

## Chapter Three: Making a Living in the 19th Century

### - Self-Sufficient People

1. What does it mean to have a self-sufficient life style?
2. What is a consumer economy?
3. What is a subsistence economy?

#### Answers:

1. It is the ability to provide for one's needs on his or her own.
2. The mainstream for today. It is where people use money to buy what they need.
3. This was common back in the 19th century in NL. It was where people provided most of what they needed for consumption on their own.

#### **Note**

In a subsistence economy people tend to be much more self-sufficient. Whereas those in a consumer economy are much more dependent on other people. Although we live in a consumer economy some people still are more self-sufficient than others by gardening, hunting, fishing, berry picking and preserving food etc.

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### - Fishermen and Their Families

4. What is involved in curing cod?
5. Name and describe the three branches of the cod fishery.
6. How did the Bank Fishery significantly change the way of life for the people in the late 1800's?

### Answers

4. It involves splitting, cleaning of the fish so they can be salted and dried on the wooden platforms. The time it took them to dry depended on the weather.
5. The three branches of the cod fishery are:
  - **Inshore Fishery:** took place near NFLD and Lab. Operating out of small boats. The men began at dawn and continued throughout the day. Cod were caught on hooks baited with capelin, herring etc. If the fish were plentiful they would make several trips to drop off the catch where the women would cure the fish. All of the family would help.
  - **Labrador Fishery:** was a migratory fishery where thousands of NFLDers moved north to fish the Labrador coast. Fishermen and sometimes their families made the trip to Labrador in June and stayed until September or October. Those who went to Labrador fell into two categories: The Stationers: those who worked from the shore and cured the fish and the Floaters: remained in their boats and moved around to various fishing grounds. Their fish were heavily salted to preserve it because they didn't dry it until they returned to NFLD.
  - **The Bank Fishery:** large vessels called schooners carried many men and dories to the banks (elevated sea beds where the fish were plentiful). Each morning many two-manned dories would leave to fish with long line and return to the schooner to unload. The schooner may stay out for as much as a month where the crew stayed in cramped quarters and in constant motion.
6. This enabled the fishing season to be extended. As a result men had less time to cut wood for fuel and women were kept busy curing fish so they had less time for gardening, cutting wood and other chores. This brought changes in lifestyle because families began purchasing coal for fuel and buying foods they previously produced themselves.

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### - Fish Merchants, Sealers and Trappers

#### Fish Merchants

They set the standard of living for the fishermen because they set the price for the fish they bought and set the price of the goods they sold to the fishermen. Merchants could easily exploit the fishermen because often they were the only merchants in the area and the fishermen couldn't negotiate a better price. However there were merchants that treated the fishermen fairly and supported fishing families during the bad years.

**Truck System:** was the method of trade between the fishermen and merchants. It was a cashless system where the fishermen would trade their season's catch for credit at the merchant's store where they could buy essentials.

#### Sealers

Two branches:

1. **Landsman's Hunt:** seals caught near the shore when the ice packed in
2. **Offshore Hunt:** the major activity from ships off the coast of Northeastern Newfoundland, Labrador and the Gulf of St Lawrence.

The seals were hunted for food and clothing, but mainly for oil, which was used for lamps, machine lubricants, paint, explosives and margarine.

**Sculping:** refers to the practice of removing the pelt of a seal with a thick layer of white fat still attached.

#### Trappers

The traditional subsistence economy of the Aboriginal peoples was changing to one of trapping and commercial endeavors resulting in a growing dependence on other people. As the demand for beaver and fox pelts increased the Innu and Inuit focused their skills on trapping for the fur trade rather than hunting for food. Many starved when the animals became scarce.

Trapping was a lonely lifestyle where men would go out on the trap lines for months at a time and the women stayed home. In the 1830's the HBC expanded to Labrador and quickly put small traders out of business. They established posts in several communities with its Headquarters in NWR.

Further north the Inuit traded at Moravian missions. They operated a similar system to the truck system and provided the Inuit with important services like education and health care (something other merchants did not). The missionaries felt they were protecting the Inuit from merchants who would take advantage of them and sell them harmful substances like alcohol.

#### **A Trapper's Wife:**

It took one month to get her husband ready for the trap line. It was a lonely life in some respects because the women would be alone with no one around.

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### - Shipbuilders and Other Occupations

Boats were the primary means of transportation in the 19th century in NFLD. Many men built their own boats but as the population grew so did the need for more ships and created an industry in shipbuilding.

Master Shipbuilders were in great demand, however by the beginning of the 20th century the fishing industry no longer dominated the NFLD economy.

- People were working in other industries such as the mining and forestry as well as building the railway.

A master shipbuilder, **Michael Kearney**, may have been NFLD's greatest ship builder.

- A master shipwright, sail maker and sailor he began his apprenticeship in 1827 and returned to NFLD in 1838 at a time when the demand for ships were high.
- His ships were noted for their speed, beauty and strength.
- One of his ships named *Ida* made a record-breaking roundtrip from St. John's to Bristol England in 26 days.