4.92 Rural and urban lifestyles in the late 1800s and early 1900s were often quite different
(top) This 1935 scene in Flatrock (approximately 30 km outside St. John's) shows a way of life that had probably changed relatively little over the years. (bottom) St. John's busy harbour, 1890.

TOPIC 4.7

Lifestyles

What factors can influence lifestyle?

How do changes in health care and education affect lifestyle?

Introduction

In the first part of the twentieth century, new communication and transportation developments began to connect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with each other and other parts of the world in new ways. The degree to which this affected different communities varied. While change was slower to come in some communities – especially those not connected by the railway – other communities experienced major lifestyle changes.

Culture, Communication, and Transportation

Telegraph lines continued to be built across and around the island of Newfoundland with Premier Robert Bond's policy of a comprehensive government telegraph system in the early 1900s. Between 1912 and the mid-1930s, the Newfoundland government used this technology for mass communications. The Department of Posts and Telegraphs compiled daily news summaries from newspaper reports and transmitted these by Morse Code to all of the telegraph offices on the island. (Later this "Public Despatch" was also transmitted to Labrador by radio.) Wherever it was received, the news summaries would be written out by the telegraph officer and posted on a wall, or read by the operator to local people who could not read.

Another leap in communications technology occurred in 1921, when technically adept Newfoundlanders and Labradorians began using radio to transmit music and words to anyone who had the equipment to receive the signal. These dedicated amateurs provided the first

* Some content contributed by Jeff Webb

"broadcast" stations. Two churches also began using radio to broadcast church services to shut-ins. The Wesley United Church in 1927 sponsored VOWR, a station that undertook to provide entertainment and information under the leadership of a volunteer committee, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church began VOAC in 1933. By the 1930s, seven stations were operating in Newfoundland, six of which were in St. John's. Two of these stations, VOCM (which became a commercial rather than amateur station in 1934) and VOWR, are still broadcasting today. These local radio broadcasts meant that, in addition to connecting to the "outside" world, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians had the opportunity to share and celebrate their own culture through shows featuring "home-grown" music and talent.

These advancements, along with improvements in transportation brought about by the railroad and some road building, altered the way Newfoundlanders and Labradorians interacted with one another and the rest of the world. In many communities it became easier to purchase store-bought goods instead of having to produce or make everything by hand. Instead of waiting weeks or even months for mail and news to arrive by boat, residents in rural and urban communities began receiving news the same day it occurred. Likewise, as residents could travel more easily from one community to another by rail, regional cultures began to interact. Slowly Newfoundlanders and Labradorians began to have the tools to see their country as a whole and compare their daily lives to those in other places.

One sign of this emerging identity was the use of the "Ode to Newfoundland" (written in 1902) as the colony's unofficial national anthem.

4.93 Another first in communications for Newfoundland and the world
Guglielmo Marconi and his assistants launch a kite-supported aerial on Signal Hill, St. John's. Using this set-up, Marconi received the first transatlantic wireless signal on Dec. 12, 1901. Prior to this, messages had to be sent using the transatlantic cable, first laid in 1866.

4.94 Control room, VONF, c. 1934
VONF began as a commercial radio station in 1932. In 1939, it was taken over by the Commission of Government and became the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland (BCN).

4.95 The coming of the railway provided communities another way to access manufactured goods from "away."
(far left) A 1914 catalogue advertises items that could be ordered from several of the larger stores in Newfoundland and Labrador. (left) Despite this, many items were still being made by hand, even in the late 1930s. Shown here is a woman spinning outside her house in Ferryland, c. 1937.

4.96 A look inside a 1912 school room
at a Grenfell Mission station (either Battle Harbour or St. Anthony).

Education

The denominational education system continued in Newfoundland and Labrador throughout the early twentieth century. Although government grants took care of many of the expenses of running and building schools, those established before 1909 were erected under church leadership without government support. In the beginning, each denomination determined its own course of study, but in 1893 an interdenominational committee, known as the Council of Higher Education, was created. This council set a common curriculum* that consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, and some history and geography, for all students from grade 6 to grade 11. The Council also established Common Examinations after grade 11, which enabled students to apply to foreign universities if they met the entrance requirements.

By 1901, the literacy rate of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians was approximately 64 per cent, and there were 783 schools in the colony. Most of these were one-room schools run by a single teacher. School was not compulsory, and parents were often charged school fees. In a 1903 speech in the House of Assembly, Sir Robert Bond noted that 16 584 of 57 783 children in the colony between five and fifteen years did not attend school. R.A. MacKay suggests that the very nature of Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians' lifestyles led to this low level of schooling:

> *…the distribution of population in small communities, often completely isolated from one another except by sea, makes for relative high overhead costs and small operating units in social and educational services. Moreover, the predominance of extractive industries in the economy – fishing, mining, forestry, agriculture – which require manual skill rather than book learning or technical training, has meant that Newfoundland people have not had the incentives to those forms of education which an industrial society develops. The fishing industry especially tends to interfere with continuous schooling; even at the elementary level, older children are useful in many operations in the industry, and there is constant temptation in the fishing season to employ them at the expense of their schooling.*

The 1920s saw several improvements in the education system, including the creation of a Department of Education with its own Minister in 1920, the establishment of Memorial University College** in St. John's in 1925, and the creation of circulating libraries in 1926. However, this progress was stalled during the Depression, when education grants were cut in half.

*Sometimes other practical skills were taught as well. Check out the needlework samples on the next page that were created by a student in 1902.

**Memorial University College was a non-denominational college.

"There are hundreds of men who are not able to read or write, who are able to plan and build their own house … who can make a model of a schooner, build the vessel according to scale, and then sail her as master to Boston or New York or Montreal, where they have never been."

– An excerpt from *The Evening Mercury*, May 17, 1886 arguing that a person does not have to be literate to be clever

4.97 Fine work: a needlework sampler created in a Newfoundland school, c. 1912.

4.98 A 1903 certificate from the Council of Higher Education granted for passing Common Examinations taken after grade 11

4.99

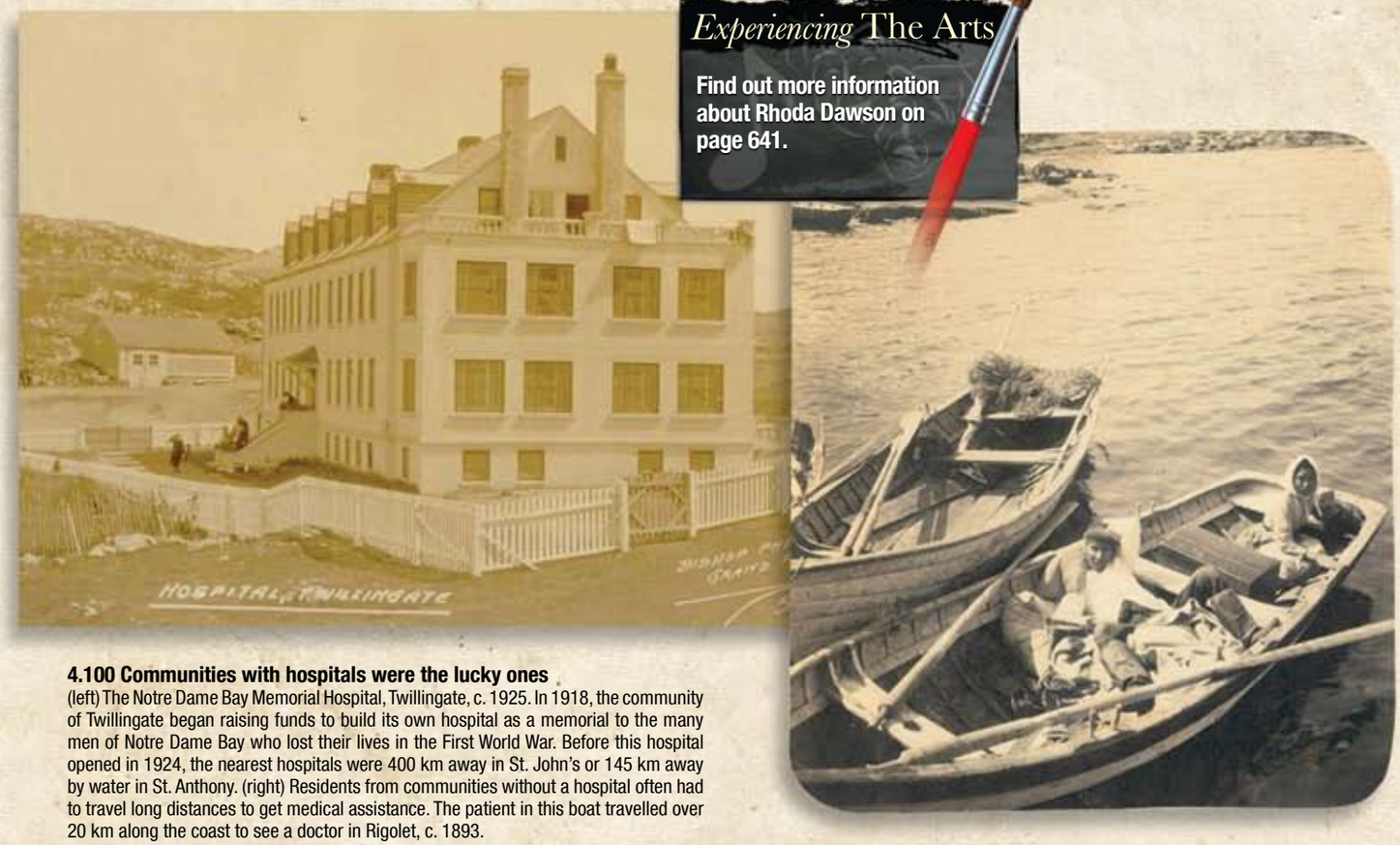
SCHOOL MEMORIES FROM THE 1920s AND 30s

Excerpts from *Them Days*, vol. 12, #2

We had slates when we were going to school and me friend and I were sharing the same seat. There was two of us to a seat. I was 12 or 13 at the time. Me friend that was sitting with me didn't know what I was doing. I was drawing a queer old picture … When she saw (it) she burst out laughing and of course the teacher blamed it on me. I had to stop in school and write 500 times, "I must be good."
– *Bessie Flynn, Forteau*

I went to school until I learned the first lesson in the Number Two book, then I left school and went fishin', 10 years old … 'Twasn't no schoolhouses here then. (The teacher) kept school over in Bill Earle's house over there … They were hard teachers, boy, awful hard teachers. (The teacher) had one of them hardwood canes, about two inches wide and a foot and a half long. We was devils though, boy, devils all of us!
– *William Ryland, L'anse au Loup*

First, when we'd go to school we used to have all slates, no pencils. You do your work on the slate and you'd have to bring a bottle of water to school with ya, and a cloth. Whatever you do on you slate, you'd take your cloth and wash it all off and when you come home in the evening, you had a clean slate … (On top of the slate) there was two little wires … with some beads on the wires. There was six pieces on one and six pieces on the other one … You'd go to work and take your beads and slide them along, counting, 1, 2, 3, 4 …
– *Michael Normore Sr., L'anse au Loup*



Experiencing The Arts

Find out more information about Rhoda Dawson on page 641.

4.100 Communities with hospitals were the lucky ones
(left) The Notre Dame Bay Memorial Hospital, Twillingate, c. 1925. In 1918, the community of Twillingate began raising funds to build its own hospital as a memorial to the many men of Notre Dame Bay who lost their lives in the First World War. Before this hospital opened in 1924, the nearest hospitals were 400 km away in St. John's or 145 km away by water in St. Anthony. (right) Residents from communities without a hospital often had to travel long distances to get medical assistance. The patient in this boat travelled over 20 km along the coast to see a doctor in Rigolet, c. 1893.

Health

Religion, political change, industrialization, and war helped advance medicine during the twentieth century. In northern Newfoundland and southern Labrador, British physician Wilfred Grenfell and the International Grenfell Association opened several hospitals and nursing stations, and operated medical ships that travelled along the coasts to treat sick and injured patients in isolated communities. In St. John's, the Roman Catholic Church opened St. Clare's Mercy Hospital in 1922 and the Salvation Army opened the Grace Maternity Hospital a year later. In addition, several other hospitals were opened in communities outside St. John's with the support of charitable groups and private industry. For instance, the Newfoundland Power and Paper Company (later Bowater Newfoundland Limited) built the Corner Brook General Hospital in 1925, and a civilian fundraising campaign led to the opening of the Notre Dame Bay Memorial Hospital in Twillingate in 1924.

Other communities on the island received some nursing services thanks to the work of the Outport Nursing Committee which formed in 1920. Funded by a government grant and public assistance, this organization – later known as the Newfoundland Outport Nursing and Industrial Association (NONIA) – brought in nurses from England and stationed them in rural communities throughout the island. In order to raise funds for the nurses' salaries, outport women created handicrafts which were then sold through NONIA. Nurses funded by this program provided a

4.101 Medical facilities 1814-1928

Year	Hospital
1814	Riverhead Hospital
1871	General Hospital (Forest Road Hospital)
1890	Seaman's Institute, Grand Bank
1893	Grenfell Mission Hospital, Battle Harbour
1894	Salvation Army Home for Girls (the Anchorage)
1894	Grenfell Mission Hospital, Indian Harbour
1901	Grenfell Mission Hospital, St. Anthony
1902	Cowan Mission Convalescent Home
1906	Fever Hospital
1909	Lady Northcliffe Hospital, Grand Falls
1910	Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire Tuberculosis Camp
1911	Hospital, Millertown
1911	Grenfell Mission Hospital, Pilley's Island
1914	Seaman's Institute
1916	Military and Naval Tuberculosis Hospital (Escasoni Hospital)
1916	Southcott Maternity and Children's Hospital
1916	Military Infectious Diseases Hospital
1916	Empire Barracks
1916	Jensen Camp
1916	Donovan's Hospital
1916	Waterford Hall
1917	St. John's Sanatorium
1918	Danson Hospital
1918	Second Southcott Hospital
1920	Children's Hospital
1920	Sudbury Military Hospital
1922	St. Clare's Mercy Hospital
1923	Grace Maternity Hospital
1924	Notre Dame Bay Memorial Hospital, Twillingate
1925	General Hospital, Corner Brook
1928	Hospital, Buchans

wide range of medical services, from delivering babies to pulling teeth, in 20 communities until 1934 when the Commission of Government assumed responsibility for all nursing services.

Despite these improvements, many communities still found themselves without any kind of professional medical care. In 1901, there were 117 doctors for a population of approximately 240 000. By 1933, there were only 83 doctors in the colony (outside of those associated with the Grenfell Mission) and 33 of these were in St. John's. This lack of medical care, combined with poor living conditions, led to high rates of infant mortality – especially when compared to the Dominion of Canada. For instance, the 1938 infant mortality rate in Newfoundland and Labrador was 92.8 deaths for every 1000 births. The same year, the average for the Dominion of Canada was 63 deaths for every 1000 births. As R.A. MacKay observed:

> *... for the outports generally, lean years have been the rule and fat years the exception. Many districts have not been able to support a doctor; the diet has been deficient in quantity and very often deficient in vitamin content; and housing and clothing are often below the standard demanded by a northern climate.*

4.102 Say "Ahhhhhh"
Originally a dentist chair, this seat was modified for use as an examination chair by a doctor in Newfoundland and Labrador.

4.103 Tools of the medical trade
(right to left) Apothecary chest used by doctors when travelling to people's homes and administrating medical attention; amputation saw (c. late 1800s) used to remove limbs from injured patients; needles case (back then, needles were used over and over again, rather than being disposable).

Experiencing The Arts

Finally, it is time to craft the lyrics for your composition. You will need to select an existing melody that serves the intent of the ideas and emotions you wish to express. Take the time to analyze the structure of your song. Once you have done this, it is time to compose your lyrics. Remember that typically your title would form part of the song. Refer to Step Three on page 280 for some reminders on how to craft lyrics for your song.

As you work on your piece, take time to share it with others, and perhaps even participate in a songwriters circle.

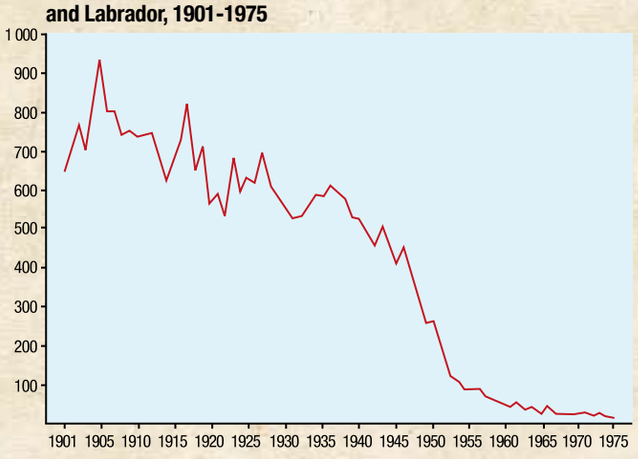
Be sure that you have decided on a single idea and emotion as your focus … and that you relax and have fun!

Tuberculosis was also endemic in Newfoundland and Labrador during this period. This infectious disease took two different forms (acute or chronic) and was spread by coughing and sneezing. It affected thousands of people each year (See fig. 4.104.) In 1908, a group of concerned citizens met in St. John's to discuss strategies for combating tuberculosis in the colony. They formed the Association for the Prevention of Consumption* (APC), a voluntary organization that was part of an international anti-tuberculosis movement. The APC focused their activities on increasing public awareness about preventing the disease, especially through better personal hygiene and home sanitation.

The Newfoundland government also became involved in the fight against tuberculosis. In 1912 it passed "An Act Respecting the Treatment and Prevention of Tuberculosis," which created a state-run Tuberculosis Public Service. The following year, the Tuberculosis Dispensary in St. John's opened its doors and began diagnosing and advising patients on the best ways to treat the disease and prevent its spread.

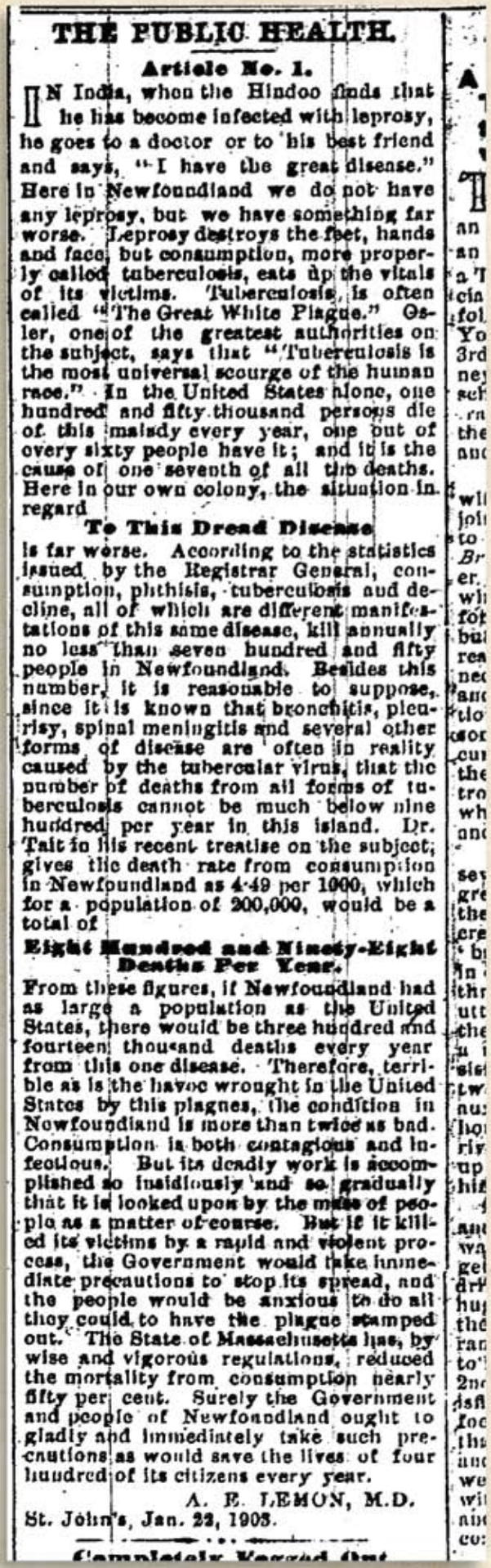
Epidemics of other infectious diseases were also a problem, especially for St. John's as a port city. An outbreak of diphtheria in St. John's caused over 700 deaths between

4.104 Number of tuberculosis deaths in Newfoundland and Labrador, 1901-1975



1888 and 1892. This outbreak, and concerns that similar outbreaks of cholera and small pox might occur, led to the creation of the position of Public Health Officer in St. John's. This role was reorganized under the title of Medical Health Officer and was expanded to include responsibilities for epidemic control in 1905. In 1918, fears of an epidemic were realized with the introduction of the Spanish flu (see pg. 298) to the colony by sailors arriving from overseas. This epidemic killed more than 600 people in Newfoundland and Labrador in less than five months.

In 1929, the Squires administration appointed a Royal Commission of Inquiry into public health. The Commission's report led to the passing of the *Health and Public Welfare Act* of 1931, which created a Board of Health as a separate department under the Colonial Secretary. Although this board was made responsible for the control of infectious diseases, the treatment of the sick, and sanitary conditions, it lacked the funds needed to carry out the widespread medical reform that later occurred under the Commission of Government.



THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

Article No. 1.

IN India, when the Hindoo finds that he has become infected with leprosy, he goes to a doctor or to his best friend and says, "I have the great disease." Here in Newfoundland we do not have any leprosy, but we have something far worse. Leprosy destroys the feet, hands and face, but consumption, more properly called tuberculosis, eats up the vitals of its victims. Tuberculosis is often called "The Great White Plague." Osler, one of the greatest authorities on the subject, says that "Tuberculosis is the most universal scourge of the human race." In the United States alone, one hundred and fifty thousand persons die of this malady every year, one out of every sixty people have it; and it is the cause of one seventh of all the deaths. Here in our own colony, the situation in regard

To This Dread Disease

is far worse. According to the statistics issued by the Registrar General, consumption, phthisis, tuberculosis and decline, all of which are different manifestations of this same disease, kill annually no less than seven hundred and fifty people in Newfoundland. Besides this number, it is reasonable to suppose, since it is known that bronchitis, pleurisy, spinal meningitis and several other forms of disease are often in reality caused by the tubercular virus, that the number of deaths from all forms of tuberculosis cannot be much below nine hundred per year in this island. Dr. Tait in his recent treatise on the subject, gives the death rate from consumption in Newfoundland as 4·49 per 1000, which for a population of 200,000, would be a total of

Eight Hundred and Ninety-Eight Deaths Per Year.

From these figures, if Newfoundland had as large a population as the United States, there would be three hundred and fourteen thousand deaths every year from this one disease. Therefore, terrible as is the havoc wrought in the United States by this plagues, the condition in Newfoundland is more than twice as bad. Consumption is both contagious and infectious. But its deadly work is accomplished so insidiously and so gradually that it is looked upon by the mass of people as a matter of course. But if it killed its victims by a rapid and violent process, the Government would take immediate precautions to stop its spread, and the people would be anxious to do all they could to have the plague stamped out. The State of Massachusetts has, by wise and vigorous regulations, reduced the mortality from consumption nearly fifty per cent. Surely the Government and people of Newfoundland ought to gladly and immediately take such precautions as would save the lives of four hundred of its citizens every year.

A. E. LEMON, M.D.

St. John's, Jan. 22, 1903.

4.105 A letter about the "Great White Plague" (tuberculosis) in Newfoundland, from *The Evening Telegram*, Jan. 23, 1903

*Organizations for the prevention of tuberculosis had already been formed in Britain (1898), Canada (1900), and the United States (1904).

Tuberculosis was also known as phthisis, consumption, and the white plague.

AN OUTPORT NURSE

English nurse Myra (Grimsley) Bennett came to Daniel's Harbour in 1921 under the employ of the Outport Nursing Committee (later known as the Newfoundland Outport Nursing and Industrial Association or NONIA). Although she started with a two-year contract, she stayed on as the only medical professional along 320 kilometres of coastline for the next 50 years. Once dubbed "The Florence Nightingale of Newfoundland" by *The Evening Telegram*, Nurse Bennett performed minor operations, delivered more than 700 babies, and pulled at least 5000 teeth during her career.

4.106 Women from Daniel's Harbour trained as midwives by Nurse Bennett (in white), c. 1930
She once explained: "Because it was impossible to be in more than one place at a time I decided to train some capable women in midwifery so that there would be someone available during my absence or if I should become ill. Six young women undertook this training and would accompany me in pairs to each confinement. Lectures were given in my kitchen. These women proved very efficient, and on one or two occasions were able to deliver a patient while I delivered another."

4.107 A NONIA depot, c. 1925
Communities using the services of a NONIA nurse formed volunteer committees that were responsible for the distribution of NONIA wool and patterns, sending the finished handicrafts to a NONIA depot, and distributing cheques to the crafters.

Questions:

1. For each aspect of lifestyle discussed in this lesson, identify one event or change that occurred. Create an idea web that explores some of the possible direct, indirect, and unanticipated consequences of the event or change.
2. Which changes presented in this lesson had the most significant impact on lifestyle? Create a "top three" list, and design a poster which uses text and graphics to examine why these changes were significant.