CRAFT DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CRAFTS: ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES OF LABRADOR WOMEN IN A CHANGING FISHERY[1]

Karen Szala-Meneok
Wilfrid Laurier University

Kara McIntosh
University of Guelph

Abstract: Like women in other coastal regions of the North Atlantic, Labrador women have a long history of adapting to the exigencies of life in a fishing, hunting and trapping society. For over 60 years crafts production has provided these women the means to contribute cash to household incomes, especially during times of economic hardship. In this article we explore the creation of early rural development initiatives by the International Grenfell Association and other philanthropic organizations that provided craft skills, instruction, materials and access to markets for these craft products. We explore further how these early development schemes have undergone change since their inception and how contemporary Labrador women view and organize themselves in craft-production activities within the broader context of community development issues.

Résumé: Tout comme les femmes d'autres régions côtières de l'atlantique nord, les femmes du Labrador ont une longue histoire d'adaptation aux exigences de la vie d'une société axée sur la pêche, la chasse et le piégeage. Pendant plus de 60 ans, la production artisanale a permis aux femmes d'accroître les revenus familiaux en particulier lors des périodes de pauvreté économique. Cet article explore le développement des premières initiatives rurales lancées par l'Association Internationale Grenfell ainsi que par celle d'autres associations philanthropiques qui ont fourni les techniques d'artisanat, la formation, les matériaux et l'accès aux marchés permettant de vendre ces produits artisanaux. Les auteurs vont plus loin dans leur exploration de ces projets de départs qui se sont modifiés depuis leur insertion. Ils examinent de plus, comment les femmes de Labrador contemporain organisent la production de l'artisanat dans le contexte plus vaste du développement communautaire.

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Introduction

Since the turn of this century, social service providers, health care professionals, clergy, provincial development workers and individual Labradorians have grappled with the question of how to increase the income of fishers who live along that rugged coast. Over the years, the numerous, local, provincial and philanthropic schemes have met with only limited success. In various permutations, a focus on the development of a craft industry has been part of all of these schemes, in particular as it relates to the improvement of women's opportunities to contribute cash to household incomes. There are a number of profound changes which have occurred in Labrador in the last decade, such as the catastrophic demise of the cod fishery, the negative impacts of sealing protests on the sale of pelts and other furs, and tighter controls in the salmon fishery. These changes have contributed to an urgent need to find solutions to the short- and long-term socio-economic problems of coastal Labradorian people. Social-scientific research has focussed on understanding and remedying these conditions in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. While such studies have made important contributions to understanding the conditions under which these fishers live, they have focussed largely on fishery policies, the economics of the fishing industry or the social organization of fishing crews. The subjects of these studies have been predominantly male fishers from the Newfoundland portion of the province. Less attention has been given to the conditions under which Labradorians, and women (in particular, Labrador women), live and their potential for contributing to the economic recovery of the region. Some important exceptions include the work of Brice-Bennett (1992), Cahill and Martland (1993), Davis (1988), McCay (1988), Neis (1988) and Porter (1985), among others.

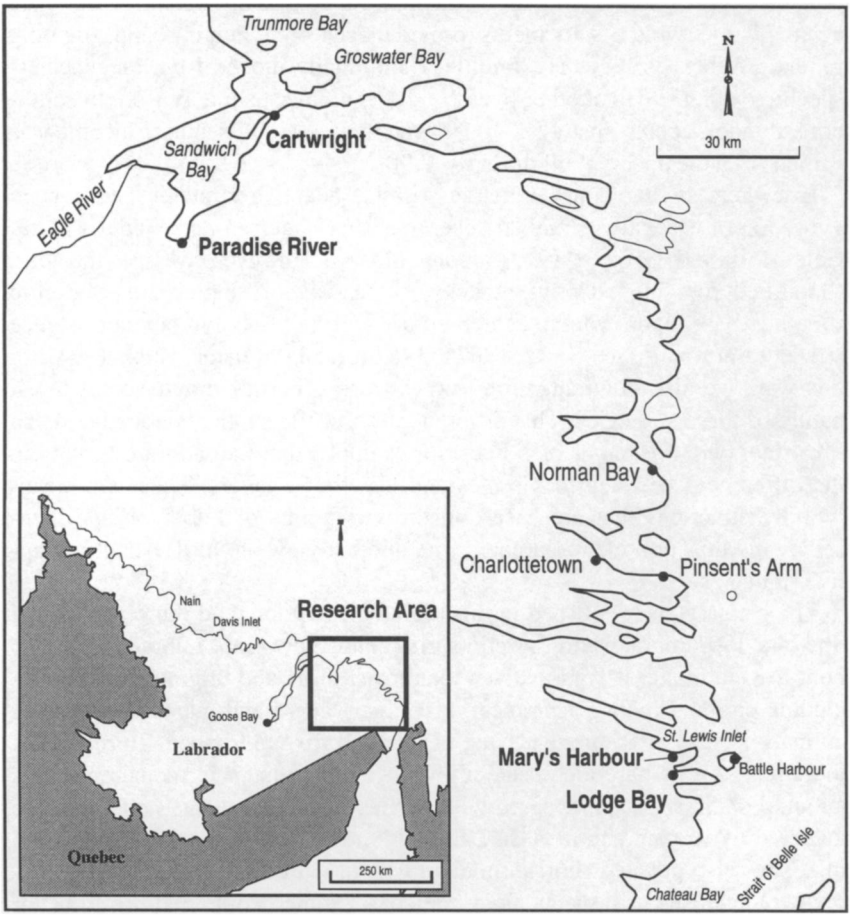
The goal of this article is to explore the role of crafts production in providing Labradorian women with the means to earn an income and contribute to the local cash economy. To this end, we examine the barriers to the development of crafts as a significant economic enterprise in coastal Labrador since the demise of Canada's east coast cod fishery.

We begin with a discussion of the historical context of craft production, and then turn to the organization of contemporary craft groups and women's involvement in them. Following this, we examine the nature of crafts production and, finally, focus on the barriers impeding the florescence of crafts production in these difficult times. An exploration of these features and their various linkages requires some familiarization with the research locale. The following section provides a brief ethnographic overview of the south coast of Labrador.

Description of the Study Area

Labrador, roughly the size of Italy, constitutes the eastern boundary of Canada's sub-Arctic and makes up the larger and northern portion of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The research area is situated along a jagged stretch of isolated coast and off-shore archipelagos between Sandwich Bay and Mary's Harbour (see Figure 1). In these two areas the total population ranges between 1200 and 1500 persons.

Figure 1
Map of Labrador's South Coast



Field research upon which this article is based was conducted in the vicinity of Groswater and Sandwich Bays by Karen Szala-Meneok in 1976, 1979-80 and in 1987, and by Kara McIntosh who worked along the south coast in the

Battle Harbour region in 1995. McIntosh's field work focussed on gender and rural development initiatives while Szala-Meneok's was grounded in a broader-based ethnographic context that included issues of contingency, decision making and features of temporal and spatial organization characterizing this sub-Arctic region.

People along the south coast of Labrador have devised what we refer to here as a modified foraging adaptive strategy consisting of fishing, hunting, trapping, gathering and some wage labour. A large portion of the coastal and hinterland regions are traversed throughout the annual cycle to pursue various extractive activities. In a biannual migratory transhumance, families move from protected winter settlements in the bays to the coastal archipelagos and back again. These winter settlements provide access to hunting and trapping grounds. When on the coast, families traditionally moved from one species-specific fishing site to another over the short summer fishing season. In southern Labrador, approximately 80 to 90 percent of a family's annual income was earned from the fishery until the early 1990s.

Elsewhere in the North Atlantic, similar adaptive strategies have been viewed as "seasonally pluralistic economies" (Andersen and Wadel 1972:3, Cole 1991 and Löfgren 1979, among others). However, we use the term "modified foraging adaptive strategy" as a way of emphasizing the core foraging base upon which contemporary coastal Labradorian subsistence strategies are built (see Smith 1987a, 1987b; Szala-Meneok 1992, 1994). In this way, we also draw attention to the strong Aboriginal and boreal forest nature of these strategies. This differentiation, while subtle, is nonetheless an important one. It is along such lines, for example, that Labradorians point out the differences between themselves and Newfoundlanders. These are meaningful distinctions that are based on the viewpoints of Labradorians themselves and thus provide researchers with another view of North Atlantic adaptive strategies.

The primary species fished in this region are salmon, cod (currently halted due to a 1991 moratorium), Arctic shrimp and snow crab. Labradorians also hunt a wide range of land and sea mammals, birds and migratory game, including caribou, moose, bear, seal, ptarmigan, geese and ducks. Fur-bearing animals such as otter, marten, lynx, beaver and fox are trapped. To round out the larder, Arctic hare are ensnared by men and women. In the summer and autumn, shellfish, seabird eggs, wild berries, legumes, plants and fungi are gathered by women and men. In Labrador's more recent history, women and men have also pursued short-term employment with the few businesses, government agencies or projects along the coast. Some people may travel as far away as Goose Bay (an important Labrador centre at the head of Hamilton Inlet) to secure part-time employment. This supplements income derived primarily from the fishery or contributes to the minimum number of "weeks

employed" needed to qualify for employment insurance benefits. These benefits are an important adjunct to the annual income of coastal people because of the seasonal nature of the fishery, the lack of a manufacturing industry or other forms of employment (Duhaime 1991; Szala-Meneok 1992). The cash economy of Labrador settlements is of obvious importance on the contemporary scene; however, the non-cash economy is equally vital. This is a well-developed system of mutual assistance and non-monetary barter that is built on a solid foundation of familial and friendship linkages and consists of food fishery, hunting, snaring, gathering, woodcutting and household activities (Hedley 1995; House, White and Ripley 1988; Ross and Usher 1986).

This modified foraging adaptive model is ideally suited to sub-Arctic conditions where the abundance of flora and fauna fluctuates, and no single subsistence strategy can satisfactorily support the human population. To adapt to these fluctuations, coastal people expand and contract their level of resource utilization to meet the exigencies of sub-Arctic living. Experience has taught Labradorians that dependency on only one of these strategies would be folly.

Historical Antecedents to Contemporary Craft Production in Labrador

During the 18th century, English and Scottish fishers came to the coast to pursue salmon and cod. In the early stages of the British fishery, fishermen only stayed along the coast during the summer months, and prosecuted the fishery from vessels operating off shore. Crew members went ashore periodically to draw fresh water and cut firewood, and eventually captains directed their crews to build stages (wharves) and flakes (drying platforms) for use in shore-based fish salteries. Later still, mercantile fishery operators determined that a year-long presence on the coast was required. Crew members then remained in Labrador to protect properties from plundering privateers, trap fur-bearing animals to sell in Europe, stockpile firewood and repair buildings and stages damaged by winter storms. While some men met and married women during their trips back to England or to Newfoundland, many fishers married Inuit and Innu (formerly known as Naskapi-Montagnais) women from Labrador. These Aboriginal foremothers, with their strong kin ties, their traditional environmental knowledge and their skills in crafting skin clothing and footwear played a vital role in the survival of Europeans on the Labrador coast. These women have also had a lasting imprint on the types of handcrafted items produced by Labradorian women even today.

Until quite recently, Labrador women manufactured boots and parkas from sealskin and caribou hide for all their household members (Ennis et al. 1987; Szala-Meneok 1992). At trading posts and through the fish merchants, women had access to duffel, woollen cloth, calico cotton, knitting worsted, embroidery silk, steel needles, thread, sailcloth and other textile goods. As a result,

the clothing of the region eventually reflected a distinctive syncretism of Aboriginal and European styles and materials.

The arrival of Anglican and Methodist missionaries in the region during the mid-19th century initiated recognition of the uniqueness of local handicrafts by outsiders. Missionaries had local women make their boots, parkas and other clothing to afford them protection when they made their parish rounds by dog-team throughout the winter. These missionaries often purchased other practical and decorative crafts from women for their own use or to send home to family and friends as exotic curios from the "wilds of Labrador." These early missionaries were the first "tourists" who bought crafts; they also served as informal middlemen in the marketing of handmade Labrador items outside of the region. The kinds of items selected by missionaries also gave crafts producers early insight into the aesthetics held by people from "away."

The Commercialization of Crafts

While missionaries were probably the earliest outside consumers of Labradorian crafts of various kinds, and were likely amongst the first to introduce them in the United States, Canada and Britain, there was no organized effort to transform the fruits of women's domestic skills into exchange items. It was not until the arrival of Sir Wilfred Grenfell in 1892, and the Mission to Deep Sea Fishers, that the economic potential of Labrador crafts was recognized. Grenfell was a young Anglican physician who, in addition to his medical duties, became an avid international fund-raiser, a self-proclaimed social reformer and early proponent of development schemes in Labrador. Building on his experiences with the Mission to Deep Sea Fishers, first in the North Sea communities and then in Labrador, Grenfell established the International Grenfell Association (IGA) and set his mind to the task of transforming Labrador society in terms of health care, quality of life and economic survival. From his days as a medical officer on the steamers and sailing vessels that served as hospital ships, Grenfell had concerns about the long-term impact of charitable work on its recipients. It was his view that giving free medical attention or medicine constituted a "handout," was demeaning and would thus lead to the "pauperization" of Labradorian people (Grenfell 1929). In light of this, Grenfell made it a policy that patients provide even a token payment, usually in kind, for medical services rendered and used clothing distributed by the IGA. Berries, fish, gull eggs and handcrafted goods became recognized items of exchange (O'Brien 1992). This encouraged the commodification of craft items along the coast.

Under Grenfell's charismatic direction, the IGA emerged in 1893, supported almost exclusively by donations collected by Grenfell on his fund-raising and speaking circuit in Canada, the United States and Europe. In 1906, efforts were made to establish the Industrial Department of the IGA.

> In the spring of 1905 Grenfell was lecturing in Salem, Massachusetts, and went with his hostess to visit a small sanatorium at Marblehead catering to those suffering from "nervous collapse." The institution offered various forms of occupational therapy, a concept then in its infant stage, under the direction of Jessie Luther, a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design and a teacher of arts and crafts. (O'Brien 1992:55)

Rompkey notes that it was the IGA's mandate to "encourage home industries so as to bring ready cash into families suffering from the slump in the [fish] market" (1991:252). It is important to note that in addition to the "home industries" development work of the IGA, the Jubilee guilds (formerly Women's Institutes) and the Anglican Mother's Unions also laboured long and hard to increase women's skills in crafts production (Gill 1972; Green 1967; Knight and Associates 1988; Province of Newfoundland and Labrador 1976). The IGA, however, had the most profound impact on crafts production of any of these organizations.

The occupational therapy movement grew out of an effort to employ craft making as a way to help persons recuperating from physical injuries and suffering from mental disorders. Hooked mats (rugs), weaving, carving, basket work, parka making and other needle work and curios were highly regarded in this field, and were popular in post-World War I Europe, United States and the Canadian Maritimes (Becker 1993; McKay 1994). Throughout Maritime Canada, Newfoundland, New England and Appalachia, occupational therapy evolved into an early manifestation of rural development work. Under Jessie Luther's direction the industrial department of the IGA began introducing weaving, pottery, toy making and brick making in addition to traditional Labrador crafts already produced along the coast. Like her Nova Scotian counterpart, Mary Black, who was also a New England-born occupational therapist, Luther's direction in choosing colours and the designs of woven goods and rug patterns was as much informed by an aesthetic sense nurtured in fine arts classes as it was through her exposure to the tastes of Americans who were to become the purchasers of these "authentic folk crafts." Luther wrote:

> . . . it seems reasonable to suppose that mats of good workmanship, of colouring that would not clash with average household furnishings and with designs of local significance, might find a ready market: and I began to offer such designs, usually with a plain centre and border of seals, walruses, deer, rabbits, komatiks and dogs, etc., treated conventionally. (Quoted in O'Brien 1992:57)

In addition to Luther's motifs, Grenfell also set his pen to paper and created rug designs for the Industrial Department. Thus, the repetitive tasks of rug hooking and other craft labour remained the domain of local people, but the organization, the setting of standards and the creative direction came from above.

During the Depression, Grenfell craft shops opened at such upscale locations as Oxford Street in London, Madison Avenue in New York City and Lo-

cust Street in Philadelphia. Grenfell shops, with quaint names such as "Dog-Team Tea Rooms" and "Dog-Team Taverns," operated in rural Connecticut and Vermont. In New York, opera goers viewed displays of Labrador handicrafts set up in lobbies during intermission (Rompkey 1991). A large measure of the IGA's early success at promoting Labrador crafts in high society is attributed to the efforts of Lady Grenfell, the wealthy Chicago-born wife of Sir Wilfred.

Rompkey (1991) notes however that the Industrial Department of the IGA was plagued by organizational problems and often had periods when it had difficulty generating sales. The IGA also had to underwrite the crafts infrastructure located at IGA Headquarters in St. Anthony, Newfoundland, because it failed to generate the necessary capital required to continue. The IGA craft strategy epitomized the paternalistic, top-down development strategies which continue into the present.

In the late 1930s, the IGA dissolved their Industrial Department, and crafts production was de-centralized to communities along the coast. Eliminating an economic liability was a positive corporate decision for the IGA as a whole. A move away from the paternalistic influence of the IGA organization provided the potential for greater autonomy for crafts producers. However, this change also meant that producers were isolated once more and no longer had the infrastructure in place to continue crafts production, while taking on the necessary marketing skills and responsibilities. In addition, crafts producers no longer had a ready source of manufactured goods used in the production of handicrafts. They now had to purchase materials at retail prices from the Hudson's Bay Company stores along the coast or from fish merchants. They were no longer in a favoured position of buying at cost, in bulk, or having a local redistribution network to move materials among crafts producers along the coast. While producers continued to make handcrafted items to sell along the coast and at IGA gift shops in St. Anthony, the engine that helped drive crafts production in Labrador had lost its steam. When the Crown Colony of Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949, the provincial government stepped in and began a long history of craft development initiatives that have experienced only limited success.

The Nature of Crafts Production Today

What Are Women Making?

What we call traditional craft items today have historically been made by women for practical use by their families. Homemade craft items such as moccasins, sealskin boots, parkas and sweaters have always been worn by Labrador families. Craft skills have been passed down through generations, and many women have learned to make crafts from their mothers, mothers-in-law or other family members and friends.

For many women who make woollen socks, toques (hats), mitts or duffel clothing for their families and friends on an "as-needed" basis, crafts have also become an important and satisfying hobby. Although there are not many private craft businesses, women continue the tradition of supplementing the household income through crafts production. Many women in Battle Harbour, Paradise River and Cartwright sell finished items to their local craft shops, which provides a direct cash contribution to their incomes. Additionally, women often make crafts as gifts rather than purchasing expensive manufactured items shipped to the coast. In turn, this enables them to provide an indirect contribution to their household incomes by conserving financial resources.

The majority of craftspeople (especially on the Labrador coast) continue to make traditional crafts, although many women are also interested in expanding their skills in the area of decorative items for use in their own homes or as gifts. Such decorative products include dolls, doilies, wreaths, flower arrangements, woodwork and cross-stitching. These items are not considered traditional, but are produced, using new skills, materials or patterns copied from hobby catalogues and magazines published in Canada and the United States.

Craft Organizations

Two significant crafts organizations were created when the rural development movement emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Crafts Development Association (NLCDA) was established in 1972, and the Labrador Craft Producers Association (LCPA) in 1975. The NLCDA and the LCPA have played an active role in shaping strategies for the development of the crafts industry. These organizations emerged in response to craftspeople's need for their own organizations to lobby and promote the industry, to provide information to producers and to arrange for assistance in the form of resources, workshops, craft fairs and loans (Beaubier et al. 1991).

The NLCDA's office is located in St. John's, and its members include individual craftspeople, production groups and craft businesses. It is the main provincial representative of the crafts industry and provides training assistance, quality control, information and resources to producers. It also organizes two craft fairs a year and operates a craft centre and gallery in St. John's on the island portion of the province.

Until its closure in 1995, the LCPA worked to gain recognition for the highly skilled craftspeople and to preserve traditional crafts in Labrador (NLCDA 1995). The LCPA also provided support in helping Labrador craftspeople to make and sell their work. As the umbrella organization for the many community craft shops/councils of Labrador, the LCPA offered a number of services to its members, including travelling workshops, exhibitions

and craft-related information. Before its closure, the LCPA was criticized for its passivity and failure to take a leadership role in promoting and developing the crafts industry (Knight and Associates, 1988). The LCPA's failure to act as an effective link between and among the many isolated crafts producers and councils across Labrador meant that many of them began to drift apart, not only from their organizational base but also from each other.

A third group working toward the development of the crafts industry is the Craft Development Division (part of the provincial Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation) which operates primarily as a resource group for craftspeople across the province. In Labrador, the Crafts Development Specialists organize arts and crafts exhibitions and work with individual producers in helping them to find raw materials, promote their products and access markets (Crafts Development Specialist, personal communication, 1996). A newsletter keeps craftspeople informed about the industry, markets, fairs, exhibits, etc.

Women's Involvement in Crafts Production

The majority of women who make crafts on the South Labrador coast work individually at home in their spare time. When walking into homes along the coast, we often observed needlework or mat-hooking projects on the kitchen table or the daybed ready to be picked up during a momentary lull in the daily rhythm of women's work. In Paradise River, for example, it was a common sight to see a woman standing by the window, watching her children playing along the river bank while knitting a mitt or sock without looking down at her work. One research participant commented that she found knitting relaxing and, since she had been knitting for so many years, it seemed odd when she did not have a set of needles in her hands.

Many women are also involved in their community craft councils as members or as producers who sell to local craft shops (Knight and Associates, 1988). Furthermore, Labrador College and the Regional Development Associations offer crafts workshops which women attend. Although their efforts are not focussed exclusively on Labrador, the NLCDA and the provincial Crafts Development Division provide services and information province-wide. Since the closing of the LCPA in 1995, however, Labrador craftspeople have been without an organizational body that represents or supports their specific and unique needs. In general, however, the commercial production of crafts has remained within the context of home-based, relatively small operations where women continue to produce items used by members of their household or their families or presented as gifts.

In a similar vein, Leonard's (1994) work with women crafts producers in Northern Ireland and Lever's (1988) in rural Spain point to the importance not only of the income-generating aspects of home-based crafts production, but

also of the pressures to maintain the informal, traditional and flexible nature of home-based work and the informal interactions between producers and their co-villagers. Labradorian women, like home-based crafts producers elsewhere, face the demands of integrating their ongoing domestic and child care duties with the production of valuable, family-consumed and cash-generating items (Singh and Kelles-Viitanen 1987). Women crafts producers in Labrador are faced with similar conflicts as are women throughout the developing world. They must negotiate a new sense of their femininity (Langellier 1990) and determine how they will fit into their local communities (Cone 1995) if they choose to diverge from more traditional patterns of using crafts to supplement their domestic work. In an egalitarian society such as coastal Labrador, there are many cultural and social barriers that condition women's experiences and often prevent them from undertaking activities outside the domestic sphere for which they have been traditionally responsible. There is limited support for individuals or groups of women who may wish to undertake a business initiative, particularly within a traditionally female area such as crafts production (McIntosh 1996).

Barriers to the Development of the Crafts Industry

The development of the crafts industry has been an important part of provincial strategies for tourist and rural economic development. The crafts industry in Newfoundland, with support from organizations such as the NLCDA and the Crafts Development Division of the Provincial Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, and the now-defunct LCPA, has enabled some women to become self-employed and has led to the establishment of many small craft businesses. It is estimated that the crafts industry now contributes $15 million annually to the provincial economy (Craft Development Division 1995). However, it is important to note that the majority of this contribution comes from the island portion of the province.

What is not clear, however, is the extent to which the crafts development strategy is meant to be part of a larger rural development strategy employed by the provincial government in the face of economic change since the decline and closure of the cod fishery. The social and economic structure of rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador is changing as people continue to struggle, eking out a living often in the context of economic and financial crisis. Crafts production and sales do offer an important opportunity for many rural people, mostly women, to contribute to their household incomes. However, for the craftspeople of coastal Labrador, there are a number of factors which inhibit increased participation in the crafts industry.

Over the years, crafts producers and their organizations have identified a number of significant areas which require greater attention in the further development of the industry (Beaubier et al. 1991; Knight and Associates 1988).

Through our research, we have also identified some significant barriers to the development of the crafts industry as an important economic enterprise in coastal Labrador.

Industry Barriers

(1) Raw Materials

The availability of raw materials has always been one of the biggest problems within the crafts industry in Southern Labrador. Due to cash flow problems and inadequate storage facilities, it is difficult to order larger quantities (i.e., bulk) and a variety of raw materials (Knight and Associates 1988). As a result, it is extremely expensive and inconvenient for producers or craft councils to stock good-quality materials necessary for the production of crafts.

(2) Marketing

For the majority of crafts producers on the Labrador coast, finding markets for their products is and always has been a central stumbling block. Organizations such as the IGA and the Women's Institutes once played a pivotal role in directing crafts production as well as selling raw materials to and buying finished crafts from producers across the province. However, their direction and control over crafts production helped to discourage independent initiatives within the industry, and many producers became dependent on these few organizations for product design, materials and the developing of networks for marketing and sales (Beaubier et al. 1991). Without this organizational direction, many individual producers lack the marketing skills required to fully participate in the business of crafts production.

The Crafts Five Year Strategy Committee (Beaubier et al. 1991) suggests that the marketing structure for crafts has become more diverse since the 1960s with the establishment of craft fairs and the emergence of craft shops and councils in many small communities across the province. However, many crafts producers remain isolated today in terms of marketing and sales networks. Despite some financial support that is available for producers who live and work in remote communities, craft fairs and external networks continue to be inaccessible to many producers. Furthermore, those marketing networks that do exist tend to benefit island producers and only a small fraction of those in Labrador. They tend to exclude Labrador craftspeople living in smaller and more isolated communities with the result that they cannot learn first hand from the experiences of successful craft marketers.

In rural or outport communities that continue to depend on the extraction of natural resources and are therefore governed by seasonal working patterns, crafts activities do not always coincide with regular crafts industry marketing schedules (Beaubier et al. 1991). For example, the many crafts producers who may be employed or otherwise busy during the critically important summer

fishing months may find it impossible to produce and ship their crafts in time for the peak merchandising during the Christmas holidays. As a result, Labrador crafts producers maximize the autumn months following the hectic salmon and crab fishing seasons to prepare for this peak craft sale period. Crafts are made and sold in this period, but a large percentage of that market is situated on the coast. In this way, crafts bring fresh capital into households, but because of the localized market—Labradorians selling to other Labradorians—crafts producers do not have access to fresh capital from outside the region. Because producers of handicrafts rarely acquire experience with pricing in a competitive marketplace outside of the coast, realistic costing principles are not understood or implemented. In one instance, one of the researchers asked a local craftswoman to make her a parka. Although the craftswoman was entirely capable of working out the design, embroidery motif, colour and measurement of the parka, she was not only incapable of, but extraordinarily uncomfortable with, setting a firm price for her craft. When asked what she would charge for the parka, she asked, "What do you think you could pay for it?" Similarly, attempts by co-ops and other groups to market Labrador crafts outside of the region are often criticized because setting wholesale prices and establishing preferred customer rates are marketing procedures with which the individual producer has no experience. Price setting often becomes a contentious issue for members of craft groups, and in some instances this lack of business knowledge leads to serious fractures in craft organizations. Such disruptive issues could be remedied by more comprehensive training in small-business skills.

(3) Training

Training programs and workshops generally focus on developing new and enhancing traditional crafts skills (Kelsey 1993; Rural Development Co-operation Agreement 1991). Recent workshops, for example, have concentrated on making moccasins, parkas and dried flower arrangements. Training programs offer people opportunities to develop new skills in making crafts, but many producers are already highly skilled, and their attendance may instead be motivated by curiosity or the social aspects of the workshops themselves. Moreover, training opportunities tend to be based in Newfoundland, which means that the participation of Labrador producers is more sporadic. Access to programs offered in the larger centres is often difficult due to time, expense and transportation logistics.

Producers have consistently indicated that they need training in marketing and the running of small businesses. The training programs that do exist tend to concentrate on skills development, but there is limited training specific to the business side of crafts production. A sincere effort on the part of craft development workers to provide small business skills could enhance the poten-

tial for crafts businesses to succeed. Furthermore, these are transferable skills and are therefore valuable to any entrepreneurial venture along the coast. Once trained through crafts development programs, women could train other women and men in starting small businesses in their communities. Despite the various philanthropic and provincially directed efforts to develop crafts production as a viable economic opportunity over the last 60 years, development programs have not focussed on improving small-business skills and have therefore failed to meet the identified needs of crafts producers.

In the early 1990s, the Crafts Five Year Strategy Committee was established to identify major development needs and to develop a series of long-term planning objectives for the crafts industry (Beaubier et al. 1991).

In their report, the Crafts Five Year Strategy Committee (Beaubier et al. 1991) determined that there was a reluctance on the part of craftspeople to access design training programs due to a lack of understanding about the necessity for developing new, marketable designs. There seems to be a fundamental lack of awareness of the potential market value of innovative craft items. This reluctance to develop new designs, however, may be fuelled by the producers' own views about the authenticity of their craft items and the place that traditional crafts have in their maintenance of a distinctive Labradorian identity. The marketing of new crafts can be viewed as a move into an even more risky business domain, because many crafts groups have already experienced some problems with trying to successfully market traditional crafts.

(4) Product Development and Design

The most significant barrier to product development and design in the crafts industry is the lack of communication among Labrador crafts producers and organizations and their lack of contact with outside purchasers and other craftspeople. In the report of the Crafts Five Year Strategy Committee (Beaubier et al. 1991) it is suggested that the isolation of rural communities provides a significant barrier for craftspeople because they do not have ready access to other new craft designs, innovations or producers. In particular, high travel costs and a weak communications network inhibit crafts producers' exposure to market opportunities, trends, new business technologies and raw material suppliers.

In the past, travelling workshops organized by the LCPA taught craft techniques, which originated in various parts of Labrador, to craft council members along the coast with the aim of increasing production and sales (Kennedy 1995). This became problematic, however, as many producers themselves began to question the authenticity of these Labrador crafts. Kennedy (1995) points to the introduction of Inuit grass-work baskets that originally came from areas along the north coast to southern communities such as Mary's Harbour. By attempting to increase production and sales, the dissemination of

traditional motifs and materials threatens the artistic integrity, genuine quality and local value of many craft items (Kennedy 1995).

(5) Organization and Communication

Beyond the organizational and communication problems that stem from the geographical isolation of the many communities between Sandwich Bay and Mary's Harbour, there is also a profound lack of organizational support for the crafts industry. The closure of the LCPA has left Labrador craftspeople without an organizational body, and has helped to further isolate them by inhibiting their exposure to marketing networks, training programs, industry information and trends.

There also seems to be a mismatch of perceived needs and interests by other provincial craft development organizations who shape and direct the crafts industry from above. There is a tendency for these organizations to concentrate on their role in the delivery and enhancement of services that encourage crafts production. However, in order more effectively to meet the needs of Labrador craftspeople, craft organizations need to develop a clear and appropriate understanding of how Labrador communities operate and the ways in which crafts fit into the adaptive economic and social strategies employed by community members.

(6) Social and Cultural Barriers

The nature of the modified foraging subsistence pattern depends primarily on individuals, dyads or triads that expand and contract to complete fishing, hunting, trapping or gathering activities. As a consequence, coastal Labradorians do not have existing social organizational models that easily transfer to the operation of large-group, co-operative ventures such as craft businesses.

In Labrador, the first line of defence for economic survival has historically been the use of foraged resources for individual and family use. The second line of defence is the use of these foraged resources in exchange for cash or kind or wage labour in other resource-related industries (i.e., fish-processing plants, sawmills, etc.). Since 1957, the social welfare system has provided a third line of defence in times of economic hardship such as the current closure of the cod fishery. And finally, fourth-line strategies such as crafts production help to meet the exigencies of coastal Labradorian life. Our experience in Labrador and the literature on the history of crafts production reports that craft producers expand and contract their involvement in crafts production when other lines of defence fail or decline (Knight and Associates 1988; NLCDA 1995; Province of Newfoundland and Labrador 1976; Rompkey 1991).

The complementary nature of women's and men's work in this largely subsistence-based economy is built upon a long tradition of meeting household needs conservatively. Labradorians live in a highly contingent world where

severe weather conditions and fluctuations in the abundance of fished, hunted and trapped species are common. These risks are generally experienced by the community at large.

Entrepreneurs, however, are defined as *individuals* "who are willing to take risks and break with traditional practices in order to make a profit" (Bates and Plog 1991:175). Like other people who live in small-scale societies, Labradorians deal with economic risk-taking not in the relative anonymity of the "big city," but on the intimate stage of the village. In the village, the very act of innovation can and is often interpreted as a value judgment about accepted or traditional ways of doing things. Nay saying and general pessimism are part of a conservative outlook cast upon new community or individual economic development ventures, especially if they are undertaken by women.

Motivations for such pessimistic pronouncements may be based on a history of failure of past efforts, traditional gender roles and hostility directed toward any person who may be perceived as gaining advantage over others. Regardless of the motivations which underlie "nay saying," it ultimately serves to dampen rather than foster enthusiasm for entrepreneurial activity and serves to hobble innovation. This continues to occur, even though many "nay sayers" will argue quite passionately that "something has to be done" about the depressed economic conditions on the coast. This paradox contributes to the often fatalistic reception that development workers receive when they attempt to drum up enthusiasm for a new project. After walking home from a development meeting where "nay saying" was served up in healthy portions, one frustrated woman observed, "Well, we wouldn't want to try anything different now, would we?"

In another community, a woman decided to start a small shop attached to her house in order to sell a few groceries, local crafts and paintings. The planned enterprise was met with statements such as, "Oh that won't go, everybody always goes to Uncle X's shop for what they need" or "Who'll get off the coastal boat to buy her things anyway?"

In terms of barriers facing women entrepreneurs in particular, McIntosh (1996) relates that south-coast Labrador women face a number of significant social, cultural and psychological obstacles that often prevent them from becoming more involved in the economic development of their communities. Traditional gender attitudes and stereotypes about the roles and responsibilities of women within the home make it extremely difficult for many women to devote much time and energy to crafts production beyond family and household needs. In her comments about why women are not more involved in their communities or in business, one research participant commented that there is "a fear of exclusion if women break traditional roles. . . . [W]omen are reluctant to go outside their role because their husband wants her around and treats it almost like desertion if she chooses to go out or to get involved in the eve-

nings . . ." (Darleen, in McIntosh 1996:12). There is a profound lack of support and encouragement among community members and women themselves for women who attempt to transform their crafts activities from what might be considered a "hobby" into a full-fledged business enterprise. For women who live in these small communities, there are high risks associated with succeeding beyond the egalitarian standards that are set and regulated by members of the community through gossip and criticism (Davis 1988; McIntosh 1996; Schneider 1984).

Low levels of self-confidence and esteem, feelings of isolation and a lack of role models in areas of business and economic development are formidable obstacles. In addition, the history of the Labrador coast is punctuated by the economic failures of both local people and outsiders with vast capital and business experience. The stories of fish merchants who lost their fortunes over the course of a single fishing season form a litany that is recited again and again (Szala-Meneok 1992). The dismal record of entrepreneurial enterprises on the coast serve as cautionary tales, and, for both women and men, there is a great reluctance to enter into unproven economic and business ventures (Schneider 1984).

These barriers reflect the social realities of women's lives and serve to reinforce and perpetuate each other, making it difficult for women to wholly embrace crafts production as a viable business strategy. As in the case of the modified foraging subsistence strategy, the risk of failure is minimized by diversifying subsistence activities. Dependency on a single economic venture ties up already scarce capital and increases the level of exposure.

(7) Economic Barriers and the Social Welfare State

Current economic and social support programs such as Employment Insurance (EI) benefits and The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS—the federal compensation package offered to displaced fishery workers) discourage self-employment initiatives and have served to decrease people's self-confidence and undermine the work ethic.

This makes it extremely difficult for people, particularly women, to tie up scarce resources (i.e., time and money) in crafts businesses or co-operatives because they risk losing the security of Employment Insurance and/or TAGS eligibility if their business ventures fail. Women are aware that this potential is real because they have already recognized that they lack the small-business skills that would make such endeavours succeed. This caution is born of the life experiences of a people who have learned that, in order to survive, they need to pursue a multiplicity of subsistence and income strategies.

Conclusions

In coastal Labrador, people have witnessed extreme fluctuations in their fishery over time. Since the moratorium on the groundfish species in 1992, many women and men are still reluctant to relinquish a way of life which is rooted in generations of experience. For the many people who are still in a state of disbelief, it is difficult to absorb the enormity of this crisis and to cope with the impending changes which will radically transform their way of life.

To take the crafts industry beyond its current level of development would require major shifts in how people perceive the importance of women's household contributions, the economic potential for business ventures in general and for craft operations in particular. On the Labrador coast, crafts have always been viewed as a supplement to subsistence activities and/or wage labour, and there is little confidence that reliance on crafts production can provide a secure livelihood.

Development efforts aimed at promoting the crafts industry should consider the myriad, long-standing adaptive strategies employed by coastal people. For generations, these strategies have been critical to the survival of people in this sub-Arctic region. Pursuing a variety of activities helps to mitigate the risks associated with dependency on a single industry or subsistence strategy in order to survive.

Development efforts must also take into consideration the real and expressed needs of crafts producers in terms of skills and business training. Initiatives of the various crafts organizations and development programs reflect a mind-set that assumes that entrepreneurs in Labrador will follow similar paths to their counterparts in more urban settings. In order to deliver more appropriate and therefore effective crafts development programs, ideas about entrepreneurial behaviour need to be re-cast within the context and realities of small-scale societies. By focussing on the realities of well-established subsistence activities and the social and cultural constraints which inhibit economic risk taking, crafts development programming can align more closely with the requirements of life along the Labrador coast. Without appropriate and effective training in all these aspects of crafts production and development, Labrador crafts producers will continue to lack the necessary skills for participating in the economic development of their communities through crafts. In order to harness the full potential that crafts production offers, some change must occur within Labradorian notions of community development and entrepreneurial activity as well.

Crafts production is but one of a constellation of adaptive responses that Labradorians, particularly women, can employ to contribute to the economic well-being and recovery of the region. Despite the barriers that inhibit the emergence of a large-scale crafts industry, Labradorians will continue to pursue crafts production as an important strategy for meeting the challenges of an uncertain future.

Note

1. This article has taken shape through our separate field research experiences in this region. Karen Szala-Meneok has conducted anthropological field research along the middle coast in the vicinity of Groswater and Sandwich Bays since 1976. Funding for this research was generously provided by the President's Committee on Northern Research, McMaster University, the Arctic Institute of North America and the Sigma Xi Research Foundation. Kara McIntosh has worked along the south coast in the Battle Harbour Region in 1995, focussing on issues of gender and rural development initiatives. Funds for this research were provided by The University School of Rural Planning and Development, University of Guelph. The final version of this article benefited from the careful readings of *Anthropologica*'s anonymous reviewers and from Patricia Colton, although the authors take full responsibility for its contents.

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