

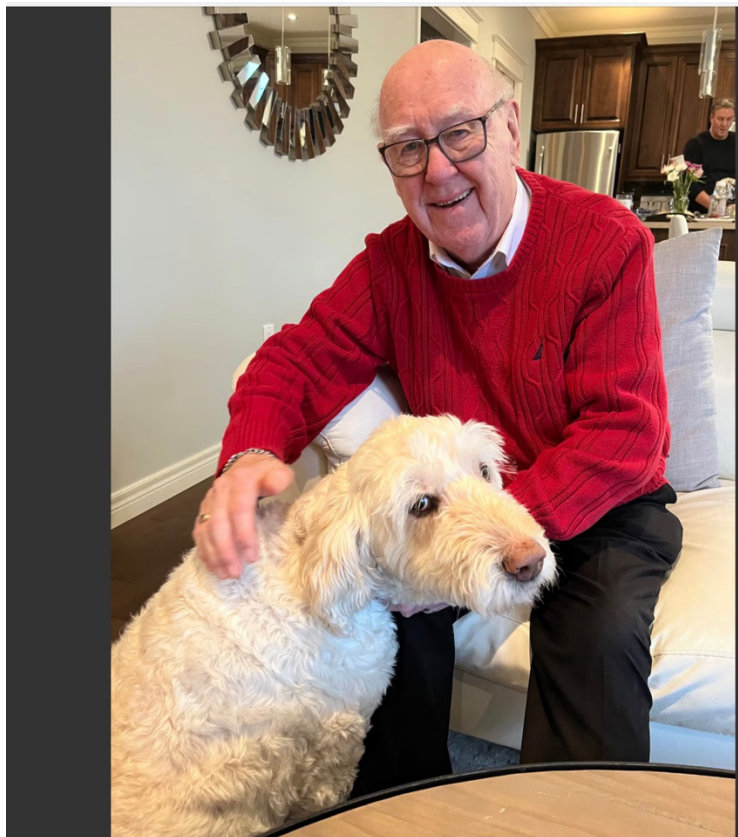
# Myrle Vokey, educator who created Newfoundland's famed Screech-in ceremony, dies at 85

ST. JOHN'S  
THE CANADIAN PRESS  
PUBLISHED 1 HOUR AGO

21 August 2024

Myrle Vokey, the beloved educator who created Newfoundland's famed Screech-in ceremony as a way to celebrate the culture he loved, died on Saturday in St. John's at the age of 85.

Krista Vokey, his daughter, says her dad created "magic" around simple things that made people feel loved, and it was from that wellspring of kindness that the Screech-in ceremony came to be.



CAPTION ▾

Myrle Vokey created the famed Newfoundland Screech-in ceremony as a way to celebrate the island's unique humour and culture, and to make everyone feel welcome.

HO/THE CANADIAN PRESS

She says that in the 1970s he was travelling the province and beyond as a speaker and director with the provincial teachers association, and he was looking for a way to make everyone in his audiences feel welcome.

Through discussions with his father about rituals fishermen would perform to anoint someone as an honorary Newfoundlander, Vokey came up with the Screech-in.

Krista Vokey says when her father performed the ceremony, he would wear his oilskins, play music, teach a few Newfoundland terms and then have members of the audience kiss a frozen cod fish that he had brought along with him. She says he began these performances in 1974, a time when disparaging “Newfie” jokes were still told, and used it as a way to instil pride in Newfoundland’s unique dialect, music and humour, and in its people’s reputation for inviting strangers into their homes for a cup of tea.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-myrtle-vokey-educator-who-created-newfoundlands-famed-screech-in/>

The article fails to mention “Screech” is a potent, maybe pungent, Jamaica rum. Part of the ritual is taking a good hard shot of it.

I have been “screeched in.” I was on the Avalon Peninsula in May, as lovely a place, with people as friendly, as one could ever find. But I have an asterisk beside my name: They couldn’t find a cod to kiss in Newfoundland at the time. Newfoundlanders are like the Irish—no wonder, given the historical roots—in that they can be more comical, deliberately or not, than most peoples. A sense of humor, and a lilt to the tongue, comes with being on—or just as often, from—the Rock. Maybe it has to; life has long been harder for them. TJB