

# Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and updates on  
Newfoundland and Labrador's  
Intangible Cultural  
Heritage Program



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## Intro to Interviewing Techniques

On February 12th, the Intangible Cultural Heritage program of the Heritage Foundation of NL will be offering a beginner's workshop for researchers doing folklore and oral history interviews. The session will cover selecting informants, doing a pre-interview, applying the best interviewing techniques, tips for recorded interviews, and suggestions on processing the interview data for preservation and dissemination.

The workshop will be run by Dr. Philip Hiscock of Memorial's Folklore Dept. Hiscock specializes in the folklore of Newfoundland and Labrador with active interests generally in language, folksong, the relationship between folklore and popular culture, and the evolution of custom.

Hiscock was editor of *Foafale News*, the newsletter of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research. For two decades he was Archivist of the MUN Folklore and Language Archive and retains an active interest in field research, archival organization, and conservation. In 2006-07 he was President-Elect of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada (L'Association canadienne e'ethnologie et de folklore).

Dr. Jillian Gould also teaches in the Department of Folklore, and argues that interviewing is the heart of any folklore or oral history project. "It is how we learn first-hand about people's experiences, thoughts, and beliefs," says Gould. "While we all have had in-depth conversations with friends, family, and community members, interviewing requires different skills – since you will be documenting with purpose."

"These skills not only will pave the way for smooth and substantial interviews, which will become important community documents, but also, should make the interview experience an enjoyable one for both the interviewer and the interviewee," she says.

Dr. Hiscock's workshop will take place Friday, February 12th, 2010, from 1pm - 4:30 pm. It will be held at The Lantern, on Barnes Road in St. John's. Participants are asked to bring notebook and writing tools. Call Dale Jarvis at 1-888-739-1892 ext 2 to register, or email [ich@heritagefoundation.ca](mailto:ich@heritagefoundation.ca). Tuition is \$25.



## Top 6 Websites With Sample Oral History Interview Questions

*By Dale Jarvis*

In preparing for some intangible cultural heritage interviews, I went looking up some sample questions for basic oral history and folklore interviews. From what I found online, these are my top picks for people who might be looking for similar resources.

### **1. The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide**

<http://tinyurl.com/SmithsonianQuestions>

An excellent resource for anyone planning a folklore or oral history project, complete with sample questions.

### **2. Fifty Questions for Family History Interviews**

<http://tinyurl.com/fiftyfamilyquestions>

Subtitled "What to Ask the Relative" this is a good starting list for anyone doing research on family stories, genealogy, or family traditions.

### **3. Oral History Questions**

<http://tinyurl.com/oralhistoryquestions>

Also a good list for people doing family oral histories, this collection of questions was compiled specifically for youth researchers.

### **4. Sample Interview Questions For Veterans**

<http://tinyurl.com/vetsquestions>

Prepared by the Library of Congress for its Veterans History Project, this is a good list of questions for people doing interviews with members and former members of the armed forces during World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars.

### **5. Tell Me Your Stories**

<http://tinyurl.com/tellmeyourstories>

Another great resource for student and youth researchers, it includes a list of sample questions in Word format, which you can download at <http://tinyurl.com/tellmeyourstoriesdoc>

### **6. Draft Oral History Interview Questions for Fairfax County Asian American Historical Project**

<http://tinyurl.com/draftoralhistory>

A list of questions for collecting stories from Asian Americans, which could be adapted to reflect other ethnic groups in different areas.

## The Rooms Brews Up Coffee and Culture... and Love!

Looking for an interesting way to spend your Thursday afternoons? The Rooms invites you to drop in to their new adult program Coffee & Culture every Thursday from 2:30 to 3:30 pm and meet new people while exploring art and culture. Included in the price of admission to The Rooms, the series will feature talks and tours, films and workshops and even provide complimentary coffee or tea at The Rooms Café.

On Thursday, February 11, 2:30 - 3:30 pm, Coffee & Culture features "Celtic Tales of Love" visiting British Columbia-based storyteller Mary Gavan as she weaves traditional tales of love and discusses their Celtic significance.

Gavan comes from a family who wintered in Scotland and summered in Ireland. She grew up tramping to and fro, enjoying the songs and stories of her grandparents and country folk. Enamoured by the traditional legends, Mary told at festivals, established and emerging. The proximity of Europe enabled her to tell from Norway to France.

Stories were also an integral part of her work as a nurse, especially in her specialty of palliative care with families in the community.

She became a story catcher of her experiences as a midwife to the dying.

Coming to Canada, Mary realized the need to open up the traditional legends in order to explain their Celtic significance. Rewriting parts of the story soon led to writing her own stories, weaving together strands of ordinary life experienced with understandings of Celtic knowledge learnt.

Nationally, Mary is the 2008 – 2009 president of Storytellers of Canada-Conteurs du Canada, and a past editor of the guild's newsletter. She continues as the treasurer, publicist and performer for the Vancouver Storytellers. Nonetheless, she finds time to tell across the country and especially within her province of BC with occasional storytelling journeys back to Europe and her Celtic Countries.

## Future Sessions:

### Thursday, February 18, 2:30 - 3:30pm

Coffee & Culture: Out of the Vaults Curator Tour  
Level 4 Museum Gallery

Take a stroll with The Rooms History Curator, Maureen Power, as she explains what has come out of the vaults.

### Thursday, February 25, 2:30 - 3:30 pm

Coffee & Culture: Behind the Scenes at the Archives  
Meet at the Archives Reference Room, Level 3

Come along with The Rooms's Melanie Tucker, Supervisor of Client Services at The Rooms Provincial Archives, she'll start you on your tour through our province's proud archival history.



## Gander and Marystown Folklore and Oral History Workshops

In the first week of March, the ICH program will be offering two more workshops in its ongoing project planning workshop series.

Entitled "How to Plan an Oral History or Folklore Project," the workshop will take participants through the process of planning a project, from establishing goals, doing preliminary research, addressing issues around ethics and consent, choosing personnel, documentation methods, processing collected materials, equipment, and budgets.

This workshop will be beneficial to people who are contemplating folklore and oral history projects of all sorts, ranging from short-term projects involving a single researcher to complex, long-term projects involving many researchers.

Instructor for the workshop is folklorist Dr. Anna Kearney Guigné. Guigné holds a Ph.D in folklore from Memorial University of Newfoundland where she is currently an adjunct professor for the M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in Ethnomusicology, at Memorial's School of Music. From 2006 to 2008 she was the initiator and Artistic Director for the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCO), which crossed over to St. John's, August 2008.

Guigné currently works as an independent folklorist and conducts research in the areas of community history, biography, contemporary legend, ship building, heritage gardens, traditional folksong and family genealogy.

Through her community work with such organizations as the Museum Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (1980-81), the Grace General Hospital (1982-1988), and the Seniors Resource Centre Association (1989-1991), she has considerable hands-on experience in such areas as fund-raising, project planning, and volunteer organization. Since 2000, she has owned and operated Kearney's Watch Repair, a small family business located in the Avalon Mall, St. Johns.



Tuition for each workshop is \$25.

### **Gander Workshop**

**Date: Monday, March 1st, 1pm – 4pm.**

**Location: Salon "A", Hotel Gander, Gander.**

### **Marystown Workshop**

**Date: Wednesday, March 3rd, 1pm – 4pm.**

**Location: Salon "C", Marystown Hotel, Marystown.**

To register, call Dale Jarvis at 1-888-739-1892 ext 2, or email [ich@heritagefoundation.ca](mailto:ich@heritagefoundation.ca)

For a full list of folklore and oral history workshops, visit our webpage at: <http://www.mun.ca/ich/classes/>



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