

IN THEIR OWN IMAGE:

*Community Broadcasting Initiatives and  
Economic Development  
in Southwestern Newfoundland*

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*Submitted to the Institute for Social and Economic Research,  
Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NF, September  
1999.*

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ABSTRACT

This research examines various applications of a model of community economic development which includes a central role for the use of communications technologies (film, video, cable television, etc.). The paper begins by arguing that we need to include culture and communications in our definitions of "community economic development." It then analyzes a number of projects which have tested this model of development over the past 30 years. These include the "Fogo Process," the work of Memorial University of Newfoundland's Extension Service, the Communication for Survival Initiative, and the development of community-owned cable television systems which produce some of their own programming. The paper then offers an analysis of a cross-section of community-based programs from southwestern Newfoundland and comments on some of the problems of local broadcasting in one-industry towns. The paper concludes by recognizing both (i) the value of the community-directed use of communications technologies in developing local consensus and confidence; and (ii) the continuing difficulties in measuring the success of such innovations.

Communities are able to sustain themselves over generations on the basis of a common identity, purpose, and culture that binds people together. A community identity is shaped by its local traditions, the way people express themselves in art, a geographical landscape, shared experiences of the past, and people's dreams and hopes for a future.... Culture is the spirit and binding force that keeps communities alive even in the face of economic hardship and disaster (Nozick, 1994: 87).

In my part of the world, it has become something of a litany to begin a paper on economic development by making reference to "globalization" -- not as a clearly-defined concept, but as some kind of amorphous and inexorable force which will discipline our every decision. But I would rather begin by noting my sense of reassurance that, in the face of the discourse (and sometimes reality) of globalization, there are still communities and regions which value their own history and culture.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, one of the most significant challenges of globalization (or at least of that way of thinking) is the loss of "community," which was traditionally a source of identity and pride.<sup>2</sup>

A successful community can talk to itself. It will not find

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<sup>1</sup> In the course of researching this area, I have had the privilege to visit several such communities, and meet with a number of "local heroes." I'd like to thank, especially, the following people for assistance in helping me to understand the communities and issues involved in this paper: Sam Fiander, Tom Hutchings, Jim Marsden, Fred Campbell, Dave Cooper, Sam Organ, Hartley Cutler, Claude Strickland, Marie Rose and Wilfred Cutler. Financial assistance for this project has been kindly supplied through Memorial University of Newfoundland's Vice-President's Research Fund as well as Sir Wilfred Grenfell College's Principal's Research Grant.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term "community" to refer to a group of people linked by a perception of having a common heritage, culture, social interests and norms, beliefs, and employment patterns.

total agreement on issues, but the communication needs to occur.

This paper shares an assumption of Carey that communication has a ritual aspect; it is the "creation, representation and celebration of shared values" and it is through communication that communities are "created, maintained, and transformed" (Carey, 1985: 33). In order to facilitate this important process, a community needs to use technologies of communication which provide images of itself. Before the existence of an increasingly-global mainstream media culture, this sort of communication was more easily achieved, especially in isolated communities (such as those which are at the forefront of this paper). But in an age of satellites, cable television and the internet, small communities are not seeing themselves reflected in what they listen to and watch. As Nozick wrote: "The task of building and preserving a community-based culture is a daunting one given the powerful forces of mass culture and globalization which are working to erase local culture from our memories and imaginations" (1994:87).

In this context, the goal of community economic development is more than just to create jobs, but also to strengthen a community's ability to regenerate and sustain itself over time. In Newfoundland, this discussion of sustainable communities comes in the midst of forces for resettlement and fragmentation. In some ways, the term "community development" is a bit misleading, as we are talking about community survival in the case of some of

these regions.

Just mention of the term "resettlement" conjures up a checkered part of Newfoundland history, as if refers to several programs of the Provincial and Federal governments to relocate entire isolated communities. Between 1954 and 1974, 253 communities were "evacuated" (the government's word) throughout the province (this does not include communities which experienced out-migration and depopulation during this time period). In terms of population, between 1965 and 1970 alone, 20,184 persons were resettled. Today, some community leaders discuss the "new resettlement," which relates to a perception that the Provincial government (through the withdrawal of services) plans to let rural communities die (blaming "globalization" as the cause).

With this context in mind, the core purpose of the paper is to provide a record of some ways that communications technologies have been used as explicit aids to community economic development in Newfoundland. It documents techniques over the past 30 years, some of which are continuing. These have not been universally successful, nor is their evaluation a simple matter. But they do represent a tradition of a particular set of uses for communications technology. In spite of a tendency to characterize television, video and film as "entertainment," these technologies (and the process that goes into their use) can unleash positive forces within communities.

The paper begins with a general discussion of community

economic development, culture, community and the development of local self-confidence and pride. The paper then moves into an examination of several models/innovations which have included communications technology as a central element in development. These include the work of the Extension Service (ES) of Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), the National Film Board (NFB) and ES co-operation in Fogo Island, the use of narrowcasting by the ES, and the Communication for Survival Initiative. We then journey to Burgeo and Ramea, two communities on the southwest coast of Newfoundland, where the latest chapter in the relationship between communications and community development is taking place. The paper offers an analysis of a cross-section of cable programs and raises the problems of broadcasting in one-industry towns. Each of the experiments discussed in the paper represents a slightly different model of how to integrate communications technology in the process of community self-definition and self-development. One of the experiments (the ES/NFB model) has become known as the "Fogo Process." Given that tradition, we could also refer to "the Port au Choix Process," "the Buchans Process" and "the Burgeo Process." They each have some distinctive elements, but they all have at least one common purpose -- to use communications technologies as tools in community economic development.

#### COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This paper is arguing for an inclusive definition of economic development which includes communication/culture issues as a part of the model. It is assumed that there is a relationship between communication within a community (consensus building, etc.) and successful economic development. Instead of focussing on top-down, expert-driven models (when solutions come from outside), the examples in this paper champion the ways in which participatory communications technologies can lead to the formation of bottom-up, grassroots models of development.<sup>3</sup>

In conventional economic thinking, which has been influenced by modernization theory, development is seen in strictly economic terms and is measured using economic indicators such as income, local GNP, employment and local business development. The focus is thus on economic development, even though it is social objectives which provide the strongest community cohesion. In the case of outport communities, it is the outmigration of the young and middle-aged (and of families) which may stimulate action. There is an overriding social objective (keeping schools open, clinics available, fire services, etc.) which has a relationship to economics but is in no way subsumed under

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<sup>3</sup> "Participatory communications technologies" do not simply mean representations of a community, or the hardware that is necessary to produce these representations, but it also refers to the whole set of processes which go into planning, preparing, skills-training, production and dissemination of local programs.

economics.<sup>4</sup>

One result of this narrow definition of community development is that the "top-down" assistance from government tends to over-emphasize the economic at the expense of the social. For example, federal attempts at regional industrial expansion have often relied on either an emphasis on resource extraction (which may not give a region any autonomy), or on global competitiveness and export maximization. However, to compete for capital nationally, communities primp themselves as being as attractive as possible (low wages are a big draw, in most cases, or a lack of environmental controls). The ultimate answer in the conventional model is still an external one -- outside capital and operators, which puts communities in constant competition with other communities for mobile capital (Gunn and Gunn, 1991: 9). Furthermore, federal programs such as DRIE and ACOA have been attempts at making links between local regions and the national economy, but they do not necessarily help communities in their independent development. The provision of seed funding by government is crucial, but the "top-down" nature of such programs often "undermine their grassroots goals" (van Geest, 1994: 22). Indeed, government funding protocols may sometimes make rural

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<sup>4</sup> Economic growth can even be detrimental to a community, as it might stimulate more dependence on outside sources of food and commodities, push the community even further into individualism and the cash/wage economy and change the nature of community participation. Economic development, improperly applied, can destroy a community socially.



communities less innovative and more dependent on outside "experts," and all at an enormous financial cost.

In comparison to the conventional approach to development, Brodhead (1994) notes that there is also a "progressive" approach which emphasizes the formation of local institutions and community empowerment. At issue is not just the creation of wealth, but also its distribution. In addition, "authentic" community economic development (CED) links economics with social, cultural and other sectors of the community, so the goals are not simply economic, but also socio-cultural. Thus, indicators of success cannot simply be local GNP or some such measure of income/wealth, but there is a need for other social indicators of such factors as local pride or cultural survival.

This is the model of development which is assumed in the experiments mentioned below. The CED plan must reflect local decision-making practices, and must be democratic. This does not mean that there is total consensus within a community and that there are no differences -- to ignore the differences would be dangerous (and unrealistic). The consensus is built and refined through the use of communications technologies (and the interaction that takes place in their use).

As a result of the process of coming to a consensus, a community is able to think about its situation in more creative ways. O'Neill refers to a new form of entrepreneurship called "community" or "collective entrepreneurship" (1994: 60). We

often think of entrepreneurship in individualistic terms (with an emphasis on profit), but that is not the only meaning of the term. Risk-taking, innovation and creativity are also community characteristics (such as in Ramea's decision to take over the local fish plant, which is discussed later). What are the institutions which might support and enhance such collective entrepreneurship? How does a community develop the confidence to take collective risks? This is where community story-telling, community broadcasting and its use in cultural survival fits in - the technologies, and their use, can increase local identity and pride. In sum, when asking whether local broadcasting initiatives are of any value, one needs to remember that economic development should not be seen in narrow economic terms, and that economic benefits can accrue from social and cultural strengths.

#### CULTURE AND PRIDE IN PLACE

Widespread participation in the discussion of local issues is both a goal and a method of bringing about change (Kaufman, 1997). The attempts to bring people together through local technology should also attempt to overcome the other divisions of class, gender, age and politics. And one way to bring these groups together is a pride in place and a sense of self-confidence (or pride in the local people).

Some versions of "globalization" and technology transfer suggest that the "end of place" is upon us -- that location and geography are increasingly irrelevant. In almost the same breath, the differences between rural and urban are seen to be either eroded or insignificant. If this were true, then the pride-in-place that is seen in so many of the cable programs mentioned below would be rendered obsolete and incomprehensible.

However, I find this idea of the "end of place" to be unconvincing, and still maintain that it is important to understand the essentially cultural difference between rural experience and urban experience. I would concur with Creed and Ching, who wrote: "Given the pervasiveness of the rural/urban opposition and its related significance in the construction of identity, it is remarkable that the explosion of scholarly interest in identity politics has generally failed to address the rural/urban axis" (Creed and Ching, 1997: 3). There is a trend to look at a limited range of variables as central aspects of identity, without recognizing that being a woman in an urban area may differ from being a woman in a rural area, and so on.

There has also been a subtext that rural values/places are backward and rural culture has been devalued and marginalized. This might be the case within dominant culture, but also within economic thought. The rural may be the site of raw materials and resources, but it is not seen as the engine of growth or the source of new economic ideas. When urban dwellers attempt to

speak for rural areas, there are some obvious liberties being taken. As a result of these biases, part of the important development work of rural communities is to re-value their own location and way of life, essentially to foster a pride in their own culture.

Culture can sometimes constrain development, or it can stimulate social change. In both cases, it should be considered as an important factor/variable in development strategies. But culture is dynamic and undergoes changes, and is influenced from the outside. One of the effects of development can be seen in culture, whereby old patterns of social control have broken down which causes further difficulties and a sense of rootlessness. Unesco (1995) outlines two categories of culture, one that features the continuity of a group (variables which are slow to change) and one that features the creative and adaptive abilities of a culture (the fast variables). Continuity variables include traditional beliefs, values, family norms, power structures and hierarchies, modes of life, production practices, eating habits, distribution of tasks, languages and historical or religious celebrations. Factors of change (fast variables) include survival strategies, needs and aspirations, knowledge, innovation, creativity, spoken language, technology transfers, economic exchanges and trade (Unesco, 1995: 93). These factors are dynamic, as there is some interplay and they may even work against each other.

A key in development is using the factors of change to allow a group to survive without major changes in the continuity of a group. That is why a fishing community may continually seek outside investors to run its fish plant, rather than to operate it on its own. That is why the rhetoric of the cable programs tend toward discussions of known ways of making a living. According to Unesco, part of the task of development is to identify these factors of continuity within a community -- what is of value? What defines a group? What are the reasons for staying here? Community broadcasting serves this purpose, by providing a litany of why the community exists and what its values are. Furthermore, the intensive discussion of economic issues at this community level may give their application more validity, as the ideas appear to be flowing from within the community.

#### COMMUNITY SELF-CONFIDENCE AND PRIDE IN LOCAL PEOPLE

Demoralization and general feelings of inefficacy or local incompetence will work against development activities. Effective community developers have to fight these feelings of loss and defeat as much as the facts of the corporations who pack up and leave or the fish that just don't come back. One of the values of local discussion is that it nurtures a belief that local knowledge has some important value. In the area of CED, as with

many others, there are struggles over knowledge -- or, better put, capital-K "Knowledge." Not particularly what it is, but who gets to determine legitimated knowledge. Who, for example, gets to decide what "development" means? Who gets to speak for the interests of a community? Often decision makers and policy makers have a different kind of knowledge than the people in the communities who live out these policy initiatives (see, for example, Gaventa, 1993). The area of CED has its own knowledge elite. They could be academics, government functionaries, free-ranging after-dinner speakers who focus on entrepreneurship, and so on. But we could ask where they get their information and how it is collected? (We may move a bit too close to home when we ask these questions. Who benefits from this paper, for example? The author, clearly. The communities? That is not so clear.)

Gaventa (1993) argues that one way for community groups to work through this issue of legitimated knowledge is to seek a reform of the knowledge production system, partly through the production of their own forms of community-based knowledge. The hiring of community development workers from within the community is a response of this kind -- to invest local people with an important role and power. Part of the value of community broadcasting is the process of nurturing local self-confidence in the people in the community.

There is a kind of knowledge that comes from living in a place that is different from that gained by visiting it or

understanding it theoretically or looking at its economic indicators. Local people always have some form of knowledge about their surroundings (sometimes called TEK knowledge, or "traditional environmental knowledge"). For example, Scott (1996) outlines how the James Bay Cree have a kind of knowledge about their location and the migration patterns of the animals that live there (and changes in those patterns) which informs their understanding of the state of the environment. "The idea that local experts are often better informed than their scientific peers is at last receiving significant acknowledgement beyond the boundaries of anthropology" (Scott, 1996: 71). Likewise with social phenomena, sometimes local people have a perspective and analysis which needs to be legitimized and celebrated locally. For example, Ryakuga's guide to community television is used by some programmers in southwestern Newfoundland. The guide suggests that when a panel of presenters is used, they all be local people, rather than the "experts" from outside. The manual states: "Actually, when outside experts are present, it can be very effective to insist that they talk from the audience while the head table is restricted to local people representing community-based knowledge" (Ryakuga, no date).

This nurturing of a pride in local people is something of an antidote to the predominance of external controls and external models of development. In discussing the reasons why the Antigonish Movement would probably not be successful today,

Dodaro and Pluta (1995) argue that one factor is the growth of the public sector and the rise of experts in regional development programs. This has downplayed the importance of widespread community involvement and the value of community-derived solutions to economic challenges. They write: "More importantly, these [government-funded] programs and agencies have entrenched the top-down, politically motivated model of development. More than ever before, the solution to regional problems has come to be seen as strictly a function of the government rather than as a function of the people themselves, despite the fact that for various reasons the government initiatives, including ACOA at the present time, have generally been relatively ineffective" (Dodaro and Pluto, 1995). This government involvement also reduces the public feeling that individuals are responsible for making changes to improve the quality of their own communities, and it undermines a community's sense of self-reliance. Federal programs such as DRIE and ACOA have been attempts at making links between local regions and the national economy, but they do not necessarily help communities in their independent development. The provision of seed funding by government is crucial, but the "top-down" nature of such programs often "undermine their grassroots goals" (van Geest, 1994: 22).

There is a recognition among many local leaders in community development that leadership should come from the communities themselves. Jim Marsden, an important voice for community



development in Ramea, wrote: "We have a choice to make in rural Newfoundland and Labrador as we approach the new millennium. We can meet the challenges ahead with the attitude that we will triumph or we can stay the course and blame others for our economic problems. Regardless of the choice we make, the challenge remains; the difference, however, will be the outcome" (Marsden, 1998A).

However, the situation in Ramea is instructive in understanding not only the possibility of success, but also the limits to that success. While the community did undergo a period of intense discussion, and opted to purchase the local fish plant in something of an act of faith, it was obvious from the beginning that they still clung to a model that it would be someone from the outside who would come in to operate the plant. And, when an operator arrived who was interested in purchasing the plant, they decided to sell it.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, to compete for capital nationally, communities often primp themselves to be as attractive as possible (low wages are a big draw, in most cases, or a lack of environmental controls). The ultimate answer in many cases is still an external one -- outside capital and operators, which puts communities in constant competition with other communities for mobile capital (Gunn and Gunn, 1991: 9).

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<sup>5</sup> The plant was sold to the operator for one dollar. The unwritten understanding was that the town may be able to buy it back (for the same price) if the operator did not want to stay. However, the operator lost some money, and in order to recoup that loss, he is planning to sell it to another operating group for an amount that is significantly more than a dollar.

Or, to take an example from Burgeo, when a new mayor was elected in late 1997, his first written message to the people included the following analysis of the responsibility of external forces to "make it right" for his town:  
I feel that someone owes something to Burgeo.... whether its the Provincial Government or the Federal Government - it doesn't matter to me who it is.... Burgeo is a fishing town, it will always be a fishing town and someone has to take the blame for shutting this town down, and that's just the way I feel (Hann, 1997: 3).

#### COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT: MUN'S EXTENSION SERVICE

Memorial University of Newfoundland's Extension Service (ES) was set up in 1959 to work in rural areas, to provide access to continuing education, and to become participants in community and social development. During the 1960s, the ES had some "signal achievements," on which its high reputation rested. During those years, the ES had a high degree of independence, which did isolate it from other parts of the university. And, in times of struggles for resources, ES did not have the links and friends necessary to come out unscathed.<sup>6</sup> One important contribution of ES was that a number of people involved in later community economic development, especially those who championed the central role of communication, had experience with MUN's Extension

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<sup>6</sup> The link between extension workers and academic departments, for example, was not well developed. But the role of an Extension Service can be problematic, and MUN is not the only university to have these difficulties.

Service.

Institutionally, there were continued re-evaluations within the university with reference to the Extension Service. For example, a committee appointed in 1980 to review the ES criticized the organization's ambiguous objectives, problems in leadership, and its "narrow" view of development, which tended to be focussed on economic development. Furthermore, the report condemned the "essentially masculine bent" of the field workers, and the lack of a working relationship with other segments of the university.

"Worse still has been an almost anti-intellectual bias of some field workers, a tendency to consolidate one's position with local residents by denigrating the academics in St. John's who know nothing of the 'real' Newfoundland" (Committee on the Review of the Extension Service, 1981: 40).

In a response to this report, a 1982 proposal for the revitalization of the ES recognized the problems of the ES, acknowledging that ES "has been living on its record rather than blazing new trails" (Harris, 1982: 1). Thus, the "30-year tradition" (as some writers state it) of using communication technologies in development is not an unbroken record. There were some serious problems in the ES, maybe for most of its history. As Callanan (a participant from the early days) wrote: "Like a star that is quickly burning out and whose light is just now reaching the earth, information about our past is still reaching new hearers for the first time. This is somewhat of an

embarrassment to us since we know that our present day Extension Service is a shadow of its former self" (Callanan, 1981: 1). To be frank (and maybe somewhat ungenerous), the Extension Service was a success in the 1960s, limped through the 1970s, expired in the 1980s and was finally buried in the 1990s (to be partially resurrected elsewhere).<sup>7</sup>

Without a doubt, one of the central goals of the Extension Service (at least on a good day) was community and individual empowerment. In this light, its activities provide an example of one way to do community development. One path to this empowerment was through participatory communications -- using communications technology, but allowing the community members to participate in making the programs.

There was a strong assumption in the Extension Service of the link between video and film representations and community economic development (Sherk et al., 1974; Lee, 1980). To illustrate this working assumption, early in its history the ES decided that television should be used to reach people throughout the province. In the Fall of 1960, ES began to produce and broadcast non-credit courses over standard television stations (Colford, 1964). Throughout the 1960s, courses were offered in areas such as Home Economics, 20th Century History, Forest

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<sup>7</sup> Art May, President of MUN, announced the closure of the ES in March of 1991, stating that it was due to financial challenges facing the university, and that its activities were not "essential" to the university's primary responsibilities.

Conservation, Fisheries Problems and Techniques, Shakespeare, Municipal Government, Newfoundland Geography and Geology and Art Appreciation. By the middle of the 1960s, most of the major urban centres had television stations (or re-broadcast stations) which would co-operate in broadcasting the programs. One of the most popular of the TV shows, first broadcast in 1961, was "Decks Awash." The series continued until 1977 (by which time a somewhat-similar CBC program, "Land and Sea," had taken over some of the topic areas). "Decks Awash" began as a one-person operation (although he made about 26 shows per year), and throughout its broadcast history it maintained a strong community development focus (Lee et al., 1977: 2).

The communications technology was not an end in itself to the ES, but it was a part of a larger development strategy. The overall strategy needed to be supported by local leaders, educators, field workers and some government departments. Without the other elements, it was felt that the participatory communication only raised expectations "beyond any means to satisfy them" (Williamson, 1973: 2). There was an attempt not to come to the communities offering services and answers, but coming to the communities to ask questions and to prompt the people to take control over their own destiny and become the developers themselves. Success was measured by not being needed any more.

THE FOGO PROCESS: THE EXTENSION SERVICE MEETS THE NFB

What has become known as "the Fogo Process" was a meeting of two trajectories, one originating at MUN's Extension Service and one at the NFB, and ending up together on an isolated island off the north coast of Newfoundland. One of the initiators of the process was Donald Snowden, whose assumption (shared elsewhere in the ES) was that true development aid would assist individuals in their "blossoming" and creativity. Snowden, who was trained as a journalist, had worked in the Canadian Government's Department of Northern Affairs for many years before arriving in Newfoundland in 1964. His first job was a one-year study on why co-operatives had not worked in Newfoundland (especially among producer groups), whereupon he was invited to join MUN's Extension Service as Director, in 1965.

Snowden already had a keen interest in Fogo, and believed that it would probably work as a place for a producer co-operative.<sup>8</sup>

Fogo Island, just off the northeast coast of Newfoundland, contained 10 communities and about 5,000 people at the time, but they were being urged to move to the "growth centres." The real "problem" in Fogo was that fishermen were deprived of information, and had no direct access to information. There was even poor (or at least irregular) communication across the island's 10 communities. During this time, the chance of the

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<sup>8</sup> Ironically, the other location where Snowden felt co-ops might work was in Port au Choix, which was where the Fogo Process was refined in the late 1960s.

entire island being resettled was being proposed. In response to the threat of resettlement, the Fogo Island Improvement Committee was formed in 1964. This committee helped to bring in the ES and later the National Film Board, and went on to become a Rural Development Association. So the groundwork for the "Fogo Process" was laid by people within the community.

By 1966, 60 percent of the people on Fogo Island were on welfare, and after a decline in landings, the major fish merchant packed up and left (Clugston, 1991). Fogo, in 1967, was not a particularly united place. They were separated by religion, and in small towns, each denomination still had its own school.<sup>9</sup> And Fogo illustrated the general rural context at this time in the province -- widespread illiteracy, little municipal government, few local services, and a great inequality of power between merchants (and sometimes clergy) and residents.

The second trajectory was unfolding many miles away, in the offices of the National Film Board. In 1967 Canada was waging a "War on Poverty," and it had enlisted the NFB's assistance. A project was planned, called "Challenge for Change," and a pilot film was made. Titled "The Things I Cannot Change," it showed a poor Montreal family of 12 who were barely subsisting on welfare.

It was released to the public before being seen by the family, and the family had no control over the film's final form, and

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<sup>9</sup> This was not uncommon throughout Newfoundland, however, as churches have, until recently, been intimately involved in the educational system.

they were "subsequently ostracized and ridiculed by their neighbours, an experience that only compounded their powerlessness and despair" (Goldberg, 1990: 12). The film won six awards, but the controversy around it indicated to some of the Board's film-makers the need to consider the dignity of the people in the film.

As a part of this "Challenge for Change" program, the NFB sent film-maker Colin Low and a film unit to Newfoundland to make a film about rural poverty. He teamed up with Don Snowden, who was frustrated with the tendency to see poverty only through urban eyes. Snowden had been enraged by a report from the Economic Council of Canada in 1965 on Poverty in Canada which focussed only on urban poverty. There was no sensitivity to rural poverty, especially to situations where cash was not the major currency (the truck system where merchants kept a running tally, but no cash changed hands, was predominant in many communities).

Also, Snowden believed that rural poverty involved a poverty of isolation from centres of power, of a lack of information and of inadequate organization (Quarry, 1984).

Low and Snowden (who had been an admirer of Low's work) searched the island for an appropriate place. They chose Fogo Island, partly due to Snowden's knowledge of the place, and partly because Fred Earle was on the Island at the time. Earle, a Fogo Islander himself, was working with the Extension Service and he had a good relationship with the people. He was



instrumental in getting the "Fogo Island Film and Community Development Project" underway. Low spent a summer on Fogo (in 1967), recruited local students to apprentice with his film crew and began filming and interviewing residents. The actual "process" in the Fogo Process is the community action which takes place in planning and then responding to the films.

Low produced 28 films (modules), each of which focussed on some aspect of the life of those in Fogo. Some were on problems in the area, others celebrated the culture. In sum, they provided a holistic portrait of life in Fogo. Snowden claims that, after the filming:

The rushes were sent back to Ottawa. Low had begun to believe, I think, that the people on Fogo should see some of that material. He showed it to some of them but it became part of the mythology that this was part of process when in fact it was not. At that time there was nothing defined that people would automatically have editing rights to their material. What Low did was to let them see some of it because they had not seen films of themselves before (cited in Quarry, 1984: 36).

After the rough cuts were made, the 16 mm films were shipped back to Fogo and shown at a series of community screenings. At each screening, the Extension worker (or an NFB person) would lead a discussion on a development issue, with the film as a catalyst. There was no new information in the films, but they allowed the people to see themselves in a more objective manner, to see their faults, but also their strengths. They could also be exposed to the dissenting views of fellow Fogo Islanders without direct hostility or confrontation.

There is a powerful "mirror effect" of seeing one's own life and words. People saw themselves in a new light, with knowledge, skills, strength, and values worth saving. This increased their self-confidence and their ability to express themselves and organize. It also prompted them to work together more, as an Island, and they saw that they had been fighting each other, setting community against community. The films helped in a move toward consensus building.

Thus, the key was not just the films themselves (the images and representations of the community), but the way in which they were used to initiate other discussions and developments. "The Fogo Process, as it started to emerge from the original filming and screenings on Fogo Island, was critically linked to a sustained program of community development efforts" (Williamson, 1991: 274). This was not just some passing "Hawthorne Effect," because it was accompanied by constructive discussions and actions.

The films themselves are subsidiary to the purpose of community economic development. (This may be true of community programming in general, in that the actual programs are of less importance than the community actually seeing their lives represented, and the planning that goes into that and the interactions and ideas which flow out of it). According to Colin Low, "Fogo is not a process, but an attitude or a method based on an attitude. It essentially regards silent people -- the silent man, the silent majority, for that matter -- as worthy of the privilege of a

voice-expression" (cited in Coish, 1975: 44).

As for standard measures of success, certain of the films were shown to Cabinet Ministers, one of whom responded to the Fogo Islanders on film as well. It convinced some that there were development alternatives for Fogo Island, and resettlement was not inevitable. By the 1970s, welfare rolls on Fogo had decreased (able-bodied relief went down 60%), a co-op had been developed, some roads had been paved, the quality of the fish landings had improved, and the community looked vibrant. At first Premier Joey Smallwood was cool to this revitalization (as it showed that resettlement, his idea, was not necessarily an inevitability). But in 1971, when visiting the island, he stated: "Now this university crowd -- extension crowd -- they have done absolutely fantastic work. The thing they put together visually in a movie, in television, makes you think -- a big experiment in social organization of an island that seemed five years ago to be doomed" (cited in Coish: 44).<sup>10</sup>

The Fogo Process was then shifted to other sites. The Extension Service set up its own 16mm film production crew and facility after the Fogo experience. The crew was to apply the

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<sup>10</sup> Of course, difficulties remain on Fogo -- there is still some rivalry and jealousy of Fogo, the main town of about 1,100, there is still a heavy reliance on federal transfer programs, the co-operative has had some difficult times (as many fish plants have), there are consistent threats to the regular ferry service, and almost everyone is a seasonal worker. But the community is still there, and there have been waves of cultural renaissance since the original Fogo Process.

process in other communities. Port au Choix was chosen next, and modules were made regarding the economic situation, resettlement, and the needs and aspirations of youth.

A new dimension was added in the Port au Choix experiment -- the "approval screenings," when people who were interviewed saw the rough cuts and could make suggestions about further cuts or insertions, and to approve the distribution of the module in general. Snowden himself set down this rule. The NFB had talked about that policy in their time on Fogo, but they did not actually institute the policy.

This made the process even more participatory, and one might go so far as to refer to the development as the "Port au Choix Process." Approval screenings allowed people to feel more comfortable as well, if they knew that they had editing control.

They could avoid being hurt or feeling misrepresented (a consistent rural complaint related to conventional broadcast media coverage). However, because of the trust developed between field workers, film-makers and the communities, little actual editing had to be done.<sup>11</sup>

One key to the success of the original Fogo Process and other

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<sup>11</sup> An exception to this was in 1969, when a camera and sound crew went to Labrador. In one small community of six families (West Bay), a module was made on the fish merchant from Cartwright who they relied upon. None of the people were literate, and no cash changed hands with the merchant. Upon viewing that module, the people were worried that the merchant would be angry and cut off their credit. So it was not shown until after the merchant's death. This was the only module that did not receive approval by a community.

ES work was that the communities did not have access to television. When the Fogo Process was tried in parts of the impoverished southern US, it did not work as well, since "people were used to television and had lots of access to information in ways that people didn't have them in the outports of Newfoundland at that time" (Snowden, cited in Quarry, 1984: 45).

In an interview before his untimely death in 1984, Snowden referred to the Fogo Process as having run its course in Newfoundland. He was critical of government attempts to follow up the results from Fogo.<sup>12</sup>

There is a point, I believe, at which that whole process is completed and that's a point where society has become organized and where it has access to other tools other than film to help them function..... I think the whole of rural Nfld. society, with some notable exceptions, because of more isolated circumstances, has got to that point (Snowden, cited in Quarry, 1984: 58).

#### THE "BUCHANS PROCESS:" or FOGO GOES TV

Another set of experiments in communications technology, which gets us closer to the Burgeo and Ramea contexts, was the Extension Service's work in low-power television transmitters (sometimes called "narrowcasting," due to the limited range of the signals). The first TV transmitter project was in Trinity in

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<sup>12</sup> For example, the Community Centres project (funded by a federal grant), which set back the community use of video by dropping off video technologies in communities without adequate thought as to their use.

the Fall of 1979. Three ES workers broadcast over the air from the Community Hall on Channel 7. There was limited public input, although some material was taped in the region.

The next year, experiments took place in Rocky Harbour and Sally's Cove, on the Northern Peninsula. A studio was built into a van and all that was needed was an electrical outlet to plug the system into. Some local programs were included, along with other Extension Service videos. This was followed by a more ambitious narrowcasting experiment in September of 1980 in Nain.

This included five days and nights -- the days were a broadcast of a land claims and aboriginal rights conference, the nights were talent shows. As one of the ES workers noted of these innovations: "For people accustomed to a regular fare of commercial television a local channel is like a mirror talking back. Nothing in their previous experience had prepared people for this kind of community television" (Callanan, 1983: 3).

The ES sponsored 12 separate TV transmitter projects during the 1980s. The Buchans experiment in 1985, after the closure of the local mine, was one of the most documented. Buchans was a company town of about 1,600 people which had been hit hard by the closure of their mine (and central economic force) in 1984. The Extension Service became involved, and began planning a model of "learning-for-development" using cable television as the central technology.<sup>13</sup> Field workers helped local people to determine the

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<sup>13</sup> They had also moved from the use of film to the use of video by this time, a shift which was accompanied by various

issues to be covered, the entertainment to be used, the sites to be photographed, and so on. This whole process of planning a specific set of broadcasts and then executing the plans was referred to by Harris (1992) as "the Buchans Process."

Buchans Community Television (BCTV) was only on the air for three days, in May 1985, with 8 hours of programming per day (from 4 pm to midnight). However, it took an immense amount of planning beforehand. The broadcasts featured entertainment, local information, suggestions for entrepreneurial opportunities, discussion of the chance of attracting a correctional institution (a local issue at the time), phone-ins on development and reminiscences.

It is widely assumed by people involved that everyone in Buchans watched the broadcasts (or at least part of them). According to Harris (1992), the programs achieved a number of effects, including: the revitalization of community spirit, increased cohesion in the community, increased confidence in the abilities of community members, the creation of a common and equitable data base and an increase of participation in community life. The television format was considered to be a good choice, due to convenience, comfort and the lower threshold of involvement (even people with little information or who are unsure of whether they want to participate can listen in and turn

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arguments about the relative merits of each technology. Film, for example, requires much more planning than video, and this coordination is sometimes of significant benefit to a community.

it off if they wish, and people are more likely to call in and talk than to stand up at a public meeting and talk).

In spite of some successes, the "Buchans Process" was not a long-term solution. The purpose was to help people take stock of their situation, get additional information and set in place a local process to make some informed decisions. But the projects took a great deal of planning, and it was not clear how the model would apply to conventional cable television, due to the intensity of the transmitter projects, the novelty of the experience and the prior presence of a community development worker (Curran, 1989).

In addition, community television was being established outside the influence of the University and its Extension Service. Burgeo and Ramea both set up their own community-owned and operated cable television systems and by the late 1980s had begun to experiment with producing local programs. The television scene was changing rapidly, with the rise of satellite delivery. Some communities had access to the CANCOM system and were redistributing materials. Newfoundland has more than 300 communities with their own cable TV systems tied in to satellite dishes. These communities can also show their own videos and programs, if they have the political will and a little technical assistance.

It is interesting to note that the Extension Service did not champion the promise of cable as a community technology.



Community access television grew out of the ferment of the 1960s, when there were demands for a democratization of communication. Cable channels became mandatory on some cable systems, due to CRTC rules about the need for such companies to put something back into the communities, and also the vision of early commissioners such as Pierre Juneau, who believed that broadcast television could not meet the demands for a variety of voices. But over time, the programs on community cable tended toward more conventional and general-interest programs. Goldberg argues that community access television is "a democratic concept without a democratic structure.... The pluralistic, democratic ideals of community access television can never be realized as long as the licence and legal control over the programming is in private hands" (1990: 21). This lead us into the next section on the "Burgeo Process," as this innovation has an advantage over other cable transmission experiments. In the case of Burgeo and Ramea, the community both owns and controls their cable systems.

#### BURGEO, RAMEA AND THE "BURGEO PROCESS"

The two southwestern Newfoundland communities of Ramea and Burgeo share a common history of relative isolation, reliance on the fishery (and on fish merchants) and a lack of economic diversification. I go into some detail on these two communities,

as this provides an illustration of the actual context in which community-owned cable does seem to work (even in spite of long-standing deficits in resource diversification, information, and opportunities for grassroots community leadership-building).

Traditionally in these communities, cash-poor fishers would "buy" their goods from fish merchants, but the price of the goods was not specified at the time of "purchase." Rather, it was adjusted when the fishers sold their catch to the fish merchant (Carter, 1986). Thus, for illiterate fishers, the merchants could easily "adjust" things in their own favour. If there was a balance, the merchant did not give the fisherman cash, but carried forward a positive balance. Fishermen were fearful of being cut off, which could happen due to a number of reasons, including: poor quality of fish (and an employee of the fish merchant was the "culler" who graded the fish) or selling one's catch, for cash, to an independent fish buyer. This shows a history of powerlessness (out of which strong leaders emerged, nevertheless).

This resulted in an economy which was usually considered to be "impoverished," due to a lack of cash income. Indeed, according to a 1957 report, Family Allowances alone accounted for fully 17% of the total income in the Burgeo/Ramea area (Province of Newfoundland, 1957: 94). It provided more cash income, even in the late 1950s, than the inshore fishery (and this is not taking into consideration other transfer programs, such as welfare and

pensions). However, at the same time, the majority of the people owned their own homes (96%) and consumed a variety of foods (and other resources) which they were able to obtain outside of the cash nexus. This made money income to be a misleading indicator of "absolute poverty" in outport Newfoundland.

Nevertheless, due to the economic data from the area (and the lack of diversification), the provincial government was not interested in putting money into economic development in the area. The 1957 report of the South Coast Commission argued that: money spent in extensive improvements of facilities in essentially declining communities or areas is money wasted. It tends to hold back the abandonment of settlements which should disappear, allowing them to continue to exist at levels of extreme poverty over long periods (Province of Newfoundland, 1957: 140).

It should be remembered that this was written at a time when the Provincial government was in the midst of a resettlement program (funded by the Welfare Department). There was also a feeling that, with fewer people in the fishery, the industry could become more "productive" (a claim that we still hear 40 years later, and which was a central plank in the philosophy behind The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy). While the 1957 Commission did not call for the resettlement of Burgeo and Ramea outright, it did not support any new development money for the area (and it rejected the call for a road to link Burgeo to other communities).

Despite this common experience, the two communities are different from each other (and there are intense rivalries which have waned and surged over the years). They were connected by

regular ferry service only in 1968, and a road was completed in 1979 to link Burgeo to the Trans Canada Highway and the rest of Newfoundland.

The more recent history of the communities in relation to their prime industry differs as well. Fish merchant Spencer Lake was lured to Burgeo by Premier Joseph Smallwood in the early 1950s, with promises of "substantial" government assistance if he would take over the town's failing fish plant (Gillespie, 1986: 130). Lake became mayor, owned the town's two fish plants, Burgeo's only supermarket, beauty parlour, dairy, barbershop, and oil and gas outlet. This made Lake very powerful, but when the major fish plant turned around, many residents felt grateful to Lake for saving their jobs. He worked for "his" people, but he also demanded total loyalty, and felt that union activity (in particular) was an insult and an affront. He threatened to sell and move away if his workers ever joined the union.

In 1956, when Lake married Margaret Penny (heiress to the Ramea fish plant) the couple merged their fishery operations. They became "what was for the time the most completely integrated fishery operation in the province," with trawlers, plants, refrigerator ships for transport to market, and a US-based distribution company in Gloucester Massachusetts (Inglis, 1985: 118). When an organizing drive by the Newfoundland Fisheries, Food and Allied Workers Union (NFFAWU) came to Burgeo in the early 1970s, Lake threatened to close down the town's industry if

the NFFAWU was successful in organizing. He said:  
In these isolated outports I contend that there is no place  
for a union... I'm not anti-union, I just think that in  
certain circumstances unions are not practical. And  
this is one of them: isolated outports in Newfoundland.  
You haven't got the local leadership to run them  
intelligently, with all due respect to the people --  
I'm very fond of them (cited in Inglis, 1985: 119).

This showed the paternalistic attitude of fish merchants, and  
also the irony that the merchants' power was indeed a barrier to  
the development of local leaders.

Nevertheless, the workers voted for a union (NFFAWU), by a  
narrow margin. The first negotiations began in the town's church  
hall, but Lake rejected the union's demands. On June 3, 1971,  
the union voted to strike, and pickets went up the next day.  
Lake waited the weekend, then demanded that the pickets come down  
within 24 hours or he would close the Burgeo operation. By the  
end of June, the plant was up and operating again, with non-union  
workers and students (some as young as 11 years old). The  
strikers blocked the road to the plant. Lake brought in his  
replacements by boat. The strikers countered with a floating  
picket line connected by a rope. Lake's own son took a load of  
workers through, cutting the rope line, and almost sparking a  
violent confrontation. Lake later got an injunction against the  
floating line, and a limit on the number of pickets.

The strike dragged on for months. Premier Smallwood was facing  
an election and his popularity was dragging (so he did not want  
to take a position on the issue). On October 19, the strikers

defied the injunction and had a mass rally, which got out of control. The strikers, and some other town members, stoned the plant office, Lake's barbershop, beauty parlour and laundromat, causing \$25,000 damage. The next day, Lake welded the gates of the plant shut. Frank Moores, the Conservative leader, vowed to buy the plant if elected. He did win (although it was very close) and the government bought the plant in early 1972, and signed an agreement with the workers in March 1972.

However, this has left a deep rift in the town, which continues to erupt at times, even today. And the later history of the plant, with Bill Barry as owner, is no less contentious. Barry, who owns a number of fish processing facilities across Newfoundland, also tends to have very confrontational relationships with any union that tries to organize in his operations. Under Barry's ownership, the plant (and the town, by extension) suffered another major labour struggle which contributed to the closing of the fish plant before the 1992 moratorium on Northern Cod.

In the face of these difficulties and the lack of community cohesion, Burgeo has also illustrated a certain resilience. The Burgeo Broadcasting System (BBS) was the first community-owned and operated cable station in the province (and maybe in Atlantic Canada). It began in 1981 with 5 channels, and now offers subscribers close to 30, including two local channels (one contains commercial advertisements and the other is used for

community announcements and community programming). The first community-produced program in the BBS library is from 1986, a concert of elementary school students. Many of the early programs on the community channel were actually videotapes that people brought in to the studio, and the station ran them (usually without editing). BBS began to make its own community programs in 1988, and it now has a paid staff member who devotes her time to programming. Regular weekly programs include the popular Sunday night local news show "This Week in Review," a popular music show called "Bandwagon," and a kid's show called "Pansy's Garden." BBS also broadcasts public meetings, graduations, school concerts, church services, the Santa Claus parade, the Lion's Club mock jail, and so on.

The system was built through a sale of shares (at \$150 each) and a bank loan. Currently, about 95 to 98 percent of the households in Burgeo are hooked up to BBS, and they pay \$19.50 per month (taxes included). There is a great deal of devotion within the town to the BBS (some people even pay their cable bills a year in advance, and they rarely have to send a bill to subscribers). Since it is a non-profit organization, BBS puts all of its surpluses back into either purchasing more channels or equipment or producing more community programming. This is what I call the "Burgeo Process" -- community-owned and community-controlled cable, which then supports the production of local materials on an ongoing basis. It combines some of the

advantages of the earlier processes (community-control, a reflection of the community, a forum for the discussion of local issues) along with a solid and continuing financial basis.

BBS uses its various types of programming to solicit opinions and arguments on matters relating to the town's future and its strategic economic plans. The events of early June 1998 illustrate the central importance of BBS to Burgeo's continuing economic struggle. At 10:45 a.m., on the first of June, after a set of contentious DFO regulations were released, BBS aired a call to join a protest. At 12:30 pm, over 300 residents had already gathered at the ballfield (despite high winds and rain).

Others joined along the way. They occupied (or denied access to) DFO offices, HRD offices, and the DFO boat. These occupations continued until Wednesday afternoon, when over 1,000 residents congregated at the Town Hall. Businesses closed to show their support. The local FFAW continued to update the public on the status of negotiations with DFO through BBS. This is not to suggest that without the community channel these protests would not have happened. But clearly, the communication regarding the reasons for the protest, the protest itself, and how to react was central to this successful community action.

This same process of developing community broadcasting capability is also taking place in Ramea, but it started a bit later than in Burgeo (although I would suggest that it might be more successful in Ramea, as the community is not as divided to



begin with). The town of Ramea is located on the main island of a group of islands (that are also called the Ramea Islands). The islands were known to Portuguese fishers as early as the 1500s. Permanent settlement in Newfoundland was illegal until 1824 (West Country fish merchants did not want interference with the fishery), but in 1822 W.E. Cormack spent the night in Ramea and reported that two families were resident there at the time (Kendall and Kendall, 1991: 7). In 1974, Decks Awash (the Extension Service publication) provided the following comparison of Burgeo and Ramea: "Ramea is as neat and tidy as Burgeo is sprawling and ungainly. With large well-kept houses, Ramea gives the feeling of stability and money" (Decks Awash, 1974B). While this was not very generous to Burgeo, it did recognize the differences in the two towns, separated by only 16 kilometres of fitful ocean.

Ramea's most important industry, John Penny and Sons, opened about 1874, and by 1890 it had expanded into the export business, trading to Europe, the West Indies and Brazil. The company lasted over a hundred years, and played a vital part in the community. Penny and Sons operated like classic fish merchants, and some accounts characterize Ramea as being in a "quasi-feudal" state up through the middle of this century (Carter, 1986). The Pennys employed many at their fish plant and on their boats, bought fish from local inshore fishers, operated the general store, and brought back a wide variety of products on their ships

on the return voyages.

In 1936, Garland Penney, the magistrate at Burgeo, estimated that 70% of the fishermen in Ramea were indebted to Penny and Sons (Kendall and Kendall, 1991: 34). And those indebted to the company were bound to sell their fish in a green state to the firm at the price of one cent per pound -- so they could not salt the fish and cure it and then sell it to some other merchant.

Penny and Sons was run by a succession of Pennys, some of whom would run the business for a time but then move back to Halifax or Boston. The last Penny owner, Margaret, married Spencer Lake (owner of the Burgeo fish plant). As mentioned above, Spencer was anti-union, and after he lost a battle with the NFFAWU, he moved his energies to union-free Ramea. Indeed, in 1972 all but three of the polled residents of Ramea signed a petition (circulated by Margaret and Spencer Lake) that they would throw union leader Richard Cashin over the wharf if he set foot on the island (Carter, 1986)!

However, in the later 1970s when Margaret began to spend more time at her home in Boston (she had dual citizenship), some Ramea citizens began to feel abandoned. That, along with other reasons, resulted in a successful vote (90% in favour) to certify an NFFAWU union in 1977. Some benefits did accrue to the workers. In terms of wages, the lowest wage in 1977 was \$3.95 per hour, and by 1982 the lowest wage was \$6.80 per hour (Barter, 1996). The union also fostered the development of leadership

capabilities in the town (a factor that fish merchants tended to downplay).

In the early 1980s, the fish plant was still the central focus of Ramea. In 1981, John Penny & Sons employed over 375 people (about 50 were women), putting a total of about \$2,439,000 into the economy of Ramea every year (Scarlett, Storey and Associates, 1981: 48). It also bought fish from inshore operators in Grey River (valued at \$148,000), Francois (\$287,000) and Ramea (\$592,000) and operated facilities at Grey River and Francois.

But with low catches in the 1970s, the loss of fish quotas, and the high interest rates, Penny and Sons was in financial trouble by the early 1980s. They had a modern fish plant, but could not pay off the cost of the modernization. In August 1981, the company shut down operations. It reopened in November, due to a \$3.5 million loan guarantee from the provincial government. By July 1982, the company had exhausted that money, and closed again. Mrs. Lake made some proposals to the provincial government, but their conditions could not be met, and the Bank of Nova Scotia placed the Ramea plant in receivership on 6 January 1983 (Kendall and Kendall, 1991: 44). The people of Ramea were shocked, dismayed, and they felt betrayed. They and their forbearers had built the plant and, whatever the reason for its demise, its loss was a blow to the community and its future.

The plant reopened under Fisheries Products International in 1983, as a part of the fisheries restructuring which was taking

place at the time.

The old regime of John Penny & Sons, however, with its master-man relationship was gone. It had been replaced by an organization which adopted a strictly businesslike attitude toward its employees. The Newfoundland Fisheries, Food and Allied Workers Union, which had come into the community a few years previously, safeguarded the rights and privileges of its members -- members now possessed a spirit of independence and self-reliance they had never known before (Kendall and Kendall, 1991: 46).

Although this was a blow to the economy of the island, it was a boon to community leadership, which was to be tested in the near future.

Radio came to the island in the 1930s, and movies arrived a decade later (shown by itinerant projectionists who travelled up and down the coast). Another decade after that, in 1956, the first television arrived in Ramea. It could receive signals from one station, and poorly at that. This was the case through the early 1980s, when only one channel was available.

A number of residents began discussing the possibility of setting up their own cable company (Burgeo had done it, and possibly the inter-community rivalries had been whetted by this).

A meeting was called and a group decided to pursue the idea, which later became concrete as the Ramea Broadcasting Company (RBC). To get the capital, they formed a company and had bake sales, etc., to buy letterhead and get a phone. Then they sold shares at \$140 each (each share guaranteed a cable hookup). Then they went to the bank and got a \$25,000 loan and this (along with 355 shares sold at \$140 each) paid for the entire system.

Volunteers hooked up the lines from the poles to the houses -- almost all in one weekend. RBC began broadcasting in November 1985, after several years of planning, with 5 channels. Now it has over 20 TV channels and 5 FM radio signals, which costs subscribers (currently about 330) \$20 per month (taxes included).

The original loan has been paid off and profits go into getting more channels. By the time RBC was up and running there were three satellite dishes in town, two of which were soon removed. Instead of an individualistic model with independent satellite dishes, Ramea chose a communal model with shared satellite dishes.

RBC started programming about 1990, using a little shack for its control headquarters. A studio with two stationary cameras was put up about 1994-95. It is in a house trailer that was converted from a former Pentecostal Church. Local programs are broadcast on Sundays at 1:00. They include music programming, children reading local news, church services, school events, public forums on local topics, and so on. Other times the channel has text and advertising. Just about everybody watches on Sunday afternoons, and approximately 95 percent of the town's households are hooked up to cable. If a politician comes to town, chances are s/he will go on community TV, rather than have a live meeting. During a recent televised fundraiser on the cable station, RBC raised almost \$17,000!

But the 1990s have not been easy for Ramea, and times have

tested the community's cohesion. After the moratorium on Northern Cod was announced in July 1992, the local fish plant tried to switch to other under-utilized species. But Fisheries Products International operated the plant only sporadically, and after the company underwent restructuring, it lost interest in operating the plant altogether. By 1994, the plant was almost totally non-operational. To add to the community's problems, their school burned down in November 1993, their lighthouse was de-staffed in the spring of 1995 and they could no longer rely on consistent medical assistance in their clinic. (From June 1995 to October 1997, Ramea was served by 27 different physicians, most of them coming on weekend visits.)

However, the community was able to respond positively. RBC provided a forum for the discussion of some of these issues and helped to spearhead the drive for a new school (including holding benefit concerts).<sup>14</sup> An organization was formed, the Ramea Economic Development Corporation (REDC), which was able to secure funding for an Economic Development Officer. REDC also began a campaign to buy the fish plant from FPI. In December of 1994, in a secret ballot, 95 percent of Ramea voters opted to buy the

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<sup>14</sup> Keep in mind that one of the major fears of communities facing resettlement is the loss of schools and clinics. There was a fear that the Provincial government would refuse to fund a new school, in an effort to resettle the town. However, the parents threatened various actions, and set up school rooms in local service group halls and the church hall and other unused buildings. Finally, in early 1997, a new school was opened to a rather emotional community welcome.

plant (for one dollar, the going rate these days for old fish plants!). After the purchase, rumours continued to circulate about plans for the plant, so REDC used the Ramea Broadcasting Company to hold regular updates (instead of having public meetings, which were not always very well attended). Even in a small community, the need to keep people involved is crucial (and difficult). For example, attendance at the 1995 annual general meeting of the Ramea Economic Development Corporation was so low that Tom Hutchings (the Development Officer at the time) was quoted as saying that "public interest in the economic survival of our community seems to have declined" (quoted in Western Star, 1995). And this just after the decision to take over the local fish plant.

REDC then went about attempting to find operators to open the plant. In addition, the group ensured that the plant was maintained properly. Ramea residents have put in about 70,000 hours of free labour in maintaining the fish plant since FPI ceased its operations. This, in spite of the knowledge on the part of some of the volunteers that they probably would not get jobs even if the facility did open.

Despite its efforts, Ramea had limited short-term success with finding outside operators, but nothing long-term. In summer 1995, the plant was briefly leased to an operator. In 1996, a different leasee was being courted, and so on. In August 1997, after years of trying to attract a long-term operator for the

plant, the REDC noted that there was still no news of the fish plant reopening, which "must really satisfy all the 'armchair critics' out there to know that they have been right again" (REDC, 1997: 1). In April 1998, another operator (who leased, and then bought, the plant from REDC) set up business to process crab, shrimp, groundfish and lobster, and the community was once again optimistic about having a future in the new fishery. Just over a year later, the new operator sold out to yet another fisheries consortium.

To be fair, government policies have affected this, as community-based fish plants have not been able to get quota (as no new quota is being allowed). Getting quota was the key to being able to operate a community-based plant. But without that possibility, the town has to look for an outside investor with quota to bring in. In another economic and environmental situation, maybe Ramea could have procured its own quota to process fish. However, if there were plenty of fish, it is likely that there would be operators interested in helping out.<sup>15</sup>

For both Ramea and Burgeo, community programming has been important in helping the towns to "think out loud" about their future. However, what these programs often have not been able to accomplish is concrete thinking outside the box -- there is still

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<sup>15</sup> Also, when Ramea took over the fish plant, they lost the tax revenues that FPI used to pay. The company used to pay about \$58,000 a year in Business and Property tax, but the REDC could not pay this amount, so the town loses revenue by not having an external operator.



a general sense that the future is tied up in the fishery, and the fish plant, and an external organization/operator running the fish plant.<sup>16</sup> To some extent, the 70,000 hours of community labour and the donated bags of cement that went in to keeping the Ramea plant up to standard simply made the place more attractive to outside investors.<sup>17</sup>

It would be nearly impossible to separate out the effects of RBC from other factors, but in the minds of key community players, the their community cable channel has allowed them to communicate more directly and efficiently with the population. The support for decisions such as buying the fish plant would have been very difficult to nurture and maintain without a strong communications program which not only imparted information, but which also required local participation. Clearly, in the sharing of this information, the sense of pessimism that pervades many other Newfoundland communities has been kept to a minimum.

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<sup>16</sup> While the IAS Committee in Ramea suggested offering the plant for non-fishing uses (such as a machine shop, small scale manufacturing/storage, etc.), these uses were not seriously explored. And, when it was realized that they might conflict with fisheries-related uses, it was decided to stick with fisheries rather than to chance another industry and remove some of the fisheries equipment.

<sup>17</sup> There have been some attempts at other fisheries-related industries in Ramea, such as a lobster enhancement project, which involved putting large concrete reef balls in an old harbour, to create a better environment for lobster. (Unfortunately, it also created a better environment for dogfish and other predators of the lobster, but the project is not yet complete.) And, the most successful alternate venture thus far is Aqua products, which focusses on the drying and packaging of various types of kelp (a renewable resource in the area).

COMMUNICATION FOR SURVIVAL:  
FOGO, BUCHANS, BURGEO AND BEYOND

This brings us to the final model (in this paper) of community development which privileges the place of communications technology. It builds on all of the above "processes," and I suppose could be called one of its own. But its effects have been to support other strategies under way more than to create new approaches.

Communication for Survival (CFS) operated in southwestern Newfoundland with funding from Human Resource Development Canada, from June 1995 to March 1997. Despite the end of funding, some CFS activities are ongoing and the name continues to be used. The initiative won the first-ever Don Snowden Community Development Achievement Award from the Newfoundland-Labrador Association for Adult Education in November 1996.

CFS was animated by Ryakuga, a "non-profit grassroots communications company registered in 1992 in Newfoundland... our purpose is to promote local/community communications in a global context" (according to their website). Ryakuga believes that when people take control of the communication process, they gain in self-confidence, which makes them feel more able to analyze and alter their own situation. The organization works with groups in largely rural communities, focussing on alternative,

participant-controlled media. Both Fred Campbell and Bruce Gilbert (the actual coordinators of the CFS initiative) worked for the MUN Extension Service from 1989 until it was phased out in 1991, then they formed a community development co-operative and later the Rural Newfoundland Cultural Survival Project in 1994.

CFS defined itself as an informal partnership of communities, agencies, groups and individuals "who are working together to promote the survival of rural communities through the sharing of ideas and information with the long-term goal of solving community and regional problems of common concern" (Rural Newfoundland Cultural Survival Project, 1997: 2).<sup>18</sup> The specific goals of CFS were to improve community dialogue and information sharing, develop the skill and confidence of participants, strengthen the efforts of existing community groups/agencies, to promote community planning, to facilitate discussion on local employment creation and to "highlight culture as a key to stimulating pride of place, for encouraging respect for the rural way of life, and for strengthening local resolve that partner communities will survive" (Rural Newfoundland Cultural Survival

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<sup>18</sup> Four major areas of Newfoundland were community partners in CFS, each of which had a local steering committee -- Burgeo, Ramea, Mainland and area and Lourdes and area. Mainland and Lourdes are both communities on the Port au Port Peninsula in western Newfoundland, and area especially hard hit by economic and social deficits. Sponsoring partners were the Port au Port Community Education Initiative, Ramea Economic Development Corporation, Association Regionale de la Cote Ouest and the Rural Newfoundland Cultural Survival Project.

Project, 1997: 4).

An underlying principle of CFS was the importance of communication, not just within a community but also between communities which are experiencing similar problems and between communities and the external agencies which affect them. If there were a "CFS Process" it would clearly be the promotion of what was called "participatory communications" to help communities to speak out and become sustainable. The steps of participatory communication were: familiarization with technologies of communication, skills training, production of programs, and enhancing sustainability (making sure that the new communications processes continue once the animators leave) (Communication for Survival, 1996). It was felt that if local people got involved in the process, it would increase a feeling of ownership and improve sustainability. If a child interviews her grandfather about the community's history on a camcorder, this will provide a different communications content than a bunch of outside experts coming in with expensive technology.<sup>19</sup>

The main communication tool for CFS was small format video, used by volunteer groups. The co-ordinators of CFS would spend

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<sup>19</sup> Fred Campbell of CFS and Ryakuga was adamant that they should not overwhelm people with "professional standards" and fancy equipment. If one wanted community ownership, then it is important to identify technical resources in the community (such as VCRs, camcorders, TVs, microphones). As CFS wrote: "The essential ingredients of our recipe [for community programming] are a speakerphone; a camcorder; a VCR and television; some taped programming, and lots of people" (Communication for Survival, 1996).

time in each of the four communities (one to two weeks at a time), teaching media skills and helping the local groups to develop the ability to make their own programs. So over the life of the program they visited each community a number of times.

CFS worked with RBC and BBS to produce programs, helped with tourism awareness, newsletter production, workshops on communication in groups, and tried to help Mainland and Lourdes to develop a community TV capability. One of the major events for the organization was Communication for Survival Week, in October 1996, which took place in the four communities. In Burgeo and Ramea, CFS used the local cable stations, but in Lourdes and Mainland they set up temporary studios broadcasting local programming and special events on the local private cable system. (One could think of this as four separate "Buchans Process" events.) The programming was a mixture of live and taped materials, generally issue-driven, often related to economic issues (tourism, the economic development zone board, fisheries news and fish plant news, youth issues, community TV bingo). Phone-ins and phone-outs were used, and there was some sharing of information from one community to another. As with all of CFS material, other important elements of the programs included taped scenery with music (to make people feel good about where they live), interviews about the past, school kids reading local news and live entertainment.

A second major event for CFS was a conference held in March

1997 for people involved in social, economic or cultural development, to teach participatory communication skills. These included technical skills such as newsletter production, Community TV/Video, Community radio, black and white photography, computer communications, posters and brochures, popular theatre/drama/ music, news writing. More than 100 people attended the event, which focussed on the sustainability of culture, the role of the mass media in changing social problems, and the need for communication to decrease barriers between government and communities. In spite of the end of funding, CFS plans a second conference in early summer, 1998.

In sum, Communication for Survival illustrates the continued tradition in rural Newfoundland of experimenting with participatory communication as a process and a tool in community development. Whether this initiative can continue to unfold in the local communities without the direct assistance of the animators will be the real test of CFS's effectiveness.

#### LISTENING TO THE VOICES: A SAMPLE OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

This section of the paper provides some analysis of the development rhetoric in a number of community cable programs from small cable companies in southwestern Newfoundland.<sup>20</sup> They have

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<sup>20</sup> Significant assistance in coding these programs was provided by Jennifer Morey.

been selected from not only the archives of BBS, but also from the group of programs produced in October 1996 through the Communication for Survival Initiative. The CFS-related material is at least implicitly related to development issues, and some of it was also supported by the Zonal board, so there was a primary interest in community economic survival. In general, these programs were chosen as they represent a significant community investment in speaking with itself about its current problems.

The programming was a mixture of live and taped materials, generally issue-driven, often related to economic issues (tourism, the economic development zone board, fisheries news and fish plant news, youth issues, community TV bingo). Phone-ins and phone-outs were used, and there was some sharing of information from one community to another. As with all of the CFS material, other important elements of the programs included taped scenery with music (to make people feel good about where they live), interviews about the past, school kids reading local news and live entertainment. There is an unrehearsed feel to the shows; singers sometimes forget the words and hosts might not be sure what's happening next, let alone which camera to look at. But the agenda of the programs is clearly community-driven. Below are a number of general observations and interpretations that derive from these programs.

**(i) The Need for Communication**

While some forms of community development have involved the use of outside facilitators who assist in the process, these programs tend to rely on people from within the community to stimulate participation. A common reference point is the need for communication, both within the community and also across the entire economic zone. Burgeo groups used the frequent TV panels to solicit information on its strategic economic plan, and held call-ins to get feedback from the community. In many ways, BBS has replaced the general store or the fishing stages as the major location of community communication. A significant amount of the discussion in the public updates also centred on the process that was undertaken to achieve their findings, and encouraged people to get involved if they had something to add. For example, during a show when the Industrial Adjustment Services Committee provided its final report, it congratulated BBS for providing the space for communication with the public.

In some of the programs there was explicit support for the Communications For Survival initiative because "it lets you get to know the people in your zone." (Newfoundland is divided into 20 economic zones, each of which is responsible for coordinating a strategic economic plan.) There was frequent reference to zonal unity, and the need for the region bounded by the zone to begin thinking like a group. In return, officials from the zone noted their optimism about the whole process of communication within the zone.



However, communications is often one-way (due to the nature of the medium) and sometimes call-ins get no calls whatsoever. This included, ironically, a Ramea-based call-in show on community policing and a Burgeo-based call-in show on the just-released economic development strategy. Two issues that did get good viewer response were youth issues (which received calls from both youth and adults) and the issue of access to water in Mainland/La Grande Terre.

**(ii) A Pride in Place**

Almost without exception, there are prominent segments with scenes of local areas in the videos. These occur not only at the beginning of shows (such as the weekly "This Week in Review" at BBS, which begins with a set of shots of the town and harbour, etc.), but also throughout the program. For example, one RBC show included a taped segment called "Gardens of Ramea," which featured scenes of local gardens. The programs also make liberal use of outdoor music festivals which are held in the region. Ramea and Burgeo both have weekend festivals in August (one week apart), as do several Port au Port communities. This not only highlights the music, but also the general scenery of the area and the interaction of people within their environment.

Other segments that highlight a pride in place include hunting/fishing pieces that are shot by local enthusiasts, videos

of life on a trawler and a frequent inclusion of segments with a series of still photographs from the past. Many news items also refer to activities related to the physical environment (roads being repaired, seasons opening or closing, the sighting of particular species of fish or birds, etc.)

### **(iii) A Pride in Local Culture**

In standard economic thought, culture creates employment only in relation to the building and staffing of historical villages or the creation of spectacles (such as museums) for tourists. But that is only one way limited way that culture can contribute to the economic vitality of a community, and such activities can actually change traditional culture in the process. (One could question, for example, the extent to which tourism representations of "traditional Newfoundland culture" have been adopted by Newfoundlanders themselves as being a part of their "authentic" identity. But this is a debate for another paper!)

Throughout the programs there is frequent reference to the Newfoundland "way of life," and (less frequently) "our culture."

There are seldom descriptions of what makes Newfoundland culture distinct, but just the assertion that it is. Occasionally, there is reference to a characteristic of this culture (such as the warmth and sense of humor). But the attempt to hold on to this culture is clearly presented as one of the reasons why committees

continue to form and re-form to develop plan after plan.

One of the common forms of culture which is prominent in these programs is the use of local music. Sometimes the music is locally-written, such as "The Light Keepers Song," which was sung on a Ramea program and related to the loss of the lighthouse keeper on the island, or "The Outport Song" (about resettlement).

Both BBS and RBC feature locally-written songs about their communities within their regular programming (often at the beginning of their broadcasts). Other times, the entertainment is international (such as one episode with a person acting out a Mr. Bean episode, or one that used John Mellencamp's "Small Town" as background to a series of pictures of Burgeo). But almost without exception, even when the music is not related to the locale, it is nevertheless performed by locals.

On the Port au Port Peninsula, the attempt to recover French cultural roots is also a theme within their programming. They will include stories read in French, or video of an adult French class or music that is sung in French.

#### **(iv) A Perception of Indifference from the Outside**

One element of the rhetoric within these programs is the strong sense that it is only local people who will look after local interests, and a sense of injustice about past treatment at the hands of outsiders. As Jim Marsden (development officer in

Ramea) interpreted local history: "After 10 years of economic molestation by Fisheries Products International (FPI), the people here finally made a decision in 1994 to take back what was left of a once vibrant and successful processing operation and build an industry from scratch" (quoted in Western Star, 1997).

When Linda Benoit, editor of the region's only newspaper, The Sou'West Times, was interviewed on a program, she emphasized why the paper was so important. She noted that there needed to be a voice from the region itself, because "it seems that we have been forgotten." However, the programs do not suggest that there has been malevolent intent on the part of outsiders (except for a few comments regarding certain fish plant owners and elected politicians). More commonly, the problem is one of the indifference of those outside the communities, and thus the need for people to look out for their own interests.

#### **(v) Reference to the Role of Government**

Despite some recent stereotypes of rural fishing communities having their hands out for continual government assistance, the role of government as a provider is generally downplayed in the rhetoric of these programs. Government is often seen to play a key role in regulation (such as in the division of fish quotas).

But in terms of direct financial support, it is not usually expected that the government will be forthcoming. Occasionally,

there is discussion of government assistance for special projects, such as the development of aquaculture or a Christmas tree farm or the flotilla that accompanied the Cabot 500 celebrations. But at least as frequently, examples are provided of people who developed projects without government support. For example, in a program about youth problems, there is much made of the fact that Grand Bank was able to fund and build a youth centre without any government support whatsoever. In addition, several callers on some of the panel shows argued that people cannot rely on the government, but they have to take responsibility for their own lives.

There are, occasionally, some concerns regarding government actions or inactions (as in the granting of fish quotas, or the specification of a food fishery). Or, there are concerns that when a strategic action plan is set in place, the government will not listen. In one program, which provided some history of the resettlement program of the 1950s and 1960s, there was reference to the current fear that the government is trying to move rural people from their homes by removing services (schools, clinics, etc.). But in general, it was far more likely that programs would emphasize the need for people to look after themselves and for communities to ensure that their own economic action plans do indeed get operationalized.

#### **(vi) Economic Options**

Despite the problems in the fishery, programs from both Ramea and Burgeo continued to stress the importance of the fish plant to the economy of their towns. In a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of Ramea, it was agreed that fishing (and the fish plant) was the economic backbone of the town. And a Burgeo program which discussed the town's strategic economic plan affirmed that the fish plant was still clearly the central plank of the local economy. The working committee understood that the fish plant needed to reopen (although maybe not to its former size). Tourism, crafts, and so on would be a way to "fill the gaps" but nothing more.<sup>21</sup>

As a result, a continual theme of programs was news related to the local fish plant. From 1989 on, BBS covered public meetings and protests related to the slow withdrawal of National Sea Products and the attempts by Bill Barry's Seafreez to take over the plant. One of the focal points of the coverage was to question the long-term commitment of the operators. In a video of Bill Barry and Paul Blades (a Nova Scotia fish plant owner, who was a partner with Seafreez on the Burgeo/Canso deal), taped at a public meeting just before the takeover was officially announced, Barry promised: "we want to be processing fish in

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<sup>21</sup> There is some indication in recent (April/May 1999) issues of the Sou'West Times that some are beginning to argue that Burgeo needs to abandon its belief in the central importance of the fish plant, if it wishes to survive. However, thus far, these opinion pieces are still anonymous.

Burgeo 20 years from now." This was of immediate solace, but was also very quickly challenged. And since 1992, a continual story on the weekly BBS newsprogram has been the lack of action at the Seafreez plant.

There was some coverage of aquaculture projects which were in the development stages, but these were always considered to be small enterprises (compared to the fish plant). BBS covered the projects related to clams, for example, and RBC offered some extensive coverage of the development of the kelp industry in Ramea.

Tourism on the other hand, was seen as a possible economic growth area, but there was a certain reticence regarding its possibilities. One of the recognized problems was the lack of infrastructure (especially services). In addition, one program recognized that the majority of what are defined as tourists are actually Newfoundlanders and returning Newfoundlanders who are visiting family (the program put this estimate at 80-90% of the total number of tourists). These people did not require the same level of services (lodging, restaurants, entertainment options) as "authentic" tourists, and so the industry continued to be underdeveloped. BBS did have regular updates on tourism, and reported on new signage, the building of a look-out in town and new comfort stations in the adjoining Provincial Park. However, it would be fair to say that the rhetoric of the programs could be captured in a statement from one of the economic planning

panels: "Our greatest strength is our fishery; our greatest untapped resource is the tourism industry."

#### **(vii) Assorted Community Problems**

While the state of the economy was clearly an important problem that the programs dealt with, it was by no means the only problem that was identified. One prominent problem area was related to youth issues in the communities. According to one youth panel from Burgeo, the main issues facing youth are underage drinking (of alcohol), lack of money, and no place to go and hang out. The problem of underage drinking was also identified in Ramea, and (according to Corporal Paul Matheson) was the number one concern for the Burgeo police detachment. The youth were very candid about this problem, and one program included a drama regarding teens on an average Friday night in Burgeo. When asked why youth drinking was such a problem, answers included "because there is nothing else to do" and "drinking is a last resort and a change of pace from the boredom." Some solutions were proposed, including the development of organized sports and a youth centre. The latter initiative (which received some inspiration from programs which championed the work of the youth in another community, Grand Bank) did later bear fruit, with the opening of the Bright Sights Youth Centre in Burgeo, in April 1988. Within



a year, the RCMP reported a noticeable difference in the amount of youth drinking and crime since the opening of the centre (Brayon, 1999: 5).

Other problems which were identified included: the need for adult education and upgrading, shoplifting, problems in access to the town water supply, and attempts to protect local services (schools, clinics/hospitals, fire prevention) and, in the Port au Port, the continued support of the French Centre. These problems were real in the everyday lived experience of the people in those communities, although they were not on the top of the agendas of regional and governmental agencies which were working on development issues.

#### **(viii) Attempts at Inclusiveness**

There was a definite attempt to be intergenerational in the programs. This was seen through the inclusion of childrens' stories (read by children), the use of young people to read the local news, video of youth bands ("Crevasse" from Burgeo, "5 Away" from Stephenville), pictures of kids at parties (e.g., in Hallowe'en costumes), and long discussions of youth issues with panels of youth. Indeed, one of the best received call-in programs was one on youth issues (from Burgeo). While youth issues continue to be a major focus of organizing and strategic planning, there has recently been some recognition of the

importance of seniors as well, as a specific area of concern.

Also in relation to inclusion, there was a discussion in one of the programs on the special problems of people with disabilities and of women. However, there is not much discussion of women and development (which is a significant issue elsewhere). One could ask whether the focus on the fishplant and on the fishery, and the downplaying of the craft industry, is an indication of the general male bias of the many development models applied thus far?

**(ix) The Local Agenda: Examples of News Items**

Several of the programs included a segment of local and regional news. (The flagship show of BBS, "This Week in Review," is essentially a news show.) To provide a sense of the types of stories which make it to the news shows, here is an example of a listing of regional items from one newscast:

- There is exploration for oil in Port aux Port, with drilling to commence soon.
- The Burgeo fish plant may reopen in March 1997 to process seal, employing 80-100 people.
- The Burgeo Industrial Adjustment Services committee needs a chairperson.
- A recent test has revealed that the cod in the region is rebounding.
- The Rotary Club is having a fund raiser in Stephenville.
- A photo display from the Burgeo photography group is being displayed at the post office.
- There is a Youth Committee meeting coming up, to discuss the development of a possible youth centre.
- The current after-school programs have been a big success.

The local agenda is thus a mixture of upcoming events, possible

economic developments, and a reaffirmation of pride in past activities.

### **(x) Thinking About Solutions**

During a January 1997 BBS broadcast, a group of local leaders listed the major strengths and weaknesses of Burgeo, as they had been identified by the Industrial Adjustment Services process. The strengths were: location, low crime rate, available workforce, plant infrastructure, and ice free port. The weaknesses were: location, leadership, communication, one-industry town, and attitude/apathy. "Location" was a strength from the point-of-view of local people, but it was acknowledged that outsiders might view it as a weakness. In addition, it is interesting to note the candour of the program, in identifying problems such as communication, leadership and an attitude problem. The program then tried to suggest how such problems could be overcome.

However, when discussing how to expand options such as tourism, the objectives tended to be rather general, such as to market one's region as a tourist destination, or to provide a wider range of products and services. And in relation to crafts development, it was not pointed out that the ones at the craft shop or in the stores tend to be standard items, rather than the more unique items that one sees on people's yards and fences and

that reflect the community (such as distinct fence posts, whirleygigs, etc.).

One solution which was suggested in several programs related to educational upgrading. One segment, complete with a skit, noted the importance of education, computer skills, and going back to school even at a mature age. The panel discussion included an acknowledgement that "if things are going to change, we have to educate our population." Other solutions included an argument that natural resources should not be shipped out of the province, but be processed here instead. Also, there was some mention of the need to work at import substitution and that there must be new methods of community financing for new businesses.

Nevertheless, based on the material studied thus far, there seems to be few solutions beyond the obvious in the programs. There is little discussion of the reasons for the decline of the fishery in these programs, nor on how the communities ended up in the position they did. Furthermore, when new "visions" for a community are revealed, they tend to focus on what at one time would have been called "motherhood" issues (full employment, prosperity, better communications, full use of natural and human resources, strong workforce, etc., all of which were part of Burgeo's June 1997 vision for the town). But the value of the programs may not lie so much in the identification and discussion of novel economic ideas, but in the revaluing of the area, nurturing pride in place and discussing everyday aggravations.

## COMMUNITY BROADCASTING IN A ONE-INDUSTRY TOWN

On reflection, I keep coming back to the complex relationship between the community broadcasters and the major industries in their towns. This is especially evident in the case of Burgeo, and in many ways this is the crux of the real challenge facing BBS -- can their programming positively affect this relationship, without being seen to be either too corporatist or too anti-company? Can it advocate for the interests of the community without alienating an outside employer (with outside interests)?

This relationship with the major employer in Burgeo has been an issue and a somewhat difficult line to walk. The town cannot get quota on its own, and it does not own the fish plant, so there is no massive public works to keep the place up to working standard.

They also cannot actively court other fish plant operators with quota to move into the town. So the place needs to dance with one partner, who sometimes appears to be unwilling to either dance or even to show up at the event itself.

In April 1997, Burgeo held a public meeting (organized by the Chamber of Commerce and others) to mark five years since the fish plant had closed. In fact, the press release for the event was very cautious in its wording, to avoid alienating Seafreez and its owner, Bill Barry. It began:  
First of all, this is not a demonstration -- whatsoever. We are not protesting against "any individual". In fact, we have contacted the fish plant owner, Bill Barry, to

assure him of this and to invite him to join in. But we are protesting to save our community. We want to bring the situation to the attention of the government, the public, Newfoundland and the rest of Canada (Burgeo Chamber of Commerce, 1997).

The focus of the meeting was protest against the government. The release states: "Let us show the world that we are families for whom the government couldn't care less about. Do they really care if the fishplant ever opens? Or if 10 people or 1,000 go to work? NO! They don't even know that we are alive" (Burgeo Chamber of Commerce, 1997).

The people joined hands around the town to make a statement that they wanted to stay. But the target of the protest, the government, was not the only player in the drama which had unfolded in Burgeo throughout the 1990s. The fish plant was a private business, owned by a company which operated a number of fish plants and trawlers, and which moved quota around to the most efficient location (since the quota was associated with the harvesting fleet). Burgeo had simply not been economically viable to reopen, thus far. But the decision to keep it closed was only tangentially a government decision.

This relates to the difficulties which community-based programming might experience regarding the major employer in a town. They cannot afford to alienate the company which is their only currently-visible hope for the future. What complicates the dynamics around the Burgeo situation is the debate regarding the reason for the plant closing. Barry had operated the plant for

only one season, but had purchased the plant as a part of a package deal (when he purchased a plant in Canso, Nova Scotia as well). Since the Burgeo plant processed predominantly groundfish, it probably would have closed in July 1992 after the moratorium, but it closed early due to a stated lack of fish to process. This was originally seen as a temporary measure, but it has turned out to be seven years (and counting).

Other proposals have come forward, and been discussed in detail on BBS programs. For example, a 1996 proposal was to process seals at the facility. In October 1996, they were expecting up to 100,000 seals to be processed there in 1997 (the total cull for the whole province was just over twice this number!) (Benoit, 1996). This was something of a surprise to the town, but it would employ up to 100 people for up to 6-8 months (if there was enough storage). But this plan, like many others, never came to fruition.

Bill Barry gets tapes of some BBS programs, so he knows what is being said about him on the channel. But Barry has also been willing to be interviewed by BBS, and does try to update the station as much as possible. It is, after all, the best way he has to speak to the people of Burgeo. (It must be noted that, in contrast to BBS's experience, Barry does not make a practice of speaking with the media, and the local CBC complains that he usually does not return their calls.) Barry's interpretations of the situation are balanced, somewhat, by interviews with

politicians, local union officials and community leaders.

One of BBS's major pieces on the fish plant situation was a 1995 documentary called "Burgeo's Future: The Seafreez Situation." The program begins by trying to ask why the plant closed in 1992. Blaine Marks (then the mayor of Burgeo), suggests that the cooperation with workers wasn't there and so the plant closed due to frustration. An extensive interview with Bill Barry is spliced throughout, and he concurs with this analysis. Barry talks about what it would take for him to get involved in Burgeo again (even though he still owns the fish plant). He said: "I've never ever felt welcome in Burgeo. I've never ever felt that anybody really wanted me there or wanted this company there."<sup>22</sup> Until he feels comfortable there, he doesn't plan to be back.

In reference to problems with the union, Barry claimed it wasn't a union/management issue. Two of his fish plants are unionized (although six are not, and he has actively campaigned to keep them non-union). Rather, he claimed that the issue was leadership, cooperation and attitude and he called the union

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<sup>22</sup> Based on the early reception which Seafreez got in Burgeo, it is easy to see how Barry would not feel welcome there. BBS broadcast a public meeting on August 13, 1990, before the Seafreez deal had been approved (and even before the town knew that National Sea, the current owners, were leaving). Some of the people at the meeting included FFAW leader Richard Cashin, who provided frequent and spirited condemnations of the Seafreez position, even before the deal was signed. Cashin charged that Seafreez was not dealing with the union at all as a player in the deal, and he reminded Seafreez of the union's history in Burgeo.



leadership "negative, obstinate, arrogant" and that they "fostered an atmosphere that ultimately forced us out of Burgeo."

As Barry said firmly: "Lots of good people in Burgeo, a whole pile of them, that's the ones I want; the handful of assholes, I don't want them, and I won't have them."

But despite the very strong voice that Barry was given in the program, his position was still somewhat balanced by other speakers. Rather, the program put the problem back in the laps of the people, rather than providing pat answers. This was also seen in another major story on the issue. At the end of a long program, which included an extensive (over one hour) interview with owner Barry (and with Ron Cooper, FFAW, and Dave Gilbert, MHA) the on-air host asks: "Who's telling the truth? Who's right? Who's wrong? That's not my decision to make. It's the people of Burgeo's. But something has to be done. And soon. The future of our community depends on it." Maybe we are too inundated by media reports with answers in them, with people who provide clear directions. But when there are obvious contradictions in the positions outlined, and when the issues are indeed complex, such clear directions are not as helpful. Shortly after the airing of one of these programs, the entire union executive resigned, and were replaced by a newer, more conciliatory executive. Dave Cooper, programming director of BBS at the time, does feel that their programs may have played a role in this change.

The debate about what closed the fish plant continues in the town, over coffee and across back fences. Over the course of several years of occasional visits, I've heard a number of cases of both unrealistic union positions and hierarchical and authoritarian management practices. However, the reticence to criticize Barry is being eroded, the longer that the fish plant remains idle.

One of the continuing themes in BBS news programs is a recognition of the frustration in the community, and the desire for concrete answers on the future of the fish plant. This is probably one of the major roles of BBS, in that it has been an outlet for frustration at times, but it has also provided a continual litany of the need to keep faith, maintain hope and trust that the plant will indeed open someday. This is a key message for the people, as the forces leading to demoralization are strong. In a 1998 telephone survey of Burgeo, residents were asked: "Would you say that the community is stronger and more unified than it was five years ago?" About 45% of the respondents said "no," many of them citing the closure of the fish plant and outmigration (Emke and Blanchard, 1998a). Only just over a quarter of the respondents said that "yes," the community was stronger (the remainder were not sure).<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the high levels of unemployment and the

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<sup>23</sup> To compare, the same question was asked in a survey of Ramea, where the results were: Yes (40%), No (22.2%), Not sure (37.8%) (Emke and Blanchard, 1998b).

uncertainty about the fish plant, over half of the people were optimistic about the future of Burgeo (56.7%).

## CONCLUSIONS

Moving from the early Extension Service work through to the Communication for Survival Initiative, one can see some common threads, but also some changes. The approaches have been altered somewhat, the technologies have changed and, more significantly, the communities themselves have changed. Some might ask whether a "Fogo Process" could work in another community, such as Ramea. However, it is not even clear whether it could still work in Fogo. The community is no longer as isolated, at least in terms of telecommunications, there is some access to centralized decision-makers, and the merchants and clergy are not as important as they used to be. As the community contexts changed, the approaches to stimulating development needed to change as well. In all of the above experiments, however, the democratization of information was important. There appear to be some advantages to technologies which allow people to get the same information at the same time -- how and when they get information may be as important as what they get access to.

The three major contributions of the community programs analyzed in this research are as follows: (i) to foster a pride in local culture and environment; (ii) to nurture a self-

confidence and pride in the skills of local people; and (iii) to reaffirm that the responsibility for development and change lay within the community itself. There are forces and messages working against these statements, and it is not fair to say that communities are totally, on their own, responsible for their current situations. But this rhetoric of community programming is one way to counter an area's growing impatience with a lack of action. By putting responsibility for development back into the hands of local people, then at least there seems to be a way forward.

One could also ask whether these technologies of communication have replaced other forms of communication? In doing so, is this positive? Some Extension Service workers believed that community viewing was an important component of the early experiments, and that the same effects could not be seen if people watch in their homes, isolated from each other. But these technologies appear to increase the amount of information which communities receive.

In a place like Ramea, the local development committee can broadcast town meetings, every few months, if there is some important issue for the whole town to consider. So a much wider group of people would watch in their own homes than would venture down to the church hall for a meeting.

Ironically, in using the technologies to maintain traditional pride in community and culture, these technologies probably change the communities themselves. The technology itself can act

as a kind of a counter-culture "which changes the relationships of all those who use it whether they be men, women, children, old, young, powerful, or weak" (Casmir, 1991: 24). It results in the construction of a "third culture" (Casmir's term), which is created when a group is undergoing change and cannot go back to what it was but also cannot stay as it is.

Communication is, as Carey said, the "creation, representation and celebration of shared values" and that may best be done by a community through a technology which provides it with images of itself. Harris (1992) refers to narrowcasting as a form of "collective dreaming," but a dreaming that inspires action to follow. As she writes of the effects of the Buchans Process: "Seeing people known to them was one of the features of narrowcast television of which residents spoke repeatedly. Seeing themselves, their friends, and their neighbours on BCTV was equated to seeing their community. Being taught and informed by themselves, reflecting on self-in-community, was crucial" (Harris, 1992: 196). As one resident of Buchans put it: "Say you're watching the [CBC] National, you're watching the other side of the world. By watching this project, you are watching yourself. People could see themselves, see inside, really see what's going on around you" (Calvin, as cited in Harris, 1992: 196).

The hypothetical side of me always asks the question, "where would a place like Burgeo be today without BBS?" If an important

aspect of development is the community consultation which takes place to determine which path to take, then BBS has served a definite purpose. Take, for example, the 1997 protest mentioned above. What this protest does show is both the resolve of the people of the community to voice their anger and the importance of BBS in acting as a conduit for that anger. The target may not be entirely clear, but the emotion is genuine. They met at the local Anglican church (and were asked to wear black, as if in mourning for their town). After some prayers they formed a human chain around part of the town. Then the BBS truck slowly drove around the chain, capturing the spectacle of a town holding hands with itself, complete with excited kids, bashful seniors, awkward teens, groups of adults chatting intensely and a variety of dogs yapping at the sheer novelty of the day. But without the documentation of BBS, the event would not have been disseminated further.

BBS and Burgeo is also an interesting case as it involves not just the principles of community-controlled communications technology, but also a more durable long-term vision of how to finance these community programs and how to adopt the news genre to fit the coverage of local events. And part of the task of development is to identify social and cultural factors of continuity within a community: what is of value? What defines a group? What are the reasons for staying here? Community broadcasting serves this purpose, by providing a litany of why

the community exists and what its values are. By helping it to think out loud.

And back in Ramea, they can (and do) watch themselves as well. One day on the ferry, as it rounded the point into the main harbour, I asked myself: "In traditional economic terms, what comparative advantage do these people have, to enable them to stay?" They do have a good, well-equipped fish plant and a trained work force. But their real competitive advantages are a will to remain there, a rootedness, a pride in their island way of life, and a sense of cultural location. That will keep some of them here for awhile. Or, at least they leave with more awareness of their roots and with more reticence. Ramea's community profile, called "Preparing for Tomorrow," clearly illustrates this pride. The introduction to the community states:

Ramea has always been a very peaceful and cohesive community, which is still very much evident today. It has an exceptionally low crime rate and a community spirit that is enviable. Its residents have a strong sense of pride and attachment to the town.

But beyond this pride, the question of the efficacy of participatory communications as a development tool requires a much more complex answer. To use the standard academic benediction, the question requires more research. Given the communications infrastructure and the recent history of consensus-building, I would say that if any isolated outpost community can make it, Ramea will. But that is the theory. The

praxis is more difficult.

In the 1991 census, Ramea had 1225 people. One evening, in Ramea's only diner, I asked the waitress how many people she thought lived there now. "850," she says, "maybe 825." She is speaking here not of census facts. She is speaking out of the experience of a marginalized community, holding on. But at least they know they are holding on, and they can see each other hold on as they attempt to continue to protect the way of life that they value. And that assurance, that cultural self-awareness, is something that their communications technology has played a major part in nurturing.



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#### APPENDIX A: VIDEOTAPES

The following videotapes were a part of the sample which were viewed for this project.

##### Communication for Survival Tapes

Burgeo (Fishery/Youth), Oct 17, 1996  
Burgeo (Zone), Oct. 17, 1996  
Ramea (Tourism), Oct. 22, 1996  
Ramea (Zone), Oct. 20, 1996  
Ramea (Youth), Oct. 21, 1996  
L'Anse a Canards (French Centre), Nov. 7, 1996 (2 tapes)  
La Grand' Terre (Water), Nov. 5, 1996 (2 tapes)  
Stephenville (Zone), Nov. 26, 1996 (5 tapes)

##### Burgeo Broadcasting Service Tapes

(Many of these were entire programs or else parts of "This Week in Review")

Public protest, November 1989  
Public meeting (re: National Sea/Seafreez), 13 August 1990  
Public Meeting (with Bill Barry and Paul Blades), 1991  
Public Meeting, 8 June 1995  
Interview (Bill Barry), 1995  
Documentary (Seafreez), November 1995  
Updates, Strategic Economic Plan, January 1997  
Updates, Industrial Adjustment Services Committee, April-Sept. 1997  
Report, Strategic Economic Planning Group, June 1997  
This Year in Review, 28 December 1997  
This Year in Review, 4 January 1998