

The Official Mind of Canadian Colonialism: Government Authorities and the Qikiqtani Region, 1950 to 1975

Official Mind 5.0.5

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Executive Summary

From 1950 to 1975, Canadian officials saw the Qikiqtani Region (formerly the Baffin Region) as an isolated, underdeveloped and problematic area that they wanted to incorporate economically, socially and politically into the rest of Canada. Until about 1969, Ottawa was delivering federal, provincial-type and municipal services to a small, dispersed population. In this period, the problems of the North were usually defined by people with little or no personal experience of the Arctic. These same people developed solutions, without asking advice from Inuit. A greater understanding of Ottawa's motivations and ideas helps explain how events unfolded in the Baffin Region and explains which results were intended and which were not.

Canadian officials were part of a generation that believed that the future would be better than the past, that Canada was a decent and progressive country, that education and training were keys to a better life, and that any remnants of cultural traditions among Canada's Aboriginal groups were likely to end due to forces beyond the control of governments. The archival record and Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC) testimonies also show that officials with first-hand knowledge of the North were less certain about applying southern solutions and expectations to northern conditions, but that they were usually overruled by those with less understanding but more power.

Two issues were high on the federal agenda for the North in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The first was planning for economic development — especially exploitation of minerals, oil and gas. Before 1950, to support future development, the federal government performed extensive aerial mapping and mineral resource surveys that covered most of the Arctic. Early in the period

under discussion, it promoted defence projects that developed the Frobisher Bay townsite in Iqaluit, as well as runways and weather stations at selected Arctic locations. These investments were expected to provide new jobs to replace the traditional land-based economy for a portion of the Inuit population, to reduce social assistance costs and to generate wealth for the whole country. Officials admitted, however, that there was no certainty that the effort would lead to a sustained increase in wage employment for Inuit.

The welfare of the people — the “human problems” — provided the second area of major concern. Three central worries concerned officials: health; possible scarcity of game animals; and a belief that Inuit needed intensive retraining for the industrial economy. Almost none of the decision-makers had any experience of living among Inuit, and consultation with Inuit above the most local levels ranged from non-existent in 1950 to hesitant and imperfect in 1975, the end of the period under review. As a result, stereotypes and externally generated priorities set the agenda for the North. Ottawa promoted change by increasing its own involvement in almost all aspects of Inuit life, from areas of expected government interest, such as education, healthcare and employment, to more personal concerns, such as child-rearing strategies and housekeeping.

The cheapest way to expose Inuit to modernizing trends and to provide critical government services was to require them to congregate in a few places chosen for southern convenience. In particular, an epidemic of tuberculosis was addressed by sending patients South. As well, a southern approach to schooling was introduced, which required dismantling a whole way of living and bringing up children. These planned changes required Inuit, who wanted and needed access to services, to settle in permanent communities, mostly around the sites of existing trading posts in places chosen by government agents.

Throughout this period, remote officials claimed to respect Inuit culture. By the 1960s, they were no longer speaking about civilizing “primitive” people; they were describing their intentions to promote community development by delivering universal social programs, new technologies and investments that would benefit both Inuit and southern Canadians. However, most of their investments did not yield an immediate financial return. Furthermore, this desire to benefit Inuit was imposed by outsiders in the name of Canada and its cultural norms. It largely denied Inuit opportunities to define the main problems as they saw them or to apply traditional environmental knowledge or *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* to the search for solutions.

Introduction

In the 1950s, it became fashionable to say that Canada's destiny would be shaped in the North. Canadians generally looked south to the United States and east to Europe for cultural and economic stimulus, and yet the North, ever since the Klondike Gold Rush, also offered them a bundle of images affirming the country's separate existence, mainly as a storehouse of resources waiting to make us prosperous. It seemed, quite wrongly, that latitude was destiny or at least that climate shaped national character.¹ What, then, did Canadians think about Inuit, the living bearers of cultures that had survived for millennia in the Arctic?

Canadians learned, from time to time, about the peoples whose homeland was in the North. Inuit sometimes appeared in the inside pages of the *Globe and Mail* or the *Toronto Star*, but they were generally dismissed as a special responsibility of the missionaries or of the Hudson's Bay Company. Impressions were generally favourable but simplistic – southerners recognized Inuit as resilient and cheerful people who were capable of surviving in a land of extreme hardship. Other stereotypes were not so positive – Inuit were imagined to be incapable of long-term planning or of recognizing or adjusting to important changes in their environments, such as trends in game shortages. Southerners recognized that Inuit were fascinated by the intrusions of capital and technology, but did not interpret this as a willingness among Inuit to engage with modernization on their own terms. Instead the non-Inuit, mostly white population – *Qallunaat* to the Inuit – feared that Inuit were balanced on a precipice, facing either starvation or dependency. After 1950 the interests of those people — the “peculiar and difficult human problems that arise in the north”² — began to compete more successfully for public, parliamentary and official attention as part of the hunt for ways to make the North profitable to southern Canadians. In this spirit, Prime Minister St. Laurent in 1953 rose in Parliament to

¹ Northern scholars have begun to distance themselves from earlier insistence on Canadian nordicity; see especially K. Coates, W. Lackenbauer, W. Morrison and Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front; Defending Canada in the Far North* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2008).

² Canada. Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. “Human Problems in the Canadian North” in *Annual Report Fiscal Year 1954–1955*, p. 9.

announce a new Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, with civil administration as part of its mandate.³

In doing this, St. Laurent commented somewhat misleadingly that Canada had never established a department specifically for this purpose: “It has been said that Great Britain acquired her empire in a state of absence of mind. Apparently we have administered these vast territories of the north in an almost continuing state of absence of mind.”⁴ It is fascinating that St. Laurent — or his speechwriter — borrowed this expression of mock innocence from an era when Great Britain was dominating South Asia and had just seized control of Egypt. St. Laurent’s new Northern Affairs department expressed no loud imperial ambitions, because it already assumed that northern lands belonged to Canada, but it raised the profile of the northern Territories to the point where an official later noted that the 1953 debates “gave northern development a new respectability like other national institutions beyond the range of attack by prudent men.”⁵ It was an accurate way to describe a mentality that did not embrace many of the challenges of northern development and administration, but allowed concerned public servants a new freedom of action.

The Official Mind – What Does it Mean?

“Official mind” is a shorthand expression used by some historians to describe a set of beliefs, values, goals, knowledge and fears that are widely shared by the small number of people who make and carry out public policy. The concept of an “official mind” emerged in the 1960s to help

³ An important product of this work is Moira Dunbar and Keith Greenaway, *Arctic Canada from the Air* (Ottawa: Defence Research Board, 1956). See also “Mineral Resources and Mining Activity in the Canadian Eastern Arctic,” *Canadian Geographical Journal* 29:2 (Aug. 1944), pp. 55–75; Y.O. Fortier, “Activities of the Geological Survey of Canada in the Arctic Islands, 1947–1953,” *The Arctic Circular* 8:3 (March 1954), pp. 25–33.

⁴ Canada. House of Commons Debates, Session 1953: vol. 1, p. 698. British historian Sir John Seeley actually said, “We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind.” Margery Sabin, *Dissenters and Mavericks; Writings About India in English 1765–2000* (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 90. Sabin calls this the “best-known reference point for the false innocence of British imperialism... the notorious sentence frequently extracted from ... [Seeley’s] 1883 book *The Expansion of England*.”

⁵ R.A.J. Phillips, *Canada’s North* (Toronto: MacMillan and Co., 1967), p. 162.

describe how Great Britain expanded overseas to control territories that did not seem strategically important or profitable.⁶ An official mind is not always unanimous on methods or details, but it filters information and interprets events in fairly consistent ways, then has the power to translate this outlook into government action — or inaction. Although this interpretive tool is mainly used by British historians, it offers insights for explaining Canada's 20th-century efforts in the North.

Canada's possessions in the Arctic are often rightly described as colonies.⁷ Colonialism can be defined as "the exploitation or subjugation of a people by a larger or wealthier power."⁸ In a colony, an external authority dominates much of the economic, social and political life of the inhabitants, who are generally (as in the case of Nunavut) culturally distinct from the colonizing nation, and lack strong representation in national political institutions. Colonizing countries and individuals have many different motives for wishing to control the territory of others. These motives usually include national pride, denying opportunities to rival countries, the possibility of future profit for business, revenue for government or employment for citizens. It is also quite common for the external power to believe it has a mission to provide a more secure present and future for the indigenous people of less developed or "backward" regions.⁹ Colonialism does not necessarily require a large settler population, military force, or even formal political control, if the colonizing power can meet its objectives more cheaply or with less effort. In the case of Canada's North, the *Qallunaat* population remained small and the military presence was largely supplied by another country; only political control was persistently applied by Canada from 1950 to 1975.

⁶ See especially Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians; The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: MacMillan, 1961), p. 25.

⁷ The practice may have entered the mainstream with Kenneth Coates, *Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1985).

⁸ *Oxford Canadian Dictionary* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 280.

⁹ See also the observation by political scientist Mark Dickerson in *Whose North?* (University of British Columbia Press, 1992), pp. 61–63. "If, by colonialism, one means state control through a bureaucratic apparatus on the ground, the 1950s represent the period when it started."

Because Canada's colonized northern regions, including Nunavut, are internationally recognized as part of Canada's sovereign territory, they are "internal colonies."¹⁰ Officially, Canada has always avoided calling its remote regions "colonies." From the 1950s to 1970s, officials, even when writing confidentially, took it for granted that Canada had sovereign rights over Arctic lands and peoples, and intended to treat them as fairly as they treated any other citizens. Yet because of the real inequality of power and the absence of concern for Aboriginal rights during most of the period studied here, this report uses the word "colonialism" with the meaning outlined in these paragraphs.

Today, a study of the official mind might seem outdated: colonial and postcolonial histories are preoccupied not so much with the way outside forces planned and directed change and control as with actual cross-cultural relations inside a "contact zone", a social space where "disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination".¹¹ The Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC) has been inspired in part by a need to get away from a history that is written from the outside. In Canada, some studies of what happened inside the contact zone have been produced by anthropologists,¹² many of whom excel at explaining the *results* of colonialism, but do not necessarily explain how colonialism in a particular place took the form that it did. For that, a study of the tone and spirit of the collective mind of politicians and officials remains an essential tool for understanding the flows of capital, legislation and contact agents onto the frontier where they might begin to carry out the changes desired by the decision-makers at the centre of the colonizing venture.

¹⁰ For a discussion of internal colonies, see Jack Hicks, "On the Application of Theories of 'Internal Colonialism' to Inuit Societies," Presentation for the Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, June 5, 2004, accessed online at <http://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2004/Hicks.pdf>; for a later version with an extensive international bibliography see "On the Application of the 'Internal Colonial' Metaphor to Inuit Societies," accessed 19 Jan. 2010 at http://www.jackhicks.com/e107_files/downloads/Hicks%20J%20WRSA%202006.pdf.

¹¹ This definition of the contact zone is offered by Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes; Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2nd ed. 2008), p. 7; see also Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

¹² Significant works on Inuit Nunangat include Hugh Brody's *The Peoples' Land: Whites and the Eastern Arctic* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975); a quarter century later, he revisited this analysis in *The Other Side of Eden; Hunters, Farmers and the Shaping of the World* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2000). See also works written or edited by Robert Paine, including *The White Arctic; Anthropological Essays on Tutelage and Ethnicity* (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, Social and Economic Papers No. 7, 1977).

Therefore, this report explores the beliefs of high-ranking officials, elected politicians and chosen intellectuals who set the framework for Canadian expansion on the Arctic frontier. To do this, an effort has to be made to set clear boundaries in space, time and hierarchy.

- Chronologically, this survey covers the period 1950–1975, which is based on the QTC’s mandate. This bridges the transfer of administration from Ottawa to Yellowknife after 1967.
- Geographically, the focus is the Baffin Region (now the Qikiqtani Region). The Mackenzie Valley has a very different and better-known recent history. Much of what is written elsewhere treats the Eastern Arctic as an afterthought. This report tries to avoid that bias.
- Hierarchically, evidence of the official mind is looked for in writings by civil servants, politicians and selected intellectuals. This includes their official publications, confidential official correspondence and post-retirement writings.

These viewpoints are worth examining in their southern isolation, because they had a profound impact on the way the colonial encounter unfolded away from the centre, inside the contact zone. This separate study is worthwhile because:

- the centre mobilizes support for ventures, and obtains and distributes funds and personnel;
- the centre tries to coordinate policy nationally despite differences that exist in the field;
- the centre selects, trains and gives direction to the contact agents who engage in — or avoid — face-to-face relations inside the contact zone; and
- the centre is responsible to other citizens, and to posterity, for what happens.

This does not suggest that the official mind was unanimous or always successful in the goals it pursued. In fact, much of the period was marked by competition among different points of view at the centre. Jim Lotz pointed out that during a career lasting a decade in northern programs, he “never saw any evidence of a deliberate plan to destroy the North or its people.” Indeed, he continued,

I never came across a deliberate plan to do anything in the North. I saw instead the continuous reaction to a series of crises, a simple equation of development with resource exploitation, a lot of ego-tripping as individuals pushed their ideas and their programs as the final solution to the problems of the North, and much bureaucratic in-

fighting in government agencies charged with northern development.... I saw a lot of selfish opportunists make money out of the miseries of the North. I also saw a lot of dedicated, selfless people give a great deal of themselves to help to create, in the North, a saner, more humane society than the one in the South. Whether the exploiters or the idealists did the more harm in the North needs to be determined in the perspective of history.¹³

Before surrendering to the pessimism of Lotz, however, readers can review a more tactful explanation from Peter Jull, another participant in the events of those years:

In terms of material commitment, Canada's investment in improvements for people in the NWT can hardly be faulted. Many painful, even tragic mistakes have been made, but the aims and the persistence of government have been clear and well-intended. Nevertheless, in the vital matter of enabling men and women to take charge of their lives — a prerequisite for mental and social well-being — delay has been recognized as the most effective form of denial.¹⁴

Many now challenge the view that "Canada's investment... can hardly be faulted" because budgets were often inadequate even for the flawed programs that developed in the South to address problems in the North. This was probably in large part because nobody in the South foresaw an immediate financial return on investments, particularly in the Eastern Arctic. While Inuit have always been subject to taxation on what they earn or the costly imported goods they consume, the cost of delivering services in such an isolated area generally outweighed public revenues from mining licenses or permits to explore for oil and gas.

The diversity, sometimes bordering on incoherence, of official views on key subjects has already been mentioned. The most widely recognized of these is the conflict in opinions, policies and programs concerning whether Inuit should remain dispersed on the land in 100 or more little settlements as self-sufficient primary producers, or should be concentrated in a few settlements as a reserve labour force for administration and projects to exploit non-renewable resources.

¹³ J Lotz, "Northern Alternatives," in *Arctic* 28:1 (March 1975), pp. 4–5.

¹⁴ Peter Jull, "Inuit Politics and the Arctic Seas," in Franklin Griffiths, ed., *Politics of the Northwest Passage* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), p. 53.

The policy of dispersal, still influential in 1950, was battered by the massive influx of *Qallunaat* who built and then maintained the DEW Line. Within a decade, the Inuit — who did not even have a federal or municipal vote at this point — received the full impact of policy, programs and infrastructure investments that still underpin the present 13 communities. In outline, this can be seen not as policy incoherence, but as a rapid and decisive evolution. One thread of incompatible views running through this period was the issue of how to involve Inuit in public policy debates on changes that so profoundly altered their lives. Throughout the period a handful of departmental officials who had lived in the North and spoke Inuktitut insisted that even where change might be necessary, it would be ineffective and unjust if Inuit were not involved. While such men as Graham Rowley, Alex Stevenson and Keith Crowe could add knowledge and wisdom to the government's decision making, at the highest levels there was less tolerance and more impatience. As an example of continuing divisions within the federal establishment, Inuit from across the Arctic gathered at Coppermine (Kugluktuk) in mid-July 1970, "to discuss their mutual concerns." The meeting, organized by a Toronto-based NGO, was opposed by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, but received an indispensable \$15,000 travel grant from the Citizenship Branch of the Department of Secretary of State. The NGO reported that "several matters discussed at the conference clearly indicated the incompetence and indifference of the Department... in administering the affairs of the North."¹⁵ Government "ambivalence" towards consultation and Inuit rights would continue, while the pressure for development would persist.¹⁶ The Baffin Region's institutions of governance in place in 1975 were still largely designed and implemented from outside the region although by then, some institutions of the Territorial government had begun to empower Inuit at the local level in ways that the federal government had resisted. By this time, economic policy had been firmly reoriented in favour of development, without much progress towards the kinds of cultural retention and community development that had once found favour with participants in official decision making.

¹⁵ P. Cumming, "Arctic Power!," *Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada Bulletin* 11:4 (Oct. 1970), p. 1.

¹⁶ Another report for the QTC will look in more detail at the background to a vague, but important document published two years later: Canada. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, *Canada's North 1970–1980* (Ottawa: DIAND, 1972).

Some Continuities

The history of the Canadian North is often written as a story of opposing paired concepts — the Arctic is either an icebox or a treasure chest, a homeland or a frontier. The official mind also saw a choice of futures that tended to be binary — a population policy that would encourage either dispersal or centralization and, therefore, would favour either a “traditional” economy based on hunting or a “modern” one based on wage employment. At times these seemed to be stark alternatives, at other times it seemed that individuals would be allowed to make their own choices from a range of possibilities. A certain number of concepts were commonly held throughout the period, and may help explain the approach in this report.

One disturbing feature of the whole period of Canadian expansion into the North was the widespread use of the word “settlement” to describe tiny enclaves of transient people and their buildings, while much more populous places where Inuit lived were termed “camps.” This language was so common that most readers quickly adopt it, despite its racialized, hierarchical overtones. It conveys a feeling, sometimes entirely intentional, that clusters of permanent buildings occupied by *Qallunaat* deserved recognition in ways that the seasonal habitations of Inuit did not.¹⁷ Today, “hamlet,” “settlement” or “community” are all used to describe these places, now permanent, where most Inuit live.¹⁸ Even the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement

¹⁷ Not all social scientists adopted this vocabulary; one who did was the government-employed geographer J.L. Robinson, “Eskimo Population in the Canadian Arctic,” *Canadian Geographical Journal* 9:3 (Sept. 1944), pp. 128–42. Jacob Fried was more analytical in “Settlement Types and Community Organization in Northern Canada,” *Arctic* 16:2 (June 1963), pp. 93–100. He describes many of today’s hamlets as “spottily and partly planned administrative outpost settlements where Eskimo communities are being formed” (pp. 93–94) and said that “all settlements dealt with in this paper have come into being to satisfy some special need or purpose of southern Canadian civilization;” and noted the transient nature of the *Qallunaat* population (p. 95). Recent work by Mathiasson and by McElroy employs the word “outpost” to describe the *Qallunaat* centres in the 1960s. See John Mathiasson, *Living Off the Land; Change among the Inuit of Baffin Island* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 91; and Ann McElroy, *Nunavut Generations; Change and Continuity in Canadian Inuit Communities* (Long Grove Ill.: Waveland Press, 2008), p. 12.

¹⁸ The major exception is Iqaluit, a “City.” George Wenzel explored some implications of using “settlement” and “community” to describe Inuit residential places in “Clyde Inuit Settlement and Community: From Before Boas to Centralization,” *Arctic Anthropology* 45:1 (2008), pp. 1–21.

defines residential places away from settlements as “outpost camps.” How outposts staffed by transients¹⁹ came to be called “settlements” while multi-family, multi-year settlements came to be called “outposts” deserves to be discussed in another time and place. This report, somewhat reluctantly, accepts the prevailing usage and for the historical period uses “settlements” and “camps” with their usual if somewhat illogical meanings, while also using an Inuktitut term, *ilagiit nunagivaktangat*, in some references to camps.

Another of the strongest forces unifying *Qallunaat* thought, including the “official mind,” was a preoccupation with dependency. Modernizers and anti-modernists alike generally assumed that Inuit would quickly surrender their attachment to traditional ways of life when they gained access to the convenience of imported material culture, abundance of processed food and the other attractions that came from interacting with a wealthy *Qallunaat* population. This fear was part of a general belief in the superiority of *Qallunaat* cultural norms, but there was a contrary fear among non-Inuit that these benefits could be withdrawn at any time, leaving some Inuit unable or unwilling to return to hunting and, therefore, dependent on social assistance. In the 1940s, this feeling among *Qallunaat* expressed itself in strange debates over topics such as whether to allow Inuit to live in wooden houses. By the 1950s, it evolved into a profound critique of the effect of the DEW Line and the hazards of involving Inuit in short-term employment without providing opportunities for the long term. A prevailing fear was that the new economy was even less sustainable than the mode of production that preceded it, but that Inuit were on the point of willingly and totally abandoning the hardship of life on the land and collectively losing all knowledge or skill of how to recover that life. This fear was shared by both anti-modernists who thought Inuit should be banned from living closer than 20 miles from *Qallunaat* establishments and by advocates of community development who acknowledged how hard it would be to develop the North economically at a pace that would absorb the people who were being encouraged to leave the land.

It is customary to say that *Qallunaat* had a great faith in the superiority of their own culture, or what is often called western civilization. Although this attitude permeates much of the official

¹⁹ For transiency see Fried, “Settlement Types and Community Organization,” p. 97; and P. Goldring, “The Triumvirate at Pangnirtung: Career Paths and Cross-Cultural Relations, 1921–1945,” unpublished paper delivered to the Canadian Historical Association annual meeting, June 1989, pp. 27–29.

and unofficial writing of the time, it is worth emphasizing the evidence that by 1960 this feeling fought with a fear that Inuit would not benefit from their exposure to modern, southern culture. At best, by 1960 the superiority was thought of as technological rather than moral. In Inuit Nunangat (the land, water and ice inhabited by Inuit),²⁰ missionaries had always singled out the white man as a source of sin and exploitation, while traders and administrators were less dogmatic. After 1945, what gripped the *Qallunaat* both inside and outside the contact zone was a sense that change was inevitable and would not be reversible. Speaking pessimistically in a conference session on the North in 1961, anthropologist Henry Hawthorne apologized for making a statement that he thought might be misunderstood as “an attack on the Eskimo language and sense of identity. The impersonal events of history have themselves constituted such an attack.”²¹

Moreover, it seemed to many that those seemingly “impersonal events” caught southerners in its unpredictable rush as much as it did Aboriginal northerners. A senior official mused after a conference in 1960:

It would, of course, be very helpful if one could peer into the future of the industrial community of the North American continent and know just where the organizational man will have led us all, say three or four generations hence, in response to the inexorable and extremely rapid processes of scientific, industrial and social development. I get the distinct impression that some of our colleagues at the Conference became so deeply immersed in the study of allegedly immutable characteristics of ethnic personality they were failing to comprehend the fact that the whole nation, together with all its aboriginal and other racial groups, is being subjected to change at a rate never before even approached. Many of us may recognize this great speed, but I am not sure we are used to thinking of it in comprehensive terms....²²

²⁰ The term and definition have recently been adopted by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; see <http://www.itk.ca/publications/maps-inuit-nunangat-inuit-regions-canada>, accessed 10 May 2010.

²¹ Comments as a discussant in a workshop on “The significance of communities and social capital in resource development in frontier regions,” *Proceedings of the Resources for Tomorrow Conference held in Montreal, October 23-28, 1961*, vol. 3, p. 372.

²² LAC: RG85, vol. 1661, file NR 4/3-14, Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada - V.F. Valentine - Personal files, Bent Sivertz to R.H. Dunning, 22 June 1960.

If officials were aware of the challenges of rapid modernization, they did not accept that it was out of all control, or that *Qallunaat* should concede much autonomy to the different wisdom of the Inuit. Official writings and speeches showed infrequent awareness of the inter-dependence of Inuit and *Qallunaat* in either the short term or the long. The decision-makers did not seriously consider Inuit to be immediately useful or competent as partners, let alone leaders, in planning the response to change. In fundamental ways, most officials do not seem to have really believed in the potential of either the North or its people, yet they felt responsible for rescuing those people from a multitude of social and economic ills, and shouldering the burden of telling Inuit how to prepare for the future.

Reading the Official Mind

The published history of northern Canada already says a great deal about government activities in the North between 1950 and 1975. Without debating the work of earlier writers, this report is organized around a few key themes that are particularly relevant to the QTC's work. Specific government programs are described in other QTC background studies.

During the 1940s, strategic concerns about the North ensured that the Qikiqtani Region would always receive a certain amount of attention at even the highest levels of government – Cabinet, central agencies and deputy ministers. The puzzle for officials after 1950 was not what to possess, but how to administer the territories Canada already claimed to own. Historian Shelagh Grant explained the development of a generation of “northern nationalists” senior officials and intellectuals who, in the 1940s, asserted a need to maintain and exercise Canada's Northern sovereignty and in the early 1950s designed the administrative machinery to achieve this.²³ To their credit, their hopes, plans and fears for the Arctic included concern about the problems that development would create for Aboriginal inhabitants north of 60°, including the stepped-up pace of American military activity. Although the politicians and officials were determined to appropriate the peoples' land and were not at all sure whether or why to appropriate their labour, the impetus to control and exploit the land inevitably brought

²³ Shelagh Grant, *Sovereignty or Security. Government Policy in the Canadian North 1936–1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).

responsibilities towards its people. And as more journalists found their way into the North, these government responsibilities would be enforced in the court of public opinion if the government fell back into the habits of neglect shown in the inter-war years.

As the 1950s wore on, there was considerable growth in the Arctic responsibilities of lower echelons of public life as well. Patrick Nixon's incisive analysis of federal administration in the North, 1954–1965, observed that the administration in the early 1950s was extremely small, largely idealistic, and generally unhampered by interference from politicians. But, Nixon continued, their success was their downfall. They appear to have oversold their "northern vision" to the Diefenbaker Conservatives, and in the process attracted the public scrutiny and over-bureaucratization that come with large budgets.²⁴ In the process, he argues, the small group of expert policy-makers expanded in ways that empowered a much wider circle of stakeholders within government. This emphasized the division of authority that remained after creating the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, and aggravated existing divisions within Ottawa. This incoherence, in Nixon's view, continued and grew through the 1960s. It fuelled a campaign to separate the Mackenzie Valley from the less developed Eastern Arctic. This movement failed, but spurred the devolution of programs to the territorial government in Yellowknife, where a new and slightly different "official mind" began to develop. From the discussion above, it is apparent where evidence of an official mind will *not* be looked for. The mass media, which in the 1950s still largely meant newspapers, was not a dependable reporter, commentator or stimulator of broad public interest in the North, let alone a strong influence on policy choices. While *Maclean's Magazine* under its editor Ralph Allen seemed like a positive influence to officials,²⁵ and the Toronto *Globe and Mail* could pull its readers' heartstrings with articles such as "Stone Age Just North of Moosonee" about a 1956 epidemic in

²⁴ Nixon interviewed central figures in the Northern Administration including former deputy minister Gordon Robertson. His findings have not been published in a monograph, but are accessible in a short doctoral thesis, "Eskimo Housing Programmes, 1954-65: a case study of representative bureaucracy," [microform] (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, Canadian Theses on Microfiche Service, 1984), especially chapter 3, "The Context of Eskimo Housing Policy," pp. 44-73; also P.G. Nixon, "Bureaucracy and Innovation," *Canadian Public Administration* 30:2 (Summer 1987), pp. 280–298; also "The Politics of Government Research," in K. Coates and R. Morrison, eds., *For Purposes of Dominion: Essays in Honour of Morris Zaslow* (Toronto: Captus Press, 1989), pp. 37–45.

²⁵ Donald Snowden, interview with P.G. Nixon quoted in Nixon, "Eskimo Housing Programmes," p. 80.

the Belcher Islands,²⁶ news of the Inuit was erratically received. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) was not regularly broadcasting into the Eastern Arctic, let alone out of it, until the 1970s.²⁷ Without strong media interest, the relatively small community of investors with assets or markets in the North were also not a major influence on policy, although exploitative ambitions were voiced – often in Parliament – and standardization of products such as housing and shipping favoured regular suppliers over the less structured efforts of earlier times.²⁸

It is important to acknowledge that the perceptions of the “men on the spot” receive little emphasis in this report. These individuals were chosen, recruited, assigned job titles and duties, and generally empowered to carry out federal policies on the “frontier.” They could report back with information to help refine the government’s strategies, but their powers were limited. Those actors are highly worthy of the study they receive in other QTC reports.

This survey of the official mind focusses on the federal department responsible for northern administration: the Department of Resources and Development (1950–1953), Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (1953–1966), and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (1966–present). Because the Department was the hinge between southern aspirations and northern conditions, and it had to obtain financial and other resources for the North and oversee their expenditure, a considerable amount of this report is based on publications of the Department and the quiet machinations of its senior officials. Public statements had to be vetted at a senior level. The Director for much of this period, Bent Sivertz, took an interest in scholarly as well as administrative debates; as a result, he is often quoted directly in this report. More colourful and original characters in the department, such as R.A.J. Phillips or Vic Valentine, appear less frequently, although they may also have helped write the pronouncements of more senior figures.

Contemporary commentary by non-officials, as well as later scholarship, are not evidence of the official mind, but they do sometimes offer information or helpful insights. Reports of the Royal

²⁶ *Globe and Mail* (16 Aug 1956), p. 25.

²⁷ The progressive extension of broadcast services into the Arctic was reported on annually in *Government Activities in the North*, the regular roll-up of all departmental activities published by the Advisory Committee on Northern Development.

²⁸ P.G. Nixon, “Eskimo Housing Programmes,” pp. 86–88.

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples are helpful, as are the numerous short writings of political scientist Patrick Nixon, who interviewed officials who helped him explain the opportunities and limitations facing the Department in the 1950s and 1960s.²⁹ Two important books by Frank Tester and Peter Kulchyski explore some failures of northern policy making, especially in the 1950s,³⁰ and a recent work by anthropologist David Damas documented the major policy shift in the 1960s, from a “policy of dispersal” in which Inuit were encouraged to remain “on the land,” to a “welfare state” policy that saw Inuit concentrated into a much smaller number of year-round settlements where schooling and social services were concentrated.³¹

Most of the historical scholarship deployed on this period to date, as well as anthropological writing in a historical vein, follows this development only to the achievement of centralization, which was almost complete throughout the region by 1970. Only a few writers attempt to bridge the period from the 1960s to 1970s because of the interpretive and documentary challenges posed by that period. These challenges were the change of personnel and focus when responsibility moved from Ottawa to Yellowknife, and the change of life and culture in Nunavut as 100 small communities merged into 13 larger settlements. The rapid change in governmental structures since 1970, culminating in the creation of Nunavut, means that broad historical overviews will be scarce and harder to conceptualize. Today’s challenges for public government remain those of the 1950s – to protect Inuit culture, autonomy and rights while carving out a place in an increasingly complex international economy.

Ottawa’s Northern Bureaucracy: Membership and Viewpoints

²⁹ Nixon’s studies bypass some of the principal facets of government-driven change in the Eastern Arctic, including health care and schooling, but his thoughts on housing and income security are presented as evidence that senior departmental officials established a framework for government policy and at least initially set some of their own goals.

³⁰ Frank Tester and Peter Kulchyski, *Tammarniit (Mistakes); Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic 1939-63* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994); also *Kiumajut (Talking Back) Game Management and Inuit Rights 1900-70* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

³¹ David Damas, *Arctic Migrants, Arctic Villagers; The Transformation of Inuit Settlement in the Central Arctic* (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002). Damas’s belief in a major policy shift concerning where Inuit would live is now widely shared among scholars, though in certain policy areas the incoherence of that policy is also widely accepted.

Prime Minister St. Laurent's desire for a single coordinating department for the North was not translated into action. Uncertainty continued as different departments designed, adopted and implemented government programs for the North. Some departments — notably National Defence — were largely independent, but others had to struggle if they wanted to coordinate their work logistically and at the policy level. The key questions concerned the pace of cultural change and the development of centralized settlements, a policy that some departments adopted sooner than others. In addition, the old Arctic powers — the Hudson's Bay Company and rival missionaries from the Anglican and Catholic churches — were never chased from the field and they continued to have influence over the policy-makers and administrators.

The Northern Administration Branch

Through several name changes, a single federal administrative unit oversaw northern affairs from 1921 until the late 1960s. This unit was mainly concerned with land and resources, but because it combined federal, provincial and municipal type responsibilities in its mandate, and because Inuit were not consistently regarded as wards of the Crown, it was unavoidably accountable for a wide range of programs and regulations affecting Inuit. In the Qikiqtani Region before 1950, the Department made an annual patrol by ship, sent out the occasional field scientist for a year or more, paid the doctor in Pangnirtung, and delivered other services through the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) or, where there were no police, through the Hudson's Bay Company. From 1947 there was steady growth in field staff, starting in the Western Arctic with "welfare teachers" and spreading to include Northern Service Officers, later called Area Administrators. These officials on the ground oversaw the growth of the 13 present-day Qikiqtani Region communities.

In Ottawa from 1921 to 1936, the Director of the branch responsible for northern administration reported straight to the Deputy Minister of the Interior. After 1936, Northwest Territories (NWT) and Yukon affairs were pushed at least one additional layer further down in the hierarchy, while Arctic affairs, when they eventually had their own unit, were buried even deeper. This status meant that personnel overseeing northern policy or operations were generally not distracted by too many additional responsibilities. An important change occurred

after 1970 when the devolution of “people” programs to Yellowknife left Ottawa with little except a strong focus on economic development.

Throughout this period, senior personnel were often involved in developing programs and overseeing their implications, briefing their Deputy Minister or Minister, dealing with the press, and generally setting the tone for Canada’s handling of social and economic programs in the territorial North. Many departmental publications, including some signed by Ministers, were written by these thoughtful and diligent officials. P.G. Nixon has described them as well-trained and strongly influenced by a British tradition of service to the public. He describes the emergence of a “representative bureaucracy,” that is, one that took on the task of speaking for clients who lacked direct or effective representation at the centre.³² Because few Northern Affairs officials spoke Inuktitut and Inuit rarely paid more than brief visits to Ottawa, administration of the Baffin Region offered a natural opening for a “representative bureaucracy” to take shape.

The northern administration staff based in Ottawa grew from three or four in the 1920s to over 300 in the 1960s. They helped develop and implement the visions that imagined Inuit, initially, as a primitive people whose way of life should be disturbed as little as possible, but later as vulnerable people who needed to be integrated quickly to avoid being crushed by economic development. Canada never put Inuit under the *Indian Act*, which would have acknowledged them as wards of the Crown, while forbidding them to control land or other property. Instead, most administrators and parliamentarians saw Inuit as British subjects and Canadian citizens, but also felt they needed special protection. To make matters more awkward, the Supreme Court in 1939 ruled that Inuit were “Indians” under the *British North America Act*. This confirmed an obvious fact — that Inuit are an indigenous people — while stating an untruth. The decision had little real effect outside Quebec, where it excused the provincial government from paying for social programs for Inuit.

In fact, until after 1970 Ottawa made up its own rules about how to manage its responsibilities towards Inuit. As an RCMP officer remarked complacently in 1952, “I think the view generally held now is that Eskimos are not wards of the Government but have complete citizenship rights.

³² P.G. Nixon, “Eskimo Housing Programmes,” introductory chapter.

There was a Supreme Court decision holding that Eskimos and Indians were in the same category but I do not think that is the opinion held by Northern Administration officials.”³³ Strange but true – senior officials and their Ministers, whether confused, negligent, or simply repelled by the risks of subjecting Inuit to the *Indian Act*, disregarded much of the Supreme Court decision and swayed between a nominally egalitarianism and excessive paternalism. Retired officials who have spoken to the QTC emphasize that most senior officials lacked faith in Inuit and desired to keep paternalistic structures in place almost indefinitely.³⁴ Because Inuit lacked either economic or political power, Northern Affairs exercised as complete an authority over them as Indian Affairs did over First Nations peoples.

One effect of this ambivalent policy was that Canada never had a clearly named “Eskimo Affairs” bureau like the one that managed Indian Affairs.³⁵ Instead, the organizational structure carried names such as “Arctic Division” that suggested all citizens had the same rights and were subject to the same laws and regulations. The Eskimo Affairs Committee (1952–1962) was tightly managed by the Department, and was purely advisory. One peculiarity was that until 1966 the federal Northern Administration Branch managed local affairs in the Inuit regions of Quebec. Although specific programs such as the Eskimo Loan Fund (1953) and the Eskimo Housing Program (1965) targeted the specific needs of Inuit, the tendency was to conceal federal and territorial programs for Inuit, along with those used mainly by *Qallunaat*, under racially neutral terms.

In the Territories, the federal government had all municipal and provincial-type responsibilities and, therefore, the official mind found it hard to perceive that underlying Aboriginal rights were at stake. In an era of developing social programs, Inuit were regarded not primarily as wards, but as an ethnically homogenous rural and isolated population whose needs might be met — or

³³ LAC: RCMP, Accession 85-86/048 Box 42, file D-1512-2-4-027 (1952), Memorandum to The Commissioner, RCMP from Asst. DCI J.A. Peacock, 27 Sept. 1952; QTC Document A05116.

³⁴ In particular, Walter Rudnicki who was first head of the Northern Affairs Welfare Division, and Gene Rheume, who worked for Rudnicki and was later the NWT Member of Parliament, described to the QTC their encounters with a paternalistic attitude that was different from the cautious optimism about long-term change that official departmental statements exhibit. Rheume once told Gordon Robertson that Inuit might not be ready for the franchise, but they would be ready the day after they were given it.

³⁵ Around 1950 a few members of the Northern Administration and Lands Branch were briefly identified as an “Eskimo Research Unit.”

ignored — as they were by lower levels of government in the South. In Parliament, poorly briefed elected leaders debated Inuit status between 1924 and 1951 in a confused and confusing manner: ministers made illogical and contradictory statements. In fact parliamentarians exhibited barely any concept of Aboriginal rights anywhere, as Members of Parliament tried to apply various historical, logical or Canadian legal tests to explain why Inuit should not submit to the restrictions of “Indian” status. For many members an economic factor — that Canada was unlikely to appropriate Arctic land — seemed to justify a different status for Inuit.³⁶ The fact that Canada already *had* appropriated Inuit land did not seem to occur to anyone.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

The RCMP served as markers of Canadian sovereignty and as monitors of economic conditions and of relations between Inuit and the traders who carried on year-round business among them. No other southern agency in the North had such slender duties or such abundant resources for carrying them out.³⁷ While the list of official duties is impressive most were nominal except when an annual ship arrived: the major duty was to keep official records of the Inuit population, to visit and report on conditions in each *ilagiit nunagivaktangat* at least once a year, to provide and if necessary deliver relief supplies to people in distress or long-term poverty, and to assist other public servants with logistics and advice. The RCMP placed stress on the self-reliance, hunting ability and survival skills of Inuit. They believed that too much contact with traders (and later, with rivals such as Northern Service Officers) would demoralize the entire population. At the same time, their positional authority endowed them with an overwhelming prestige and ability to secure agreement without true consent. Over time, the RCMP lost many of their paternalistic roles and their focus changed from protecting the hunting economy to imposing

³⁶ See especially Diamond Jenness, *Eskimo Administration: II. Canada* (Montreal: Arctic Institute of North America Technical Paper No. 14, May 1964), especially pp. 40–48; see also occasional debates in Parliament on the status of Inuit in Canada. *House of Commons Debates*. 1924, pp. 4409-11, 3823-27; 1930 pp. 1091-99; 1950, pp. 3810-16. See also, Peter A. Cumming and Neil H. Mickenberg, eds., *Native Rights in Canada; second edition* (Toronto: The Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada, 1972), pp. 132–69.

³⁷ R.A.J. Phillips wrote of the typical Mountie, “his objective at first was simply to exist,” *Canada’s North*, p. 126.

social control and enforcing the criminal law within the large and unstable settlements, which grew up around schools and nursing stations.

Department of National Health, Indian and Northern Health Service

Until 1947, Inuit relied on traditional methods and treatments for a variety of ailments, supplemented by just one tiny hospital in Pangnirtung and the first aid or imported medicines dispensed by the police, traders and missionaries. At the end of the Second World War, the federal Department of National Health and Welfare gained a general responsibility to improve hospital treatment and public health in the Arctic, far beyond the reach of the little hospitals previously run by churches with financial support from the Northern Administration.³⁸ The first Chief of the new Indian and Northern Health Service, Dr. Percy Moore, was a tough bureaucratic infighter who designed a program of forced evacuation of tuberculosis (TB) patients from the Arctic to southern sanatoria. He made no concessions to colleagues who believed that the social costs of evacuation were too high and could be mitigated by providing more treatment in the Arctic itself. As one of his superiors complained during one of Moore's quarrels with the Anglican Bishop Donald Marsh,

the unfortunate fact, which is not always realised by people like Dr. Moore, is that strong statements made by him as to our shortcomings and inadequacies in meeting the problems of Canada's Northland are oftentimes twisted around by people who are antagonistic to what we are doing and converted into a condemnation of even the inadequate efforts that are now being made.³⁹

In general, the official mentality of the medical profession operated somewhat independently of other officials or the police, but core beliefs were similar. First, medical officials understood that inaction would be scandalous because health conditions in the Qikiqtani Region were shocking: relevant statistics included high infant mortality and the epidemic impact when common viral infections reached an isolated population. In this sense, the approach to health was driven by

³⁸ The first superintendent under the new regime was Dr. Percy Moore, for whom, see P.G. Nixon, "Percy Elmer Moore (1899–1987)," *Arctic* 42:2 (June 1989), pp. 166–67.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

fear in much the same way that the approach to game management was driven by fear⁴⁰ – scientific observers saw a problem, anticipated that it would worsen and responded with regulation and intervention in the lives of Inuit.⁴¹ (The science was better in the medical case, although the remedies could be equally invasive.) Second, the medical establishment was uncertain about the wisdom of forcing cultural change on the Inuit, but in practice progressively increased the pressure for change. Third, Parliament never provided enough money to match the potential needs of Inuit. Fourth, there was a set of fundamental tendencies, beliefs and practices, which Tester and Kulchyski have labelled as “high modernism,” to put faith in scientific planning even when it lacked the backing of adequate research or investment. This was particularly true in treating TB and conducting the annual Eastern Arctic Patrol. A medical team aboard the *CGS C.D. Howe* visited most Qikiqtani Region communities each year to treat routine complaints and evacuate the sick and wounded to hospitals in the South.

From the time of her maiden voyage in 1950, the *C.D. Howe* earned a reputation for causing emotional distress when separating patients from their families. The vessel carried a helicopter to gather information about ice conditions, but also used the little aircraft to airlift individuals from camps where they were staying to avoid being taken from their families. People were still trying to dodge the *C.D. Howe* as late as 1965.⁴² By that time, however, the worst ravages of TB had been broken. If communities had nursing stations, their staffs provided essential care while also eroding the independence of Elders by forbidding them to leave the settlements and return to their *ilagiit nunagivaktangat*, and in later years by pressuring pregnant women to deliver their babies in southern hospitals. Mortality declined, but the mentality of medical staff did not permit them to relieve many of the psychological pressures this disempowerment and style of treatment placed on Inuit families and culture.⁴³ The federal government withdrew from

⁴⁰ Peter Kulchyski and Frank Tester, *Kiumajut (Talking Back) Game Management and Inuit Rights 1900-70*, especially chapter 2, “Manufacturing a Caribou Crisis,” pp. 50-81.

⁴¹ For the campaign against tuberculosis, see P.S. Grygier, *A Long Way from Home: The Tuberculosis Epidemic among the Inuit* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

⁴² Milton Freeman, interview with P. Goldring for QTC, 4 June 2009.

⁴³ See J.D. O'Neill, “The Politics of Health in the Fourth World; a Northern Canadian Example,” in K.S. Coates and W.R. Morrison, eds., *Interpreting Canada's North* (Toronto: Copp-Clark, 1989), pp. 279–98; also Betty-Anne Daviss-Putt, “Rights of Passage in the North: From Evacuation to the Birth of a

medical care in stages, beginning in the early 1970s and completing devolution to the NWT in 1988.⁴⁴ Throughout, medical policies offered the same outlook as many other social services, treating the Inuit, but blocking their ability to live anything like a traditional life on the land.

Elected Politicians

The elected arm of the national government did not usually focus closely or for long on northern issues. For historians, the risks of relying on politicians' unscripted words are evident in a parliamentary statement by Resources and Development Minister Robert Winters in 1950, comparing Inuit to First Nations people:

They live under conditions different from the Indians, and a great attempt has been made to assimilate them into modern ways of life [sic!] and so on. They are not the same type of wards [of the federal government] as Indians are, and the over-all conditions are sufficiently different that it would appear to be the proper thing to do..... to have them included in the northern administration of this department."⁴⁵

Winters understood the general thrust and direction of recent policy initiatives, but he was not reliable on details. Politicians, however, occasionally seized an opportunity for headlines, especially when the Conservative government under John Diefenbaker made northern development a campaign theme in 1958,⁴⁶ or when the entire House of Commons Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development flew to Resolute in 1969 to rendezvous with the American experimental oil tanker, *SS Manhattan*.⁴⁷ Especially as time went on, parliamentary debates could expose some southern Canadians to the injustice and inefficiency of contemporary Arctic governance. This is especially evident in the 1960s, when more

Culture," in Mary Crnkovitch, ed., *Gossip; A Spoken History of Women in the North* (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, 1990), pp. 91–114.

⁴⁴ This paragraph includes material prepared by Dr. Frank Tester for the QTC in April, 2008.

⁴⁵ Canada. House of Commons Debates, 1 June 1950, p. 3104.

⁴⁶ Although Diefenbaker's "Northern Vision" became a campaign slogan and is remembered as part of his effort to distinguish himself from his Liberal predecessors, an authoritative survey of Canadian general elections did not mention it among the defining issues. J.M. Beck, *Pendulum of Power; Canada's Federal Elections* (Toronto: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 291–328.

⁴⁷ William D. Smith, *Northwest Passage* (New York: *New York Times*, 1970), pp. 99–101.

politicians became knowledgeable and the federal riding in the Northwest Territories elected an articulate and anti-bureaucratic Métis veteran of the Northern Administration, Gene Rheaume, who knew the shortcomings of the Administration at first hand.⁴⁸ Rheaume's intervention earned enough support to block dividing the NWT, a bipartisan initiative that he believes was designed to prolong indefinitely the colonial restrictions on the Eastern Arctic, which Ottawa was gradually loosening in the more developed the Mackenzie District.⁴⁹

Politicians became more prominent when elected members were added to the Council of the Northwest Territories. As a result, that subordinate legislature gave increasing scope for action by members who lived in the North and whose whole public life focussed on the North. This tendency became stronger when the seat of government moved to Yellowknife in 1967 and, over time, and a wide range of social and economic programs were delegated to the territorial government.

Commissioner and Council of the Northwest Territories

The NWT, including present-day Nunavut, was governed throughout the period under study under a constitution enacted by Parliament, initially with a Deputy Minister as "Commissioner" of the NWT. The territories and their governments had no independent or entrenched constitution. Local laws were passed by a "Council," which was, for the most part, senior federal officials or their appointees. Their laws were not Acts but "Ordinances." The seat of government until 1967 was in Ottawa and accountable only to federal authorities. While the Council could act as a sounding board, its actions were dominated by concerns of the growing non-Aboriginal settlements in the Mackenzie Valley. In every other respect, it was simply one of the tools the Department could use to administer Canada's northern dependencies.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See for example Canada. House of Commons Debates. 7 July 1964 for Rheaume excoriating the exclusion of northerners from their own governance; also 24 July 1964, pp. 5965-71, QTC Document A07358.

⁴⁹ E. Rheaume, telephone interview with QTC researchers and staff, 8 March 2010.

⁵⁰ Inuit regions first elected members in 1966. In 1951, the Mackenzie Valley was allowed to elect three of approximately eight members. The role of the Council is usually either ignored or misrepresented

At the nominal head of this unrepresentative external legislature was the Commissioner, a figure whose office changed partway through the period under review. Between 1921 and 1963, the Commissioner was always the deputy minister of the department responsible for northern affairs. Thus he was a very senior official with time-consuming responsibilities beyond his role in the North. At times administrators found it expedient or necessary to manage an issue through the Council and Commissioner, but, except for the passage of Ordinances concerning local government services, there were generally better ways to get things done. In 1965, the post of Commissioner was downgraded to a full-time position held by a lower-level official. This commissioner, Bent Sivertz, focussed more on the North, but was a less powerful figure in Ottawa.⁵¹

Gradually, Council members represented geographical districts and some members were elected in districts that had a large educated population. As the elected membership grew, members who were independent of the federal government became more active and the published debates reflect a better sense of some northerners' concerns and diversity. In 1965–1966, the Pearson government appointed the Advisory Commission on the Development of Government in the Northwest Territories. Its report was only a speed bump on the long road to Nunavut, but by delaying dividing the NWT, it offered Inuit the mixed blessings of being administered from Yellowknife instead of from Ottawa. At the time Carruthers offered the cautious men in Ottawa a short-term vision of how to prepare the NWT “not [for] provincehood but [for] the means of growth to provincehood,” with decentralization as an achievable goal and division as merely a distant possibility.⁵² The importance of this to the evolution of the official mind is that the Carruthers Commission recommended removing the legislature and some of the administrative machinery out of Ottawa. It proposed to rename the Council as the

in memoirs and histories of this period. For a good summary, especially the focus on the mining districts of the western Arctic, see K. Rae, *The Political Economy of the Canadian North* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), pp. 34–40. Gordon Robertson described his duties as Commissioner in *Memoirs of a Very Civil Servant* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 146–64.

⁵¹ R.A.J. Phillips *Canada's North*, p. 246; see also the autobiography of Bent Sivertz, *The Life of Bent Gestur Sivertz, A Seaman, a Teacher and a Worker in the Canadian Arctic* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2000), pp. 127–43.

⁵² Canada. Advisory Commission on the Development of Government in the Northwest Territories, *Summary of the Report* (Ottawa: 1966) pp. 5–6.

“Legislative Assembly” (though some members would remain unelected). It redesigned the office of Commissioner to combine many of the functions that in a province are exercised by a lieutenant-governor, speaker of the Assembly and premier. This was adopted and only since 1980 has the Commissioner – in Yellowknife and later in Iqaluit – withdrawn to a ceremonial role very like that of a lieutenant-governor. The shifting power and prestige of the office, with its confusing sequence of real powers and ceremonial duties, illustrate the constitutional evolution of legislative authority as planned from Ottawa.

Other Federal Departments

Numerous federal departments sent a handful of officials to the Arctic, conducted surveys and studies there, funded researchers heading North, or provided central agency support and direction. One of the main departments was the Department of Transport, which oversaw aids to navigation, ran the ice-breaker service and chartered the great fleets of sea-lift vessels whose appearance offshore at permanent establishments became an annual routine each summer. The independence and high-handedness of this department were especially noticeable in its management of the supply vessel and hospital ship, the *C.D. Howe*.

The Department of National Defence, with its American allies and their numerous “contractors” in the Arctic, had a policy of “non-fraternization,” but still employed a large number of Inuit and had a wider impact through infrastructure development. The departments of External Affairs, Fisheries and Justice had small roles in Qikiqtani Region affairs and had variable impacts on events inside the contact zone. The departments responsible for mining did their best to stimulate economic development, while the national museums conducted fieldwork including, in the 1960s, an “urgent ethnology” program based on the premise that traditional cultures in Canada would soon die out. In the 1970s the CBC emerged as part of the government’s agenda to modernize the region and make it more attractive to southern workers, but it gradually developed to empower Inuit as well. All these activities were faithfully reported in the annual reports of the Advisory Committee on Northern Development (ACND), a good source of official information on mandates and budgets from 1953 to 1978.

Eskimo Affairs Committee

The Eskimo Affairs Committee, 1952–1962, was an advisory group created by the department to forestall the creation of representative institutions for Inuit. The Committee, which first heard from Inuit in person in 1959, enlisted veterans of northern fieldwork to advise on administrative and program ideas. Because the RCMP, Hudson’s Bay Company and churches were all represented on this committee, the administration could float schemes in front of agencies that had the power to obstruct Arctic initiatives that threatened their own operations, such as secular schools, the appointment of field officers, and chartering of cooperatives. Eventually the Northern Administration prevailed and with its own new policy capacity in Ottawa and Northern Service Officers in the field, and with greater backing from the political level, the Administration disbanded this public–private advisory body. In Peter Clancy’s view, by empowering the traditional non-Inuit contact agents at “a time when formal channels between Ottawa and indigenous arctic interests were virtually non-existent, the committee.... is an apt reflection of the administrative colonialism then prevalent in the North.”⁵³

Indian Affairs Branch, Inuit Status and the *Indian Act*

Significantly missing from this list is the federal Department of Indian Affairs. The officials who managed northern affairs lived in a legal fog where Inuit were sometimes treated as a special responsibility of the Crown in the same manner as First Nations peoples were, and at other times were said to have the same rights and responsibilities as any other citizens. At Confederation there were no Inuit in the three British colonies that combined to form Canada, but thousands were added in 1870 with the annexation of Rupert’s Land and the North Western Territory. For most of the next century, official rhetoric suggested that Inuit in the NWT were not wards of the Crown and had the same rights as any other Canadians, but sometimes needed additional management because of their poverty and the fragility of their resources. This was

⁵³ Peter Clancy, “The Making of Eskimo Policy in Canada, 1952–62: The Life and Times of the Eskimo Affairs Committee,” *Arctic* 40:3 (Sept. 1987), p. 192.

the strongly held view of the northern administration in the 1920s.⁵⁴ The legal situation was further clouded by a 1939 Supreme Court decision that said Inuit in Quebec were “Indians” and, therefore, under federal protection and jurisdiction; and yet a 1951 amendment to the *Indian Act* specifically exempted Inuit from that law. Parliamentarians grappled with this inconsistency in 1950 when giving Inuit the right to vote in federal elections, while refusing it to people living on First Nations reserves:

Mr. Carroll: Are the Eskimo and the Indian in the same category as far as being a ward of the government is concerned?

Mr. Gibson: They are accepted as wards of the government in the estimates of the health and welfare department where they are handled jointly. I am sure the minister who looks after that matter will confirm what I say.

Mr. Carroll: The Indians are wards of the government and are supported by the government, and I should like to know whether the Eskimos are in that same category.

Mr. Gibson: They are definitely wards of the government and have been accepted as such.

Mr. Ward [sic]: I think the hon. Member is wrong, the Eskimo is not a ward of the government.

Mr. Gibson: Maybe we should have a ministerial statement on this.⁵⁵

The confusion in this long-running debate came from an almost total lack of any sense of Aboriginal rights. Members imagined that the rights of status Indians came from the Crown and Parliament, partly through treaties and partly through legislation. A major obstacle to understanding that Inuit had Aboriginal rights was that they had not signed treaties surrendering any of those rights! Thus the discussion before about 1960 did not focus on what afterwards came to be termed “Eskimo birthright.” It muddled around with questions about treaties, reserves, voting rights, taxation and relief (social assistance).

⁵⁴ D. Jenness, *Eskimo Administration. II Canada*. Finnie is quoted regularly on Inuit status at pp. 32–37.

⁵⁵ Canada. House of Commons Debates, Session 1950, vol. 4, 19 June 1950, pp. 3811–12.

Few members wanted Inuit to sign treaties or be assigned reserves. This attitude arose partly from a sense that the existing administration of Indian affairs was inefficient as well as unjust, and partly because, as opposition leader George Drew stated in 1950, there was no economic need for Canada to have treaties with Inuit: “it is difficult to imagine that the areas occupied by the Eskimos had a substantial land value. Conceivably, at some future time minerals may be discovered in some of the Eskimo areas, although this has not yet happened so far as I know.”⁵⁶ The official stance remained that Inuit were ordinary citizens, although over time they became subject to closer and closer paternalistic supervision.⁵⁷

Debate had not moved much further 15 years later, when the NWT Council discussed whether “Eskimo birthright” – i.e. Aboriginal rights – existed and how this could be dealt with in the NWT. The member for the Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Trimble, kicked this off by observing “I feel myself that the Eskimo people have the same birthrights as the Indian people, although there were no treaties made with the Eskimos. I am interested to know who is considered to be an Eskimo and what privileges and birthrights they do have.” The commissioner, Bent Sivertz, took this opening to denounce recognition of Aboriginal rights. If rights were recognized, government might have to control the exercise of those rights through an Eskimo Act along the same lines as the *Indian Act*! He opposed this because “categorization of people intended to confer some special privilege or benefit upon them very often acts in the reverse way.” Besides, education and employment opportunities were developing so fast that special status “might well overtake any kind of provisions that are intended to be benefits to Eskimos but might actually result in their disadvantage.”⁵⁸

By raising the threats of an Eskimo Act or a reserve system, Sivertz fell into line with a growing preference for addressing inequalities in society through education and economic development, without addressing questions of rights. (This was at the core of the 1969 White Paper on Indian policy.) This discourse became obsolete with the broader acceptance of Aboriginal rights in the

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 3816. Five months earlier, Gibson himself was Minister of the responsible department.

⁵⁷ A prominent example of this is the “non-fraternization” clauses in the governance of major defence projects, notably article 13, “Matters Affecting Canadian Eskimos” in the Canada-USA “Statement Of Conditions To Govern The Establishment Of A Distant Early Warning System In Canadian Territory.”

⁵⁸ Council of the Northwest Territories. Twenty-ninth Session. *Debates*. 8–17 February 1965. vol. 1, pp. 90–91.

1970s, which made official confusion about Inuit status somewhat irrelevant. However, it was largely irrelevant already because the federal government enjoyed provincial-type and municipal powers throughout the NWT.⁵⁹ It could, therefore, intervene directly in people's lives in multiple ways, regardless of whatever "birthright" might exist. In this sense, the confusion over whether Inuit were "Indians" or ordinary citizens was irrelevant. One enduring benefit of the confusion is that Inuit were kept separate from the tradition-bound and overtly racist Indian Affairs bureaucracy, leaving the Northern Administration staff to devise measures without regard to the very different traditions prevailing in the sister department.

Intellectuals

There was little formal role for academics in making or carrying out government policy in the Arctic, but most officials were not anti-intellectual. The secretary of the ACND was university-educated, was well-grounded in anthropology, and had lived with Inuit for several years. There was a long tradition of information exchange between officialdom and the professional staffs of the Geological Survey, the National Museum and similar bodies. Sivertz had a reading knowledge of Margaret Mead's work on Samoa and used it to generalize about cultures closer to home. In the 1950s, relatively few consultants were used to advise on social policy. Some participants felt that the Department's scientists were underused in the policy sphere.⁶⁰ This separation of research from action gradually changed, and in 1961 the important *Resources for Tomorrow* conference was addressed by, among others, anthropologist Henry Hawthorne from the University of British Columbia and McGill University geographer and Arctic expert Trevor Lloyd.

Government-supported research in the Arctic was reported on annually by the ACND. Leadership in research clearly rested with the Defence Research Board and the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys, including the Polar Continental Shelf Project. Each year the

⁵⁹ This was the only realm in which the federal government exercised such responsibilities for a large civilian population except, significantly, for the constitutional responsibility for Indians and lands reserved for Indians.

⁶⁰ LAC: RG85, vol. 1654, file NR 1/1-13, part 1, "Glassco Commission - Royal Commission on Government Organization," G.W.R. to Deputy Minister (Graham Rowley to Gordon Robertson), 15 Nov. 1962.

National Research Council had up to five projects in applied science, while Northern Affairs and National Resources (NANR) itself sponsored or conducted research through the Wildlife Service and the archaeology or ethnology programs of the National Museum of Canada. It is important to note that National Health and Welfare sponsored only one research project in this era and the RCMP none. This suggests that aside from NANR, bodies with an operational presence in the North relied on their in-house expertise to understand conditions and make plans.⁶¹

NANR in these years created a Northern Social Research Group (NSRG), which by 1973 filled huge gaps in Canadians' previous knowledge of the North. The group's "mandate was to encourage, fund, and engage in social science research on the traditional and contemporary economy and cultures of Canada's north. The intent was to form a base of research from which an orderly social, political, and economic modernizing of the north could be drawn."⁶² The NSRG "gained an international reputation as a source of generally top-quality social science work." At times their published work became a critical audit of the Department itself.⁶³ Unfortunately, with the devolution of many programs to Yellowknife, the NSRG suffered organizational changes in 1968 that were, as Graham Rowley told Nixon, "meant to be dysfunctional."

Economy and Culture: Twin Dilemmas in Planning for the North

The whirlwind that overtook the Qikiqtani Region in the 1950s was not unique to that place or time. Recently, Canadian historian Anthony J. Hall has written about

Two immense, opposing forces [which] are pulling at humanity as we move beyond the millenarian fever during this time of great transformations. One historical impetus is tugging down old linguistic, cultural, national, economic and political boundaries. The other pressure is seen in the struggle by many of the world's peoples against

⁶¹ J.R. Lotz, *Government Research and Surveys in the Canadian North 1956–61* (Ottawa: Northern Coordination and Research Centre, 1961).

⁶² P.G. Nixon, "The Politics of Government Research," pp. 37–46.

⁶³ See for example, D.K. Thomas and C.T. Thompson, *Eskimo Housing as Planned Social Change* (Ottawa: 1972); and David Omar Born, *Eskimo Education and the Trauma of Social Change* (Ottawa: 1970); and, especially, Peter J. Usher's demolition of government credibility in the Western Arctic, in *The Banks Islanders: Economy and Ecology of a Frontier Trapping Community*. 3 vols. (Ottawa: 1971).

assimilation and in support of those values, institutions, and political rights they believe are essential to retain or secure a distinct place on this planet.⁶⁴

To the official mind of Canadian colonialism 50 years ago, it was not supposed to be this conflicted. The orthodoxy of the time said that economic development could be given by the developed to their dependencies, would be welcomed as the subordinated peoples embraced economic opportunities, and could be achieved simply by letting obsolete cultural norms and identities wither. While this now seems as problematic as other 20th-century slogans such as “the war to end war” or “the end of history,” many expressions of optimism and good intentions were wrapped around the steady encroachment of southern government and economy on Inuit society.

One characteristic of official interest in the Qikiqtani Region from 1950 to at least 1970 was how forward-looking much of it was. Coupled with a sense of urgency over medical and other challenges was an understanding that northern societies could not absorb, and southern taxpayers would not support, the kind of sudden change that had swept through Yukon during the Gold Rush of 1896–1898 and again during the military emergencies of 1941–1945. In Qikiqtani Region in 1950, officials were pressed between two views of the future.

The first was that Inuit should continue to live a “traditional life,” as some imagined they still did, while making some necessary adjustments to the perceived shortage of game animals, adopting new standards in public and personal health, and reaching out to grasp the increasingly complex opportunities and demands posed by the swelling migrant population in the North. These fears and preferences were common among missionaries and the RCMP.

A second, opposing view was also common: Inuit seemed destined to abandon the land and embrace wage labour in a modern, industrializing North marked by rapid investment in military installations and exploitation of minerals, oil and gas. For a variety of reasons, and despite the shortage of clear indications of probable success, the second view – the view based on assimilation and economic development — grew increasingly strong as government invested in schools, housing, military infrastructure, and other efforts to bring the southern way of life into

⁶⁴ Anthony J. Hall, *The American Empire and the Fourth World* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), p. 59.

the North. New infrastructure — particularly schools, clinics and housing — was meant to compensate Inuit for leaving the land. The federal authorities saw formal schooling and technical training as the essential hinge between economic development and the future social well-being of Inuit. Development was seen as absolutely inevitable, in which case the stark choice for Inuit was between schooling and segregation.⁶⁵ “Education is the greatest barrier which the Eskimos and Indians have to overcome,” a departmental pamphlet on *Peoples of the Northwest Territories* intoned in 1957 after the warning that isolating Inuit from “the new settlers with their unsettling ways” was segregation: “This has been the solution in other countries, but it will not be the Canadian solution. Segregation has not found favour in Canada.”⁶⁶ With great regularity, departmental publications and official pronouncements made education the great hope for the future. By setting up segregation as the alternative to profound cultural change, official pronouncements grasped a major North American public issue and put Canada’s northern administrators firmly on the side of virtue.

From then on, elementary schooling for children and technical training for adults were top objectives in the official statements published for the Canadian public. Because teachers were appointed for the permanent settlements, not the *ilagiit nunagivaktangat*, whole families moved into settlements to avoid being split up, a relocation that officials did not seem to foresee. Officials sometimes admitted that rapid change was disrupting established social relations and depriving many Inuit of meaningful roles they held in society, especially Elders and hunters. Many of the current imbalances in Qikiqtani Region communities can be traced to government attitudes and actions in the 1950s to 1970s, which failed either to protect the hunting life or replace it with enough meaningful jobs.

All these trends weakened the “traditional life” that so many *Qallunaat* in the 1950s said they respected and wanted to save. That “traditional life” was partly a southern invention, because

⁶⁵ It is interesting that segregation, not oppression or exploitation, was portrayed as the ultimate evil to be avoided. See Canada. Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, *Annual Report Fiscal Year 1954–1955*, “Human Problems in the Canadian North,” p. 12; also Canada. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, *Canada’s North 1970-1980* (Ottawa: 1972), p. 34. “The need to rid northern communities of all forms of segregation is axiomatic.”

⁶⁶ Canada. Dept. of Northern Affairs and National Resources. *Peoples of the Northwest Territories* (Ottawa: 1957), p. 36.

for a long time Inuit had been adopting or developing new practices, which they hoped would not overwhelm valued cultural traditions. (A major recent adaptation was the fur-trapping economy: the fox and the imported goods it bought had never been staples of pre-contact existence.) In addition to this misunderstanding, *Qallunaat* admiration for traditional ways contained a hefty dose of anti-modernism. They viewed Inuit as the ultimate frontiersmen and admired their balanced obligations within networks of kin and community; these were said to resemble Christianity. The anti-modernists, however, predicted that Inuit culture would be destroyed by contact with the harmful side of *Qallunaat* society, negative forces such as venereal disease and dependence on social welfare. The anti-modernists, especially common among the RCMP and the churches, possessed little sense of Inuit as competent economic actors on a wider stage.

Government was so dependent on the Hudson's Bay Company that a serious critique of the commercial system was slower to develop after the Second World War than it had been after the First World War. In 1924 a government official told the *Toronto Star*:

While they have been in touch with civilization for 100 years... and while they are capable and keen to learn, the Eskimos, beyond learning from the missionaries to read and write their own language, are poor linguists. They don't as a rule speak English, and few English people speak Eskimo. The interchange of ideas is therefore very slow. The net result is that while they have taken hold of a great many of the man's ideas, they have got nowhere commercially. It is a fair statement that there is not one Eskimo in Baffin Land who has any idea of the real value of his own products. Their position now is that they are in the best possible frame of mind to learn, and anxious to do so.⁶⁷

By 1950, such critiques of the Hudson's Bay Company were rarely uttered aloud. The Company had become profitably entangled in the government's own service delivery, transporting the Eastern Arctic Patrol from 1932 to 1947, owning almost all the two-way radios at establishments, providing "relief" — food or ammunition — to Inuit in need and, after 1945, distributing the supplies Inuit families received under the Family Allowance program, a universal

⁶⁷ The interview, printed 3 Dec. 1924, was vetted and approved by the Deputy Minister. See LAC: RG85, vol. 755, file 4687, "L.T. Burwash – Report as Exploratory Engineer."

social program, which provided a high proportion of the nominal money income of every Qikiqtani Region community.

Fuzzy thinking about family allowance should not be underestimated as a facet of the official mind. In 1950, social transfers made up over 40 percent of Inuit income at eight trading posts visited by the Eastern Arctic Patrol, with family allowance alone accounting for over 45 percent at three Baffin Island locations.⁶⁸ By comparison, furs made up another 29 percent of reported income. Although the value of country food was not counted in this survey, it is nonetheless apparent that the Inuit economy was to a significant degree integrated with the wider national economy. It was also sometimes noted that the major commodities produced by Inuit, fine furs and later art works, were luxury commodities for which both supply and demand were unreliable. These awkward realities were seldom dealt with in any nuanced way in official publications at the time. Instead, these publications wrote off the present as if it was more or less unsustainable and then offered a choice of futures that was designed for Inuit rather than with them.

The official sense of anxious responsibility was clearly expressed in a number of places during the 1950s. In an article meant for a wide public audience, RCMP Commissioner L.H. Nicholson bluntly asserted the need for government intervention, not in the trading economy but in the social lives of people:

We cannot today accept the harshness of nature's laws. Thirty years ago the death of a few Eskimos by starvation would have attracted no attention, or at most would have been a matter of interest only. Such deaths were looked upon by Eskimos themselves as inevitable and the population was in this hard way held to what the country could maintain. The Eskimos may still accept this rule – we cannot.⁶⁹

Earlier, a speech prepared for Bent Sivertz described the traditional life as part of the “balance of nature” and mused about the government’s interference with previous cycles of prosperity

⁶⁸ LAC: RG85, vol. 1207, file 201-1-8, part 3, attachment to J. Cantley to A/Chief, 19 Nov. 1952.

⁶⁹ L.H. Nicholson, “The Problem of the People,” *The Beaver* (Spring 1959), pp. 20–21. Of 11 articles in this number of *The Beaver*, this is the only one written by a public servant.

and famine.⁷⁰ Sivertz found it “incompatible with the responsibility of the modern state” to allow its citizens to feel “expendable” by exposure to the dangers of the traditional life. As a result, in Sivertz’ view, the help that government directed to those in danger interfered with the balance of nature and thus allowed population to grow rapidly, with the unintended result that existing game supplies dwindled alarmingly.⁷¹

Sivertz continued, “Bringing education to Eskimos is a formidable task;” southerners usually think of schools in settlements, “but if the Eskimos are brought together in settlements they will starve unless the government provides food, clothing and shelter – and extreme paternalism of this kind would destroy the people.” This prophetic speech was critical of proposals to encourage all Inuit to move South, and offered assimilation and employment for those who wanted it along with increased support and appropriate levels of intervention for those who wanted to “continue the primitive life in regions where game is plentiful.” What he apparently failed to foresee was how difficult it would be to design and finance programs that would respond to individual desires and local challenges, to train or recruit people with the flexibility to deliver those programs, and to resist the tendency to bring the people to health care and education rather than the other way around.

One reason for this disappointing result was that economic development was the top priority when plans for the future were implemented. This should not be portrayed as a particularly reactionary approach or a uniquely Canadian one. The seeds of this kind of thinking were present in a range of international policy-making after the Second World War and were expressed in Article 73, the part of the United Nations (UN) Charter devoted to colonial administration. Article 73 somewhat euphemistically referred to colonizing powers as “Members of the United Nations which have or assume responsibilities for the administration of territories whose peoples have not yet attained a full measure of self-government.” It stated

⁷⁰ NWT Archives. Alexander Stevenson fonds, Accession N-1992-023, box 23 file 7. “Development of the North - Sociological Developments (speech by Mr. B.G. Sivertz)”, 25 Oct. 1954.; QTC Document A00024.

⁷¹ These speaking notes show no awareness that population figures were possibly much higher before virgin soil epidemics harrowed the populations at first contact, starting around 1840.

that “the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount.”⁷² However, Article 73 is silent on “internal colonies” of larger powers or what came to be called the peoples of the “fourth world,” but the spirit of promoting peace through economic development and self-government permeated the document. It might almost have provided the foundational text for the speech by Sivertz quoted above.

The document, however, linked development and culture in a way that clearly made the retention of culture subordinate to the economy. UN members pledged:

- a. to ensure, with due respect for the culture of the peoples concerned, their political, economic, social, and educational advancement, their just treatment, and their protection against abuses;
- b. to develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples, and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions, according to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and their varying stages of advancement.⁷³

For a population such as Inuit whose livelihood was organized around harvesting wild animals across large tracts of territory, subordinating culture to development exposed that culture to tremendous pressures by cutting people off from the scenes of their most prized activities and the sites where they educated their children in the values and practices of their Elders.

In general, the course of development policy was uneven, especially in the Kivalliq Region, which was noted for its mineral potential, but also for alleged game shortages, and in the Qikiqtani Region, which had relatively abundant game, but almost no economic minerals. In the Qikiqtani Region, therefore, the main hopes for economic stability or development lay in the direction of artistic production and handicrafts, developed first at Cape Dorset about 1950, construction for defence projects and administrative services, focused on Iqaluit from the mid-1950s onwards, and tourism, particularly catering to hunters and fishermen. By the end of the 1960s, there were commercial char fishing camps on the beautifully scenic Cumberland Sound (where a national

⁷² Article 73 is part of Chapter 11, the “Declaration Regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories”; Accessed online at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter11.shtml>, 17 May 2010.

⁷³ Ibid.

park was to be established in 1972) in line with a forecast by Sivertz in 1961, that changes in the game laws

would permit the hunting of walrus and other sea mammals in the wide list of attractions that will bring tourists and their money into the many depressed areas in the Eastern Arctic. In this way the recreational use of the wildlife of the North can bring much greater economic benefit to residents than is now derived from domestic or subsistence use. This revised system of utilizing wildlife can be an effective conservation technique.⁷⁴

Only later would wilderness adventure and hunting be joined by the community-based tourism initiatives that became a cornerstone of NWT government policy after 1984.⁷⁵

The lack of adequate consideration of the renewable resource economy is one of the missed opportunities of the development plans of the 1950s and 1960s, especially when weighed against the Article 73's endorsement of "due respect for the culture of the peoples concerned." It was never going to be easy to centralize services and hence people and at the same time preserve a way of life that required a high degree both of dispersal and of continuous use of land to harvest game and instruct youth. The federal government conducted a series of Area Economic Studies in the mid-1960s, which inventoried the concentrations of game animals and that, not surprisingly, were largely carried out by talking to Inuit. However, government support for hunting was largely passive, which George Wenzel has suggested may have been due to the fact that a number of communities already earned income from the skins of Ringed seals. This was an animal (unlike the Arctic fox) whose products could be both eaten and traded. Therefore hunter-support programs were not in place when international pressures killed the sealskin trade in the early 1980s. David Natcher argues that "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." The survival of the sector depends largely on the efforts of Inuit themselves, which are paradoxically facilitated by

⁷⁴ B.G. Sivertz, "The North as a Region," *Resources for Tomorrow. A Series of Background Papers for Discussion at the Resources for Tomorrow Conference* (Montreal: October 1961), p. 572.

⁷⁵ Gillian Corless, "Community Based Tourism Planning And Policy: The Case Of The Baffin Region, Nunavut." PhD Thesis. (Montreal: McGill University, 1999).

the failure of any other large-scale enterprise, except government itself, to take root across the region.⁷⁶

Cultural Change and Continuity

This report has already quoted, with some bewilderment, Minister Robert Winters' statement in 1950 that "a great attempt has been made to assimilate them [the Inuit] into modern ways of life." In fact, at the official level before that year, only feeble and equivocal efforts had been made to assimilate Inuit. In keeping with the anti-modern attitudes of many contact agents, the Hudson's Bay Company's need for hardworking trappers, and also the spirit of the UN's timid steps towards decolonization, Canadian officials in the 1950s seldom spoke directly about assimilating Inuit to southern cultural standards. Instead they welcomed every evidence of Inuit showing an interest in wage labour. While government steadily undermined the material bases of previous socio-economic structures, they never clearly articulated a view they probably held, that not much of the Inuit's land-based, kin-based social, economic and spiritual systems were of value to the Qikiqtani Region of the future. In outline, it appears that officials did not know what to expect from the future in the 1950s, then became resigned after 1960 to the notion that development must prevail against older Inuit practices.

By the mid-1960s, this cultural pessimism blossomed into a kind of civic optimism: Inuit would be encouraged, through cooperatives and local councils, to have more influence over their own local affairs. Missionaries, traders, health workers and other officials all wanted to consign to history's dustbin the majority of practices and beliefs that set Inuit apart from their new neighbours. Officials, therefore, found it convenient to believe that Inuit would make the same choices, and their distinctiveness would be blurred in a common citizenship with other Canadians. In a speech devoted mainly to exploitation of natural resources, Minister Arthur Laing in 1965 shared his faith that the "special problems" of Inuit would cease to trouble Canada for long, as they abandoned their "precarious" economy based on trapping, to acquire

⁷⁶ See David C. Natcher, *The Social Economy of Canada's Aboriginal North*, at <http://www.nrf.is/Open%20Meetings/Anchorage/Position%20Papers/Natcher%20NRF%20Submission.pdf>, accessed 19 Jan. 2010.

mechanical and technical training and business skills. Then “the very real benefits to them in their social, political and economic development are of even greater value in coming to grips with their problems of transition.” Without generally using the word “assimilation” or worrying overtly at what would happen to those who preferred a more traditional path, Laing declaimed that “the job of developing Canada must always go on but the day that the Eskimos can develop in the same framework as the people in the provinces is fast approaching.” This was all to be achieved by merging the Inuit in a common citizenship with other Canadians: “the development of the Eskimos in the Arctic will continue until they themselves achieve the rights and responsibilities which they seek and deserve – the heritage of Canadian citizenship.”⁷⁷ Readers may recognize a foreshadowing of a more famous document issued four years later, generally known as the White Paper on Indian Policy, which invited First Nations peoples to exchange their rights for a vague promise of equality of economic opportunity:

The policy promises all Indian people a new opportunity to expand and develop their identity within the framework of a Canadian society which offers them the rewards and responsibilities of participation, the benefits of involvement and the pride of belonging.⁷⁸

In a similar fashion, official statements about Inuit shied away from outright denunciation of core elements of the culture and instead deflected attention toward opportunities for Inuit to acquire new skills and to commodify parts of the existing culture through tourism and artistic production. Official statements generally avoided talking about the fate of Inuit beliefs, lifeways and social structures that were not attuned to the modern world, but the subject was important to academic and museum anthropologists, and some of their debates spilled into the official sphere.

⁷⁷ Canada. Dept. of Northern Affairs and National Resources, “The Potential of the North,” An Address by the Honourable Arthur Laing, March 18, 1965, pp. 12-14. Mimeograph in Library and Archives Canada, Amicus No. 9098272.

⁷⁸ Canada. Dept. of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy 1969* (Ottawa: 1969), p. 7. The same document dismissed comprehensive claims as “so general and undefined that it is not realistic to think of them as specific claims capable of remedy except through a policy and program that will end injustice to Indians as members of the Canadian community,” p. 11.

In one corner of the discussion were a number of older anthropologists who took an essentialist view of Inuit culture and deplored its loss. In 1959, E.S. Carpenter of the University of Toronto publicly denounced the “tragedy of misunderstanding and ignorance” whereby romantics and bureaucrats were preventing any movement to “assist them [Inuit] in their adjustment to modern life and, at the same time, to preserve their ancient culture in book and film.”⁷⁹ He denounced the “little old ladies” who he ridiculed as “defenders of the igloo” for wanting to “insist that the Eskimo regain” the precarious life of other times. Carpenter praised recent government initiatives to treat Inuit as human beings and he mocked the view that they were being “destroyed.” But he denounced the Northern Administration for failing to support academic fieldwork, failing to “put on record the meaning of life to these arctic peoples.” He went on:

Now that Eskimo culture has fallen before our needs and power, and the Eskimo themselves are abandoning their ancient traditions, these are offered to us, briefly, at this moment. If we seize this opportunity and preserve these traditions in book and film, we enrich our own lives and, perhaps not incidentally, reaffirm that minorities, if not in flesh, at least in tradition, can survive in a modern democracy,

Inuit dignity and the enriching of the dominant society both seemed to Carpenter to require the program, which came to be known (and tolerably well-funded) as the “urgent ethnology” program of the National Museum of Canada. But in general he stood on the same ground as Canada’s pre-eminent student of the Inuit, Diamond Jenness. Nearly 80 years old and retired from government service since 1948, Jenness in 1966 published a stinging indictment of administrators who had made Inuit “the pawns of history” and – in his stereotyped view – extinguished them as a separate race or culture. His essay in R. St. J. Macdonald’s collection, *The Arctic Frontier*, is simultaneously defeatist, anti-modern and assimilationist. Canada, he said, had

⁷⁹ E. S. Carpenter, “Eskimo Culture; a tragedy of misunderstanding and ignorance” *Canadian Commentator*, 3:4 (Apr. 1959). QTC Document A00717.

allowed Inuit to corrode in idleness because she could not make up her mind what to do with them:⁸⁰

The true Indians, the true Eskimos, have passed into history, to join the Romans of Italy... and the Normans who conquered and settled in England.... Are we not duping ourselves, then, when we persistently talk about, and even legislate for, "Canadian Eskimos."⁸¹

Bitterness and pessimism might fund a film series or collect traditional legends, but did not add up to giving direction to public policy. The official mind was not closed to the contributions of anthropology. Sivertz in 1959 wrote a circular memo to his staff praising the insights of American anthropologist Margaret Mead, whose views provided a good fit with some of the assumptions of high modernism. Sivertz alerted his staff to an ongoing struggle between his Branch and the RCMP to design the pace and direction of social change in the Arctic, and strongly asserted their Department's belief in rapid change. (Commissioner Nicholson had proposed a buffer zone forcing Inuit to live more than 20 miles from any settlement.)

One point at which our philosophy diverges from that of Commissioner Nicholson is in respect of the speed at which it is possible for cultural adaptation to take place without destroying the integrity of the group or the individual . We believe, and have ample evidence for it, that people from practically a stone age culture can enter a very different way of life such as that common in Canada, generally in the space of one generation. This in fact is the basic premise of the ferment in the minds of aboriginal people all over the world who have been living in something less than the status of full citizenship in their own countries . Their demands at this moment are very insistent and may be briefly summarized as a desire for the maximum advantages human knowledge and the most developed institutions of civilization can bring . The legitimacy of these demands is being widely recognized and we have felt that it would be incompatible for

⁸⁰ D. Jenness, "The Administration of Northern Peoples: America's Eskimos – Pawns of History," in R. St. J. Macdonald, *The Arctic Frontier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 126.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

Canada to use one point of view with respect to under-developed peoples in other lands and a different one in respect of similar problems within her own borders.⁸²

The appeal to the authority of Mead followed:

Incidentally, social anthropologists have traditionally advocated a policy of gradualness in cultural change, but many leaders in this field such as Dr. Margaret Mead now favour an accelerated programme of change, provided only that the individuals and groups in question have a place in the new culture that is secure and satisfactory to them economically, vocationally and socially. In this view, the people must have economic opportunity and social acceptance, - they must have a real place in the new society, - it is fatal for them to spend time in an in-between void.⁸³

This preoccupation of the official mind with theoretical aspects of assimilation was expressed again in the important *Resources for Tomorrow* conference in 1961. Northern development was a major theme, with Sivertz himself as a key speaker and British Columbia anthropologist Henry Hawthorne disseminating Mead's views in a careful presentation on "Problems of Cultural Adjustment."⁸⁴ Also citing Mead, Hawthorne set out a program for the responsible imposition of rapid culture change. He foresaw a North whose population would be disproportionately young and town-based, where the existing educational system might be flawed in ways not yet understood, but where "the new centres may become centres of unusual intellectual, scientific and artistic growth."

Hawthorne offered six goals for moving a person from "a tribal outlook to one which fits the contemporary world," which can be summarized – not quoted – here:

1. ability to speak, read and write some "world language," that is, a language that will make participation in international conferences and free movement about the world possible;

⁸² NWT Archives, Alexander Stevenson fonds, Accession N-1992-023, box 17 file 7, "Memo to Field Staff for Information, re: Eskimo Affairs", B.G. Sivertz, Director, 11 March 1959. QTC Document A00003.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ H.B. Hawthorne, "Problems of Cultural Adjustment in Relation to Northern Resources Development," in *Resources for Tomorrow. A Series of Background Papers for Discussion at the Resources for Tomorrow Conference* (Montreal: October 1961), pp. 597–606.

2. a grasp of the framework of Western economy, use of money and credit, and a recognition of the implications of living in a contract rather than a status society;
3. a modicum of cross-cultural sophistication that will enable the individual concerned to work among people with different codes and standards without taking offence or becoming disoriented;
4. a working acceptance of the state of mind roughly summarized in such phrases as “the scientific attitude” with an ability to show this attitude in public interpersonal contexts, whether political, economic or technological;
5. some conceptualized view of history that makes it possible to deal with the time perspectives (towards the past and the future) of the great civilizations; and
6. a sufficient independence of the living mesh of their own culture to be able to exist outside it without crippling nostalgia.⁸⁵

Taken all together, Hawthorne’s talk sent messages of optimism rather than the usual prevailing anxiety, but offered this at a high cost to hunter–gatherer cultures. However, he accurately foresaw that change would move people off the land and into “centres.... more highly urbanized than the rest of Canada,” and he argued that this would require rapid and consensual change if Canada were to avoid “The hapless growth of ethnic slums and the sort of human relations they imply [which] would be indefensible.” Some other salient features of the presentation were:

- Hawthorne noted the importance of adult education in this process: “[U]nless the goals of education are accepted as distant ones several generations away, there must be inducements and opportunities to learn for the parent generation also.”
- He did not seem to foresee much intercultural growth for the non-Inuit contact agents.

Given the primacy Canada assigned to economic development over cultural retention, and the proposed penetration of non-Inuit culture into almost every individual, family and communal aspect of Inuit life, it is not clear what part of traditional Inuit culture was predicted to survive, with or without “crippling nostalgia.” Perhaps this contradiction is what soon propelled

⁸⁵ H.B. Hawthorne, “Problems of Cultural Adjustment,” pp. 601–02.

Hawthorne into a new concern for “the survival of small societies.” One of the things foreshadowed by his 1961 presentation was a growing awareness that effective social change would have to be guided by Inuit preference and participation. Officials sensitive to this fact, notably Graham Rowley,⁸⁶ were more successful in getting senior officials at least to pay lip service to this principle, though in fact it had begun to emerge as early as 1959 when two Inuit — both government employees — attended the meeting of an inter-department Eskimo Affairs Committee.⁸⁷ The government, rather like the whalers a century before, began to identify Inuit who could act as cultural intermediaries and perhaps even as role models in accommodating to a new economy.

The role of anthropologists in influencing official policy, and of Inuit in shaping the agenda, took a new and perhaps unexpected turn in 1973–1975 when the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development funded the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada to conduct a land use and occupancy project. This supported identifying Inuit rights to lands and resources they had actually used within their traditional territories. The fieldwork was entrusted to teams of younger anthropologists whose interests included hunting and who took it for granted that, despite problems of underdevelopment and pressures on traditional practices and beliefs, the communities of the Qikiqtani Region were still inhabited by Inuit and not by some deracinated underclass of former Eskimos. This ecological approach provided both government and Inuit with a clear picture of the full geographical extent of historic and recent land use, and created an expanded scientific documentation for debating the future of resource management in what has since become Nunavut.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ NWT Archives. Alexander Stevenson fonds, Accession N-1992-023, box 17 file 8, Memo, J.B. Bergevin, ADM Indian and Eskimo Affairs to “Mr. MACDONALD” [perhaps Deputy Minister John A. MacDonald], 22 Oct. 1969, summarizing and praising G.W. Rowley’s paper on policy requirements for a sound Inuit policy. QTC Document A01859.

⁸⁷ Richard Diubaldo, *The Government of Canada and the Inuit, 1900-1967* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1985) pp. 1-7, 155; P. Clancy, “The Making of Eskimo Policy in Canada, 1952–62: The Life and Times of the Eskimo Affairs Committee,” *Arctic* 40:3 (Sept. 1987), pp. 191–97.

⁸⁸ This exercise accomplished for the Eastern Arctic something similar to what Berger’s *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland* did for the west. See Milton Freeman Research Limited, *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project*. 3 vols. (Ottawa: 1976); Milton Freeman, interview with P. Goldring for QTC, 4 June 2009; this research led at least indirectly to federal acceptance of Nunavut as a separate government and territory, and its revelations continue to inspire discussion in literature on the unique institutions and future of Nunavut.

Summing up: The Trajectory of the Official Mind, 1950–1975

The official mind of Canadian colonialism in the North showed some of the characteristics of post-1945 decolonization movements, but also a relentless desire to control the land and its people in the interests of the larger Canadian state. This survey has emphasized fear and mistrust because departmental officials were by no means naive in certain important matters. They grasped the complexity of the changes they were trying to control, and also understood that they were, themselves, being driven forward by international modernizing forces they did not control. The urge to prevent harm to Inuit — the impulse to rescue — was the single most universal feeling shared by anti-modernists and modernizers alike. Their pre-occupation with their own responsibility to offer Inuit physical safety dampened any interest in taking minor financial or policy risks to protect or promote the survival of Inuit ways of life.

Although certain official desires prevailed through the entire period, there were distinct chronological stages. Until the late 1950s, there was much fear in official circles that the 20th-century economy of the Qikiqtani Region was doomed by over-hunting of game resources, epidemic TB and slumping fur markets. The federal government had no thought of completely abandoning the people to market forces, which were failing them already and failing to prepare them for change. In a revealing statement by a senior official, a serious criticism of the Inuit way of dwelling in the Arctic was that it “requires the full time of the entire family.”⁸⁹ Viewed in this light, the traditional life, characterized by highly mobile multi-generational family life, was inconsistent with compulsory schooling, specialized skills training, and various forms of migrant labour.

In 1959, having persuaded the Diefenbaker government to make the North a high priority, the Northern Administration accepted highly convenient theories offered by some recent anthropology about embracing rapid social change as both necessary and wise. They tended to ignore the caveats — especially the budgetary implications — that came with those theories. However, budgets became large enough to empower southern engineers and other advocates

⁸⁹ B.G. Sivertz, “The North as a Region,” p. 561.

of modernization, and to demand change at a speed that precluded involvement of Inuit in key decisions. The emphasis on schooling for children and training for adults developed without being coordinated with actually providing employment opportunities in the cash economy.

Though funding levels rose, they were never adequate for the resulting experiment in social engineering. One consequence of inadequate budgets was that by 1961 the Northern Administration was publicly distancing itself from the idea of delivering social services to Inuit in *ilagiiit nunagivaktangat*; people would live in settlements and oil and minerals were to provide the “principal economic base for a northern population”⁹⁰ By the mid-1960s, the accelerated pace of change and the constitutional discussions in the Western Arctic began the shift of responsibility for social policy from Ottawa to Yellowknife. The result, which eventually favoured Inuit empowerment in the medium term, was that Ottawa’s attention increasingly focussed on non-renewable resources while it was left to the Yellowknife government, though not an Aboriginal government, to begin to temper the promotion of development with a renewed interest in actual conditions in communities and on the land. The federal role remained strong, both in providing program funding to the Government of the Northwest Territories and in targeting specific programs such as national parks and the CBC.

Throughout this period, economic development was a strong preoccupation of officials, and “the human problem” came to function as both an obstacle and a rationale for accelerated development. In a remarkably short time, officials shifted from regarding hunting as the basis of survival to seeing it as at best a specialized occupation for a minority. The *Resources for Tomorrow Conference* (1961) underlined the growing but untested expectation that northern development, especially oil, would pay its own costs and also solve the human problem.

The prevailing pessimism about traditional Inuit culture and economy was offset to a certain degree by official interest in community development, including market-oriented instruments such as co-operatives. The official mind had a strongly international cast. Internationally, it was the decolonization of the Third World (if not of the Fourth) that sensitized governments to the material needs of Inuit. It was left to Inuit themselves, and to a small corps of advocates in the South, notably anthropologists, to make the case for a more humane and rights-based approach

⁹⁰ B.G. Sivertz, “The North as a Region,” p. 567.

to foster the survival of elements of traditional culture into an uncertain future. It was another kind of external event, the Supreme Court's recognition of Aboriginal rights as the basis for legitimate claims, which began the subsequent chapter in the rivalry between Ottawa and the Inuit for the dominant say in how the future of the region and its people would unfold.