People, Places, and Culture Workshop:
Map out what heritage means to your community.
Written by Dale Jarvis, ICH Development Officer and Terra Barrett, Public Folklorist with the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, our heritage is rich and diverse. It includes historic buildings and places, ballad singing, local barber shops, snowshoe-making, skateboarding, accordion playing, neighbourhood festivals, knitting, mummers and jannies, berry-picking, boat building, and much more. The living heritage of the province is dynamic and brings together the diverse cultural groups who live here. We tell stories, make clothes, paint our houses, shear sheep, and spin yarn. We have a complex knowledge of place, the seasons, and the movements and patterns of animals from moose to cod fish. If we lose these important parts of our living heritage, we will also lose important resources that can keep our communities going culturally, economically and socially. But where do we start?

One first step is "asset mapping" - the process of collecting, recording, and analyzing local information. This helps communities describe the cultural resources, networks, links and patterns of the community. Cultural asset mapping provides an inventory of key cultural resources that can be utilized for future development in the community.

Communities decide which cultural traditions are important to document. Sometimes these traditions are threatened; sometimes particular elders or tradition-bearers will be highlighted. Other communities may record important traditions of everyday life.

A great place to start is with our “People, Places, and Culture” Workshop -- a community conversation about historic places, trails, old stories, place names, traditions, and local knowledge. Come together for a cup of tea, and discuss what matters to you in your community!
Why should you map your heritage?

Asset mapping allows communities to come together and identify the cultural resources that are valued by the community and decide which resources should be preserved for future generations. The map allows community members to see connections between heritage elements such as historic churches, lodges, homes, fishing structures, and landscape features like fences, stone walls, and root cellars. It can also help community members develop a plan for community development or preservation, and the maps can form the basis for a heritage walking tour. Finally the asset maps are a visual way to show community members what unique resources lie in the community.

What do we need?

To start out, you need three large scale maps of the community you will be working on. We use table-top sized maps, 1:2500 scale, available for a small fee from the Land Management Division Office on 87 Higgins Line, St. John’s, NL (709-729-3227). But you can use any map you might have, as long as you make them big enough for a group of people to work around. If you have a small map, a local print or copy shop should be able to help you enlarge them.

If you have locally-made maps of the community, walking tour pamphlets, or guide maps, print them out to help participants locate landmarks and situate themselves in the community.

What other supplies do we need?

Recipe or index cards
Scissors
Ribbon or yarn
Tape
Glue Sticks
Pens, coloured pencils, markers, highlighters - anything to write with and draw on your maps.

You don’t need to spend a lot of money on these supplies. Use what you have already, and be creative.
Once you have all your supplies, the most important thing to gather is a crowd of people! Put on the kettle, provide some snacks, and encourage a wide range of people to come - seniors, young people, older residents, and people new to the neighbourhood. Don’t limit the workshop to your usual heritage volunteers, this type of workshop benefits from having a diverse crowd. You’ll hear more interesting stories!

**Step One - What are heritage resources?**

Begin the workshop by discussing the assets in your local community. These could include historic places, trails, old stories, place names, traditions, and local knowledge.

Once you have an idea about some of the assets in your community break into three smaller groups, and give each group one of your large tabletop maps. Have each group focus either on people, places, or culture. It helps to divide people up randomly to ensure a good mix of knowledge and personalities.

**Step Two - Get Into Groups**

Divide your workshop into three groups. One will deal with people, the second with places, the third with culture. It helps to have a facilitator for each table, to help guide discussion and ask probing questions. The table should be big enough to hold the entire map, but not so big that people can’t talk to one another. Spread enough chairs around the table so that everyone can see everyone else. Don’t put the maps on the table yet, keep it bare for the opening discussion. Have a stack of index cards on the table, with lots of pens and markers for people to use.

The first group will discuss who they think are the important and knowledgeable people in the community. Think about people who might not consider themselves to be heritage experts, but who have skills or stories that are valued by the communities. Vida Smith makes the best toutons in her community, James Miller knows how to make birch brooms, Aunt Sophie survived a shipwreck, Gus Menchions had the first gas station - these are all important stories and can be included on your map. You can include deceased people in your discussion, but also be sure to include lots of people who are a resource in your community now.
The second group will talk about important places in the community. These can be heritage buildings, places where people gather, lodges and churches, old fences and gates, shortcuts or places where wells were dug or fish were dried. They might be natural features like significant rocks, streams, fruit trees, or waterfalls. Or they might simply be old placenames, or local nicknames for specific locations or neighbourhoods.

The third group will describe the community’s culture including traditions, customs, and events. These could include things like parades, street parties, pancake night, bonfire night, Christmas mummering, or seasonal activities like bird hunting. Maybe the community has a haunted house, or spot where people were warned to stay away from the fairies. Maybe there was a spot where young couples would go for a first kiss, or a favourite location for church picnics.

After a short discussion, give everyone at your tables several recipe cards. Encourage everyone to write the name of a person, place, or culture at the top of a card. Then write a sentence or two about why it is important, or write down a memory of that person or event. People can fill out as many cards as they wish! Sometimes it helps to have the table facilitator act as a recorder, for those who are more comfortable having someone write for them.

**Step Three - Get Mapping!**

Once you have a stack of completed recipe cards, it is time to add them to the map.

Use a glue stick to glue the back of the recipe card to the border of your map, where it is out of the way. Tape a long piece of ribbon to your recipe card then tape the other end of the ribbon to the corresponding location on the map. If your card says “Audrey Mercer - Local expert on rug hooking,” use the ribbon to connect the card with her name to the location of her home on the map.

Add and locate all your recipe cards. Then have a look at your map. What is missing? Use your pens and markers to circle specific neighbourhoods, berry picking spots, trails, or meeting places. Note spots where things seem to cluster. Write down placenames, or indicate who lived in which house. Put down anything you can think of, the more information the better!
Step Four - Share your maps

Once each table has mapped the important people, places, and culture in the community, tape them up on the walls. Place them so everyone can walk from map to map, review them, and add any missing people, places, and culture. Have a discussion about what the group learned and liked, and share some of the stories you heard during the process. Who heard a story that was new to them? Who learned something new about a local place?

If you have space, these maps can stay up for a while in a public place, and you can encourage passers-by to add missing elements.

We made our maps. What next?

This workshop is a great way to get participants thinking about heritage assets which are unique and set the community apart, and thinking how you might use those assets in a heritage themed project. If there are a cluster of heritage features and assets in your community it can provide a starting place for preserving and safeguarding your town’s heritage. The maps can be the first step in developing a heritage plan for your town or organization, or useful for generating a list of ideas for future work for your local museum or volunteer group. The maps can be bulky, and might not stay up forever, so be sure to capture or write down the ideas and stories on the map. Take photos of your maps for future reference.

Once you have a list of ideas, you can start to focus in, and prioritize. Think about your overall vision or purpose for your group, and then start small. For a starting project, pick something that has heritage value to your community, which will have a positive impact, and which is easily manageable.

Do you want a People, Places, and Culture Workshop in your community? Or do you need some advice on where to go next? We’d love to help! Contact the Intangible Culture Heritage office of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador for more ideas or assistance.

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WORKSHOP CHECKLIST FOR FACILITATORS

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- Encourage everyone to write the name of a person, place, or culture at the top of a card. Then write a sentence or two about why it is important, or write down a memory of that person or event. People can fill out as many cards as they wish!

- Once you have a stack of completed recipe cards, it is time to add them to the map.

- Have a look at your map. What is missing? Use your pens and markers to add info

- Note spots where things seem to cluster.

- Tape them up on the walls, and walk around and look at other maps

- Have a discussion about what the group learned and liked, and share some of the stories you heard during the process.

- Who heard a story that was new to them?

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- Capture or write down the ideas and stories on the map.

- Take photos of your maps for future reference.