

## **THE GENESIS AND STRUCTURE OF THE "DENE GONDIE" STUDY: WHAT THE PEOPLE SAY ABOUT THE NORMAN WELLS PROJECT**

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### ABSTRACT/RESUME

The Norman Wells project is an on-going experiment in university/Native organization research. The goal is to aid in the development of a data-base on the effects of the Norman Wells Oilfield Expansion and Pipeline Project on Native (Dene) community-based economic activity and lifestyles. The researchers recommend that the research project be used as a vehicle for confidence-building and human resource development.

Le projet Norman Wells est une expérience en cours sur des recherches comprenant l'université et l'organisation autochtone. Le but est d'aider au développement du recueil d'informations sur les effets du projet d'oléoduc et de l'expansion du champ pétrolifère Norman Wells sur la vie communautaire des autochtones (Dene) tant au niveau économique qu'au niveau social. Les chercheurs recommandent qu'on emploie le projet de recherche comme un moyen d'établir la confiance et de développer les ressources humaines.

## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to describe the origin, development, and implementation of a co-operative project in socio-economic monitoring undertaken jointly in 1984-85 by the Dene Nation, several Native communities in the Mackenzie Valley, and the UBC School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP).

The overall goal of the project was to contribute to the development of a reliable planning-oriented data-base on the effects of the Norman Wells Oilfield Expansion and Pipeline Project on Native community-based economic activity and life styles in the Mackenzie Valley, and at the same time, to test a model for joint university/Dene research. A fundamental underpinning of the study was our belief that the residents of a developing region have unique qualifications to document and interpret the impacts of such development on their personal and communal lives. We also believed that the most significant contribution of university researchers in such circumstances was to assist people in the credible documentation of impacts, in developing independent analytic capabilities, and in finding ways of giving voice to their concerns.

The study was designed in a series of meetings and workshops held in Fort Simpson, Yellowknife and Vancouver, from August 1984 through February 1985. Workshop sessions focussed on the design of a working agreement between participants; the clarification of objectives and the development of a basic study plan; the identification of issues to be examined; and the design and testing of an interview protocol for a major component of the study, a survey of Mackenzie Valley Native residents' views on the impacts of the project.

From a perspective of SCARP/UBC, specific objectives of the survey were as follows:

- to collect and analyze information from valley residents on their perceptions of the impacts of the Norman Wells project on community life, and from Norman Wells project workers on the quality of the work experience;
- to contribute to the development of a comprehensive data-base for use by communities, regional organizations and the Dene Nation in their social and economic development planning, and in their preparation for future mega-project development in the Mackenzie Valley;
- to provide publishable data and analyses of the perceived socio-economic effects of the Norman Wells expansion project on Mackenzie Valley communities; and,
- to provide training for Dene community workers in such areas as study design, sampling techniques, data analysis and interpretation, and interview protocol.

Under the co-operative agreement between the Dene and SCARP worked out in the course of the study, the author and Peter Boothroyd of SCARP acted largely as facilitators and principal resource people. We provided overall direction in study design, and in training for field workers, and assumed primary

responsibility for reduction and analysis of initial survey data. Dene Nation staff were responsible for overall co-ordination of the study and logistics pertaining to community participation. Dene community workers from Fort Simpson, Wrigley, Fort Norman, Fort Franklin, and Fort Good Hope participated fully in structuring the study, and were wholly responsible for conducting the field work (interviews and other aspects of data collection in these and certain satellite communities).

We believe this project structure has considerable value as a prototype for future similar university-community or government-community research efforts.

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### The Norman Wells Project

The Norman Wells Project consisted of a ten-fold expansion of the Norman Wells oilfield and development of a 324 mm (12 inch) pipeline extending 870 km from the field in the mid-Mackenzie Valley, to the Zama terminal in northern Alberta. The project was approved by the federal cabinet on 31 July 1981, subject to a further 17 month delay in construction start-up to allow for "effective and meaningful planning" for the implementation of various special management measures (DIAND, 1981). Thus, the Norman Wells Project was a rare survivor in Canada of the National Energy Program of 1980 and softening world oil markets. Although not large by industry standards, Norman Wells was an enormous undertaking for the north, and the first of several potential major hydrocarbon production and transportation projects to be implemented.

The institutional framework set up by the federal government to manage construction of this northern mega-project was unique in several respects. At the centre was the Norman Wells Project Co-ordination Office, established to co-ordinate regulatory activities, manage impacts and implement certain other special measures. Despite its potentially critical role, this office was given no authority beyond moral suasion over the activities of the groups to be co-ordinated.

The Dene had always objected to the project on grounds there should be no major development in the Mackenzie Valley prior to settlement of land claims. However, they reluctantly accepted the development after its approval because of the decision to delay construction, and because of a special \$21.4 million impact funding package announced as part of the approval. This benefit package was intended to assist northerners "to cope with possible disruptions and changes", and prepare to take advantage of the project's local economic benefits (DIAND, 1981). One of the special programs in the package was a \$1.25 million allocation over five years for Dene/Metis planning and monitoring support, subject to Treasury Board process and approval.

Because of these unique arrangements, the Norman Wells project has been held up by government as a model, and reluctantly accepted by the Dene as a test case, of government management capabilities for future northern development projects. Construction began in January 1983 and was completed in the

winter of 1984-85; first oil flowed two months ahead of schedule, in March 1985. The project is generally hailed as a success by governments and industry. However, perceptions of project management differ widely among government, industry and Native organizations. Certainly implementation of the special management programs has been a bitter disappointment to the Dene leadership (Dene Nation, 1985a).

#### SCARP and The Policy and Planning Implications of Northern Mega-projects

Dene Gondie was conceived as part of a larger study of selected "Policy and Planning Implications of Northern Megaprojects" initiated at SCARP in 1982 under the sponsorship of the Donner Canadian Foundation. As the planning and implementation of the Norman Wells project involved several of the substantive foci of our Donner project, it seemed ideally suited as a case example in pursuit of several of our research objectives. Specifically, we believed Norman Wells could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of federal planning, impact assessment, and monitoring programs in the north, as well as into the income, employment and related social effects of industrialization on Native communities in the Mackenzie Valley. In addition, we found we could use our examination of this mini-megaproject as a supplementary vehicle for a particularly important Donner Project-related objective, namely:

To enable the project team to develop and offer special training programs in development planning for Band Planners and Native leaders, and other planners with special interests in the problems of northern and resource-based communities.

#### Initial Premises

From the outset, we were concerned that any study we might undertake of the Norman Wells project contribute to the development of an approach to northern and community development that would take into account the unique socio-economic, structural, resource, and locational characteristics of northern communities. The following premises guided our initial thinking in conceiving the present study, and describe our perception of northern community characteristics:

- Most "remote" northern communities have traditionally been supported by subsistence economies supplemented by cash income from the sale of renewable resource products.
- Government activity has become a major economic factor in the north, providing a high percentage of jobs and income.
- Traditional economies are increasingly being displaced by mineral- and energy-related mega-projects and associated development. There are both potential benefits and potential costs associated with such development.

For example, mega-projects may provide significant numbers of jobs and income to affected communities, but they also impair the productivity of the renewable resource base

- Increased participation by northern residents in non-renewable resource development is generally supported by the governments and Native organizations.
- The developing economies of northern communities are particularly sensitive to the "boom-bust" cycle of natural resource economics. Like other export-based economies, they are dependent on external market forces beyond local control.
- Local residents possess a wealth of knowledge that can be critical to the successful planning and design of major industrial developments in the north, and in the subsequent social and environmental management of such projects. Inadequate use is made of this local knowledge.
- Institutional arrangements that give residents of a development region significant "say" in matters profoundly affecting their ways of life (e.g., adequate leverage to bargain effectively with government and corporate entities) are essential to individual and community well-being. Effective involvement in the planning, management and regulation of major development projects in the north can be useful in enhancing the capabilities, self-esteem and independence of Native residents and communities.
- More needs to be known about the impacts of mega-projects on northern community economies and about possible approaches to northern community development not totally dependent on large-scale industrial projects.

### Research Questions

These premises in turn suggested a number of research questions that would help us both to understand the existing process for implementation of the Norman Wells project and, as appropriate, to suggest alternative approaches that might be more sensitive to the peculiar requirements of northern communities. For example:

- Are there options for socio-economic development which might proceed parallel to, or independent of, industrialization through mega-projects?
- What mechanisms are currently available to northern communities for participation in mega-project development and management (e.g., through wage employment, joint venturing, self-generated entrepreneurial activity, impact monitoring and management, etc.)?
- How do communities affected by mega-projects perceive the relative individual and community costs and benefits of industrialization?
- What sort of planning process would be most effective in assisting northern communities to identify and make the best of development opportunities?
- What sort of information base would be useful to communities in making choices among options for development?

Specifically, respecting the Norman Wells Project:

- What policy and planning mechanisms for implementation of the project were most relevant to community participation and management of impacts?
- To what extent are the affected communities and government agencies pursuing other options for socio-economic development (e.g., options based on renewable resources)?
- How have the affected communities been able to "relate" to the Norman Wells Project? How have they participated in its planning? What is the nature of their involvement in its implementation?
- What are the perceived economic consequences of project implementation for the communities (e.g., on jobs, income, development options, community stability, etc.)?
- What are the perceived non-economic costs and benefits of the Norman Wells Project in the communities? How can we determine and characterize people's subjective "experience" of the project?

Some of the questions on institutional arrangements and economic alternatives were developed into a series of related but self-contained projects suitable for research at the Master's thesis level and have so proceeded since 1982-3. However, we were intrigued to learn early in this work that even by the spring of 1984, little was known of the actual local socio-economic impacts of the project, or of residents' perceptions of its effects on individual, family, or community life. Moreover, the only on-going socio-economic impact study (the DIAND-sponsored Norman Wells Database Project) was stalled in a dispute with the Dene Nation and affected communities over its design, methods, implementation, and substantive focus (Dene Nation, 1984a).

We also discovered that despite DIAND's unique approach to management and co-ordination of the Norman Wells Project, and the \$1.25 million impact funding initiative in support of Dene/Metis planning and monitoring, the affected communities and Native political organizations had been able to assume only a minor advisory role in project co-ordination and had experienced lengthy delays and other difficulties in accessing the funds necessary to mount their own socio-economic monitoring study.<sup>2</sup>

We therefore decided to approach the Dene Nation with the suggestion that we work co-operatively with them in a pilot study that might facilitate the eventual implementation of a full-scale Dene social impact monitoring program, as well as provide immediately useful data. Information on the community effects of the Norman Wells Project was badly needed for planning activities associated with both the Norman Wells Project and future developments. Accordingly, we suggested that whatever the form of any joint research project we might undertake, the orientation be on the identification and assessment of the Native communities' perceptions of the socio-economic effects of the Norman Wells Project.

## PLANNING "DENE GONDIE"

## Early Delays

Dene Monitoring Program staff were cautiously receptive of our May 1984 initial proposal, but hesitant to begin serious consultation because of two continuing problems beyond our influence. First, the Dene were experiencing continuing difficulty in accessing promised monitoring funds and it was feared that "the Dene Nation [would] be forced to drop its plans to monitor the Norman Wells Project if Ottawa [did] not confirm funding by [the end of May]" (Dene Nation, 1984b).

The second problem concerned the uncertain status of DIAND's socio-economic impacts study (the Norman Wells Database Project). The Dene objections to this project had resulted in a boycott by several communities beginning in May and it was not clear whether the project could continue during the 1984 field season. This was a major stumbling-block because all agreed that any joint Dene/SCARP study should complement rather than duplicate ongoing work. There was also concern that if both projects were ultimately to proceed, they should be co-ordinated because the communities were close to being saturated with research and related activities associated not only with the Norman Wells Project, but also the recently completed Beaufort Sea Environmental Assessment Process, and the proposed Polar Gas Pipeline.

We had initially hoped to begin our own field work in the summer of 1984, but until the above issues had been resolved, were confined to preliminary discussion and planning. Dene monitoring funding was, in fact, confirmed by June. However, uncertainty about DIAND's database project prevailed through July as the department attempted to convince boycotting communities to accept the study. It was not until early August that it became clear that the DIAND's efforts had failed (the department announced cancellation of 1984 field work in affected communities on August 22 [DIAND, 1984b]). Dene monitoring staff and SCARP researchers therefore held the first detailed planning session for Dene Gondie in Yellowknife on 8 August 1984.

## The 8 August 1984 Meeting

This meeting was devoted to further developing the preliminary ideas that had been discussed during the period of delay described above. Three items were particularly important:

- Identification and clarification of elements of a working agreement to set out the responsibilities of, and relationships between, the Dene and SCARP during and after any joint study we might decide to undertake. Stress was placed on developing an exchange of rights respecting the analysis, interpretation, and publication of results.
- A review of available data from the DIAND database project to identify significant gaps and areas of potential overlap.

Preliminary planning for a workshop/training session for community workers and political representatives on issues and methods, for the proposed joint Dene/SCARP study.

This meeting confirmed that the most potentially valuable focus for the joint study would be an examination of the effects of the Norman Wells Project on community life from the perspective of the communities themselves, and proposed this orientation for the planned workshop/training session. To that end the SCARP team agreed to draft a questionnaire designed to identify community concerns, and to illustrate the substantive orientation of the proposed study, for discussion at the workshop.

#### The November 1984 "Issues and Methods" Workshop

The overall purpose of this workshop was:

to discuss and plan a jointly managed socio-economic study between the University of B.C. and the Dene communities. The study will look at the effects of the Norman Wells Project and, especially the comparison between people's expectations and what actually happened" (Dene Nation, 1984c: 1).

For the Dene, the most important substantive agenda item was to set "objectives of the study from the community perspective". There was special concern that we identify: "What kind of information is needed to have better decision-making and planning at the community level? How can it contribute to social and economic goals of the community?" (Dene Nation, 1984c:2).

The SCARP researchers were particularly concerned that our own role be clarified, and that certain training objectives be achieved. Thus we saw the workshop as essential to:

- Explain our interest and potential role in a joint monitoring research project, our understanding of its role in valley planning and, in simple terms, our perceptions of methodological assumptions and limitations.
- Introduce participants to basic concepts of research and planning at the community level. We planned to discuss roles (who does what), processes and mechanisms (planning and how to do it), and the function of information (what kind of information is needed when).
- Discuss various approaches to the monitoring study, their strengths and weaknesses, and their possible contribution to developing the type of information-base needed by Mackenzie Valley communities in their planning for future development(s).

Two people from each of the following interested communities were invited to the workshop, one political representative and one community worker interested in doing the field work in his/her own community:



- Fort Simpson
- Wrigley
- Fort Norman
- Fort Franklin
- Fort Good Hope

Also invited were representatives of the Deh Cho and Shih-tah Regional Councils and the Norman Wells Hamlet council. Other departments of the Dene Nation and Indian Affairs (DIAND) were invited to attend as observers.

We had decided at the August organizational meeting to make this initial workshop pivotal to the rest of the study. The SCARP researchers would therefore propose a "planning approach" for the conduct of the workshop itself, facilitate a discussion of issues by the community representatives, and lead a discussion of the range of feasible methodological approaches that might be adopted, including familiar survey techniques. Dene Monitoring Program staff would co-ordinate the workshop, and outline to participants the draft working agreement and its implications. However, actual decisions respecting whether to proceed at all with a joint study, acceptable field and follow-up methods, and acceptable terms of the joint working agreement from the communities' perspective, would be the responsibility of community participants, particularly the political representatives.

#### Agenda

The workshop was held in Fort Simpson on 6-7 November 1984, and was a success by any measure. In all, twenty-three people participated including the Dene co-ordinator, Rees and Boothroyd from SCARP, and representatives from all the above organizations (except the Norman Wells Council), as well as from Fort Liard and Fort Providence.

The following items were covered in two days of discussion:

Planning Process: The SCARP participants outlined a suggested planning process for the workshop and for the proposed study as a whole;

Issues and Concerns: Native participants identified 50 problem areas associated with the Norman Wells Project relevant to their communities. The perceived scope of "the problem" (and required research) had expanded far beyond our limited capacities;

Benefits: The workshop identified and assessed four major categories of potential benefits of the Norman Wells Project from the community perspective;

Goals: A major focus was on goals. Fifteen potential objectives were identified for further refinement and consideration;

Alternative Methods: The strengths and weaknesses of eight alternative methods for data collection and community feedback were discussed, with consideration of available resources and experience of community workers. These ranged from Dene-organized Berger-like community hearings to interview surveys;

Study Context and Draft Agreement: The resources available and constraints

facing the proposed study were detailed to provide the context for discussion of the draft Dene/SCARP working agreement, and a decision on whether to proceed. Rees and Boothroyd left the meeting during the decision to permit uninhibited discussion by the political representatives.

## Outcome

Four major decisions were taken at the November workshop:

There was unanimous approval to proceed with a joint Dene/SCARP study. The Dene would be equal partners in the final design and direction of the project, and Dene community workers would be responsible for conduct of the field work as appropriate;

A Steering Committee was established to manage the project. This eleven member group is comprised of seven representatives from the communities, two from the Dene Nation, and Rees and Boothroyd of SCARP.

The draft working agreement was revised and approved in principle. Final details were left to the Steering Committee prior to formal approval by the leadership.

There was general recognition that the range of issues and potential goals for the project identified in the workshop was too broad for all to be incorporated into the final study design. Therefore, no final decisions on methods were taken although some sort of questionnaire survey to complement the previous DIAND database work was seen as a useful starting point. The Steering Committee was charged with refining the objectives and choosing appropriate methods and procedures, based on discussions at the workshop.

The SCARP team was gratified by the spirit of co-operative good will and sense of commitment that prevailed during the workshop, as well as with the outcome. Dene and community participants also seemed satisfied; quoting John Bekale, Vice President, Dene Nation, the press release announcing the study noted:

The process of designing and implementing the study has full community involvement. It is a mutual learning experience for both the university representatives and many of our people being directly affected by the Norman Wells Project.

Significantly, it also stated:

This kind of jointly-managed undertaking will set a precedent for the Dene Nation being actively involved instead of just being the objects of academic studies (Dene Nation, 1984d).

### Planning Meeting, 6 December 1984

Dene staff and SCARP held this one-day Vancouver meeting to review the outcome of the Fort Simpson workshop and begin preparation of a draft study plan for consideration by the Steering Committee. We agreed to combine the 15 possible study objectives into a single comprehensive goals statement and aggregate the 50 "issues" into a few manageable categories. We also decided to propose that the first phase of the project be a stratified interview survey of key community groups (e.g., trappers, hunters, Norman Wells project workers, etc.) on an issue-by-issue basis, and that the Steering Committee consider holding community hearings, public meetings, or a Dene conference to discuss the results at a later date.

We agreed to prepare a detailed draft study plan for the first Steering Committee meeting, scheduled for 18 December (aircraft mechanical failure forced a re-scheduling to the new year).

### First Steering Committee Meeting, 7 January 1985

This meeting approved both the survey approach and the following overall goal statement for the joint socio-economic monitoring study (Dene Nation, 1985a):

To collect good, credible information and documentation of the socio-economic effects of the Norman Wells Project from the perspective of the Dene communities in the region. This is to be done using methods controlled by community representatives, in co-operation with staff and students of the School of Community and Regional Planning at UBC.

Longer term uses of this information are largely up to the communities and the Dene National Office, but may include the following:

- a) improve understanding in the north and the south about the effects of resource development on the Dene;
- b) improve local involvement in community and regional planning through better information at the local level;
- c) help people prepare for new pipeline development proposals and associated hearings leading to communities being better able to cope with large developments and make choices about development alternatives; and,
- d) contribute to training of local people in the gathering and use of information as a tool for better planning.

In light of these objectives and five categories of issues modified from the draft study plan,<sup>3</sup> the meeting then focussed on:

- clarifying study objectives in operational terms, and prioritizing issues to be examined accordingly;
- appropriate groups to be interviewed to provide information on priority

issues;  
 the types of indicators and information required to satisfy study objectives;  
 and,  
 considerations of sample design - what was the interviewee universe, the  
 appropriate sample size and sampling technique?

We found that the range of important issues and questions was still too great to be covered adequately in a relatively small-scale experimental study. It began to emerge that an effective way to address the most pressing issues might be through a specific survey of Norman Wells Project workers to provide data on the work experience, and a separate, wide ranging survey of ordinary residents of participating communities to provide data on the more general socio-economic impacts upon individual and community well-being.

Several key decisions were taken by the Steering Committee:

- Rees and Boothroyd were asked to develop a draft interview protocol(s) and questionnaire(s) based on the priority issues for finalization and testing at the next Committee meeting.
- In light of their greater rapport with interviewees and the valuable experience involved, Native community-based workers would be exclusively responsible for conducting the interviews.
- At Rees' suggestion the group chose a Slavey name for the study. "Dene Gondie" means "people's word" or "message from the people". We felt that this would enhance the project's credibility, and increase access to interviewees.
- The Working Agreement was finalized and approved for signature by the Dene executive.

#### Interview Testing and Training Session, 4 February 1985

The objectives of this meeting of the Steering Committee and Dene interviewers were to:

- finalize the scope of the initial interview survey component of Dene Gondie;
- design the survey samples in an interactive seminar on sampling with the community interviewers themselves;
- pre-test the precision and language of questions and structure of sample questionnaires, and;
- provide practice in interviewing.

Building on the previous Steering Committee meeting, we did decide to focus the survey work on the experiences of Norman Wells Project workers and effects of the Norman Wells Project on social and economic life in the communities as perceived by ordinary, non-worker community members. Consideration of other issues would be left to subsequent project components or other follow-up studies.

The draft comprehensive questionnaire prepared by Rees and Boothroyd was tested in practice interviews between Dene workers at the meeting, assisting the group to make final revisions to those questions relevant to the agreed-upon study design. Rees and Boothroyd subsequently assumed responsibility for preparing separate formal survey forms and interview protocols for the two sample groups, and for random selection of the samples for each community from the master population lists.

Appropriate samples were chosen for participating communities from Band voter eligibility lists and supplementary data provided by the Dene Nation. Sample sizes were designed to provide 95% confidence that results would be within 10% of the true population mean at the level of individual communities, and within 5% of the population mean for the study region as a whole, (assumes a 100% sample response rate). A total of 540 community members and workers were selected to be interviewed from a Dene population of approximately 1,350 in eight communities.

## RESULTS: THE FIELD SURVEY

Data collection by Dene field workers began in most communities in April 1985 and the "first round" was completed by the end of June. The Dene workers conducted themselves very professionally - misunderstandings or other problems involving the questionnaires or interview protocol usually happened with substitute workers who had not attended important planning meetings or the practice session. The vast majority of interviewees seem to have taken the Dene Gondie survey seriously and responded willingly to the lengthy interviews.

Despite the difficulty of surveying a highly mobile population, the interviewers captured 75% of the designed sample during this initial phase. Primary compilation and analysis of these data are now complete and the results are being prepared for consideration by the Steering Committee. In addition, we are augmenting the data base through supplementary field work and hope to achieve an 80-90% response rate by the end of 1985 for the Community Survey in most communities, and for the Worker Survey at least in the northern Mackenzie Valley communities. Note, however, that the terms of the Dene/SCARP working agreement preclude release or discussion of the study results prior to discussion and approval by the Steering Committee.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper describes an on-going experiment in joint university/Native organization research that, at least for SCARP participants, has been at once an exhilarating and frustrating experience. We saw our initial naive conceptualization of Natives' problems with the Norman Wells Pipeline transformed beyond recognition. And as our sense of the true dimensions of the problem expanded, our sense of what we might be able to contribute to its resolution deflated in proportion. On the positive side, we do have some hope of achieving our necessarily scaled-down ambition!

In the course of Dene Gondie, we have acquired great respect for those who cope routinely not only with a present threat to their existence, but also with the enormous logistic problems of working, communicating and simply travelling in the north. These problems seem to multiply geometrically with the numbers of people or communities involved. At each stage, our experiment cost us about 50% more in time and money than anticipated, even with allowances for the unexpected. At the same time, we have been richly rewarded. In particular, Dene Gondie taught us once again the value of mutual respect and the power of agreement in achieving a common goal.

As university participants, we are extremely pleased to date with the results of our experiment in co-operative research design and management. We are confident that the final product will be able to contribute usefully to future independent planning efforts by both individual communities and the Dene Nation as a whole. Certainly too, we have gained invaluable research and management experience, and look forward to continued joint studies with the Dene on other pressing issues related to Dene Gondie that we have had to set aside in the course of the present pilot study.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are based on what seemed to work for us as the university researchers involved in Dene Gondie, and are oriented to the primary theme of this conference - the future role of universities in Native self-determination. In this context, they reflect our belief that the university's primary role in society is in the generation and manipulation of knowledge for human well-being, and in the teaching of the necessary skills to do this competently. Indeed, the ability to generate credible information and use it with confidence is a necessary prerequisite to independent thought or action by any people. These suggestions are therefore directed toward non-Native university people contemplating developing a research-oriented relationship with a Native organization. In essence, they advocate using the research project as a vehicle for confidence-building and human resource development:

- 1) No matter how confident of your present knowledge, operate from the assumption that you have an inadequate understanding of the problem. Before proposing any research project, become fully familiar with the Native views of the problem area and with the socio-political context in which the work would go forward. Several complicated meetings may be necessary. Be prepared to spend a significant amount of time and money in this learning mode.
- 2) It is preferable to think small at first in conceiving a study focus. As you come to understand the problem, it will grow to almost unmanageable proportions!
- 3) Do not advance a firm research proposal or study design. Put ideas forward as tentative suggestions for research and invite Native co-workers to do likewise. Be prepared to extend your endeavours into areas you had not

- previously thought of and to drop consideration of issues considered less relevant to your Native partners. In short, put the range of possible "parameters" for research on the table and involve Native co-workers fully in their assembly into the final research problem or focus.
- 4) Whenever possible, consider entering into a full research partnership with the staff of Native management or political organizations. At the least, this will enhance the relevance of the work and acceptance of the research team in the Native community, broadly defined. It may also lead to useful extensions of the work, and a significant contribution of resources from the Native partner(s).
  - 5) Work out a simple but formal agreement with partner organization(s) setting out the roles and responsibilities of each major participant and the conditions respecting access to and use of research data. If not prohibited by other legal agreements pertaining to research funds, this joint working agreement should treat all full partners as equals.
  - 6) The agreement should include a section giving each party the right to review and comment on any manuscript reporting the results of the research prior to submission for publication. If there are differences in the interpretation of data, consider giving each party the right to include the other's views in an appendix.
  - 7) Assist your Native partners in getting their own analyses and interpretations of the research results published.
  - 8) Use organizational, planning and progress meetings as training media whenever appropriate. Often such sessions can be organized with time set aside for explicit training purposes, but on other occasions the heuristic value of such sessions can only be implicit in the manner of presentation by university personnel.
  - 9) Operate as open a research shop as is practical without impeding the work. Consider inviting members of the Native leadership to planning and progress meetings. Seek their advice and invite them to participate in the discussions.
  - 10) In instances where there is no consensus among research partners respecting some aspect of the joint project of particular importance to the Native community, consider the potential benefits of leaving the final decision to your Native partner(s) or local leadership.

#### NOTES

Dene Gondie was made possible by the sponsorship and participation of numerous individuals and organizations. First I would like to acknowledge and thank the Donner Canadian Foundation who funded UBC's participation through a grant to the School of Community and Regional Planning to study certain "Policy and Planning Implications of Northern Mega-projects". This project included components to analyze both the socio-economic impacts of industrialization and the effectiveness of impact management procedures, as well as to document the employment experiences and histories of Native workers in

the wage economy. Donner Canadian support enabled the SCARP study team to initiate and oversee Dene Gondie.

The Dene Nation is to be congratulated for participating in an unusual experiment. The Dene National Office funded the participation of the field workers from each community and Vice-President John Bekale serves on the Project Steering Committee. Dene office staff provided essential secretarial and technical support in the north for which we are all grateful. Special thanks are due Kate Irving, formerly of the Dene National Monitoring Program, whose meticulous documentation of meetings and skill in logistics kept the whole project flowing. Most recently, Margie Gorman and Jim Edmondson have been very helpful in co-ordinating Dene involvement as the project winds up.

I would also like to thank Conrad Pilon and Hugh Richardson of Indian and Inuit Affairs, Yellowknife, for their encouragement and, in Hugh's case, active participation in key organizational meetings.

Last and perhaps most important, I wish to acknowledge the interest and enthusiasm of the many Dene Community Workers who took part in the workshops and training sessions and ultimately assumed responsibility for field data collection. Without their participation, there would have been no "Dene Gondie".

1. "Dene Gondie" is a Slavey term meaning "the people's word" or "message from the people".
2. See DIAND 1984a for an analysis of the latter problem.
3. The aggregated issues were:
  - a) Effects on the land-based way of life;
  - b) Natives' work experience on the Norman Wells Project;
  - c) Effects on the economic/social development of valley communities;
  - d) Problems with project-related information/consultation processes;
  - e) Effects on and of community planning activities.

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