

What Shapes Culture?

How does the media shape your culture?

How do you think families who fished for generations reacted to the cod moratorium of 1992?

Introduction

Culture is strongly influenced by a number of factors or forces. In this section, and throughout this text, we will explore four forces in particular: economic factors, geographical factors, historical factors, and political factors. These factors are mostly cultural in character. Thus, cultural factors affect culture in various ways. How can this be?

Economic Factors

The way people make a living – the jobs performed, the occupations and professions pursued, the products produced, and services provided – represent an important cultural component of their existence. Big economic events always seem to make headlines because they can influence what we do for a living, how we spend our money, and even where we live. The following are examples of the types of topics that often catch our attention. Do you think these topics would affect your lifestyle? Your community? How?

- The price of oil
- Interest rates
- Unemployment
- Exchange rate for the Canadian dollar
- New businesses opening
- An industry in decline

Geographical Factors

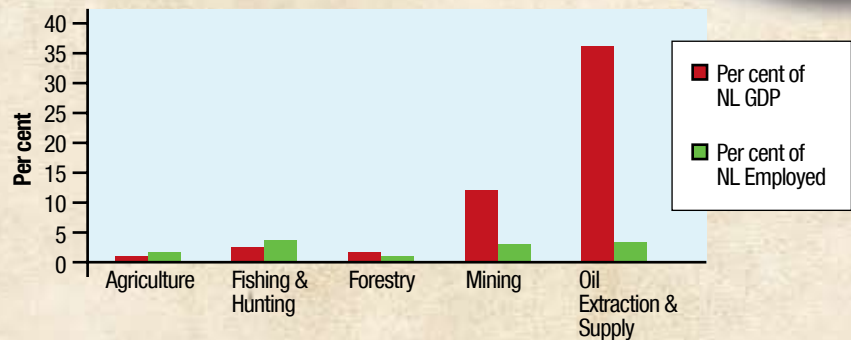
While not always obvious, factors such as the natural environment, the locations where we live, and the resources accessible can influence the way we make a living and many other aspects of our lives (e.g., sports and recreation, foods we eat, clothing we wear). How have the following factors influenced the development of cultural traits and patterns in our province?

- Marine resources
- Forests
- Water resources
- Minerals
- Oil
- Soil

1.12

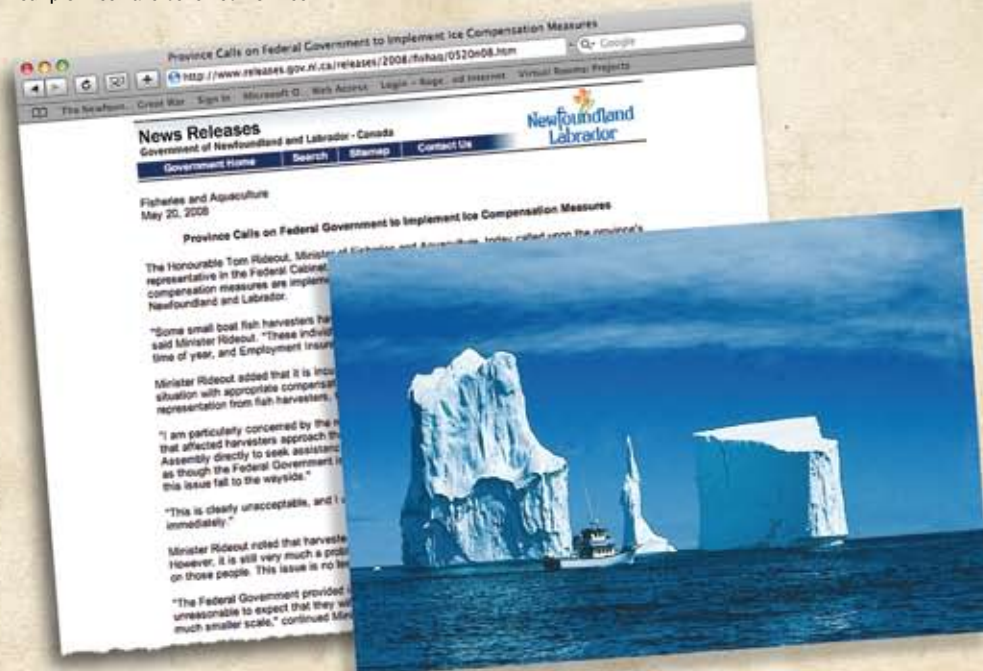


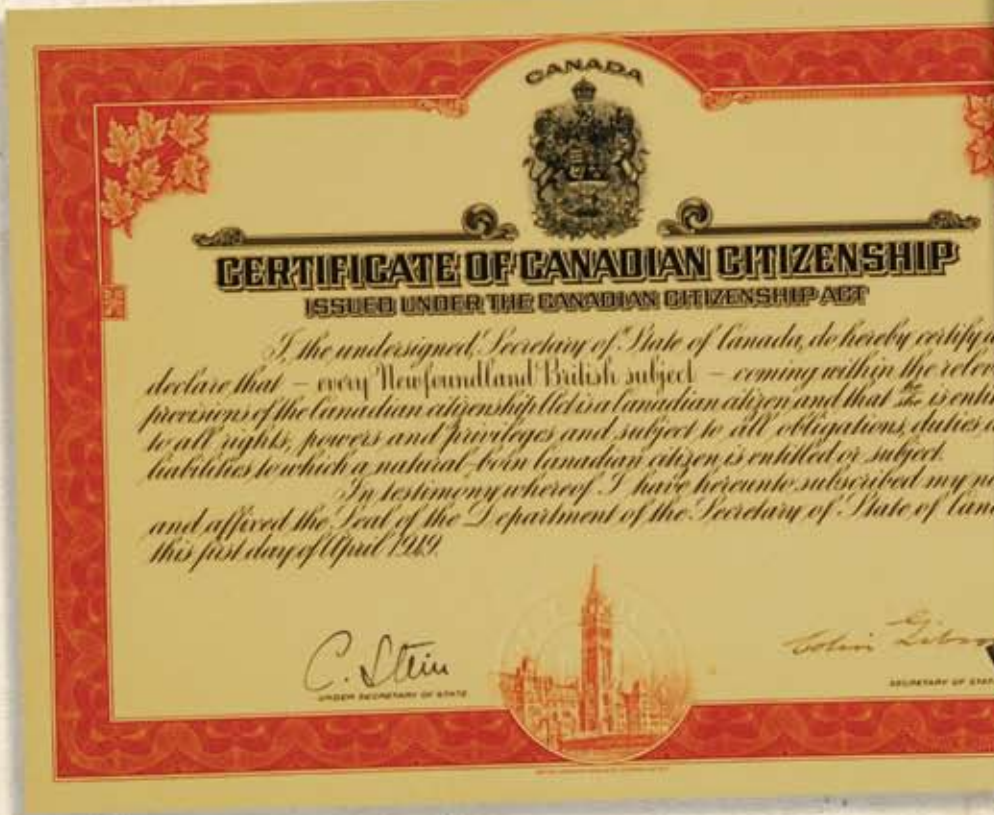
1.13 2007-08 Gross Domestic Product and Employment



1.14 A geographic feature may have a positive and negative effect.

Other than contributing to tourism, can you think of another way that people in our province have benefited from ice?





1.15 Pieces of our history

(top) Certificate of Canadian citizenship granting all Newfoundland British subjects Canadian citizenship after Confederation; (top right) a photograph showing a man gutting cod fish on St. John's waterfront, 1939; (right) a camping kettle, mid-1900s



1.16 From *The Telegram*, March 27, 2009

Historical Factors

History relates to our everyday lives. Think about the many customs passed on to us from the past, such as holiday observances, recreational activities, and even sports traditions. History has influenced what country we belong to and what language(s) we speak. Take a few moments and create a list of artifacts, sociofacts, and mentifacts that have been a part of your culture for 100 years or more.

Political Factors

Political issues are frequently a focus of news reports. Have you ever wondered why? The decisions made by municipal, provincial, and federal governments directly impact our lives and, therefore, shape our culture. How might the following political decisions influence your way of life? How might these decisions influence our culture?



- Taxes are raised or lowered
- A new law is passed
- The delivery of government services changes

Question:

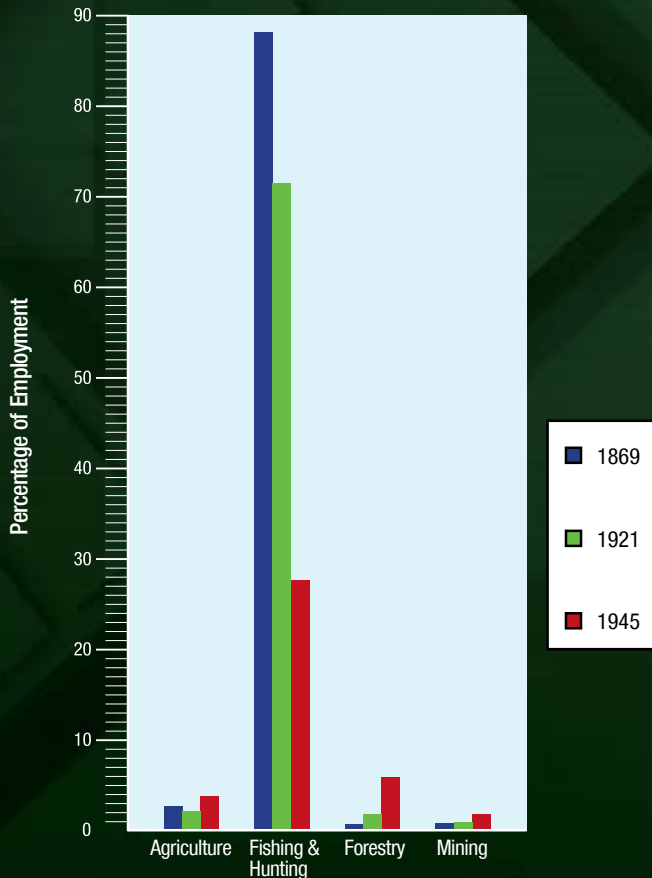
Give examples from your community/area or from the province to show how economic factors, geographical factors, historical factors, and political factors affect your culture today.

DIMENSIONS OF THINKING

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Consider the main sources of modern and past employment in the province (see Figures 1.17 and 1.18). Clearly, over time the percentage of people employed in these areas has changed drastically.

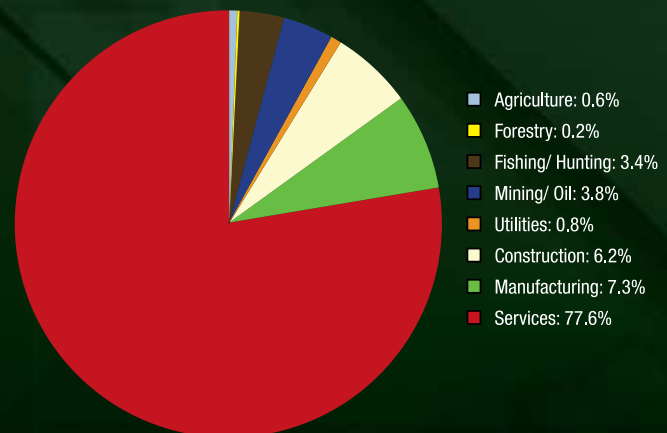
1.17 Employment by industry for Newfoundland and Labrador



Understanding change is a key idea in the study of culture. To do this, the social scientist needs data from different time periods. This information could then be analyzed to identify possible trends, explore contributing factors, and consider the consequences of the change.

Equally important is being able to identify constancy over time. For example, understanding that the fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador has been a primary source of employment for almost 500 years helps us to better appreciate how deeply rooted the culture of “this place” is.

1.18 Per cent of total Newfoundland and Labrador employment by industry 2007



Questions:

1. What area(s) of employment have changed the most?
2. Have new activities been established and become more important?

CASE STUDY

In 1992, the federal government announced a temporary closure of the cod fishery. The announcement raised many questions. What created this situation? What were the consequences of this action? How has/will it affect the culture of Newfoundland and Labrador?

In order to examine a complex issue like this, it is useful to consider it from various perspectives. That is where the various disciplines in the social studies come in. An economist, geographer, historian, and political scientist would each have valuable insights, which together would help create a comprehensive analysis of the situation.

1.19 *The Evening Telegram*, July 2, 1992



Political Scientist: What does the government need to do to meet the needs of the displaced workers in the short term? What changes in fisheries management policies are needed? What actions are necessary to ensure that the needs and interests of displaced fishers are addressed in the long term?

Geographer: What has happened to this resource? Will this create a new set of pull-push factors that will affect population distribution?

Economist: What will be the immediate economic impact of 30 000 workers being displaced? How will this affect other businesses? What will it cost in terms of social programs?

Historian: What happened in the fishery in the past that brought us to this point? How significant will this event be? Is it a tipping point or a turning point?