

“Where is our Living Heritage?” Workshop Heart’s Delight – Islington



ich@heritagenl.ca -- Heritage NL -- PO Box 5171, St. John's, NL, Canada, A1C 5V5

Notes from the “Where is our Living Heritage?” Workshop Town of Heart’s Delight – Islington Municipal Building Thursday, January 31, 2019, 7pm

On Thursday, January 31, 2019, a group of 15 people met at the municipal building in Heart’s Delight–Islington as part of the town’s ongoing work to develop and encourage a greater interest in heritage in the community. Folklorist Dale Jarvis of Heritage NL facilitated the session, and started off with a discussion about what makes up “Living Heritage.” He introduced the five categories of Intangible Cultural Heritage as defined by UNESCO: Oral traditions and expressions; Performing arts; Social practices, rituals and festive events; Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and Traditional crafts and skills.

From there, community members came up with a long list of local traditions, skills, crafts, customs, and knowledge. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but it does give a good indication of traditional themes of importance to the community:

- Accordion playing
- Barrel making
- Bean Suppers
- Berry Picking
- Blacksmithing
- Boat building
- Bonfire Night
- Brass bands
- Candy Making
- Card playing

- Casket and coffin making
- Charmers/Folk cures
- Christmas traditions and Janneying
- Cod Liver Oil
- Concerts/Times/Kitchen Parties
- Dogberry wine/homebrew/moonshine/other kinds of spirits
- Fairies
- Firemen's Belle of the Ball
- Fishing traditions (including trap berth/ground names, flakes and stages, fishing skills)
- Gardens, root cellars, and fences, hay making
- Ghost stories
- Goats
- History of local captains
- History of old stores/shops
- Hockey
- Hooked/poked mats
- Jams and Jellies, Preserve-making skills
- Local stories and Oral History (including digitization of what has been done already)
- Making grapnels and killicks
- Making knots in trees
- Midwives
- Mr Peach's songs
- Parades
- Pirate and Buried Treasure stories
- Quilting
- "Randyng on coasters"
- Reels and Square dances
- Remembrance Day/Military history
- Root Cellars and Ice Houses
- Sailing skills
- Sawmills
- Sheep, wool, and spinning, knitting, wool socks
- Snowshoe making
- Soccer
- SUF Lodge and other community organizations
- The Heart's Delight Christmas Carols
- Toutons (and their other names)
- Valentine's Cards dropped at people's doors
- Wedding and Funeral traditions
- Window making

From this list, participants identified those items that they thought were of greatest importance to the community, or those things they were most concerned about losing. Several of these items generated multiple votes, and following a discussion (and a cup of tea) the top ranked themes or thematic clusters were:

1. **Concerts/Times/Kitchen Parties**
2. **The Heart's Delight – Islington Traditional Christmas Carols**
3. **Stories & Oral History**
4. **Fishing Knowledge/Boat Building**
5. **Candy Making**

The community agreed that the first two themes, **Concerts/Times** and **Carols**, were probably the easiest to start work on immediately, while the **Stories & Oral History** theme was seen as having the greatest long-term value for the community.

Immediate Recommendations and Action Items

1. There was a general consensus that the best place to start would be to do some further work documenting, recording, and promoting the knowledge and practice of the traditional **Heart's Delight – Islington Christmas Carols**. These are two very old traditional carols, which exist in modified versions in some of the nearby communities, but which are still widely sung in HD-I. Traditionally, they were sung by men, who would travel to every house in the community. The custom continues with some changes over time, but more work is needed to safeguard this very special local tradition.
2. Dale Jarvis with Heritage NL will do up a **short report** with some specific recommendations about how to proceed with a Christmas Carol project, and circulate it to the committee. This could include interviews with tradition bearers, compilation of historical records or written reports, an archive search at the MUN Folklore and Language Archive, programs to teach the carols to children and others, or making a high-quality audio recording of the carols which could then be shared in the community and placed in an archive.
3. As a first step, the Heart's Delight – Islington Heritage Committee will start to **compile a list** of knowledgeable people in the community who should be interviewed about the tradition, and prioritize this list.
4. The Heart's Delight – Islington Heritage Committee will **convene a meeting** before the end of February 2019 to create a rough plan/timeline for the Christmas Carol project, and will invite Dale Jarvis of Heritage NL to that meeting to talk about next steps.

Secondary recommendations.

5. It was noted that some collecting work, research, and writing on local stories and history has already been done, and that one priority might be to **collect this information in one central place**, either real or online, where that information could be made accessible to the public. Dale Jarvis with Heritage NL can work with the community to further investigate and organize this material.
6. Though it didn't make the final list, there was considerable discussion around **traditional crafts**. Some of these skills should be better documented, displayed, or demonstrated in the community. These might be one-off type events. One suggestion was to have a **killick-making workshop** for people who wanted to make their own killick for their garden.
7. It was noted that there was a lot of interest in the community in **traditional concerts and times**, and that it has been a while since the town hosted such a thing. A concert could be organized and used as fundraiser.
8. Two other possible events suggested were: a **traditional bean supper**, which could also be used to raise funds; and a **molasses candy making class** where people could try their hand at making candy from a traditional recipe.¹

Report prepared by:

Dale Jarvis
ICH Development Officer, Heritage NL
dale@heritagenl.ca
www.ichblog.ca
1 February 2019

¹ Make sure you invite me to this one! - DJ