

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **LATEST REPORT FROM MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY TRAMPLES ON HUMAN AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS OF NUNATUKAVUT INUIT; CONTINUES POLITICAL PANDERING**

**HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY, LABRADOR, May 23, 2024** – NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) President Todd Russell issued the following statement following Memorial University’s release of their “Indigenous Verification Report” on May 22, 2024:

“NCC has done a preliminary review of the report and is sadly unsurprised by the deeply flawed and unbalanced nature of the content. In an earlier conversation with the office of the Vice President – Indigenous (VPI) on April 12, 2023, it was communicated that NCC was to be excluded from an Indigenous roundtable to discuss matters around Indigenous identity. While our initial intervention with the interim President and the Chair of the Board of Regents “paused” the process, it clearly did little to dissuade a discriminatory and prejudicial attack on our people, as we have seen in this latest Indigenous Verification Report.

NCC initially expressed concerns to Memorial about their Indigenous verification consultation process and the hiring of First Peoples Group. The process was unclear and our questions about the intent were ignored. Despite these reservations, NCC leadership and so many of our people participated with integrity in the consultations held by First Peoples Group. First Peoples Group assured us that NCC would be treated fairly. Yet, we can attest that the strong voices of our people and their experiences are not reflected in the report. This, too, is not surprising as we understood that Memorial would have the last pen on editing the report prior to its release.

From what we have read of the report so far, it is filled with innuendo, harmful words and racist content that specifically targets NCC and NunatuKavut Inuit. In fact, the report is incredibly focussed on undermining NCC. A critical review of the report should alarm University faculty, students and staff. The outcome of this document validates our ongoing concerns around the development of an Indigenous verification process at the University, and further illustrates the bias of the Office of the VPI. Simply put, this report is nothing more than a political attempt to trample on the human rights of our people. Make no mistake, our human rights are Indigenous rights.

Memorial University has faltered. Through this flawed process, it has intentionally ignored and excluded key evidence and facts of history, much of which have been upheld by the Government of Canada, decisions from various levels of court, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and decades of academic research. We are beneficiaries of a historic Treaty that was entered into in 1765 in our territory. This Indigenous verification process is an example of Memorial exercising authority that it does not have. This is unconscionable, unethical and brings shame and embarrassment to our province’s only University. And it will only enable further lateral violence and bullying of our people.

Almost unimaginably, we see how the university is using political propaganda to pursue biased and discriminatory ends against an entire collective of Indigenous people. What has changed in our relationship with Memorial University? NCC has significantly contributed to the development of the Labrador Campus. In 2021, all three Indigenous groups in Labrador agreed to a Constitution for the Campus that upholds the lands and culture of the Inuit of NunatuKavut, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut and the Innu of Nitassinan. This followed intense collaboration

between all three groups and Memorial University.

New programming and curriculum at the Labrador Campus reflect the history and culture of all Indigenous peoples, including NunatuKavut Inuit. Hundreds of our students have graduated from Memorial and there are a number of NCC staff and faculty. We have numerous research relationships across the University that are invested in the well-being of our people and communities. For decades, we have worked alongside Indigenous peoples across Labrador and the island of the Newfoundland through the University. We also co-developed a film with Nunatsiavut Government on the relationship between Inuit and caribou. This, too, was approved by the Government of NunatuKavut and the Government of Nunatsiavut.

The only change to date is the politics and the way that Memorial is aligning itself with Indigenous groups that are making false claims about NunatuKavut Inuit. The current leadership of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Nunatsiavut Government and Innu Nation have squandered what we understand to be millions of dollars on a defamatory and violent misinformation campaign against NunatuKavut Inuit in the name of money and resources. Our people and places have not changed. The politics have. And it is now dictating the action of the highest levels of administration at Memorial.

NCC calls upon Memorial University to swiftly remove the VPI. The bias from this office toward NunatuKavut Inuit is clear and it has caused irreparable harm to Indigenous relations in this province. We also continue to call upon Memorial University to take us up on our offer to learn about our culture, our history, our places and our integral role in this province. Failure to do so is, in part, what has led them down this dark path. Their Indigenous Verification Report was less a document about what was heard and more so a report that has been reverse engineered to suit the motive of the office of the VPI to exclude NCC and NunatuKavut Inuit. This report must be rescinded immediately.

NCC will not allow Memorial University to exercise false authorities that impact the lives and well-being of NunatuKavut Inuit and communities. Furthermore, we will not accept or condone a process that incites hate and violence against our people. NCC will continue to protect and preserve the rights that have been passed onto us by our ancestors.”

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**About:** The NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) is a governing organization that represents Inuit who come from south and central Labrador. NCC is committed to advocating for section 35 rights, interests, and priorities of NunatuKavut Inuit. Rooted in the rich traditions and culture of NunatuKavut Inuit, NCC works diligently towards self-government and self-determination, while fostering community growth and sustainability.

*To learn more about NCC and NunatuKavut Inuit, please visit our website at [www.nunatukavut.ca](http://www.nunatukavut.ca) and we invite you to check out our new Story Map page which helps tell our story. Please also join in the conversation at [facebook.com/nunatukavut](https://facebook.com/nunatukavut), X/Twitter @nunatukavut and Instagram @nunatukavutinuit.*

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