

**Northern Lights Academy
Rigolet
presents**

“Who Has It?”

Cast

Narrator 4/Miss Wilkenson/ CBC Secretary.....	Stephanie Nochasak
Mrs. Rich/Mike Powers.....	Kristy Sheppard
Ben/Gus Flowers/Seymore.....	Ben Faulkner
Narrator 3/Harriet.....	Holly Flowers
Narrator 2/ NLTA Secretary.....	Edith Sheppard
Marilyn/Millicent Loder (Child & Adult).....	Marilyn Faulkner
Yvonne/ St. John’s Archives lady.....	Crystle Michelin
Gen/ Eva.....	Genevieve Hayward
Narrator 1/Calendar/Sun/Moon.....	Candice Elson

Teacher Advisors

Marie Rich
Gail Thoms

The first school on Rigolet opened in 1924. We set out to find out about the history of schooling in Rigolet. The following play is the result. We have chosen to present this play in Readers’ Theatre format.

We wish to acknowledge Millicent Blake Loder for permission to use an excerpt from her autobiography Daughter of Labrador; Gus Flowers; George Blake, and Henry Gordon’s Labrador Public School: Journal July 1 to September 1924.

“Who Has It?”

Scene 1

Voice over;

Henry Gordon: Summer 1924. We arrived at Rigolet on Friday, July 26th, and had only just dropped anchor, when a steamer’s smoke was sighted out in the bay...we recognized the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Northern Ship, the Bay Eskimo. On board her was Mr. Ralph Parsons..... Superintendent of all the northeastern posts of the Hudson’s Bay Company. It was due to his good offices that we were able to put up the small school at Rigolet. I was able to visit our little Day-School which is being built at Rigolet and found it going splendidly. The building was boarded and roofed and the brick chimney half way up. This is a new venture which I hope will be a great benefit to the people in this district. I was glad to see that this was now nearing completion and would be quite ready for Ethel’s use in the early fall.

(Enter. Hats, coats, music)

Scene 2

(Flip chart. Sept. 1999)

Narrator 4: The first school, in Rigolet, opened in 1924. We wanted to write a serious play to celebrate this 75th anniversary, but as you know, life gets in the way.

Anyhoo.....

We began our quest for those illuminating facts the second week of school. However, we were soon to discover that many walls in finding information about what happened 75 years ago.

Mrs. Rich: Okay everyone, sit down, no more social chatting, it’s time to get on topic. We only have eight more weeks until the Creative Arts Festival, so we gotta get this done. Gen, you call all the archives, department of education and so on in St. John’s and try to find out about....well anything. Marilyn, you call rev. Buckle to see if he has any information about the first school. And.....Ben, did you call the NLTA yet?

Ben: Welllll....I did...two weeks ago when you asked me, but, ummm..every time I call it’s, ummm....busy. *(Say busy slow and sly)* .yah. That’s it.

(Brick is brought out)

Scene 3

Narrator 2: Let's tune in two weeks later to see how far our researchers have gotten in their quest for knowledge.

Mrs. Rich: Marilyn, what did Rev. Buckle say?

Marilyn: Same thing he said for the last two weeks and twenty-four calls.....he'll call me back. I'm startin' to think he ain't calling me back. Doesn't it say in the Bible something about seek and ye shall find, knock and the door shall be opened. I guess Jesus forgot about telephones.

(Brick is brought out)

Narrator 3: So off went Gen to seek knowledge from our provincial government.

St. John': Hello, Newfoundland Archives. How may I help you?

Gen: Hello, my name is Genevieve Hayward and I'm doing research on the first school in Rigolet, down here in Labrador. I was wondering if you would be able to help me find anything on the first teachers and students or anything at all or tell me where I can look for information?

St. John's: *(Snotty)* No, sorry deary, I can't give out any information like that.

Gen: What do you mean you can't give out any information?

St. John's: Well, we can't just take the papers and send them down like that, it's just not possible.

Gen: Well, I know you can't just send them down, but can you maybe photocopy them off or if that isn't possible, take a digital picture of it and send that down to me?

St. John's: No, we don't do that deary. For one thing we don't have a digital camera and for another thing this isn't like your little high school library. You can't just go in and take something out and return it the next day.

Gen: Well...how is anybody supposed to get anything when you can't give it out?

St. John's: You have to come in and get it yourself.

Gen: Well, I live in Rigolet....

St. John's: *(Bored)* I know!

Gen: Well, I can't get there. Isn't there anything you can do?

St. John's: Well, there is a way for outsiders to get information. First you have to write a detailed letter stating who you are, what you want, and why you want it. That will take about 4 or 5 months to process. Then 2 to 3 months for us to get started - you're not the first person in line you know..then it will take 6 or 7 months for us to find what you are looking for and maybe get back to you.

Gen: Well, I need it in six weeks. Thanks anyway. *(hangs up)* God, sitting down all day in a dusty archives really does make her pleasantly challenged!

(Brick brought out)

Scene 4

Narrator 2: The next morning, ben was getting a bit nervous, maybe Mrs. Rich would catch on to his slow pace. So he snuck into the staff room intending to call the NLTA. *(Ben takes book out of bag)* he picked up St. John's telephone book and Labrador phone book and said:

Ben: Gee, this book is a lot bigger than ours. That could be anywhere. Well, better not chance wasting all our valuable theatre arts class time.....

Narrator 2: So he closed his eyes, opened the St. John's phone book and pointed with his finger, he looked at the number and said:

Ben: Nope, not it. Oh well, maybe I get it tomorrow.

(Brick brought out)

Scene 5

(Flip chart. October 1999)

Narrator 3: A month later, back at room 8..students in the theatre arts class, who are organizing an arts festival in Rigolet, to celebrate the anniversary, try to help out by making some phone calls.

Mrs. Rich: Gen, did you hear from Julie Green yet?

Gen: I sent a fax two weeks ago, asking that CBC carry a story about us wanting information on early schooling in Rigolet. But, miss..... I don't have time to call again. I got too much to do.

Mrs. Rich: Yvonne, can you call Julie Green to see if she got our fax, and if CBC can help?

Narrator: Yvonne, eager to have a turn on the phone rushes off to the office to phone Julie Green.

CBC: Hello, CBC Radio.

Yvonne: Hi, is Julie Green there please?

CBC: No, she's busy at the moment. Can I take a message?

Yvonne: Yes, that would be great. This is Yvonne Michelin from Northern Lights Academy in Rigolet, and I was wondering if she had gotten our fax about the 75th anniversary?

CBC: Well I'm not sure about that...she'll call you back in about 5 minutes.

Yvonne: Okay, thank you.

Narrator 2: Yvonne sauntered back to class, hoping that call would be returned soon. But time passed.

(Sun goes down and moon comes up and hours go by)

Narrator: Days later a frantic Mrs. Rich asks....

Mrs. Rich: Yvonne, what did Julie Green say?

Yvonne: *(Tired)* She just never called back.

(Brick is brought out)

Scene 6

Narrator 3: A week later, Ben finally gets down to the business of gathering information.

Ben: Mrs. Rich, can I call the NLTA now?

Mrs. Rich: Yes you can.

(Ben pretends to dial the phone)

Secretary: NLTA, how may I help you?

Ben: Yes, I'm looking for Mr. Butts, first name See more.

Secretary: Please hold. *(Music plays)* hello Mr. Seemore Butts is not here right now. He is out to lunch with Mr. Al Cholic. Have a good day.

Ben: *(Laughing)* Wholly God! They're not so stund as they sounds.

Narrator 1: Laughing to himself, Ben struts back to the classroom, thinking that he pretty much had the seal skins pulled over Mrs. Rich's eyes. But it all seems just a little too easy. When he got back to the room, Mrs. Rich was waiting for him with her hands on her hips.

Mrs. Rich: So....how's your research going Ben?

Ben: *(Slyly)* Okay, that uncle man I called...won't call me back.

Mrs. Rich: Really? Well Mrs. Pottle just gave me a fax she's had for three days now....

Ben: And, this affects me how?

Mrs. Rich: Well, the "Uncle Man" you've been calling said that he got your message on Monday...

Ben: Yeah....He seemed very busy.

Mrs. Rich: Very busy indeed. Today is Thursday, he's sorry he couldn't get back to you earlier. He couldn't find a Ben Faulkmer.

Ben: I guess So I'm Ben Faulkner, not Ben Faulkmer.

Mrs. Rich: get to work, be here for extra, extra work, after school.

Ben: Fine, fine, fine tell a white lie, get fried like a fly.

Narrator 1: And off went Ben trying desperately to look busy. In came Yvonne frustrated with her lack of success.

Yvonne: Mrs. Rich, I've been up since 8:00 this morning trying to get hold of Julie Green.

Mrs. Rich: Yvonne, what time is it now?

Yvonne: ..it's 8:35. Why?

Mrs. Rich: Yvonne, when did you call her?

Yvonne: About 5 minutes before I left. Why?

Mrs. Rich: How many times did you try to get through?

Yvonne: *(Counting on fingers on both hands)*about....let's say....ahhh..once.

Mrs. Rich: Please go call her again. We need information.

Yvonne: Okay Miss, but it's not my fault CBC is too cheap to buy an extra phone.

(2 bricks brought out)

Scene 7

Narrator 4: Gen, who would put Sherlock Holmes to shame decides to seek information in Mr. Budgell's 1924 journal by calling the Hudson's Bay Company's head office in Manitoba.

Lady: Good afternoon, Hudson Bay Company.

Gen: Hello, is this the Hudson Bay Company archives?

Lady: No, the Hudson Bay Company archives was given to the government of Manitoba.

Gen: May I have the phone number to the Hudson Bay Company archive in Manitoba?

Lady: May I ask why?

Gen: Well, you see, myself and a few other students are doing a play on Rigolet's 75th anniversary of schooling.

Lady: Rigolet who? I've never heard of this before. Are you making this up?

Gen: *(Becoming agitated)* No, RIGOLET, LABRADOR. I am not making anything up, now will you please give me the number to get information on Hudson Bay Company in Labrador!

Lady: Well, I'd like to help you, but I know nothing of Rigolet, Labrador or the Hudson Bay Company in Labrador. I'm from Canada.

Gen: And they say we live in a modern society! Mrs. Rich, another person who failed Canadian Geography. Not to mention Canadian History.

(Another brick is brought in.)

Scene 8

Narrator 3: Ops. Did I say Sherlock Holmes? I meant Inspector Gadget. Or was it Brain? Anyhoo, back to Yvonne, after two days of waiting patiently, well actually Yvonne really forgot about the call, Mike Powers returns the call, that supposedly Julie Green was to make, or maybe that was his alias, because one never knows how a person looks when he or she is alone in the dark booth of a radio station.

Mike P: Hello... Yvonne, this is Mike Powers calling from CBC. We got your press release and is it alright if I ask you a few questions?

Yvonne: Yup.

Mike P.: Can you tell me about the first school? The first students?

Yvonne: I'll find out. *(Nervous)* Why did I say that? How stupid am I - that's what we want to know too.

Mike P.: I'll call you back at 3:00.

(Clock comes out and ticks the time off to 3:00)

Mike P.: Hello Yvonne, this is Mike Powers again.

Yvonne: Oh yeah. I forgot he was going to call.

Mike P.: Would I be able to ask you some questions now?

Yvonne: I forgot to get the information you were calling to ask for.

Mike P.: Okay then, I'll just ask you a few questions about the Arts Festival. So, Yvonne, this sounds like a big event. Who's in charge?

Yvonne: The theatre arts class is trying to put something together because it's the 75th anniversary of the opening of the first school in Rigolet. So we wanted to do

something to mark this momentous occasion.

Mike P.: Oh yeah. What do you know about the first school? Do you know what it looked like?

Yvonne: It was kind of small, so parts were built on to it.

Mike P.: Oh, so is it still standing?

Yvonne: Well, it was still standing. But it was torn down this summer.

Mike P.,: Oh, but I understand that wasn't the first school built?

Yvonne: Oh yeah, the building that the Department of Fisheries uses for its office was the first school building. I heard DFO office was the first school. How stupid I was! How embarrassing!

Mike P.: Okay, so I understand that you are trying to get your community involved. How are you doing that?

Yvonne: Well, we want them to come out and watch our plays and skits and to take part by doing plays and skits themselves. We want everyone to come out and enjoy it.

Mike P.: *(Bored)* Okay..... *(Shakes his head)* So I understand that you want to get the message out to people who might be listening - what do you want to say?

Yvonne: Well, if anyone has any information about the first school, teachers, pictures or any information at all about the old school in Rigolet, please call Ben Faulkner, Genevieve Hayward or Mrs. Rich. Finally over. How shameful! I'm so happy that's over. I hope nobody heard me!

Narrator 1: Days later Gen rushes in to tell Yvonne about the call she got from her grandmother.

Gen: Yvonne, guess what? My grandmother called this weekend. She heard my name on the radio and you were talking about the anniversary.

Yvonne: Eh, how shameful!!

(Brick brought out.)

Scene 9

Narrator 2: One evening a week later, a very frustrated group sat around room 8. Everyone had glum faces, well everyone that is, except Ben. They felt they were getting nowhere,.Period.

Mrs. Rich: Please, please, please I beg you, did anyone find anything this time?

Ben: Nooooo.....

Gen: Nope.

Marilyn: Not yet.

Mrs. Rich: Well then, if you can't get any facts, the only thing left to do is make it up yourselves.

Gen: What do you mean... make it up ourselves?

Mrs. Rich: take all the interviews you've done, the monologues from Henry Gordon and Millicent Blake Loder and your imagination, Piece it all together and see what comes out.

Scene 10

Narrator 1: All our labour was not in vain . There was a spark of information gathered from two former students of the first school.

Millicent: I started school when I was about eight in a small one-room school at Rigolet, where each year a young teacher came from Newfoundland, supplied by the Church of England. At one end of the building there was a kitchen and a bedroom, built especially for the teacher.

Gus: There was a door for the teacher so she could go from her apartment to go to the school. There was a out house for the bathroom. The teacher would sometimes cook and teach at the same time because her stove was in the school. We started school around the same time as they do now, a day or two after labour day.

Millicent: The first year I went to school for only the summer months, but the next year the school was completed and classes were held all winter at the usual time. I can recall learning to make letters and figures. We wrote on a slate with a slate pencil that scratched and set your teeth on edge.

Gus: The smaller grades would use slates and slate pencils. It was made out of slate rock. Grade two an dup used scribblers and pencils. We would use ink pens for

tests. Some children would spill ink on themselves without trying it. It would be all over the place, on the books and on the floor.

Millicent: Older boys were responsible for lighting the wood stove each day before school started, and for keeping it going all day. Wood and water for the school were provided by the village people.

Others: “Village People”. She said “Village People.” (*Dance to “YMCA”*)

Gus: In 1927, the year I started school, there were three large families here at the Hudson Bay Post before my family came: The Budgell’s, William Shiwak’s family and John Blake’s family. There were about twenty students who first started school here. We would print only in grade one or two. After that we would learn to write. Since we were under the British rule, we had to learn to read the Royal Readers. They went up to grade seven. All exams were done at the end of the year and had to be sent to St. John’s, Newfoundland.

Millicent: Eva and I became competitors in school. At the end of the first year, I was heart broken when Eva beat me by a few marks for first place in our grade. At home I threw my skipping rope (Second prize) out the door and lying on the grass, I sobbed my heart out. When I was done crying, Ma told me how proud she was of the marks I brought home.

(2 bricks taken away)

Scene 11

(Flip chart September 1924)

Narrator 1: Although we found out some information, there was not enough for us to reenact the first day. So here begins our version of the way it wasn’t. (*Pause*) Eva and Seymore are on the dock, trying to catch rod cod. But all they are getting are fly bites.

Eva: It’s our first day of school tomorrow Seymore!

Seymore: Yah, don’t remind me.

Eva: You’re not excited? We’re gonna learn how to read and write and spell our names and even count. We’ll be the smartest 8 year olds in Rigolet.

Seymore: No way, huntin’s the life for me.

Eva: When did you ever go huntin'?

Seymore: (*proud*) I caught a snowbird with my snowshoe, last spring.

Eva: Well when we go to school we'll be able to learn about animals all over the world. It'll be great!

Seymore: Great! You're crazy. It's not gonna be great when you get in trouble. You'll be wishing you were home in bed Eva.

Eva: Why?

Seymore: Why? My big brother say.... that when he went to school in North West River, that if you even breathed too loud, the teacher would hit you with the ruler until your eyes bugged out; put you in a dungeon under the school....and feed you to the dragon. They call this de-ten-tions.

Eva: (*Scared*) Forever?

Seymore: Naa...just till 4:30. But if you're bad, they'll keep sending you back.

Eva: (*Querulously*) Well, I don't know. Mommy said that new teacher, Miss Wilkenson, is real nice and that we're all gonna like her.

Seymore: That's what they want you to think. They use their (*soft*) nice, soft, sweet voices (*spooky*) like the ghost of Mother Bucksaw.

Eva: Like Mother Bucksaw!!!

Narrator 1: Mother Bucksaw is Rigolet's version of the bogey man. Legend has it she lures the kids towards her so she can cut off their hair and smoke it.

Seymore: Yah-boo!!!

Eva: AHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Narrator 1: A terrified Eva runs to Millicent and Harriet, who try to calm her fears.

Harriet: Hey, what's the matter?

Eva: Seymore said that the teacher's Mother Bucksaw..that she's gonna smoke our hair!

Millicent: Oh Eva. Don't believe Seymore. He's just trying to get you going. Besides, everyone knows Mother Bucksaw has been dead for years!

Narrator 1: Seymore quite proud of the mischief he caused, decides he'd better take off.

Seymore: I'm not going to stick around to find out. I'm getting out of this town. No school is going to hold me back.

Harriet: Eva, if you're that scared, Millicent and I will pick you up for school tomorrow.

Eva: *(Scared)* Okay.....

Scene 12

Narrator 2: The next morning as eager children rush in Miss Wilkenson is writing her name on the blackboard. Eva and Millicent anxious to learn, sit at the front.

Ethel: Good Morning. My name is Ethel Wilkenson and I will be your teacher for the year. You will learn reading, writing, arithmetic and religion. I hope you will all have a good year. Now, let's get down to work. The first thing we'll learn is the ABC's. Please copy down.

Millicent: *(Whispering)* Eva, where's Seymore?

Eva: *(Whispering)* I don't know. He said he wasn't coming, but I thought he was bluffing.

Harriet: *(Whimpering)* There he goes!

Millicent: Oh well, he'll be sorry when we're playing games and learning nice things and he's off living off his snowbirds. I know he'll never be able to read or write as good as I will.

Eva: What do you mean "you will"? I'm going to be getting the highest marks in this class.

Millicent: We'll see about that!

Narrator 1: That first day continued with Miss Wilkenson listening to the children reading so she could determine in which grade to place each pupil. All were given a Bible verse to learn for homework. Then she dismissed them for the day.

Ethel: You may pack up your books. Class is dismissed for the day. See you tomorrow, bright and early. Oh class....there are some chores that need to be done. You older boys will be responsible for bringing in the firewood.

Students: Good-bye Miss.

Narrator 3: The students pile out to find Seymore waiting for them.

Seymore: Who got sent to the dungeon today? Hey! Hey!

Millicent: No one. You're all lies, Seymore.

Eva: Yeah, she's not Mother Bucksaw. She tells us how to brush our hair and keep the kumucks out, not smoke it.

Seymore: So what's school like? What can you do? So are you the smartest eight year olds in Rigolet yet?

Eva: Of course I am. So how many snowbirds did you catch Seymore? How far did you go?

Narrator 3: Eva and Millicent giggle because there are very few snowbirds in September.

Seymore: I went to Sunday Hill and I didn't see any snowbirds. Dem tricky birds, they blends in with dem clouds. I'll get dem some day, eh boy.

Mill: Yeah, when snow comes at the end of October.

Eva: So, did you see any harn owls?

Seymore: Harn owls? What are they talking about - harn owls?

Mill/Eva: The harn owls are going to get Seymore! The harn owls are going to get Seymore!

Narrator 3: Parents warned children about harn owls or horned owls to keep small children from going outside the town. Meanwhile, Millicent and Eva leave and Seymore reveals where he has hidden all day...

Seymore: Harn owls will never get me. I hid out in the net loft all day with the mice. I got me four mice instead of those damn snowbirds.

Narrator: And so ends our make believe version, of the real first day. They years go by. The buildings change. Teachers come and go. Students grow up, have children of their

own. Many of the great-grandchildren of the first students, of the first class, now attend Northern Lights Academy. But some things never change. Students will tease other students about ghosts, Mother Bucksaw and detentions. But when all is said and done, we have learned how important it is to keep a record of events, because if no one does you find that you will come up against many walls.

(Music. Pack up. Hat and coats)