



North of 60°: Homeland or Frontier?

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INTRODUCTION

What is North? The Canadian North tends to be classified politically as **Yukon**, the Northwest Territories, and **Nunavut**,² but fundamentally, the North is a combination of a geographic and a mental orientation. Canada as a nation is itself Northern. Geographically, the North is a cardinal point marking the direction toward that part of the earth most remote from the midday sun in this hemisphere. As a mental abstraction, it is consciousness of location based on the interplay of geography and culture. In essence, it is a vision of one's place, a source of identity.

The aim of this chapter is to contrast two competing visions of the North as homeland or frontier (see Table 1). The vision of the North as homeland originates from those who live, work, and play there, whereas its conception as a frontier has Southern roots. The latter is solely motivated by a desire to exploit natural resources, whilst the former is informed by thousands of years of indigenous use of the land and sea. The notion of the North as frontier is myopic and simplistic. In contrast, the reality of the North as homeland is characterized by diversity and complexity in the population demographic, culture, and economy. The North as homeland has withstood the test of time, showing resilience and sustainability of indigenous life style. Development in the North inspired by the frontier **mindset** is **invasive** and dogged by boom and bust cycles. The North as homeland is conducive to circumpolar linkages to communities across national borders in meeting the challenges of globalization. As frontier, the North is constrained to supplying natural resources to southern markets. In essence, one point of view is indigenous and shaped by a relationship with the natural ecology, whilst the other is informed by industrial capitalism and is exogenous.

Staples development is a policy of dependence on natural resource exploitations for the purposes of economic and social development. Frontier is a perception of the North as a harsh environment that contains enormous wealth. The idea of frontier has its roots in the stories of

Attributes		
<u>Homeland</u>	<u>Frontier</u>	
Northern	↔	Southern
Traditional	↔	Staples
Lifestyle	↔	Exploitation
Diverse and Complex	↔	Myopic and Simplistic
Sustainable	↔	Boom and Bust
Circumpolar Linkages	↔	Southern Markets

the early explorers and the fur trade. The search for the Northwest Passage as a means to the riches in the East **was** accompanied by a desire to discover great wealth in the North (**Kassam and Maher, 2000**). Northern homeland is a regional consciousness linking local geography to culture and economic life (Bone, 1992). To call the North a homeland is to recognize its autochthonous political and social reality (West, 1995).

In this chapter, varying conceptions of "Northernness" will be explored; the image of the three Canadian territories as frontier will be examined critically, and an explanation for the persistence of this image will be given based upon the staples development of northern economies. The North as homeland will also be considered on the basis of the human ecology of the region and the traditional economy. This vision of the North has withstood the test of time and sustained life for thousands of years. The economic and demographic diversity of three Northern territories will be explored. Finally, the prospect of Canada as a member of the circumpolar community will be presented as a challenge for an integrated Canadian economic and cultural consciousness in the forthcoming decades.

DEFINING NORTHERNESS

One method of delineating Northerliness is by the Arctic Circle (66.67° latitude). In this area, inhabitants experience some of the winter months in total absence of direct sunlight and summer months in continuous sunshine. All three of the territories have regions above and below the Arctic Circle.

A second approach to demarcating the North is by the area of permafrost. Permafrost is perennially frozen ground. This climatic measure of the North is useful when undertaking geological work, archaeological excavation, or simply constructing buildings. All three of Canada's

Northern territories are largely within the continuous permafrost region with Southern parts in discontinuous permafrost. As we move south, the line of discontinuous permafrost extends to large areas of the provincial North across Canada, depending upon annual climatic variations.

A third way of defining the North is the separation into Arctic and **sub-Arctic** regions. Figure 1 illustrates these two regions of Canada.³ The Arctic is within the continuous permafrost region of Canada. It supports quick-maturing and shallow vegetation; it is tundra. The **sub-Arctic** is characterized by deciduous and coniferous trees of the boreal forest and wetlands; it is taiga. The Arctic encompasses 3 000 000 square kilometres of Canadian territory. The **sub-Arctic** comprises 4 500 000 square kilometres of the region of Canada (Bone, 1992, p. 4). Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut contain both Arctic and **sub-Arctic** regions.

A fourth and more sophisticated attempt to define the North is Louis-Edmond Hamelin's concept of "nordicity" (1979). The degree of northerliness of a region goes beyond measurement of latitude to include factors such as climate, geography, and psychology. Hamelin's measure of nordicity is Polar Value (*valeurs polaires* or VAPO). He developed four regional categories: extreme North, far North, middle North, and near North. Figure 2 illustrates these four regions of Canada.⁴ Hamelin's aims were to illustrate and thereby encourage Southerners to

Figure 1

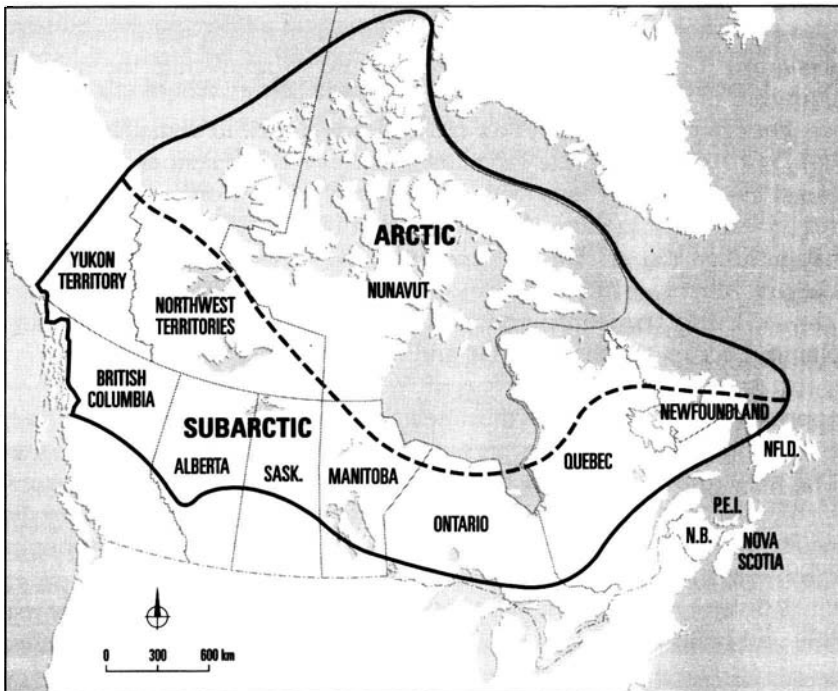
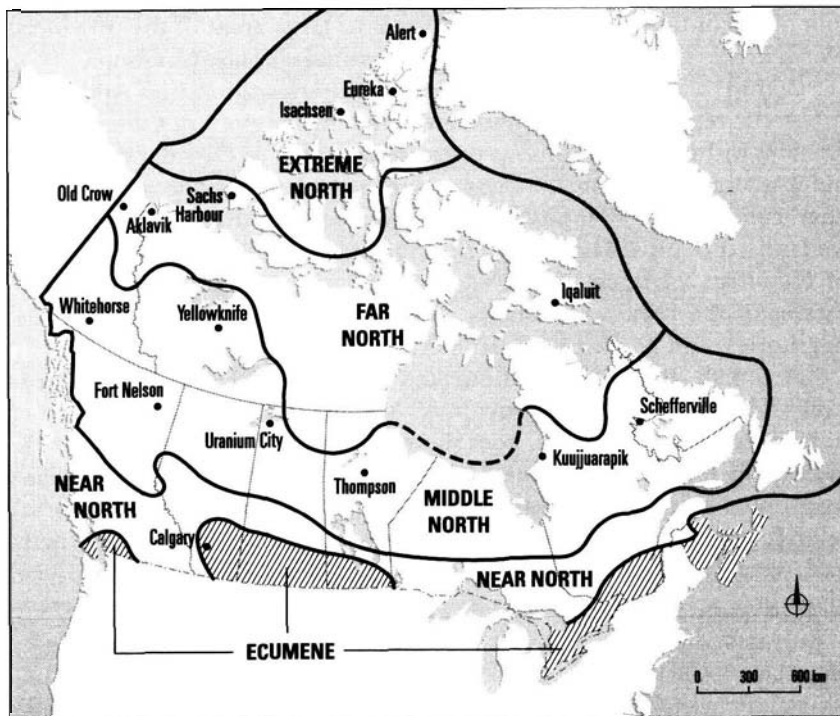


Figure 2



recognize their country's northerliness and to appreciate the cultural pluralism that is prevalent in the Canadian North.

For example the North Pole (90° latitude) in the extreme North has a VAPO of 1000. Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut (63.75° latitude), in the far North has a VAPO of 584. Yellowknife, capital of the Northwest Territories (62.45° latitude), in the middle North has a VAPO of 390. Whitehorse, capital of Yukon (60.71° latitude) in the middle North has a VAPO of 283. Calgary, Alberta (51.05° latitude), has a VAPO of 94 (Hamelin, 1979, pp. 71-74). Using Hamelin's criteria Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut occupy the extreme, far, and middle Norths.

Despite their arrangement of increased sophistication, the four approaches to defining northerliness outlined above emerge essentially from a Southern Canadian perspective in an effort to study the North. The urge to define the North according to scientific disciplines is comforting and useful in specific studies but does not necessarily relate to the reality of the perceptions of the people living in the three territories or the rest of Canada.

For most Canadians, the North is approached through films, television and radio programs, and literature rather than personal experience or travel. The nature of this engagement tends to emphasize discovery,

vast riches, and the exotic. At best these characterizations are romantic and at worst they are tantamount to intellectual colonialism (Coates and Morrison, 1996). The following quote from Robert Service's famous poem *The Cremation of Sam McGee*, one that has been taught to generations of Canadian school children, illustrates this perception of a mysterious gold-laden North:

There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who toil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was the night on the **m**arge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated **S**am **M**c**G**ee.

Robert Service, 1890, p. 159

These Southern constructions suggest an indifference to the reality of the North as a homeland.

This attitude is also found in other circumpolar countries, such as the United States. A particularly brazen example of Southerners regarding Northern lands as an "empty frontier," despite their being populated continuously for almost 10 000 years, was the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission's plan in the 1950s to detonate nuclear devices on the coast of Northwestern Alaska. Point Hope, Alaska, the site for the detonation, has one of the longest histories in North America of being continuously inhabited by indigenous people. Because of intense efforts by community members and a small group of scholars, the Atomic Energy Commission's plan was finally derailed (O'Neill, 1994).

Differing visions of the North exist between those who live or are committed to the North and those who view it from solely a Southern lens. Conflicting views of the North as homeland or frontier will be considered below. A rich history and diversity of culture inform the conception of the North as homeland. The perception of the North as a frontier is relatively more recent and homogenous.

FRONTIER: STAPLES EXPLOITATION AND GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

The vision of the territorial North as a hinterland for natural resource development is firmly embedded in Canadian public policy. This is readily illustrated by the names of federal government departments responsible for the territorial North: Department of Resources and Development (1950–53); Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (1953–66); and Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (1966–present). The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) is accountable for all Aboriginal com-

munities across Canada and Northern affairs including economic development (Dickerson, 1992, pp. 61-63).

This notion is wedded to a staples view of the economy, a thesis that was advanced by Harold Adams **Innis** after undertaking a critical analysis of Canada's economic development and an examination of the formation of Canada's political institutions. A staple is the basic or most important good that is produced in a particular region. It refers to renewable or non-renewable natural resource exploitation for economic gain. **Innis** maintained that Canada, as a nation, has emerged from staple exploitation of renewable and non-renewable resources such as fur, fisheries, timber, wheat, and minerals. More recently, staples development has included oil and gas, hydroelectricity, and strategic minerals such as gold and diamonds. **Innis** was a political economist who clearly understood the relationship between geography and economic development. To personally experience the diverse economic geography of the Canadian North, **Innis**, in 1924, undertook an exciting journey up the Mackenzie River to see the rich diversity of peoples supported by this natural transportation network. He understood the significance of a country separated by wide distances and the implications of vast geography on the development of political and economic institutions (**Innis**, 1995).

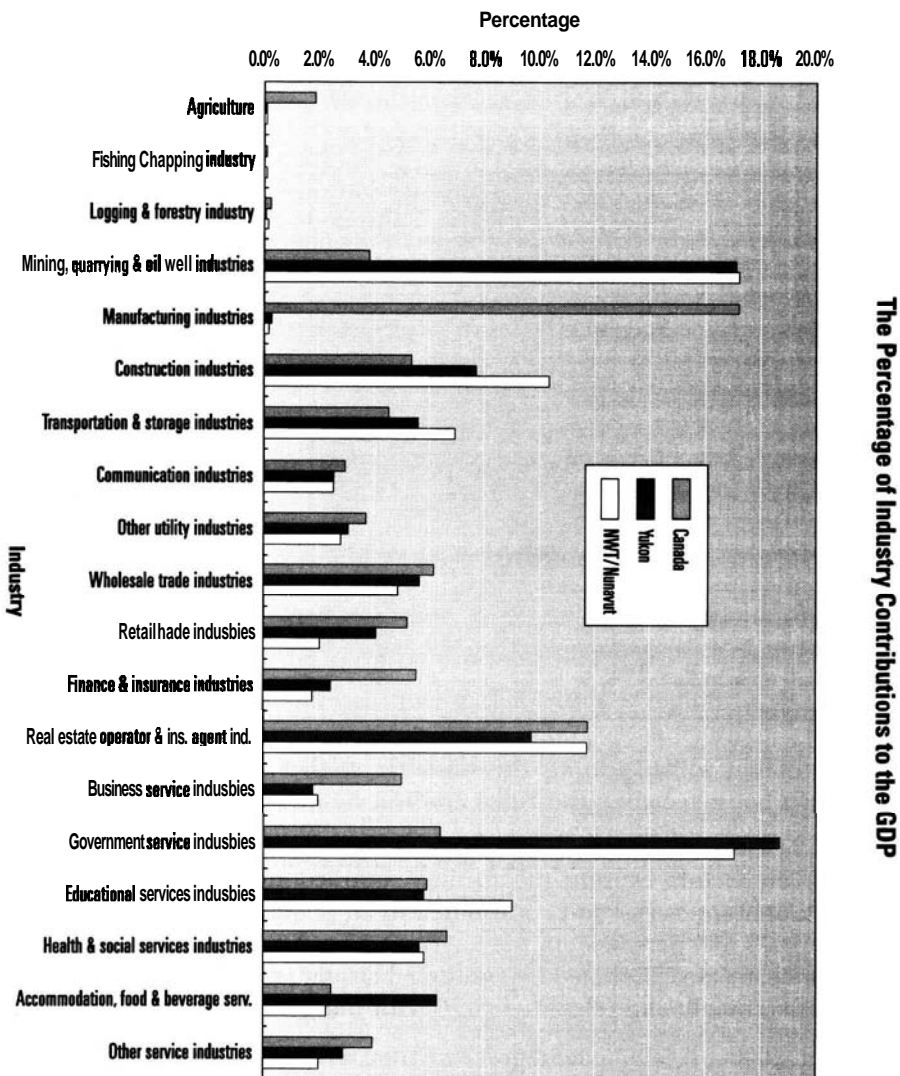
Innis observed that in the 19th century staples exports united the nation on an east-west trade axis connecting Canada, as hinterland, to its metropolitan centre in Britain. In the 20th century, staples exports re-oriented and fragmented the national economy by creating a north-south trade axis connecting the provinces to metropolitan centres mainly in the United States and other parts of the globe (Wright, 1993).

The hinterland-metropolis relationship that Canada maintains under international trade mirrors Canadian policy toward its own territories. In other words, as Canada is a hinterland to other more industrialized nations, the territorial North is a hinterland to the more developed regions of Southern Canada (Lipscomb, 1999).

Figure 3 illustrates staples dependence on the basis of the percentage of gross domestic product by industry for Canada and the three Northern territories in 1996. Government services (**Yukon**, 18.7 percent and Northwest Territories/**Nunavut**, 17 percent) support staples extraction in terms of mining, quarrying, and oil industries (**Yukon**, 17.1 percent and Northwest Territories/**Nunavut**, 17.2 percent).

Mining activities span Canada, reiterating Canada's role as a supplier of raw materials to the world. As the possibilities for mining in Southern Canada are exhausted, the North is increasingly regarded as a supplier of raw materials. Figure 4⁵ illustrates productive mines across Canada. Gold and silver mines are operative in the **Yukon** (1, 2); gold and diamond mines are active in the Northwest Territories (3, 4); and lead, silver, and zinc mines are present in **Nunavut** (5, 6). The majority of staples-extraction activities are foreign owned (Lipscomb, 1999, p. 87; **Yukon**, 2000). In a staple-dependent economy, the federal government supports natural

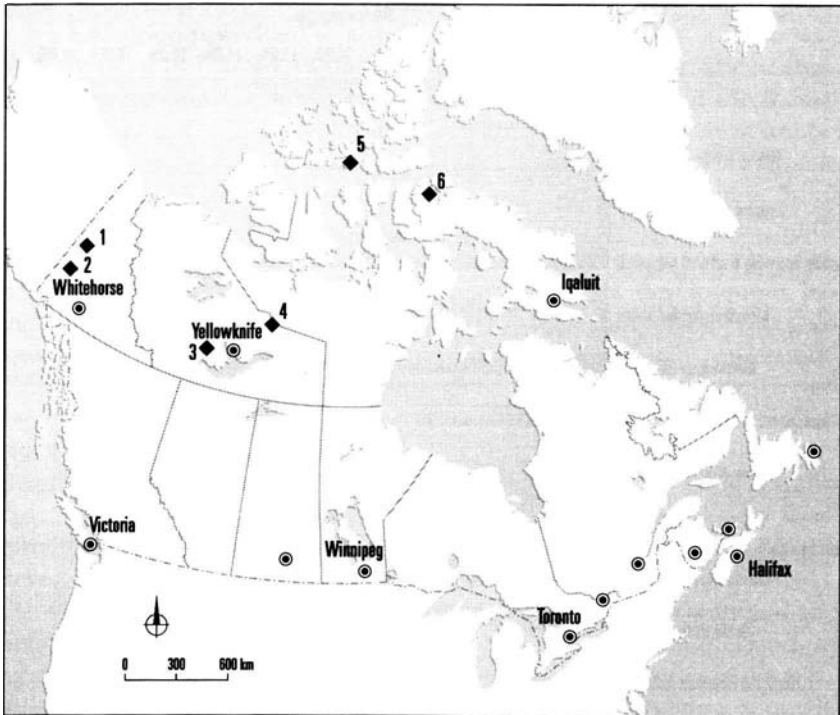
Figure 3



source: Statistics Canada, Provincial Gross Domestic Product by Industry (in 1992 prices), Catalogue No. 15-203, based on 1996 Census data.

resource extraction by corporations whilst seeking to maintain a comfortable level of welfare for its citizens. Government services for staples exploitation range from underwriting loans for private corporations to develop resource extraction activities to building infrastructure transportation networks such as roads and social infrastructure. The role of

Figure 4



government in supporting the unstable market variations of staples exports is articulated in the Yukon Economic *Review 1998, 1999*, p. 1:

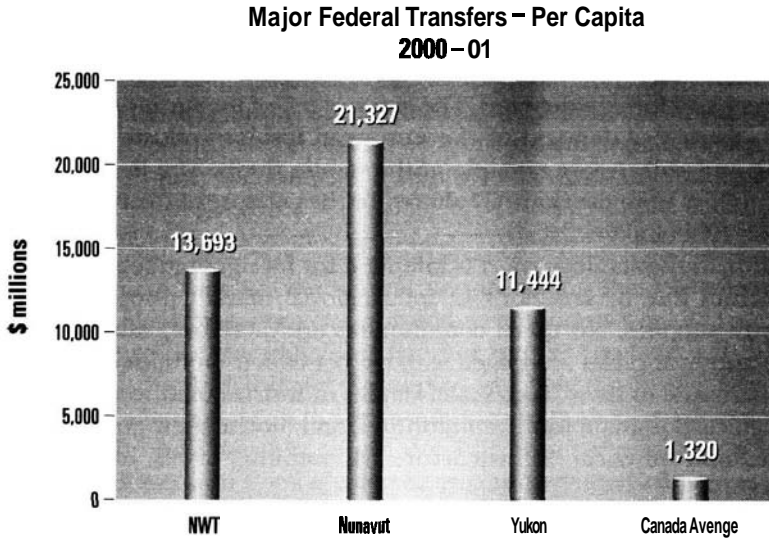
The closure of the Faro mine and falling mineral prices were the main factors causing the further contraction in mining and related industries and contributed to an out-migration of more than 1,400 people from the territory. The slump in the mining industry was alleviated by continued strong growth in tourism, government and related service sector industries.

In 2000–01, total federal government transfers will be \$1.5 billion to the three territories (Northwest Territories, \$578 million; Nunavut, \$588 million; and Yukon, \$342 million), which is small in comparison to the total of \$39 billion for remaining provinces. However, when federal transfers are represented on a per capita basis for the three territories in proportion to the Canadian average (Figure 5),⁶ it is clear that government transfers pay for territorial welfare whilst staples extraction takes place by large foreign corporations.

The staples thesis is particularly relevant in understanding the persistence of the view of the three territories as a frontier.

First, staple exports are financed primarily by foreign capital to serve foreign markets. The need to develop these staple exports requires the

Figure 5



Source: Reproduced with permission of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2000.

building of physical infrastructure such as roads or railway to gain access and support resource extraction. The federal government borrows from foreign lenders to build such infrastructure. The cost of building the physical infrastructure is ultimately paid for by the Canadian taxpayer. For example, the saying "all roads lead to Rome" is particularly germane to understanding the significance of staples development in linking the hinterland with the centre. This sentiment was reflected in Prime Minister Diefenbaker's policy of the Roads to Resources program in the late 1950s. The federal government undertook to finance the building of a road system linking Alberta to Fort Smith, Fort Simpson, Hay River, and Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. The aim of the road network was to enable Cominco to export lead and zinc from its Pine Point Mine to Southern markets (Dickerson, 1992, p. 66).

Second, as staples development requires a large initial input of capital investment followed by a long period of extraction, the foreign investor is able to exercise considerable leverage over the policies of the government. The government itself is guided by its own objectives such as job creation and re-election.

Third, due to the high capital requirements for staples extraction, larger foreign companies have greater advantage over smaller domestic firms. Smaller Canadian firms are unable to compete with large foreign companies in raising the funds necessary to undertake massive capital investments.

Fourth, as distribution of resources in Canada is uneven, there is regional concentration of staples industries. In other words, there are regions that have resources for exploitation and regions that do not. Staples development, therefore, is dependent primarily on the timing of discovery and foreign demand. The rise and fall of the fur industry based on the transitory demand of the European fashion industry is a compelling and sadly tragic example of the staples thesis. The livelihoods of communities were dramatically altered by the collapse of the fur industry (Porter, 1990; Kakfwi, 1985).

Fifth, as the staples export is intended for foreign markets, it reflects instabilities due to variations in international market prices and variability in supplies. Northern communities are therefore, subject to the boom and bust cycles associated with export of commodities.

Sixth, due to their large scale, staples industries tend to dwarf local economies, dominate local communities, and dictate their political, economic, and physical infrastructure (Lipscomb, 1999; Innis, 1995; Wright, 1993).

The result is a political structure that favours economic dependence on staples production. For example, the Klondike gold rush led to the signing of Treaty 8 in 1899, and Imperial Oil's discovery of oil led to the signing of Treaty 11 in 1921 (Usher, 1981). Government policy is geared to meet the needs of staples production. Similarly, the moratorium on oil and gas development activities resulting from the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline inquiry in 1977 enabled the process of land claims to be settled first so that natural resource extraction could proceed once again. Arguably, in each of these instances, recognition of Aboriginal rights and settlement of their claims was not primarily motivated by a sense of justice but by systemic dependence upon exploitation of non-renewable resources for sale to foreign markets.

The implications of staples development is that political and economic structures are oriented to further reinforce staples dependence. Domestic capital is drawn into the staples sector at the expense of building a locally sustainable economy because valuable human and capital resources are directed to staples development. Staples development leads to a trap in which the potential for economic diversification is severely limited. Staples dependence leads to underdevelopment in the long run because socioeconomic policies are not geared to sustainable development based on local needs. Ultimately, staples development removes cultural and economic leverage from the people who live within the region and places it firmly on foreign markets (Pretes, 1988).

Sarah Jerome, a Gwich'in leader from Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories, comments on the vagaries of the staples-oriented resource development and its implications for men in her community. Jerome's description of the collapse of the fur industry and the short-lived impact of exploration activities in the Mackenzie Delta are typical of staples

dependence. In each instance, the promise of staples development is replaced by the reality of the impacts on families and individuals. Communities are left with very few resources and many broken individuals in the wake of unstable staples development. Demand for staples production is controlled from outside the region where most of the benefits accrue. Whether it's the fur industry, oil and gas development, or mining, the result is much the same. The common thread is that the impact of development is short-lived with considerable social costs. Communities are left weakened by the boom and bust cycles of staples exploitation.

We went through a transitional period during the 1970s when the whole subsistence economy of the community went to a wage economy. The trapping lifestyle of the trappers was sort of being phased out and the wage economy was coming in and this is where a lot of women in the community who had the education and who had the time to get the jobs, who were willing to be trained, got into the wage economy, and they gradually became the breadwinners of the community. Which left our men sort of in limbo, there was no more trapping to be done, they didn't have the skills or the education to get into these job situations, so they were sort of just stuck.

I know that a lot of the men were not comfortable with that [changing gender roles], but they had no choice, so they automatically turned to the next thing they could think of, which was **drinking**, which created a lot of social problems within the community. But it wasn't their fault, because they didn't have the education, they didn't have the skills to go out there and get jobs. A lot of them had **skills** to go out [on the land] and work with the oil companies with the boom that they had in the **Beaufort Delta** region of exploration, gas exploration ... they were making a lot of money in a very short time frame. I remember being so afraid **thinking**, what are we going to do with these people when the oil boom is over and they're back, what are we going to do with them? (Kassam and Wuttunee, 1997, p. 58)

HOMELAND: APPREHENDING ANOTHER VISION

The reality of the three Canadian territories is beyond superficial characterizations seen through Southern eyes. Most important, there is a significant tension between the Southern approach to economic exploitation and the traditional indigenous economy. Below we will examine three aspects of life north of 60°: population, cultural pluralism, and the indigenous traditional economy. A key feature of the North is that diversity exists in the **population** structure, in the economic realm, and in the peoples that live there.

A. Population

Compared to the total population in Canada, Aboriginal peoples are a minority. In Canada's Northern territories, however, they range from a significant portion (Yukon, Northwest Territories) to a relative majority (Nunavut) of the population.

In Canada, as a proportion of the total population, the Aboriginal population is 2.8 percent. In Yukon, Aboriginal peoples comprise 20.1 percent of the total population; in the Northwest Territories, 48.2 percent; and in Nunavut, 83.7 percent. Aboriginal peoples in the territories have been calling this region of the Canadian North home for many thousands of years.

In addition to a strong presence in the territories, the population of Aboriginal peoples is growing. In the 1996 Census, Aboriginal youngsters represented 75 percent of all the children under the age of 15 in the Northwest and Nunavut Territories (Statistics Canada, 1998, p. 12). The proportion of Aboriginal population will grow in the next decades as these young people become adults, have their own families, and play a significant role in the life of Northern communities. In fact, the total population (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) tends to be young in all three territories compared to the Canadian average.

A youthful population carries with it a promise for the future as well as a legitimate demand for those education, social, and health services available to all Canadians and an expectation of employment opportunities. How these needs will be met is being currently debated amongst policymakers and communities in the North. For instance, the possibility of the construction of a gas pipeline in the Mackenzie Valley is currently being discussed by affected communities along the Mackenzie River. Discussion of impact on future generations, Aboriginal cultures, and the environment is very much at the forefront of the discussions. What distinguishes this debate from the one in the 1970s is that Aboriginal communities are now suggesting that they retain control of the pipeline such that its ownership not be entirely in the hands of distant or foreign companies (Chief Pierrot, 2000). Equity ownership of resource development initiatives by Northerners is a direct means of enabling environmental and economic sustainability in the territories. The youth in the territories are looked upon by Aboriginal elders to provide the leadership that will achieve development consistent with indigenous culture.

8. Cultural Pluralism

A strong Aboriginal demographic and a mainly youthful population is combined with a rich cultural diversity in the Northern territories of Canada. This diversity is manifested in the assertion of Aboriginal identity, through language and other means. For instance in 1996, almost three quarters of those who identified themselves as Inuit reported that they could conduct a conversation in Inuktitut (Statistics Canada, 1998, p.11). Inuktitut is itself

marked by a significant diversity of dialects and is representative of a language group. Some of the other language groups in the territories include **Chipewyan**, Cree, **Dogrib**, South Slave, **Kutchin-Gwich'in**, and Tliigit. Cultural pluralism is an attribute of the Canadian North.

There is an increasing self-confidence exercised by Aboriginal communities about their own culture and traditions, particularly as a result of assertion of Aboriginal rights and the settlement of comprehensive land-claim agreements in all three territories. The poem by **René Fumoleau** (below) about building bridges across cultures is particularly relevant to the diversity of the Canadian and circumpolar North. In a context where many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities live united by a common geography, pluralism is achieved through recognizing and respecting cultural diversity. Distinctiveness is a form of legitimacy. By recognition of the specificity of a people, community, or individual, a genuine bridge or relationship will be built for mutual benefit and support. Only after we accept diversity can we talk about what unites this diversity (Carrithers, 1992). In the Canadian Territories, cultural diversity is very much a part of Northern consciousness.

Bridge

A meeting in Yellowknife gathered Dene and whites
coming from a variety of races,
religions, political and economic systems.

Members of the dominant society
were preaching accommodation
to those who have already been
so accommodating for two hundred years:

We can all meet halfway ..."
We can find a middle ground ..."
We must all compromise at the centre ..."
"It's easy to start from a midway location ..."
Not new ideas for Benitra, a Dene elder:
'We've walked halfway long time ago,
and halfway again,
and halfway many more times.

Now I have a question for you:
Have you ever heard
of anybody building a bridge
by starting at the centre?"

René *Fumoleau*, 1997
Reprinted with permission.

Cultural diversity is not only present among the Aboriginal communities but also manifest amongst the non-Aboriginal Northerners. According to 1996 census data some of the other languages spoken in the Territories range from Italian to Tagalog. In addition to Aboriginal peoples and northern Europeans, people originating from eastern Europe, southern Asia, the Far East, and the Mediterranean also call the North their home.

C. Indigenous Ecology and Economy

The Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry under the leadership of Justice Thomas Berger in the latter half of the 1970s was a turning point in heightening Southern Canadians' awareness of Northern Aboriginal and environmental issues. The title of his report, *Northern Frontier; Northern Homeland: The Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (1977)*, illustrates the two competing visions of the Canadian territorial North. The result of the inquiry was a wider consciousness among all Canadians of Aboriginal concerns and a realization of the delicate ecological balance in this region.

The differences between conceptions of the North as frontier and as homeland are easily illustrated by the use of maps. Maps are a way of visualizing the land—at once representing a geographical area and the perspective or worldview of the map's creator. Figure 6 is a representation of the Mackenzie Valley in the Northwest Territories where the pipeline was proposed. In Figure 6, the Mackenzie Valley is empty space, barren, ready for exploration and resource extraction. Figure 7 is a hypothetical

Figure 6



Figure 7



map depicting the human ecology of the region. The symbols represent the diversity of life and cultures of people who live within the region. Human ecology describes the relationships between people and their habitat. It includes the relations among humans, other animals and plants, and their habitats. The figure portrays how indigenous people within a specific geographic region rely on the land and sea. The map contains ethnographic, historical, and current information on land- and marine-use patterns. A map may contain specific ecological knowledge as well as information on hunting, fishing, herding, plant species, trapping, forestry practices, migration patterns of wildlife, and location of sites that are sacred to indigenous communities. Traditional land- and marine-use mapping is not restricted solely to any one or all of these details (Kassam and Graham, 1999, p. 206). The struggle to define the Canadian North of the 1970s as either a resource frontier or an indigenous homeland was decided in part based on the ability of the peoples of the Mackenzie Valley to definitively map out their activities on the land. Based on the maps and testimonies produced during the inquiry, a 10-year moratorium was placed on staples exploitation of oil and gas through the Valley (Kassam and Maher, 2000).

In contrast to the Southern Canadian experience of regularly going shopping at a grocery store to purchase food that is cleaned, portioned, and wrapped, where the customer has no knowledge of, or connection to, the meat, fruits, or vegetables being purchased, in Northern communities people continue to retain a direct relationship with the web of life that sustains them. The surrounding wildlife is a key part of the life of Northern communities. People hunt, fish, and gather living resources from the land and sea. Notwithstanding the intrusive and disruptive political, social, and economic changes caused by colonization, forced settlement, and industrial development, the indigenous economy has proven a resilient way of life. It continues to be a viable source of living. In fact, the indigenous economy makes an essential contribution to the welfare of Northern peoples (Usher, 1981; Cox, 1985; Kakfwi, 1985; Porter, 1990).

Considerable evidence from all three of the territories indicates that the fruits of the land and sea contribute not only to the physical welfare of Northerners but also to their psychological well-being and sense of community spirit (Condon et al., 1995; Wein and Freeman, 1995; Wein et al., 1996; Collings et al., 1998). The psychological effects of indigenous hunting activities indicate a continuum of community tradition that spans thousands of years. It heals the rupture caused by drastic social change, making the past relevant to the present. Traditional harvesting of marine mammals, terrestrial mammals, fish, and plants are at once a manifestation and the defining means for retaining a connection to the land and indigenous history. Likewise, the subsequent sharing of country foods is both a formal and informal mechanism of maintaining the integrity of the community and its identity. For example Photo 17

illustrates seal flensing in the Inuit community of **Holman**, Victoria Island, Northwest Territories. In June the community celebrates its traditions by displaying skills associated with traditional harvesting activities. Other communities from the surrounding area also participate.

Similarly, other indigenous communities across the circumpolar North celebrate their traditions through sharing of foods harvested from the land and sea. For example, the Inupiat community of Wainwright, Alaska, celebrates a successful whale harvest and the cooperative effort required to hunt a large marine mammal such as a bowhead whale through a community feast, *nalukataq*. Community members gather to share food, dance, and celebrate.

Various estimates have been made of the economic value as food of the many animals and plant species harvested. For instance, in 1990, the food value of Barren Ground caribou was estimated at \$27.6 million for the Northwest Territories (Ashley, 1998). In 1999, it was estimated that



the replacement food value for caribou, seal, and three species of fish (Arctic char, lake trout, and whitefish) for Nunavut was over \$25.6 million (Nunavut Wildlife Harvest Survey, 1999). The various techniques for measurement of food values are open to debate, but the point is clear—wildlife is fundamental to the physical health and the economic welfare of Northern Aboriginal peoples. Furthermore, the harvesting of the fruits the land and sea are intimately linked to the spiritual and cultural well-being of Northern communities.

Indigenous use of the fruits of the land and sea has withstood the test of time, **revealing** sustainable use of renewable resources. Even today in a wage economy supported by staples exploitation, indigenous utilization of renewable resources results **from** a time-tested relationship with the natural environment. For example, the seasonal profile of the community of **Holman**, Northwest Territories, expresses this relationship. The seasonal round shows the activities of the community in a calendar year based on the rhythms of nature and the resources found in the region (**Kassam**, 2000, p. 28). It is a conception of time that is cyclical rather than linear. Figure 8 illustrates the human ecology of **Holman** in terms of sustainable harvest of marine and terrestrial mammals, fish, birds, and plants. The shaded areas indicate the length of the yearly harvest season and its intensity (**Kassam**, 2000).

Seasonal representation of sustainable harvesting of diverse food resources in **Holman** is an example of similar harvesting cycles found in other Arctic and **sub-Arctic** communities across the circumpolar North.

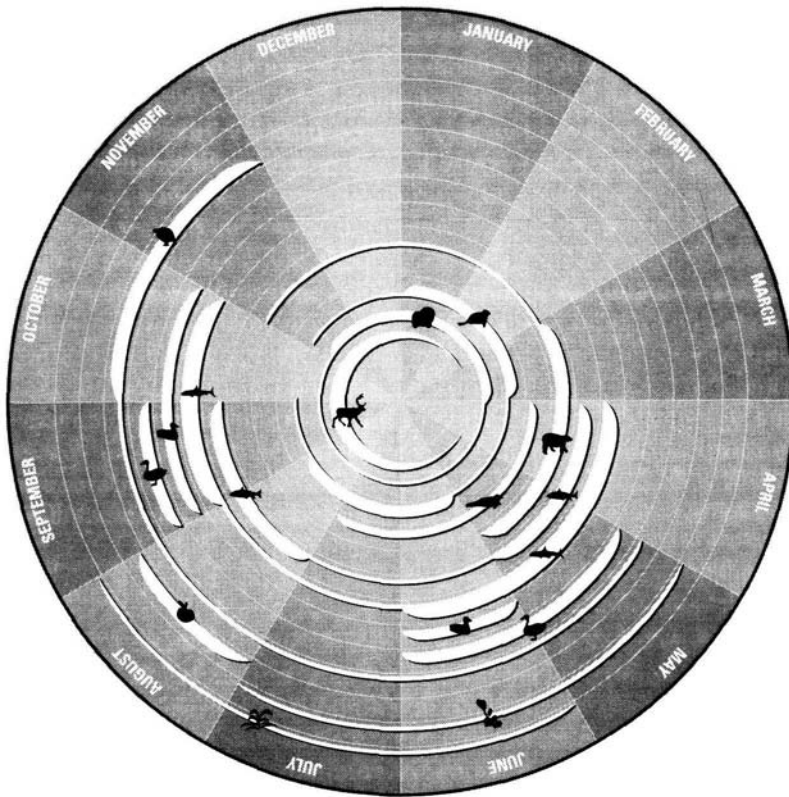
A Circumpolar Perspective

Canada shares its geography—the Arctic (tundra) and **sub-Arctic** (taiga)—with other circumpolar nations. The boreal forest encircles the North as a protective skin. This unity of geography is matched by the diversity of indigenous people, who have been living on these lands for thousands of years.

At the dawn of the **21st** century, key events force a reexamination of Canada's role in a circumpolar context. The collapse of the Soviet Empire has had significant global implications. Whilst Russia remakes itself, important energies have been released on both sides of the great divide known as the "iron curtain." Mutual belligerence is no longer the primary objective. Valuable national resources may be utilized in other ways.

The collapse of the Soviet Empire has been accompanied by rhetoric of increasing globalization. The decline of communism is self-validating and has been touted as a victory for the market system (Goldsmith, 1996; Korten, 1996). However, staples development in the Canadian North warns of an unstable future based on international markets for finite raw materials and foreign ownership of the means of production. Globalization is not a new concept. Its roots in the Canadian North go at least as far back as first contact and the search for the Northwest Passage.

Figure 8



- | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|----------------------------|
|  | 1. Caribou |  | 8. Canada Goose |
|  | 2. Muskox |  | 9. Eider |
|  | 3. Ringed Seal |  | 10. Ptarmigan |
|  | 4. Bearded Seal |  | 11. Banies |
|  | 5. Polar Bear |  | 12. Wild Rhubarb |
|  | 6. Arctic Char |  | 13. Eskimo Patatoes |
|  | 7. Lake Trout | | |

In its early manifestations, globalization is synonymous with colonization. These first attempts at globalization brought about critical changes with tragic consequences for the lives of indigenous peoples. In a similar manner, the nation as it has developed in the 19th and 20th centuries is undergoing dramatic changes. Economic liberalism, international trade agreements, and the emergence of economic unions are significantly limiting the socioeconomic independence of the individual nation-state. In many respects, the powers of the nation are withering in comparison

to supranational economic structures (Kassam, 1997). In the Canadian North, the persistence of the indigenous economy based on sustainable harvesting of fruits of the land and sea has moderated the vagaries of staples development. In Russia de-industrialization is taking place, and Northern indigenous communities of that country are relying primarily on hunting and fishing for their survival (Robinson and Kassam, 1998; Kassam and Avdeeva, 1997). After several decades of industrial development, it is hunting and fishing activities that literally put food on the tables of Northern families. Government services and industrial development provide little if any hope for survival. In such a context, communities have a significant role to play not only in terms of basic survival but also cultural survival. Communities maintain the fabric of society. A circumpolar perspective enables interaction with similar communities across the circumpolar north. If globalization is indeed inevitable, as its proponents claim, then it must carry with it the seed of pluralism, which still characterizes the Canadian and circumpolar North.

The Canadian federal government recognizes the opportunities afforded by pluralism. At a Canada-EU (European Union) seminar on Circumpolar Co-operation and the Northern Dimension, Lloyd Axworthy, Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs, describes the government's objectives for circumpolar collaboration: "There are also exciting new possibilities for partnership with other countries of the North, particularly Russia and the Baltic States; as well as with the various communities within the North, especially Indigenous peoples" (Axworthy, 1999, p. 62).

DISCUSSION

The tension between **frontier** and homeland will continue to manifest itself in the Canadian context. In Canada the notion of the North as both homeland and frontier **co-exist**. The North as homeland has withstood the test of time and contains the seed of cultural pluralism. The North as **frontier** is motivated by the promise of wealth and is short sighted. Other circumpolar regions such as Russia and Alaska also display a similar dual conception of their Northern territories. During recent efforts to build a pipeline along the Mackenzie Valley, some leaders in the oil and gas industry referred to the proposed initiative as the "**frontier**" pipeline. The discussions on development in the territorial North will be framed by a delicate balance between staples development of non-renewable resources and sustainability of indigenous livelihoods. Northern Aboriginal people will deservedly play a significant and decisive role in this debate.

The historic significance of an indigenous economy accompanied by the presence of cultural diversity in Northern peoples is and will continue to be a key feature of Northern Canadian identity. Moreover, the increasing role of Canada as a member of a community of circumpolar nations is a challenge that can be creatively turned into an opportunity

for collaboration and a **meaningful** articulation of Canadian identity. Circumpolar trade can also take the form of ideas and mutually **agreed-upon** approaches to solving common problems rather than simply the exchange of raw materials. It is likely through linkages with communities across the circumpolar world that the tension between homeland and frontier will be resolved, and Canadians will recognize the reality of the North as a homeland.

NOTES

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2. Arguably the North also includes Northern portions of provinces. Much of what is discussed regarding the three Canadian territories in this paper may also be applied to the provincial North.
3. Adapted from Robert M. Bone, *The Geography of the Canadian North: Issues and Challenges* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 5; Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, "Canada Indian and Inuit Communities and Languages," *The National Atlas of Canada*, 5th edition (Ottawa, ON: Surveys and Mapping Branch, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, 1980).
4. Adapted from Robert M. Bone, *The Geography of the Canadian North: Issues and Challenges* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 10.
5. Adapted from Natural Resources Canada, <<http://mmsdl.mms.nrcan.gc.ca/maps>>, May 23, 2000.
6. Adapted from Finance Canada, <<http://www.fin.gc.ca/FEDPROVE/ftpe.html>>, May 1, 2000.
7. Photograph by **Karim-Aly Kassam**.

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