

A TRIBUTE TO ELIZABETH MANCKE: HER CONTRIBUTION TO NEW BRUNSWICK STUDIES

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My first memory of Elizabeth Mancke dates back to April 1998 when she was MC-ing at the wedding of our mutual friend Moira Gutteridge Kloster in North Vancouver. Little did I know then that we would both end up at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) as friends and colleagues. At the time of the wedding, Elizabeth had been at the University of Akron for four years, and would remain there until 2012, when she took up a Canada Research Chair in Atlantic Canada Studies at UNB in Fredericton. By this time, I had come to know Elizabeth as an established scholar of British imperial and constitutional history. Despite the breath of her scholarship and her professional networks, Elizabeth came to care deeply about her adopted home, and has had a significant impact on New Brunswick studies. According to Dr. Erin Morton, Elizabeth's primary legacy is the "way she conducted her scholarship." Although she is the author and editor of five books, and recently a moving force behind two major multi-institutional SSHRC grants, "she did little of this work alone."¹ Elizabeth had a talent for community building. Through collaboration and mentorship, she encouraged colleagues and graduate students to produce innovative approaches that integrate New Brunswick into larger frameworks and historiographies. She also insisted that researchers have a responsibility to use their privilege and their skills and scholarship to create a more equitable society. The most notable example is her work with Dr. Bill Parenteau on the recent Madawaska Maliseet First Nation land claims case.

Collaboration and Mentorship

Elizabeth's mentorship and collaboration took many forms and benefited New Brunswick in a myriad of ways. First, she ensured that local people who work on New Brunswick topics took part in these collaborations. I was fortunate to be a part of the workshops coordinated by Elizabeth, Jerry Bannister, Scott See, and Denis McKim, which resulted in the edited volume *Violence, Order, and Unrest: A History of British North America, 1749–1876*.² Elizabeth's reframing of Atlantic Canadian history also influenced the work of established and emerging scholars. After Elizabeth passed away on 15 September 2023, her colleagues and students published a series of tributes which outlined the significance of her scholarship. Morton asserted that her colleague had "done nothing less than to change the framework of Atlantic Canadian history by placing this region into a global history of imperialism and colonialism, especially in terms of governance and legal systems."³ From the perspective of Dr. Jerry Bannister from Dalhousie University, "her work made major contributions to international histories of the Atlantic World yet was rooted deeply and unapologetically in community and region. Unlike most historians of colonialism, Elizabeth valued both transnational and local perspectives."⁴ Dr. Danny Samson from Brock University spoke of Elizabeth's "willingness to stand apart, but not in isolation." He argued that it was this quality that "made her love working in Atlantic Canada, and with Atlantic Canadian scholars and activists...She was a scholar of very high international standing, working on a place sometimes understood to be marginal to the wider Atlantic world, at a small university on the fringes of Canada, never mind the world, and she made all that work."⁵

This reframing of Atlantic Canadian history in an Atlantic World context has had major implications for our understanding of New Brunswick. One of Elizabeth's graduate students, Dr. Murray

Yeomans, once joked that while New Brunswick was small in the context of the Atlantic World, it loomed large in Elizabeth's historical imagination. What attracted Elizabeth to New Brunswick was that it boasted a plethora of historical sources but was "one of, if not, the least studied provinces," and thus desperately needed more scholarly attention. The last general text on New Brunswick, *New Brunswick: A History, 1784–1867* by William Stewart MacNutt, was originally published in 1963, and, according to Yeomans, tended to "write off New Brunswick" as "this very conservative backwater that was too poor, too remote, and too far away to really assert anything."⁶ Under Elizabeth's guidance, colleagues and graduate students have been challenging this outdated image of New Brunswick.

By placing New Brunswick in an Atlantic World context, Elizabeth encourages us to examine how it was shaped by larger networks, processes, and events. This pushes back against the privileging of regional history in the *Acadiensis* generation of scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Yeomans, Mancke did this not because she dismissed this type of history, but because she disliked being pigeon-holed as "just" doing regional history.⁷ It is therefore somewhat ironic that historian Tom Peace, in his award-winning book *The Slow Rush of Colonization: Spaces of Power in the Maritime Peninsula, 1680–1790*, has acknowledged how Elizabeth's work has helped him to articulate a regional approach in his analysis of the Maritime Peninsula in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries.⁸ According to Peace:

Thinking about this period in the Peninsula's history from a regional perspective helps us see how [a transition toward settler colonialism] was facilitated not only by military expeditions, but also by international diplomacy between Indigenous, French, and British nations and related settler expansion...Rather than looking at historicized political jurisdictions, such as European colonies or specific Indigenous national territories, a regional perspective better includes the diversity of peoples who wielded influence in the Maritime Peninsula.⁹

In the podcast *Witness to Yesterday*, Peace explains how Elizabeth's framework of "spaces of power" helped him to make sense of the "spatial manifestation of power" in a "hybrid and fluid way."¹⁰ In her 2005 chapter in the collection *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons*, Elizabeth defines spaces of power as "systems of social power, whether economic, political, cultural or military, that we can describe functionally and spatially. Social power has multiple forms that frequently operate at variance with one another."¹¹ Peace marries Elizabeth's framework with that of social geographer Henri Lefebvre who writes about the way power is produced through the "conception, perception, and lived experience of space." He argues that together their ideas are useful in understanding the changes and contradictions in such a multicultural and multi-jurisdictional space as the Maritime Peninsula.¹² Clearly by being a part of this diverse geographical space, New Brunswick is far from being a remote unimportant backwater; rather, it is part of a complex and multifaceted history.

Mentoring Graduate Students

Graduate students have always been involved in Elizabeth's collaborations. At the time of her passing, Elizabeth had a cohort of fifteen graduate students. Many of them speak fondly of her as a mentor, a role model, a friend, and part of their chosen family. Elizabeth took her supervisory responsibilities very seriously. According to Yeomans, Elizabeth "believed her job was to guide her students, not to evaluate them."¹³ In Elizabeth's own words, "being a supervisor is to be a coach. But

there is a strong tradition in history of supervisors being judges, not coaches.”¹⁴ Former graduate student Dr. Stephanie Pettigrew, who was with Elizabeth when she passed away, recalls that “one [of] the most important things I learned from Elizabeth...is the importance of meticulous research. You examine everything, and comb through your sources with a fine-tooth comb. If your sources fail to prove your point, then you change direction....You do not defer to authority just because they are authority; if someone says something that doesn't seem right, you have every right to follow your instincts and find that source of dissonance rather than accepting it at face value.”¹⁵ Moreover, the collaboration between Stephanie and Elizabeth in their article “European Expansion and the Contested North Atlantic,” which examines Dano-Norwegian claims in Greenland,¹⁶ also illustrates the broad scope of the research engaged in by Elizabeth and her students.

A number of graduate students inherited Elizabeth's enthusiasm for topics that incorporate local contexts and issues. It is their work that will have a transformative effect on our understanding of New Brunswick history and society. This was always part of Elizabeth's plan. As Yeomans notes: “nothing brought [Elizabeth] greater happiness than talking about the significance of what we might accomplish and the impact of our contribution to the academy. More importantly, I think, is that she cared about what our work represented for our communities and to us as individuals.”¹⁷ Elizabeth often co-authored papers with her graduate students, as a way of helping them along professionally and personally.

One project that integrated numerous students was the creation of the British North America Legislative Database. This database amalgamates the legislation of the original houses of government in British North America, including the records for New Brunswick, between 1786–1867. The project involved many of UNB's graduate students including Stephanie Pettigrew as project manager, and Dr. David Bent, Erin Isaac, Alanna James, Mark Landry, Dr. Katherine MacDonald, Dr. Mark McLaughlin, and Rebecca Stieva as graduate student contributors. At various times during the database's construction, Elizabeth also employed four work study students, five digitization technicians, three New Brunswick Student Employment Experience Development (SEED) students, and two student transcribers.¹⁸

The database's usefulness to New Brunswick studies, besides its employment of UNB students, is that the digitized legislation provides a lens through which we can understand how successive New Brunswick colonial governments approached various issues. One of the inspirations for the database was Elizabeth's interest in the colony's regulation of the hunting of wild game and moose. Through an initial survey, she discovered that New Brunswick was experimenting with environmental conservation at a time when other British colonies were moving toward resource exploitation.¹⁹ Elizabeth also became interested in the regulation of the colony's marine life. This necessitated three research trips to Grand Manan with her graduate students. While there, they developed working relationships with fishers on the island, scientists, the Grand Manan Museum, and the Whale and Seabird Research Station.

Elizabeth also arranged for the digitization of the pre-Confederation reports on the status of the Atlantic fisheries commissioned by the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia assemblies. Yeomans published initial research from these reports in NiCHE (Network in Canadian History & Environment) in 2020.²⁰ At the time of her passing, Elizabeth had been co-authoring a paper with Yeomans on the tensions between the desire of local inhabitants for greater regulation of the inshore fisheries to stave off American incursions, as well as their resistance to these regulations once they had been implemented. Grand Manan was the only part of New Brunswick where a specific royal commission was struck in response to local concerns about depleting the herring fishery. This led to greater state regulation but also tension with the local inhabitants. In 1841, the overseer of the fishery for Charlotte County

attempted to impose fines on people who were illegally laying nets. Locals subsequently chased the overseer of the fishery from Grand Manan and threatened to cut off his hands with a dull axe. For two years after this incident, the colonial government gave up on regulating the fishery due to local tensions and the reality that the state did not have the resources to effectively police the colony. Yeomans hopes to eventually publish this paper because of the importance of the research and as a tribute to his collaboration with Elizabeth.²¹



Figure 1. Elizabeth Manke at the helm of a zodiac near Grand Manan (August 2020). Photograph used courtesy of Stephanie Pettigrew.

This interest in the regulation of fish and game eventually morphed into the Commons Project, coordinated by the Atlantic Canada Studies Centre (ACSC). It is “a multi-jurisdictional and longitudinal study of the commons [both terrestrial and aquatic] in North America,” focusing on the Bay of Fundy (Grand Manan) and the Gulf of St. Lawrence.²² The latter has since been transformed into the Gulf

Project, supported by a SSHRC Partnership Development Grant between UNB and the University of Prince Edward Island, and partners such as Parks Canada and the Mi'Kmaq Wolastoqey Centre.²³

Another illustration of the value of the legislative database in facilitating more work on New Brunswick through collaboration with graduate students, is the 2017 *Acadiensis* article by Elizabeth Mancke, David Bent, and Mark J. McLaughlin entitled “‘their unalienable right and privilege’: New Brunswick’s Challenge to the Militarization of the British Empire, 1807–1814.” In this study, the authors use the database to outline the struggle between colonial politicians and imperial officials over militia legislation. The backdrop is the unprecedented militarization of the British empire during the Napoleonic era, during which time imperial officials were pressuring colonies to “revise legislation to align colonial militias more closely with regular army practices and military policy and reduce civil control.” They also expected colonies to adopt “expanded militia duties.” In a protracted struggle over five legislative sessions, the New Brunswick assembly pushed back against these imperial dictates, arguing in 1814 that as “the representatives of the people [they] are the constitutional judges of the extent of the burthens which their constituents can bear.”²⁴ The assembly ultimately succeeded in limiting the number of training days for their militia.

What is the significance of this incident for our understanding of New Brunswick history? During the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, we see a drift toward more authoritative governments throughout the empire. Although New Brunswick never questioned the idea of an imperial state, it did have a “self-consciously assertive colonial government willing to challenge imperial policies that it thought were contrary to the needs of the colony.” The assembly also argued that it was their responsibility to determine the “constitutionally appropriate balance of power between civil and military authorities.”²⁵ This is a profound conclusion when we consider the historiographical construction of New Brunswick as a conservative executive-driven colony. Moreover, New Brunswick’s assertiveness pushes us to reevaluate historical periodization and New Brunswick’s role in the empire. Most studies of populist movements in post-1783 British North America begin in 1815 and the “age of reform” in Britain is usually identified as occurring in the 1830s–1840s. This study shows that well before this period, New Brunswick had been developing a “political culture of consultative governance and civilian control” that locals defended even against imperial pressure.²⁶

In another co-authored *Acadiensis* article by Elizabeth Mancke and graduate student Zachary Tingley on the building of lighthouses in the Maritime region in the mid-nineteenth century, we see another instance of an aggressive and activist New Brunswick government. In this article, New Brunswick is presented as a protagonist in the intercolonial and transatlantic negotiations that transpired over marine safety and navigation. Tingley and Mancke view these negotiations as an example of polycentric governance, wherein multiple governing bodies collaborate to provide a “public good” shared by “multiple jurisdictions.” In this case the public good is the regulation of the seas for navigational safety (the “natural commons”) and the evolution of a built infrastructure of lighthouses and rescue stations (the “built commons”).²⁷ New Brunswick’s “distinctive geographical position” is significant in understanding New Brunswick’s active role in lobbying for navigational safety. New Brunswick was the only Maritime colony that was both marine and continental. As such, it linked together the Bay of Fundy and the Wolastoq River, which was the only viable route from the east into Canada during the winter. The nature of New Brunswick as a borderlands territory and the challenges involved in navigating the tides and weather of the Bay of Fundy, undoubtedly explains why the government viewed “intercolonial cooperation” as an “imperative,” not an “option.”²⁸

The New Brunswick assembly first appointed lighthouse commissioners in 1788 to oversee the construction of the Partridge Island lighthouse, which was activated in 1792. New Brunswick also “led the way” in the 1820s in promoting multilateral dialogue in support of marine safety. In 1826, the assembly resolved to ask the lieutenant governor, Howard Douglas, to lobby the governor general in Quebec about establishing lighthouses along the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Douglas reported back on his discussions with Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. He advised the assembly that he and the lieutenant governor of PEI had approached Nova Scotia to alter their mode of collecting duties at Cranberry Island lighthouse. Instead, New Brunswick set a precedent in providing an annual sum in support of the lighthouse, realizing that the built commons needed more substantial “assembly appropriations.” It is interesting as well to note the “moral language” used by New Brunswickers in lobbying Douglas to approach Quebec for more jointly-established lighthouses: because of the neglect in providing such installations, people were “prematurely consigned to a watery grave” or experienced shipwrecks and died “on the shores of the uninhabited parts of the extensive coasts.”²⁹ In a conclusion that equally applies to New Brunswick’s regulation of the commons, and the assembly’s role in resisting imperial directives regarding militia legislation, Tingley and Mancke note that the prominence of the Maritime colonies, particularly New Brunswick, in pushing for cooperation on maritime navigational safety and in arguing in terms of a humanitarian imperative suggests “*more proactive and assertive political cultures than is conventionally recognized.*”³⁰

The Public Good

Elizabeth’s colleagues and graduate students often heard her speak of the need to work for the public good. According to Tingley, Elizabeth taught him “[that] we have a collective responsibility as historians...to bring together individual pieces of evidence to build historical narratives that contribute to a public discourse about the betterment of the world in which we live.”³¹ Elizabeth made New Brunswick a better place in many ways, but the most timely and substantial is her work with Bill Parenteau (who has also recently passed away),³² in helping the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation secure a \$145M land claim settlement with the federal government in 2017, the largest in Maritime history. They were enabled by the indefatigable leadership of Chief Patricia Bernard and Haudenosaunee lawyer Paul Williams. Chief Bernard said of their preparation: “The historical research they did for the claim covered almost a 100-year period. And it wasn’t just specific to the reserve but told what was happening around the world at the time, with the French, the British, the Spanish, and the American Revolution. So it was quite a history and quite in depth.”³³

While Bill helped to prepare their case, Elizabeth took the stand for four days. According to law professor Dr. Nicole O’Byrne, at a plenary session at the Atlantic Canada Studies Conference at the University of Maine (Orono) in May 2024, Elizabeth was a very effective expert witness. On cross examination, Elizabeth was asked: “Do you think that you have a right to a different opinion than the Supreme Court of Canada?” Elizabeth’s response was “Historians have a long and proud tradition of being ahead of the courts when it comes to Indigenous issues.” When Elizabeth spoke in O’Byrne’s advanced evidence class at the UNB law school about being an expert witness, she told the students that “words matter” and you must “control the narrative.”³⁴ According to Parenteau, Elizabeth’s expert testimony helped to tip the balance in the case: “In Professor Mancke the Crown met a tireless immovable force. After an extended and systematic dismantling of the Crown’s case, they were reduced to questioning the authenticity of key documents...I knew we would win when [Elizabeth]

prefaced an answer in cross examination with ‘Thank you for asking that question a sixth time, because it’s very important.’”³⁵

Chief Bernard said of the passing of Elizabeth and Bill (as well as researcher Brian Cuthbertson): “It’s unfortunate because we have more claims moving forward, and we were hoping to use their expertise. When these people pass, it’s such a great loss and we can only hope they’ve passed on enough knowledge for the next generation to carry on.”³⁶ Elizabeth has trained a new generation of scholars who will undoubtedly take on this challenge and help to make New Brunswick, and indeed the world, a better place.

To comment on this essay, please write to editorjnbs@stu.ca. Si vous souhaitez réagir à cet essai, veuillez soit nous écrire à editorjnbs@stu.ca.

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Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Murray Yeomans, Zachary Tingley, Stephanie Pettigrew, and Erin Morton for reading a draft of this piece. Thanks also to Stephanie for permitting me to use her photograph of Elizabeth on Grand Manan. Special thanks to family and colleagues, present and former graduate students, and my History 6302 graduate class at UNB, for attending virtual seminars on the significance of the work of Elizabeth and Bill. Finally, thank you to the *Journal of New Brunswick Studies/Revue d’études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick* for inviting me to write this tribute. It is my way of thanking Elizabeth for her friendship and collegiality.

Notes

¹ Erin Morton, “Professor Mancke: A force to be reckoned with, 1954–2023,” *The Acadiensis Blog*, <https://acadiensis.wordpress.com/2023/10/16/professor-mancke-a-force-to-be-reckoned-with-1954-2023/>.

² Elizabeth Mancke, Jerry Bannister, Scott W. See, and Denis McKim, eds., *Violence, Order, and Unrest: A History of British North America, 1749–1876* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

³ Erin Morton, “Professor Mancke: A force to be reckoned with, 1954–2023.”

⁴ Jerry Bannister in “Memories of Elizabeth Mancke (1954–2023), Part I”, *Borealia: Early Canadian History*, <https://earlycanadianhistory.ca/2023/10/24/remembering-elizabeth-mancke-part-i/>.

⁵ Danny Samson in “Memories of Elizabeth Mancke (1954–2023), Part II”, *Borealia: Early Canadian History*, <https://earlycanadianhistory.ca/2023/10/26/remembering-elizabeth-mancke-ii/>.

⁶ Murray Yeomans in UNB History 6302 seminar on “Dr. Elizabeth Mancke’s contributions to the history of Atlantic Canada,” 22 January 2024. If anyone would like a copy of the recording of this seminar, please contact Bonnie Huskins at bhuskins@unb.ca.

⁷ Yeomans in UNB History 6302 seminar; David Frank, “Acadiensis, 1901 and 1999,” *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 30, 3 (Winter 2000): 365–80, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/pdf/10.3138/CRAS-s030-03-07>.

⁸ Peace defines this geographical territory as consisting of much of the present-day Maritimes but ranging more widely from the St. Lawrence and inland to Connecticut. See map in Tom Peace, *The Slow Rush of Colonization: Spaces of Power in the Maritime Peninsula, 1680–1790* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2023), 9. This book has recently received the 2024 Clio Award for Atlantic Canada from the Canadian Historical Association and the 2024 Wilson Book Prize from the Wilson Institute for Canadian History, McMaster University.

⁹ Peace, *The Slow Rush of Colonization*, 2–3.

¹⁰ *Witness to Yesterday* podcast, Episode 257: *The Slow Rush of Colonization: Spaces of Power in the Maritime Peninsula, 1680–1790*, host Nicole O’Byrne, 16 February 2024, <https://champlainsociety.utpjournals.press/podcast/wty/the-slow-rush-of-colonization-spaces-of-power-in-maritime-peninsula-with-thomas-peace>.

¹¹ Elizabeth Mancke, “Spaces of Power in the Early Modern Northeast,” in Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid eds., *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 32.

¹² *Witness to Yesterday* podcast, Episode 257.

¹³ Yeomans, “For my Mentor, Friend, and Chosen Family: A Graduate Student’s Memorial to Elizabeth Mancke,” *The Acadiensis Blog*, <https://acadiensis.wordpress.com/2023/10/23/for-my-mentor-friend-and-chosen-family-a-graduate-students-memorial-to-elizabeth-mancke/>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Email correspondence with Stephanie Pettigrew, 13 July 2024.

¹⁶ Stephanie Pettigrew and Elizabeth Mancke, “European Expansion and the Contested North Atlantic,” *Terra Incognitae: The Journal of the Society for the History of Discoveries*, Vol. 50, Issue 1 (2018), 15–34.

¹⁷ Yeomans, “For my Mentor, Friend, and Chosen Family.”

¹⁸ Not everyone worked on the project at the same time. According to Pettigrew, the largest number that she supervised was around twelve, but usually it was a maximum of five people.

¹⁹ Yeomans in UNB History 6302 seminar.

- ²⁰ Yeomans, “From Olive Branch to Policing Stick: The Fishery and the Constitutional Transformation of the 1778 Taxation of the Colonies Act,” *NICHE*, 24 September 2020, <https://niche-canada.org/2020/09/24/from-olive-branch-to-policing-stick-the-fishery-and-the-constitutional-transformation-of-the-1778-taxation-of-the-colonies-act/>.
- ²¹ For Yeomans’ discussion of Grand Manan, see UNB History 6302 seminar.
- ²² The Commons Project, Yeomans in UNB History 6302 seminar.
- ²³ The Gulf Project, Zachary Tingley in UNB History 6302 seminar.
- ²⁴ Elizabeth Mancke, David Bent, and Mark J. McLaughlin, “‘their unalienable right and privilege’: New Brunswick’s Challenge to the Militarization of the British Empire, 1807–1814,” *Acadiensis*, Vol. XLVI, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2017), 49–50.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 72, 49.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.
- ²⁷ Zachary A. Tingley and Elizabeth Mancke, “Intercolonial Cooperation and the Building of St. Paul Island and Scatarie Island Lighthouses, 1826–1840,” *Acadiensis*, Vol. 51, no. 2 (Autumn/automne 2022), 64.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 65–71.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 86. Emphasis added.
- ³¹ Tingley in UNB History 6302 seminar.
- ³² See the following tribute to Bill Parenteau: Mark J. McLaughlin, “[A Tribute to Bill Parenteau: On the Importance of His Work to New Brunswick History](https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JNBS/article/view/34139/1882529961),” *Journal of New Brunswick Studies/Revue d’études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick*, Vol. 16, no. 2 (Fall 2024), <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JNBS/article/view/34139/1882529961>.
- ³³ John Chilibeck, “Trio of scholars in landmark First Nations case die,” *New Brunswick Media Co-op*, 26 October 2023, <https://nbmediacoop.org/2023/10/26/trio-of-scholars-in-landmark-first-nations-case-die/>.
- ³⁴ “Historians as Expert Witnesses in Indigenous Land Claims Litigation: Examining the Role Played by Elizabeth Mancke and Bill Parenteau in *Madawaska Maliseet First Nation v. The Queen in 2017*,” plenary session at the Atlantic Canada Studies Conference, University of Maine (Orono), 10 May 2024, https://video.maine.edu/media/Atlantic+Canada+Studies+Conference++DPC+100+%26+207/1_w56lmudf.
- ³⁵ Morton, “Professor Mancke: A force to be reckoned with, 1954–2023.”
- ³⁶ Chilibeck, “Trio of scholars in landmark First Nations case die.”