

# Labrador hydro project could lead to jobs for Cape Breton Mi'kmaq

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CAPE BRETON POST

**SYDNEY** — A “whirlwind” trip to Labrador has opened the door for potential opportunities for Cape Breton’s Mi’kmaq communities, one official says.

Owen Fitzgerald and Alex Paul of the Unama’ki Economic Benefits Office have been in Goose Bay, N.L., for a couple of days on a fact-finding mission to learn about the Lower Churchill Falls hydro development.

The \$6.2-billion project aims to transmit power between that province and Nova Scotia, beginning with a generation facility built at Muskrat Falls in Labrador. A transmission link will then transport energy to Newfoundland, followed by a 180-kilometre subsea cable acting as an energy corridor between

Stephenville, N.L., and Cape Breton.

“It’s just amazing... the people we’ve been meeting and what we’ve got to see, we’ve learned so much, it’s incredible,” Fitzgerald said.

The premiers of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia recently announced a deal had been struck between Emera Inc., the parent company of Nova Scotia Power, and Canadian energy corporation Nalcor Energy. The trip to Labrador was planned prior to the announcement.

Fitzgerald said they’ve made some great contacts and have begun to build some important relationships. The next task will be to follow up and learn more about how the technical aspects of the project will roll out and where local Mi’kmaq communi-

ties may be able to capitalize on opportunities.

On Thursday, they went on a helicopter tour of the Churchill and got to see its power firsthand, which Fitzgerald said was impressive.

There is already a partnership in place with Emera, he noted. It recently hired local aboriginals that the benefits office helped to train to perform power line work. Fitzgerald said after returning home, they plan to meet with Emera to explore other opportunities.

“How can we carve out a niche here for First Nations to be part of it, and how do we maximize the benefits for Cape Breton?” he said. “We can help with training, recruiting people. It just seems like it’s a win-win for everyone, but you can’t take these things for granted.”



**Alex Paul, from left, and Owen Fitzgerald of the Unama’ki Economic Benefits Office visited Muskrat Falls in Labrador this week, where a hydro generation facility will be built.** Submitted by Owen Fitzgerald

In addition to opportunities associated with the construction of the project, Fitzgerald said they must also look at what it could mean to have reliable, renewable green energy in large quantities at their doorstep. To that end, they’ve been working with

Cape Breton University’s new environmental and energy sustainability centre.

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