

FISHING FOR SUCCESS

By Kimberly Orren

We are a Sea People, once described by Winston Churchill as the “world’s best small boatmen.” Yet an entire generation has come to adulthood since the cod moratorium. And those of us who may have grown up with our butts in a punt, now have children and grandchildren who spend more time on a virtual screen than at a splitting table.

Just as we celebrated the beginning of Canada’s 150th birthday year, let’s not forget that 2017 also marks the 25th anniversary of the cod moratorium in Newfoundland and Labrador. If you were fortunate enough to grow up here before the cod moratorium, you may have memories of being able to participate in the traditional fishery as a youngster. Perhaps you helped gut fish or cut tongues, you had the opportunity to learn traditional heritage skills at the elbows of your elders and then earn money or bring home a bag of fish for your work. You learned about the value of work and developed pride because you were helping your community and your family. You developed a connection to your fishing heritage, your community and this place.

This is no longer the case for youth growing up today.

Just over a hundred years ago, nearly all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians were directly involved in the fishery. In 1992, just as the cod moratorium was being called, 30 per cent were employed by the fishery. Today, only two per cent are engaged in commercial fishing. And the fishery that remains has changed: the boats and fishing gear are bigger, the wharfs are concrete and blocks of frozen bait are moved about by forklifts. The policies and regulations now in place to protect fishers at work have further distanced our youth from a traditional activity that forged their connection to place and identity. Our youth no longer have easy access to an intimate relationship with nature or a connection to their heritage. Very soon the music and stories that connect

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YOUTH COD FISHERY MEMBERS LEARN ABOUT THE PLASTICS THAT CAN BE FOUND IN FISH GUTS FROM NATALIE RICHARD OF MUN’S CLEAR LAB.



YOUTH COD FISHERY MEMBER CATCHES HER FIRST FISH.



LOCAL PETTY HARBOUR-MADDOX COVE FISHERMEN TEACHING FAMILIES HOW TO KNIT NET AT WATERSHED COFFEE SHOP THIS PAST APRIL. FUNDING WAS PROVIDED BY WELLNESS COALITION AVALON EAST.



SOME OF THE GIRLS WHO FISH MEMBERS BACK IN WITH THEIR RECREATIONAL CATCH.

us to our heritage, will have no meaning for today's young people who have come to maturity having greater access to a virtual screen than to a boat.

Fishing for Success is a nonprofit that is dedicated to introducing youth and families to our fishing her-

itage. We are developing programs that will create a new pathway to learn knowledge and skills that took our ancestors hundreds of years to refine. This past summer, we piloted a Youth Cod Fishery program in partnership with Thrive CYN: each week teenagers traveled from St. John's to Petty Harbour and learned traditional skills. They corked and painted the wooden dories, then went for a ride in the harbour. They learned to weave withes, picked blueberries and helped rind sticks. Then off to the ponds to dip for macroinvertebrates.

Finally, they climbed over a 10-foot stagehead, stepped into a boat, and ventured out on the ocean to jig for cod. For most of them, this was their first time catching a fish. Leo taught them to process their fish and they each brought a bag of fish home for a meal. They were very proud. And we are proud of them, too. On September 27, 2016, each young fish harvester received a graduation certificate and a "Golden Double Jigger Award" at a ceremony with family and friends to honour their accomplishment.

Fishing for Success has other programs, including: Girls Who Fish, Petty Harbour Twine Loft, Wild Family Nature Club and even pop-up events to teach about caplin at the beach during a roll or teach filleting to the public. Fishing for Success now sponsors an award called “The Island Rooms Fishing Heritage Award” recognizing a Heritage Fair (program sponsored by Historic Sites Association) project that “explores any aspect of a traditional family fishery.” An exemplary project will make apparent how even today we are intimately connected and dependent upon the sea that surrounds us. We are even now developing new 2017 programs to place donated fish into local food banks and connect our Youth Cod Fishery with elders and others who can’t fish through the sharing of a meal of fish and stories.

This is not something that we can — or should — do alone. The traditional fishery was a family and community enterprise and this project to create a new pathway should involve as many of us as possible. Fishing for Success needs fishermen and fish



Youngsters learning to weave withes while at a Fishing for Success summer camp program at Island Rooms.

makers, craftspeople and foodies to help pass on our culture. Please contact us to volunteer or ask about developing programs in your community. Please contact us through our website: www.IslandRooms.org or email: Fishing@IslandRooms.org or phone 709-740-3474. †