

# The Northern Review

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# A Portrait of the Social Economy in Northern Canada

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*Chris Southcott & Valoree Walker*

**Abstract:** Northern communities are currently facing many social and economic challenges. The non-profit, voluntary, and co-operative organizations involved in the social economy sector assist communities with these challenges by empowering them through the development of social and human capital. This article is part of an initial evaluation of the potential of the social economy to assist northern communities to deal with these challenges and develop this capacity. It offers an initial description of the state of the social economy in Canada's North through an examination of the results of a census of these organizations and a subsequent survey. The analysis shows that social economy organizations are particularly important to northern communities: they are more numerous and have more of an economic importance than in other regions of Canada. At the same time, these organizations are facing several important challenges that affect their ability to assist these communities such as a lack of funding, finding volunteers, retaining paid staff, and training.

Canada's North has undergone tremendous social, cultural, and economic change over the past sixty years. The two main types of communities in the North—small Indigenous communities and small non-Indigenous resource dependent communities—have gone through processes of development quite different from most other communities in Canada. These processes have resulted in many unique challenges. These challenges now require new approaches that assist these communities to ensure healthier and sustainable futures.

One of these new approaches is that of the social economy. The term social economy refers to those non-governmental enterprises and organizations that use the tools and some of the methods of business, on a not-for-profit basis, to provide social, cultural, economic, health, and other services to communities. It is an approach that seeks to empower communities by developing social capital—the ability to use social relations to mobilize communities—and

# The State and the Northern Social Economy: Research Prospects

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*Frances Abele*

**Abstract:** This article describes an initial approach to understanding the northern social economy in light of historical changes in the role of the state and in the overall northern economy. Focus on the social economy promises an analysis of northern development that avoids sterile dualisms (such as “traditional” contrasted with “modern”) that have haunted the discussion of the northern development policy for many years. It might also provide a basis for realistic northern development planning that is respectful of Indigenous communities’ way of life. This article offers a very early explanation, in three linked sections, of the elements of what I hope will be a new and more complete analysis of northern development in Canada. It is a discussion of research prospects and very early findings. These include a discussion of the importance of the enduring and resilient mixed economy of predominantly Indigenous communities, and the historical changes in the way federal and other government policies take this economy into account.

Two great historical processes have shaped what we now call the northern social economy. The first is the evolution of northern Indigenous societies that began in their encounter with religious and trading emissaries of the emerging capitalist societies of Europe as the latter roamed and colonized the planet to create, eventually, a world economy. The second is the advent and then the changing form and practices of the multi-level Canadian state, itself a product of European colonialism, and equally subject to changes in the global political economy.

In this article I use a selective literature review to isolate some particular empirical questions and interpretive challenges related to understanding the evolving northern social economy in light of historical changes in the role of the state and in the overall northern economy.<sup>1</sup> My goal is to show how such an analysis has the potential to generate an understanding of northern development that allows us to see past the sterile dualisms<sup>2</sup> that have

# What Has Been Learned Should be Studied and Passed On: Why the Northern Co-operative Experience Needs to be Considered More Seriously

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*Ian MacPherson*

**Abstract:** Since their beginnings fifty years ago, co-operatives have become a common institutional form in the Arctic regions, existing in virtually all communities. This article outlines the extent and nature of the northern co-operative movement. It briefly reviews some aspects of its history and discusses the varied economic and cultural roles co-operatives play in northern communities. It shows that they evolved generally within a form of partnership between northerners and southerners and displayed remarkable entrepreneurial capacities on both local and regional levels. The article argues that co-operatives have been and are a successful form of northern enterprise, though they have encountered many adversities over the years. They have contributed significantly to the financial, human, and social capital of the region. They have involved a steadily growing number of Indigenous people as employees, managers, and directors. The article questions why, in the discussions of future economic and social development in the northern regions, more attention is not paid to the possibilities that the co-operative model offers, given what co-operatives have accomplished in the past and are accomplishing in the present. It calls upon researchers, within and outside the academy, to take more seriously the roles co-operatives have played within communities and across the northern regions.

Co-operatives (co-ops) can be found in virtually all of the Inuit and Inuvialuit as well as some of the Dene and Innu communities of Canada's northern regions. After governments, they are the largest employer in the Canadian North, a position they have held for many years.<sup>1</sup> They are significant community-based economic engines that provide numerous services. In Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet), for example, the Toonoonik Sahoornik co-op operates no less than fourteen kinds of businesses, including a store, an Inns

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

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*David C. Natcher*

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

## **Introduction**

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

# The Social Economy and a Special Event: Community Involvement in the Whitehorse 2007 Canada Winter Games

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*Margaret Johnston & G. David Twynam*

**Abstract:** This article is premised on the idea that our understanding of the social economy can be developed through an examination of community engagement in a special sporting event. It explores the extent to which hosting a special event in Whitehorse, Yukon provided involvement opportunities for community members, and it explores the related outcomes for individuals and the community. The particular nature and attributes of Whitehorse as a northern community and the nature of the event—the Canada Winter Games—set the context for how the community and its members engaged with the event. The research explored involvement with the event in order to come to an understanding of specific outcomes in Whitehorse, and in relation to special events in the social economy more generally. Findings indicate increasingly positive assessments of the Games' impacts and resident involvement in the event through support, attendance, and volunteering. The highest-ranked motivations for volunteering suggest a strong connection to the event, linked in with the opportunity to contribute to the wider community goals of hosting the event. The findings of the study reiterate the importance of considering the local context of the social economy when exploring its expression through a special event. The basis for this article is a longitudinal research project that includes surveys, focus groups, and interviews in the community, with an emphasis on event volunteers.

## **Introduction: The Social Economy and Special Events**

Special sporting events have become a key component of the economic development plans of many Canadian communities, particularly in the interests of diversifying the local and regional tourism industry. Events are held for a variety of reasons, including celebration of culture and landscape, creating awareness of a region or activity, enabling competition, and encouraging interaction among participants of all types. Ranging in scale from local tournaments to international elite competitions, special sporting

# Statistical Information Pertaining to Socio-Economic Conditions of Northern Aboriginal People in Canada: Sources and Limitations

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*Senada Delic*

**Abstract:** With all the recent demographic, environmental, and other changes occurring in the circumpolar region of Canada, empirical investigations of the socio-economic well-being of northern Aboriginal people are becoming increasingly important to policy-makers, yet increasingly challenging to quantitative researchers. This is because systematically generated, comparable statistical data on this segment of the Canadian population have historically been inadequate, if available at all. This article identifies and assesses the quality of the existing major sources of statistical information available to researchers investigating socio-economic issues and needs in the context of northern Aboriginal communities. While a number of data sources are mentioned, the article centres primarily on the evaluation of Canadian censuses and post-censal surveys such as the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) and the related Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic (SLiCA). These data sources are the most comprehensive in the sense that they contain rich information on the surveyed population's engagement in both traditional and non-traditional economic activities, as well as on a range of other social indicators. After highlighting the relative strengths of each data source, the article makes a number of cautionary notes on their limitations when defining analytical samples and when comparing research results across time as well as between and within different Aboriginal groups. These cautions merit careful attention from researchers and policy-makers addressing specific issues and needs of the diverse sub-groups of the Aboriginal population in northern Canada. Even on the national level, there is a growing consensus on the ineffectiveness of generic policies aimed at alleviating the socio-economic burden of Aboriginal Canadians.

# Siida and Traditional Sámi Reindeer Herding Knowledge

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*Mikkel Nils Sara*

**Abstract:** The siida is a Sámi local community that has existed from time immemorial. The reindeer herding siida has formed as an adaptation of ancient siida principles to large-scale nomadic reindeer herding. It is the prerequisite and basic organizational unit for carrying out large-scale herding. Still, the siida had not, until recently, been legally acknowledged by Norwegian national authorities. Instead, the authorities maintained their own construction of reindeer herding districts, and an outsider's representation of Sámi reindeer herding. The siida, and its use of traditional herding knowledge, has on the other hand been living its own life alongside, and often in conflict with, official accounts and decisions. Some aspects of traditional Sámi reindeer herding knowledge can be held to correspond with scientific knowledge; others differ from it or go beyond the subject area with which western scientific knowledge has been occupied. However, all these aspects concern the siida members' efforts to continuously form and realize an acting siida. In 2007 the Norwegian parliament passed the new Reindeer Herding Act acknowledging siida as the basic institution regarding land rights, organization, and daily herding management. The recently achieved legal acknowledgement of siida in Norway must result in recognition of its autonomous processes of knowledge as well as recognition of its land rights. This article discusses the question of what this acknowledgement of siida's autonomous processes of knowledge means.

## **Introduction**

The Sámis have practised reindeer herding from time immemorial. In old times, semi-nomadic local communities had their own territory and governed the use and allocation of natural resources and central aspects of societal issues. These communities have been categorized as Sámi hunting siidas, although small-scale reindeer herding was a part of the resource base (Tanner 1929, Solem 1933, Tegengren 1952, Vorren and Manker 1976). The development of large-scale reindeer herding started more than 400 years

# Re-appraising Canada's Northern "Internal Colonies"

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*Andrew P. Hodgkins*

**Abstract:** This article examines application of the term "internal colonialism" to Canada's northern territories by comparing two general theories commonly used in the development literature: dependency theories of development and post-developmentalism. These theories employ different assumptions regarding causes for regional underdevelopment, and consequently arrive at different conclusions. While the former takes trade as its starting point of analysis, the latter has been used to focus on local forms of development, culture, and identity. The article begins by outlining both theories in relation to internal colonialism and follows the paradigmatic shift from the Marxian employment of the term to the postmodern turn in the social sciences. Drawing upon historical and contemporary events occurring in the North, the comparison provides an opportunity to make conjectures that class divisions are forming in the post-colonial aftermath of land claims, self-government, and devolution of power and control over resource revenues generated from megaproject developments.

## **Introduction**

In the Arctic social science literature it is common to refer to Canada's North—that is, those territories located north of the sixtieth parallel—as internal colonies (e.g., Christensen & Grant, 2007; Dacks, 1981; McLean, 1997; Watkins, 1977) or federal fiscal colonies (Banta, 2006). These terms refer to the political and economic control of the region by non-Indigenous governments for purposes of profiteering from resource extraction, with little socio-economic benefit accruing to the Indigenous peoples of the region. However, given its popular application in the discourse of northern development, the use of the term "internal colony" has been criticized for being disconnected from the various theoretical paradigms that have been used to frame its meaning, and for being generically applied without regard for regional differences in mode of production (Hicks, 2004; Poelzer & Summerville, 2005; Wolf, 1982).

# Nunavut, the Unfulfilled Dream: The Arduous Path Towards Socio-Economic Autonomy

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*André Légaré*

**Abstract:** On 1 April 2009, the Nunavut Territory celebrated its tenth anniversary. Born in 1999, the government of Nunavut was the result of more than twenty years of negotiations between Inuit officials and the government of Canada. One of the goals of the “Nunavut Project,” first submitted for negotiations in February 1976, was to empower the Inuit of the Canadian Central and Eastern Arctic with the necessary political tools to better cope with their contemporary socio-economic challenges. These challenges were well described in a statement of priorities, known as the *Bathurst Mandate*, first put forward by the government of Nunavut a few months after its inception (October 1999). The *Bathurst Mandate* exposes the socio-economic goals and visions of the new government over a twenty year period (2000–2020). The author attempts to gauge the success, to this point, of the government’s vision as reflected in the *Bathurst Mandate*, in light of recent socio-economic realities in Nunavut. The author concludes that, in view of the current socio-economic situation, it is unlikely that the vision of a viable socio-economic environment expressed in the *Bathurst Mandate* will be reached by the year 2020. In the end, though, it is understood that the government of Nunavut is still in its infancy and the jury, at this juncture, is still out on the overall success of the “Nunavut Project.”

On 25 May 1993, Inuit representatives and Canadian government officials signed the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement<sup>1</sup> (NLCA) that carved out the Nunavut Territory from the Northwest Territories (NWT). After several years of planning, the Nunavut Territory,<sup>2</sup> with its own government, was formally established on 1 April 1999. The Nunavut Territory is the largest political unit in Canada covering an area of 2,121,103 km<sup>2</sup>, one-fifth of the Canadian land mass (see figure 1). Today (2006 Census), Nunavut has a