

Office of Aboriginal and Northern Studies: Director's Report 2006

We are pleased to announce the creation of the Office of Aboriginal and Northern Research at the Gorsebrook Research Institute. The creation of this office is a natural expansion of the Labrador Project, our long term collaboration (since 1998) with the Innu First Nation of Labrador and Environment Canada, which will continue under the auspices of this new office. However, our mandate will now include collaborative research projects with other Aboriginal groups in Atlantic Canada, such as our current Native Dance Project, as well as our ongoing participation in international networks such as the University of the Arctic and our involvement with the Government of Bhutan on research relating to the Gross National Happiness (GNH) initiative. Maintaining our Atlantic Canadian focus within an international perspective has proved highly effective in finding global unity around local concerns, and in strengthening and creating networks of benefit to Aboriginal Peoples and Atlantic Canadians.

The Labrador Project

As our longest standing project, the Labrador Project continues to fulfill two mandates: the documentation, mapping, and archiving of Innu environmental knowledge (a.k.a. Traditional Ecological Knowledge or TEK) of Nitassinan, the ancestral research

blocks within the area to monitor the effects of the highway on migratory bird habitats and wetlands. As part of this monitoring effort, we are also working with Innu tshishenuat (elders) and Innu Environmental Guardians to see the affects of these developments on Innu land use and life styles. The Innu Environmental Guardians Program was developed in response to the Innu Nation's request for assistance in the training of Guardians to protect and manage their ancestral lands in preparation for self government. The program is co designed with Innu representatives and reflects Innu concerns to learn environmental sciences and related

recordings, artifacts, and databases relating to Mi'kmaw First Nations dance history. An important aspect of the project has been the hiring of three First Nations researchers to conduct interviews within Mi'kmaw and Innu communities and