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The Labrador Metis and the politics of identity: understanding the archaeological past to negotiate a sustainable future

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The Labrador Metis are a people of mixed European and Inuit ancestry who live along the coast of central and southern Labrador, Canada. Our research project, Understanding the Past to Build the Future, is a multidisciplinary project that interprets the history of the Labrador Metis. This project produces research of value to the Labrador Metis, and provides a foundation for further initiatives on the part of the Metis in the areas of heritage research and conservation, education, political action, and economic development. The Labrador Metis have undergone transformative changes in the last 20 years, particularly regarding their own developing sense of cultural identity and shared history, and have become increasingly politically active and economically directed. This paper will provide a background to the ways in which our project has been able to explore Labrador Metis identity in the past and in the present, particularly drawing off of archaeological research.

Introduction

Our research project, *Understanding the Past to Build the Future*, documents and interprets the history of the Labrador Metis. The Labrador Metis are a people of mixed European and Inuit ancestry, who live in the small communities along the coast of central and southern Labrador, Canada (Figure 1). This is a multidisciplinary collaborative research project involving both university-based academic researchers and community-based Metis researchers. Our project explores the archaeology, history, ethnography, and genealogy of the Labrador Metis. We are also working to develop practices that promote Labrador Metis interests in education and sustainable development. In this paper, we shall focus specifically the ways in which archaeological research has re-framed and re-invigorated our knowledge of Labrador Metis history, in order to situate Metis heritage as they plan for the future.

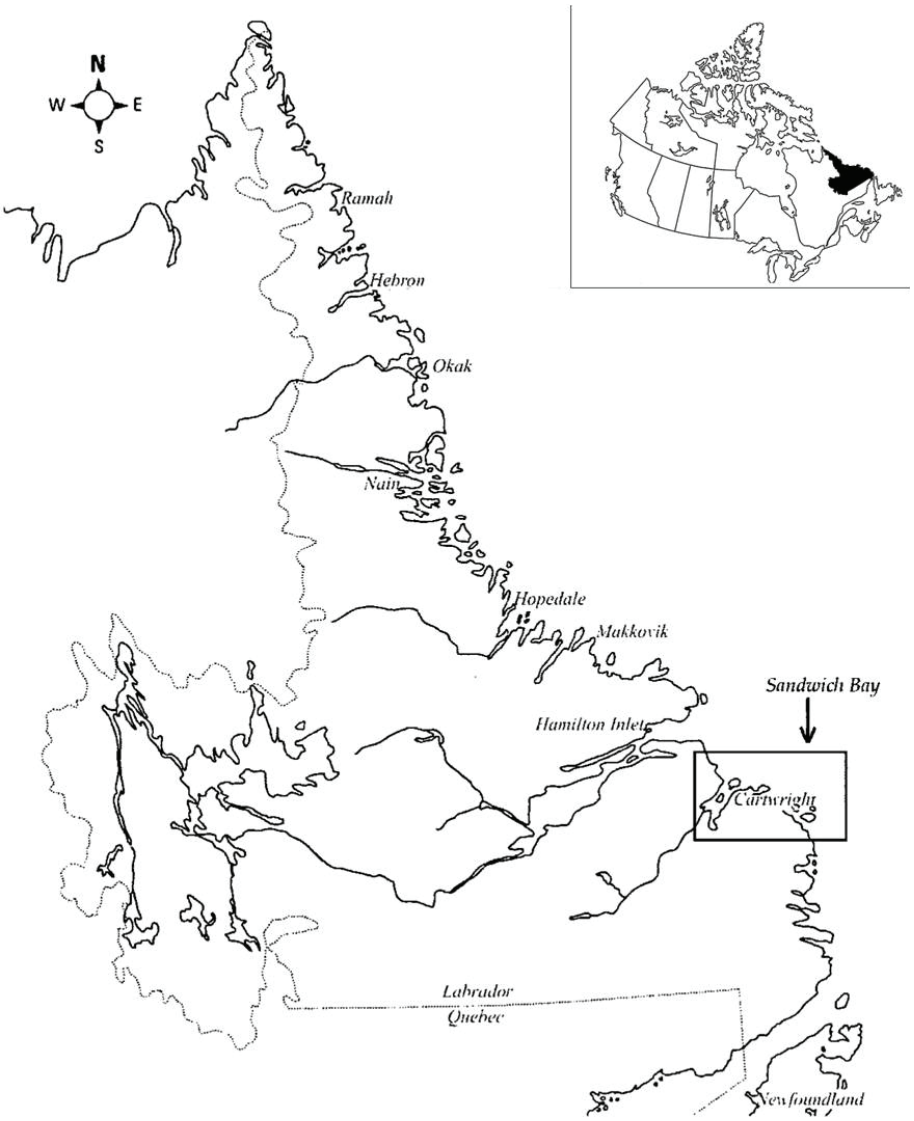

Figure 1. Map of Labrador (after Murphy, 2011). Archaeological sites discussed in the text are located in Sandwich Bay (indicated). Inset map shows the location of Labrador in Canada.

History of the Labrador Metis

The Labrador Metis are a people of mixed European and Inuit heritage, and exploring their origins requires an understanding of the history of European and Inuit interactions in southern Labrador. The Labrador Inuit are descendants of the pre-contact Thule Inuit, who entered northern Labrador in the late 15th century A.D. The Thule people continued to move southward, and their descendants, the historic Inuit, reached southern Labrador by the late 16th century. By this time, the Inuit were occasionally described by visiting Europeans with whom they traded each summer (Delanglez, 1948; Études/Inuit/Studies 1980).

Europeans had frequented the southern Labrador coast since the 16th century. Initially, Basque and French crews came to southern Labrador for the purposes of fishing and whaling, and established seasonally occupied stations along the coast. During this time, the Europeans engaged in occasional trade

with the Inuit now resident in southern Labrador. French permanent settlement along the south Labrador coast began in the early eighteenth century, for the purposes of fishing, sealing, furring, and trading with the Inuit. European settlement along the southern coast changed after 1763, when the Treaty of Paris excluded the French from this area. Fishermen and merchants from Britain and from the island of Newfoundland began to populate the south coast from this point onwards. From the late 18th century, European men who came to Labrador to work in the fishery married Inuit women, forming the ancestral population of today's Labrador Metis (Jackson, 1982; Kennedy, 1995, 1997; Plaice, 1990).

Labrador Metis ethnogenesis

By contrast to other Aboriginal groups in Labrador, the Metis have only recently begun to publicly acknowledge their Aboriginal identity, mobilize politically, and lobby to have their Aboriginality recognized by others (Kennedy, 1996; 1997; Plaice, 1996). Within the broader political context, the Labrador Metis find themselves sandwiched between other, sometimes competing Aboriginal nations. Two Labrador Aboriginal groups—the Inuit and the Innu—have a much longer history of asserting their Aboriginal identity than the Metis. Both the Innu and the Inuit have negotiated with the federal and provincial governments since the 1950s to secure fiscal agreements, recognition of their Aboriginality, and (in the case of the Inuit) a formalized land claim agreement (Alcantara, 2008; Kennedy, 1997). In 2005, the Inuit achieved self-government with the formation of the Nunatsiavut Government, which is a regional Inuit political entity within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (LIA, 2005). The Innu and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador have recently signed the New Dawn Agreement, which consists of an Agreement-in-Principal regarding Innu land claims, as well as an agreement on a hydroelectric project in their traditional lands (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2011).

By contrast to the Inuit and the Innu, Labrador Metis ethnogenesis developed comparatively late. This was due in part to the assumption that southern Labrador was not considered to be a traditional Inuit homeland. Rather, the Inuit have typically been thought to live only in northern Labrador. Any Inuit presence in the regions south of Hamilton Inlet (Figure 1) were thought to be short-term visits made to trade with Europeans, at which point the Inuit returned north. This portrayal of the Inuit as northern residents only is a long-standing narrative, which has circulated in published literature since the early twentieth century (Rankin et al., 2012). By the mid-twentieth century, provincial and federal government agencies officially codified this 'natural' ethnic landscape. Both Inuit and the descendants of early European-Inuit unions living north of Hamilton Inlet would be considered 'native' (and now Inuit), while persons of similar mixed Inuit-European ancestries living further south were not (Kennedy, 1997; LIA, 2005; Plaice, 1996). The residents of southern Labrador were assumed to be of European and not Aboriginal ancestry.

Social pressures meant that residents of southern Labrador with Inuit ancestry downplayed their heritage until comparatively recent times. Prevailing notions of social stigma meant that prior to the 1980s, persons appearing 'dark' or 'native' were negatively evaluated. Acknowledging one's Aboriginal ancestry was tacitly discouraged (Kennedy, 1996, 1997). Though elements of Inuit culture were maintained (in the persistence of Inuit material culture, for example), and families were aware of Aboriginal members in their family histories, group consciousness was tacit, unacknowledged, and unsupported by social or administrative institutions (Kennedy, 1997). As a result, the political mobilization of the Labrador Metis only began in 1985, with the establishment of the Labrador Metis Association (now the NunatuKavut Community Council or NCC).

Thus, a combination of external and internal factors meant that the Labrador Metis have only recently begun to explicitly acknowledge their own heritage and to argue for their political recognition. In the last 20 years, the Labrador Metis have undergone transformative changes, particularly regarding their own developing sense of cultural identity and shared history. With the rise of substantial resource development projects in their traditional lands, and the negotiation of land claims agreements with neighbouring First Nations and Inuit groups in Labrador, the Labrador Metis have become increasingly politically active and economically directed.

Understanding the past to build the future

Much of the history of the Metis people remains buried in archaeological sites or hidden in faraway archives. Until recently, the Metis and their southern Labrador homeland has seen comparatively little research. This is a profound issue for the Metis in their struggle for political acceptance of their Aborignality. Aboriginal groups in Canada who have not yet signed a treaty with federal and provincial governments can negotiate a land claim as part of the Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement process. Comprehensive Land Claim Agreements provide Aboriginal groups with greater control over economic development and self government, as well as financial compensation and legal title to selected lands (Saku and Bone, 2000). Under the Comprehesive Land Claims process, an Aboriginal group must demonstrate that they are an identifiable and recognizable group, that they have a demonstrable history of occupying their lands, that these lands were occupied to the exclusion of other peoples, and that their rights to claimed lands have never been extinguished (Alcantara, 2007a,b). When these requirements are met, negotiations for land claims can begin. Thus, Aboriginal groups seeking to negotiate a formal relationship

with federal and provincial governments need to construct a detailed history of their people and the lands they traditionally occupied.

Our research project was developed jointly in partnership with the NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC). In addition to developing a better understanding of their history for their own socio-political purposes, the Metis also wanted greater support for student skills training and education, adult skills training and literacy support, and heritage-based tourism development as part of their economic planning process. Our researchers agreed to provide project research results to the NCC to use as they would like in their quest for official governmental recognition, as well as to provide material for educational and sustainable development initiatives. Funds were obtained for this multi-year and multi-disciplinary project from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), under the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) program.

Our research project, *Understanding the Past to Build the Future*, documents and interprets the history of the Labrador Metis from their beginnings some 500 years ago up to the present. The research design of this CURA project was, from the outset, developed collaboratively between university and community researchers. The co-investigators on the project are four university scholars and four community researchers, who have had and continue to have equal input into all of the decision-making and planning of the project. Our project researchers investigate the origins and development of the Labrador Metis people through archaeology, history, ethnography and genealogy. Furthermore, we are also engaging the current needs of the Labrador Metis through the development of initiatives in education and sustainable development by specialists in those fields.

The archaeology of the Labrador Metis

Labrador Metis, being of mixed Inuit-European descent, are understandably curious about their Inuit ancestors. Since archaeology is the only way to gather information about a people's history and lifestyle in the absence of written records, our project has two researchers focusing on the archaeology of the Labrador Metis. Specifically, the researchers are particularly interested in investigating the Inuit ancestors of the Metis in southern Labrador during the pre-contact and early contact period. We have also focused on the development of a distinct Labrador Metis identity, as reflected in Metis archaeological sites dating from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.

Because of the importance of European commodities to Inuit economy and society, academics have long debated whether Europeans and trade lured Inuit southward or whether southern Labrador was in fact a traditional Inuit land-use and settlement area (Taylor, 1980; Kaplan, 1983; Richling, 1993; Études/ Inuit/Studies, 1980). Recent archaeological evidence, including that uncovered by our project researchers, suggests that Inuit occupation along the south coast of Labrador occurred earlier than previously thought, was widespread along the coast, and was of a permanent nature.

The traditional narrative that archaeologists have long adhered to held that the Inuit did not permanently reside south of Hamilton Inlet in central Labrador (Figure 1). This perspective has only been challenged in recent years. Archaeological work by the primary author (Rankin) in Sandwich Bay has demonstrated that previously held notions about Inuit settlement in Southern Labrador can no longer stand. The depth and breadth of Inuit occupation in Sandwich Bay means that this region must be regarded as a traditional use-area of the Inuit. Thus far, most of the Inuit sites that have been located in Sandwich Bay are found on outer coastal islands. One of the most productive of these islands is Huntingdon Island, which has been the focus of research by Rankin and her students for several years.

Huntingdon Island bears the remains of a number of Inuit sites which represent both summer and winter occupations. One site alone (Huntington Island 5 [FkBg-03]), contains at least 5 Inuit sod-walled winter houses. Sod houses were semi-subterranean structures, ideally suited for Labrador's cold winter months. These structures were framed with driftwood, and covered with sod and/or skins. A sunken entrance passage with a cold trap served to prevent cold air from entering the living space (Rankin, 2009). Summer occupations are also present at Huntingdon Island 5, indicated by the discovery of 6 or more house tent rings. Tent rings are composed of a circle of rocks, where the edges of a skin tent were weighted down or secured with rocks. The presence of tent rings clearly indicates a warm-weather occupation at this site. Collectively, the Huntingdon Island 5 sites date from the early- to mid-16th century, up through to the eighteenth century, and were clearly occupied year-round (Murphy, 2011; Rankin, 2010).

Another pervasive narrative that has long framed our perception of Inuit history in southern Labrador is that any reference to the Inuit in southern Labrador only reflects their infrequent use of the region. Historic documents certainly contain references to an Inuit presence in southern Labrador. Scholars have traditionally interpreted these references as an indication of the seasonal presence of itinerant Inuit traders, who ventured south in small numbers to access European trade goods (Stopp, 2002).

Clearly, the Inuit living in Sandwich Bay were trading with Europeans, because European artifacts are found on Inuit sites with regularity. French artifacts are common finds on Sandwich Bay Inuit sites from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century (Murphy, 2011; Rankin, 2010, 2011, 2012). The artifacts include numerous fragments of early modern French pottery, typically Normandy stoneware.

Occasional rare finds have been made, including a ceramic ware manufactured in Dieppe in the late sixteenth century, which has not until now been found outside of Dieppe. British ceramic types common to the later eighteenth century, including pearlware and creamware, are also common finds on later-dating houses. These artifacts were obtained from Europeans either by direct trade or by scavenging abandoned European sites.

Iron artifacts are also common finds, and were often re-worked by the Inuit to shape them into a more desirable form (Murphy, 2011; Rankin, 2010, 2011, 2012). For example, iron nails were re-worked by removing the nail head and cold-hammering the shaft until it was flat. Some intentionally flattened iron was turned into blades for traditionally shaped Inuit knives. Sword hilts were also recovered from one of the houses at Huntingdon Island 5; they had been modified to permit them to be hung as pendants from leather thongs. Likewise, British coins have been found with intentional drill holes; the recovery of one coin with a leather thong and a decorative bead strung through one of the holes suggests its use as a pendant. Clearly, substantial quantities of European material was being obtained through trade, and repurposed in uniquely Inuit ways.

However, the material remains from the Huntingdon Island sites also demonstrate that the Inuit living in Sandwich Bay were more than just itinerant traders. The sod houses found at these archaeological sites are communal houses, meaning that a single structure was built to house multiple families. Indeed, one of the sod houses from the Huntingdon Island 5 site is very large—measuring 8 by 11 meters—which is, at the time of writing, one of the largest Inuit communal houses on record. We can estimate the number of families who would have lived in sod houses, based on the number of soapstone lamp stands found within the house. Each family would have had its own soapstone lamp (used as a source of heat and light), which stood upon its own lamp stand. Based on the number of lamp stands found in this sod house at the Huntingdon Island 5 site, as many as 5-6 families may have lived there.

Likewise, the artifacts too indicate the presence of families. Knives known as *ulus*, which were traditionally used by women, have been found at many of the sites. Men's knives have also been recovered. Children were also present at Huntingdon Island 5, as indicated by the discovery of miniature artifacts (such as very small soapstone lamps). These are small versions made to imitate larger tools, and were traditionally the property of Inuit children. Thus, the presence of miniature artifacts at Huntingdon Island 5 is an excellent indication that children lived at the site too. Archaeologically, we can demonstrate that the Inuit presence in Sandwich Bay was not just limited to itinerant Inuit male traders. Clearly, entire families lived in southern Labrador. They had lived there for much longer than previously thought, and were living in the area year-round.

Furthermore, our researchers have been able to demonstrate that the Labrador Metis developed a distinct identity along the southern Labrador coast. Our genealogist has been able to trace entire family lineages back to the arrival of the earliest British settlers in the region. Permanent British settlement—consisting almost exclusively of men—grew steadily in the region between 1830 and 1870. These residents contracted with merchants for the necessary supplies for fishing, trapping, and sealing (Kennedy, 1995). Very few English women accompanied these initial settlers, and as a result, the men generally married Inuit or Inuit-Metis women (Rankin et al., 2012). The new generations that these unions produced were ethnically and culturally mixed. The Metis considered themselves to be neither European nor Inuit, and were perceived to be a distinct group by non-Metis peoples (Kelvin, 2011).

Archaeologically, we have undertaken surveys and excavations of known Metis houses to try and differentiate Metis dwellings from those belonging to European settlers or seasonal fishermen (Pritchard, 2010). The location of these sites, and their architectural features share similarities with both Inuit and European sites (Kelvin, 2011). Another researcher (not affiliated with our project) has re-analysed an existing zooarchaeological assemblage, and has determined that the Seal Island site, which had previously attributed to the Inuit, is almost certainly of Metis origin (Gaudreau, 2011).

Extensive archaeological excavations at one documented Metis house site (FkBg-24) have demonstrated the hybrid nature of these dwellings (Beaudoin, 2008). The dwelling was built sometime in the third quarter of the nineteenth century by Charles Williams, an English trader who had settled in Labrador some years previously. Charles married a local Metis woman named Mary, who was of Inuit and Scottish ancestry. The site may have been occupied into the twentieth century, and was certainly abandoned by 1915. The house was built of sod, which was an Inuit construction style that had quickly been adopted by European settlers for its practicality and environmental suitability. However, the house had been constructed (probably by Charles Williams) in a largely European style, with timber framing and floors, an interior cellar, and latched, ground-level doorways (Beaudoin, 2008; Rankin et al., 2012).

Interestingly, the artifacts found inside the house, and the arrangement of interior space (which would have been the preserve of Williams' Metis wife, Mary) is not as typically European. The house lacked interior partitions, which is characteristic of Inuit houses from the period. At the entrance to the home, just outside the doorway, lay a substantial midden (or refuse disposal area). This is not a typical location for refuse disposal on European sites in Labrador, but it is commonly observed at Inuit sites.

Inside the house, European domestic commodities (like ceramic tableware) were found in number. However, the frequencies of tableware types tell a different story. The dominance of hollowware vessels (like bowls and pots) is consistent with Inuit foodways and reflects the importance of stews and soups in the diet. Ceramic bowls and pots acted as an analogue for soapstone bowls, which were used on

contemporary Inuit sites for food preparation and consumption. Flatwares (like plates) were not nearly as numerous at the Williams site, as these vessel forms had no analogue in traditional Inuit households. Furthermore, the faunal evidence from the site shows a similar adherence to Inuit foodways, in that the animal bone assemblage indicates a heavy reliance on seal. Unlike contemporary European sites, the Williams house faunal collection shows a very limited consumption of pig, cow, or other domesticates (Beaudoin et al., 2010; Rankin et al., 2012). Taken together, this site demonstrates that Metis families had adopted, adapted, and altered both European and Inuit lifeways, becoming a distinct and definable cultural entity.

Turning academic research into community knowledge

An important part of our project is to provide information about the development of the Metis people to their community. We want the Metis to be able to access their newly-revealed heritage, and be able to use it in their communities however they wish. We believe that this information should be spread as widely through the community as possible, and thus we use a number of approaches to disseminate our research results. We reach a wide public audience by involving local community members in our research, helping us gather archaeological, historical, and ethnographic evidence. We hire local students, including those who are Labrador Inuit-Metis, and work closely with the NunatuKavut Community Council to help source candidates. We welcome the community to our research projects. We sponsor Community Day activities that actively encourage local visitors to come and observe our research results as they unfold in the field. Prolonged interaction with community members through a committed approach to locally-hired individuals, and strong public involvement, is an efficient way of funneling our immediate research results back into the community.

We recognise that not everyone can work for us, or visit us as we collect our research data. Thus, we try to reach out beyond the boundaries of the local communities where we work to reach a wider audience. To accomplish this, we have adopted a number of approaches to broadcast our research results. We give media interviews to local journalists, and write articles for local newspapers and popular magazines. We also give public lectures in our research communities, either in person or via webcam. We held our last Project Annual General Meeting as a travelling workshop, in which we visited a number of south Labrador communities with our project researchers.

We maintain a project website (www.mun.ca/labmetis), which is becoming increasingly popular. We update our website often, and document our research results in accessible, non-technical language. We use the website as a way to disseminate research news quickly. We also use the website to allow visitors to download files of our popular publications and interviews, as far as copyright permission allows us to. The website also provides photo archives of our research projects in progress, so that we can communicate immediate and visible results of our research to both academic audiences and the general public. We also publish images of the research we conduct in museums and archives outside of the province, to allow community members to see discoveries that would otherwise remain difficult for them to access.

We also try to bring our research alive in creative work, and to encourage public interest with creative works of film and print. We have hosted two film-making workshops in our research communities, and have a third planned. We are currently producing a movie (The People of NunatuKavut) in which we portray what we have learned in an engaging, visual way. Two of our researchers are also working on books set in southern Labrador- one is a novel and the other is a children's book.

Educational outreach is another way that we try to disseminate our research in the communities where we work. Wherever possible, we hire local students to help collect our research. We have sponsored workshops in local schools, and are developing digital environments to allow students to interact with our research results in novel ways. We have contributed to public-school curriculum development in the areas touched by our research.

We also target community groups and governmental bodies for research dissemination. We have written advisory documents for heritage groups and for the NunatuKavut Community Council. In the process of generating research data, we provide relevant databases, datasets and image archives to provincial institutions, such as the Provincial Archaeology Office (PAO). They can use this data for planning and administrative purposes, or share data with other researchers.

The socio-political realities ahead

Our project has been able to demonstrate that the time depth of the Inuit presence in southern Labrador has been previously underappreciated, and we have also been able to recognise and characterize the nature of European-Inuit interaction in this area. We have been able to identify through material culture and written records the ways in which the Inuit and Europeans became culturally entangled. And most importantly, we make efforts to ensure that this information is quickly fed back into the communities that we work in. However, the Labrador Metis have a long struggle ahead to turn the products of our research project into tangible political gains.

The Labrador Metis are still struggling to achieve socio-political acceptance of their Aboriginal status. A 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report accepts that the Labrador Metis are in the position to accept the rights and powers of nationhood, and have all the features of a distinct Aboriginal group (Sawchuk, 2001). However, this has not yet come to pass for the Labrador Metis, and they are not yet recognized as an official Aboriginal group by the federal government. By contrast, the Inuit have made (and the Innu are in the process of making) land claim agreements with federal and provincial governments. Land claims provide Aboriginal groups with some socio-political autonomy, control over traditional lands, and a mandated role in the approvals process for natural resource development (among many other rights).

However, thus far the Labrador Metis have been unable to convince governmental authorities of their Aboriginal status. This affects their ability to be involved in the planning process surrounding development projects that have an impact on their traditional lands. For example, a hydroelectric project at Muskrat Falls is currently in the planning and impact assessment stages. The Labrador Metis have been unable to legally force the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to negotiate an impact benefits agreement with them, because they are not yet officially recognized as an Aboriginal group by the Federal government of Canada (Bartlett, 2011). The province did, however, negotiate an impacts benefits agreement for the Muskrat Falls development with the neighbouring Innu.

Furthermore, the Metis traditional territory is home to mineral resources, particularly iron. Despite the fact that the Labrador Metis have been asserting their Aboriginality since the mid-1980s, they have not been consulted or considered in the planning and approvals process in the same way that the Inuit or the Innu have. Indeed, the very first agreement between a mining company and the Labrador Metis, in which agreements on environmental and cultural protection and aboriginal employment were negotiated, was only signed in early 2012 (Labrador Iron Mines, 2012).

The Metis have at least been consulted in other land use projects, including the proposed Mealy Mountains National Park (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2010). Together with the Inuit and the Innu, the Labrador Metis have lobbied to ensure that their traditional land use practices can still be upheld in the newly created park. Trapping, fishing, wood cutting and some hunting permissions have been retained for Aboriginal peoples, including the Metis. The Mealy Mountains National Park is several years away from being established, but the inclusion of the Metis in the negotiating process is a promising step towards their inclusion in other negotiations for projects that affect land use in their traditional territory.

Indeed, an increase in large-scale natural resource development projects may in fact provide an opportunity for the Metis to further press their claims for recognition. In the 1990s, significant mineral deposits were discovered at Voisey's Bay in Labrador. The subsequent rapid development of a large-scale mining project forced government authorities to fast-track land claim negotiations with the Labrador Inuit Association, which had been ongoing without much success since 1975 (Hood and Baikie 1998). Likewise, increasing activity by mining companies in Labrador meant that the Innu were finally being engaged in negotiations over projects that occurred in their traditional lands (Armitage and Ashini 1998). In 2011, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Innu signed an Agreement-in-Principal regarding Innu land claims and resource development on traditional Innu lands.

This is not to say that economic development is a necessary precursor to the satisfactory resolution of land claims issues. However, for the Inuit and the Innu, such projects certainly affected the speed with which these negotiations were concluded. Such large-scale resource development projects are in the planning stages for the Labrador Metis traditional lands, though they have not been always included in the planning process. Here, the Labrador Metis are in a situation which differs from the experiences of the Innu or the Inuit, in that the Aboriginal status of the Labrador Metis is not yet uniformly accepted or acknowledged.

Conclusion

The Labrador Metis are a people of mixed European and Inuit ancestry, who live in the small communities along the coast of central and southern Labrador, Canada. Our research project, *Understanding the Past to Build the Future*, is concerned with multiple aspects of the Labrador Metis, including understanding their origins and development as a distinct Aboriginal group. We involve the Metis community in our research in as many ways as we can, including involving Metis members directly in the research and by conducting community outreach whenever we can. We also try to communicate our research results to the larger community many ways, including several non-traditional (non-academic) formats. The Labrador Metis are thus able to access our research, and use it in many ways, including educational initiatives, policy and planning purposes, and socio-political action.

We have been able to demonstrate that the Labrador Metis have a past that is knowable, definable and distinct. Their past is, without question, an Aboriginal past. The origins of the Labrador Metis began with a sustained Inuit occupation of southern Labrador. Until our project began, the Inuit presence in Southern Labrador had been previously presumed to be entirely sporadic and not extensive. We have demonstrated through archaeological excavation that the Inuit had a sustained and lengthy presence along Labrador's south coast. The Inuit were living on the coast year-round, in large multi-family dwellings, and had been doing so since the sixteenth century. As the Inuit and Europeans became

culturally entangled, a unique and identifiable Metis culture emerged. We have been able to identify and document the emergence of the Metis in southern Labrador. The Metis can now demonstrate their past and their history.

The comparatively late ethnogenesis of the Labrador Metis means that they still struggle to achieve socio-political recognition of their Aboriginality. This stands in contrast to the other two Aboriginal groups in Labrador, the Inuit and the Innu. The Inuit, through a long process that lasted decades, have been able to negotiate land claims and self-government, and the Innu have made significant progress towards this end as well. The degree to which the Metis will be able to resolve their negotiations with governmental agencies as the Inuit and the Innu have remains to be seen. In the process of negotiating their own relationships with government bodies and resource companies, the Labrador Metis have been able to draw upon the research results provided by our project. The question remains whether there is enough time for our research to have real impact before major resource projects are initiated on their traditional lands.

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