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Uranium and the Boundaries of Indigeneity in Nunatsiavut, Labrador

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ABSTRACT

When the Labrador Inuit temporarily banned uranium development on their lands in Nunatsiavut in 2008, indigeneity and extractive development seemed to be incompatible. However, as this paper illustrates, the relationship between the two is more complex than a simple dichotomy. Throughout settler colonial history, both colonizers and Inuit have used ideas about indigeneity to support or impede resource development, and to justify, neutralize, or challenge attempts at economic and political control. The production of social categories and boundaries, as illustrated by the history of indigeneity in Nunatsiavut, has long been used for both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic purposes. Indigeneity and extractive industry have developed in tandem as functions of settler colonialism, and their relationship reflects this tangled history, as they exert diverse pressures on Inuit decisions about extractive development in Nunatsiavut.

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1. Introduction

In April 2008, Inuit politicians in Nunatsiavut, Labrador, shocked the uranium industry by voting to prohibit uranium development on Labrador Inuit Lands for three years. The decision caused the stock value of a company involved in exploring the rich uranium deposits of the region to plummet by 35% amid dire predictions about the probability of future mining projects (CBC, 2008). "The moratorium [will]...cast a dark shadow over what development [will] look like in that area," one exploration company spokesperson argued (Labradorian, 2008, A4). Many Inuit, however, praised the new-found power of Inuit self-government to withstand the onslaught of industry: "I'm proud of our government's decision. Hats off to them for taking responsibility for our future generations", commented one Nunatsiavut Inuk. "To us it means our people can continue their way of life" (fieldnotes, April 2008). Indigeneity had momentarily prevailed over industry, it seemed, and had proven to be capable of presenting a substantial obstacle to extractive development.

Indigeneity and extractive industry are often framed as incompatible and in conflicting opposition to each other. If one were to understand the controversy over uranium development in Labrador only in the context of the 2008 moratorium, this dichotomy might be a natural fit. Yet the relationship between the two is much more complex than a single episode can portray. As this paper will argue, indigeneity and extractive industrial development are, in fact, both products of a settler colonial history, and have been shaped in articulation with each other. The development of indigeneity and extractive industry are intertwined: at various times, different interests have mobilized the production of indigeneity as an object of government to facilitate, control, or challenge resource development. Using the history of uranium exploration in Labrador as an example, this paper explores the genealogy of interrelations between indigeneity and extractive industry in order to examine how the production of social categories plays a central role in managing social difference and in justifying, masking, and challenging attempts at economic and political control in settler colonial contexts.

In developing this argument, I am linking the anthropological literature on indigeneity and the production of difference with recent work on settler colonialism. Using an understanding of culture as socially constituted and an on-going project, political anthropologists have examined how people manipulate cultural categories of differentiation (Wolf, 2001; Gupta et al., 1997). The possible range of differences between people is vast, but the differences that are identified and marked as being socially significant can vary greatly, and can have far-reaching political and economic impacts. Indigenous difference, or indigeneity, is a cultural category that is created within settler colonial contexts as a way to deal with social and economic tensions that arise when settlers 'come to stay' on Indigenous lands. The specific aspects of difference that are marked within indigeneity discourses are dependent on situation and are often contested, making indigeneity an extremely mobile and productive concept. Internal and external social diversity and disagreements about how indigeneity

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should be understood and represented can generate multiple discourses, some of which endure over a period of time, while others fade from usage. Despite its flexibility, indigeneity can assume immense authority in appearing to be inherent, natural, and unchanging. In considering indigeneity in this light, we can examine the fluid, contested concept as an object of government that is produced in various ways by both dominant interests and subaltern actors in ongoing struggles over political and economic resources (Dombrowski, 2001; Starn, 2011; Coulthard, 2014).

In this paper, I am interested in exploring how indigeneity discourses articulate with the logics of settler colonialism, as theorized by Lorenzo Veracini (2010, 2011) and Patrick Wolfe (1999, 2011). As Wolfe describes it, "The primary object of settler-colonization is the land itself . . . .[It] is at base a winner-take-all project whose dominant feature is not exploitation but replacement. The logic of this project, a sustained institutional tendency to eliminate the Indigenous population, informs a range of historical practices that might otherwise appear distinct—invasion is a structure, not an event" (Patrick Wolfe, 1999: 163). Settler colonialism works through this 'logic of elimination' by attempting to erase the presence of Indigenous peoples through both physical (genocidal) means and conceptual means, by which Indigenous difference, rather than the physical body, is eliminated through assimilation, restrictive recognition politics, and severing connections to family and land (Strakosch and Macoun, 2012). Despite all attempts at elimination, however, sustained Indigenous existence and resistance renders the settler colonial project fundamentally incomplete. More a fantasy than a realization, settler colonialism is heavily invested in concealing its continuing struggle to legitimize and naturalize its authority over stolen land (Tuck and Yang, 2012). The enduring existence of indigeneity presents a problem that the drive for elimination cannot fully address, and indigeneity becomes more than simply a target of erasure. As a number of scholars have argued, settler colonialism also generates, creates, and depends on social difference in order to create the inequalities that capitalism depends upon, and the production of indigeneity discourses may function in ways that further dominant interests (Wolfe, 1999; Sider, 1993; Coulthard, 2007). But the fluidity, complexity, and tenacity of indigeneity prevent it from solely playing a disciplinary role. The discourses around indigenous difference are multiple and ever-changing, and they trouble and configure the settler colonial project in many diverse ways. The political and economic function of this tension between Indigenous erasure and social differentiation is an aspect of the settler colonial project that we need to examine further. Building on the theoretical framework developed by this emerging literature on indigeneity, this paper explores how indigeneity discourses, settler colonialism, and extractive industries have interconnected and transformed each other within a particular Labrador example.

2. Settler colonialism, indigeneity, and uranium in Labrador

The marking of Inuit difference as a form of social control and contestation has occurred throughout settler colonial history in Labrador, and this differentiation can be linked directly to state political and economic interests. In the 18th century, for example, violence between Inuit and European fishermen caused the lucrative Labrador fishery to be "confined to a small part of the Southern Coast, and always precarious," as a missionary wrote in 1772 (Davey, 1910: 137). Britain wanted to more fully exploit the fishery, but it first needed to persuade the Inuit, who lived throughout coastal Labrador, to stop disrupting British economic interests. To achieve this, Moravian missionaries worked with the government to contain the Inuit on large Mission-controlled land grants on the north coast of Labrador (Hiller, 1977). Moravians used a mix of economic and social incentives to draw Inuit to their trading posts and communities, and they were moderately successful in their endeavours, especially after 1800 (Brice-Bennett, 1990). The missionaries promoted the idea that the boundaries of their Mission field reflected that of the Inuit homeland, and that the only 'true' Inuit were the Moravian Inuit who lived within this region. But the Mission's "containment policy," as historian James Hiller describes it, ultimately failed to encompass all Inuit on what the Moravians decided was Inuit territory (Hiller, 1971). Many Inuit continued to live outside of the Moravian Mission's influence, although they were defined as "degenerate Esquimaux" by the missionaries, and were over time excluded from the category of officially recognized Inuit altogethe (Brice-Bennett, 1990: 236; Rankin et al., 2012). Using spatial and social techniques of control common to many colonial situations, European settlers and their descendants worked to establish economic control by restricting the social category of Inuit to specific (and distant) places and behaviours, while allowing themselves the freedom to live and to exploit anywhere (Razack, 2002).

After 1949, when the British colony of Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada, this practice of connecting social categories with settler colonial economic interests by restrictively defining the category of Inuit continued. In the early 1950s, the federal government reluctantly assumed responsibility for Aboriginal health funding in the new province, and so it needed to administratively identify who was Inuit. Without consulting the people themselves, and faced with a seemingly heterogeneous mix of ethnic groups, the governments decided to identify certain communities as Aboriginal instead of trying to identify Aboriginal individuals (Jenness 1965; Tanner et al., 1994). Continuing the historical pattern of linking the settler-colonial definition of indigeneity with residency in a certain place, the governments initially designated only the communities situated within the Moravian Mission's influence as Inuit. Individual Inuit who did not live in the designated communities, or had moved away from these communities, were not eligible for the funding earmarked for Aboriginal people (Royal Commission on Labrador, 1974).

Other authorities of the time used similar criteria to define indigeneity. The International Grenfell Association, for instance, which was the health care provider for coastal Labrador in the mid-20th century, required that in order for people to be recognized as Inuit in the 1950s and 1960s, they had to demonstrate that they were of "Eskimo cultural orientation—inclined to lead the traditional Eskimo way of life (economic) and use of Eskimo language" (Brantenberg, 1977: 402). However, they would lose "Eskimo" status "if relocated to wage-earning communities and independent means of employment" (ibid.). The requirement that Inuit be confined to a "traditional economic way of life" and not participate in wage labour if they were to be recognized as Inuit had much the same result as recognizing the Inuit status of only those who lived on the north coast, where opportunities for wage labour were often limited. Like the government's recognition criteria, the Grenfell Association's definition worked to exclude Inuit who were 'out of place' by living outside the defined Inuit territory, as well as those who did not meet the cultural and economic criteria used to determine Inuit identity.

Before state recognition policies began to exert an influence on the region, Inuit and their neighbours defined themselves in ways that centred more around family ties, religion, language, and connection to place than around the ethnic markers fostered by state authorities (Brice-Bennett, 1977). Once the government established the direct link between state funding and indigeneity, which occurred – probably not by coincidence – at about the same time that the settler state was claiming larger swathes of land through large-scale military developments and increased regional migration, people had little choice but to navigate the impact of state-initiated social categories on their lives. "Because of the

designated communities idea, people have begun to suffer from an identity crisis," one Inuk woman remarked. "Thus, instead of feeling unity as a people, there is an outside force that dictates who you are or are not!" (Watts in LINS 1980: 13).

When prospectors found a significant uranium deposit near the north coast communities of Makkovik and Postville in 1954, the connections between the marking of Indigenous difference and socio-economic control had therefore long been established. Settler colonial interests had been working to move Inuit away from lucrative resources and onto more marginal lands, and, despite people's own ways of identifying themselves, government authorities manipulated formal recognition criteria to impose geographical and social restrictions on those who might claim Inuit status (Coulthard 2007; Alfred 2005). Driven by settler colonialism's thirst for land, the state appropriated Inuit and Innu territory, and, in 1953, the Newfoundland government handed most of this area over to a consortium of foreign interests. Premier Smallwood proudly called it "the biggest real estate deal of the present century" when his government gave the British Newfoundland Development Corporation (Brinco) a 24-year lease with mineral and hydro-electric rights to much of Labrador (Smith, 1975: 3).

The provincial government and other regional authorities worked to sever ties between Indigenous peoples of the region and their lands by other means as well. In the 1950s, many Inuit on the north coast lived seasonally at fishing, sealing, trapping, and hunting camps and homesteads, and some moved into larger communities for the winter. Providing adequate health care for such a dispersed population was proving to be difficult and expensive for the International Grenfell Association, now that it was responsible for administering the federal-provincial cost sharing program for Inuit. The organization lobbied the Newfoundland government to centralize the Inuit population and to settle them into communities for longer periods of the year (Brice-Bennett, 1994). The provincial government, for its part, was intent on modernizing the regional economy by transforming hunters and fishermen into industrial workers. The discovery of uranium near Makkovik in 1954 and 1956 initially seemed to provide a partial solution to the interests of both the government and the Grenfell Association. If a new uranium mine was developed, it might provide 'modern' employment for Inuit of the region: "Both the Eskimos and the Indians have been encouraged and assisted in hunting and fishing," wrote the Minister of Public Welfare, "but we regard these activities as 'holding operations' until the economy in the area becomes more diversified. However, with the development of the mineral resources of Labrador, there is hope that some progress in this direction will be possible" (Hefferton, 1959: 97-98).

Without consulting Inuit, and against their wishes, authorities decided to relocate more than 400 northern Inuit to communities farther south. In 1956, Nutak was closed, and the 171 residents of the Okak Bay/Nutak area moved to Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, North West River, and Hebron. In 1959, Hebron was closed, and its 247 residents were moved to Nain, Hopedale, and Makkovik. Many of the almost 200 people who were moved to Makkovik recount promises made to them about work with Brinex, the subsidiary of Brinco: "They said that we're moving to a place where there is lots of things, lots of seals everywhere, lots of animals and fish. That's what they said. That there were jobs available also. We had to go to Makkovik because they said Makkovik had everything" (Brice-Bennett 2000: 78, 87). Another recalled, "We were told on July 12 that we had to leave Okak and we left on July 25. My father was told there would be lots of work with Brinex. They took dad away from his fishing in Silutalik. My father could not get work so he ended up fishing there" (Brice-Bennett 2000: 84). By the end of 1959, however, uranium prices had dropped, and Brinex realized that it was too late to qualify for Atomic Energy Canada contracts. The company abandoned the uranium project. No jobs materialized for the relocated Inuit in Makkovik, who were now far from home and without meaningful or sufficient livelihoods.

Modernization policies such as the relocation aimed at creating "productive" and sedentary citizens by removing people from the land that sustained them, thereby making the region available for extractive development (Tester and Kulchyski, 1994; Harvey, 2005). Such policies also endeavoured to erase the indigeneity that threatened to impede settler colonialism. If one abided by criteria that recognized Inuit as "inclined to lead the traditional Eskimo way of life (economic)" and as losing that Inuit status "if relocated to wage-earning communities," then modernization schemes that saw Inuit moving south to work in industrial centres would also result in the end of 'recognizable' Inuit (Brantenberg 1977: 402). The presence of Inuit in the region would be conceptually, if not physically, eliminated.

3. Emerging Inuit rights and neoliberalism

Industry's interest in uranium surfaced again in the early 1970s with the national energy crisis and an improved uranium market. Brinex employees returned to the north coast of Labrador and again made plans to develop a mine near the communities of Makkovik and Postville. This time, the political environment was vastly different than it had been in the 1950s. The emerging Aboriginal rights movement was sweeping across North America. The creation of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) in 1971 invoked a new form of indigeneity and helped to foster an imagined Inuit community that projected a united Inuit identity and political voice (Niezen 2003). After Inuit representatives from northern Quebec visited Nain in 1972, Inuit in Labrador started to articulate a politicized version of indigeneity in asserting that their collective rights to their territory be recognized.

Inuit in Nain created the Labrador Inuit Association (LIA) to pursue an Inuit land claims agreement for Labrador in 1973. The organization was very vocal in exposing the continuing connections between settler colonialism and resource development: "None of us, Indians or Inuit have ever given up our rights and our title to this land," the LIA Land Claims Director argued in 1979. "Outsiders just came in and began using it . . . .Somewhere in the law books, it says that native people are to be protected and helped by their government . . . .We were given promises that the harvest from the land would be ours and our children's for all time" (Obed in LIA 1979: 12-13, 17). Inuit leaders warned that their Aboriginal rights could threaten industrial development: "The large companies, like Brinex and EastCan, who are interested in developing resources found in the north coast region, should be aware that the Inuit Land Claim to the land and sea ice may hinder development" (Obed in KI 1979: 4).

Within Labrador, however, not all Indigenous people rallied under the Aboriginal banner. Many people of mixed Inuit ancestry did not want to publicly identify as Inuit, and some did not feel that the LIA reflected their perspectives or interests (Fong, 1977; Kennedy, 1988). The LIA used the dispute about the potential uranium mine to try to foster a sense of collective identity and vision among people on the north coast: "Development from big multi-national companies threaten[s] our traditional way of life, not to mention our resources and our land and waters . . . .LIA encourages its members to unite and have one voice speaking for the rights of all its members. Let's begin seriously discussing our future and get the most of LIA's land claim for the good of all northern Labrador" (Obed in KI 1979: 1, 3).

The public hearings about the newly-proposed uranium mine in 1979 illustrated the ongoing debate about the meaning and impact of indigeneity. While the LIA fervently argued for recognition of Inuit land rights, many people in the nearby communities of

Makkovik and Postville framed their concerns about the project in terms of their way of life, without labeling it as "Inuit," and without resorting to the bounded social categories that the state and, increasingly, the LIA were using. The provincial government, for its part, resolutely refused to acknowledge the possibility of Aboriginal rights in Labrador, as did Brinex. Nevertheless, the company obviously felt pressure to deal with the LIA's indigeneity discourse. Brinex officials tried to minimize the impact of Indigenous presence on the project, first by arguing that the mine site would not interfere with any current Inuit land use. "I believe the project in question does not directly involve the LIA," argued Brinex's Vice President of Mining. "I would think they cannot be considered to be residents of the land in the project area south of Kappokok Bay (sic)" (Brinex, 1979c: 2). Like previous settler-colonial definitions of indigeneity, Brinex's rendition connected Inuit existence with a restricted geographical area, while claiming the remaining land and its resources for its own interests.

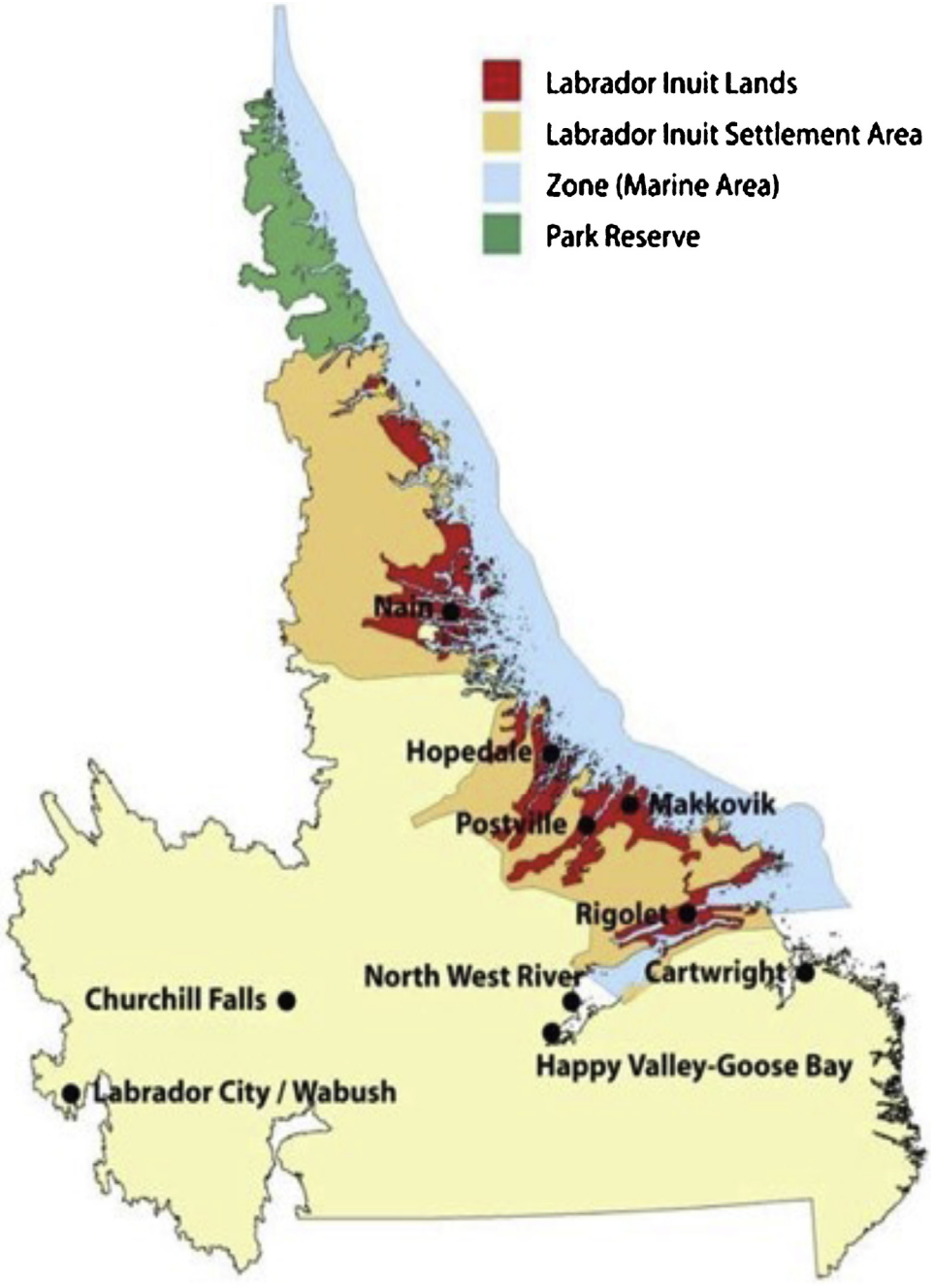
The company also attempted to diminish the importance of any cultural difference that might exist. In its Environmental Impact Statement, Brinex described historic Inuit land use patterns, and then argued that "The present day Inuit way of life is an aberration of this [historic] pattern but with significant changes in housing type and increased reliance on a wage economy" (Brinex, 1979a: 4-283-5). The company claimed that the Inuit connection with the land was diminishing, and commented that people's reliance on renewable resources was gradually changing to a reliance on wage labour (Brinex, 1979a: 4-319-323). In Postville since 1972, it argued, the value system had "increasingly recognized the worth of a wage economy. Strength, endurance, and good hunting and fishing skills are admired in Postville, but material goods are becoming increasingly more important and prevalent" (Brinex, 1979a: 5-101-2). Like the state's notion that Inuit cultural difference was tied to certain economic practices, Brinex insinuated that what remained of indigeneity would soon succumb to modern life, and the political significance of indigenous difference would be negligible.

The company also responded to local concerns by arguing that the mine could be designed on a very local scale and in isolation from places and people who did not wish to be involved. Brinex officials stressed that "the project development has been proposed in a manner to eliminate any direct contact with these two communities....The communities of Postville, Makkovik and North West River have special concerns relating to impacts such as lifestyles. I am confident that we can work closely with these communities to resolve concerns and design our systems to have them participate only to the extent they wish" (Brinex, 1979c: 3; 1979b: 4). The element of personal choice in dealing with the project was a message that company officials repeated consistently: "Benefits from this project to your community must be your choice—we will work closely with your representatives to ensure proper hiring and training programs are in place and North West River people have an option to participate" (J. O'Rourke in Brinex, 1979c: 6). At a meeting in 1976, residents commented that local people would likely only get the lowest paid jobs, and Brinex's Murry Poloski replied that they "have to start somewhere—have to choose a lifestyle . . . .The communities can choose their amount of involvement" (Poloski in LRAC 1976: 12). Offering Inuit the opportunity to "choose a lifestyle" transfers the responsibility and the focus onto individual decisions, rendering Inuit into self-managing individuals and obscuring the historical and political elements of the Inuit claim to collective land ownership and self-governance.

The emphasis on individual choice and responsibility marked a new approach to governance that was to eventually transform the politics of Aboriginal recognition in Labrador. Neoliberal proponents envisioned an ideal context in which self-sufficient and rational individuals had the freedom to participate in a free market, unencumbered by government regulation and collective cultural pressures (Castree, 2010). This approach, first championed by industry interests such as Brinex, was initially rejected by Labrador Inuit in the 1970s, but over the next 20 years, LIA negotiators massaged the way that they framed Inuit claims to converge with the state's increasing interest in neoliberal concerns. Instead of highlighting collective Inuit rights to land and the challenge to development that these rights could pose, as Inuit leaders in the 1970s had done, the LIA president in 1990 argued that a land claim agreement would be of mutual benefit to Inuit and development interests: "We are not opposed to development, provided environmental standards are met. But the people in the area should have first priority . . . Hopefully by the year 2000 we will be able to take care of ourselves rather than relying on the welfare cheques, and we will be able to make decisions for ourselves" (Andersen quoted in LINS 1990: 20). Emphasizing the common values of self-reliance and participation in the market, rather than presenting a critique of settler colonialism, he argued, "To us, land claims is not a threat to non-aboriginal people, it's a way to self-sufficiency" (Andersen quoted in LINS 1990: 56). Inuit, the LIA insisted, could and should sustain themselves on a self-contained territory. Since 1980, the provincial government had slowly warmed to acknowledging a very limited definition of Aboriginal rights. Given the government's interest in promoting resource development, self-sufficiency, and localized indigeneity, the LIA's alignment of goals served to offer some middle ground in negotiations.

As numerous scholars have argued, the convergence of neoliberal and Indigenous interests offers some space to frame cultural concerns within broader agendas, but has significant limitations in its ability to address structural change (Povinelli, 2002; Feit, 2010; Altamirano-Jiménez, 2013; Slowey, 2008). Elizabeth Povinelli, following Foucault, describes how the social movements of the 1960s created a "crisis of legitimacy for the governing," which was then transformed into a "crisis of culture for the governed, as state after state instituted formal or informal policies of cultural recognition . . . as a strategy for addressing the challenges of internal and external difference that they faced" (Povinelli, 2010: 25). Culture was "made into an object that one could possess or insufficiently create," and the definitions of what constituted evidence of culture or indigeneity became deeply political (Povinelli, 2010: 28). Instead of completely rejecting Indigenous claims, states and business interests have embraced the framework of cultural difference, as they "find that cultural rights, when carefully delimited, not only pose little challenge to the forward march of the neoliberal project but also induce the bearers of these rights to join in the march" (Hale, 2005: 4). In Labrador, industry and state definitions of indigeneity had become increasingly restricted over the 20th century, but in finally acknowledging the possible existence of some Aboriginal rights, settler colonialism transferred the onus onto Inuit themselves to prove their indigeneity against the state's criteria. Indigeneity became an individual matter and its governance became a technical issue, as attention shifted away from collective Inuit political rights to the mechanisms needed to determine and judge the degree to which each individual possessed 'legitimate' indigeneity (Povinelli, 2002; Coulthard, 2014). As political theorist Wendy Brown argues, when differences are marked as individual or cultural, and people's interests are situated at the private, non-political, and market level, then structural inequalities become invisible (Brown, 2006). Neoliberal approaches transformed indigeneity's challenge to settler colonialism in Labrador into a minimally disruptive technical project in which the state, industry, and Inuit leaders work together to outline resource rights, manage individual differences, and facilitate extractive development.

The alignment between neoliberal and indigenous interests in Labrador ultimately proved to be productive for both the Inuit land claim and for extractive industry. When a massive nickel deposit was discovered at Voisey's Bay in northern Labrador in the mid-1990s, the land claim negotiations were suddenly fast-tracked, and both the LIA and the state publicly celebrated the final agreement. Although the province withdrew the Voisey's Bay area from land negotiations, claiming sole ownership of the rich deposit for the state, the final agreement contained provisions for Inuit to receive some benefits from the mine. Initially, many Inuit, including many who lived outside Nunatsiavut, did not fully support the agreement, or were at best ambivalent about it, as they felt that it inadequately reflected their interests. Concerned about the potential result of the ratification vote in 2004, the LIA launched a "Together, We're Stronger" campaign to try to foster solidarity. The campaign centred on the idea of an Inuit community based on equality, cooperation, inclusiveness, strong family and social structures, responsibility, and a relationship of stewardship with its territory (Procter, 2012). In the end, Inuit voted overwhelmingly in favour of the agreement. LIA leaders had successfully employed an indigeneity discourse that addressed their political goals and converged with state recognition discourses. In the process, this discourse overshadowed the multiple ways in which previous LIA officials and local people had envisioned and presented their indigeneity over time, and it became the codified version of indigeneity found in the final land claim agreement.



Map 1. Nunatsiavut land claims settlement area.

(Source: Nunatsiavut Government).

4. Nunatsiavut and continued containment

In 2008, when the Nunatsiavut Assembly passed the temporary moratorium on uranium development, the political framework around the issue had therefore changed remarkably since the 1970s. The Nunatsiavut Government, established in 2005, has significant authority over a region that loosely corresponds to the historical Moravian Inuit territory, and represents Inuit beneficiaries who have ties to this region (see Map 1) (INAC, 2005). The agreement's formally recognized version of indigeneity is the specific product of historical struggles over the concept, but the creation of Nunatsiavut represents a major success in re-asserting Inuit autonomy. After years of industrial encroachment, government intervention, and stalled negotiations, Nunatsiavut Inuit managed to reclaim a portion of their homeland. But, as the uranium dispute illustrates, the land claims agreement can also play into the logic of settler colonialism in continuing the state's geographical and economic Inuit containment project.

The requirements of a land claim agreement encourage certain relationships with the land. The structure of the agreement, of course, impacts the need for territorial and membership boundaries. A land base is economically important for the viability of the new government, and legal and administrative requirements about clarity of resource ownership and beneficiary status mean that boundaries must be well defined (Slowey, 2008). In order to support all the additional costs of a new Inuit government and administration, as well as the social programs expected of such a government, the agreement requires that Nunatsiavut provide its own revenue by engaging in economic development projects and by developing the lands and resources under its jurisdiction. This neoliberal push for self-sufficiency, decentralization, and empowering 'civil society' encourages the Nunatsiavut Government to engage in extractive development and to conceptualize land as other governments and industry do, in terms of resources, revenue, and assets.

The land claim agreement stipulates that royalty calculations for potential developments in Nunatsiavut depend on where the resource is found. The specific location of the uranium deposits near Makkovik and Postville are therefore of some consequence in determining their future. Under the agreement, Nunatsiavut is divided into two main land categories: Labrador Inuit Lands (LIL), comprising 15,799 square kilometres, and Labrador Inuit Settlement Area (LISA) outside LIL, comprising 47,021 square kilometres (see Map 1). The Nunatsiavut Government has jurisdiction and surface ownership of LIL, while the provincial government has jurisdiction and ownership of LISA outside LIL. The province also owns the subsurface of LIL, but the Nunatsiavut Government controls surface access and it would receive 25% of provincial royalties from development on LIL, while it would receive only 5% of provincial royalties from development on LISA outside LIL. Many of the significant uranium deposits are on Labrador Inuit Lands, which means that the Nunatsiavut Government would see a 25% share of royalties were the uranium to be mined. The land claim agreement requirement that Nunatsiavut generate its own revenue therefore strongly encourages it to develop Nunatsiavut resources, and especially those found on Labrador Inuit Lands. Inuit no longer stand in direct opposition to industry or to a government intent on facilitating resource development, as they often did before Nunatsiavut was created; as the fiscally-responsible landlord, the Nunatsiavut Government now has a vested interest in development.

The interplay of indigeneity discourses during the debate about the uranium moratorium in 2008 illustrates the concept's productivity and its various articulations with neoliberalism. One politician described the pressure on the Nunatsiavut Government to support uranium mining: "We need economic development, and in a government where we're all aware that the finances are not that great and we will be facing some hard times in the next few years, to delay any process that may give us a light at the end of the tunnel could be extremely detrimental to our success as a government" (Keith Russell in Nunatsiavut Assembly hansard, April 2008). As one Nunatsiavut political candidate argued in 2008, the relationship between self-government and extractive industrial development is intricately linked: "As our North Coast tax base is significantly smaller than what we need to run our self-government, the Nunatsiavut government will be dependent on extracting its natural resources in order to have the funds necessary to sustain our communities and the running of our government. The generation of own source revenue is essential, and right now, mining seems to be the short-term answer. So, even though I am not a mining advocate, I still have to consider it strategically as an income source for government, a source of employment and opportunity for Beneficiaries, and a way to utilize one of our most important assets" (fieldnotes, April 2008). The economic pressures built into the land claim agreement affected the decision-making of Nunatsiavut officials, but the same pressures on a smaller scale also affected the approach of many individuals to the issue. Some people in Nunatsiavut argued that maintaining their indigeneity involved maintaining their ability to live in their communities, which in turn required jobs such as those created by a uranium mine. They disputed the importance of hunting and trapping that opponents of the development cited, and argued that if Inuit are to remain in Nunatsiavut, they needed to have jobs in the communities (Procter, 2012).

On the other side of the debate, many Inuit felt that the Nunatsiavut Government should assert its new authority in the wake of years of colonialism, and that it needed to prepare environmental assessment legislation before dealing with a large project. As one politician argued, "This [moratorium] Bill . . . send [s] a message to exploration companies, mining companies and other governments that, look, we are in charge here in Nunatsiavut....We will make the rules that apply to our land. It is our land and we will continue to protect it" (Tony Andersen in Nunatsiavut Assembly hansard, March 2008). Some relied on the authority of Inuit cultural difference to defy the dominant interests that have historically driven resource decisions in Labrador: "When people are hasty to encourage economic development for the sake of accessing jobs and revenues, important details get overlooked. Nunatsiavut Government does need time to be able to stand on solid ground before taking part in an environmental assessment for a proposed uranium development on Labrador Inuit Lands. One common virtue that Inuit culture is based on is patience. We are an Inuit Government" (Todd Broomfield in Nunatsiavut Assembly hansard, April 2008). Inuit used many competing versions of indigeneity to debate the uranium issue, and in the end, the Nunatsiavut Government decided to ban uranium development on Labrador Inuit Lands in 2008 for three years.

After the moratorium bill was passed, the uranium exploration company most heavily involved in the region, Aurora Energy Ltd., resolved to increase its public engagement, and made renewed efforts to win over the Inuit of Nunatsiavut. The company claimed that it "strived to be a 'good neighbour," and explicitly assumed a role as a community member: "By acting as responsible members of nearby communities we build lasting relationships with residents that make our developments more sustainable over time" (Aurora Energy, November 2008: 3; fieldnotes, 2011). Using a discourse of "community," the company positioned itself as expressing local interests instead of imposing ambitions that originated from elsewhere. Instead of using Brinex's 1970s tactics of isolating and containing Inuit in certain geographical spaces and into specific socio-economic definitions, Aurora Energy attempted to eliminate the now powerful difference of indigeneity by claiming to be similar.

The company worked to minimize differences between it and "the community" by expressing sentiments similar to those used by Inuit to describe themselves: "Aurora shares the goal of careful stewardship of the land that Labrador Inuit have been a part of for over 5000 years . . . . In light of a growing world demand for clean, safe energy, Aurora is looking to the future benefits of moving forward in the spirit of co-operation with the people of North Coast Labrador" (Aurora Energy, July 2008: 1). At an industry conference in June 2008, Aurora CEO Mark O'Dea described how a skidoo trip from Goose Bay to Makkovik opened his eyes "to how well people on the coast are connected to the land. We know how deeply Inuit care about land, and we share that passion—we share the common goal of protecting the land forever" (fieldnotes, June 2008). If industry and Inuit are shown to be similar, the significant difference and challenge that indigeneity poses to extractive resource development, as illustrated by the moratorium, could potentially be nullified.

The company also worked to position people as independent beings, capable of making responsible choices for themselves about the potential mine. Aurora encouraged people to participate in company-led decision-making by setting up community panels and by offering residents the chance to make decisions about tailings disposal options (Aurora Energy, November 2008). These community engagement efforts tried to contain and manage Inuit objections to uranium mining, but, as one employee told me, they were not fully successful, as people who were strongly opposed to the project simply chose not to participate (fieldnotes, November 2008). As Aurora's attempts illustrate, industry must engage with the issue of indigeneity in order to gain the "social license" to continue work, but the version of indigeneity that this company embraced is one that "empowers" Inuit to engage in decision-making processes and to decide what their own futures will hold. Yet, as Shore and Wright (1997) argue, this focus on new-found "empowerment" can obscure many underlying issues that neoliberal governance structures have not resolved. The ideal neoliberal citizen – self-managing, self-governing, self-sufficient – is empowered to work as a partner in management and to take responsibility. In this "project of self-improvement . . . any discussion of poverty as inequality or disadvantage has been erased from the discourse" (Shore and Wright, 1997Shore and Wright, 1997: 231). Larger issues such as the lingering inequalities created by the northern resettlements, for instance, are overshadowed by talk of individual choice and self-governance, responsibility to improve oneself, and job training. The assumption is that Inuit must change in order to improve, and this improvement often involves increased participation in resource development (Irlbacher-Fox, 2009).

The provincial government was conspicuously silent during the uranium moratorium debate, except to issue a news release on the day after the bill was passed by the Nunatsiavut Assembly that emphasized that the province was still open for business. "Uranium mining still ok in rest of NL, says province" read the local newspaper (Labradorian 21 April 2008: A15). The Nunatsiavut debate was technically about land that was outside provincial jurisdiction, but the government was likely quite content to allow industry actors such as Aurora to work on gaining community support and to effectively fulfill the role of the state in consulting and accommodating Inuit communities (Cameron and Levitan, 2014).

The current neoliberal context offers both opportunities for and restrictions on the political currency of indigeneity. In promoting decentralization, local autonomy, and individual choice and responsibility, the neoliberal environment has allowed Inuit and the provincial governments to align their interests and successfully reach a land claims settlement for Nunatsiavut, but it has also contributed to potential situations in which Inuit are very restricted in their choices about economic development in their territory. Nunatsiavut Inuit can decide to prohibit, delay, or strictly control certain economic developments, but the emphasis on regional (and individual) authority, responsibility, and self-sufficiency promoted by both industry and the framework of the land claims agreement puts enormous pressure on them to develop the limited Inuit land base, which has been diminished through historical dispossessions, land claims negotiations, and Nunatsiavut land categories. Mining companies and the provincial government exert this pressure and "choice" concerning economic development on individual Inuit and the Nunatsiavut Government, both of whom face significant financial challenges, as the region has limited economic possibilities. Industry efforts to promote "empowerment" and to contain dissent, however, are not always successful, and multiple indigeneity discourses continue to successfully challenge extractive developments.

The process of settler colonial containment was further illustrated by the attempt by the Nunatsiavut Government and the provincial government to co-operate through a co-management board in producing a land use plan for Nunatsiavut. Between 2008 and 2012, an independent co-management board worked to develop a land use plan that each government was then asked to ratify (Procter and Chaulk, 2013). The Nunatsiavut Government agreed to ratify it, but the provincial government argued that the plan protected too much land from possible development, and dismissed it. The Newfoundland and Labrador government then hired a consultant to draw up a land use plan for LISA outside LIL, a move successfully challenged in court by the Nunatsiavut Government. At the time of writing (June 2015), no provincial land use plan for the region exists. The process has resulted in a fragmented approach to land use planning for Nunatsiavut, with each government controlling planning for its own jurisdiction, instead of the co-managed approach laid out by the land claims agreement, in which both governments would have shared input into planning for the entire settlement area. The Nunatsiavut Government, therefore, currently only has control over planning for Labrador Inuit Lands, which constitute a small proportion of the Nunatsiavut region as a whole. Although the Nunatsiavut land claims agreement recognizes the Labrador Inuit right to self-government, the categories and the boundaries established around the scope of that governance are restrictive, and they continue to contract with the provincial government's refusal to productively participate in co-management.

5. Indigeneity and extractive industry: a developing relationship

The current situation in Nunatsiavut can be perceived as continuing the complex historical function of social differentiation within settler colonialism. Over the last two hundred and fifty years, indigeneity and extractive industry have developed in tandem, although the relationship between the two has consistently changed. The containment policies of the British and Moravian Mission to move Inuit away from regions of resource development in the 18th and 19th centuries have been superseded by 20th century government recognition policies that similarly identified and confined Inuit through spatial and social criteria. The state produced and employed specific versions of the definition of indigeneity in order to physically and conceptually remove Inuit from economically lucrative areas, and then worked to eliminate or minimize the category of "recognizable" Inuit by transforming people's livelihoods, restricting official recognition criteria, and even by forcibly relocating some people south. Throughout this period, state authorities and industry claimed lands and resources as their own, and exploited them for their own benefit.

From the 1970s onwards, Inuit successfully employed indigeneity discourses for their own goals in the struggle for land and self-government after a long history of state dispossession. The land claims framework offers space for the recognition of Indigenous difference, and it affords a significant degree of Inuit authority, but the scope of Inuit governance is restricted to much reduced land and resources. The extent of Inuit authority can also be further diminished if other governments fail to respect the co-management aspects of the agreement, although, as the Nunatsiavut Government demonstrated, it is very capable of using its authority to impede or delay industry's development plans. Nunatsiavut Inuit mobilize multiple discourses of indigeneity for different situations, and although the land claim agreement codifies one version of indigeneity, it has never been the version that is universally accepted or employed. For its part, the mining industry acknowledges the capacity of indigeneity to challenge and obstruct extractive projects, and often works quite hard to gain Indigenous approval for its projects. Both industry and the state, in articulating indigeneity with neoliberal values of decentralization, local autonomy, and empowerment, have aimed to neutralize and contain the impact of indigeneity by attempting to position Indigenous governments and individuals as decision-makers within contexts of very limited choice. In all extractive industry contexts, indigeneity remains a contested and powerful concept with significant ability to both disrupt and further the settler colonial project.

The Nunatsiavut Assembly lifted the uranium moratorium in March 2012, once it had drafted and passed Environmental Assessment legislation and ratified the land use plan for LIL. Aurora Energy Ltd. and other exploration companies continue with their work in the region, although the uranium market has cooled somewhat since the global downturn of 2008 and the Fukushima disaster of 2011. The uranium deposits in Nunatsiavut have yet to be mined, but the controversies that they have fuelled over the past sixty years have illustrated the entangled and often unpredictable relationship that has developed between indigeneity and extractive industry. By examining the historical articulation between the two, we can question the taken-for-granted nature of indigeneity as firmly established and "natural", and can better understand how social categories are constructed as objects of government to mediate difference within and against settler colonialism. As extractive industry, land claims agreements, and Indigenous rights continue to influence each other throughout the global north, it is important to conceptualize these changing dynamics as historically produced and politically structured, and to explore how indigeneity can represent an imperfect challenge to dominant interests, a function of continuing settler colonialism, and, at the same time, a creative and productive concept with the potential to shape alternative futures.

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