal

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<sup>231</sup> Interview with Gerry Squires conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 18 May 2010 [DVD Part 1, 55:26].

<sup>232</sup> Mary Dalton, "A Process in the Weather of the Heart: The *Boatman* Paintings of Gerald Squires," *Newfoundland Studies* 11, 1 (Spring 1995), p. 33.

<sup>233</sup> Bonaventure Fagan, "Images of Resettlement," *Newfoundland Studies* 6, 1 (Spring 1990), p. 4.

<sup>234</sup> Fagan, "Images of Resettlement," p. 4.

<sup>235</sup> Fagan, "Images of Resettlement," p. 4.

female, “suggesting the sterility and perverseness of their act.”<sup>236</sup> The painting also included a self-portrait of Squires holding a housefly, personifying “dirt and hence revulsion. The artist, forced to confront the political interference in the outport way of life, sees himself as a handler of dirt and revulsion, personified in the fly. All around him swirl scenes of a society being perverted by politicians and their servants.”<sup>237</sup>

Blackwood also portrayed resettlement in his work. Blackwood’s images are the best known images on resettlement. In his etching entitled *Resettlement*, a man was depicted in a world where there were forces that could overpower him. The house in the etching has dubious “characteristics of a graveyard, with the windows bearing crosses and the doors looking like coffin lids.”<sup>238</sup> It suggested “something apocalyptic” rather than the positive benefits that the government had promised as part of resettlement.<sup>239</sup>

The images portrayed by artists countered government rhetoric. These images enabled the public to realize that the attempts to centralize and industrialize had “human and cultural costs.”<sup>240</sup> Goodridge argued in 2010 that resettlement and the “Smallwood regime” had “neutralized our sense of who we were and where we had come from” and enticed people into thinking it would bring Newfoundlanders into the North American economy and progress. There was no discussion or debate until an “extraordinary discourse ...emerged from the arts community.”<sup>241</sup> As Malone proposed, artists saw

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<sup>236</sup> Fagan, “Images of Resettlement,” p. 4.

<sup>237</sup> Fagan, “Images of Resettlement,” pp. 4-5.

<sup>238</sup> Fagan, “Images of Resettlement,” p. 12.

<sup>239</sup> Fagan, “Images of Resettlement,” p. 12.

<sup>240</sup> Fagan, “Images of Resettlement,” p. 31.

<sup>241</sup> Interview with Edythe Goodridge conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 24 October 2010 [DVD 1 Part 1, 21:09].

themselves in some respects as the official opposition since Smallwood had been in power for a staggering twenty-three years.<sup>242</sup> Therefore, it was not just resettlement, but the Smallwood government in general that artists were reacting against.

### **Bond Street Facilities**

Extension Service's facility at Bond Street was an instrumental element of its promotion of the arts in Newfoundland. It provided the rehearsal space, and helped Extension in general "strengthen and expand its [arts] program in the downtown area of St. John's. Bond Street developed into a unique resource centre responsive to its geographic and cultural community."<sup>243</sup> It offered a full range of classes taught by professional artists. Bond Street had a darkroom for people interested in photography, as well as a pottery shop. Classes were also offered in film animation, creative movement, and acting. Such programs were available to adults and children alike. Beyond the course offerings, the space at Bond Street was a resource itself and was often used for rehearsals and meetings. Groups such as the Avalon Potters Guild, Newfoundland and Labrador Craft Development Association, Sheila's Brush, Neighbourhood Dance Works, Craze Anne Theatre, Wonderful Grand Band, Faustus Bidgood, Nfld. & Labrador Museum

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<sup>242</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 37:04]; see also Interview with Edythe Goodridge, 24 October 2010 [DVD 1 Part 1, 18:19]

<sup>243</sup> Reports and Objectives of the Visual and Performing Arts Section, no date, File 1.02.004, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service Visual and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

Association, and more, had used the facility.<sup>244</sup> Bond Street had an Annex Gallery that showcased the work of new and amateur artists, as well as work by more established artists.<sup>245</sup>

Bond Street met the needs of a range of individuals and artists, as well as offering single non-credit courses. The main concern of employees at Bond Street was to create programming that offered a balance of discipline and freedom to allow creative development in students and the artists. All programs, including “courses, workshops, public programmes, rehearsals, use of space,” attempted to work together to encourage growth and education in the arts. At Bond Street, “while some aspects of programming seek to encourage individual language, aesthetic and expression, other aspects intend to provoke interaction, investigation and exploration. Demonstrations, film showings, informal talks, special workshops and other activities provide a context for extending beyond the work explored through the ‘instructed’ classes.”<sup>246</sup> Extension workers hoped that such diverse programs would lead to a deeper and stronger awareness of the arts.<sup>247</sup> Bond Street was also a support for performing groups and became synonymous with

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<sup>244</sup> Reports and Objectives of the Visual and Performing Arts Section, no date, File 1.02.004, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service Visual and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 2.

<sup>245</sup> Reports and Objectives of the Visual and Performing Arts Section, no date, File 1.02.004, Collection 214, The Records of MUN Extension Service Visual and Performing Arts, Archives and Special Collections Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 2..

<sup>246</sup> “Discussion Paper: Visual and Performing Arts: Present Programmes and Future Directions,” prepared by the Visual and Performing Arts Staff of the Community Education Programmes Section Extension Service, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Susan Jamieson and Jennice Ripley, 20 January 1984, File: Don Wright, Box 6, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1.

<sup>247</sup> “Discussion Paper: Visual and Performing Arts: Present Programmes and Future Directions,” prepared by the Visual and Performing Arts Staff of the Community Education Programmes Section Extension Service, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Susan Jamieson and Jennice Ripley, 20 January 1984, File: Don Wright, Box 6, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, pp. 1-3.

theatre. The downtown facilities of Extension, including Bond Street and their rooms on Duckworth Street were used by groups for rehearsal, and those were vital in this capacity.<sup>248</sup>

As in other areas of Extension, problems emerged in the early 1980s. Issues arose with the maintenance of the building at Bond Street and repairs were needed, leading to questions as to whether the facilities might be moved to another location. However, some artists and Extension employees believed this was unnecessary because the problems were basic and the key aspect of Bond Street was its location as downtown became the cultural centre of St. John's. Extension officials suggested that its employees stay at Bond Street with the aim of improving the physical space.<sup>249</sup> Still, as with other branches of Extension, things were beginning to change due to the financial situation and signalled the end of such programs.

## **Conclusion**

Despite difficulties faced by Extension in the early 1980s, its influence on cultural development is undeniable. Extension helped shape the cultural movement. In addition to

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<sup>248</sup>“Discussion Paper: Visual and Performing Arts: Present Programmes and Future Directions,” prepared by the Visual and Performing Arts Staff of the Community Education Programmes Section Extension Service, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Susan Jamieson and Jennice Ripley, 20 January 1984, File: Don Wright, Box 6, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 7.

<sup>249</sup>“Discussion Paper: Visual and Performing Arts: Present Programmes and Future Directions,” prepared by the Visual and Performing Arts Staff of the Community Education Programmes Section Extension Service, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Susan Jamieson and Jennice Ripley, 20 January 1984, File: Don Wright, Box 6, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 13-14; see also Letter to Elayne Harris, Director, Extension Service from Susan Jamieson, Co-ordinator – Visual and Performing Arts, 24 January 1983, File: Extension Reports, Box 49, General Binder 2, Memorial University Archives, pp. 1-3; Letter to George Lee, Associate Director, Extension Service from Edythe Goodridge, Head, Visual and Performing Arts, concerning the Bond Street Programs, 15 February 1980, File Visual and Performing Arts Bond Street 1981-1982, Box 6, Extension Service Collection, Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives, p. 1.

tangible financial assistance, Extension also provided infrastructure and rehearsal space for groups. As Andy Jones put it, artists were appreciative of MUN Extension, which provided rehearsal space for artists that was “warm and well-kept.”<sup>250</sup> In addition to rehearsal space, Extension also provided “administrative help, help with grants, and introducing artists to what was available in terms of funding to help them.”<sup>251</sup>

The university, and Extension in particular, was significant to Newfoundland’s cultural development during the 1960s and 1970s. Not only did it financially support the development of key cultural centres and programs such as the Art Gallery, the St. Michael’s Printshop, the Community Artist-in-Residence Program, and Bond Street, it also promoted the arts as a form of community development. It was committed to bringing the arts to rural areas and promoting art appreciation. Along with the Departments of English Language and Literature and Folklore, Extension celebrated Newfoundland culture and heritage as something worth preserving, an ideal that influenced a generation of creative and artistic youth who sought to explore their Newfoundland heritage. Extension allowed artists such as Lapointe and Squires to stay in Newfoundland, both having returned from Toronto. Perhaps without this support, they may have stayed in Ontario, or at the very least returned there. Yet, while Extension was influential and central to developments during this period, the cultural movement was much more complex, and Extension was only part of the story.

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<sup>250</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2009 [DVD 33:54].

<sup>251</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2009 [DVD 35:52].



### Chapter 3 Searching for Identity Newfoundland's Musical Evolution

#### **Introduction:**

In the 1970s, Newfoundland experienced a folk music revival which became a major element of Newfoundland's cultural movement. Some musicians, especially the members of Figgy Duff, feared that Newfoundland folksongs were disappearing in the wake of an increased encroachment of American popular culture and modernization, and therefore traveled the province collecting music from the oral tradition.<sup>1</sup> Traditional music was important for the identity of the young musicians active in the cultural movement, and helped them challenge what they saw as the stereotypical image of Newfoundlanders. Many of them claimed that their interest in Newfoundland traditional music stemmed from the feeling of inferiority that was experienced by their parents' generation following Confederation. As Pamela Morgan, a member of Figgy Duff, an internationally successful folk band, claimed, part of the "movement [was] to rebel against the stereotypical image of Newfoundland and Labrador as being backward and inane, and redefine our identity."<sup>2</sup> However, this generation of musicians were rebelling against the "Establishment" in general, the church and state. Youth elsewhere were doing similar things, yet in Newfoundland this occurred against the background of

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<sup>1</sup> "Profile Noel Dinn: It's All Been Worth it for Folk-rock Pioneer," *Newfoundland Herald*, 12 December 1980; see also Len Penton, "Figgy Duff's First Album is a Tasty, Musical Treat," *Evening Telegram*, 23 December 1980.

<sup>2</sup> "'This Place is Your Birthright': Pamela Morgan offers her prescription for saving the culture and communities of rural Newfoundland," *Independent*, 19 October 1991.

Confederation. While musicians were in part, simply pursuing their chosen career, they were also using their art to voice their feelings and opposition to the rapid economic, political, and cultural changes that were occurring in Newfoundland.

The musical aspect of the cultural movement has garnered more attention from scholars than the other elements, since it not only a central part of the cultural movement, but folksongs also reflected politics in Newfoundland culture. Neil Rosenberg, a folklorist whose work focuses on contemporary folk music traditions, argues that Newfoundland folksong had long been an important element of national identity and consequently cultural politics. He argues that after Confederation, Canadian researchers and entertainers drew from the canon of Newfoundland folksong, celebrating them as Canadian.<sup>3</sup>

Newfoundlanders responded to this incorporation in a number of ways.<sup>4</sup> Beginning in the 1960s, there was a rejection of this incorporation. A younger generation of Newfoundlanders examined the effect Confederation had on Newfoundland culture. They began looking for what they saw as more authentic traditional music, and thus rejected the older, better-known canon, which was seen to perpetuate the “Newfie” stereotype.” Rosenberg describes the “Newfie stereotype” as an image of Newfoundlanders as “simple, humorous folk.”<sup>5</sup> This perceived image of Newfoundlanders by other Canadians was also described by members of the cultural movement. Anita Best claimed that Newfoundlanders were viewed as “picturesque

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<sup>3</sup> Neil Rosenberg, “The Canadianization of Newfoundland Folksong; or the Newfoundlandization of Canadian Folksong,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 29 (1994), p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> Rosenberg, “The Canadianization of Newfoundland Folksong,” p. 55 and 67-68.

<sup>5</sup> Rosenberg, “The Canadianization of Newfoundland Folksong,” p. 64.

caricatures,”<sup>6</sup> Mary Walsh felt that Newfoundlanders had become “Canada’s laughing stock,”<sup>7</sup> and Chris Brookes believed that Canadians viewed Newfoundland as an “Atlantic Disneyland” and a backward and anti-modern place where central Canadians could holiday.<sup>8</sup> Rosenberg argues that music, and all of the arts, were instrumental in developing perceptions of various regions in Canada.<sup>9</sup> Paul Chafe argues that in Newfoundland, the preservation of traditional music was an attempt to band together and prove that Newfoundland folk music was no longer considered “a place for ‘laughing at our selves’ but a place for aligning our proud heritage with other uncompromising and unbreakable cultural moments.”<sup>10</sup>

Lise Saugeres’s work on Figgy Duff parallels Rosenberg’s argument. Saugeres’s MA thesis on Figgy Duff is the most in-depth work available on the group. In her account, Figgy Duff was a group of young, urban, educated, and middle-class artists, looking for “identity and affirmation among the old, rural, and working class people.”<sup>11</sup> The members respected rural Newfoundland and traditional music, but also sought to transform it into a different form, searching for their own roots in their “own idiom.”<sup>12</sup> They were urban, yet were not satisfied with urban values such as industrialization and changes to the St. John’s harbour front, and therefore thought rural values of “getting back to the land” or returning to one’s roots would be more worthwhile. Therefore, the

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 12:00]

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 14:00].

<sup>8</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 163.

<sup>9</sup> Rosenberg, “The Canadianization of Newfoundland Folksong,” p. 68.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Chafe, “Rockin’ the Rock: The Newfoundland Folk/Pop ‘Revolution,’” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 22, 1 (Spring 2007), p. 357.

<sup>11</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” pp. 219.

<sup>12</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 219.

members of Figgy Duff, she suggests, believed that combining urban and rural values, and traditional and contemporary music, would “solve their problems of identity.”<sup>13</sup>

Like many other participants of Newfoundland’s cultural movement, musicians attempted to preserve the “authentic,” genuine, and lesser-known music and traditions of the province. Yet, they were very much influenced by cultural movements and musical groups in other areas as well, particularly musicians active in the American and British folk revivals. Musicians expressed their disillusionment with political and social changes through this medium. Thus, both local and non-local issues were important to the musicians of Newfoundland’s cultural movement. Music also played a part in identity, informing a sense of place and community.<sup>14</sup> Music and songs were important in the development of identity. As a report of the Canadian Folk Arts Council maintained, “music is part of our environment and by this token it plays an important role in the identification of individuals with their cultural heritages.”<sup>15</sup> Musicians, among other cultural producers, were concerned that traditional music was disappearing and that concerted action should be taken to preserve it.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 219.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Stokes, “Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music,” in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (Oxford/Providence: Berg Publishers, 1994), pp. 1-24.

<sup>15</sup> Canadian Folk Arts Council, “Canada’s Cultural Riches: A Submission to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 9 March 1981,” Canadian Folk Arts Council, File 379, Vol. 236, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada, pp. 53-54.

<sup>16</sup> Canadian Folk Arts Council, “Canada’s Cultural Riches: A Submission to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 9 March 1981,” Canadian Folk Arts Council, File 379, Vol. 236, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada, p. 54.

## **Tradition**

Tradition is an important term to consider when analyzing the musical element of the cultural movement, as groups were looking for “traditional” music. Cultures are constantly changing and “therefore can only be what is new” but this sometimes acquires symbolic value as “traditional.” *Tradition* is then an interpretive term, as is *new*.<sup>17</sup>

Tradition plays an important role as it is invented and reconstructed in the present. Yet some participants view such developments as preservation rather than invention. As Handler and Linnekin suggest, in nationalist movements, such as the one which occurred in Newfoundland, participants search for “an authentic cultural identity” that uses tradition to challenge the political status quo. A “social identity” is “formulated in interaction with others” and is constantly evolving.<sup>18</sup> Newfoundland musicians, for example, used their interpretation of traditional music in the present to voice their discontent with the Smallwood administration, the resettlement program, and many of the rapid changes that they felt threatened rural Newfoundland. Ethnomusicologist Britta Sweers argues that traditional music was communal because the music becomes communal through the oral transmission process, through which information about the original authors is often lost. The song, transmitted over a lengthy period began to convey

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, “Tradition, Genuine or Spurious,” *Journal of American Folklore*, 97, 385 (July –September 1984), pp. 273-274; see also Dan Ben-Amos, “The Seven Strands of Tradition: Varieties in Its Meaning in American Folklore Studies,” *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 21, 2/3 (May – December 1984), pp. 97-131.

<sup>18</sup> Handler and Linnekin, “Tradition, Genuine or Spurious,” p. 279.

a different meaning than its origin, and therefore meant different things to different people.<sup>19</sup>

Traditional music was important when developing an identity for musicians and their audiences as it was “linked with an experience of community much stronger than in rock or classical music” due to the close proximity between the musician and the audience.<sup>20</sup> Sweers argues that this music remained popular as “the multilayered levels of meaning that can be discovered in the traditional material are probably the main reasons why this music still holds such a powerful appeal in the present – even if the original forms have almost died away and have been replaced by revival forms.”<sup>21</sup> Such was the case in Newfoundland. Many musicians valued rural Newfoundland which they felt epitomized Newfoundland culture. Through their collection of folksongs they became, in essence, part of that community and their respect for folk music represented their respect for and interest in rural Newfoundland.

### **Earlier Folk Revivals**

Newfoundland musicians were influenced by several external and internal factors that contributed to the evolution of their sound and musical pursuits. These influences were evident well before the beginning of the cultural movement. Newfoundland was not

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<sup>19</sup> Britta Sweers, *Electric Folk: The Changing Face of English Traditional Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 238-239.

<sup>20</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 238.

<sup>21</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 239.

isolated and Newfoundlanders were influenced by outside musical sources prior to the 1960s.<sup>22</sup>

While the professionalization of the arts accelerated during the cultural movement, the commercialization of Newfoundland folksong began earlier. Local radio and television had long played a role in this. There were radio programs that showcased Newfoundland folksongs, such as *Irene B. Mellon*, a serial program that began in 1934 and continued for eight seasons.<sup>23</sup> Many of the songs performed were traditional and local and even some original.<sup>24</sup>

The arrival of American servicemen in World War II had a great impact on Newfoundland culture.<sup>25</sup> Yet, while many observers believe that Newfoundland was transformed from a “backward area” into a “capitalist and innovative” place because of American influence and presence during the war, Webb argues otherwise. Prior to the arrival of American servicemen in World War II, Newfoundlanders had been aware of American culture, including jazz and country music, through “phonographs, movies, live music, travellers, and radio.”<sup>26</sup> However, the program of the Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) and the American servicemen increased the awareness of American popular music during the war.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Jeff A. Webb, *The Voice of Newfoundland: A Social History of the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland, 1939-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 107-108.

<sup>23</sup> Philip Hiscock, “Folk Process In A Popular Medium The ‘Irene B. Mellon’ Radio Programme, 1934-1941,” in *Studies in Newfoundland Folklore: Community and Process* (St. John’s: Breakwater for the Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991), p. 181.

<sup>24</sup> Anna Kearney Guigné, *Folksongs and Folk Revival: The Cultural Politics of Kenneth Peacock’s Songs of the Newfoundland outports* (St. John’s: ISER, 2008), p. 46.

<sup>25</sup> Webb, “Gate Keeping and Newfoundland Culture,” pp. 191-192.

<sup>26</sup> Webb, “Gate Keeping and Newfoundland Culture,” pp. 217-218.

<sup>27</sup> Webb, “Gate Keeping and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 218.

Country and rock music were particularly popular in Newfoundland.<sup>28</sup> Radio played a key role in this. Folklorist Philip Hiscock argues the popularity of country music spread mainly through radio. Movies were also important as in the 1930s and 1940s, Hollywood produced several western movies featuring country music. Movies were an important factor in the popular culture of Newfoundland in larger centres and more rural areas as well. These media popularized country music in Newfoundland.<sup>29</sup> Not only was country music played on local radio stations, such as VOCM in the 1930s and 1940s, especially Nova Scotian performers Hank Snow and Wilf Carter, but the late night show from WWVA from Wheeling, West Virginia could also be heard in Newfoundland.<sup>30</sup>

While musicians in the cultural movement, most particularly the members of Figgy Duff, were interested in collecting songs from rural Newfoundlanders they were not the first to do so. Elisabeth Greenleaf came to Newfoundland in 1920 and volunteered as a teacher with the Grenfell Mission Summer School. Greenleaf had an interest in folk music, and recorded the songs she heard. She discussed the songs she had collected with others at her Alma Mater Vassar College, and returned to Newfoundland in 1929 to collect more songs. On this trip she was accompanied by Grace Yarrow Mansfield, a musician trained at Vassar. The Greenleaf and Mansfield collection *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland* was published in 1933.<sup>31</sup> Maud Karpeles came to Newfoundland

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<sup>28</sup> Peter Narváez, "Country and Western in Diffusion: Juxtaposition and Syncretism in the Popular Music of Newfoundland," *Culture & Tradition* 2 (1977), pp. 107-114.

<sup>29</sup> Philip Hiscock, "The Mass Media in the Folk Culture of Newfoundland: A Survey of Materials in the MUN Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA)," *Culture & Tradition* 8 (1984), pp. 20 and 24.

<sup>30</sup> Narváez, "Country and Western in Diffusion," p. 110.

<sup>31</sup> Margaret E. Fitzgerald, "Greenleaf, [née Bristol] Elisabeth," *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. 2 (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967), Ltd., 1984), pp. 726-727; see also



in 1929 and 1930. She had worked with collector Cecil Sharp and her trip to Newfoundland was keeping her promise to Sharp to continue his work after his death. Historian David Gregory, who is also a folk musician himself, describes her collection as “a fairly extensive record of the provenance of British folk ballads and lyrics in oral tradition in eastern Newfoundland at the end of the 1920s, no more, no less.”<sup>32</sup> Gregory argues that Karpeles’s work in Newfoundland reinforced what she had learned in her previous work with Sharp, that “traditional music was an international bond” that overcame differences of nationality, class, politics, and religion.<sup>33</sup> Karpeles herself was committed to collecting “English rural vernacular song before it vanished entirely.”<sup>34</sup> This was a theme that would be important in Newfoundland’s cultural movement, as some musicians in the 1970s feared that if these groups did not collect Newfoundland folksongs they would disappear.

Kenneth Peacock’s collection of Newfoundland folksongs represented one of the most important influences on musicians of the cultural movement. Peacock first came to Newfoundland in 1951 to collect folk music for the National Museum of Canada. Peacock hoped his research would “create a broad picture of the diversity of the Newfoundland song tradition.”<sup>35</sup> Peacock’s *Songs of the Newfoundland Outport* was an important source for musicians of Newfoundland’s cultural movement as it provided

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Elisabeth Bristol Greenleaf, *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933).

<sup>32</sup> David Gregory, “Maud Karpeles, Newfoundland and the crisis of the folksong revival, 1924-1935,” *Newfoundland Studies* 16, 2 (Fall 2000), p. 155; see also Martin Lovelace, “Unnatural Selection: Maud Karpeles’s Newfoundland Field Diaries,” *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation* (University of Aberdeen: The Elphinstone Institute, 2004), pp. 284-298.

<sup>33</sup> Gregory, “Karpeles,” p. 160.

<sup>34</sup> Gregory, “Karpeles,” p. 154.

<sup>35</sup> Guigné, *Folksongs and Folk Revival*, p. 1.

songs and the names of singers that were helpful in their research of folk and traditional music.<sup>36</sup>

Peacock's collection influenced subsequent collectors and performers as well. Peacock even influenced the Gerald S. Doyle songster published in 1955. Doyle's material had been popular both in and outside the province and it also became viewed as "an icon of the province's cultural heritage."<sup>37</sup> Canadians searching for national folk music in Newfoundland, such as Leslie Bell and Howard Cable in 1947, viewed Doyle's material as an important source. Songs from the Doyle collection that were played on the radio became accepted in other parts of Canada as "the quintessence of Newfoundland music."<sup>38</sup>

The collections of Karpeles, Peacock, and Doyle, had some differences as well. Karpeles focused on English rural vernacular songs, while Peacock was hoping to show the diversity of Newfoundland folksongs. Doyle was different yet again, as he published songsters, which not only contributed to Newfoundland's cultural heritage but also reflected changing political realities of the times. These collections all differed from the later cultural movement and popularizing of Newfoundland folksong, as Karpeles, Peacock and Doyle attempted to collect the folksong in its original form. Members of the cultural movement in the 1970s also wanted to protect the integrity of the song and keep to the original version as much as possible, however they were also using electric instruments to make the songs relevant and popular to their generation.

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<sup>36</sup> Guigné, *Folksongs and Folk Revival*, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> See Neil Rosenberg, "The Gerald S. Doyle Songsters," *Canadian Folklore* 13, 1 (1991).

<sup>38</sup> Guigné, *Folksongs and Folk Revivals*, pp. 46-47.

### **Omar Blondahl, Dick Nolan, and Harry Hibbs**

The popularization, or the widespread commercialization and radio play, of folk music began with Doyle and Omar Blondahl. Blondahl arrived in St. John's in the fall of 1955. Born in Saskatchewan, he came to Newfoundland on his way to Iceland. He decided to stop in Newfoundland and work for a while to earn the rest of his passage. He applied for a job at VOCM and told the manager that he was an announcer and could also play guitar and sing country and folk music. The manager then showed Blondahl the Gerald S. Doyle Songbook, asking Blondahl if he could sing some of this. This was Blondahl's first introduction to Newfoundland folk music and he thought it was "beautiful stuff." Blondahl recorded 50 of the 76 songs, collected Newfoundland folksongs himself, composed songs about life in Newfoundland, and published a Newfoundland songbook. Blondahl was responsible for consolidating and promoting this canon to the province and the rest of Canada. In addition, Blondahl was the first full-time professional musician who specialized in Newfoundland folksong.<sup>39</sup> Blondahl promoted Newfoundland music through radio, recordings, and in print. He was responsible for making Newfoundland traditional music into popular music.

By the late 1960s, performers such as Harry Hibbs, John White, and Dick Nolan, who had made their living singing different types of music now found markets for traditional Newfoundland music.<sup>40</sup> These singers had eclectic repertoires including country, rock, Irish, and Newfoundland traditional music.<sup>41</sup> Hibbs, White, and Nolan

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<sup>39</sup> Neil Rosenberg, "Omar Blondahl's Contribution to the Newfoundland Folksong Canon," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 19 (1991), pp. 1-5.

<sup>40</sup> John White is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

<sup>41</sup> Guigné, *Folksongs and Folk Revivals*, pp. 46-47.

represented the image of Newfoundland that musicians of the cultural movement were challenging. Journalist Richard Flohil described Hibbs as wearing a flat cloth cap, smoking a pipe, and playing “believe it or not, a button accordion.”<sup>42</sup> Hibbs moved to Toronto in 1961 and started playing music at The Caribou Club, a social club for Newfoundlanders in Toronto. He played a lot of Irish and Scottish music.<sup>43</sup> Hibbs, himself, argued that much of Newfoundland music was Irish, an idea that was challenged by the musicians in the cultural movement.<sup>44</sup>

Nolan was born in Corner Brook in 1939, and is perhaps most famous for the song “Aunt Martha’s Sheep,” which is about a Mountie investigating a case of stealing and ends up eating the evidence. Like Hibbs, Nolan moved to Toronto as a young man and began his musical career there. Newfoundland-based writer and broadcaster Jamie Fitzpatrick argues that Hibbs and Nolan were not attempting to preserve Newfoundland culture, as were the musicians active in the cultural movement.<sup>45</sup> Folklorist Peter Narváez argues that in comparison, the younger generation of professional Newfoundland folk musicians were activists, attempting to preserve Newfoundland culture.<sup>46</sup> Many among the younger generation of St. John’s musicians felt that the music performed by these musicians was “kitschy,” as it was stereotypical in a negative way, perpetuating the “Newfie” stereotype, and tacky. Anita Best told me in 2010 that “I know this is going to be hard to say but, but when I was a teenager like I just found Harry Hibbs and that whole

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Flohil, “Harry Hibbs,” *The Canadian Composer* Number 57 (February 1971), pp. 4 and 6.

<sup>43</sup> Flohil, “Harry Hibbs,” pp. 4 and 6.

<sup>44</sup> Philip Marchand, “Will Harry Hibbs Ever Become a National Sensation?” *Saturday Night*, 87 (May 1972), p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> Joan Sullivan, “Dick Nolan,” *Globe and Mail*, 15 December 2005.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Narváez, “We’re Preserving Your Fuckin’ Culture: Reflex and Revival in the Music of Newfoundland,” *This Magazine*, 16, 2 (May 1982), p. 12.

of, that whole sort of staged Newfoundlander type of Newfoundland music, that Newfie music, you know, I found that really embarrassing.”<sup>47</sup> However, the music Hibbs and Nolan were creating was just as much authentic Newfoundland music as what members of the culture movement were performing. As David Whisnant argues, cultural intervention is subject to interpretation.<sup>48</sup> What is valued as representing a culture, and the music that was viewed as representing Newfoundland, was subject to interpretation by those listening and also performing.

### **The New Generation and Figgy Duff**

As discussed in Chapter One, during Come Home Year Smallwood had hoped to show the progress taking place in the province, including industrial growth, resettlement and the centralization of government services, upgraded roads, and new hospital and school construction, all epitomizing modernization. Some people were happy with Smallwood’s plans. However, others opposed Smallwood’s sweeping changes. Members of the cultural movement feared that Newfoundland’s culture was threatened by modernization and so-called progress. They looked for an alternative to modern urban life and placed value on rural Newfoundland. A few urban dwellers viewed outport culture as “the antithesis of modernization,” offering them the chance to reconnect with the past. As Folklorist Anna Kearney Guigné writes, Peacock’s *Songs of Newfoundland Outports* highlighted the “musical condition” which “complemented this mood.”<sup>49</sup> Some musicians

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 2A, 14:00]

<sup>48</sup> Whisnant, *All that is Native and Fine*, p. 15.

<sup>49</sup> Guigné, *Folksongs and Folk Revivals*, pp. 219-220.

felt that the songs collected by Peacock were not as well known, and not considered “popular” Newfoundland folksongs, and thus these musicians viewed them as more authentic.<sup>50</sup> As Sandy Morris stated several years later “when we all became aware of the Peacock collection, for example, and started to ... hear tunes that were real old traditional stuff, the stuff that came over from the old country and was interpreted here and changed around again and started to realize what a rich mine [there] was for material then we all got into that.”<sup>51</sup>

Peacock’s was one of the most influential collections for musicians in the 1960s and 1970s, yet it was neither the first nor the last. The canon was changing. Philip Bohlman argues that repertoires and forms of music were shaped by a specific community to express its identity and distinguish itself as a social entity. Because the social community was continuously changing so too was the folk music canon, which was constantly “forming and responding creatively to new texts and changing contexts.”<sup>52</sup>

The feeling of inferiority experienced by members of the younger generation of Newfoundlanders in the 1960s and 1970s led some of the musicians to become involved in the movement. Wilfred Wareham, who was a faculty member in the Folklore Department, claimed that when he went to Memorial University in the early 1960s to train as a teacher he was told by instructors at the university that he had to lose his “heavy

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, [Cassette 2A, 14:00]; see also Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 17:38].

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, [DVD 19:11].

<sup>52</sup> Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 104.

Placentia Bay accent.”<sup>53</sup> This led to him wanting to discover everything he could about his roots and also his ambition to “give Newfoundlanders back their ‘kitchen music.’”<sup>54</sup> He described this as “the old, rambling, unaccompanied songs, tin-whistle melodies, and elaborate recitations.”<sup>55</sup> Wareham identified this as the real music of Newfoundland in opposition to “kitschy” songs such as “Aunt Martha’s Sheep,” by Dick Nolan and the well-intentioned but “insane” attempts to “mount a full scale symphony orchestra in St. John’s.”<sup>56</sup>

The rejection of one sort of Newfoundland traditional music was a characteristic of the new musical generation. As Morris recalled in a 2009 interview, while he was growing up, Newfoundland traditional music was limited to “kitschy” songs such as “I’s e the B’y” and “Jack was Every Inch a Sailor,” which Morris believed had been “spoon fed” to Newfoundlanders by “a mainlander originally.”<sup>57</sup> Yet while some mainlanders such as Blondahl had promoted such songs, Newfoundland expatriates such as Nolan and Hibbs did as well. Interestingly Peacock, a mainlander from Toronto, was heralded by Newfoundland musicians for introducing them to authentic traditional music. In 2009, Morris told me that in the 1960s musicians became aware of the Peacock collection and began to hear the “real” traditional music from the “old country” that was reinterpreted and changed in Newfoundland. It made musicians aware of the “rich mine” of folk music in the province.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 41.

<sup>54</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 41.

<sup>55</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” pp. 41-42.

<sup>56</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 42.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 17:45].

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 19:23].

Noel Dinn, a founding member of Figgy Duff, is often credited by his peers with taking traditional music “out of the kitchen.”<sup>59</sup> Dinn was at the forefront of reviving traditional music in Newfoundland. Fellow musician Glenn Simmons once commented that “Dinn was traditional when traditional wasn’t cool and he made it cool.”<sup>60</sup> Born in 1947 and growing up in St. John’s, Dinn came from a musical family; his uncles and father sang, and his father also played the fiddle. As a child he listened to radio programs such as “The Big Six,” which played mostly Irish Newfoundland music. He also listened to the American base station VOUS, which played American rhythm and blues and rock ‘n’ roll. Saugeres claims Dinn was particularly influenced by rhythm and blues and, quotes him as stating that “leaning towards the blues, I guess, was an instinctive recognition of that folk element – a realness about the music, as opposed to most pop music of that day.”<sup>61</sup> Dinn was also inspired by the Ravens, a local rhythm and blues band.<sup>62</sup>

Dinn attended the Roman Catholic High School, Brother Rice, and it was there that he met fellow musicians, such as Sandy Morris and Bryan Hennessey. Along with Derek Pelley and Wayne Brace, this core group of musicians formed The Philadelphia Cream Cheeze Band. Morris was only a year younger than Dinn, born in 1948, the year before Confederation, a point he emphasized.<sup>63</sup> Morris began playing the guitar in 1965 when he was 17, started playing in bands at 19 and began touring Canada. It was also

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<sup>59</sup> Tracey Barron, “Musicians Mourn Passing of Figgy Duff’s Founder,” *Evening Telegram*, 27 July 1993.

<sup>60</sup> Barron, “Musicians Mourn Passing of Figgy Duff’s Founder.”

<sup>61</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 0:10].



around this time that he first played a television “gig” with CBC at its old location on Water Street. The Philadelphia Cream Cheeze Band played the blues as well as psychedelic rock, such as music by The Doors and Jefferson Airplane. This group was theatrical as well as psychedelic, with screens with “pulsating blobs” behind them. They also played at the Reid Theatre at Memorial, which at that time was the Little Theatre.<sup>64</sup> Morris was influenced by American musicians. He was first inspired to be a musician when he saw Elvis Presley performing on television.<sup>65</sup> Morris was a self-taught guitarist, who also learned to play piano, percussion, banjo, mandolin and bass and was influenced by the rhythm and blues and rock ‘n’ roll. The musicians he sought to emulate included the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and also the local band the Ravens, of which his cousins were members.<sup>66</sup> Pelley, who was born in St. John’s in 1950, was also an integral part of this group. The first style of music that he learned to play was country and western, but he was later influenced by rock music, such as the Beatles, and by traditional groups such as Fairport Convention.<sup>67</sup> The Philadelphia Cream Cheeze Band were only together for six months, yet they were important in Newfoundland’s musical evolution as they were the first to perform “trad-rock” or “folk-rock,” which combined both folk and rock music.<sup>68</sup>

Dinn was first introduced to Newfoundland traditional songs by Laverne Squires, who was born in Hermitage Bay. Prior to this, he was familiar with traditional “British and American ballads popularized by Joan Baez” but was unaware that Newfoundland

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 1:22].

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 2:54].

<sup>66</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 5; see also Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 2:55].

<sup>67</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 6.

had ballads like these as well. When he first heard Squires singing he thought “well why can’t we do these you know?”<sup>69</sup> Squires had been taught a few Newfoundland traditional songs in music class while in high school, and was later introduced to the folksong collections of Kenneth Peacock, Greenleaf and Mansfield, and Maud Karpeles by Neil Murray.<sup>70</sup> Murray was an important man in the music community active in the cultural movement, as he introduced Dinn to British traditional rock bands as well. Dinn met Murray through Squires. Murray was born in 1943 in Dorset, England, to a Newfoundland father who had been stationed there and an English mother. In 1945, he moved with his family to St. John’s, where he attended school until grade six. He went to high school in England, returning to St. John’s to complete a BA and MA in English at Memorial University. He later attended Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. While he did not play an instrument, he loved music. Whenever he returned to Newfoundland for vacation he would bring records of British traditional-rock bands that were popular at the time. He also encouraged St. John’s musicians such as Dinn to perform Newfoundland traditional songs “because it was the product of their own culture as opposed to British or American folksongs.”<sup>71</sup> Narváez argues that Murray was a major catalyst of the folk revival. He held various roles in the media. He was an editor and columnist for the Newfoundland weekly magazine *The Newfoundland Herald* and also hosted radio shows “A Bit of a Time” and “Jiggs Dinner.” On “Jiggs Dinner,” Murray played British, North American, and British tradition and folk revival music.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” pp. 7-8.

<sup>72</sup> Narváez, “We’re Preserving Your Fuckin’ Culture,” p. 12.

Following the breakup of The Philadelphia Cream Cheeze Band, Dinn and Squires formed The Land of Mordor which made the first “serious effort to find electric accompaniments to Newfoundland traditional songs.”<sup>73</sup> This group did not last long either and following this Dinn and Squires joined the group The New Trip Company. This group became Lukey’s Boat, which Dinn claimed was “the first band he had been part of which ‘had the idea to be a more professional band, a good band.’”<sup>74</sup>

Lukey’s Boat played folk music on electric instruments. The band, which was named after a Newfoundland traditional song, took second place in the 1970 “Jeunesse Musicale” in Montreal with the prize being a trip to Paris.<sup>75</sup> They changed this to London because they could not speak French, and they felt London was where the “rock scene was happening.”<sup>76</sup> However, following a year in England, the members of Lukey’s Boat disbanded in 1971. The band was apparently close to a record deal and was booked to be the opening act for Pink Floyd at a concert in London. However, there were internal conflicts within the band. As Dinn explained to Saugeres “we got offered several record deals but the band sort of disintegrated over there, you know health problems and uh culture shock, we ran out of money ... if we had been able to stick it out I’d say the band would have gone a long way you know... but the economy was so bad... too many

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<sup>73</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 8.

<sup>74</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 8.

<sup>75</sup> Joan Sullivan, “Lukey’s Boat,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 3 (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1991), p. 385.

<sup>76</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 10.

personal problems on the go ... in a place like London it's pretty hard to survive as a band."<sup>77</sup>

After Lukey's Boat disbanded, and after briefly playing with another group Garrison Hill, Dinn took a year to work on folk arrangements on his own. Dinn assembled a group that included his brother Philip, Pelley, Morris, Ronnie Tilley, and Glen Stockley. Early in 1975, this group played with CODCO, at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's. CODCO was performing the show, "What do you want to see the Harbour for?," which was sponsored by the Community Planning Association. The members of the band wanted to come up with a name for that show and decided on Figgy Duff, a pudding with raisins in it.<sup>78</sup>

Figgy Duff developed over time. The second manifestation of the group was in 1977 after Dinn met Jamie Snider, a fiddler from St. Catherine's, Ontario. Snider arrived in Newfoundland in 1973 while on tour with an Irish band. The group was in Newfoundland for a month and had two weeks off during which Snider met people from the St. John's arts community, including Dinn, who told him he was attempting to form a trad-rock band and invited him to "jam." They then began to work together and decided to form a band.<sup>79</sup> Anita Best joined but did not want to pursue music professionally at this point. The group eventually was made up of six members including Noel and Philip Dinn,

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<sup>77</sup> Saugeres, "Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture," p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Saugeres, "Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture," p. 14.

<sup>79</sup> Saugeres, "Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture," p. 13.

bassist, mandolin player Dave Panting, fiddler Kelly Russell, accordionist Art Stoyles and Pamela Morgan, a singer from Grand Falls, as vocalist.<sup>80</sup>

The idea of marrying folk and rock music would influence the direction of Figgy Duff. Dinn wanted to incorporate Newfoundland folk sounds into a band that had a broader and more modern audience. Yet, there were those that did not understand Dinn's vision. According to Mark Paddock, the music Figgy Duff was creating was "too folky for the average rock fan, yet was also too innovative for the folk purists, who were appalled by the band's loud, aggressive sound."<sup>81</sup> Morgan claimed that Figgy Duff often found most acceptance in mainland blues clubs. The band was committed to promoting Newfoundland music and wanted to "popularize the lesser-known songs."<sup>82</sup>

The individual members of Figgy Duff had a life-long interest in music. Panting, who was born in Manitoba but grew up in St. John's, was encouraged by his parents to pursue his interest in music.<sup>83</sup> Many artists, including musicians, in the 1970s were concerned with the loss of traditional culture. Best is a prime example of this. Active in groups such as Figgy Duff, and as a solo artist, Best had been concerned with preserving Newfoundland's traditional culture since the beginning of her career. She had been involved in collecting songs and stories since 1973 in an attempt to preserve Newfoundland's oral tradition. Best feared the oral tradition of storytelling and singing

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<sup>80</sup> Saugeres, "Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture," p. 12; see also "Profile – Noel Dinn: It's All Been Worth it for Folk-Rock Pioneer," *Newfoundland Herald*, 12 December 1980; Susanne Hiller, "'The Voice of the region' belongs to Anita Best," *National Post*, 27 July 1999.

<sup>81</sup> Mark Paddock, "Remembering Noel," *The Express*, 18 August 1993.

<sup>82</sup> Paddock, "Remembering Noel."

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Dave Panting conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 7 December 2009 [DVD 1:01].

folksongs would be lost as the province modernized. Born in Merasheen in 1948 Best had long taken an interest in Newfoundland traditional culture.<sup>84</sup> Reflecting on what was impelling artists during the cultural movement, Best stated that “the place has changed but it’s not for the better you know, we’ve lost something and we’re losing things and we’re losing a way of life and we’re losing kinds of, the way we are and so on.”<sup>85</sup> Best claimed that “the image of poverty that was presented to Newfoundland, to Canada and to the United States was largely presented to them by Wilfred Grenfell and people like that who were trying to raise money ... but somehow or other that image became the prevalent image of Newfoundland, how we were starving, poor people who needed help, you know, and uh, I think it was our generation who rebelled against that image. And even though we didn’t really understand where the image came from in many cases, it became an emotional issue and so I think our generation of people became Newfoundland nationalists.”<sup>86</sup>

Dinn and Morgan were the only consistent members of Figgy Duff. Morgan’s mother was a piano teacher and Pamela began to play the piano at five years old.<sup>87</sup> While attending high school in Grand Falls, she was strongly influenced by the drama and arts teacher Ches Skinner, who encouraged her to pursue her artistic talents. He also had a strong sense of nationalism, and stressed “the importance of Newfoundland, the culture and how you should speak the way you speak and don’t be intimidated by people who tell

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<sup>84</sup> Susanne Hiller, “‘The Voice of the region’ belongs to Anita Best,” *National Post*, 27 July 1999.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 22:00].

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 15:00].

<sup>87</sup> “Local Musician Fulfilling Lifelong Dream,” *Evening Telegram*, 15 August 1983; see also “Profile: Pamela Morgan,” *Newfoundland TV Week*, 25 April 1979.

you you're talking wrong just because you don't speak like a mainlander and you know like the importance of hanging on to your culture.”<sup>88</sup> Inspired by this in conjunction with her interest in music, she became interested in Newfoundland music. She had a copy of the Peacock collection which she received in high school, and added songs from this to her own repertoire, performing them at music festivals in high school.<sup>89</sup> Having seen Morgan sing in “The Way of the Gosset” in Grand Falls in a high school drama festival, and a year later in the DDF in St. John's, and being moved by the pureness of her voice, Dinn asked her to join a trad-rock band. Morgan declined as she was too young and did not really take the offer seriously. However, Dinn asked her again a year later and after practising with the band a couple of times and performing a show she decided to join the group.<sup>90</sup>

Figgy Duff did not want to play what the members considered “kitschy” songs such as “I'se the B'y,” but instead searched for lesser known, more “authentic” folk songs. They spent months in rural Newfoundland learning songs from people in various communities. This was when the group really got going and with the help of a Canada Council grant, they were able to tour rural Newfoundland. The experience of touring the island encouraged the group and motivated them in their work because they started meeting the singers themselves whereas prior to this they were simply getting the songs out of books and others people's collections. They were inspired by this and also became

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<sup>88</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 21.

<sup>89</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 21.

<sup>90</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 22.

part of the preservation of traditional music rather than relying on the work of others.<sup>91</sup> The members of Figgy Duff believed that the only way to “preserve traditional music [was] to make it live.”<sup>92</sup> The group spent much of their time collecting and performing folk songs, many of which had not been previously recorded or written down. Morgan contended that the band kept “the original lyrics and melody of the tunes but sometimes adapted them to modern instruments. We keep the same modal scales, which are different from major or minor scales and are medieval in origin...contemporary chords don’t work. They jar the sound.”<sup>93</sup>

People were mostly helpful when the members of the group attempted to collect songs. On some occasions Russell or Morgan would simply knock on doors looking for information. Another helpful resource for them was Peacock’s collection, in which he identified the source for the song and the singer. The members would also track down those individuals to help in their quest.<sup>94</sup> As Dave Panting recounted over three decades later, people were occasionally suspicious, thinking the group was trying to make money off of the songs they learned, however the overwhelming reaction was enthusiasm.<sup>95</sup>

Figgy Duff wanted to promote Newfoundland traditional music and they had several criteria for their song choices. According to Lise Saugeres, they wanted to have a repertoire that represented various Newfoundland traditions such as songs that were

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<sup>91</sup> “Profile Noel Dinn: It’s All Been Worth it for Folk-rock Pioneer,” *Newfoundland Herald*, 12 December 1980; see also Len Penton, “Figgy Duff’s First Album is a Tasty, Musical Treat,” *Evening Telegram*, 23 December 1980.

<sup>92</sup> Marilyn Duffett, “Figgy Duff: A Living Tradition,” *Newfoundland TV Topics*, 27 December 1980.

<sup>93</sup> Duffett, “Figgy Duff.”

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 18:00].

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Dave Panting conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 7 December 2009 [DVD 28:46].



originally French, Irish, English, Scottish, and songs that were composed locally. Figgy Duff liked to perform less well-known songs because “they considered them to be more genuine than those which had already been popularized.”<sup>96</sup> They also preferred songs that had “not been commercially recorded or performed by other revivalists. However, some of the songs they included in their repertoire were well known among rural singers in Newfoundland and other places.”<sup>97</sup> They did perform some of the better known songs such as “She’s Like the Swallow,” “Lots of Fish in Bonavista Harbour,” and “Squid Jiggin Ground” because they felt this would “get people to listen to you.”<sup>98</sup> Figgy Duff also chose songs based on personal preference, “and chose those which were more appropriate to the style of music that they thought would convey a serious image of Newfoundland.”<sup>99</sup>

The band was heavily influenced by groups in England and moved to Toronto for a short period in 1978 where they found audiences who were familiar with British trad-rock groups such as Fairport Convention and Steeleye Span. Figgy Duff’s arrangements started with the golden rule that the original tunes and words would be preserved while the group would then combine arrangements of tin whistle, electric bass, accordion, drums and other instruments. Dinn believed that “‘traditional’ music [meant] it [had] to survive through all the generations in a way that [gave] meaning, so there’s a link.”<sup>100</sup> It was possible to keep the integrity of the song, yet adapt it musically so that it

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<sup>96</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 155.

<sup>97</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” pp. 155-156.

<sup>98</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” pp. 156.

<sup>99</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 156.

<sup>100</sup> Michael Clugston, “Proof in an electric pudding: Figgy Duff’s modern arrangements are enriching the traditional songs of Newfoundland,” *Maclean’s*, 24 August 1981.

had meaning to the new generation. This not only ensured its survival but also linked the past to the present, an important element of tradition.

As with many artists active at this time, outside developments and internal changes influenced these musicians. The members of Figgy Duff respected traditional music.<sup>101</sup> Morgan felt that part of the “movement [was] to rebel against the stereotypical image of Newfoundland and Labrador as being backward and inane, and redefine our identity.”<sup>102</sup> This fear that Newfoundland culture was disappearing was shared by band mate Kelly Russell. Russell, a member of both Figgy Duff and later the Wonderful Grand Band, was born in 1956 and grew up in St. John’s. His involvement with the arts community began in 1974.<sup>103</sup> Russell had always wanted to become a musician. He played piano as a young child, started playing guitar at 12 or 13, then the fiddle when he was 18 after listening to the music of Fairport Convention. Interestingly, Newfoundland was not initially the primary influence encouraging Russell’s enthusiasm for the arts.<sup>104</sup>

Russell reflected many years later that his ambition to combine “old music” with a new interpretation was a direct result of what he was listening to, Fairport Convention and Steeleye Span, who were reinterpreting English and Irish folksongs in a contemporary way. Before this, interestingly, he had strongly disliked fiddle music, exiting his house as soon as his mother started watching Don Messer’s Jubilee, a folk

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with Dave Panting conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 7 December 2009 [DVD 5:33].

<sup>102</sup> “This Place is Your Birthright”: Pamela Morgan offers her prescription for saving the culture and communities of rural Newfoundland,” *Independent*, 19 October 1991.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 1:00].

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 21:00].

music variety show that aired on CBC.<sup>105</sup> Russell's father was Ted Russell, a former civil servant and school teacher, who had created and written about the iconic fictional outport community of Pigeon Inlet.<sup>106</sup>

Ted Russell was born in 1904 in Coley's Point, Conception Bay.<sup>107</sup> Russell wrote "The Chronicles of Uncle Mose," a show which debuted on the radio in 1952 and told the story of residents of the fictitious outport of Pigeon Inlet.<sup>108</sup> The show remained on the air for eight years, with Russell writing over 500 scripts, each about six minutes long.<sup>109</sup> In the words of his biographer, Elizabeth Miller, Pigeon Inlet represented "all of those Newfoundland settlements that he knew and loved during his lifetime," such as Coley's Point, Pass Island, Harbour Breton and Fogo.<sup>110</sup> Pigeon Inlet was for Ted Russell a "symbol not only of a Newfoundland outport but of a way of life and of the qualities of living that the traditional Newfoundland lifestyle had to offer."<sup>111</sup>

Ted Russell spent much of his career as an educator, teaching in several Newfoundland outports, and later taught English at Memorial. However, he did have a foray into politics as a magistrate, he was appointed Director of Co-operatives with the Commission of Government in 1943, and under the Smallwood government in 1949 he became MHA for Bonavista South and Minister of Natural Resources. Russell, like the

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 22:00].

<sup>106</sup> Peter Narváez, "Folk Talk and Hard Facts: The Role of Ted Russell's 'Uncle Mose' on CBC's 'Fisherman's Broadcast,'" in *Studies in Newfoundland Folklore: Community and Process* (Breakwater Books: St. John's, NL, 1991), pp. 191-212.

<sup>107</sup> Elizabeth Miller, *Uncle Mose: The Life of Ted Russell* (St. John's: Flanker Press Ltd., 2005), p. 8.

<sup>108</sup> Miller, *Uncle Mose*, p. 175.

<sup>109</sup> Miller, *Uncle Mose*, p. 177.

<sup>110</sup> Miller, *Uncle Mose*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>111</sup> Miller, *Uncle Mose*, p. 185.

younger generation, was disillusioned with the Smallwood government. Russell resigned from cabinet on 24 March 1951.<sup>112</sup>

It is interesting to consider what influence Ted Russell's political career had on his young son, Kelly. Ted's negative experience may have influenced Kelly's view of Smallwood and added to his feeling that Smallwood's policies were destroying the "real" Newfoundland and the culture needed to be preserved. Ted Russell had been the Minister of Natural Resources in the Smallwood government, yet stayed in this post for less than two years. He resigned because he believed Smallwood was recklessly "squandering" government funds.<sup>113</sup> He disagreed with government policies, particularly the "the expenditures on economic development without the approval of the House."<sup>114</sup> Russell then had difficulty finding employment, briefly selling insurance before returning to teaching in 1957.<sup>115</sup> In 1979, Kelly Russell established Pigeon Inlet Productions, named after his father's work. In the 1970s, Ted Russell had been asked why he no longer chronicled outport life to which he responded "it's not there anymore." This had an influence on his son, and it was "this fear that prompted Kelly Russell to pick up the torch, in his own way."<sup>116</sup>

Kelly Russell's instrument of choice was the fiddle. There were various fiddle styles in Newfoundland; musician Christina Smith claims there are at least four that

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<sup>112</sup> Winter, "Russell, Edward," pp. 659-660.

<sup>113</sup> Clare-Marie Gosse, "Uncle Mose: Ted Russell 1904-1977," *Independent*, 19 March 2006.

<sup>114</sup> Kathleen Winter, "Russell, Edward," *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 4 (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1993), pp. 659-660.

<sup>115</sup> Clare-Marie Gosse, "Uncle Mose: Ted Russell 1904-1977," *Independent*, 19 March 2006.

<sup>116</sup> "Newfoundland Recording Company a One-man Show," *The Sunday Express*, 3 December 1989.

developed from the cultures that merged in Newfoundland. Perhaps the most prevalent is the East Coast style, which has an Irish sound and repertoire and is popular around the Avalon Peninsula, Bonavista, Fortune Bay, and the Northeast Coast. In the Codroy Valley on the West Coast there is Scottish influence. Around the Port-au-Port Peninsula and Bay St. George area there is a mixture of French, Scottish, and Irish influence, and some of the most unusual music can be found on the West Coast of the Northern Peninsula. These styles have a shared repertoire to a certain extent but differ in “tempo, metre, performance practice and ornamentation.” Codroy Valley tunes, for example, include the march, which is slow, and the strathspey, which is a moderate tempo. On the Port-au-Port there are numerous influences, including French. French tunes are somewhat slower in tempo and are accompanied by the “intricate clogging” of the player’s feet.<sup>117</sup> The Great Northern Peninsula has some English tunes, French ones, Irish tunes, and a few Scottish ones as well. Rufus Guinchard, from Daniel’s Harbour, exemplified this. Some Newfoundland tunes are actually Irish tunes that have changed slightly over time. The “old East Coast style” was geared to dancing, but many “fiddle buffs” in the second half of the twentieth century played “down-east Canadian or American style” because it was the type of music “people would sit and listen to.”<sup>118</sup>

Russell was searching for what he viewed as “authentic” Newfoundland music and tried to capture Newfoundland fiddle, not Irish or the style of Don Messer. He went to the West Coast to learn from Emile Benoit in the French-Newfoundland fiddle style.

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<sup>117</sup> Christina Smith, “Fiddling Around Newfoundland Part One – Codroy Valley and Port au Port,” *Newfoundland Quarterly* 96, 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 21-23.

<sup>118</sup> Christina Smith, “Fiddling Around Newfoundland Part Two – Great Northern Peninsula and East Coast,” *Newfoundland Quarterly*, Vol. 96, 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 49-51.

He also learned from Rufus Guinchard who exemplified the Great Northern Peninsula style that had Irish, English, French, and Scottish tunes. Thus, Russell looked beyond St. John's to capture Newfoundland fiddle traditions.<sup>119</sup> Thus, he was deciding what represented Newfoundland culture to him. As Whisnant put it cultural preservation is a selection of what the "intervenor" perceives as representing the culture.<sup>120</sup> The search for "authentic" music by members of Figgy Duff reflects elements of McKay's "folk formula" such as the search for original folksongs unaffected by modernity and also the attempt to collect important cultural artifacts before they disappear from the culture.<sup>121</sup>

Pamela Morgan argued that Figgy Duff was "born from the cultural inferiority complex that was prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s among Newfoundlanders." Writer Lisa Moore quotes Morgan as saying "there had been a generation before us who weren't proud of the way they spoke or dressed, or how they fished."<sup>122</sup> Morgan's statements were similar to those made by Morris, who explained that while he was growing up, his parents' generation felt like second-class citizens because they were from Newfoundland. Therefore the element of Confederation and inferiority was being dealt with in the cultural movement.<sup>123</sup> Morgan felt that Figgy Duff played an important role in the resurgence of pride in indigenous Newfoundland arts and music, as the group preserved "the complex melodies and lyrics of the folk ballads, and by getting the music off the

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1B, 14:00].

<sup>120</sup> Whisnant, *All that Native and Fine*, pp. 260-262.

<sup>121</sup> McKay, *The Quest of the Folk*, pp. 275-276.

<sup>122</sup> Lisa Moore, "Another Helping of Figgy Duff: Pamela Morgan Goes Home: A Roving Newfoundland Band Celebrates its Silver Anniversary," *National Post*, 10 July 1999.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 12:27].

island as well, paving the way for younger bands to promote themselves and tour.”<sup>124</sup>

Figgy Duff’s importance in the cultural movement is undeniable. They promoted traditional Newfoundland music both inside and outside the province. In addition, they made it relevant to a younger generation by adding electric instruments and placing the songs in a musical format that would resonate with younger listeners. The band has had a lasting influence and relevance in the province, evident in their reunion performance at the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival in recent years. Their musical recordings, in particular their album *Retrospective*, remain readily available at the time of writing.

The members of Figgy Duff not only reacted to the political developments in Newfoundland but also the fear that Newfoundland culture was disappearing in the wake of the influence of North American consumer culture. As Dinn tried to emphasize and showcase through his work “there is much more to Newfoundland music than the conventional tunes like Squid Jiggin’ Ground or The Star of Logy Bay has led people to believe.”<sup>125</sup> It was not that he considered them bad songs, but rather they had been overplayed. Figgy Duff’s music was not readily accepted everywhere and at first the band “had a hard time in Newfoundland. People didn’t understand what they were trying to do, being only used to the music they heard on the radio, or the bands that played the major centres along the Trans-Canada Highway. But they won acceptance.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Moore, “Another Helping of Figgy Duff.”

<sup>125</sup> M.T. Kelly, “Take Heart, O Ye Druids! Sing in Joy, Newfoundlanders!: Figgy Duff is Celebrating the Winter Solstice, me boy,” *Fanfare*, 7 December 1977.

<sup>126</sup> Kelly, “Take Heart, O Ye Druids!”

The reaction to Figgy Duff in areas of rural Newfoundland was mixed. It often depended on the venue. Some audiences would become upset if a group did not play country music, while others were simply happy to be entertained. For example, Russell recalled one instance in which Figgy Duff was booked to play at the Fogo Island Motel for a Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night. After finishing their first set, the manager and audience voiced their displeasure that the group did not play country music. The manager cancelled the group's next two shows. The band then headed to Joe Batt's Arm about ten miles away. They ended up playing a show at the hall that Saturday night and the audience loved it and were engaged in the music, dancing and having fun.<sup>127</sup> Part of this was due to the fact that more remote places "seemed to be very appreciative" of what the group was doing.<sup>128</sup>

Figgy Duff, sometimes affectionately referred to as The Duff in local media, was the most nationally and internationally successful group from this era. In 1978, they signed with New York's Island Records, which had offices in New York, Los Angeles, and London. They recorded an album in 1978, but it did not get released.<sup>129</sup> Morgan claimed there were communication problems between the producer and band members and while the producer was "well-intentioned" and also knowledgeable in his field, he

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 16:00].

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 17:00].

<sup>129</sup> "Figgy Duff: Newfoundland traditional band signs world-wide pact with Island Records," *The Newfoundland Herald TV Week*, 22 February 1978; see also James G. Hodder, "Figgy Duff: They May be the First Canadian Folk-rock Group to Have International Impact, says PR Agent," *The Newfoundland Herald*, 13 September 1980; "They Have a Local Best Seller," *The Daily News*, 24 February 1981; "First Album by Figgy Duff is Selling Well, Getting Good Air Play," *Evening Telegram*, 7 March 1981; Neil Murray, "Figgy Duff Album Getting Rave Reviews Upalong," *The Newfoundland Herald*, 28 February 1981; Chris Rumbolt, "Weathering Out the Storm," *The Express*, 12 July 1995.



was not the right producer for the band at the time. The band was young, unsettled, and was “uncomfortable working in the studio.”<sup>130</sup> The group and the producer had two different visions of what the album should be and ultimately neither party was happy with the final product. However, in the end it was the record company’s decision not to release the record.<sup>131</sup> According to Saugeres, the massive changes within the label itself may have contributed to this decision. Only a month before the album was set to be released Warner Brothers bought Island Records and Warner Brothers was not interested in keeping Figgy Duff.<sup>132</sup>

While this album was not released, the band did release five albums between 1980 and 1995. The first was a self-titled album, which included songs such as “Emile’s Reels” learned from Benoit, “4-stop Jigs” learned from Minnie White and Art Stoyles, and “The Fisher who Died in His Bed,” learned from Paddy Rossiter in Fermeuse, among others. *After the Tempest* was released in 1983, *Weather Out the Storm* in 1990, *Downstream* released in 1993, and *Retrospective* released in 1995.<sup>133</sup> All of these albums incorporated electric instruments with more traditional ones, such as the fiddle, mandolin, tin whistle, bodhran, and accordion. The first two albums comprised traditional material collected from the outports. The makeup of the Figgy Duff albums began to change with the third.

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<sup>130</sup> “Figgy Duff: Newfoundland traditional band signs world-wide pact with Island Records.”

<sup>131</sup> “Figgy Duff: Newfoundland traditional band signs world-wide pact with Island Records.”

<sup>132</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 30.

<sup>133</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” pp. 254-256; see also Figgy Duff, *Downstream* [Soundrecording] (Topsail: Amber Music, 1993); Figgy Duff, *A Retrospective* [Soundrecording] (Mississauga: Amber Music distributed by EMI Canada, 1995).

While the first two albums received good reviews they did not sell well and therefore the band took a different approach to the third.<sup>134</sup>

After talking to different record companies on a trip to Cannes, France in 1987, Noel Dinn and John Parsons, the band's manager, signed with a major label, A&M Records. The band began to record their third album in 1989, and decided to have half traditional and half original material on the album. At this point, "they had reached the stage where they felt like doing more original songs than they had before, but at the same time chose to write songs which would have a popular appeal to attract a bigger audience and to gain international recognition."<sup>135</sup> Saugeres quotes Kelly Russell as stating that the band had a new determination to make things happen within the next couple of years or quit.<sup>136</sup> This album *Weather Out the Storm* was released in October 1990.<sup>137</sup> The last album *Retrospective* was a compilation of all the Figgy Duff albums released in 1995, two years after Dinn's death from cancer. Part of the reason for releasing this album was that Morgan felt the band's fourth album *Downstream*, released the year of Dinn's death, was not "truly representative of the band because it was more original music. It didn't seem right that that would be the last album."<sup>138</sup>

The members of Figgy Duff were not writing protest songs, as some of their contemporary American folksingers were doing, but were primarily interested in Newfoundland traditional heritage. Figgy Duff feared that the "values of life in rural

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<sup>134</sup> Saugeres, "Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture," pp. 44-45.

<sup>135</sup> Saugeres, "Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture," p. 41.

<sup>136</sup> Saugeres, "Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture," p. 141.

<sup>137</sup> Saugeres, "Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture," p. 44.

<sup>138</sup> Curtis Rumbolt, "Weathering Out the Storm," *The Express*, 12 July 1995.

Newfoundland in the past ... were in danger of being lost as Newfoundland was entering the modern world.”<sup>139</sup> The members of the group were trying to rediscover their roots through traditional song and were “also suggesting to other people that a whole way of life with important values, such as family and nature, were disappearing. By reviving these songs they were preserving the music that had been handed down for generations, at the same time preserving, through their performance, the values of rural life of the past in Newfoundland.”<sup>140</sup> The songs were not a political message but rather were meant to reveal the uniqueness of Newfoundland and the music itself.<sup>141</sup> While the message may not have been overtly political, there was a political element to it. As Panting reflected many years later, it was important to hold onto Newfoundland music and culture or “we were going to be sitting in an apartment in Brampton not knowing who the hell we were or came from.”<sup>142</sup> While he acknowledged that not everyone was concerned about such issues, “someone in a culture is always going to take the bull by the horns and say, ok, this is what we can identify with.”<sup>143</sup> In addition to this, the songs were “beautiful” and “as a musician it is great music to play, beautiful music to play.”<sup>144</sup> While not all Newfoundland songs were as great as others, “there was a definite sense that we had something that was as good as, not better, but as good as anything else on the planet.”<sup>145</sup> The music was as valid as any elsewhere and identified the culture of the province.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” pp. 126-127.

<sup>140</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 127.

<sup>141</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 127.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Dave Panting conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 7 December 2009 [DVD 32:22].

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Dave Panting conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 7 December 2009 [DVD 32:34].

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Dave Panting conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 7 December 2009 [DVD 32:52].

<sup>145</sup> Interview with Dave Panting conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 7 December 2009 [DVD 33:16].

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Dave Panting conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 7 December 2009 [DVD 33:22].

Kelly Russell echoed this sentiment, stating in 2009 that “you know, it happened in the ‘50s and ‘60s, with rock ‘n’ roll and country music you know, this stuff is better than what we got, so discard what we got. And then came around, oh no let’s not forget about our music, this is just as good as music from anywhere else. This is just as good as Jamaican Reggae music or Greek bouzouki music, I mean this is Newfoundland music and is as valid as anything else, and is ours.”<sup>147</sup>

Although Figgy Duff achieved success outside of Newfoundland, they were not necessarily as accepted in Newfoundland. For a time, they also played covers of rock music under the name the Flip Side. While many of them had played rock music previously, they had more pragmatic reasons for reverting to this genre. The band explained that in the Newfoundland “club scene” it was important to play rock ‘n’ roll as a musician had to make a living. It was an interesting situation, an internationally successful folk band having to play commercial music to keep busy at home. Dinn admitted that the group was more popular in St. John’s than in the rest of the island, partly blaming the lack of television exposure for this problem, commenting that he was not sure why the CBC had not taken interest in them. Yet, the group claimed not to be bitter about this situation and their “commercial cross-over.”<sup>148</sup> The Flip Side represented the other side of Figgy Duff, “instead of emphasizing the traditional side, they were emphasizing the rock side. ‘Flip Side’ [was] actually slang for the other side of a ‘single,’

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<sup>147</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 20:00].

<sup>148</sup> Geoff Meeker, “There’s a new ‘Flip Side’ to Figgy Duff,” *Newfoundland Herald*, 7 May 1983; see also Geoff Meeker, “Figgy Duff: A fine album from a unique group,” *Newfoundland Herald*, 19 November 1983; Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1B, 9:00].

a 78 or 45 rpm record.”<sup>149</sup> They began playing as the Flip Side in St. John’s in May of 1983 and continued to do so until 1986.

The name Flip Side was used so that people would “not go to their gigs thinking that they were going to hear what Figgy Duff usually played and be disappointed. During this time they would still be playing as Figgy Duff outside Newfoundland and in Newfoundland occasionally, but whenever they stayed for several months without getting a tour outside the province they would play mostly as Flip Side in Newfoundland.”<sup>150</sup> Flip Side helped the band financially because in Newfoundland Figgy Duff was not “popular enough to be able to play in many places and earn enough to survive.”<sup>151</sup> Best recounts that the Flip Side played rock and roll and “top 40” music, which helped them get booked more easily.<sup>152</sup> The members also needed some time without touring outside the province to get some writing done, and Pamela Morgan had also just had a child and wanted to stay close to home.<sup>153</sup>

### **Baxter Wareham and the Byrne Brothers**

Others musicians were also creating music in the traditional genre. The Byrne brothers, Patrick and Joseph, and Baxter Wareham created an album *Towards the Sunset* which they hoped would sound like traditional music yet tell their own story of

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<sup>149</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 34.

<sup>150</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 35.

<sup>151</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 35.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1B, 9:00].

<sup>153</sup> Saugeres, “Figgy Duff and Newfoundland Culture,” p. 35.

Newfoundland. All three came from resettled communities. The Byrnes were born in Paradise, Placentia Bay in 1943 and 1949, respectively, and moved to St. John's as children. Baxter Wareham was from Harbour Buffett, Placentia Bay.<sup>154</sup> While the lyrics of their songs were original, the tunes and melodies often were not. The musicians had made a concerted effort to capture the essence of traditional melodies and were often flattered when audience members would comment that their father or grandfather had sung that particular song.<sup>155</sup> Pat Byrne claimed that the album "paint[ed] an honest and not entirely pretty picture of days gone by."<sup>156</sup> He revealed that a lot of the album had to do with the "fact that the three of us come from resettled communities in Placentia Bay."<sup>157</sup> The album was not meant to be a romantic portrayal of a time that had passed but was "an attempt to recall that period in our personal histories and in the history of the island."<sup>158</sup> Byrne argued several years later that Confederation and resettlement, particularly resettlement, gave people something to get angry about, and the album celebrated Newfoundland's culture and lamented what had been lost.<sup>159</sup>

Much of the album contained imagery about Placentia Bay, such as the title song "Towards the Sunset," written by Pat Byrne. This song discussed heading towards the sunset, searching for "yesterday" when "all cares will vanish." It discussed reconnecting with the past and "joining those who sailed before us." Another song exploring this theme

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<sup>154</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 1, 0:19]

<sup>155</sup> Interview with Joe Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 2 February 2010 [Cassette 1A, 18:00].

<sup>156</sup> Jean Edwards Stacey, "Classic Comeback," *Evening Telegram* 10 April 2004; see also Geoff Meeker, "A Fine Folk Album from Pat, Joe and Baxter," *Newfoundland Herald*, 7 January 1984.

<sup>157</sup> Stacey, "Classic Comeback."

<sup>158</sup> Stacey, "Classic Comeback."

<sup>159</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2010 [DVD 2 Part 1, 16:12].

was “The Rocks of Merasheen,” which revealed a desire to return to Merasheen, a community in Placentia Bay that had been resettled. While none of the group were from Merasheen, it again addressed the resettlement that had taken place in Newfoundland and also used imagery of Placentia Bay. It was the fondest wish of the singer to go back to “the rocks of Merasheen.” “The Seagulls Still Follow on Freedom” used Placentia Bay as the backdrop to a story about a young woman who had lost a sweetheart to the sea. Interestingly the woman was from Toronto and an old man from the community attempted to explain why the sea was important to Newfoundlanders and why a young man would risk sailing the sea for a livelihood. It was an inherent part of the culture. Those who do not understand the draw of the sea and “quote figures and count the cause lost” did not appreciate the importance of this in Newfoundland culture. Therefore, they cheated and robbed the fishermen and told the fishermen to leave the Bay, as the Newfoundland government was accused of doing through resettlement.<sup>160</sup>

Not all the songs on the album discussed loss, however; some were fun tunes discussing relationships such as “High Degree,” which humorously recounted the story of a young fishermen who pretended to be a “gentlemen” in disguise as a fisherman in order to seduce a merchant’s daughter. The song “Rubber Boots” was “Wareham’s adaptation of an Irish tune called Navy Boots. The lyrics, Pat Byrne said, are a little off-colour, and the song became very popular as a result of getting a lot of play on local radio stations.”<sup>161</sup> The song facetiously discussed a fisherman conceiving a child out of

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<sup>160</sup> Joe Byrne, Pat Byrne and Baxter Wareham, *Towards the Sunset* [Sound Recording], St. John’s: Pigeon Inlet Productions, 1983.

<sup>161</sup> Jean Edwards Stacey, “Classic Comeback,” *Evening Telegram* 10 April 2004; see also Geoff Meeker, “A Fine Folk Album from Pat, Joe and Baxter,” *Newfoundland Herald*, 7 January 1984.

wedlock and having to pay child support out of his earnings from fishing “the wild Labrador.”<sup>162</sup> Joe Byrne told me in 2010 that it was more catchy and upbeat than the other songs on the album and also met the length requirements of the radio stations. The group were told that some of the songs, such as “The Land God Gave to Cain” were too long for radio play.<sup>163</sup> “Rubber Boots” had the most radio play and Joe Byrne credits this song with making the album a success and introducing listeners to the rest of the material.<sup>164</sup>

Perhaps the most iconic song about resettlement from the period was from *Towards the Sunset*. The song “The Government Game” performed by Pat Byrne discussed the impact of resettlement on Newfoundland.<sup>165</sup> “The Government Game” was co-written by Pat Byrne and Al Pittman, a well-known Newfoundland writer born in St. Leonard’s, Placentia Bay in 1940 and raised in Corner Brook.<sup>166</sup> “The Government Game” was written while they were both working as school teachers in Montreal. Although they were not living in Newfoundland at the time, they were seeing daily reports of resettlement in the newspapers, and the song reflected their emotional reaction to what they read and the pictures they saw.<sup>167</sup> The song was written from the perspective of an elderly man who had experienced life in Newfoundland prior to resettlement. It gave a negative view of resettlement, calling it a “terrible misfortune” and referring to it as “the government game.” Such connotations made it seem like those affected by resettlement were but pawns in a game that the government had devised. The old man

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<sup>162</sup> Byrne, Byrne, and Wareham, *Towards the Sunset*.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Joe Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 2 February 2010 [Cassette 1A, 22:00].

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Joe Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 2 February 2010 [Cassette 1A, 23:00].

<sup>165</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 1, 12:14].

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 1, 13:49].

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 1, 14:16].



continued that he had never been poor and had always lived a good life with no shame “till they made me take part in the government game.” The song referred to not only the shame the people felt but also the feeling of shame they passed down to their children. It also did not prevent the outmigration or ensure the employment promised. Parents had moved to “growth centers” to improve life for their children and to keep them close to home, but this was not the case. As one stanza stated “They tell me our young ones the benefits will see/but I don’t believe it or how can it be/They’ll never know nothing but sorrow and shame/for their fathers were part of the government game.”<sup>168</sup>

Pat and Joe Byrne were also members of the Breakwater Boys, or the Breakwater Troupe, an advertising element of Breakwater Books, established in 1973. Breakwater Books was formed by MUN English professors Richard Buehler, Tom Dawe, Al Pittman, Clyde Rose, and Pat Byrne.<sup>169</sup> This group formed the company “to publish an anthology of Newfoundland writing – *Baffles of Wind and Tide*.”<sup>170</sup> Rose left the university and devoted himself full-time to building the publishing firm, and by 1978 the company had expanded into the mainland market.<sup>171</sup> As Pat Byrne explained the name Breakwater Books reflected the impulse to preserve Newfoundland culture, the idea of saving the culture before it disappeared, before “all our entertainment and all our public displays [were] bad imitations of American television or whatever.”<sup>172</sup> The breakwater “keeps the

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<sup>168</sup> Pat Byrne and Al Pittman, “The Government Game,” *Towards the Sunset* [Sound Recording] (St. John’s: Pigeon Inlet Productions, 1983).

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 1, 18:43].

<sup>170</sup> James Wade, “Printing and Publishing,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 4 (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1993), pp. 458-459.

<sup>171</sup> Wade, “Printing and Publishing,” pp. 458-459.

<sup>172</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 3 Part 1, 31:59].

savage stuff from coming ashore.”<sup>173</sup> Without a breakwater large waves would come ashore and “wipe out the Harbour.”<sup>174</sup> The breakwater would not keep everything out, but provided some protection.<sup>175</sup> The Breakwater Troupe performed at conferences and publishers events. The Breakwater Boys consisted of Pat and Joe Byrne and Clyde Rose. Their songs incorporated music, lyrics and poetry. Pat and Joe Byrne would sing, while Rose would recite excerpts from one of their publications.<sup>176</sup>

### **The Folk Arts Council**

Not only were there individuals interested in preserving traditional music, but there were also official organizations committed to this as well starting in the 1960s. The Canadian government formed the Canadian Folk Arts Councils as part of the Canadian Centennial Celebrations. At the founding conference of the Canadian Folk Arts Councils in Ottawa in 1964, Dr. Richard Johnston, a composer and musicologist, asserted that “the gradual evolution of our national life ... our folklife... and the national personality, urge us to support wholeheartedly the aims, both immediate and long-range, of the Folk Arts Council, which is, in effect, a Canadian Folklife Council.”<sup>177</sup> The Folk Arts Council defined the folk arts as “all forms of expression used by a people and which are reflected

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<sup>173</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 3 Part 1, 32:21].

<sup>174</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 3 Part 1, 32:32].

<sup>175</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 3 Part 1, 34:34].

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 3 Part 1, 17:05]; see also Interview with Joe Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 2 February 2010 [Cassette 1A, 9:00].

<sup>177</sup> Canadian Folk Arts Council, “Canada’s Cultural Riches: A Submission to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 9 March 1981,” Canadian Folk Arts Council, File 379, Vol. 236, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada.

in its shape, motifs, symbols and techniques,” and included folk dance, folk songs, handicrafts, folk music, traditional dress, customs, folk festivals, and heritage. To further develop Canadian identity, the Canadian government needed to promote and encourage Canadian culture.<sup>178</sup>

The St. John’s Folk Arts Council was formed in 1966 as part of this initiative. The Council’s first president was Lewis Brookes, father of Mummers Troupe founder Chris Brookes. Journalist Andy Samuelson claimed that the “Brookes era” of the St. John’s Folk Arts Council was a time of “formal presentations and polished performances, of contests and adjudications. This formalism did not set well with many of the younger set who were caught up in the idealism of pure folk art, particularly as applied to Newfoundland culture.”<sup>179</sup> This is ironic, as Chris Brookes was the founder of an unorthodox group that was based on the collective creation and improvisation. Chris Brookes did not want a formal presentation for his art and wanted to “create a theatre resource in Newfoundland that will be of, for, and about the people and their culture.”<sup>180</sup> He explained that there had been significant changes in Newfoundland, including

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<sup>178</sup> Canadian Folk Arts Council, “Canada’s Cultural Riches: A Submission to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 9 March 1981,” Canadian Folk Arts Council, File 379, Vol. 236, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>179</sup> Andy Samuelson, “The St. John’s Folk Arts Council: Preserving our Traditional Music,” *This Week*, 6 December 1982; see also “St. John’s Folks Art Council to Celebrate Third Birthday,” *Daily News*, 23 October 1969.

<sup>180</sup> Letter from Chris Brookes to Jeanne Sabourin, 7 June 1972, File 6.01.003, The Resource Foundation for the Arts, Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Confederation and resettlement. Brookes felt that as Newfoundlanders adjusted to the changes, valuable elements of culture were being lost.<sup>181</sup>

The formation of the St. John's Folk Arts Council encouraged the folk music revival. In the early years of its development, the Council "reflected the contemporary North American popular interest in folksong."<sup>182</sup> Early programs of the Council emphasized popularized Newfoundland folk music, as well as material characteristic of the mainstream North American folk revival. Yet certain members of the younger generation of musicians and artists were growing tired of "popular" Newfoundland folksongs, such as "Jack was Every Inch a Sailor." As the Folk Council developed, its focus shifted to Newfoundland folk material. Council organizers had St. John's performers play in small communities and had traditional performers from rural areas play in St. John's. They encouraged the performers to choose and perform Newfoundland folksongs, rather than relying on a prescribed repertoire that included songs that youth felt were "kitschy" and not representative of the variety of folksongs in Newfoundland.<sup>183</sup>

### **Folk Festivals**

Folk festivals were also important in Newfoundland's cultural movement as there was more exposure to Newfoundland culture concentrated in one place.<sup>184</sup> Just as the

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<sup>181</sup> Letter from Chris Brookes to Jeanne Sabourin, 7 June 1972, File 6.01.003, The Resource Foundation for the Arts, Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>182</sup> Guigné, *Folksongs and Folk Revival*, p. 220.

<sup>183</sup> Guigné, *Folksongs and Folk Revival*, p. 219.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 19:00].

Newfoundland Folk Festival was developed in the 1970s, other areas of Canada were also developing similar festivals as well. There were a growing number of festivals that were meant to explore “roots” and enhance “traditional cultural elements.”<sup>185</sup>

The first annual Newfoundland Folk Festival was held in 1976, after which the St. John’s Folk Arts Council made it an annual event. The promotional material for the Second Annual Folk Festival stated that the songs performed were of English, Irish, Scottish and French origin. The Council stated, similar to others in the cultural community, “let us not lose this heritage.”<sup>186</sup> The Folk Festival was held at an outside venue, Bannerman Park, in St. John’s. In its advertising, the Council declared that Newfoundland was one of the few areas in North America that “culture survives” even despite the “great disseminators of mass culture: radio, TV, and the record industry.”<sup>187</sup> The idea behind the folk festival was to bring the folk arts to the general public. In addition to music, there were also crafts displayed including “weaving, spinning, model boat building, rug hooking, and toy making.”<sup>188</sup> The folk festival was promoted as a festival that showcased the “real” Newfoundland, exhibiting “the sort of talent that made Newfoundland and her people what they are: a unique and distinctive people with a long and rich heritage of song and story.”<sup>189</sup> The Council believed the older musicians in

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<sup>185</sup> Canadian Folk Arts Council, “Canada’s Cultural Riches: A Submission to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 9 March 1981,” Canadian Folk Arts Council, File 379, Vol. 236, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada, pp. 54-55.

<sup>186</sup> The St. John’s Newfoundland Folk Arts Council and Festival Canada, “2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Newfoundland Folk Festival,” Box FDM 2001-037, File: Folk Arts Council, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

<sup>187</sup> The St. John’s Newfoundland Folk Arts Council and Festival Canada, “2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Newfoundland Folk Festival,” Box FDM 2001-037, File: Folk Arts Council, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

<sup>188</sup> The St. John’s Newfoundland Folk Arts Council and Festival Canada, “2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Newfoundland Folk Festival,” Box FDM 2001-037, File: Folk Arts Council, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

<sup>189</sup> The St. John’s Newfoundland Folk Arts Council and Festival Canada, “2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Newfoundland Folk Festival,” Box FDM 2001-037, File: Folk Arts Council, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

Newfoundland were neglected in the “modern world of pop culture and mass entertainment.”<sup>190</sup> The Council hoped that the festival would show “how much we appreciate them and thus assure that for us and them ‘the old ways’ are not dead and gone.”<sup>191</sup>

The Folk Festival was a way to bring folk song and music to the public attention; it also reflected “a growth of activity on the part of the Folk Arts Councils on the local level in this province.”<sup>192</sup> Anita Best stated that the Folk Festival allowed people to have “more exposure to Newfoundland culture concentrated in one place, you know, then they had been having before because there hadn’t been any folk festival or anything like that.”<sup>193</sup> There was again the fear that the culture would be destroyed. As Philip Hiscock maintains, some people felt that Newfoundland traditional culture was declining in the wake of mass media, roads and cash employment, and while they may not have been destroyed, “many of the cultural expressions of earlier times certainly have changed functions for most Newfoundlanders.”<sup>194</sup> New roles were found for some of these cultural expressions. For example, the annual Folk Festival which began in the 1970s “became a new outlet for many traditional expressions of culture, albeit in a thoroughly transformed context.”<sup>195</sup> Groups such as Figgy Duff sought to place traditional music in a format that

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<sup>190</sup> The St. John’s Newfoundland Folk Arts Council and Festival Canada, “2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Newfoundland Folk Festival,” Box FDM 2001-037, File: Folk Arts Council, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

<sup>191</sup> The St. John’s Newfoundland Folk Arts Council and Festival Canada, “2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Newfoundland Folk Festival,” Box FDM 2001-037, File: Folk Arts Council, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

<sup>192</sup> Neil Rosenberg, “Newfoundland Report,” *Canadian Music Bulletin*, 15, 1 (Spring 1981), p. 5.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 19:00].

<sup>194</sup> Hiscock, “The Mass Media in the Folk Culture of Newfoundland,” p. 34.

<sup>195</sup> The St. John’s Newfoundland Folk Arts Council and Festival Canada, “2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Newfoundland Folk Festival,” Box FDM 2001-037, File: Folk Arts Council, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

would maintain the integrity and original lyrics and message of the song, but also appeal to a younger generation.

The Festival was celebrated with people of all ages listening and dancing to songs played on traditional instruments such as the accordion, fiddle and tin whistle. Performers were eclectic and from across the province, including John Joe English a 83-year-old storyteller from Branch and John White singing “The Squid Jiggin’ Ground” by Arthur Scammell, who was born in Change Islands in 1913. Although the Wonderful Grand Band made fun of traditional performers such as White, he performed at the Festival backed up by Ron Hynes, a member of the Wonderful Grand Band. Other performers included Caroline Brennan, a traditional singer from Ship Cove, Emile Benoit, and Laverne Squires.<sup>196</sup> The Folk Festival received financial assistance from the Provincial Government Department of Tourism. Aidan O’Hara, Chairman of the Folk Festival Committee, contacted the Minister of Tourism, Jim Morgan, and informed him of the great success of the second folk festival. He reported that there was a reporter from the *St. Paul-Minneapolis Tribune* there who attended with his wife on his holidays intending to write an article on the Folk Festival. According to O’Hara, the reporter said that the “folk festival more than fulfilled his expectations and, as he remarked, he had no idea that such a people of culture existed anywhere on the North American continent.”<sup>197</sup> O’Hara was impressed by the Newfoundland culture presented at the festival. It is interesting to note

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<sup>196</sup> “NFLD. Folk Festival: Thousands flock to Bannerman Park to hear Nfld’s folk performances,” *The Newfoundland Herald TV Week*, 5 July 1978, Box FDM 2001-037, File: Folk Arts Council, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

<sup>197</sup> Letter from Aidan O’Hara, Chairman of the Folk Festival Committee 1978, to Jim Morgan, Minister of Tourism, nd, Box FDM 2001-037, File: Folk Arts Council, The Rooms Provincial Archives.

that while almost all the music adopted by members of the cultural community was of English and Irish origin, French music was also represented. Figgy Duff included French songs on their first album, and Kelly Russell adopted the French fiddle style he learned from Emile Benoit and Rufus Guinchard. Some members of the cultural movement were turning away from the material in pop music and turning to what they viewed as “authentic” Newfoundland music.

### **The St. John’s Folk Music Club**

The St. John’s Folk Music Club (SJFMC) was also formed in 1976. This non-profit organization attempted to “propagate and perpetuate live, home-grown music, with emphasis on acoustic instruments,” to make this music accessible to those interested and also support those interested in preserving and carrying on the musical tradition.<sup>198</sup> Susan Hart and Clara J. Murphy argue that the establishment of the SJFMC was influenced by the folk music revivals of the 1960s and 1970s. It not only served as an outlet for folk music performers in St. John’s, but was also meant to satisfy the perceived audience eager for this type of music.<sup>199</sup> The SJFMC produced “community concerts” in locations such as the Ship Inn, the Station Lounge, private living rooms and so on.<sup>200</sup> While the SJFMC performed in different locations, the venue they employed the longest was the Ship Inn,

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<sup>198</sup> “St. John’s Folk Music Club,” Vertical File, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>199</sup> Susan Hart and Clara J. Murphy, “Sunday Night at the Ship Inn: The History and Operations of the St. John’s Folk Music Club,” *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin de Musique Folklorique Canadienne* 20, 1 (March 1986), p. 28.

<sup>200</sup> “St. John’s Folk Music Club,” Vertical File, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.



which became the epicentre of the folk music scene in the city by the early 1980s.<sup>201</sup> Their concerts featured local, provincial, national and international entertainers. The SJFMC worked with national groups such as the Canadian Folk Music Society and also with Folk Arts Councils in St. John's, Conception Bay, St. Mary's Bay, Branch, and Placentia. The Club was also involved in Newfoundland folk festivals as well. The names affiliated with the SJFMC included people associated with the cultural movement, including Kelly Russell, Jamie Snider, Dave Panting, Andy Jones, Cathy Jones, Ron Hynes, Emile Benoit, Anita Best, Sandy Morris, Pat Byrne, Joe Byrne, Baxter Wareham, Pamela Morgan, Noel Dinn, Rufus Guinchard, Frank Maher, Art Stoyles, Laverne Squires, Denis Ryan, Phil Dinn, Derek Pelley, Neil Murray and many others.<sup>202</sup> The Folk Music Club hoped to "provide a suitable outlet on a regular basis for the performance of traditional music, song and dance."<sup>203</sup> The SJFMC hoped it would "encourage and assist the development of traditional music" among the general public.<sup>204</sup>

### **Broader Influences on Local Musicians**

The evolution of music during the cultural movement also fit into the broader milieu of the music of the 1960s. Popular music can be used as part of social protest. For example, protest songs sometimes focus on governments and authority that is viewed as

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<sup>201</sup> Hart and Murphy, "Sunday Night at the Ship Inn," p. 29.

<sup>202</sup> "St. John's Folk Music Club," Vertical File, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>203</sup> Scott Swinden, "St. John's Music Club: Schedules and Newsletters, 1977-1984, Location 89-200, Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive.

<sup>204</sup> Swinden, "St. John's Music Club."

unjust. These songs are often a reaction to changes that occurred.<sup>205</sup> Protest songs were popular in America at this time as well with folk musicians writing songs to protest the Vietnam War and other social issues as well.<sup>206</sup>

Protest songs had long played a role in American folk music and “showcasing them within the folk spectrum gave them a wholesome image.”<sup>207</sup> Folk music became popular on college campuses in the late 1950s, at a time when, according to Jerry Rodinsky, jazz was becoming “increasingly complex” and “rock ‘n’ roll had become more nonsensical and meaningless.”<sup>208</sup> Rock ‘n’ roll lyrics such as “splish splash I was taking a bath” affected the integrity of this musical genre. Folk songs, on the other hand, contained meaning and integrity. Social movements, such as the modern civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s had enticed folk musicians to action. American folk musicians such as Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs recorded songs that dealt with both general and specific issues of discrimination, war, and the “Establishment.” Performers such as Judy Collins, Joan Baez, The Kingston Trio, and The Brothers Four popularized folk music and protest songs even more. Rodinsky argues that the increasing success diluted the protest characteristic of the music, but it still remained an important part of popular music. It began to focus on general anti-“Establishment” sentiments rather than specific issues. However, during the 1960s, “music continued to hold its mesmerizing grip on American youth. Frank Zappa put it best in 1967 when he noted that many youths were

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<sup>205</sup> Deena Weinstein, “Rock Protest Songs: So Many and So Few,” in *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), p. 3.

<sup>206</sup> See Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The Sixties and Its Aftershocks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>207</sup> Jerry Rodinsky, “The Decline and Rebirth of Folk-Protest Music,” in *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), pp. 18-19.

<sup>208</sup> Rodinsky, “The Decline and Rebirth of Folk-Protest Music,” p. 18.

loyal to neither ‘flag, country, nor doctrine, but only to music.’”<sup>209</sup> This may be true of Newfoundland as well. While Newfoundland artists and musicians were reacting to some internal developments, these people also just wanted to be creative and many of the US musicians they emulated were anti-“Establishment.” In addition, some Newfoundlanders felt as if they were a minority in the larger community of Canada, dealing with feelings of inferiority from Confederation and the effect of “Newfie jokes.”<sup>210</sup> The music of the era brought attention to “the plight of the oppressed” to a wider audience.<sup>211</sup>

American music and the folk revival in the United Kingdom influenced the musical revival in Newfoundland. The term “folk rock” was coined during discussions of Bob Dylan’s performance at the Newport Festival in 1965 when he performed with an electric guitar. Dylan was one of the central American folk revivalists at this time.<sup>212</sup> Ethnomusicologist Britta Sweers explains that while purists were angered by his use of electric instruments, the term “folk rock” soon meant two things: “(a) a style that combined acoustic and electric instruments... and (b) rock music outside (or in opposition to) the commercialized mainstream, and especially played by groups related to the hippie movement.”<sup>213</sup> In America, as in Newfoundland, there was a feeling that folk songs were often in opposition to the dominant culture and that they could bring “people together to form a community.”<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Rodinsky, “The Decline and Rebirth of Folk-Protest Music,” pp. 18-19.

<sup>210</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 25:00]; see also Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 8:29]; Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1B, 24:00].

<sup>211</sup> Perone, *Music of the Counterculture Era*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>212</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 21.

<sup>213</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>214</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 25.

In the mid-1960s, revivalists such as Joan Baez used folk songs to protest and voice opposition to the dominant political culture of the time. Protesters used folksongs during demonstrations and marches against the Vietnam War “as diffusers” against police attempting to disband the gatherings.<sup>215</sup> It created a community and helped demonstrators showcase their opposition to authority figures such as political figures and military figures. Folk music imbued followers with the courage and passion to stand up against the social injustice they witnessed around them. Pat Byrne argued, for example, that Dylan wrote “Masters of War” and people were ready to march.<sup>216</sup> Other folk musicians that were influential on members of Newfoundland’s cultural movement included American musicians Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Peter, Paul and Mary, and Canadians Gordon Lightfoot, and Ian and Sylvia to name a few.<sup>217</sup> These folk musicians showed that folk music could be used to inspire social action. Early in their careers, some Newfoundland musicians, such as Pat Byrne, imitated the style of Bob Dylan while writing about issues that were important to them or were relevant to their own experience. It also became clear to Pat Byrne that traditional music had long dealt with issues of social injustice, discussing issues such as unwed mothers, mistreating servants, stealing someone’s land, and so on.<sup>218</sup>

Sandy Morris and his peers were more heavily influenced by rock ‘n’ roll, the blues and some country music than were the two Byrne brothers. However, with the folk

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<sup>215</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 29.

<sup>216</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 3 Part 1, 15:06].

<sup>217</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 2 Part 2, 3:59]; see also Interview with Joe Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 2 February 2010 [Cassette 1A, 27:00].

<sup>218</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 3 Part 1, 15:48].

revolution that occurred in North America in the 1960s, local musicians were introduced to and aware of the music of Dylan, Baez, Judy Collins and others. Coffee shops were an integral element of folk scenes elsewhere in North America, and a couple of them had already been established in St. John's in the 1960s.<sup>219</sup> Morris recalled in a 2009 interview that one was located in the back of a grocery store in the centre of St. John's and another was located in the basement of a suburban house. The coffee shops were open on the weekends and people would go there to play. So, a folk scene was emerging simultaneously to the rock influence.<sup>220</sup>

In addition to the American influence, British musicians active in the folk revival also affected Newfoundland's cultural movement. Two English groups that heavily influenced some Newfoundland musicians such as Figgy Duff and the Wonderful Grand Band were Fairport Convention and Steeleye Span. Fairport Convention was prominent in the "electric folk scene" and was especially influential to Newfoundland groups during the cultural movement as well. Sweers argues that "it was Fairport that achieved the first genuine musical and technical fusion of folk and rock, most obviously on its groundbreaking recording *Liege and Lief* (1969)."<sup>221</sup> This album revived traditional material for a "broader, rock-oriented contemporary audience."<sup>222</sup> While the group thought of themselves as a folk group, this characteristic became more pronounced with

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<sup>219</sup> See Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place* (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1989); see also Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 4:23].

<sup>220</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 4:37].

<sup>221</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 86.

<sup>222</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 86.

the addition of Sandy Denny as the group's lead singer. Denny was a folk singer and had a broad repertoire of folk music she had collected from singers in folk clubs.<sup>223</sup>

Fairport Convention influenced another folk-rock group, Steeleye Span, which was somewhat more rock-oriented, as the group "brought the combination of folk and rock to a much stronger musical extreme than did Fairport Convention."<sup>224</sup> While Steeleye Span's early music was very traditional, the music was harder-edged with a heavier "emphasis on the rhythmic elements, the clearer predomination of the electric instruments (especially electric guitar and bass), and additional sound effects."<sup>225</sup> Fairport Convention used many of the same instruments later employed by Figgy Duff – the fiddle, mandolin, and dulcimer.<sup>226</sup>

There was a connection between identity and the revival of folk music. As Sweers points out in the case of the British folk revival, the break with traditional music came in the previous generation, just as many members of Newfoundland's cultural movement blamed the feeling of inferiority experienced by their parents' generation for their interest in Newfoundland's culture and tradition. Just as with members of the English folk revival, many in the Newfoundland cultural movement did not have an immediate or initial connection to traditional music. Many English performers did not grow up with what would become an important element of their musical careers.<sup>227</sup> Interestingly, the English folk revival, like that in Newfoundland, was in part a reaction against the

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<sup>223</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>224</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 104.

<sup>225</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 104.

<sup>226</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 169.

<sup>227</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 210.

pervasiveness and dominance of American culture. As Sweers writes “while members of an immigrant culture like the United States apparently tend to cling to their roots, the original cultures start to search for or reinvent their lost roots as a reaction against the growing dominance of the Americanized mainstream.”<sup>228</sup>

Thus, both local and non-local influences were important in the “rediscovery” of Newfoundland folk music. As discussed earlier, the political developments and modernization taking place in Newfoundland affected artists and helped shape what they wanted to convey in their art. In addition, musicians were influenced by American culture, and also the folk musicians popular in America, Canada, and the United States. It was therefore the combination of both that led to the cultural movement, and in a more specific sense motivated musicians to discuss developments in their music.

### **Conclusion**

The period from 1965 to 1983 was one of musical evolution in Newfoundland, as a younger generation sought out the authentic folk music and rejected what they saw as the tacky renditions of well-known Newfoundland traditional music. This is perhaps most evident in the work of Figgy Duff, whose members were committed to collecting lesser-known folk music, and their determination to remain faithful to the arrangements that they had learned, even though they were incorporating electric instruments. Likewise the Byrne Brothers wrote original lyrics on their album, but attempted to maintain traditional

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<sup>228</sup> Sweers, *Electric Folk*, p. 214.

melodies that were recognizable as such. In addition, there were also more formal expressions of the attempt to preserve folk music including the Canadian Folk Arts Councils and the St. John's Folk Music Club.

The musical developments that occurred in Newfoundland during this period fit within the pattern of what was happening in the United Kingdom and the United States. The folk revival in Newfoundland was not unique and occurred at the same time as other revivals, even perhaps a bit later. The folk revival in America started around 1958 or 1959 although, as Bruce Jackson points out, it is difficult to date these things and dates are often arbitrary. Folk Festivals were also beginning around this time as well. The Berkeley Folk Festival was in 1958 and the first University of Chicago Folk Festival was held in 1961. The Newport Folk Festival was the most influential of the "revival folk festivals."<sup>229</sup> It was not the first, nor the largest, but the most influential. Perhaps the largest festival was in 1969 with Woodstock. This was a rock festival with performers such as Jefferson Airplane, the Who, Jimi Hendrix and "former folk revival performers Canned Heat, Arlo Guthrie, and Joan Baez. The mixture wouldn't happen again: Woodstock was the only large rock festival in which folk revival singers were a major element."<sup>230</sup> The idea that the folk revival was a reaction against societal changes is, again, not new. Just as youth in Newfoundland were adjusting to social and political changes in the 1960s and 1970s, those born in America in the 1940s in the "new middle-class" grew up in a changing society in which automobiles, television and

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<sup>229</sup> Bruce Jackson, "The Folksong Revival," *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p. 76.

<sup>230</sup> Jackson, "The Folksong Revival," p. 78.



“transcontinental markets” would change settlement, family structure, and patterns of communication. It created a generational gap between parents and children just as it had in Canada’s newest province.<sup>231</sup>

Yet even though outside influences were important, internal factors were also influential. There was a feeling that Newfoundland had been “ripped off by Confederation,” that Newfoundlanders were not getting their dues and deserved more. Yet, this does not mean that people became musicians mainly to promote Newfoundland culture. Many were simply trying to make a living in their chosen profession and would have become musicians despite location. However, Newfoundland musicians used their talent as a way to spread a message, whether consciously or not, that Newfoundland culture was “as good as” the culture of anyone and anywhere else.

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<sup>231</sup> Robert Cantwell, “When We Were Good: Class and Culture in the Folk Revival,” *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 35-60.

## Chapter 4

### A Reflection of Ourselves

#### The Evolution of Theatre in Newfoundland, 1965-1983

#### **Introduction**

Despite Gwyn's remarks about the "Newfoundland Renaissance," this chapter does not argue that theatre was reborn in Newfoundland, but rather illustrates how it changed. Little has been written about the development of theatre in the 1960s and 1970s. Chris Brookes, the founding member of the Mummery Troupe, is the only participant of the movement to have written a memoir about the 1970s. It is a chronological account from the formation of the Mummery until their demise, with him as the self-described hero.<sup>1</sup> Alan Filewod's work on Newfoundland theatre focuses on the Mummery, and therefore does not examine the broader development of theatre.<sup>2</sup> Patricia Cook examines The Mummery Troupe and CODCO, comparing them to two Quebecois groups, Le Theatre Euh! and Le Grand Cirque Ordinaire.<sup>3</sup> Janice Drodge examines the work of alternative theatres in Newfoundland between 1972 and 1982.<sup>4</sup> While these authors acknowledge the national and international influences on Newfoundland theatre, they downplay their importance, instead emphasizing the desire on the part of the actors to save a culture that they feared losing. While a genuine desire to protect and reclaim Newfoundland culture was certainly a factor in the province's theatrical developments,

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<sup>1</sup> See Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*.

<sup>2</sup> See Alan Filewod, "Writing the Mummery Troupe: Historiography and Me," in *Newfoundland Theatre Research: Proceedings, June 17-18, 1992* (St. John's: Memorial University, 1993), pp. 33-34; see also Alan Filewod, "The Life and Death of the Mummery Troupe," *The Proceedings of the Theatre in Atlantic Canada Symposium* (Sackville: Centre for Canadian Studies, 1986), pp. 127-141.

<sup>3</sup> See Cook, "National Cultures and Popular Theatres: Four Collective Companies in Quebec and Newfoundland."

<sup>4</sup> See Drodge, "A Heritage Portrayed: Nationalist Theatre in Newfoundland, 1972-1982," p. 114.

the importance of outside influences must be recognized.

During the cultural movement, professional theatre companies developed in Newfoundland, and there was a shift from scripted productions written by outside playwrights about outside issues to collectives written by local groups. These productions discussed what was happening in Newfoundland and told the stories of local people. Some parents of the members of the cultural movement felt that everything, including entertainment, from mainland Canada and Hollywood was superior to what was produced locally.<sup>5</sup> So, in the early 1970s, the new generation began to question this unstated assumption. They believed the arts and culture in Newfoundland were worth preserving and had almost been lost.<sup>6</sup> However, Mary Walsh claimed it was not about romanticizing “the good old days” before Confederation, but rather preserving the best of Newfoundland culture as the province moved forward.<sup>7</sup>

As the previous chapters have shown, much of the work done by artists reflected the feeling, in the actor Donna Butt’s words, that the province was “isolated, neglected, and misrepresented in the rest of Canada.”<sup>8</sup> Because of the vastness of the country, and the political and financial structures, many Newfoundlanders felt “powerlessness and disillusionment” at times.<sup>9</sup> While there had been benefits to Confederation, such as equalization grants and transfer payments, there was also resettlement, “overfishing by

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 2, 7:55].

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 25:00].

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 9 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 20:00].

<sup>8</sup> Brief Submitted by Donna Butt to the Applebaum-Hébert Report, May 1981, File 0413, Vol. 237, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Brief Submitted by Donna Butt to the Applebaum-Hébert Report, May 1981, File 0413, Vol. 237, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada, p. 3.

foreign fleets,” and “a slow erosion of a culture.”<sup>10</sup> The change in arts also reflected a change in Newfoundland society, according to Butt, an alumnus of the Mummers and a founding member of Rising Tide Theatre, as many Newfoundlanders complained only to one another in kitchens, pubs, and union halls until the 1970s when Newfoundlanders began to voice their feelings.<sup>11</sup>

Artists, such as Butt, Brookes, and the members of CODCO, believed theatre was a great means of communication, and in Butt’s words “good theatre [was] at once moving and analytical.”<sup>12</sup> It offered a forum to debate complex issues. Theatre in Newfoundland reflected changing economic and social realities of the province. Butt echoed Walsh’s sentiments, stating “Newfoundland [was] a rapidly changing place where the old and the new [existed] side by side. Our fate rests in our ability to cling to the best of the past and make the most of our future.”<sup>13</sup>

The first professional groups in Newfoundland developed during the 1970s, including the first semi-professional group the Newfoundland Travelling Theatre Company (NTTC). They were semi-professional, as none of the members of the troupe were making their living strictly from their acting. Either the members had full-time jobs or were students as well, and they made very little money from their performances.<sup>14</sup> The first full-time professional theatre was the Mummers Troupe, which was active from 1972

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<sup>10</sup> Brief Submitted by Donna Butt to the Applebaum-Hérbert Report, May 1981, File 0413, Vol. 237, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Brief Submitted by Donna Butt to the Applebaum-Hérbert Report, May 1981, File 0413, Vol. 237, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Brief Submitted by Donna Butt to the Applebaum-Hérbert Report, May 1981, File 0413, Vol. 237, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Brief Submitted by Donna Butt to the Applebaum-Hérbert Report, May 1981, File 0413, Vol. 237, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 1:00].

to 1982. Chris Brookes later reported that the Mummers Troupe were reacting to the British-centric culture that was being fostered by the provincial government, and the “cloned plastic-wrapped homogeneity of North American consumer capitalism.”<sup>15</sup> CODCO, another theatre troupe that was instrumental to the cultural movement, was similar, particularly its plays during the period from 1973 to 1976. They commented on topics such as Newfoundlanders living in Toronto, the building of new infrastructure in historic downtown St. John’s, and so on, albeit in a comedic and satirical fashion.<sup>16</sup> Both groups were influenced by developments in British, American and Canadian theatre, and thus were part of a broader theatrical and cultural moment. The resulting theatre was a unique blend of various dramatic styles that reflected local issues. Later, in 1978, former Mummers Troupe members established Rising Tide Theatre, which is still active today.

Sandra Gwyn argues that the theatre emerging in Newfoundland in the 1970s was “unscripted and improvisational,” and was “a natural extension of the kinds of things that happen in taverns and outport kitchens, when there’s Blue Star beer at the ready and the squeezebox is going full tilt.”<sup>17</sup> She writes that much of the theatre was developed by people under thirty with little formal theatrical training, describing CODCO as “commedia dell’ outport.”<sup>18</sup> The members of the troupe were “middle-class townies,” each having spent time in Memorial University’s Dramatic Society, as well as a couple of summers “touring Neil Simon comedies through the outports,” and eventually headed to Toronto in 1973. Gwyn argues “that in the hands of CODCO the Newfie Joke had

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<sup>15</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> See Helen Peters, ed., *The Plays of CODCO* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 42.

<sup>18</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” pp. 423-43.

become its own celebration.”<sup>19</sup> The Mummers Troupe, on the other hand, saw themselves as social activists. Gwyn suggests that the Mummers were the result of Brookes’s personal vision, who felt the Mummers Troupe was best defined as “an anarchist, agitprop, political-warfare-type theatre.”<sup>20</sup>

These companies fell into the pattern of other alternative theatres and collective creations being produced throughout Canada.<sup>21</sup> Filewod, a scholar of the history of Canadian theatre, who focused on radical political intervention theatre, argues that Canadian theatre was a “historically changing expression of an unstable idea of nationhood.”<sup>22</sup> He suggests that alternate theatres coincided with a revival of “nationalism in Canadian culture during the late 1960s.” These plays were inspired by a local community or political issue and created by actors who researched this and then performed the end product for a specific audience.<sup>23</sup> He argues this was more than “a passing theatrical fad,” enabling Canadian artists “to define indigenous theatre in terms of a popular audience rather than an educated elite.”<sup>24</sup>

Patricia Cook, an MA student in English at Carleton University in the 1980s, also argues that the work of CODCO and the Mummers Troupe was similar to Quebec companies such as Le Theatre Euh! and Le Grand Cirque Ordinaire. All four companies reflected methods and themes occurring nationally and internationally in the 1960s and

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<sup>19</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 43.

<sup>20</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 44.

<sup>21</sup> See Cook, “National Cultures and Popular Theatre.”

<sup>22</sup> See Filewod, “Writing the Mummers Troupe” p. 33-34; see also Filewod, “The Life and Death of the Mummers Troupe,” pp. 127-141.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Filewod, *Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. i.

<sup>24</sup> Filewod, *Collective Encounters*, pp. 184-185.

1970s, and shared features resulting from similar “historical, political, and cultural realities.”<sup>25</sup> Le Theatre Euh! and the Mummers Troupe attempted to create a theatre that explored the structure of their society and “proposed political solutions for oppressed classes and cultures.”<sup>26</sup> Le Grand Cirque Ordinaire was less militant but also tackled social issues, often using humour as its medium. While CODCO claimed that its main goal was to make people laugh, it often focused on “hypocritical societal institutions” and situations.<sup>27</sup> These groups tackled social institutions perceived to inhibit social progress.<sup>28</sup>

There was also a nationalist element to these theatres. Janice Drodge, a anthropology graduate student, argues that the Mummers Troupe and CODCO were proclaiming that Newfoundland had a unique and rich culture that required exploring. It was “the recognition of this heritage...that comprised the prime motivating philosophy underlying the activities of the alternate theatre companies.”<sup>29</sup> Both Cook and Drodge view the work of the Mummers and CODCO as promoting the uniqueness of Newfoundland culture. While Cook addresses the connections with North American and Canadian theatre, neither sufficiently acknowledges the significant importance of these influences, particularly that of Theatre Passe Muraille. This chapter examines the evolution of theatre in Newfoundland in the twentieth-century, discusses individual theatre companies, including the Mummers Troupe and CODCO, and places this evolution into a larger North American context.

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<sup>25</sup> Cook, “National Cultures and Popular Theatre,” pp. 134.

<sup>26</sup> Cook, “National Cultures and Popular Theatre,” pp. 134.

<sup>27</sup> Cook, “National Cultures and Popular Theatre,” pp. 134.

<sup>28</sup> Cook, “National Cultures and Popular Theatre,” pp. 136-137.

<sup>29</sup> Drodge, “A Heritage Portrayed,” p. 114.

### **Theatre Prior to the 1970s**

Theatre existed in Newfoundland prior to the 1970s. Louise Whiteway shows that St. John's had "been initiated into early English drama from 1806" when such plays as Field and Massinger's *The Fatal Dowry* were performed by local amateur actors who were joined by officers of the garrison. Then in the latter part of the nineteenth century, dozens of theatre companies visited St. John's, performing Shakespeare, Sheridan, Tom Taylor, and so forth.<sup>30</sup> The influence of visiting companies was prominent as many people in later amateur groups had been members of visiting British theatres.<sup>31</sup> The actor Greg Malone remembers the Freelance Players and the St. John's Players as "big amateur groups in St. John's," that produced "big elaborate productions."<sup>32</sup> Malone himself played Merlin in *Camelot* in his teenage years with one of these groups, and reflected in 2010 that it was great training for an actor.<sup>33</sup> Visiting theatre companies, such as the London Theatre, were also popular in St. John's. Although other companies, such as the Alexandra Theatre Company, had visited Newfoundland prior to the London Theatre Company, this particular group became a fixture in Newfoundland, or more particular, the St. John's arts scene during the 1950s. The Company performed traditional, arguably more professional, theatre. They presented Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Other plays put on included *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Jane Eyre*, *Pygmalion*, and others by Tennessee Williams and Agatha Christie.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Whiteway, "The London Theatre Company," p. 39.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 1:12].

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 0:51].

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 0:58].

<sup>34</sup> Louise Whiteway, "The London Theatre Company," *Newfoundland Quarterly*, p. 37; see also Steve Lord, "London Theatre Didn't Die, Apathy Killed It," *Evening Telegram*, 27 November 1976.



Prior to the 1970s, much of what occurred in Newfoundland drama, other than visiting theatre groups, such as the London Theatre Company, was amateur. Even the festivals which were supposed to support the development of drama in Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador celebrated amateur theatre. One of the most recognizable was the Dominion Drama Festival (DDF) which was “inspired by the international ‘art’ theatre movement, Drama Leagues in Britain and the United States, and a blossoming of the arts in Canada.” The DDF was founded in 1932 and was at least partly formed to connect the “Little Theatres” that had been established in many parts of Canada prior to World War II. The founders wanted to improve the “level of theatre, thereby enhancing the quality of life in Canada, fostering a national drama consistent with the maturing nation, and countering the overwhelming influence of American-based commercial touring.”<sup>35</sup> The first DDF was held in 1933. The festivals of the 1930s were held in Ottawa but later festivals were held in different cities. However, as several artists have argued about the provincial cultural policy, it was seen as “perpetuating social and colonial values and retarding the evolution of the professional theatre that supplanted it.”<sup>36</sup>

Newfoundland was not unique in this regard. Amateur theatre was also the dominant form in Canada prior to the 1960s and 1970s as well.<sup>37</sup> Between the 1920s and 1950s amateur theatre groups were sustaining theatre arts in Canada, argues Brian

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<sup>35</sup> Richard L. Plant, “Dominion Drama Festival,” in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press Canada, 2004), p. 183.

<sup>36</sup> “Newfoundland and Labrador Drama Festival,” Centre for Newfoundland Studies Vertical File, pp. 2-3.

<sup>37</sup> Cook, “National Cultures and Popular Theatre,” pp. 1 and 25.

Kennedy, whose scholarly interests focus on drama and English.<sup>38</sup> The Depression of the 1930s witnessed the development of a Leftist theatre movement known as the workers' theatre. Toby Ryan argues that the stock market crash of 1929 had an immense impact on the world and Canadian theatre. It was in the aftermath that the Progressive Arts Club and the Workers' Theatre were created in Canada, to "give voice to the shock of mass unemployment and the misery it brought to millions of people."<sup>39</sup> Ryan's Theatre of Action was part of the reaction to this movement, attempting to give people hope in a time of crisis.<sup>40</sup> Up to this point in Canada there was little indigenous dramatic work being done, and many of the scripts had to be imported. This continued to be true throughout the 1930s, and Ryan argues this was one of the failures of the Theatre of Action.<sup>41</sup>

Theatre in Canada continued to evolve and undergo changes, building on developments that had occurred only a decade or two earlier. Federal funding established regional theatres in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the Stratford Festival in 1953.<sup>42</sup> Brookes stated in 2009 that the regional theatres "looked like great big versions of the DDF amateur scene where you would do British and American plays."<sup>43</sup> He argued that the regional theatres were not mounting regional material, but instead mounting works of Shakespeare, Arthur Miller, and so on. The regional theatres in the west were doing the

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<sup>38</sup> Brian Kennedy, *The Baron Bold and the Beauteous Maid: A Compact History of Canadian Theatre* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2005), p. iii.

<sup>39</sup> Toby Gordon Ryan, *Stage Left: Canadians Workers Theatre, 1929-1940* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1985), p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> Ryan, *Stage Left*, p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> Ryan, *Stage Left*, pp. 15 and 110-111.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Wallace, *Theatre and Transformation in Contemporary Canada* (Toronto: Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, 1999), p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 13:00].

same material as those in the east.<sup>44</sup> This not only frustrated Canadian artists looking to produce their own work but, as Robert Wallace, a scholar of drama, contends, “defeated the goal of Massey and his commissioners to build an audience for Canadian plays.”<sup>45</sup> In its 1966-67 Annual Report, the Canada Council questioned whether regional theatres were able to uncover new playwrights commenting on Canadian society.<sup>46</sup> One of the reasons for this lack of development was the tighter financial measures implemented by the Canada Council.<sup>47</sup>

Wallace asserts that the alternate theatres rejected the “hierarchical structures of administration and performance institutionalized in the regionals’ approach to production,” and advocated a community experience that dealt with local issues.<sup>48</sup> Wallace cites Filewod, who argues that Massey was drawing upon the DDF, which perpetuated British cultural values, as inspiration for his report. In doing so, Massey neglected to acknowledge the viable model of the workers’ theatre movement in Canada in the 1930s, which “generated a dramatic literature out of its own experience.”<sup>49</sup>

However, by the 1960s, the economics of theatre were changing. The Canada Council subsidized construction of several regional theaters, yet, they still mostly promoted imported drama. There was usually a smaller second stage for the production of Canadian drama. Yet, the Centenary Celebrations in 1967 and Montreal’s Expo 67 produced resurgence in Canadian nationalism. This led to the production of Canadian

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 15:00].

<sup>45</sup> Wallace, *Theatre and Transformation*, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> Wallace, *Theatre and Transformation*, p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> Wallace, *Theatre and Transformation*, p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> Wallace, *Theatre and Transformation*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>49</sup> Wallace, *Theatre and Transformation*, p. 34.

drama on main stages of regional theatres.<sup>50</sup> Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille's collective creation was becoming popular. These plays included improvisation, were performed without scripts, and were based on local historical issues.<sup>51</sup> The alternative theatre movement was becoming clearly nationalist by the end of the 1970s. The companies were "defining their identity and cultural base in local history."<sup>52</sup>

As Diane Bessai explains, alternative theatres developed in two categories, those that promoted "the development of new playwrights," like the Factory Theatre Lab in Toronto and those that developed collective creations which were "actor-improvised plays." Theatre Passe Muraille was a "leading innovator" in the collective creation under the direction of Paul Thompson. Alternative theatre typically produced shows that combined "dramatic sketch, monologue, song and expressive gesture."<sup>53</sup> The actors played several roles, including inanimate objects, and props were minimal. This allowed for theatre that could be performed almost anywhere such as town halls, churches, or in public transit, such as streetcars and buses. Collective groups did not wait for an audience to find them but instead found their own audiences by addressing the public directly.<sup>54</sup>

As can be seen, theatre was changing throughout Canada in the 1960s and 1970s and Newfoundland was no exception. While Newfoundland had a long history of drama, with various amateur groups and visiting professional theatre companies, there were no indigenous professional theatre companies. The 1970s witnessed the development of

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<sup>50</sup> Wallace, *Theatre and Transformation*, p. 185.

<sup>51</sup> Wallace, *Theatre and Transformation*, pp. 186-187.

<sup>52</sup> Wallace, *Theatre and Transformation*, p. 187.

<sup>53</sup> Diane Bessai, *The Canadian Dramatist Volume Two: Playwrights of Collective Creation* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1992), pp. 13-14.

<sup>54</sup> Bessai, *The Canadian Dramatist Volume Two*, pp. 13-14; see also Filewod, *Collective Creation*, pp. 1-13.

several professional theatre companies, including the Newfoundland Traveling Theatre Company (NTTC), the Mummers Troupe, CODCO, and Rising Tide Theatre, a group further discussed in Chapter Five. Groups such as the Mummers Troupe and CODCO moved away from scripted plays and challenged the idea that theatre was for “the dominant economic class.”<sup>55</sup>

### **The Newfoundland Traveling Theatre Company**

The NTTC, a part-time professional theatre that traveled around the island, was formed in 1972 by Dudley Cox, a university professor and amateur actor, and David Weiser.<sup>56</sup> It finished in September of that year when its cast of young actors returned to university.<sup>57</sup> Malone reflected in 2010 that since Cox was English he set the company up on the English model and produced “a lot of English farce.”<sup>58</sup> On a tour of the province with this company several actors central to the later development of theatre in Newfoundland met, including Mary Walsh who became involved in the arts when she was 17. Walsh got a job as a summer replacement at CBC radio, and then Cox called her to take a part in an amateur play in the Basement Theatre of the then new St. John’s Arts and Culture Centre. Here Walsh met Tommy Sexton, who would become another core member of CODCO. In 1972, she did her “first semi-professional tour of the province

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<sup>55</sup> James Wade, “Theatre,” *Encyclopaedia of Newfoundland* Vol. 5 (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications Limited, 1993), pp. 366-367.

<sup>56</sup> Wade, “Theatre,” p. 367.

<sup>57</sup> Brookes, *Public Nuisance*, p. 43.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 4:36].

with the NTTC.”<sup>59</sup> On this tour they performed two shows, one for children, *The Wizard of Oz* and another *Pools Paradise*, “an English drawing room comedy.”<sup>60</sup> The actors received approximately \$40 to tour the island on a bus. On this tour Walsh met a core group of people that would influence the rest of her professional life. Sexton participated in this tour, as well as Andy Jones, Cathy Jones, Greg Malone, Dyan Olsen, and Bob Joy. Joy grew up in St. John’s and attended St. Bonaventure’s College, a school run by the Roman Catholic Christian Brothers, which was also attended by Andy Jones, Malone, and Sexton. Following his stint with the NTTC, Joy was chosen as a Rhodes Scholar; however after one year at Oxford he left to join CODCO full-time.<sup>61</sup> These people would eventually form CODCO and Walsh “met them all through the NTTC and remained involved with them over [her] entire career”<sup>62</sup>

Andy Jones recalled in 2009 that he was contemplating a move to Toronto when he got a job with the NTTC in the summer of 1972. Although he knew Malone from school, and Sexton somewhat, he met Walsh on this tour and the group began to discuss forming their own group and writing their own comedic material.<sup>63</sup> This was something Jones and Malone had earlier discussed. While the NTTC was central to the development

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<sup>59</sup> Winston Collins, “Robert Joy: A Movie Actor from Newfoundland Shoots to the Top,” *The Daily News*, 5 December 1981.

<sup>60</sup> Collins, “Robert Joy.”

<sup>61</sup> Collins, “Robert Joy.”

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 2:00].

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2009 [DVD 4:14]; see also “Profile: From CODCO Comedy, Tommy Sexton Switches to Drama in ‘The Hostage,’ *Newfoundland Herald TV Week*, 28 February 1979.

of professional theatre in Newfoundland, it was performing “standard repertory plays,” as well as original Newfoundland productions.<sup>64</sup>

### **The Mummers Troupe**

The Mummers Troupe formed shortly after the NTTC. Brookes and Lynn Lunde, whom Brookes had met in Vancouver, formed the Mummers in 1972. For both Brookes and Lunde, the objective was to cause social change.<sup>65</sup> Filewod argues that the Mummers Troupe was “one of the most innovative Canadian theatres of the 1970s.”<sup>66</sup> It was the first full-time professional theatre in Newfoundland and Filewod argues it “became the first company in English Canada to use theatre as a means of political intervention in community development.”<sup>67</sup> While Filewod suggests it was more closely comparable with Quebecois activist troupes such as le Theatre Euh! and le Grand Cirque Ordinaire, as does Cook, it was often compared to Theatre Passe Muraille. Like Passe Muraille, the Mummers “specialized in collectively created localist documentaries.”<sup>68</sup> Filewod argues that the Mummers were part of the “nationalist revival of the 1970s” that adopted the theatrical and improvisational techniques that characterized the global “radical” restructuring of dramaturgy. Thus, the alternative theatres in the rest of Canada were

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<sup>64</sup> Statement of Objectives, 15 July 1974, p. 1, File 8.001.002, The Newfoundland Traveling Theatre Company, Collection 129, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>65</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 6 and 10.

<sup>66</sup> Alan Filewod, “The Political Dramaturgy of the Mummers Troupe,” *Canadian Drama/L'Art dramatique canadien*, 13, 1 (1987), p. 60.

<sup>67</sup> Filewod, “The Political Dramaturgy of the Mummers Troupe,” p. 60.

<sup>68</sup> Filewod, “The Political Dramaturgy of the Mummers Troupe,” p. 60.

defined in opposition to an established system of theatre.<sup>69</sup> In Newfoundland, during the 1970s, there was no established theatre to be alternative to, which would ultimately cause funding problems for Brookes and his troupe as well.<sup>70</sup>

The Mummers Troupe was a very political and ideological group. Brookes was influenced by events happening in Newfoundland. He saw himself as a socialist and, while he had not read Marx at this point, always felt that he was a Marxist. Growing up Brookes had wanted to be an electrical engineer. At 13, he built a homemade tape recorder, recorded himself and for the first time heard his “broad brogue of a Newfoundland townie.” At that age, he argued, listening to the radio and watching television taught him that “Newfoundlanders were supposed to be some sort of second-class Canadians. We were a national joke. Canadians laughed at accents like [his].”<sup>71</sup> As a young teenager, he believed he would never get a decent job on the “mainland” with his Newfoundland accent and therefore worked hard to change his accent “to the ‘mid-Atlantic’ standard” of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. This experience greatly influenced his later theatrical pursuits as he attempted to preserve a culture he once wanted to distance himself from. Brookes ultimately abandoned engineering and studied theatre – the artistic form he would use in his attempt to save Newfoundland’s culture.<sup>72</sup>

Like many artists active in the cultural movement, Brookes felt that Newfoundland was losing its culture in the wake of Confederation with Canada in 1949,

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<sup>69</sup> Filewod, “The Political Dramaturgy of the Mummers Troupe,” p. 60.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 17:00].

<sup>71</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 4.

<sup>72</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance* p. 4.



and the resettlement program.<sup>73</sup> The fishermen's strike in Burgeo in 1969 led Brookes to start thinking about the political and cultural situation in Newfoundland. Brookes perceived that the idea of relocating fishing villages meant that traditional methods of work and cultural traditions were being destroyed. Brookes was determined to use his theatrical background to help preserve Newfoundland culture.<sup>74</sup> Brookes and the Mummers Troupe were in some ways reacting directly to the Smallwood government and the changes occurring under that regime. As he later put it: "I thought that was Smallwood's vision, that we were supposed to be a bunch of stunned arseholes that had no culture, and we just joined Canada so we better shape up real quick because they were making jokes about us and we had bad table manners and all of that stuff."<sup>75</sup> Brookes believed the Arts and Culture Centres, built across the province by the Smallwood administration, were where the government wanted Newfoundlanders to go to become cultured through listening to acts such as Harry Belafonte and the Canadian Opera Company. There was to be nothing indigenous performed in these spaces but instead outside groups would "basically show Newfoundlanders how to behave; this is what a culture is...I mean, that was the prevailing ethic in culture here at the time from the government."<sup>76</sup>

Brookes's reaction to rural Newfoundland was similar to that of members of other

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<sup>73</sup> Cadigan, *Newfoundland & Labrador*, pp. 246-247.

<sup>74</sup> Robin Endres, "Community provides impetus for Newfoundland troupe: Political theatre result of mummer tradition," *The Canadian Tribune*, 2 July 1975, History and Death of the Troupe, 1975-1982, File 2.04.006, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummers Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 25:00].

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 26:00].

movements as well. He argued that when he spoke of Newfoundlanders he was really speaking about people in the outports.<sup>77</sup> Brookes was raised in St. John's and recalled over thirty years later that his first tour of the island made him realize that this was what and who Newfoundland truly was. He had never traveled around the island prior to his puppet show tour of 1971, and found the experience "amazing. The scale lifted from my eyes [and] I thought My God is this who we are!"<sup>78</sup>

The idea for the Mummers Troupe evolved from experiences Brookes and his partner, Lunde, had while performing Punch and Judy shows around Newfoundland in 1971. Brookes described the plot as follows: "A roguish Punch bumps off his own first wife and child, and then a series of bourgeois authority figures. After he finishes off the figureheads of Law and Order, the Devil appears, to carry the transgressor off to the Fiery Furnace. Aha, you think, Righteousness triumphs at last. But Punch then demolishes the Devil as well and proclaims the demise of the whole system: 'Now we are free to do as we like!'"<sup>79</sup> Often Brookes and Lunde would insert a Smallwood puppet into the show, a puppet "who of course got beaten up."<sup>80</sup> Brookes and Lunde sometimes performed *The Punch and Joey Show*. The Joey puppet would get repeatedly hit in the head. Brookes claimed the "education objective" of the show was to get "crowds of children to chant 'Down with Joey! Get rid of him! Knock his block off!'"<sup>81</sup> Brookes wrote that they spoke to people and learned about the distinct identities in rural Newfoundland. While some

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<sup>77</sup> Letter from Chris Brookes to Jeanne Sabourin, 7 June 1972, File 6.01.003, The Resource Foundation for the Arts, Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1B, 12:00].

<sup>79</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 7.

<sup>80</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 9.

<sup>81</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 9.

communities were prosperous, others he thought were victimized by government policies regarding the fishery, resettlement, and development.<sup>82</sup> Rural areas and populations were still dealing with the social and economic effects of changes to fisheries policy, the resettlement program and other changes that had occurred since Confederation. Brookes argued that the developments following Confederation influenced cultural events, as people had lost their sense of identity.<sup>83</sup> Thus, by 1970, Brookes argues in his memoir, “economic frustration and cultural confusion coincided.”<sup>84</sup>

In June of 1972, Brookes wrote to Jeanne Sabourin of Theatre Canada stating that he wanted to “create a theatre resource in Newfoundland that will be of, for, and about the people and their culture.”<sup>85</sup> He explained that there had been significant changes in Newfoundland, including Confederation and resettlement. Brookes felt that as Newfoundlanders adjusted to the changes, valuable elements of culture were being lost. He felt there was a lack of communication among various areas of the island and “people are not in touch with themselves and what is happening to them – it’s this kind of communication that theatre is about. I want to make a communication tool.”<sup>86</sup> Brookes wanted to form a small traveling theatre that would act as a “catalyst for expression,” a group that could go into a community and “show them/work with them” to help formulate

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<sup>82</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>84</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 41.

<sup>85</sup> Letter from Chris Brookes to Jeanne Sabourin, 7 June 1972, File 6.01.003, The Resource Foundation for the Arts, Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>86</sup> Letter from Chris Brookes to Jeanne Sabourin, 7 June 1972, File 6.01.003, The Resource Foundation for the Arts, Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

their own experience and mirror their own existence.<sup>87</sup> This reflected what he told Sandra Gwyn, “we have to show people themselves before they forget who they are.”<sup>88</sup> Brookes was unsure of the form his company would take and thought the methods and style would be eclectic with the company taking shape over time. He also argued that he did not want to force ideas upon people but instead help empower them.<sup>89</sup> Brookes wanted to create a repertoire of Newfoundland theatre. He also wanted the theatre to be free and in no way commercial.<sup>90</sup>

In 1971, Brookes spent several months in Toronto directing a puppet project while Lunde studied anthropology at Rochdale College, a free liberal arts college that existed in Toronto from 1968 to 1975. It lacked the structure of more formal institutions and attempted to create a college where men and women could pursue wisdom “under the forms and by the avenues” deemed best by the student themselves.<sup>91</sup> Henry Mietkiewicz and Bob Mackowycz argue that “Rochdale embodied a revolution in the arts, education, sexuality, drug use and political philosophy. Acting as a magnet for disaffected and disillusioned members of the younger generation, it threatened to catapult a once-insulated community toward the extremes of other cities in the turbulent sixties.”<sup>92</sup> Following this experience, Brookes returned to Newfoundland in 1972 determined to

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<sup>87</sup> Letter from Chris Brookes to Jeanne Sabourin, 7 June 1972, File 6.01.003, The Resource Foundation for the Arts, Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>88</sup> Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 40.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 27:00].

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 5:00].

<sup>91</sup> David Sharpe, *Rochdale: The Runaway College* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Limited, 1987), p. 16.

<sup>92</sup> Henry Mietkiewicz and Bob Mackowycz, *Dream Tower: The Life and Legacy of Rochdale College* (Scarborough: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1988), p. 1.

develop a theatre that would participate in “constructive dialogue” about Newfoundlanders. He wanted a “full-time professional ensemble,” which was able to adjust to changing environments and would go into rural communities and create shows dealing with local issues.<sup>93</sup> The theatre would be able to travel to an area in crisis quickly, and provide a mirror helping residents clearly recognize their needs and their problems.<sup>94</sup> It was an attempt to engineer social change. The audience was to be the rural working-class for, as Brookes argued, rural areas were where “the real essence of Newfoundland culture” existed.<sup>95</sup>

The original objectives of the Mummers Troupe were “(a) to advance the use of live theatre as a vehicle for community and regional development in Newfoundland, Labrador and Canada, and to stimulate social change through social animation, (b) to promote Newfoundland and Labrador self-awareness as a means of social analysis, and (c) to seek out, develop and serve primarily working-class audiences in rural regions and in urban areas whose social reality is not normally represented on the Canadian stage.”<sup>96</sup>

The Mummers Troupe, including Chris Brookes, John Doyle, Lynn Lunde, Kevin Pittman, and Tommy Sexton, began by performing the mummers play, which they thought was rooted in Newfoundland working-class tradition.<sup>97</sup> The mummers play was performed as part of the Christmas tradition of Mummering, while visiting homes

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<sup>93</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>94</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 10.

<sup>95</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 11.

<sup>96</sup> Memorandum of Association of Mummers Troupe Arts Foundation, Memorandum and Articles of Association of The Mummers Troupe Arts Foundation, File 2.04.003, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummers Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 13, 46-47, and 52-55.

disguised during the twelve days of Christmas. The Mummers Troupe believed this play was a form of “indigenous working-class theatre,” with characters such as Father Christmas, the Doctor, Beelzebub, King George, and the Turkish Knight.<sup>98</sup> The Company went mummering every Christmas until it disbanded in 1982. Brookes argued that one of the important reasons for this was to allow “city dwellers” to see where their culture came from and “to realise that their heritage is not dull and dusty and outclassed by ‘commercial entertainment’ and American television programmes, but is exciting and meaningful and fun.”<sup>99</sup> The Mummers Troupe based much of their work on contemporary controversies, such as the development of Gros Morne National Park, and the dislocation of inhabitants in that area. This was to be a documentary piece. As Brookes maintained “the government’s view is adequately publicized; our show will need to deal with the residents’ view of their future.”<sup>100</sup> This was how the Mummers Troupe would create most of their productions, through a process called “collective creation.” The Mummers Troupe created a play about the strike in Buchans in this same vein in 1974.<sup>101</sup>

Community development was an important aspect of the Mummers work and they encouraged interaction with the people they worked with and based their performances on, including using their information and stories to develop plays, welcoming feedback, and asking their permission before performing the play in other areas. With their show *Buchans: A Mining Town/Company Town*, the Mummers consulted the community to

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<sup>98</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 46-61; see also Pocius, “The Mummers Song,” pp. 61-64.

<sup>99</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>100</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>101</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 113.

seek their permission to perform these plays elsewhere. In both cases, the community said yes and the Troupe toured the shows in the Maritimes and Toronto. Brookes contended that “the people in Buchans thought it important to do ... because Buchans is symptomatic of a bigger system. At the same time, however, the show is made for Buchans: I am not interested in saving anyone’s soul in Toronto. Theatre in Newfoundland is moving away from art-as-art to specific social usefulness. We’re very community-development oriented.”<sup>102</sup>

There were new developments in urban planning in St. John’s in 1975 which were prompted in part by modernization. The Community Planning Association of Canada (CPAC) wanted to revitalize the downtown of the capital through participation of citizens rather than doctrine emanating from City Hall, symbolic of the modernization that had characterized Newfoundland development since Confederation.<sup>103</sup> This was provoked by several proposed developments, including Atlantic Place, which was intended to be a 20-story hotel and office complex, and new CJON studio facilities on Signal Hill. Suburbs were to be built to the east and west of the city with arterial roads connecting these developments, and the Harbour Arterial linking the Harbour with the Trans Canada Highway.<sup>104</sup> Many groups, including the Newfoundland Historic Trust, and the Concerned Citizens Committee, were afraid that such developments would destroy the

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<sup>102</sup> Urjo Kareda, “Concerned Theatre from the Maritimes,” *The Toronto Star*, 9 June 1975.

<sup>103</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 128-129; see also “St. John’s: This City in Conference: 25-27 March 1973,” File 4.06.003, Sandra Gwyn Papers, Collection 316, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>104</sup> “St. John’s: This City in Conference: 25-27 March 1973,” File 4.06.003, Sandra Gwyn Papers, Collection 316, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

unique character of the city and would reflect similar developments in larger centers such as Vancouver and Toronto.<sup>105</sup> The Mummers Troupe worked with CPAC, who “wanted to sensitize the downtown’s predominantly working-class population to ... the erosion of residential priorities to the city core.”<sup>106</sup>

The CPAC was formed in the 1950s to inform the public about community planning. Initially, the membership comprised professional and business people, who brought in speakers. It is unclear when the St. John’s chapter was established, however, in 1973, important issues of community planning in St. John’s were developing. At this time, the CPAC membership became more open and varied.<sup>107</sup> The CPAC supported the Mummers Troupe for their production, *East End Story*, which investigated the effect such developments would have on downtown St. John’s. This was part of CPAC’s effort to inform the public about the proposed changes to the city.<sup>108</sup>

In the mid-1970s, the Mummers Troupe purchased the Longshoremen’s Protective Union (LSPU Hall) building in downtown St. John’s to create a theatre that would help foster the local arts community. The Hall, as it is more commonly referred to, was officially purchased by the Resource Foundation for the Arts (RFA), the administrative branch of the Mummers Troupe, “a non-profit, charitable organization set up to foster the

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<sup>105</sup> “St. John’s: This City in Conference: 25-27 March 1973,” File 4.06.003, Sandra Gwyn Papers, Collection 316, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>106</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>107</sup> Background on Groups Forming Community and Theatre Projects, The Mummers Troupe, File 5125-M3, Vol. 290, RG97, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>108</sup> Background on Groups Forming Community and Theatre Projects, The Mummers Troupe, File 5125-M3, Vol. 290, RG97, Library and Archives Canada.



growth of the arts in Newfoundland.”<sup>109</sup> In 1976, the Mummer’s received support from the Canadian government, including a \$57,500 grant from the Secretary of State to assist the Troupe to buy the Hall, renovate it, and acquire theatre equipment. The group also received money from donations, and, although Perlin has often been accused of not supporting local artists, the provincial government provided \$4500 towards this project. The Resource Centre for the Arts also acknowledged that Perlin had been supportive of the LSPU Hall project from the beginning.<sup>110</sup> It is unclear why Perlin supported this endeavour while artists contended he was not supportive of their work. Perhaps he saw this as a tangible project that would have the potential to provide support to the local arts community. His support may in part have stemmed from the fact that developing the Hall gave local groups a stage upon which to perform so that they would no longer to be asking to perform at the Arts and Culture Centre, alleviating some of the tension between him and local artists.

The Mummets renovated the Hall to meet theatre requirements and publicized the availability of the Hall and its usefulness as a “small, flexible rehearsal/performance/meeting place.” The rental costs were low and covered operating costs. The LSPU Hall was a contrast to the Arts and Culture Centres, as the Hall was

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<sup>109</sup> “Resource Centre for the Arts: A Brief History of the LSPU Hall as Theatre, October 1980,” History, File 2.02.004, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummets Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1; see also Letter to Gerald Abbott, President of the LSP Union from Lynn Lunde, Resource Foundation for the Arts, 15 January 1976, The Mummets Troupe, File 5125-M3, Vol. 290, RG97, Library and Archives Canada; Chris Pickard, “Resource Foundation for the Arts Survives,” *Evening Telegram*, 11 November 1988.

<sup>110</sup> “Resource Centre for the Arts: A Brief History of the LSPU Hall as Theatre, October 1980,” History, File 2.02.004, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummets Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

available “at low cost to performers and groups who found the Arts and Culture too large and expensive.”<sup>111</sup> The Arts and Culture Centre was a large venue, while the Hall had fewer seats, making smaller productions more feasible. The Mummers Troupe wanted the Hall to serve as a “downtown cultural centre,” and it developed a “reputation for its programs featuring popular cultural events with an indigenous Newfoundland character in a warm and intimate environment.”<sup>112</sup> Brookes recalled in a 2009 interview that “people could walk to it and it’s doing Newfoundland plays. It’s not doing British and American crap and so ... starting the Hall was an ideological statement for us.”<sup>113</sup> Brookes further stated, “it was like fuck you Arts and Culture Centre.”<sup>114</sup> In addition, the group hoped the Hall would be the cultural focus of downtown and remind people that the idea of Heritage Conservation and “restoration, renovation and rejuvenation” extended beyond buildings and applied to community life as well.<sup>115</sup>

In 1976, the Mummers Troupe agreed to create a play for Oxfam, yet worried about how Canadian audiences would accept their creation. The play depicted “Newfoundland as a Third World entity within Canada,” representing situations in other

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<sup>111</sup> “Resource Centre for the Arts: A Brief History of the LSPU Hall as Theatre, October 1980,” History, File 2.02.004, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummers Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 2..

<sup>112</sup> Letter to Walter Learning, Head, Theatre Section, Canada Council, from The Resource Foundation for the Arts, 20 January 1979, Grant, 1978-1979, File 3.03.009, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummers Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1B, 14:00].

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1B, 16:00].

<sup>115</sup> Letter to Walter Learning, Head, Theatre Section, Canada Council, from The Resource Foundation for the Arts, 20 January 1979, Grant, 1978-1979, File 3.03.009, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummers Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

depressed regions.<sup>116</sup> Brookes felt the trouble would be to get mainland audiences to take the Mummers Troupe seriously. Mainland Canadians “preferred to see Newfoundland as a kind of Atlantic Disneyland, a rugged and rubber-booted Elizabethan garden of ethnicity created for the holiday recreation of central Canadians.”<sup>117</sup> Brookes alleged that in the mid-1970s, Newfoundland nationalism was a “necessary evil.” It was a “handy and available weapon for a province battling its way out of a cultural insecurity complex.”<sup>118</sup> In addition, Brookes felt that CODCO’s caricatures of “rustic Newfoundlanders” were appreciated by Canadian and American audiences but not in rural Newfoundland. He argued that CODCO eventually only performed in St. John’s and tailored their material for Canadian audiences. He did not want the Mummers Troupe to become like that.<sup>119</sup> Brookes was not the only member of the arts community to feel this way. Best stated that there were times she was “embarrassed” by CODCO’s material because it seemed as if the troupe was “kind of putting down baymen a lot.” However, she acknowledged that in the larger picture they were not. So, she and her friends struggled a little with CODCO’s material.<sup>120</sup>

The Mummers engaged with the controversy over sealing in their plays, hoping to combat the anti-sealing propaganda from protest groups such as Greenpeace. They hoped to present Newfoundlanders’ point of view of the seal hunt and show its importance to

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<sup>116</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 163.

<sup>117</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 163.

<sup>118</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 170.

<sup>119</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 163.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 1A, 16:00].

Newfoundland's history, culture and society.<sup>121</sup> Sealing arguably represented a traditional form of income in Newfoundland society, and as Sean Cadigan argues "the seal hunt became a neo-nationalist cause."<sup>122</sup> Groups such as Greenpeace comprised mainly "affluent, urban North American professionals," and did not empathise with working people in rural Newfoundland. These groups began to protest the seal hunt in the 1970s.<sup>123</sup>

The last play Brookes was involved in was *Some Slick*, which focused on offshore oil development. Brookes argued that *Some Slick* attempted to demonstrate that the pace of offshore development and decisions surrounding these developments should be made by Newfoundlanders and not by oil businesses and developers.<sup>124</sup> Many of the plays that the Mummers Troupe developed dealt with issues that had already happened, for example, their show *Buchans a Mining Town/Company Town*, and *I.W.A.*, detailing the strike in Buchans and also the International Woodworkers Association Strike. One of the actors suggested to Brookes that while you could not change things after they had happened, "if only you could get ahead of what's happening, you might be able to help it happen in a better way."<sup>125</sup> This is what the group was attempting to do with *Some Slick*. It was a two-hour show discussing the possible impact of offshore development for both Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. It included songs, and comedic skits detailing the pros

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<sup>121</sup> Press Release, 14 December 1977, File 5.01.001, The Resource Foundation for the Arts, Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>122</sup> Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, p. 265; see also Shannon Ryan, *The Ice Hunters: A History of Newfoundland Sealing to 1914* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1994).

<sup>123</sup> Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, p. 264.

<sup>124</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 215.

<sup>125</sup> Press Release, 24 September 1979, File 5.01.001, The Resource Foundation for the Arts, Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

and cons that could potentially accompany offshore oil development. *Some Slick* argued that in order to maximise the potential benefits and minimize the possible social damage of offshore discoveries, the Atlantic Provinces would need to be prepared and plan for offshore discoveries.<sup>126</sup>

The Mummers were housed at the Hall from 1976 to 1979, during which time further divisions within the arts community developed. By 1979, there were many discussions about the RFA, the Hall and the relationship with the artistic community. There were complaints, including that the group was overcharging for rentals. This eventually created a feeling among many St. John's artists that "to work for the Hall or the Mummers was somehow a 'sell-out.'"<sup>127</sup> There was also concern in the St. John's arts community that the Hall was monopolized by the Mummers Troupe, which was something not intended by Brookes, even if it were accurate.<sup>128</sup>

A committee comprising members of the local arts community (the Appleby Committee) was created to call a public meeting to investigate the situation and discuss the RFA. The Committee suggested opening the RFA to community membership. Up until this time the membership of the RFA Board included Brookes and Lunde, who were the directors of the Mummers. Among the community there was a "general feeling ... that the RFA should be a more broadly based community organization and that the larger

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<sup>126</sup> Press Release, 24 September 1979, File 5.01.001, The Resource Foundation for the Arts, Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>127</sup> "Resource Centre for the Arts: A Brief History of the LSPU Hall as Theatre, October 1980," History, File 2.02.004, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummers Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-3; It is unclear from the archival record why this committee was named the Appleby Committee.

<sup>128</sup> Curtis Rumbolt, "The Hall Survives it All," *The Express*, 1 October 1997.

community should have a greater voice in the operation of the Hall.”<sup>129</sup> The Appleby Committee felt the breakdown in communication between the RFA and local artists hindered cooperation amongst the artistic community. The committee attributed this to misinformation. Complaints had been made about overcharging for rentals of the Hall in conjunction with complaints that the Hall was in debt. Thus, there was a movement by theatre and music groups to perform in other venues besides the Hall. The RFA, Mummers and the Hall were controlled by Brookes and Lunde, creating suspicion by artists but also placing the workload burden on Brookes and Lunde. Thus, as the workload fell to them it was only natural that they felt they should have control, inevitably creating a cycle without resolution. In order to break this cycle, the Committee felt that there was a need to share the burden of operating the Hall and to do this it was necessary to open the membership of the RFA to the community. From this membership, a Board of Directors would be elected and theoretically this would help avoid suspicion and distrust. Thus, the committee concluded there needed to be a separation of the Hall, RFA, and the Mummers Troupe.<sup>130</sup>

Between April and August of 1979, a group of 38 people boycotted all the functions at the Hall and the Mummer’s Troupe productions. In September 1979, the RFA was opened to public membership and a seven-member Board of Directors was

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<sup>129</sup> “Resource Centre for the Arts: A Brief History of the LSPU Hall as Theatre, October 1980,” History, File 2.02.004, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummers Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-3.

<sup>130</sup> The Board of Directors of Resource Foundation for the Arts, Dispute with RFA re LSPU Hall and Formation of RCA, 1977-1979, File 2.03.002, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummers Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-2.

elected.<sup>131</sup> The Board of Directors agreed that the RFA would be open to public membership and there would be a “formal separation” of the RFA and the Mummern.<sup>132</sup>

The Mummern Troupe ended in 1982 after 10 years. They attributed their decline to a shrinking budget, claiming that the group did not “want to conform to the demands of commercial popularity.”<sup>133</sup> As Brookes, the company spokesman, declared, “the company could change its mandate, produce middle-of-the-road shows with limited social relevance ... or it could close...we opted for an honourable death.”<sup>134</sup> Brookes blamed government funding agencies, both federal and provincial, stating that rather than supporting theatre that focused on community development, the trend to fund “Establishment” theatre, such as the Arts and Culture Centres and other regional theatres, continued.<sup>135</sup> In addition to these funding problems there were also internal problems as well. There was growing fragmentation among local artists. Brookes contended that even

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<sup>131</sup> “Resource Centre for the Arts: A Brief History of the LSPU Hall as Theatre, October 1980,” History, File 2.02.004, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummern Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-3; see also Resource Foundation for the Arts, LSPU Hall, Victoria St., St. John’s, Media Release – For Immediate Release – 3 December 1979, Dispute with RFA re LSPU Hall and Formation of RCA, 1977-1979, File 2.03.002, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummern Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 1.

<sup>132</sup> Resource Foundation for the Arts LSPU Hall, Victoria St., St. John’s, News Bulletin, 14 September 1979, Dispute with RFA re LSPU Hall and Formation of RCA, 1977-1979, File 2.03.002, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummern Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, pp. 1-2.

<sup>133</sup> “No money, Mummern announce their final bow in Newfoundland,” *Globe and Mail*, 10 November 1982, History and Death of the Troupe, 1975-1982, File 2.04.006, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummern Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>134</sup> “No money, Mummern announce their final bow in Newfoundland,” *Globe and Mail*, 10 November 1982, History and Death of the Troupe, 1975-1982, File 2.04.006, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummern Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>135</sup> Kathleen Winter, “Mummern bite the dust: When art and politics divorce the purse strings are drawn tight,” *This Week*, 15 November 1982. History and Death of the Troupe, 1975-1982, File 2.04.006, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummern Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

after the Mummers turned the Hall over to the RCA there continued to be infighting. The rift amongst local artists added in small part to the end of the Mummers. However, Brookes argued that, in his opinion, the major reason was “inadequate government support for the arts. As money can come between a couple, it can set groups battling each other.”<sup>136</sup>

### **CODCO**

CODCO, the other professional alternative theatre, was formed in 1973 by Tommy Sexton and Dyan Olsen. As Helen Peters, editor of a collection of CODCO’s plays, claims, CODCO had many of the same characteristics of other collective companies. The company’s work took various forms such as monologues, improvisation, mime, song, and dance. It also dealt with political and social issues and themes rather than personal ones, and, like the Mummers, its work challenged “the assumption that theatre was only for the dominant economic class.”<sup>137</sup> However, as Peters points out, its use of humour separated it from other collective productions, including the Mummers Troupe, which were often earnest, single-minded and angry. CODCO’s humour, however, could often be tough and they often dealt with tragic topics.<sup>138</sup> While CODCO were not as overtly political or ideological as the Mummers, they were political nonetheless. The Mummers dealt with specific political issues at a community level,

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<sup>136</sup> Rex Murphy, “The Great Lost Party Adrift,” *This Week*, 15 November 1982, History and Death of the Troupe, 1975-1982, File 2.04.006, The Resource Foundation for the Arts (The Mummers Troupe), Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>137</sup> Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, pp. xix-xx.

<sup>138</sup> Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, pp. xix-xx; and Cook, “National Cultures and Popular Theatre,” pp. 135.



whereas CODCO, as Peters argues, discussed relevant social and political situations in general.<sup>139</sup> For example, they hoped to help counter the negative image of Newfoundlanders on the mainland. As Walsh maintained “most people think of us either as a bunch of idiots or simple minded fishermen living simple lives in tiny villages. It’s wrong, of course, and CODCO was formed to help combat that image.”<sup>140</sup>

The members of CODCO dealt with the prejudice that Newfoundlanders were facing in other parts of Canada and it was this which informed their first show *Cod on a Stick*. Malone had gone to Toronto to pursue a career as an actor because Toronto was an epicentre for the growing underground theatre movement, such as Theatre Passe Muraille, Backdoor Theatre and the Factory Theatre Lab. He worked with Global Village Theatre, Backdoor Theatre, and Theatre Passe Muraille. Sexton, Olsen, and Cathy Jones went to Toronto looking for work as well. Sexton, who had travelled to Toronto as a very young teenager, and Olsen auditioned for Theatre Passe Muraille and, while they were not cast in the show, Paul Thompson, creative director at Theatre Passe Muraille gave Sexton \$300 and rehearsal space to start his own show. So, in 1973, while in their late teens, the group of Sexton, Olsen, and Cathy Jones began doing some of the material they had previously performed with Cox, as well as some original material they had written. After having some difficulty developing and organizing their material, Sexton persuaded Malone to join the group.

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<sup>139</sup> Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, p. xx.

<sup>140</sup> *The Ottawa Journal*, 22 October 1979, File 4.06.003, Sandra Gwyn Papers, Collection 316, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Tired of the prejudice they experienced in Toronto, and being asked questions such as “Oh, do you live in an igloo? Have you ever seen a tv?,” the group decided to do a scene about Newfoundlanders and Canadians. The group wanted to put together a show depicting tourists visiting a small town in Newfoundland and the culture shock they would experience. The show consisted of twenty minutes of original material. It was a short show – short shows were popular at the time – and it was well received. A good review from Urjo Kareda, a theatre critic with *The Toronto Star*, encouraged the fledgling group to continue.<sup>141</sup> He claimed that the show was “a vigorously delightful program of sketches,” that was “so jammed with hilarity that it’s just as well the seating arrangements require the audience to recline – you’d end up on the floor sooner or later simply from laughter.” He also commented that the use of Newfoundland “accents and linguistic idiosyncrasies” gave the show a verbal texture that was “rich, strange, and poetic” and while the show was a “wonderful instant mosaic of that 10<sup>th</sup> province,” it also made witty commentary about the other nine.<sup>142</sup> Mary Walsh was persuaded to leave Ryerson, where she was taking acting classes, to join the group by Mary White, Malone’s partner who would also become CODCO’s manager; scenes were added to the show and it eventually was called *Cod on a Stick*, which represented “selling your heritage, cheap as a fast food sort of thing.”<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 10:02].

<sup>142</sup> Urjo Kareda, “It’s non-stop comedy with Cod on a Stick,” *The Toronto Star*, 10 December 1973.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 10:39]; see also History of CODCO, File 1.34, CODCO Papers, Collection 121, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

CODCO's purpose was undoubtedly political. The central themes of *Cod on a Stick* were the economic needs of Newfoundlanders, the communication problems with fellow Canadians, and their "perverse joy" in the marginalization they experienced as part of the "relationship between Newfoundland and Canada."<sup>144</sup> One motif in the play was Mother England giving the "Newfie" puppet to Assistant Captain Canada. Since this change occurred Newfoundland had been affected by centralist policies of the federal and provincial governments, such as that of the resettlement program.<sup>145</sup> As Malone later argued over thirty years later:

[CODCO] had a political agenda with *Cod on a Stick* and that was to turn the old notions and prejudices and cliché understanding of Newfoundland on its ear and mock both ourselves and the Canadians in the process and try to normal off the situation by laughing at both. But it was very much a political agenda coming from a feeling of oppression of a certain sort or being misunderstood or needlessly stigmatized. As I say we went to, or as White [Mary White, CODCO's manager] said, we went up to Toronto Canadians and we came back Newfoundlanders. We were Canadians when we went up. We had fully integrated with the wide world. We were listening to British and American influences, we were as connected as anyone else. We were shocked to find ourselves so marginalized in Toronto by some.<sup>146</sup>

Many theatre groups discussed resettlement, partly because there was a perception that people were forced to leave their communities. Resettlement, in a sense, provoked artists and was discussed in a lot of the plays and stories that were written.<sup>147</sup> The Mummers Troupe felt that Newfoundland was losing its identity in the wake of changes such as Confederation and resettlement and it was this which spurred Brookes to want to

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<sup>144</sup> Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, p. xxii.

<sup>145</sup> Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, p. xxii.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 12:49].

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Donna Butt conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 16 January 2010 [DVD 27:07].

create a communication tool through theatre.<sup>148</sup> CODCO overtly remarked on resettlement in their play *Cod on a Stick*. In “The ‘appy Province” a group of Newfoundlanders were discussing how happy they were. The character Loll told her friends there was a time when she thought she would be unhappy, moving from Merasheen to a “growth centre” in Centreville. Her husband Jack assured her she would be content with a bungalow, water and sewerage, and two square feet of land. Of course, her husband Jack could not fish anymore because there was no ocean where they had moved and they could not grow their own vegetables anymore. However, they had more than enough neighbours to make up for this slight inconvenience. The scene suggested some of what was lost in resettlement, such as self-reliance, a way of life, the ability to sustain a level of subsistence agriculture, the loss of land, and thereby the loss of freedom to a certain extent. Now instead of their own land, people were surrounded by neighbours on their left and right.<sup>149</sup>

CODCO also addressed the shame that many Newfoundlanders felt about where they were from. An example of this is in *Sickness, Death and Beyond the Grave* when Bernie Snelgrove leaves the secure future of running his uncle’s grocery and confectionary business to pursue his dreams of stardom in Toronto. When he became a superstar he denied being from Newfoundland three times.<sup>150</sup> Mary Walsh recounted

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<sup>148</sup> Letter from Chris Brookes to Jeanne Sabourin, 7 June 1972, File 6.01.003, The Resource Foundation for the Arts, Collection 126, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland; see also Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 28:00].

<sup>149</sup> *Cod on a Stick*, in Helen Peters, ed., *The Plays of CODCO* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992), p. 29.

<sup>150</sup> *Sickness, Death and Beyond the Grave*, in *The Plays of CODCO*, edited by Helen Peters, pp. 71-88.

many years later that in the 1960s, Newfoundlanders were coming out of a period of feeling ashamed of Newfoundland “because the old ways were dying and we didn’t seem to be catching up very fast.”<sup>151</sup> Smallwood’s dream of industrialization had not materialized and people had tried to run away from the old ways but the new ways were not working either. So, she argued “we’d gone from being the doormat of Britain to becoming Canada’s laughing stock and people would try to pretend they weren’t from Newfoundland. People would deny Newfoundland three times before the cock crowed.”<sup>152</sup>

Like the Mummers Troupe, CODCO had been commissioned by the CPAC to do a show discussing the changes that were occurring in downtown St. John’s.<sup>153</sup> The result was the play, *Das Capital: Or What Do You Want to See the Harbour for Anyway?* *Das Capital* reflected how the new development would eliminate the character of downtown St. John’s. It parodied Newfoundland’s place in Canada as the poorest province, and demonstrated the urban elite control over development and what CODCO believed to be an attempt to maintain class divisions. Such economic disparity led to an exploitation of the poor, which illustrated how social lines were maintained and governed the economy of Newfoundland. The scenes in *Das Capital* showcased the idea that economic gain outweighed the consideration of social consequences.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 13:00].

<sup>152</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 14:00].

<sup>153</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 128-129.

<sup>154</sup> Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, pp. xxiv-xxvi.

CODCO suggested that these proposed changes to downtown St. John's would destroy the uniqueness of the city and make Newfoundland like any other centre. Visiting tourists would "wake up in the morning and they don't know but they're in Boston somewhere."<sup>155</sup> A character, Frank, facetiously argued that the Southside Hills in downtown St. John's should be ploughed into the harbour because the height of the hills would fill in the depth of the harbour and create a parking lot. For as the character Daphne asked, "what d'ya want to see the harbour for anyway?"<sup>156</sup> Later on in the show, they sang a song, "America's got skyscrapers,/ Smog and tears and crime,/ What's wrong with us in Newfoundland?/ Let's make up for lost time./ Let's rip down our wooden houses,/ Pass progressive bills/ To straighten out our widening roads, And flatten out our hills, Blow up our pine clad hills."<sup>157</sup> This depicted CODCO's opposition to the downtown development and the point of view that it would ruin what was unique in Newfoundland. This further reflected their political agenda and their attempt to preserve what they viewed as valuable in Newfoundland culture.

CODCO disbanded in 1976 and their last play was entitled *The Tale Ends*, which was a combination of both new and reworked material.<sup>158</sup> Andy Jones explained that the members had become "bored with it" and that all the members had other things they wanted to achieve and pursue at that time.<sup>159</sup> The group felt that towards the end they

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<sup>155</sup> *Das Capital: What Do You Want to See the Harbour For Anyway?*, in *The Plays of CODCO* edited by Helen Peters (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992), p. 165.

<sup>156</sup> *Das Capital: What Do You Want to See the Harbour For Anyway?*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>157</sup> *Das Capital: What Do You Want to See the Harbour For Anyway?*, p. 190.

<sup>158</sup> Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, p. xxviii.

<sup>159</sup> "CODCO breaking up," *Daily News*, 23 November 1976.

were not developing new or interesting material.<sup>160</sup> There were also some internal conflicts brewing. At a meeting the group decided that only those performing on stage would be members of the company. This decision therefore excluded their manager, Mary White, as a member of the company, which was perceived by White and Malone to undervalue her administrative contribution to the group.<sup>161</sup> Yet the members reunited for charity shows from time to time and a majority of the members would unite for a CBC television show that ran from 1987 to 1992.<sup>162</sup>

### **Interconnections Between the Groups**

While there were internal conflicts, the ideas that spurred these groups were similar. This is not surprising as there was a great deal of interconnection and cross-pollination between them. CODCO had a fairly permanent cast, including Tommy Sexton, Dyan Olsen, Cathy Jones, Greg Malone, Mary Walsh, Bob Joy, and Andy Jones.<sup>163</sup> Yet the Mummers was constantly in flux. Sexton had participated in the mummers play in 1972. Dyan Olsen had taken part in the Mummers' *Newfoundland Night* show in 1973. Mary Walsh was in the touring version of *Newfoundland Night* in the summer of 1973 and in *Gros Morne* in August of 1973, and also later directed the Mummers productions of *Makin' Time with the Yanks* in 1981 and 1982. Dudley Cox, co-founder of the NTTC, directed the 1976 tour of *What's That Got to Do with the Price of Fish?* Donna Butt was involved in *Newfoundland Night* in 1973, *Gros Morne* in 1973,

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<sup>160</sup> "CODCO: The Tale Ended," *The Bight* (March 1977), p. 24.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 25:16].

<sup>162</sup> Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, pp. xviii-xix.

<sup>163</sup> Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, pp. xi-xii.

*Buchans a Mining Town/Company Town* in 1974, *Once a Giant, Punch and Judy* in 1974, *Traditional Newfoundland Christmas Mummers Play* in 1974, *Dying Hard* in 1975, *I.W.A.* in 1975, *What's That Got to Do With the Price of Fish* in 1976, and *They Club Seals, Don't They?* in 1977. There was even a direct connection with Rick Salutin, a Canadian playwright who had worked with Passe Muraille – he also wrote for the Mummers during the production of *I.W.A.*, which detailed the strike of the International Woodworkers Association.<sup>164</sup> There were also connections with other members of the cultural movement. Visual artists created sets for theatre groups. For example, Frank Lapointe designed the set for the Mummer's play *I.W.A.*<sup>165</sup> Musicians worked with theatre artists as well, with Sandy Morris writing songs for CODCO plays and Pamela Morgan performing in Mummers productions.<sup>166</sup> Members of the cultural community worked with different types and genres of art because to them it all represented Newfoundland culture, or their attempt to preserve Newfoundland culture.

### **Outside Influences**

A number of outside sources influenced these groups. Brookes acknowledged in a 2009 interview that he was influenced by American theatres such as the San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Living Theatre, which he was exposed to when he attended theatre school in the United States at both Yale and the University of Michigan. Of course,

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<sup>164</sup> Filewod, *Collective Encounters*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>165</sup> Interview with Frank Lapointe conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 April 2010 [Cassette 1A, 32:00].

<sup>166</sup> Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, p. 446; see also Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 144.



Theatre Passe Muraille influenced him as well and he had been a visiting director there.<sup>167</sup>

Theatre Passe Muraille was also a huge influence on CODCO. Not only did Greg Malone work there but Paul Thompson financed and facilitated the beginning of CODCO.

CODCO was influenced by American comedians, such as Elaine May and Mike Nichols, who would appear on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, as well as *Lucille Ball*.<sup>168</sup> American and Canadian sketch comedy groups were important as well, with Andy Jones listing America's *Saturday Night Live* as an influence, as well as Canada's improv group Second City Television.<sup>169</sup> For CODCO, British humour was also influential, such as *Goon Show*, a 1950s British radio comedy, and *Beyond the Fringe*, a 1960s British show that was at the beginning of the British "satire boom."<sup>170</sup> Andy Jones, Greg Malone, and Mary White spent time in England in 1971.<sup>171</sup> Jones worked with British director Ken Campbell there before returning to Newfoundland to join CODCO.<sup>172</sup>

The work of Monty Python, which embodied satire that bordered on surrealism, was also very influential to CODCO.<sup>173</sup> Just as Monty Python satirically parodied God's omnipresence in people's lives and therefore brought that relationship into question, so too did CODCO question the role of the Roman Catholic Church in people's lives as well

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<sup>167</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 12:00]; see also Chris Brookes' Personal Resume, Community Artist in Residence Proposals to Canada Council, Extension Service Collection, Box 9, Memorial University or Newfoundland Archives.

<sup>168</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 35:12].

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2010 [DVD 13:09].

<sup>170</sup> Humphrey Carpenter, *A Great, Silly Grin: The British Satire Boom of the 1960s* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), pp. 52-53 and 116-123.

<sup>171</sup> Derek Pelley, "People Take Pictures of the Summer," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 102, 4 (2010), pp. 10-11, and 25.

<sup>172</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2009 [DVD 12:51].

<sup>173</sup> Carpenter, *A Great, Silly Grin*, p. 304; see also Stephen Faison, "God Forgive Us," *Monty Python and Philosophy: Nudge Nudge, Think Think* (Chicago: Open Court, 2006), pp. 125-127.

as the exploitative nature of this at times. As Andy Jones contended, members of the group, who were all Roman Catholic, were dealing with both the negative and positive effects their religion had left on them.<sup>174</sup> Jones said “we could always see the humour in the Church and in the education system ... All these priests and brothers, the whole Church, in fact, were trying to make rules for the insane and chaotic creatures that are human beings. There was lots of material there ... We could see the absurdity of it all.”<sup>175</sup> The monologue “Father Dinn on Sin” in *Das Capital* showed a priest exploiting a child’s fear of “innate sinfulness, eternal damnation, unendurable suffering and the growing awareness and exposure of institutional and individual power over the weak and helpless.”<sup>176</sup> Father Dinn lost his mind after giving a sermon on sin and the burning fires of hell, a sermon he had given for thirty-five years. He displayed his frustration with the sermon and topic and in losing his mind threatened to expose himself to the children.<sup>177</sup> Sandy Morris also argued that the Catholic Church heavily influenced CODCO’s material, which spoke of the physical abuse and mental cruelty experienced at the hands of the members of the Church. Morris recounted in 2009 being taught as a young child in school that his father was going to hell because he was not Catholic, making a young Morris frightened going home. He argued “there’s got to be a gentler way to teach religion.”<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2009 [DVD 38:39].

<sup>175</sup> Anne Chislett, “A Conversation with Andy Jones,” *Theatre in Atlantic Canada* (Fall 2006), p. 14.

<sup>176</sup> Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, p. xxvi.

<sup>177</sup> *Das Capital, The Plays of CODCO*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 12:13].

Anti-clericism was an important theme in CODCO. As Sara Jodi McDavid points out, CODCO was the first group to depict Catholicism in popular culture in Newfoundland.<sup>179</sup> Many of the skits reflected or were satires of experiences that are detailed in Malone's memoir *You Better Watch Out*, depicting his childhood in St. John's, including his early education at St. Bonaventure's College which was led by the Christian Brothers.<sup>180</sup> Malone had attended St. Bon's with Jones and Sexton. He detailed hypocrisies experienced there. For example, Brother Clancy asked a student "who is God?" The grade two student replied that he did not know. Brother Clancy then proceeded to hit the student on the head with the catechism, stating God is love, "L.' Smack. 'O.' Smack. 'V.' Smack. 'E.' Smack. 'Love.' Smack."<sup>181</sup> The Brother was preaching love, but using violence to teach.

While Malone's account of the Christian Brothers is not entirely negative, his story provides insight into why the members of CODCO questioned their religion. In addition to his description of the Christian Brothers is a more negative, yet brief, portrayal of his experience with the Jesuits, a religious order of the Roman Catholic Church committed to education, at Gonzaga High School in St. John's. He writes that he and his fellow classmates had expected more mature behaviour from the "highly famous Jesuits," yet his first image of a Jesuit upon arriving at the school was when

he came upon us with his arm raised and his strap  
swinging wildly, his flat face distorted and red  
with anger. Shrieking and screaming he descended

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<sup>179</sup> Sara Jodi McDavid, "Counterclericalism: Vernacular Commentary on the Power of the Catholic Priest in Atlantic Canada," (PhD Thesis: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2012), p. 79.

<sup>180</sup> See Malone, *You Better Watch Out*.

<sup>181</sup> Malone, *You Better Watch Out*, pp. 110-111.

on us, the very hound from Hell. This ghastly apparition was the Reverend Father Holland, SJ, and the very first member we had ever seen of the Society of Jesus, that Prince of Peace so endlessly betrayed. The appearance of his dark, hysterical figure troubled our hearts greatly, and though we had hoped for more and were ready for better, I am sad to report that it was rather a case of out of the frying pan and into the fire.<sup>182</sup>

The Jesuits were portrayed in the CODCO skit “McJesuit,” in which the Jesuit tried to teach the boys to say good morning in the appropriate manner and also to pronounce their names properly, eventually losing his mind in the process.<sup>183</sup>

The personal lives of CODCO members greatly influenced their work. Morris argued that one of the reasons for CODCO’s success was that people could relate to them. He contended people could look at any one of their characters and identify someone they knew that resembled the character. Sandy Morris remembered Tommy Sexton writing scripts based on encounters with his family. For example, if they had an argument at Christmas time, he is remembered as writing it down word for word and it would end up in a CODCO skit. If Sexton went to a party Morris said that he would study the guests and could do an impression of anyone who had attended verbatim.<sup>184</sup> The cast of CODCO would interpret these events in their own way and produce comedy. They were presenting their own interpretation of reality.

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<sup>182</sup> Malone, *You Better Watch Out*, p. 352.

<sup>183</sup> *Cod on a Stick*, in *The Plays of CODCO*, edited by Helen Peters, p. 45.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 25:14].

### **Institutional Influences**

These groups were also influenced by developments at Memorial University of Newfoundland, as outlined in Chapter Two. Members of CODCO were influenced by academics such as George Story, by the curator of the Art Gallery Edythe Goodridge, and people at Extension Service because they “believed in Newfoundland” and their sense that there was something in Newfoundland worth holding on to.<sup>185</sup> Brookes was influenced by the Fogo film process. Brookes believed it was “a community development process,” as well as a cultural one. He was really impressed with the idea of using film to empower people and wanted to do the same with theatre. While the group wanted to create great shows, that was not the main objective. The Mummers were using their shows as a “vehicle for community development.”<sup>186</sup> Brookes claimed it was “electric” to produce a new show and “it was like the audience was so hungry for a mirror of themselves you know. It was like we were all in it together; this is a show about us. And it’s like people came to the theatre with that kind of expectation. It was great. I mean, it was electric, it’s like sparks would fly in the audience. It was incredible.”<sup>187</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The period between 1965 and 1983 was one of great growth in professional theatre in Newfoundland. While the influence of Newfoundland culture and local

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<sup>185</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 3 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 14:00].

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 21:00].

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1A, 29:00].

developments cannot be overemphasized, likewise the influence of outside developments cannot be ignored. Andy Jones said that as “as artists if we had moved somewhere else maybe we would have found something else,” but he also expressed how influential developments in Newfoundland had been on the work of CODCO.<sup>188</sup> It cannot be denied that a genuinely deep affection for Newfoundland and concern for the province’s future and culture spurred many of these changes in Newfoundland theatre. These groups were dealing with political issues that were relevant to Newfoundland society at the time. Although the Mummers were more overtly political, CODCO satirically parodied political issues as well, bringing attention to what they viewed as social and political injustice. It is also impossible to ignore the outside influences that were determining the direction of theatre, such as the alternative theatre movement. While the issues that these groups were dealing with were unique and local, the fact that they were writing about local issues and themes was not unique. This type of theatre had sprouted across North America and CODCO was merging this with British satire. However, while Newfoundland was a part of the theatre movement that was occurring elsewhere nationally and globally, the Mummers Troupe and CODCO hoped to use their work to tell the story of Newfoundland and its people.

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<sup>188</sup> Interview with Andy Jones conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 11 November 2009 [DVD 21:29].

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Beginning of the End**

### **The Decline of the Cultural Movement**

#### **Introduction**

A shift occurred in the cultural movement in the late 1970s. Groups that had been established earlier in that decade began to experience problems: the Mummers Troupe was splitting up; CODCO had already disbanded; Figgy Duff was expanding their repertoire beyond traditional music. Groups still discussed issues important to Newfoundland, such as the tension between government cultural policy and the arts community, and Confederation and resettlement, yet they were more closely linked to the “Establishment” and sought commercial success. One such group was the Wonderful Grand Band. Akin to Figgy Duff, members of this band reacted against other groups and television shows that they found “kitchsy” and that they thought provided a limited representation of Newfoundland music. However, the Wonderful Grand Band was essentially a creation of the CBC, the same television station that televised shows, such as “All Around the Circle” and “Don Messer’s Jubilee,” which promoted the music the members of the Wonderful Grand Band rebelled against. Changes were also occurring in theatre. Rising Tide Theatre was established in 1978 by former members of the Mummers Troupe. While Rising Tide created and performed collectives, it also performed scripted plays, and had a closer relationship with the Division of Cultural Affairs than either the Mummers Troupe or CODCO. In addition, there were also political changes. In 1979, A. Brian Peckford was elected Premier of Newfoundland and he expressed greater support for the arts than had either Smallwood or Moores. Thus, there was a shift in the cultural

community and in the political environment in the late 1970s. Many of the groups that embodied the cultural movement ended.

### **The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation**

Members of the cultural movement reacted in particular to the commercialization of Newfoundland folksong. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) played a role in this with “All Around the Circle,” a popular folksong television series that was filmed in St. John’s. It had been popular in Newfoundland since 1964, and the network decided to make the show national in a summer series in 1973.<sup>1</sup> Media at this time sometimes promoted folk themes. As Carole Henderson Carpenter, a scholar focusing on folklore in the reconstruction of identity, argues, radio and television media, in particular the CBC, had long used folk themes in their programming. These shows often featured “popular music” rather than “traditional performances.”<sup>2</sup> At this time, the CBC wanted to promote local programming. The purpose of the CBC was to help “make and keep Canadians aware of their own values, needs, and goals as expressed by their artists, writers and observers.”<sup>3</sup> Warner Troyer declared that one of the goals of the CBC was “to foster a Canadian sense of identity” and also to make Canada familiar to Canadians.<sup>4</sup> The CBC also had a role in helping to develop Canadian culture, and made significant strides to

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<sup>1</sup> “CBC-TV Network Promotion: The Songs and Flavour of Newfoundland in New Series ‘All Around the Circle,’” Vol. 938, RG 41, File 697 “All Around the Circle,” Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Carole Henderson Carpenter, *Many Voices: A Study of Folklore Activities in Canada and Their Role in Canadian Culture* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1979), pp. 68-69.

<sup>3</sup> “A Plan for CBC Radio in the Seventies,” File 603, RG 41, Vol. 938, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>4</sup> “Consumer Broadcasting Proposal,” From Warner Troyer to John Kerr, Supervisor, Current Affairs, Toronto, 1968, File 695, RG 41, Vol. 938, Library and Archives Canada.



preserve Canadian culture while representing regional and ethnic differences in the Canadian population as well as the diversity in the performing and visual arts.<sup>5</sup>

The CBC advertised “All Around the Circle” in a stereotypical manner. In a promotional pamphlet for the show, the network promoted it as the “songs and flavor of Newfoundland.”<sup>6</sup> It was further described as showcasing “folk songs” and “shanties” of the Island, reflecting the English, Irish and Scottish ancestry of the province. The program also described some of the songs as reflecting the “rugged life by the sea,” and all of them “reflect something of the nature of the province itself.”<sup>7</sup> The show was meant to illustrate to the rest of Canada more of the Newfoundland lifestyle and also let them hear the music of Newfoundland. The show was hosted by Doug Laite, and regulars included Carol Brothers, John White, Evan Purchase, instrumentalist Ray Walsh, and fiddler Don Randell.<sup>8</sup>

John White was one of the original cast members of “All Around the Circle.” The native of St. John’s compiled books of Newfoundland folksongs and had six records to his credit over his career. He had worked with CBC since 1959, first in radio and then in television. CBC press releases described White in a stereotypical manner, stating “he has the face of a loveable scamp and the grin of a leprechaun. A Newfoundlander from stem

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<sup>5</sup> Canadian Folk Arts Council, “Canada’s Cultural Riches: A Submission to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 9 March 1981,” Canadian Folk Arts Council, File 379, Vol. 236, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada, pp. 24-25.

<sup>6</sup> “CBC-TV Network Promotion: The Songs and Flavour of Newfoundland in New Series ‘All Around the Circle,’” File 697 “All Around the Circle,” Vol. 938, RG 41, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>7</sup> “CBC-TV Network Promotion: The Songs and Flavour of Newfoundland in New Series ‘All Around the Circle,’” File 697 “All Around the Circle,” Vol. 938, RG 41, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>8</sup> “CBC-TV Network Promotion: The Songs and Flavour of Newfoundland in New Series ‘All Around the Circle,’” File 697 “All Around the Circle,” Vol. 938, RG 41, Library and Archives Canada.

to stern, he's the b'y that sings 'em each week on 'All Around a Circle,' from CBC Newfoundland."<sup>9</sup> Evan Purchase worked for CBC programming but, while he had interests in choirs and choral groups, did not seem to have any real musical career outside of this program. Ray Walsh was originally from Bay de Verde and worked as a school teacher. While he did not earn a living as a musician, he was talented, playing many instruments, including accordion, guitar, mandolin, fiddle, piano, and harmonica. Don Randell was from Port Rexton, Trinity Bay, and had a varied career, including time in radio and in television, but also worked with Canada Packers Ltd and played the fiddle on the show.<sup>10</sup>

The promotional information for the show romanticized Newfoundland folksongs, representing a sentimental version of Newfoundland. Even though unemployment was rampant in the province, the image of calm and accepting Newfoundlanders pervaded the program. The promotional material presented a stereotypical image of Newfoundlanders stating that "down thru [sic] the years Newfoundlanders have been fond of singing, and in every cove and hamlet throughout the island for hundreds of years people have been singing about the joys and tragedies of their existence."<sup>11</sup> "All Around the Circle" attempted to "project the flavor of Newfoundland life."<sup>12</sup>

The younger generation of Newfoundland musicians rejected the music presented

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<sup>9</sup> "CBC-TV Network Promotion: The Songs and Flavour of Newfoundland in New Series 'All Around the Circle,'" File 697 "All Around the Circle," Vol. 938, RG 41, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>10</sup> "CBC-TV Network Promotion: The Songs and Flavour of Newfoundland in New Series 'All Around the Circle,'" File 697 "All Around the Circle," Vol. 938, RG 41, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>11</sup> "CBC-TV Network Promotion: The Songs and Flavour of Newfoundland in New Series 'All Around the Circle,'" File 697 "All Around the Circle," Vol. 938, RG 41, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>12</sup> "CBC-TV Network Promotion: The Songs and Flavour of Newfoundland in New Series 'All Around the Circle,'" File 697 "All Around the Circle," Vol. 938, RG 41, Library and Archives Canada.

on the show, which they saw as neither “authentic” nor “real.” The younger generation felt it was the lesser-known folksongs, such as those found in the Kenneth Peacock (a Canadian ethnomusicologist who collected folksongs in rural Newfoundland in the 1950s and 1960s) collection and learned from older musicians in rural areas such as Rufus Guinchard and Emile Benoit, that represented Newfoundland folk music rather than the “kitschy” canon that had been accepted by mainland Canadians as representing Newfoundland folk music. Sandy Morris, a founding member of the Wonderful Grand Band, reported in 2009 that while there were some traditional musicians on the “All Around the Circle,” such as fiddler Ray Walsh, there were also jazz and pop musicians giving the songs a “slick” sound, or more polished and overproduced. It was not a kitchen party, and was unlike the traditional music being collected and performed by Anita Best and Baxter Wareham, “the real thing out in Placentia Bay.”<sup>13</sup>

The comedic group CODCO also commented on this in a skit “All Around the Nostril” poking fun at this representation of Newfoundland traditional folk music.<sup>14</sup> “All Around the Nostril” was a parody of “All Around the Circle” and also of groups that were supported by more institutional forms of culture or “high” culture, such as the Arts and Culture Centres and CBC. The troupe was making fun of more institutionally supported groups such as The Carlton Showband, an Irish band formed in 1964 who played mostly Irish music, some country, and a few rock ‘n’ roll tunes; the Clancy Brothers, an Irish folk music group, both whom performed at the Arts and Culture Centres; and Ryan’s Fancy, a group active in Newfoundland from 1969 to 1983, consisting of expatriates of

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 18:37].

<sup>14</sup> “All Around the Nostril,” in *The Plays of CODCO*, pp. 155-158.

Ireland who had moved to Newfoundland, who also had a television show on CBC.

CODCO emphasized the Irish element promoted by these groups, singing a “wonderful old song ‘There’s Whiskey in Me Gobby Hawkers.’”<sup>15</sup> They poked fun at John White’s “high Irish tenor.”<sup>16</sup> It was evident that CODCO felt “All Around the Circle” and the “Irish” groups, and the groups discussed, did not represent all of Newfoundland culture or traditional music but rather one faction, and heavily leaned towards the Irish element. The troupe also felt the show never changed and perhaps the element of Newfoundland culture being represented was stagnant, as they ended the skit with the host saying “And that, ladies and gentlemen, is our show for the week, for this season, for all eternity,” while the chorus sang “so turn your dial to channel eight/You’ll never be surprised.”<sup>17</sup>

### **The Wonderful Grand Band**

The music popular in Newfoundland during the cultural movement was eclectic, ranging from traditional, rock, pop, and country. Through these various musical genres, musicians showcased their influences from outside the province, and also commented on Newfoundland society. One group that was a prime example of this was the Wonderful Grand Band. While members of the Wonderful Grand Band were part of the movement that opposed the “Establishment” and music promoted on CBC, the band itself began because of CBC. Formed in 1977, the group consisted of session musicians for the CBC

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<sup>15</sup> “All Around the Nostril,” *The Plays of CODCO*, pp. 156.

<sup>16</sup> “All Around the Nostril,” *The Plays of CODCO*, pp. 157.

<sup>17</sup> “All Around the Nostril,” *The Plays of CODCO*, pp. 158.

television program the “Root Cellar,” developed by Sandy Morris and Mary Walsh.<sup>18</sup> The CBC intended to use “The Root Cellar” to regain its audience from “All Around the Circle” that it had lost since the show went off the air. “The Root Cellar” was similar in the sense that it was a musical variety show but it was different in the sort of issues it was dealing with. It is unclear why “All Around the Circle” was cancelled, as it was still popular when the show ended in 1977.<sup>19</sup> However, when “All Around the Circle” was cancelled, Morris was approached by CBC producer Kevin O’Connell asking for ideas of what could be developed to attract the audience that had watched the show. After Morris consulted with others in the arts community, including Greg Malone, the idea of the Wonderful Grand Band took shape, a band that would perform traditional songs with rock beats. Then the idea of the comedy element developed. This idea blossomed into “The Root Cellar,” which ran for six episodes. While “The Root Cellar” ended after the six episodes, CBC kept the band, which did many shows as the Grand Band. Then, as Morris recalled many years later, the band played “a gig in Toronto in the summer of ’77 or ’78 in a place called Toronto Caravan, every country [had] their own pavilion where they [had] their own food and entertainment and all that stuff. Newfoundland was the only province to have a pavilion.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 28:12]; see also James Wade, “The Wonderful Grand Band,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. 5 (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1994), pp. 612-613.

<sup>19</sup> Paula Flynn, “Don Randell: Mistaken Fiddling Dichotomies,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 22, 1 (Spring 2007), p. 175.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 29:21]; see also “Cut off from the Mainstream, Wonderful Grand Band is Newfoundland’s hottest group,” *Canadian Composer*, May 1981, from the Tommy Sexton Papers, Wonderful Grand Band Publicity and Photos, File 2.01.003, Collection 235, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

After great success at the Caravan, the group returned to Newfoundland, Tommy Sexton joined and the band became popular locally. The group was then approached by CBC to develop a television series. *The Wonderful Grand Band* became one of the most successful locally produced shows for the CBC.<sup>21</sup> The original members were Ron Hynes, Kelly Russell, Bryan Hennessey, Rocky Wiseman and Sandy Morris.

The Wonderful Grand Band was made up of six musicians and four actors. Musicians also performed in skits as well. It was a fusion of music and comedy and was popular in both Newfoundland and Canada.<sup>22</sup> The television show *Wonderful Grand Band* began to air in the fall of 1980 and on average 250,000 people in Newfoundland watched each night. In the summer of 1983, it aired nationally as well, garnering “substantial and respectable” ratings. There was some controversy surrounding the show, as some viewers labelled it obscene and demeaning to Newfoundlanders, perpetuating the “Newfie” stereotype.<sup>23</sup> However, the comedians did not view it this way, as the characters portrayed by Malone and Sexton were caricatures of Newfoundland personalities and reflected people in their lives, including family members.<sup>24</sup> They would use their own experiences with people to write shows. For example, Sexton’s character Nanny Hynes was based on his own maternal grandmother. There were also times that his siblings would watch the skits and wonder how their parents would react to seeing themselves

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 30:07].

<sup>22</sup> David Moores, “Wonderful Grand Band,” *Newfoundland Herald*, 22 October 1983, from Newspaper Clippings, File 2.01.001, Collection 235, Tommy Sexton Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>23</sup> Moores, “Wonderful Grand Band.”

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 11:26]; see also Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 25:14].

imitated on screen. Sexton's father jokingly said that he thought if Sexton "was mimicking or emulating me, he was doing something worthwhile."<sup>25</sup>

All the musicians in the Wonderful Grand Band were professionals who had been playing music since they were young, and challenged the stereotypical Newfoundland canon. In a radio interview on CBC in 1980 they performed "I'se the Bye" but did their own rendition, which had a slightly different melody and also included rock instruments. It was an interesting choice because these groups wanted to distance themselves from such "kitschy" songs, but it was far from the better known version. It also included bridges that differed from the original song.<sup>26</sup>

The line-up of the Wonderful Grand Band changed somewhat over the next few years, incorporating musicians Ian Perry and Glenn Simmons. Wiseman and Perry later left the band and were replaced by Howie Wadden and Steve Annan.<sup>27</sup> Rocky Wiseman was also later replaced by Paul "Boomer" Stamp. Stamp was another well-seasoned musician who brought a lot of experience to the group. He had a successful career as a musician both inside and outside the province. Playing the drums since his teens, he began playing in bands when he was 17. His first band was Huski, consisting of Brian MacLeod, Denny Driscoll, and Glenn Simmons, who he would later play with in Wonderful Grand Band. Shortly after this band broke up, Stamp moved to Ontario to join MacLeod's new project, Great Surrender. While this group toured Ontario for several

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<sup>25</sup> Nigel Markham, *Tommy ... A Family Portrait* [Videorecording] (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> CBC *Morningside*, Interview with The Wonderful Grand Band and Brian Peckford, recorded May or June 1980, CBC CD 1639, MUNFLA.

<sup>27</sup> Wade, "The Wonderful Grand Band," pp. 612-613.

years, eventually members returned to Newfoundland. Upon Stamp's return he teamed with Sandy Morris, Glenn Simmons, Bryan Hennessey and Jimmy Oulton in a band called Gunther. That group eventually went by the name Boomer. He also was part of a disco group in Newfoundland called Lary in the late 70s. After working in Toronto and Los Angeles, he received a call from Morris, whom he had previously worked with, to return to Newfoundland to do some television work with Wonderful Grand Band.<sup>28</sup>

All the members of Wonderful Grand Band had varied careers that had taken them far from home and back again. Singer/songwriter Ron Hynes was no exception. He had played in Nashville, and had been part of the Toronto folk scene in the early 1970s. He had also spent time travelling around Canada with Wonderful Grand Band, with CODCO, and on his own as well. He also worked with the Mummers Troupe, and wrote music for some of their productions. He made his television debut on "The Root Cellar" in 1977.<sup>29</sup> Hynes best known song, "Sonny's Dream" was written in 1976 while on tour in Alberta with the Mummers Troupe.<sup>30</sup> Sonny's Dream became an iconic Newfoundland song that tells the story of a sailor's son and the hardships and loneliness that accompany that lifestyle. The connection between musicians and the theatre was quite strong during this period. Again, this is apparent in the fact that Hynes first paying gig was at the Eastport Festival, an event planned by the Visual and Performing Arts section of Extension Service. He also became involved in theatre at this time as well.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Liz Sullivan, "Boomer's Wild and Wacky," *Newfoundland Herald*, 13 November 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Mark Vaughan-Jackson, "Hynes at Home," *Evening Telegram*, 28 February 1997.

<sup>30</sup> Liz Sullivan, "Avoid Cookie Cutter Syndrome," *Newfoundland Herald*, 3 April 1999; see also Geoff Dale, "Sonny's Dream Creator Struggling to Make Ends Meet," *The Sunday Express*, 19 July 1987.

<sup>31</sup> "Profile: The Many Facets of Newfoundland's Ron Hynes," *Newfoundland Herald*, 14 September 1977.



The first Wonderful Grand Band album was released in 1978. It consisted of music performed on “The Root Cellar.” It was a mixture of traditional tunes and Ron Hynes’s originals, including the first recording of “Sonny’s Dream,” which appeared on both Wonderful Grand Band albums. The album included “jigs” learned from Emile Benoit, who was born in L’Anse-a-Canards, Port-au-Port Peninsula in 1913. Benoit had learned to play the fiddle untutored and was well-respected by the cultural community in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>32</sup> Some of the songs performed and recorded by the Wonderful Grand Band reflected the members’ opinions on Smallwood. For example, one such song was Joe Smallwood’s Reel, after which the liner notes ask “is he?,” perhaps hinting at their lack of respect for the Smallwood administration. There was also a tune learned from Rufus Guinchard, who was born in Daniel’s Cove in 1899. He, like Benoit, was a self-taught fiddle player who was highly respected by musicians active in the cultural movement.<sup>33</sup> The Wonderful Grand Band’s initial interest in traditional music could have reflected Russell’s interest in traditional music and his fiddle tune collecting as well. The first Wonderful Grand Band album was recorded at Clode Sound Studio in Stephenville in May 1978. It was mastered in Toronto and consisted of Ron Hynes on vocals, acoustic guitars, mandolin, and banjo. Kelly Russell played fiddle, mandolin, and dulcimer, instruments also used by musicians he admired in Fairport Convention. Morris played lead acoustic and electric guitars. Bryan Hennessey played bass and harmonica. Glenn Simmons played acoustic and electric guitars and also vocals. Rocky Wiseman on drums,

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<sup>32</sup> Ellen M. Dinn, “Benoit, Emile Joseph,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. 1 (St. John’s: Newfoundland Book Publisher (1967) Ltd, 1981), p. 178.

<sup>33</sup> Linda E. Russell, “Guinchard, Rufus,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. 2 (St. John’s: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Ltd, 1984), p. 756.

and Memorial University folklorist Peter Narváez played harmonica on “Don’t Wake Me Up too Early.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, there was a combination of traditional and modern instruments as other groups such as Fairport Convention and Steeleye Span had done. It also reflected the younger generation adapting traditional music to reflect their interpretation of it and their identity.

In 1981, the Wonderful Grand Band released a second album *Living in a Fog*, which sounded much more polished, commercial, and professionally produced. It had more of a “top 40” feel than the first album, which had a more basic approach to instrumentation. This is not surprising as the band worked with some impressive musical talent on the second album, including producer Declan O’Doherty, who co-wrote a couple of songs and also produced the album. This was a great opportunity for the group, as O’Doherty had worked with artists such as Paul McCartney and Wings, Cat Stevens and Elton John.<sup>35</sup> While there were traditional songs on this album such as “The Merry Blacksmith” and “The Kerry Polka,” it was overwhelmingly made up of more popular genres of rock ‘n’ roll, pop, and comedic tunes. It was eclectic in its style and its context. While some of the songs, such as “Suzie,” dealt with relationship problems and personal obstacles as was the case for many pop songs, others commented on issues that were facing Newfoundland society.

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<sup>34</sup> The Wonderful Grand Band, “The Wonderful Grand Band Liner Notes,” 1978.

<sup>35</sup> “Cut off from the Mainstream, WONDERFUL GRAND BAND is Newfoundland’s hottest group,” *Canadian Composer*, May 1981, from the Tommy Sexton Papers, WONDERFUL GRAND BAND Publicity and Photos, File 2.01.003, Collection 235, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

“U.I.C.” is a prime example of this. Written by Jamie Snider, a member of the Wonderful Grand Band since 1979, the song was a play on the unemployment insurance commission, using U.I.C as a part of the lyrics in the song, such as “and it’s U.I.C standing in the long line.” Newfoundland was experiencing high levels of unemployment at this time.<sup>36</sup> This pop song with hints of a traditional melody and the incorporation of a banjo, discussed having to leave Newfoundland to find work and the hopelessness felt by those in this situation. Even those with a post-secondary education encountered problems despite the emphasis upon education during that era. The song laments that an education was not helpful as it is “U.I.C. trying to enter trade school/U.I.C looking for a new start/U.I.C. cursing yourself for a fool/As you’re lighting up the fireplace with your Bachelor of Arts.” It discussed the fact that people did not want to be on unemployment, as “when I’m on the poge I’m always full of guilt.” The song also addressed the fact that many Newfoundlanders left for menial labour jobs in Edmonton and Montreal “work digging graves and picking apples in the fall/Work in the east and work in the west.” It ended on a comedic note, stating “but I better finish now because my claim just ran out!”<sup>37</sup>

Snider wrote or helped co-write five of the twelve songs on the album. His lyrics and tunes were not only catchy but also commented on changes occurring in Newfoundland society. The comedic tune, “Babylon Mall” referred to the Avalon Mall, which opened in St. John’s in 1967. This was a change from the community family run

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<sup>36</sup> *Building on Our Strengths: Report of the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment* (St. John’s: Government of Newfoundland, 1986), p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> The Wonderful Grand Band, “U.I.C.,” *Living in a Fog* Liner notes.

stores that were celebrated in the Wonderful Grand Band. There was a personal connection with the customers, which was demonstrated in an episode, “Swami Pumphrey,” of *The Wonderful Grand Band* where Nanny Hynes, a character played by Sexton, was deciding how much to charge the customers for homemade candy. The owner of the store, Mr. Hynes, played by Malone, was angry and felt the candy was too big and Nanny Hynes was not charging enough. The customers put their purchases on credit and haggled over the price. Mr. Hynes then called the customers by name, threatening to tell one of their mothers that they were smoking.<sup>38</sup> This type of community camaraderie in a store was also apparent in the work of Ted Russell, father of Kelly Russell, in Pigeon Inlet.<sup>39</sup>

The lyrics of “Babylon Mall” alluded to the impersonal nature of the new mall: “at the mall, at the Babylon Mall/Where the sun don’t shine and the rain never falls/Don’t gotta think about nothing at all/You can dance all day to the music in the wall/At the mall.” Unlike the community store, the customer did not have to be considerate of the owners as “you can drink your coffee from a plastic cup/Spill it on the floor and never have to clean it up.” The song also commented on the disposal mentality of American consumer culture and also the consumerism apparent in the larger box store buildings. A

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<sup>38</sup> The Wonderful Grand Band, “Swami Pumphrey,” *The Best of Wonderful Grand Band* DVD Vol. 1 (St. John’s: Wonderful Grand Band Productions, 2009).

<sup>39</sup> Clare-Marie Gosse, “Uncle Mose: Ted Russell 1904-1977,” *The Independent*, 19 March 2006; see also Bert Riggs, “Writing the Newfoundland Experience: Ted Russell Taught us That Truth and Humour Make up the Newfoundland Soul,” *Evening Telegram*, 27 June 2005.

shopper could “disappear into Woolco without a trace/Buy it, take it home and then throw it away/Cash and carry credit card consumer craze.”<sup>40</sup>

The Wonderful Grand Band also dealt with the tension that existed between generations; the title song “Living in a Fog” referred to the drug culture or hippie culture that was prevalent during the 1960s and 1970s. It started “You’re living in a fog, living in a dream world/You’re living in a fog, lost in a dream world/when are ye crowd gonna wake up/and come in out of the rain?” The song preached to the younger generation from a parent’s perspective, stating that the world does not owe anyone anything and a person must rely on themselves. It also voiced the concern that parents felt for youth as they drove their mothers crazy “back there hopped up on drugs,/cagged off in a dream world.”<sup>41</sup> While each of these songs had a local resonance, the issues they dealt with would have been familiar to many Canadians.

They were still performing songs dealing with issues in Newfoundland history as well, especially through the songs of Hynes. For example, “Hard Times,” a traditional song that Omar Blondahl had recorded, referred to the plight of the Newfoundland fishermen, such as the manner in which they were taken advantage of by merchants. This is an issue that has been discussed in Newfoundland historiography and merchants are often villainized. In the song, Hynes sang “Come all ye good people I’ll sing you a song/About the poor people, how they get along/They fish in the spring, finish up in the fall/And when it’s all over they’ve nothing at all.” Hynes sang of the stereotypical

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<sup>40</sup> The Wonderful Grand Band, “Babylon Mall,” *Living in a Fog* Liner notes.

<sup>41</sup> The Wonderful Grand Band, “Living in a Fog,” *Living in a Fog* Liner notes.

merchant pervasive in Newfoundland history that would not give fishermen fair market value for their catch, keeping them in perpetual debt to the merchant. It also alluded to the cost of healthcare and that doctors sought to take what little the poor fishermen had. As the song states:

Poor fishermen we've been out all the day  
Come in in the evening, full sail up the bay  
Find Kate in the corner with a wink and a nod  
Saying, "Jimmy or John have you got any cod?"

And then next comes the merchant to see your supply  
And the fine side of fishing you'll see by and by  
Seven dollars for large and four fifty for small  
Take out your west indie and you've nothing at all

And then next comes the doctor, the worst of them all  
Saying, "what's been the matter with you since the fall?"  
He says he can cure you of all your disease  
When your money's all gone you can die if you please.<sup>42</sup>

Hynes lamented that the hardworking fishermen were never able to get free of this debt as for when these men died they were "hailed on the hill and put down in the cold/And you're dead in your grave but you're still in the hole."<sup>43</sup>

The band acknowledged the tensions between elite and popular culture, as well as the government's preference for outside entertainment in episodes of their television show aired in 1981. In the opening episode, entitled "Grand Opening Grand Hall" Mr. Hynes, played by Malone, told his wife, played by Sexton, "I don't know what you're excited about. This place, it's a hole. This place is going down fast. It's a far cry from the

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<sup>42</sup> The Wonderful Grand Band, "Hard Times," *Living in a Fog* Liner notes.

<sup>43</sup> The Wonderful Grand Band, "Hard Times," *Living in a Fog* Liner notes.

Arts and Culture Centre.”<sup>44</sup> The Grand Hall likely represented the LSPU Hall, which was purchased by the Mummers Troupe in 1976 as a performance space. While the Arts and Culture Centre was run by government and brought in a lot of outside entertainment, the Hall was run by local artists and was a venue for their creative ventures.<sup>45</sup>

This tension was further explored in the episode “Drama Festival,” which showed people facetiously acting out plays from Shakespeare while wearing overly dramatic costumes and acting. It was a comical interpretation of the plays often performed at the Dominion Drama Festival. They also put on a play called “Fish, Guts and Washpan Soup” by Cyrus Hook, likely a reference to Michael Cook’s “The Head, Guts, and Soundbone Dance.”<sup>46</sup> There are two potential interpretations of this. One is that through comedy, the group was paying homage to the work of Cook. Cook was an English playwright who had immigrated to Newfoundland and taught at the university.<sup>47</sup> However, as the show was obviously criticizing the Dominion Drama Festival and the type of drama performed at the Arts and Culture Centre it may mean something else. Pat Byrne recalled that, while John Perlin was initially not interested in the work of Cook, he changed his mind when he saw that the general public were embracing it. Thus, Cook’s plays were performed at the Arts and Culture Centre and did perform as part of the DDF, one year winning seven out of nine awards.<sup>48</sup> CODCO and the Mummers Troupe, on the

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<sup>44</sup> *The Best of the Wonderful Grand Band* DVD, Episode 1 “Opening of the Grand Hall,” 1981

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1B, 14:00].

<sup>46</sup> *The Best of the Wonderful Grand Band* DVD, Volume 2, Episode 3 “Drama Festival,” 1981.

<sup>47</sup> Wayne C. Stockwood, “Cook, Michael,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 1 (St. John’s: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Ltd., 1981), p. 516.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 2 Part 2, 8:24].

other hand, found it difficult to attain the Arts and Culture main stage for performances and thus this scene was symptomatic of a slight discord in the arts community.<sup>49</sup>

The Wonderful Grand Band had musicianship and showmanship. The band performed rock songs and ballads while comedians Sexton and Malone performed their skits, giving the group a different dimension than most bands. The humour performed by Sexton and Malone was similar to what they had done in CODCO, parodying people and places in Newfoundland. The Wonderful Grand Band television show centered around “da hall,” where the group was the house band and consisted of various neighbourhood characters created by Malone and Sexton.<sup>50</sup> Malone and Sexton would sometimes play five or six characters in the same scene, making filming a challenge. They also played a variety of versatile characters, from punk rockers to an 84-year-old “Nanny Hynes.” Sexton and Malone also wrote all the material they performed.<sup>51</sup>

The members of the Wonderful Grand Band wanted to find success, popularity, and, in essence, be rock stars, a characteristic that differentiated its members from other musical groups active in the cultural movement such as Figgy Duff. The Wonderful Grand Band was popular in Newfoundland; when interviewed in 2009, Morris told me that the Wonderful Grand Band had very high ratings, and that the band was even more popular than the local CBC evening news program *Here and Now*. He estimated that 90% of the televisions in Newfoundland were tuned into the Wonderful Grand Band and he

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 9 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 30:00]; see also Interview with Greg Malone conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 21 April 2010 [DVD Part 1, 12:24].

<sup>50</sup> “Jus’ a couple ‘a fun guys...,” *Newfoundland TV Topics*, 13 February 1982.

<sup>51</sup> “Jus’ a couple ‘a fun guys...,” *Newfoundland TV Topics*, 13 February 1982.



heard stories at schools where teachers couldn't control the kids on Monday because we were going to be on that night and then they couldn't control the kids on Tuesday because they would have seen the show and they were all imitating the characters and the lines and all that stuff right ... All of a sudden there you were and I mean you know we played in places like Burgeo and the kids in town would just follow us to wherever we went. They'd be standing up outside the hotel room windows, we'd have to draw the blinds and you'd open it up an hour later and there'd still be 30 kids standing there looking at your room. You'd go to eat in the restaurant and they'd all come and stand around the tables where you were eating.<sup>52</sup>

The Wonderful Grand Band gained national popularity and success as well. Yet, there were some who criticized the Wonderful Grand Band, including newspapers in Toronto. Some were confused by the combination of loud music “with vulgarly inventive comedy routines.” The *Toronto Star* simply wrote that “the Wonderful Grand Band isn't,” while the *Globe and Mail* and the *Sun* essentially ignored the group.<sup>53</sup>

### **Ryan's Fancy**

Ryan's Fancy was another musical group, active from 1969 to 1983, that also had a television show on CBC. Ryan's Fancy consisted of Denis Ryan, Fergus O'Byrne, and Dermott O'Reilly, all of whom had moved to Newfoundland from Ireland, and was important in introducing people to Newfoundland traditional music. The premise of the

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Sandy Morris conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 6 August 2009 [DVD 30:35].

<sup>53</sup> “Cut off from the Mainstream, WONDERFUL GRAND BAND is Newfoundland's hottest group,” *Canadian Composer*, May 1981, from the Tommy Sexton Papers, WONDERFUL GRAND BAND Publicity and Photos, File 2.01.003, Collection 235, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

show was that the group travelled around the province talking to local musicians. The first year the show aired, guests included Emile Benoit, Rufus Guinchard, and Mary “Minnie” White, an accordion player born in St. Alban’s in 1916, and others.<sup>54</sup>

Wilf Wareham and Al Pittman were consultants for the show, Wareham as a folklorist and Pittman as a writer. The show was important as it helped legitimize these musicians and also gave credibility to local people and musicians.<sup>55</sup> While these musicians had been playing for years, now people in other areas of the province, in St. John’s and Corner Brook for example, were seeing Benoit play the fiddle in his own kitchen. Pat Byrne argued these musicians would never have been on television without a show such as “Ryan’s Fancy,” which showcased to the province people who “later on became icons of the music revival, Emile and Rufus and Minnie White and a whole bunch of other people.”<sup>56</sup> It also made people realize that other local musicians in their communities were also talented, like those who were on television.<sup>57</sup> While this group was popular and its members played a role in introducing audiences to Newfoundland folk music, it also represented the beginning of a shift in the musical climate in the arts community.

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<sup>54</sup> James Wade, “White, Mary,” *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* Vol. 5 (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1994), p. 559.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 3 Part 2, 6:33].

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 3 Part 2, 6:07].

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Pat Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 10 December 2009 [DVD 3 Part 2, 6:48]; see also Kevin Kelly, “Remembering Ryan’s Fancy: Groundbreaking Band to be Honoured at ECMAs,” *Newfoundland Herald*, 8 February 2004; Stephen Cooke, “Ryan’s Fancy: The Plain Truth; Few Acts Embodify Spirit of ECMA Award for Lifetime Achievement Better Than This Transplanted Irish Trio,” *The Sunday Herald*, 15 February 2004; Mark Dwyer, “Good To See Ya!: The Sons of Erin Release New Album,” *The Newfoundland Herald*, 27 August 2001; Bob Hallett, “Odds and Ends From the Local Music Scene,” *Newfoundland Herald*, 18 November 1989; Kelly Russell, *Rufus Guinchard: The Man & His Music* (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications Limited, 1982).

The media often credited Ryan's Fancy for helping to heighten interest in Newfoundland traditional music.<sup>58</sup> When the interest in folk music became prevalent in Newfoundland in the 1970s, "Canada didn't know a lot about its newest province. It had only been a little over 20 years since Newfoundland and Labrador had joined Confederation. ... Ryan's Fancy aired on CBC television just before the hockey and brought the unique culture and communities of Newfoundland and Labrador to the rest of the country as the threesome toured the province and met her people."<sup>59</sup> This group was active until 1983, when the show was discontinued and the group disbanded shortly after.<sup>60</sup>

### **The Irish Music Revival**

The musical element of the cultural movement began to change as Irish music became more popular. Irish music was not new to Newfoundland, as the McNulty family, for example, a group from New York, was popular in Newfoundland in the 1950s.<sup>61</sup> Byrne contended that the McNulty Family's repertoire and style gave a legitimacy and respectability to a type of music which had been performed in Newfoundland for generations. Beginning in the mid-1970s, "Newfoundland experienced a second Irish

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<sup>58</sup> Mary Martin, "Ryan's Fancy Founding Member Dies: Dermot O'Reilly," *Celtic Heritage*, May/June 2007, pp. 43-44; see also "Ryan's Fancy to Get ECMA Recognition," *Evening Telegram*, 6 November 2003; Alden Nowlan, "Songs Straight from the Hear and Bottle," *Weekend Magazine*, 15 January 1977.

<sup>59</sup> "Ryan's Fancy Calls It Quits," *Daily News*, 29 March 1983; see also Denise Flint, "Ryan's Fancy Remembered in New Retrospective," *Evening Telegram*, 13 April 2007.

<sup>60</sup> "Ryan's Fancy Calls It Quits," *Daily News*, 29 March 1983.

<sup>61</sup> Pat Byrne, "'Stage Irish' in 'Britain's Oldest Colony': Introductory Remarks Towards an Analysis of the Influence of the McNulty Family on Newfoundland Music," *Canadian Folklore canadien* 13, 1 (1991), p. 59.

music revival, spearheaded by several transplanted Irish nationals who performed regularly in the Province, or took up permanent residence there.”<sup>62</sup> This included groups such as Ryan’s Fancy, Sons of Erin, and The Carlton Showband, a group often showcased at the Arts and Culture Centres.<sup>63</sup> This led several local musicians to imitate the music and style of these performers and thus “as a result, present-day audiences in Newfoundland exhibit a marked preference for what might be termed ‘middle-of-the-road Irish/Newfoundland music’ over the more traditional forms which have become more accessible in recent years.”<sup>64</sup>

Kelly Russell noted that in recent times “most of the traditional type music or the folk culturally-based music now seems to all be gone to Irish stuff.”<sup>65</sup> While during the cultural movement it was about Newfoundland and Newfoundland music, somehow that began to change and it became supplanted by Irish groups and Irish music, and now Irish music is being “passed off as our cultural music.”<sup>66</sup> It is not exactly clear why this occurred. Russell speculated that perhaps there is a feeling that the Newfoundland revival has occurred and does not need to be done anymore.<sup>67</sup> Byrne speculated that Irish music perhaps helped Newfoundlanders deal with the identity crisis caused by the rapid political changes that had occurred in Newfoundland in the mid-twentieth century, as Irish music often had the themes of loss and nostalgic reminiscences for a home left behind due to

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<sup>62</sup> Byrne, “‘Stage Irish’ in ‘Britain’s Oldest Colony,’” p. 68.

<sup>63</sup> Byrne, “‘Stage Irish’ in ‘Britain’s Oldest Colony,’” p. 68.

<sup>64</sup> Byrne, “‘Stage Irish’ in ‘Britain’s Oldest Colony,’” p. 68.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1B, 5:00].

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1B, 6:00].

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1B, 6:00].

emigration.<sup>68</sup> However, revivalists during the cultural movement were attempting to provide a sense of identity through Newfoundland music. Therefore, the reason for this shift seems complex.

### **The Changing Theatrical Landscape**

Not only was music changing towards the late 1970s and early 1980s, but so too was theatre. This shift was evident in the establishment of Rising Tide Theatre. Rising Tide moved beyond collectives as it felt that in the company's early years they were between two phases of development in Newfoundland theatre. The first, in the early '70s, consisted of collective plays when "Newfoundland was in the full flush of declaring its own political and cultural identity, and theatre wanted to be very much a part of that."<sup>69</sup> However, towards the end that was less necessary, as there was a feeling among artists that "we've arrived. We're here..." Therefore the question became "where are we going?" and could theatre potentially evolve.<sup>70</sup>

Rising Tide Theatre was formed in 1978 by Donna Butt, and at first resembled the "populist theatre companies" the Mummars Troupe and CODCO. This was not surprising as Butt had experience with the Mummars. In 1973, Butt accompanied a friend to an audition for the Mummars Troupe, ended up auditioning herself and got the part. She would continue to act with the Mummars Troupe off and on until 1978 when she and

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<sup>68</sup> Byrne, "'Stage Irish' in Britain's Oldest Colony," pp. 67-68.

<sup>69</sup> Paddy Warrick, "Rising Tide's Pleasurable Dilemma," *Evening Telegram*, 18 December 1982.

<sup>70</sup> Warrick, "Rising Tide's Pleasurable Dilemma."

some other performers left with the intention of forming their own company. There was turmoil within the Mummers as Butt felt that while the writing was done collectively, some members of the Mummers, including Butt, felt that Brookes had all the control. While it was a collective in terms of writing and salaries, it was not in terms of ownership of the company or the copyright. While they all contributed, Brookes and Lunde controlled the plays and who could produce them. Butt asserted “we had a lot of time and energy and dedication to the kind of work we were doing for the Mummers but we didn’t get fair treatment in return.”<sup>71</sup> Therefore in 1978, Butt, along with Rick Boland, David Ross, Jeff Pitcher, Administrator Ann Narváez, technician Joel Rodgers and musicians Glen Tilley and Terry Rielly, launched the Rising Tide Theatre with *Daddy What’s a Train?*<sup>72</sup>

There were some subtle differences between these three groups. Eventually, Rising Tide became more eclectic performing international plays by playwrights such as Arthur Miller, local plays by Michael Cook and Tom Cahill, as well as collectively created productions.<sup>73</sup> While in the beginning Rising Tide performed a mixture of plays and collectives, Butt did not believe that the collective lent itself to “plays of a more introspective nature, or to the development of multi-dimensional characters, and it [was] in this direction the company [was] moving.”<sup>74</sup> Butt believed that in the 1970s Newfoundland theatre needed to be political and help reclaim a sense of place as it had

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<sup>71</sup> Fran Innes, “A Very Political Newfoundlander: Actress Donna Butt,” *Newfoundland TV Topics*, 13 March 1979.

<sup>72</sup> Innes, “A Very Political Newfoundlander.”

<sup>73</sup> Brief Submitted by Donna Butt to the Applebaum-Hérbert Report, May 1981, File 0413, Vol. 237, RG 97, Library and Archives Canada, p. 13.

<sup>74</sup> “Four Great Years: A Rising Tide Update,” *The Newfoundland Herald*, 5 September 1987.

been eroded by Confederation.<sup>75</sup> Butt first became interested in theatre because of her interest in Newfoundland politics and using theatre as a way to voice her opinions on such topics as Confederation and resettlement.<sup>76</sup>

Rising Tide also differed from the Mummers Troupe and CODCO as the group received more support from Perlin. He arranged for the newly-formed theatre troupe to take two plays to England and Ireland. While there, according to Perlin, Butt became captivated by the “professional West-End style theatre, London-style theatre” and upon returning approached Perlin asking his opinion about producing similar plays in Newfoundland. Perlin thought this was a great idea and Rising Tide produced “commercial pieces” such as *Amadeus* and *Children of a Lesser God*. Perlin continued to be connected with the company, as of 2010 he sat on the Board of Rising Tide Theatre.<sup>77</sup>

### **Politics, Peckford and the Arts**

The changes in the cultural movement may have been symptomatic of the political shift taking place. Brian Peckford was elected in 1979 and, unlike Smallwood and Moores, artists felt that he supported them and the province. Peckford was the first Premier who referred to local arts and artists “as an expression of provincial culture.” Following his victory in 1979, Peckford invoked the fear of losing a unique culture for

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<sup>75</sup> Heidi Wicks, “The Little Company that Could: Rising Tide Theatre hits the big 3-0,” *Evening Telegram*, 12 September 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Geoff Dale, “Donna Butt: Actress and Director – The pleasure and pains of Newfoundland theatre,” *Sunday Express*, 10 May 1987.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with John Perlin conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 15 December 2010 [Cassette 1A, 21:00].

political purposes, including arguing for greater control over natural resources, including offshore petroleum resources. At this time, the cultural movement was in full swing.<sup>78</sup> One of the most important developments in terms of the arts during Peckford's time in office was the formation of the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council in 1980 "not simply to promote artistic production but to encourage the preservation and public awareness of cultural heritage, not merely to adjudicate applications but to advise the minister responsible on arts policy."<sup>79</sup> This represented a transfer of power from the Director of Cultural Affairs, particularly the ability to allocate funding to individuals, to an organization that had input from artists themselves.<sup>80</sup>

Although the idea of a Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council had been discussed since 1973 by the Moores administration, this would not come to fruition until Peckford was in office.<sup>81</sup> Why the Arts Council was not completed during Moore's administration is unclear; however it may have been forgotten amidst other considerations and not followed up on.<sup>82</sup> During Peckford's time as Premier of Newfoundland from 1979 to 1989 artists noticed a difference in the attitude towards the arts. As Walsh affirmed in a 2009 interview "Brian Peckford believed in the cultural community. Brian Peckford had a budget wherein he actually recognized the cultural community and made

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<sup>78</sup> Rompkey, "The Idea of Newfoundland and Arts Policy," p. 273.

<sup>79</sup> Rompkey, "The Idea of Newfoundland and Arts Policy," p. 274.

<sup>80</sup> Rompkey, "The Idea of Newfoundland and Arts Policy," pp. 273-274.

<sup>81</sup> Letter to Frank Moores from John Perlin on "Discussions over the desirability or need for a Provincial Arts Council," 19 November 1973, File: Folk Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives; see also Letter to G. R. Ottenheimer from Peter Thomas, Chairman of the Steering Committee for the Newfoundland Arts Council, 23 August 1974, File: Folk Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives; Letter to Frank Moores from David A. Vardy, 10 December 1975, File: Folk Arts Council Vol. 1, Box FDM 2001-037, The Rooms Provincial Archives

<sup>82</sup> Email Interview with Brian Peckford conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 22 October 2009.



some kind of financial commitment to supporting it.”<sup>83</sup> The creation of the Arts Council represented an institutional part of the story that furthered the professionalization because it enabled artists to make a living in Newfoundland.

Peckford arguably influenced an increase in Newfoundland nationalism. Both historian Jerry Bannister and sociologist James Overton discuss the effect the cultural movement had on Newfoundland nationalism. Bannister argues that it affected how “Newfoundlanders view their past,” and that the provincial government was largely connected to this, as local heritage was linked with tourism.<sup>84</sup> Industrialization and modernity was not viewed as a triumph by nationalists, but instead was viewed as cultural loss. As Bannister argues “at the heart of this perspective was the belief that the island’s golden age lay not in a modern future of material wealth but in an idyllic past of outport culture.”<sup>85</sup> Peckford was central to this movement. Bannister contends that Peckford’s election as Premier in 1979 led to “a surge in nationalist sentiment,” culminating in Peckford’s battle with Ottawa over offshore resources. Thus, nationalism developed from a sense of “cultural uniqueness and economic disadvantage.”<sup>86</sup> It lamented, as Bannister points out, the lack of control Newfoundland had over its resources.<sup>87</sup>

Overton also views Peckford as a key player in the construction of

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with Mary Walsh conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 9 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 26:00].

<sup>84</sup> Bannister, “Making History,” p. 180; see also Bannister, “The Politics of Cultural Memory,” p. 129

<sup>85</sup> Bannister, “Making History,” pp. 180-181; see also Bannister, “The Politics of Cultural Memory,” p. 129.

<sup>86</sup> Bannister, “Whigs and Nationalists,” p. 131; see also Harry Hiller, “Dependence and Independence: Emergent Nationalism in Newfoundland,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 10 (1987): 257-275.

<sup>87</sup> See Bannister, “Making History”; Overton, “Towards a Critical Analysis of neo-nationalism in Newfoundland,” pp. 222 and 242.

Newfoundland's neo-nationalism and the idea of Newfoundland's underdevelopment.<sup>88</sup> Political and economic themes were evident in the popular music in Newfoundland, and created a sense of community and solidarity. Overton argues that there were links between the ideas of "resource controls, economic independence, cultural survival, natural justice, and popular sovereignty."<sup>89</sup> "Popular culture" provided an insight into this interconnection and would also illuminate reasons why voters supported Peckford and the Progressive Conservative Party in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>90</sup> While Overton focused on economics and politics, he acknowledges that the cultural repercussions of these influences must be understood in order to completely comprehend the development of neo-nationalism in Newfoundland. Both Bannister and Overton present the idea that post-Confederation politics, particularly that of the 1970s and 1980s, was key in the development of Newfoundland nationalism and identity.

Not only did Peckford make some changes to arts policy, he also espoused several of the same ideas artists were promoting. In his book *The Past in the Present: A Personal Perspective on Newfoundland's Future*, Peckford claimed that the "real Newfoundland" lay in the outports.<sup>91</sup> Not only this, but he also questioned the inferiority people in Newfoundland felt, inquiring if it was "a twentieth century phenomenon or not." He also recognized the pride emerging in the province, a trait he wanted to translate into self-confidence.<sup>92</sup> Peckford sought to assert Newfoundland's position in Canada. He also

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<sup>88</sup> Overton, "Towards a Critical Analysis of neo-nationalism in Newfoundland," p. 243.

<sup>89</sup> Overton, "Living Patriotism," p. 256.

<sup>90</sup> Overton, "Living Patriotism," p. 256.

<sup>91</sup> A. Brian Peckford, *The Past in the Present: A Personal Perspective on Newfoundland's Future* (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications Limited, 1983), p. v.

<sup>92</sup> Peckford, *The Past in the Present*, p. vi.

suggested that Newfoundland's "creativity and difference" was one of the contributions Newfoundlanders made to the country. Having articulated such ideas, he needed to embark on tangible actions, such as the creation of the Arts Council.<sup>93</sup>

Peckford believed that artists valued rural Newfoundland and demonstrated this in their work. He argued that "a pride [was] emerging at certain levels of our psyche," and observed that artists recognized what was valuable in the culture.<sup>94</sup> He used the example of the cod fishery, stating that in the 1950s it was viewed as inferior to other forms of employment, and it was only later that the average person began to look at it as worthwhile and something to be proud of. He said that artists had always realized this. They used their work to portray the important aspects of rural culture to Newfoundland's identity, and sharing their views with their audience.<sup>95</sup>

Peckford recognized that a lot had changed in the 1970s. Just as some artists had claimed Newfoundlanders suffered from an inferiority complex, Peckford alleged that many Newfoundlanders had a poor perception of self due to the changes that had come after Confederation such as social programs and industrialization. However, many Newfoundlanders began to realize that they had to be careful or Newfoundland would end up like any other place in North America or American society. They would lose rural Newfoundland and a unique quality of life. All of sudden a "great energy" emerged to preserve the culture that was in danger of being lost. He argued that "we've got a

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<sup>93</sup> Email Interview with Brian Peckford conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 22 October 2009.

<sup>94</sup> Peckford, *The Past in the Present*, p. vi.

<sup>95</sup> CBC *Morningside*, Interview with The Wonderful Grand Band and Brian Peckford, recorded May or June 1980, CBC CD 1639, MUNFLA.

wonderful thing here and, if we work it out right, we can all benefit and yet have that kind of quality of life which we now realize is so important.”<sup>96</sup> Peckford mentioned the annual Folk Festival as important in preserving Newfoundland’s oral tradition, and said that groups such as the Wonderful Grand Band were keeping Newfoundland’s musical tradition alive.<sup>97</sup>

Artists wanted to show that Newfoundland and its culture was just as good as that anywhere else. While they felt that government had neglected elements of Newfoundland and its culture, artists felt that Peckford fought for Newfoundland. Peckford’s campaign for offshore oil revenues in 1984 represents one example of this. This falls just beyond my period but strengthens Brookes’s suggestion that the cultural movement ended because there was now a politician to defend Newfoundland.<sup>98</sup> Following the 8 March 1984 ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada that offshore ownership and jurisdiction lay with the Federal Government, Peckford embarked on a provincial and national campaign to challenge it. Peckford lamented Newfoundland’s past while hoping for a better future. He declared that through his campaign he hoped to “impart to my fellow Canadians the true sense of what we have suffered as Newfoundlanders during our past and now we hope, through the offshore, to help our Nation and our Province to prosper in the future.”<sup>99</sup> Peckford suggested that there needed to be more provincial control over natural

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<sup>96</sup> CBC *Morningside*, Interview with The Wonderful Grand Band and Brian Peckford, recorded May or June 1980, CBC CD 1639, MUNFLA.

<sup>97</sup> CBC *Morningside*, Interview with The Wonderful Grand Band and Brian Peckford, recorded May or June 1980, CBC CD 1639, MUNFLA.

<sup>98</sup> Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, p. 222.

<sup>99</sup> Address to the Canadian Club of Ottawa by the Honourable A. Brian Peckford Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, 9 May 1984, MG 32 B 43 4, Library and Archives Canada, p.1; see also A. Brian Peckford,

resources so that Newfoundland could then contribute more to the federation.<sup>100</sup> Just as artists suggested that Confederation did not create the hoped-for prosperity it originally seemed to promise, so too did Peckford. Peckford contended that Newfoundland had brought offshore resources into the federation and that the theory of Confederation was that “together Newfoundland and Canada would be stronger, that the resources of the province could be developed to the common benefit of Newfoundlanders and of all Canadians.” That was the theory of Confederation, but “what has happened in practice has been a different story.”<sup>101</sup>

While artists were more direct and aggressive in their views of Confederation, Peckford was an astute politician and tempered these suggestions with a desire to have Newfoundland and Canada work together and that such a thing was possible. He suggested that the province and the Canadian government jointly manage resources with each receiving a fair share of the revenues.<sup>102</sup> He recognized that the Federal Government would have to have an important role in managing offshore resources requiring a political agreement.<sup>103</sup>

Like artists, Peckford sought equality in the federation. He maintained that while Newfoundland enjoyed free education, health care, and social benefits as Canadians,

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*Some Day the Sun Will Shine and Have Not Will Be No More* (St. John's: Flanker Press, 2012), pp. 235-239.

<sup>100</sup> Address to the Canadian Club of Ottawa, p. 7.

<sup>101</sup> Address to the Canadian Club of Ottawa, p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Address to the Canadian Club of Ottawa, p. 2.

<sup>103</sup> Statement by Honourable A. Brian Peckford Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador on the Supreme Court Decision with regard to Offshore Resources, 8 March 1984, MG 32 B 43 4, Library and Archives Canada, p. 7.

“they also enjoy[ed] some more dubious privileges.”<sup>104</sup> Peckford claimed the average Newfoundland’s per capita earned incomes had only improved by 4%, increasing to 53% from 49% of the Canadian average in 35 years. The level of public services was the lowest in Canada, and Newfoundland also had the highest taxes in Canada, in conjunction with a high level of public debt. Peckford also contended that almost half of the annual provincial budget derived from Federal transfers, “facts [that] weigh heavily on the hearts and minds of Newfoundlanders.”<sup>105</sup> Peckford declared “the wish to remedy the legacy of unemployment that soars above the national average, or the wish to improve incomes that are sharply below that enjoyed by other Canadians, or the wish to improve the level of public services which is the worst in Canada, is not an act of greed, it’s a plea for justice and equality and dignity.”<sup>106</sup> Peckford also suggested that the federal government did not treat Newfoundland the same as the rest of Canada, claiming that Nova Scotia had been offered better financial terms than Newfoundland for offshore resources in the Bill C-43, An Act Respecting Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on Offshore Oil and Gas Resource Management and Revenue Sharing tabled on 31 May 1984.<sup>107</sup> Thus, Peckford’s defense of Newfoundland’s resources engaged directly with some of the issues raised by artists that artists had once felt compelled to address indirectly.

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<sup>104</sup> Address to the Canadian Club of Ottawa by the Honourable A. Brian Peckford Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, 9 May 1984, MG 32 B 43 4, Library and Archives Canada, p. 5.

<sup>105</sup> Address to the Canadian Club of Ottawa by the Honourable A. Brian Peckford Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, 9 May 1984, MG 32 B 43 4, Library and Archives Canada, p. 5.

<sup>106</sup> Address to the Canadian Club of Ottawa by the Honourable A. Brian Peckford Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, 9 May 1984, MG 32 B 43 4, Library and Archives Canada, pp. 5-6.

<sup>107</sup> Press Statement by the Honourable A. Brian Peckford Regarding the Offshore, MG 32 B 43 4, Library and Archives Canada.

## **Conclusion**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s a shift signalled the end of the cultural movement. Musicians still played traditional music, but groups such as the Wonderful Grand Band sought popularity and stardom in addition to promoting Newfoundland culture and discussing local issues. Irish music became increasingly popular and, in a sense, replaced Newfoundland traditional folk music. Theatre was also changing. Rising Tide Theatre became the predominant professional theatre company in the province, performing both collectives and scripted shows. While their work discussed Newfoundland topics at times, they also performed plays that did not. This group also had a closer relationship with the Division of Cultural Affairs than its predecessors. In addition the political climate of the province was changing. Artists found support from Brian Peckford. He supported the arts through his statements and also through tangible developments such as the Folk Arts Council.

The cultural movement had essentially ended. Perhaps Brookes was right in his contention that there was now a politician to stand up for Newfoundland and artists no longer had to take on this role. While elements of the folk revival reappear from time to time, with young bands recording traditional songs with musicians from the 1960s and 1970s, or there is a resurgence in storytelling or some other element of Newfoundland culture, the cultural movement, in the form it had taken in the 1970s and early 1980s, had ended.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

Both internal and external factors affected the cultural movement in Newfoundland. Artists may have chosen their professions regardless of any of these considerations; they were influenced by the North American and British popular culture of the time. Newfoundlanders were exposed to various genres of music on radio, such as rock 'n' roll, the blues, and folk. They were also influenced by developments in Britain, including the trad-rock of Fairport Convention and Steeleye Span, as well as British satire, such as *Beyond the Fringe*, the *Goon Show*, and *Monty Python*. In addition to these outside influences, artists were affected by the developments in Newfoundland. Smallwood's policies disillusioned many of the younger generation and their fear that Newfoundland culture was being lost fueled their passion to use their chosen craft to preserve what they perceived as Newfoundland's traditional culture and to sometimes criticize the government. Newfoundland's cultural movement was unique as artists dealt with issues that were particular to Newfoundland's political and cultural development, yet it also fitted in the broader pattern of musical and theatrical developments that were occurring elsewhere.

The movement in Newfoundland was similar to other cultural revivals, and paralleled the counterculture movement in the United States. The 1960s were a period of cultural change in North America and Western Europe, witnessing civil rights, antiwar, and feminist movements. Just as youth elsewhere were questioning authority, their contemporaries in Newfoundland became disillusioned with the unsuccessful



development policies of the Smallwood government and used music and theatre to voice their opposition.

The issue of identity was important to participants in Newfoundland's cultural movement, just as the "concepts of self and identity" were central to other social movements.<sup>1</sup> The participants were seeking identity and a feeling of belonging in a changing political, social and economic environment. They felt that rural Newfoundland was being sacrificed to these rapid changes. They also felt they were being mocked by mainland Canadians in the form of "Newfie" jokes. Artists sought to preserve what they perceived as a threatened culture and in the process adopted this as their own identity.

The cultural movement looked to Newfoundland's past and traditional culture as a type of golden age. As James Overton argues, contemporary folk culture was shaped by and also helped formulate the nostalgia and sentimental view of Newfoundland.<sup>2</sup> There had been an increase in nostalgia for a rural way of life that people feared was disappearing, a sentiment that developed not only in Newfoundland, but the rest of North America and Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Much of the fear that Newfoundland was losing its culture and identity stemmed from the changes that occurred following Confederation. Smallwood was a dichotomous figure. He at once loved Newfoundland, and celebrated the culture through his radio show *The Barrelman*, yet he also wished to industrialize, modernize and centralize the

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<sup>1</sup> Stryker, Owens, and White, "Social Psychology and Social Movements: Cloudy Past and Bright Future," p. 5; see also Snow and McAdam, "Identity Work Processes in the Context of Social Movements: Clarifying the Identity/Movement Nexus," pp. 41-67.

<sup>2</sup> Overton, "Coming Home," p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> Overton, "Living Patriotism," p. 239.

province. Following Confederation, Smallwood embarked on a rapid and aggressive industrialization program. He pursued many projects including a cement mill, gypsum plasterboard mill, an insulating material mill, footwear factory, metal products mill, plywood mill, fiberply mill, phosphorous factory, shipyards, a talc mill, an iron ore mill and mines, asbestos mill and mines, copper ore mines, zinc mines, among others.<sup>4</sup> Many of these projects were not as successful as Smallwood had promised. One, the Liner Board Mill at Stephenville, ended up being almost \$63 million over budget. The chemical plant at Long Harbour was also seen to be a failure, as it polluted the area and affected the ability of fishermen to pursue their livelihood in this area. These represent only two examples of the many projects that did not succeed as Smallwood had anticipated. Such developments as these led to a disillusionment with Smallwood.

The gap in standards of living between Newfoundland and the other provinces led some Newfoundlanders to feel a sense of inferiority to the rest of the country. As the development programs failed, some people became disappointed and disillusioned with Smallwood, and this encouraged an artistic rebellion against Smallwood's government. Smallwood's rapid industrialization and urbanization schemes, turned people against him and led many people, especially university students, to vote against him in 1971. Some of these young voters made up the cultural community, and used their art to voice their opposition to the changes Smallwood had brought to Newfoundland culture. This younger generation of artists believed they were saving Newfoundland's culture and identity. They felt the Smallwood administration wanted to get rid of Newfoundland's "antiquated

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<sup>4</sup> Smallwood, *No Apology from Me*, pp. 54-55.

culture” and artists felt they were standing up for themselves and opposing what they viewed as the government’s elitist ideas of what represented culture.<sup>5</sup> As Chris Brookes claimed many years later, “it was like we were, in all the art forms, we were all there trying to, you know, do the same thing, which was sort of feed the starving. In a sense it’s like we were trying to feed starving Newfoundlanders, who were starving for their culture is what I mean. It’s because ... we went into Confederation and you know we were treated, the Canadians still think that they took us in as some kind of strange act of charity. It’s remarkable, you can meet them all, most mainlanders think that. And it was the idea that Newfoundlanders got, you know, told them. And so we were, I think, starving for finding out who we actually were, remembering who we were, and who we had been and who we are now and who we wanted to be.”<sup>6</sup> While government developments were not the only elements that were driving artists, they did have an immense impact on what artists were doing and the type of art they were creating.

Memorial University of Newfoundland played a crucial role, and one that the historical literature underestimates, in the developments in the arts during this period. Students at Memorial, including individuals such as Greg Malone and Anita Best were influenced by scholars such as George Story and Herbert Halpert, who considered the academic study of Newfoundland language and culture to be worthwhile pursuits. This trend continued with the development of the Folklore Department, which focused much of its energy on collecting Newfoundland traditional culture. Due to such developments,

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Kelly Russell conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 4 December 2009 [Cassette 1A, 25:00].

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Chris Brookes conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 July 2009 [Cassette 1B, 2:00].

artists felt that Newfoundland culture was worth closer examination and worth preserving. Perhaps even more than these developments, artists were supported by Memorial's Extension Service in ways that historians have not fully appreciated. The conviction these artists held about the need to collect, protect, and preserve Newfoundland culture was aided by workers at Extension Service, who shared the concern that Newfoundland culture was being lost. Not only did Extension workers want to preserve "the best" of Newfoundland culture, but also help direct and fund the many changes that were occurring in the province.

Many of the developments occurring in Extension also centred on rural Newfoundland, which appealed to many of the young, St. John's-based artists, who felt that the true essence of Newfoundland existed in rural areas. People reacted against resettlement at this time as well, which also heightened interest in the rural regions of the province and the loss of a traditional way of life and culture. Projects such as the Fogo Film Process and work done by the field workers made it clear that the people in rural Newfoundland had a lot to contribute to developments in Newfoundland and its future. In addition to offering courses and conferences and other services to the community, Extension also spent a lot of energy and funds on the development of the arts in Newfoundland. The Art Gallery, particularly once Edythe Goodridge became curator, encouraged artists, not only in the visual arts, but musicians, actors, writers and so on. Many people in the arts community felt they had an advocate in Goodridge, and sought her advice about work they had in development.

The development of St. Michael's Printshop was also important. It created a professional facility used by professional artists, and also became part of the community of St. Michael's. The artists encouraged members of the community to visit the facility to see the work they were doing, and also hosted professional artists who visited from other provinces to pursue work of their own. Thus, Extension activities not only brought arts into rural Newfoundland but also showcased rural Newfoundland to artists from other regions. Artists working in several genres, such as music and theatre, were also given financial assistance through work, the Artists-in-Residence Program, rehearsal space and help with grant applications. Extension was important for many reasons, in particular the importance placed on rural Newfoundland culture and identity. It also encouraged the arts as a viable career, helped the professionalization of the arts, and supported members of the community in their artistic pursuits.

The administrative staff of the Art Gallery and the visual artists wanted their work to be educational. They wanted to show the audience work from other regions and different philosophical points of view as well as different time periods. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, the Gallery's exhibits of historic and contemporary art from Newfoundland and Labrador allowed people to see reflections of themselves, their community, and culture. There was a history, environment, and imagination in Newfoundland that influenced the work of artists practising here.

Extension supported the development of key cultural centres and programs such as the Art Gallery, the St. Michael's Printshop, and Bond Street, which all aided in the professionalization of the arts and the development of an artistic industry and sector. It

also promoted the arts as a form of community development and brought the arts to rural areas, hoping to promote art appreciation and inspire potential artists. Scholars in the English and Folklore Departments celebrated Newfoundland culture and heritage as something worth preserving, an ideal that influenced a generation of creative and artistic youth who sought to explore their Newfoundland heritage. The cultural movement would not have occurred as it did without the influence and support of Memorial University's Extension Service.

One of the main ways the cultural movement manifested itself was through music. While musicians were simply pursuing their chosen career, they were also using their art to voice their feelings and opposition to the rapid economic, political, and cultural changes that were occurring in Newfoundland. Just as hippies in the United States rejected the culture of their parents, many young Newfoundlanders tried to express their identity through fashion and popular music. The political developments that occurred in the province affected musicians and the type of music they were developing. Confederation had led to an inferiority complex in some Newfoundlanders and some men and women of that generation wanted to demonstrate that Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders were just as good as people and areas anywhere else. Resettlement was another issue that was dealt with by musicians. They wrote songs that dealt with the emotional and cultural loss that people felt was caused by the act of resettlement. In addition, musicians were tackling other issues such as unemployment, drug use, and other social issues that were apparent in Newfoundland at the time. Many of the musicians who were active in the cultural movement wanted to showcase that Newfoundland music was

as good as that anywhere else, yet they were also influenced by music developments in other areas as well. Thus, much of the music being produced in Newfoundland was a hybrid of these differing influences.

While the popular music focused on changes in Newfoundland society, it was also influenced by developments elsewhere. Newfoundland musicians emulated folk musicians in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain. Fairport Convention, in particular, heavily influenced many musicians. After hearing the traditional songs of England played with rock instruments musicians in Newfoundland, such as the members of Figgy Duff, particularly Noel Dinn, wanted to find traditional songs in Newfoundland and do the same thing. The musicians active in the cultural movement sought more “authentic” Newfoundland music and rejected the better known traditional songs, which they saw as “kitschy.” The musicians voiced their concerns about Newfoundland’s political development, their pride in Newfoundland and the province’s traditional music. They also used music to comment on relevant social issues. A younger generation sought out the authentic folk music and rejected, what they saw, as the tacky renditions of well-known Newfoundland traditional music. This is perhaps most evident in the work of Figgy Duff, whose members were committed to collecting lesser-known folk music, and their determination to remain faithful to the arrangements as they had learned, even though they were incorporating electric instruments. The Byrne Brothers wrote original lyrics on their album, but attempted to maintain traditional melodies that were recognizable as such. Yet even though outside influences were important, internal factors were also influential. Musicians felt that Newfoundlanders had gotten an unfair deal in

Confederation and that the province was still being treated unfairly. Musicians attempted to use their chosen profession to help preserve Newfoundland “traditional” music and to prove that Newfoundland culture was as good as culture anywhere else.<sup>7</sup>

Another important art form during the cultural movement was theatre, and it could be more explicitly political than could music. Like many artists of this period, those involved in theatre had a genuine interest in protecting and reclaiming Newfoundland culture. Internal factors were central to the theatrical developments of this period. Yet, like the evolution of music, the importance of outside influences must be acknowledged when analysing the theatrical developments during this period. There was a shift from performing scripted productions by outside playwrights to collectives written by local groups. These productions discussed what was happening in Newfoundland culture. The Mummers Troupe tackled strikes, resettlement, community development and oil production to name but a few, while CODCO comedically dealt with Canadian stereotypes of Newfoundlanders, resettlement, community development, religion and so on. While the previous generation, and the government officials at the time, placed value on entertainment from mainland Canada and Hollywood, the generation coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s questioned this mentality, believing that Newfoundland was a worthwhile topic of examination and that the culture was worth preserving.

While the importance of internal developments was evident in theatrical projects, so too were the outside influences. The example of Theatre Passe Muraille was especially

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Anita Best conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 29 August 2009 [Cassette 2A, 13:00]; see also Interview with Dave Panting conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 7 December 2009 [DVD 33:10]; Interview with Joe Byrne conducted by Mekaela Gulliver, 2 February 2010 [Cassette 1A, 18:00].



important, as they influenced many members of the cultural community, including the Mummers Troupe, but perhaps more particularly the members of CODCO. The Extension Service helped here too, providing them with money and rehearsal space to develop their own show. While the issues that these groups were dealing with were unique and local, the fact that they were writing about local issues and themes was not unique. This type of theatre had sprouted across North America and CODCO was merging this with British satire.

The late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed a shift in the cultural movement and ultimately its end. While musicians, such as the members of the Wonderful Grand Band, had an interest in Newfoundland culture and music, they also sought popularity and stardom. The group's television show was aired on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, arguably part of the "Establishment" that earlier groups had sought to rebel against. Theatre also witnessed a shift. Rising Tide Theatre formed in 1978 and the group performed scripted shows in addition to collective creations. Rising Tide Theatre also had a closer relationship with the Division of Cultural Affairs than other groups. Politics were also changing at this time. When Brian Peckford became Premier in 1979 many people in the arts community felt they no longer needed to defend Newfoundland culture. Peckford espoused many of the same sentiments about Newfoundland culture as artists. Thus, it appeared that the revolution had become institutionalized.

While this thesis demonstrates the importance of both internal and external factors and establishes the cultural movement as a driving force to save a perceivably threatened culture, several questions remain unanswered. What has been the legacy of the cultural

movement on the development of music and theatre in Newfoundland? How has the younger generation of artists been influenced by the cultural movement, or have they at all? With the resurgence of interest in groups such as the Wonderful Grand Band and Ryan's Fancy, with a re-release of albums, and new sold-out Wonderful Grand Band tours, for example, has Newfoundland entered a new cycle of the cultural movement in response to new challenges? The participants interviewed referred to French, English, Irish and Scottish cultural influences, yet none referred to Aboriginal groups. This was not mentioned in the reading of the archival documents either. However, it may be interesting to examine Aboriginal culture in the province to see if developments in the cultural movement had an impact on Aboriginal artists.

This study illustrates that both internal factors and outside examples were important in Newfoundland's cultural movement. While the importance of internal political and social developments is undeniable, so is the influence of outside artistic inspirations. The rapid political changes that occurred in Newfoundland influenced the artistic endeavours of the community. Artists were incorporating artistic, musical, and theatrical trends that were popular in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders were not isolated; they were aware of outside cultural developments through radio, television, and their own experiences living in other regions. Artists employed these influences to express their feelings and concerns about Newfoundland culture. Yet, perhaps Chris Brookes summed up the driving force of the movement best when he stated "we have to show people themselves before they forget

who they are.”<sup>8</sup> While people were heavily influenced by cultural movements elsewhere, there is an over-arching theme that artists in the Newfoundland cultural movement were afraid that Newfoundland indigenous culture was being lost in the wake of Smallwood’s industrialization plans and the advance of North American consumer culture. They were also shaped by developments at Memorial University and Extension Service, which celebrated Newfoundland culture as something worth studying and preserving. This is not to suggest that these cultural producers became artists to voice their views on changes occurring in Newfoundland. They became artists because they wanted to pursue creative careers. Once they had become artists, they chose to use their craft to tell the story of Newfoundland and its people in their own way.

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<sup>8</sup>Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” p. 40.

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### **Appendix 1: Interview Information**

All interviews conducted by Mekaela Gulliver

Name:	Date:	Length:	Format:
Best, Anita	29 August 2009	1:26:00	Cassette (2) 1A 31:00 1B 30:00 2A 25:00
Brookes, Chris	29 July 2009	51:00	Cassette (1) 1A 31:00 1B 20:00
Butt, Donna	16 January 2010	1:00:04	DVD (1)
Byrne, Joe	2 February 2010	58:00	Cassette (1) 1A 47:00 1B 11:00
Byrne, Pat	10 December 2010	2:16:06	DVD (3) DVD 1 39:03 DVD 2 Part 1 19:12 Part 2 40:15 DVD 3 Part 1 39:30 Part 2 28:06
Goodridge, Edythe	24 October 2010	2:55:32	DVD (2) DVD 1: Part 1 38:16 Part 2 56:10 DVD 2: Part 1 55:19 Part 2 25:47
Jones, Andy	11 November 2009	50:09	DVD (1)
Lapointe, Frank	4 April 2010	1:23:00	Cassette (1) 1A 47:00

			1B 36:00
Malone, Greg	21 April 2010	54:06	DVD (1) Part 1 43:36 Part 2 10:30
Morris, Sandy	6 August 2009	33:24	DVD (1)
Panting, Dave	7 December 2009	42:02	DVD (1)
Peckford, Brian	22 October 2009		Email
Perlin, John	15 December 2010	47:00	Cassette (1) 1A 47:00
Pratt, Christopher	6 January 2010	2:21:00	Cassette (2) 1A 47:00 1B 12:00 2A 47:00 2B 35:00
Russell, Kelly	4 December 2010	1:18:00	Cassette (1) 1A 47:00 1B 31:00
Squires, Gerry	18 May 2010	1:22:56	DVD (1) Part 1 1:03:49 Part 2 0:19:07
Walsh, Mary	9 December 2009	47:00	Cassette (1) 1A 47:00