
The Uepishtikueiau Story

The Arrival of the French at the Site of Québec City According to Innu Oral Tradition

Sylvie Vincent
With Joséphine Bacon

The Uepishtikueiau Story was originally published in French as *Le récit de Uepishtikueiau: l'arrivée des Français à Québec selon la tradition orale innue*, (2003) through the sponsorship of l'Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais in Uashat, Québec. An English version was published by Theytus Books as "The Uepishtikueiau Narrative: The Arrival of the French at the Site of Québec City According to Innu Oral Tradition" in the anthology *Aboriginality and Governance: A Multi-disciplinary Perspective*, edited by Gordon Christie (2006).

This version of *The Uepishtikueiau Story* was reviewed and modified by Mamu Tshishkutamashutau Innu Education to serve as a resource for the high school history and social studies curriculum.

MTIE gratefully acknowledges the funding support for this publication from the New Paths Program, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Government of Canada.

© 2018 Sylvie Vincent

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may only be reproduced for educational purposes. Any other reproduction whatsoever cannot occur without the express written permission of the author and publisher, except for the use of brief quotations.

Cover image: Jolene Ashini

Map of Nitassinan: Vessela Brakalova and Chelsea Arbour

ISBN 978-0-9939095-4-2

Mamu Tshishkutamashutau Innu Education

PO Box 539

Sheshatshiu, Labrador

AOP 1M0

(709)-497-3664

<http://www.innueducation.ca>

Contents

Introduction	1
1. Uepishtikueiau	3
2. The Arrival of the French	8
3. A Request and a Promise	14
4. Luring, Trickery and Ambushes	18
5. The Innu Avoid Uepishtikueiau	25
6. Testimony from Afar	30
Acknowledgements	33
Map of Nitassinan	35
List of People Quoted	36

**The Uepishtikueiau Story:
The Arrival of the French at the site of Québec City
According to Innu Oral Tradition**

Sylvie Vincent
With Joséphine Bacon

Introduction

The Innu are one of the eleven Indigenous nations of Québec. Today the Innu live in nine communities scattered along the North Shore, as well as in two communities in Labrador.¹ Their ancestral lands cover almost half of the Québec-Labrador peninsula. Given their geographical location, they were among the first to come into contact with the Europeans who, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, ventured into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and then upstream to the future site of Québec City.

The arrival of the French in Innu Lands is told by oral tradition in what can be described as a founding story. It explains a number of aspects of the present situation and, more specifically, relations between the Innu and French-speaking Quebeckers. It is not a myth, tale or legend, but a historical story. It contains the Innu version of events that occurred in a not-so-distant past. These events are also reported, though in a different way, in the Québec version of the history, based on writings from the seventeenth century. Since the time of these events, the Innu have recited what happened, passing the story down from generation to generation, each generation careful to retell what the previous generation had passed down to them. Historians must identify and evaluate the sources they use. In the same way, Innu storytellers say from whom they heard the story and do not recite stories from sources they do not consider reliable, or at least not without warning their listeners.

Since the mid-twentieth century, however, Innu oral tradition has encountered many obstacles caused by the adoption of a sedentary way of life, education in French, and changes in social roles. Maintaining their oral

¹ See the map of Innu communities on page 35.

tradition is a real challenge. Although the elders can talk about the stories they have heard, comment on them and recite passages, very few can still narrate the stories as they were told to them.

I became aware of this story in the early 1970s, but it was only at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s that I was really able to gather elements from many people (around 40 living on the North Shore between Pessamu and Pakut-shipu). The text that follows has been constructed out of a story recorded in 1975, and recordings of 18 people from Pessamu, Maniutenam, Nutashkuan and Unaman-shipu. The goal was to deliver the common core of the Innu story as I heard it, while showing some branches that, while not completely divergent, do not seem to be shared by all.

In 2003, there was a commemoration of the apparent 1603 alliance between Samuel de Champlain and the Innu *utshimau*, or chief, whom he calls Anadabijou in his writings. The Innu have their own version of the events and agreements that marked their first contact with the French. The Innu version is different from the “official” version. When one lives in a tradition dominated by writing, one generally tends to want to establish links between what we hear and what we read in historical documents. However, oral traditions have their own logic and therefore deserve to be understood on their own, at least initially. This is not easy to do. For example, there are neither dates nor names in the Uepishtikueiau Story. Yet we know that the people who appear in the story are the ancestors of the Innu and the first French people to visit their lands. From the issues and behaviour described, the story also sheds light on what is happening today between the descendants of the peoples mentioned. While it is important for the Innu to share their own version of their history, it is just as important for those who are now their neighbours to be able to understand what the Innu version contains.

1. Uepishtikueiau

It is said that the ancestors of the Innu often frequented a place called Uepishtikueiau.¹ It was located at the extreme west of their lands, on the banks of a river, at the exact spot where, as the name indicates, the river narrows. The river is called Uepishtikueiau-shipu, but is known in English as the St. Lawrence River. The name 'Uepishtikueiau' has been kept to refer to the city that the French call 'Québec,' built on the ancient site where ancestors of the Innu used to stay.

After having spent most of the year inland, it is said that the Innu used to come down the rivers in the spring and stay in small groups at the river mouths. They also used to go to Uepishtikueiau, which was their main gathering place before the French arrived.

Why go to the coast in late spring and early summer? It is said that during these seasons, the game inland was not good to eat. Also, in olden times as today, it was important to leave the animals the time to raise their young "in peace, far from noise." (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1988)

The Innu have always been in *nutshimit* (inland). [...] They used to spend time at Uepishtikueiau to wait for the animals inland to reach maturity. [...] The Innu take care of what is found in *nutshimit*. They are quiet so that everything grows well, for example, so that the young animals do not run away. While the Innu are by the sea [...] in the spring and summer, the animals inland give birth to their young. The Innu do not go into *nutshimit* at that time; they leave those areas and they do not hunt there. They go there only in the winter, and in the summer they wait on the coast. [...] In the winter, the animals are good to eat; those that were born that year have grown big. That is when the Innu go into *nutshimit*. [...] In the olden days, they used to go down to Uepishtikueiau when they went to the coast, but it was only one place among others. They stayed in various places along the St. Lawrence River. (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

¹ An ancient form of this toponym, 'Oubichtigoueiakhi,' appeared in 1634 in Father Paul Le Jeune's writings, and means literally 'where the river narrows'; see Charles Martijn, "Gepèg (Québec): un toponyme d'origine micmaque," *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec*, (1991) XXI (3):59.

When they got to the coast of the Gulf of St. Lawrence or to the bank of the river, especially at Uepishtikueiau, the Innu found the food they needed. They lived mainly from hunting migratory birds and fishing. In August, when the animals in *nutshimit* became edible again, the Innu left the St. Lawrence River area and did not come back again until the next year. Of course, some families stayed near lakes in *nutshimit* in the summer and ate mainly fish, but many went to the coast in late spring and early summer.

The Innu could choose from among a number of destinations along the St. Lawrence River and Gulf. They preferred Uepishtikueiau because, it is said, there was a lot of game there and also the bark needed to make canoes.

The Innu must have been at Uepishtikueiau, naturally, because there is a river there. It was surely a good river, given its width. There must have been everything in terms of resources. There must have been geese there. The Innu must have gone there every spring and probably stayed there to hunt the animals that ensured their subsistence. (Délima André, Mani-utenam, 1999)

They used to go to Uepishtikueiau to make their canoes. It was the only place where there was good bark for making canoes, the kind that is thick, bark that is very thick. That was the only kind of bark they used to make their canoes. [...] In those days there were not yet any French people at Uepishtikueiau and it is said that it was the only place where the Innu took bark. They must have made their canoes right there. [...] Here [on the Middle North Shore] they would not have been able to get bark. The birch trees are too thin and would have given them too many little pieces of bark. It is said that it was possible to make a canoe with the bark from a single tree. It is also said that, when they could not make their canoes there, they used to carry the bark away with them. [...] Once they had harvested the bark, they used to travel towards the Gulf and make their canoes in places where there were rivers. They made their canoes in places where there were lots of fish in the rivers, and then they used to go back to *nutshimit*. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1992, 1993)

It is said that the bark could be harvested only in spring and summer.

It is said that the Innu did not touch birch trees in the winter. They did not use them. It was only in the spring, when it was warm, that

they were able to harvest the bark. [...] They chose a tree that did not have too many knots so that there would not be too many in the canoe. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1992)

It is said that in olden times before the French arrived, there were many Innu at Uepishtikueiau in the spring and early summer. Of course, they stayed in many different places along the river, at the mouths of rivers and in places where they knew they would be able to find game and fish, but “they liked being at Uepishtikueiau” (Pierre Mesténapéo, Nutashkuan, 1993), especially on a point there, where they used to stay. They used to arrive one after another, in little groups, and in the end there were quite a few people there.

The Innu must have been very numerous in the past. And at Uepishtikueiau there must have really been a lot of people. [...] The Innu must have gone there mainly when they were coming down to the coast after spending autumn and winter in *nutshimit*. (Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

The oral tradition speaks of how Uepishtikueiau was one of the favourite places of the ancestors of the Innu. It was a meeting and gathering place: an “Innu land”.

Before the French arrived, the Innu used to live in *nutshimit* and their real gathering place was Uepishtikueiau. (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1988)

Uepishtikueiau is said to be Innu land. It was called the land of the Innu. At least, that is what the Innu used to call it. It is said that it is their land. (Pierre Mesténapéo, Nutashkuan, 1992)

But who really were the people who met at the place where the river narrowed? According to the main branch of the oral tradition, they were the ancestors only of the Innu.

It was Innu like us who were there, at Uepishtikueiau. [...] It was our ancestors who were there. (Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

We all come from Uepishtikueiau, all of us, we come from Uepishtikueiau. That is where the Innu began to become really numerous. (Pierre Courtois, Nutashkuan, 1992)

The people of Uepishtikueiau, those who live there today [the Hurons-Wendats] would not have come from there. [...] It seems that there used to be Innu like us there. It's as if the Innu were at Uepishtikueiau at that time. Then other Indians arrived, perhaps it was [...] the Iroquois or the Hurons. (Desanges Saint-Onge, Pessamu, 1994)

The people of Uepishtikueiau were our ancestors; we all come from there. They are the ancestors of all the Innu who are here [on the North Shore]. We are all descendants of the few Innu who must have been there. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1992)

The Innu living today on the Upper, Middle and Lower North Shore, in the Saguenay-Lac St. Jean area and even Labrador are thus considered descendants of the people of Uepishtikueiau.

A less often heard branch of the oral tradition says that Uepishtikueiau was also frequented by members of other nations, in particular the Mi'kmaq and Hurons-Wendats.

There were a lot of Innu at Uepishtikueiau at that time, and Mi'kmaq too, as well as Hurons-Wendats. (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1988)

There were Indians from several nations there. That is where they must have met, where they could get to know one another, learn one another's names and the lands they roamed. [...] The Innu were everywhere but it was at Uepishtikueiau really, it was mainly there, that they used to stay in the summer. Other Indians must have come there too. [...] It was as if they visited one another at Uepishtikueiau. That must have been what happened. [...] That was where all the nations used to gather. (Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

While part of the oral tradition says that members of other nations, in particular the Hurons-Wendat nation, came to Uepishtikueiau, most claim that when the French arrived, only the Innu were there.

However, whether they were alone or not, it is stated that the ancestors of the Innu used to frequent the place called Uepishtikueiau and that they used it as a major meeting place.

Then everything changed.

2. The Arrival of the French

The Innu gathered at Uepishtikueiau were staying on the point when they saw one or more sailboats arrive. The boats were made of wood, which is why those who built them were called “Mishtikushuat”.¹ Later it was learned that those people made things out of wood and that they used wood as one of their major raw materials. The stories do not really describe the new arrivals, aside from their hats.

The French must have worn fabric clothing as we do today. That is how they must have been dressed. It is not said what their clothing was like, but they certainly must not have been wearing caribou skins. They had to be wearing fabric. The Innu wore clothing made from caribou skins. [...] Maybe the French people's hats looked like those really big hats that were seen in the past. At least, that is what was said about their hats. It was said that the one who met the Innu at Uepishtikueiau had a broad hat. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1993)

However, the tradition does say why the French suddenly appeared at Uepishtikueiau.

It was said that in the past the French traveled looking for land. They sailed their ships in search of land. They used to roam the seas looking for land, it is said. [...] They did not just come to Uepishtikueiau; it is said that they also visited other places. However, the Innu saw only the French who came to Uepishtikueiau. It is said that they were not very numerous when they arrived. (Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

The French were looking for something that they could own. They were looking for a place where they could be the masters. [...] The must have come here for that reason. They were looking for a place of their own. They came because they were looking for a place to live. (Charles Kaltush, Nutashkuan, 1993)

Aside from the fact that they came from the east in sailboats, the French are thus defined basically as people who were looking for land. When they

¹ In the singular: “*mishtikushu*”; the word is formed out of “*mishtiku*” (wood, tree) and “*ush*” (boat, canoe).

arrived by chance near Uepishtikueiau, they saw that the Innu land seemed good and so they went closer to shore.

There must be a point at Uepishtikueiau. The shore of the St. Lawrence River curves back in on itself, creating a point. It is said this was the part of Uepishtikueiau where the French arrived the first time that they came. (Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

What did the Innu do when they saw the French put a rowboat in the water and approach the shore? There are several versions of the oral tradition on this point. The most frequently heard one says that the Innu *utshimau* went towards the French and invited them to come ashore.

When the French arrived at Uepishtikueiau, the Innu were very surprised to see the sailing ship. The French took a rowboat towards the shore and got out. They could not understand one another at all. The Innu would have said: "Come ashore." They must have said "*kapak*" to the French, and the French understood that the Innu were telling them "Québec." And they called Uepishtikueiau "Québec" because that is what they understood that the Innu were telling them when the Innu were telling them to come ashore. (Desanges Saint-Onge, Pessamu, 1994)

It is said there used to be Innu everywhere, and that there were some here too, downstream along the St. Lawrence [on the North Shore]. They used to be everywhere that there were rivers, it is said, and they must have also gone by canoe to Uepishtikueiau. It is said that this is where they gathered. The Innu really used to gather at Uepishtikueiau. Then the French came to them by the sea. They were in sailboats, big boats with sails, the olden days sailboats. So the Innu said to them "*Paka!*"¹ ["Come ashore!"], and Uepishtikueiau is called "Québec" because that is what the French understood when the Innu told them to come ashore. [...] They are the ones who called it "Québec." But "Uepishtikueiau" is the real Innu place name. It is the term used in Innu when we talk about it. It is because the French understood "Québec" when the Innu

¹ At Pessamu, "come ashore" is said "*kapak*" rather than "*paka*", which is used on the Middle and Lower North Shore. In terms of sound, the former resembles "Québec" more closely.

invited them to get out of their boat that the place came to be named in that way. It is said that this is why Uepishtikueiau is still called “Québec” today. (Joseph Bellefleur, Nutashkuan, 1992)

However, the Innu were fearful. They did not understand the French people's language, just as the French could not understand theirs. They were not sure what the foreigners were planning to do on their land. Also, the French were armed.

I do not know what the Innu thought the first time they saw the French. They must not have been on good terms with them. Also, they did not understand them. Since they could not understand them, they must have wondered when they saw them what they were going to do. They must have wondered, “What are they planning to do here?” As for the French, they must have left their boat intending to live here according to their customs and stay forever. And that is what happened: they stayed at Uepishtikueiau. (Joseph Bellefleur, Nutashkuan, 1992)

The Innu must have hidden when the French arrived and came ashore. Then the French went and saw them and must have told them that they were going to stay there. They also asked them who they were. The Innu did not understand and must have told them that the place where they were, was called Uepishtikueiau and that the river got narrower upstream. They were talking about the St. Lawrence River. Then the French probably set up camp on the other side of the river. [...] When you start being friendly with people who have just arrived, you do anything you can to make them as comfortable as possible and make sure they do not need anything, right? You do everything possible so that the people are at ease and really as comfortable as possible. Anyway, you are afraid of them if you see that they have guns. The Innu had no guns. They had only bows and arrows. That made them afraid in the past. They were afraid that the others would shoot at them or attack them. (Pierre Mesténapéo, Nutashkuan, 1993)

The French showed the Innu products that they had brought with them, including food that the Innu were not familiar with and guns.

When they met, they did not understand one another. The Innu were afraid of the French. The French unloaded food and all the things that they had brought with them. We had never seen such food and were familiar only with meat. We ate only animals. (Paul Benjamin, Pessamu, 1995)

It is said that the French went and made contact with the Innu. They must have shaken their hands. [...] Then they asked them how they survived. The Innu must not have understood, naturally. The people at Uepishtikueiau would not have understood the French when they spoke, [...] they did not understand French, just as we do not understand it. It must have been the same as today. They probably used gestures to understand one another. [...] Then the French showed them flour, baking powder... They showed them everything they had and gave them some. Then they showed them guns. (Pierre Mesténapéo, Nutashkuan, 1993)

According to another version of the oral tradition, when the French tried to get close to shore, Innu arrows stopped them.

The French could not get off their ship because the Innu were attacking them. It took a long time before they got off. [...] The Innu were hidden, so the French did not know where the arrows were coming from. They could not hear anything, but the Innu could hear the French's gunfire. [...] That is why it took so long for the French to come ashore. [...] They could not do so until they had beaten the Innu. At first, they could not get off their boat because they could not conquer the Innu. That is what stopped them from getting off. [...] It was only after defeating them that the French were able to come ashore. The Innu had attacked them. You get to do what you want when you win a war. Once they had won that war, the French were able to get off their boat. Then they went to see the Innu. (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

When the French arrived the very first time, the Innu must not have agreed to leave. So, when they came back, they fought them. [...] There must have been a cliff and it was from there that the Innu fought. That is where the French boat must have been anchored. It is said that those who fought the Innu were aboard a ship while the Innu must have been in the forest. It is said that the

women also shot arrows at the French. They were also using bows and arrows. Women used a different kind of bow than the men, it is said. They mainly used a kind of crossbow. That is what it is said they used. When the battle ended, all the men were dead. The only people left must have been women. They must have run away and hid in the woods. Later, when the fighting was over, the women came back to the coast and stayed there, it is said. Then the Innu population started growing again, little by little. It is said that in the past there used to be many Innu. If the French had not killed them, there would be many Innu today. [...] There was only one battle. It is said that the French had guns, while the Innu had bows and arrows, according to what is said. They killed all the men and there were only women left. Only the Innu who were inland when this happened survived. Later, they must have gone down to Uepishtikueiau and married some of the women who were there. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan,1992).

Whether they were welcomed or not, the oral tradition says that the French were not trusted by the Innu. However, they finally landed and began negotiations with them. What they wanted was clear: they were barely ashore when they asked the Innu to give them Uepishtikueiau.

I do not know how the French lived over there, on their own land; I don't know anything about it because no one saw how they did it. When they arrived at Uepishtikueiau, they saw how the Innu met their needs by using lakes and rivers. That is why, after seeing that it was possible to live well there, they asked for the land; that is why their chief asked the Innu for the land. (Charles Kaltush, Nutashkuan, 1993)

The oral tradition says that the Innu were reluctant to grant the request of the French.

The French must have come from the east, from the direction where the sun rises, and they came to Uepishtikueiau. When they arrived, the Innu were making their canoes as was the custom in the olden days. That is what the Innu must have been doing when the sailboat arrived. So they went down to meet it and their *utshimau* told the French chief to come ashore. He invited the Frenchman to come ashore and it is said that the Frenchman

understood that the Innu were telling him “Québec”. That is the origin of the location's name. So the Frenchman got out of his boat. They started negotiating on the shore. I wonder what the Innu looked like while he was talking with the Frenchman. The Frenchman asked for his land. The Innu listened to him while making his canoe and nodding his head. [...] Then the Frenchman asked him for the land: “Give it to me,” he said. (Pierre Courtois, Nutashkuan, 1993)

Some say that the French had to try two or even three times before they got permission from the Innu to settle at the place called Uepishtikueiau. It is said that they made an offer as well as a promise.

3. A Request and a Promise

Finally having got off their boat, the French said that they wanted to be allowed to settle and live on Innu land. They had seen how the Innu themselves lived on their land and they thought that it could be farmed. They planned to produce their own food, which, according to the oral tradition, was based on flour, to make bread.

The French must have studied Innu land because they are people who plant all sorts of things. They must have seen how fertile the land was. (Délima André, Mani-utenam, 1999)

The French saw that Uepishtikueiau was good land, that it would be good for growing wheat and other things – like potatoes – and that it was fertile enough for all of them to live there. [...] The French chief said to the Innu: “I am going to grow wheat and other things and that way everyone will have what they need, including the Innu.” It is said that this is what he said to them. (Joseph Bellefleur, Nutashkuan, 1993)

If the Innu agreed to let the French settle at Uepishtikueiau, they would receive in exchange a share of the wheat that would be grown and that way they would no longer have to fear the difficult periods of famine that they sometimes suffered. It is said that this is what the French promised.

The French chief came from the east when he asked the Innu to give him Uepishtikueiau. However, the Innu did not give it to him right away. It was when he asked a second time that they gave it to him. After the first request, the French planted a little wheat and after a small amount of wheat had grown, the French chief asked them for their land again. He told them: “Later there will be a lot of wheat and, if the Innu are in need, if they have no food, we will be able to use the wheat to feed them at any time. The Innu will never want for anything. You will no longer have to worry that your descendants will go hungry.” It is said that this is what he said. (Mathieu Menikapu, Nutashkuan, 1971)

After landing, the Frenchman acted as if the land belonged to him. He grew wheat on it. When he asked the Innu for their land, he told them: “It is thanks to this wheat that you will survive. Thanks

to it, you will always have something to eat. This is where we will give you money so that you can buy food and have flour.” (Pierre Courtois, Nutashkuan, 1992)

It is said that the French chief met with the Innu *utshimau* and asked him for his land, which it is said was at Uepishtikueiau. [...] And it seems the Frenchman said: “I will give you food of all kinds and you will eat really very well.” That is what he said, according to what they say. He would have said: “I will make sure that you will always have what you need, and in sufficient quantities.” (Marie-Madeleine Kaltush, Nutashkuan, 1993)

The promise that the French would always give the Innu enough food to survive extended to future generations.

The French chief said to them: “As long as you live, it is because you left us Uepishtikueiau that you will find all you require to meet your needs.” He also told them: “Your children also will never experience hunger, it is thanks to this that they will also find the food they need.” (Pierre Courtois, Nutashkuan, 1993)

The French planted wheat and it is said that the first harvests were good.

It is said that everything grows well at Uepishtikueiau. That is why the French asked the Innu for the land. They told them that they would be very good to them, in exchange. [...] It is said that the land was very good. It is said that things grew well. (Michel Bellefleur, Unaman-shipu, 1988)

Another branch of the oral tradition suggests that the French also showed the Innu other products. And, without the Innu realizing it, the promise to help them by providing food turned into an offer to trade.

It is said that there were no French there, in Uepishtikueiau. There were only Innu. So trading company bosses went to the Innu. They met with the Indians. They asked: “Can we settle here?” They talked about Uepishtikueiau. They said: “We will build a warehouse.” The bosses said: “If ever you are in need in the future, we will be able to help you.” So, according to what is said, the Innu

agreed. Then the French built a warehouse at Uepishtikueiau. And then they became numerous. (Michel Grégoire, Nutashkuan, 1975)

They came from very far away: they came from Europe. More and more of them came and they brought all they needed with them. They brought from their lands, from France, what they would need at Uepishtikueiau. Then they sold all sorts of things to the Innu: food, guns, and other goods that the Innu might need. And the Innu must have finally accepted the French who sold them guns. The Innu had nothing like all that. They had neither flintlocks nor muskets. They must have been happy. When they were given some, they must have thought that they had good guns and that they would never have had any if the French had not come. They used the guns for hunting. They must have been useful for hunting and shooting animals. Before, they had only their bows and arrows. If they could not get close enough to the animals, they could not kill them. However, with guns they could kill from afar, no matter what kind of animal, and they must have appreciated the new possibility. So in the end they liked the French who were there, and the French sold them all sorts of things. (Joseph Bellefleur, Nutashkuan, 1992)

As the story goes, the Innu were won over by the products and economic assistance offered, and they allowed the French to settle at Uepishtikueiau.

The Innu left Uepishtikueiau to the French because they would no longer have to search for food since everything necessary would be available at Uepishtikueiau. (Pierre Courtois, Nutashkuan, 1993)

Sometimes in the story, Innu permission is presented as a requirement.

The Innu who was in charge of Uepishtikueiau must have been like an *utshimau*. So the French chief must have asked that Innu *utshimau* for the land. [...] It is said that he submitted a request to the Innu; it was their land that he asked for. After the Frenchman made the request, the Innu *utshimau* would have told him: "I will let you have my land but in exchange you must never refuse to give me anything that I may ask of you in return." (Marie-Madeleine Kaltush, Nutashkuan, 1993)

There was also a discussion about land. The French apparently suggested that the Innu live along the riverbank, while the French would go and develop the land in the interior. However, the Innu rejected this arrangement.

After they got off their boat, the French went to see the Innu to tell them that they could keep control of the coast and the French would go to *nutshimit*. However, the Innu did not accept the proposal. They continued to live in *nutshimit* and let the French have only the coast. They let them use the coast along the salt water so that they would not gain control of the *nutshimit* areas. (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

The oral tradition thus reports that there was an agreement between the French and the Innu. The Innu agreed that the French could come ashore, sow wheat and build a warehouse, but the permission covered only Uepishtikueiau. In exchange, the French promised the Innu that they and their descendants would from then on have access to food aide, basically wheat flour, and that at Uepishtikueiau they would always find manufactured goods that could be useful to them, such as guns.

However, it is said that this is not exactly what happened.

4. Luring, Trickery and Ambushes

The oral tradition contains two versions of the events that followed the promise made by the French. One stresses the fact that the new arrivals used their products to lure, and then trick, the Innu. In particular, it is reported that the flour and rifles, which were particularly attractive to the Innu, ended up being a kind of trap into which the Innu fell without realizing it.

Everything happened because of food. The French acted friendly. They gave the Innu food and the Innu were happy to be able to feed their children. Since their children had enough to live on, why would the Innu have had anything bad to say? They did not know that they were being given all those things in exchange for their land. Land had not been mentioned when the French, who seemed generous, gave them their goods. [...] The Innu must have been happy to accept the food. It satisfied them. They must have been happy to be treated that way and that is how the French were able to trick them. If the French had not given them the goods, they would never have managed to trick them and the Innu would have kept their land. [...] The French knew that they were going to lay hold of the Innu's river [the St. Lawrence River], and they knew it because they had already built their houses. They had it in mind. [...] The Innu must not have paid attention to what the French were doing because they were happy with the things they had been given. [...] The Innu must not have paid attention to them because they thought the land was theirs. They never imagined that in the end they would be forced to move and that they would be deprived of their lands. But the French knew that they would supplant the Innu as soon as there were enough of them. (Pierre Mesténapéo, Nutashkuan, 1993)

The first time the French came to Uepishtikueiau, they were in a boat, a sailboat. That is how they arrived in Innu lands. They came ashore and started selling their goods to the Innu. At the time there were not the same things as we find today. Also, the French must have had food that they also traded. Then, from that time on, they continued bringing those products. [...] When the French gave guns to the Innu, they told the Innu that there were no better guns. [...] So the Innu thought that the guns that came from France were

better than all the others. They took the French's word for it. [...] They thought that by accepting the guns they were receiving help from the French; they did not see that this was how they were being displaced. [...] By bringing all those things for sale and tempting the Innu with them, the French succeeded in quietly driving the Innu away, almost without a fight. That is how they were able to take possession of the land because they knew how they would use it. (Paul Benjamin, Pessamu, 1993)

At first the French gave gifts of their harvest and technology to the Innu. However, they soon began to sell these things.

The French would have said to the Innu: "I will grow wheat, it will be very beautiful, your land will be magnificent!" It is said that the French said: "We will till the earth and send you the produce." But in fact, they farmed the earth for themselves, so they could later sell what they harvested. [...] The French also had guns. [...] They had brought some with them and gave some to the Innu. And then in the end they sold them to [the Innu]. (Joseph Bellefleur, Nutashkuan, 1993)

Having shown the usefulness of their goods, the French, who, it is said, were quite aware of what they wanted, managed to make the Innu dependent on their goods, so much so that the Innu would even trade their furs for them. The relationship then stopped being friendly and became one of commerce.

But even worse: The French gradually set down roots.

At first, the Innu were not worried. Above all, they knew they were on their own land and did not think they had anything to fear.

The Innu must have believed that their land would always be their own. That is why they did not need to hate the new arrivals. (Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, Unaman-shipu, 1988)

Since the Innu used to spend most of the year inland, they were not immediately aware of what was happening. However, every time they came back to Uepishtikueiau, they saw the French were expanding their "garden."

After living there a year, the French must have grown wheat. They would have made their own flour and they would have grown wheat at Uepishtikueiau. It is said that their garden was not very big then. At first, they did not plant very much. [...] They must have grown only what they needed to feed themselves. [...] They probably enclosed their garden with a wooden fence. Then, while the Innu were not there, while they were gone to *nutshimit*, they must have expanded it. They must have increased the land on which they grew wheat. Some Innu would have remained there to see what the French were doing, to watch them. They must have seen what they were doing. They must not have understood anything about it. They neither spoke nor understood French. They must have been afraid of the French; they must have simply watched them and seen what they were doing. The French must have done as they pleased and that way they finally managed to push the Innu off their land. It is by their agriculture that they must have succeeded. They must have extended their fence depending on what they were growing. They must have made it bigger and bigger, and the Innu must have ended up leaving Uepishtikueiau. (Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

As time went by, not only did the farmed land grow, but the foreign population also increased considerably.

The French came by boat and disembarked. After the first ship, more came and the French became more numerous. Then there were far too many to count. After the first came ashore there at Uepishtikueiau, after the Innu told them to get off their boats, the French became extremely numerous. [...] This was how they were able to get the Innu to move away from Uepishtikueiau and how they came to control that land. (Joseph Bellefleur, Nutashkuan, 1992)

The French must not have been very numerous at the very beginning. Their numbers grew at Uepishtikueiau. [...] Once they had become numerous, then they must have driven the Innu away. (Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, Unaman-shipu, 1988)

According to this branch of the oral tradition, this is how the French insidiously settled and soon behaved as if they were at home. As they

occupied more and more land with their homes and fields, the French displaced the Innu from Uepishtikueiau.

Another version of the oral tradition, which seems more widespread, relates instead that there were fights between the Innu and the French. Though, of course, at the beginning the new arrivals respected the Innu because they needed their help.

At first the French must have held the Innu in esteem. It was thanks to them that they had things to eat, thanks to them that they had food. They ate what the Innu themselves ate. The Innu gave them food that they brought from *nutshimit*. Then, after the Innu had saved them from famine, the French began to hate them. (Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, Unaman-shipu, 1988)

It was the Innu who must have taught the French how to survive in *nutshimit*. They taught them everything and, once they knew everything, the French had no more consideration for the Innu. (Joseph Bellefleur, Nutashkuan, 1993)

It is said that soon after they arrived, the French became very numerous, got organized and, in particular, formed a government. The government seems to have been placed under the authority of a young female ruler¹ and a decision was then made to take over the land of the Innu and drive them away when they tried to return.

The French formed a government, and that is how their population was able to grow at Uepishtikueiau. This is what they did to take possession of the land, to take possession of Uepishtikueiau. They must have decided that they were going to set up a government, and that is when they began acting as if Uepishtikueiau belonged to them. From then on, they no longer had to pay attention to the Innu, they did whatever they wanted with them. (Joseph Bellefleur, Nutashkuan, 1993)

¹ It has proven impossible for us to identify this female ruler. One could imagine it was Mother Marie de l'Incarnation, but we have no evidence to support this theory. As well, it is not absolutely necessary, and even possibly detrimental, to always want to establish links between the oral and written traditions.

It must have been because of the land that the French fought the Innu. They must have wanted to take it. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1992)

After the French had come ashore, they appointed a young female ruler. And the young ruler asked that the [Innu] men be killed but the women be spared. [...] The men were killed when they came down to the coast and the French saw them. The Innu and the French killed each other. You could say that they were at war. They killed each other. [...] The ruler feared that Uepishtikueiau would be taken away from her. She feared that the Innu would take possession of it again, but she thought that if there were no more men, then Uepishtikueiau could belong to her. (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

In short, the French feared that the Innu would try to take Uepishtikueiau back. The Innu fought not only to keep it but also because they feared that the French would spread beyond Québec City and try to take over the *nutshimit* lands.

The Innu must have been afraid of the French because they thought that the French would drive them off their land, of course. They feared that they would force them off the land where they hunted in *nutshimit*. (Joseph Bellefleur, Nutashkuan, 1993)

The Innu fought for their land. They must have wanted to stay at Uepishtikueiau because in the past it was they who were there. [...] The French drove them out. They drove them off their land. Perhaps they would not have been able to do it if they had not fought them. They killed the Innu and that is how they gained control of Uepishtikueiau. If there had been no war, the Innu would not have let them have Uepishtikueiau. They must have loved that land when they went there in the olden days. They came there from very far away. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1992)

The Innu must have tried to protect themselves, but the French attacked them. [...] They must have gotten killed and they must have killed French people also. There must have been a lot of deaths amongst both the Innu and the French. (Joseph-Jacques Fontaine, Pessamu, 1994)

The French killed the Innu who were at Uepishtikueiau, and then took their land. Otherwise the Innu would be numerous today. The French killed them to take their land, which is why they were always trying to kill them. (Déliima André, Mani-utenam, 1999)

The oral tradition recounts how the Innu were attached to Uepishtikueiau and always wanting to return to it, especially to harvest the birch bark needed to build canoes. Apparently, that important raw material was later delivered to them from Québec City by boat and they had to buy it.

It is said the Innu returned to Uepishtikueiau because they wanted to see their land again. [...] It is said that they went there to get bark. They must have been afraid when they went to get it; they must have just passed through and not stayed. They must have just passed by in canoes without spending time there. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1993)

The Innu and the French ambushed each other when the Innu came down from *nutshimit* and approached Uepishtikueiau. It is said that the French killed only the men. They spared the women.

There, at Uepishtikueiau, they killed the men. They did not kill the women because they took them as wives. [...] If they had not killed the men, perhaps they would have been killed themselves. And it is said that the women taught them how to hunt. In the olden days, the French must not have hunted inland. Innu women showed them how. Innu women also made their moccasins and snowshoes. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1993)

During these battles between the French and the Innu, the Innu were decimated because the French had an advantage with their weapons.

The French must have shot at the Innu because they had guns and the Innu had only bows and arrows. It is said that the Innu and the French were not on good terms at the time. They were always killing each other. (Joseph Bellefleur, Nutashkuan, 1992)

It is said that the French wanted to hurt the Innu. They attacked the men and took the women. [...] The Innu could not do anything. They had nothing and perhaps they were not as numerous as the

French or perhaps the French were better organized to attack them. [...] They must have had something that the Innu did not have to protect themselves, and that is why the Innu were defeated. (Thommy Canapé, Pessamu, 1993)

The Innu were also less numerous.

Since they were growing more and more numerous, the French did not want the people who used to come to Uepishtikueiau to keep coming there. [...] Every time the Innu came down to the coast, the French were waiting for them. Every year when the Innu came down to the coast, the French killed the men and took the women to keep them for themselves. (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1996)

And so oral tradition recounts that the French made it clear to the Innu they were not welcome at Uepishtikueiau, which had become Québec City. The agreement, which had seemed based on friendship and generosity, turned out to be a commercial relationship and the French behaved as if they owned the land. It is said that, as they continued to expand, they made their hosts, the Innu, uncomfortable and even in fear for their lives when they visited what they considered their land.

For the sake of peace and because of the dangers involved, the Innu thus avoided Uepishtikueiau.

5. The Innu Avoid Uepishtikueiau

It was becoming more and more clear to the Innu who frequented Uepishtikueiau regularly, that they would have to remove that destination from their travel routes. So they avoided returning there and when they used to come down from *nutshimit*, they would set up camp downstream from Uepishtikueiau, at the mouths of rivers that flow into the St. Lawrence River and the Gulf.

The Innu had to leave Uepishtikueiau. They were afraid that the French would attack them again, that they would shoot at them. It is said that in the olden days, the Innu were not given guns for fear they would engage in a new battle to retake Uepishtikueiau. [...] It took a long time before they were given any. [...] So, since they themselves were afraid of being shot at, the Innu went elsewhere. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1992)

The news spread that it was better to avoid Uepishtikueiau from then on. Those who fought told groups they met in *nutshimit*, and others learned it first hand when they went there in later years.

After they left, they must have met other Innu who came from elsewhere, and told them what had happened. They told them that they had been forced away from Uepishtikueiau. So they lived in other areas of their lands. (Pierre Mesténapéo, Nutashkuan, 1992)

The men had been killed during the attacks by the French. And it is said that then the population was able to rebuild because the Innu who were in *nutshimit* came down to the coast and, seeing the women, took them as their wives. It is said that they made some of them their wives. And the Innu population of Uepishtikueiau was able to grow again. [...] Those men must have come from *nutshimit*. It was when they were coming down to the coast that they must have learned that the others had been killed. It must not have been until they saw the women that they knew the men had been killed. When there was the war, there must have been only some of the Innu on the coast. The others were in *nutshimit*. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1992)

As we saw at the beginning of this story, Uepishtikueiau was not the only place where the Innu could find food in spring and summer. Many rivers teeming with fish empty into the St. Lawrence River and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and the Innu were already used to staying near the mouths of these rivers. They continued to maintain their cycle of activities, spending part of their time in *nutshimit* and part of it on the coast. What was important, of course, was to have access to game and fish.

In greater numbers and more often, they spent time on the Upper, Middle and Lower North Shore, depending on their preferences and kinship relations since, like the Innu today, it is said they had relatives more or less everywhere.

When they gave up the idea of going back and left Uepishtikueiau, they went to other places along the coast and also continued living in *nutshimit*. (Marie-Madeleine Kaltush, Nutashkuan, 1993)

The Innu must have liked the things that they had been sold and were using. However, they were exiled from Uepishtikueiau, their land. So they did not stay there. They ran away and came to the North Shore. They scattered and went where there was game, where they could hunt. (Joseph Bellefleur, Nutashkuan, 1992)

It is said that the French attacked the Innu in the olden days; they must not have liked them. So the Innu apparently left Uepishtikueiau because their population dropped. [...] They ran away and that is how there came to be more and more Innu on the North Shore. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1992)

Then the Innu left; they went towards the place where we are now [Upper North Shore]. That is what seems to have happened. They came here in little groups, and went even further to the east. (Roméo Rousselot, Pessamu, 1994)

It is said that there used to be Innu on the exact site of Québec City today. But they were forced to leave; they were displaced. [...] It is said that the French displaced them and that is why they no longer felt like staying at Uepishtikueiau. Since the Whites forced them to leave, they did not want to stay. [...] They were so afraid that they preferred to go away and leave Uepishtikueiau. They did not give

them the land; they were evicted from it. [...] They would have stayed if they had not been afraid. [...] We do not know what the French said to them to make them so afraid. [...] They came to the North Shore, and each group decided to stay along the river that it liked. (Philomène McKenzie, Mani-utenam, 1999)

The movement towards the east explains why all Innu, no matter what community they belong to today, can say that their ancestors visited Uepishtikueiau before the French arrived.

The French sometimes attacked the Innu when the latter came down to Uepishtikueiau. [...] So the Innu came here [to the Lower North Shore]. They went downstream. The Innu who live here now are the descendants of those who were at Uepishtikueiau. [...] We are all from Uepishtikueiau. (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

Then Uepishtikueiau was taken away from the Innu. [...] The Innu must have moved to Nutashkuan and then to Unaman-shipu, and all the way to Pakut-shipu and Sheshatshiu. And the furthest they went was Utshimassits. (Pierre Courtois, Nutashkuan, 1992)

Those who are here now must be descendants of those Innu. We must come from that generation. (Délima André, Mani-utenam, 1999)

The loss of Uepishtikueiau as a gathering place, also explains, it is said, why different dialects and accents can be heard in the Innu language.

It was at Uepishtikueiau [...] that we separated, so we speak differently from one another today. The people at Pessamu speak in a certain way and those from Uashau have a different accent. Those at Unaman-shipu also speak differently, and it is the same with the people from Ekuanitshu and from Nutashkuan. It was there, at Uepishtikueiau, after we became separated, that our language broke apart. [...] Everyone must have spoken the same language in the past [...] when we were at Uepishtikueiau. (Pierre Courtois, Nutashkuan, 1993)

The arrival of the French and the climate of fear created by the war also affected relations among Indigenous peoples.

After the Innu were killed by the French, we all distrusted one another. The French killed the Innu. So from then on, when the Innu, those who spoke the same language as us, came down to the coast, they were always careful. There were battles between the Innu and other Indigenous peoples. We probably distrusted one another, and feared that the French were being helped by the members of other nations. (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1988)

The war, in which many men were killed, also explains why the Innu are not very numerous today.

It was the French who attacked the Innu. It is said they killed a lot and that otherwise the Innu would be very numerous today. It is certain that they must have been numerous in the olden days because there were Innu everywhere. (Délima André, Mani-utenam, 1999)

It is said that a man used to spend spring and summer on an island located close to Uepishtikueiau. Despite the fear that the French inspired in the Innu, the man continued to go there with his family.¹

The Innu no longer went to Uepishtikueiau, except for brief trips to get bark and make canoes. It is said that an old man had been living there for a long time on an island. That was where he must have been sometimes. [...] So, when the Innu went to get bark, they would have had to pass by there by canoe. [...] They must have visited the old man on the island. [...] He would have lived close to the coast in the winter, and when the summer came he would have set up camp on the island. He would have fished there and that is also where he must have made his canoe. [...] He was there with his wife and children, with the whole family. [...] He must have had a lot of children. [...] He must have belonged to the same nation as us. [...] The last time that this Innu was heard of, he was living on that island. And then no one heard about him again. So it was thought that the French had killed him. [...] He must have wanted to fight to keep his land. [...] It was said that he had certainly been

¹ The fact that the île d'Orleans is the island closest to Québec City (compared, for example, with l'île aux Grues or l'île aux Coudres), leads us to believe that it is the island in question, but we cannot confirm this.

killed. He must have refused to give up the island; he must not have wanted to give it up, and that is why he would have been killed. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1992, 1993)

It is said that this man was the last to live in the Uepishtikueiau area and the last to be killed there.

However, the unfortunate Uepishtikueiau episode provided food for thought. It is said that some time later, when the French tried to displace the Innu again, the latter managed to persuade them not to do so.

There were Innu everywhere, all the way to Tadoussac and in other places too. They were everywhere. The French wanted to displace them. The Innu already had villages. They did not have very many, but they had some. So the French wanted to displace them. They probably wanted to attack the Innu, but the Innu told them: “You will not come here. Go elsewhere, you will not take this land, we are using it.” They wanted to attack them, but the Innu had probably already begun to defend themselves a bit. So the French left them alone, it is said. [...] The Innu seem to have told them: “This land belongs to us and we are using it, we do not want you to go into *nutshimit*, go somewhere else.” [...] Those Innu had to be on good land [...] it was a little settlement, perhaps like Pessamu or Uashau. At that time, there were not as many Innu as there are today. [...] The French left them alone because there was enough land for them to go and settle somewhere else. [...] They left them alone, and since then there have been no major attacks on the Innu. They keep trying to displace them, but they no longer do what they did in the past when the French attacked them as soon as they arrived. (Thommy Canapé, Pessamu, 1993)

While they had not given it up, it is said that the Innu had to stop visiting Uepishtikueiau and later they kept their guard up because today, as in the past, and even though there is no war, the Whites still want their land.

6. Testimony from afar

This story comes from those who witnessed the events. It was passed down by many generations to finally come to us today.

There must have been Innu there, at Uepishtikueiau, and they are the ones who must have told what happened. We have heard the same story generation after generation. [...] The Innu were everywhere, all over the whole area. And naturally there must have been some at Uepishtikueiau too. There were some here, on the North Shore, and there were also some there. Otherwise, how would we have heard about all that? The Uepishtikueiau Story comes from Uepishtikueiau. [...] The words that tell of these events do not come from here but from there. (Pierre Mesténapéo, Nutashkuan, 1992)

It was those who were at Uepishtikueiau who told what happened there. They reported it to those who later related what I am telling you myself. The story has existed for a very long time, it goes back very far in time. [...] It is known as the Uepishtikueiau Story. There must have been a large number of Innu at that place. Their ancestors must have been there too, and that must be why they could not leave their land. [...] The first generations died, and it was their descendants who stayed at Uepishtikueiau when the area was abandoned. And the story of Uepishtikueiau has reached our generation. For us, those people were the *Tshiashinnuat*, the Ancients, those whom we did not know, the ancestors of those we have not seen ourselves, those who, for our own ancestors, were the fathers of the Ancients whom they themselves had not seen. (Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, Unaman-shipu, 1988)

The memory of the event is not specific to a family or community. It is shared by the whole Innu nation.

It was my grandfather who told me what happened at Uepishtikueiau. My father also told me. They themselves were reporting what they had been told and those words came to me. [...] What I tell, I did not believe it before. I did not really believe what was said about Uepishtikueiau. [...] But the Elders all tell the same story, even those who live upstream from the Gulf of the St.

Lawrence, like those at Pessamu and Uashau. [...] That is why I believe in the truth of this story. (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1993)

It is a story that the Elders consider important because it explains the present situation, which it is said, reproduces what happened at Uepishtikueiau. It is important to keep reciting it if we are to understand not only how Uepishtikueiau was taken from the Innu but also how today they risk losing the land in *nutshimit*. The French were not content with Uepishtikueiau. Little by little, they settled all along the North Shore and today the Whites act as if they own the land in *nutshimit*, as did their own ancestors at Uepishtikueiau.

Sometimes the Elders recounted what was going to happen, they predicted what would happen. When they told their children things, they told them what the future would be like. They are the ones who thought about the turn events would take and today we are experiencing what they predicted. [...] They must have already had an inkling of what was going to happen. They must have known what the future had in store. It was when they were still there, at Uepishtikueiau, that they must have started suspecting there would always be a desire to take their land away from them. [...] The Innu who ran away from Uepishtikueiau must have been careful to observe how things happened. They must have thought that what they were experiencing would always repeat itself. And they always said so. They always said what was going to happen. Today we can see that their predictions and words are coming true. (William-Mathieu Mark, Unaman-shipu, 1988)

Today there are no longer any Innu in *nutshimit*. You see Whites there and they do not hesitate to build houses everywhere. They are making *nutshimit* into their land rather than that of the Innu, and yet the Innu are its masters. [The Whites] act as if *nutshimit* was under their control. They cannot be satisfied with Uepishtikueiau, with what they were given. (Marie-Madeleine Kaltush, Nutashkuan, 1993)

In the olden days, there were never any French in *nutshimit*. [...] They were only at Uepishtikueiau. In *nutshimit*, you did not see them very often. There were none. Now, however, they are the only ones in *nutshimit*.

They are about to force all the Innu out. They are going to hurt them. They are going to send them to the coast. Already there are a lot of things built by Whites in *nutshimit*. They are going to try and build more. They are going to want to control the whole of *nutshimit*. They are going to do to the Innu the same as what they did at Uepishtikueiau. [...] The French did not want the Innu to keep visiting that place. It is said that they attacked them and succeeded in making sure that there were no more Innu at Uepishtikueiau. The Innu were attacked at Uepishtikueiau, and then they were chased away, and then the French took their land. So the Innu went elsewhere. And now the Whites want to ban [the Innu] from *nutshimit*. Already they have almost succeeded in expelling them from *nutshimit* as they did at Uepishtikueiau. (Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, Nutashkuan, 1992)

Such is the Uepishtikueiau Story and the teachings of past generations passed down to the present generation.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank all those from Pessamu to Pakut-shipu, who received us and spent many hours speaking with me and then with Joséphine Bacon and I between 1971 and 1999. While not everyone is quoted here, it was with the help of all of their remarks that I was able to piece together the Uepishtikueiau Story as it appears in this publication.

Second, I have to express my warm gratitude to Joséphine Bacon, who acted as an assistant, interpreter and translator over the years, and who provided the French translation of all of the passages cited from recordings. However, she is not responsible for any errors in the choice of passages, their arrangement or the overall design of this document.

I would also like to thank Gloria Vollant from the ICEM, who was immediately receptive to the idea of publishing a text on the Uepishtikueiau Story and who never stopped believing in it, despite the many obstacles encountered along the way.

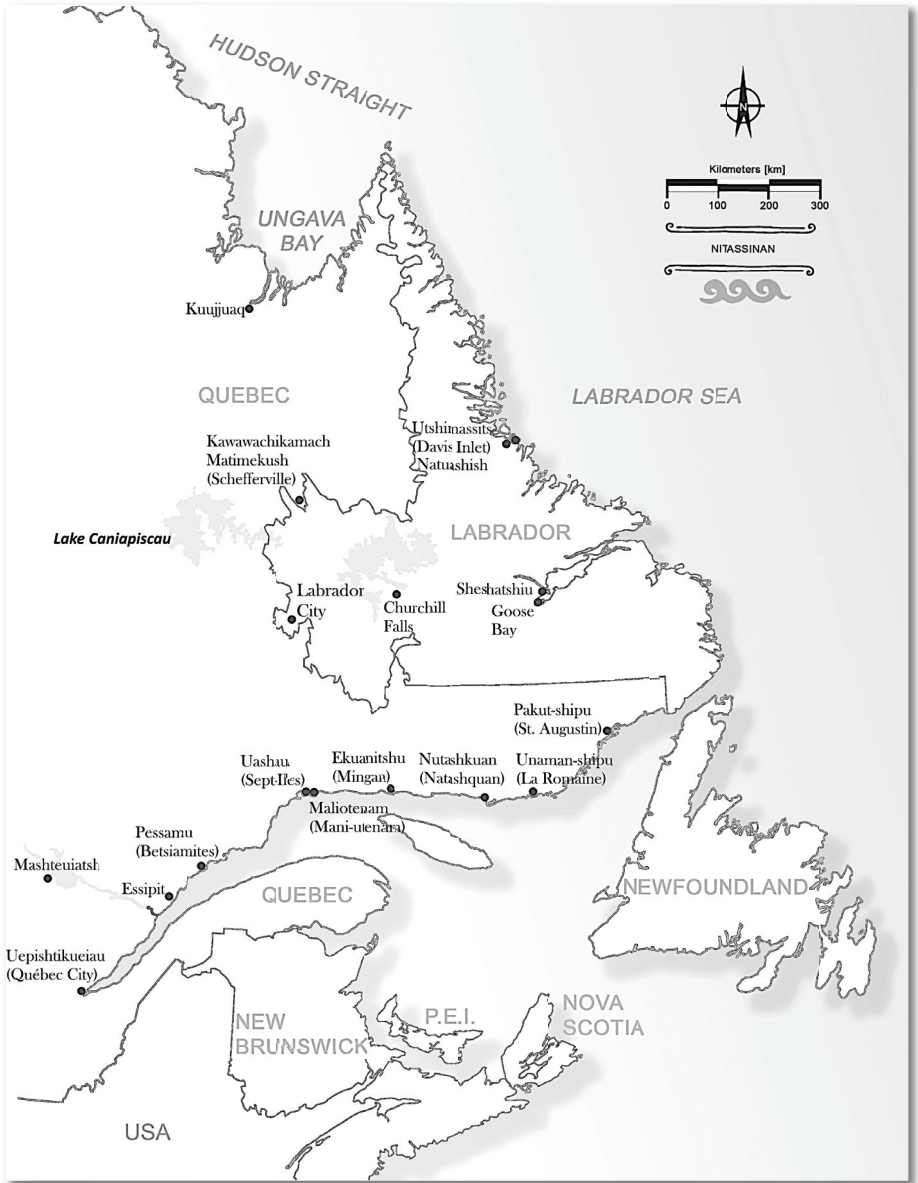
With respect to the design and writing stages, I would like to give special thanks to Diane Lemieux, who was Québec Minister of State for Culture and Communications at the time, Danielle Bilodeau, one of Ms. Lemieux's political advisors, and Carole Lévesque of the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (Urbanisation, culture et société). In addition to the financial support of their respective institutions, the personal interest that they expressed in the project encouraged me to complete it.

For their kindness and speed, thanks must also be given to Marcelle Roy, who did the final proofreading to identify errors in French, spelling mistakes and punctuation problems, to Serge Ashini-Goupil, Director and Yannick Labbé, Geomatician of Ashini-Goupil Inc., who produced the map of Innu communities, and especially to François Girard, painter in watercolour, who created the cover for the original publication.

Finally, this work would never have seen the light of day without the technical assistance, unflagging support and time provided by Thierry, Nadine and Gaëlle Vincent. They know how much they contributed to this project, and how grateful I am to them.

This short text was sponsored by the Institute culturel et éducatif montagnais (ICEM). Parks Canada (Saguenay-Lake St. Jean Marine Park) provided funding for translation from Innu to French. The writing was

funded partly by the INRS - Urbanisation, Culture et Société and by the cultural initiative fund administered by Diane Lemieux, who was Québec Minister of State for Culture and Communications at the time. The excerpts of the Innu oral tradition that are quoted here were recorded and first translated into French between 1971 and 1999 in the course of various contracts and on personal initiative, but mainly with the help of a grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (1987).



People quoted

Pessamu

Paul Benjamin, 1993
Thommy Canapé, 1993
Joseph-Jacques Fontaine, 1994
Roméo Rousselot, 1994
Desanges Saint-Onge, 1994

Mani-utenam

Déliima André, 1999
Philomène McKenzie, 1999

Nutashkuan

Joseph Bellefleur, 1992, 1993
Pierre Courtois, 1992, 1993
Michel Grégoire, 1975
Charles Kaltush, 1993
Marie-Madeleine Kaltush, 1993
Mathieu Menikapu, 1971
Pierre Mesténapéo, 1992, 1993
Joseph-Bastien Wapistan, 1992, 1993

Unaman-shipu

Jean-Baptiste Bellefleur, 1988, 1993
Michel Bellefleur, 1988
William-Mathieu Mark, 1988, 1993, 1996