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Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Canada

Quebec Region Module

This section is used for the facilitator to become familiar with some of the general issues of the region. It is Section Six - Part Two of the Facilitator's Guide and is to be used in conjunction with that section. As the regional sessions are designed to be presented by speakers from the community and region, this section is informational, but could be used as a basis for a presentation if necessary.

There are 9 separate modules available, each relating to a different region.

Alberta Region Module
Atlantic Region Module
British Columbia Region Module
Manitoba Region Module
Northwest Territories Module
Ontario Region Module
Quebec Region Module
Saskatchewan Region Module
Yukon Territories Module

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General Overview: Quebec Region

Profile of the Aboriginal Peoples of Quebec¹

The province of Quebec has played a significant part in our national development. As a region, it has witnessed the coming and going of many cultures; the various Aboriginal groups, the Vikings, the French, the French/Aboriginal or Métis and the English. Finally, out of the interplay among these cultural groups, there has emerged a province with a largely distinct culture, and one that reflects the richness and adaptability of the other cultures. Indeed, as in other provinces, Quebec encourages the existence of older cultures. It is in this manner that Quebec also reflects the multicultural mosaic.

It is also a way of acknowledging the enormous debt that the provinces owe to the Aboriginal people. The people encountered in the new world were called Indians by European explorers who mistakenly assumed, upon meeting the natives of America, that they had landed in India. In a similar manner, the Inuit, who arrived in the North American Arctic several thousand years later, were insultingly referred to as the Eskimo. These two native, vastly dissimilar ethnic cultures, dominated Quebec before the arrival of Europeans.

The Aboriginal People Today

The population of the Algonkian speaking Natives in Quebec numbers about 23,000 today. They comprise eight different cultural groups: the Montagnais, the Cree, the Algonquin, the Têtes-de-Boule, the Naskapi, the Micmac, the Abenaki and Malecite. The largest group is the Montagnais who live in eastern Quebec, north of the St. Lawrence River. To the west of the Montagnais live the Cree who comprise the second largest Algonkian band. They occupy the northwestern section of the province along James Bay. The Cree do not live on government reserves. Rather, they live in separate settlements.

The Algonquins are located south of the Cree with the Têtes-de-Boule to the east of them. The latter band, situated in the centre of the province, consider themselves to be a distinct cultural and linguistic group, but because of the close cultural and linguistic

¹ These notes were prepared by Cross Cultural Consulting, Inc. for use at Aboriginal Awareness workshops organized by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. The points of view expressed in these documents are those of the author, who is solely responsible for them. In some instances, the masculine "men" is used for ease of writing. This is not a reference to the male gender but rather includes both men and women. Additional copies of this material can be obtained at the nearest regional or district office of INAC.

similarities to the other Algonkian bands around them (the Cree to the north, the Algonquins to the west and the Montagnais to the east), the Têtes-de-boule are recognized as belonging to the Algonkian speaking cultural group.

Of the other bands that are considered to be affiliated to the Algonkian culture, the Micmac is the largest. They reside south of the Montagnais and west of the few Malecite people remaining in Quebec. The Abenakis moved into Quebec in the early 1700's and they are located to the south of the Algonquins. The only other band is the Naskapi. They are called the Fort Chimo band and consist of about 400 peoples living in Quebec. The majority of the Naskapis in Canada are located in northern Labrador.

The majority of Indians and Inuit in Northern Quebec are economically marginal. This is primarily because of the basic structure of Native economy. Hunting, fishing and trapping are still popular economic pursuits, and because of the gradual depletion of these resources, aboriginal peoples find it increasingly difficult to emerge from the socio-economic poverty pattern that prevails in northern regions of Canada. In 1986 more than 70% of the Native households of Northern Quebec fell under the Canadian poverty line, and about 25% of them depended on assistance from Indian Affairs.

Worst hit by economic hardships are the Montagnais, the Cree of the interior, the Algonquin and the Naskapi. This is not to say that the coastal Cree are very much better off. These bands have been affected by many factors, the major factor is, as was previously mentioned, the depletion of the resource base of the region. This has occurred, in part, because of the high rate of population increase among Native groups which created increased demand for relatively limited resources. As well, pollution has had a detrimental effect on the ecology of northern Quebec. Badly affected by high levels of mercury poisoning is the fishing industry of the James Bay area.

There are other reasons for the scarcity of game in northern Quebec. Mining and lumber companies have cleared large tracts of land, effectively destroying many trapping and hunting grounds, and sports hunting and fishing by outsiders have contributed to the decline in animal life. This latter activity carried out by the use of chartered planes and snowmobiles has led to protests from Native bands who find themselves having to travel longer distances, often at increased costs, in order to engage in their traditional pursuits.

Native cultural lifestyles quite often affect the economic potential of Indian families. Those who abandon the traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping and hire themselves out for wage labour, do so because it is a better financial alternative. Construction, logging and mining in the north, and employment in machine shops, factories, steel plants and even offices in the south, have lured many indigenous people away from the reserves. But there may be serious psychological repercussions. The extended family unit, in which wage earners are expected to share their income with their relatives, might

cause rifts in an urban situation between the wage earner's wife/husband and children, and the rest of the family because the societal organizations of indigenous peoples still differ considerably from those of other Canadians.

Family ties tend to be very strong among many Native peoples and they may also have close links with their communities and with the land as well. As a result, there is a strong pull for the perceived security of the reserve, especially when there are family and community celebrations. Also, those raised in a more traditional manner view work as taking place in periods of intense activity followed by periods of relaxation. They are not used to the evenly paced pattern of the mainstream world. Work is associated with risk and excitement and being outdoors. Working in a factory could be emotionally distressing for these people.

Even though the concept of a reserve is distasteful, this is the only life that many Natives know. Therefore, leaving the relative isolation to which they have become accustomed, and going out into the dominant world could be traumatic for Native youth. Living in an urban, industrialized setting with no friends and no family, among a predominantly white population in which they find themselves in the minority, has been a difficult proposition for many young Natives, and as a consequence several have turned to drugs and alcohol. The social stigmatization that quite often denies him/her the equal opportunity to obtain employment as well as always being the first to be laid off, exacerbates the problems that indigenous people face.

What is happening to the Indians in northern Quebec, in a social context, is that slowly but surely they are being drawn in to the mainstream world. Due to the necessity of functioning in a world that is changing rapidly, Native children are obliged to attend schools that are preparing them to adapt to the dominant culture at the expense of their own. Since the school term has not been changed to facilitate traditional Indian activities youngsters are not able to learn the skills of trapping and hunting from their parents, who in turn are forced to abandon certain lifestyles because of the need to remain with their children.

Indeed, in traditional Indian society, education and family life were inextricably related to each other. Basic to any education was the skill of survival. This knowledge was obtained as a matter of course as the child grew up. Boys were taught the art of hunting and warfare, and religious rituals. They were schooled in the ways of the land, water, animals and weather. Harmony with the environment was stressed. Girls, on the other hand, learned to perform household duties such as cooking and preparing skins and were also taught farming. Children were encouraged and praised when they performed well but they were never chastised for failure.

Education goals of Natives are different from those of the larger society. In recent years, the federal government has become interested in the education of Indians and Inuit. In most cases, schooling is undertaken with the cooperation of the provincial government. But some issues have to be ironed out before the kind of education that Natives truly desire is made available to them. For instance, the school year has to be staggered to allow those Native children who so wish, to participate in traditional Indian ceremonies. Secondly, Native languages must be used in those schools that cater to Native children. Finally, Native customs, arts and folklore must be presented in a positive manner, not in the derogatory way that had previously been popular in the education system. There also has to be a strong effort made to encourage Natives to enter the teaching profession.

The Inuit, whose numbers have been greatly reduced in recent years by diphtheria (1944), typhoid (1945), polio (1948), measles (1952), and influenza (1958), have been taking measures to maintain their traditions. With the money received from the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), research has been carried out into traditional Inuit economic activity in the Arctic, such as hunting, fishing and trapping. This is a long term study and will be used to formulate policies for the management and use of all wildlife. In addition, the Mativik Corporation has been set up to improve Inuit communities in Quebec. One of its first projects was to establish Air Inuit as a carrier to serve the Ungava Bay area.

The Kativik school board, established in the mid-1970's, has as its main objective the merging of federal and provincial school systems into a single Inuit-run school board. The money from the JBNQA has also gone into improving communication facilities, especially radio contact among the isolated communities of Northern Quebec, and into the establishment of a magazine, Taqralik, that has become the voice of the Northern Quebec Inuit Association (NQIA), an umbrella organization formed to look after the well-being of Inuit of Quebec.

Many Inuit, like other indigenous peoples of Canada, are concerned about the loss of their traditional culture. Of paramount importance to the elders is the imminent disappearance of the old family ties. The Inuit family used to share everything they had with each other without expecting anything in return. It was important that children learned to know and respect their elders and to care for them. In the event that some young person transgressed, the elders of the family would get together with him/her and discuss the problems in an intimate and loving manner, pointing out that the transgression could bring shame to the family. Inevitably, this approach worked and the delinquent youth would eschew the way of wrongdoing. Instead of this family/community oriented solution to handling the social problems, what has occurred in recent times is intervention by the RCMP, total strangers to the community. The elders of Inuit communities resent the presence of outsiders who act as problem solvers, denying them the opportunity to manage their own affairs according to their long lasting tradition.

Other Inuit elders complain about the effects of schooling on Inuit children. Because the school system is not designed to accommodate any culture save that of the larger nation-state, indigenous peoples find themselves culturally disadvantaged by the existing conditions. While it is absolutely necessary that Inuit children get an education in order to function as adults in Canadian society, it is, at the same time, regrettable that this circumstance would bring about the demise of traditions that have survived hundreds of years. Inuit elders complain that they no longer see their children. Everybody has become too busy, especially the youngsters who seem to come home just to eat and sleep. There is no time to teach them about Native values and traditions. The family unit, the main underpinning of Inuit society is in danger of becoming obsolescent. In some cases children do not even know the members of their own families.

At the Inuit Elders Conference which took place at Rankin Inlet in 1983, the following sentiments, voiced by concerned delegates, gives us some idea of the way the Inuit feel about the changes that threaten their society. The first is from David Igutak:

"Before the missionaries came to the North, Inuit culture and traditions were very strong, and people followed these traditions. Shamans, instead of doctors, would treat the sick and some of the sick were cured. Some people had taboos against certain foods. If they ate foods they would get sick and die. The Shamans only cured those who adhered to Inuit beliefs. Today only those who do what the doctors tell them are cured."

The second quotation is taken from Joan Attuat:

"In those days, people were able to tell if a man was a good hunter by looking at his clothing and that of his family. If a man and his family had nice, clean clothing made from good skins, that meant that he was a good hunter and a good provider for his family. The same was true of a woman. If her family had nice clothing, people knew that she was a hard worker and a good wife and mother to her family."

Indeed, there are many factors which affect the economic situation of the Quebec Indian. The lack of education and discriminatory practices have been discussed. In recent years the numbers of indigenous people who are bilingual (French/English) has also been a drawback. Furthermore, cultural differences, like the preference for social prestige over wealth and the status accorded the highly skilled hunter over a salaried employee, tend to keep the Indian in the lower echelons of the Canadian income scale.

Indians of Quebec are presently struggling to obtain rights from the provincial and federal governments. In particular, land rights have constituted the most dominant dispute between the indigenous groups and the two levels of government. Mining and timber companies have moved into Indian territory and simply taken over with no regard for property rights. Hunting and fishing grounds are no longer productive and entire bands have been forced to relocate. Apart from land rights, the original people of Canada are also seeking compensation for development of resources on land under their control, as well as cultural and constitutional rights.

In order to make themselves heard, many diverse groups comprising remote subsistence hunters and trappers, reindeer herders, fringe dwellers on reserve and mission residents, have banded together to present a common front in negotiations with the respective levels of government. Since 1958, when indigenous people of Canada obtained the right to vote in their own country, some headway has been made. The Indians of Quebec Association (IQA), formed in the fall of 1965, has emerged a political voice for Native peoples in that province. Its mandate encompasses nine regions, namely: Timiskaming, Restigouche, Mistassini, North Shore, Southern Quebec, Point-Bleue, James Bay, Quebec District and Abitibi. The IQA is seeking financial restitution for Native lands appropriated by the Canadian government. Furthermore, in 1972, the IQA brought in an injunction to delay the completion of the James Bay project until the rights of Aboriginal peoples were met. In addition, the Laurentian Alliance of Métis and Non-status Indians was formed in 1971 to lobby on behalf of the fringe Native groups. Their top priorities have been guaranteeing minimum income, community projects such as housing, and the hiring of Indian people as teachers and social workers.

When all is said and done the dominant factor affecting the economic marginality of the indigenous people of Canada is their unwillingness to conform to the ideological foundations that the national society which has taken over their land, demands of them. Until nation states throughout the world recognize that indigenous peoples are culturally and socio-economically different and are able to contribute to the welfare of the larger society, on their own terms, then what will continue to be perpetuated will be the negative and derogatory stereotypes that are more onerous for any society than a genuine attempt at cultural and economic pluralism.

The Land and the Aboriginal Peoples: History

Quebec is the largest province in Canada with an area of 1,540,681.451 km². Its physical geography is made up of three distinct regions: The Canadian Shield, The St. Lawrence Valley and The Appalachian Mountains. The Canadian Shield (also known as the Laurentian Shield) makes up half the mainland of Canada. In Quebec it comprises 90% of the province. The Shield is called a peneplain because it is almost a plain. From the sky, it appears to be uniformly flat but in reality it is made up of several rough hills, lakes, rivers and muskeg. In the far north of Quebec lies the bare tundra, a rugged desert. To the immediate south of the Tundra lies what is known as the taiga, a sort of transition zone, and south of the taiga lies the coniferous boreal forest.

The climate in the entire Quebec Shield is continental with severe temperatures and relatively low annual rainfall. The boreal forest experiences between 30cm and 50cm annually, and the amount of precipitation decreases as one goes north through the taiga and into the tundra. In the northernmost area, high winds add to the extreme cold, while in the boreal forest temperatures range from very hot in the short summer months to very cold in the long winter months. There is almost no spring or autumn.

It is in the Quebec Shield, north of the St. Lawrence, that the larger of the two Indian linguistic groups that dominate Quebec, live. This group, the Algonquin (or Algonkian) occupied that region in the north and centre of the province. The people who spoke Algonkian were divided into seven different bands. There was Algonquin, Cree, Montagnais, Naskapi, Micmac, Têtes-de-Boule and Maliseet. Another band, the Abénaki, settled in Quebec early in the eighteenth century. To the south, the Iroquoian-speaking Natives spread their culture in the hardwood forest area. They were known as the League of Six Nations: the Mohawks, Senecas, Oneidas, Cayugas, Onondagas and the relative late comer, the Tuscaroras (about 1720). The Huron, Tobacco (Petuns) and Neutral peoples also belonged to the Iroquoian linguistic group.

It is believed that the Iroquoians moved into the St. Lawrence Valley region about 1000 A.D. This area of Canada lies between two high stone plains which divide the Quebec Shield to the north for the Appalachians to the south. The St. Lawrence Lowland is comprised of flat clay plains alternating with wooded, elevated terraces. The landscape is marked by gullies, ravines and stony outcrops. It is here that the eight peaks of the Monteregian Hills rise. They are Mount Royal, St. Bruno, Beloeil, Rougemont, Yamaska, Shefford, Brome and Johnson. The climate, like most of the shield, is continental. There are warm to hot summers and cold winters. Precipitation is well distributed throughout the year and is quite suited to agriculture. Yet the weather can be unsettled at times, especially when the polar air meets the warm flow from the Gulf of Mexico. Rains occur and the rush of strong winds sweep through the trough of the

Lowlands. The soils of the St. Lawrence Valley are well suited to agriculture. They are light and sandy, and easy to cultivate. The Iroquoians, who moved southwest into the valley, adapted from hunters and trappers to agricultural pursuits. Originally this linguistic group was one comprised of distinct peoples, speaking related languages, who's development was of a homogeneous nature, leading to one culture. The Algonkian group is made up of one single people who gradually separated from each other. They became "horticulturists", relying on corn, beans, squash and sunflowers.

The Iroquois, the Hurons and Mohawks, in particular, were "slash and burn" agriculturalists: that is the men cut down the smaller trees and piled them around the larger ones that they could not chop down. They then burned the piles around the larger trees, thereby killing them. The stumps were removed and crops planted in their place by the women, who tended to and harvested them. In addition to agriculture, the Iroquois hunted and fished. The Hurons, on the other hand, created a complex trading system with the Algonkians of the interior. They traded their surplus crops to the Inland Indians for furs and dried fish. The early trade between the Huron and the Algonkian was to develop into an empire for the Huron in post-contact times and was to lead to the near extinction of the Algonkian.

The Iroquoian peoples lived in longhouses between 15m to 45m long. They were made of bark shingles and were held together with saplings and twigs, fastened over a frame of logs. There were no windows, only two doors at either end of the dwelling. Up to ten Iroquois families sometimes shared one abode while about six Huron families lived in the same home. The longhouses were divided into single compartments for the individual families, and they slept on platforms raised above the ground. Fires were placed about 6m apart with smoke-holes in the roof.

Longhouses were built side by side in a clearing to form a village. Huron villages differed from those of the Iroquois in that they were contiguous while those of the latter were separated from each other by expanses of forest which comprised their hunting grounds. The Hurons shared a common hunting ground and were culturally more homogeneous than the Iroquois. All villages were heavily fortified, except for the smaller Huron settlements, which depended upon the larger villages for protection.

A number of longhouse families formed a clan and this became a close family unit. Members of the same clan aided each other and were ready to avenge deaths and injuries to other members. The members of each clan were descended from the same female ancestor. Pre-contact Iroquoian society was matriarchal. The man moved into the longhouse of his wife's family which was usually dominated by the female members of the family. In post-contact days the matriarchal domination of the household became even more apparent since the male members of the villages were quite often away from the

home, engaged in warfare. A state of chronic warfare developed between the Iroquois and the Huron which was to have grave repercussions for the Hurons.

They were big game hunters who adapted to the region in which they found themselves. Those who encountered ample game remained in that area while others moved on in search of richer pastures. Some Indians of Quebec found a plentiful supply of food in the coniferous forests of the north while others adapted to the southern hardwood forested area. In the south, plant and animal life were more abundant than in the north, hence the larger population and the more complex and varied societies of the south. Corn was grown before the year 1000; tobacco smoking was prevalent before 1350, and squash, beans and sunflower were all popular before 1450.

There evolved over several centuries many different physical and cultural groups, a direct result of isolation of groups from each other, intermarriage and nomadic movement. In the south, due to the agricultural economy, the population was always higher than in the north, and there was a remarkable increase in the population in the fifteenth century, immediately before contact with Europeans. (This is known as the late Woodlands Period.)

The seeming preference for migration by the Indians was closely linked to the subsistence potential of the recently adopted area. Unlike the Europeans, the Indians of North America had no concept of "ownership" or property. The indigenous people believed that the land was created by the Creator and that it was not moral to buy or sell it. They did not attempt to control, manipulate or abuse the land. Instead, they always respected the land and lived in harmony with it. Land was plentiful and it was available to whoever could make a living on it. Therefore, there was no reason to alter the environment to suit the needs of man. When subsistence levels declined, the Natives would move on to other regions in search of food, and there was land enough for all.

The arrival of Europeans changed the entire concept of property. They assumed that there was no connection between the land and the people who occupied it, since the nomadic existence of the Natives showed no regard for permanent settlement. The societal organization of the Indian was quite different from that of the European. Whereas the Native people needed large tracts of land, the European saw land in terms of productive use. It is this latter fact, coupled with an advanced technology, that has been largely responsible for the decline of Native culture in the north of Quebec.

Europeans (particularly the French) pitted the Iroquois against the Huron in their bid to control the fur trade. The direct result was the near extermination of the Huron who, decimated by European diseases, could not resist the Iroquois and were forced to flee to Lorette near Quebec City where they still live today. In addition, the Tobacco and Neutral tribes were also dispersed by the Iroquois, as were the Erie. The near extinction

of these four Native tribes bears testimony to the dangers associated with contact with the Europeans. While some may argue that warfare had always existed between Aboriginal bands, it must be noted that few, if any, Aboriginal tribes had ever been brought to the verge of extinction. Greed inspired by European goods and the availability of deadly weapons such as guns carried hostilities between neighbouring bands to near disastrous proportions.

Settlement in the north of the Quebec Shield has always been sparse. Agriculture had never been feasible for most Natives, so they continued the traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping. The fur trade was the mainstay of post-contact Indian economies, although hunting and trapping were important not only for trade, but also for food and clothing, the bare necessities for survival. Deer (moose and caribou), rabbit, squirrel and beaver provided the Native people with hunting and trapping equipment as well as sustenance in that harsh land.

As a result of the depletion of game in one place, the dwellers of the boreal forest would move in search of a place where game was more plentiful. This gave them the appearance of a nomadic lifestyle but in effect their patterns of movement were deliberate and planned so that they always moved within well defined boundaries. These people, the Montagnais, the Algonquin, The Naskapi and the Cree in particular, developed a simple material culture without permanent dwellings. They used snowshoes and toboggans to get across the snow that sometimes remained for up to eight months. In their quest for game they also used canoes made of bark, which have been described as the finest carriers of that sort created by any Native group. These lightweight canoes were well suited to rapids and also easy to carry across portages and quickly repaired.

The hunting and fishing lifestyle of the Algonkian-speaking Natives cannot be thought of merely in romantic terms. Detailed knowledge of the life cycles, habits, hunts and foods of the game hunted, as well as a familiarity with the territory involved, were absolutely necessary. Hence, the northern Montagnais, the Cree, the Naskapi, the Algonquin and the Têtes-de-Boule developed great skill in stalking, trapping and shooting animals. They also created effective means of transportation which were essential to their nomadic culture. The Micmac and the southern Montagnais hunted the then prevalent seal along the St. Lawrence in addition to the caribou and moose. None of these Native people shot game for sport since animal resources were often quite low and many times hunting territory and the catch had to be shared. Fishing was of considerable importance to many bands, although Cree men left that activity to the women, deeming it unfit for a hunter.

Of all the animals hunted by the Native, the most important in pre-contact and post-contact times has been the caribou. In recent years, there has been a marked decrease in

the number of caribou herds in northern Quebec, and so moose has become a more popular source of meat and hides for the Indians of the interior. Caribou has always been easier to hunt because of the fact that they are herding animals and are usually found in large groups. Moose, on the other hand, are more likely to travel alone and are more difficult to stalk and trail. They are sometimes hunted near waterholes which enables the hunter to do a bit of trapping at the same time.

A successful caribou hunt yielded quite a bit more meat than a moose hunt. This enabled one hunting party to share its catch with other less successful bands. The caribou was of the greatest importance to the Inuit and the Montagnais and Naskapi of northeastern Quebec. All hunts were preceded by a religious ceremony in which permission was sought from the spirits, so that the hunt would be successful. It was absolutely necessary for the hunt to be successful since the entire economy of the tribe (in particular the Naskapi) depended upon the caribou. No portion of the animal was ever wasted. The hides were tanned or smoked and used for all types of clothing from hoods to snowshoes, for covering houses, for bags and cooking containers. The meat, of course, was eaten, bone and antlers made into tools, hunting weapons and toys, the brain, liver and fat were used in curing of the skin and the stomach and oesophagus were used to make bags.

Another animal that was essential to the economies of northern Quebec was the beaver. In fact, the beaver has played an important role in the history of Canada. It constituted a vital source of food and clothing, and it was plentiful and easy to catch. In post-contact Canada there arose a great demand for beaver pelts. These pelts were obtained from the native people by Europeans who saw an opportunity to turn a tidy profit by satisfying the market for furs in their respective homelands. But the effects of this trade were disastrous for the Indians. The exploitation of the beaver was a disruptive element as far as the balance of life that had existed before in the traditional Indian society. Eventually, warfare between bands, European expansion and European diseases took their toll on the Indian peoples. Many saw the new turn of events as a consequence of the greed of Europeans and the destruction of the harmony that had existed in pre-contact time between man and nature.

In traditional Indian societies, especially those of the Montagnais, the Naskapi and the Algonquin, beavers were treated with much respect. They were regarded as the most spiritually endowed of all animals and it was thought that if the remains of a beaver were badly treated, their souls would not allow other beavers to be caught. As in the case of the caribou, the consent of the Giant Beaver had to be sought before a hunt could be undertaken. Also, as in the case of the caribou, the entire beaver was fully utilized. Their teeth were used as chisels, the skins as clothing, bags, quivers, thongs and blankets, the meat as a source of food, and the fat was used medicinally and as a protective coating for the skin in the severe cold weather.

The Inuit of the Arctic depended upon seals, especially the ringed seal. Its meat was used as food for humans as well as for dogs, while its skin was made into clothing, shoes and dog harnesses. In addition, the skin was sold commercially and helped the Inuit supplement their meagre income. The blubber was good for providing heating and light. The bearded seal was also popular among the Inuit, not for its meat but for its tough hide which was ideally suited for boat sails and covers, harpoon lines, dog harnesses and boots.

The history of the Inuit people goes as far back as 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. One theory, archaeologists believe is that the original Inuit crossed the Bering Strait from Siberia and moved eastward across Canada. They belonged to what is known as the Arctic Small Tool Tradition, or the pre-Dorset culture. They lived in small, scattered, nomadic bands. In summer their houses were skin tents and in winter they resided in semi-subterranean dwellings. Their economy was also based on hunting and fishing.

From about the year 800 B.C. to approximately 1200 A.D. the Dorset culture was dominant in the Canadian east Arctic. These people used stone dwellings with turf roofs and had burial grounds. They were replaced by the Thule who moved into east Arctic about 900 years ago. They had also come east across Canada and they displayed a culture superior to that of the pre-Dorset era. The Thule, in addition to hunting seals and the walrus, were also hunters of the baleen whale. Furthermore, they introduced to the region the igloo, the kayak, dog-sleds, fur clothing, boots and the shaman drum. The Thule were the direct ancestors of the present day Inuit. They were nomadic, following the animals that were essential to their continued existence and they were known to shoot geese and the ptarmigan duck.

The women of the Thule culture were concerned with sewing and other domestic duties while the men were the providers of food. They hunted with harpoons, spears and bows and arrows. The hunting weapons were made of wood and/or animal bone with stone, flint or bone for the blades. Fishing was undertaken in the numerous lakes and arctic char and salmon were important features of the Inuit diet. These fish were caught in Ungava Bay and the Labrador Coast area.

The Inuit were hostile to initial contacts with the explorers, Frobisher, John Davis, and Hudson. Because of this, it is assumed that the Inuit had suffered from previous meetings with foreigners. But the purpose of the explorers was to find a northwest passage and as such they were not concerned with settling the harsh Arctic region. In order to be able to operate without encumbrances in the area, the Europeans encouraged the Indians of the interior to engage in wars with the Inuit. There had been bitter enmity between Indian and Inuit in the past and the Europeans exploited this situation to their own ends. The Moravians brought an end to the constant fighting in 1765 and consequently, the

Moravians took over all matters of the Inuit that had to do with education, trade and religion.

Consequently, the Inuit have had to withstand attempts by the nineteenth century Europeans to destroy their culture. As whale blubber was an important source of energy in Europe, and baleen was in great demand among the fashionable women of Europe (they used it to shape their undergarments), and the spermaceti or the sperm whale was used as a base in certain cosmetics and perfumes, European whalers risked the dangers of the trade to service the markets at home. Soon whales of the eastern Arctic became greatly reduced in number and some large whales were rendered almost extinct.

In addition, the economy and lifestyle of the Inuit were altered by the commercialization associated with the whaling industry. The Inuit, who had hunted solely to support their families, were encouraged to trap the Arctic fox during the winter months, thereby limiting the time available for seal hunting, a traditional enterprise. Trading the fox and other animal pelts for European goods also caused the Inuit to abandon some of their ancient crafts. Guns, for instance, replaced harpoons, spears and bows and arrows. In the process the skills utilized to create these weapons gradually became eroded. Metal pots and pans, whaleboats, canvas and wool and cotton clothing were becoming a part of the Inuit way of life. Even worse was the fact that the Inuit diet suffered from contact with Europeans. Store bought food and canned meat, flour and coffee, all helped to reduce the health standards of the Inuit.

The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement

On November 11, 1975, the Cree Indians and Inuit of James Bay signed the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreements with the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec. It represents the first modern Aboriginal claims settlement in Canada and is the first comprehensive Native claim settlement negotiated in Canada. Under the agreement, the hydro electric development, already begun in Northwestern Quebec, was allowed to proceed. Yet, several years later, debate still persists over the process leading up to the signing of the agreement. What was once hailed as a "great victory" by the leaders of the James Bay Cree has since been labelled a sellout by other Native groups and even by non-Native groups.

The claim has been made that Native leadership was very weak during the negotiating process, that the leaders were manipulated by non-Native advisors, and even tricked by government negotiators. It was a sellout, other Native groups claim, because the leaders of the Cree community at James Bay sought, initially, to stop the project completely. They see the agreement as a victory for the government who, in effect, cajoled the Cree into signing without the approval of the Native leaders. This is substantiated by the fact that one of the lawyers representing the Cree reportedly told them that whatever the white man wants, he gets.

There is little evidence available to dispute the statement just cited, and this is borne out by the events leading up to the initiation of the project. When in 1965, the province undertook a study into the potential of James Bay, no consultation was entered into with the Cree or Inuit of the region. Similarly, when then Premier Robert Bourassa announced on April 30, 1971, that work would begin immediately in the James Bay area on a hydro electric scheme, the indigenous peoples living in James Bay had not been consulted, nor had any organization representing Native peoples been advised of the proposed scheme. Indeed, as late as 1972, the province refused to negotiate with Native groups about the project itself.

Opposition to the hydro electric project was not immediate. The structure of Native societies was too diverse to give an immediate response to any matter. Instead, individual initiative was undertaken to put a stop to the project. Chief Billy Diamond, of the then Rupert House settlement, was the first to hit out against the Premier claiming that the Indians, far from benefiting from the project, would be ruined in a short time. Diamond then called for united action by other Native bands and associations against the project. The top priority would be to stop all work on the scheme and following that, to ensure that Indians receive just and equitable compensation for the loss of their lands. (It is

estimated that in 1972, game accounted for 60% of the total food supply of Natives living in the region).

The Indians of Quebec Association (IQA) simultaneously voiced its objections with Chief Max Gros-Louis vowing to go to court if necessary to block the project. Meanwhile, in the James Bay area, Philip Awashish, a young councillor of the Mistassini band, called a meeting of Cree leaders to discuss the effects that the proposed project would have on residents of the area. This marked a new process in the affairs of Cree Indians since it was the beginning of regional representation among those bands. Response, slow to begin, soon began to snowball. The refusal by the federal government to grant funds for the IQA in its battle against the provincial government was a unifying factor for that organization since other Native groups began to pitch in to raise funds and to attend meetings as a show of solidarity. From these meetings came a resolution emphasizing that the damage to the environment, especially in terms of the animal life, would be irreversible and that the dominant society would be the one who would ultimately benefit from the project at great cost to the Native peoples of the region. Native leaders resolutely agreed to oppose the continuation of the project in July, 1971.

During the period of mobilizing opposition, many Natives frequently expressed scepticism that any action on their part could stop the project. Instead of unanimity on stopping the scheme, what evolved was a feeling that if it could not be stopped, then ample compensation should be afforded to the indigenous peoples of the region. Native peoples reasoned that the government had never listened to them before and in any case it might be too late to stop the project. Nevertheless, the IQA announced in May, 1972, that it would seek an injunction to halt the project. When the provincial government ignored this ultimatum and proceeded with the project, the IQA went to court to make its point. This led to legal proceedings which ran from December, 1972 to June, 1973. However, it was not until December, 1973, that an injunction was handed down on behalf of the IQA. But the provincial government simply appealed the decision and continued its work on the hydro electric development.

In early 1974 serious negotiations between the government of Quebec, the government of Canada, the Norther Quebec Inuit Association and the IQA (replaced by the Grand Council of Cree in June, 1974). Eventually, after months of intense bargaining, an agreement-in-principle was reached in November, 1974. It took another year of negotiations before the settlement could be ratified and within the next couple of years the federal and provincial governments enacted legislation implementing the agreement.

A wide range of subject matter was provided for in the agreement, including a new land regime, structures of local government, health and social services, education, judicial services, and environmental management and development. Perhaps the most severely criticized clause in the agreement is the one that ceded to the government of Canada and

Quebec all Native claims, rights, titles and interests to the land in the region. This "extinguishment" of land rights gave the province of Quebec the authority to develop the entire James Bay area, subject to certain restrictions which many claim are token and designed by the government for its own benefit.

Apart from the social, cultural and economic benefits obtained by the Cree and Northern Inuit there are many doubts that persist. For instance, other Native organizations criticize the extinguishment of all rights to the land. They claim that the Cree and Inuit should have insisted on control over development, Native ownership of mineral rights, Native control over access, mandatory equity participation and establishment, and interest. Along the way, compromises could have been made on a sliding scale whereby Cree and Inuit land could be exchanged for monetary compensation. This would involve only selected areas of land and would be done after much consultation among leaders of the different communities.

It is due to the perceived failure of the Cree and Inuit leaders to negotiate a more attractive settlement with the government of Canada that other Native communities have been reluctant to deal with the federal government on similar matters. The JBNQA has been offered as a model for future negotiations between the different levels of government and indigenous peoples, but the latter have steadfastly refused to enter into any compromise that extracts from them the extinguishment of land rights. Later, the Native bands of the Yukon Territory turned down an attractive offer from the federal government. Their only objection was the provision in the agreement for the extinguishment of land rights.

In the meantime, the Native associations have the opportunity not only to learn from the JBNQA case but also to develop the expertise and sophistication of presentation that are essential in any confrontation with the nation state. The process of unity, the finer points of lobbying and the ability to stick to one's position regardless of external coercion and threats are elements of negotiating that have to be appreciated by Native groups. As well, it is absolutely necessary that Natives develop the legal support needed for future negotiations from within their own ranks before embarking upon schemes as unequivocally vital to their existence as the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

Current Issues

In June, 1988, the Assembly of First Nations held its annual meeting in Edmonton, Alberta. In addressing the assembly of Canadian Native leaders, George Erasmus, then National Chief of the Assembly, delivered what was to be a prophetic speech. His voice quavering with emotion, he warned the 700 delegates that violence loomed on the horizon, unless demonstrable progress was soon to be achieved in the settlement of Native issues. The next generation, he warned Canadians at large, may well prove neither too patient nor too peaceful as their predecessors. "Canada", he said, "if you do not deal with this generation of leaders, we cannot promise that you are going to like the kind of violent political action that we can just about guarantee that the next generation is going to bring".

Within hours of the delivery of this prophecy, the nation was given dramatic evidence of its accuracy and a graphic illustration of the kind of action that it anticipated. Almost simultaneously, two reserves in central Canada - one in Ontario, the other in Quebec - burst into violent confrontation with the larger society. In northern Ontario the Temagami band blocked the extension of a remote logging road through territory they have long claimed as their own. A confrontation with the RCMP and Ontario Provincial Police soon followed.

Meanwhile, at the sprawling Kahnawake Mohawk reserve, strategically situated along Montreal's south shore, armed Indians cut off access for twenty-eight hours to one of the city's busiest bridges. This action was provoked by an earlier raid by some two hundred RCMP officers on six stores located on the reservation accused of illegal sale of cigarettes. The dispute between the band and Canadian customs is long standing. The band has the right to buy tax free Canadian cigarettes in the United States and ship them back to the reserve without the payment of duty. Since January 1986, the band has been claiming the additional right to sell these cigarettes to non-Natives on the reserve. The Canadian government disputes this right and, with the sales representing an annual loss of fifty million dollars to the federal treasury, Ottawa decided to act. During the ensuing raid seventeen Native people were charged with smuggling related offenses and four hundred cases of cigarettes and some \$285,000 in cash were seized from the reserve.

From the Mohawk perspective, the Canadian government through the RCMP violated the sovereign right of their nation to administer the reserve. As Grand Chief Joseph Norton expressed it: "Our community believes that they do not have any jurisdiction". The issue seemed as simple and clear to many federal officials and politicians. The raid was nothing more than a perfectly legitimate and justified exercise of Canadian law. Bill McKnight, then Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, expressed the Ottawa view

point when he declared: "I would hope that the Indian leadership would wish that the laws that apply to all Canadians would be respected".

In Quebec, the recent history of Native/non-Native relations is no less confrontational and violent than characteristic of other parts of the country. In the Gaspé region of maritime Quebec, a long standing and often violent dispute over fishing rights remains unresolved between the Micmac people and the province. In northern Quebec, as explained above, the Native peoples of the James Bay area were dealt with in an exceedingly high handed and authoritarian fashion by the government of Quebec in the 1970's as the region's massive hydro-electric project was rushed to completion. Issues of settlement and compensation arising out of this era remain unsettled today. In spite of a land claims settlement, protests continue by the Innu or Montagnais-Nascapi Indians of northeastern Quebec over the development and use of their 256,000 km² traditional homeland. In the course of 1988 alone over one hundred charges were laid against Innu protesters and activists within the area.

Finally, thanks to the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord agreed to by the First Ministers on June 3, 1987, the position of the government of Quebec is today viewed by Native leaders as a serious impediment to the constitutional recognition of Aboriginal rights. The Accord has been strongly and, indeed, bitterly criticized by Aboriginal organizations for its failure to recognize the first nations as "distinct", and omitting Aboriginal rights from future constitutional discussions. The timing of the Meech Lake process naturally engendered a feeling of frustration among Native Canadians, coming as it did so soon after the failure of the final constitutional conference on Aboriginal rights.

Oka

The armed confrontation between police, military forces and angry Mohawks in Oka, Quebec is now an integral part of Canadian history, Oka has become a symbol of the uneasy relationship that often exists between the Aboriginal peoples, and mainstream society and its governments. The symbol, however, often papers over the real nature of the specific conflict.

Incredible as it seems, this dispute had its roots in a land grant by the King of France to a Roman Catholic religious order of priests in 1717. Even prior to this event, however, the Mohawks had a long and tortuous relationship with the French. From Champlain who manipulated a Mohawk defeat in an inter-tribal war, to the ignored claims of ownership on which Montreal was founded, to the successive burning of Mohawk villages, and the burning of Lachine by the Mohawks, the animosity raged.

Nevertheless, in spite of history, the root of the present problem lies in the 1717 land grant. Then in 1841, the parliament of Lower Canada upheld the legality of the grant when it passed an act to resolve "all such doubts" over the Oka land dispute. Again, in 1912, the highest court of appeal for Canadians, the British Privy Council ruled against the Mohawks.

In more recent times, the Mohawks of Oka (Kanesatake) found their claims just as firmly rejected. In 1975 and 1977 the legal basis for rejection was that the Mohawks could not prove possession of the land "from time immemorial". This judgment was argued on the grounds that other Indian bands had occupied the lands on various occasions. Another ground for rejection was that "the title had been extinguished by the land grant made by the King of France" to the Supplicants. The French king, according to the federal government, had the authority to grant the land.

In concert with the struggle for their land, the Mohawks waged a special battle against the government and church authorities for the right to govern their lives according to their traditional ways. The story of this struggle is a long history of neglect, abuse and authoritarian behaviour. In the end, the *Indian Act* became the "official" arbiter of government, and the Supplicant priests sold the land to public and private sources. From the original large single track of land, the Mohawks remained in possession of about 50 small parcels.

The contemporary dispute finds its immediate roots in the expropriation, by the government, from nine private owners in 1947 on which a public recreational facility was constructed. A 9-hole golf course was part of this park. The town of Oka decided in

1989 to extend this to an 18-hole course buying from a resident of France who bought the land from private hands in 1967.

The plans for the golf course development were delayed when the Mohawks set up a barricade after failing to come to a settlement of their dispute with the village of Oka. A ruling by the Quebec Superior court declared the barricade illegal and ordered it removed. On refusal, the mayor of Oka called in the provincial police who were soon replaced by the military.

In the tension from the confrontation that followed there was much confusion, ineptness and plain stupidity. The latter, in hindsight, is perhaps captured in a letter sent by Jean Ciaccia, the Minister for Native Affairs, to Jean Ouelette, the mayor of Oka. He wrote:

I am conscious that the law gives you just cause with this injunction. But I believe the situation goes beyond strict legality. ...elected officials should not hide behind the law, but act in manner that is generous and responsible. I ask you again to suspend indefinitely the golf course project. This promise would allow us to ask the natives to bring down the barricades. This show of good will would also re-establish a climate which would allow us to negotiate a solution that is equitable for everyone.

This letter was written two days before the armed intervention by police. Obviously, the events that followed were seriously lacking in good will and generosity.

List of Bands

Band	Linguistic Group	Language	Culture
Abenakis of Wolinak ²	Algonkian	Abenakis	Algonkian
Abitibiwinni	Algonkian	Ojibway & Cree	Algonkian
Argonaut	Algonkian	Algonquin	Algonkian
Algonquins of Barriere Lake	Algonkian	Algonquin	Algonkian
Bersimis	Algonkian	Montagnais	Algonkian
Eastmain	Algonkian	Cree	Algonkian
Fort Chimo	Algonkian	Naskapi	Algonkian
Fort George	Algonkian	Cree	Algonkian
Gaspé	Algonkian	Micmac	Algonkian
Grand Lac Victoria	Algonkian	Algonkin	Algonkian
Great Whale River	Algonkian	Cree	Algonkian
Nation Huronne de Wendat	Iroquoian	Huron	Iroquoian
Kanesatake	Iroquoian	Mohawk	Iroquoian
Kipawa	Algonkian	Algonquin	Algonkian
Lac Simon	Algonkian	Algonquin	Algonquin
Long Point	Algonkian	Algonquin	Algonkian
Atikamekw de Manowan	Algonkian	Cree	Algonkian
Micmacs of Maria	Algonkian	Micmac	Algonkian
Mingan	Algonkian	Montagnais	Algonkian
Mistassini	Algonkian	Cree	Algonkian
Montagnais de les Ecumains	Algonkian	Montagnais	Algonkian
Montagnais du Lac St. Jean	Algonkian	Montagnais	Algonkian
Montagnais de Natashquan	Algonkian	Montagnais	Algonkian
Nemaska	Algonkian	Cree	Algonkian
Obedjiwan	Algonkian	Algonquin	Algonkian
Odanak	Algonkian	Abenakis	Algonkian
Kahnawake	Iroquoian	Mohawk	Iroquoian
Old Factory	Algonkian	Cree	Algonkian

Band	Linguistic Group	Language	Culture
Restigouche	Algonkian	Micmac	Algonkian
Kitigan Zibi			
Anishinabeg	Algonkian	Algonquin	Algonkian
Montagnais de la Romaine	Algonkian	Montagnais	Algonkian
Rupert House	Algonkian	Cree	Algonkian
Sept-Iles	Algonkian	Montagnais	Algonkian
Timiskaming	Algonkian	Algonquin	Algonkian
Première Nation			
Malécite de Viger	Algonkian	Maliseet	Algonkian
Waswanipi	Algonkian	Cree	Algonkian
Weymontachie	Algonkian	Cree	Algonkian
Wolfe Lake	Algonkian	Algonquin	Algonkian
Betsiamites			
Cree Nation of Chisasibi			
Cree Nation of Wemindji			
Micmacs of Gesgapegiag			
Montagnais de Shefferville			
Naskapi de Québec			
Nation Huronne Wendat			
Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam			
Waskaganish			
Montagnais de Pakua Shipi			