

St. Paul's

Past Present Future



Community

Environment



Values



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The west coast of Newfoundland is a picturesque landscape. Nestled into the backdrop of the Long Range Mountains, along the shore of the Atlantic Ocean is the Town of St. Paul's. Information about St. Paul's is somewhat scattered. *St. Paul's: Past Present Future* is a community handbook that compiles information about the people and natural resources of St. Paul's, Newfoundland, in hopes of capturing the uniqueness of this fascinating town. The information in this handbook is based on our research conducted over the summer of 2008.

St. Paul's, settled in the latter part of the nineteenth century, is a relatively new community in comparison to other Newfoundland outports. Located on the west coast, an enclave of Gros Morne National Park, St. Paul's has always been rich in natural resources and its residents have long been able to live off the land and sea. St. Paul's Inlet contains a large unique area of saltmarsh at its opening to the Atlantic Ocean. Eelgrass, which is an important nursery habitat for many fish and shellfish species grows at the bottom of the Inlet. Numerous birds and waterfowl use the saltmarsh as a resting area during their migration. Further inland, lakes, rivers and forests provide habitat for wild animals. These surroundings and the abundant natural resources are important features of St. Paul's that have kept people connected to the place for over a century.

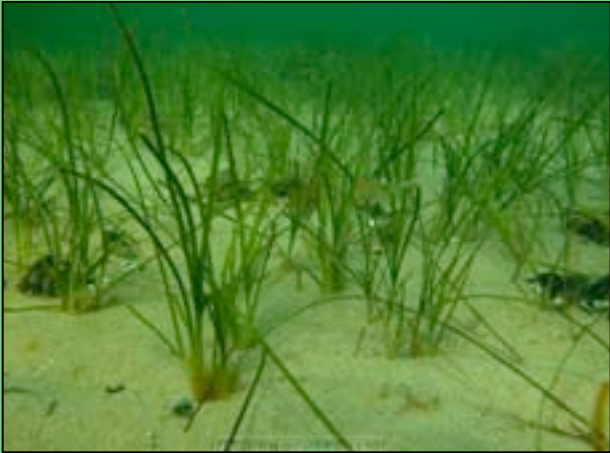
In St. Paul's, as in other Newfoundland coastal communities, the fishery has been vitally important. According to the first



A group of men and two small boys in a dory among the eelgrass beds in St. Paul's Inlet. Eelgrass is critical to a healthy intertidal ecosystem.



A Saltmarsh is an area between land and salt water, like 'Tickle Point' in St. Paul's. This habitat is often under-appreciated and poorly treated by those who do not fully understand its value. The smell from the marsh is hydrogen sulphide, caused by the high rate of decomposition. This breaking down of organic materials provides enormous amounts of food to various species in and around the Tickle Point area. The shifting tides carry the nutrients from the saltmarsh to the entire ocean ecosystem, and thus creating an ideal habitat and spawning ground for trout, salmon, and wolffish. Saltmarshes are one of the most biologically productive habitats on the planet. The saltmarsh in St. Paul's is considered '*one of the most unusual and fascinating habitats*' in the Gros Morne area. Insect species depend on the plants and vegetation that grow in the saltmarsh. In turn, they provide a food supply for fish and bird species, making the saltmarsh an important resting area for migrating birds. Bird watching, recreational duck hunting, and clam digging are popular activities at the saltmarsh in St. Paul's.



Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) is referred to as 'goosegrass' by people in St. Paul's. It grows in shallow, salty waters with muddy or sandy bottoms like St. Paul's Inlet. Many people are unaware of the ecological significance of eelgrass and therefore it is often overlooked and undervalued. Eelgrass helps to prevent erosion and maintain the stability of the ocean floor. It is the base of the food chain, providing a rich source of nourishment throughout the ocean. Eelgrass is an important nursery habitat for many shellfish, fish, and other species such as cod and herring, and is an important food source to birds and waterfowl (hence its local name goosegrass). Dead eelgrass leaves are recycled back into the ecosystem.

census of St. Paul's, Elias Gifford, a fur trapper, is believed to have been the first person of European descent to settle in St. Paul's. He processed some 56 quintals (approximately 6,300 lbs) of cod in 1874 (see page 6 for a timetable and table of local production). For much of the period before the 1930s, people on the west coast caught and processed cod in a family-oriented

"truck" system. Men fished from small vessels close to shore, while women and children formed the bulk of the "shore crew" – those who cured the cod or processed other catch after it was landed. At the end of the season, fishermen with no direct access to markets, took their cod and other catch to a merchant to repay any debt from equipment or other items given on credit at the beginning of the season. At the same time, they also purchased goods needed to sustain the family through the winter. This system was replaced, first by cooperatives, and later by large processing plants and industrial harvesting technology.



The Atlantic Cod (*Gadus morhua*) is a cultural icon to the people of Newfoundland. It has always been an important part of the livelihood on Newfoundland's west coast. In contrast to other parts of the island, other marine species such as lobster are more commercially important in St. Paul's. Although the commercial cod fishery no longer exists, fishermen in St. Paul's still participate in the cod food fishery.

Unlike cod, lobster has survived the long fishery tradition. Throughout the community's history, St. Paul's residents have harvested and processed lobster. After the decline in the cod fishery, caused by increased pressure on cod as a result of both a growing population and the use of new gears, the efforts directed toward lobster expanded. As a consequence, the number of lobster factories along the west coast increased dramatically. In 1887, the first lobster factory was opened in St. Paul's by a Nova Scotia firm, Payzant and Frazer, and was considered to be one of the most successful factories on the coast. The number of factories grew steadily from four in 1901 to nine in 1911 and eventually to twelve in 1921. After that period, fishermen started to move away from canning, toward shipping live lobsters directly to US markets, especially to Gloucester, Massachusetts, as they continue do so today.



Fishing activity can still be seen at Old House Rock, while the old fish stores still stand at Tickle Point.



The American Lobster (*Homarus americanus*) fishery is the base of the economy and the main reason for settlement in St. Paul's. Lobster thrives in cold, shallow waters where there are many rocks and other places to hide from predators such as codfish, haddock, flounder, and other lobsters. The lobster was once part of a continuous fishing cycle that offered fishermen a range of species to harvest at various times throughout the year. Today, the American lobster is the only viable commercial fishery practised by twelve men and women in the area who fish outside the Inlet in St. Paul's Bight or in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

In addition to cod and lobster, fisheries for herring, salmon, halibut, capelin and, to a limited extent, seals, took place in St. Paul's. Herring was once very abundant in the Inlet, attracting fishermen from the entire Northern Peninsula. In the 1940s large numbers of fishermen from outside of St. Paul's began to seine herring. Concerned that these fishing practices would undermine the viability of the vibrant herring stock at that time, local fishermen seized the seines. In the late 1970s, they formed a Fishermen's



Atlantic Herring (*Clupea harengus*) used to spawn in the eelgrass (goosegrass) beds in St. Paul's Inlet. It was an important food source for salmon and lobster. The herring fishery of St. Paul's tells a story of the mismanagement of resources and the consequences of overfishing. More importantly, it demonstrates efforts of the people of St. Paul's in resource protection.

Herring Protection Committee to prevent overfishing. Regulations were eventually changed and only herring nets were allowed in the Inlet. Unfortunately, these conservation efforts came too late. Overfishing by large boats and seine nets quickly ended the herring fishery in St. Paul's Inlet.

Atlantic salmon also played a key role in the settlement of St. Paul's and the west coast of Newfoundland. The commercial salmon fishery operated until 1992 when the salmon moratorium was declared. Recreational salmon fishing was also important for local residents, especially in the Western Brook River, just south of St. Paul's. Heavy fishing pressure had resulted in smaller runs, forcing Parks Canada to



Fishing for herring through the ice in the past and present on St. Paul's Inlet.

close the river in 1984 to monitor the salmon population each year. Today, in the off-season, some local fishermen still guide tourists into remote rivers to fish in what are considered to be some of the greatest salmon fishing areas in Newfoundland.

Archaeological excavations suggest that St. Paul's was occupied from 5500 to 1000 years ago. All prehistoric cultures that inhabited Newfoundland, including Maritime Archaic Indians, Groswater Palaeoeskimo, Dorset Palaeoeskimo, and the Recent Indian, were also in St. Paul's. The great abundance of food and stone resources in St. Paul's and surrounding areas was an obvious attraction to Newfoundland's prehistoric people. Fish and wild game



The Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) holds historical importance for St. Paul's residents. A commercial fishery for salmon no longer exists, and Western Brook River remains closed for recreational fishing. Re-opening the Western Brook River for a recreational fishery is contingent upon the recovery of the salmon fish stock and the health of the river and the surrounding natural environment in general.

including caribou, harbour seals, and sea birds, supported peoples livelihoods in the past and some of these are still enjoyed by the residents of St. Paul's today.

Reports by Missionaries and the British naval officers who patrolled the coast from the mid-nineteenth century suggest that gardening had been important to the entire population of the Northern Peninsula for a long time. The rich boggy soil of the Western Brook Lowlands was likely one of the reasons why people settled the area around St. Paul's. Residents on the Northern Peninsula set their gardens along the roadsides, sometimes many kilometres from their community. Today it is a common sight



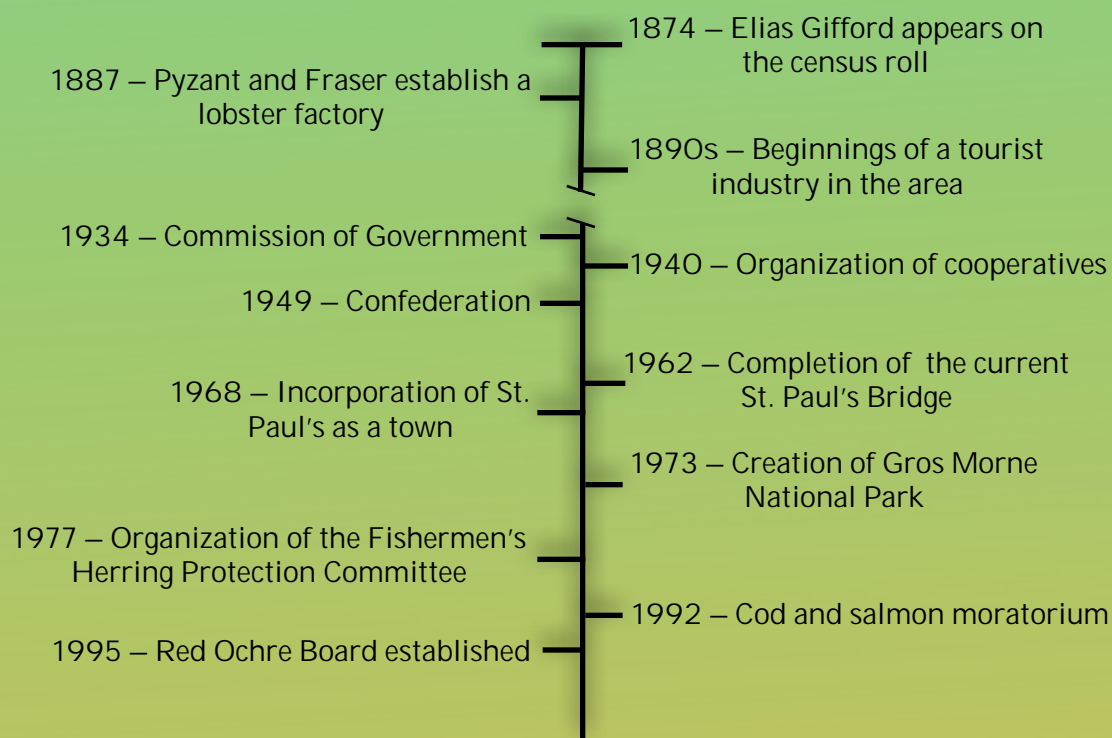
Remnants of prehistoric Indian settlers found near the St. Paul's wharf. The artifacts were discovered by Dominique Lavers and her crew from Memorial University on an archeological dig in the summer of 2008.

to see women and men walking down the highway with shovels. Gardens are planted in raised beds, which is good for retaining heat. The topsoil is dry and warmer than the soil in the deeper ground. Most people grow hardy root crops such as potatoes, carrots, beets, and turnips.



A caribou investigates a roadside garden near the Western Brook Lowlands. The boggy soil of the Lowlands is rich in organic nutrients. Roadside gardens can be seen all the way up the coast of the Northern Peninsula to St. Anthony.

Important Events in the History of St. Paul's, Newfoundland



Past Record of Population and Goods Harvested in St. Paul's, Newfoundland

	1874	1884	1901	1911	1921	1935
Population	1	11	52	61	79	115
Potatoes/Turnips (barrel)	**	72	118	179	156	293
*Livestock	**	16	69	92	125	190
Cod (quintals)	52	346	**	**	39	**
Herring (barrel)	**	448	**	214	33	**
Lobster (case)	**	**	77	196	159	**

*Livestock=Number of animals (e.g. horses, sheep, milk cows, pigs, goats, chickens, and cattle)

**No record



Moose (*Alces alces*) is an important winter food staple for residents of St. Paul's. It also provides a source of income from outfitting. Because the moose is a non-native species and has no natural predators, overpopulation is a concern. Their selective eating habits can critically alter the landscape and affect the health of the forest ecosystem. Overgrazing on Balsam Fir trees and other hardwoods, for example, is destroying forest ecosystems and restricting forest regeneration. However, the moose continues to attract many tourists to the Park area and hunters from all over North America.

Moose hunting is another activity that the people of St. Paul's are actively engaged in to supplement their livelihood, especially as various fisheries decline. Moose were first introduced to Newfoundland in 1878 when two were brought from Cape Breton to Gander. In 1904, another four moose were brought to Howley from New Brunswick. Moose reached the Gros Morne area by 1925. In 2003, the moose population in the Park was estimated at 7,800 making it one of the highest moose population densities in the world.

St. Paul's is surrounded by forest. Wood cutting has been crucial mainstay of the community. To diversify the economy, the Newfoundland and Canadian governments developed a forestry industry. A number of sawmills opened in the St. Paul's vicinity and employed men from the community.



The forest is another land-based resource that is crucial to the settlement and survival of the people of St. Paul's. Next to lobster, the forest is the second most important resource to the community. St. Paul's residents depend on wood for homes, traps, boats, sheds, and heat. Domestic woodcutting also holds social values in that it provides physical labour and keeps people busy during the long winter months. The forest is also a habitat for many creatures including the endangered Newfoundland Marten, and provides the Park with trails and campgrounds. Local forests may be in danger of permanent alteration due to various causes including overgrazing by the growing moose population. Forest conservation is crucial to the well-being of the residents of St. Paul's and for the animals inhabiting the forest.



R.E. Hallaway, a photographer from St. John's, takes a tour of St. Paul's Inlet with fishermen in the early 1900s. Hallaway was exploring Newfoundland in hopes that fresh air and the natural environment would cure his tuberculosis.

At first, the forestry industry focused mostly on the production of lumber for local use along with pit props for which there was a demand among mine owners in Britain. Later, with the establishment of the paper mill in Corner Brook, pulpwood became more important. While some residents still recall experiences of exploitation in the pulpwood industry, the recent closing of mills and decreases in production have resulted in many job losses.

Efforts to diversify the economy also led the Newfoundland government to look at other resources that would provide

employment. For St. Paul's, this meant oil. R.E. Slack was the first to commence oil exploration in St. Paul's in 1894 but had little success. Jonathan Noseworthy soon followed Slack but was no more successful. Renewed interest in oil was sparked in the 1950s when John Fox began explorations. Although commercial quantities were never found, Fox's Road in St. Paul's symbolizes the many attempts to find oil. Hope for oil development still exists in St. Paul's and the surrounding area. Residents see a local oil industry as a means to keep young people at home and a favourable way to support their families.

Another important industry for St. Paul's is tourism. Tourism has been a significant industry to St. Paul's and the west coast of Newfoundland from the late nineteenth century. The construction of the railway made previously isolated parts of the island more accessible. After Confederation, the Canadian government became intrigued by the beauty of St. Paul's and the surrounding area and planned the creation of a national park and an expansion of the road system to enhance the area as a tourist destination. The bridge over St. Paul's Inlet is the connecting point of the entire Northern Peninsula.



The first bridge was built in 1911 but the foundation was carried away with the ice. The present steel bridge was built in 1962, completing the road between Deer Lake and St. Anthony.

In 1973, several years after the bridge was completed, Gros Morne National Park was created but not without concern from local residents. Many feared restrictions on the use of resources that were important for their livelihoods. Currently a boat tour runs through the Inlet highlighting the harbour seals that also occupy the Inlet.

St. Paul's holds major potential for future tourism developments. For example, birds and waterfowl are an exciting and interesting attraction in St. Paul's. Many bird species visit the saltmarsh to recharge on their exhausting migration travels. Adult birds land in early July, soon followed by their young. Most visiting birds nest in the Arctic and James Bay. Bird watchers from near and far come to the saltmarsh in St. Paul's for a chance to see uncommon bird species including the Heron, which is rare to Newfoundland. The saltmarsh in St. Paul's is ideal for bird watchers and holds potential for education and tourism initiatives.



Over 1000 nesting pairs of common and Arctic Terns (*Sterna paradisaea*) use the saltmarsh and Inlet as a home throughout the summer. The Arctic Tern has the longest migration route of any bird in the world, migrating from the Arctic to Antarctica and back each year. The Willet, a large sandpiper, is one of many bird species that uses St. Paul's saltmarsh as a breeding ground. Scientists estimate that there are less than 750 nesting Willet pairs in the world.

The people of St. Paul's and neighbouring communities have close connections with their natural surroundings. Throughout the history of St. Paul's, a sense of stewardship for local resources has always been apparent. Local people take pride in who they are and where they come from. Researchers have been attracted to St. Paul's for many years. Biology students from the Bonne Bay Marine Station frequently visit St. Paul's to examine the unique saltmarsh habitat; archaeologists have discovered remnants from past cultures that occupied the same land; and those interested in the culture of the fishery find St. Paul's to be rich in traditions and diverse in resources.



MUN biology students make frequent visits to St. Paul's throughout the summer to collect samples from the saltmarsh and learn about the unique brackish ecosystem.

When looking at St. Paul's and its entirety, and according to the local residents who participated in our research, resources with direct uses, such as the American lobster and the forest, are considered to have much higher values than those with indirect uses. Despite the scientific importance of eelgrass

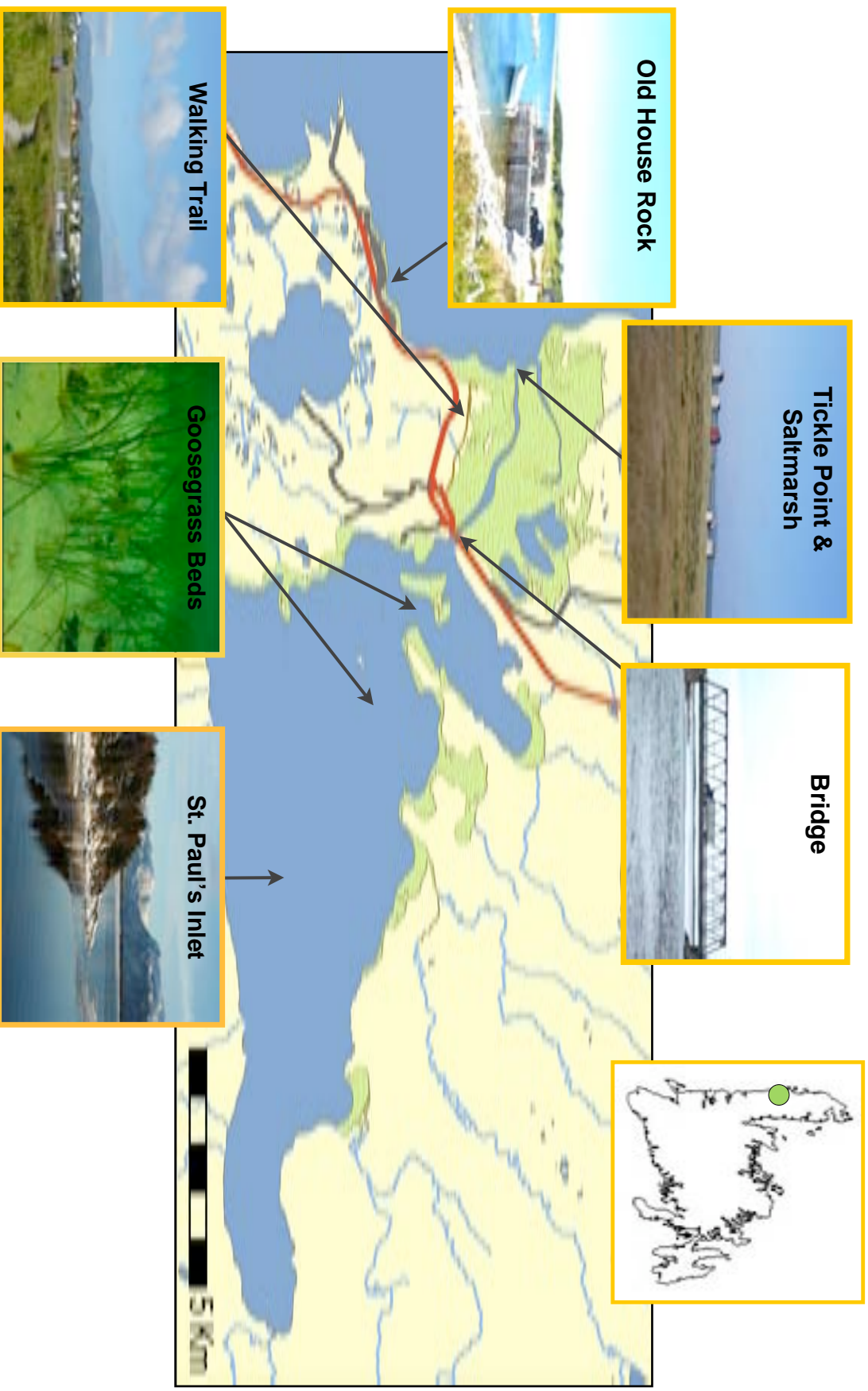
and the saltmarsh, there is little connection made to the ecosystem services that these habitats provide. Locally-based research and management are identified as priorities, especially to help raise awareness about the connectivity of these important ecosystems to the livelihoods of local residents. Educating tourists about the deeply rooted cultural heritage of the people of St. Paul's, such as their traditional ties to the herring and lobster fisheries, will also help increase the appreciation of the values of local resources and the natural surroundings.

Prospects for the future of St. Paul's are positive. At the workshop held in St. Paul's in December 2008 as part of this research, local residents expressed pride in their resources and ecosystems, as well as enthusiasm for future opportunities related particularly to nature tourism. The history of the people, the ecological and socio-economic importance of the Inlet, and the encouraging outlook for the town all contribute to making St. Paul's a unique place with exceptional natural and cultural values.



The old fish stores at Tickle Point are now featured in a televised advertisement for Newfoundland and Labrador.

St. Paul's, Newfoundland



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