

THE LABRADOR INSTITUTE, THE COLLEGE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC  
& THE LABRADOR FILM FOUNDATION

present

## LABRADOR/ANS ON FILM

2013-14 SEASON

### SCREENING #3: THE STATE OF INUTTITUT

According to UNESCO's 2003 report "Language Vitality and Endangerment", "a language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children". So what, then, is the state of Labrador Inuttitut? Like all languages spoken in this country that are neither of the two supposed solitudes, Inuttitut struggles to maintain its footing. The number of speakers remains eclipsed by Anglo and Francophones alike. But what about within Nunatsiavut, and indeed, within Labrador more generally? As the filmed record attests, its status is no less precarious. The program we have assembled today represents nearly forty years of concern about the state of the language and, accordingly, nearly forty years of effort to safeguard it. What is immediately striking is the international character of this effort. Drawing upon initiatives from places as far flung as Scotland and New Zealand – and utilizing all manner of technology – the effort to preserve Inuttitut has had a remarkably cosmopolitan effect. While Inuttitut is, to be certain, the linguistic expression of a people existing within a finite space, the means by which the language persists is in no small part a global phenomenon. What remains to be seen is the effectiveness of these methods. After all, the narrative of Inuttitut's demise endures.

1. *Bilingual Education in Scotland* (16 mins, Memorial University of Newfoundland Extension Service, 1976) As the first known film that addresses the issue of Inuttitut instruction, this film is curious in that it was neither filmed in Labrador nor does it centre around the language. In it, William Andersen III speaks with teachers in a Gaelic-language school about their methodologies. Filmed during the course of a visit by a delegation from the Labrador Inuit Association to Scotland to assess the affects of oil and gas development, little is known about the circumstances that led to the production of this film. Representatives from the Memorial University of Newfoundland Extension Service and the National Film Board of Canada would return to Scotland in 1979 to make a series of films on the broad impacts of such development.

2. *Labradorimiut: Inuktitut Immersion* (excerpt) (13 mins, OKâlaKatiget Society, c. 1986) Taken from one of the earliest episodes of *Labradorimiut*, this excerpt shows what is assumed to be the first efforts at an Inuttitut immersion program under the auspices of the provincial school board. For us, what is perhaps even more vital about this segment is the attitudes it records: towards the program, towards the status of the language, and towards the prospects for its survival.

3. *Labradorimiut: Rosetta Stone in Classes* (24 mins, OKâlaKatiget Society, 2008) Flashing forward twenty years, this episode of *Labradorimiut* chronicles how the Torngâsok Cultural Centre-sponsored Rosetta Stone program is being used in Inuttitut curriculum. But like the above excerpt, what is important here is less the apparent subject and more the attitudes of youth towards the language and the usefulness of the software.

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