

St. Paul's: A Celebration



March, 2009

“Celebrating and Building on Our Strengths: Our Resources, Our Values, Our Future” took place in St. Paul's, Newfoundland on December 9 and 10th, 2008. These events were jointly sponsored by the SSHRC-funded Community-University Research for Recovery Alliance (CURRA) at Memorial University and Coastal Connections initiative under the International Coastal Network (ICN), as well as the Town of St. Paul's. The Bonne Bay Marine Station (BBMS) in Norris Point, the Harris Centre at Memorial University, the Red Ochre Regional Economic Board in Parsons Pond and the Provincial Department of International Trade and Rural Development (INTRD) provided financial and in-kind support.

On the evening of December 9th, 2008, the St. Paul's community was invited to a public meeting entitled “Celebrating Our Strengths”. The intent of the meeting was to present to the community findings from research carried out in that area over the past several years and receive feedback. On December 10th, key members of the St. Paul's community, government officials, and local organizations participated in “Building on Our Strengths”. In this facilitated workshop they discussed the resources of St. Paul's, the local values, and future options for the St. Paul's area and ways to achieve those options.



Planning

The idea for a community event in St. Paul's originated in a public meeting organized in the community in February of 2008 by the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Board. The purpose of this public meeting was to introduce the CURRA, a 5-year program of innovative interdisciplinary, community-university research and knowledge mobilization, based at the Bonne Bay Marine Station in Norris Point, to the residents of St. Paul's. The CURRA is working with communities and organizations along Newfoundland's west coast to create knowledge and programs essential for recovery of fish stocks, fishing communities and the larger region (www.curra.ca). The second purpose of the public meeting was to discuss Coastal Connections and other research currently underway or proposed for the community. Coastal Connections is three-year coastal SSHRC-funded interdisciplinary research program that addresses long-standing concerns about fisheries, coastal resource degradation and community well-being in Newfoundland.

Participants in the February 2008 ICZM meeting included fishers from St. Paul's, members of the town council, and representatives from local

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businesses. Dr. Bob Hooper, Director of the Bonne Bay Marine Station, discussed research he had done on the St. Paul's salt marshes and participants learned about upcoming research by Jessica Kukac, a graduate student who would be spending the summer in St. Paul's doing research on how local residents value natural resources.

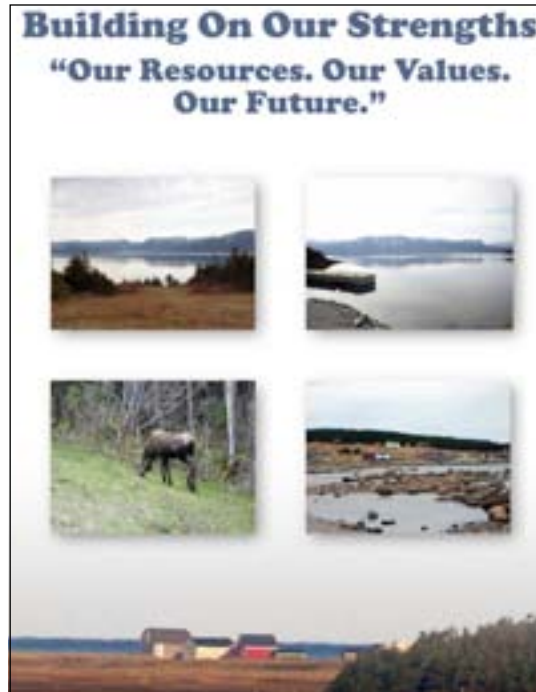
Jessica spent the summer doing ICN funded fieldwork in St. Paul's and Kurt Korneski, a CURRA postdoctoral fellow, carried out research on the history of the town. In August 2008, discussions with community members about the best way to feed back the results of this research to the community led to a decision to organize a larger event consisting of a public meeting and a workshop called "Building on Our Strengths". This event would inform the community about the research taking place in St. Paul's and provide an opportunity to plan for the future.

The St. Paul's town council agreed to support the resulting proposal for a public meeting and one-day workshop. Monica Pittman, the town clerk, and councillor Cyril Hutchings joined a steering committee tasked to design the proposed workshop and public meeting. Other members of the Steering Committee included Sean St. George of the ICZM

Committee, Barb Neis (CURRA) and Ratana Chuenpagdee (ICN and CURRA).

The CURRA agreed to fund the hiring of a local coordinator who would assist the steering committee in planning, organizing and promoting the events. Heather Payne was hired as the local coordinator. She worked closely with the Steering Committee to identify speakers, develop agendas, generate interest within the community, circulate information on the events, organize venues, and take care of all the logistical details.

Heather promoted the public meeting by placing posters in public buildings and through personal contact. Potential workshop participants were identified by the steering committee and were recruited through direct invites or through personal contact. In addition to funding the cost of the coordinator, the CURRA also provided assistance with travel costs for some of the speakers as well as covering the cost of promotional materials such as the posters and invitations. INTRD provided financial support for the refreshments during the public meeting, the lunch/coffee breaks during the workshop, and office related expenditures such as photocopying and supplies. The ICN project covered travel related costs for some of the speakers. Memorial University's Leslie Harris Centre donated



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the time and expertise of Rob Greenwood, its Director, to facilitate the workshop. The Town of St. Paul's, Red Ochre Regional Economic Development Board, the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Committee for the St. Paul's region, and the Bonne Bay Marine Station provided in-kind support.

Public Meeting –Celebrating Our Strengths: Our Resources, Our Values, Our Future

The public meeting showcased St. Paul's research done by Memorial University. Kurt Korneski provided a brief historical overview of St. Paul's and showcased many photographs of the area he had retrieved from the provincial archives. Some of the findings of Dominique Lavers' archaeological excavation of a prehistoric lithic quarry/workshop site in St. Paul's discovered in the summer of 2008 were presented. Bob Hooper, director of the Bonne Bay Marine Station, provided an extensive overview of the history and ecology of the St. Paul's saltmarsh. Jessica Kukac presented the results of her survey she conducted in the summer of 2008 on community values and local natural resources. Trevor Bell, a professor in the Department of Geography at Memorial University, provided a poster for display at the events modelling the potential effects of climate change on the saltmarsh in St. Paul's.

Many of the people attending were surprised that most of the groups in the area shared similar values



towards their natural resources. A community handbook, based on Jessica's research will be distributed throughout St. Paul's. The handbook will highlight various resources from St. Paul's and showcase local values. Bob Hooper's presentation generated excitement about the St. Paul's saltmarsh. There was also a lot of interest in the climate change model and its potential implications for the future of the saltmarsh and the community.

The public meeting presentations were followed by local entertainment by the Cow Head Heritage Dancers, accompanied by Ricky Biggin on guitar and Calvin Payne on accordion. The Anglican Church Women provided refreshments.

Workshop – Building on Our Strengths: Our Resources, Our Values, Our Future

On December 10th, Rob Greenwood facilitated a workshop entitled "Building on Our Strengths". The workshop brought together members from the local community of St. Paul's, Parks Canada, DFO, RED Ochre Regional Board, Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and other community organizations including the Anglican Church, Search and Rescue, and students from Long Range Academy. Short presentations by representatives of each of the groups about the services they provide to the community and any issues or concerns and opportunities they could identify for the future were an important part of the morning program.



Breakout Sessions

After a delightful lunch at the Anglican Church, workshop participants were split into four breakout groups: two focusing on the economy, one on youth, and one on regionalization. Each breakout group was asked to discuss broad issues related to the strengths of St. Paul's and the health of resources in the area. Groups were also assigned more specific questions regarding issues of deeper concern. At the end of the workshop, the breakout groups reported back to the larger workshop. Below are summaries of the results of their discussions.

Youth

The youth breakout group was asked to discuss the following questions:

- What is needed to retain youth or encourage them to come back to St. Paul's and the region?
- How can the youth in this region help with the future development of St. Paul's and the region?

Based on their discussion, the Youth group reported that outmigration of youth is common throughout much of rural

Newfoundland. More involvement from local organizations in the school system would allow for students to learn about the opportunities in the area. Because of the unique location of St. Paul's and the interesting ecosystems in the area, youth involvement with Parks Canada would be a useful tool and would provide an opportunity for students that could greatly improve skill diversification and might provide opportunities for some hands-on training. However, it is up to youth in the area to seek these opportunities and take advantage of those that already exist.

The Youth group also felt that many youth have recognized that the lower cost of living in St. Paul's, in comparison to a major city, is an advantage for those who are able to stay. Many take pride in where they come from and hope to one day raise a family of their own in St. Paul's. In order for youth to help with the future development of St. Paul's, they need to become more active in organizations that already exist such as the church or town council and maybe go as far as starting their own youth group.

Workshop Presenters

- Shane Fleming, *ACOA*
- Jerry Bennett, *St. Paul's Fisherman and Mayor*
- Nicole Bennett, *Youth*
- Amanda Payne, *Youth*
- Craig Payne, *Bon Tours*
- Sadie Bennett, *Anglican Church Vestry*
- Sean St. George, *RED Ochre Board*
- Kathleen Blanchard, *Intervale*
- Danny Major, *Parks Canada*
- Shawn Garrow, *Parks Canada*
- Monica Pittman, *St. Paul's Town Council*
- Joan Parsons, *Parsons Pond*
- Bettina Lori, *Search and Rescue*
- Colleen Kennedy, *Gros Morne Co-operators Association*



Economy

The two economy breakout groups were asked to discuss the following questions:

- What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of the fishery in St. Paul's and the region as a whole?
- What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of the tourism industry in St. Paul's and the region as a whole?
- Are there ways to strengthen these industries?

The breakout groups reported that St. Paul's is primarily involved in two industries: the fishery and tourism. Both industries have their strengths but both are associated with substantial uncertainty for the future. The fishermen of St. Paul's are among the biggest strength of the community. Coastal resources in the area have long provided habitats for fish and shellfish stocks which, in turn, provide an income for local people. Currently lobster stocks and cod stocks in the area are healthy. The fishery not only provides employment to fishermen but also to plant workers and is a form of tourism in and of itself. There is tremendous support from

the local community for the fishery and the people who depend upon it.

Like any industry, the fishery has its weaknesses. Currently, the fish markets are at an all time low and with a dwindling economy they are not expected to increase anytime soon. Gas prices this summer also held many fishermen back from a full work week. Simply, the cost was too high just to get to the traps and what fishermen were given in return did not make up for those expenses. Restrictions and quotas are also frustrating fishermen. Many feel that although some investments are being made in the fishery, they are going to the wrong places. It would be useful for local knowledge to be incorporated into these legislative-type decisions. Recent declines in the fishery have forced many to focus their efforts in other directions such as tourism.



The strategic location of St. Paul's within Gros Morne National Park and the unique ecosystems in the area have made tourism a growing industry for St. Paul's. Recent additions to the community infrastructure, such as Gros Morne Resort and the Seal Island Boat Tour, give tourists an



opportunity to see and explore nature at its finest. Many people from far away visit St. Paul's for a chance to hunt moose and caribou with local guides who are extremely knowledgeable about the area. The tourism experiences in St. Paul's are unlimited.

Although tourism has a promising future for St. Paul's, it is mostly a seasonal industry. Outmigration has resulted in labour shortages and specified training is needed to further develop attractions that will keep tourists in St. Paul's for a longer amount of time. Gaps in local technological infrastructure, related to high-speed internet and cell phone towers, were also of concern.

The Economy groups felt that in order to strengthen industry in the area there needs to be more action. Many felt the need to advance to the next step beyond research and development. New technology needs to be introduced to keep businesses here and

attract new ones to set up. Policies in the fishery need to change in order to make it a more profitable industry. Use of existing organizations such as the Gros Morne Co-operators Association could help to develop new initiatives with the potential to generate income and attract tourists and investors to St. Paul's.

Regionalization

The Regionalization group was asked to discuss the following questions:

- What are the potential benefits of regionalization of services?
- What are some of the potential down-sides for St. Paul's and for the region?
- How can St. Paul's take advantage of the benefits and minimize the downside of the regionalization?

The Regionalization group reported that regionalization has long been talked about in the St. Paul's area. Many have expressed a fear of losing their identity if the area becomes one region. Despite the identity issue, many feel that there would be considerable benefits to regionalization. Some regionalization already exists. For instance, the area has joint services in waste collection, water, ambulance, and fire and in many cases regionalization has come naturally given the challenges of tight budgets. St. Paul's houses the regional fire truck and many trained volunteer fire fighters. They are already recognized for their outstanding search and rescue



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efforts in the Park area. Overall, regionalization would allow for increased training and funding for more services like this. Many feel that the benefits would include an increase of supplies and services and a cut in overall spending.

Evaluation

Participants were extremely positive about their experience at both the public meeting and the facilitated workshop. Twenty-four evaluation forms were completed in total. A majority of people at the public meeting felt that the presentations were excellent. Many were motivated to attend the public meeting because of their concerns for the future of St. Paul's. Others were interested in learning more about the history of the town and many had participated in Jessica's research in the summer of 2008 and were eager to see the results. Participants felt the public meeting was very informative and well organized. However, some wanted to know where things were going to go now that all this information had been disclosed.

Those who attended the facilitated workshop also felt that the presentations were excellent and the information presented was very useful. Many were interested in what role the CURRA could play in the future of St. Paul's and in understanding more about community-university interactions. Many felt that the information that was given was extremely relevant and that there had been ample opportunity to participate in the discussion. Although there was a good balance of people from the community and external organizations, many suggested that there

needs to be more local involvement, including youth participation, in future activities. While the feedback from the workshop was extremely positive, many are still asking where do we go next.

Future work in the St. Paul's area

In spring 2009, the Conservation Corps will be advertising for an intern, funded by the CURRA, to work in St. Paul's throughout the summer of 2009. The role of the intern will be to formulate a development plan for the community that will enhance its capacity to preserve and gain the most from its diverse natural resources, beautiful setting and local expertise.

Christine Campbell, an environmental sciences professor at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook, will be doing some CURRA and Parks Canada-funded biological research in St. Paul's Inlet in the summer of 2009 and 2010. She will be working with a Parks Canada intern and will be looking at the amount of food available for fish to eat and the presence of baby fish in the Inlet.

Christine's team will work with fishermen and boat tour operators in St. Paul's Inlet to assess plankton populations. Results of Christine's project will be displayed in the Seal Island Boat Tour office alongside a poster from Dominique Lavers about her archaeological dig and possibly in the town hall.

Kurt Korneski, a postdoctoral fellow and historian working with the CURRA, will return to St. Paul's this spring. Kurt will be conducting research on the history of the herring fishery in St. Paul's Inlet and looking at the history of the co-operative movement



in the region. He hopes to gain insight into the obstacles and opportunities for future conservation that can be learned from studying the history of the herring fishery and co-operatives in the area.

Biology students from the Bonne Bay Marine Station will continue to visit St. Paul's to study the saltmarsh and use the Seal Island boat tour to study marine mammals as part of their summer program.

There is also future potential for another archaeological survey in St. Paul's Inlet. Robert Anstey from the Department of Archaeology at Memorial University in St. John's is hoping to excavate another recent Indian resource-gathering site, which may or may not be related to the site previously excavated by Dominique Lavers during the summer of 2008. The dig is dependent on the condition of the site and getting the required permission to do so. A few sites will be tested this summer in hopes to commence the dig in the summer of 2010.

Conclusion

The two-day event in St. Paul's was a success despite challenging weather and some cancellations. It provided an opportunity to celebrate the strengths and values of St. Paul's and to begin a conversation about future options and the related research needs of the community. This success was due very much to the

support and cooperation provided by the Steering Committee, local community members, and representatives of various organizations. Heather Payne's contribution was central to the success of this event as was that of Monica Pittman and the Anglican Church Women's group. Rob Greenwood's facilitation was excellent and the event would have been much less enjoyable without the entertainment by Ricky Biggin, Calvin Payne, and the Cow Head Heritage Dancers.

Participants were able to come together to learn and engage in important discussions regarding the

natural, cultural, historical, and tourism resources that St. Paul's residents value and about the issues, challenges, and opportunities confronting the community. Participants were able to meet and

interact with government and non-government groups responsible for programs that can contribute to the community's future well-being. Many had a chance to discuss their concerns and ideas for the future of St. Paul's. Participants were satisfied with the outcomes of this event and feel that events like this should happen more often in their community. Future events should be more solution-focused generating concrete plans for future activities. Participants are eager to know what is next for St. Paul's. Thank you to those who participated and especially to those responsible for the coordination of this event.

Special Thanks to:
Heather Payne, *Local Coordinator*
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St. Paul's Anglican Church Women's Group
Residents of St. Paul's
Cow Head Heritage Dancers, Randy Biggin, and Calvin Payne
Rob Greenwood, *Harris Centre, Memorial University*
Bob Hooper, *Bonne Bay Marine Station (BBMS)*
Sean St. George, *Red Ochre Regional Economic Board*

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