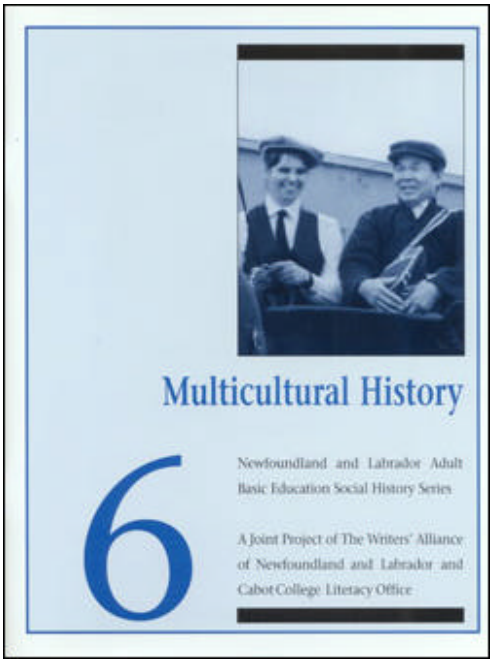

Multicultural History

Newfoundland and Labrador Adult Basic Education Social History Series

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

In This Series...

Book 1 - Timelines of Newfoundland and Labrador
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Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

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The essays and accompanying notes and questions in the *Newfoundland and Labrador Adult Basic Education Social History Series* were researched and written by Ed Kavanagh, Carmelita McGrath, Janet McNaughton, Kathryn Welbourn and Kathleen Winter. The series was edited by Marian Frances White.

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The coordinator of the project was Ed Kavanagh. Susan Hoddinott, Literacy Specialist at Cabot College, provided overall coordination.

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

Early Chinese Immigrants in Newfoundland

by Ed Kavanagh

Credit: Centre for Newfoundland Studies.

Members of the Chinese community welcome the Chinese General Consul to St. John's, *circa* 1938.

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On the morning of November 16th, 1906, a man joined the crowd waiting at the dock in Port aux Basques, Newfoundland. He boarded the ferry the *S.S. Bruce* for the ten hour trip to North Sydney, Nova Scotia. As he walked up the gangplank, the other passengers looked at him curiously. On deck, a wide-eyed little girl in a blue woollen cap pointed at the man and stared. She pulled on her father's coat sleeve to make him look too. Her father said "hush" and looked away. The man said nothing. The girl continued to stare. She bit ice from her thick mittens and kept pulling on her father's sleeve. Finally, the man smiled at the little girl. She raised a mittened hand to her mouth, giggled and turned away.

If the man had a wife and children, they were not with him. He travelled alone. His only luggage was an old cloth bag. Around his neck hung a leather wallet containing a small amount of money.

No one knew where the man came from. No one knew why he was leaving Newfoundland. No one knew what he was going to do when he got to Nova Scotia, a province in the foreign country of Canada. Perhaps the man himself did not know.

The early winter crossing was rough. November winds blow cold and strong in the North Atlantic. The ship was not as comfortable or well built as today's vessels. The S.S. Bruce pitched and rolled. Many people were seasick. The man was not a sailor. He had made at

least one long sea voyage in his life, but he too was probably seasick. It would be too bad if he was sick, because he was going to stay on the ship for much longer than the other passengers. On this voyage, he would never set foot on Canadian soil. For the next week the S.S. Bruce would be his prison.

The man was an immigrant to North America.[1] He did not look like the other passengers who hurried across the *S.S. Bruce's* frozen decks, or slept in their narrow bunks. Unlike them, he was not of Scottish, Irish or English background. Neither was he French, Spanish or Portuguese. He came from no European country. The man's name was Wang Lee and he had been born in Kwangtung Province in southern China. He was twenty-six years old and he needed to find work. Now, on this cold morning in November, he looked over the rail of the S.S. Bruce into the rolling fog. He wondered what lay ahead for him in Canada.

When the *S.S. Bruce* docked in North Sydney, Wang Lee waited until the other passengers had left. Then he made his way to the top of the wooden gangplank and looked around. In the fading light, the little girl and her father hurried, hand in hand, along the snowy dock. Halfway down the gangplank two men stood huddled together. They were talking seriously and nodding. One of the men had a grey bushy beard. He was the captain of the *S.S. Bruce*. Often during the trip, Wang Lee had seen him staring from the wheelhouse window or bending over his compass and charts. The other man was taller than the captain and had a thin grey mustache.

The men looked up and watched Wang Lee come towards them. As soon as he met their eyes, Wang Lee knew they had been talking about him. He could feel it in his bones. He was so sure that when he reached the men, he stopped. Wang Lee lay down his bag and waited.

The captain did not speak or look at Wang Lee. The man with the mustache laid one hand firmly on Wang Lee's shoulder; with the other hand he pointed up the gangplank. Wang Lee picked up his bag and slowly went back on board the *S.S. Bruce*.

The man with the mustache was a Canadian immigration officer.[2] He led Wang Lee to a small room below decks. He closed the door and dropped into a creaking wooden chair. He pulled some files from a desk drawer. For a moment he sat studying them. He looked up at Wang Lee. "You have papers?"

Wang Lee nodded and reached inside his jacket.

"You speak English?"

Wang Lee shrugged. "Yes," he said, handing over the papers. "A little."

"Travelling alone?"

Wang Lee nodded.

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[1] An immigrant is a person who comes to a new country with the intention of staying and becoming a citizen.

[2] Immigration officers decide which foreigners are allowed into a country. They also make sure that the person is not carrying anything illegal like drugs or guns.

The immigration officer glanced at the papers. "If you want to enter Canada, you must pay five hundred dollars." He spoke slowly and loudly as if he were speaking to a child or a deaf person. "Five-hundred-dollars."

"Five hundred dollars?" said Wang Lee.

"Yes, five hundred. It's the tax for Chinamen. If you want to come to Canada you must pay five hundred dollars." The officer took out his pipe and searched his pockets for matches. "Do you have it?"

"Five *hundred*?" said Wang Lee.

"Yes," said the man, impatiently. "For the tax. Do you have it?"

Wang Lee closed his eyes. He reached inside his jacket and felt his thin wallet. He shook his head. "No. No, five hundred."

"Then you cannot come into Canada," said the officer, lighting his pipe. He handed back the papers.

Wang Lee took the papers and looked at them.

"Without the five hundred dollars you cannot be admitted," said the officer. "Didn't you know?"

"No," said Wang Lee.

"It's the law," said the officer getting up from his desk. "You must go back to Newfoundland."

Wang Lee wanted to argue his case. His throat felt tight and dry. He tried to speak. But the immigration officer had already opened the door. No words would come.

The next morning Wang Lee found himself once more on the grey North Atlantic. The weather was even rougher than before. There were high seas and biting winds. The trip to Newfoundland took a long time. When the *S.S. Bruce* docked in Port aux Basques, Wang Lee again waited until most of the other passengers had left. When he stepped ashore he saw three men. They were smoking. Their hands were buried deep in their overcoat pockets. Wang Lee knew they wanted to talk to him. He stopped and looked at the men.

One of the men looked a lot like the immigration officer in North Sydney. The other two were policemen. They motioned for Wang Lee to follow them. They led him to a small building, not much bigger than a shed. As the shouts of dock workers came through the thin walls, the Newfoundland immigration officer looked at Wang Lee. He opened a file.

"If you want to enter the colony of Newfoundland you must pay a tax of three hundred dollars," he said.

"What?" said Wang Lee.

"It's the law," said the officer. "A new law."

"For everyone?" said Wang Lee, looking around.

"No," said the officer. "For the Chinese. Do you have three hundred dollars?"

Wang Lee shook his head. "Then I must deny you entry."

"But I just left here," said Wang Lee. "Two days ago."

"There is no tax for leaving the country," said the officer. One of the policemen laughed.

"But where do I go now?" said Wang Lee, gripping his bag.

"I don't know," said the officer. "You should have thought of that before you left."

"No landee in Canada, no landee in Newfoundland," said Wang Lee looking at the officer. "Throw me overboard." The officer shrugged and closed the file. He nodded to the two policemen.

Wang Lee was put on board the *S.S. Bruce*. Once more he found himself on the North Atlantic, drifting between two countries. Neither one would take him in. He wondered if he would stay on the ocean forever.

Wang Lee's name and the details of his story have been made up, but the facts are true. The story was reported in the St. John's Daily News *on November 26th, 1906.*

How did the story end? Wang Lee was forced to stay on the ferry for nearly a week. He went back and forth between North Sydney and Port aux Basques. Then, some of his friends in St. John's heard about his problem. They raised $300 so he could legally enter Newfoundland.

When asked by the Daily News' *reporter what he thought about his poor treatment, Wang Lee said: "No landee in Canada. No landee in Newfoundland. Thlow'ee overboard." This is the way the reporter wrote down Wang Lee's Chinese accent. Wang Lee was very bitter about what happened to him. If both Canada and Newfoundland didn't want him, he thought perhaps the immigration officers should have thrown him overboard. Or perhaps he meant that he was so depressed that he felt like jumping into the sea. Wang Lee must have been very lonely during his days and nights on the ferry.*

No one knows what became of him.

There are probably many stories like Wang Lee's that were never made public. The rest of this essay will explain some of the reasons why the Chinese were treated so badly.

Immigration

When someone comes to a country and wants to become a new citizen, he or she is called an immigrant. Over the years Newfoundland has had many different kinds of immigrants. Some still come today. In the past few years, Newfoundland has had a lot of immigrants from Bulgaria and other eastern European countries. Immigrants have also come from Cuba and Central and South America. These immigrants did not like the governments and living conditions in their home countries. Sometimes their lives were in danger because of their political or religious beliefs. They wanted to live in a country with

more freedom. Immigrants hope that their new country will give them a better life. Canada is a country many immigrants wish to come to.

Newfoundland's first white immigrants came mainly from England, Ireland, Scotland and France. They first arrived in the 1600 to 1800s. We also know that about a thousand years ago, Eric the Red and the Vikings visited Newfoundland. They did not stay for long. But even the Vikings were not Newfoundland's first immigrants. The native peoples, the Micmac and Beothuck, were also immigrants to Newfoundland. They came long before any white people. Thousands of years before their arrival, other natives called the Paleo-Eskimo and the Maritime Archaic people also lived in Newfoundland.

In 1997 there will be celebrations to mark the 500th anniversary of John Cabot's landing in Newfoundland. But he was not the first person to come to Newfoundland. Cabot's voyage was important, but Newfoundland had given a home to many people for thousands of years before his arrival.

The Chinese in Newfoundland

When the Chinese arrived in Newfoundland, many people from England, Ireland, Scotland and France were already settled there. They first arrived about 1895. In 1995 the Chinese community celebrated the 100th anniversary of their arrival in Newfoundland.

Since 1895 the Chinese have worked hard to build a place in Newfoundland business and culture. But Wang Lee's story shows that their struggle was long and difficult. Of all the peoples who made Newfoundland their home, perhaps only the native peoples have suffered more than the Chinese.

Most of Newfoundland's first Chinese immigrants came from an area in southern China called Kwangtung Province. This was a very poor part of China. Many Chinese men left Kwangtung to find work. They would send money home to their families. Sometimes the men stayed away for 20 years or longer. Some never returned. Many left babies and young children in China. Sometimes they did not see these children again until they were grown up with children of their own.

Most Chinese immigrants to Canada first went to British Columbia. They worked in the fishing and forest industries. Later, they helped to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. Their wages and living conditions were bad. Many died. When the railway was finished, the Chinese looked for other work. Little by little they spread across Canada. By 1895 the Chinese reached Newfoundland.

The Chinese Immigration Act

Wang Lee's story shows that immigrants are not always welcomed in their new country. This was especially true for the Chinese. When the Newfoundland government decided to bring in new immigration laws in 1906, Wang Lee found himself adrift on the Atlantic Ocean.

Before 1906 the only law Newfoundland had for immigrants was the *Disembarking of Paupers Act*. Under this Act, the captain of a ship could be given a three month prison sentence for landing any person in Newfoundland who because of age, disease or lack of

support, could become a public charge.[3] On the tenth of May, 1906, the government

passed a new law—the *Chinese Immigration Act*. This Act said that any Chinese person coming to Newfoundland had to pay $300. This kind of tax—a tax on people—is called a "head tax." Governments sometimes bring in head taxes when they are concerned about the number or kind of people entering their countries. A year before, in 1905, the Canadian government had set a $500 head tax on the Chinese. So did many other countries.[4] The head tax caused all the trouble for Wang Lee.

In 1906 in Newfoundland, the Chinese were the only immigrants who were forced to pay this $300 tax. Why?

When the Chinese first came to Newfoundland most people were not worried. No one tried to control them. They were left to go about their business. The Chinese opened laundries and restaurants. A few worked in mining, fishing and forestry. But life was not easy. Sometimes the Chinese were treated badly. Children or toughs would throw rocks at them, tease them, or break their store windows. Sometimes the Chinese were beaten up. But they did not let this drive them away. They continued to try and make a living.

By 1900, two Chinese hand laundries[5] were operating in St. John's: the Sing Lee Laundry on New Gower St., and the Jim Lee Laundry on Duckworth St. Over the next few years, more Chinese arrived. But their numbers were very small. Those that did come were all men. No Chinese women were allowed into Newfoundland until 1949.

As time went on, people began to notice the Chinese more and more. When we look at the newspapers of the time we see that some people were beginning to think that too many Chinese were coming into Newfoundland. People thought the Chinese would take any job they could get. It was said that they would work for very low wages—lower than most Newfoundlanders. Some people began to worry that the Chinese would take jobs away from other people. By 1904, many people were thinking this way. They believed that thousands and thousands of Chinese might decide to come to Newfoundland. This led to many negative comments about them. In the newspapers, both letters to the editor and editorials[6] complained about the Chinese. When the fifth Chinese laundry opened in St. John's, *The Evening Telegram* of 21 December 1904, said, "It is time some steps were taken to check this invasion of undesirables."[7] The *Daily News* said "the government should take steps to prevent more [Chinese] from coming in, [or] else the place will soon be over run."[8] Sometimes the language used to describe the Chinese was even more unkind than "undesirables." Here is what the editor of the *Daily News* said in 1905:

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[3] A "public charge" is another way of referring to someone on social assistance. Darren John Goodyear, *The Genesis of the Newfoundland Immigration Act of 1926*. M.U.N. MA Thesis, 1993. p.9.
[4] In some ways things haven't changed. Recently, a new Canadian law was passed that makes every Canadian immigrant pay a $1000 head tax.
[5] In "hand laundries" the work is done mainly by hand instead of by machines.
[6] An editorial is an opinion piece in a newspaper written by someone who works at the newspaper. See booklet 3 of this series *Learning About the Past*.
[7] *Evening Telegram*, December 21, 1904, p. 3 col. 2.
[8] *Daily News*, February 14, 1905, p.3, col. 8.

> Six more Chinamen and four Assyrians arrived here by the *S.S. Laurentian* this morning. The "Heathen Chinee" have now quite a colony established here, and if they continue to come in such large bunches we will boast of a local China town of larger population than in much more pretentious cities. The yellow peril is not greatly appreciated by our workmen, who fear that in a short time they will be branching out in other than the "washee-washee" business.[9]

Today names like "Heathen Chinee"[10] and "the yellow peril" are considered racist. Newspapers would not print such comments. But 100 years ago many people from all walks of life used this kind of language.

Here is a poem called "Washee-Washee" that appeared in the *Daily News* on the 26th of September, 1906:

Washee-Washee

In good old days when grandpa lived,
and grandma boiled his dickie white,
And starched it stiff with Colman's best
'till it did shine way out o' sight.
When ruffled bosoms were in vogue,
no patent wringers had we then,
But women washed with tucked-up sleeves
and did the laundry for their men.

But since that time a change has come
and with it Chinese by the score,
One Lung, Sing Lee and Wee Wah,
who wrote inviting fifty more
And soon the town was well supplied
with washee, washee signs hung out,
It seemed as if we had relied too much
on washee washee without a doubt.

Some scratched their nose
and shook their heads,
and said that they would interfere,
With labourers and artisans and other
workmen 'round here,
So to devise some easy way,
to introduce some simple plan,
Inducing washee to get out and rid us
of the Chinaman.

R.J.P., St. John's[11]

Credit: Centre for Newfoundland Studies
An ad from a local newspaper for a Chinese restaurant on Water Street, *circa* 1920.

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[9] *Daily News*, November 29, 1905, p.1, col. 5. "Washee Washee" refers to the laundry business. Many Chinese immigrants worked in laundries and restaurants.
[10] Heathen means not Christian, Jewish, or Islamic.
[11] *Daily News*, September 26, 1906, p.5, col. 6.

The line "who wrote inviting fifty more" shows us that some people thought that a Chinese person who had set up a business, would send for his relatives.

This poem and other things said in the newspapers tell us that some people did not think the Chinese were good immigrants. People did not want to understand or mix with the Chinese because their culture was different. Some people disliked them because they were not white or Christian. The Chinese were not seen as ordinary people. It was said that they gambled and smoked opium. [12] They are called the "heathen Chinee" and the "yellow peril." But the biggest fear was that the Chinese would take jobs.

In 1904, because of these attitudes, the member of the Newfoundland Legislature for Bay St. George, W.R. Howley, tried to pass a bill that would stop the entry of the Chinese into Newfoundland. Howley was unsuccessful. The government was still not convinced that enough Chinese were coming to cause a problem. But, in the next two years, more and more people complained about the Chinese. Finally, the government was convinced that something had to be done. In 1906, the *Chinese Immigration Act* and its $300 head tax became law.

White Immigration to Newfoundland

Fairbridge and the Salvation Army

Newfoundland has always had a small population. Even today there are less than 600,000 people in all of Newfoundland and Labrador. Some Canadian cities like Toronto and Edmonton have many more people. Newfoundland's population has remained small for many reasons.

Compared with other places in North America, Newfoundland has never had many immigrants. The climate is harsh. At the turn of the century Newfoundland was isolated. It took a long time to get there. In the early 1900s it could take 30 days to get to St. John's from Vancouver. Because of this, many immigrants decided to go to Canada or the United States. In addition, Newfoundland has never been a rich place. Just as the Chinese left Kwangtung Province to find work, many people have left Newfoundland for the same reason. It is often said that Newfoundland's greatest export is its people. Recently, the closure of the cod fishery has forced thousands of people to leave the province every year. When many people leave a place it is called an "outward migration." Over the years, Newfoundland has had many of these migrations. Today, of all the Canadian provinces, only Prince Edward Island has fewer people than Newfoundland.

In the early years of the 20th century, the Newfoundland government tried to bring more settlers into the country. But the government did not want to welcome just anyone. Because of Newfoundland's close ties with Britain, immigrants from the United Kingdom were thought to be the best. In 1909 and 1910, Prime Minister E.P. Morris tried to work with the Salvation Army in London, England. The Salvation Army said they would send British immigrants to live and work on new farm settlements in Newfoundland. In 1909, members of the Salvation Army came to Newfoundland and toured the island. Many people were happy that new British immigrants might be coming to Newfoundland. The editor of The *Daily News* wrote on November 13th, 1909 that "... there is plenty of room in the 'gardens' of Newfoundland for emigrants of the class that the Salvation Army sends

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[12] "Opium" is a narcotic derived from the poppy plant.

out."[13] The *Daily News* approved of the project because the Salvation Army immigrants would be white and Christian. They thought these people would fit in well with the rest of the population. In the end, the Salvation Army was not impressed with Newfoundland. Nothing ever came of this idea.

In 1909 there was another plan to bring British immigrants to Newfoundland. A man named Kingsley Fairbridge had started a group in Britain called "The Society for the Furtherance of Child Emigration to the Colonies." Fairbridge thought that all of Britain's colonies should have strong ties to England. He wanted to send British orphans and abandoned children to the colonies. In a talk to the Colonial Club at Oxford, England he said, "Great Britain and Greater Britain are and must be one... This will not be charity, it will be an imperial investment."[14] Once again, Prime Minister Morris and the Newfoundland government were excited about the idea. So were many other Newfoundlanders. The editor of the *Daily News* said the idea had "a real imperial ring to it."[15] But the plan did not work out. Fairbridge and his friends thought the Newfoundland climate would be too hard on the children. Some years later they sent children to Australia.

It is interesting to compare what the newspapers had to say about British and Chinese immigrants. The idea of British immigration had a nice "imperial" ring to it. They were the right "class" of people. But when it came to the Chinese it was a different story. Compared to "Mother Britain," *The Evening Telegram* called China "... the great slave country of the world" ruled by bands of brigands who have a "regular system of blackmail."[16] It was this kind of class and racist thinking that made the British immigrants desirable, and the Chinese unwelcome in Newfoundland.

The "Celestials"

Prejudice and Stereotypes[17]

It is often said that people are afraid of things that are different or what they do not understand. Perhaps this is why the Chinese were treated so badly when they first arrived in Newfoundland. Compared to the United States and the Canadian provinces, Newfoundlanders were not used to seeing many immigrants—certainly not from places like China or Japan. The Chinese, of course, looked different and had a different culture and language. In the newspapers they were sometimes called "celestials." This does not make them sound like human beings. It makes them sound very foreign and strange.

There are other reasons why the Chinese were sometimes treated with prejudice. Robert Hong, who has studied the Chinese in Newfoundland, says there were four main reasons why the Chinese were not accepted:

1. the idea that White people and the Christian religions were better
2. fear of job loss

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[13] "Salvation Army Settlement" *Daily News*, November 13, 1909, p. 1.
[14] Kingsley Fairbridge, *The Story Of Kingsley Fairbridge* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp 173-174. "Imperial" refers to Britain's many colonies throughout the world.
[15] *Daily News*, November 25, 1909, p. 4.
[16] *Evening Telegram*, July 16, 1904, p.3, col. 8.
[17] A stereotype is a popular idea about something. It is not always true.

3. the idea that the Chinese were unwilling to act like White, Christian people
4. the idea that the Chinese were "sojourners"—people who did not want to stay in Newfoundland

White and Religious Superiority

"Racism" is what happens when someone dislikes or mistreats a person just because of their race. Even today many countries like South Africa, the United States and even Canada have trouble with racism. But at least today governments and schools try to educate people to understand and accept their differences. Countries like South Africa are now trying to turn things around. A hundred years ago racism was common everywhere. At the turn of the century, non-whites in the colonies were feared and treated as less than equal. Robert Hong says:

> As was... the case with other non-whites, the Chinese were [looked upon] as inferior beings. From the white colonists' point of view, there was little "redeemable" value in their culture, and their continued immigration only threatened the social and economic fabric of life in the colonies. [18]

Many people thought the Chinese and other non-whites were not as good as white people. They believed in "white superiority." These people thought that non-whites were not as smart as whites. They believed that the white way of doing things was better. They thought that contact with non-whites might harm white culture.

These ideas are not accepted today. The Canadian government encourages "multiculturalism." This means that all cultures should be respected and kept alive. But at the turn of the century no one thought this way. Slavery in the United States had ended only 50 years before. The old idea of white superiority was deeply set in people. The Chinese faced constant racial prejudice. Because they were non-white and had a very different culture, they were sometimes looked upon as lesser people.

Unlike most Newfoundlanders, the Chinese were also not Christian. Many Newfoundlanders, whether Protestant or Catholic, did not take the Chinese religions like Buddhism or Taoism seriously. They thought that Christianity was the only right religion. They wanted the Chinese to become Christians. But most Chinese did not want to do this.

Being non-white and non-Christian made things very difficult for the Chinese.

Fear of Job Loss

As we have seen, many people also believed that the Chinese would take their jobs. Some did work in mining, fishing and forestry. But many others opened laundries and restaurants. In fact, the Chinese often made new jobs. Sometimes they even made jobs for white Newfoundlanders.

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[18] Robert G. Hong. *"To take action without delay": Newfoundland's Chinese Immigration Act of 1906.* (B.A. Hons. Thesis) Department of History, 1987, p 22

Assimilation

To assimilate means to become part of. Many Newfoundlanders thought that the Chinese, because of their culture, religion and language, would always be "out siders." They wanted immigrants who would fit in more easily- people from Britain or Ireland. They thought the Chinese would always be separate.

Today, many people think that different cultures add richness and colour to life. People from different countries often help to make their new country successful—even when they keep their own culture. At the turn of the century—and even today—some people did not believe this. They thought that all the citizens of a country should be the same. The Unites States follows this idea more closely than does Canada. It is sometimes said that the United States has a "melting pot" culture. This means that, when new immigrants come to the United States, they are encouraged to leave their old ways behind and become "American." This is one of the main differences between Canada and the United States. But even today not all Canadians agree with multiculturalism. In the early 1900s in Newfoundland, nobody did.

The Sojourner

Some people also believed that the Chinese did not intend to stay in Newfoundland and become citizens. It was said that they came here only to make as much money as they could. Then they would leave. People who do this are called "sojourners." Some citizens of a country do not like this because they think that sojourners take from a country and give nothing back. These people do not see why they should treat immigrants well if they are not even going to stay.

Some Chinese immigrants probably were sojourners. But so were a great many other immigrants. Most of the Chinese would probably have preferred to stay in Newfoundland. But there were many reasons why this was hard for them. We have already seen that the Chinese were sometimes badly treated. But there is an even more important reason why some Chinese did not stay. Chinese women were not allowed into Newfoundland until 1949. It is hard to assimilate and stay if you cannot have your family with you. This made life very hard and lonely for the Chinese.

Chinese Life in Newfoundland Today

From the very beginning, life in Newfoundland was a struggle for the Chinese. But they kept looking to the future. They were not afraid of hard work. William Ping, a Chinese man who ran the last Chinese laundry in St. John's, remembers the hard and long hours many Chinese worked in the early years of the century. He says they often worked in the laundry from 8 A.M. until 1 A.M. the next morning without a break. Then they would have their supper. But the day was still not over. The clothes then had to be ironed. Sometimes the laundry workers got only a half hour of sleep in a 24 hour day. Not many people would put up with these working conditions. But the Chinese did this kind of work regularly. [19]

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[19] "The Last Chinese Laundry." Documentary film. School of Continuing Studies and Education, M.U.N., 1987.

Today, things are better for the Chinese. Attitudes about race are changing. The Chinese are looked upon as respected members of society. They hold important professional positions. Many own successful businesses. They have also kept their culture alive. Every year colourful celebrations mark the Chinese New Year. Many Chinese take part in multicultural festivals. The Chinese and their culture add greatly to Newfoundland society.

The Chinese have come a long way since 1906 when Wang Lee boarded the *S.S. Bruce*. Every year the Chinese community gathers at Mount Carmel Cemetery in St. John's to pay their respects to the early Chinese immigrants. They know that Wang Lee and others like him helped pave the way for the Chinese of today.

Credit: Ed Kavanagh

The current Chinese community remembers.

Note to Instructors

"Early Chinese Immigrants in Newfoundland" can be used in conjunction with "Never Look Back: The Irish Migration to Newfoundland" and "The Secret History of the Mi'kmaq (Micmac) People of Newfoundland" for discussions concerning the peopling of the province. Most Level I students will need help with the source material of this piece as much of the syntax and vocabulary is slightly archaic.

This piece will also be appropriate for discussions of Government and Law, job creation and the many issues associated with race relations. Students should be encouraged to honestly examine their own feelings towards minorities.

Immigration is a particularly sensitive issue in the 1990s. For a Newfoundland context, instructors may want to focus on the mass defections at Gander International Airport in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as well as the landing of illegal aliens in Newfoundland by boat.

Credit: Centre for Newfoundland Studies
William Ping

Issues for Discussion

1. The role of racial prejudice in immigration policy.
2. Stereotyping.
3. A comparison of the reasons behind the "outward migrations" of China, Ireland and Newfoundland.
4. A comparison between Kwangtung Province and Newfoundland.
5. The idea that John Cabot "discovered" Newfoundland.
6. The reasoning behind the passing of the Chinese Immigration Act.
7. Race relations and attitudes in the past as compared to today.
8. The current $1000 Canadian head tax.
9. The contributions varied races make to a society.
10. A comparison of the Chinese and Irish immigration experiences.

Questions for Discussion

1. Who were the first immigrants to Newfoundland?
2. Where did most white immigrants to Newfoundland come from?
3. Describe the work of an immigration officer.

4. Where have many recent immigrants to Newfoundland come from? How have they been treated by the Newfoundland government and people?

5. When did the Chinese first arrive in Newfoundland? Why did they come later than other immigrants?

6. Which part of China did the Chinese immigrants mainly come from?

7. What was the Disembarking of Paupers Act?

8. Describe the Chinese Immigration Act. Why were the Chinese the only people required to pay a $300 tax? What would the cash value of the tax be today?

9. Why do you think Chinese women were not allowed into Newfoundland?

10. List the reasons why some people at the turn of the century worried about the Chinese coming to Newfoundland. Did people think the same way in other countries? Were these good reasons? Would people think the same way today?

11. What made the Chinese different than most Newfoundlanders? What did some people think of Chinese culture?

12. Why were immigrants from Britain more welcome than the Chinese?

13. Who was Kingsley Fairbridge?

14. What does "celestial" mean? Why do you think the Chinese were sometimes called "celestials?"

15. List the main reasons why some people did not want to see Chinese immigrants in Newfoundland. What do you think of these reasons? Do people feel the same way today?

16. What is "multiculturalism?" Is this more common in Canada or the United States?

17. Describe Chinese life in Newfoundland today. Do the Chinese still experience problems? If so, why?

Activities

1. Seek out an immigrant to Newfoundland and ask him/her about their experiences.

2. Call or write the Department of Immigration. Find out how many immigrants Canada accepts each year. Where do these people usually come from? What must they do in order to come here?

Never Look Back

The Irish Immigration to Newfoundland

by Ed Kavanagh

Ireland is the only European country to have its population decrease by at least 50% in modern times, as a result of the...twin forces of mass starvation and mass migration.[1]

Those of us who had to leave remember the songs and the stories. In the morning sunlight of our leavings, last goodbyes with our loved ones are heightened by vivid images of our native land: green fields, the wild cry of the curlew, the silent oak trees, ancient stones, the purple heather. The very landscape seems to join with our songs and our poems to mourn our leaving as we go across the water, beyond, abroad, in search of places where we can live our lives, where we can find fulfilment for our hopes and dreams. My Aunt Frances used to say that the thing to do was never look back as you were going up the boreen [laneway] towards the gate. Whatever you do, never look back.[2]

Talamh an Eisc

"The Island of Fish"

Visitors to Newfoundland often comment on the Irish character of the province. This is not surprising. About one third of the Newfoundland population has Irish roots. Towns like Ferryland, Logy Bay and Fogo were first settled by Irish immigrants. St. John's, the capital city, is also very Irish. The Irish influence can be seen in Newfoundland music, dance and architecture. It can be heard in many Newfoundland accents.

Newfoundland's strong Irish flavour comes from the fact that the early Irish immigrants did not leave their culture behind. When they arrived in Newfoundland they continued to sing the songs and tell the stories that had been handed down for hundreds of years. They modeled their houses and farms on those they had left behind in Ireland. Many of the tools they used had an Irish origin. Some can still be seen in Newfoundland today:

Credit: PANL. A17-81.

Fogo at the turn of the century.

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[1] Peter T. McGuigan. *Peoples of the Maritimes--The Irish*. Four East Publications, Tantallon, Nova Scotia, 1991. p. 4.

[2] Sheelagh Conway. *The Faraway Hills Are Green*. Women's Press, 1992. p. 16.

> Mattocks, a kind of cross between pick and hoe, were widely used for cultivation, and on the Cape Shore[3] to this day are still called by their Gaelic[4] name of *gruff* or *gruffawn*, though now used only for special jobs. Root-crops were planted in lazy-beds as they had been from time immemorial in Ireland...Baskets were woven and called by the Irish name *kish*. When carts came into use in the 1870s, they were home-made on the two-wheel pattern used in Ireland, rather than the four-wheel waggons of English origin.[5]

It is little wonder, then, that when the Irish President visited Newfoundland in 1996 as part of "Irish Week," he commented on how much Newfoundland reminded him of Ireland. Newfoundland, he said, was "just like home."

Why did the Irish come to Newfoundland? When did they first arrive? A clue can be found in the Irish Gaelic name for Newfoundland: *Talamh an Eisc:* "The Island of Fish." Starting in the mid seventeenth century, thousands of Irish came to Newfoundland to work in the migratory or "summer" fishery. They came out in the spring and returned to Ireland in the fall. The ships they worked on were owned by British merchants and based in England. More will be said about this later.

By the late 1700s the migratory fishery was coming to a close. Many Irish were staying year round in Newfoundland. They settled mainly in St. John's and throughout the Avalon Peninsula:

> By 1836 there were 38,000 Irish on the island--half the population of Newfoundland. More than 70% lived in St. John's and its near hinterland, between Renews and Carbonear. There were probably more Catholic Irish crowded into this restricted strip of shore than in any comparable Canadian space.[6]

There were so many Irish in Newfoundland that until the 1820s the most common language on the Avalon Peninsula was not English, but Irish (Gaelic).[7]

Life in Newfoundland was not always easy for the Irish. But many Irish immigrants thought anything was better than staying in Ireland. This was not because they did not love their native country. But many things made it impossible for them to stay.

Reasons for Leaving Ireland

Both political and economic reasons forced the Irish to emigrate to other countries. Like many immigrants, some Irish left hoping to find freedom.

Since the 12th century, the English had tried to take control of Ireland. They invaded Ireland many times. There were bloody wars and rebellions. Ireland was often under English rule. Six counties in the north of Ireland are still part of Britain today.

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[3] A heavily Irish part of southern Newfoundland.
[4] *Gaelic* refers to the early language and culture of Ireland.
[5] Kildare Dobbs, "Newfoundland and the Maritimes: An Overview" quoted in *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada.* Robert O'Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds (eds). Celtic Arts of Canada p. 183.
[6] John Mannion, PNLA Exhibit, 1996.
[7] Cyril Byrne. "The First Irish Foothold in North America." Quoted in Robert O'Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds (eds) *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada.* Celtic Arts of Canada p. 173.

The Irish did not like being ruled by the English. They did not feel that Ireland was their own country. The English sometimes took Irish land and gave it to English settlers. They also had strict laws for the Irish. They tried to destroy Irish culture. One way they did this was by forbidding the Irish to speak Gaelic, their native language. They also made it illegal for Irish poets and musicians to practice their arts. The harp—Ireland's oldest and most loved instrument—was banned.

Religion was also a problem. Most Irish were Catholic. The English, who were mainly Protestant, did not want the Irish Catholics to practice their religion. England brought in the "Penal Laws." Under these laws, those who refused to give up Catholicism were not allowed to own land. All of these rules made life hard for the Irish.

English rule in Ireland was often violent. The English leader Oliver Cromwell, who went to Ireland in 1649, was especially cruel. His soldiers killed thousands of Irish. Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who claimed Newfoundland for England in 1583, also fought the Irish rebels. For his service to England he was knighted and made governor of Munster, an Irish county. The Irish continued to fight hard, but they could not drive the English out.

Some areas of Ireland were also heavily populated. But there was little industrialization.[8] There were few jobs. Most people lived and worked on small farms. There was little chance for people to improve their lives.

Ireland also suffered from many crop failures. The most serious of these happened in the mid 1840s. This was the Great Famine.

The Great Famine

The most important source of food in 19th century Ireland was the potato. In the autumn of 1845, farmers found that their potatoes were rotting in the fields. A plant disease called *phytophthora infestans* destroyed almost the entire crop. This led to a terrible famine. Many people died. More decided to leave Ireland:

The winter of 1847-48 was, to make things worse, one of the most bitter on record. The years 1848 and 1849 were the worst years of the famine. Without sufficient help the Irish had no choice but to flee in greater and greater numbers. At least 1.5 million (and possibly as many as 2 million) had left Ireland by 1851, and at least 1 million or possibly twice that number died of starvation and disease. It is no wonder that Ireland's officially expected population of more than 9 million fell almost 2.5 million short in the 1851 census.[9]

Some people think that most Newfoundland Irish arrived during or just after the Great Famine. This is not true. The Great Famine caused many people to leave Ireland, but most of these went to the United States. The Irish migration to Newfoundland was nearly over by the time of the Great Famine.

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[8] Industrialization refers to factories and other mechanical means of work.
[9] Peter T. McGuigan. *Peoples of the Maritimes--The Irish*. Four East Publications, Tantallon, Nova Scotia, 1991. p. 11.

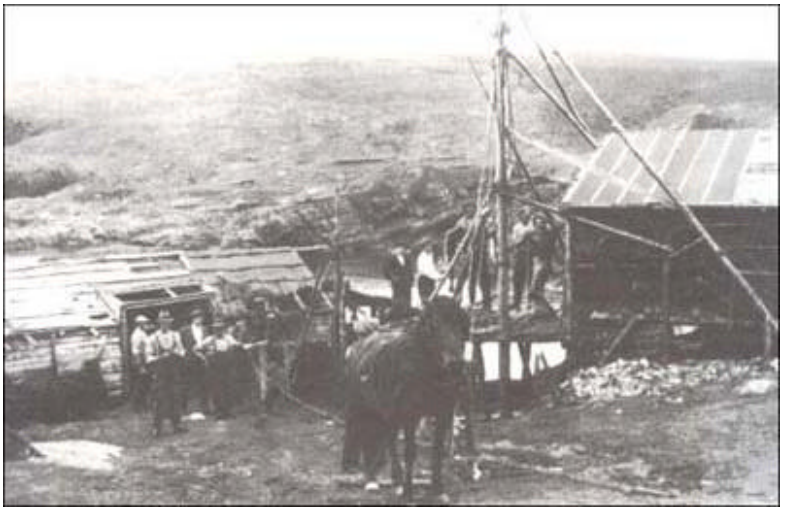
The Irish in Newfoundland

The Beginning The Irish first started coming to Newfoundland around 1675. Some of the earliest Irish settlements were Ireland's Eye (1675), Heart's Content (1696) and St. John's (1705).[10] The English had been coming to Newfoundland since the mid 1500s.

The Irish came to Newfoundland on English ships to work in the summer (migratory) fishery. Most of these ships came from the English West Country and from Poole:

> Every spring vessels from these places bound for Newfoundland called in en route to ports along the south coast of Ireland to collect salt provisions and recruit servants for the summer fishery. New Ross, Youghal, and the great port of Cork were all sources of supply...but Waterford was the pivot of the Irish trade. More than 85% of all Irish came from within thirty miles radius of the city, primarily from towns and parishes along the main routes of communications and trade, both river and road, in southwest Wexford, south Carlow, south Kilkenny, southeast Tipperary, and east Waterford. A further 10% came from the Blackwater Basin in east Cork and west Waterford, through the port of Youghal, and from Dingle, in Kerry.[11]

For the first 100 years of the Irish migration more English than Irish arrived in Newfoundland. But the number of Irish soon grew. Most Irish came in the early 1770s and the 1810s. During these years 3000-5000 Irish left Ireland each spring for Newfoundland. Most were poor young men who left in an effort to improve their economic lot.[12] But not all were successful.



Credit: PANL B16-108
Fishermen in Logy Bay.

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[10] Kildare Dobbs.
[11] Dr. John Mannion. PNLA Exhibit, 1996.
[12] Mannion, PNLA Exhibit, 1996.

Conditions in the New Found Land

What was life like for a new Irish immigrant in Newfoundland? First the person had to be admitted. Sometimes immigrants were not allowed in. Immigrants were only welcome if they were young, healthy and had enough money. Sometimes immigrants made the long trip across the Atlantic only to be turned back.

Once the immigrant had been admitted into Newfoundland, life was far from easy. Many suffered from loneliness. The work was hard and long. Like Ireland, Newfoundland was ruled by the English. Irish immigrants were sometimes treated worse in Newfoundland than they were in Ireland. In particular, Irish Catholic immigrants often faced religious discrimination:

> An Irish priest, Timothy Lynch, was a missionary at the fort [Louisbourg in Nova Scotia] during the 1740s, and in the next decade a number of Catholics from the Nova Scotia mainland and Newfoundland sought refuge there from discrimination. Newfoundlanders also sailed to the fortress to have their children baptized or their marriages regularized.[13]

In spite of these problems the Irish continued to come to Newfoundland. By the middle of the 18th century so many Irish were living in Newfoundland that the English began to worry. They knew they were not liked by the Irish. The English took steps to reduce the number of Irish living in Newfoundland. They tried to make sure that workers in the migratory fishery did not winter in Newfoundland. In addition to religious discrimination, the English also passed other rules that made life difficult for the Irish:

> They refused to allow Roman Catholics to operate public houses; they limited the number of Irish allowed to live in any one household. They discouraged the practice of bringing out Irish women to get work. One excuse given by Governor Palliser was that these "young girls who are destitute of friends" were often found to be pregnant shortly after their arrival in Newfoundland, and therefore became a charge on the inhabitants.[14]

Between 1780 and 1830 most of these rules were dropped. But this poor treatment led many Irish to leave Newfoundland for Upper Canada, New England, Cape Breton and the Miramichi region of New Brunswick.

Labour Contracts and Deserters

It was common for Irish workers to come to Newfoundland on a labour contract. These workers agreed to work for an employer for an agreed upon wage and length of time. But sometimes the workers broke their contracts. They found the work too hard or the wages too small. Sometimes the workers were badly treated. Shipowners sometimes lied about how long the passage to Newfoundland would take. This let them charge more money for food. Many workers left their jobs before their contracts were finished. If they did this they were considered "deserters." Employers placed ads in local newspapers to try and find these deserters. Here is an example taken from the *Royal Gazette* on Thursday, June 9th, 1814:

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[13] McGuigan, p. 17
[14] F.W. Rowe, *History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Toronto, 1980) pp. 212-214.

> Deserted:
> From the Service of Thomas Bulley &Co. on Saturday last the 21st instant:
> John Murphy—23 years of age, fair complexion, brown hair, 5 feet 4 inches high—a native of Ireland.
> William Mulves—24 years of age, fair complexion, dark hair, with foxy whiskers, 6 feet high—a native of Ireland.
> The above named Deserters, arrived here in the Brig *Thomas*, Thomas Bulley, Master, from Waterford. A reward of Three Pounds for each man, is hereby offered to any person or persons who will apprehend the above named deserters, or either of them, or give such information as will lead to their apprehension.
>
> Masters of Vessels and others are hereby cautioned not to harbor, conceal, or carry off the above named deserters, as they will be prosecuted to the utmost rigour of the law.
>
> St. John's, 26th May, 1814[15]

Sometimes workers who came to Newfoundland did not pay their passage before they left. When this happened someone Ireland would agree to act as a "surety" for the worker. If the worker did not pay his passage after an agreed upon time, the person in Ireland would have to pay. Here is a notice about this that appeared in a St. John's newspaper in 1816:

> The Passengers who arrived last spring in the Brig *Dolphin*, John Down, master, from Waterford, and Schooner *Jubilee*, John Cousins, master, from Cork, are desired to take notice, that if their passages are not paid on or before the 10th day of November next, that their notes will be sent to Ireland, to recover their sureties there.
>
> Samuel Codner
> Oct. 12th, 1816[16]

Those who could not pay often remained in Newfoundland illegally. Some went to isolated coves and bays in Newfoundland and started their own communities. Other "deserters" were found and sent back to Ireland.

Conclusion

By the middle of the 19th century relations between the English and Irish in Newfoundland had improved. John Kent, who was born in Waterford, Ireland in 1805, became the Prime Minister of Newfoundland in 1858. Catholic and Protestant Newfoundlanders learned to accept their differences. Slowly but surely, the Irish began to move into positions of power.

Today the Irish influence can be seen everywhere in Newfoundland. The Benevolent Irish Society (BIS) does much to keep Irish culture and traditions alive. The teaching orders the Irish Christian Brothers, the Sisters of Mercy and the Presentation Sisters all have

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[15] Mannion, PNLA Exhibit, 1996.
[16] *The Royal Gazette*. Oct. 12th, 1816.

Irish roots and continue to operate today. Irish folk song and dance can be seen every summer in the many folk festivals around the province.

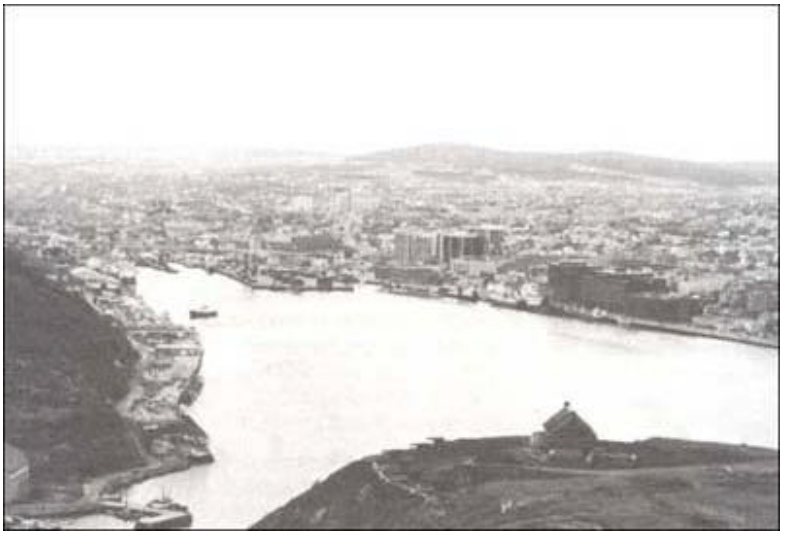
The Irish migration to Newfoundland took nearly 200 years to complete. During that time there were many changes in Newfoundland. Despite the hard times they endured, the Irish made a great contribution to Newfoundland's social and economic life. Today, their descendants continue to do the same.

Note to Instructors

"Never Look Back: The Irish Migration to Newfoundland" is appropriate for Social Studies discussions. In particular, race relations and the wide ranging impact of government social policy, past and present, may be focused upon. The piece can also be used in conjunction with "Early Chinese Immigrants in Newfoundland" for a comparison of both immigrant experiences. Students should also be encouraged to think about the other main immigrant groups in Newfoundland: the English, French, Scottish and native peoples.

This piece may also be useful in a discussion of the current troubles in Northern Ireland. The political repercussions of relations between Catholics and Protestants in the past, as well as today, should also be addressed.

The current migration of Newfoundlanders to other parts of Canada due to the closure of the cod fishery can also be examined in relation to the Irish experience. What are the similarities and differences? Is Newfoundland suffering through a "Great Famine?"



Modern Day St. John's.

Issues for Discussion

1. The psychological impact of "no choice" migration.

2. The treatment of workers in the 18th and 19th centuries as compared to today. What are the similarities and differences between the treatment of Newfoundland loggers in the 1930s, and the Irish "servants" of the 18th century migratory fishery?

3. The social legacy of Catholic/Protestant relations.

4. Rich versus poor and the politics of "class."

Questions for Discussion

1. What does Talamh an Eisc mean?

2. When did the Irish first start coming to Newfoundland? Why?

3. When did the Irish first start to settle in Newfoundland?

4. Give some of the reasons why some early Irish immigrants did not stay in Newfoundland. Where did they go?

5. What does the "migratory" fishery mean? Are there any fisheries like this operating today?

6. Where did the early Irish immigrants in Newfoundland first settle?

7. At what period were there the most Irish in Newfoundland?

8. How did the English and Irish get along in the 18th century? Was this true for Newfoundland as well as Ireland? What were some of their major differences?

9. What were the Penal Laws? Why would the English bring in such laws?

10. Describe the impact of the "Great Famine" on Ireland. What caused it?

11. What effect did the Great Famine have on Newfoundland?

12. What part of Ireland did most Irish immigrants to Newfoundland come from? What was this part of Ireland like?

13. Describe life for a new Irish immigrant in Newfoundland.

14. How did the English in Newfoundland feel when the Irish population started to increase? What did they do about this? How did the Irish react?

15. What was a labour contract? Describe how a "surety" worked.

The Secret History of the Mi'kmaq (Micmac) People of Newfoundland

by Kathryn Welbourn

Credit: Greg Locke.
Michael Joe tries to keep the traditions of Mi'kmaq people alive.

The Struggle Over Mi'kmaq (Micmac) History

In the beginning...

> When the Great Spirit was making the Continent of the New World, he found that he had much material left over in the shape of rocks, swamps and useless trees. So he formed a big rubbish heap by casting it all into the sea to the northeast, and called it Wee-soc-kadao. Several years after, John Cabot discovered and claimed the island for Great Britain. He called it Newfoundland.[1]

This is a very old **Mi'kmaq** joke. It is based on their beliefs about the creation of North America. It's a lot like our own saying about Labrador-the land God gave to Cain-a sly comment about the harsh landscape of this province. Like many jokes, it may have been changed and added to over time. The last two lines could be a comment on the habits of **Europeans**. They claimed to "discover" places where Indians already lived. They changed the names given to those places by the Gods.

We don't know when the joke was first told. It could have been hundreds of years ago. We do know when this bit of Mi'kmaq wit was first written down. In 1906 J.G. Millais traveled to Newfoundland. He came to explore and hunt caribou in the Bay d'Espoir and Port aux Basques wilderness. He hired several Mi'kmaq guides to help him find his way. These guides told him the joke during the trip.

Millais came to like and admire his Mi'kmaq guides. He probably understood both parts of the joke. He may even have agreed with the slap it makes at Europeans like himself. Millais liked it so much he used it as the opening paragraph in the book he wrote about his adventures, called *Newfoundland and Its Untrodden Ways*.[1] The joke is still told by Mi'kmaq people on the island today. It may not strike them as funny anymore. Europeans renamed their home. The Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland believe they also rewrote their history.

History, Salmon Nets and Mi'kmaq People

On Tuesday, August 15, 1995 two men from the Glenwood Mi'kmaq Indian Band set a single salmon net across the Gander River. Setting the net was illegal. The men who set the net knew this. They broke the law on purpose. When the river wardens came the Mi'kmaq men did not run. They did not try to hide what they were doing. They did not argue or fight with the wardens. They wanted to get arrested. They wanted to go to court.

Tony John and Jim John weren't trying to catch any fish. They set the net to make a point. They believe the Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland have a **historical** right to fish for food. They also believe Mi'kmaq people have the right to set their own hunting, trapping and fishing rules in this province—a right that is different from the rights of Newfoundlanders who are not native people. This is called **aboriginal** rights.

Their protest angered some of their neighbours. Fishing guides from the Glenwood area also use the Gander River. They make their living by taking people on salmon fishing trips. The guides believe the Mi'kmaq claims could destroy their business. They say Mi'kmaq people should have to follow the same wildlife rules as other Newfoundlanders.

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[1] J.G. Millais, *Newfoundland and Its Untrodden Ways*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1907.

The *Evening Telegram* reported that this issue had divided the community into "white men" and "damn Indians."[2] A petition against native fishing rights was sent around the town. As one Glenwood resident put it: "We are all people of this community, but now the line is there."[3]

In a letter to the *Evening Telegram*, the chief of the Conne River Mi'kmaq band defended the Glenwood band's actions. Michael Joe said that Mi'kmaq people would not back down. "An informed citizen will not only see the historical and legal fairness in Mi'kmaq aboriginal rights but also come to understand its moral fairness," he wrote. "We will not change or go away."[4]

The Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland believe they come from a group of **ancient** native people. They lived here at least a thousand years ago. They are part of a larger Mi'kmaq nation. It is spread across the Atlantic provinces. Their relatives in Cape Breton came to the island to fish and hunt. But a small group of Mi'kmaq people always lived in Newfoundland.

Mi'kmaq people believe they have special rights because their **ancestors** lived, hunted, trapped, and fished in Newfoundland before Europeans settled on the island. They believe their claim is fair because Europeans took away their land and their **resources**—not just because they are a different colour or race than their neighbors.

But many Newfoundlanders don't buy the Mi'kmaq claims. They believe another version of history. That version claims the Mi'kmaq people came to Newfoundland after Europeans arrived on the island. They were brought over from Nova Scotia by the French. They were brought over to hunt and kill another group of native people—the Beothuks. As one Glenwood resident said: "The average Newfoundlander knows that these people aren't native to this province. They were brought in as assassins to kill the Beothuks off. They were brought in to do what the white man couldn't do himself—and that was to finish off a troublesome people. Normally an assassin would go home. They stayed."[5]

The Glenwood Mi'kmaq band is part of a provincial group. The group is called the Federation of Newfoundland Indians. It represents nine other Mi'kmaq bands. Band members live side by side with their non-native neighbours. They live in the outports and towns of the central, southern and western areas of the island. The Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland have been trying to gather enough historical proof to set up a land claim. They have been trying to do this for at least 30 years. Proving their right to fish for food is part of that process.

So the conflict between the Glenwood Mi'kmaq people, their non-native neighbors, and the government is all about history. It is also about **status**, the right to use resources, and the ownership of land.

It's not a new problem, or a new argument. Non-native Newfoundlanders and Mi'kmaq people have been fighting for the right to live and work on the island since the 1700s. Mi'kmaq people have been arrested on the Gander River before.

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[2] *The Evening Telegram*, August 27, 1995.
[3] *The Evening Telegram*, August 27, 1995.
[4] *The Evening Telegram*, August 28, 1995.
[5] *The Evening Telegram*, August 27, 1995.

Walking Through Time

The evening is warm and still. You can hear the hum of lazy bees. They hang on the summer clover. The sun lies low in the sky. But it won't set for a few more hours.

A stocky man with copper-coloured skin and straight black hair comes walking over the green meadow. He listens to the bees. He watches an eagle. It glides gracefully overhead. The eagle is heading for its nest in the hills. The man is going into the bush. He turns away and walks into the trees.

Michael Joe is a Mi'kmaq Indian. He is the traditional chief of the Conne River Mi'kmaq band. Michael Joe does a lot of office work—like the mayor of any small town. He also settles arguments about trapping areas. A big part of Michael Joe's job is to keep the **spiritual** and **cultural** traditions of his people alive. He started a **traditional** singing and drumming group for the youth of Conne River. He helped organize a trapping and hunting training camp. Young people learn how to live and find food "on the country" at this camp. Michael Joe also practices the old way of making medicine and healing the sick.

Yesterday a woman came to Michael Joe with a sore throat. She had medicine from the doctor, but it wasn't working. She asked him to make her some traditional medicine. Michael Joe doesn't keep his cures on hand. They must be gathered fresh for each new person. Michael Joe has come to the woods to find the things he needs.

He stops at a small stream. This is his special place. He calls it a healing place. Michael Joe has high blood pressure. He sits beside the stream and prays. He feels himself becoming calm. He feels his heart slowing down. He feels the stream healing him.

Michael Joe gets up and walks on through the bush. He is looking for a wild cherry tree. He passes young fir trees. They are good for vitamin C. In the 1950s many of his people became sick with tuberculosis—a disease made worse by poor food and living conditions. Their chief told them to eat the inner core of a new shoot. It tastes sweet, almost like an orange.

Michael Joe sees a witch hazel bush. He thinks about how his father taught him to peel the bark from the branches. He sucks them for strength. They have a mint or winter green taste.

Michael Joe comes into a sunny opening in the bush. He sees the cherry tree. He stands praying for a long time. He asks the Great Spirit to help him make a good medicine. He asks for permission to take a part of the tree. Then he carefully cuts off a branch. Michael Joe knows how to cut it so it won't damage the tree. He takes the branch home and peels off the outer bark. He peels off the inner bark and boils it in water. He saves the branch. He won't throw it away or burn it. It is a special branch now. It will help heal a human being.

Michael Joe brings the boiled cherry bark to the woman with the sore throat. He tells her to swallow it down quickly. "Don't taste it," he says. His medicine has a bitter flavor.

"That's something white medicine and Indian medicine have in common," the woman says.

Michael Joe's medicine is very old. The way to find it and make it has been passed down among Mi'kmaq people for hundreds of years. When Michael Joe goes into the bush he

wears jeans and running shoes. He carries a nylon knapsack. His ancestors wore animal skin shoes and clothing. They carried woven baskets. But what Michael Joe does in the bush is the same as his ancestors have always done. They went to the same places. They gathered the same plants. It is easy to hear the voices of the ancient Mi'kmaq walking through the bush with Michael Joe. It is easy to imagine them sitting in the same sunny opening and praying beside the cherry tree.

In 1987 the Conne River band was granted a small **reserve**. It is about three square kilometers of land. The reserve was a special deal with the federal and provincial governments.[6] The band gets federal funding like other native reserves in Canada. Seven hundred people live there. Conne River is the only native reserve in Newfoundland.

The Mi'kmaq people have done a lot on their tiny piece of land. They built their own school and medical clinic. The band has started several businesses, including a Christmas tree farm. There is very little unemployment. The people there have special rights to fish salmon on the Conne River. They have the same kind of rights the Glenwood Mi'kmaq band want. Michael Joe says getting reserve status and control of their funding wasn't easy. Band members had to lobby, protest, and even hold hunger strikes.

They still do not have the right to negotiate a land claim. But Michael Joe is trying to change that. The Conne River Mi'kmaq believe they have the right to a large part of the Bay du Nord wilderness area near their reserve. Michael Joe's main job as chief is to gather enough historical proof to show the Mi'kmaq lived in the area before Europeans arrived. This is part of the rules for land claims.

You might think Michael Joe would have no problem getting the proof he needs. After all, he knows how his ancestors made their medicines. He should be able to find the information he needs for land claims in the same way. It should be simple. Either Mi'kmaq people lived in Newfoundland before Europeans came, or they didn't. But history is a tricky thing. There are different ways of remembering what happened. There are different ways of keeping time and events.

A Trip to Newfoundland in the 15th Century

Three sturdy canoes lined the beach at what we now know as Cape North, Cape Breton. The canoes were at least 20 feet long. They were cleverly designed. The sides were raised in the middle to keep out ocean waves. The canoes were made of birch bark. The bark had been peeled off the trees gently so as not to kill them. Prayers had been offered to the Great Spirit for the use of the bark. It was laid on the canoe frames while still wet with sap. The birch bark dried in the sunlight. It shrunk tight against the ribs of the canoes. Here were vessels to have confidence in. They were waterproof, steady and truly seaworthy. The canoes were neatly packed with supplies and winter gear.

As the sun rose over the salt water several Mi'kmaq families came down to the beach. They settled into their canoes. There was a lot of talking and laughing. There were a few sharp words about an eel spear. It had been left on the beach. A young man ran back to

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[6] Most native reserves and land claims are based on agreements between native people and Europeans. These agreements are called treaties. They were signed during the settlement of North America. Many native groups did not want to sign these treaties. But they feared their people would not have any land of their own if they did not agree to live on reserves. Britain did not sign any treaties with the Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland.

pack it safely into one of the canoes. It was an exciting day, especially for the children. It would be their first trip to the island north of Cape Breton. They called it Unamakik—the foggy lands.

The adults were also happy to go on such a calm, clear fall morning. The winter hunting would be good on the other side of the water. There would be feasting and gossiping with the Mi'kmaq people who lived there.

Ansalewit carried gifts for her granddaughter. Her son had married a woman over there five years ago. She had not seen him since. Word had come last spring that she now had a granddaughter. Ansalewit was determined to go along on this year's trip. Her son had named his daughter after her. Her name meant a good person or an angel. The new grandmother smiled to herself. Ansalewit. A fine name, but hard to live up to.

The men traveling with Ansalewit had messages and news to deliver to the chief across the water. The messages were from the Grand Chief of all the Mi'kmaq. He lived in Cape Breton.

The first day of the trip was pretty easy going. It was only 14 miles to their first stop at St. Paul's Island. They paddled into the Atlantic Ocean. They kept watch for land. They found their spot easily enough. They got out of their canoes and made camp for the night.

Several of the men had made this trip before. They took a short break. Then they headed out into the open water. They paddled towards what we call Cape Ray, near Port aux Basques. This time they had a long way to go, about 70 miles. The greatest danger would come when they reached the cape. The coastline was full of rocks and wild, crashing waves. The men were more excited than frightened. Their canoes were made for open water. The ocean was calm at night. The sky was full of stars to guide them. Each man knew exactly what the easiest landing site looked like. They carried maps in their heads of all the trees and rocks and cliffs along the way.

When they reached the island, the men would climb up to the high barrens. They would build a huge fire to guide their friends and families safely to shore. Then together they would travel inland. There they would join the people who called the foggy lands Tak'am'kuk—our home, or our land.

This is a **fictional** account of a trip taken by a group of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaqs to visit their friends and family in Newfoundland. The trip takes place in the early 1400s before European explorers came to North America. But it's not just a made up story. It is based on the detailed descriptions Mi'kmaq people have been giving to explorers, **anthropologists** and priests for the last three hundred years.

Two Kinds of History Keeping

The Mi'kmaq people did not keep written records of their trips between Cape Breton and Newfoundland. They did not write reports of the number of people living in Newfoundland. They did not write family histories. They did not draw maps of their hunting grounds. They did not put their religious beliefs into a book like the Bible.

The Mi'kmaq people did not know about or use writing. They kept the information they needed in their heads. They passed it on to their sons and daughters by telling and showing them. They remembered their histories by telling stories about the past.

Mi'kmaq people did not learn to read and write. They learned to remember. This is called oral history.

North Americans use written documents and accounts as proof of events. We call the stories people tell each other **myths**, folk tales or gossip. There must be written proof to back up these stories. So Mi'kmaq history has been written from the point of view of the people who could read and write. It has been written by the Europeans who claimed Newfoundland for themselves.

Mi'kmaq oral history says a small group of their ancestors always traveled and lived in southern and western Newfoundland—from Bay St. George to Bay D'Espoir. Mi'kmaq people got along with the other native groups who came to the island from Labrador. They got along with the Beothuk people who lived on the island with them. But a fight, possibly over hunting areas, caused a split between the Mi'kmaqs and the Beothuks. The two groups lived apart from then on. The Beothuks kept to the north of Red Indian Lake. The Mi'kmaqs kept to the south.

As more and more Europeans settled in Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, many mainland Mi'kmaqs began moving to Newfoundland. Cape Breton was becoming too crowded. They had to compete with the **settlers** for wild animals and fish. There was still plenty of both in Newfoundland. Mi'kmaq people spread across the south and west coasts of the island. They hunted and fished inland.

The Mi'kmaq people of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland had good relations with the French settlers and explorers. They became Catholics like their French friends. They even helped the French fight the British during the struggle over Newfoundland in the 1600s and 1700s.

But the Mi'kmaq people's stories of their lives in Newfoundland before Europeans came here-like their descriptions of travelling back and forth from Cape Breton—are not believed. Instead, Mi'kmaq people say they are stuck with someone else's **version** of their past.

That version claims the Mi'kmaq did not come to Newfoundland until the 1600s. They came then to trap and trade furs with the French. It also claimed until recently, that the Mi'kmaq were hired by the French to kill the Beothuk. This theory has been rejected by most modern historians.[7] But many Newfoundlanders still believe this.

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[7] This story may have been started by a landowner and furrier named John Peyton. He told a government geologist that the Mi'kmaq were paid by the French to kill the Beothuk. According to this story, the French wanted to get rid of the Beothuk because they raided their fishing supplies. John Peyton claimed a Mi'kmaq person had told him the story But members of the Peyton family were suspected of murdering Beothuk Indians themselves. In fact, in the late 1 700s there were several written accounts of a small group of settlers murdering Beothuk Indians for stealing their supplies.

There may still be people with Beothuk ancestors living in Newfoundland today. Beothuks may have married Mi'kmaq people. They may have had children with non-native settlers. But as a people the Beothuks are extinct. Modem historians believe they were destroyed by hunger and diseases spread to them by Europeans. If they were murdered, it was probably by European settlers. But there was no official policy to hunt Beothuk people.

The Mi'kmaq people could not have known that their way of keeping history would hurt future generations of their people. They did not know they would need written proof for land claims. Their oral history was the only kind of history in Atlantic Canada before Europeans arrived.

The official version of history says the only native people who might have made a claim for land are the Beothuk. Mi'kmaq people are just **immigrants**, like the Irish and the English. They are asking for special status they don't deserve.[8]

What is this claim about the Mi'kmaq people really based on? Explorers and adventurers wrote accounts about what they saw. Government officials wrote reports. Settlers and priests wrote letters to relatives and friends. Newspapers published stories on current events. **Historians** take all of these "facts." They put together the parts that seem interesting or true to them. And they come up with what we call history.

So our written history is also a series of stories, conversations and guesses. If people in the past were as human as people today, then their stories—like ours—are coloured by their own likes, dislikes, fears and, in some cases, mischief. Their stories and reports are limited by what they saw, heard and were told.

But if all history is a series of stories, conversations and guesses, how do we know what really happened in the past? The short answer is we don't. What we do get are different versions of events from the view of the people who first wrote or told about the events. We also get the versions which historians choose to tell us. Perhaps the same "grain of salt" we use when listening to gossip about our neighbors should be used when reading history books. The history of the Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland is no exception. Somewhere between the accounts written by the Europeans who met them, and their own traditional stories, lies the secret history of their past. And of ours.

A Brief Account of the Struggle over Newfoundland

Throughout the 1600s France and Britain fought for control of Newfoundland. Both countries wanted the cod stocks. France also wanted to protect the route from southern Newfoundland to the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. That river led to the French colonies in Quebec. The French and the British attacked each other's fishing ships. They set fire to the tiny settlements of their enemies. In 1713 the French gave up control of Newfoundland. They signed the Treaty of Utrecht. Newfoundland became a British **colony**.

France and Britain continued to fight for control of the rest of North America. In 1763 the British won that war. France signed the Treaty of Paris. The French lost everything in Canada except the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

Where were the Mi'kmaq? The written history shows they fought with the French against the English in Cape Breton and Newfoundland. In the 1 700s, at least 200 Mi'kmaq people moved from Cape Breton to Newfoundland. They left Nova Scotia in search of better hunting and trapping.

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[8] The provincial government rejected the Conne River Mi'kmaq's first land claim proposal in the 1980s. The province said the claim relied too much on oral history. The Conne River Mi'kmaq have done more research since then. They planned to give the province another land claim proposal in 1996.

Mi'kmaq oral history says the Cape Breton Mi'kmaq went to join their relatives and friends along the southwest coast and in the interior of the island. The French and the British had not used those parts of the island before the 1700s. The French fished in the Placentia and Fortune Bay areas. The British fished the Southern Shore, Conception Bay, and Trinity areas. The Europeans were not interested in the interior of the island. Mi'kmaq oral history says the Europeans just assumed all the Mi'kmaq came from Cape Breton.

What did the Mi'kmaq think about the British control of Newfoundland? What did they say to each other about the loss of their hunting grounds in Cape Breton? Were they sorry they had become friends with the French? Many Mi'kmaq people died of diseases like tuberculosis. They caught these diseases from the French and the British. Were they shocked when their traditional medicines could not cure these new diseases?

There are some written accounts of the Mi'kmaq in the mainland Atlantic provinces. We know they traded furs to the French for guns and other supplies. But there is very little written about the Mi'kmaq people in Newfoundland. No one set out to study them. The British government did not try to get to know them. When Mi'kmaq people do show up in government reports and other written documents it is as part of someone else's history.

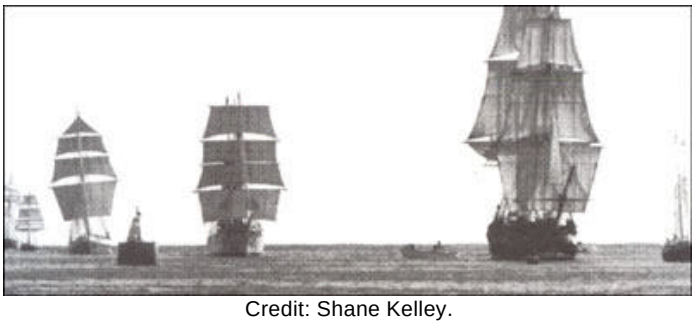
Four Accounts of Mi'kmaq People of Newfoundland

We do not often get the chance to look at the documents from which history is written. These documents can be found in government archives, at universities and sometimes in the library.

The following are four accounts of Mi'kmaq people in Newfoundland. They are taken from letters, reports, books and interviews written about Newfoundland from the 1 700s to the 1990s. Some of the old language is quite difficult to understand. The documents have been edited to make them easier to read.

As we have seen, it is important to know who wrote these accounts and why. Research and imagination have been used to try to give an idea of the point of view of the people who wrote about the Mi'kmaq.

It is always hard to write about people from another time or another culture. It is hard to imagine how they felt and what they thought about. This is true of the words written about Mi'kmaq people in the following documents. It is also true about the following attempts to write about the people who wrote about the Mi'kmaq. This is one of the challenges of history—to be **critical** of what we read. And to be aware of the **biases** of those who wrote about the events and people of the past.



Credit: Shane Kelley.
Man-of-War ships arriving St. John's harbour.

William Taverner

William Taverner was a government surveyor. It was his job to travel into the unknown areas of Newfoundland. He made maps of those places for Britain. It was also his job to write reports about the natural resources that might be useful to Britain.

Being the government surveyor was no easy task. Taverner was on his way home from a trip along the southwest coast. It had been tiring and dangerous. There were no roads into the country. There was only the wilderness, the sea and—as he had just found out—Mi'kmaq Indians.

Britain was trying to encourage settlement of the southern part of Newfoundland. The French had always tried to keep British settlers and fishermen away from the area. During his trip William had discovered why. The place was blocked with useful resources—timber, beaver, rich fishing grounds.

But Taverner also had bad news to report. The French were spreading rumors about Mi'kmaq Indians. They wanted to scare British settlers away from the area. William Taverner sighed. He raised his pen. The government surveyor began to write a report he knew would not please his British bosses.

To the Right Honorable Lords of Commissioners of Trade and Plantations (1715)

> ...The French from Cape Breton are very busy spreading reports that the Indians of Cape Breton are coming to St. Peters and the harbors to steal from the French inhabitants who remain there. Their plan in spreading these rumors is to hinder the inhabitants of those places from going to Cape Ray to catch fur and to keep the English inhabitants from settling in those harbors. So far their plan has worked. The boats won't go furring on that coast and there is not one Englishman come to settle there... In my humble opinion could the Indians of Cape Breton be prevented from coming over to Newfoundland, it would be of great use to the [fur and fish] Trade.
>
> Your lordships most humble and obedient servant
>
> William Taverner*

***Note:** William Taverner's report was sent to the Colonial Office in London, England. It is now part of the Colonial Office records in the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Colonial Office records are kept on microfilm.

John Gale

John Gale had had enough. Beothuks had stolen his supplies and destroyed his fishing gear. Mi'kmaqs were killing bear and beaver in his trapping area. The Indians sold their furs to local merchants. They were cutting him out of the business. Didn't he, John Gale, own land and trapping rights? Wasn't he a British citizen? Hadn't he worked hard to build up his land and his traplines?

He had not come out to this wild and lonely part of Newfoundland just to be scared off by Indians. It was time for a little action. He would send a letter to the government. He would demand help. John Gale could not write. But he knew someone who could. He'd get that letter written right away.

Morton's Harbor
Sept. 10, 1819

To His Excellency
Governor Charles Hamilton
St. John's, Nfld.

The Mi'kmaq Indians infest White Bay in a manner that makes it impossible for me or any other person settled here to make a life of it by catching fur.

I have two hundred traps and used to catch three hundred pounds of fur a winter. But now I do not catch forty or fifty pounds in consequence of the Mi'kmaqs infesting that bay. They also infest the Bay of Islands, Boon Bay, and the Bay of St. George's. I am informed by those that live there that they do a great deal of injury to the fur catchers in that quarter. Their principle place is in St. George's Bay, where they are in the habit of selling their fur to a Jersey merchant.

I am fully convinced that if an order was sent to the principle people of the above places it would deter them in the future. A Man-of-War would make them keep off.

I am your Excellency's
Most obedient and humble servant

His Witness (signed)
Henry Knight *John X Gale

***Note:** The X placed between John and Gale shows Mr. Gale could not sign his own name. He probably could not write at all. He must have told someone else, perhaps the witness Henry Knight, what to write down in his letter. John Gale's letter was sent to the Governor's Office in St. John's. The letter is part of the Governors Records collection, kept on microfilm at the Provincial Archives

Reverend Noah

By the late 1800s, Protestant missionaries had become interested in the people of Newfoundland, especially the Beothuks. The missionaries wanted to convert the Beothuks to their Protestant religion. Reverend Noah came to Fortune Bay and Hermitage Bay to spread the Protestant religion. He could not find any Beothuks. But Reverend Noall did meet some Indians of the Mi'kmaq tribe. These Indians did not interest him. They were Catholic. But then Reverend Noah had an idea. Perhaps the Mi'kmaq might be useful after all. They could help him find the Beothuks. In 1872 he wrote to the Wesleyn Missionary Society in London to tell them so.

> ...I am informed by those who know their habits well that the Indians belonging to* Bay Despair (of whom there are 18 families) are still under the bondage of the vilest habits. They are very lazy and false in their dealings. And there is much reason to fear that they murder a great many of the Red Indians, who live in the interior.
>
> If they could be properly instructed they might emerge from that darkness in which they are now enveloped. At present they are only the dupes of those priest—who baptized, but never instructed them.
>
> It is impossible to calculate the advantage that might follow if we could convert them to our religion. It would at once open a religious intercourse between much greater numbers at White Bear Bay. And is perhaps the only way for us to meet the Aborigines [Beothuks] of the island.

***Note:** British settlers called Bay d'Espoir, Bay Despair. The original name meant bay of hope.

By the time Reverend Noah got to Newfoundland the Beothuk people seemed to be extinct. It was believed that the last Beothuk person had already died in 1829 in St. John's.

This document comes from an old book written by Philip Tocque about his travels in Newfoundland. Tocque published Reverend Noall's letter in his book, *Newfoundland as it was and as it is in 1877*, Toronto: Magurn, 1878.

Henry Camp

Henry Camp was a colonial fisheries warden. On October 3, 1872 he sat down to write his yearly report. Henry went over the crimes in his mind. Poaching fish and eels. Getting in the way of British fishermen. The Indians just ignored the rules. They also ignored him. It made Henry look bad. Well, he'd done his best to control the Mi'kmaqs in his area. He'd just state the facts and ask for help.

> Pushthrough, October 3, 1872
> To the honorable James Noonan, Colonial Secretary
> St. John's, Newfoundland
>
> Our salmon fishermen took nearly twice as much fish this year as they did in the last six years.
>
> The great trouble in Conne River is with the Indians. They fancy they have almost exclusive right to fish on the river and estuary here. One Indian, Joseph Brazil, carried an old herring net three miles up the River to the Salmon Hole. Our people report that he took 100 salmon, but the Indian claims he only took three. I threatened him with a month in the Harbor Breton Jail if he ever did it again. He got the net from a local Englishman who is married to an Indian woman. I threatened him with jail as well for giving the Indian a net. If they could see a Man-of-War going in the bay I think great good might be done with these fellows. They have become very saucy over the past three years. Someone has been telling them they have exclusive rights to the land and the water around Conne River.
>
> To keep an Indian from spearing Salmon, Trout and Eels, I believe you must take his arms off.
>
> Henry Camp
> Warden of River Fisheries*

***Note:** Henry Camp's Annual Report is published in the Journal of the Legislative Council for 1873. It can be found in the Newfoundland studies section of the library at Memorial University in St. John's.

The History that is Chosen for us.
The History we Choose

As we have seen, the written history of the Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland has been gathered from the accounts of Europeans. They all had their own biases, likes, dislikes, and reasons for what they wrote. The Mi'kmaq people didn't use writing. There are no documents written by them to compare with European accounts. Unless Mi'kmaq people want to use the words written about them by Europeans and other non-native people, their oral history is all they really have.

Chief Michael Joe says it is easy to believe the official history of the Mi'kmaq people. If Mi'kmaq people have no rights to land claims then Newfoundlanders won't have to give up any of their land or resources. Michael Joe knows the written word is a powerful thing. "We won't have a history of our own until a Newfoundland Mi'kmaq writes that history," he says.

Non-native Newfoundlanders should understand those feelings. They have had to suffer under someone else's version of their past and present.

The world-wide protest against the Newfoundland white coat seal hunt in the 1970s and 1980s is a good example. Newfoundlanders were written about by people from other cultures and countries. Paragraphs like this one by Brian Davies from the International Fund for Animal Welfare were hard to fight:

> ...I stood on the blood-drenched ice watching the relentless killing going on around me. Frightened adult seals were driven by club-swinging hunters to nearby open water. [The seals] watched with desperately anxious eyes the methodical slaughter of their infants. Then, after the hunters had moved on, there was left the saddest sight of all: the mother seals hauled out onto the ice to keep cold vigil by the shattered remains of her only pup.[8]

The world was horrified. Britain protested seal products. The market for whitecoat seal pelts collapsed. The seal hunt shut down.

The closure of the cod fishery in 1992 has led to a whole series of stories telling Newfoundlanders to move off the island. A Globe and Mail writer even claimed it would be "immoral" for Newfoundlanders with children to stay in the outports. In an article published on February 19, 1994, editor William Thorsell said the federal government should take action. Newfoundlanders should be encouraged to move, not to stay.

> "The morality of such decisions should be openly challenged," Thorsell wrote. "To raise children in circumstances that fearfully or selfishly restrict their horizons is a profoundly aggressive act. To establish public policies that endorse or subsidize such behavior is ethically dubious at best... What a waste of a country; what a burden on a parent's heart."[9]

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[8] 1973 International Fund for Animal Welfare newsletter.
[9] *Globe and Mail*, February 19,1994.

What effect could those lines have on the future of rural Newfoundland? What if one hundred years from now historians rely on newspaper columns written by mainland journalists like William Thorsell. Will the official history of Newfoundland claim that people in the outports should have been resettled?

History is never carved in stone. When you pick up a history book or essay you are not entering into some kind of sacred land. You are not entering into a dusty old past. Instead, as we have seen, reading history is like trying to solve a mystery. It takes critical thinking. You've got to be ready to challenge what the author has to say. It doesn't matter if you are a Mi'kmaq chief in Conne River or an inshore fisherman from New World Island. The versions of the past that we choose to believe have an impact on the events of today.

A Name with which to Face the Future

Michael Joe wanted to be a good chief. He wanted to be useful to his community. He wanted to help his people. But lately Michael Joe had been feeling he was missing something important. He asked an elder in his community what he should do. The old man told him to follow the old ways and go on a vision quest. A few days later Michael Joe set out on a spiritual trip to his Grandfather's trapline near the Gander River. He hoped the spirits would send him a sign. He hoped he'd find out what was wrong.

Fasting is part of a vision quest. It helps to clear the mind and the soul. When he arrived at his Grandfather's camp Michael Joe didn't eat anything. He did not take a drink. He sat on the snow covered ground and prayed. He stood in the forest and looked out at the beautiful world. Then he saw it—a white caribou. The strange animal stared shyly at Michael Joe from the trees. It appeared several times during the day. It left no prints in the snow.

That night Michael Joe had another visitor. He woke from a deep sleep. A figure with no face and the hooves of a caribou stood before him. Michael Joe lay on the earth. He trembled. The figure stirred a fire at his feet. The sparks flew up. The heat of the fire warmed him. Michael Joe was afraid. He thought the figure was Mindou—the devil. Michael Joe stood up. He was determined to face the creature. He stared into the dark hole of the figure's face. Wait. A devil would not come to keep him warm. Michael Joe moved forward to speak to the vision. It was too late. The figure disappeared.

Michael Joe did not understand the meaning of his vision. He did not understand what he was supposed to learn from his vision quest. He went home feeling confused and unhappy with himself.

A few months later Michael Joe went to New Brunswick. He went to visit an elder. The elder was going to give Michael Joe his spiritual name. Michael Joe hoped he would be called Screaming Eagle. A fine name for a chief. The eagle is the only animal that has brushed the face of the Great Spirit. It is a creature beloved by God.

The ceremony was a long one. The chanting and praying went on and on. Michael Joe's mind began to wander. He started listing the birds that he could be named after. Eagle. Hawk. Chicken. "If it goes on much longer," he thought, "all that will be left is a turkey. I'll be known as Turkey Joe."

Finally the elder turned to Michael Joe. He gave him his spiritual name. The name would guide him through life. The elder called him Wapukek Quaopou—White Caribou.

"I don't want to be named after a caribou," Michael Joe thought. "I want to be named after an eagle."

That was in the late 1980s. Since then, Michael Joe has thought a lot about the name given to him by the elder. He has wondered about the white caribou and the dark figure that came to him during his spiritual quest. He has thought about the history and the future of his people. He has laughed to himself, trying to picture himself as a screaming eagle.

The caribou has given food and clothing to the Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland. Today, artists in Conne River also use the antlers to make beautiful sculptures. So the caribou is a strong link between their present and their past. Wapukek Quaopou. White Caribou—a good name for a chief.

Credit: Shane Kelly.

Traditional Mi'kmaq singing and dancing has become popular with the young people of Conne River.

Word List

Mi'kmaq: Micmac is the word North Americans use. Mi'kmaq is the word Newfoundland's native people use to describe themselves.

Europeans: people from countries in Europe like France, Britain or Germany.

historical: used in the past.

aboriginal: first people to live in a place. Aboriginal is a word used for different groups of native peoples in North America. The word Indian is also used in the same way.

ancient: very old, from the early part of history.

ancestors: relatives from a long time ago, or forefathers.

natural resources: timber, fish, wild animals, or minerals (like the nickel found at Voisey's Bay, Labrador). Anything from nature used to make a living or to make money.

status: legal position or rights.

spiritual: religious, deeply emotional.

culture: characteristics of a way of life. For example, in Newfoundland music is part of the culture. Fishing is part of Newfoundland's culture.

traditional: handed down from generation to generation.

native reserve: land that is set aside by governments for use by native people.

fictional: made up, invented, imagined.

anthropologists: people who study groups of people from the past and present.

myths: traditional stories about events and people in the past.

settlers: people who move from their homes to start up towns and villages in wild places. In Newfoundland most settlers came from Ireland, Britain and France.

version: an account or description from a particular point of view.

immigrants: people who come to another country to live.

historians: people who study history:

colony: a place or territory which is ruled by another country or empire.

critical: questioning in a thoughtful or informed way.

bias: a settled outlook or point of view based on a person's own beliefs or knowledge.

Issues for Discussion

1. How history is written.
2. Native land claims and rights.

Questions for Discussion

The struggle over Mi'kmaq history

1. Describe the joke told to explorer J.G. Millais by his Mi'kmaq guides.
2. Why wouldn't Mi'kmaq people think their joke is funny today?

History, Salmon nets and Mi'kmaq people

1. Tony and Jim John were not trying to catch any fish when they set their net on the Gander River. Why did they set the net?
2. The issue of native fishing rights has divided native and non-native people in the Glenwood area. Explain both sides of the conflict.
3. There are two different versions of Mi'kmaq history in this chapter. Which version are you familiar with? Where did you learn about it?
4. The author of this essay says the conflict in Glenwood is about history, status and rights. What does she mean?

Walking through time

1. Michael Joe uses plants and trees for his cures. Describe his cure for a sore throat. Do you know of any natural cures used in the past. Do you know of any other local plants or trees used as medicine today?
2. Why does the author think it is easy to imagine Michael Joe's ancestors in the bush?
3. Michael Joe is the chief of Conne River. Compare his job with the job of a small town mayor.

A trip to Newfoundland in the 15th century

1. The Mi'kmaq people did not have maps or compasses. How did they find their way from Nova Scotia to Newfoundland?
2. The author says this story is fictional but the facts are true. What does she mean?

Two Kinds of History Keeping

1. Why isn't the Mi'kmaq version of history accepted?

2. The author of this essay states that written history must also be "taken with a grain of salt." What does she mean? Do you agree?

A Brief Account of the Struggle Over Newfoundland

1. Why did France and Britain fight over Newfoundland?

2. Mi'kmaq people from Cape Breton moved to Newfoundland. Why? What do you think Mi'kmaq people thought about the effect of Europeans on their lives?

Four Accounts of Mi'kmaq People

William Taverner

1. William Taverner was a government surveyor in 1715. Describe his job.

2. Why would the British government be upset by William's report?

3. William Taverner's report is written in an old English style. Rewrite the report in simple modern English.

John Gale

1. John Gale was a landowner and a furrier in Morton's Harbor in 1819. What was he so upset about?

2. How do you think Mi'kmaq people would have felt about John Gale's complaints? Write a short letter to Governor Charles Hamilton from a Mi'kmaq person's point of view.

Reverend Noah

1. Why did Reverend Noall come to Newfoundland in the 1800s?

2. Explain why the Reverend was not interested in Mi'kmaq people. What changed his mind?

Henry Camp

1. Henry Camp was a fisheries warden in 1872. Describe his complaints about Mi'kmaq people.

2. After reading Henry Camp's report how would you describe his opinion of Mi'kmaq people.

3. Mi'kmaq rights to fish salmon were also an issue in the 1990s. Compare the conflict described in Henry Camp's letter with the conflict described in *History, salmon nets and Mi'kmaq people*. How much or how little has changed?

The History that is Chosen for Us. The History We Choose.

1. Why is it easy to believe the official version of Mi'kmaq history?

2. Brian Davies' description of the seal hunt horrified people who were not from Newfoundland. Why? What do you think about what he wrote? Why does the author compare Brian Davies' essay with Mi'kmaq history?

3. Why would people in other parts of Canada be surprised if Newfoundland people don't move away from the outports?

4. Is reading history like trying to solve a mystery? Why?

A Name With Which to Face the Future

1. Describe Michael Joe's vision quest. Where did he go? What did he do? What did he see? How did he feel about his quest?

2. Why did Michael Joe want to be called Screaming Eagle?

3. At first, Michael Joe didn't like the name given to him by the elder. But he changed his mind. Why does Michael Joe think White Caribou is a good name for a chief?