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Discussion Paper

Political spoils or political largesse? Regional development in northern Quebec, Canada and Australia's Northern Territory

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SERIES NOTE

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- to investigate issues relating to Aboriginal employment and unemployment;
- to identify and analyse the factors affecting Aboriginal participation in the labour force; and
- to assist in the development of government strategies aimed at raising the level of Aboriginal participation in the labour force and at the stimulation of Aboriginal economic development.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines regional development in northern Quebec, Canada, with a focus on the James Bay Cree, and makes some preliminary comparisons with the Australian Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. The relationship between economic development and emergent regional Aboriginal governments is a central concern. The paper compares political, juridical, constitutional and cultural factors affecting the organisational and economic resources available to Aboriginal people in the two countries.

Even before the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement the Cree have enjoyed relative affluence when compared to most Aboriginal people in Canada or in Australia. With rapid growth in the Cree workforce, subsistence production is a stable but proportionally declining contributor to incomes, while heavily subsidised growth in Cree-controlled public administration and social services, and accelerated entrepreneurial development, have been necessary to avert real economic hardship. This growth has required constant vigilance and lobbying by the Cree, who encounter substantial provincial and federal government resistance to honouring some sections of their Aboriginal claims settlement. Their efforts have not prevented increased unemployment and declines in mean incomes in recent years. But without regional self-government, the Cree would have fared much worse, and their chances of meeting the very substantial demographic, environmental, and economic challenges of current and coming decades would be even more tenuous.

This author's impression is that initiatives in Australia are to a greater extent driven by central government policy than in Canada, where Aboriginal organisations, like those in northern Quebec, have put state authorities on the defensive in defining policy and constitutional agendas. There are, however, a number of parallel trends in self-government mobilisation by Australian Aborigines, particularly in the central and northern regions. Regional organisations are assuming a more holistic range of functions of governance, while consolidating Aboriginal control of resources, and are beginning to exploit the attendant possibilities for internal linkages in regional Aboriginal economies.

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Foreword

Dr Colin Scott was something of a windfall Visiting Fellow for the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR). He had made arrangements to visit the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology prior to the establishment of CAEPR, but when he finalised arrangements for his visit in 1991, it became clear that his research interests were as much within the Centre's as the Department's ambit. He was in Australia from June to August 1991, during which time he made a brief visit to the Northern Territory and presented seminars in both the CAEPR and Anthropology seminar series. Some of the material in this discussion paper was presented in July 1991 at the seminar 'Aboriginal economies in Northern Québec: recent experience with development and the claims settlements'.

Dr Scott completed this comparative discussion paper on his return to Canada. He emphasises that the paper is both exploratory and preliminary. This makes it extremely suitable for inclusion in the CAEPR Discussion Paper Series. It also accords with the Centre's requirement that Visiting Fellows provide some written output.

In sub-editing the paper for publication two minor stylistic changes have been made that require explanation. First, the term 'aboriginal' is generally used in Canada in the dictionary sense of 'indigenous', and Dr Scott used the lower case in his paper. This usage would have created some confusion for an Australian readership familiar with the upper case usage of the term to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Consequently, the upper case is used throughout this paper, although it is noteworthy that in Canada the all-encompassing term 'Canadian Aboriginals' includes 'status' or registered Indians, non-status Indians and Métis, and Inuit. Dr Scott's use of the adjectival 'Aboriginals' is maintained throughout, except when reference is made to Australian Aborigines. Second, dollar amounts refer to Australian and Canadian dollars. Wherever there is any possible confusion, $A refers to Australian dollars and $C to Canadian dollars.

Jon Altman
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The aims of this paper are twofold. First, it seeks to provide a current account of the experience of the Cree of James Bay, northern Quebec, concerning regional economic development under the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA). In the past, this case has attracted international interest as one model for what may be achieved by Aboriginal 'claimants' within the framework of a liberal democratic state. The most recent comprehensive published data on the regional economy (in Salisbury 1986) are now a decade old, and there is naturally some interest in how the Cree are doing, fifteen years after 'settlement' of their claims.

Second, this paper takes up, in a necessarily tentative way, the relevance of the Cree example to the Australian context. While I have only a novice's understanding of the Australian setting, its literature reveals both striking similarities and differences with Canada. Australian specialists' reflections and reactions in oral communication have made me particularly sensitive to the differences and, I hope, suitably cautious about extrapolating conclusions based on a Canadian region. At the same time, reflection on differences has perhaps the greater potential for suggesting new policy directions.

Particular attention is paid in this paper to regional development among the Cree of James Bay in northern Quebec, and among Aborigines in the Northern Territory, Australia. The JBNQA of 1975, and the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (henceforth ALRA) represent the strongest recognition of Aboriginal rights in Canada and Australia respectively, at least in those sub-state jurisdictions where Aboriginal people are outnumbered by settler populations.[1]

Macro similarities

The experience of Aboriginal societies in Canada and Australia involves many obvious parallels: the direct dispossession of most by European 'settler' societies; their encapsulation by British 'Dominions' that have developed as liberal democracies; the numerical weakness of Aboriginal populations; the fact that by most socioeconomic indicators they are the most disadvantaged groups in society; their continuing cultural attachment to the land; the substantial rurality or remoteness of their populations; and the importance of Aboriginal rights as an issue to which both Canadian and Australian Governments in the past two decades have become politically sensitive, at both domestic and international levels. At about the same time, policy-makers in both Canada and Australia were recognising the bankruptcy of assimilationist policies, and bringing in policies of recognition of Aboriginal claims as a key component in the ongoing relationship between Aboriginal people and the nation-state.[2]

ALRA and the JBNQA were given effect at the same time, albeit via very different processes at the level of state institutions.

There is little qualitative difference in the electoral strength of Aboriginal populations in the two countries, so that in both Aboriginals' ability to shape state policy depends heavily on extra-parliamentary political strategies and sympathies. According to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada projections (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) 1989: 5), there are now about 520,000 so-called 'status' or registered Indians in Canada, roughly 2 per cent of the total population.[3] In addition, there are some 25,000 Inuit, and perhaps a quarter million non-status Indians and Métis (estimates vary widely). All told, people who identify culturally as Aboriginal probably comprise around 3 per cent of the Canadian population. Aborigines, including Torres Strait Islanders, comprised 1.5 per cent of Australia's population according to the 1986 Census, and according to the preliminary count of the 1991 Census totalled 257,333, a similar proportion of the total population (see Gaminiratne 1992).

In both countries, a combination of Aboriginal cultural preferences, exclusion from mainstream political and economic institutions, and central government policies has produced a growing non-urban Aboriginal population that, contrary to assimilationist expectations of an earlier era, shows no real tendency to integrate fully with the urban 'mainstream'. More than 60 per cent of registered Indians live in nearly 600 'reserve' communities, and more than 60 per cent of these reserves are in rural and remote parts of the country (INAC 1989: 14). The average size of Indian reserve communities is slightly over 500 persons. Patterns of population size and location in Canada, then, are somewhat similar to those in Australia, where 42 per cent of Aborigines are estimated to live in or around settlements or townships of less than 1,000 population (Australian Government 1987: 1). The proportion of registered Indians in rural and remote regions has remained substantially unchanged for the past twenty years, even as the population has doubled, a growth rate not dissimilar to that of Aborigines in Australia (Tesfaghiorghis 1991). The relatively economically depressed character of most rural areas in both countries extends the parallel.

The employment rate in Canada among the working-age population who identify as Aboriginal is about 45 per cent; but for registered Indians in remote areas, the rate falls to 30 per cent. On reserves, 25 per cent of working-age Indians are in full-time employment and 5 per cent in part-time employment (Canadian Government 1989: 17), although it must be remembered that in many rural and remote areas subsistence pursuits are an important form of employment not reflected in these statistics. Again, this picture is crudely comparable to an Australian Aboriginal employment rate of 33 per cent (Tesfaghiorghis 1991: 19).[4] Meanwhile,

the employment rate among non-Aboriginals of working age in both countries is 63 per cent. Aboriginal mean incomes in both Canada and Australia are, in general, about half the level of non-Aboriginal incomes.

In both countries, therefore, the impediments to sustained economic development and employment equity are formidable. Economic improvement will come through expanded access and accelerated growth in (largely rural and remote) regional economies, or not at all. Yet these are precisely the regional economies that have been bypassed by free market forces, or distorted by the boom-bust cycles of 'single-industry' resource extraction. And although Aboriginal settlements in rural areas have sometimes retained or regained land bases, these are all too often lands that have historically been ignored by non-Aboriginals precisely because of limited economic potential.

Still, in recent years, one senses wide-ranging optimism on the part of Canadian Aboriginal leaders at local, regional and national levels, and in different areas of the country. The vision of economically self-sufficient, self-governing First Nations is widely proclaimed. Vigorous entrepreneurial spirit and self-confidence are in evidence at native development seminars, business conferences, and commercial fairs, not, however, without some expression of frustration over political resistance, at both provincial and federal levels, to the demands of Aboriginal governments for enhanced jurisdictions and resource bases.

My preliminary impression is that Australian academic observers and analysts are more guarded about the prospects for Aboriginal economic development than are their Canadian counterparts, even though the tone of official government policy in Australia would seem more optimistic than in Canada: no federal political party in Canada would commit to Aboriginal 'employment equity' by the year 2000, as the Australian Government (1987) did in announcing its Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP), with significant funding to back its initiative.[5] It is projected that by the end of the five-year period from 1987 to 1993, over $1.5 billion will be expended under AEDP (Altman and Sanders 1991b: 12).

In contrast, the funding levels of federal Aboriginal economic development programming in Canada do not inspire particular confidence. The Government of Canada has promised to allocate $873.7 million to its Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy during the first five years of the 1990s (Canadian Government 1989).[6] It is not easy to evaluate what this will mean in the final analysis, but here is one crude measure: it has been estimated that in southern Canada it takes an input of between $100,000 and $150,000 in government money to create one permanent job. The costs are undoubtedly higher in remote areas, but let

us assume this is a valid figure. With $870 million, from 6,000 to 8,000 jobs at best could be created over the five-year cycle. But during eight recent years, from 1982 to 1989, the average number of status Indians on social assistance or welfare increased by about 18,000, from 39,000 to 57,000, according to INAC (1989: 55) figures.[7] In other words, the federal promise, even if it were all new money, could be expected, at best, to forestall only half of the probable increase in welfare dependency among status Indians alone, given current trends, not to mention Inuit, non-status Indians, and Métis.[8]

Many Aboriginal groups attach their strongest hopes for economic improvement not on government programming, but on development of resources on reserves or other traditional land bases, bolstered by settlement of their Aboriginal and treaty claims. There are more than thirty 'comprehensive' claims under way in Canada, covering the majority of the land masses of the Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Quebec, and substantial tracts of several other provinces. These cover territories over which the Crown does not claim to have extinguished Aboriginal rights by treaty. Only three of these comprehensive claims have so far been settled. There are, in addition, as many as 300 smaller, 'specific' claims relating to post-Confederation (1867) treaties, and perhaps a hundred more relating to pre-Confederation treaties.

But do even the modern claims settlements in Canada warrant optimism about self-determined, sustained economic development? The Quebec Cree and Inuit have had some important successes in using their agreements to obtain benefits unforeseen by Ottawa at time of signing, but there have also been significant failures in getting the assistance to which governments have committed themselves in principle, but failed to deliver. Ottawa is concerned whether the JBNQA model is affordable as a general solution. The federal deficit currently stands at $370 billion, double that of Australia on a per capita basis. A third of federal revenue now goes on servicing the national debt. The cost of settling all 30 comprehensive claims and 300 to 400 specific claims could run into the tens of billions. It will not be a finished process this decade, or next.

Hopes and rhetoric aside, one wonders whether the ethos of entrepreneurial development espoused by Canadian Aboriginal leaders and many of their social science observers is really rooted in any more fertile soil than that in Aboriginal Australia.

Macro differences

Australian social scientists cite many of the same macro-structural impediments to Aboriginal development as their Canadian counterparts, but also cite macro-structural disadvantages that are absent or less severe in Canada. There are important differences in 'policy culture' between Canada and Australia. Development initiatives in Australia seem to be directed more by government policy. However enlightened that policy has sometimes been, there is the nagging concern about things getting done 'for' rather than 'by' Aboriginals. Moreover, there is the pervasive sense that past gains are quite vulnerable to changes in government and to policy reversals that are largely beyond the ability of Aboriginals to control.

One has the sense that in Canada policy agendas have come to be driven to a greater extent by regional, provincial and national Aboriginal organisations. Federal government funding was an important stimulus in the development of provincial and national Aboriginal organisations, and remains an important source of revenue. Aboriginal organisations have achieved a degree of effectiveness, however, that makes it difficult for government to withdraw support without serious political costs to itself. And the device of multi-year 'block-funding' agreements between Aboriginal entities and federal and provincial governments has provided some protection against the shorter-term political manipulations and insecurities that can arise from fiscal dependency.

The constitutional and legal history of British North America and of Canada in relation to Aboriginal peoples represents a major and well-known contrast to Australia. Aboriginal and treaty rights, reaffirmed in Canada's *Constitution Act 1982*, relate to a long history of nation-to-nation dealings between Aboriginals and Europeans, and although in many conjunctures these precedents have been sorely eroded, they have also provided important opportunities for rebuilding relations between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian societies. Perhaps this history helps to account for the relative receptivity of the Canadian public to Aboriginal demands, particularly in view of the many broken treaties of the past. Even mainstream conservatives who are not particularly sympathetic to Aboriginal claims on humanistic grounds tend to be offended by the notion that treaties and other agreements may be casually dishonoured.

Compensation for lands already alienated is part of any modern comprehensive claim settlement in Canada, a principle arising out of treaty and constitutional history, and one which provides an initial capital base in the form of compensation funds, in addition to the possibility of ongoing revenues from resource development. As Young (1991: 213) notes, Australian claims settlements do not include the payment of

compensation monies, making Aboriginal communities more dependent for capital on forms of resource exploitation which will generate royalties, and limiting opportunities for those groups who do not have commercially valuable mineral deposits on their lands.

The economic impact of land rights, according to Young (1991: 208), depends on five factors: the control exerted by claimants over renewable resource use, particularly of subsistence; whether land claims include subsurface or just surface rights; whether cash compensation is paid; how cash payments are invested/distributed; and the internal mechanisms for managing compensation. To these, I would add a sixth factor: the extent to which claims agreements establish or promote institutions of self-government. Self-government for the Cree and Naskapi of northern Quebec, to the extent it is established by legislation pursuant to a comprehensive claims settlement, is a constitutionally protected right.[9] The 'self-government' component of claims negotiations in Canada leads to customary funding for Aboriginal government jurisdictions (health and social services, education, police and justice, and so on) that provides insulation from central government policy shifts.

Partly because of constitutional histories, partly because of the greater length of time that self-government has been on the political agendas of Aboriginal organisations, and perhaps also for cultural reasons (in both Aboriginal and mainstream populations), the development of regionally-based Aboriginal government structures controlling a 'holistic' range of portfolios, seems to be coming about more readily in parts of Canada than in Australia.

The advantages of regional-scale Aboriginal governments for economic development are clear. They enable greater coordination of development strategies across communities, and more effective capture and recirculation of multiple sources of income through contracting and other policies. They also offer opportunities for breaking the stalemate of dependency on external agencies, by providing investment and more informed decision-making about larger economic projects. Without such support, local communities are dependent on complex interventions by non-Aboriginal government departments, funding agencies, and advisers; 'it is difficult, if not impossible, for the leaders of an Aboriginal community, the prospective 'owners' or beneficiaries of a local enterprise, to maintain their own position and interests or to control the course of negotiations in such a complex situation' (Ellana et al. 1988: 261).

Cultural factors

Observers of Australian Aboriginal economies report that: a corporate sense of community beyond narrowly kin-defined social networks (a pre-requisite for effective self-government and local and regional development planning) is typically absent; egalitarian social pressures to share wealth immediately are thwarting capital accumulation and entrepreneurial management strategies; Aboriginal enterprises and administrative office tend to be exploited for the benefit of close kin (and by non-Aboriginal managers); and, while non-Aboriginal governments have encouraged 'self-management' in various forms, Aboriginal collectivities have found it difficult to develop the institutional means for taking charge of governmental functions.[10]

Even at the scale of individual settlements, the existence of 'community' organisation and sentiment cannot be assumed (Smith 1989). There are definite implications for the scope of economic initiatives that are workable. Ellana et al. (1988: 258) observe that large projects are especially likely to trigger intra-community tensions rooted in tribal and linguistic heterogeneity, and in the status of traditional owners versus non-owners with regard to land requirements.

Local community heterogeneity is magnified regionally. Nonetheless, there are instances of regional political cohesion along cultural/linguistic lines: the Pitjantjatjara Council, whose constituency spans adjacent portions of South Australia, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory, and the regional organisation of Torres Strait Islanders.

In Canada, the better-developed cases of regional Aboriginal government tend to be among populations who view themselves as having cultural and linguistic affinities, although these are not proof against inter-community or kin-group rivalries. At the same time, First Nation governments have experienced powerful pressures to 'trim' their constituencies to conform to provincial or territorial boundaries, or to respond to particular conflicts with outside developers, as with the Grand Council of the Crees of Quebec.[11]

At one pole of the discourse on development, indigenous cultural survival has been perceived as incompatible with the development of Aboriginal administrative and commercial entities. Against this tendency, one may cite well-known cases in the anthropological literature of indigenous social relations serving as effective vehicles for economic development (for example, Salisbury 1969). Canadian anthropologists and historians are becoming increasingly critical of the view that social relations and ideologies of egalitarian hunters have been in conflict with competitive economic practice. Archival reconstructions are showing that nineteenth

century Aboriginal hunters in diverse areas of Canada often turned quickly to compete effectively as farmers on the prairies, as commercial traders and fishermen on the Northwest Coast, and as loggers and miners on the Shield (Knight 1978; Carter 1990). These entrepreneurial successes were typically resented and vigorously undermined, however, by non-Aboriginal competitors, who enlisted the well-documented assistance of federal politicians and bureaucrats to impose legal and administrative restrictions in order to block access by Aboriginals to natural resources, machinery, and other necessities, often on the pretext that Aboriginals, lacking the civilised qualities of the European, must be restricted to outmoded (and unprofitable) scales and techniques of production before being allowed to graduate to modern technologies of production, or that they must first be made employees of White entrepreneurs to 'learn the ropes'. In other words, there is a strong case for the economic responses of indigenous social relations on modern reserves being primarily the result of official sanctions during the formative phases of frontier economies.

Do policy goals of economic development interfere with the 'right' of Aboriginals to engage in lifestyles that bear the aspect of 'poverty' in European terms? The appropriate response to such questions must be provided by Aboriginal people themselves, and only adequately empowered Aboriginal organisations are capable of a practical response. A growing sentiment among Aboriginals in Canada is that a viable contemporary economic base is a prerequisite for cultural self-determination, even where achieving such a base requires significant adaptation to state politics and market economic rules.

The Quebec Cree model

If claims settlements, implemented through a regional definition of Aboriginal government and development planning, represent a best hope for economic self-sufficiency in Canada, how well is development under the JBNQA working out in practice? I will focus mainly on the Cree, who organised as a regional polity twenty years ago, in response to the development plans of Hydro Quebec, a provincial crown corporation. It is important to remember that the Quebec Cree represent one of the more progressive cases in the country. At the opposite end of the spectrum are groups like the Lubicon of northern Alberta, whose claims over the past dozen years, or so, have encountered federal and provincial government opposition that has sometimes been nothing short of punitive, aimed at undermining resistance through planned disintegration of the community.

The presence of industrially significant resources, and the legal and political potential for Aboriginal claimants to oppose these developments,

have been primary factors in determining which comprehensive claims get priority in negotiations.

Economic impacts

In the early 1970s, when hydroelectric development plans were made known, the Cree and Inuit were fundamentally hunting societies, with supplementary seasonal employment, as well as welfare income introduced after World War II, but very few permanent jobs. Contemporary governments did not acknowledge Cree and Inuit title to land. Any special rights to resources (confined to fur animals) were viewed by central governments as exercisable strictly at the Crown's discretion.

The 1975 agreement established different bundles of rights to three separate categories of land: for Cree, 2,158 square miles and for Inuit, 3,250 square miles of Category I lands, held in 'fee simple' by local communities; 25,130 and 35,000 square miles of Category II lands to which the Cree and Inuit, respectively, retained exclusive rights to traditional resources; and the remainder of lands in Category III (over two-thirds of traditional lands) to which preferential Cree and Inuit rights to traditional resources are recognised. A general right of the Crown to develop on Category II and III lands was established, but subject to an important role for Cree and Inuit participation in environmental assessment, and to various forms of compensation or replacement for damaged lands and resources.

Cash compensation was $136.6 million for the Cree and $88.4 million for the Inuit, paid out over 20 years. There was also, for Cree hunters, an income security program. The cash benefits from this program are a major support for Cree subsistence production, in the order of 2,000,000 lbs. of bush food per annum, regionally.

A series of regional self-government entities were established by the JBNQA: the Cree Regional Authority (CRA), the administrative side of regional government which operates in tandem with the political and executive functions of the Grand Council of the Crees of Quebec (GCCQ); the CRA's Board of Compensation, which administers compensation monies; the Cree Board of Education; and the Cree Board of Health and Social Services. Also pursuant to the JBNQA, the Cree-Naskapi (of Quebec) Act, in place since 1984, provides a charter for band governments within the region. Capital and operations and maintenance 'core' funding from provincial and federal governments sustain both regional boards and band administrations, although the GCCQ/CRA depend primarily on income from compensation fund investments for their operations.

The main change to the Cree regional economy since the signing of the JBNQA has been the growth of employment in local and regional administration and social services (Tables 1 and 2). This growth should not be regarded solely as the outcome of the JBNQA, since there has been important growth of expenditure by federal and provincial governments in the infrastructure, local administration, and social services of several northern regions in Canada since the late 1960s. At the same time, it is clear that the self-governing structures defined by the JBNQA, and their political effectiveness, have been very important in accelerating fiscal inputs by Quebec and Canadian governments.

The development of local and regional Cree enterprises, as well as the provision of non-commercial community facilities, such as hockey arenas and community centres, have been boosted through investment of compensation fund income and principal. Personal income from both local and regional enterprises shows significant growth, but at a far lower rate than income from administration and social services during the initial decade. Over half the employees of the regional administrative and commercial entities are Cree, as are the vast majority of employees in local administrations and enterprises.

Table 1. Cree personal incomes, 1971 and 1981.

	1971		1981	
	$,000	Per cent	$,000	Per cent
Hunting				
in cash (furs)	300	4	642	2
in kind (meat etc.)	3,864	57	5,700	20
Income Security Program	-	-	6,046	21
Total, hunting	4,164	61	12,388	43
Salaries				
government, industry, local business	1,580	23	14,891	52
Transfers				
old age, family allowances	305	5	600	2
welfare	683	11	800	3
Total income	6,732	100	28,679	100

Table 2. Cree labour force, 1971 and 1981.

	1971		1981	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Dependents				
under age 5	1,008		947	
aged 5-14	1,704		2,365	
over 65	222		319	
Labour force				
professional, managerial	14	0.5	209	5.3
white collar, sales	29	1.0	238	6.0
skilled manual	83	3.0	117	2.9
unskilled, full-time	215	7.5	254	6.4
part-time wages/hunting	365	12.9	453	11.4
hunting, full-time	600	21.1	899	22.7
domestic	1,100	38.8	1,110	27.9
unemployed, sick	170	6.0	328	8.3
in school, college, university	262	9.2	362	9.1
Total in labour force	2,838	100.0	3,970	100.0
Total population	5,772		7,600	

Source: Salisbury (1986).

Intensive harvesting

The numbers of households ('beneficiary units') and of adult subsistence producers supported by the Income Security Program for Cree Hunters (ISP), have been stable for the past eight years. There have been, on average, 1,825 adults in 1,187 beneficiary units during this period (see Table 3b). But due to a declining birth rate, declining average age of adult beneficiaries, and lower average number of children per household, the total ISP population has declined from 3,623 to 3,188 during the same eight years.

Meanwhile, the total Cree population has risen rapidly, so that the percentage on ISP has dropped steadily from 52 per cent in 1977-78 to 30 per cent in 1989-90. From 1977-78 to 1989-90, the non-ISP population, oriented primarily to wages, unemployment benefits or welfare, has more than doubled, increasing from 3,374 to 7,494. Ninety-three per cent of Cree beneficiaries of the JBNQA reside in the territory, up from 90 per cent six years ago, so net out-migration has not increased. The increase in the non-ISP working-age population must be accommodated in local and regional administration, social services and commercial enterprises, or yield unemployment.

Cree on ISP spend an average of 189 days per adult per year in the bush. Total person-days in ISP-supported hunting have stabilised very near a 350,000 day statutory limit, on which the Quebec Government insists, following two upward revisions from the original 150,000 person-day limit contemplated in the JBNQA (and greatly exceeded in the first year of operations).

Average ISP benefits per adult on ISP are $7,149, so that a husband-wife team engaged in harvesting together are drawing a cash income of over $14,000 in ISP benefits, a roughly equivalent amount in estimated cash replacement value of bush food harvested, plus other cash income from seasonal wage employment, fur sales, family allowances and, in the case of the elderly, old age pensions (see Table 4).

Table 3a. Participation in Income Security Program (ISP) for Cree hunters.

Year	Number BUs[a]	ISP population	Total Cree population	ISP of total (per cent)	Resident population	ISP of resident (per cent)
1975-76	695	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.		
1976-77	979	4,046	6,348	64		
1977-78	887	3,672	7,046	52		
1978-79	901	3,564	7,036	51		
1979-80	838	3,111	7,390	42		
1980-81	874	3,043	7,684	40		
1981-82	929	3,134	8,060	39		
1982-83	1,122	3,623	8,764	41		
1983-84	1,205	3,740	9,028	41		
1984-85	1,205	3,710	9,336	40	8,442	44
1985-86	1,176	3,586	9,828	36	8,885	40
1986-87	1,180	3,474	9,777	36	9,019	39
1987-88	1,194	3,302	10,288	32	9,473	35
1988-89	1,217	3,372	10,448	32	9,671	35
1989-90	1,193	3,188	10,682	30	9,880	32
Average 1983-4 to 1989-90	1,196	3,482				

a. BU, 'beneficiary unit', is an administrative term for household.

Table 3b. Participation in Income Security Program for Cree hunters.

Year	Adult beneficiaries	Children in BUs	Adult days harvesting	Average days per BU	Average days per adult
1975-76	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
1976-77	n.d.	2,400	261,715	267	n.d.
1977-78	1,482	2,190	261,285	295	176
1978-79	1,478	2,086	265,835	295	180
1979-80	1,353	1,758	244,948	292	181
1980-81	1,348	1,695	271,048	310	201
1981-82	1,443	1,691	284,725	306	197
1982-83	1,730	1,893	338,017	301	195
1983-84	1,860	1,880	351,356	292	189
1984-85	1,874	1,836	349,578	290	187
1985-86	1,843	1,743	345,592	294	188
1986-87	1,839	1,635	343,794	291	187
1987-88	1,815	1,487	345,690	290	190
1988-89	1,845	1,527	340,393	280	184
1989-90	1,796	1,392	344,541	289	192
Average	1,839	1,643	345,849	289	188

Source: Cree Hunters Income Security Board Annual Reports.

ISP now injects about $13 million dollars per year into the regional Cree economy. From 1976 to 1990, the program contributed $127,550,004 in direct benefits to hunters.

Wage earners and unemployed

The 1989 resident labour force stood at 3,814, 1,835 on ISP, 1,207 in full-time jobs, and 880, or 22 per cent, unemployed or occasionally employed (Table 5).[12] This is close to the norm in Canadian Indian communities, but is still more than double the Canadian unemployment rate in the worst of economic times.

Population increase has been such that from 1982 to 1989, the number of Crees in the labour force (defined as people in the 20-64 age range plus youths 15-20 years of age not in school) nearly tripled. From 1990 to 1994, an estimated 918 people will come into the labour force, with 175 retirees. Job availability must increase threefold by 1994 to achieve full employment. Needed are 360 additional new jobs per year, or a total of 1,800 by 1994, just to prevent today's unemployment rates from worsening; nearly 400 additional jobs per year are needed for the next

Table 4. Benefits paid under Income Security Program for Cree hunters.

Year	Total benefits (real $)	Total benefits (1989-90$)	Average /BU ($)	Average /BU (1989-90$)	Average /adult ($)	Average /adult (1989-90$)
1975-76	1,965,716	5,007,182	2,828	7,205	n.d.	n.d.
1976-77	4,887,720	11,958,097	4,993	12,215	n.d.	n.d.
1977-78	4,931,577	11,188,955	5,560	12,614	3,328	7,550
1978-79	5,271,449	11,038,335	5,851	12,251	3,567	7,468
1979-80	5,120,687	9,840,906	6,111	11,743	3,785	7,273
1980-81	6,013,076	10,554,464	6,880	12,076	4,461	7,830
1981-82	7,341,276	11,589,298	7,902	12,475	5,088	8,031
1982-83	9,522,085	13,461,425	8,487	11,998	5,504	7,781
1983-84	10,821,044	14,055,161	8,980	11,664	5,818	7,557
1984-85	11,436,660	14,077,833	9,491	11,683	6,103	7,512
1985-86	11,574,303	13,673,143	9,842	11,627	6,280	7,419
1986-87	11,703,173	13,285,328	9,918	11,259	6,364	7,224
1987-88	11,955,363	13,018,841	10,013	10,904	6,587	7,173
1988-89	12,165,556	12,709,374	9,996	10,443	6,594	6,889
1989-90	12,840,319	12,840,319	10,763	10,763	7,149	7,149
Total	127,550,004	178,298,661				

Source: Cree Hunters Income Security Board Annual Reports.

Table 5. Summary of changes in Cree labour force.

	1983-84		1988-89		Increase	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Income security	1,641	58	1,835	48	194	12
Cree entities	304	11	447	12	143	47
Band admin.	257	9	350	9	93	36
Local enterprise	216	8	296	8	80	37
Other	56	2	60	2	4	7
Unemployed	349	12	826	22	477	137
Total	2,823	100	3,814	100	991	35

Source: LaRusic et al. (1990).

decade to attain full employment. Since almost 38 per cent of the population in Cree communities is under the age of fifteen, high rates of job creation would be needed well beyond the year 2000 (LaRusic et al. 1990).

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the 'easy' job creation of the first decade of JBNQA implementation is over. Of existing jobs, nearly 800, or 70 per cent, are in Cree local and regional governments, health, education, social services entities, and the regional commercial and industrial entities of the Cree. Only 25 per cent are in local enterprises. Further expansion into subsistence is currently inhibited by the statutory ceiling on payable days, and on ecological and resource management grounds is an unlikely alternative for the number of adults to be accommodated in the labour force in coming years. Even if government funding for housing and infrastructure for a growing population were secure, 'it is unlikely that construction would be able to employ more people than in recent 'boom' years when significant community infrastructure projects were carried out' (LaRusic et al. 1990: 17). Any employment growth that comes, therefore, must come through enterprise development at local and regional levels. Alternatives are expanded welfare rolls, out-migration to questionable opportunities elsewhere or, as a temporary solution, higher retention rates in the educational system.

Currently, only about 13 per cent of Cree income derives from local enterprises, and another 4 per cent from the Crees' regional enterprises.[13] With about $70 million annual personal income, most of it from quite stable government sources, there is considerable room for improving multipliers through business development at local and regional levels. Certainly, reasonable growth in income from enterprises is evident, with real five-year growth of 78 per cent and 94 per cent, respectively, for regional and local enterprises (see Tables 6, 7 and 8). This is faster than the rate of population growth, but not as rapid as increases in unemployment (Table 5).

Cree investment and enterprise development

The Cree's compensation monies are held by the CRA Board of Compensation. By 1990, it had received, $113 million in compensation funds (CRA 1990). About two-thirds of these funds are in secure short- and long-term securities, while 15 per cent are invested in Cree regional enterprises. Return on total assets have been in the 7 to 10 per cent range since the mid 1980s.

The regional enterprises of the Cree are managed by Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company (CREECO), a holding company. Principal among the enterprises are Air Creebec and the Cree Construction Company, usually both profit-generators. Each have annual

Table 6. Changes in Cree personal income ($).

	1983-84	1988-89	Five-year change	Per cent change
Transfer payments	5,439,286	16,156,077	10,716,791	197
Income security	10,376,356	12,144,735	1,768,379	17
Cree Regional Govt admin./services	7,955,545	17,333,132	9,377,587	118
enterprises	1,029,901	2,274,642	1,244,741	121
Band administration	7,697,641	12,614,823	4,917,182	64
Local enterprise	3,829,948	9,244,154	5,414,206	141
Other wage income	1,301,366	1,623,480	322,114	25
Other income	1,142,133	766,144	(375,989)	-33
Total	38,772,176	72,157,187	33,385,011	86

Table 7. Changes in Cree personal income (1983-84 $).

	1983-84	1988-89	Five-year change	Per cent change
Transfer payments	5,439,286	12,994,494	7,555,208	139
Income security	10,376,356	9,768,132	(608,224)	-6
Cree Regional Govt admin./services	7,955,545	13,941,211	5,985,666	75
enterprises	1,029,901	1,829,517	799,617	78
Band administration	7,697,641	10,146,228	2,448,587	32
Local enterprise	3,829,948	7,435,166	3,605,218	94
Other wage income	1,301,366	1,305,781	4,415	0
Other income	1,142,133	616,217	(525,916)	-46
Total	38,772,176	58,036,747	19,264,571	50

revenues in the order of $25-30 million. There have been successes and failures, good years and bad. On assets of $38.4 million, CREECO has a cumulative deficit of $10.3 million. Over half of this is attributed to a loss last year by the air carrier, which encountered difficulties with expansion into the northern Ontario market, requiring $6 million in additional investment from the Board of Compensation to offset the loss (CREECO 1990).

The Board of Compensation must balance financial management considerations against the need to make business risk investments, as well as allocations for community facilities. Due largely to pressure from local

band councils for annual disbursements (both for community facilities and local enterprise investment), the total capital of the Board of Compensation has declined by 25 per cent over the past three years, a loss in purchasing power of nearly 40 per cent when inflation is taken into account. The Chairman is actively advocating higher reinvestment of earnings. On the other hand, a too strict policy of capital conservation would cripple the ability of the fund to respond to development needs. If inflation averages 4 per cent per year, and population growth continues at about 5 per cent, then the fund would need to reinvest virtually all investment earnings if capital conserved is to keep pace relative to an expanding population base (CRA 1990).

Table 8. Changes in Cree income per capita (1983-84 $).

	1983-4	1988-9	Five-year change	Per cent change
Transfer payments	716	1,430	715	100
Income security	1,365	1,075	(290)	-21
Cree Regional Govt				
admin./services	1,047	1,535	488	47
enterprises	136	201	66	49
Band administration	1,013	1,117	104	10
Local enterprise	504	818	314	62
Other wage income	171	144	(28)	-16
Other income	150	68	(82)	-55
Total	5,102	6,389	1,287	25

Source: LaRusic et al. (1990).

Amendments and additions to Hydro Quebec's engineering plans to complete Phase I led to subsidiary agreements providing cash compensation of a further $180 million. Of this, $112 million is held by a new entity established in the mid-1980s, Eeyou Corporation. Eeyou invests this sum conservatively on the securities market, but unlike the Board of Compensation, it distributes all profits to communities suffering the impact of the scheme, who decide for themselves the proportions to be invested in community projects and services and enterprise development.

Financial information on local enterprises, many of them private, is not easily accessible. Service enterprises such as grocery stores, cafeterias, lodging, vehicle service, and small motor sales have done well. More ambitious schemes have included operations such as a bush plane charter

service, and mini-hydro generation for local consumption. As yet, there are few enterprises in primary or secondary industries. Two communities are involved in forestry, another in a joint venture with Yamaha to manufacture water craft for northern use, and yet another is involved in domesticating lynx as a ranched fur. Results have been mixed.

Cultural factors in economic development

It is worth considering how Cree have been dealing with certain cultural issues raised earlier. Social tensions do arise over private accumulation and material differentiation, but these are mediated by the fact that in communities where local and regional administrations control access to investment funding and other opportunities, there is a political mechanism for distributing opportunities relatively evenly.[14] Accumulation *per se* is not so much the issue, as having enough opportunities for everyone to 'rise' together. At the same time, it is tempting for band administrators to support particularly successful entrepreneurs, as these not only provide more reliable employment opportunities in the community, but are often more able to attract funding from provincial and federal government economic development programs.

As discussed elsewhere (Scott 1984), sharing through kin networks has tended to level out differences between the relatively cash-rich permanently employed, and the bush food-rich intensive hunters. All households whose primary adaptation is cash income still have close kin whose primary occupation is hunting.

Cultural priorities do shape patterns of labour allocation that are feasible in business and employment development. Seasonal hunting, particularly during socially and ritually important times on the land, requires flexibility. Local development plans have had to take these requirements into account.

Many Cree are very cautious about involving themselves in entrepreneurial initiatives, perhaps not surprising given the special difficulties and risks that business in a remote area can entail, and also given experience in the 1960s and early 1970s of development projects advocated by external government agencies that generally failed. It is furthermore the case that many small business opportunities are not attractive compared to the excellent incomes and conditions of work attached to many administrative and other jobs with Cree entities in the service sector. While expectations may have been inflated during the initial years of JBNQA implementation and the period of easier job creation, rising unemployment levels are inducing many Cree to take a second look at entrepreneurial possibilities. The role of Cree government resources in providing capital and reducing the risk to individuals is important. Where more costly enterprises are concerned, local

administrations, and many individuals, prefer to harness entrepreneurial talent through management roles in band-owned businesses.

Obstacles to economic development

Several obstacles continue to restrict the extent to which Cree are able to participate in the development of resources on their territory. Currently, as is well known, there is major disagreement between the Cree and the Government of Quebec over the wisdom of proceeding with Phases II and III of hydroelectric development at James and southern Hudson Bays. Cree predict damage to traditional harvesting activities on an environmentally as well as socially unacceptable scale, and have had to embark on numerous costly court actions to force the Governments of Canada and Quebec to submit hydroelectric development to the environmental review process negotiated as part of the JBNQA and passed into provincial and federal statute. In other words, the Cree have had to be vigilant in forcing non-Aboriginal governments to uphold their own laws and agreements, and the financial and human resource cost of this vigilance is onerous for a small Aboriginal administration.

Hydroelectricity is not the only development activity initiated by non-Aboriginals that poses extensive threats to the traditional economy. In the southerly parts of Cree territory, large-scale forestry operations, involving extensive clear-cutting of many hunting areas, have become a second major threat. Clear-cutting permits for reservoirs projected as part of Phase III hydro development have been granted by the Quebec government, and cutting was already under way in 1991, despite Cree protests, well in advance of any environmental assessment and review.

These intrusions are particularly galling to the Cree, given the difficulties they have experienced in obtaining control of resources for their own enterprise development, and in gaining a voice in forest management planning. Forestry concessions to large non-Aboriginal companies have severely restricted the timber available to Cree forestry enterprises, and cutting practices have typically proceeded with little adjustment to the requirements of Cree hunters and other users of the land.

Federal and provincial governments have been non-cooperative in other areas as well. Terms negotiated under the JBNQA, giving Cree the primary opportunity to develop tourism and outfitting enterprises supplying recreational hunters in the territory, were 'creatively interpreted' by the Quebec Government in a calculated effort to sidestep the Cree right and give freer rein to non-Aboriginal entrepreneurs in this domain. Defence of Cree rights again required costly court actions.

A factor limiting Cree participation in some economic development activity is the large amount of capital required to control certain kinds of

enterprise. Hydroelectric, mining, and forestry operations are often on such a scale. In some such areas, Cree have developed wholly-owned specialty enterprises to serve a particular function within a larger industrial process. In others, joint venture arrangements have been made.

Even when Cree capital is adequate to control certain large-scale enterprises, non-Aboriginal political opposition remains an obstacle. When Cree on two separate occasions successfully arranged financial bids on large commercial airlines for sale in southern Quebec (Nordair and Quebecair), provincial and federal cabinets collaborated to block the bids from being successful, in one case, apparently, by assisting a competitor to marginally undercut the Cree bid through the relay of confidential information. In both cases, disbelief in the ability of the Cree to run a large-scale enterprise, as well as Quebec nationalist sentiment over control of the airlines, were at play. A provincial cabinet minister remarked, 'Les Cris ne sont pas Québecois [the Cree are not Quebecers]!'. The episodes led Chief Billy Diamond to conclude that the Cree are victims of 'white-collar apartheid' (MacGregor 1990: 249-54).

It is generally acknowledged that one of the weakest sections of the JBNQA is that relating to economic development. Governments committed themselves to general principles and objectives, rather than to a precise schedule of inputs. In a climate of fiscal restraint, as governments have baulked at the general level of expenditure required to maintain the JBNQA, support has often been disappointing. Official reviews of JBNQA performance have been critical of this departure from the spirit and intent of the economic development provisions.

Notwithstanding formidable obstacles, the Cree have achieved a 'critical mass' of resources and experience that make them a political organisation to be reckoned with. Through their highly effective opposition over the past few years to Phase II of Hydro Quebec's James/Hudson Bay development plan, the Cree have demonstrated that their *de facto* control of land and resources considerably exceeds the limited legal title which the Governments of Quebec and Canada recognise under the JBNQA. It is this quantum of political control over what happens in the territory that could provide the basis for negotiating a strong position in an expanding regional economy, but on terms environmentally acceptable to the Cree.

Reflections on the Northern Territory comparison

The challenges of Aboriginal economic development in Australia's central and northern regions resemble those in the Canadian north. Physical and environmental characteristics offer a relatively narrow range of economically significant resources. Political economic structures have

offered opportunities disproportionately to non-Aboriginal residents and non-resident investors. Undercapitalisation, high overheads, the difficulties of transport and communications, sparse populations, low incomes of Aboriginal customers, and dependency on external support agencies for development in Aboriginal communities have contributed to high failure rates among Aboriginal enterprises (Young 1988).

In the Australian central and northern areas, as in the Canadian north, public sector expenditure is the economic mainstay for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations.[15] In neither case do royalties, compensation monies, and title to lands and resources provide by themselves a sufficient economic base for Aboriginal communities. A key element of development strategy, then, must be for self-governing institutions to directly administer the highest possible proportion of resources from central government treasuries earmarked for Aboriginals. Ideally, this should in time result in improved ratios of Aboriginal employees in administration and social services, improved multipliers through enhanced enterprise development in Aboriginal communities, and increased effectiveness in creating and competing for new opportunities.

A regional comparison

Existing studies provide the basis for some crude comparison of regional Aboriginal economies in northern Quebec and central Australia. Per capita government expenditures attributed to Aboriginals in northern Quebec, at $C19,700, were substantially higher than those in central Australia at $A11,700 in 1987-88, the only year for which we have comparative data (Tables 9 and 10).[16] Higher government expenditure in northern Quebec, of course, cannot be taken as a straightforward indication of a higher material standard in Cree communities. The larger population in central Australia which enables certain economies of scale, and a less severe climate should, for example, influence the amount and proportion of per capita transfers required for general infrastructure.

The key structural difference is that a much higher proportion of government expenditures remains under the control of federal, state and territorial 'mainstream' departments in central Australia. Cree local and regional government entities administer block budgets for education, health and social services, housing and administration, transferred annually from federal and provincial government treasuries.

The multipliers of these inputs have no doubt assisted the growth of local and regional enterprises noted earlier, but as LaRusic et al. (1990: 22) conclude, the development of the commercial sector has scarcely begun to harvest the potential for turning over money in Cree communities. More established non-Aboriginal enterprises, headquartered south of the Cree region, are beneficiaries of much of the opportunity for recirculation and wealth creation.

Table 9. Government expenditures attributable to Aborigines in Central Australia, 1987-88 ($m).[a]

Grants/subsidies based on 'Aboriginality'[b]		46,374
Citizenship entitlements		
Dept of Social Security	26,929	
Community Development Employment Projects scheme[c]	16,601	
Local Government grants	4,096	
Mainstream department spending[d]	55,572	
Total		103,198
Administration costs of state Aboriginal bureaucracy		2,188
Total		151,760

a. Includes federal and territorial governments.
b. From the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Aboriginal Development Commission, Department of Employment, Education and Training; and Aboriginals Benefit Trust Account.
c. Monies made in lieu of unemployment benefits.
d. Includes the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services, and the Northern Territory Department of Education, as well as several other 'mainstream' departments. South Australian and Western Australian Government components were estimated.

Source: Crough et al. (1989).

This finding is consistent with a comparison of Aboriginal personal incomes (Tables 11 and 12). While per capita cash incomes are appreciably higher in northern Quebec than in central Australia ($C7,900 and $A4,700 respectively), it is perhaps not entirely coincidental that the difference in income is just proportional to the difference in government expenditures on Aborigines, which might suggest that the Cree economy has not yet been more effective in recirculating revenues from central governments. The contexts in which multipliers result in employment opportunities for Aborigines do, of course, differ in important respects. Aborigines in central Australia, who comprise about one-third of the population, have greater employment involvement with non-Aboriginal enterprises, in centres such as Alice Springs, than do Cree. In the Northern Territory as a whole, 51 per cent of Aboriginal jobs were in the private sector, although many so defined in the census were with Aboriginal organisations (Altman and Daly 1992: 17). This can be compared with 31 per cent in the Cree region, where non-Aboriginals are a tiny minority of the permanent population. The nine Cree communities range in size from 500 to 2,500 in population, in a territory the size of

France. Only two of them have ready access to the employment markets of larger non-Aboriginal towns, on the southern edge of this territory.

Table 10. Government expenditures attributable to Aboriginals in Northern Quebec, 1987-88 ($m).

	Cree	Inuit	Naskapi	Ethnicity not specified	Total
Government of Quebec					
Hydro Quebec	16,827	2,010	205		19,042
Ministry of Municipal Affairs		19,065			19,065
Ministry of Education[a]	11,731	23,964	403		36,098
Ministry of Health and Social Services	16,708	23,656	2,066		42,430
Hunters' ISP	16,175				16,175
Ministry of Housing		42,302			42,302
Other	5,659	27,803	576		34,038
Total, Quebec	67,100	138,800	3,250		209,150
Government of Canada					
Department of Indian Affairs					
housing & community infrastructure		8,000		7,391	15,391
local government				14,130	14,130
education	23,200	7,300	1,300		31,800
development	382	765	66	3,082	4,295
other	1,944	247			2,191
Central Mortgage and Housing	6,791	6,541	588		13,920
Department of Regional Industrial Expansion	29	3,291		87	3,407
Secretary of State				3,091	3,091
Employment and Immigration Canada				4,100	4,100
Transport Canada		5,000			5,000
Other	532	530	29	1,331	2,422
Total, Canada	32,878	31,674	1,983	33,212	99,747
Total, Canada and Quebec	99,978	170,474	5,233	33,212	308,897

a. Excludes federal education transfers paid through province.

Sources: Canadian government: Annual Report of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement/Northeastern Quebec Agreement (1988); Quebec Government: Secrétariat aux Affaires Autochtones, Raymond-M. Gagnon (1989).

Table 11. Aboriginal personal cash income, Central Australia (1987-88).

		$m	Per cent
Transfer payments[a]			
Dept of Social Security (DSS)	29,929		
Community Development Employment Projects scheme (CDEP) wages	12,254		
Total transfer payments		42,183	70
Wages			
Aboriginal bureaucracy of central govts	414		
Aboriginal organizations	6,730		
other	10,930		
Total wages		18,074	30
Total personal income		60,257	100

a. DSS benefits include unemployment, family allowance, old age and other benefits. CDEP wages are an unemployment benefit replacement.

Source: Crough et al. (1989).

Rates of employment in the formal economic sector, as well as unemployment, are quite similar for James Bay and central Australia (Table 13). As with the Cree, Aboriginal employment in central Australia centres heavily on public administration and community services (Crough et al. 1989: 20). The most striking difference is the percentage of central Australian Aborigines not in the labour force.[17] In the Cree region, ISP-supported hunting is considered a form of employment, and ISP hunters are included in the labour force. Very high rates of non-labour force involvement in central Australia mask significant engagement in subsistence and other traditional activities. CDEP scheme block funds, which allow communities to define for themselves which work is remunerable, provide support at some outstations for such activities. Altman and Taylor (1989) argue that a guaranteed income for outstations in support of subsistence activities could support high rates of employment in many areas. This income, in turn, could foster certain Aboriginal enterprises to service outstations and other rural populations.

A true picture of Aboriginal incomes, in both central Australia and northern Quebec, must take account of subsistence production. Here the grounds for comparison are even more impressionistic. If Cree annual bush food harvests have stabilised in absolute terms at the two million pounds reported a decade ago (James Bay and Northern Quebec Native

Harvesting Research Committee 1982), then $9 million in 1988-89 replacement value is a reasonable estimate, or 11 per cent of total Cree income, when added to cash income shown in Table 12. Although a constant and crucial contributor to diets and incomes, the proportional contribution of subsistence product to incomes has declined steadily from levels of 'in kind' contributions to income of 57 per cent in 1971 and 20 per cent in 1981 (Table 1).

Table 12. Cree personal cash income, Northern Quebec (1988-89).

		$ m	Per cent
Transfer payments			
Income Security Program	12,145		
other transfer payments[a]	16,156		
Total transfer payments		28,301	39
Wages			
Cree Regional Govt admin./services	17,333		
enterprises	2,275		
Band administration	12,615		
Local enterprise	9,244		
Other wage income	1,623		
Total wages		43,090	60
Other income		766	1
Total personal income		72,157	100

a.Transfer payments include welfare, unemployment insurance, family allowance, pension and old age security benefits.

Source: LaRusic et al. (1990).

Increases in salaries and direct transfers, enabled by large increases in government spending on Aboriginals in northern Quebec since the early 1970s, only partly compensated for proportional declines in the contribution of subsistence to the personal incomes of a rapidly growing population. According to Simard's (1992) compilation of earlier studies, the years following the signing of the JBNQA saw a decline in Cree and Inuit per capita incomes relative to incomes in Quebec, the Yukon and Northwest Territories, and Canada at large (Table 14). With subsistence production taken into account, income tax exempt status, and substantially larger families, Cree and Inuit family incomes exceeded the Canadian

average, both before and after the implementation of the JBNQA, but by a steadily decreasing margin (Table 15).[18]

Table 13. Aboriginal labour force status, Central Australia and James Bay Cree.

	Central Australia 1986 (per cent)	James Bay 1988 (per cent)
Employed	25.7	21.5
Unemployed	17.1	15.4
Hunters' ISP		34.2
Not in labour force	50.5	28.8
Not stated	6.5	

Sources: Central Australia, Crough et al. (1989); James Bay, LaRusic et al. (1990).

Table 14. Per capita disposable income for Cree, Inuit and other regions in Canada for selected years 1970-83[a].

Year	Cree ($)	Inuit ($)	Quebec ($)	Yukon and NWT[b] ($)	Canada ($)
1970	1,902		2,385	2,700	2,611
1971	2,151		2,593	2,669	2,835
1972	2,384		2,955	2,940	3,204
1973		2,970	3,361	3,339	3,709
1976		4,625	5,217	5,078	5,577
1981	5,072	5,883	8,889	9,729	9,764
1983		6,202	10,168	11,102	11,135

a. Cash and imputed subsistence incomes combined for Cree and Inuit.
b. North West Territories.

Source: Simard (1992), compiled from multiple sources.

In the Northern Territory, subsistence production accounts for significantly higher incomes at outstation communities than at Aboriginal townships (Fisk 1985: 63). Taylor (1991: 25) finds that 'the proportion of outstation males in higher income brackets compares surprisingly well with males in the rest of the Northern Territory' in 1991, an intriguing

Table 15. Disposable family incomes for Cree, Inuit and all Canadians for selected years 1971-83[a].

Year	Cree ($)	Inuit ($)	Canada ($)
1971	11,851		7,972
1972	13,227		8,957
1973		16,009	9,902
1976		24,405	14,079
1981	27,705	29,458	23,736
1983		32,234	26,394

a. Cash and imputed subsistence incomes combined for Cree and Inuit.

Source: Simard (1992), compiled from multiple sources.

observation when one considers that the median individual cash income of Aborigines was only 39 per cent of the non-Aboriginal median in the 1986 Census, a lower ratio of Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal median cash income in the Northern Territory than in any of the States (Tesfaghiorghis 1991: 19). The 'locational disadvantage' (Altman 1990, Tesfaghiorghis and Gray 1991) of rural and remote Aboriginal communities, without disproportionate inputs of public resources, may sometimes be converted to net advantage in the context of subsistence opportunities.

In the Top End, annual replacement value of bush food at Momega outstation has been estimated at $1,411 and $747 per capita for 1979-80, depending on whether urban or outstation replacement prices are used (Altman 1987: 56; Fisk 1985: 23). Based on data collected three years after Altman's Momega study, subsistence income at desert outstations was estimated at a lower value of $616 per capita per year (Cane and Stanley 1985: 197). However, Palmer and Brady's study (1991) challenges the idea that subsistence is necessarily a greater contributor in the Top End than in the desert.

Subsistence values in northern Quebec, for broad regional populations, were calculated by Salisbury at $750 per capita income 'in kind' for Cree in 1981 (Table 1), and by Duhaime (1987) at $1,763 per capita for Inuit. Outstation values do not provide a comparable picture of subsistence contributions to overall regional economies in Australia. Taylor (1991: 11) estimates a minimum of 5,474 Aborigines residing at outstations in the Northern Territory based on the 1986 Census. While many other

Aborigines are doubtless substantially less engaged in subsistence pursuits, their income in kind is probably of significance to the regional picture.

Aboriginal 'prosperity' in much of the Northern Territory, as in northern Quebec, depends on a combination of cash and subsistence income. Less clear in the Northern Territory context is the extent to which patterns of settlement, and increases in the working-age population relative to ecological productivity, limit the possibilities for increased subsistence activity. Beyond income considerations, the homeland-outstation movement clearly represents significant improvements in health and quality of life, including renewed opportunities for self-determination (Downing 1988). Furthermore, it is argued that indigenous practices of resource use and management are needed to restore economies to ecological sustainability in the tropical north and central arid zone (Coombs 1990), a role that could repay public investment in a more decentralised Aboriginal population.

Aboriginal organisation for regional development

Regional-scale organisations for self-government in central Australia, even without the benefit of direct control of a significant share of central government Aboriginal budgets as in northern Quebec, have begun to develop some similar strategies. Important successes in coordinating the development of air transportation, food warehousing and distribution, road maintenance service and fuel distribution are reported for the Ngaanyatjarra, in the Western Australia portion of the Pitjantjatjara Council's region. The cultural homogeneity of their regional political organisation has helped to commit scattered communities to regional ventures of mutual benefit (pers. comm., Maureen Tehan).

Trends towards a more holistic range of political self-government functions are also evident, both locally and regionally. Wolfe (1989: 175) remarks:

> Almost unnoticed NT Aboriginal communities have acquired a functional scope which is unprecedented in communities of comparable size, managerial skill ... or experience with local government. This is the case regardless of whether the community operates under the council and associations system or the NT community government scheme.

Rowse (1991) describes the importance of Aboriginal-managed service organisations, publicly subsidised and serving local clienteles, in political mobilisation. There is a tendency for these service organisations to redefine their mandates to address social issues holisticly, to apply pressure and assert control in areas that go beyond their original statutory/administrative *raison d'être*, frequently in spite of concerted opposition from state authorities.

The regional land councils of the Northern Territory are considered by Altman and Dillon (1988: 126) to be 'the most advanced and comprehensive expression of Aboriginal self-government in the NT (and for that matter anywhere in Australia)'. The land councils are increasingly assuming 'para-governmental' functions, going beyond their statutory role as agents for traditional owners of land to act as guardians of broader Aboriginal interests, and to represent the views and aspirations of Northern Territory Aborigines generally. As the organisational size and effectiveness of land councils have increased, relations with mainstream interests have become essentially 'inter-governmental'.[19]

The receipt of royalty equivalent payments means that land councils have substantial financial independence relative to most other government-funded Aboriginal organisations.[20] Like the compensation monies of the Cree, moneys managed by land councils represent the single most important source of independent finance. These have been used to research and present land claim submissions to the Aboriginal Land Commission, to negotiate resource development agreements, and to mount effective opposition to the Northern Territory Government and mining company lobbies.

Unlike Cree government entities, the land councils are fully dependent on their own revenue for their activities. They have been arguing for base budgets that would enable them to fulfil statutory functions without dipping into royalty equivalent payments, which would in turn release a higher proportion of royalties income for economic development. Only the land councils, according to Altman and Dillon (1988), have sufficient size and expertise to respond to many development opportunities on behalf of Northern Territory Aborigines. Organisational differentiation is needed to separate administrative functions from business risk involvement.

Emergent regional entities are bound to face vexing issues of representation in economic decision-making. Balancing the interests of communities-at-large against those of traditional owners is difficult both for land councils, and for the royalties associations which receive a portion of revenues from specific mining developments on traditional lands (Altman and Dillon 1988). The emphasis in ALRA is on traditional ownership (rather than residentially-defined communities), reinforcing it as a principle for receipt of financial benefits. By contrast, Cree 'hunting bosses', who 'own' and manage territories damaged by hydroelectric development, received no special rights to compensation monies or monies paid in lieu of royalties received to the Cree under the JBNQA (although hunters directly impacted benefit from certain local remedial measures and limited forms of compensation).

Nine Cree communities benefited from compensation paid under the JBNQA, while Phase I hydroelectric development had a direct impact on the lands and waters of only four of them.[21] Compensation in lieu of royalties was intended by the Government of Quebec as one element in an agreement clearing the way for future phases of development that would eventually impact all of the Cree communities. But the Cree argue that they retain sufficient legal rights to block unwanted development, and have so far been quite formidable in defending this position politically. Meanwhile, the original compensation monies are managed regionally on behalf of all JBNQA beneficiaries.

Both the cultural-linguistic homogeneity of the Cree, and the need to make common cause against intrusive and geographically extensive development plans, promoted relatively strong regional institutional solidarity, although competition between local and regional leaderships for authority and resources certainly does exist in various forms. But investment stipulations for compensation monies under the JBNQA (requiring, for example, that a significant percentage be invested conservatively), the legal structures established by the JBNQA for disbursing available revenue, and the political advantage of a regional organisation in dealing with external governments, ensure the continued viability and vitality of regional government.

It is an anthropological rule of thumb that new structures for development should be coherent with existing social structure. O'Faircheallaigh's (1986, 1988) analyses of Gagudju and Kunwinjku royalty associations in the Northern Territory support the conclusion that royalty associations are more effective when based on indigenous forms of ownership. Ownership and associated kin relations were the basis for constructive investments in enterprise and community infrastructure development by the Gagudju Association, while the Kunwinjku Association, whose members include three large communities without common lands or kin ties, succumbed to infighting, and pressures to maximise personal gains through disproportionate distributions to clans and individuals.

While it is intuitively sensible to tie economic management to existing socio-territorial arrangements, institutional innovation is nonetheless required to overcome localism. Here, the evolution of a coherent relationship between land councils and community self-government structures in development planning and investment is key. Such evolution cannot be taken for granted. Altman and Dillon (1988) fear that a comprehensive system of community governments under Northern Territory legislation could undermine the authority of both traditional owners and land councils. Wolfe (1989: 173-4) finds 'little evidence of a consistent agenda for greater Aboriginal self-determination ... on

evidence of an agenda aimed at greater Aboriginal self-government of the kind being sought, and in a few instances achieved by Aboriginal peoples in Canada and the USA'. Wolfe concludes that in either existing option for local government in the Northern Territory, incorporated community councils with satellite housing and commercial enterprise associations, or the 'community government' scheme offered under Northern Territory legislation, local government is unduly subordinated to senior government definitions.

While land councils have tended to broaden their political base and the functions they serve for constituents, their statutory mandates limit their ability to serve as comprehensive institutions of regional self-government. What possibilities exist for accommodating the evolving capacities of such organisations on the economic development scene? Altman and Dillon (1988) advocate greater land council control of ALRA's financial provisions, the establishment of independent commercial arms, and increased rates of saving while broadening constituent support.

Piecemeal 'self-management' via central government programs results in a patchwork that duplicates the fragmentation, overlap and inefficiencies of multi-agency involvement in Aboriginal affairs. True, the proliferation of programs and administrators may increase room for manoeuvre of the better-resourced and more effective Aboriginal organisations (Altman and Sanders 1991a); but the factors accounting for the latter's cohesive strategy are what one seeks to understand and reinforce.

The new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) regional councils are meant to combine Aboriginal representation with more integrated decision-making in the administration of assistance monies. A statutory responsibility of regional councils under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989* is 'to formulate and revise from time to time a regional plan for improving the economic, social and cultural status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents of the region'. Will momentum be stolen from regional self-government structures that already enjoy a measure of legitimacy with Aboriginal communities, or will the latter move effectively to secure their own agendas and representatives on the new regional councils? Will the Aboriginal Commissioners and regional councils have sufficient autonomy from Commonwealth Government policies and administrative procedures to be politically effective? Representation by statutory requirement, while it may foster certain skills in dealing with government bureaucracy, is the sort of approach to 'delegated' rights of self-government that has been rejected by Aboriginal groups in Canada, in favour of 'inherent', constitutionally-entrenched rights of self-government.

Consolidation and expansion of powers and claims to the resources of existing regional structures of self-government, the land councils, the Pitjantjatjara Council, the Torres Strait Island Coordinating Council, are important opportunities in the context of constitutional renewal in Australia (Jull 1991a, 1991b). In the setting of Canada's never-ending constitutional negotiations, Aboriginals appear to be on the verge of gaining recognition of Aboriginal government as a 'third order' of constitutionally-empowered government, alongside federal and provincial levels.

Conclusion

Three themes have been emphasised in this paper. First is the importance of regional organisation. Cultural homogeneity facilitates the development of regional polities, but broader definitions of Aboriginal affinity that are not specific to clan or language grouping may serve as well, if real benefits are to be had. This depends on Aboriginal perception of a common interest, as well as structural opportunities for reform at the state level.

A second theme is the importance of relatively comprehensive Aboriginal government powers, interrelated powers that give local and regional Aboriginal administrations, and the enterprises that they sponsor, greater scope for employing their own people and for capturing economic spin-offs between domains of financial input. While this potential is not realised overnight, the initial indicators are positive in the James Bay instance.

This relates, in turn, to a third theme, the importance of a holistic conception of Aboriginal rights, not reduced merely to rights in real estate, or to self-management of slender wedges of community administration, but rather a conception that marries a spectrum of self-government powers to real control over resources. For such complexes to emerge, nation-states must lose the fear of surrendering substantial control of resources and development agendas to Aboriginal polities. In effect, circumstances must be fostered to improve the power of Aboriginal leadership in state arenas, to get beyond the passive receipt of policy largesse to command political spoils.

Notes

1. The Inuit and the Dene of the Northwest Territories (NWT), where Aboriginal people form a political majority, enjoy some advantages compared with Cree and Inuit in northern Quebec, both in regard to the extent of outright title to lands and

resources that can be negotiated, and their influence through the NWT Legislative Assembly on resource management policy.

2. An account of policy evolution in Australia can be found in Altman and Sanders (1991a).

3. A registry is kept of all persons considered to be Indian under Canada's *Indian Act*; hence, the term 'registered Indian', and the accuracy of figures for this population, in comparison with unregistered or 'non-status' Indians and Métis or 'mixed-bloods'.

4. Employment rates expressed as the percentage employed of the working-age population are a more accurate indicator than official unemployment rates. As Smith (1991) shows, the restrictive definitions upon which official unemployment statistics are based result in underestimation of Aboriginal unemployment rates.

5. This goal is regarded as unrealistic by some Australian specialists. See, for example, Altman (1991b) and Altman and Sanders (1991b), who argue that the deep-seated structural features which account for Aboriginal employment and income status are intractable over the shorter term, and who caution against reducing the notion of 'equity' to statistical equality in mainstream economic terms.

6. It is not clear how much of the $C873.7 million promised for the first half of the 1990s will be new money. The general perception is that total monies available for Aboriginal economic development through federal government spending have been in decline since the mid-1980s. There was a $C345 million Native Economic Development Program, which ran from 1983 to 1989, but the government was criticised for offsetting this program via cuts in funding previously available to Aboriginals through such departments as Indian and Northern Affairs, Employment and Immigration, and Regional Industrial Expansion.

7. These figures exclude registered Indians in the Northwest Territories and Newfoundland. This increase in unemployment is related both to the deepening economic recession toward the end of the period, and to the fact that in Canada, as in Australia, the Aboriginal population is very young compared to the general population, so that a growing proportion reached working age during the 1980s, and will continue to do so during the 1990s.

8. Policy-makers recognise that 5,000 jobs per year need to be created to achieve a level of 50 per cent employment among young Indian adults on reserves alone, and that only a quarter of these jobs will be met by the Indian public administration sector and other government supported jobs. Private or collective entrepreneurial operations are the only prospect for an improved employment outlook. The federal government hopes that the level of resources it is committing will attract additional investment contributions from provincial and municipal governments, as well as Aboriginal people. Also, by using a portion of funds in the development of a network of Aboriginal financial institutions and capital corporations, business development and employment creation are planned to be given an additional boost over the longer term.

9. Canada's 1982 Constitution recognises and affirms 'existing Aboriginal rights', which include treaty rights. For constitutional purposes, comprehensive claims agreements are considered treaties.

10. Rowse (1991) discusses and critiques the recurrent theme among Australian observers such as Howard (1981), Sansom (1982), and Eckermann (1988) that the local, kin-anchored loyalties of small, culturally differentiated Aboriginal groups impede political cohesion at more inclusive levels.

11. A significant degree of Aboriginal political solidarity transcending cultural distinctions does occur in provincial and national federations, associations and assemblies. Generally, however, this effectiveness is at the level of putting pressure on non-Aboriginal governments on constitutional and more general rights and entitlements, not at the level of the practical functions of self-government.

12. LaRusic et al. (1990) caution that due to data limitations and methodology employed, the unemployed category includes some ISP beneficiaries who held seasonal jobs.

13. Percentages derived from figures in Table 6.

14. It has been suggested, however, that because the governing structures established under the JBNQA assumed collectivity, room for individual action has been limited, inhibiting the creation of small businesses (Robinson et al. 1989: 25). Our knowledge of Cree use of personal savings in entrepreneurial investment is poorly developed.

15. Altman and Daly (1992) find that agricultural and other private sector employment has declined markedly for Australian Aborigines in general, while employment in public sector industries, including the 'work-for-the-dole' CDEP scheme, has increased markedly.

16. The Australian dollar was worth approximately $0.90 - 0.91 Canadian in 1987-88. Obviously, extreme caution is required in interpreting the results of figures from separate studies. Methodologies, as well as governments' accounting conventions, differ. In both countries, however, it seems likely that Aboriginal-related expenditures tend to be maximally represented, in the Canada/Quebec case because it is in the interest of governments to show that transfers to JBNQA beneficiaries are substantial; and in the central Australia case because the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs were concerned to demonstrate that the regional economy benefited substantially from central government expenditures on Aborigines. Government of Quebec figures include some Hydro Quebec expenditures that are in the nature of compensation to Aboriginal communities, and therefore not in the nature of a routine annual expenditure. Some Ministry of Finance expenditures in the form of recoverable loans to Aboriginal communities are included. While these inclusions marginally inflate the total for 'annual' government expenditures, the total does give an indication of cash economic inflows to the region.

17. Figures for Central Australia in Table 13 are similar to those for Northern Territory Aborigines in general, at 26 per cent employed, 14 per cent unemployed, and 60 per cent of those of working age not in the labour force (Tesfaghiorghis 1991).

18. Notwithstanding their 'relative impoverishment', Simard (1992: 16) finds that, taking into account the official 'poverty line' adjusted for rurality and family size, the Cree and Inuit of Quebec, in general, were less poor than the majority of Canadians, both prior to and following the James Bay project. Average disposable Canadian family incomes have been moving closer to the poverty line since the mid-1970s, although Cree and Inuit income status has dropped more quickly. The surprisingly favourable income status of the Cree and Inuit in the early 1970s depended heavily on subsistence income, but in the twenty years since has come to depend increasingly on alternative economic development, as we have seen.

19. The most comprehensive reference on the functioning of royalty associations and land councils, though now almost a decade old, is Altman (1983).

20. In 1985-86, Aboriginal interests received $21.5 million in mining royalty equivalent payments, about $8 million of which was distributed to Aboriginal associations and communities (Altman and Dillon 1988: 134). On a territory-wide per capita basis, these levels are lower than income on compensation monies administered by the regional entities of the Cree and Inuit, but are increasing with new development.

21. 'Complementary' agreements resulted in significant payments to individual settlements, but still these have not been distributed on the basis of traditional tenure below the level of the community area.

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