

## *Annual NL almanac a connection to people and patients*

Robert Doyle's grandfather was a pharmacist, an entrepreneur and a collector.

As he travelled the Newfoundland coastline selling his patent medicines, which included essence of ginger wine and iodized throat gargle, Gerald Doyle collected songs, poems and more from the communities he visited. He often his findings them into newsletters and songbooks he distributed free to customers. When his grandson purchased the Neighbourhood Pharmacy in St. John's in 1990, he put some of those mementos, as well as some of his own, on display.

"I made a little museum," says Robert Doyle.

The display cases, filled with once-popular remedies, original bottles and ointments were intended to be a curiosity and a conversation piece for customers waiting for prescriptions. One of those customers, Gus Fanning, an earth and ocean scientist, suggested Doyle take his interest in Newfoundland and Labrador lore and combine it with Fanning's weather forecasting prowess. That was six years ago, and *Doyle's Almanac of Newfoundland and Labrador* was born.



The current edition, which sells for \$15.95, features local sunrise and sunset times as well as astronomical events. "Of course, everyone loves to talk about the weather, especially in Newfoundland," says Doyle, a graduate of Memorial University's pharmacy program.

It also features an interview with Canadian actor Allan Hawco, along with an intriguing story about the Newfoundland veiled virgin. Gardening tips, poems, recipes and a large selection of colour photographs capture the island's beauty and spirit. "Everything in our almanac is local," says Doyle.

Roughly 700 copies of the almanac were printed in the publication's first year, rising to 1,500 copies of the 2021 almanac issued—and they have all been snapped up. "We sold out," says Doyle. "Maybe because people were [stuck] at home."

The almanac is sold through independent pharmacies across the province, as well as in bookstores and grocery chains. "It's important to build connections with the local communities," says Doyle.

For the province's small towns that don't have a family physician, the pharmacy serves as a central health hub, he adds. The almanac highlights that community, and personal, relationship. The almanac, says Doyle, "is a connection with our people and patients."