

Cultural Impact

Cultural Impact: A Retrospect

Early Views of the North

Before considering the economic and social impact that the pipeline and the energy corridor will have, we should examine the history of the cultural impact of white civilization upon the native people of the North. The relations between the dominant society and the native society, and the history of that relationship from the earliest times to the present, should be borne in mind: they condition our attitudes to native people, and theirs towards us.

When the first Europeans came to North America, they brought with them a set of attitudes and values that were quite different from those of the original peoples of the continent. At the heart of the difference was land. To white Europeans, the land was a resource waiting to be settled and cultivated. They believed that it was a form of private property, and that private property was linked to political responsibility. This political theory about land was coupled with religious and economic assumptions. Europeans believed that the conditions for civilized existence could be satisfied only through the practice of the Christian religion and cultivation of the land. As an early missionary phrased it, "Those who come to Christ turn to agriculture."

To the Europeans, the native people's use of the land, based upon hunting and gathering, was extravagant in extent and irreligious in nature. But to the native people, the land was sacred, the source of life and sustenance, not a commodity to be bought and sold.

Chief Justice John Marshall of the Supreme Court of the United States, writing in 1823, described the attitudes of the Europeans in this way:

On the discovery of this immense continent, the great nations of Europe were eager to appropriate to themselves so much of it as they could respectively acquire. Its vast extent offered an ample field to the ambition and enterprise of all; and the character and religion of its inhabitants afforded an apology for considering them as a people over whom the superior genius of Europe might claim an ascendancy. The potentates of the old world found no difficulty in convincing themselves that they made ample compensation to the inhabitants of the new, by bestowing on them civilization and Christianity, in exchange for unlimited independence. [*Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823) 21 U.S. 543, 572]

It was to be the white man's mission not only to tame the land and bring it under cultivation, but also to tame the native people and bring them within the pale of civilization. This sense of mission has remained the dominant theme in the history of white-native relations.

In Northern Canada, even though the possibilities for agriculture were virtually non-existent in comparison with the prairie lands, the white man's purpose was the same: to subdue the North and its people. In the old days that meant bringing furs to market; nowadays it means bringing minerals, oil and gas to market. At all times it has meant bringing the northern native people within white religious, educational and economic institutions. We sought to detach the native population from cultural habits and beliefs that were thought to be inimical to the priorities of white civilization. This process of cultural transformation has proceeded so far that in the North today many white people — and some native people, too — believe that native culture is dying. Yet

the preponderance of evidence presented to this Inquiry indicates beyond any doubt that the culture of the native people is still a vital force in their lives. It informs their view of themselves, of the world about them and of the dominant white society.

Euro-Canadian society has refused to take native culture seriously. European institutions, values and use of land were seen as the basis of culture. Native institutions, values and language were rejected, ignored or misunderstood and — given the native people's use of the land — the Europeans had no difficulty in supposing that native people possessed no real culture at all. Education was perceived as the most effective instrument of cultural change; so, educational systems were introduced that were intended to provide the native people with a useful and meaningful cultural inheritance, since their own ancestors had left them none.

The assumptions implicit in all of this are several. Native religion had to be replaced; native customs had to be rejected; native uses of the land could not, once the fur trade had been superseded by the search for minerals, oil and gas, be regarded as socially important or economically significant.

This moral onslaught has had profound consequences throughout Canada. Yet, since the coming of the white man, the native people of the North have clung to their own beliefs, their own ideas of themselves, of who they are and where they came from, and have revealed a self-consciousness that is much more than retrospective. They have shown a determination to have something to say about their lives and their future. This determination has been repeatedly expressed to the Inquiry.



The Fur and Mission Era

The penetration of European values in the North has been felt for nearly two centuries. In the early days of the fur and mission era, the native people were able to participate in the fur trade with comparatively little disruption to many of their patterns of social and economic organization, and with little change to their basic cultural values. For most of the year they still lived off the land, travelling in small groups of families in the semi-nomadic tradition of hunting and gathering peoples. Their aboriginal cycle of seasonal activity was modified to include visits to the trading post and mission to sell their furs, to buy tea, sugar, flour and guns, and to go to church.

Father Felicien Labat, the priest at Fort Good Hope, tracing a century of history through the diary of the mission, told the Inquiry about life during the fur and mission era:

[The trading post] of Good Hope was deserted during the winter months. Christmas and Easter would see a good many of [the Dene] back in the Fort for a few days, but soon after New Year they would again go back to their winter camps. Then it would be the spring hunt, when beavers would start to come out of their houses and travel down the many rivers. Summer would bring nearly everyone back into Fort Good Hope. . . . The people lived close to nature, and their life pattern followed the pattern of nature. Winter and spring were times for working, when transportation into the heart of the land was easier. Summer, on the other hand, was a bit of a holiday, with drums echoing for days and days. That life pattern remained unchallenged until recently, when white people started to come down this way in greater numbers. [C1873ff.]

Even though contact with white civilization, the Hudson's Bay Company, the Church and, in later years, the RCMP was

intermittent, its impact was pervasive. White society dictated the places and terms of exchange, took care to ensure that its rituals (social as well as religious and political) took precedence in any contact between native and white, and provided a system of incentives that was irresistible. Political, religious and commercial power over the lives of the native people came to reside in the triumvirate of policeman, priest and Hudson's Bay store manager.

Behind these agents at the frontier lay the power of the metropolis as a whole, a power that was glimpsed occasionally when a ship arrived, a plane flew overhead, or a law court with judge and jury came to hold court. White people in the North were powerful because of what they did, the goods they dispensed, and all that they represented. Their power became entrenched during the fur and mission era in the Mackenzie Valley and the Western Arctic.

Although the fur and mission era ended 20 years ago, the RCMP, Church and Hudson's Bay Company still possess considerable authority in the North, but their authority is no longer exclusive. Government has proliferated. The mining industry and the oil and gas industry have arrived. And these new authorities – governmental and industrial – possess a power that transcends the old order: a power to alter the northern landscape and to extinguish the culture of its people.

But make no mistake: the process of transformation has in a sense been continuous. With the fur trade, many native northerners became dependent on the technology and on some of the staples of the South, and this dependence gave outsiders a power quite out of proportion to their number. Although at that time many white people in the North needed the help of native people

and had to learn local skills, they nonetheless controlled northern society – or were seen to do so. The authority of traditional leadership was greatly weakened. The power and influence of traders, missionaries and policemen were noticed by many early observers of the northern scene. No less an authority than Diamond Jenness believed that, "The new barter economy – furs in exchange for the goods of civilization" had caused great harm to the Inuit, and indeed had made them "economically its slaves."

But the native people did not always see it that way. They felt – and still feel – that they gained materially from the fur trade, even if at the same time they became dependent upon and subordinate to outsiders. The material culture of the fur trade did, in fact, become the basis of what is now regarded as the traditional life of the native people – and this is so throughout the Canadian North. It is not surprising that the fur trade era, dependent as it was on traditional skills and a blending of technology with aboriginal ways, often seems to have been a better time, for it was a time when life still had a coherence and purpose consistent with native values and life on the land. Today, when Indian and Eskimo people speak of the traditional way of life, they are not referring to an unremembered aboriginal past, but to the fur and mission era. Most of today's adults in the Mackenzie Valley and the Western Arctic were raised in it and remember it vividly.

The Government Presence

The traditional way of life, based on the fur trade, lasted until about 20 years ago. As native people became increasingly dependent on trade goods and staples, so their economic well-being became increasingly

Influences – fur traders, the Church, the Bay and the RCMP.

Furs baled at trading post in Fort Resolution. (Alberta Archives)

Old mission at Fort Resolution. (Native Press)

Hudson's Bay Company store, Fort Liard. (GNWT-M. White)

Treaty payment party paying treaty in Nahanni Butte, 1975. (GNWT)



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tied to the fortunes of the fur market. It was the long depression in the price of fur in the years after the Second World War that led to the collapse of the northern fur economy in the 1950s. When the fur market failed, the federal government had to come to the aid of the native people.

It was at this time that the welfare state made its appearance in the North. Family allowances and old age pensions were paid to native northerners. Nursing stations and schools were built; then housing was supplied. All these things were provided by the federal government, which soon had a pervasive influence on the life of every native person. It offered what few parents anywhere would ever refuse – food, medicine and education for their children. Northern natives entered a system whose object – wholly benign in intent – was to reorder their daily lives.

In 1953 there were between 250 and 300 federal employees in the Northwest Territories. Today the Government of Canada (including its crown corporations) and the Government of the Northwest Territories have almost 5,000 employees there. What we are now observing in the North is a determination by native people to wrest from the government control of their daily lives.

The Growth of Settlements

Federal policy in the North since the late 1950s has proceeded on the assumption that the traditional way of life was dying, and that native people had no alternative but the adoption of the white man's way. The short-run solution to the northern crisis was the provision of health and welfare measures. The long-run solution was the education of native people to enable them to enter the wage economy.

The native people who were still living in the bush and on the barrens had to live in the settlements if they were to receive the benefits of the new dispensation, and if their children were to attend school. Doubtless, the promise of greater comfort and ease made the move to settlements seem more attractive; but evidence given at the Inquiry reveals that many people do not remember the move as entirely voluntary. Many were given to understand that they would not receive family allowances if their children were not attending school. At the same time, the children in school were being taught a curriculum that bore no relation to their parents' way of life or to the traditions of their people.

What occurred on the Nahanni River exemplifies much of what happened as settlements grew. In the past the Dene did not live at Nahanni Butte but in camps along the Nahanni River. The government brought them all into Nahanni Butte so that their children could be taught at the school the government had established there. Nahanni Butte, though a beautiful place with an awesome view, is not a particularly good location for hunting, fishing or trapping. Neither the establishment of the school nor the arrangement of the school year and the curriculum – much less the location of the settlement itself – was planned in consultation with the native people.

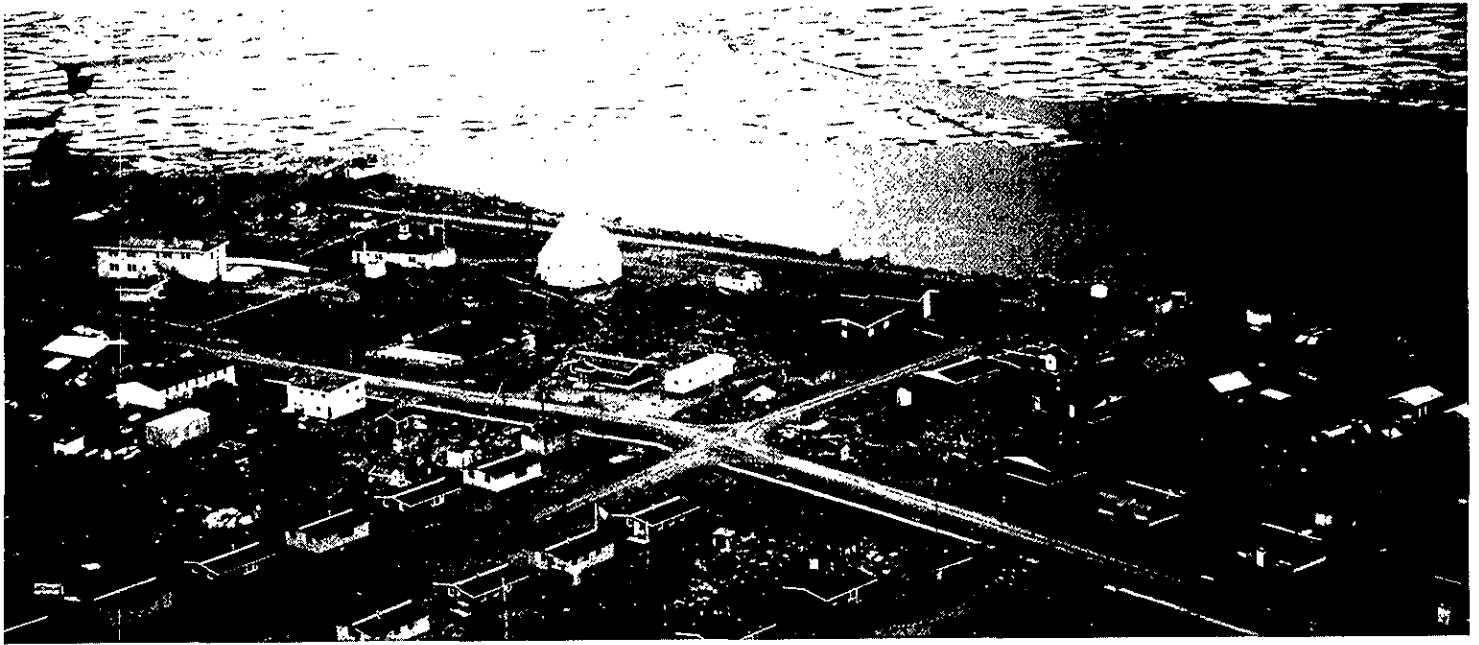
The establishment of new government facilities in the settlements made available a few permanent and some casual jobs, especially in summer. Typically, these jobs were at the lowest level, such as janitor and labourer. Thus a hunter of repute, a man who might be highly esteemed in the traditional order, joined the new order on the lowest rung. Yet so depressed was the traditional economy that even the lowest

paid native wage-earner lived with more security and comfort than most hunters and trappers. For those who wanted to continue living off the land, welfare was sometimes the only means of financing the purchase of ammunition and equipment. Whereas traders had previously extended credit to make sure families stayed on the land, now some administrators preferred the hunters to stay around the settlement to look for casual work rather than to give them welfare so they could go out hunting. Hence wage labour often came to be seen as antithetical to traditional life.

The building of the DEW Line accelerated this process in the Western Arctic. The DEW Line offered stores and medical facilities where there had been none. Many Inuit, such as those from Paulatuk, came to live in the shadow of the DEW Line stations. These sites had been chosen for strategic and military purposes, but they were often in areas without sufficient fish and game to sustain the native people.

When the people first moved into the settlements, they lived in tents or log cabins. The government, at the urging of those in the South who were disturbed by the plight of native northerners, decided that settlements should be modernized and new housing provided. These new communities were laid out to be convenient for services, such as sewage disposal systems, that were often never installed.

Along with the introduction of health, welfare, education and housing programs came new political models. Municipal government, derived from Southern Canada, was chosen as the institution for local government in the native communities. We ignored the traditional decision-making process of the native people, whereby community consensus is the index of approved



action. Today in the Northwest Territories many native people sit on municipal councils, but the councils deal with matters such as water supply and garbage disposal, which the native people do not consider as vital to their future as the management of game, fish and fur, the education of their children, and their land claims. This is not to gainsay the usefulness of local government in the Northwest Territories. It is merely to remark that native people regard these local institutions as secondary to the achievement of their main goals. Their existence has not diminished in any way the growing native desire for self-determination.

Northern needs were defined by the government, or by Canadians concerned about northern natives. Programs were conceived and implemented in response to the sensibilities of southern public servants. And because few were able to find out how native people really lived or what they wanted, much less to heed what they said, many government programs were conceived and implemented in error.

This is not to depreciate the benefits that government has brought to the native people in the North. It is easy to discount these benefits now, but the attraction they held for the native people, and the need the people quickly felt for them, soon became apparent. Today housing, health services, schools and welfare are all made available by the government, and the native people have been continually and forcefully reminded of the advantages to themselves and their children of accepting these things.

As northern settlements have grown, white compounds have become established within them. In many places it is no exaggeration to speak of southern enclaves, occupied by whites who have no links with the native population, but are there to administer the

programs of the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories. Many native witnesses expressed the resentment they feel toward the white people within their communities who have large houses, clean running water and flush toilets, while they have none of these amenities.

It is important to recognize the speed with which these changes have come about: some of the children who were born in tents or log cabins and were raised in the bush or on the barrens, have gone to school; they now live in settlements and have entered the wage economy — all in just a few years.

The Wage Economy

Wage employment and the greater availability of cash have had an impact on native culture. Much of the income earned by native people is, of course, used to buy provisions and equipment, such as snowmobiles, guns and traps. In this way, wage employment serves to reinforce the native economy and the native culture. But much of the cash that is earned is not so used, and this has had consequences that have been destructive and divisive.

Wage employment has, within the past decade or so, been important chiefly in the larger centres — Inuvik, Hay River, Fort Simpson, Yellowknife. Even in these places wage employment has created possibilities for men who wish to improve their hunting gear, and has encouraged the flow of consumer durables and processed foods into many families. But this has also meant that many native people have taken — at least temporarily — a place on the lowest rungs of the pay and status ladder. Because the number of such participants has grown considerably in recent years, and because

there are persistent and increasing pressures on virtually everyone to participate in the wage economy, the cultural and social ramifications have been very wide.

The Importance of the Land

There have always been indigenous peoples on the frontier of western civilization. The process of encroachment upon their lands and their way of life is inseparable from the process of pushing back the frontier. In the North, the process of detaching the native people from their traditional lands and their traditional ways has been abetted by the fact that fur trappers are at the mercy of the marketplace. There is no organized marketing system for their furs, no minimum price, no guaranteed return. Thus the fur economy is denied the support we accord to primary producers in the South. Nor is it comparable in any way to the network of capital subsidies, tax incentives and depreciation allowances that we offer to the non-renewable resource extraction industry in the North.

To most white Canadians, hunting and trapping are not regarded as either economically viable or desirable. The image that these activities bring to mind includes the attributes of ruggedness, skill and endurance; but they are essentially regarded as irrelevant to the important pursuits that distinguish the industrial way of life. This is an attitude that many white northerners hold in common with southerners. But the relationship of the northern native to the land is still the foundation of his own sense of identity. It is on the land that he recovers a sense of who he is. Again and again I have been told of the sense of achievement that comes with hunting, trapping and fishing — with making a living from the land.

Much has been written about the capacity

Government-built housing dominates Fort Franklin landscape. (M. Jackson)

The Watade home, Rae Lakes. (GNWT)

Workers reporting for duty with Work Arctic in Hay River. (GNWT)

Detah Indian village. (R. Fumoleau)



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of the native people to wrest a living from the country in which they live. Only to the southerner does their land seem inhospitable; to the native people it offers a living. In every village of the Mackenzie Valley and the Western Arctic there are people who use, and feel they depend on, the land.

The North is vast, and life in Sachs Harbour is altogether different from life in Yellowknife. In Sachs Harbour and in the villages that lie beyond the advance of industry — in Old Crow, Paulatuk, Holman, Colville Lake, Lac la Martre, Rae Lakes, Trout Lake and Kakisa Lake — the people still live off the land and take pride in their way of life. In these places, industrial development and the lure of the wage economy do not each day offer an immediate and continuing challenge to the legitimacy of native culture and native identity.

The Inuit of Paulatuk still live off the land. They store their caribou and fish on the roofs of their houses, away from the dogs. These people had earlier left Paulatuk to live near the DEW Line station at Cape Parry, where they eventually found themselves in decline. Now they have returned to the land they used to occupy, where caribou and arctic char are plentiful.

At Sachs Harbour the Inuit live off the land, and they live well. Some 23 trappers there cover a total hunting range as large as Nova Scotia to harvest white fox. They also live off caribou, seals, polar bear, muskoxen and geese.

At Kakisa Lake the Dene still make their living from the land. The people there have consistently resisted the idea that they should move from their tiny village to the larger Dene community of Fort Providence. They have built their own log cabins and have insisted on the establishment of their own school.

At Colville Lake, too, the Dene have maintained their annual cycle of activity, which sees them out in the bush for much of the year, supporting themselves and their families in the manner of their ancestors. They, too, have built their own log cabins and still burn wood in their stoves. They resist incorporation into the metropolis by continuing their traditional way of life.

Other people in Canada who live in rural and isolated settlements are having their lives changed by the impact of industrial development. White people who lived to some extent off the land by hunting, fishing and trapping, and whose wants were few, have been drawn into the path of industrial development. Their own rural way of life has been discarded under pressure from the metropolis. But we should remember that white people in rural Canada have generally shared the economic and political traditions that have led to the growth of the metropolis. The challenge the metropolis represents to their self-esteem is not as great as it is for the native peoples. Although the impact of rapid change on their communities and on family ties is often quite severe, there are possibilities for translating some of these traditions and values into an urban and metropolitan context. Few such possibilities exist for the native people of the North.

Some Implications of the Pipeline

In the days of the fur trade, the native people were essential. In the North today, the native people are not essential to the oil and gas industry, and they know it. The outside world may need the North's oil and gas resources, but it does not need the native people to obtain those resources. Outsiders know exactly what they want and exactly how to get it, and they need no local help.

Now they can travel anywhere with tractors, trucks, airplanes and helicopters. They can keep themselves warm, sheltered, clothed and fed by bringing in everything they need from outside. They have, or claim to have, all the knowledge, techniques and equipment necessary to explore and drill for gas and oil, and to take them out of the country. They can bring all the labour they need from outside. The native people are not necessary to any of this work.

The attitude of many white people toward the North and native northerners is a thinly veiled evolutionary determinism: there will be greater industrial development in which the fittest will survive; the native people should not protest, but should rather prepare themselves for the challenge that this development will present. It is inevitable that their villages should cease to be native villages, for in this scheme, native villages are synonymous with regressive holdouts. "Progress" will create white towns, and the native people will have to become like whites if they are to survive. But this kind of determinism is a continuation of the worst features of northern history: southerners are once again insisting that a particular mode of life is the one and only way to social, economic and even moral well-being.

We must put ourselves in the shoes of a native person to understand the frustration and fury that such an attitude engenders in him. If the history of the native people of the North teaches us anything, it is that these people, who have been subjected to a massive assault on their culture and identity, are still determined to be themselves. In my consideration of the impact of the pipeline, insofar as it bears on the predicament of northern native people, I will return often to the historical influences on the present situation.



Schools and Native Culture

I have traced in a general way the impingement of the white man and his institutions upon the native people of the North. The changes that occurred were changes in the native way of life: the world of the native people was altered, whereas the world of the white man — his religion, his economy, his own idea of who he was — remained the same. We sought to make native people like ourselves, and native society like our own; we pursued a policy of cultural replacement. Perhaps nothing offers a better illustration of this policy than the schools we established in the North.

When we consider what culture is, we can see the importance of schools and education. Man puts his unique stamp on the world around him. His values, ideas, language and institutions exhibit his understanding of himself and his world. The schools, and what was taught within them, offered a challenge to the culture of the Dene and the Inuit, to their very identity as a people.

Of course, even before there were schools, the right of the Dene and the Inuit to name themselves and the world around them had been challenged. The Church established the use of English and French Christian names in preference to native names. Native place-names were gradually displaced in favour of a nomenclature that paid tribute to the white explorers of the North. *Deh-cho*, the Big River, now bears Alexander Mackenzie's name — an affirmation of one people's history and the theft of another's. In this and myriad other ways the native people suffered a denigration of their past; they were

given to understand that the future was not theirs to announce.

Introduction of Formal Education

Prior to the arrival of the white man in the North and for a substantial period thereafter, the only school the native people knew was life in the bush and on the barrens. Children acquired their language, their cultural traditions and the skills for survival through observing and participating in the life of their parents and grandparents.

Formal education began in the Mackenzie District when the Grey Nuns established a residential school at Fort Providence in 1867, and for almost a century, education remained primarily the responsibility of the churches. Children were taken from their families as early as seven years of age, and kept at distant boarding schools for up to 10 months out of 12. The curriculum taught in the schools consisted of the catechism, and of reading, writing and arithmetic. The average period of school attendance was three or four years. Fort Providence, Hay River, Fort Resolution, Shingle Point and Aklavik were centres for schools and hostels. The few day schools that were established were largely in response to the needs of the southern whites who had come to the North.

There was no doubt about the purpose of the boarding schools; it was the same throughout Canada. It was expressed plainly by Hayter Reed, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, in the *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs* in 1893:

Experience has proved that the industrial and boarding schools are productive of the best results in Indian education. At the ordinary day school the children are under the influence of their teacher for only a short time each day and after school hours they merge again with the life of the reserve. ... But in the

boarding or industrial schools the pupils are removed for a long period from the leadings of this uncivilized life and receive constant care and attention. It is therefore in the interest of the Indians that those institutions should be kept in an efficient state as it is in their success that the solution of the Indian problem lies. [p. xviii]

The policy was rooted in the belief, held by laymen and churchmen alike, that the aboriginal population must be reconstituted, preferably painlessly, in the image of the new race that had come to live on this continent. Certainly very few southern whites questioned the wisdom of what was being done.

This policy, evolved in the South, was carried into the North. At residential schools the religious observances of the native people were banned and the use of their languages forbidden. When the children who attended mission schools returned to their homes, they had often become uncertain about the use of their own language, and they were almost persuaded that the beliefs of their own people were suspect.

Dolphus Shae told the Inquiry at Fort Franklin of the Dene experience at the Aklavik Residential School:

Before I went to school the only English I knew was "hello," and when we got there we were told that if we spoke Indian they would whip us until our hands were blue on both sides. And also we were told that the Indian religion was superstitious and pagan. It made you feel inferior to the whites. ... The first day we got to school all our clothes were taken away ... and everybody was given a haircut which was a bald haircut. We all felt lost and wanted to go home, and some cried for weeks and weeks, and I remember one Eskimo boy every night crying inside his blanket because he was afraid that the sister might come and spank him. ... Today, I think back on the hostel life and I feel ferocious. [C689ff.]

École St. Joseph, Fort Resolution, 1916. (Native Press)

The Roman Catholic residential school once used in Aklavik. (Public Archives)

First Eskimo students to come to the Hay River Mission School. (Public Archives)

Alfred McKay and his brother ice fishing for the old mission school in Fort Resolution. (Public Archives)



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Rosemary Kirby, an Eskimo teacher who spoke to the Inquiry at Paulatuk, told of the Inuit experience in residential schools:

There was a time after being raised in residential schools when an Eskimo person felt that they were useless. They were worthless, that what they were was something to be ashamed of, and so we grew up to feel ashamed of being Eskimos, being ashamed of being Indian. [C4465]

Yet by 1950 less than 15 percent of the young people of the North had had any formal schooling. The experience of those children who had attended the mission schools, despite the personal scars, had made only minor inroads into the social and economic patterns of hunters and trappers who continued to live in the bush and on the barrens. Most native people still spoke only their own languages, and the culture of northern communities remained rooted in native values and the native economy.

A *New Education Programme in the Northwest Territories* was announced in 1955 by Jean Lesage, then Minister of Northern Affairs. This program, designed to increase the rate of school and hostel construction, was based on compulsory school attendance, certification of teachers, construction of composite high schools (containing academic and vocational training), and the centralization of control in the hands of a single government agency. It was to be free, universal, compulsory and closely aligned to education programs in Southern Canada.

Facilities (schools and hostels), equipment (books and related materials), teachers (certified to meet the standards of the dominant society), curricula (developed for the Alberta school population), and laws (compulsory attendance and length of school year) were imposed on the traditional way of life of the native peoples. Little consideration was

given to such basic matters as the function of language within native society, the effect of language loss on children, or its effect on the relationship between generations. Nor was consultation with the native people considered to be of primary importance. The education system developed for the dominant society was assumed to be adequate for the North as well. Indeed, there was an expectation that native northerners would, in due course, adopt the goals, preferences and aspirations of the people of the South.

Formal Education and the Native People

One of a society's purposes in requiring formal education for its children is to preserve and transmit to the next generation its history, language, religion and philosophy — to ensure a continuity of the beliefs and knowledge that a people holds in common. But the purpose of the education provided to northern native people was to erase their collective memory — their history, language, religion and philosophy — and to replace it with that of the white man.

The native people have an acute understanding of what we have been trying to do. In every native community, young men and women told of their experience in the schools. At Fort McPherson, Richard Ner-ysoo, 24, told the Inquiry:

When I went to school in Fort McPherson I can remember being taught that the Indians were savages. We were violent, cruel and uncivilized. I remember reading history books that glorified the white man who slaughtered whole nations of Indian people. No one called the white man savages, they were heroes who explored new horizons or conquered new frontiers. ... That kind of thinking is still going on today. ... The federal government has told the McPherson people that they want to create a national historic site here. They

propose to put up a plaque telling some of the important history of this area. As you know, my people have lived here in this area for thousands of years and there are many events that are worthy of recognition. There are many Indian heroes and many examples of courage and dedication to the people. We have a rich and proud history.

But what events does the federal government consider history? Let me read you the text that they propose for the plaque. It is in both English and French, but I will read the English. ...

In 1840 John Bell of the Hudson's Bay Company built the first Fort McPherson ... it was for over fifty years the principal trading post in the Mackenzie Delta region and, after 1860, a centre of missionary activity. In 1903 Inspector Charles Constantine established the first R.N.W.M.P. post in the Western Arctic here. In the winter of 1898-99 a number of overlanders tried to use Fort McPherson as a base to reach the Klondike.

Where are we mentioned on this plaque? Where is there mention of any of our history? The history of the Peel River people did not begin in 1840. We have been here for a long, long time before that, yet we get no mention. Does the federal government not consider us to be human too? Do they think we don't make history? ...

The date on this proposed text ... is July 3, 1975 — not 1875, but 1975, today. Our history and culture has been ignored and shoved aside. [C1184ff.]

By the end of the sixties, between 95 and 98 percent of children of school age in the North were in school, a vocational program was well established, and adult education — though still only rudimentary — had begun. However, levels of achievement have remained low.

It is not to be denied that the new education brought advantages. Without it, native people would have been even less able to understand and cope with the changes



taking place in the North and with the new institutional and administrative forms that were being imposed on them. My primary concern, however, is with the way in which formal education programs have been conceived and applied.

In the North, as in the South, the schools were agencies of cultural replacement and assimilation. Like dominant societies throughout the world, we believed that it is possible to direct, even command, other people to "improve" — that is to say, to become more like ourselves. If they will but don the trappings of our culture, then time and motivation will do the rest.

By the seventies, the native people had seen the negative results of the school system. Alienated from their own culture and rejected by the new, many of the young people who had gone through the northern school system were disillusioned, apathetic or — in many cases — angry. To many children the conflicting values of the home and school could not be integrated: not knowing whom to believe, they resisted both sets of values. Many native children became so bewildered that they dropped out of school. Their parents, to whom the formal education system was largely alien, concluded that once again the white man had not honoured his promises.

Many native witnesses described the confusion engendered by the northern education policy. Roy Fabian of Hay River addressed the Inquiry:

I'm a young native Indian. I've got an education. . . . I went to school until I was about 16, then I quit . . . then about three years later I went back to Fort Smith for the Adult Education Program, and I got my grade 11. . . . Since I was about 16-17 years old I have been travelling around trying to figure out where I'm at, what I can do for my people . . . I thought if I

got this education, then I would be able to do something for them. . . .

So I come back and I find that people don't accept me as I am. . . . They really can't accept me as I am because they either can't accept the changes I went through or it's something else. I can't understand what it is. So I'm not really accepted back into the culture, mainly because I lost the knowledge of it . . . and I can't really get into the white society because I'm the wrong colour. Like, there's very, very few white people that will be friends with native people. Any of these white people that are friends with native people, it's like a pearl in a pile of gravel.

For myself, I find it very hard to identify with anybody because I have nobody to turn to. My people don't accept me any more because I got an education, and the white people won't accept me because I'm not the right colour. So like, a lot of people keep saying, "O.K. we've got to educate these young native people, so that they can become something." But what good is it if the person has no identity? . . . I can't really identify with anybody and I'm lost. I'm just sort of a person hanging in the middle of two cultures and doesn't know which way to go. [C557ff.]

Abe Ruben, a young Eskimo from Paulatuk, told the Inquiry:

This thing of shutting a person off, shutting an Inuit off from any expression that was related to his own culture . . . didn't only stay in hostels. It went into schools. It went into just everything that you tried to do in living in a town. You were more or less told that you couldn't express yourself as an Inuit and you had to adopt a totally different life-style. What the hostels [and schools] were put there for was to make stereotype images of native people, setting them up or educating them where they would be able to fit into the mainstream of Canadian society. . . . A lot of these students couldn't cope with being this southern image of a second-class white person and going home in the summertime and trying to cope with going back to their parents or their villages and trying to live as Inuit. . . .

They would get home and couldn't relate to their parents. They couldn't speak the language anymore and when they got back to the larger town, say in Inuvik, they couldn't fare any better there. They couldn't cope just being half people. [C4476ff.]

Native Languages

It is particularly important to understand the impact of the present education system on the native languages. When young men and women cannot understand their parents and grandparents, they learn little about their own people and their own past; nor do they acquire the confidence that comes with adult understanding. They tend to feel inadequate, and the elders themselves feel that much of what they represent and have to offer has been discarded. For grandparents it is a life without the consolations of old age. Anny Zoe, an old woman at Fort Rae, put it this way: the white man, she said, has spoiled everything for the native people, "even our own children." [C7978]

According to Robert Worl, a witness from Alaska, the same phenomenon has been observed in Alaska: in many villages, parents speak their native language, but their children tend to speak English. Consequently, a large number of children are unable to share important knowledge and feelings with their elders in either language, and, because their English is poor, they cannot communicate easily with their peers either.

The Situation Today

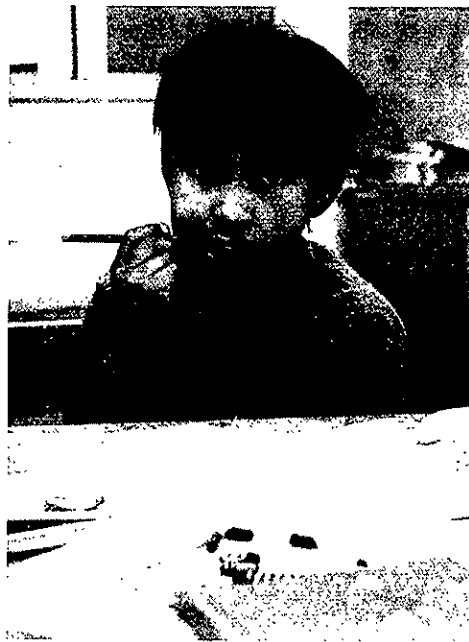
On April 1, 1969, responsibility for education in the Mackenzie District was transferred from the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ottawa, to the territorial Department of Education, Yellowknife. Two men appeared before the Inquiry to argue

Indian residential school — early days, Fort Resolution. (Public Archives)

Inuit boys in typing class, Churchill, Man., 1960s. (NFB—Pearce)

At boarding school in Churchill, Man. (NFB—Pearce)

Inuit children at school. (NFB)



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that nothing has changed with this transfer of responsibility. Bernard Gillie, Director of Education for the Northwest Territories from 1968 to 1972, said:

The plan developed in detail in the *Survey of Education, Northwest Territories, 1972* is sound only for [a] program having its base in a belief that gradually the Dene people will be absorbed into the dominant Canadian culture and their identity as a distinct segment of the nation will disappear. [F23924ff.]

Paul Robinson, Director of Curriculum for the Northwest Territories from 1969 to 1974, indicated that, notwithstanding the efforts that have been made by the Government of the Northwest Territories, the educational process is still administered by whites and is still geared to southern values. The Government of the Northwest Territories says that Gillie and Robinson are wrong and that the Department of Education is not pursuing a program of cultural assimilation.

The native people are not in doubt on this issue. They say that, as long as the system is run by white people, it will reflect white views of what the northern curriculum ought to be. The native people argue that since its inception, the purpose of the government's education program in the North has been to assimilate them. They say it cannot be otherwise because the system was devised and is run by representatives of the dominant society. Steve Kakfwi of Fort Good Hope told the Inquiry about the Dene view of formal education in the North:

The Dene allowed the government to educate their young when schools were first built in the North. The Dene believed the government could take care of their interests and that they knew what was best for them. Then a few years ago, people started to realize that something was wrong. There developed a gap between the young and the old. The elders had much difficulty in relating to the young.

Many of the young lost their language, their values and views, which they had learned from their elders. What the elders realized was that what was happening to their young in school was not exactly what they wanted. The government was literally stealing young people from their families. They saw that if the situation remained unchanged, they as a people, would be destroyed in a relatively short time. . . .

All people have a desire for continuity of themselves in the future. That is why people have families, so they can pass on to their children their values and their own way of relating to the world, so that their children can continue as they had before them. No human being would allow anyone to suggest that they are worthless, that they have no right to insist on the continuity of themselves in the future, no values worth passing on to others for the future. No people would knowingly give away their right to educate their children to someone else of whom they have no understanding, except where people have been led to believe they do not have such rights. [F23945ff.]

The Dene and the Inuit today are seeking to reclaim what they say is rightfully theirs. At the core of this claim, and basic to their idea of self-determination, is their right to educate their children — the right to pass on to them their values, their languages, their knowledge and their history.

The Persistence of Native Values

The native peoples of the North have values that are in many respects quite different from our own. These values are related to the struggle for survival waged by their ancestors, and they persist in their struggle today to survive as distinct peoples.

There is a tendency for us to depreciate

native culture. Many white northerners have argued that the native way of life is dying, that what we observe today is a pathetic and diminishing remnant of what existed in the past. The argument arises as much from our attitudes toward native people as from any process of reasoning. We find it hard to believe that anyone would wish to live as native people do in their homes and villages. We show indifference, even contempt, for the native people's defence of their way of life. We tend to idealize those aspects of native culture that we can most easily understand, or that we can appropriate to wear or to place on a shelf in our own homes. We simply do not see native culture as defensible. Many of us do not even see it as a culture at all, but only as a problem to be solved. But we must learn what values the native people still regard as vital today. Only then can we understand how they see their society developing in the future, and what they fear the impact of a pipeline and an energy corridor on that future will be.

The Native Concept of Land

The native people of Canada, and indeed indigenous people throughout the world, have what they regard as a special relationship with their environment. Native people of the North have told the Inquiry that they regard themselves as inseparable from the land, the waters and the animals with which they share the world. They regard themselves as custodians of the land, which is for their use during their lifetime, and which they must pass on to their children and their children's children after them. In their languages, there are no words for wilderness.

The native people's relationship to the land is so different from that of the dominant culture that only through their own words



can we comprehend it. The native people, whose testimony appears throughout this chapter — and indeed throughout this report — are people of all ages, from teenagers to the very old.

Richard Nerysoo of Fort McPherson:

It is very clear to me that it is an important and special thing to be an Indian. Being an Indian means being able to understand and live with this world in a very special way. It means living with the land, with the animals, with the birds and fish, as though they were your sisters and brothers. It means saying the land is an old friend and an old friend your father knew, your grandfather knew, indeed your people always have known ... we see our land as much, much more than the white man sees it. To the Indian people our land really is our life. Without our land we cannot — we could no longer exist as people. If our land is destroyed, we too are destroyed. If your people ever take our land you will be taking our life. [C1183ff.]

Louis Caesar of Fort Good Hope:

This land it is just like our blood because we live off the animals that feed off the land. That's why we are brown. We are not like the white people. We worry about our land because we make our living off our land. The white people they live on money. That's why they worry about money. [C1790]

Georgina Tobac of Fort Good Hope:

Every time the white people come to the North or come to our land and start tearing up the land, I feel as if they are cutting our own flesh because that is the way we feel about our land. It is our flesh. [C1952]

Susie Tutcho of Fort Franklin:

My father really loved this land, and we love our land. The grass and the trees are our flesh, the animals are our flesh. [C684]

Joe Betsidea of Fort Franklin:

This land is our blood. We were born and raised on it. We live and survive by it. Though I am young this is the way I feel about my

land ... we the people of the North know our land and could find minerals and be a millionaire one day. But the creator did not make us that way. [C761ff.]

Ray Sonfrere of Hay River:

I need and love the land I was born and raised on. Many people find meaning in different things in life. Native people find meaning in the land and they need it and they love it. ... Sometimes you stand on the shore of the lake, you see high waves rolling onto shore, and it's pushed by winds you can't see. Soon it's all calm again. In the winter you see flowers, trees, rivers and streams covered with snow and frozen. In the spring it all comes back to life. This has a strong meaning for my people and me and we need it. [C552]

Norah Ruben of Paulatuk:

As the sea is laying there, we look at it, we feed from it and we are really part of it. [C4456]

Marie Moosenose of Lac la Martre:

We love our land because we survive with it. It gives us life, the land gives us life. [C8227]

Charlie Gully of Fort Good Hope:

We talk so strongly about our land because we depend so much on it. Our parents are gone now. Our grandparents [are gone] but we still live on the same land that they did, so it is just like they are still living with us. I was born in 1926 and my father died in the year 1947, but the land is still here and I still could use it the way my father taught me to, so to me it is like my father is still alive with me. [C1918ff.]

Isadore Kochon of Colville Lake:

This is the land that we make our living on. ... We make our living the simple way, to fish on it, to hunt on it and to trap on it, just live off the land. ... This land fed us all even before the time the white people ever came to the North. To us it is just like a mother that brought her children up. That's how we feel about this country. It is just like a mother to us. That's how serious it is that we think about the land around here. [C8309ff.]

Joachim Bonnetrouge of Fort Providence:

We love the Mackenzie River, that's our life. It shelters us when it storms and it feeds us when there is hunger. It takes care of its children, the native people. [C7839]

Eddie Cook of Fort Good Hope:

Why do I go back to my land? Because I love and respect my land. My land was my supplier of food. It was my teacher, my land taught me. It taught me education which I could not learn in the white man's books. [C2037]

The Land as Security

The native people in every village made it quite clear to me that the land is the source of their well-being today and for generations to come. This is how Bertram Pokiak of Tuktoyaktuk talked about the land in the best years of the fur trade, 40 years ago:

In Aklavik a lot of fur them days, just like you white people working for wages and you have money in the bank, well my bank was here, all around with the fur. Whatever kind of food I wanted, if I wanted caribou I'd go up in the mountains; if I wanted coloured fox, I went up in the mountain; in the Delta I get mink, muskrat; but I never make a big trapper. I just get enough for my own use the coming year. Next year the animals are going to be there anyway, that's my bank. The same way all over where I travelled. Some people said to me, "Why you don't put the money in the bank and save it for future?" I should have told him that time, "The North is my bank." But I never did. I just thought of it lately. [C4234]

Pierre Tlokka told the Inquiry at Fort Rae:

I don't think that I will end up being like a white man or act like one. The white people they always have some money in the bank. I will never have any money in the bank. The only banking I could do is something that is stored in the bush and live off it. That's my bank. That's my saving account right there. [C8030]

Dogs pull Dogrib couple over spring ice back home to Detah, near Yellowknife. (NFB—Pearce)

Boiling sap in the open. (Public Archives)

Trapper Jean Rabiska, Fort Good Hope. (Native Press)

Moise Bezha and family, Fort Franklin. (R. Fumoleau)



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The deep and abiding value of the land as the basis for the native people's long-term security is still central to native society. At Tuktoyaktuk, Inuit witnesses told the Inquiry of the proposal they had made to the federal government for a land freeze in the Cape Bathurst and Eskimo Lakes region to protect this land pending settlement of the Inuit claims. Jimmy Jacobson explained the thinking behind it:

Lots of us Eskimos, they talk about Cape Bathurst and Eskimo Lakes. We thought that Eskimo Lakes and Cape Bathurst should be just like a reserve, kept free, not just keep it free for two or three years, [but] completely, have it for a reserve in case the pipeline come up; [then] we got something to go back on to keep our good hunting grounds, because if that pipeline ever come up, the people will be only rich for one or two years. They won't have money for years and years because most of the people after they work on the pipeline they bound to go and have a heck of a good time, most of them, and come back broke. They got to fall back on something. It's something that will be good to keep for the young people because they got to go back to hunting and fishing for sure. [C4255]

The Land as the Basis of Identity, Pride and Self-respect

The native people's identity, pride, self-respect and independence are inseparably linked to the land and a way of life that has land at its centre.

Jean Marie Rabiska, a trapper in his twenties, addressed the inquiry at Fort Good Hope:

I am strictly a trapper. I was born and raised in the bush. When I was seven years old, that is when I first started learning about bush life. I used to watch my brothers come back from the trap line. They would bring back marten and when they would go hunting, they would always bring back a moose or caribou. They

are good hunters and trappers. They seldom failed when hunting, and I used to envy them because they were good in the bush life. Ever since that time I had one thing in my mind: I wanted to be a trapper. From then on, I tried hard to learn the ways of bush life. I learned most everything from my mother. She is a tough woman when it comes to bush life. Through hardships and good times, we always stuck it out. We seldom complained for complaining is not the way of a true trapper.

My Mum, she did a good job. She made a good trapper out of me. She taught me to follow in the footsteps of my ancestors. Today I stand out among trappers and I am proud of it. [C2013]

Paul Pagotak addressed the Inquiry at Holman, through an interpreter:

He wants to see the Eskimos live the way they are for quite some time. He wants to see the children of the children on the land supporting themselves from the land. We don't have money among ourselves but our pride in living off the land is one thing we don't want taken away. [C3937ff.]

Even native people, who are not themselves hunters and trappers but who make their contribution to native society in other ways, see their identity and pride as people as linked to the land. Mary Rose Drybones, the social worker at Fort Good Hope, made this point quite clear:

I am proud at this moment to say that my father was a real Dene because he made his living off the land for us. There was no welfare at that time. He died in 1953 and left a memory for me and my brother to be true Dene and we are still, and we would like to keep it that way. [C1940]

There is one other important characteristic of the native people's relationship to land. Traditionally there was no private or individual ownership of land among the Dene and the Inuit. They have always believed that all the members of a community have

the right to use it. That is why indigenous people do not believe they have the right to sell the land. It is not so much a limitation upon their rights over the land; it is rather something to which the land is not susceptible. Gabe Bluecoat of Arctic Red River addressed the Inquiry on this subject:

The land, who made it? I really want to find out who made it. Me? You? The government? Who made it? I know [of] only one man made it — God. But on this land who besides Him made the land? What is given is not sold to anyone. We're that kind of people. What is given to us, we are not going to give away. [C4587]

Social and Political Values

Dene and Inuit societies have also developed important values that centre on the welfare of the group or community. They are values that have survived many changes and are still strong today.

The value of egalitarianism has important implications for the way decisions are made within native society. George Barnaby of Fort Good Hope, Vice-President of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories, explained this tradition:

No one can decide for another person. Everyone is involved in the discussion and ... the decision [is] made by everyone. Our way is to try and give freedom to a person as he knows what he wants. [F22003]

At the community hearings of the Inquiry, I discovered what Barnaby meant. In the native villages there was an implicit assumption that everyone shared in forming the community's judgment on the pipeline.

Those who wonder why the feelings of the native people have not previously appeared as strongly as they do now may find their answer in the fact that the native people themselves had substantial control



over the timing, the setting, the procedure and the conduct of the Inquiry's community hearings. The Inquiry did not seek to impose any preconceived notion of how the hearings should be conducted. Its proceedings were not based upon a model or an agenda with which we, as white people, would feel comfortable. All members of each community were invited to speak. All were free to question the representatives of the pipeline companies. And the Inquiry stayed in a community until everyone there who wished to say something had been heard. The native people had an opportunity to express themselves in their own languages and in their own way.

Egalitarianism in northern native communities is closely linked with the people's respect for individual autonomy and freedom. Peter Gardiner, an anthropologist who spent a year among the Dene of Fort Liard, spoke to the Inquiry of his experience:

Living with the people, you can see that they try to act with respect, even toward people who are young, or people who are confused, or people who are different; they are tolerant beyond anything white Canadians ever experience. When the people here give freedom to one another, they give equality. Then, many of us have a lot to learn from the people. . . . These are values that other Canadians can appreciate. They are ancient values though, and we should not see them as a result of our better teachings. [C1705ff.]

The Sharing Ethic

The tradition of sharing is seen by native people as an essential part of their cultural inheritance. Joachim Bonnetrouge told the Inquiry at Fort Liard:

We do not conquer, we are not like that. We are sharers, we are welcomers. [C1718]

Joe Naedzo at Fort Franklin:

We native people, we help each other. We have good words for each other. And we share the things that we have with each other. I am not talking just for Fort Franklin. This happens throughout all of the North. . . .

When we visit another community, you never buy food. You don't have to buy the food. I went to visit Fort Good Hope with a dog team for five days. My dogs were fed and I was fed. I had a place to stay. And on the return trip, they gave me food for the dogs. They gave me enough food to make sure that I [could] come home. . . .

In this community, if one hunter went out hunting and got five to ten caribou, that person feeds everybody. They share that whole meat until it is all gone with everybody. That is the way the native people live among each other. They share.

It is the same thing for fishing. If a person went out fishing and got some fish, that person shares it with the community. We help each other. That is how our life continues. We share all the time.

Our ancestors have taught us a lot of things. They have taught us how to make life continue. They teach you that for your neighbours, when they are in need and when you are in need, the neighbours will feed you. Take care of each other and share with each other. [C810ff.]

Louis Norwegian at Jean Marie River:

If a person kills one moose, he shares and shares alike, and everybody have some amount, no matter how big the people around here. This is still carried out. If they kill one moose, everybody get a share of it. . . . If they go to fish, a few of them go to the lake and get some fish, everybody gets the same amount of fish. That's just the way we live here, at Jean Marie. [C2855ff.]

It is not only among the Dene that sharing is highly valued. In the Inuit communities the people told me the same thing.

Alexandria Elias at Sachs Harbour:

Long ago people helped one another all the time. They used to go down to Kendall Island

every summer, and they go there for whaling, and lots of people go there. Once they got a whale everybody got together and ate. Nobody ever looked down on one another, everybody helped one another, the poor, and who had some and who didn't have. They never try to beat one another or try to go against one another. They were all just like one big family. . . .

The Delta used to be as full of people then, and [I] never ever remember government ever helping them. They never ever asked for government help. Everything they got was what they got themselves and what they shared with one another. . . . [I] never ever remember being poor. [I] didn't know what poor meant. [C4066ff.]

The observations of anthropologists provide additional support for the persistence of the sharing ethic in present-day native society. Joel Savishinsky, in *Kinship and the Expression of Values in an Athabaskan Bush Community*, a study of the people of Colville Lake, writes:

In addition to generosity in terms of food, the people's concept of interdependence and reciprocity extends into matters of hospitality, cooperation, and mutual aid. People adopt and care for one another's children, help each other in moving to and from bush camps, get one another firewood in cases of immediate need, do sewing for each other, camp with one another for varying periods in the bush, and also offer each other assistance for mending and operating boats, motors, chain saws and other equipment. Generosity, therefore, covers both goods and services, and these two aspects often are interchangeable in terms of reciprocity involved in the people's behaviour. [p. 47]

Although the tradition of sharing is still regarded as vital, it has of course undergone some adaptation, particularly over the last 20 years with the movement of the native people into permanent settlements. Thus, in the larger communities, a single moose may

Inquiry witnesses were all ages. (D. Crosbie)

Louis Norwegian and Jim Sangris in Jean Marie River. (N. Cooper)

Cecile Modeste gathering firewood, near Fort Franklin. (R. Fumoleau)

Taping the old legends, Fort McPherson. (L. Smith)



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not be distributed among every single household, but it will be shared within the extended family group. Even in the larger communities, however, wherever circumstances and the magnitude of the kill allow, communal distribution is still practised.

The native people have described not only how sharing and generosity characterize relations among themselves, but also how they have characterized their relations with whites. They told the Inquiry how, during the days of the fur trade, they shared with the traders their knowledge and their food, both of which were indispensable to the traders' survival in the North. This is how Philip Simba of Kakisa Lake remembers those days:

When the first snow comes, they come into camp and the Hudson's Bay [manager] has at least 12 men working for him. Each man had a team of six dogs. These people went and got the moose. This was provided to the Hudson's Bay for his food. In the winter time they provided him with rabbits and all that. This is how they helped the Hudson's Bay. That's how he grew rich on the misery of the people, I guess. That's how come he's got a beautiful store today. [C7930]

Joe Naedzo at Fort Franklin told how native people extended the same generosity to some of the white trappers that came into the North:

The native people don't only share among themselves. There was one white man who lived among us. His name was Jack Raymond. He went to Johnny Hoe River with us. He had no money. He had five pounds of flour and that is supposed to last him for the whole year that they spent at Johnny Hoe River. . . . Before the end of November there was no flour. . . .

At the time . . . there was a lot of people living in Johnny Hoe. And Jack Raymond and his family had no more food. And they had only six dogs left. And for five months we shared our food with him. From January to April we

fed them, we fed their dogs. And then at the end of April, with their six dogs, they went to Port Radium to find a job.

They have a job and they make money. But we never asked them to pay us back for all the five months that we took care of them. This is what our ancestors taught us. You know the kind of sharing we had with Jack Raymond. . . . The white man and the native people, no difference, we share our food. [C814ff.]

Many native people expressed the view that, although they have extended to white strangers the same generosity with which they have traditionally treated each other, the white man has not reciprocated.

Gabe Bluecoat of Arctic Red River told the Inquiry:

Us people, Arctic Red River people, if a white man came and asked to stay with us, sure, right away we'd say, "Yes, yes, my friend." The white people, why can't they be like that? Everything they do is money, money, money. Why don't they be our friends and use everything, share everything, just the same as the other? Why don't they do that? It's always money. It really makes me feel bad. [C4588ff.]

Native people have also commented with some bitterness on the lack of reciprocity which they say has characterized our dealings with the mineral resources of the North. Cecile Modeste of Fort Franklin expressed the sentiments of many native people in the North:

In Port Radium, radium was discovered. In Norman Wells oil was discovered. In Yellowknife gold was discovered. All of these discoveries were [made] by Indian people. But all of the people who have discovered those minerals and stuff like that, the ways of making money, have died poor. They have died really poor. And those, the white people who have come in — we just go ahead and let them have all of these things, we never say anything about getting money back. . . .

But now it has come to a point where they are

deciding to take the whole land. Then we have to say something about it. [C633ff.]

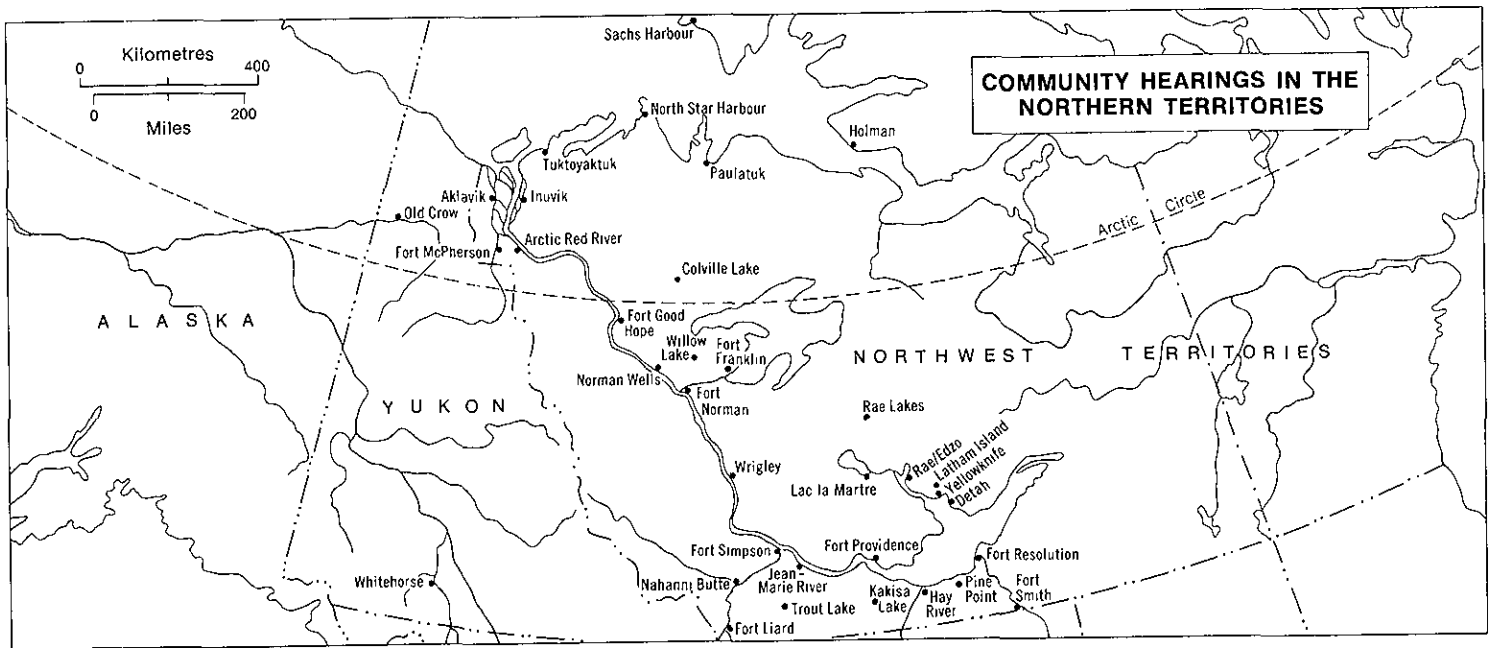
The Role of the Elders

There exists among the native people a special respect for the old. The elders are their historians, the keepers of their customs and traditions. They are respected for what they are, for the experience and the knowledge that their age has given them, and for all that they can in turn give to others. George Barnaby put it this way:

Respect for the old people is another law, since all the laws come from the teaching by our elders, from stories that give us pride in our culture, from training since we are young; we learn what is expected of us. Without this learning from the elders our culture will be destroyed. [F22003]

The role of the elders and the respect they receive are important in the native people's attempts to deal with the problems that face them today. René Lamothe told the Inquiry at Fort Simpson about the activities of the Koe Go Cho Society, a community resource centre that serves the educational, cultural and social needs of the native people of Simpson. He explained the central role of the elders in the society's activities:

We don't look at senior citizens' homes as they are looked at in the South or by the industrial economy. . . . The reason for having senior citizens here is a service to them of course. If they choose to come here there would be no charge to them. We would ask them to come as leaders of the people, as people who have the knowledge of the ways of life of the people to teach to the young here. They would come, not as people who have no further productive reality in the existence of the people, but as the crucial element, the age which passes on the life to the young. One of the perspectives of life that is lacking in the industrial economy, which is a very real thing . . . in the Indian world, is the fact that we are



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born every day, and that every little bit of information that we learn is a birth. As we learn the way of life from the old, as we get older, we understand different things. We hear a legend, we hear it again, we hear it again, we hear it again, and every time at a given age this legend takes on new meaning.

So the senior citizens by their presence, their knowledge of the past, of language, of songs and dances, of the legends, the material aspects of their culture, such as the building of canoes, snowshoes, this kind of thing, will be very instrumental in creating the spirit, the atmosphere in which the culture thrives. The senior citizens will be present to give moral support to the adults in alcohol rehabilitation. They will be present to assist the research and information crews to build a library of native folklore. Their presence in the education system as it is developing will make it possible for them to take up their rightful and ancestral role as teachers of their people. [C2698ff.]

Native Leadership

Until the signing of the treaties and the establishment under the Indian Act of the chief and band council model of Indian government, the Dene had no institutionalized political system as we understand it. However, as they made clear to the Inquiry, they did have their own ways of governing themselves. Chief Jim Antoine of Fort Simpson told the Inquiry:

Before 1921 people used to live off the land along the rivers ... my people at that time were a nation. They had their own leaders, they had elders who gave direction, they had learned men who knew how to cure people and give good directions to the people, so that they could continue living off the land. [C2619]

Joe Naedzo, of the Fort Franklin Band, told the Inquiry:

In those days, too, the government wasn't there to tell them how to do this and that, to

survive. So the Indian people chose leaders and these leaders were the government for the people. They decided in what way the people should go this year, what to do before the winter comes. ... These chosen leaders were the government. [C640]

When the Dene were still living in seminomadic extended-family groups, their leaders were the most respected hunters. The acceptance of their leadership rested on the deference of others to their wisdom and judgment and on their ability to provide for the group. Guidance was also provided by the shamans, men knowledgeable in spiritual and psychological matters. Leadership, however, was not usually autocratic; it respected the basic egalitarian structure of the group. Dr. June Helm, an anthropologist who has specialized for many years in Northern Athabaskan society, described its nature in a paper written in 1976:

The traditional Dene leader ... is, on the basis of his superior abilities, consensually recognized by the group to serve as organizer, pacesetter and spokesman for the group. He is not the "boss" or independent decision-maker in group matters, as the Euro-Canadian might surmise. [*Traditional Dene Community Structure and Socioterritorial Organization*, p. 20, unpub.]

The Dene told the Inquiry about some leaders of the past. The Dogrib people of Fort Rae spoke of their great Chiefs Edzo and Monfwi, and the Loucheux people of Fort McPherson talked of the guidance given by Chief Julius. Both Chief Monfwi and Chief Julius were respected leaders when Treaty 11 was signed in 1921, and they became the first chiefs of their respective peoples under the system of elected chiefs instituted by the Indian Act.

Because no treaties were ever made with the Inuit, and because they were not brought within the framework of the Indian Act,

they have not developed an institutionalized system for electing leaders. However, Inuit witnesses told the Inquiry that they, too, had their traditional leaders. Frank Cockney at Tukttoyaktuk described through an interpreter how, as a young man, he came to be aware of these leaders:

At one time Eskimos used to get together in Aklavik after raftering and just before it was whaling season time. ... He said he was big enough to understand, and that was the first time he saw the Indians there. And the Indians and the Inuit used to mix together, and that was the first time he also found out that there were chiefs. He said the Eskimo Chief was Mangilaluk and there was other people there that got together with the Indians, Muligak and Kaglik, that was the Eskimo leaders. He said the other Indian people he found out only later were Paul Koe and Jim Greenland and Chief Julius. He said he used to wonder how they always got together, but later he found out they were making plans about their land. ... He found out only later, even though he didn't see them very often, that the older people always used to get together. They always planned how they would look after their land, so he said now, after he grew up, he knew it's nothing new that people plan about their land and how they look after it. It was done a long time ago also. [C42512ff.]

Charlie Gruben also told the Inquiry at Tukttoyaktuk about Inuit leadership:

When we were young we had a Chief Mangilaluk. He tell us not to kill this and that. We don't do that because we want to listen to our chief, so good, we don't overkill. It was better than game wardens we got today, I think. That's the way the people used to handle their game that time. We don't kill game just for the sport, we just kill what we need and that's it. [C4254ff.]

Mark Noksana, one of the men who took part in the five-year reindeer drive from Alaska to the Mackenzie Delta in the 1930s, told the Inquiry how the wise judgment of

Transportation in the old days, Great Slave Lake.
(Alberta Archives)



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William Mangilaluk had continued to serve the Mackenzie Delta Eskimos. He explained that Mangilaluk had been asked by government representatives whether the Eskimos wanted to take and receive treaty money like the Indians:

[Mangilaluk] heard of some reindeer in Alaska. There was no caribou at all here in Tuktoyaktuk. You have to go far down to Baillie Island to get your caribou. No caribou at all at that time. . . . So the chief asked the government if he could get the reindeer from Alaska for the Eskimos. Sec. they don't want no money. He says money is no good to him. That's what he told me. He said he'd rather get reindeer so that he can have meat all the time for the new generation coming. . . . That's what happened. . . . I'm glad about it because the reindeer this year has been a real help to the Delta people at Tuk, McPherson, Arctic Red, Aklavik. There is no caribou on the west side this year. The reindeer have been real helpful for the people in the North. If it wasn't for the reindeer brought here, a lot of them would have been hungry for meat at Tuk, all these places, this year. [C4273ff.]

In the last few years the structure of native leadership seems, at first glance, to have changed. In many villages the Dene have elected young men to be their chiefs, and young people now play an essential role in the development of native political organizations. On closer analysis, however, the structure of leadership today can be seen to be continuous with traditional ways. In the old days, native leaders were chosen for their ability as hunters and as spokesmen in dealings with the white man. Today, the young and educated Dene and Inuit, who have learned to speak English and to articulate their aspirations to the outside world, have been chosen as leaders in the contemporary struggle for survival.

As leaders, however, the young people look to the elders for guidance. They seek to

blend the knowledge they have acquired through education with the knowledge of the elders. Isidore Zoe, Chairman of the Settlement Council of Lac la Martre, a man in his early twenties, explained to the Inquiry the role of the new leadership:

My position is to go between the young and the old. It is the sort of thing like you compare from the old to the young generation to see what is suitable for both. . . .

We young people are the ear of the old people, to listen to what has been said. We hear what the politicians say — to pass it on to old people, in order for them to support and to make decisions.

We young people are the eyes of the old people, to see what is happening down South, what we read, and to compare what is the best for the Dene people.

We young people are the tongue of the old people . . . to say what they have to say. [C8197ff.]

Conclusions

There have been great changes in the life of the native people, particularly in the last 20 years, but they have tried to hold fast to the values that lie at the core of their cultures. They are striving to maintain these values in the modern world. These values are ancient and enduring, although the expression of them may change — indeed has changed — from generation to generation. George Erasmus, President of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories, told the Inquiry at Fort Rae:

We want to be our own boss. We want to decide on our land what is going to happen. It's not as some people keep referring to as looking back. We are not looking back. We do not want to remain static. We do not want to stop the clock of time. Our old people, when they talk about how the Dene ways should be kept by young people, when they talk about stopping the pipeline until we settle our land

claims, they are not looking back, they are looking forward. They are looking as far ahead into the future as they possibly can. So are we all. [C8068]

One of the greatest fears of young native people is that the impact of the pipeline will reduce to little more than a memory the values by which their parents and grandparents have lived. Bella T'Scleie spoke to the Inquiry at Colville Lake:

I was born in Fort Good Hope in 1953. When I was three years old my mother caught T.B. and was taken away. I was taken care of by the people of Good Hope. The people there are like that. If a kid doesn't have a mother, it is everybody's responsibility to make sure this kid doesn't starve. . . . the kid is not taken off to some home, you know, to strangers either. I was kept by many families until my foster parents . . . learned about my situation. They weren't young and they had three children alive and they already had three younger girls who died. But they are kind people and they knew that I needed help, so they adopted me.

For the rest of my childhood I was raised in Colville Lake. In the summer we lived in fish camps, always working together making dry fish, cutting wood, and I look back on those days as really happy. I was happy. . . .

I look at Colville Lake today . . . [the people] still have their own lives; they still have their pride. I don't want my people to have nothing but memories of what their life used to be. . . .

There's a lot of young people, like myself, that want to have something other than memories. That's why we want control of what's going to happen to us and our lives in the future. I think about all that and I know that we are one of the last people to have our own land and still have our own kind of life in the world. I think the government and oil companies should consider that, after all they've done to the native people in the South, they should know that it doesn't work. It didn't work for them. They are not happy people:



they are not proud people. All they have is memories. [C8329ff.]

The native people of the North insist that they have the right to transmit to future generations a way of life and a set of values that give coherence and distinctiveness to their existence as Dene, Inuit and Metis. Frank T'Seleie, then Chief of the Fort Good Hope Band, expressed his hope for the future of his people:

Our Dene nation is like this great river. It has been flowing before any of us can remember. We take our strength, our wisdom and our ways from the flow and direction which has been established for us by ancestors we never knew, ancestors of a thousand years ago. Their wisdom flows through us to our children and our grandchildren, to generations we will never know. We will live out our lives as we must, and we will die in peace because we will know that our people and this river will flow on after us.

We know that our grandchildren will speak a language that is their heritage, that has been passed on from before time. We know they will share their wealth and not hoard it, or keep it to themselves. We know they will look after their old people and respect them for their wisdom. We know they will look after this land and protect it, and that 500 years from now, someone with skin my colour and moccasins on his feet will climb up the Ramparts and rest, and look over the river, and feel that he, too, has a place in the universe, and he will thank the same spirits that I thank, that his ancestors have looked after his land well, and he will be proud to be a Dene. [C1778]

It may be asked why I have devoted so much space to these statements of native values. It may be said that the task that is at hand is the development of the North. But I have given this space to the native people's own words because they felt it was essential to say these things. By these statements the native people have affirmed their belief in

themselves, their past and their future, and the ideals by which they seek to live. These are the values and the principles that must underlie the development of the North.

The Native Economy

Assessing the Native Economy

The native people of the North have lived for generations in a world of their own, a world that has been obscured from the eyes of the rest of the world by the many myths our society has woven around it. Now they are emerging from the shadows, and they appear as themselves, not as imitations of us. And we can see that their world and their economy have a reality as tangible as our own.

Charlie Chocolate of Rae Lakes made this point quite explicit:

This land is our industry, providing us with shelter, food, income, similar to the industries down South supporting the white peoples. [C8289]

We have always undervalued northern native culture, and we have tended to underestimate the vitality of the native economy. We have, at times, even doubted its existence. I can perhaps illustrate how white people typically understand the native economy by referring to a report by Gemini North, prepared for Arctic Gas, on the number of persons who are still engaged in trapping in the Mackenzie Valley. The report says:

A survey made in 1972 revealed that only 96 persons, out of a study region population of 23,600 and a male working age population of 7,830 were engaged in full-time and regular part-time trapping. [Arctic Gas application, Section 14.c, p. 17]

Yet the evidence of the native people was altogether to the contrary. The Land Use and Occupancy Study, carried out by the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories, sets forth conclusions that are quite different from those of Gemini North. The Brotherhood claims there are 1,075 persons actively engaged in trapping in the Mackenzie District. Although not all of them are totally or equally dependent on the land, the evidence given in the communities by hundreds of native witnesses and the Land Use and Occupancy Study maps, all indicate the extent to which the native people are still engaged in hunting, fishing and trapping. These maps were presented and discussed at each community; the composite map, prepared by the Brotherhood, was introduced at the Inquiry's formal hearings in Yellowknife. The evidence I heard in the Inuit villages was similar. Like the Brotherhood, the Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement introduced a series of land use and occupancy maps to substantiate their claim of continued intensive native use of and dependence on the land. In the Yukon, the people of Old Crow presented similar evidence.

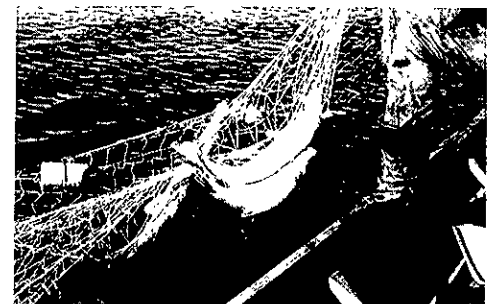
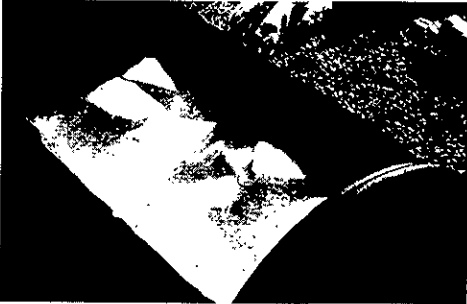
The discrepancy between the evidence of Gemini North and that of the native people arises from different assumptions about the nature of trapping. To Gemini North, and to most white people, trapping is a job, much the same as any other job. So, determining the number of trappers is simply a matter of counting how many people during the period of the survey ran a trap line and sold furs. The native people, however, do not see trapping as a job; it is, rather, a way of life based on the use of the land and its resources: running a trap line is but one of a number of seasonal activities. A trapper is, therefore, someone who sees himself as following that

Frank T'Seleic, Chief of Fort Good Hope, at Inquiry hearing with Foothills' president, Robert Blair and interpreter, Mary Wilson. (Native Press)

Country foods: muktuk boiling at Inuit whaling camp. (W. Hunt)

Mary Jane Sangris of Detah eating caribou. (R. Fumoleau)

Fish — an important resource. (R. Fumoleau)



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way of life. A man who is working for wages with a seismic exploration crew (and who would, therefore, enter Gemini North's figures as a wage employee) might still regard himself as a trapper (or hunter) because he intends to use part of his wages to buy a new snowmobile, a new boat, new traps or a new rifle. In his own eyes, therefore, he is working at "a job" to support "his way of life" as a trapper.

Charlie Neyele of Fort Franklin explained this attitude to the Inquiry:

This winter I have been working for the Cop. I get two days off on the Saturday and Sunday. In those days I usually go out trapping and I go out hunting. . . . Right now I have no boat and no canoe, no kicker, so I plan to work for some kind of company, like I am working for Imperial Oil right now. I didn't work for the money, but I work for a canoe and a kicker, and after I get this canoe and kicker I will use that for travelling around Bear Lake. . . . If I really want a gun. . . . I work for a gun only, not for money. [C715]

I do not think that statistics on the number of "trappers," however they are defined, are the best evidence of the extent to which the native people still live off the land. It makes more sense to look at the evidence of their actual use of the land today: whether they are engaged in hunting and fishing for subsistence, or trapping for fur, or both. We can understand the native people's vehement rejection of the contention advanced by Arctic Gas that very few of them are trappers only if we appreciate the persistence of their way of life on the land and the persistence of their values associated with the land.

At every community hearing, the native people told me about their dependence upon the land. Such dependence is not just a question of what people say; it is founded on realities that we often have not seen or have

not recognized. You can walk through any native village in summer, and at every home see fish drying on racks or being smoke-cured in teepees. Anyone who, like myself, has been to the native villages of the Mackenzie Valley and the Western Arctic is struck by the extent to which people still rely on the bush and the barrens: the "reefer" chock full of game at Fort McPherson, thousands of muskrat pelts at Old Crow, caribou carcasses butchered at Holman, hunting and fishing camps of the native people throughout the Valley and the Delta. In every community you find people eating country food: caribou, moose, arctic char, whitefish, trout, muktuk and sometimes muskox.

Our tendency to underestimate the vitality of native culture and the native economy is exemplified in the value that Gemini North said should be attributed to country food. They found that it accounted for less than five percent of native income in the Mackenzie Valley and the Mackenzie Delta. How could they reach such a conclusion, when everywhere in the North there is evidence that people still rely heavily on country food? I think the main reason is that, long ago, we concluded that the native economy was dying, that the land could not sustain its native population, that the people had lost the skills they needed to live off the land, and even that they had lost the desire to do so.

The fact is, the native economy exists out of the sight of white people: out of sight, out of mind. Furthermore, the true extent of the native economy is difficult to measure; it cannot easily be reduced to statistical form. Gemini North attributed to country food only a "local exchange" value, that is, the price that one person would charge another for a commodity, say caribou, within a

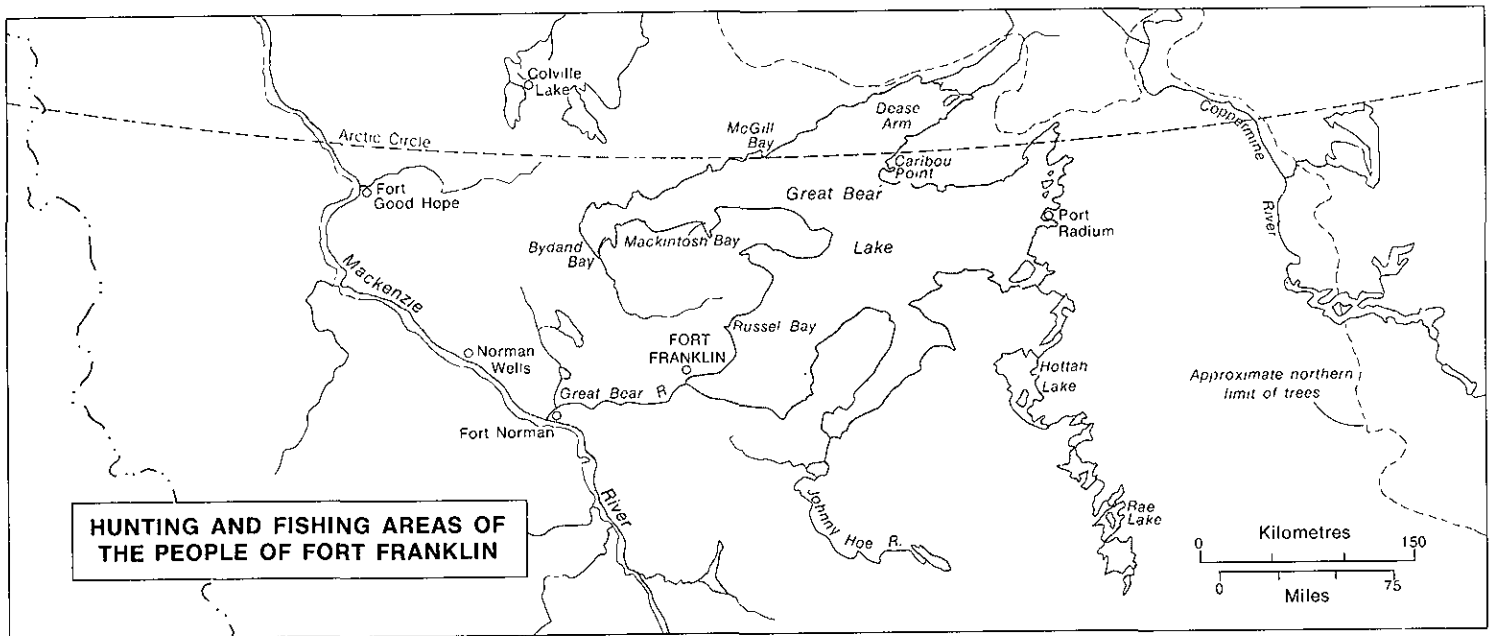
native community. This method of calculation ignores the fact that the distribution and exchange of country food takes place within the context of kinship obligations and family ties; it is nothing like an ordinary market transaction. So, if we are to understand the real economic value of country food, a standard other than "local exchange" must be used. It is clear from the evidence that the standard that should be applied is the "replacement" value, that is, the amount it would cost a native person to buy from the local store the imported equivalent of the country food he now obtains from the bush and the barrens. It must be plain to anyone that if native people did not or could not obtain country food, they would have to buy meat and fish from the store to replace the food they get now from the land.

Evidence from the Community Hearings

What then is the actual extent of the use by native people of the game, fish and fur of the land for subsistence and for cash? The Inquiry visited 35 communities in the Mackenzie Valley and the Western Arctic. At each hearing, native people spoke of their reliance upon the land, and what they said has been strongly supported by the evidence of social scientists. I will review this evidence in some detail because, as I have said, for more than a generation we have undervalued the native economy.

FORT FRANKLIN

For three days in June 1975, the Inquiry held hearings at Fort Franklin, a Dene village of approximately 400 people on the shore of Great Bear Lake. The evidence of the Dene there, together with the evidence of Scott Rushforth, an anthropologist who lived in



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Fort Franklin in 1974 and 1975, provides a detailed insight into the nature and extent of the native economy and of the native reliance on the land.

These people traditionally lived in small kinship and family groups in camps around Bear Lake wherever fish and meat were abundant. If a group of Bear Lake people living at a fish camp received word that a large herd of caribou had been seen on the north shore, they might immediately pack up their essential belongings and move there to hunt. Abundant fish and game, and a strategic knowledge of these resources, gave the Bear Lake people security in a land that can be harsh and inhospitable. Following the changes the fur trade brought, their seasonal activity came to focus on trips to the trading posts at Fort Franklin or Fort Norman, at the mouth of Great Bear River, to sell furs for essential supplies. This way of life continued until the 1950s, when the people moved into the settlement of Fort Franklin. Liza Blondin, who was born in 1911, speaking through an interpreter, told the Inquiry at Fort Franklin about the traditional life of the native people during the fur trade era:

[She] and her husband used to travel by boat with paddles. ... When they get to the area where they want to go trapping, her husband gets their fishing net in the lake ... and then he goes hunting. And after he gets some meat for his wife to live off, he is away. Then he finally goes trapping ... he sets his traps [and usually] they trap right up until Christmas. ... When she is alone after her husband goes trapping, she has to go out and visit the nets, she has to go hunting to feed her children, and ... sometimes her husband also gives her a few traps so that she can trap around the area that they are living in. When they are out trapping, she makes all of the dried fish and dried meat. And she prepares it for the long journey back to [Fort] Franklin. They usually come back to Franklin around Christmas ...

all this time she has been preparing the food to come back to Franklin. She also makes all of the clothing for the children because coming back across the lake it is really cold.

After spending Christmas in Franklin they go back in January. It is a very cold month. Nearly 60 to 70 [Fahrenheit] below in Franklin but ... they still have to set the net. They set four nets at a time and they still have to fish and they still have to hunt. ... When you set four nets like that ... if the ice freezes over with that temperature, [it] freezes ... to at least a foot. And you have to dig a hole right [through it. And when her husband comes back from trapping,] he takes the fish for his dogs so that he can feed them while he is on the trap line. And then while he is gone she has to go fishing ... [and] hunting and she sets snares for rabbits. She has to go hunting for ptarmigan. ... And it includes maintaining the home too. Like getting brushes [spruce boughs] and putting the brushes on the floor [of the tent], getting wood and sewing.

When her husband brings back a moose, she has to cut off ... the meat from the inside, and then they have to scrape the skin while it is still damp. And then they have to tan it. ...

When they go spring hunting they usually leave about May 7 ... to fish, hunt and get some wood ... feed the children, make dry fish, paint the boat and get the boat all ready. ... When [the men] come back they bring back beaver and muskrats. So you have to clean the beaver [skins] off and the muskrats. ... until it is all smooth on the inside and then [you have to nail it to a stretching board]. ... While you are doing that, you teach your children all of these things, how it is done. [C625ff.]

In the early 1950s the Bear Lake people moved into Fort Franklin. As a result, they have faced many changes in their way of life, but, despite these changes, they have retained much of their traditional culture and many of their traditional values. In organizing their way of living, they rely, for the most part, upon their own cultural knowledge and their own values – not on

those of white society. Rushforth, in his study *Recent Land-use by the Great Bear Lake Indians*, concluded that the number of people engaged in traditional land use activities has remained constant in recent years, and that the people have not abandoned their traditional means of making a living, despite changes in their life. Although many aspects of social organization have changed since the days described by Liza Blondin, the economic life of Fort Franklin still centres on hunting, fishing and trapping.

Rushforth described the seasonal cycle of land use in Fort Franklin. Nowadays, men leave the community in mid-October to go trapping. With a few exceptions, their families no longer accompany them; instead a trapper travels with a male relative or friend. Trappers who still use dogs leave somewhat earlier than those who use snowmobiles. They pitch camp near a fish lake, then set the nets to take advantage of the late-October run of whitefish. They keep their nets in the water until they have enough fish for themselves and their dogs and perhaps some to send back to Fort Franklin. For example, the men who trapped at Johnny Hoe River in November and December 1974 fished long enough to feed themselves and at least 12 dogs and to send back approximately 1,000 whitefish, that is, over 3,000 pounds of fish, to Fort Franklin.

In addition to fishing while on their trap lines, the men also spend some time hunting for moose and caribou. If the hunt is successful, the trappers keep some of the meat for themselves and send the rest back to Fort Franklin to feed their families. During the 1974-1975 trapping season, at least ten caribou and four moose were divided in this way. The men go back to Fort Franklin in mid-December to trade their furs and to spend Christmas with their families. After

Dog-team on the ice in April. (R. Fumoleau)

Trapped muskrat. (R. Fumoleau)

Theodore Tobac of the Hare tribe. (R. Fumoleau)



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the New Year, some, although not all, of the men go back out to their trap lines and stay until February. In addition to full-time trappers at Fort Franklin there are a number of men who trap part-time. By trapping every weekend, these part-time trappers can supplement their wage income by selling some furs, catching a few rabbits, shooting a few ptarmigan or grouse, and bagging an occasional caribou or moose; and — what is most important to many of them — they can maintain contact with life in the bush.

In the last few years, hunters at Fort Franklin have organized community hunts in February and March for barren ground caribou. In 1975 they made two such trips to the east end of Great Bear Lake. On the first, five men spent ten days at Caribou Point; on the second, 27 men spent three weeks in the Port Radium region. Altogether, these hunters killed at least 165 barren ground caribou and three moose. Approximately 90 of the caribou were stored in the community freezer for distribution among all of the people of Fort Franklin; the others were distributed among the individual hunters' families.

In fall and winter the Fort Franklin people sometimes go out to hunt moose; during 1974-1975, they took 17 moose.

During May, the men of Fort Franklin hunt beaver and muskrat on the rivers and lakes around Great Bear Lake. From the spring hunt, they get both fur to sell and plenty of meat to eat. Meat that is not consumed in the bush is dried and brought back to Fort Franklin. Like trapping in winter, the spring beaver hunt is undertaken almost exclusively by men because school is still in session and the women normally stay in Fort Franklin with the children.

During August, there is usually another community caribou hunt from Fort Franklin

and, because school is out, the men take their families with them into the bush. In August 1974, about 25 hunters, many of them with their wives and children, making in all a party of about 120, went on a summer hunt to McGill Bay on the north shore of Great Bear Lake. While the men went hunting each day, the women remained in camp to scrape and tan hides, dry the meat, and mind the children. I visited that camp at McGill Bay, arriving while the men were out hunting. Everywhere caribou and fish were drying on racks and in teepees. After a meal of dried meat and fish, I flew in a small plane along the north shore of the lake, landing near "Nanook," the big schooner the Franklin people use to travel around the lake. As the plane landed, the men sighted caribou, turned back to shore and made a kill.

Fish are a major source of food for the Bear Lake people. In the vicinity of Fort Franklin itself, people fish throughout the year except during the two or three months of freeze-up and break-up. From December to May, they set nets under the ice for trout and herring, and they set hooks for trout. The nets are removed before break-up, then reset after the ice is gone. From July to September, they net hundreds of large trout. In July, a fisherman can catch between 50 and 100 grayling during a canoe trip to Great Bear River. The people make fishing trips throughout the year to many places around Great Bear Lake, during which they may catch hundreds of fish in a short time. For example, in June 1974, some fishermen went by snowmobile to Russell Bay; they set three or four nets under the ice for three days, and returned to Fort Franklin with approximately one thousand trout and whitefish.

Although the Fort Franklin people do not rely upon birds as much as, for example, do the people in the Mackenzie Delta, they do

take many ptarmigan, grouse and ducks, and when they are at their spring camps, they can hunt the ducks and geese flying north to their breeding grounds on the shores of Beaufort Sea.

It has been assumed that, with the change to permanent settlement living, native people no longer use much of their traditional land base. The evidence challenges this assumption. Rushforth stated that, although the Bear Lake people no longer live in small dispersed groups at places like Johnny Hoe River, Hottah Lake, Caribou Point, Dease Bay, Bydand Bay and Mackintosh Bay, they continue to use all of these places, as well as others, to hunt, trap and fish. For example, at Johnny Hoe River there are six cabins that are used every year during the winter trapping season, during the spring beaver hunt, and during the seasonal fish runs. The Bear Lake people continue to use the entire area that their ancestors used and that they themselves used as recently as 25 years ago. At the hearing in Fort Franklin, Chief George Kodakin's 15-year-old son Paul showed me on a land use map where he and his father had travelled on hunting trips — the places were the same as those the older people of the village had identified as important traditional territory. New technology, such as snowmobiles, larger boats and chartered aircraft, and differently organized work units, such as community hunting groups, permit the Bear Lake people to reach quickly areas far from Fort Franklin, and to spend a shorter time at areas in which, in the old days, they would have camped for a whole season.

Chief Kodakin told the Inquiry:

The whole lake is like a deep freeze for Fort Franklin. Our ancestors have used it as a deep freeze and we will use it as a deep freeze for the future children. [C751]



Gemini North estimated the value of this "deep freeze," that is, the value of country food to the people of Fort Franklin, for the year 1972, at approximately \$42,000. Rushforth, on the other hand, found that the Fort Franklin people derive an important, even a critically important, proportion of their food from the land. By calculating the replacement value of food, he concluded that the Bear Lake people derived between \$223,000 and \$261,000 in income from their land during 1974-1975. These figures, when broken down, reveal that the Dene households of Fort Franklin derived an average income from land use activities during 1974-1975 of between \$3,500 and \$4,100 and, on a per capita basis, between \$630 and \$750. Rushforth concluded that the Bear Lake people still derive 25 to 40 percent of their food from the land. I think Rushforth's standard of measurement — replacement value — is the right one.

Although it is important to adopt an appropriate standard to measure the native economy and the value to be imputed to country food, quantification by itself is not enough. We should not allow the figures of measurement to obscure the qualitative importance of country food and of the way of life that is associated with it. The figures do not show how much native people prefer country food to store-bought food. Not only does country food taste better to them, but virtually all country food has far greater nutritional value than processed and packaged foods bought in stores. Still more important, these figures do not and cannot indicate the intrinsic importance of hunting, fishing and trapping as social and cultural activities. Neither do they nor can they indicate the value to the native hunter of the environment that provides these resources.

WRIGLEY AND FORT SIMPSON

You may say: it is all very well to talk about Fort Franklin, but is it a representative community? Can we apply Rushforth's findings to the Mackenzie Valley and the Western Arctic as a whole? After all, Fort Franklin is located on Great Bear Lake, not on the Mackenzie River itself, and is generally regarded as a traditional community.

Dr. Michael Asch, an anthropologist, tried to deal with this question. He compared Wrigley, a village of 200 people, with Fort Simpson, a town of 1,200. Both settlements are on the Mackenzie River, and are about 110 miles apart. Gemini North found that in Wrigley, a relatively isolated community, the native people still live off the land, whereas at Fort Simpson, a more urban community accessible from the Mackenzie Highway, the native people no longer rely significantly on the land. Asch argued that, even accepting Gemini North's figures regarding the quantities of game taken at Wrigley and Fort Simpson, the results, upon analysis, do not bear out the conclusion reached by Gemini North.

Gemini North tried to calculate the proportion of country food in the economy of every community in the Mackenzie Valley. These values range from a low of zero at Norman Wells (essentially a white community), to a high of 50 percent at Fort Good Hope. Even at Wrigley, which Gemini North considered to be a traditional community, the value of country food came to only 19 percent, whereas at Fort Simpson it was a mere five percent. The claim that the native economy is dying is based on these figures.

Of course, Gemini North's calculations were based on local exchange value. I have already indicated that this method of calculating the value of country food should be rejected. But Asch argued that a further

mistake was made. Gemini North compared the imputed income, based on the value of the country food consumed, with the "total estimated income," in each settlement. This latter figure includes the income of both white and native people, and it is, thus, the total estimated income for the whole community. Therefore, communities that have large white populations — with governmental, business and industrial infrastructures — have very high estimated total incomes (such as \$7.4 million for Inuvik and \$23 million for Yellowknife). Native communities with small white populations, such as Nahanni Butte and Trout Lake, have very low total estimated incomes (\$56,000 and \$14,000, respectively). In this way, Gemini North compared the income imputed to country food (which they had undervalued) with the incomes of all residents in a community, both native and white. This is not a meaningful comparison. White people in the North do not hunt and fish for a living — therefore they do not contribute to the native economy. At the same time, virtually all whites in the North have highly paid jobs — therefore their salaries greatly inflate the figure for total income.

In 1972, Gemini North imputed a value of \$92,364 to the country food used by the people of Fort Simpson; the equivalent figure for the people of Wrigley was \$24,130. Whether or not these figures represent true value, the same errors were made in both cases. Consider only the relationship between them and you will see that the figure for Fort Simpson is roughly four times that for Wrigley. Then, if you compare the native populations of both communities, you will see that Fort Simpson, at the time, had approximately 650 native people — or about four times as many as Wrigley. Hence, the figures appear to show that the native people

Joe Blondin on the Great Bear River. (R. Fumoleau)

Leo Norwegian. (Native Press)

Trapper Philippe Codzi, Colville Lake. (R. Fumoleau)

Young people at Paul and Mary Rose Wright's lodge, to learn bush skills. (Native Press)



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in both communities depend to about the same extent on country food. In other words, the native people of Fort Simpson — a group that had supposedly abandoned the land — were just as dependent on the land as the people of Wrigley.

However, some words of caution are necessary. The figures upon which Gemini North's conclusions were based relate to 1971-1972, only a year or two after the Mackenzie Highway reached Fort Simpson. The native people at Fort Simpson told me that in the five years since its completion as far as the town, the highway has brought many changes, and the social and economic fabric of the native residents has been weakened. At the present time, therefore, the native people themselves see significant differences between the native economy of Fort Simpson and of Wrigley. In the time that has passed since Gemini North's survey, dependence on the land has, I think, diminished in Fort Simpson. This is not to say that the land is no longer important to the native residents of Fort Simpson, nor that they have abandoned the native economy. Links with the land are important to many of the native people there. Leo Norwegian and Jimmy Sanguetz, two of the older men, told the Inquiry how they are taking school children into the bush to teach them how to live off the land.

At Fort Providence a similar program is underway. Chief Albert Canadien described how:

This summer we have established a small camp down the river ... for the native students from ages of eight to 16 try to get their interest in everyday life or routine ... of the native people living in the bush. We have three couples down there looking after the students, and of the three we have two of them who speak English quite well. The other two couples don't speak it at all. And this is

primarily to encourage the students, the children, to talk in their native language again.

This is in a sense land use on the part of native people. We are not trying to forget our ways of life. We are trying to encourage the students to remember the old ways, not necessarily live them. It's their choice to do and live the way they want. We cannot dictate to our young people and say, "This is the way it is." Every individual has his own mind and they can choose what they want. But to encourage them we have this camp ... we have nets in the water and some of the young girls make dry fish, and they take the older boys out hunting and I think everybody goes out and snares...

What I am trying to say is that we are far from forgetting who we are and how we live. [C7894ff.]

COLVILLE LAKE

Hyacinthe Kochon, the Chief at Colville Lake, told the Inquiry that his people continue to depend upon the land for their livelihood:

Around here we make our living by hunting for our meat, fish on the lakes and trapping. ... We depend on the land. [C8309]

Joel Savishinsky, an anthropologist, has written that at Colville Lake the people still rely heavily upon caribou, moose, hare, waterfowl and fish for human and dog food; their diet consists primarily of country food. The people still use dog teams, and fish is the most economical food for maintaining their animals.

Martin Codzi of Colville Lake told the Inquiry:

Even now today we are still living the way our old people used to live. Right now my brother has put his camp on the shore of the lake here and he is getting a lot of fish and he is putting up dry fish for the winter. That's the way that we've always been making our living. [C8333]

Virtually all of the fuel used for heating

and cooking is wood obtained from the local forest, and spruce wood is the primary building material in the village. There is only one pre-fabricated structure in the community; the RCMP use it on their infrequent overnight stays at the settlement.

OLD CROW

The evidence heard at Old Crow left me in no doubt that life on the land is still of vital importance to all the people there. Dr. John Stager, who made a study in 1974 for the Environmental-Social Committee, concluded that a very large proportion of the total food consumed in Old Crow came from the land. Caribou is the most important food resource and Stager's report states that, in 1973, the Old Crow hunters killed a total of 751 animals. Almost every male over 11 years of age goes on the spring hunt, when the caribou migrate past Old Crow to their calving grounds on the Arctic coast, and on the fall hunt, when the caribou return to their wintering grounds. In 1973, the people of Old Crow secured more than 90,000 pounds of caribou meat. Although the trapping of fine furs — marten, mink and lynx — has gradually declined, the number of families involved in the spring hunt for muskrat and beaver has recently increased. During spring 1975, almost everybody in the village was out hunting on Old Crow Flats; not only did the muskrat harvest provide an income, which in 1973 averaged \$900 per trapper, but it also provided an important source of meat for the people and their dogs.

In the summer and fall, when salmon are running up the Porcupine River, fishing is an important activity in Old Crow. Stager estimated that in 1973 the total salmon catch was in the neighbourhood of 30,000 pounds.

Robert Sharpe, the school principal at Old Crow, helped the community to prepare a



land use map that was presented at the community hearing. He testified that, in preparing the map, he found that the younger people were able to identify almost all of the places that were regarded as important by the older people. This testimony is consistent with the evidence given by the young people at Old Crow: they have not given up interest in the land.

MACKENZIE DELTA AND BEAUFORT SEA COMMUNITIES

Dr. Peter Usher, a geographer who has had a long association with the region, reviewed the season of 1973-1974 (the last for which he had comprehensive data) in the Western Arctic communities of Aklavik, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk and Sachs Harbour (but excluding Holman). He estimated that the native people harvested over \$800,000 worth of fur and nearly \$1.6 million worth of food in the region. For a population of about 2,000 Eskimos, comprising some 300 families, these figures represent an average income of about \$8,000 per family from the land. Although Usher properly used replacement value as the standard of measurement, the values he imputed were somewhat high. At the same time it should be remembered that 1973-1974 was a very good year for trapping. Notwithstanding these qualifications, Usher's evidence established that the value to be imputed to the native economy in the Western Arctic is greater than has generally been thought. Continued and widespread use of country food is confirmed in a general way by survey of the diets of northern households carried out by the federal Department of National Health and Welfare.

In three of the Western Arctic communities, Sachs Harbour, Holman and Paulatuk, virtually all families make their living from

the land. Roy Goose, who is an Eskimo and the local Wildlife Officer at Holman, described to the Inquiry the extent of the people's use of the land:

There [have] been approximately 200 to 225 caribou killed in Holman Island since October of this year. That's an average of six per family. ... Most of the people ... are professional hunters and trappers. They are the people that know the land, that know the ocean, that know everything relating to the environment. And up to date, the white fox catch is approximately 900 by approximately 25 serious trappers. ... Their seal catch ... would be approximately 1,700 ringed seals. ... Their income from the seals would be approximately \$60,000 and their income from the white foxes ... \$39,000. As you can see from these figures ... they're very wealthy people, they're well off, they're happy. The full use from the land and from the ocean that these people have can be shown from their income and from the way they live.

Now to go over to the fishing, the people do all of their fishing in the fall of the year, in October when the snow comes over and the ice freezes over on the lakes enough for them to travel to the Fish Lakes. ... It's a three-chain lake and these chain lakes empty into the Minto Inlet. ... The approximate pounds per hunter that are harvested from the Fish Lakes would be approximately 300 to 350 pounds of arctic char. ... So that's 5,000 to 6,000 pounds harvested per year. ...

The settlement of Holman Island has a quota of 16 polar bear per year ... and 99 percent of the polar bear taken this year was taken within a 25- to 30-mile radius of Holman. ... The income from these polar bear would be \$700 to \$800 per hide this year. ... A few years ago [the Japanese] raised the price right up to \$2,000 or \$3,000 in some cases for a hide and that was only for one year. ...

A long time ago the Eskimo utilized the muskox quite a bit for food and for clothing ... the early explorers started killing muskox because of the similarity to beef in taste, and since then the numbers have gone down to

very little, and this made the Canadian Wildlife [Service] and other government agencies involved close off the hunting of it as an endangered species. For the past few years there have been sightings of these animals. The sightings continue to be more frequent ... and the people here have been continually asking for a quota.

Generalizing now, the total of all the income from the land and from the ocean would be in the near figure of \$100,000 for the settlement of Holman Island, and that's the income only from fur-bearing animals. That's not counting the other monies that they make from handicrafts and/or carvings. [C3963ff.]

This figure relates only to cash receipts. It does not include the replacement value of all of the country food upon which the Holman people depend.

I have been to Holman in winter. I have seen the meat and furs that are everywhere in the village. I understand what Roy Goose means when he says the people of Holman are "well off."

At Sachs Harbour, in addition to the food obtained from the harvesting of caribou, muskox, fish, geese and polar bear, the income derived from the trading of white fox and polar bear skins is normally higher than that which the villagers could earn if they were employed as wage labourers.

Even in Tuktoyaktuk and Aklavik — communities where urban and industrial influences are considerable — people do some trapping as well as wage employment. But even those who work for wages full-time often spend weekends and holidays hunting. Moreover, this is not mere recreation, but an attempt to secure both the foodstuffs and the sense of identity that are so important to native people throughout the Western Arctic.

In Inuvik, virtually no one lives exclusively by hunting and trapping, partly

Salmon hanging to dry, Old Crow. (C. Calef)

Caribou kill near Old Crow. (C. Calef)

Caribou carcasses in natural freezer, Holman. (DIAND)

Muskoxen. (GNWT)



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because the native people who chose to move there did so in response to wage opportunities, and partly because Inuvik is essentially an urban community. Nonetheless, native men in Inuvik go out hunting and trapping. Many of them told the Inquiry of their continued commitment to the land.

Colin Allen said:

{We} are not like . . . the people that come from South and have government jobs: they go down South and have a rest on their holiday, whereas the Eskimos — they use a holiday to hunt as much food as they can so that they don't have to buy from the store, and that will help them to live through the winter. Even though they have a job, they need to get their food in order to keep up with themselves. [C3455]

Ishmael Alunik, President of the Inuvik Hunters and Trappers Association, added:

We do not think of our jobs as a substitute for living off the land. Jobs are another way to help us live. We still want to trap and eat the food from our land. [C3448]

Usher, on the basis of his work on the Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project, concluded that, although there had been a reduction in trapping by the Inuit of Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk and Aklavik, their dependence on fish and game for subsistence was still considerable. He pointed out that even the shift toward limited wage employment had not reduced the use of land. Key hunting areas still include the Richardson Mountains for caribou and sheep, the whaling areas in Shallow Bay and near Whitefish Station, the goose-hunting areas along the main channel of the Mackenzie River, and the Delta itself for trapping.

Colin Allen described for the Inquiry his land use patterns before moving to Inuvik, and he explained how, although he has taken up permanent residence in town, he

still uses many of his old hunting and trapping areas on a part-time basis:

Today I work in Inuvik for about 15 years altogether, but still all these hunting grounds, goose-hunting area, caribou-hunting area, whale-hunting area, I still use them even though I worked that long. The hunting has never changed for me from the time I was driving dog team and paddling canoe. Now today I've got no dog team, [so I] use skidoo, and today I use the outboard motor . . . and still I go to them places today that I used to go to when I was walking and dog team. [C3768]

Usher also pointed out that, in the Tuktoyaktuk region, after construction of the DEW Line and the movement of the people into the village, there had been a contraction of the general hunting and trapping areas for a few years, but since the introduction of the snowmobile the people once again hunt and trap areas they had temporarily abandoned. The Tuktoyaktuk people now cover their traditional hunting areas as effectively from the one settlement as they did many years ago from the various camps along the Arctic coast between Kittigazuit and Cape Bathurst.

There was evidence of this increase in hunting effectiveness in the other villages on the Beaufort Sea, as we saw when the Inquiry visited Paulatuk. On the very day of the hearing there, two young trappers returned to the village, and pointed out to me on a map where they had been trapping. They included an area that was not marked on the maps that indicate the most recent areas of land use, but which did appear on the maps that indicate land use 20 years ago, when the people were still living in camps. These men, both in their twenties, are now using again, with the help of modern technology, trapping areas used by their fathers and grandfathers.

The Persistence of the Native Economy

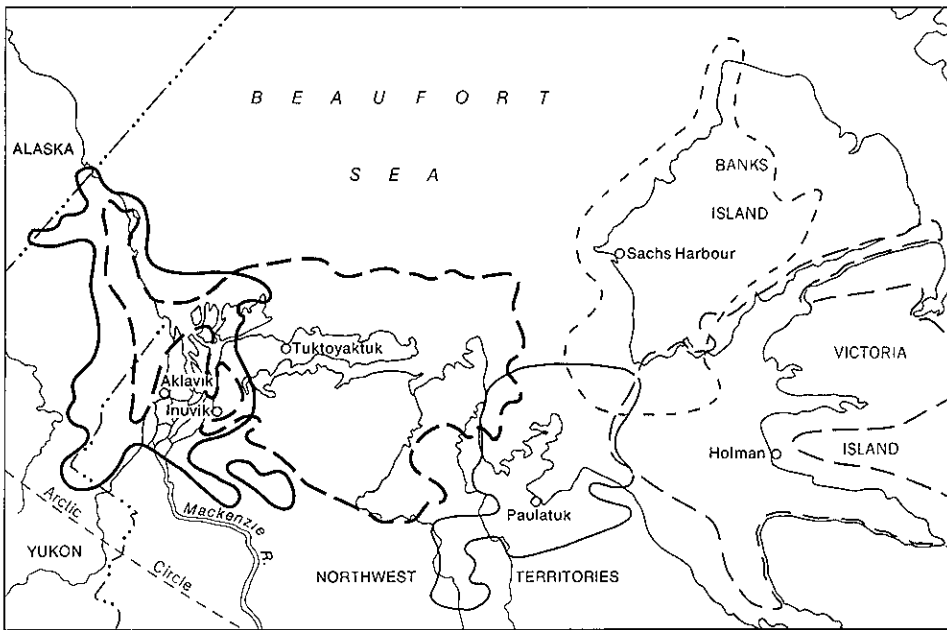
Throughout the Western Arctic there exists an elaborate network for the exchange of country produce. Arctic char from Paulatuk and caribou from Banks Island are eaten in Inuvik, and muktuk from Tuktoyaktuk adds to the diet of the Bankslanders. Those unable to provide country food for themselves receive it from their neighbours or relatives; the native people in Inuvik, the most urban of the Mackenzie Delta communities, receive food from relatives in other settlements. Hence none of the Inuit are divorced from the land or the sustenance it provides.

Sam Raddi, President of the Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement, now lives in Inuvik. He told the Inquiry:

I still rely on the country for food . . . I still rely on the other settlements for my food. I get my caribou meat from Sachs Harbour, Tuk and Aklavik, and sometimes from Komakuk. I get my muktuk from the Co-op of the Hunters and Trappers Association in Inuvik. I get my fish from the Delta here and also from Tuk. [C3456]

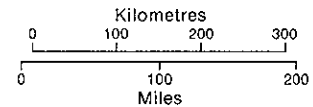
We observed this mutual exchange of country food ourselves. Wherever we went in the Western Arctic, caribou carcasses, dried meat or fish would be loaded onto our aircraft to be taken back to Inuit friends and relatives in Inuvik. I observed a similar pattern of exchange among the native people and communities throughout the Mackenzie Valley as well.

Native northerners are well aware of their good fortune in having plenty of fish and game. As Usher put it, "The North may well be the only place where a poor man's table is laden with meat." [F25818] The Inuit regard as imprudent the risk of impairing the



EXTENT OF INUIT LAND USE IN THE WESTERN ARCTIC, 1900 TO 1974

Maximum extent of lands used, 1900-1974	_____
Extent of lands used recently:	
Inuvik and Aklavik, 1955-1974	_____
Tuktoyaktuk, 1955-1974	_____
Paulatuk, 1959-1974	_____
Sachs Harbour, 1961-1974	_____
Holman, 1965-1974	_____



productivity of lands and waters that supply their meat and fish, especially at a time when the world may be entering a period of food shortages.

Usher has taken issue with Gemini North's conclusions on the value and importance of the traditional economy to the native population of the Western Arctic. Gemini North say that, in 1972, income from furs in Aklavik, Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik amounted to about \$188,000 and that income in kind (country food) amounted to about \$97,000. The latter figure is less than 20 percent of what Usher calculated it to be for 1973-1974. In 1973, according to Gemini North, the total income for the three communities was just over \$9 million, of which almost \$8 million accrued to Inuvik alone. If you make a generous calculation of the native component in the total income for Inuvik and assume that virtually all income in the smaller settlements accrues to the native people, it would seem reasonable to estimate that native income in the three communities is about \$2 million altogether — almost all of which comes, according to Gemini North's calculations, in the form of wages.

Hobart provided figures on income the native people have received from employment connected with oil and gas exploration, which, between the years 1971 and 1975, averaged about \$1.15 million. In 1973-1974, the year in which Usher calculated income from food and fur in the Western Arctic to be about \$2.4 million, exploration activity provided them with less than \$1.1 million in wages. Usher maintained that, in recent years, native income from hunting and trapping is about equal to income from wages — about \$2 million in each case. Thus, hunting and trapping produce, not five percent, but more like 50 percent of native

income. I think that both the degree of poverty in the Western Arctic and the need for wage income have often been overstated.

Usher's evaluation of the importance of the native economy is supported by the work of Dr. Derek Smith in his study, *Natives and Outsiders: Pluralism in the Mackenzie River Delta, Northwest Territories*. Smith states that, in the Delta:

More people are engaged in casual labour and are living in the settlements in improved housing. But this does not mean that the land and its resources have become less significant for Native people. There is less fishing, since there are fewer dogs to feed, but there is more hunting (and more effective hunting) for meat for human consumption. [p. xiii]

The survival of the native economy has depended primarily on the native people's special relationship with the land. To native people, the land is more than just a source of food or cash: it is the permanent source not only of their physical, but also of their psychological well-being and of their identity as a people.

Rushforth, in his evidence on Fort Franklin, offered these observations:

The Bear Lake people work in the bush not only because they derive income from their land, but also because that work represents a link in their cultural tradition to a way of life characterized by industrious activity and the acquisition of knowledge through bush experience, independence and self-reliance, and generosity and mutual support. These values help explain why Bear Lake people maintain strong ties to the bush in spite of increasing pressures from outside of their socio-cultural system which undermine their continued economic use of the land. [F22668]

The independence and self-reliance characteristic of life in the bush are highly prized by the native people. Dr. Peter Gardiner, an anthropologist who spent 15 months with the people of Fort Liard, told the Inquiry that

the transformation in them as they left the settlement for the bush could be clearly observed:

... going with them, I have seen them change as they leave town and the pressures of town life behind them. Faces are simply more relaxed ... they're more open ... when you get out of town, there's no boss. And this is a tremendous relief. In the world of towns, you have people asserting themselves in authoritarian ways constantly. That's just the white world. [C1705ff.]

Jim Pierrot of Fort Good Hope told the Inquiry:

That is the way how we live our life on our land. We like to be free. [C1814]

Leslie Carpenter, a 19-year-old Eskimo from Sachs Harbour, reflecting on the increased urbanization and industrialization he foresaw with the pipeline, told the Inquiry:

Then that won't be our native life, because we won't be free. Once you take our freedom you take most of our life. [C4128]

The Reality of the Native Economy

Some white people are inclined to romanticize the bush and the barrens. But make no mistake, it is a hard life — the native people have no illusions about this. Abe Okpik told the Inquiry in Aklavik about hardships and bad times in the Mackenzie Delta:

... when we have severe cold winters ... and there is hardly any snow, the lakes freeze to the bottom, and all the muskrats ... will disappear. ... In the springtime, when we are out hunting muskrat with the canoe ... and when the weather turns cold, especially around Shallow Bay, the ice gets about two inches thick and you can't walk out on it ... you can't paddle on it, so sometimes we will be stuck for a whole week trying to live off what may be around. ... [In the summer] we

CBC broadcaster, Abe Okpik explains whaling techniques, Whitefish Station. (W. Fraser)

Skinning a beaver. (R. Fumolcau)

Fort Good Hope trappers Jean Rabiska (left) and Leon Turo on the trapline near the Arctic Circle. (Native Press)



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used to go down to Fish Station, and we hunted gulls... and you got nothing to eat for about three days. And maybe the dogs screaming for life [from the mosquitoes], and you tried to build smudges to keep them alive. ... In the fall sometimes... when it is heavy rain... you go knee deep or lower in the mud... and we didn't have the rubber boots like we have now....

Some years, when there is a big west wind before freeze-up, the water flows back around Shallow Bay... and all the fish that are supposed to go up the creeks hardly come up, and you have a hard time getting any good load of fish, and you really have to work to get that....

Although all these things that we strive and struggle with, we like this land. [C140ff.]

Life in the bush and on the barrens is hard; it also demands industriousness. There is always something that must be done. Food must be obtained, fires must be kept, clothing and shelter must be looked after, dogs must be fed, and boats, snowmobiles and toboggans must be repaired. Trapping is not a mechanical activity in which a trapper simply sets his traps and hopes the animals will walk into them; the trapper must be able to predict where the animals are likely to go and to set his traps accordingly.

The native people told the Inquiry that life in the bush requires constant learning. Randy Pokiak, the young President of the Hunters and Trappers Association of Tuktoyaktuk, explained that point:

One thing I learned about trapping, one thing I learned about hunting, is that we never know everything all at one time. No matter how old you get, I believe you keep learning — you find out something new, and this is what I like about it. Because sometimes you figure you know everything, and then again there's times you find out that it's not true, and you are sort of happy that there are other things to learn. [C4227]

Among the northern native people, there is a powerful commitment to the land that is their home. Native people of the Western Arctic and the Mackenzie Valley regard their environment as rich and productive.

Native Preferences and Aspirations

A decade ago we felt we knew where the native people stood. They appeared to be turning away from the native economy and to have expressed a preference for entry into the wage economy. Dr. Charles Hobart, a sociologist who testified for Arctic Gas, believes that research carried out by anthropologists in the early sixties under government auspices showed a clear preference among the native people for wage employment over trapping at that time. There is other evidence to support this view: there is no doubt that the native people moved away from trapping in the fifties and sixties.

There were a number of reasons behind the movement away from the traditional economy: the low prices of fur during the fifties and sixties; the availability of welfare, family allowances and old age pensions; and the denigration of native values in the new government schools. The curriculum of the schools was calculated to diminish native pride and confidence in their own history, customs, and ways of making a living. It is not surprising that many Dene and Inuit appeared, for a time, to prefer white ways over their own ways. Hobart feels that, more than anything else, the attraction of the metropolis and the comforts it offered, as opposed to the hardships of life in the bush and on the barrens, accounted for the tendency to turn away from trapping that was

observed in the sixties. In his opinion, the preferences the native people expressed in the sixties are still their preferences in the seventies, and he considers that trapping as a means of making a living is passing into desuetude, because it has failed to satisfy native needs for a cash income. He regards the experience of Sachs Harbour, for instance, where a whole village earns a very good income from trapping, as an exception that merely proves the rule. He would ask, how many other such villages can you point to? And there are no others where the income from trapping equals that of Sachs Harbour, although there are many villages where potential for trapping is considerable, and a large proportion of the food that the people eat comes from the land.

Hobart and others who share his views — and his views have been urged upon the Inquiry by Arctic Gas and by Imperial, Gulf and Shell — feel that the native people now have no effective alternative to wage employment. They feel that the schools, the Mackenzie and Dempster Highways, and television are irresistible forces altering the fabric of the native people's lives. In Hobart's view, it is unrealistic to talk as though the native people have any real choice, except the one that the oil and gas industry offers them, because they are dependent upon white governments and institutions.

The Evidence of the Community Hearings

Yet Hobart's view is at variance with what native people said at the community hearings. I heard close to one thousand native witnesses in 35 northern communities. They insisted upon their desire to continue trapping. But Hobart holds that, notwithstanding what the native people may say, they



have been voting with their feet. He cites the interest shown by young men throughout the Northwest Territories in working for Hire North, and the interest shown in the Delta and throughout the Valley in working on oil and gas exploration crews.

However, this discrepancy in the evidence may not be as great as it at first appears. The people in the villages often spoke through interpreters. There is a tendency for them (as there is for us) to use the word "trapping" as a generic term to comprehend hunting, fishing and trapping; that is, to cover all activities in the bush and on the barrens, whether for food, fur or cash. The people in the villages insisted, time and again, upon the very great extent to which they still depend upon the bush and the barrens for food, and upon their attachment to the land as an affirmation of identity. They often described life in the bush and on the barrens as "trapping," and they were determined to discredit studies and reports that seemed to them to depreciate the extent to which they still use the bush and the barrens today. At the same time, I do not think that the native people were rejecting wage employment altogether. They are alive to the consideration that dominates Hobart's thinking: how can they secure a meaningful and productive way of life for the young and rapidly expanding population of the North?

As far as the native people's expression of preferences is concerned, it seems plain enough that their perception of the world of wage employment has changed since the sixties. They now have had the experience of a decade or more of an alien school system and wage employment that has largely consisted of unskilled work. Their willingness to renounce native ways for white ways, which sociologists and anthropologists observed in the sixties, no longer exists.

I think that Hobart is right to this extent: income from wage employment, especially in the Delta communities of Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk, has become an essential source of cash to many native families. But this does not mean that they wish to pursue such employment exclusively. Many white northerners, whose experience and knowledge of native people are often limited, tend to discount expressions of native preferences. You could spend two years in Yellowknife and never get to know or talk to a native person, let alone establish a friendship with one. You might see native people on the street, sometimes drunk or hanging around the bars, but you would not necessarily know anything of their culture and their lives. Virtually all you might discover about the North from a city like Yellowknife is that it is colder than the city you came from in the South.

I think we must regard the decline in the native people's use of the land in the sixties as a result of the economic crisis in the fur trade, the first impact of schooling-for-all, and as the people's initial — although temporary — reaction to living in settlements. It was an involuntary, unforeseen and demoralized retreat, and there is abundant evidence now of a renewed determination to maintain the native economy.

The Place of Wage Employment

At the same time, the Dene, Inuit and Metis are proud of their history, traditions and identity. They are now trying to adapt to the modern world in ways that will not destroy their culture and that will not lead only to their assimilation into white society — or to relegation to the fringes of that society. They are seeking means of earning a living from the land and participating in the wage

economy without becoming entirely dependent on wage income. They want to achieve a measure of control over their own lives and their land to ensure that their communities remain essentially native communities.

Hobart feels that, if we build a pipeline, the native people's movement away from trapping to a wage economy will likely reach its ordained result. Hunting, fishing and trapping as a way of life will receive their quietus. If we do not build the pipeline, the Dene and the Inuit will be condemned to a life of idleness and dependence. Given the events of the last two decades, there is, according to this argument, no choice for us or for the native people; the die has already been cast.

The question comes down to this: are traditional customs and values essential to the native people's sense of identity and well-being today? Or have they fallen into desuetude?

Dr. Michael Asch and Scott Rushforth, anthropologists called as witnesses by the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories, criticized Hobart for relying too heavily on changes in technology as an indication of acculturation. They said that, merely because native people have adopted certain items of western technology, they do not necessarily adopt western values with them to replace their traditional values. Dr. Derek Smith, in *Natives and Outsiders: Pluralism in the Mackenzie River Delta, Northwest Territories*, has also cautioned against equating technological adaptations with a change in values:

Technological change, which is very visible, should not be allowed to obscure the less visible, but very important, continuities in reliance upon traditional resources. [p. iii]

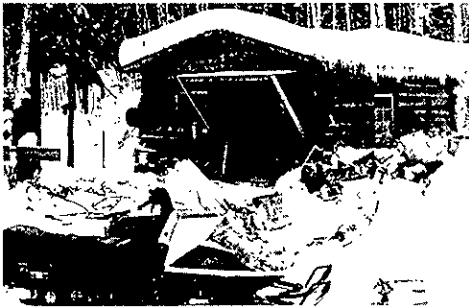
The fact is that, without modern equipment, including rifles and snowmobiles, the native

Holman Islanders describe arctic hunting life through interpreter. (M. Jackson)

Ski-doo outside log cabin near Great Slave Lake. (Native Press)

Hunting bison with rifles near Fort Resolution. (Native Press)

Caribou meat being loaded into plane after community hunt. (Native Press)



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people would find it virtually impossible to continue their traditional land-based subsistence activities in the contemporary situation because, in some cases, they live in villages far removed from traditional hunting grounds and, in others, the concentration of population has led to a depletion of game nearby.

The evidence heard at the Inquiry has led me to conclude that the selective adoption of items of western technology by the Dene and the Inuit is, in fact, one of the most important means by which they continue to maintain their traditional way of life. These items, like other modern or southern elements in the native society, have become part of the life that native people value.

The Native People's Own Voice

English has not been wholly an instrument of acculturation: rather, Dene groups have used it as a lingua franca to achieve a measure of unity among themselves that was never possible when they spoke only the five Athabaskan languages. They have used English, not to become like us, but to tell us that they wish to be themselves. English has become one of their principal means of expressing their desire for self-determination. It is English that has, paradoxically, helped the Dene to insist upon their identity as a distinct people.

Some recent studies have thrown a good deal of light on native preferences. Between 1971 and 1973, for example, Hugh Brody carried out, under the auspices of the federal government's Northern Science Research Group, more than 150 interviews in communities of the Canadian Eastern Arctic to see how the white and native populations regarded each other. Having interviewed members of each generation, Brody found

that Inuit of all ages identified themselves with their land, and they regarded continued use of the land as central to their identity. He found that most of the men wanted to spend an important part of their time hunting, fishing and trapping; and this included those who had only recently returned from training schools in Churchill and elsewhere and who, on the evidence of appearance and material culture, would be regarded as highly acculturated. Brody found, too, that all of them, old and young alike, regarded land use activities in quite modern terms: they consider that good hunters are men who can use snowmobiles, high-quality rifles and other recent technological developments that might be useful in hunting.

The Inquiry's hearings revealed the same attitudes among Dene and Inuit in the Mackenzie Valley and the Western Arctic. Expressions of native pride and identity returned many times to the importance, and therefore to the defence, of the land.

I do not want anyone to think that I regard the evidence of these social scientists as decisive by itself. They, like other white people in the North, have been willing to tell me what they think the native people want. But if we are truly to understand what the native people want and what kind of life they seek, we must let them speak for themselves. They must describe their own preferences. Their testimony, heard in community after community, is the best evidence of what really are the native goals, the native preferences and the native aspirations. In village after village, the witnesses made one point clear: they do not want to become white men with brown skins.

Here is how some of them expressed their deeply-felt conviction on this subject. Richard Nerysoo at Fort McPherson:

We do not have to become brown white-men

to survive. We are Indians and we are proud to be Indians. All the education, all the schooling that you have given us cannot destroy that in us.

We are Indian people. We will survive as Indian people, and we will develop our own ways based on the strengths and traditions of the old ways. We will always see ourselves as part of nature. Whether we use outboard motors or plywood for our cabins does not make us any less Indian. . . . The young people from Fort McPherson hunt and fish and get out into the bush whenever they can. We are Indians just like our fathers and grandfathers. and just like our children and grandchildren will be. [C1187ff.]

Peter Green at Paulatuk:

I have sat down many times and thought over the differences or the distinction between my people's way of life and your way of life. It's pretty hard for me to say that your way of life is superior. . . . I would prefer the Inuit way of life, our way of life. . . . Your way of life, down South as white people, is a way of life I myself would not want to live. We are people who are free to go hunting every day. [C4444ff.]

Paul Andrew, Chief of the Fort Norman Band:

We do not want any other way of life. We do not know enough of any other way of life. We cannot go into the white man's world and expect to live like him. . . . We wish for the upcoming generation . . . to carry on our identity, our language and our culture. [C878]

Alexis Arrowmaker, former Chief of the Dogrib people:

It seems that the government's intention is . . . to persuade native people to become like or act like white people. And there is no way that we native people want to lose our culture. . . . There is no way they are going to change native people or have them like white man. [C8081ff.]

George Erasmus, President of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories:

The decision that is before the Dene people



today, as it has been now since Confederation, since the beginning of Canada as a nation, for the original people, for the native people, is: do we assimilate? Do we remain distinct people?

For us in the valley here, it's a decision: do we want to continue on as Dene people? Or do we want to forget that and become like everybody else? The decision before us, I think, has been made already, and people are acting on it. Clearly we want to remain as Dene people. We do not want to assimilate. [C8067]

The programs of the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories have conferred some real benefits on the native people. But the critical result of these programs has been to create a dependence on them. And this dependence, in turn, creates in the native people a frustration that is almost palpable.

Native people have expressed this frustration to the Inquiry. Mary Elias at Sach's Harbour:

Long ago [our] parents they didn't have nobody, [no] Government to tell them what to do or ask them anything. They used to have a real good life because they lived only the way they wanted to. Nobody told them how to live, and they knew how to make a good living, and they were good people then. But now [it is] just like they are having government substitute the way of life, everything is government. [C4063]

Robert Clement at Fort Norman:

I remember a few years ago, the people lived in their homes. They cut their own wood and hauled their own water. People were happier then, when they didn't have to depend on the government all of the time. We were happier then and we could do it again.

But look what has happened. Now the government gives the people everything, pays for the water and the fuel and the houses, the education. It gives the people everything, everything but one thing — the right to live their own lives. And that is the only thing

that we really want, to control our lives, our own land. [C897]

This time native people say they want to decide their future for themselves. And they want to be allowed to choose a life that is still connected to the land and their own tradition. So many hundreds of people came forward at the hearings and said these things that I must regard them as an expression of the people's deepest convictions.

Many white people in the North ask how the native people, after all that has been done for them, can now be dissatisfied or ungrateful. The native people reply: "These are things you chose for us. We did not choose them for ourselves."

The old and the young alike are of one mind on this issue. Mary Kendi, an elderly woman from Fort McPherson, told the Inquiry:

We would like to see our children and theirs carry on the ways of our ancestors and ourselves. We don't want to be changed into something we don't understand. If we must make some changes, we don't want it through someone pushing us into it. We must be given time to think and do it our own way. [C1135]

These thoughts were echoed by Isaac Aleekuk, a young trapper at Holman:

I want you people to understand [that] the way of life I am leading is very important to me, and I would like to keep it and use it to the best of my knowledge. I don't want it to be taken away from me or from anyone else here living at Holman. I am 24 years old now. I got married at an early age, and I do feel strongly about this, my way of life, and the way I am living it. I want my children to live that way if they want to. I'll teach them what I know. I still want them to keep this land long after we have gone. [C3948ff.]

If the native people are given the right to make their own choices, the future will be hard and difficult — both for them and us.

The question is, ought we to give them that right? And the next question must be, is it possible to give them that right? Here the moral, political and economic questions intersect. Here the industrial system impinges directly upon the native people, and the values of the two ways of life are in opposition. Here we are faced with the fundamental problem of the future of the North: whose preferences should determine the future of the North? Those who think of it as our last frontier? Or those who think of it as their homeland?

Harry Deneron, Chief of the Fort Liard Indian Band, told the Inquiry:

This is not a virgin land, it is not a pioneer land, it is the Indian [and Inuit] land. [C1664]

Two Different Views

The industrial system is now impinging on the northern native people. History and perceived economic necessity have brought the white and the native societies into contact on our northern frontier, a frontier occupied from time out of mind by the native people.

White people, in general, are driven by economic and social values that are very different from those that motivate native society. White people have always regarded the North as a land rich in desirable commodities: first furs, then gold and uranium, and now oil and gas. The white man, therefore, has progressively encroached upon the land and life of the Dene and the Inuit to secure for himself those commodities that he believes the native people leave unused or underused.

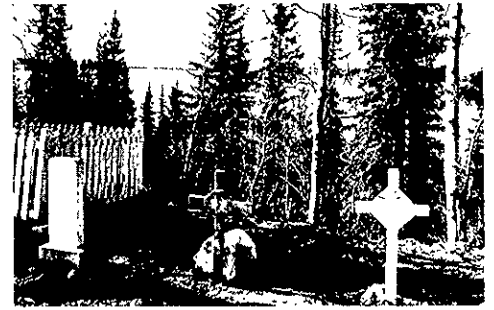
In all the years of contact between the two societies, the white man still sees the North from his own point of view, and he still wishes to conquer the frozen and waste

Inuit children. (ITC)

Drum dance, Fort McPherson. (I. Smith)

Richard Nerysoo. (Native Press)

Cemetery, Fort Norman. (I. Smith)



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spaces that he sees, with roads, mines, drilling rigs, gas wells and pipelines. He dreams of the technological conquest of the northern frontier.

The Dene and Inuit see their land as unbounded in its ability to fulfil their deepest needs. They see moose, herds of caribou and rivers and lakes teeming with fish. To them the frozen sea does not cover riches, nor is it an obstacle to shipping, but it is a storehouse from which they can take what they need: fish, seals, walrus and whales. The native's preferences and aspirations are formed by his way of looking at the North. Even though many Dene and Inuit have adopted southern dress and speak English, they retain their own ways of thinking about the land and the environment and their own idea of man's destiny in the North.

It has been difficult for the native people to convince us that their preferences and aspirations are real and worthy of our respect. Deeply rooted conceptions underlie the responses that have revealed themselves in the dealings of Europeans with aboriginal groups throughout the world. Hugh Brody,

in his evidence, described this devaluation of native people in the European's terms of nature and culture:

[We regard] the native person [as] at the very edge of, or just beyond, the world of culture. Insofar as he is beyond the frontier and stays outside the economy and society that the frontier is seeking to advance, he remains a part of nature. . . . Peoples in that condition do not know what is best for them (they cannot understand progress) and can only learn by acquiring religion, schooling, housing, money, modern conveniences, jobs. This picture of the native beyond culture, beyond the frontier, suggests that he has no real religion, no effective schooling, no proper houses, still less conveniences, money or jobs. As these are supposed to be the very hallmarks of culture, of civilization, and as they are the indices by which we measure progress, then if people do not have them, and do not get them, they cannot progress. [F25873ff.]

Hence many southerners — including policy-makers and administrators — arrive at a moral imperative to bring industrial development to the frontier.

It is for reasons of this nature that the oil and gas companies and the pipeline companies are convinced that their activities will

greatly benefit the people of the North. The representatives of the companies regard their presence in the North as benign. They are, therefore, shocked and disbelieving when native people suggest the contrary: they attribute any negative response to their proposals to ignorance or sometimes to the influence of white advisers on the native organizations.

Those who represent the industrial system have a complete and entire commitment to it, as a way of life and as a source of income. This is so whether we are public servants, representing a government whose goals are based on ideas of growth and expansion, or executives and workers in the oil and gas industry.

Seasonal employment that oil and gas exploration offers in the Mackenzie Delta has become an important source of income to many Inuit. Yet that does not mean that they — any more than the Dene — are prepared to give up their claim to the land. If our specialized vision of progress prevails, it is likely to prevail with indifference to — or even in defiance of — native aspirations as they have been expressed to this Inquiry.



Oil derrick, Mackenzie Delta. (DIAND)