

Lynn Lunde, *Mummers, Janneys and Naluyuks of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada: 'One of these is not alike'*, Mummers Unconvention, Gloucester, 2013.

Mummers, Janneys and Naluyuks of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada: 'One of these is not alike'.

Masked and costumed figures carrying sticks, moving in groups through communities at night, banging on doors, gaining entrance to homes – these figures, whose personal identities are carefully guarded from spectators, are known to engage in erratic, unconventional and often violent behaviour. These mummers, janneys and naluyuks move through physical and social landscapes during the mid-winter period. Mumming (mummers and janneys) occurs on the island of Newfoundland and in southern Labrador, areas with strong English and Irish historical connections. Naluyuks appear in northern Labrador among the Inuit, a people with a traditional hunting and gathering-based culture. The current northern Labrador primary settlements developed as a result of Moravian missions established on the coast and Canadian community resettlement policies. The origins of naluyuk and mumming events and the historical and cultural contexts of each are different.

Over the past several decades the events have been conflated - naluyuks have been described as mummers and janneys - creating a misunderstanding of the content and intent of the naluyuk event with a consequent failure to treat it as a separate tradition. This conflation initially occurred in scholarly papers and was perpetuated by inclusion in public usage scholarly reference books. A discussion of this problem begins with a look at the terminology used for the events and their sources.

There are numerous terms applied to the events and participants of mummering and janneying – Robertson¹ notes use of a number of terms – barneys, darbies, dress-ups, fools, geezers, janneying, janneys, jennies, johnnies, maskers, mickies, mummering, mummers, mumpers, and white boys; Story et al² note additional terms – 'dressing the fool', janny, janney, jannies, janning, jанныing, jennyng, John Jacks, johnny, mumming, old teaks, ownshook. To this list of terms and variant spellings the following can be added: guizers, soldiers, ribbon fools and old fools³; and janneyies, jannyies.

This array of terms covers three basic events: a parade or procession, an identity-guessing game and the performance of a play. Some of the terms were applied to the participants as well as to the events, others seem to have been applied to participants only. The terms janneys and mummers are generally applied to participants involved in all three events, however the term janney doesn't appear to have

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been applied to participants involved in the performance of plays to whom the terms mummies and soldiers was more commonly applied. Because of the confusion this range of terms engenders within any discussion of these events, I have applied the term janneying to the identity-guessing game event, the term mummering to performance of the plays. To add to the confusion, currently resurrected in St. John's is a processional called the Mummies' Parade, hence the participants are called mummies. As the parade manifestation of mumming is not a consideration in this paper, the apparent confusion in terms will not affect the discussion.

Terms for the 'naluyuk night' event and for the personages involved are based in the Inuktitut language of the Inuit: nalaguk⁴; nalajuk⁵; nalijuk, Inuit plural nalijuit⁶; nallijuk⁷; nalujut⁸; nallayuts and nalyusk⁹; naluyuk¹⁰; nalujuk¹¹, Inuit plural naluyuyit¹² and nalujuit¹³; nelloyuks¹⁴. (Anglicized plurals have an added 's' to the singular of the word.)

The definitions of naluyuk from Newfoundland and Labrador sources associate the event with janneys and mummies. The *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*¹⁵ (1999) references two sources which establishes the association: the *Labrador Inuit: Uquasingit* (1976) translates the term nalujuk as 'janny'¹⁶, and the article by Ben-Dor in *Christmas Mummie in Newfoundland* (1969) describes the naluyuks as 'Eskimo mummies'¹⁷. A substantive third source for material on naluyuks, available in 1983, by Barnett Richling¹⁸, discussed the Inuit foundations of the naluyuk event with no reference to mummies or janneys. The inclusion of Richling's work in the revised editions of the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (1990, 1999) would have assisted in clarifying the misapplication of mumming terms to a notably separate event, naluyuk night.

The application of descriptive terms between the events is not reciprocal: the terms attributed to mummies and janneys do not include the term naluyuk. This suggests that the incorporation of terms mummer and janney in definitions of naluyuk is descriptive of the common disguising characteristic occurring in each of the events, but does not address the content or meaning of the events within their respective communities. To refer to Labrador naluyuks as 'Eskimo mummies' and/or as 'janneys' is misleading and incorrect. Naluyuks are neither mummies nor janneys, they are masked figures representing spirits existent within Inuit mythology.

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The on-going association of naluyuks with Ben Dor's 'Eskimo mummers' and *Labrador Inuit 'janneys'* rests with subsequent reiteration in the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* and the *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*. The association is further perpetuated for public consumption and confusion by newsletters and newspapers which use the above noted reference documents in their publications. An excellent example of the problem occurred in the 26 August 2011 issue of *The Telegram*, a St. John's NL newspaper, in a short article titled 'Newfoundland word of the day': "Naluyuk ('nalujuk' 'janny') Inuit name for a Christmas mummer 1969 *Christmas Mumming in Nfld* [page]121 The Eskimo mummers, the 'naluyuks ...' *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*"¹⁹. Furthering the confusion is a St. John's organization which promotes a mummers parade through various media avenues including a website²⁰ which lists various house visitation events within Newfoundland and Labrador including the Wren and Nalujuit which are not part of the mumming tradition.

The problem with the misapplication of terms lies in the descriptive nature of the terms. The application of terms mummer and janney to the naluyuk event masks the differences between the events, differences which are sufficiently profound to warrant the naluyuk event be understood and studied as a unique event. The following discussion of each of the events of mumming²¹ (mummers, janneys) and naluyuk night will assist in understanding the events as separate in content, execution, intent, and origins.

The Mummers' Play as currently performed by several groups in St. John's is a secular event comprised of set lines of text and improvised speech, often rhyming, combined with set and improvised actions. There exists a range of characters available for inclusion in a performance, the play is performed by persons disguised and costumed, and is most often enacted in people's homes usually during the twelve days of Christmas (December 26 thru January 6). The script is deceptively straightforward yet opaque, with the base-line of action as follows: Enterer-In or Father Christmas (not the kindly grandfather type currently cherished by North America, but rather a brusque, powerful figure) gains entrance to the house and enjoins the inhabitants to clear a space for the players; two protagonists, King George (or St. George) and the Turkish Knight (or the Turkey Snipe, also the Prince of Darkness) do battle to the death of one or the other; a Doctor is called in who performs a cure for death, a resurrection occurs and the 'dead' protagonist leaps to life; Enterer-In introduces the Mummers' Horse (Ball or Old Ball) and

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they perform together; a parade of characters extra to the combat and curing segments of the Play may enter at this point; a closing song is sung by the performers; food and drinks are served by the householders. Costumes are rag-tag, often created anew each year with the nature of each costume dependent upon the individual playing the part, consequently the identifying items incorporated into each costume also varies year-to-year.

The mumming events (mumming and janneying) in the past were comprised of two segments, indoor and outdoor activities. The outdoor activities occurred as the mummers and janneys moved from house-to-house and were joined by spectators whose focus appeared to be the unmasking of mumming participants. The wooden sticks carried by the mummers and janneys could be effectively deployed discouraging physical unmasking and keeping neighbourhood dogs at bay.

The appearance of janneys signals a different event from the performance of the Mummers' Play. Janneying, also a form of house-visitation and a secular event which occurs during the twelve days of Christmas, is an identity-guessing game. Although terms applied to mumming and janneying are interchangeable in general usage, the two events differ in most ways. Janneys are disguised and costumed with the intent of remaining anonymous – within small communities it is difficult to attain anonymity, to not be recognized by people the janney has lived and worked alongside for most of their lives. When janneys enter a house the identity-guessing game begins. Through various socially accepted means householders attempt to 'unmask' the disguised visitors. Despite careful costuming, it is difficult for janneys to cover their identity – they must mask all personally characteristic features including body parts such as hands and biological sex, alter body movements and general body shape, and change the sound of their voice and laughter. Janneys are mum, with the exception of ingested speech, until their identity is determined, at which point they unmask, engage socially with the householders and are given food and drink. Once identified they reenter their daily identity until they leave the house and make their way through the dark entering the next household as 'strangers'.

As an identity-guessing game janneying brings the 'stranger' into the community and into homes, playing with the attendant fear of the unknown: anxiety and fear accompanies the presence of an unidentified person as how they will behave and what their intentions are is not known. The 'stranger' stands outside recognized social norms. If the behaviour and intentions of the stranger are not within

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the range of acceptable norms of that community, the anonymity of the stranger protects them from later reprisals couched in socially acceptable punishment. Strangers or unidentifiable persons are also unlikely to engage in expected reciprocal hospitality. The reciprocal nature of hospitality is a means of acknowledging shared interests and values, a means of establishing common ground between individuals in terms of behaviour and intentions, and it asserts that the people engaged in reciprocal hospitality are known nonthreatening social entities. Extending hospitality with the expectation of reciprocity places individuals within socially recognizable activities; the expectation of hospitality being reciprocated within the near future and the occurrence of such hospitality establishes a common ground of mutual benefit between persons thereby relieving the anxiety and stress of having the unknown, the stranger, abroad in the community.

Mummers' Play performers were not engaged in the identity-guessing game, hence their costumes do not involve the elaborate disguising of janneys. The costumes of performers could share a general style of dress, such as the same trousers and shirts, with specific items indicative of their characters. One of the groups currently performing in St. John's do not expose their faces, and may use double masks to ensure their anonymity. As they are usually strangers in the houses in which they perform, double-masking is a matter of being unidentifiable in any future context while also being anonymous in the performance context. There may also be a desire to be other-worldly, of being mysterious, of being disguised strangers who come in the night, give a gift in the form of a performance, bestow a blessing on the houses where the performance and reception have been good, and leave as disguised strangers not to be encountered in daily life. The event of the performance with the arrival of strangers is The event of the performance is a unique experience divorced from every day life and is 'sset aside' from daily life, almost bracketed by the presence of the strangers. An event comprised of strangers is bracketed by daily life of known persons and gains its novelty and power from the presence of the unknown in the community in the guise of stranger personages.

The recently resurrected Mummers' Parade²² in St. John's NL encourages the costuming and masking characteristic of mumming events and may include overtones of the identity-guessing-game; however, the identity-guessing-game is not available to parade participants as a real stranger, which most participants in the parade are, cannot enter into an identity-guessing game which must be played with intimates not with parade spectators, other unknown personages. The contemporary processional is a

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parading of costumed figures trading on nostalgia and vague connections to parades of mummers in St. John's in the early 1800s. The current parade invites comment not only because of the many hundreds of participants costumed and masked who walk through the streets. This event, to date, occurs without the aid of corporate sponsors and participants do not use stock costuming characters such as superheroes and princesses, thereby indicating an adherence to an understanding of mumming as an event separate from other masking and costuming events such as Halloween.

The relevance of mumming events in contemporary life does not reside within an analysis of symbols which may or may not exist within the text or performance of the Play or an analysis of the behaviours displayed throughout the events, nor does it reside in an analysis of Mummers' Play performances and janneying as rituals. These practices, coupled with an increasing usage of mumming references within the visual and performance arts, are now part of a general Newfoundland identity. The events and particularly representations of mummer figures have been used within the tourism industry with the creation of three-dimensional figures and images for sale in numerous outlets across the island.

Mumming has taken on the shroud of being curious and quaint folkloric events which are part of the oddity of Newfoundland as presented by the tourism industry.

Mumming and janneying no longer perform their previous shared functions within the social world of tight-knit small communities. The social and physical realities of Newfoundland culture have changed over the last century with the introduction of roads accompanied by the increasing presence of mass communication and entertainment industries. Mumming has lost its power as a means of social control, both as a means of curtailing the behaviour of individuals and groups within the community, and as a means of critique of political, economic and social realities: individuals are able to access a much larger social context than the immediate community and family connections, which relieves them of attendance to the words and actions of mummers and janneys. Contemporary mumming no longer provides an important means of creating new social and work relationships through expected reciprocity of the hospitality received when visiting mumming. The personal and societal tensions and anxieties often existent within close-knit communities were given expression and release through the aberrant behaviour and role inversion associated with mumming – with the loss of small tight-knit communities, mumming no longer provides release of personal and community tensions. However the entertainment value for spectators and participants remains for many people. The anticipation and

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pleasure of creating and wearing costumes and anonymously playing the fool remains as a nostalgic excursion into the values and lifestyle of traditional fishing communities. Mummings and janneys were and remain as human figures intent upon human-to-human contact.

The presence of naluyuks in northern Labrador communities on Naluyuk night (January 6, Epiphany, Old Christmas Eve or Day) heralds an event arising from an Inuit cultural base. This event follows a different internal cadence or flow to mumming events and the disguised figures have a different meaning to community members than disguised figures have for spectators of mumming events. On one level the event was inquisitorial, holding children accountable for their behaviour over the previous year; it was and is also a visit by spiritual representatives of Inuit beliefs which are resonant with adults, a reminder of another world-view with which to encounter and interpret the social and physical world.

On January 6 a small group of men would leave the community in daylight and return in the dark as naluyuks, entering each house as inquisitors of the household children. The children would be questioned as to their behaviour over the previous year and would be required to sing Moravian songs and hymns in Inuktitut and were often given small gifts by the naluyuks. The event was terrifying for children: the naluyuks were costumed as non-humans, threatened the children with violence, and were portrayed by the community as 'bogey-men', as personages that could take children who were not 'good' away from the community and leave them in the woods, a fate of certain death.

Once outdoors and moving from house-to-house naluyuks would be taunted by adolescents and young adults and gave chase as stick-wielding protagonists striking anyone 'caught'. Before electricity reached the northern Labrador coast the community homes were lit by seal-oil and kerosene lamps, the streets were dark. An event involving masked figures running about in the dark with large sticks would have had a different intensity from now when there is electricity and streetlights and a different understanding of what the naluyuk figures are. Snowmobiles have also changed the nature of the outdoor activity – single headlights flash in the darkness accompanied by the roar and drone of engines, and the naluyuks are more mobile who, as passengers, are able to jump off the machines at any moment and take up the chase of participating spectators.

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As people move off the coast into communities located inland the naluyuk event alters to suit its new environment, including streets dominated by cars and trucks, not snowmobiles, and a police presence to curtail violent behaviour. The much subdued naluyuk event in the inland Happy Valley-Goose Bay community hall is more a celebratory social gathering than an inquisitional event. Today community members often gather in community halls, singing and celebrating, awaiting the naluyuks - upon their arrival the naluyuks give candy to everyone and frighten small children²³. The naluyuks engaged in the festivities at the community hall in a coastal community are not necessarily the same ones outside on the streets of the community chasing and hitting people²⁴.

In the Labrador coastal communities of Nain, Hopedale and Makkovik naluyuk night is a more robust event²⁵ involving primarily Inuit households in the inquisitional house-visit centered on children and outdoor activity of chasing adolescents and adults. The activities within these communities differ more in intensity than in nature: events in Hopedale last longer than in Makkovik, attributable to the presence of a larger Inuit community in Hopedale; in Nain, a large community, 20 or more naluyuks can be found roaming the streets and engaging in violent activities which can leave people with injuries as serious as broken bones²⁶.

The inquisitional nature of naluyuk house-visitation accompanied by fear and a punishment/reward duality is mirrored in the outdoor activities where persons are chased by stick-wielding naluyuks. When caught by the naluyuks people are hit with sticks and often engage in singing to halt the aggressive nature of the 'punishment', a harkening back to the original inquisitional nature of the event. Naluyuks at one time entered communities as spirit-beings arising from an Inuit worldview – have they now become disguised humans engaged in a exciting footrace? I suggest the event remains embedded in Inuit understanding and is used as a means to interpret the modern world, providing a uniquely Inuit lens.

The naluyuk night event has an Inuit foundation, not northern European as is the case with mumming events. The events themselves – while sharing the characteristics of masking and costuming, erratic frightening behaviour, threatened and actual use of violence, occurrence in a mid-winter time period – are radically different in intent and execution²⁷.

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- ¹Robertson, Margaret R. *The Newfoundland Mummers' Christmas House-visit*. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1984. P. xvi-xvii. Print.
- ²Story, G.M., W.J. Kirwin, J.D.A. Widdowson, Eds. *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, second edition with supplement. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. Pp. 273-7, 337-8, 365, 705, 717. Print.
- ³Widdowson, J.D.A. "Mumming and Janneying: Some Explanatory Notes." *Christmas Mummie in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology, Folklore, and History*. Eds. Herbert Halpert, G.M. Story. Toronto: published by University of Toronto Press for Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1969. Pp. 197, 216-221. Print.
- ⁴Bartlett, Dave. "Blending traditions: Christmas on the coast." *The Telegram* 23 Dec. 2008: A5. Eureka.cc. Web. 11 Nov. 2013.
- ⁵Edmunds, G. Sharon. Unpublished student paper. Folklore 1150, Labrador Institute, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2005. Print.; Bartlett, Dave. "Blending traditions: Christmas on the coast." *The Telegram* 23 Dec. 2008: A5. Eureka.cc. Web. 11 Nov. 2013.
- ⁶Edmunds, G. Sharon. Personal communication, email. 4 Jan. 2010.
- ⁷Anderson, April. "The Nallujuk." Unpublished student paper. Folklore 1150, Labrador Institute, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2005. Pp. 1-22. Print.
- ⁸Stacey, Jean Edwards. "On the 12th Day of Christmas: Mumming, merriment and mysterious shrubs." *The Telegram* 6 Jan. 2001: 17. Eureka.cc. Web. 11 Nov. 2013. Michael Johansen. "Good intentions gone bad." *The Telegram* 11 Jan. 1998: 14. Eureka.cc. Web. 11 Nov. 2013. Boas Obed. Article from *Them Days* 6, 2:14 quoted by Lynne D. Fitzhugh in *The Labradorians: Voices from the Land of Cain*. St. John's: Breakwater, 1999. Print.; Barnett Richling. "Labrador Nalujuk: The Transformation of an Aboriginal Ritual Complex in a Post-Contact Setting." *The Power of Symbols: Masks and Masquerade in the Americas*. Eds. N. Ross Crumrine and Marjorie Halpin. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983. Pp. 21-29. Print.
- ⁹McCarthy, Jenny. "Masked visitors bring presents for kid." *The Labradorian* 29 Dec. 2008: A3, Vol. 34 No. 53. Eureka.cc. Web. 11 Nov. 2013.
- ¹⁰Author unknown. "Christmas Time in Northern Labrador." *Inuktitut* Winter 1978: 18-26. Print.; Story, G.M., W.J. Kirwin, J.D.A. Widdowson, Eds. *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, second edition with supplement. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. Print.
- ¹¹Jeddore, Rose, Ed. *Labrador Inuit: Uqausingit*. Nain: Labrador Inuit Committee on Literacy, 1976. Print.; Story, G.M., W.J. Kirwin, J.D.A. Widdowson, Eds. *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, second edition with supplement. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. Print.
- ¹²Ben-Dor, Shmuel. "The 'Naluyuks' of Northern Labrador: A Mechanism of Social Control." *Christmas Mummie in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology Folklore, and History*. Eds. Herbert Halpert and G.M. Story. Toronto: published by University of Toronto Press for Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1969. Pp. 119-127. Print.
- ¹³Anderson, April. "The Nallujuk." Unpublished student paper. Folklore 1150, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Happy Valley-Goose Bay Labrador campus, 2005. Print.
- ¹⁴Brazeau, Maria. "Labrador School Days". *Inuktitut* Spring (1976): 30-41. Print.
- ¹⁵Story, G.M., W.J. Kirwin, J.D.A. Widdowson, Eds. *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, second edition with supplement. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1999. Print.
"Naluyuk n Labrador Inuit 77 nalujuk 'janny'. Inuit name for a Christmas mummer 1969 *Christmas Mummie in Nfld* 121 the Eskimo mummers, the 'naluyuks...'"
- ¹⁶Jeddore, Rose, Ed. *Labrador Inuit: Uqausingit*. Nain: Labrador Inuit Committee on Literacy, 1976. Print.
"Nalujuk. 1. A heathen (n.). 2. Janny (n.). 3. Ignorant. 4. Ineducable. 5. Backward. Tukisinggituk, nalujuugami. He cannot understand because he is ineducable. Nalujummi, nalujuunguqaqtajut. On Old Christmas Night, men dress up as jannies. Nalujualuk. You ignorant, backward person."
- ¹⁷Ben-Dor, Shmuel. "The 'Naluyuks' of Northern Labrador: A Mechanism of Social Control". *Christmas Mummie in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology Folklore, and History*. Ed. Herbert Halpert, G.M. Story. Toronto: published by University of Toronto Press for Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1969. Pp. 119-127. Print.
"The Eskimo mummers, the 'naluyuks'..." p121.
- ¹⁸Richling, Barnett. "Labrador Naluyuk: The Transformation of an Aboriginal Inuit Ritual Complex in a Post-Contact Setting." *The Power of Symbols: Masks and Masquerades in the Americas*. Eds. N. Ross Crumrine and Marjorie Halpin. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983. Pp. 21-29. Print.
- ¹⁹Newfoundland word of the day.' *The Telegram* 26 August 2011: B8. Eureka.cc. Web. 11 Nov. 2013.
- ²⁰www.mummersfestival.ca
- ²¹The events of mumming and janneying noted here are brief accounts of contemporary mumming events occurring in St. John's and environs and are based upon my personal experience of the event as performer and spectator. Research on

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most aspects of mumming has been undertaken by several authors: Robertson, Margaret R. *The Newfoundland Mummers' Christmas House-visit*. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1984. Xvi-xvii.; Brookes, Chris. *A Public Nuisance: A History of the Mummers Troupe*. St. John's: ISER (Institute of Social and Economic Research), Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1988. Articles in *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland*. Eds. Herbert Halpert and G.M. Story. Toronto: published by University of Toronto Press for Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1969. And numerous local journals, newsletters and newspapers with oral history accounts of the events.

²²www.mummersfestival.ca

²³Andersen, April. "The Nallijuk." Unpublished student paper submitted for Folklore 1150, Labrador Institute, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2005. Pp. 1-22. Print. Interview with Ashley Edmunds, collected by April Andersen.

²⁴Barbour, Janelle. "Nalujuk's Night". Unpublished student paper submitted for Folklore 1150, Labrador Institute, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2006. Pp. 1-11. Print.

²⁵Edmunds, Sharon. "Christmas in Makkovik". www.hvgb.net/~sedna/christmasmakkovik.html. Web. 9 Dec. 2008.

²⁶Edmunds, Sharon. "Christmas in Makkovik". www.hvgb.net/~sedna/christmasmakkovik.html. Web. 9 Dec. 2008.

²⁷I will undertake a more detailed discussion of the naluyuk event in a subsequent paper.