

**CULTURE, POLITICS, AND SCHOOL CONTROL IN SHESHATSHIT**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the significance of school control for the Labrador Innu of Sheshatshit. An historical overview of pre-settlement life is followed by an analysis of existence in the community today. It is argued that recent adaptation to year-round life in the community of Sheshashit has created a tension between "country" values, associated with traditions of the past, and the exigencies associated with modern life. It is within the context of this tension that the issues related to school control can best be understood. School control is presented here as primarily a cultural and political issue. As part of a broader struggle for Innu self-government, political leaders are attempting to gain control of the local all-grade school. School control is portrayed by the leaders as a symbol of cultural and political empowerment. However, as the thesis shows, control poses multiple challenges for the community. This is mainly because Sheshashit comprises heterogeneous and conflicting views of what the school should be and do; a monolithic "community" perspective does not exist. On the one hand, there exists a competent and empowered group of political leaders, committed to attaining nation status for the Innu. For this group, school control is a means, symbolic and material, of achieving self-government. On the other hand, many community members feel increasingly marginalized as Innu knowledge and skills fade from their lives leaving gaps in their identity which nationalist rhetoric is not able to fill.

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FOREST

SHEJHATSHI

• - HOUSES  
• - LAKES

6000  
FOOT

