A LONG JOURNEY

Residential Schools in Labrador and Newfoundland

Andrea Procter

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Title: A long journey : residential schools in Labrador and Newfoundland / Andrea Procter.
Names: Procter, Andrea H., 1974- author.
Series: Social and economic studies (St. John's, N.L.) ; no. 86.
Description: Series statement: Social and economic studies ; no. 86 | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20200168398 | Canadiana (ebook) 20200168436 | ISBN 9781894725644 (softcover) | ISBN 9781894725668 (EPUB) | ISBN 9781894725675 (Kindle) | ISBN 9781894725651 (PDF)
Subjects: LCSH: Boarding schools—Newfoundland and Labrador—History. | CSH: Native peoples—Residential schools—Newfoundland and Labrador—History. | CSH: Native students—Newfoundland and Labrador—History.
Classification: LCC E96.5 .P76 2020 | DDC 371.829/970718—dc23

Cover image: Lizzie Lucy at the St. Anthony orphanage, ca.1932 (courtesy of The Rooms)
Cover design: Alison Carr
Page design and typesetting: Alison Carr
Copy editing: Richard Tallman

Published by ISER Books
Institute of Social and Economic Research
Memorial University of Newfoundland
PO Box 4200
St. John's, NL A1C 5S7
www.hss.mun.ca/iserbooks/

Printed in Canada
26 25 24 23 22 21 20 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Wilfred Grenfell and the Grenfell Mission

"In Labrador there is no poor-law system as in this country, and so when parents die the unhappy orphans might starve, were it not for the kindly, prompt sympathy of other families well-nigh as poor and hard-pressed as the bereaved. It is just here that the Mission has been able to exert a most beneficent influence. Families have been found in more favoured parts of the world willing to adopt the poor little orphans."

— *Among the Deep Sea Fishers*, July 1903

While the Moravian Mission was establishing stations and schools in northern Labrador, Inuit life in central and southern Labrador was following a different trajectory. Outside Moravian control, families in the region were free to maintain Inuit cultural practices that the missionaries farther north were trying to erase, such as spiritual beliefs, burial practices, and "shifting" between seasonal homes.[1] Inuit families were also free to associate with the growing tide of fishers and merchants from Newfoundland, Europe, and America who exploited the rich coastal resources of fish, whales, and seals each summer.

The fishing grounds attracted many to the coast. American whalers and fishers from New England travelled to southern Labrador in the 1700s and 1800s, bringing with them cheap goods to trade.[2] In the mid-1800s, a smaller French fishery brought over 1,200 fishers each year to the

coast between the Strait of Belle Isle and Hamilton Inlet.[3] But the Newfoundland fishing fleet brought the largest wave of visitors to the region. Thousands of Newfoundlanders travelled each summer to fish "down on the Labrador," especially after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 when Newfoundland fishers were forbidden to fish along the French Shore in central and northern Newfoundland. In 1825, for example, over 260 ships carrying about 5,000 fishers sailed to Labrador to fish for the summer.[4] Most of the fishermen remained on their schooners for the fishing season. Others, known as stationers, claimed plots of land on the coast where they lived, dried fish, and stored equipment. Many stationers returned to these "rooms" year after year. Newfoundland and British merchants also established trading posts in the region, and they often hired servants or local people to guard their premises over the winter.[5]

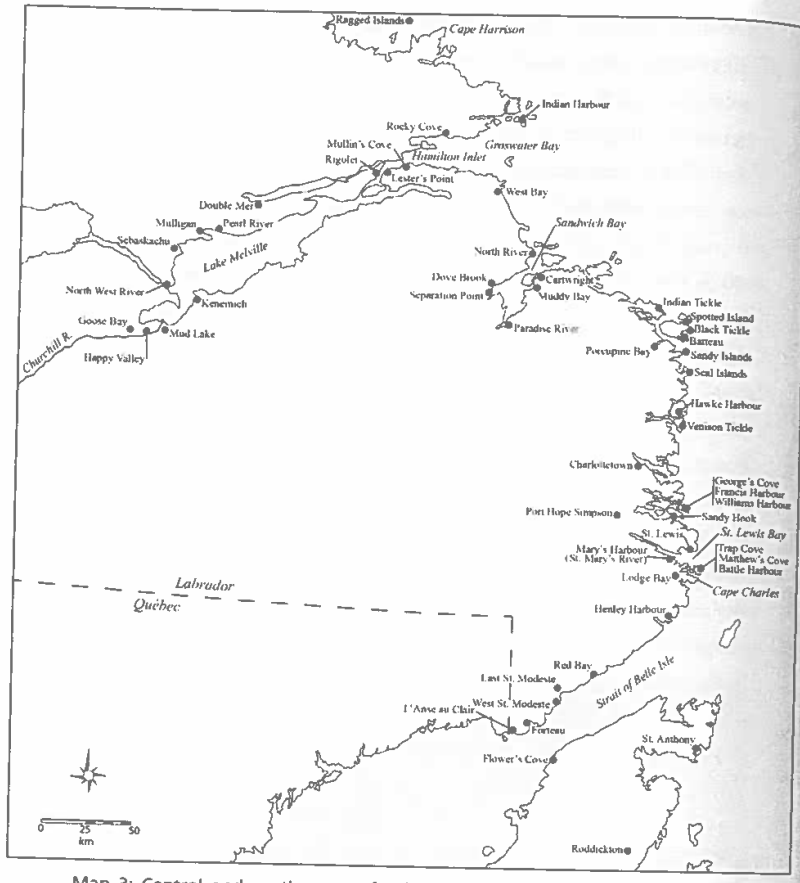
The seasonal flood of fishermen to southern Labrador had a profound impact on the local population. Innu families spent much of their year inland, so they had little contact with the newcomers. But Inuit families lived on the coast during the summer and fished the same waters as

Fishing vessels, Indian Harbour, Labrador, before 1937 (courtesy of The Rooms).

the southern visitors. Although Inuit gained access to trade goods and trading partners, they faced intense competition for their resources. They also contracted infectious diseases and watched as these visitors depleted the environment. Some Inuit welcomed the European men as members of their family when stationers and trading post servants decided to start a new life in Labrador. A new mix of Inuit–European kinship developed that melded with the Inuit society of the region.[6] By the 1870s, about 1,000 to 1,300 permanent residents lived on the coast between Chateau Bay and Sandwich Bay.[7]

As elsewhere in Labrador, the Inuit and Inuit–European families (hereafter referred to as NunatuKavut Inuit) lived in dispersed homesteads. They fished for salmon, cod, and herring on the coast in the summer, and hunted migratory birds and seals in the fall. In the late fall, they moved to homes in sheltered and wooded bays for the winter, where they trapped for fur. Families lived in wooden houses during the summer and in sod houses or wooden structures during the winter.[8] European men relied on their Inuit partners for their knowledge of how to survive in the unforgiving territory. They relied on a network of Inuit family support that shared food and labour in times of need, and learned the skills needed to sustain themselves.[9]

By trapping, fishing, and hunting, the NunatuKavut Inuit families enjoyed a more diverse livelihood than the Newfoundlanders who relied solely on the summer fishing season, but both were entangled in the system of trade on the coast. In some years, the fishing was lucrative. More often, fishermen found themselves in debt to the Newfoundland merchants who controlled the market. The truck system, as it was called, was a cashless economy. Merchants equipped the fishermen with provisions and fishing gear at the beginning of the season on credit. At the end of the fishing season, they set the prices for both the fish and the goods taken on credit.[10] Fishermen found themselves dependent on the merchants and in constant debt. As a result, both Newfoundland and NunatuKavut Inuit families faced poverty and difficult working conditions. When combined with the resulting poor health and the almost complete absence of



Map 3: Central and south coast of Labrador, and Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland (map by Peter Ramsden).

Pardy family, Huntington Island, Sandwich Bay, 1893 (back, l-r: Levi Pardy, Martha Davis Campbell, Alvina and Thomas; front, l-r: Manuel, Harriet, Sarah Davis Pardy holding Eliza, Edward, James, and William) (courtesy of The Rooms).

Newfoundland fisherman Joseph Goss and his wife, Inner Sandy Islands, 1893 (courtesy of The Rooms).

government provision of justice, governance, and medicine, many endured hardship.[11]

News of the conditions in the isolated region reached the wider world in 1891. At the request of the Newfoundland government, Francis Hopwood, a member of the British Board of Trade and the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, travelled to Newfoundland to investigate the medical care given to coastal fishers in Labrador.[12] Outraged at what he discovered, Hopwood published an account of the fishermen's precarious life. He described their poverty and their perpetual dependence on merchants. His shocking account galvanized the public in Britain, Canada, and the United States to demand action.[13] The next summer, the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, a charitable organization dedicated to meeting the medical and spiritual needs of the British North Sea fishing fleet, sent a hospital ship to the Labrador coast. On board was a doctor named Wilfred Grenfell, who was sent to provide medical assistance to the fishermen.[14] The experience inspired the young Englishman to dedicate himself to activism in the region. As biographer Ronald Rompkey writes, "From the time [Grenfell] set foot in Labrador, he was seized with the desire to reform it."[15]

Charlotte Webber Paulo, Fox Harbour [St. Lewis], 1893 (courtesy of The Rooms).

Wilfred Grenfell convinced St. John's-based merchants to fund the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen's medical work in the Labrador fishery. He returned in the following years to build small hospitals at Battle Harbour and Indian Harbour, central locations for the thousands of Newfoundland fishermen who descended on Labrador each summer.

When needed, the Mission also treated the local resident population of NunatuKavut Inuit, but the Mission's initial focus was on supporting the Newfoundland fishers.[16]

Grenfell worked tirelessly to extend medical services. He raised funds, convinced staff and volunteers to join him, and collected equipment for the work. He spent his summers travelling the coast in a hospital ship, tending to the migratory fishery and surveying their living and working conditions. In the winter, he toured across Canada, the United States, and Great Britain to raise more money for the new branch of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen that he called the Grenfell Mission.

In 1904, the Grenfell Mission opened its medical headquarters in St. Anthony on the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. The choice was strategic, as St. Anthony was located halfway between the Labrador fishing grounds and the home communities of the Newfoundland fishermen.[17] Over the next 75 years, the Grenfell Mission was to play a major role in the medical and social development of northern Newfoundland and Labrador.

The scope of the Mission soon extended far beyond the medical. Under Grenfell's influence, it expanded to encompass the social, economic,

Oliver family, Pottles Bay, Hamilton Inlet, 1893 (courtesy of The Rooms).

and educational affairs of the region. Grenfell believed that providing medical care was not enough to improve people's lives. Many of the health problems he encountered, including rickets, beri-beri, and tuberculosis, were the result of malnutrition, poor housing conditions, and poverty.[18] The Newfoundland fishermen's diet of white bread, tea, and salt cod was insufficient, and the truck system kept them in such debt that they struggled to improve their situation. What the region needed, Grenfell maintained, was social and economic development. Accordingly, the Mission organized local co-operative stores to break the merchants' monopoly on trade. It initiated nutritional education and agricultural projects, and a "no spitting" campaign to fight the spread of tuberculosis. It also established schools, a handicraft production program, and even an ill-fated experiment to introduce reindeer with their Sami herders to the Northern Peninsula.[19]

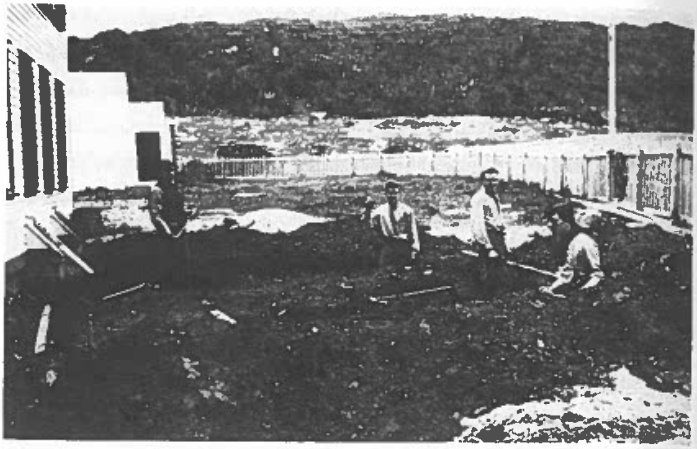
Wilfred Grenfell has been described as a social reformer, a "spiritual adventurer," and a "manly Christian."[20] Born in 1865, he was driven by Victorian notions of heroism, imperialism, and self-sacrifice for a higher purpose. From his earliest days in Newfoundland and Labrador, he spun a narrative about his role in the region that echoes these ideals. Enthusiastic supporters in 1903, for instance, boasted that Grenfell's arrival "was the most fortunate thing that ever happened to Labrador. For the misery that Dr. Grenfell encountered, the hopeless suffering he found, so cried out to him that he decided then and there to devote his life to bringing what alleviation he could to the unhappy souls that were imprisoned in ice for half the year, and cursed with privation and sickness always."[21]

Grenfell's initiatives were idealistic, but they often failed to engage local advice or participation. The Mission invited outside experts to the region to develop and organize programs. Equipped with British and American education, wealth, and confident know-how, Mission staff aimed to usher local people into the twentieth century. They saw Labradorians and northern Newfoundlanders as quaint and hard-working, but perhaps not capable of managing their own affairs. The control of the Mission's work, from its administration to the design of rug-hooking

patterns, was therefore most often left to the Grenfell staff.[22] As anthropologist John Kennedy notes, Labrador and northern Newfoundland residents viewed these well-intentioned but often patronizing Grenfell workers with a mix of appreciation and resentment.[23]

According to his biographers, Grenfell was a mediocre doctor.[24] But his energy, charisma, and determination to effect social reform in northern Newfoundland and Labrador attracted many Americans, Britons, and Canadians to his cause. The Grenfell Mission relied almost completely on philanthropic support. After several disputes with the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen about the cost and direction of its efforts, the International Grenfell Association (IGA) was incorporated in 1914.[25] The IGA included the branch committees that Grenfell had established in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain. These branches were crucial to the IGA's fundraising efforts. Often driven by "lively and resourceful women," they collected money and donations of clothing, toys, and hospital equipment for the Mission.[26] The IGA's Board of Directors, based in New York City, was responsible for the financial and administrative management of the organization. It represented the Grenfell Association of America, the Grenfell Association of Great Britain and Ireland, the New England Grenfell Association, the Grenfell-Labrador Medical Mission, and the Grenfell Association of Newfoundland.[27]

From the hospital headquarters in St. Anthony, Grenfell and his staff ran summer hospitals at Indian Harbour and Battle Harbour. They relied on the Mission hospital ship to transport patients, staff, and goods throughout the region. When the English doctor Harry Paddon joined the Mission in 1912, he identified the need for a winter hospital in central Labrador as well. Paddon established himself first at Mud Lake and then at North West River.[28] As the organization grew, the Battle Harbour hospital became a year-round institution. The complex at St. Anthony expanded to include a school, orphanage, and Industrial Department. The IGA later built other nursing stations in Labrador and northern Newfoundland, including at Cartwright, Spotted Island, St. Mary's River (Mary's Harbour), Forteau, Flower's Cove, and Roddickton.[29] It also built



Grenfell Mission wops (workers without pay), St. Anthony, 1912. (l-r: William Logan Fox from Harvard University, S. Frederick Cushman from Amherst College, William Moore Carson Jr. from Harvard University, and Mr. Raley from Oxford University) (courtesy of The Rooms).

schools, co-operatives, and handicraft centres in various communities, and established itself as a leader in community development.

As Grenfell's fame grew, doctors, nurses, and volunteer workers flocked to the IGA. Most came from wealthy families in Britain and the United States, drawn to the opportunity for meaningful work. Many highly trained professionals offered years of dedicated service in communities throughout the region. Until the start of World War II, it was fashionable for students from elite American colleges to travel north each summer to volunteer as wops (workers without pay) at the Grenfell stations.[30] Harvard University students worked at St. Anthony; Yale University students went to North West River; Columbia University medical students worked at Spotted Island; and Johns Hopkins students went to Battle Harbour.[31] They volunteered as teachers, medical assistants, or manual labourers, acquiring valuable life experience and satisfaction from helping others. They also gained membership into the Grenfell social network of prominent and wealthy Americans. IGA staff and volunteers formed

many fond memories and relationships with each other, and their solidarity ensured that support for the IGA continued long after they returned home, in the form of financial donations and well-attended reunions. Within communities in Labrador and northern Newfoundland, however, the Grenfell staff's education, privilege, and habit of maintaining an elite social clique often alienated local residents.[32] IGA staff made it clear that they were socially distinct from the people they had come to help.

A great publicist, Grenfell wrote many books and pamphlets, and went on lecture tours promoting his work. He relied on stories of extreme poverty and suffering to invoke sympathy among potential supporters, exaggerating and embellishing as needed. His fundraising efforts targeted the wealthy classes of New England, Canada, and Britain, who were willing audiences for stories of hardship. Those closer to home often felt more ambivalent about his fundraising approach. Grenfell's tales of misery riled the Newfoundland establishment, who complained that his stories harmed their business interests and created a poor image of the colony. In 1917, their complaints even launched an inquiry into the IGA's use of its charitable status in its economic efforts, but the organization was cleared of any wrongdoing.[33]

In his public lectures and promotional writing, Grenfell often capitalized on tales of suffering children, many of whom were Inuit. Aiming for greatest impact, he knew that stories about innocent children garnered more sympathy than stories about grown fishermen. In one of his most publicized stories, Grenfell describes his rescue of "Prince Pomiuk." Pomiuk was a young Inuk boy who had been on display at the Eskimo Village at Chicago's 1893 World Fair. The American promoters of the exhibit had given him the title of "Prince" because his father was an Inuit leader in Nachvak. Pomiuk suffered physical abuse at the hands of his stepfather in Chicago, and by the time he returned to Labrador his injuries had become badly infected.[34] Grenfell's story begins with finding Pomiuk "naked and haggard, suffering from an insidious hip disease, lying on the rocks beside a tiny tubik [tent]" at Nachvak.[35] The doctor took him aboard the Mission ship and brought him to the Battle Harbour

Pomiuk on deck of the *Sir Donald*, ca. 1896 (courtesy of The Rooms).

hospital. Through his fundraising efforts, Grenfell garnered financial sponsorship from a congregation in New England for the "Corner Cot" that Pomiuk occupied.[36] Hospital staff cared for the boy until his final days. "In a sheltered corner of a little graveyard on the Labrador," Grenfell wrote, "rests the body of this 'happy Prince.'"[37] The Mission used Pomiuk's story for years afterwards to encourage support for its work. "There are others still as desolate as was Pomiuk," noted an article in the 1904 issue of the Grenfell magazine, *Among the Deep Sea Fishers*: "many little sufferers to fill the cots as fast as they can be provided in the hospitals."[38]

Elizabeth Kirkina Jeffries Mucko was another Inuk child who features in Grenfell's stories. Born in 1893, she also benefited from the charity of the same "Cornerers" congregation in New England a few years after Pomiuk's death. At four years old, Elizabeth had frozen both legs at her home in Groswater Bay. To prevent gangrene from spreading, her father had chopped off her lower legs with an axe. As some versions of the story go, Grenfell staff brought her to the Indian Harbour hospital where she learned English.[39] Wilfred Grenfell renamed her "Kirkina," and the name

stuck. A nurse took her to school in Halifax, and on returning to Labrador she stayed at the Battle Harbour hospital for two more years. The resident doctor, John McPherson, made her a temporary set of artificial legs, which the "Cornerers" congregation later replaced with cork legs. When Dr. McPherson and his wife returned to their home in New England, they decided to take Kirkina with them and, "with true Christ-like love and pity, to provide for the child."[40] Grenfell conveyed the story to show the Christian charity and generosity of the Mission's work:

> Does not the record of this little girl's life, as it is, and as it might have been, bring home to us all the grand work the Mission is doing, and which would be left undone but for it. This is only one of many cases where a life of constant suffering has been changed into one of health and usefulness — and you and I may have the gladness and honor of sharing in this Christ-like work if we will.[41]

Kirkina lived with the McPhersons until she returned to Labrador as a young adult, at which point she learned that her father had died in 1897, shortly after she had first been taken to the hospital as a child. While her Grenfell caregivers had known of his death, they had not shared the news with her. In anger and grief, she threw her artificial legs over the side of the ship. She spent the rest of her life in Labrador. After losing her husband in 1920, she trained and served as a nurse in Rigolet and Happy Valley. Four

Benjamin Cumby (on crutches) and Kirkina Jeffries, Battle Harbour, 1909 (courtesy of The Rooms).

decades after her death in 1970, a women's shelter opened in Rigolet and was named in her honour.[42]

Labrador Inuit were not the Grenfell Mission's initial focus, but they played a disproportionately large role in the IGA's fundraising efforts. Pomiuk, Kirkina, and other Inuit children featured prominently in Grenfell publications and funding campaigns. The IGA's Industrial Department sold hooked mats and embroidered handicrafts with Inuit figures and motifs in New England, Canada, and Britain. The "Innuits, children of the Northland," as Wilfred Grenfell patronizingly called them, provided the IGA with a marketable image that served the organization well over its years of fundraising.[43]

In its early days, the Grenfell Mission approached the challenge of poverty in Labrador and northern Newfoundland by finding a solution elsewhere. Grenfell and his staff sought to help children from poor or struggling families by sending them away to live with other families. "In my boyhood," Grenfell wrote, "I used to collect postage stamps, butterflies, and birds' eggs. When we sailed to Labrador, however . . . I started to collect children."[44] Among the first were a little girl and her brother whose parents had died and left them destitute. Grenfell took them to a family in England, "and today, forty years later, they can look back on a happy and useful life."[45] Others included an abandoned five- or six-year-old who was adopted by the British skipper of the Mission hospital ship. In a 1903 letter to Grenfell, the skipper described how happy he was with the little girl:

> She is all that one could wish. My wife was very pleased with her, and she is a little lump of love. If I had a pick of ten thousand children — and that is a lot to say — I would not pick a better child. . . . There have been two or three people asking if Dr. Grenfell had got any more like her, and if so, ask him to send them along. . . . I will endeavor to do as far as lies in my power for her. I want her trained for the Lord, because I believe she was sent from Him for a purpose. Please send me her age, if you can tell

it, because we should like her to have a birthday. Praying that God may make you a power for good, I remain, yours sincerely, S. Farman.[46]

Grenfell sent other girls to Canada, the United States, and England for work and training as ward maids and domestic workers. "I have taken away to be trained quite a number this year," he wrote in 1902, "and some good friends in Canada are acting as a sort of registry and home on a small scale to look after them, when they have found them places, and try to see that they are happy and well trained."[47] The following year, the Mission reported that "Dr. Grenfell has this year taken seven girls from poor homes on the coast and found them good situations."[48] The parents of one such girl wrote a letter to show their support for Grenfell's proposal to take her away:

Hunt's River, Sept. 13, 1903.
Dear Dockter Granvil.
I received your kind letter about E___, and she is willing to go, and both me and my wife have consented. We know that you will look after her and see that she is in a good place. . . . Dear Dockter we know who you are, and what you is. We know that you are doing your best for God's people wherever you go. . . . We all pray for you dear Dockter.[49]

The Grenfell Mission also instituted the practice of sending students away to the United States, Britain, and Canada for education early in the twentieth century. Exceptional students from across Labrador and the Northern Peninsula pursued higher education at institutes elsewhere, funded by Mission supporters. Edgar ("Ted") McNeill from Island Harbour, Labrador, was Grenfell's "first scholar."[50] He was educated by Moravian missionaries in Makkovik, and then asked to work for Grenfell in return for more education. After attending school in St. Anthony, he went to the Pratt Institute in New York in 1908. He returned to work for the

Mission in St. Anthony as a construction foreman and superintendent of Mission buildings.[51] In 1927, he built the hospital in St. Anthony, and another Pratt graduate from Labrador, Wilfred Mesher, installed the heating and lighting system in the hospital.[52]

When Wilfred Grenfell in 1909 married Anne MacClanahan, a wealthy and well-connected woman from Chicago, the scholarship project became her focus. Under her leadership, the program expanded in size. In 1921, the Carnegie Corporation of New York agreed to provide grants of up to $5,000 per year for seven years for the scholarships.[53] Students attended the Pratt Institute in New York, the Wentworth Institute in Boston, Berea College in Kentucky, nurses' training schools, business schools, and other institutions in the United States.[54] Other students later went to Ryerson Institute of Technology in Toronto and to other Canadian schools. Between 1921 and 1928, over 89 young people from Labrador and northern Newfoundland obtained training through the scholarship program.[55] On their return home, most applied their skills in the schools, dormitories, orphanage, hospitals, and offices of the IGA stations. As

Students educated abroad by the IGA, 1920s. Front left: Violet Stone Moores from Battle Harbour; back right: Horace McNeill from St. Anthony. Also in photo: Edmund Pike from Port Saunders; Alice Simms from St. Anthony; Michael Walsh from Flower's Cove; and Winnifred Pye from Cape Charles (courtesy of The Rooms).

Anne Grenfell commented in 1927, the students received an education that promised to transform both them and their communities:

> They have brought home very different standards and ideals of living than they could have acquired otherwise, and their own people would naturally be more influenced by their report and their teaching than they could be by that of the staff of the Grenfell Association.[56]

The Mission offered transformative higher education opportunities for exceptional children, but for others it aimed simply to remove them from their home situations. Mission personnel saw poverty and cultural difference when they looked on families in the region, and their solution was often to take children away. Some children went willingly with the Mission, with their family's approval, but others were taken by force from their homes by Grenfell staff. Grenfell had been appointed as magistrate for the region, and he often exercised his authority to make unilateral decisions about other people's lives. In his autobiography, for example, Grenfell describes how he decided to "rescue" two young boys from their family in Eskimo Bay (Hamilton Inlet):

> We soon found the two small boys. They were practically stark naked, but fat as curlews, being full of wild berries with which their bodies were stained bright blues and reds. They were a jolly little couple, as unconcerned about their environment as Robinson Crusoe after five years on his island.
>
> Soon the father came home. I can see him still — the vacant brown face of a very feeble-minded half-breed, ragged and tattered and almost bootless. He was carrying an aged single-barrelled boy's gun in one hand and a belated sea-gull in the other, which bird was destined for the entire evening meal of the family. A half-wild-looking hobbledehoy boy of fifteen years also joined the group. It was just beginning to snow, a wet sleet.

> Eight months of winter lay ahead. Yet not one of the family seemed to think a whit about that which was vivid enough to the minds of the mate and myself.
>
> We sat down for a regular pow-wow beside the fire sputtering in the open room, from which thick smoke crept up the face of the rock, and hung over us in a material but symbolic cloud. It was naturally cold. The man began with a plea for some "clodin." We began with a plea for some children. How many would he swap for a start in clothing and "tings for his winter"? He picked out and gave us Jimmie. The soft-hearted mate, on whose cheeks the tears were literally standing, grabbed Jimmie — as the latter did his share of the gull.
>
> But we were not satisfied. We had to have Willie. It was only when a breaking of diplomatic relations altogether was threatened that Willie was sacrificed on the altar of "tings." I forget the price, but I think that we threw in an axe, which was one of the trifles which the father lacked — and in this of all countries! The word was no sooner spoken than our shellback again excelled himself. He pounced on Willie like a hawk on its prey, and before the treaty was really concluded he was off to our dory with a naked boy kicking violently in the vice of each of his powerful arms.[57]

Grenfell's depiction of taking the boys — James and William Shugalo[58] — illustrates his certainty that he is doing the right thing. He is equally confident that his audience will also approve of his actions. The story positions the doctor as benevolent and wise — vastly superior to the "feeble-minded half-breed" father, who is portrayed as socially deficient and incapable of supporting his family. In this story and in others told throughout the early years of the Grenfell Mission, the heroes are clearly Grenfell and his staff, who describe themselves as saving the poor children from the wretched hand-to-mouth existence of Indigenous life. The British, American, and Canadian public embraced this story and rewarded the Grenfell Mission with generous donations. Grenfell was knighted in

1927 by King George V for his medical, educational, and social work, and "Sir Wilfred" was celebrated as one of the greatest medical missionaries of his time.[59] Although failing health forced him to cut back his activities by the end of the 1920s (he would die in 1940) and he formally resigned his management of the Mission's work in early 1936, the work Grenfell began would carry on.[60]

The Grenfell Mission's attempts to improve the lives of orphaned or poor children changed over time. Its practice of removing children from Labrador and northern Newfoundland to the United States or Britain peaked in the early 1900s. The organization then adopted other approaches to child welfare. One of the new approaches involved establishing an orphanage for what Grenfell called his "increasing family" of destitute children.[61] As the next chapter will show, the "Children's Home" in St. Anthony played a prominent role over the next 60 years in the lives of many children from Labrador and northern Newfoundland. "Even though Gabriel, Prince Pomiuk, never lived within its walls," Grenfell wrote, "the real beginning of the idea of our Children's Home was due to him; and one feels sure that his spirit loves to visit the other little ones who claim this lonely coast as their homeland also."[62]

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Children's Home at St. Anthony

"A little helpless child was presented to us to care for, and later, five more whose father . . . had died. It wasn't a question of wanting to take them. By all the laws of humanity we had to take care of them, so we did."
— Wilfred Grenfell, January 1920

In the early years of the Grenfell Mission, Wilfred Grenfell and his staff arranged for the adoption of children they felt needed to be removed from a difficult home life. Grenfell relates how he "rescued" children from poverty, neglect, or ill-health by sending them to live with families in the United States, Canada, or Britain, to hospitals, or to the care of Grenfell Mission staff members.[1] As doctor and magistrate, Grenfell believed he had the authority to apprehend children and make decisions about their future. But finding homes for the children could be difficult. Grenfell staff started to reconsider the wisdom of sending children to live in other countries. An orphanage that kept the children in the region appeared to be a better option. But where to put them?

In 1904, the Indian Harbour hospital doctor and his wife took in a few children, including "Emmie, Prissie [Priscie], and Tommy [Roberts from Seal Islands], orphan children of an excellent man . . . who died last winter."[2] When Indian Harbour closed for the winter, Dr. George Simpson and his wife May moved with their new wards to the Grenfell hospital at St. Anthony. May Simpson took the lead on organizing supplies

for an orphanage. An English nurse, she had worked at Indian Harbour before marrying the doctor. "I am sure you will be very much interested in our orphanage and more so in the three children we had with us last winter as its first instalment," she wrote to supporters. "The training of children is most delicate work, touching as it does the Unformed characters of our men and women of the future, but it is very interesting and enjoyable. Dr. and I found our winter very happy with them around."[3] On closing the letter, she provided a detailed list of the types and quantities of clothing that Mission donors could send to the new orphanage.

Emma White and children at St. Anthony orphanage, ca.1910 (courtesy of The Rooms).

In 1904, St. Anthony was a small but growing village. The Methodist church and the Grenfell Mission hospital, co-operative store, and guest house sat on one side of the harbour, facing the Church of England and houses on the other.[4] The hospital had opened in March 1904, but it was not a suitable place for the orphanage; the children needed a building of their own. In the fall of 1904, the Grenfell Mission started building "a small house in which we might accommodate a dozen orphan children."[5]

Construction of the orphanage continued over the next year, with local people hauling logs and Mission carpenters working to erect the building. "We hope," Grenfell wrote in 1905, "that we shall be able to place our children in the new building before the winter is too far advanced to do any more work at it."[6]

An "Orphanage for Helpless Children"

The Children's Home, as it was called, officially opened in 1906 with seven children. Four came from Labrador: the two older Roberts children, Emmie (age 12) and Tommy (10) (while their younger sister, Priscie [2], went to live with a Captain Ashe in St. Anthony),[7] their cousin, Davy Gill (10), also from Seal Islands, and John Newell (14) from Winter's Cove in Hamilton Inlet.[8] The other three children came from Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula: Lizzie Hedderson (7) and her brother James (5) from Noddy Bay, and Hayward Patey (12) from HaHa Bay.

All of the children except for Hayward had lost one parent, and the Grenfell staff felt they needed care. At the 1906 Grenfell Mission annual meeting, Dr. Simpson described how the Roberts children were "living on scraps which the neighbours could ill afford to let them have."[9]

> I shall never forget going to get these children. The father had died, and the mother, poor soul, did not know what she was going to do in the winter — absolute starvation faced her. We pleaded with her to let us have the children. What was she to do?[10]

Along with the Roberts children, the Simpsons had also taken John Newell and Davy Gill into their care at the Indian Harbour hospital a few years before the orphanage was established. John's father had died, and his older brother had been looking after the other four children. According to the IGA records, John had a weak constitution, "having been starved most of his life," but was "a quiet lad and a good worker" with the "straight black hair and the olive complexion of the Eskimo."[11] He had spent time recovering in the St. Anthony hospital before moving into the Children's Home in 1906. Dr. Simpson described Davy Gill as "one of the flotsam and jetsam of this wild coast, having no home" after his mother had died.[12] The Hedderson children's father had also died the previous winter, and Grenfell staff found their mother and her five children living in a neighbour's home.[13] Hayward Patey lived with an uncle because his parents could not support him. He came to the orphanage for 10 months while he underwent treatment for his eyes, and although the Grenfell staff wanted him to stay longer, they reported that "his uncle insisted on having him back."[14]

After settling these children in St. Anthony, Dr. and Mrs. Simpson returned to England. The Children's Home needed a house parent to look after the group, so Grenfell searched for someone "who understood the problem of running the Home. She — how often it is 'she' — was found in England, a volunteer by the name of Eleanor Storr."[15] Miss Storr, a "lady of social rank" with a midwife's certificate, came to St. Anthony "at her own expense . . . because," according to Grenfell, "she thought she could work better miracles in a Labrador orphanage than she could in her London house."[16]

On the front of the orphanage a large wooden sign proclaimed, "SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME." The biblical text (Matthew 19:14) quotes Jesus, who told his disciples, "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The passage suggests that even the small and weak deserve care and that heaven will be open to those who, like children, are humble and meek. A Baptist church in Roxbury, Massachusetts, had made the sign and had sent it to the orphanage as a gift for its opening.[17]

Jessie Luther, a crafts teacher from New England who helped create the Grenfell hooked mat industry, arrived in St. Anthony in 1906. She witnessed the first years of the Children's Home: "The orphanage, not fully completed but livable, is a frame house without cellar, the walls bare boards, the outside clapboarded. The seven orphans, varying in age from five to fifteen years, assist in the housework. Miss Storr and Miss Bayley have done the cooking."[18] Jessie introduced the art of weaving to residents in the community and patients at the hospital as both an economic skill and occupational therapy. She also encouraged children at the orphanage to learn the technique.

> One of the orphanage children, twelve-year-old Emmie [Roberts] from Labrador, is bright and so capable I have taught her to make warps and wind bobbins. There are two looms ready, one for pattern weaving, one for homespun. Emmie is now making a heavy warp for rugs. She seems interested and is willing to work for a while without interruption, which I was told might be doubtful.[19]

Mary "Mae" Bird Burton was another of the early wards of the new Children's Home. She arrived when she was four and stayed there until she was 17 before returning home:[20]

> I went to the orphanage in St. Anthony, Newfoundland in 1908 when I was only four years old. There wasn't very many children there then, I was the youngest of them all.
>
> My mother, Emeline Martin (Mrs. Thomas Martin) was left a widow at Cartwright. She had been born somewhere down around Mulligan, near North West River. When my father died, she was left with six of us to rear up, three older than myself. . . .
>
> In the spring or summer, when I was four years old, Doctor Grenfell came in the *Strathcona* [the Grenfell Mission hospital ship] and took me to the orphanage at St. Anthony. There was a doctor's wife on board, Mrs. Stewart, and when we came to

> Spotted Islands, they brought a boy aboard by the name of Albert Elson. I got used to Mrs. Stewart and Albert. Albert would look after me when we were out on the deck.
>
> When we got to St. Anthony, they had to tie me on with a little horse's rein to keep me from running away as I wanted to go to Mrs. Stewart. The next day, they started calling me Mae (at that time there were two other Marys and another Lydia). As I was the new one, they took the R out of Mary and called me Mae. I would yell and tell them my name wasn't Mae. . . .
>
> We had good times at the Orphanage. Of course we had all kinds of rules to go by, and also the bell. The bell would ring before every meal so you would have to wash and stand in your place at the table and wait for Grace. You could not speak one word while at the table or you would have to leave the room. I guess, since it was all English matrons, it was English rules. They were very strict. We went to bed early every night, the oldest of us at 7:30 pm. We had work to do after supper, so we would hurry through that and try to get out for a few minutes to play Cat, baseball as it is called now. Now I have the Matrons and the Orphanage to thank for my good health. . . . I often wondered, after I grew up and went back to Cartwright, why I was the only one sent to the Orphanage as there were three older than me and two younger. Mother didn't really know.[21]

The original orphanage building was built to accommodate 25 children. In 1909, renovations doubled its capacity, thanks to a donation from Francis Sayre, a volunteer at the orphanage in the summer of 1908.[22] Sayre was the type of wealthy American volunteer that Grenfell tried to recruit for the Mission — as the son of the vice-president of Bethlehem Steel, and the future son-in-law of American President Woodrow Wilson, Sayre proved to be a valuable connection.[23] The orphanage housed 18 children in 1910; in 1911, 12 girls, aged five to 17, and 12 boys, aged six to 15, lived there.[24] The number of children kept growing. In 1917, the

The St. Anthony orphanage, partially financed by Francis Sayre, ca.1909 (courtesy of The Rooms).

orphanage housed 37 children.[25] Mission staff began to think about replacing the wooden building with a larger, more durable brick structure.

The orphanage numbers increased in part because of Wilfred Grenfell's impulsiveness and high-handedness. According to his biographer, J. Lennox Kerr, his enthusiasm for collecting children for the orphanage seemed endless:

> [Grenfell] picked up children and brought them to St. Anthony, with no thought for the fact that the orphanage there was already overcrowded and that, no matter how eager the staff were to save more children, there were physical limits. He just dumped the children on the wharf and left some one to "finish the job."[26]

Like many initiatives that Grenfell started, other members of the Mission had to tackle the work and manage the everyday realities. His methods exasperated many of the IGA staff. The surgeon at the St. Anthony hospital in the early 1900s, John Little, disagreed with Grenfell's focus. "Grenfell built an orphanage, which Dr. Little didn't approve of at

that time because he thought the hospital was much more important," wrote an IGA doctor years afterwards.[27] Frustrated with the situation, Dr. Little resigned in 1917. But Grenfell continued to concentrate on the orphanage work.

Determined to take in as many children as he could, Grenfell sometimes resorted to coercion in convincing parents to allow their children to live at the orphanage. In 1905, for example, he asked a father for permission to "take care of and educate a small derelict boy of 10 years of age" from Seal Islands — a cousin of the Roberts children, David "Davy" Gill.[28] The father refused. "It so happened," Grenfell related, "that police constable Dawe . . . was with me at the time."[29] The constable, taking Grenfell's side, "skillfully portrayed the terrors of the law that were sure to overtake any who neglect their children." The intimidation worked. "He finally succeeded in persuading the man to let the child go. His uniform

Wilfred Grenfell with St. Anthony orphanage children, 1930 (courtesy of The Rooms).

the first ever seen here, was his most persuasive argument."[30] The IGA's records for the Children's Home contain other examples of similar coercion, as well as cases of parents refusing to give up their children.[31] Most records state that IGA staff brought the child to the orphanage, without details of the transaction, but a few describe parents asking the IGA to take their children.[32]

In 1918, the Spanish flu swept through the orphanage, infecting nearly everyone and killing Elizabeth "Bessie" Blake from the Rigolet area on 23 November.[33] Earlier in the year, Noah Karle from Davis Inlet had died from tuberculosis.[34] Katie Spalding, who had taken over administration of the orphanage from Eleanor Storr in 1916, reported the sad news:

> For the first time in the history of the Orphanage we have to record the loss from death of two of our children. In March our eldest boy, who had developed tuberculosis more than a year ago, died in the hospital where he had been a patient since the previous summer. In the fall of this year the Orphanage suffered from an epidemic of Spanish influenza from which only three of the children escaped. Several were very sick and one girl of sixteen unhappily developed pneumonia and died after a few days' illness. This was the only case of pneumonia we had, and, considering the serious nature of the epidemic, it is a cause for great gratitude that all the others recovered without complication.[35]

The epidemic devastated Labrador, killing many in Sandwich Bay and almost the entire populations of Okak and Hebron.[36] The victims of the Spanish flu were often adults, so many children in the region lost one or both parents in the epidemic. In Sandwich Bay, where over 70 people had died in a district of 320, almost 40 children lost one or both parents.[37] Family members took in most of these children until Rev. Henry Gordon built a boarding school at Muddy Bay in 1920 (see Chapter Nine), but several were sent to the St. Anthony orphanage. In a 1976 interview, Edward Pardy described how two of his siblings were taken to the orphanage after

Children's Page

HAVE YOU|A PLACE IN YOUR HEART FOR US?

By Etta V. Leighton

THAT is the message the cold north wind is bringing us from down North and even if by the time it reaches our far South or our golden California, the wind itself has grown warm and pleasant, the message is still as penetrating, still as searching as when the north wind took it up from the sighs of little orphans in Newfoundland and the Labrador.

We understand it the minute the breeze brings it to our ears, for it comes from little children speaking our language and even thinking our thoughts. For the blood that flows in the veins of these little orphans is the same as that which flowed in the veins of Abraham Lincoln and Garfield and Jackson and Grant. Back of these children stretches the splendid line of heroes we all love, and in their little hearts is the same courage that Daniel Boone and the other heroes we read of in history showed when they lived under the hard conditions of the frontier.

THE WORLD NEEDS COURAGE.

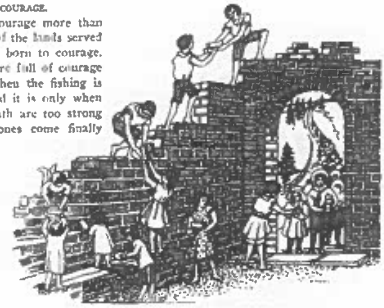
Today the world needs courage more than ever, and the little children of the lands served by the Grenfell Mission are born to courage. Their fathers and mothers are full of courage and keep on hoping even when the fishing is bad or the hunting fails, and it is only when poverty and disease and death are too strong for them that their little ones come finally to the shelter of the orphanage.

You remember how in the war time we would do anything to help the soldier in the front line trenches? Well Labrador and Newfoundland are front line trenches, the frontiers of civilization. We must help the people who live there to fill that country with prosperous happy homes, just as Daniel Boone and Abraham Lincoln's father and the thousands of other pioneers changed our wilderness into a rich country.

Newfoundland and the Labrador are very beautiful and the children there love the high cliffs, the rushing waves, the majestic icebergs, the great forests with a deep love. But it takes a strong, healthy people to live in such a country, and little ones who lose one or both parents can not grow strong and courageous when they haven't enough food, no warm clothes, no comfortable homes. We are cheating the world of the courage it needs, if through carelessness, we leave one little orphan uncared for.

WELL BEGUN IS HALF DONE.

The new orphanage is well begun. Think of the hard work done in digging out the cellar! All those big boulders that you saw in the pictures in the October magazine had to be hauled out by men and dogs. Oh, it was hard! Have you worked as hard to earn and buy bricks as you would have to work to dig out even one of those great rocks?



CHILDREN BRINGING BRICKS TO THE ORPHANS

EACH BRICK IN PLACE COSTS 25 CENTS
WILL YOU HELP BY SENDING 20 BRICKS?

Keep the Picture but send this slip with the money and your name and address to

The Grenfell Association of America, Inc.
156 Fifth Avenue, New York City

Fundraising for St. Anthony orphanage in the January 1921 issue of *Among the Deep Sea Fishers*.

their parents died of the flu near Cartwright: "Jim and [Henry] went to St. Anthony. Dr Grenfell took 'em. And I stayed with Uncle John Learning."[38] The IGA records lists four children from Sandwich Bay who were admitted into the Children's Home in September 1919: Katie Lethbridge (10) and her brother, William Lethbridge (8), from Grady, and Levi James Pardy (13) and Silas Henry Pardy (6) from Packs Harbour/Mountaineer Cove.[39] The Lethbridges' father was dead, and both parents of the two Pardy children had died of the flu, leaving six children.[40]

Wilfred Grenfell informed the Newfoundland colonial secretary that the Mission was doing its best to care for children affected by the Spanish flu, despite the almost complete lack of assistance from the Newfoundland government:[41] "I have assumed the care of just as many destitute children as I can provide for at St. Anthony, as well as one widow, and together with the Reverend Mr. Gordon [at Muddy Bay] we are making preparations to see that as few more as possible die from neglect."[42]

With the growing number of children at the orphanage, the IGA decided it needed a larger building. It launched a Brick Orphanage Fund campaign to raise funds for the construction of a new Children's Home. The IGA's magazine, *Among the Deep Sea Fishers*, featured various appeals for donations: donors could pay 25 cents per brick, $2,500 to endow a room, $450 to pay for a schoolteacher's salary, or $125 to care for a child in the Children's Home for a year.[43]

To build support for the cause, orphanage superintendent Katie Spalding wrote a book in 1920 with Dr. Grenfell's wife, Anne. The book consisted of fictional letters from an orphanage superintendent that offered witty depictions of conditions in the old building:

> Feb 28: This building rocks like a ship at sea; the roof continually leaks, the windows are always "coming abroad," and the panes drop out at "scattered times," while even when shut, the wind whistles through as if to show his utter disdain of our inhospitable and paltry efforts to keep him outside. On stormy nights, in spite of closed windows, the rooms resemble huge snowdrifts.[44]

A Boston church magazine also ran an advertisement in 1918 for "the Children's Brick Home Fund, Dr. Grenfell's Home for Labrador Orphans."[45] The ad reminded the public of the children that Grenfell had famously "rescued:" "Let us honor the memory of Pomiuk, Tommy, Kirkina and their companions by providing room for these homeless children."[46] "Have You a Place in your Heart for Us?" asks another advertisement in the January 1921 issue of *Among the Deep Sea Fishers*, with an illustration of "children bringing bricks to the orphans."[47]

The campaign motivated many to donate to the project, including charitable foundations, Sunday school groups, and hundreds of individuals from the United States, Canada, and Britain. Most of the individual donors were women, the names of whom are listed in the back of the IGA's publications.[48] By 1920, the campaign had raised almost $30,000 from the multitude of people who donated $2 or $25 towards the cause.[49] Many American college students volunteered to help dig the foundations of the new building in St. Anthony. "The[se volunteers] certainly did credit to Yale, Harvard, Princeton, and their various schools and colleges," Grenfell wrote. "They christened themselves as usual by the honourable title of 'The Wops' [workers without pay]."[50]

The brick orphanage was completed in 1922. The new three-storey building looked "simply magnificent in its solidity and its design for economy and convenience."[51] It provided beds for 50 children and featured a modern kitchen, running water, and electricity. The new orphanage superintendent, Frances Baier of Troy, New York, took over from Harriot Houghteling, a childhood friend of Anne Grenfell.[52] The children moved from the old building to the new one on 13 December 1922, and the orphanage hosted an open house on New Year's Day. About 160 people from St. Anthony and the surrounding area joined the children and staff to inspect and celebrate the new building.[53]

Millicent Blake Loder from Rigolet was one of the children to live in the new orphanage. She represented a new type of boarder — a student from Labrador who came to St. Anthony to continue her education. Millicent had completed Grade 6 at the Labrador Public School in Muddy Bay

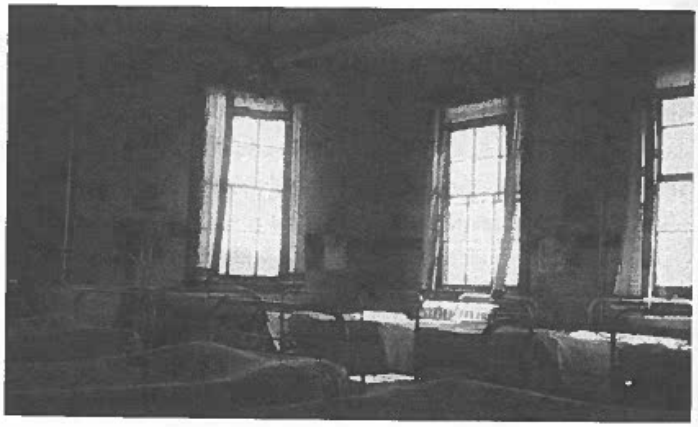
The new brick St. Anthony orphanage, 1945 (courtesy of The Rooms).

and travelled to St. Anthony in 1928 to get her final three grades. The orphanage became her home while she attended school. In her memoir, *Daughter of Labrador*, she describes her memories of the place:

> I can recall quite clearly my first sight of St. Anthony. . . . Up from the wharf were several large buildings that belonged to the IGA. There was a large shed and farther up, enclosed by fences, was a large yellow box-like building. This was the orphanage, where we were to live.
>
> Five Labrador girls and a number of boys had come to attend school that year. We were met and warmly welcomed by a jolly, smiling, motherly sort of lady. This was Miss Karpik, the Head Mistress. Her greeting convinced me from the first that this school would be more to my liking than Muddy Bay. Miss Karpik took us around to our room. This was called the Labrador Girls' Room. Other children are everywhere in the halls and

> in the dining room. Some had been there for years, while others were newcomers as we were. The dining room had lots of tables and when we all filed in they were all full. It was like a big family.
>
> Miss Karpik and her helpers sat at the table with us, quite a change from Muddy Bay. Miss Karpik told us all about the rules and regulations. She told us that she would be glad to help us out with anything at any time. I loved her from the first. . . . I told Eva [Shiwak] I was going to like it here. After we got in bed we chatted about the place, the Head Mistress and expectations for the future. We fell asleep happy.[54]

With the larger building, the number of children grew. Sixty children lived in the orphanage each year in the early 1930s, and between 65 and 75 lived there in the mid-1940s.[55] For the first time, the IGA hired co-superintendents for the Children's Home. Linwood Brown and his wife Rachel took over administration of the orphanage from 1936 to 1945. The couple had worked at a children's home in New York State, and both "have had training in the management of children along modern lines."[56] Linwood tried to enforce the use of the name, "The Children's Home"



The interior of the new St. Anthony orphanage, after 1923 (courtesy of The Rooms).

instead of "The Orphanage," but the original name stuck. Unofficially, the new building was also known as the "cracker box" or the "old biscuit box."[57] Rachel Brown, a trained nurse, described the layout of the building during their time there:

> A corner light area kitchen, with a monstrous wood-burning iron stove, whose ovens would bake-off a dozen loaves of bread at a time. . . . The laundry room was next with huge set of tubs, and yes, hand scrub boards! . . . There was also a huge food storage room, which was well secured by locks! Many staple foods came in barrels: flour, sugar, molasses. There were bins for root vegetables, shelves for canned goods, and more perishable foods. In addition, there was a large shower room, washroom and toilets for boys use. Across the hall was a work shop. . . .
>
> First floor dining rooms were for the children, and there was a serving kitchen where the food was sent up from the kitchen by "dum-waiter" [*sic*]. Sinks for washing and sterilizing dishes were used at mealtimes. Two rooms off this serving kitchen provided the domestic help with dining and sitting rooms. The staff dining room, living room, and dish pantry, were on the back of the building on the first floor. Also, was the Director's office, coat rooms, clinic facilities, and washroom-toilets for the girls, and an activity room or games room. There were boys and girls stairwells leading to the second floor. Dormitories for small and large boys, with bathroom facilities between, and adequate storage for clothing. There were dormitories for little girls, and a nursery with cribs and youth beds, bathrooms, and clothing storage. On the third floor, were dormitories for the larger girls, staff rooms, and bathrooms. Here was the ever popular "Sewing Room" . . . .
>
> Daily routines included: One hour knitting, sewing or mending for the girls. Under the supervision of Francisca Mayer, who was skilled in these techniques. The smaller boys filled wood boxes, split wood, working on the fish stage curing salt

cod in season, mending fish nets, repairing shoes or skin boots. Older boys worked at the Mission barns, dog kennels, and hen house. The wood working shop was open only when supervision was available as the machines required supervision. Many fine pieces of furniture were produced in this shop.[58]

The School Curriculum and Orphanage Activities

School-age children at the orphanage and in the community attended a Grenfell Mission school in St. Anthony. The number of orphanage children at the school varied over the years. In 1945, about a third of the 180 students came from the Children's Home.[59] The proportion declined in the 1950s and 1960s as the number of children at the orphanage decreased. By 1958–59, the school had grown to 238 pupils, of whom only 38, or 16 per cent, lived in the orphanage.[60]

Wilfred Grenfell had established the St. Anthony school in the early 1900s. Although the town already had Anglican and Methodist schools, he wanted to build a school that was open to everyone. Grenfell disagreed with the religious segregation and the inefficient duplication of Newfoundland's denominational education system. Church control of the schools made it feel like people in the colony were "still living in the Middle Ages," he argued.[61] When he could not convince the other schools in St. Anthony to combine their efforts, he opened a non-denominational Mission school in 1907. For the first few years, until a new schoolhouse had been built, the Grenfell school used both the Methodist schoolhouse and the Church of England schoolhouse across the harbour.[62]

A non-denominational school was an anomaly, and teachers at the Wilfred T. Grenfell School initially endured local criticism and low enrolment.[63] To counter the public's skepticism, the Mission tried to attract well-qualified teachers, the earliest of whom were well-educated American and Canadian volunteers.[64] Ruth Keese of Chelsea, Massachusetts, was the first to teach at the school. The daughter of a Congregational minister and a graduate of Vermont State College, she travelled to St. Anthony

for the position in 1907.[65] "Little Miss Keese," as she was known among Mission staff, taught at the school for a few years until she returned to the States after marrying John Mason Little, a Grenfell doctor stationed at St. Anthony.[66] Olive Lesley joined Ruth Keese in 1910 to teach kindergarten at the Grenfell school. Olive had co-founded the Lesley School for teachers in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with her sister, Edith, and specialized in training teachers in kindergarten methods.[67]

In 1910, students at the Grenfell school no longer had to use the Methodist or Church of England schoolhouses. The new two-room Grenfell schoolhouse stood about 750 metres from the orphanage. When it opened, Ruth Keese was ecstatic:

> It really is perfectly gorgeous in the new school. We had the Christmas tree there and introduced it to the general public and the general public was enthusiastic. It is just a joy. When we get furniture for this school it will be hard to beat. It is one of the pleasantest rooms I have ever seen.[68]

The Grenfell schoolhouse in St. Anthony, 1913. The inscription above the door reads: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be the peace of thy children" (courtesy of The Rooms).

Student numbers increased as the school's reputation improved. According to Magistrate Squarey, who investigated the Grenfell Association's activities in 1917 as a result of complaints filed by the Newfoundland business community, children from neighbouring towns stayed at the local inn in St. Anthony while attending the Grenfell school. He was impressed with what he saw: "The Association has established a splendid school at St. Anthony. Nearly one hundred children attend. People come to St. Anthony every winter and board at the inn solely for the purpose of attending the school — a fact illustrative of their appreciation of its existence."[69]

Grenfell teachers and orphanage staff aimed to provide an education that set a high standard of academic achievement and extended well beyond academic subjects. They expressed their hopes that both the school and the orphanage would profoundly change the children who attended them. As Wilfred Grenfell wrote in 1911: "It is our great desire that the schools should stand for more than mere teaching school-book learning. They can be centres of real civilization."[70] Grenfell staff also felt their work at the orphanage existed on "the frontiers of civilization."[71] Accordingly, the orphanage would serve as a "factory to raise boys and girls [in] Christian ideals of life and service."[72]

Grenfell's philosophy of "work, service, worship and play" influenced the school curriculum and orphanage activities.[73] Teachers and orphanage staff organized programs designed to teach the children practical skills, sportsmanship, creativity, and play. They also socialized the children in the norms, values, and behaviours that the IGA staff felt were essential for their future lives. "Education as we see it," Grenfell wrote, "means the training that enables one most completely to correspond to one's environment, together with the development of a healthy body, and primarily of a spirit which makes living to serve the world the first objective."[74] To adapt the teaching to the needs of the students, as the teacher Alice MacNair explained, the school curriculum focused on "Arithmetic — adding and subtracting was most needed of all, for the making and understanding of a simple bill; the composition of a letter; some spelling, some local geography leading out to the larger world."[75]

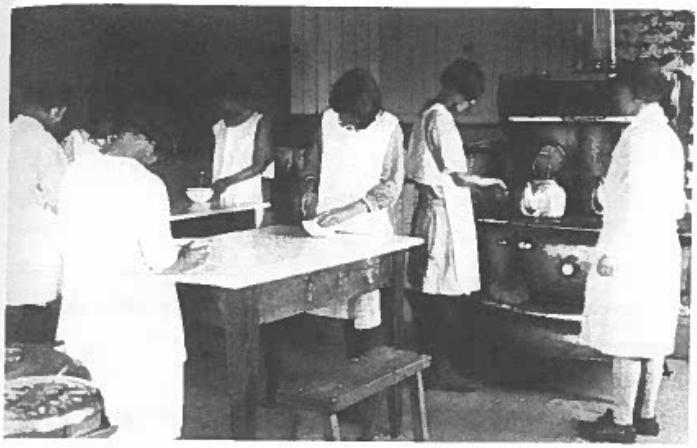
Snowshoe race in the annual St. Anthony Sports Day (with the orphanage in the background) (courtesy of The Rooms).

For Grenfell, play was important for children because it fostered "the ineradicable love of athletics and sport" that was a distinguishing feature of "Anglo-Saxon" superiority.[76] As Grenfell saw it, the love of sports gave the English an "advantage over competitors" in addition to their "racial attributes."[77] But when Grenfell and the volunteer teachers first came to the coast, they did not see any recognizable toys or games among the children — at least not the kind one would see in the homes of children in Britain and America. They aimed to fill this void, in the name of British imperialism. Ethel Gordon Muir, a summer teacher with a PhD who co-ordinated the Mission's volunteer teachers in the early 1900s, shared Grenfell's belief in the need to encourage games and imagination among the children. Muir likewise saw the lack of play as a sign of a flawed childhood: "Where life is so serious and hard, as it is on this coast," she wrote in 1911, "it is surely no wonder that the children are sadly lacking in imagination."[78] Accordingly, "organized play was carefully introduced on the coast," and sports days and annual competitions became a tradition in St. Anthony.[79]

Staff also tried to instill a spirit of service by encouraging students to use their knowledge and new skills to help others upon their return home. Phyllis Blake, a child at the orphanage from Mud Lake, Labrador, wrote an article for *Among the Deep Sea Fishers* magazine in October 1922 that illustrates her ambition to serve Labradorians. She describes the poverty, starvation, and poor health of many in Labrador, yet affirms her wish to improve conditions: "But in spite of all the privations of the far north land, I still love it and when my nurse's course is finished (it hasn't begun yet), I will return to my native land and try to help the people in every way possible."[80]

The orphanage also provided training in practical skills. In 1922, the first boys' worker, Paul Claggett, reported his plans for the boys at the orphanage. These included organizing a Boy Scout troop and adding training in gardening, arts and crafts, construction, and woodworking to the school curriculum. "The boys who leave the orphanage to make their own living must have a good knowledge of the use of tools," he maintained.[81] For group instruction, he envisioned "[s]ports and games, physical fitness, tools and handicraft, woodcraft, mechanics, popular science, camping, reading and public speaking, wild animals, birds, gardening, citizenship, and vocational training."[82] The children seem to have enjoyed the activities. Teacher Alice MacNair reported that "The favorite subjects were manual training, sewing, music and the worship service."[83]

Orphanage staff also introduced the children to current American social values through their training and activities. One such example involved a visit from a representative of the American Humane Association and Animal Rescue League of Boston, who arrived in St. Anthony in the early 1930s. Maude Phillips tried to promote the organization's values among the orphanage children by launching a humane society called "Sir Wilfred's Crusaders." To become a Crusader, children had to make the pledge, "I promise to be kind to every living thing, people, animals, birds, trees, and flowers."[84] The children were encouraged to shelter their dogs, to make kennels, to feed bread to the birds and to be kind to each other. When asked to perform a kind deed, the children laid flowers on the



Domestic science class at the St. Anthony school, 1930 (courtesy of The Rooms).

grave of a child who had recently died — an act that impressed their reality on Maude Phillips.[85] Like other missionaries, she used gardening metaphors to describe her work. In an article published in the IGA magazine, Phillips wrote that she was sowing seeds of humane values in the "soil" of the children's hearts and minds.[86]

In the late 1930s, under the supervision of Linwood and Rachel Brown, the orphanage children were given more manual training to supplement their schooling. Linwood felt it "imperative that our children be given every possible opportunity to become self-sufficient."[87] A local fisherman taught the boys how to fish, and Dr. Curtis, the IGA superintendent, taught the older boys "how to raise and care for cattle and pigs at the Mission barn. During the summer the younger boys and girls are busy in their vegetable garden. Next year I hope to be training the boys in poultry raising."[88] Linwood Brown also taught the boys furniture-making, while his wife ensured the girls learned "cooking, sewing, and every phase of housekeeping."[89] Rachel Brown offered the girls training in other practical homemaking skills as well:

> They are also taught to can the local products, make jam and jellies from the locally grown berries. Our canning and preserving figures for the past year are quite impressive: twelve hundred tins of salmon, hundreds of pounds of jams and jellies and many jars of vegetables and greens. Besides the valuable training this affords the girls, these things go a long way in augmenting our winter's food supply.[90]

After the Browns left St. Anthony in 1945, a similar carpentry program ran for a few years in the late 1950s.[91] Aimed at Inuit boys from northern Labrador, it was funded by the provincial Department of Natural Resources. Stanley Hodge and Albert Styles, two Grenfell school graduates who had gone to the Ryerson Institute in Toronto for technical training, ran the program.[92] As the January 1957 issue of *Among the Deep Sea Fishers* notes:

> A new venture has been started this year by bringing to St. Anthony five Eskimo boys from Labrador to a small manual-training school that we have established under the charge of

Orphanage boys splitting fish on wharf, St. Anthony, 1931 (Bill Burden, Israel Rumbolt, Jimmy Turnbull) (courtesy of The Rooms).

> Stanley Hodge. These boys are receiving instruction in plumbing, carpentry and diesel engineering so that they will be able to take their place in the many new activities that are opening up in Labrador.[93]

The Moravian missionary in Hebron, Siegfried Hettasch, describes the experience of two of the Inuit students for the *Periodical Accounts of the Moravian Missions*:

> We have one 17-year-old man, who is an orphan, and in his days here in Hebron has been pushed around from one home to another and for a while he was labelled as a bad boy. But there is a great deal of good in him. The Government is paying for additional education for him at the Grenfell Mission Trade School in St. Anthony where he is getting much valuable training. He is now in St. Anthony for his second winter. This summer he came home for several weeks, when he showed us quite a lot of the blue-prints for house-building, which he had learned to design. He is very happy about it all and seems to be getting on well. We feel quite proud of him.
>
> Another boy with an artificial leg was taken to that same school this year. The reason of his leaving Hebron was that he wanted to get away from his relatives who were drunk too often for his liking. He has only little knowledge of the English language as yet, and had also very little schooling, nevertheless, we hope that he too will be able to learn something to help him in the future.[94]

The trade school program came to an end in 1960, when the provincial funding ceased.[95]

The Children at the Orphanage

Children at the St. Anthony orphanage came from families throughout Labrador and northern Newfoundland. In his early publicity, Wilfred Grenfell often claimed that most were Labradorians, perhaps in an effort to convince skeptical American donors of the need to support such a cause. In 1919, for instance, he wrote:

> One of our boys is from Cape Chidley itself; others come from as far south and west as Bay of Islands in South Newfoundland. So many erroneous opinions seem to persist regarding the difference between Newfoundland and Labrador that I am constantly asked: "But why do you have a Children's Home in Newfoundland? Can't the Newfoundlanders look out for themselves and their dependent children?" As I have tried to make clear . . . North and South Newfoundland should be sharply differentiated as to wealth, education, climate, and opportunity. Though for purposes of efficiency and economy the actual building of the Home is situated in the north end of the northern peninsula of Newfoundland, the children who make up the family are drawn almost entirely from the Labrador side of the Straits; unless, as is often the case, the poverty and destitution of a so-called Newfoundland family on the south side of Belle Isle makes it impossible to leave children under such conditions.[96]

The existing IGA records from the Children's Home are incomplete, but they provide a more detailed picture.[97] From when it opened in 1906 until 1919, the orphanage took in more children from Labrador (53) than children from Newfoundland (34).[98] However, the ratio switched in the 1920s and the number of children increased, especially after the larger brick orphanage opened in 1922. Between 1920 and 1929, more Newfoundlanders (81) than Labradorians (54) were admitted.[99] This trend continues in the 1930s, when the orphanage took in 80 children from Newfoundland and 26

Children at the St. Anthony orphanage, ca. 1929. Back, l-r: Mary Spurrell, Priscilla Burden, Margaret Fequet, Jessie May Bownes; front: Alice Parsons (courtesy of The Rooms).

children from Labrador.[100] In the 1940s, the number of children continued to decrease, with 48 children from Newfoundland and only eight children from Labrador.[101] The IGA records list a total of 141 Labradorians and 243 Newfoundlanders admitted into the Children's Home between 1906 and 1948.[102]

While a few came from northern Labrador (including Ford's Harbour, Davis Inlet, Makkovik, and Aillik), most came from central Labrador (including Mud Lake, North West River, Rigolet, and Sandwich Bay), southeastern Labrador (including Batteau, Spotted Island, Seal Islands, Grady, Ragged Islands, Tilt Cove, George's Cove, Fox Harbour, Venison Tickle, Boulter's Rock, Battle Harbour, and Cape Charles), southern Labrador (including Red Bay, West St. Modeste, Forteau, L'Anse au Loup, and L'Anse au Claire), the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland (including St. Anthony, Griquet, Back Cove, Flower's Cove, Hare Bay, Daniel's Harbour, Englee, and Conche), and other communities in Newfoundland (including Bonne Bay, Lewisporte, Hampden, Springdale, and King's Point).[103] The names of children in archival records less than 100 years old cannot be published, due to privacy restrictions,[104] but the April 1930 issue of *Among the Deep Sea Fishers* lists 63

children who lived at the orphanage on 31 December 1929 (see Appendix 1).[105] Based on their family names, it can be deduced that about half of the children came from Labrador. The majority of those from Labrador were of Inuit ancestry.[106]

Until the 1930s, Grenfell staff kept detailed records of the orphanage children's appearance and behaviour. Using racial terms from colonial and American slavery contexts, they made judgements based on their assumptions of the children's ethnicity and ancestry. Comments such as "she is dark and has Eskimo blood in her," "looks like a pure Eskimo," "a quadred," and "a dark child but seems remarkably bright and intelligent" contrast with "blue eyes and sallow complexion with light hair . . . he has a rather sainted expression" and "fair — bright looking and seems very intelligent."[107] One boy from Francis Harbour — a "redheaded little Eskimo!" — caused the staff some confusion about their categories: "never saw the dark skin and red haired combination before . . . ."[108]

Children stayed in the orphanage for shorter periods of time as the years went on. In the first 15 years (1906–20), the children stayed for an average of six years in the orphanage.[109] In the 1920s and 1930s, the average stay was about four and a half years, while in the 1940s, as more children were staying at the Children's Home for a year or less, the average

Children at the St. Anthony orphanage, before 1949 (courtesy of The Rooms).

length of stay was two years.[110] These changing trends were the result of changing reasons for children to be at the orphanage. When it opened, the institution acted as a home for children who had lost a parent and who were often facing destitution. As the years went on, children came to the orphanage for other reasons as well. In 1960, a report on the IGA's educational efforts surveyed the children in the three IGA dormitories in St. Anthony, Cartwright, and North West River.[111] The report, written by Senator William Wall at the request of the IGA Board of Directors, found that the largest group of the children (37 per cent) stayed in a dormitory because their community had no school or they lived far from a school.[112] The second largest group, at 22 per cent, involved foster children and children with one or both parents in the hospital.[113] Another 15 per cent of the children had one parent deceased, and 10 per cent of the children came from "poor home conditions — broken homes, immorality, etc."[114] Ten per cent of the students lived in the dormitories in order to attend high school.[115] The smallest groups, each with 3 per cent, were children who needed medical attention and those with special circumstances.[116]

Children with One or No Parents

In its first four decades, the St. Anthony orphanage often housed children who had lost both or — more commonly — one parent. In 1929, for instance, most of the 17 children admitted to the Children's Home that year fell into this category:

> Of the children admitted eleven are from Newfoundland and six are from Labrador. Three new girls have come from Muddy Bay [Grenfell boarding school] and one from Cook's Harbor [Newfoundland] for schooling. Frank Cove, a little boy of six, was sent to us in the summer from Labrador by Sir Wilfred. His parents were both drowned at Ragged Islands the winter before while out trapping, and left three children. Frank is a cute little fellow and a favorite with the older boys who sometimes lend him one of their ties to wear on a Sunday — a great honor. By special

Children at the St. Anthony orphanage, ca.1932: (l-r) Frank Cove, Joey Ward, and Jim Turnbull (courtesy of The Rooms).

> request he always sits at table with the older boys for meals. A little boy of three came from Jackson's Arm, Newfoundland, with his two sisters aged eight and six. They had recently lost their mother. All the others admitted have one parent only.[117]

When their surviving parent remarried, the children often returned home. Those who had lost both parents often stayed at the orphanage until they reached the age of 16, at which point they left St. Anthony to work, to undertake more schooling, or to live with other family members. The Grenfell Mission helped some of the earliest residents at the Children's Home to find employment in the early 1900s at the logging mills on the Northern Peninsula, on fishing crews, or as domestic help.[118] A few children were adopted into other families in the 1930s and 1940s. New parents signed an adoption agreement promising to be responsible for the child "physically, morally, and spiritually until he is eighteen years of age."[119] If they failed to do so, the Children's Home superintendent had the authority to withdraw the child from their care.[120] In 1949, when the federal Family Allowance program began in Newfoundland and Labrador,

the new income allowed families to keep their children at home. IGA staff saw a significant decrease in the number of impoverished children admitted into the orphanage.[121]

Boarding at St. Anthony for School

Not long after it opened, the orphanage housed other children who came to St. Anthony to attend school. Wilfred Grenfell described the new approach to recruiting more students to the school with enthusiasm: "Being an unrecognized school, and so far off, some years went by before the innovation of bringing up scholars from our northern districts entered our heads."[122] Frank and Blanche Davis of Mullin's Cove, near Cartwright, were sent to St. Anthony in the early years of the orphanage by their mother, who wanted her children to take advantage of the education that the IGA provided. Blanche later trained as a teacher in another institution and returned to teach at the boarding school in Muddy Bay, but Frank decided not to pursue further education abroad:[123]

> I come to go to St. Anthony school just by accident. Sir Wilfred Grenfell used to come on the coast and he used to get women to make moccasins and things out of deerskin, boots and all that see. Now when he come to Mullin's Cove, poor Mother asked if he'd be calling in on the way back. He told her that he wouldn't be calling again — he had a visit there so he was satisfied with that. Poor Mother told him that if he called back that he could have me for two years. And that's how I come to go to St. Anthony for school, only by accident. Poor Father didn't want me to go, but poor Mother told Sir Wilfred I could, so that was that.
>
> I had the chance to go to England, too. Sir Wilfred was interested in what he called the smartest of the people, interested in taking them away and putting them through school and all that. It was a Miss Muir was interested in me and, as far as I know, that was the one that took away Blanche. . . . She took Blanche and two or three more. I come back from St. Anthony for a cruise with my

> family before I went away to England and then they wouldn't let me go back. I would like to have gone, but just the same when you take it all-in-all, 'tis only a living, whatever you do.
>
> I don't think I was too smart altogether, but they called me one of the smart ones. I got to the fourth grade and that was as far as I ever got. That was a good grade for them days, because there was lots that wasn't able to read. I was thirteen when I went to St. Anthony and fifteen when I came back. . . . It was lonely at first when I got to St. Anthony, but I fought that off and got over it all right.
>
> Poor Father said I could go to England if I wished but I knowed he was against it so I stayed home to satisfy him. I was sorry in my own mind. I would have liked to get out and get an education.[124]

A number of children at the orphanage, like Redgeway Snook from Trap Cove in southern Labrador, came to St. Anthony in the late 1930s to finish high school:

> I went to St. Anthony to take my grade eleven. . . . I was homesick as could be. I really missed my friends and family. It was especially hard because we were a close family. I was a very lonely person. I was a bit lucky when Charles Stone from Henley Harbour came over and I got to visit him. Cornelia Stevens and Lillian Rumbolt came over to work in the orphanage. That helped a bit to get to see someone from home. I made a few friends but it was still hard.[125]

Florence Goudie Michelin from North West River also finished high school in St. Anthony. An orphan at nine, she had lived at Gibbons Cottage, the IGA dormitory in North West River, before moving to St. Anthony. Once she graduated from Grade 11, the IGA sent Florence to study nursing in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Children at the St. Anthony orphanage, 1926 ("The beginners' sewing class") (courtesy of The Rooms).

> I stayed in school in North West River until I was 13 and had my Grade Six. Old Dr. Harry Paddon wanted me to go on, and in order to get further education I had to go to St. Anthony, Newfoundland. It was strange there at first because I didn't know anybody but I got into it. I liked it at the Orphanage and I did pretty good in school.[126]

In the 1940s, the Moravian Mission in northern Labrador sent other children to live at the orphanage while they attended school in St. Anthony. Hulda "Hilda" Hunter was one of four students who came from Moravian schools in Nain and Hopedale. Being immersed in a new school system was a challenge, as she describes:

> Before Newfoundland was under Confederation in 1949, when I was twelve or thirteen years old, they were recruiting some students to go to school in St. Anthony, Newfoundland. There was four of us, two girls and two boys: myself and Silpa Barbour from Nain, and two boys — John or Jack Edmunds (we called

him "Jack" all the time), and David Mitsuk. There was four of us went in a little schooner-type boat called *Winifred Lee*. We got aboard of that, and we were sent off to go to school in St. Anthony, Newfoundland, and we stayed in the orphanage. And from then on, I went back and forth for five years, back and forth going to school. . . .

When we got to St. Anthony, they tested us to see what we knew 'cause we didn't have no records or anything to take with us. We had to go to the principal and go through what we learned while we was in Nain or Hopedale. When he tested us on the blackboard to see what we knew, how much we knew, we didn't know English very good. We could hardly speak because of shyness — we didn't know all them students that were there. They put us in the classroom upstairs in grade nine, ten, and eleven. And he start asking us and looking at some math and English and whatever, and asking us.

But the grade nine, ten students watching us and laugh[ing] at us and everything else. They wasn't very nice, and I don't think anybody, any teacher, should ever do that to kids who got another language and hardly know the language of Newfoundland English. Anyway, come to find out they put us into grade six. I got to laugh, I often wonders — I must have been in grade five when I left home! I was thinking after, too, I must have been in grade five for five years, because that's all I knew when I was five and first when I went to school, we was doing the same thing we was doing when I left home and went to school in Grenfell School in St. Anthony!

That's how funny to me it was after a while. And then we were in the orphanage and we had to walk over a mile, it must have been, over to the school every day, every schooling day. Rain or shine or whatever, but cold. We could only wear little old things like dresses all the time, no pants. It was cruel in a way, I found it. I guess you get used to it after a while, when you go back and forth so much.[127]

When Silpa Barbour decided to remain in Nain upon her return home after a year at St. Anthony's, Audrey Frieda from Hopedale took her spot. The four students — Hulda, Audrey, John, and David — stayed at the orphanage and attended the school for four or five years. Hulda's last year was 1953. She and Audrey trained to become nurses, and Hulda transferred to North West River to work in the hospital there.[128]

Beth Green Solis from Nain also lived in the orphanage at the same time as Hulda Hunter and Audrey Frieda. Her parents had died when she was seven years old.[129] At first, she lived with her grandmother and her aunt. But then the Ogletrees, an American couple who taught at the Moravian school in Nain, adopted her. Years later, she described her early memories of Nain and of going to the St. Anthony orphanage before she joined the Ogletrees in the States:

> We were very poor but happy. I remember having to trap snowbirds and going to the island to fish. My favourites were dried capelin, ovelooks (mussels), pipsi with siva (dried cod liver), and nikku. I missed all these when I left for St. John's in the summer of 1950, little did I know that I would end up in St. Anthony orphanage at the end of that summer. . . . I was 16 years old and very scared, knowing just enough English to get by but in less than a year, I was able to write letters to the Ogletrees in the USA. We were very obedient in the Orphanage to Margie Byrne and Miss Parker our house parents. Drs. Thomas, Curtis, and Paddon were there then. We learned so much in that year, 1950 to 1951. We sewed, mended, made homemade bread, cooked, knitted, cleaned, took care of younger ones. We sang and danced. The boys milked cows and made ice cream. We went to movies and we served in the kitchen and dining room. We ate a lot of oatmeal with molasses or brown sugar. We had to take ugly old cod liver oil every morning. And we learned to be very responsible.[130]

Them Days magazine published a letter that Beth wrote to the Ogletrees on 4 October 1950, from St. Anthony. The letter illustrates her efforts to learn English:

> Only me and Hulda and Audrey are in the house all the other girls are town to the movies and I didn't want to go because Hulda and Audrey didn't go and because I'm stateying (studying) tonight. I loves learning English only some of them are hard for me. Our teacher's name is George Fields his right nice teacher. He [teaches] grade 8, 7, and 6. He told me and Audrey that his going to help us and try to teach us hard so we can go to grade 7 after Christmas and his going to try to led (let) Grade 7 go to Grade 8. His nice teacher. When I go stutying in the evening Hulda always helps me, she's right nice. She's Grade 7 now. Me and Audrey and Hulda go stutying together in the evenings. We are having some fun now.[131]

Eva Elson Luther leaves St. Anthony to fly home to Spotted Island, ca.1965 (courtesy of Them Days Archive).

In 1959, the Newfoundland government launched the Confederation Bursary program to celebrate 10 years as a province in Canada. The new program enabled high school students to attend school in larger communities if their own schools did not offer higher grades. Lloyd Stone from Henley Harbour in southern Labrador described the program in a *Them Days* interview:

> Many kids quit around Grade Nine or Ten. For those who wished to continue beyond Grade Ten, there was a $500 bursary available to attend a Regional High School in a larger centre. Some of the students went to the St. Anthony Grenfell Mission boarding school, while Lloyd and his brother Paul went to Bishop's College in St. John's to study grade eleven.[132]

Many of the high school students who stayed at the orphanage relied on this bursary program to fund their room, board, books, and other expenses.

Boarding at St. Anthony for Medical Services

Other children who lived at the orphanage came to St. Anthony for medical reasons and attended school while they were there. The IGA took Bella Butt Brown to St. Anthony from her home in East St. Modeste, southern Labrador, because of illness in 1923. She describes how she later went to an American school:

> In March, I was rushed off to Forteau hospital with an infected lung. In August, I was sent to St. Anthony to the Children's Home. There I would be near a doctor and could attend school. My father was quite upset over the move because he hadn't been told about it. He always said that I was kidnapped.
>
> Four years went by, and I was still at St. Anthony. He became anxious and sent a telegram to the matron, stating that if I wasn't sent back home, he was coming to get me. A message was sent back to my father telling him that I was going to be sent out to

> the United States to school. In those days, the Grenfell Mission had a fund to send students away to the United States or Canada to further their studies, and this year, I was one of those chosen to go.
>
> Within a few days, I was on my way with Mrs. Grenfell as my guardian. I wrote and told my father about it, saying that it was only for two years. It turned out to be five years. In 1932, I went home to what I thought would be a surprise arrival. . . . It was a happy reunion.[133]

Alice Rumbolt from the Mary's Harbour region was another child who was sent to the St. Anthony hospital and lived in the orphanage while she attended school: "I had to go to the hospital and the orphanage. I supposed I was eight or nine years in the hospital and then I was reared in the orphanage and that's where I got my education, Grade Eleven."[134]

After Confederation, even more children came to St. Anthony for medical reasons. Funding from the federal government for Inuit and Innu medical care starting in 1954 prompted the IGA to embark on an ambitious campaign to treat tuberculosis among people in Labrador. It built a 50-bed sanatorium in St. Anthony, and the expanded tuberculosis program brought many patients to live in St. Anthony.[135] As Dr. Curtis reported in 1955: "The Children's Home now houses about thirty children, many of them from Labrador, who are living there and attending school while their parents are undergoing treatment at the Hospital."[136]

Fran Frieda Williams from Hopedale, who had tuberculosis twice as a child, recalls being sent to the North West River hospital in 1949, and then to the new facility in St. Anthony for a few years after 1955. She lived in an annex for female patients when she first got there, then in the sanatorium for a year before moving to the orphanage for her final year: "My dad died of TB, so did my uncle, and I've had TB twice as a child; when I was 5, in hospital for a year, and when I was 11 in St. Anthony for two years."[137] Laura Millie, who was relocated from Hebron in 1959, moved to the St. Anthony hospital for three years in 1962 at the age of 11.[138]

William Palliser, who was born in 1947 in Rigolet, arrived in St. Anthony when he was five. He came to receive medical treatment after being hit on the head with a rock, but he contracted tuberculosis while there and stayed almost seven years.[139]

The Heavy Hand of Social Services

The orphanage also served as a home for children who had been apprehended by social services. As in Wilfred Grenfell's day, the IGA continued to act in its unofficial capacity as child welfare and social services provider until the Newfoundland government took over the role. In 1931, Newfoundland passed child welfare legislation. But with only two staff members assigned to child protection for the entire province, the government relied on the IGA to provide child welfare services in the region. More than a decade later, in 1944, the government passed the Welfare of Children Act and expanded the Division of Child Welfare under the Department of Public Welfare.[140] Still, government staff and resources remained limited. The Department of Public Welfare depended on the IGA, the Newfoundland Rangers, and the Division of Northern Labrador Affairs to co-operate in dealing with children taken as wards of the state.[141]

In fact, until it closed its doors, the St. Anthony orphanage maintained its original purpose of providing housing for children whom authorities deemed at risk. Rosina Kalleo Holwell of Nain was one child placed at the St. Anthony orphanage as a ward of the state. In an interview during a 2018 Healing and Commemoration session, she describes the pain she felt at being separated from her family:

> I was really hurt, because I was taken away from my home, from my family, and my sisters, because I always took care of them. When my parents were drinking and drunk, I always had to be there for them. My two brothers were older. My brother, John, I believe, was on his own somewhere on the island. And, my other brother, William, was in the St. Anthony orphanage already.[142]

Rosina recalls her sadness and loneliness at being taken so far from home:

> Selma and I used to be very close, and we were homesick, and we started counting the days. She was in grade 3, and I was in grade 4. And we made our own calendars, and we used to say, "Gee, we can't wait. Too bad we can't run away. We can't run away and go home. I wish we could run away. I'm sick of this place." And, we used to hug each other and cry. And, Selma said, "We can't. We're in Newfoundland. We can't go. We can't go back home. And we used to cry ourselves to sleep. . . . I don't know why, but I can never remember ever going back home from North West to Nain either. I don't know why. It was just so overwhelming, I guess.[143]

Rosina suffered sexual abuse by another student. She also experienced hunger while in St. Anthony:

> Another time, we were so hungry in the orphanage. . . . [The dumb waiter] I used to call it the tilt for some reason. It used to go down and bring up our food, eh, from the basement. We were so hungry, there was four of us. We went down in that. And, I can't remember the boys. They had to be strong, because they had to use the rope, a strong rope, to bring us up and down. We went down and we stole some vegetables, potatoes, cabbage, turnip and carrots in one of our aprons. Whoever had the biggest apron had to carry it. So, we stole some, and we let them know that we were ready to be brought back up. So, sure enough, then we got caught.[144]

Yet not all of her memories are bad:

> I mean, we had good days. . . . I remember clearly we were in grade four. We were allowed to go and visit the farm they had

there at St. Anthony. . . . We used to count the days on the calendar when we were almost getting ready to go home. That was good. At the end of May, we would make our own little calendars in our classrooms, in the back, at the orphanage. And, we just used to cross the X's off. "Oh, so many days. Yay, we're going back home soon!"[145]

Enoch Obed was another child placed in the orphanage by social services. In a 1999 article, he describes being relocated from Nutak to Hopedale in 1956. The eviction caused relentless upheaval for him and his family:

> In the relocation, I lost touch with who belonged in my family. I was 9 years old when I got separated from my family due to a respiratory disease. I lost my mother to food poisoning. My family wasn't used to new materials to store our food in. I wasn't allowed to attend her funeral at North West River. I was taken to the St. Anthony orphanage without my father's consent. When my father died, it was three months later I was told, although the caregivers knew of his death.
>
> In my early year at the Orphanage, I went through physical, emotional, mental, and even sexual abuse. I recall the beatings, going to bed with no meal because I'd spoken in Inuktitut. When I went there I was fluent in my language. Somehow, through the brainwashing, assimilation and punishment, my language was lost. It's like a burn in my brain. Anyway, I got kicked out of the Orphanage. I was too full of rage, bitterness, hatred and shame.
>
> Today I realize those that worked there thought they were doing God's will and simply followed orders and policies set by the government. When I returned to Hopedale, I had lost my identity, my culture, my language and my dignity. I could not communicate with my family anymore. The age and cultural gap seemed unbridgeable. I didn't know how to tell my story. It

Enoch Obed at the St. Anthony orphanage, ca. 1965 (courtesy of Them Days Archive).

was too shameful. All my emotions were bottled up and frozen. I did manage to get an education and a number of trades.

But I became an alcoholic and drug addict. My heart was so full of despair and grief. Many times I thought of suicide as a way out, and did try a number of times. Most people don't know how many times I agonized and wished that things would have turned out differently. In my own hurting, I hurt those who were closest to me. I loved each one of my family members, yet I could not show that love.[146]

Authorities also took K. Naeme Merkuratsuk of Nain to the orphanage after first placing her in North West River:

> My sister and I were not permitted to come back to Nain to spend summer here with my mom and we were asked where would we like to go. I think we were asked if we'd like to go to St. Anthony. And I asked my sister what she would like to do. She and I decided to go to St. Anthony for the summer. But we enjoyed St. Anthony so much — it was so much like home; there were hills and motor boats and everything, berry picking, so much like home — that we decided to be there instead of going to what they call flat North West.[147]

Eventually, K. Naeme was allowed to return temporarily to Nain. Dr. Gordon Thomas, the IGA superintendent from 1959 to 1979, agreed to let her stay at home longer:

> I wrote to Dr. Thomas and asked him if I would be permitted to stay in Nain and look after my father because he had artificial legs and all that. . . . And I was given permission to stay. And then two years after that, I wrote to Dr. Thomas, again, asking permission for Joanna to be sent home to help me look after my father.[148]

While in state care, children experienced the authorities' absolute control over their lives. Government and IGA officials determined where the children lived, what they ate, what language they spoke, whether they could attend family funerals, and even when they were to be told of family deaths. As a result, many felt frustration, anger, and resentment towards the institutions and the political structure that exerted such authority.

Fundraising to Stay Afloat

In the early years, the Newfoundland government paid the IGA to care for many of the children at the Children's Home, as it did for other orphanages in the colony.[149] However, government grants only covered a fraction of the costs. And the orphanage was not the IGA's only expense. Its hospitals, schools, and social programs were increasingly costly. By 1918, the IGA's budget was already more than $90,000, and it ballooned over the next 50 years.[150] The organization depended on financial support and donations of used clothing, equipment, books, and volunteer time from its wealthy supporters in the United States, Canada, and Britain. Wilfred Grenfell, a phenomenal fundraiser, enthusiastically accepted the challenge. He collected almost $1 million for the IGA's Endowment Fund in the 1920s — an enormous sum for the time.[151]

Much of the fundraising focused on children. Stories written in the early 1900s to elicit donations from sympathetic readers chronicled how the orphanage transformed its wards from physically and morally deficient children into strong citizens of the Empire:

> Some of our boys have done splendidly. Instead of growing up weak, rickedy, dwarfed, ignorant, and all that means morally as well, they are now doing splendidly for the world. Several fought in the war. Freddie Blake, the oldest boy of the original family presented to me, fought with the New England troops. Archie Ashe brought in 40 wounded with his stretcher patrol one day. He was mentioned by the General in France the day before he was killed, actually carrying men in. He sleeps in France. Our girls are also giving good service to others as nurses, cooks, seamstresses, etc. The Home . . . badly needs hurrying along.[152]

The IGA also recruited the children themselves to help raise funds. In the 1930s, it circulated descriptions and photographs of orphanage children whom generous donors could sponsor. Women from Britain, such as the students at the Ladies College in Harrogate, England, and other individuals each sent the IGA $125 a year to support a child.[153] The children at the orphanage also performed operettas for visiting tourists on the Clark Steamship Line. The steamship offered cruises to "the far-famed Grenfell Missions in outposts of civilization on the fringe of the Arctic," as an advertisement in the April 1938 issue of *Among the Deep Sea Fishers* proclaimed.[154] Lizzie Lucy, who lived in the orphanage in the 1930s, was photographed dressed in traditional sealskin clothing as she collected donations from the passengers.[155] These operetta performances were successful fundraisers, collecting enough money to purchase laundry equipment and chairs for the children's dining rooms.[156]

Lizzie Lucy at the St. Anthony orphanage, ca.1932 (courtesy of The Rooms).

Hard Times

Despite the constant fundraising, the orphanage remained an expensive endeavour for the IGA. Dr. Charles Curtis, the IGA superintendent from 1936 to 1959, felt that the high cost of the orphanage was unwarranted. Since at least 1910, the Newfoundland government had provided funding for the children in the orphanage.[157] In the 1930s, the grant "for the support of children whose father is dead" was $65 per child per year and in 1942 this support increased to $80.[158] But the cost of running the orphanage extended well beyond these payments. Curtis argued for limiting the admissions criteria for children:

> The whole question of taking care of children at St. Anthony should be reconsidered. I do not feel that such a large building is justified by the results we are obtaining from the children. . . . I suggest that the [IGA] Directors consider a smaller building for a Children's Home. I suggest that in the future no children should be taken unless they are full orphans.[159]

In order to track the institution's impact, the IGA staff had kept records about the children's lives after they left the orphanage. They noted how and where their former wards lived, whom they married, and any "improvements" in moral principles or standard of living. For example, they commented that one young man was "supporting himself comfortably and is planning to study for the ministry . . . he is turning out very well" and that another now had "one of the leading families" in his community.[160] A young woman was "now married [but showed] no improvement in standards over those of her family."[161] Another record laments, "he is living in the same miserable condition as [when he first came to the orphanage]. Evidently the only good accomplished here was that he acquired a love of reading. He is as dirty as ever."[162]

The mixed outcomes and the expense involved made some IGA staff members feel uneasy about running the Children's Home. In 1942, for

example, Dr. Curtis felt the institution was having a positive influence on the children of the region. "For many years," he wrote, "the Orphanage was mostly a rescue home and dubious results were obtained in many cases. Now, I think we are making some progress."[163] However, a few years later, Curtis again argued that the cost of the Children's Home was too great. "The orphanage expense has gradually increased during the past several years so that it now costs us $400 per year per child. This I consider excessive for this country."[164] With 66 boarders in the orphanage for the 1944–45 year, the gross cost of running the institution was $28,715.08. After deducting all sources of income, the IGA still needed to pay $20,100.60.[165] "The cost of operating the orphanage at St. Anthony causes me considerable concern," Curtis wrote again in 1946 in his report to the IGA Board of Directors.[166]

It was at this financially difficult time for the IGA that Linwood ("Brownie") and Rachel Brown left St. Anthony to return to the United States. The couple had worked together supervising the orphanage for almost 10 years. At least one person saw their departure as the start of the orphanage's long, slow decline into irrelevance. Long-time IGA staff member and Assistant Superintendent Horace McNeill (son of Ted McNeill from Island Harbour, Labrador, and Grenfell's "first scholar") later wrote:

> Rachel and Brownie made the place tick and when they left there seemed to be a vacuum and with the uncertain economic outlook the orphanage was phased out. The Browns gave those in their care, the best of home life atmosphere, gave the children a sense of well-being and self worth. Never before had this been entirely fostered.[167]

While the Browns' departure affected the orphanage, the changes that occurred after Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada in 1949 were even more influential. Social and economic conditions improved with federal social welfare programs such as the Family Allowance and Old Age Pension. The new money given to families directly contributed

to the decline of the St. Anthony orphanage. In 1950, Dr. Curtis reported to the Board of Directors that the number of children at the orphanage was decreasing: "An average of 25 children were in residence during the year. . . . Owing to the family allowances and increased social benefits there are fewer applicants for this institution."[168] The October 1951 issue of *Among the Deep Sea Fishers* reported the same trend: "The Children's Home at St. Anthony has fewer children than in years past because widows now receive generous pensions and family allowances thus enabling them to bring up their families at home which is far better than placing them in an institution."[169]

Plans for a Regional High School and Dormitory

In 1960, the orphanage housed 31 children, six of whom came from Labrador.[170] Half of the children had been placed there by Newfoundland's Division of Child Welfare, and none were full orphans.[171] It cost about $1,000 to house each child annually. The provincial government provided grants of $234 to $360 per year for each child in state care, while the IGA paid the rest.[172] The low numbers of children combined with the high cost of their care led the IGA to consider using the orphanage building for other purposes. One option was to build a regional high school in St. Anthony and to house out-of-town students in the orphanage building. The Newfoundland government offered grants for the construction of regional high schools, so Dr. Gordon Thomas, who would succeed Dr. Curtis as the IGA superintendent, suggested in 1952 that the government convert the orphanage into a dormitory and then manage it. He anticipated that high school students from southern Labrador and northern Newfoundland could then attend a regional institution:[173]

> We also have on the Grenfell Mission here, a large building which is presently used for an Orphanage. The need for a boarding school is becoming more apparent and we would be interested in having the Department of Education establish here a regional

> high school, and take over our Orphanage for the housing and maintenance of the children who would come to school here.[174]

The provincial government replied that it would not involve itself in managing student accommodations, but the IGA still pursued the idea of turning the orphanage into a student dormitory for a regional high school.[175] Dr. Thomas reiterated his plans for the orphanage in a letter to the Department of Education in 1961:

> We are hoping next year to make it more of a dormitory for High School children than a residence for Foster Children of a younger age group, as we feel that the building is better suited and would be better used for this purpose. Therefore, if we can obtain sufficient children to come to school here in St. Anthony, we will be happy to make our dormitory facilities available to them. I would appreciate you letting the various Superintendents and responsible officials such as school supervisors aware of this. Where possible we would be glad to bring children into here under the indenture scheme so that they can be resident in the dormitory and go to the Grenfell School here in St. Anthony until a proper Regional High School is built. This dormitory could be particularly useful to children living in isolated areas of Southern Labrador.[176]

Despite the IGA's enthusiasm for the project, establishing a regional high school in St. Anthony proved challenging. Conflict among the local school board, the IGA, the Anglican authorities, and the community led to much frustration. It also slowed construction of the building, the plans for which had been approved in 1960.[177] Although a partially completed school was in use by 1962, disagreements between the parties continued.[178] A year later, Dr. Thomas recognized "the local rising feeling of a large element to run their own affairs with no interference from outsiders."[179] He suggested that the IGA withdraw from the educational sphere

in St. Anthony. Accordingly, the IGA Board of Directors decided to step away from its participation in the local school board: "We have reached the conclusion that the time has now arrived when the people themselves are ready and willing to administer and control their educational facilities without the advice and assistance of the Grenfell Mission."[180]

The days of the St. Anthony orphanage were numbered. In North West River, IGA administrators were urging authorities in northern Labrador to send their students to live and attend school there instead of St. Anthony. The IGA staff also discussed changing their policy for housing children in care so that fewer children would be sent to St. Anthony. In 1964, Dr. Thomas wrote to Dr. Anthony Paddon at North West River with a proposal: "I suggest . . . we now decide that St. Anthony dormitory will no longer take children from middle and northern Labrador through the Welfare Department, but in the future we will refer all these children to you and consider that you will be able to take care of them."[181] The shift of the IGA's educational and child welfare work in Labrador from St. Anthony to North West River was almost complete.

Olive Matthews, who worked in St. Anthony in the early 1960s, describes the final years of the orphanage in a letter published in *Them Days*. She had come to St. Anthony after having been in charge of the dormitory at North West River for four years:

> St. Anthony was very different. The orphanage was running down, and apart from a few children sent by [IGA nurse] Louise Greenfield from Spotted Islands, etc., young people from Newfoundland preferred to "board" in the Village, and a small amount of money was then being given to would-be high school students. We had 35–40 children, one helper and myself. It was never the challenge or the quality of North West, much more occasion for social life, better food, etc. . . . And again we got excellent results from the few high school students we had. Gladys Elson from Spotted Islands got her 11th grade and every prize going, then went to St. John's to train for her teaching, later

> going back for her degree. . . . In spite of a large social life, it never compared with North West dorm. St. Anthony closed down about two years after I left, and the building was used for staff quarters. I remember it with mixed feelings.[182]

The new regional high school, Harriot Curtis Collegiate, officially opened on 3 September 1964. While the orphanage continued to house a few students, financial difficulties led the IGA board to look for ways to reduce spending. On 7 February 1969 they decided "To close down St. Anthony Children's Dormitory as of June 30th, 1969, for an estimated saving of $20,000 this year and $40,000 in subsequent years."[183] The IGA converted the dormitory into a residence for medical staff. It later transferred the building to the province when it handed responsibility for health care and the ownership of much of its property to the Newfoundland government in 1981.

A former IGA worker, who visited St. Anthony in 1978 after a 48-year absence, recalls:

> When we arrived in St. Anthony I was escorted to an apartment put at my disposal for a couple of days while its owner was in Nain. Where was I? In the orphanage, of course! But orphanage no more — it was now an apartment house for the staff. The orphanage had been abandoned some years ago. The infant mortality rate had decreased, the longevity rate had increased, and the government has stepped in between. Result — not enough orphans to fill the building![184]

The St. Anthony orphanage had undergone a pronounced transformation over the years. From its idealistic but imperious beginnings to its decline in the 1960s, the orphanage had played a significant role in the care and education of children in Labrador and northern Newfoundland. The International Grenfell Association had arrived in the region when the Newfoundland government was uninterested and uninvolved in

Labrador. In the government's absence, Grenfell and his organization assumed jurisdiction over educational, social, and medical affairs, and established the orphanage, schools, and hospitals. The IGA staff operated these institutions and took control of child welfare concerns, based on their own cultural ideals and assumptions about what was best. As Newfoundlanders and Labradorians increasingly resisted outside interference in their lives, the IGA bowed out and the orphanage closed.

In the IGA's final year, the superintendent, Dr. Thomas, reflected on the nearly 90-year evolution of the organization. He recognized the need to step aside and allow the local communities to make their own decisions:

> This organization started in 1892 under the colonial system of Great Britain, during the heyday of Queen Victoria's reign. This was a time when the affairs of such an organization as the Grenfell Mission were conducted in an extremely paternalistic although well-motivated manner, by outside persons and with no local opportunity for involvement in the running of its affairs. These philanthropic-minded individuals felt themselves to be very much "bearing the white man's burden." That the Grenfell Organization was to survive, especially following Newfoundland's joining the Canadian Confederation, was due to its ability to change with changing times.[185]

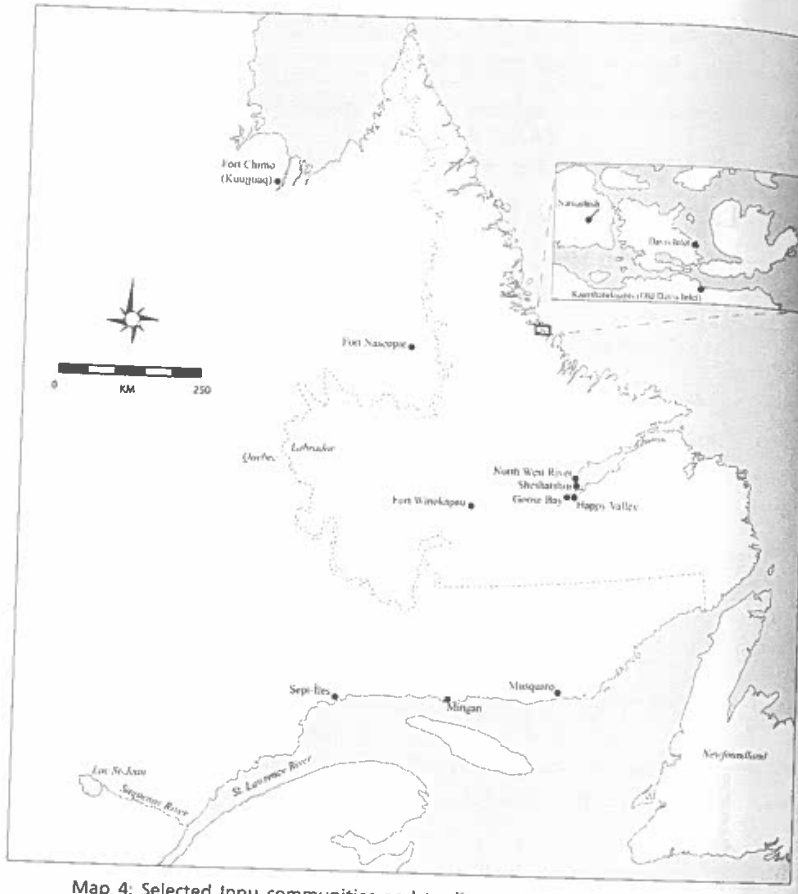
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Labrador Innu, Roman Catholic Schooling, and the IGA Boarding Schools

"The school, the agency now most engaged in influencing the Indians of tomorrow at North West River, must also hasten cultural change as much as possible."
— Our Lady of the Snows School principal, Sheshatshiu, 1967

"The best way to destroy a culture is to train its children in another culture."
— Pien Penashue (Innu Elder), Sheshatshiu, 1999

The Innu of Labrador have had a difficult relationship with schooling. They lived in *nutshimit* (on the land) until the 1960s, when Catholic priests and the provincial government forced them to settle in communities, partly by requiring that their children attend school. Instead of building boarding schools, the authorities built day schools in Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet. When they made schooling mandatory, Innu families had to move into the villages. Although the Catholic Church did not establish any residential schools in Labrador, some Innu moved away to go to boarding schools. Some attended IGA boarding schools in North West River and St. Anthony, and some attended Catholic schools in Newfoundland, including the Mount Cashel Orphanage in St. John's. Innu children did not attend boarding schools to the same extent as Inuit children in Labrador, but the day schools that Catholic



Map 4: Selected Innu communities and trading posts in Quebec and Labrador (map by Peter Ramsden).

priests established for Innu students have had a huge impact on the people of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet (now moved to Natuashish). This chapter briefly explores the history of Innu schooling in Labrador and includes the experiences of former students who lived at a boarding school.

The Innu and the Roman Catholic Church

Nitassinan — Innu territory — extends from Labrador to Quebec's North Shore of the St. Lawrence River to the Lac St-Jean and Saguenay region. As noted in Chapter One, Innu in Labrador largely adopted Roman Catholicism through their connections with their cousins in Quebec and with the Oblate missions along the St. Lawrence River. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate came to Canada from Europe in 1844 to convert Indigenous peoples to the Roman Catholic faith. The missionaries based themselves in the Ottawa region at first and then expanded into western Canada and east into Quebec.[1] By the mid-1850s, Innu living in Labrador often travelled to the Lower North Shore of the St. Lawrence River, where Oblate priests had built chapels at the Hudson's Bay Company trading posts. The Innu visited the posts at Musquaro and Mingan, east of Sept-Îles, where they traded their furs for better prices than they could get in Labrador. The Oblate missionaries conducted Mass, married couples, and baptized children.[2]

After the Hudson's Bay Company established posts at North West River and Davis Inlet in 1831, the traders hoped that having an itinerant priest stationed there might convince Innu in the region not to go to the Lower North Shore to trade.[3] In 1867, they invited an Oblate priest to visit their posts at North West River, Fort Winokapau on the Grand River, and Fort Nascopie in the interior of Labrador.[4] Over the next 30 years, Oblates maintained missions for Innu at North West River and as far north as Fort Chimo on Ungava Bay (present-day Kuujjuaq, Nunavik, the Inuit homeland in northern Quebec). The endeavour was expensive, however, and after 1896 the Oblates abandoned their activities in Labrador.[5] The Diocese of Newfoundland revived a Catholic presence in Labrador in the 1920s, when Father Edward O'Brien visited the region. He travelled to North West River each summer, starting in 1921. From 1927 on, he also travelled to Davis Inlet, where Innu came to the coast to trade at the Hudson's Bay Company post.[6]

By the mid-1920s, more non-Innu families were living at North West

River. Many were Inuit and the families of former Hudson's Bay Company employees who had married Inuit women, while others were from Newfoundland or elsewhere. The International Grenfell Association opened a new hospital and school in the village, and both the Hudson's Bay Company and the Revillon Frères trading company operated trading posts.[7] Trapping in the area was good. But with more people, it became harder to find areas to trap. Settler and Inuit trappers moved deeper into the interior and pushed Innu families farther inland.[8]

Non-Innu residents of North West River also pressured the Catholic Church to push Innu from the community site itself. In 1930, Father O'Brien convinced the Innu to relocate from their traditional camping grounds on the north side of North West River to the south side of the river (current-day Sheshatshiu).[9] As anthropologist John McGee wrote in 1961, "In order to avoid trouble with white settlers who had moved into land near the trading post, a Catholic missionary thirty years ago persuaded the Indians to move to their present site."[10] The Innu were pushed out of both their summer home and their trapping grounds, and many still feel frustrated that their land was taken from them.[11]

Father O'Brien continued his mission with the Labrador Innu until 1946, when the Catholic Church transferred the mission to the Oblates once again.[12] In 1949, Father Joseph Cyr arrived to live in Davis Inlet, and in 1952, Father Joseph Pirson from Belgium moved to Sheshatshiu.[13] Like Father O'Brien, both Oblate priests learned to speak Innu-aimun. Both also acted as the primary agent between the government and the Innu.[14]

Several factors forced changes to the Innu semi-nomadic way of life. At North West River, other trappers pushed the Innu deeper into the interior to hunt and trap.[15] Caribou, the main source of food for the Innu, were decreasing in number. The fur trade was also declining, resulting in the Hudson's Bay Company closing its posts in the Labrador interior. With little food and few ways to make a living, many Innu faced hunger and poor health. Instead of protecting Innu land rights, however, the government simply provided ration relief.[16] But it was not enough. Given the poor conditions, the priests and the provincial government thought it

best to pressure Innu to stay in communities longer and to spend less time on the land hunting.[17] As Walter Rockwood of the provincial government argued in 1955:

> The Indian may be an excellent hunter, and more inclined when game resources permit to live off in the country, [but] . . . in view of the scarcity of game and the low prices for produce, these occupations alone can no longer provide even a bare existence. . . . The needs of the Indian are the same as for the Eskimo, namely a vigorous Health, Education, and Welfare programme to fit him for the Society of the future.[18]

Education Promotes Settlement

Preparing the Innu for the "Society of the future" proved complicated. Few provincial government officials lived in Labrador, and fewer still had even met any Innu. So the government relied on the missionaries to achieve their goals. Catholic priests played a major role in encouraging the Innu to settle in villages and to transform their way of life, just as the International Grenfell Association and the Moravian missionaries had done with the Inuit. The Catholic Church and the government believed that Labrador's Indigenous peoples should modernize. The priests discouraged the Innu lifestyle of hunting caribou, trapping fur-bearing animals, and travelling throughout Nitassinan. Instead, they promoted a sedentary life in communities with wage-paying jobs and schooling.

North West River

When Father Joseph Pirson arrived in Sheshatshiu (then known as the Innu side of North West River) in 1952, he tried to get families to live in the village. "The priest would come to visit us where we were camped," recalled Iskuess Pasteen, a woman from Sheshatshiu. "He would ask the families to come and reside in the community. . . . [He] got really angry because there was no one living in the community."[19]

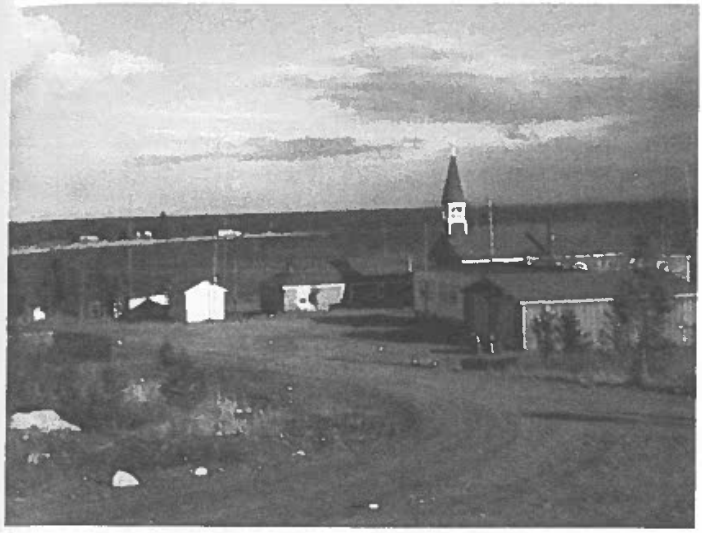
Pirson taught school from the priest's house until the Catholic Church built a small schoolhouse two years later.[20] He promised housing and jobs if families stayed in the village and sent their children to school, as one Innu woman remembers:

> The Innu were told that houses would be built for them and they had to school their children in return. It's like bribing the Innu. The Innu were not to leave the community when their children were schooled. Not even to go into the country while their land was being destroyed through exploitation. That was the idea the governments must have had. And many Innu were led to believe all this. We were told the children would eventually find proper jobs once they finished school. It was never like that. All those promises.[21]

Father Pirson made promises, but he also made threats. Elizabeth Penashue of Sheshatshiu describes how the priest used his position of authority to pressure families to settle in the community:

> The priest would go to my mother and sit close by her, talking for a long time. He lectured her on how to bring up her children. He would say to her, "If you take your children into the country they will be hungry and cold, it's better for you to stay in the community year-round, your children will be schooled." And of course he was obeyed because he was treated like Jesus. Many Innu thought it was wrong not to obey the priest. I guess we never knew or foresaw how the future would be for us once we lived permanently in the community.[22]

Many Innu describe the schooling as harsh and humiliating. Their priest teachers aimed to change them fundamentally. Father Pirson considered the Innu to be "backward," and he called Innu beliefs "devil worship."[23] He believed that, in order to become "civilized," students needed

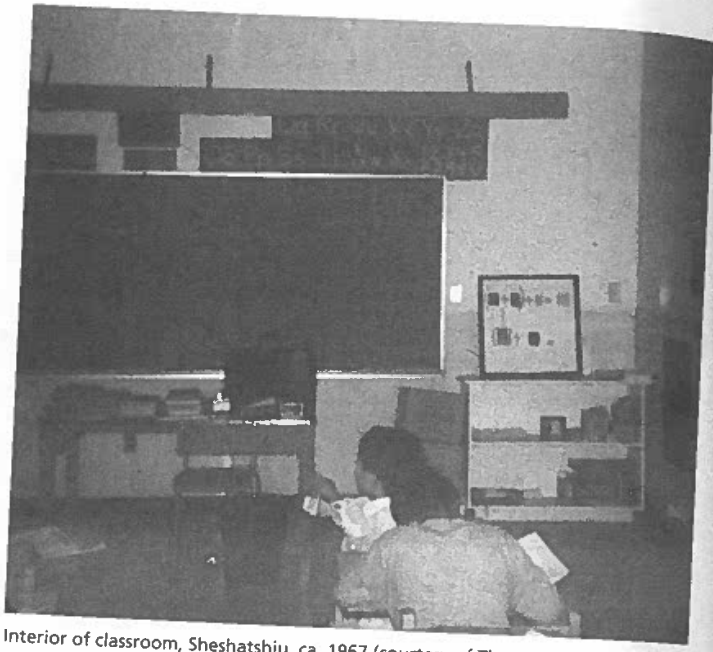


Sheshatshiu, ca. 1967 (courtesy of Them Days Archive).

discipline. They needed to learn to arrive on time, conform with his rules, and respect authority. Teachers followed this approach for years. As Anna Hammond, the principal of the Sheshatshiu school in 1967, wrote, Innu have a "primitive personality" and a culture that must be changed through schooling. "These people have their own methods of bringing up children. It is often done by the grandparents. . . . Thus, in school, they must often unlearn the patterns of responses learned in another culture."[24]

Although Father Pirson spoke Innu-aimun, he taught the Newfoundland school curriculum mainly in English. He made students memorize passages from the Bible, read and write in English, and study European history and math.[25] School schedules likewise followed non-Innu priorities. The school year ran from September to June, when Innu were usually hunting in *nutshimit*, rather than in the summer, when Innu usually gathered in Sheshatshiu.[26]

Discipline at school often took the form of corporal punishment.



Interior of classroom, Sheshatshiu, ca. 1967 (courtesy of Them Days Archive).

Father Pirson beat students with a stick, ruler, or leather belt for not paying attention, arriving late, or not knowing an answer.[27] Elizabeth Penashue remembers being punished at school one day in the 1950s when she asked another girl for help: "Father Pirson hit me over the face with a ruler and blood came down my face. I went home to tell my mother and she went to speak to the priest. But this happened to a lot of kids."[28]

Between the 1950s and the 1990s, several priests and teachers also sexually abused Innu children in Sheshatshiu. By 2001, Labrador Innu had filed almost 50 charges of sexual abuse and complaints against individual priests, the local diocese, and the Roman Catholic Church.[29] Many more victims likely did not press charges, as people deferred to the authority of priests and teachers.

Some Innu rejected the attempts by the priest and the provincial

government to control their lives. Napess Ashini, a respected Innu leader from Sheshatshiu, was a child in the 1960s when his family refused to be intimidated by the authorities:

> Me and my sister didn't go to school. We went to the country in the spring of 1966, returning to Sheshatshiu in September. Then the priest came to the house telling us we had to go to school to become doctors or lawyers even though my father didn't like the priest or accept the non-Innu religion. He thought the priest was brainwashing the Innu kids. My grandfather knew that something would come wrong out of it. When we didn't go to school again, the priest hired a truant officer from Goose Bay to chase us all around the community and take us to school.[30]

The priest used any means he could to force children to come to school. One strategy was to threaten to cancel Family Allowance payments if parents refused to send their children. As Father Pirson explained to the Newfoundland Superintendent of Schools in 1959, fewer than half of the Innu children in the area were attending school. Writing in poor English, the French-speaking priest described his plans: "I think that I have to do something. I told the parents many time I am afraid to do that but I will suggest in inform Family Allowances Department and ask them to discontinue allowances to parents who are careless."[31]

As more families moved into the community, the Catholic Church in 1959 built a larger facility, Our Lady of the Snows School, to accommodate the new students.[32] Provincial government officials argued that a school dormitory should also be built so that children could attend school if their parents went to the country.[33] However, federal officials were reluctant to commit funding for a boarding school because federal policy at the time favoured day schools over residential schools for Indigenous students.[34] In the end, no boarding school was built in Sheshatshiu. The provincial government focused its efforts instead on convincing Innu families to live in the community permanently. Between 1962 and 1968, the provincial

Department of Public Welfare accessed federal funding to build more than 30 houses in Sheshatshiu.[35] The houses were poorly built, however, with no running water and inadequate insulation for the cold Labrador winter.[36]

In 1965, with the old Sheshatshiu school overflowing with students, the Roman Catholic School Board for Labrador North (formed in 1960) requested and received federal funding for a new eight-room school.[37] However, federal government representatives on the Federal–Provincial Committee on Financial Assistance for Indians and Eskimos in Northern Labrador questioned the plan's practicality. The school board at North West River was also asking for money to fund a new high school on the other side of the river. Federal representatives asked whether it made sense for the committee to fund two new schools so close to each other.[38] Instead of having two schools, they suggested that all students attend one of the schools. But provincial representatives held to their conviction that combining students in one school would not work.[39] The province's denominational education system divided schools between Protestant and Catholic school boards. The system ensured that students at the Catholic school in Sheshatshiu and at the Protestant school (run by the Central Labrador Amalgamated School Board) in North West River were kept separate. The churches involved in education in Labrador — Catholic, United, Moravian, and Anglican — did not want to expose their students to other religious teachings.

In addition to religious grounds, other officials also argued against combining the students for social reasons. Some believed that the "Eskimo and White" children attending school in North West River should not go to the school in Sheshatshiu, where they would be exposed to Innu language and culture.[40] Dr. Tony Paddon, the head of the International Grenfell Association at North West River and superintendent of the local school board, argued that the school in North West River did a better job of assimilating Indigenous children into the dominant culture. He recommended against North West River students going to the Innu school in Sheshatshiu; he thought the Innu children should come to the North West River school instead:

> If the Indian could be integrated into the general school system instead of being educated in the Indian School he would learn much from his white and Eskimo classmates and could put the new language to work and become fluent in it and he would probably raise his sights and prepare himself for a career, or at least make a reasonable adjustment to Canadian life.[41]

In spite of Paddon's hopes for integrating Innu students into the North West River school, however, the river continued to separate the students, the schools, and the communities of Sheshatshiu and North West River. In 1967, the Catholic School Board built the Peenamin McKenzie School for Innu students in Sheshatshiu, naming it after a devoutly Catholic and prominent Innu Elder.[42]

Davis Inlet

In Davis Inlet, Oblate Father Joseph Cyr arrived in 1949 as the first priest to live at the trading post year-round. Starting in 1953, he organized classes to teach children how to read and write in Innu-aimun.[43] Children attended for short periods of time, while their families camped at the post. Like Father Pirson in North West River, Father Cyr was determined to make attendance in the classes obligatory. He used threats to convince families to send their children to school:

> He told the people the children should stay behind to go to school while the parents went in the country. He told us if we didn't send our children to school, they would be taken away and placed where they could attend school. He also told us our social assistance would be cut off. When the children didn't go to school, he would go look for them in the tents.[44]

After a few years, Father Frank Peters from Belgium replaced Father Cyr as the village Oblate priest. He continued with teaching, although he realized that the curriculum was unsuited for life in northern Labrador,

where there was no real alternative to a life of hunting. School was preparing Innu children "for a way of life that does not exist," he wrote.[45]

Despite the obvious problems with the curriculum, the priest and the provincial government remained convinced that education was the best way to transform Innu into wage labourers. W.G. Rockwood, the director of the provincial Northern Labrador Affairs, argued in 1960 that Innu were not hired at military construction projects in Labrador because "the adults had no formal education and could not speak or write English."[46] The solution was schooling:

> The Indians must be taught the 3 R's, and will also need vocational training, but it would be naive to think that this will automatically solve all the problems overnight. As with the Indians elsewhere there are deeply rooted psychological attitudes to be overcome before the process of integration is complete.[47]

According to the authorities, the Innu needed to be integrated into Canadian society and their "deeply rooted psychological attitudes" conquered. The government and the priests saw Innu culture and independence as a problem and something to be corrected. As Bishop Scheffer, the senior Catholic official in Labrador, stated in a letter to the Deputy Minister of Education in 1956, "They need more education if they want to enter into normal communities and live a regular life."[48]

The Catholic Church, the provincial government, and the federal government worked together to create what they saw as a "normal community" and a "regular life" for the Innu. The first requirement was that Innu abandon life in *nutshimit* and instead live in the village permanently. The provincial government built about 30 houses and the Mushuau Innu School in 1967 and 1968, with funds from the federal government.[49] For the first time, the school offered classes higher than Grade 5. Catholic priests and nuns taught the students in both Innu-aimun and English until trained English-speaking teachers were hired to teach the higher grades in 1968.[50] Under threat and coercion from the priests and government

officials, more families moved into the village, and more children attended the schools.

Innu Students at Boarding Schools

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, more Innu settled in the communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu. But sedentary life meant that people had to rely on poor relief and social welfare payments to buy store-bought food, which did not provide enough nutrition for good health. Moreover, community life created new challenges. Hunting for food was difficult, and diseases such as tuberculosis spread easily in poor and crowded housing conditions. As a result, doctors sent more and more Innu patients to Grenfell hospitals in North West River and St. Anthony for medical treatment.

In some cases, IGA officials placed the children of patients or sick children themselves in Grenfell dormitories at either North West River or St. Anthony, where they attended school. Caroline Andrew, for instance, was taken to the dormitory in North West River from her home in Kauishatukuants (Old Davis Inlet) in 1952. She went to school there while medical staff treated her for pneumonia. She describes having to learn English, and going once to a Protestant church in North West River with the Grenfell dormitory staff and children. The priest in Sheshatshiu became angry when he learned that she and her brother had attended a non-Catholic church:

> We didn't say anything because we were so scared. He told us he was going to tell the priest in Kauishatukuants. The priest would then tell our parents. He said he was also going to tell the kamit-uatshet (bishop) when he came. I didn't know what my parents were going to think when they heard this. We weren't allowed to go back to the dorm after this and there was no place to continue our schooling. The priest did not want us to go to a non-Catholic school anymore and there was no school in Sheshatshiu yet.[51]

Elizabeth Penashue was another child who was sent to the hospital in North West River when she was sick with tuberculosis:

> First when I went to school, I was shy and nervous because my English was very slow. I was a bit happy when I found out there was Natuashish people there, three of them. There was two Innu ladies and one young man, Sam Nui. I stayed a couple of months in the school and I started to get friends with the akeneshau [white people]. . . . I was very very happy when I went home. I was tired of eating akeneshau food every day. I wanted duck, fish, goose, meat, not sardines and beets. My mother brought lots of dried caribou and pemmican from the bush, and fish, and that's what I wanted to eat.[52]

As Caroline Andrew's story shows, the Oblate priests were keen to maintain religious divisions between the Catholic Innu and the Protestant residents of Labrador. In co-ordination with the provincial government, the priests sent Innu students from Sheshatshiu or Davis Inlet to Catholic high schools in Newfoundland or western Labrador instead of the much closer Protestant high schools at North West River or Happy Valley.

In the 1950s, for example, Father Pirson selected Francis Penashue and another younger boy to go to school at Mount Cashel Orphanage in St. John's. Mount Cashel was a Catholic institution run by the Congregation of Christian Brothers. The school is infamous for one of the largest sexual and physical abuse scandals in Canada. Francis described the rigid routine and the severe discipline at Mount Cashel during a Truth and Reconciliation Commission sharing panel in Goose Bay in 2011: "[It was a] very strict school. We had long hours. You had to get up 6:30 every morning, go to church, grab breakfast, go to classroom, 15 minute break."[53] One day, Francis forgot to do some chores, and a Christian Brother strapped him 15 times on his palms. He was then ordered to write two thousand lines of "I did not do what I was told." Francis and the

other boy returned to Sheshatshiu after the school year, but both ran away when it came time to go back to St. John's in September. Neither boy returned to Mount Cashel.[54]

In 1969, the provincial government and the Roman Catholic School Board used federal funds to sponsor Innu students in getting higher education. Two Innu boys travelled to St. John's to attend a Catholic high school, while three Innu girls trained at the General Hospital in St. John's as nursing assistants.[55] A few years later, two Innu boys moved to Labrador West to complete high school under the same program.[56] In the 1970s, about 20 Innu students attended Catholic high schools in St. John's, where they boarded with families. The majority did not return to St. John's after the first year because they were unhappy with their experiences at the schools.[57]

Taking Back Control

An abrupt immersion into an English-language curriculum and the regimented system of education at the Peenamin McKenzie and Mushuau Innu schools was a traumatic experience for many Innu children. Students suffered abuse from teachers and priests. Yet these figures wielded such authority in the villages that children found it difficult to report the abuse or gain support in questioning their teachers' power.[58] School administrators in the 1960s were dismissive of Innu culture and spoke openly of "the school's function in the acculturation of a primitive race."[59] Many Innu believe that the formal education system caused widespread harm to their society:

> Most problems are because of the school. Like us, we went to school. That's when our problems started. When we were in school, just like today, we never learned anything about our own culture. That is why we don't live like our forefathers lived. We really blame the school for what has happened to our children.[60]

But as Innu families saw their children expected to submit to the conditioning of the school, they demanded more control of education. Their calls for increased authority gained momentum in the 1970s and 1980s. Young and articulate Innu leaders such as Bart Jack, Tony Penashue, and Etienne Andrew argued for more Indigenous participation in government decision-making about education.[61] They demanded that government recognize Innu land and governance rights, and that the federal government provide them with the same services as it gave their Innu relatives in Quebec. The Innu Nation, the governing organization of the Labrador Innu, eventually regained authority over education in Sheshatshiu and in the new northern community of Natuashish. Today, Innu children attend schools that champion Innu-aimun and Innu culture.[62]