

Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and notes on Newfoundland and Labrador's Intangible Cultural Heritage Program

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Folklore Students on Fire!

Living in Newfoundland and Labrador has historically involved fire, from kitchen woodstoves to “mug ups” to community bonfires. Some of the most important fire-related events are the November 5th bonfire celebrations, which have been a long-standing, province-wide tradition.

The Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador (HFNL), in partnership with Memorial University of Newfoundland's Folklore 6740: Public Folklore graduate level class, is organizing a list of community events surrounding this lively and interesting tradition, as well as hosting celebratory events for the Second Annual Festival on Fire: Bonfire Night. The festival will take place during the beginning of November. The project is a part of both HFNL's goal to maintain the intangible cultural heritage of Newfoundland and Labrador, and of the graduate students' education in public sector folklore, preparing them to have a part in preserving such traditions and helping communities to do so as well.

Dr. Jillian Gould, the professor of the Folklore 6740: Public Folklore graduate class, asserts: “The project is a unique opportunity for our students — to experience the entire range of public folklore fieldwork: from planning and interviewing, to presenting and celebrating. And most importantly, it's a chance for students to tap into a significant cultural and historic event, giving them a greater sense of place, while strengthening relations between MUN and the larger community.”

To begin, student organizers are asking communities to contact them about any Bonfire Night events they have already planned. Communities or local fire departments wishing to register supervised, official town bonfires should send the following information by Friday, October 21st, 2011:

1. Name of community
2. Location of bonfire in the community
3. Start time and date
4. Backup bad weather date if applicable
5. Name/Contact information of official contact person.

Send information to: festivalonfire@gmail.com

CultureDays Tweetup in Newman Wine Vaults

Friday, September 30th, 6:30 pm

Newman Wine Vaults Provincial Historic Site

436 Water Street,

St. John's, Newfoundland

What is a Tweetup?

A tweetup is an event where people who use the online social media application Twitter come together to meet in person. At a tweetup you meet the people you might only otherwise know virtually. A tweetup is a great opportunity to connect with people in your online network. There have been a few tweetup events organized for St. John's so far, with meeting places as varied as a local restaurant and a local beach.

What is Culture Days?

Culture Days is a collaborative pan-Canadian volunteer movement to raise the awareness, accessibility, participation and engagement of all Canadians in the arts and cultural life of their communities. Annual, Canada-wide Culture Days events feature free, hands-on, interactive activities that invite the public to participate "behind the scenes," to discover the world of artists, creators, historians, architects, curators, and designers at work in their community.

What's happening in the Newman Wine Vaults?

On Friday, September 30th, the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Newfoundland Historic Trust, will be hosting a St. John's Tweetup event at the Newman Wine Vaults Provincial Historic Site on Water Street as part of Culture Days. It is a chance for anyone to learn more about how social media is being used in the arts and culture sector in St. John's, and to meet those people face-to-face that you've only ever talked to in 140 character tweets. As part of the event, folklorist Dale Jarvis will moderate a panel discussion with people in the cultural sector on the role of social media in local arts, how it is working, and where it is going.

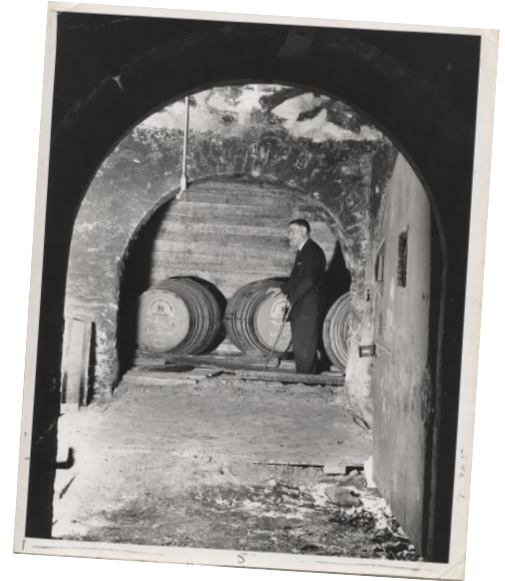
Who are the panelists?

Jennifer Barnable is a writer, photographer and communications professional from Ferryland, Newfoundland who now resides in downtown St. John's. With degrees in cultural anthropology and public relations, Jennifer has spent most of her career working in the arts and cultural industries.

John Gushue is an online editor with CBC News in St. John's, and contributes regularly to radio and television programming. He writes a weekly column on digital culture for the St. John's Telegram, and publishes a blog called Dot Dot Dot.

Elling Lien is editor of The Scope, a weekly, independent alternative newspaper which focuses on local arts, culture, and current affairs in the St. John's region.

Dale Jarvis is the province's Intangible Cultural Heritage Development Officer, working to enact Newfoundland and Labrador's ICH Strategy.



(undated photo, possibly circa 1940s, Newman Wine Vaults interior, part of the recently digitized Newman Wine Vaults Provincial Historic Site collection on Memorial's Digital Archives Initiative)

Local Hookers Work On Display in Heart's Content

Local Betty White discusses the tradition of rug hooking in Trinity Bay.

By Melissa Squarey

Sometimes a long time tradition can become a very new one for someone when they learn how to do it later in their lives. Betty White from Heart's Content knows how much taking a spin at practicing an old tradition can reward you. Betty is a member of the New Horizons Seniors Program in Heart's Content that initiated a rug hooking project to create an ongoing exhibit of local rugs on display in the Mizzen Heritage Centre. The rugs range in styles, colours, and content but they all have one thing in common, they tell a story.

What is rug hooking anyway? How do they do it? Betty explains rug hooking as an art that was once a necessity for floor coverings but is now used for artistic wall hangings. Betty says " They tell stories about culture and history, personal stories that get told with new friends and reacquainted with old friends." Betty's first experience with hooked rugs was a rug that her mother had on her kitchen floor as a child. Betty came up with her rug design on her own.

Betty's rug "Luggin' a Turn of Water" has it's own story. As you can see from the picture the mat itself is telling the story of Betty and her sister lugging water from a well at their family property and grandparent's property with Jack Cumby's Hill in the background. Betty says "So many memories on that hill. We would have a large bonfire on Guy Fawkes Night, we could slide up there in the winter, and my family grew potatoes and other vegetables up on that hill."

It's not always easy when you first begin rug hooking. Betty explains the feeling of just starting out. She said you fee like saying "Am I ever going to get this done? " But once you start Betty has nothing bad to say "An important part of rug hooking is your design and your colours in the beginning. But the more you hook on the mat the more you want to do it, you want to see the end product."

Beginning is great but you'll need some tools before you can hook your own mat. Betty gave me this list. She says that you'll need a mat frame, which is usually made from pine put together to keep the burlap taught while you are hooking the materials through. You are going to need a hook. Hooks are now bought as a long metal tool, looking similar to a screwdriver, with a handle with a hook on the end. In the past though it was different. Betty says "Years ago the women used to use a handmade piece of wood on top of a nail with a little crook in the end." Burlap is also involved, Betty prefers to call it brin cloth. "I call it brin cloth because when I was growing up that's what they used to hook their rugs. It came from old potato sacks or other goods bags." Finally, you'll need a few other things like transfer paper called red dot, cut strips of fabric, a cutter and a cutting board.

When I asked Betty what she thought of the tradition she had many good things to say.

I think it's wonderful. I think it's great that we've revived the art. Every mat tells a story. I think it's very important that we keep our heritage alive for our children and our grandchildren because that's who we are and everyone needs to know that.

There has also been some changes to the tradition though Betty suggests that "the art itself hasn't changed because you still tell a story on a mat." There are two things that Betty distinctly identified as different from the past. The first change, is that it is now an artistic form of expression and tradition



rather than a necessity to keep the floors warm and dry. “It’s become therapeutic“ says Betty “you can loose track of the time that’s passing when you hook, you’re going right back in that time.” The second change is the availability of materials. Now materials are much easier to get. When talking about the past way of rug hooking Betty says “You didn’t just cut up a t-shirt. Most of the materials they used in the past were old stockings and things that were torn or worn out. If they weren’t the right colour, they were dyed.”

Betty and the rest of the New Horizons participants wanted to show their community what rug hooking was all about. They wanted to bring awareness to the tradition and increase the interest in participating in the future. They shared their local histories by bring awareness to their communities in the form of a hooked mat. Betty says the most interesting thing about the tradition of rug hooking is

To see what can come from an idea and a pile of material strips. How it comes to life is what amazes me. And when you look at it you can see exactly what that person was wanting to say. We learned so much about each other on Tuesday afternoons, I was telling my story, Pat was telling hers, someone else was telling theirs. The women from closer neighbouring communities came together and those women who were new to the area were brought closer into the communities and felt like they had always lived here.

*You can listen to Melissa’s full half-hour interview with Betty White on Memorial University’s Digital Archives Initiative at:
<http://tinyurl.com/BettyWhiteRug>*



Working on History: Tales of Town

Wednesday, October 5

7pm

The Rooms Theatre, St. John’s

There is certainly no shortage of interesting Townies! Join folklorist Dale Jarvis as he sits down to chat with three of our most engaging: author Lisa Moore, businesswoman Margaret Dunn, and music shop owner Gordon O’Brien, about the unique experience of growing up in St. John’s.

This presentation is the first of a series of programs connected with the Working on History exhibition at The Rooms Provincial Museum.

Tickets \$5, free for Rooms members, a cash bar will follow the presentation.

(photo of Gordon O’Brien from obriensmusic.com)

