

INUIT ON LABRADOR'S NORTH COAST: AN INTRODUCTION

Andrea Procter

One of the main storytellers in this book is Levi Noah Nochasak, an energetic Inuk Elder who spends much of his time hunting and wooding along the north coast of Labrador. Levi was born in Hebron shortly before 1959, when governing authorities withdrew services in the community and forced its Inuit residents to move south. He now lives in Nain, a town of 1,100 people and the northernmost community of Nunatsiavut, the Inuit self-governing region in northern Labrador. But he travels further north as often as he can, spending his summers restoring the historic wooden buildings at the heritage site at Hebron.¹ The remains of the beloved community now serve as both a tourist destination for visitors to the Torngat Mountains National Park and a tragic reminder of misguided government attitudes towards Inuit life on the land. Levi's own life—from Hebron to Nain and back again during the short summer season—is reflected in many of the photos and stories in this book. But to fully appreciate the context, the story must begin much earlier.

Inuit have lived along the coast of Labrador for countless generations. Closely related to Inuit in Nunavut, Greenland, and Nunavik (northern Quebec), Inuit in Labrador once lived from the northern tip of the Ungava Peninsula south to the shores of the St. Lawrence River. From the 1400s to the early 1900s, they hunted seals, whales, and caribou, travelling by dog team, large sealskin boats called *umiat*, and *Kajait*.² Small family groups lived in tents in the summer and in *illuvigait* and sod houses in the colder months.³ Sharing food, skills, and knowledge, they based their society on

generosity and mutual aid. They spoke the Inuktitut language and thrived in the unforgiving Arctic and sub-Arctic climate because of their cultural and environmental expertise.

The rich marine environment of the Labrador coast also attracted European whalers and fishermen as far back as the 1500s.⁴ In the beginning, relations between the groups often turned violent, as Inuit defended themselves against the European intruders.⁵ When Great Britain assumed colonial jurisdiction of Labrador from the French in 1763, it aimed to gain control over the lucrative coastal fishery. But in order to do so, it first needed to “pacify” the Inuit population.⁶ In 1765, Britain signed a peace and friendship treaty with Inuit in southern Labrador.⁷ British authorities also encouraged Moravian missionaries, members of an early Protestant church based in Germany and Britain, to establish a mission among Inuit in northern Labrador. They hoped that the missionaries would be able to attract and contain Inuit in the north, away from British fishing interests in the south.⁸

The Moravian brethren founded their first station at Nain in 1771, followed by Okkak in 1776, Hopedale in 1782, and Hebron in 1830.⁹ Traders as well as missionaries, the Moravians built posts alongside their churches to draw Inuit visitors. In the years and decades that followed, some Inuit families converted to the Moravian faith, congregating at the stations between Christmas and Easter to celebrate the main Christian festivals.¹⁰ Other Inuit refused to become Moravians, continuing instead to live

INUIT LABRADORIMI TAGGAUP SATJUGIANGANI: PIGIANNIK

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UnikkâluaKattaniattut tapvani atuagami una Levi Noah Nochasak, Kittainganginnatuk Inuk InutuKak pinasuanginnatuk ammalu Kijuttagianginnatuk taggaup satjugiangani Labradorimi. Levi inolisimajuk Hebronimi akuniungituk sivungagut 1959, taipsumani aulatsijet pitsatuniKajut petsilauttut kiggatotinnik iluani nunalimmi ammalu innunik nokkujilauttut siKingamut. IniKalittuk Nainimi, nunalik inuKatluni 1,100 innunik ammalu tagganganeluattuk nunalik Nunatsiavummi., Inuit namminik-aulatsijet nunakKatigengitumik iluani taggaup Labradorimi. Tâvatuak iniggaKattajuk taggamoluak pigunnasiligami, aujami sanagiaKattajuk piusituKagijausimajuk Kijulimmut illualunnik taimangasuanit iniKajumut Hebronimi.¹ Taikkua amiakkuit nalligijausimajumut nunalik mâna kiggatuKattavuk silakKijâgiattuKattajunut tikipvigijauKattalittuk niugguKattajunut taikkunga Tungait KakKasuangita Nunatsualimâmi SilakKijâpvingani ammalu pilukattausimannimut ikKaititsiKattajuk taimâlukak kavamakkunut pijausimammata Inuit inosingit nunatsuami. Levi namminik inosinga—Hebronimit Nainimut ammalu utimullu naittoKattajumut aujami nalliuvinga—takutsauvut unuttumaginnik atjinguani ammalu unikkausinnik tamânejunut atuagammi. Tâvatuak ilonnâgut nakugijajuk pitagijangit, taikkua unikkauset pigiasigiale tapvainaunitsak.

Inuit iniKasimajut satjugiami Labradorimi kititaugunnangitunik kinguvânik. Kanittumik ilinganiKatsiatut Innunik Nunavummi, karâllimi,

ammalu Nunavik (taggaup Quebecimi), Inuit Labradorimi iniKalautsimajut taggaup nuvuani Ungava Ikâgiapvingani siKinganut sitjanganut St. Lawrence kongani. Pisimajumit 1400s tikijumut 1900s, pinasuasimajut puijinik, apvinik ammalu tutunuk, iniggaKattasimajut Kimutsikut, angijunik Kisijannit umiannik tajjaujunut umiat, ammalu Kajait.² Mikinitsait ilaget katingaKatigejut iniKasimajut tupinni aujaulimmat ammalu iluani illuviganni ammalu illusuannik nilanalualimmat takKinginni.³ AittuiKatigetlutik niKinik, ilisimajanginnik, ammalu Kaujimajaugettunut, ilingattiKattasimajut inulimânut aittuigumannikut ammalu nallinattumik ikajuttigennimik. UKâlaKattasimajut Inuktitut uKausituKanganik ammalu omasimajut ikKasungitumik Ukiuttattumik ammalu KikKangani ukiuttattumi silamik ilukkusigijanginnik ammalu avatimmik ilisimallagijanginnik.

Tainna pitaluvinik imappik avatinga Labrador satjugiangani piugijaulaummiuk Akianimiunik apviniaKattasimajunut ammalu oganniatinik tikijumit kingumit 1500-ini.⁴ Pigiannimi, ilagennik akungani katingaKatigejunut Kangaulimmat pilukânnimik sakKititsiKattalauttut taikkununga Akianimiunik itâgaKattalauttunut.⁵ Taipsumani Great Britain kamagiasilaummata nunalinut katiliaKikKujimmata Labradorimi taikkunangat Frenchinit 1763-ini, tugâgutiKalauttut aulatsigiamut pimmagittumik satjugiamik ogannianimmik. Tâvatuak taimâk pigunnagiamut, sivullimi “ilannasâgiaKakKâlauttut” Inunginnik.⁶

These are rocks we put up as we hike. Every Inuit person, mostly, puts up rocks. There're rocks everywhere in Labrador North. You walk and there's always a rock there. It's not us—it's from the Elders, older generations before us, ancestors before us. Those things work very well. You go up there, and there, and there, and you find your way. Everybody knows we were here.

— Levi Noah Nochasak

Ujaganik nappatitsiKattavugut pisugagatta. Atunik Inuk, ilonnatikasâk, nappatitsiKattajut ujaganik. UjagaluviniKavuk nanituinnak Labrador Taggangani. Pisugavit ammalu ujagaKanginnavuk tamâni. Uvagolungituk—inutuKattinit, sivullivinigisimajavut, kinguvâgisimajavut. Taikkua kajusitsiaKattavut. Avungagavit, ammalu taikani, ikanillu, ammalu KaujiniakKutit nanemmangâppit. Ilonnait Kaujimajut tamânesimavugut.

— Levi Noah Nochasak







Deborah Atsatata, Nain



CHANGE | ASIANGUK

It's good, when you looks back at it. But when you were there at the time, you know, it wasn't all that great, right?

— Greg Flowers

Piujuk kingumut takuniaguvit. Tâvatuak taikanegavit taipsumani, Kaujimavutit, ilonnanga piujosimalungituk, ilai?

— Greg Flowers