

## The CURRA objectives

2. The Community-University Research for Recovery Alliance (CURRA) is a project out of Memorial University in Newfoundland that is carrying out an innovative program of community-engaged interdisciplinary research, knowledge mobilization, training, and policy development related to the recovery of fish stocks and fishery communities on Newfoundland's west coast, from Burnt Islands to St. Anthony. We are housed in a small building on the St. John's campus where our administrator Janet Oliver works, and in the Bonne Bay Marine Station, where I have an office. The Station is located in Bonne Bay, located in the heart of Gros Morne National Park.

3. By recovery we mean the possibility of a more vibrant future for people, communities and their natural environment. Key requirements for recovery include: accurate, timely information on critical social and environmental issues; opportunities and barriers to broad community engagement including youth involvement; and effective governance. Through our work we are helping to enhance the knowledge and human and organizational resources available to alliance members and others as they work to build a future that is grounded in the region's rich maritime social, artistic, heritage, governance and ecological strengths.

4. To date, the CURRA has engaged 23 community partners, 22 researchers from multiple disciplines, as well as 13 students and one postdoctoral fellow.

5. The over-arching goal of the CURRA is to find ways to promote sustainable recovery of fisheries and fishing communities on Newfoundland's west coast in a context of resource scarcity, scientific uncertainty, market volatility, out-migration and governance challenges. It is even more evident today as ecological recovery challenges continue to confront the region's marine ecosystems despite extensive investment in stewardship and recovery, and as the fishing industry confronts another serious economic crisis triggered by the global recession, escalating costs and some of the lowest prices for seals, fish and shellfish in decades.

By learning and working together, CURRA partners, researchers, students and staff are seeking to fill critical gaps in our collective knowledge and to promote networking and debate. We are doing this by promoting awareness and understanding of the rich and unique marine ecosystems in the region (including their history); and, by looking at resources and barriers to recovery along the fish chain from the ecosystem through harvesting, processing and marketing, all within the complex network of governance mechanisms.

6. We are looking for potential synergies between tourism, heritage and fisheries; commercial and recreational fisheries; and fisheries and food security. We are combining new community-engaged research findings with existing, often overlooked knowledge from interviews with seniors and other community residents

and mobilizing it using community radio broadcasts, theatre, visual art, photography, meetings and workshops.

7. "We are seeking to bring the related discussions into kitchens, onto boats, into town halls, museums and theatres, into the university and policy arenas. We are working with community leaders to build models for alternative, sustainable futures. "

(From mid-term report by B. Neis and J. Oliver)

### Heritage and Sustainable Rural Development

When I joined the CURRA in 2008, I had recently come from a five-year stint with the Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, where I had been working on a "Cultural Blueprint" to guide the province's investment in culture.

[<http://www.tcr.gov.nl.ca/tcr/publications/2006/culturalplan2006.pdf>]

My colleague and I worked with a "new" definition of culture that included arts and heritage, both built and intangible. We were working from an international definition of culture as proposed by scholars such as Charles Guillaumin (1988:p.41) that is representative of the holistic approach to culture:

*"the totality of the knowledge and practices both intellectual and material of each of the particular groups of a society, and of a society itself as a whole. From food to dress, from household techniques to industrial techniques, from forms of politeness to mass media, from work rhythm to the learning of family rules, all human practices, all invented and manufactured materials are concerned and constitute in their relationship, culture".*

Culture provides a sense of place for rural communities, a link with the past, but it also has through its traditions and values, a crucial role in defining modern rural society, Arts and culture contribute to building a sense of local identity and they influence the confidence with which rural communities tackle their own problems, co-operate with each other in their social and economic organizations and adapt their collective approach to modern needs.

In economic terms, culture contributes directly and indirectly to the creation and retention of employment in rural areas and presents an image of an area as a basis for tourism and business investment. Traditional and modern crafts represent a significant and growing sector of the small business economy in many rural areas and provide opportunities for people to generate income from their personal resources and skills. The preservation and enhancement of local culture is also a feature of rural areas that has potential for generating new kinds of economic activity. In recent years the film industry and tourism videos presented by the province's Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation have not only generated

local economic activity but has promoted the image and attractions of rural areas for tourism purposes.

The definition of heritage was confined largely to architecture until about ten years ago when UNESCO stated:

*“having at one time referred exclusively to the monumental remains of cultures, heritage as a concept has gradually come to include new categories such as the intangible, ethnographic, industrial heritage as well as natural heritage. The concept of heritage in our time accordingly is an open one, reflecting living culture every bit as much as that of the past.”* (UNESCO, 2001)

Heritage is manifested through its tangible and intangible products. All aspects that provide us with information about rural people's lifestyles, beliefs, ethics and aesthetics, ways of using their land and of living with their surrounding environment, habits and customs, architecture and arts (fine, applied and performing), songs and festivities, rituals and myths, are included. Michel Colardelle (2007)

This is a radical, dynamic and all-embracing definition of heritage and it opens new horizons, giving rural heritage the place in cultural policy it deserves and connecting it to all aspects of rural development.

My colleague and I recommended a new way of thinking about the culture of the province. Previously in this government, culture meant “arts” and heritage meant “architecture”. We suggested that the cultural division of the department have a director of arts and a director of heritage and that the mandate of the Heritage Foundation of NL be broadened to encompass people’s intangible cultural heritage—skills, knowledge and traditions passed down from previous generations and flowing into future generations. We saw this heritage as the basis for community pride and social cohesion.

### **Rural Sustainability**

Since the 1990s it has been widely recognized that a community-based approach to rural development is essential for achieving sustainability. Community-based development planning is important for two reasons: firstly to avoid conflicts and tensions that are likely to occur if local development is not compatible with the community's desires and objectives, especially when outside interests take control of investment and economic activity; and secondly because local pride and confidence is seen as an important precursor to local cohesion, regeneration and sustainable economic development.

In many of the coastal communities in the region covered by our CURRA, small heritage properties are that focal point of local pride and confidence. Many of them have some museum artifacts as well as small collections of archival materials such

as photographs, sound and video recordings and manuscripts. For example, Trout River, a fishing community on the Gulf, has three buildings that help tell the story of that community's struggle to survive over the past two hundred years. Fishing, subsistence farming and lately tourism have all played their part. Local entrepreneurs rely heavily on tourism for 8-10 weeks in the summer to supplement their family incomes. Handcrafted items homemade preserves and local cuisine form a large portion of their tourism offerings, along with the songs, tunes and stories that are featured in their summer arts festival, Passing the Time in Trout River. Guided walks through the town focus on the fishing and farming heritage of previous and current residents.

The same picture, more or less, can be painted of all the coastal communities in the area. The local heritage committee is often the keeper of the community's history and the driver of community gatherings, celebrations and tourism activities. These committees have enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers who work long hours to get funding, develop interpretation plans and activities, maintain and operate heritage buildings, conduct oral history projects and train and supervise students who are employed for the summer to implement the heritage committee's programming.

Employment programs for students and others, such as the Targeted Wage Initiative for Older Workers have proved to be very useful resources for heritage committees throughout the Northern Peninsula to provide employment for their people and reduce somewhat the flow of outmigration. In the case of the older workers, many of whom were previously engaged in the fishery, this employment has become an essential part of the family income. The heritage committees benefit from the local knowledge and expertise of these people in developing interesting and informative experiences for visitors who pay admission to interpretive programs and purchase locally-produced products, thereby adding to the local economy.

Local heritage committees contribute enormously to the sense of pride and community cohesion necessary for communities to thrive and survive in uncertain economic climates. The celebration of a common heritage creates a positive climate in a community and gives people hope that things can be better and that they can make it through until they are. Several of the heritage organizations within the Network have festivals that help confirm community identity and draw people together to celebrate their songs and stories and to have a scuff and scuff with their friends and families. Come-Home-Year events, often organized by the local "heritage committee" draw expatriates back from Ontario and Alberta to their former homes to bond with their friends and relatives and to introduce new generations to their cultural roots. The fact that tourists also attend these events and add a few dollars to the local economy is a plus.

Canadian tourism studies indicate that heritage tourism is on the rise. What the new lingo calls "the cultural explorer" is becoming the most prevalent visitor to Gros Morne National Park, which is the gateway to heritage sites and attractions throughout the entire Northern Peninsula. Strengthening the heritage organizations

within the communities makes good economic sense. I'd like to quote two paragraphs from a recent publication by the Canadian Tourism Commission:

There will be an increase in the absolute number of Canadians who will be in the market for heritage activities between 2011 and 2026, from an estimated 2.6 million now to about 3.7 million in 2026. Canada's likely share of this market – those who will seek heritage experiences and take leisure trips within Canada – is also expected to grow from 2.2 million to 3.0 million.

These growth rates are *higher* than the population growth rate of Canada as a whole, primarily because heritage activities tend to appeal to older people and to those who are born outside Canada. Just as the older end of the age spectrum will increase as a proportion of the total population over the next two decades, so too will the market for heritage tourism---Canadian Tourism Commission

### **GNP Heritage Network**

There has been considerable interest among multiple groups in our region related to the idea of developing a Virtual Museum for the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. The virtual exhibits would include photographs and manuscripts, sound- and video-recordings of interviews and performances as well as customs and traditions, maps and virtual walking tours through heritage buildings and cultural landscapes. Communities within the entire region would make their own heritage contribution to the development of a comprehensive story of the culture of the Northern Peninsula. Such a museum would help to meet the CURRA goal of improving access to information on fisheries heritage, getting it into the school curriculum, and more tightly integrated into outreach and tourism initiatives throughout the research area.

I am a folklorist and archivist by training, and have a great interest in what is now known as intangible cultural heritage. As part of my work as community coordinator for the CURRA, I have been providing advice and assistance to many of the local community heritage groups who have requested training for interpretative staff at heritage properties and in relation to cataloging, doing oral history interviews, marketing and so on. As I visited the different sites, I saw their collections and listened to the challenges they faced in caring for their holdings, maintaining their buildings, attracting visitors, training summer staff and seeking professional development. The idea of a network of like-minded organizations began to surface.

Meanwhile, the Red Ochre Development Board had been thinking about joint marketing initiatives for the heritage buildings within its jurisdiction. The idea of a Virtual Museum with virtual exhibits from various communities had been discussed with Fred Campbell, the previous CURRA community coordinator, who was very involved in the specifics of digital communications and community radio through his company Ryakuga. After engaging with the community heritage organizations and the two development boards on the Northern Peninsula, it became apparent that the various community organizations were at very different levels of readiness

for engagement in digital exhibitions. Some were nearly there, but some were only beginning to catalogue their artifacts and arrange and describe their archival collections. There was no consistency from the perspective of governance, best practices, preservation or conservation. The best approach seemed to be to form a network and assess what was needed to bring everyone up to speed.

Working with the Red Ochre Board, we accessed funding for a workshop on the Great Northern Peninsula that provided some heritage training and resulted in a collective decision to establish the *Great Northern Peninsula Heritage Network*. In the short term, the focus of this group is to strengthen the heritage capacity within heritage organizations in the region. In the longer term, if they decide this is appropriate, the Network will work with a variety of partners, such as the Red Ochre and Nordic Economic Development Boards, Parks Canada, and the CURRA to develop a proposal to Canadian Heritage for funding for the Virtual Museum.

Shortly after this initial meeting and decision to form the GNP Heritage Network, a call for proposals came from the Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation for a 3-year pilot project for a “cluster” of heritage organizations within a region to work together to “improve their operations and services to the public and build their capacity overall.” This three-year pilot was to determine the effectiveness of providing professional heritage services and staff at a regional level-- a test-case that will help the government decide how they are going to invest money to help local small heritage organizations throughout the province. It seemed tailor-made for us. The Red Ochre Board and I worked quickly to submit a proposal within the very short deadline. Our proposal was successful and we found ourselves with the resources to consolidate and move forward (205,000 over 3 years).

The RED Ochre Regional Board, and the CURRA Community Coordinator are the project leaders, working in conjunction with the Pilot Advisory Committee, composed of the Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, the Museum Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Archives and the Association of Heritage Industries. Other partners in this initiative include the Nordic Economic Development Corporation, the Viking Trail Tourism Association, and Parks Canada.

#### **Cluster Pilot Project Objectives:**

- To enhance standards and best practices in the operation of community museums and archives and to enhance the visitor experience;
- To develop individual and cluster strategic plans and to provide full-time professional staff to help implement these plans;
- To build the capacity as a whole by undertaking collaborative projects, focusing messages and improving communication among the group;
- To increase the long-term sustainability of the organizations

### **Pilot Project Activities:**

#### **Phase 1** (November 2010 – May 2011)

Heritage Collaborative Inc., a prestigious firm of heritage consultants, was hired to conduct a complete review of the current policies, procedures and visitor experience of individual organizations, and an assessment of the Cluster as a whole, in order to enhance their best practices, build capacity as individual organizations, develop individual strategic plans for each participating institution, and encourage collaboration in marketing, programming and operations amongst all members.

A series of collaborative meetings and individual site visits was undertaken during the winter and spring, resulting in an extensive assessment of each member of the Heritage Cluster project. The consultant developed individual Action Plans with each participating organization, as well as a Cluster Action Plan for the whole group and a project baseline for project evaluation, which will be implemented in Phase 3. A draft report was submitted last week to the Cluster Advisory Committee. The report includes assessments and specific recommendations for key actions for participating organizations, including a section on standards and best practices to ensure that all participants achieve quality standards of governance, interpretation, programming, preservation and conservation in their institutions.

#### **Phase 2** (2011/12 and 2012/13)

A Heritage Development Specialist was contracted to work with the Cluster, facilitating implementation of the action plans. Regina Rumbolt has been hired and has begun work on Phase 2. Her work will continue with individual organizations and the Cluster as a whole until 2013.

#### **Phase 3** (Summer 2013)

A review will be undertaken at the end of the project to evaluate and report on outcomes.

### **Project Heritage Organizations:**

This pilot project involves 13 community heritage organizations spanning from St. Anthony to Trout River, the largest distinctive geographical region on the island of Newfoundland, with a population of approximately 8850 people over 17,500 km. More than 150,000 tourists come to the area annually, mainly visiting Gros Morne and L'Anse aux Meadows. Twenty per cent of the people are employed in the tourism industry.

They are:

- [Trout River Heritage Committee \(Trout River\)](#)
- [Woody Point Heritage Committee \(Woody Point\)](#)
- [Bonne Bay Cottage Hospital Heritage Committee \(Norris Point\)](#)
- [Dr. Henry Payne Museum Heritage Committee \(Cow Head\)](#)

- [Nurse Myra Bennett House \(Daniel's Harbour\)](#)
- [Torrent River Heritage Committee \(Hawke's Bay\)](#)
- [Big Droke Pre-Historic Cultures Foundation \(Bird Cove\)](#)
- [Port au Choix Heritage Committee \(Port au Choix\)](#)
- [French Shore Historical Society \(Conche\)](#)
- [The Green Moose National Heritage Interpretation Centre \(Roddickton\)](#)
- [Town of Englee Heritage Committee \(Englee\)](#)
- [Ashton House Heritage Committee \(Bide Arm\)](#)
- [Grenfell Historical Society \(St. Anthony\)](#)

Also included in the Cluster are two Parks Canada Sites – [L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site](#) and [Port au Choix National Historic Site](#), both of which will provide in-kind support including office space and technical expertise.

### **Future Challenges**

The thirteen organizations indicated that their expectations were that the Cluster Pilot Project would be able to assist them with developing opportunities in three main areas: funding, marketing and leadership. These three goals were recurring and common across all steps of the project and to all sites. As the Heritage Network is developed, it will be important that the individual sites feel that these expectations are being fulfilled.

More work needs to be done in consolidating the structure of the Heritage Network, since recent research in this area shows that successful networks are characterized by their ability to work together and maintain an organizational framework over the long term. Stronger members will need to stay involved in order to support and encourage weaker members.

The operational and meeting requirements of the Network need to be identified. A regular series of meetings that would include a day of professional development or training and a day of organizational meetings is essential. Because of the distance encompassed by the Network, these meetings will have to be carefully planned in strategic locations.

As part of the long-term development for the Network, the consultants have proposed that the Network move to a more independent status within the next five years with the formation of a social enterprise. A social enterprise is defined as a business venture operated by non-profit organizations, whether they be cooperatives, societies or charities. These businesses sell goods or provide service in the market for the purpose of creating a blended return on investment, both financial and social. Their profits are returned to the business or to a social purpose, rather than maximizing profits to shareholders. Social enterprises are established to sustain the organizations financially, while also bringing positive changes to surrounding communities and people. Any profit that is made from the



social enterprise organization is invested back into the program or used to bring about community benefit.

The proposed social enterprise would consist of one organization where individual sites would become members providing they meet the required standards. The enterprise would then be guided by the purpose of mutually beneficial policies, including marketing and product development. The enterprise would develop these policies as well as strategies for funding opportunities. The enterprise would also encompass any other core actions development that is needed by the Network. This provides a way for sites to develop collective procedures, uniting all the sites in the Network, aiding promotional and marketing development.

At present, the consultants, the Heritage Specialist and the Advisory Committee are discussing the recommendations and the budget that will be required to carry them out. Collaboration with other government departments, such as the provincial Departments of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development and Human Resources and Employment will be necessary for the long-term success of the project. Eventually, the Department of Canadian Heritage will need to become involved in the development of a Virtual Museum Exhibit for the entire GNP Heritage Network.

Thank-you.