Securing Futures: The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and Reindeer Herding History

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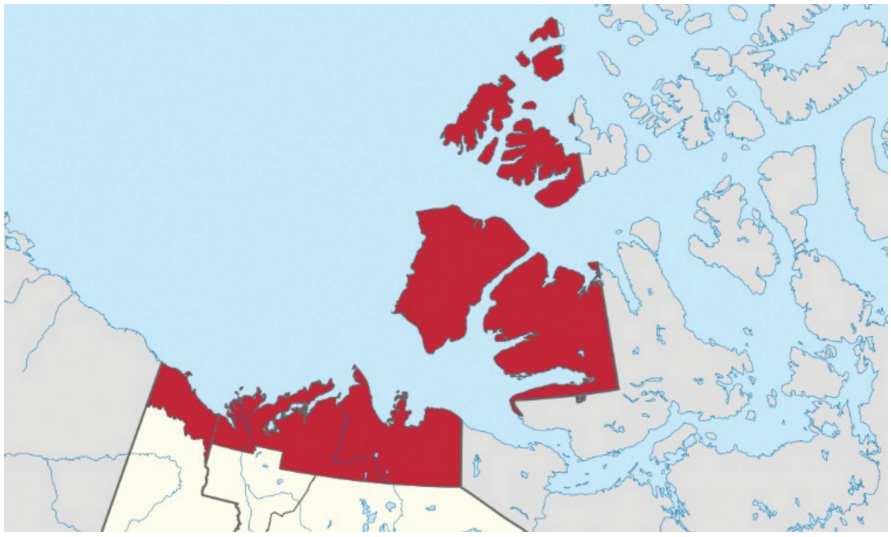
ABSTRACT

This article explores the complex history of reindeer herding in North America and contextualizes its connection to other Arctic Indigenous nations, from the Sámi people to its contemporary management by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC). Reindeer herding was initially introduced in North America in the late nineteenth century as a solution to declining caribou populations and this practice evolved over time into its modern context with the IRC. By acquiring Canada's only reindeer herd in 2021 and spearheading initiatives like the Country Food Processing Plant in Inuvik, the IRC is integrating traditional herding practices within a corporate framework to ensure sustainable development, food security, and local job creation, while also highlighting the importance of economic development in Indigenous self-determination. This article provides insight into how the IRC's management of the reindeer herd represents an innovative model of Indigenous economic empowerment, blending culture with strategic economic initiatives to address contemporary challenges. The article contributes to the broader discourse on Indigenous governance, economic sustainability, and the pivotal role of traditional knowledge in shaping future pathways for Indigenous communities in the Arctic and beyond.

KEYWORDS: economic development, reindeer herding, food security

The development of Indigenous corporations through Modern Land Claim Agreements (MLCAs) has greatly enhanced Indigenous sovereignty over the management and decision-making processes of their lands and communities. The establishment of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) following the Inuvialuit Final Agreement exemplifies a significant move towards Indigenous autonomy, self-governance, and improved economic and cultural well-being (Inuvialuit Final Agreement, n.d.; Selle & Wilson, 2022). Being 100% Indigenous-owned and operated, the IRC has a mandate to advance the Inuvialuit's economic, social, and cultural prosperity, managing over $695 million of assets and achieving consistent profit growth (Inuvialuit Regional Corporation [IRC], n.d.). Economic development is at the core of the IRC's operations because it is an essential element of Indigenous autonomy, and the acquisition of Canada's only reindeer herd exemplifies the IRC's commitment to sustainable development, food security (Fillion et al., 2014), and local job creation. Initiatives such as the Country Food Processing Plant in Inuvik further demonstrate the IRC's focus on enhancing local employment and the regional food supply. Ultimately, reindeer herding—crucial to the culture and survival of Arctic Indigenous peoples and introduced to Alaska and the Northwest Territories about a century ago—represents more than a business endeavour for the IRC; it signifies a new phase in Indigenous economic empowerment, marrying traditional knowledge with modern corporate structures. However, this journey towards self-determination and sustainability is complex and involves reconciling the traditions and narratives of Indigenous communities with contemporary economic challenges.

FIGURE 1
Map (c. 2019) of Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Yukon, and NWT



Note. From File:NWT-YT Inuvialuit Settlement Locator.svg [Map], by awmcphee, June 9, 2019, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NWT-YT_Inuvialuit_Settlement_Locator.svg

Reindeer Herding: Global Cultural and Economic Significance

FIGURE 2
Grazing Caribou

Note. From File:Barren Ground Caribou Grazing with Autumn Foliage in Background.jpg [Photograph], by E. Bauer & P. Bauer, n.d., Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barren_ground_caribou_grazing_with_autumn_foliage_in_background.jpg

Contrary to common misconceptions, reindeer and caribou belong to the same species, *Rangifer tarandus,* and exhibit significant genetic and behavioural similarities. The primary distinction between them is their level of domestication: caribou *(Rangifer tarandus granti)* remain wild in North America while reindeer *(Rangifer tarandus tarandus)* are semi-domesticated. The domestication process produced variations in appearance and size: domesticated reindeer tend to be smaller due to selective breeding for tameness (Willis, 2006; Hill, 1968; Colson, Mager, & Hundertmark, 2014; Jackson, 1891). The Indigenous Sámi people, who account for about one-third of the world's reindeer-herding activities, have herded reindeer across northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia since time immemorial (Ravna, 2013). In the circumpolar North, around 2.5 million semi-domesticated reindeer are managed by approximately 100,000 herders from over 20 Arctic Indigenous groups, including the Nenets, Chukchi, Izhma Komi, Khanty, Mansi, Evenk, Even, and Selkup (Eira et al., 2008; Syroechkovski, 1999). Reindeer herding also extends to Mongolia, China, Greenland, and, more recently, to Alaska and Canada, where it covers over 4 million square kilometres of pastures. Semi-domesticated reindeer were initially introduced to Alaska from the Siberian Chukchi Peninsula and, later, from Sápmi (Lapland), which also marked the introduction of many key herding practices to the region (Vorren, 1994; Fjeld & Muus, 2012; Jackson, 1891).

FIGURE 3
Gabna Sameby Village

Note. From Fichier:Gabna sameby i Nord-Sverige (1).jpg [Photograph], by S. B. Kinsten, June 24, 2009, Wikimedia Commons, https://fr.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fichier:Gabna_sameby_i_Nord-Sverige_(1).jpg

Since then, reindeer herding has become a vital tradition for many North American Arctic Indigenous peoples. It is both an economic activity and a cultural practice, deeply rooted in respect for the natural world and blending traditional knowledge with contemporary corporate frameworks. Moreover, hunting wild reindeer and caribou remains essential for many Arctic Indigenous groups' survival, culture, social structure, and lifestyle (Eira et al., 2008). Guided by the seasonal migration patterns of the herds across the Arctic's vast landscapes, the practice of reindeer herding and hunting embodies a profound respect for nature.

Historical Context of Reindeer Herding in North America

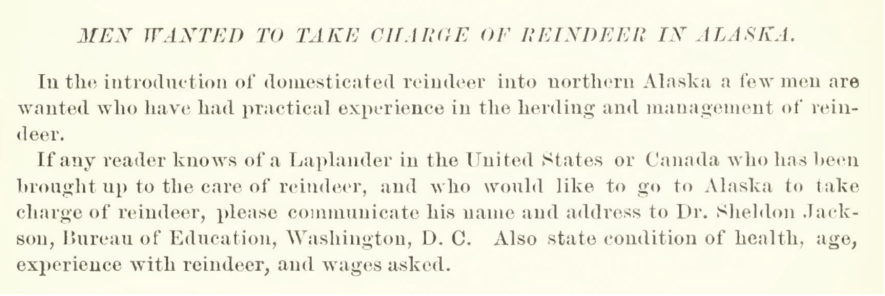
FIGURE 4
Reindeer Herd at Teller, Alaska

Note. From Reindeer Herd at Teller, Alaska [Photograph], by J. J. O'Neill, August 1913, Canadian Museum of History (Control No. 38383), Gatineau, QC.

Introduced to North America in 1892, reindeer herding emerged as a response to declining caribou populations: the critical decrease in caribou, vital to the diets of many communities, led to severe shortages and a looming threat of starvation (Treude, 1968; Finstad, Kielland, & Schneider, 2006; Jackson, 1891). Sheldon Jackson, a missionary and Alaska's General Agent of Education, highlighted the severity of the situation in his 1891 report on the introduction of domestic reindeer to Alaska. He noted that in the winter of 1889, not a single caribou was spotted within a 200-mile radius of Kotzebue Sound, underscoring the dire circumstances.

Reindeer herding was seen as a solution to this problem. To this end, between 1894 and 1904 Jackson obtained $207,500 from the United States Congress to initiate reindeer herding in Alaska, a project aimed at bolstering the local economy and providing a sustainable food source (Jackson, 1905; Fjeld & Muus, 2012). In pursuit of skilled herders, Jackson advertised in Scandinavian-American newspapers in 1893, specifically seeking "Laplanders" (Sámi), who were renowned for their reindeer-herding skills (Báiki, 2001; Jackson, 1891; Willis, 2006; Massey & Carlos, 2019). [1] The Reindeer Project sought to adapt Sámi herding methods to a North American setting, facilitating a cultural and knowledge exchange between Sámi herders and Alaska's Indigenous populations (Fjeld & Muus, 2012; Willis, 2006). However, Jackson also had colonial intentions to shift Indigenous Alaskans from their traditional hunting practices, claiming that reindeer herding would have a "civilizing" effect by promoting private resource ownership and establishing a wage-dependent class (Jackson, 1893). [2]

FIGURE 5
1893 Newspaper Advertisement



MEN WANTED TO TAKE CHARGE OF REINDEER IN ALASKA.

In the introduction of domesticated reindeer into northern Alaska a few men are wanted who have had practical experience in the herding and management of reindeer.

If any reader knows of a Laplander in the United States or Canada who has been brought up to the care of reindeer, and who would like to go to Alaska to take charge of reindeer, please communicate his name and address to Dr. Sheldon Jackson, Bureau of Education, Washington, D. C. Also state condition of health, age, experience with reindeer, and wages asked.

Note. From Report on Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, with Maps and Illustrations, by S. Jackson, 1893, Department of the Interior, United States Bureau of Education and US Senate.

In February 1894, Jackson sent William Kjellmann—a Norwegian Kven raised in Arctic Norway's Finnmark region, fluent in Sámi, and with reindeer herding experience—to recruit Sámi herders in Kautokeino, Norway, for the Alaskan project (Figure 5) (Fjeld & Muus, 2012; Vorren, 1994). Despite his experience, Kjellmann faced reluctance from the herders, who were hesitant to leave their homeland (Jackson, 1891). To negotiate, he arranged a meeting in Bosekop, a well-known Sámi trading spot. There, Kjellmann's presentation was met with silence from the herders, who took their time considering the offer but initially made no commitments (Jackson, 1896). The discussions stretched over four days, filled with questions from the Sámi, yet concluded without resolution, with the herders leaving for their summer pastures on the fifth day. Two weeks later, the Sámi finally sent a man back to Bosekop to deliver their decision (Jackson, 1896). [3] Ultimately, seven herding families, totalling 16 people along with their dogs, signed on for a three-year term (Jackson, 1899; Báiki, 2001; Willis, 2006).

FIGURE 6
Sámi Family in Front of a Lavvu (Traditional Sámi Tent)

Note. From Eighth Annual Report on Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, with Map and Illustrations, 1898, by S. Jackson, 1898, Department of the Interior, United States Bureau of Education.

In May 1894, the group set sail for New York. The dogs' importation necessitated extensive paperwork at Ellis Island due to the absence of breeding station certificates (Jackson, 1896), as they were Sámi herding dogs from the mountains (specifically, Lapland reindeer spitz). The group's journey by rail to Seattle was marked by several incidents: one dog died, another was stolen (and recovered), and they experienced racism when a Northern Pacific Railroad agent in Helena refused to provide food. Additionally, a young Sámi couple had postponed their wedding due to Jackson's short timeline, so they married during a stop in San Francisco. Despite these challenges, the group reached the Teller Reindeer Station on July 29, 1894 (Jackson, 1896).

FIGURE 7
Group of Lapland (Sámi) Herders Standing Near a Passenger Train

Note. From Group of Lapland (Sami) herders standing near a passenger train, Lapland-Yukon Relief Expedition, 1898 [Photograph], by A.B. Wilse, 1898, Seattle Photograph Collection, University of Washington, (Order No. 2665), Seattle, WA.

Upon arriving in Alaska, the Sámi began training Inuvialuit herding apprentices, many of whom were teenagers orphaned by the Great Death. The apprentices were offered food, lodging, and an annual allocation of five to ten reindeer for each year of their five-year apprenticeship—although they were initially skeptical about the promise of receiving their own reindeer (Fjeld & Muus, 2012). Most could also expect to receive 50 reindeer on loan to establish their own herd by the end of their apprenticeship (Massey & Carlos, 2019). In contrast, Sámi herders were assured ownership of a herd of 100 reindeer upon completing their three- to five-year contracts (Jackson, 1896), with full autonomy over herd management, including the rights to slaughter and sell (Massey & Carlos, 2019).

FIGURE 8
An Inuvialuit Herder and Reindeer

Note. From [Man with Reindeer] [Photograph], by A. Fleming, c. 1930, NWT Archives (N-1979-050-0305), Yellowknife, YT.

In 1897, under orders from the United States government, Jackson brought additional Sámi and reindeer to establish a permanent Sámi settlement in Alaska (Jackson, 1899). This endeavour involved purchasing 539 reindeer, 418 sleds, and 500 tons of moss from regions across Sápmi, including Kautokeino, Karasjok, and Enare (Jackson, 1899; Fjeld & Muus, 2012). Jackson documented the significant challenge of persuading individuals, deeply rooted in their ancestral lands, to uproot their lives and embark on a 12,500-mile journey to Alaska on two weeks' notice (Jackson, 1899)—but his efforts paid off, and in 1898, 113 Sámi men, women, and children (including babies and six newlywed couples) embarked for North America aboard the Manitoban (Jackson, 1899; Fjeld & Muus, 2012).

FIGURE 9
Families Associated with the Lapland Reindeer Expedition in Seattle en Route to Alaska

Note. From Eighth Annual Report on Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, with Map and Illustrations, 1898, by S. Jackson, 1898, Department of the Interior, United States Bureau of Education.

They arrived in Jersey City with only one casualty among the reindeer (Vorren, 1994; Jackson, 1896). The Sámi loaded the remaining reindeer onto trains at the Pennsylvania Railroad cattle yards and set off to Seattle. Upon arriving in Seattle, they were informed of a 10-day delay in their ship departure, resulting in a shortage of lichen (the reindeer's primary food source). They were taken to Woodland Park Zoo, but the unfamiliar forage proved harmful, leading to several reindeer deaths (Fjeld & Muus, 2012; Vorren, 1994). Then, in the subsequent voyage to Alaska on the sailing vessel *Seminole,* their trip was further delayed by a lack of wind, exacerbating the reindeer's starvation (Vorren, 1994). The situation worsened as the reindeer, fed only hay for several weeks, suffered from stress and dietary changes, leading to severe health issues (Conaty & Binder, 2004). Upon arrival at their destination, only 144 of the original 526 reindeer survived (Jackson, 1896).

FIGURE 10
Reindeer and Sámi at Woodland Park in Seattle en Route to Alaska

Note. From Reindeer and Sámi at Woodland Park, 1898 [Photographic print mounted on cardboard], by E. S. Curtis, 1898, Seattle Historical Society Collection, Museum of History & Industry (Image No. shs2899), Seattle, WA.

Initially, there was wariness between the Sámi and the Inuit, and differences in government compensation also caused some Inuit to be upset. For example, Inuvialuit owners were subjected to restrictions such as prohibitions on slaughtering and selling female reindeer to non-Natives (Massey & Carlos, 2019). Moreover, Jackson controlled the involvement of the Sámi, Yup'ik, and Inupiaq in the Reindeer Project, effectively reducing them to "auxiliaries of the white man" (Fjeld & Muus, 2012, p. 7). By 1896, Jackson modified the program, removing the incentive of reindeer compensation and establishing that upon an Inupiat owner's death, half of the herd would be returned to the mission rather than inherited by the owner's heirs (Vorren, 1994).

FIGURE 11
Reindeer en Route to the Klondike, Yukon Territory

Note. From Reindeer en route to the Klondike, Yukon Territory, probably 1898 [Photograph], by E. A. Hegg, ca. 1898, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections (Order no. HEG456), Seattle, WA.

Despite this, the Inuit and Sámi built mutual respect as they worked together in reindeer herding. Over time, the Inupiat recognized a kinship with the Sámi, rooted in a shared Indigenous worldview, reverence for nature, and striking parallels in their traditional ways of life (Vorren, 1994). These similarities were so profound that the cultures and lifestyles of the Sámi and Inupiat were almost indistinguishable (Nyborg, 2010). In letters the Sámi sent back to family members, they said, "There are many Eskimos here, and they are good people. They eat seal and fish and earn their living hunting and fishing. They live amid the white people the same way the Sámi of Finnmark live with Norwegians" (Solbakk & Solbakk, 2014, p. 48). The two communities became increasingly intertwined through marriage, causing clear lines between the two to fade (Willis, 2006). [4]

FIGURE 12
Families of Herders Watching Men Round Up Reindeer While Sitting in Front of a Summer Tent

Note. From Families of Herders Sit in Front of a Tent, Watching Men Round Up. Reindeer Depot, Mackenzie Delta [Photograph], by D. Wilkinson, 1955, Nunavut Archives (NU-1979-051-1130).

Over time, Jackson's heavy-handed management practices came under scrutiny. In 1905, the Secretary of the Interior investigated accusations regarding Jackson's misallocation of government funds for missionary purposes, as well as his policies on reindeer ownership among the mission, non-Native, and Inupiaq populations. The investigation culminated in Jackson's resignation and a focused effort to transfer as much reindeer ownership as possible to the Inupiaq (Finstad, et al., 2006).

FIGURE 13
Sámi Man Watching Reindeer Herd, Alaska

Note. From Man (Possibly a Sami from Norway) Watching Reindeer Herd, Alaska, 1897 [Photograph], 1897, Ralph E. MacKay Alaska Photograph Albums, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections (Order No. AWC6741), Seattle, WA.

In the end, over 600 Inupiaq and Yup'ik apprenticed in various aspects of reindeer herding, including milking, marking, and butchering (Vorren, 1994). By 1905, Alaska's reindeer population had reached approximately 10,000, predominantly owned by the Sámi; in 1910, there were over 27,000, with 19% of the total reindeer herd owned by just six families (Vorren, 1989; Báiki, 2001); and in 1920, the herds had grown to 600,000 reindeer, providing vital resources such as food and clothing. They even became pack animals for miners, pulling heavy loads and delivering mail and provisions across Alaska, the Yukon River, and British Columbia (Vorren, 1994; Fjeld & Muus, 2012; Conaty & Binder, 2004). This marked a significant advancement in establishing reindeer herding as a viable industry in the region because, for example, reindeer could run a route in four to five days that would take a dog team 50-60 days (Vorren, 1994), demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of the involved communities (Vorren, 1994; Fjeld & Muus, 2012; Conaty & Binder, 2004). This growth marked a significant evolution in the reindeer herding industry, showcasing its vital role in the region's economic and cultural landscape and establishing it as a foundational cornerstone of the Canadian Arctic's economy and culture.

Reindeer Industry Act

The success of the Reindeer Project did not go unnoticed, with non-Native reindeer ownership notably increasing in 1914 and leading to a surge in the reindeer population: by 1915 there were approximately 70,000-100,000 reindeer split between 98 herds. Sixty-nine percent of these reindeer were owned by 1,200 Inuit and Yup'ik individuals, while the remaining reindeer were held by a mix of Sámi, the US Government, various missions, and the Lomen Company (Báiki, 2001). Indeed, by 1929, the Lomen Company had acquired 14,083 reindeer and established a substantial commercial export operation. They purchased many reindeer from the Sámi, and also employed some Sámi as herders, expanding their operations to include slaughterhouses and two cold storage ships for transporting meat to the southern markets (Vorren, 1994).

FIGURE 14
Lomen Brothers Reindeer Meat Ad

Note. From Lomen Brothers Reindeer Meat Ad, c.1920, Glenbow Museum, Calgary, AB.

Carl Lomen, the company's owner, was a relentless promoter and lobbied investors, politicians, and Congress for financial support, as well as issuing shares on the stock exchange (Fawcett, 2022; Vorren, 1994). He argued that the reindeer industry could preserve wild game for hunters and gourmet enthusiasts, rehabilitate unused lands (e.g., tundra), and address the country's meat shortages—a position illustrated when the Nome Gold Rush caused the price of reindeer meat to double due to an increased demand for meat (Lantis, 1950). Lomen also hosted dinner parties featuring reindeer meat for elite clubs, highlighted its commercial potential on the lecture circuit, persuaded high-end restaurants to add reindeer meat to their menus, and arranged for reindeer meat to be served in dining car trains (Willis, 2006; Fawcett, 2022), noting that "reindeer meat is as good as, if not better than, other types of venison and serves as an excellent alternative to beef and mutton" (Lomen, 1920, p. X). He even pitched reindeer meat to pet food manufacturers (Fawcett, 2022). But Lomen's most extravagant marketing scheme began in 1926, involving department stores like Macy's. That Christmas, he sent live, harness-trained reindeer to various retail locations, where they paraded as "Santa's reindeer" led by Inuit or Sámi herders and cemented the cultural image of Santa and his reindeer (Smith, 2021; Fawcett, 2022). Lomen's efforts paid off, and by 1929, Americans had purchased nearly 6.5 million pounds of reindeer products, mostly meat from Lomen's.

FIGURE 15
Lomen & Company Sent Reindeer and a Santa Claus to Nome

Note. From The Rise and Fall of Alaska's 'Reindeer King,' by K. Fawcett, December 23, 2022, Atlas Obscura, https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/alaska-reindeer

However, that year's stock market crash, along with opposition from the beef industry, significantly impacted sales (Fawcett, 2022). Compounding the issue, the best markets for luxury meats were in far-away New York, and some states prohibited the sale

of reindeer meat by classifying it as game meat. Restrictive measures and preferences for beef over reindeer meat further hindered steady market development (Lantis, 1950). Lomen also faced local resistance: the Inuit accused Lomen of monopolistic practices, reindeer theft, and grazing his herds on Indigenous-designated lands, leading to years of disputes and hearings (Conaty & Binder, 2004; Fawcett, 2022). Due to these myriad factors, the reindeer industry, which had already been struggling due to the Depression, collapsed, decreasing its production from over 700,000 pounds of reindeer meat annually to just a few thousand (Bown, 2014).

Despite its collapse, Lomen's company still had a significant impact on the reindeer industry: prompted partly by the dominance of the Lomen Brothers' white-owned reindeer enterprise and partly by Indigenous dissatisfaction and political activism in the 1920s and early 1930s, the Reindeer Act was passed by the United States Congress on September 1, 1937. [5] This crucial law significantly altered the industry by restricting reindeer ownership in Alaska to "Alaskan Natives" and transferred oversight of the reindeer program to the Alaska Division of the Office of Indian Affairs (Báiki, 2001; Hanson, 1952). This move aimed to consolidate all non-Native-owned reindeer and their equipment under government ownership (Willis, 2006) and resulted in the federal government's $500,000 purchase of the Lomen reindeer business (Massey & Carlos, 2019; Fawcett, 2022).

While the Reindeer Act aimed to enhance food security and income for Indigenous Alaskans, its success varied. Despite evidence suggesting that herding was linked to reduced indebtedness, the Act did not boost income for Indigenous Alaskan households as intended: ultimately, herding communities showed lower income and assets (Massey & Carlos, 2019). The program's rules, including the ban on sales to non-Natives and the requirement for active slaughtering, limited Indigenous households' ability to capitalize on market opportunities and adversely affected Inuit households' financial opportunities (Massey & Carlos, 2019).

The Reindeer Act's Effect on the Sámi

The Reindeer Act also significantly impacted the Sámi. Unexpected political debates regarding white ownership reclassified them as non-Native, requiring them to relinquish their herds to the government for $3-4 per animal (Willis, 2006). [6] Many Sámi felt disillusioned with the system that had initially lured them to Alaska, 4with some herders returning to Sápmi, while others pursued gold mining or fur farming opportunities (Vorren, 1994). Still others joined the gold rush or settled near Seattle in Poulsbo (Jensen, 2012; Vorren, 1994). Anders Bær poignantly described the situation: "We didn't wish to give up our animals... After the animals were gone, we just remained in the village. Our people started getting old. My father said he wished to die here because this was his home" (Nyborg, 2010, p. X). However, there was one important exception to the Sámi's disenfranchisement: Sámi individuals who had married into "Alaskan Native" (e.g., Inupiat, Yup'ik) families were allowed to continue herding, creating a significant exception to the broad legislative changes (Nyborg, 2010).

Canadian Reindeer Project

During the time that the Reindeer Act was being put into place, the Canadian government had started seeking remedies for their own caribou shortage and its impact on the Inuvialuit, who relied heavily on caribou for sustenance and winter clothing (Conaty & Binder, 2004). Government reports from 1922 and 1928 recommended reindeer herding as a viable solution, highlighting the Mackenzie River Delta as an ideal location. These studies suggested that the northeastern part of the region could support over half a million reindeer (Vorren, 1994; Conaty & Binder, 2004). This approach sought to address both the decline in caribou populations and the social challenges posed by government relocation of Inuit to areas near trading posts and RCMP outposts, which had disrupted their traditional lifestyle (Conaty & Binder, 2004). The Lomen brothers facilitated the Canadian government's plan by selling them 3,515 reindeer intended for delivery to Kittigazuit, Northwest Territories (Vorren, 1994; Conaty & Binder, 2004).

FIGURE 16
Laplander (Sámi) Andrew Bær Poses with Two Reindeer

Note. From Laplander Andrew Bahr (Bær) Poses with Two Reindeer (in Full Winter Attire and at His Side at a Reindeer Fair Held in January 1915 at Igloo, Alaska [Photograph], 1915, Glenbow Museum (NC-1-547D), Calgary, AB.

Labrador

The Canadian Reindeer Project in the Northwest Territories was not an isolated initiative but built upon earlier reindeer projects in Canada. Wilfred Grenfell, a doctor in Newfoundland, initiated Canada's first reindeer herding project. He was convinced that Newfoundland and Labrador's vast moss-covered lands would be as suitable for domestic reindeer as they were for wild caribou (Privy Council Office, 1919). Grenfell

consulted with Sheldon Jackson in the United States, then raised funds and urged the Canadian government to bring three Sámi families and 300 reindeer to St. Anthony, Newfoundland in 1908: within five years, the herd grew to approximately 1,500 (Smith, 2021). [7] Grenfell's early success demonstrated the potential for reindeer herding in Canada.

However, as time went on, the project faced several challenges. Grenfell's absence during World War I, disease outbreaks among the reindeer, local resistance from Newfoundlanders, animal poaching, and the Sámi herders' departure all contributed to its decline. By 1917, only about 250 reindeer remained. These remaining animals were transferred to Rocky Bay on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and later to Anticosti Island. However, there was a silver lining to the project's failure: it (a) proved that reindeer could be successfully herded in Canada without undue cost, as the animals ate natural food sources, and (b) demonstrated that reindeer could be effective means of transport. [8] In light of this, Grenfell remained convinced of his project's feasibility (Smith, 2021). In two letters from 1921, Grenfell advocated for continued reindeer herding in Newfoundland and Labrador, underscoring the overcrowding of reindeer grounds in Sweden and Norway and the willingness of Sámi herders to relocate to Canada with their herds (Privy Council Office, 1919).

FIGURE 17
Unnamed Man with Two Laplanders (Sámi), Amadjuak, Baffin Island

Note. From Nomad Lives, by A. Averbouh, N. Goutas, & S. Méry (Eds.), 2021, Publications Scientifiques du Muséum.

Baffin Island

Building upon the Labrador project, Canada's second reindeer project, sometimes called the Amadjuak experiment, expanded efforts to Baffin Island in the early 1920s, where the Hudson's Bay Company created the Hudson's Bay Reindeer Company to establish a commercial herd (Privy Council Office, 1919). In 1920, Vilhjalmur Stefansson was granted an exclusive grazing lease on Baffin Island and appointed as the new company's director (Privy Council Office, 1919; Smith, 2021). In May 1921, the Hudson's Bay Company sent Francis Wood and Captain J.A. Mikkelborg to Norway on the HBC ship Nascopie to purchase 689 reindeer and pick up Sámi herders and their families. They arrived on November 1, 1921, in Amadjuak (Laugrand, 2021).

The plan was for the Sámi to teach the Inuit about reindeer herding (Laugrand, 2021). The Sámi herders developed a friendly relationship with the Inuit, who were intrigued by their similar worldview and clothing and who saw the reindeer herders as "cousins" (Laugrand, 2021, p. X). However, the Sámi herders struggled to manage the herd due to the difficult terrain and weakened animals. One strategy involved dividing the herd into smaller groups to prevent starvation, but approximately 250 reindeer escaped and mixed with the wild caribou herds (Laugrand, 2021). Despite these difficulties, this project did lay the groundwork for future reindeer herding initiatives—particularly the Canadian Reindeer Project in the Northwest Territories.

Northwest Territories

FIGURE 18
Canadian Reindeer Project

Note. From The Great Canadian Reindeer Project, by S.R. Brown, 2014, Canada's History, https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/environment/the-great-canadian-reindeer-project

The Canadian government's early interest in reindeer herding emerged during a period of instability in northern subsistence economies, when declining fox populations and volatile fur prices after the First World War (1918-20) raised concerns about the long-term viability of the fur trade (Canada. Royal Commission 1922). In the winter of 1919-1920, members of the Royal Commission on Musk-Ox and Reindeer met in Ottawa to evaluate reindeer husbandry as a potential source of stable food supply and income in the Northwest Territories, identifying extensive regions of the western Arctic as suitable grazing lands. Their discussions also reflected the influence of the Alaskan reindeer industry, which U.S. officials had promoted since the 1890s as a more dependable alternative to boom-and-bust resource economies. Oral histories noted that an Inuvialuit man named Mangilaluk negotiated on behalf of local communities with the government, offering a potential agreement with the government if reindeer were brought from Alaska to the Tuktoyaktuk area (Stuhl, 2022).A few years later, Danish-born botanist Alf Erling Porsild and his brother Robert were appointed to conduct a detailed investigation on whether reindeer herding was feasible in Canada. They spent two years examining the area between the Alaska-Yukon boundary and Coronation Gulf, covering 15,000 miles by dog team, canoe, motorboat, pack dogs, and snowshoe. They concluded that the region was well-suited for reindeer herding, particularly those areas east of the Mackenzie Delta and north and east of Great Bear Lake (Smith, 2021). Meanwhile, none other than Carl Lomen travelled to Seattle to connect with Sámi individuals who had sold their reindeer herds and moved south: Lomen's goal was to recruit additional herders to join the Sámi previously recruited by the Canadian Government (Báiki, 2001; Conaty & Binder, 2004). Anders Bær, a lead herder for Lomen, offered to move the reindeer and selected Mikkel Nilukka to assist in this endeavour. The ambitious journey commenced in 1929, with a projected two year, 2,000-kilometer trek over mountains and vast tundra. However, the reindeer and their herders did not reach Kittigazuit until 1933, highlighting the challenging terrains and Bær's persistence in recovering reindeer that had joined with the wild caribou herds (Vorren, 1994; Conaty & Binder, 2004).

FIGURE 19
Inuvialuit Herders in Corral with Reindeer During Annual Roundup

Note. From Inuvialuit Herders in Reindeer Corral with Reindeer During Annual Roundup (Richards Island, Northwest Territories) [Photograph], 1928-37, Canadian Archives (R216-1093-5-E.

The Canadian government prepared for the herders' arrival by officially designating a tract of land east of the Mackenzie Delta as the Reindeer Grazing Reserve (Smith, 2021). And Erling Porsild stayed on to oversee the construction of the new town of Reindeer Station and a reindeer corral near Kittigazuit. The operation's success was signalled by the birth of 815 calves upon the reindeer's arrival (Báiki, 2001; Hill, 1968). However, reindeer herding was not met with universal enthusiasm. While the Canadian government anticipated that the Inuvialuit of the Delta would eagerly adopt reindeer herding—and, hopefully, transition away from relying on caribou and towards a pastoral lifestyle—their reactions ranged from indifference to disdain. The Inuvialuit were not among the Arctic peoples that herded reindeer: they were hunters, gatherers, fishers, and trappers, and their year revolved around the optimal times for different foods. Most Inuit were unwilling to exchange their traditional lifestyle (Laugrand, 2021), particularly in the Mackenzie Delta, which boasts a richness of animal species (Treude, 1979). The Inuvialuit's cultural preference for hunting is deeply rooted, with one Inuit hunter, Pauloosie Kilabuk, explaining, "We Inuit want to kill animals, not to live with them" (Laugrand, 2021). Reindeer herding required a significant shift in lifestyle, involving wintering in the hills, guiding reindeer across ice and tundra to

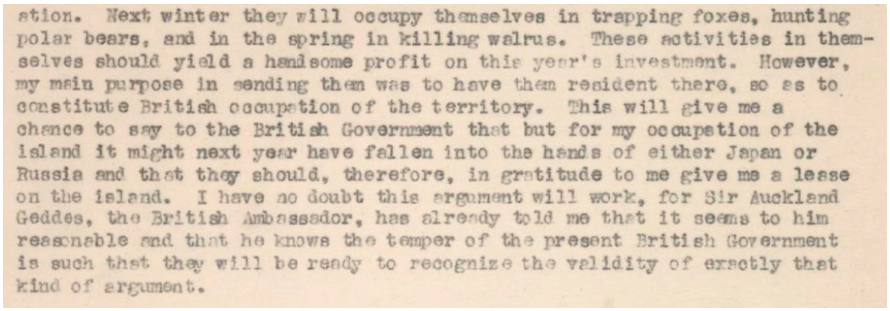
the calving grounds, and staying with the herd at night for warmth and protection. Even if some Inuvialuit were interested in herding, pursuing it risked alienation from their community (Edwards, 2016). Another challenge to the Reindeer Project was the government's decision to make hunting illegal on the Reindeer Grazing Reserve's 17,000 square kilometres (which eventually expanded to over 46,000 square kilometers) (Treude, 1979). And the slaughtering of reindeer was highly regulated, preventing the Inuvialuit from sharing meat.

Moreover, there is evidence that a government agenda to establish sovereignty over the Arctic partly drove the relocation of Inuit into permanent settlements. [9] These projects were, to some extent, a manifestation of the desire to occupy and utilize these regions (Smith, 2021). Evidence of this governmental agenda is seen in Vilhjalmur Stefansson's correspondence. In a letter dated August 30, 1921, Stefansson stated,

My main purpose in sending them was to have them resident there, so as to constitute British occupation of the territory. This will give me a chance to say to the British Government that but for my occupation of the island it might next year have fallen into the hands of either Japan or Russia and that they should, therefore, in gratitude to me give me a lease on the island.

This explicit admission highlights how reindeer herding projects were used strategically to assert sovereignty over the Arctic.

FIGURE 20
Excerpt from Vilhjalmur Stefansson's Letter to George Jennings



ation. Next winter they will occupy themselves in trapping foxes, hunting polar bears, and in the spring in killing walrus. These activities in themselves should yield a handsome profit on this year's investment. However, my main purpose in sending them was to have them resident there, so as to constitute British occupation of the territory. This will give me a chance to say to the British Government that but for my occupation of the island it might next year have fallen into the hands of either Japan or Russia and that they should, therefore, in gratitude to me give me a lease on the island. I have no doubt this argument will work, for Sir Auckland Geddes, the British Ambassador, has already told me that it seems to him reasonable and that he knows the temper of the present British Government is such that they will be ready to recognize the validity of exactly that kind of argument.

Note. From Letter from Vilhjalmur Stefansson to George Jennings, 30 August 1921, by V. Stefansson, 1921, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College (Stefansson Mss-98, Box 9, Folder 6), Hanover, NH.

However, despite the Inuvialuit's wariness, the Mackenzie reindeer operation eventually became a model of efficiency and sustainability, revolutionizing reindeer herding with open herding techniques and unified management. This development provided a reliable food source and income and played a significant role in cultural

enrichment for the local communities (Finstad, Kielland, & Schneider, 2006; |Hill, 1968).

But significant changes were on the horizon. In 1959, management of the Canadian Reindeer Project was handed over to the Canadian Wildlife Service, signalling a pivotal change in its administration (Library and Archives Canada 2015, Báiki, 2001), and in 1973, the Canadian federal government embarked on a new initiative in Indigenous relations, pledging to negotiate comprehensive land claims agreements with Indigenous groups that had not yet signed treaties (Wilson & Alcantara, 2012). The following year marked a significant step towards Indigenous ownership as Inuit entrepreneurs acquired Canadian Reindeer Limited (Báiki, 2001), although there were also setbacks along the way: for example, the Inuit Tapirisat's 1976 land claim did not reach a successful resolution (Wilson & Alcantara, 2012). Ultimately, though, the foundation was laid for a locally managed reindeer herding industry in Canada, leading to the involvement of the IRC and the continuation of the Mackenzie Delta herd's legacy.

The Inuvialuit Final Agreement

This movement towards Indigenous land rights and a locally managed reindeer herding industry continued to gained momentum, and in 1984 the Inuvialuit presented their claim, culminating in the negotiation of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. This historic agreement endowed the Inuvialuit with extensive rights and resources: a settlement area spanning 435,000 square kilometres, ownership of 91,000 square kilometres, mineral rights over 13,000 square kilometres, and a substantial cash settlement of $152 million (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016). It also included additional economic and social development funds, rights to harvest wildlife across the settlement area, and significant authority over managing the region's economy, environment, and social programs. Notably, the treaty affirmed the Inuvialuit's entitlement to self-government powers on par with other Indigenous groups in the Northwest Territories (Wilson & Alcantara, 2012).

After the Inuvialuit Final Agreement was finalized in 1984, Canadian Reindeer Ltd. mistakenly believed their pre-existing contract would supersede the new settlement. This misinterpretation led to them not securing specific grazing rights with the Inuvialuit. The IRC insisted on grazing fees from Canadian Reindeer Ltd. for land use within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, an expectation Canadian Reindeer Ltd. challenged. The ensuing legal battle resulted in a deadlock, stalling progress on the matter for years (Conaty & Binder, 2003). Around 1996, Nellie Cournoyea of the IRC and William Nasigaluak of Canadian Reindeer Ltd. approached local Inuk-Sámi Lloyd Binder with a proposition to form a new company aimed at acquiring the reindeer, thereby resolving a longstanding dispute. This led to the start of the Kunnek Resource Development Corporation. Several primary shareholders were members of the Binder-Kunik families, marking it as a predominantly Inuvialuit-operated venture (Conaty & Binder, 2012). By 1997, Inuk Otto Binder and his son Lloyd successfully purchased the herd, making Otto the first Inuvialuit to own and herd reindeer.

The family was uniquely positioned for success. Lloyd leveraged his experience from his time as a senior manager for the Government of the Northwest Territories' Department of Economic Development and Tourism, as well as from his time as the general manager of Canadian Reindeer Ltd. (Conaty & Binder, 2012). Otto had many years of first-hand herding experience (Conaty & Binder, 2004), and Otto's wife Ellen Pulk was descended from the Finnish Sámi hired by the Canadian government to bring reindeer to the Northwest Territories, directly linking the family's heritage to the origins of reindeer herding in the region (Conaty & Binder, 2004; Vorren, 1994). [10]

FIGURE 21
Ellen Pulk-Binder at Reindeer Station

Note. From [A woman dressed in fur parka uses a rope leash to lead two reindeer] [Photograph], by the Kirk family, 1946, NWT Archives (Kirk Family Fonds, N-2005-001: 0115), Yellowknife, NT.

Over the following two years, a comprehensive economic feasibility and business plan was developed (Conaty & Binder, 2012). This process included an environmental impact screening for the Inuvialuit Environmental Impact Screening Committee, established in 1982 as part of the Western Arctic Claim. This screening was significantly more complex than the previous one-page form from the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, which had been considered sufficient for addressing concerns related to oil and gas projects (Conaty & Binder, 2012). In contrast, the new screening involved producing a 10,000-page report, complete with meetings, consultations, reviews, and detailed studies of impact statements. Completing the impact screening process took a year, at which point it underwent a full review by the Environmental Impact Review Board, a process spanning two years and costing between $50,000 and $75,000 (Conaty & Binder, 2012).

Complicating matters, the reindeer herding initiative fell under the jurisdiction of four governments and numerous agencies, with a review process primarily designed for oil and gas projects, not agriculture (Conaty & Binder, 2012). Moreover, the regulations were being applied to an existing enterprise with reindeer present in Canada for half a century. The requirement to continuously consult and report to various government entities—including federal, territorial, and Inuvialuit representatives within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region Co-management system [11] —does ensure all regional development is monitored, but it comes with great time and cost for the reindeer herders. Reporting obligations cover industry movements, interactions with wildlife, and herd sizes (which influence grazing fees). There were also new costs: for example, shooting a grizzly bear that threatened the herd incurred a $10,000 trophy fee. As well, the project was limited to harvesting antler velvet for the Far Eastern market and small amounts of meat for local sustenance, as exporting meat would necessitate further infrastructure and an additional rigorous review process (Conaty & Binder, 2012). The project also faced significant restrictions from the Canadian government in the form of prohibitions against moving herds to new areas (such as the coast during summer for bug relief), leading to the death of some animals (Conaty & Binder, 2012). The fluctuating demand for reindeer meat, which is often influenced by the availability of hunted caribou meat, also needed to be taken into account (Pope, 2015), as did the relatively small returns generated by herds, the lack of reliable marketing systems, and the necessity of meeting village meat needs, which can slow desired herd growth (Naylor et al., 1980).

The Reindeer Market

Research in the economics and marketing of reindeer is a relatively recent development (Alm, 2007) but can helpfully be applied to the issues facing the Mackenzie Delta herd. Regulatory and legal conflicts have historically increased harvesting costs and reduced profitability for the Mackenzie Delta herd. The Northwest Territories is one of the few jurisdictions with specific reindeer regulations, requiring permits for export and restricting grazing and meat sales without approved marketing plans (Reindeer Act, 2014). These regulations create additional hurdles for market expansion and operational efficiency. As a result, when compared to other similar enterprises—such as Kivalliq Arctic Foods, which operates a commercial caribou hunting operation that processes and ships meat to markets in Quebec, Ontario, and internationally, and Hillside Palace Elk Farms, which sells high-end reindeer steaks and cuts locally in Quebec (Humphries, 2007)—the Mackenzie Delta reindeer herd faces increased challenges due to regulatory and legal conflicts, which then increase harvesting costs and reduce profitability. This difference in business models highlights the importance of local market access and the impact of transportation costs on profitability.

Indeed, the commercial export of reindeer meat has a complicated history. As previously discussed, in the early 20th century, the Lomen Company shipped significant quantities of reindeer meat to southern markets: for example, they shipped 2 million pounds in 1929 (Brady, 1968). However, competition from the beef industry and the stock market crash in 1929 led to the industry's decline, culminating in the 1937 Reindeer Act

that restricted ownership to native Alaskans (Nixon, 1983). Modern reindeer herding faces similar market challenges, such as the high cost of shipping meat to viable markets (such as high-end restaurants in New York), and new challenges such as the expense of maintaining technology essential for herding operations (Jernsletten & Klokov, 2002). Technologies like snowmobiles, helicopters, and satellite tracking tags are costly but necessary for efficient herd management. These expenses, coupled with high fuel costs, can limit the profitability of reindeer herding, particularly for small herds (Humphries, 2007). Additionally, the sale of soft antlers, once a significant income source, has nearly ceased due to market changes in Asia and regulatory bans in countries like Korea. Predation and environmental challenges further complicate the market landscape, as large herds attract predators, increasing the need for protective measures (Jernsletten & Klokov, 2002). Despite these challenges, reindeer meat commands a high price across Europe and North America, with demand often exceeding supply. However, the industry's success is closely tied to location, infrastructure, and regulation. Proximity to large population centers or existing infrastructure can significantly reduce costs and improve market access. Conversely, remote operations face higher costs and logistical difficulties (Humphries, 2007).

Ultimately, the reindeer industry requires a delicate balance between traditional practices and modern economic strategies. Ensuring sustainable herd sizes, supporting community involvement, and navigating complex regulatory environments are crucial for the future success of reindeer herding in the Mackenzie Delta and beyond. These considerations led to Binder's decision to sell the reindeer herd to the IRC in 2021, ending the private ownership of the herd and helping to ensure the community's food security and the preservation of Inuvialuit cultural traditions (IRC, n.d.; CBC News, 2021). The IRC reindeer herding team will oversee the herd's revitalization, with the main objective of increasing the herd from its current number of 2,200 to 2,800 animals to ensure a sustainable processing level (CBC News, 2021). These plans are directly connected to the IRC initiative to create a Country Food Processing Plant that acquires country food from Inuvialuit and distributes it to those who cannot obtain it themselves (IRC, n.d.). The IRC also plans to provide meat to beneficiaries of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (CBC News, 2021). The plant opened in Inuvik during 2021 and processes animals from community hunts as well as reindeer meat to supply traditional country food to the community (Fillion et al., 2014). [12] It will also offer employment and training opportunities, on-the-land learning and education, tourism opportunities for Inuvialuit beneficiaries, and food processing courses so Inuvialuit can learn to make various products out of reindeer (IRC, n.d.; CBC News, 2021). This initiative underscores a strategic approach towards Indigenous autonomy and governance, effectively marrying ancestral wisdom with modern economic strategies to enhance food sovereignty, and thus enhancing community welfare and cultural continuity (IRC, n.d.). As Duane Ningaqsiq Smith, IRC Chair and CEO stated, "We've been indirectly, directly engaged for decades" (CBC News, 2021).

Though the IRC's role is mainly economic, its activities have governance implications by contributing to the daily administration of the region (Wilson & Alcantara, 2012). The IRC's success, marked by its cultural integration and emphasis on

community-based governance, is a potential model for adaptation by other governance structures. By leveraging local resources and enhancing market access, the IRC aims to create a stable and prosperous reindeer herding industry that benefits all Inuvialuit members (IRC, n.d.). This represents a form of self-governance that is responsive and evolves with the community's needs and aspirations (Wilson & Alcantara, 2012; Selle & Wilson, 2022).

FIGURE 22
Inuvialuit Reindeer Herder in the Mackenzie Delta

Note. From [Inuvialuit Reindeer Herder in the Mackenzie Delta] [Photograph], by A. Fleming, c. 1930, NWT Archives (N-1979-050-0306), Yellowknife, NT.

Modern Evolution: From Herding Traditions to Corporate Strategy

The Inuvialuit communities' reindeer herding journey is a testament to adaptation, resilience, and the integration of tradition with economic development. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation's oversight of the reindeer herd highlights the innovative union of traditional practices and modern economic frameworks, paving the way for sustainable development and Indigenous autonomy. This approach offers key insights into cultural preservation, economic resilience, and self-governance for Indigenous communities globally. The establishment and operations of the IRC raise important questions about minimizing assimilation into colonial systems (e.g., corporations) while pursuing self-determination. By managing lands and investments stemming from the Settlement, the Inuvialuit have ensured equitable benefit sharing among all beneficiaries. Elected directors' governance of the IRC illustrates its accountability to the community, in contrast to governmental control (*Inuvialuit Final Agreement,* n.d.; Wilson & Alcantara, 2012). Furthermore, the IRC's dedication to traditional food-sharing practices and its goal to expand the reindeer herd demonstrates its broader role in regional governance and Indigenous leadership. Finally, the IRC's effectiveness as a governance institution is

highlighted by financial soundness and elder participation (Wilson & Alcantara, 2012; Simeone, 2007). As Indigenous communities worldwide endeavour to amalgamate traditional practices with modern economic demands, the Inuvialuit approach provides invaluable lessons in cultural preservation, economic sustainability, and governance.

Conclusion

The history of reindeer herding within North America is a powerful narrative on a global Indigenous scale. While reindeer herding is a traditional practice in many Arctic regions, it is important to understand how governments can use traditional practices from other Indigenous groups to bolster their own colonial goals, such as keeping Inuit families geographically connected to specific areas. However, it is also important to acknowledge how the narrative became more complex and nuanced as relationships and marriages developed between the Inuvialuit and Sámi and as communities adapted and changed. Now, the goal is for reindeer herding to not only drive sustainable development and economic empowerment but to also be one of the tools for Inuvialuit self-determination.

The IRC's acquisition of the reindeer herd, coupled with initiatives like the Country Food Processing Plant, signals a significant commitment to community food security and preserving Inuvialuit cultural practices (IRC, n.d.) and underscores a strategic approach towards Inuvialuit autonomy and self-governance. It exemplifies adaptive self-governance that dynamically responds to the community's evolving needs and goals (IRC, n.d.). From this history and experience, we can learn several important lessons for Indigenous economic development:

1. Integrating traditional practices with modern economic frameworks can provide a robust foundation for sustainable development. The IRC's success in developing the Country Foods Processing Plant and managing the reindeer herd illustrates how creative practices can be leveraged to create economic opportunities. This integration provides a robust foundation for sustainable development and navigates contemporary challenges while maintaining cultural identity.
2. The importance of self-governance and community-driven initiatives cannot be overstated. The IRC's approach emphasizes direct governance by elected directors accountable to the community, offering a model of effective and inclusive Indigenous economic development. Ensuring that the benefits of economic activities are shared equitably among all beneficiaries promotes social cohesion and collective well-being.
3. The resilience and adaptability shown by the Inuvialuit in the face of historical and contemporary challenges highlight the critical role of perseverance, adaptability, and strategic planning in Indigenous economic development.

The saga of reindeer herding within North America from its introduction to the present day showcases resilience, adaptability, and combining traditional knowledge (both local and international) with modern strategies to achieve goals. The Inuvialuit experience with reindeer herding and the establishment of the IRC provide valuable insights into how Indigenous communities can achieve the economic empowerment and self-determination necessary to create sustainable and prosperous futures.

FIGURE 23
A Young Reindeer

Note. From File:TinyReindeer.jpg [Photograph], by F. M. Marzoa Alonso, July 2006, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TinyReindeer.jpg.

END NOTES

1 The feedback from these advertisements indicated that successful recruitment required travelling to Sápmi to engage herders directly. Additionally, the responses underscored the importance of including herding dogs in the project to ensure its success (Jackson, 1891).

2 That said, while broad reindeer ownership brought the Inupiat into the private property system, it was inadequate for the industry's commercialization (Demuth, 2012).

3 For some context, Jackson's offer to the Sámi was made during the 1852 Sámi rebellion against Norway: the Sámi objected to policies mandating the Norwegian language, discouraging the Sámi's nomadic lifestyle, and enforcing boarding school attendance, correctly viewing them as attempts to assimilate the Sámi and sever ties with their heritage (Berg, 2013).

4 Indeed, their descendants often regard their Sámi heritage and Inupiat roots as equal (Nyborg, 2010).

[5] Lomen, who was the predominant non-Inuit reindeer owner in Alaska, believed that the Act was a reaction to the burgeoning reindeer meat market's threat to the cattle industry's dominance and blamed the Act for triggering opposition to non-Inuit reindeer ownership amid the economic downturn of the era (Finstad, Kielland, & Schneider, 2006; Lomen, 1954).

[6] Interestingly, no village altogether ceased reindeer herding: those without reindeer by 1940 likely never herded in the first place.

[7] Not all the reindeer remained with the Sámi. Of the initial 300 reindeer, 50 were transported to the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company to be used for hauling logs to its paper mill in Grand Falls (Bartlett, 2010), while another 50 were sold to an experimental reindeer project in western Canada.

[8] The Alaskan reindeer had been used as transport in British Columbia and the Yukon (Vorren, 1994; Fjeld & Muus, 2012; Conaty & Binder, 2004), and the Labrador project paved the way for projects on Baffin Island and the Northwest Territories. There was discussion of projects in Hudson's Bay along the rivers near York Factory and Moose Factory and even plans to include Winnipeg, Manitoba and Cochrane, Alberta as wintering grounds (Privy Council Office, 1919).

[9] That said, while some researchers have noted the challenges in establishing a direct connection between sovereignty and the reindeer projects, it is unlikely that these projects were unrelated to Canadian authorities' concerns about the security of their northern territories (Smith, 2021).

[10] Ellen's mother later reflected that her participation was partly influenced by a six-month trip to Germany in 1930 as part of an exhibition showcasing Sámi lifestyle and culture. These shows, which are now recognized as perpetuating notions of white racial superiority, ironically ignited a curiosity in Ellen's mother about life in other countries and the potential for a better future (Conaty & Binder, 2012; Lehtola, 2013).

[11] These entities include the Inuvialuit Land Administration, Inuvialuit Game Council, Inuvialuit Hunters and Trappers Committee, and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

[12] The Country Food Plant processes various animals, including moose, reindeer, muskox, beaver, whale, and several species of fish.

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