



# NUNAVUT

INUIT REGAIN CONTROL OF  
THEIR LANDS AND THEIR LIVES

NUNAVUT:  
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THEIR LANDS  
AND THEIR LIVES

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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

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*by the Editors*

A large part (about one-fifth) of the world's second largest country has been returned to the political control of its indigenous Inuit people. This has happened in a country – Canada – which is obsessively insecure about 'separatism' and the distinct political agendas of regions and minority peoples. Since the early 1960s many Canadians have feared that Quebec's desire to become a new nation-state would destroy not only Canada but the economy of its remaining provinces, its influence in the world, and its ability to withstand the cultural, socio-economic, and political power of the USA. Despite this fear, which has seen Canada sometimes oppose indigenous rights reforms at international level lest they become precedents for 'Quebec separatism', some scattered Inuit villages have been able to create a political movement and a sense of community resulting in a new and unconventional political entity: Nunavut.

This story needs to be told – and told truthfully and clearly. Such information is not easy to find. Within Canada the Inuit have found themselves opposed by groups with very widely different agendas but a common misunderstanding of – or simple opposition to – the creation of Nunavut. Those groups have been a rich source of misinformation and, often, disinformation. Right-wing politicians oppose *all* indigenous rights and self-determination, and pretend that Nunavut is a threat to the unity of Canada. Some other indigenous groups fear that Inuit have not claimed or won strong enough constitutional recognition or legal guarantees to protect their future *vis-à-vis* the white man. Some otherwise tolerant and progressive Canadians fear that a political entity built on an ethnically-exclusive land (and sea) claims agreement may be a bad example in a multi-cultural world where building bridges rather than distinctions between races and peoples and cultures is needed.

As the chapters in this book demonstrate, these and many other ideas about Nunavut are simply wrong. The long interaction between successive federal governments, prime ministers, and ministers on the one hand, and Inuit leaders and their teams of advisers on the other, ensured that most foreseeable issues were foreseen and negotiated smoothly. This does not guarantee that Nunavut will be without problems – *all* new governments have problems. However, the commitment of Inuit to working within the society and politics

of Canada to solve their problems, and of the federal government in Ottawa and wider Canadian public to work with Inuit to solve them, may be the most important element of the Nunavut story. The relationship between north and south, isolated hunter-gatherer village and networked industrial city, and Inuit and European (or 'Euro-Canadian' as some writers say in a word which sounds like an embarrassing medical problem) has been strengthened by the long years of negotiation, the many disputes, angry words and slammed doors, and eventual renewed discussion and final agreement which created Nunavut.

When Nunavut became a world news story episodically from the 1980s onwards, with a tremendous amount of media attention before and after the April 1999 inauguration of the new government, world news media were often uninformed, confused, and perplexed – or openly scornful. Some of this reportage is discussed in the main chapter (by Hicks and White) in this book. These media saw the social problems suffered by Inuit and they saw the lack of a modern industrial economy – surely it was outrageous that such a place should think it could be politically successful?! (There were also some sympathetic press and television reports.)

Of course, negative judgments are not new. When Ireland and Iceland insisted on become independent and self-governing early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, outsiders ridiculed the idea, and yet despite problems along the way, those two peoples have shown no desire to bring back British or Danish rule. When the European Union was faced with the desire of Greenland and its Inuit government to withdraw, and sent EU president Roy Jenkins to try a final round of persuading Greenlanders to stay, a classic article in *The Economist* enumerated all the reasons why the Greenlanders would be wrong and foolish to leave, but concluded in bemusement that, nonetheless, they were likely to leave all the same. It would be hard to find a more delicious piece of political and economic *élite* inability to come to terms with indigenous realities than that article!

There are two fundamental questions about Nunavut which apply no less to other indigenous self-government models in the world. The first question is, *Does Nunavut represent a new type of political economy and society, as some of its supporters claim?* (E.g., Jull in this volume) Or, is it merely a changing of hands on the same old levers of power and on the keys to the cash-box? Will a true sustainable development economy be able to flourish inside a modern industrial state which is a charter member of the G-7 industrial powers? Certainly the rhetoric and public relations of the Nunavut political movement *vis-à-vis* white-controlled governments and the general public – as well as the expectations of many Inuit in their villages –

has been that there would be a new kind of government with new kinds of policies. It is too early to guess the outcome. In some ways the Nunavut government has been forced to live with the dominant structures and political culture of the Canadian federation, while in others it has shown commendable independence of mind.<sup>1</sup>

The second question will be of more concern to readers of this book. *Can Inuit best re-build, maintain, strengthen, and expand their society and culture through their new political and legal arrangements?* For many Inuit that question will be insulting – after all, isn't it better for Inuit to make decisions about Inuit society than for white outsiders to do it? Nonetheless, many sceptics will fear that by 'opting in' to the political systems and culture of the contemporary industrial world, especially in a country like Canada which has become notorious for its failed resource management policies – Atlantic and Pacific fisheries, forests ('the Brazil of the North'), polluted river and lakes, and air pollution – Inuit have already taken a decisive step in abandoning the strength and core values of their culture. Certainly one can see that however much a road network linking Nunavut with the rest of Canada may reduce prices of imported goods to Inuit consumers, its social and environmental impacts on a hitherto isolated people will be enormous and by no means entirely joyful.

The Nunavut story told in the following pages is important for indigenous peoples around the world. It is not so much legal and administrative details but political dynamics which are important. The authors of the pages published here have all been involved with Nunavut and Inuit politics for a very long time.

While the delay in publication – which had originally been scheduled to coincide with the beginning of Nunavut's political autonomous life in April 1999 – has given us time and perspective to publish a more valuable book which includes the events of that beginning (see Hicks and White again), we see something else. Although Inuit won their amazing political victories in Greenland, Alaska, and Canada in no small part because of smart publicity and communications strategies, now they have been relatively neglectful of the power of the Internet to carry their views, concerns, problems, and needs to the world. We hope that this problem will be overcome as younger people more comfortable with technology replace those of us who grew up in a very different world, both technologically and ideologically. Inuit have huge problems to face, the most intimate and dangerous being the toxins carried and accumulated within the basic life systems of Nunavut and the Arctic in general, a subject now central to the work of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.<sup>2</sup> They will need all the friends they can find around the world to deal with such issues.

However, such problems are for another publication, and another day. Here we are trying to provide a clear and accurate account of a remarkable political story. For anyone who doubts the extent of change in the Nunavut region, Knud Rasmussen's *Across Arctic America* (Putnam, New York, 1927) shows what conditions were like in the 1920s. Almost everything has changed in 80 years. But the Nunavut story remains in its early days. Now that the excitement of April 1999 recedes in time, we can see that such a date is only one of many steps in a long journey. It was an essential step, opening new possibilities, as well as new dangers. The fact remains that Nunavut is a most remarkable achievement – the winning back by a numerically small and scattered hunter-gatherer population of their ancient territory under modern European constitutional and legal systems. It should remind peoples of other countries and continents, from Australia to Asia to Africa to the Americas, that many things are possible when peoples are politically organised and persistent.

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Jose Kusugak is one of the Inuit leaders who has been part of the process of establishing Nunavut from its earliest years. Based on a few facts about Nunavut, he introduces this book by raising three fundamental questions: why did Nunavut come to life, what are the opportunities and challenges to come, and what is to be learned from this experience? There are no easy answers to these questions. However, in applying great flexibility in the negotiating tactics without changing the objectives and always seeking and securing allies, Nunavut has become a reality and the relations between Inuit and newcomers have improved. Kusugak's thesis is that "The creation of Nunavut will not shelter us from problems, but will allow us to make our own decisions about how best to confront and take on those problems."

The chapter by Jack Hicks and Graham White gives an extended introduction to Nunavut, its history and structure. In the social contract that was entered into between the Inuit and the Canadian Government Nunavut, Inuit have always stressed that a land claim agreement should be linked with the establishment of a new territory - with a public government - in which the Inuit made up the majority of the population. A core consideration to the authors is how this new regime will generate significant local control over political and economic processes that affect local people in Nunavut, and to what extent it is able to incorporate local values. Nunavut has only existed for one year, but the authors take a close look at the most recent developments and examine what they mean to the people of Nunavut.

In many ways the Inuit of Nunavut are different. Their perception of Nunavut as Homeland contravenes with most White attitudes of this as the last frontier still to be conquered. Peter Jull writes about how the great idea of Nunavut became reality through the efforts of a united population who had decided to solve the practical problems – without ever forgetting the dream. As Jull concludes, “Nunavut is an Inuit response to inequality, as well as a positive assertion of territorial rights.” To many indigenous peoples Nunavut will be considered as a model, notwithstanding that the Inuit still face a lot of challenges following their victory.

John Amagoalik is often called ‘father of Nunavut’. If anyone can claim responsibility for the fact that Nunavut is now established, following about two decades of negotiations, he can. As a columnist at the weekly Nunavut newspaper, *Nunatsiaq News*, he has often played the tune for others to follow. With unconcealed satisfaction he is now able to announce that the public in general has come to realise that Nunavut is no longer (has never been) a wasteland of nobodies.

When modern Canada was firmly established the Inuit became inhabitants of different provinces and territories. Zebedee Nungak is one of the Inuit leaders from northern Quebec, Nunavik. Had it not been for the accidents of history, the Inuit of northern Quebec would have been part of Nunavut as well. Considered from the outside, from Nunavik, the establishment of Nunavut is looked upon with envy as well as enjoyment. After all, Nungak claims, the Inuit of Nunavut have regained a part of their homelands that was once taken away from them.

The contributions by Ludger Müller-Wille, Kenn Harper and Laila Sørensen take up cultural issues of great significance to the people of Nunavut. The world of place names is one of symbols that strengthen cultural and political self-determination, writes Ludger Müller-Wille. Geographical names are an expression of the intricate relationship between humans and the environment. In these toponyms we find the gist of Inuit’s relations to their lands and territories. But they also contain knowledge about history, and ultimately they express relations of power and they are used in political image building.

“Inuit had no traditional writing systems” states Kenn Harper and observes that the Inuit of Nunavut have no literature. Although there are two different writing systems within Nunavut, one using Syllabics and the other Roman orthography – with the practical problems that this contains – the absence of an indigenous literature is more important. Kenn Harper gives an outline of the history of the various orthographies in Nunavut and the other Arctic Inuit regions,

and he summarizes some of the intricacies associated with the introduction of a common writing system in Nunavut as well as for all Inuit. One such intricacy is that using syllabics indicates Inuit-ness and signals dissimilarity to the dominant society. The author ends his paper with a number of recommendations on how to strengthen the various Inuit languages and writing systems.

Laila Sørensen looks into the role of the television programmes in the Inuit language, Inuktitut that the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation has produced since 1982. The article examines an important dilemma facing the IBC: on the one hand IBC may play a central role in transforming the ethnic Inuit identity into a regional and political identity, but on the other hand, if the IBC were to become the official Nunavut broadcaster, it would also have to serve the non-Inuit minority, despite its commitment to use most resources on transmissions in Inuktitut.

Two articles deal with the important subsistence issue. George Wenzel places hunting and sharing at the heart of the Inuit subsistence system and of the Inuit culture. Subsistence reflects a complex web of social relations, which were changed significantly with the Inuit becoming dependent on the international market. When the world market for sealskins collapsed in the early 1980s, the Inuit became dependent on government sponsored support programmes. While these wrongly focused on the economy of the individual hunter, the Nunavut Hunter Support Programme as recently introduced emphasizes the social nature of subsistence.

For many years, no bowhead whales were harvested in Nunavut. With the implementation of the land claim agreement and the establishment of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, new impetus was given to resume this old tradition. Helle Høgh reports on the first three bowhead hunts in recent years, focusing on the different perspectives that have developed within this tradition in post land claim Nunavut. When Inuit leaders turned the new opportunity into an ethno-political regional event to be negotiated, and the hunters considered it to be a community-based activity, a conflict has changed from being external to the Inuit society to being an internal Inuit matter.

In the last chapter of this book, Odd Terje Brantenberg compares Nunavut with other models of indigenous self-government. He finds differences between the North American legal traditions in dealing with indigenous rights and the inclination of the Nordic countries to stress social and political relations. But this variance should not allow overshadowing similarities in the relationships between indigenous peoples and the states, nor should it inhibit the sharing of experiences. Nunavut is an unprecedented step, but it is not unimagi-



nable in mono-cultural Scandinavia. The crucial question is how to create a constitutional framework for indigenous peoples within the limits set by the states.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See Jull P, 2000: 'Indigenous "Self-Government" in Canada: The Bathurst Mandate', *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, Vol 4., No. 27, 14-18 (published Sydney, Australia).
- <sup>2</sup> See the new ICC Canada web site, <http://www.inusiaat.com/>

# CHAPTER I

# THE TIDE HAS SHIFTED: NUNAVUT WORKS FOR US, AND IT OFFERS A LESSON TO THE BROADER GLOBAL COMMUNITY

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*by Jose Kusugak*

In Inuktitut - the language of Inuit - Nunavut is a composite word made up of a root word, "nuna" or "land", and a suffix "vut" or "our". Thus Nunavut means "our land" in English. The place of the term "Nunavut" in the everyday conversation of generations of Inuit has reflected ancient truths about arctic demography and culture. The Inuit have been, and the Inuit remain, the aboriginal people of Nunavut. We have lived in the Arctic for many thousands of years. The Arctic has sustained and defined us. We are a part of the Arctic landscape and seascape and the Arctic landscape and seascape are a part of us. A more subtle, but no less authentic, English interpretation of Nunavut is "Our Home", not just "Our Land".

In more recent time this root meaning has been supplemented with two additional meanings:

- Nunavut also means a land rights settlement with the Crown in right of Canada, known as the Nunavut agreement; and, as well,
- Nunavut means a new territory, carved out of the existing Northwest territories and equipped with its own Government, that will come into existence on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999.

The Nunavut agreement was signed in Iqualit on May 25, 1993, after almost 20 years of negotiating efforts. These efforts were on-again off-again during the 1970s, intensified in the early 1980s, and came to a head at the opening of the 1990s.

The Nunavut agreement is the biggest land rights agreement signed in Canada, covering about one-fifth of Canada's land mass and a very large marine area as well - all the marine areas adjacent to coastlines and that separate the islands of Arctic Archipelago. The agreement was ratified by a large majority of Inuit in all three regions of Nunavut in November, 1992. Under the agreement, the Inuit of Nunavut obtained, in exchange for common law aboriginal rights, the following principal rights:

- Title to approximately 350,000 square kilometres of land, of which approximately 38,000 include mineral rights; these figures represent surface title to just under 20% of the lands in Nunavut and mineral rights over large areas of the most promising geological formations as indicated through mineral research;
- Priority rights to harvest wildlife for domestic, sports and commercial purposes throughout lands and waters covered by the agreement;
- A guarantee of the establishment of the three national parks;
- Equal memberships with government on the new institutions of public government established to manage the lands, waters, offshore, and wildlife of the Nunavut area; these institutions include the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, the Nunavut Water Board, The Nunavut Impact Review Board, The Nunavut Planning Commission, and a surface Rights Tribunal;
- Capital Transfer payments of \$1.148 billion, payable to Inuit over 14 years; a separate Nunavut Trust has been established to receive the moneys and invest them prudently.
- A 5% share of royalties that government receives from oil, gas and mineral development on Crown lands;
- Where Inuit own surface title to lands, the rights to negotiate with industry for impact mitigation and for economic and social benefits from non-renewable resource development;
- Measures to increase Inuit employment within government in Nunavut to levels representative of the Inuit share of the population, and fair access by Inuit businesses to the government contracting process; and,
- A \$13 million training trust fund.

In addition to these rights, the Nunavut Agreement committed the government of Canada to recommend legislation to Parliament to establish a new Territory in the eastern and central portions of the existing Northwest Territories. The legislation in question was enacted by Parliament in 1993 in a parallel process to the enactment of legislation ratifying the overall Nunavut Agreement.

As of April 1<sup>st</sup> of 1999, with the coming into force of the *Nunavut Act*, the new territory of Nunavut – with its own Nunavut Government – will become the newest member of the provincial and territorial club.

Like other members of the provincial and territorial club, Nunavut will have a legislature elected by all its residents, regardless of their ethnic background, and all members of the Nunavut public will be able to stand as candidates for the Nunavut legislature and for local government offices.

Participation in the political life of Nunavut will be open to all Canadians who make a home there. Unlike other provinces and territories in Canada, however, the overwhelming majority of the population of Nunavut – some 85% - will be made up of a single aboriginal people... Inuit. For the first time since the Metis secured the creation of Manitoba, Canada's internal map will have been changed for the purpose of empowering a specific aboriginal people. And unlike Manitoba, Nunavut's demographics are not going to be altered beyond recognition by the sudden influx of a wave of homesteading farmers.

While Nunavut will become the newest and – at least from the point of view of population size – the smallest one of Canada's provinces and territories, it will nevertheless have some very substantial powers and responsibilities. The law-making powers of its legislature will be very similar to those of the provincial legislatures. Its first year budget will be more than \$600 million dollars and it will have more than 2,000 employees on the payroll. (2,000 employees may sound like a lot, but this figure includes community workers such as teachers and nurses.) By any test, these powers, responsibilities and resources add up to a major measure of regional autonomy within the broader framework of a shared Canadian citizenship.

I would like to approach the rest of this paper by posing and answering three questions.

**First, why is Nunavut - the combination of a 1993 land rights agreement and the creation of the new territory and government on April 1, 1999 – happening?**

There are no doubts as many answers to these questions as there are people who worked on the Nunavut "project" over the last quarter-century; as the late American president John F. Kennedy once observed about political events, "Victory has many fathers, but defeat is an orphan." What follows is one view of the factors that have helped to bring about the extraordinary and exciting set of events that have been unfolding in the Arctic.

**Factor #1: Inuit kept things as simple as possible**

While the Nunavut agreement is not exactly light reading, its structure and language were kept as user-friendly as possible. Most importantly, the idea of a new territory – with its familiar features of an elected Legislative Assembly, a Speaker, a Cabinet, and so on did not scare anybody as a leap into institutional dark.

**Factor #2:** Repetition, repetition, repetition

As anyone who has watched the same commercial several times during a single TV show knows, this is basic advertising wisdom. It is no less valid for politics than for TV. Inuit leaders started demanding a Nunavut Territory and Government in the mid-1970s and were still demanding it 15 years later. Inuit leaders also kept emphasising that they would not sign a land rights agreement without a commitment to create Nunavut. After awhile, even sceptical government ministers and officials began to see the light.

**Factor #3:** Flexibility of tactics

While our objectives remained highly consistent, our tactics kept adapting to events. For example, at one time we refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Northwest Territories' Legislative assembly; after 1979, we switched gears completely and worked out a close alliance with the members of the assembly elected from the Nunavut area. We also did not hesitate to both pursue litigation when useful (the Baker Lake case), and to stay out of court when main table negotiations were making progress.

**Factor #4:** Circumventing the federal government's policy status quo

The federal government's land claims failed to live up to Inuit expectations in many areas. Inuit managed to get around some of these problems by either bringing about formal amendments to those policies –for example, the inclusion of offshore rights – or by persuading federal politicians to break loose of the policy party line – for example, the commitment to create a Nunavut Territory was made in the face of stated federal policy. Of course in some policy areas Inuit had to accept the unchangeability of federal positions.

**Factor #5:** Establishing and sustaining credibility

Throughout negotiations, Inuit worked hard at establishing and sustaining credibility with both government and two publics: the Inuit public and anybody else. Great

efforts were made to secure organizational stability, to remain consistent in objectives and style, to achieve continuity in leadership and staff, and to avoid posturing while following through on hard messages. The credibility of Inuit negotiations was demonstrated by the very high turnouts and very positive results in Nunavut communities when Nunavut issues were put to plebiscites in 1982 and early 1992, and when the entire Nunavut Agreement was put to a ratification vote in late 1992.

**Factor #6:** Knowing who you're negotiating with

Whenever possible, Inuit attempted to negotiate with government representatives in ways that fell within the 'comfort zone' of Canadian political structure. This is not to say that there weren't sharp disagreements and tough debates. We did, however, avoid defining our demands in vocabulary that would get us mired in other issues – for example, we did not talk about 'sovereignty-association' (the term used by the separatist Party Québécois in Québec) – and we did our best to stay away from unnecessary fights and from burning any bridges. We also kept in mind that the government of Canada is not a monolithic monster; in the course of negotiations we encountered some very well-disposed officials as well as some who were less helpful.

**Factor #7:** Taking calculated risks

The creation of a new Nunavut Territory and Government on April 1, 1999, would not be taking place if Inuit had not consciously taken some sizeable risks along the way. In 1979, Inuit went to court to prove the existence of aboriginal rights in Nunavut; while the court decision was not entirely satisfactory, we knew we had to risk defeat in order to get some legal momentum. Even more starkly, we agreed to Northwest Territories-wide plebiscites in 1982 and 1992 on the principle and boundaries of division, even though we knew that Inuit would be a clear minority of eligible voters. There were no back-up plans in these votes – we calculated the risk and took the plunge. This was 'sink or swim' politics.

## Factor #8: Seizing the day

A final factor that must be identified involved seizing the day - that is, making the best of opportunities that presented themselves. Some might call this good luck or good fortune. Whatever you choose to call it, there can be no doubt that negotiations over the details of the Nunavut Agreement were coming to a peak – the early 1990s just a time when the Government of Canada was very anxious to demonstrate a breakthrough on aboriginal issues in one major region of the country. The breakdown in a single comprehensive land claims agreement in the Mackenzie valley and the tragic events at Oka in Québec fed this anxiety, as did the reality that the federal government of the day knew it would be facing the voters in the middle of 1993. These outside events helped to push Nunavut over the top.

I should point out some things we tried to sieve as part of the Nunavut project proved to be a little ambitious or, at least, premature. A plebiscite was held in Nunavut in 1997 on a proposal to introduce a system of two-member constituencies for Nunavut, with male and female candidates grouped together and each voter given two votes – one for the best man and one for the best woman. This would have guaranteed a legislature made up half of men and half of women, and would have done so in a way consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The proposal was rejected by Nunavut voters on a roughly 60/40 split of votes; however, we may not have heard the last of the issue.

I will now pose a second question.

**What are the opportunities and challenges that Nunavut – as a land rights agreement and as a new Territory and Government – brings with it?**

What are the **opportunities**? The Nunavut agreement provides three main benefits to Inuit.

First of all, the agreement provides the Inuit of Nunavut with a set of property rights – land ownership, royalties, access to wildlife, capital transfer, and so on – that, wisely used, can move Inuit forward some distance on the road back to economic self-sufficiency.



Secondly, the agreement creates a set of joint Inuit and government resource management boards that can do two things:

- Safeguard fundamental conservation and environmental values while encouraging responsible development proposals; and,
- In combination with Inuit property rights, they go a long way to convincing resource developers that successful projects require having Inuit 'on side'.

Thirdly, the agreement serves as the constitutionally-protected guarantor of a separate Nunavut Territory and Government.

The opportunities that come with the Nunavut Territory and Government are almost open-ended. Through this government Inuit, in democratic partnership with other residents, will be in a position to shape public life and public services in ways that are more compatible with our unique social and cultural characteristics. For example, it will be possible to promote Inuktitut as a real working language of government, to introduce a more sensible approach to social assistance (one that recognises the social value of hunting and arts & crafts), and to embed Inuit customs into laws of general application relating to family matters and the administration of justice (things such as customary adoption and the role of community justice committees come to mind).

What are the **challenges** we face?

The challenges faced by the Nunavut Territory and Government will only emerge clearly in the months and years following April 1, 1999. But we know there will be much to learn, things such as increasing the number of Inuit in the government's workforce, decentralising operations in order to bring employment to smaller communities, and making progress on language and culture issues. And all of these initiatives will have to be mounted against a backdrop of a rapidly growing population, high costs, a shortage of jobs, and limits on the size of the public purse.

Yet, the existence of such challenges does not detract from the great sense of enthusiasm and achievement that is focusing and motivating the Inuit and other residents of Nunavut. The creation of Nunavut will not shelter us from problems, but will allow us to make our own decisions about how best to confront and take on those problems.

And a third and final question...

**What significance might our experience in Nunavut have for aboriginal peoples in other parts of Canada, for Canadians as a whole, and for the global community?**

For aboriginal peoples in other parts of Canada, Nunavut suggests at least three things.

The Nunavut Agreement provides evidence that is possible to conclude an agreement with the Crown that provides an aboriginal people with some real powers. In saying this, I am not suggesting that Nunavut is the 'last word' on the kinds of rights and benefits that can be obtained in relation to land rights and political change; indeed, it is my hope that aboriginal peoples in other parts of Canada (and outside Canada) continue to build on the lessons learned in earlier agreements, including ours. Nor am I unmindful of the sad history of broken treaties and promises that have beset relations between aboriginal and settler societies in Canada (and elsewhere) in the past.

Notwithstanding, there is no reason to believe that our generation, and the generation that follow us, can do – and, in a shrinking world, must do – better.

A second thing that the Nunavut Agreement suggests is that the land rights and self-determination agendas of aboriginal peoples must be carefully tailored to fit their histories and circumstances. The creation of a new territory with a government representing all its residents is a workable and attractive form of empowering the Inuit of Nunavut. This is entirely a function of our demographics – unlike aboriginal people in other parts of Canada, we have never been made a minority in our homeland. Put simply, Nunavut works for us. Other aboriginal peoples will need to find other solutions. Non-aboriginal Canadians should understand, respect, and, where possible, contribute to a creative, yet pragmatic, diversity of accommodations and solutions.

A third thing that the Nunavut experience can suggest to other aboriginal peoples in Canada is the enormous advantages that follow from finding support in non-aboriginal society. Any major breakthroughs in relations between an aboriginal people and non-aboriginal society will, at some stage, require the involvement of elected lawmakers in the nation's capital, and in federal systems like Canada's, provincial capitals. Allies must be identified and secured.

A lesson from the Nunavut experience for all Canadians is that the fears that have often been raised by opponents of new treaties are NOT borne out by any events at ground level. The conclusion of the Nunavut Agreement has improved relations between Inuit and newcomers in Nunavut, and has contributed to investor confidence

and a more positive business climate generally. I am confident that the new Legislative Assembly and government of Nunavut, notwithstanding a few inevitable birth pains, will generate ideas and innovations that will be of interest to many Canadians – not just to those of us that live in Nunavut. And I am equally confident that Nunavut will become as much a source of pride for Canadians living outside its borders as to those of us that are living within.

A second lesson from Nunavut is that, yes, Canada is changing. With the arrival of Nunavut on the scene, there is likely to be an Inuit Premier participating on a regular basis at all the high-level federal/provincial/territorial meetings. This new reality is a reflection of the presence of aboriginal peoples in Canada, and an indication that this presence – so long obscured – is once again showing its face. Such changes are natural and healthy if we are to be genuinely committed to the true spirit of democracy and to the universality of human rights and dignity.

And finally, Nunavut offers a lesson to the broader global community. And that lesson is about the resilience of the human spirit. Not that long ago, it was possible to say that the Inuit of Nunavut were thoroughly colonised people – we had lost control of large parts of our lives through the introduction of outside institutions, languages, and values. We still carry that legacy of colonisation with us in many respects (as well as, I should add out of fairness, a more constructive legacy in the form of useful things that Europeans brought with them).

But in Nunavut the tide has shifted. Conclusion of the Nunavut Agreement and the creation of the Nunavut Territory and Government, within the lifetimes of those of us who were taken away to regional schools, is proof positive that the strength of the human spirit can overcome the biggest of political obstacles and transcend the most entrenched of cultural prejudices.

## CHAPTER 2

# NUNAVUT: INUIT SELF-DETERMINATION THROUGH A LAND CLAIM AND PUBLIC GOVERNMENT?

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*by Jack Hicks and Graham White*

## **1. Introduction**

Nunavut<sup>1</sup> means “our land” in Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit, the aboriginal people of Canada’s eastern and central Arctic.<sup>2</sup> It symbolises how directly the creation of a new territory north of the tree-line emerged from Inuit political and cultural aspirations. Nunavut is an attempt by the large Inuit majority to regain control over their lives and to ensure their survival and development as a people.

Roughly 85 per cent of Nunavut’s population are Inuit, so that although it has a ‘public government’ – in which all residents, Inuit and non-Inuit, can participate – Nunavut is primarily about Inuit needs and Inuit approaches to governance. As such, the political dynamics and the operation of government in Nunavut raise crucial questions about how state structures and political processes can better reflect the nature of society and economy. With its distinctive people, geography, economy and government, Nunavut differs fundamentally from other Canadian provinces and territories. Accordingly, while Nunavut’s population may be barely that of a small city in southern Canada, the emerging issues of politics and governance there are of wide interest and import.

Foreign observers – and, truth be told, some Canadians – who are aware of the extensive powers that the creation of Nunavut represents for Inuit sometimes believe that Nunavut entails a separation from Canada and the establishment of an independent Inuit state. This is not simply a misunderstanding; it misses a particularly noteworthy aspect of the Nunavut project – one that may make Nunavut something of an example, as well as an inspiration, for aboriginal peoples around the world.

Nunavut is and will remain very much part of the Canadian federation. Moreover, although important operational and design

features will distinguish the Government of Nunavut from those of other territories and provinces, Nunavut will be a fairly conventional jurisdiction within the Canadian context. Nunavut will be different by virtue of its strong Inuit majority and its focus on the survival and development of Inuit culture, but its accommodation of Inuit aspirations will take place squarely within the four corners of established Canadian forms of governance.

It is fair to add that Canada is one of the most decentralised federations in the world and its subnational units – provinces and territories – exercise a remarkable degree of political and policy-making autonomy from the central government in Ottawa. As well, Canada is a wealthy country and can afford financial support for Nunavut that other countries could not manage. Still, the creation of Nunavut carries important, broadly applicable lessons. After all, Canada is an essentially conservative country, not given to flights of constitutional fancy, yet willing to experiment within broad limits. Put differently, the Nunavut ‘package’ – the provisions of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, and the resulting division of the Northwest Territories and the creation of the Nunavut territory and the Government of Nunavut – was designed to both accommodate Inuit self-government aspirations yet fit comfortably within established traditions of mainstream Canadian governance. It is not a radical departure.<sup>3</sup>

Another key lesson to be drawn from the Nunavut project is the extent to which major change in the situations of aboriginal peoples can indeed occur if sufficient will exists – both political will and determination on the part of the aboriginal people and good will and flexibility on the part of those in positions of political authority.

As Peter Jull has noted, ‘regional agreements’ such as Nunavut may be “a means for indigenous people to begin to solve ... problems which ... police and paternalism will not and cannot”.<sup>4</sup> Nunavut is one of a series of ‘regional agreements’ which Inuit have been able to negotiate into existence in many (but not yet all) parts of the Arctic.

*In recent decades, the Inuit have regained a high degree of control over their lands and experienced widespread cultural and political renewal. They now have what may be a unique opportunity: a chance to create a self-sustaining economy in a region relatively insulated from the intense population and resource pressures that jeopardize indigenous cultures in so many other parts of the world. In this respect, the Inuit represent a ‘best case’ scenario for indigenous development. And yet the tumultuous social changes, the controver-*

*sial politics of hunting (the Inuit's primary economic activity), and the uncertainties of resource exploitation in the delicate Arctic environment – all of these factors make the Inuit cultural renaissance still a very uncertain affair. That uncertainty is compounded by global environmental pressures, which are now working fundamental changes in Arctic ecosystems. In both cultural and natural terms, the far north may be on the verge of profound transition.*<sup>5</sup>

After briefly sketching Nunavut's geography, society and economy, and providing a summary of Nunavut's history and an account of the principal features of the Inuit land claim, we will examine government and politics in Nunavut with special emphasis on state-society linkages. In doing so we will try to focus on two central issues: first, the prospect that the new regime in Nunavut will generate significant local control over the political and economic processes that affect its people's lives; and second, the extent to which the design and operation of the state in Nunavut does in fact incorporate the values and perspectives of its people. These are, of course, universal themes but they are particularly highlighted in Nunavut because of the distinctiveness of Inuit culture and because no other Canadian attempt at aboriginal self-government has anything like the scope and magnitude of the Nunavut project.

Our discussion and conclusions on these matters are necessarily preliminary, not least because as we write, Nunavut has only existed for a year. Nonetheless, the opportunities and the problems confronting Nunavut and its people, as well as the need for Canadians outside the north to understand them, are sufficiently clear to warrant analysis as the Government of Nunavut is still in its early days.

This chapter brings a political economy approach to bear on the question of why and how Nunavut came to be, and what it means. This requires analysis of somewhat different issues and linkages than is often the case, as political economy incorporates a range of approaches, which view societies as structured by specific power relations, and economies as socially and politically embedded.

Although it is clear that Nunavut is, in important respects, economically dependent on southern Canada, we do not root our analysis in the 'dependency theory' that dominates the writings of many Canadian political economists. Given the tendency of Canadian analysts to focus on the degree to which Canada is allegedly 'dependent' on the United States, it is not surprising that the Canadian north is often described simply as being 'dependent' on southern Canada. Dependency theory recognises that political and economic relationships are the products of inequitable historical

relations, but as Philip O'Brien has observed with regard to Latin America, "dependency can easily become a pseudo-concept which explains everything in general and hence nothing in particular."<sup>6</sup>

Dependency approaches also tend to obscure the opportunity for agency. Any description of how dependent the Canadian Arctic is on fiscal transfers from the federal government should also recognise that – and be capable of explaining how – a highly 'dependent' people managed to negotiate one of the most sweeping aboriginal rights and self-government packages in North America.<sup>7</sup>

## **2. Nunavut - a profile**

### *Geography*

At more than 2.1 million square kilometres, Nunavut encompasses 23 per cent of Canada's land mass. The new territory is substantially larger than Québec (Canada's largest province), three times the size of Texas, ten times larger than Britain, and roughly the size of continental Europe. It is so large that, if independent, it would rank as the world's twelfth largest country.

Its western boundary with the Northwest Territories runs north from the intersection of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border with the sixtieth parallel, roughly follows the tree-line (beyond which the climate is too harsh for trees) north-west to the Arctic Ocean, then cuts east and north through the western Arctic islands. The curious route of the north-western part of the boundary, which bisects several large islands, reflects the boundaries established for the land claim of the Inuvialuit (the Inuit of the Mackenzie Delta). To the east, Nunavut's boundary is that of the pre-division Northwest Territories.

These boundaries illustrate that even as the creation of Nunavut represents increased Inuit control over their lives, it sets important limits on that control. Nunavut's boundaries derive from a 1993 land claim settlement (described in greater detail below) in which Inuit agreed to surrender significant aboriginal rights in exchange for (among other things) establishment of their long-sought after homeland. Moreover, Nunavut's artificial boundaries attest to the practical compromises Inuit have had to make. First, Nunavut does not include all the lands traditionally used by the people we can now call Nunavut Inuit, which extended into northern Manitoba and beyond Nunavut's western boundary.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, the Nunavut project is about enhancing the political autonomy of the Inuit in the



eastern and central parts of the Northwest Territories, so that the substantial numbers of Inuit in Nunavik (northern Québec) and Labrador, many of whom share close ties with Nunavut Inuit, are excluded by virtue of turn-of-the-century judicial and political decisions, imposed on Inuit without their knowledge let alone consent. The Inuvialuit are also outside the boundaries of Nunavut.<sup>9</sup>

Nunavut's physical features vary substantially, from the essentially flat (but grievously misnamed) 'barrenlands' west of Hudson Bay to the soaring mountains and spectacular fiords of Baffin and Ellesmere Islands. Climatic variations also exist, though winters are everywhere long and severe; at best the ice in most of Nunavut's harbours and waterways does not break up until July, permitting only a limited period of shipping and navigation before fall freeze-up.

All Nunavut communities, with the single exception of Baker Lake, are located beside the sea – reflecting the importance of marine mammals in the traditional Inuit economy. By southern standards, communities are very isolated; Nunavut has virtually no roads so transportation is primarily by air, which is extremely expensive.<sup>10</sup> Bulk goods are usually shipped in from the south during the summer 'sea-lift'. Consequently, the small local markets, high cost of transportation and harsh conditions make for very high living costs. Residents in Nunavut may pay twice as much for groceries as people in the south, while construction costs are proportionately even higher.

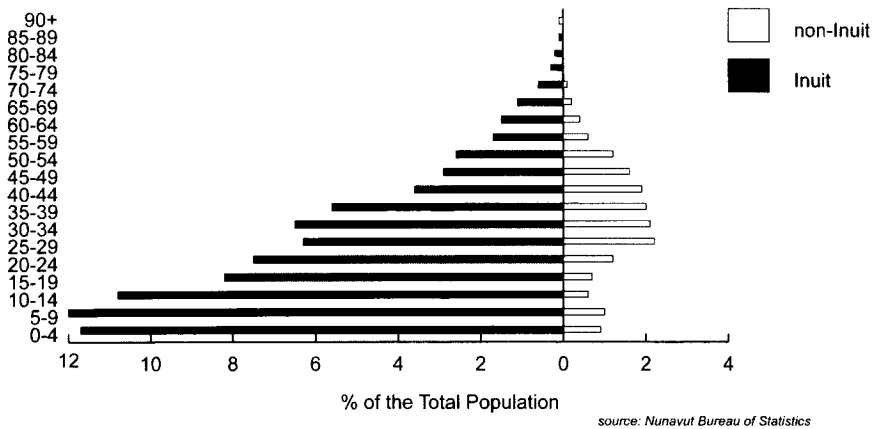
### *Demography*

Few parts of the globe are as sparsely populated as Nunavut, whose population was just 27,000 when it came into existence on April 1, 1999.<sup>11</sup> The population is spread out among 25 incorporated communities – one 'town' and 24 'hamlets'. The capital, Iqaluit, is by far the largest community with a population fast approaching 5,000; Rankin Inlet has 2,200 residents and eight other communities have populations over 1,000. Eight Nunavut communities have populations between 500 and 1,000, and seven more have populations below 500. There are also two tiny settlements in the western part of the territory, and in the Baffin region a few dozen people live in small 'outpost camps' distant from the communities.<sup>12</sup>

Roughly 85 per cent of Nunavut's people are Inuit. Non-Inuit are concentrated in the regional centres of Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay, and at the Nanisivik mine, so that many of the smaller communities are more than 95 per cent Inuit.

The Inuit population is significantly younger in composition than the non-Inuit population, which is largely made up of people between the ages of 25 and 50 who are working temporarily in Nunavut.

### Population Pyramid, Nunavut, by Ethnicity, 2000

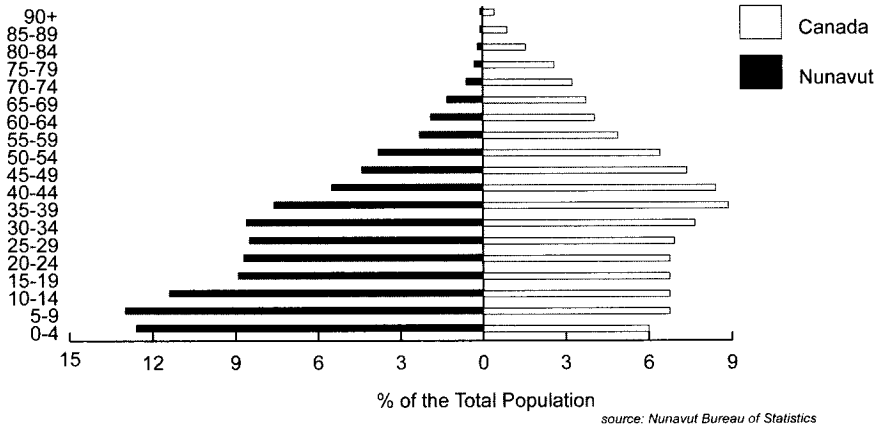


Nunavut's population growth rate is more than three times the national average. Between the Census years 1991 and 1996, the population of Nunavut grew by 16.4 per cent compared to 5.7 per cent nationally. Most of this growth is due to natural increase.

At 30 live births per 1,000 population (in 1996), birth rates among Nunavut Inuit reflect a population undergoing a historic demographic transition. Inuit were historically a society with both a high birth rate and a high mortality rate. The mortality rate fell sharply when medical care was made available in the communities, however the decline in the birth rate began later and has been more gradual.

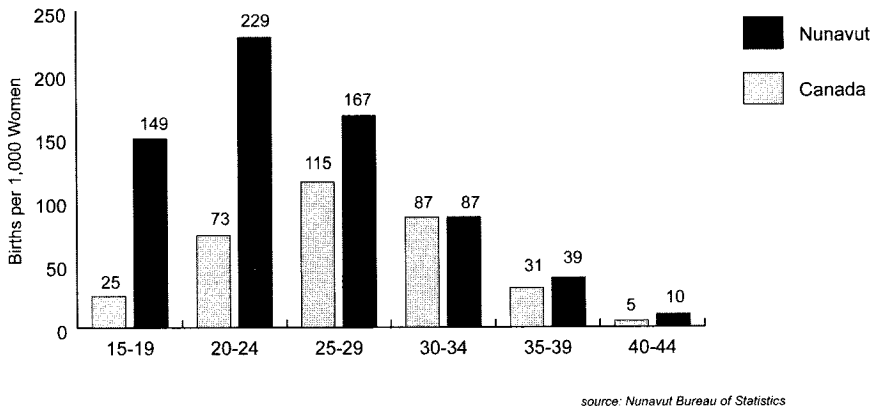
As a result, Nunavut's age structure is dramatically different from the Canadian average. 41 per cent of Nunavut Inuit are under 15 years of age, compared to 20 per cent for the population of Canada as a whole; and 60 per cent of Nunavut Inuit are under 25 years of age, compared to 38 per cent for the population of Canada as a whole. Conversely, less than three per cent of Nunavut Inuit are 65 years of age and over, compared to 12 per cent nationally.<sup>13</sup>

## Population Pyramid, Nunavut and Canada, 2000



Young women in Nunavut have dramatically higher fertility rates than the Canadian population as a whole – almost six times higher than the national average for women 15 to 19 years old.

## Age-Specific Fertility Rates, 5-Year Average 1992-96



Nunavut's overall birth rate has fallen steadily since 1986, however, and is now below the rate maintained by Canada as a whole during the 'baby boom' years of the 1950s.

Both the rapid population growth and the unusual age structure have enormous social and economic consequences. Simply maintaining existing levels of social services, housing, education and job

creation in the face of such enormous population pressure is a huge challenge.

The formal educational attainment of Nunavut residents is significantly lower than the national average, but some of the difference is due to the age differences in the two populations. There is a very strong inverse relationship between age and education in Nunavut – older Inuit tend to have little formal education, but as the present population ages Nunavut's overall level of formal education will rise. Already, between the 1986 and 1996 Census years the proportion of Nunavut adults with less than Grade 9 education declined by more than 40 per cent while the proportion with some post-secondary education more than doubled.

### *Economy*

Nunavut can best be described as having a 'mixed economy', wherein households combine cash income from a variety of sources (wages, social transfers, arts and crafts production) with income in kind from the land, shifting their efforts from one sector to another as conditions dictate.

The 'mixed economy' of today is a culturally-appropriate adaptation to dynamic but uneven economic opportunities; the result of a long history of economic adaptation by Inuit – and other aboriginal peoples in Canada:

*Incomers relied on natives for information, for indigenous technology for survival and travel, and for labour, before overseas investors made continuous commitments of men, capital, and goods to remote regions. Such partnerships, whether equal or not, allowed aboriginal societies in contact with Euro-Americans to retain essential elements of their ideology, social structure, and way of life even when superficially subordinated to a nonindigenous system of production.<sup>14</sup>*

Until as recently as the 1960s, most Nunavut Inuit lived in multifamily hunting groups, largely depending for food, fuel and shelter on marine mammals (especially seals) and caribou. Today most Inuit families continue to engage in considerable harvesting of the naturally occurring resources of the land and sea, in addition to earning wage income and receiving transfer payments from the state. Extended families pool and share food, cash and labour as required. Market and non-market activities are mutually supportive and operate simultaneously, with the household being the primary unit of production, distribution and consumption.

The continued economic importance of harvesting to Inuit has historically been downplayed by government policy makers, yet

harvesting remains one of the most important economic activities in most Nunavut communities:

*Despite the changes in the domain of hunting following the integration of [Inuit] into the international market-economy and their transition to settlement life, hunting has not vanished. Although it is no longer a strict necessity for survival and although not all adult males are full-time engaged in hunting, some not even part of the time, hunting is still a characteristic aspect of [Inuit] life, not only in the outpost camps but also in the settlement. People ... discuss hunting trips on the local radio, on the streets, in stores or at home. Hunters can be seen returning from or going on a hunt almost daily. People may gather around a hunter's booty at the beach or on the streets. Hunters invite relatives and others to come and get a share of their meat. Fish, seal, caribou or other chunks of meat are found on the floor of many houses. Skins are found everywhere in and around the settlement, drying in the sun and wind. The yearly migration to the hunting camps in the spring and summer are indicative of the fact that the [Inuit] have retained strong ties with the land. The attachment to hunting is also revealed by the fact that many who are employed mainly work to get money to buy hunting equipment.<sup>15</sup>*

Detailed data on wildlife harvesting in Nunavut is being collected by the Nunavut Wildlife Harvest Survey undertaken by the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, but results from this survey will not be made public until the five-year data collection period wraps up in the summer of 2001.<sup>16</sup>

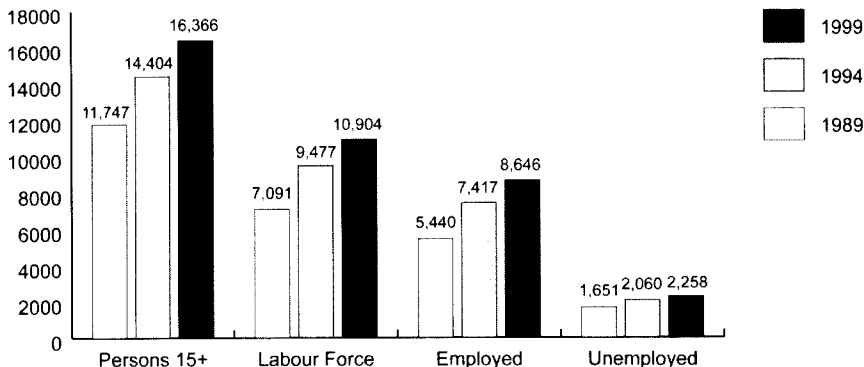
In terms of its dollar value, the traditional hunting, trapping and fishing economy is of limited significance. Commercial fisheries off the east coast of Baffin Island are increasing in importance,<sup>17</sup> and the harvesting of caribou for export and similar endeavours hold some promise for development,<sup>18</sup> but both are ultimately limited in scale (despite the often wildly optimistic expectations that some people have for this sector).

Yet measuring hunting and fishing activities simply in terms of wages paid or sales generated is highly misleading. Particularly in the smaller communities, a significant proportion of food comes directly from the land. This 'country food' is fresher and more nutritious than extremely expensive frozen meat flown in from Ottawa or Winnipeg. The 'replacement value' of country food harvested by Nunavut Inuit has been estimated at between \$30 and \$35 million per year.

Moreover, hunting and fishing have tremendous cultural importance – both for individual Inuit for whom going 'on the land' is crucial to their identity and for communities whose traditional values and social ties are reinforced by the hunt itself and the sharing of the harvest.<sup>19</sup>

Turning to the wage economy, the decade leading up to the creation of Nunavut saw significant growth not just in the size of the adult population, but also in the size of the labour force and especially in the numbers of persons employed.<sup>20</sup>

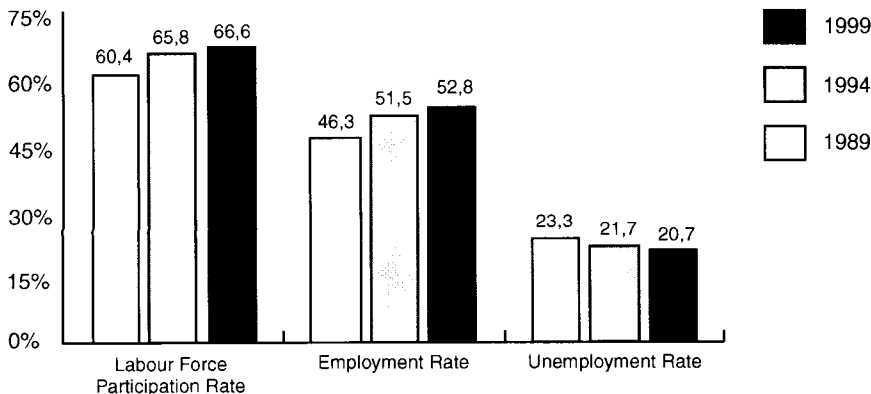
### Change in Labour Force Counts, 1989/94/99



source: Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, Community Labour Force Surveys

When it came into existence in 1999, Nunavut had an overall labour force participation rate 66.6 per cent and an overall unemployment rate of 20.7 per cent. (At that time Canada as a whole had a 64.5 per cent labour force participation rate and an 8.5 per cent unemployment rate.)

### Change in Labour Force Measures, 1989/94/99

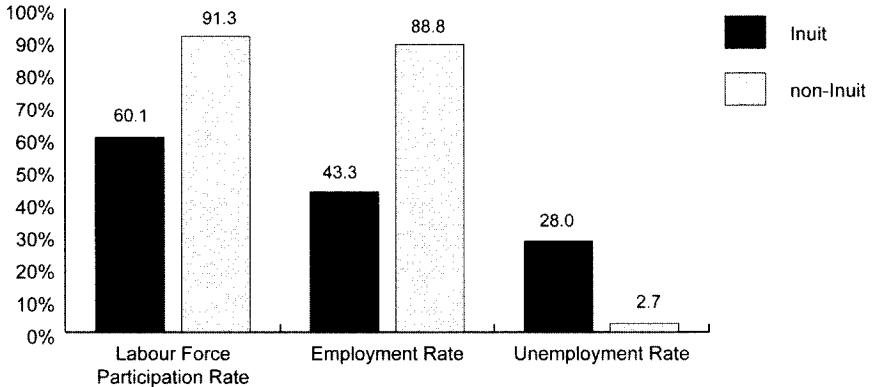


source: Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, Community Labour Force Survey

There is a dramatic difference in employment and unemployment rates by ethnicity. Nunavut Inuit had a 60.1 per cent labour force participation

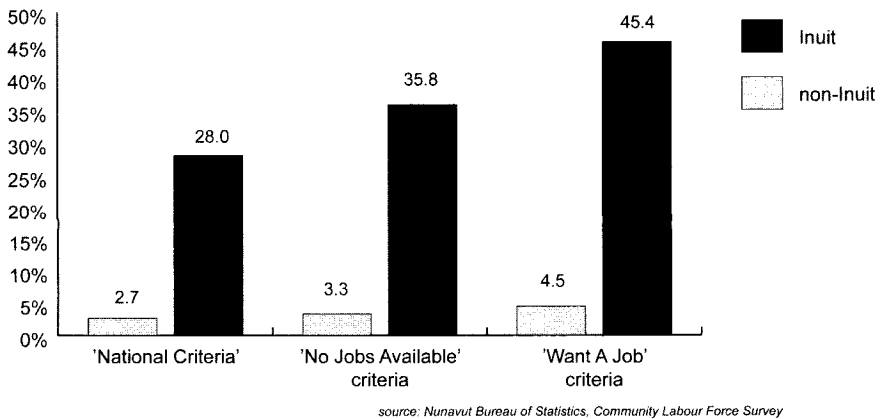
rate and a 28.0 per cent unemployment rate, while the non-Inuit population had 91.3 per cent participation and only 2.7 per cent unemployment rates. Simply put, most non-Inuit are in Nunavut to work – and when their work ends, for whatever the reason or case, they leave.

### Labour Force Measures, by Ethnicity, 1999



These unemployment rates are based on Canada-wide criteria that are not very appropriate to small Inuit communities – people have to be without work and also have ‘actively looked for work in the previous four weeks’. Using a more appropriate criteria – adding ‘had not looked for work because they perceived no jobs to be available’ to the standard criteria, or simply asking people if they want a job – raises the Inuit unemployment rate significantly but leaves the non-Inuit unemployment rate almost unchanged.

### Alternative Unemployment Rates, by Ethnicity, 1999



There are also significant differences in employment and unemployment rates between the larger, medium-sized and smaller communities. More than 65 per cent of the adult population of the three regional centres had a job in 1999, while less than 35 per cent of the adult population of Clyde River and Gjoa Haven were employed. The regional centres experienced the greatest growth in employment in the 1990s, and ended the decade with a combined unemployment rate of 11.9 per cent. The fourteen small communities need to employ a significant percentage of their population simply to provide basic services but have limited other job prospects; they ended the decade with an unemployment rate twice that of the regional centres. The eight medium-sized communities, however, experienced the greatest growth in unemployment in the 1990s – and ended the decade with an unemployment rate of 29 per cent.<sup>21</sup>

Nunavut's economy depends to an extraordinary degree on government. Well over half the territory's jobs are in the public sector and many others, in service and construction for example, are (directly or indirectly) dependent on government activity. (Public sector employment involves far more than government bureaucrats; teachers and health care workers are important – and numerous – examples of para-public sector employees.) In some communities, only a handful of private sector jobs exist. Inuit hold a substantial number of public sector jobs, but far fewer than their proportion of the overall population warrants. Not only have no Nunavut Inuit become doctors, but there are no Inuit nurses in Nunavut either. Moreover, the higher-paying and professional jobs in the public sector have tended to be occupied by non-Inuit – although this situation is changing significantly with the creation of the Government of Nunavut and the other bodies arising out of the land claim. A major goal of the Nunavut land claim and the creation of the Government of Nunavut is ensuring representative Inuit participation throughout the public sector.<sup>22</sup>

Government is a central economic force in another sense, the overall level of public subsidy of the economy. Precisely how this subsidy takes place is quite telling. The residents of Nunavut have the *lowest* economic dependency ratio – the standard measure of dependence on government – of any provincial/territorial jurisdiction in Canada. How can this be? Statistics Canada defines 'economic dependency' as being total transfer payments to individuals divided by their total income. While the overall level of Social Assistance payments grew rapidly during the 1980s and 1990s, especially in the Baffin region<sup>23</sup>, they are still just a fraction of the region's wage income. The levels of other types of transfer payments to individuals are also lower than in the rest of the country. The result is that



people who are without jobs in the wage economy exist on very limited amounts of cash – and rely heavily on the sharing of food and money within extended families and on highly subsidised housing provided by the territorial government. So while they may live in a highly subsidised society, as individual economic actors Nunavimmiut are very dependent on the wage income that they – and/or the other members of their families – earn.

Nunavut's economic realities – inextricably intertwined subsistence and cash sectors operating in a context of overwhelming dependence on spending by the national government – are thus similar to those of other Arctic jurisdictions:

*... three elements – resources, place, and public programs reflecting [national] social standards – combine in ways that make government the dominant force in the cash economy in rural-bush Alaska. It dominates by paying people to work, and by transferring cash in many other ways. Its dominance is permanent. The private sector will never create enough jobs for rural-bush residents because, except under special circumstances, the resources are not abundant enough, they are too costly to exploit, their world price is too low, the prospects for adding value locally are too limited, and the markets are too distant.<sup>24</sup>*

Private sector economic activity in Nunavut today is dominated by resource extraction. At present Nunavut's three mines produce lead/zinc (Nanisivik and Polaris) and gold (Lupin); one diamond property (Jericho) and two more gold properties (West Meliadine and Boston) are on the cusp of development; and extensive exploration and development work is underway for other precious and base metals as well as for diamonds and uranium.<sup>25</sup> Vast reserves of oil and gas lie beneath the Arctic Ocean, but the tremendous logistical and environmental difficulties of extracting these resources and transporting them to southern markets have thus far prevented sustained efforts at developing them.

Mines in Nunavut – current and prospective – are owned and operated by large southern Canadian or foreign multinational firms. With the exception of the early North Rankin Nickel Mine,<sup>26</sup> Inuit have held relatively few of the often highly paid mining jobs in Nunavut. Indeed, many of the workers at the current mines do not live in Nunavut in any real sense – they fly in from southern centres like Montréal or Edmonton for two or three weeks of intense work and then fly home for their time off. Sections of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement are intended to remedy this situation somewhat for future mines.

Transportation, construction and retail trade are the next most important sectors of the Nunavut economy. Since the mines are

largely self-contained, in important ways it is in these sectors that southern capital is most evident and exerts its most direct influence on Nunavut society. Companies in these sectors, both the larger firms headquartered in southern Canada and smaller, locally owned enterprises, have long been predominantly owned and operated by non-Inuit. Inuit-owned companies are becoming increasingly important players, however, as money from the land claim is channelled by Inuit organisations into long-term economic development projects. The Nunavut Construction Corporation (NCC), for example, is a consortium of Inuit-owned firms building and leasing many of the office buildings and other infrastructure needed by the Government of Nunavut.

The largest Inuit-owned companies are the 'birthright development corporations' collectively owned by all Nunavut Inuit through their land claims organisations. While these firms are especially concerned about hiring and training Inuit, they must still be understood as essentially capitalist enterprises, not least for their role in fostering economic divisions in Inuit society that are strongly linked to political power: "Although the development corporations are becoming increasingly important as employers of Inuit, their main significance is that they control the allocation of resources and wealth and that their economic control is combined with political control. ... the native development corporation has enabled a small group of Inuit to become both powerful and wealthy."<sup>27</sup> In Nunavut, at least, this wealth has come from hefty salaries – and not from the skimming of profits by enormous 'bonus' payments (as has occurred elsewhere).

Nunavut's tourism industry contributes to the economy in a number of ways. It contributes to the vitality and viability of several sectors, including arts and crafts, hospitality and transportation, and offers part-time and seasonal employment opportunities to people primarily engaged in the harvesting and arts and crafts sectors. Spectacular parks and protected areas are among Nunavut's biggest tourist destinations. Tourism is a growing sector, and is believed to have considerable potential for growth – but very high costs limit the number of visitors (most of whom are affluent and well-educated younger adults, primarily from southern Canada but also from the United States and overseas) and tourism remains a relatively small component of the economy.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, although more than 2,000 families in Nunavut earn some of their income from the sale of their arts and crafts (primarily stone carving), for the vast majority this represents only a small supplement to their income from other sources. (Reliable statistics on arts and crafts are notoriously difficult to collect.)

Economic activity in arts and crafts has close ties to the extensive co-operative movement which is heavily involved in the production and marketing of Inuit art. Moreover, with most communities having only one or two large retail outlets, the community-owned Co-op stores are important economic institutions throughout Nunavut. As Marybelle Mitchell has observed, not only have the co-ops been the largest non-government employer of Inuit, "virtually all the Inuit population is involved in one way or another with a local co-operative."<sup>29</sup>

If the importance of the co-operative movement, with its local control and communal ethic, is noteworthy, the co-ops should not be seen as a fundamental challenge to capitalist values and economic processes in Nunavut. As Mitchell's exhaustive study of Inuit co-ops demonstrates, they are best understood as "the definitive link between the indigenous and capitalist modes of production... [they are] communal in name but capitalist in effect".<sup>30</sup> Building on the experience of prairie families working collectively to survive the bitter economic depression of the 1930s, the Canadian state played an unusual – indeed, a decisive – role in establishing co-ops in the north as a tool of community economic development. The success of this tool greatly facilitated the incorporation of the Inuit into the wage economy.

Only the three regional centres have bank branches, although automated banking machines are starting to appear in the larger settlements. And while the banks are involved in large economic development projects (and are extremely interested in Inuit land claim money), and Northern (formerly the Hudson's Bay Company) and Co-op stores partially fill the gap on a local basis, the historic role played by financial institutions has often been assumed by the state. As Peter Clancy has noted, "in frontier societies more than most, the core mechanisms of production and exchange are established and maintained only with state support."<sup>31</sup>

### **3. Inuit and the State: from autonomy to subjugation (to self-determination?)**

#### *Contact and Colonisation*

The central theme in the recent history of the eastern and central Canadian Arctic has been the effect of EuroCanadian contact on Inuit society and the resulting rapid social change within Inuit society.

Accordingly, the creation of Nunavut, as well as the critical social, political and economic problems facing Nunavut, must be understood in terms of Inuit society's evolution in a context of colonial domination by southern Canadian economic and political interests. In most fundamentals the Inuit experience replicates the history of other North American aboriginal peoples after contact with European society.<sup>32</sup> Overtaken by overwhelming social, economic and cultural changes, their status as an autonomous, self-governing people disappeared as they lost control of their land and resources to governments imposed on them without their consent.

Prior to the advent of air travel, the eastern and central Arctic was far less accessible to Europeans (and later, Canadians) than the Mackenzie Valley or the Yukon and it offered few of the resources that drew Europeans and southerners north, such as fur, gold and oil. Accordingly, EuroCanadian contact with the Inuit of what we know today as Nunavut came much later and was much less extensive than for other aboriginal peoples of the Canadian north – or for other Inuit societies.<sup>33</sup>

Significant interaction between Inuit and whalers from Europe and North America occurred in the nineteenth century, but most Inuit were not directly affected by this contact in fundamental ways. Only in the twentieth century did large-scale EuroCanadian influence begin to dramatically affect Inuit society, as fur-traders, missionaries, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers spread throughout the north; unlike the whalers, they came to live in the Arctic on a permanent basis. And while Inuit labour may have played a negligible role in the development of the Canadian economy as a whole, it was crucial to the viability of most EuroCanadian ventures in the Arctic and it had a profound, transformative impact on Inuit society.<sup>34</sup>

Economic integration preceded political integration as the Hudson's Bay Company traders promoted the exploitation of local resources, most notably furs and skins. Traders offered Inuit strong material incentives – such as supplies, equipment and other goods – for items such as white fox pelts. Many Inuit significantly altered their hunting practices and indeed their whole lifestyle, to meet the traders' demands, thereby tying themselves to the vagaries of the international commodity market as well as to specific companies. For example, the following is the text of an indenture certificate that was found in the walls of a building in Kimmirut (formerly Lake Harbour) in 1999:

*I, \_\_\_\_, son of \_\_\_\_, do agree and promise on this \_\_\_\_ day of 1914, to serve the Hudson's Bay Company, faithfully, in the capacity of Hunter, and in such other capacity as the Hudson's Bay Company shall appoint, for the full term of five years, to be computed from the first day of June 1914. I do also hereby*

*agree to obey all orders and commands given me by the said Company and that I will not be engaged in any other employment whatsoever, than that of the Hudson's Bay Company for the said term of five years, and that I will deliver my entire hunt of all foxes, bears, seals, walrus, wolf et cetera to the said company, for the said term of five years. In compensation for the above mentioned services, the Hudson's Bay Company agrees to pay me Thirty Netchik per year, and also pay me for my aforementioned entire hunt turned over to them at the usual prices allowed Eskimo Hunters by the said Company. In witness whereof, these presents have been executed at Lake Harbour on the \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_ 1914.*

When major downturns in those markets occurred, as exemplified when the price for white fox collapsed following World War Two, the Inuit, who had come to depend on trade goods, were unable to purchase the goods to which they had become accustomed. Economically, by the second half of the century Inuit had become subservient to outside forces and economic agents over whom they exercised no control.

A similar dynamic reoccurred in the 1970s and 1980s the commercial market for sealskin, which had become a key pillar of the economy of the eastern and central Arctic, was destroyed by:

*... groups claiming to act in the interests of wildlife preservation and animal welfare [which] captured headlines in parts of Canada, the United States and western Europe [and] clamoured for an end to commercial sale of seal pelts and sealskin products. The fund-raising drives of the anti-sealing groups proved so lucrative that they persisted long after their factual basis was shown to be weak. Lacking evidence to indicate that any species of northern seal was endangered, they attempted, instead, to stir public outrage by pointing to hunting methods used in the harvest of harp seal pups in places far away from the Arctic. ... Their clever manipulation led to a ban on sealskin imports in the United States and a selective ban in the European Union.<sup>35</sup>*

These bans had devastating economic and social impacts on Nunavut communities.

### ***Incorporation and Social Change***

Politically, Inuit were largely ignored by Canada until quite recently. Inuit never signed treaties or agreements with either British or Canadian authorities, nor were they conquered militarily. And yet, Inuit ruefully discovered that although they had always governed themselves and exercised stewardship over their lands, a foreign and little understood entity called the Government of Canada was now, without their consent or agreement, to control their lives.

After the Second World War, the Canadian state's minimalist northern presence gave way to active intervention, replete with social engineering plans for aboriginal societies.<sup>36</sup> A variety of motives underlay this fundamental policy reversal: concern with the distress suffered by Inuit and other northern aboriginal peoples who, having become incorporated into (and somewhat dependent on) the global economy, found themselves largely excluded from it with the decline of the fur trade; recognition of the Canadian state's obligations to aboriginal people, coupled with a strongly assimilationist agenda to eliminate the distinctive elements of aboriginal society; interest in fostering large-scale exploitation of the north's mineral and other resources; and desire to solidify Canada's disputed claim to sovereignty over the islands of the Arctic archipelago.

A key element in realising these diverse goals was the creation of permanent settlements. Establishment of these communities symbolises how, even very recently, the Canadian state controlled Inuit life in fundamental ways. Until well into the twentieth century Inuit did not live in permanent settlements, though they often gathered at traditional sites for hunting and fishing and for social purposes. Hence, all the communities in Nunavut are of recent origin (many dating only from the 1940s and 1950s, although often at or near places of historic Inuit habitation) having grown where Europeans and southern Canadians located their institutions: Hudson's Bay Company trading posts, Royal Canadian Mounted Police detachments, mission churches, military installations and the like. Even more tellingly, many Inuit did not settle in these communities entirely willingly; they were coerced by the government to move into central locations so as to facilitate the delivery of public services such as health and education and also so that they could be assimilated into southern Canadian ways.<sup>37</sup>

In some instances, Inuit were relocated great distances to serve the interests of the Canadian state; the most notorious example is that of the 'High Arctic Exiles' of the 1950s who were moved thousands of kilometres from northern Québec to Ellesmere and Cornwallis islands in part to bolster Canadian claims to sovereignty over the far north.<sup>38</sup>

And as was the case with First Nations across Canada, government officials sent children away to boarding schools (run by the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches in Chesterfield Inlet, Churchill and Inuvik). As Hugh Brody has noted:

*... the word ilira ... is used to refer to the fear of ghosts, the awe a strong father inspires in his children, and fear of the qadlunaat [white man]. I often heard Inuit speak about their agreement to their children being taken away from*

*their homes in camps, and being put in schools far away. This taking of children caused much heartache to Inuit parents, who are famous for their intense attachment to their children. Virtually every Inuit child embodies a much loved and respected older relative (in North Baffin, a recently deceased relative), the person who is the child's atiq. When a child is taken away, therefore, the families lose a loved (and potentially helpful) little person; the embodiment, almost the reincarnation, of an elder, the child's atiq, is also lost. Yet when this happened, Inuit seemed to accept the process. When older men and women told me about the grief the boarding school program caused them, I asked many times, "Why did you not complain? Why did you go along with it?" The answers repeatedly made use of ilira, fear, awe, a sense of intimidation. And when I explored these answers, asking more questions about the feelings and events that surrounded the taking of children out to school, I was told that all qadlunaat made Inuit feel ilira. Often elders – both men and women – made the point in general terms: iliranaturalulautut, "they were very ilira-making".<sup>39</sup>*

It would be hard to underestimate the extent and the speed of social and cultural change experienced by the Inuit in recent decades. Most Inuit over the age of 40 were born on the land in snow houses or tents to nomadic families whose lives depended almost entirely on hunting, fishing and trapping, and who had almost no exposure to mainstream North American society. They now watch cable television in their living rooms while their children play video games or surf the Internet. Life in permanent communities built upon the wage economy, the welfare state and modern technology changed Inuit society fundamentally. Profound changes in economic activity were linked to other changes: traditional patterns of authority (for example, the respect accorded elders) were challenged by new forces, single-parent families (rare in traditional Inuit society) became common, and a range of traditional values and practices were weakened. The impaired capacity of Inuit to hunt was critical since hunting was not only the economic mainstay but also the cultural focus of traditional Inuit society.

State activism in the 1950s and 1960s brought Inuit important entitlements that other Canadians had long taken for granted, such as public health services, schooling and social welfare. These benefits, however, came at enormous social cost. Not all Inuit could follow traditional economic pursuits. Increased pressure on the wild-life close to the settled communities (some of which were located great distances from good hunting areas) meant that many hunters had to travel long distances, requiring mechanised equipment that was expensive to purchase and operate. Yet few paying jobs were available. Because of the cost of hunting, by the 1980s "only Inuit

who do have a job, and hence an income, can afford to go hunting in the little spare time available. Inuit who do not have a job or a regular income cannot afford to go hunting, although they have plenty of time to do so."<sup>40</sup> (The Nunavut Harvester Support Program, created through the land claim, attempts to remedy this situation.)

*Older Inuit have said that the move into settlements deceived them into thinking their troubles were over. Life on the land had been a constant struggle just to survive, pitting mental and physical resources against an implacable environment. The new towns made the conditions of life much more pleasant; the houses were always heated, and no one lacked for food. In fact, the Inuit came to realize that the struggle for survival was to continue as a fight to maintain their identity and values.*<sup>41</sup>

The implicit presumption underpinning the government's reorganisation of Inuit life was rejection of traditional economic activities in favour of integration into the North American wage economy, yet even when jobs were open to Inuit they were typically unskilled, low-paying and often of only short duration. Unemployment and underemployment thus became chronic problems that combined with alienation from the land and from traditional culture to engender social pathologies: low self-esteem, alcohol and substance abuse, family violence, youth suicide and welfare dependency. In the words of one deeply pessimistic report about Inuit society, the "lords of the Arctic" had become "wards of the state".<sup>42</sup>

Although profoundly affected by government decisions, Inuit were permitted no role in politics or government. The Northwest Territories was ruled by Ottawa as a colony: for decades the Government of the Northwest Territories was in effect a committee of federal civil servants. Residents of Nunavut – both Inuit and non-Inuit – were unable to vote in federal elections until 1962 or in territorial elections until 1966.<sup>43</sup> When municipal governments were established in the settlements in the 1950s and 1960s they were allowed no significant powers. Until well into the 1980s, virtually no Inuk held a bureaucratic post of any influence in the territorial government.

Not only were Inuit systematically excluded from participating in decision-making, but government persistently treated the Inuit in ways that in hindsight seem astoundingly patronising and condescending. "The King is helping all the children in his lands", Inuit were told after World War II. "He is giving aid to the Eskimo children also and has instructed His servants the Police to proceed in this way."<sup>44</sup>



Perhaps the best illustration involves that most central element of identity: names. Government bureaucrats who had trouble understanding and keeping track of complex Inuit naming systems issued all Inuit with discs imprinted with identification numbers – known as ‘Eskimo numbers’, or ‘E-numbers’ – that were to be used in dealings with government in place of their names.<sup>45</sup> Inuit were instructed that “Every Eskimo should have a disc bearing his identification number. Do not lose your disc. You will need it to obtain the King’s help.”<sup>46</sup> To this day, many Inuit still know their ‘E-numbers’ by heart.

### *Ethnic Mobilisation and Class Differentiation*

*We very much dislike white people taking our land for granted. It seems they feel they can destroy our land any time they feel like it without even asking for permission. We want to have the freedom of conservation with the animals. They steal the raw materials without even consulting us or giving the Inuit a percentage of what they are taking. We need to get power to control the land.*  
– Elijah Takkiapik, 1974<sup>47</sup>

Inuit would never have survived as a people without enormous resilience, patience and determination. These qualities were critical in the Inuit struggle to regain control of their lives and their land. As well, compared to many other Canadian aboriginal peoples, the Inuit enjoy important advantages stemming from their relative isolation and the lack of readily exploitable resources on their lands. Their overwhelming numerical dominance in their homelands may have only recently taken on political importance but it has facilitated retention of key elements of Inuit culture. Most notably, Inuktitut continues to rank among the healthiest aboriginal languages in Canada; the overwhelming majority of Nunavut Inuit continue to speak it and in most Nunavut communities Inuktitut is heard far more often than English – except in federal and territorial government offices in the three regional centres.<sup>48</sup>

Inuit differ from the other aboriginal peoples of Canada not just in history, language and culture but also in legal status – Inuit are not subject to the federal government’s infamous *Indian Act*.<sup>49</sup> This means that there have never been reserves established under the *Indian Act* for Inuit. It has also meant that some of the arbitrary, legalistic divisions that impede political action among other aboriginal peoples in Canada – between ‘status Indians’, ‘non-status Indians’ and Metis – do not exist among Inuit. In turn, this has made it easier to maintain Inuit unity, especially in terms of political direction.

One paradoxical result of Inuit contact with – and subsequent domination by – EuroCanadian society has been the emergence of a group identity among Inuit. Prior to contact, Inuit identities and loyalties were rooted in local groups and the social organisation of extended families. The social and economic change wrought by contact served to differentiate Inuit from non-Inuit and to emphasize commonalities among Inuit, resulting in what has been termed “Inuit nationalism”.<sup>50</sup> Thus, while regional divisions and antagonisms are certainly evident in contemporary Nunavut society and politics, they are generally subsumed into a larger Inuit identity and unity.

Life in the communities and (partial) integration into the wage economy also brought about economic differentiation among Inuit and development of a class system. Various forms and gradations of class groupings among Inuit can be discerned according to their role in productive practices, their participation in traditional or wage economies, their status as independent commodity producers, state workers, petty capitalists and the like.<sup>51</sup>

While such class divisions do have relevance to social and political developments, they do not yet represent the defining socioeconomic dynamic within Nunavut society. In part this is because the Inuit economic elite remains relatively small, as does the Inuit middle class, and in part it reflects disinclination among Inuit to think in terms of – or identify themselves with – class perspectives. For example, while some Inuit belong to trade unions, organised labour has so far developed only shallow roots in Nunavut.<sup>52</sup>

It is worth noting, however, that in 1982 – when the successful implementation of a Nunavut land claim and territorial government must have seemed like a distant dream – Inuit leader John Amagoalik (then President of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada) wrote to his Board of Directors that he had been “thinking about trying to start some sort of labour movement in the North for about 10 years”.<sup>53</sup> An Inuit aide to Amagoalik wrote a memo to the Board which began by summing up the mounting socioeconomic woes in Inuit communities and concluded that organising Inuit labour might be a way to improve matters:

*Universal lack of resistance by Inuit is also compounding this depressing situation. This lack of resistance is not due to lack of interest and concern, but it exists because of the lack of access to voicing these concerns in a manner which would be noticed and responded to adequately by the governments and business community. It is demoralising and is eating away at the emotional and mental well-being of too many Inuit. In the minds of many Inuit the promisingly bright future painted for years by the territorial and federal governments has been a big illusion and instead have betrayed and used*

*them. The planning and promotion of the likes of the Arctic Pilot Project, which are being pushed rudely at us, only confirm the growing pessimism which is depressing our spirits and fermenting anger inside us. ... Inuit organisations in existence today are not geared towards meeting and taking real action on economic matters concerning Inuit. The only recourse, then, is to start organising Inuit labour so that the ordinary Inuit can renew their hopes and aspirations for the future.*<sup>54</sup>

Most critical, however, is the conjunction between class and ethnicity. The economic elite of Nunavut has long been primarily non-Inuit. Ownership and control of private capital – be it large firms based in the south or smaller, locally owned enterprises – has been very much in the hands of non-Inuit. Similarly, non-Inuit have predominated in high-paying, influential public sector jobs, which carry unusual economic significance in a region as dependent on government as Nunavut.

Mitchell has described a process of dramatic and rapid social change among the Inuit, a “transformation of Inuit relationships from relatively egalitarian, apolitical family-based units to ethno-regional collectivities in which class distinctions are becoming an important line of affiliation”.<sup>55</sup> Inuit are acutely aware of their subordinate economic status, but until recently they have seen the solution less in explicitly class terms than in enhanced political capacity as a people to run their own affairs. In short, culture not class has been the prime dynamic driving Inuit political activity. The rise of an Inuit economic elite, in large measure through the growth of the claims-funded development corporations, and the emergence of a strong Inuit political-administrative elite with the creation of Nunavut portends significant change in this dynamic.

As occurred in aboriginal societies elsewhere in Canada, an identifiable Inuit political elite emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s. Educated in non-Inuit ways yet rooted in a strong sense of Inuit identity, this political-administrative elite was not prepared to accept second-class status in their own land.

Reflecting on this period, Tagak Curley – who was elected President of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada at its founding meeting on August 24, 1971 – has noted that “The government’s colonial system had a lot of power... When I was growing up my parents were afraid of the white man. The government people were very intimidating to them. This was too much for me... I knew I had a mission... My mission was to create a voice for the Inuit people”.<sup>56</sup>

Though less aggressive and confrontational than many other aboriginal leaders, as well as pragmatic as to means of reaching their goal, the leadership of the Inuit organisations never wavered in their

determination to establish an Inuit homeland. The principal vehicle they chose to pursue their political goals was a sweeping land claim linked to a proposal for creation of an Inuit-dominated territory – Nunavut – in the eastern and central Arctic.

The pioneers of the land claim movement faced limited resistance from within Inuit society. Some Inuit thought that this might be the ‘communism’ they had been warned about by the priests, and the few who had been given supporting roles in the emerging North-west Territories elite joined their non-Inuit peers in attacking the land claim movement as radical. Creating Nunavut would “really be quitting Canada because the principles of Canadian Confederation are against racial division”, wrote one Inuit Member of the Legislative Assembly in Yellowknife, “... with the territorial government’s continuing plan to turn over more and more control for local matters to the local people, the Inuit have a bright political future and don’t need their own territory”.<sup>57</sup>

Inuit leaders used public education campaigns, community meetings and radio phone-in shows to discuss the issues facing and the options available to Inuit, and quickly achieved overwhelming Inuit support for the Nunavut proposal. Peter Ittinuar summed up the political consensus when he wrote:

*The key to sustained and effective Inuit participation in politics does not lie in further elaboration and consolidation of existing structures, nor in tinkering with existing mechanisms for decision-making. It lies in the formal constitutional recognition of the Inuit’s right to determine their own future and to develop the institutions and procedures most appropriate to the expression of their deepest concerns.*<sup>58</sup>

## 4. The Nunavut Land Claim

### *Negotiating the Claim*

A land claim proposal for a Nunavut land claim was put to the federal government by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) in 1976.<sup>59</sup> Through a decade and a half of protracted negotiations, which often seemed to have encountered insurmountable obstacles, the Inuit never wavered on their fundamental principles. Foremost among these were settlement of a comprehensive land claim which would set out and enshrine Inuit use of their lands and would compensate them for past and future use of Inuit lands by non-Inuit as well as

the creation of a new government in the eastern and central Arctic with capacity to protect and foster Inuit language, culture and social well-being.

A critical element in the Inuit position – which ultimately made it palatable to a reluctant federal government – was their willingness to accept in the new territory a ‘public government’ rather than ‘aboriginal self-government’. Under this public government approach all residents could vote, run for office and otherwise participate in public affairs and the government’s jurisdiction and activities would extend to all residents. In other words, Nunavut would in essence have a government like those of the provinces and territories, rather than following the ‘aboriginal self-government’ model (proposed by many First Nations, including those in the Mackenzie Valley) under which only aboriginal people would participate in government or be eligible for its programmes and services.

If the Inuit were open, both philosophically and as a negotiating strategy, to the notion of a public government, they were insistent that they did not wish to be part of the existing Northwest Territories (NWT)<sup>60</sup> – which by the time the Nunavut negotiations were completed had attained very close to full responsible government and, most important, province-like powers. Inuit were never more than a large minority in the Northwest Territories (they constituted approximately 38 per cent of the population at the time of division) and the centres of economic and political power in the Northwest Territories were simply too remote – both geographically and culturally – from Inuit communities (Yellowknife, the Northwest Territories capital, is as far from Baffin Island communities as Vancouver is from Thunder Bay). Thus although Inuit were vitally concerned with decisions, programmes and funding from the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), their principal political focus was on creating Nunavut. (Inuit leader John Amagoalik once observed that the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) elected to the territorial legislature in Yellowknife were the Inuit ‘B Team’; the ‘A Team’ was working on the land claim.)<sup>61</sup>

The Inuit negotiators gave notice in 1980 that no final land claim agreement would be concluded without an enforceable commitment to create the territory. Efforts took place to promote the creation of Nunavut at federal/provincial First Ministers’ Conferences, and in the context of politics within the existing Northwest Territories – especially after the election of a ‘reform’ Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories in 1979.

The political machinations and the events that culminated in the finalisation of the Inuit land claim are far too complex to be reviewed

here.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, for our purposes, the processes by which the land claim was realised are less important than its provisions.

Suffice it to say that a slow, unspectacular process of negotiations unfolded throughout much of 1980s. Bit by bit, sub-agreement by sub-agreement, a comprehensive land claims settlement was put together. Progress was aided somewhat by the revision of federal land claims policy in the wake of the 1985 Coolican Task Force Report. Revisions sanctioning decision-making powers for joint management boards, resource revenue sharing, and inclusion of off-shore areas, were particularly important for the Nunavut claim. Nunavut Inuit organisations played a significant part in the lobbying efforts needed to amend federal land claims policy to these ends.<sup>63</sup> As John Merritt, one of the key players at the staff level for the Inuit organisations has noted,

*Moments of crisis and drama notwithstanding, the story of the twenty year old 'Nunavut project' is best described as a process of consistent effort, endless negotiation, and detailed text. Unlike other negotiations involving aboriginal peoples that have sometimes captured intensive but fleeting attention, the 'Nunavut project' ... followed a slow but comparatively steady course.<sup>64</sup>*

By the early 1990s, most of the proprietary and resource management aspects of an agreement had been put together, and the moment of truth arrived: would Inuit accept the federal offer of a land claims agreement and drop their demand for a separate Nunavut territory, or would they insist on linking a land claims agreement with the establishment of an Inuit-controlled territorial government as they had done for twenty years?

Confident that the Inuit public would not accept a land claims agreement without an accompanying commitment on a Nunavut territory and a Government of Nunavut, Inuit negotiators stood firm on the demand that the Nunavut Agreement contain – within its four corners, not in some collateral undertaking – a commitment to create Nunavut. Government of Canada representatives understood the depth of Inuit resolve on this point and, to the credit of those Ministers of the Crown and public servants working on the file, agreed to include the commitment to Nunavut as part of a land claims agreement. The agreement was formalised in a document called the Nunavut Political Accord, signed by the Government of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Inuit negotiating body Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN).

The Conservative government of the day, under the increasingly unpopular Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, was badly in need of a 'good news' story about its relationship with aboriginal peoples. The

armed stand-off with the Mohawks at Oka, Québec, had made headlines and television newscasts around the world, and the country's political elites seemed unable to amend the Constitution to include (among other things) stronger guarantees of aboriginal peoples' self-government rights. In this context, even some politicians who had previously expressed reservations about Nunavut came to regard it as a positive, progressive initiative that the Canadian state could – and should – embrace.

The inclusion of a commitment to a Nunavut territory and a Government of Nunavut went well beyond the stated federal government land claims policy of the time. This reality, no doubt, created certain political and bureaucratic risks for those involved in the negotiations. Calculated risks were also run by the Inuit, most notably in agreeing to territory-wide plebiscites in 1982 and 1992; the first was on the principle of dividing the Northwest Territories, the second on the specific boundary between the two new territories. In both, voters in the western part of the Northwest Territories opposed division while an overwhelming majority in Nunavut supported it – the overall result being a slim majority in favour.

Agreement on the precise boundary was a serious sticking point. Aside from Baker Lake, no permanent settlements are to be found in the vast tract of land between Great Slave Lake and the Inuit communities on Hudson Bay. However, both Inuit leaders and their Dene and Metis counterparts of the Mackenzie Valley sought control over these lands, with both groups pointing to eons of nomadic occupation primarily for hunting. A boundary settlement was almost reached in the late 1980s but ultimately negotiations proved unsuccessful. Yet without a definite boundary the Nunavut project could not proceed. In order to break the deadlock, the federal government appointed John Parker, the widely respected former Commissioner, to consult those affected and propose a boundary. It was his compromise – a compromise generally acceptable to Inuit, but strongly opposed by certain Dene-Metis groups for whom it encroached too far into their traditional lands – that was put to a vote in 1992. (Shortly after the boundary was settled, the disputed territory turned out to be focus of an intense diamond rush, but diamonds had not been a factor in the boundary conflict. Although promising sites exist in Nunavut, the first operating diamond mine is just to the west of the boundary.)

The land claim itself was ratified in November of 1992: 69 per cent of eligible Inuit voters supported the settlement.<sup>65</sup> Inuit and government representatives signed the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) in Iqaluit on May 25, 1993. Finally, in June 1993, Parliament enacted two separate pieces of legislation – the *Nunavut Land Claims*

*Agreement Act* (ratifying the Nunavut land claim settlement), and the *Nunavut Act* (creating a Nunavut territory and a Government of Nunavut). Taken together, these two measures constitute the terms of a new social contract – or terms of confederation – between the Inuit of Nunavut and the people and government of Canada.

The perspective of the Inuit leaders who first envisioned and articulated this new relationship and then negotiated it into reality is well expressed by one of their key legal counsel:

*... it is remarkable to note how similar, in broad brush, the results of the 'Nunavut project' are to the initial negotiating demands put forward in 1976. After almost two decades of hard work, concentration on the essential, willingness to take calculated risks, and refusal to take no for an answer, the Inuit of Nunavut have secured the Crown's agreement to a package that provides the Inuit of Nunavut with both an impressive array of land rights and responsibilities in their ancestral homeland and a new Nunavut territory and government that will, on account of an overwhelming Inuit majority, provide Inuit with political power in the contemporary legislative and administrative context of Canadian federalism.<sup>66</sup>*

### ***Provisions of the Claim***

As is the case with other comprehensive land claim settlements, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement is a 'modern day treaty' that is entrenched under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

The Preamble to the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement states four basic objectives shared by the parties to the Agreement:

- to provide for certainty and clarity of rights to ownership and use of lands and resources, and of rights for Inuit to participate in decision-making concerning the use, management and conservation of land, water and resources, including the offshore.
- to provide Inuit with wildlife harvesting rights and rights to participate in decision making concerning wildlife harvesting.
- to provide Inuit with financial compensation and means of participating in economic opportunities.
- to encourage self-reliance and social well being of Inuit.

At the heart of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement is a fundamental exchange between the Inuit of Nunavut and the federal Crown. For their part, the Nunavut Inuit agreed to surrender "any claims, rights, title and interests based on their assertion of an aboriginal title" anywhere in Canada (including the Nunavut Settlement Area



– the area to which the terms of the land claim apply). In return, the Agreement set out an array of constitutionally protected rights and benefits that the Inuit of Nunavut will exercise and enjoy in perpetuity.

The most important of these provisions for the Inuit beneficiaries are:

- collective title to approximately 350,000 square kilometres of land, of which roughly ten per cent include subsurface mineral rights.
- priority rights to harvest wildlife for domestic, sports and commercial purposes throughout lands and waters covered by the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.
- establishment of a series of comanagement boards (often referred to as institutions of public government – or, in the acronym-laden north, IPGs) that will work alongside the Government of Nunavut (GN) but will not be a part of it. The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB), for example, has equal numbers of Inuit-appointed and government-appointed members<sup>67</sup> to oversee wildlife harvesting and management, as well as specific wildlife harvesting rights and economic opportunities related to guiding, sports lodges and commercial marketing of wildlife products. Other Institutions of Public Government include the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC), with responsibility for land use planning; the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB), which conducts environmental and socioeconomic reviews of development proposals; and the Nunavut Water Board (NWB). A Nunavut Social Development Council (NSDC) was also established.
- capital transfer payments of \$1.148 billion to be paid over a 14 year period; these monies – which are to be administered by the Nunavut Trust on behalf of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI; the successor organisation to the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut), the Inuit organisation responsible for overseeing the claim – are not paid to individuals but are for the collective benefit of all Nunavut Inuit.
- a series of other provisions, such as commitments to increase Inuit employment in government and to give preference to Inuit-owned businesses in government contracting; a share in royalties on non-renewable resources; an obligation on the part of developers to conclude impact and benefit agreements in relation to certain types of development; a \$13 million training trust fund; a federal commitment to establish three national parks in Nunavut; and others.
- last, but certainly not least: a commitment to create a Nunavut territory and a Government of Nunavut on April 1, 1999.

In effect, the Inuit of Nunavut surrendered their rights to lands and resources at common law – known as ‘aboriginal title’ – for the measures contained in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. This exchange did not involve any surrender of Inuit rights to self-government in existence at the time the land claim was agreed to, or which may be defined by future constitutional amendments.

Implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement is proceeding within the framework provided by a formal *Contract Relating to the Implementation of the Nunavut Final Agreement*, which was signed on May 25, 1993 in Iqaluit by the Inuit negotiators and by representatives of the federal and territorial governments. It contains extensive details on the responsibilities of many parties involved in the implementation of the Agreement, the activities this will require, time-frames and guidelines for such activities, and the financial resources for implementation that will be allocated during the first ten-year period. A basic assumption running through the implementation contract is that successful implementation of the Agreement depends on the cooperation and commitment of many different parties, including Inuit organisations, departments of the federal and territorial governments, and the newly created Institutions of Public Government. A Nunavut Implementation Panel (NIP) was established, with membership from the federal and territorial governments and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., to oversee, provide direction, and monitor the implementation of the ongoing and time-limited obligations, specific activities and projects arising from the land claim and implementation contract.

### *Implications of the Claim*

A key objective of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement is to implement a new land and resource management system in the Nunavut Settlement Area (NSA; the area to which the terms of the land claim apply – and almost coterminous with the boundaries of the Nunavut Territory) to replace an existing system which was perceived by Inuit negotiators to be “ad hoc, incremental and fragmented..”.<sup>68</sup> This system is intended to be comprehensive, exercising authority over the entire Nunavut Settlement Area (including surface lands, waters, marine areas and the maximum limit of land fast ice). It is also intended to achieve integration, linking a number of different institutions and processes together in one unified management system with jurisdiction over both Crown and Inuit owned lands in Nunavut.

Of central importance in this system will be the linkages established between land/habitat and wildlife management. At the centre

of this new set of power-sharing arrangements between Inuit and non-Inuit are four comanagement bodies. Comanagement arrangements between the state and an aboriginal people are regarded by many as an achievable way to “bring together the traditional Inuit system of knowledge and management with that of Canada’s ... blending ... two systems of management in such a way that the advantages of both are optimised and the domination of one on the other is avoided”.<sup>69</sup>

In a strict legal sense, the four comanagement bodies (the Institutions of Public Government) are ‘advisory’ bodies that will make recommendations to federal and territorial government Ministers, but in practice they are powerful institutions which are clearly intended to be decision makers with sufficient authorities and resources to function relatively independently from both government departments and Inuit organisations. The Inuit land claim negotiators ‘went to the wall’ at the negotiating table to overcome the strenuous objections of federal ‘line departments’ (such as the Department of Fisheries and Oceans) to ensure that these bodies would have those authorities and resources.

The powers and authorities of existing federal and territorial departments are neither replaced nor superseded by those of the Institutions of Public Government, but government departments are now required to share some of their powers and to include the comanagement bodies in their decision making processes. Depending on the issue, this power sharing will take various forms, ranging from ‘rubber-stamping’ the recommendation of an Institution of Public Government, to structured consultations, to a department’s need to secure the “approval” of an Institution of Public Government before proceeding with a decision or policy.

In the final analysis, the decisions of these institutions of public government are subject to Ministerial authority and discretion. Even so, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement spells out a number of conditions and circumstances under which this Ministerial authority will be exercised. Beyond this, most of the traditional responsibilities of government departments will continue.

Implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement is thus creating a new political and administrative regime in the eastern Arctic; a ‘regime’ in the sense of ‘a method or system of government’. Many types of important decisions are no longer made by unelected and/or unaccountable people in faraway boardrooms; they are made in Nunavut, largely by residents of Nunavut. And “while the Nunavut Agreement provides for a wide range of constitutionally protected rights and benefits to Inuit – and to Inuit alone – it also reforms fundamentally the structures and processes for

making decisions about the use of natural resources owned by the Crown."<sup>70</sup>

A good example of the magnitude of the changes brought about by the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement was the 1996 harvest of a bowhead whale near Repulse Bay. The fact that the federal Minister of Fisheries signed a permit authorising the hunt made news in southern Canada. What was less clearly explained was that the authority to decide whether or not to harvest a bowhead now rests with the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, and only the presentation of overwhelmingly contradictory data on the stocks – and the expenditure of significant political capital – could have prevented the federal Minister from rubber-stamping the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's decision.<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, the days of mining and other large projects planned in isolation from Inuit communities that would be affected are over. The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement requires that Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreements (IIBAs) be negotiated between the Inuit and the would-be developer. The first such IIBA, between the Kitikmeot Inuit Association and Echo Bay Mines Ltd. for development of the Ulu gold deposit, covers the full range of "matters considered appropriate for Inuit benefits" under Schedule 26-1 of the Agreement. It is a legally binding agreement which aboriginal communities threatened by large non-renewable resource development elsewhere in the world would find mind-boggling.

One of the least recognised – yet farthest-reaching – implications of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement is that government departments must "consult" Inuit organisations and Institutions of Public Government on most management decisions, policies, initiatives and activities applicable in Nunavut.

The fiduciary nature of government's obligation to undertake appropriate consultations was reinforced by a 1997 Federal Court decision on the 'turbot dispute' between Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.<sup>72</sup> In his ruling, Justice Campbell remarked that:

*I consider it very important to remember that the Agreement was struck within a context of acknowledgment of an Aboriginal right. The Agreement is, therefore, a solemn arrangement... In particular, with respect to these provisions regarding "consultation" and "consideration", I find that they must be fully enforced.<sup>73</sup>*

A subsequent court ruling overturned the Federal Court decision, and the whole issue of consultation remains subject to legal action.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, regardless of how consultation requirements are ulti-

mately defined, their significance lies not in constituting an Inuit veto over governments, but in requiring of governments an acute awareness of – and sensitivity to – Inuit concerns.

Finally, while many of the most talented Inuit managers have left the various levels of government to work for Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the regional Inuit associations and the Institutions of Public Government, implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement has also resulted in an important transformation of the ethnic framework: for the first time, there are now significant numbers of EuroCanadians working *for* Inuit (rather than *with* them, or *on* them...).

### *Reviewing the Implementation of the Claim*

The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement stipulates that an independent review of the implementation of the land claim will take place every five years, and the first such review – covering the period 1993 to 1998 – was completed in late 1999. It examined each of the many obligations resulting from the land claim, and noted them as either ‘substantially complete’ (98), ‘partially complete’ (46) or ‘largely unmet’ (49).

*Overall, there has been a significant amount of success. It is important to recognize the commitment and effort it has taken to get this far, however, there are a large number of obligations that remain unsatisfied. ... The best results tended to come from situations where front-line managers entered into productive discussions, or where the Implementation Panel was able to agree on a course of remedial action. The worst results tended to come in situations where the Parties failed to enter into constructive discussions, and opted instead for stating positions unilaterally.<sup>75</sup>*

After paying special attention to the issues of Inuit employment in government, impact assessment, the implementation environment (especially the need for an ‘active management model’ with a more central role for the Nunavut Implementation Panel in managing the implementation effort) and compliance with the spirit and intent of the land claim, the consultants graded the progress achieved to date as “Fair”.

*Considered from a ‘standing start’, the scope of the changes already implemented is impressive, and is both a compliment to those involved and a testament to what can be achieved.<sup>76</sup>*

The report also contained the results of a Nunavut-wide public opinion survey which showed that:

- 57 per cent of Nunavut Inuit felt that the implementation of the land claim thus far had had a 'very positive' or 'positive' impact on their life;
- 86 per cent of Nunavut residents felt that "the creation of Nunavut will give the people a real opportunity to govern our lives better";
- 73 per cent of Nunavut residents agreed that "for financial reasons, the Nunavut government will have a difficult time maintaining existing programs and services"; and.
- 79 per cent of Nunavut residents said that "generally speaking, [when] thinking about the future of Nunavut" they are 'very optimistic' or 'somewhat optimistic'.

## 5. The Government of Nunavut

### *Designing the Government of Nunavut*

To facilitate the creation of Nunavut, the *Nunavut Act* established a Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC). The Nunavut Implementation Commission was initially composed of nine Commissioners and a Chief Commissioner – veteran Inuit leader John Amagoalik – appointed by the three signatories to the Nunavut Political Accord. Of the original ten Commissioners, nine were Inuit, nine were resident in Nunavut, and eight were men.

The Nunavut Implementation Commission's mandate was to advise the three signatories on the political and administrative design of the Government of Nunavut, including such diverse matters as the location of the capital, the development of human resources training programs, the organisational structure of the new government, the timetable for the assumption of the Government of Nunavut (GN)'s responsibilities for the delivery of programs and services, and the division of assets and liabilities between Nunavut and the western territory.

Throughout the years from the passage of the *Nunavut Act* to the formal start-up of Nunavut in 1999, major policy decisions as to governmental structure, implementation strategy, scheduling and the like were made through a series of 'Nunavut Leaders' Summits'. These meetings took place two or three times a year in various

Nunavut communities and brought together the elected leaders of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) and the Government of Canada, along with members of the Nunavut Implementation Commission. The atmosphere of these meetings ranged from amicable and cooperative to bitter and confrontational, but they were crucial in giving political direction to the officials working towards setting up the new government. They also symbolised the genuine partnership, albeit by times a stormy one, between the signatories to the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and the Nunavut Political Accord.

In March 1995 the Nunavut Implementation Commission released its first comprehensive report, *Footprints in New Snow*. Over the following year and a half the Nunavut Implementation Commission published eight specialised supplementary reports and then a second comprehensive report, *Footprints 2*, in October 1996. The Nunavut Implementation Commission's political recommendations were contained in a supplementary report entitled *Nunavut's Legislature, Premier and First Election*, which was released in December 1996.

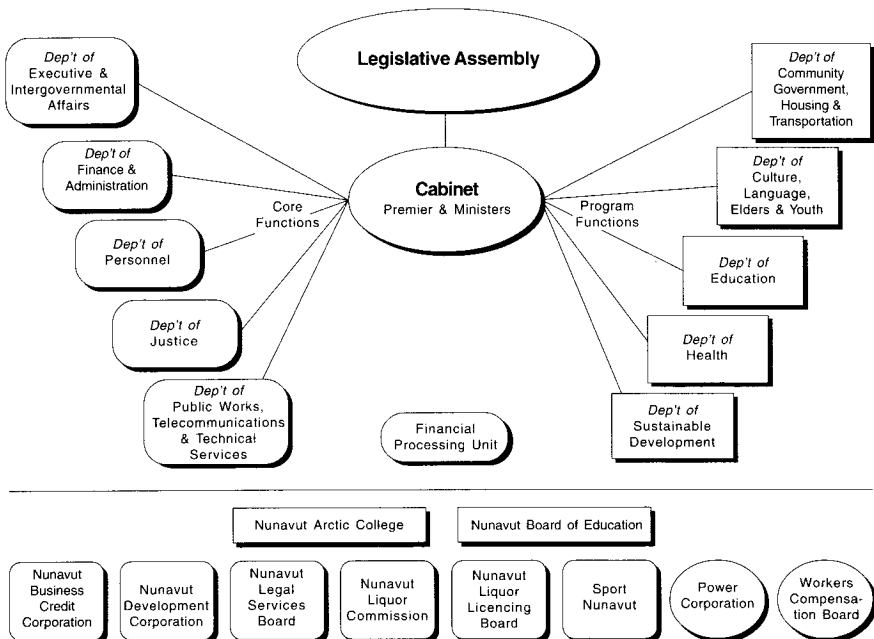
The Government of the Northwest Territories did not respond in writing to *Footprints in New Snow*, but did issue a written response to *Footprints 2*. Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. responded in writing to both of the Nunavut Implementation Commission's comprehensive reports, and their response to *Footprints 2* also contained a response to the Nunavut Implementation Commission's political recommendations.

The Nunavut Implementation Commission recommended the creation of what John Amagoalik termed "a public government with a democratically elected Legislative Assembly [which] will respect individual and collective rights as defined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. It will be a government that respects and reflects Canada's political traditions and institutions, and it will be a territory that remains firmly entrenched within the bounds of Canadian confederation".<sup>77</sup> As John Amagoalik had promised years previously, "What we are proposing is not new; it will be a creature that Canadians will recognise".<sup>78</sup>

Initially, some thought it best for the Government of Nunavut to phase in the active control over its full range of powers over several years. On Nunavut Implementation Commission's recommendation, however, the Government of Nunavut assumed responsibility for the full range of its jurisdictional powers on April 1, 1999. Since only about a third of a projected 640 headquarters staff were in place as of formal start-up,<sup>79</sup> a number of services and activities were contracted back to the Government of the (post-division) Northwest Territories until the Government of Nunavut was ready to deliver

them. (In other words, for the first few years many programs and services that the people of Nunavut receive from the territorial level of government will be provided by Government of the Northwest Territories staff – under contract to the Government of Nunavut.)<sup>80</sup> Examples include teacher certification and student records, health promotion services and tax collection. Even in areas contracted back to the Government of the Northwest Territories, however, the Government of Nunavut retains political control and policy direction.

The Nunavut Implementation Commission recommended that the Government of Nunavut should be a streamlined government – leaner and more effective than the Government of the Northwest Territories. *Footprints in New Snow* recommended a structure of just ten departments, no regional health boards, and a single, elected education board.<sup>81</sup> In addition to the community and regional level staff already employed by the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Nunavut Implementation Commission projected that just over 600 new ‘headquarters’ positions will be required – considerably fewer than previous estimates had assumed.



*Organisational Design Model of the Government of Nunavut, as proposed by the Nunavut Implementation Commission in Footprints 2.*<sup>82</sup>



The Government of Nunavut administration will be highly decentralised. (All governments have networks of regional and local offices, but these are typically restricted to service delivery; the core functions of government administration, such as policy development, tend to be concentrated in the capital city.) For some it was important that the Government of Nunavut be decentralised so that as many communities as possible could share in the economic benefits arising from the stable, well-paid jobs that would come with the new government. Others believed that locating middle management and professional positions in communities would encourage Inuit participation in the bureaucracy. Still others saw a decentralised government as better suited to traditional Inuit political culture.

The Nunavut Implementation Commission felt that modern communication technologies would allow extensive decentralisation of the Government of Nunavut; however there was considerable debate both inside and outside the commission as to the best way to achieve decentralisation. One school of thought held that all the Deputy Ministers and their senior managers must be based in the capital, with decentralisation to occur by placing some divisions (organisational subsets of departments) and many boards and agencies in smaller communities. (There was general agreement that 'headquarters' jobs could not be spread across all of Nunavut's 25 communities, but that the ten largest communities – in addition to the capital – should have Government of Nunavut offices of some kind. All Nunavut communities have community-based territorial government workers such as teachers, nurses, etc.) Another school of thought held that the departments should be grouped by Executive/Central Agencies, Human Services and Technical Services, with each 'group' of departments (up to and including the Deputy Ministers) located in one of the three regional centres. This approach would have resulted in all 'headquarters' employees of each department being located in the same community, rather than scattered across a number of communities. The former school of thought won out, to the surprise and disappointment of those who had believed that popular support for the principle of 'not recreating Yellowknife' (i.e. not centralising government employment, economic benefits and political power as occurred in the capital of the Northwest Territories) would result in entire departments being located outside the capital and the entire headquarters of each department being located in the same community.

The decentralisation debate is reflective of two broader schools of thought on the Nunavut Implementation Commission's recommendations considered in their entirety. One school holds that the Nunavut Implementation Commission recommended an extremely

conventional design, and thereby wasted an opportunity to radically rethink government from an Inuit perspective, while another school holds that the Nunavut Implementation Commission's recommendations, while well intentioned, are optimistic to the point of naiveté about how cumbersome and expensive it will be to establish and operate a decentralised government across a fifth of the land mass of Canada.

Given the need for extensive infrastructure construction (staff housing as well as office facilities) in the ten communities outside Iqaluit, and the complex implementation issues arising from large-scale transfer of jobs, it will be several years before the decentralised model is completely in place. To take one example of what decentralisation will mean, *Footprints 2* recommended that the Department of Sustainable Development have its Deputy Minister, 'Policy, Planning and Human Resources', 'Finance and Administration', 'Income Support Programs' and 'Trade and Investment' divisions located in Iqaluit; an 'Environmental Protection' division located in Cambridge Bay; a 'Fisheries and Wildlife' division located in Igloolik; a 'Minerals, Oil and Gas' division located in Kugluktuk; and a 'Parks and Tourism' division located in Pangnirtung – in addition to regional offices located in Pangnirtung, Arviat and Kugluktuk.

The choice of a capital was one of the more 'political' aspects of the Nunavut Implementation Commission's mandate – and the commission therefore approached it with caution. The Commission developed a detailed analysis of how well the three leading contenders for the capital met the criteria it had established for the government as a whole – in particular, how well each of them fit in with the Nunavut Implementation Commission's model of a decentralised government. After completing this analysis, the Commission acknowledged that Iqaluit was the best choice under the most important criteria – but stopped short of actually recommending that it be named the capital. The Nunavut leadership was unable to achieve consensus on the matter, and the delay in selecting a capital was threatening other aspects of the planning process, so Ron Irwin, the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, called for a public vote on the question. On December 11, 1995, 60 per cent of the voters chose Iqaluit over Rankin Inlet to be their capital.

Nunavut Inuit have always stressed that for the Government of Nunavut to serve their interests and to foster their culture, its staff must reflect the largely Inuit population and it must use Inuktitut as a working language. Article 23 of the land claim commits governments to "representative" levels of Inuit participation in the bureaucracy, but specifies no time frame. The Nunavut Implementation Commission recommended that 50 per cent of jobs at all levels of the

Government of Nunavut be filled by Inuit at start-up in 1999, with representative levels by 2008.<sup>83</sup>

Recruitment, training and retention of Inuit for middle and senior management positions (which is closely tied in with the use of Inuktitut, since few non-Inuit speak or write it) looms as one of the more problematic areas in developing the Government of Nunavut. The federal and territorial governments, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the Nunavut Implementation Commission and the Nunavut Implementation Training Committee developed a comprehensive Unified Human Resources Development Strategy, with short- and long-term responses to the problem. Ottawa allocated \$40 million to fund this initiative.

That \$40 million was included in a \$150 million allocation by the federal Cabinet to cover start-up costs associated with the creation of the new territory, including training costs, capital expenditures, operation and maintenance budgets and the Office of the Interim Commissioner. This was substantially less than previous estimates.<sup>84</sup>

### *Designing the Nunavut Political System*

The most controversial of the Nunavut Implementation Commission's recommendations were those dealing with Nunavut's political system. Among the ironies of the creation of Nunavut was the federal government's establishment of the Nunavut Implementation Commission to advise on a political system for Nunavut when only 30 years before it had offered to Inuit such simple-minded explanations of democracy as the following:

*Several men in the community will have been nominated to each position on the Council. In order to decide which of the men should have those positions, an election was held. Each person was probably asked to write, on a slip of paper, the name of the man he or she wished to have on the Council. When the voting was completed, the votes were counted and the man who received the highest number of votes was declared elected. It is unlikely that everyone voted for the man who was elected. People do not all think the same way so they are not likely at all to want the same man in office. The man who won the election was elected by the majority of the voters. The minority of the voters had to accept the decision of the majority. This is what democracy means.<sup>85</sup>*

Prior to division the residents of Nunavut elected ten of the 24 members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. The Northwest Territories legislature had no political parties; candidates present themselves to the voters as individuals. In keeping

with the Canadian norm, each electoral district elected a single Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). Despite the absence of parties, government followed the basic constitutional precepts of British-style 'responsible government' – with some uniquely northern modifications to the standard Westminster Cabinet-parliamentary system. For example, one Member of the Legislative Assembly was elected Premier by a secret ballot of all 24 Members of his or her peers. The Members of the Legislative Assembly also chose the other members of Cabinet by secret ballot. The Premier assigned ministers to portfolios and could discipline them – including firing them – as required. The Premier could be disciplined – and, if necessary, replaced – by the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

The Nunavut Implementation Commission recommended that Nunavut's first Premier should be selected in the same manner as the Premier of the Northwest Territories was chosen. There is considerable public support for strengthening the role of the Premier by having that position directly elected by the voters, however the Nunavut Implementation Commission concluded that there are so many complex and unresolved problems with this concept that it should be deferred to a committee of the first Nunavut Legislative Assembly. (Essentially, direct election of the Premier involves grafting a new element onto the Westminster system of parliamentary government – an element that doesn't 'fit' well with the internal logic of that system and may in fact be constitutionally incompatible with it. For example, if the voters directly elect the Premier, how can he/she be disciplined by the Members of the Legislative Assembly? What is the relationship between the Premier, the rest of the Cabinet, and the rest of the Members of the Legislative Assembly? How would the Premier be replaced if he/she were removed from office, resigns or dies?) At a Nunavut Leaders Summit held in Cambridge Bay in February of 1997 the three parties to the Nunavut Political Accord agreed to an elected premiership for Nunavut "if practicable", but by the time of the January 1998 Nunavut Leaders Summit in Iqaluit they had agreed that the issue should be decided after division. Nunavut's first Premier was therefore selected in the same manner as the Premier of the Northwest Territories.

Concerned that a very small legislature might prove unworkable, the Nunavut Implementation Commission initially recommended that the Nunavut Legislative Assembly should consist of between 18 and 24 members and later narrowed its recommendation to either 20 or 22 members.<sup>66</sup> The three parties to the Nunavut Political Accord agreed with this recommendation. While the number of members may not have been surprising, the manner in which they might be selected was. The Nunavut Implementation Commission recom-

mended that the Nunavut Legislative Assembly should consist of equal numbers of men and women, using a system of ten or eleven two-member constituencies each electing one male Member of the Legislative Assembly and one female Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Encouraged by the commitment of Chief Commissioner John Amagoalik, the Commission had expressed a desire to do whatever it could to encourage the full participation of women in Nunavut's political life. After spirited internal debate, in December 1994 the Nunavut Implementation Commission released a discussion paper on the use of two-member constituencies with gender parity – an equal number of men and women – as a good way to achieve this. The Commission avoided making exaggerated claims for the merits of its proposal, and instead made a minimalist argument that the people of Nunavut would be best represented if the two abiding subsets of humanity were equally represented – especially in light of the disjunctive relations which exist between men and women in Nunavut today, and the magnitude of the social pathologies which the new government would be facing.<sup>87</sup>

Part of the beauty of such a proposal lies in its simplicity. When Nunavut's first election was called, the names of men wanting to run for a seat in the Legislative Assembly would have gone on one list and the names of women wanting to run for a seat in the Legislative Assembly would have gone on another list. On election day, each voter would be given two ballots – one for candidates on the list of male candidates and one for candidates on the list of female candidates. In each electoral district, both the man with the most votes *and* the woman with the most votes would be elected. Since one male Member of the Legislative Assembly and one female Member of the Legislative Assembly would represent each electoral district, the Nunavut Legislative Assembly would have been the first legislature in the world to have gender parity guaranteed by its very makeup. The proposal would also have functioned equally well with or without 'party politics' – an important point since many observers of Nunavut politics expect political parties to be formed at some point in the future.

Despite its simplicity, there were two popular misconceptions about this proposal. The first was that men would vote for male candidates and women would vote for female candidates, the implication being that the Nunavut Implementation Commission believed that only men can speak for men and only women can speak for women. In fact, each voter – male or female – would have cast two votes, one for a man and one for a woman. The second misconception was that gender parity would inflate the size of the legislature

and increase the costs accordingly (*News/North*, a newspaper based in Yellowknife, erroneously estimated that the Nunavut Implementation Commission's proposal would have cost the taxpayers an additional \$1.8 to \$2.2 million per year). In fact, since Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. had agreed that there would be between 20 and 22 Members of the Legislative Assembly in the Nunavut Legislative Assembly, the question was only how those 20 to 22 Members of the Legislative Assembly will be selected, and there would have been no appreciable cost difference between electing 20 legislators from ten two-member constituencies and electing 20 legislators from 20 single-member constituencies.

The release of the discussion paper ignited a vigorous public debate on the issue of women in politics in general, and on the proposal for gender parity in the Nunavut Legislative Assembly in particular. After receiving more positive comment than negative comment, the Nunavut Implementation Commission formally recommended the proposal to the three parties to the Nunavut Political Accord in December 1996.<sup>88</sup> Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. also gave the proposal its endorsement,<sup>89</sup> and despite some initial misgivings, Ron Irwin – the federal Minister responsible for the creation of Nunavut – also came out in support. While some members of the Nunavut Caucus (the Members of the Legislative Assembly elected to represent Nunavut in the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories) endorsed the proposal, most did not – with the most vociferous opponent being Manikot Thompson, the only female member of the Nunavut Caucus and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women in the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories, whose role was to advise the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, strongly supported the proposal:

*Women have been struggling long and hard for political representation. After so many years of having the vote, by now we should see women being elected in equal numbers. It's not happening because of the systemic barriers in our society. ... Those barriers include negative attitudes about women in leadership positions, expectations that women should stay home and care for children, lack of adequate, affordable child care, lack of confidence, lack of money, and lack of connection to the informal power structures by which candidates are chosen and supported through the election process. Equality is about equal opportunity to be represented in the political process. In a democratic society, we accept the principles of representation by geography and by population. Equal representation for women and men is just a more refined form of representation by population, since the electorate is divided almost equally between men and women. Democracy and equality are also about*

*fairness. It is not fair that women's voices are so under-represented in our present electoral system. If we continue at the present rate of slow increases of women being represented in the electoral process, it could be several hundred years before we see equal numbers of women and men in our legislature. Our northern society, with our serious economic and social problems, needs women's voices in the Legislature now.*<sup>90</sup>

At the Nunavut Leaders Summit held in Cambridge Bay in February of 1997, the Government of the Northwest Territories surprised and angered the other parties around the table by peremptorily issuing a press release calling for a public vote on the matter. Since the three parties to the Nunavut Political Accord strove to reach agreement by consensus, and since the Nunavut Caucus refused to join the rest of the Nunavut leadership in support of the proposal, Minister Irwin agreed to hold a public vote on the question.

The campaigning in the weeks leading up to the vote generated rather more heat than light. The 'Yes' side – those who supported the proposal – was composed of Nunavut Implementation Commission Chief Commissioner John Amagoalik, most of the Board of Directors of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the President of Pauktuutit (the national Inuit women's association), and youth and elder representatives. With \$75,000 in financial support from Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. they produced and distributed pamphlets, posters and buttons, and – in the style of the 'community tours' that had been used to inform Inuit of the contents of the land claim – chartered a small aircraft to visit a number of the communities for 'town hall' style meetings.

The 'No' side was less organised and largely unfunded. Manikot Thompson and other opponents of the proposal, the most vocal of whom resided in Rankin Inlet and Igloolik, joined the 'Yes' side in making their arguments on phone-in shows on both community radio stations and Nunavut-wide current affairs programs on both radio and television. The multiple lines of argument used by those opposing the proposal made it difficult for the 'Yes' side to respond effectively. Some opponents clearly did not understand the proposal – and argued that it would cost too much, or force men to be represented by men and women to be represented by women. Many opponents did understand the proposal, however, and argued that it would sow division between men and women where none currently existed, that women would be seen as 'affirmative action' Members of the Legislative Assembly whose opinions would be taken less seriously than that of male Members of the Legislative Assembly, and that women need to "beat" men in order to be taken seriously in politics.

72. Where supporters saw a unique opportunity to implement a vision of

a more balanced political system, opponents saw a plan that insulted women's abilities to get elected if they chose to run. Where supporters saw a gender equal legislature as a return to the values of traditional Inuit society, in which families were built on an equal division of labour between men and women,<sup>91</sup> opponents dismissed this view as a romanticised retelling of history. Where supporters saw a way to achieve a new partnership between men and women, opponents were insulted by a proposal that would "send women back to the stone age". Where supporters saw a way to recognise the differing perspectives that men and women sometimes have on particular issues, opponents argued that disproportionate gender representation in politics is not important – that "people think with what's between their ears, not with what's between their legs".<sup>92</sup> And finally, where supporters saw the proposal as reflecting the 'creative but within Canadian political norms' tone of the Nunavut project as a whole, opponents saw it as an unwelcome, unnecessary and unworkable scheme that the Nunavut leadership was trying to force on an unsuspecting electorate.<sup>93</sup>

A vocal minority went so far as to suggest – often on biblical grounds – that women have no business in politics, and widely held conservative religious beliefs appear to have been an important factor in the outcome. (While most people think of shamanism when they think of Inuit religious beliefs, the population of Nunavut today tends to adhere to what anthropologist Robert Williamson has called "a quasi-fundamentalist, low-church Anglicanism",<sup>94</sup> Roman Catholicism, or – increasingly – one of a number of fundamentalist churches.) Many Christians (including some clergy) supported the proposal,<sup>95</sup> but the great majority of people who publicly commented on it from a religious perspective – especially from a fundamentalist perspective – were strongly opposed to it.<sup>96</sup>

The 'damn the elites and their agreements' mindset that had helped sink the Charlottetown Accord<sup>97</sup> resonated in a side debate that came to dominate public discussion in the closing days of the campaign. The Board of Directors of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. had voted a modest amount of money to be used to publicise their support of the proposal, as they had done on other issues previously. Opponents of the proposal complained that Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. had no business "telling people how to vote", and that at the very least they should receive equal funding for pamphlets, posters, buttons and community tours.

On May 26, 1997, the voters rejected the Nunavut Implementation Commission's proposal for a Nunavut Legislature with gender parity by a margin of 57 per cent to 43 per cent.<sup>98</sup>

In the absence of any polling data, one can only speculate as to the



reasons for this result.

One explanation might be that while Nunavut residents expressed their desire for a government that would be "different" from the Government of the Northwest Territories, the existing government remained the reference point for discussion of how the new government should be structured and how it should operate. The 'one man, one vote' norm for electoral systems in Canada has been accepted and internalised as 'the way elections are done', even though the results tend to be 'one vote, one man' – indeed the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories had the lowest proportion of female members of any provincial or territorial legislature in Canada. The Nunavut Implementation Commission's suggestion to choose representatives in a slightly different manner was regarded by many people as just plain loopy.

Some may have voted against the proposal less because they objected to gender parity in the legislature than because they did not wish to see dual-member ridings. A system with twice as many single-member districts would enhance the prospects of individual communities having their 'own' Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Another factor worth considering is the very low voter turnout for the vote – just 39 per cent. Again, in the absence of polling data one can only speculate as to the reasons for this. The date of the vote, in late spring when many families had already left town for spring camping, may have been a factor. But it may also be the case that while gender parity in decision-making structures is an issue that some people are passionately supportive of, and while other people are hotly opposed to measures intended to achieve gender parity, many people either did not think the issue was worthy of all the attention it was receiving or were put off by the tone of the debate it had sparked. It is important to note that the gender parity question was the only aspect of the creation of Nunavut which resulted in open conflict between sections of the Inuit political leadership.

While the debate was playing itself out, a three-person Nunavut Electoral Boundaries Commission (NEBC) was touring Nunavut communities. The Nunavut Electoral Boundaries Commission had been established by the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories to make recommendations on the area, boundaries, names and representation of Nunavut's electoral districts. As the public vote had not yet decided the question of gender parity and two-member constituencies, the Nunavut Electoral Boundaries Commission was directed to include options for both ten or eleven dual member and 20 to 22 single-member electoral districts.

74: The Nunavut Electoral Boundaries Commission's report contained

models for those options, but the Commission recommended a third option – a system of 17 single-member electoral districts in which Iqaluit would have two electoral districts and the other 15 electoral districts would contain between one and four communities each. The reason given in the report was that during community consultations “many citizens expressed a genuine concern about the ‘expense’ of having 20 to 22 Members of the Legislative Assembly in the Nunavut legislature..”<sup>99</sup> The Nunavut Electoral Boundaries Commission did not address the Nunavut Implementation Commission’s rationale as to the need for at least 20 Members of the Legislative Assembly to ensure the effective operation of the legislature. The Legislative Assembly later endorsed the Nunavut Electoral Boundaries Commission’s recommendations with minor modifications, but Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. continued to push for a larger legislature. Finally, at the January 1998 Nunavut Leaders Summit, the three parties to the Nunavut Political Accord finally agreed that Nunavut’s legislature would consist of 19 electoral districts.

### *Building Core Capacity*

The *Nunavut Act* had established the Nunavut Implementation Commission to advise the parties (the federal and territorial governments and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated) on crucial political and administrative design features for the territorial government. It also made provision for an Interim Commissioner of Nunavut, a federal public servant empowered to finalise the design for the government and to implement it. This key official was authorised to hire staff for the new government, enter into contracts and intergovernmental agreements on its behalf and generally take whatever administrative steps were required to ensure that the Government of Nunavut was fully up and running on April 1, 1999.

Initial expectations were that the Interim Commissioner would have to be in place no later than the end of 1995 if the necessary work was to be completed on time. For various political reasons, however, it was not until April 1997 that the federal government appointed Jack Anawak, who resigned as the region’s Liberal Member of Parliament to serve as Interim Commissioner. Ottawa also placed a senior bureaucrat (with a reputation as a back-room ‘fixer’) in the Office of the Interim Commissioner (OIC).

In January 1998, the Office of the Interim Commissioner’s detailed plans for the Government of Nunavut, based closely on the *Footprints 2* model, were approved by the three parties. Shortly thereafter, following a Canada-wide competition, the first set of Deputy Minis-

ters<sup>100</sup> was appointed. Only three of the eleven Deputy Ministers were Inuit; six more were veteran Government of the Northwest Territories bureaucrats, mostly based in Nunavut. Criticism of the low proportion of Inuit in this top management cadre was somewhat muted by the hiring of 14 Assistant Deputy Ministers (the next level down in the administrative hierarchy) all of whom were Inuit.

The new Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers began the task of staffing their departments, working up budgets and sorting out myriad administrative matters. With an enormous amount of work, facilitated by extensive give and take on the part of the three parties, the logistical details of creating the new government were addressed. Because of time pressures and other difficulties, a substantial number of operational and service delivery functions (such as electronic data processing and teacher certification) were contracted back to the post-division Government of the Northwest Territories, to be taken over by the Government of Nunavut as its capacity developed. Similarly, the commitment to a decentralised government remained, but construction of the necessary infrastructure and the actual transfer of jobs to the communities had not progressed very far by April 1. A very few important matters, such as the future of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, remained to be resolved after division.

### *Nunavut's First Election*

Nunavut's first election took place on February 15, 1999. 71 candidates, including eleven Inuit women and seven non-Inuit men, put their names forward for the 19 seats; all ran as independents, following the 'consensus' model which had developed in the Northwest Territories. A very high proportion — 88 per cent — of those eligible to vote cast ballots.

The voters returned some former Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories who had extensive political experience but rejected others (including former Northwest Territories Deputy Premier Goo Arlooktoo, who had been widely tabbed in the southern media as a likely Premier) in favour of candidates with minimal political seasoning. Similarly, the new legislature contained both Inuit with limited facility in English and fluently bilingual Inuit with professional training and experience.

A total of fourteen Inuit men were elected (including Jack Anawak, who had resigned as Interim Commissioner in order to run for election to the first Legislative Assembly), as well as four non-Inuit men. Just one woman was elected — Manitok Thompson, the former

Northwest Territories minister who had campaigned against a gender-equal legislature. With just one female Member of the Legislative Assembly out of 19, Nunavut now has the lowest proportion of female representation in Canada.

When the Members of the Legislative Assembly gathered in Iqaluit in March, they chose as Premier not Jack Anawak, the apparent front-runner, but 34-year-old Paul Okalik, who had won the riding of Iqaluit West. Okalik seemed to symbolise the hopes of many for the new territory – overcoming brushes with the law in his youth, he became a senior negotiator on the land claim and later Nunavut's first Inuit lawyer.

*Mr. Okalik, who is the father of two, could be a poster child for Nunavut and a role model for the next generation. Like many young Inuit, he had a troublesome adolescence. He struggled through difficulties with alcohol and the suicide of his brother. He was kicked out of high school and wandered aimlessly without direction. When his first daughter was born, he began to turn his life around. He learned about his roots, cocooning himself with his family in Pangnirtung, a community just outside Iqaluit. He did an undergraduate degree in political science and Canadian studies at Carleton University in Ottawa. He enrolled in law school at the University of Ottawa and then began articling at a law firm in Iqaluit. He was called to the bar days before Nunavut's first election, on February 15.<sup>101</sup>*

After choosing Paul Okalik as their Premier, the Members of the Legislative Assembly then chose the balance of Nunavut's first Cabinet. Both Jack Anawak and Manitok Thompson were included, as was veteran Inuit politician James Arvaluk, two non-Inuit men who had served in the Northwest Territories legislature (Kelvin Ng and Ed Picco) and two Inuit newcomers to territorial politics (Peter Kilabuk and Donald Havioyak).

Several days after his election Premier Okalik assigned portfolios to his fellow Cabinet members, and the new government quickly got down to work. On the one hand they found themselves with little room to manoeuvre, given the relentless pressures for social spending on education, health, housing and social services; yet on the other hand, they set themselves lofty goals in a comprehensive (if somewhat imprecise) document they — Ministers and 'regular' Members of the Legislative Assembly alike — developed during the summer of 1999, entitled 'The Bathurst Mandate'.<sup>102</sup>

By and large, the first year of the Government of Nunavut was characterised by a 'stay the course' approach. With some notable exceptions, such as an early decision to eliminate the regional health and education boards in 2000 and a controversial decision to establish

a single time zone for Nunavut (in place of the three that had previously existed), the government's efforts were principally consumed with the difficult task of building governance capacity while maintaining and improving delivery of public services.

## 6. April 1999 and after: celebration and criticism

It was quite a party. The celebrations marking the creation of Nunavut on April 1, 1999 were centred in the capital, Iqaluit, but community feasts and dances were held across the new territory. The formal ceremonies were attended by the Governor General and Prime Minister of Canada, and were broadcast live on television from sea to sea to sea – and around the world. “The thrill of victory is quickly replaced by the awesome amount of work that must be done”, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, himself a former federal minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, said at the first sitting of the Nunavut Legislative Assembly – an event rich in Inuit tradition and music. “As Nunavut takes flight, you are dealing with immense challenges. Whether it is educating your fast-growing population, alleviating poverty and social breakdown, or building the capacity within your own government to address these challenges, you have your work cut out for you.”

The long-awaited creation of Nunavut also focused unprecedented media attention on the eastern and central Arctic. Not only did all major Canadian news organisations send reporters and camera crews to Nunavut in the days leading up to April 1, but so too did literally dozens of American, European and even Asian newspapers and television networks. Most of the coverage was positive and supportive, albeit with references to the magnitude of the task ahead:

The *Manchester Guardian*, for example, noted:

*The emergence of Nunavut is unequivocally good news. While large tracts of the world are mired in war and insurgency, an ethnic minority has quietly negotiated an equitable deal with a central government that gives them the freedom to run their own affairs.*<sup>103</sup>

The *Globe and Mail* proclaimed:

*Canada has done something of huge symbolic value ... Nunavut is a powerful and worthy experiment [which] deserves to succeed.*<sup>104</sup>

*TIME* magazine wrote:

*Canada's first de facto experiment with native self-government – and only the second of its kind in the world. [It is] a socio-political experiment on an epic scale.*<sup>105</sup>

And the **Baltimore Sun** called Nunavut:

*... a bold and risky experiment in native self-government, one that has fired the hopes of aboriginal people around the world, from the Maori of New Zealand to the Mohawks of New York.*<sup>106</sup>

The **Baltimore Sun** went on to note that while:

*Nunavut might be a symbol of hope, ... it is also a stronghold of despair. On the instant of its birth, it becomes the poorest territory, by far, in Canada – a welfare basket case where desperate social conditions are made worse by physical isolation and a brutal climate.*<sup>107</sup>

A small but vocal media contingent reacted very negatively to Nunavut. From the political right, especially from commentators and publications openly hostile to aboriginal self-government aspirations, came volleys of condemnation and misinformation:

A columnist in **Alberta Report**, a regional magazine owned by the Byfield family – whose politics mimic those of far-right politico-religious groups in the United States – wrote:

*The 25,000 people who live in the new territory ... mostly speak a foreign language. ... the Inuit will (likely) have to put up with decades of corruption and political oppression from their own leaders. ... Perhaps we should be toasting the birth of Nunavut with a chunk of raw seal meat (and) a glass of narwhal blood... the day will live in infamy, as a huge step towards the race-based partitioning of Canada. ... Giving away Nunavut was easy compared to what is happening in British Columbia... man the boats, Eurotrash, and set a course for pre-Columbia.*<sup>108</sup>

A columnist in **Report Newsmagazine**, the Byfield's attempt to reach a national audience, suggested:

*With little likelihood of solving Nunavut's problems any time soon, federal taxpayers could be forgiven for wondering if it might be wiser to ship its entire population south. Housing and feeding an Inuit family of four in Orlando, Florida, where a decent two-bedroom apartment rents for under \$1,000 per month, would be far cheaper than the \$100,000-plus in transfers the same family requires in Nunavut. Even if the family opted for a two-*

*bedroom, two-bathroom air-conditioned suite with full kitchen facilities at the Sea World Ramada, the annual room charge of \$62,800 and a \$2,500 monthly allowance would still save Canadians almost \$10,000 a year.*<sup>109</sup>

Right-wing columnist David Frum seemed to take considerable pleasure in informing the readership of the *National Post* (owned by right-wing media magnate Conrad Black) that:

*The new territory of Nunavut is shaping up to be a mess of corruption and maladministration that will prove catastrophic both for the Inuit and the Canadian taxpayer ... Look at the system of government Nunavut is adopting ... it is carefully arranging to eliminate any organised locus of opposition to the government. The Nunavut legislature will have no political parties. The leaders of Nunavut explain this with a lot of 'Dances With Wolves' hooey about confrontation and criticism being alien to native ways of life, etc... But the real purpose of the exclusion of any mechanism for opposition is to ensure that nobody in the legislature will have the resources and incentive to scrutinise the doings of the Nunavut territorial government.*<sup>110</sup>

According to Mel Smith, a British Columbia-based opponent of native land claims, Nunavut is a case study in interest group liberalism run amok ... "proposed by aggressive bureaucrats, prodded by the most powerful lobby in the country and acceded to by compliant politicians",<sup>111</sup> while a columnist in the *Ottawa Citizen* (also owned by Conrad Black) called Nunavut Canada's "first Bantustan, an apartheid-style ethnic homeland".<sup>112</sup>

The *Wall Street Journal* paraphrased Owen Lippert, a spokesperson for the Fraser Institute (a British Columbia-based right-wing think tank), as saying "They [Inuit] ... can't sell the land unless they want to sell it back to the Crown; and ... they can't build anything deemed offensive: no strip malls, no parking lots. In other words, they are not allowed to do the things that makes owning private property a worthwhile investment."<sup>113</sup> "Whatever the motives of this and similar attempts to offer retroactive justice to indigenous people", the article's author concluded, "it always ends up tangled in interest group politics, social engineering and bigger government. Canada's latest debacle is perhaps the triumph of hope over experience. But when all the noisemakers and confetti have left the new territory, the Inuit may not be any better off than they were when they started."

While some of these articles reflect general hostility to aboriginal peoples' aspirations, many of them were really targeted at another land claim altogether – that of the Nisga'a First Nation in British Columbia. Most of Nunavut's more strident critics have no history of

interest in Nunavut, and no track record of research and writing on Nunavut. Few if any have even bothered to visit Nunavut. What they are interested in, however, is using Nunavut as a vehicle with which to scaremonger about what the settlement of First Nations' land claims will mean for British Columbia. When a director of the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation says that "southern Canadians should have been consulted before the Inuit-dominated territory split from the Northwest Territories in April",<sup>114</sup> what he really means is that the non-native majority in British Columbia should have veto powers over First Nations land claims there.

Not all the vociferous critics are journalists, politicians and lobbyists. While the vast majority of informed academic commentary on Nunavut has been positive, the Toronto-based duo of Albert Howard and Frances Widdowson purport to bring academic analysis to northern issues – but their criticism seems no less driven by an odious sense of cultural superiority. Howard and Widdowson, who make much of the fact that they lived for several years in Yellowknife before returning to the south, argued in an article entitled "The disaster of Nunavut" that Nunavut is "fundamentally unviable",<sup>115</sup> and "will not enable the Inuit to assert more control over their lives and thereby improve social conditions in their communities".<sup>116</sup> They further assert that "Nunavut cannot be the answer to Inuit social problems because it is economically and culturally unviable. The racially defined territory's existence will depend almost entirely on federal transfers, and attempting to artificially retain Inuit culture will isolate Inuit people further from the modern world".<sup>117</sup> Writing in a style that would have been extreme even in the assimilationist 1950s and 1960s (but without a trace of the humanism that characterised that period) they urge Inuit to discard the "attitudes and values arising from a subsistence lifestyle [which] are ... a barrier to the social and political development of Inuit people".<sup>118</sup> "The Inuit have as much capacity to become producers of economic value as anyone else",<sup>119</sup> they conclude, if only Inuit would, well, be just like the rest of us.

Their certainty that Nunavut will prove to be an anthropological theme park where Inuit can (or must) forego the "disciplines of industrialisation"<sup>120</sup> in favour of an "artificial retention of Inuit culture"<sup>121</sup> and "free money for all Inuit and no obligations to humanity as a whole"<sup>122</sup> might be dispelled by a visit to Greenland, Nunavut's neighbour across the Davis Strait. For from being a polity determined to "warehouse the Inuit and ... [institutionalise] Inuit separation from the modern world",<sup>123</sup> thereby maintaining Inuit culture "in the Neolithic period, preserving it as a museum piece for the rest of the world to observe",<sup>124</sup> the development of the Home Rule Govern-



ment has rapidly increased the speed of Greenland's integration into the world around it – including the world market for the products which Greenlanders produce. The Home Rule Government has, in effect, been the vehicle through which Greenlanders have sought to negotiate the terms of their increased integration into the wider world.<sup>125</sup>

Howard and Widdowson have attracted media attention not because of the acuity of their 'insights' or the power of their analyses – and certainly not because they offer any viable alternative strategies – but because so few other academics and policy analysts are studying and writing about Nunavut. The resulting intellectual (and publishing) vacuum is filled by people who, at the end of the day, find themselves in bed with the reactionary Canadian Alliance Party, columnists in the employ of Ted Byfield and Conrad Black, and others who really could not care less about Nunavut – and whose real agenda is hostility to aboriginal self-government aspirations elsewhere.

To be sure, there may be serious and valid criticisms to be made of the Nunavut project. As we await critiques of the Nunavut 'package' that are more knowledgeable and thoughtful than those that have been published to date, it may be useful to summarise the weaknesses of the current crop of critics:

- they fall into and perpetuate major factual errors; for example, Nunavut is not a race-based government, it is a public government in which all residents can participate. 20 per cent of all Members of Legislative Assembly and 25 per cent of the Cabinet are non-Inuit;
- the fleeting and/or politically motivated nature of their interest in Nunavut tends to result in shallow coverage that offers little of substance to those involved in building Nunavut;
- they apparently wish to deny to the people of Nunavut what all other Canadians take for granted: the ability of people to run their own affairs as they wish, through local and regional democratically elected institutions;
- obsessed as they are with the magnitude of transfer payments from Ottawa, they rarely acknowledge facts well-known to federal decision-makers: that having sovereignty over the eastern and central was costing Ottawa a bundle long before Nunavut came into being, and that the incremental cost of dividing the Northwest Territories in order to accommodate Inuit self-government interests – \$95 million – is just a fraction of the overall cost of providing province-like programs and services etc. to northern residents. As a public government, the Government of Nunavut is responsible for delivering health care, education, social

services, etc. to all who live there. With a presently limited capacity to raise revenue through taxation, transfer payments from Ottawa are essential to sustain the same basic level of service enjoyed by all Canadians – regardless of where they live;

- they fail to mention that other regions of the country were also highly dependent on the federal government before they achieved a level of economic development that allowed them to cover more of their own costs of government services;
- they tend to caricature the Inuit leaders who negotiated the Nunavut land claim as being rather naïve and/or oblivious to the social problems in their communities, rather than recognising them for what they were and are – pragmatic politicians who assessed the options which the Canadian political system offered them and their people, envisioned a new form of accommodating aboriginal self-government aspirations without threatening the territorial integrity of the state within which they found themselves, helped change the government policies which stood in their way, and thereby earned the respect of their negotiating partners during the 20 long years it took to make their dream a reality; and,
- they offer no alternatives other than depopulating the Arctic and destroying the Inuit as a distinct people – which would be an obscene violation of their human rights.

## 7. Politics, prospects and problems

Robert Williamson, one of the first Members of the Legislative Assembly elected to represent an eastern Arctic constituency in the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, has written that Inuit must be understood as being:

*... a people within their habitat – interrelated socially, physically and meta-physically with their ancestral environment. The cosmology, prehistory and oral history give meaning, depth and predictability to the present and future. The language carries cultural meaning into the present and the future. The social organisation is integrated with the economy, the value system, and the acquisition, holding and deployment of power. The adaptability and learning capacity of the people in changing circumstances depend on confidence in themselves as bearers of a valued and respected contemporary identity, based on their own expression of culture. All of these are related to self-determination in the contemporary era.<sup>126</sup>*

Indeed they are. What is less clear, however, is the degree to which the

self-government and public government institutions created by the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement can sustain and foster that confidence, and result in meaningful self-determination for the Inuit of Nunavut.

Many of today's Inuit leaders are veterans of the struggle for Nunavut, and they take care to articulate a vision of a better future while they manage their enormous day-to-day responsibilities. Behind them is rising a thin layer of younger leaders, men and women who have worked their way up through government and elsewhere, acquiring the skills that effective self-government requires. Behind *them* is a somewhat larger but even younger layer, often fresh out of school or not having gone as far in school as they might have, yet destined to be fast-tracked into management positions in the new structures.

This is one face of Nunavut, a new face of opportunity. The other face of Nunavut is one of mounting despair. "We live in the most violent jurisdiction in Canada", a woman writes in a weekly newspaper. "... Ignoring the statistics is condoning violence. It is saying it is okay for our women to be beaten. Shelters don't cause the break-up of families or suicide; violence does."<sup>127</sup>

As if in response, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. First Vice-President James Eetoolook acknowledged:

*As in other societies, problems of domestic violence are a symptom of deeper economic and social problems in Inuit society that are aggravated by such things as: unemployment, underemployment, inadequate and poorly designed government social policies and programs, and the rapid rate of technological change.*<sup>128</sup>

Much of the responsibility for the development and implementation of policies and programs that can begin to address these problems now rests with the Government of Nunavut. The challenges and contradictions inherent in the Nunavut project will make the initial years of the new government a critical time for all residents of the new territory.

### *Relationships Between the Bodies Created by the Land Claim*

In addition to the politics of the web of relationships between Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the regional Inuit associations and the Institutions of Public Government, the year 1999 saw the beginning of a complex relationship between a public government and an organisation that can legitimately claim to represent the inter-

ests of 85 per cent of the public. Indeed, the Presidents of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. will almost certainly be elected by more voters than the Premiers of Nunavut.

Like the Makivik Corporation in Nunavik and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation in the Mackenzie Delta, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. wields a unique blend of political and economic power as it promotes the rights of – and manages the responsibilities of – its Inuit beneficiaries. Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. differs from Makivik and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation in that where they represent a small minority of the total population of the province and territory in which they find themselves, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. represents the overwhelming majority. Indeed, nowhere in Canada does a non-governmental organisation exist with anything that even begins to approximate the clout and legitimacy that Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. carries in Nunavut.

The actions of the new government will be monitored carefully by Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, which became so frustrated with the Government of the Northwest Territories that it formed an Inuit ‘shadow Cabinet’ – a “watchdog structure to safeguard Inuit rights”.<sup>129</sup> How will Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. react should the fledgling Government of Nunavut not adequately meet the Inuit population’s demand for rapid, appropriate and effective changes in the public government policies? The ‘shadow Cabinet’ could possibly be reconstituted, but the initial effort actually accomplished little other than making public the organisations’ degree of frustration with the previous territorial government.

A high priority for both the new Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. was, therefore, the establishment of principles to guide their unique and crucial relationship. In the Fall of 1999, the Premier of Nunavut and the President of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. signed the ‘Clyde River Protocol’ – an agreement outlining in broad terms the two organisations’ understanding of their respective spheres of influence, the importance of respecting and consulting one another on areas of mutual concern and the communications processes to achieve cooperation. The signing ceremony had all the solemnity and formality one would expect of the signing of an intergovernmental agreement. While Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. is not a government, the ceremony demonstrated the respect which the Premier of Nunavut accords Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and the Nunavut land claim – which he had played a key role in negotiating. Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. can be expected to give particular attention to how the Government of Nunavut addresses Articles 23 (‘Inuit employment within government’) and 24 (‘Government contracts’), and also to how the Government of Nunavut addresses incorporating

*Inuit qaujimagatuqangit* ('Inuit traditional knowledge', literally 'that which is long known by Inuit') into its *modus operandi*.

The actions of the entire Nunavut leadership – the public Government of Nunavut, the Inuit organisations (Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and the regional Inuit organisations) and the Institutions of Public Government – are coming under increasing scrutiny at the community level. "We are hoping for action", women teacher trainees wrote the President of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. after describing the social crisis in grim detail. "We are expecting to see a plan, with goals and a timetable. We are expecting our leaders to stand up and speak out continuously against violence, addiction and abuse in our communities."<sup>130</sup>

It remains to be seen if and/or how the public at large will hold the leadership accountable should serious problems arise with the organisations and the organisational structure created by the land claim.

### *An Emerging Political Elite*

One of the key aspects of recent Northwest Territories political history was the gradual maturing of the Government of the Northwest Territories as a territorial state, with its own political elite, its own bureaucratic hierarchy and its own institutional self-interests. If or how the Government of Nunavut may differ in this regard remains to be seen, but the fact that the creation of a new political regime is resulting in the formation of a new political elite is beyond dispute.

And as Peter Clancy has noted in the most insightful discussion of class structures and accumulation strategies in the Northwest Territories to date:

*... class power in the north as elsewhere does not derive automatically from economic position, but is politically mediated. It is in this political realm that class interests are organised, alliances and coalitions are formed, and programs are forged. In the north, these interests have been pursued through many channels: political parties and electoral mobilisation, associational lobbying, litigation, or through negotiation at the aboriginal claims table.*<sup>131</sup>

Successful negotiation at the aboriginal claims table is resulting in many profound changes in Nunavut society; a deepening of social differentiation – i.e. the more complete development of a class system among Nunavut Inuit – is one of them. Political and economic

forces that have been set in motion which will result in even more profound social change in the years to come.<sup>132</sup>

### *Financial Realities*

One of those forces may be a growing realisation among the Canadian body politic of the cost of maintaining Canadian sovereignty over the Arctic. Perhaps because the cost of maintaining and developing Nunavut had previously been hidden in a maze of departmental budgets and interjurisdictional funding agreements, the size of the first budget of the Government of Nunavut – \$610 million, for a jurisdiction of 27,000 people – came as a shock to many people in the south, even though the amount is scarcely a rounding error in terms of the overall federal budget.

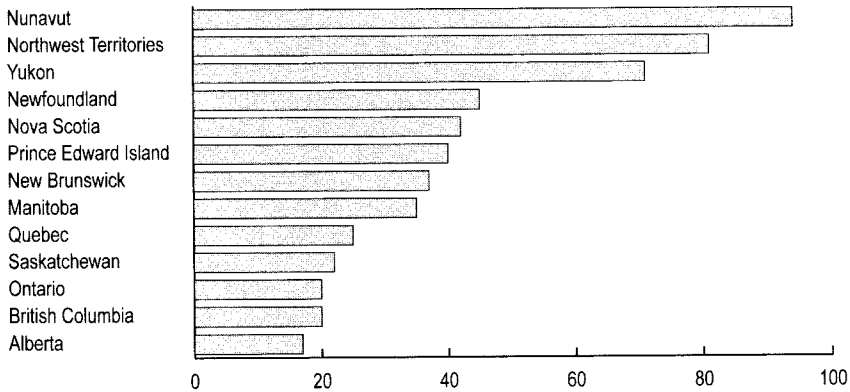
Both the Nunavut and federal governments may find it necessary to arm Canadians with information about the cost of delivering government programs and services in the Arctic, and arguments as to why investments in Nunavut today should mean both healthier communities and reduced costs in the future – precisely the kind of argument which has gone out of favour during the lifetime of the current federal government.

Similarly, Canadians will need to be reminded that in their early days many parts of the country enjoyed massive federal government infrastructure spending on railways, canals and other facilities necessary for economic development. In contrast, the money Nunavut gets from Ottawa covers only costs of running the government; Nunavut has yet to see anything like the massive federal spending on economic development that many provinces enjoyed for decades.

In the 2000/01 fiscal year the Government of Nunavut will receive \$21,327 per capita in federal funding, compared to \$1,277 per capita for the provinces (with Newfoundland being the most dependent province at \$2,751 per capita).<sup>133</sup> In the Government of Nunavut's first budget, more than 90 per cent of territorial revenue came from the federal government – most of it through a five-year formula funding agreement. The basic grant from Canada amounted to \$498.9 million, with another \$53.7 flowing from Ottawa to Iqaluit through other federal programs. By fiscal year 2003/04 – Nunavut's fifth budget – annual federal transfers to Nunavut are projected to reach \$666 million.

Because the private sector is less developed in Nunavut than in the

## Federal Transfers as % of Provincial/Territorial Budgets Fiscal Year 2000/01



*source: Finance Canada*

other territories and provinces, with a correspondingly weaker tax base, Nunavut is the most fiscally dependent jurisdiction in Canada as measured by reliance on federal funding. Over 90 per cent of the Government of Nunavut's revenue comes from Ottawa; in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon the figures are 81 and 71 per cent respectively. Newfoundland, the province most dependent on federal transfers, receives 45 per cent of its revenue from Ottawa. The average among 'have-not' provinces is 34 per cent; for all provinces it is 29 per cent.

Without the high level of federal transfers currently underwriting territorial government programs and services, few people could afford to live in the Arctic – at least not with a standard of living anywhere close to Canadian norms. For example, the elderly and the unemployed pay as little as \$32 a month to live in public housing units which cost the government as much as \$1,000 per month to build and maintain. At the same time, during the 1990s the Government of the Northwest Territories dramatically raised rents for employed persons who live in government-owned housing to encourage them to move out of public housing and build or purchase their own homes. Many Nunavut communities have very limited private housing markets, so that government-owned housing is essential. In the larger communities, limited amounts of expensive privately owned rental housing are becoming available.

Because federal funding is critical if the Government of Nunavut is to provide essential services to its residents, the degree of Nunavut's fiscal dependence on the federal treasury renders the territory highly

vulnerable to unilateral cutbacks in transfer payments.<sup>134</sup>

### ***Social Realities***

*Nunavut to be a welfare case: Sweeping social, economic problems face Canada's newest territory.*

– front-page headline in *The Globe and Mail*, June 5, 1998

Southern Canadians may be in for another kind of shock as the realities of life (and death) in the new territorial jurisdiction become better publicised – the realisation that living conditions in a region comprising a fifth of the country are far below national standards, to they point that they are often described by local politicians and international media alike as 'Third World'.<sup>135</sup> As a former Chief Medical Officer of the Northwest Territories (NWT) noted before Nunavut came into existence:

*Division will consolidate not only the Inuit, but also their problems, [statistics on which] now are diluted by the presence of a substantial NWT non-aboriginal population, and to a lesser extent by the non-Inuit aboriginal population, whose health status is better than that of Inuit. Thus, the health status profile for Nunavut may come as a shock to many who may have become inured even to the depressing aspects of the overall NWT profile.*<sup>136</sup>

When mortality data for Nunavut was first published by Statistics Canada, many Nunavimmiut were shocked to learn that the life expectancy at birth for a baby born in Nunavut in 1996 was almost ten years lower than for Canada as a whole. Infant mortality rates in Nunavut's infant mortality rates have been halved over the last fifteen years, but are still more than three times the national rate. Mortality due to lung cancer among women in Nunavut is almost five times the national rate, and women in Nunavut were about seven times more likely to die of respiratory disease than Canadian women as a whole.<sup>137</sup>

To the outside observer it must seem like there is no end to the depressing statistics: over two-thirds of Nunavut residents 12 years of age and older smoke (compared to less than 30 per cent nationally), almost three-quarters of all Nunavut mothers smoke during their pregnancies, Nunavut's rate of tuberculosis during the 1990s was more than eight times the national average, sexually transmitted disease rates are 15 to 20 times the national rate, and Nunavut's suicide rate is six times the national average.<sup>138</sup>

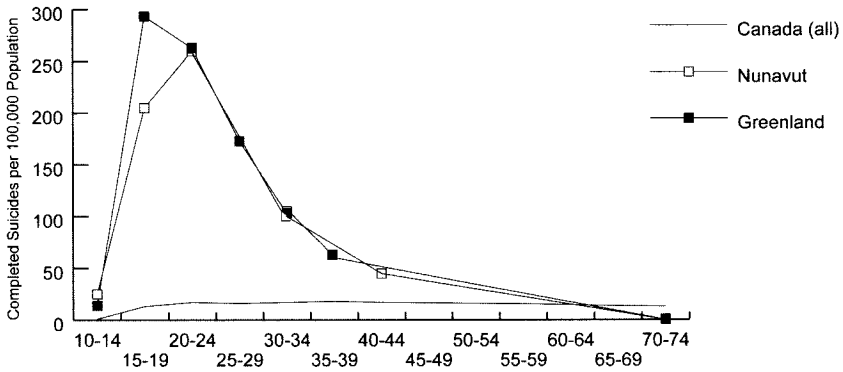
This latter statistic is perhaps the most disturbing. For the period 1986



to 1996, Nunavut's crude suicide rate was 77.9 per 100,000 – and rising – compared to a national rate of 13.2 per 100,000.<sup>139</sup> The suicide rate was far higher among those between 15 to 29 years of age, much higher among than males than among females, and higher in the Baffin region than in the Kitikmeot or Kivalliq regions.

If we look eastwards to Greenland, not only do we find that the suicide profile there is almost identical to that of Nunavut – very high rates among young Inuit:

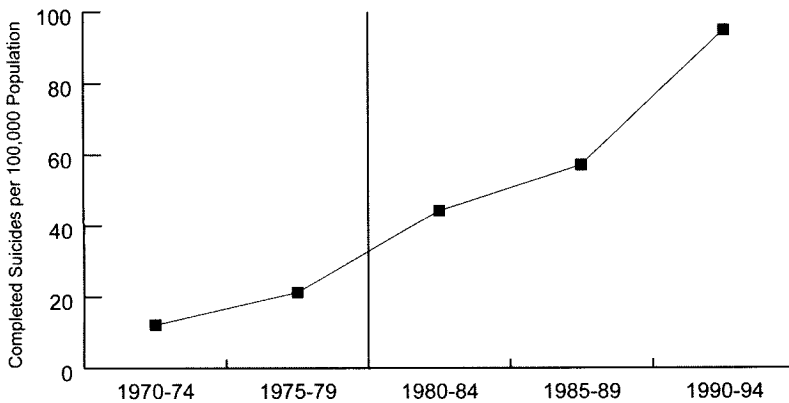
### Completed Suicides by Age Cohort, 1990-94



*sources: Greenland Bureau of Statistics, KRBHSS and SIEC*

... but we also find that the suicide rate continued to rise after the establishment of Home Rule in 1979:

### Suicide in Greenland Before and After Home Rule



*source: Greenland Bureau of Statistics*

Similarly, suicide rates in the eastern and central Arctic were also rising sharply before the creation of Nunavut in 1999. The suicide rate for the period 1992 to 1996 was almost double what it had been a decade before. And during the first 16 months of Nunavut's existence (April 1999 thru July 2000), at least 34 Nunavimmiut took their own lives. Of the 21 suicides which occurred in the Baffin region, all but two were Inuit males. 12 of those 21 were from Iqaluit.

If suicide is "almost always an effort to escape intense frustration, grief, and psychic pain",<sup>140</sup> what do Nunavut's tragically high rates of youth suicide tell us? After making the case that "a self-alienation of native peoples ... has contributed to exorbitant suicide rates, increasing levels of addiction, high rates of interpersonal violence and high teenage pregnancy" in Alaska, researchers termed the situation there one of "sociocultural oppression".<sup>141</sup>

Another researcher has concluded that:

*Unresolved historical traumas (both at the individual and the collective levels) compounding present-day traumas are likely to have significantly contributed to the distressed conditions we see ... today. The benefits of economic and political development are less likely to be reaped when individuals and their communities are still struggling with underlying issues of unresolved trauma. Indeed, collective trauma is associated with the breakdown of ... the sociocultural foundations of economic growth and effective governance.*<sup>142</sup>

## **8. Conclusion: Pijarnirniarniraqtaulaungimmat<sup>143</sup>**

"The days of the Inuit are numbered", wrote the American explorer Charles Francis Hall after visiting the Frobisher Bay area in 1861. "Fifty years may find them all passed away, without leaving one to tell that such a people ever lived." Hall's prediction proved far too bleak, and the Inuit of Nunavut survived both contact and colonisation. While the last century has been tremendously difficult, they have endured.

Looking to the future, it is possible to be both optimistic and alarmed for the Inuit of Nunavut – optimistic about the opportunities created by the Nunavut land claim and the Government of Nunavut, yet alarmed about the future of Nunavut itself. On the one hand, as Mary Simon – an Inuk from Nunavik who is a former member of the Nunavut Implementation Commission, and is now Canada's Ambassador to Denmark and the Circumpolar Arctic – said in a speech at Queen's University:

*... the very scale of the Nunavut undertaking means it cannot be overlooked. Nunavut will constitute some 20 per cent of the land mass of Canada. Its boundaries will extend over a larger marine area than the boundaries of any Canadian province. For the first time in Canadian history, with the partial exception of the creation of Manitoba in 1870, a member of the federal-provincial-territorial club is being admitted for the precise purpose of supplying a specific aboriginal people with an enhanced opportunity for self-determination. This is ground-breaking stuff.*

For a small, aboriginal society like the Inuit, the creation of Nunavut is an enormous achievement. Nunavut follows Greenland as an example of a regional Inuit population equipping itself with political tools intended to counterbalance the power of the nation-states in which they reside. And their achievement may be of benefit to other aboriginal peoples who live in ethnically homogenous areas with a significant land base. Self-government by way of public government, which is the basis of both Greenlandic Home Rule and the Government of Nunavut, may be a way to meet the needs and aspirations of some other aboriginal peoples without threatening the territorial integrity of the states within which they exist. The degree of legislative and administrative autonomy that the Government of Nunavut will exercise may permit the development and implementation of a modern form of governance that reflects the customs and traditions of its citizens, with the flexibility to evolve at a pace they desire.

It is too soon to know whether the Government of Nunavut will live up to the expectations that many people have of it, but from its first date of operation it has managed to deliver services, pay its bills and balance its budgets much like the government it succeeded was able to do. In other words, the fact that there are no high-level crisis meetings in Ottawa to determine 'what to do about Nunavut' is no small achievement for the new government.

Still, the territory's new government, Inuit organisations and Institutions of Public Government face enormous challenges: a young work force with high levels of unemployment and dependence on social assistance, low (but rising) educational levels, high costs for goods and public services, inadequate public housing, poor health conditions, and escalating rates of substance abuse, violence and incarceration. Indeed, a study commissioned by the federal government in 1988<sup>144</sup> predicted that Nunavut communities may become Arctic ghettos plagued by increasing rates of crime – with more in common with urban slums than with the independent, resourceful society that survived for thousands of years.

Is it unrealistic to hope that the creation of Nunavut can prove this grim prediction wrong?

The visionaries who gave birth to the Nunavut project and then negotiated it into existence did so in the belief that it would facilitate meaningful self-government, sustainable economic development and healthy communities. The challenge of overcoming Nunavut's economic and social problems, however, may well dwarf the considerable challenge of negotiating and implementing the aboriginal rights and 'self-government through public government' arrangements which make up the Nunavut project. And while the creation of Nunavut is undeniably a significant innovation within Canadian federalism, there is no guarantee that it will result in, for example, the kinds of community-based interventions needed to curb social pathologies such as suicides by young Inuit males.

Nunavut is, of course, home to many happy and healthy people, and most of Nunavut's children grow up in stable and loving families. For young people with the skills and life-skills needed to seize the opportunities available to them, Nunavut offers a bright future indeed. The new suburbs of comfortable middle-class houses springing up in Iqaluit and elsewhere are proof of this.

And as John Amagoalik – often referred to as 'The father of Nunavut' – has stated many times, Nunavut "won't solve all of our problems overnight. ... But people will have a government they can relate to – a government that speaks and understands their language and understands their culture and priorities".<sup>145</sup> "We cannot expect miracles. Sitting over a hole in the ice for hours, not moving, waiting for a seal, takes patience. It took a lot of patience to get self-government. Now it will take more patience to solve our many problems."<sup>146</sup>

Ultimately, however, the test of Nunavut's "success" will be the degree to which its many benefits and opportunities are shared by *all* its residents – and the rate at which its social pathologies decrease over time.

Nunavut's first Premier, Paul Okalik, clearly recognised this when he was asked what he would place in a time capsule to mark the new millennium:

*A pair of kamiks<sup>147</sup> [to] remind people ... that they must walk in the footsteps of the past – not doomed to repeat mistakes, but to be aware of past experiences and learn from them.*

*I would include a journal – a personal account of an Inuk living in Nunavut at the turn of the century.*

*I would also include a statistical profile of Nunavut in comparison to other jurisdictions throughout the country. I would hope that people [in the future] would use this document as a concrete guide to measure the progress, or lack thereof, from now until then.<sup>148</sup>*

## 9. Appendix: Nunavut – A Chronology

4,500 BC to	Successive waves of Inuit enter and move throughout what is now the Canadian
1,000 AD	Arctic
1670	King Charles II of England grants the Hudson's Bay Charter, giving the Hudson's Bay Company a trading monopoly of much of what is now the Canadian north. This area is named Rupert's Land.
1870	The Government of Canada acquires Rupert's Land.
1880	The British government transfers the Arctic islands to the Government of Canada.
1973	The Government of Canada establishes a Comprehensive Land Claims Policy under which undefined 'aboriginal rights' can be exchanged for a clearly defined package of rights and benefits set out in a land claim settlement agreement. Also that year, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada begins a study of Inuit land use and occupancy which documents the extent of Inuit land use in the eastern and central Arctic.
1976	The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada proposes the creation of a Nunavut territory as part of a comprehensive settlement of Inuit land claims in the Northwest Territories. The Nunavut proposal calls for the Beaufort Sea and Yukon North Slope areas used by the Inuvialuit to be included in the Nunavut territory. Later that year, due to development pressure in the Beaufort Sea area, the Inuvialuit split from the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada to negotiate a separate land claim agreement. Also that same year, a federal electoral boundaries commission recommends dividing the Northwest Territories into two electoral districts: Nunatsiak and Western Arctic. This recommendation is put into effect for the 1979 federal election.
1980	Delegates at the annual general meeting of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada unanimously pass a resolution calling for the creation of Nunavut, and the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories votes in favour of dividing the territory.

- 1990 April** The Tungavik Federation of Nunavut and the federal and Northwest Territories governments sign a Nunavut land claims agreement-in-principle.
- 1992 January** Tungavik Federation of Nunavut and government negotiators come to an agreement on the substantive portions of a final land claims agreement. The agreement contains commitments for the creation of a Nunavut territory and government, subject to a boundary plebiscite and the conclusion of a Nunavut Political Accord which would detail the timetable and process for establishing Nunavut.
- 1992 May** An overall majority of voters in the Northwest Territories approve the proposed boundary for division.
- 1992 October** Tungavik Federation of Nunavut and government representatives sign the Nunavut Political Accord, setting the date for creation of Nunavut as April 1, 1999.
- 1992 November** In a Nunavut-wide vote, the Inuit of Nunavut ratify the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.
- 1993 May** The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement is signed.
- 1993 November** The *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act* and the *Nunavut Act* are adopted by Parliament, and receive Royal Assent.
- 1994** The Nunavut Implementation Commission is established to advise the three parties to the Nunavut Political Accord on aspects of creating Nunavut.
- 1995 March 31** The Nunavut Implementation Commission releases *Footprints in New Snow*, a detailed plan for the design and implementation of the Government of Nunavut.
- 1995 December 11** In a public vote, 60 per cent of Nunavut voters choose Iqaluit over Rankin Inlet as their capital.
- 1996 October 21** After reviewing feedback received re: *Footprints in New Snow*, the Nunavut Implementation Commission releases *Footprints 2*, a revised plan for the design and implementation of the Government of Nunavut.
- 1997 May 26** Nunavut voters reject the Nunavut Implementation Commission's proposal for a Nunavut Legislature with gender parity.

- 1997** The Office of the Interim Commissioner of Nunavut is established, and work begins on implementing the recommendations of the Nunavut Implementation Commission and recruiting a public service for the new government.
- 1998** Amendments to the *Nunavut Act* are adopted by Parliament, and receive Royal Assent.
- 1999 February 15** Residents of Nunavut hold their first election for members of their Legislative Assembly.
- 1999 March 5** 34 year-old Paul Okalik is selected by his fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly to serve as Nunavut's first Premier.
- 1999 April 1** The Nunavut territory and the Government of Nunavut are inaugurated; and the Nunavut flag and coat of arms are unveiled.

## 11. Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Pronounced 'NOO-na-voot'. The name of the capital, Iqaluit, is pronounced 'ee-KAL-oo-eet'.
- <sup>2</sup> For useful overviews of Canadian Inuit and Inuktitut, see: Louis-Jacques Dorais, "The Canadian Inuit and their language", in: Dirmid R.F. Collis (ed.), *Arctic Languages: An Awakening* (Paris: UNESCO, 1990), pp. 185-289; and "Inuit", in: Paul R. Magocsi (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto ON: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 47-56.
- <sup>3</sup> Readers unfamiliar with the evolution of Canadian state policy regarding indigenous peoples may benefit from: Frances Abele, Katherine A. Graham, and Allan M. Maslove, "Negotiating Canada: Changes in aboriginal policy over the last thirty years", in: Leslie A. Pal (ed.) *How Ottawa Spends 1999-2000* (Ottawa ON, Carleton University Press, 1999), pp. 251-92; and Peter J. Usher, Frank J. Tough, and Robert M. Galois, "Reclaiming the land: Aboriginal title, treaty rights, and land claims in Canada", *Applied Geography* 12:2, 1999, pp. 109-32.
- <sup>4</sup> "Lessons from the Canadian experience", *Indigenous Affairs* 1997:1, p. 41.
- <sup>5</sup> Lisa Mastny, "Coming to terms with the Arctic", *World Watch* January/February 2000.
- <sup>6</sup> Philip O'Brien, "A critique of Latin American theories of dependency", in: Ivar Oxaal et al. (eds.), *Beyond the Sociology of Development* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 12. For a critique of other social science concepts as they have been applied to aboriginal peoples, see: Tony Kaliss, "What was the 'other' that came on Columbus's ships? An interpretation of the writing about the interaction between northern native peoples in Canada and the United States and the 'other'", *Journal of Indigenous Studies* 3:2, 1997, pp. 27-42; and "Europeans and native peoples: A comparison of the policies of the United States and Soviet/ Russian governments towards the native peoples on both sides of the Bering Strait", his unpublished 1999 Ph.D. thesis in American Studies at the University of Hawaii.

- <sup>7</sup> For a critique of dependency theory applied to aboriginal peoples in the current economic order, see: Deborah Simmons, "After Chiapas: Aboriginal lands and resistance in the new North America", *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 19:1, 1998, and "Against capital: The political economy of aboriginal resistance in Canada", her unpublished 1995 Ph.D. thesis in Social and Political Thought at York University. Simmons advocates an approach which accounts for the historical significance of aboriginal struggles within a global political economy, a method which allows for a material analysis of the linkages between such struggles on an international scale.
- <sup>8</sup> Nunavut's boundaries also include areas that were historically used by Dene of northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan as well as of the Northwest Territories.
- <sup>9</sup> The Inuit of Nunavik are a party to the 1975 James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA), which was negotiated in haste between the Government of Canada, the province of Québec, and the Cree and Inuit of northern Québec following the commencement of large-scale hydroelectric development by Hydro-Québec. The Inuvialuit negotiated the 1984 Inuvialuit Final Agreement in the face of similarly threatening oil and gas development. The Nunavut land claim was therefore the first modern land claim to have been negotiated in circumstances where the aboriginal people were not negotiating 'under the gun'.
- <sup>10</sup> At the time of writing a regular economy return airfare from Iqaluit to Ottawa costs \$2,068, and a similar ticket from Iqaluit to Cambridge Bay return costs \$3,865.
- <sup>11</sup> If Denmark had the same population density as Nunavut, it would be home to just 561 people!
- <sup>12</sup> Under the Government of the Northwest Territories, the area which is now Nunavut was organized into three administrative regions: Baffin, with roughly 50 per cent of the population; Keewatin (or Kivalliq), with roughly 30 per cent of the population; and Kitikmeot, with roughly 20 per cent of the population. The community of Holman was within the Kitikmeot administrative region, but because it is situated outside the Nunavut Settlement Area it remained part of the Northwest Territories when Nunavut was created. The population of Nanisivik, a mine with an adjacent town site, has no municipal government and is therefore not regarded as a 'community' – although its resident population of just under 300 is usually included in territorial totals. Temporary residents at the Lupin and Polaris 'fly-in/fly-out' mines are not counted as residents of the territory, nor are temporary residents at the Environment Canada meteorological station at Eureka or the Canadian Forces installation at Alert (both of which are on Ellesmere Island).
- <sup>13</sup> It is worth noting, however, that as the population ages in the next ten years the largest percentage growth in population is likely to occur among those 65 years of age and over. The population aged 10 to 24 years of age will also increase substantially, impacting high school and post-secondary education programs.
- <sup>14</sup> Philip Goldring, "Inuit economic responses to Euro-American contacts: Southeast Baffin Island, 1824-1940", *Historical Papers/Communications Historiques* 1986, p. 252.
- <sup>15</sup> Willem C.E. Rasing, "Hunting for identity: Thoughts on the practice of hunting and its significance for Iglulingmiut identity", in: Jarich G. Oosten and Cornelius H. W. Remie (eds.), *Arctic Identities: Continuity and Change in Inuit and Saami*



- Societies*, (Leiden: School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies, Universiteit Leiden, 1999), pp. 95-6.
- 16 The purpose of the Nunavut Wildlife Harvest Survey is to establish current harvesting levels, establish the 'basic needs levels' required by Inuit communities, and contribute to the sound management and utilisation of wildlife resources. 6,250 harvesters are taking part in the survey, of whom 2,000 self-describe their harvesting activity as 'intensive' or 'active' (meaning that they regularly engage in all or some of the major harvesting activities over the course of a year, making more than just day-trips or the occasional weekend 'on the land') and 4,250 self-describe their harvesting activity as 'occasional'.
  - 17 The landed value of shrimp harvested in Nunavut waters is perhaps \$20 million, with \$2 million in direct economic benefits to Nunavut. Nunavut's offshore groundfish industry has been less successful, the primary barrier being the fact that Nunavut must share adjacent resources with other Canadians but is not allowed to compete to compete on an equal or consistent basis with them. Other Canadian fishing enterprises have multi-species groundfish licences that allow them to balance their fishing plan in both adjacent and non-adjacent waters throughout the year, thus ensuring economic viability and self-sufficiency. For its offshore fisheries to succeed, Nunavut must have fair and equal access to shared Canadian resources. Many communities also have commercial Arctic char fisheries. Nunavut's inshore fisheries for char and turbot generate income for several hundred people, but these fisheries have limited growth potential.
  - 18 Nunavut is home to perhaps 1.5 million caribou; more than 50 for every man, woman and child in the territory.
  - 19 See: Laurie-Anne White's unpublished 2000 M.A. thesis in Geography at Concordia University, "Economy and economic relations of an Inuit *ilagiit* (extended family) in Kangiqtugaapik (Clyde River) – A case study".
  - 20 Data from: Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, 1999 *Community Labour Force Survey: Overall Results and Basic Tables* (Iqaluit, 1999). 'Labour force participation rate' is a measure of the extent to which residents of working age (age 15 and over) are either working or seeking work.
  - 21 Igloolik had the highest unemployment rate, at 41 per cent. It was these realities which led the Nunavut Implementation Commission to recommend locating as many jobs as possible in the medium-sized communities.
  - 22 See: Article 23 ('Inuit Employment within Government') of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Iqaluit in particular is experiencing a dynamic which Nuuk, the capital of Greenland, experienced after the establishment of Home Rule in 1979 – the number of Inuit employed by government is increasing at the same time as the total number of non-Inuit employed by government is increasing as well. Self-government in both cases has resulted in an increase in the non-Inuit population.
  - 23 Between the 1990/91 and 1995/96 fiscal years, Social Assistance payments increased by 105 per cent in the Baffin region – compared to 52 per cent in the Keewatin region and 30 per cent in the Kitikmeot region.
  - 24 David L. Marshall, "The economy of rural-bush Alaska: Structure, issues and prospects", in: *Alaska Public Policy Issues: Background and Perspectives* (Juneau AK: The Denali Press, 1999), pp. 47-8.
  - 25 See: Jack Hicks, "Mining the Canadian Arctic: Experiences relevant to potential developments in Greenland", in: *Udvalget om socioøkonomiske virkninger ad olie-*

- og gasudvinding samt mineralindustri (Committee on the Socioeconomic Impacts of Oil and Gas Exploitation and the Mining Industry) (eds.), *Socio-økonomiske Virkninger af Råstofudvinding: En Indledende Kortlægning og Forslag til Videre Arbejde* ('Socioeconomic Impacts of Resource Development: A Preliminary Overview and Proposals for Further Work') (Nuuk, 1997).
- <sup>26</sup> See: Robert G. Williamson, *Eskimo Underground: Sociocultural Change in the Canadian Arctic* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1974).
- <sup>27</sup> Marybelle Mitchell, *From Talking Chiefs to a Native Corporate Elite: The Birth of Class and Nationalism among Canadian Inuit* (Montréal QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), pp. 398 and 402.
- <sup>28</sup> See: Gillian Corliss' unpublished 1999 M.A. thesis in Geography at McGill University, "Community-based tourism planning and policy: The case of the Baffin region, Nunavut".
- <sup>29</sup> Marybelle Mitchell, op. cit. p. 167.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid. pp. 297 and 447.
- <sup>31</sup> Peter Clancy, "Northwest Territories: Class politics on the northern frontier", in: Keith Brownsey and Michael Howlett (eds.), *The Provincial State: Politics in Canada's Provinces and Territories* (Mississauga ON: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992), p. 298.
- <sup>32</sup> For an authoritative survey of historical and modern Inuit societies, see: David J. Damas (ed.), *Arctic* (vol. 5 in the series *Handbook of North American Indians*) (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1984).
- <sup>33</sup> For a comprehensive review of Inuit groups and their differing interactions with European societies, see: Hein van der Voort, "History of Eskimo interethnic contact and its linguistic consequences", in: Stephen A. Wurm et al. (eds.), *Atlas of Languages of Intercultural Communication in the Pacific, Asia, and the Americas* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996), pp. 1043-94.
- <sup>34</sup> For a theoretical overview of this understudied aspect of aboriginal history, see: Martha Knack and Alice Littlefield, "Native American labor: Retrieving history, rethinking theory", in: Martha Knack and Alice Littlefield (eds.), *Native Americans and Wage Labor: Ethnohistorical Perspectives* (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), pp. 3-44. Two Canadian case studies which are not included in this volume are David S. Blanchard, "High steel! The Kahnawake Mohawk and the high construction trade", *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 11:2, 1983, pp. 41-60; and Rolf Knight, *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia, 1858-1930* (Vancouver BC: New Star Books, 1996). See also: Steven High, "Native wage labour and independent production during the 'era of irrelevance'", *Labour/Le Travail* 37, 1996, pp. 243-64.
- <sup>35</sup> Nunavut Arts & Crafts Association, *Seals & Nunavut: Our Tradition, Our Future* (Iqaluit NU, 1999). p. 14.  
See also: George W. Wenzel, *Animal Rights, Human Rights: Ecology, Economy and Ideology in the Canadian Arctic* (Toronto ON: University of Toronto Press, 1991); and "Inuit sealing and subsistence managing after the EU sealskin ban", *Geographische Zeitschrift* 32:2, 1996, pp. 130-42.
- <sup>36</sup> See: Richard J. Diubaldo, *The Government of Canada and the Inuit, 1900-67* (Ottawa ON: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1985). There were, however, no sweeping blueprints for the extensive modernisation of the Canadian north similar to the G-50 and G-60 reports in Greenland.
- <sup>37</sup> See: R. Quinn Duffy, *The Road to Nunavut: The Progress of the Eastern Arctic Inuit Since the Second World War* (Kingston ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988).

- <sup>38</sup> See: Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *The High Arctic Relocation: A Report on the 1953-55 Relocation* (3 vols.) (Ottawa ON: Supply and Services Canada, 1994); Alan R. Marcus, *Out in the Cold: The Legacy of Canada's Inuit Relocation Experiment in the High Arctic* (Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1992) and *Relocating Eden: The Image and Politics of Inuit Exile in the Canadian Arctic* (Dartmouth NH: University Press of New England, 1995); and Frank J. Tester and Peter Kulchyski, *Tammarniit (Mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939-63* (Vancouver BC: University of British Columbia Press, 1994).
- <sup>39</sup> Hugh Brody, "Some historical aspects of the High Arctic Exiles' experience." (Report prepared for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993.) Federal day schools were also established in some communities.
- <sup>40</sup> Colin Irwin, "Future imperfect: A controversial report on the prospects for Inuit society strikes a nerve in the NWT", *Northern Perspectives* 17:1, 1989, p. 4.
- <sup>41</sup> Ian Creery, *The Inuit (Eskimo) of Canada* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1993). p. 25. See also: Willem C.E. Rasing's 'Too Many People': *Order and Nonconformity in Iglulingmiut Social Process* (Nijmegen: Katholieke Universiteit, 1994), a superb analysis of social and economic change among the Inuit who now live in Igloodik.
- <sup>42</sup> Colin Irwin, op. cit.
- <sup>43</sup> Technically, barriers to Inuit voting in territorial elections were eliminated in 1954, but since no constituencies existed in the eastern or central Arctic until 1966, this was not much of an advance.
- <sup>44</sup> Canada, Department of Mines and Resources, *The Book of Wisdom for Eskimo* (Ottawa ON: 1947), p. 19. A similar but even more outrageous book had earlier been inflicted upon the Labrador Inuit: George Binney, *The Eskimo Book of Knowledge* (London: Hudson's Bay Company, 1931).
- <sup>45</sup> See: Valerie Alia, *Names, Numbers and Northern Policy: Inuit, Project Surname and the Politics of Identity* (Halifax NS: Fernwood Publishing, 1994).
- <sup>46</sup> Canada, Department of Mines and Resources, op. cit. p. 20.
- <sup>47</sup> As quoted by Peter Ittinuar, Canada's first Inuit Member of Parliament, in his maiden speech in the House of Commons. See: "First speech by an Inuk member of Parliament", *Inuit Today* Winter 1980, pp. 97-103.
- <sup>48</sup> According to Statistics Canada's 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 96 per cent of adult (defined as age 15 and over) Inuit in Nunavut speak Inuktitut. In the 1996 Census 71 per cent of people living in Nunavut reported Inuktitut as their 'mother tongue', and 60 per cent reported Inuktitut as their 'home language'. English is the 'home language' of 35 per cent of all residents, and the territory also has a small but vibrant Francophone community – most of which resides in Iqaluit. 15 per cent of the population speaks neither English nor French.
- The language spoken by Inuit of Nunavut consists of seven dialects, which are essentially variations on a single language. Six of these dialects are collectively referred to as Inuktitut, and are written using a Syllabic writing system. The dialect spoken by the residents of the communities of Kugluktuk and Cambridge Bay, in the western part of the Kitikmeot region, is called Inuinnaqtun – and is written in Roman orthography. (By contrast, the Dene of the Yukon and Northwest Territories comprise several different peoples each speaking a distinctive language.)
- <sup>49</sup> Although the 1939 Supreme Court ruling *Re: Eskimos* declared them in effect to be equivalent to Indians in that the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility to them. See: Richard J. Diubaldo, "The absurd little mouse: When Eskimos became Indians", *Journal of Canadian Studies* 16:2, 1981, pp. 34-40.

- <sup>50</sup> See: Marybelle Mitchell, op. cit. chapters 20-21.
- <sup>51</sup> See: Marybelle Mitchell, op. cit. chapters 6 and 16; and Peter Clancy, op. cit.
- <sup>52</sup> This is in marked contrast to the situation in Greenland, where organized labour – largely Inuit labour – played a key role in the political agitation which led to Denmark granting the island Home Rule in 1979.
- <sup>53</sup> Letter dated February 22, 1982.
- <sup>54</sup> Memo by Charlie Peter, dated February 16, 1982. 15 years later we can see that while this initiative went nowhere, the frustration which fuelled it was channeled into successful ethnopolitical activity. It remains to be seen to what degree to which the fruits of this ethnopolitical activity – the provisions of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement – actually improve socioeconomic conditions in the communities, and to what degree any disappointment is expressed in class terms.
- <sup>55</sup> Marybelle Mitchell, op. cit. p. ix.
- <sup>56</sup> Quoted in: Jim Bell, "When Inuit began to talk back to the government", *Nunatsiaq News*, August 29, 1997.
- <sup>57</sup> Quoted in: "Nunavut: Inuit Tapirisat's proposal to split the NWT", *The Inuit North*, January 1980, p. 4.
- <sup>58</sup> Peter Ittinuar, "Inuit participation in politics", in: Morris Zaslow (ed.), *A Century of Canada's Arctic Islands, 1880-1980* (Ottawa ON: The Royal Society of Canada, 1981), p. 298.
- <sup>59</sup> This proposal was withdrawn shortly thereafter, and replaced by a second proposal which became the basis for the eventual land claim.
- <sup>60</sup> Which had entered Confederation in 1870, and assumed its pre-division boundaries in 1912.
- <sup>61</sup> Northwest Territories Electoral District Boundaries Commission, *Hearing Transcripts II* (hearing in Iqaluit NT, October 10, 1989), p. 12.
- <sup>62</sup> See: John Merritt, Terry Fenge, Randy Ames and Peter Jull, *Nunavut: Political Choice and Manifest Destiny* (Ottawa ON: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, 1989), especially chapter 4.
- <sup>63</sup> See: Terry Fenge and Joanne Barnaby, "From recommendations to policy: Battling inertia to obtain a land claim policy", *Northern Perspectives* 15:1, 1987, pp. 12-5.
- <sup>64</sup> John Merritt, "Nunavut: Canada turns a new page in the Arctic", *Canadian Parliamentary Review* Summer 1993, p. 4.
- <sup>65</sup> Of those who actually cast votes, 85 per cent voted in favour. To guard against ratification of an agreement with such profound consequences by a small percentage of the population, the federal government's threshold for ratification of the claim was based on the number of eligible voters – so a non-vote was in effect a 'no' vote.
- <sup>66</sup> John Merritt, op. cit., p. 4
- <sup>67</sup> It should be noted that the members appointed by Inuit organisations need not be Inuit, and likewise the members appointed by government can be Inuit or non-Inuit.
- <sup>68</sup> John Merritt and Terry Fenge, "The Nunavut land claims settlement: Emerging issues in law and public administration", *Queen's Law Journal* 15:2, 1990, p. 270.
- <sup>69</sup> Chesley Andersen, former Vice-President of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, as quoted in: Thierry Rodon, "Co-management and self-determination in Nunavut", *Polar Geography* 22:2, 1998, p. 123.
- <sup>70</sup> See: Terry Fenge, "The Nunavut Agreement and sustainable development in the Canadian Arctic and the circumpolar world", in: Terje Brantenberg et al.

(eds.), *Becoming Visible: Indigenous Politics and Self-Government* (Tromsø: Centre for Sámi Studies, University of Tromsø, 1995), pp. 171-86.

- <sup>71</sup> A second bowhead was harvested near Pangnirtung in 1999, and a third bowhead harvest is scheduled for Coral Harbour in 2000.
- <sup>72</sup> The Minister had ignored the provisions of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and unilaterally allocated quotas for turbot fishing in Davis Strait. The bulk of the quota was assigned to fishers from southern Canada (just before a federal election, when the governing Liberal Party was anxious to retain seats in Atlantic Canada) while the principle of 'adjacency' (which results in the bulk of quotas in waters off southern Canada being assigned to fishers in adjacent jurisdictions) should have seen at least a significant portion of the quota assigned to Nunavut fishers. The case is of such significance that it may ultimately be decided by the Supreme Court of Canada.
- <sup>73</sup> *Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. v. Canada*, F.C.T.D., 1997
- <sup>74</sup> See: Sonia Lawrence and Patrick Macklem, "From consultation to reconciliation: Aboriginal rights and the Crown's duty to consult", *Canadian Bar Review* 79: February 2000, no. 1, pp. 252-79.
- <sup>75</sup> Louise Vertes, David Connelly, Bruce Knott, and Ile Royale Enterprises Ltd., *Implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement: An Independent 5-Year Review, 1993 to 1998* (Iqaluit NU: Nortext Multimedia Inc., 2000), pp. 4-5.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.
- <sup>77</sup> John Amagoalik, speech to Japanese parliamentarians visiting Iqaluit, September 1, 1995.
- <sup>78</sup> Quoted in: Richard Hamilton, "TFN, feds reach final agreement: Boundary plebiscite March 16, Nunavut accord by April 1", *Nunatsiaq News*, December 20, 1991.
- <sup>79</sup> Most of the employees of the Government of Nunavut, especially those who delivered services directly to the public, were simply transferred from the Government of the Northwest Territories and continued to perform the same jobs in the same locations as they had prior to division. A nurse in Igloodik, for example, was an employee of the Government of the Northwest Territories on March 31 and an employee of the Government of Nunavut on April 1. The challenge facing the new government was to recruit virtually its entire 'headquarters' staff; the people who perform senior management, central coordination, policy development and similar 'headquarters' functions.
- <sup>80</sup> This represents a significant departure from what the Nunavut Implementation Commission recommended: *Footprints 2* called for the new government to be fully staffed and operational by the end of its first year of operation. However, delays in the appointment of an Interim Commissioner to oversee actual implementation – and the pace of progress once that position was finally occupied – made a quick start-up impossible.
- <sup>81</sup> Under the Government of the Northwest Territories, each region had an education board and a health board which administered programs on behalf of the territorial government.
- <sup>82</sup> As a result of discussions between the signatories to the Nunavut Political Accord, the model underwent further evolution after this design was proposed in October 1996. After April 1, 1999 the Members of the Legislative Assembly began making their own changes to the structure of the new government.
- <sup>83</sup> As of April 1, 2000 – one year after the Government of Nunavut formally came into being – 44 per cent of its employees were Inuit. As expected, the percentages

were higher in the senior management, clerical and entry-level categories, and lower in the professional categories.

<sup>84</sup> Three studies by consulting firms Coopers & Lybrand and Price Waterhouse had put the one-time start-up costs at between \$230 million and \$500 million.

<sup>85</sup> Canada, Northern Affairs and National Resources, Northern Administration Branch, Welfare Division, *Qaujivaallirutissat* (Ottawa ON: 1964), p. 38

<sup>86</sup> See: Nunavut Implementation Commission, *Nunavut's Legislature, Premier and First Election* (Iqaluit NU, 1996), pp. 13-6.

<sup>87</sup> As Shireen Hassim has noted, "This [approach] is valuable because it sidesteps the controversial areas of normative judgments about fairness, as well as the essentialist arguments about women's differences. It does not assume that women are best able to represent women's interests, or that women's arguments are coherent across race, class or age. Rather, it is an argument posed at the most general and pragmatic level, and is relatively detached from assumptions about what kinds of policies are best for women, or what kinds of substantive changes are needed to empower women." "The dual politics of representation: Women and electoral politics in South Africa", *Politikon* 26:2, 1999, p. 203.

<sup>88</sup> See: Nunavut Implementation Commission, *Nunavut's Legislature, Premier and First Election*, pp. 31-65.

<sup>89</sup> "Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. reaffirms support for gender parity", press release dated 1997 March 7.

<sup>90</sup> Press release dated 1997 February 25.

<sup>91</sup> The Nunavut Implementation Commission had chosen not to situate its proposal in a definitive explanation of historical gender relations in Inuit society or the impact of colonisation upon those relations, as any such analysis would have been at least as controversial as the gender parity proposal itself.

<sup>92</sup> In her 1997 book *Speaking of Sex: The Denial of Gender Inequality* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press), Deborah L. Rhode examines what she terms the "no problem" problem. "When speaking of sex, we like to discuss sexual relationships, sexual deviance, and sexual difference; we prefer to avoid sexual inequality and the patterns that sustain it. ... The dynamics of denial fall into three basic patterns. The first involves denials of gender equality: many individuals fail to recognise the extent of problems facing women. The second dynamic involves denials of injustice: people often rationalise women's inequality as the result of women's own choices and capabilities. The final pattern involves denials of responsibility: individuals frequently believe that whatever inequality exists, they personally are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution." (pp. 2-3.)

<sup>93</sup> This range of perspectives is similar to those expressed when Edna Maclean of Barrow, Alaska, introduced a resolution to the 1983 General Assembly of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference calling for guaranteed equal representation for women at the organisation's General Assembly. After a prominent male Inuit leader from Alaska argued that such a move would be "discriminatory", the resolution was amended to read that women should have equal representation "whenever possible". See: Bill Hess, "Women see equal representation", *Inuit Today* February 1984, p. 46.

<sup>94</sup> Robert G. Williamson, "In the search for 'a people': The Inuit, their habitat, and economic politics", in: Donald Clark and Robert G. Williamson (eds.), *Self-determination: International Perspectives* (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 316.

- <sup>95</sup> For a biblical case in support of gender equality, see: Rebecca M. Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1997).
- <sup>96</sup> For an interesting analysis of the role that religion – especially fundamentalist religion – has played in limiting the number of women elected to public office in the southern United States, see: Laura M. Moore’s unpublished 1999 Ph.D. thesis in Sociology at the University of Maryland College Park, “A multi-level analysis of attitudes regarding women in politics: Why is the United States south different?” One of Moore’s most interesting findings has to do with the impact that the emancipatory character of black fundamentalist churches appears to have – “As the proportion fundamentalist increases, whites’ conservative political gender attitudes increase while blacks’ decrease.” In this regard, the fundamentalist churches in Nunavut are ‘white churches’, not ‘black churches’.
- <sup>97</sup> The Charlottetown Accord was a sweeping package of constitutional reforms which was negotiated and agreed to by the Government of Canada and the provinces, but rejected by the voters in a nation-wide referendum held in October 1992. It included a constitutional provision recognising the inherent right to self-government of Canada’s indigenous peoples. Kent McNeil has suggested that, despite its rejection, by this recognition “the accord probably altered the relationship between the aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state in fundamental and irrevocable ways”. (“The decolonisation of Canada: Moving toward recognition of aboriginal governments”, *Western Legal History* 7:1, 1994, pp. 113-41.) See also: Kenneth McRoberts and Patrick Monahan (eds.), *The Charlottetown Accord, the Referendum, and the Future of Canada* (Toronto ON: University of Toronto Press, 1993), especially Mary Ellen Turpel’s article “The Charlottetown discord and aboriginal peoples’ struggle for fundamental political change”.
- <sup>98</sup> As a result, the new government has a Senior Advisor on Women’s Issues and an advisory Status of Women Council (appointed by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women) – both of which were deliberately excluded from the Nunavut Implementation Commission’s *Footprints* recommendations to emphasise its belief that having gender parity in the legislature would be more effective than the conventional responses to the under-representation of women in decision-making structures.
- <sup>99</sup> Nunavut Electoral Boundaries Commission, *Report of the Nunavut Electoral Boundary Commission* (Iqaluit NU, June 30, 1997), p. 16.
- <sup>100</sup> ‘Deputy Minister’ is the term used in Canada to denote the chief civil servant in a given department; the same position is called ‘Permanent Secretary’ in some other countries.
- <sup>101</sup> Anne Marie Owens, “Nunavut’s ‘new man’ beats favourite to become Premier”, *National Post*, March 6, 1999.
- <sup>102</sup> Government of Nunavut, *The Bathurst Mandate: Pinasuaqtavut: That Which We’ve Set Out To Do: Our Hopes and Plans for Nunavut* (Iqaluit NU, 1999).
- <sup>103</sup> John Ryle, “What country are we in?” *Manchester Guardian*, February 22, 1999.
- <sup>104</sup> “Charting new territory” (editorial), *Globe and Mail*, April 3, 1999.
- <sup>105</sup> Andrew Purvis, “Nunavut gets ready: The hoopla is about to start for the launch of Canada’s huge, largely Inuit-run, self-governing Arctic territory. But how prepared is everyone?”, *TIME*, March 29, 1999.

- <sup>106</sup> Colin Nickerson, "Inuit land born amid hope, fear; Nunavut: The new territory in Canada's Arctic will be the nation's poorest, but natives are overjoyed at the opportunity for self-rule", *Baltimore Sun*, March 31, 1999.
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>108</sup> Paul Bunner, "Birth of a Nunavut: The racial partitioning of Canada begins", *Alberta Report*, April 12, 1999.
- <sup>109</sup> Tom McFeely, "Move them to Florida", *Report Newsmagazine*, November 22, 1999.
- <sup>110</sup> "Nunavut needs protection from itself", *National Post*, April 3, 1999.
- <sup>111</sup> Quoted in: Colin Levey, "Canada gives the Inuits a homeland, but no malls please", *Wall Street Journal*, April 2, 1999.
- <sup>112</sup> Dan Gardner, "It's just like South Africa, but without the beaches", *Ottawa Citizen*, March 8, 1999.
- <sup>113</sup> Colin Levey, op. cit. One can only wonder how the *Wall Street Journal's* fact-checkers allowed such nonsense to appear in print...
- <sup>114</sup> Quoted in: Shawn Ohler, "Nunavut to release first budget with 90% of it federal money", *National Post*, May 14, 1999.
- <sup>115</sup> Albert Howard and Frances Widdowson, "The disaster of Nunavut", *Policy Options* July / August 1999, p. 58.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>117</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 60.
- <sup>119</sup> Ibid, p. 61.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid, p. 60.
- <sup>121</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>122</sup> Ibid, p. 61.
- <sup>123</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>124</sup> Ibid, p. 60.
- <sup>125</sup> In his 1986 article "Greenland: Political structure of self-government" (*Arctic Anthropology* 23:1/2) Danish social anthropologist Jens Dahl noted the crucial role played by the Home Rule Government, and the fact that it is "overdeveloped compared to its social basis inside Greenland. The character of the Home Rule 'state', its power, its scope, and area of function are primarily products of the Danish presence in the country for more than 250 years, and not a product of national economic and social development". The Government of Nunavut has a similar, although less extreme, "overdeveloped" relationship to its social basis inside the new territory.

Other recommended writings on Greenland in English include: Jens Dahl, *Saqqaq: An Inuit Hunting Community in the Modern World* (Toronto ON: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Søren Forchhammer, "Gathered or dispersed? Four decades of development policy debate in Greenland", Ph.D. Thesis in the Department of Eskimology, University of Copenhagen, 1997; Jack Hicks, "Greenland: Home Rule at the crossroads", *Arctic Circle* Fall 1994; Finn Breinholt Larsen, "The quiet life of a revolution: Greenlandic Home Rule 1979-1992", *Études/Inuit/Studies* 16:1/2, 1992; Philip Lauritzen, *Highlights of an Arctic Revolution: The First 120 Months of Greenlandic Home Rule* (Nuuk: Atuakkiorkfik, 1989); Ole Marquardt et al., *From Sealing to Fishing: Social and Economic Change in Greenland, 1850-1940* (Esbjerg: North Atlantic Fisheries History Association, 1999); Mark Nuttall, *Arctic Homeland: Kinship, Community and Development in Northwest Greenland* (London: Belhaven Press, 1992), and "Greenland: Emergence of an



Inuit homeland", in: Minority Rights Group (eds.) *Polar Peoples: Self-Determination and Development* (London, 1994); Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Greenland's Economy: Building a Strategy for the Future* (Nuuk: Greenland Home Rule Government, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Trade, 1999); Birger Poppel, "Greenland's road to recovery and the pattern of settlement", *Nordic Journal of Regional Development and Territorial Policy* 8:2, 1997; and Axel Kjær Sørensen, "Greenland: From colony to Home Rule", in: Sven Tagil (ed.) *Ethnicity and Nation Building in the Nordic World* (Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995).

<sup>126</sup> Robert G. Williamson, op. cit. p. 322.

<sup>127</sup> Rebecca Kudloo, Eastern Arctic Vice-President of the Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories, "We are living in an epidemic of violence", letter to *Nunatsiaq News*, February 11, 1994.

<sup>128</sup> Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. press release issued 4 February, 1994.

<sup>129</sup> Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. press release issued 31 October 1997.

<sup>130</sup> "State of health of the population of Nunavut", letter from Nunavut Arctic College Northern Teacher Education Program students to Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. President Jose Kusugak, dated 4 July 1995.

<sup>131</sup> Peter Clancy, op. cit. p. 298.

<sup>132</sup> Elizabeth Rata's *A Political Economy of Neotribal Capitalism* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2000) is a path-breaking analysis of the impact of the politics of an aboriginal rights movement on class relations within an aboriginal people (the Maori of New Zealand) – and of the impact of class relations within an aboriginal people on the politics of their aboriginal rights movement – which may shed light on similar developments in Nunavut and elsewhere. Commenting on Rata's work – which he called "very important" – sociologist Jonathon Friedman commented that "it is, of course, to be expected that intelligentsia should emerge within such movements and that they should become increasingly established as the movements become institutionalised. They are, after all, the focal points for political unity and often political action as well, pivots in the competition for funding and rights. It would be a sign of incomprehension ... to critique such developments on the grounds that they deviate from [our] conception of traditional culture. Even the class aspect of this development is quite logical in terms of the process of integration itself. On the other hand, such divisions are bound to be sources of potential conflict within the emerging larger political community". (Jonathon Friedman, "Indigenous struggles and the discreet charm of the bourgeoisie", *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 10:1, 1999, pp. 1-14).

<sup>133</sup> Data in this section is from the Government of Nunavut's budgets of May 1999 and May 2000 and the federal budget of February 2000.

<sup>134</sup> For example, in the final year before division the Government of the Northwest Territories spent \$1.25 billion on programs and services. Compared to the 1995/96 fiscal year, this is a decrease of roughly 11 per cent on a per capita basis. Deep spending cuts were necessitated after the federal government, in the 1995 budget, announced changes to the formula funding agreement. These changes are estimated to have cost the Government of the Northwest Territories a further \$160 million over three years. Subsequent forecasts of a key component of the funding formula – the Provincial-Local Government Spending Escalator – were revised downward, costing the Government of the Northwest Territories a further \$160 million over three years. The revised forecasts result

primarily from provincial governments cutting their spending. (In other words, the policies of the right-wing Harris government in Ontario have caused spending cuts in Nunavut communities by impacting on the elements of the funding formula which reflect spending by the provincial governments.) The total impact of these cuts is that the Government of the Northwest Territories received roughly \$400 million less over the five-year life of the final pre-division formula financing agreement than was forecast when the agreement was concluded in December 1994 – more than twice the amount expected by the federal government when it announced the cuts. This was in addition to a \$100 million reduction in federal funding for housing in the Northwest Territories.

- <sup>135</sup> This analogy may be powerful rhetoric, but it is quite inaccurate. As T. Kue Young has pointed out, "... the principal causes of death and disability are actually very different, as also is the nutritional status and the supply of health services." (T. Kue Young, "The Canadian North and the Third World: Is the analogy appropriate?" *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 74, 1983, pp. 239-41.)
- <sup>136</sup> David Kinloch, "Health and health services in the NWT: A review of policies and programs," unpublished report dated March 21, 1996, p. 72.
- <sup>137</sup> Data in this paragraph is from: "How healthy are Canadians?" A special issue (11:3) of *Health Reports*, 1999.
- <sup>138</sup> Data in this paragraph is from: Government of the Northwest Territories, Dep't of Health and Social Services.
- <sup>139</sup> Data in this paragraph is from: Sandy Isaacs, Susan Keogh, Cathy Menard and Jamie Hickin, "Suicide in the Northwest Territories: A descriptive review", *Chronic Diseases in Canada* 19:4, 1998.
- <sup>140</sup> Edwin S. Shneidman, "Suicide as psychache", *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 181-3, 1993, as quoted in: Laurence J. Kirmayer et al., "Suicide among the Inuit of Canada", in: Antoon A. Leenaars et al., (eds.), *Suicide in Canada* (Toronto ON: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 189-211. See also: Laurence J. Kirmayer, "Suicide among Canadian aboriginal peoples", *Transcultural Psychiatric Research Review* 31, 1994, pp. 3-58.
- <sup>141</sup> Alice Sullivan and Christiane Brems, "The psychological repercussions of the sociocultural oppression of Alaska native peoples", *Journal: Genetic Social and General Psychology Monographs* 123:4, 1997, pp. 411-40.
- <sup>142</sup> Sousan Abadian, "From wasteland to homeland: Trauma and the renewal of indigenous peoples and their communities", unpublished 1999 Ph.D. thesis in Political Economy and Government at Harvard University, p. 452. See also: Peter D. Elias, "Worklessness and social pathologies in aboriginal communities", *Human Organization* 55:1, 1996, pp. 13-24.
- <sup>143</sup> 'No one said it was going to be easy'
- <sup>144</sup> Colin Irwin, op. cit.
- <sup>145</sup> Quoted in: Darcy Henton, "Inuit's dream of home rule coming true", *Toronto Star*, March 5, 1998.
- <sup>146</sup> Quoted in: Philip Broughton, "Inuit look to a new homeland to solve old problems", *Daily Telegraph*, February 23, 1999.
- <sup>147</sup> The waterproof skin boots for which Inuit women are justly famous. See: Jill E. Oakes and Roderick R. Riewe, *Our Boots: An Inuit Women's Art* (Vancouver BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 1995).
- <sup>148</sup> Quoted in: "Time capsule", *National Post*, December 30, 1999.

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A similar bibliography on Greenland is available on-line at:  
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and a bibliography of social science theses on the circumpolar Arctic is available on-line at:  
[www.nunanet.com/~jhicks/arctictheses.html](http://www.nunanet.com/~jhicks/arctictheses.html).<sup>149</sup>



## CHAPTER 3

# INUIT & NUNAVUT: RENEWING THE NEW WORLD

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*by Peter Jull*

## **A Different Place**

Nunavut is different from any other jurisdiction in Canada. The other provinces and territories came into being following the first trickle, or flood (as during a gold rush), of Europeans clamouring to set themselves up, free from authority. In Nunavut some 20,000 Inuit residents 'since time immemorial' have taken over one-fifth of the land area of Canada, and vast seas, inheriting a strange hybrid political economy which has never even been properly described.<sup>1</sup> The North has all been expensive, and some expensive mistakes made. On occasion a federal minister will step out of line, as in late 1987, and link Northern peoples' future to increased economic activity, but it is not 'the Canadian way' to make basic rights and freedoms a cash transaction. For Inuit, Nunavut is an astonishing achievement; for other Canadians, it is a monument to national idealism and goodwill.

Although the whole European experience in Canada has been a story of domesticating intense cold, distance, rock, and forest to a livable space, the Arctic has been seen as lying beyond such possibilities. Leif Eriksen took a look c. 1000 AD and dismissed the region as good for nothing before sailing south to 'Vineland'. Nunavut today has no roads except meagre local networks from houses to airstrip, houses to garbage dump, houses to cemetery. People have not poured in, and even resource projects rely on fly-in, fly-out work crews who live somewhere else. There is little conventional economy, and most money recycles the costs of administration and provision of services.

The modern era in Inuit policy and programs began with Canadian humiliation in the world at starvation deaths in Northern Quebec and the Keewatin before and after the war.<sup>2</sup> Nobody is going to let that happen again. Following World War II, federal officials involved with the North also wanted to avoid the sort of marginalisation of Indian peoples in Canada's provinces. They were determined to do things differently. Forbidding climate, frozen ground, and ice-filled seas helped them deter the sort of territorial assimilation common elsewhere in Canada – or in Australia where

whites tried grazing cattle and sheep even in deserts and developed a confident terra nullius outlook.

Canadian idealism and romance about Inuit and the Arctic has included readiness to accept high costs. Canadians may like to have an Inuit carving or graphic in their home, but essentially they know nothing about this culture so different from their own. Whereas Danes took firm and difficult steps to re-organise and equip Greenland for an industrial economy based on a small number of towns, Canada brought the people into small villages and apparently expected matters to look after themselves once health and schooling were assured. Health care saved many lives and sparked a baby boom, while schooling made people want jobs which did not exist in the Arctic. There is no doubt that under- and un-employment are and will be the fundamental challenge of Nunavut for some time. Big resource projects, if and when they come, do not hire large numbers of unskilled local labour but rely on national and international pools of skilled personnel who move around the world following jobs.

Of course, countless 'good ideas' and grand initiatives have been tried in the Inuit North to promote genuine local employment and income. One of these has worked: the co-operative movement. A Liberal government in Ottawa rejected the idea as 'communist' so the Tories introduced the means to do it, c. 1960, impressed by earlier co-op success on the Canadian Prairies. The Co-ops are now the major employer in Nunavut, best known in the south for marketing Inuit art and crafts. They also run tourist camps, physical community services (water, sewage, garbage), the cleaning and care of buildings, local shops and supermarkets, and virtually anything else possible, as well as advancing tools and equipment on credit for local Inuit livelihoods. The Co-ops are owned and managed by Inuit, although often a manager with supposedly superior managerial and business knowledge is brought in (this is not always seen as an insult because an outsider is immune to the suspicions of favouritism which would attend a member of one or other local clan.)

Meanwhile Inuit have been gaining a wide variety of office and management skills valuable for a wide range of activities. There is no question that Nunavut is and will be a primary hunter-gatherer life (not least because country food, or what Australians call 'bush tucker', is more affordable than store-bought food) welded onto an increasingly computer-driven service economy.

Although Inuit are rarely aware of it, much post-Depression and post-War Canadian idealism has gone into the Inuit North, and especially into Nunavut. Canada was devastated in the Depression, and then exhilarated by the large and honoured part it played in the

War, not least in its Air Force, Atlantic and Arctic convoys, work for the Atomic Bomb, and service and death all over the world. At war's end that sense of 'can-do' material optimism and national energy was directed northwards. Somehow or other the commitment to equality and ability to move men and materials would transform the North. They did, but not in the ways expected.<sup>3</sup> However, the commitment and generosity of the country towards the Northern territories was clear. By and large that spirit of generosity has been maintained. (Tragically, the mid-North, i.e., the indigenous communities in the huge Northern areas of seven provinces from Atlantic to Pacific, did not benefit from this, and those regions remain the shame of Canada's society. Canadians have maintained a false dichotomy whereby the Northern territories are zones of idealism and innovation, while the provincial Northlands are left to the small mercies and 'trickle-down' of state or private development projects. The 60th parallel of North latitude has become a moral as well as political border.)

Although Inuit often complain, a community of 500 or 1000 people in Nunavut in recent decades has almost always had far better facilities and far more positive official attention than similarly sized communities elsewhere in Canada, except for road access.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, at times the attention has been suffocating, with fussing officials thinking up endless new ways to assimilate Inuit to the ways of suburban WASP Canadian society – how to arrange living-room furniture, how to dust it, etc. Some of the most passionate outbursts at community meetings with visiting officials have been Inuit pointing out that chopping up a seal in the middle of the living-room was a practical necessity, even if it upset squeamish homebodies sent from the south to govern them.

Such attention has brought hardship, too. The work of health teams taking away unilingual Inuit to alien hospitals far away, for years or forever, and other health insensitivity, is the most bitter of Nunavut memories. Another is the former practice of collecting children and removing them to boarding schools. There is delicious irony that the first bright generation of such children founded and led the Nunavut autonomy movement with their new learning. Culturally inappropriate teaching, especially the former denigration of the Inuit language, is also bitterly remembered.

Inuit are practical people, however, and few wish to deny the various benefits of active white administration in the North since the 1920s. The Mounties (Canada's federal police force) stopped the blood feuds and other killings, Inuit tell community meetings. The coming of family allowance and old age pension has made life much more bearable, many point out. People today live longer and more comfortably, another adds. However, as many voices say sadly, the

old life was better in many ways – self-reliance, healthy family lives, none of the drink and drugs and community miseries brought by the villages and towns.

The modern history of Nunavut, especially, and of the rest of the Northern territories in varying degrees, has been a dialogue between the remote hunter-gatherer Inuit and a powerful and wealthy federal government. The inclusion of Nunavut under the Yellowknife-based administration of the NWT from 1970-99 will be seen as a brief anomaly. In fairness, the NWT government in Yellowknife continued the welfare-state policies developed and administered by Ottawa, introducing many practical improvements. It is not true that Yellowknife has been uncaring. Nevertheless, the NWT government with its location far from Nunavut in the development-minded south-west, and with close ties to Alberta province, would seem to have a destiny very different from Nunavut. Nunavut would have to assert itself or be increasingly marginalised on a typical North American development frontier.

## Sequence of Change

**In the 1950s** the Northern Territories began to be assimilated into Canada's material and social culture. From 1953 a federal Department, later named Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND, or INAC) was created. It spent generously in the North but the forced transition was painful for people, and tragic for many. Inuit ways were considered backward ways to be replaced.

**In the 1960s** the Territories acquired the outward institutions of Canadian society and national culture, e.g., a quasi-provincial North-west Territories administration in a new Northern capital, Yellowknife. Assimilation accelerated. Through the 1960s indigenous people from seasonal camps were resettled in central villages where health could be monitored and full public services provided. This transformed the indigenous North. As the 1960s drew to a close the 'frontier energy' search began in earnest. Indigenous peoples realised that the White Man would now blow up or grind down or bulldoze or dig up the land itself. This was done with little or no regard to the habitats of the caribou, sea mammals, or other species which remained the main indigenous food and livelihood. All Northern land remained in federal Crown ownership, with private alienation only in a few towns, but the resource development arm of DIAND was seen as a law unto itself, expected to win all big battles and divorced in all but theory from the welfare-state Northern Administration and emerging NWT government.



**In the 1970s** the great collision between Northern indigenous and non-indigenous political agendas took place – and between indigenous Northern and non-indigenous southern agendas. Nunavut was somewhat insulated from the worst of it because the Inuit were the overwhelming majority in their homeland, but the Dene, Métis, and Inuvialuit got the full force of it. Two events changed Canada's moral climate: the 1973 Calder decision of the Supreme Court of Canada recognised that native title rights could exist in Canada and the Berger inquiry on Northern development analysed the indigenous-white, indigenous-development conflicts in terms the public and policy-makers could understand. Berger's report nicely captured opposing forces in its title, *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland*.<sup>5</sup> Another decisive event, in 1979, was election of a new NWT Legislative Assembly in which older frontier whites were replaced by indigenous politicians, and by younger whites prepared to work with indigenous peoples. They met at once to repudiate the anti-aboriginal rights policies and constitutional positions of their predecessors and to prepare a new era of recognised collective indigenous rights pertaining to traditional territory and environments.

**In the 1980s** an accommodation of peoples and economic philosophies began to be reached as land claims, environment strategies, cooperative government policy and program development, and national and Northern constitutional forums re-negotiated and re-wrote indigenous-white relations.

Now, **in the 1990s**, the task is to move from fundamental change and old disputes to make a new Inuit society within the frameworks acquired in recent decades, and to modify those frameworks. The great danger is that the White Man's system is a Trojan horse full of ways and means by which Nunavut Inuit will assimilate themselves to North American frontier capitalism. The great hope is that Inuit will keep ahead of despair and inertia, overcoming all obstacles as they have done for several decades, to create a new world for themselves.

## **Nunavut's Four Realities**

Nunavut has existed simultaneously in four very different contexts, i.e., as:

- A land of isolated villages with local problems
- An exotic and unique region
- An indigenous member of Canada's federation
- An international hinterland

Many delays and mistakes have occurred, and important opportunities missed, because of the failure to recognise this. These may be discussed singly.

**A land of isolated villages with local problems.** To most Inuit, Nunavut is all about solving social, economic, and environmental problems afflicting their community and its near hinterland. The means are primarily (a) by taking control of the region's budget and of development, resource management, education, social welfare, and other policies, and (b) by representing Inuit in relations with the Canadian government and other major interests, whether government or industry. This, of course, was and remains the primary motive of the people and leaders of Nunavut. However, sometimes they received unexpected help, or faced unforeseen difficulties, because of the other three contexts.

At the high policy level, this homely indigenous North only episodically has been a serious focus in Ottawa. 'Northern policy' has dealt primarily with great resource projects (or fantasies about such). It has also involved securing Canadian sovereignty, scientific research, and military issues (such as the Distant Early Warning line of radar bases). Then there has been a range of speculative matters ranging from futuristic transport technologies to geo-political and strategic scenarios. This 'high policy' North has tended too often to leave out the people who live there. On the other hand, since the 1950s the federal government, both directly and through the NWT government, has directed notable sums and much imagination quietly to Northern peoples by means of the most complete 'welfare state' commitment anywhere in North America (all the while successive federal ministers and heads of Northern government have trumpeted a classic North American free enterprise ideology to the southern public, despite the rather different reality in the North).

**An exotic and unique region.** The Inuit culture with its icons or stereotypes of snow igloo, fur parkas, and patient hunters of the sea ice, and the treeless land, icebergs, polar bears, and long winter dark of the Arctic, have fascinated Canadian and everyone else for a long time. The Arctic and Inuit are frequent subjects of TV items or documentaries all around the world. Reinforcing this idea that Canada is trustee of a very special part of the world is the fact that the Northwest Territories (and Arctic Quebec until the 1960s) have been under federal administration, a natural focus therefore of federal science, resources policy, and politico-administrative innovation. Inuit have sometimes complained that they feel like they are in a zoo, being studied and preserved rather than allowed to live their lives and follow their aspirations. On the other hand, a visit to the

Northern regions of the seven provinces with Northern hinterlands reminds us how much better have been general conditions, not to mention the far greater social and political opportunities, in the Territories.<sup>6</sup>

Many voices in Ottawa over the years have argued that the North should remain a federal preserve for scientific study and enlightened administration, but neither indigenous nor non-indigenous Northerners have taken kindly to the idea. Ultimately it was the federal government's own policies in society and resource development which caused a political backlash and fuelled the indigenous rights movement which transformed the North.

**An indigenous member of Canada's federation.** The political recognition of a large portion of Canada, presumed rich in minerals, oil, and gas, but inhabited by sceptical 'outsiders' to the European culture, language, industrial economy, and 'normal' aspirations of the OECD 'first world', has been both exciting to many and troubling to some. Nor is it surprising that Nunavut is being watched with interest by other countries, e.g., Australia.<sup>7</sup>

Nunavut Inuit leaders had to accept various demands and concerns of the national government not applicable to small self-governing entities such as Indian first nations on a small land base. For instance, Ottawa wanted to avoid having a single Inuit territory uniting all Inuit in the North and stretching from Inuit Greenland to Alaska's Inuit North Slope, in effect.<sup>8</sup>

As always when Canadians act neurotic in such matters, the unstated fear is that Francophone or Anglophone regions in Canada's central and eastern provinces might seize on such a precedent to demand re-drawing of boundaries to accommodate ethno-nationalist ambitions or anxieties. Ottawa simply refused, privately and clearly, but never in public statements, to include the Western Arctic Inuit, the Inuvialuit. This was one of the two biggest problems in creating Nunavut: Inuit were reluctant to reject their Inuvialuit kin as long as the latter said they wanted to join, but Inuvialuit leaders were more interested in leverage to get a better offer to stay in the Western NWT than eager to become a minority region in Nunavut<sup>9</sup> (the other big problem was also a boundary issue, i.e., the western and southern political and land claims boundaries, now both the same, of Nunavut with the Dene).

**Inuit anticipated fears about white minority status in Nunavut.** The Nunavut Constitutional Forum ostentatiously undertook a study on how best to entrench minority rights in the Nunavut governing system. Nevertheless, Canada's national daily newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, fretted over comments in Building Nunavut about managing transient work forces to contain social impacts in the way other

Northern regions on resource frontiers do, e.g., Greenland, Iceland, Shetland, the Faroes, and Norway. Also, resource issues were a central issue for government and public, i.e., would Inuit shut down all development? The Nunavut claims settlement provides mechanisms for Inuit roles and benefits from such development. In any case, Canadians have accepted a different social order 'North of 60'.

However, the main worries were constitutional and political. Would a new member of the Canadian federation upset constitutional amendment mechanics, be a stalking-horse for federal agendas among the provinces, and bring exotic and subversive ideas into Canadian political culture? Because Nunavut is not becoming a province, much of this worry is irrelevant. Governing arrangements affecting others are not formally changed, except that the Western NWT has been encouraged by creation of Nunavut to review its own constitutional framework, a process now occurring. Moreover, the performance of Inuit leaders in the national constitutional reform process beginning in 1978 has shown Canada's political élite and the general public (thanks to televised conferences and interviews) that Inuit are good and smart people with much to offer the rest of us. For their part, Nunavut leaders continually stress that through Nunavut they are trying to join Canada as equals, not separate from it.

**An international hinterland.** Years before Nunavut's political status became clear, Inuit there and in Labrador, Quebec, and the Western NWT had brought their regions and politics into a new international relationship with Inuit in Alaska and Greenland, other Northern indigenous peoples, and the international community. The Arctic Peoples Conference in Copenhagen, 1973, was a major event in this process, bringing Inuit and Northern Canada's Indian peoples together with Greenlanders and Sami.<sup>10</sup>

Although Canadian politicians and others have said for years that 'Canada is an Arctic country', it meant almost nothing. Then, from the 1950s the federal government made a new commitment to the region, especially the Inuit areas. But beginning with the 1973 conference and then the founding of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) in Barrow, Alaska, in 1977, Inuit redefined Canada as a whole and the Arctic in particular. Now the Arctic was no longer a poor deprived place into which the material culture, ideas, and kindness of Canada must be poured from south to north to 'civilise' the unfortunate natives; rather, it was a different world, one where culture, economy, language, and political solidarity flowed east-west, a world about which Canadians and their government knew almost nothing. It was a place of old knowledge and ancient traditions, much older than the European presence in Canada, and yet it

was being recognised and re-organised now as a place which had something special to communicate to the world at large, even though Canadians had long shown they were not prepared to listen. It caught Canadians by surprise and made them feel a little foolish. After all, an important psychological aspect of the Arctic Peoples Conference for those involved had been the satisfaction of finding persons with whom to share failures and successes in the struggle to maintain culture and regain control – the struggles against the power and smugness of a Canadian society which had only thought the North useful as a pile of minerals or hidden storage tank of oil and gas to be taken away to make Southern Canada wealthy. The federal Northern administration had a more social and indigenous-centred program from the 1950s onward, but it was known only to a few people. Besides, even that vision was based on an assumption that minerals, oil, and gas were the necessary underpinning of future ‘progress’ in the North.

Ottawa had meant well but had its nose rubbed in the new realities. While Canadian government officials argued about whether they dare speak to anyone in Greenland lest it offend the Danes – and decided that, No, they must not – Inuit Canadians (and Alaskans) were matter-of-factly going back and forth, cooperating happily with Greenland ministers, officials, and organisations, and, doing so in their own language, as were Alaskan Inuit. Not content with that, these young upstarts insisted on setting up their own international organisation, the ICC. Now the North was no longer just for middle-aged chaps to talk about in blazers with a sherry or scotch glass in hand on a military fly-around or conference, talk which would sometimes include gentle head-shaking about those strange and recalcitrant ‘Eskimos’. Now, instead, the North was something disputed passionately by young Northern residents unlikely to enjoy club manners or abstract policy – and in a language the ‘experts’ couldn’t even speak. (Worse was to come. Soon these young people were putting on suits and replacing the old-timers in these meetings sponsored by governments, although there are still fly-arounds for ambassadors and others, presumably still ill-informed by southern officials recycling old prejudices.)

### **Practical Lessons for Others**

The Nunavut experience has countless lessons for others, but a few are worth mentioning. Most important of all was that Inuit created the Nunavut concept and fought for it, themselves. It had no Canadian precedents, no neat boundaries of surrounding ocean or lines

on any map, and flew in the face of many Canadian ideas and ideals. Through determination over many years, and despite many major setbacks, they won their goal.

The winning style was to avoid extreme or confrontational rhetoric which frightened a country already haunted by the Quebec independence movement and fearful of any ethno-national movement. The racial violence of US cities and violent decolonisation in parts of the 'third world' were to be avoided. Even so the Inuit leaders had to explain their good intentions over and over. The fact that the Nunavut claims and self-government process has occurred over 22 years, to date, has meant constant briefing of new governments or new ministers, winning new members of parliamentary committees, educating new journalists, etc. (Nunavut should have proceeded at least 10 years ago. The only benefit of extra time has been that more Inuit have gone through school and are ready to take up the work of running Nunavut. All the same, education and training to provide Inuit administrators and other personnel will remain urgent priorities for many years to come.)

Avoiding certain types of controversy was important. National uproar had landed on the heads of Dene in 1975 with their Dene Nation and Dene Declaration, only months before the Inuit launched their Nunavut package of proposals. Positive measures were also needed. The most important of these was an active presence on the national scene. This was no small task for a region far from Canada's media and population centres. However, by insistently putting forward Nunavut views to public bodies and inquiries, as the Nunavut Constitutional Forum and other Inuit bodies did, Canadians came to recognise Nunavut as a moral community, a political community, a regional entity, long before it was that in a formal or legal sense. By making thoughtful presentations to public bodies and in public forums, constantly demonstrating that Inuit were careful and knowledgeable about their territory while also respectful and mindful of important Canadian values and political culture, Inuit dispelled a hidden white fear. That was the unstated anxiety among many European-descended Canadians that 'primitive' or 'backward' or 'nomadic' people might be unreliable or run amok if empowered. Few Canadians realised that Inuit in Nunavut knew more about government, and were more over-governed, than other Canadians.

Indeed, that fact posed problems. Older Inuit had become so alienated from government by its disruption of their lives that talk of a new and closer one did not always cause dancing in the snow. On the one hand they understood all too well the power of government to do things, but they worried that unless more Inuit youth were trained to take the new jobs, there would be problems. In

every community the question put to the Nunavut Constitutional Forum on its 1983 tour was the same: Where are the Inuit who will staff the new government? And where are the training programs to prepare them?

The choice of name, Nunavut, a common Inuit term meaning 'our land', was helpful at home. Inuit would call the region that – in lower-case, as it were – no matter what names and lines the White Man put on the map. Obviously Nunavut benefited from the lack of strong opposition within the region, although there was some opposition. For a while in 1985 that opposition exerted itself and derailed the whole project after the federal government publicly set a timetable for creating Nunavut.<sup>11</sup> However, a more usual fear was that we would fail to mobilise enough people to vote in the several referenda which senior governments demanded; after all, if Inuit felt no threat, why bother voting? In each case the communities were reminded that it was important that they show support, actively, to maintain momentum, and in each case they responded with very high turn-outs and extremely high Yes votes. Ultimately the solidarity of Nunavut Inuit behind the land claims and self-government agenda was the most important factor. One might write a book on how that was achieved. In the 1920s Knud Rasmussen found isolated traditional camps in a world of their own across Nunavut, but by the 1970s there was a Nunavut region and political community despite scattered and isolated settlements. Today there are already reports of unseemly squabbles between communities and among Nunavut's regions for material advantages, and while inevitable in any political system, Inuit leaders will now have to manage and control such conflict which is no longer directed at faraway whites. They will also have to strengthen and assert an overriding Nunavut interest to win some very large battles within and outside Nunavut.

One can only say that in the countless daily efforts to create Nunavut there was a spirit of Inuit practicality and willingness to solve problems rather than rushing to the media to shout and show outrage every time something was difficult or displeasing. Yes, there were huge issues of principle to be overcome – the decision-making role for Nunavut land and sea co-management bodies, Nunavut self-government as *sine qua non* for Inuit to sign any claims settlement, the decoupling of Nunavut and Western NWT destinies (from those who wanted to hold up Nunavut till the Western NWT agreed on its own constitution), the inclusion of marine areas and marine management in Nunavut 'land' claims, etc. Inuit were determined to win such basic disputes with Ottawa and they did. But their endless daily patience and conviction in what they were doing, and their usual

avoidance of attacks on Ottawa, helped the negotiating climate immensely.

Finally, the many practical individuals representing government departments, persons who will rarely be remembered but whose hard work and frequent idealism and initiative helped the great, clumsy, and not-always-very-bright behemoth of Canada's federal government move towards final settlement... they are as much part of this story as Inuit leaders and their teams. If Nunavut and the North had been held hostage to simplistic 'principles' and the ignorance of bombastic white political leaders, e.g., as in Australia today, things might have been very different. The unhelpful uproar in 1998 among some white politicians over the Nisga'a settlement in British Columbia illustrates the problem. Inuit and their white allies have helped to change Canada's conventions for the better, benefiting all other indigenous groups seeking self-government.

## **A World Community of Indigenous Hinterlands**

Nunavut is one of many regions around the world where indigenous people are struggling to re-establish their culture, self-government, livelihoods, and territorial rights. Some of these places, like Nunavut and the Inuit regions of Alaska, the Inuvialuit region (NWT), Nunavik (Arctic Quebec), Labrador, and Greenland; the Torres Strait Islands, Tiwi islands (Bathurst and Melville, north of Darwin), the Pitjantjatjara Lands, Kimberley, Arnhem Land, Cape York Peninsula, all in Australia; Cook Islands, Niue, and others, have officially recognised governments or government authorities, e.g., Torres Strait Regional Authority and Island Coordinating Council in the same building on Thursday Island, Queensland. Some, as in Northern Scandinavia, are moral and cultural communities working through a variety of ethnic or regional bodies, e.g., the Sami Parliaments are official regional bodies, in effect. In many other places indigenous peoples do not yet have more than the will to succeed, or have only informal meetings of various bodies within a region. In Alice Springs, Australia, the major indigenous organisations meet formally or informally to coordinate political positions and share information so that although there is no regional body in theory, there is a strong Central Australia indigenous political community in practice. Of course, in such cases hostile governments may do their utmost to create divisions among indigenous people.

Although these various indigenous territories often use international support or ideas from elsewhere to begin their work, their leaders forget such contacts as they struggle with powerful govern-



ments at home. This is unfortunate because the 'political studies' they need are in few universities or books – rather, they are found in the experience of other peoples too busy to write things down or too secretive to share their ideas. It is most desirable that Nunavut and other indigenous peoples share ideas and experience with each other to improve their opportunities and outcomes at every stage. A permanent council or 'conference' is needed, ideally within the United Nations system, e.g., to better fulfil the goals of the Brundtland Report for better protection of indigenous hinterlands.<sup>12</sup> There are enough indigenous hinterlands with more than enough territory – in the 'first world' alone! – to show that a new sort of ethno-cultural entity with a new sort of political economy is emerging in the world. Nevertheless, national governments will do very little for them unless indigenous peoples maintain the momentum. The best way to move ahead is to share ideas and inspiration widely.

## Conclusion

Despite Canada's endless constitutional struggles and accompanying despair, Inuit in the North, as well as Cree, Dene (in NWT and Yukon), Métis, Nisga'a, et al., have been rebuilding the Northern two-thirds or three-quarters of Canada according to a new political economy. This hopeful problem-solving is replacing bitter tensions and even more bitter injustices of the past. That being said, Canadians and their governments have almost no understanding of this 'big picture', what it requires in the way of continuing support, what must be done to continue the success story. Essentially Ottawa has been reacting to Inuit and other indigenous initiatives. The only positive approach with any official backing was found in the 1985 Coolican report and the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the latter a proposal for regional indigenous political settlements all across Canada.<sup>13</sup>

The indigenous political movements which emerged in the Northwest Territories from the late 1960s were outraged reactions to injustice and inequality in society and politics, and to the denigration of indigenous culture by a white élite. The focus moved to land, sea, and environmental issues a little later. Nunavut is an Inuit response to inequality, as well as a positive assertion of territorial rights. Nunavut's ideals and legitimacy demand that it not fall prey to social division itself. This will not be easy. A highly-paid public sector élite (including the corporations created by the Nunavut claims settlement) will collect 'fre-

quent flyer' points while many people will have few means or prospects.

The Canadian media have now served notice that they will no longer simply keep quiet about disparities between the fine rhetoric of indigenous leaders and the actual situations their people endure at their hands.<sup>14</sup> The mundane fulfilment of indigenous self-government, of course, means politicians and officials being held responsible for decisions, outcomes, revenue-raising, and spending in the name of the community. Nunavut leaders will not have the sort of honeymoon period, the 'willing suspension of disbelief', they could have received a decade ago. Fortunately Nunavut has had a weekly newspaper for years, *Nunatsiaq News*, which has set a very high standard in public responsibility, social wisdom, and political commentary under the editorship of Jim Bell. Indigenous peoples anywhere in the world would be fortunate to have such an asset as they develop an authentic political culture as part of their accession to genuine self-government.

Building a uniquely Inuit and Nunavut political culture is the great domestic task now. Inuit must overcome the sort of petty community-centred bargaining which has become a disease of the Northwest Territories political system. Fighting over the bounty provided by southern taxpayers, while having difficulty with major policy development and setting directions, has been the curse of the NWT's non-party government system.<sup>15</sup> There will always be special pleading for one's own community, of course, but the Inuit movement was a reaction against all that. That is, the old NWT government set up community councils and gave them budgets so that Inuit could play at making decisions about street light purchases and other local goodies. Inuit insisted that the larger issues of cultural survival, culturally relevant teaching and public services, management and protection of environment and food species, and the ability to map their own future were more urgently needed. And so they rejected the NWT. Now they must do better.

They must also come to grips with great national and international economic enterprises and trends which would use their lands and seas as disposable economic assets or shipping corridors. That, too, was the whole point of achieving Nunavut as a separate jurisdiction responsible for Inuit, to Inuit.

The challenges of victory in their long struggle to achieve Nunavut may become pale in the face of the reality of having won. Now they must not drift into the lazy local ways of the old NWT, merely taking over the administration they long deplored, but show that they really do have something different, something unique, and something important to put in its place. To get this far

they have overcome the timid, the local, and the small thinkers among them. They must not abandon their great project to those people now. Besides, locally minded people will be fully occupied in making Nunavut work at grass roots level, an essential process itself.

The dual constitutional of Nunavut, the first such in Canada, provides important governing powers to the Inuit-only claims settlement structures as well as to the Nunavut government. In other claims settlements the huge funds and limited accountability of claims bodies have become problems in themselves, and a problem vis-à-vis indigenous-dominated public authorities in the same region. If the claims bodies and government work well together in Nunavut they will be able to move mountains. There are many areas of potential conflict, however. Nunavut will need large-minded and magnanimous leaders in its early years.

Indeed, in the Canadian federation Nunavut should always be 'punching above its weight', as Australians say. The 'realist' school who say one must focus on very small and limited things are really only advertising their own lack of imagination and breadth.<sup>16</sup> Nunavut is a big idea, and has been achieved by people with big ideas. It will always be an exception to any Canadian norms. It can turn its uniqueness to advantage.

Nunavut leaders must also be aware that they represent not only a new, but a new type of political entity. The world will not let them forget it, of course – they will receive countless invitations to speak at conferences or on tours of indigenous territories abroad. Some of the great and long-term goals of Nunavut will only be achievable in cooperation and communication with other indigenous peoples, support groups, and international agencies. The Arctic environment and the future of marine species and marine management are the most obvious of those concerns. One would expect Nunavut's government and the Nunavut Inuit claims corporations to be pillars of support for the Inuit Circumpolar Conference. One may also hope that Nunavut will be active in building an international network or council of indigenous hinterlands. This body would share experience and ideas among members to help each other and to strengthen global protection for such marginal regions in the face of hysterical demands by large poor countries or powerful rich countries for their resources.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The facts lie buried in countless legislature papers of the NWT Legislative Assembly written over past decades.

- <sup>2</sup> This story is thoroughly recounted in Tester FJ & Kulchyski P, 1994: *Tammarniit (Mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939-63*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver.
- <sup>3</sup> A fascinating look at an older mindset is the book, JD Hamilton's *Arctic Revolution: Social Change in the Northwest Territories, 1935-1994*, Dundurn Press, Toronto, 1994. The author is awed by material change, and although a witness of the political and social changes following, entirely fails to 'see' them. The 'revolution' of his title is the coming of electrical appliances and kitchen sinks!
- <sup>4</sup> Roads are controversial. Many people want them for lower costs of freight and, more questionably, to bring economic development. Many people fear them for effects on wildlife, e.g., migrating caribou, and influx of North American social problems.
- <sup>5</sup> Berger T, 1977. *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland: the Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry*, Minister of Supply and Services, Ottawa.
- <sup>6</sup> A report of October 1998 appears to contest this northern advantage in socio-economic conditions. The author is trying to find answers and has suggested a number of possible anomalies in the study methodology.
- <sup>7</sup> The populist xenophobe, Pauline Hanson, leader of the One Nation party, attacked Nunavut (and the author of this article) in Australia's Parliament, 1-10-97 & 2-6-98, in her usual strident terms. It has also been attacked in Australia by at least two Northern Territory premiers and a former national chief justice. None of these critics has any real understanding of what Nunavut is or why it has come into being. Those indigenous Australians who read Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen's speech to the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, July 24, 1998, recommending to the rest of the world such indigenous self-government as in Greenland (or Nunavut, he could have added), took heart.
- <sup>8</sup> Although the Yukon north slope separates NWT and Alaska, NWT Inuvialuit, i.e., Western Inuit, have special rights in that part of the Yukon.
- <sup>9</sup> Although some observers have been outraged at this 'division' of Inuvialuit and Inuit, the reality is that they were never really joined, culturally or administratively. There is no question that some Inuvialuit, especially in more traditional communities, liked the idea of Nunavut. However, this whole issue has been something of an illusion, and one sometimes cynically manipulated. It deserves a study of its own.
- <sup>10</sup> See Kleivan I, 1992: 'The Arctic Peoples' Conference in Copenhagen, November 22-25, 1973', *Études Inuit Studies*, Vol. 16 (1-2), 1992, 227-236. Also, Jull P, 1998. "'First world" indigenous internationalism after twenty-five years', *Indigenous Law Bulletin* (Australia), Vol 4, No 9 (February 1998), 8-11.
- <sup>11</sup> See Jull P, 1985: 'Dividing the North', *Policy Options*, Vol 6, No 4, May 1985, 10-13.
- <sup>12</sup> See 'Empowering Vulnerable Groups', in Chapter 4, in Brundtland GH et al., 1987: *Our Common Future: The Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*, Oxford University Press.
- <sup>13</sup> Coolican M et al., 1985: *Living Treaties: Lasting Agreements: Report of the Task Force To Review Comprehensive Claims Policy*, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa; see especially Vol 2 in RCAP, 1996: *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 5 volumes, Ottawa; and this author's attempt to provide a federal agenda for Nunavut and similar projects, Jull P, 1997: 'Re-Inventing Canada: The North and National Policy, Revised 3rd Edition', *For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, CD-ROM, Public Works and Government Services (Publishing), Ottawa.

- <sup>14</sup> The clearest statement is made by William Thorsell, the editor of Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, in a column on October 31, 1998, 'An open look at aboriginal issues'.
- <sup>15</sup> NWT parties would have developed sooner but this was deemed impractical until the major de facto party, i.e., the Nunavut members' caucus, left the stage.
- <sup>16</sup> Nunavut leaders are less likely to be a problem here than non-Inuit advisers.

## Further Reading

### For Nunavut's Northern and indigenous context see:

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## CHAPTER 4



# WASTELAND OF NOBODIES

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*by John Amagoalik*

In the 1950s and 60s, when journalists first discovered the Arctic, they would come up and interview a cop, a teacher, or the local government administrator. Having spent a few days in the Arctic and spoken to "Arctic experts", they would return to their homes in the south and write their stories. Somewhere in their article a familiar line usually appeared. They almost never failed to refer to the Arctic as a "wasteland where nobody lives". I couldn't understand this because they obviously saw us. Even as a young boy, I was annoyed that these guys thought of us as nobodies or that we somehow did not qualify as human beings. It was not very long ago that even some federal government people were still referring to our homeland as a wasteland and defending their policies in the Arctic because "nobody lives there".

Just as disturbing to me was to listen to conversations between non-Inuit as they discussed the future of the Arctic and the Inuit. There was always agreement between them that Inuit could not survive as a people. They all agreed that Inuit culture and language "will disappear" and would be only memories and displayed on museum shelves. What disturbed me even more was the fact that they were so casual when they were talking about the "death of Inuit culture".

If those same journalists and social scientists were to come to the Arctic today, I suspect they would write quite different stories. They would understand by now that the Arctic is not a wasteland. That it is a unique ecosystem with wide variety of flora and fauna. They would discover that a stubborn culture still thrives. They would discover that our language is doing just fine.

They would also discover that Inuit have staggered but not fallen. They would see the signs of revival and that Inuit are adapting to the new realities of the computer age. They would see that we have signed the largest and most comprehensive land treaty in history. They would find that we are changing the map of Canada. They would see that we have changed the attitude of Canadians about our proper place in this country. They would also see that we definitely qualify as human beings.

Perhaps they would write that this bunch of nobodies are doing some remarkable things in their distinct homeland.



## CHAPTER 5

# PIGATSIPIVUGUT YOU ATTAIN, THEREFORE WE ATTAIN

*by Zebedee Nungak*

## **Nunavut**

The preparations for Nunavut's inauguration April 1, 1999 were a sight to behold from Nunavik, on the akiani (south) side of Hudson Bay. It was difficult to be an involuntary bystander, knowing that we could have been taking part in these celebrations had Parliament not passed that despicable Act 87 years ago that placed our own particular stretch of tundra into a jurisdictional purgatory called Quebec.

It takes all of one's self-control not to gush forth with expressions of envy (in capital letters) about Nunavut's birth. It is an admiring appreciation, a vivid inspiration for those of us who still carry its dream as a gleam in our eye, despite being several political light-years behind.

Nunavut is already a proud credit to the jurisdiction that has discovered the courage to accommodate it. It is sure to strengthen, and not weaken, the so-called 'fabric' of Canada. The descendants of those who came from St. Malo, France and Plymouth, England are now also embarking on a journey of discovery. They will be delighted to see that the order of life their immigrant ancestors stumbled upon in the 1500s and 1600s is sound, stable, and worthy of recognition in the form of Nunavut.

The map of Canada has been changed peacefully, without even a notable war of words. This has been the result of appropriate respect for the expressed will of the people who live there - and not by a wrenching, divisive extraction harmful to any significant collectivity. It is a sight to behold, as I've said already but have to say again. We rejoice in Nunavut with those of our flesh and blood who reside in significant numbers in the High Arctic, Rankin Inlet, Cape Dorset, Iqaluit and Sanikiluaq. The good fortune that shines upon our cousins, aunts, uncles, and in-laws warms our hearts. Pigatsi pivugut, as the saying goes - You attain, therefore we attain. We are strengthened, encouraged and inspired by your attainment!

We will certainly have occasion to discuss issues and events of importance to both of us: four of the nineteen ridings in the new territory run smack up to our high water mark, and we tread upon

your MLA's jurisdiction every time we heave our boats into the water, or hunt on the floe edge. Our 'breadbasket', the offshore, is still your piece of business but now at least we will talk about it in Inuktitut, in Iqaluit, with Inuit cabinet ministers. That's awesome! From where I look at it, Nunavut surely IS a sight to behold!

## Coming Full Circle

Archbishop Desmond Tutu said it best in describing the momentous first landing of white settlers in his homeland: 'When the white people came upon South Africa, they had the Book, the Bible, and the black people had the land. The white people then said, "Let us close our eyes and pray." And so they did. When everybody opened their eyes and stood up, the black people had the Book, and the white people had the land!'

A threshold got crossed during the kneeling and, by some fiat, the new arrivals became the landlord. The balance of relationships between indigenous inhabitants and the settlers was jolted completely upside down.

We in Canada have not escaped this universal colonial fact. From the times of the first Europeans landing in various parts of North America, we aboriginals were doomed to wrestle with being tenants in our ancestral homelands. We are consequential Victim/Beneficiaries of Qallunaat 'discovery' of our lands, and their doctrine of claiming what they saw in the name of the King.

Let us for a moment imagine a reverse order of this process: Inuit shamans set out to colonize some stretches of Europe, landing in St. Malo, France and Plymouth, England. They plant their amulets on the shore, loudly asserting ownership of all that they see, and tell the locals that their heretofore adequate existence is out of line. All previous order of life is null and void, and the shamans' directives are now the enforced law. Lands are arbitrarily divided into units that are defined in seances, with absolutely no regard for how things were done before.

The shamans would be the laughing-stock of the French Saint-Malo-ites and the English Plymouth-ites. Or worse, they would simply be ignored. Probably the Europeans, being civilized, would have a less open immigration policy than our ancestors and would unceremoniously shoo away the pretentious foreigners. Does it sound wacky when laid out this way? The British and the French have done it in all deadly seriousness!

Claiming back tattered remnants of our lands has been an exercise in coming full circle in the hardest possible way. Lands claimed,

wherever they may be, look like Apartheid-style 'homelands' in South Africa. The absence of respectful regard toward original inhabitants inherent in the colonial legacy manifests itself in the uneven record of claims settled. Some, like the Nisga'a claim, take obscenely long. Some, like James Bay, are done with undue haste. What a satisfying delight, then, to observe Nunavut's birth! I can just see Desmond Tutu dancing the toya-toya over this event.

## CHAPTER 6



# NUNAVUT-PLACE NAMES AND SELF-DETERMINATION: SOME REFLECTIONS

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*by Ludger Müller-Wille*

Humankind's attributes are expressed through language, gestures, behavior, attitudes and a number of other defining characteristics. Among these elements proper names, a specific body of vocabulary, are an essential part of the human mind's capability to sort, organize and assess the mental, social and physical environments that need to be understood to make sense of life and its vagaries. Like names for people and animals, names for geographical places and spaces are an essential means to situate oneself and others in the natural environment in which a specific population functions. Thus, geographical names in a specific culture and language are an expression of the intricate relationship between humans and the environment. Geographical names, i.e. toponyms, or more commonly known in English as place names, represent a complex body of knowledge people have accumulated over long periods of being part of specific natural environments and ecosystems; i.e. culture and environment function as one system and are not separate.

These bodies of names, originally solely contained in oral traditions, are mental records or maps of spatial dimensions that give the interactions between humans and the environment a structure, maintaining and developing the essential information to know the environment's contents as well as the physical and human processes related to them. Furthermore, place names, as a crucial component of any language, have always attained a territorial dimension indicating range and limits of diverse cultures and their languages through their relationship with space.

On the one hand, place names as proper names have grown out of the intensive links between people and their environment, thus they are part and parcel of the human heritage and oral tradition - the cultural indicator. On the other hand, strongly supported by written traditions and visual maps, place names are also a very effective political indicator of territoriality and sovereignty for both original populations and for expansionist and conquering interests. In historic and modern times, moreover, place names have served political image building as well as posturing in the name of self-

determination either by fledgling nation-building, movements of independence, or self-government for aboriginal peoples in centralized state systems. Place names have become a political as well as a cultural banner to prove sovereignty to oneself and to the Other. These processes have taken on different forms in various cultural and political settings. It is often too arduous to compare such situations since they represent different premises and goals. However, what seems to be a common element is the expected recognition of one's cultural and political rights to self-determination in order to create a system of balanced equality among peoples, cultures and languages that would level the disadvantages given by imbalances in numbers, territory and power. In fact, the imagined challenge is to grant equal rights to any culture, language and, for that matter, their place names. The problem is how can this goal be achieved in modern times with all the knowledge and technological advantages available? A brief look at the Canadian and, in particular, the Inuit situation in *Nunavut* might reveal some insight into these processes leading to self-determination and ultimate cultural and political sovereignty for people who intend to make their own decisions over their own lives, i.e. including the acceptance and use of their very own place names in their own language - supported by their own maps and homepages on the internet.

As in other cultures and languages Inuit place names have been passed on from generation to generation through oral tradition for time immemorial. This temporal process receives its changes and adaptations from its own dynamics which are bound to the interchange between peoples and their environments. In their varying characteristics and content place names represent the intimate expression of the close relationship between Inuit and the specific elements of the arctic landscape on a very locally and regionally defined level. Thus, these evolved place names have been part of the highly localized cultural heritage carried on by local communities. In fact, these place names are interconnected and can be identified as functional systems serving the needs of the local Inuit population. Today, the foundations of these local systems are threatened by many influences related to external communications that have reached global dimensions.

Historically, in written form, Inuit place names have been documented, if scarcely and not systematically, since the beginning of contacts between Inuit and Europeans. Some of these names have entered the 'official' toponymy on maps produced in Europe and later on in Canada; however, these place names never represented the complete Inuit place name systems in their localized cultural and linguistic varieties. In fact, these records of Inuit toponymy were

fragmented and selective at best and could not be seen as a continuum of place name use among the Inuit in their own languages. Only since the 1880s have Inuit place names been collected systematically throughout specific regions by 'outsiders', i.e. anthropologists, historians, and natural scientists who did understand the paramount importance of aboriginal place name systems to local knowledge of special natural environments such as the arctic landscape including water and ice. Such surveys have resulted in a more appropriate and representative picture of Inuit toponymy and its functioning. It is due to the foresight and tenacity of a Franz Boas (1858-1942), who, in the early 1880s, conducted one of the first such surveys with Inuit, who also documented their knowledge by drawing maps. Today, this collection of place names serves the Inuit of southern Qikirtaaluk [Baffin Island] as a historical base upon which to build the modern Inuit toponymy of *Nunavut* as stipulated in the land claims agreement.

Such toponymic surveys carried out by external interests had as their goal to record and document aboriginal knowledge as a cultural indicator stressing the connection between people, culture and land. They were not seen as a tool to strengthen cultural self-determination since, parallel to these anthropological efforts, Inuit lands were swamped by the application of foreign place names to their places and spaces. This toponymic encroachment, for purposes of integration and sovereignty by the Canadian state, was enhanced and solidified by its inclusion on official maps and 'officialization' of those foreign place names as the singular name for one specific place - in fact, in Canada, by law, a legal entity. Aboriginal names in their entirety as a system never received 'official recognition' as such, rather individually aboriginal place names were accepted as an exemption. However, times have changed.

These circumstances were clearly altered by the modern native land claims process in Canada beginning in the late 1960s and continuing until today. With aboriginal territorial claims being put forward against the overall sovereignty claim by the Canadian federal state and its provinces and territories, place names obtained a high value and exposure as cultural and political symbols in these altercations providing proof for the aboriginality of these claims by projecting names in the indigenous languages into the national and international political fora. *Denendeh* and *Nunavut*, names for Dene and Inuit lands respectively, were projected in the 1970s and are early examples of this process. The political dimension of place names thus became clearly apparent as an important component of self-reliance and self-determination leading, in fact, to a more independent position for aboriginal peoples in the context of Canada.

In this political arena, however, only some aboriginal place names received this exposure at the early stages. This meant that complete and functional aboriginal place name systems were not recognized in their holistic context by the 'other', i.e. 'official toponymy'. Further, Canada and its political parts adhere to the internationally accepted principle of 'one place, one name', an awkward position for a multicultural and multilingual country where multiple, thus parallel, naming for one place in different languages does occur frequently. Systematic documentation and surveys of Inuit place names were conducted sporadically in geographically defined areas of Inuit lands with Inuit experts between the 1940s and 1970s (for example by Frans van de Velde, Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, Milton M. R. Freeman with the Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project, and others). These collections were, in most cases, submitted to government authorities for 'officialization'; however, acceptance was reluctant and did not result in the full representation of all names collected as a toponymic entity representing Inuit culture and languages.

In 1981, some years after the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed, the Inuit Elders Conference of Northern Quebec with the newly founded Avataq Cultural Institute passed a resolution requesting the systematic recording of Inuit place names to enhance their culture, language, and general education, but also the geographical knowledge of the land, sea and ice to safeguard Inuit presence throughout their cultural and political territory. The results of these efforts, supported financially by the provincial and federal governments, culminated in the publication of the *Gazetteer of Inuit Place Names in Nunavik, Quebec, Canada* with close to 8000 place names (Ludger Müller-Wille in conjunction with the Inuit Elders of Nunavik, Inukjuak: Avataq Cultural Institute 1987) followed by the *Inuit Place Names Map Series of Nunavik* in 1991 (by 1998, 27 maps had been published) and the 'officialization' in April 1988 of *Nunavik*, selected by referendum, as the name and uniting symbol for the Inuit region in the northern parts of the Quebec-Labrador peninsula. Although, by the late 1990s, a larger number of Inuit toponyms have now been 'integrated' into the official toponymy of the Province of Quebec under its language law of 1977, these Inuit toponymic projects have confirmed, in fact, the validity of aboriginal Inuit place name systems parallel to the introduced 'official' toponymy by focusing on and stressing the cultural integrity of the Inuit place name systems, collated from all Inuit regions of *Nunavik*. This has clearly led to a powerful representation of Inuit values both in cultural and political terms. Thus Inuit place names have become an integral part of the political concept of *Nunavik* as a means to support and enhance Inuit self-determination.

In other Inuit lands of arctic Canada the recording and documentation of Inuit place names has taken on different forms and avenues. Besides the existing historic collections mentioned above, organizations such as the Inuit Cultural Institute and individuals, either Inuit or non-Inuit, have taken on the task to conduct surveys throughout regions which are included in the modern territory of *Nunavut*, such as in *Kivalliq* (Keewatin), the western, central or eastern Arctic. However, these surveys have not yet resulted in the creation of a complete record of Inuit toponymy throughout *Nunavut*, although, as in *Nunavik*/Quebec, large numbers of Inuit place names have been 'officialized' since the late 1980s by the authorities of the Northwest Territories, even including name changes for settlements to the original Inuit version, i.e. Frobisher Bay = *Iqaluit*, Eskimo Point = *Arviat* and many others. Although considerable progress can be noted, it still seems that there is a lingering reluctance by the authorities to react to popular demands by local Inuit communities and their experts to aim at the complete representation and confirmation of Inuit place names throughout the Inuit territories. This might change under the new political constructs and constellations. The political and legal creation of *NUNAVUT* in April 1999 allows for the opportunity to consolidate the representation of Inuit toponymy, albeit based only on a rather short and quite general paragraph in the existing agreement that grants aboriginal, i.e. Inuit, toponymy full recognition and permanence. It is now clearly in the hands of the newly created authorities to progress in this issue to serve the interests of securing and developing Inuit culture and languages. Still at this time, many collections such as the *Kivalliq* (Keewatin) Nunatop Survey with 5000 names (collected by Inuit experts, Linna Weber Müller-Wille and the author between 1989-91) lie idle in archives and on hard discs. These data bases are ready to be used to preserve and develop Inuit cultural heritage, geographical knowledge and languages within the context of the pervasive use and application of English or French as the dominant languages. In this global linguistic context, the various Inuit languages are 'lesser spoken languages', to apply a term used in the European Union. These languages are under continuous pressures by majority languages. Safeguarding their survival requires policies and their implementation directed at the enhancement and strengthening of these languages' application and use among their speakers if language should remain an element of cultural identity and distinction.

This process clearly includes place names. Thus *Nunavut*, its peoples and organizations have now an opportunity to confirm the value of geographical names to Inuit culture and languages by setting standards in the use and application of all known Inuit names within

their territory. By doing so the responsible individuals and the society at large will contribute to the appropriate and proper representation of culture and to the identity of *Nunavut's* residents, thus supporting symbols that strengthen cultural and political self-determination.

April 7, 2000



## CHAPTER 7



# INUIT WRITING SYSTEMS IN NUNAVUT

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*by Kenn Harper*

## **Background**

Inuit had no traditional writing systems. After contact with non-Inuit, various writing systems were developed for Inuit, usually by missionaries whose purpose was to translate the Bible and encourage literacy for religious purposes. Missionaries did not introduce writing systems as a way of allowing Inuit to communicate with one another, although that was obviously a result.

Today, some Inuit leaders in Nunavut perceive a need for a change from the use of the Syllabic writing system to a system using the Roman alphabet. This would be a major change, which would profoundly affect the lives of most adult Inuit. It should not be undertaken without serious study to determine whether, in fact, a change is needed. If a need for change were indicated, it could still not be undertaken without general public understanding and acceptance of that need. There is also some discussion of the need for standardization of the non-standard Roman orthography used in the Kitikmeot Region of Nunavut

To begin any such study, we need some understanding of orthographic reform and of the position of Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun as used and written in Nunavut.

### **1.1. Inuit writing systems worldwide**

In Greenland, the missionary Poul Egede translated and published the New Testament in Greenlandic in its entirety by 1766. In 1794 Otto Fabricius published a new translation, in an orthography which was a revision of that of Egede. A third translation was published in 1822 by Johan Kleinschmidt, again in another revised orthography. In the mid-1800s Samuel Kleinschmidt revised and standardized the Greenlandic orthography; like his predecessors he used the Roman alphabet. His innovations became the standard for written Greenlandic for over 100 years, and were used consistently in books, newspapers and all official publications.

In 1973, the Greenlandic orthography underwent a major reform, to change from the Kleinschmidt orthography to the Roman alphabetic orthography we see in use there in all publications today.

Moravian missionaries from Greenland established missions in Labrador in the late eighteenth century. Their arrival pre-dated Kleinschmidt's work on the standardization of Greenland, so the Moravian orthography used in Labrador differs considerably from Greenlandic.

Roman orthographies were also used in the western Canadian Arctic, although no standard form developed and each writer was very much on his own to develop his own system.

In Alaska there are 3 examples of Eskimos (Yupik and Inuit) attempting to develop their own writing systems. The most well-known was developed around 1900 by a Yupik-speaker named Uyaqoq, more commonly known by his English name "Helper Neck". These were all picture writing systems, and they were developed only after contact with missionaries, and were not intended to be used for communication among Inuit but only as memory aids to assist in preaching on Biblical texts. Other than these unsuccessful attempts, the Roman alphabet has been used to write Alaskan Yupik and Inupiaq.

The Roman alphabet was also used in Siberia to write Yupik, before a system using Russian Cyrillic characters was imposed by the Russian government.

In the eastern Canadian Arctic, excluding Labrador, Inuit use a Syllabic writing system. This non-alphabetic system was developed first for the Cree by a missionary, James Evans. It was adapted to the Inuit language by two missionaries, John Horden and E. A. Watkins, but the major work in promoting its use among Inuit was done by the Anglican, Rev. Edmund James Peck, still remembered by his Inuktitut name, Uqammak. He worked first in Arctic Quebec for almost two decades before establishing a mission in Baffin in 1894. His efforts, and those of the Inuit catechists he trained, notably Luke Kidlapik, Joseph Pudloo and Peter Tooloogakjuak, resulted in Syllabics being used by all Inuit of the Baffin and Keewatin; when the Roman Catholic church established its first missions in the Keewatin region, they too used Syllabics.

## 1.2. Inuit writing systems in Nunavut

Linguists generally divide the Inuit language into 4 groupings of dialects (Alaskan Inupiaq, Western Canadian Inuktitun, Eastern Canadian Inuktitut, and Greenlandic). Of these, 3 are spoken in Canada, and 2 in Nunavut. Those spoken in Nunavut are Eastern Canadian Inuktitut (North Baffin, South Baffin, Aivilik, Kivalliq, and Arctic Quebec dialects) and Western Canadian Inuktitun (Inuinnaqtun and

Natsilingmiut dialects). Two orthographies are used in Nunavut. Syllabics is used for all Eastern Canadian Inuktitut dialects and Natsilingmiut dialect; Roman orthography is used for only one dialect, Inuinnaqtun, usually described in English as the Copper dialect. The situation can be summarized in the following chart:

<b>Nunavut Inuit Dialects and Orthographies</b>				
<b>Group</b>	<b>Dialect</b>	<b>Orthography</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Description</b>
Eastern Canadian Inuktitut	North Baffin	Syllabics	Baffin	Inuktitut
	South Baffin	Syllabics	Baffin	Inuktitut
	Aivilik	Syllabics	Keewatin	Inuktitut
	Kivalliq	Syllabics	Keewatin	Inuktitut
	Arctic Quebec	Syllabics	Baffin/ Keewatin	Inuktitut
Western Canadian Inuktun	Natsilingmiut	Syllabics	Eastern Kitikmeot/ Keewatin	Inuktitut
	Inuinnaqtun	Roman	Western Kitikmeot	Inuinnaqtun

### 1.3 Two versions of syllabics

When Catholic missionaries established missions among the Inuit in the early 1900s, they used a Syllabic orthography which differed in some respects from that used by Anglicans. The main difference was in showing vocalic length, but there were other minor differences.

A Roman orthography is used in the Inuinnaqtun communities of the Kitikmeot region. The orthography historically used was an inconsistent Roman orthography devised by Anglican missionaries.

Very little written material, other than church literature, was ever produced in it. This orthography [I'll refer to it as "Old Roman"] does not differentiate between "k" and "q", using "k" for both; does not differentiate between "g" and "r", using "g" for both; and uses "y" instead of "j". These consonants are used consistently. All five vowels are used, but "u" and "o" are often used interchangeably, as are "e" and "i". The inconsistent use of vowels makes for an inconsistent orthography, although many of its users claim it is not confusing.

## 2. Orthographic change

In the 1950s the federal government attempted to initiate orthographic reform among Canadian Inuit. A linguist, Gilles Lefebvre, was hired "to discuss the possibilities in the field of a unified standard orthography for the Canadian Eskimo language". [Harper, 1983, p. 36] Lefebvre rejected the Syllabic system, and proposed a gradual phasing out of Syllabics as a new Roman alphabetic writing system would be introduced. The government considered his recommendations premature, and they were never implemented. In 1960, however, they hired another linguist, Raymond Gagne, giving him the goal of establishing "one system of writing for all Canadian Eskimos". [Harper, 1983, p. 40] Gagne worked with Inuit such as Elijah Erkloo, Mary Panegoosho, Elijah Menarik, Abe Okpik and Joanasie Salamonie, and in 1961 published "Tentative Standard Orthography for Canadian Eskimos". Gagne concluded that "the only solution rests in presenting a new orthography in Roman letters." [Harper 1983, p. 43] Once again, the suggested reforms were not implemented.

### 2.1. The I.C.I. language commission

By the 1970s Inuit and educators recognized the need, not for an abandonment of the Syllabic writing system, but for a reform. Mark Kalluak and Armand Tagoona were among the first Inuit to push for reform. In 1974, at the insistence of Tagak Curley, the federal government funded Inuit Tapirisat of Canada to establish an Inuit Language Commission; the second of its seven objectives was to "study the present state of the written language and recommend changes for the future". The project was later transferred to the Inuit Cultural Institute. The director of the commission was Jose Kusugak.

The result was the development of a dual orthography. A Roman orthography was devised, built on an analysis of the language and the application of scientific principles. The Syllabic system was standardized – differences in style between Catholics and Anglicans were abandoned – and made compatible with the Roman system. Because the Roman and Syllabic versions were both based on the same analysis of the language and its orthographic needs, it was in fact one system with two orthographic forms. The dual orthography was ratified by ICI in 1976 for use by all Canadian Inuit.

## **2.2. The names chosen for the dual orthographies**

Each form of the dual orthography was given its own name – Qaliujaaqpait for Roman orthography, and Qaniujaaqpait for Syllabics. [The former was suggested by the late Abe Okpik.] Although seldom used, these are the official names.

## **2.3. Use of standardized Syllabic orthography**

The standard Syllabic orthography was accepted by all Inuktitut speakers [but not Inuinnaqtun-speakers] in the NWT. At an conference of Inuit elders from all regions of the NWT, held in Hall Beach in 1985, elders endorsed the use of the “new” writing system in both its Syllabic and Roman versions. [Harper, 1992, p. 7]

The Syllabic standard is used by government and Inuit organizations in official publications. Indeed it is used in all “official” writing except by the Anglican church, where it has been partially adopted.

## **2.4. Use of standardized Roman orthography**

The official Roman orthography – Qaliujaaqpait – is almost never used. Although it was designed to be a mirror image of the ICI Syllabic standard, and therefore capable of easy transliteration, almost nothing is ever published using it. It is used only as a teaching device in teaching Inuktitut as a second language, and sporadically as an aid in teaching Inuktitut as a first language in senior grades.

When ICI introduced its standard Roman orthography in 1976, it was meant to apply to the Kitikmeot region, as well as to the rest

of the Canadian Inuit area. It has, however, been consistently rejected by most adults in the region; attempts by educators to use it in the schools have often been met with hostility. In 1982-83, the Kitikmeot Inuit Association initiated its own language commission; unfortunately funding was not provided and the commission folded. Non-standard and inconsistent versions of Roman orthography are still the norm among adult speakers of Inuinnaqtun.

### 3. The dream of a pan-Inuit orthography

Mention was made earlier of the federal government's initiative for orthographic reform in the 1950's. When Gilles Lefebvre was asked to explore "the possibilities in the field of a unified standard orthography for the Canadian Eskimo language", he was also asked to explore "the delicate question of this unification along the lines of the Greenlandic (Kleinschmidt) system." [Harper, 1983, p. 36] Indeed, Lefebvre's 1957 publication, *A Draft Orthography for the Canadian Eskimo* was subtitled "Towards a future unification with Greenlandic". [Harper, 1983, p. 36] He saw Greenlandic as the model to emulate, and rejected Syllabics because it was incompatible with this model.

Perhaps Lefebvre's efforts were the only tangible results in Canada of an initiative of the Provincial Council of Greenland which proposed, in 1952, that there should be closer contact between Greenlanders and Canadian Inuit. They hoped that this initiative might result in "collaborative publication of books and of radio broadcasts". A delegation of Greenlanders visited Canada in 1956, and the visit was reciprocated two years later. But the Greenlanders reached the conclusion that "in the course of centuries each language had developed in its own way. Obviously there could be no question of joint publications." [Kleivan, p. 242]

In 1978, Edna Ahgeak MacLean proposed the development of an auxiliary Inuit writing system. It was assumed that this system would use the Roman orthography. She wrote:

*An auxiliary writing system is not intended to replace the existing major writing systems. I believe that the Inuit groups are not ready to consider, much less accept, any writing system which proposes to replace the existing major writing systems.*

*The auxiliary writing system can be used by linguists (Inuit and non-Inuit) in the preparation of comparative dictionaries and possibly grammars. It can also be used by journalists and linguists in the publication of Inuit texts in linguistic journals and circumpolar newsletters...*

*The auxiliary writing system should not be designed to replace those in regional use, but to provide a tool for use in comparative studies and in international communication in the Inuit language.*

She also suggested:

*But if any one group... should have any desire to revise their writing systems, the auxiliary writing system can serve as a model for change. [Maclean]*

At an ICC Conference in Sisimiut in 1989, a motion was passed to develop an international writing system for the Inuit language. ICC set up a working group on the subject; Greenlandic members were Robert Petersen and Carl Christian 'Puju' Olsen. In 1992, however, Robert Petersen reported that to date there had been no meetings. He reported to me as follows:

*We [Petersen and Olsen] both recommended that a paper presented by Edna Ahgeak MacLean at a symposium in Aarhus on an auxiliary Inuit writing system might be used as a model, as we both doubted that any group would be eager to drop their own system. We feel both that other Greenlandic supporters of the idea wanted to export the Greenlandic orthography both to Canadian and Alaskan Inuit. Their reason was that there exists a Greenlandic literature and in this way they disregard that Greenlandic phonology probably is insufficient to cover the more westerly needs.*

Michael Fortescue, one of the most respected academics working in Inuit linguistics today, concurs with Petersen's impression that it was probably the desire of some Greenlanders to export their orthography and literature to the rest of the Inuit world that led to the suggestion of a common Inuit orthography, and that the suggestion is inappropriate.

In research I did for the Government of NWT in 1992, many in the Keewatin saw the initiative for a common writing system as a Greenlandic initiative, and suggested that if Greenlanders wanted an auxiliary system they should learn Syllabics!

Robert Petersen, a Greenlandic linguist, prepared a report on the feasibility of a common writing system for the Greenlandic Home Rule parliament. In it he pointed out the non-linguistic aspects to the development of a common script, describing the historic reasons for the various scripts in use among Inuit in Alaska, Canada and Greenland. In considering the linguistic aspects to the question of a common Inuit orthography, Petersen concluded that "...while it is not an easy matter to try and create a common orthography, it is not entirely impossible..." [Petersen, quoted in Harper, 1992, p. 61] However, he concluded that, for linguistic reasons, "Greenlandic is probably the worst starting point for a common Inuit orthography." In commenting specifically on Canada, he felt that "There is no

dialect or language of common communication, and as long as this is the case, the question of a common script will be a problem in Canada even though this means that yet another symbol of common identity is in a weak position." [Petersen, quoted in Harper, 1992, p. 59]

The consensus is that the inter-dialectal differences in phonology are large enough that any common orthography would be an auxiliary one, not meant for the use of the general public, but meant for use by linguists and scholars; and that the inter-dialectal differences in vocabulary are sufficiently large that, even if a common orthography existed, it would not create access by Inuit of one dialectal area to the literature of Inuit of another dialectal area geographically far removed. More specifically, the existence of a common orthography would not automatically allow Canadian Inuit access to the rich literature in Greenlandic. Moreover, no progress has been made on the development of an auxiliary common writing system for all Inuit.

#### **4. Syllabics vs. Roman orthography in eastern Nunavut**

The elimination, for practical reasons, of the consideration of a common writing system for all Inuit, leads us directly back to the situation that exists in Nunavut, and the realization that we need a made-in-Nunavut solution to the orthographic dilemma, if indeed there is a problem at all.

##### **4.1. Perceived need for orthographic reform**

The situation is this: 95% of Inuit in Nunavut use the Syllabic orthography; 5% (Inuinnaqtun-speakers) use a non-standard Roman orthography.

Some Canadian Inuit leaders perceive that the Syllabic writing system, the system of the majority, is holding Canadian Inuit back, that it is preventing them from joining the modern world. Some, like John Amagoalik, recommend the abolition of Syllabics and an adoption of a standard Roman orthography, a standard that has already been created but never used.

In the Kitikmeot region, educators (and few others) see the need for a greater public awareness of the deficiencies of the non-standard "old" Roman orthography in use there, and the promotion of the ICI Qaliujaaqpait standard orthography.

It will be helpful to understand how orthographic reform has been handled elsewhere.



## 5. Experiences of orthographic reform

Many languages have undergone orthographic reform. However, this is usually a matter of spelling reform, rather than of a change of script. The Greenlandic reform of 1973, although major, was not a change of script; it was a “radical spelling reform” motivated by “the wish to make it [Greenlandic] easier to spell – to get written and spoken language in greater accordance with each other...” [Jacobsen, p. 119] Even so, at its outset it was controversial and aroused much opposition.

Within Nunavut, the spelling reform that resulted in a standardization of Syllabics in 1976 was accepted, although not without some quarrel, especially from the church. This spelling reform can be considered major in that it eliminated 25% of the syllabary, through the elimination of the former first column of symbols.

Much rarer are orthographic reforms in which the type of script, the writing system itself, is changed. Only one insignificant example exists in the Eskimo world; in the 1950s a Roman alphabet devised by Russian researchers and teachers in the 1930s for Siberian Yupik was replaced by the Cyrillic alphabet.

### 5.1. Examples of script reform elsewhere

Elsewhere in the world, the best known example of script reform is Turkey. In 1928 Turkish ruler Mustafa Kemal Atatürk decided to abolish the Arabic script, which Turks had used for a thousand years, and replace it with the Latin alphabet. He asked experts how long they thought it would take to replace Arabic with Latin script, and was told it would take at least five years. “We shall do it,” he said, “within five months”. This script reform, combined with education programmes, enabled children and adults to read and write in the Roman alphabet within a few months, and to study other languages written in Roman orthography with greater effectiveness. Atatürk stated that “The cornerstone of education is an easy system of reading and writing”.

In the past few years, script reform has been initiated in the Turkic-speaking former Soviet republics. Many of them, including Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan, signed an agreement in 1993 in Ankara on the adoption of a 34-letter Latin alphabet. The 34 letters form an inventory of all the letters needed for the various languages, and individual languages from the Turkic group will pick the letters they need – like selecting from a menu; thus Turkish will remain as it is with 29 letters, Azerbaijan will

use 32, and so on. [This approach may be one that can be used for the Inuit languages if ever an auxiliary common writing system is developed.] In some of the republics, however, actual implementation of the changes has been given a low priority. One Uzbek expressed his reason for the “go-slow” approach in this way: “Having been rendered illiterate by fiat three times in this century, we’re not at all eager to relive such a cultural trauma.” [Linguist List]

These examples are brought forward here so that conference participants will realize that Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun speakers are not unique in being asked to contemplate major orthographic reform which, for Syllabic users, would also constitute script reform.

## **5.2. Speed of reform**

The script reform which occurred in Turkey under Ataturk was swift and undemocratically imposed. It was, however, effective. The reform underway in some of the former Soviet republics is happening at varying speeds; one must wait to see how effective the changes become.

In Greenland, the 1973 spelling reform was phased in, in a planned and co-ordinated way, and has been effective; the new Greenlandic orthography is used for all official purposes in Greenland.

By contrast, the dual orthographies – Qaliujaaqpait and Qaniujaaqpait – adopted by ICI and ITC in 1976 have had varying degrees of acceptance. The Syllabic standard has been generally accepted in the Syllabic-using area. Its Roman counterpart has been totally ignored in the Inuktitut-speaking communities, and almost completely ignored in the Inuinnaqtun-speaking communities.

## **6. Is orthographic reform needed in Nunavut?**

This is really two questions: Should Syllabics be abandoned? Should Inuinnaqtun be standardized?

At the outset, let’s recognize that we don’t have a situation in Nunavut like Ataturk had in Turkey, or even like Kleinschmidt had in Greenland, in which orthographic reform was simply imposed on the population.

Before the advent of modern computer technology, Syllabics was a costly system to maintain. Today, however, there is probably little, if any, cost premium to publishing in Syllabics. No matter what orthography is used, translation costs will remain constant.

An international effort has been made in the standardization of Syllabic characters for computer use. An Iqaluit-based communica-

tions company, Nortext Multimedia, is developing what they describe as “a revolutionary online news and information service that will provide free and easy access to a virtual world of northern information – in your choice of Inuktitut or English.” [Nunatsiaq News]. The boards of education in Nunavut have published hundreds of texts for school children in Inuktitut Syllabics. [Hundreds more have been published in Nunavik.]

Clearly, initiatives have been made to help Syllabics live and thrive.

But has enough been done?

For adults, there is little other than government handouts and religious literature to read. The cultural periodical that was a mainstay of a previous generation of Inuktitut readers, Inuktitut magazine, has turned itself in recent years into a podium for expressing Inuit political aspirations. There is almost no culturally-relevant literature in book or magazine form for adult readers of Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun.

Studies need to be undertaken on speed and ease of reading Syllabics, and of learning to read Syllabics compared with speed and ease of reading Roman orthography in a language like Inuktitut in which words are very long. Certain studies undertaken in Greenland on the difficulty of learning to read in Greenlandic, where words are also very long, have concluded that “word length is considered to be a problem especially for readers who use an alphabetic reading strategy.” [Jacobsen, p. 127]. I do not know of comparable studies for Inuktitut.

One cannot underestimate the emotional attachment that Inuit have for Syllabics. Consider the following statements, a small sample of many similar statements:

*When I became fully familiar with the use of Syllabics, I became, as it were, in love with them, even so far as to defend their use if someone wasn't pleased with the way I write, or hinted I was wrong... Some Inuit do not want to give up Syllabics simply because they're different and it makes them appear to be genuine Inuk; some perhaps even think that Syllabics was invented by Inuit. [Mark Kalluak, quoted in Harper, 1983, p. 46-7]*

*Personally, I am in favour of those who wish to retain the old system of Syllabics, because I feel it's their possession. [Simeonie Amagoalik, quoted in Harper, 1983, p. 47]*

A professor emeritus of northern studies, Robert Williamson, noted:

*Obviously the Syllabics, in this era when the Inuit feel their culture to be so deeply threatened, have assumed a symbolic significance over-riding*

any considerations of 'efficiency'... [Williamson, quoted in Harper, 1983, p. 48]

Robert Petersen has noted that some elders have "no desire to change the way of writing in which 'God's words' were written" and commented that "Such is the way that love for one's language works. In itself it is something important and valuable, but it hinders both unreasonable and reasonable changes. Love for one's mother tongue is not always easy to distinguish from ordinary intolerance." [Petersen, quoted in Harper, 1992, p. 66]

In 1989 at a board meeting of the Inuit Cultural Institute, a motion was passed as follows:

*Whereas Inuit Circumpolar Conference wishes to introduce an international one writing system in Roman Orthography... and whereas the Syllabic is being taught in schools and is widely accepted by the general Inuit population, and whereas we wish to retain this form of communication (writing Syllabics), so be it resolved that a poll be conducted amongst Nunasiak (sic) residents asking whether they wish to keep Syllabics as it exists or change to Roman Orthography... [Harper, 1992, p. 26-7]*

The suggested poll was never taken.

## **6.2. Inuinnaqtun Roman orthography**

In the Kitikmeot Region, there is a need for a major public education campaign on the need for a standardized Roman orthography and the legitimacy of the Qaliujaaqpait orthography that has been endorsed for use by Canadian Inuit.

## **6.3. Both orthographies**

Students above the primary level are increasingly bored with the way Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun are taught in school. In the larger communities, this is a crisis. Boards of education have paid lip service to the development of curricula at the higher grade levels for over a decade, with little to show for it. Indeed, what they have to show for it are frustrated language teachers with no resources, expected to "wing it" every day in the classroom; and students who are either disrespectful of the teachers' efforts to teach the language in the absence of the necessary resources, or motivated students who are frustrated by the lack of curricula which would allow their attempts to study the language to be successful.

There is almost no secular literature of other than a government nature to read in Inuktitut (Syllabics) or Inuinnaqtun (Roman) above the primary school level. It is imperative that concrete encouragement be given to the development of culturally-relevant literature in both Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun for older students and for adults.

The Government of Nunavut should therefore adopt a subsidy program to encourage the publication of literature in Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun. The market is simply not large enough, in either dialect of orthography, for publishing as a business venture to succeed without subsidies.

The forces that would mitigate against the long-term survival of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun are massive. Foremost among them is the ubiquitous television with its preponderance of English language stations. Aboriginal language programming must compete against big-budget television from the south. A continuing commitment of funding to aboriginal organizations to produce high-quality programming in Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun is a must, for the language must be supported and promoted through all media if efforts to promote literacy and reading through print media are to be successful.

In short, a major effort to promote adult reading is necessary. This is not the same as promoting literacy. Most adults are literate in that they have the ability to read in Inuktitut Syllabics or in Inuinnaqtun Roman orthography. **But there is nothing to read!** Active literacy can only be promoted if material to read is produced.

Only after such an effort is made, over a long period of time, would one be able to decide whether or not Syllabics will be an appropriate orthography over the long term. It is premature to sound its death knell now. It hasn't really been given a chance.

## 7. What is to be done?

There is an expectation and an assumption that Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun will be working languages of the Nunavut Government, employed for official purposes to a greater extent than they have been under the Government of the Northwest Territories. If this dream is to be realized, the government and its citizens will have to address the issues of orthography.

The Government of Nunavut should make a major commitment, including the commitment of financial resources, to the production of culturally-relevant material for readers of all ages, including adults, in Inuktitut Syllabics and Inuinnaqtun Roman orthography.

The Government of Nunavut should conduct a major campaign of public education in the Kitikmeot Region to inform adults of the merits

of the Standard Roman orthography, and should teach Inuinnaqtun consistently in the standard Roman orthography in schools in the region.

The Government of Nunavut should continue the GNWT's admirable approach to the production of reading materials for the primary grades.

The Government of Nunavut and its boards of education should develop appropriate curricula for intermediate and senior grades, produce reading and other support material for the teaching of these curricula, and train teachers of Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun for these grade levels to a level of competency and professionalism that one would expect of teachers in other subjects.

The official names for the Syllabic and Roman orthographies – Qaniujaaqpait and Qaliujaaqpait – endorsed by ITC and ICI, should be used by all official bodies.

The churches should be encouraged to use the appropriate official orthography consistently in their publications.

The Government of Nunavut should undertake a public education campaign to instill pride in the use of Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun.

The Government of Nunavut should adopt a subsidy program to encourage the publication of literature in Inuktitut Syllabics and Inuinnaqtun Roman orthography, for readers of all ages.

The Government of Nunavut and the Government of Canada should increase their funding to aboriginal organizations to produce high-quality television programming in Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun.

The Government of Nunavut should undertake, or encourage, the publication of a periodical in Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun which will avoid political themes and, instead, focus on culture, language, history, poetry and creative fiction.

When Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun place names are officially adopted, their spelling should be that of the official orthography.

The Government of Nunavut should undertake studies on the speed and ease with which readers are able to acquire reading skills in both Syllabics and Roman orthography, and study the implications of the results for language teaching methodologies.

The Government of Nunavut should establish, within its Department of Culture, Language and Youth, a "Language Academy", in which the language bureaucracy will draw regularly on the expertise of language scholars to ensure that the promotion and use of Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun remain priorities of the Government of Nunavut, that the results of linguistic scholarship are known to bureaucrats and policy-makers, and that evolving language policies are linguistically and pedagogically sound.

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## CHAPTER 8



# THE INUIT BROADCASTING CORPORATION AND NUNAVUT

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**By Laila Sørensen**

*"Much like communication is an important tool of disempowerment, it plays a significant role in empowerment. People's power requires knowledge about the decisions that affect their lives and information about what they can do about these decisions. People's power also needs expression, dialogue and the sharing of experiences." (Hamelink, 1994)*

## **Introduction**

Since 1982 the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) has been producing television for the Inuit, by the Inuit, in Inuktitut. IBC's aim is to preserve and enhance traditional Inuit values and the language Inuktitut. IBC was the first indigenous peoples' TV network in Northern America to be distributed via satellite. IBC is distributed by Television Northern Canada (TVNC) Canada's first network dedicated to indigenous broadcasting.

1999 was a year of changes for the Canadian Inuit. Nunavut became a reality, and IBC would seem to be the natural choice as the official Nunavut broadcaster. Ironically the emergence of Nunavut has posed a central dilemma for IBC, despite their seemingly common goals. On the one hand IBC would like to be given a central role in transforming the ethnic Inuit identity into a regional and political identity. On the other hand, if IBC were to become the official Nunavut broadcaster, it would have to serve the 20 % non-Inuit population in the region, and produce programming in English too – despite their original wish not to produce more English programming.

In 1999 TVNC also expanded its services to include southern Canada. The new aboriginal network is called Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN). The aim of APTN is to counteract the under- and misrepresentation of Inuit and other Canadian indigenous groups in the French and English speaking national media.

This article aims to shed some light on the dilemma facing IBC and the genesis of the Nunavut region, by focussing on what prod-

ucts and services IBC has to offer the new region, and the potential problems that are to be faced in doing so.

## **IBC Background**

Canada is both a pioneer and a “flagship” nation as regards aboriginal broadcasting. The development of aboriginal television programming began more than 20 years ago as a response to the introduction of TV from the “south”. Inuit were not consulted and were also lacking influence in the decision-making processes concerning the programme content and the distribution. In the 1970’s local aboriginal communications societies began producing linguistic, social and cultural programmes based on the local realities and life worlds.

The spreading of the communications technologies to include Arctic Canada, and especially the video and satellite technologies, was on the one hand considered to be the “final attack” on the Inuit culture, language, the relationship between the generations and the respect for traditional knowledge. But on the other hand the development also provided Inuit with new tools to express and define their culture and identity. Paradoxically, the new technologies were, and still are, a threat to Inuit objectives, whilst at the same time being the most feasible means to achieving them.

IBC’s goal is to provide a vehicle for the free exchange of ideas and thereby to popularise and strengthen the Inuit culture, identity, language, mythology and social patterns which define and give meaning to being Inuit. IBC also wants to contribute to the flow and exchange of regional cultural information and entertainment, providing a channel of communication for north-north community dialogue. Finally, IBC wishes to offer a regional service dealing with contemporary issues.

In IBC’s mandate, it hopes to achieve these three major goals by using the TV media to:

1. *Integrate* the different isolated communities in the Nunavut region,
2. Accelerate the economic, cultural and political development process in the region, and
3. Preserve the Inuit culture and language.

These goals are also consistent with the goals of Nunavut.

Both TVNC and IBC are non-profit organisations, and IBC is the biggest of the 10 different aboriginal communications societies in

the TVNC network. IBC and the other Canadian aboriginal broadcasters have in this way, through TVNC, participated in the democratisation of the Canadian media structure. IBC is financed by a federal government communications programme. Financially IBC has demonstrated alternative survival strategies and raised money through bingo events, concerts etc., and by creating Inuit Communication Systems Ltd., which offers different media services for Internet productions, a video archive, and consultant services.

In spite of financial difficulties IBC has, since it's beginning, held a respectful position both among Inuit, who could for the first time see and hear Inuit language on TV, and among international minority media researchers and other aboriginal broadcasters such as the Aborigines in Australia. As such, IBC has developed into a respected international position. The IBC network is built up by 5 stations scattered across the Nunavut region. The biggest station is placed in Iqaluit, and employs 20 people. All in all IBC employs about 50 people across Nunavut, the vast majority being of Inuit descent.

The institutions and processes of world communication have a disempowering effect, and operate through censorship, deceit, victimisation and information glut. This distorting of information obstructs people's independent formation of opinion and undermines peoples' capacity to control decisions that affect their daily lives. The stereotypical treatment of ethnic minorities puts the ethnic minorities in a submissive social role, and the resulting dependence, intimidation and vulnerability victimise and disempower them. (Hamelink, 1994) To allow competition on the media marketplace does not necessarily lead to more diversity, as seen in the deregulated, competitive broadcast systems of Western Europe and North America. This is largely due to the fact that the actors in the competitive market all try to control the largest viewer segment by catering to the rather similar tastes and preferences of that market segment.

## IBC Programming

IBC produces 7 1/2 hours of Inuktitut TV per week. Due to cutbacks in federal funding, long term planning is difficult or impossible, but recently it has been possible to generate additional funding for specific programmes, and in 1998 IBC introduced a new youth programme that presents different Inuit music groups and singers.

Directly or indirectly IBC's seven different programmes are directed towards enhancing the Inuit culture and language, and the different stations have through the years specialised in different programme types. Cambridge Bay is known for its news coverage, while Baker Lake and Ranklin Inlet are known for their cultural and entertainment programmes. The IBC station in Igloolik is respected for its historical features, and Iqaluit is the home of the news coverage, drama and educational children's programmes.

The famous children programme "Takuginai", known by all people in Nunavut, features the legendary puppet hero Kiuiuq, who is half shaman and hunter. The programme is based on an Inuit puppet family with a little boy and girl dressed in traditional Inuit fur and their grandparents. Johnny the Lemming, and Tulu the Raven are other famous characters in "Takuginai". The target group for the programme is the 5-7 year olds, but the programme is loved by all ages. In "Takuginai" children also learn to count and read in Inuktitut, that it is important to go to school, to eat right and to show respect for nature, animals and the parent generation. "Takuginai" is very careful *not* to portray the animals with human emotions as known from the Disney empire. This is due to the fact that Inuit live, and have always lived, from the animals.

Besides the regular programmes IBC has a live programme, "Qanuq Isumavit" (what do you think), that enables people to phone in and discuss events, problems and other current affairs concerning the North. Issues range from sleep walking to sexual abuse and instruction in the establishment of small businesses, the creation of Nunavut and Inuit leadership. Through the years IBC has also co-operated with different regional and federal institutions in this programme.

In 1991 IBC developed a Community Training Programme based on a three-day video training course. The idea is to represent as many Inuit as possible, without encountering the large costs associated with travelling and research. The course gives an introduction to the most important filming techniques, such as editing, interviewing and news coverage. The participants are typically schools or small communities that are equipped with video cameras and microphones. IBC covers the costs of the tapes, and they are sent to IBC where they are edited to fit existing IBC programmes. It is a win-win

project as IBC gets a bigger representation in their footage, and the people in the local communities get an opportunity to show their views and concerns to the outside world.

The community programme has been a success, but because of the poor financial situation, the programme has been cut back and is currently not operating on a regular basis. IBC hopes that this programme will run more effectively again.

## **Regional identity, IBC and Nunavut**

The role of the TV media in the process of identity “shaping” continues to be interactive, multidimensional and difficult to understand. At the same time, few would question that the TV media plays a role in guiding, formulating and transforming the world as we understand and relate to it. Some believe that those who control the media have the power to define the very beliefs, values and myths that guide our modern perception. At the other end of the spectrum, the TV media has the ability to mobilise support for special interest groups, and signal what is normal, laudable and important for society.

The cultural geographer Anssi Paasi believes that regional identity is a crucial term, as he believes it to be the essence of a region. Regional identity combines the objective, material and subjective dimensions of a region. Regional identity can be expressed in the social praxes through the language that is an expression of the individual’s personal “place identity”.

Paasi believes that the regions’ mass media are significant for the regional identity. The mass media provides the audience with ideal criteria for regional identification. Likewise the regional literature, school geography and novelists that all have influence in the creation of the external and internal regions identity. In other words, the different regional cultural and educational institutions play a central role in the creation of regional identity, as the sense of “togetherness” is communicated through institutional praxes such as local newspapers, literature, radio and TV, and educational institutions that can produce and reproduce the regional identity. Also the community radio and television provide, more than national broadcasting, opportunities for *genuine* public systems and citizen involvement. The importance of this should not be underestimated, as there is enough evidence to show that media/communicative empowerment strategies can indeed increase people’s control over their lives.

Whether a community or ethnic group will be able to develop its own cultural identity will largely depend upon the local cultural

space people can control, and they need sufficient cultural space to define their identity autonomously. If the cultural space is not adequately provided or acquired, it will be incorporated in structures of oppression that define people as "beings for others". The local cultural space is the battleground, and there will always be hegemonic forces inside and outside the community intent on reducing this space.

In the case of Nunavut the number of books, newspapers and the existence of music in Inuktitut are limited<sup>1</sup>, and because of this the audio-visual media such as radio and TV play a central role in the creation of a regional identity. Through the years of the implementation of Nunavut, the IBC has had close contacts to the Implementation Committee and has promoted and communicated the Nunavut agenda. IBC has a de-central structure and the different IBC production centres are localised in the major dialect areas of Nunavut. The IBC crew is recruited from the local communities, and it is IBC's aim to maintain a grass-root relationship to its audience, i.e. through the Community Training Programme and the Phone-in that provides the people with channels where they can express their concerns etc. In this way, IBC tries to build a bridge between the isolated communities in the Nunavut region, and thereby provide a link between the individual and the region. And finally to define, express and develop the local/regional culture, and as such play a key role in the dynamic process of defining and preserving the Inuit culture and language based on close interaction with its audience.

Americas hottest export item today is pop culture, which generates \$ 8 billion in trade surplus. There is a worldwide clear trend towards an increasing demand for the American-brand of entertainment. The Dutch media researcher Hamelink (1994) believes that this trend towards globalisation creates a cultural environment that spreads compulsive consumerism and reduces local cultural space. A uniform consumerist lifestyle is engineered by forces intent on the reduction of local cultural space. The globalisation process obstructs the local initiative and disadvantages the local cultural producers; it effectively silences local culture and hampers people's development as "beings for themselves". The Global spread of capitalist modernity and its agents, such as advertising, promote a culture that overshadows local knowledge and experience, creates dependence and hampers autonomous development.

## IBC at a crossroads

If IBC becomes the official broadcaster for Nunavut, it will have to produce programming in English, which poses a central dilemma considering the wish not to produce more English programming. Nunavut will also lead IBC to new dependencies. As other local or indigenous media the IBC is now dependent on the goodwill of government politicians and bureaucrats of Nunavut. These politician claim that they want to see thriving local media, but give limited, or no, economic support. The new Nunavut government has not yet directed its attention towards Inuit regional media. Instead the interest and efforts have been directed to Southern Canada with the creation of the new national Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN). With this new development the target group of TVNC, and thereby IBC, has changed to include non-Inuit, and will operate mainly on a commercial basis.

This is a paradox as IBC, among others in the institutional sphere in Nunavut, played a vital role in giving birth to the idea of self-government based on Inuit culture and language. It is therefore sad that the Nunavut Implementations Committee and the current Nunavut government have not directed enough attention towards IBC in terms of funding, which is crucial to the continued existence of IBC, as it is unlikely that the federal government will spend more money on Inuit communications societies considering the expenses for the implementation of Nunavut and the coming 10 years. Finally, also seen in the light of the competitive threats from the well-financed, highly popular American Networks, more support from the Nunavut government would be useful.

IBC's historic role as a bridge-builder between the isolated communities, and the fact that IBC has been able to discuss and air social issues (including taboo issues such as domestic violence and sexual abuse), and discussed and informed about Nunavut, have demonstrated its potential as an instrument for the cultural expression of the Inuit in Nunavut.

IBC has involved public participation and genuine interaction, not vertical and one-way (top-down) communication and highly controlled interaction.

The lack of an official position is also out of line with the Nunavut government's strategies for de-centralisation and a close contact to the people. Some researchers and IBC producers even claim that Nunavut would not have become a reality had IBC not existed.

*"I'm sure it (IBC) has played a role in educating the people in Nunavut. A lot of them don't understand what it is all about. Like anything else there are*

*a lot of things that people don't understand or realise how important it is, and IBC does not want that! We want to educate them (the audience) in today's world, all the modern things happening with Nunavut and what not."* (Interview with Station Manager Noah Tiktak, IBC)

## Note

- <sup>1</sup> Besides IBC's programming in Inuktitut, only CBC North has two daily 1/2-hour news programmes in Inuktitut and English. The OkalaKatiget Society airs a weekly 1/2 programme and the Kativik Schoolboard airs a total of 4 hours per week, and only sometimes there will be a programme that is versioned into Inuktitut.

## Relevant homepages

TVNC, including IBC; [www.tvnc.ca](http://www.tvnc.ca)

Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN); [www.aptn.ca](http://www.aptn.ca)

Canadian Journal of Communications; [www.ccsp.sfu.ca/calj/cjc](http://www.ccsp.sfu.ca/calj/cjc)

An overview of Canada's First Nations; [www.pch.gc.ca/csp-pec/english/about/native/index.htm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/csp-pec/english/about/native/index.htm)

## Relevant literature on indigenous broadcasting

**Hamelink, Cees, J.** (1994): *Trends in World Communication- on Disempowerment and Selfempowerment*, Southbound, Malaysia, 1994.

**Michaels, Eric** (1994): *Bad Aboriginal Art. Tradition, Media and Technological Horizons*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1994.

**Paasi, Annsi** (1986): "The institutionalization of regions: a theoretical framework for understanding the emergence of regions and the constitution of regional identity". *Fennia* 164:1, p.105-146, (Geographical Society of Finland), Helsinki, 1986.

**Riggins, Stephen Harold (ed.)** (1992): *Ethnic Minority Media - An international Perspective*, London, 1992.

**Sørensen, Laila** (1999): *By the Inuit, For the Inuit* (in Danish), a video on IBC discussions "IBC at a crossroads" (in Danish and English), Communications and Geography Departments, Roskilde University, Denmark. *Unpublished - available on request from the author.*

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## CHAPTER 9

# INUIT SUBSISTENCE AND HUNTER SUPPORT IN NUNAVUT

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*by George Wenzel*

## **Introduction**

Almost no other aboriginal culture in Canada retains such a strong representation in the minds of the general public of a prototypical subsistence hunting society as does that of the Inuit. The image of the Inuk hunter waiting at a seal's winter breathing is a standard of popular descriptions of Inuit life; in fact, hunting - or, more accurately, subsistence relations - has been and remains an important aspect of the scientific literature on Inuit, beginning with the earliest anthropological research done by Boas (1888) in Cumberland Sound through to the most recently published ethnographies of contemporary northern life.

That this is so relates not only to the fact that the capturing and eating of animals remain central to Inuit physical health, but also that seal, caribou and the other species Inuit hunt embody the socio-cultural relations - the sharing of food and transmission of ecological knowledge - that are at the heart of the Inuit subsistence system. In fact, what appears on its face to be the simplest of statements, that no one goes without food in an Inuit community, masks a complex web of ecological, social, and economic relationships.

It may seem more than passingly strange, therefore, to suggest that such an intrinsic definer of Inuit culture has, or needs, the benefit of an official government policy. But it is precisely because subsistence, as a socio-economic system, is so central to Inuit physical and cultural well-being that it is a concern of Nunavut policy-makers today. To understand this link, and why it is neither novel nor incongruous to suggest its existence, it is necessary (briefly) to examine both the sociocultural meaning of subsistence for Inuit and (more expansively) the socio-historical context of its practice within the Nunavut environment.

## **Inuit Subsistence**

It is through capturing, processing, distributing, celebrating, and consuming naturally occurring fish and animal populations that subsistence societies define... their way of life (Langdon 1984: 3).

### *Defining Subsistence:*

As the above quotation indicates, there is considerably more conceptual meaning to the term subsistence than standard dictionary definitions suggest. Far from being "...the minimum (as of food and shelter) to support life" (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate), Langdon makes it clear that even to consider hunting to be the entire content of subsistence is too limiting and belies the core reality of subsistence as practiced by Inuit.

As an anthropologist who has studied Inuit subsistence on Baffin Island for many years, my formal understanding is that it is a system of social relationships in which material-economic actions (of which the hunting to be sure is the most apparent activity) are organized by the same principles that generally govern the day-to-day interpersonal conduct of participants and, thus, reinforce a broadly held set of cultural values. Or, in more succinct terms, it is how Inuit organize their resources to catch the animals they use for food and, further, insure that everyone shares in this food according to their needs.

Inuit subsistence is, in fact, neither "minimal", individualistic, nor simple. Rather, it requires a continuous commitment to and practice of a complex of cultural relations and values (see Damas 1972; Wenzel 1995; Collings et al. 1998) by all its participants. Beginning with rules of kinship, an individual hunter brings his/her catch of seal, fish, or caribou to the *isumataq*, usually the eldest member of the hunter's *ilagiit*, or extended family, who then redistributes it within the family and into the wider community (see Wenzel 1995: 48 for an overview of this system). Ultimately, for Inuit, subsistence is about reciprocal relationships that include shared social responsibility as much as they do kilograms of meat, in which all community members contribute their knowledge of animals and the environment, energy in hunting and processing food, and equipment and/or money as they are able.

### *Inuit Subsistence in Socio-Historical Context:*

To many non-Inuit, subsistence as a way of Inuit life is often perceived as having ended with the establishment of the arctic fur trade in the early decades of this century. The reality is, however, that even after the trade became established in the most remote Inuit areas, it was often less the dominating presence than as is frequently portrayed.

In those areas in which arctic fox was the focal commercial species during this era, it was obtainable in appreciable numbers only peri-

odically because of the cyclical nature of the species. Thus, trade was often sporadic, with local production mirroring the "boom and bust" relationship between lemming and fox - when the lemming cycle was low, foxes were few and trade dormant. Also, in regions like eastern Baffin Island, where fox spent much of the time on the winter sea ice foraging upon seals killed by polar bears, Inuit trapping easily combined with seal hunting, allowing Inuit hunters optimally to combine seal hunting for food with trapping for trade.

As the trading records indicate, Inuit participation in this relationship was less committed than traders would have liked. Goldring (1986), for instance, notes that economic relations between Inuit and the HBC were rarely as one-sided as is sometimes assumed. The following passage (*ibid*: 170), from the Pangnirtung HBC post diary for 1933-34, when the fox trade was at its zenith, illustrates this aspect of the trade, "...they [the Inuit] are more or less content to hunt seals and the fur hunt is becoming of secondary importance. They appear to have little ambition to secure anything but ammunition and tobacco".

While Inuit living in areas where the resource base was less secure, as in the regions west of Hudson Bay, relied more heavily on fur trade goods and foods, in the Baffin and Central Arctic regions of Nunavut, as Goldring's research makes clear, the year-round presence of ringed seal provided considerable winter food security and, thus, a reduced involvement in the fur trade. In the latter regions, trapping was done as a supplement to, not a replacement for, traditional food subsistence.

Prior to the end of World War II, Canada's main presence in its North was through the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (see Duffy 1988). After 1945, however, federal authorities, became the primary factor in Inuit life, especially as the fur trade collapsed in the aftermath of the war.

While the advent of the "government era" brought such benefits as professional health care, public education, and social welfare, it also had two less benign impacts upon Inuit. The first was that the delivery of these services was accompanied by a policy of re-settling Inuit from their indigenous villages to a relatively few regional population centers; the 40 or so Inuit communities that dot the map of Nunavut today virtually all post-date the mid-1950s. The other was that the Canadian government chose to monetize northern economic relations, thereby changing the basis of Inuit-Euro-Canadian economic relations.

Both these developments have had special consequence for Inuit subsistence and ecology since the onset of "big government" in the Canadian North. Because of re-settlement, the demographic condi-

tions under which Inuit hunted passed through a dramatic change. Rather than small groups exploiting resources contiguous to their indigenous village, centralization meant an enormous increase in local hunter populations from communities that were not situated with hunting in mind. Because traditional transport, notably dogteams, limited the distance at which hunting could be conducted, this demographic change meant a greater density of hunters and, thus, the potential for overexploitation of the local resource base (see Wenzel 1991: 34).

At the same time, monetization also disadvantaged Inuit. In the absence of any external demand for the by-products of hunters' subsistence efforts, Inuit were limited in their ability to obtain the cash that centralized hunting required. This was because, without access to money for the new technologies, like the snowmobile, that could alleviate the "density problem", hunters faced a constrained subsistence environment. The situation was made worse by the paucity of jobs available to Inuit, but even when hunters could gain employment, it usually meant curtailment of their harvesting - conditions which continue to plague Inuit today.

Through the 1950s, this was the basic situation confronting the Inuit. Hunting remained essential for material and sociocultural sustenance, but the economic and geographic circumstances of hunting had become considerably more complex. In addition, local demand for wildlife resources increased as the human population in these new centers grew, but the artifacts that could make hunting more effective and sustainable - by reducing travel time and extending hunters' range - were generally unavailable because of the scarcity of money. And, while some funds did reach hunters and their families through various types of social transfers, the amounts were rarely sufficient to capitalize costly items like snowmobiles.

The difficulties confronting Inuit hunting, if not the subsistence system itself, were recognized by both the federal and territorial authorities. Moreover, an at least vague cognizance of the material importance, amounting to thousands of kilograms of food to each village, made by hunting to the economies of Inuit communities (see Table One), stemmed from the realization that the government might find itself having annually to subsidize northern food needs at some considerable cost. In lieu of such circumstances, a number of small-scale ad hoc "support" programs (Table Two) came into being on a limited basis in the late 1960s and early 1970s (see Clancy 1990). These included the subsidization of gasoline for hunters, emergency equipment replacement funding, and funds to community Hunter-Trapper Associations in order that discounted ammunition, net twine and other petty equipment might be available.

**Table One:** Estimated Annual Harvest of Selected Food Species and Their Imputed Monetary Value in the Northwest Territories, Circa 1965<sup>\*</sup>

Species <sup>**</sup>	Annual Est. Harvest	Est. Edible Biomass (kg) <sup>5</sup>	Est. Value (\$/kg) <sup>6</sup>
Caribou	2,244 (1973)	100,980	302,940
Ringed Seal	34,781 (1975)	794,525	2,383,576
Small Whales	1,011 (1978, 1976)	101,100	303,300
Fish <sup>4</sup>	150,000 (none)	300,000	900,000
Walrus	500 ("1960s")	230,000	690,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,446,605</b>	<b>4,579,816</b>

<sup>\*</sup> These data represent conservative best "guesstimate" reconstructions based on nearest year source information (see below).

<sup>\*\*</sup> Species harvest sources: caribou - Dickinson and Herman, 1979: 14-15; ringed seal - Davis et al, 1980: 65; small whales (narwhal and beluga) - Davis et al, 1980: 30, 35; walrus - Davis et al, 1980: 46.

Dickinson and Herman (1979: 14-15) provide a three-year harvest total; the one-year figure presented here represents one-third their consolidated total.

<sup>4</sup> No accurate data are available for "fish"; the figures presented reflect an assumed harvest of 5,000 per community (30 communities).

<sup>5</sup> Edible weight data are estimated averages for a "typical individual" of each species (see also Foote 1967; also Anderson and Garlich-Miller 1994 re. walrus): caribou - 45kg; ringed seal - 25kg; small whales (maktaaq only) - 100kg; fish (arctic char) - 2kg; walrus - 480kg.

<sup>6</sup> Substitution/imputed value from Kemp (Personal Communication).

However, the development of an external market for ringed seal-skins, beginning in 1962 and extending until ca. 1982 (Wenzel 1991), precluded any need for expediency regarding more formal efforts toward hunter support.

## The Emergence of Programmatic Hunter Support

### *Beginnings:*

The emergence of sealskins as a commodity desirable to outside markets gave Inuit hunters access to sufficient amounts of money to support the overall subsistence system. While these sums were never so large as to afford complete security, they enabled Inuit to control an

**Table Two:** A General Chronology of Hunter Support in the NWT/ Nunavut

1960s	Gasoline Subsidies to Hunters Hunter Emergency Relief Hunter and Trappers Organization Equipment Funds
1970s	Incentive Subsidy Program (1973) Outpost Camp Subsidy Program (ca. 1975)
1980s	Gasoline Subsidy Program (1981) DFO-GNWT Sealskin Subsidy Program (1983)
(1988)	TFN Comprehensive Wildlife Harvest Support Model
1990s	Fur Incentive and Subsidy Program (1990) Fur Price Program (1995) NTI-GNWT Nunavut Hunter Support Program (1994)

important proportion of the monies required to carry out food harvesting and, thus, insure a sufficient flow of food within their communities.

The shape of the relationship between subsistence activities and local economy can be seen in outline from data collected at Clyde River, on the east coast of Baffin Island, during the middle 1970s. In 1978 Clyde's eighty-one hunters averaged an approximate per capita cash return of Can\$2,350 from the sale of ringed sealskins, polar bear hides, narwhal ivory, and soapstone and whalebone sculptures, while the capital costs of a hunter's basic equipment, including a snowmobile, canvas-wood canoe, outboard motor and rifle, was at the time about \$6,500. However, most of these items did not require annual replacement (see Wenzel 1991: 116) and, in households where there was more than one hunter, some equipment, especially boats and motors, and their costs were shared by several users.

At the same time, the subsistence return, even exclusive of cash sales, was prodigious, with hunters providing an estimated 112,750kg of meat and fish, or 0.88kg daily for each of the 350 village residents. At the average retail price of imported meat (\$7.00/kg) current at the time (ibid.: 122), this wild food harvest represented almost \$790,000 in saved food costs. More importantly, this production, through the social mechanisms that structure subsistence relations (Table Three), was distributed throughout the community.

The overall completeness of the subsistence system, including its ability to produce money, from the early 1960s until 1983 mitigated



**Table Three:** Social Relational Levels of Clyde Inuit *Ningiqtuq* (Sharing)

Social Basis	Behavioral Directive	Form	Description
1a) Individual	<i>Ungayuk</i> (solidarity-affection)	<i>akpallugiit</i>	inviting in guests (typically same generation non-kin)
1b)	<i>Ungayuk</i>	<i>quaktuaktuq/ niqisutaiyuq/ paiyuktuq</i>	food gifts to close affines and non-kin (generally restricted to elders)
1c)	<i>Ungayuk</i>	<i>niqitatianaq</i>	<i>uummajusiutiit</i> ("partnered" hunters)
2a) Within Extended Families	<i>Nalaqtuk</i> (respect-obedience)	<i>niqiliriiq</i>	<i>tugagauyuk- tigutuinnaq</i> complementary
2b)	<i>Nalaqtuk</i>	<i>nirriyaktuqtuq</i>	restricted commensalism
3a) Between Families/ Across Community	<i>Ungayuk</i>	<i>nirriyaktuqtuq</i>	open commensalism
3b)	<i>Ungayuk</i>	<i>minaqtuq</i>	distribution of stored food
3c)	<i>Nalaqtuk</i>	<i>katujiyuk</i>	within task group

Source: Adapted from Wenzel 1998.

the need for developing any broadly focussed program of hunter support. Indeed, as the data above show, Inuit subsistence practices were well able to meet "basic needs levels" in all but the most wage-dependent communities.

This situation drastically changed, however, in the early 1980s when the world market for sealskins was closed by the European Community's decision to institute a boycott (see Lynge 1992) on commercial seal products. While this political action (see European Community 1983) was conceived to curtail the industrial-scale killing of harp and hooded seals by Norwegian and southern Canadian sealers, one of its primary effects was to deprive Inuit of one of their main means for sustaining the monetary component of

subsistence (Table Four). As a result, the ability of Inuit to hunt generally was placed in jeopardy because the equipment used to hunt seal was critical to all types of Inuit hunting (see Wenzel 1991). As Reeves et al. (n.d.) show, beginning in the early 1980s, both the federal and Northwest Territories governments responded to “the

**Table Four:** Clyde River Sealskin Sales (Can\$), 1979-80 to 1984-85

Year	Sealskins Sold	Total Value (ave price/sealskin)	Seals as % of Wildlife Sales
1979-80	2,504	57,824 (23.09)	55%
1980-81	3,377	58,516 (17.32)	56%
1981-82	1,172	16,263 (13.87)	26%
1982-83	1,238	12,577 (10.15)	21%
1983-84	656	4,682 (7.13)	.09%
1984-85	532	3,719 (6.99)	.07%

*Source: Adapted from Wenzel 1991: 124.*

sealskin crisis” with an array of programs directed toward Inuit, principal of which was the Sealskin Support Program in which a premium, initially \$6.00 (but which increased gradually during the program’s life), was added to the sale price of each skin. The thrust of the program, as is pointed out (ibid.) was “...to encourage seal hunting by Inuit” and, therefore, linked payment to individual hunters to the level of sealskin production achieved. Unfortunately, neither this program nor its successors, the Fur Incentive and Subsidy and the Fur Price Programs, although well-intentioned, recognized two important realities.

The first was one of economics. Put simply, the “base” (sale) price of a sealskin had fallen so low, essentially to pre-1962 levels (<\$5.00), that even with “support” the monetary return was insufficient to support the operational, let alone the capital, expense of sustained subsistence hunting. In this regard, the cost of gasoline and ammunition for one day of seal hunting by the time the market disappeared, exclusive of any capital outlays which were rapidly approaching \$10,000 (Ames et al. 1988a: 2) for a basic outfit, consumed

from \$20.00 to \$30.00, while the cash return, even with the inclusion of the support premium, at best replaced only about one half of this outlay. Thus, the econometrics of post seal boycott hunting mitigated against the efficacy of the program; indeed, the Sealskin Support Program and its descendents failed in the most basic sense in that they did not provide any measure of security for the next day or the day after that.

The other, and more important, difficulty was that none of these programs, in either their design or philosophy, understood that the economic and social focus of Inuit subsistence was not the individual hunter. Rather, subsistence as a cultural system was inherently a shared endeavor in terms of both its costs and benefits. In this regard, programs were conceived on the false assumption that the individual actions of hunters were the core and sum of "subsistence". With respect to the hunting component of subsistence, virtually every type of hunt required the effort of several cooperating harvesters. By emphasizing sealskin production, the Sealskin Support Program introduced an economic condition antithetical to the cultural practice of subsistence.

Ultimately, none of these government-initiated programs attained any comprehensive success. Not only did they generally offer "too little, too late" in material terms, but they also misperceived the nature of the Inuit subsistence process. In sum, the Sealskin Support Program and its policy followers did not offer sufficient resources to stimulate participation and, in their essential design, they misidentified the action of hunting as being the whole of the subsistence process.

#### *TFN and Harvester Support:*

By the late 1980s, the situation confronting the material and social relations of Inuit subsistence was clearly worsening. Many harvesters found their hunting curtailed by a lack of equipment, while Inuit who had found placement within the wage employment sector of their communities felt increasing pressure to direct scarce monies to hunters (Wenzel 1995). At the same time, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) was assuming greater responsibility for the implementation of local-level support programs at a time when federal government financial transfers to it were being reduced. In light of the overall worsening economic environment at all levels in the North, the GNWT approached the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN), the designated Inuit organization engaged in the Nunavut comprehensive land claims negotiation, to explore the possibility of including a Wildlife Harvesting Support Programme within

the Nunavut framework. TFN proceeded to develop a background document (Ames et al. 1988b) which provided a clear rationale for why such a program was needed (Usher and Wenzel 1988), the various political and administrative issues associated with such a program (Axford 1988), and a set of alternative approaches for harvest support (Weick 1988). Overall, the main alternative developed in this document modelled itself after the Cree Hunter and Trappers Income Security Programme (La Rusic 1982) that arose as a component of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement.

While recognizing the existence of important political, cultural and economic differences between the Nunavut Inuit and James Bay Cree situations, the TFN document sought to adapt those components of the Cree program that could best fulfill the cultural, as well as economic, needs of Inuit subsistants. Among the most important of these elements were: 1) gender and age inclusiveness; 2) a program focus on participant effort rather than "production" per se.

TFN's proposed model never found inclusion within the Nunavut land claims framework (Cadieux 1988). At the same time, it stimulated sufficient interest among Inuit and in the GNWT that the concept of comprehensive hunter support, while removed from the Nunavut negotiating table, did not fall far from it.

## **The Nunavut Hunter Support Program**

The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (Nunavut 1993) came into effect in 1994. In the same year, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI, formerly TFN) established the Nunavut Hunter Support Program (NHSP) through a \$30 million fund, contributed to equally by NTI and the GNWT. And while the current program is semantically related to the James Bay Cree Income Security Programme, it is, in fact, more closely descended from the 1988 TFN exercise.

Using the annual interest from the \$30 million, the objective of the program is to allocate support directly to individuals in order that they may purchase major capital hunting items. In principal, the NHSP, following from TFN's Wildlife Harvest Support model, is open to all Inuit 16 years and older. However, because the monies available to the program in any year is limited, allocations are nominally pegged at a maximum of \$7,000 per recipient with participation based on an application format. And, while administered on a regional basis, as in the TFN model, primary adjudication of individual applications rests with community Hunter-Trapper Organizations (see Nunavut 1993).

As Table Five shows, the need for such a program is at least as high today as at any time since the collapse of the sealskin market. However, because of the program's one-time capitalization scheme, demand consistently outstrips the NHSP's ability to fund all yearly requests. Yet, as successful applicants are excluded from consideration for at least two subsequent years, the program has the potential to achieve approximate universality by virtue of its three-year appli-

**Table Five: NHSP Applications and Approvals, 1994**

Community	Applications	Approvals	Percent Accepted
Arctic Bay	48	12	25
Arviat	105	17	16
Baker Lake	83	12	15
Bay Chimo	11	5	45
Broughton Island	51	8	16
Cambridge Bay	6	6	100
Cape Dorset	55	10	18
Chesterfield Inlet	19	5	26
Clyde River	90	13	14
Coral Harbour	50	9	18
Coppermine	14	14	100
Gjoa Haven	40	14	35
Grise Fiord	14	3	21
Hall Beach	24	7	29
Igloolik	68	13	19
Iqaluit	58	14	24
Lake Harbour	18	6	33
Pangnirtung	81	17	21
Pelly Bay	28	9	32
Pond Inlet	65	14	21
Rankin Inlet	55	10	19
Repulse Bay	45	9	20
Resolute Bay	22	3	14
Sanikiluaq	30	11	36
Tayoyoak	73	12	16
Umingmaktok	5	2	40
Whale Cove	9	5	55
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1167</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>22</b>

cation limitation on successful recipients. In this regard, the NHSP resembles the "slow build-up" approach suggested in the original TFN model (Ames et al. 1988).

As was anticipated in the TFN exercise, the present hunter support program has had to make a number of adjustments. Two are of some broad interest. Firstly, by the NHSP's second year, it was decided that the set sum approach should be replaced by a specific capital item allocation. In so doing, the program acknowledged the disadvantage in retail price schedules present in communities as diverse as Grise Fiord and Iqaluit. Secondly, in 1998 the program underwent a name change and is now the Nunavut Harvester Support Program. This renaming was done to make the gender openness of its intent more transparent to women (J. Hicks, Pers. Comm.).

## Summary

Inuit subsistence relations have been and are a system of collective action that is regulated as much by social relations that exist between participants as by human-animal ecological relations. In light of this, it is neither mere bodily maintenance, independent self-sufficiency, hunting, nor the economically advantageous movement of commodities from possessors to those most able to acquire them, but rather, for want of a better term, a distinct social-economy.

Since intensive interaction with non-Inuit began early in this century, the nature of Inuit subsistence has been one of adapting new technologies and, increasingly, new institutional forms to meet the primary social goals of this system. In regard to the former, Inuit were notably successful until the intervention of powerful exogenous agents in the early 1980s. As a result of this intervention, Inuit subsistence practice experienced considerable disruption, necessitating for the first time direct government support to re-establish access to critical resources. While this support was important, it was predicated on a perception of subsistence that more reflected non-Inuit conceptions than the Inuit reality.

The Nunavut Agreement has provided the Inuit with the institutional and fiscal resources to undertake redress of the situation affecting this essential aspect of their culture. The Nunavut Harvester Support Program, while perhaps not a perfect solution, as much emphasizes the social nature of subsistence as the material resources necessary for its practice. It is very much an Inuit construct.

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## CHAPTER 10

# BOWHEAD WHALE HUNTING IN NUNAVUT: A SYMBOL OF SELF-GOVERNMENT

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by Helle Høgh

*A new political culture is developing in Nunavut where tradition, culture, and identity are negotiated, and where new ways of reconstructing old traditions are discussed. The revival of bowhead whale hunting in Nunavut is an example of this process. In August 1996 the first legal bowhead whale hunt in Canada's Eastern Arctic since 1979 took place. The hunt was initiated by the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board pursuant to Section 5.6.18 of the 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Leaders of Nunavut organisations cheered the hunt as a revival of an Inuit cultural tradition and as a symbol of self-government, but not all Nunavummiut were happy with the hunt and the way it was organised. Different interests were at stake in the process of self-government.*

The bowhead whale stock in Canada's Eastern Arctic was greatly depleted by commercial whaling, which ended in the beginning of this century. In 1979 the Canadian government passed legislation banning the hunting of bowhead whales without a licence and for the next 16 years no Inuit or other body ever requested a licence to hunt a bowhead whale in the Eastern Arctic from the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO).<sup>1</sup>

In recent decades hunters from many communities in Nunavut reported an increase in the numbers of bowhead whales, especially in northern Foxe Basin, northern Hudson Bay, and along the east and north coasts of Baffin Island. Some Inuit indicated an interest in renewing a subsistence bowhead hunt, but they chose to articulate what they believed to be their aboriginal right to hunt whales rather than request a licence from the DFO. The reasons given for wanting to re-establish the bowhead hunt included passing on important cultural traditions of Inuit knowledge and harvesting methods associated with bowhead whale hunting, and showing respect for the elders and their skills. The situation changed completely in 1993 with the settlement of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA). Article 5 of the NLCA created a powerful co-management body called the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB), an institution of public government which is the primary instrument of

wildlife management and the primary regulator of access to wildlife (including fish and marine mammals) in Nunavut. NWMB has the authority to establish, modify or remove levels of the total allowable harvest for stocks or populations of wildlife in Nunavut. The Total Allowable Harvest is, in effect, a quota on a given stock of wildlife. However, decisions of the NWMB which are subject to federal jurisdiction must be sent to the appropriate Minister (in the case of bowhead whale, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans) for his/her review. After receiving a final decision of the NWMB, the Minister may choose to accept, reject or vary it.

In Section 5.5.1 of the NLCA the government acknowledged the "Inuit view that, following the cessation of commercial harvesting, stocks of bowhead whales in [Nunavut] have increased in recent decades as a result, in part, of Inuit voluntarily curtailing their harvesting practices to allow the recovery of the bowhead whale population", and Section 5.5.2 allocated the NWMB C\$500,000 to document the Inuit view by conducting a study of Inuit traditional knowledge of bowhead whales.

Section 5.6.18 of the NLCA stated that the NWMB must, within a year of the commencement of the traditional bowhead knowledge study, establish a Total Allowable Harvest of at least one bowhead whale. Thereafter, it is the responsibility of the NWMB to establish Total Allowable Harvest levels for bowhead whales in the same manner as it does for other stocks and species.

A committee established by the NWMB began designing a traditional bowhead knowledge study in October 1994, and work commenced in February 1995. On December 1, 1995 the NWMB decided to establish a Total Allowable Harvest of one bowhead for Nunavut for 1996, to be harvested in either Lancaster Sound, western Baffin Bay, Foxe Basin or northern Hudson Bay. On February 2, 1996 the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans accepted the NWMB's decision, and the department then issued a license to the Keewatin Wildlife Federation<sup>2</sup> to hunt and kill one bowhead whale (and/or to strike two bowheads if the first animal escaped alive) during the period from July 20 to October 30, 1996. The licence specified that the hunt and processing of the whale must be conducted in accordance with an approved hunt plan, and that hunters were not to strike or kill a bowhead calf or any bowhead accompanied by a calf.

## **The 1996 bowhead hunt**

The NWMB convened a workshop on the bowhead hunt in Iqaluit in January, 1996, where among other matters the delegates discussed

where the hunt should take place. Duke of York Bay (near Coral Harbour) was chosen as the best location, over Cumberland Sound (near Pangnirtung). The first strike should be made from a kayak, the delegates recommended, with modern boats and exploding weapons then used to ensure a quick, humane kill. The delegates also identified the need for a Bowhead Whale Hunt Planning Committee, which would have an office in Coral Harbour and receive logistical support from the Keewatin Wildlife Federation.

Concerns were soon expressed with respect to ice conditions, strong currents, and limited access to Duke of York Bay, and it was eventually decided that the 1996 hunt would be conducted from the community of Repulse Bay, a decision which came as a severe disappointment to the people of Coral Harbour.

The next step was to decide who was going to participate in the hunt. The Planning Committee's top priority was that all of Nunavut should be represented in the hunting crew. A Hunt Captain was appointed from Repulse Bay, and the three regional wildlife organisations in Nunavut were each asked to select four crew members for the hunt. A few days before the hunt was to take place the designated hunters met in Repulse Bay in order to plan their strategy. They agreed that it should be a traditional whale hunt, where the whale was harpooned and then later shot with a special whaling gun (which fires an exploding projectile) to minimise suffering, not only because it was the humane thing to do, but also to ensure that 'animal rights' groups would not have arguments to lobby against similar hunts in the future. Before the hunt took place DFO officials inspected the equipment to ensure that it was appropriate to kill the whale successfully and the boat to ensure that it was big enough to drag the whale back to shore. For security reasons a two nautical mile zone was set up around the hunting party. Everything was set and ready to go on August 12, 1996.

A few days later the mood in Repulse Bay was festive after local residents spotted a large (15 metre) male bowhead whale in shallow waters in front of the community. The hunting party managed to harpoon the whale several times, and then repeatedly shot it with ordinary rifles because no one had been trained to use the special whaling gun. Unfortunately the whale managed to swim into deeper water before sinking 'dead' despite having more than a dozen floats attached to it. The hunters had no luck trying to locate the whale using sonar and heavy duty hooks, but after two frustrating days the whale corpse resurfaced on its own, bloated with gas, on Saturday, August 17.

The dead whale was landed for butchering as the tide was going out, but as the meat of an unopened bowhead remains edible for

only a day and a half after death most of this whale could not be consumed. Fortunately the maktaaq<sup>3</sup> and blubber were still edible, and celebrations and a feast were held that night.

As had been intended from the beginning, the maktaaq was distributed to all the communities in Nunavut. Obviously one whale is not enough for 25,000 people, so it was seen to that the elders in the communities were the first recipients of the maktaaq. In Repulse Bay and across Nunavut, although people were happy that the entire whale wasn't wasted, many were disappointed with the manner in which the hunt had taken place.

### **Local response to the hunt**

Local hunters in Repulse Bay were dissatisfied with the manner in which the hunt took place. First of all, they were not allowed to participate in the hunt the Nunavut-wide team assembled by the Planning Committee carried out the hunt. Secondly, they had to stay outside the two-mile zone around the hunting party. And thirdly, they believed that the hunt was too expensive; it cost more than C\$100,000 to pay for the hunting crew, the equipment, and transporting the maktaaq to all the communities in Nunavut. A Repulse Bay resident criticised the hunt in a letter to the editor in the local newspaper.<sup>4</sup> His understanding of a traditional bowhead whale hunt was that the people hunting should not get cash payment, as if it were a job. He suggested that instead of establishing committees the NWMB should allow the community selected for the hunt to organise it, and that the community should not receive cash compensation for expenses other than the costs of distributing the maktaaq. This critique of the Nunavut-wide approach of the bowhead whale hunt indicates that the organisation of the hunt differed somewhat from the traditional, locally-organised Inuit way of hunting whales. Traditionally local hunters hunted together, and everyone who had a boat was allowed to participate and received a part of the whale when it was butchered. Local hunters know their land and waters, and that's where they hunted; they didn't travel long distances to hunt on other people's land and waters.

From the beginning, the 1996 whale hunt had an unusual character. The organisation of the hunt was institutionalised and taken out of its local context. It was turned into an ethno-political regional event where people who did not usually hunt together were appointed to a hunting team – and even received cash payment for their 'work.' The political organisations wanted to control the hunt, to ensure that it was according to 'best practice.' They wanted to

show the Canadian Government that they were capable, that they were in charge, and that they lived up to their self-government responsibilities.

These concerns were paramount because two years earlier there had been an illegal community-driven bowhead whale hunt, which had put the NWMB and leading Inuit organisations and politicians in a delicate position between the federal government and local hunters.

### **The illegal bowhead whale hunt in Igloolik**

In September 1994 three hunters from Igloolik came across a young bowhead whale. They decided to harvest it, so after repeatedly shooting the whale with walrus hunting rifles they speared it with a harpoon made out of a paddle and a snow knife and landed it one hour by boat from the community. It was butchered, and the meat and maktaaq were brought home to the community. The hunters claimed to be surprised that their harvest attracted a great deal of attention from federal authorities and the media, because they didn't consider the hunt unusual. They had been hunting walrus and seal among the ice floes near Igloolik when they saw the whale surface; they said that after observing the whale for a while they determined that it was sick and decided to kill it so it would not be wasted. The hunters either were not aware of, or had chosen to ignore, the fact that they had killed a protected whale. The hunters had not applied for a license to kill a bowhead whale, and were thus in violation of the Marine Mammal Regulations made pursuant to the federal *Fisheries Act*.

The immediate reactions from the Inuit representative organisations on the Igloolik hunt were negative. The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the Baffin Regional Inuit Association all expressed disappointment and disapproval of the hunt. They could not, they said, support an action that violated the rules established by the NLCA - an agreement which Inuit had spent more than 20 years negotiating.

For its part, the NWMB was deeply concerned about the 'legal' bowhead hunt they were expecting the federal government to agree to for the following year. The general public in Nunavut, however, didn't share this point of view. Many elders and hunters all over Nunavut were excited by the hunt. In Igloolik and beyond, overwhelming support for the three hunters was expressed on radio and television call-in shows - especially after the mayor of Igloolik told the press that the bowhead whale had been killed out of love for a

respected elder in the community whose last wish had been to taste bowhead whale maktaaq which he had not had since he was a young man.<sup>5</sup>

As the trial of the three hunters approached, the NWMB decided on a Total Allowable Harvest of one for the legal 1996 bowhead hunt – and the federal Minister agreed. This allowed the NWMB and the Inuit representative organisations to move from a reactive mode to a reflective one, and they changed their positions on the illegal hunt. In order to avoid internal conflicts in Nunavut they introduced a new perspective on the case, one which all Inuit in Nunavut could agree with. Instead of seeing the illegal hunt as a threat to the legal whale hunt and the NLCA, the organisations changed focus and saw the charges against the three hunters as a question of aboriginal rights.

Despite the NLCA and the coming creation of Nunavut, the Inuit of Nunavut *as an aboriginal people* are still to some degree in conflict or tension with the Canadian state. Seen in this perspective, the trial could easily have been perceived as a challenge to aboriginal rights in general across Canada – a high profile case concerning the question of whether aboriginal peoples have hunting rights that may supersede other regulations or laws, or whether they ever gave up their hunting rights at all. It might well have been a very lengthy and expensive process, with unpredictable implications for aboriginal hunting rights in other parts of Canada – something the federal government would not be interested in and would certainly try to avoid.

The Inuit representative organisations supported the hunters, saying that they had made a wise decision in deciding to harvest the whale because otherwise it would have been wasted. Others drew attention to the statement that the whale had been killed to fulfil the last request of a respected elder man. The President of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada even explained the case as a misunderstanding, explaining that because the NLCA had been signed in 1993 the hunters thought they were at liberty to go ahead and harvest a bowhead whale.<sup>6</sup> To show they meant business, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and Baffin Regional Inuit Association agreed to pay the three hunters' legal bills.

The federal government stayed the charges against the three hunters from Igloodik at the end of May, 1996, shortly before the legal bowhead whale hunt was to take place. The reason given by the prosecutor was that the cost of a court battle would have been prohibitive due to the complexity of the case, and that prosecution would therefore not have been in the public interest.<sup>7</sup> The prior conduct of Igloodik hunters was also taken into consideration, and the act was seen as an isolated event.



## Whale hunting and self-government

These two bowhead whale hunts touch on many critical issues concerning the right to self-government. A central element in the process of implementing self-government agreements is the transition from *demanding* rights to *achieving* rights. Achieving the right of self-government shifts the focus from external confrontation between Inuit and the Canadian state to the internal organisation of self-government among Inuit themselves, and among the institutions established by the land claim. In this process culture has become a contested concept in political life as *rhetoric*, but comprises at the same time the order of *lived reality*. These two levels of cultural practise are reflected in the two whale hunts.

The legal whale hunt reflects both the politics of culture and the political culture which have characterised the ethno-national rhetoric and demands of Inuit for more than 20 years. Since the early 1970s the political arena in the Arctic has been characterised by Inuit leaders engaging the Canadian state and the international community in negotiations regarding aboriginal rights. It was a small, well-educated Inuit elite that was responsible for those negotiations, which were premised on a specific representation of Inuit culture and ethnicity. It was their vision of returning to more traditional values that was heard in the debate. The Inuit leaders were successful in achieving their goal, a form of self-government through a land claim agreement and a public government, and in 1993 they signed the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement with the governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories. Since then, a process of implementing the provisions of the NLCA has been underway in Nunavut – a process which culminated in the creation of Nunavut on April 1, 1999. A key component of this implementation process to date has been the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board successfully exercising responsibility for wildlife-related decision-making in Nunavut.

However, the legal whale hunt shows that the political leaders' ideas and visions of reorganising Inuit society sometimes differ from the local community's culture and forms of self-organisation. Local hunters criticised the decisions of their political leaders because their decision to organise a 'traditional' whale hunt as a Nunavut-wide event was not seen to be faithful to the spirit of traditional Inuit bowhead whale hunting practices, which are community-driven. One could go as far as to call it an infringement of local hunters' right to self-determination, understood as their right to hunt in their own local waters. Surely this was not the political leaders' intention; they wanted the hunt to symbolise regional self-government and to unite

all Nunavut residents, and they wanted everyone to feel they were part of the event.

The contradiction and tension between the traditional local practice of hunting whales and the new politically organised bowhead whale hunt introduced a new dimension to Inuit culture and politics, a 'Nunavut nationhood feeling' where the whale hunt becomes a symbol of the modern ethno-political project of self-government more than a revival of an 'authentic' Inuit cultural tradition. The legal whale hunt was therefore a political event which meant a lot – in terms of prestige and respect – to Nunavut leaders. This political dimension of the whale hunt has been criticised by the previously mentioned resident of Repulse Bay, who said in *Nunatsiaq News*, 'Let the people and the real hunters harvest the next bowhead whale instead of politicians, and with much less financial cost to Nunavut beneficiaries, so we may call it a true success.'<sup>8</sup> Seen from that perspective the illegal whale hunt seems to have been more the peoples' whale hunt than the legal whale hunt turned out to be, essentially because it was a local, community-driven hunt and therefore not taken out of its local context and traditional Inuit whale hunting practices. It was easy for ordinary people to identify with the three hunters, which explains the tremendous sympathy and solidarity expressed by the general public in Nunavut. It was more difficult to identify with the legal whale hunt, because only a few chosen people were allowed – indeed, employed – in the hunt.

These observations do not excuse the fact that the three hunters from Igloolik harvested a whale which they were not legally allowed to hunt, but they illustrate that the political leadership had a different perspective on the meaning of Inuit cultural traditions in a post land claim Nunavut than those of the local cultural practices of Igloolik hunters. It also shows that a new political culture is developing in Nunavut where tradition, culture and identity is negotiated, and where new ways of reconstructing old traditions are discussed. Different interests are at stake in the process of self-government – this becomes clear in real-life events like the bowhead whale hunts, and this diversity among Inuit people must be recognised in order to build Nunavut in an inclusive manner.

## Postscript

A second bowhead whale was legally hunted since this article was written, in Cumberland Sound near Pangnirtung in July 1998. The NWMB had recognised that mistakes had been made during the first hunt, and had commissioned a consultant's study which suggested

that the Nunavut-wide approach had complicated the planning and implementation of the 1996 hunt. It was therefore recommended that the 1998 hunt should be community-driven, and that hunters from the chosen community should take a leading role in the hunt.<sup>9</sup> The 1998 hunt was, accordingly, a community-driven hunt with the Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Association as the organising body. The planning of the 1998 hunt also included training in how to use the whaling gun, which was actually used during this hunt<sup>10</sup>.

People in Nunavut seemed much more satisfied with this hunt than that of 1996. The re-organisation of the 1998 hunt is an example of the dynamic mentioned above, where new ways of reconstructing old traditions are discussed. This process of Inuit culture-in-the-making shows that it is not only the leading Inuit politicians who will decide how future bowhead whale hunts will be organised. Local people who participate actively in community-level and Nunavut-wide discussions have had and will continue to have a lot to say about the organisation of cultural practices in Nunavut.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In 1991 the Inuvialuit in the Western Arctic obtained a licence to hunt a bowhead whale, but that whale belonged to a different stock than the bowheads in Nunavut.
- <sup>2</sup> Nunavut is organised into three administrative regions, and each has its own regional wildlife organization – the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board in the Baffin region, the Keewatin Wildlife Federation in the Keewatin region, and the Kitikmeot Hunters and Trappers Association in the Kitikmeot region. Unlike the NWMB, which is a public (i.e. non-ethnic) body, the three regional wildlife organizations are explicitly Inuit bodies. They are the means by which the concerns of Inuit hunters are intended to be brought to the attention of the NWMB.
- <sup>3</sup> Maktaak is the skin and fat of a whale, and a delicacy among Inuit.
- <sup>4</sup> Nunatsiaq News, August 2, 1996.
- <sup>5</sup> Nunatsiaq News, September 23, 1994.
- <sup>6</sup> Nunatsiaq News, February 17, 1995.
- <sup>7</sup> News/North, June 3, 1996.
- <sup>8</sup> Nunatsiaq News, August 23, 1996.
- <sup>9</sup> Nunatsiaq News, March 14, 1997.
- <sup>10</sup> For a detailed description of the 1998 Bowhead whale hunt see: *Ittuuaqtuut* Volume 1 Issue 1 "A Whaler's Life" p.14-28.

## CHAPTER 11

# NUNAVUT AND OTHER NORTHERN TERRITORIES: A SCANDINAVIAN PERSPECTIVE

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by **Odd Terje Brantenberg**

## **Comparative Studies**

In comparative studies people are too often surprised by obvious differences between one place and another. They may fail to see underlying problems and possibilities which are shared. The poverty and hardship of indigenous settlements in Northern Australia may obscure the fact that people are facing the same mining intrusions into their lifestyle, sometimes by the same companies, as in the Sami North of Scandinavia, Sápmi; the Dene-Inuit lands on Nunavut's western border; and the mountain country at the head of the Fly River in Papua New Guinea.

Glib talk about differences between Anglo-Saxon common law traditions and European law have allowed some of our experts, e.g., the Sami Rights Committee (Samerettsutvalget), to evade the obvious moral equivalence of indigenous land, freshwater, and sea rights in Sápmi<sup>1</sup> with those in North America and Australia. And so, the land rights reports of 1994 from that body, first appearing as news leaks in mid-1993, based their denial of Sami rights on the very same moral principle which had been dismissed by Australian courts in *Mabo* (1992) and *Wik* (1996), by Canadian courts in *Calder* (1973), New Zealand courts in recent times, and by the USA Supreme Court of Chief Justice Marshall in the 1820s and 1830s. One might almost say the Sami Rights Committee relied on *terra nullius* thinking. The hypocrisy involved has been gleefully picked up and used as a defence of backward policies by governments elsewhere to justify themselves internationally, as when Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer of Australia attacked the Scandinavian countries in January 1998 for denying Sami rights.<sup>2</sup>

Another negative development in the past couple of years has been a popular backlash in hinterland regions like North Norway against indigenous peoples and their rights. The populist movement led by Pauline Hanson in Australia and the Reform Party in Western Canada have similar agendas. However, as Reform in Canada strug-

gles to become a serious national political force – it is already the official Opposition in Parliament in Ottawa – it has had to shed its more extreme positions and members. In Australia the Prime Minister, whose ambiguous utterances on indigenous and immigration issues are seen by many to have provided the fertile ground in which Pauline Hanson could grow, has now proclaimed that in his second term he will make national reconciliation with Aborigines a priority. That may be mere political rhetoric, but the fact that he said it in his election night speech to the country indicates that his own party and the general public are fed up with anti-indigenous policy and rhetoric.

In Canada the Nisga'a claims settlement<sup>3</sup> of August 1998, a settlement which includes territorial, fishing, and forestry rights; control of public services such as schools; regional and local Nisga'a government; and large compensation payments for damage done to the Nisga'a homeland by governments and settlers, has provoked Reform and other white backlash groups. But a funny thing has happened. In this strongly populist, resource-centred province, the Premier is basing his re-election campaign on the justice and goodwill of the Nisga'a settlement. A few years ago British Columbia was more like Australia's Western Australia and Queensland – i.e., strongly anti-indigenous. Some years of discussion and principled leadership by national and provincial governments have changed the whole political chemistry. Furthermore, there is growing public anger at white politicians who are trying to use the Nisga'a people to win cheap votes from racists. No matter how or whether the settlement package is finally agreed, the Nisga'a debate marks a great change in Western Canada's political culture.

Nunavut, too, has attracted some criticism. However, the national leader of Reform has pledged his party's support for creation of Nunavut as planned on April 1, 1999. Much of the commentary by recent critics is silly. They complain that Nunavut is not strong in a conventional economic sense, that many people rely on government support both directly and indirectly, and that the region is expensive for governments. Of course, that is true of North Norway or Northern Australia or Northern Russia, also. It is not a new situation in Northern Canada, and indeed one of the motives behind creation of Nunavut is to help that whole region to help itself by taking stronger control of its future. What is new is that when governments are unwilling or unable to maintain an adequate level of services or enlightened policies towards indigenous peoples in their hinterlands, the rest of the world takes a vocal and critical interest.

Australian leaders now criticise Norway, Sweden, and Finland for their dithering and delay of Sami rights recognition. America's

Time magazine denounces the capitalist exploitation of Siberia and Northern Russia as 'rape' in a special feature, and the rest of the world watches with interest the environmental and social impacts on Sami, Nenets, Inuit, and other peoples of Russia's troubles. Europeans and Asians criticise Australia's previously little-known Northern policies. We may say that all this is 'too little, too late', but it does show a changing international culture, one in which the territory and rights of indigenous peoples are increasingly respected, as the former president of the Sami Parliament in Norway Ole Henrik Magga noted in a United Nations journal<sup>4</sup>.

The challenge is to use the nation state as the building block for ensuring that all cultural groups have a space within its borders.

The idea of a nation state as a culturally homogenous group that could assimilate and oppress minorities is not acceptable. It means decimating the cultural richness of our planet, to which public opinion is increasingly sensitive. Even from a cynical viewpoint, it is in the best interest of states to put an end to this policy. The alternative will lead to major conflicts that will only upset the very stability of states.

A compromise has to be struck between cultural groups and the nation state. It means that mechanisms, both legislative and political, must be developed whereby the state would transfer a large part of its powers to cultural groups and ensure that all groups have space to exist and develop without oppressing the others. It means that the state becomes a sort of federation of cultural groups responsible for guaranteeing both individual rights and collective cultural rights. This involves rethinking the notion of the state. In the event of conflict, the international community must have the right to interfere in internal affairs through a mechanism that remains to be created under the auspices of the United Nations.

## **Nunavut in a Scandinavian Context**

Nunavut is neither a creation of special Canadian laws nor feasible only because of the wide open spaces of Northern Canada. The principles which motivated the national government to accept and even encourage indigenous self-determination in the far North were no different from those contained in the 1984 report of the Norwegian Sami Rights Committee. That is, Inuit were a people with a culture and territory having a special claim on the Canadian conscience. Canadians are less likely to cite international law in domestic matters than Scandinavians are, but the spirit of United Nations agreements and precedents are important there, Canada having

been proudly active in founding the UN and participating in all its work. (In Canada there has never been the hostility to the UN found in Australia or America.)

Furthermore, the Nunavut model, like other recent Canadian land claims settlements, is designed to accommodate existing non-indigenous communities and other land uses, whether roads and dams, or mines.<sup>5</sup> Its main purpose is to enable indigenous peoples to regain control of territory and economic potential without disturbing existing legal rights of third parties. 'The wide open spaces' of Canada are an illusion – in fact, there is usually intense competition for certain areas, e.g., waterways, productive lands or marine areas, as well as 'natural' settlement sites. This Canadian model, of which Nunavut is the largest example to date, is flexible and can be used anywhere, e.g., Finnmark, or Troms, or Australia.

The most recent application of the process has been the Northern British Columbia agreement negotiated by the Nisga'a, mentioned above. The Nisga'a people, who have fought the longest continuous land rights battle in Canada, ratified their negotiated agreement with the governments of Canada and British Columbia on November 6-7, 1998.<sup>6</sup> As Prime Minister Chrétien said after a meeting with the Nisga'a leader a few days later, 'It's a very important thing... I believe in it personally and it is an obligation of the government and it is a constitutional obligation... that the King of England gave us in 1763. We're a bit late to implement it, don't you think?' (*Ottawa Citizen*, 11-11-98).

Indeed, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the biggest public inquiry Canada has ever held, recommended in its 1996 final report that the whole country be the subject of these regional agreements to return power and opportunity as well as secure the culture of indigenous peoples.<sup>7</sup> A major reason for this proposal is that Nunavut and the other similar claims settlements and self-government projects across Northern Canada have been healing racial tensions, improving environmental management, and reconciling indigenous self-determination with the demands of the national government for a united country.

The socio-economic conditions of Nunavut are different from North Norway. The Canadians only began to spend on major material change – housing, public services, community facilities, schools – in the 1950s and 1960s. Accompanied as this was by bringing the scattered Inuit hunting camps into new central villages which look, superficially, like North American suburbs, the policy was devastating for Inuit traditions and culture, as well as for individuals and families. While one cannot fault the level of



national commitment, the immediate non-material results were horrendous.

Unlike North Norway with its open-water ports, Arctic Canada is much more difficult to reach with supplies. Annual re-supply ships usually reach the communities in August, and then only if ice conditions permit. Today the system of airports in every Nunavut community and better aviation support systems mean that medical emergencies and urgent supplies are no longer a problem. However, the costs of air transport are very high, so Nunavut living costs for typical Canadian lifestyles are very high. The old hunter-gatherer life is not only a tradition, it is a necessity.

Because Nunavut has only had one or two generations of real incorporation in the Canadian state, it is too early to say how things will develop. As in Greenland and North Alaska during and after World War II, the shock of social and material change has created many predictable social problems. Alcohol and now drug abuse, domestic violence, unemployment, and loss of identity have run rampant. One may hope that just as the late 19th century cities of the Nordic countries could be social hell-holes a generation or two before they became admired around the world for their order and well-being, so may another generation or two in time bring more positive outcomes in Nunavut, Greenland, and elsewhere.

Sami have lived in close contact with Norwegians, Swedes, Finns, and Russians for a very long time. Much cultural exchange was inevitable. Inevitable too were many bitter feelings and remembered experiences such as those re-enacted in the Sami film, *The Pathfinder*. The Nunavut Inuit have had brief acquaintance with the pressure of European society, and certainly they do not show the depths of anger and bitterness of Canada's Indian peoples. On the other hand, they have strong grievances of their own. These are recent, and one may hope that having acquired the levers of their own government so quickly after the worst of those experiences, they may be able to undo or move on from such unhappy social policies.

In general, social and political theory of the types familiar in Northern as well as the rest of Scandinavia, and in Europe as a whole, have had little impact in Nunavut. This is the more remarkable because in North America, only Nunavut and the remainder of the Northwest Territories have a fully elaborated welfare-state system comparable with those in Nordic countries. In Northern Canada, as in the rest of North America and the English-speaking world, indigenous politics and grievance focus on law and legal rights, whereas it may be natural in Nordic countries to think of reform in terms of social theory and applied social science. (Nevertheless, as Jull in this volume and others have noted, social grievance and

discrimination in social services were the starting point of the Nunavut movement.)

The adversarial domestic legal system has been the main battleground in Canada, USA, New Zealand, and Australia for progress in indigenous policy. On the other hand, international law has played a smaller role than one might expect of such litigious cultures. Because society is expected to work this way in Anglophone countries, it has little of the damaging effect on national unity which we might expect. National and sub-national governments happily send their vexed disputes with each other to the courts to be resolved, and then abide by the court decisions. Visitors from those countries to Nordic Europe are astounded by claims that our system is 'inclusive'; they see it merely as the cultural hegemony or assimilation by one ethnic group of others and are surprised by the lack of Sami legal disputation.

## **Cross-Cultural Relations**

A Canadian Inuit leader some years ago asked an Icelander while visiting that country how his people had been so successful in building a strong and affluent society on their isolated island.<sup>8</sup> 'Ethnic homogeneity!', was the reply. No doubt many people in the Nordic world have believed the same thing of their countries, but it is not true. Even in Iceland there was a large Celtic population brought in by the Norse, sometimes as slaves and often as wives. Many observers believe that the Celtic influence lies behind Iceland's unique literary accomplishments. The building of the modern nation state in Scandinavia has been at Sami expense, and only in the past few decades have Sami begun to regain the freedom and equality of old times.

Nunavut is one-fifth of Canada's land area. Canadians have few fears about it being in non-European hands. In the post-war years the old Anglophone hegemony has been challenged and defeated by immigrants from Europe and now Asia and the Caribbean all across Canada, and by the old Francophone culture of Quebec, and by the Acadian French of the Atlantic provinces. During the post-1968 Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, until 1989, the Czech literary and cultural centre was Toronto. Toronto also has the largest Latvian population of anywhere outside Latvia, and Manitoba has the largest Icelandic community outside Iceland. Canada has been transformed. Most Anglophone Canadians welcome the change. They say the country was 'stuffy', 'boring', 'puritanical', and a sad cultural colony (of USA and UK) until the cultural change really began to be felt

nation-wide, c. 1960. They note the richness of artistic and literary life today, of cuisine and social scenes in the Canadian cities, but most of all they note the openness and tolerance, and the enthusiastic celebration of cultural diversity in national, provincial, and regional life.

The Inuit, Indians, and Métis have been the last people to benefit from these changes, but since the late 1960s they have made many gains. It is now the policy of the Canadian government to build self-government and the 'capacity building' needed to support it in indigenous communities. The federal government has even formally stated that it regards the 'aboriginal rights' guaranteed in Section 35 of the Constitution Act 1982 to include an aboriginal right to self-government.

There has been a great deal of attention to indigenous art and culture. This began with Inuit graphics and sculpture from the 1950s and has spread to other peoples. The Inuit and Indian political revival has been accompanied by a cultural revival and by the whole of Canadian society joining in. No bookshop in Canada (or Australia, or New Zealand) lacks a section on indigenous peoples. Recognition of indigenous culture now is part of virtually all public occasions. Europeans like to think that these British-derived countries simply lack a culture of their own, but people there look blank when told this – after all, they point out, they are heirs to the whole of British history and regard King Alfred as their own ancestral figure as much as Norwegians so regard Ottar.

This year the United Nations again found Canada to be the best country in the world in its living standards, with the Nordic countries also in the highest listings. In other words, the prejudice Nordic Europe has long felt about its mono-cultural advantage may be an illusion. Canada has embraced multiculturalism in contemporary terms and is the better for it (the Quebec issue is somewhat separate: it is rooted in imperial policies and conflicts of the 17th and 18th centuries. Moreover, the national government in Canada has been dominated for decades by Quebec prime ministers and ministers who have totally altered the tone and content of national policy in respect of Francophone-Anglophone and federal-provincial relations. Quebec's motivation now is more than of mature confidence seeking further expression than old grievance).

The big issue for Canada posed by Nunavut was not cultural or racial; rather, it was doubt about the economic viability of this large, remote region. However, just as Norway has an equalisation policy for its regions and municipalities, the Canadian Constitution now specifically recognises a commitment to equalisation among regions. This is an old policy, in fact. Canadian taxpayers have long supported the Northwest Territories (and Quebec and the Atlantic

provinces) through equalisation payments of various types. Of more concern to Canadian than the cost of Nunavut is the fact that its employment and economic outlooks are grim. The anti-seal hunting campaign in Europe and elsewhere destroyed the Inuit economy, even though Inuit were not the people hunting seals in the Gulf of St Lawrence where the controversy is focused. The world is upset with Nunavut Inuit again now over the agreement whereby Nunavut is allowed to kill one bowhead whale each year. Smaller whales, beluga and narwhal, are also major Inuit food sources. What worries Canadians, however, is the welfare dependency of many Northern and remote areas like Nunavut. This is seen more as a moral issue than a financial one. In the hysterical free-market and anti-government mood which has swept the English-speaking world since Thatcher and Reagan made it popular, Nunavut is an exception. Most Canadian are happy to accept this exception, however.

Moreover, Northern Canada has always been an exception. The large-scale commitment of government to Nunavut and other regions of the North from 1953 saw the sort of planning and phased project development familiar to North Norway after the war, or to post-war Greenland. The reality is that Nunavut, the rest of Northern Canada, and the rest of the Circumpolar regions are ones in which government support is a fundamental part of life. North Norway may be the most successful example – as many overseas visitors tell us – but it is not the only example. Perhaps the fact that North Norway is the region where indigenous and non-indigenous peoples have lived together longest, much longer than anywhere else, is part of the reason for that success. And yet old problems of Sami-Norwegian relations remain.

Nunavut is the leading recent example in Canada of the belief that legal and political recognition of social and cultural communities is the key to resolving grievances and ensuring participation in national life. Inuit gain political power and legal rights as a cultural community, and thus they gain the means to participate fully in Canada. When the British parliament initiated this Canadian tradition in the 1760s and 1770s in respect of Quebec, the American colonies were outraged. The Quebec Act of 1774 entrenched this constitutional approach and was one of the major causes of the American Revolution against Britain two years later. The Canadian Constitution of 1867 is full of such regional, cultural, linguistic, and religious accommodations. Indeed, Canadians argue that this is the whole point of a federal system of government. Whatever one may think of the theory, it works well in practice.

Indigenous cultures and territories across Canada, USA, and Russia, already do or soon will follow this pattern, with variations

according to scale and other circumstances. It is what Australian indigenous peoples are also seeking in the Northern Territory and elsewhere. It does not mean that these peoples seal their borders and deny entrance to others. On the contrary, they gain the security and confidence to act much like other modern governments in tolerating diversity. In Norway we have seen the ill effects of suspicion and fear of minorities as part of state policy in the North, even if we have also had more cause than other countries to be nervous in our unhappy relations with Russia in modern times. The end of the Cold War may be a good time to rethink our attitudes towards culture and politics in North Norway.

Nunavut is coming into being not because of war or revolution, or because of a court decision or international rights covenant. It happened because Inuit had formed a good working relationship with élites in the national government and had the good fortune (and often the cleverness and wisdom) to use national processes and pre-occupations effectively to achieve their goals. One may hope that Sami in Scandinavia can build similar relationships with national capitals and overcome the prejudice and disdain of too many Northern Norwegians, Swedes, and Finns. In Northern Canada and elsewhere, after all, Northern settlers have been left out of political changes because their reactionary and often racist attitudes have given national capitals no other choice but to ignore them. No country can have an active and progressive international human rights policy like Norway's and simultaneously continue to respect the anti-indigenous views of its own citizens. It must firmly overrule the latter.

### **Looking Ahead, Looking Abroad, Looking Back**

What will happen now in Nunavut? Inuit have inherited a society full of problems. It has been a central part of the Nunavut belief that Inuit control will solve many problems. While that is very likely, some of the problems Inuit now face are universal. Many are problems which Greenland Inuit and Sami have already experienced in their countries. Just as Inuit and Sami have looked for inspiration and support among indigenous peoples abroad, one may hope that international networks can assist Inuit to make Nunavut a success.

Inuit and Sami peoples, as well as Nenets and other of Russia's Northern peoples, and those in Australia, New Zealand, and other countries, share many problems. In some countries there is great progress in one or other field, but failure or neglect in others. There should be much more practical cooperation between Sami and Inuit

across international borders, and between them and other peoples. The Torres Strait Islands leader, Getano Lui, Jr., who attended the 1993 Tromsø conference and gave a paper found much to think about and share with Australians on his return home.<sup>9</sup> Likewise fishing and other marine policy developments in Torres Strait, around Australia, and in the Inuit Arctic, have many aspects which could assist Sami and Norwegians. There have been many calls for Sami-Inuit-Australian conferences or workshops on sea issues for years, but none has ever taken place. Now the Nunavut Inuit, who have already played an aggressive and successful role in such issues will take another step forward through their new Nunavut government and claims organizations.

The most interesting and oldest connection between Scandinavia and Nunavut is the least known. That is, the first Europeans known to have visited Nunavut were the Norse living in Greenland. Presumably they had extensive contacts over several centuries, but apart from one or two small Inuit carvings, there is no material evidence available. North Americans used to 'discover' Viking sites regularly, and various Inuit ruins around Nunavut, Quebec, and Labrador are attributed to the Norse from time to time.

The Canadian archeologist and writer, Robert McGhee, has pointed out that when the Norse met the Algonquian and Inuit peoples of Nunavut, Arctic Quebec, Labrador, and Newfoundland (and perhaps other regions farther south), it was the completion of the circle of human migration around the globe, c. 1000 AD.<sup>10</sup> This aspect of the Nunavut story will receive much attention in North America and Northern Europe over the next couple of years. It is a shame that this fascination with the heroic age of Viking derring-do is not matched by equal interest in the no less fascinating problems, triumphs, and work of the actual peoples of the actual Arctic and Sub-Arctic today. Across Northern Canada, Greenland, the North Atlantic, Northern Scandinavia, and Russia they face serious threats to cultural survival and their sustainable resource base.

Meanwhile, in the 20th century, Norwegians visited and mapped much of the northernmost region of Nunavut. At the moment the North Magnetic Pole is wandering over one of two large Ringnes islands there, named in memory of the Norwegian beer family who helped pay for the Sverdrup expedition of 1898-1902 in that region. Few Canadians know that Norway later gave up its rights and claims to Nunavut with one condition: that Inuit resource management always have priority in that region.<sup>11</sup> When Canada separated that region from the new Inuit Nunavut administration and made it a reserve instead for non-Inuit resource extraction, it violated the

spirit of the agreement, needless to say. It is not known if Norway made any protest. Polar Inuit from Greenland also have traditional hunting rights in part of that far Northern region, a matter they have raised through the Inuit Circumpolar Conference more than once.

## Final Remarks

In Scandinavian universities and public intellectual debate, we are coming dangerously close to denying that indigenous culture, territory, and survival have any meaning beyond a sort of wearing of costume to a masquerade ball. As people proud of their own folk costumes, Norwegians, should recognize that the costume is a celebration of identity, not its source.

We have an ancient ethnic nation in our midst, the Sami, and the 1984 report of the Sami Rights Committee and reports of the Sami Culture Committee gave us philosophical frameworks for embracing that nation. The Rights committee also gave us a constitutional amendment for ensuring its survival among us. That amendment is receiving interest, admiration, and respect on other continents as well as among other Northern European countries. Meanwhile incremental government actions and the baffled non-Sami public of the North in Norway, no less than pollution, construction, etc., are threatening the reality of that ethnic nation daily.

We like to feel superior to the Anglo-Saxons. That is only fair because they have often been known for imperial arrogance towards the rest of the world, the 'Wogs begin at Calais!' syndrome. Also, the social disparities that are allowed in Britain, Canada, USA, and Australia are simply unthinkable in our countries. Nevertheless, as Fae Korsmo has asked in her writings on Sápmi and Alaska, and as other studies of Sami and Norway from North America and Australia have asked over recent decades, are we really justified in believing that all is well in our Scandinavian policy-making?<sup>12</sup> Nunavut has been a bold step, an unprecedented step, and a step not imaginable in Scandinavia. The whole trend of Canadian indigenous policy in self-government, territorial settlements, and the recognition of inherent rights is promising, even today in a time of white backlash in that country. Is Scandinavian policy really more than assimilation on the instalment plan?

Perhaps the integrity of Scandinavian government is built on old mono-cultural assumptions. However, the Norwegian constitutional amendment recognising two nations, Sami and Norwegian, within a single state, requires new thinking in our administration. It may be that the federal systems and heterogeneous nature of the large

countries like Canada, Australia, and USA have some possibilities for cultural and regional accommodation which we lack. It is at least a question we should consider because in recent years Norway, Sweden, and Finland have failed spectacularly to come to terms with the challenge of Sami rights and political imperatives.

Ours is not the only Nordic approach. Greenland<sup>13</sup> has been flourishing. In July 1998 the Danish prime minister, Mr Rasmussen, told an international gathering of indigenous peoples in Greenland<sup>14</sup>.

Political development combined with the general economic globalization racing all over the world often make it difficult for indigenous peoples to maintain their cultural origin on economically sustainable terms.

This is not an acceptable situation! Because – what is identity, without one's own culture and history? We believe, it is possible to unite identity and economic survival.

But it requires political will. We have that will. And we have shown it here in Greenland – together. Denmark and Greenland.

The world is beginning to wake up now. The nations are beginning to realise the necessity of a new global consensus of securing indigenous people. Here, at the beginning of a new Millennium.

It is vital that the rights of and respect for indigenous peoples are kept on the international agenda. (...)

There is no uniform nor simple solution to the question of how to create a constitutional framework for indigenous peoples within the limits set by nation-states.

Each country and each people must find their own solutions.

Greenland and Denmark have formulated one model – the Home Rule Agreement securing the self-government of the people of Greenland.

The Danish Government attaches great value to the Home Rule arrangement. We work together in an open political dialogue and – most importantly – in mutual respect and solidarity.

The relationship between Denmark and Greenland finds itself in a permanent process of development. Greenland have gradually taken over the responsibility for more and more policy areas of a modern society. Lately oil activities and development continue. Still based on mutual respect, responsibilities and rights and duties.

We have been able to ratify the ILO Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples – with the consent and encouragement of the Greenland Home Rule Government – without any changes to any laws and regulations governing the Danish-Greenland relationship. The ILO convention emphasises the rights of indigenous peoples to exercise control over their own institutions, ways of life and economic development, and to maintain and develop their identities,



languages and religions within the framework of the states in which they live.

I make this explicit reference to the convention because it covers – in a few words – the complexity of the matter. (...)

We hope that the Home Rule arrangement may be an inspiration to other parts of the world. It is important to show to the rest of the world that this can be done – a peaceful settlement within the nation-state, – a recognition of an indigenous population within the nation-state. Based on mutual respect of culture and identity, own and common history, economic and social opportunities... but based on rights and duties. And first and foremost based on the common thinking that everybody counts, everybody can do something. (...)

You have opened the eyes of the world of nations and people.

Nunavut grows out of particular historical and cultural circumstances. Nobody would suggest that it be an exact model for any other place or people. Nevertheless, as many people around the world now recognise – including the Danish prime minister and successive governments of that country – indigenous autonomy or self-government is workable when national governments are open to it.

## Notes

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<sup>11</sup> Henriksen G, 1970: 'Norske rettigheter i det kanadiske arktis?', *Aftenposten*, Oslo, September 16, 1970.

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<sup>13</sup> For a thoughtful and complete reflection on Greenland home rule, see Harhoff F, 1994/95: 'Palestinian Self-Government Viewed from a Distance: An International Legal Comparison Between Palestinian Self-Government and Greenland's Home Rule', *Palestinian Yearbook of International Law*, Vol VIII, 1994/95, 55-77.

<sup>14</sup> Speech of July 24, 1998, to Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Nuuk, by Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen.



**BIOGRAPHIES**

## BIOGRAPHIES

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**John Amagoalik** headed the Inuit Claims Commission before being elected for several terms as President of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. He then served as Constitutional Consultant to the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut, and as Chief Commissioner of the Nunavut Implementation Commission. He is currently a consultant based in Iqaluit.

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## **Nunavut Inuit regain control of their lands and their lives**

The Nunavut story told in this book by authors who have all been involved with Nunavut and Inuit politics for a very long time is an important one for indigenous peoples around the world – and for anyone interested in indigenous issues.

Stressing the political dynamics of the beginning of Nunavut's autonomous life, the authors provide a clear and accurate account of a remarkable political process.

Following an introductory focus on three fundamental questions: Why did Nunavut come to life, what are the opportunities and challenges to come, and what is to be learned from this experience? – the book continues with an investigation of Nunavut, its history and structure and the most recent developments and their impact on the people of Nunavut.

The questions of how Nunavut became a reality and why it is considered a model by other indigenous peoples are raised, and an "outsider's" views on the establishment of Nunavut – are presented by an Inuit leader from Nunavik, the Northern part of Quebec.

Cultural issues such as the local place names and their symbolic significance for strengthening the will to political self-determination are taken up in one article.

An outline of the history of the various orthographies having been used in Nunavut is drawn, and a closer look is taken at the absence of an indigenous literature and the intricacies associated with the introduction of a common writing system in Nunavut.

The role of the television programmes produced by the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) in the Inuit language is examined. – What influence might such programmes have on Inuit identity and the transformation from an ethnic into a regional and political identity – are some of the questions raised.

The important subsistence issue is dealt with in two articles, one on the different perspectives that have developed within the tradition of bowhead hunts in post land claim Nunavut, and another article on hunting and sharing and their changing roles after Inuit became dependent on the international market.

In the final chapter Nunavut is compared with other models of indigenous self-government already existing in the world, as for example in Greenland and Scandinavia.

The book is a remarkable achievement and should remind indigenous peoples from Australia to Asia to Africa to the Americas that many things are possible when being politically organised is combined with being persistent.



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