

Film/ Canada*An Untidy Package:
Women and the
Newfoundland Cod
Moratorium*

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NF has reviewed this film.

An Untidy Package sets out to dispel the popular misconception that Newfoundland women weren't major players in the cod fishery before the moratorium, and that the federal compensation they received was only added to their husband's claims to increase their family's allowance. We learn at the outset that one third of the 35,000 workers displaced were women. Using the viewpoint of some of these women, this video examines the cod crisis and its social implications for families. Historical film footage, showing women working alongside men, and musical interludes with artistic close-ups of net knitting, are interspersed with the stories of five women from different coastal communities across the province. One is the mayor of a small Labrador town where half of the plant workers were women. She dedicated her life to building up her community and is devastated that all the young people have moved away to find work. Another, the head of her local fisheries union, relates how sudden poverty has caused domestic violence and marital break-ups amongst union members. All women, regardless of their educational level, are eloquent in expressing how profoundly their way of life has been affected. For instance, the stupidity of overfishing and the government's inept handling of retraining are seen from their perspective. The prevalent disregard for education prior to fisheries jobs, the use of emergency funds for infrastructure, and the short-term focus of the policies are illustrated with poignant examples.

Despite the beautiful photography, the video is difficult to watch when the women are overwhelmed by emotion. Although anger and bitterness at their treatment is evident, so, too, is the tenacity and resilience that has kept these women in their home communities. This is an important video for those studying Canadian social studies or women's studies to view.

This film is directed by Debbie McGee and produced by Nicole Hubert. Montreal, PQ: National Film Board of Canada, 1997. 47 min., 36 sec., VHS, \$39.95. Order