



OUR HISTORY, OUR STORIES:

PERSONAL NARRATIVES &
URBAN ABORIGINAL HISTORY
IN NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

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BECAUSE URBAN ABORIGINAL populations are largely invisible and poorly understood, the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network Atlantic Research Centre's (UAKN Atlantic) Executive Committee commissioned the *Our History, Our Stories* research project. The goal was to produce an accessible urban Aboriginal history for each of the Atlantic Provinces that could be readily shared with community organizations, the education system and all levels of government.

The 2016 census data determined Atlantic Canada to have an Indigenous population of 129,340. Of that population, 20,070 (15.5%) live on-reserve and 109,265 (84.5%) live off-reserve in rural and urban settings. In other words, **in Atlantic Canada five out of six persons who self-identify as Indigenous live off-reserve**. This suite of *Our History, Our Stories* for NB, NS, PEI and NL, combines personal stories with brief historical narratives. Each document also includes a discussion guide. Our hope is that our histories and stories will increase the general public's understanding, recognition and inclusion of urban Aboriginal populations in Atlantic Canada.

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INDIGENOUS RESEARCH GUIDELINES and ethical processes for research conducted in urban areas are expanding and evolving in Newfoundland and Labrador. The author would like to express special thanks to the representative governments and organizations of the three pre-dominant Indigenous groups in Labrador: Innu Nation, NunatuKavut Community Council, Nunatsiavut Government and to First Light St. John's Friendship Centre in St. John's, Newfoundland. Building meaningful and collaborative relationships between researchers and Indigenous organizations is an ongoing process: the guidance offered and the feedback received from all representative organizations will help strengthen research processes in years to come. The author would also like to express her deepest gratitude to the individual collaborators whose stories are featured within this document. Their direction, wisdom and openness were invaluable to the creation of this document.

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INTRODUCTION

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR has the second largest Indigenous population of all the Atlantic Provinces: approximately 45,730 people identify as Indigenous. 2016 Census data reports that 94.1% of Indigenous people in Newfoundland and Labrador live off-reserve.^[1] Despite the fact that the vast majority of Indigenous people in Newfoundland and Labrador reside off-reserve and in urban areas, much of the history and information available to the general public has been focused almost exclusively on the experiences of those living on-reserve and within the context of reserve experiences. The history of the urban and off-reserve Indigenous community is an important part of the cultural narrative of Newfoundland and Labrador and yet, it is a story that has remained untold.

The purpose of this project is to create awareness of the growing urban Indigenous population by offering an easy-to-read and accessible resource for community members, teachers, government agencies, researchers and public organizations. The project coordinator worked collaboratively with four urban Indigenous community members to create this document for use as an educational resource. The document features a brief historical narrative that expands on issue of importance to the urban and off-reserve Indigenous community and includes the personal stories of the community members.

Traditionally, Aboriginal people have used stories to pass down beliefs, traditions and history to future generations. Following this tradition, our purpose in sharing the personal stories of Emma Reelis, Marie, Abigail Webb, and Catherine is to honour their life experiences and also, importantly, to teach those in the non-Aboriginal community about the history and experiences of the fast-growing urban Aboriginal population.

The following document is a combination of historical data gathered from secondary sources and the personal stories of community members. The personal stories are an integral part of the document as this oral history captures the lived experience of off-reserve people and adds depth to the historical narrative. It also provides an opportunity to place local urban Aboriginal history within the context of the larger, national Aboriginal urban history and experience.

The history and personal stories that the average Canadian hears about are mostly from the perspective of Aboriginal people living on reserves. While some of the experiences of Aboriginal people living on-reserve may be similar to those of off-reserve people, some of their experiences can be quite different. In some cases, off-reserve and urban experiences have been shaped by divisive policies. For others, choosing to live in an urban area is a way to secure more sustainable employment or to provide greater opportunities for themselves and their children.

Creating a broad and relatively brief historical document focused on a province where a number of different Indigenous histories, cultures and government/settler interactions co-exist is challenging. Despite this, the author and contributors have made every effort to be as inclusive as possible and to carefully consider the perspectives of the pre-dominant and original inhabitants of the urban/off-reserve community in Newfoundland and Labrador: the Innu, the Mi'kmaq, the Southern Inuit and Inuit. To this end, this document pays careful attention to historical aspects that are relevant to the experiences of the urban/off-reserve Indigenous community, including culture and traditions of the pre-dominant groups, omission from the Terms of Union, settlement and resettlement, current issues and supports in urban areas.

02

SOUTHERN INUIT OF NUNATUKAVUT

THE HISTORY OF NunatuKavut is presently being written by the NunatuKavut Community Council and will be added at a later date.

THE INUIT OF LABRADOR

THE LABRADOR INUIT are descendants of the prehistoric Thule people who historically occupied the northeastern coast of Labrador. The early Inuit subsisted on mostly ocean-bound resources. They hunted walrus, beluga, bow-head whale and seal from their kayaks and umiaks, an open, skin covered boat. Several Inuit families lived together in houses made of sod, wood, stone and whalebone. In the 16th century the Labrador Inuit made contact with missionaries and whalers and by the mid-17th century they were trading fairly frequently with the British. Permanent Moravian mission stations set up after 1760 changed the trading networks and the exchange of goods by providing European products to the Inuit.^[5]

For many years the British government provided funding to the Moravian church and the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) to provide services to the Inuit communities of Nain, Hebron, Hopedale and Okak. Over time, diseases brought by traders and missionaries significantly decreased the population of the Inuit and changed their traditional way of life. The Inuit became increasingly dependent on the trade economy of the region though many maintained aspects of their traditional lifestyle.^[6]

In the 1920's, the trade economy began to fail which brought further turmoil to the social and economic systems of the Inuit. The HBC and the Government of Commissions took over the Moravian stores with little success. Services were suspended to smaller communities and an abrupt resettlement process was launched. After Newfoundland and Labrador joined Confederation in 1949, services were provided by both the federal and provincial governments. Like many other Indigenous groups across the province and throughout the country, the resettlement process negatively impacted the Labrador Inuit by forcing them from traditional lands and communities—the effects of the resettlement process can still be felt today.^[7]

In 1997, the Inuit were successful in their land claims with the federal government and were provided with surface land claim rights, shared land claim rights, fishing, wildlife rights and a portion of the Voisey's Bay mine. In 2005 the Labrador Inuit enacted the first Government of Nunatsiavut, a self-governing regional authority.

Although the process has been long and arduous, the Labrador Inuit have confidently asserted themselves as a strong and united group who have persevered for decades to achieve self-government control of traditional lands. The Nunatsiavut Government provides strong leadership in business, economy and advocacy and offers many cultural and social programs for Inuit beneficiaries. The Labrador Inuit maintain strong ties to their land and culture.

EMMA'S STORY

EMMA REELIS IS a revered Inuk Elder living in St. John's. Those who have spent any time in Newfoundland and Labrador will be familiar with Emma as she is often the Elder responsible for delivering prayers for events and land ceremonies throughout the province. Every one of Emma's prayers is different: she takes a great deal of pride in carefully creating prayers unique to each ceremony or event.

Emma was born in Nain, Labrador but moved to Goose Bay when her father got a job on the American airbase. Sadly, Emma's father passed away when she was only ten years old. After her father passed away, Emma's mother began to drink heavily and when it became clear that her mother could not care for Emma and her siblings, a Moravian minister in the community gave her mother an ultimatum: either put the children up for adoption or send them to residential school. Emma's mother chose to send the children to residential school in North West River.

Like countless other Indigenous children across the country, Emma suffered physical, mental and emotional abuse at the school. In 1963 she left the school on her own and got a cleaning job at a nurse's station at North West River. Soon after that she moved to Goose Bay. Tragically, she was re-victimized shortly after arriving in Goose Bay by a friend of her mother.

Emma got a job at the hospital in Goose Bay where she met Kevin, the man that would become her husband. In 1964 they married and moved to St. John's. Emma describes her marriage as difficult. Her husband was abusive, had addiction issues and often spent nights away from the home. Emma left him a few times but always came back because she couldn't leave her children in her husband's care. When her children reached school-age, Emma went to work at the Waterford hospital in food service, a position she held for 27 years. Throughout those years, Emma stayed with her husband and raised five children, despite continued abuse at home. Emma feels that her early trauma, time in residential school and the abuse

she experienced after leaving the school broke down her confidence and self-esteem. It was her low self-esteem and brokenness that kept her with her husband for so many years. Emma stayed with her husband until the end, through a serious illness during the final stages of his life and until his death.

Ten years ago, Emma was asked by her friend, Myrtle, who was the Executive Director of the St. John's Native Friendship Centre at the time, to come visit the centre. After spending some time there, she connected with Danny Pottle and Judge Jim Igloliorte, who saw intelligence, promise and leadership skills within Emma, and before long she was asked to run for President of the Friendship Centre. Emma says that even though she had fears and feelings of inadequacy, she accepted the position and has been involved with the Friendship Centre in many capacities ever since. She currently serves as Vice President of the Board.

Emma has found that working with the Friendship Centre on initiatives that are focused on ending violence against women and attending various retreats have been meaningful and therapeutic. And although Emma lives a quiet and peaceful life, she says she still sometimes has negative thoughts as a result of her past trauma. Prayer has played a crucial role in Emma's recovery, not only prayers for herself but prayers for her family, her friends and for all of those who suffer. Everyone who meets Emma loves her and she is truly a gift to her grown children, seven grandchildren, three great grandchildren and the communities she serves with her prayers and words of wisdom.

THE MI'KMAQ OF NEWFOUNDLAND

THE MI'KMAQ PEOPLE have lived in the Atlantic region for more than 10,000 years and were among the first Indigenous groups in Canada to have contact with Europeans. The Mi'kmaq were a hunting-gathering people who harvested resources from the land and sea according to the seasons. The Mi'kmaq lived in small groups of families in teepees and later tar-paper shacks, and were self-sustained for thousands of years. English and French records indicate that the Mi'kmaq hunted, fished and trapped along the west coast of Newfoundland along the south coast to Placentia Bay during the 1700's, travelling back and forth between Cape Breton and Newfoundland.^[8]

It is not entirely clear how long the Mi'kmaq have occupied Newfoundland. Mi'kmaq oral tradition holds that they have occupied Newfoundland since before European contact. Others argue that it wasn't until about 1760 that the Mi'kmaq occupied the land on a permanent basis. We know for certain that groups of Mi'kmaq hunted, trapped, fished and lived for periods of time in both Cape Breton and Newfoundland and continued to move between the two until the beginning of the 1900's.^[9] During the 1800's, some Mi'kmaq worked as guides for explorers and colonial government agents. Some Mi'kmaq also worked as repairmen for the telegraph line and delivered mail in winter.^[10]

The traditional Mi'kmaq way of life was significantly impacted by the completion of the railway across the Island in 1898. Access to transportation within the interior made it easier for settlers to live permanently in the interior. The railway also gave hunters easy access to good hunting grounds, which decimated the caribou population in the interior—an animal of major importance to Mi'kmaq.

During the 20th century a number of factors made life more difficult for the Mi'kmaq. As in many parts of Canada, the Church discouraged Mi'kmaq traditions and dismissed Mi'kmaq leaders. Logging operations reduced areas for trap lines and hunting. Additionally, the decline in the fur market in the 1920's negatively impacted the Mi'kmaq who

relied on this economy to survive. While some Mi'kmaq were able to find work during WWII, it has been reported that the Mi'kmaq living in the Conne River area had a low standard of living at the time of Confederation.^[11]

When Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949 the Mi'kmaq were not recognized as having Indian status and, therefore, were not eligible for the federal government-administered benefits afforded to other Indigenous people in Canada. The Qalipu First Nation (made up of 66 Mi'kmaq communities) has no reserve land and continues to fight for official Indian status for band members. Miawpukek First Nation in Conne River is the only Mi'kmaq reserve in the province.

THE INNU OF LABRADOR

THE INNU (FORMERLY known as the Naskapi-Montagnais) are an Algonquian speaking people whose traditional homeland is the Eastern portion of the Quebec-Labrador interior. The Innu language is called Innu-aimun. The Innu are perhaps less well-known than some of the other Indigenous groups in Canada. This is partly due to the fact that until fairly recently the Innu spent much of the year deep in the interior of their traditional land and infrequently visited the coast to trade. The Innu were one of the last Indigenous groups in Canada to permanently settle into villages in Labrador, which did not happen until the 1960's.^[12]

Traditionally, the Innu were nomadic hunters, but throughout the 19th century, some Innu engaged in trapping, mostly as a secondary occupation to hunting. Throughout the 19th century, the Innu made visits to the coast to trade with Basques, missionaries and later the British.

The first major disruption to the Innu way of life came when they began using guns to hunt. This decreased the need for the Innu to hunt in large groups. However, the most destructive period to the Innu way of life started after WWI. When fur prices rose after the war, many Southern Inuit moved into traditional Innu territory to set up individual trap lines. The Southern Inuit laid down laws of trespass—a system unknown to the Innu. This kept the Innu from using their best land for trapping and hunting. In addition to this, after 1900, forestry projects began operation in Innu territory which further decreased traditional Innu hunting grounds.

By the 1950's many Innu were in need of assistance from the government. The creation of schools during this time kept Innu children and their parents in villages for a number of months throughout the year, significantly decreasing the opportunity for children to learn traditional ways of living from their parents and grandparents. Furthermore, many Innu adults were pressured by authorities to stay in the village for fear they would not receive assistance if they went away hunting.^[13]

Traditionally a nomadic people, settlement totally transformed the Innu way of life and was devastating to the social fabric of the community. The government provided inadequate housing supports with a severe lack of water and sewage systems. The location of the village of Davis Inlet was inappropriate for the Innu. Situated on an island, it cut them off for part of the year from their traditional lands and kept them from hunting—the activity that was so central to their culture, health and well-being.^[14] The Innu were also negatively affected by flooding for the Churchill Falls project, low flying flights that had a detrimental effect on the caribou, as well as mining operations that impacted their traditional lands.^[15]

In 1970, the communities of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish formed Innu Nation (formerly the Naskapi-Montagnais Innu Association) to improve conditions and to advocate for land rights. The Innu communities of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish were both formally recognized by 2006 as First Nations reserves and the Innu have received official Indian Status eligibility under the Indian Act. Despite the fact that the Innu faced incredible challenges, many Innu in Labrador maintain a strong connection to the land, culture and family.

MARIE'S STORY

MARIE IS AN Innu woman from Labrador living and working in St. John's. Family is extremely important to Marie. Not only her own family of four children with her husband, but also her extended family including many brothers and sisters and dozens of nieces and nephews. But like many Indigenous people from Labrador, Marie and her family have had to leave home to pursue post-secondary education and to find meaningful employment.

From her early childhood up until she was in high school, Marie spent almost six months each year "in the country" living a traditional lifestyle on the land far away from the community or "the village" as they called it: three months in the spring and three months in the fall. In the country, her family lived off of the resources of the land and were in constant movement hunting, eating wild meats and picking berries. This is where her family felt healthy and spiritually whole, where they lived out the traditions and culture of her ancestors, and where lessons were passed down through generations. As Marie and her siblings got older, her family would return to the village for the children to attend school in between trips to the country. Life in the country is integral to Innu well-being, so living in the village was hard on the families both socially and economically. Marie says that many men were "broken" while they lived in the village and resorted to heavy drinking and unhealthy behaviors. This was the case for Marie's father as well. It was hard for Innu men to provide for their families while living in the village, living a lifestyle that was at odds with the traditional lifestyle and culture they had lived since time immemorial.

Marie enjoyed school and was a strong student, so when she reached high school she made the decision to stop going to the country to devote more time to her studies. Marie became a mother for the first time during her high school years, but despite this, she graduated and began a degree at Memorial University of Newfoundland. It was during these post-secondary studies that she met

her husband who was also studying at MUN. Marie was raising two young children while she was completing her degree, and because her first language was Innu, she was also studying in a language that was not her mother tongue. Marie worked hard and successfully completed her post-secondary education.

Marie suggests that many Indigenous people in Labrador move to more urban areas to pursue post-secondary education and many move to more urban areas to be closer to medical services. Diabetes is a serious problem within Innu communities in Labrador and those who suffer from complications from the disease need more comprehensive services only found in larger, more urban areas. After having lived in St. John's for years for school and work, Marie says that a racist attitude still exists, "people still think that Indigenous people in urban areas don't pay taxes, that Inuit and Innu are the same people and that English is their first language."

Marie worked in the education system for a number of years until 2013, when she and her husband started a training business and continue to work as consultants today. In addition to consulting work, Marie recently took a position in St. John's working as a liaison between non-profit organizations and the provincial government to improve the lives of women throughout the province. Even though Marie and her family are generally content in St. John's, she says it's painful to be away from her family living in Labrador. With the right job offer, Marie would definitely move back.

Marie is highly committed to her family and the future and well-being of her people. Marie carries on the strong legacy of her parents, leading by example in passing on her Innu culture and values to the next generation of Innu children.

THE BEOTHUK

THE BEOTHUK WERE an Algonquian-speaking people of Newfoundland and were the descendants of the Indigenous group called the Little Passage people. When Europeans arrived to Newfoundland around 1500, evidence suggests that the Beothuk were living all over the coast of Newfoundland with the exception of the upper Avalon Peninsula. Evidence also suggests that that Beothuk, like many Indigenous groups in Atlantic Canada, moved around to hunt and fish according to the seasons.^[16]

The arrival of the Europeans and more specifically, the encroachment of white-settlement and more permanent fishing stations along the coast of Newfoundland were detrimental to the survival of the Beothuk. The Beothuk did not engage in significant trade with settlers and generally retreated to the interior of the island to avoid them. There were a number of altercations between groups of Beothuk and English settlements, as competition for resources increased and the Beothuk became unable to use the land and coast like they had pre-contact. By the 1800's, the Beothuk were significantly reduced in numbers and were facing major challenges subsisting on diminished resources. Sadly, the last surviving Beothuk, Shanawdithit, was captured in 1827 and died in St. John's in 1829.

OMISSION FROM THE TERMS OF UNION

WHEN NEWFOUNDLAND AND Labrador joined Confederation in 1949, there was no mention of any Indigenous group or responsibility to Indigenous people in the province in formal discussions prior to or upon joining Confederation (referred to as the Terms of Union). In the other provinces and territories in Canada, most Indigenous groups and individuals were registered under the Indian Act upon joining Confederation and have official Indian status. Having Indian status renders a person eligible for benefits and services provided by the Federal Government.^[17]

Until 1954, there was no federal-provincial agreement in place concerning financial responsibility for Indigenous groups in Newfoundland and Labrador.^[18] Being omitted from the Terms of Union had many lasting negative impacts on virtually all Indigenous groups in Newfoundland and Labrador including serious shortfalls in the delivery of community health services, community infrastructure and land claims.

Over the years, Canada and the Newfoundland and Labrador government have alluded to a number of reasons why Indigenous people were left out of the Terms of Union. Among the reasons were that neither the Mi'kmaq nor the Innu lived on-reserve, that Indigenous people were enfranchised at the time of the Union, that the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous groups were “small groups” and that the province wanted to administer their own Indigenous affairs.^[19]

The chance for Indigenous people in the province to receive benefits on par with other Indigenous people in the country was further hindered in 1951 when Canada undertook a registration process in the form of a national census to identify and register all Indians. This is also when band lists were introduced and created. Newfoundland and Labrador was also omitted from this process. In 1960, when the Indian Act was amended to allow First Nations and Inuit people the right to vote—Newfoundland and Canada still failed to recognize Indigenous people in the province. Registration was only offered to Newfoundland Mi'kmaq in 1984, after a long struggle.

Currently, the Inuit of Labrador have settled their land claims, the two Innu communities of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish have been recognized as First Nations reserves and the reserve at Conne River is recognized as a federal First Nation. Despite this, many issues remain regarding the rights to land, access to services and registration under the Indian Act for many people with Mi'kmaq ancestry in the province.

The Southern Inuit continue to fight for land claims. Some argue that the reasons why the Southern Inuit have had a more challenging struggle is the result of a historical lack of representation by the Moravians. The Inuit in northern Labrador have historically had the Moravian church acting on their behalf—thus, making them more visible to the provincial and federal governments. The Southern Inuit have not had the benefit of that representation. As a result of the lack of recognition under the Indian Act, Southern Inuit communities have some of the worst infrastructure in the province. Access to clean and sufficient water systems continues to be a major issue in many communities, negatively affecting food choices and burdening family budgets.^[20] And because the communities are not recognized as reserves, they are not eligible for funding for services and infrastructure made available to other First Nations reserves in Canada.

RESETTLEMENT AND RELOCATION

IN ADDITION TO omission from the Terms of Union in 1949, the provincial government launched a resettlement program in the early 1950's which negatively impacted Indigenous groups in the province. The goal of the resettlement policy was to make the administration of services to people in smaller and poorer communities more financially efficient by relocating smaller communities to larger and more central towns.^[21] Today this program is generally seen as a failure.

Indigenous people, especially those living in the communities of Hebron and Nutak, faced major challenges when they were forced to relocate. For residents of those two communities, moving separated them from their traditional homeland, diminished their relationship with their land and culture, decreased their level of self-sufficiency and clearly contributed to a decline in physical health. Moving to communities with housing shortages and to communities where the best fishing and hunting areas were already spoken for disrupted social hierarchies and in some cases, increased dependency on welfare.^[22]

In 1967, the Innu in Labrador were settled into two communities—Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet. The Davis Inlet location was situated on an island and, because of spring break up, the Innu were unable to access their hunting grounds from Davis Inlet for part of the year. The Davis Inlet settlement became overcrowded, houses were substandard at best and many homes did not have running water or sewage. Access to clean water was inadequate.^[23] After schools were built, many families stayed in villages to be close to their children while they attended school. This resulted in less time spent in the country, living off the land and being engaged in the traditional activities that were so central to Innu culture and well-being. And

while the Innu communities and Innu people have since been recognised as First Nations reserves and have been registered under the Indian Act, the devastating effects of settlement on the health and well-being of the Innu are still evident today.

As previously discussed, the Southern Inuit were also negatively impacted by resettlement policies in the 1960's when many people living in small southern Inuit communities were relocated to Cartwright and Mary's Harbour. By 1970, one fourth of the population in southeastern Labrador had moved to more central areas.^[24]

ABBY'S STORY

ABIGAIL WEBB IS an Inuk from Nain, Labrador. She currently works as a Registered Dietitian for Labrador Grenfell Heath and lives in Happy Valley-Goose Bay with her spouse and young son.

Abby was raised in Nain where she was immersed in her Inuit culture, hunting and trapping with her family, participating in land-based activities and sports and, of course, eating traditional food. She left Nain after high school to pursue post-secondary education. First she received a Diploma in Sports and Leisure Management from Holland College in Prince Edward Island. She then went on to the University of Prince Edward Island to complete a Bachelor of Science Degree in Foods and Nutrition including a Dietetic Internship Program. Although Abby completed her studies in PEI, during semester breaks she travelled back to Nain where she worked in community health and outreach.

Abby has experienced the great value of being immersed in Inuit culture for her physical, emotional and spiritual health. Alternatively, she has witnessed first-hand the problems that are being faced in her home community and in other northern Labrador communities. She has been impacted by suicides and mental health issues both within her family and her community. She has seen the challenges created by unemployment, addiction, food insecurity, inadequate housing and loss of culture.

Abby believes that we all have a part in caring for and improving our communities. After returning to Labrador to work as a dietitian, she became a respite foster parent. In this role she has been able to care for several Indigenous children within her community. Abby says that it has broadened her insight into the challenges that families face within the region and it allows her to give back to her community in a meaningful way.

When asked about barriers to living as an Indigenous person in an urban area, Abby speaks to the high cost of living and the shortage of housing. Childcare is very hard to find and is significantly more expensive than in other parts of Atlantic Canada. When Abby returns to work from maternity leave this summer, she will have to rely on family to care for her son as there are no child care centres that care for children under age two. Despite the challenges, Labrador is home for Abby and her family.

Abby speaks from her own cultural knowledge and upbringing to illustrate the importance of land-based activities and eating traditional foods for health. In her work as a foster parent, she supports Indigenous families and helps them to move forward. Abby is truly a role model and will no doubt be making a positive contribution to Indigenous people and communities for years to come.

LEGACY OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS AND CURRENT ISSUES

PROVINCIALY-ADMINISTERED RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

were attended by Innu, Inuit and Southern Inuit children and youth. The conditions and abuse that were suffered at residential schools throughout the country have been well-documented.^[25]

In Newfoundland and Labrador, residential schools were administered by the provincial government, run by the International Grenfell Association and the Moravian Mission and funded by the Federal government. Lawsuits claiming physical, mental and sexual abuse as well as culture loss have been filed against the schools in Labrador. In 2016, class action lawsuits were settled out of court for a lump sum payment to the plaintiffs along with an order for the federal government to fund reconciliation and commemorations programs in the province.

Survivors in the province were left out of an apology made to residential school survivors by Prime Minister Harper in 2008 because the schools were set up in Newfoundland and Labrador prior to joining Confederation in 1949. However, in 2017, Prime Minister Trudeau made a formal apology to the Innu, Inuit and Southern Inuit in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

The current high rates of addiction, physical illness and mental health issues within Indigenous communities can be traced back to the trauma suffered by previous generations. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the intergenerational impact of the residential school system can be seen today among the Indigenous population in Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHILD WELFARE

IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND Labrador, child protection services, voluntary residence and support services are provided by the Department of Children and Youth Family Services (CFYS). There are no mandated First Nations Child and Family services agencies in Newfoundland and Labrador. Therefore, the more than 7500 Indigenous children in care in the province fall under the jurisdiction of CFYS.^[26] Indigenous children are significantly over-represented in the child welfare system in Newfoundland and Labrador.^[27]

In 2005, the Nunatsiavut Government received sovereignty over child welfare matters with the Labrador Inuit land claims agreement. Currently, the Nunatsiavut Government works in tandem with CFYS in child welfare cases and have made significant improvements in decreasing the number of children that are removed in Labrador for care by increasing kinship services, whereby a child is placed into the custody of family members, rather than with an unknown foster family.

The Innu Nation and the CYFS have had less meaningful partnerships and communication over the years; rates of apprehension of Innu children are high.^[28] The Innu generally remain understandably mistrustful of child protection workers given the historical injustices faced by the Innu after years of failed and flawed government policies being imposed on them.

CATHERINE'S STORY

CATHERINE IS A bright, young professional Inuk originally from northern Labrador. She currently lives in Goose Bay.

Catherine lived on the north coast throughout her entire childhood. After she graduated from high school, Catherine moved to the mainland to complete her post-secondary studies, then returned to Labrador to work a short time after.

However, for Catherine and many young Inuit professionals, moving back to the north coast can be a challenge. There is a severe housing shortage in northern communities. Many of the available housing units get rented out to contractors who must house their workers for large industrial/developmental projects in the north. Those who own housing units prefer to rent to those contractors because they stand to make a huge profit on rental income from contractors who will pay top dollar. Individual renters can't compete with the money that the contractors and corporations will pay out for rental space.

The housing problem is compounded for young professionals because many organizations and agencies that operate in the north, including the Nunatsiavut Government, require their staff to live in one of the northern communities in which they serve. And while there are positions within those agencies and organizations in which housing is provided, it is not the case for all positions. Young professionals are sometimes forced to live for years in crowded, transitional housing in order to work in their home communities after they move back. This can have a detrimental impact on their mental and physical health. Some eventually leave promising positions in northern Labrador because they cannot secure adequate housing.

Catherine is eager to live and work on the north coast of Labrador but because of the dire shortage of available housing she has been forced to live in Goose Bay until housing can be secured. In addition to housing shortages, Catherine also points out the difficulties in accessing basic health care services in the north. Fairly mainstream and generally widely available health care services like physiotherapy are only available in Goose Bay. Air travel is very expensive and for some Indigenous people living on the north coast, it's just easier to live in Goose Bay close to comprehensive health services. In terms of social supports for Indigenous people in the city, Catherine reports that Happy Valley-Goose Bay is considered a service centre for Indigenous groups in Labrador and, as a result, there are a number of service centres administering services for the Innu, Inuit and Southern Inuit.

Catherine is committed to her family, her profession and to helping her people. Though she is unable to work and live on the north coast now, she is hopeful that in the future, she and her partner will secure housing in the community she considers her home.

SUPPORTS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN URBAN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR has the highest number of Indigenous people living off-reserve and in urban areas out of all of the Atlantic Provinces. Despite this, there are only two Indigenous organizations whose primary mandate is to serve Indigenous people living off-reserve—the First Light St. John’s Friendship Centre and the Labrador Native Friendship Centre (located in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador).

In St. John’s, the Friendship Centre is the only organization that offers Indigenous specific cultural programs to all of the pre-dominant Indigenous groups in the province. First Light Friendship Centre offers culture and recreation programs, youth programming, social enterprise development and training, the Indigenous Patient Navigator program in partnership with Eastern Health, a hostel, a shelter and many other services and programs. First Light has a high profile within the St. John’s community, and has partnered with the municipal, provincial and federal governments on a number of innovative initiatives in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Labrador Friendship Centre offers many programs and services to Indigenous people living in the area. The centre offers cultural programming, an Aboriginal Head start and Family Centre, assisted living, a hostel, cafeteria, and youth outreach programming. The Nunatsiavut Government and the NunatuKavut Community Council also offer some services and programming in Happy Valley-Goose Bay for beneficiaries and members.

There are many people with Mi’kmaq ancestry living off-reserve and in urban areas in western Newfoundland. The Miawpukek First Nation at the mouth of the Conne River has a population of 787 people living on-reserve and 1779 living off-reserve. The Qalipu First Nation has more than 24,000 members living in Newfoundland and abroad—all off-reserve. While the Qalipu First Nation is recognized as a First Nation Band they have no designated reserve lands. Band members are spread out over a number of communities in the western part of the province. The Qalipu First Nation Band offers cultural activities and programs throughout the communities they serve but without a land base, there are significant challenges in offering centralized services or housing supports. Currently, there is no organization in an urban or off-reserve area that offers significant services for Indigenous people in that region.

URBAN INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE IN HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE FACE unique challenges when living in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The cost of rent is very high in HVGB, child care is difficult to find and everyday household goods and groceries are expensive compared to St. John's. Indigenous people living in the city also report facing overt racism: landlords are reluctant to rent to Indigenous people and many Indigenous people have faced racial discrimination in hiring practices. Often, Indigenous people are not making a choice to live in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Instead they feel forced to live there due to a lack of housing in their home communities on the north coast or to be close to comprehensive health services. While the Indigenous community members consulted for this project reported that there were a number of organizations including the Nunatsiavut Government, the NunatuKavut Community Council and the Friendship Centre that offered programs and services for their beneficiaries and members, they do not report accessing these organizations to connect with their culture. For so many Indigenous people in Labrador, connecting with culture means being on the land and in the country, far removed from the urban environment.

CONCLUSION

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR has a unique Indigenous history and differs in many ways from the other Atlantic Provinces. First, there are four pre-dominant Indigenous groups in the province not including the Beothuk. Indigenous groups in this province have no significant history of treaties, and because they did not enter into Confederation with the rest of Canada in or around 1867, Indigenous people were not subject to the regulations of the Indian Act. As Indigenous people in Newfoundland and Labrador were not subject to the regulations of the Indian Act, they also were not afforded any of the benefits of the act either, including housing supports, health benefits and educational benefits. Indigenous people in Newfoundland and Labrador were essentially landless in the eyes of the governments, and to this day, there is only a small reserve set aside for the Mi'kmaq on the entire island of Newfoundland. Conflict and contention continue to mark the relationship between the Mi'kmaq and the federal government with respect to registration rules under the Indian Act.

The Innu of Labrador were one of the last Indigenous groups in Canada to be settled into permanent villages. The two main Innu villages were not permanent settlements until the late 1960's, and for many years after, many families continued to live on the land for months at a time. Adapting to a non-Indigenous way of life has been hard on the Innu people and they have faced many social problems as a result of the imposed settlement. For many Indigenous people on the north coast, the effects of residential schools, the growing reliance on non-Indigenous goods and foods and the isolation and lack of connection that many people experience, have all contributed to physical and spiritual health issues and higher rates of suicide among community members.

Despite these issues, the Inuit, Innu, Southern Inuit and Mi'kmaq people living in urban areas in Newfoundland and Labrador are strong, resilient and rooted in their cultures. Representative governments and organizations are making great progress in land rights and ownership of natural resources. Further, representative governments are consistently increasing their autonomy over Indigenous affairs in areas including child welfare, land and resource use and education. And in the urban areas of Newfoundland and Labrador there is a fast-growing population of strong, innovative Indigenous men and women who are committed to helping their people move forward.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Thinking about your own community, what urban Aboriginal organizations are you aware of and how can we increase their visibility and better support the work that they are doing?
2. Given the high percentage of Indigenous persons in our province who live off-reserve (94.1%, Census 2016), what are some ways that we can ensure their voices are represented in our communities, our health and education systems, and at all levels of government?
3. Research demonstrates that an urban Indigenous community's identity, cultural needs and well-being are best served when they can access health and social services through a Family Resource Centre or a Friendship Centre. What is it about the way that these organizations provide programs and services that makes them so effective?
4. Thinking about the long history of colonization in this country, from the early settlement of the land by Europeans, to the Indian Act and residential school system, and even including the current child welfare system, in what ways does this history of colonization continue to impact urban Indigenous populations in Newfoundland and Labrador today?
5. How can the general population, the education system and all levels of government use this *Our History, Our Stories* document to establish and maintain respectful relationships with urban Indigenous populations in Newfoundland and Labrador?
6. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission says "*reconciliation offers a new way of living together.*" How does better understanding the history of off-reserve Aboriginal people impact your perception of urban Aboriginal people in Canada?

NOTES

- [1] Statistics Canada. 2018. *Newfoundland and Labrador [Province] (table). Aboriginal Population Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-510-X2016001. Ottawa. Released July 18, 2018. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed February 3, 2019).*
- There are three registered First Nation Reserves in Newfoundland and Labrador, (Miawpukek First Nation (Mi'kmaq), Natuashish First Nation (Innu) and Sheshatshiu First Nation (Innu). Qalipu First Nation (Mi'kmaq) is recognized as a First Nation Band but does not have reserve land. It is important to note that many Inuit and Southern Inuit people in Labrador would not consider themselves to be living "on or off-reserve", rather they would consider themselves to be living on traditional territory or in a land claims area. Census data however, counts those living on traditional territory in Labrador (aside from Natuashish and Sheshatshiu) as living "off-reserve".
- [2] "Labrador Metis. The Labrador Virtual Museum, accessed January 4, 2018. <http://www.labradorvirtualmuseum.ca/home/metis.htm>
- [3] Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 2000.
- [4] John C. Kennedy, "Southern Inuit of NunatuKavut: the Historical Background," last modified July 2012 <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/Indigenous/southern-inuit.php>
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] Nunatsiavut Government Website, accessed March 1, 2018. <http://www.nunatsiavut.com/>
- [7] Ibid.
- [8] Ralph T. Pastore, "The History of the Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland," last modified October, 2016 <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/Indigenous/mikmaq-history.php>
- [9] Charles A. Martijn, "Early Mikmaq Presence in Southern Newfoundland: An Ethnohistorical Perspective, c.1500-1763," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, Vol 19, No 1: The New Early Modern Newfoundland: Part 2 (2003).
- [10] Pastore, "The History of the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq," <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/Indigenous/mikmaq-history.php>.
- [11] Ibid.
- [12] Adrian Tanner, "Innu History" last modified May, 2016. <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/aboriginal/innu-history.php>
- [13] Marie Wadden, *Nitassinan: The Innu Struggle to Reclaim their Homeland* (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre Ltd, 1991) 66.
- [14] Constance Backhouse and Donald McRae, *Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on the Treatment of the Innu of Labrador by the Government of Canada*, 2002, 1.
- [15] Wadden, 36-39.
- [16] Ralph, T Pastore, "The Beothuk" last modified 1997 <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/aboriginal/beothuk.php>
- [17] Registration under the *Indian Act* is not automatic with self-identification or registration with a Band. Registration under the *Act* remains a contentious issue in Canada. Requirement regarding Indigenous ancestry based on parental lineage must be met and approved by the Federal government.
- [18] Backhouse and McRae, 11.
- [19] Maura Hanrahan, "The Lasting Breach: The Omission of Aboriginal People from the Terms of Union between Newfoundland and Canada and its Ongoing Impacts," *Collected Research Papers of the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening our Place in Canada*, Volume 1. St. John's: Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening our Place in Canada, 2003, 236.
- [20] Hanrahan, 245.
- [21] James Ryan, "Economic Development and the Innu Settlement: the Establishment of Sheshatshit," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 8, no. 1 (1988): 5-7.
- [22] Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. *Relocation of Aboriginal Peoples*, Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services Canada, Volume 2, 1996, 411-413.
- [23] "A well Intentioned Bumbling," CBC Digital Radio Archives, February 1, 1993, <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1769605179>, (accessed January 5th, 2018).
- [24] "Southern Inuit of NunatuKavut History," Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador, accessed January 8, 2018. <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/aboriginal/southern-inuit-history.php>
- [25] See, for example, Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubunacadie*, Nova Scotia. Lockport: Roseway, 1992.
- [26] Anne Blumenthal and Vanda Sinha, "Newfoundland and Labrador's Child Welfare System," Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal, http://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/en/NL_final_infosheet_O.pdf (accessed January, 2018)
- [27] Ossie Michelin, "Nearly a Third of Kids in Protective Custody are Indigenous," APTN National News, last modified October 29, 2014. <http://aptnews.ca/2014/10/29/nearly-third-kids-protective-custody-newfoundland-labrador-come-Indigenous-communities/>
- [28] Ibid.

