

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLANDDepartment of FolkloreNEWFOUNDLAND STORYTELLINGQ68Note to Student Contributors

Newfoundland is rich in stories of all kinds. Most of you have heard stories told in your home communities; some of you even tell them to your friends.

We need your help.

Here at Memorial University we are trying to get examples of every kind of story told in Newfoundland as nearly as possible in the words Newfoundlanders use.

If we had 2,000 tape recorders, one for each of you, many of you could probably get your grandparents, parents, relatives or neighbours to tell some of the stories they know. Next best is to get some of these stories as nearly as possible in the exact words of the person telling them.

Will you try to get some of these stories for us?

What kind? It doesn't matter so long as they are not copies from printed sources like magazines, newspapers or books.

To make these stories of most value as a genuine record of Newfoundland, we need the stories exactly as people tell them -- that is, without "improving" or "correcting" the grammar or the choice of words.

But just as important: write down as much information as you can about the storyteller, the way he tells the story, and the kind of situation in which such a story is told.

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On the next page are General Instructions.

On the pages following, we suggest some of the situations in which we know stories are told, and some of the kinds of stories in which we are especially interested.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Write in black or blue ink, or type (double spaced).
2. Use 8 1/2 X 11 paper.
3. Write on one side of the paper only.
4. Leave good margins on all four sides.
5. Number your pages in the upper right-hand corner.
6. Write or print your full name on the last line of each page.

INFORMATION NEEDED ABOUT EACH STORY

1. The name of the person who told you the story.
2. His or her age (this may be approximate).
3. The name of the community where you heard the story.
4. Give the storyteller's relationship to you, or explain if he is a neighbour, visitor, etc.
5. Give the storyteller's home community.
6. From whom, or where, did the storyteller hear the story if it did not happen to him personally.
7. Describe as fully as you can the actual storytelling situation (for suggestions on this see page 5).
8. Write down any remarks or comments the storyteller makes on the story.
9. Write down the comments or the reaction (laughter, shock, etc.) of the people listening to the story.
10. Explain if you took the story down word for word, or took notes while it was told and wrote it up later, or if this is a story you remember hearing.
11. Give your full name, course and section.
12. Give your home community mailing address. For St. John's give the street name. Do not give St. John's as your home community if you are living here only while at university.

SPECIAL CATEGORIES OF STORIES

Here are some kinds of stories in which we are especially interested. Give as many stories as you can in any one of these main areas or a few in each category.

Under each kind we have made some suggestions to help you.

I. STORIES OF GHOSTS AND OTHER STRANGE HAPPENINGS

1. Phantom ships
2. Strange lights and/or noises
3. Stories about death signs
4. Returning from the dead
5. Haunted places, persons or things
6. Animals unusual in form or behaviour
7. Unexplainable happenings

Indicate for each story if the teller was personally involved in any way.

II. STORIES ABOUT TREASURE

1. Stories about people looking for treasure. Why did they look in that particular place? Did they find any treasure? If not, why not?
2. Stories of dreams of hidden treasure. How many times did the person dream of the treasure? Did he look for it? Did he find it and get it?
3. How do people know that treasure is hidden at a certain place?
4. When digging for treasure are there any rules which must be followed?
5. Who is supposed to have hidden the treasure? When? Why? What was it (gold, silver, jewels, religious objects, money, liquor)?

Remember to include the comments of the teller on the story told and the comments of those listening to the story.

### III. TALL TALES, LYING STORIES AND BIG YARNS

Tales or yarns are sometimes told (for example, around the camp fire on a fishing or hunting trip) about the unusual exploits and doings of people.

Some of these stories may be about the incredible amount of fish they caught, or the unlikely methods used to catch animals.

Sometimes the stories may be about unusually large insects or very uncommon weather, such as extremes of heat or cold or fog, and how they affected people.

Other tales may be told about the sea and the unusually large ships people claim to have sailed in.

Yet others may be told about people who are marvellous shots, or who have exceptional sight or hearing, or liars who got to believe their own stories.

1. If you know any stories similar to the ones suggested above, write them down exactly as you would tell them, or as you heard them told.
2. Describe the situations where you heard them told and say something, if you can, about the people telling the stories, their attitude to the stories, and the way the listeners reacted.
3. DO NOT give stories from books or other publications, but if you know books with such stories, we'd be glad to have you write down: title, author, date and place of publication. You may know some books we have missed.
4. Songs or rhymes about the same sort of thing, or which seem to be full of nonsense or contradictions are also of interest.

THE STORYTELLER'S HOME COMMUNITY, HIS AGE AND WHERE HE LEARNED THE STORY ARE IMPORTANT

## THE STORYTELLING SITUATION

Besides the stories themselves, we are also interested in the storytelling situation of the stories you have given.

1. When and where were the stories told? (e.g., at "times", dances, wakes, or when visitors came to the house.

At lunch breaks, at work or after it, or on Sunday afternoon.

While working at traps, or mending nets, or waiting for birds or seals to appear.

When a parent wanted to teach a child about things he should or should not do -- disobeying his parents, working on Sunday, etc.

2. What people were present? (Give age, sex, occupation and relationship to one another).
3. What started the storytelling?
4. What types of stories were told at this time?
5. Why did the storyteller tell his story? (To prove a point, to go one better than the last storyteller, to give information, etc.)
6. How did each storyteller comment on his story?
7. How did the audience react to each story?
8. Were the stories told one after the other or was there conversation in between? Describe.

A SMALL GROUP OF STORIES WITH SUCH INFORMATION IS MORE VALUABLE THAN A LARGE COLLECTION THAT DOES NOT DESCRIBE THE SETTING.

At this time we would prefer to get stories in the first three categories; however, stories or jokes of the types listed below would also be of interest.

IV. OTHER TYPES OF STORIES

1. Fairies (the good people, the little people, etc.)
2. Witches and jinkers
3. Stories about the Devil (the Bad One, Evil One, Old Scratch, Old Nick)
4. Stories about Pat and Mike, or Mick
5. Jokes or stories about lazy, stingy or deaf people
6. Stories about the unusual powers of clergyman, or humorous stories about them.

A limited number of stories (say, half-a-dozen) in the actual words of a storyteller, just as he talks -- phrases, half-sentences, etc. -- and with all the details of information about each story called for on page 2 are better than twenty with incomplete information.

THE OLDER PEOPLE WILL CERTAINLY BE ABLE TO TELL YOU  
STORIES