

## Do You Play Newfoundland Music? Tracking Traditional Music in the Tourist Imaginary

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*Abstract: Music-making is assumed to be a significant part of the Newfoundland and Labrador tourist imaginary. This introductory exploration of the construction of traditional music in Newfoundland and Labrador tourism considers how people working in the music and tourism industries perceive tourist desire for traditional music. The occupational perspectives of musicians and tourism industry professionals is contrasted with statistical data concerning non-resident visitors, as they are more likely to be seeking out Newfoundland traditional music for the first time. Interview data supports the existence of a niche market for traditional music aficionados as well as tourists generally interested in local culture, although this is not yet reflected in provincial tourism surveys and reports.*

*Résumé : Les joueurs de musique traditionnelle sont censés constituer une partie importante de l'imaginaire touristique de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador. Cette exploration préliminaire, dans cette province, de la représentation de la musique traditionnelle dans le tourisme, considère la façon dont les gens qui travaillent dans le domaine de la musique et ceux qui travaillent dans l'industrie du tourisme perçoivent l'attrance des touristes pour la musique traditionnelle. Les points de vue des musiciens et des professionnels de l'industrie du tourisme sont mis en contraste avec des données statistiques au sujet des visiteurs, lesquels sont plus susceptibles d'être en quête pour la première fois de musique traditionnelle terre-neuvienne. Les données des entrevues confirment l'existence d'un marché de niche pour les passionnés de musique traditionnelle, ainsi que pour les touristes qui s'intéressent plus généralement à la culture locale, bien que cela ne transparaît pas dans les études et les rapports portant sur le tourisme au niveau provincial.*

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The dynamic musical practices of Newfoundland and Labrador have been extensively documented, with a variety of music scholars of diverse disciplinary backgrounds traveling to the province since the early 1920s, as well as locals seeking to preserve and enliven venerable practices (see Lehr and Best 2003; Doucette and Quigley 1981; Greenleaf 1933; Kearney Guigné 2008; Lovelace 2004; Narváez 1995; Quigley 1980; Rosenberg 1991). In North America and Europe, the province is known as a bastion

of centuries-old musical traditions from England, Ireland, Scotland, and France, in addition to longstanding, locally developed practices (Everett 2003; Osborne 2015). Music continues to play a vital role in the cultural life of the province and is considered fundamental to a highly valued cultural heritage.

Music-making is also an integral part of the Newfoundland and Labrador tourist imaginary (Salazar 2011). The construction of this image utilizes Newfoundland and Labrador's traditional music(s) in particular. The term "traditional music," in the sense that it is employed in provincial tourism marketing (see, e.g., the provincial tourism website at [www.newfoundlandlabrador.com](http://www.newfoundlandlabrador.com)), refers to music made via acoustic instruments including guitars, accordions, fiddles, bodhrans, and concertinas, and engaging with folk or vernacular idioms as developed in Europe and North America. The music is often referred to as Irish-Newfoundland music, due to the heavy influence of Irish immigrants on the island's culture (Byrne 1991; Harris Walsh 2009; McDonald 1999; Ní Shúilleabháin 2004; Osborne 2015).

In Newfoundland and Labrador, traditional music is also popular music, in that while it may be commercially produced and distributed, it is still thought of as belonging to the people who make and enjoy it (Narváez 1995, 2002). In addition to year-round events such as traditional music sessions, open mics, and genre-specific nights at local venues, the peak tourist season sees the addition of dinner theatre, outdoor concert series, and festivals. Supporting and informing these public performances are dynamic traditions of making music in the home and in other semi-private circumstances, most notably in the form of the kitchen party. The wide range of musical genres employed by local musicians, however, often far exceeds visitors' expectations (Everett 2003). On a Friday night in the province's capital city of St. John's, for example, tourists might be able to take in performances ranging from Django Reinhardt-inspired arrangements of Newfoundland folksongs to death metal to klezmer to downhome or country blues. While all these bands may be perceived to play what local record label SingSong Inc. cannily terms "music that reflects the Newfoundland experience" on their website (<http://www.singsonginc.ca/>), they are clearly not all rooted in Newfoundland culture.

The definition of Newfoundland "traditional" or "folk" music can be slippery and contentious in both academic and popular discourse (see, e.g., McDonald 1999; Narváez 1995, 2002; Lovelace 2004). However, in conversation with local musicians, as well as music and tourism industry professionals for this ongoing research, I have found such categories, at least in the commercial realm, to be capacious and dynamic. An excellent example of this was the lineup for the 2015 Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival,

which included Bruce Cockburn, Hey Rosetta!, and Fred Penner. According to the definition provided above, none of the three acts would fall into the category of “traditional music”: Cockburn and Penner are singer-songwriters and Hey Rosetta! is an indie rock ensemble.

The following is an introductory exploration of the construction of traditional music in Newfoundland and Labrador tourism, beginning with Newfoundland, from both emic and etic perspectives (Gibson and Connell 2005; Hayes 2012; Kaul 2002). From an emic perspective, I consider how people working in the music industry—those whose labour upon which this aspect of the tourist imaginary is built—perceive tourist desire for traditional music. The fieldwork for this article involved interviews with seven individuals with a variety of experience in the St. John’s and provincial music scenes, as well as informal conversations at music events ranging from bar shows to festivals between May 2014 and August 2015. My interviewees were between 22 and 60 years of age, all actively gigging musicians, and known to me through various social networks, including individuals whose friendship I have enjoyed for over 15 years. The interviews were conducted between January and June of 2015. I also consulted with employees of the City of St. John’s Department of Economic Development and Tourism. Questions discussed in the interviews included provincial tourism campaigns’ emphasis on traditional music and assessments of tourist interest in local traditional music on the ground.<sup>1</sup>

The occupational perspective of musicians and tourism industry professionals is contrasted with statistical data concerning non-resident visitors (see also Heldt and Mortazavi 2016; Rivera, Hara, and Kock 2008; Moranz 2014), as they are more likely to be seeking out Newfoundland traditional music for the first time. Interview data supports the existence of a niche market for traditional music aficionados as well as tourists generally interested in local culture, although this is not yet reflected in provincial tourism surveys and reports. At present, efforts to control access to this cultural field appear minimal, allowing a range of local identities and etic perception to operate within the tourist marketplace, speaking to Ian McKay’s observation of “the non-reducibility of the cultural to the economic” (1994: 306).

### Tourist expectations, local experience

In the last 16 years, tourism in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador has changed considerably. When I began research for my doctoral thesis on culinary tourism in the province in 1999, I was impressed by how *personal* it was. I stayed in a number of bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) during my fieldwork

because in many communities, B&Bs or hospitality homes were the only lodgings available. Similarly, in some of these same communities the B&B was, in effect, the only “restaurant” (Everett 2005, 2007). Travel guides, such as Frommer’s, cautioned prospective tourists about the lack of tourism infrastructure, but also framed it as part of the province’s allure:

Be patient as you make your way throughout Newfoundland & Labrador, understanding that tourism is a new industry for the province and that services are not as abundant as they are in certain other locales. And really, isn’t that why you’re coming here in the first place? (Chafe and Pendgracs 2004: 1)

From 2003 to 2007, the number of visitors to the province increased by 15 percent (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2009: 8). Specialty retail stores, boutique and chain hotels, gourmet restaurants, and new tourist attractions developed, particularly in St. John’s and Corner Brook, to meet increasing demand. Jobs in the tourism industry have grown to account for approximately 8 percent of all employment in the province (Adey 2015). Between April 2014 and April 2015, 79,433 non-residents traveled to Newfoundland and Labrador. There are still infrastructure issues, not least of which is transportation (Uncommon Potential 2009: 17, 28-29). Travel to the province is expensive in any form, particularly to the island portion, necessitating a plane or ferry trip. Although the ferries are designed to handle severe ice conditions, they regularly get stuck. Strong winds can lead to delays or cancelled crossings even in the summer.

Regional weather patterns are a significant factor in both local culture and its commodification for touristic purposes, as they affect large-scale outdoor events such as the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Festival, now in its 40th year, organized by the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society. The City of St. John’s *Music at Harbourside Lunchtime Concert Series*, which takes place on Friday afternoons, is also dependent on the weather, as there is no backup indoor venue. Bad weather on folk festival weekend, not surprisingly, results in poor attendance and often a crushing loss of revenue for the not-for-profit Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society (Clarke 2015). To a lesser degree, poor weather conditions also affect foot traffic on George Street, St. John’s (in)famous bar district.<sup>2</sup>

Despite such challenges, tourism now accounts for just over one billion dollars annually (Adey 2015). In reporting tourism numbers, the province distinguishes between resident and non-resident tourists, with just over 55 percent of tourists being residents of the province, or so-called “staycationers”

(Adey 2015). Non-resident visitors, including former residents living outside the province, “tend to be older, well-educated, and affluent” (2015 Provincial Tourism Performance), with almost half of all visitors 55 years of age or older. By contrast, non-resident tourists between the ages of 18 and 44 make up just one-quarter of all non-resident visitors. About 60 percent of all tourists from elsewhere live in one of the Maritime provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island) or Ontario. Non-resident spending in 2014 has recently been estimated at \$491 million, an increase of about \$360 million over the past 30 years.<sup>3</sup>

The creation of locally distinctive “experiences,” and their identification in tourism marketing as such, has been a trend in the global industry for the last decade or so. Based on research on emotional intelligence and the concept of “experiential tourism,” the industry has taken up the phrase “return on emotion” or ROE, to describe the benefits of such tourist activities (see, e.g. Fortuna 2013; Poncela 2014). To summarize, if tourists are able to connect emotionally with a given destination, namely through interpersonal encounters with locals, they will have a better experience and think more positively about the locale in general. In turn, the emotion elicited may inspire return visits, positive reviews on travel websites, and/or recommendations to family, friends, and so on. In 2015, Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador (HNL), the provincial tourism industry association, announced a new focus on ROE, perhaps indicating a turning point in provincial tourism, long focused almost exclusively on the province’s spectacular natural geographic features and wildlife (Pocius 1994). In a 2014 interview with CBC News reporter Jane Adey, HNL CEO Carol-Ann Gilliard said:

We have people here who are who they are, naturally. They’re storytelling [*sic*], they’re funny, they’re musical and can really make people feel at home. There’s a warmth that travellers get from us here that people don’t get everywhere they travel and not everybody comes here expecting that. When it happens and you encounter somebody that really makes you feel something, that’s what’s really important.

Tourist expectations of Newfoundlanders’ warmth are shaped via multiple media, including award-winning advertisements produced for the provincial government.<sup>4</sup> Broadcast on television and closed-circuit systems such as Air Canada’s, they may also be viewed on the provincial government’s website ([www.newfoundlandlabrador.com/AboutThisPlace/Multimedia](http://www.newfoundlandlabrador.com/AboutThisPlace/Multimedia)) and YouTube. One of these ads promotes Newfoundland traditional music as an an-

tidote to popular music with the tag line, “Isn’t it time you got all that Top 40 out of your system?” The thirty-second spot begins with a scene in which a young girl plays the well-known Newfoundland folksong, “Mussels in the Corner,” as an older gentleman (that the viewer may assume is her grandfather), accompanies her on the accordion. We see them through the doorway of a fishing stage on a soft summer evening. The scene then shifts to a fine dining establishment, indicated by an array of stemware on tables and the dress of the patrons, as the tune continues via mandolin, played by someone whose face we never see as we view the scene from outside the restaurant through a window. The final scene shifts the action to a community hall with people of all ages dancing and clapping along to the tune, now played by a full ensemble including renowned Newfoundland fiddler Kelly Russell as well as the accomplished singer-songwriter and guitarist Sean Panting. More fiddle and guitar, a bodhran, and two accordions round out the instrumentation. As the band comes to the end of the tune, the viewer is presented with images of the red-faced and sweaty, but smiling, happy dancers.

While local musicians may good-naturedly dismiss such ads, well aware of tourism marketing strategies emphasizing and often romanticizing the unique aspects of any destination, they sometimes have to grapple with the expectations that might result. Andrew Fitzgerald, a fiddler in the up-and-coming band, The Freels, said, “It’d be interesting to hear if when tourists come here, if they are disappointed, that it didn’t live up to their expectations—it was raining every day and that downtown people are actually kind of mean. You know, like, there aren’t traditional musicians walking around and the colours aren’t quite as vibrant” (interview, January 16, 2015). Robert Walker, a musician with experience performing in a variety of bands in St. John’s, worked for many years at Fred’s, a downtown retail store that is a tourist attraction in itself. Often asked for advice about sightseeing, Walker told me:

I [would] say do this, don’t do that. This is how I see it. And then they go away for two weeks, three weeks and then they come back and say, there’s no music outside St. John’s.... You know, they hear of the famous kitchen party, but they think they can pay five dollars to get into a kitchen party somewhere. And I say, well, no, that would be obviously private, family, invite-only, right? (interview, January 29, 2015)

In answer to my observation that it was easy to imagine how visitors might expect to join in a kitchen party after viewing the Top 40 television ad, for example, Walker sarcastically agreed, “because there’s one *every day*.”<sup>5</sup> Fitzgerald

interpreted the ads more negatively, declaring, “What they [the ads] are actually promoting is years of poverty” in their depiction of, for example, dying outport communities that have suffered from systemic underdevelopment as quaint villages filled with colourful houses and even more colourful people (see also McKay 1994: xiv-xvii). When I asked former Great Big Sea frontman Alan Doyle about the ads, he responded emphatically:

The ads are great. We are in heavy competition for the travellers’ attention and business. We need great marketing and visuals to compete. And we are winning. They are coming in droves. And love what they see, hear and taste when they get here. Any savvy traveller knows that a Big Mac does not look the same as it does in the photo in the magazine. The ads are designed to get people to consider the destination and then do their own research online and elsewhere. I literally laughed when someone recently suggested to me that the ads make the place look too beautiful [...]. I have a friend in British Columbia who’s not allowed to put up a clothesline. Now that’s poverty. (email communication, May 20, 2015)

Regardless of their personal feelings about provincial tourism campaigns, local musicians knowingly tap into the constructed imaginary. Walker informed me that a Newfoundland recording company specializing in traditional music releases up to five CDs at the beginning of every summer.<sup>6</sup> Along with the CDs come posters promoting the new releases. Using recognizable motifs, Walker described the posters as “cutesy, Newfoundland, fisherperson, boats, nets, whatever. So people see that at eye-level, when they come in the door, it’s at eye-level on the new release section, and it’s in the ‘Top 21’ charted by the store” (interview, January 29, 2015).

As a result of this annual market saturation, a summer release is not optimal, as Walker underscored, for “anything other than your typical Newfoundland-Irish band” (interview, January 29, 2015). The store is within easy walking distance of four major hotels, as well the section of the St. John’s harbour where cruise ship passengers disembark to visit the city. As a result of the summer months’ emphasis on traditional music, store employees thus find themselves not only in the position of defining “Newfoundland music,” but also identifying the “best” recordings of it. Walker explained,

Most people don’t want to get to the end of the store. You know, some tourists do come in, they want to hang out all day, they’re

real music heads, they buy hundreds of dollars' worth of records. Some people really just want to come and they say, you know, 'I'll take your best one.' (interview, January 29, 2015)

Through such interactions, the canon of Newfoundland music may be strengthened or subverted (Rosenberg 1991, 1994). While there are particular acts that one expects in any listing of Newfoundland traditional bands (for example, The Irish Descendants, Great Big Sea, Shanneyganock), staff may also note personal favourites in the genre that fellow employees might not consider significant or "good" enough to mention.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, the musicians I interviewed take a practical approach to the representation of Newfoundland culture in tourist productions. For example, Bob Hallett, also of Great Big Sea fame, wrote:

I think we have been successful at creating an impression that Newfoundland is somewhere with a different culture, one that is expressly older and more interesting, entertaining and engaging. Traditional music is the soundtrack and one of the dominant images of that impression, so when visitors come here, it is something they both want and expect to encounter, along with colourful houses, icebergs and whales. How it might be presented, or what its level of authenticity it contains is neither here nor there. (email communication, April 28, 2015)

The construction of the province for tourist consumption appears to be generally accepted for what it is, destination marketing emphasizing a "safe otherness" (McKay 1994: xv, 31, 307). But it is also recognized for what it is not—a realistic portrayal of everyday life in any part of the province. As Hallett noted further,

Conventions in Newfoundland are almost always organized by a very small group of professional organizers, who focus almost exclusively on a version of Newfoundland culture heavily gauged towards either a very touristic and participatory version of Newfoundland music, or one rather neutral. Therefore, most such work goes to dinner theatre organizations who can create a show that incorporates music, dancing, humour, Screech-ins and the like in a slick, well-organized and concise package. Bands and solo musicians might be hired to supplement such an evening, or to add star power, but this is more the exception than



the rule. Alternately, traditional musicians are hired to provide “atmosphere” at cocktail parties and receptions. In other words they will sit in a corner and play instrumental music purely as background music, performing the function of a living stereo; there is no performance or audience attention as such, they are just providing a local sound to enhance the authenticity of the gathering. (email communication, April 28, 2015)

Hallett provides a concise summary of traditional music’s place in hosting conventions and conferences, ranging from a “slick” package incorporating both vernacular culture and perhaps a few stereotypes (for example, the Screech-In), to musicians playing background music. Thus in tourist productions, as in everyday life, musicians may play a variety of roles.

The musicians interviewed for this article are also university students, folk festival coordinators, authors, visual artists, band managers, restaurateurs, and actors. The aforementioned variety of live music to be enjoyed in St. John’s is a direct result of the fact that local musicians tend to be fluent in a number of genres. Walker reminded me about a mutual friend, a talented jazz and rock guitarist: “He plays with dinner theatre, plays with the symphony, and plays traditional music with his dad. You know, he’s ABBA one night and then the next night he’s backing up an accordion player. And that’s the life of a musician, you have to do that” (interview, January 29, 2015). Walker’s comment could describe any number of musicians living and working in St. John’s, with primary gigs in a variety of genres. For example, local guitarists, whatever their genre of choice, will generally be able to accompany traditional fiddlers or accordionists as well.

Walker himself performs with several groups and sees the emphasis on traditional music as more of an option among many than an obstacle for non-traditional musicians trying to make a living. However, he did acknowledge that there is competition for such gigs. He said:

Yeah, I don’t think anyone needs to be saying, “Oh, man, maybe I should be playing Irish music, that’s where the money is.” There probably is, theoretically, more money in it, you know, just because. But you have to be one of the really great established acts. It’s not like everybody who wears a shamrock gets a dollar. (interview, January 29, 2015)

Musicians sporting shamrocks may not automatically get a dollar, but there is potential for lucrative bookings for established ensembles. In discussing

whether or not traditional bands are preferred by conference or convention organizers wishing to incorporate local culture in their event, Hallett opined,

Traditional music does not so much get in the way of other genres ... as operate in a parallel system of professional music. Musicians in other genres are either export based or playing for local audiences, a fact about which they are generally well aware. In my experience tourists and conventioners have zero interest in local jazz, blues, rock, etc. They expect to see and hear and be entertained by traditional music and musicians in Newfoundland, and if they seek out any musical experience at all, it will be one based on that notion. (email communication, April 28, 2015)

Hallett understands tourist interest in traditional music as an expressive form unique to the province, but like Walker, also locates agency in professional musical pursuits with individual musicians, in terms of both genre and skill. He elaborated, saying,

Good traditional musicians are in demand year-round, as the music has an enormous local audience, and there are more venues seeking good performers than there are good performers to fill all the slots. This is particularly so during the summer, when local festivals and tourist-oriented seasonal venues enter an already competitive marketplace. (email communication, April 28, 2015)

As Hallett notes, unlike businesses or other organizations whose activity is tied to the tourist season, traditional musicians have opportunities throughout the year. Additionally, from Hallett's perspective, there are more potential gigs than can be filled by "good performers."

Contrary to Hallett's assessment, however, Doyle views the dynamic traditional music scene as a kind of gateway to other local musicking (Small 1998). He wrote,

There is no doubt that people go to Cape Breton to hear the fiddle and see step-dancing. Likewise they come to Newfoundland to hear Newfoundland traditional music. But I honestly have never heard of a single awesome non-traditional Newfoundland band that suffered because tourists come here to see and hear

accordions and shanties. People flock here for music. If you are good and just down the street from the trad pub, they will find you eventually. (email communication, May 20, 2015)

While perceiving more possibility of tourist interest in non-traditional local bands, Doyle also emphasizes skill over genre as a central factor of success.

## Categorical Challenges

At present, official statistics tend to obscure the significance of traditional music in tourism to the province. The most recent exit survey, administered in 2011, organizes possible tourist activities into a number of categories. Nature and outdoor activities—whale and bird watching, hiking, kayaking, “pleasure walking,” and so on—are grouped into a chart separately from another simply titled “other activities,” a catch-all scheme that employs ambiguous and overlapping categories such as *Nightclubs/lounges/pubs*, *Live performing music presentations/concerts*, *Local festivals/events*, and *Live performing theatre presentations/plays or dinner theatres*.<sup>8</sup> A visitor spending time in a nightclub, lounge, or pub may well have heard local traditional music. However, within the bounds of the category, it is unknown whether it was live, streaming via satellite, or emanating from a CD player behind the bar. On the other hand, all local festivals of which the author is aware feature local traditional bands, although this is not clearly communicated by the category title.

Given these classifications, music enters the listing at number nine, with only one-third of non-resident visitors reporting that they visited a nightclub, lounge, or pub. However, it is important to note that craft and gift shops, the most visited at 54 percent of all respondents, frequently carry not only the CDs of local musicians, but also instructional materials on traditional music such as Daniel Payne’s *Learning the Newfoundland Tin Whistle* DVD or Christina Smith’s *Easiest Dance Tunes from Newfoundland and Labrador*. Relatively small, lightweight items such as tin whistles, CDs, and instructional books are frequently purchased as souvenirs (Monroe 2016; Sparling 2016; Walker 2015). Thus, there are more opportunities to engage with local music culture than are represented in these survey categories.

As another example of categorical slippage, any tourist on Gatherall’s Puffin and Whale Watch tour (out of Bay Bulls, Newfoundland) will be exposed to significant musical components in the course of the ninety-minute trip to the “Bird Islands” and back—a *cappella* singing by tour guides, music played loudly on the boat’s sound system, and CDs for sale in the gift shop.

None of this is taken into account in the “Nature and Outdoor Activities” chart into which a whale or bird watching tour falls. Reflecting Chris Gibson and John Connell’s assertion that, “music is, strictly speaking, invisible, and often ephemeral, and the essence of tourism—the ‘tourist gaze’—has only the most tenuous connection with music” (2005: 13), the exit survey seeks to quantify activities (whale and bird watching, hiking, shopping) and sites seen (whales, birds, icebergs). “Listening” as an activity is not explicitly accounted for by survey categories. The “invisibility” of music, together with its ubiquity, resists quantification.

Exit survey numbers present challenges not only for the researcher, but for tourism industry professionals as well. The City of St. John’s Visitor Information Centre does not track statistics regarding tourist interest in local music. When asked about tourist interest, attendance, or participation in musical activities, they said, “We *wish we knew* the answers to those questions!” In a related conversation, Doyle declared:

Yes. I would love, love, love to know the amount of tourism money the Music Industry [*sic*] has brought into Atlantic Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador in particular. It would be staggering. I suspect as many as two thirds of the folks visiting the province have been convinced to do so in whole or in part by music. (email communication, May 20, 2015)

However, a Non-Resident Travel Motivations Study conducted in 2014 by Harris/Decima (a Nielsen company) for the provincial government found that while visitors from both the US and other parts of Canada considered live theatre and musical performance an important aspect of travel, they perceived a “general weakness” in the island’s musical offerings, seemingly unaware of the variety available (53-54; 65-66).<sup>9</sup> Together with the 2011 exit survey, which appears to indicate that music is a low priority for visitors, this perception of the province’s musical offerings runs directly contrary to my interviewees’ experience and assumptions. Of course, musicians playing traditional music are more likely to encounter visitors interested in that genre, and perhaps music in general, than those who aren’t. A challenge for the industry then becomes identifying the overlap between visitors to the province as a whole and those who seek out locally made music, either recorded or live.

In accounting for provincial tourism statistics, Denis Parker, bluesman and director of the province’s Music Industry Association for 18 years, points to a lack of infrastructure in both industries (music and tourism) that persisted into the early 2000s (see also Hennessey 2015 on this point). Parker first arrived

in Newfoundland in 1971, and he also questions visitors' historical perception of Newfoundland traditional music, theorizing that the "Canadian perception of our music has always been wrong" (interview, February 4, 2015). Parker describes a long battle to dispel Newfie stereotypes that extended to music.<sup>10</sup> Doyle mentioned this as well, but noted that he confronts the stereotype less often now:

I find less and less situations where I have to start a conversation by dispelling a negative stereotype. There was a time in the 90's when GBS toured Canada extensively, when the old Newfie Joke Book impression of Newfoundland was still prevalent in the public and even in the national media. Through that period we often struggled with mindless comments in bars, and even national media institutions like *The Globe and Mail*, *Macleans*, and the CBC. But I have found those situations less and less frequent in the past decade.<sup>11</sup> It seems the tide has turned and swung full circle as Newfoundland has become "cool" with people from the same regions of Canada that used to mock it. I should say, though that with more and more international travel, I find myself in front of people who have no impression of Newfoundland one way or the other. It is neither cool nor uncool. Just a place they have never or almost never heard of. (email communication, May 20, 2015)

Parker explains that he tried for years to get information about musical performances and festivals into local tourist kiosks and on the ferries. He described music as "always an afterthought" for the tourism industry. "I just don't think they get [it]," he said. "The will has to come from the department [of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development]" (interview, February 4, 2015). Walker illustrated the information gap that confounds tourists with a hypothetical example:

There's music in all kinds of places ... But I guess because these places are kind of small-ish, they don't need to put a poster on every pole in Port Rexton that Colin is playing tonight, you know? Because they [local residents] probably know that Colin plays Friday nights.  
[HE: And if you wonder if he's playing or not, you can call him.]  
RW: Yeah. You can look out your window and see if his truck is in the yard. (interview, January 29, 2015)

While Parker's experience together with Walker's imagined example might point to a certain lack of supporting infrastructure in the tourism industry, it also highlights the deep vernacularity of Newfoundland traditional music. If you live in Newfoundland and enjoy playing and/or hearing traditional music, you're likely to be part of one or more social networks through which information about related musical events is transmitted. However, such networks require an investment of time beyond the scope of the typical one-to-two-week vacation.

Fiddler Maile Graham-Laidlaw, who had lived in the province for two-and-a-half years at the time of our interview, described how she was invited to attend traditional sessions in the town of Heart's Content only after several visits to the community over a three-month period for a graduate course project (interview, January 28, 2015). As we discussed this, Graham-Laidlaw led me to consider the conceptual conflation between music as social practice (Turino 2008) and music as tourism event that has helped sustain a foundational theme in Newfoundland and Labrador travel literature (both commercial and institutional) for decades: that of Newfoundlander's friendliness and openness to strangers (Overton 1996; Everett 2005: 71-72).<sup>12</sup>

As noted above, Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador (HNL) is counting on the power of this trope to inspire tourism operators in the province to create unique experiences involving emotional engagement for visitors. Like Walker and Parker, CEO Gilliard recognizes that there is a disjuncture at present. Gilliard encourages tourism professionals toward

[p]ackaging experiences that people don't get anywhere else. Whether it's with people who are rug hookers, musicians, someone who knows where the best berry patch is, someone who knows how to bake bread.... Right now, it's hard to access. A traveller could be passing through a community and there's stuff happening all around them, but how do you package it so they can access it?" (Adey 2015)

I have described here a conceptual challenge to the quantification of traditional music's economic impact. Performing traditional music, while certainly not a guarantee of a steady income, is a cultural space open to a variety of manifestations, from lingering "goofy Newfie" representations to educational workshops.<sup>13</sup> Further research will seek to identify the mechanisms and effects of, as Doyle referred to it, "the most underestimated economic engine in Newfoundland and Labrador history" (email, May 20, 2015). In the space between the presentation and the perceptions of visitors—as well as locals

considering their own culture through the lens of tourist imaginaries—the practice of Newfoundland traditional music, both in production and consumption, continues to shape local identities in ways as pervasive as they are unmarked. It remains to be seen if efforts to document and track the economic impact of Newfoundland traditional music will reveal observable changes in the representation of local culture through musical activity in the tourist soundscape. 🍀

## Notes

1. I am indebted to all of the interviewees who gave so generously of their time. I have changed some names to protect privacy. I also wish to acknowledge colleagues who provided feedback on an earlier version of this work at the Folklore Studies Association of Canada annual meeting in Ottawa in May 2015. Finally, I'm grateful to the anonymous reviewers, as well as the editor, for their comments and suggestions.

2. George Street is a topic that deserves its own study, but is outside the scope of this article. The two-block stretch reputedly boasts the most bars and pubs per capita of any street in North America. Although its reputation has suffered in recent years due to reports of sexual assault and other violence, it remains a popular spot for tourists and pub crawls. Downtown gift shops sell George Street-themed apparel, such as T-shirts that read, "I got George-faced on S\*\*\* Street," pointing to the primary activity associated with the area. Of the 21 bars now operating, 2 showcase traditional music on a regular basis. Another bar, Trapper John's Museum N' Pub, is known for its frequent Screech-Ins. This is a ceremony in which, generally speaking, CFAs (Come from Aways, or non-Newfoundlanders) are made to recite traditional Newfoundland phrases, kiss a cod (or perhaps a stuffed, plush puffin), and down a shot of Screech, a Newfoundland rum. If they successfully perform these tasks, they are dubbed honorary Newfoundlanders, and sometimes given a certificate to commemorate the occasion. For the history of the Screech-In, see Byrne 1997.

3. The most recent year-to-date statistics at the time of writing were published on June 16, 2015. The report was accessed via [http://www.btcrcd.gov.nl.ca/tourism/tourism\\_marketing/pdf/Tourism\\_performance\\_2015\\_YTD\\_April\\_2015\\_June\\_16\\_2015.pdf](http://www.btcrcd.gov.nl.ca/tourism/tourism_marketing/pdf/Tourism_performance_2015_YTD_April_2015_June_16_2015.pdf). For an overview of tourism figures up to the mid-1990s, see Overton 1996.

4. Target Marketing, the company that produced the ads, has won over 227 advertising and marketing awards for the Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism campaign, entitled "Find Yourself," launched in 2006 ([http://www.btcrcd.gov.nl.ca/publications/pdf/2014\\_15\\_Annual\\_Reports/2014\\_15\\_BTCRD\\_AR.pdf](http://www.btcrcd.gov.nl.ca/publications/pdf/2014_15_Annual_Reports/2014_15_BTCRD_AR.pdf)).

5. Adding to the confusion may also be the fact that events taking place around the province are often referred to as "kitchen parties" regardless of whether or not

they conform to notions of a traditional kitchen party, i.e., actually held in the kitchen of a private home. For example, the province's largest archive and museum, The Rooms, hosted a "kitchen party" to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its opening on June 28, 2015. The text of the invitation posted on the website read, in part: "Join us for some rousing traditional music and cake with the best view in the city." See The Rooms' website at <http://www.therooms.ca>.

6. Another benefit to aiming for a summer release date is having product available for sale at the aforementioned Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival, which takes place on the first full weekend in August. In addition to showcasing festival performers' CDs, the festival also offers the CDs of a wide range of Newfoundland and Labrador musicians whether or not they are on the festival program.

7. For example, older employees might note now-defunct traditional groups whose CDs or LPs may still be available, but with whom younger employees may not be familiar. Another complicating factor in the calculation is that at any one time, some store employees may also be traditional musicians who have CDs for sale in the store.

8. The provincial government publishes these and many other tourism reports via their website. The most complete listing of downloadable PDFs may be found in the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture, and Recreation section of the website at [http://www.btrcd.gov.nl.ca/tourism/tourism\\_research/stats/index.html](http://www.btrcd.gov.nl.ca/tourism/tourism_research/stats/index.html).

9. The scale is quite basic, allowing respondents to choose a point on a continuum between "strong" and "weak."

10. Newfie jokes are typical of ethnic jokes in which a marginalized group is negatively portrayed for comic effect. The "goofy Newfie" is the personification of the stereotype, the word "Newfie" itself considered an ethnic slur by some residents (Byrne 1997: 236; Davies 1990; Everett 2009: 29-30).

11. In fact, as Anthony DePalma reported for the *New York Times* in 1998, Great Big Sea were "sensitive enough about their image to write restrictions into every contract. If the term Newfie is used in any promotion, the band will not play. If there are sou'westers, fishing nets or lobster pots anywhere near the stage, the contract calls for them to be removed." From early in the band's career, they referred to themselves as "Newfoundland cultural ambassadors."

12. To shorthand it, the idea goes something like this: Newfoundlanders are so uncommonly friendly, they'll invite you into their homes shortly after meeting you. They'll give you a feed of moose! They'll organize a kitchen party for you! While not completely outside the realm of possibility, such an occurrence would be rare. Nevertheless it remains a sought-after chimera, Goffman's elusive backstage (1959). For the development of Goffman's ideas with regard to tourism, see Dean MacCannell's, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1976).

13. The Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival presents themed workshops on Saturday and Sunday morning. Informal in character, the general format consists



of a handful of instrumentalists, singers, or dancers who address the audience and each other while taking turns performing solo, and performing together. A newer but already popular feature of the festival, the workshops are often standing-room-only.

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