



The People of NunatuKavut

History in the making

Jenny McCarthy photos

In the first event of its kind for NunatuKavut, a film documenting the history of Labrador's Southern Inuit people was screened at the Lawrence O'Brien Arts Centre on Feb. 9.

Dozens of people filled the auditorium to witness the documentary created by a group of independent university researchers and archeologists.

Dr. Lisa Rankin, an associate professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland is the lead archeologist in the 5-year project entitled "Understanding the Past to Build the Future" which culminated in the documentary film, of which she was also the executive producer.

Dr. Rankin has been researching the Inuit presence in Southern Labrador for more than 10 years. It was her team's findings that enabled the information for the film to be compiled.

The evidence of a constant Inuit presence in Southern Labrador was one that was not widely accepted prior to the archeological digs of the past decade.

Now Dr. Rankin said there is no doubt of that presence. "We know for certain there have been Inuit in the Sandwich Bay area for several hundred years."

The Archeologists have excavated four different Inuit home sites.

"They were the first clue that there was year-round settlement of Inuit," Dr. Rankin said.

The funding for the current project runs out next year so this summer will be the last dig for the archeology team. Through the knowledge of people living in the south coast communities, the archeologists have determined a location to excavate the site of the remains of another southern

Inuit home.

The research of Dr. Rankin and her associates has been incredibly important to NunatuKavut—both in affirming for its residents something they had been trying to explain for years and also in establishing the unbroken continuance of the Southern Inuit people, right up to the people who inhabit the communities today.

As Dr. Rankin points out, there was no end to the Southern Inuit presence in Labrador. The lives of the Southern Inuit simply evolved into a different way of life, as did the culture and lives of the other aboriginal groups in Labrador. The people of NunatuKavut are direct descendants of those southern Inuit people who inhabited the sod houses now being excavated in much the same way as the Innu who now live in Sheshatshiu are direct descendants of the previous Innu populations who lived nomadically in caribou-skin tents.

The People of NunatuKavut remain connected to the land, as were their Southern Inuit ancestors. Hunting, Trapping, fishing and seal hunting remain important parts of the NunatuKavut culture. Members of NunatuKavut communities still maintain dog teams and spend time in traditional activities such as snowshoeing, trapping and crafting.

The film was a connection to the past for the people of NunatuKavut.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) through CURA (the Community-University Research Alliances) funded the People of NunatuKavut project.

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Everyone enjoyed some social time after the screening of the film at the Lawrence O'Brien Arts Centre on Feb. 22



Pauline and Aubrey Russell of Mary's Harbour with NunatuKavut President Todd Russell.