



Heritage Foundation
Newfoundland & Labrador

#009



CRAFTS IN
CARTWRIGHT:
BEARPAWS,
DICKIES, AND
ROMATIS

EDITED BY TERRA BARRETT

ORAL HISTORY ROADSHOW SERIES

CRAFTS IN CARTWRIGHT: BEARPAWS, DICKIES, AND ROMATIKS

Research, interviews and editing by: Terra Barrett

Oral History Roadshow Series #009



Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
Intangible Cultural Heritage Office
St. John's, NL, Canada

Layout / design by Jessie Meyer

2018

INTRODUCTION

The resources are here. We have a massive amount of wood resources and other resources and really if you lose that culture and lose that ability it is sad in my mind. There are so many things that you can make for yourself and do for yourself that mean a lot in your day to day living. - Woody Lethbridge

As noted by Woody Lethbridge, Labrador is rich in resources and material. Cartwright is located on the eastern side of the entrance to Sandwich Bay on the South Coast of Labrador. This area has a longstanding tradition of land use with Captain George Cartwright establishing a fish and fur trading business in 1775. The community of Cartwright is now accessible by road from the southeast coast and central and western Labrador. Prior to the construction of these two roads in 2002 and 2009 the community was only accessible by plane, boat, or snowmobile and dog team in the winter.

Cartwright, like many southern Labrador communities, has a long history with craft. As mentioned by community members throughout the book there has been a tradition of working hard, making do, and creating the things that were needed. This included clothing, quilts for bed, rugs for the floor, hats, mitts, and boots, and dickies to shelter you from the wind. They also carved things like axe and ulu handles, and komatik and grub boxes. Many of the crafts in Labrador served a very practical purpose such as komatiks and snowshoes for travelling across the land. While many crafts made in Cartwright today serve a practical function there are many others that are made which serve a more decorative and aesthetic purpose. These include sealskin decorations, earrings, and napkin rings, cross stitch pieces, and hand carved wooden dog teams and komatiks.



Editor Terra Barrett in a Grenfell coat. Embroidery can be seen on the cuffs and pockets.

This history of craft production in the community is also tied to the larger history of craft production in Labrador which includes the Grenfell Mission. This mission, which was dedicated to providing medical and social services, also developed an industrial department in order to encourage the craft industry. Local people, particularly women, were encouraged to produce crafts such as hooked rugs and embroidered coats in order to raise money for the mission and for their families. While community members are no longer producing crafts for Grenfell Handicrafts, many people sell their products locally, to tourists, and online through platforms like Facebook. There has been an increase in crafting for pleasure

but the self sufficient nature of Labradorians can still be seen in their homes and outbuildings today.

In this booklet you will see the work of just some of the craft producers in Cartwright. During my time in the community I attended an open craft night with community members, as well as a snowshoe workshop which included both youth and seniors. Walking through the homes of the people I interviewed I could see layers of craft. There were grass baskets made aunts and mothers, woodwork by brothers and fathers, and grub and komatik boxes passed down through families. There were examples of craft across cultures with Innu snowshoes found alongside an Inuit drum. There was craft for pleasure and craft from necessity. But most of all there was Craft in Cartwright: Bearpaws, Dickies, and Komatiks.

Special thanks to:

Ola Anderson, Gladys Hill Burdett, Josh Burdett, Minnie Clark, Doreen Clarke, Susan Curl, Olive Davis, Rupert Davis, Charles Dyson, Alice Lethbridge, Woody Lethbridge, Nita Martin, Sheldon Morris, Judy Pardy, Maggie Toomashie, and Shirley Tremblett.

Terra Barrett

CRAFTSPEOPLE

Ola Anderson, originally from Makovik, has been teaching in Cartwright for twenty-seven years. Ola explained that a lot of the crafts that she learned came from her Aunt Ellie Winters in Makovik and she learned through observation. Ola attends Tuesday craft nights and has made mitts, coin purses, and a special pair of moccasins for her graduation.

Describing her moccasins Ola says:

“I made a pair of moccasins out of a piece of material that a residential school survivor gave me. So I looked at the material and I said to myself, ‘What can I do with this to make it meaningful for my convocation?’ I wanted something traditional to wear. So they have meaning because I did a lot of work, a lot of research on indigenous knowledge within Labrador, within all the aboriginal groups in Labrador. So my moccasins have a residential school component to them. My pattern is from my Aunt Ellie Winters in Makovik. I taught myself how to bead just from watching Aunt Ellie, from learning from her. I put an ulu on the front of it to represent a tool that the Inuit used in their culture, so that would be my culture, the Inuit culture and I went to Norway this fall with a lady from the Labrador Institute by the



Moccasins made by Ola Anderson.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

name of Dr. Sylvia Moore. She took me to Norway to study place-based learning and outdoor education and how it is common to us in Labrador. So, I bought some binding over there and I used those two different patterns of binding to put on my moccasins. Then I have the colours, I beaded some work up around the top of my moccasin that had the Labrador colours, the blue, green, and white and then I topped it off with green string or rope and white tassels to represent the Labrador colours. So, these moccasins have a special meaning for me. It encompasses how we used our observations skills in watching our parents and grandparents do crafting and it taught me patience and finally the indigenous knowledge in Labrador is being recognized.”



Sealskin and fur mittens with ulu inlay made by Ola Anderson.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

Doreen Clarke grew up in Cartwright where she lived until the age of twelve when she moved to Goose Bay. She returned to Cartwright in 1996 and said she won't be leaving any time soon. As Doreen works seasonally as the manager/wharfinger at the Northern Ranger dock from June to December she finds crafting to be an excellent winter pastime as it is “fun to do, passes the time away and keeps [her] busy”. She sources most of her material outside of the community from places like Terry's Tent in Goose Bay, and Michaels and Walmart in St. John's. She mostly sells locally and advertises on Facebook.



Cross stitch tote bag made by Doreen Clarke. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Stained glass pattern knit mittens by Doreen Clarke. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Nordic Santa cross stitch by Doreen Clarke with Gitta pattern in background.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

The first craft Doreen picked up was crocheting. She was taught the basics by her aunt and then learned new patterns and techniques on her own. She likes to learn new methods as she tends to get tired of doing the same thing over again. After crocheting Doreen took up quilting and has done quite a number over the years. There was one year in particular she remembers completing seven quilts. Doreen has made them for her siblings and family members but doesn't make many anymore as her children are not really into the quilts. She has crocheted afghans for all her grandchildren and made Labrador style dickies of cotton duct, Labrador coloured trim, and rabbit fur hoods. Doreen

has also made a pair of slippers for one of her grandchildren but she doesn't do much in the way of crafting for her children and grandchildren as they mostly tend to wear store bought items. She said, "I very seldom keep what I make. I would rather do it to sell or give away."

Cross stitch is another craft which Doreen practices and is something she does quite regularly although she is quick to clarify she uses patterns for everything! Most of these patterns come from a



Map of Labrador made from Labrador tartan on cotton duct in Doreen Clarke's craft room. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

company called Gitta's and include northern inspired scenes with dog teams, seals, polar bears, caribou and Inuit people ice fishing, building igloos, and warming by the fire. Doreen said it would be great to be able to find some new cross stitch patterns as she has crafted almost all of the northern patterns released by Gitta's. One of the other patterns she is working on but admits she might never finish is a large Nordic Santa standing in the woods among animals. Doreen also sews handcrafted bags which she started sewing for Christmas. Recently the main store in the community stopped using plastic bags and so Doreen's handcrafted tote bags have gone over really well. Her bags are made with cotton duct and some have included Doreen's cross stitch work or maps of Labrador cut from Labrador tartan. Lately, during the winter months, Doreen has been knitting socks and mitts to sell during the Christmas season. She has also knit sweaters, and blankets as well as Christmas stockings which she donated to the Fall Fair. Doreen has crafted all kinds of products but the one thing she will not do is beading - she said, "It is too time consuming and I am just not interested in it."

Doreen comes from a family of crafters and said her mom and several sisters were knitters, crocheters, sewers, and rug hookers. She even has a sister who does clothing alterations. In discussing crafting Doreen said, "I'm a homebody. Crafting passes the time and gets your mind on what you are doing." She said she wouldn't want to be obligated to craft as it would be too much pressure but she really enjoys crafting during her spare time then donating or selling her crafts. Doreen enjoys crafting and is hoping to come up with new ideas in the fall for the upcoming crafting season.

Olive Davis, originally from Spotted Islands and Rocky Bay, moved to Cartwright at the age of six. She grew up surrounded by craft and making things by hand. She said that for years and years she had no interest in craft then all of sudden she started thinking about getting back into it, and she said, “Now I don’t have enough time to do all that is in my mind. I would like to do all kinds of things.” Olive has tried her hand at a variety of crafts, and has sold product through Facebook, sending one of her handmade bags all the way to Las Vegas.



T-shirt quilt sewn by Olive Davis for her daughter Hillary. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

As Olive remembers, “I think the first thing Mom taught me how to do was sew. She started off showing me how to make doll clothes and then she showed me how to make quilts and I’ll never forget it because I made a lot of quilts. They were all twin size quilts and before the summer was over all the beds had one of my quilts. They were all just squares, checkers. I remember how proud I felt because all the beds had my new blankets on them. I was twelve or thirteen. So that was the start of it.”

Along with sewing quilts, Olive has also sewn bags and hats.

She has made bags of various sizes from materials such as duffel, old leather jackets, canvas, sealskin, cotton duct, Canadian mist, and quilted fabric. Olive said she really wants to make a nice hat as she finds it difficult to find a well made hat in the area. Aside from sewing she also learned to knit and crochet from her mother but is not a frequent knitter due to carpal tunnel in her hands. Any techniques she needed beyond the basics she found in books, and lately on YouTube and Pinterest. Olive also enjoys learning new crafts and said, “I took a course on grasswork – I enjoyed doing that. I took a course on embroidery with duffels



Sealskin bag by Olive Davis. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

years ago and I was at that for a little bit.” Both courses were offered in the community like the snowshoe workshop Olive attended in winter 2018.

Aside from quilting, knitting, and crocheting, her mother, Violet Dyson, also sewed clothing pieces for the family and made boots. Olive describes the process of preparing the seal skin:

“Mom made skin boots. She used to make skin boots for all of us when we were kids. That was before we moved to Cartwright. After we moved here I don’t think we had much to do with skin boots. I know I had a pair, or a couple of pairs, but it wasn’t as necessary as when we were really little. I think when we were really tiny, before we moved here we all had a pair. That was it. They were waterproof and they were warm. A lot of work to making sealskin boots because the first thing she used to have to do was clean the sealskin by hand. She would have this big tub with a piece of board and the sealskin draped over it and then she had to scrape all the fat off and then they had to tie them in a frame, put them outside to dry for I don’t know how long before they could use the sealskin and they didn’t always smell very good. I remember I had a pair of skin boots and they were sealskin, I don’t know what kind of seal it was, but the boots didn’t smell very good.”



Grasswork cup and saucer by Olive Davis. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Olive Davis and Charles Dyson in Charles' shed. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

Other members of Olive's family have been involved in making crafts including her sister, Clem Williams, and her husband, Rupert Davis. Olive said that every now and then Rupert will get in a mood and start making something out of wood. Found around their home are carved chests, a komatik box, and model boats and planes created by her husband. Rupert's father, Rupert (Rupe) Davis, was also known for his woodworking and Olive can remember the wooden komatik and dogs he carved, "He made a lot of them. Everybody wanted one of them. I remember when we were kids going to the Easter Fair and the Fall Fair and everybody would be bidding on his father's dog teams so there

is a lot of them around somewhere. They didn't go cheap either. They were something everybody wanted."

Outside of her family Olive said that most people in the community craft, "Around here everybody is always making something. It seems like everybody is into some type of craft which is good because they need to keep the tradition alive and after a while we might all know how to make it again." When asked what other kinds of craft she would like to see taught in Cartwright she said, "I would love to learn how to make the dickie I never learned how to make a dickie yet. I'm hoping they will have that course in the future. I would like to learn how to make skin boots as well and the mitts, the sealskin mitts and the hats. I want to learn how to make them right."

While discussing her time spent crafting Olive explains, "I enjoy it. I really enjoy making things and especially if somebody else gets some pleasure out of it. Somebody likes it enough that they will use it or wear it or whatever – it makes me feel really good that I can do that. So goodness only knows what I will make next but I know I'll always be making something because I just enjoy making things. I don't have a lot of time for it but every chance I get I'm picking at something or looking at something that I'm going to make or do."

Charles Dyson grew up on Spotted Islands and in Rocky Bay before moving to Cartwright. He grew up in a family of ten children with his parents Violet and Esau Dyson. Charles recalls when the family would travel by boat between the two

communities and how the family would move all their gear. His sister Olive said her fondest memories are of the year she remembers living in Rocky Bay, and the two share memories of the move to Cartwright.



Komatik box made by Olive's husband, Rupert Davis. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

"I guess everybody had a komatik box because everybody needed one for getting their wood and whatever else. I mean they probably used them for when they went hunting and sealing and just moving back between their summer place and their winter place and put that on their komatik and used it as a seat and a grub box. So it was a very useful thing. I don't know why my husband made that one for me. We must have been talking about grub boxes but it was really nice that he made it for me." - Olive Davis



Left to right: spy bucket, tool for making a spile hole, and needles for knitting nets. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Left to right: sealskin boots, wooden tool for removing boots, and red grub bucket on top of komatik box. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

Olive said, "It was a different life all together. I can't believe we lived like that but we did. Mom always said, 'It was hard. A lot harder than it is now.' And it is because they had to do everything by hand like wash the clothes, everything. But she said, 'It never felt like it was hard.' That was all they knew."

Charles described how to use a spy bucket, explained how to make spileholes and mend nets, and demonstrated how to haul wood with a logging hook. While discussing how he knows how to use traditional tools and materials, and Olive does not, it was decided that it was gender that decided who needed what information at the time. Charles answered Olive's question as to why she was never taught how to use the tools with a simple answer, "You were a girl - you didn't need to know."

One of the most important objects that Charles and Olive described was the grub box the family used. The siblings remember, "This is a grub box that they took out on the boat when they went fishing and they filled it with whatever they needed for the day because it was a day journey. They were gone all day long. You would take your dinner with you. Mostly lassy bread and water. So whatever you took that was it. Whatever you took to eat or drink was in there and whatever else you had to take. If you had to take a compass it went in there."

As Olive noted, "In our culture everything that anybody had they had to make." Standing in Charles' shed you can see the generations of tools used to make everything from boats for fishing to spybuckets to cut the glare of the sun and find something you lost in the water.

Woody Lethbridge and his family resettled in the community of Cartwright in 1968 from their home in Paradise River. His father chose to move the family so the children could continue their education. Woody left Cartwright in order to pursue a career but returned in order to raise a family. He said he won't leave now unless health forces him to and said the community allows him to access all the activities he loves from plucking partridge to snowmobile trips.



Bearpaw snowshoes made for Woody Lethbridge by his father.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

"They are a souvenir that will always be with me. Dad made for me when I was a kid. I don't know for sure but they are probably my first pair. I would say he filled all that in an evening after supper. Two snowshoes." - **Woody Lethbridge**

In discussing the importance of craft to his family Woody said, “They lived in a remote little community and pretty much had to have everything, had to produce everything they needed other than staple foods. Me being not so good as my dad was, but anything that was made from wood or cloth or hide he made his own. I did get a little bit of that [experience] growing up in that environment. But I still cherish every moment I see when it’s done by whoever. Whether it’s boots, mitts, coats, hammer handles, axe handles, snow shoes, komatiks, sleighs, I can just keep going.”

While Woody’s father made snowshoes and taught him the basics when he was a child, it is only now that he is in his 60s and taking a course at the community centre that he is learning the craft. Woody explains, “Snowshoe making - I am just learning to do it. I should have learned to do it when I was a boy. My dad sat me down many times and said, ‘You’ve got to learn how to do this. I’m not always going to be here to do it for you so you should do it.’ I would get halfway through it, throw it down and go off with some friends or whatever. I never concentrated enough to get through the process and that’s probably why I’m a little bit slow now. But anyway I’m in the process now and I’ll know how to fill snowshoes in another week or so. Boot making and mitt making, I didn’t get into that at all. As I said I got to know a lot of native people over the years and when I needed a pair of boots or mitts I just tapped on their door, or rang their phone and said, ‘Please.’ [laughter] But my dad made everything. He made tents, stoves, pipes. He was a good tinsmith. The Lethbridge ancestry coming over from England was in the metal world, metal makers. They were sheet metal workers who came over here in the fish cannery. I’m fifth generation so my grandkids are seventh generation passing through this neck of the woods.”



Bearpaw snowshoes made by Woody Lethbridge as part of the snowshoe making course offered in Cartwright. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

“I make my own komatiks, and I make komatiks for sale too but not this year I haven’t been up to it. Usually I have anywhere from two to four or five komatiks fully finished and ready to use. The Northern people like my work, so I usually take one or two extra ones with me when I go north. Put one in the other or one on top of the other or tow two, or tow three sometimes. As I am going along I will fill the orders I’ve got. My dad used to do that even in the dog team days. That was back in the days when komatiks didn’t use nails, everything was done with wooden pegs and line. The boards were laced to the sides, to the runners, and he used to make up four or five of them and pile them on top of each other

and come down here and sell them. That was a part of his annual income,” Woody describes. “That I did learn from Dad because I can make komatiks the old fashioned way with the pegs and line. I learned it quite well as a kid. I don’t make them very often. If I make one now it is usually for someone who is doing the mushing, dog teams. I get a request every now and again to do a really light duty komatik. You can’t get any lighter than if you don’t use metal. It is all the very lightest wood you can find laced with a strong twine and anywhere you need extra strength you put in wooden dowels. They last forever. I made one for a lady in Makovik I think twelve, fourteen, maybe fifteen years ago and up until last year she was still racing that komatik. Make sure to keep it dry and painted. The wood is usually spruce now but if I am making one for a dog racer I am making it with fir and probably poplar. Two of the lightest woods we have. The gray one out in the driveway that I made that is probably ten years old now or close to it. It has been repaired many times but it is all spruce except for the box.”

Woody also comes from a family of crafters, he said, “They were all crafters. My sisters not so much but my brother is a wood crafter. My mom was a very handy person with needles. She was a great sewer. Never got a chance to produce like she should have but that’s it. But there was no shortage of work produced by her in the way of clothing and knitting. She spent a lot of time alone because my dad was a fur harvester in all the early years and right till he died and certainly depended on it until ’68 and somewhat after ’68. He would go away for as much as two to three months at a time. No communication, no nothing. He walked away in the fall and walked back when the snow and ice came.”

In discussing the importance of craft in Labrador, Woody said, “The resources are here. We have a massive amount of wood resources and other resources and really if you lose that culture and lose that ability it is sad in my mind. There are so many things that you can make for yourself and do for yourself that mean a lot in your day to day living. If I had to go buy ever komatik or sled that I beat up and wore out I would spend a fortune on it, and I wouldn’t get the product that I am delivering to myself. That is one of the reasons I want to keep the snowshoe art on the go as much as I can. I don’t think I will ever be an instructor myself but I would love to see people learn how to do it so it just keeps on trucking.”

Nita Martin of Cartwright is a craftsperson who has been making things all her life. She began selling her wares by word of mouth and now mainly sells her crafts through Facebook, although, she has been approached by Slippers n Things in Goose Bay to sell in store. Nita has sent her crafts all across Canada and other parts of the world. She said that once she retires from her job as floor supervisor at the shrimp company at age sixty (just three more years to go) she will go into crafting full time and will hopefully be able to fill an order for a store.

Nita has always been a knitter having learned from her grandmother, and said, “I have been picking at jewelry since I was a kid.” She has started to get more into making and selling beaded jewelry in the past five to six years, and within the past three to four years has moved into crafting with sealskin. Nita said her main reason for starting to get into sealskin crafts including jewelry, ornament, and framed pieces was all the wastage she



Framed komatik and dog team in sealskin by Nita Martin. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

saw. She said the crafters making mittens and slippers would have a lot of scrap material leftover and she thought there had to be something she could make with the material. Her initial sealskin scraps came from her daughter-in-law in Makovik, and then she found a woman in Rigolet who sold her scrap sealskin. While she still uses scrap material, she has also started buying her own pelts. Nita uses a lot of coloured pelts in her ornaments which she sources from Goose Bay and Quebec. Since her move into sealskin she has made everything from bracelets and napkin holders, to framed dogsled pieces and wedding boutonnieres. Nita has also branched out and started to use Labradorite and Labrador tartan in her jewelry. She is inventive and has used birchbark for jewelry and framed maps of Newfoundland and Labrador, and partridge feathers for earrings. Each of the patterns for her ornaments are her own and are quite time consuming to create.



Sealskin flower necklace and earrings by Nita Martin.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

Placed around Nita's home are examples of crafts created by herself, family members, and community members. Her father, Ken Martin, was a boat builder, while her mother, Ethel Martin, is still knitting at the age of eighty-five. Ethel has also done other crafts such as embroidery work for Grenfell coats. Her grandmother, Lucy, made skin boots, knit, and embroidered,

while her brother is into woodwork and built his own home. Walking through Nita's home you can see the tradition of crafts passed through the generations and across cultures. She has Innu snowshoes purchased by her grandfather, a hand carved dogwhip, woodwork created by her brother, a drum crafted by Henry Jacque, and grasswork by her mother. Nita's love of crafts has led her to dedicate a room in her basement to crafting with bins of scraps for later use and a table to lay out her creations. In discussing crafts Nita said, "I just love to be at it."



Sealskin and partridge feather boutonnières in Nita Martin's craft room.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

CRAFTS IN CARTWRIGHT + SENIOR CITIZENS



Participants enjoying a mug up at the weekly craft night in the 50+ club community centre. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

Judy Pardy, a volunteer with the 50+ club and a member of the province's Seniors Advisory Council, describes the history of craft courses offered and senior citizen involvement in the community:

"A group of concerned citizens came together in 2010 to discuss a social activity plan for our seniors as there was very little being offered to them at that time. We held a public meeting and, as a result the Seniors Committee was set up. For the first few years, we met in different homes and rented or borrowed space in the community to offer social functions and special events for the seniors. We were also successful in obtaining small grants to offer traditional craft courses such as slipper and mitt making.

In 2012, we lobbied Government to take over the defunct ticket office here in Cartwright to be used as a senior's club. This was very positive and, in 2014, we signed an Agreement with the Town Council to take full responsibility for this facility. Since then, we have received different pots of funding to turn this building into a very comfortable and cheerful 50+ Club. We have partnered with most of the groups in town and we share this facility for any special functions, especially with regards to workshops geared towards seniors, and various recreation activities which take place on the outdoor rink next to our Community Centre.

Since taking over the Community Centre and renovating, we have offered several workshops, functions and social activities geared towards our most vulnerable group, the seniors. We are especially pleased with bringing our community together on many occasions.

It was identified that many of our traditional crafts were being lost as they were not being passed on by our seniors. As a result, we were fortunate to obtain different pots of funding to offer several courses: duffel slipper making, offered by a senior; Labrador dickie parkas, offered by two of our seniors; traditional snowshoe making, offered by a young man; and, currently, our second traditional snowshoe making course, offered by a senior who actually took the first course, mastered it through a lot of hard work and commitment, and is now teaching a new group. We opened the snowshoe course to our youth and three of them came forward with two completing the course and feeling very proud of their accomplishment.

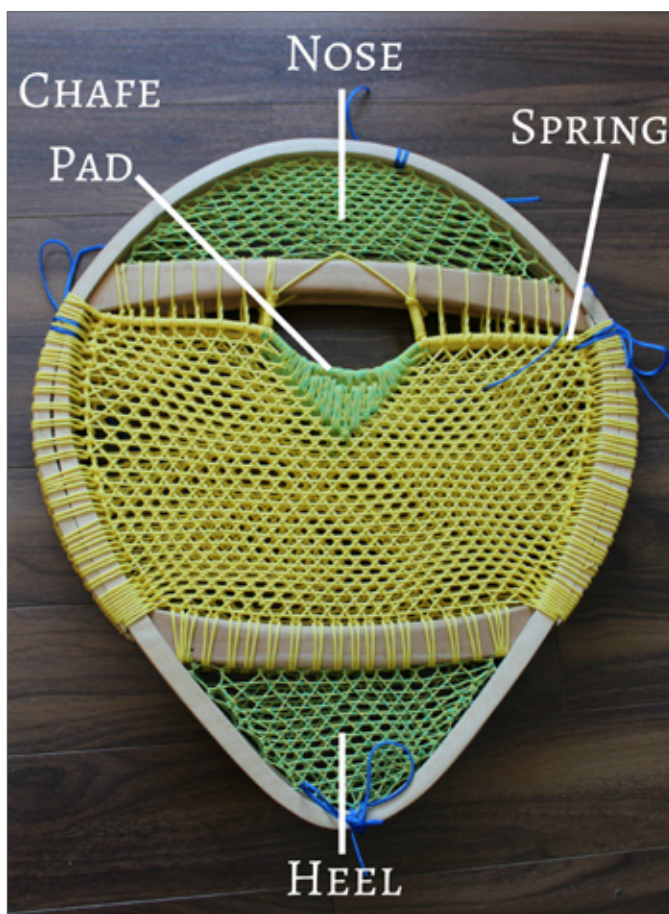
Another positive outcome of offering these workshops is that one of our seniors took it upon herself to offer an open craft night every week at our centre. This is for all ages and there are several community members under fifty who are participating. It gives them a place to come together and work on the different crafts while socializing.

Everyone thoroughly enjoys the courses offered and we see people coming out and getting involved who never did before. We believe that the social aspect is just as important as the actual craft or function that we are able to offer.



Photo hung in the 50+ club community centre of the dickie making course that was offered in the centre. Photo courtesy of 50+ club.

SNOWSHOE MAKING IN CARTWRIGHT



Labelled bearpaw snowshoe made by Woody Lethbridge's father.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

"The chafe pad was put on so your boots wouldn't chafe off the actual filling itself. It was just a protection pad." - Woody Lethbridge

“The traditional snowshoes from around here come off the Innu pattern for the most part and they used to make them for conditions. They would have snowshoes made for light snow walking, for heavy snowfalls in the wintertime they would be a big bow, a massive size bow. Then they would come down from that for better conditions. They probably had about three pairs of snowshoes in their stock [for] anybody who travelled a lot by foot. And 90% of the people around here did all their travelling by foot - very seldom used dogs - until skidoos came of course. So you couldn't expect to move around with a small pair of snowshoes after a big winter snowstorm so a lot of those guys would go in the country with two pairs on them. A smaller pair in case the weather turned mild and the conditions got better and a big pair to muck through the fluff,” explained Woody Lethbridge.



Participants at snowshoe making workshop held at the 50+ club community centre.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

On Wednesday, February 21st, 2018, as part of my week in Cartwright I attended the snowshoe making course at the 50+ Club Community Centre. There were ten participants ranging in age from pre-teens to their sixties. The workshop was full and had a waitlist of participants hoping to learn how to make snowshoes during the next offering. The community has hosted other craft workshops in the past including grasswork, duffel embroidery, and dickie making.

As Olive Davis notes, making snowshoes is not an easy task, “In January we started this course and I would love to know how to do a lot of the traditional crafts and this was being offered and I thought it would be really interesting to learn how to make a pair of snowshoes and it is interesting. For anybody out there who is a perfectionist and wants to do something that you’ve got to be a perfectionist to do - because it is so tricky. If I make one little mistake - I might have all this done and I might find something back there that is not right and then you have to take it back and start over. You can’t cheat on making snowshoes. I took apart one of them today. It’s always a challenge the first time you make something like the snowshoes. For example, I really wanted to know how to do that but now I’m getting tired of it. I don’t plan on giving up because these frames, just for the frame with nothing on it, was \$40.00 so if I can find somebody who makes frames I am going to get a pair and I am going to try to make another pair just so I can make it on my own without instructions. That’s the plan.”

Sheldon Morris who taught the snowshoe making course only recently learned the craft himself. Woody noted, “Only a year ago he learned how to fill snowshoes. He went to a program, a



Instructor, Sheldon Morris, talking with Olive Davis. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

training in Rigolet. He was living in Rigolet at the time where his wife comes from and some senior guy down there was teaching a program. So he went on and I mean Sheldon is not a perfectionist either yet. It takes a long time to get that down to a true art. So when we approached him this fall he said, 'Well I don't have enough confidence that I can do it.' So I said, 'Look, why don't you take an example of each size snowshoe we have.' We had the bows done by a pro, someone who does them all the time, someone from a different community. 'Take a couple, take two or three weeks and some material and go play with it. Practice it. When and if you are satisfied, let us know and we'll set up the course.' That's what he did."

This snowshoe making course is teaching participants how to make bearpaw snowshoes which is just one style of snowshoe found in the community. The frames for these snowshoes were made by Richard Williams from Rigolet who currently lives in Charlottetown. Woody described the various types of snowshoes saying, “Well there is a beavertail, then there is what you call a rat tail. A beavertail has a long narrow tail and a rat tail just comes back to a point and there is about a six inch tail on the snowshoe and it is oval. The bearpaw is a full bearpaw, it is a full snowshoe and there is no sharp corners on it. The beavertail is more of a long snowshoe, a lot of factory snowshoes are beavertails. They call those little wire ones they make now bearpaws, and there are an awful lot of them made with cable and they have no nose and heel they just have one lot of filling in them for the whole snowshoe, they are just a wire bearpaw. But they are manufacturing snowshoes now of every shape you can think of. Some of them are almost like skis, they are long and narrow. My dad had a pair when we would do bearpaws we would do the measurement and he had a seven foot bow. He was fairly tall, six foot tall and his stride was big so they were two and a half, three feet at the front beam. Now they wouldn’t be spread apart – they would go over as he was walking, only half a snowshoe you would need to spread your legs because you were going over one with the next one.”

Most participants are using nylon rope to fill the frame but some people have brought sinew to use. Traditionally caribou sinew would’ve been used but with the declining herds and the ban on caribou hunting it is harder to use traditional materials. Woody describes the process of making sinew from caribou hide, “Every skin was saved. Some of them were used as mattresses when

you were traveling the country you would have either a bear skin or a deer skin mattress. The caribou hide was cleaned for this purpose and then if you needed moccasins they would cure the caribou skin and smoke it. They would get it all softened up and make boots and mitts out of it. There were multiple uses for caribou hide. This you didn't have to be so fussy. For filling you could cut around it right? Most of this was cut out when it was dried hard with a pocket knife. You would go around and around the skin, then you would throw it in a pail of warm water and let it soak and then you could stretch it."



Sheldon Morris drilling holes for the nose filling. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

CRAFT TRADITIONS

On Tuesday, February 20th, 2018, I attended the weekly craft night at the 50+ Club Community Centre. This weekly event is open to anyone who wants to come out and work on their craft in an informal social setting. Ten community members came out to craft and to share some crafts they made or owned. There were salt fish clocks, flour bag quilts, rag and pom pom rugs, hand carved skates, knitwear, sealskin and quilted bags, mittens and slippers, and duffel vamps to warm skin boots. I've included a selection of photographs I took at the event and during my time visiting with people in the community.



Shirley Tremblett and Olive Davis at craft night. Olive is holding a fur hat she made for herself. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Whale bone owl made in Pond Inlet. Courtesy of Shirley Tremblett.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Komatik and dog team by Rupert (Rupe) Davis. Courtesy of Shirley Tremblett.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



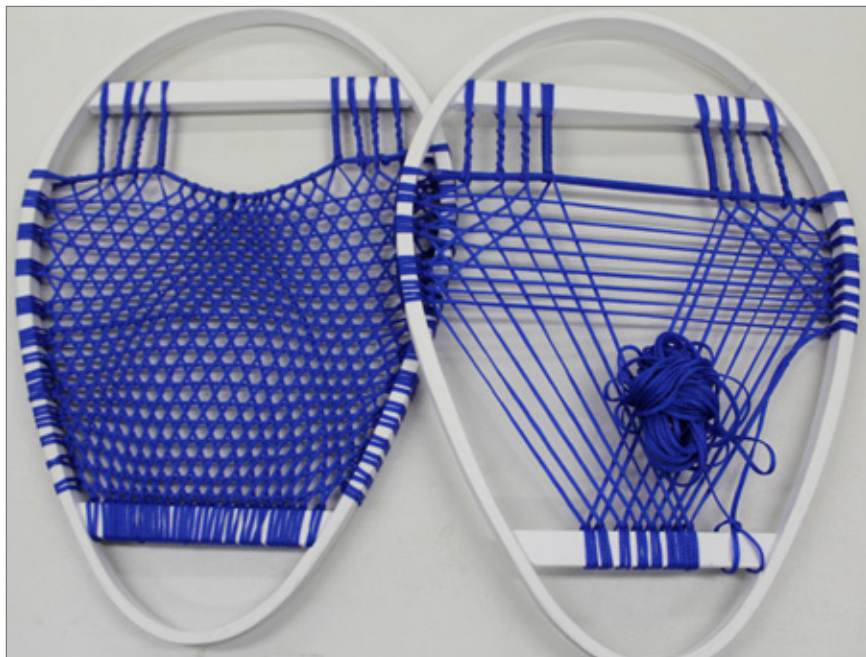
Handcarved skated made by Jim Burdett. Courtesy of Gladys Hill Burdett
and Josh Burdett. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Duffel vamps made by Violet Dyson or Jane Davis. The duffel vamps were worn inside skin boots to keep your feet warm. This pair were brought Olive Davis and made by her mother or mother-in-law. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Hide, fur, and beaded mittens made by Clementine Dyson. Courtesy of Olive Davis. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Bearpaw snowshoes made by Maggie Toomashie. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Salt fish clock made in Norman Bay. Courtesy of Shirley Tremblett.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Pompom rug made by Minnie Clark for her granddaughter. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Hairy leg skin boots made by Minnie Merkuratsuk. Courtesy of Woody Lethbridge.



Gladys Hill Burdett and Olive Davis discussing hooked rugs. Left rug hooked by Gladys Burdett, right rug hooked by Gladys Hill Burdett. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Susan Curl holding knitted dishcloth lap blanket. This blanket is a scaled up version of a knitted dishcloth. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Susan Curl in her dickie made in a workshop offered at the 50+ club community. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Wooden links carved by Josh Burdett from a single piece of wood.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Innu snowshoes purchased by Nita Martin's grandfather.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Baby moccasins made by Missy Hopkins. Courtesy of Olive Davis. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Drum made by Henry Jacque. Courtesy of Nita Martin. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

"It's a Victorian sleigh and we saw the sleigh in a catalogue but it was a baby sleigh and we needed something bigger so he just increased the size of the pattern and made it for Hillary. 12 years ago I think as she was 13 and we needed something to take her outside and go for a walk. She loved it." - Olive Davis



Sleigh made by Rupert Davis made for his daughter Hillary. The sleigh has also been used by Hillary and family in the town's Santa Claus parade. Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Ulu made by Gerald Saunders in Cartwright. Courtesy of Shirley Tremblett.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.



Flour sack quilt made by Violet Dyson. Courtesy of Olive Davis.
Photo by Terra Barrett. 2018.

GLOSSARY

Dickie - also known as a amuatik, cossack, and silapâk. As Woody Lethbridge describes, “It is a wind tight or fairly wind tight garment. There were so many uses for it. It was used when there was a lot of snow on the trees because the hood was so snug. You would pull the hood up and no snow could get down your neck. If you were out in the bad weather and the wind you had a bit of fur trim on it then you would pull that up and you were basically in a sleeping bag. You are bottled tight and no wind can get in at you. The normal silapâk just had a hole for your head to go through and two holes for your arms that was it. They were good for dog team driving, they were good for walking because you wouldn’t have heavy clothes on. You would have a big wool sweater or jacket of some kind underneath it.”

Komatik - A long sled, adopted in northern Newfoundland and especially Labrador for winter travel and hauled by dogs or sometimes men.

Komatik Box - A compartment on komatik for passenger or load. As Woody Lethbridge describes, “The komatik box is something that was used more when there were dog teams. It was a hinged cover on it usually and they kept their food and valuables in that and they sat on it when they were driving their dogs. I have made them but I haven’t had a use for them in many years.”

Grenfell Handicrafts and Grenfell Cloth Coats - As part of the Grenfell Mission, an organization dedicated to providing medical and social services to people in rural communities in northern Newfoundland and Labrador, an industrial department was started in the early 1900s. This department was later renamed Gren-

fell Handicrafts and focused on making crafts to raise money for families of craftspeople and the Grenfell Mission as a whole.

Two notable crafts produced as part of Grenfell Handicrafts were the infamous silk stocking hooked rugs depicting northern scenes and Grenfell Cloth Coats.

As Olive Davis remembers, “I don’t even know if they make Grenfell cloth anymore but that’s what they used to use years ago for the coats they used to make. Rupert’s mother used to make jackets. She used to make some really nice jackets. Long, Grenfell cloth coats. Everybody had one one time but I don’t see anybody wearing them these days. They were really popular at some points but I don’t know if they stopped making Grenfell cloth but I know that these days I think it is Canadian mist I don’t even know if they make that anymore but it is like a waterproof exterior for the coat.”

These Grenfell Coats were usually made in two styles: shorter parkas and longer coats that went to the knee. The coats were made of a durable wind and water resistant material and had northern scenes done in embroidery on the cuff and pocket of the coat.

Residential Schools - Residential schools were government-sponsored religious schools established to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture.

Ulu - a multipurpose knife traditionally used by Inuit people. The knives tend to have a rounded blade which is often used for skinning and cleaning animals.

SOURCES

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Laverty, Paula. 1998. “The Hooked Mats of the Grenfell Mission of Newfoundland and Labrador.”



ABOUT HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

The Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador is a nonprofit organization which was established in 1984 to stimulate an understanding of and an appreciation for the architectural heritage of the province. The Foundation, an invaluable source of information for historic restoration, supports and contributes to the preservation and restoration of buildings of architectural or historical significance. The Heritage Foundation also has an educational role and undertakes or sponsors events, publications and other projects designed to promote the value of our built heritage. The Heritage Foundation is also involved in work designed to safeguard and sustain the intangible cultural heritage of Newfoundland and Labrador for present and future generations everywhere, as a vital part of the identities of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and as a valuable collection of unique knowledge and customs. This is achieved through policies that celebrate, record, disseminate, and promote our living heritage.



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2018

ISBN 978-1-988899-12-1