

*Environmental Scan - Indigenous  
Cultural Competency Training  
within Newfoundland and  
Labrador the traditional territory  
of the Inuit, Beothuck, Innu &  
Mi'kmaq*



**Prepared for the LOFEO Project - Winter 2018 Summary Report**

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Background .....	2
Memorial University Team members .....	2
Method .....	3
Scope of Environmental Scan .....	4
Key Informant Questionnaire .....	4
Preliminary Findings .....	5
Table 1 - Common Themes – Cultural Competency Training .....	5
Table 2 – Key Informant Recommendations.....	7
Reflections and Issues Identified .....	8
Project Engagement.....	9
Table 3 – MUN’s Participation in LOFEO Activity .....	9
Table 4 – MUN Meeting Summary Table <sup>1</sup> .....	9
Moving Forward & Next Steps .....	10

## Background

The ongoing crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls has been attracting much media and political attention, but the exposure concerning cases in Eastern Canada continues to be limited. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has acknowledged that many cases have not yet been documented and therefore the scope of the problem is unknown and likely greater than currently assumed. The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, under the leadership of President & Chief Wendy Wetteland, has initiated a research and community action project titled "Looking Out For Each Other" (LOFEO). This project is designed to enhance our collective understanding of cases involving missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and sexual and gender minorities in Eastern Canada. The goal is to provide concrete and effective assistance to families and friends when an Indigenous person goes missing. The project intends for communities and organizations to have the resources to empower them to collaborate, access services, improve outcomes, and to address victimization and loss (From LOFEO project documentation, Hughes PI).

## Memorial University Team members

The Memorial University team consists of Dr. Jennifer Shea, and Elizabeth Zarpa both located in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Jennifer Shea is an Assistant Professor of Aboriginal Health in the Division of Community Health and Humanities, Faculty of Medicine MUN. She has been working with Indigenous communities as a community-based researcher in both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador since 2006. She completed a PhD in sociology specializing in Aboriginal Health at the University of Saskatchewan. In the division she teaches courses on Northern, remote and rural health as well as social justice. Prior to working at Memorial she worked in leadership roles within the provincial health care system for eight years. Jennifer's research is community-based and driven by community's needs. She specializes in participatory approaches such as photovoice.

Elizabeth Zarpa is Inuit from Labrador. She is a lawyer in Newfoundland and Labrador, and her legal work has been focused on criminal law, family law and most recently Indigenous legal traditions. She has worked with First Nations on Vancouver Island as part of the Indigenous Legal Research Unit at the University of Victoria where she finished her law degree in 2015. And she has also worked with Indigenous and settler communities in Labrador throughout her legal practice. She is currently finishing her Master's thesis in political science at Memorial University.

Their contribution to the LOFEO project has consisted of an environmental scan of Indigenous cultural training received by lawyers, police officers and journalists throughout their education to become a professional in their field. These professions are some of the few which come into first contact with the

families of loved ones who experience violence or who have gone missing due to an alleged homicide. From January to April 2018, there were a total of ten key informants (seven lawyers, two journalists and one individual who was closely connected to the Indigenous populations in NL through a local grassroots organization) provided information for the scan.

The grassroots organization key informant was the first point of contact and provided invaluable knowledge on potential contacts and perspectives regarding training. Through this connection Attempts were made to connect with police officers/personnel, and these Attempts have been unsuccessful at the time of this report. Inability can be linked to unforeseen road blocks such as several loop holes that the officers had to undergo before an interview relating to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) could be done by an officer. Linkage to law enforcement remains a priority.

## Method

The environmental scan method has origins in business because it is a practical tool to gather and synthesize information for decision making. This has evolved into a value method for program design and improvement beyond business<sup>1</sup> Providing a scan of this nature with the professions targeted in LOFEO helps establish what is already happening, what needs to happen in the future and the development of best practices to ultimately improve the cultural safety for families when their loved one goes missing or is murdered. At this stage of work we have engaged in an environmental scan to learn more about the level of training provided to lawyers, journalists and police officers. Prior to reaching out to potential informants we contacted the Research Ethics Board in St. John's, NL to inform them of the larger project and the current piece of work we would take on. We were informed that we would not require ethics approval at this time. For the purposes of the scan individual names and information are not used. We provide information regarding the profession but do not provide additional demographics such as age, gender and specific locations. We also did not record the conversations and have only included summary information. Key informants were all informed of the purpose and we offered each of them the opportunity to review any report or other information types prepared. Elizabeth Zarpa took leadership in making connections, having the conversations and summarizing the information obtained.

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<sup>1</sup> Graham, P., Evitts, T., & Thomas-MacLean, R. (2008). Environmental scans how useful are they for primary care research. *Canadian Family Physician*, 54, 1022-1023.

## Scope of Environmental Scan

To date (April 2018) there have been ten key informants for the environmental scan in NL. Key informants spoke with the research assistant in a semi-structured conversation. Seven of these individuals were located in St. John's and the other three were in the Happy Valley-Goose Bay area.

Key informants included:

1. Seven Lawyers – some from private firms, a sole practitioner, government lawyers and legal aid lawyers.
2. Two journalists – both working in the area of Indigenous news stories, and one who worked as a free-lance journalist within NL.
3. One employee of Indigenous Grass roots organization in NL.

Each informant was asked a standard sixteen questions (See below) prepared in a guide related to their knowledge, and level of training they received about Indigenous populations throughout NL. The objective of the questionnaire was to understand whether interviewees had any training about NL Indigenous populations, and if that awareness was present how it was obtained. Also the limitation and gaps within understanding were highlighted throughout the interviewees' answers as critical areas of focus.

## Key Informant Questionnaire

- 1) Where do you work?
- 2) How long have you worked within this specific field?
- 3) How many years of training did you go through to become a lawyer, journalist, police officer?
- 4) Throughout which years did you receive this training?
- 5) Which provinces did you receive your training for this specific job?
- 6) Which institutions did you attend to receive this particular training?
- 7) Within your profession as a lawyer, journalist, police officer – do you interact or work directly or indirectly, with Indigenous populations within this province? If so, yes please elaborate.
- 8) Throughout the duration of training to become a lawyer, journalist, police officer – were there any courses or training offered regarding Indigenous people within Canada? If so please elaborate
- 9) What did the training consist of? Was it course based? Experiential learning? How long was the training?
- 10) Was the training effective? If so please elaborate, if not please elaborate.
- 11) Was it volunteer or mandatory?
- 12) Who are the Indigenous people within this province? Where did you learn that?
- 13) Are there movements within your profession to offer training relating to Indigenous people within NL? If so please elaborate – are they mandatory or volunteer options?

- 14) Do you think that cultural sensitivity training relating to Indigenous people within this province is needed within your profession? If so why?
- 15) On a scale of 1-10 – how well is your profession providing cultural sensitivity training relating to the Indigenous people of NL? 1 being great – 10 indicating nothing
- 16) Are there any recommendations you would suggest for cultural sensitivity training relating to Indigenous people from this province?

## Preliminary Findings

**Table 1 - Common Themes – Cultural Competency Training**

Theme	Feedback	Area
<b>Issues/Information Specific to NL</b>	The journalists largely left the province to attend university because there is no University in Labrador, and also there is no journalism course offered at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN). Additionally when attending post-secondary education to become a journalist, there were no Indigenous professors, and there was no Indigenous content offered or made mandatory, but this is slowly changing within institutions	<b>Media</b>
	There is no law school nor is there a journalism school within the province of NL	<b>Law</b>
	Respondents aware of some of the Indigenous populations within their province, attributed this to Indigenous populations that were closest to their place of residence (ie: those in Labrador knew about Inuit, Innu, and southern Inuit)	<b>General</b>
	There is a new Indigenous Lawyers Education Committee within NL	<b>Law</b>
<b>Lack of Training Opportunities</b>	There is a lack of cultural competency training within the legal profession and journalism relating to Indigenous people throughout NL	<b>Law</b>
	There is no cultural competency training offered through the Law Society of NL for people who have to write the bar exams within the NL jurisdiction, and this is problematic because there were several lawyers who work within legal aid who said that their practice is approximately 95% Indigenous clients, or they're bound to come into contact with Indigenous clients through criminal law or family law, and their cultural understanding is limited	<b>Law</b>
	In response to question 15 - On a scale of 1 (being great) – 10 (being nothing) relating to whether the interviewees felt their profession provided cultural competency training in relation to Indigenous people, many of the responses indicated “nothing” or close to “nothing” being offered	<b>General</b>
	For the city of St. John's, the organizations that predominantly do cultural competency training, are limited to two because that is the only two organizations offering such training. And it is the St. John's Native Friendship Centre (SJNFC), and the Aboriginal Resource Office (ARO) at MUN	
	There is a recognition that there is a lack of training relating to Indigenous people within this province amongst all of the key informants	
	The training that lawyers receive relating to Indigenous people are within the law schools that were attended and that is largely related to aboriginal law, or the aboriginal people where the law school is located, not Indigenous people from	<b>Law</b>

<b>Training Complexities</b>	NL. There is no law school within NL, therefore individuals who become lawyers have to leave the province, or lawyers who work within the province are from other jurisdictions (especially in Labrador)	
	Lawyers who have Indigenous clients, that have not had any cultural competency training, feel unable to adequately and thoroughly assess the needs of their clients because there is a huge gap in understanding between the lawyer and their client. To have better representation the lawyer has to have a clearer understanding of their client's cultural background, if not it negatively impacts the process	
<b>Voluntary vs. Mandatory Training</b>	Much of the cultural training obtained by journalists or lawyers are not mandatory from the training they received to become a professional, but it was through voluntary actions and interest, or coming into contact with Indigenous people or clients through their work, and then seeking learning opportunities.	<b>Media &amp; Law</b>
	The cultural competency training that some lawyers had the option to participate were voluntary, not mandatory, and this training was offered by the Indigenous organizations themselves such as Innu Nation, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut or the Southern Inuit from NunatuKavut – it was not something that was mandated and orchestrated by the Law Society of NL or inclusive of all NL groups.	<b>Law</b>
	Much of the exposure to Indigenous populations whether within NL or throughout Canada within the training, was voluntary and not mandatory (an exception was the Faculty of Law at UBC, mandatory Aboriginal law course)	
	There is some training relating to Indigenous people within NL through the Continuing Legal Education (CLE) workshops that lawyers can take at a fee	
<b>Lack of Indigenous representation and Understanding</b>	Lawyers and journalists are usually individuals who are not Indigenous, and usually individuals who are not familiar with Indigenous communities they're working around or within	<b>Media &amp; Law</b>
	Some of the lawyers who work within the province come from other provinces, and are not from Labrador, and this is a prevalent occurrence. Where lawyers come into the community, work for a few days, couple months or years, and then leave.	<b>Law</b>
	Many of the journalists are not Indigenous within NL, nor is there any exposure to Indigenous communities and their culture as a journalist in NL, unless it is sought out independently	<b>Media</b>
	Many of the journalists within NL are settlers, therefore their perspective comes from that perspective or with an inherent bias, and this can be mitigated if more Indigenous journalists are trained to work within the field and within NL. But the issue in having predominantly settler journalists is that Indigenous perspectives, histories, understandings are not understood within the outpouring of media coverage, and it is not infiltrated within policy decisions	
	Often Newfoundlanders or people who work in Newfoundland (island portion of the province) have very little understanding about Labrador, and people who live there including Indigenous populations. Many informants from Newfoundland have little to no experience traveling to Labrador, whereas people from Labrador travel often to Newfoundland regularly for access to resources like health care, education, etc	<b>General</b>
	When there is news coverage on Indigenous communities it can be from a settler perspective, or a negative lens which is problematic for the Indigenous group	<b>Media</b>

	which is being focused upon (ie: gas sniffing coverage, a media piece that referred to Innu as ‘walking zombies’)	
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**Table 2 – Key Informant Recommendations**

Theme	Feedback	Area
<b>Introduction of Degree Programs in NL</b>	To develop a university in Labrador, so people do not have to leave their home, community and family to receive a university education, and they can get the training needed to become professional journalists, lawyers or police officers	<b>Media &amp; Law</b>
	To incorporate a journalism programme at MUN and to have it implement Indigenous people and content under the Truth and Reconciliation Calls (TRC) Calls to Action.	<b>Media</b>
<b>Increasing the number of Indigenous professionals in Law and Media</b>	To have affirmative action programs within media businesses where Indigenous people are hired as managers, producers or editors	<b>Media</b>
	CBC Newfoundland and Labrador is the main media outlet and a Federal body in the province and there is little to no Indigenous journalists or staff within these two organizations, and this has to change because it is not reflective of the reality throughout the province and it has an effect on the coverage of Indigenous communities, and how their realities are mediated	
<b>Indigenous Led responses and Education</b>	Professionals consult the individual community members and ask what it is that the particular Indigenous community sees is problematic in dealing with these professions (lawyer, police and journalists) and get their perspective on what is working and what isn't working and begin from that premise	<b>General</b>
	Have journalists, editors, managers sent to the remote Indigenous communities such as Conne River, Rigolet, Hopedale, Makkovik, Nain and have them listen to the community members themselves. To understand and listen to their criticisms and better understand how to reflect their concerns in content and policy development relating to media coverage	<b>Media</b>
	To hire knowledge keepers or elders to develop mandatory training programmes for journalists who will be working with or in Indigenous communities	
	To have some media outlets provide some coverage in Indigenous languages like Inuktitut, Innu-aimun or Mik'maq	
	To have on-going course content within post-secondary institutions that better reflects Indigenous populations throughout Canada, and throughout NL	<b>General</b>



<b>Mandatory &amp; continuing Training</b>	To have mandatory training for professionals to develop their cultural competency relating to Indigenous people within NL (within the law society, within journalism, and within policing)	
	For cultural competency training to be on-going within a particular Indigenous organization or community, and not just a one-time course offered for a couple of hours or days, and then that is cultural competency training. For the professionals to develop a mutual relationship with the Indigenous community to build learning also through experience and for this to be mandatory	
	To have a mandatory course offered through the Law Society Bar Course which relates to the Indigenous people in NL, and have Indigenous people themselves teach it	<b>Law</b>
<b>Celebrate Resilience</b>	Not to privilege Indigenous media coverage or stories, but to rectify the bad stories that are told about Indigenous communities in NL with more positive stories relating to their communities and their culture, history, lives	<b>General</b>

## Reflections and Issues Identified

There were two noteworthy issues that arose during Elizabeth's time speaking with key informants that we wish to reflect on:

1. **A Long Process & Bureaucracy** – Despite several informal conversations with the police officer regarding the questionnaire, and an illusion that it would lead to an interview, once the issue of MMIWG was brought up, it became more complicated. Once this was disclosed there were then several loop holes presented - lots of follow up, emails and phone conversations. Elizabeth was led in circles to believe it was unfolding with a potential conversation to finish the questionnaire together, but that was not the case for several reasons. The main lesson is to contact the Ottawa police office directly and get them to follow up with an interview because whenever the issue of MMIWG comes up it automatically has to be streamlined to their office for approval before a conversation with a police officer in NL can be conducted. It is uncertain whether this is also the case for other police officers (provincial, municipal and also federal) in other jurisdictions. And it is a main focus which can be further developed, as it is a timely endeavor to communicate with police officers for this project.
2. **Importance of Recognition** - Many of the informants provided 20, 30 and sometimes an hour of their busy schedules to have a conversation, and also to provide their input for the questionnaire. There were no stipends offered to them for their time and input which was an issue because it felt as though I was taking their time and info, and not exchanging it with anything tangible to show I was thankful for this contribution. This led to reflection on the possibility of sharing LOFEO magnets with informants as a token of appreciation. The magnets could have the toll-free number or other relevant info about the project on it.

## Project Engagement

**Table 3 – MUN’s Participation in LOFEO Activity**

Date	Summary	Attended by
Jan 24, 2018	Orientation of the LOFEO project with Janelle	Elizabeth
Feb 6, 2018	LOFEO Advisory Circle and NL update (by skype)	Jennifer and Elizabeth
April 18-20, 2018	SJNFC Healing Circle	Elizabeth and Jennifer
May 8-10, 2018	Conference in Fredericton	Jennifer and Elizabeth

**Table 4 – MUN Meeting Summary Table<sup>1</sup>**

Date	Summary	Notes
Jan 12, 2018	Meeting - Elizabeth & Jennifer	Discussed the parameters of the project and the MUN team’s focus for the Winter 2018 term
Jan 19, 2018		Discussed the main focus of the questionnaire and the timeline for the project
Jan 26, 2018	Elizabeth met with SJNFC	Discussed the approach taken when doing Indigenous cultural competency training and the pertinent questions to ask in the questionnaire
March 6, 2018	Meeting – Elizabeth & Jennifer	Update on the progress with the conversations with key informants
May 7, 2018		Report review and preparation for project update

<sup>1</sup>In addition the MUN team kept in regular contact through text, phone and email.

## Moving Forward & Next Steps

Many of the key informants were interested in knowing more about the project and how it relates to other work that is being done throughout the issue of MMIWG (the inquiry, etc). As a way of continuing and building the relationships built between LOFEO and the informants, we agree it is important to provide them with updates on the project, as well as the final report for the project.

One challenge we have outlined was our inability to connect with police. Going forward we would like to finally begin these conversations and gain insight into their training strengths and limitations. In particular we would like to establish how the training experience varies from Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) on the island portion of the province compared to Labrador. We would also like to draw out the comparisons between Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) and RCMP in their training to become police officers, and whether they receive cultural support training relating to Indigenous peoples in NL.

We would like to provide more summary documentation about current training programs including showcasing strong Indigenous approaches, such as *Allies in Healing* developed by Nunatsiavut Government. Additionally provide more developed recommendations for future responses.

We are open to additional work and expansion to incorporate other jurisdictions in our scope if desired by the project advisory team.