

# Subsistence and the Social Economy of Canada's Aboriginal North

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the complex social, economic, and political interplay that takes place between subsistence and wage economies, sharing and reciprocity, and regulatory regimes that now mediate Aboriginal community access to wildlife resources. By focusing on subsistence, with its equally important social and economic attributes, this article argues that the harvesting, processing, and distribution of wild foods and resources continues to be a central component of Canada's northern social economy. This article concludes by arguing that any attempt to develop effective northern policy in the future must account for the complexity and heterogeneity of northern subsistence economies, and remain open to the plurality of forms they may take.

## **Introduction**

In 1931, Kalervo Oberg, then a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Chicago, conducted research with the Tlingit of southeast Alaska. Oberg's interests, and those of his graduate advisors (Edward Sapir and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown), were on the links between economics and social organization in societies that have no organized markets or official currencies. Conducted in considerable detail, Oberg's research examined Tlingit property rights, annual production cycles, organization of labour, trade, distribution of wealth, and resource consumption. During Oberg's research, he came to appreciate that although Tlingit economic institutions were central to the exchange of goods and services, the social aspects of those same institutions were so important that "to treat them solely as mechanisms of commodity transfer would be to miss their equally important social significance in Tlingit society" (1973: 93). Oberg concluded that in order to fully comprehend the Tlingit economy one must consider the distinctive nature of Tlingit culture and how social systems situate resource production and exchange activities. Oberg's doctoral dissertation, entitled the "Social

Economy of the Tlingit Indians of Alaska” (later published 1973) was one of the first empirical studies to clearly show that the economies of Aboriginal peoples not only entail highly specialized modes of resource production, but also involve the transmission of social values—in essence, models of social economy.

Since Oberg’s research, academic attention to Aboriginal social economies has come in and out of fashion or has been conducted under other thematic headings. Today there exists considerable debate over the meaning and relevance of the social economy for Aboriginal communities and whether its organizing principles reflect the contemporary social and economic conditions of Aboriginal peoples. For example, in “Defining the Social Economy in Indigenous Communities,” the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (2005) identifies five defining principles: 1) service to members of the community rather than generating profits; 2) autonomous management rather than government or market control; 3) democratic decision making; 4) primacy of work and the individual over capital accumulation; and 5) participation premised on empowerment. These principles have, however, been challenged on grounds that they fail to adequately reflect the heterogeneity of Aboriginal economies and misrepresent the realities inherent within contemporary Aboriginal communities (Corbiere, Johnston, and Reyes 2007). Research conducted within a social economy framework has also been criticized for failing to question the imposition of colonial economic models that have long been used to inform public policy. Thus, beyond the rhetorical, the relevance of the social economy for Aboriginal communities has been called into question.

Notwithstanding the validity of these critiques, the social economy may still prove to be a useful conceptual device for the reality it can capture. For example, a social economy framework can be used to account for the multiplicity of institutions within Aboriginal communities that perform a blend of commercial (wages) and non-commercial (subsistence) activities, as well as involve monetary (public transfers) and non-monetary transactions (sharing wild foods with others) (Restakis 2006). It is in this context that subsistence—characterized as economic activities (hunting, fishing, gathering, herding, crafting, trading) that are relatively self-contained within a community or region and are governed by cultural norms and traditional patterns of exchange (Lonner 1980)—is examined. Specifically, this article explores the complex social, economic, and political interplay that takes place between subsistence and wage economies, sharing and reciprocity, and regulatory regimes that now mediate the access and use of wildlife resources by Aboriginal communities in the Canadian North. By focusing on

subsistence, with its equally important social and economic attributes, this paper argues that the harvesting, processing, and distribution of wild foods and resources continues to be a central component of Canada's northern social economy.

### **Subsistence and the Social Economy**

While the economies of Aboriginal communities in Canada have undergone considerable change since Oberg's research with the Tlingit, an enduring and perhaps defining feature remains the harvest of wild foods and resources. Despite experiencing profound social and economic change, Aboriginal peoples throughout northern Canada have maintained a lasting connection with the environment through hunting, fishing, and gathering of resources from the land and sea.<sup>1</sup> Today, as in the past, Aboriginal peoples from across the North harvest, process, distribute, and consume considerable volumes of wild foods annually. Collectively, these activities have come to be known as "subsistence" and together comprise an essential component of northern Aboriginal cultures (Thornton 1998). Subsistence has been defined as the local production and distribution of goods and services (Lonner 1980) where the objective is not total self-sufficiency nor capital accumulation but rather a continuous flow of goods and services (Sahlins 1971). Marks (1977) extends this definition by noting that subsistence, as a specialized mode of production and exchange, also entails the transmission of social norms and cultural values; or what Neale (1971) refers to as the psychic income or non-monetary awards of wildlife harvesting. Participation in subsistence activities is fundamental in maintaining the social vitality and cultural continuity of Aboriginal communities (Freeman 1986: 29).

The term "informal economy" has also been used to characterize subsistence activities. In fact, a review of the literature finds a plurality of terms that have been used to describe the harvesting activities of northern Aboriginal peoples, including non-observed, irregular, unofficial, hidden, shadow, non-structured, and unorganized. However, by being characterized as unorganized or irregular, the subsistence economy has to some extent been stigmatized with those participating in subsistence activities typified as non-progressive, backward, and resistant to change (Reimer 2006)—images that in some circles persist today. These characterizations have in turn invited ill-conceived policies derived from outdated theories of modernization that assume subsistence economies will be subsumed as development proceeds on national and global scales.

Despite the predictions of their eventual demise, subsistence economies continue to demonstrate considerable resilience and remain integral to the

health and well-being of northern Aboriginal communities. Subsistence research, in the form of harvest studies (Priest and Usher 2004) and Aboriginal land use mapping (Sherry and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation 1999), reveal that fishing, hunting, and collecting wild resources remain integral to the economies of many, if not most, Aboriginal communities located across Canada's North. For example, the Arctic Monitoring Assessment Program (AMAP - 1998) estimates that individual consumption of wild foods in the Northwest Territories is 232 kilograms annually. The Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS - 2001) found a similar prevalence among Inuit households, with wild foods, including caribou, whales, seals, ducks, Arctic char, shellfish, and berries, among others, comprising more than half of the total dietary intake of 78% of Inuit households in Nunavik, 73% in Nunavut, 70% in Inuvialuit, and 56% in Nunatsiavut (Tait 2001). Nearly half of all Inuit children in Nunavut, Nunavik, and Inuvialuit eat wild meat five to seven days a week while in Nunatsiavut, 22% of Inuit children consume wild meat as often (Tait 2001). There also exists considerable optimism for the continued use of wild foods, with 70% of all Inuit adults believing that harvest levels for themselves and other members of their household would remain the same or even increase in the years to come (Tait 2001). The main reason for their optimism was the growing number of community members who were taking part in hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering activities. That said, there are some generational disparities emerging among those taking part in the subsistence activities. As identified in the APS (2001), the highest producers of wild foods among Inuit were men between the ages of 45 and 54 (90% participation), while only 65% of Inuit between 15 and 24 years of age were engaged in subsistence (74% for men and 55% for women). This disparity can be attributed to a number of factors, including school attendance and involvement in wage earning employment, particularly in the industrial and public sectors. These and other factors no doubt detract from the time available to participate in harvesting of wild foods. However, this trend may be countered by a reassertion of cultural values that often occurs as Inuit youth mature, assume leadership roles in their own communities, and take on more prominent roles as providers of wild foods in family sharing networks (Ford et al. 2008: 57).

With subsistence production representing a large component of the northern Aboriginal economy, considerable efforts have been made to quantify the monetary value of subsistence production. Whether used to inform public policy or to aid in impact mitigation and compensation efforts, it has generally been considered important to attach a numerical exchange value to the volume of wild foods harvested from the land (i.e., one kilogram

of harvested caribou for one kilogram of store-bought beef) (Natcher 2001). In Nunavut, the dollar value of annual wild food production is estimated to be \$30 million (Vail and Clinton 2001). However, this figure does not include associated activities such as the sale or trade of sealskins or the use of natural resources for the production and sale of clothing and crafts (i.e., fur, ivory, soapstone). If these activities are considered, the total value of the land-based economy of Nunavut alone is estimated to be as high as \$60 million annually (Vail and Clinton 2001). Other aspects of the subsistence economy that generally go unobserved are the associated health costs of eating less nutritious imported foods or the effects of not participating in harvesting activities and assuming a more sedentary lifestyle. It is safe to assume that, when considered together, the total monetary value of wild food production far exceeds the exchange value alone.

While important in analytical terms, the valuation of subsistence production does run the risk of misrepresenting and devaluing the cultural significance of subsistence activities. Wein and Freeman (1992) found that, for many Arctic residents, consuming wild foods is fundamentally important for personal and cultural well-being. When one loses access to wild foods, a subsequent effect is the loss in personal identity and a deterioration in one's overall sense of self (Wein and Freeman 1992). Because Aboriginal cultures of northern Canada are rooted in the landscape, and cultural values are perpetuated through continued land use activities, the cultural significance of subsistence pursuits cannot be quantified exclusively in economic terms. Nuttall and his colleagues (2005: 654) have argued that the harvesting of wildlife resources is not done to simply satisfy economic or nutritional needs, but rather to provide a fundamental basis for the social identity, cultural survival, and spiritual life of northern Aboriginal peoples. In this way, wildlife harvesting is as much an economic pursuit as it is an expression and perpetuation of cultural values. For the Innu of Labrador, the value of hunting caribou extends well beyond personal sustenance. As a rite of passage, the killing of one's first caribou serves as an important indicator as to whether a young man is prepared to assume responsibility as a family provider. In a cultural context, caribou hunting remains a defining factor for young Innu men entering adulthood. The same is true for seal hunting among young Inuit (Wenzel 1991) or moose hunting among the Cree (Nelson, Natcher, and Hickey 2005). Considered in this context, the procurement of wild foods is of fundamental importance to not only an individual's economic well-being but also to the social vitality of northern Aboriginal communities.

## **Reciprocity and the Social Economy**

A further expression of the social vitality of wild food production is exemplified through food sharing and the norms of reciprocity that are associated with harvesting activities. Prior to entering into a more sedentary lifestyle, it was necessary for northern Aboriginal peoples to adapt to the temporal and spatial variations in resource availability, for instance the annual migration of caribou or waterfowl. Under these conditions, food sharing helped to minimize the impacts of misfortune affecting an individual or a single household and reduced the consequences of environmental and economic strain (Nelson, Natcher, and Hickey 2008). Oberg (1931-32) distinguished seven traditional forms of exchange common among the Tlingit including barter, gift exchange, the food gift, the feast, the ceremonial exchange of labour, and the ceremonial gift (1973: 93). Each of these forms of exchange occurred along a continuum of formality—some derived through agreements between trading partners and others from long-standing norms of reciprocity between families and clans.

Today, Aboriginal peoples must still adapt to fluctuations in wildlife populations but must also cope with a variety of new influences, such as the need for income to support subsistence activities, population change, and constraints imposed by industrial development and wildlife regulations. As in the past, the basic purpose of sharing wild foods has generally remained the same—to maximize the overall well-being of the community. In Aboriginal communities across the Canadian North, food sharing remains an important and widely-practised tradition. Tait (2001) found that food sharing takes place among 96% of all Inuit households. The exchange of wild foods, and more recently equipment, unites families, communities, and regions on economic, social, and ideological grounds (Wheelersburg 2008: 171). This form of reciprocity not only facilitates the distribution of food as an economic resource, but also affirms personal relationships and the social networks that support them. Thus, by embodying both social and economic attributes, food sharing continues to represent a defining feature of the northern Aboriginal social economy.

Reciprocity is the social mechanism that makes associational life possible. When reciprocity finds economic expression for the provision of goods and services to people and communities it is the social economy that results. (Restakis 2006: 1)

While participating in the production and distribution of wild foods establishes a sense of social relatedness within communities, equally important

is the fact that the sharing of wild foods instills a moral framework between people and the non-human world (Fienup-Riorden 1991). For many Aboriginal peoples, their relationship with animals is based on reciprocal transactions. In these exchanges, animals give themselves to hunters in exchange for the hunters' respectful treatment of them as non-human persons (Feit 2007). Encompassing an important spiritual dimension, food sharing and norms of reciprocity entail broader conceptions of social responsibility and account for an entirely different set of motivations that extend beyond economic rationality.

Due to the increasing importance of money in the northern economy, some have suggested that divisions and social tensions have arisen in ways that have challenged traditional sharing practices. For example, Ford and his colleagues (2008) have found that the sharing of hunting equipment between family members has come under increasing stress, with some younger family members reluctant to share equipment with others or requesting payment before sharing occurs. In such cases, access to money is proving critical in the ability to effectively harvest wild foods while the rising cost of equipment (particularly fuel) is proving prohibitive to full-time hunters and youth who may have limited income earning opportunities (Ford et al. 2008: 54). These conditions have made the demand for wage income even more pronounced and have contributed to the complexity of the northern economy.

### **The Northern Mixed Economy**

It has been suggested that, due to the importance of money in the North, divisions within communities have emerged in ways that have weakened social networks and contributed to the loss of traditional cultural values (Ford et al. 2008). Owing to the incompatibility of subsistence and "modern" wage economies, Inuit family structure, values, and expectations have been altered to the point where traditional forms of socialization are being devalued (Hund 2004: 1). As a result, "the functioning of social networks have been affected by a decrease in importance of the extended family unit and the emergence of inter-generational segregation, a decline in the practice of traditional cultural values, a concentration of resources in fewer hands, and the emergence of social conflict" (Ford et al. 2008: 54).

Despite the increasing commodification of northern resources and the irreversible importance of cash in Aboriginal communities, others have argued that the contemporary mixed economy of northern Aboriginal peoples continues to reflect the customary social relationships long inherent within subsistence-oriented systems (Wenzel et al. 2000: 2). Kruse (1991) notes that the cultural values associated with subsistence production have not been

diminished by the wage economy, but rather that wage earning has actually allowed for the continuation of harvesting activities and has, in some cases, strengthened the social networks supporting them. Rather than subverting subsistence production, the wage economy provides an economic basis for wildlife harvesting, thereby invigorating social institutions and perpetuating traditional values among communities (Wheelersburg 2008: 170).

While the importance of wages in the northern economy has likely influenced the social structure of some Aboriginal communities, Hart (2006: 22) attributes much of the ongoing debate to the compartmentalization of subsistence and wage economies into distinct "sectors," as if subsistence and wage economies function in different places, like agriculture and manufacturing or western and traditional. While the distinction between subsistence and wage economies may be useful in analytical terms, Aboriginal involvement in subsistence and wage economies is best seen as occurring along a continuum with participation occurring at varying points on the scale. The economic make-up of most Aboriginal households is quite heterogeneous, including a blend of economic activities. Some household members may participate in subsistence harvesting, others may produce and sell commercially-modified products harvested from the land (fur, carvings), some may receive government transfer payments (employment insurance, social assistance, pensions), and others may be involved in full or seasonal wage-earning labour. Rather than choosing to participate in any one activity, most households attempt to find a balance with household incomes being derived from multiple sources. Depending on a range of circumstances, community members move along this continuum with most households participating simultaneously in multiple activities. Nuttall and his colleagues (2005: 673) suggest that, due to the complimentary nature of subsistence and wage-earning, the northern mixed-economy is perhaps best characterized as an optimal economy.

In mixed economy households, wage labour is often used to support the harvesting activities of other family members. In fact, households with the greatest access to wage income, and thereby the financial means to purchase the necessary equipment to harvest effectively, tend to produce, consume, and distribute significantly more wild foods than households with limited or no access to wage earning opportunities (Wheelersburg 2008: 171). Rarely a means in itself, cash in the northern mixed economy most often facilitates the subsistence harvest (Fienup-Riorden 1986). For example, a father may receive money from his daughter who is employed in the community daycare facility. With the money, the father purchases fuel and supplies to fish for Arctic char. Of the 500 pounds of char caught, 100 pounds are sold

for \$1.75 per pound. This \$175 is returned to the daughter for her initial investment and the remaining 400 pounds of char—with an exchange value in the local Co-op or Northern Store of \$2000—is distributed and consumed by friends and family (scenario adapted from Simpson, nd). In this process, the relationship between subsistence and wage earning activities represents a process of integration with each end of the economic continuum dynamically linked within a social network (Chen 2006). Lonner (1980: 8) argues that in today's North a cash-free society is neither possible nor desirable, but is the result of both choice and necessity as technology and sources of energy are provided from "outside." By optimizing a range of economic activities, northern Aboriginal peoples have successfully incorporated wage earning into an overall livelihood strategy.

Despite calls to end the characterization of northern Aboriginal peoples as being caught between the contrary demands of wage and subsistence economies (Lonner 1980), and to respect the social and economic forms of mixed-economies for their own right (Tanner 1979), Canada's northern economy continues to be defined as having two distinct economic sectors—subsistence and cash. This form of dualism has, in effect, created a dialectic between subsistence and wage economies, with participants in the former often represented as less-advantaged (Chen 2006: 84). In a northern policy context, such characterizations have been a powerful impetus for government interventions and have invited regulatory actions and development schemes aimed at improving the economic conditions of Aboriginal peoples—often with disastrous effects.

### **Regulating the Northern Social Economy**

As early as 1894 (passage of the Unorganized Territories Game Preservation Act), the subsistence economy of Canada's Aboriginal peoples was becoming increasingly regulated. Under the guise of wildlife conservation, government-imposed game regulations challenged the ability of Aboriginal peoples to secure a livelihood from the land. With a growing government interest and presence in the North, many of the activities associated with wild food harvesting—fur trapping, seasonal mobility, communal hunting—were defined as criminal activities (Sandlos 2007: 236). By the early 1900s, Aboriginal subsistence economies were being significantly impacted through the formation of parks and wildlife preserves, seasonal hunting closures, and, in several cases, hunting moratoriums on several key subsistence species (beaver, whales, caribou, and muskox).

With the passage of the Migratory Birds Convention (MBC-1916), the Canadian government assumed responsibility for the protection of

migratory birds within its national boundaries. While proving to be a significant advancement in terms of international wildlife conservation, the terms of the MBC failed to account for the subsistence needs of Canada's northern Aboriginal peoples. Specifically, by establishing seasonal closures, the MBC made it illegal for Aboriginal hunters to harvest waterfowl prior to the first day of September. With most waterfowl species having already migrated south by this time, the MBC effectively denied Aboriginal access to a key subsistence resource. Similar regulatory restrictions were imposed on Inuit whalers following the passage of the 1931 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. Specifically, Article 3 placed severe limits on the means by which the Inuit could harvest whales. Inuit hunters were only permitted to use canoes or other craft propelled exclusively by sail or oars, were not permitted to use or carry firearms during a hunt, and were restricted from delivering products of their harvest to any third person (Gambell 1993). Whatever their justification, wildlife regulations such as these proved to have a major impact on Aboriginal harvesters and exerted an enormous and lasting effect on Aboriginal subsistence economies.

In two recent publications, Sandlos (2007) and Kulchyski and Tester (2008) demonstrate in great detail how government-sponsored conservation schemes laid the groundwork for a period of intense government intervention in the lives of northern Aboriginal peoples. Beginning in the postwar period, government agents were sent north to not only monitor but ultimately curtail the hunting activities of Aboriginal peoples (Sandlos 2007: 20). Frustrated by what they saw as an undermining of government efforts to conserve northern wildlife, federal policies of the 1950s took a particularly coercive, and ultimately devastating toll on Aboriginal peoples (Sandlos 2007). These policies, based on government's own ideas of modernization, initiated an era of profound social change for Aboriginal peoples (Kulchyski and Tester 2008). The most overt expression of social control was the relocation of Inuit communities away from interior caribou grounds. Defended on the basis of conservation, the relocation of Inuit communities was also done to educate and train Aboriginal peoples in ways that would facilitate their entrance into the modern industrial economy (Wynn 2007: xix). By being relocated to more accessible regional centers, "Inuit could receive so-called rehabilitation and employment training that would in theory allow them to adopt modern livelihoods as miners, or market-oriented craft-producers," which in turn would transform Aboriginal peoples into passive workers in a modern capitalist economy (Sandlos 2007: 239). Sandlos (2007: 235–236) argues convincingly that the federal government's early conservation policies were tied directly to colonial ambitions not only to assert control over northern

wildlife populations but also to establish administrative control over Aboriginal peoples.

Despite the significant political gains that have since been made by Canada's Aboriginal peoples, the colonial ambitions of government can still be found in some of the very institutions designed to empower them. For example, effective December 1, 2005, the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement (LILCA) was settled. Through this settlement, the Nunatsiavut Government secured clearly-defined rights to a 72,500 km<sup>2</sup> land base and 48,690 km<sup>2</sup> of coastal zone. Within the settlement region, Inuit residents have the right to harvest wildlife resources in order to meet their domestic harvesting needs. Defined as the amount of resources necessary to satisfy individual non-commercial use, domestic harvesting needs are based on historic harvesting levels derived from available data (i.e., harvest studies) and local knowledge. The use of domestic harvest levels as a basis for wildlife harvesting policy was strongly advocated by the federal and provincial governments, and ultimately agreed to by the Nunatsiavut Government, for its ability to set clearly defined harvest limits and facilitate effective enforcement capabilities. However, by adopting a policy based on pre-determined harvest levels, the federal and provincial governments have effectively retained a significant degree of power over Inuit harvesting. As a result, many of the species that remain critical to the Inuit subsistence economy, such as caribou, seals, and salmon, remain, in large part, under the jurisdiction of distant government centres. Under these conditions the Inuit subsistence economy will continue to be influenced by the degree to which distant government administrators exercise regulatory controls.

For the past century, the conservationist policies of government have to a large extent been unsympathetic to the subsistence needs of Aboriginal peoples. Today, decisions of where and when to hunt continue to be dictated not by Aboriginal harvesters but by bureaucrats and government regulators. Across the Canadian North, the subsistence economy of Aboriginal peoples falls under the authority of complex management regimes that have the ability to monitor and even restrict harvesting activities. While Tanner (1979) correctly notes that the ability of Aboriginal communities to sustain viable subsistence-oriented economies is not in the ability to resist externally imposed change but rather to effectively adapt local systems of economic production, it is also true that as governments (or other external institutions such as industry) gain administrative control over subsistence resources, they also gain significant control over Aboriginal economies. What lies bare, both now and in the past, is the extent to which government exerts controls over the subsistence economies of Canada's Aboriginal peoples.

## Conclusion

In 1931, Kalervo Oberg offered one of the first critiques of an Aboriginal social economy. Working with the Tlingit in southeast Alaska, Oberg showed clearly that the Tlingit economy involved both social and economic attributes and that considering one set of attributes (economic) at the expense of the other (social) would profoundly misrepresent the Tlingit social economy. Nearly eighty years later, the social economy of Canada's northern Aboriginal communities can still be characterized by the social systems that situate economic activities. Today, as in the past, the harvesting and distribution of wildlife resources not only fulfills important economic and nutritional needs but also strengthens and perpetuates social networks by linking individuals, households, communities, and regions across the North. However, given the profound changes taking place in northern Canada, a revised set of assumptions concerning the northern Aboriginal economy is required. This is particularly necessary given that Aboriginal communities are undeniably adjoined politically, economically, and socially to the national mainstream. As Doubleday (2007: 230) notes, in any given northern community one can find the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) facility under federal jurisdiction, education and health care facilities run by territorial governments, and regional and municipal government offices offering support and employment services to community members in economic development, tourism, and wildlife management. These same communities are also inextricably tied to the global economy, some as producers of highly sought-after carvings and prints (Doubleday 2007), others through joint business ventures with international resource developers (Bielawski 2004), and nearly all through the campaigns of international animals rights organizations (Wenzel 1991). Yet all of these associations, each occurring at different scales of interaction, function alongside viable and resilient subsistence economies. While the lack of conceptual boundaries between these activities may make it difficult to capture the complexity of these interactions, Wenzel and his colleagues (2000) correctly advise that if we are to fully appreciate the economies of Aboriginal communities we must consider how external influences and material inputs from the industrial society are being incorporated into subsistence production systems and how subsistence production influences participation in the wage-earning activities.

Despite the interdependence between subsistence and wage economies, Canada's northern development policies have, for more than a century, characterized the northern economy as functioning between "formal" and "informal" spheres. Fueled by theoretical and empirical analyses, this

dichotomy has been central to the collection and interpretation of statistical data, the formation and implementation of public policy, program and service delivery, and the setting of economic development priorities. However, by characterizing the subsistence and wage economies as structured versus unstructured, simple versus complex, and irregular versus predictable, policy interventions have often proven detrimental to northern Aboriginal peoples and the maintenance of mutually supportive social and economic activities. Any attempt to develop more effective northern policy in the future must begin to more accurately reflect the complexity inherent in Aboriginal economies and remain open to the plurality of potential forms they may take. Given that the subsistence economy is here to stay, and that subsistence and wage earning economies are intrinsically linked, more appropriate policies promoting equitable linkages between the two are required. This will be paramount if future policies are to strengthen rather than hinder the economies of Canada's Aboriginal North.

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### **Notes**

1. Aboriginal peoples in Canada include Inuit, First Nation, and Métis peoples.

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