

OUTDOORS

Labrador tea, growing wild in the Big Land



Colin Preston (right) and Andy Gould have a brew. Hot tea can certainly warm the soul and lift spirits.

PAUL SMITH/SPECIAL TO THE TELEGRAM

I returned yesterday from Labrador, the Big Land, so vast and magnificent, with waterways that may never have floated a trout fly. There are not many places like Labrador left on our planet. We need to stay on our toes to protect it, us folks who find solace and peace in wild places. Not everybody cares. There are those who only see money and potential development, not that I have anything against economic prosperity, but we must strike a balance.

Although I have visited the Big Land many times, I have never before tasted Labrador tea. I had the opportunity and I was all over it. How could I miss out on the chance to experience such a visceral, and time-honoured backwoods tradition.

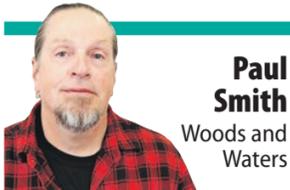
What would I be doing in Labrador in early September? Is there a better place to spend Labour Day Weekend? I don't think so.

The massive deep-bellied brook trout that swim the cold pristine waters of Igloo Lake are moving into the rivers to mate and produce baby brookies. All inflows and outflows are potential locations to catch trout, as well as any steadies or gullies that might interrupt the laminar nature of brooks and rivers both big and small. The trout are concentrated this time of year, making for some spectacular fly fishing opportunities. If you haven't figured it out already, I spent the last week of the trout season at Jim Burton's world class brook trout camp on Igloo Lake.

I'll write more about my autumn angling experience another time, but for now let's talk Labrador tea. According to Wikipedia, Labrador tea is the common name for herbal tea brewed from the leaves of three closely related slow growing shrubs with evergreen leaves. I won't get into the long Latin names that separately identify the plants scientifically, but each seems to grow in a distinct geographic region of Labrador,



Colin Preston tending his fire.



Paul Smith
Woods and Waters

specifically, the north, west and bog lands. I suspect I was drinking bog land tea in the headwaters of the Eagle River area. If any of you might be more knowledgeable about this, I'd love to hear from you.

There's lots of history and anecdotal information on uses of Labrador tea. Incidentally, this plant doesn't just grow in Labrador, as the common name suggests. It is found all across northern regions of North America from Alaska to Labrador, as well as Greenland.

So as you would expect there is a rich medicinal culture of its use with indigenous people from west to east. Labrador tea has been used in folk medicine for coughs, chest and kidney ailments, headache, rheumatism, diarrhea, sore throat and malignancies.

There's not much documented science on this stuff, so if you decide to try it in the medical context, please proceed with caution. Many websites warn of overdosing on concentrations of Labrador tea with intoxication and dire physical symptoms. But a simple cup of tea will do you no harm. The French Canadian *coureurs-des-bois* used Labrador tea to extend their supplies of black tea.

Back to Igloo Lake. We were walking down the trail that leads from the lodge to a pool on the lake's main outflow named Archie's. There were three of us, our guide Colin Preston from Corner Brook, Andy Gould, my fishing partner from Nova Scotia, and me. It was rainy and cold and we had every intention of enjoying a warm rousing fire and some tea. Colin pointed to a small green plant and told us it was Labrador tea.

"I've always wanted to try that," says I. "Let's do it," says Andy. Colin picked some plants and we were again dodging along the meandering north woods trail.

It wasn't long before we caught some dandy trout, but that's story fodder for later.

Colin's roaring fire broke the dampness and chill. We sat around the blazing logs warming our hands and souls.

Colin detached the leaves from the plants and dropped them into the boiling water. After a few minutes, he poured us steaming cups of the most flavourful, full-bodied tea. There wasn't much colour, but



Not much colour in the Labrador tea, but amazing flavour.

PAUL SMITH/SPECIAL TO THE TELEGRAM



That's Labrador tea.

PAUL SMITH/SPECIAL TO THE TELEGRAM

what a wonderful taste. I liked it, and if you ever get the chance be sure and give Labrador tea a try — just be careful about over indulgence. I had a spot of gas in the belly and it cleared right up, hardly evidence up to scientific rigour,

but you never know.

Paul Smith, a native of Spaniard's Bay, fishes and wanders the outdoors at every opportunity. He can be contacted at flyfishtherock@hotmail.com or follow him on twitter at [@flyfishtherock](https://twitter.com/flyfishtherock)

inside



Bruce Mactavish

It was late morning Sunday as I drove through Renew's on my way back home to St. John's after an enjoyable morning birding in the alders of Bear Cove and Cappahayden. I came across a group of birders standing on the side of the road.

>B2



What to watch locally

Karl Wells

My chef friend, Steve Watson, and I are about to inaugurate the eighth season of our TV show, "One Chef One Critic." This season's debut episode airs Sunday on Rogers TV, Channel 9. The new season will also kick off later this week on Eastlink TV throughout Newfoundland (please check local listings).

>B4

>B5

DID YOU know



Jewel details struggles with family, divorce and debt

Nashville (AP) — Most people know Jewel's rags-to-riches story — growing up on an Alaskan homestead, getting discovered as a homeless teen in a California coffee shop, going platinum on her debut album, "Pieces of You," a folksy anthem in the grunge era.

But as she reveals in her new memoir, "Never Broken," and a companion album, "Picking Up the Pieces," her story didn't have a fairytale ending.

"I've always been very transparent as an artist," said the 41-year-old singer. "I've been known throughout my career to share a lot. But I think people will be quite surprised by what is in the book. Honestly, I think the biggest setbacks I faced were after I became famous."

Difficult and sometimes painful family relationships led her to become mostly independent as a teenager, crafting her skills in bars and coffee shops. She writes that her father was physically and verbally abusive to her and her brothers, which she attributes to his drinking and his own personal trauma. They have since reconciled.

"I think that anybody that reads the book won't consider this a salacious book, but it is incredibly forthright," Jewel said.

"My dad gave me permission. ... My dad grew up in an abusive household. My dad became abusive. ... What are cycles of abuse and what kinds of conversations can we have in America about emotional patterns?"

She also details how her mother took control of her finances and subsequently led her into debt despite selling millions of albums, according to the book. The two stopped talking in 2003. The final chapters of the book describe her romance with champion rodeo cowboy Ty Murray, who she married in 2008 and had a son with, and their divorce last year.

On the album, she dives deep into those relationships on songs like "My Father's Daughter," a duet with Dolly Parton, and "Family Tree," about learning to live with her family's legacy.