"ALL HANDS BE TOGETHER": NEWFOUNDLAND GARDENING

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Abstract: Vegetable gardening persists in rural Newfoundland settlements as they undergo rapid technological, political and economic changes because gardening displays and perpetuates old values such as self-reliance, subsistence skills and family co-operation. Long-term research in northern Newfoundland has shown that it is not the poorest who garden but the proudest, especially the flag-bearers of a traditionalist vision of rural life.

Résumé: Faire un potager existe toujours dans les villages de la Terre Neuve rurale bien que ces villages soient en passe à de rapides changements technologiques, politiques et économiques. Faire un potager démontre et perpétue les anciennes valeurs de l'auto suffisance, de la capacité de pouvoir se nourrir et de la coopération familiale. Les recherches à long terme dans la Terre-Neuve septentrionale ont montré que ce ne sont pas les plus pauvres qui font un jardin mais bien les plus fiers, c'est-à-dire ceux qui portent l'étendard de la vision traditionnelle de la vie pastorale.

Introduction

Just outside the small town of Main Brook, northern Newfoundland, where the gravel highway turns down into town, a branch road turns inland to "the Pit." The Pit was dug for gravel, but it serves as well for planting gardens, picking raspberries and storing pulpwood logs. Like Camp Four Pit on the cross-country road, the active part of "the Pit" is now marked by a sign, "Gardens are not permitted in the Town Gravel Pit/By Order of the Main Brook Town Council." Potatoes and frontloaders compete for ground not covered by forest. At the edge of the Pit on about a tenth of an acre which she has been planting for 15 years, Aunt Bess, two adult sons and a granddaughter by another son are setting potatoes. The June fishery is keeping the men up until late at night hauling caplin traps, so her sons have little time to help, but "you make time," Bess says. "Your garden is your livelihood too." The men begin by

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raking the ground smooth and "lining out" the "lazy beds" with string and stakes. The beds are a yard wide and 30 feet long. They then toss down some seaweed or stable manure where the beds will be. Bess and her niece follow behind, placing the potato seed, cut into egg-size wedges, each with a sprouted eye, in tight, neat rows of four across the defined rectangles. The potatoes are "long blues," an old variety, "reds," which came along in the 1960s, and "canker-proof whites," a variety Canada Agriculture has been promoting lately. The men then lever up the tan sand from the strips of ground between the beds and pitch it over the seed, simultaneously forming the trenches and raising the beds.

The gardening season began in April when Bess and some of her neighbours started cabbage seedlings in pots on their window sills. The sacks of potatoes saved for seed were brought into the house from the root cellar in May and allowed to sprout before being cut into chunks, one eye apiece. As soon as the ground thaws in late May or early June the planting begins. Planting and trenching potatoes usually involves a crowd of workers of both genders and all ages, sometimes representing several related nuclear families which share the harvest. Men and women perform identical tasks in potato gardens, while women usually set the "small seed" for cabbage and other vegetables in their kitchen gardens behind the house. Kitchen gardens might also contain beet, carrot, onion and rhubarb or a currant bush—any fruit or vegetable the housewife needs to protect or cultivate frequently. Cabbage seedlings started in the house are set into the kitchen garden's lazy beds in June. Cabbage and turnip seed may also be broadcast at that time over 10-foot-square, raised nursery beds for the first three or four weeks of growth before being transplanted into nearby lazy beds.

In early July the gardens are "trenched" by spreading more fish or seaweed fertilizer over the beds and banking up soil from the trenches around the emerging potato plants. "Set 'em in kelp, trench 'em in caplin," the gardeners recite. The annual caplin run is well timed to provide barrels full of fertilizer for the trenching step. Since people moved their gardens out into the country in the 1960s, bears and crows have been rooting up the fish, so commercial fertilizer has become more common.

Bess straightens up from laying potato seed. "Potatoes are easy, really. They're only three days' work: a day to set them, a day to trench them and a day to haul them." In fact, gardens are somewhat more than three days' work. Gardeners do return again to their lazy beds to weed in June and July, and to repair the beds where the moose have stepped. A well-nourished garden is like a magnet to the sting nettles and chickweed, and the manure has always added crabgrass. So while the men fish, the women and children weed.[1]

Later, riding to the garden with Bess in her pickup truck, I asked her why she bothered to set a garden now that all her boys are grown and life is much

easier. "Garden work is easy to do if all hands go at it together. You just make up your mind to get the work done and it goes fast."

This is an opinion I have frequently heard gardeners express. On another occasion, Bess elaborated. She was complaining about what she saw as a decline in charity among townspeople.

> I worked my whole life and never got paid. My husband and my father never got any UI (unemployment insurance), and I got no child support for my eight children. But we survived—we made things for ourselves and people took care of one another. Now if one person gets something, the other person has got to get one better. I'd like for all hands to be as one again.

This article examines Newfoundland vegetable gardening as an expression of the value of "all hands be as one," as well as other values that have had immense survival value in the past and became beleaguered in recent times, but now have undergone something of a renaissance. This report supplements my recent book, *Rough Food: Seasons of Subsistence in Northern Newfoundland* (1994), which takes an ecological, adaptationist approach to Newfoundlanders' subsistence activities. My orientation in the book, and here, is historical, social, organizational and ecological. I began my 14 years of field work in rural Newfoundland in the potato gardens, and from there acquired a holistic understanding of northern life because gardening was thickly intertwined with the rest of the culture in rural Newfoundland. From the gardens I was led inexorably to the family and household economy, to other subsistence activities like foraging, to nutrition, land tenure, rural development projects, world view and many other topics.

This paper begins with a review of the elements of the Newfoundland gardening tradition and its changes since Newfoundland joined Canada. Next the connection of gardening to rural social organization will be examined. The main point to be made is that as rural Newfoundland settlements undergo rapid technological, political and economic changes, vegetable gardening persists because it displays and perpetuates old values concerning self-reliance, subsistence skills and extended family reciprocity. Those who garden are not the poorest but the proudest, that is, the flag-bearers of a traditionalist vision of rural life.[2]

The Tradition and Its Modern Fate

Besides Bess, about two fifths of the other Main Brook households will be planting this month, either in the Pit with her, or along logging roads, or beside their houses, or in the meadows at the mouth of Western Brook, reached by boat across the bay, or in several of these places. Gardening is not as widespread as it was 50 years ago, but a distinct gardening tradition persists in Main Brook and throughout Newfoundland.

Following this tradition Newfoundlanders grow cold weather crops of potatoes, turnips, cabbage and carrots in lazy beds, which they make with a few hand tools and fertilize with fish and seaweed.[3] The history of outport agriculture from the 17th to the 19th centuries (Omohundro 1994) reveals that Newfoundlanders successfully adapted Old World practices to the special rigours of the New World climate, soils and occupations. In the process agriculture devolved, or simplified, from its European antecedents to become the tradition which today remains largely intact, though diminished, in the "outports," as the rural settlements are called. Even within the productive limits set by the mercantile truck system and the physical conditions, outport vegetable production was efficient, reliable and made a valuable supplement to diet.

Newfoundland's gardening tradition is "old-fashioned" and rare now in North America, but it was once practised in other northeastern coastal settlements and mountainous areas where soil and weather conditions are similar to Newfoundland's (Omohundro 1987). Lazy bed gardens have been made in the Adirondack mountains, in New Brunswick (Mannion 1974), on St. Lawrence River islands (LeQuerrec 1978) and probably coastal Maine and Massachusetts (Russell 1976). Gardening in those places lost its distinctive features under the influence of commercial farming, and it lost its urgency when the inhabitants acquired steady sources of cash and local shops began selling food year-round. In Newfoundland, by contrast, the gardening methods the pioneers brought with them 200 years ago have been preserved because they still satisfactorily perform under the difficult natural and cultural conditions found there, and until very recently they contributed significantly to the security, variety and quality of the diet.

In the last 50 years, Newfoundlanders' home food production has responded to sweeping changes, including technological innovations, the spread of plant disease, the development of the labour market and island infrastructure and Confederation with Canada. The Second World War brought the beginning of the changes. There were no "victory gardens" in Newfoundland; after the Depression, people eagerly abandoned their subsistence gardens for the construction work stimulated by the war. The decline of subsistence agriculture accelerated when Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949. The precariousness of life that had made gardening necessary began to diminish. Unemployment compensation, retirement benefits and welfare cheques became a significant part of household income. The new welfare floor under outport families eliminated the need for small gardens as necessary winter insurance (Dyke 1968:28) and so people "turned their spades into can openers" (Pottle 1979:74). The fishing and logging industries were revitalized for a time, and they paid well. Confederation with Canada eliminated many taxes and tariffs which had kept food prices high. Roads began to connect isolated communities to regular groceries, to wage work and health care and other conveniences

of civilization. Since these conveniences were declared essential, some isolated communities were completely evacuated and their residents moved to selected "resettlement centres."

Many factors combined in the 1960s to cause a decline in home food production. In Javanese agriculture, Clifford Geertz observed that "cultural, social, and psychological variables are at least as crucial as environmental ones in determining the stability of human modes of adaptation" (Geertz 1963:27), and that observation holds true in Newfoundland, too. The decline of self-sufficiency was brought about by internal, or cultural, changes as much as by external, or environmental, pressures. Gardening declined when roads were built and the merchants decided to sell vegetables—e.g., in Cat Harbour, on the northeast coast (Faris 1966:33). Garden decline has been attributed to the availability of cash, compulsory education, the roads, smaller families and a change in consumption with the breakdown of mercantile monopoly—e.g., in Notre Dame Bay (Wadel 1969:53) and on the Great Northern Peninsula (Firestone 1967:90). The provincial school curriculum in home economics throughout the 1970s avoided the subjects of home production in favour of teaching young women to be modern consumers of prepared foods like cake mixes and canned tuna. Vegetable gardens, along with "goats and berrypicking," became symbols of the poverty and backwardness of the Depression.

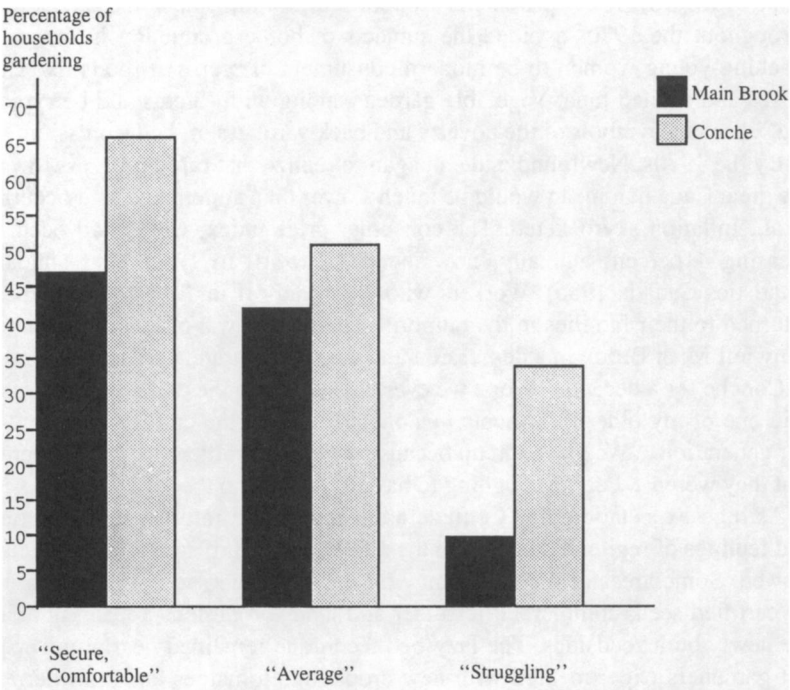
By the 1970s, Newfoundlanders began to realize that rapid progress toward the great Canadian mean would be much slower than anticipated, if it occurred at all. Inflation skyrocketed. The consumer price index, which had been increasing 4 percent annually, now increased to 10 to 12 percent annually (Statistics Canada 1985). Workers who were laid off in Toronto and Alberta returned to their families in the outports. The withdrawal of the logging company left Main Brook in a depression and the saltfish trade had been declining in Conche for a decade. "Worst we ever done, give up the cows, the gardens," said one of my older informants in Conche, echoing the current sentiment of her generation. "We gave 'em up because we thought times was getting better. But they weren't. People are going to have to go back to the ground again."

As high expectations for Confederation modulated into consumer anxiety and feelings of regional disparity in the 1970s, gardening's precipitous decline slowed. Some areas of the island may have even witnessed a recovery, aided by certified seed, commercial fertilizer and land for gardens appearing along the newly built roadsides. The lazy-bed technique remained nearly universal, but gardeners experimented with new crops, like tomatoes and strawberries, and new tools like greenhouses. In Main Brook in 1990, 40 percent of households are still gardening, which is about the same number as gardened 25 years ago. In Conche, the figure has slipped to about 22 percent, but in Plum Point, a small highway service centre on the west coast of the Peninsula, 65 to 80 percent of households are gardening.[4]

Non-economic Motives for Gardening

Why do northerners still do so much gardening? We investigated that question in Conche and Main Brook, a fishing and a logging community respectively, and therefore representative of settlements on the Great Northern Peninsula. We expected that a household's decision to garden would be related to economic need and the number of available workers. It was not. Home production on the Great Northern Peninsula is more than a safety net for those in the low and unstable income groups. About half the Main Brook and Conche households in the "comfortable" and "average" income categories (as locals define them) maintain gardens, compared to only one quarter of those in the "struggling" economic category (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Percentage of Households Gardening, by Socio-economic Status, Main Brook and Conche, 1982

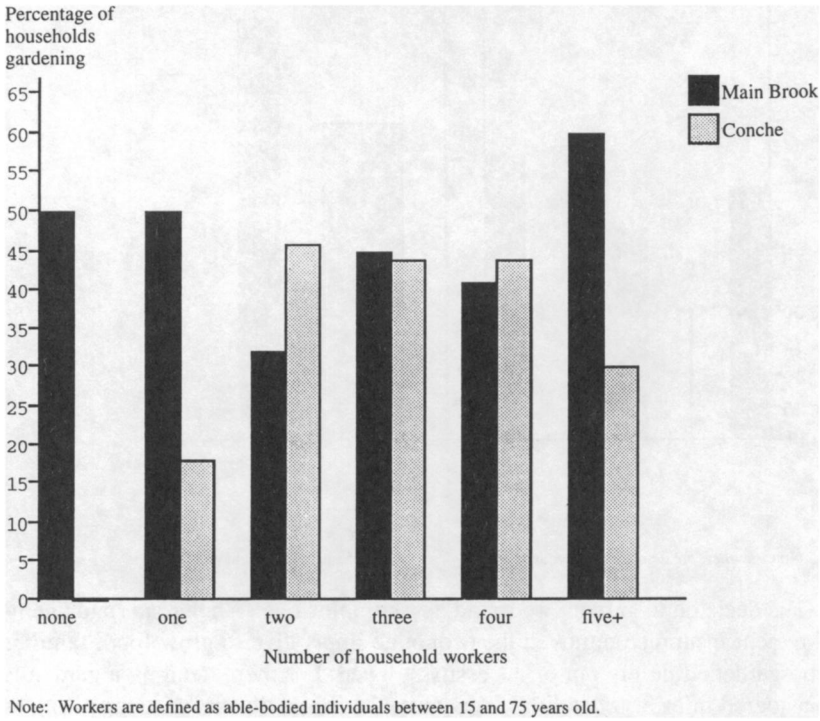


Note: Statuses defined and assigned by panels of judges from within the communities. Comprehensive survey of Conche households (N = 108) and Main Brook households (N = 120).

Further evidence that home production such as gardening is not associated any longer with poverty is the vigour with which it is conducted by postmasters, school principals and heads of large "crowds," or extended families.

Likewise, Hill's team found in their five community study (1983) that subsistence production was not simply a refuge for the unemployed. And it is not that gardening households in the north have significantly more able-bodied workers or fewer income-earners than non-gardeners (see Figures 2 and 3).

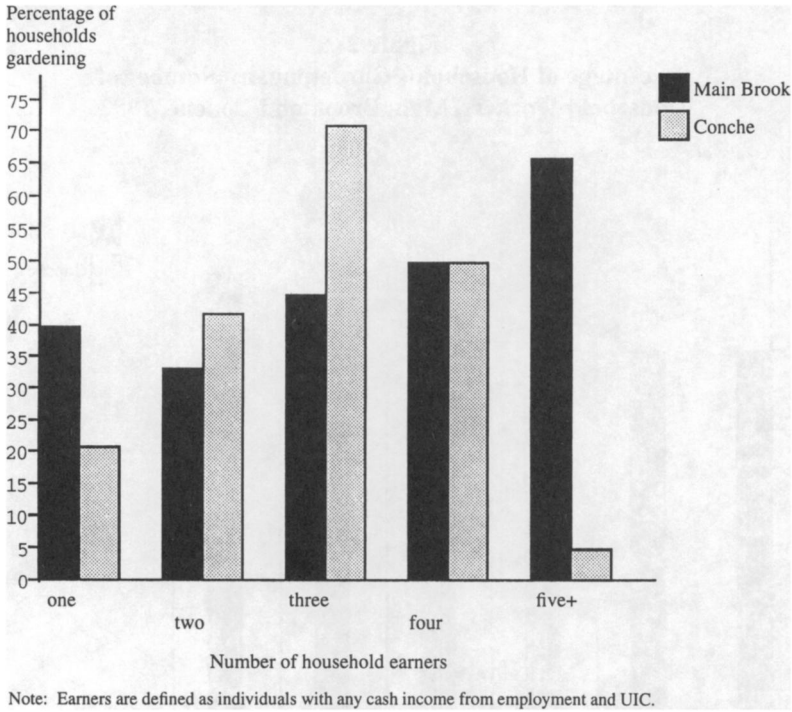
Figure 2
Percentage of Households Gardening, by Number of Household Workers, Main Brook and Conche, 1982



Note: Workers are defined as able-bodied individuals between 15 and 75 years old.

Lastly, although a paved road and proximity to shopping facilities are among the reasons given for gardening's decline, e.g., in the southeastern outport of Aquafort (Hill 1983), they do not necessarily produce a decline. Evidence for this claim comes from Plum Point. In 1965, 81 percent of its 40 families kept gardens. In the decade that followed, roads and a secure supply of merchandise reached the settlement, whereupon home production in general slumped. As in other northern settlements, Plum Point's domestic animals were almost gone by 1967, and in the 1980s even the chickens disappeared. But gardening's slump was mostly in acreage and crop variety rather than in number of participants. In 1982, a remarkable 85 percent were still gardening.[5]

Figure 3
Percentage of Households Gardening, by Number of Household Income Earners, Main Brook and Conche, 1982



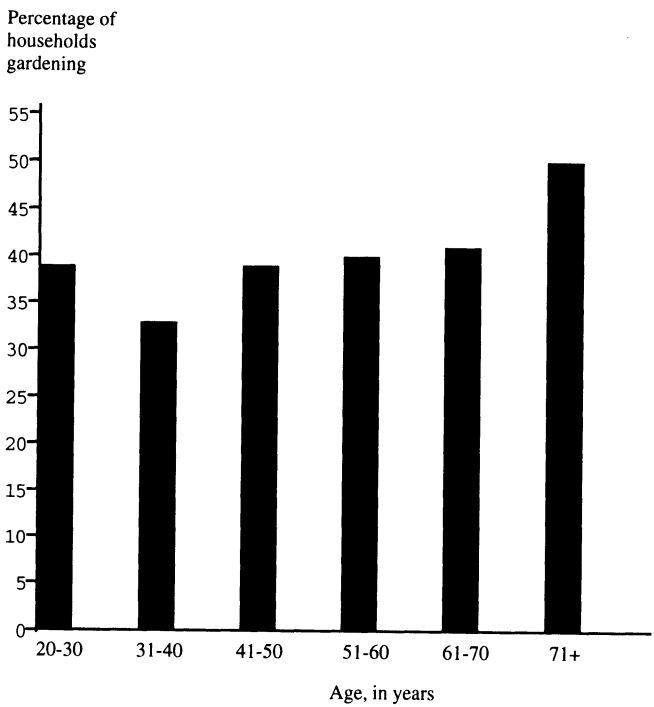
Note: Earners are defined as individuals with any cash income from employment and UIC.

The decision to garden, we found, is a complex one. When roads and unemployment insurance removed the economic imperative to grow food, families who gardened purely out of necessity stopped. For them, tending a garden is considered inferior to tending a decorative lawn and flowers or to travelling or to working for cash and buying vegetables with one's earnings. Men and women who were growing up in the 1960s and early 1970s when gardening was at its nadir are least likely to garden. Some say they never learned how. In all other age groups, including those in their twenties, about 40 percent are keeping gardens (Figure 4). In Main Brook in 1990, an active 4-H program, recently established and led by parents and teachers, includes classes in gardening and other outdoor skills, such as wild plant identification. These classes pass on certain knowledge useful for home food production which may not be transmitted any longer simply by enculturation in the family.

Our survey in Main Brook and other towns convinced us that most northerners do not depend upon vegetable gardens for income substitution but for upholding their quality of life in such areas as recreation and taste. They grow

potatoes for the same reasons other North American home gardeners grow its cousin, the tomato: the home-grown tastes incomparably better than the shop's. Many are as articulate about potato varieties as Asians are vocal about rice varieties. The imported white potatoes stocked in the shops are considered "right watery, slubby" when boiled compared to the floury texture of the old blue potatoes. Said one woman, "we like to save money, but we love to eat blue potatoes." She continued in a vein we heard frequently, "Shop potatoes don't taste like your own—what you grow. They got the taste of fertilizer, like they was drove [forced]." Other commercial vegetables are presumed to have also been grown with "chemicals" and to retain pesticide residues harmful to health.

Figure 4
Percentage of Households Gardening, by Age of Household Female Head, Main Brook and Conche, 1982



Those who garden offer many reasons, both practical and ideological. They save cash for other purposes. "We buy our winter's oil with what we save on potatoes," one woman claimed. Even after subtracting the costs of production, garden savings can amount to several hundred dollars. Some also earn cash by selling to non-gardeners. Memories of the hard years and a constant uncer-

tainty about next year's fish or wage work have made garden produce and the contents of one's cellar a trustworthy yardstick of security and comfort. A Main Brook woman said, "If you don't dig in and get something, you're gonna be out of it [unable to take care of yourself] in a few years." In the outport's egalitarian community, status differentials are slight, but gardening, among other home production tasks, is one area for skill competition. Gardeners recall and compare the size of their cabbage and the number of sacks of potatoes they grew each year. They remind each other about the time they grew potatoes "so long you could stack them on your arm like firewood." A gardener's prestige still depends upon the quality and quantity of potatoes, but merit is earned for growing the difficult vegetables, like marrows, or trying new crops like lettuce or strawberries. Inspired by mainland seed catalogues, the ambitious gardener will attempt (and usually lose) a tomato or a pumpkin.

When gardeners talk about why or how they conduct their work, they espouse a number of values inherited from the old days. As mentioned above, there is a strong sentiment of self-reliance and a pride in the skills required to produce vegetables under difficult conditions. Self-sufficiency in vegetables displays one's competence as a self-provider, even in an environment with high unemployment and a heavy dependence on government cheques. Some gardeners also take pride in making do with a limited kitbag of resources, like Lévi-Strauss's *bricoleur*, by reassigning uses to materials from other activity spheres. An old punt may be converted to a root cellar, a big iron grapnel hook may be used as a plough and fish salt may serve as a slug repellent.

Most gardeners enjoy the work and women like getting away from the house. "I glories in me garden," a retired man said. A woman told me, "I could be at the garden, or berrypicking, all day. The only thing I hate is housework." In fact, for some country gardens (those along roadsides as much as 40 km from the house) as well as for kitchen gardens, a kind of housekeeping aesthetic exists. One's reputation as a gardener depends partly on how neat one's garden is. Many Newfoundlanders perceive a beauty in a highly regular arrangement of square and rectangular raised beds, carefully "lined out" during planting with string and stakes. They poke fun at the more casual or idiosyncratic potato patches. Lastly, even though they have always lived mostly by extracting unmanaged resources from a wilderness, Newfoundlanders are carriers of a European cultural tradition that values the taming and domestication of the land. So they gain satisfaction in cultivating or nurturing something, as when they tend sheep, children and potatoes. "When I see things growing I get interested."

As the reality of hard-scrabble times became more remote in the 1970s, the opprobrium of the traditional self-sufficient lifestyle weakened somewhat. Amidst rapid socio-economic changes, Newfoundlanders began systematically to preserve the memory culture of their elders. Schools introduced a

course about Newfoundland culture, which assigned high school students to interview their elders. A spate of local cookbooks appeared, extolling the virtues of regional dishes like cods' tongues and blackberry pudding (Gray 1977:35). Local people became tolerant or even supportive of the folklore, dialect and survival skills of earlier times.[6] They began to worry that gardening and keeping animals were going the way of the hooked rug and Christmas mumming. The loss of these subsistence practices was not usually felt in economic terms, but rather they now evoked an era of community co-operation and self-reliance which contemporary Newfoundlanders feared was ending as the Canadian government introduced elaborate social support programs into the outports. Giving up the garden became more a source of guilt than of pride in modernizing. It was clearly an abandonment of one's parents' livelihood; it also opened one to suspicions of being "lazy" because one works less hard. As a woman who did not set a garden told me, "I feel guilty, like I haven't done my duty."

To sum up the history of gardening, for two centuries home gardening was an essential component of home food production in rural Newfoundland. Like other subsistence work, gardening was subordinate culturally and economically to fishing and logging, but it supplemented and complemented that commercial sphere. Today the gardening tradition is no longer economically essential and is widespread only in the more marginal settlements such as in the north. But throughout the province, home production has recovered somewhat in status if not in volume from its abandonment amidst the excessive expectations of Confederation. Small, relatively isolated places like Main Brook and Conche, where we have lived, have reconsidered the likelihood that they will catch up to Canadian mainland standards of living. A recurrent self-image has appeared in print that Newfoundland cannot achieve the same lifestyle as mainlanders, and that the island might succeed in developing only if its people "adjusted to a pattern of consumption somewhat different from that of the mainland" (Alexander 1980:37). In the face of continuing uncertainty and regional disparity, rural Newfoundlanders are preserving certain aspects of home production as one of the features of their old survival strategy which supported them by its resilience and diversity. Besides their practical value, gardening and other traditions of self-sufficiency have acquired a place in the new ideology of regionalism. Some Newfoundlanders are deciding they do not *want* to be like Ontarians, but to be close to the sea and forest, where they can own their own home, hunt and fish, share with family and neighbours and so on.

Gardens and Outport Social Organization

Elsewhere (Omohundro 1994) I stress the connection of values about self-reliance and survival skills with the persistence of home production like gar-

dening. Here I would like to elaborate on the theme of "all hands together" that emerged in Bess' ideals for gardening and, by implication, for outport society in general. Gardening is closely linked to extended families and to community egalitarianism and reciprocity, which have long constituted the fundamentals of outport social organization. Most outport residents consider these features the core of their identity and security and want to see them preserved.

Today in many outports such as Main Brook, some people are loggers while others are fishers or shopkeepers—occupations with differing work routines, social organization and vested interests—but everyone in town can be a gardener, so such work reinforces a beleaguered sense of egalitarianism.

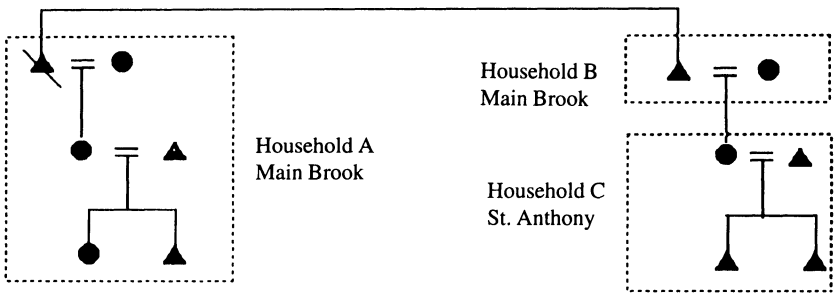
Garden produce, like all home produce, is a highly valued commodity in exchange among townspeople. The cash nexus is expanding, and northerners can now buy many more goods than before Confederation, but cash and commercial goods are still not widely exchanged among themselves for goods and services. A gardener might trade potatoes and cabbage for seal or moose from a hunter, or for salmon or salt cod from a fisherman. Sometimes home produce will win a favour that an offer of cash will not. Exchange and redistribution of the garden harvest around town follows and reinforces kin and friendship ties. Bess' vegetables, for example, will be collectively stored in the old family cellar, but shared among as many as five households: hers and her four resident married sons. She'll also send some sacks of potatoes on the coastal steamer to her daughters in Labrador. Whenever sons and daughters visit home from St. John's, Fort McMurray or Toronto, they'll often be given garden produce—perhaps a burlap sackful of early Jersey cabbage leaves—to carry back with them.

Bess is not typical any more, but her situation represents an enduring ideal of family co-residence and co-operation. Garden work parties often still comprise members of the "crowd," or extended family. Below is another example of a planting party, collected in Main Brook in 1981 (see Figure 5). It comprises three related households living in two different towns. The crowd is based on two neighbouring brothers and encompasses three generations. Note that because there are no sons, the daughters have brought their husbands into the work; ordinarily, a daughter resides with her husband, at first in and then beside the house of her parents-in-law, and so receives her kitchen garden from her father-in-law. The families in this crowd share garden work and produce, though they maintain separate root cellars. They sell some vegetables and give some to neighbours.

From the late 19th century until 1950, when Confederation and a technological change both altered the fishery, the basic social organization of the outport was the agnatic, patrilocal "crowd" of father and sons comprising a fishing crew. Crew members maintained separate households but lived in contiguous "gardens," referring to the fenced house plots beside the beach where

they shared fishing sheds, dried their fish and hauled out their boats. Until World War Two a traditional crowd in Conche, for example, shared work and ownership of many productive resources like boats and home production. The co-resident and neighbouring brothers shared sheep and cattle and they pooled their caribou kills. They collectively worked a potato patch on the rise behind their houses. Meanwhile, each female household head maintained a separate kitchen garden for other vegetables near her back door (Casey 1971).

Figure 5
Gardening and the Crowd, Main Brook, 1981



Gardening as a "crowd" celebrates that close-knit, hard-working family, the one that has not been dispersed by economic necessity or succumbed to the temptations of welfare (see also Murray 1979:19). Today most youths in the household do not do as much home production as previous generations of youths, who dropped out of school after five or six years to work with the family (Felt, Murphy and Sinclair 1995). But today some sons and daughters rejoin the home production community after they finish school, go away to work for awhile, get married, return to the outport and build a house. Home production becomes part of a lifestyle which a young man or woman may elect, or else young people may slip into home production by default when other options appear unattractive or unattainable (Richling 1985).

The church, often the most important community institution, also celebrates home production with its "garden party," a fund-raising banquet usually held in August and, in years past, by serving a "cooked dinner" of home-grown vegetables and home-raised lamb. Furthermore, "harvest home" services in the churches in October honoured home production. Parishioners placed before the altar selected exemplars of their fresh vegetables and home-canned jams, fish and other local produce. The only other important institution in the outports was the school, which was closely connected to the church because schools in Newfoundland have always been sectarian. The school also once acknowledged the importance of gardening. Until the 1950s children were let out of classes for a day or two in October to assist their families in harvesting the gardens.

An infectious excitement builds up in the neighbourhood to trigger crucial gardening tasks like planting and harvesting. When the weather or other clues like the caplin run signal a new season's onset, a wave of interest in a particular food or subsistence task sweeps through the town. Then "all hands go at it," talking themselves into agreement about when the weather and other work permit gardening. Garden tasks, like moose hunting and trout season, announce and celebrate spots on the annual cycle. Planting the garden in newly thawed ground, for example, signals the beginning of the fishing season in the way stringing up lights marks the Christmas holiday season.

To summarize, though gardens in rural Newfoundland retain economic value, the economic necessity to grow one's own is gone. Gardening today is for the flagbearers of the outport tradition: not the poor and dependent but the proud and traditional, the regional revivalist. The image adopted for this paper is a nautical one, of "all hands" pitching into some task together, united in purpose and sharing the product. The garden speaks to the Newfoundlander of a number of themes, all of which are undergoing threats from rapid changes. The garden is a domestic spot in the wilderness, a mirror of one's house and crowd. It is insurance against the vagaries of the economy. It is an exercise room for the self-reliant rural life. It provides prestige goods for exchange among neighbours and kin. It reinforces the egalitarian and mutual self-help ethic of the rural settlement. It celebrates the distinctly seasonal cycle of life and work. Main Brook, Conche and other northern settlements are not typical of the rest of Newfoundland in that more households cultivate gardens in these relatively remote places than elsewhere. But the revivalism, regionalism and values espoused by northern gardeners are widespread in the province and suggest that Newfoundlanders will be setting spuds in lazy beds for some time to come.

Notes

1. Practices once valuable for survival often retain cultural value (Bartlett 1980) and, indeed, Newfoundland women have taken garden weeding as a measure of their character. Laziness, sloppiness or poor knowledge are apparent from examining a person's garden (see also Murray 1979:19). Consistently good garden yields are also a mark of status as a good provider, and a full root cellar has been one measure that a family was "well off." Some men and women derive a sense of pleasure from driving out to look at neat and healthy beds of flowering potato plants in early August.
2. In some subsequent writings, I will review evidence for the claims that Newfoundlanders operate simultaneously in contrasting universes—the land and the sea, or the male and the female—and emphasize instead the dichotomy of the wilderness and the garden.
3. Though subsistence practices are constrained by the habitat, cultural tradition makes a difference. Take, for example, St. Pierre and Miquelon, islands off the southeast coast of Newfoundland and possessions of France for over two centuries. The St. Pierrais set gardens in Newfoundlandish climate and soil conditions, but because their island was a frequent port of call for French ships, they were never as isolated and self-reliant as the northern Newfoundlanders. Consequently, St. Pierrais grow their vegetables in lazy beds like Newfoundlanders but they

concentrate on luxury crops like leeks and lettuce. Basic carbohydrates like potatoes, never appreciated in French history, have none of the importance and central significance that they possess in Newfoundland.

4. During the 1960s, inshore fishing families like Conche's were more likely than families in other occupations to continue gardening (Dyke 1968), but now Conche has one of the lowest gardening participation rates in the region because most women are employed in a busy fish plant.
5. In 1990, gardening had declined to 61 percent of households, which was still a high number. Similarly, 57 percent of the households were gardening in the nearby fishing outports of Bird Cove and Anchor Point (House, White and Ripley 1989).
6. Since the 1970s a revival of numerous local traditions has paralleled the more prominent efforts at development. Wearing sealskin boots, considered in the 1950s to be a sign of poverty, has become fashionable. Recently in Conche, a brother-sister singing pair released a tape of songs in an effort to preserve the outport's heritage (Clarke 1991). Similarly, 25 years after sled dogs disappeared in Newfoundland, a white native of Labrador, now residing in the Northern Peninsula outport of Ship Cove, is training a team. A news article in the north's weekly paper praised him as "one of those rare individuals who are striving to keep the past alive" (Harding 1991). In general, the newspaper acts as a focal point for regional distinction and cultural preservation. Every year it publishes picture stories on planting gardens in spring and harvesting in fall.

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