

## Against Prevailing Currents: The History of Them Days Magazine in Labrador

Vicki S. Hallett

Volume 48, Number 2, Fall 2019

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1067770ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Department of History at the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (print)

1712-7432 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Hallett, V. (2019). Against Prevailing Currents: The History of Them Days Magazine in Labrador. *Acadiensis*, 48(2), 146–176.

### Article abstract

For more than four decades, Them Days magazine has portrayed Labradorians in their own words through publishing a quarterly periodical and multiple books about Labrador as well as creating a public archive. This article will focus on the historical aspects of the magazine's inception and the challenges its creators faced as they built a storehouse of Labrador narratives that would represent the cultures that make Labrador unique and document a way of life considered to be in precipitous decline. It will also discuss how individuals, peoples, and even magazines must continually negotiate their identities through power relations in a settler-colonial state.

# Against Prevailing Currents: The History of *Them Days* Magazine in Labrador

VICKI S. HALLETT

Depuis plus de quatre décennies, la revue *Them Days* dépeint les gens du Labrador dans leurs propres mots grâce à la publication d'un numéro trimestriel et de nombreux livres sur le Labrador, ainsi qu'à la création d'un fonds d'archives publiques. Cet article s'intéresse principalement aux aspects historiques de la fondation de la revue et aux défis que ses fondateurs ont dû relever pour construire un stock de récits du Labrador qui représenteraient les cultures qui font l'originalité du Labrador et qui documenteraient un mode de vie considéré comme en déclin rapide. Il examine également comment les individus, les peuples et même les revues doivent continuellement négocier leur identité à travers des rapports de force dans un État de peuplement colonial.

For more than four decades, *Them Days* magazine has portrayed Labradorians in their own words through publishing a quarterly periodical and multiple books about Labrador as well as creating a public archive. This article will focus on the historical aspects of the magazine's inception and the challenges its creators faced as they built a storehouse of Labrador narratives that would represent the cultures that make Labrador unique and document a way of life considered to be in precipitous decline. It will also discuss how individuals, peoples, and even magazines must continually negotiate their identities through power relations in a settler-colonial state.

PUBLISHED IN HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY, LABRADOR, SINCE 1975, *Them Days* magazine is dedicated to “helping to preserve the rich cultural history of Labrador.”<sup>1</sup> With its incredibly varied, 44-year compilation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Labrador narratives, *Them Days* and its archives constitute a priceless repository of Labrador's cultural heritage. Focusing on the lived experiences of people in or connected to Labrador, the magazine's collection includes oral histories and interviews with elders of Innu, Inuit, and settler descent as well as poetry, photographs, and archival records that cannot be found in any other location. Today, after more than four decades of portraying Labradorians in their own words through publishing a quarterly periodical and multiple books about Labrador, plus creating a public archive,

---

1 “Our History,” *Them Days Archives and Publications*, [https://www.themdays.com/?page\\_id=697](https://www.themdays.com/?page_id=697).

it can safely be said that *Them Days* has become something of a Labrador institution.

This article will focus on the historical aspects of the inception of *Them Days* and the challenges its creators faced as they built a storehouse of Labrador narratives that would come to represent the separate, yet intermingled, cultures that make Labrador unique while documenting a way of life considered to be in precipitous decline. In addition to the periodical's success in this regard, the analysis will dissect telling examples from its archives that demonstrate how individuals, peoples, and even magazines must continually negotiate their identities through power relations in a settler-colonial state. In order to make visible these workings of power as they pertain to *Them Days*, this article proceeds in three sections. The first – “The flow of genealogy and storytelling” – presents the key questions and concepts of multiculturalism and Indian status that propel this analysis and introduces founding editor Doris Saunders, whose story is deeply intertwined with that of the magazine.<sup>2</sup> The second section – “The tide of Confederation and beyond” – outlines some key changes in Labrador's cultural, economic, and political landscape during the 1960s and 1970s. It also underscores some of the particularities of Newfoundland and Labrador's entry into the Canadian Confederation and how these impacted those changes. The third section – “Cross-currents of colonial power” – takes up the questions and concepts outlined in the first section and discusses them in relation to the interrelated campaigns for recognition of both *Them Days* and Doris Saunders in light of Newfoundland and Labrador's unique position in the country. Through examples from multiple archival documents, this article demonstrates how the people who created and sustained *Them Days* were engaged in a continuous struggle for financial support and cultural legitimacy – a struggle tied directly to the ways multiculturalism and Indian status are understood, misunderstood, and mediated in the settler-colonial state.

---

2 “Canadian multiculturalism,” as federal policy, refers to the “management of diversity through formal initiatives”; see Laurence Brosseau and Michael Dewing, “Canadian Multiculturalism,” *Library of Parliament*, [https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en\\_CA/ResearchPublications/200920E#a2-2](https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/200920E#a2-2), which contains a fuller discussion of this issue. “‘Indian Status’ refers to a specific legal identity of an Aboriginal person in Canada. With the creation of the Indian Act in 1876, the Canadian government developed criteria for who would be legally considered an Indian. This criteria continues to be outlined in Section 6 of the Indian Act, thus defining who qualifies for Indian status”; see [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/indian\\_status/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/indian_status/).

### The flow of genealogy and storytelling

The current mission statement of *Them Days* outlines the purpose of the magazine and its archives as “keeping the history of Labrador alive by documenting and preserving the ‘old ways and early days’ of Labrador.”<sup>3</sup> This simple statement points to a key historical conundrum regarding researching the magazine: when do the “early days,” or “them days,” begin? In other words, is there a discrete historical time period covered by the magazine? The short answer is “no.” The longer answer is that “them days” was chosen as the title because it was the most common phrase uttered by interviewees when asked about their memories of life in Labrador. What that answer does, in effect, is point towards a Foucauldian interpretation of the phrase and the magazine that bears it as a title. In other words, it prompts curiosity about the title *Them Days* and what systems of thought and contingent historical events and processes underlie its origins. To satisfy this curiosity, this article presents a genealogy of the magazine and its archives – one that analyzes the “the myriad events through which – thanks to which, against which – they were formed.”<sup>4</sup> In so doing, the myriad of historical events that preceded and coincided with the magazine’s creation are examined as are the confluences of story and history in the magazine’s archives.

Given that the idea for *Them Days* was hatched in the early 1970s and relied on federal government funding to come to fruition, it is not surprising that its creators found themselves caught in the tangled web of Canadian cultural policies and programs being woven at that time. As part of its genealogy, then, this article explores how two important pieces of those policies – multiculturalism and Indian status – came to affect the magazine and its creators. As will become clear from an analysis of archival records, these interconnected vectors of power in the settler-colonial state directly impacted the continual creation and reproduction of *Them Days*. In the course of this article’s analysis, the following questions will be asked: How are Indian status and multiculturalism intertwined in the settler-state? Given the particular history of Newfoundland and Labrador, how have such national policies impacted the way that *Them Days* framed itself (e.g., justified its applications for funding from government agencies)? And how did the push and pull of federal and provincial policies and priorities, or the cross-currents of colonial

---

3 This statement is found on the inside cover of each issue of *Them Days* magazine.

4 Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 81.

power, affect the inception and development of *Them Days* in its earliest years as it tried to stay afloat?

In exploring such queries and examining the social, political, and cultural changes that occurred in the decades leading up to the founding of *Them Days* in 1974, a clearer sense will emerge of the reasons the periodical, which was only meant to be a book, was immediately overwhelmed with material and why it was and is so popular in Labrador and beyond. The crucial intertextual stories that foster an understanding of how and why the magazine originated are found in various locations. Perhaps the most crucial and ongoing story is that of Canadian settler-colonialism and the cross-currents of colonial power that flow around and through Labrador. This is, of course, a complex and multivalent story, with many relevant characters and historically and geographically specific chapters. For the purposes of this article, the most pertinent pieces of this story are the negotiated terms of Newfoundland's entry into the Canadian Confederation in 1949 and the province's subsequent attempts to catch up with industrialized modernity at all costs. Layered atop those are the complex constitutional debates of the 1970s, the infamous White Paper of 1969, and the ideas of multiculturalism and Indian status that were so integral to them. Finally, there is the story of the magazine itself, its creators and supporters, all of whom were caught up in these larger tales and determined to take control of their own narrative.

Beginning with its first edition in 1975, *Them Days* was targetted at the people of Labrador. The magazine was not only dedicated to cataloguing a way of life in decline but also to showcasing Labradorians' stories in their own voices and thus promoting an awareness of their shared history and culture. Through these efforts, the magazine was attempting to foster a sense of common identity and shared stake in their future. Simultaneously, the publication was also aimed at Newfoundlanders with a different, yet interrelated, goal: to help Newfoundlanders understand Labradorians on their own terms, not those of outsiders who had, in the past, interpreted Labrador through the lenses of their own biases and desires. *Them Days* aimed to educate Newfoundlanders about how Labradorians lived, what they valued, who they were, and how their vitality was crucial to the well-being of Newfoundland as well. Labrador, for instance, was not merely an empty space (or *terra nullius*) to be used as a resource extraction site. So, from its inception, *Them Days* had a dual mission – increasing Labradorians' self-awareness and self-identification as Labradorians, and increasing Newfoundlanders' awareness of Labrador

and the interdependence of the two portions of the province. In effect, both of these goals were crucial to the overarching purpose of nurturing Labradorians' collective agency within the settler state.

What has proven to be most fascinating about, and most challenging for, *Them Days* is the way that the magazine has tried/tries to incorporate the multiple cultures and languages that have built Labrador. This effort has not always been successful, and the reasons for that are part of the complex history of the place and the structure of colonialism (as per Wolfe)<sup>5</sup> that has shaped and continues to shape it. As we will see, the decades leading up to the establishment of *Them Days* in particular were rife with political shifts that are directly related to the governance of Labrador, both internal and external, as well as discursive shifts that are connected to these political machinations. Discourses of multiculturalism and Indian status have particular resonance in Labrador, where Indigenous peoples and European settlers have lived together, often intermingling both culturally and genetically, for hundreds of years yet within the Canadian nation for just the past 70 years.

*Them Days* founding editor Doris Saunders was a descendant of Labrador's founding peoples, and a product of its particular cultural melting pot. A self-described "Labrador Settler,"<sup>6</sup> she was of mixed Inuit, Innu, and European heritage. Born in 1941 in Cartwright, on Labrador's southeast coast, Saunders grew up hearing stories of her ancestors and their deep attachment to the place and the way of life it required. Some of the most inspiring stories were those of her famous great-great grandmother Lydia Campbell (1818-1907), whose diary-like *Sketches of Labrador Life* first appeared in the *Evening Herald*, a St.

5 Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 387-409. Wolfe's analysis of colonialism as a structure and not an event offers insight into the historical and ongoing effects of colonialism through settler-colonial systems of governance and cultural and social institutions.

6 Doris Saunders, "I am a native Labradorian of Inuit, Indian and white descent, a Labrador Settler," speech to the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, "Women in Labrador", 1979, Doris Saunders Collection APL 103, file 1, *Them Days* Archives (TDA), Happy Valley-Goose Bay, NL. The use of the term "Settler" to describe oneself as being of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry was common in Labrador during Saunders's lifetime, but is no longer used by most people. A good discussion of this can be found in John C. Kennedy, ed., "Identity Politics," in *History and Renewal of Labrador's Inuit-Métis* (St. John's: ISER, 2014): 241-62. In southern Labrador most people with this ancestry would today identify as Southern Inuit or Inuit-Métis (sometimes spelled with an accented e, and other times without), while "Kablunāngajuit" is an Inuttitut word meaning 'resembling a white person' and is used for the people of northern Labrador who formerly called themselves 'settlers'; see Andrea Procter, Lawrence Felt, and David C. Natcher, ed., "Introduction," in *Settlement, Subsistence, and Change Among the Labrador Inuit: The Nunatsiavummiut Experience* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 3n1.

John's newspaper, in 1895.<sup>7</sup> Like Campbell, Saunders would become well known throughout Labrador as a storyteller and as a story collector.

Saunders worked as the editor of *Them Days*, and was its general driving force for more than three decades – in large part due to her commitment to an ancestral tradition of storytelling. As a descendant of Lydia Campbell and other notable Labrador autobiographers such as Margaret Baikie (1844-1940) and Elizabeth Goudie (1902-1982), she saw her role and the role of the magazine as one of “passing those [Labrador] stories on to my grandchildren.” Saunders also saw the political importance of the magazine; for instance, in 1994 she stated: “Since the start of Native land claims negotiations, people in Labrador have become interested in their roots and are accepting the fact that they do indeed have aboriginal roots.”<sup>8</sup> Saunders understood *Them Days* as playing a part in a renewed interest and pride in Labrador's heritage.

It would, though, be unfair to equate Saunders with *Them Days*, for while Saunders's dedication was crucial to its success she was not the only person involved in it. *Them Days* has always had a volunteer board of directors and volunteer story collectors as well as photographers, contributors, and eventually other staff to help with the tremendous work involved in the development and maintenance of the archive and the magazine's creation and distribution.<sup>9</sup> To say, therefore, that Saunders's story and that of the magazine are intimately intertwined is not to say that they are one and the same. Nonetheless, Saunders's story, and its deep connection with that of the magazine, is evident in the many speeches, letters, and essays she left behind after her death in 2006. And when read together with a genealogy of *Them Days*, they offer an account of shared struggle for recognition within the settler-state.

### The tide of Confederation and beyond

Labrador, the home of *Them Days*, is a vast mainland territory, one sparsely populated by culturally and linguistically diverse peoples and spread over a variegated landscape of boreal forests, mountain ranges, coastal inlets, and

7 Initially published in 13 short installments, *Sketches of Labrador Life* by a Labrador Woman would be reprinted as a book, titled *Sketches of Labrador Life*, in 2000 by *Them Days* and Killick Press under the editorial guidance of Doris Saunders. Campbell's text, and life, have been discussed in numerous academic studies, including most recently Marianne P. Stopp, “I, Old Lydia Campbell: A Labrador Woman of National Historic Significance,” in *History and Renewal of Labrador's Inuit-Métis*, ed. John C. Kennedy (St. John's, NL: ISER Books, 2014): 155-79.

8 Lynn Fitzhugh, *The Labradorians* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1999), xi.

9 The complement of these groups has changed over the years. Right now, *Them Days* has a nine-person volunteer board of directors, two full-time employees (one editor and one administrator), and two part-time archive technicians.

islands. The relative lack of overland transportation and communication technologies in the past has meant that the different regions of Labrador developed somewhat independently from one another. These realities, coupled with Newfoundland's disinterested and distant governance, have also meant that Labrador and Newfoundland have never shared a common cultural identity.

Bill Rompkey has referred to the two portions of the province as "two uneasy stepsisters who have left the house of their mother and tried to share a common place. Each with its own strong identity has sustained the relationship because of mutual dependence or because there was no clearly defined alternative."<sup>10</sup> Many people in Labrador share Rompkey's sentiments about the difficult, yet interdependent relationship between the island and the mainland. Such feelings found political and cultural outlets, such as the New Labrador Party formed in 1970 and the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association formed in 1976, as the pace of economic, political, and environmental change became alarmingly rapid.

Much of this change was ushered in after Newfoundland became the 10th province of Canada on 31 March 1949. Perhaps thinking that a larger federation would better serve their interests, Labradorians had voted overwhelmingly in favour of Confederation. Over 80 per cent of those who voted chose Canada. In debating the terms of union, Canadian and Newfoundland officials argued "there was too much intermarriage between the Innu, Inuit, and people of European descent, and that the Innu and Inuit would lose their voting rights under the Indian Act."<sup>11</sup> In fact, these voting rights had only been granted in 1946 for the National Convention on Confederation, and there was very little intermarriage amongst the Innu and other peoples of Labrador.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, under the terms of union, Indigenous peoples in the newly minted province were not subject to the Indian Act. As a result, after 1949 there was considerable paternal wrangling between federal and provincial governments over who had responsibility for the welfare of Indigenous peoples, especially in Labrador. Eventually the Canadian government agreed to provide funding for Inuit and Innu health care in a 1954 agreement, and then for building and maintaining

---

10 Bill Rompkey, *The Story of Labrador* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), x.

11 Sean Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 248.

12 Adrian Tanner, "The Aboriginal Peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador and Confederation," *Newfoundland Studies* 14, no. 2 (1998): 238-52.



their communities beginning in 1965 (with the funds administered by the province). Finally, in 1975 the leadership of Inuit and Innu communities were able to establish some control over the distribution of these funds.<sup>13</sup> In post-Confederation times, then, Indigenous groups in Labrador found themselves caught between two colonial regimes, provincial and federal, each of which imposed rules and regulations in their own best interests and one of which denied people the right to negotiate land claims under the Indian Act.

Along with tremendous cultural change, and as part of its inclusion in the modern settler-state, post-Confederation Labrador would also witness rapid industrialization and environmental devastation. Perhaps the most egregious, and now infamous, example is the Churchill Falls hydroelectric project built in the 1960s and early 1970s. In addition to damming the flow of a magnificent cataract that held spiritual significance for Indigenous peoples, the project also created the Smallwood Reservoir, which inundated Innu hunting, trapping, and burial grounds as well as Southern Inuit hunting areas and trap lines.<sup>14</sup> The ensuing changes in the river would also raise mercury levels in native fish species upon which people in Labrador had long relied for food. All of this was done without compensation for, or consultation with, adversely affected groups.

Mining exploration was also booming in Labrador West during this period, and in 1962 the Iron Ore Company opened the Smallwood Mine in the heart of Innu hunting territory. Again, the Innu were not consulted, and the mine negatively altered the waterways and surrounding territory forever. The Innu received little compensation.<sup>15</sup> The majority of workers hired at the mine and many of those who came to find other work in Labrador City were from the island, and those Indigenous people hired to work there were largely relegated to menial jobs and life in substandard housing or tents on the periphery of the newly built town site.<sup>16</sup>

13 Rompkey, *Story of Labrador*, 103.

14 While Innu land use and occupation of this area is well documented – for example, in books about Kaniuetutat such as Georg Henriksen's *I Dreamed the Animals: Kaniuetutat: The Life of an Innu Hunter* (London: Berghahn Books, 2008) and Matthew Mestokosho and Serge Bouchard's *Caribou Hunter: A Song of a Vanished Innu Life*, trans. Joan Irving (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2004) – Southern Inuit have also used the Upper Churchill watershed for trapping and caribou hunting for many generations. This is documented by Greg Mitchell and Madison Coombs in the report *Nunatukavut Land Uses in the Labrador Iron Belt*, NunatuKavut Community Council, 2012, <https://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/050/documents/p64575/81763E.pdf>.

15 Heritage NL, "Labrador West," <https://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/politics/labrador-west.php>.

16 A rail line would also be built to ship the ore through Quebec to the south coast. Meanwhile, Labrador West and Happy Valley-Goose Bay (the eastern coastal hub) were not connected by rail, and would only be linked by dirt road (the trans-Labrador highway) in 1992; see Heritage

Significantly, then-premier Joseph Smallwood saw Labrador's natural resources as key to Newfoundland's economic fortunes. The Smallwood Reservoir bears his name and is a literal and figurative demonstration of how the premier and the government of Newfoundland viewed Labrador. The 1970s would see the Smallwood regime collapse and a new era of politics ushered in. Yet when Smallwood left politics in 1972, he left behind a legacy that Labradorians feel acutely to this day. The imposition of the iron ore mines in Labrador West and the Churchill Falls project without consultation with Indigenous groups, and with an eye to securing Newfoundland's economic future at all costs, resonates today in continuing rampant development that seems to prioritize Newfoundland nationalism over considerable local Labrador protest.<sup>17</sup> Churchill Falls, in particular, exists in most Newfoundlanders' minds not as a real place, but as a "heuristic device for understanding the province's past since Confederation." As Jerry Bannister further argues, the hydroelectric project and the contract to sell the resulting power to Quebec at fixed prices until 2041 loom large in Newfoundlanders' imaginations, while photographs and/or information about the geographical location and those who live there do not.<sup>18</sup> The complex political, economic, and cultural wrangling over the latest developments on the lower Churchill at Muskrat Falls have done little to dispel such powerful ideas on the island or in much of Labrador.

It is not insignificant that when asked by the provincial government to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Confederation in 1973, Labradorians responded by creating their own flag.<sup>19</sup> Conceptualized by Michael S. Martin, Member of the House of Assembly for the district of Labrador South, and hand-sewn by Patricia Martin, the flag is a white, green, and blue tri-colour

---

NL, "Post-1949 Communications and Transport," <https://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/politics/labrador-west.php>.

- 17 Ongoing protest of the Muskrat Falls development by groups like the Labrador Land Protectors, members of the Innu Nation, the Nunatsiavut Government, and the Grand River Keepers is well documented. Also well documented is the Tshash Petapen Agreement (or New Dawn Agreement), signed by the leadership of the Innu Nation and the provincial government in 2008 and ratified in 2009. In 2008, Premier Danny Williams said the following of the agreement: "The Innu Rights Agreement will bring tremendous new benefits and opportunities to the Innu people of Labrador, and signals a new era of partnership and cooperation between their people and our government. The Tshash Petapen Agreement also resolves key issues associated with the Lower Churchill development including an Impacts and Benefits Agreement and redress on the upper Churchill hydroelectric development." This is outlined in detail on the website of the Innu Nation, [http://www.innu.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19%3Dinnu-nation-and-provi](http://www.innu.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19%3Dinnu-nation-and-provi).
- 18 Jerry Bannister, "A River Runs Through It: Churchill Falls and the End of Newfoundland History," *Acadiensis* 41, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2012): 216.
- 19 Labrador Heritage Museum, "The Labrador Flag," [http://www.labradorheritemuseum.ca/home/labrador\\_flag.htm](http://www.labradorheritemuseum.ca/home/labrador_flag.htm).

with a spruce twig in the upper left corner. Representing the snow and ice, the land, and the fresh and salt waters, plus the three founding cultures of the place, it was intended as a unifying banner for the Innu, Inuit, and European settlers and was adopted in 1974. As current *Them Days* editor Aimee Chaulk said at a 2016 ceremony honouring the 42nd anniversary of the flag, “It was a symbol that proclaimed the identity of Labradorians.”<sup>20</sup> This flag, however, is unofficial and is not flown at the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial legislature.

Beyond crafting enduring symbols, the peoples of Labrador were also busy creating lasting political organizations, many of which were Indigenous organizations. In 1973 the Labrador Inuit Association (LIA) and the Native Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (NANL) were formed. These would be followed quickly by the Naskapi Montagnais Innu Association (NMIA) in 1976. The Southern Inuit of Labrador would not formally organize until 1985 as the Labrador Metis Association (LMA, later the Labrador Metis Nation).<sup>21</sup> The short-lived but impactful New Labrador Party formed in 1969 in order to field Labrador candidates in provincial elections. The provincial government, meanwhile, sponsored the Labrador Resources Advisory Council, the Labrador Craft Producers Association, and the Combined Councils of Labrador, a body which brought together community councils from all over Labrador to discuss community issues, devise plans for the future, and advocate for change. Bill Shiwak, one-time chairman of the Community Council of Rigolet, called the formation of the Combined Councils of Labrador “one of the most significant events to occur in Labrador in the 70s” because it provided Labradorians a united front in negotiations with outside governments and agencies and filled a communications gap that had existed between communities in the region.<sup>22</sup>

---

20 Jacob Barker, “Labradorians Want Official Status for their Flag,” CBC News, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/labrador-flag-day-official-status-1.3515185>.

21 The LIA would launch a successful land claim in 1977, which would eventually culminate in the formation of the Nunatsiavut Inuit self-governing territory of northern Labrador in 2005. The NMIA would become the Innu Nation in 1990, be recognized under the Indian Act in 2006, and have their land claim and self-governing negotiations with the federal and provincial governments codified in the 2011 New Dawn Agreements. The LMA would eventually become the NunatuKavut Community Council in 2010, representing the Southern Inuit of Labrador. While they do receive federal and provincial funding, their land claim, filed in 1991, is still being negotiated with the federal government.

22 Sadie L. Popovich, ed., *Labrador in the 80s: A Conference Sponsored by Memorial University of Newfoundland* (North West River, NL: Labrador Institute of Northern Studies, 1980).

### Cross-currents of colonial power

Contributing to the politically choppy waters in Labrador in the 1960s and 1970s were the ripple effects of national political turmoil and constitutional debates. Culminating in a revamped Canadian Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, this period witnessed a resurgence of Indigenous political organizing and Quebec nationalism plus renewed debate over Canadian cultural identity, human rights, and linguistic protections. In the end, Indigenous peoples across the rest of the nation would still be subject to the paternalistic laws of the Indian Act (a main tenet of which was still “Indian Status”), and thus largely invisible in the new Charter. At the same time, multiculturalism, as national policy, would superficially celebrate “diversity” while effectively masking assimilation. French language rights would be protected but not those of Indigenous language speakers. The colonial status quo had been challenged but not undone.<sup>23</sup>

A significant aspect of this challenge was the Red Power movement, which had been spawned, in part, by the notorious 1969 White Paper.<sup>24</sup> Put forward by Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Jean Chrétien in the government of Pierre Trudeau, the “Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy” proposed a radical revisioning of the state’s relationship with Indigenous peoples through dismantling the Indian Act. It was understood by most Indigenous leaders as an assimilatory measure, one which ran counter to most of the ideas they had put forth during consultations leading up to the policy paper’s delivery. Across the country, Indigenous leaders and grassroots activists gathered to voice their outrage and form their responses. New Indigenous organizations were formulated, while older ones were reinvigorated in their struggle against the settler-colonial state.

The concept of Indian status, so contentious in these struggles, and so paradoxically crucial to things like land claims agreements, was targeted for elimination under the auspices of the White Paper. It became a hotly debated topic in the national media, and was at the centre of provincial and federal political squabbling over individual and collective rights during the 1960s and

23 In fact, Roger Gibbins argued that the new constitution had made Indian policy less responsive to the domain-specific concerns of Indigenous peoples: “Canada’s constitutional debate has become a trap for Canadian Indians by elevating the discussion of Indian affairs to a plane where it is very difficult for Indians to win and where major losses are possible”; see Roger Gibbins, “Canadian Indian Policy: The Constitutional Trap,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 4, no. 1 (1984): 7.

24 Naithan Lagace and Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, “The White Paper, 1969,” *Canadian Encyclopedia*, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-white-paper-1969/>.

1970s. The White Paper was eventually withdrawn in the face of widespread opposition, especially from Indigenous peoples whose collective voice rang out in support of their inherent rights and the protection of their cultural practices and lands. Indigenous groups across the country would agree with the Indian Association of Alberta that “there is nothing more important than our treaties, our lands and the well-being of our future generations.”<sup>25</sup> Indian status would remain part of Canadian policy, and a bone of particular contention for Indigenous peoples in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Soon after the White Paper debacle, the Trudeau government would propose a policy of national multiculturalism, which would also have long-lasting and profound reverberations in Labrador. Ostensibly born of the federal government’s response to the Quiet Revolution in Quebec and the 1963 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism,<sup>26</sup> the policy, introduced in 1970 and made official in 1988, enshrined respect for cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity as the law of the land. Touted as an antidote to assimilation,<sup>27</sup> it would serve as a key tenet of Canadian nationalism and make the term “cultural mosaic” ubiquitous. Simultaneously, it would prompt criticism and confusion, as people tried to understand its role in nation-building and access support for their own piece of the mosaic under the newly developed funding initiatives and programs.

In the midst of this political and cultural turbidity, a clear concern for the protection of Labrador’s unique cultural heritage was emerging. In 1973 the Labrador Heritage Society (LHS) was formed, with Joseph Goudie as president and Bruce Borque as vice-president (he was also the first managing editor of *Them Days*). According to Doris Saunders, “One of the aims of the Society was to collect all the books it could that had Labrador content, and they soon discovered that, except for Elizabeth Goudie’s book *Woman of Labrador*, all the books about Labrador were written by other people [meaning non-Labradorians]. It was decided that something should be done to record the

25 University of British Columbia’s First Nations Studies Program, “The White Paper 1969,” 2009, [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the\\_white\\_paper\\_1969/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_white_paper_1969/).

26 Erna Paris, “Canada’s Multiculturalism is Our Identity,” *Globe and Mail*, 27 April 2018.

27 A research paper on the Library of Parliament’s website describes the “incipient stage” of the development of multiculturalism, in part, as follows: “Events and developments during the 1960s paved the way for the eventual demise of the official policy of assimilation and the subsequent appearance of multiculturalism. Pressures for change stemmed from the growing assertiveness of Canada’s Indigenous peoples, the force of Québécois nationalism and increasing resentment on the part of some ethnic minorities regarding their place in society”; see Laurence Brosseau and Michael Dewing, “Canadian Multiculturalism,” *Library of Parliament*, [https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en\\_CA/ResearchPublications/200920E](https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/200920E).

history of Labrador as told by the people of Labrador.”<sup>28</sup> In conjunction with the Old Timers League, a group of elders from the Upper Lake Melville region, they put forth a proposal to the federal government’s New Horizons Program to fund a project “for the purpose of collecting historical material from our older residents,” and proposed that the project “could involve the collection and preservation of verbal records on cassette tape, the publication of some of this material, and the collection of photographs of historical interest.”<sup>29</sup>

The LHS was “born out of the concerns of a small group of people for those aspects of Labrador’s past which are daily dying along with the people who lived that past. Another concern was, and is, that artifacts and historic data and documents are always exported out of regions like ours to larger population centres such as provincial capitals where museums are big business.”<sup>30</sup> In this handwritten document, entitled *Background to the Labrador Heritage Society and Application for Funding*, vice-president Bruce Borque goes on to detail the story of the “Churchill Falls Bottle,” or “Trapper’s Bottle,” as an example of this appropriation of history by outsiders and the rapid pace of development that was making the situation critical.

The story of the bottle is found in a number of places, including the archival papers of Joseph Goudie, who was not only founding president of the LHS but also the son of Elizabeth Goudie.<sup>31</sup> The bottle is actually a mason jar that was first placed at the foot of the falls in 1891 near a popular portage by two American students from Bowdoin College, who left a note with their names and the date of their visit in it when they surveyed the area on a scientific expedition. In subsequent years trappers, explorers, and other visitors left their names and the dates of their visits in the bottle as well. It was discovered by workers excavating the site of the hydroelectric dam in 1960 and given to Premier Joseph Smallwood, who housed it at the Provincial Museum in St. John’s. In 1976 Smallwood gifted the bottle to Goudie, who returned the bottle to Labrador where it was housed at the Administration and Control Building at the generating station of Churchill (Hamilton/Grand) Falls.<sup>32</sup>

---

28 “History of *Them Days*,” Doris Saunders Collection, APL 103, file 14, TDA.

29 “Report to the Old Timers’ League on *Them Days Magazine*,” 3 December 1975, History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 1/1, TDA.

30 “Background to the Labrador Heritage Society and Application for Funding,” Labrador Heritage Society Collection, APL 60, file 8, TDA.

31 In addition to these roles, Goudie would also serve as a provincial Member of the House of Assembly and as president of the Labrador Metis Association.

32 Joseph Goudie Collection, APL 81, file 1, TDA.

Before the return of the bottle to Labrador, this story was important to the LHS for two reasons. To them it represented both the Newfoundland attitude toward Labrador, one of ownership and exploitation, and the cultural cost of the rapid industrialization plan that the Newfoundland government was implementing. From this perspective, it was all too obvious that Labrador's cultural history needed to be preserved and it needed to be preserved by Labradorians for Labradorians in Labrador.

Based on their impassioned arguments, the LHS was able to secure funding and proceeded to enlist the help of Isaac Rich, one of the members of the Old Timers League, and a former trapper from the Rigolet area, who was paid to collect stories from his fellow trappers and members of the communities of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Rigolet, and North West River. Another local elder, John Broomfield, collected stories on the north coast, and so became *Them Days*' first volunteer.<sup>33</sup> They hired Doris Saunders as editor and paid her \$3,000 for an intended stint of three and one-half months, which turned into six months. As the magazine's success grew, but profits did not, Saunders agreed to stay on despite the lack of a guaranteed salary.

In a paper presented to the Northern Libraries Colloquy in August 1984, Saunders outlined the basic format of the first issue that would become the magazine's standard format:

Ike's and John's tapes focused mainly on trapping and tales of the north. I supplemented these with stories about the Spanish Flu, home remedies, tales of tragedy, ghost stories, and a craft item. This set the format for *Them Days*. In most cases the interviews started by establishing the identity of the person being interviewed, tracing their families back as far as they could go (doing a bit of genealogy), talking about their earliest memories and working up to the present, telling stories they remembered being told by other people and whatever else came to mind.<sup>34</sup>

Because the first edition of the magazine sold out, and vast amounts of material had been collected, further editions of the magazine were immediately planned. By 1976, according to a letter from Doris Saunders to Earl Wynette

33 Doris Saunders Collection, APL 103, file 14, TDA.

34 "Archival Frontiers in Newfoundland and Labrador," History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 1/34, TDA.



and Associates (a printing firm to whom she was looking for advice and quotes on new printing equipment), they were publishing “4000 copies of the magazine four times a year.”<sup>35</sup> There was obviously an appetite for such a publication, and people all over Labrador responded.

It did not take long for *Them Days* to attract attention as a source of Labrador pride. In a letter dated 1 September 1976, Frank W. Pye, the secretary of the Labrador Provincial Association (Labrador Straits Branch) outlines the purpose of this inchoate group looking for supporters.<sup>36</sup> In the missive, he asks that Saunders lend her support to “the creation of an independent Labrador.” Appended to this letter was the prospectus for the establishment of the association, which outlined Newfoundland’s attitude toward Labrador as “colonists or worse” due to the lack of local control over policies and economic development and “disregard of the wishes and needs of Labradorians” by outside governments.<sup>37</sup>

While there is no reply to Pye in the archives, Saunders was sympathetic to the cause he represented. She too felt the government of Newfoundland was a colonial one that did not represent or understand the needs of Labradorians.<sup>38</sup> In addition to speaking publicly on the topic, Saunders was a card-carrying member of the New Labrador Party (NLP).<sup>39</sup> Formed in Labrador West in 1969, largely by disaffected union members who thought the lion’s share of mining royalties and taxes were not being spent to benefit Labrador, the NLP would elect Tom Burgess to the provincial legislature in 1971.<sup>40</sup> The party fielded candidates in every Labrador riding in the 1972 election when Mike Martin was elected to the House of Assembly under its banner, representing Labrador South. Martin resigned his seat in 1975, effectively dissolving the NLP but not the dissatisfaction of Labradorians. Realizing the seriousness of Labradorians’

---

35 Doris Saunders to Earl Wynette and Associates, 19 November 1976, History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 1/1, TDA.

36 The Labrador Provincial Association was an attempt to rejuvenate the success of the defunct New Labrador Party, of which Pye had been a member and campaign organizer in the Labrador Straits district.

37 Frank W. Pye to Doris Saunders, 1 September 1976, History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 1/1, TDA.

38 In a presentation to the provincial Progressive Conservative Caucus policy forum in 1992, Saunders decried what she saw as the despicable treatment of Labrador by Newfoundland, calling its governance “colonial” and likening Newfoundland’s racism to that of apartheid-era South Africa; see Doris Saunders Collection, APL 103, file 28, TDA.

39 Her membership card for 1975–6 is in her archival papers; see Doris Saunders Collection, APL 103, file 4, TDA.

40 This famously thorny election spelled the beginning of the end of Joseph Smallwood’s long tenure as premier, which would officially come to a close in 1972.



concerns and the threats they represented to the traditional party structure and government stability, the Frank Moores government convened the Royal Commission on Labrador in 1972.

Both this royal commission, and the conference “Labrador in the 70s,” would hear grievances from all across the region, many of which centered on the lack of provincial government interest, the ineffective infrastructure, and the inadequate delivery of services in Labrador.<sup>41</sup> The royal commission, in its 1974 report, issued 288 recommendations under 28 different headings. Weighing in on a broad swath of issues, from communications technology to federal-provincial agreements, the report made it clear that Labrador was not receiving equitable treatment as a member of the Canadian federation. With regard to the cultural life of the region, two recommendations stand out: #114 – “the establishment of an Arts and Culture Centre in Happy Valley to preserve the cultural uniqueness of Labrador and its people” – and #251 – “that eligibility to specified communities under the [federal-provincial] Agreement be dropped immediately so that the Governments can meet their original intent of providing for the Indians and Eskimos of Labrador.”<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps hoping to affect change from within, Joseph Goudie ran for provincial office and was elected to the House of Assembly, representing the Progressive Conservatives, in 1975. As a result, the Labrador Heritage Society was defunct from 1976 to 1978 and in 1979 *Them Days* decided to incorporate and thus separate formally from its parent organization. This caused no small amount of upheaval, as can be seen in a letter from Saunders to Morris Chaulk (president of the LHS) in July of 1979. Saunders defends her role and work with *Them Days* and the LHS:

I have been a supporter of Labrador Heritage for as long as the organization has been in existence and I will support the aims and objectives of that organization as long as I live. The fact that through *Them Days* I have been fulfilling one of those aims and objectives for four years must be proof of my allegiance. Joe Goudie and Mike Martin [long time members of the LHS executive] can tell you how

41 Held in 1970 in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the conference was sponsored by the Labrador North Chamber of Commerce and organized by Memorial University's Extension Service. The Royal Commission was chaired by Donald Snowden, a former head of Memorial University's Extension Service, and was billed as “an inquiry into ‘the economic and social conditions of life in Labrador’”; see Rompkey, *Story of Labrador*, 148, 152–3.

42 Donald Snowden, *Recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labrador* (St. John's: Royal Commission on Labrador, 1974), 1360, 1389.

much time and emotion I put in to getting the Heritage Society revived, because I sincerely felt and still feel that it is one of the hopes for Labrador unity.<sup>43</sup>

From this excerpt it is obvious how Saunders's vision was being put into practice through the magazine – her hopes for Labrador unity were placed in *Them Days*, along with the LHS, and were evident in her desire to publish stories from all corners of the place, in English, Innu-aimun, and Inuttitut. This dream of a tri-lingual magazine, however, was financially difficult to realize, as Saunders declared in a 1977 letter to Sam Metcalfe, who had been working with the Linguistics Department at Memorial University. In it, she asks him for stories written in both Inuttitut and English for the magazine, and outlines both her vision and her dilemma: “We have been having some difficulties in getting stories translated to and from both the Inuit and Indian languages. Our major problem is financial. We are unable to pay for translating services. My dream is to someday have a tri-lingual magazine, or have the magazine printed in three languages. God-willing that is not an impossible dream.”<sup>44</sup>

The magazine would never be printed fully in all three languages, but more stories in both Indigenous languages, with English translations, would be featured as time went on. However, the great majority of the pieces to appear in the 44-year history of *Them Days* were in English only. This is due to the continuing financial difficulties of the magazine, certainly, but also to the realities of geography and language use and retention in Labrador. Communities in Labrador are spread over a vast and difficult terrain that is rarely easy, or affordable, to access. The Inuit language – Inuttitut – declined rapidly in the years following Confederation, and fully bilingual Inuttitut/English speakers were rare (although there is a resurgence of the language ongoing in Nunatsiavut today). Innu-aimun speakers dominate the communities of Sheshatshu and Natuashish,<sup>45</sup> but folks fluent in both

43 Doris Saunders to Morris Chaulk, 20 July 1979, History of *Them Days* Collection,, APL 1, file 4, TDA.

44 Doris Saunders to Sam Metcalf, 21 December 1977, Doris Saunders Collection, APL 103, file 14, TDA.

45 Post-Confederation schooling focused on “modernization,” and English curriculum became dominant in Northern Labrador; see Danielle Matthews in collaboration with Lyla Andrew, Winston C. White, Shirley Pye and Tim Borlase, “Inuit of Labrador,” <http://www.labradorvirtualmuseum.ca/home/inuit.htm>. Virtually all inhabitants of these two Innu communities speak one of two distinct dialects of Innu-aimun: Mushuau-aimun or Sheshatshu-aimun; see Marguerite MacKenzie, “Innu-aimun: The Language of the Innu in Labrador,” <http://www.labradorvirtualmuseum.ca/home/innu-aimun.htm>.

Innu-aimun and English are present mainly in the generation of people who came after the elders targetted for interviewing in *Them Days*. Overall, an issue identified by Bruce Borque in 1974 remains crucial: "It's practically impossible to find someone who speaks English, Eskimo, and Indian."<sup>46</sup> Still, the amount of linguistic diversity that the magazine has achieved is impressive for a small publication with such limited resources.<sup>47</sup>

Those closely associated with the magazine, of course, had thoughts on this cultural and linguistic imbalance as well, and put it down to monetary constraints and lack of available staff. In a letter dated 2 April 1984 to Assistant Under Secretary of State (Citizenship Branch) Doug Bowie (who had been a supporter of the magazine in the past, according to the letter), Lawrence Jackson, who was chairman of the board at *Them Days*, attempted to underscore the crucial role that the magazine was playing in the cultural life of Labrador and Canada. Due to the multiple roles played by *Them Days* as "regional multi-lingual publisher, archives, multi-cultural institute, tourist information centre and research institute," Jackson stated they deserved some reliable public funding to cover their expenses. In further support of their case, Jackson (with what reads like considerable input from Doris Saunders) outlined the core mission of the magazine:

We strive to include material from every region of Labrador in each issue. Given the diversity of this territory and the many constraints in contact between the different areas, you will appreciate that this policy alone has cultural importance. We manage to include stories from the Inuit communities in several issues each year, usually in both English and Inuktitut. We carry material from the Indian communities when we can, but find this much harder both to collect and translate. We lack the staff to actively pursue this material and have had to rely on volunteers for much of the translation. In another sense, however, there is a strong native element to nearly everything we publish, in that Labrador blends the races to a degree unmatched

---

46 "Background to the Labrador Heritage Society and Application for Funding," Labrador Heritage Society Collection, APL 60, file 8, TDA.

47 In Lynn Fitzhugh's book *The Labradorians* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1999) – a collection of *Them Days* excerpts arranged according to geographical area and interspersed with short introductions – she writes that "the Innu . . . unlike the Settlers, have only begun to tell their own stories to the outside world. Few of the Innu narratives collected by *Them Days* divulge much of their character and soul" (377).

anywhere in the north, so that features of Indian or Inuit culture are commonplace in the lives of nearly everyone born here.<sup>48</sup>

This letter is particularly illustrative of the policies affecting the operations of *Them Days* and the ways in which its board chair tried to position it in order to gain funding from a federal agency. It is worth quoting it further:

We haven't explored this at length but we have had the feeling that *multi-culturalism* means a readiness to celebrate the background of people like Greeks and Estonians (particularly those in Toronto ridings) but not that of folks whose origins are closer to home. If you're visibly Inuit or registered Indian, or almost any kind of foreign exotic, there are a variety of programs available. But if you're anything else, no matter how distinct and varied your culture, you fall between the cracks. I don't mean to sound cranky about this. I think that if we could make people in the department aware of all that we do, and of what an unusual piece of the mosaic Labrador represents, a number of doors would open to us.<sup>49</sup>

Clearly, the notion, if not the reality, of multiculturalism had become prevalent in Canada, particularly within the federal government, where it was official policy, and in its funding bodies. Jackson's uses of the term, and the word "mosaic," were not accidental. It is also evident from this excerpt that multiculturalism was seen, at least by the folks at *Them Days*, to be pitting one group against another in a fight for a limited pool of resources – the worst kind of identity politics. Similarly, the notion of "Indian-ness" was leveraged here in light of the government's own dealings with Indigenous groups through the Indian Act, legislation so pernicious as to be considered tantamount to enacting government-sponsored genocide by many scholars.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Gloria Bird has called similar colonial interventions in the United States "the policy

48 Lawrence Jackson to Doug Bowie, 2 April 1984, History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 19/13, folder A, TDA.

49 Jackson to Bowie, 2 April 1984, History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 19/13, folder A, TDA.

50 See, for example, Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Grounded Normativity/Place-Based Solidarity," *American Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (June 2016): 249–55; Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Women's Press, 2016); Patricia Monture-Angus, "To Break with the Past: Searching for the Meaning of Self-Determination," *Journeying Forward: Dreaming First Nations' Independence* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1999): 21–40.

of dividing and conquering, keeping us bickering among ourselves in order to distract us from the larger issues that affect our lives.”<sup>51</sup> In effect, this is what *Them Days* found itself doing as it tried to get a piece of a limited financial pie.

From this letter it is also clear that the group working at *Them Days* saw themselves as multicultural in the sense of coming from different cultural traditions – Indigenous and non-Indigenous and within and beyond Labrador. But they also sensed that the federal definition of the term did not include them or their cultures. Later in the letter this became more apparent when Jackson wrote about their need for funding and various strategies they were planning to employ to find some. One of these was “to lobby Ottawa for a more liberal (if that’s the word) interpretation of what people mean by multi-cultural, so that we might qualify for some of the support we see other groups getting. We could scarcely get more multi-cultural, as we see it, but we know our understanding of the phrase is not the common one.”<sup>52</sup> His frustration, and that of the entire board and staff of the magazine, was palpable, and shows how deeply divisive the policy of multiculturalism could be when viewed from this perspective.

Indeed, the letter’s critique of multiculturalism and Indian status underscore the ways in which both policies were entangled. The position the letter takes of deliberately “misunderstanding” multiculturalism and simultaneously invoking Indigeneity is, in effect, a nuanced critique of the ways in which these policies create politically expedient categories of, on the one hand, homogenized Indians, and, on the other, geographically specific clumps of hyphenated Canadians. Multiculturalism, according to Jenny Burman’s analysis, does not undo assimilationism but “acts as a salve or alibi for ongoing settler colonialism” by promoting the image of Canada as a haven for cultural diversity. However, as Burman points out, the policy does not include Indigenous peoples, and its mechanisms of promoting individual rights over collective rights in the interest of preserving existing legal and social frameworks uphold the legitimacy of the existing state.<sup>53</sup>

By the time multiculturalism was officially enshrined in the Canadian constitution, it was clear that *Them Days* was not going to neatly fit into either of these categories (multicultural or Indian). In notes from a finance meeting held on 4 February 1988 with members of its board of directors, staff, and

51 Gloria Bird, “Breaking the Silence: Writing as ‘Witness,’” in *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing*, ed. Simon J. Ortiz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998): 27.

52 Jackson to Bowie, 2 April 1984, History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 19/13, folder A, TDA.

53 Jenny Burman, “Multicultural Feeling, Feminist Rage, Indigenous Refusal,” *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 16, no. 4 (August 2016): 362–65.

guests from the local town council as well as community economic advisors, there are broad discussions about how to adequately fund the magazine since it continued to struggle financially. In his comments at the meeting, board member Larry Jackson highlighted the frustrations of trying to attain long-term funding from federal government agencies, such as the secretary of state. In the notes, he is quoted at length about the routes the magazine has explored in order to obtain sustaining funds, including through the federal government:

The Secretary of State . . . has a multicultural program which *Them Days* thought it should qualify for. Unfortunately, *Them Days* does not qualify for two reasons: 1) they are reluctant to fund publications for fear of being accused of buying favouritism. 2) we are not considered ethnic enough. Secretary of State does not look on indigenous native cultures as being what their multicultural program is all about. They say that *Them Days* is a native venture and that we should be looking at native money for our purposes. Indian Affairs says we should go to the L.I.A. [Labrador Inuit Association]; go to our native groups & obtain funding from them. So, we are neither native enough nor ethnic enough for anyone.<sup>54</sup>

Here Jackson highlights yet another important connection between multiculturalism and Indian status: the politics of recognition. Embedded within multiculturalism is the identification of a core group and a peripheral group – White European settlers being the core, and all other racialized cultural groups, understood to be from outside Canada, are peripheral and meant to be “tolerated.” This implies a group who includes and a group who is included – one active, the other passive. The notion of Indian status is similarly defined through Euro-Canadian standards and practices, in the interest of those same standards and practices. Indian status, for instance, is granted, or taken away, by the settler-state. Its fuzzy parameters and leaking boundaries are enforced by colonial governance, in the interests of that same governance. Assimilation of all “Indians” is the paradoxical goal of Indian policy for the Canadian state, much like the tolerance of multiculturalism (tolerance is extended to cultural groups that “fit in” or assimilate enough so that they are no longer threatening to dominant cultural patterns). Essentially, the interest

---

54 *Them Days* Finance Meeting Notes, 4 February 1988, History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 41/91, TDA.

of both policies is to maintain the status quo through the promotion of respect for existing institutions and laws and a politics of recognition.

For Glen Coulthard, the politics of recognition that has characterized Indigenous relations with the federal government since the backlash to the infamous White Paper of 1969 has not led to a more equal or balanced relationship between nations. On the contrary, Coulthard argues “the politics of recognition in its contemporary form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend.” Coulthard maintains that this reproduction hinges on the ways that the politics of recognition inculcates a kind of internalized inferiority within Indigenous populations whereby they “come to *identify*, either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly *asymmetrical* and *non-reciprocal* forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the colonial-state and society.” Coulthard goes on to argue that for Indigenous peoples the processes of decolonization must reject the politics of recognition from the state and instead focus on self-recognition.<sup>55</sup>

*Them Days* was balancing on this knife-edge between the practicality of finding funding to continue their work and the philosophy of self-directed validation. They knew what they were doing was important, even though there was no financial incentive to keep doing it. They were asking for recognition in order to receive funding from federal bodies, while also cultivating local empowerment and pride through the recognition of value and worth in their own stories. As Doris Saunders put it: “Labradorians have always had a special feeling for their roots – and the 70s gave them *Them Days*, a physical form through which that pride of heritage and culture can be demonstrated to the world.”<sup>56</sup> Making things even more complicated, of course, was that the stories in the magazine were about often overlapping Indigenous and non-Indigenous histories and cultures that Labradorians claimed as their own.

Distrust of outside meddling in Labrador’s affairs and outside interpretations and definitions of Labrador ways of life continued to resonate with Doris Saunders and impact the operations of *Them Days*. In a letter dated 27 March 1979 to Bill Flowers, the executive director of the Labrador Resources Advisory Council, Saunders responded to what must have been a missive from Flowers asking advice on the approval of a proposed academic study on

55 Glen S. Coulthard, “Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the ‘Politics of Recognition,’” *Contemporary Political Theory* 6, no. 4 (November 2007): 438–9, 453–5 (emphasis in original).

56 Doris Saunders, “*Them Days*,” in Popovich, *Labrador in the 80s*, 36–8.

“spatio-temporal concepts among biannually migratory south Labradorians.” Saunders did not mince words: “It has been my experience, during the past four years of research in Labrador, that the worst problem has been with people who have been exposed to the clinical methods of overeducated academics.” Her adverse reaction may have been exacerbated by her personal knowledge of this particular academic, however, because they had worked for *Them Days* in the past collecting interviews, but had never submitted the tapes. This meant that Saunders had to work hard to convince the interviewee, one of the last remaining trappers in Labrador who had gone to the Northwest Territories, to be interviewed again. To make matters worse, she contended that other elders were reluctant to be recorded on tape because they felt as though “they were made fun of by an outsider who was doing research in the area.”<sup>57</sup>

Saunders was determined that this sort of treatment would not be repeated and that Labradorians would have their own voice in *Them Days*. All of this work on the magazine paid off and *Them Days* received formal recognition. In 1980, for instance, *Them Days* was successfully nominated for a Certificate of Merit award of the Canadian Historical Association; the magazine was lauded by Newton B. Morgan of the Newfoundland Historical Society as well as Tony Williamson, executive director of the Labrador Institute of Memorial University, both of whom wrote enthusiastically about the publication and its editor Doris Saunders. Their letters of support for the successful nomination focused on the tremendous amount of work that was done with meager funding. Morgan noted that the magazine was a “noble and meritorious effort in preserving so much of the literature, history, and culture of this remote and historical part of our great country.”<sup>58</sup> A few years later, *Them Days* would also receive special recognition from the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council for its role in the preservation of Labrador’s rich cultural heritage.<sup>59</sup>

Despite such accolades, *Them Days* continued to struggle financially. During the early 1980s the magazine was enjoying some success, yet it relied on a patchwork of temporary funding and donations to stay afloat. Diverse sources from Petro-Canada to the International Grenfell Association to the Jackman Foundation were tapped, but the flow of money always dried up and

57 Doris Saunders to Bill Flowers, 27 March 1979, History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 19/8, TDA.

58 Newton B. Morgan to Margaret Conrad, 21 November 1980, and Tony Williamson to Margaret Conrad, 26 November 1980, History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 19/4, TDA.

59 ArtsNL, “ArtsNL Arts Awards: 1984 Award Winners,” [http://www.nlac.ca/awards/winners\\_1984.htm](http://www.nlac.ca/awards/winners_1984.htm).



the drain on staff time and energy was dispiriting. In his impassioned entreaty to Doug Bowie in 1984, Board Chair Lawrence Jackson précised the situation succinctly: “I think I could sum up our dilemma by saying that we are a unique, important, versatile, increasingly professional enterprise, and that the task of surviving is not getting harder, just bigger. It is very rewarding to inspire the praise and encouragement we have always had, but it would be nice to inspire some steady funding.”<sup>60</sup>

Even with their ongoing financial woes, the magazine remained committed to core principles that required significant investments of resources to implement. In a paper presented to the Northern Libraries Colloquy in 1984, Saunders explained a philosophy that remains central to the magazine to this day: “We are very particular about preserving the phrasing and sound of speech, so the transcribing is as important as doing the interview.” For this to happen, she said, it was crucial that the interviewer “be someone who is familiar with the ways, sensitive to the feelings of the people and has a great deal of pride in their heritage.” Nonetheless, Saunders also recognized that non-locals could be useful as interviewers because folks would explain local customs and practices in detail to them whereas they might assume that a local person would not need such specificity. Saunders saw the benefit of having both Labradorians and newcomers working at the magazine to maintain a kind of “balance” as she put it.<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, these ideas have remained part of *Them Days* functioning ever since. There are still locals and “Come-From-Aways” working there, balancing out the perspectives and maintaining a sense of pride and curiosity on staff. In addition, as current editor Aimee Chaulk told me on a recent archival visit, the policy is to transcribe “dialect, but not accent.”<sup>62</sup> So they only change syntax or grammar when it is necessary for the comprehension of the text, and these instances are minimal. This is a conscious decision that attempts to represent people’s way of speaking as authentically as possible, without slipping into caricature. A delicate and deft editorial touch has thus always been required.

By 1984 the magazine had expanded its mandate to include additional activities: publishing diaries, such as that of Thomas Blake in 2000 and Lydia Campbell, in conjunction with Breakwater Books, in 2001; organizing craft

60 Jackson to Bowie, 2 April 1984, History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 19/13, folder A, TDA.

61 “Archival Frontiers in Newfoundland and Labrador,” History of *Them Days* Collection APL 1, file 1/34, TDA.

62 Aimee Chaulk, personal communication with author, 22 February 2018.

exhibitions; creating information books such as *Alluring Labrador*,<sup>63</sup> and housing an archive of Labrador materials. As Saunders told the audience at the Northern Libraries Colloquy: “The whole collection of *Them Days* can be woven together, like a patchwork quilt, and still have a strong thread running through it; that’s the essence of Labrador.”<sup>64</sup> Saunders had earlier elaborated on this theme in a piece written for *The Rounder* magazine in 1979. In it Saunders discussed the role that *Them Days* was playing in the lives of Labradorians, and how she hoped it would impact the rest of the province and country. She also felt that the magazine was giving people in the vast region a sense of connectedness to one another, a sense of shared history and heritage. And she hoped, as well, that Newfoundland and Canada would come to see that Labrador history and culture were valuable. For Saunders, ultimately, the increased knowledge of the past generated through *Them Days* was meant to imbue Labradorians with a sense of pride of place because, in Saunders’s words, “We know where we came from, we want the right to decide for ourselves where we are going.”<sup>65</sup>

In a 1991 piece written for the *Women’s Almanac*, Saunders talked about her background, her work at *Them Days*, and her love for Labrador. In it she described herself as a “native Labradorian,” and said that “I’ve always felt that Newfoundland looks at Labrador as a place to take things from and does not recognize the people. We’re the poor cousins that don’t count. But when you meet Newfoundland people, individually, they are very warm and supportive. White cultures generally feel superior to native cultures, but that is gradually changing.” She goes on to talk about the negative impacts of industrial development in Labrador and her fears about a possible PCB incinerator and her opposition to the proposed NATO air base at Goose Bay.<sup>66</sup> She concludes:

---

63 *Them Days, Alluring Labrador: A Journey Through Labrador* (Happy Valley–Goose Bay, NL: Author, 1980).

64 “Archival Frontiers in Newfoundland and Labrador,” History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 1/34, TDA.

65 “Bringing the Past to Life,” March 1979, History of *Them Days* Collection, APL 1, file 40/2, TDA.

66 Saunders would later support the continuation of low-level flying exercises by NATO countries at Canadian Forces Base Goose Bay, writing letters to local newspapers and government officials. Some of these letters expressed dismissal of Innu protests and protesters in denigrating terms. Saunders questioned whether the flights were detrimental to the caribou herds, and seemed particularly incensed that national news coverage, in her opinion, designated the Innu as Labrador’s only Indigenous group. While on the one hand Saunders understood the protests as “another example of the impotence felt by natives who have finally been pushed too far,” she is also quoted as saying “They [the Innu] are not the only native people. And that’s how it’s covered in the media”; see Beth Gorham, “Labrador Editor Preserves Tales of the North,” *National General News*, 26 June 1991. Her comments are reflective of a personal resentment but also of the complex politics of recognition in the

“There has been much destruction of dignity of native people in Labrador. The only way to regain that dignity is for each person to take responsibility for himself or herself. No person or no government can *give* you back your dignity, you do it yourself.”<sup>67</sup>

These statements point to the ways that Saunders was simultaneously pushed and pulled by the countervailing currents of colonial power. On the one hand, Saunders seems to understand that feelings of cultural superiority were generalized and generalizable to the larger group, while at the same time dignity was a personal, individual attribute that had to be cultivated in oneself. The ideal of individualism co-exists here with the ideal of cultural cohesiveness, in part because Saunders saw Labradorians as individuals who, together, were making Labrador. There also seems to be an understanding of the “politics of recognition” that Coulthard critiques. Saunders dismisses the notion that a government can give someone dignity, presumably through recognition of their rights or identity.

Similarly, in an earlier speech from 1986, Saunders commented on the divisiveness of federal and provincial political machinations and their impacts on the peoples of Labrador. She stated: “The struggles in Labrador today have been accentuated by the resettlement programs of the Smallwood government and the polarizing of ethnic group[s] by the Federal-Provincial agreements which have created designated communities. The designated communities being Rigolet and communities north and Sheshatshit.”<sup>68</sup> By “designated” she meant designated as receiving funding under federal-provincial general cost-sharing agreements for the provision of services to Indigenous peoples in Labrador. As Adrian Tanner points out, “A unique feature of this arrangement was that funds were targeted at anyone living in certain designated communities, rather than to aboriginal people as such.”<sup>69</sup> Saunders, who identified as Inuit, did not live in one of these communities.

---

settler-state (as per Coulthard and Bird) discussed earlier. The issue of low-level flying was, and remains, extremely divisive in Labrador, with some people, such as Saunders, supporting the economic expansion and job creation it brought, and others, such as Innu elder and activist Tshaukuesh Elizabeth Penashue, reiterating the cost of environmental damage and saying “the government thinks they can help the people by giving them jobs, but it just causes more problems”; see Tshaukuesh Elizabeth Penashue, *Nitinikiau Innusi I Keep the Land Alive*, ed. Elizabeth Yeoman (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2019), 201.

67 “Doris Saunders,” 1991, Doris Saunders Collection, APL 103, file 19, TDA.

68 Elderhostel Happy Valley, 30 June 1986, Doris Saunders Collection, APL 103, file 26, TDA.

69 Tanner, “Aboriginal Peoples,” 247.

When she began her tenure as the editor of *Them Days* in 1975, Labrador's Indigenous groups were in the midst of political reorganization with the intent to reclaim land rights and other ancestral entitlements from the federal and provincial governments with whom relations remained largely uncoded. In 1985, after years of meetings and discussions, the Labrador Metis Association was officially formed in response to two main factors. First, there were internal pressures from "Settlers" living south of "Inuit lands," who were not recognized by the Labrador Inuit Association but whose northern family members/friends/cultural relatives were recognized due to complex and contradictory rules regarding historical residency. Second, there were external developments such as the 1982 amendment to the Canadian Constitution Act, which recognized Métis as Indigenous peoples. The LMA would ultimately become the Labrador Metis Nation (LMN) in 1998 following the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' conclusion that the Métis were a distinct people and nation. The LMN is now formally known as the NunatuKavut Community Council and represents more than 6,000 "Southern Inuit" or "Inuit Metis of Labrador," and its 1991 land claim is still being negotiated.<sup>70</sup>

The Labrador Inuit Association (LIA) had formed in 1973, and "in 1977 [they] initiated a settlement of claim with the Government of Canada seeking rights to the land and sea ice of Northern Labrador." The framework agreement between the LIA and the federal government, outlining the process and timetable for land claim negotiations, was signed in 1990, and the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act was approved by the provincial and federal governments on 6 December 2004 and came into effect in 2005.<sup>71</sup>

Saunders became embroiled in the identity politics surrounding these associations in the 1980s and early 1990s. While she had always called herself a Settler (in the Labrador sense), and was part of the Labrador Metis Association from its inception, she strongly identified with her Inuit heritage, passed on to her by her father and grandmothers. Saunders was born in Cartwright, just south of the cut-off border of the Inuit land claim initiated by the LIA, but her grandmother had been born in Bluff Head, a settlement within the LIA claim area. Thinking she did not fit the residency requirements, Saunders did not apply for membership in the LIA until encouraged to do so in the 1980s. She was turned down initially but then accepted in 1990, and was quickly elected

70 NunatuKavut Community Council, [http://www.nunatukavut.ca/home/who\\_we\\_are.htm](http://www.nunatukavut.ca/home/who_we_are.htm).

71 Nunatsiavut Government, <http://www.nunatsiavut.com/government/the-path-to-self-government/>.

to its board of directors. Almost as quickly, her membership was challenged and revoked on the basis of residency because the president of the association claimed that her grandmother's birthplace of Bluff Head was not a recognized permanent Inuit or Settler community.

In her ensuing fight with the board of the LIA, Saunders wrote multiple letters, passionate entreaties, and denunciations to the LIA board of directors, the media, and members of the provincial and federal governments. Saunders, realizing how close the Land Claims Agreement (in principle) was to being ratified, wrote to the federal Minister for Indian and Northern Affairs Tom Sidon in 1991 and outlined her story. The letter ends with this entreaty:

One of the things holding up the Federal Government's signing of the Agreement in Principle is how the Labrador Inuit Association has defined its membership eligibility. I trust that after reading my material, you will move even more cautiously. To rush forward, for the sake of quickly getting the Land Claims settled, will mean that many people outside the claim area, Inuit and those of Inuit descent who strongly identify with their roots, will be left out.<sup>72</sup>

Appealing directly to the federal government representative was a risky move that would put her at odds with members of the very community with whom she was trying to maintain links. It was a move that speaks to Saunders's determination, and her willingness to wade into the turbid waters stirred up by crosscurrents of colonial power.<sup>73</sup>

In another missive to the Board of Directors of the LIA in 1991, Saunders demonstrated her own ambivalence about the "politics of recognition." She wrote:

I don't know if any of you can understand how I felt about being recognized as a legitimate 'aboriginal.' You were born in the 'right zone' and all your lives have had such obvious and living ties to your roots. I was born and grew up in Cartwright, but my father told me even when I was a little child about my heritage. He had so much

72 Doris Saunders to Tom Sidon, 14 June 1991, Doris Saunders Collection, APL 103, file 32, TDA.

73 There is no evidence that Saunders was accepted back into the Labrador Inuit Association. She did become an active member of the Labrador Metis Association (as mentioned on the next page), the forerunner of today's NunatuKavut Community Council.

pride in his roots, which had been passed on to him by his mother. . . .  
I am secure in the knowledge of who I am and what I represent.<sup>74</sup>

While wanting, and in a sense needing, the recognition of governing bodies, she was also determined to carry on working to represent what she considered to be her place and her people – Labrador and Labradorians.

Somewhat ironically, as Saunders and the team at *Them Days* collected more and more stories of Labrador, their work became a tool of recognition for others. In their 1991 land claim, the Labrador Metis Association would include multiple oral history documents from *Them Days* magazine<sup>75</sup> – most composed in Lydia Campbell's style of combining history and personal memoir<sup>76</sup> – as proof of their Indigenous ancestry and continuous occupation of lands in Southern Labrador. As a member of that association Doris Saunders knew herself to be Indigenous, and, as Labradorian, she struggled to survive on the literal and figurative edge of Canada – *against* those who would deny her heritage, uproot her culture, and repudiate her right to self-determination and *with* those who would embrace her knowledge, her history, and her cultural work at *Them Days*.

Speaking about her life and life's work at an Inuit Roundtable on Education, Language and Culture in Tuktoyaktuk in 1993, she stated: "My dad always told me that anything worth having is worth working for – based on that *Them Days* surely must be worth a lot. He also said that anything worth doing is worth doing right, and this I have tried to do. When the struggle becomes too burdensome I will retire knowing that I have succeeded in continuing the work started when my great, great-grandmother Lydia Campbell began writing sketches of her life on December 25, 1893."<sup>77</sup>

74 Doris Saunders to Board of Directors, Labrador Inuit Association, 25 May 1991, Doris Saunders Collection, APL 103, file 32, TDA.

75 Labrador Metis Association, VFPL 277, file 4, TDA.

76 For a discussion of Campbell and her influence, see Marianne P. Stopp, "I, Old Lydia Campbell," in Kennedy, *History and Renewal of Labrador's Inuit-Métis*, 155–79, and Roberta Buchanan, "Autobiography as History: The Autobiographies of Three Labrador Women – Lydia Campbell, Margaret Baikie, and Elizabeth Goudie," in *Their Lives and Times: Women in Newfoundland and Labrador, A Collage*, ed. Carmelita McGrath, Barbara Neis, and Marilyn Porter (St. John's: Killick Press, 1995): 67–74.

77 *Inuit Roundtable on Education, Language and Culture, Tuktoyaktuk, 1993*, Doris Saunders Collection, APL 103, file 28, TDA.

## Conclusion

The story of *Them Days* is ongoing and multifaceted. Today, the magazine and its archives continue to garner awards, yet still receive insufficient funds to do their important work.<sup>78</sup> The archive is full to bursting, and many of Labrador's most notable inhabitants still entrust them with their treasures.<sup>79</sup> But they have no full-time archivist on staff and cannot afford to hire one. Each year four issues are produced, along with occasional special volumes dedicated to various aspects of Labrador's past, a remarkable feat given the fact that they have only two full-time paid employees. Add to this the intangible benefits that *Them Days* provides to the communities – including acting as a font of information for amateur and professional researchers, participating in cultural events, and hosting fundraisers – and you get a sense of the impact it has had in Labrador. Indeed, the very success of *Them Days* has caused it to become something of a cultural monolith – one which has dominated the Labrador literary landscape. What Kristina Fagan describes as the Labrador literary tradition,<sup>80</sup> which began with Lydia Campbell and was kept alive by Doris Saunders, has continued to flourish in *Them Days*, where its style of narration and subjective fascination with ethnographic detail has become the dominant method of storytelling.<sup>81</sup>

Beyond the obvious success of a small regional periodical, which is deeply significant in its own right, this complicated story reveals something more. When read through, against, and with pertinent events in provincial and federal history, the story shows that the intertwined struggles for recognition by both *Them Days* and Doris Saunders have been struggles against the prevailing currents of colonial power in the settler-state. And while *Them Days* is certainly not the only underfunded periodical or cultural institution in Canada, their situation presents a case study of how policies designed to maintain the assimilatory status quo, such as those pertaining to multiculturalism and

---

78 At a ceremony to bestow the 2019 Heritage Award on *Them Days* from the Newfoundland and Labrador Historical Society, editor Aimee Chaulk reminded all in attendance that *Them Days* works on a shoestring budget while its archives are overflowing with materials waiting to be catalogued due to a lack of staff. The author was present as Aimee Chaulk made these comments at Government House, St. John's on 22 February 2019; see also <https://www.govhouse.nl.ca/newfoundland-and-labrador-historical-society-heritage-award-ceremony/>.

79 For instance, Robin McGrath recently donated her papers to them, and Tshaukuesh Elizabeth Penashue has left the originals of her diaries in their care.

80 Kristina Fagan, "'Well done old half breed woman': Lydia Campbell and the Labrador Literary Tradition," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 49–76.

81 Some critique the flattening effect this may be having on Labrador literature; see Morgon Mills, "Stephen and Florence Tasker and Unromantic Labrador," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 32, no. 1 (2017): 151–82.

Indian status, can subtly and effectively undermine the work of people and organizations trying to change it.

**VICKI S. HALLETT** est professeure adjointe au département d'études sur le genre à l'Université Memorial. Ses sujets de recherche comprennent la co-constitution du lieu et de l'identité telle qu'observée dans les récits de vie, la théorie féministe et l'histoire et la culture de Terre-Neuve et-Labrador. Parmi ses publications récentes figurent *Mistress of the Blue Castle: The Writing Life of Phebe Florence Miller* (St. John's, ISER Books, 2018) et « "I Know Who I Am and What I Represent": Asserting Indigenous Labrador Identity », *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, vol. 34, no 2 (hiver 2019), p. 271-301.

**VICKI S. HALLETT** is an assistant professor in the Department of Gender Studies at Memorial University whose research interests include the co-constitution of place and identity as witnessed in life narratives, feminist theory, and Newfoundland and Labrador history and culture. Her recent publications include *Mistress of the Blue Castle: The Writing Life of Phebe Florence Miller* (St. John's: ISER Books, 2018) and "'I Know Who I Am and What I Represent': Asserting Indigenous Labrador Identity," *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 34, no. 2 (Winter 2019): 271-301.