

## A Historical Account of Inuttitut in Southern Labrador

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### “Our ancestral language”

In a recent survey, NunatuKavummiut – people of NunatuKavut – described their relationship with the Inuttitut language. Some called it “the forgotten language of our people,” “our native tongue,” and “our language that was lost due to colonization.”<sup>1</sup> Many want to learn Inuttitut because “it is part of our culture,” “my ancestors were Inuit,” and “it needs to be revived again.” Others wanted “to honour my foremothers” and “to feel deeper connected to our culture.” People talked about reconnection, revitalization, and pride. One person wrote, “I would like to learn more Inuttitut because I want to be more connected with my culture.” Someone else stated, “Inuttitut is important to me because when I understand it, I feel like I will have a greater understanding of my identity.” Another wrote, “Inuttitut is important to me because it was our mother tongue and we need to reclaim it, embrace it, and speak it daily.” Many people also talked about how they want future generations to know the language. “I’d love to reclaim and learn our language and pass it to my children,” one person said.<sup>2</sup>

As more people throughout NunatuKavut express interest in re-connecting with their ancestral language, they also want to know more about the history of the language in the region. So, where and when did people speak Inuttitut in southern Labrador? And how can we find out?

### Earliest historical documentation of Inuttitut

Written evidence of the historical use of a language can determine when it was spoken. However, when the language speakers did not have a writing tradition themselves, we must rely on the written records of other visitors to the region. In Labrador, this means that we need

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<sup>1</sup> Inuttitut language survey, NunatuKavut Community Council, November 2022-February 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Inuttitut language survey, NunatuKavut Community Council, November 2022-February 2023.

to look in the European colonial records. While Europeans describe encountering Inuit in the Strait of Belle Isle in the 1500s, most interactions were brief or violent and did not allow for much language exchange.<sup>3</sup> The first substantial documentation of the Inuttitut language comes from a word list created in 1717.<sup>4</sup> Entitled “Liste de quelques mots d’Esquimaux que nous avons appris de nos prisonniers [A list of some Inuit words that we learned from our prisoners],” it was likely compiled by a French trader named Martel de Brouague, who had inherited Courtemanche’s trade concession in the Bradore Bay / Blanc Sablon area on the Lower North Shore of Quebec.<sup>5</sup> One of his “prisoners” included Acoutsina, an Inuit woman who lived as a slave in the Governor’s household, doing domestic work and teaching Inuttitut to Brouague between 1717 and 1719.<sup>6</sup>

Acoutsina’s list of 31 words illustrate that the Inuttitut she spoke was very similar to Inuttitut spoken today. Similarly, a 1730 list of 144 Inuttitut words compiled by another enslaved Inuit woman from southern Labrador/Quebec contains familiar language.<sup>7</sup> Linguist Louis-Jacques Dorais analyzes these lists and others in his 1980 report, *The Inuit Language in Southern Labrador from 1694-1785*.<sup>8</sup> He deciphers the different historical spellings and connects most words with their contemporary equivalents. For example, the word for teeth is recorded as quiéouté from the 1717 list and qiqoutte from the 1730 list, while kigutik is the Inuttitut spelling today. The word for hair (nujak in today’s spelling) is spelled noujacte in the 1730 list, and the word for cheek (uluak in today’s spelling) is written as ouloua in the 1717 list. Although each person who compiled the lists had their own way of spelling the sounds they heard, a linguistic analysis can interpret their words. As Dorais writes in conclusion, “The

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<sup>3</sup> Marianne Stopp, “Reconsidering Inuit presence in southern Labrador,” *Études/Inuit/Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2002): 71-106.

<sup>4</sup> Anonymous, “Liste de quelques mots d’Esquimaux que nous avons appris de nos prisonniers”, Library and Archives Canada, microfilm F-109. List compiled at Fort Pontchartrain [Bradore Bay] from Inuit prisoners, probably by Martel de Brouague.

<sup>5</sup> Louis-Jacques Dorais, “Les Inuit du Labrador méridional: données linguistiques,” *Études/Inuit/Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1/2 (1980): 173.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Rousseau, “ACOUTSINA (Acountsina),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 4, 2022, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/acoutsina\\_2E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/acoutsina_2E.html).

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous, “Estat d’une partie des mots de la Langue Esquimeaux don’t l’explication es ten français,” in *Mémoire sur les Esquimaux*, ms C11A, vol. 122: 49-54, Library and Archives Canada. List compiled at Beauport, Quebec, from an Inuit prisoner, probably by Father François.

<sup>8</sup> Louis-Jacques Dorais, *The Inuit Language in Southern Labrador from 1694-1785*, (Ottawa: Mercury Series, Paper No. 66, 1980).

language of southern Labrador from 1694 to 1785 does not differ greatly from contemporary Inuit languages. With the exception of a few phonetical and possibly lexical peculiarities, it much resembles the other dialects of the eastern Canadian Arctic.”<sup>9</sup>

When Inuttitut-speaking Moravian missionaries came to Labrador in the 1760s, they also described the similarities between the language spoken by Inuit in southern Labrador and the language they had learned from Inuit in Greenland: “The language is essentially the same with the Greenlandic,” they claimed.<sup>10</sup> However, as linguist Elke Nowak comments, Greenlandic Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttitut are not always mutually understandable, even if they are closely related.<sup>11</sup> From their first meetings with the missionaries, Labrador Inuit were quick to note subtle linguistic distinctions. When Jens Haven and Christian Drachardt visited Inuit tents in Chateau Bay in 1765, they described the discussion: “The tent was crowded with people...they had a good deal of conversation with them about the difference between theirs and the Greenland speech.”<sup>12</sup> In a later conversation with the British Governor, Drachardt also noted “that the Esquimaux call many things differently than the Greenlanders. Their pronunciation and use of the tongue is entirely different.”<sup>13</sup> Nowak argues that most Moravian missionaries in Labrador ignored these differences and imported the writing system and language approach they had developed in Greenland, confident that their knowledge of Kalaallisut equipped them to communicate with Labrador Inuit.<sup>14</sup> The Moravians eventually established a mission station at Nain in 1771, followed by Okak in 1776 and Hopedale in 1782,

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<sup>9</sup> Louis-Jacques Dorais, *The Inuit Language in Southern Labrador from 1694-1785*, (Ottawa: Mercury Series, Paper No. 66, 1980), p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> David Crantz, *Historie von Grönland*. Barby: Heinrich Detlef Ebers; Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich) p. 293.

<sup>11</sup> Elke Nowak, “The ‘Eskimo’ language of Labrador: Moravian missionaries and the description of Labrador Inuttut, 1733-1891,” *Études/Inuit/Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1/2 (1999): 173-197.

<sup>12</sup> “Account of the voyage of the four Missionaries sent by the Unitas Fratrum to the Esquimaux on the Coast of Labrador, and under the protection of his Britannic Majesty. From the month of May to November, 1765” in A.M. Lysaght, *Joseph Banks in Newfoundland Labrador, 1766: His Diary, Manuscripts, and Collections* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 209.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Hans Rollmann, “Introduction and Summaries” in Gordon Handcock, Ludger Müller-Wille, and Douglas Wharram, “The 1765 Map of Jens Haven: Linguistic, Toponymic, and Geographical Studies,” Report for the Labrador Metis Nation co-ordinated by Hans Rollmann, (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2007), p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Nowak, “The ‘Eskimo’ language.”

focusing their attention almost exclusively on Inuit and the preservation of Inuttitut in northern Labrador.

Another extensive list of Inuttitut vocabulary from southern Labrador was compiled by English sailor William Richardson in 1771.<sup>15</sup> Richardson traveled to northern Newfoundland and Labrador several times between 1765 and 1771 on British naval ships. In 1771, he was mate on the *Grenville* as it charted the coastline between Spotted Island and Sandwich Bay, and he spent time in the Cape Charles area at the end of the voyage. During this time, he learned 92 Inuttitut words in one of the earliest Inuttitut-English vocabularies. Some familiar words in this list include cokioot [Kukiutik] for gun, omiack [umiak] for boat, nuna for land, nanook [nanuk] for polar bear, amagoke [amaguk] for wolf, tackavootit [takuvutit] for 'do you see?' and agaito [aggait] for hands. The collection also illustrates the trading and violent relationship between Inuit and British, as it includes words for many fur-bearing animals as well as kettle, blanket, file, knife, sword, cutlass, and cannon.<sup>16</sup> Richardson also added the word Caiactucchuac for Belle Isle and Callaroshillik for the Island of Newfoundland.<sup>17</sup>

### Inuttitut place names

The Moravian missionaries also learned Inuttitut place names during their meetings with Inuit in southern Labrador in the 1760s, and they created toponym maps of the coast. Unlike most Europeans in Labrador before them, the Moravians could understand Inuttitut. They were therefore extremely useful to the British Crown, which was aiming to quell the violence on the coast by trying to move Inuit north, away from the British fishery. British officials and Moravian missionaries hoped that by establishing a mission for Inuit in Labrador,

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<sup>15</sup> Marianne Stopp, "The Complete Inuttitut Vocabulary Collected by William Richardson, ca. 1765-1771," *Regional Language Studies*, No. 25 (2014), Memorial University.

<sup>16</sup> Marianne Stopp, "The Complete Inuttitut Vocabulary Collected by William Richardson, ca. 1765-1771," *Regional Language Studies*, No. 25 (2014), Memorial University.

<sup>17</sup> This is different from the word for Newfoundland that Moravian missionary Christian Drachardt learned in 1765 from Inuit as Ikkarumiklua. See Marianne Stopp, "The Complete Inuttitut Vocabulary" and Charles Martijn and Louis-Jacques Dorais, "Eighteenth century Innu (Montagnais) and Inuit toponyms in the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Studies* 17.2 (2001): 319-330 for more discussion about these differences and about the difficulty in confirming historical toponyms.

the fishery could proceed peacefully in the south and Inuit would be contained in the north.<sup>18</sup> On their travels in 1764 and 1765, the missionaries asked Inuit specifically about Inuit place names and demographics because they wanted to build a mission station where many Inuit lived. In 1765, after a trip to Labrador, Jens Haven and three other missionaries presented British officials with a map of the coastline between approximately the Island of Ponds area and Nain (see Map 1).<sup>19</sup> This map contains Inuttitut place names and approximate numbers of Inuit houses in each area – information useful for estimating population numbers and location.

Over the next decade, the missionaries and British authorities created other maps with Inuit toponyms. Like the Moravians' 1765 map, British Lieutenant Roger Curtis' 1773 chart of the coast contains Inuit place names and showing where Inuit lived (see Maps 2 and 3).<sup>20</sup> Together, these maps illustrate place based Inuttitut and the relationships between Inuit and their homeland. Map 4 is a compilation of some Inuttitut toponyms from these historical maps.

Two of the main place names are Aivitok (Hamilton Inlet) and Natsitok (Sandwich Bay). Aivitok means 'place of the walrus,' and was spelled different ways historically. As no standardized spelling system (orthography) yet existed for Labrador Inuttitut, each mapmaker wrote the words as he heard them. While the Moravian missionaries used their Greenlandic orthography, the British officials often used their own idiosyncratic spellings. Aivitok, therefore, was spelled Ivucktoke, Ivuctoke, Aivektok, Aivertok, Aivaktot, or Eivektok.<sup>21</sup> British trader George Cartwright, for example, mentions Ivucktoke Bay [Aivitok] as a main winter location for Inuit. On September 8, 1783, he describes "thirty-six Esquimaux of all ages and of both sexes...in one of their whaling boats and several kyacks" arriving at Cartwright Harbour from

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<sup>18</sup> Hans Rollmann, "Comments on the use and decline of Inuttitut toponyms" in Lisa Rankin, ed. "Toponymic and Cartographic Research Conducted for the Labrador Metis Nation," (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Gordon Handcock, Ludger Müller-Wille, and Douglas Wharram, "The 1765 Map of Jens Haven: Linguistic, Toponymic, and Geographical Studies," Report for the Labrador Metis Nation co-ordinated by Hans Rollmann, (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2007). Map is held in the Herrnhut Map Collection, Number 1786. English interpretations of the Inuttitut toponyms are given in the English records of the treaty event at CO 194/16, 225-245.

<sup>20</sup> Curtis, Sir R. 1773. A chart of part of the country of Labrador taken by order of commander Shuldham in a tour of the coast in the year 1773 by Lieutenant Roger Curtis. G3441.P5 1773 .C8, Harvard Map Collection, at [https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:426558446\\$1j](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:426558446$1j)

<sup>21</sup> Douglas Wharram, "Translation of Inuktitut names" in Lisa Rankin, ed. "Toponymic and Cartographic Research Conducted for the Labrador Metis Nation," (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2008).

Spotted Island.<sup>22</sup> Three days later, they “sailed for Ivucktoke, to winter there.”<sup>23</sup> Natsitok (Sandwich Bay) means ‘place of many ringed seals’ and was variously spelled Netsektok, Netchucktoke, or Neitsektok.<sup>24</sup>

The maps identify other Inuit toponyms, including (with the modern Labrador orthography in square brackets and the translation in round brackets):<sup>25</sup>

- Kikertarsoak [Kikittasuak] (‘big island’), possibly George Island;
- Puktualik (‘high land’), possibly George Island or Tumbledown Dick Island;
- Innuckchuckluck [Inutsualuk] (‘big inuksuk’), possibly George Island or Tumbledown Dick Island;
- Tuapauktualik (‘it has only gravel’), probably South Stag Island;
- Akugugatsut (‘place to wait or congregate’), north entrance of Sandwich Bay off Porcupine Strand;
- Aviktome or Aviktume (‘parting place’), possibly Sandwich Bay;
- Kajaruliktut [Kaigulittok] (‘place of many harp seals’), Hare Islands at south entrance of Sandwich Bay;
- Igiak [iggiak] (‘throat’), the Narrows into Sandwich Bay;
- Noobootaleweet [Nuvualuit] (‘big headlands’), north Cape North;
- Kikertauiak (cape islands), Cape North and Grady Islands area;
- Kikertet (‘the many islands’), the Spotted Island-Table Bay area;
- Ekerasuit (‘a passage between islands’), possibly Porcupine Bay, Squasho Bay, or Frenchmans Run;

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<sup>22</sup> George Cartwright, *A Journal of Transactions and Events during a Residence of Nearly Sixteen Years on the Coast of Labrador* (Newark: Allin and Ridge, 1792), Vol. III: 7.

<sup>23</sup> George Cartwright, *A Journal of Transactions and Events during a Residence of Nearly Sixteen Years on the Coast of Labrador* (Newark: Allin and Ridge, 1792), Vol. III: 10.

<sup>24</sup> Douglas Wharram, “Translation of Inuktitut names” in Lisa Rankin, ed. “Toponymic and Cartographic Research Conducted for the Labrador Metis Nation,” (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Gordon Handcock, “A Review of the 1773 Curtis Map” and Douglas Wharram, “Translation of Inuktitut names” in Lisa Rankin, ed. “Toponymic and Cartographic Research Conducted for the Labrador Metis Nation,” (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2008); Douglas Wharram, “Linguistic Analysis of Inuit Toponymy on Jens Haven’s Map of 1765 and Related Documents” in Gordon Handcock, Ludger Müller-Wille, and Douglas Wharram, “The 1765 Map of Jens Haven: Linguistic, Toponymic, and Geographic Studies,” coordinated and compiled by Hans Rollmann, Contract Research for Labrador Metis Nation, (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2007); Marianne Stopp, “Reconsidering Inuit presence in southern Labrador,” *Études/Inuit/Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2002): 71-106.

- Ectrawbick [Itsavik] ('wharf'), possibly Shoal Bay;
- Webatuke [Uivvatok] ('place of many capes'), possibly Seal Island;
- Kikertarsoak ('a large island'), probably Seal Island;
- Puktaksoak ('very high land'), probably Spotted Island or Indian Island;
- Tanannut ('island in the shadows, the dark one') probably Porcupine Island (sheltered behind Island of Ponds);
- Kukitikkoklok (associated with a gun), off Hawke Island;
- Uvebak ('big container'), close to Cape Bluff;
- Puto ('a hole through something'), close to Cape Bluff;
- Ikkarisarsuk ('place where one potentially gets grounded on a shoal'); and
- Ogbucktoke [Apvitok] ('place of many bowhead whales'), Belle Isle area.

The descriptive nature of many of these place names illustrate the connections between people and place. Information about navigation, hunting, and social activities are all inscribed on the landscape through these names. Inuit used these and many other Inuttitut place names for many years after they were recorded by missionaries and British officials in the late 1700s, but the subsequent British mapmakers and colonizers chose to assert their ownership over the territory by assigning their own English place names.

The historical record has therefore preserved the European maps and written material, but very little of the Inuit oral tradition. As more British traders and fishermen established themselves in the resource-rich region, their political power caused most of these Inuttitut place names to eventually fade from the written record and from public memory. British trader George Cartwright, for example, lived in Sandwich Bay for 18 years in the 1770s and 1780s. He had good relationships with local Inuit and learned some Inuttitut, but he invented his own toponyms instead of using the Inuttitut ones, and it is his names of Sandwich Bay, Cartwright, Dove Brook, White Bear River, and Paradise River that we use today.<sup>26</sup> The 1872 map drawn by Moravian Bishop Reichel, for instance, uses English place names south of Hamilton Inlet, except

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<sup>26</sup> Gordon Handcock, "A Review of Published Scholarly Articles Containing Inuit Place Names" in Lisa Rankin, ed. "Toponymic and Cartographic Research Conducted for the Labrador Metis Nation," (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2008).

for Aivitok.<sup>27</sup> This process of geographic colonization continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although some Inuttitut toponyms survived. In his 1916 book, anthropologist Ernest Hawkes describes Inuit using the names Aivitu-miut ('the people of Aivitok'), Netce-tumiut ('the people of Natsitok'), and Putla-vamiut ('the people of Battle Harbour').<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> T. Reichel, *Labrador: Aivektok oder Eskimo Bay* (1872), at <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/maps/id/52/rec/42>.

<sup>28</sup> Ernest Hawkes, *The Labrador Eskimo* (Ottawa: Anthropological Series 14, Geological Survey of Canada 91, 1916), p24.



Map 1: 1765 Haven map. Copy of a map created by Moravian interpreters after conducting interviews with Inuit attending the Inuit-British Treaty conference in August of 1765 showing Inuttitut toponyms from today's Frenchman's Run to north of Davis Inlet. Map is held in the Herrnhut Map Collection, Number 1786. English interpretations of the Inuttitut toponyms are given in the English records of the treaty event at CO 194/16, 225-245.





Map 3: A close-up of a section of Roger Curtis' 1773 map, showing Sandwich Bay and Hamilton Inlet



Map 4: Inuttit place names collected from various historical sources<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Lisa Rankin, ed. "Toponymic and Cartographic Research Conducted for the Labrador Metis Nation," (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2008); Gordon Handcock, Ludger Müller-Wille, and Douglas Wharram, "The 1765 Map of Jens Haven: Linguistic, Toponymic, and Geographical Studies," Report for the Labrador Metis Nation co-ordinated by Hans Rollmann, (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2007).

## Historical documentation of spoken Inuttitut in southern Labrador

Inuit continued to speak Inuttitut in southern Labrador in the 1800s. In 1820, two Inuttitut-speaking Inuit named George Niagungitok and Mary Coonunnak, and two young children travelled from Grady, just outside Cartwright, to perform in whaling captain Samuel Hadlock's "Eskimo Show" in the United States and Europe. As a child, Niagungitok had attended school in Hopedale and had returned south to live with his mother at Hare Harbour, east of Grady. He also had relatives in Hawke Harbour (St. Michael's Bay), and Mary Coonunnak's parents and family lived at Cape North, where about 30 Inuit lived at the time.<sup>30</sup> On their travels with Hadlock, they performed for audiences by demonstrating traditional Inuit skills and Niagungitok compiled an Inuttitut word list currently housed at the British Library. Tragically, they all died before they could return home.<sup>31</sup>

Visiting clergy from Newfoundland also remarked on Inuit speaking Inuttitut in southern Labrador in their reports and diaries. In 1824, Methodist minister Thomas Hickson travelled to Dumplin Harbour, just north of Cartwright, where he held a service for local residents and Newfoundland fishermen. "The poor Esquimaux gladly mixed with the assembly," he wrote. "And as many of them can understand English, (tho they cannot speak it,) I sincerely [sic] hope that they profited by what they heard."<sup>32</sup> He continued on to Spotted Island, where he found all the Inuit residents gone, "excepting an Old female and a child. A man who had long been in the habit of conversing with the Esquimaux thought that he could interpret for me, but failed in the attempt. Nevertheless I was able to make her understand the object of my visit which seemed to afford her pleasure."<sup>33</sup> Continuing south, he described more Inuttitut-speaking Inuit at Square Islands. One woman had a European partner, and when Hickson suggested that they should get married, he wrote, "It was [di]fficult to make his Esquimaux [con]cubine understand for want of an Interpreter. Both of them expressed a desire to be married, but only the poor

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Laing, ed. "The Labrador Journal of Rev. Thomas Hickson, 1824," Contract research for the Labrador Metis Nation, (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2007), p. 63.

<sup>31</sup> Sonja Schierle, "Samuel Hadlock, his 'Esquimaux Show,' and Missing Pages," *European Review of Native American Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2003): 29-36; Greg Mitchell, "Tangible Inuit Culture in NunatuKavut, Labrador," Report for NunatuKavut Community Council (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: NCC, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Peter Laing, ed. "The Labrador Journal of Rev. Thomas Hickson, 1824," p. 59.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Laing, ed. "The Labrador Journal of Rev. Thomas Hickson, 1824," pp. 65-66.

Indian<sup>34</sup> [Inuk] was since[re].”<sup>35</sup> He also met twenty-three “real Esquimaux” at Square Islands who spoke Inuttitut and with whom he struggled to communicate. “I endeavoured to preach to them through an Interpreter, but by reason of my Interpreter being so very deficient, I laboured under great inconveniences.”<sup>36</sup>

The next summer, Methodist minister Richard Knight made a similar voyage and met Inuit along the coast. He occasionally noted the language they spoke in his journal. At Black Tickle, for example, he describes a man who could speak a little English: “At this place I fell in with the first Indian [Inuit] family I had seen, consisting of the Indian [Inuk], his wife, and a fine boy. They were about to leave the harbour when I first saw them, but anxious to hold an interview, I ran, and called to them. The indian [Inuk] could speak a little English. The wife and child either knew nothing of this language, or would hold no conversation in it, for I could get no reply to several questions I put to them.”

Both Hickson and Knight also spent time with many Inuttitut-speaking Inuit in Hamilton Inlet. At Cuff Harbour, for example, Knight met a large group of Inuit who spoke only Inuttitut:

I found here of Indians [Inuit] and half Indians [Inuit] eighteen in number but could say nothing to them from the want of an interpreter. One of them, an old female, was sick. I was told that she knew a little English but could not prevail on her to converse. From her husband, I learnt she was born near the Moravian establishment at Hopedale, and was the first scholar that went to the school in that place.<sup>37</sup>

In concluding his report to the Wesleyan Missionary Committee, Rev. Knight emphasized the widespread use of Inuttitut, especially in Hamilton Inlet, and the need for any missionaries to learn the language. Many Inuit “informed me that the Indians [Inuit] had frequently said they understood nothing of what B. H. [Rev. Hickson] or myself had told them. The conclusion is then that their language must be learnt, and to facilitate this it would be well if practicable for

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<sup>34</sup> British colonists often used the term ‘Indian’ to refer to all Indigenous peoples, including Inuit in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Laing, ed. “The Labrador Journal of Rev. Thomas Hickson, 1824,” p. 70.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Laing, ed. “The Labrador Journal of Rev. Thomas Hickson, 1824,” p. 70.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Laing, ed. “The Labrador Journal of Rev. Richard Knight, 1825,” Contract research for the Labrador Metis Nation, (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2007, pp. 40-41.

the missionary to spend his winter at Hopedale among the Moravians.”<sup>38</sup> Knight envisioned building a mission station at Cullingham’s Tickle in Hamilton Inlet and felt that the missionaries would only have to learn Inuttitut for the first few years, until more Inuit learned English. He wrote, “But the Esquimaux are very desirous that their children should learn the English language. The accomplishment of this object would open the way most effectually, as in process of time the mission could be supplied from Newfoundland, and necessity would no longer exist of learning the Indian [Inuit] tongue. I think the children would soon learn.”<sup>39</sup>

Methodists ceased writing records about Inuit in southern Labrador after they abandoned their hopes of establishing a Labrador mission in 1828. But twenty years later, when Bishop Edward Feild initiated an Anglican interest in the coast, he similarly described his encounters with Inuttitut speakers. He made special note of Inuit who were literate and who owned biblical written material, perhaps because it illustrated their dedication to Christianity or perhaps because literacy was relatively rare at the time. At Forteau in 1848, he met a “married woman [who] can read and write the Esquimaux language... She had the New Testament and some other books in her own language, which she could read. She wrote also fairly...and spoke English so imperfectly that we could not make her understand.”<sup>40</sup> In Sandwich Bay, Feild met other Inuit who were literate in Inuttitut. “Several of the Esquimaux could read, and a few write. These advantages they chiefly owe to the Moravian missionaries in Nain and Hopedale, and two other stations, about 200 and 300 miles to the north of Sandwich Bay.”<sup>41</sup> At Dumplin Island, he described Inuit reading and singing from Inuttitut-language books:

After our service was concluded, some Esquimaux, at my request, read from a printed book portions of the service which they use at the Moravian stations. It appeared to be a Litany, commencing with the Lord’s Prayer, of course in the Esquimaux language. A woman, I presume the best scholar, led, and was in most

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Laing, ed. “The Labrador Journal of Rev. Richard Knight, 1825,” pp. 119-120.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Laing, ed. “The Labrador Journal of Rev. Richard Knight, 1825” p. 120.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Chronological Table of SPG and Diocesan Data’ in Hans Rollmann, “Anglican Beginnings and Aboriginality in 19th-Century Southern and Central Labrador: Evidence from the Episcopal Visitations to Labrador, Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and hitherto unexamined Church Records of 1848 and 1849,” Contract research for the Labrador Metis Nation, (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2008), p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Chronological Table’ in Hans Rollmann, “Anglican Beginnings,” p. 3.

parts followed by others, who seemed to know their parts, or responses, very perfectly. Some portions she read alone. There were frequent Antiphons, or short hymns, which all sang in unison, in a clear and pleasing tone. The voice and ear seemed good. Their language has been reduced to writing by the European Missionaries; and their Service-books and the Holy Gospels are now printed in the English character.<sup>42</sup>

The presence of Moravian books and ties with Moravian Inuit speaks to the continuing interconnections between Inuit in northern and southern Labrador.<sup>43</sup>

Bishop Feild also met Inuttitut speakers at St. Francis Harbour. When a group of nine Inuit arrived to be baptized, he noted that “Two of the women could not speak English, but the meaning of the service had been fully explained.”<sup>44</sup> At Seal Islands, he spoke with a group of twenty-three Inuit and noted their use of Inuttitut indirectly. “Most of them could speak English,” he wrote, “and some of them spoke and answered as correctly and intelligently as any poor persons I have ever conversed with.”<sup>45</sup>

Two years later, in 1850, Rev. Henry Disney travelled to St. Francis Harbour. He describes a large Inuit population that wanted to learn English as a second language. “I opened school the first Sunday I was at St. Francis’ Harbour: and though none of the people from Newfoundland had at that time reached Labrador, I had a large school, chiefly Eskimaux. On each Wednesday and Friday, during my stay at St. Francis’ Harbour, I kept school, and the Eskimaux women and children attended it, some of them coming from a considerable distance. They showed the greatest anxiety to learn to speak and read English.”<sup>46</sup>

In 1860, an American geologist Oscar Lieber travelled to Labrador stopped in Spotted Island on his way north. His description of the Inuit settlement there and its inhabitants is one of the more detailed, if condescending, narratives about Inuttitut speakers on the coast:

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<sup>42</sup> ‘Chronological Table’ in Hans Rollmann, “Anglican Beginnings,” p. 16.

<sup>43</sup> Hans Rollmann, “The Indigenous Inuit Mission of Jacobus and Salome at Snooks Cove,” *Journal of Moravian History*, No. 9 (Fall 2010), pp. 6-40.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Chronological Table’ in Hans Rollmann, “Anglican Beginnings,” p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Chronological Table’ in Hans Rollmann, “Anglican Beginnings,” p. 12.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Chronological Table’ in Hans Rollmann, “Anglican Beginnings,” pp. 20-21.

A very greasy, dingy boat landed us at the settlement on Spotted Island, where our friendly host at once introduced us to a stout, merry looking Esquimau lady of very respectable size and prepossessing appearance. She spoke English fluently, albeit with the somewhat Irish brogue peculiar to these remote English settlements....she showed me how the nut-tchak<sup>47</sup> is worn and how a baby may be conveniently carried in the copious folds of its cowl....She was talking in the Esquimaux tongue to another woman and I, by way of introducing her to speak again in an intelligible language pretended to understand them and said 'Exactly, that's my opinion too. Just what I said.' Suddenly she wheeled around and addressed a sentence to me in Esquimau, which again pretending to understand, I responded to by saying: 'Yes, to-morrow.' 'Why that is very unkind' she said. 'How so?' 'What did you say?' I inquired. 'Why I asked you to let me smoke your pipe and you say 'tomorrow,' she answered....She wanted to know something about our object in traveling so long. I told her we had done so for the purpose of seeing the eclipse. 'That we call 'suchunik ivunga tallinga mucktok' she said. I remarked that where we had been it was all dark and here could only have been partial. 'Oh' she said, 'when it's all dark we call it 'suchunick illunane tallinga lucktok. What I told you just now means half dark.' 'Suchiniulp' she observed, means the sun, 'but when we talk of it that way we say 'suchunik'. P'niuk is the word for dog, and nut-tchak and kai-yak have already been explained. These were all the words I could scribble down on a little slip of paper at the time, but it would be easy to learn the language thoroughly from the English-speaking Esquimau of this place."<sup>48</sup>

As Lieber noted, Spotted Island was a bilingual place in 1860. Other 19<sup>th</sup>-century visitors also noted the English language abilities of local Inuit in a manner that seems to imply that they

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<sup>47</sup> "A woman's parka with enlarged hood for a baby. Baby in Inuttituk is nutaraK (Peacock 1974: 311) or nutagak (Jeddore 1976: 88), suggesting the prefix of the word Lieber collected (i.e., nut) along with its modifying suffix (i.e., tchak) was probably an Inuktitut construction." John Kennedy, "Visitors' Accounts of Inuit Metis between Cape Charles and Cape Harrison, Labrador," A Report on Research Conducted for the Labrador Metis Nation (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2010), p. 82.

<sup>48</sup> John Kennedy, "Visitors' Accounts of Inuit Metis," pp. 82-83.

spoke Inuttitut as a first language. For example, Rev. Kelly visited Earl Island near Cartwright in 1870, and remarked, "One of those present [during a service at the Salmon preserving station of Messrs Hunt] asked us to pay a visit to his wife, an Esquimaux woman, living a little way round the point. This we gladly did, and found her house no exception to the clean and tidy dwellings of the Indian [Inuit] wives. She spoke English very well..."<sup>49</sup> American tourist Charles Hallock also described Inuit at Flatwater and Tub Harbour in Groswater Bay as speaking Inuttitut and some as speaking "laconic" (concise, brief) English.<sup>50</sup> When the group engaged in some trading, Hallock wrote, "Joe [Palliser] was spokesman of the party, as the others could speak little or no English."<sup>51</sup>

Moravian missionaries also described the use of Inuttitut in the Hamilton Inlet region. From the mid-1800s onwards, they considered establishing a Moravian station near Rigolet, at the request of the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1857, Brother Elsner travelled from Hopedale to explore the possibility. When he arrived in Snooks Cove, he learned that seven to ten Inuit families had been attached to the firm Hunt & Co., which had provided them with "a schoolmaster from among their nation, by whom the children were able to learn reading and writing," presumably in Inuttitut.<sup>52</sup> By the time of Elsner's visit, however, the families had "largely left him and have moved farther south."<sup>53</sup> These Inuttitut speakers were therefore now living south of Hamilton Inlet. Elsner also commented on the bilingual abilities of Inuit in the area:

It would be requisite that a Missionary at this place should be perfectly acquainted with English, which language would be required for preaching and other services. A knowledge of Esquimaux is not absolutely necessary, as the few

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<sup>49</sup> 'Chronological Table' in Hans Rollmann, "Anglican Beginnings," pp. 47-48.

<sup>50</sup> Charles Hallock, "Three Months in Labrador," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* vol. 22 no. 132 (May 1861), p. 750.

<sup>51</sup> Charles Hallock, "Three Months in Labrador," p. 750.

<sup>52</sup> 'Chronological Summary of the Missionary and Exploratory Trips to the South of Hopedale' in Allyson Davis and Hans Rollmann, "Moravian Missionary and Exploration Journeys South of Hopedale 1857-1900," Contract Research for Labrador Metis Nation (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2007), p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> 'Chronological Summary of the Missionary and Exploratory Trips to the South of Hopedale' in Allyson Davis and Hans Rollmann, "Moravian Missionary and Exploration Journeys South of Hopedale 1857-1900," p. 2.

individuals of that race who reside near Cross Waters [Groswater Bay] all speak more or less English, and some remarkably well.<sup>54</sup>

Many of the Moravian brethren came from German-speaking regions of Europe, and some did not speak English themselves. As Elsner notes, any missionary stationed near Rigolet would need to know English.

For the next forty years, Moravian officials made periodic trips to Hamilton Inlet to visit with Inuttitut-speaking Inuit and to provide them with religious services. In 1871, a family from Hopedale moved to Snooks Cove to spread the gospel. Jacobus and Salome and their children spent a year with relatives in the region, preaching services and sharing Inuttitut-language religious texts with families.<sup>55</sup> In 1894, two missionaries travelled to Hamilton Inlet – or Aivertok, as they called it – to assess the situation. They also commented on the language use:

Besides the settlers, there are some seventy Eskimoes living up this long fjord. Mr. Moore, the Methodist preacher, has faithfully done his best for them, visited them at any rate once or twice in the year, and kept meetings for them. But this was in English, which they understand very imperfectly, if at all....Some of them can read in their own language and are supplied with our Eskimo Bibles and hymn-books.<sup>56</sup>

Some of these Inuttitut bibles and hymnbooks were circulated around the region, and a few still exist today. An Inuttitut bible remains in Williams Harbour, for example.<sup>57</sup>

The Moravian missionaries noted the widespread use of Inuttitut in Hamilton Inlet in the late 1800s. As Inuttitut speakers themselves, they were uniquely situated to preach in the language, unlike the Methodists or other clergy. “No one does anything for these poor Inuit; not necessarily out of hate or unwillingness, but simply because no one understands their language. The Methodist preacher visits them perhaps once or twice a year, holds also a

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<sup>54</sup> ‘Br. Elsner’s Report of a Journey from Hopedale to North-West River, Esquimaux Bay, in April, 1857’ in Allyson Davis and Hans Rollmann, “Moravian Missionary and Exploration Journeys South of Hopedale 1857-1900,” p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> Hans Rollmann, “The Indigenous Inuit Mission of Jacobus and Salome at Snooks Cove,” pp. 27-29.

<sup>56</sup> ‘An Expedition to Rigoulette’ in Allyson Davis and Hans Rollmann, “Moravian Missionary and Exploration Journeys South of Hopedale 1857-1900,” p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Maura Hanrahan, “A Solid Past: Inuit Cultural Continuity in Labrador Communities,” Report for Labrador Metis Nation (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2001), p. 108.

service, but they understand hardly anything of it, since he speaks, of course, only English.”<sup>58</sup> However, by 1901, Moravian missionaries had decided against establishing a station in the Rigolet area. As more Inuit were learning and speaking English, the need for Inuttitut-speaking missionaries diminished. The Moravians also cited a decline in Inuit population numbers and their frequent intermarriage with people of mixed or European ancestry as reasons not to expand the Moravian Church’s reach southward.<sup>59</sup>

The close connections between Inuit in northern and southern Labrador sometimes led to more Inuttitut speakers moving into the region. In 1863, Rev. Hutchinson reported from Battle Harbour that a group of unilingual and literate Inuit had arrived from the north:

Four families of Esquimaux from Hopedale, one of the Moravian settlements, have come to live here. They came here hoping to better their worldly circumstances. They sailed along the shore and did not settle until they found a pastor and a church. One man only can speak English. The other fifteen cannot speak a word or only ‘Good morning.’ All the adults can read, and most of them write. They sing hymns very nicely. They attend church very regularly and four children come to school.<sup>60</sup>

Thirty years later, when Dr. Elliot Curwen visited Indian Tickle, west of Spotted Island, he met an Inuttitut speaker who had also moved from Hopedale: “Some [patients] were Esquimaux who had come from Red Point, and it was quite pleasant hearing one old man talking in his native tongue; he had been up from Hopedale 20 years or more but being very deaf he had scarcely learnt English.”<sup>61</sup>

Curwen also met Inuttitut speakers in Fox Harbour [St. Lewis] in 1893. He visited “Mrs. Thoms, her blind brother Pawlo, and her brother with his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Pawlo – full-blooded Esquimaux. These all lived in one large house with their four children and are a thriving

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<sup>58</sup> ‘An Expedition to Rigoulette’ in Allyson Davis and Hans Rollmann, “Moravian Missionary and Exploration Journeys South of Hopedale 1857-1900,” p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Hans Rollmann, “The Indigenous Inuit Mission of Jacobus and Salome at Snooks Cove,” pp. 35-36.

<sup>60</sup> Hans Rollmann, Chronological Table, p. 40.

<sup>61</sup> Ronald Rompkey, ed., *Labrador Odyssey: The Journal and Photographs of Eliot Curwen on the Second Voyage of Wilfred Grenfell, 1893* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), p. 161.

family.”<sup>62</sup> Curwen talked with “Mr. P., whose English though good was not fluent” and when he left, “the whole household came to bid farewell (or ‘ethani’ [atsunai] as it is in Esquimaux.)”<sup>63</sup>

The documented use of Inuttitut in southern Labrador becomes more sparse into the 1900s, although its use in the Rigolet area persisted. When the Anglican minister Henry Gordon arrived in Cartwright in 1915, he kept a journal of his life in Labrador until he left again in 1925. In his writing, he describes hearing Inuttitut in the Rigolet area, but does not remark on hearing it elsewhere. In 1915, he gathered a group together in Rigolet. “The entire Eskimo colony must have been present, numbering close on to two hundred....Although all of these Eskimo speak English, they sang the hymn in their own tongues, which reads like a series of ‘Icks’ and ‘Ucks,’ but is much softer in pronunciation.”<sup>64</sup> The next year, he held a service at Carawalla, west of Rigolet: “Most of the men folk were able to talk a little English and a few of the women, but the common tongue is Eskimo. A large crowd assembled in the small room. I fear I was unintelligible to them, but they listened well. The hymns were rather a novelty: the congregation singing in their language and myself in mine.”<sup>65</sup>

A few fluent speakers lived south of Hamilton Inlet in the 1900s. At North River in Sandwich Bay, Rev. Gordon described “old Aunt Nancy Williams, a purebred Eskimo and, I learned, the only one of her race in the entire bay.”<sup>66</sup> Although he does not remark on her linguistic abilities, Nancy Manak Williams is probably one of the two women that anthropologist Ernest Hawkes described in 1914, after spending some time in Sandwich Bay: “[There are] two survivors of the old southern bands of Labrador Eskimo living in Sandwich Bay...both women married to white men, but [who] still spoke good Eskimo and remembered native stories and customs.”<sup>67</sup> Farther south, in an 1994 interview with anthropologist John Kennedy, Jason Curl named Betsy Paulo Wakeham as the last Inuttitut speaker in the St. Lewis / Fox Harbour region.<sup>68</sup> She died on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1921, and is mentioned in passing in Dillon Wallace’s *Lure of the*

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<sup>62</sup> Ronald Rompkey, ed., *Labrador Odyssey*, p. 37.

<sup>63</sup> Ronald Rompkey, ed., *Labrador Odyssey*, p. 38.

<sup>64</sup> Francis Buckle, ed., *Labrador Diary, 1915-1925: The Gordon Journals* (St. John’s: Print Atlantic, 2003), p. 21.

<sup>65</sup> Francis Buckle, ed., *Labrador Diary*, p. 59.

<sup>66</sup> Francis Buckle, ed., *Labrador Diary*, p. 32.

<sup>67</sup> E.W. Hawkes, *The Labrador Eskimo* (Ottawa: Department of Mines, 1916), pp. 16-17.

<sup>68</sup> John Kennedy, “Labrador Metis Ethnogenesis,” *Ethnos*, Vol. 63, no. 3-4 (1995): 12.

*Labrador Wild* as the “Eskimo wife” of Englishman George Wakeham when Wallace stayed with them in Fox Harbour in 1903.<sup>69</sup>

Although fewer people were fluent in Inuttitut in southern Labrador in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they continued to use Inuttitut words. At Spotted Island, American staff with the International Grenfell Association (IGA) commented on the local people’s use of several Inuttitut words in the early 1920s. After spending the summer teaching children on the island in 1922, Fred Carleton published a magazine article about the unique dialect they spoke. He wrote, “To make things clear at the start. The language spoken on the coast is English. The isolation of the country and the conditions of life and livelihood have produced a dialect unlike that of any other English people.”<sup>70</sup> He then lists pages of words and phrases that are novel to his ear. Among them are several Inuttitut words (with current spellings added in square brackets):<sup>71</sup>

Auch, Etta [auk, auttu<sup>72</sup>]: right, left commands for dogteam

Komatik [Kamutik]: sled for dogteam

Nowlok [naulak]: Detachable steel head of harpoon

Unok [unâk]: Stock of harpoon with line attached<sup>73</sup>

Carleton makes no mention of the Inuttitut origins of these words, but he does comment on how the way of speaking is heavily influenced by the “leading part which hunting and fishing play in the lives of the people.”<sup>74</sup>

The next year at Spotted Island, American IGA staff member Ruth Boring learned another Inuttitut word in her child welfare efforts:

One day last summer, while making a call in one of the houses at Spotted Islands, we noticed the small son of our hostess chewing enthusiastically on a stem of

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<sup>69</sup> Dillon Wallace, *Lure of the Labrador Wild* (New York: Revell, 1905).

<sup>70</sup> Fred Carleton, “Notes on the Labrador Dialect,” *P & S on the Labrador: An account of the work of the Columbia unit of the Grenfell Mission at Spotted Islands, Labrador*. Columbia University, 1921-1924 (New York: College of Physicians and Surgeons, 1924), 1922, p. 12.

<sup>71</sup> Note that a capital ‘K’ in Labrador Inuttitut orthography is pronounced as a guttural “ch” (as in “Bach”). The small ‘k’ is pronounced much as it is in English. A long ‘a’ is spelled with a tupik: â.

<sup>72</sup> “Auttutut: when a person commands his dog team to turn left” in August Andersen, William Kalleo, and Beatrice Watts, eds., *Labradorimi Ulinnaisigutet: An Inuktitut-English Dictionary of Northern Labrador Dialect*, (Nain: Torngâsok Cultural Centre, 2007). Labrador Inuttitut dictionaries also list the command for turn left as “ha’ra” (*Labradorimi Ulinnaisigutet* and <http://www.labradorvirtualmuseum.ca/inuttut-english.htm>).

<sup>73</sup> Fred Carleton, “Notes on the Labrador Dialect,” 1922, p. 13.

<sup>74</sup> Carleton, “Notes on the Labrador Dialect,” p. 12.

the course sea-kelp – this, we learned, was “quinyuck” [kuannik], which children like for its sweetish flavor. Judging by our own taste, this was a poor sort of vegetable. But on the Labrador, one cannot neglect even small adjuncts to the diet, so we smiled upon the young man’s chewing, reflecting that even if he got a few vitamins, he was acquiring a bit of cellulose.<sup>75</sup>

Kuannik is also a word used today in the Spotted Island area. In a recent interview, George Keefe of Black Tickle describes what he would eat as a young man: “We used to eat seal, birds, rabbits, and partridges. You'd go to the cove and get a feed of mussels, a feed of wrinkles, or a feed of ose eggs; stuff like that. Quanyuk [kuannik] was a favourite feed. You'd take the kelp off and eat the middle. It stopped the hunger.”<sup>76</sup>

Rita Stevens from Fox Harbour also remembers eating kuannik as a child. She was born in 1924 in Frankie’s Cove near Fox Harbour/St. Lewis and she described some of her fond memories of learning Inuttitut words from her father, Thomas Paulo, in a 2009 interview:

Dad used to tell me a few names, like boos in your head [lice], kumak, that what they used to call them. Kumaks. Dad used to say a lot of them [Inuttitut words] and he’d be talking to me you know and right happy and be talking to me, he used to say a lot of little old stuff to me. But I forgets stuff....There was a kelp, a wide kelp and a stalk grows up through it and it begins like a carrot down here and a stalk grows up through, right flat, and you peel off the wide carrot. Dad used to eat it one time and he used to take me up in the back cove, and he used to get this and scrape the bottom like a carrot and the stalk goes up through and give it to me to eat. He called it kuanyuck. I loved it....”<sup>77</sup>

Rita’s father also had sled dogs, and she recalled the commands for them: “Yuck for right and yedder for left, to turn them. We had good leaders too, when Dad would say yuck and yedder. We would get them to stop. They were good dogs, he had them

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<sup>75</sup> Ruth Boring, “Child Welfare,” *P & S on the Labrador: An account of the work of the Columbia unit of the Grenfell Mission at Spotted Islands, Labrador*. Columbia University, 1921-1924 (New York: College of Physicians and Surgeons, 1924), 1923, p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> George Keefe in *Black Tickle / Domino Through the Years* (Black Tickle: Literacy Group of Black Tickle, n.d. [1999?]), p. 16.

<sup>77</sup> Rita Stevens, Interview with Eva Luther for Labrador Metis Nation Oral History Project, 2009.

trained, he never used to beat them, or do anything with them, just had them trained.”<sup>78</sup>

Other people in St. Lewis remember Inuttitut being spoken in the past. Gertrude Curl Chubbs was interviewed by anthropologist John Kennedy in St. Lewis in 2000. She describes how George and Martha Holley “used to speak some words to her in Eskimo” when she grew up in Deep Water Creek.<sup>79</sup> George was likely related to Betsy Paulo Wakeham, the last fluent Inuttitut speaker in St. Lewis (mentioned above), as he and Martha took in Betsy and George Wakeham in their old age. Another woman from St. Lewis, Charlotte Thoms Curl, was born in Deep Water Creek in 1925. In a 2009 interview, she described how her family would pronounce ‘ulu,’ demonstrating the Inuttitut pronunciation: “Udulo we used to call it. Same thing I guess.”<sup>80</sup>

Violet Dyson of Spotted Island also shared some Inuttitut words that she has used all her life in a 2009 interview. Violet was born in 1929 and grew up with her grandparents, John Curl and Susan Winters Curl. “[Frozen caribou meat] they called kuak....Slice it off, I remember seeing them slicing it right thin and frozen....and [dried seal meat] was nikku! Just hang it up, cut it off real thin and hang it on a line over the stove. They’d put salt on it.”<sup>81</sup>

In 2010, Eva Luther compiled a list of Inuttitut words that Elders in southern Labrador shared with her in interviews. Most words are nouns that related to land-based life in Labrador – clothing, wild food, tools for working sealskin, and words related to using dog teams. Her report to the Labrador Metis Nation,<sup>82</sup> she lists them (with current orthography in square brackets):

Clothing:

Sillipuk [silipâk] – outer lining for a duffel coat

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<sup>78</sup> Rita Stevens, Interview with Eva Luther for Labrador Metis Nation Oral History Project, 2009.

<sup>79</sup> John Kennedy, “Review of Two Documents by Carol Brice-Bennett,” (St. John’s: Memorial University, 2001), p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Charlotte Curl, Interview with Eva Luther for Labrador Metis Nation Oral History Project, St. Lewis, 2009.

<sup>81</sup> Violet Dyson, Interview with Eva Luther for Labrador Metis Nation Oral History Project, 2009.

<sup>82</sup> Eva Luther, 2010, Report to Labrador Metis Nation on Elder Interviews, (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: NunatuKavut Community Council, 2010); Gladys Holwell, Interview for Labrador Metis Nation Oral History Project, 2009.

Autuk – winter coat with large hood and back flap<sup>83</sup>

Food and medicinal knowledge:

Kwuack [Kuak] – frozen caribou meat

Nick-koo [nikkuk] – dried seal meat

Kwan-yook [kuannik] – type of leafy seaweed

Nitsek [natsik] – seal

Kollikinears – cakes cooked in seal fat

Kulluks – sweet doughballs

Koodliluk – roseroot

Dog team-related:

Kometic [Kamutik] – dog sled

Houck [auk] – turn dogs [to the right]

Atter [auttu] – turn dogs [to the left]

Tools:

Ulu – Inuit women’s curved knife

Killiuktuk [kiliutak] – curved tool for curing animal skins

Other:

Hee-kee [ikke] – said when something cold was touched

Aht – exclamation to show wonder

Coo-mocks [kumak] – lice

The Elders described using these words in everyday life. As a woman from St. Lewis described to anthropologist Maura Hanrahan in the 1990s, she learned Inuttitut words by absorbing them and not by consciously acknowledging that they were from a different language: “It was just

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<sup>83</sup> Amautik is the hood for carrying a baby.

something like how you learn English. It was included in our language. It wasn't explained to us as saying, well, you know this is a word that came from here and there. You just picked it up as you went along.”<sup>84</sup>

### Revitalizing Inuttitut in NunatuKavut

*“Preserving that part of our history would help us with our identity and connect us to our roots” – Inuttitut survey participant, 2023*

Inuttitut words are an integral part of life in NunatuKavut, and many people want to revive more of the language. In response, the NunatuKavut Community Council is developing language programming for schools, youth, and adults in the region. Participants in the recent Inuttitut survey provided some guidance about what they would like to see. Many felt that the programs should be available for everyone, with a specific focus on children and students. “I would love to see a course offered in schools or even an after-school program,” suggested one person.<sup>85</sup> Several participants want to see Inuttitut incorporated into the school curriculum. Some provided insight into language topics, such as “names of plants, animals, fish, and place names,” while others suggested incorporating language into cultural education and skills training such as “drum practice, sinew stitching, stories, and history.” These practical and place-based contexts for language learning correspond with the documented history of Inuttitut in NunatuKavut, as outlined in this report, and could build on the core of knowledge that still exists today. As one person wrote, “Inuttitut is important to me because it’s a part of my culture. It’s a part of myself that I don’t even know, and I think it’s really important that we and future generations should know it and keep it alive.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Maura Hanrahan, “A Solid Past: Inuit Cultural Continuity in Labrador Communities,” Report for Labrador Metis Nation (Happy Valley-Goose Bay: Labrador Metis Nation, 2001), p. 108.

<sup>85</sup> Inuttitut language survey, NunatuKavut Community Council, November 2022-February 2023.

<sup>86</sup> Inuttitut language survey, NunatuKavut Community Council, November 2022-February 2023.