

Memorial's History in Labrador



Labrador Institute

Beginnings

MUN has been involved with Labrador all along, you might say, but our most visible and enduring presence began in 1977, when Tony Williamson became the associate director of Memorial's Extension Service, and came to Goose Bay to stay. Like MUN Extension, Tony had been a known quantity in Labrador since the late 50s, having taken on, among other projects, a stint in Cartwright from 1967-70 and another with the Naskapi-Montagnais Innu Association in the mid-70s.

The rapid social development of the 1970s, however, made it clear that the Extension Service was not enough: Labrador needed its own special unit of the university. Thus the Labrador Institute of Northern Studies (LINS) was born in 1979, with Tony Williamson as its founding director.

What was MUN Extension?

Even today, for many Labradorians, "Labrador Institute" is still synonymous with "MUN Extension." So, what's the difference? The Extension Service began in 1959, and "extended" the university's work beyond academic learning and into a broader concept of education, aimed at community development. It operated throughout the province, but was based at the university in St. John's. Its earliest successes were in film-making, and these quickly steered the service toward using media and technology as tools for development. Hence the Labrador Film Project 1969, and a variety of programs to make media equipment available to local users.

This focus endured until the death of long-time director Don Snowden in 1984. The next year, in a changing economic and social climate, MUN Extension was merged with Continuing Studies and Educational Technology. At the same time, Tony Williamson left LINS to direct the new Donald Snowden Centre for Development Support Communications. In 1991, the Extension division was closed altogether, having done its job—but its work in Labrador persisted at LINS, as it had ever since they shared premises in Goose Bay from 1979-1985. LINS was the *de facto* inheritor of many of its methods, partnerships, and priorities. After all, for many years the divisions were so intertwined that an outsider looking back can hardly tell which was which!

FOOD AND NUTRITION ISSUES :
LOOKING BACK TO PLAN AHEAD



↑ Nutrition Education Project group photo, 1984.

← LINS and MUN Extension staff in front of the original LINS office in Building 256 at CFB Goose Bay, 1984. From left to right: Carolyn Maybee, Mary Mackey, and Kathleen Boles.



↑ Martha MacDonald and Jennifer Butler review the first shipment of *Very Rough Country*, 2011.



↑ Resource Technician training program students prepare for climbing exercises in the Labrador woods, as part of their studies. 1984-1986.

University President Leslie Harris and LINS Director Carol Brice-Bennett officially open the North Star Building location, 1987. ↓



Scott Neilsen excavates a 3,000-year-old archaeological site at the former lakeshore in Sheshatshiu, 2012. ↓



At any given time Memorial has several research programs ongoing in Labrador, but the university's oft-cited "special obligation" to the province has never been more directly addressed on the mainland than it was by the creation of the Labrador Institute of Northern Studies in 1979. Charged by its constitution "to promote the well-being of the people of Labrador" (and to study the region), and strongly influenced by the community development orientation of the Extension Service, LINS focused first of all on grassroots educational programs, such as the Fisheries Co-operative Education Project, and later, Resource Technician Training. Research and documentary work were also prioritized from the beginning, and both continued as mainstays under Carol Brice-Bennett's directorship, from 1985. Initiatives like the Labradorians at Work career education program and the Coastal Community Training Needs Assessments combined these trends with the community development principle. In time literacy also became a significant area of focus, while more conventional academic research gradually came to share the spotlight, especially through Carol's own studies in northern Labrador. By the mid-90s, however, Memorial had evolved. The Extension Service was gone, budgets were tight, and outlooks had been transformed. In 1996, LINS had only three staff, the directorship was vacant, and a re-imagining was in the cards.

The Labrador Institute Today

"Of Northern Studies" was dropped in 1997, and for a time the Labrador Institute was recast as a facilitator, forging partnerships and building capacity in Labrador and in the university, serving such important functions as organizing conferences, supporting researchers, and working in the arts community. In recent years, with renewed prosperity and increased opportunities for collaboration with industry, the LI has adapted the same partnership model to a strong research focus, while also retaining its educational and community-engagement priorities. Under director Keith Chaulk and via collaboration with outside partners and various divisions of Memorial, the LI tripled its staff and opened a new research station in North West River, initiating high-level academic research across many disciplines, from aquatic ecology to education and from language to geology, as well as offering new cohort undergraduate degree programs in social work and education. Most recently the LI has welcomed a new director, Ashlee Cunsolo, and continues to focus on meeting the education and research needs of Labradorians.

