



Humber Valley Skills Inventory

Prepared by Dale Gilbert Jarvis and Denise McKeown

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Heritage NL

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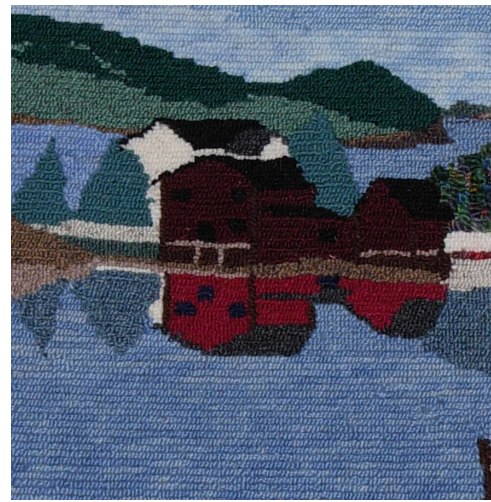


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TERRY PIKE, TIM SPICER, TIM SPICER,
TERRY PIKE, TERRY PIKE, TIM SPICER,
TIM SPICER





PHOTO COURTESY OF LEE HARVEY

Introduction

The Humber Valley Skills Inventory, part of the Humber Valley Thriving Regions project, is intended to identify existing knowledge holders in the area, including craft producers, bakers, farmers, foragers, brewers, printmakers, fly tyers, beekeepers, cooks, artists, antler carvers, and makers of all kinds.

The region includes the following communities: Steady Brook, Little Rapids, Humber Village, Humber Valley Resort, Pasadena, Pynn's Brook, Little Harbour, St. Judes, Deer Lake, Reidville, Cormack, and Howley. The region is formed by the Humber River which flows through the Long Range Mountains, through Deer Lake to the Bay of Islands. The area has a rich history and economy which includes the Deer Lake hydro-electric station and regional airport, agriculture, and tourism.

This report is very much a first look at the wide variety of talents and skills held by residents of the Humber Valley, and is a starting point for additional research on local knowledge.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEE HARVEY



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUSAN MORRIS

How to use this inventory

The goal of this inventory is to help in identifying the region's hidden gems - our tradition bearers - and linking them with existing businesses and tourism operators to extend the depth and breadth of visitor opportunities. If you are a tourism operator, bed and breakfast owner, guide, or entrepreneur, we encourage you to contact them, and work out how they might be able to provide you with a demonstration, workshop, or other cultural experience.

Be creative! Think about packages and cultural experiences you can develop in partnership with the skills holders listed here.

If you are developing a tourism offering for your clients, remember to build in a fee that can be paid to your cultural partner. Some may already have fees in mind for their work, others may not, but we encourage you to discuss that with your partners and to fairly compensate them for their contributions and specialized knowledge.

Lee Harvey Beekeeping

709 765 0345

Lee is skilled in the art of beekeeping and feels he is privileged to be “keeper of the bees.” Lee, and his wife Dawn, decided to get bees to pollinate their raspberries in 2017 after the NL government introduced a beekeeping initiative in the province. Shortly afterwards, in 2019, they decided to open their bee business selling bee related products.





Ingrid Hillyard

Rag rugs

709 636 4569

Ingrid remembers seeing old fashioned rag rugs in the homes of elderly people and hearing stories about how they were made. She loved that people recycled worn out clothes into quilts and rag rugs. Ingrid's elderly relatives taught her how to make the rugs but it was watching videos on Pinterest that renewed her interest.

PARTICIPANT SEWING TOGETHER A BRAIDED RUG AT A WORKSHOP
LED BY DEANNE DAWE OF RUSTIC RAG RUGS. WORKSHOP
WAS HELD BY HERITAGE NL AND TOOK PLACE AT ST. JOHN THE
EVANGELIST CHURCH HALL IN BAY ROBERTS.
PHOTO COURTESY OF HERITAGE NL



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSEANN BRAKE

Roseann Brake Food, stories

709 636 8063

www.rockybrookacres.com

Roseann is dedicated to teaching people about Cormack and its heritage. She was inspired by her dad, who was a WWII veteran and one of the original settlers in the Cormack area. He was one of the handful of settlers who stayed in the area and helped build the community. Many people are unaware that Cormack was settled by WWII vets and their war brides and Roseann is happy to share her knowledge.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURALEE LEDREW

Lauralee Ledrew

Permaculture farming,
greenhouse grower,
forager/wild edible harvester
(not mushrooms); preserves,
bannock making, fire/survival,
Indigenous chef, hiking leader
facebook.com/upperhumbersetlement
info@upperhumbersetlement.ca
709 215 4166

Lauralee is a hiking leader and skilled forager who enjoys sharing her knowledge. Lauralee is also an Indigenous chef who enjoys making preserves and bannock. Lauralee and her husband Mark implemented permaculture practices at their six-acre zero waste sustainable farming homestead after a trip to New Zealand. Now they are both passionate advocates of permaculture farming.

Susan Morris

Knitting, rug hooking

709 638 0111

Susan loves doing traditional crafts, some of which she learned from her dad who used to knit socks to donate to soldiers. Susan was also intrigued by different hooked rug displays, and attended a Rug Hooking Guild of NL workshop to learn how to make them. Susan immediately fell in love with this craft and continues to share it through her own rug hooking school. Susan is inspired to create familiar Newfoundland scenes.





PHOTO COURTESY OF UNA REID

Una Reid

Knitting, rug hooking

709 634 7298

Una learned how to knit as a child and has made a variety of socks, sweaters, mittens, blankets, and shawls. She has recently started knitting Fair Isle patterns. Years ago Una attended a craft fair in Corner Brook, where she became interested in hooked rugs. After her first class, Una was “hooked.” Since then Una has attended several classes. Besides learning how to bleach and dye pantyhose for projects, Una has learned a number of techniques, including: Grenfell-style hooking, fine shading, sculpting, creative stitches, geometrics, and tessellations. Una has participated in several initiatives that promote rug hooking using Newfoundland heritage buildings and lighthouses as inspiration.

Audrey Feltham

Textiles, embroidery, hand quilting, printmaking, watercolours, surface embellishment of fabric

709 636 4626

Audrey is a professional artist working both in traditional print practice and in fibre art. She was taught embroidery by her grandmother as a young child. She later learned crochet and quilting on her own. Her watercolour skills are also self-taught. Audrey received a BFA in visual arts (printmaking) in 2002 from Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Corner Brook. She values the close relationships developed through the transference of skills.

“These skills give me a voice to create visual statements of heritage, culture, and place.”



“I learned to knit from my grandmother. I think of her often when I knit”.

~Delphine Ball

Roxanne Feener

**Knitting, crocheting, rug hooking,
quilting, English paper piecing,
plastic canvas**

709 290 1657

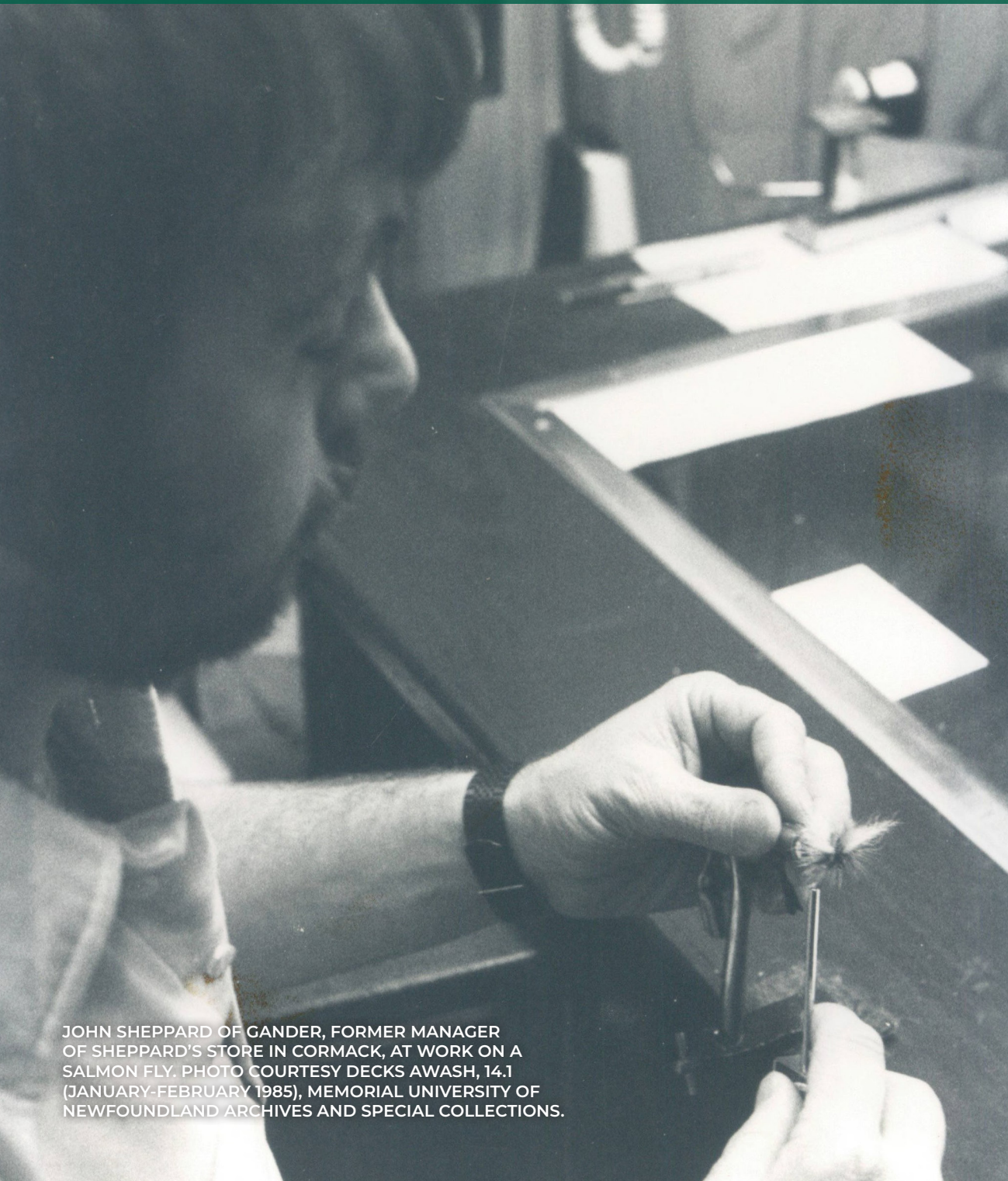
Since it was difficult to learn from her left-handed mother, Roxanne learned many handicrafts from her grandmother including knitting, crocheting and rug hooking. By her own admission, Roxanne has tried everything. Roxanne enjoys the intricate work of the English paper piecing quilting technique, but it can take up to three years to complete a quilt. Most of Roxanne's finished projects are donated to a variety of charities. However, Roxanne is currently crocheting sixteen small turtles, for a colour matching game for her kids. All of the small turtles for the game fit into one large turtle.

Thelma Bowdridge

Knitting, crocheting, quilting

709 215 9141

Although Thelma learned to knit, crochet, and quilt as a teenager she did not pursue these activities until recently. Now she creates a variety of projects throughout the year and donates them to several charities. As a token of appreciation for their services to our country, Thelma donates quilts to Canadian veterans through the Quilts of Valour program. Thelma also donates knitted items to charities that, in turn, distribute them throughout Newfoundland in support of women, children, and seniors.



JOHN SHEPPARD OF GANDER, FORMER MANAGER OF SHEPPARD'S STORE IN CORMACK, AT WORK ON A SALMON FLY. PHOTO COURTESY DECKS AWASH, 14.1 (JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1985), MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS.

Mike Goosney

**Fly tying, bread making,
bottling**

709 636 6877

Some of Mike's favourite memories are learning from his dad and grandmother, so his skills make him feel rooted to the past. Mike remembers watching his dad in the kitchen as a little kid. Mike learned how to tie flies from an instructor at a fly tying course in Labrador. His dad had a fly tying kit and Mike's interest grew from there.

“My Grandmother used to crochet lace to go around table cloths, I have her hook and a ball of lace still”

~Norma Hillyard

Norma Hillyard

Knitting, crocheting, quilting, embroidery, sewing

709 636 8580

Norma feels it is important to keep traditional skills going. Norma still has a ball of lace her grandmother crocheted and the hook she used.

Trudy Forsey

Knitting

709 635 3735

Trudy used to watch her friend knit when she was in her twenties and asked for some lessons. There were three or four friends who learned together. They had small kids so they would gather together to watch television, knit, and visit. Trudy used to make a lot of kid's items like sweaters and socks. Now that her children are grown, Trudy mostly knits dishcloths, which she likes to give away. For Trudy, knitting is a good pastime and she cherishes the memories she has of sitting and knitting with her friends.



Sabrina Gaulton

Rug hooking, leather making (wallets and purses), sealskin wallets, bark tanned sealskin, sewing, landscaping, gardening
709 636 4190

Sabrina's favourite skill is rug hooking. She learned the craft during a textile studies program in St. John's. When Sabrina learned how to hook rugs she felt it was a dying craft and is happy to see it picking up again. Sabrina likes the way rug hooking allows for a lot of creativity in textures and materials and that rugs can be made to look like anything you want. She also likes that it's a hands-on craft she can do when she watches television in the evening.

Sylvia Patey

**Knitting, crocheting, Tunisian crochet,
loom knitting, rug hooking**

709 638 1302

Sylvia's skills help her pass the time and give to others. Sylvia grew up in London, England, and when she was seven years old her grandmother taught her a basic knit stitch. Sylvia wanted to make something for her doll, so they worked together and made a little scarf. Although Sylvia didn't go back to knitting until she was married and had kids of her own, she was inspired by this experience. After moving to Newfoundland, Sylvia had more leisure time to knit and to learn how to crochet from the internet. YouTube has been a game changer for Sylvia, who loves learning and sharing new stitches.

Colleen Harnum

**Knitting, crocheting, quilting,
sewing**

709 633 0144

Colleen learned her skills from her mom and her nan. Colleen's mom taught her how to sew on an old-fashioned Singer treadle sewing machine, the kind where you had to use your feet on the treadle to make it work. Her mom used to make all the kids' clothes on that machine. Colleen also knits and crochets and belongs to a group that makes items for donation from wool donated by others.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JANE MARGARET JANES

Jane Margaret Janes

Knitting, sewing

709 636 0007

Jane is not a fan of current fashion and prefers to make her own skirts, dresses, and other clothes. Crafting connects Jane to cherished and heartwarming memories of her childhood and her grandmother. Jane's grandma did not know how to read or write but she could look at a person and make them a dress without taking any measurements or following a pattern. Jane admires how her grandma could cook, bake, or make anything just by looking at items. Jane still has a bureau scarf (similar to a runner) with crocheted lace edging made by her grandma.

“These skills that the older generations knew are dying out. So we need to learn them and teach them to the next generation.”

“My son even made a baby blanket for his first child. I asked him where he learned how to make a quilt. He said, ‘Mom you taught us that in school, in art classes over the years.’ Wow, you don’t realize what they take in until you talk to your students years later.” ~Viola Rice

Viola Rice

Rug hooking, knitting, sewing, needlepoint, painting

709 216 6646

Viola wants to keep traditional skills alive. Viola learned how to knit from her grandmother and how to sew from her mother. Currently, Viola’s favourite craft is her newest skill, rug hooking. As an art teacher retired from the Newfoundland school system, Viola takes pride in having taught and inspired many youth to try crafting and acrylic painting.

Jean Young

Storytelling, journalling, writing workshops, book design

709 635 4090

Jean is an author and book designer who uses her skills to support writers of all ages. Publishing the young adult novel, *Quicksilver Summer*, is one of Jean’s favourite memories.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUE MCFADDEN

Sue McFadden

Knitting, crocheting, sewing,
gardening, a bit of woodworking

709 770 8581

Sue calls knitting her “moving meditation” and likes how she relaxes and gets lost in her work. Sue learned her skills by watching other people, whether it was her sister knitting or her husband woodworking. Although Sue started out doing basic kinds of knitting, she found herself drawn to finer work and is now dedicated to knitting lace. Sue is a retired journalist and one of her favourite memories is of her mother knitting mittens. Sue is the founder of Blankets for NL, a program that provides knitted, crocheted, and quilted blankets to residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. Volunteers provide finished items to Sue, who arranges for them to be donated to numerous non-profit organizations, women’s shelters, mental health facilities, and communities throughout the province.



Donna March

Knitting, crocheting, sewing

709 685 1233

Donna learned to knit basic items, like scarves and mitts, from her mother. Donna had a fascination with knitting right from the start and continues to grow her skills so she can make a variety of things. Donna happily explains that her dad, a WWII veteran, used to wear the cardigans and sweaters Donna made for him. He was especially happy with the fine knit socks she made him. Previously, Donna participated in a fundraising project [organized by Doris Park] where each person contributed a quilt square to make a quilt. The picture shows Donna with the quilt (in progress). The pattern is called Oxygen and comes from a company called Cosmos.

Olga Wiseman

Sewing, knitting, crocheting, rug hooking, rabbit catching

709 635 7810

Although Olga learned to knit in the Brownies, she didn't really get into it until after she was married. As a nurse on shift work, Olga and the other nurses often knitted when they were working at night. Over time Olga also learned how to quilt, crochet, and hook rugs. Although she prefers to read nowadays, Olga's crafting brings back many happy memories.

Melva Nichols

Knitting, rug hooking

Melva's sister taught her how to hook rugs and it continues to be something Melva enjoys doing.

Linda Tulk

Sewing, knitting

709-635-3562

Linda enjoys the social time spent making crafts and learning to do different things. Linda learned to sew from her mother-in-law, a sewing instructor for the vocational school in Corner Brook, when she was still dating her husband. Linda used to make most of her own clothes, including formal wear like her graduation dresses and wedding dress. Currently Linda enjoys sewing old-fashioned flannel quilts. She also belongs to two knitting groups that make a variety of blankets for several different charities.

HUMBER VILLAGE

Jennifer Lundrigan

Animal husbandry (horses, chickens, ducks, dogs),
beekeeping, landscaping,
retail marketing

Diamondelledesigns@gmail.com

Jennifer believes it is important to be practical and open to new ideas. Jennifer's skills have developed over a lifetime of practice both with her family and as an adult working in different industries. In the past Jennifer participated in horse shows but now she enjoys backcountry adventures with her fellow horse riding friends. Jennifer cherishes the lifelong memories she has made with family and friends. Jennifer loves her greenhouse, pictured here, crafted by her husband from repurposed materials.



LITTLE RAPIDS

Megan Holdfast

Horticulture, sustainable farming, seed saving, painting

709 660 8410

www.mholdfast.com

Megan's art and farming skills have been passed down through family but also cultivated through her own art practice, homesteading, and formal education in the field of horticulture at the University of Saskatchewan. Megan enjoys discovering the lessons and stories each plant shares and getting lost in the creative process of art.

Jackie Dyson

Sealskin sewing, moccasin making, caribou tufting, quilting

709 897 5431

Jackie enjoys working on crafts that are part of her culture and likes sharing ideas and knowledge. Jackie learned some of her craft skills through a two-year diploma program in heritage crafts from the College of the North Atlantic in Goose Bay, Labrador.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TERRY PIKE

Terry Pike

Rug hooking, quilting,
sewing, cossack making

NLTechieTchr@gmail.com

Terry has been making cossacks, a type of coat, since 1982 when she moved from Newfoundland to Labrador. Each cossack is custom made, without a pattern, to fit the torso of the wearer. Terry's husband used to be an inshore fisherman. Using the only picture of his family's fishing crew checking their cod trap, Terry created a large mat hooked on burlap. It hangs in their home as a reminder of their family's history.

Dianne May Bartlett

**Photography, quilting, sewing,
knitting, painting, birdwatching,
rock painting, gardening**

709 456 7097

Although many of Dianne's skills are self-taught she did learn knitting in the Brownies and Girl Guides and rock painting from Pinterest videos. In 2019, Dianne started collecting rocks to paint over the winter. Shortly afterwards, Covid-19 hit and luckily Dianne had enough rocks and painting supplies to keep her busy for months. Dianne likes to "drop" painted rocks around Corner Brook and throughout the province. Dianne likes spending time outdoors in the garden or taking pictures. For her latest endeavour, Dianne is trying to recreate her grandmother's English flower garden. Dianne enjoys teaching and learning skills and spending time with other crafters.

Eileen Anne Simms

Quilting

709 660 6170

Eileen took a seamstress course at the college in Stephenville. Afterwards, she worked from home doing alterations and making clothing such as tailored suits. About twenty years ago, Eileen gave up sewing clothes in favour of making quilts. She is especially interested in Newfoundland applique quilts. Eileen also enjoys crafting with her nieces and great-nieces. Eileen's crafts keep her active and involved in the community.

Richard Butt

Farming, food sustainability

709 640 7653

Richard is a proud supporter of Food First NL, an organization dedicated to raising awareness regarding the precarious nature of food security in Newfoundland and Labrador. The organization works to make sure everyone in the province has access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN ENGLISH

Karen English

Rug hooking

709 640 3236

As a child, Karen's parents fostered a love of art and craft through their own artistic endeavours and with family trips to St. Anthony to learn about the Grenfell Industrial Mission. They would also visit Jordi Bonet's ceramic murals in the Charles S. Curtis Memorial Hospital in St. Anthony during the 1960s. Karen's mom was an artist with many interests, including painting and functional pottery. However, it was the texture of her dad's hooked rugs, made before she was born, that eventually inspired Karen to take up rug hooking as an adult.



Deborah (nee Myles) Le Moine

**Knitting, quilting, stained
glass**

709 686 5089

Deborah learned to knit from her grandmother and remembers making scarves for her dolls from a very young age. Deborah learned to sew in a home economics class in school but became hooked on quilting after taking a course in Pasadena. Half of Deborah's studio above her garage is dedicated to her passion for stained glass, a craft she learned about twenty years ago in Rocky Harbour. Deborah is currently contemplating venturing into rug hooking.

Marylyn Murphy

**Baking, scrapbooking, quilting,
jam making, moose bottling,
bottle beets, small Girl Guide
camp crafts**

709 632 1866

Marylyn learned most of her skills from family and friends. For Marylyn, creating is an enjoyable way to relieve stress and makes her feel accomplished. Marylyn wants to pass her skills on to future generations.

Kathy Rideout

**Sewing, knitting, crocheting,
rug hooking**

709 660 1064

Kathy says she has always needed to do something with her hands and likes making things for herself and others. She finds it very satisfying to see the end product and know that she has done a good job. Kathy learned to crochet from her mother, to knit from her grandmother, and to sew from them both. Kathy used to make all her own clothes and was in her twenties before she bought her first dress. Although Kathy still sews, she now prefers making simple quilts and craft projects. Kathy learned how to hook rugs in 2002 from Joan Foster but it is only since retiring that she has the time to hook in earnest. Kathy cherishes the time spent learning to knit with her grandmother.



Tim Spicer

Rug hooking, punch needle
709 686 6397

As a gardener, Tim needed a hobby for the off-season. Looking at the hooked rugs in a craft shop in York Harbour, Tim knew he needed to try it. Tim appreciates rug hooking as an aspect of Newfoundland's heritage and is happy to be part of it. Tim likes the way the creative process of rug hooking improves his hand-brain coordination, raises his self-esteem, and relieves stress. Recently, Tim has taken up punch needle work, which uses all the same materials as rug hooking.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN TILLER

Karen Tiller **Knitting**

709 632 4158

Knitting connects Karen to her grandmothers. Both of Karen's grandmothers tried to teach her to knit. But they knitted too quickly and neither of them followed printed patterns. Karen eventually learned to knit from the ladies at the local heritage group in Pasadena. Karen prefers straightforward patterns but she'll try anything at least once. At one point Karen made a scarf and hat set in the Pasadena Winter Carnival colours of red and yellow. She brings it out every year for the carnival.

PYNN'S BROOK

Ken Tuach
Dry stone masonry,
quarrying
709 660 2050
<http://nlflagstone.com>

NL Flagstone is a small-scale, seasonal operation that has been working with natural stone since 1994. The company quarries bluestone from Lower Carboniferous rocks near Pynn's Brook. These were formed 350 million years ago in a delta, similar to where the Humber River presently flows into Deer Lake in western Newfoundland. The company supplies natural stone across the province to private home owners, contractors, and for public projects, and also offers technically standardized walls, ensuring that customers get a standard product. Ken is a certified level three dry stone craftsman who can run workshops using skills obtained from the Dry Stone Walling Association of the UK, Dry Stone Canada, and the Stone Trust in Vermont, USA. All are registered nonprofits interested in preserving and restoring stone work as well as developing technical walling skills. His hands-on workshops are run on a periodic basis and can encompass different levels of difficulty.



“Our bluestone is quarried near Pynn’s Brook in western Newfoundland. It is strong, durable, workable, and reusable. It is regarded as a prestige product for use in landscaping and masonry work - similar to Pennsylvania bluestone quarried from the Appalachian Mountains of Pennsylvania and New York states.”

~Ken Tuach

Joan Foster**Knitting, crocheting, sewing,
quilting, rug hooking****709-673-3086**

Although Joan does not live in the Humber Valley, she has been a tremendous influence on rug hooking both throughout the area and in the province. In fact, many people featured in this booklet learned how to hook rugs from Joan. Joan learned how to hook rugs from her mother in 1979. Later, in 1983, Joan attended the Rug Hooking Guild of Nova Scotia's annual Rug School (a 5-day workshop). She also completed several courses from both RHGNS and the Rug Hooking Guild of Newfoundland and Labrador (of which she is a founding member). Now Joan travels all around the province teaching rug hooking wherever there is sufficient interest. Some of Joan's memories include watching her mother hook and listening to stories told by older rug hookers when they register their mats for the RHGNL Heritage Rug Registry.



LESLIE HARRIS CENTRE OF REGIONAL POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT

The Humber Valley Skills Inventory received funding as part of Memorial University's Thriving Regions Partnership Process, which supports research partnerships that help promote thriving social and economic regions. The Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development is Memorial University's lead unit on regional development, public policy, and knowledge mobilization.

For the past 20 years, the Centre has funded almost 200 applied research projects relevant to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and organized dozens of public events, ranging from annual lectures to policy dialogues to regional workshops bringing ideas and solutions to some of the most pressing problems facing the province today. Through its strong national and international partnerships, the Centre has a broad network that it can mobilize to find expertise and share knowledge on a wide range of issues.

The Centre also supports research projects at Memorial University, universities across Canada, and internationally through its robust program of knowledge mobilization tools such as podcasts, webinars, public policy dialogues, and effective facilitation processes.



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Needs and Gaps Related to Traditional Knowledge Transfer in the Humber Valley, NL



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**TUCK, Emlyn; JARVIS, Dale Gilbert;
O'BRIEN, Andrea**

Traditional crafts are the most tangible expression of intangible cultural heritage. The preservation of craft objects is very important, but there needs to be an emphasis on encouraging crafters and makers to continue their work and to pass their skills and knowledge onto others, specifically within their own communities. The skills, techniques, and methods needed to create craft objects are as diverse as the crafts themselves. (UNESCO, 2023)

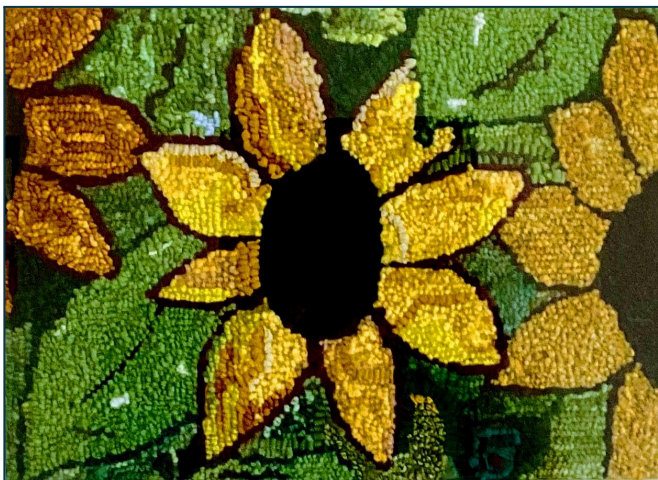


Image: Hooked Mat detail, courtesy Tim Spicer, Pasadena

For the purposes of this summary, we are using a definition developed by the UK-based Heritage Crafts Association, which defines a heritage craft as "a practice which employs manual dexterity

and skill and an understanding of traditional materials, design and techniques, and which has been practised for two or more successive generations."

The Humber Valley Traditional Skills Project aims to identify existing traditional knowledge holders in one specific area of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, and to identify needs and gaps related to traditional knowledge transfer.

The following communities are included in the study: Steady Brook, Little Rapids, Humber Village, Humber Valley Resort, Pasadena, Pynn's Brook, Little Harbour, St. Judes, Deer Lake, Reidville, Cormack, and Howley.

Common Issues Affecting Craft Viability

In 2008 and 2013, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Office of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador created two surveys to explore the needs of communities in preserving their ICH. These surveys identified a shared view among participants that certain forms of intangible cultural heritage were at risk of being lost. A list of traditions, knowledge, and skills participants thought were most likely to be lost was created. Five categories of ICH were included: oral traditions; knowledge of natural spaces; traditional crafts; customs, rituals and celebrations; and performing arts. Nearly 17% of respondents identified traditional crafts as being most at risk. (Mills, 2018)

In 2021 Heritage NL released its Craft at Risk List, a joint project of Heritage NL and the Craft Council of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The List was developed from responses to the Heritage Craft at Risk Survey in which practitioners, artisans, tradespeople, and craft producers were questioned about their traditional practices.

The Survey assessed the current viability of traditional heritage crafts in Newfoundland and Labrador while also aiming to identify crafts most at risk of disappearing.

While the responses provided useful information about specific skills at risk, it also highlighted other areas of concern. Craft producers and makers noted the lack of networks between craftspeople. They also stressed the importance of documenting crafts, craft skills, and traditions as a safeguarding measure and as a means of transmission.



Image: Leatherwork, courtesy Sabrina Gaulton, Deer Lake.

Responses to the Heritage Craft at Risk Survey identified six key threats to traditional crafts and skills in Newfoundland and Labrador.

1. Training for Practitioners

Issues concerning the lack of training opportunities for interested practitioners and the recruitment of skilled crafters and makers to teach the crafts was highlighted. Recruiting skilled craftspeople to teach courses, workshops, etc. would provide the best quality of learning.

2. Access to Materials

Materials needed to produce specialized crafts are becoming limited as they are too costly or too difficult to find - which can affect the future of certain crafts.

Particular issues include the rising cost of materials for smaller businesses, which can result in their inability to buy in bulk, a shortage of raw materials, and a shortage of tools and equipment.

3. Marketing

Poor marketing can result in a limited customer base. Training sessions focused on expanding market impact might help get information out to potential customers and create more opportunities.

4. Public Education

There is a lack of awareness of the differences between handmade and mass-manufactured objects, along with a lack of awareness by potential customers of the difference between high quality and poor quality craft products. Additionally, some craft trades are not being recognized and certain practices are not being considered fine arts.

5. Costs/Taxation

The rising cost of raw and allied materials has affected craft production. Practitioners are unable to make a livelihood from their craft due to high prices, less demand, and competition. Many craft businesses are closing. New municipal taxes charged to home-based businesses also impact expenses.

6. Globalization

Globalization and technology have limited the transmission of local craft knowledge from generation to generation. Practitioners are learning skills from around the world, but not traditional Newfoundland and Labrador skills. As a result, local nuances and specialities may be lost.

Specific issues raised by Humber Valley Traditional Skills Project participants

A Google survey sent out to Humber Valley practitioners resulted in responses from eighteen individuals, seventeen from the Humber Valley and one from outside the region. The survey answers provided insights of the experience of craftspeople in the Humber Valley region. The participants work in various crafts, from knitting to painting, quilting to rug hooking, and foraging to beekeeping. Many of the participants mentioned at least one of the six key threats listed above. The three main hindrances identified in the submissions were cost, access to materials, and promotion/exhibition of their work. Included below is a selection of responses to some of the questions posed.

What challenges do you face around materials or tools?

Cost and access to materials were significant issues in the participants' responses. More than a half (68%) of responses mentioned the cost of materials, and a quarter (25%) cited availability. Many parts of Newfoundland have limited access to supplies as compared to other parts of the province, let alone to Canada, so access to materials can be difficult, as one participant mentioned:

“Often I have to wait to get materials/tools until I travel to St. John’s because what I need isn’t accessible in the area (assuming I can even get it in St. John’s and don’t have to order it online and

pay shipping fees). Ex. Posca markers, many sizes of canvases, certain kinds of brushes, certain types of acrylic mediums.”

The increasing price of materials coupled with higher shipping costs is making it harder for some individuals to practise their craft.

What is the most challenging or difficult aspect of the tradition to learn?

Since the participants work in different mediums, many mentioned genre specific challenges, such as ‘casting off’ for knitting or ‘colour choices’ for quilting. Broader challenges were also noted. Almost a quarter (23%) noted the need for in-person instruction and workshops. One participant wrote, “trying to follow online videos; need more in-person instruction sessions,” and another wrote, “outreach, available classes, time to learn with qualified teachers.” Both comments speak to the need for instructional courses that help new learners and seasoned practitioners acquire and develop their skills.

What needs to be in place so that future generations can also learn this tradition?

The majority of participants (76%) mentioned the need for accessible workshops or workspaces for younger generations, where knowledge could be exchanged in person between mentors and mentees. Four of the Humber Valley participants mentioned the implementation of craftwork in schools as a way to reintroduce threatened crafts to younger generations. As one respondent noted, “We need a dedicated return to hands-on instruction in the skills from K to 12. We need a return of a significant budget for the visual arts in the school system.” Two respondents also mentioned gaining more understanding of the younger generation’s lifestyle and current trends. With proper introduction and explanation, and by understanding what younger generations enjoy or value, crafts could be revitalized in younger

generations. One participant said, “I believe we need to give them the knowledge and opportunity to learn a skill that they can make their own with practice.” By creating spaces where people can learn skills and then develop them into their own style, threatened crafts can find new life through varied forms of expression.

What are your suggestions for future craft skill training or learning?

Many different ideas were suggested but, as above, hands-on workshops were viewed as crucial. More than half of respondents (62%) mentioned workshops, a “centre for free access and learning,” and “events happening in an informal way” (so people can participate without it feeling like a huge commitment). One individual mentioned the need to practise “self sustainability” as the more we practise it, “the more future generations will have the same skills.” Another individual also wrote, “people have to see rug hooking, how it is done, what you can create and the work you can pass on.” A physical connection with crafts through workshops could significantly increase the number of people producing that craft. Another participant suggested the introduction of “more in-your-face advertising,” which could help with attracting people to workshops or learning about a particular craft.

One participant mentioned the need to support artists’ businesses and greater support in grant writing practices. Funding through grants is a way craftspeople can afford to continue their practice, but grant writing skills are an essential component of the process.

What areas of this craft or skill do you feel you need to learn more about?

Many answers to this question were very genre specific, for example, “detailing” for rug hooking and punch needlework and “advanced techniques in longarm machine” for quilting. More broadly,

there is an interest in social media literacy. Facebook, Instagram, and other digital platforms provide opportunities to promote and sell products. Although craftspeople are aware of the benefits of posting to social media, they may lack the time and/or technical knowledge to do so (Kholi, 2022: 10). Knowledge of current and emerging platforms would allow this source to be used to its full potential to market products and events. Greater social media literacy can also address the aim of connecting younger generations to traditional crafts.

Key Issues Identified

Participants noted several concerns, including those specific to their craft, but three key issues emerged from the consultation:

1. High cost of materials and a need to make them more accessible;
2. The need for in-person and accessible workshops, to both learn crafts and to transmit skills to a younger generation; and,
3. The need for entrepreneurial training and skills-building around marketing and exhibiting craft.

While there are clearly a number of skilled craft producers in the region, many are working at a hobbyist level. There are gaps in the professionalization of craft as an industry, and a disconnect between some of the surveyed crafters and potential markets.

This is not unusual amongst traditional craft practitioners. A 2011 study in Northern Thailand noted that artisans and crafters faced issues around market information, customer preferences, and product design, stating “Craft enterprises face a lack of knowledge and information about markets and buyers... Few companies know how to satisfy distributor or

buyer demands, particularly in the tourist and export markets” (Chudasri *et al* 10).

While maintenance and transmission of skills is one issue in that region, there exists a large knowledge gap of how to make existing skills more sustainable and marketable.

Research on quilting programs in Central Asia noted that efforts to establish training projects tend to end quickly when there is no effort placed on developing a long-term maintenance strategy. That researcher notes:

By creating a dependency on the outside agency instead of building a self-sustaining model based on the capacities within the community, these models are at risk when the supporting agency ends the program (Goodwin 39).

Recommendations

Based on identified key issues, Heritage NL makes the following recommendations:

1. Subsidy for mentor/apprentice training projects;
2. Support for documenting traditional craft techniques and the production of training films and documents;
3. Design assistance for developing new products using traditional techniques;
4. Introduction to the Standards of Quality Guidelines developed by the Craft Council of NL <https://www.craftcouncilnl.ca/archived-pages/membership>
5. Regional marketing/networking opportunities, entrepreneurship training, and development of social media skills.

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