

5) The Influenza Epidemic

1918 may have marked the end of the war, yet another tragedy struck Newfoundland that same year.

- ❖ **A severe strain of influenza, known as the Spanish Flu, began to be contracted by the soldiers in the trenches of France in 1918.**
- ❖ **Spanish Flu came to Newfoundland in September of 1918 with a ship carrying soldiers returning to St. John's.**
- ❖ **Despite closing public places and setting up a special hospital for flu patients, the epidemic killed 232 people in the city.**

When the pandemic broke out, many of Newfoundland and Labrador's medical personnel were serving overseas in the First World War. This caused the country to experience a severe shortage of health-care workers and prompted the Public Health Division to publish appeals for nurses and volunteers in local newspapers.



The Spanish Flu hit Labrador when the Moravian mission ship Harmony arrived with an infected sailor in November, 1918.

- ❖ **As the ship moved from port to port, the disease began to spread quickly, especially with very little medical help available.**
- ❖ **People died so quickly, that they had to be buried in mass graves and houses where they died were burned to prevent the disease from spreading.**
- ❖ **Worldwide, the Spanish Flu claimed 25 to 30 million lives.**





**Okak, Labrador,
circa 1884 to
1902.**

The Spanish influenza appeared at the Inuit community of Okak in November 1918 after a supply ship arrived there carrying at least one infected crewmember. By the end of that year, the virus had killed 204 of Okak's 263 residents.



**Hebron, Labrador,
circa 1900**

The Spanish influenza appeared at the Inuit village of Hebron in October 1918 after a supply ship arrived there from St. John's with an infected crewmember on board. By 19 November, 86 of Hebron's 100 residents had died from the influenza. A further 74 people died in surrounding communities, cutting the area's population to 70 from 220.