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# INFLUENCES PRECEDING “NUNATSIAVUT” SELF-DETERMINATION: HISTORICAL, POLITICAL *and* EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCES *on the* PEOPLE *of* NORTHERN LABRADOR (CANADA)

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## ■ Abstract

What were the influences on the Inuit of Northern Labrador preceding the creation of the self-governing territory of Nunatsiavut? What are the preterritorial influences of the Inuit on the territory's five schools? To answer these questions and to share the success of one Indigenous people, the Nunatsiavut Inuit (the Inuit of Northern Labrador, Canada), this paper traces their survival, recovery, and development as they reclaim their right to self-determination (Smith, 1999). As part of this process, the paper reports such influences as: the bicultural and assimilationist forces (Moravian missionaries and the governments of Newfoundland), the rise and successful influence of the Labrador Inuit Association as a precursor to the Nunatsiavut Assembly, and the Inuit influence on schools in the region. This paper concludes with a discussion of the nature of northern isolation as a source of economic and cultural strength, which may have enabled the Nunatsiavut Inuit to resist complete assimilation, a factor in Nunatsiavut Inuit survival and increased potential for successful self-determination.

## ■ Introduction

The focus of social, economic and political life has changed for the people of Northern Labrador. The last two vestiges of the early colonising forces on the Inuit culture and Inuit schools of Northern Labrador (Nunatsiavut) are in decline: the “guardianship” of the Moravian church and “direct rule” from the governments of Newfoundland (as a separate Dominion of Newfoundland until 1927, under a British-controlled commission government of Newfoundland from 1927 to 1949 due to the Dominion's financial collapse in 1927, and after union with Canada as the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador from 1949 to the present).

The Moravian church mission was established at the request of the colonial government of Newfoundland in the 1770s. The Moravian missionaries were German-speaking and from central Europe. They had previous experience with the Inuit of Greenland and some of their missionaries actually spoke Inuktitut (the language of the Inuit, albeit with a Greenland accent) when they arrived in Northern Labrador. For two centuries the Moravian church and its missionaries were the dominant political force in Northern Labrador; however they are now restricted to purely spiritual matters. Even in these matters their influence has waned as the modern church struggles to supply clerics for its pastoral charges (Anderson & Smith, 1986).

The provincial government has, after over a half a century, agreed to the creation of a self-governing territory for the Inuit of Northern Labrador (called Nunatsiavut, meaning “Our Beautiful Land”, after the establishment of self-government). This transition comes as result of the efforts of the Labrador Inuit Association (LIA), which, after a decades-long political struggle, has succeeded in creating the provincial self-governing territory of Nunatsiavut within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. While the Nunatsiavut constitution was ratified in 2005, the new Inuit-

based political organisations are proceeding through a formative and transitional stage: the Nunatsiavut Assembly was elected in 2006, Inuit community governments later in the same year, leading up to the eventual election of a president in October, 2008.

As the newly formed self-government makes its transition to full control of the new territory, which at some point will include education, two questions need to be asked. First, and of importance to understanding the overall conditions which have led the Nunatsiavut Inuit back to self-determination: what were the influences on the Nunatsiavut Inuit preceding the creation of a self-governing territory? Second, and of critical importance to understanding the current context and potential of Nunatsiavut society: what is the extent and nature of the influences that have shaped the Inuit schools of Nunatsiavut immediately prior to self-determination? To answer these questions and to share the success of one Indigenous people, the Nunatsiavut Inuit, this paper traces the influences on their survival, recovery, and development as they reclaim their right to self-determination.

### ■ Methodology

Hughes (1990, p. 79) argues that, "epistemology is really an inquiry into how we come to know the world in the way in which we do". In this regard, this study is a largely descriptive and somewhat interpretive search for insights. It is consistent with Bassey (1999, p. 44) who argues that, "the purpose of research is to advance knowledge by describing and interpreting the phenomena of the world in attempts to get shared meaning with others". To share meaning in and to aid an Indigenous perspective of this paper and its message, ethical approval was sought and obtained from the LIA education committee. Ethical approval was also sought and gained from the local school district and the University ethics review committee. In order to add trustworthiness to the contextual information presented through the perspectives of the respondents, I was assisted by three other sources to guide the interpretations. The LIA education advisor was consulted throughout the study and the final draft was read and approved by him. In addition to the LIA source, two other key sources, each with a background in the relevant areas, guided the analysis and final draft of the paper. In addition, each respondent interviewed was a long-term resident of Nunatsiavut. Finally, while this paper and its analysis does not pretend to reach high levels of critical discourse, the paper is organised to parallel Smith's (1999) four tides of decolonisation: survival, recovery, development, and self-determination within the overall framework of the influences leading to self-determination.

The isolation and inability to access Northern Labrador is a factor in the evolution of the relative

context between this Nunatsiavut Inuit and its colonist government to the south. The five permanent communities of Nunatsiavut are not accessible by road, but are reached overland by snowmobile in winter, by sea in summer (seaways are open for about four months per year), and by air if weather permits. Geographical Labrador is a large land mass twice the size of Great Britain in the remote northeast of Canada's sub-Arctic with a population of less than 40,000. While geographically isolated and distinct, politically the region is part of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Newfoundland is an island roughly the same size as Great Britain and a population of just over 500,000. The island of Newfoundland is also remote and rests off the eastern coast of Canada. The island of Newfoundland's northern-most part is separated by a 20km strait from the southern-most part of Labrador. The southern-most tip of the island of Newfoundland is the location of the capital of the province while the northern-most region of Labrador is the traditional home of the Inuit, Nunatsiavut, almost 1600km apart.

In using case study as a method to conduct research, there are mixtures of data collection techniques characteristic of case study methods, including surveys, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study reflects the views of respondents from five rural, isolated Inuit schools, all teaching kindergarten through Grade 12. To collect data, focused interviews were conducted with the principal of each of the five schools as a respondent. Communication and access for interviews were by telephone, as I was not able to conduct field visits during the time of this study. I am, however, well-acquainted with the geographic area, have been to each of the communities on various occasions, and have developed a considerable understanding of the communities and schools referred to in this study. The communities' names have been changed to respect and protect the sensitivity of any information presented. As well, the study draws upon available documentation regarding the relevant programmes and policies. The primary sources of information were focused interviews with the respondents as the key sources of data from each school. The interviews were transcribed and sorted into idea statements. The ideas statements were then grouped into tables with themed categories which are used as the catalyst for discussion (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

It is extremely difficult to reach the depth of treatment needed for such a complex socio-political and historical discussion given the geographical and financial limitations that shaped the methodology for this study. However, I will make a beginning to this as little has been shared about the creation of the new Inuit self-governing territory of Nunatsiavut. This lack of information includes a lack of knowledge

of the preterritory influences on the schools, which serve the residents of the five Inuit communities of Nunatsiavut. To ameliorate this lack of sharing, this paper reports a literature overview of the unique historical and more recent influences as well as a qualitative multisite case study based on the five schools, which serve the five communities comprising the entire population of Nunatsiavut.

### ■ The historical context as influences

The change in status for Nunatsiavut raises the question as to what were the preterritorial influences on the Inuit of Northern Labrador. Prior to establishing Nunatsiavut, what were the influences on the five schools within the political and geographical landscape preceding self-determination? To answer the first question this literature review speaks to many of the effects of colonisation. Following this, the answer to the second question is given as a discussion of the school-specific features. As a researcher, teacher, and through personal experience, I am aware of the negative legacy of Western-based research methods and, in particular, of Smith's (1999) warning of the potential dangers of such research when misused. She writes, "The greater danger, however, was in the creeping policies that intruded into every aspect of our lives, legitimated by research, informed more often by ideology" (1999, pp. 3-4). I lived and studied in the region for eight years, I have a background in Indigenous research, and I am supportive of Smith's decolonising message. I will discuss the influences on the Nunatsiavut Inuit using Smith's (1999, p. 116) tides of survival, recovery, development, and self-determination as a partial guide in this paper.

### ■ Survival: The missionaries (1770s to 1948) and direct government control (1949 to 1970s)

The Moravian mission influence on the Inuit of Nunatsiavut shaped a transitional and colonialist period for over 200 years. The Moravian church operated schools in an atmosphere where the isolation of the north seems to have afforded some protection from more direct incursions by southern governance until 1949. For example, at the onset of Newfoundland's confederation with Canada in 1949, the growing influence of the newly-formed province's Department of Education resulted in English being the only language of instruction for Nunatsiavut schools. At this point, leaders chose programmes that were more typical of Canadian schools and encouraged what was purported to be the best option to serve the future interests of the students. Arguably, decision-makers believed that local families and communities were strong enough to protect and promote local culture, language and traditions. Nachtigal (1982) refers to the one best system model for small schools and critiques this type

of transition in the post-confederation system. He states, "a one best system model of education ... not only fails to recognize urban/suburban differences, but ignores the needs of unique populations as well" (p. 5). The cultural transition from Inuit to a North American Eurocentric worldview is a struggle still for the Nunatsiavut Inuit today. In many cases, even with good intentions, cultural misadventures have not achieved the purported results. Rather than increasing self-reliance for all, education in the north has reduced a formerly autonomous people to a dependence on church and government to meet their spiritual and physical needs.

During this post-confederation period (Newfoundland and Labrador was a late entry into the Canadian confederation and joined in 1949), the colonising influence on the Inuit seemed to have gained momentum, particularly in schools. The transitions since Newfoundland's confederation with Canada are a critically important period of cultural change and development for the people of Nunatsiavut (from 1927 to 1949, the Commission Government – six commissioners, three appointed from Great Britain and three from Newfoundland – replaced self-rule due to the old Dominion of Newfoundland's financial collapse in 1927). In 1949 debt-free and better able to manage its own financial affairs as a new province of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador began assuming more direct control for education. However, the Moravian influence was still strong. From 1949 to the early 1970s, Nunatsiavut schools were funded as part of a new and growing provincial Department of Education but remained denominationally Moravian. The church authority controlled hiring, spending, building and many other aspects of these schools, including religious instruction.

The Moravians continued to control education as the province attempted to assert itself. These two major historical influences of church and government may not have adequately considered Inuit concerns. The Moravian church continued its control of education until the early 1970s, but as the province's influence grew, another transition took place driven by a shift to greater financial efficiency. A provincial Royal Commission into education for the province (Warren, 1967), recommended greater "interdenominational" co-operation in the delivery of education. By the early 1970s the Moravians had joined a new "integrated" or interdenominational school system comprised of a number of Protestant churches. This meant the Moravian church authorities lost much of their direct control over schools in favour of regional school districts and local school councils, which enabled higher levels of public participation and in this case resulted in more direct Inuit influence. Academic results in Nunatsiavut schools were far below provincial and national standards, raising a concern that many students were not functional in either English or in Inuktitut.



### Recovery: The rise of the Labrador Inuit Association (LIA), 1970s to 2005

The federal Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996) claims that New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland did not have residential schools, but it should be noted that for a brief period in the 1970s, Inuit students were sent to a boarding school in North West River, Labrador. This residential boarding school was phased out shortly after its creation and all students are now instructed up to secondary levels in their home communities. This factor may have also aided the Nunatsiavut on their path to recovery. In addition, increased activity by the Labrador Inuit Association (LIA) within the Nunatsiavut region, aided by improving communication and social links between communities, reduced isolation and aided a growing political awareness.

In tandem with Indigenous peoples' growing political awareness and growing resistance to Western, or Eurocentric dominance (Smith, 1999), a parallel evolution of the Inuit of Labrador has been largely ignored by the official processes and powers of both the church in decline and the state in ascendancy. In the 1971 provincial election, the long-standing provincial governing party was in decline and managed only a tie with the other major political party. In this same election, a grass-roots Labrador separatist party, the New Labrador Party, emerged on the political scene with the election of one representative. For a while, this one member held the balance of power, which forced a province-wide political focus on Labrador and its issues. While the party did not produce any subsequent electoral successes, it did for a time compel provincial authorities to view Labrador's issues with more seriousness and recommendations for change were made. As well, the Labrador Inuit within the Labrador context began to emerge and speak to Indigenous issues (Smallwood et al., 1991).

From this point through to the present day, the LIA has enjoyed successes despite the difficulties faced. The LIA has pressed its issues to the forefront as both a negotiator on behalf of its people and as the representative cultural, economic and educational political force of the region. A transformation has taken place as the Inuit people seek to rebuild their destiny from the ruins of interventions by non-natives. They are working toward a comprehensive land claims agreement that at some point will include control over education. In the current context, the Nunatsiavut Inuit have secured a new territory thereby reclaiming their right to self-determination.

### ■ Development Part 1: Influences in general

The issue of control of Indigenous education is at the heart of what many Indigenous peoples see as ending

the centuries-old legacy of Eurocentric domination of their peoples and assimilation of their cultures. Ryan (1996) describes the lack of trust and contempt of Europeans towards Indigenous peoples. She discusses the Eurocentric interventionist approach to Indigenous education as, "first and foremost European beliefs were characterized by disrespect for, and lack of trust in, Native peoples ... They believe themselves and their way of life to be superior to those of indigenous cultures" (Ryan, 1996, p. 115).

In observing the Indigenous peoples' drive to reclaim control of education, Ryan expresses concern that, "the legacy of the past – encased in these same structures – remains today as Native people in Canada prepare to attend schools that were imposed by Europeans" (1996, p. 118). She notes that the name *Satuigiarniq*, given to a project that encourages Inuit responsibility for educating the communities' children, is translated into English as "to reclaim" (Armstrong et al., 1997). Brady (1991, p. 47) also discusses the First Nations' drive to control education, albeit with a differing point of view that, "while still in a developmental state it does appear to have the potential to correct many of the deficiencies that have plagued first nations ... Indeed a number of first nation schools have demonstrated remarkable success in improving both attendance and graduation rates."

In a land not yet part of the Dominion of Canada and further north than many other such missions, the Moravians had little interference from other European institutions. In this circumstance, they were able to introduce a formal education, which while aimed at bringing Christianity, also reflected Inuit culture (Smallwood et al., 1991). In this sense, the Moravians and the Inuit are perhaps the first groups in North America to implement biculturalism in their approach to education. The Moravian experience was an unwarranted intervention into the affairs of an Indigenous people and the request of a minor colonial power. It was colonialism. There is, however, another possible point of view. Regardless of being welcome or not, Europeans were coming and if not the Moravians then others. The Moravians adapted to Inuit culture. They learned the Inuit language of Inuktitut, wrote it down, and used it in the education of Inuit converts to Christianity. The Moravians may have been somewhat better than their European counterparts in working with Indigenous peoples. They seemed more aware that one culture juxtaposed with another will better succeed through adaptation to the other, and thus their actions reflected a degree of biculturalism.

Fuzessy (1998) provides some interesting thoughts on adaptive cultures. He discusses minorities in the context of bilingualism and biculturalism, arguing that Inuit students must be grounded in their primary language and culture if they are to succeed in a second language and culture, usually English. Fuzessy makes three key points regarding this subject:

The literature on minority education speaks to the following. First, it stresses the need for minority students to have a solid foundation in their primary culture and language if they are to be successful in the secondary culture contact in school ...

Second, it points to the need for minority students' educational experiences to be immersed in primary culture values, skills, and information as reflected through culturally sensitive curricula and pedagogy in the school and classroom ...

Moreover, It follows minority students should have a solid foundation and competence in their first language for them to become functionally bilingual and competent in their second language (Cummins, 1984a, 1984b). It follows, therefore, that these students will be better equipped to develop competence in their second language as well as secondary culture. Therefore, minority students will ideally acquire functional bilingualism and biculturalism through their educational and social contact with the secondary culture (Fuzessy, 1998, p. 201).

These points reflect a reality: If Inuit or other minority language speakers are to succeed, they must establish or re-establish competency in their original language and culture. This reinforces the view of Roberts et al. (1989) that a minority culture must come to be inclusive to be adaptive. Success is achieved through a synthesis of cultures, and not by one culture prevailing over the other – a lesson lost on colonial powers.

#### ■ Development Part 2: In Nunatsiavut schools specifically

As Nunatsiavut ventures into the future, a future which will include control of its schools, understanding the preterritorial influence on these schools is vitally important. This view is reflective of Ryan's (1996) concern that Indigenous control of education must simply do more than encase the same old structures as control of education means to actively engage in survival, recovery and decolonising as part of development. Understanding this distinctive and critically important role for Indigenous control of education, Annahatak (1994, p. 13) discusses quality education for the Inuit from an Inuk (single person) point of view: "there are tension related to Inuit values versus institutional values, traditional values versus mainstream worldview, and modern cultural roles versus traditional knowledge". She also reflects upon cultural tension as she argues, "students have not lost the ability to want to learn. They wait to be taught, and on the other hand elders are also waiting to be watched as models" (Annahatak, 1994, p. 17). She

asserts that the Inuit are of necessity included in the present-day reality of biculturalism. She suggests that the Inuit should be grounded in their own culture as they expand to take advantage of the benefits offered by another. She remarks, "once students face the real life question of who they are now and where they are going, it is with the real life stories of elders that they can make meaning of our culture and of themselves living in the present" (Annahatak, 1994, p. 17). Greater success in Nunatsiavut schools rests upon successful adaptations of existing cultures. Non-Indigenous influences must be grounded in respect, awareness and confidence in Inuit culture and language. A synthesis of outside influences within Inuit culture can then occur, where needed, as the Inuit reach toward a better future. Fuzessy (1998, p.201) argues, speaking specifically of schools, "[cultural synthesis] presumably leads to less cultural incongruence in the educational and social backgrounds of the students".

As the Nunatsiavut Inuit step into the future and reassume control of their development for the first time in over two and a half centuries, more information about the schools in the five Inuit communities is pertinent. The second question in this study specifically asks respondents about the Inuit influence on schools in the land now known as Nunatsiavut. In answering this, respondents were asked a range of questions about the nature of their schools and the Inuit influence on these schools. Responses from this process have been developed into thematic categories collated and expressed in representative tables to reflect: demographics, special features, programmes, and an interesting discovery as to geographical-climatic-economic. It seems the connection between geography, climate, and economics may have a unique and largely misunderstood role in preserving traditional culture for the Inuit of Nunatsiavut.

#### ■ Demographics

Asking about racial or cultural origins is a sensitive matter and one that can be misunderstood both locally and externally. Although a question of racial or cultural origin may seem simple from the outside, on the ground it is more problematic. The LIA made an interesting political and cultural distinction about residents in the status or recognition of peoples. While local residents sometimes make a distinction between the Kablunangajuit (settlers) and Inuit, the LIA did not. For this reason, respondents tended to include the settlers as Inuit as they were full members of the LIA. Respondents when asked about this gave a simple and clear rationale: all the people of Nunatsiavut are long-term residents of the territory, have Indigenous ancestry, and therefore are included. The LIA definition is based on lifestyle and cultural grounds. The Métis (of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry) status of affiliation is almost non-existent, as those who

would claim this in southern regions are included as members of the LIA and are therefore considered as *citizens* of Nunatsiavut (see Table 1).

■ Special features

In the five schools studied, respondents cited two distinct differences in what they perceived as successful aspects of their school. One school had a decidedly academic focus while the other four focused on other aspects to the exclusion of academic pursuits. These four schools indicated a mixture of sports, lifestyle, and technology foci (see Table 2). These activities ranged from sports and recreation programmes to internet access, activities cited as having a high profile in the community. Students are motivated to perform in areas that require creativity and hands-on skills as opposed to English-language literacy, although this focus is raised as a concern. The absence of other recreational facilities in these communities makes the school a natural centre of activity, student or otherwise. These activities, such as sports or drama, have a high profile in the communities and wide-spread support. Arguably, the rewards of such activities are immediate

and observable and for this reason gain recognition and approval from residents in a way that academic pursuits may not.

The exception is the southern-most school of Nutak. Here, the respondent takes a decidedly academic focus. This school stands out for citing a strong academic focus, with a high graduation rate, high postsecondary participation, and a strong attachment of the community to its students and their achievements. In attributing causes for these successes, links with the community and the long-term stability of the staff, who are described as having a strong work ethic, are key points raised.

The other four schools appear focused on more readily recognisable aspects of success which are not the result of a school's primary focus, whereas, the single academic-focused school clearly stresses the achievement related to school, but does not ignore the others.

The data in Table 3 suggest that the least successful aspects of these schools are literacy and competency in English-language and are influenced by lower than acceptable student attendance. Difficulties in providing a wide choice of programmes are also referenced by respondents. The academically focused school cited a concern about the transition from old ways to new ways. In terms of attributing causes to these less successful aspects, a variety of factors arise. Lack of telephones in some homes, lack of parental interest in formal school or preschooling, staff not capable of handling a wide breadth of programming, and student preferences for computer games and cable TV are raised as problems impeding academic achievement.

Table 1. The demographics of Nunatsiavut schools.

	Killinek	Ramah	Hebron	Okak	Nutak
Inuit*	95	95	100	98	98
Settler*	25	15	10		
Metis*	0			0.2	0
Other	5	5		1.8	2

\* As percentages, but number(s) overlap with other categories.

Table 2. Special features as most successful aspects of schools.

	Killinek	Ramah	Hebron	Okak	Nutak
Most successful aspects	Community access, sports nights, special programmes, music, PE, art etc	Art, PE, technology, industrial arts and life skills, drama, science fairs, heritage fairs, intra-mural sports, regional sports meets, music programme	Recent access to internet for computers, school-wide technology	Definitely the gymnasium	Graduation rate 99%, postsecondary participation 50%, strong attachment to community, student travel and awards
Causes	Student interest, high profile in community	Focus on creativity and personal development, hands-on, not academic, stress verbal communication rather than reading and writing	Student use and ability to operate and understand internet and computers	Before new school was built there was no indoor recreation facility	Strong academic focus, strong links with community, staff work ethic and stability

While many of these may be considered fairly typical of rural schools, two schools did raise unique concerns that relate to social need and transition.

The respondent from Ramah school mentioned a lack of parental involvement with students in early learning activities. In this case, the LIA and parents instituted a "headstart" programme for preschool students. The programme seems to suffer from a familiar problem with such initiatives, namely that of getting those who seem to need it the most, to actually take advantage of the programme. Concern was also raised as to the effects of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum

Disorder (FASD) and other learning disabilities of students.

Nutak's school principal raised the need for students to see community-based role models as a result of successful schooling. There is a desire or need to keep students in their home communities and not simply "ship them out". It was felt that the permanent staff, although responsible for many successful aspects of education, actually prevents some successful local students from returning to positions as teachers once they become qualified. It seems the stability of staff meant few new positions would become available to

Table 3. Special features as least successful aspects of schools.

	Killinek	Ramah	Hebron	Okak	Nutak
Least successful aspects	Student attendance	Comprehension in reading is weak, English language-based courses are a source of difficulty due to this, basic math skills are also weak	Narrow range of courses available, limited choice due to staffing, multiaging up to 3 grades in one class, different subjects in one class	The library	Struggling with transition from old ways to new means (i.e. from hunting and gathering lifestyle to common economic activities)
Causes	No phones in many homes, lack of priority for formal education	Social problems in home life, lack of parental involvement in children's early literacy and pre-school, effects of FASD and other learning disabilities impact children's learning	Expectation of offering diverse programme, struggling to meet high school requirements, impacted by staff variables	Students more interested in computer games and videos, and cable TV, there is a definite swing away from books after Grade 6	Need to see more local residents as professionals as role models (most are from outside), difficulty in keeping local graduates as few opportunities exist at home upon graduation (stable staff is good, but also block some grads from returning)

Table 4. Special feature as per other challenges of schools.

	Killinek	Ramah	Hebron	Okak	Nutak
Other challenges	Keeping abreast of changes in technology, recruiting and keeping qualified staff	Lack of social skills, problems with bullying and teasing, teaching pro-social skills with a focus on extrinsic control and intrinsic control	Shortage of space, crowding, too many classes	Lack of internet time, waiting for telephone upgrades	Achieving and maintaining high standards of literacy



new graduates. As the four northern-most schools struggle with special features and technical problems, the southern-most school, Nutak, stressed high standards of literacy and academic focus. Concerning special features, it seems that this school has its academic vision clearly laid out while the others are mired in different issues and are what Leithwood et al. (1997) would call "stuck" schools.

■ Language-based programmes

In discussing core programmes for these schools (required for provincial graduation or central to Nunatsiavut society), I have included preschool and Inuktitut language programmes (see Table 5). All these communities have preschool programmes of some sort, although it is not clear from the respondents' comments whether they are school-based or not. In three schools, the LIA through the LIHC (Labrador Inuit Health Commission) is referenced as sponsoring or running the preschool programmes. The Ramah School is an exception in that the respondent describes it as a headstart programme. Respondents in Ramah and Killinek refer to difficulties in getting parents to take advantage of these programmes. In a sense, while all schools have preschool programmes, they are not always in the schools nor are all the schools directly involved. The LIA, through the LIHC, is a major force in the attempt to deal with preschool literacy issues in these communities.

Three distinct areas of concern exist within language instruction: Inuktitut language, core English language, and French. The northern-most school

is attempting to bring in Inuktitut immersion and, while planning to go further, has yet to implement it beyond Grade 3. The rest of its Inuktitut programmes are the same as those offered by the remaining three schools. These schools offer Inuktitut as a core language programme similar to French instruction in kindergarten to Grade 9. In high school the curriculum offers Inuktitut 1120, 2120 and 3120 for credit, all taught by NTEP/TEPL teachers (Indigenous-Inuit teacher training programmes).

Most respondents express the sentiment that their school programmes are very good or at least acceptable. They make a point, however, that assistance in dealing with learning difficulties and alternate programming are needed. In one case, a respondent felt that her school exceeds provincial standards. Lastly, both concern and hope is expressed as one school raised the concern that the loss of a core French teacher will mean the French programme will suffer while another is optimistic that in the next academic year their school will be able to offer Inuktitut language instruction.

■ Geographic-climatic-economic conditions and cultural preservation

Historical isolation, extreme distances, and climatic conditions have served to protect the Nunatsiavut Inuit from total assimilation. Nunatsiavut was historically inaccessible from the south. There are no roads connecting the communities to each other or to areas outside of the territory. This region is affected by sub-Arctic weather patterns, and while it is much farther south than the Northwest Territories

Table 5. Core programme.

	Killinek	Ramah	Hebron	Okak	Nutak
Core K-12	■	■	■	■	■
Preschool	■	■ (LIA) (Headstart)	■	■ (LIHC)	■ (LIHC)
Inuktitut immersion	K-3				
Inuktitut as core course	4-12	K-12			
English language arts	Very appropriate	Needs to better accommodate students with learning difficulties, more alternate courses	Good programme, but language is not a strong point for students	No frills – only core programme	Exceeds Provincial standards
Other concerns			Hopes to have Inuktitut teacher in September 2000	Losing core French teacher may result in losing programme	

and Nunavut, the climate does not follow latitude lines and the Arctic weather patterns dip southward. In addition, the cold Labrador current impacts the regional sub-Arctic climate. Access can be made only by air and sea, with waterways that are frozen for up to six months a year. Recall, there is over 1600km between Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador) and the traditional seat of government in the southern-most part of the province. While this Beautiful Land is very much home to the Nunatsiavut, it is still very remote to the southerner's eyes. These factors coupled with respondents' views about the influence of local weather conditions points to what is perhaps the most significant finding in the study: a climatic-geographic-economic link which has served, and still serves, to protect the Nunatsiavut Inuit.

Based on the comments of the respondents, other sources, documentation, and my own observation, there may be a north-south difference in how entrenched traditional activities are maintained. These activities are not simply a result of the population's ancestry of origin, but are also the result of climatic conditions which reinforce the successful economic exploitation of the region in favour of traditional Inuit lifestyles. Furthermore, until recent

technological developments, southern industrial and economic factors simply could not compete with the more efficient local "on the land" traditional economy of the Nunatsiavut Inuit. Weather patterns from Killinek to Nutak (north to south) are about two weeks advanced and delayed respectively in the onset and offset of winter conditions. The annual migration of the George River caribou herd normally migrates using a trek that is further north. All these influences affect the degree of reliance and reinforcement of participation in such activities as well as any settler-Inuit distinctiveness in ancestry. A limitation of this study is a lack of resources to dig deeper into this north-south distinction. Nonetheless it is both a pertinent finding and a worthy feature for further study to determine more precisely how education relates to this distinctive feature and related aspects of schooling in Nunatsiavut (see Table 6).

■ Self-determination: Conclusion and summary

While many of the issues facing the Nunatsiavut Inuit are familiar to those studying Indigenous issues in other parts of Canada and internationally, others are not. These specific issues include:

Table 6. The weather and other conditions.

	Killinek	Ramah	Hebron	Okak	Nutak
Regional pattern	Short warm summers moderated by colder sea and related breezes. Falls run until November/December at which time freeze-up occurs. Snow is lighter in December/January although temperatures drop to -15 to -30°C in January to March. March and April may see heavy snowfall as temperatures rise and precipitation increases. April and May see longer days, moderate temperature, but ice and snow remain until June and even July. Shipping season runs from late July to late November.				
Weather effects	School year runs the same as the remainder of the province, although winter storms and blizzards sometimes force cancellations. Since there are no bus services or winter use of roads, closure for weather related bus problems are rare. The extreme cold means restricted outdoor activity during cold winter months. Also, the cost of heating is quite high. Heating failure results in some closures and sometimes access to parts may be a problem, although the school does keep parts in stock.				
Seasonal effects	There are some festivals in the winter months, which involve the schools. Also, in spring many older students may join their elders to pursue the caribou hunt as the migration of the George River herd occurs in the Spring. In the past, some students arrived late in the fall and left early in the summer to join families in the summer fisheries and camps outside the community. This has diminished considerably as these activities have declined.				
Specific to site	No bussing means extreme cold affects students further from school sites			Exposed hillside forces closures due to wind chill	
Degree of influence in each community	Strongest → to → Weakest				

- the unique role of the Moravian missionaries in developing and to a lesser extent exploiting, while in some ways "protecting and colonising" the region;
- the extreme isolation of this region which may have protected it from some southern cultural and economic development-exploitation patterns;
- the distinct political evolution of the Dominion-province with its delayed entry in the Canadian federation in 1949;
- the more inclusive yet distinctive integration (part of the provincial system but being isolated from it by culture and geography) of schooling within the provincial system; and,
- the emergence of an effective political activism and leadership from the LIA.

These factors have combined to produce a distinctive evolution of this region and to provide a more optimistic outcome for the future.

The influences on the Nunatsiavut Inuit generally, and the influences on the territorial five schools specifically, are connected economically, socially and politically. This mixture of events surrounding historical and present-day realities suggests that the impact of cultural domination and maladaptive responses by Eurocentric thinkers has negatively influenced much of Nunatsiavut society. As the Nunatsiavut Inuit step into what will in all likelihood be a brighter future, they need to be aware of the mixture of bicultural and bilingual influences that are operating within their society. There is much to gain and much to lose but finally such decisions will be theirs to make in the future.

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