



1.25 Mumbai, India (above), Toronto (top right), and Gander (right)

## TOPIC 1.5

# Geography and Culture

How would you feel if you lived in a city where there are 30 000 people per square kilometre?

What advantages and disadvantages are there to living in a big city or a small village?

## Introduction

Can you think of reasons why Mumbai, India has 30 000 people per square kilometre, while Toronto has fewer than 3000 per square kilometre, and Gander has fewer than 100 per square kilometre? Part of the answer can be found in the natural environments, or geographic factors, of these urban centres. In this context, geography focuses on three main questions: **Where are things located? Why are they there? How might this be important?** Or as geographer Charles Gritzner puts it: “What is where? Why there? Why care?”

Geography is another lens through which we can examine culture. Two fundamental concepts in geography are **site** and **situation**. The site of a place refers to its **absolute location** (a position described in terms of latitude and longitude) and

the natural and human features that are found there. The situation of a place refers to its location in relation to its surroundings – in other words, its **relative location**. Elements of situation include its accessibility to resources and its connectedness to other places.

The different aspects of site and situation affect peoples’ lifestyles in many ways. For example, the traditional foods of Newfoundland and Labrador come from products immediately available here – such as fish, berries, and caribou. Likewise, many of our contemporary recreational activities, including snowmobiling, skiing, and hiking, are connected to the natural features of our landscape. Can you suggest ways in which our climate and landscape affect where people live?

How good is your geography? Take a blank piece of paper and sketch an outline of the province. When you’re done, compare it to an actual map.



# WHAT MAKES US WHO WE ARE?

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries some geographers believed in environmental determinism. This was the belief that the physical environment is the primary factor in determining human behaviour. Groups of people who lived in similar environments (landscapes, climates, etc.) should have similar patterns of behaviour.

As more and more studies were done, it was discovered that people often responded in different ways to the same kind of environment. It was recognized that the environment does not dictate how people behave, but rather that people make choices among different possibilities. This led to the development of the term possibilism.

Possibilism allows that people sometimes make choices based upon environmental conditions, but also upon preferences which are often guided by their history and culture. For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador most people once fished because fish were bountiful (environmental factor). At the same time, some chose to farm, even though soils were not particularly good (preference).



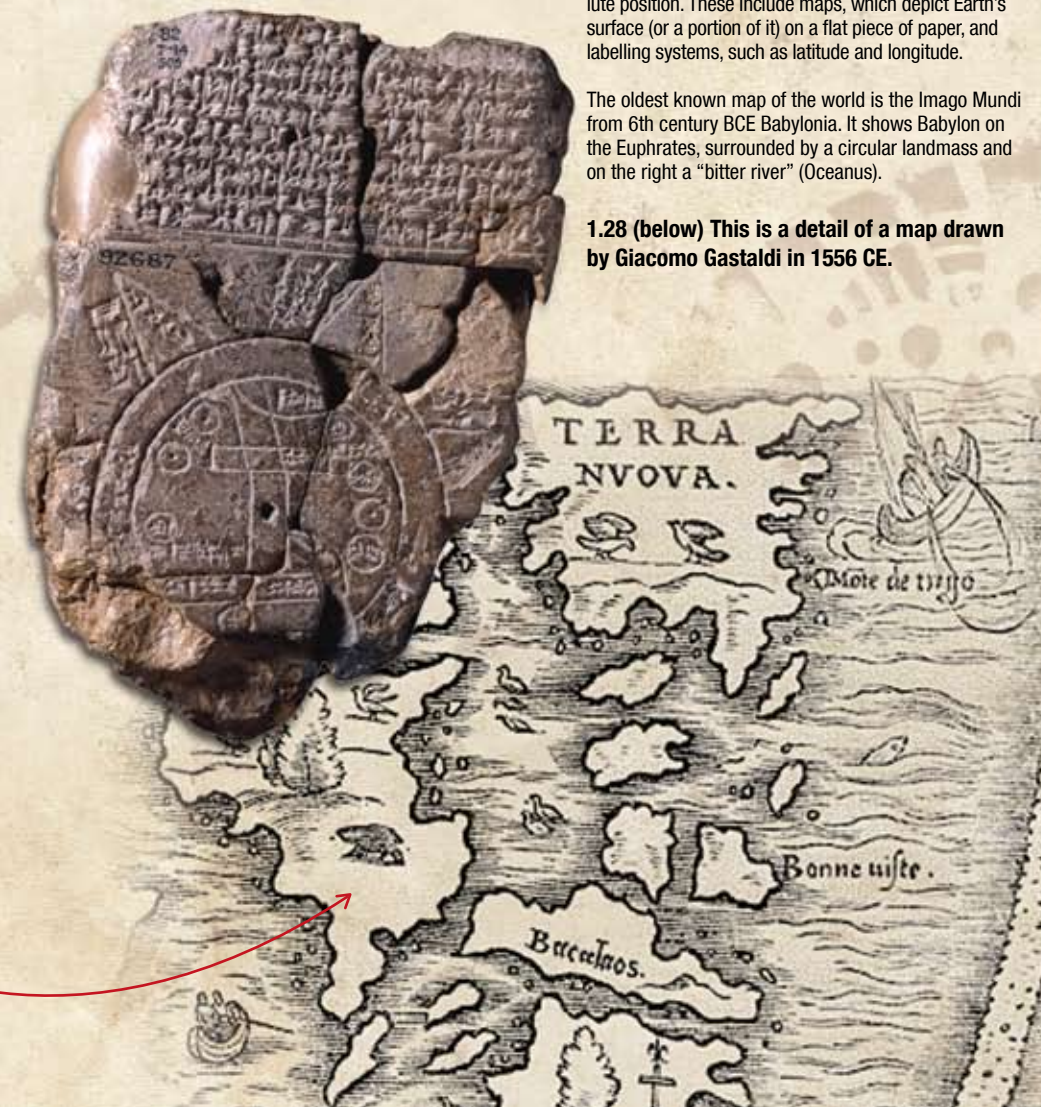
1.26 (above) How are these activities related to natural environment?

1.27 (left) The oldest known map

Throughout history, humans have developed a variety of ways to relay information to others about a place's absolute position. These include maps, which depict Earth's surface (or a portion of it) on a flat piece of paper, and labelling systems, such as latitude and longitude.

The oldest known map of the world is the Imago Mundi from 6th century BCE Babylonia. It shows Babylon on the Euphrates, surrounded by a circular landmass and on the right a "bitter river" (Oceanus).

1.28 (below) This is a detail of a map drawn by Giacomo Gastaldi in 1556 CE.



1.29







### 1.30 Portugal Cove, Newfoundland and Labrador

From the information shown here, explain how site and situation influenced the development of this town. Now, consider the site and situation of your own community. What is the reason your community exists? Is it a result of site or situation or both?

## Geography and Population Distribution

Site and situation can influence population distribution. Throughout history, humans tended to locate their homes near resources – such as fresh water, fertile soil, and natural food sources. The location of resources is a much less important factor in explaining where people live today than formerly. Today most people in developed countries reside in or near large cities. The trend toward greater urbanization is now global – occurring everywhere. Why is this? What are the advantages of living in or near cities? Why are great cities located where they are?



### 1.32 As you can see from this image, population distribution tends to be heavier along coastlines.

Population distribution is represented here as a night scene with population being represented by lights. If lights represent population distribution, where on this map should they be brighter?



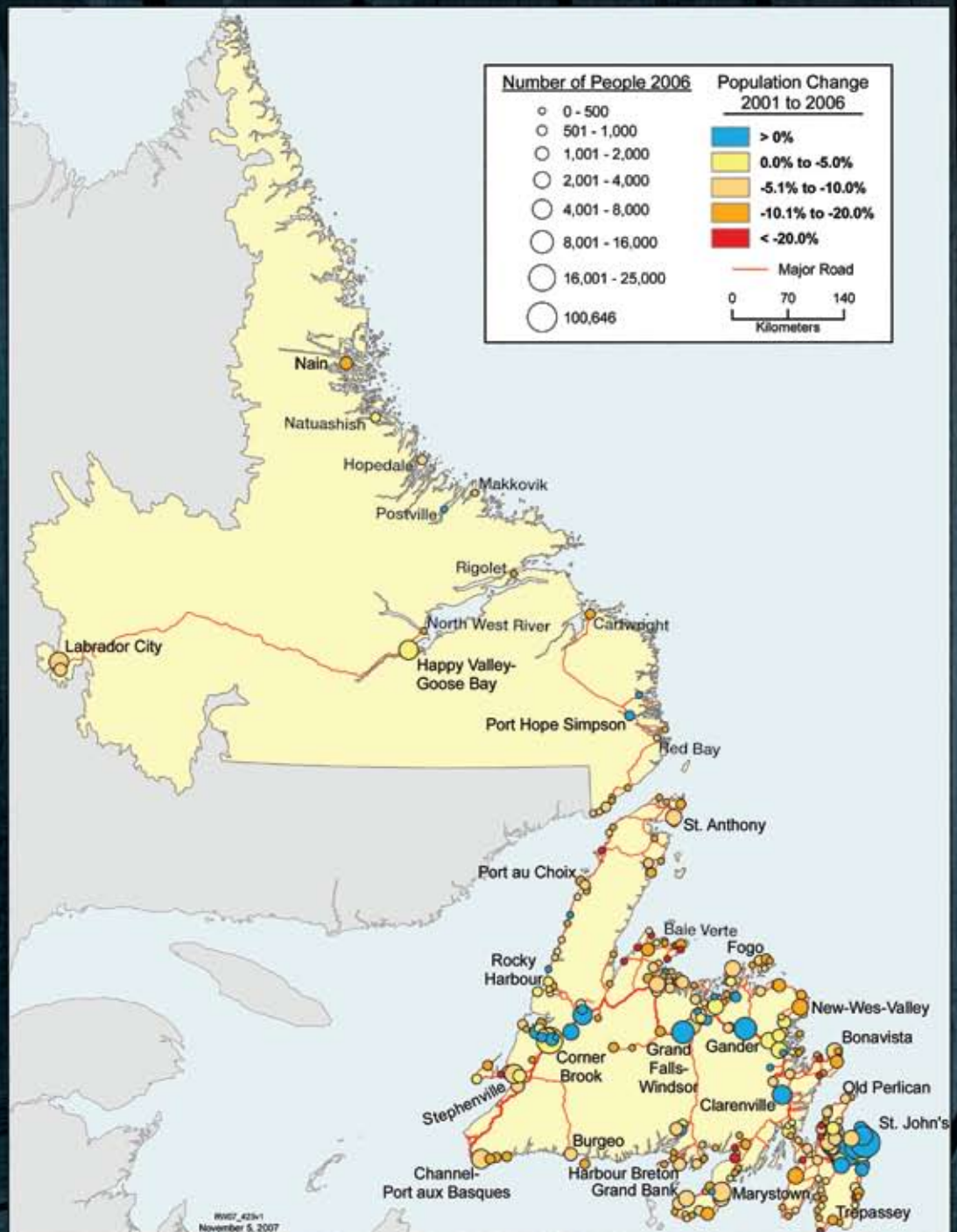


# CASE STUDY

## Looking at Population Distribution

CONSIDER HOW THE POPULATION DISTRIBUTION of the province is changing. The majority of communities are located along the coastline. However, based on recent trends, Newfoundland and Labrador is becoming increasingly urban.

1.33 Population distribution in Newfoundland and Labrador



### Questions:

1. What accounts for this trend?
2. How will this trend affect the culture of the province?



## Geography and Economy

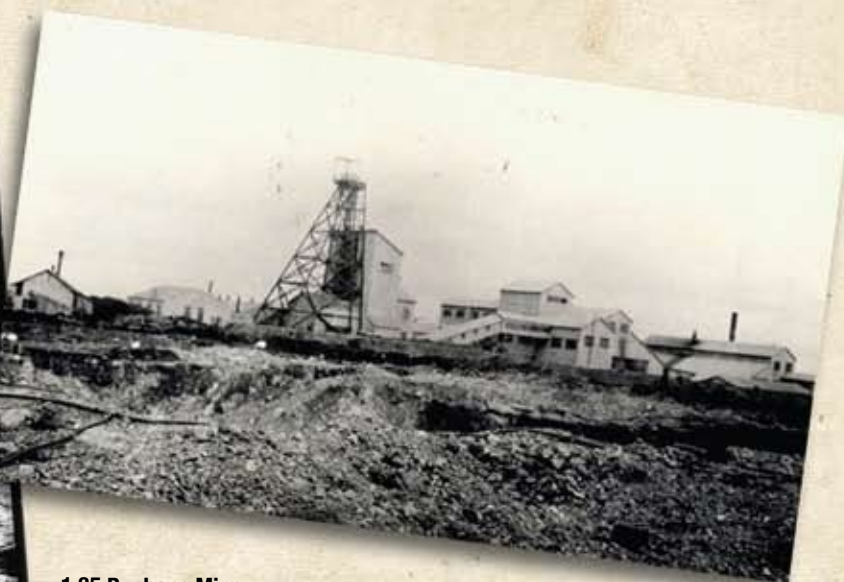
A place's economy and its location (site and situation) are often strongly interconnected. In many cases, the natural **endowments** or qualities of an area are what first attracted inhabitants. Endowments used to meet basic human needs are called **resources**. Some resources are easily accessed and used – such as soil to grow crops – while others are more complex. Rocks, for example, are a nuisance for farming but can be used to build fences and buildings; fossil fuels like coal or oil must be extracted and processed before they are useful.

Which endowments are considered resources can vary over time and depend on economic or political factors. For instance, hats made of beaver pelts were once very popular in Europe. The abundance of beaver in eastern

North America, and its proximity to Europe, fuelled an industry that contributed to the settlement of Canada by Europeans. However, the supply of (and demand for) beaver pelts declined over the nineteenth century due to over-exploitation of the resource, the expansion of agriculture into beaver habitat, and a shift in fashion favouring silk hats.

In order for a resource to be **viable** it must be possible for it to be extracted and delivered to consumers in a cost-effective manner. Thus, how close an endowment is to its market and/or a transportation network (that is, its relative location) is often an important factor in the decision whether or not to develop it as a resource.

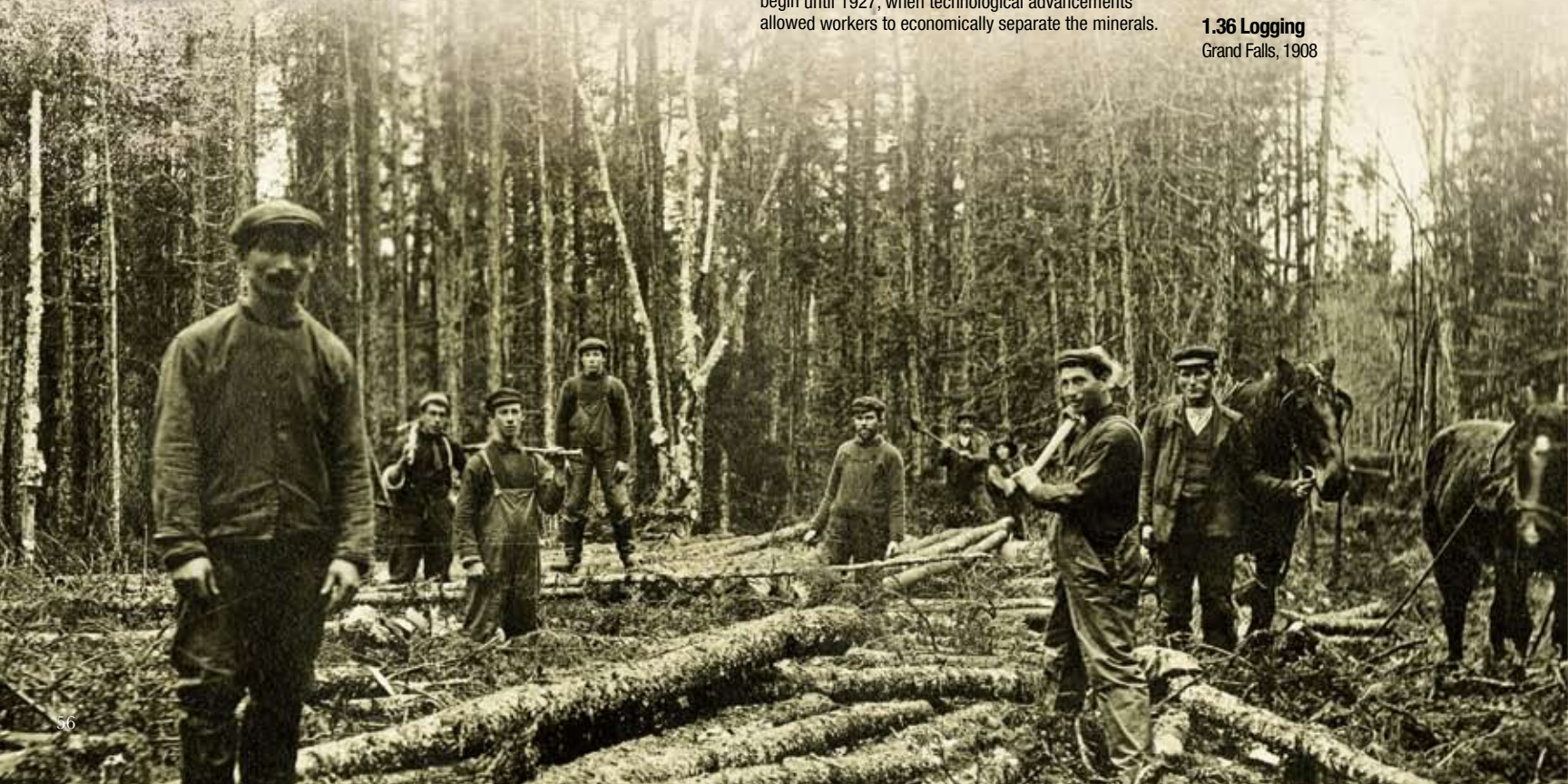
1.34 Cod drying at A.H. Murray's fishing premises in St. John's, c. 1900



1.35 Buchans Mine

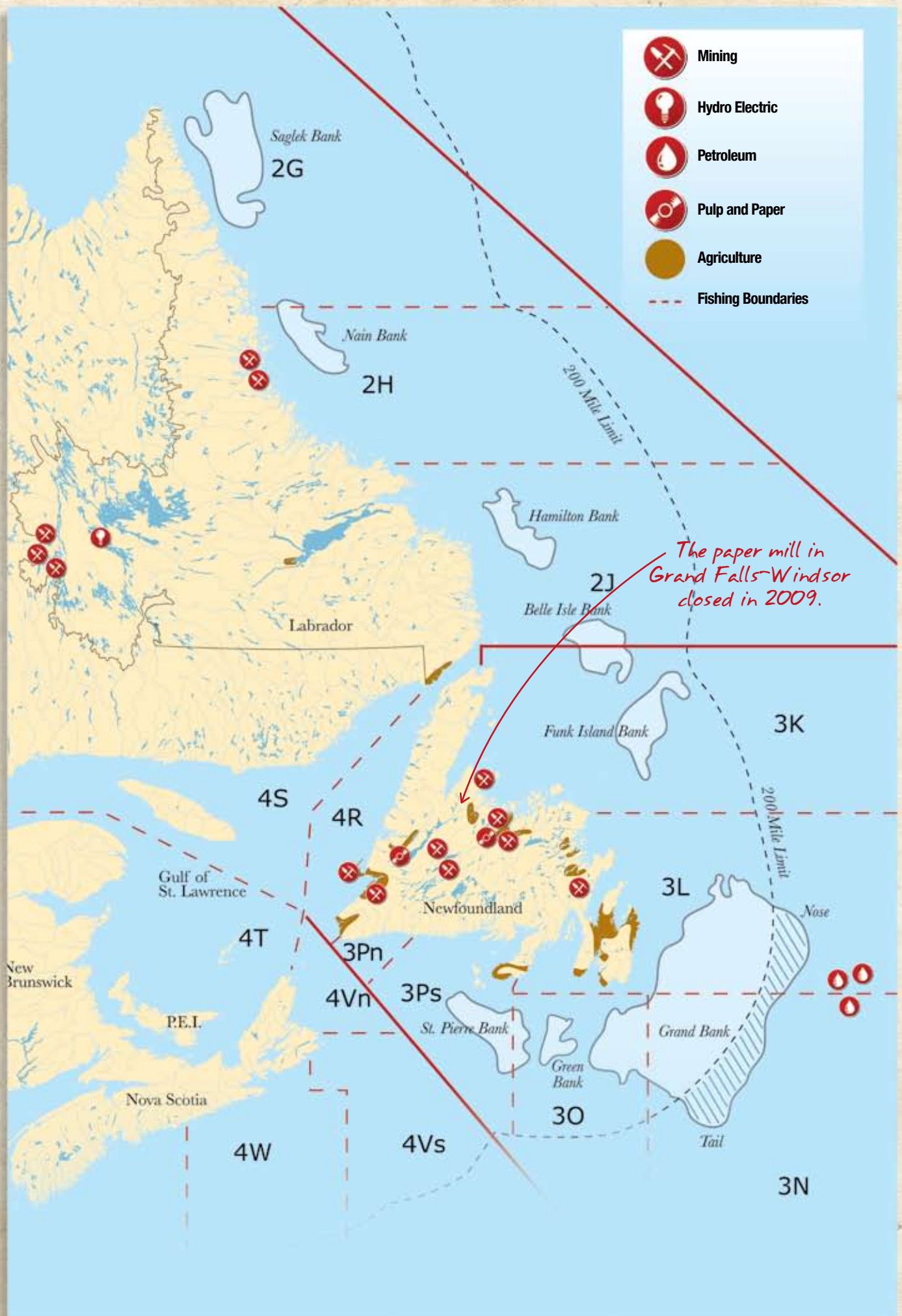
In 1905, the Anglo-Newfoundland Development (AND) Company discovered zinc, lead, copper, gold, and silver mineral deposits near the Buchans River in central Newfoundland. However, mining in the area didn't begin until 1927, when technological advancements allowed workers to economically separate the minerals.

1.36 Logging  
Grand Falls, 1908





**1.37 Natural resources developed for export by Newfoundland and Labrador**  
Which primary resources are being exploited in your area of the province?







## Geography and Expressions of Culture

In addition to influencing where people live and how they make a living, geography can also affect how an individual sees the world and interacts with it. The natural and cultural elements of an area tend to create a sense of place. This is a geographic perspective that comes from the combined experiences of the place's inhabitants and reflects what it is like to live in that location. The fact that people in different parts of the world can experience a different sense of place (even

→ *The reverse is also true – culture can shape geography. For instance, improper farming practices can cause erosion, and poor forestry practices can lead to deforestation and even climate change.*

when they live in areas with similar physical features and climate) means social practices and natural features in one location do not necessarily mean the same as they do to people in another location.

Expressions of culture are often influenced by a sense of place. In Newfoundland and Labrador, many of our sayings, stories, art, and other artistic expressions are about the sea and/or other features of our landscape. Likewise, much of our music reflects our experience with the sea. Inspiration from our geography can be found in the odes to Newfoundland and to Labrador; traditional songs such as “Jack Was Every Inch a Sailor” and “I’se the B’y,” and contemporary songs such as Great Big Sea’s “Fisherman’s Lament” and Wayne Chaulk’s “Saltwater Joys.”

**“At the intersection of culture and geography, you’ll find art and science, individuals and communities, history and current events. You’ll see how a mountain in the distance can inspire a Sufi poet, how a river blocking a passage occupies a civil engineer and ship builder alike ...”**

– From *Culture and Geography* ([www.beyondbooks.com/wcu91/index.asp](http://www.beyondbooks.com/wcu91/index.asp))

1.39

## Ode To Newfoundland

Written by Sir Cavendish Boyle (1904)

When sun rays crown  
thy pine-clad hills,  
And summer  
spreads her hand,  
When silvern voices  
tune thy rills,  
We love thee, smiling land.  
We love thee, we love thee,  
We love thee, smiling land.

When spreads thy cloak  
of shimmering white,

At winter’s stern command,  
Thro’ shortened day  
and starlit night,  
We love thee, frozen land.  
We love thee, we love thee  
We love thee, frozen land.

When blinding storm  
gusts fret thy shore,  
And wild waves lash thy strand,  
Thro’ spindrift swirl,  
and tempest roar,

We love thee wind-swept land.  
We love thee, we love thee  
We love thee wind-swept land.

As loved our fathers, so we love,  
Where once they stood, we stand;  
Their prayer we raise to  
Heaven above,  
God guard thee, Newfoundland  
God guard thee, God guard thee,  
God guard thee, Newfoundland.





1.40

## Saltwater Joys

Words and music by Wayne Chaulk (©1989)

Just to wake up in the morning,  
to the quiet of the cove  
And to hear Aunt Bessie  
talking to herself  
And to hear poor Uncle John,  
mumbling wishes to old Nell  
It made me feel that everything  
was fine.

I was born down by the water,  
it's here I'm gonna stay  
I've searched for all the reasons  
why I should go away  
But I haven't got the thirst  
for all those modern day toys  
So I'll just take my chances  
with those saltwater joys.

Following the little brook as  
it trickles to the shore  
In the autumn when the  
trees are flaming red  
Kicking leaves that

fall around me  
Watching sunsets paint the hills  
That's all I'll ever need to  
feel at home.

This island that we cling to has been  
handed down with pride  
By folks that fought to live here,  
taking hardships all in stride  
So I'll compliment her beauty, hold  
on to my goodbyes  
And I'll stay and take my chances  
with those saltwater joys.

How can I leave those mornings  
with the sunrise on the cove  
And the gulls like flies surrounding  
Clayton's wharf  
Platter's Island wrapped in rainbow  
in the evening after fog  
The ocean smells are  
perfume to my soul.

Some go to where the buildings  
reach to meet the clouds  
Where warm and gentle people turn  
to swarmin', faceless crowds  
So I'll do without their riches,  
glamour and the noise  
And I'll stay and take my chances  
with those saltwater joys.

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## Questions:

1. Create a chart that summarizes the main endorsements or attributes of your community or region. Use the headings *site* and *situation*. Compare your responses with a partner's.
2. Refer to Fig. 1.33 on page 55 "Population Distribution." In relation to your community:
  - a. What is the population distribution trend?
  - b. What are the pull-push factors contributing to this trend?
  - c. How might this trend affect the distribution
3. What is the most significant feature of your community or region in geographic terms today? Is this different from 100 years ago? Explain.

of infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals?  
d. Assuming the current trend continues, how would the urbanization of the province's population impact the way of life in areas that are experiencing (i) population decline and (ii) population growth?

1.41

