



Northern Perspectives



FUTURE IMPERFECT

A controversial report on the prospects for Inuit society strikes a nerve in the N.W.T.

QITDLARSSUAQ, the fabled Inuk shaman of another age, is said to have led a small band of followers on a great journey, far from Auyuittuq, the home of their forefathers on **Baffin Island**, to the land of the Akukiktut in northern Greenland. Theirs was a sea-ice odyssey into the unknown, a lifelong search for a new future among new peoples and new ideas.

The Inuit of today face a similar Journey—a journey through time into the 21st century. Indeed, it has been scarcely a lifetime since a world not unlike Qildlarssuaq's vanished forever in a sudden whirlwind of modern technology and notions too fantastic to be believed. But where the journey of today will end remains a much-disputed question.

This issue of *Northern Perspectives* begins with one view of that rather uncertain destination. In 1986, as part of a review of Canadian demographics to the year 2025, the Department of National Health and Welfare commissioned a series of multidisciplinary research studies by scholars from across Canada. The task of describing the social and economic changes engendered by the resettlement of a rapidly expanding Inuit population into permanent communities was undertaken by Dr **Colin Irwin** of the Dalhousie University Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology. Dr Irwin's final report, *Lords of the Arctic: Wards of the State*, was released in the fall of 1988. It painted a bleak picture of Inuit society some 40 years hence: "Most of the Inuit living in the Arctic in the year 2025 will probably be second-generation wards of the state, living out their lives in 'arctic ghettos' plagued by increasing rates of crime", wrote Dr Irwin. "As long as current trends persist, most of the people living in the Arctic with professional and university qualifications will be white, and they will continue to dominate the higher levels of management in both the private and public sectors. This racially distinct minority can be expected to be the focus of growing racial tensions between themselves and the majority Inuit population. "

Hard-hitting as the report may have been, its general conclusions were, to quote Dr Irwin himself, "not particularly new". New or not, reaction to a leaked draft of the report on the part of the Government of the Northwest Territories was revealed as not only critical but openly hostile. In a letter to Minister of National Health and Welfare Jake Epp, N.W.T. Government Leader Dennis Patterson termed the report "a collection of unsubstantiated opinion" and suggested that the department "review more carefully the impact of recent developments on the future of the Inuit before officially releasing the study you have initiated."

CARC's purpose in presenting Dr Irwin's findings is neither to endorse them wholeheartedly nor to condemn *in toto* the current administration of government programs in the Northwest Territories; rather, it is to present both the report and debate surrounding it to a larger audience in a manner that will permit and encourage critical review. To that end we have reproduced the summary report, in edited form, on the following pages. In addition, we posed five questions based on the report to Mr Patterson and to the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut, the organization representing Inuit of the eastern Arctic in land claim negotiations. The responses we received from each, along with a brief rebuttal by Dr Irwin, are included in this issue.

Not everyone shares Dr Irwin's pessimistic assessment of the Inuit future, but most would agree that the path ahead is uncertain, the choices difficult. It seems clear, too, that at least some of the policies adopted in the past have proved inadequate and ill-suited to the needs of Inuit. While prudence may be the lesson reamed through such experience, it must not be allowed to override the urgent need for imaginative solutions to the disparities and cruel dilemmas that have for too long distinguished Canada's native North.

A national commitment to share the modest aspirations of aboriginal northerners is required, for the journey of the Inuit is very much a journey for all Canadians.

"In This Issue..."



Irwin Report

Lords of the Arctic: Wards of the State

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A Summary Report

Colin Irwin

Introduction

On 26 May 1986, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, The Honourable Jake Epp, announced the creation of the Review of Demography and Its Implications for Economic and Social Policy. The Review was directed to report by 31 March 1989 on possible changes in the size, structure, and distribution of the population of Canada to 2025, and on how these changes might affect Canada's economic and social life.

As part of this research effort, scholars from across Canada were invited to submit research proposals to the Review Secretariat in 1986. In 1987 I participated in a three-day workshop to discuss regional issues; later that year, 21 of a possible 96 proposals were accepted for funding. This proposal, which attempts to describe the social and economic changes brought about by the resettlement of the Inuit in villages and the growth of the Inuit population in the Canadian Arctic, was included.

Since the Inuit were moved into permanent settlements in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a new generation has grown up in the social and cultural environment of houses, villages, schools, hospitals, jobs, and television. Some of the changes brought about by resettlement have been neutral with respect to demographic, social, and economic change; others have had positive effects (e.g., lower death rates); and yet others may have been detrimental (e.g., higher unemployment). In the absence of a reversal of this resettlement process, the Inuit living in arctic communities in 2025 will be made up of individuals barely able to recollect a life lived independently "out on the land". Given the almost compelling certainty of this conclusion, a sense of the direction in which social and economic change is moving is essential if the social and economic expectations desired by the Inuit are to be realized.

Looking almost half a century into the future is very difficult. This is probably especially true of the Arctic, where resettlement and a clash of cultures has produced very rapid social, cultural, and economic change. During the past half-century, this change has been marked most notably by an abandonment of the aboriginal life-style. At best, this research can only attempt to predict the directions of change into the future by working from the assumption that there will be no change in current government policies for regional development in the Arctic. Inevitably, this assumption will be false, but, hopefully, by making

this assumption, there will emerge a picture of some future existence for the Inuit which will stand as a bench-mark from which desired futures might be better drawn and systematically planned.

If it is found that Inuit hopes and expectations closely match the social and economic reality emergent in their communities, then there may be little cause for concern or need for new government policies. However, if it is found that the most modest expectations, particularly for the young, are not in keeping with the emergent reality, then, hopefully, this research will be able to identify specific areas of policy that may require revision.

The Inuit Population: Past

The fundamental unit of traditional Inuit social structure was the nuclear family, comprised of parents and children (perhaps five or six individuals). Depending on seasonal hunting activities, a number of nuclear families, representing one or more extended families (parents, children, grandparents, and relatives by marriage), made up a hunting camp or band (perhaps 25 individuals). These groups shared relatives with other members of the same dialect group, or tribe, which would typically number some 500 individuals. These Inuit were often spread across thousands of square miles of land sea, and ice, with population densities as low as one person per 200 square miles. Change in the fortunes and misfortunes of groups were sometimes accompanied by distant migrations. For example the Netsilingmiut, who now dominate the population of Chesterfield Inlet, moved there in the 1920s from their traditional hunting ground some 500 miles to the north. Part of the reason for this migration was the opportunity to enter the fur trade with the Hudson's Bay Company, which had been established at Chesterfield Inlet in the early 1900s, along with an RCMP post and mission. In the 1950s, two events encouraged many Inuit in the region to move off the land and into settlements: illness (principal!, polio and tuberculosis) and the opening of a nickel mine at Rankin Inlet. In an effort to avoid the high death rates of the early 1950s this resettlement process was completed in the 1960s with promise of health care, free housing, welfare, and education.

The Inuit Population: Present

The settlements established across the Arctic in the 1960s have grown steadily. In 1981 the total Inuit population of Canada was 25 871, having doubled in the previous 20 years (Robitaille and Choinière, 1986). This high growth rate is a product of both a lower rate of infant mortality, brought about by resettlement and associated health and social services, and traditional values favouring large families. As a consequence of these factors, the present Inuit population is, on average, much younger than the traditional population in which many more children died.

Although there is migration of Inuit in and out of the Arctic, there is also considerable migration north of the tree-line. In the Keewatin, many young people migrate when they get married, and the migration of families to Rankin Inlet, in search of better economic and educational opportunities, is probably only limited by the acute housing shortage. Although older Inuit identify with the tribe or dialect group to which they and their parents belonged, younger Inuit tend to identify with their community. In Rankin Inlet, a new dialect, *Keevaliqmiatitut*, is emerging as a mixture of perhaps five dialects from other parts of the region. Young Inuit are marrying at a slightly older age than their parents and are having much smaller families (three or four children as opposed to 10 or more). In traditional times, single-parent families were very rare, as Inuit men and women could not survive without the arctic clothing or meat provided by their partner. Today, the welfare state and wage economy make single-parent families possible, and they are increasing in number. These families take two forms: young mothers with children, and elderly widows and widowers, often with adopted children.

The Inuit Population: Future

At the present time, all estimates as to the future size of the Inuit population predict very high rates of growth. Robitaille and Choinière (1986) believe that the national Inuit population of 25 871 in 1981 will

increase by 60 per cent, to approximately 41 000, by the turn of the century. The growth rate in the Northwest Territories is expected to be higher than the Inuit national average; thus the territorial population is predicted to increase from 15 905 to 25 757 during the same 1981-2001 period. As Inuit now wish to have smaller families, the average age of the Inuit population will begin to increase. This change will place an increasing proportion of the Inuit population into the age group of those looking for work. Robitaille and Choinière (1986) predict that this age group (20-64) will double, from 10 648 in 1981 to 21 206 in 2001. But the Review Secretariat's mandate is to look forward to the year 2025, so it may be reasonable to assume that the Inuit population will at least double, or possibly triple, by that date; however, even this speculation may be low.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has produced growth figures for individual Inuit communities based on zero migration (N.W.T. Bureau of Statistics 1988.06.08). For the 20-year period 1986-2006, the population of Chesterfield Inlet is expected to increase from 294 to 509; that of Rankin Inlet is expected to rise to 2057 from 1374.

However, when the effects of in-migration (due to the establishment of a CF- 18 operating base, college campus, cottage hospital, and more tourist and administrative facilities) are taken into account, Rankin Inlet is expected to grow from 1374 to 2383 during the same 20-year period (Uma Engineering, 1988). It is expected that the community will become a small town, such as Iqaluit. Conversely, Chesterfield Inlet may not grow as quickly as predicted, due to out-migration, but it will still grow and, all other things being equal, double in size long before the year 2025.

As the size of Inuit families is on the decline, a doubling of the population will produce more than a doubling of the number of Inuit households. This fact will, in turn, create a greater demand for housing construction and community services than a simple doubling of the population would at first indicate. Although extended families still exist, they are increasingly spread out across the Keewatin Region as a result of increased migration. This fact, and the increase in the importance of the wage economy and social services, will continue to undermine the importance of the extended family as a unit of social action. Increasingly, nuclear families, particularly unmarried mothers and their children, will come to rely on the state for social support.

However, this description of arctic communities growing and becoming more regionally centralized is dependent on several important assumptions. First, it is assumed that Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) will not have a devastating effect on the Inuit population. Although the Inuit are a sexually active and partially isolated population, no special policies or programs have been developed either to prevent this disease from reaching the Arctic or to monitor its progress. Given this situation, and the lack of epidemiological data, I cannot say with any confidence that AIDS will not have a devastating effect on the Inuit population. Second, I have assumed that government policies will not be changed, so that those Inuit who wish to establish new communities away from current population centres will continue to find it very difficult to do so, as housing, social assistance, health care, and education are, for most practical purposes, available only in the established communities. Third, although more Inuit may migrate to southern Canadian cities or to Yellowknife, I am inclined to believe such a trend will not have a significant effect on the size of the Inuit population in the Arctic, because Inuit migration out of the Arctic is, and has always been, low. Well-educated Inuit will probably continue to be able to get better jobs in the Arctic than in the South, and the migration of poorly educated Inuit will only transport social problems from the Arctic to "Main Street, Big Southern Canadian City", where the social problems will become more acute.

Inuit Economic Activity

The Inuit Economy: Past

My mother-in-law, who was born around 1904, never met a white man until she was a teenager. When she was a girl, the economy of her people, the Arvilikjuarmiut, was still centred on hunting rather than the fur trade. Before the domestication of animals and agriculture, the world was populated by hunter-gatherers. Unlike the rest of the hunter-gatherers throughout the world, the Inuit relied on hunting for almost all their needs. This necessity of the arctic environment produced a society with a strong division of labour by sex. The men were skilled at hunting and making the tools of their livelihood, while the women were expert sewers and child-rearers, which, like everything else, was not an easy task in the Arctic. The fur trade and the introduction of the rifle allowed the Inuit to raise more children, keep larger dog-teams, and become more mobile. Some Inuit who were not able or chose not to maintain the strenuous life of hunting and trapping entered the wage economy by working for the Hudson's Bay Company, the RCMP, or the local mission. These job opportunities were very limited until the establishment of the nickel mine at Rankin Inlet in the mid-1950s. The mine closed in the 1960s, but the creation of the arctic settlements at about the same time generated a few new opportunities for wage employment. Two factors brought about the decline of the fur trade in the 1970s and 1980s. First, trapping and hunting activities became more costly as they became mechanized; second, the activity of the anti-fur lobby depressed fur prices. For example, the Northwest Territories harvest for white fox dropped from a 1980-81 high of 37 315 pelts to 4438 pelts in 1985-86, and the hair seal harvest dropped from 42 120 skins in 1980-81 to 3602 in 1985-86. (N.W.T. Bureau of Statistics, 1987). In the Baffin region, where the seal harvest was largest, the decline in this trade correlates with increases in welfare (GNWT Department of Social Services, 1985).

The Inuit Economy: Present

Hunting is still an important part of the Inuit economy, although the fur trade and the sale of fish do not provide very much income to those engaged in such activities. A survey of all Inuit in Chesterfield Inlet found that 88 per cent had eaten Inuit food (meat or fish) the previous day. As store-bought food costs approximately twice as much in Chesterfield Inlet as it does in southern Canada, the value of country food is considerable. Meat and fish are still shared through the network established by the extended family, a practice of particular importance for the elderly. Unfortunately, the high capital and operating costs of mechanized hunting (about \$10 000 per year for the fully outfitted, active hunter) restricts hunting to those with a cash income. Therefore, only Inuit who do have a job, and hence an income, can afford to go hunting in the little spare time available. Inuit who do not have a job or a regular income cannot afford to go hunting, although they have plenty of time to do so. I had expected Inuit in the larger, more urban community of Rankin Inlet to hunt less frequently than the Inuit of Chesterfield Inlet, but this did not prove to be the case; as Rankin Inlet is the wealthiest community in the region, the Inuit there can afford to hunt. The Inuit of Rankin Inlet rely as much on meat and fish as the Inuit in Chesterfield Inlet, and they will often go hundreds of miles in pursuit of game to avoid the heavy hunting activity close to town.

Two sections of the communities of Chesterfield Inlet and Rankin Inlet hunt less frequently and eat less native food than the majority of the population. The white members of the communities eat less native food, as they tend not to have a taste for it. They also hunt less frequently, because they have other priorities for their disposable income and are not committed to helping feed their extended families. Inuit in their early 20s and younger also eat less native food, because they have developed a liking for more variety in their diet, supplied by the store. They hunt less frequently because they cannot afford to—there is more unemployment among the young—but also because some of them are genuinely not interested in hunting, having grown up in the cultural, economic, social, and physical environment of the community, school, and television.

Rates of unemployment in the Arctic are available from a number of different sources. The 1981 census (1986 data were not available from Statistics Canada at the time of writing) indicates unemployment rates of 11.1 per cent for males and 0 per cent for females in Chesterfield Inlet, and 12.2 per cent for males and 8.3 per cent for females in Rankin Inlet (Statistics Canada, 1983). The average for the Keewatin region

was 12.0 per cent for males and 15.2 per cent for females. However, these statistics are based on the premise that the unemployed have recently looked for work. In small arctic communities, where everyone knows about the few jobs that occasionally become available, no one wastes their time "looking for work", with the result that the unemployed are not accurately recorded by Statistics Canada. The 1984 Labour Force Survey conducted by the Government of the Northwest Territories (N.W.T. Bureau of Statistics, 1985) attempted to overcome this problem by asking people who were not working if they wanted a job. Using this question as a basis for calculation, the unemployment rate becomes 41 per cent in Chesterfield Inlet, 24 per cent in Rankin Inlet, and 42 per cent for the Keewatin region as a whole. I conducted a similar survey in Chesterfield Inlet in 1986 and found that 45 per cent wanted a job. Using a slightly different calculation, Robitaille and Choinière (1985) came up with a national Inuit "unemployment" rate of 48 per cent. But all those employed in seasonal or part-time jobs in Chesterfield Inlet in 1986 wanted full-time jobs. If these individuals are included in the unemployment statistics, then as many as 69 per cent of the available work force in Chesterfield Inlet could be considered unemployed. If students seeking summer jobs are also included, then the unemployment rate climbs to 72 per cent. (My survey was conducted in the summer, whereas the Labour Force Survey was conducted in the winter, when students were in school.)

As might be expected, unemployment rates are higher among females, the young, and the poorly educated. As the white population in the Arctic are very well educated, they are rarely unemployed. In the Keewatin region, the Labour Force Survey identifies 92 per cent of the non-native population as employed (306 out of a possible 332), compared with 48 per cent of the native population (1143 out of a possible 2380). The large number of white persons in Rankin Inlet (24 per cent of the local population) clearly accounts for the unusually low level of unemployment to be found in that community. The figures suggested here for the rate of Inuit unemployment are dependent on the definition used. In general, it may be reasonable to conclude that, after the employed white population is removed from the calculation, approximately half the Inuit in the Arctic are unemployed.

Some Inuit have become successful in business. It should be noted that they tend to employ more Inuit than do businesses owned and operated by non-Inuit. However, for the many Inuit without jobs, the different forms of social security available to them have become the dominant element in their economy. In Chesterfield Inlet, welfare payments are the preferred form of social support. Many of the Inuit there do not receive unemployment insurance benefits, although they may be eligible for them; poor mail service, difficulty in resolving administrative errors (there is no employment office in Chesterfield Inlet), and the complexity of forms written in a foreign language (English, not Inuktitut) discourage many from even applying for benefits. Welfare, on the other hand, can be obtained through a simple interview with an Inuk representative of the territorial government. In Rankin Inlet (where there is an employment office to sort out problems), a greater proportion of Inuit receive unemployment insurance benefits. In reality, many use unemployment insurance benefits and welfare payments to subsidize their hunting/subsistence economy activities. Some administrators turn a blind eye to this practice, in the belief that such activities are probably of more benefit to the welfare recipient than simply waiting at home for a job opportunity that will not come. Unfortunately, some administrators interpret the welfare rules very strictly. For example, they do not allow payments for clothing to be used for the purchase of hunting supplies, despite the logical argument that skins from the animals killed will be used to make clothes. They may also insist that recipients be in town on "welfare day", when hunting activities require them to be out on the land.

Other counter-productive quirks of the social security system in the Arctic include the withdrawal of some benefits from individuals who enter an educational program, even when that program cannot sponsor the recipient, and the drop in disposable income if a recipient takes a job at minimum wage and then has to pay a higher rent or hire a babysitter. As a consequence, many Inuit take welfare even when they would prefer to have a job (particularly if that job is part-time, at minimum wage), to be on the land, actively involved in the subsistence economy, or to be in a program of education.

The Inuit Economy: Future

The current economic prospects for Inuit may well be among the worst in Canada, marked as they are by poor levels of education and high unemployment and further aggravated by the proximity of a well-educated white population enjoying virtually full employment. In the short term, this situation could be improved if Inuit were to replace the white people who come north to take the trade, technical, and professional positions for which Inuit are considered unqualified. But even if this goal were to be achieved completely, within a single generation, more Inuit would still be unemployed in the future, as the growth in the Inuit work force over the next 20 years will be much larger than the total number of white people working in the Arctic today. Without the out-migration of thousands of Inuit (which is very unlikely), the number of jobs in the Arctic will have to be doubled, and then doubled again, if levels of employment comparable to the rest of Canada are to be achieved. Even this unrealistically optimistic prospect would require that there be no in-migration of skilled workers from the South. High Inuit unemployment, it would seem, is quite unavoidable in the kind of wage economy that has been introduced in the Arctic over the past 30 years. If current trends continue, most of the Inuit living in the Arctic in the year 2025 will be second-generation wards of the state, whose society, economy, and culture may have more in common with an urban slum than with the life their grandparents knew.

Inuit Education and Enculturation

Inuit Education and Enculturation: Past

Traditional Inuit education cannot be separated from Inuit enculturation—the learning of culture. This "education" began when the children started to copy the activities of their parents and older brothers and sisters. Given the strong division of labour by sex in traditional Inuit society, the girls would learn from their mothers how to prepare, cut, and sew skins, while the boys would learn from their fathers how to make hunting tools. Appropriate work ethics associated with quality control and stoic persistence were taught, as the seams of arctic clothing could not split or allow wind to pass through, and a hunter could never be a quitter; the survival of the Inuit depended on the successful teaching of these values. The equivalent of tests of competence were celebrated when a girl successfully made her first mitts and boots and when a boy killed the first of each kind of animal relied upon for food. Young men and women were expected to be fully qualified in their respective skills before being married in their early teens.

Formal education came to the Arctic in the 1940s and 1950s when mission schools were established to teach Christianity and the "three its": reading, writing, and arithmetic. These schools were residential and strict. Inuit children, with no previous formal education, were generally taken away from their families a few years before they reached puberty. They spent the winters in school and the summers out on the land with their parents. Only English could be spoken in school; their native language, Inuktitut, was forbidden. In practice, then, these children spent their school years alternating between a "white" education and enculturation experience and an Inuit education and enculturation experience.

Many of the children who attended the mission school at Chesterfield Inlet went on to attend the Churchill Vocational Centre; from there, the most promising students were sent to schools across southern Canada. With the establishment of the settlements in the 1960s, Inuit children were able to live at home while they attended grade school, and young Inuit men and women who went on to high school were able to stay in the North among their peers at schools in Yellowknife, Frobisher Bay, and, most recently, Rankin Inlet.

Inuit Education and Enculturation: Present

Inuit who went through the residential school system between the late 1940s and early 1960s believe they have received a better education than Inuit in the modern GNWT school system. They believe their

success in becoming native leaders in the Arctic of today is largely attributable to their rigorous education. One native leader I interviewed was so sure of the truth of this situation that he took a Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and scored above the grade he had been awarded in school. In contrast, most schoolchildren in the Arctic today score below their recorded school grade. Unlike the Inuit who spend their school holidays out on the land with their parents and, therefore, have a good command of the Inuit language as well as their land-based skills, hunting skills, and sewing skills, most young men cannot build an igloo or make hunting tools, and most young women cannot make clothes from skins. When the young speak among themselves they frequently prefer to use a form of broken English with a shortened vocabulary, and their Inuktitut possesses but a fraction of the richness that it did for their parents and grandparents, who were often accomplished poets. The generation of Inuit who were born, grew up, and went to school in the settlements established in the 1960s have acquired neither the tradition nor the formal education possessed by their older brothers and sisters. They find it very difficult to live on the land, to develop a career, or to complete a program of higher education. They are a lost generation, whose education and enculturation provides them with little more than the skills required to live out their lives as wards of the state. If filling out a form is considered to be an essential skill for living in such a society, then many Inuit would fail to meet even this most modest of expectations.

Some statistics and observations from my interviews may help illustrate the extent of this human tragedy. Robitaille and Choinière (1985) note that 72 per cent of the Inuit in the Northwest Territories reach Grade 1, compared with 96 per cent of the total Canadian population; 34 per cent reach Grade 9, compared with 80 per cent of the Canadian population; 15 per cent graduate from high school, compared with 52 per cent of the total Canadian population; and 1 per cent of the Inuit in Northwest Territories attend a university, compared with 16 per cent of the total Canadian population. These statistics improve for the younger population who have grown up with schools in their communities. Of the Inuit in the 20-24 age group, 55 per cent have reached Grade 9, compared with 80 per cent for the Canadian population.

Unfortunately, this apparent improvement is distorted by the fact that these grades more closely correlate with the classes Inuit have been placed in as opposed to their level of academic achievement. TABEs administered to Inuit entering adult education programs in the Keewatin revealed an average score 2.4 grades lower than that achieved in school (GNWT Department of Education, 1984). One Grade 7 student tested at Grade 1.5. Similar shortfalls were found among Inuit students entering the new high school at Rankin Inlet. Since students enter high school with academic abilities closer to Grade 7 than Grade 9, it is not surprising that the few Inuit students to graduate from high school all received general diplomas that do not prepare them for a university education and profession. It should be noted, as well, that none of Rankin Inlet High School's Inuit graduates came from Rankin Inlet. As students must stay in a residence, where their study habits are closely monitored, only Inuit from other communities in the region have managed to graduate. I have been told that the same has happened in Iqaluit; so it would seem that having a high school in an arctic community actually reduces the chances of local residents obtaining their diplomas. Many white families with children of senior elementary and high school age try to transfer to Yellowknife, if they work for the GNWT, or move south, so that their children's education will not suffer during these critical years. As a consequence, the children of white parents often receive a much better education than their Inuit counterparts and are, therefore, able to successfully complete a program of higher education in southern Canada. Although Inuit greatly outnumber the white population, only 70 Inuit from the Northwest Territories attended university, college, or technical school in southern Canada in 1986-87, compared with 537 non-natives from the territory, nearly all from Yellowknife (GNWT Department of Education, undated).

As would be expected, poor levels of education produce high rates of failure in all training programs in the Arctic. Both instructors and Inuit students have told me that Inuit often quit their courses when they cannot comprehend the textbooks they are expected to read, or when they fail to perform basic measurements that may require an understanding of fractions. Even Inuit students who pass a TABE at an average level of Grade 10 may fail for these reasons, as their English comprehension and mathematical skills will be below Grade 10. As with the devaluation of the grades given to students in northern schools, one solution to this problem, from the point of view of the bureaucracy, is to drop standards. For example,

when applicants for GNWT jobs requiring Grade 10 or Grade 12 kept failing the tests. TABEs were dropped. Many diplomas and certificates given out by the GNWT do not meet southern Canadian standards and are not recognized outside the Northwest Territories.

In institutional terms, this lowering of standards has thwarted the efforts of the Equal Employment Directorate, as they require about another 1300 natives with Grade 12 if they are to reach their target level of native employment in the GNWT. The schools are not producing a sufficient number of high school graduates to meet these goals. Inuit trainees frequently quit when they are required to take over the full responsibility of a position, as they lack the necessary experience, training, and confidence. In personal terms, the plight of one newly married Inuk I interviewed in Rankin Inlet illustrates the danger of lowered standards. He quit school at Grade 8, when he was about 15 years of age. As he is now starting a family, he decided to enrol in Adult Education for upgrading. With Grade 10 he could get a government job. But unlike the school, Adult Education uses the TABE. He tested at the Grade 4 level. Making it from Grade 4 to Grade 10 was too much for him to comprehend. He feels cheated. He has given up for the present, and his family is on welfare. He told me he won't let his kids quit school.

The failure of formal education in the Arctic is surpassed only by the failure of the education system in the Northwest Territories to teach and preserve the Inuit language, history, and culture. Bringing Inuit into settlements, and providing them with television dominated by southern programming, may well have done the greatest harm in an area that is of deep concern to the Inuit. However, a curriculum to teach the Inuit language has been developed only to Grade 4, and not enough Inuit teachers have been trained to deliver even this limited Inuktitut program. Failure to teach English or French as a second language beyond Grade 4 would not be tolerated in southern Canada, and it should be recalled that the failure to teach Canadian history from the French perspective in Quebec schools contributed to the formation of the separatist movement in that province.

Inuit Education and Enculturation: Future

The individuals who benefit most from any education system are those best able to take advantage of it. In the Northwest Territories, these people are the sons and daughters of the non-native Canadians who went north to help the native people of the region. Many are now returning, after completing their university education, to take the professional positions that their parents may have hoped to see filled by natives. This continued restriction of higher education to a small and racially distinct segment of the northern population will sow the seeds of what is technically termed "structural racism". In the long term, this is a recipe for social discord, possibly even social upheaval, as the native people in this region of Canada are, and will remain, a majority.

The Inuit language, culture, and traditional land-based skills are being lost at an alarming rate. If all this is forgotten, the Inuit, like other native peoples in Canada, will, whatever the truth of the matter, blame the white man for their loss. When combined with the social inequalities of "structural racism", the demise of the Inuit culture will probably mark the end of a healthy and constructive white-Inuit relationship in the Canadian Arctic.

Inuit Socialization and Social Control

Inuit Sociality: Past

In traditional Inuit society, authority rested squarely in the hands of elder relatives. From this simple premise everyone knew the hierarchy of authority in networks of extended families that could sometimes number hundreds of individuals. In practice, this system of social control was made more complex by male-female relationships, the loss of authority by the senile and incompetent, and ambiguities in the

elaborate system of Inuit kinship. In general, however, elder relatives had to be respected. When disputants were unable to resolve their differences with an appeal to the authority of an elder, they could attempt to settle their argument in a forum of rhetoric, using the Inuit "song duel", or in a forum of strength involving carefully regulated forms of wrestling and boxing. If all this failed, then murder, and possibly a family feud, might result. Disruptive individuals could be brought under the control of their community with gossip, ridicule, withdrawal of community welfare (being left out of patterns of food sharing), ostracism, abandonment, or, when all else failed, execution. Most of the elderly Inuit with whom I have discussed this subject, welcomed the introduction of the RCMP to the Arctic, as the rate of violent crime, particularly murder, has been reduced.

Inuit Sociality: Present

Although traditional lines of authority still exist, they are not as strong as they used to be. Several reasons are given for this decline. For example, due to the generation and culture gap between elders and the young, the sanctions of ridicule and gossip do not have the biting effect they once did. The withdrawal of community welfare no longer exists as a sanction; welfare can now be obtained from the state. The respect once accorded elders as possessors of the knowledge required to live in the Arctic is now less visible; white teachers are the primary source of the knowledge required for life in the new Arctic. Although the latter may not have gained the respect of the young, the elders lost their respect when schools and settlements were established. In a like manner, the authority of the elders has been eroded with the assumption of traditional authority roles by the RCMP, judges, missionaries, and public administrators. This problem is further aggravated by the fact that most of these new authority figures are not Inuit. Although some families maintain traditional values, there seems to be a growing subculture among the young, who have created a way of life almost separate from the societal culture of their parents. This was most noticeable in the larger community of Rankin Inlet, where some parents complained that their children slept during the day and stayed out all night with people they did not know. "Not knowing" everyone is a new experience for Inuit, who once lived in communities where they not only knew everyone but also knew their business. As a consequence of this radical change in Inuit social relationships, social dislocation and antisocial behaviour have increased at rates that exceed the growth of arctic communities.

Inuit Sociality: Future

If the trends described here continue, then increases in the size of the Inuit population will lead to growth in the size of arctic settlements and, with it, growth in the rate of crime in the Arctic. If the traditional social fabric continues to break down, the need for more RCMP and associated legal and correctional services will probably increase at a rate higher than that of population growth for Inuit.

Social And Economic Change

The Emergent Reality

The reality emergent in the Arctic is a reality in which a growing Inuit population will come to live in larger, and possibly more regionalized, communities and towns. If current trends continue, rates of unemployment will not improve, even though the number of job opportunities may rise. Although Inuit families will decline in size, they will probably be more numerous, requiring expanded housing and social services. Should migration remain a socially undesirable and economically high-risk strategy for members of this poorly educated population, then most of the Inuit can be expected to remain in the Arctic, even though they will probably have lost more of their language, culture, and land-based skills. If this

description is correct, then most of the Inuit living in the Arctic in the year 2025 will probably be second-generation wards of the state, living out their lives in "arctic ghettos" plagued by increasing rates of crime.

As long as current trends persist, most of the people living in the Arctic with professional and university qualifications will be white, and they will continue to dominate the higher levels of management in both the private and public sectors. This racially distinct minority can be expected to be the focus of growing racial tensions between themselves and the majority Inuit population.

The Reality Desired

Needless to say, no one I interviewed, either Inuit or white, desired such a future, although I believe many thoughtful people realize the possibility of such a future and genuinely fear it. What future do the people now living in the Arctic want for themselves and for their children? The overwhelming response to this question, from both white and Inuit members of the communities of Rankin Inlet and Chesterfield Inlet, was: a good education and a good job. With an almost equally strong consensus, the people wanted Inuit language, culture, and land-based skills to be preserved and passed on to future generations. The reasons for this were both sentimental and practical. People do not want thousands of years of Inuit tradition to be totally lost, and though they would prefer to see their children have a good job, as a life spent out on the land is so hard, elder Inuit feel jobs cannot always be relied upon. For this reason, they want their children to learn both the old and new ways.

When I asked the Inuit of Chesterfield Inlet if they would like to move back to the land, only a few couples said Yes, explaining that the prices paid for fox and sealskins are too low. The Inuit are well aware that traditional subsistence activities are not viable in the modern arctic economy. Jobs are the first priority in today's world for both young and old. With the exception of the elderly, most Inuit would welcome more opportunities for education and job training. However, when I rephrased the question in Rankin Inlet, with the suggestion that the price of furs could be subsidized and some assistance given to help in the move out of town, then many of the Inuit said they would prefer to live in an outpost camp. The Inuit who had their land-based skills were the most enthusiastic about taking advantage of such an opportunity if it ever came. So, some Inuit want more education, some want a better job (or any job), and some want to get back to the land. All want their children to have a good education and the opportunity for a good job, and nearly all want their children to retain the Inuit language and land-based skills. This list of desires poses several questions. Are these desires realistic and compatible, and, even if they can be attained, can this success avoid the social catastrophe of the emergent reality? I am inclined to think Yes, but not because I or anyone else is capable of weaving some master plan that will carefully avoid every social and economic obstacle that stands in the way of creating a productive and worthwhile future for the Inuit; rather, I believe the Inuit are a practical and resourceful people who, when given the opportunity to pursue the different options available to them, will create the best of possible futures for themselves and their people according to their individual talents and circumstances. Grand plans are destined to failure; giving people choices creates opportunities to avoid failure and, in so doing, to come closer to success.

Choices in Education

Good choices cannot be made without good knowledge. Two rather distinct forms of good knowledge are required for a successful life in the modern Arctic, and each demands an appropriate form of education: formal education, oriented to job skills; and land-skills education, oriented to the subsistence economy.

There can be little doubt that the quality of formal education needs to be greatly improved if the goals of the GNWT Equal Employment Directorate and those of Inuit are to be attained. As the residential education system of the 1950s has been replaced with a community-based education system across the Northwest Territories, the universal delivery of education seems to have been emphasized at some loss to

the quality of education. Several steps can be taken to correct this problem. First and foremost, the quality of formal education should be monitored. Failure to adequately monitor and maintain the quality of education in the Arctic is, in my view, an act of negligence that has contributed more than any other single factor to the establishment of "structural racism". At the present time, parents blame teachers, and teachers blame parents, for educational failure. But testing identifies the good and the poor among students, among households and parents, among classes and teachers, among schools and principals, and among communities and regions. When testing is done, the failures can be corrected with knowledge gained from the successes. The TABEs used by Adult Education and the tests used by the high school principal in Rankin Inlet could be used throughout the Arctic today, but the GNWT Department of Education and teachers with whom I have discussed this matter seem very reluctant to do so. This reluctance should be viewed with suspicion, as failure to document the shortcomings of education in the Arctic is in the self-interest of the teachers and the department they serve.

Another counter-productive policy that may be self-serving is that which does not allow sponsorship of N.W.T. residents to attend educational institutions outside the Northwest Territories (except when a particular program is not offered by the Department of Education). Going south may not be the best educational strategy for all Inuit, but those who are able to make the transition receive a better education and learn how to operate in mainstream Canadian society. The successful Inuit leaders of today owe much to this kind of experience. The Canadian government sponsored my Ph.D. studies in the United States, so I do not see why Inuit should not be sponsored when they wish to go south for their education. Choice in this matter should be taken away from the government and given to the Inuit. If the education system continues to fail the Inuit in the Arctic, then at least some Inuit will be well educated, like the Inuit leaders who went through the old residential system.

It seems, too, that there are fewer educational opportunities available to Inuit in the Arctic than there are for the Micmac Indians I taught at Dalhousie University in Halifax. Dalhousie offers a transition-year program designed to give Micmacs an opportunity to adjust to university life. As well, special programs have been created to allow Micmac health workers and social workers obtain degrees and professional qualifications. Although many Inuit working for the GNWT would like to work toward their degrees, few special programs are in place to actively encourage them. An exception is the Eastern Arctic Teacher Education Program, but that program is underfunded and must turn away many willing students.

With regard to the teaching of Inuit language and culture, the Inuit I interviewed felt these should be taught in the school and in the home. Some Inuit believed land-based skills should also be taught in the schools, but most considered the best place for this kind of education to be out on the land. I see no reason why Inuit language and culture (e.g. poetry, mythology, and history) should not be taught through all school grades in the Arctic, in much the same way as other languages are taught across Canada. Failure to develop a curriculum and an adequate number of Inuit teachers to do this in the 20 years since the establishment of settlements and community schools is surely unacceptable. If Inuit had been given a good formal education at the cost of being unable to keep their language and culture alive in all its richness, then, perhaps, there would have been some grounds for forgiving this omission, but Inuit have received the worst of both worlds and the best of neither. As for land-based skills, they are best taught out on the land, so the appropriate solution here is not another school program but, rather, policies to encourage and support active Inuit involvement in the subsistence segment of the arctic economy.

Choices in Productive Activity

In the 1950s, when the Government of Canada began to make a concerted effort to extend the Canadian welfare system to the Arctic, a bureaucrat from Ottawa explained to a missionary in Whale Cove that he would have to reject the modest suggestions of the missionary for a self-help program for the Inuit, as some of the suggestions would cost less than his own salary. (Among other suggestions, the missionary had proposed that the government give the Inuit lumber, tools, and some guidance in house construction

instead of building houses for them.) Perhaps the GNWT, with an annual budget fast approaching a billion dollars, is, to a considerable degree, little more than the institutionalization of that bureaucrat and his philosophy. I am inclined to believe that the Homeownership Assistance Plan (HAP) introduced into the Arctic over the past few years more closely follows the philosophy recommended by the missionary. Happily for the government (and Canadian taxpayers), houses built with the assistance of their Inuit owners cost little more than half the price of houses constructed by the GNWT (approximately \$90 000 as compared with \$160 000 to \$170 000). It should be noted also that ongoing operating costs are greatly reduced. Perhaps the time has come to apply this philosophy to other programs before welfare completely erodes traditional Inuit values of independence and individual industry.

In most of Canada, the different forms of social assistance, such as welfare and unemployment insurance, are designed to help the few citizens unable to work to live without discomfort, and to provide for those citizens who find themselves temporarily out of work. I do not believe these forms of social assistance were ever designed as a substitute for work for large segments of the northern population. Yet, that is exactly what they are required to be, and it should come as no surprise that they perform very poorly. Various programs exist to help some students attend school, to create a few summer jobs in the community, and to assist a limited number of hunters with the purchase of equipment or gas. Those Inuit who do not have full-time jobs try to piece their lives together with combinations of these different programs, but, as the latter are limited in number and duration, they may well create as much frustration as real help.

A number of social experiments have been developed to deal with aspects of this problem—the Mincome experiment in rural Manitoba, the subsidization of fur prices in Greenland, and the hunter assistance program for the Cree of northern Quebec. Recently, the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut requested the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) to consider a \$10 million per annum program to return unemployed Inuit hunters to the land. (The proposal was rejected.) When it is noted that the proposed cash settlement for the Dene is \$500 million and that the current GNWT budget is more than \$800 million, \$10 million does not seem very much. However, a senior planner in the GNWT told me that he had been involved in designing a similar program some years ago and that his proposal would have cost nothing, as it could have been funded by piecing together moneys from other budgets that overlapped with the aims of a subsistence economy support program. Clearly, money is not the problem. Perhaps, the problem is a lack of political or institutional will. Perhaps, no one wants to admit to the possibility that a normal wage economy cannot solve all the social and economic problems of the Arctic. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that current programs leave many potentially productive Inuit idle, when the redesign of these programs to meet the needs of the Inuit in the Arctic could put them in school, in college, in community service, or back on the land.

Inuit must be given the opportunity to choose the career path or productive activity that they perceive to be best for them, instead of having their options determined by the vagaries of budgetary decisions beyond their control. To achieve this end, many programs will have to be co-ordinated, or even combined; this, in turn, will require some institutional imagination and leadership. Given this kind of flexibility, the old and the young, those living in small or large communities, those living in regions rich in renewable or non-renewable resources, and those with traditional or modern skills will be able to make the choices that will maximize their potential and, with it, the potential of their family and community, while still taking advantage of economic development if and when it comes.

Making It Work

When I was given permission to do this research by the Inuit of Chesterfield Inlet and Rankin Inlet, one of the most frequently expressed concerns was that this report might end up as yet another pile of paper collecting dust. A few Inuit refused to be interviewed for this very reason. This concern is undoubtedly valid. The problems faced by the Inuit—high population growth, high unemployment, poor education, and

poor economic prospects—are well documented both in recent reports (Robitaille and Choinière, 1985) and in reports written more than 20 years ago (Brack and McIntosh, 1963). To various degrees they are problems faced by all Inuit, from the Yukon to Labrador, and, possibly, by all native people in northern Canada (Hawthorn, 1966; Robitaille and Choinière, 1985; Lithwick, 1986). But these problems are probably most acute for the Inuit of the Arctic, for they live in the most inaccessible and inhospitable region of Canada. Given the intransigence of these problems, and their possible national dimension, strong federal leadership may be required to resolve these problems; other options for creative policy development seem to offer little hope for success.

For example, land claim settlements offer one possibility for dealing with these problems. The native people of Alaska won the right to have a high school in any community that requested it as part of their land claim settlement, and the Cree of northern Quebec received a hunter assistance program through their settlement with the Government of Quebec. At the present time, DIAND will not negotiate social issues such as these as a part of a land claim settlement in the eastern Arctic, so using land claims as a positive force for social change in the region is not a viable option.

Another possibility is for territorial and provincial governments to deal with these problems. In the Northwest Territories, efforts to create a hunter assistance program have been underway for several years. Unfortunately, the program has never been implemented, even though similar programs already exist for the Cree of northern Quebec and the Inuit of Greenland. As one of the largest segments of the N.W.T. population consists of unemployed natives, it is difficult to understand why the territorial government has not taken a leadership role in the development of these kinds of policies. I should add that getting people off welfare and supporting the subsistence economy is a high priority for the current government (N.W.T. Culture and Communications, 1988), but the problem is decades old (Brack and McIntosh, 1963) and has not been dealt with yet.

A third possibility for bringing about social and economic change is the creation of regional or native governments that would presumably be more responsive to the needs of their electorates. In the Arctic, this would entail division of the Northwest Territories to create the new territory of Nunavut. But these forms of government do not exist today, and so, at least for the present, some federal leadership would seem to be required.

Improving the quality of education is a complex and difficult undertaking, but systematic efforts to solve the problem cannot be made until it is recognized in its full extent. The first step in this process is to monitor standards, with a view to regulation and maintenance. Failure to do so wastes lives and adds to the costs of welfare and adult education. In an effort to come to terms with this problem, the federal government should undertake an audit of education standards throughout northern Canada.

There are probably as many different ways to assist students, create community service programs, and support subsistence hunters as there are government departments with imaginative civil servants. No one will know for certain what kind of program will work best in the Arctic until a few have been tried. By way of starting discussion on this problem, I make the following suggestion: Anyone who has left school and is without a job (excluding retired individuals) should have the opportunity to be employed in various community services at minimum wage. These make-work projects could include working in a day-care centre, teaching traditional handicrafts, organizing recreational activities, helping out at a youth camp, teaching snowmobile repair, collecting Inuit oral histories, cleaning up the town, repairing fishing nets, painting the community centre, providing unskilled labour for the construction of a hockey rink or a HAP house, cleaning up the houses of the elderly, or working on community radio or a regional newspaper. Should an individual wish to improve himself, and aspire to one of the better jobs available in the region, then that person may take his minimum wage and use it as a training or education allowance at the local adult education centre, at Arctic College, or even in the South. Finally, for those interested neither in community service nor in further education, the minimum wage may serve as a per diem subsidy for subsistence hunting and fishing activities. I would expect hunters to pay their own operating and capital expenses, as they generally work in small family groups and can pool their modest salaries when needed.

Hunters can also earn some additional cash from the sale of furs.

The cost of such a program, which has the potential to create full productive activity, turns out to be surprisingly low. In Chesterfield Inlet, 52 members of the community wanted full-time jobs but had no employment in the fall of 1986. If all of these individuals "signed up" for one of the programs offered, then the total cost in Chesterfield Inlet, at about \$10 000 per person, would be \$520 000. However, a considerable amount of money would be saved from existing programs, including a large portion of current welfare payments, training allowances, day-care costs, unemployment insurance benefits, existing make-work and summer job-creation programs, youth programs, financial assistance to hunters, and, possibly, even a large amount of the labour costs on community projects such as a hockey rink. Construction of HAP houses might also be included in the scheme, thereby reducing the cost of home construction in the Arctic; some HAP house clients have already used make-work programs for this purpose. As there are about 300 individuals in Chesterfield Inlet, the same program might cost about \$30 million for that half of the Northwest Territories known as Nunavut (population approximately 18 000). But this cost is still less than 3.75 per cent of the annual budget of the GNWT-with none of the savings suggested above. Clearly, a program of this magnitude needs to be carefully thought through and properly costed. However, if the Inuit so desire, the Minister of National Health and Welfare should fund a pilot project in the Arctic that would seek to achieve the objectives of the program outlined above.

There are many problems that I have not dealt with in this brief report, but I am inclined to believe the Inuit are capable of solving most of their problems for themselves, provided they are given the opportunity. Giving the Inuit educational opportunities in the South, in the North, and out on the land, and giving them the opportunity to be productive, through the jobs that are available, through training programs, through community service, and through participation in the subsistence economy, could provide many of the opportunities Inuit require to mend their own lives and to create a better future for their children.

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Note: The views in this report are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Review of Demography and Its Implications for Economic and Social Policy or of Health and Welfare Canada.

"In This Issue..."



The View from Yellowknife

Marc Malone

What is the response of the Government of the Northwest Territories to Dr Irwin's report?

Dr Colin Irwin has taken on a difficult and complex task. His report attempts to look at the broad social and economic factors shaping the future of the Inuit to the year 2025.

While the global perspective of the report is refreshing, the findings have many shortcomings. The report is based more on personal impressions, and the impressions of individual interviewees, than on the findings of scientific research. The federal government, which sponsored this research, has the final responsibility for evaluating it.

The report focuses largely on Inuit education. While it is important to recognize the social and economic problems confronting Inuit, and the challenges posed to the education system, Dr Irwin fails to acknowledge positive trends in education, or to cite any existing successful initiatives. With such a perspective the report can only forecast a hopeless future for the lords of the Arctic.

A great deal has been accomplished in the education system of the Northwest Territories in a relatively short time. The creation of elected boards, the extension of high school grades in community schools, improved attendance rates, the development of native language and cultural programs, and the increasing participation of native people in post-secondary education are indications of improvement and success. Clearly, the challenges ahead are great, but there is hope for a better future.

The only hope for change the report offers is that the federal government will resolve the problems experienced by the Inuit with strong and creative policies. In contrast to this position, Dr Irwin acknowledges at the end of the report that "the Inuit are capable of solving most of their problems for themselves provided they are given the opportunity." Many of the positive developments initiated by the territorial government, which Dr Irwin has ignored in his report, are based on this principle.

In the government's view, what does the future hold for the Inuit economy?

It is difficult to predict the state of the Inuit economy 30 to 40 years in the future. However, it does have considerable potential.

The Baffin region contains several billion barrels of "average expectation" oil reserves. The Keewatin region is richly endowed with extensive mineral wealth. The Nunavut landscape and culture will foster steady growth in tourism from around the world.

The GNWT is pursuing policies to improve the economic prospects of the Northwest Territories. In cooperation with CARC, the Department of Renewable Resources is developing a hunters' and trappers' income support program. Wildlife harvesting is essential to both the social and economic fabric of the North, as it entails a \$50 million import substitution benefit. Participation in the Council of Atlantic Fisheries Ministers has resulted in increased quotas for the fishermen of the Baffin.

While it is true that too few Inuit are trained for trade, technical, and professional positions now, educational and employment training opportunities are expanding. There are opportunities for apprenticeship training within government and the private sector, and the demand for managerial training has resulted in the offering of an administrative studies program at the Nunatta Campus in Iqaluit. In 1987, there were five times as many Inuit enrolled (137) in post-secondary education programs as there were just four years earlier in 1983 (28). Increases in Inuit enrolment in post-secondary education programs are likely to continue as more programs are brought closer to home through the campuses of Arctic College.

It is also reasonable to anticipate that the implementation of the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut claim will build a foundation for economic development in the eastern Arctic that incorporates elements of traditional economies and the modern wage economy.

Dr Irwin's report suggests that many Inuit are caught between traditional culture and a Western consumer economy. Will it be possible for Inuit to live in a "half-way house"?

Inuit have displayed remarkable resilience in adjusting to new technological challenges. One example is in communications, where the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, along with other aboriginal organizations and with GNWT support, successfully fought for the TV North Project.

The territorial government recognizes the value and importance of traditional cultures and activities. The recognition, promotion and development of languages is a priority of the government. This is evident in the report of the Task Force on Native Languages and is reflected more and more in government programs and the delivery of government services.

The GNWT Department of Education has invited aboriginal groups to participate on advisory committees guiding the development of native language programs. Centres for Teaching and Learning have been established at Coppermine, Iqaluit, Inuvik, and Rankin Inlet. More than 60 Inuit students have graduated as certified teachers from the Eastern Arctic Teacher Education Program since 1981. An Inuktitut studies program is being introduced at the Grade 10 level in 1988-89, and a northern studies course for high school students will be introduced in 1990.

In other countries, people have adapted to new technologies while successfully retaining their cultures. There is no reason to believe the lords of the Arctic will fail to make this transition.

How effective have governments been at promoting Inuit economic, social, and political self-reliance? What are the main challenges ahead?

In a short period of time, the Inuit have become intimately involved in a development process leading to self-reliance in Canada. The co-operatives movement is an indication of successful transition. The Inuit have recognized that they need to become the leaders and managers of businesses and governments.

The N.W.T. legislative assembly has supported the Iqaluit Agreement which contains principles of constitutional development for Inuit and a process leading to a claims boundary. Through policies of transfer and devolution, the government is strengthening Inuit community governments.

The main political challenges are three-fold. First, the Constitutional Alliance, which was reactivated in 1988, is working toward the implementation of the Iqaluit Agreement. A land claims boundary could lead to the creation of a Nunavut territory. Second, a TFN claim agreement would provide Inuit with tools for economic and social development. Third, a renewal of aboriginal talks on aboriginal constitutional rights is essential for the clarification of Inuit self-government.

The economy of Nunavut will benefit greatly from political development. In the meantime, GNWT education, training, business incentives, and sectoral programs have already resulted in progress in such areas as tourism, fisheries, construction, and services.

Will demographic trends in Inuit communities and the resulting demand for government services lead to a crisis in public sector finances? Do Canadian taxpayers appear willing to make the kinds of investments required?

The population of Nunavut is currently growing at four times the national average. Such growth is likely to continue and to put pressure on public expenditures. The Arctic also has a lot of catching up to do to meet all the infrastructure needs in communities and to provide a level of infrastructure comparable to the rest of Canada. If Canada reduced the current grant to the Northwest Territories or curtailed its growth, it would cause much more hardship to N.W.T. residents in comparison with the effect of an increase in the grant on Canadian taxpayers.

Despite the fact that Canada does make large transfer payments to the Northwest Territories on a per capita basis, an increase in the transfer grant to bring the level of infrastructure up to Canadian averages, or to keep pace with the likely population growth, would still not present a crisis in public sector finances. Canada has a budget of approximately \$110 billion, and decisions are made to spend billions on (initiative) such as day care. A decision to increase the grant to the Northwest Territories by \$1 billion to \$2 billion over time to keep pace with the population growth in the Arctic should not be considered a crisis in the context of the total federal budget.

Canadian society is committed to social programs and funding programs to reduce regional economic disparities. Canadian taxpayers have made investments in all areas of Canada, and it is likely that they will continue to do so.

Do you think Dr Irwin's report is "fair"? Is it a useful contribution to policy debate in the Northwest Territories?

Fairness is not a question that should have to be asked about social scientific inquiry. Instead, Dr Irwin's report can and should be evaluated in relation to its lack of objectivity, which is evidenced by the negative and unbalanced perspective adopted throughout his presentation. He presents a worst-case scenario which does not acknowledge positive developments in any area. This is unfortunate. A more objective and accurate report would have been more useful.

It should be noted that the suggested solutions put forward by Dr Irwin are not new. They have been, or are being, tried both in the Northwest Territories and southern Canada.

Dr Irwin concludes his report with a statement that the Government of the Northwest Territories agrees with, and that is fundamental to the provision of territorial programs and services in the Arctic: the belief that "the Inuit are capable of solving most of their problems for themselves provided they are given the opportunity." As stated in the answer to the first question, the positive developments in the Arctic that Dr Irwin has chosen to ignore in his report are based on this belief.

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"In This Issue..."



An Inuit Response

Tungavik Federation of Nunavut

It is not often that a report about Inuit is featured on the front page of the *Globe and Mail*. Nevertheless, an in-depth interview with Colin Irwin on his *Lords of the Arctic: Wards of the State* report greeted thousands of Torontonians one morning last September as many were pouring their coffee, putting out the cat, or preparing for the vehicular rigours of the Don Valley Parkway. Perhaps, it was the catchy title or the stark and depressing social and cultural reality for Inuit predicted in the report that prompted its inclusion in Canada's "national" newspaper. Whatever the reason, the report brought to a large southern audience a compelling message and plea. For this reason alone, we commend Dr Irwin but wonder, in passing, why we have been unable to command the same attention in the southern press. After all, many of the points made by Dr Irwin have been raised before by Inuit leaders.

Colin Irwin paints a very gloomy picture of Inuit society and culture in the 21st century, based on current demographic, educational, and economic trends. He may very well be right. His predictions should be sobering to all those well-meaning politicians and civil servants who, in the last 20 years or so, have constructed in the North Canada's most enveloping social welfare system. The malaise facing Inuit today, which promises to get worse tomorrow, cannot be eradicated by existing social policies and programs. Additional teachers, social workers, doctors, and public administrators, although welcome, will not forestall the future that Dr Irwin fears. Yet the future, our future, is not predestined.

Inuit have a well-deserved reputation for adapting to environmental and economic change. We will continue to adapt to changing circumstances, but this does not mean we are prepared to adopt all southern ways, mores, and values, and to cut ourselves off from our culture and our land. Instead, we want to design a society and economy that enables us to participate effectively in the old ways based on the land and its bounty, as well as in the new ways based on space-age technology and world-wide communication. We want and need a mixed economy and society reflecting the best of the old and the new.

To design this mixed economy and society we must have a formal educational system through which we can acquire the skills needed to function effectively in Canadian society, as well as the land-based skills of our forefathers. Dr Irwin suggests that younger Inuit, in particular, are being shortchanged by the formal educational system, and that fewer and fewer Inuit are acquiring the land-based skills needed for hunting, fishing, and trapping. We are very disturbed by Dr Irwin's characterization of the failings of the formal educational system in Nunavut. If he is correct, the diplomas and certificates being awarded to our children are worth very little, for the standard of education in Nunavut is far below that publicly available in, say, Toronto or Montreal. If so, this is unacceptable. In response, we suggest that a public inquiry be conducted to examine the state of formal education in Nunavut, to document fully its strengths and weaknesses, and to recommend how it can be improved to better serve the needs of Inuit.

However, the achievement of the future desired by Inuit will require more than inquiries and creative tinkering with existing public policies and programs. To head off the future that Dr Irwin predicts and to design the future that Inuit want is not possible through existing constitutional, political, and institutional

arrangements, which treat us, to use Dr Irwin's resonant phrase, as "wards of the state". Only fundamental change—a reordering of the political relationship between government and Inuit—will provide us with the authority and the tools to tackle our own problems. The basis upon which solutions can be found to the profound social and economic problems gripping Inuit ever tighter lies in new political arrangements through which we can design and control our own destiny and, in so doing, abandon the cloying paternalism that now governs the relationship between Inuit and government.

We have a vision of our future, and, in articulating that vision, we refuse to adopt purely administrative solutions to our social, economic, and cultural problems. Tinkering with public administration in Nunavut is insufficient. We have said this in constitutional conferences, land claim negotiations, and other forums for years, yet the federal and territorial governments, which exert extraordinary control over Inuit, are not helping us put in place a new political base. This lack of vision by Ottawa and Yellowknife underlies the depressing situation so graphically described by Colin Irwin.

The Inuit Agenda

Inuit seek a new and comprehensive social contract with Canada that will effectively and permanently integrate us and Nunavut into the Canadian body politic. This social contract will have to deal with diverse issues, such as language rights, education, the administration of justice, and ownership and management of land and resources, including the offshore. Inuit are using two vehicles to design this social contract: constitutional and political development discussions to divide the Northwest Territories and create a new political entity in the North-Nunavut—and negotiation of a comprehensive land claim.

The Inuit agenda is, of necessity, very broad. Yet government—in particular, the federal government—does not wish to deal with all of the items on our agenda. Instead of welcoming the opportunity to negotiate a broad social contract with Inuit, the federal government has, in the last couple of years, largely washed its hands of constitutional development in the Northwest Territories and has adopted a land claims policy that permits negotiation of only those issues dealing with land and natural resource ownership and management, and cash compensation for past unauthorized use of Inuit land by government. The remaining items on the Inuit agenda, it suggests, are matters of "public government" and, as such, should be addressed in constitutional development discussions rather than the more "limited" forum of land claim negotiations.

Yet those portions of the Inuit agenda that the federal government sees as outside the purview of land claim negotiations are crucial to the social contract Inuit seek to make with Canada and to the ability of Inuit to deal with the social, cultural, and economic problems outlined by Colin Irwin. Moreover, without the active involvement of the federal government, which, after all, is the constitutional guardian of the North, discussions among northern groups on dividing the Northwest Territories have virtually halted.

In April 1982, a territory-wide plebiscite demonstrated overwhelming support in the eastern Arctic for division of the Northwest Territories and mixed opinions on this issue in the western Arctic. The legislative assembly of the Northwest Territories subsequently established the Constitutional Alliance to define a division boundary and to develop proposals for new territorial constitutions. In response to the plebiscite, the federal government announced its support for the concept of division. Prime Minister Trudeau, himself a constitutional specialist, recommended the concept of Nunavut to native peoples across Canada when he opened the constitutional conference in March 1984. As Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development David Crombie understood the Inuit vision and, in 1985, told the legislative assembly that the federal government fully supported the need for new government institutions in the North to reflect the social and cultural values of aboriginal peoples.

Inuit expectations reached a high point early in 1987 when the Constitutional Alliance produced the Boundary and Constitutional Agreement for the Implementation of Division of the Northwest Territories. This agreement identified October 1991 as the target date for division. Since then, however, the Dene and Métis have refused to ratify a previously agreed to boundary separating their land claim area from that of

the Inuit. As this same line is to be used to divide the Northwest Territories, the whole constitutional development and division process has mired. Consensus on this issue of principle among ethnically and racially different groups in the Northwest Territories has, not surprisingly, proved very difficult to obtain. Faced with this, the federal government has done very little, notwithstanding its pro-division policy.

The former Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Bill McKnight, maintained a rigid aloofness from the northern constitutional development and division debate. Through his lack of action he would have had Canadians believe that northern constitutional development is of little more than local northern interest. Inuit, on the other hand, maintain that division and the forthcoming social contract with Canada are truly significant examples of nation building.

Without the active participation of the federal government, northern constitutional development and division discussions could very well remain barren. Besides, it is pure fiction for Ottawa to maintain that it has little or no interest in such matters. By abstaining from these discussions, Ottawa is abrogating its responsibility and is effectively supporting the political *status quo* that has contributed to the social, cultural, and economic problems now facing Inuit. Of course, this lack of progress on the division issue raises the questions of how and whether the many outstanding items on the Inuit agenda will be addressed.

The danger in all of this, from the Inuit perspective, is that, as we move forward to settle the comprehensive land claim (an overall agreement-in-principle is expected in spring 1989), division of the Northwest Territories will be left behind, perhaps only for a few years, or perhaps forever, and, with it, much of the Inuit agenda will languish. In light of this, Inuit look now to the federal government to state clearly that division of the Northwest Territories serves the national interest in the North, and to provide Inuit with a firm guarantee that Nunavut will be created on or by a given date. Until this promise is given, it is an open question whether Inuit will ratify any prospective land claim deal, no matter how generous government feels it to be. In the absence of such a guarantee, Inuit will continue to chafe more and more at the agenda limitations imposed upon us by the federal government's land claims policy, for we are, in effect, being told to abandon a major part of our agenda and, with it, the possibility of negotiating a comprehensive social contract with Canada. This would surely speed to reality Dr Irwin's prediction for the future.

We know that our culture is eroding, that spousal assault and drug and alcohol abuse are increasing, that the suicide rate among young Inuit is a tragedy of national importance. Furthermore, we know that the traditional sources of authority in Inuit society-our elders-have been severely challenged in the last 30 to 40 years by various organs of the state, by the churches, and by industry. In response, we want the Nunavut government and our land claim settlement to reverse these trends as much as possible. We recognize the broad limitations of the federal government's land claims policy but suggest that this policy, with some vision and good will on the part of the federal and territorial governments, could help us deal with some of the problems raised by Dr Irwin, even as we continue to press for division of the Northwest Territories.

As ever, we know that land holds the key to our future. If, through the land claim settlement, we can help Inuit afford to stay on the land, we will ensure that Inuit remain a land-based culture. In sum, we need the land claim settlement to establish a comprehensive, government-sponsored and -supported program to assist hunters and trappers carry out their livelihood.

Hunter Income Support: A TFN Proposal

Hunting, fishing, and trapping by Inuit is not undertaken for recreation; it is the basis of our economy. Gone are the days when we followed, in nomadic fashion, the wildlife upon which we still depend. Now, we live in small, isolated communities and use snowmobiles, rifles, and other modern technologies for hunting. The animals we kill provide us with highly nutritious food which is shared with other Inuit who cannot, or do not, go hunting. Inuit harvesters in Nunavut produce approximately \$40 million worth of

country food per year, which averages between \$10 000 and \$15 000 worth of country food annually per harvester. What is more, these figures include neither the value of other wildlife products used domestically or marketed by individual harvesters, nor the revenues generated by sport and commercial operations.

However, figures tell only part of the story. Our society and culture, as well as our economy, are based on harvesting wildlife from the land. Hunting, fishing, and trapping represent the most important source of our psychological well-being as individuals and of our collective identity and world-view as Inuit. Through our life on and with the land, we maintain our cultural continuity at the same time that our society copes with and adapts to change brought about by external influences. It is through wildlife harvesting that we pass on to the young the behaviour and values of our culture. It is when we are divorced from the land that all manner of social problems result.

Hunting, fishing, and trapping are increasingly expensive. It costs many thousands of dollars to fully equip hunters with the needed paraphernalia of snowmobiles, canoes, rifles, tents, gasoline, etc. Unfortunately, wage employment, particularly in the smaller communities of Nunavut, is rare, for non-renewable resource development is limited in the Arctic, and jobs with government agencies are few. This means there is little cash available in the communities with which to buy the equipment needed by hunters. Moreover, just as the costs of hunting have been increasing, the cash returns on wildlife products have been declining dramatically due to the world-wide lobbying efforts of the anti-fur and anti-harvest movement. There is, then, a financial crisis among Inuit wildlife harvesters.

To an increasing extent, it is only those relatively few Inuit with full- or part-time employment who can afford to purchase hunting equipment and maintain the hunting life-style and economy. Without wage employment or hunting, many Inuit are forced to rely on social assistance payments from government to make ends meet. In 1984-85, more than 50 per cent of the total population of Nunavut received social assistance at some time during the year, and, in some communities, the proportion was more than 90 per cent of the community population. Ironically, four-fifths of social assistance payments went to the purchase of store-bought food. In sum, wildlife harvesting is a viable economic system, but lack of cash is causing a breakdown in this system, bringing social, culture, and economic deterioration over which Inuit have little control.

To counter the erosion of the Inuit culture and economy, and to bolster our relationship with the land, TFN recently proposed the establishment of a hunter income support program, to be operated through the land claim settlement. Our proposal is for a form of income supplement that will guarantee a minimum level of cash to Inuit wildlife harvesters, enabling them to purchase equipment and to remain on the land obtaining food for themselves and their families. We estimate that such a program could cost between \$10 million and \$15 million per year, but it would also save government millions of dollars per year in lower health care costs and reduced social assistance payments.

Social assistance is not well suited to serve the minimum cash-flow needs of the harvesting economy; it is designed primarily to permit consumption of foodstuffs brought in from outside rather than to sustain the production of food from local resources. Moreover, social assistance tends to erode, not buttress, cultural values bound up in the subsistence harvesting economy.

Our proposed program is not some pie-in-the-sky hope. Hunter income support programs have been used by Cree and Inuit in northern Quebec with considerable success. These programs were put in place through the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, and are paid for by the Government of Quebec. They have helped hundreds of aboriginal peoples stay on the land.

The federal government has refused to address our proposed hunter income support program, saying new programs cannot be established through land claim settlements. Instead, Inuit have been urged to discuss this issue with the territorial government, which has expressed an interest in developing a territory-wide hunter income support policy and program. We are scheduled to discuss our proposal with the territorial government early in 1989 but are leery about divorcing it from the prospective land claim settlement, for a

hunter income support program put in place through policy or general legislation can be altered or abandoned by government without reference to us. This would not be possible if the program were established through the land claim settlement. In any event, we feel very strongly that a hunter income support program should be part of the forthcoming social contract between Inuit and Canada, and we urge both the federal and territorial governments to adopt our proposal.

Toward Nunavut

In the last few months the Dene and Métis of the Northwest Territories and the Council for Yukon Indians have signed overall agreements-in-principle with the federal government. We hope to do likewise in the spring of 1989. Although we want to finish negotiating our land claim and to begin implementing the settlement provisions, we intend to do so only if the Inuit agenda-the *whole* Inuit agenda-is satisfactorily addressed. A new federal government has been installed in Ottawa. This government and, in particular, its minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, have an opportunity to deal effectively with the Inuit agenda and to help us reverse the deterioration of Inuit society and culture that Colin Irwin predicts and we fear. This opportunity will not come again.

The Tungavik Federation of Nunavut is the organization representing Inuit of the eastern Arctic in land claim negotiations.

"In This Issue..."



LORDS OF THE ARCTIC: WARDS OF THE STATE

A Postscript

Colin Irwin

I have been asked to respond in this postscript to the reviews of my report made by the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). The two commentaries published here are very different. The GNWT takes a very negative view of my report, in the belief that current policies are adequate and essentially sound, whereas the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut takes a positive approach to my report, as they do not believe current policies, programs, and the political *status quo* can give shape to their vision of the future. In an effort to end on a positive note, I will begin by commenting on the negative GNWT review.

First, I am surprised that the GNWT does not believe that my major conclusions with respect to the Inuit (high population growth, high unemployment, low levels of education, the decline of traditional language and culture, dependence on welfare, and increased social breakdown) are based on scientific research. These conclusions are drawn from, and confirmed by, the very thorough research of other social scientists, which I refer to at length, including research conducted by the GNWT. Attempting to deny the reality of these findings is, in my view, a very dangerous rejection of the most fundamental responsibilities of government, as problems cannot be solved until they are recognized.

Although the GNWT review of my report lists many accomplishments of the N.W.T. education system, the fact remains that white residents born in the Northwest Territories are consistently better educated than their native counterparts; for example, only 10 of the 60 graduates of the Eastern Arctic Teacher Education Program have a bachelor's degree, whereas most white teachers I interviewed had at least two bachelor's degrees. The number of white students from the Northwest Territories enrolled in post-secondary education is far greater than the number of Inuit students. Although the number of Inuit enrolled in these programs is on the increase, the GNWT review says nothing about the number of Inuit who actually complete courses or about the standards of these courses. It should be noted that the standard of education among N.W.T. Inuit in the grade school system declined rapidly between 1974 and 1979, according to tests carried out by the government. Knowledge of native languages and vocabularies, of native culture and history, and of hunting and traditional crafts is also on the decline. The GNWT Department of Education can create as many new pilot programs, task forces, teaching and learning centres, and advisory committees as it wishes, but unless these activities and expenditures produce real increases in standards of formal education and traditional knowledge they are meaningless and worthless. It is my contention that the GNWT does not rigorously monitor educational standards precisely because these programs often fail. The rapid decrease in the level of education reported in the late 1970s does not give me a great deal of hope for a better future.

The GNWT suggests that I do not acknowledge positive developments in any area. This is grossly inaccurate. On the first page of my report I draw attention to the lowered death rate which, in turn, accounts for high population growth. The GNWT further states that my solutions "have been, or are being, tried" in the N.W.T. Why, then, are Inuit hunters out on the land not assisted, as they need to be, by

a hunter income support program? Why are Inuit who do not wish to hunt not allowed to enrich their lives, and the lives of their people, through community service?

Why are all those Inuit who wish to improve themselves through education not given the resources they require to do so? Why are so many Inuit on welfare? Why are so many Inuit wards of the state? No, the solution of self-help I propose has *not* been tried in the Northwest Territories. When the proportion of the population receiving social assistance can be as low as 10 to 20 per cent in Yellowknife, yet as high as 70 to 80 per cent in Nunavut, it is an insult to the Inuit on welfare to suggest that my solution has been tried.

The GNWT looks to the oil reserves of the Baffin as a source of future economic expansion. This promise and expectation may be as empty as the long-abandoned Polar Gas Pipeline. The GNWT points to the success of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation. This was an Inuit initiative, not a GNWT initiative. The GNWT also points out that "the TFN claim will build a foundation for economic development in the eastern Arctic which incorporates elements of traditional economies and the modern wage economy." Why hasn't the GNWT done this over the past 20 years, and why are they relying on TFN to do it now? If the GNWT cannot develop appropriate cultural and economic policies, and must rely on outside Inuit agencies to do it for them, then surely both time and money could be saved by transferring their budget directly to Inuit agencies, bypassing what would appear to be a redundant Yellowknife bureaucracy.

When I read the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut response to my report I am left with a sense of hope. I have nothing to add to their review except to say that I agree with it. The review speaks for itself. The GNWT plan for the future of Canada's Inuit is to build more infrastructure over the coming years at an additional cost to the Canadian taxpayer of between \$1 billion and \$2 billion per year. In some "trickledown" way, like crumbs falling from a table, this may bring benefits to the Inuit, but it is a plan without vision, as stale as the crumbs it generates. It is simply a continuation and expansion of past policies which have made Inuit wards of the state. The Inuit have an alternative plan, as they must, if they and their descendants are to survive as a viable society. The Inuit invite Canadians to join with them, as full partners, in an act of creative nation building in the Canadian Arctic. For both sound economic and moral reasons, this invitation should be warmly and graciously accepted by the government and people of Canada.

I wish to thank the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut, the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, and the Editor of *Northern Perspectives* for publishing a summary of my report and inviting commentary from some of the principal parties. So long as the debate over the future of Canada's Inuit can be sustained in this way there remains hope that new policies will be developed adequate to the challenge at hand.

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