

# Spaces and Places

## UPDATE: April 2014

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Spaces and Places Research Project led by Dr. Linda Liebenberg (PI) and Janice Ikeda (Project Manager) explores the ways in which communities can build better civic and cultural engagement with youth. This qualitative study is currently taking place in two communities in Labrador and, with the help of our partners and local site researchers, we have recently completed the first research phase of the project.

A total of 17 youth between the ages of 12-17 have participated in the project by helping us gather and analyse data. These youth have also helped us begin disseminating findings back to local and broader communities.

### WHAT DID WE DO IN THE PAST YEAR?

During January and February of 2014, a year after the first phase of the project, we returned to the two communities to complete another round of data gathering. We asked the youth to take a second set of photographs of spaces and places around them; spaces that made them feel they belong to their community and spaces that didn't make them feel they belong. Youth were then interviewed about their photographs and discussed how their lives and photos were different from last year.

We also met with the youth over a weekend for a second focus group and data analysis workshop. The youth helped us to further understand some of the themes from the previous year and any new themes.



## EARLY FINDINGS

### COMMUNITY 1

Youth are more appreciative of nature and what is available to them through the natural environment. Several of the youth commented that this winter was a better winter than last year and they have more snow. This allowed them to be outdoors skidoing and snowshoeing which youth commented were limited last

year. The younger youth also recognized that this year they are old enough to drive their skidoos while last year they had more restrictions placed on them by their family because they were not old enough to drive skidoos. They talked about how this freedom and related opportunity to go to more places resulted in less boredom.

Youth are also more articulate about their use of technology. Although they don't deny the amount of time that they spend using technology and the importance it plays in their lives, they seem to be able to identify that they use technology when they are bored. If they can't find anything else to do, they will go on Facebook, play video or computer games, and other forms of technology. This is in contrast to last year when youth would often comment that technology was their primary source of entertainment.

When discussing culture, it is interesting that youth still did not talk much about cultural activities such as hunting, fishing, or boil-ups. Instead, youth thought of their culture more generally, as the outdoors and appreciation of living in a small town. Culture to them appears to be about appreciation of the outdoors and the freedom it provides and the safety of living in a small town. Youth still discussed that hunting, fishing, and boil-ups were fun activities to do, but they were not regular activities

so they did not consider them part of their culture.

Youth were also very vocal about the need to move away from the community once they graduate from high school if they want a "better" job. They often talked about being worried that their town will also be abandoned like many of the other small towns surrounding them.



## COMMUNITY 2

Youth reiterated the importance of their family and friends. Youth are proud to be from this community and would not choose to live elsewhere. These themes were central to all discussions. Another important theme was the beauty of their surroundings. Youth were very enthusiastic to share photos that showed the beauty of the nature that surrounds them. Interestingly, youth commented that despite the appreciation of nature, they find themselves indoors on Facebook and gaming

systems more than they are outdoors.

Youth also discussed the importance of wild food and being out on the land. It is interesting that when some of the youth were asked whether they would attend a program that took them out on the land, they replied that they would not attend this program. When asked to describe this further, they commented that they already go off on the land with their parents,



emphasising the importance of creating opportunities for youth to engage in more unstructured activities.

They also emphasized the importance of their community. They all discussed the importance

of helping out others in their community and they all gave examples of what they might do to help someone out: give them a ride home on a particularly cold day, help chop wood, and help grandparents with housework. They also discussed that they

enjoy knowing everyone in their community and the safety they feel at home. All youth said they would not like to move away because their friends and family are in this community.



## FUTURE PLANS

The researchers plan to spend the next few months analyzing the information and youth stories in depth to gain a fuller understanding of the trends and themes we are currently exploring. We will also continue working with the Nunatsiavut Government and NunatuKavut to spread the findings at a community and governmental level to generate change in programs, youth spaces and policies.



For more information and updates on this and other resilience projects go to our website: [www.resilienceresearch.org](http://www.resilienceresearch.org)



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Centre

If you have any questions about the Spaces and Places Project, please contact:

Linda Liebenberg, Principal Investigator  
Email: [linda.liebenberg@dal.ca](mailto:linda.liebenberg@dal.ca)  
Phone: 902-494-1357

Janice Ikeda, Project Manager  
Email: [janice.ikeda@dal.ca](mailto:janice.ikeda@dal.ca)  
Phone: 902-494-2969

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