

the problem of temporary workers overwhelming small northern communities is a real one and must be faced. Perhaps if the problem were a more visible and immediate threat, it would have elicited more concern among the builders of Nunavut.

<sup>2</sup> See Thomas Berger's book, *Village Journey*, 1985, for an evaluation sponsored by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement.

<sup>3</sup> See my article on Greenland in the December, 1987, issue of *Policy Options*, Institute for Research on Public Policy, Ottawa, Montreal, Halifax, etc., for a discussion of Greenland society, constitution and politics.

<sup>4</sup> These are widely available. *Nunavut*, the history, was written by me and published in glossy format in three languages, profusely illustrated, early 1983, by the Government of the Northwest Territories for NCF. Mark Malone, a Paris-based political scientist and expert on Canadian federalism, prepared both *Nunavut: the division of powers* and *Nunavut: fiscal relations*, both published in English in early 1983. Various other studies have been prepared over the years. In May, 1983, NCF released *Building Nunavut*, its comprehensive proposal, and later the same year produced this in glossy quadri-lingual format (English, French, Inuktitut syllabics and Central Arctic Roman orthography). The much-revised second edition of *Building Nunavut*, *Building Nunavut Today and Tomorrow*, was available from March, 1985, and was formally adopted by a Nunavut constitutional conference in Coppermine in September, 1985. This latter is available in English only because it was not thought necessary or desirable to spend large amounts of money circulating a further publication. Other studies available from NCF include Peter Burnet on language policy (making Inuktitut an official language of Nunavut), Ron Doering on land (with some innovative and sadly-neglected proposals), and Jeff Richstone on human rights in Nunavut (including the protection of the non-Inuit minority).

<sup>5</sup> The approach seems to be working. Before the 1987 Venice Economic Summit, President Reagan told the foreign press that the unique circumstance of frozen seas and long-standing Inuit habitation made the Northwest Passage a unique situation in the world, the essence of the Canadian claim for non-application of open passage rights.

<sup>6</sup> As a long-time advisor to the international Inuit organization, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), I have never seen evidence of any serious thought among any Inuit leaders from Greenland, Canada or Alaska about such a prospect.

<sup>7</sup> Published as *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*, Oxford University Press, 1987. The section referred to ends chapter 4.

<sup>8</sup> The government did not have everything its own way. On October 1, 1987, Nunavut MP Thomas Suluk, a government member, himself long immersed in Nunavut land claims and the development of a Nunavut government before his election to Parliament, gave a thoughtful speech putting the case for Nunavut clearly. But this was during the debate on the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord and the speech was little noted by press or public except for his hedged support for that Accord. It was more noticed within the government, however.

<sup>9</sup> For a more specific discussion of this, see my *Politics, Development and Conservation in the International North*, CARC Policy Paper No. 2, Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, Ottawa, 1986, and my brief article, *The Challenge of Northern Peoples*, in *Northern Perspectives* Vol. 15, No. 2, Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, Ottawa, May-June, 1987.

## On the Outside in Their Homeland: Native People and the Evolution of the Yukon Economy

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The statistics present a bleak picture. Native unemployment in the Yukon Territory exceeds fifty per cent, even in summer when government make-work projects and short-term opportunities are at their peak. In the winter months, many Indian bands face unemployment rates of more than eighty per cent. Almost half of Yukon Indian families live on less than \$15,000 per year, and much of that comes from government transfer payments. Despite the expenditure of millions of federal dollars over the past two decades on Native economic development schemes, the Yukon Indians remain outside the mainstream of the territorial economy.<sup>1</sup>

The economic and social malaise of the northern Indians, particularly those facing the potential disruptions of large-scale development projects, has generated much concern and debate.<sup>2</sup> This debate focusses on a classic twentieth-century confrontation — between the Dene harvesters of the Mackenzie River valley and the pro-development oil companies and southern, non-Native businesses (and, one might add, the Canadian government).<sup>3</sup> Much less attention, however, has been paid to the example of the Indians in the Yukon Territory.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the Dene of the Mackenzie district, the Yukon Indians have faced the industrial frontier for over a century. Their situation provides a useful longitudinal study of Native reaction to the forces of cyclical mining development, seasonal industrial activity, and white encroachment on traditional hunting territories. The Indians' response illustrates the depth of their commitment to harvesting, the impact of on-going job discrimination, and the inability of successive governments to understand Native economic needs and aspirations.

The current economic condition of the Yukon Indians represents the culmination of more than a century of Native-white interaction in the Yukon River valley. From the arrival of Hudson's Bay Company fur traders in the 1840s, the Indians have been

drawn into the imperatives of international export economies. Subsequent relations between the Natives, traders, gold miners, government agents and non-Native businessmen led to constantly changing parameters for participation in the territorial economy. The Yukon Indians — almost the only permanent residents of the territory — made numerous adaptations to the new realities. Ultimately, however, a combination of racial discrimination and Native preferences limited the level of economic integration.

The historiographic importance of the Yukon example extends beyond the North. The study of the fur trade, which typically stops around 1870,<sup>5</sup> does not explain the Natives' response to the very different realities of the industrial and mining frontiers.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have offered few comments on Native accommodation to the economics of the settlement period. The attempts of prairie Indians to adapt to the advance of the agricultural frontier have received surprisingly little attention.<sup>7</sup> There are a few exceptions — the work of Robin Fisher, Noel Dyck, Rolf Knight and Frank Tough — but much remains missing.<sup>8</sup> In restricting their work to the fur trade, historians have all but ignored twentieth-century developments and have offered few comments on Native response to the expansion of the industrial frontier.

The Yukon Territory provides a very excellent opportunity to examine the questions of Native economic adaptation beyond the fur trade. The fur trade remained, as it did across much of the North, a vital and important industry. Unlike many other northern areas, however, industrial and commercial activities developed alongside the fur trade. The arrival of gold miners in the 1870s, and the subsequent Klondike Gold Rush (1897-1899), brought the imperatives of the industrial economy to bear on the region and its inhabitants. In the 110 years from the arrival of Hudson's Bay Company traders to the establishment of the modern welfare state in the Yukon in the 1950s, the Yukon Indians had to adapt to constantly-changing opportunities and restrictions.

The Indians welcomed the advance of the fur trade. Long before Robert Campbell and John Bell reached the Yukon River basin, the Indians had gained access to European trade goods through inter-tribal trade.<sup>9</sup> As HBC traders approached from the south-east, the Yukon Indians encouraged them to expand quickly into the region, an effort that met the determined resistance of the middleman traders in the Mackenzie River valley. With the establishment of Fort Youcon in 1847 and Fort Selkirk the next

year, the Yukon Indians<sup>10</sup> could take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the fur trade. They adapted quickly to the trade, modifying their seasonal cycles to meet the rhythms of Hudson's Bay Company activities. They found work as packers, tripmen, provision hunters and fishermen, work which they had to intergrate into their own seasonal round of hunting and trapping. The Indians also exploited competitive situations or, more properly, the Hudson's Bay Company's fear of competition from the Russian traders working downstream from Fort Youcon.

The expansion of the fur trade into the Yukon River basin fit well with the Indians' needs. By refusing to trade, or combining in opposition to the company, they influenced the terms and conditions of trade. The isolated company traders felt extremely vulnerable and regularly feared a Native attack. Their concerns were not misplaced, for in 1852, coastal Tlingit traders, upset at HBC incursions into their trading area, attacked and destroyed Fort Selkirk. The early Yukon fur trade fit Fisher's description of a "mutually-beneficial economic symbiosis."<sup>11</sup>

The fur trade had, of course, brought many changes to the Yukon Indians. The ready availability of manufactured goods improved harvesting and subsistence activities. The Indians had, as Pat McCormack has illustrated, adopted a "fur trade mode of production," in which they accepted the cycles and dictates of an economy tied to external markets and commercial interests much beyond their control.<sup>12</sup> Although the economy drew on "traditional" Native skills, such as hunting, trapping and guiding, the fur trade nonetheless represented a sharp break from pre-contact subsistence activities. In the short-term, however, the benefits weighed significantly in the Indians' favour. The apparent threat of Russian and, after 1867, American competition prevented the Hudson's Bay Company from placing unreasonable demands. Because the Indians could get part-time work from the traders, they were able to spend less of their time harvesting. But since they wished to continue their traditional hunting activities, and since the needs of the fur trade required them to do so, a situation developed in which both parties benefited: the Company traded goods for furs and food, and the Indians continued their lifestyle, although at a more leisurely pace, and also obtained the goods and technology that they wanted.

The first indications that this balance would soon change occurred in 1869, when Captain Raymond of the U.S. Navy led a

military-commercial expedition to Fort Youcon. After ascertaining the post to be on American territory (something the HBC had known for years), Raymond ordered the Hudson's Bay Company to leave.<sup>13</sup> A number of the Fort Youcon Indians initially followed the company's traders up the Porcupine River, but soon returned to the more competitive trade along the Yukon River.

The arrival of the Americans (who ignored the Canadian boundary and soon expanded onto Canadian territory) marked the start of a new economy. Although they continued the fur trade, as did the HBC from its new post, Rampart House, along the Porcupine River, the American traders placed greater emphasis on the growing number of prospectors in the region. The gold-mining frontier had advanced slowly north from California, reaching British Columbia in the mid-1850s, the Stikine-Cassiar District by the next decade and, in the early 1870s, finally pushing into the Yukon River valley.<sup>14</sup> The imperatives of a new economy now took hold. American transportation companies placed steamers on the Yukon River, running supplies well up into Canadian territory each year. The prospectors fanned out, examining creek after creek, forming and reforming partnerships, searching for the elusive "Eldorado."<sup>15</sup> After a small strike on the Stewart River, the miners turned their attentions to more promising discoveries in the Forty-mile region.<sup>16</sup>

The Indians now had to react to an entirely new economic order, one which placed limited value on Native skills. They sold meat and fish to the miners, much as they had to the Hudson's Bay Company traders. The steamship companies, particularly the dominant Alaska Commercial Company, paid the Indians to cut and stack cord-wood for the steamers. Natives also found occasional work as packers in the gold fields, carrying supplies from the Yukon River to the miners' camps.

There was little room for the Indians at the mine sites. Placer mining is a peculiarly individualistic activity; miners often worked in pairs, and occasionally hired temporary assistants, particularly during the spring "wash-out" of the winter's diggings. They did not, however, require a permanent or regular work-force. In addition, the largely American mining community also put a low value on Indian workers, believing them incapable of a full day's work and unlikely to be of much value. From the very start, therefore, discrimination precluded Native workers from full participation in the mining economy. Indian men were paid less than white workers, and were much less likely to find a labouring

position.<sup>17</sup> At one point, the non-Native workers formed a "combination" to keep Indian workers out of the gold fields.<sup>18</sup>

The opportunities and limitations facing the Indians living near the mines originated with the structure of the local labour market. Most of the men in the region were there on their own account, hoping to strike it rich on the frozen creek beds of the Yukon basin. Few sought to work for others. This meant, therefore, that there was a chronic shortage of casual labourers — men able and willing to undertake the hard work around the diggings. Some non-Natives, hoping to build up a "grub-stake" for future explorations, accepted short-term positions. Each summer, the steamers brought several dozen more would-be prospectors, many without the resources to support themselves in the bush. These men also joined the casual workforce. At most times, however, there were not enough non-Native workers and, reluctantly, would-be employers turned to Native men.

Such openings were few, and most Yukon Indians had little to do with the emerging mining economy. Those in outlying areas continued to hunt and trap, trading with the Hudson's Bay Company or American traders and working occasionally as guides for the prospectors or travellers. The Kutchin along the Porcupine River also discovered a new outlet for their furs; they travelled north each summer to trade with the American whalers working off of Herschel Island.<sup>19</sup> Throughout much of the region, therefore, seasonal cycles and economic patterns continued much as before, broken only occasionally by the imperatives of the new economy.

The early gold-mining phase brought two important transitions. It introduced the industrial sector to the regional economy, in which work and productivity focussed on the exploitation of non-renewable resources. The contrast with the fur trade era is crucial, for the earlier period placed high value on Native skills and comparatively little pressure on local resources. The arrival of the miners ushered in new economic priorities, in which the rapid and systematic development of available deposits took precedence over all other economic activities. The miners and their suppliers had only a marginal commitment to the area, and sought in the main to "strike it rich" in typical frontier fashion, hoping to earn enough to abandon the region forever and return to the south. This new economy placed its pre-eminent value, not on traditional skills, but on technical innovation. The fur traders lauded the skills of the great hunter; the miners' applauded the efforts of men like William

Ogilvie of the Geological Survey of Canada, who developed new techniques for extracting gold from frozen ground.<sup>20</sup>

The second transition — the introduction of the mixed economy — was especially important for the Yukon Indians. From the start of the fur trade, the Indians tied their seasonal activities to the cycles of the fur trade, trading at certain periods, returning to the trap lines at the appropriate season, and working as tripmen and packers at the key points of the year. The availability of occasional work in the industrial economy — as mine labourers, guides, packers, wood-cutters, and deck-hands — allowed many Indians the opportunity to broaden their economic base. These activities were seasonal in nature, like the Natives' hunting. They could, consequently, be combined with hunting and trapping. The establishment of a "mixed economy"<sup>21</sup> represented an important adaptation to the newly-imposed industrial structures of the mining frontier.

The Klondike Gold Rush threatened to obliterate this accommodation. The discovery of gold in Rabbit (later Bonanza) creek in August 1896 brought thousands of would-be miners into the region. The invasion reshaped the regional order. Natives initially participated in the development. Two Indians, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie, were co-discoverers of the Bonanza strike, and became rich men.<sup>22</sup>

Tlingit Indians at the foot of the Chilkoot and White Passes offered to pack supplies over the mountains, and earned high incomes from prospectors anxious to be first to the gold fields.<sup>23</sup> A number of Indians joined the migration from Forty-mile to the new town of Dawson, where some staked claims and built cabins (which they later sold at considerable profit).<sup>24</sup> Even Indians in the far north profited from the ill-founded decision of a number of prospectors to try and reach the Klondike via Edmonton.<sup>25</sup>

Such gains soon proved transitory. The construction of a tramway and later a railway over the coastal mountains undermined the Tlingit packing business. The expansion of steamship travel further eroded the need for Native guides and packers along the Yukon River.<sup>26</sup> The Indians had provided meat and fish to the miners for years. The market remained, but the Canadian government's demand that each miner bring in a one-year supply of food limited the need for local produce. More importantly, the arrival of thousands of would-be miners in the summers of 1897, 1898 and 1899 undercut almost completely the demand for temporary Indian

labour. These miners and government officials carried the racist attitudes then current, and viewed Native workers as lazy, untrustworthy and unproductive.<sup>27</sup> As a consequence, few considered hiring Natives, particularly when hundreds of white men were now available. Occasional developments in the labour market, especially infrequent shortages of white workers and their demands for unreasonably high wages, convinced some employers to hire Indians, but such positions opened infrequently, and then on a temporary basis.

The Native people worked around the fringes of the regional order. They continued to hunt and trap — and found ready markets for their produce — but seldom achieved a more complete integration. Some Indian groups responded to the Gold Rush by retreating, pulling away from the Klondike district. The Indians from the McQuesten region, for example, moved eastward into the mountains, largely to escape non-Native thefts of their goods and to find better hunting areas.<sup>28</sup> Others, particularly those from Fort McPherson, were drawn by the perceived opportunities of the gold fields. In the latter cases, the so-called "Dawson Boys" sought employment and markets in Dawson City. As Richard Slobodin described this exodus:

Summer activities, however, opened up a new life. Fourteen major summer occupations for this period have been recorded, of which ten were quite novel to these people. They included deckhand on steamboats, scow pilot, carpenter, motorboat mechanic, pool-hall handyman, licensed trader, and, for women, laundress and mining camp cook.<sup>29</sup>

Alice Kehoe offers a similar assessment of Native adaptation to the new economic order:

Dene, eager for cash or novelty, flocked to these towns, men selling fish and meat or working as labourers on the steamboats, at the river docks, and in the town, women working as laundresses if their husbands brought them along. The majority of Dene men made excursions for wage labour on the pattern of hunting and trapping, leaving the wives and children in the camp.<sup>30</sup>

The commencement of the gold rush had transformed the Yukon economy, but the Indians remained on the periphery.

The Yukon Indians found it increasingly difficult to avoid the dictates of the new economy. Even as some pulled away from

developed areas, they discovered the sweeping impact of the new industrial economy. Prospectors once more scoured the creek and river beds. Timber operators cut down tree stands along the banks of the Yukon River and steamboat companies forged new routes along tributary rivers. Indian groups, like those in the White River area, who had previously been cut off (by Native middlemen) from contact with Europeans, now met regularly with traders, prospectors and other travellers. The greatly expanded European activity did not immediately disrupt Native access to resources, except in the immediate vicinity of the gold fields and along the Yukon River, but it did put added pressure on the harvestable resources.

The increased commercialization of the Yukon economy spread swiftly throughout the district. Fur traders pushed into previously inaccessible areas, opened up new posts and brought new trading opportunities to dozens of Indian groups. Riverboats took prospectors' supplies well up the Stewart, Pelly and Teslin rivers and stimulated the development of new mining communities at places like Mayo and Livingstone Creek. New mines opened around Whitehorse, Carcross, and Kluane Lake. For the Indians, the opportunities for work remained much as before. They continued to hunt and trap, both for personal use and for sale, they cut wood for the steamers and found occasional work, usually in the summer, around the trading posts and mining communities. Equally important is what they did not do. Indians did not work in the predominantly white communities. They also did not find work on the dredges that had, by the early twentieth century, replaced the individual placer miners in the Klondike gold fields or in the other mines that opened in the Yukon.<sup>31</sup>

The rapid collapse of the Klondike Gold Rush brought few changes to the Indians' position within the territorial order. Discrimination continued to face those few Indians who sought to enter the industrial work force. The Anglican church, aided financially by the federal government, opened a residential school at Carcross in 1911, hoping to train the children for entry into the regional economy. Their efforts, which included an explicit condemnation of the Indian lifestyle, failed, largely because of the refusal of most non-Native employers to hire Indian workers, even ones that had been "properly" trained. The children suffered tremendously, unable to adapt to their home situation, but unwelcome in the white communities.<sup>32</sup>

Discrimination proved very wide-spread, and received official sanction by the Anglican church and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (who believed that the Indians had to be "protected" from the white population). Indians were constrained from entering and working in the towns, and efforts were made to keep them in the bush, until, it was argued, such time as they were able to enter industrial society as equals.<sup>33</sup> The major towns—Whitehorse, Dawson and Mayo—remained as white enclaves; Natives were not particularly welcome, except on a temporary basis.

The Indians were in no hurry to seek an accommodation with the discriminatory economic order. The continued viability of the fur trade through the first half of the twentieth century provided a much-needed counter-balance to the limited opportunities available within the industrial sector. The Indians had developed needs for manufactured goods; by the 1920s, rifles, motor boats, steel traps, blankets and manufactured clothing had replaced traditional products. The Native people had also come to demand other commodities, including tobacco and alcohol (despite legal interdictions against the use of the latter), for which they required a cash income. Subsistence hunting could provide for their food needs, but the Indians required access to the cash economy to purchase additional goods.

That access came, in large part, through the fur trade and related harvesting activities. A high demand for specialty furs, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, stimulated a major expansion in the trade. Unlike other areas in the Canadian North, where the Hudson's Bay Company dominated the industry, the Yukon remained opened for competitive trade. The locally-owned Taylor and Drury Company was the largest single firm, opening as many as eleven posts and operating its own supply boat. Many small entrepreneurs, who often combined personal trapping with their trading, opened posts around the territory. As had been the case during the period of Hudson's Bay Company-Russian rivalry, competition worked to the Indians' benefit, as they played traders off against each other, secured gratuities or negotiated credit arrangements.<sup>34</sup>

The further development of the fur trade also brought problems for the Yukon Natives. The extremely high prices offered for some furs, particularly silver fox, attracted white trappers. These temporary residents lacked the Indians' commitment to the region and the resources, and often over-trapped the animals.<sup>35</sup> In addition,

an increasingly conservation-minded government imposed a series of regulatory impediments on the trade. At several points in the 1920s, restrictions on the trapping of beaver and marten were imposed, and although the Royal Canadian Mounted Police implemented the laws with considerable discretion, the measures interfered with harvesting practices and routines.

In responding to the apparent over-harvesting of Yukon fur resources, the government refused the Natives' (and the Anglican church's) request that the Indians be given special hunting preserves, as had been done in the Northwest Territories. Faced with a choice between a potential expansion of mining activities and securing native access to resources, the government selected the former. As the Deputy Minister of the Department of Mines noted in 1935:

If we are not going to reserve our northern regions exclusively for the use of the natives but are looking to encourage the opening up of these regions to the people of Canada generally, then I think we must limit the extent of the preserves to meet the pressing needs of the Indians but no more.<sup>36</sup>

The fact that the government did not set aside any "preserves" for the Indians indicates their assessment of the Indians' "pressing needs." The mining industry had only impinged marginally on the Yukon Indians' harvesting activities by the 1930s; the government was determined to ensure that Native rights did not interfere at all with potential mineral developments.

Yukon Indians found other economic outlets, but most involved some modification of their harvesting activities. The miners and townsfolk continued to demand local meat and fish products, and Indians living near Whitehorse or Dawson could make sizeable returns selling country produce in town. Some Indians also secured work as big-game guides, although once more the discriminatory attitudes of government and the general public emerged. The Yukon Territorial Game Ordinance of 1923, however, barred Native people from holding chief guide licenses, despite their evident capability (both financial and technical) for such work. This blocked them from a potentially rewarding activity and made them dependent upon the marketing abilities and organizational activities of a small number of white guides.<sup>37</sup>

From the end of the Gold Rush through to 1942, economic conditions changed little. The territorial economy remained very vulnerable to external market forces and to the depletion of

regional resources. The non-Native labour force continued to be highly flexible, often leaving the Yukon on a seasonal basis, and ensuring there was little continuity in the work-place. The Indians remained on the periphery, occasional participants in the industrial economy, but restricted to short-term, seasonal work.

The onset of World War II, and the decision in February 1942 to build a highway to Alaska, upset the balance once more. Thousands of American soldiers and construction workers entered the area, pushing their bulldozers through the previously untouched wilderness in a frantic rush to the northwest. The regional economy ground to a veritable halt. Non-Native workers left their jobs in the north to seek more remunerative employment along the highway; businesses in Dawson City closed down and moved to Whitehorse.<sup>38</sup>

Most Yukon Indians did not share in the new developments. Ravaged by a series of epidemic diseases, many sought to distance themselves from the actual construction process. A few men found work as guides and labourers; some women worked as laundresses and cooks, or made Native handicrafts for sale (an effort that did not succeed, despite government encouragement). In one unusual experiment, dictated by the loss of non-Native labour to the highway crews, the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation hired Native workers for the dredges. The Indians proved "undependable," in that they wished to continue hunting and trapping, but they also proved to be solid workers.<sup>39</sup> Most Indians, however, continued their harvesting activities, drawn in particular by the high prices for furs then available. Those who did seek an accommodation with the highway construction did so along the now standard lines of the mixed economy.<sup>40</sup> Seasonal, unskilled work along the highway was combined with hunting and fishing to provide sufficient food and enough cash to meet personal and family needs. The observations of an Anglican missionary at Champagne in 1949 could have applied to many places in the Yukon:

The white population is occupied exclusively in connection with the maintenance of the Alaska Highway... Many of the Indians are similarly occupied, though spasmodically, in more menial capacities. Hunting and trapping in winter, and fishing in summer are the principal interests of the Indians generally, the young men being employed by the various Highway authorities occasionally. Few of the Indians accept, or are suited for, regular employment.<sup>41</sup>

The pattern identified by this missionary differed little from the Indians' economic behaviour of the past half century. As they had done since the early days of the gold mining frontier, the Natives in the Yukon sought the means to meet the industrial economy on their terms. This entailed a continuation of seasonal cycles, a reliance on the products of the harvest for both sustenance and trade, and a position on the periphery of the economic order. Indians participated in the industrial economy — although seldom in the mines themselves—but typically on a temporary and seasonal basis.

The development and expansion of the industrial economy had not proven unduly disruptive to the Indians of the Yukon. The continued opportunity to hunt, although subject to increased government regulation and gradually expanding competition for the resources, provided an option to industrial wage labour that few Natives in North America still possessed. It was just as well, for non-Natives provided few openings for Indian workers in the mines or related service activities. Natives were viewed as a casual labour pool of last resort, to be utilized in isolated areas or when there were not enough white workers around to handle unskilled work.

This accommodation had worked for decades, primarily because neither Natives nor whites viewed the relationship as terribly threatening. It would break down quickly in the aftermath of World War II. The problems began with the collapse of the Canadian fur trade in the late 1940s. Prices and demand for the high-quality northern pelts fell precipitously. The decline coincided with increased government regulation. In 1947, the Yukon Territorial government fell into line with other Canadian jurisdictions and banned the commercial sale of wild meat. Three years later, in 1950, the government imposed a trap-line registration system, with a pricey \$10 per annum fee that, given falling prices, many Indians chose not to pay.<sup>42</sup>

The decline of the fur trade undermined an important foundation for the Indians' mixed economy. They continued to hunt for subsistence (an extremely important component of the Northern economy that governments are only now acknowledging), but now lacked a ready means of securing required cash income. The government had a solution here as well. For reasons unrelated to the crisis in the Native economy, the Canadian government decided to expand its social assistance network. In the short-term, government subsidies replaced returns from the fur trade and temporarily

sustained the Yukon Indians' hunting economy. By the mid-1950s, however, the federal government, and particularly the Department of Indian Affairs, decided that the nomadic patterns had to be broken. Using the coercive powers available to it through the welfare programmes, the government demanded that families move onto small, residential reserves (there was no treaty for the Yukon Indians) and insisted that children attend school. Underlying this increased interventionism was the government's determination to break the Indians' nomadic habits and integrate them into the broader territorial economy.<sup>43</sup>

The effort, by all objective standards, has not worked. Native people have remained outside the non-Native and industrial economy. Current income levels remain far below those of non-Native Yukoners, and Indians continue to find few openings in such key economic sectors as mining and trade. At the same time, there is substantial evidence that the Indians remain committed both to harvesting and a mixed economy, despite government and non-Native efforts to enforce conformity to standard North American models of economic behaviour. Where possible, and to a degree that surprises government planners, the Indians continue to hunt for subsistence, thus providing a substantial portion of their food requirements. This foundation, although threatened on a regional basis by expanded industrial activity, means that many Natives seek only temporary or seasonal employment to meet their needs for a cash income (other money comes through transfers from government).<sup>44</sup> Despite the obvious resilience of the mixed economy, the federal and territorial governments continue to emphasize individual entrepreneurship and technical skills acquisition in their programmes for Native economic development. This initiative, offered in a myriad of government initiatives, has had only a marginal impact over the past decade in increasing the level of Indian participation in the non-harvesting economy.<sup>45</sup>

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It should be clear from this analysis that the Indians' contemporary effort to combine harvesting, government subsidies and temporary wage employment to create a sustainable level of economic activity is not a reaction to recent developments. From the days of the early fur trade, the Yukon Indians have attempted to accommodate their way of life to that of the non-Natives, and to

satisfy their desire for non-traditional commodities through involvement in the new economy.

The Natives' reliance on a mixed economy represented a combination of Indian preference and economic realism. The Yukon Indians, like all harvesting peoples, placed particular importance on their hunting and gathering activities. It provided an "affluent" lifestyle,<sup>46</sup> formed the basis of their spirituality, and determined much of the nature of their social organization.<sup>47</sup> The Natives, therefore, were predisposed to favour a continuation of seasonal mobility and harvesting over a re-orientation toward industrial work.

At the same time, the combination of occasional wage labour and hunting represented the best possible economic adaptation to the cyclical realities of the Yukon economy. Unlike most non-Natives in the North, the Indians sought a permanent place within the region. Given the evident discrimination against Native workers, and the seasonal and cyclical nature of the industrial economy, it was soon evident that permanent Indian residents could not, in fact, rely on the income from any single sector to provide for individual and family needs. Indians, therefore, had no choice but to combine wage labour and trapping—the two cash-generating activities which influenced them to purchase required manufactured goods—with continued subsistence hunting.

It is too simplistic to argue that the Indians opted for the comparative isolation of the mixed economy for cultural reasons, just as it is incorrect to argue that discriminatory attitudes alone determined Native economic behaviour. Some Indians sought and achieved economic integration with the dominant society; others tried and failed. Most Yukon Indians had little to do with the industrial sector of the regional order. Sustained by a profitable fur trade (and encouraged by fur traders dependent upon their activities), continued access to resources and occasional wage work, they maintained an economic approach that originated in the years of the early gold mining frontier. The mixed economy became the "Native" response to the northern economy—the new tradition—and has formed the basis of Indian reaction to government initiatives and economic re-organization to the present day. It seems apparent that future attempts to assist and preserve Native economic activity must take the Indians' evident priorities into account. The contemporary land claims process in the Yukon, and current government programmes, offer the opportunity to create a lasting

accommodation between the harvesting lifestyle and the industrial economy. The economic history of the Yukon Indians suggests that that opportunity should not be lost.

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Ken Coates, *Indian Participation in the Economy*, Yukon 2000 Discussion Paper (Whitehorse: Government of Yukon, 1986).
- <sup>2</sup> In his much-heralded report on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline, Justice Thomas Berger argued that the federal government should provide substantial grants to support the Dene hunting and trapping activities. Thomas Berger, *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland: The Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, Volume I and II* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1986). Many have challenged that view. Anthropologist Michael Asch argues that the Northern Natives should receive royalties on their lands; which they would then use to support "the kinds of traditional institutions and values they wish to assert." Michael Asch, "Capital and Recommendations of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Commission," *Culture*, (3), 1982, 3-8.
- <sup>3</sup> This debate is ably summarized in Robert Page, *Northern Development: The Canadian Dilemma* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).
- <sup>4</sup> A small-scale, Berger-like inquiry was held in the Yukon Territory. See Kenneth Lysyk, Edith Bohmer and Willard Phelps, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1977).
- <sup>5</sup> The emphasis on 1870 reflects changes with the organization of the Hudson's Bay Company, most noticeably the transfer of its control over Rupert's land to the Canadian government. Equally, the fact that H.B.C. records for the period after 1870 were not available until recently convinced many scholars to stop at that point. For an example of this, see Francis and Morantz, *Partners in Furs*.
- <sup>6</sup> The best exception to this general trend is A. J. Ray. See his article, "Periodic Shortages, Native Welfare and the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1930," in Sheperd Krech, III, ed., *Subarctic Indians: Economic & Social Adaptations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1982).
- <sup>7</sup> N. Dyck, "An Opportunity Lost: The Initiative of the Reserve Agricultural Programme in the Prairie West," in L. Barron and J. Waldram, eds. *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1986).
- <sup>8</sup> See the introduction to Robin Fisher and Ken Coates, *Out of the Background: Readings on Native History* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988).
- <sup>9</sup> S. Ugarenko, "The Distribution of the Kutchin and Their Spatial Patterns of Trade, 1700-1850," (MA Thesis: York University, 1979).
- <sup>10</sup> There are, of course, many different Indian groups in the Yukon Territory, including Kutchin, Han, Tutchone, Inland Tlingit and Kaska. See C. Osgood, *The Distribution of the Northern Athapaskan Indians*, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936).
- <sup>11</sup> This summary is based on Ken Coates, "Furs Along the Yukon: Hudson's Bay Company-Native Trade in the Yukon River Valley, 1830-1893," MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1980. Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, p. 47.



- <sup>12</sup> Pat McCormack, "Becoming Trappers: The Transformation of a Fur Trade Mode of Production," in Thomas Buckley, ed. *Rendezvous: Selected Papers of the Fourth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1981* pp. 155-176.
- <sup>13</sup> B. D. Lain, "The Fort Yukon Affair, 1869," *Alaska Journal*, vol. 7, No. 1 (Winter 1977), 12-17.
- <sup>14</sup> A. A. Wright, *Prelude to Bonanza* (Sidney: Gray's Publishing, 1976).
- <sup>15</sup> Thomas Stone, "Flux and Authority: The Yukon miners in the Nineteenth Century," *Ethnohistory*, 30 (1983).
- <sup>16</sup> Melody Webb, *The Last Frontier: A History of the Yukon Basin of Canada and Alaska* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985).
- <sup>17</sup> "Report of Inspector Constantine, 20 January 1896" *Annual report of the North West Mounted Police, 1896*.
- <sup>18</sup> Public Archives of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 3962, file 147, 654-1, pt. 2, Bompas to Indian Commissioner, 5 September 1896.
- <sup>19</sup> Ken Coates, "Furs Along the Yukon."
- <sup>20</sup> Melody Webb, *The Last Frontier: A History of the Yukon Basin of Canada and Alaska* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), 77-98.
- <sup>21</sup> See the work cited above by Michael Asch.
- <sup>22</sup> Neither man felt comfortable with his wealth. Skookum Jim willed much of his estate to be used in the interests of the Yukon Indians. Morris Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971).
- <sup>23</sup> Richard Friesen, *The Chilkoot Pass and the Great Gold Rush of 1898*, Manuscript Report Series No. 236 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1978).
- <sup>24</sup> Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, file 801-30-0-01, Bompas to Minister of the Interior, 28 October 1896 and Extract from William Ogilvie's letter, 8 November 1896.
- <sup>25</sup> Ken Coates, *The Northern Yukon: A History* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1979).
- <sup>26</sup> The development of the steamship system is described in Gordon Bennett, *Yukon Transportation: A History*, Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History. No. 19 (Ottawa: National Historic Parks, 1978).
- <sup>27</sup> R. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian From Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978). As this relates to the N.W.M.P. in the North, see W. R. Morrison, "Native Peoples of the Northern Frontier," in Hugh Dempsey, ed., *Men in Scarlet* (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart, 1975).
- <sup>28</sup> PAC, R.C.M.P. RG 18, vol. 189, file 339, Davis to O. C. Dawson, 2 October 1900. This is explored further in Ken Coates, "Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1950," Ph.D. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1984.
- <sup>29</sup> R. Slobodin, "The Dawson Boys," *Polar Notes*, vol. 5 (1963), 24-35.
- <sup>30</sup> A. Kehoe, *North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1981), 500.
- <sup>31</sup> A few Indians were hired at a small copper mine near Whitehorse, although again the work was short-term. "Report of Supt. Snyder, 30 Nov, 1904," RNWMP, *Annual Report, 1904*.
- <sup>32</sup> Ken Coates, "Betwixt and Between: The Anglican Church and the Children of the Carcross (Chouttla) Residential School, 1910 to 1955," *BC Studies*, (Winter 1984-1985).
- <sup>33</sup> Ken Coates, "Best Left as Indians: The Federal Government and the Indians of the Yukon, 1894 to 1950," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1981).
- <sup>34</sup> Adrian Tanner, "The Structure of Fur Trade Relations," MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1986.
- <sup>35</sup> The Indians also complained that the white trappers used inappropriate methods, particularly the use of poisons.
- <sup>36</sup> Yukon Territorial Archives, Yukon Record Group, series 3, vol. 8, file 12-15, Camsell to Gibson, 14 September 1935.
- <sup>37</sup> Robert McCandless, *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985).
- <sup>38</sup> Richard Stuart, "The Impact of the Alaska Highway on Dawson City," in Ken Coates, ed., *The Alaska Highway: Papers of the 40th Anniversary Symposium* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1985).
- <sup>39</sup> Richard Stuart, "The Impact of the Alaska Highway on Dawson City," p. 195.
- <sup>40</sup> See the contrary arguments advanced in Ken Coates, "The Alaska Highway and the Indians of the Southern Yukon, 1912-1950: A Case Study of Native Adaptation to Northern Development," and Julie Cruikshank, "The Gravel Magnet: Some Social Impacts of the Alaska Highway on Yukon Indians," in *ibid*.
- <sup>41</sup> Yukon Territorial Archives, Anglican Church, Champagne File, Report to the Diocese of Yukon upon the present state of the Champagne (Y.T.) Mission Field, Summer 1949, by Anthony Guscoyne.
- <sup>42</sup> Robert McCandless, *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History*.
- <sup>43</sup> This process is examined in Ken Coates, "Upsetting the Rhythm: The Federal Government and Development of Indian Communities in the Yukon Territory, 1915-1973." Unpublished paper presented to the Knowing the North Conference, Edmonton, Alberta, November 1986.
- <sup>44</sup> Frank Duerden, *Testis: The Indian Village and Community Economy—An Appraisal* (Toronto: Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, 1986) and Peter Dimitrov and Martin Weinstein, *So That the Future Will Be Ours: Vol. 1: Ross River Impact Report* (Ross River: Ross River Indian Band, 1984).
- <sup>45</sup> Ken Coates, *Indian Participation in the Yukon Economy*, Background Discussion Paper, prepared for the Yukon 2000 Conference, Whitehorse, October 1986.
- <sup>46</sup> Marshall Sahlins, "Notes on the Original Affluent Society," in *Stone Age Economics* (London: Tavistock, 1974).
- <sup>47</sup> There is much debate on the degree to which harvesting activities "determined" patterns of human behaviour. For the functionalist perspective, see Marvin Harris, *Cultural Materialism* (New York: Random House, 1979). For an emphasis on humanistic aspects of social development, see David Riches, *Northern Nomadic Hunter-Gatherers: A Humanistic Approach* (London: Academic Press, 1982).