

## Discussion: Tourism alone cannot save the outports.

Remote outports face monumental challenges in tourism development. There are simply not enough visitors and the season is too short for tourism alone to help the outports fully overcome the cod moratorium. Even communities that have invested in tourism and heritage preservation, like Tilting, Burin, Raleigh, and Burgeo, offer a remarkably limited number of ways for travelers to spend money. An outport with a heritage center, informative signage, restored infrastructure, and four-star lodging may still face declining year-round population and dwindling services. A successful tourism project does not imply that the outport in which it is located is rebounding as a result. Before the moratorium, cod fishing generated less revenue than other fisheries, oil extraction, or tourism. However, the cod fishery provided significantly more jobs, especially in remote areas of Newfoundland, and these jobs cannot all be replaced by tourism-related employment. This underscores the need reported by many interviewees that tourism should only be tackled as one component of an overall outport revitalization vision.

Newfoundland's modern tourism industry is still quite young and faces some important challenges related to staffing, perceptions, and funding. Out-migration limits the availability of tourism workers, many of whom are now either under-trained students or highly motivated retirees. Funding to hire staff is often grant-based, which limits the means of sustaining long-term skilled positions. And though perceptions are changing, there is still a lack of buy-in as to tourism's ability to contribute to community revitalization, even on a local scale. One planner for a federal community development agency said that the next phase of tourism development in Newfoundland needs to be about building the capacity of locals and tourism providers to grow their industry.

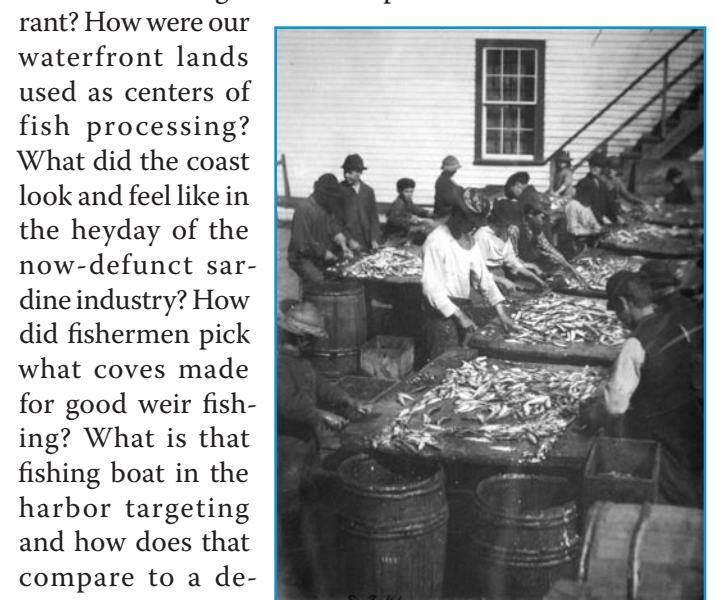
Newfoundlanders, like people the world over who have been devastated by natural resource decline, invest tremendous hope and money into tourism, so determined are they that it is the panacea to all their troubles. But if tourism is not totally effective, at the province-wide scale, in bringing in the economic return it promises, is it a failure? The answer, from many people encountered during the course of this study, is a vehement no. Tourism has given Newfoundlanders a chance to remember themselves, and even to reinvent themselves and their communities into the future they want to achieve.



## Applications to Maine

Communities that depend heavily on one fishery are deeply and often traumatically affected by downturns. While the conclusions drawn here about the impact of tourism on Newfoundland outports affected by the cod moratorium cannot be generalized across the province, Newfoundland's experience with tourism is applicable and relevant to Downeast Maine.

Maine's coastal tourism industry already relies on the fishing village as a principal backdrop in its marketing of the region. It is often the icons of maritime heritage (i.e., the salty fisherman) that draw visitors to the Maine coast. Most tourists will eat Maine lobster, many will visit a maritime museum, take part in a whale-watching excursion, stroll a beach, or visit a lighthouse. But the amount, diversity, and authenticity of maritime experiences that Maine tourists can currently explore is not equal to the actual depth of Maine's maritime and fisheries heritage. How was that lobster caught and transported alive to the restaurant? How were our waterfront lands used as centers of fish processing? What did the coast look and feel like in the heyday of the now-defunct sardine industry? How did fishermen pick what coves made for good weir fishing? What is that fishing boat in the harbor targeting and how does that compare to a decade ago? What's it like to work a scallop dragger? A herring seiner? A lobster boat? These are just some of the thousands of questions that would captivate tourists, highlight important cultural history, and celebrate the life and work of modern fishing families.



Maine has an opportunity to increase focus on marine heritage for achieving community aspirations and developing tourism potential. Maine tourism providers and brokers of culture can learn a great deal from Newfoundland. There is no single Newfoundland model that can be replicated in Maine's coastal regions, but potential exists in the give and take relationship between community values informing tourism development and effective tourism development feeding into community and cultural aspirations.

Maine has an opportunity to increase focus on marine heritage for achieving community aspirations and developing tourism potential. Maine tourism providers and brokers of culture can learn a great deal from Newfoundland. There is no single Newfoundland model that can be replicated in Maine's coastal regions, but potential exists in the give and take relationship between community values informing tourism development and effective tourism development feeding into community and cultural aspirations.



## Sustainable Tourism Programming at Maine Sea Grant

Maine Sea Grant works with partners throughout the state to foster sustainable tourism development that highlights and protects the region's natural and cultural assets. Programs include the Downeast Fisheries Trail, working waterfronts and coastal access, healthy coastal swim beach monitoring, recreational fishing surveys, tourism product development, and education programs. Maine Sea Grant strives to create links on the waterfront between traditional marine uses (such as fisheries) and the rapidly growing interest in nature and heritage tourism opportunities. Natalie Springuel, Maine Sea Grant's lead tourism extension associate, represents tourism stakeholders from the Downeast region on the Maine Governor's Task Force on Nature-based Tourism. A Master Maine Guide for sea kayaking and recreation, Springuel also chairs the Vacationland Resources Committee of the Downeast Resource Conservation and Development Council (whose mission is to foster sustainable tourism Downeast) and has long served as an advisor to the Maine Island Trail Association. Springuel is based at College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, in the heart of the state's most popular tourism destination, where she has co-taught a course on the Human Ecology of Newfoundland since 2007.



## Fishing for Tourists: The Newfoundland Cod Crisis and the Role of Tourism in Community Revitalization: Lessons for Maine

Funding provided by:



Maine Sea Grant supports marine science research and outreach activities to promote the understanding, sustainable use, and conservation of ocean and coastal resources. Based at the University of Maine, our coastwide program works in partnership with marine industries, scientists, government agencies, private organizations, and a wide range of marine resource users. For more information on the activities of the Maine Sea Grant College Program at the University of Maine, please call 207.581.1435 or visit our Web site at [www.seagrants.umaine.edu](http://www.seagrants.umaine.edu).

Design by Kathryn Tenga-González, Maine Sea Grant; All photos Natalie Springuel except sardine cleaning: Gulf of Maine Cod Project, NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries; Courtesy of National Archives.

*In complying with the letter and spirit of applicable laws and pursuing its own goals of diversity, the University of Maine shall not discriminate on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, including transgender status or gender expression, national origin, citizenship status, age, disability, or veteran's status in employment, education, and all other areas of the University System. The University provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities upon request. Questions and complaints about discrimination in any area of the University should be directed to the Director of Equal Opportunity, the University of Maine, 5754 North Stevens Hall, Room 101, Orono, ME 04469-5754, telephone (207) 581-1226, TTY (207) 581-9484.*

## Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thanks to all the Newfoundlanders who willingly shared their stories and aspirations with me, not to mention the countless cups of tea. In respect for your privacy, I have intentionally attempted to report here in such a way that you will remain anonymous, but you know who you are and so do I. Thanks also to the fine folks at Memorial University of Newfoundland and the Center for Newfoundland Studies.



# Marine RESEARCH in focus

April 2010 / Vol. 5

## Fishing for Tourists: The Newfoundland Cod Crisis and the Role of Tourism in Community Revitalization: Lessons for Maine

Natalie Springuel, Maine Sea Grant

### Introduction

Tourism is the world's largest industry. Rural areas experiencing declines in natural resource-based economies are looking to tourism as a development opportunity. One such area is Newfoundland, Canada, where a moratorium on cod fishing that affected all aspects of society gave rise to a modern tourism industry. The period following the moratorium offers a finite timeframe for analyzing the success of tourism development in a rural, coastal location devastated by the loss of a natural resource. This report documents the results of research conducted in 2008 to evaluate the impact of the 1992 cod moratorium on Newfoundland's rural coastal villages ("outports"), and the role of tourism in community revitalization efforts.

Newfoundland and Maine have a common history of European settlement based on marine resource exploitation in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean. Newfoundland's experience developing tourism in the face of significant economic and social changes can inform tourism development in coastal Maine, where reliance on a single fishery (lobster) mirrors Newfoundland's pre-cod-collapse economy and culture. Findings from this research may be especially relevant to Downeast Maine (coastal Hancock and Washington counties), where regional history, geography, and fisheries heritage are similar to Newfoundland.



Marine Research in focus provides updates on marine research for coastal communities. This fact sheet was produced by Maine Sea Grant with programing support provided by University of Maine Cooperative Extension.



MSG-E-10-06  
NA06OAR4170108  
300

Printed on recycled paper



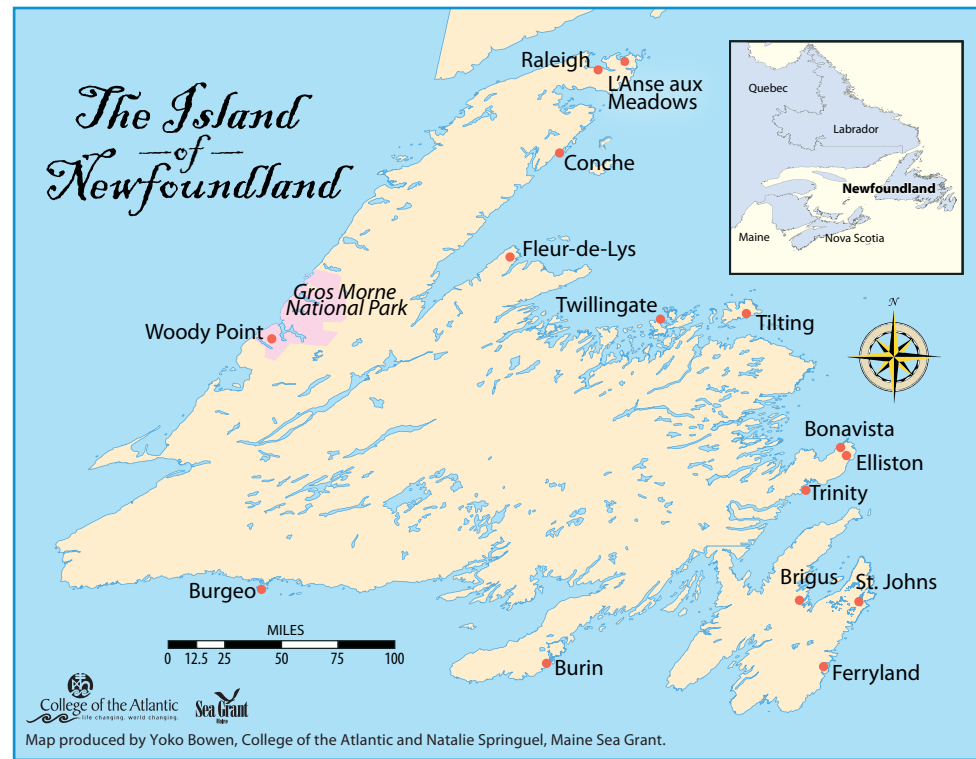
## Background

In 1992, Canadian provincial and federal government identified tourism as one of the most important opportunities for Newfoundland's future. Heavy investment in tourism has been targeted to destinations such as Gros Morne, Trinity, and L'Anse Aux Meadows, with a goal of building select, world-class destinations that would attract other businesses. However, this study assessed the impacts—emotional, political, and economic—of tourism investment in Newfoundland's more remote coastal villages, because those are the areas most applicable to Downeast Maine.

## Methods

Newfoundlanders helped identify approximately 20 outports that were affected by fisheries decline and where tourism was being offered, or had already emerged, as an option for the future. The research combined traditional academic methods with personal engagement in experiential tourism using four primary approaches:

- First impressions, a fairly common approach to tourism asset evaluation, used a standardized series of observations (on factors ranging from quality and availability of services to presence of government support) to rapidly assess the “tourism readiness” of a particular area, town, or project within a few hours of arrival.
- Semi-formal interviews, conducted with about three dozen individuals, including current and former fishermen and fish plant workers, marine and heritage tour operators and business owners, local and provincial officials, community development agents, teachers and professors, staff at tourism venues such as museums and visitor centers, and other residents, about their experiences with fisheries decline and the role of tourism in community revitalization.
- Opportunistic conversations with nearly everyone encountered were directed toward topic questions.
- Observations of themes, experiences, and products highlighted by communities and tourism providers—in boat tours, community events and festivals, stores, visitor centers, and theater productions—informed assessment of the impact of tourism in Newfoundland outports.



The Island of Newfoundland, with select outports and towns included in this study.

## Results

More than 100 conversations about the research topic, including multiple two-hour interviews and scores of 15-minute to one-hour spontaneous conversations at a variety of venues (including campgrounds, accommodations, restaurants, retail shops, visitor centers, heritage centers, museums, boat rides, and whale watch trips), coupled with extensive secondary research, resulted in a multi-faceted understanding of the complex role of tourism in Newfoundland's coastal communities since the cod fishing moratorium.

This research has shown that tourism will never replace the economic and social role of the cod fishery, however tourism has contributed to revitalization in a number of communities. And while challenges remain, the intent of this work is not to identify ways for Newfoundland's tourism industry to improve, but to present the positive effects of tourism and how other places, such as Maine, can learn from the Newfoundland experience.



The greatest impact of tourism is not on the local economy, but on community pride and the social fabric that keeps communities vibrant. Two key themes emerged: community aspirations and values come before tourism, and the importance of preserving fishing heritage.

## Community aspirations and values come before tourism

In the outports targeted for this work—all of which reported an aging population and diminished services, and all having been identified by Newfoundlanders as having some tourism development—most interviewees were eager to reverse the downward spiral of community decline. Residents have engaged in efforts to revitalize their community, in several cases with outside help. Their approaches vary considerably, although festivals, events, and heritage preservation figure prominently, and all share one thing in common: the goal of maintaining a viable, livable community. The definitions of “viable” and “livable” are highly variable and subjective, as indicated by the following meanings observed:

- year-round employment
- renewed sense of place
- strong family presence
- enough of a tax base to maintain services such as the post office and the elementary school
- jobs and opportunity for youth
- freedom from the threat of outport closure (when the entire population relocates)

Many communities began by identifying a desired future, and the characteristics that would make them viable, and then developed smaller initiatives to achieve their goals. Some



of the examples reported include: revitalizing a downtown district or Main Street; having opportunities for community members to become engaged in local activities, such as theatre or music; preserving and illustrating fisheries heritage; providing reasons for out-migrants to come home regularly to visit and possibly stay; and creating jobs to keep youth and others of working age in Newfoundland.

In nearly all cases, the drive behind such projects, initiatives, and events was a community aspiration or goal, mainly to keep the outport viable in some form, but the outcome often included something that was appealing to visitors as well as residents. A few shops or restaurants on Main Street, theatre and music festivals, a sense of fisheries history and culture, summer homes to buy or rent, tourism venues with local students running the information booth, etc. When communities engaged in projects that improved their own prospects for the future, regardless of whether they were tourism projects or not, the communities often became more appealing as tourism destinations because they have assets that visitors, as well as locals, enjoy.

## Heritage Preservation

One of the chief concerns of outport decline is the loss of Newfoundland's cultural heritage. Well before the moratorium, Newfoundland government policy united tourism planning with cultural preservation. Likewise, artists, writers, crafters, and other “brokers of culture” have contributed a body of work that highlights Newfoundland and outport heritage with pride and appreciation, fueling a strong sense of place and re-enforcing a nationalist movement while also producing experiences sought by tourists. This feedback loop between tourism and culture has enabled Newfoundland to protect important assets (many of them being fisheries-related), strengthen the social fabric of outports, and emerge as a leader in heritage tourism.

Conducting an inventory of heritage assets helped several communities discover their distinguishing characteristics. For example, Elliston discovered they had more root cellars than any other area; Fleur de Lys found unique archaeological features;



and Conche identified a unique French history. But fisheries heritage, alongside whale- and iceberg-watching, is perhaps Newfoundland's most notable theme in tourism attractions. Newfoundland's fishery heritage spans centuries, countries, and social classes. It informs art, theatre, literature, natural history interpretation, and social commentary. Local celebrations, heritage centers, and historic sites commemorate important fishing places, families, and events.

Fisheries heritage was visible in nearly every outport visited, largely because much of the work of the cod fishery (gutting, cleaning, salting, drying, storing, and later processing in fish plants), occurred at the edge of the sea, on land. No longer needed after the moratorium (and already in decline due to modernization before the moratorium), traditional fisheries-related infrastructure (stages, stores, twine lofts, etc.) that defined the waterfront for hundreds of years began to crumble into the sea. Likely thousands have been lost forever, but the remaining structures are now the target of government-funded restoration efforts. According to one interviewee, the built landscape is a cultural manifestation of



place, and protecting and restoring it is protecting and restoring Newfoundlanders themselves.

But heritage tourism is not just about the built environment. It is first and foremost about people. Many fishermen and fish plant workers have maintained their livelihood by becoming an integral part of the tourism experience as guides, business owners, boat captains, etc. Inevitably, they bring their life's work, their being, into what they deliver for the tourist. These things cannot be measured but are of great importance to outporters. As one tour guide explained, she

never imagined anyone would care about her work at a now-closed fish plant, but telling stories to visitors who seem to care gives her something to smile about every summer day.

While some of those interviewed reported concern about the blending of tourism and culture, fearing that the commoditization of their heritage would result in a caricature of their values and traditions, most felt the benefits of cultural preservation through tourism outweighed the risks.

*“We are proud. We are proud of our heritage and our history. This place is really beautiful and it feels good when people tell us they love it... It makes us proud of what we have, who we are... What is going to happen in ten years? I will be a senior then. We need people to come in. We need tourism. We need people to buy houses and live here year round. We are proud when people want to come here...”*

—Woman whose family has lived in the same outport for generations. She was formerly involved in giving tours of a restored fisheries premises and the whole outport.

