Editor's Introduction

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The concept of "Sustainable Development" became the key issue in development thinking after the World Commission on Environment and Development released its report *Our Common Future* in 1987. The report, which is more commonly referred to as the Brundtland Report — named after the Chair of the Commission, Gro Harlem Brundtland — called on international cooperation and action to develop national policies that would promote and maintain sustainable development on a global scale. The Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 43).

The Brundtland Commission was borne out of international economic and environmental concern related to "third-world" debt, poverty, global financial instability, industrialization, waste management, population growth, environmental destruction, the depletion of the ozone layer, natural resource exploitation and depletion, urban expansion, and the cultural extinction of indigenous groups and tribal knowledge.

Sustainable development was held out as a broad solution to these and other global problems. Like many other general concepts however, the Commission's broad definition of sustainable development quickly became a handy buzzword meaning all things to all people. It could be argued that little has changed since the release of the report. Yet many international leaders and economic theorists continue to believe that the solution to the world's environmental and economic development woes rest in approaches that promote "sustainable" development.

Much of the debate to date about how sustainable development should be operationally defined and put into practice has occurred at the local community level. As we see in this section, this debate about the meaning of sustainable development and attempts to apply "sustainable" economic development in meaningful ways are also taking place in many Aboriginal communities located across Canada. It is important to note that this section reflects lessons from experience. As the title of this section suggests, the following six papers present a number of community and individual perspectives on sustainable development.

The first piece in this section is a brief commentary on sustainable development as viewed through the eyes of Lynn Katsitsaronkwas Jacobs, a Mohawk woman from the Kahnawake Mohawk Territory. She starts by asking the critical question, "What exactly does sustainable development mean?" She concludes that to date government-directed sustainable development policies do not seem to fit the needs of Aboriginal communities. Instead she suggests that Aboriginal communities adopt sustainable development policies that are based on indigenous concepts and traditional values that promote, among other things, sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods.

In the second, fourth and sixth papers, Ross Smith presents three cases related to different aspects of community-based sustainable development in practice. These cases profile community development in the Buffalo Point, Walpole Island, and Fort William First Nations consecutively. The cases touch on the importance of planning, institutional development, and sustainable development that includes community participation.

The third paper, by Dr. Wanda Wuttunnee, looks at "Partnering Among Aboriginal Communities" by focusing on the work of the Tribal Councils Investment Group (TCIG), based in Manitoba. The TCIG allows those First Nations involved to participate in larger-scale economic initiatives. The case study includes quotes from the leaders and managers involved in the creation and operation of the investment group.

The fifth paper is a case study of the Kanata Healthy Housing Project, a Mokawk initiative that promotes sustainable housing for residents of Kahnawake, Quebec. In the case, Lynn Katsitsaronkwas Jacobs recounts briefly the history of the project, and comments on the importance of such initiatives within her community.

In conclusion, these case studies and practical viewpoints lend to and assist in the ongoing empirical investigation and development of academic theories related to experiences and trends in Aboriginal community and sustainable economic development — the content of the next section. In this way, the journal continues to promote the connection of practical experience to research and theoretical development.

As an editorial endnote, it is important that people interested and involved in Aboriginal community and economic development hear about the myriad of community-based projects taking place in indigenous communities located across Canada. The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development is the perfect medium to share with economic development officers and managers those initiatives in which you and your community are involved. The articles do not have to be lengthy — a page or two will do. Your piece can describe a project or it can highlight the challenges and opportunities involved in planning for or implementing such a project. It can be your own personal reflection on a community development project or experience. It can be a case study, or an initial (qualitative) exploration of a specific issue or community development practice. In any event, the Journal is looking for your input. Enjoy the current issue!