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Charles D. Arnold is Senior Archaeologist at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.

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Building Nunavut: A Story of Inuit Self-Government

PETER JULL

The story of Nunavut, a project to create a self-governing territory in the eastern and northern portions of the Northwest Territories, is important for all Canadians. It is the most ambitious of the Canadian aboriginal proposals for self-government, yet is also one of the most practical. It combines Canadian traditions of social and political philosophy with the needs of Inuit culture. It embraces concepts of environment and development, and social values and administration, of the most enlightened modern sort — of the type Canada preaches in the world. Its realization would be the most clear statement of Canada's genuine human rights convictions and commitment to full sovereignty in the Arctic, yet somehow that step has seemed difficult for the politicians and policy-makers in Ottawa to take.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s when young Inuit began using their newly-acquired education and contact with the currents in the world outside their northern homeland, they began to question the situation of their people. They had just come through a time in which the wisdom and authority of their elders had been supplanted by young white administrators with limited appreciation of Inuit language and society. Their people's way of life had been one of extensive use of the living environment based in scattered camps, but now they had been resettled in confused and confusing bungalow communities where an all-inclusive administration tried to reshape every aspect of their lives. They had seen ill family members disappear south for long periods, and often die there, alone. Their own schools had been leaders in the task of replacing their old "primitive" culture with the new ways of the white man, an urban industrial "mainstream" white man at that. It is not surprising that when the world was reverberating with de-colonization in Africa and Asia, and North America in the throes of a re-evaluating of minorities and the building of a caring society, these first Inuit school leavers should speak out.

The first object of concern was the domination of Inuit by white

men and white man's government. But soon another followed, and one about which no Inuit could be the least confused: the cavalier use of the land and waters of "our land," *nunavut* in the Inuit language, by industrial firms seeking new energy and mineral sources. The living species and natural habitat which had always sustained Inuit were now under threat themselves. The Indians of western and northern Canada had signed treaties many years earlier over these same issues, but the outcome had not been encouraging. Now in Alaska the Inuit, Dene, Haida, Tlingit, and Aleuts, an Inuit-related people, were trying a new model, an apparently gigantic land claims settlement. The billion dollars involved made it sound breath-taking, and there is little doubt that it showed both aboriginal Canadians and their governments that the unthinkable—a renegotiation of European settlement of America—was indeed thinkable.

The Inuit of the Keewatin and Baffin regions of the eastern Northwest Territories had ties, some ancient and cultural, and others which were a result of more recent administrative patterns. The people of the central Arctic or Kitikmeot region shared history and way of life, but had more recent ties with the Fort Smith and Yellowknife administrations which had successively governed the western NWT. The Inuvialuit, the Inuit of the Mackenzie River delta and the Beaufort Sea communities, were an Alaskan people who had moved into their area during the twentieth century to replace the Mackenzie Inuit who had mostly died out. The Nunavut heartland of the eastern arctic, in other words, had no associations with the western NWT until the early 1970s when its administration based in Ottawa was removed to Yellowknife with development of the NWT territorial administration. That administration had opened for business in 1967, but only concerned itself with the western area until it could digest the complications of a whole new government system. Not only had the eastern and western NWT been administered separately, but in the early 1960s both Conservative and Liberal governments had been in the process of dividing the NWT to create an eastern Nunatsiag territory. That project came to grief on the shoals of minority government because some northerners pointed out that the east was being constituted as a new entity without any say in the matter.

Nothing Canadians have done has earned more awe and respect among human rights observers abroad than the substantial fund-

ing of regional and national Indian, Métis and Inuit associations. That national system was being consolidated in the early 1970s. The Commissioner of the Northwest Territories opposed extension of the system into the North because he believed in grass roots organization rather than sponsored politicization from above, and because he sincerely regarded ethnically-based groups as dangerous and racist. He was a large man with forceful views, and he was speaking for much opinion in Canada at the time. For a generation who had fought against the evils of Nazi race theory, and who were trying to build a post-war society where there was equal opportunity for all, the affirmative action approach to minority issues was disturbing. It took many years for society to come to terms with these matters. More popular at the time among officials and some northern residents was the view that in the North a truly multi-racial, multicultural society could develop in which all were, simply, northerners. The notion of special administration for Indians, for instance, had proven such a baneful experience in Canada that few policy-makers wished to perpetuate ethnic administration. But the Alaska case was proving intriguing to some, and the united fury of Canadian Indians over the mid-1969 White Paper on Indian policy recommending the end to special status began to move public thinking. The ruminations of the Supreme Court judges in the Calder, or Nishga case, in the early 1970s were another major event, leading a Prime Minister who was the national champion against nationalist ethnocentrism to declare that the aboriginal people obviously had more particular rights than many, including himself, had thought.

In the North itself, the hopes for a single northern citizenship irrespective of race were running into trouble. It was fine for well-paid whites to share such sentiments, but the aboriginal majority in the NWT could not help but notice that it was they who lacked equality in jobs, income, housing, education, and such. The territorial government in the NWT was largely a service delivery agency to provide the most comprehensive welfare state services of any Canadian government, even while successive northern affairs ministers in Ottawa talked of free enterprise while levering more funds from their cabinet colleagues! It was the aboriginal peoples who were the prime objects of that administration, but the whole system was a white man's system in design and habit, and in its goals and assumptions. Once northern aboriginal groups, including Inuit ones, were off and running, they posed a challenge to the

authority of the territorial administration. Had they been cultivated as helpful potential associates, it might all have been different. But the territorial administration was suspicious and rejecting. Since that administration was virtually all white, and the associations were all aboriginal, the political struggle sharpened.

Inuit developed their organizations and proposals quickly. The strongest NWT Inuit bodies were the Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement (COPE), the Inuvialuit regional body, and Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), the national Canadian Inuit body. Some Inuit saw ITC as too devoted to the Nunavut area which, after all includes only three of Canada's six Inuit regions, and excludes the western Arctic, arctic Quebec and northern Labrador. All NWT Inuit worked at first on a common land claims policy, but eventually COPE broke away to pursue its interests as the most developed area of Canadian Inuit and the area under most immediate threat of major resource development. ITC fixed its hopes on a proposal for Nunavut: a land claims settlement including creation of a Nunavut territorial government. In other words, while the Nunavut government would function as a provincial-type government open to all residents, the large population majority who were Inuit could expect to dominate its life just as French-speaking people dominate Quebec.¹ And the claims settlement would reinforce the economic, cultural and social rights of Inuit through specially-created bodies controlled by Inuit.

The COPE claim was settled in the early 1980s, so that Inuit of Nunavut now have that experience plus that of Quebec Inuit who settled their claim in 1975 (including establishment of a regional government), of Alaskan Inuit in several quite different regions who settled in 1971² and in Greenland, an Inuit self-governing country within the Danish kingdom.³ These experiences have been full of problems and shot through with successes, so there is much to be learned. (As a student of comparative aboriginal self-government development, I am tempted to conclude that most of the problems are both foreseeable and avoidable.) The federal government has insisted that Nunavut claims and territorial government creation must be negotiated separately, although it links them itself whenever it wishes to put pressure on Inuit. While the Nunavut claims have been worked on steadily for more than a decade, however, the creation of a Nunavut government only became the occupation of a specific body in 1982 following an NWT-wide plebiscite on division of the NWT to create Nunavut.

In the eastern half of the NWT, the Nunavut heartland, the vote was 4-1 for Nunavut in a record voter turnout. The result so stunned the observers that nobody attempted any longer to deny Nunavut. Both the Yellowknife and Ottawa governments moved to make creation of Nunavut their avowed policy. And in Yellowknife the territorial government imaginatively and wisely sponsored two new bodies, the Nunavut Constitutional Forum and the Western Constitutional Forum, to carry out the work of devising new governments. These bodies contain Members of the Legislative Assembly elected from each forum's area, plus the leaders of aboriginal associations in the area. Each forum thus represents the social and political reality of half of the NWT. COPE has the right to sit in either or both forums, and Inuvialuit ambivalence has been the main specific obstacle to speedy creation of Nunavut. A later delay has also been occasioned by Dene and Métis discomfort with a proposed Nunavut boundary which is discussed below.

The aboriginal organizations funded by Ottawa have changed the character of the North and of Canada. In the NWT they were the first aboriginal public bodies which could tackle territory-wide and national issues. In spite of, or perhaps because of, territorial government hostility, they became rallying points for aboriginal opinion. And while the territorial governments excluded aboriginal employees from policy or management levels, despite many directives insisting on greater aboriginal hiring, the organizations provided them work and great opportunities for social and political action. Very quickly Ottawa recognized *de facto* that NWT politics, opinion and political legitimacy were divided between the legislature and the aboriginal associations. Great care was taken to balance these interests, and Ottawa through the Trudeau and Clark government years played a role of active neutrality: its goal was to secure a social, economic and political development in the North which would provide equality between aboriginal northerners and the newer arrivals. In particular, Ottawa resisted territorial government attempts to secure devolution of powers and budgets, seeing clearly that these would consolidate the position of, and otherwise benefit, the whites while largely leaving aboriginal northerners aside.

The NWT territorial government has, however, evolved considerably. The turning point was the October 1979 election which swept into oblivion the older white leaders who had insisted on a North modelled on the South. They had opposed aboriginal rights,

claims settlements, and political and institutional adjustments for aboriginal people, while seeing in massive resource development the hopes for their business community. A new group was elected now, consisting of younger whites who recognized the need to accommodate the interests of their aboriginal fellow citizens, and young aboriginal leaders themselves. They met in special session at once and reversed most of the major policies on aboriginal rights and constitutional issues of preceding legislators. They also set up a special committee on NWT "unity," and the committee quickly found and announced that neither the present borders nor the present administration of the NWT were meaningful to most residents, especially the aboriginal residents. It was this discussion which, under Inuit pressure, led to the above-mentioned plebiscite.

The NWT government is something of a marvel. Its history deserves to be written and written carefully before it all vanishes into new systems. Essentially it is the Canadian monument to progressive programming for an underdeveloped area, and the boldest attempt at total government ever seen in this country. It was designed to respond humanely to the poverty and isolation Canadians saw in the North, and to deliver southern standards of living conditions to the most remote ice-bound hamlets. It cut corners to upgrade living standards quickly, and the main corner cut was the viewpoint of the aboriginal residents. This administration concentrated expertise to solve northern problems, to bring the good things from the South to the North. It was a directed effort, and was specifically designed to deliver outside goods rather than respond to inside opinion. As aboriginal people recovered their balance from the massive concentration of their scattered camps into new villages and the change of all that was familiar to them, they found, not surprisingly, a system which had little interest in their ideas. After all, the perceived primitiveness of their ideas was one of the things which was to be changed. Of course there were many individuals who were outstanding in their commitment and sensitivity to Inuit, Métis and Dene needs and preferences. But in general the government system was one which changed the North dramatically and in ways which had vast implications for every individual aboriginal life. The replacement of a federal administrative bureaucracy by a territorial one after 1967 with an elected northern legislature to democratize distribution of federal largesse did not really change very much at the top. However, it did provide more local employment in

government overall, and it recruited a relatively young, highly capable and deeply-committed public service. This public service is probably pound for pound the best in Canada at its main task of service delivery. As one deputy minister in Yellowknife said to me, "Let's face it: this is a shit and water government." But if sewers and water are major tasks, many of the underlying problems today are philosophical and legal, institutional and economic, and in such policy areas the NWT government has been almost incapable of action. Part of the problem is the lack of jurisdiction over land and resources, but there is also the fact that budgets are almost entirely tied to a very rich service level which someday will break the whole system wide open, and the unsettled, stalemated claims and constitutional development processes. The basic consensus on what the NWT is and should be is lacking. Nunavut is the biggest piece in this puzzle, but as Dene and Métis voters saw when they supported Nunavut in the 1982 plebiscite, that change is the key to re-ordering territorial government for the West — the Dene, Métis and Inuvialuit homelands — as well.

The territorial legislature has been highly productive in proportion to the weakness of the executive. Committees have been important and local interests are bargained back and forth. The "premier" (officially the Government Leader) has not chosen his own ministers, and so the cabinet has been in fact eight equal persons of no one political orientation. Policy-making on the larger subjects has been non-existent because impossible. Yet a party system may be premature until the Nunavut issue is settled: the Inuit bloc, including whites elected from Nunavut, is in fact the main "party."

The Nunavut Constitutional Forum (NCF) began its work in August, 1982. It settled on a work plan which would produce some background studies beginning with a history of the Nunavut concept, followed by studies of major issues such as the federal-Nunavut division of powers and fiscal relations, and concluding with a comprehensive proposal for government in Nunavut.⁴ Inuit knew well what many northern groups have not: that for success in influencing federal policy a parallel southern campaign with its own rules and materials must accompany political action in the North. The NCF meetings were marked by their almost excessive openness, so the press and public had the opportunity to participate in constitution-making. Meetings were frequent in 1983 and 1984, and work intense. In late 1983 tours of Kewatin and Baffin

region communities, and then Central Arctic communities, took place, with the Western Arctic Inuvialuit communities visited in the first half of 1984.

These tours yielded several important points. Inuit wanted their language and elements of their customs protected and promoted in Nunavut. This would mean securing official language use of Inuktitut, an easily-agreed principle but one which will take time and serious development to implement. Nothing could be more important, however, and a good bargaining is being made by the NWT government today. In Greenland, Inuktitut is a language of legislation and all business and the main language of the country. A study of Inuit customary law has proceeded slowly. The most likely prospects for Inuit customary elements are the administration of justice and in local government.

Another universal point was the need for a Nunavut government to be an active participant in offshore management. Federal governments have been moving towards greater recognition of Inuit offshore interests because of the Canadian claim to full marine sovereignty in the Arctic based on Inuit use and occupancy of the Arctic islands and seas and ice between.⁵ The Mulroney government has agreed to negotiate with Inuit shared rights to manage and secure revenues from offshore renewable and non-renewable resources as part of land claims. (In other respects, however, that government has limited the scope of claims negotiations disappointingly.)

Finally, Inuit were concerned that Nunavut not simply be another government which directed and changed their lives. They were most concerned that significant Inuit employment in government be secured so the governors would understand and be sympathetic to the governed. They also were motivated by the critical job shortage among the extraordinarily large youth population. This problem is one of continuing concern, and crash upgrading programmes such as that which took place among the Inuit of Alaska's North Slope may have to be developed.

Otherwise, the Nunavut proposal is one for a continuation of the now familiar institutions of territorial government, i.e., similar to provincial governments across Canada. Inuit wish to make use of technology, at which their youth have shown themselves exceptionally gifted, to provide a decentralized administration. This should also help with Inuitization because there are many trained but under-employed or unemployed persons in the villages, persons

whose family ties and culture would keep them from moving to a centre elsewhere.

But two major challenges have threatened Nunavut. The first was the western boundary of Nunavut. Ideally, Inuit would like Nunavut to include the Inuvialuit homeland, but this is rejected by aboriginal and white residents of the Mackenzie Valley in the western NWT. It is also rejected privately in Ottawa because of fear that to so define a jurisdiction around a single ethnic group would feed separatist moods in Quebec, in Acadia, in Inuit Quebec or Anglophone west Montreal Island. The fact that such a Nunavut would almost adjoin the rambunctious Inuit North Slope Borough government on the West and the socialist Greenland government on the East also generates fears of a pan-Inuit homeland movement.⁶ In traditional Inuit society confrontation is frowned upon, and the rather traditional eastern Umuavut Inuit did not force the boundary issue. The Inuvialuit wanted to avoid a choice which many of their people would find wrenching, abandoning the western ties they knew or abandoning the eastern Inuit whose numbers could weigh favourably for future political needs. Some Inuvialuit leaders also calculated that if they stayed undecided, they could see how rich a deal the NCF and WCF might be prepared to make because they were clear that a regional Inuvialuit government was more important to them than any choice of Nunavut or western territory in future. The boundary agreed in January, 1985, leaving the Inuvialuit in the West prepared the way for the Mulroney government's February, 1985, commitment to creation of Nunavut in a few short years. But the boundary agreement unravelled and the refusal of eastern Inuit to force the issue let political momentum escape. In January, 1987, the same basic proposal was agreed upon again by Inuit and Dene-Métis negotiators, and is very much alive despite delays and disputes in 1987. By late 1987 Ottawa had abandoned all interest in Nunavut, but this may change quickly if aboriginal northerners can agree finally on a boundary.

The other issue has been devolution of powers from Ottawa to Yellowknife. Inuit have insisted that no devolution to the present NWT government take place because it reinforces an unsatisfactory institution. They would prefer that devolution await creation of the Nunavut government. Federal minister Crombie accepted this, but policy has changed under his successor. As well, it has been general government policy to unload jobs and budgets to the

territories to give the appearance of a downsized federal government and of a commitment to northern self-government. By so abandoning the past bi-partisan federal policy of even-handedness between white settler and aboriginal resident institutions, and failing to link devolution of power to white élites conditional on their acceptance of aboriginal rights and interests, Ottawa has now threatened race relations, future stability, and equality of opportunity in the NWT. Territorial government ministers have been delighted, of course, to be given more powers and funds while avoiding the pain other governments have in raising their own revenues.

These two recent conflicts have brought into sharp focus the two broad political proto-parties in Nunavut. Majority opinion in the eastern Arctic has been supportive of strong Inuit cultural guarantees, environmental protection, and collective control of and benefit from economic activity, while seeing Nunavut as the vehicle for realizing these. But in the more westerly areas of the eastern Arctic and in the western Arctic is centred another opinion, less committed to Inuitization or even to Nunavut itself, favouring private small enterprise and rapid economic development. The creation and nature of Nunavut will depend on the continued interplay between these two groups. Many twists and turns may lie ahead, but there is little doubt that Nunavut will be achieved sooner or later.

Despite separate structures, the Nunavut claims body, Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN) and the Nunavut Constitutional Forum have worked closely. Nunavut is a whole, and the government and the claims settlement are two halves of that whole. TFN has in 1987 commissioned a study by the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee on the relationship between claims and government in Nunavut, and the best tactic for Inuit to follow now to win Nunavut. One thing which nobody, surely, now doubts is that achieving self-government is a process, not an event, and various stages must be worked through by a people if their self-government is to be authentic and workable.

Meanwhile, the ideology of Inuit in proposing Nunavut and of other Canadian aboriginal peoples, especially in the more northern (and more intact) areas, has come down with rare authority from an international report. The World Commission on Environment and Development, the "Brundtland Commission," in its 1987 report⁷ states unequivocally that unless the governments of

the world follow its proposals, life on this planet will be nasty, brutish and short. In a section on aboriginal homelands it says that where such benign relationships of intact nature and indigenous peoples living harmoniously with them are found, aboriginal systems of ecological management and adaptation must be reinforced and wider political control ("empowering") vested in aboriginal peoples. The words in this moving passage sound like those which Canadian Inuit have been using matter-of-factly for years. With some seventy-five per cent of Canada's land area remaining as relatively intact nature with aboriginal peoples the main permanent residents of this northern hinterland, the Brundtland report is obviously speaking to Canadians.

Conclusions

The historical summary I have sketched makes the main point about Nunavut. It is not an off-the-shelf theory from a university or from consultants, or a vague dream, but a practical evolution in community sentiment. It combines the experience of Canadian constitution-making through a period when constitutional forms have been a high-profile subject of discussion in Canada, with the hopes and needs of a distinct population in a unique physical territory. It has been a product of growth and dialogue. A leadership firmly rooted and still living in the scattered villages of the Arctic, advised by capable professional staff, has served as animator and mediator for the wider Inuit community.

The most notable characteristic of the Nunavut area in the past decade has been the endless series of meetings on all manner of subjects. Through thousands of hours of talk and questioning and listening, Inuit have developed a general consensus on what kind of public services and institutions would best meet their needs. Doubters from outside have complained that ordinary folk in Nunavut do not really understand inter-governmental intricacies, a rather fatuous observation, surely, because nobody else in Canada does either — or is expected to! But nobody else in Canada has been exposed to or been more frequently asked to discuss the requirements for governing bodies — federal, present territorial or future Nunavut — than Inuit in the NWT. And in no corner of the land are discussions about constitutions, at national or Nunavut level, more familiar.

Modern times and recent constitutional precedent at national level, notably the televised parliamentary committee hearings in Ottawa in 1980-81 and the series of aboriginal constitutional First Ministers' Conferences, have taken constitution-making away from the specialists and placed it where it belongs, with the people. There are basically two approaches to the development of government and peoples' constitutions in northern Canada. One is gradualism whereby distinct regions and institutions gradually become assimilated into national conventions, their cultures lost or submerged in the white, southern-modelled systems which the farming and industrial history of Canada had developed from British antecedents. The other is to recognize the distinctive character of the North's regions—Northwest Territories or Yukon, Denedeh or Nunavut—and build systems which accommodate and celebrate cultural and regional character.

Policy emphasis has alternated, and the present Mulroney government has successively opted for each course. In February, 1985, northern affairs minister David Crombie spoke in Yellowknife saying that Nunavut in the East and a new constitution in the West which would include special cultural and regional features for Inuvialuit, Dene and Métis should proceed. He was continuing and furthering the directed momentum of the Trudeau and Clark governments before him. But in October, 1987, northern affairs minister Bill McKnight speaking in Whitehorse opted for the gradualism model and tied it so explicitly to job creation and development profits that one wonders that his government accepts the legitimacy of Quebec and the half-dozen other "have not" provinces which receive equalization. Prime Minister Mulroney himself in a party poster for the North released in autumn, 1987, devotes his large-type message to the constitutional issue:

Canadian history teaches that the gradual maturing of territories into provinces has been an essential part of the growth of Canada.

This government has actively promoted the steady expansion of responsible government in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, and will continue to give to both territories the support they will need for the next stages in their constitutional development.

The federal government has, for the time being, brushed aside the recent history and trends in northern Canada in favour of a policy which justifies its devolution programme and which turns its back on aboriginal hopes.⁸ It is doubtful, however, if this policy

would withstand a serious political campaign of opposition from the North. The North has not been a priority of the Mulroney government, nuclear submarines and sovereignty claims notwithstanding, and one suspects the new policy is a matter of haste and convenience more than of careful study or profound conviction.

The Canadian North shares many characteristics with the foreign North. Among aboriginal peoples such as Alaskan Inuit and Indians, Greenlandic Inuit and Laplanders (the Sami), or among the indigenous European populations of Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Shetland, the same emerging identities with their political and cultural imperatives, and demands for the safeguarding of northern economic assets traditional to these peoples, are observable. Canada shares patterns with a wider North, and if Canadians were more aware of this it might be easier to develop realistic policies in and for the North.⁹ Inuit themselves have been leaders in developing contact and sharing experience with the foreign North through the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, a permanent body now headquartered in Canada.

Meanwhile, the challenges of Nunavut and other northern proposals will remain. They will continue to sap the life and direction of the existing jurisdictions in which they lie, and weaken the North, until they are resolved. They also provide a rather sour commentary on Canada's much publicized commitment to the rights of dark-skinned people abroad.

Peter Jull was research director, policy advisor and author for the Nunavut Constitutional Forum from 1982 to 1987. He was a policy assistant to successive Commissioners of the NWT and was Advisor on the Constitution (Northern and Native Affairs) in the federal cabinet office from 1968 to 1980. In recent years he has travelled and studied widely in the North, writing many articles and monographs on socio-political developments.

NOTES

¹ This point is remarkable. Inuit working to develop the Nunavut government proposal have consistently rejected the idea of special political rights for themselves beyond a reasonable voter residency requirement. The North, of course, contains large populations of transient and short-term workers, and the residency requirement would prevent a political takeover by these people. Inuit in Nunavut community hearings repeatedly insisted that outsiders who came to live with them in their communities should share the same rights, e.g. local hunting. A proposal in *Building Nunavut* (see note 1 below) that resource industry boom sites should be "quarantined" as is done by other northern populations, e.g. in Shetland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland, or in the past in northern Canada, was vigorously attacked by the *Tuvalu Globe and Mail* editorially as unsatisfactory. Nevertheless,

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.

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

³ 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.

⁴ 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).

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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

KENNETH COATES

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.¹

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.² 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).³ Much less attention, however, has been paid to the example of the Indians in the Yukon Territory.⁴ 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