



# “We were told we were going to live in houses”

*Relocation and housing of the Mushuau Innu of Natuashish from 1948 to 2003*



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## **Abstract**

The Mushuau Innu is a First Nation group who have gone from a nomadic lifestyle in the interior of Labrador to a sedentary lifestyle on the coast since their first contact with European colonizers. The Mushuau Innu has gone through three relocations in a time period of 55 years; the first move was in 1948 to the Inuit community of Nutak further north, and the second in 1967 to Utshimassit (Davis Inlet) on Iluikoyak Island, where they for the first time were to live in houses. In 2003, over thirty years after settling in Utshimassit the Mushuau Innu relocated from Utshimassit to Natuashish. The aim of this thesis is to find out the background for, and if the Innu were consulted about the relocations. Also it aims to find out if the Innu were active or passive in regards to the decision making process.

This thesis argues that the Innu were relocated in 1948 and settled in 1967 based on the assimilation policy, while the last relocation was part of the general political mobilization of Aboriginal peoples. It also argues that the Mushuau Innu have made conscious decisions in regards to all three relocations, although the alternatives might have been few or none and based on false assumptions.

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# Chapter One: Relocation and Housing of the Mushuau Innu: An Introduction to the Subject

When Georg Henriksen did his fieldwork in Labrador among the Mushuau Innu in the 1960's houses were just starting to be built in Utshimassit. It was Henriksen's monograph *Hunters in the Barrens. Naskapi Indians on the edge of the White Man's world (2000)* that first caught my interest for the Innu. I was curious of his monograph that ended in the late 1960's, and forty years later I visited the Mushuau Innu in Natuashish to learn more about their history, which turned out to be a history of relocation and housing.

The Mushuau Innu have gone from a nomadic lifestyle in the interior of Labrador to a sedentary lifestyle on the coast since their first contact with Europeans. The first move was in 1948 to the Inuit community of Nutak further north, and the second in 1967 to Utshimassit (Davis Inlet), on Iluikoyak Island, where they for the first time were to live in houses. In 2003, over thirty years after settling in Utshimassit the Mushuau Innu relocated from Utshimassit to Natuashish.<sup>1</sup> In my thesis I have set out to find what the background of these three relocations were, and if the Innu were consulted about these relocations.

The Innu is a First Nations group of approximately 18,000 people who inhabit Quebec and Labrador in Canada. The Mushuau Innu of Natuashish is part of the nomadic peoples who traveled in Nitassinan ("Our Land") hunting caribou and should not be confused with the neighboring Inuit. Today approximately 2,100 of the Innu of Labrador live on two reserves, Natuashish in the north and Sheshatshit in the south, while the majority of the Innu live in Quebec. Natuashish is located in northern Labrador, and most of the communities 800 inhabitants are Innu. The second, and largest Innu community in Labrador is Sheshatshit with approximately 1300 inhabitants, which is situated further south of Natuashish, a 30 minutes drive from Happy-Valley Goose Bay and across the river from North West River.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pretty, J., & Samson, C. (2005) Environmental and Health Benefits of Hunting Lifestyles and Diets for the Innu of Labrador. *Presented at British Association of Canadian Studies, First Nations, First Thoughts Conference*, 6 May, Edinburgh: 2

<sup>2</sup> Pretty and Samson 2005: 3

Map of Labrador with the three relocations in 1948, 1967 and 2003<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Map: Canada Maps (Retrieved May 15<sup>th</sup> 2010 <http://www.canada-maps.org/newfoundland-and-labrador-map.htm>)





Map of Canada, Natuashish and Utshimassit (BBC)<sup>4</sup>



Today the Mushuau Innu live in Natuashish, a modern community in northern Labrador  
(Photo: Katie Rich 2009)

<sup>4</sup> BBC News 25 November 2005

## Research Question

While working on my project proposal I often found stories about the Innu addressing a troubled community with many social problems. As I hadn't set out to write a story of distress and misery, though having deep respect for the issues the Innu have been and are still dealing with, I had to find a topic that was specific to this community but not too invasive for the people I wanted to interview. I therefore decided that this thesis should be about the relocation and housing of the Mushuau Innu. The research questions I chose were:

- What was the background for the relocations and housing of the Mushuau Innu?
- To what extent were the Mushuau Innu consulted about the relocations and housing? And were they passive or active partakers in the decision-making?

To find answers to these questions I searched for sources that would help me understand the three relocations. I divided my sources into three; the first were secondary sources written mainly by anthropologists, secondly I used copies of written letters and official governmental documents, and thirdly I was fortunate to get interviews with ten Innu, all which gave me valuable information on the relocations.

## Methodology

### Oral history

According to historians Anna Green and Kathleen Troup the perhaps most important legacy of anthropology to the study of history has been the inclusion of the “people without history” within the written historical record.<sup>5</sup> Until more recent years the history of minorities has been neglected and historians focused mostly on the majority population, an imperial or political history of élites. According to historian Einar Niemi this reflects the strong scholarly traditions in which historical research for a long time was intimately and quite strictly related to written sources in public archives, and therefore “cultures and societies regarded as “primitive”, exotic, or “foreign” were traditionally not among historians’ priorities.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Green, A., & Troup, K. (1999). *The houses of history. A critical reader in twentieth-century history and theory*. Manchester University Press, Manchester:178

<sup>6</sup> Niemi, E. (1995). History of Minorities: The Sami and the Kvens. In W. H. Hubbard, *Making a Historical Culture: Historiography in Norway* Oslo: 325

Donald McRae notes in *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*, and which I also found that when researching the history of relocation and housing of the Mushuau Innu, the historical records were only partially written and what has been written is generally recordings of the government, church, the International Grenfell Association or the Hudson Bay Company. The Innu themselves have an oral tradition, and their record of events is based on the recollections of those who were there at the time or of those to whom these recollections have been passed on to.<sup>7</sup> For pre-literate societies who have generated little or no written evidence of their own and are known in documents only through the statement of literate, prejudiced outsiders, the documentation of oral history is very important.<sup>8</sup>

My decision to travel to Natuashish was based on an understanding that thesis was depending on interviews with people that had actually been relocated, and I wanted to understand the landscape and the area where the relocations happened. Information online, such as news articles, is often based on myths and I therefore found it meaningful for me going there and interview peoples myself.

Through time oral history has not always been received well by conventional historians and it was regarded as unreliable and tainted by personal subjectivity. According to oral historian Paul Thompson the reliability of memory rest partly on whether the question being asked interests the informant or not.<sup>9</sup> According to Tosh the most recent oral history has been insistently local in focus and the reason is that it's practical since testimonies can easily be tested against each other. Tosh further discusses the difficulties with oral history and one issue is that a testimony is never a pure distillation of past experience, because in an interview each party is affected by each other, the historian selects the informant and indicates the area of interest and the presence of an outsider might influence how the informant recalls the past and talks about it. Furthermore the informant's memories are filtered through subsequent experience, and might have been influenced by other sources such as media, nostalgia and grievances. Therefore it's important to command the full range of relevant sources for a "democratic" oral history.<sup>10</sup> In this thesis I have depended both on written and oral sources. It is important for my thesis that the Innu themselves have a voice, just as it is important to have ha access to the written sources from the

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<sup>7</sup> McRae, D. M. (1993). *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*. Common Law Section, Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa:5

<sup>8</sup> Tosh, J., & Lang, S. (2006). *The Pursuit of History* Pearson Education Limited, United Kingdom: 313

<sup>9</sup> Green and Troup 1999: 231

<sup>10</sup> Tosh and Lang 2006: 316-319

governments and other actors in Labrador and Newfoundland. I would also point out that for the last relocation I have depended on written sources by the Innu themselves. In short, in this thesis I will base my research on earlier research, historical documents and interviews.

## **Interviews**

Before I left Norway I had gotten in touch with Maniai (Mary Anne) Nui through a contact I had in Natuashish. When I got there I met with her and at the same time she was working on a project recording Innu people's stories, and she agreed to help me with finding elders I could interview. Together we interviewed one man and four women, all elders living in Natuashish. We decided that the best way to do the interviews would be to go through the interviews before hand and I would give her my questions. Because she wanted to use the recordings for her own project as well, and also have them broadcast on the radio, we used her recording equipment. She also took notes during the interviews so I could keep track of what the elders were saying so we could stop to get further information.

The elders were mainly interviewed about the first relocation to Nutak in 1948, the second relocation to Utshimassit (Davis Inlet) in 1967, and also their opinion on the new community of Natuashish and the last relocation. The elders contributed with a lot of information, and their opinions were valuable as well as a counterbalance to the official records and letters. Further they gave me their views on the changes the Mushuau Innu have gone through the last sixty years.

We translated the interviews after we were done. Maniai Nui would listen to the tapes and translate sentence by sentence while I transcribed. Now and then we would stop to clear up misunderstandings and get further help to translate words in Innu-Eimun she didn't understand (names for the different caribou parts, fish etc.).

I also spoke with people working in the Band Council, as well as others, if they knew anyone I could interview about the relocations, and they would refer me to different people. As an outsider to the community I was depending on help from people in the community to find me subjects to interview. This kind of research method is known as snowballing or chain referral sampling. In this method participants or informants use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who potentially could participate in or contribute to the study. Snowball sampling is often used to find and recruit people that are not easily accessible to

researchers through other sampling strategies.<sup>11</sup> Through such contacts I made during my stay I also interviewed, in English, three men and two women on the relocations. They were all working and living in the community. We talked about their memories from the relocation to Utshimassit (Davis Inlet), the relocation to Natuashish, and about their opinion on the community today. I haven't used all the interviews in direct quotes, but they were very much influential on the direction my thesis took.

I realize that when using a translator points might get lost and thus my understanding, but I couldn't see no other way of getting this information in any other way. Maniai Nui would be able to use these interviews with the elders in her own project and the benefits of the interviews will be greater for the community.

### **Ethical Considerations**

A majority of my master thesis will be based on written sources, historical documents and secondary sources, so I do not see any ethical problems arise, as these are already public. That goes for the public papers from the Innu Nation and the Mushuau Innu Band Council. My informants in Natuashish requires another type of consideration, and I provided them with information on what my purposes of the interviews were and got their consent to use it in my thesis, and I chose to keep my informants anonymous. In portraying community life the viewpoints present in the community will be represented fairly and I designed my project in such a way that the privacy, dignity, and integrity of those participating in my research would be protected. All my informants are anonymous in this thesis. When my master thesis is finished I will provide the community with samples of it.

### **Earlier Research**

Archeological work in Quebec and Labrador has been an important contributor to Innu history; I have however depended heavily upon the articles and books of anthropologists in this thesis. Many, if not all, anthropologist working on Innu issues have been working on issues concerning the land claims and negotiations on the relocation to Natuashish in 2003. Georg Henriksen, Peter Armitage, José Mailhot, Adrian Tanner and Colin Samson are all researchers who have done extensive studies on Innu issues. George Henriksen spent two years among the Mushuau Innu

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<sup>11</sup> Mack, N., Woodsong, C., McQueen, K., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide*. Family Health International: 5-6

from 1966-1968 that resulted in the earlier mentioned *Hunters in the Barrens. The Naskapi on the Edge of the White Man's World* where he follows the Innu in what Robert Paine calls “the eleventh hour” before the Innu moved into houses in Utshimassit. Henriksen continued to work on and with the Innu until he died in 2007. Peter Armitage has also done considerable work on Innu issues, in 1990 he released a land use and occupancy study *Land Use and Occupancy Among the Innu of Utshimassit and Sheshatshit* which I have used in this thesis, as well as the book about the Innu of Labrador and Quebec *The Innu (The Montagnais-Naskapi)*.

I have also used the *David Inlet People's Inquiry. Gathering Voices. Finding the Strength to Help Our Children* that was published by the Mushuau Innu in 1995. It was developed through several meetings where all Innu who wanted could express their opinion on the aspects of Innu history, the two first relocations and the wish for a new relocation to Natuashish. James Ryan, a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, wrote in 1988 the article *Economic Development and Innu Settlement: The Establishment of Sheshatshit* where he discusses the settling of Sheshatshit Innu and which I have used to explain the settling of the Mushuau Innu.

Through land rights negotiations reports as law professor Donald McRae's Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission from 1993 and the Davis Inlet (Utshimassit) Service Infrastructure, Socio-Economic Study by Terpastra & Associates Ltd. from 1992 was published. The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), a 4,000-page document containing hundreds of recommendations, was published in 1996. The Commission was set up by the Canadian Government in 1991 and can be compared to the Official Norwegian Reports or NOU (Norges offentlige utredninger), where the Sami of Norway have had their culture, history and rights researched several times. The RCAP has, in addition to making recommendations, looked at different relocations and the historical relationship between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginals in Canada. In addition I have depended on articles and letters from different actors in Labrador and Newfoundland, most of them are collected by Them Days Magazine and James Roche for the Innu Nation in 1992.

# Terms and Concepts

## Relocation

The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)* from 1996 states that since the Europeans arrived in North America the principal effects on Aboriginal peoples was the physical displacement from their traditional hunting and fishing territories and residential locations.<sup>12</sup> The issue of displacement is not only confined to an American context but also a world wide issue according to the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), a Geneva-based, international non-governmental human rights organization. According to COHRE the forced evictions of individuals, families and communities from their homes and lands ranks amongst the most widespread human rights violations in the world. Every year hundreds of thousands of women, men and children are victims of evictions and displacement.<sup>13</sup>

In this thesis my focus is on the relocation of the Mushuau Innu of Natuashish, Canada. Researchers have different views on the term relocation and how the three different relocations of the Mushuau should be categorized. Myriam Denov and Kathryn Campbell researched the effects the relocations had on Innu children and define the first two relocations of the Innu as forced internal displacement. They have written that the concept of displacement has been largely associated with refugees and individuals living in a situation of civil unrest, political violence, and armed conflict, particularly within poor and developing nations. In contrast, few authors have used the concept to explain the forced migration and cultural invasion that have occurred among many Aboriginal populations within wealthy, developed nations such as Canada. By definition, displaced persons have been removed from their home and/or land against their will and have lost the protection of certain basic rights.<sup>14</sup>

In the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* relocation is divided into two: administrative relocation and development relocation. Administrative relocations are moves carried out to facilitate either the operation of government or to address the perceived needs of Aboriginal people and for their “own good”. Facilitating government operations was the rationale for many relocations following the Second World War. Development relocations have a long

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<sup>12</sup> Canada. (1996). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) Looking Forward, Looking Back*. Volume I, Part II, Chapter 11 Relocation of Aboriginal Communities.

<sup>13</sup> Centre and Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE). (2009). *Global Survey on Forced Evictions. Violations of Human Rights 2007-2008:7*

<sup>14</sup> Campbell, M. D. (2002). Casualties of Aboriginal Displacement in Canada: Children at Risk among the Innu of Labrador. *Refuge: Canada's periodical on refugees* (Volume 20. No 2): 21

history and have been used frequently around the world as a rationale for population transfer. Development relocation is the consequence of national development policies whose stated purpose is primarily to “benefit” the relocatees or get them out of the way of proposed industrial projects.<sup>15</sup>

According to Peter Armitage only one of the three moves of the Innu can be called relocation – that one to Natuashish in 2003. Since the Innu were almost entirely nomadic until about 1967-68, when they were settled in houses in Utshimassit, Armitage sees it as erroneous to call the first two moves as relocation.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, most articles on the subject use the term relocation, which would translate to “forflytte” in Norwegian, in most articles about the subject. I agree with Armitage that the Innu never were settled permanently until 1967. They were however drawn to specific *locations* in Labrador, such as old Utshimassit, Emish (Voisey’s Bay), and North West River (Sheshatshit) for longer periods in the summers to visit the Hudson Bay Company post and the priest. I have therefore decided to use the term relocation for all three moves, understanding that the Mushuau Innu were nomadic until they were permanently settled in Utshimassit in 1967.

## **Living Conditions**

Finnish sociologist Erik Allardt worked on measuring Scandinavian living conditions in the 1970, and his way of measuring is still used today. He breaks living conditions into three: “Having, Loving and Being”. “Having” refers to those material conditions which are necessary for survival and for avoidance of misery like economic resources, housing conditions, employment, working conditions, health and education. “Love” stands for the need to relate to other people and to form social identities. The level of satisfaction can be assessed by measuring attachments and contacts in the local community, attachment to family and kin, active patterns of friendships, attachment and contact with fellow members in associations and organizations and relationship with work-mates. “Being” stands for the need for integration into society and to live in harmony with nature. These indicators can measure to what extent a person participate in

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<sup>15</sup> Canada 1996

<sup>16</sup> Armitage 2010 personal communication



decisions and activities influencing his life, political activities, opportunities for leisure activities, the opportunity for a meaningful work life, and opportunities to enjoy nature.<sup>17</sup>

In thesis theses I will focus on housing and the right to adequate housing has been recognized in article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and in other international instruments. Having a secure place to live is according to the United Nations Housing Rights Program one of the fundamental elements for human dignity, physical and mental health and overall quality of life, which enable one's development.<sup>18</sup> The use of the word house is fairly new in the lives of the Mushuau Innu, and a more adequate naming for both the tent and the house is dwelling. Since Erik Allardt's model is based on a western ideal of living conditions it is meaningful to remind ourselves that many measures of poverty and living conditions are inappropriate. The United Nations Housing Rights Programme uses one example, which is that a certain housing structure might be deemed uninhabitable by one population group, while it might be adequate by other peoples. It should also be noted that many indigenous peoples do not consider themselves to be poor, but rather victims of impoverishment processes such as land dispossession. Their richness comes from their resources, unique knowledge and know-how and their cultures that have special values and strength.<sup>19</sup> I believe that the Innu themselves have the right to evaluate their living conditions, and if they deem them high or low it should be taken into consideration. Secondly there are different considerations that come into play when we are talking about the living conditions of the Innu. The pressure on their homeland, resources, relocations, housing and importantly, assimilation are all important to be able to measure their living conditions.

## **Assimilation**

There are according to Niemi four main alternatives of minority policies. The first he calls *acculturation* where openness to social pluralistic processes is a core attitude and in which diffusion between ethnic groups and cultures is accepted and where change, adaption and accommodation constantly take place. Politically the model means relaxed attitudes towards

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<sup>17</sup> Allardt, E. (1993). Having, Loving and Being: An Alternative to the Swedish Model of Welfare Research. In Sen, & Nussbaum, *The Quality of Life*. World Institute for Development Economic Research. Oxford University Press: 89-91

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Housing Rights Programme. (2005). *Indigenous peoples' right to adequate housing. A global overview Report United Nations Housing Rights Programme No. 7*. Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): 6

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Housing Rights Programme 2005:6

minority groups, although it doesn't mean that there are no policies. The second alternative is *segregation* which is known through the reservation/reserve policy in the US and Canada from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A third one is called *multiculturalism* or *pluralistic integration* where pluralism is depicted as "natural" and as a value in itself for the larger society as well as for the minority group, and identity is linked to a human self respect. This model is familiar with the multicultural concept of today.<sup>20</sup>

The fourth policy is *assimilation* and it means to integrate the minority population into the society on the terms of the majority population. In regards of the Innu this meant that they were to become Canadaized. According to anthropologist Robert Paine "White incursion into the Canadian arctic over the last hundred years have taken five principal forms: trade, mission, law, welfare and capital investment."<sup>21</sup> And these five principals of "white incursion" can be look on as means of assimilation. In general terms I use the term assimilation in regards to the desire to incorporate the Mushuau Innu economically, culturally and politically into Newfoundland and Labrador as well as Canada.

### **The challenge of naming**

In this thesis I have chosen to use the term *Aboriginal* or *Aboriginal peoples* instead of Indigenous or Native peoples, as it is the more common to use this term in a Canadian setting (although they have parallel meaning).<sup>22</sup> Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) describe the term Aboriginal peoples as "the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America".<sup>23</sup> The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people Indians, Métis and Inuit. The term "Indian" is considered offensive and instead I will use the term First Nations. There is no legal definition for the term First Nations, although it is widely used. In this thesis I will still use the term "Indian" in direct quotes and in regards to the Indian Act. As for the Inuit the term "Eskimo" will be used only in direct quotes.

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<sup>20</sup> Niemi, E. (2006). Cross-cultural Communication and Ethnic Identities. In E. Lars, & C. Karlsson (Ed.), *Proceedings II from the Conference Regional Northern Identity: From Past to Future at Petrozavodsk State University*. Petrozavods: 24

<sup>21</sup> Paine, R. (1977). *The White Arctic : anthropological essays on tutelage and ethnicity*. Newfoundland: Newfoundland social and economic papers / Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland:7

<sup>22</sup> For more information see S. James Anaya "Indigenous Peoples in International Law" 2004: 3-5

<sup>23</sup> Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 2009.

We will also see different naming of the *Innu*. To early settlers the Innu in the south of Quebec and Labrador were known as the “Montagnais”, and the Innu in the north including the Mushuau Innu of Natuashish were known as the “Naskapi”. They were actually the same people, sharing a common language called Innu-Eimun.<sup>24</sup> Today some Innu in northern Quebec still call them Naskapi, while in Labrador - Innu or “Our people” is used. “Naskapi” and “Montagnais” will be used in direct quotes in official documents, books, articles and private letters.<sup>25</sup>

In my research it often occurs papers, articles and so on and about Newfoundland, and there might be no mentioning about Labrador. The reason for this, although the paper is definitely about Labrador is that the province was named the Province of Newfoundland until October 2001, when it became the Province of Newfoundland *and* Labrador. This was because, as Canadian Premier Roger Grims stated, "Labrador is an important and vital part of this province. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is firmly committed to ensuring official recognition of Labrador as an equal partner in this province, and a constitutional name change of our province will reiterate that commitment."<sup>26</sup> In cases were papers, book and articles, which I site, only refers to Newfoundland, it means the Province of Newfoundland which includes Labrador. In cases were the author’s means the Island of Newfoundland; I will make a remark about it.

In this thesis I have chosen to use Innu place names, instead of the English version. The place name mentioned the most, which may be the most confusing, is *Old Utshimassit*, named *Old Davis Inlet* in English. From Old Utshimassit the Innu were relocated for the second time to Utshimassit on Iluikoyak Island. Utshimassit means “place of the boss” in Innu-Eimun; referring to the manager of the Hudson’s Bay Company store. In English *Utshimassit* is simply known as *Davis Inlet*. In other words Old Utshimassit and Utshimassit are two different places, but in close vicinity of each other. Another place name used is Emish, which is known in English as Voisey’s Bay, named after Amos Voisey who lived there. Today we find the Voisey’s Bay Nickel Mine there. Other names I will translate in text or footnotes.

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<sup>24</sup> Armitage, P. (1991). *The Innu (The Montagnais-Naskapi)*. Chelsea House Publishers, New York, New York:14-15

<sup>25</sup> Armitage 1991

<sup>26</sup> Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. (2001, November 2). *Noteworthy: A newsletter of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador*:1

## **Are you our new teacher? - My role as a researcher**

Arriving in Canada, and in preparation for my stay in Natuashish, I went to the Memorial University/ College of the North Atlantic's library in Happy-Valley Goose Bay. After a few days at there I traveled by plane to Natuashish to begin my fieldwork. My first day in Natuashish I decided to go for a walk around town. It was a nice day and the only people I could see were kids riding around in their shorts on their bikes. It only took a few minutes before one of them talked to me "Hi! What is your name?" I told them my name and they continued asking "Are you our new teacher?" My blond hair and blue eyes had quickly given me away. Since I had met most of the teachers on the airport in Goose Bay, they were going home and I was going up to Natuashish, I could easily see the resemblance. I had contacted the Mushuau Innu Band Council before I came, first of all to get permission to do research in the community and secondly I needed a place to stay. I was lucky to get a place to stay all for weeks, first in the hotel, then in a trailer next to where many of the non-Innu workers on contracts live during their stay in Natuashish.

When I started introducing myself as a Master student in Indigenous studies from Norway many would ask if we had any aboriginal people in Norway. Some had heard about the Sami and most people gave me some credit for being from the same country as Georg Henriksen. In Natuashish I was an outsider when interviewing Innu, walking around town or going to buy food in the local store. In many ways I was thankful I was a Norwegian outsider, not having to carry all the burdens of Canadian colonial history on my shoulders. Since Natuashish is depending on outsiders and non-Innu coming to the community as teachers, administrators, carpenters, electricians and construction workers, which hasn't always been popular in the community, I felt that it made it easier for me since I wasn't working there and were Norwegian. I also felt that many of the non-Innu somehow saw me as an insider since I, just like them, weren't Innu, and they could talk to me about their challenges living in Natuashish in a private matter, and that they, since I was a non-Innu, could understand their issues.

During my time in Natuashish I know there were things I were not able to see or cultural expressions I misinterpreted or didn't understand because I was an outsider. Since I only stayed there a month and people had no prior knowledge to me, people might have been reluctant to give me all the information I asked for. I also believe my own personal bias have affected how I interpreted what people told me.

As a researcher with no prior knowledge in doing fieldwork I am also aware that my inexperience had an impact on my research. I also believe that I sometimes might be too shy or have too little faith in my own research to persuade people to talk to me. While I also believe that I am able to treat people with respect and understanding and I believe I got what I could get from my informants taking into consideration all these factors that plays in since I was an outsider. On the other hand, as an outsider, I might have been able to see things differently than if I was an insider. Another issue is that as a foreigner I wasn't too familiar with the myths and stories about the Innu that I heard traveling in Labrador and visiting Happy-Valley Goose Bay before I went to Natuashish. I believe that this was beneficial for my thesis.

### **Outline of thesis**

In this thesis we will follow the housing and relocation of the Mushuau Innu in 1948, 1967 and 2003. In chapter two I will discuss the background for the first relocation to Nutak in 1948 and if and how the Innu were consulted about the relocation. The third chapter will discuss the background for the second relocation in 1967 and as in chapter two if and how they were consulted about the relocation. Were they active in the decision-making or passive bystanders? The fourth chapter will look at background for the relocation to Natuashish in 2003 where the Mushuau Innu now live, and what role did the Innu take in the relocation. Chapter four is the concluding chapter.



## Chapter Two: “When the Innu started Hunting for Seals” Relocation to Nutak in 1948

The Innu of Labrador had a nomadic lifestyle that was based on hunting during the winter months, roaming the interior of Nitassinan<sup>27</sup> from October-December to March-April. In the interior they would hunt for several species of mammals such as bear, beaver, porcupine and most important – Caribou, which was the heart of their way of living. In the summers, after the break-up of the ice in May or June the Innu would travel to the coast or to a large inland lake to fish, trade, repair equipment, meet friends and relatives.<sup>28</sup> In 1948 the Mushuau Innu were relocated by boat to the Inuit settlement in Nutak where they stayed for two years until they decided to walk back to Old Utshimassit. The Innu who had depended on caribou for food, clothing and had a lifestyle centered around the caribou was now to start hunting for seals.

The relocation of the Innu to Nutak and an Inuit community has later been viewed as illustrative of the lack of cultural awareness the government had about the Innu and the Inuit and their different lifestyle. This however doesn't answer the main question. Why were the Innu relocated to Nutak, who supported this decision and why did the Innu move to Nutak? To be able to answer these questions we will have to understand who the decision makers were in northern Labrador in the early and mid 1900s. There were several actors who could take this position, such as the fur traders, Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), the missionaries and the Government of Newfoundland and the Innu themselves.

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<sup>27</sup> Translates to “Our land” and comprises all the land traditionally inhabited and used by the Innu of Labrador and Quebec.

<sup>28</sup> Armitage 1991 and Henriksen, G. (2000). *Hunters in the Barrens. The Naskapi on the Edge of the White Man's World*. Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland:1, and Samson, C. (1999, February). The dispossession of the Innu and the colonial magic of Canadian Liberalism. *Citizenship Studies* 3(1):6



Map showing the relocation from old Utshimassit to Nutak in 1948.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Map: Canada Maps (Retrieved May 15<sup>th</sup> 2010 <http://www.canada-maps.org/newfoundland-and-labrador-map.htm>)



## The Establishment of Trading Posts



The Hudson Bay Company trading post at old Utshimassit in 1896. This is where the Innu would come to trade.<sup>30</sup>

Prior to the move to Nutak, the Innu camped in the Emish, Sango Bay (where they were relocated for the third time in 2003 and created the community of Natuashish) and Old Utshimassit areas during the summers where they traded, did odd jobs around the trading posts and fished. When the Innu were not by the coast, they were living inland in the vicinity of prime caribou hunting grounds between Ashuapun (Boarder Beacon) and Kameshtashtan (Mistastin Lake).<sup>31</sup>

When the A.B. Hunt established a trading post in old Utshimassit in 1831 the Innu had already traded to several other post in the Northern Labrador/Quebec peninsula.<sup>32</sup> Louis Fornel opened a post in Hamilton Inlet in 1743. The Hudson Bay Company (HBC) had been present in

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<sup>30</sup> Photo by A.P. Low. Library and Archives Canada (PA038207)

<sup>31</sup> Personal Communication with Peter Armitage May 2010. For more information on Innu place names visit [www.innuplaces.ca](http://www.innuplaces.ca)

<sup>32</sup> Terpastra & Associates Ltd. (1992 ). *Davis Inlet (Utshimassit) Service Infrastructure, Socio-Economic Study*. Goose Bay.

Uashkaikan (Fort Chimo) since 1830 and longer in several other trading posts in northern Labrador/Quebec and the north shore of St. Lawrence River.<sup>33</sup> In 1869 Hudson Bay Company bought the trading post in old Utshimassit and the Mushuau Innu were now dealing with the most influential trading companies in Canada.<sup>34</sup> The Hudson's Bay Company, believing the Innu were "living in great plenty, not one in twenty of whom ever troubled to visit a trading post" wished to extend its business northwards and into the interior where, according to Henriksen, they believed that by their usual method, they would be able to research the land and exploit the Innu as they done with other Aboriginal groups.<sup>35</sup> The Innu had become dependant on rifles and ammunition for hunting and on the European traders to provide them with such goods.<sup>36</sup> In 1814, an employee of Hudson Bay Company wrote about the Innu near Grate Whale River

"Noting but necessity or great want, will ever produce a spirit of exertion, in Such Indians as these; their dependence on us is very trifling, the Deer [caribou] furnishes them with both food and raiment, and so long as they can procure a supply of Powder, Shot, Tobacco and a heartily swill of grog at times, their wants are wholly supplied."<sup>37</sup>

The managers of the trading posts had a difficult time making the Innu trap as much as they wanted them too. The Innu were dependant on caribou and neglecting hunting caribou for the sake of fur bearing animals could be fatal to them. Fearing that the Innu would spend their time hunting caribou instead of trapping Hudson's Bay Company traders sometimes restricted the he supply of ammunition to them, hoping to force them to trap as a result.<sup>38</sup>

Erlandsson, a fur trader from Fort McKenzie, had in 1833 tried to persuade the Innu to hunt for martens instead of hunting Caribou, which was abundant, and consequently the Innu had starved.

"It was with great persuasion and extraordinary encouragement I induced then to look after martens in the early part of winter. Subsequently some of them were starving, which they blame me for, saying that I enticed them to hunt furs when they could have killed abundance of deer; they then came to me not only expecting, but demanding, food which I was unable to supply them with."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Mailhot, J. (1997). *The People of Sheshatshit. In the Land of the Innu* ISER Institute of Social and Economic Research Memorial University of Newfoundland, .St. Johns: 43

<sup>34</sup> Terpastra & Associates Ltd. 1992

<sup>35</sup> Henriksen 2000: 11

<sup>36</sup> Armitage, P. (1990). *Land Use and Occupancy Among the Innu of Utshimassit and Sheshatshit*. Innu Nation, Sheshatshit and Utshimassit::108

<sup>37</sup> Henriksen 2000: 11

<sup>38</sup> Armitage 1990: 109

<sup>39</sup> Henriksen 2000: 12

Erlandsson further writes that the Innu told him that he couldn't expect them to hunt skins for him, while he could not supply them when they were hungry.<sup>40</sup> The fur traders and Hudson's Bay Company would in the mid 1800's and early 1900's get company from Catholic missionaries.

## **The Establishment of Mission**

The first non-Aboriginals to settle north of Hamilton Inlet were missionaries of the Moravian Church who before establishing a mission in Labrador had established themselves in Greenland. The Moravian missionaries in Labrador saw their mission exclusively directed toward the Inuit and carried out their mission in the Inuit language and didn't want or considered the Innu to be part of this mission.<sup>41</sup> The Moravian mission chose the policy of segregation and didn't want non-Inuit to settle in their communities to preserve and to protect the Inuit from being influenced by the main society and where Inuit "nature" culture could survive.<sup>42</sup> This policy of segregation was in the contrast to the assimilation policy used in regards to the Innu by the Catholic missionaries.

In 1859 a Catholic Oblate priest reached North West River and preached for fourteen Innu families. Until then the Hudson's Bay Company had lost trade to the St. Lawrence posts because the Innu would rather visit post with missionaries.<sup>43</sup> In 1895 the Oblates withdrew from North West River, but the need for a priest remained. As the trade was in serious jeopardy, the Hudson's Bay Company and Revillon Frères<sup>44</sup> appealed to the authorities in Newfoundland to find a priest. From the 1920's the priest came to North West River every summer and from 1923 Father Joseph O'Brien assumed the responsibility for the work and he would later become an influential character among the Innu.<sup>45</sup>

For the first years Father O'Brien only visited North West River, but in 1925 Father O'Brien received a letter from the Hudson Bay Company's store manager at Old Utshimassit, John E. Keats, stating that the Innu trading in that area wanted father O'Brien to visit them "Joseph Rich (Indian) has asked me to write to you... He wants to know if you are coming to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Hiller, J. (1998). *Labrador Moravian Voyages*. Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site

<sup>42</sup> Niemi 2006:24 and personal communication with Dr. Hans Rollmann, Department of Religious Studies Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Markham, N. (1985). Monsignor Edward O'Brien. (D. Saunders, Ed.) *Them Days Magazine. Stories of Early Labrador*, Vol. 10, p 4.

<sup>44</sup> In 1909, Revillon Frères had forty-eight stores in its Eastern Arctic division while the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) had fifty-two. Competition in Canada between these companies ended in 1936 when the HBC bought out Revillon Frères.

<sup>45</sup> Markham 1985:4-5.

Davis Inlet either next summer or the following summer [...] he says he will tell the Nescauppy Indians that you are coming.”<sup>46</sup> Joseph “Joe” Rich used to travel to Sheshatshit where he had met the Catholic priest and he told him about the Innu further north. In 1927 Father O’Brien made his first trip to old Utshimassit where the Innu would come during the summers to visit the HBC store. From then on he visited the Innu there and in North West River every summer until 1946.<sup>47</sup> Father O’Brien used Joe Rich as an interpreter in the sermon, and later, Father O’Brien would make his interpreter the Chief of the Mushuau Innu, a type of leadership the Innu didn’t have in the past.<sup>48</sup> We know from written sources that the church or Mission house was under construction in 1928 because the storekeeper, John Keats, from the Hudson Bay Company in old Utshimassit wrote to Father O’Brien saying that they were “making progress with the church, have laid the foundation laid and the first floor on, and the posts up, am hoping to get it finished enough for you to hold your services there [...]”<sup>49</sup> From then there were both the Hudson Bay Company and a mission present in old Utshimassit.

Old Utshimassit was split between Ukasikaslik Island where the HBC store and managers house were located, and on the mainland where the Mission House and later the school were located. Whenever Innu came out of the country, they would tent on the mainland across from the HBC store, in a grassy field area to the west of the store, on neighboring islands, or at more distant locations such as Sango Bay, near the present village of Natuashish.<sup>50</sup>

The Newfoundland government had little direct contact with the Innu people before mid 1900s and trade between Aboriginal peoples and European settlers in Labrador did not evolve to the extent that the government thought it required formal legislation or significant government involvement. Furthermore Labrador was far removed from the centre of political activity at St. John's or even London and it would have been costly and difficult for politicians to provide services to the territory's small-scattered population. Instead, government officials delegated the day-to-day administration of Labrador affairs to religious groups and commercial trading companies in the area, which were Christian missionaries and the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>51</sup> The

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.:10

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.: 5

<sup>48</sup> Henriksen, G. (2009). *I Dreamed the Animals. Kaniuekutat: the life of an Innu hunter*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books: 201

<sup>49</sup> Markham 1985: 11.

<sup>50</sup> Henriksen 2000: 69 and Peter Armitage personal communication May 2010

<sup>51</sup> Higgins, J. (2009, September). *Inuit Organizations and Land Claims*. Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage

Catholic mission and their priest would gain considerable influence on the Innu lifestyle for decades.

### **From Caribou Hunters to Recipients of Relief**

The Innu, who had a migratory lifestyle, would wait at the lake for the annual migration of caribou herds from the west. At the height of the season hundreds of animals were killed in a day as they swam across the lake. William Cabot described one of these hunts during the summer of 1906, when hunters in canoes speared 1.200-1.500 animals in a two-week period.<sup>52</sup> If many caribou were taken during the summer and fall the Mushuau Innu would remain together during the winter, otherwise they would break up into small groups to fish through the ice and hunt caribou on foot. If the Innu were not able to locate caribou - starvation was a genuine threat. In spring and early summer the small groups would gather once more to fish and to prepare again for the fall caribou hunt.<sup>53</sup> The travels in Nitassinan could be exhausting: “My husband and I used to canoe and travel many kilometers to Sheshatshit and we used to put up our tent in many places. In the fall we stayed in one place and waited for the water to freeze up. Then our travels would begin after the water was frozen.”<sup>54</sup>

One of the traditional meeting places was Mushuau-nipi (Indian House Lake) where thousands of caribou would cross the northern end of the lake on their migration route. In their canoes they would surround the swimming caribou and slaughter. Innu from various parts of Labrador and Quebec would meet and participate, some coming all the way from the Gulf of St. Lawrence, while the most regular contact was with the Innu from Uashkaikan (Kuujuuaq/Fort Chimo, Quebec).<sup>55</sup> Anthropologist James VanStone explains that the intensive adoption to caribou hunting made it possible for a more stable life for the Mushuau Innu, compared to the Sheshatshit Innu, who were generalized hunters and had to seek out game rather than simply station themselves at known migration routes.<sup>56</sup> VanStone believes that Turner in 1894 wasn't exaggerating when he stated with the reference to the Ungava band Innu, from the area around

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<sup>52</sup> Vanstone 1985: Vanstone, J. W. (1985, January 31). Material Culture of the Davis Inlet Barren Ground Naskapi: The William Duncan Strong Collection. *Fieldiana, Anthropology* (Publication 1358): 2

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Informant Four

<sup>55</sup> Henriksen 2000:8-9

<sup>56</sup> VanStone 1985:3

Uashkaikan (Kuujjuaq/Fort Chimo, Quebec), the subjects of his research, “without reindeer (caribou) the very existence of the Indians would be imperiled.”<sup>57</sup>

In 1916, for unknown reasons, the main caribou herd failed to appear at Mushuau-nipi (Indian House Lake). Up to that time, had invariably appeared there in October, moving from the north to the east, then crossing the lake and passing to the south and east. In May the caribou came back up the east side of the George River, moving to the northeast. As a result of the considerable slaughter that took place every year, there were great piles of caribou bones around the lake. Duncan Strong’s informants believed that the animals smelled these bones, were offended, and informed the caribou god, who then refused to allow the herd to come south. Neglect of religious rites associated with the caribou was also believed to have been involved. Overkill could according to VanStone be a factor in the disappearance of the herd, but forest fires and winter icing could also have been a factor.<sup>58</sup>

As already mentioned the Innu had to hunt furbearing animals, which they traded rifles and ammunition with. The decline in fur bearing animals as well as caribou could become disastrous for the Innu. Keeping in mind that when store managers, missionaries and government officials were talking about a failure and decline in hunt, they were usually not referring to the caribou, but to fur bearing animals. Raoul Thevenet, the manager of Revillon Frères trading post at North West River after 1909 wrote that the pressure by non-Innu trappers was being noticed. The Sheshatshit Innu was worsened by the presence of Lake Melville Settlers, Newfoundlanders, and other non-Innu who had progressively pushed them out of their best hunting and trapping area.<sup>59</sup>

“The territory at and around Northwest River as far as Hopedale towards the coast has been the best of the Indian hunting ground for generations past, but these last few years the so-called Natives (half breeds) and Newfoundlanders have been making a regular business of trapping, some of them having as many as three to six hundred traps set during the hunting season. In doing this they have overrun the Indian hunting grounds.”<sup>60</sup>

In 1928 the decline in animals was witnessed by the Hudson’s Bay Company post manager in old Utshimassit, John E. Keats, writing that he was “[...] sorry to say that we have had a very very poor year. Far inland the Indians barely caught enough to pay their fall outfit, and some of them

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.:4

<sup>58</sup> VanStone 1985:4

<sup>59</sup> Armitage 1990:5

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.:6.

have been living on Newfoundland Government relief this spring to keep from starving.”<sup>61</sup> The Innu were by their own standards living in extreme poverty and because of this they were required to seek increasing levels of relief from Newfoundland government on the form of basic foodstuffs.<sup>62</sup> In a 1939 newspaper article Father O’Brien also supports the perception that the Innu hunting grounds were under great pressure.

“The privation and hardship of the Indians is largely a result of their restricted hunting grounds and their ever increasing hoards of white trappers. The wilds of Labrador, their birthright, have now been divided among so many groups that in most years someone has to go short, usually the Indians.”<sup>63</sup>

Walter Rockwood, the director of the Newfoundland Division of Northern Labrador Affairs (DNLA), held the same opinion in the 1960s, quoted in the St. John’s Evening Telegram saying “At Northwest River the Indians had been practically driven from the best trapping lines the last 25 years and subsisted largely on relief.”<sup>64</sup>

Donald McRae argues that there is no evidence of the caribou disappearing from traditional Mushuau Innu hunting grounds, and although the “winter of 1948 had apparently been hard and there had been some starvation the Innu do not recall that there was a particular shortage of animals in their hunting grounds.” My suggestion would be that if there had been a shortage of caribou over a long period of time, 1948 might not have been “particular”. According to McRae, Max Budgell, the store manager for HBC had “identified the problem in productivity not to an absence of animals; rather, he said, the Innu would not hunt. In his view the Innu had become dependent on government relief and were reluctant to go into the country.”<sup>65</sup> Peter Armitage does not support McRae’s argument that the Innu weren’t affected by a change or route or decline in Caribou. Armitage argues that the Mushuau Innu were by the 1940s in desperate state due to falling fur prices and major decline in the populations of local caribou herds and as a result many Innu were reluctant to travel inland for fear of starvation.<sup>66</sup> If we look at the caribou statistics from 1954 there were 5000 animals left in the George River caribou herd, while it in 1984 had increased to 472 200.<sup>67</sup> In 1993 the number was 785,00 animals while it had decreased to

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<sup>61</sup> Markham 1985: 11

<sup>62</sup> Armitage 1990: 5

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.: 6.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.: 6

<sup>65</sup> McRae 1993: 40

<sup>66</sup> McRae 1993: 40

<sup>67</sup> Messier, F., Huot, J., Le Henaff, D., & Luttich, S. (1988, December). Demography of the George River Caribou Herd: Evidence of Population Regulation by Forage Exploitation and Range Expansion (41:4): 279

385,000 in 2001.<sup>68</sup> According to Henriksen the George River caribou herd can fluctuate quite dramatically in numbers, as these numbers shows us. It is therefore difficult to rely on both McRae's arguments and Max Budgell's statement that the Mushuau Innu were starving because they simply didn't want to hunt.<sup>69</sup>

What was true was that as a result of the caribou failing to appear at Mushuau-nipi 1916 and the decline in caribou and furbearing animals the Innu were relying more and more on relief from the government and their dependency on store food grew. Once they had moved their families to the coast where they could supplement hunting trips with trade, the trips inland became fewer because it was a major undertaking to go inland on a regular basis. At the time of the relocation in 1948 they had very few dogs, which meant that it took a long time to travel into nutshimit.<sup>70</sup> "We hauled our sleds to our tents with lots of meat. Sometimes I would have a hard time hauling my sled, I would get very tired and my legs would get very tired. It was the same routine that we did over and over."<sup>71</sup>

James Roche researched archives concerning the move of the Innu to Nutak in 1948 and he found that there was little factual information available for the period leading up to the decision of the Newfoundland Government to resettle the Mushuau Innu in 1948.<sup>72</sup> There is however some archival information about this as well as accounts from Innu elders that can give us some insight on this relocation. The correspondence between Father O'Brien and Ralph Parsons is a first indication on a plan of resettlement that would soon after be implemented on the lives of the Mushuau Innu. In 1933 Ralph Parsons, an official with the Hudson's Bay Company wrote to Father O'Brien complaining about the International Grenfell Association,<sup>73</sup> represented by Dr. Paddon, who he believed would take over the "duties of relieving the sick and destitute on the whole of the Labrador Coast." He believed Dr. Paddon plan was "to centralize the residents who are scattered along the Coast, hoping to make them more productive and self-supporting. He

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<sup>68</sup> Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. (2009, July 15th). *Newsrelease*. Provincial Wildlife Officials Plan George River Caribou Herd Census

<sup>69</sup> Henriksen 2009:10

<sup>70</sup> Henriksen 2000:13

<sup>71</sup> Informant Five

<sup>72</sup> Roche, J. (1992). *Resettlement of the Mushuau Innu 1948. A Summary of Documents*. The Innu Nation. Sheshatshit.

<sup>73</sup> The International Grenfell Association (IGA) is an organization founded by Sir Wilfred Grenfell to provide health care, education, religious services, and rehabilitation and other social activities to the fisherman and coastal communities in northern Newfoundland and the coast of Labrador.



also hopes to interest them in farming.”<sup>74</sup> Parsons believed that Dr. Paddon's idea in theory this would have been “all right”:

“[...] in practice both you and I know it will be a failure before it is begun [...] In the meantime, the people will become so demoralized that their future will appear to be hopeless. You know how their natural occupation is hunting and if you take them away from their present location and trapping grounds, when they can at least obtain a few foxes in ordinary years, and assemble them in villages, there will be impossible to find work of a productive nature for them to do, the results will I fear be disastrous.”<sup>75</sup>

Ralph Parsons were apparently concerned about this idea to move the Aboriginal population in Labrador because they were hunters. He did however not only consider the welfare of the Innu; he was also concerned with the HBC revenue. At this time the HBC had suffered losses for eight years, and Paddon’s scheme would not have helped them economically. Parsons suggested instead that the HBC take responsibility for relief and predicted it could do so at a considerably lower cost. Neither plan was attempted, and a few months later the British parliament appointed a commission with legislative and executive authority to govern Newfoundland, and later that year the Newfoundland rural police became in charge of issuing relief.<sup>76</sup>

In 1942 the Hudson Bay Company gave up its business in Northern Labrador and the Newfoundland Government took over the trade and responsibility for the welfare of the population as well as the store in old Utshimassit. In 1945, the Northern Labrador Trading Operations brought in \$45,000 from the fur trade; in 1948 revenues were only \$3,000. In 1944 there were discussions about closing the post in old Utshimassit, and in 1946 plans for closing the post during the winter months were articulated.<sup>77</sup> In April 1950, J.G. Wright, Chief of Arctic Division for the Department of Resources and Development wrote a memorandum on “Assistance to Newfoundland Government regarding Indians and Eskimos in Labrador “saying:

“The economic state of these Eskimos and Indians is very low, the Indians being somewhat worse off than the Eskimos. Various reasons are advanced for the deterioration of these people. The Moravian Missions... in order to facilitate religious instructions encouraged the natives to congregate in communities around the mission stations and give up their nomadic way of life. The people thus lost their ability and desire to live independently by hunting and fishing and relied more and more on unsuitable imported foods.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Markham 1985:16

<sup>75</sup> Markham 1985:16

<sup>76</sup> Paddon, H., & Rompkey, R. (2003). *The Labrador Memoir of Dr Harry Paddon 1912-1938*. McGill-Queen's University Press: xxxii

<sup>77</sup> McRae 1993: 37-38

<sup>78</sup> Roche 1992: 15-16

The Newfoundland government would become more aware of the dependency the Innu had on the trading post, especially after the decline in animals and the dependency on relief became more evident when the Newfoundland Government had taken over the HBC store in old Utshimassit.

### **Relocation to Nutak and Walking Back (1948-1950)**

In a letter from Budgell, the storekeeper in old Utshimassit, to Father O'Brien in June 1947 he stated that he expected the post to be closed in the fall.<sup>79</sup> Budgell was to be stationed in Nutak, but he did not seem to have been aware of the plans to relocate the Mushuau Innu. Budgell believed that the Innu would "drift to Hopedale" after the post was closed. According to McRae it was the perceived opposition of the Moravian Mission in Hopedale to the Innu moving there was stated as the reason for not closing the post in 1946.<sup>80</sup>

McRae argues that it's unclear why they were moved to Nutak, and they had not been consulted. It seems however clear that the decision to relocate the Innu were made in a short time and the fact that one of my informants were surprised to find out that all of the Mushuau Innu had been relocated from old Utshimassit to Nutak when they came to old Utshimassit supports this finding.

"My family and I canoed to old Utshimassit but when we got there all the Innu was gone. They moved to someone else. The Hudson Bay Company was still there. We talked to the Utshimau ["the Boss" Hudson Bay Company representative]. That was part of the trading. The Hudson Bay Company representative who stayed in old Utshimassit were fishing, he gave us a lot of food too canoe to Nutak."<sup>81</sup>

McRae argues that the Innu had not been consulted in advance, and I have not found any evidence of either or, but I will make some assumptions. Joe Rich had, according to McRae's informants, apparently been taken to Nutak before the move. This is supported by a letter written by K.J. Carter, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources to R.A. Gibson, Director of Mines and Resources in Ottawa stating that "[...] it was decided to move them to Okkak Bay after the chief of the tribe had had an opportunity to look over the new hunting grounds".<sup>82</sup> McRae asserts that Joe Rich had no decision making power, but it is reason to believe that he had influence over the Mushuau Innu. Furthermore, it doesn't exclude the Mushuau Innu from making decisions

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<sup>79</sup> McRae 1993:38,69

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Informant Four

<sup>82</sup> Roche 1992: 19

themselves, something they had to everyday while travelling and hunting in Nitassinan. First of all we can assume that the government had informed Joe Rich about their plans and that they must have consulted with some of the Innu about the relocation, and that the ship didn't appear one day in old Utshimassit and all the Innu, without any prior knowledge or incentive, left to Nutak. We know from William Duncan Strong's journals from 1927-1928 that there were an "abundance of caribou in the northern districts west of Okak and Nain [...]"<sup>83</sup> and that the Government probably used this as an incentive. The other being that the store in old Utshimassit were to be closed and the Innu would not have been able to get outfit or relief. The Innu also had the ability to adapt to changes, such as hunting other species if the caribou were scarce, and although there is no exact answer, the Innu might have seen the relocation to Nutak as an alternative to starvation and as a temporarily arrangement. Evidence of this is that Chief Joe Rich wrote in 1948 to Father O'Brien saying, "We don't know yet whether it will be better or not but we are going to try it." The Innu did exactly that and left old Utshimassit with boat to Nutak, on the "Winnifred Lee."<sup>84</sup>

"We all went to Nutak on a big ship. Nutak is not a very good place. There are no trees, so you have to go to the bays in order to find trees. Nutak is a very bad place with high cliffs and high mountains. The only trees you find are close to salt water. Nutak is a bad place to live, not like old Davis Inlet"<sup>85</sup>

The Innu were placed in the hold of the cargo and some pitched tents on deck on their way up to Nutak. "The Innu were on the ship and looked for canvas to cover them up, there were a lot of Innu on the ship. It took us two days to get to Nutak."<sup>86</sup> We know that not everyone actually went to Nutak, some families also stayed in Nain.<sup>87</sup>

After the Innu came to Nutak they got tents, clothing and food. "When we got to Nutak, we go to the Wharf, there were no trees, and the houses were not made of trees. And the Innu didn't have any poles to put up their tents, but then the government gave us poles to put our tents up."<sup>88</sup> The Innu spent a few weeks in Nutak before they moved to areas in the bays including Okak Bay. The Inuit had a very different lifestyle from that of the Innu: one was sea-oriented (Inuit), the other land-oriented (Innu). Mixing the two groups together was according to Powers a

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<sup>83</sup> Leacock, E. B., & Rothschild, N. A. (1994). *Labrador Winter. The Ethnographic Journals of William Duncan Strong, 1927-1928*. Smithsonian Institution Press: Washington and London: 6

<sup>84</sup> McRae 1993: 38

<sup>85</sup> Henriksen 2008: 206

<sup>86</sup> Informant One

<sup>87</sup> Armitage 2010 personal communication and Henriksen 2008:206

<sup>88</sup> Informant One

recipe for failure.<sup>89</sup> One elder explained that when they were relocated to Nutak the Innu lifestyle changed, they cut trees they would sell to the Inuit, they had enough food and they started to use dogs when they traveled.

“We had water and food, fish, seals, porcupine, caribou and lots of seals. That’s when the Innu started hunting for seals. The Innu lifestyle, how we traveled, changed, we started using dogs. After Christmas no one was hungry. We tried to go further and further to hunt, but the mountains got bigger and bigger and there were no trees. We couldn’t travel as far as we wanted, only as far as the trees. I noticed it was changing. It was different in Nutak than in the place we grew up. Then the Innu noticed it got harder.”<sup>90</sup>

Between old Utshimassit and Nain the landscape changes dramatically. In Nutak there were no spruce trees, which are abundant further south. The whole lifestyle of the Innu changed. According to my informant the Innu went to Okak bay to fish. They received fishing nets to catch their own fish and the government gave them the nets and salt for free, and the fish they caught they sold to the store so they could feed their families.<sup>91</sup> After two years the Mushuau Innu had tried to live in Nutak and when the Innu wanted to move back to old Utshimassit “the Innu decided for themselves.”

“One priest visited us in Nutak, he was from St. Johns. He wanted to find out if the Innu was happy there, the Innu knew they wouldn’t be staying in Nutak because it was not the same as in Utshimassit. The priest did not want us to move back, the Innu decided for them. In the summer chief Joe rich was very unhappy because he lost his son on the ice. He decided they should go back.”<sup>92</sup>

The priest who visited the Innu in Nutak was Father Cyr who later became the first permanent priest in old Utshimassit when the Innu returned in 1950.<sup>93</sup> The Innu had told Father Cyr that they weren’t happy in Nutak and Chief Joe Rich also became deeply affected by the drowning of his son.<sup>94</sup> “In the summer the chief Joe rich was very unhappy because he lost his son on the ice. He decided they should go back. And he lost his grandchild.”<sup>95</sup> According to McRae some of the younger Innu were not unhappy at Nutak, while the older Innu were dissatisfied with the conditions for hunting and they agreed to go back to old Utshimassit. According to Kaniuekutat, Joe Rich had in the spring of 1950 gone to see the storekeeper and told him they were leaving for

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<sup>89</sup> Powers, T. A. (1997). *Conscious Choice of Convenience: The Relocation of the Mushuau Innu of Davis Inlet, Labrador*. Master thesis, Saint Mary's University:20

<sup>90</sup> Informant One

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> McRae 1993: 39

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Informant One

old Utshimassit. Max Budgell had provided them with food and they had then traveled to Nain, where they stayed in two weeks.

“We arrived in spring, we stayed in Nain for 2 weeks, and many people were on the ice to meet the Innu from Nain. They were very happy. There were so many Innu they couldn’t take them into their houses, but the Moravian church made a special feast for the Innu, a trade drinks of the Inuit. Powdered milk was served for the Innu. Innu people were very happy to see the Inuit and the settlers. And the Inuit were happy about the Innu moving back in may we were finally back in old Utshimassit. That was in 1950.”<sup>96</sup>

In Nain each family had received relief from a Mountie (member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and five months after they had left Nutak they arrived in old Utshimassit. According to Henriksen the Innu had “simply disappeared” which had left the government “puzzled” until the Innu had repapered in old Utshimassit five months later.<sup>97</sup> How this could have been a surprise to the government, when representatives, such as storekeeper Max Budgell in Nutak was informed and a “Mountie” in Nain had provided them with relief is unclear, what is clear is that the Innu were back in old Utshimassit.

## **Conclusion**

It is important to understand that although the decision to relocate the Mushuau Innu to Nutak might seem as a sudden or surprising relocation to the Innu, the assimilation of the Innu had already been an ongoing process for a long time. In the mid 1700s and expanding in the mid 1800s the trading posts and fur trade started to move in to Labrador. Around the same time the Catholic missionaries began their work, with the first regular missionary coming to old Utshimassit in the 1920s. Furthermore we saw the decline in fur and game which is especially evident when the George River Caribou herd failed to appear at Mushuau-nipi (Indian House Lake) in 1916. The Innu were forced to hunt furbearing animals that were almost extinct to get outfit from the store, which made the situation impossible for the Innu. The decline in animals and the dependency to store food and relief made the Innu spend more and more time on the coast because great undertaking for the Innu to move families from the inland to the trading posts.

Government reports suggested that the move to Nutak was designed to provide employment for the Innu. This policy of relocating the Mushuau Innu to Nutak and "teach them to fish" was described in the October 1949 report to the Newfoundland government of Harold

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<sup>96</sup> Informant One

<sup>97</sup> Henriksen 2009: 14

Horwood as "monstrous but necessary", and Horwood stated that the "servile labor" of cutting wood for the Inuit was "better than the enforced idleness they suffered at Nain and Davis Inlet".<sup>98</sup>

The problem of moving the Innu to Nutak was that the environment was totally different in Nutak; the Innu had problems even with putting up their tents. This lack of understanding the Newfoundland Government had about the Innu, that they were hunters and not fishermen, were to continue for generations. The fur trade had definitely come to a full stop, and my suggestion is the low income for the old Utshimassit post is one of the reasons for making a decision to close the post, and subsequently to move the Mushuau Innu to Nutak.

The Innu were not passive decisions makers, although other alternatives than relocating to Nutak in reality were none. If they had decide to stay in old Utshimassit where many reported a scarcity of game and the store were closed the most likely result would be starvation. In stead they decided to try and see if there were any better hunting grounds further north. After two years in Nutak they made the decision to walk back, something that might be seen as a second relocation, which clearly shows that the Innu were fully capable of making their own decisions.

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<sup>98</sup> McRae 1993:39

## Chapter Three: The Place of the Boss<sup>99</sup> - Relocation to Utshimassit in 1967

“A military ship came to old Davis Inlet about thirty years ago. It had many different flags. A priest and other people were all dressed up. We were told that a government person was on the ship and he wanted to meet with the Innu people. We were told he was a representative of the Queen. I don’t know who he was. The priest was the interpreter. After the man finished his speech, we were told what he said, who-ever he was. He said that before he came here he was told the Innu people had everything-good housing, water and sewage. Now he could see that this was not true. When he went back, he would tell the Queen what he had seen: that the Innu were still living in tents. The former chief told him that the Innu were very poor and that it was cold to live in tents.”<sup>100</sup>

The person who visited old Utshimassit was Ross King, the director of Northern Labrador Affairs in 1966-67.<sup>101</sup> The Chief was Joe Rich, appointed by the first priest in old Utshimassit, Father O’Brien in the late 1920s and supported by Father Peters who translated for Ross King. Kaniuekutat’s accounts from Ross King’s visit is significant because it gives us a window to the situation in old Utshimassit in the mid 1960s.

In 1950 the Mushuau Innu had walked back from Nutak to old Utshimassit after spending two years in the Inuit settlement further north. Nearly twenty years later, in 1967, the Innu were relocated for the second time, this time to Utshimassit on Iluikoyak Island. The Island where close to where they had camped earlier, by the catholic missionary and the government store in old Utshimassit. The Innu, who were traditionally nomadic and dependant on hunting caribou were now to be settled on an island. Who and what were the forces behind the housing and relocation to Utshimassit in 1967? And why did the Innu, who had in 1950 made the decision to walk back to old Utshimassit because of the foreign natural environment in Nutak, apparently willingly, relocate to an island that would prevent the Innu from going to their traditional hunting grounds for months every year?

To answer these questions there is a need to understand the political situation in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 1950s and 1960s. The political situation was colored by the confederation between the Government of Newfoundland and Canada, the need for industrialization, higher living conditions and welfare policies. To understand how political

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<sup>99</sup> Utshimassit is the Innu name for Davis Inlet and means “the place of the boss” referring to the Hudson’s Bay Company and the storekeeper.

<sup>100</sup> Kaniuekutat, elder, in Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council 1995:26

<sup>101</sup> Pretty and Samson 2004: 155

decisions were carried through and how it affected the Innu I will discuss the role of the Catholic Church, the priests, the chief and the government store.

## **Confederation with Canada**

In 1949, while the Innu were still in Nutak, Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada. By 1945, Canada and the British Government were coming to the conclusion to incorporate Newfoundland into the Canadian Confederation. The referendums held in 1948 showed that a majority of Newfoundlanders now agreed on becoming a province of Canada as well.<sup>102</sup>

Ralph Matthews argues in *There's No Better Place Than Here. Social Change in Three Newfoundland Communities* that centuries of British colonial mismanagement, followed by local political corruption had drained Newfoundland and Labrador of resources than the one commodity, the fishery could provide. A small local elite had become rich, while most Newfoundlanders were in 1949 living in rural fishing villages where they were dependent on the inshore fisheries and the village merchant. Except for two paper mills and some small mines, there was no large-scale production in the province. The standard of living was low, educational facilities were poor, hospitals were scattered, roads were almost non-existent and social assistance in time of need were meager.<sup>103</sup> The Smallwood government used Confederation to industrialize, as well as develop health care, education and infrastructure of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was in this plan the Innu and Inuit of Labrador were to be incorporated.

The Newfoundland government did not have any special agencies in place to deal with Aboriginal affairs and it had not developed a system of reserves or land claims. In Canada, the Indian Act made the federal government financially responsible for the delivery of health, education, and other social services to much of its Aboriginal population. When the province of Newfoundland joined Canada, the federal and provincial governments did not extend the Act to the new province's Aboriginal peoples. Government officials argued that doing so would disenfranchise Newfoundland and Labrador's Aboriginal residents, who, unlike most status Indians in Canada, had the right to vote.<sup>104</sup> Its claimed that the Canadian government's desire to exclude the Innu from the Indian Act was motivated by its explicit policy of enfranchising and

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<sup>102</sup> Hiller, J. (1997). *Newfoundland and Canada: 1864-1949*. Hentet May 15th, 2010 fra Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site: <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/law/confed.html>

<sup>103</sup> Matthews, R. (1976). *"There's No Better Place Than Here" Social Change in Three Newfoundland Communities*. Toronto, Canada: Peter Martin Associates Limited:1

<sup>104</sup> Canadian First Nations did not get the right to vote until the 1960s.



assimilating the Innu into the Canadian society.<sup>105</sup> Instead of extending the Indian Act, federal officials agreed to pay money to the Newfoundland and Labrador government for the delivery of education, health, and other services in the First Nations and Inuit communities. Not being under the Indian Act cut the Innu off from structured funding, mechanisms for community governing and the Innu were at the mercy of the provincial government to provide services in the community. After Confederation with Canada in 1949 the Innu qualified for a variety of pensions as well as family allowance payments and more Innu began to take advantage of government benefits they were entitled to if and when they chose not to go to the country. Those who stayed by the mission throughout the winter would receive a steady cash income; while those who travelled into the bush would obtain an outfit, and combined with an adequate supply of game it could be sufficient to sustain them during this period. The outfit however amounted to considerably less than the regular welfare payments. According to one of James Ryan's informant the welfare payment for a family who didn't go to the country totaled thirty dollars a month. And "for [a family of] four that was a lot of money."<sup>106</sup> Successful hunting and trapping seasons could not always be counted on, and in contrast to the relative security of a guaranteed source of sustenance, country life was in comparison risky.

## **Economic development and the welfare state**

The first premier of the province of Newfoundland, Joseph Smallwood, looked to improve education and health services in the province in pursuit of economic development, and both health and education facilities expanded rapidly after Confederation. The education budget, for example, grew from four million in 1950 to eighty million in 1967.<sup>107</sup> The state, health and church agencies responsible for Labrador believed that industrial society was to sweep over Labrador and that their task was to prepare the Aboriginal people of the province to take their place within this system.<sup>108</sup>

In 1951 the responsibility for trade and social welfare in northern Labrador was transferred to the provincial Department of Welfare and a new agency, the Division of Northern Labrador Affairs (DNLA). DNLA succeeded the Northern Labrador Trading Operation and the

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<sup>105</sup> Armitage 1990:7

<sup>106</sup> Ryan 1988: 11.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.:8

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.:6

division was to administer the federal funds that were flowing into the province.<sup>109</sup> The focus of DNLA was the economic situation in Labrador and the director of DNLA, Walter Rockwood, believed that the main problem was that the province was too dependent on the small scale fishing industry and he wanted to create other industries, “whether it be mining, lumber or others, the other pieces of the puzzle [would] fall into place.”<sup>110</sup> The “economic rehabilitation” of the First Nations and Inuit areas took priority and DNLA based their policy on the belief that Aboriginal people would rather “work” than hunt or fish - and hunting was not work. Consequently DNLA undertook to replace the subsistent hunting economy with one based on wage labor.<sup>111</sup>

To prepare the Aboriginal population for the “inevitable” assimilation and canadianization Rockwood and DNLA believed that the proper authorities had to educate the children. Education as a key element in the process of integration would provide the indigenous peoples with the tools to master the market economy.

“Infinitely important, is the process of integration, which, although going on for generations, may be expected to continue for many years to come... Education is the key and there is ample evidence that given the proper training, Eskimos and Indians can undertake any of the occupations and professions in our present society.”<sup>112</sup>

The understanding was that if the Innu were educated they could contribute to new province. Other individuals and agencies also promoted formal education for the same reasons. One of the elders in Natuashish told me that in the past the Innu had never lived in the shores and he had grown up inland. They had no school and lived by the knowledge and traditions of their parents. Today many Innu views the inland or nutshimit as represented traditions, knowledge and prosperity despite its known hardship, while the coast represented the priest, schooling and hunger:

“We lived old Utshimassit for 16 years. They told us there was going to be school for the people to learn. There used to be two priests at the time and still no school. After living there for ten years the lifestyle we had was still the same. We were hungry, but when we were living in the inland we never hungry. But ever since we were living in the shores we were always hungry, we stopped noticing, we were getting used to this lifestyle.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Rompkey, B. (2003). *The Story of Labrador*. McGill-Queen's University Press:103

<sup>110</sup> Ryan 1988:8

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.:6

<sup>113</sup> Informant One

The hunger the elder talks about was an important factor when the Innu were relocated to Nutak in 1948 as we have already seen in chapter two. The Innu who had been dependant on caribou were now getting more and more dependant on canned food from the government store, the security in the village, with improved health care and housing was as an attractive alternative to increasingly difficult life in the barrens. The sedentarization of the Innu were an ongoing process, were this dependency on relief was a result of the government plan. If they could make the Innu dependant on relief, which they had to go to the coast to receive, the trip back to Nitassinan would be impossible because it was an enormous physical undertaking.

In 1955 an International Grenfell Association (IGA), an important actor in Labrador, sponsored inspection identified housing conditions as a major contributor to poor health among the Innu. Officials who conducted the survey reasoned that it was an exercise in futility to restore people's health and “then send them back to live in these unsanitary hovels”.<sup>114</sup> It was assumed that poor housing, and the fact that the Innu lived in tents were the background for their poor health. Bruemmer disputes the notion that tents contributed to ill health. He argues “In 1967 when nearly all the 150 Davis Inlet Naskapi were still living year-round in tents, they had the lowest mortality rate of all the people on the Labrador coast, 9.6 per 1,000 (only slightly higher than the Canadian national average of 8 per 1,000 in 1960).”<sup>115</sup> The IGA were very much pro housing, and Henriksen believes they were influential to the housing of the Mushuau Innu, although they were most likely not part of the decision to relocate the Innu to an island.<sup>116</sup> The IGA had a hospital in North West River, which my some of my informants had been sent to treat Tuberculosis.<sup>117</sup>

## **Relocation - To go ahead or go eastern**

The relocation and housing of the Mushuau Innu was part of the provincial strategy to resettle the inhabitant in larger towns and growth centers. Joseph Smallwood’s speech “Ahead and Easter” captures the state of mind in Newfoundland in 1949 were the province goal was to heighten the living conditions by industrialization.

“The policy of the Liberal party is to make Newfoundland one of the prosperous, progressive provinces of Canada: a province able to hold its head up and proud to look the rest of Canada squarely in the eyes. A province willing and able to help its people to a higher standard of

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<sup>114</sup> Ryan 1988:12

<sup>115</sup> Ryan 1988: 13

<sup>116</sup> Georg Henriksen on CBC Radio February 1<sup>st</sup> 1993 <http://archives.cbc.ca/society/poverty/clips/11508/>

<sup>117</sup> Informants

living than they have ever enjoyed before. Our first great undertaking as a government will be the development of our country, both Newfoundland and Labrador. We will push vigorously ahead with a policy of searching for natural resources, measuring them developing them; day and night we will work for this great purpose. We will strain every effort and use all our ability to open up our country and to increase our country's wealth and prosperity. Newfoundland cannot stand still — we must go ahead or go astern.”<sup>118</sup>

A part of this strategy was also to provide basic services such as health care, education, electricity and transportation to residents of the province. It is difficult to imagine that the government would be able to reach its goal of centralization without providing such basic services. The population of Newfoundland and Labrador was in 1961 457,853 located in 1,104 communities. 815 had less than 300 inhabitants and over 400 of these communities had less than 200 inhabitants. The small size and the location of these communities was a direct result of the historical dependence on the inshore cod fishery.<sup>119</sup> By the 1950s the number of fish coming near shore had as Matthews writes, “declined as a result of offshore hunting of fish by deep-sea draggers, and the traditional economic base of the Newfoundland “outport” was largely replaced.”<sup>120</sup>

After confederation many deserted their villages willingly and took up residence and jobs in the larger towns. Some were unable to bear the cost involved and petitioned the provincial government for assistance in moving and this is the background for the first resettlement plan. Three different types of Government-sponsored resettlement programs took place from 1954 to 1975. I will explain two of the programs, the first and the second. The third, named “The Second Resettlement Program” (even though it was the third) or the Department of Regional Economic Expansion (DREE) agreement was signed in 1970 and lasted for five years.

The first one, *Centralization*, was first introduced in 1954 when the Newfoundland Government set up a small assistance fund to help those desiring to move to larger centers’ of their own choosing. One hundred percent of a community had to certify its willingness to move before any assistance would be granted. Short-distance moves were common because people tended to choose their new communities on the basis of family ties and religious affiliation.<sup>121</sup> In 1958, the Director of the Division of Northern Labrador Affairs (DNLA), Walter Rockwood, presented a report to the Royal Commission of Newfoundland Finances entitled “General Policy

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<sup>118</sup> Smallwood 1973 in Ryan 1988: 6

<sup>119</sup> Ryan 1988:6

<sup>120</sup> Matthews 1975: 205-206

<sup>121</sup> Martin, M. (2006). *Centralization*. Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site

in Respect to Indians and Eskimos in Northern Labrador.” The document reveals the intentions of government and provides the background to the financial proposals and budgets established by them. Rockwood writes:

“The immediate reaction is likely to be, - Move the people to a better area or areas. But where? ... The best sections, and the only places to be considered are the Lake Melville and Sandwich Bay regions, but these already have more people than an economy based entirely on hunting and fishing can support. Nor would it be polite to dump predominantly Eskimo and Indian population into an area populated at present by people who regard themselves as pure White and perhaps superior to those of the North.”<sup>122</sup>

Rockwood goes on and writes:

“But one fact seems clear, civilization is on the Northward march, and for the Eskimo and Indian there is no escape. The last bridges of isolation were destroyed with the coming of the airplane and the radio. The only course now is open, for there can be no turning back, it is to fit him as soon as he may able to take his full place as a citizen in our society.”<sup>123</sup>

For the Inuit and Innu there were no escape for “civilization” and they were to be assimilated. “The ultimate aim should be full and complete integration into our society,” wrote DNLA in a report in 1956<sup>124</sup> Rockwood believed it would be hard to assimilate the Innu to the Canadian society and maintained that “As with the Indians elsewhere there are deeply rooted psychological attitudes to be overcome before the process of integration is complete.”<sup>125</sup> There had to be though measures if the Innu were to fully integrate into the Canadian society.

According to McRae contemporary documents indicate that shortly after coming back to old Utshimassit in 1950 government officials continued to speculate about ways to integrate the Innu into the economy, but that they did not consider the Utshimassit area to be a place where this could be done, due to the lack of space for houses as being able to build a wharf. Suggestions were made to move the Mushuau Innu closer to North West River so that over time the two groups would merge. The possibility of some of the Mushuau Innu moving to Schefferville was also raised. Although the Innu were never relocated to North West River permanently it has been reported that during the next seven to eight years some seventeen families did move from old Utshimassit to North West River, some for treatment of TB at the hospital there.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Roche 1992: 15

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. 15-16

<sup>124</sup> Ryan 1988: 8

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> McRae 1993:43

In 1959 the entire population of the Inuit community of Hebron were relocated when the Government store and the Moravian Church decided to abandon the settlement. 247 people in 60 families were relocated to several settlements further south in Labrador. Most of the Inuit were first given temporary shelters in Hopedale, and a year or two later, many of them moved to Makkovik and Nain. The transition from Nutak was for many overwhelming, especially for those moving to Makkovik, a community where people for instance spoke English.<sup>127</sup> By the 1960s there was a growing recognition that the social impact of centralization was significant and studies of these communities were conducted. For many people the Centralization Program was the cause of stress because people feared that the government would force them to leave their communities. Stories circulated that the churches would refuse to send clergy to the outpost, or that teachers would not come to isolated areas, and this was especially evident after the relocation of the Inuit from Nutak. This also occurred because resettlement was community-focused: every member of a community had to sign a document indicating they were willing to move. No money was paid until the last household left. This was not a concern when the Innu were relocated to Utshimassit in 1967. There is evidence that the government knew about the negative effects of the Centralization and Resettlement plan, and the decision to relocate the Innu were carried through anyway.<sup>128</sup>

By 1965 the provincial government had persuaded the federal government to help. Thus the second phase of resettlement was to be a partnership between the federal and provincial governments, which focused its efforts on relocating people to designated 'growth centers'. With a new fresh-frozen industry replacing the salt-cod fishery in Newfoundland, the issue of resettlement became very much tied to the modernization of the industry. In 1965 a five-year federal-provincial partnership was established, and the Centralization Programme, previously delivered by the provincial Department of Welfare, was replaced by a Fisheries Household Resettlement Programme. This program was administered by the Department of Fisheries at both levels of government. Decisions were ultimately made by the Household Resettlement Committee made up of ten provincial and five federal government officials. In 1967 the program was turned over to the newly created provincial Department of Community and Social

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<sup>127</sup> Brice-Bennett, C. (2000). *Reconciling With Memories: A Record of the Reunion at Hebron 40 Years After Relocation*. Nain: Labrador Inuit Association:7

<sup>128</sup> Martin, M. (2006). *The Resettlement Program*. Hentet January 12th, 2010 fra Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site: <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/law/resprogram.html>

Development, but remained federally with Fisheries. It was under this plan the Mushuau Innu was resettled.<sup>129</sup> From the early 1960s the Canadian government had encouraged the Innu to start fishing cod and they gave the Innu small boats so they could fish in the bays, and the missionary imported small outboard engines for the Innu to buy. If they did not have the money to do so the missionary would lend them the money on the condition that they stopped drinking. When Henriksen did his fieldwork in 1967 almost all every household had an engine, and five men had bought bigger motorboats, all with the help of missionary.<sup>130</sup> Relief was also cut during the fishing season to encourage fishing and by the 1970s most families had a motorboat.<sup>131</sup> According to Powers the Innu was supposed to be involved in a commercial salt-water fishery in Utshimassit, but there is no evidence to suggest that Utshimassit could support a viable fishery.<sup>132</sup>

The regulations for the Resettlement Act of 1965 stated that the first step was to hold a meeting attended by at least 50 percent of all householders in the community considering resettlement. This meeting would pass a resolution stating that the community desired resettlement and a three-person committee would then be chosen to represent the community and conduct negotiations with the provincial Department of Fisheries and the committee then had to circulate a petition in the community supporting resettlement. This required no less than 90 percent (by 1967 80 percent) of householders' signatures, and had to include the chosen relocation community.<sup>133</sup> There is no evidence that suggests that the Mushuau Innu signed any agreement on the relocation to Utshimassit, although there have been some evidence that the Innu were summoned for a meeting. There is no evidence that there have been a three-person committee, and if it was that it had any influence on the chosen site.

According to one of my informants “They told us that we would have the choice to decide were we wanted to have our houses. We couldn’t have it in old Davis because it was too rocky. I told them the houses should be built in Sango<sup>134</sup> but they didn’t listen. The leaders said that the ships couldn’t go there, and after they said no, I didn’t have more to say.”<sup>135</sup> According, Kaniuekutat, Ross King visited Old Davis Inlet “about thirty years ago on a military ship.”<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Henriksen 2000:15

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Powers 1997:21

<sup>133</sup> Martin, M. (2006). *The Resettlement Program*.

<sup>134</sup> Sango is where Natuashish now is located.

<sup>135</sup> Informant one

<sup>136</sup> Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council 1995:35

According to the “Davis Inlet Inquiry” Ross King was not happy about the living conditions to the Innu, and after a year the provincial government gave plywood to every family so they could build their own shack using plywood on the floor and for the walls, with tent canvas for the roof. According to the inquiry the shacks were better than the tents and a bit warmer. The priest, who had his own power generator, hooked up the generator to the tents.<sup>137</sup> “The priest started noticing how bad the housing was. The flooring of the houses started to soak with water. And they were very cold. The houses that were in old Davis Inlet were one year old.”<sup>138</sup>

One of the elders I interviewed told me “The government used to come in from St. Johns Newfoundland. The priest and they used to have meetings how the relocation was going to take place, and they made the decision that the houses would be build during the spring.”<sup>139</sup> He further told me that that Ross King, priest Frank Peterson and Chief Joe Rich were the decision makers. From the government's point of view, though, the resettlement program was a success, much more than “Centralization”. Between 1965 and 1970, 3,242 households, totaling 16,114 people from 119 communities were resettled.

### **Missionization and assimilation**

After the Innu came back from Nutak in the store in old Utshimassit was reopened in 1952 and the first permanent priest, Father Joseph Cyr came.<sup>140</sup> According to Kaniuekutat this is when “people started to settle in the community.” He further says that the “priest stayed in an old shack on the HBC side and the house he stayed in was not that good. After some time the school opened, but Father Cyr only thought the children to write in Innu-Eimun.”<sup>141</sup> Father Cyr also opened a sawmill in old Utshimassit where he wanted people to work, and he told the Innu that a school would be opened for the children. According to the Davis Inlet Inquiry some of the elders said that the elders at the time agreed him, and some said that they were told the children would be taken away from the if the children didn't go school and that the social assistance would be taken away from them.<sup>142</sup>

According to an elder the priest in old Utshimassit wanted the Innu to “stay by the water so he could start teaching us that is how we ended up in old Utshimassit. After one year the priest

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Informant three

<sup>139</sup> Informant one

<sup>140</sup> McRae 1993:43

<sup>141</sup> Henriksen 2009: 210

<sup>142</sup> Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council 1995



stayed with us. We didn't have a school but we went in a tent to go to school. The tent the priest used to stay in." My informant further told me that the government started to talk about school in 1964. "It was only two classrooms in the school. This is in old Utshimassit."<sup>143</sup>

One of the more crucial aspects of the housing process as well as the position of the missionary is the appointment of a chief in old Utshimassit. Father O'Brien, the first missionary in old Utshimassit, appointed Chief Joe Rich. Father Peters supported the chief when he came in the 1950s and built a house for him in old Utshimassit with his own money while the other Innu still lived in tents. The Innu had no traditions with leaders or chiefs. Whoever went to hunt took the role as the leader on that specific trip. The missionary used the chief as, what Georg Henriksen calls, a broker between himself and the Innu. The Innu used the chief as a spokesperson for the Innu, especially when officials and guests visited the Mushuau Innu.<sup>144</sup> Joe Rich spoke English and could translate for the priests and in hindsight many gave Joe Rich partly responsibility for the relocation to Utshimassit.<sup>145</sup>

Joe Rich was present when the government decided to relocate the Innu together with the priest and the storekeeper. And he might have been seen as a representative for the Innu, a chief who spoke for them. "Joe Rich was a lone leader. He gave all the advice to the Innu people. There was some discussion; some people didn't want to move up here, where Davis Inlet is now. Late Joe Rich was always alone as a leader..." told Shapatash an elder to the Davis Inlet Inquiry.<sup>146</sup> "Some people say we just said yes to the white people about the move because we saw the houses that was built for Joe Rich."<sup>147</sup>

The Mushuau Innu would in old Utshimassit camp around the Mission House and School and by the old HBC store at Ukasikaslik Island, on the opposite side of Iluikoyak Island were they soon would be relocated to. According to Georg Henriksen the reason for some families living at Ukasikaslik Island is because of their relationship to the missionary. Some did not "want any interference from the missionary, while others had personal reasons for feeling antagonistic towards him. The feelings were mutual on the part of the missionary."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Informant nr One

<sup>144</sup> Henriksen 2000: 99

<sup>145</sup> Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council 1993

<sup>146</sup> Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council 1995: 37

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Henriksen 2000: 70

Although the Innu never had depended on hospitals and western medicine before, the missionary in old Utshimassit were gaining influence over this as well. There was no hospital in old Utshimassit and no nurses, so the missionary was responsible to give medical aid and he stocked large amounts of medicine, and he gave out vitamins and powdered milk to the mothers with young children. According to Henriksen “The missionary says that by winning the mother through the care of their children, he will also win the men.”<sup>149</sup> The missionary, had as we can see many different roles. He was a Catholic priest and a religious leader, he would treat the Innu and give medical aid, and he would give them loans on special conditions and he was also their teacher. There is no doubt about the strong position the missionaries in both North West River (Sheshatshit) and old Utshimassit. According to McRae it is likely that Father Peters played a leading role in the choice of the site and relocation. He was a dominant figure, who Innu describe as someone "who did lots of good things for the Innu"<sup>150</sup>, and who was always making decisions for the Innu on what he thought was best for them. He apparently dug the well that led to the conclusion that there was sufficient water and he was a strong advocate of the site as early as March 1966. He has stated that the Innu who inspected the new site were in favor of it and that "the decision to move to the new site was done with the approval of the Innu, but not with a consultative vote".<sup>151</sup>

A female elder told me that “The priest was Frank Peters, he was not happy that the Innu was poor. He talked to the government leader and the government leader went back to his office and brought the word on what was going on with the Innu.”<sup>152</sup> The Newfoundland government hade before confederation depended on the missionaries to deliver services to the aboriginal population in Labrador. It is therefore reason to believe that the missionaries had considerable influence over issues concerning the relationship between the Innu and the government.

George Rich writes in *Struggling With My Soul* about the relocation to Utshimassit, or “the promised land” as he calls it. George Rich and his family had traveled to Utshimassit many times and also he believes that the missionary and the chief chose the site. “My parents were not church-going people. They were not easily tamed by the missionary. But they decided to set up

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<sup>149</sup> Henriksen, G. (1971). Patrons and Brokers in the East Arctic. I R. Paine, *Newfoundland Social and Economic Papers No. 2*. Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland:28

<sup>150</sup> McRae 1993: 45

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Informant number three

their tent near the church and school that were being built.”<sup>153</sup> George Riches father wanted to camp by the church and had told his mother that “we can try to go to church more often and maybe the priest will start noticing us. (...) And we will able to get the house right away instead of waiting forever. They promised that they will build 10 houses this summer and we might get lucky.”<sup>154</sup> According to George Rich this talk had went on for days and more and more people had arrived to the tent city in Utshimassit. This is one example on how the priest influenced the Innu, and the how the priest had made the Innu depend on him.

Henriksen names the priest and the storekeeper in the 1950 and 60s the middlemen. For the middlemen to succeed he had to convert his resources strategically to obtain influence. Henriksen stated that the missionary had considerable influence compared to the storekeeper. The missionary followed a strategy were he created a need for a commodity he offered, first without asking for a return. The he varied the goods and services he offered, which the Innu were unable to get elsewhere, and created a general dependency upon himself. The Innu could not therefore lightly reject the demands from him in fear of loosing his favor. By having this influence he becomes what Georg Henriksen explained to be a patron to the Innu. He was at the same time a broker between the Innu and the non-Aboriginal society and through the combination of the two roles he was able to disseminate his values to the Innu. According to Paine a patron is distinguished from his client as “the person who has the values of his own choosing affirmed by the others”.<sup>155</sup> A broker is according to Henriksen “defined as a middleman who manipulates or process the values which he purveys to others.”<sup>156</sup> The priest Henriksen refers to was Father Peters, but could be transferred to the earlier priest as well. Father Peters had a significant role in the Innu community and had much to do with all aspects of Innu life in the coast.

Henriksen contends that the storekeeper did not have the same influence over the Innu in the 1950s and 60s as the missionary. On the other hand one of my informants told me “The Hudson Bay Company, the priest and the leader selected the land where the houses were going to be built.”<sup>157</sup> By Hudson Bay Company he meant the Government store in old Utshimassit. The Hudson Bay Company had in 1942 pulled out of Labrador and after this the Newfoundland government operated the store in Utshimassit. The storekeeper was required to execute

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<sup>153</sup> Rich, G. (2000). *Struggling With My Soul* . St. John’s: Harrish Press:7

<sup>154</sup> Henriksen 2000: 93

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Informant number one

government polices in Utshimassit were he gave out relief, family allowances check and old age pensions. Also the storekeeper administered the fishing enterprise were the Innu were provided with small boats and cod traps for the salt cod market in Newfoundland.<sup>158</sup> According to Henriksen the store was a non-profit store and the storekeeper had a fix wage that made increased sale uninteresting. Therefore the storekeepers major concern was to please his superiors and according to Henriksen that was evaluated on how he balanced his accounts. It is hard to agree on all Henriksen accounts for the relationship between the storekeeper and the Innu. Although the storekeeper himself was not necessarily the one with the power, the store as an important institution and as an agent for the state certainly had great influence over the Innu lifestyle and had so for years. Secondly when deciding where the community were to be placed, a good place to put a wharf was very important. This to make it possible for the deliveries to the store and to export fish.<sup>159</sup>

### **Schooling and assimilation**

There were several agents who carried through governmental and provincial politics. Sometimes it is also evident that the situation was reversed at that the different actors in northern Labrador influenced the policies. On a local level Dr. Paddon, director of the International Grenfell Association hospital in North West River had already been mentioned in regards to the relocation to Nutak. Dr. Paddon, who had considerable impact not only on health matters but also upon educational matters, writes that

“If the Indian could be integrated with the general school system instead of being educated in the Indian school he would learn much from his white and Eskimo classmates and could put the new language to work and become fluent in it and he would probably raise his sights and Prepare himself for a career, or at least make a reasonable adjustment to Canadian life.”<sup>160</sup>

By having Innu children attending school with Inuit and non-Indigenous children Paddon hoped that the Innu children would learn English better and as he writes be prepared for the “Canadian life.” The Innu had Catholic missionaries as teachers in both old Utshimassit and Sheshatshit, who had thought the Innu in Innu-Eimun. The Inuit had Moravian missionaries as teachers who had thought them in Inuktitut.

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<sup>158</sup> Henriksen 2000:93

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.: 94-95

<sup>160</sup> Ryan 1988: 9

The hunting and fishing economies of the indigenous people, and in particular, the nomadic tendencies of the Innu proved to be inconsistent with a development scheme centered around central and stationary industries and formal schooling. Rockwood stated “the hunting and fishing economies of the past, necessitating as it did frequent moves from place to place [has not] been conducive to this kind of development.”<sup>161</sup> If the Innu were to “develop” with the rest of the province they would have to become more or less sedentary and go to school year round.

One example taken from Sheshatshit in 1952 where Father Joseph Pierson was responsible for starting formal education among the Innu with instruction during the summer moths. It would become a major challenge for Father Pierson to make the children attend school. One of James Ryan’s informants remembered it was enough that they miss school, but when students avoided religion class it was considered an offense of immeasurable magnitude. When Father Pierson were questioned by the sporadic school attendance by school officials in St. John's he investigated another incentive that would induce parents to send their children to school. Eventually he considered recommending that government officials deprive those families who neglected to send their children to school of their family allowance payments.

“Every time I was filling the monthly report for school attendance, I was feeling guilty. Now, I think the time is due to give a true picture of what is going on here. Looking at this monthly report, you will notice that there are 21 pupils attending school here at North West River, (I mean Indians). But according to the census of the Indian population, 53 children are supposed to attend school. So 31 children are not in school. The difficulty with the Indians is the following. Most of them are moving because they are supposed to be hunting people... I will suggest to inform the Family Allowances Department and ask them to discontinue allowances to parents who are careless.”<sup>162</sup>

The situation in North West River, or Sheshatshit, follow the same tendencies as in Natuashish where it became more important for the priest and later for the teachers that the children are following the school calendar. When the priest were starting to regulate who were to be allowed to go the country the women would stay in the communities with the children and many of the men who did go left their families behind. To loose the family allowance could mean that the families could starve.

In Sheshatshit, in 1962 forty-one complete families went to the country, ten complete families stayed by the mission and nine men journeyed to the bush without their families. Over the next few years the numbers going to the country declined dramatically. Most who made the

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<sup>161</sup> Ryan 1988: 9

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.: 15

trip travelled without their families, spent considerably less time away from the settlement than they had during previous years and covered less territory. By November of 1967 only a few had ventured into the Nitassinan.<sup>163</sup>

The Innu would themselves cut the trees in Utshimassit where they wanted to live in Utshimassit. The government provided twenty saws, and no tractors. They were told if they got tractors the Innu “didn’t have to do no work.”<sup>164</sup> The Innu were also, according to my informant, told “they [the carpenters] needed the chainsaws for themselves. That’s when we started cutting down our own trees.” My informant helped the carpenters to build his house. He further said, “Our houses weren’t the houses they promised. The government said we would have houses with basements. When we told the architects, and they said that maybe in the long run we would get it.”<sup>165</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Although the Mushuau Innu had walked back from Nutak in 1950 after living there for two years, the provincial government continued to find ways to settle them. The provincial plan to resettle all of Newfoundland and Labrador into growth centre’s, and therefore be able o industrialize and make welfare services such as health and education for more people. It is also reason to believe that the government wanted to ease the administration of the province. The relocation of the Mushuau Innu were not necessarily unique in itself, but it the fact that the Innu were a nomadic people, with a culture and lifestyle who depended on hunting caribou, makes this relocation significant. The Innu never lived in houses before 1967, they lived in tents, which easily could be erected and moved to another site if it was needed. In Utshimassit they became trapped on an island for months every year, not able to hunt for caribou. There were no longer room for nomadic tendencies, and they were to become fishermen.

According to Peter Armitage there was many reasons for why the Innu settled in Utshimassit and Sheshatshit. Although many of them could be “attributed to coercive government policies, it must be remembered that the Innu had been so weakened by deceases, periodic starvation, and other physical deprivation resulting primarily from contact with

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<sup>163</sup> Mailhot and Michand 1965 in Ryan 1988: 5

<sup>164</sup> Informant number one

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

Europeans that they were “ready for settlement”.<sup>166</sup> I some degree I agree with Armitage. It certainly applies to the first relocation, and for why the government wanted to relocate the to Nutak. On the other side the Innu had wanted to live in the comforts of a house, which would include all the amenities they felt they were promised. The main issue with the relocation was the settlement on an island, which would prove to have negative affects on the Innu lifestyle and culture.

I have listed several decisionmakers in regards to the relocation. First the priest Father Frank Peters had something to say in almost all aspects of the Innu life in the coast. He was their teacher, advisor, priest, gave out loans to the Innu and he handed out medicine to the Innu. The Innu were in many ways in his mercy and he could make decisions that could get serious impact on their lives. As we read in this chapter he was also the one who had picked out the place of the new settlement.

The second decision maker was the storekeeper. Not necessarily the storekeeper personally, but as an institution the government store were responsible to follow government policies, hand out relief, outfit and welfare checks. When relocated to Utshimassit the store was opened first, and the importance of a wharf where deliveries could easily be made was important in making the decision to where the settlement should be.

Thirdly the Mushuau Innu themselves could be seen as decision makers. The Innu had an understanding for how the houses were to be built and they wanted the comfort they had seen chief Joe Rich had in his house. When the Mushuau Innu were starting their inquiries on the issues concerning the relocation in the 1990s the issue has not been the fact that they moved into houses, but the low quality of the houses and the location of the settlement.

“Today, most of us think that we never decided to settle here in Utshimassit ourselves. We believe it was the government and the priests who made the decisions in those days. Ross King was one of those people... This was during the Smallwood government. Joe Rich was the chief at the time we settled in the community... Now, thirty years later, it is not clear how these decisions were made.”<sup>167</sup>

Many Innu have considered chief Joe Rich as one of the main decision makers in the relocation. It is however unclear how much power the chief had with the government officials such as Walter Rockwood and later Ross King. In many ways Joe Rich was also in the mercy of the priest. The priest dependant on the chief in the beginning to translate to him, later the priest were

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<sup>166</sup> Armitage 1990:10

<sup>167</sup> Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council 1995:25.

able to speak Innu-Eimun fluently. In my opinion the chief was used by the priest as a representative for the Innu, so if he was questioned by any officials on the opinion of the Innu how could refer to Chief Joe Rich.

The relocation to Utshimassit 1967 turned out to be a failure in any ways possible. It failed to assimilate Mushuau Innu into the Canadian society as the governments had hoped for and it failed in providing the Innu with a standard of living they were promised. The Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission states that “in the light of what they were led to believe they were going to get at the new site, who could have disagreed with such a move?”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> McRae 1993: 45



## Chapter Four: Living Conditions and Political Mobilization. The Relocation to Natuashish in 2003

In 2003 the Mushuau Innu completed the relocation to Natuashish after spending over 35 years in Utshimassit. According to Ausra Burns the relocation to Natuashish was one of the most ambitious and costly relocations of an Aboriginal population in Canadian history. By the end of 2004, the federal and provincial governments had spent approximately \$280 million to move 700 Innu to Natuashish.<sup>169</sup> Why did the Innu move to the new community of Natuashish and why did the governments agree to spend this much money on a community they had just settled in the late 1960s? To be able to understand what the background for the relocation from Utshimassit to Natuashish was, I will first discuss the housing and living conditions in Utshimassit and at the political mobilization among the Innu.



The relocation from Utshimassit (Davis Inlet) to Natuashish was completed in 2003.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Burns 2006:76-77

<sup>170</sup> Map: First Contact Communication Retrieved May 26, 2010 <http://www.firstcontact.ca/Surviving-Canada/history.html>

## **Housing Conditions in Utshimassit**

The Mushuau Innu consider Father Peters, Joe Rich and government officials such as Ross King to be the ones who made the decision to relocate the Innu for a second time to Utshimassit on Iluikoyak Island. The Mushuau Innu themselves believes that there was no consultation and the question of approval or disapproval by them did not arise.<sup>171</sup> However, as I stated in the conclusion in chapter three, the Mushuau Innu made the decision to move to Utshimassit and they had wanted the comforts of living in houses. The problem was that the houses and living conditions in Utshimassit were deteriorating from the first year of settlement. In his annual report for 1968 the Director of Northern Labrador Services, Ross King, noted that the problem of installing water in the houses was going to be expensive because of the problem of freezing in the winter and this shows that there was an expectation that there would be running water in the houses in Utshimassit.<sup>172</sup> McRae states in 1993 “While that proposition may not have been astounding in 1968, (particularly when the expected basements had not been constructed) what is incredible is that twenty-five years later the matter has still not been remedied.”<sup>173</sup> For most Canadians (and Norwegians) living without water and sewage and houses in a bad condition, especially when you add minus 40 degree's Celsius during winter on top, would be unimaginable, especially in the 1990s.

The year after the first houses had been built, in 1968, the government representative in Davis Inlet was reporting that houses constructed in the previous summer were leaking through the windows and the roof. Even though there were complaints made to the priest by the Innu and to government officials the houses were not maintained.<sup>174</sup> One could question why the Mushuau Innu didn't do maintenance their houses themselves. The government provided the Innu with building materials but without the skills training for them to know how to use the materials. Many Innu used them to build wooden walls on which they would use their tents as roofs.<sup>175</sup> Adrian Tanner contends that no preparations were made for the complexities of house maintenance and the authorities provided few mechanisms to ease the rapid transition from

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<sup>171</sup> Mc Rae 1993: 45

<sup>172</sup> Roche 1992

<sup>173</sup> McRae 1993: 47

<sup>174</sup> McRae 1993: 48

<sup>175</sup> Press 1995: 193

nomadic to sedentary life.<sup>176</sup> The 1992 Terpstra Report states that the housing and the conditions resulting from the lack of adequate infrastructure and that the houses were deplorable. The houses in good condition were exceptions and marked an effective racial demarcation in living conditions since they were habited by non-Innu.<sup>177</sup>

Throughout the nearly forty years in Utshimassit the issue of water would become the main concern for the Innu. Wells had been dug and running water was available in the mission, the school, the teachers' residences, the nursing clinic, and the nurses' residence and in some houses occupied by non-Innu. The fact that the Innu were unable to get water and sewage, while the non-Innu in the community had it was for most people hard to understand and it is a sign that there was a perceived difference between the needs of Innu and non-Innu. "No-one in the Innu community can understand why the Mission and the nursing clinic can have wells that are productive, but that attempts to dig wells at Philip Rich's adjacent house have not yielded serviceable, uncontaminated water."<sup>178</sup>

The electric heating of homes was not possible in Utshimassit because of the high cost. According to a survey made houses or 70 % had only wood stoves, 4 had wood and oil furnaces, 3 had wood stoves supplemented by a minimum of electric heat, 8 had wood stoves and oil furnaces and 8 had only oil furnaces. In 90 % of the homes wood was used as either the primary or secondary source of heat. This meant that the Innu would have to haul a substantial amount of wood for heat and food. In the seventies the Innu would have to chop wood "without using anything mechanical" and with axe and it could take up to a day to chop wood.<sup>179</sup>

The struggles the Mushuau Innu had were not visible for the public because Utshimassit was in the periphery. It was far away from the general public's daily life and it would take years before the public were aware of the living conditions. The two governments, the federal and provincial, didn't have the same excuse, first of all they were responsible for settling the Innu in Utshimassit and on an Island, secondly they had representatives working in the community. They had funds going into the community and they were responsible for welfare services and the school.

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<sup>176</sup> Adrian Tanner, «The Double Bind of Aboriginal Self-Government,» i *Aboriginal autonomy and development in northern Quebec and Labrador* .

<sup>177</sup> Terpstra & Associates Ltd.1992

<sup>178</sup> McRae 1993: 48

<sup>179</sup> Shustinis in Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council 1995:39

The Terpstra Report also measured the quality of construction and found that except for the last five units built by the Northern Labrador Housing Commission none of the housing units were close to the construction standards in the early 90s. The houses had unisolated floors, inadequate floor supports, insulation in walls and ceilings. When I asked about the housing conditions in Utshimassit one man told me that the mattresses would freeze to the ground because there was no insulation in the floor.<sup>180</sup> Kaniuekutat states “In the tent, if you found your tent too cold, you moved it to another spot. In the house, it is different. If you find your house too cold there is nothing you can do. You can’t move it another place.”<sup>181</sup> The mobility of the tent is one of its best attributes, if it’s cold or dirty you can move it. In comparison a house, especially with the low quality housing in Utshimassit could not easily be fixed.

One of the most ironic parts of the houses in Utshimassit was the bathroom. “What good is a bathtub when there is no water? We thought the government must be crazy to send those bathtubs. They knew there was no water in the community.”<sup>182</sup> Approximately 97% of the houses had space allocated to for a bathroom, but only the fifteen houses with running water (19%) had a complete 3-piece bathroom in place. In many of the older houses the bathrooms were not physically big enough to contain a toilet, sink and a bathtub.<sup>183</sup> Father Frank Peters believed the reason for why the Innu were not able to get water was because of the need of firewood to heat the houses had led to cutting down the vegetation at the town site and lowered the water table.<sup>184</sup> By this reasoning what Frank Peters was implying was that the Innu themselves were to blame for the lack of water.

Many of the houses surveyed were in poor condition and the overcrowding in the houses was a result of the high population growth and housing shortage. Peter Collings writes that in most arctic communities in Canada, there is an absolute need for more housing to ease overcrowding and replace substandard units. This need is compounded by a lack of funding and the inability of tenants and homeowners to make rental and mortgage payments in a timely manner.<sup>185</sup> The traditional “homeless person” does not exist in northern Canada. Instead people

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<sup>180</sup> Own fieldnotes July 2010

<sup>181</sup> Henriksen 2009: 261

<sup>182</sup> Fouillard 1995:39

<sup>183</sup> Terpastra & Associates Ltd.1992

<sup>184</sup> McRae 1993: 48

<sup>185</sup> Collings, P. (2005). Housing Policy, Aging, and Life Course Construction in a Canadian Inuit Community. *Arctic Anthropology*: 50

have to sleep shifts within already overcrowded homes, and move out in tents during summers.<sup>186</sup> Overcrowding is defined within the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey as more than one person per room.<sup>187</sup> Severe overcrowding has been identified as a major risk factor contributing to suicide, violence, and the spread of disease in indigenous communities.<sup>188</sup> According to the Terpstra Report the condition of 61% of the houses was so poor that the price to move the houses to a new townsite would exceed the cost of building a new house.<sup>189</sup> Peter Armitage contends the community would “not have been chosen with sufficient foresight with regards to the future infrastructural needs of a modern community, with adequate water, sewage, and growing space. This new Davis Inlet never amounted to much more than a disgraceful shantytown, a remote slum in the Canadian hinterland.”<sup>190</sup>

Ausra Burns traces the causes of physical health deterioration and communal problems to the loss of cultural continuity in daily life, which was disrupted when their traditionally nomadic life was forcibly changed to a settled existence in an increasingly crowded and poorly serviced communities. The lack of employment and income options as well as government-imposed policies such as education and social assistance, didn't allow the Innu to spend significant time hunting or foraging in their traditional territories.<sup>191</sup>

### **“That day woke us up”**

In addition to low housing conditions an issue important for the Mushuau Innu to legitimizing relocation was the alcohol dependency in the community and the consequences of this dependency. In 1992, on Valentines Day, February 14<sup>th</sup> six children died in a house fire. The children had been alone in the house while the community had a Valentines party and the parents were drinking.<sup>192</sup> Since there were some serious issues concerning the water supply, the Utshimassit didn't have a fire department or fire equipment either. According to Katie Rich “That day woke us up, made us think about our children and what needs to be done. Our children don't have to live like this. They have the same hopes and dreams as any other child. We also know

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<sup>186</sup> Nunavut Housing Corporation

<sup>187</sup> Canada. (2006). *Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001 - Provincial and Territorial Reports: Off-reserve Aboriginal Population*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada:122

<sup>188</sup> UN-HABITAT and OHCHR 2005: 85

<sup>189</sup> Terpstra & Associates Ltd. 1992

<sup>190</sup> Armitage 2010 Personal communication

<sup>191</sup> Burns 2006:65

<sup>192</sup> Tanner, A. (2001). *The Double Bind of Aboriginal Self-Government*. I C. H. Scott, *Aboriginal autonomy and development in northern Quebec and Labrador*. Vancouver: UBC Press:405

that we had to examine ourselves to be able to help them.”<sup>193</sup> The dependency on alcohol and the low living conditions in Utshimassit would be the Innu selling point to the media and consequently the public, which seems to have loved the sensational horror s Basic infrastructure which most Canadians took for granted like running water and sewage was not available for the Mushuau Innu, while most non-Innu in Utshimassit had both. Tanner contends that the Mushuau Innu believed that the genesis of dysfunction in their lives was to be found in the events leading up to the government settling them in Utshimassit.<sup>194</sup> “We want to relocate before the community gets worse. If we don’t move to another location, we will have other problems, not only in the community, but also in the country. When people have better living conditions, they will change.”<sup>195</sup>

Although the public didn’t know about their relocation plans until 1992 and 1993 the leadership of Utshimassit had begun to seriously press for the relocation of the village during 1990 and 1991. Through the efforts of volunteers of the Mennonite Central Committee, a Christian organization who works with Aboriginal communities, an architect-planner conducted a study of the idea, which included a technical survey of the favored site of Sango Bay, together with plans for a small hydro plant, a fresh water supply, and the outline of a village plan. The study was based on discussions held with community members, at which other potential sites were also considered; it was however after the death of the six children the Innu would gain considerable attention to the relocation.<sup>196</sup> According to one of my informants the Mushuau Innu completed over forty reports on issues ranging from archeological to engineering surveys.<sup>197</sup>

The core personnel of what Tanner believed to be a social movement to relocate to Sango Bay and create Natuashish, was made up by a small group of people from Utshimassit who had undergone a alcohol treatment program and had remained sober for about a year. Throughout the summer of 1992 this group petitioned both the federal and provincial government to fund the relocation. In August, after the band council had moved construction equipment and building materials, which was intended for new houses in Utshimassit, to Sango Bay both federal and provincial governments agreed to fund a study of the proposed relocation.<sup>198</sup> According to an

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<sup>193</sup> Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council 1995:xiii

<sup>194</sup> Terpastra & Associates Ltd. 1992

<sup>195</sup> Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council 1995:133

<sup>196</sup> Tanner 2001:405

<sup>197</sup> Informant six

<sup>198</sup> Tanner 2001:406

informant the Innu had in the early 1990's a gathering by little Sango pond during springtime where Natuashish is located. This is when they discussed the issue of relocation and the future in Utshimassit. They had agreed there was no future there, a place with no running water. The other issue was that there were no more room for expanding in Utshimassit, and more houses needed to be built. In comparison the community of Natuashish has a long-term community plan in regards to space allocated to housing. The third reason for why people wanted to relocate was to live on the mainland, were they could go hunting without fearing the ice breakups around the island.<sup>199</sup>

In January 1993 what has become known as the Utshimassit Gas-Sniffing Incident received worldwide press coverage. The Innu Nation released a home-made video showing five children sniffing gas and saying they wanted to die and the press carried a story whose core remained unaltered for several weeks: five children had tried to commit suicide. As part of their coverage the press also wrote about community plans to relocate the village to the mainland.<sup>200</sup> Apparently the reason the Innu gave for moving was not sufficient for the provincial government to spend the amount of money need for relocation. The reason the government found sufficient was the fact that government engineers had been unable to find an economically feasible source of fresh water that could deliver the specified number of liters per hour for a settlement of this size, as called for by the Newfoundland and Labrador municipal code. The engineers indicated that the costs of bringing adequate quantities of water to the present site would be as costly, over the next fifty years, as would moving the village to the new site. The province left aside the claim that the relocation was necessary because of the flawed process of establishing Utshimassit without the consent of the community and because of the need to reestablish community functionality.<sup>201</sup>

In 1994 the federal and provincial governments made a formal commitment to support and fund relocation to a mainland site of the community's choice, but as the details were dependent upon a funding agreement being reached between Ottawa and Newfoundland, it was only finalized in 1996.<sup>202</sup> The Labrador Innu was not unfamiliar with dealing with the provincial and federal government before 1990; they had already fought several battles against the military and hydroelectric development.

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<sup>199</sup> Informant six

<sup>200</sup> Tanner 2001: 407

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.: 406

<sup>202</sup> Burns 2006:71

## **Innu Political Organization**

In 1969 a large area of Innu hunting grounds and hunting equipment, as well birth- and burial-sites was flooded by the Churchill Falls hydroelectric project. The hydroelectric project flooded more than 1,300 km<sup>2</sup> of land in central Labrador. According to Colin Samson one of the most significant landmarks for the Innu was the Patshetshunau (“steam rising”), an enormous waterfall, which could be seen and heard from more than ten miles away. With no legal formalities or consultation, it was reduced to a trickle by creating the Churchill Falls hydroelectric complex. As well as diverting hundreds of waterways, the project involved flooding Lake Meshikimau, an important fishing and camping area, and turning thousands of square kilometers of forest into an artificial lake named the Smallwood Reservoir in honor of the first Premier of the Canadian province of Newfoundland.<sup>203</sup> No known records indicate government officials contacted the Innu people before damming the river, nor did they offer compensation after the flooding until 2010 when the outstanding issues of the Tshash Petapen (New Dawn) land claims Agreement was resolved, including \$2 million annually in compensation for flooding caused by construction of the Churchill Falls hydroelectric project 40 years ago.<sup>204</sup>

At the same time as the flooding of Innu land the 1960s and 70s saw the growth of political activism among the world’s aboriginal people. Civil rights activism and African-American protesters were influencing both American and Canadian Aboriginal peoples. In Norway the struggle for human- and aboriginal rights and the ideology of “Red Power” in the America was made known with Vine Delorias’ paper “Custer Died for your sins,” and Dee Browns “Bury my heart at Wounded Knee” and the Sami people would start to compare themselves with the Aboriginal peoples of north America.<sup>205</sup> The forces of this movement should not be undermined and also affected the Labrador Innu.

The Canadian policy paper, the Statement of the Government on Indian Policy from 1969, usually referred to as the White Paper, proposed among others to repeal the Indian Act and turn over to the provinces the administration of education, health, and other benefits. The authors of the White Paper claimed that the problems of Aboriginal Canadians were a result from their legal

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<sup>203</sup> Colin Samson, «The dispossession of the Innu and the colonial magic of Canadian Liberalism,» *Citizenship Studies*, 1999:7

<sup>204</sup> CBC News February 23, 2010 <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/newfoundland-labrador/story/2010/02/23/nl-innu-caribou-230210.html>

<sup>205</sup> Minde, H. (2003). The Challenge of Indigenism: The Struggle for Sami Land Rights and Self-Government in Norway 1960-1990. I S. Jentoft, H. Minde, & R. Nilsen, *Indigenous Peoples: Resource Management and Global Rights*. Eburon Academic Publishers, Netherlands: 81



status as wards of the government. Attacks on the policy came from First Nations groups throughout Canada, academics, and Canadian public and within a year the Trudeau government had backed away from its termination proposal.<sup>206</sup> Although the Labrador Innu were already under the provincial administration and were not registered under the Indian Act the general positive outcome was the strengthening of national and regional Aboriginal organizations. The Aboriginal organizations had learned that their objections had become newsworthy. First Nations leaders started to issue press releases and the leaders became skilled in dealing with both the press and the government. Within a couple of year the First Nations organizations received an increased level of founding.<sup>207</sup>

In spite of the fact that the Innu in the later 1960s and early 1970s did not offer any resistance to the damming of Churchill Falls, by the late 1970s a movement around the Sheshatshit Innu was according to Adrian Tanner espousing an ideology of pan-Innu ethnic nationalism, and challenging the legitimacy of the state, denying the authority that provincial and federal laws and courts assert of them and their lands, and to do this they frequently turned to international arenas for political action.<sup>208</sup> After some initial meetings starting in the late 1960s, in 1973 the Native Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (NANL) was founded. 1973 was the first year federal money first became available to fund aboriginal organization. The federal government would only support one “non-status” organization for each province and the Innu joined NANL with the Inuit and Micmac’s of Newfoundland since they were not under the Indian Act. In 1976 the Labrador Innu broke from NANL to form the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association (NMIA) apparently to gain a greater proportion of the limited funds for the Innu, on the argument that the Innu were more in need and were more legitimately aboriginal than the Micmac’s who they portrayed as having substantially lost their aboriginal culture. NMIA later changed their name to the Innu Nation (IN).<sup>209</sup>

Adrian Tanner questions how this political mobilization was possible in such a short term and explains it by using Walker Connor who believes that ethnic nationalism only comes out of the self-awareness of the group in question. He traces the origins of ethnical nationalism

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<sup>206</sup> Nichols, R. L. (1998). *Indians in the United States and Canada. A Comparative History*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press: 297-298

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Tanner, A. (1993). History and Culture in the Generation of Ethnic Nationalism. I M. D. Levin, *Ethnicity and aboriginality: case studies in ethnonationalism*:76-77

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.:88

movements to a specific historical event, the emergence of the idea of self-determination among self-conscious ethnic groups. Although the Innu themselves claims that their nationalisms originates in their prehistoric identity as a people, Tanner contends that it has its roots in established Innu cultural values and Innu historical experience and influence by outsiders.<sup>210</sup> According to Tanner there have been little research or published on how outsiders has influenced or lack of it on the development of political ideas, although when aboriginal people oppose the use of their lands by others the suggestion is often that they have been influenced by outside agitators. The Innu adopted ethnic nationalism at around the same time they were having increasing contacts with sympathetic outsiders, and these people should not be overlooked as possible sources of new ideas and ideologies. Before 1970 the Innu had been relatively isolated from mainstream of the Canadian aboriginal political movement, after which a number of non-Innu visitors, allies, supporters, employees, and professional consultants, non-aboriginal as well as from other aboriginal groups, came to live and work with them. Innu leaders themselves have also travelled widely in Canada and in Europe. However, such external sources of ideas do not in according to Tanner adequately account for Innu nationalism.<sup>211</sup>

According to Tanner the tendency was for Innu leaders to focus on an analysis of their own situation, one which they knew far better than any outsider, and in doing so they didn't make reference to, or take their inspiration from, the similarity of their own situation with that of other groups. However, one particular early non-Innu employee in NMIA was influential, and introduced the terminology of the decolonization movement. In addition, a number of university-based social scientist that conducted research, young priest, and religious based and volunteer groups for the Innu were generally critical of government programs and policies.<sup>212</sup> Even though the Innu leaders didn't compare themselves to other Aboriginal peoples in speeches and papers it seems impossible that the Innu were not influenced by the general tendencies for Aboriginal and human rights and especially when they themselves used international forums to make their voices heard.

NMIA filed its first claim with the federal government in November 1977 for land in central Labrador. Government officials decided there was not enough information backing up the claim and gave the Innu Nation money to conduct further research. In a speech made by Georg

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.:77

<sup>211</sup> Tanner 1993:79

<sup>212</sup> Tanner 1993:78-79

Henriksen regarding the Voisey's Bay Mine in 1997 he refers to the land claims process and research made in Utshimassit in 1975-76. In the process, he writes, "it became apparent to the Innu how non-aboriginal authorities forced the Innu to participate in a process as if they were equals, but where the rules of the game were entirely designed by the other party where the power resided."<sup>213</sup> The Innu were also asked to produce documentation of their land-use patterns since time immemorial, a demand Henriksen imply was meaningless, as the Innu had lived on the land for thousands of years. According to Henriksen this was demanded by the Innu, "who could not read or write which also meant that crucial written information flowing both ways had to go through non-aboriginal intermediaries."<sup>214</sup> The fact that the Innu had to use non-Innu and social scientist to formulate reports and land claims is not unordinary. To the contrary, it will be difficult to find any aboriginal peoples who have not used professional consultants at any time in colonial history.

## **Political Battles**

The political battles of the Innu can be divided into military, resource development and cultural and political rights. Military planners saw the Quebec-Labrador peninsula and the Canadian Forces Base in Goose Bay as offering sustainable terrain and the necessary infrastructure for low-level flight training, and the absence of permanent settlements in the designated training area was seen as a great advantage. Since 1979, Canada has leased the air base at Goose Bay, originally built by the United States Air Force during the Second World War. In 1979-8 the British and the German air force base began low-level flight training at Goose Bay. Low-level sorties is defined s flights flown less than 300 meters above ground level focusing on navigation, maneuvering and target bombing with non explosive weapons. In 1993 British, German, and Dutch planes flew a total of 7355 sorties over Nitassinan, often skimming the ground at no more than 30 meters at very high speeds.<sup>215</sup> According to Samson the Innu also believed that low-level flying has had a marked negative effect on wildlife, reducing their numbers and altering their behavior, while the

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<sup>213</sup> Henriksen, Georg. Voisey's Bay Mine and Mill Project Transcript of Proceedings of the Scoping Sessions The Davis Inlet Mission Davis Inlet, Labrador April 19, 1997

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Samson, C. (1999). The dispossession of the Innu and the colonial magic of Canadian Liberalism. *Citizenship Studies*, 3 (1):8 and

Baker, M. (2001). Low-Level Military Flight Training in Quebec-Labrador: The Anatomy of a Northern Development Conflict. I C. H. Scott, *Aboriginal Autonomy and Development in Northern Quebec-Labrador*. (ss. 233-254). Vancouver: UBC Press:239

authorities assumed that the village community was the centre of the Innu world and that the country was uninhabited and available for use by Canada and allies.<sup>216</sup>

Innu Nation opposed military flight training, which it saw as a fundamental infringement upon unseeded territory. The flight activities are seen as a severe threat to the Innu culture, which is based on a strong attachment on Nitassinan. Following Baker the military viewpoint was that only a small number of Innu engaged in seasonal hunting in the interior and that unoccupied land not in immediate use by Aboriginal people.<sup>217</sup> When I first starting to research the history of the Innu, I found initially little information about their resistance to development in their lands and to my surprise the Innu were strongly involved, although their voices haven't always been heard. In 1988, Innu women and children undertook a campaign of non-violent civil disobedience occupying the bombing ranges, blocking the runways, camping at the fence of Canadian Forces Base (CFB) in Goose Bay. Though the whole Innu community quickly rallied behind the campaign-and though the men were the ones who most often spoke to the media and the authorities, women and children were the initiators of the direct action campaign.<sup>218</sup>

Tanner claims that the Innu tended to take aggressive actions, which tended to engender hostile political relations between the Innu and other groups were not uncommon. In pursuit of their own specific political goals Labrador Innu leaders would often deal in an openly assertive manner with others who express aims different than their own.<sup>219</sup> An example on how the Mushuau Innu were dealing with federal and provincial authorities when Chief Katie Rich in December 1993 evicted a district court judge from Utshimassit whose perceived insensitivity and racism had outraged the community. According to Katie Rich they evicted the judge and his court from the community because the whole justice system didn't work for the Innu and did not meet their needs to heal. The Innu believed that that they should be the ones who should judge their own people and have their own law enforcement and laws. Katie Rich claimed that they wanted to deal with the root causes of these problems through healing circles and treatment programs and that punishing people was not the answer.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Samson 1999:8

<sup>217</sup> Baker, M. (2001). Low-Level Military Flight Training in Quebec-Labrador: The Anatomy of a Northern Development Conflict. I C. H. Scott, *Aboriginal Autonomy and Development in Northern Quebec-Labrador*. (ss. 233-254). Vancouver: UBC Press.

<sup>218</sup> Helwig, M. (1993). Low-Level Flight Testing Innu Women Fight Back. *CANADIAN WOMAN STUDIES/LES CAHIERS DE LA FEMME*.

<sup>219</sup> Tanner 1993: 81

<sup>220</sup> Innes and Rich Prerelease April 21st 1995 <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/41/405.html>

The background for the dispute were in 1992 two young Innu took the initiative to travel to the First Nations Tribal Police Institute in British Columbia to train as peacekeepers. RCMP was policing the community and the community had approached the provincial government for recognition of the peacekeepers and six weeks of on-the-job training. The province refused and threatened to charge the peacekeepers with impersonating a police officer. But the two peacekeepers, under the direction of the Band Council, started their duties anyway, and three more went out for training. According to Katie Rich the “government's refusal to cooperate led us to really question the jurisdiction of both governments on our lives since Innu people have never signed any agreements or treaties.”<sup>221</sup> According to Tanner the Innu Nation leadership had for many years developed an increasingly pointed set of analyses of the Innu situation. This includes an insistence that the state has, with regard to the Innu, engaged in theft, colonization, cultural genocide, and the denial of basic human rights. While these contentions have been successful in recruiting support among a network of allies, state officials have not accepted them.<sup>222</sup>

This situation led the provincial and federal government hold all discussion on land claims, until the Innu had let the RCMP and judge back into the community. A few year later the tone were to change after the Innu let the government that they were not to let the Voisey's Bay Nickel mine go ahead without their say. In 1994 deposits of nickel were discovered about 75 kilometers north of Utshimassit, in Emish where the Innu had traveled to for generations and the area was rich both in hunting and cultural terms. According to Samson the Innu were not to let the same thing that happened in Emish as in Churchill River and in 1995 the Innu Nation served an eviction notice on Archean Resources and Diamond Fields, two of the companies involved in establishing the mine, and local Innu then protested at the site. In February 1995, about 100 Innu from Utshimassit traveled to Emish (Voisey's Bay) by snowmobile. Once at the site, Chief Simeon Tshakapesh and Daniel Ashini delivered an eviction notice to the chief geologist, giving the company twenty-four hours to shut down operations and leave Innu land. A two-week standoff between the Innu and the RCMP followed before a peaceful resolution was reached.<sup>223</sup>

Larry Innes contends that although the Innu action against the company failed to achieve the practical outcome the Innu desired it was singularly important in many other ways. Publicly, the action established the Innu as one of the principle actors in the mineral discovery, and it also

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<sup>221</sup> Innes and Rich 1995

<sup>222</sup> Tanner

<sup>223</sup> Samson 1999: 9

helped to unify the Innu response to the project. Innu leaders, spokespeople, elders, and community members consistently articulated positions that centered around the effects of the project on Innu rights, Innu land, and the Innu way of life.<sup>224</sup> Tim Powers draw the direct connection between the mineral discovery and the financing of the relocation to Natuashish. The mineral find was worth over three billion dollars, which, compared to the initial 80 million dollars the relocation would cost, were pocket change.

According to Powers Canadian officials were acknowledging the connection between the mine and relocation in a ministerial briefing; first of all the governments recognized that development at Voisey's Bay and in the rest of Labrador was critical to the economic recovery of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, secondly the Relocation of the community of Utshimassit to Little Sango Pond was in their view essential to any agreement with the Innu, and thirdly they recognized that the Innu have the means and the motivation to disrupt development and contribute to what they called an "unhealthy investment climate" if the Innu concerns weren't addressed. The governments had then, according to Powers, realized that it would be easier to work with the Innu than against them. And his take on the relocation was that the relocation did not occur because Canada realized its malignant neglect of the Innu, but to be able to ensure Innu cooperation on the Voisey's Bay development.<sup>225</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The Innu have worked persistently on the relocation to Natuashish. The low living and housing conditions were the main reason for the Innu wanting a new relocation and they were not living up to the expectations the Innu had when they were relocated to Utshimassit. The relocation to Natuashish is especially interesting because the situation in the 1990s is reversed from the situation in 1967 when the missionaries were the leading character in the community. In this period before the relocation in 2003 the Innu were definitely taking the stage as their own negotiators and leaders in their community. I believe that the Innu were able to convince the media and public about the need for relocation to a better place and then later pressured the two governments to admit that the living conditions they were living under were not meeting

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<sup>224</sup> Innes, Larry Staking Claims: Innu Rights and Mining Claims at Voisey's Bay 25.1 (Spring 2001) Mining Indigenous Lands <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/innes/staking-claims-innu-rights-and-mining-claims-voiseys->

<sup>225</sup> Powers, T. A. (1997). *Conscious Choice of Convenience: The Relocation of the Mushuau Innu of Davis Inlet, Labrador*. Master thesis, Saint Mary's University: 62

international, federal or provincial standards. The government knew that the conditions they were living under were low, but it seems like the governments for a long time had little or no interest in remedying the communities living conditions until the Voisey's Bay nickel mine were in serious jeopardy in being delayed.





## Chapter five: Conclusion

### Background for Relocation and Housing

The first relocation in 1948 to Nutak and the second relocation to Utshimassit in 1967 were administrative relocations to make it easier for the governments to administer the Innu, and provide certain welfare services that the government saw fit to assimilate them with. Robert Paine<sup>226</sup> uses the five principals: “trade, mission, law, welfare and capital investment” to explain non-Aboriginal incursion to Aboriginal peoples territories. Fur trade, pressure on Innu hunting grounds, welfare policies, medical and Catholic missionization, forced schooling of Innu children, the relocation and housing of the Mushuau Innu were some of the forms assimilation took. I believe these five principals were the important background for why the Innu started to spend more time in old Utshimassit by the Hudson’s Bay Company store and mission. By 1948 the Innu had been severely affected by the incursion on Nitassinan from fur traders and trappers and they became increasingly dependant on relief. The Innu had been forced to hunt fur-bearing animals at the same time as they experienced a decline in the caribou herd. The government wanted the Mushuau Innu to become self-sufficient by hunting seals and fish in Nutak, at the same time as they wanted to close down the old Utshimassit post to save money. McRae contends that the decision to relocate the Innu to Nutak was made on the belief that the Innu would become economically productive and based on the administrative convenience of the location of the government depot.<sup>227</sup> In the 1950 the Mushuau Innu walked back to old Utshimassit because they weren’t happy in Nutak. The Innu had been relocated to Nutak to fish and hunt for seals, and do paid labor. The government would already start to consider moving the Mushuau Innu to another location, this time to a Innu settlement, either to Schefferville in Quebec or North West River (Sheshatshit) were the Innu were already being settled into houses.

In the second relocation from Old Utshimassit in 1967 the Mushuau Innu were part of a larger plan to resettle and move people in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador into growth centers to provide better welfare services to the communities, as well as industrialize the province. To be able to achieve this they initiated three different programs, the second which the Innu were relocated under. The relocation to Utshimassit can be viewed as a continuity of the first relocation, the Innu were to become fishermen and live in houses, not “live in these

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<sup>226</sup> Paine 1977:7

<sup>227</sup> McRae 1993

unsanitary hovels.”<sup>228</sup> One of the major reasons for settling the Mushuau Innu on Iluikoyak Island was that the store needed a better wharf and the Innu were for a second time incorporated into the fishing community. There had been talk about relocating the store to another site further away, but the decision was finally made that the best location was on the island.

RCAP characterized the time in which the Innu were relocated for the third time, to Natuasish in 2003 as the period of “Negotiation and Renewal,” which is characterized by non-Aboriginal society's admission of the manifest failure of its interventionist and assimilationist approach. This acknowledgement was pushed both by domestic and international forces. Campaigns by national Aboriginal social and political organizations, court decisions on Aboriginal rights, sympathetic public opinion, developments in international law, and the worldwide political mobilization of Indigenous peoples under the auspices of the United Nations have all played a role during this stage in the relationship.<sup>229</sup> The Innu started their political mobilization at the same time as many Aboriginal peoples. The Innu of Labrador had their first organization founded in the 1970s, after the federal government decided to fund non-status First Nations organizations. The organization that today is known as Innu Nation has had several battles in Labrador such as land claims negotiations, damming and military training in their hunting grounds, and in Utshimassit the Mushuau Innu Band Council and Chief Katie Rich practically forced the RCMP (police) and the court out of the community. For me this is evidence that the Innu of Labrador were building up capacity to negotiate with the government on several issues, most important for the Mushuau Innu, were the long overdue right to higher living conditions. Before the Mushuau Innu relocated for the third time to Natuasish in 2003 they had lived in Utshimassit for over 35 years. The living conditions in Utshimassit was so low in the mid 1990's it didn't meet the standard of living to the provincial government, and the cost of providing enough water to the community was higher than the cost of building a new.

### **The Mushuau Innu - Active or Passive actors?**

Researching the background for the first relocation to Nutak in 1948 I often found that the Innu were portrayed as they didn't make any conscious decisions concerning the relocations. Donald McRae<sup>230</sup> concluded the reason for the Innu to being relocated to Nutak was that the government

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<sup>228</sup>International Grenfell Association in Ryan 1988: 12

<sup>229</sup> Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996). *Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples*. Retrieved May 15, 2010 from Indian and Northern Affairs:

<sup>230</sup> McRae 1993

no longer wanted to pay out relief to the Innu and now wanted them to fish further north. McRae argument for why the Innu were living off relief was that the Innu didn't want to hunt and that there was no evidence of lack of caribou. In chapter two we read that the caribou numbered to 5000 animals in 1954, which, when we take into consideration William Cabot's descriptions on a hunt in 1906 when hunters in canoes speared 1.200-1.500 animals in a two-week period, is a very low number and it would have been significant to why the Innu were choosing to stay in the community compared to taking the risk of starvation in nutshimit.

Joe Rich had apparently been taken to Nutak before the move to look at the hunting grounds, although both McRae (1993) and Henriksen (2000) asserts that Joe Rich had no decision making power. Although that might be true, it doesn't exclude the Mushuau Innu from making decisions themselves, something they had to everyday while travelling and hunting in Nitassinan. First of all we can assume that Joe Rich must have consulted with some of the Innu about the relocation, and that the ship didn't appear one day in old Utshimassit and all the Innu, without any prior knowledge or incentive left to Nutak. There are several incentives the government could have given the Innu. First of all we know from William Duncan Strong's journals from 1927-1928 that there were an caribou in the northern districts west of Okak and Nain and that the Government probably used this as an incentive, and the other being that the store in old Utshimassit were to be closed and the Innu would not have been able to get outfit or relief. The Innu also had the ability to adapt to changes, such as hunting other species if the caribou were scarce, and although there is no exact answer, there is reason to believe that the Innu saw the relocation to Nutak as an alternative to starvation. In Nutak they had "water and food, fish, seals, porcupine, caribou. And lots of seals." Secondly they saw the relocation as a temporarily arrangement. Evidence of this is that Chief Joe Rich wrote in 1948 to Father O'Brien "We don't know yet whether it will be better or not but we are going to try it." After two years the Mushuau Innu had tried to live in Nutak and when the Innu wanted to move back to old Utshimassit "the Innu decided for themselves."

The Mushuau Innu were familiar with the benefits and comfort of houses and when they were to be relocated for a second time to Utshimassit even the ones with the opposition to the priest would go to church to be able to get a house. The problem with the relocation to Utshimassit was not necessarily the house it self, but a combination of a poor location, were the Innu were not able to travel inland to hunt for several months every year, because of the ice

breakups, the lack of infrastructure in the community with no sewage or running water and the poor quality of the houses as well as no training in how to maintain a house. A reason for why the government wanted to settle the Innu on the island was that they wanted them to fish and commit to a sedentary lifestyle. There was probably then not an issue that they were not able to go to their traditional hunting grounds. It must however be clear that to think that the Mushuau Innu would never want to live in a house because they were nomadic is at best naive. The Innu wanted the comfort of a house; the problem was that the houses and settlement would be their worst enemy. The relocation in 1967 was never a success, and the living conditions never became up to a Canadian standard.

As we could see in chapter one Erik Allard's broke living conditions into three: Having, Loving and Being. In all three of the terms the living conditions in Utshimassit was quite low. The Innu had bad housing, no running water or sewage, they were cut away from their hunting grounds and their culture wasn't valued as it had been in Nutshimit. They were in many ways controlled and at the same time left to themselves by the federal and provincial government. This would however change in the 1970s when the Innu, as other aboriginal peoples, started to mobilize politically. The incursion and encroachment on Innu land were the first the Innu would protest against. At the same time the injustice in Utshimassit, where the Innu were living "in a slum in the Canadian hinterland" as Armitage puts it, became visible through the differences in the community, where non-Innu were able to get better housing and water and sewage, while the Innu had none. The Innu were able to use their acquired knowledge on how to gain public attention towards their sufferings at the same time as a nickel ore valued to 3 billion dollars was found in Emish. The last relocation to Natuashish was, in my opinion, carried through due to two significant factors. The first was that the Innu were able to use media to get attention on their sufferings and low living conditions from the public, which pressured the Canadian Government to make surveys which showed that it would cost more to heighten the living conditions and provide enough water to the Innu. Secondly I believe that the million dollars it cost to build Natuashish was nothing compared to the billion dollar nickel ore could provide the province. This gave the Innu better cards on their hands to press for relocation.

In general I conclude that both the Government of Newfoundland before Confederation in 1949 with Canada, the provincial government and federal government all has used extensive measures

too be able to assimilate the Mushuau Innu culturally, politically and economically by relocating them first in 1948 to Nutak and to Utshimassit in 1967 through use of false incentives. The Mushuau Innu have, in my opinion, through their history as a nomadic autonomous people always made decisions to better their opportunities, therefore the first relocations in 1948 and 1967 must be seen in light of this. The third relocation in 2003 to Natuashish was a relocation they initiated themselves and through land rights negotiations and fight against low level flying, mining and so on the Innu learned, as many other Aboriginal peoples to use sympathizers, media, international organizations to negotiate their case. Most important for the decision to finally go ahead with the relocation I believe was the fact that the Innu pressured the Government through negotiation to stop the Voisey's Bay nickel mine and the relocation to Natuashish got its final go.

In thesis I have taken another approach than most articles I have read about the two first relocations. When starting out I was more or less sure the Innu had not been able to make any decisions in regards to the relocation in 1948 and 1967. What I found, by focusing on what I could find in written sources, letters and my interviews etc., was that the Innu were making decisions and they weren't passive by standards in their own lives. At the same time, I don't believe that the options the Innu had were equal, and it shouldn't be read as the government didn't have any responsibility towards the Innu and the relocations. My opinion is however that the decisions made, were based on a flexibility to adapt to these changes.

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## **Informants**

Informant one- male elder  
Informant two- female elder  
Informant three- female elder  
Informant four- female elder  
Informant five- female elder  
Informant six- male  
Informant seven- male  
Informant eight- female  
Informant nine- female  
Informant ten- male

## **Maps and Pictures**

Map page 2: Canada Maps Retrieved May 15<sup>th</sup> 2010  
<http://www.canada-maps.org/newfoundland-and-labrador-map.htm>

Map page 3: BBC News 25 November 2005 Retrieved May 15<sup>th</sup> 2010  
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Pictures on front-page by Elisabeth Thørring Dalsbø in Natuashish July 2009

Picture page 3 of Natuashish by Katie Rich 2009

Picture page 19: Photo by A.P. Low. Library and Archives Canada (PA038207) Retrieved May 15<sup>th</sup> 2010 [http://www.heritage.nf.ca/aboriginal/pa\\_038207.html](http://www.heritage.nf.ca/aboriginal/pa_038207.html)

## **Radio Clip**

Georg Henriksen on CBC Radio February 1<sup>st</sup> 1993, Retrieved April 20th  
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