

Why not settle here?

How do you think it would have felt to winter in Newfoundland and Labrador for the first time?

Would you consider going to an unknown, unexplored place? Why or why not?

Introduction

Although Europeans had been coming to Newfoundland and Labrador to fish since the early 1500s, year-round governance and large-scale settlement of the colony were slow to take place. It was not until 1729 that Britain posted winter magistrates on the island and not until the late 1700s (about 300 years after the start of the migratory fishery) that a European resident population of any size developed. Why was this so?

The short answer is that it wasn't necessary to set up a settled colony to run a summer fishery. Also, there was little work here for people in the winter. While there was some speculation that there were other resources to be exploited in Newfoundland and Labrador, these industries had yet to be established. Economically, it made more

sense for fishers to go back to England and France to find other sources of employment during the fishing off-season than to settle here. This established annual migrations as a pattern of living for many people for several centuries.

During this time period, many European countries "conquered" territories throughout the world. Typically, they would take the natural resources of the area and use them for their own benefit, often at the expense of the inhabitants. This same pattern occurred in Newfoundland and Labrador. Consequently, there was little "accumulation of capital" here – the wealth derived from the resources of Newfoundland and Labrador was transferred to the mother countries, leaving little behind with which to build infrastructure.

EUROPEAN

Names in Newfoundland dating before 1700

From *Family Names from the Island of Newfoundland*, by E.R. Seary

2.65 Although Newfoundland and Labrador was little more than a seasonal fishing station in the 1500s and 1600s, a few European family names date to this time period.

Adams	Davies	Hefford	Marshall	Smith
Andrews	Davis	Hibbs	Martin	Snow
Atkins	Dawe	Hill	Matthews	Spingle
	Downing	Hinds	May	Stephens
Badcock		Holloway	Miller	Stone
Bailey	Earl	Holwell	Moores	Swain
Baker	Edwards	Hopen	Mugford	
Batten	Elliott	Hopkins		Talbot
Boone	England	Horton	Newell	Tavernor
Bradley	Evans	Howard	Newman	Taylor
Burt		Hunt		Thistle
Butler	Feild	Jewer	Parsons	Thoms
Butt	Fillier	Johnson	Pearce	Tilley
	Ford		Pearcey	Tucker
Caines	French		Pollard	
Carter		Keyes	Poole	Wallis
Cole	Gabriel	King	Powell	Warren
Collins	Garland	Kirk	Pynn	Webb
Cooke	Genge	Knight		Welshman
Corbin	Gifford		Robbins	Windsor
Cotton	Godfrey	Land	Roberts	
Cox	Good	Lee	Rolands	Yard
Crewes	Gregory			
Curtis	Guy	Maddox	Sergeant	
		Mahon	Shambler	

“The island of Newfoundland has been considered, in all former times, as a great ship moored near the Banks during the fishing season, for the convenience of the English fishery ...”

— Comment made by British politician, William Knox, in 1793

Experiencing The Arts

Learn about other stories that are part of our tradition on page 650 as you read the stories written by storyteller Ted Russell.



2.66 English ship

An ocean-going vessel, likely similar to other English ships which visited Newfoundland during the 16th century.



2.67 The colonial powers saw the “New World” as territory to exploit for the benefit of the mother countries.

This map entitled *The English Empire in America, Newfoundland, Canada, Hudson's Bay &c in Plans* was created by Herman Moll in 1701.

The **MYTH OF ILLEGAL SETTLEMENT**

Following the collapse of the early formal colonies, the English government discouraged settlement, but did not make it illegal (except for 1676). The main opponents of settlement were merchants in the west of England, who argued for freedom in the fishery. Ironically, it was merchants who also encouraged settlement, not by what they said but by what they did. During the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century, some merchants began to be suppliers to residents. They brought them supplies, which they gave on credit, and took the settlers' fish and products as payment.

Although historical records do not support this interpretation, the myth has become part of what most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have been taught about their own past. Historians now point out that merchants realized there was a profit to be made transporting fishers to Newfoundland and Labrador and selling them supplies when they stayed. The English government also realized English settlers helped keep the French out of the area. However, it would take until the late 1700s before economic factors favoured widespread permanent settlement in the colony.



2.68 Colleen Lynch Island sculpture

Planters

During the 1600s some migratory fishing masters began to leave behind servants to protect fishing properties during the winter months. More importantly, some boatkeepers, often called planters or inhabitants, brought their wives and children to settle. The planters hired servants to work in the fishery in much the same way as the byeboat-keepers. Through this process of voluntary settlement, most places acquired a year-round or permanent population.

While it is impossible to know exactly when many places were first occupied by many **planters**, the first detailed census taken in 1675 shows that 1655 inhabitants were living in 30 settlements between Cape de Razo (Cape Race) and Cape Bonavista. The largest places were St. John's and Bonavista. The great majority of these individuals were young, single males – servants to the planters. The planters were the owners of properties and boats. A few were women.



2.69 Colony of Avalon

Extensive excavation work at the site of the Colony of Avalon has provided us with a good idea of how the colony was laid out. This painting by artist David Webber shows the Avalon waterfront with a stone sea wall bordering the harbour and a large warehouse.

Sponsored Settlement

In addition to the planters' informal settlement patterns were the organized attempts of various English trading companies and other businesses to plant colonies on the island of Newfoundland. By doing so, the companies hoped to further develop and profit from local resources. This practice grew in popularity after 1604, when England ended its war with Spain and increased its investments and activities overseas.

The English sponsored colonies on the Avalon Peninsula, of which the best known are John Guy's **charter colony** at Cupids (established 1610) and Lord Baltimore's **proprietary** Colony of Avalon at Ferryland (established 1621). Although these investments failed,

sponsored settlement did contribute to permanent settlement in Newfoundland and Labrador. Ferryland has been continuously inhabited since 1621, except for a few months after the French raid of 1696; Cupids has had an English presence since 1610, although it may have been only seasonally occupied for a few years in the late seventeenth century.

The French also had a royal colony in Newfoundland and Labrador – the garrison-town of Plaisance (Placentia), founded by King Louis XIV. While this colony failed to make profits, it was continuously occupied by the French from 1662 to 1713, when the Treaty of Utrecht no longer allowed the French to build anywhere on the island.

(((DIMENSIONS OF THINKING)))

PERSPECTIVE

The concept of perspective centres on how people view an event, idea, issue, or trend. The challenge is to suspend one's own frame of reference and instead view the matter at hand in terms of other points of view. The event of European settlement is an excellent example.

Europeans mistook the coastal lands used by the Beothuks as empty, and migratory fishers felt free to leave fishing premises unprotected at the end of the fishing season. From the Beothuk perspective, they could gather from abandoned fishing premises each winter the metal goods that made their lives easier. The Beothuks did not see the premises as private property but rather as something abandoned and therefore free to take ... although their scavenging eventually earned them a reputation as thieves.

— Sean Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History*



2.70 An excerpt from Sketch I by Shanawdithit (the last known Beothuk)
This depicts "Captain Buchan's visit to the Red Indians in 1810-11, when the two marines were killed."

Questions:

How should we view this experience? Were Europeans moving into an "empty" land? Or did they not consider Aboriginal people as legitimate residents? Did Beothuk really perceive items left behind as "abandoned" or did they have a different concept of private property? What would we have to know about European and Beothuk values at that point in history in order to answer these questions?

Questions:

1. What would be some of the challenges faced by English planters, colonists or others (such as the French military) who overwintered on the island of Newfoundland in the seventeenth century? Which of these challenges might be the most difficult to address?
2. By the mid-1700s, there was very little permanent settlement by Europeans in Newfoundland and Labrador. What factors accounted for this? Which factor might have been the most significant?
3. Today, despite risks and hardship, many people choose to work in frontier regions. What factors encourage people to do this? Would any of these reasons be similar for those who worked in the migratory fishery during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries? Explain.

The NEW ENGLAND CONNECTION

In order to make their return voyage cheaper, occasionally fishing captains abandoned the fishers they had brought over to Newfoundland and Labrador. The majority of abandoned fishers moved on to New England. This began a long association between Newfoundland and Labrador and New England. The West Country merchants who founded the English Newfoundland fishery were also active in fishing off New England. From the late 1600s to the American Revolution in 1776, New England became a major supplier of food, livestock, and rum to Newfoundland and Labrador. New England also became a destination for later generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Records as early as 1701 show that many of those who did not prosper in Newfoundland or Labrador simply moved on to New England.

