

# How the Craft Shop and Museum was started in Labrador

**Collector:** Ann O'Brien

**Contributor:** Margaret Buckle

**Ann O'Brien:**

Today was September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009, my name is Ann O'Brien and I'm ah....with Margaret Buckle who's gonna share a story with me about how and when the craft shop was started, here in the.....on the Labrador Coast. Go ahead Margaret.

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yes, Ann, I guess I'll start with how we obtained funding for the craft shop. The craft shop was built through a Canada's Work Project and it was built in 1978. Now our reason for building the craft shop was ah....traditional crafts on the coast were beginning to become a thing of the past. And there was a sister, in Pinware, but she use to teach school in West St. Modeste and she got into crafts and got some of the women in Pinware involved with doing crafts and other things. So then they started to do a lot of different kinds of crafts and especially picked up on traditional crafts. They produced a lot of crafts over the winter, so ah....in the event they found out about the Women's Institute.

So we formed up a Women's Institute here on the coast and Women's Institute was a organization to help women to learn new things ...ah better develop their knowledge and skills. Become better business people and whatever. So they became really interested in trying to develop more crafts for the first two years ah.... all the crafts that were produced were sold out of the community center in Pinware. Sylvia Buckle use to operate the Craft Shop for us or the Craft portion.

And ah... a lot of tourist were coming to the Pinware Park at that time, so people use to drop by the community center and buy crafts and of course, it was very encouraging to know that people were interested in the kind of crafts that we were producing. So we figured that we needed ah....a bigger and better place to ah...sell our crafts because we only could only use the craft shop...the community center when it wasn't being used for other purposes.

So then we thought we'd build a Craft Shop so we applied for ah...a grant through Canada Works. I was the district representative of the Women's Institute at that time. So I applied for a grant. Other people helped me to sponsor the project. It was an original project, so we obtained the funding for that project ah.... Patricia Cabot was ah.. President of the Craft Council at that time, by then we had a craft council formed up too.

That was in 1978, so ah.... in the winter of '78 and '79 the Craft Shop was build and it was open for operation in the summer of '79.

And there were women from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay that use to produce crafts, people got a chance to make money to help with ah.... their families cost of living, I guess. To help offset some of that, and ah... we had somebody hired, there was a woman hired every year, from June to September to ah...operate the craft shop and some students use to be hired as part time. So you know, it gave not only just the women but also the teenagers an opportunity to ah... make some money and good experience at business and what ever.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Margaret, what kind of traditional crafts, now, did the people produce?

**Margaret Buckle:**

Ah....Cossacks, overalls, skin boots, skin mitts, sweaters, socks and mittens....ah... gun gloves - we called them.... like the ones with the one finger in the mitt and ah....coats – duffel coats. Well, duffel coats and Canadian mist coats weren't a part of our traditional crafts, that was something that people picked up on, later. But hooked rugs and quilts, hunting bags and gun cases, all these things were .... and that was one of the main reasons we want to get the craft shops because traditional crafts were beginning to fade away.

People were ...instead of doing the traditional crafts they were going out and buying the handmade crafts or machine made crafts and I guess it was like the old saying out with the old and in with the new they thought that was a better thing, more modern, I guess. But they later found that the traditional crafts were ah... were more important, 'cause when people came in from other places in the United States and England and different countries and started in buying our crafts, then they felt like our crafts were valuable so they wanted to keep on producing it.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So cotton duck Cossacks..... Cossacks and the overalls and gun cases, that was made out of ...

**Margaret Buckle:**

....cotton ....

**Ann O'Brien:**

...certain...

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yeah, cotton duck, white. The cotton duck and ah... people use to use it ...in the earlier days people use to use it for hunting and ah....mainly for hunting in the winter time. It was something that was light and you could pull it on over a sweater or a light jacket and they could run with it on and you know, they didn't sweat. I guess, the duck was kind of

open and the air use to ah... use to help them from keep 'em..... keep 'em dry. It was also good for wet weather, it was a good thing for them to use, especially for hunting.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So after, this going on now for a period of years, ah... is the Craft Shop operating now?

**Margaret Buckle:**

The Craft Shop is still operating. The building that we built in Pinware in 1979, that was sold because ah... the cost of operation was ah... got to ....got to big. Too heavy a load for us and ah... we weren't making all that much money on crafts. We were selling some crafts but not enough to pay our worker and to pay the fuel bill and the electricity and the phone and to keep, you know, .... keep things going...repairs to the building and whatever.

So we sold that building and then we ah....we took the crafts to the museum. So we took up a space at the museum and used that for a craft shop and ah.... that's what still happening today. The crafts are brought to the museum and sold there.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So you built a building, to start the museum?

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yes, yeah. Our museum was built the same year our craft shop was built... 1978. And it was open in 1979. I know the museum was built through a Canada Works project, too, as well.

And the Craft Shop was a good thing for the museum because ah.... that helped offset the cost of the museum, too, because we had the Craft Shop and we had the museum and that was a lot of expense, with no money coming in. We're only a voluntary organization and we don't have as much money to operate our buildings.

So the crafts that we were selling at the museum helped to offset the cost of the museum as well. So you know, we get by with half the expense now as we did before, instead of two people being employed there's one people... one person employed.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So was it always a....woman..... a Woman's Institute member that ah.... worked in the museum or.....

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yes, well we had ah... our main craft....ah....worker or ah....operator of the museum or craft shop was ah... a Woman's Institute member. But we hired others, like the students in the Summer time. It didn't make any difference, whether they were Woman's Institute member, we gave a lot of student's employment who weren't Women's Institute members children.

Every summer there's at least two students hired there, some summers there's three students hired. And ah... a lot of the children got an opportunity to be able to get out to University through the funds that they received from the museum because ah.....there's not too much employment around here in the summer time.

Those projects, the Women's Institute have helped to ah... put a lot of dollars in people's pockets through crafts and through ah....projects as well.

**Ann O'Brien:**

So where did you get the things, that you put in your museum?

**Margaret Buckle:**

Well, first when we started our museum... and the reason we started a museum, a lot of .....I'll get to your question after Ann, a lot of things on the coast was being taken away by tourist. Tourist was coming into the area and they were buying up all the old traditional things, the artifacts, everything was going people had very valuable things and some things that were in really good conditions. And tourist were coming in and admiring it, and offering somebody a little bit of money for it and people sold it.

So we saw this happening, and at the time I just got elected as district representative for Women's Institute. And I was a member of the CESA, that's the Canada Employment Strategy Association that was formed here. At a meeting one time, this was what we were discussing, about all the things that was leaving our coast and we thought it was a shame to see so many things leaving and ah....eventually we might be, might have a museum or whatever and our young people wouldn't be able to see the way people lived because all of the older things were being taken away. So I thought about it, this museum, so I decided then that we'd ah....we'd ah build a museum.

Did I answer your question?

**Ann O'Brien:**

Yeah...no, I asked you where did you get the things that ah...

**Margaret Buckle:**

Oh yes...yes, I'm sorry about that. The things for the museum now, came from the ....when we opened up first, we only had a few things in our museum but there was a museum already in Blanc Sablon and they closed up and Tony Cormier was in charge of it and I knew about this, so I asked Tony about it, if we could get a loan of it. So he gave us a loan of what he had there, and it gave us a better idea of things that we could probably get from our local people.

So then we got out the worker that we had, ah... Mike Normore was the first fellow, who worked...Mike Jr. , was the first fellow who worked at the museum. So we got a grant.....grant, that year and we sent Mike out to the Masonium Museum and he did a course in ah...cataloguing artifacts and ....

**Ann O'Brien:**

Where's this museum at?

**Margaret Buckle:**

It's in the United States and ah, Reverend Brian got him through there.

So then we went to our local people, ah... that we knew had different things and got a little bit, but people were reluctant to give it to us. They use to sell it to strangers who came in...

**Ann O'Brien:**

'Cause they got money.

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yeah. We were....we didn't have money to buy it from 'em. There are still a lot of things today. A lot of good things around today, that we don't have, but that's how we ...how we got our artifacts. We went out and asked people if they had old things. That's a part of what our worker did. Go around and visit our people and get things for the museum.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Did you get things from the hospital....the Grenfell Hospital in Forteau?

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yeah, we got some things from the Grenfell Hospital. I asked Miss Taylor about some of the older things when they built the new hospital. I knew they had some new equipment there, so we got an incubator there, that was one of the things.

There was a couple of other things that they gave us. But that was the one thing that you will see when you go there. And also the table, the maternity table that the people use to use to....

**Ann O'Brien:**

For the women.....

**Margaret Buckle:**

...before the hospital.

**Ann O'Brien:**

That the women use to use to have their babies on.

**Margaret Buckle:**

The delivery table. That's there... that was the two biggest things, that we have there. We've got things from the church.....the old church in Pinware, got some things there.... from there.

We got things from, a couple of old radios from Greenley Island and ah...a few old things like that. Typewriters ..... typewriters that belonged to Father Tessard there. Ah, that's some of the most valuable things we have. Their all valuable of course, but, the thing that we find so hard is trying to preserve those artifacts, where we don't have a heated building, it makes it hard. Sometimes things get rusty quicker than they would if they were into a heated building and trying to preserve them is hard.

But the...the museum itself, I thought...I thought it was a good project. This is going to carry on our history for our younger people because when the young ones comes into the museum and see the .... like the old washboard...the wash tub and the wash board, they haven't got any idea of what to do with that. And if you don't explain to them about it, when you see the water buckets and the hoop, you know, "what did you do with that? How did you manage to do that? How did you manage to carry the water with that? Where they're just so use to turning on the tap and the water is there. Then of course, you know, you got the night tables and the pail that people use to use instead of the flush toilets.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Yeah.

**Margaret Buckle:**

The children now don't know that ever existed, 'cause that was before their time. So if we didn't have the museum. You know, all these things would be gone. So this is a part of their history.

Ah... we got the trawl lines with the suds, where people use to trawl one time, put the hooks on and children would think that the way of fishing was just the draggers and the drag bags and things like that, they don't know anything about that type of fishing. So there a lot of things there a lot of history that children can learn from.

**Ann O'Brien:**

I see you got a boat out by your museum, did somebody donate that?

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yes, that was Art Dorey, from Pinware, donated that back some years ago.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Was it one that he fished in?

**Margaret Buckle:**

That was one he fished in and ....and he got...it went beyond repairs for fishing. It wasn't something that he could fish in anymore so ah... we asked him about it and ah... he was glad to donate it to the museum, which is good.

We got some old anchors that people donated, and ah....there's a few fishing supplies there, a few blocks and things that people use to use for pulling up their nets on in later years.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Now, do you charge a small fee for people to visit the museum?

**Margaret Buckle:**

Yes, and that was..... it's a good thing that we did charge a fee that was the thing that helped us keep in operation. Those fees, were a part of a.... a part of our income because without some income, you wouldn't be able to keep in operation. So the crafts helped and the admission fees was ah...was a good help, too.

I think right now, it's somewhere \$4.00 for an adult or \$5.00 but we use to only charge a \$1.50 first when we started. A \$1.50 for adults and \$0.75 for children and then we went up to \$2.00 I think. Went to \$2.00 and then a \$1.00 for children but right now it's up to \$5.00 for adults and probably \$3.00 for children. I'm not quick sure on that, but we do charge a fee.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Well I guess wherever you go, you pay a fee to go in a museum.

**Margaret Buckle:**

Everywhere.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Yeah.

**Margaret Buckle:**

Now, there's some museums that's ah operated....government operated but ah...I would say they charge a fee as well, but our museum is just ..... is just a voluntarily organization so it's hard to keep on the go.

**Ann O'Brien:**

You don't get any donations from anyone.....

**Margaret Buckle:**

We get a heritage grant every year. Well not every year, but most years. And that could range anywhere from ....we've got as low as \$400 and I think, we got as high as probably a \$1000 or \$1200. So that's .... that's a great help to ah ... with the wages of our employee and to help offset the cost of operation, like the light and phone bill.

**Ann O'Brien:**

Ah.... well that about covers everything on the museum and the craft shop Margaret and I want to thank you very much for sharing that story with me.

**Margaret Buckle:**  
Your very welcome.