# THE POLITICAL RHETORIC OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS: GASOLINE SNIFFING AMONG THE INNU OF LABRADOR



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Title Page

# The Political Rhetoric of Social Problems: Gasoline Sniffing Among the Innu of Labrador

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**Abstract**

In 1993, six Innu youth from Davis Inlet were the focus of a home video that showed them high on gasoline fumes and shouting suicidal threats. The release of this video to media was undertaken by Innu representatives who claimed that they could not help their children and requested that the governments offer aid to treat these children and numerous others in the community. This 'crisis' changed the way in which negotiations took place between Innu and governments, as the gasoline sniffing home video was part of a political agenda of Innu leaders to embarrass the governments into taking action. Undertaking a social constructionist perspective and Critcher's natural history model, the gasoline sniffing crises of Labrador Innu communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu are examined to determine who was involved in bringing attention to this 'problem', what the political stakes were in their involvement as well as some of the intended and unintended consequences of this media spectacle.

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## Introduction: claims and aims

In recent years the problems of substance abuse in Labrador Innu communities have gained extensive international attention. In January 1993, Davis Inlet, one of the two Labrador Innu communities, was the centre of media attention when a video showing six Innu youth sniffing gasoline was released to the media. The event seized attention across the globe, as local, provincial, national and international news affiliates displayed images of the desperate situation in Davis Inlet. Those children were the first major causalities of substance abuse to become a media spectacle in the Labrador Innu communities and it was at this point that awareness of such problems spread beyond the boundaries of the Innu communities into the international spotlight. This thesis examines the process by which substance abuse among the Labrador Innu came to be recognized as a 'social problem', focusing particularly on the political processes involved in recognizing and making claims about these problems.

### The Problem

Since the 1970s Innu have been struggling over land claims and negotiating with governments, bureaucrats and corporations over issues such as Indian status registration, gaining reserve status, low-level flying by NATO, the hydro-electric development of Churchill Falls, and INCO's development of the Voisey's Bay nickel mine[1]. The Innu have also been dealing with more personal and complex issues affecting the social health of their communities. Alcoholism and substance abuse have a long and complex history

[1] For a more comprehensive look at Innu community events, see Appendix A.

within the Innu communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu. Alcohol and induced altered states existed before the sedentarization of the Innu in 1960s; however, the majority of literature written on Innu associates the excessive alcohol and drug consumption with Innu settlement (Armitage, 1991; Degnen, 2001; Henriksen, 1973, 1993a, 1993b; Tanner, 2000; Samson, 2003; Wadden, 2001).

*Gathering Voices: Finding Strength to Help Our Children* (1992) is a people's inquiry from Davis Inlet released by the Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council. Throughout the report there are numerous Innu voices—children, adults, elders—expressing their thoughts and concerns about the problems facing their community; all of which state that alcohol and substance abuse problems were things they had little experience of before settlement. Between 1965 and 1992, the inquiry claims that out of 66 deaths 47 of them have been alcohol-related in Utshimassits[2]. These are not official statistics; nevertheless they give an impression of the seriousness of the problem of alcohol use and abuse and of its social consequences (Innu Nation & Mushuau Band Council, 1992, 69). Yet, it is only in recent years that this particular problem has gained widespread media attention. While the Innu had been internationally known and supported for their campaigns against NATO since the 1980s (Ashini, 1996; Samson, 2003; Tanner, 2000; Wadden, 1991); it was not until 1992 that the internal social problems of the community of Davis Inlet were publicly proclaimed.

[2] Utshimassits is Innu-aimun for "place of the boss", the Innu name for Davis Inlet (Mahoney, 1996).

*The video*

In January 1993, approaching the first anniversary of a house fire that tragically killed six young children in February 1992 while parents were binge drinking in the community; Davis Inlet became the centre of media attention once again for similar problems associated with substance abuse. Six Innu youth ages 10 to 16, were the focus of a video in which the children were shown sniffing gasoline. Images of Innu children in an unheated shack with plastic bags of gasoline pressed over their faces became a media spectacle as children intoxicated on gas fumes shouted suicidal threats at a video camera. The Mushuau Chief, Katie Rich, pleaded for help from the governments. Social workers were called into the community, the youth were assessed and eighteen of the highest risk sniffers were removed from Davis Inlet. The young Innu were transported to an Aboriginal detoxification and treatment centre in Alberta (Gorham, 1993b). The Innu youth remained at the centre for three months, after which time the children were returned to their homes in Davis Inlet (ibid).

*Gasoline sniffing resurgence(s)*

November 2000 marked another significant landmark in the Innu's battle with substance abuse, as a cry for help in treating substance abuse problems of Innu youth echoed that of 1993. Chief Paul Rich of Sheshatshiu claimed that the children in his community were experiencing high levels of intoxication due to gasoline sniffing. He stated that there were upwards of forty children in the community addicted to gasoline sniffing. Social workers were dispatched to Sheshatshiu, and 14 of the 39 children were

considered high risk, however, the governments claimed there was nowhere to detox the Innu youth. The new facility in the community was considered to be too close to the children's sniffing environment, and after much deliberation, 19 children were removed from Sheshatshiu and brought to Goose Bay to use Canadian military barracks as a detoxification centre (MacDonald, 2000f).

On November 23, 2000, *The Telegram* printed a story where Chief Rich's sentiments were echoed by the Davis Inlet chief Simeon Tshakapesh. The problem of substance abuse was now manifesting in both Innu communities, suggesting that there were deeper issues being revealed:

> For the second time in a week, a Labrador Innu community has made a desperate plea to the Newfoundland government for help to battle widespread solvent abuse. Chronic gas sniffing and alcoholism in Davis Inlet has been out of control for a decade, and it's worse than the situation in Sheshatshiu, says Chief Simeon Tshakapesh (Callahan, 2000b).

The economic, political, and social significance of these substance abuse 'crises' between 1992 and 2005 are central to the discussion throughout this thesis.

**The Purpose**

This research examines the processes involved in defining gasoline sniffing of youth in Innu communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu, Labrador as a social and/or public problem. Social problems are often understood simply as the existence of problematic conditions, however as this investigation shows; social problems are about creating a viable *claim* that there is some threat to the moral order of society that needs attention (Best, 2003a, 2003b; Gusfield, 1981; Loseke, 2003; Spector & Kitsuse, 2001).

Social problems are about persuasion; that is, providing evidence to support a claim, as well as mobilizing the resources—human, financial and organizational—to make claims. This thesis examines how and why agencies, such as the media, government, Innu organizations and others have come to define this particular phenomenon as a 'problem'. The substance abuse problems of the Labrador Innu are used to analyze how public problems are socially constructed, who constructs them, as well as what political purposes such constructions serve. This focus on the political process and purpose of social problems claims involves the examination of how the focus on gasoline sniffing amongst the Innu children has been used to discuss the more general social, political and economic issues facing the Innu Nation of Labrador and embarrass the government into action over issues such as the low standard of living endured by the Mushuau of Davis Inlet and their desire for community relocation.

Under the theoretical understanding that social problems are persuasions more so than conditions emerges the idea that persuasion is a process of negotiating power relationships between the various players involved in defining the gasoline sniffing problems in the Labrador Innu communities. This is not suggesting that the conditions of substance abuse were fabricated, but that they were used for political purposes. The persuasive element in social problems work involves trying to draw attention to a condition. It involves campaigning in order to persuade someone that a condition exists that is dangerous or problematic and therefore in urgent need of action to be resolved. This persuasion is always directed toward a particular group, or individual that is seen as responsible for the problem and its solution.

This thesis examines the gasoline sniffing conditions of Labrador Innu and the social problems work undertaken to draw attention to the problem, particularly through the use of media outlets. An examination of the social construction of a problem in the media follows, along with a discussion of the roles played by the various actors that are involved in the production of the gasoline sniffing news. The purpose of such a socio-political and historical contextualization of the substance abuse and gasoline sniffing problem is to examine the political processes involved in social problems claims. Government officials, the Innu band councils, spokespersons, various 'experts' and the journalists offer a range of analyses about the problems of substance abuse in Davis Inlet. What did each individual, group, or group representative say? What were the underlying political motivations of their social problems claims?

*Tracing the evolution of gasoline sniffing*

To answer these questions, the evolution of gasoline sniffing as a 'problem' within the communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu was traced and the major organizations, agencies and government departments involved in the construction of the problem of substance abuse were identified. Their roles were examined, as were their relations to the others involved, as well, an attempt was made to understand each social player's motives for involvement and how this was related to the political rhetoric that emerged from such interactions. Of particular interest in this investigation was the role of the Innu[3], or more properly, of particular Innu representatives in the process of making

[3] The uniform label of 'Innu' or 'the Innu' is used frequently throughout this thesis. While recognizing the problematic nature of this monolithic and homogenous depiction of Innu individuals, it is unavoidable due to the inaccessibility of

claims about the substance abuse problems and the way in which they used the issue in negotiations with the federal government, and provincial government.

*The role of Innu*

Most existing theoretically discussion of the media identifies it as a white, middle class, dominated enterprise without recognizing that minority groups are involved in the processes of social construction of discourse (Champagne, 1999; Fairclough, 1995a; Van Dijk, 1991). Media is often widely criticized for sensationalism of the negative, violent, and controversial (Ashini, 1996; Champagne, 1999; Cohen, 2002; Carter & Weaver, 2003; Critcher, 2003; Leyton, O'Grady & Overton, 1992); however, media are not the only social actors in the construction of social problems (Leyton et al., 1992). It is often assumed that minorities, whether ethnic, racial, or of other special interests, are victims of the media's power. However, as it will be illustrated in this thesis, this is not always the case. Minority groups are not helpless victims but often active participants in the process of news making or discourse production (Gitlin, 1980; Leyton et al., 1992; Overton, 1993; Paine, 1985; Wolfsfeld, 1984). They may, in some circumstances, play a role in influencing or shaping what is said, what images and ideas are produced, and how the information is presented. There is an understanding among politicians, proponents of various causes, and special interest groups: if they wish to justify their behaviour, plead their case publicly, or receive greater government funding, they must use the media to gain public recognition for their cause (Leyton et al., 1992, 109). This is, as this thesis

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the Innu communities I experienced as an academic researcher. More will be said on this issue in Chapter 3.

suggests, what the Innu did with the release of the video in 1993. This thesis explains how gasoline sniffing of Innu youth became a media spectacle using the concepts of 'pseudo-event' (Boorstin, 1964) and 'politics of embarrassment' (Paine, 1985).

*Investigative techniques*

Theoretically, this thesis draws on social constructionist understandings of social problems theory. It uses the natural history model of Critcher (2003) to show social problems are not homogenously recognized problems, but are produced through political negotiating relationships that exist between different interest groups—Innu, governments, media and other social organizations, in this case. As Joseph Gusfield stated in his examination of alcoholism as a public problem, "a social problem is not an external entity, lying in the road to be discovered by passersby. It is shaped by the activities of people" (Gusfield, 1984, 38). This suggests that public problems are constructed, but not constructions of one group or individual, but are continuous negotiations between the groups involved. Therefore, in this context of power negotiations, the language and style in which the problem is presented in by each social actor or social movement organization is important as it promotes a particular political judgement about and attitude toward the problem (Gusfield, 1981, 187). The core methodology undertaken in this study, therefore, is critical discourse analysis as it helps in the examination of underpinning political biases and motivations of various social actors and their discourses.

*Building on other works*

Henriksen (1973) was one of the first ethnographic studies to be carried out among the Labrador Innu. Henriksen's account deals with his view of how the Innu were dealing with the changes in their culture and traditions due to the pressure of the Newfoundland government to settle Innu in Davis Inlet during the 1960s. Henriksen discusses the two oppositional economic spheres that the Innu are caught between, that of their traditional way of life, represented by the interior, and the capitalist economy of the present and future, represented by Davis Inlet, as well as the social, economic, ecological and ideological affects of their shift toward the 'white man's way.' This trend continues in the academic works of Armitage (1991), later works by Henriksen (1993a, 1993b), Samson (1999, 2003), and Tanner (2000). While each of these works offers explores what is problematic in the Innu communities, specifically the rise in substance abuse, seen to be an effect of colonization and cultural collapse, little research has been done describing the 'natural history' of the problem of substance abuse, or why the problem of gasoline sniffing became the defining problem for all other discussion about the Labrador Innu in the 1990s.

Two recent studies have aimed to update the traditional anthropological studies of the Labrador Innu. Beaton (2003) and Landry (2003) offer analysis of the recent social problems of the Innu. Beaton's work deals with examining the social problem status of substance abuse and suicide as it was constructed in three social problem arenas: the news media, the government, and social movement organizations. According to Beaton, the research shows the "ultimate failure of the Innu plight to achieve, let alone maintain its

status as a social problem" (2003, 2). Landry (2003), while providing more optimistic discussion of resistance to dominant discourses, focuses on the problems of the Innu and how those problems are presented in the media. Landry's focus on print media and the power structure of this institution shows that Innu are, more often than not, victims of the media misrepresentation of Indigenous populations.

My thesis is, therefore, unique in the fact that its focus is on how media can be used by minorities to convey their political agendas, though not always in the circumstances of their choosing, as the 'owners' of media often create the terms for encounter. This thesis explains the theoretical perspectives that suggest, through comparative cases, that the Innu played a crucial role in the shaping of the problem of gasoline sniffing children, the timing of its release to the media and their pleas for help from government officials. The victim status of the addicted Innu youth portrayed in media served a political purpose to gain bargaining power with the government over other issues such as Aboriginal self-government, land claims and community relocation negotiations; what Kenney (2002) calls using victim status as "shield and sword." This theme of 'victimology' as social construction that emerges throughout this thesis, is building upon the work of Holstein and Miller (1990). Holstein and Miller suggest that the construction of social problems and constructing victims and victimizers is a simultaneous process; assigning responsibility, defining causes of the problem, and therefore specifying what appropriate responses to the problem should be (1990). This thesis does not suggest that gasoline sniffing is not a serious problem for the youth of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet, but that it was a problem long before it became a media

issue in 1993, therefore there were elements of political rhetoric—"partisan activity intended to persuade others to adopt and act on preferred understandings of persons and circumstances" (Holstein & Miller, 1990, 105)—at play in the periods between 1993 and 2005 when the story became covered as a 'crisis.'

**Chapter Overview**

The first and second chapters of this thesis establish the theoretical framework and discuss the methodological techniques used in this research, as well as the reasoning behind their presence and use. The chapters explain the significance and relevance of social problems theory, specifically that of social constructionism, as well as the "natural history" model that accompanies this theoretical perspective. Further to that discussion is the importance of critical discourse analysis which aims to focus on the socio-historical context in which language is used and the social impact that language and the use of metaphors can have on the presentation of social problems.

Chapters three, four, and five employ the theory and methods discussed in chapters one and two and cover the three main objectives of this project. First, chapter three maps the processes by which media coverage for this social problem of gasoline sniffing was gained and maintained, as well identify the agencies, organizations and individuals involved in the process of publicizing the problem. Secondly, chapter four examines how the Innu used their substance abuse problems to push forward their political goals. The active participation of Innu in making claims about substance abuse and their attempts to control the problem is presented, as well as making suggestions for solutions and resolutions. Finally, the role of the media in relation to the substance abuse issue is discussed in chapter five. This chapter identifies the source of the information

that the general public is offered through the presentation styles and tactics that media outlets use. Through the use of critical discourse analysis, the socio-historical context of language used in media, particularly *The Telegram* (St. John's) and *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), is discussed.

While chapter four discusses the role of the Innu in the construction of social problems, chapter five shows that their influence is limited, but ultimately owned by media outlets. Media dictates the who, what, when, where and how of reporting about social problems. Therefore, chapter three offers an overview of how the problem evolved and the social players involved, and chapters four and five discuss more specifically the roles of the media, governments and the Innu and the intended and unintended consequences of their involvement and actions in the evolution of the gasoline sniffing problem.

This thesis stresses the importance of dealing with the social construction of problems such as substance abuse through mapping their natural history; their evolution in media spotlight as well as their social and political significance. Henriksen (1973), Samson (2003), and Wadden (1991) all view alcoholism as a manifestation of other community problems. Although substance abuse is a backgrounding issue in the communities in Labrador, the reason *why* it has become a foregrounding issue in the public spotlight should also be examined. This is, foremost, the most important question this thesis aims to answer.

# Chapter 1

## Theoretical Perspective: Studying Social Problems through a Constructionist Perspective

### Introduction

How does a society learn about the problems that afflict its populations? Who decides what people are told about 'social problems'? Why do groups in societies worry about some social conditions and not others? What factors decide which social conditions are identified as social problems and what the level of attention and action they receive? By what social processes are certain conditions declared to be social problems in urgent need of attention? These kinds of questions are typical of those posed within a social construction perspective of social problems theory, concentrating on the social processes by which conditions come to be identified as problems for society. This chapter provides an overview of selected social problems theory literature, specifically the social constructionist perspective, as well as its models for analysis, by way of outlining the theoretical framework employed in this thesis. First, a definition of what constitutes a social problem from a constructionist perspective is developed.

### What is a Social Problem?

When asked 'what is a social problem', examples of problems are often thought of before general definitions. Crime is a social problem, as is substance abuse and violence. But a more abstract, general definition is needed to suit all the possible examples of social problems. A social problem could be considered a 'trouble spot'—a social arrangement

that does not work properly (Best, 1995). It could also be defined as a harmful social condition that affects individual or group well-being (ibid). However, these definitions use 'social conditions' to define social problems. This thesis, on the other hand, will examine the interpretative elements of social problems. Different people use different terminology for 'social problems' thereby creating and reflecting confusion about what a social problem is. Is it a condition or is it a problem identified by a person or group in society which they consider to be in need of attention?

*The debate: social condition or perceived threat to social order?*

The primary debate in social problems theory occurs between two differing perspectives on what constitutes an appropriate definition of 'social problems'. One perspective, the objectivists, suggests that social problems are observable and tangible conditions that occur within a society. Blumer (1969, 1971), Fuller and Myers (1941), while alluding to the importance of meaning, still based their analysis on the existence of objective conditions. They believed that social problems existed when objective conditions are subjectively defined as problems (McGrath, 1993, 31). The second perspective argues that there need not necessarily be objective conditions for a social problem to arise. Constructionists focus on what people believe is a problem; therefore "social problems" do not exist until they are defined or recognized by society as troublesome conditions. An example is the fear about increasing the rate of crime without evidence of a consistent rise in actual criminal activity. Leyton, O'Grady and Overton (1992) discuss how there is a problematic relationship between the perceived

crime rate, the official statistics and public anxiety about crime[1]. They claim that responses to problems are out of proportion to, or even unrelated to, the actual occurrences and threats of violence (Leyton et al., 1992). People fear violence and crime, with or without an actual serious threat of being a victim of crime. This study shows that even in the absence of objective conditions, a social problem can still be created through a public belief that people are at risk of being victimized, because the belief that crime and violence are increasing creates a feeling of being threatened. Therefore, this feeling can cause changes in behaviour whether the conditions actually exist or not. The issue to question then is why people believe that society is in the midst of serious escalation in both the number of crimes and the seriousness of crimes. This belief stems from rhetoric strategies of interest groups and mass media involvement in making claims about increasing violence, elements of social problems theory to be discussed later. From this perspective, social problems are about interaction and evaluation of conditions, whether or not they are objective, or believed to be problematic conditions by interest groups or individuals (Best, 2003a; Gusfield, 1981; Loseke, 2003; Spector & Kitsuse, 2001).

Loseke (2003) identifies five differences between objectivist and constructionist perspectives of social problems theory. First, Loseke states that objectivists assume that social problems conditions exist in the real world and that those who make claims of problematic social conditions are merely bringing them to the attention of the public. On

[1] Statistics are often presented as 'actual' representations of what is happening, however statistics must be examined critically as another form of interpretation and perception; not just objective fact. Different images of the same problem can be constructed depending on what criteria were used in the collection of data. In Best's (1987) work on missing children, he states that some police departments stated that 24 hours had to pass before a child could be considered missing; others stated that the requirement was 72 hours. These two definitions produce very different results. For further critical analysis of official statistics see Best (1987, 2004), Leyton et al. (1992), Gomme (1993).

the other hand, constructionists assume that the conditions are not social problems until they are constructed as such. Troublesome conditions may exist, but are not social problems until someone claims them to be and evaluates them as intolerable. Secondly, objectivists are concerned with how the world is. Constructionists, however, focus on what humans believe the world is like and how our understanding of the world is a consequence of humans who construct this meaning. Third, objectivists categorize a condition as a problem because it violates a theoretical belief about how the world should work, while constructionists focus on how people come to hold one or another set of beliefs about how the world should work. Fourth, according to Loseke, objectivists make claims about how the world should be set up, but constructionists focus on how claims-makers construct theses claims about the characteristics of a better world. Finally, Loseke discusses the types of research questions and areas of inquiry that separate the two perspectives. Objectivists' ask: What causes social problems? What should be done to eliminate these conditions? Yet, constructionism leads to questions such as: Why do we worry about some things and not others? How do claims makers construct typifications of social problems in ways that persuade audience to evaluate claims as believable and important? How do successful constructions change the objective world around us? How do successful claims influence the way we evaluate and categorize experiences, ourselves, and those around us? (Loseke, 2003, 165-66)

*Social problems as public problems*

The general constructionist definition of a social problem employed in this thesis

indicates that something is *interpreted*, by a group or individual, as a serious issue for society, but also that the condition is widespread or serious enough to warrant public concern, the condition has the possibility for change, and is something that society, or dominant group in society, believes should be changed due to the *perceived* threat it causes to society (Loseke, 2003, 6; Rubington & Weinberg, 2003, 4). The important element of this definition is that a social problem is something that people; particularly powerful people believe should be changed. Conditions can exist, but conditions do not become social problems until attention is drawn to a condition or a *perceived* condition. A social problem becomes a social problem because it requires social action to be changed or rectified.

Gusfield (1981), like C. Wright Mills (1959), argues that it is useful to distinguish public problems from private ones. He asserts that all social problems do not become public problems as all social problems do not become matters of conflict or controversy in the arena of public action. Therefore, Gusfield separates "social problems" from "public problems". He clarifies his terminology by stating that there are social problems that never become matters of public conflict or controversy, or search for ameliorative public action (Gusfield, 1981, 5). "What may be visible and salient in one period of time may not be so in another. Issues and problems may wax and wane in public attention, may disappear or appear. How is it that an issue or problem emerges as one with a public status, as something about which "someone ought to do something"?" (ibid) Again, as Gusfield suggests, social problems are about gathering social forces to carry forward with social action to find a solution or resolution to the problem, whether the situation is real

or perceived. This is the process that this thesis will discuss. This process of drawing attention to a problem, the process of gathering social and political forces, and the process of using attention grabbing devices, such as the media to further awareness and therefore social action will be examined in relation to the gasoline sniffing problem of Labrador Innu youth.

**Social Constructionism**

From the social constructionist perspective, social reality is shaped and defined by humans with beliefs, interests, and commitments, whose implicit and explicit frameworks produce an interpreted reality (Gusfield, 1996). Numerous works had been written about social problems before Spector & Kitsuse's (1977) *Constructing Social Problems*, however this book was significant in the academic discussion as it claimed that social problems analysis should centre on the process by which people come to think of a social problem, without any reference to an objective condition (Rubington & Weinberg, 2003, 281-82). Adopting a radically subjective approach, Spector and Kitsuse focused their attention on the defining process, examining who goes about defining a situation as a problem, what kind of explanations they create, how they present their complaints to others, how others respond to their grievances, and what the result of the interaction is between those who complain and those who respond (ibid, 283). Their central concern for social problems theory was to account for the emergence, nature, and perpetuation of claims-making and its responding activities (Spector & Kitsuse, 2001, 76). Spector and Kitsuse asserted that the notion that social problems are a kind of objective condition

must be abandoned in favour of a conception of them as an activity, which they labeled claims-making activity (2001, 73). Spector and Kistuse quote Nisbet (1971) at length to reiterate this point:

> A social problem cannot be said to exist until it is defined as one. The way of behavior involved may be fixed and may be found among many peoples. But unless the way of behavior is defined as a violation of some norm, unless it is regarded by large numbers of people as being repugnant to moral consciousness, it cannot be termed a social problem...We are obliged, as sociologists, to recognize that social problems are inseparably joined to subjective awareness of a particular set of norms...There is a reciprocal relation between moral consciousness in a society and the perceived existence of social problems...No social problem exist for any people unless it has been defined as a social problem. The subjective element is inescapable (Nesbit, 1971, as cited in Spector & Kitsuse, 2001, 5).

It follows that social problems often mean different things to different people, therefore social problems theory does not consist of stable or definitive categories. It is difficult to create a coherent and cohesive model of what social problems should look like, as they are shaped by historical, political, and cultural contexts of time and place and consequently the product of moral evaluations of conditions in these contexts (Loseke, 2003, 6). However there is a pattern to be observed, according to Gusfield (1981), of how issues and problems arise, emerge and support a structure; to describe the structure of public problems is to describe the ordered way in which ideas and activities emerge in the public arenas. Therefore, researchers of social problems should not necessarily focus on the conditions themselves, but also on the processes by which a social problem comes to be defined (Loseke, 2003, Spector & Kitsuse, 2001, Best 2003a, Gusfield, 1981, Schneider, 1985). Who makes the decisions about what constitutes a social problem? How are the decisions made? Why are the claims made? How do the claims makers use

the social problem—what is the problem's purpose? How are the claims about social problem evaluated by the public? From this perspective social problems are not necessarily a separate entity for social examination, but the end product of a social process of claims-making; an inherently political process in that claims are always made with particular intentions. The "career" of a problem hinges partially on the suitability of the ideologies it implies, as it is a construction that furthers ideological interests of the claims makers or other special interest groups involved. Problems are created so that particular reasons can be offered for public acceptance and so particular answers can be proposed (Edelman, 1988, 18). If the ideologies of the claims do not generate a reaction within the greater population, then the claim of a social problem does not gain status as a social problem. Certain problems are more likely to be acceptable than others. Particularly in the case of the Innu, because the problem of substance abuse involved young children, more general concern was raised, as protecting the well-being and innocence of childhood is considered to be an important goal of Western society.

*Conditions for making social problems claims*

According to Crotty and Meier (2005), there are three conditions that must be present for claimsmaking to take place and for resolutions to be examined. The first condition is in regard to the characteristics of the target group, what Crotty and Meier refer to as the 'deviants', or what can be labeled the problem group. The problem group must be recognizable to the mass public, as well as to the political elites, and hold a marginal position in society. These groups are prone to value-laden stereotypes,

considered to be one of the most important factors in determining the allocation of state resources. Groups like the Labrador Innu are chosen, consciously or unconsciously, by the media as an attention grabbing social problems because they are Aboriginal and fit the stereotypes of a "problem group." Edelman (1977) states "the archetypal device for influencing political opinion is the evocation of beliefs about the problems, intention, or moral condition of people whose very existence is problematic" (as cited in Crotty & Meier, 2005, 225). Western society's socio-historical understanding of Aboriginal peoples involves images of 'savagery' as little attempt was made to understand their cultural traditions; they were labeled as different therefore considered unequal and inferior to 'white', 'civilized' peoples. These stereotypes have been forwarded through generations and therefore in the present day, these stereotypes are being used to forward an image of a 'problem group.' Particularly important to the attention that the Innu people have been receiving around the issue of gasoline sniffing is due to the sensationalizing nature of the media. More will be said on the role of the media in social problems work in Chapter 5.

The second condition is the presence of a moral entrepreneur(s) who is willing to draw attention to certain features or actions of the marginalized group and convince others that those actions are threat to the greater society. Moral entrepreneurs are advocates who believe that some members in society are partaking in damaging behaviours and that appropriate measures are not being taken to see that the deviant behaviour is stopped (Cohen, 1972; Crotty & Meier, 2005; Edelman, 1988). Moral entrepreneurs identify the problem and suggest actions for dealing with the problem.

There are however, a lot of claims of social problems that are competing for public attention, not all receive the same awareness and consideration, and therefore the question to ask is: what determines whether society takes notice? The role of the moral entrepreneur is important as it not only identifies the problem but places a value judgment on it, usually appealing to the dominant ideologies of society.

Moral entrepreneurs' actions can be seen as actions of power; attempts to influence the existing power structures of the dominant group of society. Their claims gain legitimacy because they reflect the dominant ideologies of the society; in the 'hierarchy of credibility' (Becker, 1967), moral entrepreneurs have greater access to the political, social and economic resources required to make claims about social problems. They must have a position of power, claim some expertise in the area, but the most substantial claims emerge from typifying—defining an entire group to be engaged in a particular behaviour that is dangerous or threatening. The behaviour is not only identified (eg. substance abuse), but labeled as a particular type of problem (eg. moral or health), associated with a particular group of people (eg. Labrador Innu youth) (Crotty & Meier, 2005). However, as will be demonstrated later, moral entrepreneurs do not necessarily have to be linked to the dominant group in society, but must be aware of the strategies and initiatives of the dominant group and display the information in a manner that is appealing to the dominant group.

The third and final condition required in the process of social problems claims making, according to Crotty and Meier, is the presence of a political entrepreneur. Moral entrepreneurs can be political entrepreneurs but Crotty and Meier separate the roles they

play in the process. Moral entrepreneurs create awareness and anxiety and place the problem on the public agenda, political entrepreneurs, on the other hand, translate these concerns into public policy. However, the vigor with which political entrepreneurs engage in policy formation and the success of the policy is linked to the amount of political payoff for the political actors within the particular political circumstances. The greater the concern or fear of the general public about the problem, the greater public support the political entrepreneur will receive for a resolution (Crotty & Meier, 2005).

*Why social constructionism?*

This general theoretical framework of social constructionism will be applied to explain how and why gasoline sniffing of Innu youth emerged as a social problem. For the purposes of this paper, a social problem will be defined as subjective definitions of objective conditions (Best, 2003a; Loseke, 2003), what Best (1995) calls *contextual constructionism*. Best argues that any definition of social problems needs to account for the interplay between subjective definitions and objective conditions. Best asserts that

> Rather than retreating into general theories of condition categories and other abstractions, contextual constructionism seeks to locate claimsmaking within its context. Claims emerge at particular historical moments in particular societies; they are made by particular claimsmakers, who address particular audiences. Claimsmakers have particular reasons for choosing particular rhetoric to address particular problems (Best, 2003b, 343).

The use of contextual constructionism was chosen for one specific reason. While the main emphasis will be on claims-making and the social actors involved in that process, the fear is that by ignoring the objective conditions of gasoline sniffing and substance abuse in the Innu communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu, it may be

implied that the conditions do not actually exist. Clearly, this is not the case, even if the actual prevalence of gasoline sniffing is not adequately documented. While the argument will be that Innu used the gasoline sniffing situation for political manoeuvring, it is not implied that the conditions of substance abuse were fabricated. As a discussion of the constructionist perspective, this thesis will not develop a statement of truth about Innu gasoline sniffing, as it is outside of the scope of this study to do so. Attention will be focussed away from the social conditions of the Innu communities and drawn towards discussing *how* the social conditions of the communities became publicly displayed and politically used; the ways in which issues are defined as problematic, the ways problems gain visibility and viability in the public arena, as well as the participants and interest groups involved (Beaton, 2003, 3). Nevertheless, the existence of these conditions will not be denied. Discussion of the social conditions of the Innu and the truth of statements about substance abuse and its prevalence is a subject for another research project.

*Who defines social problems?*

It is important to ask who defines social problems, especially as a process involved in the social construction of social problems. It needs to be recognized that social problems are defined by groups; what are problems for some individuals and groups in society are not necessarily problems for others, therefore problems are constructed by the individuals and groups involved. Without input about why a condition such as substance abuse is a problem, there would be no problem. Problems are not conditions or situations, but interpretations of conditions or situations, thereby a social

process.

There are intentions behind social problems claims; there is particular timing in which social problems gain their attention, particular political motivation, and particular ways of engaging in the social problems claim making process, defined by the groups involved. According to Gusfield, public problems are about making statements of responsibility and ownership of a social problem and its resolution(s). Responsibility involves asking questions of cause, 'why?', and political obligation, 'what is to be done and by who?' while statements of ownership allow for discussion of who claims the power to define the problem and describe the solution (Gusfield, 1981).

To "own" a problem is to be afforded the recognition and obligation to have the claims to the existence of a problem and to information and ideas about it be given a high degree of attention and credibility. To "own" a social problem is to possess the authority to pronounce that a condition constitutes a "problem" and to suggest what might be done about it (Gusfield, 1996, 21). These are the elements of social problems that will be examined throughout this thesis. Specifically this thesis will be considered the relationship between the Innu, the federal government, the provincial government, and the media in relation to the question of ownership. Each group, organization, agency, or institution made claims about the problem of gasoline sniffing, thereby making claims about who dis/owned the problem and who should be awarded responsibility for the problem and its resolution.

**Media and Social Problems**

Neither the proponents nor the critics of media can deny the importance of the role of media in the daily lives of modern populations, since much of what is known about the world is often through the mediated gaze (Cohen, 2001, 168). According to Cohen (2001, 2002), mass media have a near monopoly on transmitting information on suffering, tragedies and social problems. The imagery generated by media "belong to a hyper-reality, a continuous set of paradoxes about the observer's view of what is 'really' happening" (Cohen, 2001, 168). McRobbie and Thornton (1995) state that media is difficult to separate from society, as much of our social reality is experienced through the language, communications and imagery of the media. Gitlin (1980) produces a similar argument when he suggests that people rely on the media for concepts, images, heroes, information, emotional charges, and recognition of public values, symbols and language (1). Mediated forms of information are encountered everyday and media are often presenting information about events outside the experiences of the majority of society. The media then present the primary if not only source of information about many important events and topics (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978, 56).

The most popular avenue in which to engage in public discussion about social problems, to battle the issues of responsibility and ownership, is through the mass media. Social problems stories are not told by one person. They are often a compilation from researchers, scientists, activists, victims, government spokespersons and other "official" sources; designed as cultural stories told through the mass media. These stories are evaluated for their importance and believability (Loseke, 2003, 92). Loseke also states

that stories about social problems are important for three reasons. Firstly, experiences and people in real life are complex and often disagreed upon, therefore, social problems formula stories put those disagreements to rest. Second, social problems formula stories are those types favoured by the media. They are compelling and entertaining, and they have disturbing plots and compelling characters that evoke sympathy. Finally, they are public narratives and if successful, can become part of public wisdom, or used as a reference point by which to measure the believability of all other claims about social problems (Loseke, 2003, 92-93). Therefore, gaining access to the mass media is important to the claims-making process and evaluation of social problems work, as it simplifies, stereotypes, selects and provides focus to social problems by creating stories.

There are two theories on the role of media in the dissemination of information. One suggests that media are conduits through which information is relayed to public domains. The second perspective suggests that media are purposive actors in the dissemination of news, actively shaping the information they receive to fit the production and distribution rules of what constitutes news. Schneider (1985) asks: What happens to claims and definitions that go to media organizations? How do they emerge? What is the place of the media in the social problems process? Do media communicate claims and definitions of their own, quite aside from what other claims makers say (222)?

*Media as conduit*

The first perspective, media as conduit, suggests that ideas and information are not necessarily produced by the media outlets. Leyton (1992) argues, using an example of

public perceptions of crime and violence, that it is not simply the media and ruling elites that created the general fear of the increase in violence and crime. A "coalition" of special interest groups, professionals, government agencies, and politicians exploit the media, using the outlet as testing ground for public responses to their own constructions and interpretations of social problems (Leyton et al., 1992, 111). Hall et al. (1978), also agree that media are not the ultimate producers of *all* news stories. They explain their argument by explaining the difference between 'primary definers' and 'secondary definers'. The primary definition sets the limit for further discussion by framing what the problem is. However, Hall et al. suggest that

> the media then, do not simply 'create' the news; nor do they simply transmit the ideology of the 'ruling class' in a conspiratorial fashion. Indeed, we have suggested that, in a critical sense, the media are frequently not the 'primary definers' of news events at all; but their structured relationship to power has the effect of making them play a crucial but secondary role *reproducing* the definitions of those who have privileged access, to the media as 'accredited sources'. From this point of view, in the moment of news production, the media stands in a position of structured subordination to the primary definers (1978, 59).

While not denying that news is still a social construction, Hall et al., assert that media are not to be held solely responsible for the interpretations and ideologies that emerge in media.

*News as 'purposive behaviour'*

The second perspective of the role of media suggests that news is "purposive behaviour"—an activity that not only reacts to events but creates them as well (Spector & Kitsuse, 2001, 20). Cottle (2003) asserts that public problems and anxieties about social

problems are generated by media through the processes of media amplification—sensationalization, exaggeration, distortion, and symbolization of problematic events and social actors that in turn lead to processes of societal action and reaction (9). It is also suggested by Taylor (2003) that media coverage of events such as international conflicts are extremely skewed. He states that once a conflict breaks out there are two wars—'real war' and 'media war'—media war is a third-party decontextualized image of the real war; a representation, skewed imagery that is offered to the audience for further interpretations (Taylor, 2003, 78). In the realm of claims-making activities, most people who produce the primary meanings of a social problem have no voice in what the media make of what they say or do, or the context in which the media frame their activity. The meanings that result deviate from the originals—deformed beyond recognition from the original concept(s) (Gitlin, 1980, 3).

Media outlets do not just construct the content of news stories; they also have a hand in constructing the ideologies that are portrayed through media framing and story selection. The media are often blamed for extreme sensationalization of violence and tragedy. Cohen (2001) argues:

> The media do not tell us what to think, but they tell us what to think about...Coverage is so selective that the media in effect create a disaster when they recognize it: 'they give institutional endorsement or attestation to bad events which otherwise have a reality restricted to a local circle of victims'. These 'bad events' include not just literal events such as a natural disaster or a political massacre, but also...infant mortality statistics, the long-time persecution of minority groups and the degradation of women (169).

There are numerous ways in which media can shape what people view and absorb from mediated coverage. Shaping can take place from journalistic rules and ideologies of what

constitutes a good news story, termed 'news values', such as: frequency (time span) of the event, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, cultural proximity and relevance, consonance unexpectedness, continuity, composition, elite persons, elite nations, personification, negativity (Critcher, 2003,132-33). Gitlin (1980) also suggests that there is a news selection process based on: one, an editor decides that certain event or issue should be reported, two, a reporter decides what is worthy of notice in the field, and three, an editor decides how to treat and place the resulting story in the finished media product (258). Reporters are trained to sort, edit and shade the story so that it will fit into the set of media frames defined as news. In order to send out their message coherently, it must be related to more general themes of interest such as politics, scandals, and violence, since media frames are designed to cover events, not issues (Wolfsfeld, 1984, 554).

*Symbiosis between claims makers and media*

While the two perspectives seem dichotomous, they are not mutually exclusive categories. For the purposes of this thesis, a combination of both perspectives will be adopted. Often times, media coverage of social problems are a symbiotic relationship between claims-makers and the media (Wolfsfeld, 1984). Wolfsfeld states that the success of the symbiotic interaction between claims-makers and media depends on two variables, one, the extent of dependence on the resource held by the other party, and second, the ability to regulate access to one's own resources. The first variable determines vulnerability while the latter established control (ibid). Wolfsfeld coins this 'competitive symbiosis' as each needs to help the other in pursuit of mutual goal; to make

the headlines (ibid), as the reporter shares an interest in making the headlines with the protester. This suggests that minority groups, like the Innu, are not helpless victims but active participants in the process of news making or discourse production, albeit within constraints of the media news values. According to Wolfsfeld, there are three stages that the activist or claims-makers go through in the process of news dissemination. The first stage is bidding. Protest groups and other claims-makers are especially dependent on the mass media during their initial attempts to gain public attention. They must prove their importance to the media by proving that they have issues that can be defined by what constitutes 'news'. The media dominate the relationship at this point and the claims-makers have to agree to play by the press' rules. According to Wolfsfeld, the cost of such rules is often paid with the threat or use of violence and the reward is publicity for their actions (1984, 552).

The second stage is called bartering. After a group's activities or issues have been officially defined as news; the power struggle begins intensely. The greater the degree of celebrity status granted to the groups, the more the reporter becomes dependent on them, therefore, withholding information is the protesters' most important sanction against reporters (Wolfsfeld, 1984, 555). The third and final stage is termed closing. Maintaining celebrity status is often more expensive that obtaining it, therefore the exchange between reporters and protest leaders ends when either or both sides decide that the costs of continuing the relationship outweigh its benefits. Wolfsfeld quotes a reporter as saying: "if they burn a house today, they must blow one up tomorrow...otherwise it's simply not as strong. It will no longer be the top of the news"—"in the beginning, threats

would get a lot of publicity, before what actually happened. Now that won't work...They must carry out the threat..."if you burn it, then we'll print it"" (ibid).

It may be that there is a limited carrying capacity in social arenas for social problems, making competition for public attention is intense. Access to media for public discussion of social problems is limited; therefore rhetoric must escalate to maintain attention (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988; Leyton et al., 1992; Loseke, 2003; Wolfsfeld, 1984). The public holds very little 'surplus compassion' (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988), therefore the condition must be created in a way to make it seem worth time, worry and money outside of everyday living (Loseke, 2003, 52). A similar analysis is offered by Clark (1987). Clark suggests that sympathy, a feeling of being sorry for or with another person, is a claim on a person's time and energy. Not all claims for sympathy are responded to, as there are "feeling rules" that shape when, where and how sympathy is requested and offered. Clark states that people create "sympathy margins" or accounts for each other based on sympathy biographies—past observance to sympathy etiquette. These accounts are set up as an "emotional economy"; "a system, produced and reproduced by interacting group members for regulating emotional resources in a community" (1987, 296). Within such an 'economy' a person's claims to sympathy are legitimate only if they are included in the grounds that the particular society believes are sympathy worthy, and are not claims that require too much sympathy too often or for too long (Clark, 1987). A lack of past observance to etiquette, illegitimate claims, or expecting too much, too often or for too long will result in a loss of sympathy for the current sympathy request and future claims as well.

Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) suggest that it is important to stress the idea that social problems occur in arenas, and that arenas overlap and compete for limited resources. They develop a model for examining public arenas that includes six main points:

1. a dynamic process of competition among members of a very large 'population' of social problems claims
2. the institutional arenas that serve as environments where social problems compete for attention and grow
3. the carrying capacity of these arenas, which limit the number or problems that can gain widespread attention at one time
4. the principles of selection or institutional, political, and cultural factors that influence the probability of survival of competing problem formulations
5. patterns of interaction among the different arenas, such as feedback and synergy, through which activities in each arena spread throughout the others,
6. the networks of operatives who promote and attempt to control particular problems and whose channels of communication crisscross the different arenas (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988, 56).

The length of time that a social problem remains at particular level of status varies greatly. Some can be the centre of public debate for several years and then fade into the background. Other problems grow and decline in the public eye much more rapidly. Still other problems grow, decline, and later reemerge, never vanishing completely, but receiving greatly fluctuating quantities of public attention (ibid). Edelman (1988) states that public attention is likely to be short-lived, changing forms as the news highlights different issues or unrecognized facets of previous problems. He further asserts that

public attention for social problems lies in its capacity to be both present and absent: "to be selective in the occasions it manifests its existence" (32).

Much of the time and space that a particular social problem occupies has to do with the framing and reframing of the problem for public consumption. Social problems frames give meaning to the problem. Loseke suggests that there are three main categories of social problems framing. The first is the diagnostic frame. This type of framing asks what type of problem is being dealt with. There are two types of diagnostic framing. One, deal with social structure/social forces, such as economy, racism, the education system, and the second type deals with individual behaviour, personality and beliefs. The second type of framing is called motivational framing. Motivational frames give us reasons to care about the particular social problem. Third, prognostic frames look at solutions and resolutions for the problem (Loseke, 2003, 59-60). Loseke further suggests that it does not matter why audience members are motivated to evaluate claims as important social problems. However, to gain the desired attention, to fiercely compete for public attention in an arena with limited carrying capacity, claimsmakers must construct a diagnostic frame to include several cultural themes; the more themes constructed as violated by the condition, the more likely at least one of them will appeal to audience members (ibid, 67).

**Politics of Social Problems Work**

*Power, status and media access*

Wolfsfeld states that an adaptive relationship develops when both reporters and protest leaders share a mutual interest in obtaining access to other's resources; it is about vulnerability and control, or about struggling to define the power relationships between the two social actors; the social activists or claims-makers and the media. According to McRobbie and Thornton (1995), most political strategies are media strategies (571); political strategy is about mobilizing power, consequently it is difficult to gain advantage without media outlets. Some critics of media, such as Champagne (1999) argue the dominated are less capable of controlling their own representations. They are considered culturally deprived, therefore incapable of expressing themselves in the forms required by the mass media (ibid). Gusfield (1981) analyzes public problems as structured means, finding the conceptual and institutional orderliness in which they emerge in the public arena. "The public arena is not a field for all to play on equally; some social actors have greater access to and greater power and ability to shape the definitions of public issues. Nor do all ideas have public problems as their consequences" (Gusfield, 1981, 8).

It is often assumed that those with less social prestige such as racial and ethnic minority groups are disadvantaged on the playing field of defining social problems. However, this thesis argues that the Innu did express moments of powerful assertion in the media spotlight when the problem of gasoline sniffing youth became recognized publicly. While dominant groups such as government departments—Indian Affairs, Health Canada and Social Services—as well as media were involved in the discussion of

gasoline sniffing, they were not solely responsible for the way the problem was displayed. Gasoline sniffing as it became publicly known to mass audiences was a result of power negotiations between various social actors involved in this process. According to Foucault (1983), "the exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners...it a way that certain actions modify others...[Power]...which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffuse form, does not exist" (219). This is not suggest that social classes and domination do not exist or that power is not manifested through political institutions, such as the media, but suggests that power is not inherently institutional—power shifts, changes, is challenged and sometimes overthrown. The power relations between the dominant and the dominated are relationships that neither party can control simply or absolutely (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 121).

Foucault (1983) states that power, as a network of relations, is multidirectional, functioning from the top down but also from the bottom up. Therefore, to overthrow power is not all or nothing, power is not acquired permanently, only in the localized context in which it has occurred. It is mobile, both temporally and spatially (ibid). Foucault's conceptualization of power is valuable in the discussion of the Innu role in the dispersion of news stories. As per Foucault's theoretical suggestions, it is useful to look at the Innu despite their minority status, as gaining bargaining power through the release of the video footage from January 1993. Due to the iconic value of the images of Innu children participating in self-destructive activities and the international attention it received, the governments were forced, or embarrassed, into a position where they were under public scrutiny and therefore had to approach the child protection issues more

compassionately. The video gave Innu leaders a moment of power to influence the governments' actions. It provided shock value; it provided a 'real' look into the lives of six Innu children, showing desperation and hopelessness and children as young as 10 years of age were high on gas fumes and shouting suicidal threats. The public had not been presented with images like those before.

*Pseudo-events and spectacles*

There are two specific power strategies that will be discussed throughout this thesis to examine how minority groups and special interest groups get social problems into the media spotlight; to engage in public debate. One, the creation of a media event—what Boorstin (1964) called "pseudo-event" and Edelman (1988) called "the spectacle". A pseudo-event is the creation of newsworthy situations to draw media attention toward a particular problem or event. The purpose of the pseudo-event is to create a media spectacle. Politicians and interest group spokespeople resort to the contriving of dramatic events, "pseudo-events", in order to win media publicity. The politicized minority assumes that its target public needs alarm, shocks, and titillation to make it pay attention to issues that preoccupy the minority (Edelman, 1988, 34). This media spectacle is then the means by which the government, or other groups that are being lobbied against, are pressured into action to solve the problem or dilute the damage. While most news stories can be considered pseudo-events, the construction of the event is often associated with the journalist or media production process, not the minority groups such as the Innu. Pseudo-events or spectacles can emerge in the form of news conferences, press releases or

protests, or in the case of the gasoline sniffing problem, a home video that shows six young children sniffing gas from plastic bags and expressing their will to die. The characteristics of pseudo-events will be discussed in detail at a later point.

*Politics of embarrassment: social action*

Secondly, the creation of public problems to bring about social action will be discussed. The idea of 'politics of embarrassment' developed by Paine (1985) will emerge to discuss the theoretical nature of the Innu's media strategies. Paine uses the concept of "politics of embarrassment" when discussing the Saami, the indigenous peoples of Norway, and their hunger strike in protest of the Norwegian government's decision to dam the Alta/Kautokeino River that flowed through the Saami areas of settlement. The Innu of Labrador, like the Saami, used their powerlessness to engage in public moral debate, and gained significant publicity and immediate action to aid in the mending of the social problems in the communities of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet. Paine's analysis of the Saami Action Group will be used as a comparative case against which the successes and failures of the Innu's social problem claim-making can be pitted. It is again important to remind readers that this is not to suggest that the event of gasoline sniffing was staged; the children were not orchestrated to sniff gasoline or scripted to shout suicidal intentions, but that the reporting of the event was planned and carried out with specific purpose, it was through this action that Innu were partaking in the politics of embarrassment. This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

*Criticisms and alternative thoughts*

Some colleagues, however, might disagree with this interpretation of this social problems game of the Innu. Beaton (2003) analyzed the substance abuse and suicide issues of the Labrador Innu from a constructionist perspective of social problems theory, arguing that the Innu failed to achieve and sustain social problems status. Beaton discussed three 'public arenas' (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988) in which substance abuse and suicide of the Innu are constructed: the news media, the government, and social movement organizations. The media treated the problem as a 'crisis', the government treated it as an 'expense', and it was considered an 'injustice' in the social movement organization arena. Beaton argues that because of the three different definitions in the three separate arenas, the Innu plight failed to achieve and sustain a position on the institutional agenda of any of the three arenas (2003, 90). Beaton discusses in detail the decline of the social problem; its failure to be resolved. However, an important line of questioning was not addressed by Beaton. What constitutes success and failure? Who decides these definitions? What did the Innu want to gain from this exercise in public relations? The most important question that can be asked here is what the Innu wanted to achieve. Success should be defined as the achievement of the claims makers' goals. Was the Innu's goal to eradicate substance abuse? Or was it to gain leverage in negotiating community relocation with the Federal and provincial governments? Or was there another goal? Did the Innu's goals remain the same over time?

Beaton is correct in suggesting that in the ideal type and theoretical analysis of this problem, it certainly failed to consistently maintain public attention as a social

problem. But was that the primary intention of drawing attention to the problem of substance abuse and suicide of the Innu? Beaton has failed to ask *why* this particular issue gained the particular attention it did, when it did, or what the particular motives behind those involved in its public discussion were. Beaton took the problem of substance abuse and suicide at face value without examining the underlying issues, problems and motives that could have been associated with it. These are the issues and questions that this thesis will attempt to describe and explain.

## Chapter 2

## From Theory to Practice: the Tools of Analyzing Social Problems

### Introduction

The chapter outlines the various methodologies that were utilized through this research to investigate the social construction of the social problems of the Labrador Innu. First, a natural history model was used to examine who was involved, in what capacity, the consequences of their involvement, both intended and unintended, and how their involvement shaped the social problem of substance abuse. This involved researching how agencies, such as the media, government, Innu organizations and others have come to define this particular set of phenomenon as a 'problem' and the examination of how the focus on gasoline sniffing amongst the Innu children has been used to discuss the more general social, political and economic issues of First Nations people.

The second major methodological technique used was critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis involved taking a close look at the shape of social problems in the media. It looks specifically at the role of the media, as a conduit through with information passes from one party to another, but more specifically as a social force in the shaping of the thoughts and ideologies of its audiences. Media is the number one way in which people discover and becomes socially active in social problems work (Cohen, 2001; Sakore, 2005); therefore it is important to examine media as a social force and its role in social problems work. Critical discourse analysis not only analyzes what information about a problem is present and the way it is presented, but it also asks what is missing from media presentations and why.

These two methodologies are important to studying social problems as they focus on problem definition, creation and development. One looks at the larger picture of who is involved and why, and the second examines the forms in which audiences gather and interpret information which is important to understanding how and why people form particular opinions about the problem and what should be done about it.

## The Natural History Model

*Becker's model*

There are numerous models for analyzing the 'natural history' of social problems; how they evolve or develop over time. Each is developed in a set of stages, building on previous models creating a coherent stage model to track the existence of social problems. Becker (1967) developed a three stage model to examine the life course of social problems. Stage one consisted of an interested party perceiving objective conditions as problematic, this allowed Becker to question who was becoming involved and why. The second stage suggested that the problem must become shared and considered a widespread threat to achieve status as a social problem. The final stage stated that the problem had to become a political focus of an organization or institution if it was to achieve existence as a social problem. Becker identified two outcomes, one suggested that existing organizations would takes responsibility for the problem and two, a new organization might be set up to deal with the problem (McGrath, 1993). While Becker's model is useful, it fails to examine what happens to a social problem after it has become defined as a shared problem and adopted by special interest groups.

*Blumer's model*

Blumer (1971) expanded on Becker's model. Blumer suggested that social problems were "products of a process of collective definition" (Blumer, 1971) and that this definition determined the career and fate of the problem. Blumer developed a five stage model. Stage one was the emergence of a social problem. This stage was the convergence of Becker's first and second stages, as it involved the recognition of objective conditions as problematic and its widespread and collective social nature. The second stage involved the legitimatization of the problem, paralleling Becker's third stage, since social problems gain legitimacy and publicity through the efforts and actions of special interest and social activist groups (Blumer, 1971; McGrath, 1993).

> A social problem must acquire social endorsement if it is to be taken seriously and move forward in its career...If a social problem does not carry the credentials of respectability necessary for entrance into these [public] arenas, it is doomed...it flounders and languishes outside the arena of public action (Blumer, 1971, as cited in Spector & Kitsuse, 2001, 140).

The third stage included the mobilization of action, where interest groups compete to define the problem. This involves power struggles and the development of strategies in a fight for the problem's survival. The fourth stage was the formation of an official plan through compromises, tradeoffs, regard for outside influence, and ideas of what was workable to keep the social problem alive. Finally, the fifth stage was the implementation of an official plan of action (Blumer, 1971; McGrath, 1993; Spector & Kitsuse, 2001).

*Spector and Kitsuse's model*

Spector and Kitsuse (1977) also developed a four stage natural history model for the study of social problems. The first step was "group(s) attempt to assert the existence of some condition, define it as offensive, harmful, or otherwise undesirable, publicize these assertion, stimulate controversy, and create a public or political issue over the matters" (Spector & Kitsuse, 2001, 142). The second stage recognized the legitimacy of the complaining group(s), either through official organizations, agencies or institutions, and could lead to the establishment of an agency to respond to (ie. control) those claims and demands (Spector & Kitsuse, 2001; McGrath, 1993). Spector and Kitsuse's first two primary steps could be considered an amalgamation of Becker's and Blumer's entire social problems models. The third stage of Spector and Kitsuse's model considered the re-emergence of claims and demands by the original groups, or others, expressing dissatisfaction with the established procedures for dealing with the conditions. Within the second stage, official organizations and agencies are called upon or created to deal with the putative problematic conditions. The third stage is a reaction to this.

Concern is generated about the bureaucratic processes of dealing with the complaints and new social problems emerge from this dialogue regarding the fear that the bureaucracy has no intentions of rectifying the situation. This response is seen as unsatisfactory; therefore the current problem is not the original problem, but the bureaucratic response to the original problem (Spector & Kitsuse, 2001; McGrath, 1993). The final stage is a rejection of the bureaucratic response to the claims or demands and the development of activities to create alternative or parallel institutions to deal with the

problem. Interest in the problem is renewed and development of the problem depends on realizations that established bureaucratic channels are ineffective and therefore, deciding to work outside the system might be in the best interests of maintaining the problem and finding an appropriate solution (Spector & Kitsuse, 2001; McGrath, 1993).

*Critcher's model*

Critcher (2003) has recently suggested a model of studying social problems which builds on the works of Becker, Blumer, and Spector and Kitsuse and examines the media's role in moral panics. Critcher developed this model as an extension of the model designed by Cohen (1972) in his study of Mods and Rockers. The process of recognizing a social problem begins with emergence. In this stage Critcher is concerned with the form the 'problem' emerges in, why it is considered novel and a threat to the moral and social order of society. Once the existence of the problem is recognized its success as a social problem depends on the accounts given in the media. This step examines the characters involved in the social problem, what stereotypes emerge, and to what degree the media becomes engaged with the problem and its social actors.

Central to this approach is an examination of the actions of groups or individuals called moral entrepreneurs. The moral entrepreneurs are social problems 'definers.' They offer emotional and intellectual responses and images of the problem, its victims and its perpetrators, as well as account of the problem's causal explanations. Also involved in this process are experts. Who claims expertise about the problem? On what grounds do they claim expertise? Is such expertise accredited by the media? Once moral

entrepreneurs and experts become involved and define the social problem, then ways of coping and suggestions for resolution are developed. Solutions are examined for their effectiveness and symbolism. Critcher suggests that the solution be analyzed not just for its innovation, but also for the position from which it emerges. Who has said what and why? Solutions are not neutral actions, but actions that emerge from particular political stances. Attention needs to be drawn to who is interested in the problem and what their motivation for that interest is.

After coping and resolution are attempted, the problem begins to fade away. Therefore, Critcher suggests that examination of why is important as well as an assessment of the problem's chance of recurrence. The final aspect of a social problem's development, according to Critcher, involves exploring the problem's legacy, its effect on other social problems, as well as its relationship to previous and subsequent problems that emerge (Critcher, 2003, 16-18). Recognizing this stage of social problems work is important as the impact that one social problem has on another can often be significant. A social problem is often not one issue that emerges and disappears, but more often a problem that is an extension to or from another problem.

*Critiques of the natural history model*

Despite the popularity and continuing reformation of the natural history model of social problems analysis, Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) suggest it is time to move beyond the natural history model. They argue that the idea of an orderly succession of stages is unsophisticated, as many stages exist simultaneously and patterns fluctuate immensely.

They also assert that the focus on the characteristic career of a social problem impedes analysis since interactions among problems are central to the process of collective definition. Social problems exist in complex relations to other social problems, and are rooted within an intricate institutionalized system of problem production and distribution (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988, 54-5). Loseke (2003) makes a similar argument asserting that successful social problems require the construction of "difference within sameness", which can be achieved through 'piggybacking' and 'domain expansion.' Piggybacking suggests that claims makers can build upon the successes of previous claims makers by linking a problem constructed as new to a problem that already has achieved some level of audience acceptance, while domain expansion suggests that a social problem can be maintained by expanding the definition of what the social problem involves (Loseke, 2003). This suggests that problems are not static, nor are they easily separated from other social problems, but exist in complex relationships to other issues, institutions, agencies, and often the state of one cannot be discussed without the others. Therefore it is the purpose of this thesis to show that the gasoline sniffing problem of Labrador Innu youth was not an isolated problem; its existence and shape as a public problem is intimately linked to other problems and the political motivations of the social actors involved.

This interconnectivity between problems makes linearity virtually impossible; therefore more focus will be placed on processes rather than linearity. Most studies of social problems, particularly Critcher, also draw attention to the key role of the media in the emergence and maintenance of social problems rhetoric, therefore this thesis cannot deny the media's importance as an active participant in social problems claims making,

therefore this is the topic to which attention will now be turned.

**Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis**

This thesis examines the relationships that exist between different interest groups, such as the government and the Innu band councils, when actively participating in constructing social problems that are developed in the media through competing discourses. In everyday usage, discourse can be considered "a statement or an utterance longer than a sentence" (Riggins, 1997, 2). However, Riggins asserts that social sciences research on discourse emphasizes the structural nature of statements (2); the who, what, when, where, why and how of discourse. There are various definitions for discourse based on the discipline in which it is used. Fairclough (1995b) concludes that there are two main ways discourse can be discussed. One, in language studies, discourse is considered social action and interaction. The second theoretical understanding, predominantly from post-structuralist social theory, discusses discourse as a social construction of reality, a form of knowledge, as examined by Foucault (Fairclough, 1995b, 18).

Foucault and his academic followers believe that all statements are intertextual; interpreted against a backdrop of other statements, under the assumption that all ideas are connected together (Riggins, 1997, 2). Therefore, as Fairclough (1995b) states discourse is "language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view" (56). While the term discourse often refers to language, Fairclough suggests that the definition should be extended to include other types of semiotic activity such as visual

images, non-verbal communication, actions and behaviours (1995b, 54). The language of discourse is important, but it is more important to recognize that discourse is a social action—the armed conflict at Oka can be considered a discourse, as can a hunger strike or a protest. This is the type of discourse examined in this research. While language is important, language is not the only component of discourse. It also involves images and political rhetoric, such as the unspoken expression of anger and helplessness from the images released from Davis Inlet and the political controversy that ensued. Dealing with 700 newspaper articles from a local and national news source between 1992 and 2005, the research engaged with language as well as its explicit and implicit meanings, but also the actions and behaviours that accompany what is 'said.' Discourse, therefore, is a knowledge base, a way in which we see and engage with society, our social reality.

This thesis examines the use of constructed discourse as a form of interaction between competing social groups, as well as discourse as a form of political rhetoric. This involved examining the situational, institutional and societal contexts in which the discourses emerge. The social context and institutional framework the discourse occurs within shows there is a systematic link between texts, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices (Fairclough, 1995b, 16). As Foucault states in *Orders of Discourse* (1971) "the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures" (8).

Analysis of discourse is the examination of how texts work within sociocultural practice, and within the context of the media, requires attention to textual forms, structure and organization at all levels such as phonological, grammatical, lexical, exchange

systems, and structures of argumentation (Fairclough, 1995a, 7). The discourses that develop around the Innu's problem with children gasoline sniffing and other substance abuse problems were examined to answer the following questions: What strategies and tactics are being used by those involved—Innu, the provincial government, Indian Affairs, Health Canada, and other agencies—in the construction of the public problem of gasoline sniffing among Innu youth? Who are the dominant voices, are they government officials or Innu band members? What arguments are made? Who are deemed the 'experts' by the media? Is argumentation space equally divided among opponents? Examining discourse went beyond dealing with language, it meant also studying the context in which it was produced and the political motivation behind its usage. As Riggins (1997) asserts, all representations are *polysemic*; ambiguous and unstable meanings, a mixture of truth and fiction, of "biased perceptions and 'stories', all of which both exceed and shortchange "reality""(Riggins, 1997, 2).

Examination of discourse and political rhetoric is often undertaken through content analysis and critical discourse analysis. Content analysis, according to Van Dijk (1991), involves the systematic quantitative analysis of themes, sources, lexical items and other semantic matter throughout a body of texts. Critical discourse analysis, according to Van Dijk (1991) "specifically aims to show how the cognitive, social, historical, cultural, or political contexts of language use and communication impinge on the contents, meanings, structures, or strategies of text or dialogue and vice versa, how discourse itself is an integral part of the and contributes to these contexts"(45). Fairclough (1995a) states that the goal of a critical discourse analyst should be to make

visible and criticize the "connections between properties of texts and social processes and relations which are generally not obvious to people who produce and interpret those texts, and whose effectiveness depends upon this opacity" (97).

However, Fairclough reminds readers that analysis depends on the nature of the sociocultural practice which the discourse is a part; the nature of the discourse practice of text production shapes the text, and leaves traces in surface feature of the text; and the nature of discourse practice of text interpretation determines how the surface feature of a text will be interpreted (1995a, 97). Reality is expressed through language, it shapes and is shaped by language, and embedded in language without conscious thought and is expressed and interpreted through semiotic activities. Critical discourse analysis starts from the assumption that texts are socially constructed, expressing the social identity of the producers, but also the *assumed* social identity of those who the piece addresses, as Fairclough reminds us that language use is always simultaneously constitutive of social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough, 1995a).

The important difference between content and discourse analysis is that discourse analysis views language use as social practice implying it is a mode of action, always historically and socially situated—it is socially shaped and socially shaping (Fairclough, 1995a). It shows "the relation of language to power and privilege" (Riggins, 1997, 2), as critical discourse analysis place emphasis on the implied messages that underlie communication (ibid, 10). Through critical discourse analysis the construction, ethnocentrism, ideologies, and lexical strategies that tend to naturalize the discourse of news stories can be examined and overtly politicized to support the notion that news is

not objective. Discourse analysis involves examining the political environment in which texts are produced, an aspect that is imperative to examining the social construction of the gasoline sniffing of Innu youth as a public problem. Riggins states that most critical discourse analysts take an "explicit political stance" (2), identifying with the *Other*, the group with access to the least amount of social resources for creating a discourse (Riggins, 1997, 3). While examining the political environment is important, as well as distinguishing the 'powerful' from the 'powerless' in terms of the dominant discourse, this author disagrees with Riggins' stance on being politically explicit.

This thesis is interested in the social *processes* of social problems claims making and counter claims making; it is not interested in uncovering the truth. The emergence of this issue in the media spotlight happened at a particular time, in a particular way and discourse analysis will aid in uncovering the political context, the competing groups and the competing discourses that emerge during the claims-making process and social problems work that surfaced in 1993 and has periodically resurfaced ever since. The aim was not to attach overt personal political statements to the analysis, but to interpret the various discourses that emerge throughout the social problems claims making process. By overtly stating political intentions, the argument may be weakened, as it may be tagged as advocacy literature; a campaign strategy, a way of presenting information to win hearts rather than presenting information for the audience to further interpret and explore. The point of this exercise is to show that all discourse, all statements, all analysis come with bias inevitably attached, but this analysis was set up as critical, not to condemn the actions of the various social actors of social problems work. This is a

personal interpretation, informed by social positions, personal biases; these things cannot be avoided. The aim is to piece together the story of how the problem developed over time, who was involved and what each side had to say about the problem and its solutions.

**The Sample**

The collection of documentary materials to study the 'natural history' and discourse of the gasoline sniffing problem consists of 700 articles from *The Telegram* (St. John's) and *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto) over a thirteen year period from 1992-2005. Collection began with anything related to the Labrador Innu from any media source; numerous newspapers, radio transcripts, television news clips, internet news sources, as well as hundreds of pages of media and communications documents from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada through the Access to Information Act; however the quantity of materials quickly became daunting. This material was used as a preliminary search to gain a sense of how widespread the attention and information regarding the Innu's issues with gasoline sniffing had become. Materials regarding other issues involving the Labrador Innu such as Voisey's Bay mining developments, NATO low-level flying, criminal justice, land claims, reserve creation and Davis Inlet's community relocation negotiations were also collected.

These materials regarding numerous issues help to build a sense of the political environment in which the gasoline sniffing problem emerged into public spotlight. The issue of gasoline sniffing was not the only social problem on the Innu agenda. It provided

a place to examine linkages between various social problems, whether through similar timing or its link to other political agendas. Are the problems of suicide linked with substance abuse? Is Voisey's Bay seen as another Euro-Canadian project that inhibits Native ways of life, associated with another substance abusing binge in the communities? Why or why not? The media coverage of other issues also serves as a point of comparison. Did the gasoline sniffing youth gain more public attention than other social problems in the Labrador Innu communities? Is there any evidence to explain how or why gasoline sniffing gained the attention it did?

*The sources*

The corpus of the critical discourse analysis came from two separate news sources: *The Evening Telegram* (now known as *The Telegram*), the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial newspaper from St. John's and *The Globe and Mail*, a Canadian national newsprint source from Toronto, between the years of 1992-2005, along with Strategic Media Analysis Documents, media transcriptions, Questions and Answers from government officials, and news releases from all government departments, Innu Band Councils, non-governmental organizations, and other interests groups involved. However, a systematic analysis of the entire textual corpus concerning the gasoline sniffing problems of the Labrador Innu is beyond the scope of this project. Electronic archive services from *The Globe and Mail* online and *Transcontinental Newsnet* for *The Telegram* were used to search for articles pertaining to the Innu. However, electronic copies of *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail* only go back as far as 2003 and 2002,

respectively. The databases *ProQuest* and *FPinfomart* provided articles before 2002, but *The Telegram* only dated as far back as 2000, leaving the task of manually searching through Memorial University's The Centre for Newfoundland Studies' (CNS) vertical files pertaining to the Innu and the Innu communities, as well as microfiche copies of *The Telegram* between 1992 and 2000. Needless to say, most of the information gathering came from the CNS vertical files; therefore much of the information between 1992 and 2000 depended on the collection abilities of the CNS library staff, due to the extremely labour intensive task of searching through eight years of daily papers. Therefore the majority of my information was limited to the interpretative skills and labour of the library staff.

The databases were first searched using the keyword 'Innu.' Over 800 articles were collected and sorted chronologically. However, using 'Innu' as the main search item brought with it information not relevant to this research project. The articles were sorted through and the unnecessary topics and types of articles were removed. The keyword 'Innu' also obtained media articles pertaining to the Quebec Innu. These were removed from the sample. Articles that used only brief reference to the Innu were also withdrawn from the sample as it was desirable for the articles to be primarily about the Innu, or topics of direct influence on the Innu. It was also decided not to include articles that dealt with the technical side of issues such as Voisey's Bay and Churchill Falls. While both developments have great effect on the Innu, only those articles that directly discussed Innu action and reaction to projects like Churchill Falls and Voisey's Bay were included in the sample. Therefore an appropriate sample of materials was selected from

the period 1992 to 2005, with articles pertaining to social, economic and political issues of the Innu of Davis Inlet, Natuashish and Sheshatshiu.

*The focus*

After the topic selection process was complete, 700 articles remained within the period of 1992 and July 2005. This sample was used to trace the 'natural history', the development of the problem of gasoline sniffing in the media and to examine the shifts in media coverage over time. From that however, a smaller, more manageable sample was chosen to discuss the discourses and political rhetoric surrounding the social problems of the Labrador Innu. A sample of articles from 2000 to 2005 was chosen for the reason that discourses and rhetoric throughout this period are more developed than that from 1992 to 2000, thereby offering clearer examples of the situations and problems that have been identified for this thesis. By 2000, the problem had been present in some capacity for almost a decade and there was a greater familiarity with the Innu as a people and greater public recognition of the Innu's social problems.

In 2000, Chiefs from Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet pleaded for government help for the youth in their communities. In 2002, an RCMP officer made claims during a radio interview with CBC that there was a resurgence of sniffing despite detoxification and treatment efforts of the previous year. It is also during this time period that various long-term solutions were being negotiated and implemented. In late 2002, early 2003, the community of Davis Inlet was relocated to Natuashish, considered to be a step toward solutions of various social problems that plagued the community. In 2002 as well, the

Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy (LICHS) was announced, as a joint project between the Federal, provincial, and Innu governments to provide short-term and long-term processes of healing to the Labrador Innu communities. In 2004, a documentary was produced by Ed Martin discussing the continuing problems of the Mushuau Innu despite the millions of dollars spent on relocation, and in early 2005, a CBC television report examined the viability of the LICHS, and started another quick torrent of media interest in the Innu communities. The majority of information that was received through Access to Information Act requests filed with the Federal government's department of Indian and Northern Affairs also covers this time period. Between 2000 and 2005, there are more available materials on the subject, allowing for a more comprehensive study of the discourses and rhetoric on the problems and solutions of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet/Natuashish. The timeline and information was more cohesive and complete through this time period.

The chosen sample helped determine: who claimed authoritative knowledge? How is this knowledge used? By whom and to do what? What is included and omitted? What type of language was used? What various discourses emerged from the language and images presented? What side of the story was presented, or were all sides presented equally? Are the media creating the news stories, or used as a conduit for the political struggle between the interest groups? What 'facts' are collected? By whom and with what purpose? How are they transmitted? Through whom, and to whom? How does language frame a news story? Why were particular images used for a story? What symbolic functions do the images serve? What connotative meanings emerge through the

photographic images?

It is also important when critically analyzing discourse to examine what is *not* present and ask why. Therefore, these themes and subjects of news stories between 2000 and 2005, the presentational devices of these stories and the metaphors and rhetorical devices present were examined. Also of interest was the explicit and implicit argumentation, the examination of what was being said literally as well as what was figuratively suggested by choices of words, phrases and lexical styles, therefore allowing for the examination of why certain lines of argument were completely absent. Brief definitions of each element for analysis are offered below.

**Elements of Analysis**

*Content Categories*

Boyle and Hoeschen's (2001) study on media coverage of female genital cutting identified four broad categories in which stories can be placed to typify tactics. These categories are:

- *Information stories*—These types of stories involve providing basic information about the issue often through scientific and expert means. Information stories are often the first stories that are presented when a social problem is recognized publicly.
- *Symbolism stories*—Stories that are considered symbolic are often defined as human interest stories, often graphic, gripping, and personalized stories. Stories about specific Innu families dealing with substance abuse are considered symbolism stories as they provide a 'human face' to the social problem of substance abuse.

- *Leverage stories*—Leverage stories persuade people into action by suggesting ways to change or reform the social problem. These types of stories are usually overtly political, offering suggestions about who is responsible and what needs to be done about the problem. The editorials, letters to the editor, as well as opinion articles offered analysis of who was to blame for the problems of the Labrador Innu and who had to take responsibility for solutions.
- *Accountability stories*—These stories follows policy implementation and enforcement and often holds individuals, organizations and institutions to their promises for aid in resolving the problem.

While the four categories are separated for definitional purposes, these divisions are not so clear in practice. These categories can also be viewed as part of the presentational style of the news story, as it refers to the way in which information is presented to the readers.

*Subjects*

The subject of a news article is the single concept which stands for a larger social or political domain. "Crime" is a common subject under which a vast amount of stories can be reported (Van Dijk, 1991, 78). "Innu relations" or "native issues" in this case are subjects.

*Themes*

Themes, or topics, simplify complex information to an essential term or phrase. Themes occur within subject categories. Themes allow readers to better organize, store and recall texts, create a mental structure from general knowledge, a way to categorize

and evaluate a situation or event (Van Dijk, 1991, 73). Themes, for the majority of stories about Innu affairs appeared as a headnote above the headline for the article. Themes such as "substance abuse"(MacDonald, 2000f), "solvent abuse" (MacDonald, 2000e) and "Innu crisis" (Morris, 2000), "relocation" (Macafee, 1998; Cleary, 1999), "Davis Inlet" (Jackson, 1998; Gorham, 1999), "alcohol ban" ("Sheshatshiu," 1999), "health/Native issues" (Johansen, 2000a) appear before the news story, giving readers an overview and point of recognition.

*Presuppositions*

This involves an examination of the semantic inference of a statement. It is the conveying of information without explicit statement. It is considered shared knowledge between the writer and the audience therefore need not be stated (Van Dijk, 1991). According to Fairclough (1995b), there are four degrees of presence and absence in media texts. Foregrounded information in media texts are those ideas that are present and emphasized. Backgrounded information refers to the ideas that are present and de-emphasized. Presupposed information is present but implied meaning. Absent information is considered the ideas and perspectives that are relevant to a topic but are neither stated nor implied in a text (Fairclough, 1995b, 106-109; Riggins, 1997, 11). What does the newspaper/journalist believe that the general reading public already knows or maintains common knowledge of regarding the situation of the Labrador Innu? "All three parties that pledged to help the gas-sniffing kids of Davis Inlet in December emerged from a meeting" (Hilliard, 2001c). The reporter assumes that the reader

recognizes who "all three parties" are in this opening paragraph, as no reference to who is involved in the negotiations is made until the fourth paragraph. Presuppositions are also linked to the following analytic element, explicit and implicit argumentation.

*Explicit and implicit argumentation*

What is the overt argument(s) of the article? Can inferences be made from what is implied or absent from the story? This can be analyzed through the use of ridicule, ad homonym attacks, and the presentation of self versus the other (ie. Us vs. Them). Implicit meanings are displayed using connectives such as 'because', 'therefore' and 'so.' The credibility of quoted speakers may be enhanced or lowered by the strategic use of verbs or adverbs—implicitness or indirectness (ex. 'claimed', 'probably') (Fairclough, 1995a; Van Dijk, 1991). Government officials 'state' and Innu representatives 'suggest'. Such argumentation styles suggest a power relationship as the government officials are sure and assertive and the Innu representatives are weak and uncertain.

*Textual analysis*

The headline, the background information, the argument/speaking space allocation for opponents, expectations and evaluations, and conclusions, and the use of lexical strategies and rhetoric—expressions that have specific meanings but also speak of the writers' social situation, opinions and culture, through alliteration, metaphor, comparison, irony and hyperbole, and the use of distance markers such as quotation marks (Van Dijk, 1991; Fairclough, 1995a; Riggins, 1997, 11).

While the analytical elements are specifically defined as separate categories of analysis, Fairclough (1995a) asserts that one cannot properly analyze content without analyzing form since content is realized in form and different contents entail different forms and vice versa. Form is a part of the content (188). He further argues that "the signifier (form) and signified (content) constitute a dialectical and inseparable unity in the sign, so that one-sided attention to the signified is blind to the essential material side of meaning, and one-sided attention to the signifier is blind to the essential meaningfulness of forms" (Fairclough, 1995a, 212). Texts constitute a major source of evidence for grounding claims about social structures, relations and processes. They can provide good indication of social change. It is increasingly through the media that social control and social domination are exercised, negotiated and resisted (Fairclough, 1995a, 209). Therefore, analysis goes beyond the literal meaning that is revealed from the relations and interactions between themes, subjects and words. It involves examining its social meaning, the ideological affects and effects of the news item and the institutional dialogue that accompanies it (Fairclough, 1995a; Patrick & Armitage, 1992).

**Challenges**

There were numerous challenges that emerged in the course of researching and writing this thesis. Conducting research in an Aboriginal community according to the Tri-Council's policy statement, *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* is subject to special ethical guidelines. The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland, on review of my

proposal, required that a letter be addressed to the Innu Nation requesting their permission to conduct my research. Such a letter was written, but never received any response despite numerous attempts being directed at Innu community leaders. The original proposal for this thesis entailed interviewing the most prominent journalists, government officials, the Innu band councils, spokespeople, and various 'experts' in an attempt to examine the role played by these groups in the definitions and discussion of the Innu's substance abuse problems.

With access to the Innu representatives denied, the decision was made to forego all personal interviews as to avoid overrepresenting the Euro-Canadian officials and social actors in the social construction of gasoline sniffing of Innu youth. This decision changed the shape of this thesis. It changed the research from a thesis devoted to using multiple voices to a thesis devoted to using theory. The vast majority of examples, images and quotations from Innu spokespersons that appear in this thesis were drawn from published sources and media reports and interviews which are accompanied by issues of data accuracy due to editorial filtering. However, as previously mentioned, this thesis is not about creating an accurate picture of what exactly happened during the 'crisis' moments in the Labrador Innu communities, but to discuss the claims making process. The media is the number one source through which claims makers do their social problems work and the major source through which audiences receive information. It would have been ideal to supplement the reported statements of Innu actors with data collected from interviews, but due to the circumstances this was not possible.

Another challenge this inaccessibility produced was the inability to look at the

Innu as a heterogeneous group of individuals. While fully recognizing that Innu are not a monolithic, homogeneous group, Innu are largely presented as a unified group in this thesis; as if decisions were agreed upon and followed through with the consent of all members of the community. Members of the Innu community should not be painted as a coherent group, with one set of values, one clear set of aims and one voice. A lack of contact with the community, however, leaves me with little knowledge to comment otherwise. There was no opportunity to discuss the differences of opinion or political factions within the community and the effects that those relationships had on the presentation of the problem of substance abuse and the possible solutions. Differences of opinion are, however, commented on as they arise in media documentation. The problems of differentiation is made more difficult because often the media does not identify the originators of opinions attributed to the Innu. With Innu band council Chiefs and members—they are elected representatives of the communities—it is assumed that they represent the majority, but this is largely because there is no other information to go on.

Finally, limitations were also encountered in the gathering of materials. As previously mentioned, it was impossible to collect and critically analyze the entire textual corpus related to the Labrador Innu. Therefore, this thesis obviously does not attempt to provide a complete picture of the political events surrounding the issues of gasoline sniffing in the Innu communities. It can almost be assured that relevant literature, documents and points of view are absent from this work. Because of this, this thesis makes no claims to be providing 'the whole truth.' These limitations, notwithstanding, however, this thesis does provide important insights into the social construction of

gasoline sniffing of Labrador Innu as a social problem. More will be said on the need for further research in the final conclusion.

**Conclusion**

It is important to remember that the form in which information is presented is as important as who presents the information. Chapter 3 and 4 examine the social actors, their roles and the social context in which their involvement emerged and how their involvement was instrumental in the evolution of the social problem and its publicization. Chapter 5 deals with the form in which the problem of gasoline sniffing of Innu youth became publicized. The forms in which information is received affects what audiences understand and retain about a social problem. Chapter 5 examines newspaper articles to show the argumentation, subjects, themes and content covered and how those things affect motivation, advocacy and information retention. Media affects social change, therefore it is important to understand how social change is encouraged or undermined by public information.

## Chapter 3

## The "Natural History" of Substance Abuse: The Who, What, When, Where, Why and How of Gasoline Sniffing as a Social Problem

### Introduction

A distinction can be made between social problems as conditions and social problems as constructions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, social problems are often thought of as being conditions; situations or behaviours objectively defined as being problematic, such as the example used in this thesis: substance abuse. Substance abuse however, can also be considered a product of social problem construction processes. The very label of substance 'abuse' implies someone has defined certain behaviour as a problem, as it is constructed to separate 'abuse' from 'use.' It identifies particular patterns of use as abnormal and dangerous and labels the behaviour as problematic. 'Substance' also implies that that the thing being 'abused' is unnatural, a man-made chemical. However, 'substance abuse' is not a problem until it is subjectively defined as a problem, which involves the input of social actors to battle over the definition of the problem, as well as its solutions and resolutions. Blumer (1971) states that before "persons perceive it, address it, discuss it or do anything about it, the problem is not there" (as cited by Lippert, 1990, 433). The point of this thesis is to show that it is not the existence of social problems conditions, but the construction processes—the public claims that are made are what make problematic conditions *social* problems[1].

In a study of the history of the campaign about the health risks associated with

[1]Lippert (1990) suggests there does not have to be conditions present to warrant public concern about the extent of the problem. However, a belief and anxiety about problematic conditions causes a social problem.

smoking, Karen Miller (1992) explains that in the 1950s medical research was emerging concerning the health effects of smoking, such as cancer and heart disease. Scientists were bringing the medical research to the media to create awareness, yet at the same time cigarette makers were employing public relations firms and advertising agencies to produce a different message (Miller, 1992, 1). The claim was made that smoking had considerable health risks, but counter claims were also made by the cigarette companies. It was not a matter that smoking was a problem; it was a matter of *proving* that smoking was detrimental, thereby constructing a case to make people believe that there were health risks and therefore a considerable problem for society.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact date, time and location that alcoholism and substance abuse became social problems conditions in Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu, in the sense that they were recognized as damaging and dangerous behaviours. Captain Cartwright first met Innu in Labrador in 1774. Cartwright provided a group of Innu with rum and gunpowder in exchange for the furs they were carrying (Cartwright, 2003). While Cartwright made reference to the drunken nature of Innu, it has been suggested by Henriksen (1993a) that alcohol, before settlement, was used in rituals to communicate with animal spirits. Speck (1935) also made reference to the spiritual use of alcohol. Speck stated that dreams were important to Innu hunters. If a hunter dreamt of a 'gentleman' the custom upon awakening was to drink whisky, if only a spoonful, for the dream to be realized. The theory underlying this act was that the soul and spirit of the hunter was being gratified and strengthened by the alcohol, leading the hunter to success on his next venture. The point at which alcohol became a problem rather than a ritualistic component of Innu spirituality is unclear. However, the excessive use of alcohol and

drugs is related to sedentarization of the Innu in the 1960s (Armitage, 1991; Degnen, 2001; Henriksen, 1973, 1993a, 1993b; Tanner, 2000; Samson, 2003; Wadden, 2001).

Information is not available on how many 'alcoholics' or 'addicts' there are among the Labrador Innu and to provide this information would require conducting a large study of the condition, which is beyond the scope of this research. However, it is possible to map the emergence of 'substance abuse' generally, and gasoline sniffing specifically, as public problems, and therefore examine their construction as social and public problems. To map the 'natural history' of this problem, the history of alcohol and substance abuse must be examined; how and why it became the focus of public concern, as well as looking at the history of expressions made to gain recognition for the problem and actions taken to resolve the problem.

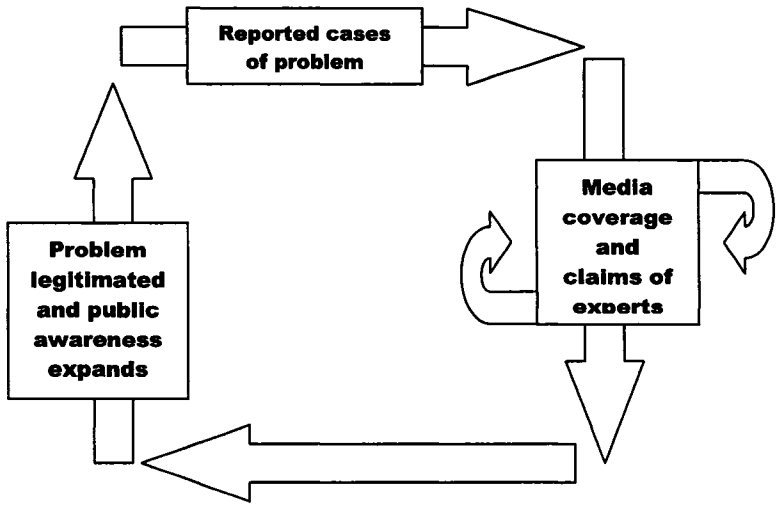
## The Problem—why are we interested?

*General models*

There are numerous theories that offer explanations for why people are interested in social problems. Particularly for the social constructionist perspective, the way to map out interest and social problem emergence is through the natural history model. This model allows a picture of how the problem is emerging to be obtained, as well as identify the groups involved in making claims and the types of claims being made. Social problems do not often emerge solitarily; therefore it is important to recognize the other problems it has emerged from, as well as how it can be used as a vehicle for the recognition of other social problems. The figure below is a depiction of the important elements of social problems and social problems analysis, as adapted from Randy

Lippert's work on Satanism as a social problem (1990, 432).

**Figure 3.1** Diagram for conceptualizing the construction of a social problem




Becker (1967), Blumer (1971) and Spector and Kitsuse (2001) all develop natural history models to examine the elements and processes they believe are important in studying social problems. Becker's model stopped at the point at which the problem reached public discussion through the embodiment of the problem by an organization. Blumer's model continued that of Becker's, suggesting that the final stage of the natural history process was when an official plan of action was decided upon. Finally, Spector and Kitsuse expanded on these models again suggesting that their natural history model's final stage was when special interest groups disagreed with the bureaucratic responses to the problem and began lobbying for support and solutions again. These models were discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The model chosen for this analysis, however, is a more contemporary one developed by Critcher (2003).

*Critcher's model*

Critcher names seven elements of social problems: emergence of the social problem, media inventory, the presence of moral entrepreneurs, the presence of experts, coping and resolution of the social problem, the fade away of the problem and the legacy the social problem leaves behind (Critcher, 2003, 16-18). These are the elements of the natural history of the problem of gasoline sniffing which are discussed in this thesis. This model for analysis is an extension of the model that Cohen developed in his 1972 study of moral panics and folk devils. According to Critcher, Cohen is not interested in stages but processes; "not what happened in what order and why but how social reaction evolves and develops" (ibid, 13).

While Critcher offers criticism for the model, suggesting that despite Cohen's desire to move beyond the linear and constant stages of most natural history models, he still manages to produce an implicitly linear model (ibid). But this is the most difficult task of analyzing complex social phenomena; to explain phenomenon that are not linear in a coherent manner often requires us to give it an element of linear steps regardless of its more complex and cyclical nature. This model was chosen for its recognition of the importance of processes over linearity, rather than for its 'fool proof' analysis of social problems, as well as the fact that it raises important questions about the process of problem construction.

Critcher's natural history model also places emphasis on the role of the media in the process of defining the problem, its resolutions, how long the public recognizes the problem and what is remembered long after the news sources have stopped talking about the problem. Media is considered one of the major and most influential socialization

agents of this socio-historical period therefore deserves special attention in the discussion of the natural history of social problems. Media acts as both claims maker and a public forum for other claims makers and moral entrepreneurs. Most importantly, however, is that media play a role in the shaping of public perceptions, while simultaneously showing which special interest groups are making claims (Lippert, 1990). Chapter 5 discusses this role of media in much more detail, as it is for this focus on the media that Critcher's model was chosen. First, a discussion of the claims and the events that led up to the claims making about substance abuse and suicide is developed, followed by a discussion of who was involved in the process as moral entrepreneurs and experts, as well as the role of media, then an examination of the resolutions is put forth, how the problem comes to an end—whether resolved or not—and finally, the legacy that the social problem leaves behind.

**The Beginning As We Know it**

There have been numerous social changes as a result of permanent settlement for the Labrador Innu. The majority of the recent political controversies surrounding the Innu have been related to rights and gaining control over issues that affect the Innu people. Land rights, education and health services, alcohol and substance abuse, policing and self-government negotiations are all linked to the basic premise that the Innu of Labrador want more control over the actions and policies that concern their communities.

*Land claims*

Once settled in Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu in the 1960s, rights to numerous traditionally occupied lands were points of contention between the Innu and the provincial and federal governments. The land claims process for First Nations Peoples in Canada first emerged in 1969 when the Nisga'a people of British Columbia went to the Provincial Supreme Court of British Columbia, claiming that they still held legal title to their traditional territories. The court ruled against them; they took their case to the Supreme Court of Canada, which ruled that the Nisga'a had a title to the land based on their long time occupancy, possession and use of the traditional territories. This ruling forced the Federal government to develop policies to deal with Aboriginal land claims and in 1973 the Office of Native Claims was created (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), 2003, 5). The Innu first filed land claims with the Canadian government in November of 1977. The petition was conditionally accepted, but subject to completion of a land use and occupancy study and the participation of the Newfoundland government in the negotiation process, given that the Innu were not registered under the Federal Indian Act. The Innu submitted a land use and occupancy study in October of 1990 (INAC, 2004g). A Framework Agreement was signed in March of 1996 by the three governments; Innu, Provincial and Federal, however, there were and still are numerous challenges to the land claims process, most of which involve corporate interests (Arctic Circle, n.d.).

*Churchill Falls*

In 1961, the Upper Churchill Falls hydro dam development was in final negotiations. The Churchill River, originally known as Grand River, starts from Ashuanipi Lake and empties into Lake Melville. The Churchill Falls Corporation Limited was established in 1961 and granted a 99 year lease authorizing development of the Upper Churchill River watershed (Green, n.d.). The Churchill River development was controversial because both the Innu and Inuit of Labrador had traditional claims on the river. The Innu called the river *Mishtashipu*, translated as "Big River." The hydro development flooded Innu hunting and burial grounds, for which the Innu requested compensation from the provincial government (Canadian Council for Geographic Education, 2005). The dam was completed in 1974 at a construction cost of almost one billion dollars (Green, n.d.), with promises of annual revenue for the province of Newfoundland.

*NATO and low-level flying*

The 1970s also proved to be politically challenging for the Innu as well. The military base opened in Goose Bay in 1941 to service the American Airforce during the Second World War, became a home to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military in 1979. Labrador and Northern Quebec became training zones for flight exercises such as low-level flying, air-defence exercises and bombing practices. Throughout the following decade or more, the Innu protested the NATO exercises and the effects of low-level flying on Innu hunting and traditional life. Innu hunters continually

claimed that the noise from the jets flying only 100 feet overhead has affected migration patterns and even inflicted death on the animals that were the heart of Innu existence. The noise has also caused Innu to be startled and anxious (Samson, 2003, 109).

> It was only "conurbations and built up areas" that were exempt from low-level flight paths. The ministry clearly did not consider the Labrador-Quebec peninsula to be "populated" enough to warrant avoidance...Any distinctiveness the nomadic life of the Innu had—their necessary attachment to the land, the open spaces, and the animals—was simply ignored (Samson, 2003, 109).

In 1979, 274 flights were undertaken, since then the annual numbers have risen approximately 2000 percent (ibid). This illustrates the governments' unwillingness to listen to Innu concerns, and why Innu continually felt the need to protest the exercises and even be arrested for their cause.

*Voisey's Bay mines*

In 1993 Diamond Field Resources Inc. discovered copper-nickel deposits in Voisey's Bay—*Emish* in Innuaimun. By 1996 the deposit was estimated to be a hundred million tonnes and was considered highly desirable due to the ease of extraction and shipping from the area. Voisey's Bay, in the midst of this discovery, was also being claimed by Innu and Inuit (Arctic Circle, n.d.). Mining development falls under provincial jurisdiction, and it was their position that mineral development and exploration should be based on a 'free-entry' system which allowed mineral exploration to supersede all other uses of the land. The Innu protested. In 1995, they occupied the land for twelve days and served Diamond Field Resources with an eviction notice. Their concerns were unheard as more drilling, engineering and planning was undertaken by the company. In

1997, the Innu Nation and Labrador Inuit Association (LIA) took legal action in provincial court requesting that road and airstrip construction associated with Voisey's Bay halt until a full environmental assessment was undertaken with Aboriginal input. In September of 1997, The Newfoundland Court of Appeals blocked the government and ordered the construction project to undergo a full environmental assessment (ibid).

Samson summarizes the discussion of the struggle between the Innu and the government and its corporate affiliates in the following:

> How is it that the state can sit in judgment of a land "claim" from them, the people whose ancestors in the area can be traced back to well before European contact? How is it that low-level military flight training can be carried out across the entirety of *Nitassinan*? Or mining at Voisey's Bay, on the migration route of caribou, the site of births and burials dating back millennia? Or hydroelectric projects on Mista-shipu in the heart of the Innu hunting territory? How is it that the provincial and federal governments can sell off rights to land, water, or airspace with no reference to Native inhabitants?...They have never been asked to grant their consent to any sales. They have not ceded land...by treaty...Under Canadian constitutional arrangements, their "title" to land has never been "extinguished" (Samson, 2003, 40).

This struggle to find recognition and rights as *First Peoples* in a society where Aboriginals have a common 'invisibility,' is the context in which all other social, economic, and political problems emerge (Dyck, 1991; Henriksen, 1973; Innu Nation & Mushuau Band Council, 1992; Samson, 2003; Wadden, 1991).

**The Substance Abuse Problems**

While Innu were fighting political battles over the ownership of land, Native rights and numerous other struggles over legal and economic problems, Innu of Davis

Inlet and Sheshatshiu were also dealing with problems of substance abuse. Problems that once publicized became identified, rightly or wrongly, as the core problem that all other problems stemmed from in the Innu communities.

*The Fire*

On February 14, 1992, six children in Davis Inlet died in a house fire while left alone by their parents who were out drinking in the community. At this point, the stereotype of the drunken Indian became more than a seemingly self-destructive behaviour; it became linked with the negligence that caused the death of six children, thereby having a shocking effect in the general public as well as the community. This is an important landmark in the development of the public discussion of the social problems of the Labrador Innu. Coverage of the death of those six children led to the public to be exposed to vivid images of the deplorable living conditions of Davis Inlet. The house fire was blamed on alcohol abuse and the lack of resources in the community by Innu representatives such as the Mushuau Chief Katie Rich and other band council members (Lutes, 1992; Johansen, 1992), as the parents of five of the children were drinking at the local Valentine's Day dance when the house fire started and the children, alone, were trying to keep themselves warm with a hot plate when the curtains caught fire. Some people in the community ran to the house but there was nothing they could do as there was no fire truck or equipment to fight the flames, nor any running water. According to one community member, there was not even enough water nearby to fill a bucket (CBC Archives, "Did you know", n.d.).

As a report in the CBC Archives websites states, the fire "thrusts Davis Inlet and the plight of the Labrador Innu into the national spotlight" (CBC Archives, "The story", n.d.). The tragic event was reported briefly both nationally and provincially, but the significance of the house fire was not so much how it was reported by media, but how the community leaders of Davis Inlet used the event and the despair that followed to politically mobilize their voice through an inquiry into the fire and the other social problems that emerged among the Innu people since sedentarization under Euro-Canadian authority in the 1960s.

*Gathering Voices: a new campaign*

The tragic incident of February 1992 was followed by *Gathering Voices: Finding Strength to Help Our Children* (1992), a people's inquiry released by the Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council[2] "to gather information on why we have so many tragedies in Utshimasits. We decided it was time we stopped and looked at why these accidents and violent deaths are happening to our people before it happens again. Too many people have died" (Innu Nation & Mushuau Innu Band Council, 1992, 1). Katie Rich is quoted as saying:

> We are having this inquiry because of the fire which struck or community in February. This is the saddest thing that has ever happened in our community. We thought this Inquiry was the only way to begin to look at how to prevent these things from happening again (as cited by Innu Nation & Mushuau Innu Band Council, 1992, 1).

Members of the Mushuau Innu community gathered together to examine the issues they

[2] Innu leaders requested that INAC carry out a formal inquiry into the events surrounding the tragic house fire, however INAC Minister Tom Siddon declined and the Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council decided to design, control and fund the inquiry themselves.

felt the community were facing but also use the time as part of the healing and grieving process after the February 14th community loss. The death of these six children in the fire was a serious tragedy, but it was not the only tragedy in Davis Inlet.

*Gathering Voices* was arranged to look at what happened in the 30 years prior to the house fire and to ask why tragedies keep occurring. It was designed to examine how outside agencies and institutions have impacted the community, to look at alcohol problems, the problems alcohol caused and what was being done, or not done to deal with these problems. The people's inquiry also provided an outlet for people to talk about their problems, served as a healing process for individuals and the community as the inquiry also served to identify actions that could address and possibly solve the problems, as well as offered recommendations to government agencies and institutions for changes that could aid in helping the community overcome and prevent disasters (ibid).

In this 1992 publication the prevalence of gasoline sniffing and alcohol consumption among young people was stated as being very high; a statement made a year before the gasoline sniffing/suicide home video was released to media outlets and the general public became aware of the problems of the Labrador Innu. Children partaking in the inquiry are quoted as saying: "Since we were settled in Utshimasits, more people drink, there are more suicides and more people have died" and "the thing we hate most in our community is too much alcohol and gas sniffing" (Innu Nation & Mushuau Innu Band Council, 1992, 5). A year before the beginning of its public discussion and recognition, the community was discussing the problem of gasoline sniffing and possible solutions in a people's inquiry.

The people's inquiry marked the start of a new campaign to draw attention to the social conditions and social problems that existed in the community of Davis Inlet, as previous discussions of the need to relocate the community and concerns with low-level flying had gone unheard. *Gathering Voices* was a conference organized by community members in hope of dealing with tragedies in general and tragedies associated with substance abuse specifically. The inquiry pointed out the institutions and historical situations that the Innu participants believed led to the current state of the community. The grievances identified were: the church and missionaries, the education system, community location, broken government promises, lack of sufficient social services and health services, and the police and justice system—all of which have been out of the control of the Innu.

This inquiry was important to the development of the social problems claims that came in the media in 1993 because it was an Innu look at the social problems of the Davis Inlet. It was a way to gather Innu voices, to find the situations and history that the community were concerned about and find a way to voice that concern to the rest of Canada. *Gathering Voices* was a way to find commonality and possibly for the Mushuau Band Council and Innu Nation to plan further action based on this inquiry.

*The epidemic before the 'crisis'*

There are articles in the media in the 1980s that mention gas sniffing as an "epidemic" (*Author Unknown,* 1988; "Gasoline sniffing," 1989); which suggests that it was a recognized social problem in the Innu community before it entered into the media spotlight. On June 18, 1992 Michael Johansen of *The Evening Telegram* wrote an article

entitled "Royal Commission moved to consider visit to Davis Inlet." In the article, The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples[3] was reconsidering a visit to Davis Inlet due to the recent tragedy of the fire, "to examine conditions the Innu say contributed to the deaths of six children in a house fire" (ibid). Alcohol was seen as a contributing factor, as the parents had gone drinking, leaving the young children home alone, but the article also mentions the seriousness and prevalence of gasoline sniffing among the Mushuau youth.

George Rich, a Mushuau Band Councillor at the time, was stated as saying that the federal government was not providing enough money to aid the Innu in dealing with the problem. Rich was further quoted as saying that the Newfoundland Premier Wells had promised to provide provincial funding in 1991, but Rich suggested that no money has arrived in the community. Something Rich saw as a sign that nobody in the province was listening (ibid). Representatives of the Innu communities had tried to bring the problem of substance abuse to the media stage, but with little avail until 1993. In a November 2000 article in *The Telegram*, gasoline sniffing was claimed to have been a problem for forty years (MacDonald, 2000f), yet strong public focus was not awarded to the problem until 1993.

Around the same time that Johansen wrote in *The Telegram* about the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was considering a visit to Davis Inlet, the Innu Nation requested an investigation by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) to

[3] The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established on August 26, 1991. The Commission was mandated to "investigate the evolution of the relationship among aboriginal peoples (Indian, Inuit and Métis), the Canadian government, and Canadian society as a whole and propose specific solutions, rooted in domestic and international experience, to the problems which have plagued those relationships and which confront aboriginal peoples today." This Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was born in a time of conflict when the future of the Canadian federation was being debated passionately. "It came to fruition in the troubled months following the demise of the Meech Lake Accord and the confrontation, in the summer of 1990, between Mohawks and the power of the Canadian state at Kanesatake (Oka), Quebec" (INAC, n.d.).

examine the government of Canada and Newfoundland and their treatment of the Innu of Labrador. The CHRC with permission from the Innu Nation and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) hired Donald McRae, Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa to undertake the research and writing of the report investigating the federal government's lack of recognition of the Innu, issues of self-government, relocation of the Mushuau Innu, and compensation for the government's breach of fiduciary responsibility (McRae, 1993).

The Innu were putting a political push on both levels of government to take action to offer the Labrador Innu the rights and services due to them as First Nations peoples of Canada. When Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949, Aboriginal peoples were not included in the agreement. Newfoundland was the only province in Canada to maintain sole responsibility for the First Nations People within its borders (Report of the Royal Commission on Labrador, 1974, 1170). The relationship between the Innu and the governments remained as such until November 2002 when the Sheshatshiu and Mushuau bands were registered as Indians, and the two communities were recognized reserves in December 2003 (INAC, 2004f).

**The Claims and the Claims Makers**

The events described above validate the idea that the social problem of gasoline sniffing was not a new problem for the Innu of Davis Inlet in January 1993. What was new, however, was the decision by people in the Innu community[4] to formally do

[4] It is unclear exactly who the 'leader(s)' of this action group was/were in the beginning stages due to the inability to access Innu community members for interviews. Chief Katie Rich was involved as was Simeon Tshakapesh, but it is

something about the problem[5]. In January 1993, a new way of getting people to listen was attempted. Simeon Tshakapesh was a community appointed RCMP Peacekeeper in 1993 and a key actor is this event, captured a 'crisis' moment with his video camera as six Davis Inlet children sniffed gasoline and shouted claims of suicide in an unheated shack in minus forty degrees Celsius[6]. The video was released to the media and once again the Mushuau Innu became the centre of attention. The video showed six young Innu children barricaded in a room, a makeshift alcohol treatment centre in Davis Inlet. The children were belligerent, as they shoved their middle fingers at the camera, threw chairs and yelled agitatedly. The children yelled in Innuaimun, their mother tongue, words that were translated to English, meaning, "Let me go. I want to sniff gasoline. I want to kill myself" (Craig, 1993).

Innu, at the point that the video was released to the media in 1993 played a key role in creating the media incident and controlling the initial flow of information regarding the gasoline sniffing problems. The video of January 1993 was released from Davis Inlet by the Mushuau Innu community, in hopes of gaining public help and support in their fight for recognition as a people; a people with serious social problems that required government attention. This suggests that minority groups, like the Innu, can be active participants in the process of social problems claims making in the media and political arena. Peter Penashue (2001), former Innu Nation president, writes

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unknown whether they were the initial leaders or not.

[5] This assumption is made as no information was found to suggest that steps had been taken to *treat* substance abuse before 1993. From the Access to Information requests filed with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), there was no information provided before 1993, and that information from that year was low in quantity. If steps had been taken before 1993 and INAC or Health Canada was involved, INAC has no record of it. Also, if steps were taken within the Innu communities, I had no formal contact with any representatives, spokespersons, or health workers from the community; therefore that information was unavailable for this thesis.

[6] These assumptions are made from analysis of media documentation, as I had no contact with Tshakapesh.

> [A] few people in Davis Inlet took a camcorder and videotaped kids sniffing gas, thus capturing the effects of gas sniffing. We discussed whether or not we should release that film to the media. Some of us were worried that we would be exploiting the children, others were worried that if we did not do something soon, nobody would listen to us and then we would never have access to the resources we need to tackle these problems. We also knew that releasing the video to the media would give us access to a larger audience, so in the end we decided to release it. That is what started the whole media event that was centred around Davis Inlet...it is now possible for us to advance our cause[7] (23-4).

Following the release of the suicide/gas sniffing video in January 1993, provincial, national and international news sources gathered in Davis Inlet, a very isolated Northern Native community, situated on Iluikoyak Island, to capture 'the story.' However, this so-called new problem of the Mushuau Innu was not an entirely new subject for the media to cover. Before 1992, substance abuse was an issue sporadically mentioned in the press, but one that was for the most part ignored. Cohen (2001) suggests that denial is due to information being too disturbing, threatening or abnormal to be fully recognized or acknowledged as a problem, in the case of the Innu, the problem was far removed geographically from the Euro-Canadian experience, as well as seen as an 'ethnic' problem of First Nations peoples. Discussion of the reason why 1992-1993 claims were different is provided in the section dealing with media frames in Chapter 5.

*Artistic claims*

This problem of gasoline sniffing was also examined in an artistic setting during 1993 as well. A community theatre group called the Innuinuit Theatre Company, a group collaboratively formed by Innu students from Davis Inlet and Inuit students from

[7] Penashue suggests that "a few people" were personally involved in the gasoline sniffing incident in January 1993, but he then suggests that it was a community decision to deal with the problem through the media. Penashue uses the words "we" and "us" without clarifying who "we" and "us" are, thereby suggesting a unified Innu voice.

Hopedale, and the Nalujuk Players, a group from Hopedale; collectively wrote and starred in a production called *Braindead.* The play, set in a Native treatment centre, dramatizes how a group of young people have come to be at the treatment centre. The production openly discusses the effects of gasoline sniffing on Aboriginal youth in a realistic and powerful artistic display.

> Do you think we want to live like this? Do you think we enjoy fighting for a place to sleep and eat...It's cold, and lonely, and cruel. Then people...wonder why we sniff. Wake up and face reality! This isn't the promised land! You all find it easy to pass judgment on us because of who we are, and how we look. No wonder we sniff, and can't quit. You all don't make it any easier (Braindead, 1996, 402).

The various character stories in the theatrical production are emotionally charged and show that the students who created the play understand the reality of the issues and try to maintain that realistic imagery throughout the play.

The creation of this production shows the depth of the situation. It shows the anguish, the frustration, the suffering; the emotional effects as well as the social and psychological effects. While the play ends optimistically, as each character uses the opportunities and facilities afforded them through treatment to overcome their problems and addictions; the problems and situations in reality are not given the same fortitude as *Braindead* shows. This play was informative, but the audience it reached was very limited as it was only presented in Nain, Hopedale and Goose Bay at three separate times in 1993. The production was localized to Labrador communities, and while an act of claims making, was a weak showing as it did not offer widespread knowledge or opinions about gasoline sniffing in Aboriginal communities. While *Braindead* may not have received attention outside of these communities, it may have offered the communities

opportunity to mobilize on the problem. Mobilizing actions most often include media encounters.

## Media Involvement

*Setting the agenda*

The involvement of media was paramount in the development and recognition of gasoline sniffing and substance abuse as social problems, as well as the discussion of courses of action for solutions and resolutions. Without media there would have been little public discussion or knowledge of the problems that were plaguing the Innu communities in Labrador. Media, according to Cohen (2002), plays three very important roles in the dissemination of knowledge about deviance and social problems. First, media sets the agenda. What is deemed newsworthy is investigated but only the best news stories of the day are presented. The most noteworthy news stories are sensational stories of violence and turmoil, issues and situations that catch attention through graphic imagery or controversial politics (Champagne, 1999; Cohen, 2001; Gitlin, 1980; Leyton et al., 1992; Wolfsfeld, 1984). The Innu, in the late 1980s, and up until 1993 had made numerous references to the gasoline sniffing problem of the youth, yet no actions were taken and no media spectacle ensued. In 1993 however, that changed. With the release of the video images of six intoxicated youth threatening suicide, media outlets jumped at the chance to make it news. The Innu representatives may have gone to media with the stories and images, but it could not be guaranteed that their stories would be used, for media outlets had to establish the story as newsworthy for it to gain the leverage as a social problem worthy of social attention.

*Transmitting of Images*

Second, media is of primary importance in the transmitting of images, whether through embellishment or diluting the impact of imagery. Media is often thought about for its dissemination of information, but more specifically, it is often the images, not the language that draws audience attention to topics of discussion in the news. The first imagery that the world was shown was that of the video revealing six young Innu children intoxicated on gasoline in January 1993.

Without imagery, the gasoline sniffing crises of 1993 and 2000 would have received considerably less media coverage. Images made appearance across the world; The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Independent, The Observer, National Geographic—all covered aspects of the gasoline sniffing problems of the Innu. It was not so much the language, but the pictures that attracted readers. Children with obvious "native" physical traits; dark hair, dark skin and dark eyes peer out over garbage bags bulging with gasoline pressed to the young faces; their youth obvious, their tattered clothing hanging loosely on their bodies. The same images multiplied through various articles, through various sources to display the dazed and confused faces of intoxicated Innu youth against a background of dilapidated shacks, in muddy streets and paths, audiences are continuously bombarded with images of poverty and hopelessness (Penashue, 2000; MacDonald, 2000c, 2000f, 2000g; Dooley, 2004).

*Breaking the silence*

Third, media is instrumental in breaking the silence. Media is the medium through which the majority of social problems claims are made (Cohen, 2001, xxiii);

despite the distortion that accompanies such images and information. Without media, no attention would have been paid to the problems of Davis Inlet or Sheshatshiu. The Innu had been lobbying for the relocation of the Mushuau community of Davis Inlet for years, but no attempt to respond to the request was made until there were media images of gasoline sniffing youth to back up the claims of deplorable living conditions. Numerous sources, even Katie Rich, Mushuau Chief in 1993, said she was not surprised that the government agreed to relocate the community after the events of the 'crisis' had unfolded (Bronskill, 1993). The images were used to embarrass the governments into action, a political action by Innu representatives to coax the governments into aiding the Innu in solving their social problems. A more in depth discussion of the "politics of embarrassment" and the effects of the video imagery on relocation negotiations is offered in Chapter 4. The point is, however, that the video was an in-your-face image that could not be denied. There was selective awareness of the problem as mention was made by George Rich in 1992 (Johansen, 1992), and mentions in other earlier publications (*Author Unknown*, 1988; "Gasoline sniffing", 1989) but widespread public awareness was not generated until the video imagery reached media outlets. It is this widespread recognition of the problem through which media 'breaks the silence'; because it is media's coverage of a problem that contributes to public acceptance of the problem as it has been defined (Lippert, 1990, 430).

*Un/forgettable images and stories*

The powerful imagery of that "infamous January night," created a news story that would not be easily forgotten as media, particularly *The Evening Telegram,* reported on

the progress of the problem of the Labrador Innu after its initial release in January 1993. From the collected sample between January 1993, the beginning of the recognition of the seriousness of the problems of the Labrador Innu, to November 2000 when the next panic was created about substance abuse in Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet, there were 73 articles combined from *The Telegram* (49) and *The Globe and Mail* (24) written specifically about the issue of substance abuse. This count does not include the reference to alcohol and solvent abuse amidst articles pertaining to other topics and subjects, nor how the discussion of gasoline sniffing overlapped with talks of community relocation for Davis Inlet and other government-Innu negotiations such as registration under the Indian Act, land claims, self-government and policing issues.

Media documentation in the years following 1993 was littered with references to the continuing social problem of substance abuse, as well as numerous conflicting stories. For example, health workers and educators in Davis Inlet reported they still see Innu youth sniffing, but claim that they notice fewer children picking up the habit (Johansen, 1996). However, only three days earlier, the RCMP were reported picking up six teens in three separate incidents. RCMP claimed there was an increase in sniffing related arrests, as they often only dealt with two cases per month ("Innu still," 1996).

While there were numerous references to the gasoline sniffing problems, it is important to point out that media never followed the story from beginning to end. There were points where there was no coverage, and generally the "Innu story" was marginally examined by media relative to the amount of stories and news spots produced by media

outlets in a yearly span. According to Beaton (2003), the "social problem"[8] fails to "achieve and sustain a position on the institutional agenda" due to the irregularities of its reporting by media and the problem's maintenance by moral entrepreneurs. Beaton further states that the attempt to connect the Innu plight with audiences' lived experiences, by drawing parallels to familiar experiences to well established social problems categories had little effect (Beaton, 2003). However, despite the sporadic nature of reporting, audiences were programmed to recognize the images and imagery associated with 'Innu', 'Davis Inlet' and 'gasoline sniffing', and that in itself is an accomplishment. Audiences may not have been moved to affect change, for the most part, but the Innu were still able to use the images to affect changes in their relationship with the Newfoundland and Canadian governments. The images were used to pressure the governments into making changes in the ways in which the problems of the Innu were dealt with. Audiences' witnessing the conditions under which the Innu were living as well as their recognition of the governments' neglect was enough to embarrass the governments into affecting change. In the midst of a federal election campaign in 1993 the government could not afford the image of 'doing nothing.' Political embarrassment is discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

**The Proposed Solution—relocation**

Of particular importance during the years following the 1993 crisis, however, is the link of gasoline sniffing to the eventual relocation of Davis Inlet to Natuashish. Out

[8] The term "social problem" is used in quotation marks to show that both Beaton and I are discussing the same social condition of gasoline sniffing, yet do not hold the same socially constructed definition of what a social problem constitutes in society.

of the ashes of the 1992 house fire and the vivid 'gas sniffing' imagery shown in 1993, the Mushuau Innu were finally promised community relocation by the government. The Innu of Davis Inlet had been asking the federal and provincial government for community relocation for years. They were unhappy with the conditions of Davis Inlet and the isolated location of the community in respect to traditional lands and culture. The video images had shocked the world and the Canadian and Newfoundland governments were embarrassed into making changes to the living conditions of the Mushuau Innu. After January 28, 1993 when the first report was aired about the incident of suicide and gasoline sniffing, Davis Inlet became tagged as "Canada's Third World" (Craig, 1993). Canada, regarded as a highly desirable country to live in, was displayed as the home of a destitute Aboriginal community full of poverty and substance abuse with living conditions comparable to that of developing countries. Davis Inlet consisted of substandard housing with a lack of running water and a sewage system, and much of the plight of the Mushuau was blamed on the deplorable living conditions they were expected to survive amidst. The federal and provincial governments quickly agreed to discuss the possibility of moving the community of Davis Inlet to a more appropriate location.

The Innu began community relocation negotiations with the governments of Canada and Newfoundland, in hopes of moving the Mushuau Innu of Davis Inlet to a more culturally appropriate location in 1993, an action considered essential if the Innu were ever to begin healing. Three years later, in November of 1996, the Mushuau Innu Relocation Agreement (MIRA) was signed by the province of Newfoundland, Premier Brian Tobin; the Federal government, Minister Ronald Irwin of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs; and the Mushuau Innu Band Council, Chief Katie Rich. The

agreement stated that funding would be provided to move the entire community of Davis Inlet to Sango Bay, 15 kilometers west of Davis Inlet, a mainland community to be known as Natuashish (Martin, 2004). The move would take six years to be completed.

Relocation was deemed by the federal government and some Innu leaders to be the *beginning* of a long-term solution to the substance abuse problems of the community, therefore media coverage switched from the immediate problem of gasoline sniffing to the negotiations of the proposed solution. In the initial media release on January 28, 1993, *The Telegram* mentions the living conditions of the Mushuau. "Many homes today are no more than wooden shacks and few have facilities other Canadians take for granted. The community has repeatedly called for government to move them back to the mainland and to help them fight problems such as alcoholism, violence and suicide" ("Innu Kids," 1993). On February 10, 1993, journalist Jim Bronskill reported that Indian Affairs Minister Tom Siddon had agreed to move the population of Davis Inlet to a new site. Siddon is quoted as saying that the community "can no longer exist in its present location" and the Mushuau Innu "have to be moved off that island according to their wishes, in a time and a way that they are fully agreeable to" (ibid). Mushuau Chief Katie Rich commented that it was the decision that the Mushuau had been waiting a long time for, "but with all the events going on here in the last two weeks, I'm not a bit surprised that this decision came" (ibid). While it cannot be definitively proved on the basis of this research, it seems as if the gasoline sniffing issue became a political campaign on behalf of the Innu to rally for community relocation, as if it was used as a means to the political end of relocation; an issue which is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Once the official announcement came that the federal and provincial governments were going to move the Innu from Davis Inlet, media reports became focused on the notion of relocation, as the governments and the Innu battled over where the community would be moved as well as the cost, the timing, and other details of the historic negotiations. Even though the deal for relocation was an issue of great importance, the issue of the children and their substance abuse problems became lost amongst the discussions of milestone event of relocation. It is hard to determine if all parties involved were starry-eyed by the possibility of relocation to the point of abandoning the social problem of substance abuse, however it is certain that media began replacing the volume of Innu coverage of the gasoline sniffing problems with the relocation negotiations. Gasoline sniffing did not disappear completely as these two problems would remain intertwined throughout the next decade.

On November 13, 1996 Indian Affairs Minister Ron Irwin, Newfoundland Premier Brian Tobin and Mushuau Chief Katie Rich signed a deal to relocate the community from Davis Inlet to Little Sango Pond and a new community to be called Natuashish. Katie Rich was quoted as saying: "The key to our healing is for us to take back power and responsibility for ourselves. The relocation is not an end in itself—it is a vital tool for our re-empowerment" ("Irwin signs," 1996). Relocation then became a symbol for the change, for the empowerment, and for the healing of the Mushuau Innu; a deal that may not have been made so quickly without the vivid imagery of gas sniffing children in 1993.

Media discussion of substance abuse problems were gradually replaced with information and news stories directed at the relocation of Davis Inlet as it drew nearer to

when the first Mushuau families made the move in December 2002. The problem shifted focus. Relocation was considered a long-term solution to the 'social problems' of the Mushuau Innu. It was fought for, the agreement was signed and the hope was strong, but it soon became a problem in itself. Relocation had been delayed numerous times; construction work was moving slowly due to the short warmer seasons in Labrador, the cost was reaching an astronomical amount, and the initial construction plans had not accounted for the lapse of time and the increase in the Mushuau population. Relocation, as a solution, quickly became a social problem as it was deemed a large waste of government funding.

**Here We Go Again—the problem comes full circle**

On November 16, 2000, the media covered the substance abuse issues of the Labrador Innu extensively once more. The chief of Sheshatshiu, Paul Rich, announced publicly that there was a serious problem with gasoline sniffing among Sheshatshiu's youth and pleaded with the government to intervene. Chief Rich claimed that there were upwards of 50 children sniffing gasoline, wandering the streets in broad daylight. Rich stated that the children were being neglected by their legal guardians and that the children should be tended to by Health and Community Services so safe homes could be found for the children (Bennett, 2000). The Sheshatshiu Band Council went as far as hiring ten security guards to patrol the community for gasoline sniffing children (Johansen, 2000a). Chief Rich was quoted as saying "We cannot continue to tolerate the ongoing neglect of these children by their legal caregivers, and action is past due. The ongoing situation is drastic and we need to take drastic measures" (Callahan, 2000a). On November 21, 2000,

twelve children were bused outside the community to attend a detoxification and addiction treatment program at the Canadian Forces Base Goose Bay (MacDonald, 2000f).

November 23, 2000, two days after the children were removed from Sheshatshiu for treatment; Davis Inlet Chief Simeon Tshakapesh also called for immediate help in dealing with the substance abuse problems of Mushuau youth. Chief Simeon Tshakapesh claimed, according to *The Telegram*'s Brian Callahan, that chronic gas sniffing and alcoholism in Davis Inlet has been out of control for a decade and it was worse that the situation in Sheshatshiu (Callahan, 2000b). Tshakapesh also said that of the 169 youth in Davis Inlet, 154 have been gas sniffers at some point in their lives, 92 of them in 2000 alone. About 60 were chronic abusers. He also claimed that 11 of the youth identified as gas sniffers in Sheshatshiu were originally from Davis Inlet (ibid). Callahan quoted Tshakaspesh: "The Canadian people are witnessing the next extinction of a First Nation, namely ours. An illness has swept through our community and is slowly killing our children, our future, and us" (ibid).

While substance abuse of Innu youth became a 'hot topic' once again, the campaign for help in 2000 was very different than that of 1993. In 1993, the home video images were used to attract attention to the dilapidated housing and squalor in which the Mushuau Innu were living, to create a basis for negotiations with the federal and provincial governments for relocation. In 2000, the campaign became more about child welfare directly linked to gasoline sniffing. It was a child welfare and protection issue, but also about Innu gaining control over the issues in the community. Mushuau Chief Simeon Tshakapesh was, in particular, very vocal about how the government was failing

to recognize the magnitude of the problems faced by Innu and Innu youth, specifically. This vocalization from Tshakapesh instigated a 'media war' between Tshakapesh and the federal government over who was to blame for the problems and lack of action to help the youth.

*Media mud-slinging and treatment delays*

A course of action to deal with this problem was not easy to develop. The children from Davis Inlet had been treated eight years prior and there were claims that the problem was worse than ever before (Morris, 2000). While it is not clear that if the same children involved in the 2000 sniffing crisis as in 1993, the fact that the numbers had increased and the second 'crisis' involved both communities, showed that the social problem of substance abuse had grown. Innu called for the development of a long-term healing process that would involve not only sending the children out of the communities for treatment, but also bringing specialists into Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu for more counselling involving the children's families (ibid).

While a treatment centre had been opened in Sheshatshiu in May of 2000, the facility only had a 12-bed capacity and had already been rejected as a proper treatment placement for the Sheshatshiu youth, as it was felt that the children could easily escape into their 'sniffing environment' (MacDonald, 2000f). It was then decided that the former Grace Hospital, which had been closed earlier the same year in the restructuring of the St. John's health care facilities, would be used as a detoxification and treatment centre for the 39 Innu gasoline sniffing children from Davis Inlet. Roger Grimes, provincial Health Minister at the time, was quoted as saying on December 8, 2000 in a *Telegram*

article, "[the Innu] indicated they want the children to have service and help. We have a program ready...and at this point, the Innu leadership, because of their disagreement with the government of Canada, are refusing to send out the first children until they get further acknowledgement from the government on some long-term plans for the future" (Sweet, 2000). An Innu spokesperson stated that they first wanted a commitment from the government to set up an adult treatment program in Davis Inlet and controlled by local authorities, but the government negotiator claimed that the children had to be removed from the community before any other plans were to be made (ibid).

Talks broke off between the Innu, provincial and federal governments and Chief Tshakapesh and twenty other Innu supporters from the community traveled to Ottawa to plead the case of the Innu. Reporter Will Hilliard of *The Telegram*, stated that "the chief was making veiled references to an all-out protest on Parliament Hill" if help does not come soon (Hilliard, 2000). Tshakapesh was stated as saying: "I'll go to jail if I have to, to get help for our children" (ibid). On December 14, 2000 a deal was reported as being reached between Innu leaders and the federal government on the treatment of the Davis Inlet youth. Counsellors arrived in the community and assessed the youth for the severity of their gasoline sniffing behaviours and the type of treatment they would need, the children however, were not sent to the Grace until after the Christmas holiday season (Blanchfield, 2000). Sheshatshiu youth were assessed, sent for detoxification and released within three weeks of treatment with a statement from a senior health official that the gasoline sniffing children from Sheshatshiu were not chronic users (MacDonald, 2000g). Treatment for Mushuau youth was expected to take much longer as there was a longer history of solvent abuse in the coastal community (ibid).

It was January 2001 before 35 Innu children were removed from Davis Inlet and placed in detoxification in the refurbished former Grace Hospital in St. John's (Sweet, 2001a) at a cost of six million dollars for four months of treatment (Martin, 2004). Getting the children there was not easy. The provincial government department of youth services blamed the Innu for not returning phone calls and Chief Simeon Tshakapesh blamed the government for avoiding issues such as involving the Innu in the assessment and treatment process, such as the hiring of Aboriginal addictions counsellors who would have a better understanding of the Innu children and their problems (Hilliard, 2001a). Tshakapesh decided he could wait no longer, placed twelve children on a plane and sent them to St. John's for treatment without assessment from the provincial government (MacDonald, 2001a). On January 11, 2001, a deal was reportedly reached, and social workers were sent into Davis Inlet to assess the remaining children (Hilliard, 2001b).

The battle to fight solvent abuse in the Innu community of Davis Inlet was a political battle. It was a fight over funding, as well as power and control over substance abuse treatment issues, but also the band's everyday functioning. There had been on-going financial and administrative problems in the Labrador Innu communities. In the midst of the gasoline sniffing problems Indian Affairs announced third-party management was placed in charge of the Innu's federal funds, due to large deficits recorded by Innu bookkeeping. The federal government assured the Innu that the decision would not affect the treatment of the gasoline sniffing youth (MacDonald, 2001b), however, Chief Tshakapesh later accused federal Health Minister Allan Rock of withholding the funds agreed to for the proper addictions treatment after the detoxification of the youth at the Grace in St. John's (MacDonald, 2001c). March 30, 2001 a deal was reportedly reached,

but no details were released to media at that time, however the government made a statement that the parties were "pleased with the outcome" of the meeting (Johansen, 2001).

*After detox*

April 24, 2001, the detoxification phase of treatment of the Innu youth was completed, as the last eleven children left the Grace. Sixteen high-risk sniffers were sent to an aboriginal treatment centre in Alberta, six low-risk sniffers were to continue treatment by learning their traditional ways in the bush near Davis Inlet, and the last eleven were moved to a residential treatment centre set up in Goose Bay (MacDonald, 2001d). A few months later, statements from youth support workers from the Grace detoxification program were anonymously released, stating that the program failed to provide 'beneficial treatment' for the Innu children, or a safe working environment for the workers and that an inquiry should take place (Sweet, 2001b). Little else was said in the media about the gasoline sniffing and related problems of the Innu until November 26, 2001 when *The Telegram* printed an article related to the anniversary of the 'crisis' of November 2000 (MacDonald, 2001e). Chief Tshakapesh was quoted as being hopeful and proud of the changes occurring in Davis Inlet, however, others were skeptical of Tshakapesh's comments. An RCMP Sergeant suggested that the quiet streets of Davis Inlet were in part due to the fact that most of the children had not returned to their families. A statement was made that five "hard-core sniffers" had already returned to their "habit" (ibid).

*The Healing Strategy*

In 2001 as well, in response to the 'crisis' in November 2000, The Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy (LICHS) was initiated by Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Solicitor General to stabilize health, create safe communities and help the Innu build a better future (INAC, 2004d). The federal government committed to spend 81.3 million dollars over three years on the LICHS including 45.2 million for registration of the Innu under the Indian Act, granting Sheshatshiu and Natuashish (relocated Davis Inlet) reserve status, as well as offering on reserve programs and services. 14 million was used in the building of Natuashish and relocation, Health Canada put forth 20.1 million for community health and the Solicitor General offered 2 million for community policing (INAC, 2004e). The LICHS was designed for the federal government, the Province and the Innu to work in partnership to: treat addictions, begin healing, improve school attendance rates, improve Innu skills and capacity, relocate Davis Inlet and raise infrastructure standards in Sheshatshiu, implement band and reserve creation under the Indian Act, implement First Nations policing agreements, and better provincial, federal and Innu government relations (IER Planning, Research & Management Services & Aboriginal Research Institute, 2003).

*Resurgence*

Despite the efforts to treat and heal addictions, a resurgence of gasoline sniffing was reported by an RCMP officer in the community of Davis Inlet during a CBC Radio interview in January 2002, a few months after all children had returned from treatment. On January 10, 2002 the resurgence was reported in *The Telegram* and claims were made

that over half of the children removed from the community the winter before for treatment were once again sniffing gasoline. Chief Tshakapesh claimed that the root of the problem was that the recommendations for a four-phase, holistic healing strategy made by the clinical committee the year before has not been implemented (Hilliard, 2002). Tshakapesh was also reported as claiming that the federal departments that agreed to help the Innu children a year previous were still battling over cost and jurisdiction. As of September 5, 2001, Tshakapesh claimed that they had only received one-third of the budget proposed and agreed upon by Health Canada and also claimed that he was told to lobby the Department of Indian Affairs and the provincial government for the rest (ibid).

**Moral Entrepreneurs**

To get social problems to the media, to provide a perspective for understanding the problem, and engaging the media to create a story about the problem, the presence of moral entrepreneurs was imperative. Critcher (2003) defines moral entrepreneurs as groups or organizations that "take it upon themselves to pronounce upon the nature of the problem and its best remedies" and suggests that their role is to "offer orientations (emotional and intellectual responses), images of the deviants and explanations of their causal explanations" (17). Crotty and Meier (2005) suggest that moral entrepreneurs often make use of an institutionalized power base when identifying the nature of a social problem (226). Cohen asserts that the "moral barricades" are manned by "editors, bishops, politicians, and other right-thinking people" (as quoted by Critcher, 2003, 17). However, these models assume that there is only one set of moral entrepreneurs that place values judgments on social conditions to create and manage social problems. There is

often more than one group that tries to examine the nature of the problem and offer suggestion for resolution; it is a competition over ownership and responsibility—who is allowed to define the problem and make suggestions for solutions. In the case of the Innu's gasoline sniffing problem, there were numerous ways in which the problem and its solutions were interpreted, and the 'moral barricades' were not necessarily operated by religious and governmental officials. The moral entrepreneurs of the gasoline sniffing problem were Innu representatives, Health Canada officials, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada representatives, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers, social workers, Innu community members, and international tribal rights organization *Survival International,* as well as others.

*Innu and Simeon Tshakapesh*

Some Innu—community members, community health workers, as well as political organizations such as the Innu Nation and Band Councils—functioned as moral entrepreneurs, active participants in the social construction of the gasoline sniffing problem. Simeon Tshakapesh, specifically, became a moral entrepreneur on behalf of the Labrador Innu. Ranging from being the videographer of the 1993 'crisis', to the Mushuau Innu chief, to addictions counsellor, Tshakapesh was present in a vast majority of media documentation involving the issue of substance abuse. The voice of the Innu was often vocalized through Simeon Tshakapesh, as Mushuau chief, government negotiator and deal maker over addictions treatment, protestor and later as a counsellor in the mobile treatment units. Tshakapesh explained what the problem was, brought the problem of substance abuse to public attention numerous times, offered suggestions about its

causality, negotiated for treatment and solutions with the government departments, and was outspoken when he believed the solutions were not aggressive enough, not in line with Innu culture, understanding, or was not of primary benefit to the Innu.

Tshakapesh, as spokesperson for the Innu, also experienced moments when his claims about the problems of Davis Inlet went unheard. In particular, a story was written in *The Telegram* in January 2002 stating that Tshakapesh had written a letter to Prime Minister Chretien, Health Minister Allan Rock, and Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault in October 2001 warning the Federal Ministers that an outbreak of gasoline sniffing was inevitable if the federal government did not provide the funds that Innu had been promised for treatment. The letter, according to the news article, went unanswered and children resumed their sniffing habits due to the failure of proper healing strategies to be put into practice (Hilliard, 2002). Tshakapesh's claims were not reported or responded to until the resurgence was reported by a RCMP officer in a CBC radio interview.

*Government—Federal and provincial*

After the initial release of information, the government had the chance to return with offers of aid, but also statements of what the problem was, why it was occurring, and suggestions for solutions and resolutions. The government, particularly the federal departments of Indian Affairs and Health Canada and the provincial ministry of Social Services, also became moral entrepreneurs. In this case, Cohen (1972) and Critcher (2003) are correct in suggesting that often government and religiously based individuals or organizations are involved in the moral entrepreneur process. Social Services were in control of the counsellors that assessed the youth in Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu for the

type and intensity of their sniffing. Therefore, they were the ones who had the ultimate say in who was an 'addict', who required treatment and who was an occasional substance user, therefore not in need of an intensive detoxification and treatment program. In January 1993, eighteen youth were removed from Davis Inlet for treatment at Poundmakers Lodge in Alberta. On January 29, 1993, *The Telegram* reported that Peter Penashue was claiming there were 40 or more children in Davis Inlet in various stages of substance abuse (Gorham, 1993a), yet only eighteen were recognized as in need of extensive counselling for their behaviour. Again in 2000, Chief Paul Rich claimed that there were up to 50 children gasoline sniffing in Sheshatshiu, Social Services workers entered the community and only twelve of the claimed 50 sniffers were removed from the community for treatment. These children were also released three weeks later, as the children in Sheshatshiu were not seen as 'chronic users.'

Health Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada can also be considered moral entrepreneurs as they held official jurisdiction over the Innu, were the funding agents for the treatment programs for the Innu youth, as well as decision makers about the financial feasibility of treatment. They provided the who, what, when where, why and how of treatment. Nevertheless, we must not forget that they are not the only claims makers of social problems, nor are they always the primary groups to engage in social problems work. There are counter claims makers and moral entrepreneurs, as minority groups such as the Mushuau Innu, also have the power to project powerful images of political significance such as the gasoline sniffing suicide video released in 1993 and the second call for government intervention in November of 2000.

*RCMP*

The RCMP also played the role of moral entrepreneur. The RCMP were stationed in Davis Inlet as law enforcement officers when the community was established in 1967 and have been an active presence in Davis Inlet for many years. Simeon Tshakapesh, when the video images were captured in 1993, was trained as an Aboriginal Peacekeeper and was working in conjunction with the RCMP in the community, though not recognized as a law enforcement officer by the provincial government. The Innu had fought with the federal government to be given the opportunity to have control over community policing, however the government has not relinquished control over this service.

In January 2002, when a resurgence of gasoline sniffing was first reported, it was reported on a CBC radio news program by RCMP sergeant stationed in Davis Inlet. The comments from the officer were followed by concerned statements from health and community service workers and professionals in Davis Inlet, as well as stories in *The Telegram*. As the Euro-Canadian eyes and ears in the Innu community, uniformed professionals and law enforcers, the RCMP were important claims makers in the community. In 1996, health workers and educators claimed that they noticed fewer children picking up the habit (Johansen, 1996). However, only three days earlier, the RCMP were reported picking up six teens in three separate incidents. RCMP claimed there was an increase in sniffing related arrests, as they often only deal with two cases per month ("Innu still," 1996).

*Survival International*

*Survival International* is an international organization that supports the rights of tribal peoples. Founded in 1969, Survival International offers education, advocacy, and campaigns in the quest for recognition for tribal peoples and their human rights (Survival International, n.d.). Survival International, late in November 1999, along with British sociologist Colin Samson, released a report on the state of affairs of the Labrador Innu entitled *Canada's Tibet: The Killing of the Innu.* The report stated that the Innu's way of life, religion and society were forced into 'modern' transformation, from a nomadic hunting people into a settled and dependent population, which had brought terrible social problems. The report examined the problems of colonization and community resettlement, loss of cultural autonomy, the current situations of suicide, substance abuse and relations with the government and detailed the Innu's own suggestions for regaining control of their land and their future (ibid). The presence and involvement of *Survival International* was important because it offered Innu an international support network; a larger more recognized group in which Innu could further their own political platforms.

*How the moral entrepreneurs interact with media*

Also in need of examination, and one of the main purposes of this research, is how moral entrepreneurs interact with the media. Do moral entrepreneurs lead, follow, or operate alongside the media? (Critcher, 2003, 17). Media as an active moral entrepreneur also needs discussion because the definition, as well as who defines fluctuates between the moral entrepreneur and the media outlet. Wolfsfeld (1984) offers an analysis of the media-claims maker relationship which suggests that the two work in symbiosis,

continually bartering for the upper-hand in the control of the construction of newsworthy issues. Peter Penashue was stated as saying in a *CTV Canada AM* (2002), television interview:

> I think at the beginning it was important to put out the story and put it out to a broader audience so that people could react and participate in finding solutions. And I think we've done that. For the last ten years, *we've been putting out these pictures of children sniffing gas*, which was the actual reality on the ground (emphasis added).

While emphasizing that the Innu do exert power and control in some of the social construction of their issues and problems, no suggestion is made that they are entirely in control of the construction at all times. A CBC report from February 2005 is a perfect example of how drawing attention to a social problem such as substance abuse may bring unwanted attention with it. Other problems may be revealed in the process of identifying and attempting to resolve substance abuse. The story may get distorted from its original purpose and in the process Innu leaders and community members may become scrutinized despite their efforts to scrutinize the governments' actions.

In February 2005, CBC video journalist Peter Gullage asserted that documents "obtained through a CBC investigation show that Natuashish leadership is contributing to social chaos" (Gullage, 2005). Gullage reported that the Mushuau Band Council funds were being used in the drug smuggling business in Natuashish, a report which discussed the conflicts of interest in the Mushuau community. Gullage further stated that he obtained affidavits signed by community members stating that votes were traded for drugs and alcohol in the last band election in Natuashish and claimed that he had proof; a shipping receipt for a large shipment of alcohol signed by a member of the band council (Gullage, 2005). This information surfaced in the midst of a report from IER Planning,

Research and Management Services which asserted that the Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy (LICHS), a joint project of the federal government, provincial government and the Innu, was failing to serve the Labrador Innu appropriately (ibid). While Gullage's report started by criticizing the federal government for its lack of aid for the communities of Natuashish and Sheshatshiu, despite the millions of dollars in funding, Gullage also reported on the alleged mismanagement of band funds and suggested that the council is contributing to the drinking and social chaos of the community. Gullage conducted interviews with representatives from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada as well as Health Canada, community members from the Health Commission and mobile treatment unit's addictions counsellors and a forced questioning of the Mushuau Innu Band Chief Simon Pokue. Do the moral entrepreneurs lead, follow, or operate alongside the media? Within the eighteen and a half minute television news report, Gullage covers the entire spectrum of Critcher's question, showing that it is not easy to pinpoint the answer.

In the beginning of the news story, Gullage seemed to be working on behalf of or with the Innu, who have been claiming all the while that federal money has not been solving the social problems of the Labrador Innu. Gullage critically analyzed the role of the Federal departments in the LICHS, the mandate of the program and where and how the government initiatives are falling short. This works in favour of the Innu moral entrepreneurs, while working against the government (Gullage, 2005). Secondly, Gullage stated that the documents had been "obtained" by CBC on the drug and alcohol supply problems of the community of Natuashish (ibid), suggesting that media may be the primary constructor of this story, taking on the role of moral entrepreneur, digging for

information, creating the story.

Finally, Gullage also offered information that was given to him by "sources" suggesting that his report was following the moral 'finger pointing' of an unidentified Innu community member at the Mushuau Band Council for allegedly financing the drug trade in Natuashish (ibid). This statement switches the story, aligning the story with the government moral entrepreneurs and others who believe the Innu are to blame for their own demise, as some members of the community are contributing to problems such as substance abuse. This involvement of unidentified sources suggests that there are political factions within the community, a difference of opinion that has created animosity among groups of community members. This shows that the story can be initiated by Innu, but not necessarily as a story that promotes a unified voice.

## How Do We Make Sense of Social Problems?

*Orientation*

Critcher (2003) and Cohen (1972) also examine how the media, political actors and the public make sense of social problems claims. According to Cohen, three themes emerge. First is orientation, an emotional and intellectual evaluation, where images of tragedy, disaster and crisis symbolize moral and social decline (as cited by Critcher, 2003, 12). Secondly, images emerge of who the problem groups are and why they behave in this way, labelling the group and stereotyping against a section of society. Third, causation emerges, as moral entrepreneurs suggest explanations for the problematic behaviour(s), as well as drawing strong distinctions between normalcy and deviance. Cohen reminds his readers that we cannot treat these categories as mutually exclusive, as

statements of orientation, images, and causation can carry element of the other categories (Cohen, 1972, 51). For example, a statement such as: 'Innu children sniff gasoline because their parents are drinking', can carry meaning for both images and causation. The statement offers a reason why children are partaking in such activities, but simultaneously offers a stereotypical image of 'the drunken Indian.' Again, like the statements of those who can be defined as moral entrepreneurs, statements of orientation, images and causation depend upon who the most prominent moral entrepreneur is at that particular moment. The initial media release of the horrific images of children claiming that they wanted to die while high on gasoline fumes in 1993 played on the hearts and minds of people around the world. The images of children participating in such self-destructive behaviours began a media frenzy. The video showed a tragic scene, it showed children in a state of despair, wanting to end their lives, invoking sympathy in its audience. It also involved media and audience questioning what made children so young contemplate suicide, as such emotionally charged images often made audiences question the social and moral makeup of the community. This orientation, this way of thinking about the problem led to stereotypes of the lazy, negligent, drunken Indian parent.

*The role of stereotypes*

A research study conducted by Claxton-Oldfield and Keefe (1999) assessed stereotypes about the Mushuau Innu. The study involved two separate processes of analysis. First, Newfoundland college students were asked to describe what the characteristics of the Innu were from their personal interpretations when they thought of the Innu. Claxton-Oldfield and Keefe state that at least 20 percent of respondents (n=78)

that were asked, described the Innu as uneducated, alcoholic, poor, isolated and gas-sniffing. The respondents further answered that the two most important sources for these perceptions were the television and newspaper, both media sources; only one of the 78 respondents stated that they have ever had personal contact with the Innu people. The second part of the study examined the image of the Innu in a daily Newfoundland newspaper. Claxton-Oldfield and Keefe use content analysis to examine the frequency with which articles about the Innu appear in newspapers, the event categories used and to analyze headline wording. Between January 2, 1996 and December 31, 1996, items which referred to the Innu appeared 66 times, at an average of 1.3 items per week. In that sample, approximately 44 percent of the headlines contained words related to conflict or deviance, such as gas-sniffing, sexual abuse, and protest (Claxton-Oldfield & Keefe, 1999). This study suggests that Innu are often associated with problematic conditions in media coverage, coverage that therefore reinforces the "Indian 'problem'" (Dyck, 1991). This topic is dealt with in Chapter 5.

*Causation*

Statements of causation, depend on who the statement comes from, or what other contextual information backgrounds the causal statement. As mentioned previously, heavy drinking of parents and guardians is examined in media reports as the foremost cause of solvent abuse among youth (Landry, 2003, 84). The cause of the problem, according to the Innu, has been the lack of infrastructure in the communities in which they live. They were forced into communities by the government, their lands were taken over by Euro-Canadian colonizers, and their rights to land, their culture, their humanity,

were taken from them. In a 2004 documentary entitled *The Mushuau Innu: Surviving Canada*, produced by Ed Martin, Simeon Tshakapesh states that the Innu did not invite white people into their homeland, they did not sign a treaty, and they did not sell their land. There have been too many injustices they are not responsible for; therefore it is not the Innu's responsibility to fix the problems (Martin, 2004). In the CBC release of the video in January 1993, Tshakapesh claimed "I don't blame those kids, it's not their fault, it's the government's fault" (Craig, 1993). Peter Penashue stated alcoholism is "a symptom of powerlessness, of alienation and despair in the face of government policies that have deprived us our land, stripped us of our rights and denied us the opportunity to be a self-determining people" ("Time to start," 2000).

In opposition to that, Brian Tobin, Premier of Newfoundland from 1996-2000, stated publicly that responsibility lay within the Aboriginal communities. Amidst land claim negotiations with the Labrador Inuit Association (LIA), Tobin asserts that "part of the problem is those who have a responsibility to lead are themselves scarred by alcohol abuse" suggesting that Labrador First Nations leaders were too intimidated to talk about alcohol abuse in their community (MacDonald, 2000b). From this perspective, alcoholism is seen as a personal decision to drink or abstain from drinking. Two very different statements of cause, related to two very different views on substance abuse in the Labrador communities. Each one used to further political ideas about ownership and responsibility of the substance abuse problem. Further discussion of discourse and rhetorical strategies of the different moral entrepreneurs occurs in the following chapters.

**The Role of Experts**

Cohen suggested that "socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions" (1972, 9). According to Critcher, expertise may carry particular weight, affecting the way the media come to define the issue (2003, 18). Therefore, we must ask: who claims expertise? On what grounds do they claim expertise? Is such expertise accredited by the media? (ibid) However, it is also important to question whether experts are considered experts because they are knowledgeable about the problem, or because media has pronounced them to be experts, therefore are forced to comment upon the issues without self-proclaimed expertise in the area.

*Social workers*

Social Services workers in Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet, sent in for addictions assessment of the youth, as mentioned above, were also seen as having expertise in distinguishing the intensity and severity of addicts from chronic to recreational users, and the types of treatment programs each needs. Their job was to examine the social conditions, evaluate the children and their level of addiction and suggest to the provincial and federal government the severity of the problem, as well as the well-being of the children in their family homes.

*Dr. Jane McGillivray*

In the midst of the 2000 sniffing crisis, Dr. Jane McGillivray, the lone physician serving the community of Sheshatshiu, took a leave of absence from her position at the local medical clinic, stating that "There comes a point when, as a doctor, I cannot

continue to work in a dying community, where nothing I do seems to make a difference and people themselves are unwilling to take responsibility" (Lindgren, 2000a). Dr. McGillivray, in a letter informing the Innu Nation of her decision to leave, described the situation in Sheshatshiu "a culture of addiction", a situation where people engage "willfully in drunkenness, debauchery and denial" ("Excerpt," 2000). She further states that "this is not a problem of money or a problem of poverty. This is a spiritual issue and no amount of money can heal the spirit. People here need to take charge of their lives, to care for their children" (ibid). Peter Penashue, Innu Nation President at the time, stated that Dr. McGillivray would not be welcome back into the community and stated she was an "outsider" who came into Sheshatshiu with "her own agendas" and solutions to Innu problems (Lindgren, 2000b). INAC, however, saw Dr. McGillivray as an "excellent expert third party spokesperson" as she chose to speak out when she heard the government was going to "bow to Innu demands for more money" (INAC, 2004c). Dr. McGillivray was seen as an expert from the federal government perspective because she was a doctor, she held a socially prestigious occupation and she had a decade of experience living and working in the Innu community of Sheshatshiu. For the Innu, as Penashue suggested, her expertise was Euro-Canadian and set by her own agenda about what the Innu should be doing to solve their problems; agendas that the Innu did not see as compliant with their culture, values and beliefs about what the problems and solutions were. Therefore, expertise cannot be universally defined as various moral entrepreneurs can decide what expertise is relevant to their cause based on their point of view, values and beliefs.

**Coping and Resolution**

The ways in which the media, moral entrepreneurs, and experts react to the social problems claims suggest the measures need to be taken to resolve or cope with the problem. However, ideas about what the problem is vary. Therefore, examinations of what solutions are advocated and by who, are important in determining the development of the social problem and its possible solutions (Critcher, 2003, 18). This line of questioning deals with power relationships, as the solutions may not be noteworthy unless they emerge from a powerful source, such as a 'white bureaucrat' or 'white expert'. The claim by Innu was that the community needed to improve its living standards, physically, emotionally, and socially. For the Innu, this requires Innu control over Innu healing, such as training Innu to be addictions counsellors, involving Innu in the hiring of non-Innu addictions counsellors, creating an Innu treatment program that involves returning to the land and Innu traditions, as well as taking steps to heal entire Innu families, not just the solvent abusing children. It also includes taking control of issues outside the problem of substance abuse, such as self-government, gaining Indian status and reserve status under the federal Indian Act, controlling community policing, and having a voice in Voisey's Bay and Churchill Falls development negotiations. For the Innu, the solution for the long term is the gaining of human rights, dignity and respect.

The federal government, on the other hand, offered millions of dollars to remove the children from the communities and place them in detoxification and treatment programs across the country. The refurbishing of the Grace Hospital as a detox unit, as well as staffing of the program, cost the governments six million dollars for four months of treatment (Martin, 2004). The government solution seemed to be reliant on providing

money rather than providing infrastructure, support, and long term goals for healing.

**The End of the Cycle—the problem fades away**

The more visible and recognizable the problem becomes, the further it drifts from the media spotlight, as journalists and media outlets thrive on reporting the spectacular, shocking and unusual (Critcher, 2003, 18). The more audiences know about a problem the less spectacular and unusual it is; the more familiar it becomes. The cost of maintaining media attention becomes too great, therefore, social problems and special interest groups often spend long periods of time in the headlines (Wolfsfeld, 1984) and then the problem fades from media as it no longer becomes interesting and reportable.

How, why and when media coverage of the gasoline sniffing crisis fades from the spotlight is difficult to predict or explain. It could be related to a decline in media interest, a decline in public interest, or a decline in information related to the story. Within my sample between January 1992 and July 2005, there were 145 articles written specifically about substance abuse in Innu communities of Labrador. While most were sporadically spread throughout the sample, the large number asserts that the media were still interested in the social problems of the Labrador Innu, though it is important to remember that the reporting of the crisis did not necessarily match the cycle of the crisis in the community. Media reported on the extremes, not the day to day community dealing with the issues of substance abuse. Media focus was obviously the sensational images, the conflict and debates between the Innu councils and the federal and provincial governments over the treatment methods and finances.

While media and audiences were interested in updates on how the children are doing, they do not hold the attention span required to be interested in every move that is made regarding the problem, its maintenance and its solutions. If the information being released about the problem has little that can evoke strong emotions, be sensationalized, or is repetitive with no twist or new facet of information, chances are it will not be covered. Secondary to this, information from media's major sources may not be offered to the media anymore. Information may be withheld due to the cost of maintaining celebrity status for the social problem, or because the social problem makers and moral entrepreneurs feel that the media is inhibiting the Innu youth's healing process.

The federal government, particularly INAC, throughout the entire process of dealing with the suicide and gasoline sniffing 'epidemics' of the Labrador Innu, were trying to gain control of the situation and control the flow of information. This meant, for the most part, that they wished to quieten media reports about the issues and the government's responses. In a communications strategy report from INAC, it is stated that the Innu "have learned that the more issues they throw into the public forum, the more heat the federal government is likely to feel" (INAC, 2004e). INAC felt that they needed to find a way to focus the Innu representatives on one or two key issues, instead of the plethora of problems they were trying to find solutions to. It was also stated that "the federal government can win public approval for helping Innu focus on their most pressing social issue first" (ibid). This suggests that the federal government, by forcing Innu to deal with a smaller number of issues, may have forced the Innu to lose their place in the media spotlight, thereby causing the problem to fade from widespread recognition and social action. More will be said on this issue of communication strategies in Chapter 4.

**The Legacy—what do we remember?**

This problem of substance abuse of the Innu peoples of Labrador has created a legacy. Cohen states that "sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten...at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way the society conceives of itself" (Cohen, 1972, 9).

One of the major legacies that the emergence of gasoline sniffing produced was an agreement with the provincial and federal governments to relocate the Mushuau Innu community to a 'claimed' physically, socially and culturally appropriate location. The Innu had been lobbying the government prior to 1993, but their pleas went unanswered. In 1993, after the release of the gas-sniffing/suicide home video, the governments began to seriously consider moving the Mushuau from Davis Inlet, as a step in the long term healing strategy of the Innu. On February 10, 1993, *The Telegram* reported that the community of Davis Inlet "can no longer exist in its present location" (Bronskill, 1993). Mushuau Chief Katie Rich stated in an interview with *Telegram* reporter Bronskill that she was glad the decision was made but not surprised that this decision came given the problems and imagery that had emerged of gasoline sniffing and suicidal children (ibid). The legacy of the gasoline sniffing crisis remains in its link to the relocation agreement and the international attention it received in 1993 after the 'crisis' had emerged in the media. The problem of gasoline sniffing became linked with the dilapidated conditions of the community, portrayed as a reaction to the despair of the community.

Children could not be expected to thrive in a cold shack with no running water or sewerage system; therefore substance abuse became a symbol of the other social

problems of Davis Inlet. Relocation negotiations took three years before a final agreement was signed by the Innu, the province and the Federal government, and the construction of the new community faced numerous delays until its completion in 2003. Without that extra visual push that the gasoline sniffing/suicide video provided, it is difficult to say whether any progress would have been made in the relocation negotiations. Criticisms have emerged asserting that the relocation of Davis Inlet to Natuashish was not the solution to the various social problems of the Innu community.

The federal government receives a lot of criticism for agreeing that relocation was a solution to the substance abuse and other social issues of the Labrador Innu. In October 2000, the Auditor General's report stated that there was significant risk the $113 million project would not address Innu needs. Auditor General Denis Desautels stated that the government had failed to identify the remedies needed to ensure that the move would repair the "social pathologies" in Davis Inlet. The social problems that emerged and suggested that the relocation was necessary were not dealt with; therefore Desautels stated that the problems of substance abuse and suicide must be attended to first so that Innu are not faced with the same problems in their new location (Ayed, 2000). The project, at the point that *The Telegram* reported, was at least one year behind and cost was 35 percent above the initial authorized amount, which added to the Auditor General's concerns (ibid).

The other legacy that the social problem of substance abuse produced was the reinforcement of the 'drunken Indian' stereotype. As Landry (2003) claims, the imagery of young Innu children sniffing gasoline froze those children in time and discursive space, as the playback of those images never allowed those children to grow up, or be anything

else other than gas-sniffers. The constant reiteration of the imagery of substance abusing children does not allow the audience to see any other facet of Innu community life, or Innu culture. This is an image that the public does not forget and an image that the media continually recalls and uses in other news stories related to the Innu, even after discussion of the issue and possible solutions has faded from public attention.

**Conclusion**

This chapter showed, through the use of Chas Critcher's natural history model for examining social problems, the social problem of gasoline sniffing in Labrador Innu communities followed a particular process through which claims makers made claims about what the problems were and what the solutions should have been. The purpose of this chapter was to examine what the social problems claims were, who were involved in the social problems work of initiating and maintaining the problem of gasoline sniffing among Innu youth and the proposed solutions, as well as the end of the media cycle and the residual problems and issues that remained unresolved despite the efforts of moral entrepreneurs. In general, this discussion examined how social problems are social constructions, how the recognition of problems are the result of hard work, determination, and political motivation of particular groups, individuals and organizations.

## Chapter 4

## Political Rhetoric: Power, Responsibility and Embarrassment

### Introduction

This chapter examines the politics of making claims about social problems. It discusses the political rhetoric of social problems through the discussion of issues of responsibility and ownership of social problems (Gusfield, 1981). More specifically, the particular role of the Innu in the process of social problems construction is discussed and using Foucault's conceptualization of power, the minority's role in the creation of news is explored. Using the concepts of 'pseudo-event' (Boorstin, 1964; Edelman, 1988) and 'politics of embarrassment' (Paine, 1985) this chapter explains the political rhetoric involved in process of social problems claims making.

According to Paine (1981), political rhetoric takes two forms. One, political rhetoric is the idea that "saying is doing" (ibid). Therefore, language and discourse are seen as political actions. General discourses of substance abuse are discussed in this chapter along with the political motivations that accompany each discourse. Secondly, political rhetoric can be seen as action; that "doing is saying" (ibid). Rhetoric, in this sense, can be considered a rally or protest, such as tying oneself to a tree to protest logging. This is an action that receives as much attention as a political speech, as it may create awareness without the accompaniment of language. These are the two main theoretical forms of political rhetoric that this chapter examines. Doing as saying will be examined through the concepts of 'pseudo-event' and 'politics of embarrassment.' These issues and concepts are important to the discussion of social problems as they help to

identify the political environment, as well as the political manipulation, justification and motivation of social problems claims making and problem management. It allows the examination of the political actors involves, but also their level of involvement and the stakes of their involvement.

**Responsibility and Ownership**

Interesting questions are asked by Gusfield (1981) regarding responsibility and ownership of problems and the nature of social problems in the public domain, what he calls "public problems." Responsibility has two meanings according to Gusfield. One, causal responsibility, asks why. It is a matter of belief, an assertion about the sequence of events, facts that account for the existence of the problem. Second, political responsibility is matter of policy as it asks what is going to be done. Political responsibility suggests that there is someone obligated to do something about the problem; to take action (Gusfield, 1981, 13). Ownership, on the other hand, according to Gusfield, is used to recognize that all groups involved in public debate and social problems work do not have equality of power, influence and authority to define the reality of the problem. Therefore, ownership is "the ability to create and influence the public definition of a problem" (ibid, 10). Ownership leads to a discussion of who is involved in the claims making process and more specifically, what their interests are in the particular problem.

There are various ways to describe substance abuse as a problem. It can be seen as a medical, psychological, socio-economic, and/or cultural problem; each of which has its own idea of responsibility and ownership. The explanations occur within particular

discourses, as they are particular ways of talking about the problem and its solutions. Each discourse offers answers to why, what is to be done, as well as who is to take action, and who battles the political stage for right to dis/ownership[1]. Some discourses that speak to the generalized problem of alcohol and substance abuse among Aboriginal Peoples are discussed by Saggers and Gray (1998) and Thatcher (2004). Each will be briefly outlined and followed with a discussion of more specific examples of how the Innu's problems with substance abuse are explained and who the political actors involved in offering such explanations are.

## Discourses of Substance Abuse--saying as doing

*Biology*

The reason that colonization of 'Indians' was attempted to begin with was due to the ideology that 'Indians' were an inferior race of people, as Europeans were considered to be biologically superior. This Darwinist theory has been used to explain differences between ethnic groups, even their alcohol consumption patterns and its consequences. In the 1970s the theory that genetic makeup had to do with differences in substance abuse patterns emerged, suggesting that 'Indians' metabolized alcohol at a slower rate than 'whites.' This slower metabolism allowed for higher blood alcohol levels, translating into becoming intoxicated quicker and maintaining it for longer periods of time. While this theory never held much scientific validity, the ideology of racial difference attached to it did, thereby the reason this explanation still exists (Saggers & Gray, 1998, 69).

[1] The term *dis/ownership* is used here to signify that as much as the process is about accepting ownership, it is also about not wanting to own the problem; denying responsibility. With ownership comes some responsibility for the problem and its solutions, therefore the process sometimes involves claiming that ownership belongs to someone else.

This political rhetoric suggests that the "problem" of substance abuse is attributed to the biological makeup of Aboriginals. In this discourse, ownership is accredited to medical professionals, as they have discovered the metabolic differences between Caucasians and Indigenous populations and the effect this biological difference has on Aboriginals' physical response to alcohol consumption. Medical professionals were the claims makers as they offered suggestions as to why there was a problem. The political responsibility then fell to the Aboriginal individuals and communities to recognize that their physicality did not allow them to process alcohol is a 'normal' manner, therefore their personal responsibility to abstain from substance use. As mentioned previously, this biological theory was/is used to express racial differences, and to *'Other'* First Nations.

*Alcohol dependence as a disease or dysfunction*

Disorder theory of alcohol consumption is characterized by a craving for alcohol and losing the ability to control the amount consumed. 'Alcoholism' is viewed as a disease in two ways: a physical illness and a psychological disorder, yet overlap can be seen between the two. Genetic markers become an issue again in the medicalization of substance abuse as some are considered to be genetically predisposed. This theoretical explanation individualizes substance abuse; as the larger social context of consumption is ignored (Saggers & Gray, 1998, 71; Thatcher, 2004).

The disease or dysfunction argument for the prevalence of alcohol and substance abuse in Aboriginal communities is attributed to the pervasiveness of foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) or Foetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) in these communities. FAS, a term that emerged in 1973, describes the defects of the foetus associated with a mother's alcohol

abuse during pregnancy. FAS is a lifelong condition that can cause physical abnormalities as well as behavioural problems (French, 2000, 41), and put FAS/FAE children at risk to be substance abusers themselves. More will be said about FAS and its prevalence in Innu communities in a later section.

Like the biological discourse, ownership falls to medical professionals as they determine the probability that an individual has been 'predisposed' to the 'disease' of alcoholism. By associating issues of alcoholism and other substance abusing behaviours with biological 'abnormalities,' individuals inflicted with alcoholism are not assumed to be responsible for their actions, as biological make up and hereditary characteristics are out of the control of the individual. With the medicalization of alcoholism the behaviours are viewed as symptoms of illness. However, as mentioned, this discourse ignores the social context in which alcoholic behaviours emerge, and particularly with the case of the Innu, fails to explain why a "whole people" would be addicted to alcohol and partake in other substance abusing behaviours[2] (Martin, 2004).

*Cultural change and loss*

Indigenous peoples rapidly lost their culture and traditions in the shift toward modernity, through the assimilation practices of Euro-Canadians. According to this perspective, this cultural change reveals two situations. One, a state of *anomie*[3], and second, a state of stress as a consequence of Indigenous peoples trying to assimilate to the

[2] While the entire Innu population is not assumed to be substance abusers, it is suggested that approximately 80 percent of the population show signs of alcoholic tendencies. However, these numbers are not official, but figures gathered through casual conversations with knowledgeable individuals, such as medical professionals such as Dr. Rosales and Akaneshau advocates for Innu causes.

[3] Anomie is a concept developed by Emile Durkheim to explain pathological state of society and the breakdown of

wider society. It is argued that the high level of substance abuse in Aboriginal communities has been a result of anomie and acculturation; a sign of the psychological distress that Aboriginal groups have felt as minorities (Saggers & Gray, 1998; Thatcher, 2004).

As with the disease and dysfunction discourse of alcoholism, First Nations resign responsibility for alcoholism and the problems this addiction causes. Causal and political responsibility falls in the hands of the original colonizers, or the current representatives of the colonizers, such as the provincial and federal governments. This discourse is different from the previous ones on the issue of ownership. The biological and disease rhetorical offerings suggested that both the responsibility and the ownership were not exercised by First Nations. In this case, however, ownership is in the possession of Aboriginals. This discourse is often used by First Nations and advocates in negotiations with governments in attempts to persuade the government, as well as the public, that more funding and social services are required in Aboriginal communities to deal with the social problems conditions. This discussion is expanded further in a later section.

*Cultural explanations*

A common explanation for excessive substance abuse among Aboriginal populations is linked to the absence of alcohol or other psychoactive agents in the pre-colonization period. Therefore, once alcohol became widely available no social rules or conventions were in place to control its usage (Saggers & Gray, 1998, 77). Therefore,

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social consensus on norms. It was further developed to include the feelings of people within this state of society (Saggers & Gray, 1998, 74).

Saggers and Gray suggest that Indigenous drinking behaviours are learned behaviours. Some behaviour are clearly accredited to the intoxicating effects of alcohol, however others are mannerisms, so varied that they cannot be assumed to be just effects of intoxication. It is argued that Aboriginal groups learned their alcohol behaviours from contact with Europeans, and have incorporated these learned 'norms' into their culture as a response to alcohol (ibid, 78).

This discourse is used as a response by Aboriginals and advocates as it is felt that the social problems conditions of alcoholism and substance abuse are problems that emerged after contact with Europeans. It is often a discourse used in the negotiation processes about social services and funding for the creation and maintenance of alcohol and drug treatment and rehabilitation programs. Those who use this rhetoric argue that alcoholism and drug abuse are the result of colonization, therefore governments should be responsible for the solutions and resolutions of the substance abuse problems.

*Political and economic factors*

The processes of dispossession of Indigenous cultures from their land have left them in a position of relative powerlessness. This powerlessness directs behaviours that result in the abuse of alcohol, suicide and violence. Health Canada (1989) states that alcohol and substance abuse among First Nations are often correlated with low income, lack of education, and limited job opportunities (Saggers & Gray, 80). Alcohol and other psychoactive agents are used to ease the psychological pain and frustration and make the impoverished conditions bearable (ibid).

Lurie (1979) states that Indigenous drinking patterns are 'the world's oldest protest demonstrations' (311). She asserts that indigenous peoples are not just helpless victims of colonization, or that excessive substance abuse is a passive response to colonization, arguing that alcohol use is a means by which First Nations peoples can resist complying with existing power structures. Lurie suggests that Indian drinking be regarded as a cultural artefact, suggesting that it has form, function, meaning and use (1979, 315). The 'form' of Indigenous drinking is getting purposefully drunk to reinforce the stereotype of the drunken Indian. Its 'function' is the maintenance of the Indian-white binary. Its 'meaning' is to feel good or better, 'to feel like an Indian', and communicates the Indian-white boundary in mutually understood terms. The 'use' of Aboriginal drinking may be to drink according to old recreational activities, or as a effort to release frustration when other means of expressing Indianness are unavailable (Lurie, 1979; Thatcher, 2004).

Lurie's argument is that there are 'good' messages in Indigenous uses of alcohol. She views getting drunk as a very 'Indian thing to do' when other methods to maintain the Indian-white boundary fail. Drinking will continue until the Aboriginal group can achieve new, mutually satisfactory relationships with their non-Indigenous counterparts (Lurie, 1979, 331).

> The fact that Indian drinking distresses and disturbs whites and forces them to take notice may well explain why it can so easily become a form of protest...in Indian-white encounters and can even help restore credit where one's Indian investment in the Indian community is called into question (ibid).

Davis and Zannis (1973) echo Lurie's stance:

> The cultural component weighs heavily with minority groups which suffer political and economic oppression. Drinking becomes a part of elaborate games,

> played with the oppressing authority, which are very much a part of a conscious and unconscious survival strategy of the minority...they are forced to do obeisance to the white man's image of them as dirty, lazy, shiftless, treacherous savages (126).

*The eclectic response*

Saggers & Gray make it clear that however mutually exclusive these theoretical categories seem, most explanations are eclectic. Points of various perspectives are accepted and melded with others to provide an explanation that may not be consistent with one theoretical view. Saggers and Gray use the work of Brady (1995) to elaborate on this view. Brady in *The Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among Aboriginal People* suggests that it is important to know the relationship between the drug, the set and the setting—the physiological effects of the drug, the state of mind of the person using or abusing the drug, and the environmental context in which the behaviour is taking place (Saggers & Gray, 1998, 84).

**Where the Innu Fit in**

The most widely articulated argument explaining alcohol and substance abuse in Innu communities suggests that the Innu are lost between two different worldviews, two different cultures and two very different ways of living. A balance between the two worlds needs to be developed and maintained for the Labrador Innu to be economically, socially and emotionally viable. However, the two worlds are not yet balanced, as the social problems of the community manifested suggest there is emptiness and anger about the forced sedentarization into Davis Inlet. The spirit voices are silent, but the ancient call is not completely forgotten, therefore the pattern of thinking has become

disorientated, knowing that the traditional ways need to be recovered, yet knowing that they cannot turn back time (Mahoney, 1996).

According to Wadden (1991), this leaves the Innu with feelings of *anomie,* "the emotionally and morally devastating experience of losing one's traditional values and beliefs, yet without gaining a meaningful new set in exchange" (Horswill, as cited in Wadden, 1991, 75); what Thatcher calls *decculturation* (2004, 75). When cultural confusion is created and a people's identity and way of life is undermined, Wadden believes self-destructive behaviour will arise. Wadden also states this destructive behaviour is manifested in substance abuse, what she describes as a silent rage of the Innu of Labrador (ibid, 92). Tanner (2000) agrees. Hopelessness and a feeling of loss of purpose lead to alcohol abuse, which in turn lead to physical and sexual violence and accidental deaths (Tanner, 2000). Tanner, in an interview for the documentary *Surviving Canada* (2004) states that what is going on in the Innu communities needs a perspective that embraces understanding of alcoholism and substance abuse as more than a multitude of individual problems. He further states that "the notion that a whole people would take up alcohol, their children would be abusing gas sniffing...to imagine that this is all individual responsibilities and that there is not some social process going on, requires you to be a racist" (Martin, 2004).

Samson (2003) suggests that substance abuse is an expression of the Innu's invisibility to the 'white world' (100). Feelings of powerlessness by the Innu cause them to direct the majority of their anger internally rather than at the government, the primary source of their anguish. In the midst of dealing with social problems such as the Innu's relationship with the Canadian government, the Innu of Labrador have been manifesting

their anger and frustration about the lack of social infrastructure and their social and geographical isolation through substance abuse. Alcohol and substance abuse are most often associated with life in Davis Inlet, possibly marking a separation of Innu from traditional rituals of celebration and their cultural and spiritual connection to the land, Nitassinan. Drinking occurs, according to Samson (2003), when the means by which Innu can practice their culture, traditions and spirituality are jeopardized (Samson, 2003, 281), and often binge drinking[4] coincides with certain events, situations or crises (ibid, 284). Samson cites Nancy Lurie (1979): "Indian people are more likely to drink when they feel thwarted in achieving Indian rather than white goals or when their success as Indians or simply individuals apart from Indian-white comparisons is interpreted as success in achieving status as whites" (290). Therefore, substance abuse, in this sense is a resistance, a way of rejecting assimilation, a way of rejecting being 'white', albeit at the same time feeding stereotypes of the drunken, lazy Indian (Samson, 2003, 293).

Each discourse that is described above is accompanied by a particular idea about the causal and political responsibility, as well as the issue of ownership. Of the discourses that are named above, the ones that most commonly occur in media presentations will be examined for their importance in describing the problem of substance abuse; who is offering the definition of the problem, who the owner defines as responsible, and what they are responsible for.

[4] Binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks for a man and four or more drinks for a woman on a single occasion (CTV News, 2005; Canada Safety Council, 2002; Mullens, 2005).

**Discourses Emerging in Media**

*Displaced by government interventions*

The most common discourse that emerges within *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail* in regards to the gasoline sniffing problem of Labrador Innu youth is the argument that the Innu were displaced by government interventions. In 1993, with the first release of video images from Davis Inlet the situation was considered to be a result of the living conditions of the community. It was quickly concluded by interviewed Innu representatives and proponents that the problem was that of the government, therefore they should be the ones responsible for its resolution. Valpy stated that "Davis Inlet, with its pandemic alcoholism, substance abuse, suicides, poverty and soul-destroyed, destitute and defeated populations, became in a few days the national expression of how-white-Canadians-and-their-governments-have-failed-native-peoples" (Valpy, 1994). George Rich, vice president of the Innu Nation in 1993 stated in an interview "Our concerns are falling on deaf ears" ("Innu kids," 1993). The community of Davis Inlet had repeatedly called the government to relocate the Mushuau back to the mainland of Labrador and to aid them in fighting problems of alcoholism, violence and suicide (ibid). Simeon Tshakapesh stated in a CBC television interview on January 28, 1993, "I don't blame those kids, it's not their fault, it's the government's fault" (Craig, 1993).

While the Innu recognized the problems as being those of the Innu community, they expressed the need for governments to take responsibility in finding and funding a solution. George Rich, vice president of the Innu Nation in the early 1990s, is quoted in *The Telegram* "Our concerns are falling on deaf ears and no one is doing anything" ("Innu kids," 1993). Peter Penashue states in another *Telegram* article that "Everybody's

caught in this grinder [substance abuse]. You're starting to see the impact of assimilation now" (Gorham, 1993a). He further states "Money is dumped in the system and nothing is happening. Governments are protecting themselves. They appear to be doing something when they're not" (ibid). Even opinion articles and editorials promote the governments as the ones to pick up responsibility for the problems of the Innu. An editorial entitled "Close Davis Inlet" which ran in *The Telegram* on January 31, 1993 states that "the Innu are being done a great disservice by being kept there against their will...the province owes the Innu a better life, not more excuses, delays, or further study. The government knows enough about the problems...now it's time for solutions" ("Close Davis," 1993).

A very powerful point to be made here is that strong criticisms of the government were made by Innu and published by media such as *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail.* This is very important because it shows that despite the sensationalizing actions of media outlets, despite their attachment to "if it bleeds, it leads," the Innu were given a voice in a public forum. In the initial stages of publicity, it was the Innu who controlled how the problem of gasoline sniffing was defined, therefore in what realms responsibility belonged. For as it was stated in a *Telegram* editorial, this issue was "not on the political map. It's hardly on the radar, until a leader makes an impassioned plea for help" ("A cry," 2000). This topic will be further explored in a later section.

*Where's the action?*

*The Globe and Mail*'s Michael Valpy is a major proponent of the Innu's plight as a reflection of cultural loss due to government policies. As an opinion column writer for a national paper, Michael Valpy was important in getting ideas of Innu cultural collapse

to the national media stage. With articles like "The destruction of the Labrador Innu" (February 5, 1993), "Would cultural genocide stand up in court?" (February 19, 1993) and "Where's the action after the Innu drama?" (September 1, 1993), Valpy identified the government as the main organization responsible for the problems of Davis Inlet and jeered at them for their inaction and disinterest. "These governments have been complicitous in decades of a systematic destruction of the Innu. Someone is going to use the word genocide to describe what Ottawa—particularly Ottawa—and St. John's have allowed to happen. It is not the right word, but neither is it completely off-track" (Valpy, 1993a). Valpy stated in a later article that

> The federal and Newfoundland governments did things to the Davis Innu that destroyed their traditional lives and wrecked their psychological lives. The Innu, under government direction, were moved to an economically unsustainable site, subjected to an alien legal system and alien social services. Stripped of their cultural supports, they fell into substance abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence...and a host of other health problems (1993b).

Both governments, federal and provincial, were/are a source of much of the anguish faced by the Innu (Armitage, 1991; Martin, 2004; Samson, 1999, 2003; Tanner, 2000).

Simeon Tshakapesh and Prote Poker, members of the Mushuau Innu Healing Team interviewed for the documentary *Surviving Canada* (2004), state that the governments are to blame for the continuing destitution in their community. They constructed the problem as one of Innu victimization, caused by inaction and neglect by the governments. Officials were called into Davis Inlet twice, once in 1993 and again in 2000. The sniffing children were removed, yet Tshakapesh stated he is still waiting for help to arrive (Martin, 2004). Promises were made by the governments to provide the Innu with holistic healing plans (Hilliard, 2002), outpost programs, and alcohol treatment

for adults, yet Innu representatives such as Tshakapesh and Innu advocates such as *Globe and Mail* columnist Valpy (1993c) suggest that the funding and services that were planned by the governments had faded from existence when the media coverage of social problems subsided (INAC, 2004a). INAC feels that the Innu need to stop blaming the government and forcing the federal government to respond to the needs of the community in the face of "sensational footage" (ibid). Tshakapesh, on the other hand, declared there are too many injustices. The Innu did not invite white people onto their land, they did not sign a treaty and they did not sell their land; things they did not ask for, things that are the responsibility of the government to rectify (Martin, 2004). In *Surviving Canada*, Prote Poker is quoted as saying "We will stop blaming once we're free—right now we are not" (ibid).

*Living like white people*

Innu culture and traditions have been taken away; they were forced to settle in inadequate housing in Davis Inlet, in a community that did not fit their needs; forced to live as white people do. As one elder says in *Gathering Voices*, "How many times have I told the government that I did not grow up from white people? I can never live like white people...I want to see our children live as Innu" (Innu Nation & Mushuau Band Council, 1992, 23). Dependency on the government has left the Innu helpless; in an indeterminate state between being Innu and living the white man's way. They are not in control of their own lives; substance abuse is seen as a response to their frustrations, because they lack the power to express their feelings through the appropriate avenues to share feelings about having a stolen past and dismal present and future. Therefore, alcohol and

substance abuse becomes a form of political rhetoric (Lurie, 1979; Samson, 2003). "We are human beings, not animals. The government lives in luxury while we live in poverty" (Samson, 2003, 47). Innu feel that they are left without a cultural identity and therefore without the power to reclaim their lives. This is the perspective within which the relocation of Davis Inlet emerged as a response and a possible solution to the social problems of the Innu community. The government was blamed for moving the Mushuau Innu to Davis Inlet, therefore deemed responsible for the behaviours that emerged within those social conditions.

*The other side: family structures and neglect*

On the other side, the governments, both federal and provincial, offer different explanations for the problems of Innu youth in Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu. They feel they are not to blame, but that there are other factors more serious than government relations, such as family structure. Eric Gullage, provincial Social Services Minister in 1993, stated in an interview "We know the real problem here is the family. Obviously, the example isn't there" (Gorham, 1993a). Dr. Jane McGillivray in December of 2000 also made claims that the problems of addictions would not go away until parents stopped drinking and neglecting their children. The doctor, after resigning her position in Sheshatshiu in February 2000, talked publicly about her experiences in the community in December. In an interview McGillivray expressed her frustration. "There comes a point...where nothing I do seems to makes a difference and people themselves are unwilling to take responsibility" (Lindgren, 2000a). McGillivray's perspective was very critical of the Innu, blaming the community for caring more about drinking than about

their children. This perspective turned alcohol abuse into a moral problem that takes personal will-power and control to overcome. What this point of view did not address, however, is the extremely high rates of substance abuse in these communities, as it reduced the problem to individual choices of whether to drink or not (Thatcher, 2004).

Chief Paul Rich, in his public plea for help for the children of Sheshatshiu in November 2000 also stated that gasoline sniffing was an issue of child neglect. He blamed parents in Sheshatshiu for neglecting their children and allowing them to sniff gasoline "endangering themselves and endangering others" (Johansen, 2000a). Chief Rich's comments started a conflict in the community, as parents were outraged that Rich was "putting the community into a very bad light" (MacDonald, 2000d). Media does not say much more about the political faction within the community of Sheshatshiu, though it is made obvious that there are differing opinions about the problems and the solutions of family structures in the community.

No comment can be made on why Chief Rich and his colleagues chose to label the gasoline sniffing crisis as an issue of child neglect, as no access to Rich or other Sheshatshiu council members was available, therefore the motives of this rhetoric are unexplainable at this time. However, with that said, it is also important to remember that the federal election was held the week following Chief Rich's plea for help, therefore it is undeniable that there was some political motive behind what was said and the timing of its release. More is said on this subject in a later section.

*A new discourse: FASD*

New to the discussion of what has caused substance abuse among First Nation communities such as Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet/Natuashish is the discourse surrounding Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). FASD is a disorder as a result of intrauterine alcohol exposure; a consequence of a mother's alcohol consumption during pregnancy. The brain of the foetus is damaged during intrauterine development, causing physical problems such as growth abnormalities and physical deformities (French, 2000). FASD is a disorder that affects brain function, but it is only diagnosed through behavioural cues, such as hyperactivity, short attention span, irritability during infancy, learning disabilities and poor reasoning and judgment skills (Chudley et al., 2005; Nesbit, Philpott, Jeffrey & Cahill, 2005).

Gasoline sniffing, according to Dr. Ted Rosales, who is a paediatrician and geneticist who has worked with Innu, is a secondary behavioural characteristic of living with FASD. Dr. Rosales completed the first research project of its kind on FASD in Labrador in the summer of 2005. There are approximately 310,000 people living with FASD in Canada, and over 5,000 of them living within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, according to the 1996 Canadian census (Rosales, 2005). Rosales, during his research months in Labrador, diagnosed 125 cases of FASD. While not all of these cases were Aboriginal peoples, one of the participating communities in Rosales' research was Sheshatshiu (ibid). Dr. Rosales had also been part of the treatment/detoxification team with the Innu children of Davis Inlet sent to the Grace Hospital in early 2001. Of the 40 children sent to the Grace for detoxification, Rosales states that approximately 29 of them were diagnosed as having FASD (T. Rosales, personal communication, July 14,

2005). There is no cure for FASD, it requires social services, individualized treatment, and structure to help the person living with FASD avoid distraction and destructive behaviours (Rosales, 2005).

One of these destructive behaviours is gasoline sniffing and solvent abuse. According to Dr. Rosales, Innu leaders are recognizing that this could be a diagnosis for the 'epidemic' social problems that are occurring in Labrador Innu communities. Rosales points out that FASD is brain damage, as people suffering with FASD do not have fully developed cognitive abilities, yet it is simultaneously a social disorder, as the only way to treat FASD is with social programs through such avenues as; education, health care, social services and criminal justices systems. However, currently, Innu leaders are keeping quiet about the chances of the prevalence of FASD in their communities (T. Rosales, personal communication, July 14, 2005).

Rosales suggested that community leaders quietly and individually admit that FASD might be a logical diagnosis for the destructive behaviours of Innu youth, but will not publicly broadcast the possibility for fear of repercussions. FASD is a problem of all ethnicities according to Rosales, but once Innu leaders speak of the problem of FASD in Innu communities, FASD may become an Innu disorder, once again reinforcing the Indian 'problem' (ibid). Innu leaders obviously want to avoid the mass labelling that would result from an announcement that FASD is prevalent in Innu communities, however, at the same time silence is damaging as well.

By recognizing FASD, by announcing the statistics of its prevalence, Innu leaders may be able to secure funding from government agencies to put the social programming in place to help deal with FASD victims. Social programming through education, health

care, social services and the like, may be exactly what the communities need to battle substance abuse problems. I believe that while FASD is only quietly recognized as a problem in Innu communities of Labrador, it has the possibility of becoming a strong political discourse to explain the substance abuse problem of the Innu. The same way that gasoline sniffing was seen as problem of social and geographical dislocation and a problem of child neglect, FASD may too become an explanation for the solvent abusing behaviours of Innu youth; the start of a new campaign to the federal government for social and financial aid for the communities' substance abuse problems.

Each perspective has a different understanding of the nature of the problem and its solutions. Labelling the problem as secondary to the condition of FAS suggests that the problem is one of education and knowledge of harmful effects activities such as drinking during pregnancy can have. Labelling the substance abuse problem as one of child protection suggested that the problems were with the family, problems of morality that became individualized. Labelling the gasoline sniffing problem as a problem due to the living conditions in Davis Inlet encouraged relocation negotiations between Innu leaders and provincial and federal governments. This was the most prominent discourse offered about the problems of the Innu, by Innu representatives and advocates.

It is hard to speculate why this discourse about the sedentarization of the Innu in a culturally and physically inappropriate environment received the most attention, but the majority of editorials, opinions articles and letters to the editor that appeared in *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail* through the 13 year span from 1992 to 2005 made reference to the relationship of Innu to the governments as being the being the major problem from which substance abuse problems emerged. Proponents of this discourse

felt that the governments were the greatest enemy the Innu faced. Constructing that perspective as believable required not only constructing the case, or the social problem, but also constructing the enemy, the tactical or moral deviance that has 'created' this problem.

## Enemies and Adversaries

Enemies are important in political work, as described by Edelman (1988). In *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, Edelman suggests that people are always pitted against others, and therefore viewed as adversaries or enemies.

> Political enemies may be foreign countries, believers in distasteful ideologies, groups that are different in any respect, or figments of the imagination; in any case, they are an inherent part of the political scene. They help give the political spectacle its power to arouse passions, fears, and hopes, the more so because an enemy to some people is an ally or innocent victim to others (Edelman, 1988, 66).

Edelman suggests that defining the enemy is also part of the process of self-definition, as politicized people often define themselves in opposition to other groups they fear or condemn (1988, 82). To name specific enemies is to evoke images and concepts about particular ideologies; and as Edleman suggests: "we know a great deal about the moral stance and the ideology of a person if we know his or her definition of the paramount political enemy" (ibid).

### *Enemies of the Innu*

The Innu, for example, constructed the governments, both federal and provincial, as their political enemy. By defining the relationship as such, it spoke to their minority status, their First Nations status (or lack of, for that matter), therefore spoke of their

poverty, despair about inequality under the federal policies and laws. The growth of political awareness and identity among the Innu therefore depended on the degree to which they could construct their enemy. Making the government the enemy was essential to the Innu's construction of their victim identity. Simultaneously, Innu representatives were also appealing to the governments, requesting resources in the way of funding and services to help them combat the substance abuse problems of their communities. This relationship therefore, became a delicate balance through which Innu had to criticize and yet work with the governments to find solutions. This is a challenge of many, if not all First Nations groups (Dyck, 1991). Further discussion of the Innu's use of their victim status is undertaken in a later section.

*The governments' enemies*

The enemies for the governments were the Innu band councils and Innu Nation, as well as the media; both constructed as obstacles to the government's goal to help detoxify and treat the Innu children for their gasoline sniffing addictions. In communications and media documents from the federal departments of Indian and Northern Affairs and Health Canada, the Innu are portrayed as "media savvy," "skilled at using the media" to "drive home their demands" about substance abuse treatment, registration under the Indian Act, and numerous other issues. They are viewed as intentionally creating negative press for the federal government, "criticizing the government too long, for too little" (INAC, 2004a). As well, the media are portrayed as blood thirsty, looking only to destroy the government's public image.

> In the past, out of sensitivity to the Innu and the extraordinary challenges faced by the two communities, government have not wished to broadcast details of these two struggling communities. However, as demonstrated in the last year's crisis, not providing reporters with the government perspective give credence to Innu leaders' claims that the government is doing nothing to help. Media excitement escalates (ibid).

Therefore, it seems that the federal government's media strategies are set up as defensive strategies, as their ideologies and tactics are attacked by the media and the Innu through the media. Communications officers and personnel state that "If conditions deteriorate in Davis Inlet, there will be strong and renewed media interest and the federal government will be held accountable" (INAC, 2004e). The government strategy was to obtain and maintain control over the media coverage of issues involving government negotiations, decision-making and funding.

> Over and over, [the Innu] have shown they know how to use the media to serve their purposes. They know when to strike, using the media focus at opportune times, like the election campaign, to force the federal government to give them what they want. They know how to position their issues. They are adept at portraying the federal government as an unfeeling, negligent bureaucracy. The Innu have also learned that the more issues they throw into the public forum, the more heat the federal government are likely to feel (INAC, 2004e).

While this quote from Draft Communications Strategy documents negatively depicts the Innu, the federal government's analysis is not wrong. The media releases of information pertaining to the solvent abuse crises in Davis Inlet in 1993 and Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu in 2000 and the various points of discussion in between were controlled by the Innu to convey particular messages. The following sections discuss the issue of Innu media use, and its political viability.

**Who is in Control?**

Theoretical discussions of media largely presents the media as a white; middle class dominated enterprise without recognizing that minority groups are involved in the processes of social construction of discourse (Champagne, 1999, Fairclough, 1995a, Van Dijk, 1991). Minority groups' coverage in media tends to be negative and centered on conflict (Singer, 1982, 351) and sensationalized. Minorities, in this relationship with media, tend to be viewed as objects of news stories constructed by journalists, editors and photographers. This issue is examined in Chapter 5. However, the purpose of this thesis is also to examine the role of the Innu in the construction of the social problem of gasoline sniffing, as well as the 'normal' power positions of media, governments, and other 'white' bureaucracies in the dominant, problem-constructing roles in society.

*Innu as social constructors*

The processes of news-making involve journalistic interpretations, editing, photography, captions, headlines, and a multitude of other processes of news production that shape its presentation. However, the dissemination of news stories can become power struggles among competing groups, as groups such as the Innu try to persuade the media, and therefore the public, that their issue or story is worthy of media coverage. During the initial attempts to gain public attention, they must prove their value to the media outlets by aiming to frame their issue in terms of predefined frames of what constitutes newsworthiness (Wolfsfeld, 1984). The specific case of the minority, the Innu gasoline sniffing in this case, must be related to more general themes of interest such as politics, scandals, and violence, as the media is designed to cover events, not issues (ibid,

554). The fact that there was vivid and shocking imagery to accompany claims of substance abuse and horrific living conditions, made the claims more believable and therefore acceptable for news coverage.

Minority groups, often the objects of media gaze, can also be involved in the production of news. There is an understanding among politicians and special interest groups that if they wish to justify their behaviour, plead their case publicly, or receive greater government funding, they must use the media to gain public recognition for their cause (Leyton et al., 1992, 109). The video of January 1993 was released from Davis Inlet by the Innu community, or representatives and leaders of the community, in hopes of gaining help and support in the public eye. This suggests that minority groups, like the Innu, are not helpless victims of media construction but active participants in the process of news making or discourse production, despite the unequal power relationship. They may have victim status or powerlessness in their relationship with the governments, but use their victim status to seek change through the use of media outlets. Holstein and Miller (1990) and Loseke (1993) suggests that to create claims about social problems is to simultaneously create claims about the people involved in the process of claims making, specifically the victims and the victimizers. To make claims in which the problem of gasoline sniffing was defined as a problem which was created through a 'social failure' rather than a personal failure, the Innu were self-labelled as victim, the objects of harmful and unfair treatment at the hands of others, and therefore able to use that moral label of being 'not responsible' to further their political demands with the government; what Kenney (2002) calls using the victim role as "a sword" (259). This concept of the power of the powerless, or acts of resistance as acts of power are also discussed by Foucault.

*Foucault and Power*

According to Foucault,

> [Power] is not the "privilege," acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions—an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated. Furthermore, this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who "do not have it"; it invests them, it is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure on them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them. This means that these relations go right down into the depths of society; that they are not localized in the relations between the state and its citizens (1984, 174).

Power, in this context, is described as a social relation based on socio-historical events. It does not have shape or permanent hierarchical structure. It is not an object. It is not an institution (Foucault, 1983, 185), "power exists only when it is put into action" (ibid, 219). This does not suggest that social classes and domination do not exist or that power is not manifested through political institutions, but suggests that power is not inherently institutional. The power relations between the dominant and the dominated are relationships that neither party can control simply or absolutely (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 121).

Foucault further states that power, as a network of relations, is multidirectional, functioning from the top down but also from the bottom up (Foucault, 1983, 185). Therefore, to overthrow power is not all or nothing, power is not acquired permanently, only in the localized context in which it has occurred. It is mobile, both temporally and spatially (ibid). Following Foucault's theoretical suggestions, the Innu despite their minority status, can be viewed as gaining bargaining power through the release of the video to media outlets. Due to the iconic value of the images of Innu children participating in self-destructive activities and the international attention it received, the governments were forced into a position where they were under extensive public scrutiny,

and as INAC stated, they were being forced to respond in the face of "sensational footage" (INAC, 2004a). The video gave Innu leaders power to influence the governments' re/actions.

**Doing as Saying**

Despite the negative imaging of the Labrador Innu in the media, the Euro-Canadian discourse and negative 'white-spin' on native issues such as gasoline sniffing may be used by Aboriginal peoples for their own political purposes. It is a subtle, limited, and localized power which the Innu exercise; it may not change the power differentials of the Innu-government relationships in other social contexts, but is the exercise of power nevertheless. This power is not often discussed, as it is often passed over for the grand narrative of the subjugation of First Nations people. However, it may be the very 'subjugation' that the Innu are using to engage discussion of the gas sniffing issue. The victimization of the Innu children, and more specifically the publicization of their victimization, became a play of power to draw attention and sympathy to their plight, and to pressure the government for action.

*Drawing attention to the in/visible minority*

Daniel Ashini, former vice-president of the Innu Nation and current advisor to the president, in a presentation to the Canadian Association of Journalists in 1996 made the argument that for any attention to be paid to the problems of the Innu of Labrador, they must create the situation for encounter with the media. Ashini uses the example of military low-level flying, asserting that the Innu "manufactured news-worthy events in

the form of demonstrations, occupations of bombing ranges and government offices, court appearances, and news conferences. We had a media campaign that spoon-fed journalists news from various perspectives to keep the issue before the public, and to help put pressure on politicians" (Ashini, 1996). Ashini shows in this presentation that the Innu are using aggressive methods to draw attention to the issues that they believe require government consideration. They are using the media, a traditionally white, middle class enterprise to push forward issues in order to put public pressure on the government. Ashini further states:

> journalists will not cover an issue because of its own merits; because there really is a problem. We had to *manufacture* the problem using various dramatic devices such as demonstrations and news conferences. These events were the vehicle that we used to talk to the general public and politicians (1996, emphasis added).

The Innu councils of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu feel that for any attention to be paid to the problems of the Innu of Labrador, they must create the situation for encounter with the media. This, therefore, requires strategic planning as they need to tailor their issues to media's criteria of what constitutes newsworthiness.

Overton (1993) discusses the unemployment situation in Newfoundland during the 1930s, echoing Ashini's assertions about manufacturing problems. The unemployed are often viewed as a homogenous group of lazy, dishonest people, purposely avoiding work. However, the unemployed are a diverse group of individuals whose social situation is not offered the political and social attention it deserves and therefore requires a particular force to put it back on the political agenda. Overton states that "if action is to be taken, it will only be as a result of a mobilization of working people. It is a pressure from below which generates the conditions in which governments can be forced to take a

problem such as unemployment seriously" (1993, 13). The unemployed had to fight to get their stories heard, to prove that they were not accepting the social position of stereotypical 'unemployment.'

> The struggle to communicate was not motivated simply by the desire to tell a story, but in the clear recognition that public opinion was potentially a powerful weapon in the struggle of the unemployed to improve their social condition of life. Publicity might bring sympathy. It might bring support. But it might also cause the politicians responsible...to be forced to answer awkward questions (Overton, 1993, 19).

What Ashini and Overton are describing is the idea of "pseudo-events," a concept coined by Boorstin (1964).

**Pseudo-Events**

What Boorstin calls a "pseudo-event," and what Edelman (1988) calls a "spectacle" is the creation of newsworthy situations to draw media attention toward a particular problem or event. The purpose of the pseudo-event is to create a media spectacle with political aims. The media spectacle is the means by which the government, or other groups that are being lobbied against, are pressured into action to solve the problem or dilute the damage. While most news stories can be considered pseudo-events, the construction of the event is often associated with the journalist or media production process, not the minority groups such as the Innu or the unemployed. According to Boorstin, a pseudo-event possesses the following characteristics: it is planned; its purpose is to be reported and its success is measured by how well it is reported; its relationship to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous; and it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy (Boorstin, 1964, 11-12). Pseudo-events or

spectacles can emerge in the form of news conferences, press releases or protests, or in the case of the gasoline sniffing problem, a home video that shows six young children sniffing gas from plastic bags and expressing their will to die.

*It is planned*

While definitive answer can be given regarding whether or not a plan was made to capture images of gasoline sniffing children in January 1993 to release them to media; the event does not seem 'set up.' Once the images existed, however, quotes from Innu leaders suggest that a plan was designed to bring the information and problem to the attention of media. 1993 was a federal election year, and the Innu were not newcomers to protesting. They had rallied against the government to protest low-level flying contracts with NATO Air Forces over their traditional hunting grounds, protested logging and other environmentally damaging practices, and had filed a claim with the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) condemning federal government practices in dealing with the Innu in regards to issues such as jurisdiction, financial support and community services. While the event of gasoline sniffing itself was not planned in 1993, the release of the images to the media was constructed. The problem of gasoline sniffing was not a 'new' problem that developed in 1993; gas sniffing has been considered a problem for forty years (MacDonald, 2000f). There is proof that the Innu were trying to engage in discussions about the problem of gasoline sniffing and alcohol abuse in 1988 (Author Unknown, 1988), 1989 ("Gasoline sniffing," 1989), and 1992 (Innu Nation & Mushuau Band Council, 1992; Johansen, 1992). This provides evidence that gasoline sniffing as a community problem had its roots before 1993.

In 2000, the social problems conditions of gasoline sniffing youth of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet were announced by Chief Paul Rich and Chief Tshakapesh within days of each other and made a week prior to the federal election. This seems too deliberate to be coincidental; as both 'crises', 1993 and 2000, were announced as 'problems' in the wake of a federal election and both times government was quick to agree that they would provide aid. Innu Nation President Penashue stated that the decision to release the information in 1993 was made by Innu leaders in hopes of getting the government to pay attention and provide the funding and services to Innu communities (Penashue, 2001); the same assumption can be made in 2000. It was not that gasoline sniffing habits had subsided and happened to reappear around election time 7 years later, but possibly that the timing was right to renew awareness and to exert political pressure to receive aid.

The two problems, solvent abuse and the deplorable living conditions of Davis Inlet, quickly became intertwined in media coverage portrayed in a cause and effect relationship; therefore relocation became viewed as the quick and viable solution to aid in the resolution of the problems of the Mushuau Innu. In this way, the gasoline sniffing crisis can be viewed as a tool to be used in negotiating community relocation, as the agreement to move the Innu from Davis Inlet came from the federal government two weeks after the release of the video images. Was the act of videotaping the 'crisis' planned? The answer cannot be offered here as there were no interviews conducted, but the motives to negotiate relocation and the fact that the images emerged from the community in a federal election year cannot be denied. The timing was ideal for iterating and reiterating concerns and issues of the Innu communities as government was more inclined to listen and respond positively during an election year.

*Its purpose is to be reported*

While Tshakapesh may or may not have videotaped the gas sniffing children with the intention of releasing it to the media, once the tape existed, decisions were made to involve the media and make it a 'public' problem. It is at this point that the tape's purpose was to engage the public in discussion about the social problems faced by the Innu and to use this public awareness to embarrass the government into giving concessions to Innu problems. Without that media/public awareness, government acknowledgement would have been less, if not completely absent. Public forum was not the ultimate goal of the Innu, but public opinion is often linked to government action. If mass audiences were aware and disturbed or outraged by the situation of Labrador Innu youth, that opinion was more likely to be voiced, as audiences tend to voice displeasure more often than support. When that opinion of outrage becomes widespread, the government are forced to step in and offer steps for the resolution of the problem. The majority of media documentation obtained from the federal government through the Access to Information Act (AIA) was concerned with the amount of media attention that the social problems of the Innu were receiving. Pressure was put on the federal government to respond to the needs of the community in the face of "sensational footage" (INAC, 2004a), as it was felt that the Innu used media outlets to "drive home demands" (ibid).

In terms of its newsworthiness, media outlets from around the world congregated in Davis Inlet to capture the story of the Innu. The fact that the problems of the Innu of Labrador made it to the international stage, as it was covered by papers in Europe and elsewhere, proved that the story met media criteria of "good" reporting for the coverage

to continue for that period in 1993. The Innu provided the initial information for the story, but media had control over the shape of the story. Through editing, writing style, tone, and commentary, the story is framed to meet media credentials of newsworthiness; to sensationalize the violence, political struggle and scandal to make headlines (Wolfsfeld, 1984), discussed more in the next chapter. The more coverage the story received, the more newsworthiness that the Innu were awarded, the more acknowledgements the Innu received from the public.

However, the purpose of this media spectacle went beyond just making the news. Action needed to be taken to repair the other social, economic, psychological, and ecological problems the Innu communities in Labrador were experiencing, such as suicide, family violence, unemployment, and issues of relocation. Therefore the purpose was not just gaining media coverage, but gaining political outcomes. The problems of the communities had been ignored, or solutions had quickly lost their momentum, returning the Innu back to the problems that had been promised solutions many times before. This time the problem involved children; therefore images of the innocent and vulnerable child became powerful moral incentives for immediate resolution (Davis & Bourhill, 1997); ways to embarrass the government into action.

*The underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous*

It is obvious that the gasoline sniffing had been a serious problem before it became a media spectacle in January 1993, yet no clarity was offered as to how long it had been occurring, or why it became important to create a public forum about the problems of the Innu at that point in time. Once the video had entered the media, the

media frame left limited space for discussion of the history of the Innu, what brought their community to such despair, or the connection of gasoline sniffing to the other social problems occurring in the community, such as the failure of the education system, the lack of social services in the community, or most importantly the failure of the government to provide a healthy living environment for the Innu. Media images became situational, contextualized only by Tshakapesh's video; its connection to the Innu's social history was ambiguous.

An example of this ambiguity comes from *The Telegram*. On February 7, 1993 a story was published accompanying the headline "Ministers vow to meet with Innu: Gasoline addiction on agenda." While the majority of the news story talks of the pending meeting between federal cabinet ministers and Innu leaders, the ending paragraph tries to entertain the idea that there are greater tasks at hand. "The Davis Inlet Innu have also complained for years that their island has inadequate water supplies and no sewage treatment system, and they are separated from their traditional hunting lifestyle" ("Ministers vow," 1993). This is how the news story ends. All are correct statements about what the Innu have been fighting the government for, but no explanation, no analysis; no explicit link to the problem of gasoline sniffing is made. It is a list of 'complaints', rather than legitimate concerns, or lobbying efforts, which seems to open up a wider debate rather than end a brief story about a scheduled meeting between Innu representatives and federal ministers. The silence and rapid drop off point of the story by *The Telegram* reporter suggests that ambiguity is used to avoid discussion of topics associated with particular political orthodoxy. The reporter is hinting that colonization is a culprit without explicit statement that where and how the provincial government settled

the Innu in the 1960s has any bearing on the social condition Davis Inlet presently.

*A self-fulfilling prophecy*

Self-fulfilling prophecy is a concept developed by Merton (1961) that suggests that an expectation affects the behaviour of a person or group or the outcome of a situation. Reporting of the problem of gasoline sniffing could be a self-fulfilling prophecy in that expectations of discovering substance abuse in the community led journalists to seek out sniffers and therefore communicate an image of intoxication, displaying that image as a homogeneous truth about the community. This type of reporting results in the generalization that all Innu are substance abusers, which therefore, becomes the expectation of the self-fulfilling prophecy.

*When is a media event not a pseudo-event?*

While Boorstin's concept 'pseudo-event' is used to describe the place of the gasoline sniffing problem in media space, Boorstin's approach must be critically analyzed. Most news stories can be considered pseudo-events. It becomes difficult to draw a line between what is a pseudo-event and what occurs spontaneously when it involves media re/production. Boorstin provides a simplistic 'ideal type' explanation, without giving credit to the complex relationship between various groups when it comes to the production of news. The term is useful, but Boorstin's explanation is lacking depth and complexity; creating a rigid theoretical box. Boorstin also does not make a provision for the fact that the attempt to create a pseudo-event may not be successful. While the Innu were successful in creating a pseudo-event with the release of the video in 1993,

they had attempted many times before to draw attention to problems in their community, through protests and demonstrations, news conferences for other issues such as the impact of military low-level flying on the Innu's lifestyle and health; however interest was short lived.

There are two ways to look at the gasoline sniffing issue. It is a 'spontaneously' occurring event, media did not create gasoline sniffing; it was an issue before media arrived to report the event in the community of Davis Inlet. However, its presence in the media spotlight in January of 1993 suggests that it deserves recognition as a pseudo-event. Gasoline sniffing was occurring before 1993, there are examples in the media in the 1980s that mention sniffing as an "epidemic" (*Author Unknown*, 1988; "Gasoline sniffing," 1989); therefore, engagement with media had to be constructed in 1993 to make it a larger, more extravagant media event. Awareness of the gasoline sniffing had been raised in the media before, why were the events of 1993 different? The spectacle that ensued in 1993 shows a significant shift in media treatment of Innu issues; possibly due to powerful imagery that video release of 1993 portrayed.

*The power to make experience*

Boorstin states that "the power to make a reportable event is thus the power to make experience" (Boorstin, 1964, 10). The video and the media attention it gained was an attempt to legitimize Innu experiences, and:

> capture the hopelessness of our youth....we hoped these images would alert the world to our reality and shame the government into helping us...[these images] were shown around the world and made Utshimassit a symbol of the poverty that exists among First Nations in Canada (Innu Nation & Mushuau Innu Band Council, 1995, xiii).

This statement appeared in *Gathering Voices* (1995), a second edition of the people's report released. This leads to the belief that while the issues of gasoline sniffing and substance abuse were very serious and needed immediate attention; Innu political motivation dictated the timing and context of the media release. This political motivation, this willingness to draw attention to the despair of the community, suggests that the Innu Nation and Mushuau Band Council were engaging in the "politics of embarrassment." The concept "politics of embarrassment" is credited to Paine (1985) and his study of the political movements of the Saami of Norway in 1979, as they struggled as Indigenous people to be heard and understood as unique voices that did not always agree or benefit from public policies of the Norwegian government. Paine's study of the Saami will be used a point of comparison for the political work of the Labrador Innu regarding the media coverage of the gasoline sniffing issues.

## Politics of Embarrassment

### *A comparable case*

Paine (1985) uses the concept of "politics of embarrassment" when discussing the Saami, the indigenous peoples of Norway, and their hunger strike in protest of the Norwegian government's decision to dam the Alta/Kautokeino River that flowed through the Saami areas of settlement. The Saami Action Group (SAG) felt that the government were not offering a fair deal as damming the river would disrupt the Saami transhumant reindeer pastoralists, disrupting their traditional way of life. SAG descended upon Parliament, set up a traditional Saami tent (*lavvo*) and staged a hunger strike in honour of their cause. It was unexpected, unannounced, and caused the government and Norway to

stop and take notice. The protest offered two messages: "the one promulgated powerlessness and the other a new source of power...much of Fourth world politics is about turning physical powerlessness into moral power and then putting that to good political account" (Paine, 1985, 190). By creating a dramatic event, the Saami staged a public forum in which their anger and frustration about the dam could be voiced, bringing to light their own version of reality in attempts to gain public sympathy and support for their cause.

The Innu accomplished the "politics of embarrassment" in a similar manner to that of the Saami. The 1993 video was used to show the public that they had not been treated fairly by the government; they had been neglected socially, economically and politically, problems that were now manifested among their youth. The video's entrance into the media spotlight was not anticipated and its effects were shocking. "For a Fourth World ideology to possess a political life it is necessary for it to attract the broadest public by an event of particular force" (Paine, 1985, 191). There was virtually no other way to draw the media into the community of Davis Inlet then to release a video that displayed the Third World conditions of a "Canadian community." They had tried other methods, press releases, demonstrations, news conferences, but interest quickly faded, or was never really sparked to begin with. Those who engage in the politicization of events "resort to the contriving of dramatic events in order to win media publicity. The politicized minority assumes that its target public needs alarms, shocks, and titillation to pay attention to the issues that preoccupy that minority" (Edelman, 1988, 34). The video sparked public interest because it was dramatic; the images of Native youth hopelessly intoxicated claiming suicidal intentions played with the audience's moral consciousness.

The release of the video in 1993 and the public plea again in 2000 and other various points throughout the 13 year span that this research covers, are expressions of political rhetoric. Political rhetoric are the actions or language that provide persuasive reasoning, linked to a political stance and used to encourage others to see a situation in a particular way. Political rhetoric, in this instance, was used to raise awareness of the issues of Innu communities, situations that often went unrecognized without internal push to get things to the media stage. Penashue and other Innu leaders openly admit to deliberately sending information to media outlets. Media, then, became the outlet through which political rhetoric, in the form of actions and discourse, was expressed. It also was the outlet through which government responded to Innu claims. Paine's analysis of the Saami's hunger strike also shows elements of political rhetoric.

While the hunger strike itself is not similar action to the gasoline sniffing problems of Innu youth, the fact that both groups, the Innu and Saami, recognized problems in their communities and developed a plan in which to draw attention to these problems, shows that politics of embarrassment is a useful concept to explain the actions of these groups. Both the Innu representatives and Saami action groups recognized that without a bold move, without a sensational and drastic action, their issues would not be attended to. The 'in-your-face' actions of both groups, the hunger strike by SAG and the release of the home video footage to media by Innu representatives, showed that to receive re/action from government embarrassing actions needed to be carried out to show the magnitude with which the issues of river damming and gasoline sniffing affected the lives of Saami and Innu, respectively.

*Changes in negotiations*

The Innu have been subjected to Canadian and Newfoundland 'coercive tutelage' (Dyck, 1991) for over fifty years. The rights to land, Indian status, education, proper standards of living, social services and basic human dignity have been ignored by the federal and provincial governments. This video was self-ascribed advocacy by Innu on behalf of Innu, an expression of control over their own destiny. Paine's analysis of the Saami parallels this notion:

> The hunger strike became a *Norwegian event*—one of general, or national, concern even though staged by Saami. This is an important development from the Fourth World perspective, for it serves to advance the process by whereby the premise of Saami/Norwegian relations is changed: before the hunger strike, issues affecting Saami interests and principles were dealt with according to 'set' Norwegian principles, but after the strike we find Norwegian principles being re-examined in the light of the SAG's action" (Paine, 1985, 202).

Once the video had been release by the Innu Nation, the federal government department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada was prompted to deal with the issues as presented in the Innu communities.

The Innu, like the Saami had turned "physical powerlessness into moral power and then [put] that to good political account" (Paine, 1985, 190). This video and the emotional and moral response it evoked in the public resulted in different negotiation tactics used by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. An INAC representative, in training to become deputy minister of INAC, went to the community, sat in tents with Innu representatives, and engaged in active discussion with them about the issues of the community and possible solutions. He went beyond the protocol of INAC, as it had been the first time that government officials had attempted to discuss Innu issues in an Innu environment, under Innu traditional settings (J. Higham, personal communication,

October 19, 2004).

The power may not have been permanently acquired, but momentarily the video gave Innu bargaining power. The media coverage of the video questioned what the government's response to the issues would be. Without public reaction, the Innu would have to sit quietly by and wait for INAC to realize there was a 'new' problem in Davis Inlet. However, due to the isolation of Davis Inlet, an island in Northern Labrador, and the federal government's unwillingness to recognize the Innu as "Status Indians" under the Indian Act, the chances of INAC recognizing the problem on their own were nil. Forcing the issue of gasoline sniffing into media spotlight, by exposing the social and psychological disarray of the community publicly, the government could not turn a blind eye to the issues. International eyes were watching how the Canadian government was going to deal with the Innu; therefore the video images and the public emotional response it received were the only influences INAC had for acting on the gasoline sniffing issues of Davis Inlet. The Innu had no choice but to take the matter into their own hands, INAC would not help their children without coercion.

*Maintaining the spotlight*

Finally, there is a need to ask whether this media strategy will continue to work for the Innu. It may be impossible to answer however, due to changing themes and structures of what the media constitutes as 'newsworthy'. The Innu and other special interest groups need to discover ways to reinvent the same story to continue to draw the appropriate attention to their issues and simultaneously relate to more general themes of media interest such as politics, scandals and violence. As Wolfsfeld (1984) states,

"maintaining celebrity status is more expensive than obtaining it" (555). He quotes a reporter as saying: "If people want to stay in the news they must 'up the ante'...If they burn a house today, they must blow up one tomorrow...otherwise it's simply not as strong. It will no longer be on the top of the news" (Wolfsfeld, 1984, 555). The problem remains that dealing with the media is a complicated undertaking. The rules for 'newsworthiness' are not apparent; audience interest and social consciousness are unpredictable and social context is constantly changing, thereby making an uncertain pathway to the media spotlight for issues like Innu gasoline sniffing. This paper shows that 'news' is not a spontaneous event, but a 'pseudo-event' that requires thought, planning, and a specific social context to emerge within.

**Conclusion**

Canadian media are mainly white, middle-class, profit-seeking enterprises. While minorities very rarely break through this structure with their own interpretations and discourses, the power structures that exist can be used by minorities to convey their political agendas. Innu played a crucial role in the shaping of the problem of gasoline sniffing children to fit media definitions of news. The timing of its release to media was purposely chosen by the Innu to gain maximum usage of the story and embarrass the government into taking action to solve the problems, and secure promises from them in the wake of federal elections; a way of engaging in political rhetoric.

Media may not have been the ideal environment in which to engage in discussion with the government about the state of their community, but it was fast and effective in providing a coercive force. The victim status of the addicted Innu youth also served a

political purpose to gain further bargaining power with the government over other issues such as Aboriginal self-government, land claims and community relocation negotiations. Innu representatives, by releasing video images of gas sniffing children to the media, were not passively waiting for action from the "powerful" institutions. They gathered their support forcefully by engaging the moral consciousness of the public, by engaging in political rhetoric. The power exercised may not have been physical, permanently possessed, or long-lived, but was power nevertheless and should not be disregarded. The purpose of this chapter was to show that social construction of social problems involves political motivation; to show that Innu representatives can maintain as much political motivation as other social actors despite their minority social status.

The next chapter will deal with media discourse, where a closer look will be taken at stereotypes, political rhetoric, and social discourse that emerge from the various social players involved in the emergence and maintenance of the gasoline sniffing problem of Innu youth in the media. It will examine how semantic tools are used, to who's benefit, and the intended and possible unintended consequences of language and imagery that is produced through *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail*'s coverage of the social problem of substance abuse.

## Chapter 5
## The Role(s) of the Media: Constructor and Conduit

### Introduction

This chapter examines the role of media in social problems work. As mentioned, media is the number one source through which we gain information about the world, the various social conditions in various places, as well as the cultural, political, economic and social environments of places around the globe. If media is the primary medium through which audiences and the general public receive information about events and situations, then it is important to investigate the ways in which this information is gathered, processed, interpreted and re/presented for audiences to consume.

This is an extremely important part of social problems work, since without widespread recognition and attention there is no 'problem' and often no action to deal with the problem. The media spotlight was the battle ground where Innu representatives and government officials negotiated the problem of substance abuse, as well as various solutions and resolutions to the 'social problems' of Labrador Innu. While the general argument of this thesis is that social problems and their social construction is a complex relationship between various social actors, including the Innu, media outlets ultimately decide what makes the news, what is newsworthy and how stories will be framed to gain attention among mass audiences. This makes using the media a dangerous political tactic. Groups such as the Innu may plan their communications and media strategies, but the final decision about what a news story looks like is controlled by media outlets. This chapter examines the fact that despite Innu efforts, media still controlled the publicization

of the problem of gasoline sniffing, therefore what parts of the story were included and omitted.

Here, the structures and strategies of news production and presentation processes of the media as they relate to the gasoline sniffing 'story' are examined. Discussion of general patterns and trends of reporting and presentation on the issue of gasoline sniffing follow focusing on *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail* between 1992 and 2005. This involves a detailed discussion of the use of language, the phonological, grammatical and lexical strategies, as well as the sociocultural context in which it is used. Critical discourse analysis will be employed to systematically examine two articles, one from *The Telegram* and one from *The Globe and* Mail, to show specific examples of news reporting of the 'crisis' moments of the Innu of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu. These articles are used to examine the discourse and rhetorical strategies used by various social players in the claims making and social problems work of maintaining the problem in the public spotlight, as well as the media's role as constructor and conduit of news.

**Is News Objective?**

Audiences hold much of what is reported in newspapers as factual information, therefore the processes of construction often go unnoticed. The individual interpretations of reporter, news source, social problems claims maker, moral entrepreneur, and other organizations affect the shape of a news story, as well as the way it is interpreted by the audience. Interpretation occurs through the selection, context, and availability of information and occurs on three different levels; through the source of information, the reporter, and the audience. Critical discourse analysis allows the peeling back of these

layers of interpretation and its aim is to discover what has been said, by whom, and with what political motivation, to examine the relationship of power and privilege to the use of language (Riggins, 1997, 2). The stories read in newspapers are only selective views of situations or events, yet are often represented as whole truths and designed to seemingly portray value-free information. However, through critical discourse analysis the biases, ideologies, and lexical strategies that tend to naturalize the language of news stories can be examined and politicized to demonstrate that news is not objectively produced or consumed.

*Exaggeration and distortion*

Cohen and Critcher state that during media inventory three processes occur: distortion and exaggeration, prediction, and symbolization (Cohen, 1972; Critcher, 2003). Cohen further suggests that media's major type of distortion during media inventory is through exaggeration, or 'over reporting' (29). This usually is observable through the mode and style of presentation which involves sensational headlines, melodramatic vocabulary and "the deliberate heightening of those elements in the story considered news" (Cohen, 1972, 31). Before the images of solvent abusing children were displayed on television, the plight of the Labrador Innu was ignored by mainstream newspapers, however after the images were released space was made available, but limited according to Landry (2003), to the racist and stereotypical mainstream ideas about First Nations peoples. Landry asserts that the news stories continued to frame the Innu as a problematic population who posed threats to dominant, Euro-Canadian values (Landry, 2003, 27-8). Michael Valpy agrees.

Michael Valpy, columnist for *The Globe and Mail,* criticizes media for practicing "poverty as pornography" (1993b), and asks his readers to look beyond the sensationalism of the media and recognize the issues, the causes and effects, and the solutions. "Poverty as pornography" is often used in the discussion of global development and the use of images such as the starving children in Africa. It involves the use of shocking images to arouse audiences to feel sympathy, anger, frustration and a need to help the people 'less fortunate.' The issues arising from these images, however, are numerous. First of all, the idea that 'a picture is worth a thousand words' is overused and results in an addiction to graphic imagery. Partly, this problem is a result of the increasingly visual media. This addiction demands increasingly graphic images to provoke even minimum arousal in the audience. Secondly, 'poverty as pornography' imagery shows helpless people, people who require increasing amounts of help, people who's survival depends on the kindness of strangers. These types of images and the message that it conveys strips people of their dignity and encourages prejudice through the offering of simplistic and negative stereotypes, based on the idea that the people or population portrayed is unequal, or living sub-humanly. These images then become accepted as truth. Third, the situations and issues that images convey are more complex than uni-dimensional, simple photographs could ever suggest. The images show the results, but no real explanation of why poverty persists (Sakore, 2005).

Valpy therefore, when suggesting that the media are employing methods that could be considered 'poverty as pornography', is suggesting that media images of the Labrador Innu are sensationalized thereby stimulating less and less emotional response in audiences, or using more graphic images to produce the same level of emotional

response. The images also do not give recognition to Innu as intelligent, hard working people trying to solve their own problems. The imagery suggests Innu are helpless victims, stereotyping Innu as inferior to the majority; the dominant white society. Also, by not recognizing the socio-historical context in which the Innu are experiencing poverty and substance abuse, the complexity of the situation is ignored and the faults of Euro-Canadians as the colonizing and exploiting force are ignored. Valpy, in his article entitled "Would cultural genocide stand up in court?" (1993b) suggests that the question to be asked and answered goes beyond the images of poverty and substance addiction. It involves examining the character of the relationships (both historical and contemporary) between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples, as the psychological and social problems of aboriginal communities reside in this relationship, not in the aboriginal peoples themselves (ibid).

The poverty and substance abuse of the Labrador Innu is real, but media images of the problem do not do justice to the complexity of the problem. Media was instrumental in getting the story to the public, in transmitting images of the tragedy of Innu youth and in breaking the silence surrounding the issues faced by First Nations people in Canada, but this occurred within the 'safe house' of Euro-Canadian understandings of the Innu and their community troubles; in other words, by examining the problem shallowly, through stereotypical, sensational images, without exploring the historical context in which the Innu arrived in Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu. Valpy states in one of his columns, "We are not allowed to be titillated by the pornography of poverty, death and cultural destruction and then lose interest when some of the juice runs out the drama and the news media find more entertaining material elsewhere. This is how issues of public

policy remain unresolved" (Valpy, 1993c). Yet, this imagery is what draws us, as an audience, to sit up and pay attention to the horrible conditions in places such as Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu. Without the dramatic and exploitative images, neither media nor audience would take the time to listen to claims. Images, as socially constructed as they might be, offer a sense of "reality" that language cannot.

*Symbolization*

Another process of media inventory is *symbolization*. Cohen states that communication, and especially the mass communication of stereotypes, depends on the symbolic power of words and images. For example, place names can evoke a particular emotion or idea, such as 'Davis Inlet'. In the process of relocating the Mushuau Innu from Davis Inlet to Natuashish, it was often commented in the news that there was a fear that Natuashish would turn into another Davis (Ayed, 2000). Davis Inlet came to symbolize all the social ills that affected the Mushuau Innu: substance abuse, lack of running water, lack of a sewerage system, poor housing conditions, isolation, and crisis.

From these processes emerges the question of media sensitization.

> Any item of news thrust into the individual's consciousness has the effect of increasing the awareness of items of a similar nature which he might otherwise have ignored. Psychological cues are provided to register and act upon previously neutral stimuli. This is the phenomenon of sensitization which, in the case of deviance, entails the reinterpretation of neutral or ambiguous stimuli as potentially or actually deviant (Cohen, 1972, 77).

Media certainly became more acutely aware of the issue of substance abuse in the Labrador Innu communities. Substance abuse became a reference point to which other news stories alluded to, whether it was about relocation, suicide, policing and

jurisdictional issues; references were often made to gasoline sniffing troubles of the community. However, it went beyond the sensitized media, to the sensitized general public. Media awareness of the issues, particularly that of *The Telegram*[1], continuously made substance abuse a quick reference point in which to remind the audiences of who the Innu were. In this way, Innu also became a signifier for gasoline sniffing. The two signifying agents could not often be separated, gasoline sniffing immediately made reference to the Labrador Innu and mentioning the Labrador Innu conjured up images of gasoline sniffing children. Landry (2003), in *Re/locating the Mushuau Innu*, suggests that in 49 percent of all news stories in her analysis, reference was made to the video of 1993. She states "it has frozen six un-named Innu children in a discursive space where they are never allowed to grow up, recover, or accomplish positive achievements in their lives" (Landry, 2003, 124).

**Media Coverage of Gasoline Sniffing Over Time**

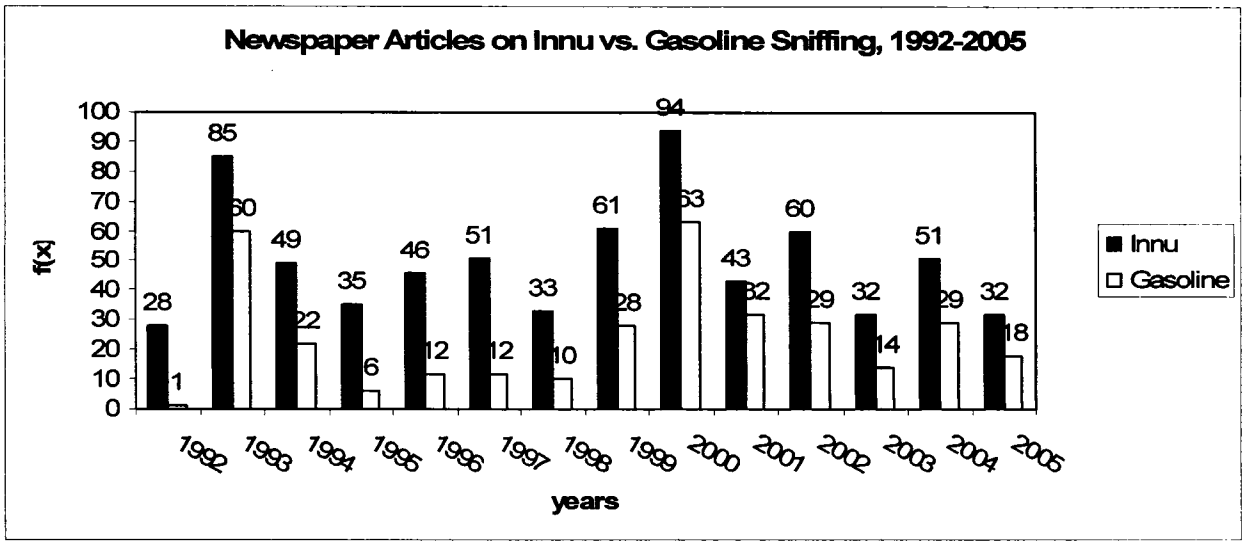
The first topic to discuss is the frequency with which the issue of gasoline sniffing of Labrador Innu youth was covered between 1992 and 2005, and explain its fluctuations over the period in question. The sample consists of 700 articles from *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail*. Chosen from 13 years of newspaper articles, the sample was gained from a systematic search of vertical files from Memorial University of Newfoundland's Centre for Newfoundland Studies' (CNS) archival service, as well as a thorough search through other sources such as electronic databases, for relevant material concerning the

[1] *The Telegram* is used as an example due to the fact that the majority of the media information gathered for this research project came from this source. *The Telegram* was also more likely to cover the 'Innu story' than other media sources such as *The Globe and Mail* because of the local content.

various social problems and 'newsworthy' events of the Northern Labrador communities of Sheshatshiu, Davis Inlet, and as of 2003, the new community of Natuashish. Articles were chosen for the sample if they were primarily about Innu and the social, political, cultural, economic environments within Innu communities. While Voisey's Bay nickel mines and Churchill Falls hydro-electric operations are political issues of the Innu, articles about these topics were not included if they were not primarily about Innu involvement in or resistance to the projects.

Of these 700 chosen articles for the sample, 336 of them make some reference to gasoline sniffing, whether as a direct discussion of the issue, or as a passing reference in articles on other subjects. Some of the references include: 'that infamous January night in 1993', 'substance abuse', 'gasoline sniffing,' 'crisis,' or 'social problems' of the Innu communities. The frequency distribution graph below compares the two groups of numbers, one shows the frequency with which social, political, cultural, and economic issues of the Labrador Innu were covered and the second shows the frequency with which the newspapers, *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail*, made reference to the gasoline sniffing crises.

**Figure 5.1** The frequency with which the sample covered issues of the Labrador Innu generally in comparison with the number of those articles that mentioned gasoline sniffing.




*Patterns of coverage*

For the most part, there is a wave pattern depicting the frequency of articles about the Innu generally and gasoline sniffing specifically. This suggests, according to the other information available, that newspaper coverage of the Labrador Innu increased when there were moments of crisis. The three years that show the most frequent coverage are 1993, 1999 and 2000. 1993 and 2000 were the two years in which Innu representatives went to the media with stories of gasoline sniffing and substance abuse of the youth in the communities. The Survival International report entitled *Canada's Tibet* was released in 1999 which also coincided with the suicide death of a young boy in Sheshatshiu, the son of one of the Innu promoters of Survival International's report. Again in 2002 interest in the Innu peaked, as it was the year that the first Mushuau Inn families made the journey from Davis Inlet to their new home in Natuashish. Therefore,

the general pattern that can be mapped out suggests that the peaks in media coverage surrounding the Labrador Innu occurred in 1993, 1999, 2000, and 2002, the years in which events of major social and political significance occurred. The same pattern would be seen if the frequency of media coverage was mapped throughout a single year. The coverage would be concentrated around the time of year in which the 'events' were occurring.

However, the trend cannot be considered a fully accurate representation, as the information between 2000 and 2005 had greater accessibility due to the ease with which the news articles could be found and collected through electronic databases. Anything before 2000, especially for *The Telegram*, was searched manually; therefore the sample cannot be considered systematically complete, as much of the information collected was selected from vertical files from the Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS), a compilation that had already been selectively constructed. These limitations not withstanding, the trend does suggest that coverage of the social problems conditions of the Innu generally, and of gasoline sniffing specifically, was linked to the campaigning efforts of Innu advocacy groups. As argued through this thesis, Innu were involved in constructing the media campaigns around gasoline sniffing, in hopes of gaining a community relocation agreement for Davis Inlet. Innu representatives were also involved in the promotion of Survival International's report, once again showing that Innu were campaigning for support, or ways in which to embarrass the governments into action. It is now important to focus on how these campaigning initiatives were portrayed by media.

*What others have found*

48 percent of the sample of articles between January 1992 and July 2005 mention gasoline sniffing, whether or not it is the primary topic of the news story. These results are consistent with the findings of Landry (2003) and Claxton-Oldfield and Keefe (1999). Landry reported that in over 49 percent of all news stories, the text recalled the video images of January 1993 (124). Claxton-Oldfield and Keefe report similar results. In their 1999 study, they conducted an analysis of newspaper headlines and concluded that 44 percent of headlines about the Labrador Innu also included words associated with deviance or conflict, such as gas-sniffing, sexual abuse or protest. Claxton-Oldfield and Keefe also suggest that even if articles were categorized as being about government relations, culture and community, or cooperation between Innu and non-Innu, 18 percent of them still made references to deviance or criminal acts of the Innu, even though it was not the primary theme of the news story, or even hinted at in the headline (Claxton-Oldfield & Keefe, 1999, 89-90). These results show that the video images released in 1993 became a key defining event; a basic reference point for most subsequent stories about the Innu.

Benjamin Singer's (1982) research exploring the presentation of Canadian First Nations in Ontario newspapers examined the frequency of stories about Indians and Inuit, event categories, article prominence, and headline wording. The purpose of Singer's analysis was to question "how often 'symbolic contact' is potentially made, in what kind of event context, and with what prominence?" (Singer, 1982, 353) Symbolic contact, according to Singer, suggests that what is known about groups such as First Nations is gathered from the media, not from personal experiences. Therefore, experiences of and

contact with minorities becomes symbolic. Singer chose a 52-week sample of articles from a large, metropolitan newspaper in Ontario over a five year period and analyzed it for Native content. Singer was able to determine the frequency with which stories pertaining to Native peoples and issues were reported, where in the newspaper layout the stories were presented, and under what categories or themes the stories could be placed (ie. Relationship with government, culture, land claims, persecution, etc). Singer, by examining the frequency, prominence, event categories, and headlines, could quantify the exposure Euro-Canadians have to First Nations through newspaper coverage and what images that contact is often associated with (Singer, 1982). Singer discovered that the majority of the issues discussed in newspapers stories were related to government relationships and land claims activities and that conflict and deviance labels were often attached to First Nations within the stories. Therefore, our symbolic contact with the Innu becomes defined by conflict and deviance, as these are some of the most prominent images audiences receive about the Innu from media sources.

## Media Frames

### *The drunken Indian frame*

These results suggest that this continuous prompt to recognize the Innu as gas sniffers and substance abusers contributes to the construction and reconstruction of the Labrador Innu as 'problematic' people. This coincides with the argument of Dyck (1991) who suggests that we, as a society, are constantly confronted with images, discourses and stereotypes that refer to the "Indian 'problem'." This Indian 'problem' is comprised of a series of concerns, usually in the form of questions, as well as series of observations and

beliefs suggested to be adequate responses to the 'problem.' Dyck states that when Euro-Canadians discuss Indians and the differences between themselves and the Indians, more often than not, personality deficiencies and lack of initiative are stated as the main factors (1991, 15), what Francis (1992) called the "imaginary Indian." Many of the images we hold of the Indian obtained in childhood are never abandoned. The Indian is the "bad guy," savage, a symbol of the dark forces of disorder which had to be subdued before civilization could thrive (Francis, 1992). This trend is a factor in the construction of news stories, as well as maintained by news stories, that continually represent minority groups, such as the Innu as a deficient population.

Part of the problem with using the media as a vehicle for social problems work is that alcohol abuse in Native communities across Canada is considered an accepted practice and knowledge of the problem is often minimized to the stereotype of the 'drunken Indian.' This stereotype is played on by the media and other social players in the process and development of the gasoline sniffing issue of the Labrador Innu. The stereotype of the drunken Indian had been played to the point of audience saturation, drinking was considered a problem of self-destruction, an individual problem; something beyond the concern of the Euro-Canadian population.

Substance abuse, therefore, is one of those "here they go again" moments, confirming the physical disorder of First Nations communities, a problem that is not 'our' problem. This began to change in 1993 as gasoline sniffing began drawing attention to the other social problems affecting the health and well being of the Labrador Innu communities as well as drawing more widespread sympathy from media audiences. Alcohol and substance abuse were around before the issue gained media attention in 1993

("Gasoline Sniffing", 1989; Henriksen, 1973; Innu Nation & Mushuau Innu Band Council, 1992; Johansen, 1992), so why were the events of the early 1990s different?

*Imagery of children*

In partial answer to this question, we are reminded that the media do not continuously cover the same events, as audience members become bored with repeatedly hearing the same claims[2] (Loseke, 2003). Again, like the February 14th fire of the previous year, the gasoline sniffing incident involved the health and well-being of children. Euro-Canadian audiences are accustomed to hearing of the drunken mishaps of First Nations adults; however, the intoxication of young children, particularly of children as young as 10 years of age, was shocking.

> Childhood is that period during which persons are subject to a set of rules and regulations unique to them, and one that does not apply to members of other social categories. Moreover, childhood is a period in a person's life during which he/she is neither expected nor allowed to fully participate in various domains of social life (Shamgar-Handelman, 1994 as cited in Goldson, 1997, 2).

The involvement of children adds a factor of novelty and a shock value for the audience to be interested in and appalled by, while simultaneously providing a familiar base for recognizing and understanding the problem through the issue of First Nations substance abuse. Journalists, media outlets and the general audience are concerned with the problem of gasoline sniffing of Innu youth. It is disturbing to see children between the ages of 10 and 16 engaging in self-destructive behaviours; behaviours associated with adults, therefore the images are easily sensationalized by the media. Image wise, children

[2] Media and public interest began to fade after images of the problem became mundane. Each time the story of substance abuse emerged in the media as a main topic of discussion, there was a new twist that made the story 'new'. This discussion of events and reporting of events will be developed further in a later section.

make the best 'propaganda' tools, according to an article in *The American Daily* (online).

Children are prototypical victims; they appear incapable of helping themselves and rely on a caring authority to help and support them. To not care for these victims "of supposed negative, impersonal social forces is seen as heartless and cold" (Soupcoff, 2003). Heavy drinking is associated with solvent abuse in the news stories, but according to Landry (2003), news reports investigate it as the foremost cause for solvent abuse among Innu children. In effect, responsibility is placed on the parents who drank heavily and therefore constructed as impediments to the health and well-being of their children (Landry, 2003, 84). It is viewed as stealing of childhood innocence and as an activity that is damaging the development of the future generations.

*Child protection frame*

It can be suggested that audience interest in issues involving children may be the result of sensitization. As Downs (1972) suggests, media and public interest in social issues often follow "issue-attention cycles." Individual problems go through cycles, as Critcher (2003) suggested that problems fade away often without being resolved; but often problems 'piggyback' other social problems (Loseke, 2003). Therefore, issue-attention cycles therefore may often link problems together in themes—audiences may be interested in only one 'type' of social problem at a single moment. During the time in which the gasoline sniffing problem of Innu youth was publicized, there were other events that preceded and followed this story which also involved protection, or the lack of protection of children.

An example of this is the fact that the crisis of the Davis Inlet youth occurred after

the Mount Cashel Orphanage Scandal of the late 1980s and early 1990s had made its appearance on the media stage. The sexual molestation of young boys during the mid-1970s at the Mount Cashel Orphanage, a boy's home run by Christian Brothers, became an extensively covered news story during the late 80s and early 90s. Priests and Brothers of the Catholic order were charged with numerous account of sexual and physical abuse of the boys under their care at the orphanage. Almost one hundred cases of sexual and physical assault were filed against the brothers and priests and large amounts of financial compensation were awarded to those men who were affected (CBC News, 2003; 2004). After such shocking news involving the abuse of young children; the media and public were more acutely aware of issues involving children.

While the images of children from Davis Inlet were obviously different from that emerging from the Mount Cashel scandal, Mount Cashel had affected the way that stories of children, particularly stories of abuse, in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador were handled. The images of abuse, whether by others like at Mount Cashel, or self abuse like the images that emerged from Davis Inlet, were hard to ignore. Audiences were sensitive to events that involved children and framing the gasoline sniffing issues of Innu as problems of youth may have made the claims more viable—for both the Innu campaigning and media newsworthiness.

**Other Media Tools**

*Nameless faces*

Despite sensitization to child protection issues, the main imagery audiences were presented with were those of First Nations as 'problematic.' Landry states that a lack of

naming contributes to the construction of the Innu as a 'problem people.' The images that are used in news reports of gasoline sniffing children use nameless faces (Landry, 2003, 124). This imagery suggests that these children could be any Innu child in the community, thereby producing a generalization about the extent of the problem; it is not a problem for some, but a problem for all. "Publishing photos of nameless children within the story provided a discursive space for the re/creation of the community as 'troubled'" (ibid, 125). This practice, combined with a lack of specific information about the actual context of the problem reiterated that the communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu were 'problematic.' Naming children would have challenged the representation of the gasoline sniffing as a community problem, because it honed in on the problem of that particular child rather than the innately unstable state of the communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu (ibid). Later, after the 'facts' of the case had come forth in the media spotlight, human interest or symbolic stories began to be published. In these human interest stories, reporters came in contact with gasoline sniffing children, reported on their lives and social situations, as well as their reasons for sniffing. These children were often named, giving a face to the problem of gasoline sniffing. Initially, it is important to express the widespread nature of the problem, but then it is also important to make the story personal, to pull at the heart strings of audiences[3]. However, for the majority of the news stories the children remained nameless. This practice of photographing 'nameless children' was interpreted by Landry to be an inherently racist practice of defacing the Innu, transforming them into a homogeneous group.

[3] I will not provide examples of these human interest stories as I believe they make people vulnerable, especially when the individuals are minors. I wish to protect their identities to the best of my ability as I do not wish this research to cause anymore pain and suffering to Innu youth.

However, the namelessness of the sniffing Innu youth serves another political purpose. In 1993, when the video was release by the Innu community of Davis Inlet, Innu were the constructors of the problem. They controlled the initial release of information about the conditions of substance abuse in the community, thereby; the point may have been to make those six children represent the majority of the children in Davis Inlet. Innu representatives may not have provided media with the names of the youth, as there may have been political advantages to identifying gasoline sniffing as an "Innu problem." This is a point that Landry fails to recognize. She automatically assumes the Mushuau Innu were victims of media sensationalization and story construction, rather than being active participants in the process. Innu Nation President Peter Penashue was quoted as stating in a media interview, according to Michael Valpy, that the Mushuau Innu band council and Innu Nation were instrumental in the decision to release the video of the gasoline sniffing children. "If we don't do it no one is going to listen to our problems. It gave us the opportunity to speak to others and work on ourselves (Valpy, 1994). The political use of defining gasoline sniffing as a 'widespread' problem is discussed further in the section on rhetorical numbers.

However, media continued the process of constructing the story of gasoline sniffing after the initial release of information from the Labrador Innu community. By replaying the video, or re-releasing the images, as Landry states, those children became frozen in discursive space. These children were then no longer used to express the 'Innu story', but became reinforcing images of the "Indian 'problem';" highlighting the sensational imagery and stereotypes of Aboriginal communities plagued with substance abuse. This highlights that even though Innu are successful at drawing attention to the

substance abuse problem, the cost of this 'success' is the reinforcement of existing prejudices and negative stereotypes of Innu.

*Ambiguous definitions*

Audiences were bombarded with the sights of Innu kids high on gas fumes, stumbling around the filthy and impoverished community of Davis Inlet, yet no clarity was given as to the actual pervasiveness of the problem. The problem of gasoline sniffing was defined as that of kids "doing whatever they want" (Barron, 1998), without a clear definition of what behaviour was considered problematic. RCMP defined the problem by separating 'regular users' and 'hardcore users' (MacDonald, 2000a), yet the audience was not offered a definition of what constitutes a 'regular' sniffer versus a 'hardcore' or 'chronic' sniffer, nor was any information ever offered as to the criteria by which the children were assessed for treatment. Under what conditions were children sent for treatment? How 'bad' were the addictions? Did the children have to sniff everyday? Once a week? Once a month? If the children were only sniffing 'sporadically', did that mean they did not have a 'problem'? These questions and others related to what is considered "addiction" or "abusive behaviours" are never answered in media presentations. Audiences were informed of the numbers of children being treated, but given no indication about how the children qualified for treatment.

While it is not clear whether this lack of clarity is a result of claims makers and moral entrepreneurs' definitions or a problem in reporting by media, the point to make is the fact that media *should* have been asking these questions. Innu advocates were stating that the problem was widespread, yet only 18 children in a community of over 600 were

sent for detoxification and treatment in 1993. Why did so few receive treatment, when the problem was presented as so large?

*Rhetorical numbers*

The use of numbers to express the prevalence of substance abuse was also inconsistent, which can be labelled the use of *rhetorical numbers* (Best, 2004). Rhetorical numbers are used as devices of persuasion; constructed numbers to prove a point. For example, in the community of Davis Inlet, a community of approximately 600, there are numbers suggesting that there are 42 regular solvent users ("Sniffing gasoline," 1993), "dozens" of kids (Hilliard, 2002), to 30 to 50 kids as reported in *The Telegram* (Barron, 1998), to as high as 80 (LeBlanc, 2000) and 100 (MacDonald, 2000a). No official numbers of occurrence were ever released. Therefore the actual frequency of gasoline sniffing went unreported, yet audiences were still bombarded with words and images that suggested Innu communities were in a state of disarray and disrepair, a crisis; making ambiguous statements about the universality of the problem of gasoline sniffing among the Labrador Innu. This was the main imagery conveyed by Innu claims makers. This ambiguity was important to advancing the cause of getting help for gasoline sniffing youth and negotiating Davis Inlet's relocation; as the Innu political tactics of embarrassing the governments were already discussed. However, no statements were backed up with any consistent and 'factual' information. It is unclear whether this is a tactic of media, Innu claims makers, or a combination of both.

Where do the numbers come from and why are they released as statistics? Sources quoted in news reports are community members, the community chief, namely

Simeon Tshakapesh, Innu advisors, RCMP constables, family members, community health care workers and educators, and addictions counsellors. Each source gave a slightly different account of the prevalence of the problem. Therefore, audiences were never offered a comprehensive numerical representation of how serious the problem was, though urged to believe that it was a serious and widespread problem. A consistent view was offered, not one article or claims maker, moral entrepreneur or expert denied there was a problem, but the 'factual' numbers reflecting the pervasiveness of the problem were unreliable and conflicting.

In the beginning of the cycle of coverage in 1993, the seriousness of the issue with gasoline sniffing youth would not have been recognized without claims of large numbers of the population partaking in the destructive behaviour. For, as the general definition of a social problem states, the condition needs to be widespread enough to warrant public concern (Loseke, 2003; Rubington & Weinberg, 2003). The sniffing/suicide video released may only have shown six youth, but as Landry states, the nameless images suggested that the problem was representative of the plight of the community. The gasoline sniffing behaviour needed to be presented as immense in number and in severity to be recognized and dealt with as a social problem; its worthiness as a social problem had to be proved. If the problem had only been experienced by a small group, or only those six children in 1993, then public interest would have quickly dissipated, as the gasoline sniffing would have been seen as an isolated incident, or a personal battle with addiction, instead of the widespread discussion that emerged about the state of the community of Davis Inlet.

In 2000, numbers were once again important in raising awareness and media coverage of gasoline sniffing. Sheshatshiu chief, Paul Rich was stated as saying "up to 50 kids are sniffing gas on the streets in broad daylight" further stating that the "situation is drastic and we need drastic measures" (Bennett, 2000). When Mushuau chief Simeon Tshakapesh made a similar statement calling for aid for the situation in Davis Inlet a week later, Tshakapesh stated that 154 of the 169 youth in the community were gas sniffers at some point in their lives, with 92 in 2000. He claimed that 60 of those were chronic abusers (Callahan, 2000b). It was again, a call for recognition, a plea for aid for the devastated communities. Without explaining the extensiveness of the problem, it was possible that Innu leaders and decision makers felt that no help would arrive. This use of rhetorical numbers aimed to prove that the problem was worthy of attention, however no time frame was offered to explain the context in which the comments were made, or in what social context the children were sniffing. The numbers changed depending on the source, they were re-quoted in other stories, and the end result was a miscellany of ambiguous numbers that do not clarify the problem or the extent to which it was happening, or in what context. The story of the Innu and gasoline sniffing was constructed not only through rhetorical numbers but lexicography and ambiguous contextualization as well. These elements of news stories provided audiences symbolic contact with the Innu, a relationship that is developed further in the sections dedicated to discourse analysis.

**Presentation Styles, Tactics, and Attention Cycles**

*Information stories*

There are four categories of article types or presentational styles, according to Boyle and Hoeschen's (2001) study on media coverage of female genital cutting. These four broad categories in which stories can be placed to typify the tactics of social problems claims makers and moral entrepreneurs are used to examine the popular styles of presenting political information. The four tactics are: information, symbolism, leverage, and accountability. Information news stories are those which describe the social problem in an expert or scientific fashion; the extent of the problem and the consequences of the behaviour (Boyle & Hoeschen, 2001, 517). In an article entitled "Gas-sniffing kids bused out" which appeared in *The Telegram* on November 22, 2000, the process by which the children were collected in Sheshatshiu and brought to the treatment centre in Goose Bay was described. The article opened with "Provincial health officials armed with a court order rounded up gas-addicted children late Tuesday and took them from this remote Innu community to military barracks for treatment" (MacDonald, 2000f). The children were "escorted on to a bus by RCMP officers" and "driven out of Sheshatshiu shortly after 7p.m. local time" (ibid). While some of the words and phrases can be interpreted as biased, such as "rounded up" like animals, or "escorted" like convicts, there are few dramatic and emotionally charged words and phrases in this article. The article described the process of removing the children from Sheshatshiu, who was involved, how many children were sent for treatment, how they got there and when. What also makes this article informative, rather than a symbolic, leverage or accountability article, was the table inserted in the article that gives a brief overview of the physiological effects of

gasoline sniffing. It described the speed with which it enters the body's system, the desired effect, the typical reactions of the sniffer, the resulting behaviours, the time frame in which the high lasts, and some long-term symptoms of sniffing (ibid).

*Symbolism stories*

Symbolism stories are most often presented as human interest stories. These types of articles focus on images and individuals to provide a human face to the social problem and are often graphic, gripping, personalized stories (Boyle & Hoeschen, 2001, 517). Journalist Michael MacDonald offered a descriptive news story of the problems in Sheshatshiu which appeared in *The Telegram* November 21, 2000. The article headline reads "A bleak scene amid Labrador's natural beauty." MacDonald used expressive words and phrases to paint the picture of what Sheshatshiu looks like. "Although it's set in *spectacular* Labrador scenery, the town of Sheshatshiu has become a *harsh* and *depressing* place for its Innu youth" (MacDonald, 2000e, emphasis added). MacDonald further described Sheshatshiu by recounting its "dilapidated school" and streets "littered with plastic bags and empty beer cases" (ibid). He also explained the state of the Sheshatshiu band council and community rapport as facing challenges by "bitter internal criticism from their own people, who say they play favourites," "squabble," and are troubled by "clan rivalries" (ibid), which suggests that the community is dysfunctional and deeply divided along political lines.

MacDonald's symbolic article also offered a personal story from a community member who explained his own struggles with substance abuse, and that of his children, as well as his understanding of why the Innu youth are sniffing. This article, through its

emotionally expressive use of language and use of personal stories from community members, attempts to engage readers and assisted them in recognizing the magnitude of the problems facing the Labrador Innu communities without using technical language and statistics.

It is also important to point out here that most news stories do contain some element of symbolization. The use of dramatic and emotionally charged language and imagery is how media often holds attention of audiences, though the obtrusiveness of symbolism varies. The examples offered for the various presentation tactics all contain elements of symbolization, but are used because they are primarily informative, leverage, or accountability stories.

*Leverage stories*

Leverage stories suggest or describe social movement efforts to resolve the social problem. These stories aim to incite people to take action (Boyle & Hoeschen, 2001, 517). In *The Globe and Mail*, "Chretien pledges aid for Innu" (LeBlanc, 2000). This article discussed the federal and provincial government promises to build a treatment centre in Labrador. The Innu leaders took a group of young solvent abusers to Ottawa to plead their case, their need for aid and a treatment centre. This was an organized activity to bring awareness to the Prime Minister and the federal government of the problems in the Innu communities of Labrador, and from this meeting, they gained a promise to build a treatment centre (ibid). This article is representative of the leverage tactics as described by Boyle and Hoeschen, because the Innu have received, through their lobbying efforts, "pledges" and "promises" of aid and infrastructure to deal with the problem of substance

abuse, not tangible action from the government.

*Accountability stories*

Finally, Boyle and Hoeschen describe accountability stories as stories that function as monitors to policy implementation and enforcement often holding individuals, organizations and institutions to their promises for aid in resolving the problem (2001, 517). In a news story printed in *The Telegram* on June 9, 2001, a group of youth-support workers who served the Innu youth during detoxification at the reformed Grace Hospital in St. John's claimed that the program failed the children and requested that an inquiry be held. The group claimed that the government was negligent as it failed to provide "beneficial treatment" for the Innu youth (Sweet, 2001b). The workers suggested that "there were no standards", there was not a "proper plan", and there was "no attempt by the facility's clinical team to provide counselling or treatment to the children" (ibid). One worker asked "Where is the healing?"(ibid) This article was looking for accountability after a stage of care and treatment has taken place. The government had provided the services that were requested by and negotiated with the Innu, but not in the appropriate manner according to this group of youth workers, therefore it was suggested that an inquiry should be undertaken to explain where the 5.5 million dollars was spent and what progress resulted from the treatment of the children.

*Issue-attention cycles*

Boyle and Hoeschen also believe that these presentation styles and social movement tactics are related to the "life course" of the social problem, or the "issue-

attention cycle" (Downs, 1972). Boyle and Hoeschen suggest that the presentation styles and tactics used in raising awareness in the media follow stages. Informative stories emerge about the problem first, followed by symbolism, leverage, and then accountability stories. The authors hypothesize that informative and symbolic stories dominate female genital cutting because these presentation styles are often used to capture public attention. They also suggest that the overall number of stories do not decrease until the number of accountability stories has peaked. They believe that it is at this stage that ideas of social responsibility have adequately expanded to include the new issue being presented (Boyle & Hoeschen, 2001, 514).

Boyle and Hoeschen's hypotheses can be applied to the cycle of media coverage of the gasoline sniffing problems of Innu youth between November 2000, when Chief Paul Rich requested aid for Sheshatshiu, and June 2001. The first challenge of using this model, however, is that it deals only with social movement organizations, not the other social actors involved such as government. It fails to recognize that governments and other bureaucracies also have motives in relation to making social problems claims, or in making counter claims. They are not attentive to the fact that there are different sides to the same problem. Social problems work is never a simple, linear movement of one group, but a complex interrelationship between various social players who all have a stake in the social problem claim. Therefore, it is difficult to examine the trend as defined by Boyle and Hoeschen as there are numerous trends happening simultaneously, depending on whom the moral entrepreneurs are and what their positions are on the social problem.

*What was found*

In the beginning of the media cycle, Boyle and Hoeschen are correct in suggesting that the majority of stories are informative or symbolic in nature. On November 16, 2000, the first article appeared in *The Telegram*, with the headline "Officials should take children, says Sheshatshiu band council." This article stated the problem was child negligence, as legal guardians were not taking responsibility for their children, as "up to 50 kids are sniffing gas on the streets in broad daylight." Further articles continued to inform the public of the scope of the problem, as well as added symbolic elements to the development of the social problem through the continuous use of descriptive words such as "crisis," "poverty," "neglect," "troubled," "despair," "plight" as well as offering personal stories of youth who used to sniff or are still sniffing gasoline. The stories became more emotionally charged when a face and a name were given to substance abusers. Also, because the substance abuse problem of the Labrador Innu dealt with children, the statements of age were also important to add symbolic content to the news reports. "None of the children were bouncing or shouting, but between sniffs they were doing a lot of giggling. The youngest seemed to be a boy of about 10 or 11" (Johansen, 2000b). "Innu leaders have given the social workers a list containing the names of 39 children under the age of 16—all of them addicted to sniffing gas" (MacDonald, 2000d).

Between November 2000 and June 2001, there were 67 stories printed in *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail* combined, regarding the gasoline sniffing problems of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet. Of these 67, 37 of them were information or symbolism based. This accounts for 55 percent of the sample.

However, it was discovered that generally, stories began to fade after leverage stories were at the highest peak, not accountability stories as suggested by Boyle and Hoeschen. The Innu's solvent abuse treatment was to be carried out in numerous stages; therefore the majority of the stories dealt with making claims about the problem of substance abuse and the negotiations for treatment options until the time the children entered into treatment. There was little news during detoxification and treatment, and only a few stories after the children returned home from their various programs across the country. Most of the news reports that emerged after the initial information about the problem emerged as leverage stories. Negotiations were never really complete; thereby stories were about negotiating the next level of treatment, gaining further leverage to complete the next deal between Innu leaders and the federal and provincial governments.

For the Innu, accountability stories emerged after the treatment did not seem to help. Therefore, reports of gasoline sniffing resurgence became stories associated with searching for accountability; stories that emerged in the years after with claims of broken promises from government. In January 2002, resurgence of solvent abuse was reported including headlines such as "Chief's pleas for government help for gas-sniffing youths goes unanswered" (Hilliard, 2002) and "No quick fixes for resurgence of gas sniffing by Innu youth, health official says" (2002). Accountability stories emerge when social problems such as gasoline sniffing problems of Innu youth lose their place in media spotlight despite the fact that the problem is still ongoing, thereby accountability stories are used in hopes of rekindling public interest by creating controversy.

In October 2001, Davis Inlet chief Simeon Tshakapesh wrote a letter to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Health Minister Allan Rock, and Indian Affairs Minister Robert

Nault to warn them of "an impending outbreak of gasoline sniffing that would occur in his village if the federal government didn't provide money to continue treating young solvent abusers after their return from programs outside the community" (Hilliard, 2002). That outbreak was reported on January 10, 2002. The letter was written in October of 2001, but a copy of the letter was sent to *The Telegram* in January 2002 "after Health Canada defended itself against charges it didn't do enough to head off a resurgence of solvent abuse in Davis Inlet by coming up with the money for followup support programs" (ibid). Tshakapesh stated in his letter that the root of the problem was that a four-stage holistic healing strategy was created while the children were receiving detoxification treatment at the refurbished Grace Hospital, yet it had not been implemented. There was no family program in place, no aftercare programs and the government departments that agreed to help the Innu during the 2000-2001 substance abuse crises were still negotiating over cost and jurisdictional issues in January 2002. Tshakapesh was looking for government accountability, as he claimed government non-compliance to the promises to provide in-community treatment after the children had returned. The letter was written in October, but released to the media three months later. This shows that the request for accountability from the government was also a public display, as it revived the public discussion of the problem of gasoline sniffing and negotiations for resolutions, thereby encouraging the governments to react. Therefore, accountability stories can be viewed as the beginning of a smaller cycle of news reports rather than the end of the overall coverage of the story.

**Media Discourse Analysis**

Now that the general trends in reporting styles has been discussed, more detailed analysis of the semantics, lexicography and discourse of news will be examined. Texts, such as newspaper media, are a major source of evidence for viewing claims about social structures, relations and processes. It is increasingly through the media that social control and social domination are exercised, negotiated and resisted (Fairclough, 1995a, 209). Therefore, analysis must go beyond the literal meaning that is revealed from the relations and interactions between themes, subjects and words. It involves examining its social meaning, the ideological effects of the news item and the institutional dialogue (discourse) that accompanies it (Fairclough, 1995a; Patrick & Armitage, 1992). To illustrate this, two different examples will be examined, one from *The Telegram*, the other from *The Globe and Mail.*

*The Telegram* ran a story entitled "Agreement on treatment nearer, officials say," written by reporter Will Hilliard, which appeared on the first page of the provincial newspaper on March 22, 2001. This article, along with "New village readied for the Innu of Davis Inlet" which appeared on page 7 of *The Globe and Mail* November 19, 2002, are utilized to explore the discourse and rhetorical strategies of the various social actors involved in the social problems work of the solvent abuse issues of the Labrador Innu communities. The themes and subjects of news stories are examined, along with the presentational devices of these stories, the metaphors and rhetorical devices present, but also the explicit and implicit argumentation, or its connotation and denotation, to examine not only what is being said literally, but what is figuratively suggested by choices of words, phrases and lexical styles, as well as ask why certain lines of argument are

completely absent. These two articles were chosen because each article offered language, metaphors, and presuppositions that could be interpreted to illustrate the various elements of analysis as laid out in Chapter 2.

### *The Telegram*

*Headnotes, headlines and photographs*

Hilliard's article, "Agreement on treatment nearer, officials say"[4], is a news feature that appeared in *The Telegram* on March 22, 2001. Hilliard reported on the negotiation process between the Mushuau Innu Band Council and the federal and provincial governments regarding the care and treatment plans for the 35 gasoline sniffing youth that entered detoxification in January 2001. The subject of the article, a single concept that stands for a larger social or political domain (Van Dijk, 1991), is Native/government relations, as the discussion of the negotiating process is more prominent than the issue of substance abuse. However, the headnote above the headline, "solvent abuse", states that the topic of the article is solvent abuse. Themes, or topics, simplify complex information to an essential term or phrase and occur as part of a subject. Themes allow readers to better organize, store and recall texts, create a mental structure from general knowledge and are a way to categorize and evaluate a situation or event (Van Dijk, 1991). The social problem of the gasoline sniffing of Innu youth was therefore simplified through the use of the phrase "solvent abuse." The reader was quickly prompted to understand the topic of the article and to recognize its association with the Labrador Innu through the picture and caption that accompanied it. The

photograph of Simeon Tshakapesh, Chief of the Mushuau Innu, and Al Garman, Health Canada's Atlantic regional director for First Nations and Inuit health, showed the men sitting behind microphones, followed by a caption that stated that the two men "speak to reporters following a day of talks aimed at continuing treatment for young Innu from Davis Inlet"[5] (Hilliard, 2001c).

The headline read "Agreement on treatment nearer, officials say" (Hilliard, 2001c). The headline was straightforward, not emotionally charged or extremely descriptive and was ambiguous as to who, what, when, where and why of the story, as it did not even suggest who "officials" were. There is connotative meaning in the headline, as well. Use of the word "Officials" suggested that the person making the statement was a bureaucrat; therefore the reader is automatically and subconsciously told that the Al Garman, the Health Canada Atlantic Regional director, was the one to suggest that agreement on treatment was nearer, as his opinion may be seen as 'official.' 'Official' can also be used to imply accuracy and authority, as statistics and statements are not considered accurate until made 'official.' Therefore, a statement that "agreement on treatment is nearer" was made by an 'official' makes the statement seem more accurate, as officials make official statements.

*Presuppositions*

In the first paragraph Hilliard stated "All three parties that pledged to help the gas-sniffing kids of Davis Inlet in December emerged from a meeting Wednesday putting a positive spin on stalled talks to develop a treatment program for them" (Hilliard, 2001c).

[4] The complete article used for this analysis is provided in Appendix B.

The reporter assumed that the reader recognized who "all three parties" were, as Hilliard did not make reference to who was involved in the negotiations until the fourth paragraph. The ambiguous nature of the first sentence perhaps attracted readers to continue reading the entire article to clarify the vagueness, but it also suggested that readers had some previous knowledge of the situation and the social actors involved. The fact that three parties were involved also suggested some of the past problems the Innu have had in government negotiations. The Innu, when they joined Confederation with Newfoundland, were not offered Indian Status under the Indian Act. Therefore, government negotiations have always been between the Innu and two levels of government, federal and provincial, as the province of Newfoundland was primarily responsible for the Labrador Innu. This situation is unique, as the majority of First Nations people across Canada have their social services directly offered through the federal Indian Affairs department. Therefore, the fact that there were three parties present suggested the uniqueness of the Innu's relationship with the governments. The Innu have argued with the governments over these jurisdictional issues on various occasions without avail. Hilliard's statement of three parties implies that the reader already recognizes the situation and felt it was unnecessary to explain.

Also in the first sentence, the social problems of the Innu were explained as "gas-sniffing kids of Davis Inlet" (Hilliard, 2001c). Minimal background information was present, no historical context was offered, no further explanation of the problem was presented, therefore, it was again assumed that the reader has acquired knowledge of the situation and social problems of the Labrador Innu prior to reading this article. In this

[5] The photograph can be viewed in Appendix B.

case then, the issue of gasoline sniffing became secondary to the negotiation process. The issue became making a deal rather than recognizing what the agreement was about. This can be seen as a reflection of the press conference's regional coverage, a topic that will be examined further in a later section.

*The use of metaphors*

This article also uses interesting metaphors to describe the tension between the parties during the negotiation process of trying to agree on what treatment and facilities are appropriate for dealing with the youth. Words like "beleaguered," "evacuated," "battle" and "fight" are used at various points throughout the article, offering images of conflict and war. There was even suggestion that the next phase of treatment would have taken place in "barracks on the north side of CFB Goose Bay" if it had not suffered fire damage (Hilliard, 2001c). The community of Davis Inlet was described as beleaguered, the children were evacuated, Tshakapesh claimed that dealing with the governments was a battle, as he "would have to fight Ottawa every step of the way for adequate funding" (ibid). This implies that Davis Inlet was a battle ground, a source of contention among the parties involved; a hostile environment from which children needed to be evacuated.

Skea (1993) examined the Canadian newspaper industry's portrayal of the Oka Crisis. Skea undertook a thematic analysis of all articles and editorials within a one-week time frame in fifteen major daily Canadian papers. Skea named four major themes as emerging: Law and order, the death of Corporal Lemay, the telling of Natives' stories, and Native rights and the history of First Nations peoples in Canada. He proceeded to examine these four themes as emerging within two major categories, those of pro-Native

and anti-Native (Skea, 1993). Skea engaged in discussions of the corporate structure of a newspaper, the type of source of an article and the region in which a newspaper is published, leading to sociocultural explanations of news production, makes mention of power relationships and further suggested that given the readership statistics of the various newspapers in his sample, most Canadians read articles that portrayed the events of the Oka crisis in an "anti-Native" manner. By using metaphors of conflict and war, Hilliard reinforces the problematization of First Nations people.

*The problematization of Natives*

Hilliard portrayed Tshakapesh as "tenacious," "insisting" that the treatment of "his people" would have to be run by the band council. Tshakapesh was labelled "difficult to work with," threatening to remove the children from detoxification at the Grace Hospital "if he didn't get his way" (Hilliard, 2001c). Tshakapesh was also suggested to be possessive as Davis Inlet is offered as "his community" and the Innu as "his people." This phrasing made the conflict of negotiations personal, as it became a conflict with Tshakapesh rather than Chief Tshakapesh, Mushuau Innu Band Chief and representative of the Mushuau Innu in negotiations with the government. Tshakapesh was quoted as saying he was "discouraged because of the delay of the process" (ibid). Tshakapesh's statement ended the first page, and the headnote, that works as a secondary headline on the continuing page was "'There is no delay'" (ibid). There are quotation marks used to frame the headnote, yet a speaker is not identified. Without an identified speaker, Tshakapesh's statement on the previous page was superseded by a statement that could be interpreted as truth, not opinion. The large print and prominent position of

'There is no delay' also contradicts what Chief Tshakapesh believed part of the problem and setback to negotiations for treatment were.

In contrast to Tshakapesh's tenacious impatience, the government was portrayed as patient, stating that the negotiation process was lengthy due to the need to wait for the medical assessments of the children from the Grace. The continuous use of the word "we" by Health Canada's Al Garman made his approach seem holistic and inclusive. Tshakapesh was stated as wanting to get his way, and Garman was stated as saying "*We're* in a position now whereby by next week *we* will be making decisions on where to place the kids and the specific kinds of treatment that they need" (Hilliard, 2001c, emphasis added). This was quickly contradicted as the subsequent line states that "The program will be designed by the Mushuai (sic) Innu" (ibid). Yet, throughout the article it is stated that the parties need "to work out the details;" to come to an "agreement" as the headline suggested. This meant the Innu were not in control, if they had to negotiate with the federal and provincial governments for "a long-term holistic treatment program" (ibid). It was not Innu designed and Innu run if federal government officials were inserting 'we' into statements or were negotiating an agreement.

*Negotiations*

There was also no indication that the negotiations were being controlled by the Innu, according to the division of speaking and argument space between government officials and Innu spokespersons. First of all, the only spokesperson for the Mushuau was Chief Tshakapesh. On behalf of the governments, Al Garman from Health Canada and Beverley Clarke provincial deputy minister were spokespersons quoted in this article.

Argument space can be defined as the space in the article, which is measured by the number of lines committed to describing a particular position. There were 40 lines of argument space associated with Simeon Tshakapesh and his perspective, 31 lines with Al Garman, and 18 lines for Beverley Clarke. Hilliard does not separate the provincial and federal governments as two perspectives; therefore 49 lines of argument space can be denoted for the governments' perspective. Also included in the argument space is speaking space, which is the direct quotation space allotted for each perspective. Garman had 15 lines of speaking space and Clarke had 6, for a total of 21 speaking space lines for the governments versus Tshakapesh, who received 7 lines. Therefore, the governments' perspective can be analyzed as receiving more space, and therefore more consideration within *The Telegram* article.

This example from *The Telegram* shows the distorting and constructing processes association with news production. The reader is presented with various perspectives from various social actors and moral entrepreneurs involved in the social problems work, and even though the perspectives may seem equally presented and discussed on the surface, upon further critical analysis, various discourses emerge through connotative meanings, implicit argumentation, and metaphors. Therefore, media presentations are never apolitical. Choice of words, phrases, and argument structure can affect how news is presented and interpreted.

***The Globe and Mail***

Another example to show the lexicography, semantics and discourse of social problems in media was taken from *The Globe and Mail.* The article entitled "New

Village readied for Innu of Davis Inlet"[6] written by Shawna Richer and printed on November 19, 2002, discusses the pending move of the Mushuau Innu from Davis Inlet to Natuashish. This article was systematically examined and the main points of those findings are discussed below.

*Headline*

The headline reads "New Village readied for Innu of Davis Inlet." The headline, the first piece of the article that an audience reads, is the piece of information that draws attention and encourages the reader to continue to the article. Literally, the headline states that the Mushuau Innu are receiving a new community. The headline suggests that the article following discusses the pending move of the Mushuau Innu from Davis Inlet to Natuashish; a general statement that gives an indication of what the subject matter is without revealing the entire contents of the article. However, the headline also contains latent meaning. Figuratively, the headline suggests that the Innu are receiving a "village." The use of the word "village," however, draws images of a small, semi-modern, rural community. In the northern barren of Labrador, where the community of Natuashish cannot be reached by road, the word village implies there is a simplistic and isolated lifestyle of the Innu people, a lifestyle that is neither traditional nor modern.

The headline also suggests that Innu had no role, no hand in the creation of their new home. The new village has been "readied *for*" the Innu. This implies that the work has been done without Innu input, without Innu planning and without Innu labour. The Innu are the subject of the statement, suggesting that everything has been done *for* the

[6] Richer's entire article is provided as reference in Appendix C.

group, as if it was commissioned in an act of goodwill. This statement then further suggests that the 'new village' is another project or gift, suggesting that the First Nations group has once again received 'a settlement', a deal from which the Innu profited.

*Leading the reader*

The lead paragraph states "When most of the 600 Innu depart Davis Inlet next month, their new homes will take some getting used to" (Richer, 2002). This opening is vague as it does not offer explanation of how or why the Innu would have to get used to their new homes and the underlying understanding is that there is something different and inferior about the Innu. What could be so different and fascinating about a new home? The paragraph that follows states that the Innu are "leaving behind ramshackle residence for fully furnished homes with...hot running water and modern bathrooms...the Innu will need to be trained in basic household chores most Canadians take for granted"(Richer, 2002). Once more, audiences receive imagery that suggests that the Innu are inferior. Innu need to be "trained" to deal with modernity, or in the context of discourse of colonization; the Innu need to be civilized to join the modern world.

The stereotypes continue as James Wheelhouse, the regional director with the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC), states that the Innu have to be taught to fix circuit breakers, how to clean a floor, and learn not to use their living room or their bathtub as a place to butcher their caribou. Such statements once again suggest that the Innu are inferior and savage, as it is suggested that they do not know how to deal with the modern world, and need Euro-Canadians to guide them, to civilize them, to help them enter modernity. Such statements are patronizing, as Wheelhouse assumes that the

Innu have no idea about modern appliances and modern 'ways,' and through these statements and the publishing of these statements by *The Globe and Mail*, perpetuate stereotypes of the lazy, 'uncivilized' Indian.

The layout of the new community is briefly described, as are the new amenities offered such as a sewage system, something that the majority of Davis Inlet had no access to previously. The houses are also said to "resemble a reasonably modern subdivision" (Richer, 2002). "Resemble" and "reasonably" suggests that the houses for the Innu are not 'actually' modern. The homes 'look like' or are 'similar to' homes that could be modern, but the statement suggests that houses are a show, not modern but just the appearance of being 'somewhat' modern. It is as if the houses of the new community of Natuashish are being used to convince the general population that Natives cannot handle modernity. The Innu cannot be given 'real' modern homes, for the Innu are not advanced enough to appreciate the gift of new homes as they will try to cut caribou carcasses in the living room and bathtub. This again suggests that the Innu are not civilized, but also that they may not deserve to be given a fully modern community, placing Innu in the position of the Other; inferior to Euro-Canadians therefore undeserving of a 'real' Canadian way of life.

*The photograph*[7]

In the context of these patronizing statements and stereotypes, the photograph which accompanies the article shows two young Innu boys with wide smiles trudging through the barren snow, with a caption that reads: "These boys will be among 600 Innu

who will soon leave Davis Inlet, Nfld., which has been plagued by alcoholism and substance abuse" (Richer, 2002). The photo, with the caption, and the arguments for modernization presented in the article, suggest that the boys are happy because the move to the new community is fast approaching. The boys are viewed as victims of the alcohol and substance abuse and smiling only because they will soon leave behind the 'ramshackle' lifestyle and the problems which beleaguered the Innu in Davis Inlet. The photo shows the children's youth and innocence as the boys look to be about 5 or 6 years old, pulling snow sleds behind them. Past images presented by media, however showed children of the same age and older hopeless intoxicated on gasoline fumes, therefore within this context; the images of happiness cannot be attributed to the 'happy-go-lucky' nature of the children, nor the lifestyle which they live in Davis Inlet.

**What is Left Out?**

*Innu voice*

"New village readied for Innu of Davis Inlet" is an article aimed at discussing the nature of the move of the Mushuau Innu to Natuashish, as well as some of the challenges being faced in this monumental project of community relocation. However, while the above analysis examines the content of the article, it is also important to ask what is missing. The most obvious element absent from this article in *The Globe and Mail* is Innu representation. In critical discourse analysis it is usually customary to examine the argument and speaking space, to discuss the lines of argument presented, and to measure the equality or inequality in the presentation of opposing views. This was carried out in

[7] The photograph can be viewed in Appendix C.

the analysis of the Hilliard article as printed in *The Telegram,* however this practice seems pointless in this case, as there is no argumentation presented in contrary to Wheelhouse; only supporting statements from Al Garman, regional director with Health Canada. Both men are bureaucratic officials from the federal government departments, both considered to be representing the same point of view. As two departments with the federal government, Health Canada and INAC coordinate communication plans, to ensure that there are no contradictions in information.

There are no Innu voices, not even mention of Innu representatives; who the community Chief is, or whether the Chief was even present at the press conference from which this article was written. Part of the issue associated with the lack of Innu presence in the article is the fact that the article was written from Halifax. The regional offices for Health Canada and INAC are present in Halifax, Nova Scotia; geographically disengaged from Newfoundland and Labrador and more specifically disengaged from the problems of the Northern Aboriginal communities. Did the Innu know about the press conference? Were they asked to attend? A press conference held in Halifax, a large city centre in another province about an Aboriginal group in Labrador and the problems and resolutions that they face as a group, showed a lack of bureaucratic understanding and respect for Innu problems and their desire to be involved directly in the decisions that affect them. Innu spokespersons and representatives have continuously stated that they wanted to be fully involved in all decisions and aspects of policy and program design and management that affected the Labrador Innu communities. However, this article and the press conference from which the article was born suggests that Innu were once again absent from the decision making process.

*Colonization frame*

Framing the issue in a way in which the effects of colonization on the lifestyle and social issues of Labrador Innu were examined and associated with the gasoline sniffing and other substance abuse problems of the communities, was never an official stance of either of the newsprint services, *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail*, used in this thesis. Colonization, however, was viewed by many to be the genesis of the problems in Innu communities, according to some of the Innu representatives and spokespersons and academic social investigators. Colonization is an academic understanding of the events and situations that plague the Aboriginal populations of Canada and something that media often shy away from. In attempts to appear neutral, concepts like colonization are not used by mainstream media news outlets, so it is this silence in the media that is analyzed through academic works.

Henriksen (1973, 1993a, 1993b), Tanner (2000), Samson (1999, 2003), and numerous other academics have written on Innu issues and challenges and each one of them discuss the effects of colonization on the development of Innu people and culture. Samson and colleagues, in the Survival International report entitled *Canada's Tibet* (1999) state in the foreward:

> In the tundra of the Labrador peninsula, a tragedy is being played out. An indigenous people suffers the highest suicide rate on earth as one of the world's most powerful nations occupies their land, takes their resources and seems hell-bent on transforming them into Euro-Canadians...to integrate a 'backward' population into the dominant society, and to control a strategic area and the resources it contains.

Colonization is a word often associated with a left-wing political orthodoxy. Any mention of colonization in media was associated with a quotation from a Innu spokesperson or

representative, or the focus of an opinion article, a newsprint article that often is connected with a disclaimer from the company stating that the opinion expressed in the article is that of the author and does not reflect the views of the newspaper or it affiliates. Even then, it is often ideas that can be associated with the concept of colonization, but the term itself is not used. Michael Valpy, in his opinion article published in *The Globe and Mail*, stated that the provincial and federal "governments have been complicitous in decades of a systematic destruction of the Innu" (Valpy, 1993a). Another editorial statement from *The Globe* states: "Much of the blame for this sad history must be attributed to white society, and the provincial and federal governments, whose policies have vacillated between meddling and indifference" ("No haven," 1993). Each of these statements suggests colonization in some way, yet discusses the idea in an indirect manner. Why colonization is such an important concept in the academic realm of discussing Indigenous issues, but absent or silenced in media representations of Aboriginal social problems, is a problem this research cannot attempt to examine, yet it is something that should be examined further.

**Comparing The Telegram and The Globe**

Both the articles, "Agreement on treatment nearer, officials say" printed in *The Telegram* and "New village readied for Innu of Davis Inlet" of *The Globe and Mail* seem neutral and objective. Yet upon further examination, it has been uncovered that there are stereotypes and presuppositions which emerge through particular lexicography and semantics; a discourse emerges. A discourse is not only what is said, but what is implied; the political undertones that accompany the content. The purpose of this chapter was to

show that these media discourses affect the construction of social problems of the Innu. Media is a major source through which society gathers information and understandings; therefore it is important to understand the political rhetoric that accompanies content. Both *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail* present the Innu in similar ways, as an uncivilized population who are difficult to negotiate with. While it is important to recognize the problematic stereotypes media presents of the Innu, it is also important to point out that there are differences in tactics of reporting and presentation between the two news sources.

*Priorities change with demand*

First of all, the difference between *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail* hinges on the fact that one is regional coverage and the other is national. This shows that there may be different priorities and different reporting styles from the different news sources. At the national level, reporting about the problems of Labrador Innu communities requires more discussion of past events, more contextualization. For example, in "New village readied for Innu of Davis Inlet" less presumptions are made about the level of knowledge of the audience. The article explains the "misery" that has "ravaged" the community of Davis Inlet and "put the community on the map" by briefly discussing the gasoline sniffing habits of Innu youth, and the high suicide rate of the community where half the population is under the age of 21 years (Richer, 2002). *The Telegram*, however, when reporting on Innu issues can reflect back on the social problems through quick references such as "that infamous January night" and the Davis Inlet "crisis."

Regional coverage was more 'aware' of the issues and printing articles in a more continuous circuit, following the story more closely than national news sources due to the geographical nearness of Davis Inlet to St. John's compared with Toronto, where *The Globe* is produced. It is not that audiences in Newfoundland and Labrador are necessarily more interested in the problems of the Innu, but that more attention can be paid to the issues due to less demand for national and international news coverage compared with that of a news source such as *The Globe.* The intra-provincial location of the news made the stories of the Innu more frequently reported than they were in *The Globe.* Out of the sample of 700 articles, 504 were from *The Telegram* and 196 were *Globe* articles. While this is not a full representation of every article written about the Innu in either source, it still shows a large discrepancy between the frequency of reporting on Innu issues between the regional and national sources.

Beaton (2003) feels that the social problem conditions of the Innu failed as social problems constructions. Beaton discusses three 'public arenas' (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988) in which substance abuse and suicide of the Innu are constructed: news media, the government, and social movement organizations. Media treated the problem as a 'crisis,' the government treated it as an 'expense,' and it was considered an 'injustice' in the social movement organization arena. Beaton argues that because of the three different definitions in the three separate arenas, the Innu plight failed to achieve and sustain a position on the institutional agenda of any of the three arenas (Beaton, 2003, 90). Beaton tends to generalize media as a single arena, a single entity in which social problems work occurs, however as it has been pointed out above, regional and national news sources have different priorities.

Due to demand on *The Globe* to report national and international news, the problems of the Labrador Innu are 'regional' rather than national news. Therefore, for the Labrador Innu, the social problem of gasoline sniffing was more successfully constructed and maintained in the regional news source compared with the national paper. There was more continuous coverage, more knowledge of the problem regionally, therefore more interest and concern about the people, the problem, and the proposed solutions, comparative to the national coverage of gasoline sniffing. So, in response to Beaton's work, it is important to expand on the idea of 'arenas.' Media is not a singular 'public arena,' as regionalism plays a factor in the likelihood that a story will be printed. National news sources, like *The Globe and Mail*, deal with higher volumes of news stories, therefore given media rules of 'newsworthiness;' the most sensational, attention grabbing, graphic and violent stories are the ones that are printed; maybe more so the larger the audience is.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a critical discourse analysis of media documentation of the substance abuse problems of Labrador Innu. The chapter examined the structures and strategies of news production and presentation processes of minority issues, such as the gasoline sniffing crises of Labrador Innu youth. General patterns and trends of reporting and presentation were discussed, as was the use of language; the strategies employed, as well as the sociocultural context in which it was used. These elements were examined through the use of two specific examples, one from the regional paper *The Telegram*, the second *The Globe and Mail*, a national news print source. This aided in the examination

of discourse and rhetorical strategies used by various social players in the claims making and social problems work of maintaining the problem in the public spotlight, as well as the media's role as constructor and conduit in the dissemination of news. This again, like the natural history mapping of social problems examined in Chapter 3, shows that there are many levels of involvement, adding another layer of complexity to social problems work. Analyzing media also shows that despite the intentions of moral entrepreneurs and others involved in constructing social problems, media often have their own rules and agendas in presenting social problems. Information is selectively chosen for presentation by media journalists, photographers, editors, and so forth, therefore the goals of the moral entrepreneurs are often distorted through the media's selection processes.

## Conclusion

This thesis examined the processes involved in defining gasoline sniffing of youth in Innu communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu, Labrador as a public social problem. This involved examining how agencies, such as the media, government, Innu organizations and others have come to define this particular set of phenomenon as a 'problem.' It also involved examining how the focus on gasoline sniffing amongst the Innu children has been used politically to discuss the more general social, political and economic issues of First Nations people and to embarrass federal and provincial governments to resolve other problems through actions such as the community relocation of Davis Inlet. Undertaking a social constructionist perspective on social problems theory, the foremost purpose of this thesis was to show that social problems are not simply problematic conditions, but a political process of negotiations, risk taking, and claims making by various groups with different political agendas—Innu, governments and media—each with a specific purpose for being involved in the process.

The Labrador Innu and the issue of substance abuse became a public social problem in January 1993 when home video images of six young children sniffing gasoline and yelling that they wanted to die emerged in the media spotlight and received international attention. Substance abuse was a problem before 1993 (Author Unknown, 1988; "Gasoline Sniffing", 1989; Henriksen, 1973; Innu Nation & Mushuau Innu Band Council, 1992; Johansen, 1992); therefore the major question this thesis aimed to answer was why 1993 became the year that the Mushuau Innu of Davis Inlet became internationally known for their troubles with substance abuse, specifically gasoline

sniffing of the communities' youth. Many questions emerged from this investigation such as: who was involved? Why? What was at stake? Why was the media interested? What elements of the story did the media pick up on and report?

## Chapter Objectives

*'Natural history'*

The evolution of the problem of gasoline sniffing was traced from its emergence as a local social problem within the communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu to a public social problem which gained international attention. Tracing the 'natural history' of gasoline sniffing involved not only its evolvement as a problem publicly, but also the major organizations, agencies and departments involved in the construction of the problem, their roles, as well as their relations to others involved, motives for involvement, and the political discourses that emerged from such interactions. Chapter 3 showed that social problems are not linear, but complex situations that involve numerous social actors, with numerous political agendas.

The analytical task of mapping the 'natural history' involved the utilization of a framework developed by Critcher (2003) based on the sociological understandings of 'moral panics' as examined by Cohen (1972). Critcher suggests that social problems do not just appear, but are constructed through various players and processes which often rely on the media to express their concerns and public policy discussions, as media is the source where the majority of the population receives the majority of its knowledge about world events.

Innu leaders, provincial and federal governments, the RCMP and International rights organizations such as *Survival International*, and other key actors were involved in the process of making the story. Examining the various social actors involved showed that social problems are not just created by one person or organization, but various groups with various political motivations. Mapping the 'natural history' was important to the overall objective of this thesis, it showed that what is known of social problems and how problems are known, involves claims making and counter claims making of various social actors, as well as the involvement of media. In short, this chapter showed that social problems claims involve work. Social problems are not simply conditions but interpretations, persuasions, and motivations of individuals, groups and organizations.

*Political rhetoric and embarrassment*

The concepts of 'pseudo-event' (Boorstin, 1964) and 'politics of embarrassment' (Paine, 1985) were used in Chapter 4 to explain how gasoline sniffing of Innu youth became a media spectacle and some of the consequences of its release. These issues and concepts are important to the discussion of social problems as they help to identify the political environment, as well as the political manipulation, justification and motivation of social problems claims making and problem management. It allowed the examination of the political actors involved, particularly the Innu and the federal and provincial governments, but also their level of involvement and the stakes of their involvement, as well as the expressions of political rhetoric used.

The international attention that the gasoline sniffing problems of the Innu received in 1993 was not solely about the problem of substance abuse. The Innu had been trying

for years to get the federal and provincial governments to pay attention to the other social issues plaguing the communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu. They had protested military low-level flying starting in the 1970s, complained about living standards in Davis Inlet after the house fire in February 1992, filed complaints with the Canadian Human Rights Commission about the unethical treatment of Labrador Innu by federal government departments in 1992 and even tried to negotiate community relocation for the Mushuau on numerous occasions[1]. Innu felt that their voices had gone unheard. In 1993 the opportunity to be seen and heard came in the shape of a home video displaying the destitute living conditions and hopelessness of Innu youth sniffing gasoline and shouting suicidal threats. Peter Penashue, Katie Rich, Simeon Tshakapesh, and other Innu leaders and representatives openly took responsibility for making the decision to send the video images to media outlets. 1993 was a federal election year and two weeks after the images were shown in local, national and international media; the Mushuau Innu had an agreement with the federal government to negotiate relocating Davis Inlet. The video of 1993 marked a new form of political campaigning for the Innu, as the images of gasoline sniffing children had embarrassed the government into action.

While minorities, such as the Labrador Innu do not have control or power over the media, through this theoretical study, I believe that I demonstrated they can sometimes break through the power structures and use media outlets to convey their own political agendas. It is the belief that the timing of its release to the media was purposely chosen by the Innu to gain maximum usage of the story, to create mass empathy from the public, embarrass the government into taking action to solve the problems, and secure promises

[1] For more information on Innu issues and a timeline of community events, see Appendix A.

from them in the wake of the federal elections in both 1993 and 2000. The power of the minority is often disregarded, particularly in this case because the images of the Innu presented in the media were those of pain and despair and powerlessness. However, by using the media to draw attention to the problems of the Innu youth, Innu spokespersons and representatives were using the Innu's status as victims of Canadian government policies and colonization to motivate the government into negotiating for solutions and resolutions to some of the major problems plaguing the Innu communities of Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu.

*Critical discourse analysis*

Finally, the role of the media in social problems work was examined. Specifically, critical discourse analysis was employed to examine the language and presentation styles of newspapers to demonstrate that news is not objectively produced. Chapter 5 examined the structures and strategies of news production and presentation processes of minority issues, such as the gasoline sniffing crises of Labrador Innu youth through *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail.* While the main focus of this thesis was the use of the home video footage to gain media attention, video footage also affected news texts and the most feasible way to systematically examine the course of the social problem in media documentation was through textual analysis.

The use of critical discourse analysis aided in the examination of discourse and rhetorical strategies used by various social players in the claims making and social problems work of maintaining the problem in the public spotlight, as well as media's role as constructor and conduit in the dissemination of news. This again, like the natural

history mapping of social problems, shows that there are many levels of involvement, adding another layer of complexity to social problems work. Analyzing media also shows that despite the intentions of moral entrepreneurs and others involved in constructing social problems, media often have their own agendas. Innu, as it was shown in Chapter 4 played a critical initial role in releasing information to media outlets regarding the gasoline sniffing problem, however their choice to engage politically with media proved to be a dangerous tactic as the imagery in the press continually played on the stereotypes of First Nations peoples.

Information is selectively chosen for presentation by media journalists, photographers, editors, and so forth, therefore the goals of moral entrepreneurs, such as the Innu, are often distorted through media's selection processes. These ideas were discussed through the critical discourse analysis of two articles, one from *The Telegram* and the other from *The Globe and Mail.* Analysis of these articles showed that on the surface, information seemed fairly and objectively presented. Upon further analysis, however, it was shown that Innu leaders and community members were shown to be inferior to Euro-Canadian society. Leaders, particularly Tshakapesh, was painted as 'tenacious' and unreasonable, while community members of Davis Inlet were seen as 'uncivilized'—needing 'training' to adjust to the new surroundings of the new community of Natuashish. Despite the fact that news sources such as *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail* were covering important stories of Innu social problems, the majority of information provided in the stories were from government representatives, providing an imbalance in the presentation of information. Audiences were receiving information about the social problems of Innu communities; however the stories had a particular

political stance attached to them, more often affiliated with Akaneshau (non-Innu) politics.

Media was the main source through which Innu representatives constructed and presented their stories about substance abuse, but simultaneously, media outlets had their own political agenda. Innu Nation President Peter Penashue was quoted as stating in a media interview that the Mushuau Innu band council and Innu Nation were instrumental in the decision to release the video of the gasoline sniffing children. "If we don't do it no one is going to listen to our problems. It gave us the opportunity to speak to others and work on ourselves (Valpy, 1994). Media continued constructing the story of gasoline sniffing after the initial release of information from the Labrador Innu community, however. By replaying the video, or re-releasing the images, those children became frozen in discursive space. These children were then no longer used to express the 'Innu story', but became reinforcing images of the "Indian 'problem';" highlighting the sensational imagery and stereotypes of Aboriginal communities plagued with substance abuse. This is reinforced by the fact that approximately half of all articles included in the sample made some reference to gasoline sniffing, whether as a direct discussion of the issue, or as a passing reference in articles on other subjects. Concentration of coverage increased during crisis moments, such as 1993 and 2000 gasoline sniffing 'epidemics', which suggested that media were interested in the 'sensational' footage more than the resolution of the gasoline sniffing problem.

## Limitations and Challenges

It must be reiterated that these are personal conjectures and interpretations of the events discussed, supported by theoretical studies. The research for this thesis was carried out in this manner due to the difficulties of gaining access to Innu community members for 'first-hand' experiences and 'native' interpretations of events. Therefore, one of the greatest challenges of this thesis was aiming to offer an accurate depiction of the events without input from the Innu Nation, Sheshatshiu or Mushuau Band Councils or any other Innu persons involved in the events under examination.

The situation of the Labrador Innu was examined using theoretical frameworks, for example showing how Paine (1985) interpreted the hunger strike actions of the Norwegian Saami and how similar traits can be recognized in the actions of the Innu with respect to publicizing the gasoline sniffing addictions of youth. These are the issues and topics that I believe needed to be examined and that could, even without the involvement of the Innu Nation, produce a piece of research that maintains integrity and respect for Innu culture while discussing sensitive issues, such as understanding the politics of substance abuse as a public issue. However, it is important to restate that the findings, as presented in this thesis, are provisional; not least because access to the Innu community members who were involved in the development of the gasoline sniffing media 'story' was not available.

## Implications for Further Research

While this thesis serves its purpose in examining the political process of the social construction of social problems, it relies heavily on media and government sources, as

well as academic works. The works of Landry (2003) and Beaton (2003) deal with the issues of social problems construction and media influence in the same theoretical and analytical manner as they both deal with textual analysis. The fact that Landry, Beaton and I all depended on textual analysis and secondary information suggests that further research is needed in this area with direct involvement of Innu community members. Researchers need to gain access to the communities of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish, talk to community members and leaders and add Innu voice, Innu interpretations, and Innu experiences to the theoretical and analytical works of Landry, Beaton, and myself.

Related to this exploration is the need to look at the internal divisions of the groups of moral entrepreneurs that have been identified in this thesis, specifically the Innu. Due to the lack of access to Innu communities to conduct research, the Innu have been painted as a homogeneous group with a unified voice. However, it is unlikely that this is the case. It would be worthwhile for research to be conducted to analyze the political environment within the Labrador Innu Nation and the effects differing agendas have on the face of social problems such as gasoline sniffing. Who is speaking out in the community? Who does that person(s) represent? How are the agendas different for Sheshatshiu and Natuashish? Further research needs to be completed in order to break the ethnocentric view of First Nations people as a monolith and singular voice. There are differing opinions and political factions within the Labrador Innu communities that require further consideration to help elaborate on the effect various political situations had on the emergence of the gasoline sniffing issue into the media spotlight. Therefore, research including Innu voice should include multiple Innu voices.

**Political Purpose**

This thesis is about how gasoline sniffing became a social issue and how it was used politically to gain power and control over events, information and negotiations in various other areas of Innu/government relations. Therefore, it is about gasoline sniffing as a social problem *construction*. Most existing research understands the political motivations of media outlets and government departments, but little attention is paid to the political rhetoric of minority groups, therefore the examination in this theme amidst this thesis is an innovative contribution to the existing literature on moral panics and social constructionism. The Innu may have been colonized, they may have endured extreme hardships, pain and suffering, but they did not standing by listlessly watching their lives disintegrate before them. They took action; they used the resources available, such as the media, and succeeded in gaining power and control of their communities and their futures. This is an interpretation that is absent in the majority of literature on the social construction of social problems. The claims making processes of defining social problems is not confined to only those in traditional positions of power and authority. The Innu have pioneered important media initiatives and brought their own voices to an ever widening public. Increasingly, they have *attempted* to take over the representation of themselves and in doing so they have been active agents of decolonization and constructive change (Alia, 1999, 63).

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# Appendix A

## Labrador Innu—Events Timeline, 1936-2005

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|---|---|
| 1936 | The Newfoundland Rangers police force is established in Old Davis Inlet, and is responsible for the distribution of rations from the Newfoundland government |
| 1939 | Innu begin to settle more permanently in Old Davis Inlet in traditional tents |
| 1941 | Military base in Goose Bay is completed to connect North America to Europe during WWII |
| 1948 | Newfoundland Government relocates Innu to Nutak, an Inuit community, Innu are unhappy and return to Old Davis Inlet |
| 1949 | Newfoundland joins Confederation—The First Nations People of Newfoundland are left out of the Terms of Union, therefore the Innu of Labrador were left to the responsibility of the province, not recognized under the Federal Indian Act and left without "Indian Status." Part of the rationale for this was that Aboriginal peoples in Newfoundland could vote, while the rest of Canada's First Nations population were not extended that right. Registering Newfoundland's First Nations under the Indian Act was considered a 'step back' |
| 1950s | Catholic priests and missionaries take permanent residence in Old Davis Inlet |
| 1951 | The Indian Act is revised to remove the provision which made it an offence to raise funds or hire a lawyer to advance a land claim without the government's permission. However, Newfoundland had never established treaties with the Indians within its borders; therefore the Indian Act did not apply and was not enforced in the province. This meant that the Innu had no status or rights under the Federal Indian Act |
| 1954-1964 | Funding is transferred from Canada to the Newfoundland government for "Aboriginal" components of programs and services. Aboriginal people in Newfoundland and Labrador do not receive funding at levels of First Nations elsewhere and do not have access to an equivalent range of programs and services |
| 1960 | Aboriginal people in Canada are fully enfranchised |
| 1961 | Upper Churchill Falls hydro dam development—Churchill Falls Corporation Limited established and granted 99 year lease authorizing |

development of the Upper Churchill watershed—controversial due to Innu and Inuit traditional claims to the land—Innu called the river *Mishtashipu*, meaning "big river" in English translation

1962 Newfoundland election—Liberal government

1965 Canadian policy towards Aboriginal people in Newfoundland and Labrador is made official through the Federal-Provincial Agreement for Financial Assistance to Native Communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. The government of Newfoundland is given the authority to legislate over, and manage the province's Indian and Inuit peoples, making Newfoundland the only province in Canada to be given that authority

1966 Newfoundland election—Liberal government

Mushuau Innu are relocated to Davis Inlet on Iluikoyak Island as part of the Fisheries Household Resettlement Program of the Smallwood government. The idea was to relocate smaller, isolated communities and integrate them in more concentrated areas where fishing could be more elaborately pursued. The Innu were not moved into another community, they were to receive a new community with access to boat services and fishing waters, but were isolated from traditional hunting grounds, and proper housing, and community services

1970s Low level flying agreement with NATO. During Cold War, the idea was to practice flying under the radar as attack and defense tactic against USSR. NATO still practices low level flying over Innu hunting grounds, which started in 1979. Federal government encourages other countries to use Goose Bay, good diplomatic and economic bargaining

1970 The Naskapi-Montagnais Innu Association (now the Innu Nation) is created as a political body to represent the Innu communities of Utshimassits and Sheshatshiu

1971 Newfoundland election—Conservative government

December—First two generating units of Churchill Falls are working, and Innu traditional hunting and burial grounds are flooded

1972 October—Federal Election—Minority Liberal Government

Newfoundland election—Conservative government

1974 Churchill Falls completed and running at full capacity

Report of the Royal Commission on Labrador released

July—Federal Election—Liberal government

1976 Newfoundland election—Conservative government

1977 Innu files first land claims with the government and request registration under the Indian Act

Charges are laid against Innu hunters and their meat and guns are confiscated. Wildlife Minister says there will be "no special treatment for Indian hunters." Protests ensue. An informal agreement that game laws will not be used harshly against Innu hunters results

1978 Land claims petition conditionally accepted by Federal government, but subject to completion of land use and occupancy study and the participation of the Newfoundland government in negotiations

1979 Canada began leasing the Goose Bay Air Base to NATO Air Forces to engage in low level flight training, air-defense exercises, and bombing practices

Newfoundland election—Conservative government

May—Federal election is held—Minority Progressive Conservative government

1980 February—Federal election—Liberal government

1982 Newfoundland election—Conservative government

1984 Innu receive federal government funding directly for first time

September—Federal Election—Liberal government

1985 Newfoundland election—Conservative government

1987 May—three Innu men are found guilty of illegal possession of Caribou meat and illegal hunting of the protected Mealy Mountain Caribou herd. Sentenced to 30 days. Men claim it is their native right to hunt

1988 Innu demonstrators invaded a secure airfield seven times in three weeks and force four western powers to suspend their northern bombing exercises for nearly a month

November—Federal election—Progressive Conservative government

1989 Newfoundland election—Liberal government

November—9 youth form Davis Inlet face 50 charges stemming from problems associated with sniffing

1990 Statement of Claims regarding Innu land rights is finally accepted, after land use and occupancy study is submitted to the government

Naskapi-Montagnais Innu Association changes name to Innu Nation under leadership of Peter Penashue

Supreme Court of Canada rules to loosen strict hunting regulations to accommodate sustenance hunters

1991 September—Innu create a blockade to halt the extension of a logging road west of Goose Bay

The federal government established the Indian Claims Commission. It was based on a model proposed during consultations with First Nation organizations, and was created as an independent advisory body with authority to hold public inquiries into specific claims that have been rejected by the government. The Commission was also mandated to provide mediation to help First Nations and government, at any stage in negotiations, reach claim settlements

1992 February 14—Six children die in house fire because adults were out drinking. Shows problem of drinking, but also the lack of adequate facilities in the community—children using hot plate to heat home, no fire dept or equipment, etc.

March—Katie Rich is elected as Mushuau Band Chief –First female band chief

Innu make move toward own jurisdiction officers—wish to create own police force. Two Innu men are sent to British Columbia for aboriginal peacekeeping training. They were given policing authority by the Innu Nation and the Mushuau Band Council (not recognized authority by the province) in attempts to address some of the chronic social problems in the community of Davis Inlet

June—Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples conducts hearings in Sheshatshiu

June—Innu Nation requested an investigation by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) to examine the government of Canada and Newfoundland and their treatment of the Innu of Labrador. The CHRC with permission from the Innu Nation and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) hired Donald McRae, Dean

of the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa to undertake the research and writing of the report

June—Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council, with aid from editor Camille Fouillard, release people's inquiry into the death of the children in the house fire, *Gathering Voices: Finding Strength to Help Our Children*

October—Demonstration staged on the Airbase tarmac to protest NATO low-level flying. 13 Innu are arrested

November—Residents of Sheshatshiu remove Hydro meters from their homes—replace with home-made 'jumpers'

December—Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples conducts hearings in Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet

Store in Sheshatsiu receives license to sell liquor but the band council persuades Premier Wells to withdraw license

The upgrade of the original Trans Labrador Highway from Labrador West (Labrador City/Wabush) to Happy Valley-Goose Bay was officially completed

1993 January—six children are sniffing gasoline in an unheated shack, claiming they want to die; images are videotaped by Simeon Tshakapesh and distributed to the media

January/February—Innu make request that 18 of worst sniffers be sent to Poundmakers Rehabilitation Centre in Alberta for 6 months of treatment. Cost= $2 million for 18 kids out of 24 but many returned to sniffing

February/March—discussions surrounding the Relocation of Davis Inlet—Innu request Sango Bay, Premier Wells wants West Labrador which is less isolated and where greater services and economic opportunities are available. Wells delays decision saying that more studies need to be undertaken before a decision can be made. Innu say the site for the new community should be of their own choosing

August—McRae's *Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Right Commission* is released

September—Kids returned home from Alberta. Brought to Sango Bay for Innu spiritual/country experience before returning to Davis Inlet

September—The Innu reject Indian Act registration offer

October—Federal election—Liberal government

October—Innu stage a two-week sit-in on Parliament Hill to gain public support for their opposition to registration and demand relocation

October—Sheshatshiu Innu and Hydro company come to agreement and meters are replaced on homes in Sheshatshiu

November—25 people from Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu training to be drug and alcohol counselors from Nechi Institute of Alcohol and Drug Education, Edmonton (Nechi= Native AA)

December 16—Judge Robert Hislop is forced out of the community—accused of being insensitive to aboriginal sensibilities—claimed Innu were not given fair treatment and trial—delay trial of parents of children in house fire. Innu claim they want control of their own destiny and they find sentences too harsh. RCMP closes its detachment, but promises police services from a community to the south whenever the residents of Davis Inlet request it

December—12 prisoners escape during the December 16th protest. Justice Minister Ed Roberts says the organizers of the protest will be charged. Talks about a range of community issues were also suspended until the Innu leaders aid in the search for the fugitives. Chief Katie Rich refused

December—Minister Ron Irwin, the new INAC minister, delayed his visit to Davis Inlet because of the political tension and protest in the community

December—6 trashed the Davis Inlet safe house for victims of domestic and sexual abuse along with RCMP patrol cabin—stated offenders were high on gas

Katie Rich is charged with contempt of court because she served court with an eviction notice

Voisey's Bay Nickel deposits discovered (75 km North of Utshimassits) by Diamond Fields Resources, region called *Emish* by Innu

Newfoundland election—Liberal government

Georg Henriksen's Report on the social and economic development of the Innu community of Davis Inlet to the Economic Recovery Commission is released

1994 January—suicide attempt rate 3 times higher than 1 year earlier—gone from 4/month to 12/month, after treatment. 17 out of 18 have returned to their sniffing habit

January—All 12 prisoners are recaptured by the RCMP

March—Simeon Tshakapesh replaced Katie Rich as Chief in Utshimassits

September—Provincial Minister of Justice, Ed Roberts, threatens to force the court system back into Davis Inlet

December—150 Innu youth 'riot' surrounded government building in community threw lumber at RCMP and traveling circuit judge

Innu demonstrate on Parliament Hill to demand a relocation agreement from the federal government

1995 February—An eviction notice is served to Diamond Fields Resources for occupation of Voisey's Bay, land in dispute with land claims from the Innu and Inuit. The Innu and Inuit demand that all drilling stop until cultural and environmental protection plans are in place. A peaceful protest is held on the land lasting 12 days

March—Innu and supporters gather on Parliament Hill to protest federal environmental assessment panel recommendations that would double the number of low-level flights over their traditional lands

March—Interim Policing Agreement between Mushuau and RCMP signed

April—Katie Rich is re-elected as Mushuau Chief

Canadian Justice System reinstated in Davis Inlet. First session held in May

July—Mushuau Band takes over government store in Davis Inlet. There are plans for it to be run by Board of Directors

September—Dr. Jane McGillvary states in the press that one out of four children in Sheshatshiu are sniffing gas regularly

October—Conference held with Dr. Jane McGillvary—doctor in Davis Inlet says one quarter of youth are sniffing regularly—states her work seem futile—anger over comments expressed by Mushuau Band Council

November—Ptarmigan Trail proposed and approved through environmental-assessment process. Innu are angered by the impact it will have on land and wildlife that Innu depend on. The trail is proposed to link Goose Bay with the South Coast of Labrador through Mealy Mountains

December—Abitibi-Price runs papermills in Grand Falls and Stephenville. They forecast a wood supply problem on the island and submitted a

proposal to government to cut 300,000 cubic metres in the Happy-Valley Goose Bay region of Labrador. Innu Nation claims it is an irresponsible activity trying to take place on lands not yet settled

1996 January—5 RCMP officers are sworn in as supernumeracy RCMP officers

March—Framework Agreement for Innu land claims is signed by the three governments (Innu Nation, Federal, and Provincial)

March—Peter Penashue makes suggestion that RCMP should investigate Band Councils for private use of public funds. Penashue later retracts his statement, but the RCMP investigate anyway

May—A lawyer argues that the case against the parents charged in the death of their children in the February 1992 house fire in Davis Inlet should be thrown out of court because it took too long to get the case to trial. It was delayed once on the request of Attorney General Ed Roberts, once because of bad weather, and between December 1993 and May 1995 because of the court's eviction out of Davis Inlet

November—Relocation agreement signed by province (Tobin), Ottawa (Irwin Dept of Indian Aff), and Mushuau Innu council (Katie Rich)—ratified by 97% of community

December—6 girls in 3 separate incidents are arrested for crimes under the influence. Represents increase in arrests related to sniffing—RCMP says avg. of 2 sniffers a month picked up in Sheshatshiu

Low level flying deal with NATO is doubled—274 flights in 1979 to over 5000 by 1998

Inco acquired the rights to the Voisey's Bay deposits with go ahead from the prov government. Deposit is estimated at 30 million tones of nickel, copper and cobalt and worth an estimated $10 billion

Newfoundland election—Liberal government

1997 January—17 gas sniffers trashed Davis Inlet School. Offenders between ages of 13-21

February—Innu Nation leader Peter Penashue and Sheshatshiu Chief Greg Andrew leave their leadership positions after a dispute over alleged misuse of band council funds

February—Framework agreement for self-government is signed by Innu Nation and province and federal governments

March—Katie Rich elected new Innu Nation President after Peter Penashue resigns over dispute in Sheshatshiu

March—Order in Council authorizes Federal Cabinet to consider Labrador Innu as status Indians residing on a reserve for purposes of providing funding for programs and services

Innu Nation and Labrador Inuit Association (LIA) take legal action against INCO. They request that the construction of the road and airstrip associated with Voisey's Bay halt until full environmental assessment is undertaken. Marks first time the Innu Nation and LIA collaborate in land claim support

First allegations of sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests, brothers—dating back to 1950s—about 50 civil law suits filed between 1997-2001

June—Federal election—Liberal government

July—Newfoundland Supreme Court Justice rejects the legal basis of the Innu Nation and LIA claim

August—Innu Nation and Labrador Inuit Association stage a joint protest against the Voisey's Bay Development

September—Three judges of the Newfoundland Court of Appeals block the government of Newfoundland's order to allow the bypass of the environmental assessment. The government is ordered to undergo environmental assessment for the road and airstrip

Prote Poker replaces Katie Rich as Chief. Rich steps down stating there are financial issues with the Innu Nation

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador committed to building an extension of the TLH, connecting Happy Valley-Goose Bay with an existing isolated road network serving coastal communities on the Strait of Belle Isle. The Labrador Transportation Initiative Agreement resulted in the transfer of the Labrador coastal marine service to the province from the federal government. As part of the agreement, the province received a $340 million cash settlement and all related infrastructure. With the funding, the province agreed to complete Phases I and II, to undertake other Labrador transportation initiatives as approved by Cabinet, and to operate the ferry service to coastal Labrador

Canada-Innu Transfer Agreement is signed. A federal order-in-council authorizes Minister of Indian Affairs and other federal departments to treat Innu "as if they were registered Indians living on reserves"; Innu to continuing paying tax, unlike other First Nations; provincial programs,

including education, social services, and policing, are exempt from agreement. There is an impasse over jurisdiction and funding responsibility

1998 March—Premier Tobin and Premier Bouchard are negotiating a new Churchill Hydro Development in the lower Churchill River. Agreement is to be signed on March 9, but the Innu Nation along with the Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native Peoples (CASNP) interrupted the signing, forcing Tobin and Bouchard to find a new location for the agreement signing

Natuashish building begins

July—Extra RCMP stationed in Davis Inlet due to weekend crime spree under influence—allows for 24 hour patrol

August—Referendum in Davis Inlet re: Drug and Alcohol ban—56% voter turnout, 62% in favour of restriction (101 of 164 voters)—little officially done

October—Mark Nui is elected to replace Prote Poker as Mushuau Chief

November—province releases position that they will let community leaders deal with alcohol and substance abuse and will provide resources when called upon

November—David Nuk is elected the new Innu Nation President

David Nuk of the Innu Nation called the environmental impact statement into the Trans Labrador Highway (TLH) pro-government propaganda. Among the deficiency, he said, it doesn't address Innu concerns about the effect of the road on the environment. The Labrador Metis Nation joins the fight against the TLH

In 1998 and 1999, the United Nations human rights committees reviewed Canada's compliance with the International Covenants. These committees ruled that Canada was violating its international human rights obligations towards Aboriginals stating: "There has been little or no progress in the alleviation of social and economic deprivation among Aboriginal people. In particular, the Committee is deeply concerned at the shortage of adequate housing, the endemic mass unemployment and the high rate of suicide, especially among youth in Aboriginal communities, [and] the failure to provide safe and adequate drinking water to Aboriginal communities" (As quoted by Matthew Coon Come at World Conference Against Racism, August 30, 2001)

1999 January—Labrador Inuit reach an agreement in principle with Federal and Provincial governments that gives the Inuit 15,800 square km of land and $255 million

February—Provincial election is held

February—Sheshatshiu receives $200,000 toward building of youth solvent treatment centre with $500,000 annual operating budget from Health Canada

May—Land claims from Inuit groups in Quebec cover most of Labrador. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador does not accept any of those claims. It says it will only deal with Aboriginals who live in the Province

May—Mushuau Innu propose a program to deal with issues and problems—Mushuau Innu Integrated Healing Strategy

May—six youth from Davis Inlet are sent to Ontario for addictions treatment for one week

June 7—Mushuau Innu declare Sober Day for Davis Inlet

June—Chief Pokue says sniffing is serious problem again, RCMP says only isolated incidents—admist petition to have band council removed

July—2 men committed suicide within 6 hours of each other—one alcohol related the other drug overdose in Sheshatshiu. Band Council banned alcohol and drugs for two weeks in Sheshatshiu. Barricades and check points set up—no by-law could be passed since Innu didn't hold status therefore did not have self-government rights

August—Ban of alcohol lifted in Sheshatshiu after Band Council receive threats of being sued. Within 3 days 8 girls are picked up for sniffing and there are 4 suicide threats

August—16 year old by from Davis Inlet sets himself on fire while sniffing gasoline, after a fight with his girlfriend

September—14 year old girl sets herself on fire while sniffing

September—The Innu Nation releases the details of its land selection process. Premier Tobin publicly proclaims that the Innu are asking for an unreasonable 80% of Labrador. Daniel Ashini counters saying that they are requesting 22%, plus another 23% joint with the province/federal governments

November—Agreement reached for the transfer of education and police services to Innu control—Nov 2000 still not implemented

November—Ban reinstated at a cost of $600,000 a year. 82% of community in favour but looking for government to pass laws to make it legal

November—Survival International releases the report entitled *Canada's Tibet: The Killing of the Innu.* The suicide of Andrew Rich, a young Innu man in Sheshatshiu, coincides with the release of the report. Rich's father, Napes Ashini, an outspoken community advocate on the issues of suicide was in Britain assisting with the release of the report when he learns of the death of his son

December—Barricade disassembled when children found risking their lives to break through the blockade smuggling alcohol by snowmobile over open ice

December—The provincial government agrees to let Northern Labrador communities have control over the sale and consumption of alcohol—as per request from LIA

Newfoundland election—Liberal government

Tobin requests First Nations Status for Innu from Federal government

Paul Rich requests help in the form of more money and more control over own affairs to combat substance abuse. Health Canada agrees to give Sheshatshiu an extra $15,000 to help counselors assess what addicted youth need

Some sections of the original Trans Labrador Highway were poorly-built or in need of upgrades from increased traffic use, particularly the section between Churchill Falls and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. $60 million was allocated to upgrade the highway as part of the Labrador Transportation Initiative

- Phase II of new construction, costing $130 million (CAD), began and saw provincial route #510 extended 323 km over 4 years from its terminus in Red Bay northeast to the port of Cartwright

2000 Statistics released by the Newfoundland Liquor Commission showed that the Atasanik Lodge, Nain poured more hard liquor than all but three other bars in the province

February—Registration under the Indian Act is suggested by the Federal government for the Innu. The Innu consider the offer, discuss it through community meetings, and sent their agreement with the offer in writing to

the Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault. Nault responds to the letter by removing the offer, stating that it would not be in the Innu's best interest to register under the Indian Act. The problem: Nault did not realize that the Innu were considered Indians, not Inuit

February—Paul Rich is re-elected as Sheshatshiu Chief

February—It is announced that military low-level flying will increase by 750 flights to 6050 flights per year. It is also announced that the flights will occur later at night, to accommodate military requests for more night flying

March—Brian Tobin chairs task force looking into the social and economic problems of Labrador coastal communities

March—Premier Brian Tobin, Ernest McLean, Minister Responsible for Labrador, and Torngat Mountains MHA Wally Andersen today announced that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will provide $23 million over the next three years for a Northern Coastal Labrador Strategic Initiative for the five northern coastal Labrador communities of Nain, Hopedale, Rigolet, Makkovik and Postville. The premier said that this funding will be used to improve fundamental infrastructure within the communities, including $7.7 million for housing, $6 million for roads, and $9 million for water and sewer servicing

May—12-bed addictions treatment facility opens in Sheshatshiu

June—David Nui replaces Mark Nui as Mushuau Chief

June—three teenage boys overdose on drugs in Sheshatshiu. Man sets himself on fire and burns to death in Davis Inlet, and a young girl sets herself on fire while high on gasoline in Sheshatshiu

June—Premier Brian Tobin makes comment in media that Aboriginal leadership needs to deal with their own alcohol problems to help their communities

June—the school in Sheshatshiu is closed a week before school ends for the summer, because a Public Works Canada building safety report identified 42 serious deficiencies

June—Innu Nation states it will remove non-Aboriginal fishing nets out of rivers near Lake Melville. The Innu Nation has designated several areas in Upper Lake Melville as salmon conservation areas in response to DFO's decision to open the salmon fishery to non-aboriginal resident fishers

July—The Innu Nation goes to court to get an injunction to stop supersonic flight testing in Labrador. The military postponed the testing until September when they discovered the Innu were taking legal action

July—three Quebec Innu bands are willing to agree to framework of a land claim offer by government that offers a one time payment of $250 million for 500 square miles of land, and three percent royalties of the exploitation of natural resources on territories they share with non-aboriginals. The Innu Nation thinks it's a sell out as they are requesting 10,000 square miles of land in their claim negotiations

July—Innu protest logging, and blockade Grand Lake Road. Shots are fired and RCMP show up to break up the protest

September—leaders of the 4 churches—RC, Presb, Angl, and United apologize for the abuse since arrival of Europeans—Penashue doesn't accept apology saying they do not know what they are apologizing for

October—Davis Nui resigns and Daniel Poker replaces him as interim Chief

October—Auditor General's Report on Davis Inlet Relocation states that there is significant risk the $113 million project will not address Innu needs. Criticisms are: DIAND did not fully identify, plan, or implement necessary measures to remedy social pathologies; the project is at least one year behind, cost is 35% above the initial authorized amount, DIAND did not evaluate whether the Innu could manage a project of this magnitude

October—A house fire in Sheshatshiu kills two grandparents and three children while parents are out drinking in the community

November—Simeon Tshakapesh is elected as Mushuau Chief

November—Paul Rich (Sheshatshiu) requests the removal of up to 50 kids due to gas sniffing—says no point in using Sheshatshiu's center since kids can leave right back to sniffing environment—39 kids need immediate help

- Agreement made that kids receive treatment in Sheshatshiu—need to voluntarily sign into protective custody—33 signed in 8 remained with families for treatment

- 12 more high risk are moved from center to Goose Bay

Same week Davis Inlet makes claims that sniffing is rampant in their community as well—stated that 11 of the sniffers from Sheshatshiu came

from Davis Inlet—there has been no certified social worker stationed in Davis Inlet since 1998

- 19 cases before court—all solvent abuse is factor
- agreement made to build treatment center to service Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet in Natuashish

November—Canada signs communiqué with province, Innu Nation, and Chiefs of Sheshatshiu and Mushuau Councils, committing Canada to register Innu under Indian Act and declare both groups as bands

November 27—Federal election—Liberal government

December—Dr. McGillvary resigns her position as medical practitioner in Sheshatshiu. The doctor publicly announces her frustration over the continuing substance abuse and child neglect in the community. She claims that she cannot help people who will not help themselves and take responsibility for their problems

December—Grace Hospital is converted into makeshift detox center for Davis Inlet—talks break down about details due to Innu's request for more long term solutions

- agreement reached—Goose Bay facilities for treatment, after Grace for detox, but let families spend Christmas together—40 of 85 subject to be removed from community

Dec 16—all Sheshatshiu youth are released from Goose Bay facilities after 3 weeks, claim they are not chronic users, but not returned to community

2001 January—Health Canada opens an office in Goose Bay specifically to work with the Innu communities of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet

January—Federal government (INAC) introduce 3rd party management in Davis Inlet. KMPG Consultants Inc. were hired to manage and be the administrative responsibility for financial operations of Davis Inlet

January—Grace ready for kids but Innu haven't returned calls to social services

- Chief Simeon Tshakapesh waiting for government officials to decided whether to hire Aboriginal counselors –want to be involved in hiring process—acknowledged as decision makers—won't prevent the removal of the children but says process will fail without Innu involvement

- Jan 9—Tshakapesh puts 12 kids on plane for St. John's—can't wait for government

- Jan 10—Assistant Deputy minister with provincial Department of Health says no counselors have been hired, only detox support staff

- Jan 12—Telegram states that Innu have requested immunity from sexual abuse allegations that arise during detox—Tshakapesh denies, Katie Rich says possible

- Governor General Adrienne Clarkson set to visit Labrador Native communities

- Jan 25—threaten to remove kids from program after Ottawa made decision to take over Innu finances

April—35 kids from Grace detox—16 high risk sent to Alberta, 6 low risk learning nomadic lifestyle, and 11 to Goose Bay

May—The Innu submit revised land claim proposal. The Governments of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador agree to resume negotiations

May—22 Mushuau youth enter a treatment program in Manitoba

May—Nukum Mani Shan School in Davis Inlet closed because of oil leak

June—a group of support workers say treatment failed and an inquiry should be launched--$5.5 million spent

- Staff abused by kids, began to quit and staffing became an issue—supervisors offered no behaviour modification

June—The Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy is initiated by Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Solicitor General to stabilize health, create safe communities and help the Innu build a better future. $81.3 million is allocated to the Healing Strategy over the next 3 years

June—map is released outlining the LIAs land claims agreement and non-aboriginal hunters and fishers are angry that the Inuit hold the land right to the best hunting and fishing grounds in Labrador

August—Premier Roger Grimes visits Davis Inlet

August—Claims of a resurgence of sniffing in Davis Inlet. Innu blame Health Canada for a lack of an 'after-care' program in the community

September—The Mushuau youth return from Manitoba

October—Band council of Davis Inlet drafted bylaw to ban alcohol—failed in 1998

October—Health Canada has agreed to fund an Innu family centered treatment program and the province has agreed to purchase a place called Lobstick Lodge, that will be the site for the family centered treatment—slated to start January 2002

December—province and INCO sign deal about Voisey's Bay—only party not in agreement is LIA

50 civil lawsuits in court system for grievances against the RC for sex abuse

Independent accountant hires by INA to look into the Innu Nation and the allocation of its federal funding

2002 January—RCMP officer from Davis Inlet claims a resurgence of gas sniffing during a CBC Radio interview. Innu say that the 4 phase plan recommended in 2000-2001 not implemented—Health Canada says Innu ones to stop treatment (outpost program) because of weather

January—10 individuals arrested and charged for break and enter and theft. 9 of the 10 were youth—blamed on kids sniffing gasoline again

March—Government intends to invest some $100 million, or $17 million a year, to build Phase III of the Trans Labrador Highway, from Happy Valley-Goose Bay to Cartwright, over a six-year period—completion anticipated for 2009

May—Innu and INCO reach an impact benefits agreement

August—Amnesty International condemns Canada for its treatment of Indigenous Peoples at United Nations meeting of the UN committee on the elimination of racial discrimination (BC's controversial referendum on Native treaty, freezing deaths of a Saskatoon Natives after being abandoned by RCMP)

November—Band creation for Mushuau and Sheshatshiu occurs, allowing the registration process to being Status Indians under Indian Act

November—Strike by social workers in Sheshatshiu, citing a lack of enough trained social workers to handle the situations in the community

November—Canadian Human Rights release a follow-up report to the 1992 Innu complaint. It claims that the government has "acknowledged its constitutional responsibility to the Innu," however commitments and negotiations are not being completed or are under unnecessary delays

December—Auditor General's Report accuses the Federal government of forcing Canadian First Nations people to spend too much time filing government paperwork, therefore leaving little time to attend to real problems

December—Move to Natuashish begins, but community is not complete—cost $150 million

Phase II of the TLH is completed, the Labrador coastal ferry services were transferred in a controversial move from Lewisporte on the island of Newfoundland to Cartwright

The Innu Nation and LIA accept the INCO Benefits Agreement and ratified by the communities. 51% of Inuit voted, 82% supported the terms of the agreement, 68% of Innu agreed as well. The agreement amounted to $300 million over 30 years

2003 January—The new school in Natuashish is completed and opened. The school at Davis Inlet continues to operate while up to 12 children remain in that community

January—The new community medical health clinic opens

April—petition signed by residents calling for the resignation of chief and council saying they hadn't done enough to curb addiction problems in the community

May—Several new homes in Natuashish are vandalized

May—Council elections in both Natuashish and Sheshatshiu

June—A petition to remove the Chief and Council in Natuashish is signed by 60% of the residents. Petition was not done in accordance with the community's custom election code and therefore not implemented

August—The community of Natuashish is complete

October—Tshakapesh asks for help in treating gas sniffing children. The

problem aimed to be fixed by the move to Natuashish, is claimed to be an issue in the community again

December—Natuashish is given reserve status

Davis Inlet decommissioned

Newfoundland election—Conservative government

2004 March--"riot" breaks out in Sheshatshiu after a peaceful protest over housing shortage turns violent. Six adults and six children occupied Band Council office to protest their need for a house. In the midst of removing the 12 people from Chief Paul Rich's office, 40-50 people showed up and damages to RCMP cars and the Band Office ensued. Nine are arrested

March—Simeon Tshakapesh is found guilty of obstruction of justice after an incident two years ago where Tshakapesh told a judge he could not leave Davis Inlet until 4 prisoners were released

April—The Royal Netherlands Airforce terminates its low level flying exercises in Labrador

April—extra police arrive in both Sheshatshiu and Natuashish to deal with increased alcohol-related problems during the band election campaigns

June—Federal election—Minority Liberal government

Election held in Natuashish. Simon Pokue is elected Chief as Simeon Tshakapesh resigns

September—4th suicide in 3 months in Natuashish. The youth was Simeon Tshakapesh's nephew. He went to John Efford's office (MP of the Avalon) to complain about the lack of assistance and indifference to the Innu's cries for help. Minister claims that no response could be given to Tshakapesh because it was questionable whether he was an official spokesperson for the Innu of Natuashish

September—The Mushuau Band Council renews call for emergency action to treat alcohol and substance abuse problems following the suicide of two brothers. Tshakapesh calls for a safe house and addictions treatment centre

October—Documentary *The Mushuau Innu: Surviving Canada* is released. It shows the social, economic, political and psychological suffering of the community of Natuashish—problems that were claimed to be fixed with the move from Davis Inlet. The problems remain

November—Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information (NLCHI) release a report titled *Attempted Suicide Among Adolescents*. It states that the rate of suicide attempts from 1998 to 2000 was 17 times the rate for the province

2005 February—CBC report is released suggesting that the problems of the Mushuau Innu are still being neglected, therefore the Healing Strategy is failing its mandate. It is also suggested the Band Council is fuelling addictions in the community and is mismanaging millions of dollars—royalties from Voisey's Bay development

- A petition is organized requesting the removal of the band council, and a new election. 63% of eligible voters signed the petition

- Tom Rideout, the provincial minister of Aboriginal Affairs calls to Federal government to investigate the Mushuau's finances, but INAC says it is beyond their jurisdiction—it is a matter for the RCMP

February—Parents close Peenamin Mackenzie School in Sheshatshiu after a report on education is release by Davis Phillpott suggesting that Innu children are behind upwards of 5 years. They feel that no action is being taken to rectify the situation

# Appendix B

SOLVENT ABUSE

# Agreement on treatment nearer, officials say

BY WILL HILLIARD
The Telegram

P.1 March 22/2001

All three parties that pledged to help the gas-sniffing kids of Davis Inlet in December emerged from a meeting Wednesday putting a positive spin on stalled talks to develop a treatment program for them.

They said they will sit down again March 29 to work out the details after agreeing to move ahead with the next phase of treatment for the kids and a mobile treatment program to tackle the addictions of adults in the beleaguered Innu community off the Labrador coast.

Both programs will be run by the band.

Davis Inlet Chief Simeon Tshakapesh said he was pleased with the outcome of the discussions with the federal and provincial government officials who evacuated 35 kids from his community to St. John's for detoxification more than two months ago.

He complained publicly last week that federal Health Minister Allan Rock had broken his promise to help the children of Davis Inlet by withholding funds and ignoring treatment proposals.

"I was a little bit discouraged because of the delay of the process," Tshakapesh told reporters after the meeting at Confederation Building.

See 'THERE', page 2

KEITH GOBBE/THE TELEGRAM

**Davis Inlet Chief Simeon Tshakapesh (left) and Al Garman, Health Canada's Atlantic regional director for First Nation and Inuit Health, speak to reporters following a day of talks aimed at continuing treatment for young Innu from Davis Inlet.**

# 'There is no delay'

Continued from page 1

"It's be been a long hard battle but we came to an understanding today that we are going to implement the commitments that Health Canada made to us," the chief said.

"There is no delay," said Al Garman, Health Canada's Atlantic regional director for First Nation and Inuit Health.

He said it took this long because they were waiting on the medical assessments of the children being housed at the former Grace hospital.

"We feel very good that everything that needs to be done is being done for those children," Garman said.

"We're in a position now whereby by next week we will be making decisions on where to place the kids and the specific kinds of treatment that they need.

"The program will be designed by the Mushuai Innu."

He said he didn't know how much it would cost.

Beverley Clarke, the provincial deputy minister handling the Davis Inlet file, said the 35 children being treated at the makeshift detox centre are ready for the next phase of therapy.

She deflected criticism that the children should have been moved into a professional addictions counselling program sooner rather than being cooped up in the detox.

"The children are in locked wards but there's lots of movement for them to move around and ... they are actually engaging in different kinds of programs (in the community) on a daily basis, such as school," Clarke said.

She said social workers have been hired to help counsel the children.

In January, Dennis Kimberley, a social work professor at Memorial University and an expert on addictions, said it would only take between three to 16 days to detoxify a single child, after which addictions counsellors would have to be in place for the kids immediately after their gasoline highs wore off.

He also warned that treatment would have to be delivered by professional counsellors with backgrounds in solvent abuse.

Tshakapesh said a lot of parents back home are concerned about the lapse between detoxification and treatment.

The tenacious chief was more toned down than he was in an interview on the previous night when expressed grave concern that he would have to fight Ottawa every step of the way for adequate funding to develop a long-term, holistic treatment program for his community that would make the move to Sango Bay worthwhile.

Tshakapesh has insisted from the outset that any treatment program for his people would have to be run by the band.

## Personalities

Government insiders say the process is taking so long because Tshakapesh has been difficult to work with and officials holding the purse strings want to control the cost.

Tshakapesh said Tuesday if he didn't get his way with the program he would pull the kids from the Grace.

He reaffirmed Wednesday that treating the addicted children must be followed up with treatment for their parents, and then abuse counselling plan for the families after they have been reunited.

Some Innu children have said they sniff gasoline to try and escape the pain of their abusive homes.

A study released by Tshakapesh in November said that 154 of the 169 young people in Davis Inlet have abused solvents at least once.

He said some of the older teenagers in his community are still sniffing.

Tshakapesh said Wednesday he will look at holding a plebiscite in his community to outlaw alcohol and solvent abuse.

A few weeks ago, the process of finding a suitable site in Labrador to continue the treatment of the Innu children hit a snag when a former barracks on the north side of CFB Goose Bay burned to the ground.

Garman said then the three parties wanted to move the children back to Labrador because the Grace is an institutional setting and the kids need something "less institutional" and "closer to Davis Inlet."

"There are no decision made whatsoever yet," he said Wednesday.

"Putting the children in a treatment facility is certainly still an option but no decision at all has been made."

Appendix C

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2002 p. 7

# New village readied for Innu of Davis Inlet

BY SHAWNA RICHER, HALIFAX

When most of the 600 Innu depart Davis Inlet next month, their new homes will take some getting used to.

Leaving behind ramshackle residences for fully furnished homes with new appliances, hot running water and modern bathrooms and kitchens, the Innu will need to be trained in basic household chores most Canadians take for granted.

"These individuals have had to be taught how to fix a circuit breaker, how to unclog a toilet, how to clean a floor," James Wheelhouse, the regional director general with the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, said. "One of their lessons may be in not cutting their caribou carcasses on the living room floor or in the bathtub."

On Dec. 14, if the weather cooperates, most of the residents of Davis Inlet — including all of the elders and families with children — will be moved to the new village. Natuashish, on Sango Bay about 15 kilometres west from Davis Inlet, means "break in the river" in Innuaumin.

By mid-December about 110 of the 133 planned homes will be ready. The remaining ones will be completed within two months, and the remaining residents will move then, Mr. Wheelhouse said.

The community stretches about four kilometres along a road, from a modern wharf on Sango Bay to a new airstrip. The community has a new water treatment plant, sewage lagoon and diesel power plant. The houses resemble a reasonably modern subdivision.

As of today, streets and service roads, a school with playground and daycare, as well as a fire hall, police station and nursing station are ready. Children should be able to start school after Christmas holidays. The Band Council office and general store should be completed in March.

The federal Department of Indian Affairs, which is funding the project, expects problems.

"During the transfer period there will be health staff in both places," Al Garman, regional director with Health Canada, said. "There will be some issues arise with people going around drunk and gas sniffing. We are prepared for that."

The community of Davis Inlet has been ravaged by social and economic misery for more than three decades. Severe alcoholism, substance abuse, crime and poor attendance and performance by children at school are what have put the community on the map.

Among the more horrific examples: six children died in a house fire in 1992 while their parents were out drinking, and in 1993, several children were discovered inhaling from gasoline-filled plastic bags. Half the population of Davis Inlet is younger than 21, and the community has one of the highest suicide rates in the world.

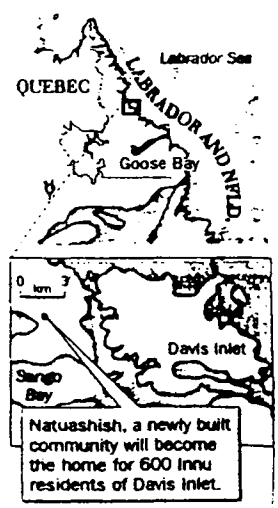
And although more luxurious than its predecessor, the village is no less isolated — 1½ hours by plane from Goose Bay, Nfld., which is roughly the distance between Halifax and Ottawa.

At this time, a federally appointed accounting firm is overseeing the community's finances. Construction of the town began in 1997 and was supposed to be finished by 2000 at a cost of $85-million. The project's budget now stands at $152-million.

RYAN REMIORZ/CANADIAN PRESS

These boys will be among 600 Innu who will soon leave Davis Inlet, Nfld., which has been plagued by alcoholism and substance abuse.

## A new home




Natuashish, a newly built community will become the home for 600 Innu residents of Davis Inlet.