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Reconstructing Heritage and Cultural Identity in Marginalised and Hinterland Communities: Case Studies from Western Newfoundland

*Rainer Baehre**

Abstract

This essay examines the issue of missing heritage, cultural identity, and regeneration of two historically marginalised communities in the Humber River Basin region of western Newfoundland, Canada: Woods Island and Crow Gulch. This region was shaped by the implementation of international treaties which restricted settlement until the turn of the twentieth century by Britain, France and the United States. The first case study focuses on a former fishing community in the Bay of Islands, Woods Island, whose prosperity once coincided with the need by large fish producers based in Gloucester, Massachusetts; they relied on the Bay of Islands for a herring bait fishery to conduct their operations, making the location one of the most important sources of supply in the North Atlantic. Issues surrounding treaty rights and access to this region's resources resulted in international arbitration and The Hague Tribunal of 1910, and set a legal precedent for opening up global access to the world's oceans. A half-century later, in the face of the forces of 'modernisation', Woods Island was resettled under pressure from the Newfoundland government, as part of a larger strategy to transform the island's society and economy. Its heritage remains however important to former residents and their families in understanding a world now lost. The second case study explores an abandoned underclass community, consisting mostly of residents with French/Aboriginal background who were largely discriminated against because of their ethnicity. While also no longer in existence, Crow Gulch in its iconic role is significant in the

wake of a recent major Mi'kmaw resurgence in Western Newfoundland. Together, these studies demonstrate how to conserve tangible and intangible culture of marginalised communities by linking micro-history to macro-history and how to preserve the past for future cultural benefit.

Introduction

The idea of conserving heritage extends back to the nineteenth century, though public concern about heritage has undergone a major revival in recent years. In 1972 the UNESCO report on World Cultural Heritage focused on preserving important buildings and sites, or 'tangible heritage'. In the 1980s, the concept of heritage conservation was extended to the protection of 'non-physical heritage', 'traditional culture and folklore' and 'intangible heritage'.[1] Both tangible and intangible heritage linked to 'inheritance,' 'legacy' and 'ownership' are now considered as necessary in preserving the past and reflecting 'a communal awareness of what is worth collecting, conserving and passing on to the next generations'.[2] Additional conceptual dimensions of what constitute heritage preservation surfaced under the European Landscape Convention of 2007, namely, that heritage can embody the 'historic urban/rural landscape'. This dimension has now been extended to include coastal waters and territorial seas – the 'historical seascape'.[3] In this essay, two 'abandoned' communities in western Newfoundland, Woods Island and Crow Gulch, represent both landscape and seascape and reflect this wider discussion of the tangible and intangible components of heritage.

These case studies also however raise the question of what purpose the conservation and preservation of obscure sites serve? The answers I propose are rooted in the recent discourses governing heritage. One, conservation and preservation of heritage can form part of an economic strategy in terms of sustaining communities or regions facing possible decline from adverse social and economic developments. In this sense, promoting the past benefits the tourism industry can contribute to local and regional economic sustainability. A second and at least equally important rationale focuses on the cultural aspects of heritage and its relationship to identity formation. Tangible and intangible heritage provides the symbolic and historical reference points through which individuals and communities construct meaning, identity and a sense of rootedness.

Other positive contributions of heritage conservation have also been argued. Some studies suggest the possibility of social and even

political benefits from heritage preservation and community regeneration, because cultural facilities and programmes can be used to address community social and civic issues such as poverty, crime and education.[4] Heritage preservation can add to a collective sense of purpose and acceptance of cultural diversity[5] and even provide insights into global issues, for example, in maintaining links between natural and human environments. In describing the nature and objectives of heritage, Europa Nostra – 'the voice of cultural heritage in Europe' – makes the sweeping claim that, 'Heritage reflects our ongoing relationship with the environment and plays a role in defining modern culture and identity'.[6]

Interest in and support for heritage conservation has become global though each country presents its own distinctive agenda and approach. Canada, a nation where a heritage conservation movement has been active for over forty years, is no exception. In late 2012, a National Heritage Summit, 'Regeneration: Toward a New Vision for Heritage', was convened in Montreal and announced 'the launch of national conversation', the greater purpose of which was heritage preservation.[7] This Summit not only had the objective of preserving the tangible past in the form of rehabilitating older buildings but focused on how 'to embrace the entire environment, including spirit of place, community, memories, stories and traditions'. This meeting was followed up in 2013 with a conference, 'Regeneration: Heritage Leads the Way', where the issue of 'how older communities, cultural landscapes, buildings and intangible heritage' were acquiring 'new relevance' was discussed in light of 'the shift to smaller government and the drive for sustainable communities', with the search for 'new conservation strategies and legislative tools' as a key theme.[8] This broad approach by the federal government, upon which many heritage projects for funding depend, suggests a further widening of the once narrow definition of 'culture' that ties together cultural conservation with a growing interest in the regeneration of small communities in order to make them sustainable, especially in light of existing economic pressures and efforts by government to reduce costs in a fiscally conservative climate.

Outside influences on the federal government of Canada in directing heritage, regeneration, and sustainability discourse have become manifest and share not only in redefining what to conserve and preserve but also on how to carry out this task. In this regard, new approaches encompassing vernacular heritage challenge the traditional 'top down' approach to defining heritage and nationhood. Heritage is thus increasingly identified in terms of multiple identities shaped by 'context, social values, cultural attitudes and participation'.[9] Again,

however, questions of what constitutes culture, whose culture is to be preserved, and which communities are to be regenerated, do not always find easy answers. There are many smaller communities, even those that can boast a heritage committee, whose past remains little known or unknown and not well understood, even at the local level. For such already disadvantaged communities with no identifiable and distinct architectural heritage or perceived site of recognized national historical importance, the difficulties of preserving 'culture' remains problematic.

Heritage-based community identities are filtered through 'landscape' and 'place' that connect past and present. Their reconstruction and application in heritage and economic regeneration projects however require more than adequate funding but researching, developing, and promoting local heritage, not only what remains visible but also what remains forgotten, hidden, or intangible. If a community's past is barely accessible or non-existent in textual form, it is absolutely necessary to engage in 'nearby history' in rigorous, scholarly, ethnographic and historical research using local knowledge. This involves using oral interviewing of individuals who still retain some memory of the local past and rewriting their community's history from the bottom up – to reconstruct and archive the vernacular collective memory before it is entirely lost. Otherwise, once the memories fade and disappear, the community's heritage risks disappearing alongside.

Historically and culturally distinct, even within Atlantic Canada, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador consisted once of hundreds of small fishing and logging communities, or outports, and one large metropolitan and mercantile centre, St. John's. The relative decline of the fishery that led to the collapse of the centuries old cod fishery and the end of the historic cod fishery in the early 1990s has contributed to a social and economic shift away from the fishery towards other natural resource industries, particularly offshore oil and minerals. While fish stocks continue to decline, the once dynamic pulp and paper industry has also declined in the international marketplace and one of two pulp and paper mills has closed recently with continuing concerns expressed about the other's long-term survival which, in turn, has negatively affected the logging industry.[10] Despite these downturns, Newfoundland and Labrador has become a 'have province' for the first time in its history because of the revenues generated from the capital intensive oil and mining sector. This shift away from the traditionally more labour-intensive maritime and forest resources has resulted in a decline of smaller rural communities, a growing number of which have lost population, have been abandoned or continue to face a bleak

future. In terms of its cultural heritage, Newfoundland's identity has remained strongly tied to the fishery and, to a lesser extent, its forest industries and the provincial government has been seeking ways to preserve its cultural heritage. The problem of doing so remains cost, a reality exacerbated by a sparse population of roughly 600,000 residents living thinly spread out over a geographical area larger than Japan.

To protect its culture, the Newfoundland and Labrador government established a Heritage Foundation (HFNL) in 1984 to identify and preserve its architectural heritage, followed in 2008 with an Intangible Cultural Heritage Strategy, or 'Living Heritage'.[11] Initially, recognised heritage sites existed primarily in eastern Newfoundland, particularly the Avalon Peninsula where the capital city of St. John's and much of the island's population is located. Now such sites exist throughout the province including Labrador. There are six heritage sites in the immediate Corner Brook region – the general location of the two cases studies, Woods Island and Crow Gulch, which will be discussed below. As part of its strategy, the HFNL has programmes for promoting fisheries heritage, municipal heritage designation, intangible cultural heritage, heritage days and educational resources including the Newfoundland and Newfoundland Heritage Fair Programme and an extensive Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Website. It is part of a much larger government initiative housed within the Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation which encompasses the Culture Economic Development Programme, the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Programme, a Commemorations Programme, the Provincial Archaeology Office and The Rooms, the Provincial Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Provincial Archives. There are also 148 smaller and volunteer-run local museums and historical societies in the province, many of which belong to The Museum Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, which also provides professional development and other services, and the Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Archives. The various campuses of Memorial University of Newfoundland and the College of the North Atlantic also engage scholars and practitioners in history, folklore, and other heritage-related disciplines, as research specialists and teachers. Particularly noteworthy are the collections held by the Centre for Newfoundland Studies and the Memorial University Folklore Archive. The relevance of 'culture' to this small province is demonstrable in terms of the resources which government has devoted to heritage preservation, though the task remains incomplete.

Newfoundland and Labrador has also adapted its views on what culture to preserve and why cultural preservation remains important

for the future. A 2002 report, *A Cultural Policy for Newfoundland and Labrador*, states that it was the government's intention 'to nurture and preserve this province's culture for its intrinsic value, as well as for its social and economic benefits'.[12] This report defines 'cultural resources' as those things 'creative, archival, archaeological, architectural, educational or historical'. In recent years, its people, culture and landscape are considered key in marketing the province to outsiders and visitors. Economic regeneration and sustainability for the province has included a strong tourism component, as outlined in the government's own ten-year framework, *Uncommon Potential – A Vision for Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism*, in which Jonathan Swift's comment is prominently featured, 'Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others'. The economic underpinnings of heritage were explicitly announced in 2012 with 'The Cultural Economic Development Programme – Heritage' which established an advisory committee to preserve and present heritage resources, 'increase sustainability' and make non-profit heritage organisations more relevant in the province by promoting their 'increased social and economic contributions'.[13] In the case of preserving the culture of specific marginal communities far removed from the provincial capital and the heaviest concentration of population on the island, the question remains: what makes their heritage and culture worth conserving? This question can be addressed through case studies of two small abandoned communities in western Newfoundland – Woods Island and Crow Gulch – that disappeared from the seascape and landscape a half century ago.

The heritage, culture and identity of Woods Island and Crow Gulch illustrate how micro-history and macro-history can be linked in ways that affect personal and collective lives. Much of that history has yet to be written; it exists and remains in the form of oral history, memory fragments, archival documents and popular history.[14] Nevertheless, the heritage of these former communities remains essential because the past worlds they represent are historically significant to the cultural identities of many residents in the region. 'Stories' of their former existence can also be used to promote the region's heritage, regenerate interest in the region's history, as a whole, and contribute to the region's economic and cultural sustainability by relating that heritage to tourists in real and virtual forms. If this fading tangible and intangible heritage is to be conserved and preserved, however, it needs to be 'mapped', interpreted, reconstructed and disseminated not only through scholarly research but also by means of university and community engagement. Only then can heritage of such near-forgotten communities survive

and contribute to the cultural sustainability and heritage-regeneration, or 'the improvement of disadvantaged people or places through the delivery of a heritage focused project'.[15] In short, the case studies of Woods Island and Crow Gulch illustrate the connectedness of heritage, community and regeneration – how marginalised and abandoned communities can protect their vernacular culture and bring it to light.

Overview: Bay of Islands and Humber Arm

Woods Island was a former outport in the Bay of Islands on the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Crow Gulch was once a community of 'disadvantaged' inhabitants roughly fifteen miles eastward towards the interior along the large fjord called the Humber Arm. They reflect in different but important ways the heritage of the Humber River Basin region.[16] Their disappearance, as communities, can be attributed to the decline of the traditional cod and herring fisheries and the construction of a major pulp and paper operation which transformed the natural and human environment of the region. This same region is heavily dominated today by the city of Corner Brook – the regional hub for the province's lone pulp and paper mill, government activities and service industries. The Humber River, a few miles to the northeast of Corner Brook, flows roughly 150 km. from its source into Deer Lake and then the Humber Arm, within the boreal forest ecosystem. The heavily timbered valleys, a rich fishery of herring, mackerel, lobster, salmon and cod, numerous pockets of arable land suitable for grazing and subsistence farming, and highly regarded scenic landscape made the region appealing to early settlers.

The pre-history of the Humber River Basin region extends back several millennia. Traces of Aboriginal habitation began during the retreat of the last Ice Age with the arrival of the Maritime Archaic Indians at least three thousand years ago. Other groups like the Groswater Paleoeskimo, Beothuk, and Mi'kmaq later entered into the region. After 1500, this coastline was regularly visited by Bretons, Portuguese and Basques fishers – a French map called this 'the Basques coast'. Visitors included the explorer Jacques Cartier in 1534 who was blown during a gale into the Bay of Islands. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Newfoundland's western coast came to be dominated by French, British and American fishers and whalers in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, including the Humber River Basin region. They were lured by a rich abundance of fish: cod, mackerel and herring. French fur traders from Acadia also

brought Abenaki trappers to western Newfoundland who worked their way from Port au Basques northwards into Bay St. George, where a Mi'kmaw settlement is recorded in 1705, though oral history refers to a much earlier and pre-encounter presence.[17]

Competition for control of the island of Newfoundland and its waters contributed to major ongoing conflict and occasional wars between France and Britain. The first major agreement between the two powers over access to this coastline came with the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, giving Britain governance over the entire island and establishing the first 'French Shore', giving France and its migratory fishery almost exclusive access to a substantial stretch of the island's coastline. Despite reoccurring wars, particularly during the 1740s and 1750s, Britain acquiesced to France's demands for continuing access to this fishery. Following the Seven Years War and the Treaty of Paris of 1763, Newfoundland's governor, Admiral Hugh Palliser, consolidated British control by carrying out the first systematic hydrographic charting of the island, including the Bay of Islands and Humber Arm, much of it by the Royal Naval officer James Cook, later well known for his Pacific exploits.[18] France's support for the American revolutionaries led to another interruption in this fishery, though the matter was resolved in 1783 when Britain acceded to France's demands and the new 'French Shore' was constituted along the west coast of Newfoundland northwards from Port au Basques, including the Bay of Islands/Humber Arm region, to the Northern Peninsula. French access was once more affected with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars but reinstated under the Treaty of Paris of 1814–1815, and lasted under this arrangement until 1904. During the nineteenth century, the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon together with the French Shore remained the only remnants of France's once mighty North American empire.[19]

France's defeat in 1763 also opened up the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the first large-scale arrival of New England fishers. Despite the American Revolution and the War of 1812, Britain agreed under diplomatic pressure to make a similar arrangement by establishing under the Convention of 1818 an American Shore overlapping much of the French Shore, though subject to more restrictions.[20] These international events and diplomatic negotiations resulted in the relative isolation of the west coast with restrictions on settlement and limited provincial jurisdiction which left the Humber River Basin region underdeveloped and sparsely populated. However, fishing privileges along the western Newfoundland coastline, as negotiated by France and the United States, began to be challenged by the colonial legislature beginning in

the mid-nineteenth century, when Newfoundland acquired responsible government and began to extend its ambitions to include central and western parts of the island for purposes of economic diversification and development. With the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 and the Treaty of Washington of 1871, the United States was given greater access to the region, contributing to an influx of new residents from Newfoundland and parts of Atlantic Canada. While the cod fishery along this stretch of coastline was less important than those associated with the Bank fishery, nevertheless, this region, particularly the Bay of Islands, became a major centre for the herring bait fishery necessary to conduct the cod fishery and also the site of Newfoundland's first major lobster fishery, both of which attracted considerable attention from mainland Canada and New England.[21]

The rich timber resources of the Humber River Basin region also attracted others less attached to the fisheries. During the course of the century, the population of this region grew from a few hundred to several thousand. A subsequent impetus for economic growth came with the 1898 completion of a transinsular railway that went through Corner Brook and several adjacent communities and connected to the mainland railways of Canada by means of steamships. This new transportation spurred local logging and saw-mill operations with the export of lumber to the United States and pit-props to Britain.[22] The railway's arrival also changed the herring bait fishery, contributing to the growth of many local communities, including Woods Island, and fostering several short-lived mining and quarry operations, including several operations run by Welsh entrepreneurs.[23]

Another fundamental transformation to the region resulted during and after the building of a model company town in Corner Brook named Town Site together with a major pulp and paper mill constructed, owned and operated beginning in 1923 by a British consortium led by the aircraft manufacturer and hydro-engineering firm, W.G. Armstrong Whitworth Company, in the form of the Newfoundland Power and Paper Company. The building of this mill and the hydro corridor from nearby Deer Lake became Newfoundland's single largest construction project of its day that transformed the village of Corner Brook into an industrial and urban hub in western Newfoundland, attracting workers and their families from throughout the island and affecting traditional communities throughout the entire region.[24] Ownership then passed on to the American forest industry giant, International Pulp and Paper, which restructured its Canadian operations during the inter-war Depression years and then divested itself of its Corner Brook

holdings and finally, in 1936, Bowater's Company. After World War II, the Bowater mill was briefly touted as the world's largest integrated pulp and mill. The sheer impact of this mill is indicated by its leased and private landholdings consisting of over 25,000 square miles of forest.[25]

The planning and construction of Town Site is also noteworthy. Armstrong Whitworth hired Thomas Adams, a leading figure in Britain with the Garden City movement and responsible for the construction of Letchworth, a new town in England, to plan the company town. Adams conceived of constructing a company town divided into residential, commercial and industrial areas in order to avoid the social and health issues associated with slum and working-class housing and minimise potential labour strife. Town Site, like Temiscaming in Quebec, was only one of Adams' numerous projects in Canada, but nevertheless noteworthy. In turn, the chief architect contracted to carry out Adams' plans was the American-born Andrew Cobb with whom Adams had worked in Halifax, Nova Scotia, following the catastrophic Halifax explosion of 1917. Cobb was a noted proponent of the Arts and Crafts Movement of nineteenth-century Britain linked to its leading advocates, such as John Ruskin and William Morris.[26]

In short, the history of the Humber River Basin region suggests much that merits collecting, conserving and preserving. While no significant battles were fought in the area or monumental architecture constructed, its contextualised heritage provides numerous symbolic and historical reference points that not only contribute to a general understanding of the social, economic and cultural identity of those who have lived there but also represent possible points of interest to outsiders: Aboriginal-European contact and encounter, early European exploration and mercantile expansion, the Atlantic system, international relations, colonialism, and the social, transformation arising from the introduction of the wage economy and industrialisation, and leading-edge urban planning. These themes are reflected uniquely in the heritage and identity of the region.

Local examples in the Humber River Basin region of how this heritage has been applied to promote tourism include a monument site, Captain Cook's look-out, and a highway along the north shore of the Humber Arm called The Palliser Trail, where a few small local 'museums' can be found. There is also the Corner Brook Museum and Archives, a volunteer organisation supported by government grants with a few paid staff. Its mandate, as the name suggests, has primarily focused on preserving the heritage and natural environment of the city. Very little information on this region can be found in general studies of Atlantic

Canada, though somewhat more information and context is available in more recent histories of Newfoundland and Labrador.[27] In contrast, the importance of modern Corner Brook and its mill has generated a few published scholarly studies and even a critically acclaimed novel, *House of Hate*.[28] The same cannot be said of surrounding communities in the Bay of Islands and Humber Arm, each of which evinces a distinctive heritage that has only been superficially treated in local popular histories. The following case studies of 'nearby history' suggest how that gap can be filled by merging macro- with micro-history.[29]

Heritage regeneration of Woods Island and Crow Gulch

Woods Island and Crow Gulch represent 'places' that in tangible terms are barely recognisable today and remain largely invisible in the official historical record. Woods Island represents the traditional Newfoundland outport of the Bay of Islands and the largest settlement in the Humber Basin region at the turn of the twentieth century. Once inhabited by over five hundred residents, its disappearance reflects the impact of the end of the old salt cod and herring trade which accompanied the modernisation of the fishery and stock depletion. Currently, it is a place where some former island descendants keep their summer 'cabins' and tend to old cemeteries. Otherwise, Woods Island is uninhabited year-around, except for a single resident. The island's inhabitants were resettled under a government programme of the 1950s and 1960s in a strategy which affected roughly three hundred small coastal fishing communities. While not physically coerced, they either left voluntarily to seek a better life for their families and themselves, or left reluctantly under government and church pressure. Like Woods Island, Crow Gulch has also disappeared, though for different reasons. It was destroyed in the interests of urban renewal and calls for public housing.[30] The descendants of both communities are still scattered throughout the Humber Arm region and, in many instances, they remain well aware of their origins and identify with them as places and spaces. Their respective heritage, while still largely unrecognised, has a broad significance for local and regional history.

Woods Island

The heritage of Woods Island is significant to the region and beyond for several reasons, though its history remains practically invisible outside

and little known within the Humber Arm region. Woods Island was important during the early twentieth century when the Gorton-Pew company, the largest fish producer in the United States, and other companies 'owned' the Bay of Islands, for the region had then become a principal source of herring in the North Atlantic. Woods Island provided fishers, coopers, a customs officer, supplies and port facilities particularly for Gorton-Pew's and other New England fishing company operations.[31]

After the Convention of 1818, American fishers out of various New England ports plied the Gulf of St. Lawrence along the American Shore of western Newfoundland. The importance of cod and, until the 1870s, mackerel drew the industry into the region. Herring also became increasingly important serving as bait but also pickled herring, as a consumer product, grew in popularity as European immigration increased into Boston and New York. By the end of the 1870s, access to bait became an increasing issue because of overfishing and pollution. Traditional sources along Newfoundland's south coast became depleted and Bay St. George, Bay of Islands, and Bonne Bay herring fishery became increasingly important. With the turn of the twentieth century and the end of the French Shore, the Bay of Islands became western Newfoundland's major source of herring. Primarily, Gloucester, Massachusetts fish producers sent many dozens of vessels annually to the region, many making two trips between October and early February, or until ice in the Bay forced this fishery to close. Consequently, huge volumes of herring were caught, barrelled, salted and shipped in barrels or, as frozen herring, placed on scaffolds on deck, and returned to Gloucester to be turned into retail herring and fishcakes.

Under the terms of the 1818 Convention, American vessels were required to fish in uninhabited waters. In the Bay of Islands, they did so in nearby North Arm, Middle Arm, Penguin Arm and Goose Arm but also entered the Humber Arm. The only 'settlements' of note to the Americans when they entered the region were Birchy Cove (later Curling) and Woods Island, though other smaller communities also existed. The impact of this fishery was profound for a decade and more. New England schooners brought with them fishing gear, fishermen's outfits and various provisions, including alcohol, which they traded to local residents, sometimes with gold. These vessels also arrived with only skeleton crews, 'just enough to sail to Newfoundland and back', usually 8–10 persons, and then hired crew from within the Bay of Islands, often 25–35 additional crew per vessel who fished in their own small boats, or dories, and sold it to the Americans on a piece-work basis.

The French and American shores, established by a series of international treaties over which the colonial Newfoundland government had little control, became increasingly contentious during the course of the nineteenth century.[32] In promoting economic strategies that would help to diversify the provincial economy and reduce its dependence on the cod fishery, the colonial government focused increasingly on the rich maritime and land-based resources of the Humber River basin region whose population had begun to increase steadily during the boom (and bust) phases of the local herring, lobster and timber industries. At various times, the Newfoundland government had attempted to enact regulations governing fishing and even pursued its own free trade with the United States. Often, Britain supported the spirit and terms of its fishing treaties with France and the United States over colonial interests. In 1905, Newfoundland again attempted to seize control over its inshore fisheries trade and conserve its fish stocks by prohibiting the hiring of resident Newfoundlanders by foreign fishing vessels, almost exclusively American in origin, and also charging lighthouse duties and import duties on supplies brought from New England to carry out the fishery, leading not only to wide protests from Bay of Islands residents but also to a major diplomatic dispute between Britain and the United States.[33]

This dispute, much of it focused on the Bay of Islands and its herring fishery, resulted in the United States government claiming that the Convention of 1818 had been violated, with American vessels subject to unfair charges and discriminatory practices. In seeking a resolution to this dispute, the matter led to a General Arbitration Treaty in 1908 and 1909, and then in 1910, The Award of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague in the North Atlantic Coast, better known as the Hague Tribunal. While Newfoundland was accorded the right to regulate its inshore fisheries, this decision had international consequences. According to Payne, it 'opened the resources of the great oceans to an unfettered amount of extraction throughout most of the twentieth century'[34], a continuing issue of global interest and concern.

Woods Island, apart from its role within the context of this important historical development, is also symbolic of Newfoundland's controversial and iconic resettlement policies of a half-century later. The controversial topic of the resettlement programmes has received much scholarly attention, as well as figuring large in contemporary Newfoundland culture, as a source of song, literary works, and popular non-fiction.

By the mid-twentieth century, Wood's Island was in decline, like hundreds of other coastal communities reliant on the traditional

inshore fishery. After World War I, the herring industry went into decline and the American presence diminished. The region was also badly affected during the decline of traditional cod fishery from the mid-1920s and through the Great Depression years. World War II and post-war European reconstruction however led to a brief period of prosperity in the fishery. By the 1950s, this once abundant fishery in which Woods Island had played a central role, began to fade noticeably and now remains a distant memory. In large part, the traditional inshore fishery faced major structural issues including the need for major capital investment in larger and more modern vessels, as well as fish-freezing and processing plants that would allow the industry to compete effectively with its foreign counterparts.[35] Woods Island, even though its population was then at an historic high, faced many of the same challenges affecting hundreds of other Newfoundland coastal communities in a changing economy.

In 1954, the provincial Department of Welfare began to assist financially families from small, isolated and unsustainable outports to move to larger centres. Such centralisation, it was argued, would lead to a reduction in costs and better services and education.[36] This strategy came to affect 258 communities and an estimated 27,500 people over a twenty-year period, including Woods Island and its 526 inhabitants who decided in 1960 to relocate, many reluctantly, to Benoit's Cove and other nearby shore communities. This relocation meant a transformation of an older way of life which, in certain ways, remained preferable for some because it allowed for a greater degree of independence for individual fishers and their families, a strong sense of identity and community, and a closer connection with the natural environment. In many respects, this transformation parallels what Laslett aptly described in his celebrated study about the ways in which life changed in England from the early modern to the modern period, with its wage economy and industrial production – 'a world we have lost'.[37] While a full treatment of Woods Island history based on a range of sources, particularly through oral history, is not possible here, nevertheless, it remains much in the memory of those living within the region and those who have migrated elsewhere.

The history of Woods Island might not have survived and been recorded, except for local input. Its history is barely visible outside of the region. To illustrate, the Maritime History Archive of Memorial University provides an overview of resettlement history along with primary documents, interpretation, bibliographical references and individual community histories. Its archival offerings are substantial

with maps of relocated communities on the island including seven in the Humber River Basin. Yet, it does not provide either a community history or even a map reference to Woods Island – the largest one. This community also receives no mention in general histories of Newfoundland. Its relative invisibility poses obvious problems for reconstructing its heritage and the collective identity of former residents and their relocated families. Yet, apart from its ties to individuals whose families once lived there, the wider significance of Woods Island is also obvious in terms of its historic links to New England and The Hague Tribunal, its demographic and economic role within the region, and its fading cultural heritage as symbolic of another time and another space, when the world was less anthropocene and less defined by simulacra.

Crow Gulch

In 1956, four communities including Town Site amalgamated to form the city of Corner Brook, then the second largest urban centre in Newfoundland. Crow Gulch was part of this new city with its forty-five families wedged between former Curling and Corner Brook West, less than two miles from Town Site along the shore of the Humber Arm, situated on some of the roughest, steepest, and soil-less terrain west of Bowater's holding boom at the end of Pier Road alongside the railway tracks towards East Curling. Five years earlier geographer William Wonders had reported to the Department of Natural Resources, that Crow Gulch was a 'parasite community', a term used to describe a community dependent on others for its economic activity. The place consisted of 'little more than shacks, built of discarded material'. Its marginal nature was evidenced by a total lack of municipal services – no water or sewage facilities, and no streets and roadways. Everyone coming in or out had to make their way along footpaths which went up and down steep slopes, or follow the railway track to get into West Corner Brook, for work, shopping and school. Incoming deliveries were sent, for example, to 'the house at the fourth pole [telegraph and hydro pole] after Pier Road'.[38]

Crow Gulch had emerged as a shack town sometime during the early 1920s when the mill was constructed. Many workers during the hard times of the continuing post-war recession looked for seasonal work from the outports in western Newfoundland and other parts of the island. During the mill's construction phase, other housing for workers existed, notably in Shacktown (later the Smithville area) closer to the

mill and Corner Brook East, with inexpensive but substandard rental housing in Corner Brook West, and some boarding houses. However, Crow Gulch offered the cheapest, most affordable, individually owned housing for the working poor in temporary jobs, and no municipal regulation or taxes.

A socio-economic profile of Crow Gulch can be constructed from available survey information in the Urban Renewal Study which reported, 'The worst situation exists in Crow Gulch, on the northern slopes of Crow Hill, because here municipal services are totally absent and many of the houses are little more than shacks, built of discarded materials'. They were built in many cases 'only of a makeshift wood frame covered by tarpaulins and scrap plywood. Some dwellings have windows without glass which must be closed with cardboard or wood during cold weather. Many dwellings have no flooring over soil.'[39] In short, their general condition was 'appalling'. Only one house qualified as livable, though with a 'poor exterior', and none had indoor plumbing, ranging from dwellings designated 'atrocious' to 'very bad ones'. The houses were also divided from one another without clear property lines, scattered about the slopes, and inhabited by squatters because the land was technically under Bowater's company control and clear title was unlikely.

Crow Gulch's residents were described as 'very poor' and lived with no running water, relying instead on a single standpipe on Pier Road and some well water. They had no municipal garbage pick-up, leaving the place littered with refuse, and no schools, churches, shops or parks. Its population also had a reputation as 'socially unacceptable' with many 'broken families' and 'widows and separated and deserted wives', as well as of a crime-ridden area associated with bootlegging and prostitution, mostly offences related to vagrancy, assault and liquor violations. Beginning in 1965, the Corner Brook Housing authority, supported by provincial and federal government agencies, decided to address the city's slum housing conditions by closing down Crow Gulch, one of the worst 'shacktown' sites in Newfoundland. The destruction and relocation process was carried out in 1968 when Corner Brook briefly achieved, in sharp contrast to Crow Gulch, the highest per capita income in Atlantic Canada.

The heritage of Crow Gulch, however, extends far beyond its reputation as a slum community housing Corner Brook's underclass to encompass their ethnic origins, as 'jackatars'. In 1951, for example, Wonders characterised the majority of Crow Gulch residents, as such, 'a mixture of Micmac Indian and French'.[40] However, he also evinced the racial attitudes of the period, adding that, 'Though both groups include

citizens for the most part, this merger seems to have resulted in an inferior people'. A recent collection of stories about 'old' Corner Brook provides additional insight into such attitudes. Tom Finn writes,

> We were cruel as children, and I remember we used to pee into that spring pool and laugh about what the jackytars down the hill would be drinking in their tea for supper. A jackytar, if any of you aren't familiar with the term, was the lowest caste of person in Newfoundland at the time, which is saying something, let me tell you; a mix, as I understand of Micmac and French blood from the times when the French more or less owned, or at least had use of, the west coast of the Island. We used to be kept in line with threats of having the jackytars being put after us, or being sent down to live in Crow Gulch and no matter how badly off you might be, there was always the consolation of thinking: *At least I'm not a jackytar, thank God, and have to live in Crow Gulch!*[41]

In the past decade, the stigma of the 'jackatar' has taken on a different significance with the resurgence of the region's Mi'kmaw population. Although the jackatar represented a visible minority, even among the wider Mi'kmaw population, many of whom did not want to be identified as Aboriginal, this resurgence and interest in Crow Gulch now represents a coming-to-terms with Aboriginal identities, historically suppressed and distorted by colonialism and assimilation.[42] Non-willingness to recognise a Mi'kmaw heritage was commonplace among the non-Aboriginal population, and one that had seen a series of official denials. In 1949, when the terms of Confederation with Canada were drafted, the province of Newfoundland supported the false view that there were no 'true' Indians left on the island.[43] The last Aboriginal group, it was argued, had been the Beothuk peoples who had succumbed to cultural extermination in the 1820s when its remaining member, Shanawditith, died.

This position has been challenged only since the 1970s. The growing awareness and determination of Mi'kmaw descendants to assert their Aboriginal identity led in 1987 to legal status under the Indian Act of the Conne River reserve. The remaining Mi'kmaw communities organised the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and lobbied for change, leading to the formation and formal recognition of Qalipu First Nations band. Barely a decade ago, the federal government estimated that the number of Mi'kmaw descendants in western Newfoundland would be less than 10,000; this number has

now increased tenfold. Many applicants are well integrated as middle class inhabitants of Corner Brook, Stephenville, and the region,[44] often little aware of their Aboriginal background; many others having outmigrated. Who will eventually be given legal federal status as an 'Indian' in western Newfoundland remains up in the air, but many applicants are in the process of searching for and recovering their personal family background, seeking out a lost heritage and buried cultural identity.

This process has also transformed the stigma of Aboriginality in western Newfoundland and its racist elements, an identity hidden by shame, to one of growing pride in ancestors who had survived discrimination, exclusion and oppression. Within this emerging context, Crow Gulch has taken on a very different iconic form and its intangible culture an added significance. While the community no longer exists in a physical sense, the regeneration of memory associated with Crow Gulch and what it represented remains a significant feature of the regional heritage of the local Mi'kmaq and the Humber River Basin.

Conclusion

Heritage and community are highly complex human experiences, in the way that individuals and groups experience and express a 'sense of place', ranging from 'inchoate feeling to explicit conception'.[45] According to Morgan, they represent a collection of intangible values, including physical environment, human behaviours, and social/psychological processes. Such attachment conveys an 'emotional, cognitive, symbolic, or spiritual response to a particular physical surrounding or environment'.[46] But what is missing in this discussion and representation of community is the necessary role which historical interpretation plays in making sense of a place and how individuals are connected with their heritage. Understanding that sense of place is not fixed, even psychologically, but shaped through interpretation and reinterpretation. It is the product of a dialectical, reflexive and internal dialogue that takes place between the private and public spheres, an ongoing matrix of knowledge shaped by historical events, experience, memory, narrative, interpretation and shared meaning, in defining and redefining individual and collective memories; this represents the 'intersubjectivity' of the 'landscape', the social construction of heritage based on history and culture as they relate to the natural environment and personal experience.[47]

The mixed appeal of specific spaces and places common among the local descendants of Woods Island and Crow Gulch reflects what Cosgrove terms one of the most 'deep rooted' and 'powerful' myths that influence individuals and communities, namely, 'rootedness'. That is, 'ideas of home and belonging, of locality and identity, and of the social and environmental dangers of change and modernisation'.[48] A recent collection gives voice to the sense of loss, even mourning, which Newfoundlanders and Labradorians often experience upon leaving their communities and the island that sometimes is still associated with the loss of independence many residents felt when Newfoundland joined the Confederation, as well as language loss and loss of continuity that comes with outmigration.[49]

This is not however an argument in favour of reconstructing a heritage to romanticise the past. The lack of adequate local schooling, medical care, and the hardships of the fishery were reflected in the struggle to sustain Woods Island's economy and community; there were those who left reluctantly but unhesitatingly in order to provide their children with what they were convinced was a better future. Similarly, in the case of Crow Gulch, there were few who wanted to stay. So, the heritage and identity of both communities was never characterised as representing some ideal form but also marked a break away from 'tradition'. This is not to say that Woods Island and Crow Gulch are cultural icons of 'progress'. Rather, these case studies demonstrate how landscape and its heritage also needs to be understood as shaped by ideology, 'the struggle between conflicting interest groups'[50] of the past. In a broad sense, the benefits of understanding the socio-economic, political, and cultural context of what happened to Woods Island and Crow Gulch might then even provide insight into how communities have sustained themselves, or adapted, in the past to ever changing local and global environments.[51]

In closing, the conservation of the heritage of Woods Island and Crow Gulch remains important to the region on an individual and collective basis. Regenerating their respective tangible and intangible heritage requires a contextual understanding of the past that integrates local knowledge with other sources. To a degree, this process is already underway. In 2010, the Town of Humber Arm South established a Historic Sites and Heritage Committee instrumental in opening the Woods Island Resettlement House and Historic Centre at Benoit's Cove. Serving as a local museum, its contents were provided with the goodwill of surrounding residents and include photos, artifacts, transcripts of oral histories, maps, tools, and a three-dimensional map of Woods Island.

The community's tangible heritage also encompasses the house itself which was floated across the water from Woods Island to Benoit's Cove during resettlement. In addition, the town celebrated Come Home Year celebrations during the summer of 2013, engaging local residents with family members who had moved away and simply interested parties. These celebrations attended by many hundreds included the production of two plays written about former life on Woods Island and other related festivities.[52] The cultural heritage amassed and disseminated by the community and its committee on Woods Island has also benefited from the research and contributions of local scholars and students. In part, this has taken the form of carrying out oral history and an interactive website still under construction which will combine local knowledge with scholarly research and applications; this includes the application of GIS mapping and a 3-D digital reconstruction of life on Woods Island during the 1950s, using virtual architecture with family history and photos, as a way of regenerating and sustaining its heritage.[53]

Less advanced is the heritage of Crow Gulch which, however, is gaining personal and collective significance. Efforts afoot include linking local scholars working in Indigenous Studies with officials from the City of Corner Brook and members of the Qalipu First Nations band in order to establish a strategy of how to preserve and present regional Mi'kmaw identity, history and culture. This would constitute a way of reconstructing and preserving sites like Crow Gulch, as public memory, in the form of 'local acts of placing and remembering'.[54] What form that will ultimately take remains as yet undetermined.[55] One example already of preserving the memory of Crow Gulch has surfaced in the form of poetry by the award-winning Newfoundland poet Doug Gough, whose father grew up there. In light of available funding and growing attention to Aboriginal heritage by government, media and the public, this longstanding quest by the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq for broad cultural recognition augers well for preserving their heritage.

The prospects in western Newfoundland for conserving the tangible and intangible culture of marginalised communities have improved considerably over the past generation as global, national and local groups have come to appreciate the social and economic benefits of such heritage culture. As the UNESCO Convention of 1972 noted, 'they are increasingly threatened with destruction not only by the traditional causes of decay, but also by changing social and economic conditions which aggravate the situation'.[56] Woods Island and Crow Gulch are not likely to compete successfully for tourism

against L'Anse aux Meadows, Red Bay and Gros Morne – three UNESCO World Heritage sites within less than a day's drive of the Humber Arm. Yet they have their own appeal on one level, for anyone holding near or distant ties to them, particularly those interested in genealogy and contextualised regional history. On another level, they represent examples of 'small worlds' or micro-histories that shed light on global patterns and wider issues by revealing 'in fine-grained detail how larger processes operate, how the case serves as a useful hypothesis for exploring other cases'.[57]

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