

**Puffins, Kayaks and Oil Rigs:  
Shifting Modes of Society-Environment Interaction on  
the Newfoundland Coast**

Summary report, March 2015



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- 2014 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Canadian Sociological Association (St. Catherines, ON).
- 2014 Engage Memorial Fest (St. John's, NL).
- 2014 Great Northern Peninsula Tourism Stakeholder Engagement Session (Hawkes Bay, NL).
- 2014 International Sociological Association World Congress of Sociology (Yokohama, Japan).
- 2014 Towards Regional Collaboration Workshop (Blanc Sablon, QC and L'Anse aux Claire, NL).
- 2013 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Canadian Sociological Association (Victoria, BC).
- 2013 International Conference of the Pan-American Mobilities Network (Montreal, QC).
- 2013 MUNButtoned: A Three Night Festival of Research (St. John's, NL).
- 2012 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Canadian Sociological Association (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON).
- 2011 Sport and the Environment: Philosophical Dimensions (Antigonish, NS).

Two case studies were nested within this broader project. Final reports for both are available by contacting Dr. Stoddart at [mstoddart@mun.ca](mailto:mstoddart@mun.ca), or through [Academia.edu](http://Academia.edu): Stoddart, Mark C.J., and Paula Graham (2013). *Cultivating Tourism Mobility on the Burin Peninsula*.

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## Executive Summary

This research project examines how Newfoundland and Labrador's coastal environments are integrated into the province's tourist imagery, and the possible tensions of trying to create new ways of living with – and make a living from – coastal environments through nature-oriented tourism and offshore oil development. Our findings are based on research carried out from 2011-2014 which involved interviews with key stakeholders, online content analysis (websites and social media), and analyses of mass media content, reports, and scholarly and popular literature.

*Our main research findings include:*

- The tourism destination image for Newfoundland and Labrador relies heavily on a package of iconic elements: whales, icebergs, spectacular coastal landscapes, Gros Morne National Park, and coastal communities that are defined as sites of history and cultural authenticity. The natural environment works alongside the material culture and intangible heritage of the province to draw tourists.
- As these themes are translated from insider media (i.e. content produced by provincial tourism operators and promoters, or by the provincial government) to outsider media, we see that there is a certain level of thematic consistency, which points to a relatively smooth process of translation from the image of the coastal environment produced by tourism promoters and operators to the travel narratives of outsider mass media. However, different aspects of this tourism destination image are given more emphasis over time, and are interpreted differently by media in Canada, the U.S., and the U.K.
- The positive impacts of tourism for host communities are primarily understood in economic terms. However, our results demonstrate that there can also be important social and environmental benefits from tourism development.
- Key challenges to tourism development include issues with airplane, ferry, and car travel to and within the province. High costs and accessibility issues are repeatedly cited as barriers to tourist travel and challenges for tourism development in the region. Other challenges to tourism development include working within a short tourism season, as well as uneven consistency and quality of food service that often fails to meet visitor expectations.
- In general, nature-oriented tourism and oil development are seen as separate and independent modes of interaction with coastal environments. However, there is more resistance to oil development where it poses risks to key tourism landscapes, such as Gros Morne National Park.
- In terms of global climate change, many participants feel that climate change will

have negative impacts on tourism, through changes to iceberg formation, shifting fish and animal habitat, changing normal seasonal weather patterns, as well as increased storm activity and storm surges.

*Based on this research, the following are recommendations for pursuing tourism development in ways that contribute to the social and environmental viability of coastal communities in Newfoundland and Labrador:*

- Different tourism attractors resonate better with some outsider media than others. As such, it is strategic to promote multiple aspects of coastal communities and environments within the insider media of advertisements, travel guides and web content produced by provincial tourism operators, promoters, and governments.
- At its best, tourism development can work to provide economic, social and environmental benefits for host communities. As much as possible, tourism development should be pursued with economic, social and environmental dimensions in mind so that it contributes to community resilience.
- Given the significance of Gros Morne National Park as an iconic tourism attractor, any discussion of possible resource extraction or industrial development near its borders should be treated with extreme caution, with an emphasis on maintaining the ecological and social integrity of this protected area and its enclave communities.
- Given the significance of the East Coast Trail as a tourism attractor and local recreational amenity, greater attention should be given to protecting the integrity of the Trail from encroaching real estate development.
- Improving the role of tourism development in contributing to the social viability of coastal communities requires thinking strategically about extending the tourist season, as well as ensuring that amenities, such as food service, consistently meet visitors' expectations.
- Continue to work towards building regional tourism networks that incorporate tourism operators and promoters, as well as local and provincial governments, in order to share resources and information. Parallel to this, continue to cultivate a strong regional destination image that emphasizes the distinctiveness of the region, rather than focusing only on specific anchor communities.
- Given the perceived risks posed by climate change to the environments, fish and wildlife that the Newfoundland and Labrador tourism industry relies on, greater participation of the tourism industry in provincial efforts towards climate change mitigation and adaption should be encouraged.

## **Introduction**

The collapse of the cod fishery in the 1990s in Newfoundland and Labrador was one of the greatest ecological disasters experienced in Atlantic Canada, with profound impacts on community wellbeing. In the 21st century, nature-oriented tourism and offshore oil extraction are being pursued as parallel development paths that redefine how communities live with and make a living from coastal environments in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In comparison with extractive industries that view the environment as a source of harvestable resources, nature-oriented tourism can be considered a form of "attractive development" (Luke, 2002), where rural environments are defined as places of experience, rather than sites of natural resource extraction. Nature tourism and outdoor recreation in particular are increasingly important modes of interaction with coastal environments in Newfoundland and Labrador. The opportunity to experience the coastal environment through watching whales, puffins or icebergs, or through sea kayaking, hiking, and camping draws a growing number of visitors to the province.

Our guiding research question was: **How is nature-oriented tourism transforming social-ecological relationships with and cultural conceptions of coastal environments in Newfoundland and Labrador?** We used a multiple method approach to answer this question, combining analyses of expert interviews, websites and web 2.0 materials retrieved from Facebook, Twitter, and You Tube, mass media coverage of Newfoundland tourism, government and academic reports, and field observation (see Appendix for a detailed description).

In this report, we focus on findings from this research that we hope will have applied value to non-academic audiences, including the provincial government, tourism operators and promoters, communities, and non-governmental organizations. Elsewhere, the province is in the process of obtaining Tourism Visitor Destination Appeal Appraisals (TVDAAs). The Eastern region was the first to go through this process, and many of our findings complement the findings contained in that report (Brain Trust Marketing & Communications & The Tourism Café, 2014). The TDVAA report for the Eastern Region notes that more attention could be paid to issues of environmental and social sustainability within the provincial tourism industry as a whole. This is one area in which our research findings are particularly complimentary to the TDVAA process. The body of this report is divided into five sections: 1) The social benefits of nature-oriented tourism development; 2) the main features that bring tourists to Newfoundland and Labrador; 3) barriers to tourism mobility; 4) strategies for cultivating tourism mobility; and 5) local-provincial engagement and tourism networks.

## Main Features that Bring Tourists to Newfoundland and Labrador

Tourism involves connecting local communities and environments to global flows of people, which can be described as networks of “tourism mobilities” (Sheller & Urry, 2004). Successfully linking local communities to these tourism mobility networks requires creating and circulating a “tourism destination image” – the image that potential visitors have of a place, which will draw them to visit (Tasci et al., 2007). Producing and circulating a strong tourism destination image involves multiple layers of translation through various media that works as a sort of “imaginary tourism” that can draw visitors to host communities (Urry & Larsen, 2011; see Figure 1). Local communities and environments are packaged into insider media, including the websites, television advertisements and travel guides produced by the provincial government, as well as by tourism operators and promoters. A second layer of translation occurs as these images are picked up and re-circulated (and sometimes redefined) by outsider media, such as travel magazines, newspaper articles, or online and print travel guides (i.e. *Lonely Planet*). A third, and increasingly important layer of translation, occurs as tourists post opinions, stories and photos to travel websites like Expedia and Trip Advisor, as well as to social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. As we see in our research, working successfully with web-based media is seen as increasingly important for many tourism operators, instead of focusing their time and energy on more traditional mass media strategies.



**Figure 1.** Connecting tourism host communities to tourism mobility networks.

Newfoundland’s tourism destination image draws heavily on the province’s dramatic coastlines, native animal species, national parks and protected areas, and unique cultural characteristics. By drawing on the province’s history, cultural identity and natural environment, insider media promote a tourism destination that is visually arresting and “real and genuine, warm and welcoming, fun-loving and funny to the core”

(Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2013). The features that draw tourists to the region present a destination image of the province as “off the beaten track” of mass market tourism. The idea that tourists will experience cultural and historical authenticity within a spectacular natural environment is embodied by the promotional phrase that Newfoundland is as “far from Disney as you can get,” an idea that was expressed repeatedly by participants in this research. Some of the key aspects of this tourism destination image are defined further:

### ***Coastline***

In our interview, online, and social media data, one of the most frequently discussed features is Newfoundland’s majestic coastline. The coast is frequently represented through images of icebergs, rocky headlands and cliffs, and outdoor activities like hiking and ocean kayaking. Specifically, icebergs are perceived as a crucial element of the province’s destination image. They are an environmental feature that draws visitors from around the world, and are well-described by one participant as one of the “cornerstones” of tourism promotion, along with whales.

Coastal environments are also often described as wilderness and places for adventure. Tourism promotional material and our participants promote a cultural image of coastal environments that are teeming with non-human activity (icebergs and wildlife), while offering positive ‘adventure experiences’ for visitors.

### ***Animals***

The province’s abundant and diverse wildlife also work as a key attractor within nature-oriented tourist imaginaries. Whales are the most frequently referenced animals by interview participants, and in internet and mass media sources. Whales serve as a tourism version of a “cultural keystone species” (Ommer, 2007). The next most often mentioned animals are other forms of marine life and seabirds. Puffins, in particular, stand out as an attractor species, often featuring in promotional images for the province.

### ***Parks and Protected Areas***

Newfoundland’s national parks also stand as powerful natural features that draw tourists to the province. The recurring use of phrases like “wilderness” and “unspoiled environment” by interview participants highlight the emotional and cultural affects that protected areas induce for visitors. Newfoundland’s wild spaces afford outdoor recreation experiences and opportunities that are unique to the region, including hiking and camping.

Throughout our data, Gros Morne National Park is positioned as the leading symbol of the island’s distinctive geography, and as a key tourism attractor. Interview participants described how Gros Morne embodies perceptions of an untouched wilderness due to the visible presence of various wildlife species such as whales, moose, and

seabirds, as well as through its fjords and the unique geology of the Tablelands.

Material on Gros Morne is also often linked to perceptions of tourism as a sustainable practice and to the idea that the experience of participating in outdoor recreation in coastal environments can help foster greater environmental awareness. Given the importance of Gros Morne to tourism development in the province, and as the province's most iconic protected area, questions about whether and how to proceed with industrial development resource extraction in the surrounding area (i.e. the recent controversy over fracking near park boundaries) should be considered extremely carefully. In reaction to the Shoal Point controversy at Sally's Cove, the provincial government has put a fracking moratorium in place. As debate over the benefits and risks of oil development on the west coast of the island continues, the social and ecological impacts of oil extraction should be measured against the social-cultural and ecological benefits that Gros Morne provides to the region and the province.

Interview participants also discussed other parks and protected areas, with particular reference to Witless Bay and Cape St. Mary's, which are often discussed together. While not referenced nearly as often as Gros Morne, these two ecological reserves are also viewed as key tourism attractors, as they provide sites for viewing whales and seabirds. Witless Bay and Cape St. Mary's are most often associated with boat tours, while Gros Morne is most often linked to hiking as modes of interacting with coastal environments.

The East Coast Trail also comes up often as an important tourism attractor and outdoor recreation amenity for the Avalon Peninsula, which has received international media attention as a hiking destination. While the trail passes through a few parks and protected areas, including La Manche Provincial Park and Cape Spear Lighthouse National Historic Site, most of the trail is unprotected. Just as Gros Morne national park embodies nature for tourists on the west coast of the island, the East Coast Trail is an anchor attraction for nature-oriented tourism and recreation on the Avalon Peninsula. However, unlike Gros Morne, the East Coast Trail does not enjoy the status of a park or protected area. As a result, the trail has been rerouted in sections to accommodate new housing construction. We encourage efforts to increase the protection for the East Coast Trail, so that it remains a key tourism attractor and is not compromised by unfettered real estate development.

### ***Culture and History***

While dramatic coastlines, national parks, wilderness areas, and wildlife are routinely incorporated into an imagery that promises opportunities for adventure and outdoor recreation, culture also plays an important role in drawing tourists towards the province. In media depictions and travel writing there is often a tight connection between whales, icebergs and the historicity and cultural authenticity of rural outport communities. Both insider and outsider media content link landscape, animals and local

culture as key components of the tourist experience of Newfoundland.

Tourism imagery and participants' talk about outport communities often juxtaposes these places with the urban and suburban landscapes where many Canadians now reside. Outport life is seen as being more in-tune and connected to the local environment, more socially "authentic," and able to provide a tourism experience that is significantly different than many other destinations.

Material on rural communities suggests they are valued for their role in preserving the material and intangible heritage of Newfoundland culture. A related theme that comes up often is that history serves as an important tourism attractor through places like L'Anse aux Meadows, Trinity and Bonavista, and Battle Harbor. Material on the authenticity and historicity of rural communities is also often connected to material on the province's arts and craft scene, and distinct food and drink.

### ***Outsider Media Coverage of Newfoundland Tourism***

Images of Newfoundland and Labrador culture and environments are packaged and circulated through the "insider media" of provincial government websites, television ads and travel guides, as well as through web content and other promotional material created by tourism operators and promoters. These images are further taken up and circulated through various "outsider media," including newspapers, magazines, travel websites and other travel guides. Part of this project involved an analysis of coverage of Newfoundland tourism in newspapers from Canada, the U.S., and U.K., published between 1992 and 2010 (Stoddart & Graham, forthcoming; Stoddart & Sodero, forthcoming).

This layer of our analysis shows that the meanings ascribed by media to the coastal Newfoundland environment have shifted between 1992 and 2010. A key mass media theme that is generally absent from insider media images of the province is that the collapse of the cod fishery and the 1992 fishing moratorium led to the decline of rural outport communities. While this theme is especially prevalent in the early- to mid-nineties, the fisheries collapse and rural decline continue to contextualize media representations of tourism and mobility well into the 2000s.

Another key mass media theme emphasizes the authenticity and historical value of rural outport communities. This image of rural Newfoundland is typically coupled with media coverage that describes coastal Newfoundland as a spectacular environment rich with icebergs, whales, and seabirds. In this media narrative, which reflects the images promoted by insider media, nature and culture work as tourism attractors, and tourism is valued for its positive impact on local communities. The emphasis on nature as a tourism attractor, and outdoor recreation (i.e. hiking and sea kayaking) as a highly-valued mode of interacting with coastal environments becomes more visible during the 2000s.

Besides historical shifts in outsider media travel narratives, there are also differences in which dimensions of Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism destination image are emphasized by media in Canada, the U.S. and U.K. Canadian mass media

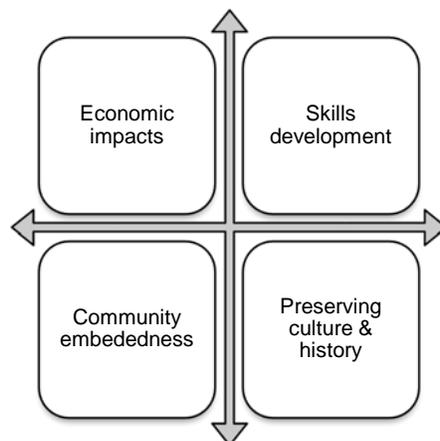
describe the coastal environment primarily as a place for outdoor adventure, recreation, and interaction with the environment and highlight the cultural authenticity that is distinct from mainland Canada. Tourism-oriented coverage in the UK focuses on the isolation of Newfoundland, the solitude that can be found in its wilderness, and the authenticity and warmth of islanders. By contrast, coverage in the US media focuses to a greater degree on Witless Bay and Cape St. Mary's ecological reserves as tourism anchors, emphasizing opportunities for viewing whales and seabirds. In comparison to UK and Canadian media coverage, there is less focus on outdoor recreation and more of a focus on the history of the island as well as its economic hardships.

## Benefits of Nature-Oriented Tourism Development

The province of Newfoundland and Labrador provides opportunities for both nature-oriented and cultural-historical tourism. Recent research on tourism and recreation suggests that there is an increasing interest in alternatives to large-scale resort developments, which bring tourists into “authentic” encounters with local cultures and environments through adventure and eco-tourism (Franklin, 2003; Urry & Larsen, 2011; Salazar, 2010). As part of this shift, growing numbers of an increasingly urban Canadian population choose to vacation in rural areas.

Within this context, many communities in Atlantic Canada and elsewhere have begun to see tourism as an “attractive development” (Luke, 2002) strategy, where instead of (or in addition to) exporting natural resources, tourists are enticed to visit and experience the unique environments, landscapes, and cultural histories of a destination (Baldacchino, 2006; George et al., 2009). As part of the move towards attractive development, communities in Newfoundland are relying on tourism anchors like historic sites, national parks, and outdoor recreation activities like sea kayaking and hiking, or whale, puffin, and iceberg viewing.

While the limitations and challenges of tourism development are discussed by our research participants, the main theme in our data is that tourism is widely perceived as having positive economic, social and environmental impacts for host communities. Many of our interview participants describe the benefits of nature-oriented tourism primarily in economic terms: improved employment opportunities for local residents, “new money” brought into Newfoundland and Labrador from outside the region, the cultivation of job-skills training, entrepreneurial development, and new opportunities for young people who wish to remain in Newfoundland (see Figure 2). While tourism employment is generally seasonal, the positive impacts of these jobs are distributed throughout the province to a greater degree than the oil industry, which tends to be centred on the northeast Avalon Peninsula.



**Figure 2.** Potential social benefits of tourism development.

As local communities connect to global flows of people, capital, and ideas through tourism development, they are plugging into one of the world's largest industries (Urry & Larsen, 2011). The economic benefits experienced by tourism operators and employees can have broader spill-over effects for host communities. These benefits include the development of tourism anchors that provide amenities that are used by communities as well as visitors, such as the East Coast Trail and the Battle Harbour National Historic District (Fennelly, 2011; D.W. Knight Associates Team, 2005). The social benefits of nature-oriented tourism development can also include an enhanced sense of community identity, and preserving local culture and history.

Nature-oriented tourism development is also generally seen as an environmentally responsible and sustainable industry. Tourism is often described as sustainable in comparison to other possible uses of coastal environments. The relatively small scale of tourism in Newfoundland (compared with many other regions of the world) means it is still a low-impact consumer of natural and environmental resources.

Specifically, individuals who work in nature-oriented tourism are often described, and describe themselves, as contributing to a more environmentally sustainable development path for Newfoundland and Labrador. This includes adopting environmentally responsible practices, such as guidelines around interactions with wildlife through boat or kayak tours, increasing energy efficiency, waste reduction, and using organic or local foods.

For many participants, tourism also connects to environmental sustainability because nature-oriented tourism may provide a place for environmental education and awareness-raising for visitors. The experience of interacting with coastal environments and wildlife is believed to help cultivate pro-environmental values among visitors. Nature-oriented tourism is seen to work as a site of pro-environmental social learning that connects visitors, tourism operators, host communities and coastal environments. In particular, outdoor recreation activities like hiking and kayaking are viewed as sustainable modes of experiencing coastal environments and of cultivating environmental awareness. Boat tours are also repeatedly referenced in discussions of environmentally responsible tourism, as another key mode of interaction with the environment and wildlife, specifically whales and seabirds. As the coastline and ocean are key tourism attractors, we believe the links between tourist economies and pro-environmental practices will continue to gain importance, as demonstrated by the recent Eastern Newfoundland Geotourism project (<http://www.nlgeotourism.com/>), and as emphasized by the recent Tourism Destination Visitor Appeal Appraisals for the Eastern region (Brain Trust Marketing & Communications & The Tourism Café, 2014)

As nature-oriented tourism continues to expand in the province, it is important to maintain a focus on promoting forms of development that can work to create economic, social and environmental benefits for host communities.

## **Challenges of Tourism Development**

This project also examined barriers and challenges in connecting local communities to large-scale networks of tourism mobility. Several challenges were identified through this research. The most prominent challenges centre on “automobility,” a term that refers to networks of cars, drivers, roads and services related to car use (Urry, 2004). Challenges related to automobility include the need to improve road signage, poor road conditions and lack of roadside facilities for visitors, and problems with rental car availability.

Besides automobility-related issues, the condition of provincial “aeromobility” and “aquamobility” networks -- the technologies and infrastructure related to airplane and ferry travel -- also came up in our interviews. Discussions concerning the difficulties of air travel highlighted the high cost of flights to the island and the limited number of places that reach Newfoundland and Labrador by direct flight. These concerns about the cost and inconvenience of flying highlight that the province is not well integrated into tourism mobility air travel networks, which creates issues for tourism promotion and development. The challenges of aquamobility are centred on the Marine Atlantic ferry system and its cost and long travel times, as well as the inconveniences of scheduling travel ahead of time. Many of the issues relating to tourist mobility – road conditions, signage, rental car availability, airfare and ferry costs, and flight routing limitations -- are infrastructural in nature and are cannot be addressed only by tourism operators and promoters alone.

Themes regarding the challenges of tourist travel to and within the province reinforce the notion that Newfoundland is a destination that is distant and remote from most tourism markets, which means that visitors have to be especially motivated to travel here. As a few of our participants put it, there are no “accidental tourists” to the province. The isolation and distance of Newfoundland from tourism markets is viewed both as a barrier to tourism, but is also viewed as something that helps preserve the quality of visitors’ experience of coastal communities and environments. There is a noteworthy tension between the positive value of remoteness and the idea of a tourist experience “as far from Disneyland as you can get,” on one hand, and the notion of distance as a barrier to tourism development on the other hand. Moves to increase flows of tourists and make it easier to travel here may inadvertently change the quality of experience for those who travel to the province.

Another prevalent theme focuses on the role of weather in shaping tourism flows and influences visitors’ experiences. Through the intervention of rain, fog, snow, or conversely through the experience of a particularly good summer – weather is deeply connected to the experiences that visitors carry with them after spending time in the province. The unpredictability of the weather is viewed as one of the biggest challenges in ensuring tourists enjoy their experience.

The short tourism season in the province is another key challenge that comes up

repeatedly. The short season means poses challenges for tourism operators in terms of maintaining their own income, as well as recruiting and retaining employees from year to year. Research participants often describe the main market comprising visitors aged 45 and above. Retirees and older tourists are among those likely to take advantage of the shoulder season as a time to travel, and moves towards season extension should be made with this demographic in mind.

A final challenge that comes up repeatedly is the notion that food service in the province is of uneven quality and often fails to meet the expectations of visitors. This challenge is related to the short season, as tourism operators often note that it can be difficult to appeal both local residents and visitors, but maintaining a viable business throughout the year depends on this. Changes to restaurant culture to appeal to tourists will have to be balanced by maintaining options that appeal to existing year-round customers in the community. Hosting short-term workshops or training events with visiting high-caliber chefs from Newfoundland or the broader Atlantic region may be a useful strategy to help local restaurants shift to meet tourists' expectations. As Lowitt (2011; 2012) notes in her report on tourism and fisheries in the Bonne Bay region, strengthening connections between local fisheries and food producers and the tourism industry can provide benefits for local communities as well as enhance tourists' experience of the region.

Finally, it is worth drawing attention to parallels between our findings and those of the recent report on the Eastern region, which similarly points to issues around mobility (car, airplane and ferry travel), the short core season, and the consistency and quality of food service as ongoing issues for tourism development (Brain Trust Marketing & Communications & The Tourism Café, 2014).

### ***The Limitations of Tourism Development***

While tourism development can bring positive social impacts to communities, it is important to note that it is not a cure-all for regional development issues. It is also important to remain aware that tourism development can also give rise to new issues. As such, we wish to draw attention to two concerns, in particular, about the limitations of tourism development. While these themes are dominant in our data, they are worth further consideration if tourism development is to proceed in ways that contribute to community viability.

First, some interview note that dominant tourism images of rural coastal communities risks transforming these communities into museum pieces. As an example, one participant remarks that “we have to be mindful we don't lose our identity” in pursuit of attracting visitors. For some participants, tourism images can romanticize a vision of rural Newfoundland that no longer exists, as residents across the province are increasingly mobile, networked, and keyed into global flows of goods, services, and ideas. Such comments echo a critical perspective among tourism researchers who argue

that there are social and cultural costs to redeveloping communities to appeal to tourists (George et al. 2009; Overton, 1996).

Second, while much of the interview talk and documents analysed in this project focus on tourism as an environmentally responsible mode of interaction with the environment, we also saw concerns about the environmental impacts produced by tourism. Concerns were raised regarding risks of harassment faced by whales, seabirds and other wildlife by irresponsible boat tour operators (who are typically seen as minority in the industry), coupled with the view that there should be clear and rigorous codes of conduct protecting the wildlife that visitors see and interact with. Other concerns were raised regarding the impacts of motorized recreation, such as snowmobiling and ATV use, especially in the context of Gros Morne and other protected areas. A third area of concern is that there are inconsistencies in the environmental practices of different tourism operators and a lack of sufficient education and regulation to maintain a consistent level of environmental responsibility across the tourism industry.

## **Local-Provincial Engagement and Tourism Networks**

Tourism development relies on linking local communities and environments to large-scale flows of media communication and travelers. While visitors experience the character of specific landscapes and communities, linking local places to large-scale systems of tourist mobility is facilitated by networks that connect regional tourism operators and promoters, as well as local and provincial governments.

Building strong regional tourism networks among tourism operators, promoters, local communities, and provincial tourism agencies can assist in enhancing the potential of regional-provincial engagements and collaborations (Tucker et al., 2011). Some of the difficulties found in strengthening regional tourism networks included the existence of competing interests and internal tensions within tourism operators and communities. Tied to these tensions were differences in the level of priority that individual communities placed on tourism development. Another key barrier to strengthening regional tourism networks is a high level of dependence on volunteer labor. Investing resources into full-time, dedicated staff members is paramount for the continued maturation of the industry. The presence of well-developed staff members, whose role it is to coordinate these regional tourism network and marketing strategies, could serve as key liaisons between regional nodes of tourism development, the Eastern Destination Management Organization (EDMO) and provincial government.

The need to develop strong regional destination images within the province is identified as a key priority in the recent TDVAA for the Eastern Region and is a key area of overlap between that report and our research findings (Brain Trust Marketing & Communications & The Tourism Café, 2014). A tourism destination image is a mental impression or conception that potential tourists have about a certain destination. It tells them what kind of experiences they should expect if they decide to travel to that place. A regional tourism destination image is one that encompasses a full region as opposed to individual communities or attractions. Building organizational-level regional tourism networks can aid in the development of strong regional destination images. By creating a distinct regional tourism destination image for Newfoundland that is coherent and memorable, the whole region – as opposed to select communities – becomes a tourism destination that can be promoted to visitors. These images can, over time be further developed and strengthened to emphasize Newfoundland's distinctiveness from other regional destinations in Canada and North America.

## **Tourism and Environmental Issues**

Material on a wide range of environmental issues came up throughout this project. The most visible environmental issues include: offshore oil development, climate change, and the health and sustainability of fisheries. While less visible within the project as a whole, other environmental issues that are raised within the context of tourism development include questions about creating new protected areas, the negative impacts of ocean and beach waste on tourist experiences, the impacts of uncontrolled real estate development in coastal environments, and questions about the environmental impacts of aquaculture.

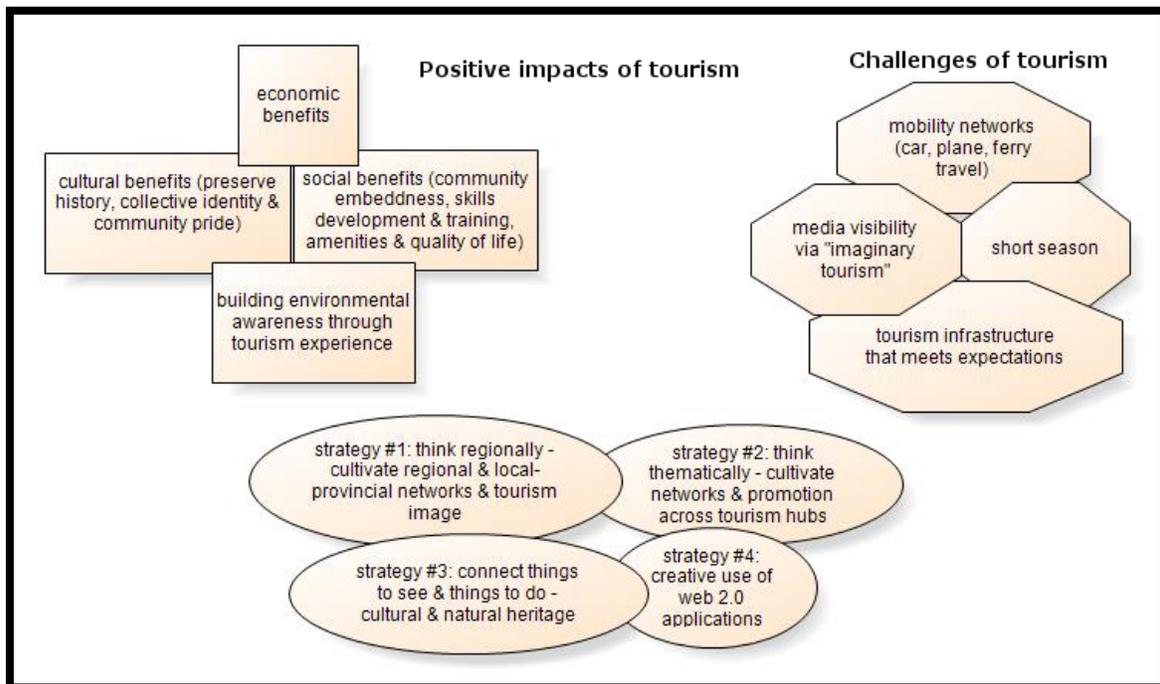
Offshore oil extraction and tourism development offer very different models for living with – and making a living from – coastal environments. For many of our interview participants, these are seen as distinct and largely unrelated modes of interaction with coastal environments, as oil extraction (particularly on the Avalon Peninsula) largely occurs out of sight of tourism activities. The environmental risks of oil development were viewed as hypothetical possibilities. That is, the risks of a large-scale oil spill or disaster were not seen to have current impacts on tourism images or tourist experiences. Rather, the risks of oil development were seen as potential dangers that could be addressed through appropriate oversight and precaution. Instead, resistance to oil development tends to focus on particular projects like the proposed Old Harry offshore oil exploration project, or proposed fracking near Gros Morne. In general, concerns about the impacts of oil extraction on tourism focus on the impacts a catastrophic spill could have on specific communities and environments, and rarely reflect a wholesale questioning or rejection of oil development in the province. In the case of contentious proposed projects like Old Harry and Shoal Point, the presence of offshore equipment and potential for spills or accidents near key tourism attractors like Gros Morne National Park is seen as especially problematic.

Global climate change is another major environmental issue that is addressed by interview participants and in the various documents analysed in this project. For several respondents, perceptions that we are already seeing a warming ocean and altered weather patterns were linked to discussion about what those changes will mean for iceberg formation, and whether there will continue to be a significant number of icebergs coming down the coast in the future. Additionally, participants expressed concerns about storm surges, rising sea levels, and impacts on coastlines. All of these impacts can shape tourism as they alter key tourism attractors (wildlife, coastlines, and icebergs). Other impacts of climate change that were raised focus on the changing range and behaviour of seabirds, animals and marine life. For example, there is talk about observed changes among capelin and caribou, and concerns about increasing numbers of jellyfish in warming waters. Changing norms for summer and winter weather can also have impacts on tourism development, such as the impacts increasingly unreliable winters may have on efforts to extend tourism operations beyond the summer peak season.

A few participants linked talk about car and air tourist travel to discussions of climate change and the negative environmental impacts of tourism. Some participants noted the contributions tourism makes to climate change through the carbon footprint of air travel, or through gas consumption and infrastructure and road development. This is, however, a relatively minor theme within the project. By contrast, the majority of research participants are less critical about the ecological impacts associated with the provincial tourism industry, which is seen as operating at too small a scale to make a significant contribution to global climate change.

## Conclusion

In the wake of the cod moratorium, Newfoundland and Labrador has embraced offshore oil and tourism as two different visions for living with and making from coastal environments. The provincial tourism industry is reliant on images of coastlines and oceans, rural coastal communities, national parks and wildlife to attract visitors and create an image of the province as a refuge for the residents of an increasingly urban Canada. Nature-oriented tourism sits alongside the promotion of Newfoundland's distinct history and culture. Both of these elements – cultural and environmental – play a vital role in Newfoundland's tourism imaginary. Figure 3 provides a visual summary of some of the main social benefits and challenges of tourism development as a strategy for the social environmental viability of coastal communities.



**Figure 3.** Tourism and the social-environmental viability of coastal communities.

As this figure suggests, tourism development is seen as having the potential to provide a range of social, cultural and economic benefits, and is also viewed as having the potential to contribute to the development of environmental awareness among visitors. However, these benefits are not evenly distributed among tourist communities, nor are they evenly distributed within even the most successful tourist destinations in the province. These benefits are also counter-balanced by several challenges, including the mobility challenges related to car, plane or ferry travel, a short tourist season, the need to gain media visibility within increasingly global communication networks, and the need to provide tourism infrastructure that meets visitor expectations. Moving forward, we suggest four strategies that we believe increase the potential for tourism to contribute to

the viability of coastal communities in Newfoundland and Labrador:

***Strategy #1: Think Regionally***

The first strategy is to continue to develop regional-level networks among tourism operators, promoters, and other key stakeholders in various regions of the province. This recommendation echoes key recommendations made in other reports (i.e. Mariner Resource Opportunities Network Inc. 2008; Tucker et al. 2011). This process can be facilitated by clearly communicating the social impacts of tourism for host communities. As community members develop a realistic and comprehensive understanding of the potential impacts of tourism development, they are more likely to be supportive, while not developing unrealistic expectations for tourism as a cure-all for regional development.

In parallel to building regional-level organizational networks, it is also important to develop strong, distinct “tourism destination images” (Tasci et al. 2007) for different regions of the province. This is also a key recommendation of the recent TDVAA for the Eastern region (Brain Trust Marketing & Communications & The Tourism Café, 2014). This allows whole regions of the province – as opposed to single communities – to become tourism destinations that are differentiated from each other. The strategic development of regional tourism networks, which can serve as a middle ground between provincial and individual promotion efforts, may also help build stronger regional tourism destination images.

***Strategy #2: Think Thematically***

Strong regional tourism destination images can be cultivated by emphasizing the stories that are unique to the different regions of the province. Another complementary strategy for building a provincial tourism destination image is to focus on making connections across tourism attractors, particularly between the more established tourism regions of the province (i.e. Gros Morne, the Bonavista Peninsula, or St. John’s) and emerging tourism regions. For example, a thematic focus on the fisheries history of Newfoundland and Labrador could weave together the Ryan Premises National Historic Site, the Battle Harbour historic district, the Provincial Seaman’s Museum and the Rooms. A thematic focus on the rich geological heritage of the province, which would complement recent moves to emphasize geotourism, could link Gros Morne National Park, Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve, and Fortune Head Ecological Reserve.

***Strategy #3: Connect Cultural Heritage and Natural Heritage***

Over the past two decades, outsider media narratives of tourism to Newfoundland and Labrador have placed a dual emphasis on the cultural heritage of the province and the coastal environment, wildlife and recreational opportunities. Building on this, another strategy for future tourism development is to emphasize the combination of sites and

activities where visitors can experience the natural environment of the region. A similar approach is recommended in the recent TDVAA for the Eastern region (Brain Trust Marketing & Communications & The Tourism Café, 2014). Historic sites, museums, parks and protected areas, hiking trails and the coastal environment all serve as important tourism attractors and should be valued and promoted as an integral part of the social-ecological systems of the province.

Part of this strategy involves focusing future tourism-oriented development on projects that can draw visitors, but also enhance social-environmental wellbeing for host communities by providing amenities or recreational opportunities, rather than focusing primarily on short-term, large-scale events that are costly and often do not have a lasting impact.

#### ***Strategy #4: Make Creative use of 2.0 Applications***

Tourism operators and promoters typically note that they are moving away from relying on traditional mass media as a promotion strategy in favour of websites and web 2.0 application. While the provincial government has the resources to successfully engage mass media on behalf of the province as a whole (for example, the *Find Yourself Here* advertising campaign), web-based promotion is seen as a better use of resources for most smaller-scale tourism operators and promoters. One of the key benefits of digital media is that it has the potential to connect local tourism host communities to global flows of potential visitors. However, the internet ethnography component of our work suggests that much of the use of web 2.0 applications like Facebook and Twitter (particularly in emerging tourism regions) is directed at internal communication among regional networks of tourism operators and residents, with communities of users that are often relatively small and localized. Additional attention could be given to more effectively utilize the full capabilities of these digital communication tools. This subject is dealt with in greater detail in the recent TDVAA for the Eastern region (Brain Trust Marketing & Communications & The Tourism Café, 2014). One way to more effectively use digital media would be to connect specific regions of the province to larger-scale groups of people around common activities and interests that are well represented in the province, such as hiking, sea kayaking, history, geology, or geotourism.

#### ***Future research***

This report summarizes the main applied research findings from a multi-year, SSHRC-funded research project on the ways in which tourism development in Newfoundland and Labrador is reshaping social-ecological relationships with coastal environments. Two future projects based on this work that are in preliminary development include:

- *Tourism Networks and the Social-Environmental Viability of Coastal Communities: A Regional Comparative Approach.* This project would more closely examine the factors that facilitate participation in building regional tourism networks, the barriers to participation in regional tourism networks, and how these barriers can be reduced to facilitate participation in regional tourism networks. This research would be approached through a regional-level comparison of the Burin Peninsula and Labrador Straits (as emerging tourism regions) and the Gros Morne communities and Bonavista Peninsula (as established tourism regions). Data collection would focus on local and regional tourism operators and promoters using a survey, followed by focus group meetings. This research will also help us better understand how tourism operators and promoters view the role of tourism in contributing to the social and environmental viability of coastal, rural communities.
- *The Oil-Tourism Interface and Social-Ecological Change in the North Atlantic.* Offshore oil development and nature-oriented tourism offer alternate visions for how societies can live with, and make a living from, coastal environments. Across the North Atlantic region, tourism relies on unspoiled coastlines, whales, seabirds, hiking, and sea kayaking. Beyond this tourism imagery -- and normally beyond the sight of tourists -- offshore oil extraction proceeds, fueling economic growth and providing government revenue. Much of the time, offshore oil development and nature-oriented tourism do not appear to intersect and are not incorporated into the same discussions about the social and ecological viability of coastal communities in the North Atlantic. However, we argue for the analytical value of the novel concept of the “oil-tourism interface,” which emphasizes the connections between modes of development that are normally seen as disparate. This research would adopt an international comparative approach to studying the connections and tensions between offshore oil and nature-oriented tourism as pathways for social-ecological development at sites across the North Atlantic: Newfoundland and Labrador, Scotland, Norway, Denmark and Iceland. Through this comparative approach, this research will help us better understand how the oil-tourism interface is shaped through the interaction of governments, the oil industry, the tourism industry, social movements, and the media.

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## Appendix: Methodology

### *Mass Media Analysis*

The first phase of the project examined media coverage of Newfoundland and Labrador tourism in Canadian, UK, and US newspapers, from the period 1992-2010. A keyword search of the Factiva database of major world publications yielded the following sample:

News outlet	Number of hits
Globe & Mail	52
Toronto Star	33
Toronto Sun	9
<b>Canada total</b>	<b>94</b>
Daily Mail	4
The Independent	4
The Observer	4
The Daily Telegraph	3
The Guardian	3
The Evening Standard	1
The Mirror	1
<b>UK total</b>	<b>20</b>
Washington Post	4
New York Times	3
St. Petersburg Times (Tampa Bay)	3
Dallas Morning News	2
Christian Science Monitor	1
Philadelphia Inquirer	1
USA Today	1
Washington Times	1
<b>US total</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Total mass media data set</b>	<b>130</b>

### ***Interviews***

Several different types of organizations were contacted about participating in the interview phase of this project: government departments, economic development boards, and tourism promotion agencies; private tourism operators and promoters; and non-governmental organizations, including environmental and recreational organizations. Using a purposive sampling strategy developed from the mass media and internet ethnography phases of the project, a total of 47 key organizations were identified and contacted about participating in this research. In total, 29 interviews were conducted for this phase of the project, including government-affiliated participants, tourism industry participants, and Newfoundland-based NGO participants. This sample also includes participants from NGO's based outside Newfoundland whose organizations have been active in debates over the proposed Old Harry oil exploration project in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, located off the west coast of Newfoundland. Furthermore, our analysis incorporates additional interviews conducted as part of a case study of the social impacts of tourism development at Battle Harbour, Labrador, which was nested within this larger project.

### ***Internet ethnography***

Internet ethnography involves treating the internet as a site of field research. Web content produced by government, tourism operators and promoters, and non-governmental organizations (including organization websites and web 2.0 content from Facebook, Twitter and You Tube) was examined for this project. Keyword searching produced the following sample of organizational websites:

This produced a sample that breaks down as follows:

<b>Organizational category</b>	<b># of websites</b>
<b>Provincial government</b>	3
<b>Provincial tourism promotion umbrella organizations</b>	2
<b>Specific nature tourism and outdoor sport operators</b>	13
<b>Local and regional environmental organizations</b>	4
<b>Outdoor recreation community organizations</b>	2
<b>Total</b>	24

Web 2.0 material was retrieved from Facebook, Twitter and You Tube, based on four distinct sampling strategies.

First, Facebook content relevant to Newfoundland tourism and environmentalism was identified using keyword searching. Eight Facebook pages were purposively sampled, based on relevance and alignment with data collected in other phases of the project. Detailed notes were produced on these pages between August 2012 and January 2013.

Second, another subset of Web 2.0 data was generated that had particular relevance to the Burin Peninsula case study that was nested within this broader project. Keyword searching was used to identify relevant Facebook pages, and detailed notes were written on 12 Facebook pages between July and August 2013. Twitter was also searched for relevant content from 2009 through August 2013, yielding a set of 250 individual tweets. A similar analysis was carried out for relevant You Tube content in September 2013.

Third, another subset of Web 2.0 data was generated that has particular relevance to the Battle Harbour case study that was nested within this broader project. There are two different Facebook pages related to the Battle Harbour District and both were examined. A search of relevant Twitter content was carried out in September 2013, which yielded 56 results. As for the Burin case, we analysed relevant You Tube content in September 2013, producing detailed notes on 32 You Tube videos.

Fourth, another subset Web 2.0 data was related to communication by environmental movements in the controversy over the proposed Old Harry oil exploration project in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. This data set encompasses content produced by organizations who have intervened in this development from both inside and outside Newfoundland (i.e. Quebec, PEI, Nova Scotia). We retrieved material between November 2012 and March 2013 from an ongoing series of searches of Twitter, You Tube, and Facebook.

### ***Field observation***

Another source of data for this project was field observation. Dr. Stoddart or his research assistants attended the following public events and took field notes:

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>'Twiixt Mountains and Sea: Pre-Confederation Tourism in Newfoundland, The Rooms</b>	July 6, 2011
<b>Leisure Time Exhibit, The Rooms</b>	July 6, 2011
<b>Exploring Eastern Newfoundland Geotourism Project</b>	October 13, 2011
<b>Parks Canada Job Cuts - More than lost jobs - Lost parks?</b>	May 17, 2012
<b>Exploring Renewable Energy Opportunities for Newfoundland and Labrador</b>	May 18, 2012
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador Economy and the Environment Forum 2012 (New Leaf)</b>	October 24, 2012
<b>It's Time to Prepare Now: Bad Weather Ahead, Atlantic Climate Adaptation Solutions Association (ACASA), Newfoundland and Labrador Conference</b>	November 27, 2012
<b>Screening of the film Arctic Cliffhangers, The Rooms</b>	April 11, 2013
<b>Oil Spill Response Technology Seminar</b>	May 27-28, 2013
<b>Eastern Newfoundland Strategic Environmental Assessment Open House</b>	September 17, 2013
<b>Facts on Fracking: Public forum and information session on shale gas exploration and development in Western Newfoundland</b>	October 19th, 2013
<b>Climate Change in Atlantic Canada with Dr. David Suzuki</b>	November 23, 2013
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Industry Association, Speaker Series: Barbara Pike</b>	February 11, 2014
<b>Newfoundland Environmental Industry Association Speaker Series: Chris Feetham, Environment Canada</b>	March 11, 2014

In addition, both of the case studies nested within this larger project, focusing on Battle Harbour and the Burin Peninsula, involved field observation, which was carried out in summer 2013.

### ***Other data sources***

Throughout the project, we also collected and analysis reports and policy documents produced by the provincial government, academics, tourism promotion organizations, and non-governmental organizations that focused on tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### ***Data analysis***

All documents and transcripts for this project were imported into NVIVO software for qualitative analysis, where they were coded and analyzed. A semi-structured coding scheme, which was used to identify themes in the data, was developed to reflect the research questions set out above. Coding categories were established prior to data collection and analysis. Following the conventions of qualitative research, the coding categories were periodically reviewed and revised in light of emerging results.