

A history of Preparing Teachers for Northern Labrador

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Abstract

This article explores the history of Indigenous teacher education in Labrador, Canada. The focus is on Memorial University's involvement in this area from the 1970s to the present, including the Teacher Education Program in Labrador (TEPL), the Native and Northern Bachelor of Education, and the community-based Inuit Bachelor of Education. The authors examine contributions, strengths and weaknesses of these programs and conclude with some thoughts on possible future directions. To our knowledge, there has not been a published history of Memorial University's role in teacher education in Labrador in recent years. Thus, this article contributes to knowledge about this history.

Introduction

Northern communities consistently express their need for teachers who understand the local cultures and are able to teach in a culturally responsive way. Language is also a high priority for many communities. To maintain the wealth of knowledge and culture conveyed through Indigenous¹ languages, there is also an urgent need for language teachers who are both language speakers and who have the pedagogical skills and knowledge to teach the language. This article contributes a brief

¹ Indigenous is the term currently being used in the province to refer to the First Peoples of Canada. The synonymous terms Aboriginal, First Nations, Native, and Indian are used when quoted from other sources.

factual history of Memorial University's role in teacher education for Labrador, which, to our knowledge, has not been published. We compiled this history from academic articles, news items, interviews, reflections, internal documents, course syllabi, and personal communications.

This article is a contribution to the special issue on teaching and teacher education in the circumpolar north and is a starting place for possible future work. While two of Memorial's past teacher education programs for Labrador, the Teacher Education Program in Labrador (TEPL) and the Native and Northern BEd, were open to all, most students were from the Indigenous communities of Labrador. Thus, for the purpose of this article we are focusing mainly on Indigenous teacher education for Labrador. However, there is also a significant need for specialized courses for non-Indigenous teachers who are or will be teaching in northern Indigenous communities. This could be a useful area to explore in a future article. The present article looks at the specific and different histories of teacher education for Innu and Inuit schools, the need for Indigenous language and cultural education, and some details and critiques of previous programs.

Language has always been central to teacher education in Labrador and a priority for the communities, yet it has also always been one of the biggest challenges. Schooling has often contributed significantly to language loss. It is crucial to make every effort to prepare teachers who can support Indigenous languages and cultures as much as possible. Two Indigenous languages are spoken as first languages in Labrador. One is Inuktitut, which is spoken in various dialects across a vast area reaching from eastern Russia to Alaska, and northern Canada to southeastern Greenland. The other is Innu-Aimun, a language of the Algonquian family spoken by the Innu, whose traditional territories stretch across the Quebec-Labrador peninsula from Mashteuiatsh in the southwest to Natuashish in the northeast and Pakua-shipu in the southeast. Innu-aimun also has several different dialects

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action (2015) include several calls that are significant for teacher education. These are calls to produce reports comparing funding and educational attainments of Aboriginal peoples and others in Canada; to develop and implement new Aboriginal education legislation that would support the closing of educational achievement gaps; to improve education and employment attainment levels and success rates; to support the full participation of Aboriginal parents in their children's education; to develop culturally appropriate curricula; and to protect Aboriginal languages. The Commission also calls for adequate funding of Aboriginal education at all levels; "culturally appropriate early childhood education programs (12);" support for "Aboriginal-language revitalization and preservation (14 iii);" and the creation of "university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages (16)." Perhaps most relevant of all, there are calls for funding for post-secondary institutions "to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms (62 ii);" to develop and

teach “Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools (63 i);” and to build “student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect (63 iii).” We are writing this article in the context of the The Commission’s calls, in the hope that understanding our past experiences in teacher education may help us respond to these calls in the best way possible.

Separate histories: The evolution of Innu and Inuit Teacher Education in Labrador

Historically, teachers were difficult to recruit. Most came from outside of Labrador, were not familiar with unique aspects of Labrador cultures, and did not stay for extended periods of time. In an attempt to find teachers in 1946, Reverend Peacock, the superintendent of the Moravian Mission from 1942 to 1971, sent a telegram to the Moravian Mission congregation in Alberta. In part, the letter read: “Urgently require one lady teacher, over twenty-one years of age for Boarding school. . . She needs courage and determination matriculation if possible” (cited in Procter, 2020, p. 151). Given the shortage of teachers, the Mission decided to support locals who wanted to train as teachers and would be willing to travel to a southern university to do so. Beatrice Ford Watts from Nain accepted this offer and went on to become the first Labrador Inuit teacher.

Newfoundland and Labrador was a dominion of the British Commonwealth until 1934 when its self-governing status was suspended. After this time it was controlled by the colonial secretary in London until it joined Canada in 1949. Schooling then became mandatory for all children between the ages of seven and fourteen, and standardized provincial regulations were put in place for curriculum and teacher licensure. Teaching was to be in one of Canada’s official languages, either English or French. English was chosen to be the language of instruction for all schools at the time. Prior to Confederation, some teaching had been done in Inuktitut. This change of language policy occurred without any preparation or input from the Inuit and led to Labrador Inuktitut being retired from the school system (Johns & Mazurkewich, 2001). It was not reintroduced officially in the Inuit community schools until 1975 (Tuglavina, 2010).

After completing her teacher education at Memorial University in 1951, Beatrice Watts returned to Nain to teach. Despite the language policy of the time, she informally developed an Inuktitut program for the students she taught. The Labrador East Integrated School Board, which ran the schools in the five Inuit communities on the north coast, hired Beatrice in 1970 to develop an Inuktitut language program in these schools and to create a course on traditional Inuit skills (Green, 1998; Johnson & Budgell, 1989). In 1975 she became the program coordinator and worked with Memorial University to create the Teacher Education Program in Labrador (TEPL), which began in 1978 (Johns & Mazurkewich, 2001; Sharpe, 1992; Gleason, 1983).

Meanwhile, most Innu were still living on the land until the late 1960s. The Catholic Church had established mission schools staffed by Oblate priests in Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu in the early 1950s. These schools operated during the summer months when the Innu came out to the coast for the season. Lessons were taught primarily in Innu-aimun by Peenamin MacKenzie (an Innu teacher) and some of the priests (Davis, 2020). The first professional teachers arrived in 1959 and the Labrador Catholic School Board assumed responsibility for the schools in 1960 (Samson, 2000). A standardized curriculum was introduced, English became the operating language, and the schools began to follow the North American school year (Ryan, 1988).

Because the province's denominational education system divided the schools into Protestant and Catholic school boards, students and teachers at the Catholic school in Sheshatshiu were separate from the Protestant school in North West River. This trend was followed throughout Labrador where the churches involved in education--Catholic, United, Moravian, and Anglican--were opposed to exposing their students to other religious teachings (Procter, 2020). Most missionaries and government officers involved in setting up the schools saw them as a means of assimilating the Innu. However, many children attended school only seasonally until the late 1960s or even later as their families continued to spend the winters in *nutshimit*² (Schuurman, 1994, p. 32). This meant that their language and traditional culture were retained. However, the Innu recognized that their children would also need to go to school and that the existing school system was not meeting their needs. For example, in 1987, Innu activist and community leader, Elizabeth Penashue (2019) wrote:

We don't have enough Innu teachers at the school. Ever since the school was built here in Sheshatshiu, our children are losing their history and culture. They don't live the way we used to and they have very unhealthy lives. We should be allowed to run our own school; then we'd have a say in what our children are taught. The teachers have very different knowledge and beliefs than we do. The school doesn't have Innu books and the students aren't taught in their own language... Neither the school principal nor the superintendent wants to hear about the

² The Innu word, "nutshimit" expresses a concept that cannot readily be conveyed in English. It has been variously translated as "in the bush," "in the country," "on the land," "inland," and "in the wilderness." Jean-Paul Lacasse (Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire: Innu tipenitamun*, Québec QC: Septentrion, 249) states that "nutshimit" used to be widely understood as the opposite of "uinipeku" ("the sea") but currently is more often used as the opposite of the reserve. Most significantly, the late Innu leader, Tanien Ashini was quoted as saying "to reduce the meaning of the word 'nutshimit' to 'in the bush' does not describe what it means to us. It is a place where we are at home." (in Colin Samson and James Wilson, *Canada's Tibet: The Killing of the Innu*. Survival International, 1999, 190.)

concerns we have for our children's education... We have to teach them our culture—they need to know who they are. (pp. 6-7)

That same year, another Innu leader, Ben Michel, spoke even more forcefully about the situation at a conference on teacher education in North West River:

What can we do for kids who spend six months of the school year in the bush? I believe the intent of the school system, a foreign one at that, negates against the children learning about who they are, feeling human deep in their family roots, what their history, culture and society are. The school is responsible for cultural assimilation and genocide. This is the intent of governments, to make children ashamed of their own culture. The teachers themselves have been processed through this assimilation machine. This has left a very deep scarring in our minds and hearts... Our colonizers will have to understand we have a right to self-determination, to teach our children our own history. (Native Teacher Training Conference Report, 1987, p. 3)

In 1991, the Innu Education Management Committee (IEMC) submitted a proposal to the provincial Minister of Education for the transfer of school control which advocated that "education is the most vital component in preparation for self-determination and for the survival of Aboriginal people" (IEMC, 1992, p. 96). Seventeen years later, in 2009, the Labrador Innu assumed complete responsibility for K-12 education services in Natuashish and Sheshatshiu with the inauguration of the Innu School Board MTIE Mamu Tshishkutamashutau – Innu Education (Government of Canada, 2015). A year earlier, in 2008, Kanani Davis had become the first Innu speaking graduate of Memorial University with a Bachelor of Education, along with linguistic training in standardized Innu spelling and experience developing many Innu children's books in Innu-aimun. She is now Director of Administration & Professional Services for Mamu Tshishkutamashutau Innu Education, Inc (Davis, 2020).

Calls for Indigenous language programming

A Labrador Inuit Association (LIA) education conference took place in Nain in 1977. It resulted in a call, by the Inuit community, for further Inuktitut language program development including an Inuktitut immersion program (Green, 1998; Johnson & Budgell, 1989; Mazurkewich, 1991). With this request came the need for further teacher training, especially for language speakers.

More recently, the National Committee Strategy on Inuit Education recommended a priority on developing education leadership and increasing the number of bilingual educators across Inuit Nunangat (National Inuit Committee on Education,

2011). The Inuit of Labrador have continued to advocate for increased Inuktitut language teaching as well as curricula and pedagogies that reflect Inuit culture and worldviews. The Nunatsiavut Government provides the provincial school board with additional funding to support the teaching of K-12 Inuktitut, as well as Inuit arts and traditional skills. There is now a critical need for Inuit speakers to offer the language program (Moore & Tulloch, 2020). The NunatuKavut Community Council also works with the provincial school board to bring Inuit programming to schools in their region on the south coast of Labrador.

In the 2013 Report on Community Consultations on schooling in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish, the need for Innu teachers was emphasized over and over again, as was the importance of non-Innu teachers being knowledgeable or open to learning Innu language and culture: “Innu teacher training needs to be provided for young Innu and an accelerated program needs to be offered for committed CAs [classroom assistants] with a lot of classroom experience.” (Fouillard, 2013, p. 47). School plans “should include strategies to encourage Innu people, including existing committed staff, to study education and become certified teachers” (Fouillard, 2013, p. 48). One parent summed up a vision for Innu education in which the schools would have some of the highest academic standards in the country, while children would also spend time with Elders in *nutshimit*

...overlooking a river and watching the salmon run or preparing the fire to clean the porcupine... at this school, kids would be immersed in the language and learn the way of the land. A place to walk in both cultures, learn to wear your moccasins and be that much closer to your academic dreams!” (Fouillard, 2013, p. 44)

A follow up the next year stated that, in the shared vision of participants,

The children will learn about their language and culture, as well as the provincial curriculum. Staff will be well-trained and caring and many will be Innu... Our children will be proud to be Innu and ready to take on self-government.” (Sheshatshiu & Natuashish Community Forums, 2014, p. 1)

While participants expressed pride at their strong connections to language and culture, they were also concerned about their children’s language loss.

Recommendations for what could be done to address this included

more Innu-aimun, culture, crafts and Innu-aitun; teachers and CAs [classroom assistants who would be Innu] co-teaching; CAs in all classrooms; hir[ing] elders on staff...; more trained Innu teachers;

teach[ing] non-Innu teachers about language and culture... more Innu time interaction and curriculum; and Innu homework. One group said Innu language and culture should be the base of all learning in the school” (Sheshatshiu & Natuashish Community Forums, 2014, p. 2).

More recently, earlier this year, the Director of the Innu School Board, Kanani Davis reaffirmed, “We would like to see more Innu in our classrooms teaching our Innu children, especially now where the language is endangered” (CBC News, 2020).

History of university programs

Through federal and provincial funding for Indigenous post-secondary education, a number of universities across Canada developed Indigenous teacher education programs for northern teaching. Memorial University of Newfoundland was one of them, offering a native and northern teaching diploma program, Teacher Education Program in Labrador (TEPL), to train Inuit and Innu language and culture specialists as teachers’ aides in the classroom (Johns & Mazurkewich, 2001, p. 356). Jerry MacNeil, the Coordinator with Native and Northern Education at Memorial University, stated at the Labrador Inuit Education Conference in 1977 that, although Memorial University could prepare non-Indigenous teachers to go to the north to work “it was more important to train [Innu] and Inuit teachers to do these jobs” (Labrador Inuit Education Conference, 1977, p. 42).

In September 1977, Memorial University appointed an advisory committee to work with the TEPL coordinator. The committee had representation from the Federation of Newfoundland Indians, the Naskapi-Montagnais Innu Association, and the Labrador Inuit Association, as well as the Provincial Department of Education and the University. The program was based in the Faculty of Education but the university’s Department of Linguistics was also involved in developing and teaching courses on Labrador Inuktitut and Innu-aimun. Language speakers were trained as co-instructors for the courses (Department of Linguistics, Memorial University of Newfoundland, n.d.). The program proposal for TEPL received University Senate approval May 9, 1978 (Gleason, 1983). It consisted of 20 courses, 14 of which were in Education. Six courses were offered each year, two per semester with the first courses offered in the summer of 1978. These courses were delivered mostly in Labrador.

The TEPL graduates received a Diploma in Native and Northern Education (Sharpe, 1992). The first graduate of TEPL was Francesca Snow from Sheshatshiu who received her diploma in May 1983. She went on to become the first Innu principal in Labrador, working at Peenamin MacKenzie School in Sheshashiu (Samson, 2000). Inuk Trudy Flowers graduated in the fall of 1983 as the second student to complete the program. At that time, there were approximately twenty students taking TEPL courses (Gleason, 1983).

The Bachelor of Education (Native and Northern) was approved by Memorial University in 1987 (Sharpe, 1992) and was first offered in 1989 (Johns and Mazurkewich). It was a five-year program consisting of 50 courses. This degree program met the university's requirements for an undergraduate teacher education degree while also incorporating courses specific to the Labrador Indigenous cultures. TEPL courses were accepted as credits for the program and some TEPL graduates went on to complete the degree (Sharpe, 1992). In the Native and Northern B.Ed., students who were Indigenous language speakers and chose to specialize in Native Language teaching, could take further courses in Inuktitut or Innu-aimun literacy and language teaching. However, linguists Alanna Johns and Irene Mazurkewich (2001), both of whom were extensively involved in the program, stated that some of the language pedagogy courses were still under development in 2001. They argued that Indigenous language courses "went from being a small part of a small program [TEPL] to a small part of a big program [BEd], even though both the communities and the students themselves (speakers and non-speakers) clearly saw language as a prominent issue" (Johns & Mazurkewich, 2001, p. 357).

In 2010, Sophie Tuglavina confirmed that teacher training was an ongoing issue. She had worked as an Inuktitut teacher, director of the Inuktitut curriculum centre, and Program Specialist for Native Education for the Labrador School Board. She noted that many of the Inuktitut teachers were preparing to retire and there were no new teachers to take their place. She suggested that people interested in teaching Inuktitut should enroll in the Native and Northern BEd as the TEPL program was no longer functioning adequately (Tuglavina, 2010).

Sarah Townley, a now retired Inuktitut Program Specialist for Inuit Programming for the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, also spoke about the concerns regarding available Inuktitut teachers and the importance of teacher education in Labrador:

There are some teachers retiring soon so we're going to have to start looking for more Inuktitut teachers and new teachers are going to be hard to come by because we don't have a TEPL program like we did before... So we don't have any Inuktitut teachers coming up unless we get them off the street... We used to have Native and Northern education through MUN and that program was working really well. I went through that route. I think it would be beneficial for the people who want to teach Inuktitut to go through the program..." (in Yeoman, 2013, p. 61)

Entrance to the TEPL and the Native and Northern BEd was the same as a regular application to the university where students have either completed high school matriculation requirements or were eligible to enter the university as mature students

(Sharpe, 1992, pp. 4-5). One difference between the TEPL and the BEd was that the graduates of the degree program were eligible for a higher level of teacher licensure and therefore a higher salary. There was a shift in the goals between the TEPL and the BEd programs. Memorial's teacher education for Labrador went from training teachers how to teach specialized Indigenous subjects to training teachers to meet the general educational needs of northern Labrador communities "which includes many common cultural components" (Johns & Mazurkewich, 2001, p. 357). However, the language component is not shared cross culturally in Labrador. Although Sarah Townley and some others had positive experiences, the Native and Northern BEd program was discontinued in 2015 due to challenges offering the required courses within the program format, the small number of graduates, and concerns expressed by many past and current students that a new community-based program was needed.

The Inuit Bachelor of Education

The Inuit Bachelor of Education (IBED) began in 2014 as a partnership of the Nunatsiavut Government³, the Labrador Institute of Memorial University, the Faculty of Education of Memorial University, and the College of the North Atlantic. The goal was to prepare Inuit teachers for teaching in Labrador. The program focused on culturally responsive teaching and Inuit culture was infused in all aspects of the program (Moore & Galway, 2018). Jodie Lane, Director of Education for the Nunatsiavut Government, described it as "a program that would train new teachers to teach in a way that encourages culture and language to flow through all curriculum and to emphasize land based and deep learning using the community and local resources" (personal communication, December 20, 2019).

The Faculty of Education and the Nunatsiavut Government worked collaboratively throughout the program. Memorial University provided both a lead faculty member and a program coordinator on-site for the five years, as well as course instructors. The Nuatsiavut Government provided a cultural consultant, additional staffing for extended library hours, and academic and financial support for students. Most instructors travelled to Labrador to teach in blocks of time.

One aspect of the delivery of the IBED that I really appreciated is the genuine nature of the instructors to want to teach the courses in the most effective way possible. Many of the instructors would contact me prior to teaching a course to see if there was anything we (NG) wanted covered that semester. Whether it was content or instructional style, instructors were open to suggestions and were comfortable enough to ask us questions to make the courses richer (Jodie Lane, personal communication, December 20, 2019).

³ Nunatsiavut is the Inuit region in northern Labrador and is one of the four regions of Inuit Nunangat or the Inuit homeland.

The five-year program ran for three semesters each year: fall, winter, and spring/summer. The teacher education courses were those required for a Bachelor of Education (Primary/ Elementary) at Memorial University's main campus and graduates of the program were eligible for teacher licensure in Newfoundland and Labrador or across Canada (with the exception of Quebec where there are specific language requirements).

In addition to the university courses, students were enrolled in the Labrador Inuktitut Training Program (LITP) that was offered as a concurrent language program by the Nunatsiavut Government. LITP was a program to learn Inuktitut and linked teacher education with a language rejuvenation strategy. IBED student Doris Boase spoke of the importance, to her, of learning Inuktitut and teaching it. "As a child, my dream was to become an Inuktitut teacher specifically. I took so much pride in Inuktitut in school. My Inuktitut teachers were my mentors and role models" (Tulloch, 2017, 1:10-1:28). Jodie Lane explains the language program:

During the development of the IBED, another NG department, the then Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism (now Language, Culture & Tourism), was working on a program of their own. The Labrador Inuktitut Training Program was designed to focus on teaching Inuktitut with a conversational focus as opposed to a grammar-based focus and was targeted towards adults. The LITP was nearing the pilot phase so it was suggested that the IBED cohort take the LITP modules throughout the duration of the program. It was a compromise, as the delivery method would be different from how the LITP was designed. However, those around the table eagerly accepted the suggestion to at least try. Our expectations were conservative, as we knew that this method of delivery would not be able to produce fluent Inuktitut speakers, but we all recognized that any amount of Inuktitut language training was invaluable. (personal communication, December 20, 2019)

As such, these future educators would be able to contribute to language rejuvenation either as language teachers or as classroom teachers who integrate Inuktitut across the curriculum (Moore, 2019). The language, according to student Alanna Edmunds,

...is so lost on the coast...there's not very many speakers left and we just want to bring it to our children... I would love to go back home and teach what I know to the kids at home because not very many of them are influenced by Inuktitut like and I think that's a very important thing to embrace our culture part. (Tulloch, 2017, 3:22- 3:38)

Students commented there were a number of factors related to the program that helped them for the five years. The first is that, like TEPL, the IBED was offered in Labrador with classes taking place in Goose Bay. The second factor is that a cohort model was used that gave students the opportunity to work together and support one another for the duration of the program (Tulloch et al.). The students graduated in May of 2019.

Current Innu Approach to Teacher Education

For the Innu, the linguistic challenges are different. While they too are dealing with language loss, Innu-aimun is still the first language for most of the nearly 700 students in the Innu School Board. However, teachers often speak only English and many curriculum resources are only in that language. To be able to place well qualified speakers on Innu-aimun in classrooms quickly, the school board has taken on teacher education and is working with Nipissing University to develop a two year program for Innu teacher assistants. School Board Director, Kanani Davis hopes to have about eight to 10 people trained in each community. Katie Rich, Natuashish's community Director of Education, adds that the school board is also educating non-Indigenous teachers about the Innu way of life through experiential education by taking them to stay in nutshimit with families (CBC News, 2018). The school board has also produced childrens' books in Innu-aimun and developed two high school courses in that language: History and Innu-aimun Language Arts. The latter is being piloted this fall (Davis, 2020).

Discussion

Having teacher education programs available for Innu and Inuit who are language speakers and want to be teachers addresses the need both for language teachers and for teachers who understand the respective cultures. Each of the three teacher education programs offered had strengths and challenges associated with it.

The programs were developed in response to the need for teacher training for Labradorians and they did make a contribution. In 1987, Innu teacher Francesca Snow stated that "in the 60s and 70s there were no native teachers. With TEPL this has changed. Now there are seven certified teachers and eight more in training... If there was no TEPL program, things would not have changed a bit." (Native Teacher Training Conference, p. 8). In a recent interview, Kanani Davis added that one of the reasons Innu people can still speak, read and write their own language is that the TEPL trained teachers kept it alive by teaching solely in Innu-aimun (Davis, 2020). However, Jeddore (cited in Clarke and MacKenzie, 1980) suggested that the Indigenous peoples should have had a greater role in developing TEPL. Johns & Mazurkewich (2001) noted that TEPL was criticized as assimilationist and, in their opinion, the Native and Northern BEd was also assimilationist. Courses were taught in English, sometimes causing barriers for students whose first language was Innu-aimun or Inuktitut. It is

interesting to note that it was sometimes other students who translated for them (Clarke & MacKenzie, 1980).

Both the TEPL and the IBED were offered in Labrador but the Native and Northern BEd was offered in St. John's. The timing of courses in both TEPL and the Native and Northern BEd was problematic. Students often did not know for sure when courses would be offered, making it difficult to plan. Courses offered in St. John's were also more difficult for students to access. At the same time, Sharpe (1992) noted that instructor travel to Labrador was expensive and inclement weather could alter scheduling. Meanwhile, there were challenges offering courses to small numbers of students across different communities and these challenges were only increased by the fact that the courses had to be offered to groups of student-teachers with different languages: the Innu, who still spoke Innu-aimun, and the Inuit, most of whom spoke Inuktitut at that time but whose communities were struggling with language loss. The infrequent offering of courses led to students' frustration as they were not able to complete their programs in a timely fashion and had difficulty remembering content of related courses over long periods. Memorial University's report on post-secondary education in Labrador (Jong, 2007), concluded that TEPL "...had very limited success, in large part because it did not meet the needs of participants" (p. 30).

Although TEPL addressed the pressure to hire local teachers for Labrador schools, the graduates could teach only language and culture. As well, they received the lowest level of teacher certification in the province, thus creating a divide between Indigenous language teachers and outside teachers who had higher levels of certification and were more highly paid. To make matters worse, the linguistic and cultural knowledge of the Indigenous teachers was never recognized with a higher level of pay or certification, despite its obvious value. The undervaluing of TEPL graduates was addressed by William Kalleo at the 1977 Labrador Inuit Education Conference when he appealed to the government officials who were present to stop referring to Indigenous language teachers as "teachers' aides" (p. 37). Graduates of the Bachelor of Education programs, both the Native and Northern BEd and the Inuit Bachelor of Education, were eligible for licensure as teachers. TEPL graduates qualified for teaching certificates but not teacher licensure in the province. This has resulted in on-going wage disparity and marginalization of some language teachers within the education system (Moore & Tulloch, 2020).

Not only was language proficiency not recognized with higher levels of certification or pay, but Indigenous language speakers who are students in Memorial University's teacher education programs have never been eligible for course credits for their language knowledge and this has been a contentious issue. Johns & Mazurkewich (2001) maintain that "teachers who speak a native language must be afforded special recognition and respect for this knowledge and provided with the linguistic and pedagogical training to teach language" (p. 358). This recommendation has still not been addressed. To do so would be a significant step in decolonization.

Language teacher education is imperative for Indigenous communities where language maintenance or revitalization are issues. Shuswap linguist, Marianne Ignace (2016), Director of the First Nations Language Centre and First Nations Languages Program at Simon Fraser University, works with communities and elders on language revitalization projects. She cites members of the Indigenous Languages Institute who maintain that, along with speaking an Indigenous language, teachers must also understand the structure and function of the language in order to teach it (Ignace, 2016). In addition to such knowledge, Johns and Mazurkewich state “it is absolutely vital that there be courses on the pedagogical aspects of teaching a specific aboriginal language” (p. 357).

Conclusions

A review of post secondary education in Labrador in January 2007 by Michael Collins, Associate Vice-President (Academic), Memorial University of Newfoundland came to the conclusion that the 20 credit TEPL diploma program had been a failure even though it had been revised twice as it had only successfully graduated 33 students in 27 years. Some Innu in Québec had enrolled in options with McGill University, which had some success in teacher training for the Cree in Northern Quebec. Although the program was being revised, the time frame was seen as much too slow. One failure of the program that was pointed out was the lack of identifying or ensuring a consistent academic level of incoming students and consequently students were faced with courses without proper academic background. Another failure was that many educators that were responsible for developing and delivering relevant and appropriate post-secondary programming in Labrador were based outside the region and did not have a full understanding of the local needs (Collins, 2007).

A review of the Native and Northern teacher education programs at Memorial University of Newfoundland in 2016 by two of the authors (Moore and Yeoman) sought input from the five Indigenous groups in the province. Feedback from the NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) described some of their concerns with the Bachelor of Education Program at Memorial University. This included the point that students have an increased interest in learning when their Indigenous culture is reflected in the material that they are taught in schools or university. NCC’s response also highlighted that education curriculum needs to accurately reflect the life, history and culture of Inuit of NunatuKavut, which has not always been accurately represented by academics and curriculum developers. They noted that, because of a lack of resources, their staff had little opportunity to consult with communities, former students, parents or elders due to lack of resources about teacher education needs. They highlighted that students have been negatively impacted when teachers have been misinformed about the people of Nunatukavut, their culture, and Indigenous cultures in general. Therefore, teachers need more time and training to become knowledgeable of the diversity that exists within Indigenous cultures in Labrador and the province

(Moore & Yeoman, 2016). The review put forward a number of recommendations including: establishing a community-based teacher education program, removing all references to the TEPL diploma from the calendar, developing a mechanism for official recognition of language skills, the inclusion of land-based and cultural knowledge in Memorial University's teacher education programs, and an Indigenous studies focus area available within the primary/elementary teacher education program (Moore & Yeoman, 2016)

There continue to be barriers for Labradorians who want to complete a teacher education program relevant to Labrador cultures and languages. These obstacles include the lack of culturally relevant teacher education curriculum, as well as courses specifically for language learning and teaching. The scheduling of courses and access to course locations has impacted student progress. As a Nunatsiavut specific program, the IBED was available for only one of the three Indigenous groups in Labrador. Memorial University does not currently offer any teacher education program for Indigenous Labradorians.

Future directions

Through a partnership with the Nunavut Arctic College, Memorial University is currently supporting the Nunavut Teacher Education Program located in communities across Nunavut. Students entering the program take an initial two-year language and culture diploma program, after which they may continue with the teacher education courses. This tiered model offers some benefits for northern teacher education. The two stages offer shorter periods of time commitment yet can still lead to a BEd. This model can also provide an important foundation in language and culture essential for culturally responsive teaching. The first two years may also be an opportunity for the preparation of classroom assistants. Memorial University has recently created the School of Arctic and Subarctic Studies in Goose Bay, Labrador. Programming is now under development, providing opportunities to continue to support language rejuvenation and teacher education. Given the success of the IBED, we hope that we can use this model and our experiences in Nunavut to develop future community-based programs in partnership with the communities.

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