

**Eric G. Lambert School
Churchill Falls
presents**

“Who Were We”

Cast

Elizabeth Noonan..... Hiker/Townperson
Jessica Holmes..... Hiker/Townsperson
Krista Collins, Laura Bonnell
Samantha Kent, Heidi Kent..... Women of the community
Alyssa Lake..... Chairman
Shane Collins..... Government Official
Alexis Loder..... Child

Teacher Advisor

Rosemary Vigeant

The face of Newfoundland was changed forever when the government of Joseph R. Smallwood decided on a plan to move entire communities and resettle them to larger centres. While some viewed this program of “Centralization” as a step forward, many were reluctant to give up the only life they had ever known. Our history is filled with stories of the forced/encouraged resettlement of the 1950's and 1960's. Many songs have been written that tell of these times and the good ol' days. Our hertiage is rich in music, culture and traditions, but life was never the same after resettlement. With the old ways gone, will future generations be forced to wonder - Who Were We?

Scene 1

Begins with two hikers making their way around an Newfoundland island, they discovered while kayaking

- Jackie:** Wow, look at this view!
- Lisa:** Yeah, it's amazing. Look at how clear the water is. It's beautiful! If we hadn't gone on this kayak trip we wouldn't have seen all this.
- Jackie:** Alright, Alright. I'm glad I agreed to come. You were right. *(Walking across the stage.)* But I get the feeling that someone else is here.
- Lisa:** What do you mean? There's only two of us here.
- Jackie:** I don't know. I feel like we're not alone.
- Lisa:** I'm pretty sure we're the only ones here.
- Jackie:** You're probably right. *(Jackie trips and falls.)* Ouf.
- Lisa:** Are you okay?
- Jackie:** Yeah I'm fine. What was that?
- Lisa:** I think it's a headstone.
- Jackie:** What's that doing here?
- Lisa:** I don't know, but there's parts of a cross here.
- Jackie:** There's only a name here. Margaret Harris.
- Lisa:** There's a couple here, Valentine and Martha Greenham.
- Jackie:** Here's Emily Healy, May 1st, 1913 - May 2nd 1913. She was only one day old!
- Lisa:** Here's a Katie Pritchett, another young one.
- Jackie:** There's a few here with the same last name. There's a Betty Ryan, an Emma Ryan, a David Ryan, and a Thomas Ryan.
- Lisa:** Why would a family be buried here? There's no town around or anything.
- Jackie:** I don't know. Let's look around. Maybe we can find something else.

**Scenes 2 through 6 are written using typical Newfoundland accent/dialect.*

Scene 2

Mary and Beth are at the kitchen table chatting about the recent news of resettlement and centralization.

Beth: Mary 'ave you 'eard the nonsense dem ol' government buggers are getting on wit?

Mary: Yes, I 'eard Joey Smallwood on de radio, going on again, mudderin' summ'un about 'is new plans for centralization, whatever dat means. I even 'eard 'im say 'e'd drag us Newfoundlanders, into de twentieth century even is we's be kickin' and screamin'. All I know is dat it's a done deal down in Merasheen, dey've all packed up and moved to Placentia.

Beth: Well if dey tink's dey's getting me outta me 'ome dey're cracked.

Mary: I wonders, is dey makin' us go? Or are dey just gonna give us something if we moves? Me husband's brudder says dat dey've givin' out money to dem folk willin' to go.

Beth: Dat's foolishness! Why trow 'way perfectly good money to make us leave, life's good 'ere, we're all 'appy. We gots our fish 'n gardens, sure last year after the 'arvest me cellars were filled to the brim. This is all we've ever known. Why would we just pick up and go? I've ne'er even been off dis 'ere island.

Mary: Well I dunno Bet, I 'eard tell some people's mighty keen on goin'. Fishin's not what it used to be and anudder ting- Mr. Greenham, God bless 'is soul 'ad a rough spell a while back with 'is old 'eart. 'N yer brudder, if 'e'd of gotten to d'ospital 'e might still be walkin'.

Beth: Yeah, but me 'ouse is me 'ome. I don't wanna leave de place where I grew up. Me mudder and me grandmudder is buried 'ere. I couldn't leave 'em.

Mary: De're's supposed to be a meetin' in da town hall tonight. I 'ear the government sent someone an' everyting.

Beth: I s'pose I should go. See what it's about. See what dey're up to now. But I'll tell you one ting, I ain't leaving dis place. It's me 'ome.

Scene 3

The Scene opens in the town meeting with all the members of the community lively discussing, the recent announcement from the government.

Chairman: Alright b'ys settle down. Quiet down now so we can 'ear what dis 'ere government fella 'as de say.

Voice 1: Why should we listen to 'im? Dem old politicians don't know nudding about we real Newfoundlanders.

Voice 2: Yes. Dat's right b'y. Dem der know it all's up in Ottawa and St. John's, poisonin our government. De've ne'er done neider 'ard days work in der life.

Voice 3: Ya de wouldn't know one end of a gaff from de udder.

Chairman: Hold on now b'ys. At least listen to wat de man 'as to say. Ye ne'er know- it might be good fer us. Mr. Kean, let's 'ear what ye got.

Mr. Kean: Welcome everyone.

Voice: You're not welcome 'ere.

Mr. Kean: My name is Mr. Kean. It's great to see such a good turn out tonight.

Voice: Why, so you can turn us out?

Mr. Kean: Ahhm. I've been sent here to your community, because our government believes that it is important you know all the facts. As I s'pose you've all heard a new policy has been introduced by our Premier Smallwood.

Voice: Oh yeah, ol' Joey must me burning the midnight oil, coming up with all his new policies.

All: 'ere, 'ere.

Chairman: *(Bangs for attention)* 'ey now, listen up.

Mr. Kean: As I was saying, we're looking to the future, and the well being of our province. There's no way the government can provide, to each and every outport community, all the services you good people deserve. So as an alternative, the government is willing to provide each family with some money to help make the move easier.

Voice: What a few pennys?

Voice: Trying to buy us off are dey?

Mr. Kean: Well actually, you may get \$400 up to even \$1000, depending on the size of your family.

Voice: You could give me a million and it still wouldn't be nuff.

Mr. Kean: The plan is to move everyone from this area across the bay to Hare Bay and Gambo. It's not a huge distance, but the opportunities will be better for everyone.

Voice 1: Wat are ya mad. Leaves our 'omes, and go where, someplace on the main island, piled up like sardines, with no place to fish. How are we supposed to make a living up der. It's taken us years to build what we got 'ere. It may not be much, but its ours and no one can take that from us.

Voice 2: Ya me families been 'ere since God knows when, all the way back to de 1800's. An me grandfadder's body's buried just o'er de hill d'ere. There no way I'm leavin.

Voice 3: An what about our 'ouses? Ye can't just s'pect us to pick up'n leave and den 'ave to go and build new u'n.

Mr. Kean: Well in other communities they've actually floated their houses across the water. They packed them up and floated them out.

Voice: Oh, yes by. Good luck wit dat.

Mr. Kean: Well they've had great success floating them clear across the bay.

Voice: This side of the bay is fine by me.

Mr. Kean: And just think about the conveniences like telephones and electricity. There'll be hospitals, schools, roads and post offices. Your standard of living will improve drastically.

Voice: That's sounds good to me.

Voice: To me it don't.

Mr. Kean: But no one is forcing you to leave. It's entirely your decision. However, you must understand that if you do make the choice to stay, the government will no long support you. There will be no more

transportation to and from this island. You will be completely on your own.

Voice 2: Well wat kind of choice is dat? Eider, go or be forced to live all on yer own. No way of getting in supplies. We'd perish out here in de winter. Some choice.

Chairman: Seems to me we's got a lot of different opinions 'ere. Lets give some people de chance de speak der minds.

Voice 4: I don't think leavin' is such a bad idea. We can keep our 'ouses, de government is gonna give us money. When's the last time de government offered us anyting- let alone money. And tink of de children. De needs de best schooling de can get, and if de gets sick, de can actually go to a real 'ospital. Our children could grow up to be doctors and lawyers, but 'ere dey can barely learn how to read.

Mr. Kean: That's the idea. This move is meant to benefit everyone.

Voice 1: But what about de past? Ye can't just turn yer back on everyting 'ere. Like she said-we all gots flesh and blood buried up to de graveyard. De died working hard to try and make life a bit easier fer us. We can't just leave them 'ere to rot and be forgotten.

Voice 2: And our traditions- our children will never be able to experience all the fun we used to 'ave on des 'ere hills. And the songs. My dear no one can belt 'em out like we can, fer hours and hours on end. We might be together but 'aven a yarn won't be de same if we're not down in George's store. Dey'll never get none of that in Gambo or Hare Bay. It just won't be the same.

Voice 3: But we can make new traditions, maybe it's time to move on. We need these modern conveniences to survive, anyways.

Mr. Kean: Well, this is the government plan. Like it or lump folks. It's resettlement now, while resettlement pays.

An Uproar starts. People yelling their opinions as well as insults at each other.

Scene 4

Scene opens with women working quietly, while they make a beat with what they are doing.

One woman starts humming, the others join in, and they begin singing "Outport People".

- Beth:** I'm sure gonna miss days like des b'ys.
- Sarah:** I knows Bet, cool ocean air, the smell of salt, it don't get any bedder dan dis.
- Mary:** I'm gonna mis dis place some bad, once we leaves. It's me 'ome, I don't know anywhere else.
- Anne:** Yes. It feels like we's leavin' more dan just an island dough. We's leavin behind memories, traditions, our 'ole lives.
- Beth:** I'll ne'er forget de time when we was youngsters, when fadder came 'ome from out on de ice sealin', and 'e brought us dat old kite. Lord we'd play with dat old ting fer ours.
- Anne:** I remembers dat. Oh yes and den we got 'er stuck up in dat old tree, we 'ad de 'ole island up in a tizzy tryin' to get 'er out. Geez by it's been some long time.
- Mary:** Oh yes, dat was some good larfe. Old Leonard Goulding up in de tree, tryin' to wrestle dat ting down.
- Beth:** Anne's poor little brudder bawlin' and screamin' after dat ratty ol' kite. God rest 'is soul.
- Sarah:** 'E was taken from us too young. Dat was one nasty starm, lasted nearly tree days. Felt like and eternity dough. I thought de roof was gonna blow clear off de 'ouse. Anne's brudder 'e ne'er had a chance. De sea's a cruel, cruel beast. She gives us our lives, but ye ne'er know when she's gonna take it back.
- Anne:** Hard times b'y. But even trough all de bad times we always 'ad fun at Christmas time.
- Beth:** Me dear de food alone still makes me mout water. Salt meat, carrots, turnip, potatoes, and de figgy duff with butter sauce. Lord dat's still my favourite part of de 'ole winter.
- Emma (Child):** Mommy, what about mummerin'?
- All:** Oh yes, the mummerin'!
- Mary:** Yes, me ducky, the mummerin. When I was your age, I couldn't wait to 'ear that first knock on the door. They'd be all done up in their silly ol' clothes, wit socks on their 'ands and mitts on their feet.
- Beth:** The larfs we 'ave trying to figure out who's who.

Emma: The music, dat's my favorite part.

Anne: Oh, yes and no one can play the squeeze box like ol' Tom Ryan.

Mary: And sure nuff someone would always bring de ugly stick.

Beth: After the bottle o' Screech was passed around, sure we'd all be singin.

Anne: No one know's 'ow to 'ave a time like we folks.

Emma: Can we still do dat when we goes?

Sarah: I don't know for sure 'oney. I don't know anyting about what our new life'll be like.

Emma: I'm scared Mommy. I don't wanna go. Do we really 'ave to?

Anne: We're all a bit scared me lovey, but maybe it's time fer a change. Like Mr. Kean said- life'll be easier wit 'ospitals and proper schools. Ya ne'er know- you might even grow up to be a nurse or a teacher.

Sarah: Whadda ya doing, fillin me daughters 'ead wit nonsense like dat.

Beth: You're takin deir side Anne, sounds like you actually wanna go.

Mary: 'old on now b'ys. Dere's no point in arguin' now. It's a done deal. We're all in de same boat. And besides-we're gonna need each udder once we gets o'er dere.

Scene 5

Scene opens with two kids in awe watching the house being floated away. Emma and Patrick.

Patrick: What's on de go down dere?

Emma: Des floatin' across de first 'ouse t'day. Hurry up b'y, stop yer dilly dallying I wants to see 'er.

Patrick: Hey look der around de point der floatin 'er out, I tinks it's de Ryan's 'ouse.

Anne: What you youngsters doing down 'ere? Get up to de 'ouse and help out yer mudder. *(walks over and starts talking to Sarah)* Well maid, I 'eard yer 'ouse is next, you all ready do go?

Sarah: You can launch a 'ouse , and tow it away. But the 'ome doesn't move

Anne: Yes, and de money sure it'll keep us alive, but it won't soothe me heart, nor ease me mind. There's lots to be done, I s'pose we should 'ead on up now.

Sarah: I'll be der in a bit, I just have to say me goodbye's. *(goes to the cemetery-centre of the stage kneeling as if in front of the grave stone and begins monologue)*

Scene 5

Monologue

Sarah: Hey Katie, it's Momma. I'm here I say goodbye. Deys decided to move us all. Right now they're floating our 'ome away. I can't believe I 'ave to leave this place. I 'ave to leave you sweet pea. We're all goin to the main island. Dey tinks dey can pack us all up and move us an we'd be 'appy. But dey did'n tink of the memories, of the places, of you. I don't wanna leave dis island. You're 'ere an I can't take you wit me. I won't forget you, but we won' 'ave our Sunday talks. I can't pray wit you, or visit you on your birthday. It's been five years since dat day. I'll always remember yer sweet breat' on my cheek. We didn' have you fer long but I loved you from the start. So little you was. I could put my ring right 'round yer little h'arm, and you fought so 'ard. Filled wit spirit, as stubborn as yer fadder! We were jus' gettin to know you. You were taken too soon. I remembers the day we brought you up here to be with the Lord. T'was raining like the heavens was crying to see you go. When we put ya wit de udder lost ones I was overcome. Couldn' believe my baby was gone an' I couldn' go wit you. I wanted to follow you. But I 'ad to stay wit de rest of da family. I never tought I'd have ta feel dat way again, but by leaving you behind it's like losing you all over. Dey's taking me away from you wee one, but don' be sad, I'll 'member you till the day I die. I don' know what's to come of dis place. We've got dem stories an' memories. But soon de stories won' be told an' de memories will be forgotten. Be safe, lil one. Dere ain't nudding dey can do to keep me from you. Don' miss me. I'll be tinkin of you h'always. Leavin dis graveyard is de 'ardest ting I 'ave to do. Dis is the last ting I wanted to do, leaving you. You're my little baby girl an' now I'm sposed to just go an' ne'er wanna turn back. But I'll be tinkin of you every second, my wee one. I don't know what I'll be at, who I'll be wit, or what I'll be like, but I do know that I love you and will ne'er ever leave you behind.

Pray for us darling. We need your 'elp to get trough dis. Everytings changin' and we don' know how tings'll be in dis new town. I 'ave to go, get on dat boat, and sail away from you forever, an' tis tearing me 'part te do it. I'll be with you my, h'angel no matter where I'm at. I'll love you always. Goodbye my Katie.

Scene 6

Two elderly people discussing society today.

Elderly Person 1: Look at dem teenagers o'er der, wit der baggy ol' clothes, and der dirty ol' music. Dey've got no respect for anything anymore.

Elderly Person 2: I know b'y, dey don't know nudding about 'ard work. Dey just gets e'eryting 'anded to 'em. Not like when we was young.

Elderly Person 1: Yes b'y, it's not dat long ago when people actually 'ad to work fer what dey got. E'eryting's right different now. Dem teenagers don't know nudding about where dey came from.

Elderly Person 2: It's 'ard to believe. Its like our 'ole way of life is just going down de tubes. Young people don't care nudding about de past. All dey're worried about is der I-pod tingy's and der video games. Shockin in't it.

Elderly Person 1: I sees what ya mean. De udder day me granddaughter finally came to visit me, and all she did was sit der, wit dose plugs in 'er ears, blastin' 'er ear drums wit dat dreadful music. Just sitting der wit dat smug look on 'er face. I tell ya, if she was me young'un she'd ne'er get away wit dat. I'd straighten 'er out, pretty quick.

Elderly Person 2: If only dey knew all de stuff we 'ad to go through when we was der age. We'd ne'er sleep in 'til tree or four in de day. We was up e'ery day wit de sun, mendin' nets, spiltin' and saltin' fish, and den if it'd rain we'd 'ave to drag 'em all in and start all o'er again.

Elderly Person 1: And dey ne'er 'ad to pick up and leave de only 'ome dey e'er knew, just cause de government told 'em too. B'y ye can't take a man from de life dat 'e knows, and tear up his roots and expect 'im de grow. 'Cause if he's unwillingly forced de decide, 'e'll move without leavin' and ne'er arrive.

Elderly Person 2: What's gonna happen when we goes? None of dem'll remember e'er ting we went through to get 'em where dey is now. It's hard to imagine.

Elderly Person 1: I don't know if I wants to imagine it. It's a sad tought in't it.

Scene 7

Clone 1: What is Joey Smallwood?

Clone 2: What is cod fish?

Clone 3: What is dory?

Clone 4: What is mummering?

Clone 5: What is jiggs dinner?

Clone 1: What is kitchen party?

Clone 2: What is Hibernia?

Clone 3: What is tradition?

Clone 4: What is culture?

Clone 5: What is newfie?

All: Who were we?

Music Credits: Government Game(traditional)- Brian Lannon/Percy Cutler
OutPort People- Bud Davidge
Little Boxes- Malvina Reynolds