

# Co-Management: An Aboriginal Response to Frontier Development

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## *Abstract*

Recognizing that socio-political change will not be achieved through isolation and independence, Aboriginal communities from across Canada are pursuing multi-actor frameworks of co-operation in an effort to redefine existing institutions of power and authority. The extent to which this restructuring is viable has involved the implementation of co-management institutions that have redefined methods of resource management specifically, and local-state relations more generally. That is, beyond specific resource-related issues, institutions of co-management are proving to have broader social, legal and political influence in addressing Aboriginal claims in the state system. Thus the decentralization of state control over Aboriginal homelands should be seen as a cornerstone in the much larger agenda for Aboriginal self-determination. Pulling examples from across Canada, this paper demonstrates that institutions of co-management, between Aboriginal resource users and government agencies, are evolving, and in many cases flourishing in response to an array of resource management issues, often stemming from situations of conflict.

## *Introduction*

The relationship between Canada's Aboriginal population and state agencies can largely be characterized as one bound in conflict and confrontation. This conflict has taken a variety of forms that have included challenges over the unwanted administration of local affairs, the dissemination of the dominant non-Aboriginal culture, and the imposed 'modernization' of Aboriginal economies. But perhaps no issue has been more definitive as the conflict that has occurred over access and control of the traditionally used lands and resources of Aboriginal communities.

Couched in a number of theoretical approaches, including core-periphery relations, internal colonialism, under-underdevelopment, and capitalistic development (e.g., Chrisholm & Smith, 1990; Harvey, 1993; Jackson & Penrose, 1993), the conflicts that occur between Aboriginal communities and the state are often a consequence of the profit accumulation efforts of the state clashing

with the traditional livelihoods of resident Aboriginal peoples. Because the traditional lifestyles of Aboriginal peoples are seen by the state as outmoded in the context of the modern industrial society, it follows that Aboriginal communities lack the capacity to make informed decisions concerning their own affairs (Hedican, 1995, p. 67). Viewed as incapable of making sound land management decisions, Aboriginal peoples have largely been excluded from the policy formation process.

By being removed from the decision-making institutions, Aboriginal peoples in Canada have had to succumb to the interests of the majority while witnessing their homelands transformed to meet the perceived needs of external interests. Thus, by controlling and oppressing the Aboriginal voice from institutional settings, the state has effectively minimized Aboriginal resistance to the use and exploitation of Aboriginal homelands (Jackson & Penrose, 1993). This exclusionary tactic has resulted in the formation of ethnocentric mono-cultural institutions that generally ignore the concerns and contributions of Aboriginal communities; a form of "institutional racism" that has fortified the state's dominance over Aboriginal peoples and has reinforced the Aboriginal role of outsider within their own lands (Armitage, 1995). It is important to note, however, that the subjugation of Aboriginal concerns is certainly not unique to Canada in that most industrialized nations have viewed Aboriginal peoples as obstacles to resource development and have thus excluded Aboriginal representation from institutional settings (see Gladden and Thornton in this issue). Alexander and Yiftachel (1997, p. 275) have noted that

... governments in most multi-ethnic settler societies have opted to use a range of control mechanisms against homeland indigenous minorities. These mechanisms have typically de-territorialized the minority, made it economically dependent on the majority and on the State, and excluded members of the minority from the centres of political power and policy making processes.

While Aboriginal peoples remain largely on the fringe of policy and decision-making institutions, a contemporary understanding of conflict in Canada would be incomplete without recognizing the ever-changing pattern of state-Aboriginal relations. With a changing socio-political order, pressure has intensified from the local, national and international levels, each calling for a restructuring of state institutions. By reviewing the policies of Canada one can begin to identify incremental changes being made between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in response to changing socio-political circumstances, specifically as these changes relate to Aboriginal land rights (e.g., Comprehensive Lands Claims; *Canadian Constitution Act*, 1982; *R. v. Sparrow*, 1990; *Delgamuukw v. S.C.C.*, 1997; *Marshall v. S.C.C.*, 2000). Through effective political opposition, Aboriginal peoples in Canada are succeeding in a reexamination of the very foundations in which the colonial process had been established

and are now beginning to reposition themselves within the institutional structures most responsible for the management of their traditionally used lands. Although the biases of government continue to reflect the interests of the non-Aboriginal majority, owing to the proliferation of Aboriginal involvement in challenging and modifying state land management policies, a reorientation is occurring that is incorporating the direct involvement of Aboriginal resource users in the planning process. By calling into question the manner in which northern lands and resources have been managed—the tragedy of the commons, the accepted wisdom of a centralized authority, and the superiority of western science and management—Aboriginal peoples are challenging state hegemony and are now beginning to gain greater control over the lands and resources that continue to sustain their cultures, economies, and distinctive ways of life.

Accomplished through the formation of co-management arrangements, Aboriginal communities are gaining (at varying degrees of authority) a decisive role in the management process. Although there has traditionally existed a void between formal governance structures and Aboriginal resource users, co-management in Canada is proving relatively successful at democratizing land use objectives by arriving at agreed-upon rules and decision-making procedures. However, beyond specific resource-related issues, institutions of co-management are proving to have broader social, legal and political influence in addressing Aboriginal claims within the state system. That is, Aboriginal participation in the management process is now being acknowledged as an integral right (e.g., *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1997), as well as a necessary factor in dictating the sustainable future of the environments of which we all depend (e.g., Brundtland, 1987). As the Brundtland Commission's report "Empowering Vulnerable Groups" (1987, pp. 115-116) has stated,

The starting point for a just and humane policy for such groups is the recognition and protection of their traditional rights to land and other resources that sustain their way of life—rights that may be defined in terms that do not fit into standard legal systems. These groups' own institutions to regulate rights and obligations are crucial for maintaining harmony with nature and the awareness characteristic of the traditional way of life. [Action] must also give local communities a decisive voice in the decisions about resource use in their area.

It is important to note at the outset however, that, in using the term co-management, it is not being suggested that an equal sharing of power between Aboriginal resources users and government is occurring, or likely to occur in the near future. While desirable from an Aboriginal perspective, given current political realities (i.e., treaty arrangements in Canada's prairie provinces) co-management has in most cases come to represent something substantially less. Nonetheless, co-management should be understood to in-

clude a range of management systems created to facilitate local and state interaction. Thus where conflicts exist over the use and access to natural resources, direct and unmediated dialogue, framed within a co-management arrangement, has proven successful at influencing land-use decisions in accordance to local preferences.

Owing to this institutional diversity, this paper makes no attempt to weigh the relative merits of specific co-management agreements in some substantive manner. Rather, this paper demonstrates the fact that institutions of co-management, between Aboriginal resource users and government agencies, are evolving, and in many cases flourishing in response to an array of resource management issues, often stemming from situations of conflict.

### *Co-Management in the Canadian Context*

A review of the co-management literature presents either the merits of alternative management regimes or discusses the success or failure of specific agreements in managing a shared resource. Research on the socio-political implications of co-management is rather limited, with the exception of Young (1982), Ostrom (1990), Pinkerton (1989; 1992), and Prystupa (1998) who have offered theoretical propositions for institutional analysis. In theory (Pinkerton, 1989) co-management between Aboriginal resource users and state resource managers improves the effectiveness of the management system. By sharing relevant information, co-management institutions are able to incorporate local knowledge into the management process, are more responsive to ecosystemic change and the needs of resource users, and are helping to ensure compliance with agreed-upon rules and regulations (McCay, 1996).

Notzke (1993, p. 1) considers co-management an innovative management regime that integrates local and state systems, allocates control of resources among competing interests, and facilitates the merging of knowledge systems. Kofinas' (1993, p. 3) analysis of co-management and its role in community economic development maintains that co-management is basically a power-sharing arrangement that aims to mitigate the cultural differences that exist between Aboriginal and state systems. Further, by establishing partnerships between Aboriginal communities and government agencies, long-standing cultural barriers can be overcome, thereby leading to a mutual awareness and an equitable approach in dealing with complex resource management challenges.

While considered to be a relatively new approach to managing shared resources, co-management in Canada dates back to the 1940s, when a group of Dene and Inuit hunters from the community of Ft. MacPherson first approached government wildlife managers about sharing management responsibility for hunting and trapping resources (Roberts et al., 1996). From these initial discussions arose the first hunters and trappers committee for the

Northwest Territories. However, it was not until 1975 that co-management was recognized in legislation. With the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) in 1975, the Cree and Inuit of northern Quebec secured an equitable as well as a legally defined role in the management of their traditionally used lands and resources. According to MacLachlan (1994), co-management, as outlined in the JBNQA, represented a "... significant departure from traditional forms of wildlife management elsewhere in Canada." In addition to being the first viable alternative to state wildlife management in Canada, the implementation of the JBNQA also represented a clear shift in state policy, as wildlife management moved from the biological to the political (Treseder & Honda-McNeil, 1999). That is, in recognizing that the alternative to co-management would be prolonged and costly litigation—in which the Aboriginal claimants would have a good chance of winning—the Canadian government chose, rather, to enter into arrangements that would provide the Cree and Inuit with public recognition and legislative authority in the management and utilization of their homelands (Usher, 1991).

Since the signing of the JBNQA there have been ten other comprehensive land claim settlements in Canada, all of which provide for the equitable involvement of signatory communities in the management process. Approached largely through a number of joint-management boards made up equally by community and government representatives, these boards serve essentially as decision-making bodies that are responsible for the day-to-day management of the settlement areas. While the Minister of the Environment retains ultimate decision-making authority, co-management, as implemented through the comprehensive land claim process, is demonstrating a clear shift from state paternalism to an acceptance of ethnic and ideological pluralism grounded in legislative reform.

Besides agreements established through comprehensive land claims, there have been several co-management arrangements created to address specific resource "crises." These arrangements have generally been implemented in cases where either community or governmental concerns arise over the continued access and/or availability of a wildlife resource. In many cases, these crises revolve around migratory and/or trans-boundary species involving multiple jurisdictional interests, thus making management efforts multifarious and complex. Two of the more recognized crisis-based agreements in Canada have been the Co-Management Plan for Southeast Baffin Beluga and the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement.

The Co-Management Plan for Southeast Baffin Beluga (1994) was developed in response to management disagreements between the Inuit communities of Iqaluit, Kimmirut and Pangnirtung and the Canadian government. At the heart of the conflict was the belief among government biologists that the population of beluga in the Cumberland Sound area had been reduced

severely by commercial harvesting (1920-1950) and could not support the current level of local Inuit hunting. Despite disagreeing with government findings, the Inuit, in 1981, agreed to a reduced annual quota of 40 beluga. However, over the next 10 years government biologists continued to express concern over the level of local hunting. These concerns led the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) eventually to impose a quota of five beluga for each of the three communities. However, by failing to consider the views of local residents, the externally imposed quota was met with considerable hostility and little compliance.

In 1991, in an effort to resolve this conflict, the Planning Committee for Co-Management of Southeast Baffin Beluga was established. Composed of Inuit representatives from each of the three Southeast Baffin communities, along with biologists from the DFO, the Planning Committee recommended that the beluga quota for local communities be increased and that a Management Plan for Southeast Baffin Beluga be drafted. To implement the Management Plan, the Southeast Baffin Beluga Management Committee was established. The Committee is composed of members representing the Iqaluit, Kimmirut and Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Association, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, and the DFO. The Management Committee serves as a forum to consider new information from Inuit and government biologists together, in making recommendations for future management initiatives (Planning Committee for the Co-Management of Southeast Baffin Beluga, 1994). The specific measures of the Management Plan call for a balancing of Inuit and scientific knowledge in both management and research objectives. For the Inuit, however, the primary intent of the plan is to maintain, preserve, and enhance the traditional relationship between themselves and beluga in the Southeast Baffin area (Planning Committee for the Co-Management of Southeast Baffin Beluga, 1994).

The other, and perhaps most well recognized crisis-based agreement in Canada is the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement (1985). The Porcupine Caribou Herd is a population that averages approximately 160,000 barren-ground caribou that range from the Mackenzie Delta in the Northwest Territories through the Yukon onto the North Slope of Alaska. Beginning in the 1960s concerns were expressed by user communities regarding the potential impacts of industrial development on the migration and ultimate survival of the Porcupine Caribou Herd (i.e., Mackenzie Valley Pipeline hearings). These concerns were compounded by the long-held sense of dissatisfaction of local communities with the (mis)management practices of government wildlife managers. Specifically, community members objected to governmentally imposed hunting restrictions that were based upon health and population surveys conducted by government biologists, findings that conflicted with local knowledge of the herd's status (Peter & Urquhart, 1994). Owing

to these concerns, user communities insisted that they be provided a more equitable role in the management of the caribou, which, for countless generations, has formed the basis of their culture, economy and identity (Peter & Urquhart, 1994, p. 273). In October of 1985, the efforts of community members were rewarded through the implementation of the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement (PCMA). Signed by the government of Canada, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, the Inuvialuit Game Council, the Council for Yukon Indians, the Dene Nation and the Metis Association of the Northwest Territories, the PCMA has provided community members with a recognized role in the stewardship of the Porcupine Herd.

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB) currently serves as the vehicle for the implementation of the Agreement and is composed of an eight-member panel representing each of the signatories. The primary duties of the Board are to facilitate communication between government and user communities in the course of making recommendations to federal, territorial and Aboriginal governments concerning the management of the Porcupine Caribou Herd (Peter & Urquhart, 1994, p. 274). The specific goals of the PCMB, as outlined by Peter and Urquhart (1994), include cooperatively managing, as a herd, the Porcupine Caribou and its habitat within Canada so as to ensure the conservation of the herd while recognizing the proprietary harvesting rights of Aboriginal users.

However, user communities have also recognized that the preservation of the Porcupine Herd and its habitat is contingent upon the national and international agendas of national governments; in this case Ottawa and Washington, DC. With the term of US president Bill Clinton coming to a close in November 2000, and a pro-development administration being elected, the PCMB has, since 1998, undertaken an aggressive campaign to keep the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) removed from industrial development. Specifically, the PCMB, spearheaded through the formation of the Canadian Campaign to Protect the ANWR, has undertaken initiatives at the local, national and international levels to keep industrial development out of the Refuge area (Caribou Update, 2000).

At the international level, delegates from user communities have lobbied US politicians to keep the Refuge free of development. In seeking this support, community delegates have made personal visits to Washington to meet with US representatives, have testified at congressional hearing, and have sought and gained support from major American environmental groups. Community members have also embarked upon international slide-show tours in an effort to articulate visually their relationship with the Porcupine Caribou Herd and threat posed by industrial development (*Caribou Update*, 2000). This specific strategy has been proven successful at shifting the focus from wilderness preservation to that of cultural survival, a reorientation consi-

dered necessary when applying pressure to industrial shareholders with financial interests in the Refuge.

At the national level, user communities succeeded in persuading Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to make an official request of then-President Bill Clinton to implement legislative measures that protect the Refuge from future development. These efforts have been supported locally through an active letter-writing campaign to Canadian and American politicians seeking their support for Refuge protection, distributing flyers, posters and stickers, publishing the *Caribou Update Newsletter*; and posting a web site ([www.caribou.trek.org](http://www.caribou.trek.org)) that provides general news concerning the herd's status as well as campaign updates. In addition, community meetings and tours take place throughout the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Alaska in order to review past accomplishments and to develop future strategies. To date, the collective efforts of local communities have resulted in the vetoing of all US energy bills that call for the development of the Refuge or have required language changes in bills that refer to any potential development of the Refuge in the future (*Caribou Update*, 2000).

According to Kofinas (1993), the ability of local communities to voice concerns, and influence the political process, stems directly from the establishment of the PCMB as a legally defined institutional arrangement that provides community members with a well-developed venue for voicing and implementing local management objectives. This institutional involvement and the links that have been established from these exchanges support the views of Scott (1990) and other social movement theorists (e.g., Morris & Mueller, 1992; Johnston & Klandermans, 1995; Rochon, 1998), who suggest that cross-scale institutionalism—or an institution that operates at more than one level—stands a far greater chance of success. Thus, by creating new relationships, community members are being exposed to new forms of socio-political expression which have provided them greater opportunities in influencing the political process from the local to international levels.

### *Provincial Co-Management*

Unlike the situation in Canada's northern territories where First Nations have secured an equitable role in the management of their traditionally used land and resources, co-management in Canada's provinces operates under vastly different perimeters. Owing to the lack of clearly defined rights that provincial First Nations can currently exercise over lands and resources that lie outside the reserve boundaries, provincial First Nations have largely been excluded from the management process (Campbell, 1996). Although co-management in both the territories and the provinces has been motivated by similar factors, including: 1) conditions of resource uncertainty; 2) demands from external interests, and; 3) enhanced Aboriginal involvement in the political

process (Kofinas, 1993), because provincial governments maintain jurisdictional rights over off-reserve natural resources, co-management opportunities within the provinces operate at a far lower level of institutional authority. However, despite the institutional barriers created through the original treaty process, examples from across Canada demonstrate that provincial First Nations are nonetheless using co-management arrangements to further their own socio-political objectives. One of the first provincial First Nations to seek such an institutional arrangement was the Barrière Lake First Nation, located in the province of Quebec.

Signed in 1991 by the Algonquins of Barrière Lake, the provincial government of Quebec, and the Canadian government, the Barrière Lake Trilateral Agreement evolved largely in response to the encroachment of resource development (i.e., hydroelectric, logging and recreational hunting) into the traditional territory of the Barrière Lake First Nation. Pursued by Barrière Lake, the aim of the agreement was for the protection and integration of community land-use activities in the land-management process. Thus through the signing and implementation of the Trilateral Agreement, Barrière Lake entered into an institutional arrangement designed to ensure the protection of local land use as well as provide community members with an equitable role in the stewardship of their homeland.

However, despite the signing of the Agreement, a number of challenges remained in the actual implementation of the trilateral process. At issue was the type of management regime that would prevail in the implementation of the Agreement, and, more specifically, at what level of institutional authority would local resource users assume in the management process. According to Notzke (1993), despite numerous epistemological differences, the Barrière Lake Trilateral Agreement has been successful at laying the groundwork for an integrated resource management plan for a region comprising one million hectares. This has been accomplished largely through the development of a management regime that has recognized and has promoted Algonquin values and has provided a share of resource-related rights and responsibilities to community members (Notzke, 1993). A key element to the Agreement has been the appointment of special representatives from Barrière Lake and the Quebec government who have been assigned to supervise the process and have been given legislative authority to make and apply decisions to the provisions of the Agreement. According to Notzke (1993), this cooperative approach to management has created a climate favorable for future joint management initiatives between Aboriginal resource users and government agencies across Canada. It is in this climate of change that a number of provincial arrangements have begun to emerge (e.g., the Wabaseemoong–Province of Ontario Co-Management Agreement, the Wendaban Stewardship Authority, the Little Red River–Province of Alberta Co-operative Management Agree-

ment, and the Whitefish Lake First Nation–Province of Alberta Cooperative Management Agreement).

Similar to Barrière Lake conflict, the Whitefish Lake Co-operative Management Agreement was motivated by forty years of resource extraction that had effectively limited all other forest uses, including the traditional land use patterns of Whitefish Lake band members (Natcher, 2000). Unable to exercise rights and/or authority over off-reserve lands and resources, Whitefish Lake had been forced to witness their homeland transformed to meet industrial/state interests. However, in 1985, Whitefish Lake asserted that, since their reserve was established (1908), the Crown had failed to administer the land base to which Whitefish Lake was entitled. Owing to this outstanding treaty obligation Whitefish Lake submitted a Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) Claim to Crown. In November of 1988, Whitefish Lake's claim was ratified through a Memorandum of Intent. In addition to securing an additional land base as well as a financial settlement, Whitefish Lake was successful at negotiating a clause within the Memorandum that called for the cooperative management of lands surrounding the Whitefish Lake reserves (2,700 km<sup>2</sup>). Through these negotiations Whitefish Lake was successful at implementing the first cooperative management agreement, as recognized under the terms of a TLE claim, in the province of Alberta. This agreement is in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the White Fish Lake First Nation, Alberta Environmental Protection, and Aboriginal Affairs.

The terms of the Agreement provide Whitefish Lake with a legislative role in the off-reserve management of fish, timber and wildlife resources. This shared responsibility includes identifying key resource management issues, implementing processes to address those issues, and for recommending processes leading to resolution—including policy recommendations and changes in policy that may be required to achieve agreed upon objectives. The Whitefish Lake Cooperative Management Board operates as a three-tiered system: the provincial, represented by the Whitefish Lake Chief and Council and the Assistant Deputy Ministers of Environmental Protection and Aboriginal Affairs; the regional, represented by two Whitefish Lake council representatives along with senior government officials, and the local, represented by the Whitefish Lake Council, Elders and a representative from the Whitefish Lake Trappers Association together with local representatives from Alberta Lands and Forests and the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

In gaining increased management responsibility for their traditionally used territory, Whitefish Lake has recognized the need to form alliances with others who can help in the attainment of locally defined goals. One of these partnerships has been made with the Sustainable Forest Management Network at the University of Alberta. This partnership was formed in an effort to develop strategies that include undertaking community land-use research,

conducting an environmental health analysis, implementing capacity-building and training programs in resource management, and developing technical skills necessary for effective forest management. Through this partnership, Whitefish Lake has been involved in training sessions, roundtable discussions, workshops and conferences that have further exposed community members and band leaders to a range of issues relating to forest management.

This alliance strategy, and the ties that have been created with university partners, is not unlike the alliances formed between Brazilian rubber-tappers from the extractive reserves of the Upper Jurva' and ecologists from Brazilian universities. In both cases the ties established with university partners are attempts to prevent the intrusion of unsustainable forestry practices through the establishment of multi-actor alliances. In the case of the rubber-tappers, it was they themselves who created the extractive reserves, promoting ecologically sustainable practices that have led to cultural and ecological resilience (Begossi, 1998). Whitefish Lake's involvement with the University of Alberta has led to similar links with other actors, each connected in flexible ways to each other, and to the formation of strategies promoting ecological and cultural sustainability. It has been through these links that Whitefish Lake has assumed a more active and visible role in forest management initiatives taking place not only in Alberta but in international settings as well.

For example, in 1999 Whitefish Lake was invited to participate in the International Symposium on Society and Resource Management held at the University of Queensland, in Brisbane, Australia. This forum brought together over 500 researchers, practitioners, students, NGOs and indigenous resource managers from more than 30 different countries in an exchange of ideas and resource management strategies. This international exposure enabled Whitefish Lake delegates to meet with, and form ties with other indigenous communities who are faced with similar challenges; thus enabling Whitefish Lake leaders to return to their community and apply the ideas and strategies gained internationally to local issues of concern.

Beyond specific resource-related issues, the Whitefish Lake Agreement also calls for economic opportunities to be made available to Whitefish Lake band members. Because the realities of welfare dependency have long worked against members of the Whitefish Lake community, anxiety over the unknown has led many welfare-dependent community members to adhere to the status quo (Ponting, 1997). Thus Whitefish Lake's continued exclusion from economic opportunities was seen by band leaders as furthering local perceptions of the normality of economic dependency, thereby reinforcing the acceptance of their own economic marginality. However, through measures promoting self-empowerment, Whitefish Lake has begun to assume a collective responsibility for its own future and is now taking direct control of their own self-defined economic development. These strategies are being

implemented through the Whitefish Lake Agreement as a means for Whitefish Lake to become economically self-sufficient, an approach advocated by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, pp. 326-353) to break the trap of economic dependency that has long served to disempower Aboriginal communities. Specifically, this is being undertaken through employment and training programs for Whitefish Lake residents in order that they may assume management responsibility for the cooperative management area. In addition, the Agreement has provided Whitefish Lake with a commercial fishery allocation and has facilitated contractual arrangements for municipal services (i.e., road repair, graveling and snow removal). Further, Whitefish Lake is working directly with industry and government agencies in identifying potential employment opportunities in such areas as eco-tourism and outfitting as well as outlining education and training requirements necessary for securing long-term labor and managerial contracts.

It is important to understand that each of the strategies outlined above represents a mechanism employed by Whitefish Lake as a mean of regaining control over the decisions that most directly affect their lives. The implementation of the Whitefish Lake Agreement—which has not only increased the community's involvement in the land management process but has also strengthened local systems of self-reliance—has led to institutional reforms. It is through the continued development of legal, financial, educational and administrative capacity that effective social reform will become an eventual reality.

### *Discussion*

As the above examples show, government agencies have demonstrated a general willingness to support the involvement of these First Nation communities in the resource management process. However, in some political contexts, state agencies may feel threatened by the strengthening of local institutions and may undermine, or at least fail to support, local initiatives. Young (1982, p. 106) argues that the transformation of local institutions will directly reflect the agenda of power prevailing at the time of articulation. However, Uphoff (1986, p. 217) notes that, although the political orientation of government will affect the climate in which co-management arrangements are configured, it is not a determining factor in the ultimate success or failure of the institution. That is, because central governments are seldom monolithic, governmental hierarchies exist with differing attitudes and motivations that will ultimately affect the evolution and formation of individual arrangements.

It has been suggested, however, that co-management merely represents a stage in the natural progression of a socio-political system—a system typified by conflict and reconfiguration (e.g., Ostrom, 1990; Light et al., 1995; Berkes, 1998). That is, as management systems mature they become limiting

and outmoded in meeting the evolving needs of resource users. Thus, the failure of political institutions to adapt successfully leads inevitably to a period of conflict. This pattern—as described by Gunderson et al. (1995) and others (e.g., Uphoff, 1986; Berkes, 1989; Ostrom, 1990; Jansson et al., 1994; Hanna et al., 1996; Berkes & Folke, 1998)—involves a process that generally follows four phases: the over-exploitation of a resource, attempted conservation measures, resource crises, and the reconfiguration of the management institution.

In this process, conflict is considered an inevitable phase that signals a need for restructuring. Consequently, the reformation of the institutional framework results in new goals, policies, and organizational processes that are then used to carry out new policy initiatives until the next crisis arises (Gunderson et al., 1995, p. 492). Mary Douglas (1978) and Mike Thompson (1983) have similarly characterized institutional change as being driven by periods of stability and instability and the interplay between the two.

It is in this context that the concept of social movements has emerged and has been applied to co-management theory. As it applies to co-management, social movements are aimed generally at stimulating some form of collective action that seeks both to change the social behavior of the state as well as to transform state management institutions (Rochon, 1998, p. 32). Scott (1990) views social movements as reactions to the state's failure to respond adequately to the needs and concerns of resource users. In this view, social movements are attempts to reconfigure state institutions by mobilizing local involvement in governing institutions, that is, rather than assuming centralized control of power. This view follows Whitt's (1982) class-dialectic model, where the biases of state institutions most often favor outcomes beneficial to the dominant class, but recognizes that, through alliances and social mobilization, outcomes can favor Aboriginal interests—resulting in the restructuring of state institutions, a process aimed at empowering Aboriginal communities by resisting the processes of domination (Routledge, 1993, p. 27).

The relatively recent application of co-management arrangements seems testimony to the ability of social movements to initiate change within the state system. The interest that has been afforded to co-management arrangements by Aboriginal peoples, governments, and industry demonstrates basic behavioral changes in resource management. That is, for all the interest that has been afforded to co-management these institutional arrangements were not a matter of debate thirty years ago. Thus, social movements have generated new ideas and perspectives among resource users and state managers. Subsequently, this enhanced interaction has promoted the development of new cultural values that have reshaped state institutions and thus the role of Aboriginal communities in the allocation of resources.

## *Conclusion*

The expansionist efforts of the Canadian state to develop Aboriginal homelands have been motivated largely by two factors. First, there was a desire to incorporate (acculturate) the Aboriginal population into mainstream Canadian society. Second, there has, and continues to be a desire to enlarge the state's economic base through the development of natural resources. Rarely, however, has either of these initiatives been carried out with the interests of the Aboriginal population in mind. Consequently, state endeavors have often been in direct conflict with local needs and desires.

However, by mobilizing socio-political leverage in the state arena, Aboriginal peoples have begun to restructure the relationships that have long dictated their involvement in state institutions (Feit, 1984, p. 435). The extent to which this restructuring is viable has been contingent upon the implementation of new and adaptive management regimes that are now beginning to redefine methods of resource management specifically, and local-state relations more generally. Recognizing that change will not be achieved through isolation and independence, Aboriginal communities are pursuing multi-actor frameworks of co-operation in an effort to redefine existing institutions of power and authority. By viewing state-directed management as inimical to local traditions and livelihoods, Aboriginal communities are actively affirming local identity, culture and systems of knowledge as an integral part of their resistance to state control (Routledge, 1993, p. 17). Thus, Aboriginal communities across Canada are not only articulating dissent (and often non-compliance) with state land management policies, but are also seeking to implement alternative management regimes. Therefore, it is important to understand that Aboriginal involvement in co-management arrangements has more to do with defining, and to a certain extent redefining, local autonomy within the existing state structure than about managing resources in the more narrow, technical sense (Howitt et al., 1996). The decentralization of state control over Aboriginal homelands, facilitated in part through co-management arrangements, should therefore be seen as a cornerstone of the much larger agenda for Aboriginal self-determination.

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