

• *Articles* •

**Becoming Local:  
The Emerging Craft Beer Industry in Newfoundland, Canada**

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**Abstract:** *This article considers the ways craft breweries integrate the local culture of Newfoundland, Canada in their branding, events and even flavors. Between 2016 and 2019, the number of craft breweries in Newfoundland quadrupled. This essay examines how this emerging industry frames craft beer as local through heritage branding that draws on local customs and the island's unique language. At the same time, some breweries embrace their newness by reinterpreting representations of rural Newfoundland.*

In May of 2017, I moved from Massachusetts to the island of Newfoundland with my husband. "The Rock," as it's nicknamed, part of Canada's easternmost province of Newfoundland and Labrador, is an isolated island of over 155,000 square miles of boreal forest, bluffs and barrens. During that first summer, we were enthralled by the East Coast Trail, a hiking trail that loops around the Avalon Peninsula on the eastern edge of the island. From rocky cliffs, we spotted whales, hawks, icebergs, and seals. We often ate a "feed of fish and chips," as I have heard this popular dish called in Newfoundland. One thing we missed from home were the numerous craft breweries, where we could grab a pint after a day of hiking. We had become accustomed to small, locally-owned breweries throughout New England, operating out of innocuous locations like industrial parks or converted warehouses, where we could try different beers every time we visited. I was disappointed to find a much more limited selection of beer when I moved to Newfoundland. Luckily for me, the island was about to experience a craft beer boom.

Between 2016 and 2019, twelve locally-owned craft breweries opened across Newfoundland. I refer to this time period as Newfoundland's "craft beer boom" because a large number of breweries opened in a short time. Previously, Quidi Vidi Brewing (est.

1995), Storm Brewing (est. 1995), and Yellowbelly Brewery (est. 2011) were the only craft beer producers on the island. When I began my research on craft beer in Newfoundland in 2017, I hoped to find connections between craft beer production, the physical landscape of the island, and the history of brewing. Instead, I found that the craft beer industry is new to the island and gained momentum after 2016.

Historically, the Newfoundland beer industry consisted of large macro-breweries. In 1949, Newfoundland ceased to be a dominion of Britain and became a province of Canada through an island-wide referendum in a process known as Confederation. At this time, the island had only three independent Newfoundland-owned breweries that produced mainly German-style lagers: Newfoundland Brewing, Bennett Brewing, and Bavarian Brewing. In 1962, Canada's three national breweries: Molson, Canadian Breweries Limited, and Labatt, purchased the independent Newfoundland breweries.

The rest of the country followed a similar pattern. From the 1960s through the 1980s, independent breweries were consolidated into national corporations across Canada (Eberts 2014, 190). By 1989, the Canadian beer market was dominated by just two brands: Labatt and Molson. These two companies merged with international corporations Anheuser-Busch In Bev and Coors (Eberts 2014, 191). This meant that the macro-breweries in Newfoundland were not even Canadian anymore—they were actually owned by international corporations. In the 1990s, consolidation in the beer industry had reached its peak across North America and consumers had only a few different types of beers to choose from. It was in this climate that local craft breweries began to emerge across Canada. By the time Newfoundland experienced a craft beer boom, craft breweries had been popular across North America for decades. As to the reason it took so long for Newfoundland to open its own breweries, there is not just one answer. The cost of importing ingredients and the popularity of macro beers are two barriers that come to mind. Nonetheless, the industry took off, developing its own take on craft beer.

### **Newfoundland Beer: Crafted Right Here**

In Newfoundland, the main ingredients to brew beer (yeast, barley and hops) are imported from outside the province. In both wine and craft cider production, apples and grapes are grown on orchards and vineyards on the same land where these beverages are

produced. This inherent connection to the land can lead to an expressive culture surrounding wine and cider that make it clear that these products are literally and figuratively homegrown. For example, folklorist Maria Kennedy's research explores how landscape and life in rural Britain is imagined through cider making. Kennedy describes "cider land" as "a living cultural phenomenon shaping the understanding of rural heritage in Britain" (Kennedy 2017, 2). She considers conservation of apple orchards to be "material embodiments" of this phenomenon (Kennedy 2017, 3). The sudden introduction of craft beer on the island of Newfoundland is an opportunity to examine the ways craft breweries establish themselves as local through other means, such as their branding, events and even flavors. In this article, I examine the ways Newfoundland craft breweries connect to place through heritage branding and events, as well as the island's contemporary culture.

Although they often lacked a connection to the landscape, craft breweries can connect to local identity in other ways. As Kennedy explains in the context of her research, "cider land" is also performed across a variety of expressive genres, including literature, crafts and landscape management (Kennedy 2017, 2). Similarly, craft breweries in North America rely on the branding surrounding beer in order to frame their product as local. For example, breweries focus on the fact that their beer is locally brewed or use imagery and beer names that tap into local identity, even if the industry is new to the region or their ingredients are from elsewhere. In Newfoundland, many breweries use yeast shipped from labs in Ontario, grains from other parts of Canada, and hops from all over North America and Europe.

Folklorist Julie LeBlanc uses the term "folkloric branding" to describe "the commercialization of folklore" by craft breweries. LeBlanc explains how microbreweries that use folklore in their advertising appeal to local consumers who understand and identify with insider "cultural codes," as well as outsiders who read the advertising as a representation of that group. LeBlanc states: "Using cultural codes, that is, items that convey messages to its group, microbreweries are able to appeal to a smaller and more local market while telling said group's story" (LeBlanc 2015, 29). In her dissertation on the brewery Unibroue, located in Montreal, LeBlanc analyzes Unibroue's "reimaginings of historical Quebec, New France colonies, political rebellions, imagined communities, shared cultural traits and romantic heroic associations" (LeBlanc 2015, 2). LeBlanc asserts that

Canada's colonization of the province of Quebec led to the intentional recording and promotion of Quebec's folklore, language, and culture. In relation to craft beer marketing, this meant that Unibroue's branding would be recognized by Quebecois and would help them identify the beer as local (LeBlanc 2015, 29). I believe a similar process is at work in Newfoundland.

Like Quebec, Newfoundland maintains a regional, even nationalist, identity. The 1949 referendum to join Canada only narrowly rejected Newfoundland independence. Subsequently, there was an effort post-Confederation to record and preserve the island's heritage and culture as distinct from the rest of Canada. Newfoundland breweries tap into these nostalgic constructions of Newfoundland heritage through branding imagery, such as label designs and logos, as well as beer names. However, craft breweries are also framing Newfoundland's beer scene as oriented towards contemporary Newfoundland culture and future growth. Much of the branding of Newfoundland craft breweries captures the tension between the perception that rural heritage is dying or disappearing, and the representation of these same areas as vitalized by new businesses and tourism.

### **Trends in Craft Brewery Branding in North America**

Research in the field of Geography has also explored the ways that craft breweries across North America connect to place. In his research on craft breweries in Canada, geographer Derrek Eberts uses the term "neolocalism" to describe the ways that breweries invoke a connection to their location (Eberts 2014, 193). Neolocalism is a cultural movement that emphasizes a connection to geography and place over globalized consumer culture. Other examples of neolocalism include farmer's markets, the locavore diet, and buying artisanal products from local producers. Geographer Anne M. Fletchall explored neolocal branding among breweries in Montana in "Place-Making through Beer Drinking: A Case Study of Montana's Craft Breweries." Even though the craft beer industry was new to Montana when she completed this research, Fletchall shows how breweries present themselves as part of the local culture in the towns and cities where they are located by drawing on the state's culture, history, and environment. In her research, Fletchall finds that "visiting a brewery can make a location personally meaningful, or a place, and thus meaning may come from many different aspects of a particular brewery: its name, logo,

decor, beers, and most importantly, from its community function and local clientele" (2016, 563). Fletchall analyzes brewery's names and logos to show "how such imagery work to construct a particular place identity" (Fletchall 2016, 542). Similarly, Newfoundland craft breweries tap into "place identity" through folkloric branding that represents local people, places, and history.

### **Construction Newfoundland Identity: The Newfoundland Studies Movement**

The Newfoundland Studies movement in the 1960s and 1970s was essential in the construction of a regionalist Newfoundland identity and defining what constitutes Newfoundland heritage. In *Observing the Outports*, Jeff A. Webb examines this movement among academics at Memorial University, which focused on collecting and preserving rural Newfoundland culture and language. As Webb explains, the movement "was also part of a broader cultural reaction to a loss of nationhood and modernization that included a folk music revival, efforts to preserve built heritage, the growth of an indigenous theatre, and the emergence of a visual arts scene" (Webb 2016, 15). As discussed previously, efforts to preserve Newfoundland identity as distinct from the rest of Canada recall similar efforts described by LeBlanc in Quebec. The negotiation between preserving a distinct provincial identity and assimilating into the rest of Canada contributed to the construction of heritage in both these provinces. Academics and artists involved in the Newfoundland Studies movement collected information on Newfoundland's past in order to create the concept of Newfoundland heritage. Their efforts were a reaction to the loss of independence and fear that the island's culture would be replaced by modern Canadian culture.

As Webb points out, Newfoundlanders voted to join Canada by a slim margin, and the loss of political independence led to a fear that cultural identity would be lost as well (Webb 2016, 24). I believe that in many parts of rural Newfoundland, the prediction that rural culture would disappear came true. The moratorium on the cod fishery in 1992 was in many ways a definitive end to a way of life in Newfoundland, even though the fishery had been in decline for decades (Overton 2007, 60).

In addition to collecting and preserving research on rural life, the Newfoundland Studies movement also defined characteristics of Newfoundland identity for the general populace. James Overton claims that one consequence of the "nationalist or regionalist

movement that emerged in the 1970s" was the creation of "romantic attachment to rural Newfoundland, a kind of populist celebration" (Overton 1996, xii). This "populist celebration" was manifested in cultural revivals in music and the arts, as well as academic interest in Newfoundland heritage. One of the products of these efforts is the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, which has been used by academics, writers, poets and artists to represent the island (Webb 2016, 25). As Webb points out, the academic work on Newfoundland identity also reached the population of the island through art, theatre, and a folk music revival, noting that, "Artists and musicians often took inspiration and practical aid from faculty members at Memorial who had documented the oral culture of Newfoundland, and younger members of the faculty and graduate students became part of the broader cultural movement" (Webb 2016, 25).

By creating the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, academics at Memorial University created a tangible culture resource from language, an intangible part of the island's culture. In the 2000s, Newfoundland & Labrador Tourism continue to draw on this research. A series of nine videos from 2015 explain Newfoundland words and phrases, such as "some day on clothes" and "I dies at you". [1] Of course, correlation does not mean causation, but I theorize that without the foundational collection, preservation and interpretation done by researchers of the Newfoundland Studies movement, the Tourism Department would not have a dictionary of unique Newfoundland words and phrases to draw from for their promotional ads. In a broader sense, I suggest that the collection and interpretation of rural Newfoundland culture following confederation in 1949 contributed to the construction and presentation of heritage in Newfoundland today.

In the following section, I examine two specialty beers named "Mummers Brew" as examples of cultural production in heritage-based branding in the craft beer industry. I consider the progression from collection and preservation of mummering folklore, to heritage revival that educates people in their own folklore practices, to the creation of tourist products that harness and market this cultural knowledge.

### **Heritage Revival and Mummers Brew**

One example of beer branding that draws on heritage revival is the annual Mummers Brew beers, two different specialty beers produced by Yellowbelly Brewery and

Quidi Vidi Brewing during the Christmas season. On April 24, 2019, Matt Powers, Quidi Vidi Brewery's Retail Shop Supervisor, said that Quidi Vidi first released Mummers Brew in 1998, but the recipe was changed, and the beer was re-released in 2013. Two years earlier, in 2011, Yellowbelly released their Mummers Brew (Conway, 2012).

The Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador held their first Mummer's Parade in St. John's in 2009. In "Return on the Mummers," folklorist Emily Urquhart describes taking part in the inaugural Mummers Festival Parade in 2009 and explains the revival of the tradition. Urquhart defines the act of mummering as follows:

Mummering, which can also be called janneying, mumming, or guising, varies across Newfoundland and Labrador in form and persistence. But generally it goes like this: after mummers knock on someone's door, the host invites them in. It would be unneighborly to say no, and some think it would be bad luck to turn mummers away. Once inside, it's the host's job to guess the mummer's identities, which is a feat since they've also taken pains to mask their voices, their gaits, and even their genders. When the mummers are revealed, they pull up their masks and are offered a cordial-like drink called syrup, although they often prefer something stronger. The mummers might perform a song, or a dance, or play a tune using instruments they've carried with them, but soon they disappear back into the wintry night from where they came, heading to the next house where they'll do it all over again. (Urquhart 2016)

Disguises are an important part of mummering. Common costumes include pillowcases and lampshades to hide one's face, bras worn on top of clothing by men and women, pillows underneath clothing to disguise one's body, and hobby horses with clacking nails for teeth. However, mummering was banned in 1861 because participants' disguises enabled them to commit acts of violence, often between different Christian sects, or incite political unrest (Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Website, 1999). Urquhart describes the original practice of mummering in St. John's as "often rowdy, dangerous, and highly alcoholic" (Urquhart 2016). Kennedy defines revival as instances "where chains of performative transmission from person to person are broken" (Kennedy 2017, 27). While the practice of mummering was almost extinct in rural communities, the production of heritage in the form of the Mummer's Parade, mummer workshops, and mummer-related products like Christmas ornaments and limited-release craft beers took off.

Revival efforts began with academic interest in mummering at Memorial University in the 1960s; the ban was lifted in the mid-1980s. In 1983, Simani, two musicians from

Fortune Bay, released "Any Mummers Allowed In?," a song folklorist Gerald Pocius identified as central to the revival of mummering, as well as the broader nativist movement in Newfoundland (Pocius 1988, 58). Pocius describes mummering as "a powerful identity symbol of cultural revival" in Newfoundland (Pocius 1988, 57). He explains that everyday practices become objectified during periods of nativism, and that mummering is an example of a practice that become central to Newfoundland cultural identity as a result of the nativism of the 1970s (Pocius 1988, 59). Mummering has literally been objectified in Newfoundland through the production of mummer-related products, transforming a tradition into a souvenir. In my time working as a salesclerk in 2019 at the Heritage Shop in St. John's, I sold mummer Christmas ornaments, decorative statues, and tea towels depicting mummers. During her research, Urquhart also observed the multitude of mummer-branded products in souvenir shops in St. John's in the form of ornaments, snow globes, figurines, magnets, and more. In recent years, craft breweries have capitalized on the cultural recognition of mummering as distinctly Newfoundland by releasing specialty "Mummers Brew" beers.

The Mummers Brew beers are one example of how heritage is commodified. While mummering is not an active tradition in many rural communities anymore, there continues to be recognition in Newfoundland of mummering thanks to the parade and other revival efforts. Beer branding that highlights Newfoundland's unique language is another way the craft beer industry appeals to local consumers, who understand phrases and word play, as well as tourists or outsiders, who read these beer and brewery names and representations of the province.

### **Lexicon as Commodity: Newfoundland Language and Beer Names**

As discussed previously, language is a prominent part of the construction of Newfoundland cultural identity. The creation of the Dictionary of Newfoundland English established Newfoundland language as a distinguishing characteristic of the island's culture and it holds a prominent place in the tourism industry. Ronald Seary, head of the Department of English at Memorial University from 1953 to 1970, was one of the first scholars to promote Newfoundland language as the focus of academic work. Seary was interested in researching Newfoundland place names, dialects and language while at the



same time instructing students to write and speak mainstream English (Webb 2016, 37). Through Seary and his predecessors' work on the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, Newfoundland language was recognized as unique and valuable, at least as a subject of research, rather than solely backwards and provincial. However, Newfoundland's language continues to be preserved as heritage and commodified by the tourism industry while also being recognized as a marker of rural origins and a working class background.

In December of 2018, I worked as a sales employee at Heritage Shop on Duckworth Street in St. John's. I observed firsthand how Newfoundland's language had become a commodity in the form of tea towels, mugs, and sweatshirts branded with Newfoundland phrases, such as the ubiquitous "some day on clothes" (nice weather) and "what ya at, b'y" (how are you). [2] No longer of interest solely to educators and academics, capitalizing on Newfoundland's language is part of the tourism industry.

I expected that Newfoundland breweries would use similar language as these other tourist products. However, I found that while breweries still tended to highlight the island's language by naming beers after local history, places and customs, they were less inclined to use the same words and phrases highlighted by the tourism ads. If they did, these highly visible Newfoundland phrases were combined with a pop culture reference or transformed in some way. For example, Split Rock Brewing released a sour beer named "Sour Patch B'ys," combining the well-known Newfoundland word "b'y," meaning "boy" or "person," and Sour Patch Kids candy. Similarly, Quidi Vidi's session IPA named "Dayboil," which refers to drinking during the day, uses a Newfoundland phrase to allude to the beer's relatively low alcohol content (4.5%). Through these clever beer names, craft breweries re-introduce Newfoundland language that has been commodified back into the local lexicon, invigorating language sold as heritage with new meaning.

On June 23, 2018, Felicity Roberts of The Overcast wrote an article titled, "A Guide to Dayboiling in St. John's: Four Bars. Two Townies. One Goal. To Find The New Heart Of The Affordable Daytime Buzz Downtown." Clearly this custom is alive and well in St. John's. Although this term is not in the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, I believe it is a reference to a boil up, or boiling a kettle of tea in the woods in the winter. The boil up is a custom more commonly associated with rural areas and the dayboil with St. John's urban pub culture. The boil up and dayboil exemplify the divergent, but similar customs of bay

(rural) and townie (St. John's) cultures in Newfoundland [3]. Locals will understand the literal meaning of a dayboil, as well as the connotation of urban St. John's pub culture and the contrasting rural tradition of the boil up. These references to Newfoundland slang tap into cultural codes, offering a representation of the island to visitors while conveying a deeper meaning to insiders, who will understand the slang itself and the clever transformation the same language often used in tourism products.

Newfoundland place names, like the island's slang, were also the subject of academic research and continue to hold interest for breweries. Craft breweries construct a historical connection to their location by explaining the history of place names and thereby creating a sense of continuity between a community's past and the establishment of the brewery. Through place-based naming, craft breweries explicitly situate themselves as part of a community's past, creating a history for their brewery despite being a new industry to the area. Dildo Brewing prints this text, stylized after a dictionary entry, on the back of their glass growlers:

Dil·do - A small fishing community in Newfoundland and Labrador, 100 km from St. John's.  
[dild o]  
Originally inhabited by our Beothuk ancestors, the Town of Dildo was then founded in 1711, offering settlers an abundance of cod, whales and seals for harvest.

Dildo may have more of a reason to focus specifically on their namesake than other breweries. The brewery offers a historical explanation for the town's name, beginning with the Beothuk, the original inhabitants of Newfoundland when white settlers first arrived from Europe. The second paragraph on the growler offers some other possibilities for the town's name:

Perhaps we were named for the Spanish term "Dos Islas" meaning "two islands" which can be seen steaming south into our harbour. As is often the case with place names, "Dos Islas" could have evolved into Dildo Island. Or maybe it comes from the 18th century term dildo, meaning a cylindrical object or nautical pin used in the oar of a boat. Whatever the case, British explorer Captain James Cook thought it was a fitting name for this picturesque harbour as he mapped most of the coast of Newfoundland.

This second explanation connects with the area's history as a fishing town by referencing a boat part, defined as "nautical pin used in the oar of a boat." Lastly, the text slyly refers to

the other definition of dildo by stating that the name "does make for a great conversation starter." As this label recognizes, Newfoundland place names are considered a part of Newfoundland heritage, especially the more unique examples. In fact, the town of Dildo received international news coverage in 2019 as a result of late night comedian Jimmel Kimmel's bid to become the town's mayor. As a result, the town erected letters that spell "Dildo" on a hill overlooking the harbor, reminiscent of the Hollywood sign, and the town was flooded with tourists over the summer.

Similarly, Ninepenney Brewing offers a historical explanation for their brewery name. Their growler reads: "The name is born from our ancestors' love of beer and pays homage to the English pubs where stories were told, beers were shared, and journeys began. It also makes a subtle nod to the nine communities that came together to create Conception Bay South." In this instance, the statement "our ancestors' love of beer" refers to emigration between England and Newfoundland. This is one representation of Newfoundland as essentially culturally English as it was a colony of Britain until 1949. Secondly, the name refers to the more recent history of amalgamation of smaller communities in Newfoundland into larger towns, such as the nine communities that make up Conception Bay South.

The island's language is promoted as a defining characteristic of Newfoundland identity. Craft breweries use slang, place names, and clever twists on well-known Newfoundland phrases to situate craft beer as local. Craft breweries also host events that are recognized as part of Newfoundland traditions or heritage in their taprooms. In the next section, I examine heritage events at craft breweries.

### **Heritage Events at Craft Brewery Taprooms**

In this section, I focus on events hosted by craft breweries in taprooms [4] that draw on Newfoundland heritage and traditions, including kitchen parties, the holiday of Tibb's Eve, and 120's card game nights, a popular game in the province. All of these events offer experiences for tourist consumption that were once hosted in private, domestic spaces, more often in rural areas. Events like kitchen parties, Tibb's Eve celebrations, and card game nights open these Newfoundland experiences to outsiders, such as tourists.

Especially in rural areas, these events would either be hosted in the home or in community halls intended for residents, not visitors.

Secret Cove Brewing Co. in Port au Port and Quidi Vidi Brewery in St. John's host Newfoundland kitchen parties, a live performance featuring traditional Irish or Newfoundland music that has been promoted as a uniquely Newfoundland experience by the tourism industry. Kitchen parties, as the name suggests, were traditionally held in people's private kitchens in rural areas before they were organized in bars and pubs in urban St. John's. In episode 124 of the *Living Heritage Podcast*, "Aidan O'Hara has a 'A Grand Time' in Newfoundland," which aired on CHMR 93.5 on August 29, 2018, I interviewed Aidan O'Hara, the recipient of the 2018 NL Folk Arts Society Lifetime Achievement Award. In the mid-1970s, O'Hara collected over 130 audio reels-to-reels and tape cassettes of songs, stories, and music on Newfoundland's Cape Shore. In our interview, I asked O'Hara to describe a Newfoundland kitchen party, also referred to as a "time," a kitchen racket and a ceilidh. O'Hara said:

Well, a time is called by various names in Newfoundland. You have kitchen rackets, you have ceilidhs, all over the world now the word from the Gaelic language has gone into the vocabulary. Generally, everyone pretty well knows what a ceilidh is. It's a house gathering and people have rambling houses and you ramble in. It's a kitchen party, and you have a good time.

O'Hara's description of a "time" or kitchen party defines some important characteristics of the Newfoundland kitchen party: generally, it takes place in a person's home and a guest would need to have an established relationship with the host in order to "ramble in." In addition, O'Hara's research took place in the rural communities of the Cape Shore and the kitchen party is generally a rural tradition.

In "'Do You Play Newfoundland Music?': Tracking Traditional Music in the Tourist Imaginary," Holly Everett analyzes tourists' expectations and musicians' perceptions of traditional Newfoundland music. In her research, Everett finds that tourists were surprised that they could not find kitchen parties once they arrived in Newfoundland, and musicians were equally mystified by this expectation. Robert Walker, a musician in St. John's, said in an interview with Everett on January 29, 2015:

You know, they [the tourists] hear of the famous kitchen party, but they think they can pay five dollars to get into a kitchen party somewhere. And I say, well, no, that would be obviously a private, family, invite-only right?  
(Everett 2016, 117)

Walker's description begs the question, if the kitchen party is taken out of the kitchen, is it still a kitchen party? In St. John's, Quidi Vidi Brewery's kitchen parties take place every Friday and are a mainstay of their year-round entertainment. Before Quidi Vidi's taproom was renovated in 2018, the kitchen party event on Fridays was the only time the taproom was open. Aside from Secret Cove Brewing in Port au Port, which opened in 2018, I did not find any other rural breweries that were labeling live music as kitchen parties specifically.

On September 18, 2018, I interviewed Martha Nelson and Gavin Clarke, operators of the Skerwink Hostel, located a short walk from Port Rexton Brewing in Port Rexton, NL. Martha and Gavin have observed an increase in visitors to the hostel since the brewery opened in 2016 and have especially noticed more groups, such as student from Memorial University, coming from St. John's in the "shoulder seasons," or less popular tourist seasons of spring and fall.

Gavin described Port Rexton Brewing's weekly open mics as, "Not just a kitchen party. They're open to everybody, but it could turn into a kitchen a party." Gavin's comment is describing how the open mic event mimics the atmosphere of a kitchen party, but he specifies that the open mic event is different precisely because it is "open to everybody." Gavin's description, and the lack of events marketed as "kitchen parties" at rural breweries suggests that breweries outside of St. John's still define kitchen parties as primarily private events. In contrast, Quidi Vidi Brewery and Secret Cove Brewing are staging kitchen parties in their taprooms and opening an event that was limited to private, domestic spaces for tourist consumption. While they may not host kitchen parties, Port Rexton Brewing does host events characteristic of Newfoundland culture. Two examples are a Tibb's Eve celebration and card game nights to play 120s, a popular card game in the province.

Port Rexton Brewing began hosting "120s" card game nights in the winter of 2019. On January 22, 2019, Port Rexton Brewing posted the following caption on their Instagram account:

If Newfoundland & Labrador had their own card game, it would be "120s"! This game had traditionally been played between family, friends and neighbors in homes

or community halls. Since our taproom used to be a community hall in Port Rexton, we felt it was a perfect spot to host a monthly gathering for a night of playing "120s" this winter!

In this caption, the brewery points out that their taproom used to be a community hall, thereby presenting the building's history as one way they maintain a "traditional" venue for their card game nights. The Rooms, Newfoundland and Labrador's provincial art gallery and museum, also hosts "120s" gatherings. Their website reads: "Have you always wanted to learn how to play 120's but have never had the chance? Join our enthusiastic volunteer instructors as they share their love of this iconic card game." [5] As a provincial museum, The Rooms programming is intended to promote and preserve Newfoundland and Labrador culture. The inclusion of "120s" in their programming shows that this card game is considered a Newfoundland cultural activity. One difference between the game nights offered by The Rooms and those offered by Port Rexton Brewing is that The Rooms program also features volunteers that will teach attendees the card game, while the brewery is providing a place for people to gather and play. This suggests that these programs are aimed at different audiences. The Rooms, as a museum, attracts visitors to Newfoundland who would not know how to play "120s". On the other hand, Port Rexton Brewery is primarily catering to local residents or other Newfoundlanders taking trips from St. John's, and thus both these groups would be more likely to already know how to play "120s". Nonetheless, both The Rooms and Port Rexton Brewing are taking card games nights out of private homes and community halls into a more accessible venue where local residents and visitors can participate.

Tibb's Eve is a Newfoundland holiday celebrated on December 23 and is another example of an event traditionally held in the home that is being made accessible to the public through craft brewery events. In an article published in the Northern Pen on December 22, 2017, Paul Herridge interviews Dr. Phillip Hiscock, a professor in the Folklore department at Memorial University. Herridge writes:

As [Dr. Hiscock] explained it, sometime around World War Two, people along the south coast began to associate Dec. 23 with the phrase 'Tibb's Eve' and deemed it the first occasion it was acceptable to have a few Christmas tipples. In many of the outport communities, it became a day where the men would visit each other's homes for a taste. Because Christmas Eve was still a part of Advent and that observance was almost as sober as Lent, Dr. Hiscock indicated most traditional

Christians would never consider taking a nip before Christmas Day prior to World War Two, which was even then perhaps a little early.

On September 25, 2018, I interviewed Port Rexton Brewing co-owners Sonja Mills and Alicia McDonald in the Port Rexton Brewing taproom. Sonja is the co-owner of Port Rexton Brewing and married to fellow owner Alicia MacDonald. Sonja described the holiday Tibb's Eve as follows:

There's conflicting interpretations of where it originated, or how it originated, or what it's really supposed to be. I think it's of English origin, we have a lot of influences from England here [Newfoundland]... Anyway, the idea behind it is that people would, leading up the holidays, make their own booze. This was a way long time ago. And so you have your homebrew, you would have your moonshine, whatever your booze was that you made at home. Then you wanted to test before getting into the holidays, so you would crack open some batches of your homebrew, whatever the alcohol was, and it would end up being a party because it would get drunk. But now, it's basically become, everyone in the community, family, friends, gets together and parties.

Like kitchen parties, Tibb's Eve is usually a house party and an event that breweries have taken out of a private setting and into the taproom. As Sonja suggests, a brewery taproom is a natural setting for a Tibb's Eve party because the holiday is centered around consuming alcohol, especially homebrew. Friend and St. John's native Terra Barrett told me that Tibb's Eve is a night to party with friends before spending time with family on Christmas. During the week of Christmas, many people return to their hometowns to be with family, so Tibb's Eve is a time set aside for friends to reconnect.

Events like kitchen parties, Tibb's Eve celebrations, and card game nights open these Newfoundland experiences to outsiders, such as urban residents in Newfoundland, or tourists from outside the province. Especially in rural areas, such as Port Rexton, these events would either be hosted in the home or in community halls intended for residents, not visitors. By offering events marketed as characteristic of Newfoundland, craft brewery taprooms become sites to experience local culture for visitors.

As a new industry, craft breweries have also taken part in the revival of foraging in the province, again changing the custom even as they increase participation in foraging through the practice of open-sourcing foraged ingredients from consumers.

### **Foraging and Craft Beer**

Foraging is an active tradition in much of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially berry picking. In "A Welcoming Wilderness: The Role of Wild Berries in the Construction of Newfoundland and Labrador Tourist Destination," Holly Everett analyzes the role of berries and berry picking in the construction of the province as a tourist destination (Everett 2007). Specifically, Everett analyzes the history of berry picking in travel literature, as well as contemporary activities like berry festivals, and berry products such as wines and jams. In addition to its role in the tourism industry, berry picking is also one example of foraging on the island. In the following quote, Everett alludes to the stereotype of berry pickers as secretive and protective of their best berry patches: "Visitors to Newfoundland soon discover that islanders are passionate about their berries. There probably isn't a Newfoundlander who doesn't know of a decent berry patch, but just try to find out where they are" (Everett 2007). Everett's fieldwork took place from 2002 to 2005, but the culinary tourism surrounding foraged foods has only grown since. Visitors can eat foraged foods like chanterelle mushrooms at restaurants or participate in foraging tours where they pick their own berries, mushrooms, or seaweed.

On a cloudy morning on January 9, 2019, I met professional forager Shawn Dawson at the Georgetown Cafe in St. John's. Shawn, who also owns a small farm in Torbay named The Barking Kettle, has collaborated with the Newfoundland Distillery Company, Mill Street Brewery, and Quidi Vidi Brewery to produce beers featuring foraged ingredients. Some of the beers Shawn has helped create are: Mill Street's chaga mushroom porter, Mill Street's spruce tip Indian Pale Ale (IPA), a cranberry and rosehip beer from Mill Street, Quidi Vidi's New England IPA with pineapple weed, and a chaga rum with the Newfoundland Distillery Company.

Shawn has been foraging food since childhood. He grew up in Calvert on the Southern Shore in Newfoundland, where he learned to pick berries, dandelions and mussels. In 2016, Shawn learned how to forage mushrooms from books and began selling them to Chinch and Raymonds, two restaurants in downtown St. John's. In addition, chefs would ask Shawn for specific ingredients, such as sweet gale, and this would lead him to conduct his own research and add those plants to his repertoire. He views the growing



popularity of foraged ingredients in craft beer as part of the overall culinary movement in Newfoundland towards using more local ingredients:

When I first did it, it was only Chinch and Raymonds buying the mushrooms off me, but in the past three years, I've noticed such a movement in the food. The tourists are coming here to eat now. They know that Newfoundland is using wild ingredients and they want to taste the fish and all that.

Shawn pointed out that nationally-acclaimed restaurant Raymonds had a significant influence on the culinary scene in Newfoundland and the increasing popularity of wild ingredients. Even outside the gourmet food scene, the practice of foraging has also seen a resurgence in popularity among people in their 20s and 30s. As Shawn explained:

When I was doing it, people thought I was super weird. I would spend all my time going into the woods. I was always skateboarding and my friends would call me to go skateboarding, but I'd be in the woods, like I can't. People thought I was a bit strange at first, and even the parents and stuff, they knew I was always into it, but you can't pick berries for ten hours, you got to go out and get a job. But it was weird and now, like you said, it's super cool.

The use of wild ingredients in restaurants combined with an increase in the practice of foraging among Newfoundlanders and tourists made foraged beers a natural addition to Newfoundland's craft beer offerings. One of the more unique characteristics of the Newfoundland craft beer and liquor industry is the practice of open sourcing for foraged ingredients. The Newfoundland Distillery asked Shawn to forage juniper berries for their gin, but also released a call on social media for people to bring them juniper berries. As Shawn explained to me, "everybody grew up picking berries," so it made sense to assume that consumers could donate their foraged berries. Similarly, Quidi Vidi Brewery produced a series of foraged beers in the summer of 2019 called "Open Saison" and put out a call for crabapples on social media. Shawn told me that although he did pick some apples for them, it was a "bad year for crabapples" and Quidi Vidi would not have been able to produce this beer without the contributions of everyone who foraged for them. Without the collective effort and knowledge of Newfoundlanders and the continued practice of foraging on the island, foraged beers would be less common because they often rely on community involvement.

Although restaurant meals with foraged ingredients have increased in popularity, they are still mainstays of the more expensive offerings in downtown St. John's or finer

dining establishments in rural Newfoundland such as The Boreal Harvest in Bonavista. Beer is not only a cheaper way for people to try foraged ingredients, craft beer is supported by consumers because it is made locally. As Shawn told me: "There's a lot more people that are willing to spend a few extra dollars and buy a good beer...There's not a ton of money here right now, but people are still willing to come to the Farmers Market and buy local." Like the produce and crafts on sale at the Farmers Market, people are willing to buy craft beer because it is produced in Newfoundland. Craft breweries use of foraged ingredients show how the industry is both drawing on Newfoundland heritage and customs for the ir branding, events and even flavors, while also tapping into current trends like the increased popularity in wild ingredients.

While heritage branding consists of drawing on past constructions of cultural identity, craft breweries are also engaged in folkloric branding that reflects contemporary Newfoundland culture and complicates the established presentation of Newfoundland identity. In the following section, I explore how Port Rexton Brewing represents contemporary Newfoundland culture in their branding.

### **Contemporary Newfoundland Culture in Craft Beer Branding**

Port Rexton Brewing's folkloric branding references local people and places, but resists the static, quaint marketing perpetuated by The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Tourism, Culture and Innovation. The department's promotional videos present Newfoundland as a place you can "go back to," as if travelling to Newfoundland can transport visitors to a simpler time. The ads feature subdued music, beautiful nature scenes of whales, icebergs, and sunrises, boats, and the ubiquitous clothesline with white sheets or patterned quilts. The videos do not show technology like cell phones or cars. They only hint at the fact that most Newfoundlanders are not fishermen. [5]

Newfoundland is not the only place where rural life is presented as existing in a simplified past while these communities face instability and change. Maria Kennedy's research also considers the construction of rural identity through the "cider poetic," or cider making and the cultural performance surrounding craft cider production in Britain. Kennedy explains that as Britain's countryside grapples with globalization and instability, "the cider poetic represents and active arena for refashioning of rural heritage discourse"

(Kennedy 2017, 28). I think Newfoundland craft breweries are also "refashioning" rural representation through beer branding.

For example, one beer I found interesting is Port Rexton Brewery's annual collaboration beer, produced with the breweries that opened on the island in the past year. I have analyzed examples of folkloric branding of individual breweries, but the collaboration beer is a way to examine how multiple craft breweries come together to represent Newfoundland. The label of the 2018 collaboration beer, named "Next Generation," reads:

Next Generation is a celebration of the growing NL craft beer community with new microbreweries collaborating to create and brew a new beer together, promoting positive vibes all around. We've invited all new breweries that opened in 2018 to join us in this fun new beer series.

The beer label depicts an artistic rendering of a map of Newfoundland with red triangles that mark the locations of the breweries. On this map are minimalist graphics, which are also printed on Port Rexton's merchandise. If this beer is a tangible embodiment of Newfoundland's craft beer industry in 2018, the label is a composite representation of Newfoundland identity. On the map, graphics of a cruise ship, a hiker, icebergs, a camping trailer, a kayaker, moose, and lighthouses represent the island as an outdoors destination. In this context, cod fishing appears to be more of a cultural past time than an industry, which it has become by necessity of the 1992 cod moratorium (Shibley 2017, 21). These images show a move away from solely connecting Newfoundland's environment with fishing towards a more general representation of nature and outdoors recreation.

### **Cultural Codes: Levels of Understanding the "Next Generation" Label**

As LeBlanc theorizes, folkloric branding can communicate messages to consumers who understand and identify with insider cultural codes, in this example local residents or other Newfoundlanders, while also representing that group to outsiders, such as tourists or non-Newfoundlanders like myself. Geographer Derrek Eberts interprets cultural codes, or "cultural signals," as inherently tied to place. Eberts theorizes that craft brewery marketing utilizes cultural signals that connect to consumers' sense of identity, which is often tied to place. Eberts states: "the relationship between branding and place indicates that brands and marketing strategies can be understood differently by people in different places

precisely because of the variation in meaning of 'cultural signals' from place to place" (Eberts 2014, 192). Based on this premise, Eberts posits that craft breweries often have a difficult time expanding beyond their geographical consumer base, such as producing beer at a national level, because their branding is not understood by consumers in other places (Eberts 2014, 197). In my own experience, I found that Newfoundland brewery marketing did appeal to an insider that cultural codes that were unclear to me as an American. For example, when I first moved to Newfoundland in 2017, beer names such as Quidi Vidi's Amber Ale, named 1892, had little meaning to me. I later learned that 1892 was the year that the city of St John's suffered a devastating fire. The beer itself was first brewed in 1995.

After taking multiple trips to Port Rexton for my research and interviewing brewery co-owner Sonja Mills about these images, I gained multiple perspectives of Port Rexton Brewing's branding. I was able to understand the brewery's branding like other tourists as a representation of rural Newfoundland and different recreational activities a visitor could participate in. As a researcher, I understood that images relating to the fishery have a significant historical context. From an insider perspective, I began to recognize local landmarks in this imagery.

While outsiders may be able to identify some of these images and connect them to Newfoundland, some are also specific landmarks in Port Rexton. For example, the graphics of the moose, evergreen trees, and the bears fit this construction of Newfoundland as an outdoors destination. Ocean images, such as the boat, kayak, and lighthouse allude to Newfoundland's island geography. However, these symbols may have another meaning to Newfoundlanders familiar with the area; the boat is a cod fishing trawl, the cabin is actually a specific fishing shed located in Ship Cove, NL. A particular rock formation called a sea stack, also seen on the Skerwink Trail, is depicted. As my example shows, Port Rexton's merchandise can be interpreted differently by different consumers and, as LeBlanc suggests, convey cultural codes to different audiences. For residents of the Bonavista Peninsula, the brewery's merchandise depicts well-known landmarks. For those less familiar with the area, these graphics represent the bay as a destination for outdoors activities like hiking, camping and fishing.

### Conclusion

In this article, I considered the ways craft breweries simultaneously integrate Newfoundland's past and present into their branding, events and even flavors. As a new industry to the island, craft breweries frame their products as local through heritage branding such as mummers, kitchen parties and the island's unique language. At the same time, breweries like Port Rexton embrace their newness by reinterpreting representations of rural Newfoundland as a region in decline. The entrepreneurial energy of these small breweries is captured in the ways they present themselves and their communities as vibrant and desirable destinations. Although beyond the scope of this article, further research could explore if craft breweries are actively reviving local customs, such as foraging and kitchen parties, beyond the walls of their taprooms and if craft brewery taprooms can be considered sites of heritage tourism, despite the newness of the craft beer industry in the region.

*Natalie Dignam recently graduated with her M.A. in Folklore from Memorial University of Newfoundland. Her thesis explores the craft beer boom on the island of Newfoundland, from homebrewers and beer enthusiasts to professional brewers. Natalie homebrews with Queer Beer NL (on Instagram as @queerbeerNL) and produces the Newfoundland Beer Podcast.*

### Notes

- [1] Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism. *Newfoundland and Labrador Language Lessons* (Playlist). June 30, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/user/NewfoundlandLabrador/playlists>. Accessed April 25, 2019.
- [2] Ibid.
- [3] "The bay," a colloquial term referring to rural Newfoundland outside of St. John's, the province's largest city, which is referred to as "town."
- [4] A taproom is any place where alcoholic drinks are served, but in the craft beer industry, the taproom has taken on specific characteristics. A craft beer taproom is the designated seating area where customers are served drinks. The taproom is usually located in the same building as the area where the beer is made (called the "brewhouse"). Patrons can often see the brewhouse floor and observe the beer being made from where they sit. Common barriers between the taproom and brewhouse include fences, glass walls, or walls with windows.
- [5] *The Rooms*, "Learn to Play '120s'." <https://www.therooms.ca/programs-events/for-adults/orientation-tours-workshops/learn-to-play-120s>. Accessed July 13, 2019.
- [6] My opinion of the Newfoundland and Labrador tourism videos was informed by watching the promotional videos on the department's website. Accessed on April 25, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/user/NewfoundlandLabrador/videos>.

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## Figures

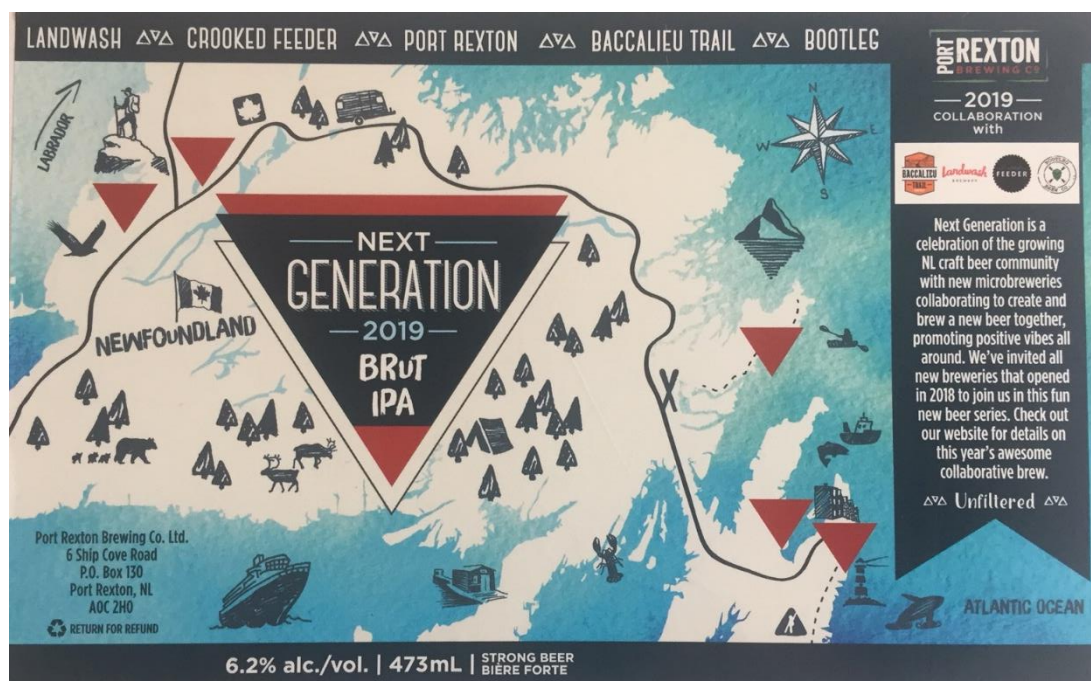


Fig. 4.1— The label for a can of the beer “Next Generation” layed flat. The red triangles are locations of craft breweries in Newfoundland.  
(Photo by Natalie Dignam.)



Fig. 4.2—Port Rexton Brewing's "teku" glass and a can of the "Next Generation" Brute IPA. This photo shows the similar graphics on the glass and beer label.  
(Photo by Natalie Dignam.)





Fig. 4.3—Port Rexton Brewing's stainless steel growlers feature the same minimalist graphics as the glassware.  
(Photo by Natalie Dignam.)



Fig. 4.4—Close up of the "sea stack" graphic on Port Rexton Brewing's glassware.  
(Photo by Natalie Dignam.)