

Editors' Introduction

In this section, we once again offer a splendid variety of interesting and informative research pieces on Aboriginal business, community, and economic development.

Bob Anderson and Robert Bone consider the importance of taking a proactive approach to community economic development by asserting that Aboriginal business organizations formed out of comprehensive land claim agreements are leading the way in the market economy. Their argument is supported by dynamic examples such as the Inuvialuit, Sahtu and the Gwich'in: all of whom have settled their land claims and all are now part of the Aboriginal Pipeline Group (APG) that has a one-third share in the natural gas pipeline associated with the Mackenzie Gas Project — the project that proved so divisive some four decades ago. The authors go on to demonstrate that much has changed over the past 40 years and, perhaps the most important, that multiple shifts in relationship have taken place. Where once Aboriginal groups and environmentalists were strong allies, today the Inuvialuit, Sahtu and the Gwich'in are proponents of the project and environmental representatives are not, while emphasizing the central significance of the Deh Cho in the process. The authors conclude that, while they are not opposed in principle to economic development, they wish to control such development within the framework of their comprehensive land claim agreement: Should the Deh Cho become dissatisfied, the gas pipeline project could be in trouble.

Doctoral candidate Suzanne Mills and her co-author Tyler McCready investigate the impact of policies implemented by forest-processing firms to increase retention of women Aboriginal employees in the workplace. Arguing that the result of First Nations Bands, Tribal Councils and other Aboriginal parties impressing upon their constituents the need to seek employment with regional mills has been the increased participation of Aboriginal people in the forest industry as a whole. Despite this, Aboriginal people have continued

to be under-represented in forest processing employment, particularly in management and professional occupations. This exploratory study suggests that effective Aboriginal inclusion can take various forms and that empowering Aboriginal women through equity in promotions, ensuring Aboriginal representation in management and decision-making, and implementing anti-discrimination and harassment policies to prevent the further marginalization of Aboriginal people in the workplace are of equal importance.

Doctoral student Frank Deer studies the benefits accessible adult education that focuses on improving job opportunities would have in an inner-city area with a significantly large Aboriginal population. Employing focus groups and individual interviews with potential students, former students, elders, and program instructors, Deer concludes that Saskatoon's inner-city residents who desire access to such programs are frequently Aboriginal and are either involved in low-wage employment or receiving social assistance. Contextualizing the findings in relation to social and community development, and preparation for post-secondary education and employment and academic success, the results indicate that the proximity of the programs as well as the services that are offered may be essential to student success.

John Parkins of the Canadian Forest Service and his research team examine the contribution of forestry and other resource sectors to the social and economic status of Aboriginal communities in Canada. Beginning with a discussion of the current conditions within Aboriginal communities, the changing relationships between Aboriginal communities and natural resource sectors are evaluated to potentially offer insights into the total levels of employment in the forest sector and the relationship between changing levels of forest sector dependence and changes in social and economic status. Parkins et al. conclude by discussing several implications of these trends with respect to resource sector contributions to the future of Aboriginal communities.

In the final paper, public policy professor Ciaran O'Faircheallaigh considers the importance of three specific areas in which mining agreements can contribute to Aboriginal economic development: by generating an income stream through royalty or other similar payments; by creating opportunities for education, training and employment; and by supporting Aboriginal business enterprises. Driving his investigation is the reality that mining projects on the traditional lands of Aboriginal Peoples in Australia and Canada have considerable potential to contribute to Aboriginal economic development — potential that has often not been realised due

to the marginalization of Aboriginal Peoples in both countries from large-scale mineral development. O'Faircheallaigh concludes the negotiation of "mining agreements" or "impact and benefit agreements" involving Aboriginal Peoples has the potential to change this situation.