Culture, Community & Identity

Overview

This lesson explores how culture, tradition, and shared values shaped identity in Newfoundland's outport communities. Students will examine how education, faith, gender roles, and everyday traditions helped form strong community bonds in isolated coastal settlements. Through discussion, analysis, and creative response, students will explore how cultural expressions communicated values and beliefs, and how these identities evolved over time while maintaining deep roots in place and heritage.

Lesson Objective

1. **Demonstrate** an understanding of how culture, tradition, and heritage shape identity
2. **Analyze** how cultural values were expressed through daily life and storytelling.
3. **Explain** how education, faith, and gender roles influenced community identity.

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Part 1 Culture & Diversity / Time, Continuity & Change

What is Culture in an Outport Community?

- **Culture as Daily Life:** In outport Newfoundland, culture was not separate from daily survival — it was embedded in work, family, faith, and cooperation.
- **Isolation & Interdependence:** Small populations and geographic isolation meant people relied on one another for survival, support, and social life.
- **Shared Identity:** Community identity was built on shared labour, mutual responsibility, and strong family ties.

Education in Outport Communities

- **One-Room Schoolhouses:** Education often took place in small, multi-age classrooms where one teacher taught all subjects.
- **Learning Beyond School:** Children learned essential skills at home — fishing, gardening, food preservation, sewing, and boat repair.
- **Education as Community Value:** Schooling was respected, but survival skills were equally important.

Faith & Moral Life

- **Church as a Social Centre:** Churches were central gathering places for worship, community meetings, and social events.
- **Shared Beliefs:** Faith shaped moral values, behaviour, and social expectations.
- **Continuity:** Religious traditions connected generations and reinforced a sense of belonging.

Gender Roles & Family Life

- **Women's Work:** Women managed households, raised children, tended gardens, cured fish, and supported the fishery.
- **Men's Work:** Men fished, built boats, cut wood, and maintained infrastructure.
- **Children's Roles:** Children contributed from a young age, learning responsibility and cooperation.
- **Community Balance:** Each role was essential to the survival of the household and the community.

Part 2 Cultural Expression & Community Impact

Traditions & Storytelling
Songs, oral history, and storytelling preserved knowledge and values.

Celebrations & Traditions
Holidays, church events, and seasonal gatherings strengthened community bonds.

Values in Action
Cooperation, resilience, and respect for elders were demonstrated through everyday actions.

Continuity & Change
While modern life has changed education, work, and family roles, many cultural values remain central to Newfoundland identity today.

Cultural Memory
Even after resettlement or modernization, traditions and shared stories continue to shape how communities see themselves.

Suggested Activities:

Vocab Crossword
Click here to download a crossword and answer key with Newfoundland and Labrador cultural terms and tools for students to complete.

Class Activity: What Holds a Community Together?

Purpose
To demonstrate how culture, roles, and shared responsibility created stability in outport communities and what happens when one element is removed.

Materials
- Ball of string or yarn
- Role cards (written on paper):
  - Fisher
  - Parent
  - Teacher
  - Church leader
  - Child
  - Elder
  - Neighbour

Instructions
1. Students stand in a circle.
2. Each student receives a role from an outport community.
3. One student starts holding the string and says:
   "I am a [role], and I contribute by _____."
4. They toss the string to another role they depend on.
5. Continue until everyone is connected, forming a web.

The teacher announces changes that would impact the community, for example:
- "The school closes."
- "Families are forced to move."
- "The church no longer gathers people."
- "Young people leave the community."

Each affected role drops the string.
Students see and feel the web of community weaken, showing the importance of every role.

Quiz A

Multiple Choice (Circle the best answer)

1. **What was the primary role of culture in outport communities?**
   a. Entertainment
   b. Survival and community cohesion
   c. Political organization
   d. Tourism

2. **Why were churches important in outport communities?**
   a. They provided schooling
   b. They served only religious purposes
   c. They were social and moral centres
   d. They controlled trade

3. **What type of schooling was common in outport communities?**
   a. Boarding schools
   b. Online learning
   c. One-room schoolhouses
   d. Universities

4. **How did children contribute to outport life?**
   a. They did not work
   b. Only through schooling
   c. By helping with household and fishing-related tasks
   d. Only during winter

5. **Which value was essential to outport community life?**
   a. Competition
   b. Independence
   c. Cooperation
   a. Wealth

Quiz A ANSWER KEY

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Quiz B

1. Explain how education in outport communities differed from education today.

2. Describe one way faith shaped daily life in an outport community.

3. How did gender roles support community survival?

4. Why was storytelling important in preserving culture?

5. Give one example of continuity and one example of change in Newfoundland culture.

Quiz B ANSWER KEY

1. Explain how education in outport communities differed from education today.

Sample: Education was often informal and combined classroom learning with practical life skills needed for survival.

2. Describe one way faith shaped daily life in an outport community.

Sample: Faith guided moral behaviour and brought people together through church gatherings and shared beliefs.

3. How did gender roles support community survival?

Sample: Each family member had specific responsibilities that ensured food production, household stability, and economic survival.

4. Why was storytelling important in preserving culture?

Sample: Storytelling passed knowledge, values, and history from one generation to the next.

5. Give one example of continuity and one example of change in Newfoundland culture.

Sample: Continuity — strong community ties; Change — modernization of education and work.

Quiz C

1. Journal Entry
Write as a child, teacher, or parent in an outport community. Describe a day in your life and how community traditions shape who you are.

2. Monologue or Letter

Write a piece titled *"What Home Means to Me"* from the perspective of someone living in or leaving an outport community.

3. Then & Now Comparison

Create a chart comparing education, family roles, and community life in a 19th-century outport and a modern Newfoundland town.

4. Cultural Artifact Design
Design an object (poster, drawing, or digital slide) that represents outport identity — include symbols, values, and traditions.

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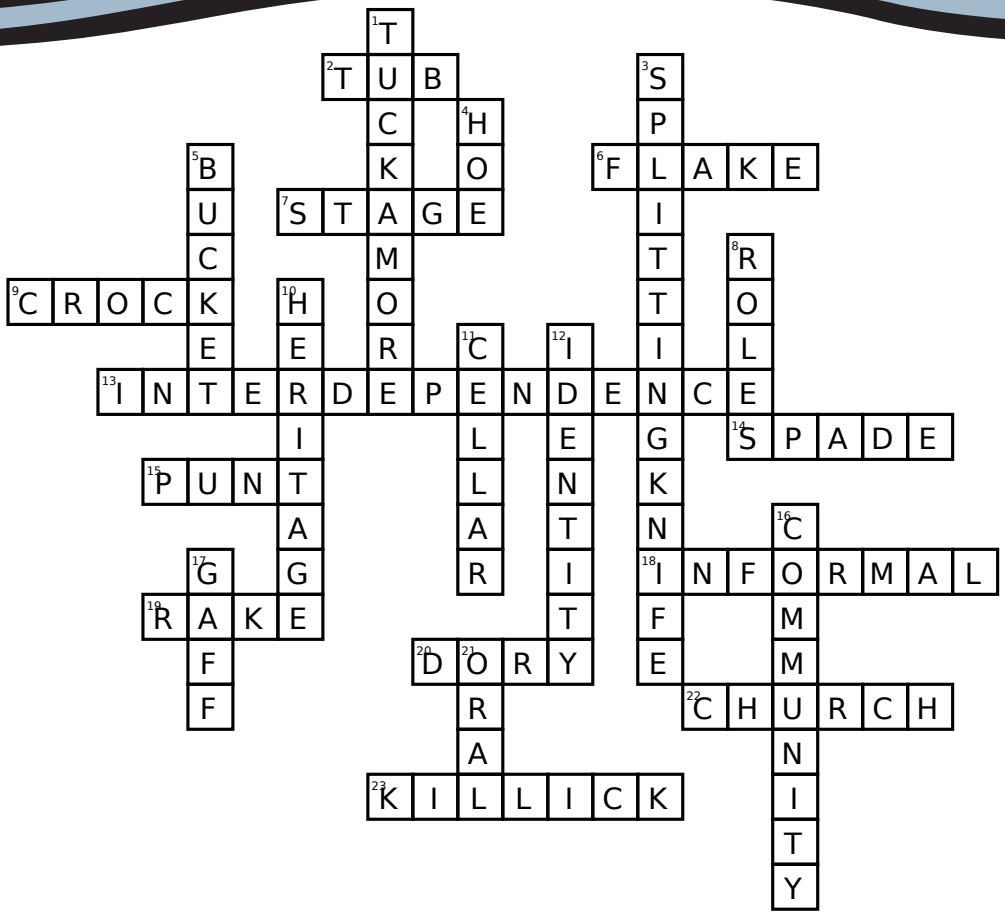
Crossword Answer Key



Down:

1. Small stunted evergreen tree with gnarled spreading roots
3. A long, thin knife used to split cod
4. Primary garden tool
5. Item for carrying water, fish, or produce
8. Responsibilities expected of individuals based on family or society
10. What communities preserve through tradition, memory, and storytelling
11. Place for storing vegetables
12. The feeling of being connected to a place and its people
16. A shared sense of belonging created through traditions and cooperation
17. Hook used to lift fish
21. Knowledge passed down through stories rather than books

Across:

2. Container for salting fish
6. Wooden platform for drying fish
7. Fishing structure over the water
9. Stoneware container for food storage
13. A value shown when neighbours rely on one another for survival
14. Tool used for digging and planting
15. Small fishing boat
18. Learning that happens outside of school
19. Tool for clearing stones, leaves, and soil
20. Lightweight fishing boat
22. The place where moral values and social life often met in an outport
23. An anchor made up of an elongated stone encased in pliable sticks

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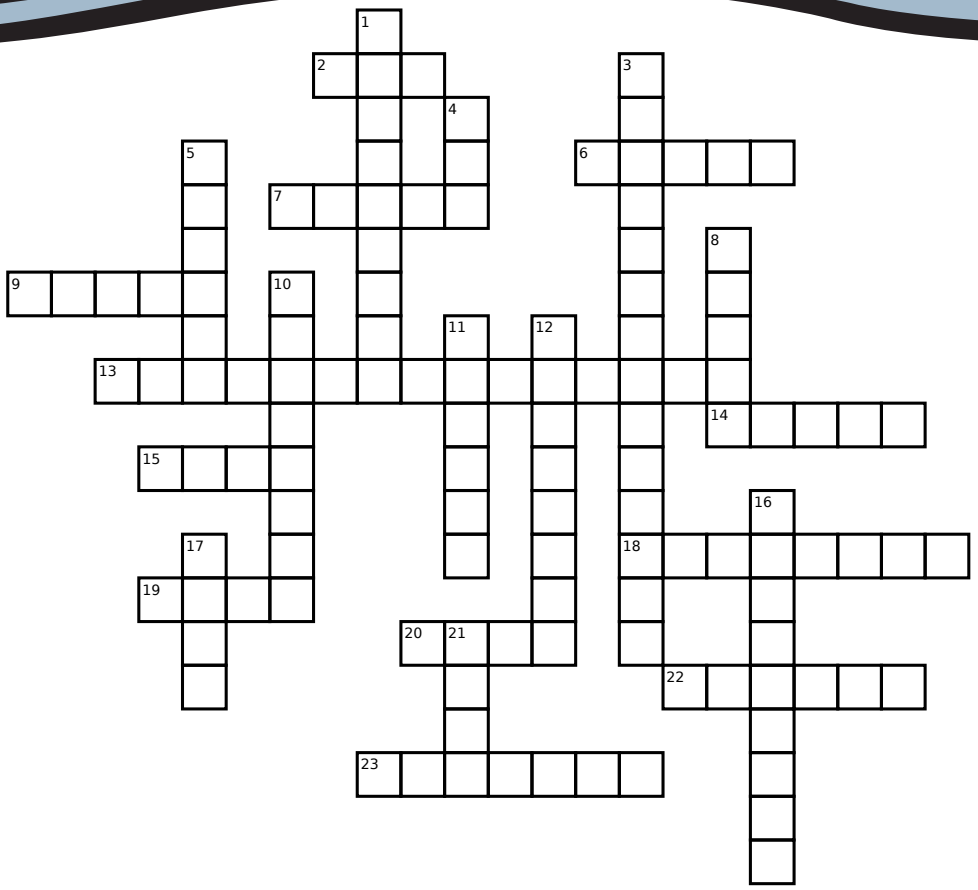
Crossword



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