

4.134 Hudson's Bay Company post and Moravian Mission buildings, c. 1935



4.135 Not as isolated as you would think ...

By the 1930s, Hopedale had a surprising number of connections with the "outside world." The community received a short-wave radio in 1925 and a movie projector in 1931 to show over 100 films donated by the Government of Canada. In 1927, the mission house and church had electric lighting powered by a generator, and in 1930 a post office and a telegraph station (shown here under construction) opened in Hopedale.



4.136 A Moravian postcard shows a Labrador Inuk woman in native dress, c. 1920s

## TOPIC 4.9

# Further Encroachment

How would Innu, Inuit, Metis, and Mi'kmaq cultures have been influenced by the arrival of Europeans?

Is encroachment a concern today for Newfoundland and Labrador's Aboriginal people?

## Introduction

The late 1800s and early 1900s continued to be a time of change for Aboriginal people as they faced further encroachment into their lands by the growing European population. As Inuit, Innu, Mi'kmaq, and Metis developed closer relationships with European settlers, they became exposed to the effects of outside influences such as the rise and fall of the fur trade, the arrival of the Spanish flu, the First World War, and the Great Depression.

## Inuit

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Moravian mission stations in Labrador had become an integral part of the lives of many Labrador Inuit, both culturally

and economically. While many Inuit grew increasingly dependent on the mission stations for European goods, such as flour, tea, rifles, ammunition, and European clothing, the missionaries also became dependent on Inuit to supply them with a steady source of cod\* and furs, which they could sell in the European markets to pay for the missions' operation and supplies. This left both the Moravians and Inuit vulnerable to the supply of natural resources and marketplace conditions.

By 1900, Moravian trade operations had accumulated a huge outstanding debt from increased operating expenditures and the practice of advancing credit

*\*There were no cod north of Hebron.*

# FISH FOR SALE

In addition to trading with the Moravian missions, Inuit traded with the Newfoundland cod fishers who started frequenting the northern coast of Labrador in the 1860s. This encouraged Inuit to catch cod, salmon, and arctic char for trade, as well as for their own consumption. Recognizing the value of this trade, Moravian missions soon expanded their operations to become fish dealers and started accepting fish, in addition to furs, for exchange.

This new focus on summer fishing changed both Inuit seasonal round and their lifestyle in a number of ways. For instance, fishing coincided with the best times to hunt caribou because the herds were in prime condition for use as winter clothing. This meant Inuit had to change their hunting season and become somewhat dependent on European garments.

4.138 Yaffling fish, Hopedale, 1893



4.137 The chapel servants, Hopedale, 1893

to Inuit families in less profitable times. To reduce costs, the Moravians began to close missions (such as Ramah) in 1908 and reduce the numbers of missionaries in the remaining communities to one. This move increased the influence of Inuit “chapel servants,” who assumed greater responsibility for conducting church services and making pastoral visits both within the community and to outlying fishing camps. It also led to respected community members being elected as Elders. Together with the missionaries, these “watch committees” or boards initiated policies and settled a range of disputes.

Serious hardship occurred in the Inuit communities in 1918, when the Spanish influenza was unknowingly introduced to the Labrador coast by the Moravian ship *Harmony*. Although every community was affected, Okak and Hebron were decimated. Okak lost all but 59 women and children from its population of 263 and all its adult males succumbed to the disease. In the Hebron area, the Inuit population was reduced from 220 to 70. In 1919, Okak was closed as a mission station. Surviving family members of the epidemic were adopted by Inuit families in other communities, but sometimes family members were separated.

The Moravian missions experienced increased financial strain during the First World War and, by 1924, credit advances were stopped at the mission stores. In 1926, the Moravian Society leased its entire trade business to the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) for 21 years. The HBC provided store managers who resided in the various communities, built some new stores, and made other investments in the communities that led to a renewed sense of hope.

The company kept credit advances to a minimum and encouraged Inuit families to spend the winter living away from the community to hunt and trap. Seal hunting in both spring and fall, along with cod fishing in summer, kept families at remote sites and provided natural resources for sale to the company. This continued until the Great Depression in the 1930s, when markets collapsed and Inuit families were left to look after themselves. Items such as ammunition for hunting, flour, tea, and other imported goods were no longer available unless they could be purchased with cash. While the Hudson’s Bay Company did distribute some “relief” or welfare assistance for the Newfoundland government, these rations were very small and the health of many communities suffered.

*This role was taken over by members of the Newfoundland Rangers who were posted to Labrador after 1934, when the Commission of Government established a rural police force.*



**4.139** Mushuauinnu at a camp on Mushuau shipu (George River), 1906 (top left)

**4.140** Unidentified Innu woman and children, c. 1930

(top right) The Roman Catholic Church influenced many aspects of Innu culture in the 19th and 20th centuries. Missionaries objected to the Innu shamanistic religion and abolished many of its rituals, including drum dances, which they believed were connected to the devil.

**4.141** Political borders were unknown to Innu bands in the early 1850s.

(left) The settlement of the Labrador boundary dispute in 1927 created new political boundaries between Labrador and Quebec that divided Innu territory almost in half. While this may not have affected Innu land use at the time, these boundaries would have implications in later years as Innu pursued land claim negotiations.

Source: Frank Speck, 1931

*\*This was the original settlement. Innu moved in 1967 to a new location, which they also called Davis Inlet. After this time, the first settlement was referred to as "Old" Davis Inlet.*

*\*\*The Hudson's Bay Company had already opened a trading post at North West River in 1836 and encouraged Innu to settle close by.*

## Innu

As the fur trade in Labrador grew in the early twentieth century, Labrador Innu had increased contact with European settlers. The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) continued to open new trading posts, including one at Davis Inlet\* in 1896 and another at Voisey's Bay in 1913.\*\* This interaction with English fur traders led to an increased reliance on European goods from these trading posts.

Hunters were encouraged to trap furs full time for the HBC, rather than focusing on caribou hunting as they had traditionally done. This encouragement, combined with the introduction of guns from trading posts, caused Innu hunting methods to change. When using the traditional method, hunters worked together to construct fences and corrals. They then drove the

animals into these enclosures and killed them with spears. When using guns, caribou hunting became an individual or small group activity. The use of guns also meant Innu were dependent on the trading posts for ammunition. During a year when fur-bearing animals were scarce, Innu often could not afford ammunition for their guns and this sometimes led to starvation.

Additional changes for Innu, resulting from European colonization, occurred when fur prices rose in the early twentieth century. As a result, there was increased competition for furs from Metis, who set individual trap lines and believed they had trapping rights in these areas. This conflicted with Innu, who believed in sharing the land.

*\*The Newfoundland government had little direct contact with Innu before the mid-1900s. Instead, it delegated dealings with Innu to missionaries and the HBC. In Davis Inlet, for example, up to the 1930s, Roman Catholic priests distributed food, clothing, and other forms of social assistance to Innu.*



**4.142 An Innu tent at Davis Inlet, c. 1930**

The photographer, Fred Coleman Sears, included the following caption with this picture: "A Nascaupsee Indian teepee at Davis Inlet, which is one of their summer settlements where they come down to see their priest (they are all Catholics) and to get supplies for the coming winter. This is certainly a primitive dwelling and one wonders how these Indians endure the myriads of mosquitoes and black flies which frequently, in fact usually, swarm about them."

Further encroachment on Innu territory occurred after 1900, when logging began in areas that were traditional hunting grounds, causing an imbalance in the ecosystem and a decline in caribou herds. Consequently, Innu were faced with both a decrease in their traditional food source and a loss of land on which to conduct trapping. A drop in fur prices during the Great Depression made things even more difficult for Innu and was compounded by a further decline in the caribou population during

the 1930s. Starving, and cut off from their traditional means of making a living, many Innu had no option but to seek assistance from the government,\* the Church, and charitable organizations. Increased reliance on government relief, however, made it difficult for Innu to maintain a seasonal-round-based lifestyle and many remained close to settlements where missionaries and government representatives worked.



**4.143 Innu traders outside the Hudson's Bay Company post in Davis Inlet, 1903**



**4.144 Labrador (possibly near Battle Harbour or Forteau), c. 1908-11**  
 Many trapper families lived in extreme isolation during the winter months.

## Metis

Metis blended qualities from their Aboriginal and European ancestors. Elliott Merrick, an American writer, described the uniqueness of the Metis as follows:

*... the scattered families that inhabit the bay are a unique race with oddly combined cultures: Scotch Presbyterian in religion, old English in speech and custom, Indian in their ways of hunting and their skill with canoes ascending the big rivers bound for the trapping grounds far in the country. Sometimes it seems as though they had taken for their own the best qualities of the three races, the Eskimo laughter-loving happiness, the Indian endurance and uncanny instinct for living off the country, the Scotchman's strength of character and will.*

In the early twentieth century, most Metis were involved in the fur trade. As they became the predominant population in the Lake Melville region, they were the chief suppliers of fur to the Hudson's Bay Company posts located there. Some Metis also traded with the Revillon Frères Trapping Company, which established a post in North West River in 1901. For a while, this break in the Hudson's Bay Company's trade monopoly resulted in better fur prices for trappers, but by 1936 the Hudson's Bay Company had bought out Revillon Frères' interests.

The life of a Metis trapper was often one of isolation. Trappers had an extensive network of traplines, often quite a distance from home. These men spent months on the traplines. Typically, a trapline extended in a zigzag line with 200-300 traps set about half

a kilometre apart along the way. Trappers built several small tilts along their line where they could sleep, and thaw and skin each day's catch. Traplines usually remained within a family for generations, but sometimes they were rented to other trappers for a season. By custom, trappers usually kept their lines at least 15 kilometres apart. However, as more and more generations of trappers' children grew up and began trapping themselves, they were forced to set new traplines at greater distances from their homes. By the 1930s, this meant that the traplines of the Metis and Innu hunting grounds began to overlap, but this seldom caused problems between the two groups.

A trapper's life was not easy, and the life of a trapper's wife was perhaps equally difficult. While her husband was on the trapline, a trapper's wife was left alone with children in an isolated setting. She took on the many tasks of her husband around the family home, as well as doing her own work.

Although many Metis lived in near isolation during the winter, some families in the North West River/Mud Lake region were able to take advantage of new developments in their area by the early 1900s. In 1904, a lumber operation began in Mud Lake. For many, this was their first opportunity to earn cash for labour. In addition, in 1912 a year-round hospital was started in Mud Lake, in 1920 the Labrador Public School was opened in Muddy Bay (near Cartwright), and in 1926 a boarding school was built in North West River.



**4.145 Spinning a yarn**  
at the Hudson's Bay Company post, North West River.

# OLD CUSTOM TRAPPING LAWS IN LABRADOR

An excerpt from details told by Walter McLean, North West River:

- *If someone come on your (trapping) grounds. You could hang (their) trap in tree. If found second time, you could "beat up" trap.*
- *If a trapper's line along the shore extended to a neighbour's trapline, he must move trap 100-200 yards from neighbour's trap.*
- *When shorelines were taken, one must go five miles inland or over the hill before starting a line.*
- *If you come to a (another trapper's) trap with animal alive in it, you kill animal and hang it in tree or nearest tilt and must reset trap.*

*(Note: Innu were free to hunt on traplines.)*



**4.146 Students of the Labrador Public School in Muddy Bay (near Cartwright), c. 1920**  
Many of these students were orphans of the Spanish flu that swept the area in 1918.



Squasho Kun, Caplin Head - Trapper and team carrying a live Silver Fox.

**4.147 A trapper and team carrying a live silver fox on Squasho Run, Caplin Head, c. 1912**



**4.148 leg trap**

# CASE STUDY

## Life as a Trapper's Wife



4.149 Interior shot of two clotheslines hung with fox furs, possibly in a trading post, prior to 1940



4.150 Elizabeth Goudie, shown here in c. 1975, wrote about her life in Labrador in the book *Woman of Labrador*.

Lydia Campbell (1818-1905), who lived and wrote about life in Labrador, describes the life of her sister Hannah Michelin, who was a trapper's widow:

SHE [HANNAH] BROUGHT UP HER FIRST FAMILY OF LITTLE CHILDREN when their father died, taught all to read and write in the long winter nights, and hunt with them in the day, got about a dozen foxes and as many martens. She would take the little ones on the sled, haul them over snow and ice to a large river; chop ice about three feet thick, catch about two or three hundred trout, large ones, and haul them and the children home perhaps in the night; catch salmon and seal in the summer the same way. And then the men of the Hudson Bay Company's servants used to get her to make a lot of things, that is, clothing, such as pants, shirts, flannel slippers, drawers, sealskin boots, deerskin shoes, caps, washing, starching, ironing and whatnot.

— From: *Sketches of Labrador Life*, by Lydia Campbell, which appeared in the *Evening Herald* in 13 installments between 1894-5

One of Hannah Michelin's great-grandchildren, Elizabeth Goudie, also wrote about being a trapper's wife. The following description of her life in the 1920s talks of her family's dependence on the Hudson's Bay Company. Trappers selling their furs to a trading post were in a similar position to fishers selling their fish to a merchant under the truck system: they were paid in credit, which could be used to buy supplies from the trading post. Cash rarely exchanged hands.

*... As each year went by we were a little more in debt. The Hudson's Bay Company was getting a bit more impatient with us.*

*In 1928, when we went to get our food again for the winter, the Hudson's Bay manager told us that if we could not pay off our bills that year, he would have to cut off our credit. Jim said we would have to do something. We needed a lot of things when our fourth child was born in 1927. We were living in a house in Davis Inlet with another family that summer because Jim had a job with the Hudson's Bay for a little while ...*

*When Jim came out of the country the first time, he did very well with fur. We had to have food to eat and he put all he could against*

*his bills. It was not enough. When he came back he had his mind made up. He said if he could get enough furs to buy food for us and the dogs, we would get in touch with the mailman and travel down the coast with him because we did not know the way ... That was early 1929 ... Jim said he thought he had enough furs to buy food for the trip. I had to make a couple of pairs of boots for Jim and boots for the three children and a pair for myself. The trip we had to take was roughly a little over 300 miles by the coast. We both thought it was going to be pretty rough for me and the children but there was not much else we could do because we would not get any help from the Hudson's Bay Company for another winter.*

*We talked about it and at first I did not approve because I was worried about the children. We would have to go over quite a lot of land. It was up hills and down other sides and through valleys. I had thought we might cripple our children. We only had six dogs. There were five of us besides our belongings, food and dog food. Jim said he would have to build a new kamutik. We had to be ready for the fifteenth of April because the mailman was making his last trip at that time ...*

— From *Woman of Labrador*, by Elizabeth Goudie, 1973.



**4.151 Mrs. Thoms and seven of her nine children, Fox Harbour, 1893. The original photographer wrote the following caption:** She is a widow: a half breed (children male: 19, 14, 7, 4, 1 1/2, female: 13, 11). They are wearing all the clothes they possess. They have no nets, only jiggers, and two old guns. Last winter they lived on 5 barrels of flour, 1 cwt. hard bread, 6 viii molasses, and lbs iv tea.

## Questions:

1. What evidence is there in this case study that a trapper's wife led a difficult life?
2. How was the economic situation of a trapper's life similar to that of a fisher's life?



4.152 Two Conne River Mi'kmaw guides using tumplines to carry packs, c. 1906

## Mi'kmaq

Mi'kmaq continued their interactions with French and English settlers in the late 1800s. As more English settlers moved into Mi'kmaw traditional lands, many Mi'kmaq moved to Miawpukek, which is today known as Conne River, and other communities such as Glenwood and the Bay St. George area. Originally one of many semi-permanent hunting areas used by Mi'kmaq, Miawpukek became a permanent community sometime around 1822.

However, no matter where Mi'kmaq lived on the island, the effects of a growing European population could be felt. At the turn of the twentieth century, the construction of the railroad had a huge impact on the Mi'kmaw way of life. The railway opened the interior to logging which, in turn, destroyed caribou habitat. It also provided a means for other caribou hunters to access the interior, destroying an ecological balance that had been maintained for centuries. Estimates suggest the caribou herds fell from between 200 000 and 300 000 in 1900 to near extinction by 1930. This decline in caribou, a staple of the Mi'kmaw diet, had devastating effects. Without a steady supply of this food source, it became hard for Mi'kmaq to live in the island's interior. Additionally, the decline in world fur markets in the 1920s and 1930s meant trapping was no longer profitable. Instead of hunting for themselves, many Mi'kmaq became guides for English hunters and explorers. Others took seasonal logging jobs for low wages.

Mi'kmaq in Miawpukek (Conne River) experienced another change in their way of life when a Catholic Church was established there in 1908. Although

Mi'kmaq had practised the Catholic religion for 200 years, they had mostly maintained ties to the church through visits to French priests at St. Pierre. Regular contact with an English priest led to a huge change in culture – especially when Father Stanley St. Croix



4.153 Mary Webb (shown here c. 1970s), was a Mi'kmaw midwife, credited with assisting with the birth of over 700 babies. Born in the Codroy Valley, she later moved to Flat Bay. She often travelled by horse and sled, dog-team, or on snowshoes to reach expectant mothers. She was also very knowledgeable in the traditional medicinal uses of plants and was often called a medicine woman. Mary was fluent in Mi'kmaq, Gaelic, English, and French. She died in 1978 at the age of 97.



4.154 Mi'kmaw girl, Badger Brook, 1914



4.155 The Catholic church in Conne River, 1908



4.156 Mi'kmaw family and log camp near St. George's Bay, 1914

held the position during the interwar period. St. Croix established a mill at St. Alban's that provided work for the area and accepted coupons from the mill in his store. In addition to his social influence as a priest, this gave St. Croix economic sway over many in the community. With this influence, he abolished the office of Chief of the Miawpukek band and forbade the use of the Mi'kmaw language in both school and church. This helped to further erode Mi'kmaw traditional culture.

## Questions:

1. How did the way of life of the various Aboriginal peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador change during this time period? Which changes had the most significant consequences? Use a chart to help organize your answer.
2. Based on the information presented in this section, and the information presented earlier in this book, describe the ways in which there was continuity in the way of life for the Aboriginal people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

# TRADITIONAL HUNTING GROUNDS

In the early 1900s, Newfoundland Mi'kmaw lived in southern, central, and western portions of the island. These lands were mapped in 1914 by anthropologist Frank Speck, who numbered 13 "hunting districts" in the interior (See fig. 4.157.) These family hunting territories were generally transmitted from father to son. Large families had headquarters in the different coastal areas and in hunting camps distributed throughout their territories. (However, with the coming of the railway, some families moved their headquarters along the railway line so they could also work on the railway when needed.) The oldest hunter of each family was considered the boss and, based on his knowledge of the land and game conditions, he told the younger men in the family where to hunt. Upon the death of a head family member, the authority fell to the next most responsible Elder in the family.

4.157 Mi'kmaw hunting territories, as drawn by anthropologist Frank Speck in 1914

