

**Managing the Moraine:
Political Economy and Political Culture Approaches
to
Assessing the Success of Nunavut**

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Introduction

The creation of Nunavut has been described as a bold, innovative step towards improving Aboriginal peoples' lives, empowering them by establishing a governance system they control and which serves their interests. It is therefore important to assess how successful Nunavut has been.

How might one evaluate whether things are going well or going poorly in a political jurisdiction? For political scientists, this might mean examining levels of political engagement, the government's ability to balance its books, the government's effectiveness in delivering programmes and services, the openness and fairness of the policy process (or the people's belief that it is open and fair) and economic indicators such as unemployment levels or economic growth rates; various other measures could be used. Evaluating the success of a new jurisdiction could proceed in two quite different ways. We can identify the goals of those who wanted to create a new polity and determine whether they have been met. Alternatively, we can focus on whether things have changed, and changed for the better. We could ask, for example, whether the new arrangements have produced higher levels of political engagement, a distinct policy process or policy outputs or improved standards of living. In some areas, change might be expected to be rapid, while changes in other areas might not appear for decades.

With Nunavut into its second decade, we attempt in this paper to reach some judgements of its success by evaluating four aspects of political life in Nunavut: political participation, the functioning of its civil service, the extent to which Nunavut is an Inuit government and standards of living. We employ two contrasting conceptual approaches – political culture and political economy – in seeking insight into political developments in Canada's newest territory.

Nunavut – An Overview

The basics of Nunavut can be set out succinctly. Nunavut came into being on April 1, 1999 when the Inuit-dominated Eastern Arctic was split off from the Northwest Territories. Covering some two million square kilometres – roughly the size of Western Europe, representing one-fifth of Canada's land mass – it is home to barely 30,000 residents. Approximately 85 per cent of Nunavummiut (the people of Nunavut) are Inuit, of whom 85 per cent speak Inuktitut. The population is dispersed across 25 communities, no two joined by roads; the largest is Iqaluit, the capital, with a population of just over 6,000 according to the 2006 Census; only two others have as many as 2000 residents and most have fewer than 1000.^a Nunavut's demographic profile differs tremendously from that of southern Canada in terms of age; whereas about 17 per cent of the Canadian population is less than 15 years old, in Nunavut this cohort represents over 40 per cent of the population.^b With its women having the highest fertility rate in the country, Nunavut's population continues to expand significantly.

Though the Arctic has experienced far more dramatic environmental change because of global warming than the rest of the planet, Nunavut's climate remains harsh. Winters are much longer, and typically colder, than elsewhere in Canada; when trees are coming into bud throughout Southern Canada, Nunavut remains snow- and ice-covered and of course there are no trees to bud.

The public sector is by far the largest employer in the territory; as discussed below, the private sector is weak, whereas each community has not only its local government plus schools, a nursing station and various territorial and federal government offices and agencies; the territorial government has a surprisingly large bureaucracy and there is a much smaller, yet still sizeable, federal presence as well.

The territorial population – and thus the government – faces pressing social and economic needs. Rates of suicide are by far the most disturbing, the highest of any jurisdiction in Canada and among the highest in the world. As the data in Table 1 make clear, levels of infant mortality, drinking and smoking are the highest in the country, while access to doctors and educational attainment are the lowest. Levels of unemployment and the average household income also make clear that the government faces very real economic challenges.

Table 1 about here.

Politically, Nunavut is at once very similar to and very different from the other territories and provinces. The Government of Nunavut (GN) is a Westminster-style 'responsible government' elected by all territorial residents (Inuit or not), supported by a hierarchical, merit-based public service organized into conventional departments (Finance, Education, Health and Social Services, etc). At the same time, Nunavut's very existence is rooted in a comprehensive land claim, the significance of which can hardly be overstated.^c Many of its provisions – which carry quasi-constitutional status – relate to institutional governance arrangements, from a set of powerful wildlife and environmental regulatory co-management boards to formal status in various government processes for Inuit land claim organizations. As well, the GN has explicitly committed itself to operating according to traditional Inuit values – *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ: "that which has been long known by Inuit").

Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), the territory-wide land claim organization and the three regional Inuit associations (RIAs) which comprise NTI represent all Nunavut Inuit (the "beneficiaries" of the claim). At first glance they might appear to be interest groups – unusually influential interest groups to be sure, but interest groups nevertheless. Such a categorization, however, grossly underestimates their importance in the governance of Nunavut. NTI is not – nor does it think of itself as – an alternate government, yet it does perform a number of governance functions, such as nominating and appointing members to the powerful 'Institutions of Public Government' (discussed below) and delivering social services to its members, for example through a hunter support programme and what amounts to pension programme for Inuit elders. NTI is an omnipresent force in territorial politics, as evidenced by its formal accords with the GN which codify its formal involvement in the policy/governance process, the "Clyde River Protocol", signed in 1999 and its 2004 successor "*Iqqanaijaqatigiit*".^d

The significance and the legitimacy of NTI is symbolized in the popular support its leader enjoys, as measured in electoral terms. Eva Aariak, the current premier, won her seat in the legislature by virtue of the 439 votes she attracted in her constituency in the 2008 Nunavut election. By contrast, NTI presidents are elected on a territory-wide vote; in the most recent NTI election, President Paul Kaludjak was returned to office with 2224 votes.

Political Economy and Political Culture

Political economy and political culture approaches to understanding politics are by no means mutually exclusive but they certainly emphasize different elements of the political system. Political economy focuses on the linkages between politics – the distribution and use of political power – and social forces, most notably the economic divisions and groupings in society. The interests and activities of different economic strata, typically defined in terms of income, occupation and class, are seen as especially important drivers of politics. Political economists include among the factors determining politics economic processes and structures outside the jurisdiction, such as international economic conditions and trends, and the extent to which important control of economic resources and economic institutions (corporations, financial institutions, lies beyond the jurisdiction's borders. In the case of a federal country like Canada, the economic – and thus the political influence – of corporations and governments located outside the jurisdiction may be greater than that of international factors. Central to the political economy approach is attention to the nature and effectiveness of mechanisms such as trade unions and political parties for mobilizing political action. In analysing politics, political economists pay special attention to state policies affecting the control and distribution of economic wealth and the provision of services contributing to the material welfare of the population, especially those who are most economically disadvantaged.

From the overview of Nunavut offered in the previous section, it becomes evident that standard political economy approaches are less helpful in understanding Nunavut than they are elsewhere in Canada. The imposition of the wage economy on Nunavummiut is a relatively recent development and indeed, a substantial proportion of the population remains only weakly tied to the wage economy. Key features of the traditional subsistence economy, which until only a few decades ago dominated what is now Nunavut, run fundamentally counter to essential elements of the capitalist economy which has long held sway in Canada: the lack of interest in capital accumulation and the emphasis on community-wide sharing of resources. The latter is linked to the oftentimes ambivalent attitude of Inuit to unions; most government employees are unionized and labour-management strife, including strikes, are not unknown, but discomfort is sometimes expressed that confrontational union behaviour 'is not the Inuit way'. To this day, Nunavut has only a small private sector (notably, though, the most powerful private economic interests – resource development companies – are almost entirely owned and controlled by interests located outside Nunavut). The state is economically dominant and, as noted below, the Inuit land claims organizations, which differ substantially in their objectives and activities from privately owned firms, are important players in the economy.

Conventional political economy approaches are clearly relevant to understanding important elements of Nunavut politics. In particular, the difficult social and economic

conditions of many Nunavummiut raise critical questions about the state's role in providing for the people's material wellbeing. In addition, a political economy approach highlights an important question about where Nunavut is heading in terms of equality of economic condition: is the land claim and the creation of Nunavut producing a class division within Nunavut society between a small political-economic Inuit elite doing well for itself and a large Inuit underclass struggling with poverty and social dysfunction?

Political culture research is fundamentally interested in the attitudinal and behavioural norms of political life. Typically researchers are interested in attitudes towards government: whether citizens hold it in high regard, trust it to do what is right, feel that as citizens they can make a difference or that the political system as a whole is responsive to their influence. Other indicators include measures of political engagement such as voting, standing for office, contacting politicians or more 'protest' behaviours such as attending rallies or signing petitions. Sometimes researchers examine the institutions about which individuals hold views, or the institutions that structure the way citizens participate. We can distinguish, therefore, between approaches that look at objective aspects of political culture, such as patterns of political recruitment, and subjective aspects such as citizen attitudes. Political culture is a property of the political system as a whole. It is often measured by looking at indicators that are available at the individual level, but these are only partial ways of forming an impression of the overarching system. Political cultures can be fairly homogeneous, where the norms reinforced by institutions and held by elites and the rest of the electorate are fairly similar, or they can be heterogeneous, where clear differences distinguish, for example, the views of elites and 'masses', or the subjective expectations of citizens and the structure of political institutions.

The political culture approach has much to offer those interested in Nunavut politics.⁶ Over several decades, the process of institutional creation has been a battleground for competing visions of political culture and the current territory bears the hallmarks of three distinct cultural visions. In the 1960s the federal government promoted a political culture that sought to integrate Inuit as political citizens on a southern-Canadian model. Subsequently, in the pre-division Northwest Territories a distinctive northern political culture developed, structuring the institutional working culture of the legislature and its civil service, and the 'subjective' political culture of its population. This territorial working culture is itself a hybrid of institutional working practice common in Western liberal-democratic systems and adaptations specific to the north that reflect both accident and design. The most obvious manifestation is what has come to be termed 'consensus government'. In the NWT, and now Nunavut, candidates for office run as individuals rather than as representatives of political parties. Cabinet ministers are elected from amongst the successful candidates by all Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) rather than by the premier. This poses obvious challenges for cabinet cohesiveness or solidarity. As in all Westminster systems, power principally resides with the premier and the cabinet, but MLAs (both individually and through an all-MLA 'caucus') have unusual scope for policy influence. This political system was, until 1999, unique to the NWT; since division, it prevails in Nunavut as well.

A third political cultural vision seeks to imbue the bureaucratic, liberal-democratic, Westminster form of government with more traditional approaches to Inuit governance, through greater representation of Inuit values in legislative decision making and the organisation and

operation of the civil service. Such efforts face several challenges, not least the very powerful and established norms of the existing institutional arrangements. In addition, there is, perhaps not surprisingly, no uniform view of the ‘traditional approaches to Inuit governance’ that might supplant existing practices.

Nunavut’s Political Economy

Nunavut’s economy is, as noted earlier, dominated by public sector employment and activity. The private sector is largely limited to small retail, construction and service (primarily hospitality/tourism and business services) sectors. Nunavut has virtually no manufacturing enterprises, though arts and crafts – mostly Inuit carvings and prints – provide supplementary income to many households. The traditional economy – hunting, fishing and gathering – brings in little or no income but contributes substantially to many families’ sustenance needs (and is far more nutritious than the expensive perishable food that has to be flown in from Ottawa, Montreal or Winnipeg). In addition, traditional harvesting activities remain of huge cultural significance. Agriculture of course is entirely absent, but commercial fishing holds significant economic potential, though federal government policy impedes the realization of that potential in two respects. First, much of the quota for valuable species in waters adjacent to Nunavut are assigned by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to companies from Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia (and with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans typically representing a riding in one of these provinces, changing this policy is an uphill fight). Second, the lack of infrastructure – in this case suitable harbour facilities – means that even Nunavut-based fishing vessels must often offload their catches and have them processed in Southern Canada or even in Greenland.

This latter point is worth pursuing briefly. All but one of Nunavut’s 25 communities are on the ocean and, given the absence of roads and the expense of air freight, receive almost all non-perishable supplies – vehicles, construction supplies, fuel, furniture, even bulk groceries – by sea-going ships. Astonishingly, however, not a single community has docking facilities to handle even moderate-size ships let alone large ocean-going transport ships.^f Accordingly, cargo must be offloaded onto barges which unload on local beaches when the tides are right; this is costly, inefficient and dangerous. Nunavummiut rightly point out that their government cannot afford expensive infrastructure projects and that earlier in Canadian history it was the Government of Canada which built the wharves, docks, railways, canals and other infrastructure needed to promote local economic development.

Hope for a brighter economic future for Nunavut largely rests with the territory’s non-renewable resources. Although massive oil and gas deposits have been discovered in Nunavut’s Arctic Islands, daunting logistical and financial barriers have thus far stymied development. Mining holds more immediate promise, though hardly any instant solutions. Nunavut has extensive deposits of diamonds, gold, coal, iron ore, silver, uranium and other valuable minerals, but the history of its mining industry is replete with problems and false starts. Some mines simply come to the end of their productive life – the Rankin Inlet nickel mine, iron ore at Nanisivik, the zinc mine on Little Cornwallis Island – while others fall victim to high operating costs and unstable markets: Nunavut’s first diamond mine lasted less than two years before closing due to unsustainable losses. Other potential ventures require huge capital investments

and often demand extensive publicly funded infrastructure and are thus vulnerable to shifting international economic conditions which slow or altogether halt their development. The Mary River project in North Baffin Island involves what is said to be the largest untapped top-quality iron ore body on the planet, but requires billions of dollars of capital, not to mention construction of a 150-kilometre railway (which would be the world's most northerly railroad) and a deep-water port.

The Mary River project raises some very basic questions so to who gains and who loses from non-renewable resource extraction in Nunavut. Three sets of issues are in play. First, who will get the jobs – often high-paying jobs – at the mines? For many years the history of mining (and of oil and gas projects) in the far North was marked either by outright exclusion of local Aboriginal people from employment or by relegating them to the lowest-paid jobs. More recently, Aboriginal organizations and territorial governments have insisted that industry train and hire substantial numbers of Aboriginal workers and direct as much subcontracting to Aboriginal firms as possible. Still, despite notable improvement along these lines, Inuit generally lack the formal education for the management and high-end technical mining jobs. Second, which level of government rakes in the huge royalties from profitable mining operations? Unlike 'south of sixty', in the territorial North, Crown (i.e. public) land is owned by the federal government, so that royalties on mining accrue to the national treasury, not to the GN, though the GN taxes the economic activity mining generates. Until a 'devolution' agreement between Ottawa and the GN is reached – no one expects it any time soon – the 'big money' in the form of royalty payments will continue to leave Nunavut.⁸

The third question is the most important and the most difficult: what will be the environmental consequences of widespread resource extraction? Not only is the Arctic ecosystem singularly fragile, but mining activities directly threaten the fundamental foundation of Inuit culture: a deeply spiritual connection to the land and the animals. Potentially irreversible damage to sensitive caribou calving grounds, marine mammal habitat and spiritually significant places are of deep concern to many Nunavummiut. As one Inuit leader told a recent mining symposium: "we're still here after the mines close [but] it's next to impossible for the land to be the way it was before."⁹ While the Mary River project for example could bring hundreds of much needed jobs to the region, residents of communities such as Igloolik strongly oppose the prospect of dozens of massive ore-carriers, with their potential for catastrophic oil spills, plying nearby waters. Hearings are currently underway on a proposed uranium mine near Baker Lake, which brings into sharp relief divisions within Nunavut over resource extraction. Many local residents, supported by broad-based wildlife associations and citizens groups, entirely reject the idea of introducing such a toxic element to their environment and warn that if one mine is approved, others are likely to follow. Others argue that the economic benefits are worth the risks.

Among the latter are the Inuit land claim organizations (discussed in greater detail below). After much debate, in 2007, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), which represents all Nunavut Inuit, reversed its long-standing opposition to uranium mining. It has since granted approval for uranium prospecting on certain Inuit-owned lands and in 2010, along with two of the three regional Inuit associations, established the Nunavut Resources Corporation. This company, whose aim is to give Inuit greater involvement in and economic benefit from their non-renewable resources, is involved in joint ventures in two uranium exploration projects.

If the Inuit land claims organizations' involvement in uranium mining may be surprising – and indeed to some in Nunavut, disturbing – their status as major economic players is not. Under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, finalized in 1993, the Inuit received over a 15-year period \$1.14 billion in partial compensation for giving up Aboriginal title to their traditional lands. As has been the case with other comprehensive land claim agreements, this money was not divided up among Inuit beneficiaries but transferred to NTI (which also holds title to the 350,000 square kilometres of Inuit-owned lands specified under the claim) and invested in a trust fund. More significantly, land claim moneys have been used to create a vast network of companies operating across the North which not only provide jobs and training to Inuit but also keep profits, which would otherwise drain away to Southern Canada, in Nunavut. In addition to Atuqtuarvik Corporation, which provides expertise and loans to Inuit-owned businesses, through its holding company, Nunasi Corporation, NTI either owns outright or has partnership arrangements in a wide variety of business ventures including retail, transportation, manufacturing, insurance, travel, education, multimedia, fuel distribution, digital communications, medical boarding facilities, contracting and real estate.¹ For example, Nunasi and the Inuvialuit Development Corporation, Nunasi's equivalent for the Inuvialuit of the NWT, jointly own NorTerra, which in turn owns two of Northern Canada's most important transportation enterprises, Canadian North airline and Northern Transportation Company Limited. The three regional Inuit associations have similar economic development, "birthright", corporations.

Evaluating the 'success' of Nunavut

Reaching a conclusion about the success of Nunavut depends in part on the criteria we use. The original land claim advocates emphasized goals that fall under the rubric of political culture as well as political economy. They expected, for example, that the new territory and land claim would produce economic advances and a cultural renaissance for the Inuit population. For political culture researchers, levels of political engagement or the integration of Inuit values into the operation of the civil service would be of obvious interest. From a political economy perspective, we might consult various indicators that help us to evaluate standards of living in the territory. The remainder of the paper examines four criteria of success, mass and elite political engagement, standards of living, the effectiveness of the civil service and the degree to which the Inuit of Nunavut have regained control of their land and their lives through government (the last two are clearly linked but are nonetheless distinct). Looking at these matters sheds light both on politics in Nunavut as well as the utility of our two conceptual frameworks.

Before embarking on this analysis, however, we might ask how those most affected – Nunavummiut themselves – evaluate Nunavut. Thanks to a major study commissioned by the GN we have a detailed answer, and it is a sobering one. Shortly after taking office in late 2008, the Government led by newly elected Premier Eva Aariak engaged an independent consulting firm to produce a 'report card' on the GN's performance at its ten-year anniversary. In conducting their review, the consultants held meetings in 25 communities and through these meetings, on-line surveys and other methods heard from more than 2100 people, a substantial proportion of Nunavut's adult population. The ensuing report, *Qanukkanniq? The GN Report*

Card: Analysis & Recommendations,^j pulled no punches in recounting how Nunavummiut perceived their government:

while many were happy with the progress being made in certain areas, most were disenchanted with, and some were profoundly discouraged by, directions taken by the government in others. Often people described governance in Nunavut as a vision not yet realized and, at times, a vision derailed. Without doubt, the expectations most people had of Nunavut at its inception have not yet been met ... we heard people speak critically of the government's performance in the areas that matter most to them. Many of these views were shared by public servants who expressed frustration that more was not being done. In fact, GN staff knew better than anyone the government's shortcomings, expressing deep concern about key but dysfunctional elements of the government's internal operating environment ... when Nunavut was created, people expected better interaction with government and that they would be involved in decisions that affect them. Today, they say that government has never seemed so distant ... they believe strongly that general service levels have dropped over the last ten years^k

Significantly, however, for all the criticism and disappointment voiced by Nunavummiut, much good will remains:

While much of the commentary was critical of the government's performance, people everywhere said they supported Nunavut, and remained inspired by the dream that had created it. Many acknowledged that it was still early days for Nunavut and that ultimately government performance would align with public expectations.^l

Political engagement

One of the basic tenets of political culture research is that polities require minimum levels of political engagement. Typically such research focuses on participation during elections for it provides an opportunity to examine the most common form of political activity in which citizens engage – voting – as well as more ‘gladiatorial’ activities such as standing as candidates for office. Elections in Nunavut operate slightly differently than they do in most other jurisdictions in Canada, though they are organized on the same ‘first-past-the-post’ electoral system as elsewhere in the country. As in the NWT, candidates run not as representatives of political parties but as independents. This raises the ‘costs’ of participation for both candidates and voters. Candidates lack the institutional, organizational and financial support that parties can provide. This can include anything from institutional knowledge acquired over several campaigns, or something as basic as lists of likely or sympathetic voters. Voters lack the cues that parties provide them in casting their ballots and must wade through the competing claims of different candidates to identify issues that are of interest to them, evaluating the proposals of each potential legislative member, as well as the candidates’ personal qualifications and characteristics. One important upside is that, unlike elsewhere in Canada, where candidates other than those officially representing a major political party are rarely elected, anyone with a modicum of local support and modest financing can run for office with some prospect of winning.

In such a system it is difficult to identify issues that attract the attention of the entire electorate. This has both positive and negative aspects. Since candidates lack incentives to serve as aggregators of interest across the polity, territory-wide discussion of policy issues is often lacking. This means not only that it is difficult for the electorate to feel part of a cohesive whole, but also that important ‘big picture’ issues may not be adequately addressed. Instead, candidates are more likely to identify local issues to attract the interest of local voters and in so doing raise the profile of what in other elections might be considered insignificant issues. At the same time, this can be of considerable benefit to local communities, whose concerns might not be highlighted in other types of campaigns. Data from a survey of all 82 candidates in the 2004 Nunavut election confirm the local orientation of territorial elections: when asked why they were running, 44 per cent mentioned local concerns, 20 per cent cited personal reasons, 15 per cent said they wanted to work on specific (non-local) issues, 15 per cent wanted to contribute to politics on a territory-wide basis and 7 per cent mentioned ethnic concerns.^m

Given all this, we might expect that levels of turnout would be lower than in other jurisdictions in Canada, or that the number of people putting themselves forward to contest seats would be lower. This expectation would reflect Nunavut’s lack of one of the key agents of political recruitment and mobilization – political parties – that seek to identify or attract prospective candidates and to get voters out to the polls. As the results below demonstrate however, this is not necessarily the case.

First, with respect to turnout, levels of political engagement in Nunavut have typically been described as amongst the highest in the country, with recorded rates of turnout exceeding 100 per cent in some communities. It should immediately be said that careful review of the data reveals that turnout is far lower than the official figures suggest and in no communities approaches, let alone exceeds, 100 per cent. The official figures are misleadingly high for two reasons. First, voters are allowed to register on the day of the election and cast their ballots. When the official turnout figures were calculated, the number of ballots cast would be divided by the number of electors on the voting list compiled prior to election day. Thus a surge in last minute voters would cause the turnout figures to increase. Second, variations in enumeration practices across communities produced voting lists that varied to differing degrees from the federal lists, which are constructed on a more consistent basis. In some communities, the federal and territorial lists would have relatively similar numbers of potential voters. In others, whether because enumeration was done when more citizens were out on the land and away from the community, or because individuals did not respond to requests for information, the territorial list could have far fewer names.

Table 2 about here

Table 2 records turnout levels for the 19 constituencies in Nunavut over the first three territorial elections. We can see that turnout, although high in 1999 and 2004, fell sharply in 2008, as did the number of candidates. In terms of candidates, the numbers for the territory were

substantially lower in 2008 (48) than in 1999 (71) or 2004 (82).ⁿ From a political culture perspective does this give us reason to worry about politics in Nunavut?

As Table 2 demonstrates, some constituencies have experienced a clear decline in the number of candidates standing for office. In 1999 and 2004 there were five and six candidates contesting the seats in Amittuq and Quttiktuq constituencies respectively, and only two each in 2008. This could indicate a genuine decline in political interest levels among potential candidates or it could mean that, as patterns of Nunavut politics develop, potential candidates are taking a more measured assessment of their prospects of winning. Evidence for the latter interpretation would include the fact that in 2008 MLAs for two ridings were returned by acclamation (as opposed to one in 2004 and none in 1999), suggesting an unwillingness to take on strong, popular sitting MLAs. Similarly, elections for top posts in NTI and the regional Inuit associations continue to attract substantial numbers of candidates. The experience in South Baffin, however, points in the other direction: when nominations closed, no one can come forward as a candidate and the election had to be postponed pending a second nomination period, which produced four candidates.^o

In terms of popular participation, in 2008 elections were held at both the territorial and federal levels and the two lists of electors appear far more similar than in the past. This suggests that the declining rate of turnout is in fact a product of the improved accuracy of the enumeration process, rather than declining levels of engagement.

An Effective – and Inuit – Government?

One of the most basic questions to be asked of any government relates to its effectiveness in delivering the programmes and services its residents desire. Like any modern government, the GN can and should be measured in terms of how well it performs its basic functions such as managing its finances; ensuring quality health care and education (both the services delivered by doctors, nurses and teachers and construction and maintenance of physical facilities); protecting the environment; processing government cheques in a timely and accurate fashion; providing shelter and safety to those vulnerable or in need; and promoting economic growth. In addition, Nunavummiut judge their government in terms of one of the primary goals of the Inuit leaders who for so many years pushed for the creation of an Inuit territory: a government operating accordingly to Inuit values and practices and thus in turn promoting and enhancing Inuit culture.

Realizing either set of goals has been difficult for the GN, not least because to some extent – at least in the short term – they conflict. While all governments encounter problems recruiting and retaining good staff, these essential elements of good governance have proven especially troublesome in Nunavut. Many of the more important – and better paying – jobs in government require particular educational qualifications and/or extensive managerial experience that are in short supply among Inuit. Moreover, the GN faces stiff competition for talented Inuit from the land claims organizations, the private sector and the federal government, all of which may offer more attractive salaries and benefits. Since it is expensive and difficult to attract qualified staff from southern Canada since its first day the GN has been bedevilled by high vacancy rates; when bringing forward his 2010-11 budget Nunavut Finance Minister Keith

Peterson acknowledged that some 900 GN jobs – nearly a third of the total – were vacant.^p A blistering report from the Auditor General of Canada (whose office serves as auditor for all three territories) took the GN severely to task for systematic inadequacies in dealing with vacancies, revealing, for example, that on average it takes 318 days for the GN to fill a vacancy and that half its job competitions fail to turn up qualified candidates.^q With so many positions unfilled (and with the high rate of staff turnover that gives rise to many vacancies) it is difficult for the GN to discharge its responsibilities effectively, though paradoxically the money saved as a result of understaffing helps to keep the budget balanced.

The issue of Inuit staff levels within the GN is an especially important and sensitive one. Article 23 of the land claim contains an explicit provision requiring that Inuit hold “representative” levels of government positions in all employment categories. (“Government” in this instance encompasses the federal as well as the territorial government). Since Inuit constitute well over 80 per cent of the population, over 80 per cent of government jobs should be filled by Inuit. Article 23, however, imposes no deadline and more than a decade on, the GN is little closer to achieving ‘representative levels’ than it was when it opened for business. The goal, agreed by the three parties to the claim, Canada, the GNWT and the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (NTI’s predecessor), was to have 50 per cent Inuit hire at start-up and this goal was met. Subsequently, however, the level fell below 50 per cent and although it recovered slightly, it remains mired just above that level.^r Overall rates of Inuit hire are only part of the story; the distribution of Inuit across employment categories is no less important. And here the record is even more disappointing. A recent count found 41 per cent Inuit in the very small executive cadre and between 21 and 29 per cent in the senior management, middle management and professional categories; by contrast, the two lowest categories in the bureaucratic hierarchy, paraprofessionals and those in administrative support, were 68 and 93 per cent Inuit respectively.

Article 23 was designed to ensure that Inuit would benefit economically from the creation of Nunavut through the well-paid, stable employment government offers. A related objective was making a government operating according to traditional Inuit values and practices a reality. Yet a truly Inuit government in this sense entails rather more than simply a government staffed by Inuit. Given the centrality of language to culture, the GN has committed to making Inuktitut the working language of government by 2020 and has brought in sweeping language legislation (*The Official Languages Act* and the *Inuit Language Protection Act*) to elevate the status of Inuktitut across the territory but especially in government. While Inuktitut dominates in the Legislative Assembly, many front-line government services and forms are available in Inuktitut, some offices operate primarily in Inuktitut and important documents are translated into Inuktitut, by and large the GN operates in English, especially at its higher reaches. Achieving a government operating primarily in Inuktitut will not be easy with non-Inuit, very few of whom are fluent in Inuktitut, comprising nearly half the GN’s workforce (and substantially more than half at higher levels). Moreover, given the GN’s extensive interactions with other jurisdictions, notably but not exclusively the federal government and the GNWT, English will continue to be prominent within the Nunavut bureaucracy.^s

So too, imbuing a large organization, whose structures and processes are very much determined by Western bureaucratic precepts, with Inuit values and approaches has proven challenging. The predominance of English is an obvious and important barrier but even more

fundamental is the lack of clarity as to just what a government operating on IQ principles would look like. Government departments have IQ coordinators and committees and the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth (CLEY) has been assigned lead responsibility on the IQ initiative. To date, however, progress on anything like a transformation of government has been limited.

In many ways the structure of the GN was conventional, in keeping with the premise recalled by John Amagoalik, the influential Inuit leader who chaired the commission which designed the GN: “We did not want to introduce anything that people did not really understand. We did not want to try to re-invent the wheel. We knew that up here people understood the territorial form of government and that was what they expected.”^t Establishing a department like CLEY was certainly innovative and the retention of the NWT’s non-partisan ‘consensus government’ approach distinguishes Nunavut from party-based southern Canadian models. By far, however, the most radical and imaginative design feature of the GN was the strong commitment to a decentralized government structure.

All governments have networks of regional and field offices to deliver services, but in Nunavut ‘decentralization’ means much more. The idea was to establish in 10 small communities offices that in other jurisdictions would be located in the capital city. In this way the employment and infrastructure benefits of government presence would be spread widely across the territory – a welcome prospect for communities with few good, stable jobs. Decentralization was also thought to be a way of enabling Inuit to move into senior bureaucratic positions without having to leave their home communities, a concern for Inuit given the significance they accord strong family ties. Finally, through decentralization it was hoped that genuine power and authority within government would be brought ‘closer to the people’, a notion very much in keeping with Inuit culture. Like so many aspects of the Nunavut project, decentralization has been a mixed success; it has certainly spread jobs and related economic benefits around but it has not been notably successful at enhancing Inuit participation in the GN bureaucracy nor has it reversed the concentration of political and bureaucratic power in Iqaluit. Decentralization has been highly controversial throughout Nunavut, but an early assessment suggested that it has been at least as successful as other elements of the GN.^u The consultations done for “GN Report Card” revealed widespread disappointment with decentralization.^v

An important set of governance institutions, deriving directly from the land claim, are the so-called ‘Institutions of Public Government’ (IPGs). These are co-management boards, such as the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board [NWMB] and the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB), which exercise significant influence over wildlife policy and environmental regulation. Members of these boards are nominated or appointed by the three parties to the land claim, the federal government, NTI and the GN, but wield authority independent of government, in effect existing at the intersection of the federal, territorial and Aboriginal governments.

The rationale for their creation lay in a compromise between the Inuit demand for meaningful involvement in important wildlife, resource development and environmental protection decisions and the federal government’s insistence that the public interest inherent in such matters required that they be managed through ‘public government’ processes. The vast

majority of board members are Inuit (as of early 2008, 84 and 86 per cent of appointees to NWMB and NIRB since their creation were Inuit),^w though Inuit have held very few of the boards' senior administrative and technical staff positions.

While many board recommendations require agreement of federal or territorial ministers, few have been rejected or modified, so that in most instances they effectively determine wildlife harvest quotas or decide whether roads, mines or even mineral exploration projects go ahead. The NIRB assessment of the proposed Baker Lake uranium mine, mentioned above, is an example of these processes. Earlier this year, NIRB recommended to the federal government that a major coal mining project proposed for Ellesmere Island be rejected entirely or very substantially modified, on the grounds that it "may have significant adverse effects on the ecosystem, wildlife habitat or Inuit harvesting activities ... [and that it] may have significant adverse socio-economic effects on northerners".^x Certain of the IPGs have at times experienced significant problems but overall they may be counted a governance success – an Inuit-dominated governance success.

Quality of life indicators

Advocates of the land claim and territorial division argued that the creation of Nunavut would bring two types of benefits, a cultural emancipation for the Inuit population, with improved opportunities to pursue education in Inuktitut, greater chances to work in Inuktitut, greater representation of Inuit in the public service, greater representation of Inuit values in the legislature and the public service, greater opportunities to pursue life on the land for those who so wished, and, in general, greater voice for Inuit. In terms of material benefits, advocates argued that the land claim would provide a much needed infusion of capital and the political control required to improve standards of living in the eastern Arctic. Both were ambitious goals and it is worth considering the timeframe for assessing success and what level of improvement would be necessary for the territory to be considered a success. Would five years be enough? Would be considered a success if standards of living remained comparable to before 1999, in other words if they did not decline, or would we expect an appreciable increase in levels of economic activity or the quality of housing?

Table 3 about here.

The data in Table 3 provide four indicators relevant to both sets of goals: the quality of housing, educational attainment, economic activity and language use. The table presents figures from 1996 and 2006 for the Inuit communities in four Canadian regions: Nunatsiavut (Labrador), Nunavik (northern Quebec) the Inuvialuit region of the current NWT and Nunavut. If we look only at the figures in bold, those for Nunavut, we see no appreciable change in terms of economic activity and language use and some change in housing and education. The proportion of overcrowded houses decreased slightly, but the proportion of housing stock in need of major repair increased. With respect to education, the proportion completing high school has risen dramatically. The figures remain low, but between 1996 and 2006 there was a threefold increase in the proportion of individuals who have obtained a high school diploma.^y

These figures could, of course, be looked at in another way. We can examine the figures for Nunavut in light of the data for the NWT, Nunatsiavut and Nunavik. This will help us to understand the changes in context. The arguments of land claim advocates suggested that a land claim and division were necessary so that Inuit could have greater control over policy and create policy better tailored to the needs of the local population. If the results in Nunavut are improved *relative* to the results in other communities, if they improved while others remained stable, or if they remained stable while all others fell, then even the more muted results discussed above might be considered a success. Each of the other regions saw an increase in rates of those obtaining high school diplomas so we should be cautious attributing the increase in Nunavut to the creation of the territory itself. The absence of an improvement in language use mirrors results across the other Inuit regions, while the absence of economic improvement in Nunavut can be evaluated in light of a decreasing rate of participation in the NWT and an increase in Nunavik. Whether such changes are within the control of the government or are subject to other economic ‘legacies’ is, of course, a matter for debate. Lastly, the decrease in overcrowded housing, which seems impressive when we look only at Nunavut alone, seems more muted compared to Nunatsiavut where the proportion of crowded houses fell from 17 to three percent in ten years.

How do the Inuit of Nunavut compare with those in other jurisdictions? Are Nunavut Inuit significantly better off? Are they significantly worse off? In both 1996 and 2006 for all but percentage with university education, pre-tax income and economic participation rate (and for those with the least education in 2006) there were statistically significant differences across the communities. In several instances this is not because the Nunavut communities distinguished themselves at either the high or low end of the scale, but because of remarkable results in other regions. The data in table 3 indicate no dramatic variation in four sets of cultural and economic indicators before and after the creation of Nunavut which is to say that the people of Nunavut, while not noticeably better off after 1999 are not noticeably worse off than they were before.

In depth studies of such social policy fields as housing, suicide and suicide prevention and education policy consistently reveal that the GN continues to struggle to provide basic social services and to deal with far-reaching social problems.^z The continuing demographic pressures, together with the GN’s limited room for financial manoeuvre, mean that progress on these and other fronts will be slow. And of course the GN’s ongoing capacity deficit further complicates the process of improving the cultural and material wellbeing of Nunavummiut.

Conclusion

While up-to-date hard data are difficult to come by, a growing sense of disappointment and frustration as to Nunavut’s success is evident among Nunavummiut, as evidenced by the North Sky ‘Report Card’. Systematic analysis of survey data from Nunavut’s first few years uncovered an emerging trend of dissatisfaction with the GN, no doubt partially reflecting the widely held yet unquestionably unrealistic expectations (especially among Inuit) as to how implementation of the land claim and creation of Nunavut would improve their lives.^{aa} Initially, Nunavummiut were clearly judging Nunavut and the land claim on their cultural rather than economic merits.^{bb} By the 2004 election, though, popular concern with economic issues far outpaced interest in cultural concerns: when asked “What is the biggest challenge facing

Nunavut?” 47 per cent of respondents to the Nunavut Household Survey mentioned aspects of territorial economic vitality, whereas for only 11 per cent were issues of cultural vitality of primary importance.^{cc}

Judging by the indicators analysed in this paper – political participation, the functioning of its civil service, the extent to which Nunavut is an Inuit government and standards of living – Nunavut’s record of success is indeed mixed. So too, whether Nunavut’s success is analysed from a political economy or political culture perspective, the results are mixed. While it is fair to observe that the territory and its government are barely a decade old and have faced difficult circumstances from the outset, it is too easy to dismiss lack of progress by reference to growing pains and inexperience and to hope that things will improve in the future. And yet, harkening back to a key conclusion of the North Sky ‘Report Card’, a substantial residue of goodwill and optimism remains among Nunavummiut. Four decades ago few in the Eastern Arctic or elsewhere would have believed that a far-reaching land claim could be settled or an Inuit-dominated territory established. Whether the promise of Nunavut set out by the visionary Inuit leaders who made the land claim and the territory a reality – a promise of fundamental importance to all Nunavummiut – will be fulfilled remains an open question.

Tables

Table 1: Health and socio-economic indicators in Nunavut

	Canada	Nunavut	Worst
Health indicators			
Infant mortality (deaths/1000 live births)	5.1	15.1	Nunavut
Heavy drinking (%)	16.7	25.7	Nunavut
Smokers (%)	16.5	46.1	Nunavut
Population with regular doctor (%)	84.4	12.4	Nunavut
Socio-economic indicators			
Incarceration rates/100,000	141.1	683.6	NWT (843.1)
Minimal educational qualifications (%)	23.8	57.3	Nunavut
Unemployment (%)	8.5	11.9	Newfoundland (16.5)
Median income	63,600	54,300	Newfoundland (50,500)
GDP per capita (\$)	48,010	50,700	PEI (33,150)

Table 2: Levels of political engagement, 1999-2008

	1999		2004		2008	
	Turnout	Candidates	Turnout	Candidates	Turnout	Candidates
Akulliq	78.01	2	93.33	5	78.1	5
Amittuq	85.11	5	120.10	5	59.2	2
Arviat	92.68	2	81.10	6	66.1	3
Baker Lake	103.01	3	89.50	4	67.1	3
Cambridge Bay	115.07	4	102.13	4	acclamation	1
Hudson Bay	79.01	2	96.09	5	81.6	3
Iqaluit Centre	114.94	4	101.73	6	69.7	4
Iqaluit East	97.67	2	112.4	3	73.2	3
Iqaluit West	82.38	3	101.13	2	90.2	2
Kugluktuk	87.67	4	134.33	3	68.2	2
Nanulik	90.61	5	77.78	4	86.3	3
Nattilik	85.56	6	107.04	7	83.6	4
Pangnirtung	80.99	6	83.95	2	54.7	2
Quttiktuq	67.99	6	81.34	6	63.8	2
Rankin Inlet North	78.94	3	acclamation	1	acclamation	1
Rankin Inlet S/WC	85.67	3	78.48	5	63.9	2
South Baffin	91.23	3	109.17	3	58.7	0 (4)
Tunnunig	88.24	5	90.22	3	70.8	3
Uqqumiut	83.28	3	143.34	7	84.9	3

Table 3: Economic indicators and language use in Canadian Inuit communities, 1996-2006

	1996				2006			
	Western NWT (NWT)	Eastern NWT (Nunavut)	Nunavik	Nunatsiavut	NWT	Nunavut	Nunavik	Nunatsiavut
Housing (%)								
Old	43.6	45.9	18.3	51.7	50.6	47.0	41.0	39.3
In need of major repair	16.4	21.5	11.2	31.1	25.3	24.9	40.9	29.7
Crowded	15.4	25.8	25.4	17.4	8.9	21.5	28.5	3.2
Education (%)								
No degree, diploma or certificate	53.4	57.6	65.1	51.2	58.9	61.3	62.1	47.3
High school	4.5	2.8	4.1	7.2	12.0	8.8	10.3	17.2
Trade or college	23.8	21.3	12.5	23.3	20.2	20.0	19.8	26.5
University	6.4	5.6	8.3	7.0	5.1	6.0	5.8	5.6
Economic vitality								
Pretax income	\$22,542	\$19,611	\$19,396	\$15,320	\$20,613	\$18,258	\$20,601	\$18,136
Economic participation rate	69.2	62.4	65.3	56.1	65.9	63.0	69.6	56.3
Language (%)								
Aboriginal mother tongue	20.1	79.5	91.0	11.9	17.9	79.2	91.9	12.8
Use Aboriginal language at home	4.5	71.1	90.0	4.4	4.2	61.5	88.3	3.6

Data: Statistics Canada census 1996, 2006 Community profiles

NOTES

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- a. See Statistics Canada, *Population and dwelling counts, for Canada, provinces and territories, and census subdivisions (municipalities), 2006 and 2001 censuses*.
 - b. Conference Board of Canada, *Northern Outlook: Economic Forecast* (Ottawa: Conference Board, January 2010), 4.
 - c. Briefly, comprehensive land claims are modern treaties by which Aboriginal peoples formally convey ownership of their traditional lands to the Canadian state in return for certain benefits (cash, ownership of selected lands, extensive governance arrangements and a wide range of other provisions such as mineral royalties and employment guarantees). Once ratified by vote of the Aboriginal people and authorized by acts of Parliament and the provincial/territorial legislature, finalized land claims agreements become constitutionally protected by virtue of section 35 of *The Constitution Act, 1982*.
 - d. For the text of *Iqqanaijaqatigiit*, see www.gov.nu.ca/documents/iqqanaijaqatigiit/Iqqanaijaqatigiit_eng.pdf.
 - e. For an extensive analysis of Nunavut political culture, see Ailsa Henderson, *Nunavut: Rethinking Political Culture* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).
 - f. One substantial dock project is underway at Pangnirtung and the federal government plans to turn the former Nanisivik mine site, which has good harbour facilities, into a docking and refueling centre for Arctic transportation. Other deep-water ports have been discussed in connection with possible mining activity. For a sympathetic analysis of the lack of wharves and docks in Nunavut, see Senate of Canada, Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, *Nunavut Marine Fisheries: Quotas and Harbours* (Ottawa, June 2009), 18-26.
 - g. Devolution is too complex an issue to be adequately dealt with here, though it is worth pointing out that once the GN begins to collect royalties, the large unconditional payments that it receives from Ottawa will be significantly reduced.
 - h. Gabriel Zarate, "Nunavut Mayors Warned to Look Beyond Immediate Benefits of Mining" *Nunatsiaq News*, April 21, 2010.

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- i. For a listing of Nunasi's holdings, see www.nunasi.com/theme/user/NunasiBookEng.pdf.
 - j. North Sky Consulting Group, *Qanukkanniq? The GN Report Card: Analysis & Recommendations* (Iqaluit, October 2009).
 - k. *Ibid.*, 2, 3, 4, 5.
 - l. *Ibid.*, 1.
 - m. Henderson, *Nunavut*, 121-2.
 - n. The figure for the 2008 election includes two persons who were ruled ineligible to be candidates because they failed to meet residency requirements, but not the four candidates in South Baffin by-election required because no candidates were nominated at the general election. See Annis May Timpson, "The 2008 Nunavut Territorial Election," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Carleton University, June 2009.
 - o. For an analysis of the 2008 election, see Timpson, "The 2008 Nunavut Territorial Election."
 - p. Jim Bell, "Nunavut holds the line in "stable" 2010-11 budget," *Nunatsiaq News* March 8, 2010.
 - q. See Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut 2010: Human Resource Capacity – Government of Nunavut*, March 2010.
 - r. As of December 2009, 51 per cent of GN employees (departments, agencies, boards and corporations) were Inuit. See Government of Nunavut, Department of Human Resources, "Towards a Representative Public Service: Statistics as of December 31, 2009", 2.
 - s. On language policy in Nunavut see Annis May Timpson, "Reconciling Settler and Indigenous Language Interests: Language Policy Initiatives in Nunavut", *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43 (Spring, 2009), 159-80.

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- t. John Amagoalik, *Changing the Face of Canada: The Life Story of John Amagoalik* [edited by Louis McComber] (Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College), 128.
- u. Jack Hicks and Graham White, “Building Nunavut Through Decentralization or Carpet-bombing it into Near-total Dysfunction? A Study in Organizational Engineering,” paper presented to the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, London, Ontario, June 2005.
- v. See North Sky Consulting Group, , *Qanukkanniq? The GN Report Card: What We Heard Report* (Iqaluit, September, 2009).
- w. Graham White, “‘Not the Almighty’: Evaluating Aboriginal Influence in Northern Claims Boards,” *Arctic* 61 (Supp) 2008, 75.
- x. Lucassie Arragutainaq, NIRB Chairperson, to Indian and Northern Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl, February 22, 2010.
- y. Entries in the table are progressive, that is, they indicate the highest level of education received by an individual.
- z. See Frank Tester, “Iglutaasaavut (Our New Homes): Neither “New” nor “Ours” – Housing Challenges of the Nunavut Territorial Government” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43 (Spring, 2009), 137-58; Jack Hicks, “Toward More Effective Evidence-Based Suicide Prevention in Nunavut,” in Frances Abele, et al, eds., *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects in Canada’s North* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2009), 467-95; Derek Rasmussen “Forty Years of Struggle and Still No Inuit Right to Education in Nunavut”, *Our Schools/Ourselves* 19 (Fall 2009); Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, *Annual Report on the State of Inuit Culture and Society 05/06, 06/07: Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education in Nunavut* (Iqaluit, 2007).
- aa. Henderson, *Nunavut*, 201-12.
- bb. *Ibid.*, 212.
- cc. *Ibid.*, 124.