

AN ASSESSMENT OF RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NUNAVUT: THE CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS OF INUIT SELF-GOVERNMENT

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Abstract / Résumé

On April 1, 1999, the Nunavut Territory will be officially proclaimed. This paper presents a prospective analysis of the future legislative and administrative structures of the government of Nunavut and its financing. What kinds of political structures will Nunavut inherit in 1999? The author examines some of the political challenges and dilemmas generated by the emergence of Nunavut, and the reasons which motivated the federal government to establish this new political unit in Canada's north.

Le 1er avril 1999, le gouvernement territorial du Nunavut sera instauré. Cet article présente une analyse prospective des structures législatives et administratives du Nunavut et de son mode de financement. Quelles seront les structures politiques du Nunavut est la question centrale du présent article. De plus, l'auteur examine les défis et les dilemmes qui seront au coeur de l'échiquier politique du Nunavut. Enfin, il s'agit de découvrir les raisons qui motivèrent le gouvernement fédéral à créer cette nouvelle entité politique dans le Nord canadien.

Introduction

On April 1, 1999, the Nunavut¹ Territory and government will be officially proclaimed. It will then become the most recent member of the Canadian federation. The Nunavut Territory will be the largest political unit of Canada covering one-fifth of the Canadian land mass i.e., 2,121,102 km² (Figure 1). In fact, the boundaries of Nunavut are largely inspired by traditional Inuit land use and occupancy in the central and eastern Canadian Arctic.² Nevertheless, this vast geographic area is sparsely inhabited by only 24,000 Nunavummiut,³ a majority of whom are Inuit (85 percent). Nunavut's tiny population is scattered among 27 far-flung communities with great distances in between; Iqaluit the future capital is the largest community with only 4000 people.

According to the *Nunavut Act* (Canada 1993), which received Canadian Parliamentary approval on June 10, 1993, the Nunavut territorial government (NTG) will possess the same political powers than those held by the present government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), and will also be a non-ethnic public jurisdiction. However, since the Inuit compose the population majority in the central and eastern Northwest Territories, Nunavut will become a "de facto" Inuit self-government. Thus, it should better respond to the needs and concerns of Inuit than the present GNWT.⁴

The creation of the Nunavut Territory requires a reshuffling of the Northwest Territories (NWT) borders. However, this situation should not be seen as unique. In fact, the NWT borders have shifted numerous times in the past to create other provincial or territorial jurisdictions in Canada e.g., Manitoba (1870), Yukon (1898), Alberta and Saskatchewan (1905).

This paper intends first to present a brief history of the events which led to the idea of dividing the NWT and creating the Nunavut Territory. The article also proposes to look at the role of the Nunavut Implementation Commission. However, the main objective of the paper consists in a prospective analysis of the future legislative and administrative structures of the government of Nunavut and its financing. In fact, the question is to find out what kinds of political structure arrangements the government of Nunavut will inherit in 1999? Finally, the author examines some of the political challenges and dilemmas generated by the emergence of Nunavut, and the reasons which motivated the federal government to establish this new political unit in Canada's North.

To answer the objectives posed by this paper, sources were gathered in part from two comprehensive reports entitled *Footprints in New Snow* (NIC, 1995) and *Footprints 2* (NIC, 1996). Both reports were published by the Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC), whose task is to provide advise on matters pertaining to the settling up of the Nunavut government.

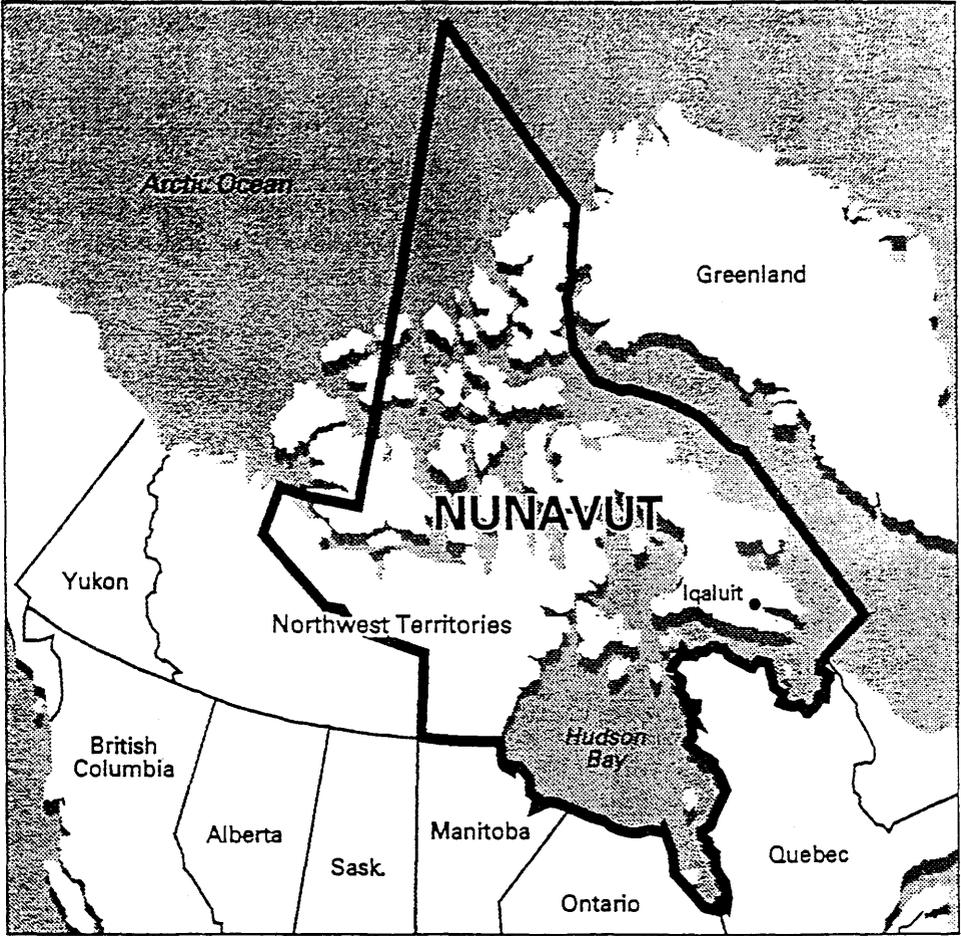


Figure 1: The Nunavut Territory

Source: adapted from NIC, 1994b: i

The Issue of Dividing the Northwest Territories

The establishment of the Nunavut Territory in the central and eastern Canadian Arctic is the result of twenty years of arduous negotiations between Inuit organizations, such as Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) and Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN), and territorial and federal governments. The idea of creating Nunavut was first exposed in the document *Nunavut: a proposal for the settlement of Inuit lands in the Northwest Territories* (ITC, 1976) put forward in February 1976 by ITC, the organization representing the Canadian Inuit, as part of the federal policy on Native comprehensive land claims (DIAND, 1973).⁵ In its document ITC asked the federal government to create a new political unit that would be carved out from the present NWT: "In brief, the basic idea is to create a Territory, the vast majority of people within which, will be Inuit. As such, this Territory and its institutions will better reflect Inuit values and perspectives than with the present Northwest Territories" (ITC, 1976:15).

Subsequent land claims proposals⁶ drafted by ITC (ITC, 1977, 1979) reiterated the Inuit position on the creation of an Inuit-controlled political unit in the Canadian North. The reasons behind the Inuit desire, in the 1970s, to push for their own political entity were threefold. First, was the absence of any land cession treaty with the Canadian government. Second, the Inuit constitute a demographic and cultural majority in the central and eastern Arctic of the Northwest Territories. Third, the Inuit desires to control their own political, social, and economic agendas. However, the federal government having to deal, at the end of the 1970s, with strong autonomist ideas originating from Quebec was not interested in creating a second political unit whose majority population would be distinct from the anglophone majority in Canada. Paradoxically, it would be the political initiatives coming from the GNWT, in the 1980s, which would ultimately force Ottawa's hands in negotiating the division of the NWT and in creating the Nunavut Territory.

Following the November 1979 election, the ninth NWT Legislative Assembly opened its first session with new members, a majority of whom for the first time were Natives.⁷ To settle the controversial idea of dividing the NWT and to survey the feelings of the population on this issue, the Assembly decided to create a Special Unity Committee. In its final report (GNWT, 1980), introduced to the Assembly in October 1980, the Committee concluded that there was no consensus among the residents of the NWT on the issue of unity and that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal citizens of the NWT had expressed favorably the idea of dividing the NWT. Taking into account the recommendations of the report, a majority of members of the Legislative Assembly voted in favour of dividing the NWT and decided to submit this question to the population through a territory-wide plebiscite.

The April 1982 plebiscite resulted in a small majority (56 per cent) favoring the idea of dividing the NWT and creating Nunavut.⁸

The federal government which had until then been reluctant to ascertain the idea of creating the Nunavut Territory recognized the legitimacy of the plebiscite. In November 1982, the then Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, John Munro, announced that Ottawa would implement the decisions of the residents of the NWT and create Nunavut. However, Ottawa identified three pre-conditions before division could be implemented. The first was a settlement of the Inuit land claims. The second was the establishment of a boundary line that would divide the NWT in two parts—to the East Nunavut, to the West the remainder of the Northwest Territories. The third involved concluding a political accord which would define the basic structural arrangements of the future Nunavut territorial government.

The Nunavut Land Claims Settlement

At the beginning of the 1980s, the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN),⁹ representing the Inuit of the NWT, had the task of reaching, with the federal government, a land claims agreement. After ten years of intense negotiations between TFN representatives and those of the federal government, a land claims agreement-in-principle was signed in April 1990 (DIAND, 1991).¹⁰ Article 4 of the agreement-in-principle supported the creation of the Nunavut Territory and government. Further the document stated that such an objective should be reached through a distinct negotiation process:

Consistent with their long-standing positions, the Government of Canada, the Territorial Government and the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut support in principle the creation of the Nunavut Territory, (...). The Territorial Government and TFN undertake to develop, within six months of the Final Agreement, a process for giving effect to Section 4.1.1. (...), the process shall include a territory-wide plebiscite on a boundary for division,... (DIAND, TFN, 1991:Art.4.1.1, 4.1.2).

In December 1991, the Nunavut Final Land Claims Agreement (DIAND, TFN, 1993) was signed between TFN representatives and federal authorities. The main objective of the Agreement was to settle Inuit land claims in the NWT,¹¹ but the document also reiterated the need to establish a new territorial government in the central and eastern Canadian Arctic: "The Government of Canada will recommend to Parliament, as a government measure, legislation to establish within a defined time period, a new Nunavut Territory, with its own Legislative Assembly and public government, separate from the Government of the remainder of the Northwest Territories" (DIAND, TFN, 1993:Art.4.1.1).

The Boundary Line Dispute

Before a political accord could be concluded on the creation of Nunavut the conflicting boundary line issue remained to be settled. Where to put a line, which would serve to divide the NWT in two parts, was a dominant question throughout the 1980s. The Constitutional Alliance composed of MLAs, Dene Indians, Métis and Inuit representatives, founded in July 1982 had the challenging task of proposing a boundary line that would make possible consensus among all Aboriginal groups i.e., the Dene-Métis of the MacKenzie valley and the Inuit of the eastern Arctic. However, after five years of intense negotiations Dene and Inuit representatives were not able to find a compromise boundary that would please both groups. The heart of the problem lay in the ongoing harvesting activities of both groups around Contwoyo lake and Thelon Game Sanctuary areas. Both groups argued that these areas should be on their side of the border. Having failed to settle the boundary issue the Constitutional Alliance was disbanded in July 1987.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the expected conclusion of a final land claims agreement with the Inuit of the NWT forced Ottawa to act on the question of the boundary dispute. Negotiations on this issue had stalled for the past three years. To bring about a solution to this dilemma the GNWT and TFN asked federal authorities to intervene in the debate and to propose a compromise boundary line. Such a demand was made through a letter addressed on January 20, 1990, to the Canadian Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, by the GNWT Premier and TFN President. In the letter the Inuit threaten not to ratify any land claims deal with Ottawa unless the federal government committed itself to the creation of a Nunavut Territory and therefore to settle the boundary dispute:

...Inuit leaders believe strongly that the ratification of the Nunavut land claims by Inuit is likely only if there is a commitment to the creation of a Nunavut Territory and Government. In response to these considerations, we are proposing that Canada agree to introduce legislation to Parliament creating a Nunavut Territory on or before the time the Nunavut land claims ratification legislation is expected to be introduced (GNWT, TFN, 1990).

In April 1990, acquiescing to the political pressures of the GNWT and TFN, Ottawa designated the ex-Commissioner of the NWT, John Parker, with the arduous mandate to solve the boundary imbroglio. After consulting with all parties, Inuit and Dene-Métis, Parker recommended, in April 1991, a compromised boundary line that would serve to divide in two halves the NWT. The "Parker Boundary Line" was later approved (May 1992) in a

territory-wide plebiscite by a majority of NWT residents (54 per cent voted in favor).¹²

The Nunavut Political Accord

The signature of the Nunavut Final Land Claims Agreement in December 1991 combined with the approval, in May 1992, of the "Parker Boundary Line" opened up the possibility to fulfil the last remaining pre-condition established by the federal government in November 1982 i.e., the conclusion of a political accord.

Representatives from TFN and both federal and territorial governments started discussions on drafting a political accord in April 1992. The parties concluded an accord on October 30, 1992.¹³ The Nunavut Political Accord (Canada, TFN, GNWT, 1992) became a federal Act (*Nunavut Act*) on June 10, 1993 (Canada, 1993). The *Nunavut Act* states that powers of the Nunavut Legislative Assembly and the administrative capacity of the future Nunavut government should be generally consistent with those in the present Northwest Territories. In addition, the Act establishes the date of the inauguration of the Nunavut Territory as of April 1, 1999, and has provision (Canada, 1993:Part III) for the creation of a commission (Nunavut Implementation Commission) whose mandate would be to provide advice to all parties (i.e., GNWT, TFN, federal government) on the design of the Nunavut public sector and its Legislative Assembly.

The Nunavut Implementation Commission

In December 1993, six months after the enactment of the *Nunavut Act*, a ten-member commission, known as the "Nunavut Implementation Commission", was established. The Commission's mandate is to put forward recommendations regarding the design of Nunavut's administrative and political structures. However, the decisions to implement these recommendations will solely rest in the hands of the federal government (Canada, 1993:Art.58).

The Commission's members were appointed by the federal government from a list of nominees submitted by the GNWT, DIAND, and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc (NTI).¹⁴ Each of these actors nominated three members to the Commission. The Chairman of the Commission, John Amagoalik, was selected by the consensus of all parties.¹⁵ Twenty office workers help the Commission in its functions. The total annual costs of the NIC, whose operations will last until July 1999, amounts to \$3 million. These sums are to be paid out by the Canadian government. The NIC is a public institution which answers to the interests of all Nunavummiut.

At their first assembly in January 1994 in Iqaluit, the commissioners drafted a discussion paper regarding the design and operations of the future Nunavut Territorial Government (NTG) (NIC, 1994a). The document was then circulated among Nunavummiut so as to emerge discussion on subjects pertaining to: the administrative structure of Nunavut, the composition of its Legislative Assembly, and the training of future Nunavummiut civil servants.

Equipped with their first discussion paper, the Commission started, in September 1994, a five-month consultation tour of all 27 communities in Nunavut. The commissioners met with regional and local councils, they visited schools and held public forums, they also fielded questions on open-line radio shows. The purpose of this exercise was to inform the public on the content of the discussion paper and to tap Nunavummiut opinions concerning the arrangement of administrative and political structures in Nunavut. In all a total of 2600 citizens, mainly Inuit, participated in 62 meetings held throughout Nunavut between September 1994 and January 1995. The whole process culminated with a public conference, held in Iqaluit in February 1995, which brought together about one hundred delegates from all parts of Nunavut.

These consultations led to the publication of a hundred page comprehensive report entitled *Footprints in New Snow* (NIC, 1995). The report contains 104 recommendations aimed at defining the political structures of a future Nunavut government. The document assembled ideas put forward by the Commission in its discussion paper as well as opinions expressed by ordinary citizens and local or regional councils during the 1995-96 Nunavut-wide consultation process led by the NIC. *Footprints in New Snow* was further refined with the publication of a second comprehensive report, *Footprints 2*, in October 1996 (NIC, 1996).

Both reports depict with clarity the political concepts and the inner workings of future Nunavut administrative and legislative branches. The primary conclusions and recommendations contained in these reports were endorsed by the Canadian government, the GNWT, and NTI. I propose here to examine, among other things, these essential conclusions and recommendations that would govern the design of the NTG.

The Structural Arrangements of the Nunavut Territorial Government

According to the *Nunavut Act*, the Nunavut Territory will be led by a non-ethnic public government whose legislative authority will rest among the elected members of the Nunavut Legislative Assembly. The Nunavut

Territory will hold the same political institutions as does the present NWT i.e., a Commissioner, an Executive Council, a Legislative Assembly, a public service sector and tribunals. The political powers of the Nunavut government should therefore be similar to those of the present GNWT¹⁶ (Canada, 1993:Part I).

In addition, the existing NWT laws will apply within the future Nunavut government, so as to avoid any jurisdictional vacuum associated with the establishment of the NTG on April 1, 1999: "...the laws in force in the Northwest Territories on the coming into force of this section continue to be in force in Nunavut..." (Canada, 1993:Art. 29). Nevertheless, during the first sessions of the Nunavut Legislative Assembly some of these laws (e.g., law on Indian reserves, law on Indian languages) could be repealed or modified by the Assembly on the ground that they would not be relevant to situations prevailing within the Nunavut Territory.

The establishment of the NTG will put in the hands of Inuit, who compose the majority of Nunavummiut (85 percent), powers over social and economic issues that could not have been held in a simple land claims agreement e.g., culture, education, health, social services, sustainable development, finances. In the matter of language, for instance, the NIC believes that an eventual Nunavut government would protect the Inuit culture and language (i.e., Inuktitut) from encroachment caused by the prevailing presence of the English language. Even though Nunavut will have three official languages—English, French, Inuktitut—the primary working language of the Nunavut government should be Inuktitut (NIC, 1995:14): "We can give the language of a majority of our people (inuktitut) a role in the workplace that it could never have in an undivided NWT" (Nunavut Newsletter, 1992:26). This determination to protect a threatened language and culture is not unlike what one sees with the French language in Québec: "...we consider the territory of Nunavut to have the same responsibilities as to the government of Québec—the government of Québec has special responsibilities to its population" (Bell, 1994:25).

The Legislature of the Nunavut Territory

An elected nineteen-member Nunavut Legislative Assembly would be constituted by February 1999, two months before the inception of the Nunavut Territory (GNWT, 1998). Because of Nunavut's demographic composition, it is more than likely that this Assembly will be composed of a majority of Inuit. The Legislature should hold its first session by April 1999. At least every four years Nunavummiut would be called upon to elect a new Legislative Assembly¹⁷ (NIC, 1995:14).

As with the present NWT Legislature, the Nunavut parliament would function on the political principle of consensus.¹⁸ There would be no political parties in Nunavut. Each MLA would sit as an independent. In this unique structure of British parliamentarism political decisions are taken by a majority of MLAs where each can express freely their views on a given subject. In the NWT Legislature¹⁹ bills are usually put forward by members of the Cabinet and have to obtain a majority of votes from independent MLAs in order to become laws.

I will now endeavour to depict the process of political decision-making in a future Nunavut Legislature ruled by a consensus system. In a Nunavut parliament that would hold 19 members, there would be a need to have at least 10 MLAs to vote in favor of a particular bill so that it could become law; considering that there could be 7 members in a Nunavut Cabinet, all backing a proposed bill, the process then consists of convincing 3 additional MLAs so that the bill could become law. In this context the objections of several MLAs would generally be left unanswered. On the other hand, an ordinary MLA, not a member of the Cabinet, could also submit a bill for approval, but without the backing of the Cabinet its chances of seeing it ratified by the Legislature are slim to say the least, since he or she would have to convince 9 MLAs. In sum, although the Nunavut Legislature would be ruled under the principle of consensus, the system would actually be more like a "non-partisan system", where political decisions are arrived at by majoritarian rules, where Cabinet plays a key role, and where the views of all MLAs would be expressed but not always taken into account in the decision-making process.

Nunavut would encompass nineteen electoral districts. Such a low number should, nevertheless, reflect adequately the wide range of opinions and interests resting among the 24,000 residents of Nunavut. Further, a nineteen-member Legislature would be sufficient to provide enough MLAs for an efficient Executive Council (i.e., Cabinet). The elected members would select a Premier among their midst. He or she would then select and control a six-member Cabinet. As elsewhere in provincial and territorial legislatures, the Cabinet members would be answerable to the Assembly.²⁰

At first, NIC had promoted the idea of a gender equal legislature for Nunavut²¹ (NIC, 1994c). It was proposed that in an eleven-district electoral map, each constituency would elect one member from a list of male candidates and another from a list of females. This proposal would have allowed the Nunavut Assembly to achieve a viable number of members (i.e., 22 MLAs). But more importantly the two-member constituencies initiative would signal the first time in history that woman have been guaranteed equal political representation in a Legislature: "The Nunavut Legislative

Assembly could be a model for democratic peoples everywhere. Nunavut could have the first legislature in the world to have balanced representation of men and women designed right into its make-up" (NIC, 1994c, 17). However, the idea of two-member constituencies in Nunavut did not please everyone. Ultimately, the proposal was defeated by a 57 percent "no" vote in a Nunavut-wide referendum held on this issue on May 26, 1997. Opponents labelled the plan as discriminatory and insulting to women: "...it assumed they could not win election without representational guarantees (Young, 1997:308).

The most powerful constitutional figure in Nunavut would be the Commissioner. As the Queen's representative, his or her selection will be done by the Governor-in-Council (i.e., Federal Cabinet). However, the Commissioner's tasks would be mostly ceremonial and he or she would not interfere in the running of the Legislative Assembly.

In the meantime, so as to ensure a smooth transition period leading up to the establishment of the NTG, an Interim Commissioner,²² Mr. Jack Anawak,²³ was appointed on April 15, 1997.²⁴ According to the Nunavut Act (Canada, 1993:Part IV), the Interim Commissioner is able to make binding commitments on behalf of the future Nunavut government. He has the authority over a wide range of responsibilities (NIC, 1996:219): (1) to recruit personnel for employment in the future Nunavut government; (2) to come into an agreement with the federal government regarding the financing of the NTG; (3) to conclude an agreement with the GNWT on division of assets and liabilities.

The Interim Commissioner was appointed by the Governor-in-Council.²⁵ He has to follow the instructions of the Federal Minister of Indian Affairs. However, the other actors involved in the formation of Nunavut (i.e., NIC, NTI, GNWT) are also to be consulted before any written instructions are given to the Interim Commissioner. Further, while exercising his authority the Interim Commissioner would have to do so in consultation with the GNWT MLAs from Nunavut, and with the presidents of NTI and NIC (NIC, 1996:210).

The Administrative Structure of the Nunavut Territory

In the future government of Nunavut there would be no more than ten departments and eight agencies (see Figure 2). All departments and programs should be fully in operation, a year after Nunavut's conception, by April 1, 2000 (NIC, 1996:155). The administrative organization of Nunavut would be simpler than the present administrative arrangements of the GNWT.²⁶ In addition to a less complex administration offering similar programs and services than those presently delivered by the GNWT, the

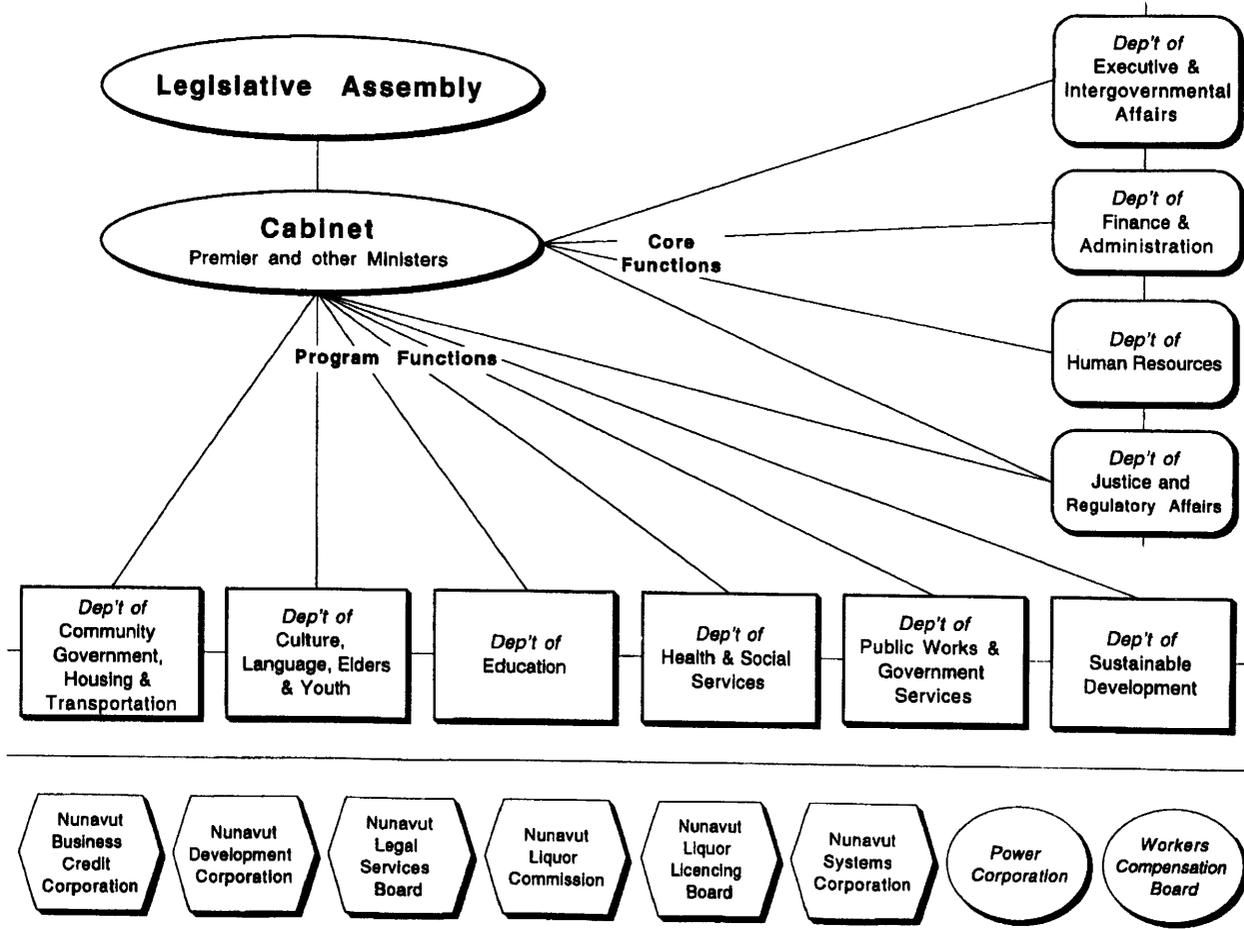


Figure 2: Nunavut proposed departmental structure.

Source: NIC, 1995: A10.2

NTG would be highly decentralized so as to assert its political presence over all of its vast territory, and to better serve the people who live in the 27 scattered communities of Nunavut (NIC, 1995:25).

The planned decentralization would ensure a fair distribution of government employment opportunities to as many communities as possible. In fact, decentralization would involve the creation of numerous departmental jobs outside of the capital Iqaluit.²⁷ "The departments would be structured so as to distribute employment in a manner that recognizes the three regional centers as well as the needs of the smaller and economically more depressed communities so that they can gain employment as a result of the establishment of Nunavut" (Nunavut, 1994a:7). It is likely that some departmental head offices would be regrouped thematically (Nunavut 1994a:7): (1) "public domain" including health, education, social services; (2) "lands and resources" for example sustainable development; (3) "services" such as human resources, habitation, transportation. Each of these proposed "super-departments" would locate their main operation centres in different regions of Nunavut, thus spreading government employment throughout the Territory.

Service distribution in Nunavut would be based on three regional administrative areas with which Nunavummiut are already familiar. These regions (see Figure 3) were created in 1982 by the GNWT so as to facilitate programs and services deliveries in the central and eastern Canadian Arctic. According to the NIC the proportion of Nunavummiut territorial civil servants should be proportionally spread according to the resident population of each region. Thus, Baffin would gather about half of the public work force while the other two regions would equally divide the remaining jobs: "... sharing of government employment opportunities with as many communities as reasonably possible can be achieved" (NIC, 1995:25).

The Commission does not recommend the continued existence of regional councils which were created by the GNWT in 1982 in order to coordinate the implementation of programs and services deliveries within each of the regions. Instead, it is recommended that the councils be replaced by regional summits where mayors, MLAs, and local councillors within each region would meet at least once a year so as to express their regional expectations and concerns to the government (NIC, 1995:27). These future regional summits would only have advisory functions: "There would be no regional councils in Nunavut. But summit gatherings of various leaders in each region may still be held" (Bell, 1995:2).

In fact, the comprehensive reports suggest that political powers be concentrated solely in the hands of the Legislative Assembly and local councils (NIC, 1996:51). In order to lessen bureaucratic inertia and confu-

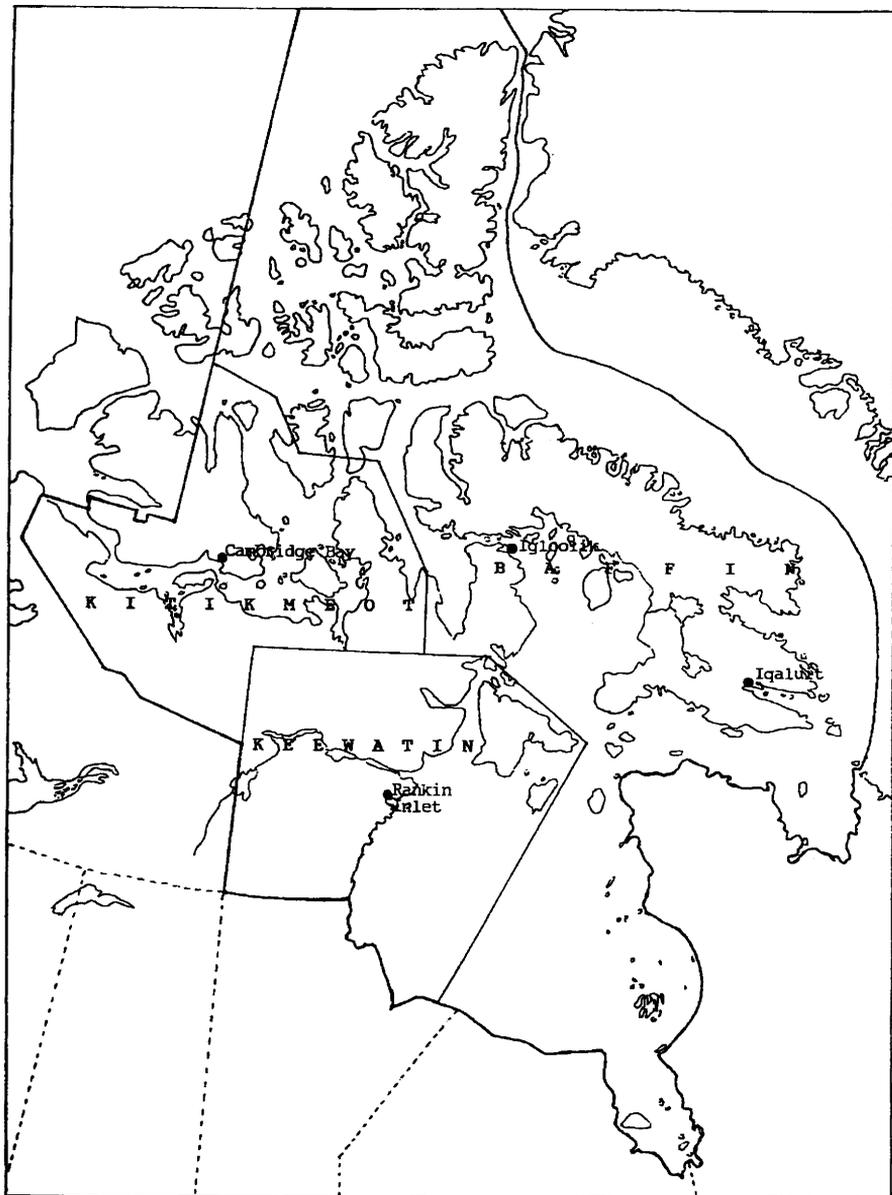


Figure 3: The Administrative Regions of Nunavut

Source: Adapted from DIAND, 1982:34.

sion born from the complex political structure of the GNWT there would not be in Nunavut any political decision-making power at the regional level: "The Commission believes that there should be only two levels of government in Nunavut: community government and territorial government" (NIC, 1995:24).

Because community governments is the level of government most visible to Nunavummiut, the Commission recommends that the administration and the delivery of programs and services should be done, as much as possible, at the community level. Without pinpointing the extent of community government powers, the NIC suggests that local councils should inherit increased responsibilities in education, health, social services, justice and housing (NIC, 1995:24).

The Political Challenges Emerging from the Establishment of the Nunavut Government

With a population of just under 24,000, the commissioners agree that the two biggest obstacles facing the future Nunavut government would be a lack of properly trained public service workers and a financial sector too dependent on Ottawa's help. A recent study on employment and finance in Nunavut, published for the benefit of the Commission's first comprehensive report, by the firm Price & Waterhouse Consultants sheds some light on these potential challenges which could limit the degree of autonomy of Nunavut (NIC, 1995:A15.1-A15.19, A16.1-A16.10).

Government Employment in Nunavut

Presently there are 500 GNWT public servants working in the Nunavut area, and half of these are Inuit (NIC, 1995:47). On April 1, 1999, the Commission expects that at least 50 percent of the NTG employees would be Inuit: "...the Nunavut Government must begin its existence with a proportion of Inuit employees at least equivalent to the proportion of Inuit in the current Nunavut public sector work force (approaching 50%)" (NIC, 1995:15). Nevertheless, the long term desire of the Commission is for Nunavut to attain a representative level of Inuit employment which would reflect the ratio of Inuit to the total population of Nunavut—85 percent: "The NIC recommends...the attainment of representative levels as soon as possible and, in any event, not later than 2021" (NIC, 1995:47). This idea of a representative level of Inuit in government is also prescribed in Article 23 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement: "The objective of this article is to increase Inuit participation in government employment in the Nunavut Settlement Area to a representative level..." (DIAND, TFN, 1993:Art. 23.2.1).

According to Price & Waterhouse, it is projected that the establishment of the NTG would require the arrival of an additional 600 public service workers (NIC, 1995:A6.1-6.12). These civil servants would add up to the already existing public work force of 500. Thus, the Nunavut public service work force would number 1,100 employees by the year 1999. In the spirit of decentralization it is projected that about 400 public servants would work in the capital Iqaluit, while the rest would be spread through all the regions of Nunavut (NIC, 1995:A6.1-A6.12).

To fulfil the government employment requirement goal by 1999 (i.e., 1,100 individuals), the NIC suggests first to rely on the already existing public service work force in the region, and second to concentrate on the formation of future Nunavut civil servants through the introduction of appropriate training programs.

The Commission strongly wishes that a majority of the present 500 public servants working in Nunavut will remain in the region after 1999. It is expected that they would do so and that they would occupy similar functions within the eventual Nunavut public service work force: "A final implication flows from the advisability of making best use of individuals now working in regional and community level offices of the territorial and municipal governments" (NIC, 1995:44).

In sum, the objective here is to avoid a great affluence of southern non-Inuit civil servants. For the Commission it is essential that the public administration sector be composed of a majority of Nunavummiut and particularly of Inuit People (NIC, 1995:45). The reasoning behind this is threefold. First, Nunavummiut are the people most concerned and familiar with the pressing social and economic issues prevalent in the Arctic today. Second, the massive arrival of non-Nunavummiut civil servants, less familiar with the issues in Nunavut, could generate misunderstandings between the Nunavut public service sector and the people it serves. In addition, the arrival of non-Inuit public servants and their families would certainly decrease the proportion ratio of Inuit within Nunavut.²⁸ "The Nunavut government will not meet the expectation of the public if we're importing great numbers of civil servants from Yellowknife or southern Canada" (Nunavut Forum, 1991a:7). Third, besides having to be familiar with the needs of Nunavummiut, the public servant workers would have to possess knowledge of the Inuit culture and the Inuktitut language so as to better serve its population (NIC, 1995:47).

To reach a ratio of Inuit around 50 percent in the Nunavut public sector by 1999, training would be crucial. During the present transitional period about 300 Inuit would have to be trained for administrative jobs within government. However, this could turn out to be a considerable challenge.

Indeed, potential Inuit candidates holding at least a high school degree are rare. In fact, only 2 percent of the Nunavut Inuit population have completed high school (Bell, 1992:21). The challenge is even greater when one thinks that education and training plans must build ultimately towards the objective, set in Article 23 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, of a 85 percent Inuit public work force.

The NIC in collaboration with the federal and territorial governments would have to find ways to meet the education and training needs of Nunavut. Already numerous training programs have been set up by federal and territorial officials to upgrade Inuit administrative proficiency.²⁹ Adult education programs, focusing on the new public sector that will be opened up in 1999, are widespread throughout Nunavut. Training efforts mostly take place in Nunavut secondary schools and in vocational colleges. Since they have been installed in the late 1980s, public sector training programs have produced on average 60 new candidates per year.

The continued success of adult education programs in Nunavut should avoid dealing with the precarious issue of importing a great number of external public service candidates, and more importantly should guarantee a 50 percent proportion of Inuit in the 1999 Nunavut public service sector. However, one should not expect to find such a ratio in the upper echelons of government administration: "Of the 11 deputy ministers only three are Inuit" (Colbourne, 1998:A17).

Financing the Nunavut Territorial Government

Besides government employment and training, the NTG will face a second obstacle of importance—financing. The cost concurrent to the establishment and the yearly operations of the government of Nunavut could actually reveal itself to be a more complex liability in limiting Nunavut's autonomy than public service employment training. According to Price & Waterhouse, the one-time costs for establishing the NTG could reach \$280 million (NIC, 1995:A16.1-A16.12). The sources of these costs are tied in with the building of housing infrastructure and the movement of personnel that would accompany the establishment of new government offices in Nunavut. Most of the expenditures would be spent in the capital, Iqaluit.

Price & Waterhouse estimates that the yearly cost for operating the government of Nunavut should reach \$600 million (NIC, 1995:A16.8). Through the signed Nunavut Political Accord, Ottawa has already committed itself in financing most of Nunavut's annual budget: "Canada...shall establish the financial arrangements for the Government of Nunavut. Such financial arrangements shall be analogous to those which currently exist with the GNWT" (Canada, 1992:Part 8).

Presently about 80 percent of the GNWT annual budget, which reached \$1.2 billion in 1995, is financed by the federal government. In its study, Price & Waterhouse estimates that because of the low number of tax payers in Nunavut, the under-developed economy of the region, and the fact that resources on Crown lands in Nunavut belong to the federal government, the NTG would have to rely on Ottawa's help for about 95 percent of its annual budget (NIC, 1995:A16.2). Thus, Nunavut will be far from being financially self-sufficient. This could in turn have an impact on its degree of political autonomy.

Some may suggest that in Nunavut the bases for a greater financial self-sufficiency could rest in holding title over Crown lands and their resources. However, the gains incurred by mining and oil activities in Nunavut would still not be sufficient for financing the NTG. The difficulties lying behind resource exploitation activities in Nunavut are numerous: the permafrost terrains; the harsh conditions faced by maritime transportation in the Arctic; the location of Nunavut far away from any major markets. These hindrances render large scale development projects quite improbable, thus making the profit levels issued from non-renewable resources activities limited at best. In fact, royalties generated by the mining and oil sectors in Nunavut would only contribute a low percentage of Nunavut's annual budget: "Based on the level of royalties collected at this time, it is estimated that this could bring in ten to twelve million dollars annually" (Nunavut Forum, 1991b:9). In sum, even if the NTG were to eventually hold title over Crown lands in Nunavut this would still not be sufficient to support the \$600 million annual budget.

Financial compensations given to the Inuit as part of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement could be a source of money for the financial predicament of Nunavut. However, land claims money is solely for the use of Inuit organizations and can not be utilized in government functions. For example, part of the compensation amounts, totalling 1.15 billion dollars over a 14 year period (1993-2007), will be used in investments to support programs such as the Inuit hunter income plan and the Inuit Elders pension plan. In sum, compensation money issued from the land claims settlement would not contribute to the NTG's budget.

Therefore, at first glance internal financial sources in Nunavut would seem to be weak. This opens up the need for a heavy federal government intervention in Nunavut's finances. Indeed, the absence of a solid economic base, the difficulty encountered by maritime transportation in the region, the relative geographical remoteness of the region, and its scarce population seem to condemn Nunavut to depend on Ottawa's help for its economic survival. Nevertheless, this financial dependency should not endanger

Nunavut's political authority within the Canadian federation:³⁰ "... Ottawa-Nunavut financial arrangements should promote Nunavut self-sufficiency" (NIC, 1995:15).

Political Dilemmas Generated by the Establishment of the Nunavut Government

According to the Commission the establishment of Nunavut would raise at least two crucial political questions: (1) how will the establishment of the Nunavut government fulfil the idea of Inuit self-government?, this question is particularly important if Inuit were eventually to become a minority in Nunavut; (2) what sort of political relations that the NTG would ascertain with Canada and with the rest of the circumpolar world ?

The Nunavut Territorial Government and Inuit Self-Government

There exist divergent opinions as to the interpretation given by the federal government and the Nunavut Implementation Commission on the issue of Nunavut as public government and the rights of Inuit living in the NWT to self-government.

For Ottawa the establishment of the NTG answers the traditional demands of Inuit Organizations (ITC, TFN) on the question of self-government. The federal government argues that the Inuit of the NWT through their majority ratio in Nunavut have ensured themselves with a "de facto" self-government, and therefore there is no need for Inuit self-government since, for all practical purposes, it is already attained through the NTG. In addition, as we have seen, Ottawa will likely spend a considerable amount of money in creating this new Territory and in contributing to its yearly budget. Obviously the sources of these federal expenditures would come from public money. Under these circumstances, Ottawa is not interested in investing additional sums of money in order to create some sort of yet undefined Inuit self-government in the NWT.

For the NIC however, the establishment of the Nunavut government has nothing to do with Inuit self-government. This is further supported by the fact that Inuit have not relinquished their inherent rights to self-government by signing the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement or the Nunavut Political Accord. Without defining precisely what shape Inuit self-government would take in the context of Nunavut, NIC is adamant on the fact that one must distinguish between a non-ethnic public government like NTG and Inuit self-government based on ethnicity, where only Inuit can vote and be represented: "There will be a need to respect, in a fundamental and enduring way, the differences between Nunavut as a form of public govern-

ment and the rights of the Inuit of Nunavut to self-determination and self-government" (NIC, 1995:73).

For now, because of Inuit majority in Nunavut, the Commission estimates that the issue of Inuit self-government is not yet acute. Inuit public service training is on the right track and Inuit are sure of electing a majority of Inuit MLAs in the future Nunavut Legislative Assembly. Inuit feel confident that, because of their demographic majority, they will control the economic, social and political agendas of Nunavut. Therefore, one could indeed portray the future NTG as a "de facto" Inuit self-government which should answer the expectations and interests of the Inuit of Canada's central and eastern Arctic for as long as they remain the population majority in the region.

However, what would happen if in the future Inuit were to become a minority in Nunavut? Few observers have addressed this so important question. This is due to the fact that this scenario is far from likely. Nunavut geographic remoteness, its high cost of living, its lack of housing infrastructure, and its harsh climate render the likelihood of a massive number of non-Inuit arrivals in Nunavut rather improbable. In fact, only wide-scale resource development projects could entice a large number of non-Inuit to settle in the region over a long period, thus threatening to unbalance the population ratio in favor of non-Inuit.

Nevertheless, the high expenditure costs associated with the development of such large scale projects in a remote area like the Arctic is not, for the foreseeable future, economically feasible.³¹ Still the unlikelihood of massive non-Inuit arrivals in Nunavut did not deter the NIC from suggesting solutions in case of such an event. Public meetings held in 1994-95 for the drafting of the comprehensive report *Footprints in New Snow* have revealed three solutions to counter any drastic decrease in Inuit ratio population and make sure that Inuit would continue to have a large say in Nunavut's political agenda. The first one suggests that NTI, the organization representing the Inuit of Nunavut which negotiated the Nunavut land claims, could become an Inuit self-government and be a political counter balance to the NTG. The second solution consist in creating a Senate solely composed of Inuit in addition to the Nunavut Legislative Assembly. Such a Senate would have veto powers over any laws affecting the Inuit population, passed by the Assembly. A final suggestion is to have a minimum presence of Inuit in parliament representing at least half of the seats (NIC, 1995:A9.7). All of these suggestions are aimed at guaranteeing a continued presence of Inuit decision-making power in Nunavut in case the improbable was to happen. But one must admit that, under the present foreseeable circumstances, it

is highly unlikely that the Inuit would ever become a minority within Nunavut, or would ever have to debate seriously these solutions.

Nunavut and its Political Relations with Canada and with the Rest of the Circumpolar World

In achieving the status of a territory within Canada, Nunavut will rearrange the relationship between the Inuit of the eastern NWT and Canada. The Nunavut Territory, like the rest of the provinces, will have a certain degree of political clout in its relationship with Canada: "...the intergovernmental relationship between the Nunavut Territorial Government and the Government of Canada should expect conventions and practices that have evolved, and are evolving, to reinforce the political autonomy of Nunavut" (Nunavut, 1994b:12). Like other existing territorial jurisdictions (i.e., NWT and Yukon), Nunavut will participate in inter-governmental conferences. This will allow the people of Nunavut to express their concerns in various federal/provincial/territorial inter-governmental discussion forums, thus increasing the political weight of Nunavummiut within the Canadian federation: "The NIC recommends that the Government of Nunavut participate in federal/provincial/territorial inter-governmental activities on the same footing as other territorial governments, and that the Nunavut Government be supplied with policy-making and administrative capacity to participate effectively" (NIC, 1995:73).

In addition, a political unit composed of a majority of Inuit like Nunavut would be an excellent "spokesperson" for the Inuit cause in Canada. Thus, when Canada would be involved in negotiating international conventions that might effect Inuit interests, Nunavut would be a strong defender of Inuit concerns. For example, Canada would be hard pressed to negotiate any international accord that could effect Inuit harvesting rights in the Arctic without prior consultations with the Nunavut government.

It is important here to remind ourselves that Inuit are first and foremost a People of the circumpolar North. The 100,000 Inuit of the circumpolar world live under four flags: Denmark, United States, Russia, Canada. Thus, one should not be surprised if Nunavut, the home of the Canadian central and eastern Arctic Inuit, seeks to maintain and increase its links with other circumpolar regions where Inuit are present: Greenland, Alaska, Chukotka, Labrador, Nunavik, etc.: "Co-operation with Greenland and other parts of the circumpolar world should be fostered in as many areas as possible... The Nunavut Government should seek to pursue common interests with regional governments in the Beaufort Sea, Nunavik, and Labrador" (NIC, 1995:77). As a matter of fact, the Commission's comprehensive report strongly recommends that the NTG be able to establish and maintain

policy-making capacities with regard to circumpolar affairs: "The NTG will be a government operating within the circumpolar world, and it should be equipped with the ability to develop relations...with other parts of the circumpolar world" (NIC, 1995:A7.3).

Finally, the political regional autonomy that would be enjoyed by the citizens of Nunavut could certainly inspire other Inuit groups to acquire similar political powers. Indeed, Nunavut, like today's Greenland, would come to symbolize a form of Inuit government arrangement within Nation-States that may serve as a political model for other Inuit groups in the circumpolar North: "...the creation of Nunavut will give added incentive to create strong regional governments within the Beaufort Sea and northern Quebec (Nunavik) regions of Arctic Canada" (NIC, 1995:6).

The Reasons behind the Establishment of the Nunavut Government

The establishment of the NTG will bring a certain degree of financial and political costs at the expense of the Canadian government. Indeed, Ottawa will have to relinquish some political power in favor of the Inuit of Nunavut; the federal government will also have to find ways to pay its share of the NTG budget. So, what are the reasons which motivated the Canadian government to acquiesce to these expenses?

According to some of the federal officials who negotiated the Nunavut Land Claims and Political Accord (cf. Molloy, 1994:9-11), Canada's commitment to the establishment of Nunavut is an expression of concrete desire on the part of Ottawa to share legislative and administrative powers with Aboriginal Nations. It is aimed at proving that Canadian federalism can be flexible and can accommodate the political aspirations of Aboriginal groups. However, one must go beyond the simple explanation of magnanimity, on the part of the federal government, in order to explain the reasons behind the creation of the Nunavut Territory.

By accepting to negotiate the demands of the Inuit of the NWT, in the 1970s and 80s, Ottawa wanted to prove that its Aboriginal land claims policy worked (DIAND, 1987). In ratifying the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and Political Accord, Ottawa gained good media publicity and raised its standing in the eyes of the international community on the issue of Aboriginal self-government: "...the creation of a new territory in Canada's Arctic with a solid Inuit majority and political rights for all its residents will be a powerful signal to the world that Canadians have the will and the ways to reconcile aboriginal self-determination with parliamentary democracy" (Nunavut Forum, 1991c:7).

Another likely reason behind Ottawa's decision to approve the establishment of Nunavut is the issue of Canadian sovereignty in the North. As a matter of fact, this concern was clearly stated in Article 15 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement: "Canada's sovereignty over the waters of the arctic archipelago is supported by Inuit use and occupancy..." (DIAND, TFN, 1993:Art.15.1.1). The sovereignty issue is highly important for the Canadian government, since the United States has been reluctant in the past to recognize Canada's jurisdiction over the arctic waters of the Canadian archipelago (e.g., Northwest passage).³² There is no doubt that the creation of the Nunavut Territory will reinforce Canada's sovereignty claim over the Northwest passage. For one can expect that Nunavut's political leaders will act to protect the interest of the Inuit hunters who have used the Northwest passage as a transportation link to various fishing and trapping grounds. In addition, like all provincial jurisdictions in Canada, the NTG will strongly react to any threat to its territorial integrity: "... trans-Arctic shipping must now take into account a new player, the Inuit people (Purich, 1992:152).

Thus, Canada had at least two practical political reasons, beyond the scope of simple magnanimity, to explain its support to the idea of creating the Nunavut Territory: (1) its image abroad; (2) its desire to assert sovereignty over the Northwest passage.

Conclusion

The establishment of the Nunavut government and Territory in 1999 give to the Inuit of the central and eastern Canadian Arctic a golden opportunity to create political institutions based on Inuit ideas gathered during the NIC consultation forums. Nevertheless, Nunavut would not be a panacea for all socio-economic malaise faced by today's Inuit society; at best the NTG will allow Inuit to take into their own hands their social, economic and political destinies, so as to better stand up to tomorrow's challenges.

The portrayal of the future governmental structures of Nunavut, as detailed in the NIC's comprehensive reports (*Footprints in New Snow ; Footprints 2*), show that the NTG could inherit unique and innovative structural arrangements... the NTG would be highly decentralized, laws enacted by the Assembly would reflect and protect Inuit culture, the Inuit and the Inuit language (Inuktitut) should be prevalent in all governmental functions. However, the implementation of some of these initiatives would likely increase the operating costs inherent to the administration of Nunavut. In these times of federal budget restrictions, these unique political initiatives, suggested by the Commission, might not please the main financial

sponsor of Nunavut i.e., the federal government. Therefore, one should not be surprised if, following the path of the failed gender equal Nunavut legislature proposal, some of the NIC's recommendations are not implemented. However, only a subsequent analysis of Nunavut's governmental arrangements after 1999 would allow us to see if the Commission's expectations were fulfilled.

Introduced for the first time on the Canadian political scene in 1976 (ITC, 1976), the idea of creating Nunavut has taken over three decades. The task of building this new political unit is not yet complete, but past events have demonstrated that through their perseverance and patience Inuit have found ways to achieve their goals. Nunavut has already jumped the biggest hurdle toward its inception. Indeed, the division of the NWT and the establishment of the NTG, for April 1, 1999, has already been formally approved by the Canadian government through the *Nunavut Act* (Canada, 1993), and it is now undeniable that the Inuit of the central and eastern Canadian Arctic will have a high degree of political autonomy by April 1, 1999. What exact shape this new political unit would take is still open to some speculation, however the prospective analysis, discussed in this paper, has given some clues on the likely structural arrangements that this future political unit will inherit on April 1, 1999.

Notes

1. "Nunavut" is an Inuktitut word which means in English "Our Land".
2. On the subject of traditional Inuit land use in the Arctic see the three volume report by Freeman (1976).
3. "Nunavummiut" is an Inuktitut word which designates the Inuit and non-Inuit residents of Nunavut.
4. In its 24-member Legislative Assembly the NWT has only 8 Inuit members while only 15 percent of its public sector employees are Inuit.
5. The land claim policy is based upon the fact that Canadian Aboriginal Peoples who have not yet signed a land-cession treaty with the federal government hold some sort of undefined title to the land that they occupy and use. In Canadian law the existence of an Aboriginal title is recognized in the 1764 British North American Royal Proclamation. Thus, to obtain land certainty the Canadian government has to come into a land agreement with the Inuit of the NWT, who in exchange for their undefined Aboriginal title will obtain various defined rights spelled out in a land claims agreement. For a thorough analysis on the origin of Ottawa's Comprehensive Land Claims Policy see Weaver (1981).
6. For an examination of the contents of the ITC land claims proposals see Weller (1988).

7. The ninth Legislative Assembly accounted for 22 members, i.e., 7 non-Natives, 7 Inuit, 5 Dene Indians, 3 Métis.
8. For an analysis on the April 1982 plebiscite results see Abele and Dickerson (1985).
9. In May 1981 ITC, in order to spend more time tackling other issues of concern to Northern Quebec and Labrador Inuit, decided to create a new affiliate TFN whose purpose was solely dedicated to the settlement of an Inuit land claims agreement in the NWT.
10. For a description of the Nunavut land claims negotiation process see Légaré (1996).
11. In addition to its allegiance to the establishment of a Nunavut Territory, the final agreement primarily defines various land rights allocated to the Inuit i.e., Inuit will own lands over an area of 353,610 km², 36,257 km² of which will include mineral rights; public board agencies equally composed of Inuit and non-Inuit will be instituted to manage land resources; Inuit will also receive from Ottawa 1,15 billion dollars over a 14 year period and will get a percentage of royalties coming from resource development projects. However in exchange for these defined rights Inuit extinguished their Aboriginal land title over the central and eastern Canadian Arctic.
12. For a detailed account of the events surrounding the boundary line dispute see Wonders (1990).
13. On November 5, 1992, five days after the conclusion of the Nunavut Political Accord which guaranteed the eventual establishment of the Nunavut Territory, 69 percent of the Inuit of Nunavut voted in favor to ratify the Final Land Claims Agreement.
14. In March 1993, the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut was renamed Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
15. Nine of the ten members are Inuit. In addition, all of them are permanent residents of Nunavut.
16. The Northwest Territories has similar powers and jurisdictions as those held by Canadian provinces, except that the ownership and the management of public Crown lands in the NWT still rests in the hands of the federal government.
17. To participate in an election, one would be a permanent resident of Nunavut for at least a year prior to the date of an election; one should also be 18 years or older.
18. Inuit people have traditionally been against the introduction of party politics, because a party system implies party discipline and Inuit have

always preferred to freely express their individual views rather than subordinate them to party discipline.

19. For further information on the inner workings of the NWT Legislature see Légaré (1998).
20. Since the Nunavut administrative structure should number ten departments, some ministers will have to hold several ministerial portfolios.
21. For an evaluation on the merits of gender-equal legislature see Young (1997).
22. The person selected as Interim Commissioner will not necessarily become the future Nunavut Commissioner.
23. Before being selected as Interim Commissioner, Jack Anawak was the liberal member of parliament for the federal electoral district of Nunavut.
24. On January 27, 1999, Mr. Jack Anawak was replaced as Interim Commissioner by Mr. Joe Kunuk. Mr. Kunuk is the ex-Mayor of the town of Iqaluit.
25. The selection of an Interim Commissioner was made in consultation with the GNWT, NTI, and NIC.
26. In 1995, the GNWT had 17 departments and about one hundred public agencies.
27. Iqaluit was selected as the capital of the future Nunavut Territory following a Nunavut-wide plebiscite held on December 11, 1995. The results favored Iqaluit, who gathered 60 percent of the votes, over its rival Rankin Inlet.
28. It is estimated that the arrival of 500 civil servants from outside Nunavut along with their families could entail a sudden increase of about 2,000 non-Inuit individuals in Nunavut. This could create social tensions between Inuit and non-Inuit newly arrivals, and would decrease the proportion of Inuit in Nunavut by as much as 20 percent.
29. Several education projects have been initiated in Nunavut to answer this challenge, here are some examples: "Sivuniksavut Program", "Management Development Training Program", "Municipalities Staff Development Program", etc. These programs are funded by the federal and territorial governments and have been in existence since the late eighties. In just 1994 these programs have trained 40 Inuit into the civil service work force.
30. Although Newfoundland's budget is strongly financed by Ottawa (i.e., 50 percent), nobody would doubt Newfoundland's political leverage within Canada.

31. Presently, there are only three small-scale lead and zinc mines operating in Nunavut: Lupin, Nanisivik, Polaris. These mines employed a total of about 100 seasonal non-resident workers on the sites. This does not pose any sort of threat to the present Inuit population ratio in Nunavut since seasonal workers do not have the right to vote in the NWT and are not accounted for as residents of Nunavut.
32. For further information on the subject of Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic see Young (1987).

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