

Trip 3 – Episode #17: St. John's aka "Town"

It had been a long time since we'd been in a big city. But we just followed the signs, and there it was. As was explained to us in The Rooms, Newfoundlanders don't call it St. John's, they just refer to it as Town.



From a distance it looks like a normal large city.



But up close it's a totally different thing. The combination of the architecture, the bright colours and the steep hills makes St. John's a truly unique experience.



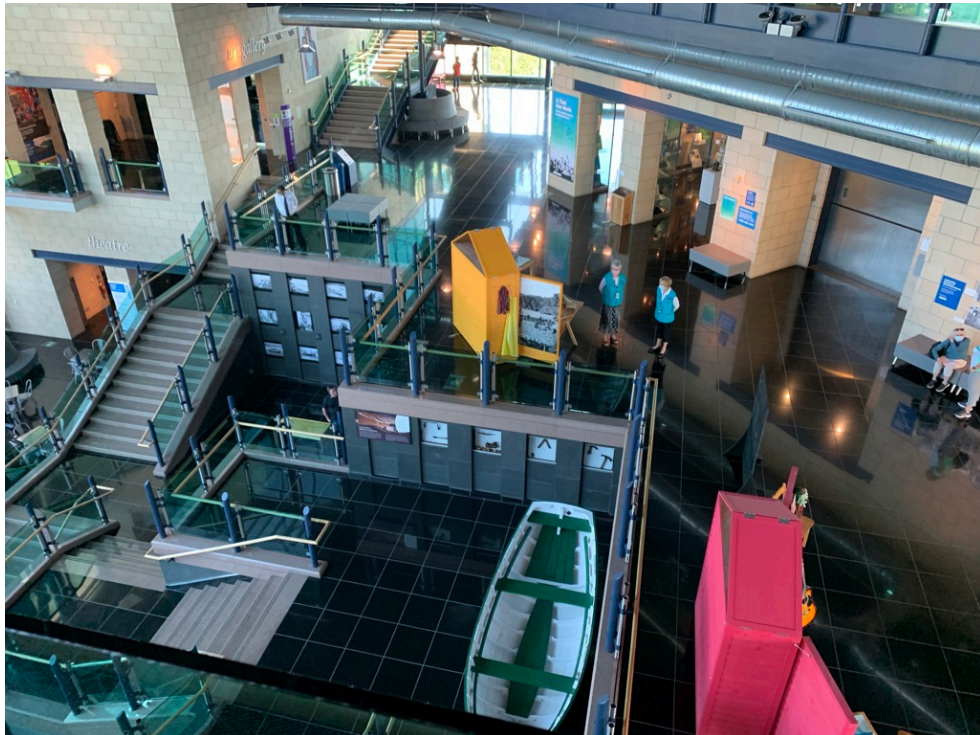




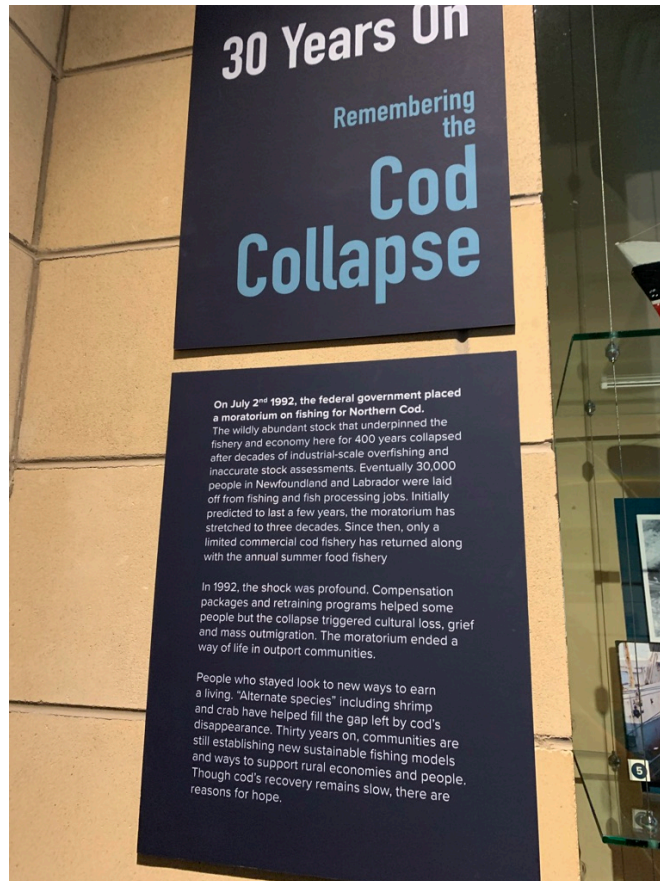
But there are other things that make it unique. Like The Rooms, the fabulous museum perched over the city. The huge buildings are designed to represent the traditional fishing rooms, where families came together to process their catch.



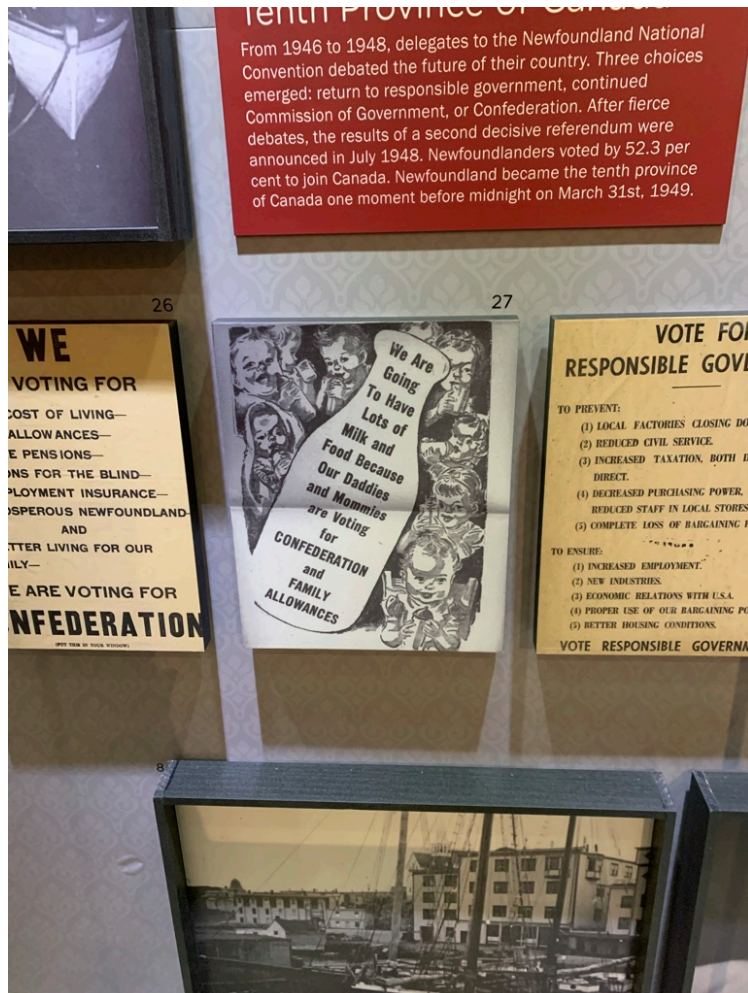
What a great museum! Along with covering the fishing industry, it also explores the archeology, ethnology, flora and fauna of the region, and presents art and culture from the area in a magnificently laid out space.



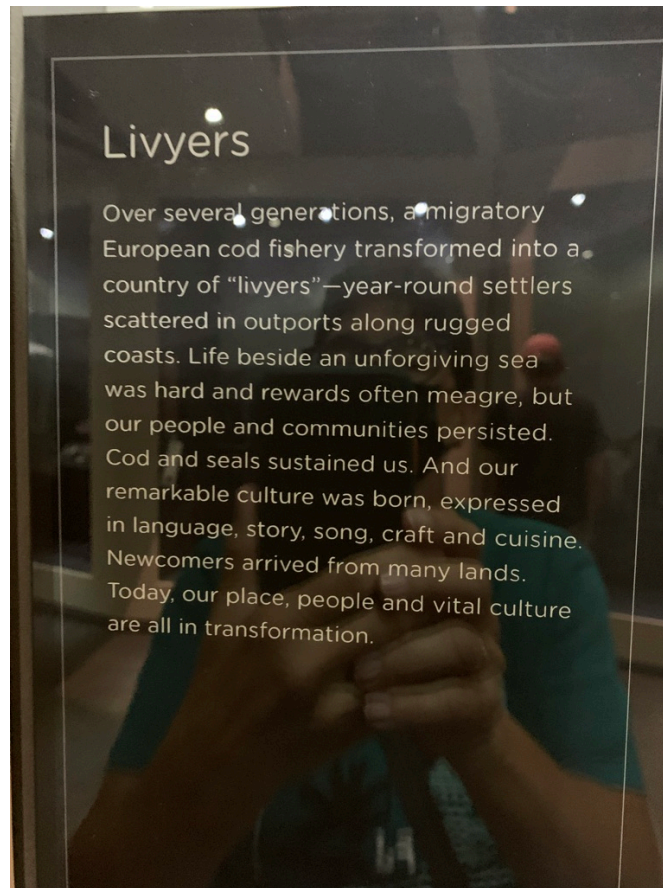
There were reminders of many significant moments in Newfoundland's history. Like the cod collapse.



And Joey Smallwood's campaign to convince Newfoundlanders to join Canada.



We got an education on some interesting words and issues.



Would love to have heard this band!



Lots of great pieces of art.



These two pieces by Monkman were especially interesting.



KENT MONKMAN b. 1965

EXPELLING THE VICES
2014

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of Rob and Monique Sobey

Monkman uses the compositions and techniques of traditional European painting to confront the legacy of colonialism in North America. This riotous scene recalls Andrea Mantegna's *Minerva Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue* from 1502, but here the Goddess of Wisdom is replaced by Monkman's alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle. *Expelling the Vices* takes its place in this gallery among the historic genre paintings by Cornelius Krieghoff, several of which explore similar moralizing themes.



KENT MONKMAN b. 1965

**STUDY FOR "MISTIKÔSIWAK
(WOODEN BOAT PEOPLE):
WELCOMING THE NEWCOMERS"
(FINAL VARIATION)
2019**

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of the Sobey Art Foundation

This work and the large painting facing it are studies for a 2019 commission for the Great Hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Borrowing from the legacies of artists whose works are held in the museum—among them Emanuel Leutze and Eugène Delacroix—Monkman paints the crisis of migration and colonization, with Indigenous people receiving newcomers with mixed emotions.

Several moving pieces of art by the famous and recently departed David Blackwood.



David Blackwood

culture: Spirit Departing, Once Told Tale date: 1968
materials: Intaglio, Ed. Artist's Proof
place: The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery,
Memorial University of Newfoundland Collection

The Riskiest Business

Sealing ships travelled deep into the fields of shifting ice off of Newfoundland and Labrador. This alone made sealing the most dangerous of fisheries—ships were always at risk of being trapped or crushed in ice when storm winds blew.

Once seals were spotted, the work began. The sealers' tasks were relentlessly dangerous. They often walked miles from their ship to reach the herds, spending up to 12 hours on the shifting ice wearing light clothing and with little food.

If a blizzard blew in, it was a life-and-death challenge to find the ship again. Its tolling bell and regular gunshots were the only guides through fierce wind and snow. Storms caused many sealing disasters, claiming hundreds of lives.



HOME FROM BRAGG'S ISLAND

2009

Oil tempera on canvas

The Rooms

Donated by BMO Financial Group to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of joining Confederation

This work reflects David Blackwood's various ideas of home. During the government's 1960s-era resettlement program, Blackwood's family was relocated from Bragg's Island to nearby Wesleyville, a center for the cod fishery and seal hunt. In a nod to the poet Milton, Blackwood has described Wesleyville as his "Paradise Lost," Bragg's Island as "Paradise Regained" and the destruction of built heritage as "Inferno."

The artifacts displayed are the source material used by Blackwood as he created this painting and the other artworks in this room.

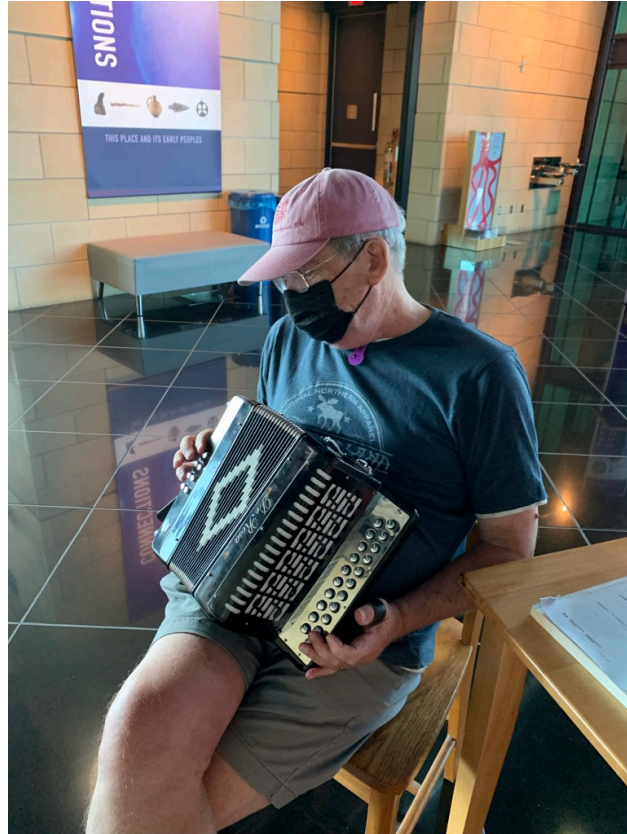
The whole space was beautifully laid out, with regular opportunities to look out over the city.



As well as opportunities to touch and play.



He looks like he
knows what
he's doing,
doesn't he?



And who could forget the Giant Squid? (I keep trying.)



After a great visit at The Rooms, we decided to go visit the Terry Fox Memorial, where Terry dipped his toe in the Atlantic before starting his cross-country run. Having just recently seen the memorial near Timmins, where he was forced to end his Marathon of Hope, it was especially moving.





We still had a few memorable moments ahead of us. One was totally unplanned. We suddenly found ourselves in a huge traffic jam, and discovered there was a parade through town. They were celebrating Alex Newhook, who had played on the Stanley Cup winning Colorado Avalanche team. Earlier in our adventures, we had missed the opportunity to see the Stanley Cup in Roberval Quebec, so this made our trip more complete.





Of course, no visit to “Town” would be complete without some lively music. And thanks to our friend George, we got to listen to a great little group in a tiny pub. Where else would you have the chance to listen to a group that consists of a guitar, a mandolin, two fiddles and three accordions?



Our Town visit was short, but it was full. Time to move on!

