

62

*Reflections on work relations and
governance among the Crees and
Inuit of Northern Québec*



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the Crees and Inuit of Northern Québec**

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Table of contents

Foreword.....	4
Introduction	5
1. Brief cultural history of the Crees and Inuit nations	6
Settlement in northern territories and traditional way of life.....	6
First contacts and relationships.....	8
The Crees in the 17th century.....	9
The Crees in the 18 th century.....	10
The Crees in the 19 th century.....	10
The Inuit in the 17th and 18th century.....	11
The Inuit in the 19th century	12
The Inuit in the 20th century	13
1.1 Importance of community and family.....	14
1.2 Importance of gifts.....	17
2. Brief history of the evolution of community governance	19
2.1 Pre-contact	19
2.2 Evolution of governance until the signing of the JBNQA	20
2.3 Since the signature of the JBNQA	29
3. The concept of time.....	34
3.1 Relationship of Native people to work.....	35
3.2 Mixed economy and validation of traditional work.....	37
4. Relationship of Native people to the labor union	38
4.1 Geographical influence.....	39
Conclusion.....	41
Appendix 1.....	43
Appendix 2.....	44
Bibliography	45

Foreword

This research paper was realized by Jacynthe Poulin, Master of Science student in geography at Laval University, under the supervision of Caroline Desbiens from the Canada Research Chair in Historical Geography of the North at Laval University. Coordination was assured by Nicole de Sève, adviser to the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* (CSQ).

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Introduction

The present reality of the First Nations and Inuit of Québec reflects only a small part their ancestral way of life which existed less than a hundred years ago. From the moment of first contact, the way of life of Native communities was influenced by ongoing relationships with Europeans through the fur trade, religious educational missions and, ultimately, the appearance of government institutions. Influence began gradually, but finished by framing and structuring this way of life in order to accelerate the process of social change.

Changes inspired by non-Native people now make up part of the modern reality of Native societies throughout the province. Many ideas originating in non-Native culture have been introduced to Northern communities, which have either adopted and integrated them, or perceive them as obstacles to the realization and reconstruction of a society in their own image. These structural changes have become embedded in their culture, their identity and their methods of governance, and are now an object of interest for a large number of researchers who are attempting a better understanding of Native issues.

To understand the impact of these changes on the Cree and Inuit nations, it is necessary to look at an overview of their cultural history, emphasizing the values which structure their society. The importance of the community and of the family network, and notably, the concept of gift-giving, are all organizing principles of Native society which harmonize the forces which are shaping their modern realities. In addition, culture has infused the methods of governance leading to the social cohesion and identity of Northern Native society, as they make their way towards autonomous government.

A review of culture and governance is useful for putting the daily reality of Inuit and Cree communities into context. It will permit us to recognize better the complex of elements among which the inhabitants of James Bay and Nunavik are presently navigating, and to grasp better the relationship of Native people to the notions of time, modern and traditional life, all of which they carry with them into salaried employment. Finally, shedding light on these elements will allow new understanding of the relationship of Native people to the labor union, taking into account the manner in which their geographical reality has influenced them in their conflict and present evolution.

Sociocultural and political changes among the Crees and Inuit of Québec

1. Brief cultural history of the Crees and Inuit nations

Settlement in northern territories and traditional way of life

The Northern territory of Québec was liberated from glaciers at different moments of history, creating, therefore, varied rhythms of human settlement from one region to another. "Human settlement of the Arctic did not take place before 2000 BP [Before Present], and in James Bay, territory freed by the glaciers remained unoccupied for two millennia before the first settlers arrived, in around 1500 BP."¹ The Inuit, as we know them today, probably migrated from Alaska to the Québec tundra in about the fourteenth or fifteenth century². According to their own accounts, the Crees experienced "movement of population originating from the Great Lakes region, or from the coast of Labrador, or even from these two points of origin."³ At first, both Crees and Inuit carried out the occasional hunt in northern regions before moving onto the territory permanently. Their way of life was based on a subsistence economy, varying their food according to the rhythm of the seasons. Once they decided to move into the territory permanently, families of hunter-gathers moved across the land according to an annual cycle, allowing them to locate what was necessary for survival. Individuals profited from all the elements of nature to make the totality of "their clothes, their tools, their weapons and their homes."⁴ Although their way of lives were filled with common or similar elements, the Crees and Inuit nations also displayed many divergent cultural characteristics.

The Cree nation travelled across the James Bay territory searching for the necessities of survival. They moved by canoe or toboggan, according to the time of year, and walking was the most common method used to travel. In the winter, people used snowshoes in order to travel across the surface of the snow. The habitations constructed by the Crees were built in a conical shape and called a "tee-pee", which was made with wood covered by skins, able to shelter a nuclear family. A tent in the form of a sphere could, accordingly, shelter a larger group. The Crees organized hunting groups as their basic social unit, and the size of the group varied according to the season and the species of animal being hunted. Hunting groups formed of 15 to 25 individuals belonged to a band which was composed, on average, of about a hundred persons. It is, however, very difficult to reconstruct the way of life of these hunter-gatherers in any more detail, because "even though from the seventeenth century,

¹ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others (2001). *Le Nord : Habitants et mutations*, Atlas historique du Québec, Presse de l'Université Laval, Sainte-Foy, p. 11. (Our translation)

² DICKASON, Olive Patricia (1996). *Les Premières Nations du Canada*, Septentrion, Sillery, 511 p.

³ DUHAIME, Gérard and others, *op. cit.*, p. 14. (Our translation)

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54. (Our translation)

accounts of merchants, missionaries and explorers, along with museum collections, can all be compiled with archaeological clues, the difficulty remains.”⁵

According to their own accounts, the Inuit nation was able to adapt their technologies to an environment characterized by an extreme climate and absence of vegetation. The Inuit lived for the most part in coastal areas, travelling, when weather permitted, by kayak (a wood structure covered with sealskin). In the winter, their transportation method was a “sled on runners [...] pulled by dogs placed in harness”⁶ or, like the Crees, they travelled by snowshoe. When it came to establishing an encampment, “certain specific conditions were necessary [...] such as proximity to a territory suitable for hunting, fishing, or secondarily, to gathering of other resources; another condition, for the most part during the summer, was access to drinking water (a lake or running water).”⁷ The Inuit chose their campsites according to the seasons. Unlike the Crees, they reunited in the winter and formed igloo villages in order to protect themselves from the great winds. During the warm season, they dispersed in small hunting groups to maximize their productivity.

The Crees and Inuit shared a common view of the universe, infused with mythology arising from “natural phenomena. Amerindians and Inuit perceived the universe as a tightly woven cloth filled with personified powers, large and small, kindly and dangerous, where balance rested on reciprocity.”⁸ The Crees “were a profoundly spiritual people; their whole world, material and non-material—animals, plants, rocks, clothes, doorways of tents—was infused with spirits and spiritual powers.”⁹ The spiritual life of sub-Arctic Amerindians and Inuit was orchestrated by shamans, mostly masculine, but at times, feminine. The Inuit, too, possessed this same spirituality based on balance between the natural and supernatural world.

Although trade did exist along a north-south axis between the different Native nations, “there is little reason to believe that they should come into contact. It was not until the establishment of trading posts in certain areas convenient to both Indian and Eskimo that the two peoples were drawn into close proximity to each other.”¹⁰ Before the mid-eighteenth century, “the Crees and Inuit regularly raided each other’s camps, terrorizing each other in what the company men referred to as the Eskimo hunts.”¹¹ In fact, it seems that the Amerindians rarely passed the tree line of their territory, because there are in existence “numerous myths and historical accounts [witnessing to] conflictual relations between the Indians and the Inuit.”¹²

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55. (Our translation)

⁶ MALAURIE, Jean, and Jacques ROUSSEAU (2005). *Du Nouveau-Québec au Nunavik 1964-2004 : une fragile autonomie*, Économica, Paris, p. 81. (Our translation)

⁷ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 87. (Our translation)

⁸ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 75. (Our translation)

⁹ MORANTZ, Toby (2002), *The White Man’s Gonna Getcha: the Colonial Challenge to the Crees in Quebec*, Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, p. 87.

¹⁰ MALAURIE, Jean, and Jacques ROUSSEAU, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

¹¹ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

¹² DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 102. (Our translation)

First contacts and relationships

In his work, Dickason helps us to understand fully the difference between the following terms: contact, conflict and relationship. “ ‘Contact’ was an encounter, for the most part of short duration, between Europeans and people belonging to a non-European culture [...] ‘Conflict’ tended to occur during subsequent encounters. [...] Commerce, evangelism and colonial administration characterized ‘relationships’.”¹³ Thus, first contacts with whites occurred at different epochs for each of the nations. With the establishment of close relationships between Native people and Euro-Canadians, social and economic changes began to occur. The Inuit of the Québec Arctic were the first Native people to meet European explorers, at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The first ships came to exploit the banks of Arctic fish which could fill the needs of their markets. Other ships traversed the waters in the search for a passage which would allow them to sail to Asia. “The first encounters between European whalers and Inuit hunting whales seemed to have been peaceful, and based on an exchange of information and merchandise.”¹⁴ At first, the Inuit drew certain advantages from these encounters. In the long run, the intensive hunt for these large marine mammals had the effect of reducing their numbers, which contributed later to famines experienced by the Inuit population.

The Crees experienced their first contact later than the Inuit, around the beginning of the seventeenth century. During his expedition to James Bay in 1611, Henry Hudson made contact with one or two Crees in an attempt to barter, but did not succeed. In fact, the story of this first contact varies according to the source. According to the explorers, a single Cree was present during this negotiation, while the Crees themselves state that the event “seems to have taken place at a later date, and implicated a group rather than a single individual.”¹⁵ However it may have been, the Crees already knew about the process of exchange, and also about current prices. This knowledge of market value probably arose from a pre-existing system of trade among Native nations. These rare contacts often took place in a context of violence, and did not facilitate the development of good relationships between Europeans and sub-Arctic Amerindians.

The white man traversed the northern zones of the present Québec, and although these contacts were not continuous, the presence of Europeans in these areas seemed to have had a much more significant effect on indigenous peoples than might have been expected. For example, all we have to consider are the effect of an intensive whale hunt, which so diminished the whale population. Moreover, since the whites were so unaccustomed to the rigors of the climate in these areas, they occasionally left behind:

¹³ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 80-81. (Our translation)

¹⁴ MARTIN, Thibault (2003). *De la banquise au congélateur : Mondialisation et culture au Nunavik*, Presses de l'Université Laval, Québec, p. 30. (Our translation)

¹⁵ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 86. (Our translation)

Supplies and equipment, and at times, even their boats. For the Inuit and the Amerindians, these probably represented a profitable resource as well as a source of rare materials such as wood and iron. We do not know the effects of this sudden supply on indigenous groups during a primitive period; nevertheless this [leads to...] the assumption that the influence could have been considerable, both economically and sociologically.¹⁶

The Crees in the 17th century

The acquisition of these goods might have contributed to a change in the pre-established social order of these societies, which might have pushed the people to develop new hunting methods, besides causing changes in the list of species being hunted to ensure the survival of these communities.

Following the first contacts, the first pioneers arrived in the south of the province, bringing with them a new group of northern explorers and “coureurs des bois.” The first merchants present in the northern regions were sent by the British crown in 1668. The same summer, the coastal Crees were immediately engaged in a new trading process. According to them, inland Crees (Inlanders) were already trading with French merchants from the Laurentian shield. This first English expedition was crowned by the creation of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) in 1670, a company whose charter accorded it a commercial monopoly in the drainage basin of Hudson’s Bay.¹⁷ Therefore, “groups of hunters in the region of James Bay had no other choice than to share the animal resources on their territory with traders and merchants whose interests were essentially commercial.”¹⁸ The essential elements of the English fort system were put in place from 1685.

It is perfectly valid to question the impact of changes caused by these new relationships between sub-Arctic Amerindians and Europeans. In fact, “the fur trade had definite repercussions on the social and economic organization of the Crees, and on how territory was used and exploited. Nevertheless, these repercussions were perhaps not as great as has been assumed.”¹⁹ As was mentioned earlier, the Crees had a way of life based on a subsistence economy. These new commercial relationships might lead us to assume that this economy changed radically with the arrival of trade. After analyzing the archives of the HBC, Morantz discovered however that the change had been more gradual. In the seventeenth century, the Crees had no dependence on imported products such as food. “It is only towards the end of the nineteenth century that small quantities of flour, sugar, baking powder and tea became trade items. Thus, their subsistence practices were paramount and guided their hunting strategies well into the twentieth century.”²⁰

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87. (Our translation)

¹⁷ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, 511 p. and DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, 225 p.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56. (Our translation)

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57. (Our translation)

²⁰ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

The Crees in the 18th century

From the point of view of Cree social organization, several changes did occur, beginning with the relationship between two groups of Crees. “Although it probably existed before first contacts, an ever greater distinction gradually evolved between the coastal Crees ([*Coasters*], who had more frequent contact with the fur traders, and the inland Crees [*Inlanders*] who arrived less frequently at the trading posts, and in fewer numbers.”²¹

From 1730, Crees living in the coastal territory, also called the *homeguards*, developed close relationships with the employees of the trading posts, and established themselves close to the posts. Employees of the Company could not always count on supplies to be delivered from England. “It was the Crees who provided the labour, not only in supplying pelts but also transporting the goods and furs and maintaining the Englishmen at post. They provided them with food from the land, firewood, clothing, male and female companionship and family life.”²² The *homeguards* and the employees in the posts maintained a reciprocal and respectful relationship. On their side, the employees of the HBC gave food to families during periods of shortage.²³ The employees taught Crees children the rudiments of reading and writing. Not until the beginning of the 19th century, at the request of parents, did the first schools appear.²⁴ Employees at the trading posts and the Crees professed mutual respect. It is, therefore, possible to find indications of this harmonious relationship in the archives kept by employees of the Company. Contrary to practice in the southern colonies, these employees rarely used such pejorative terms as “savage” to refer to Native people in their writing.

The Crees in the 19th century

Beginning in the middle of the 19th century, “missionaries established themselves close to the trading posts, thus becoming part of the circle of foreigners who met periodically with Natives.”²⁵ The first Anglican mission was established at Fort George in 1852. During the same decade, Crees living in the interior were receiving visits from the Catholic Church. Whether Catholic or Anglican, religion caused numerous changes for Crees. In their role as representatives of civil authority, the missionaries performed actions which promoted a climate of stability among Native people. They looked after necessities, but they also did their part to “transmit basic instruction in fundamentals of Western knowledge.”²⁶ For the Crees, religion appealed to their own value system, thus adopting “what they needed to help them survive in a changing society.”²⁷ In fact, “the survival of beliefs and traditional religious practices, just like the hybrid religion which

²¹ DUHAIME, Gérard and others, *op. cit.*, p. 56. (Our translation)

²² MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

²³ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, 511 p. and DUHAIME, Gérard and others, *op. cit.*, 225 p.

²⁴ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, 511 p.

²⁵ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 177. (Our translation)

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 180. (Our translation)

²⁷ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

evolved as time passed, was evidence of Native people's effective ability to manage their own spiritual acculturation and, by extension, their interactions with the missionaries."²⁸

In addition to these changes, a trade group emerged which was exclusively focused on commerce, which was not necessarily the same group as hunters who shared the territory. The size of this group varied with seasonal catches, "a good catch of game during the winter could mean that fewer hunters arrived at the trading post during the summer."²⁹ At the head of this group, a trading captain was designated by the company, without imposing the choice on the hunting group. When making the choice, the employees took into consideration the traditional criteria of Cree leadership. In the end, social change occurred from within, since the fur trade probably had not destabilized traditional structures, but rather consolidated them, by preserving the original principles of their way of life."³⁰

Technological and material modifications also began with the arrival of commercial activity. The Crees adopted metal and used it to improve their weapons, such as knives, harpoons and arrows. As time progressed, these weapons were exchanged for firearms. Materials used for clothing were also exchanged with the advent of traders. Towards the end of the 19th century, skins and leathers used for sewing were quietly replaced by manufactured materials, "before being completely replaced by new articles, such as trousers and hats."³¹

The Inuit in the 17th and 18th century

The Inuit established their first relationships with European traders much later than the Amerindians. A few contacts occurred during the course of the 17th and 18th centuries. The HBC attempted to establish trading posts on Inuit territory. However, the Company had to accept some limits as it tried to develop harmonious relationships with this group. Employees' lack of knowledge about their culture, and also the distant positioning of the Inuit were not beneficial to the attempts of the HBC to establish themselves.³² Conflictual relationships persisted among Native peoples of the peninsula; the Crees continued their raids on enemy territory, carrying out a "hunt for Eskimos." These conditions had the effect of impeding the attempts of the Company to do business in the Arctic. Therefore, in an attempt to improve the situation, the Company proclaimed some interdictions which limited the movement and actions of Amerindians on Inuit territory.

²⁸ GÉLINAS, Claude (2007). *Les Autochtones dans le Québec Post-confédéral 1867-1960*, Septentrion, Sillery, p. 155. (Our translation)

²⁹ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 57. (Our translation)

³⁰ *Ibid.*, and MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

³¹ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.* p. 58. (Our translation)

³² *Ibid.*, and DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, 511 p.

The Inuit in the 19th century

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Moravians³³ explored the southern part of the Ungava peninsula. In order to counteract the plans of the Moravians and competition from other trading companies, the HBC bought one of these competitors in 1821, the North West Company, which gave it access to the entire commercial system of the peninsula. The first and foremost trading post which it was then able to establish in Fort Chimo opened its doors in 1830, followed by other posts in subsequent years (See Appendix 2). "In spite of all this, the Inuit of Ungava Bay, who one might suspect were already familiar with objects manufactured by Europeans which would have been accessible to them through barter, begin to frequent, in an irregular fashion, the missions of Okak and Nain³⁴ at the end of the century, sometimes to trade, and sometimes to visit their peers, paving the way to the established relationships which will begin in the following decades."³⁵ It was necessary to wait until half the 19th century before this group took the decision to settle near trading posts. From that point, they began to work seasonally for the HBC, which caused changes in their relationships both with the Crees and Europeans

In spite of their cultural differences and their distinctive geographical positioning, the Inuit transformed their economy into a mixed activity permitting both subsistence and market production.³⁶ In fact, "the case of the Inuit is not fundamentally different than that of Amerindian peoples, even if trade generally evolved later. [Their presence at...] trading posts contributed to the modification of their economic activities and their periodic movements on their territory."³⁷ The Inuit shifted their movements, consequently, to the southern regions of their usual territory. They also produced various merchandise such as oil and sealskin boots, in order to respond to provincial and European markets. These changes, due to commercial exchanges, "involved the introduction and transformation of means of production (iron, guns, metal traps, cloth, etc.), and various modifications in the annual cycle of traditional activities."³⁸ The new commercial activity also transformed, for the Inuit, the social organization from what it had been during the pre-contact era. The presence of trading companies and missionaries engendered significant changes in the social structure of the Inuit, leading to "weakening of traditional solidarity systems and a decline in a certain number of traditional social practices (adoption, shamanism, traditional justice) which had contributed to the integration of Inuit groups."³⁹

³³ The Moravians were missionaries sent by the Anglican Church to teach the fundamentals of the Protestant religion.

³⁴ These trading posts were located on the coast of Labrador.

³⁵ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 139-140. (Our translation)

³⁶ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, 511 p.; DUHAIME, Gérard and others, *op. cit.*, 225 p. and MARTIN, Thibault, *op. cit.*, 202 p.

³⁷ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 176. (Our translation)

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 144. (Our translation)

³⁹ MARTIN, Thibault, *op. cit.*, p. 34. (Our translation)

The 19th century is marked by the appearance of teaching institutions at first founded by missionaries and then, by teachers engaged by the government in some northern communities. Although some schools were opened before the 20th century, the instruction which took place in them was generally rudimentary and usually occurred during the summer season, during the gathering of people near trading posts. The first residential school was established in 1930 at Fort George, where children were sent to receive a Western education. In fact, “even by 1947, it was estimated that 60% of Native children in Québec were unable to attend teaching institutions because classes were not available, a fact which put into question, generally, the will of the central government to carry out successfully his policies of assimilation in Québec.”⁴⁰ It would be necessary to wait until after the Second World War before a comprehensive system of education was established throughout Native communities in Northern Québec.

The Inuit in the 20th century

The 20th century is marked by strong competition between two trading companies: the HBC and *Révillon Frères*. The latter offered new products for exchange and good prices for furs, while accelerating the opening of numerous trading posts in Northern Québec. However, the 1930s were difficult and the HBC bought parts of *Révillon Frères*:

The combined effects of the Depression and of the Second World War forced these companies [who had tried to take over part of the market after the sale of the *Révillon Frères*,] as well as the Hudson’s Bay Company, to proceed with the closing of an additional number of trading posts [...] forcing the Inuit in turn to return to their subsistence activities, and to take long trips in order to continue to trade.⁴¹

Given the difficult times, « the HBC was informed [in 1934] that, if it wished to continue its activities in the North, it must assume responsibility for the well-being of Native people, without charging a cent to the Ministry.”⁴²

The first half of the 20th century corresponded to a significant stage for the Crees and Inuit. Native people had previously worked for the HBC in exchange for food items and credit at the trading posts, thus maintaining the spirit of barter. The missions, continuing their work to evangelize and “civilize” Native people, had established a sawmill and bakery on the southern territory of James Bay during the 1930s, which introduced, consequently, the notion of working for wages. This phenomenon gathered speed in the 1950’s, spreading to the majority of communities. From there, the second half of the century is characterized, as much for the Crees as for the Inuit, by a definitive move towards permanent settlements, orchestrated by different levels of government, by the missionaries and by commercial agents in the regions. Fixed settlements, just like the earlier establishment of trading posts and missions, were adopted gradually, according

⁴⁰ GÉLINAS, Claude, *op. cit.*, p. 49. (Our translation)

⁴¹ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 148. (Our translation)

⁴² DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 397. (Our translation)

to the geographical location of each community. The movement towards fixed settlement for the Crees and Inuit unfolded in the decades between 1940 and 1960, in the same rhythm that the industrial development of the Middle North⁴³ took its course.⁴⁴

During the 1970s, the development of hydroelectric power in James Bay marked the “completion of the process of settling process [...] for the Crees and Inuit. The tendency towards settling process had already become irreversible before the construction of huge power plants.”⁴⁵ The continuing cultural evolution of the Crees and Inuit of the Ungava Peninsula is framed in a political debate, where their identity has been affirmed in their fight for recognition of their ancestral rights. Considering their past experience with litigations, members of the First Nations have organized forces to engage in this legal and political battle, under the banner of Native identity.

1.1 Importance of community and family

This foregoing brief cultural history and historical overview of contacts and encounters helps us to understand changes which have occurred across time, permitting us to understand the place and origin of social changes in Cree and Inuit cultures. Above all, “their fundamental socio-economic organization is dominated by kinship and extended family which can, according to the demands of their way of life, be subsumed into larger groups, ranging from local to regional bands.”⁴⁶ For Native people, the family represents the continuity and protection of the individual, because it ensures the survival of his or her clan. Families numbering three or four regrouped and formed a basic social structure, the hunting group, which served to accomplish tasks necessary for survival. These groups moved across the territory to find their food through hunting, fishing, and gathering. These activities made available the materials necessary for the production of weapons, clothing, shelter and various technologies:

Gatherings for the hunt of large mammals such as caribou, whale or walrus; for the hunting of seals under the ice in winter; or for the construction of certain items important to material culture (for example the *qajaq*, the *umiaq* or the canoe in the spring), all activities usually requiring a multi-family collaboration on an extended basis or of a local band, are also opportunities to afford themselves of intra-band barter of various products coming from ecological territories which were somewhat different.⁴⁷

The traders, missionaries and governments present in Arctic and sub-Arctic regions encouraged Native people to stabilize themselves in this space, which contributed to modification of the socio-economic organization of the Crees and Inuit. “The

⁴³ The expression « Moyen-Nord » [Middle North] refers to resource regions such as Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and the Lower North Shore.

⁴⁴ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, 225 p. and GÉLINAS, Claude, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

⁴⁵ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others., *op. cit.*, p. 185. (Our translation)

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 127. (Our translation)

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 129. (Our translation)

fundamental importance which Amerindians accord to kinship suggests that even political and economic alliances imply personal and social aspects.”⁴⁸ From that time, mixed relations marked a passage in the history of exploration of Native territory and colonisation. It developed everywhere in the Ungava Peninsula, but especially in the sub-Arctic portion. Women played “a vital role, both because of their family connections and their special competencies,”⁴⁹ knowing the countryside, traditional techniques of survival and the tanning of skins. Children born of these mixed marriages generally remained close to the trading posts and assured, as a consequence, the maintenance of the posts.

The community and family practices of Native people underwent numerous changes, the latter caused by the presence of missionaries. Polygamy and polyandry had been practiced by the Inuit as well as by the Crees. These customs were embedded in ancestral practice devised to respond to the economic necessities of the family. Women were temporarily exchanged in order to accomplish certain tasks in which they were especially skilled.⁵⁰ This explains why:

[That] Indian material culture altered, values and other aspects of behaviour also underwent change. Some of these changes the foreigners encouraged more deliberately than others. Missionaries worked with the greatest concentration in an effort to alter traditional beliefs and feelings, to end polygyny, and induce new standards of interpersonal conduct.⁵¹

As time passed, social change occurred with the fur trade, which led Native people to develop a new mixed economy, hereafter based on commerce and traditional economic activity. However, this change:

[modified] to some extent the social organization of Natives. It required the specialization of certain individuals and groups in the trade process, giving birth to new roles, functions, statutes, categories and hierarchies (trade intermediaries, captains of trade, residents, etc.).⁵²

This modification encouraged, among Crees and Inuit, the adoption of individual activities such as trapping, weakening thereby traditional family relationships. In addition to the individualization of certain activities, Euro-Canadians present in Northern regions (traders, *coureurs des bois*, Indian Affairs agents, teachers, missionaries) contributed to a redefinition of the community by encouraging “the emergence of more definitive macrobands.”⁵³ Nevertheless, traditional hunting practices persisted through time. The Great Depression had repercussions on the activities of Native people, forcing them to

⁴⁸ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 162. (Our translation)

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 166. (Our translation)

⁵⁰ MALAURIE, Jean and Jacques ROUSSEAU, *op. cit.*, 533 p.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

⁵² DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 152. (Our translation)

⁵³ MALAURIE, Jean and Jacques ROUSSEAU, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

return to subsistence practices in order to respond to family needs for food. Even in the 60s, many families continued the traditional hunting practices and “[the] life for the Crees had changed, yet the continuity with their past life was still very evident.”⁵⁴

When missionaries arrived near the trading posts, the Amerindians and Inuit began to leave behind them some family members who might receive health care or an education. This tendency intensified after Confederation in 1867, but above all in the course of the second half of the 20th century. The government in Ottawa accorded transfer payments to Native people to ensure their survival and well-being:

[The] family allowance payments were used as a weapon by the government to force children into schools. [...] These payments enabled the old people to stay at the post in the winter months rather than being a drain on the energies and resources of the winter hunting group.⁵⁵

Traditionally, the educational needs of children and support for the elderly were provided by family members and the community.

In addition, the settling process led to a significant change in the very structure of the social system in Native communities. Certainly, the construction of a wood house is a step forward in itself, but these houses responded primarily to the needs of a nuclear family, not to the needs of an extended family, or of several families. As was previously mentioned, the presence of strangers in Northern regions reduced the cohesion of social groups both among the Crees and the Inuit. The situation of the Inuit was extreme and they had to face “dependence on the state and on its interventions to resolve problems caused by social change.”⁵⁶ The state wanted to rationalize services offered to the Inuit population and relocated many in already established villages, either on the peninsula or even on other islands on Canadian territory:

Whatever the causes, these relocations were a source of social trauma for the Inuit who remember, even today, this painful experience. In general, anthropologists see elements in the settling process and relocation process which have led to social dislocation of Inuit communities, notably because they led to the physical destructuring of family systems on which the community was built.⁵⁷

The Crees did not experience organized relocation. Nevertheless, the *nucléarisation* of families changed the social organization of communities considerably. The settle in process, in the form of the nuclear family, would reach its peak in the 1970s.

To summarize, the turning point of the 20th century was an unavoidable stage for the Native peoples of Northern Québec. The century evokes a conjuncture of juxtaposed

⁵⁴ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁵⁶ MARTIN, Thibault, *op. cit.*, p. 35. (Our translation)

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36. (Our translation)

elements, which resulted in numerous changes in the traditional way of life of the Crees and Inuit and therefore in the very structure of their social system. Previously, change had occurred at different periods for the Amerindians and the Inuit, but in the course of this century, changes occurred more or less in a parallel manner. It was, however, the second half of the 20th century which was the most striking for the families and communities of Native people in Northern Québec, with interventions by the state, and the finalization of the settling process.

1.2 Importance of gifts

At the very heart of the structure of the Amerindian and Inuit system lies a reciprocal sentiment which translates itself into a binding social tie. This tie is expressed in two primordial principles: the act of sharing, and the gift. The Crees and Inuit of Northern Québec are societies which, throughout the course of centuries, chose to preserve this socially constructive ancestral practice. "The gift creates chosen ones and excluded ones, privileged and obliged persons. Generosity gives power, and debt incurs obligation."⁵⁸ Since Native society was egalitarian, with a way of life based on subsistence economy, these principles and practices were essential for the perpetuation of the communities.⁵⁹ First of all, these exchanges took place within the same family or community, reinforcing pre-existing ties. The arrival of strangers in Arctic and sub-Arctic territory drew new players into existing patterns of exchange and gift-giving; without changing the essence of these relationships.

The most significant social cost was the sharing of food and throughout most of the Company's history, until well into the twentieth century, it worked both ways. [...] the Company men adhered, for they, too, were very often beneficiaries. Some Crees were simply helped, as this directive indicates. There were a few widows and orphans and one or two old men in the district who received a net and a little ammunition annually to prevent them starving, but only those who had no relations able to help them.⁶⁰

The sharing of food however would only be possible in the context of production, where hunting was of the highest importance. Hunting was an ancient activity which had endured through time, passing through the traditional way of life and into modern life. It structured and continued to structure these exchanges, which rebalanced inequities. Sharing and giving were strictly formalized by ritual and rules, so that sharing, among other things, of foodstuffs, might be equitably carried out within the social system. In addition, this activity was a clear expression of existing social relations, engendered by reciprocity and giving. "The hunt creates a social structure because game, caught by hunters, circulates within the community and creates a generalized chain of giving."⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 123. (Our translation)

⁵⁹ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, 511 p.; MALAURIE, Jean and Jacques ROUSSEAU, *op. cit.*, 533 p. and MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, 370 p.

⁶⁰ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁶¹ MARTIN, Thibault, *op. cit.*, p. 121. (Our translation)

Historically, distribution took place according to the degree of participation of the hunters. The individual who led the hunting group, or the one who had located or wounded the animal, “was in control of distribution; he was the one who had first choice and the claim to useful parts such as the ivory, the baleen plates, or the skin.”⁶² The remaining parts were then distributed to members of the community. The basic rules of gift-giving and sharing were strictly applied, and most of all, during periods when animal resources were scarce. Another form of sharing was carried out among the Inuit, a ritual process, in which first catches of any species in any given year were parcelled out among the community. The first time a child or adolescent killed an animal of any species marked an important passage for him and, just as with the first game of the year, these kills were distributed in a ritual sharing. “In all cases of ritual sharing, a celebration was organized, either in the form of a banquet, or as a tournament and games.”⁶³

It seems, then, that the principles of sharing and gift-giving were preserved during the centuries when relationship between Native people and strangers were being developed. These principles are now enshrined within modern political structures such as the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA), which regulates and organizes all the spheres of life of the Crees and Inuit communities. Each nation developed a strategy to respond to the needs of their communities. The Crees set up a support program for hunter-trappers, favouring members of communities which practiced these traditional activities full time, who became, therefore, hunting professionals. “The Inuit chose another way to administer an aid program for hunters, one which encouraged everyone’s participation in the hunt. Whatever the choice, the administrative approaches have their merits and each approach contribute, without a doubt to the maintenance of hunting.”⁶⁴ The distribution of food is carried out differently among the Native people. Crees hunters supply their communities with foodstuffs, while Inuit hunters distribute their catches to members of their families and, when necessary, sell the rest of their catch to the municipal freezer. This freezer then distributes meat without cost to community members who wish to eat traditional food, or who do not have the financial means to buy food at the supermarket. With these aid programs for hunters, the inhabitants of the Arctic and sub-Arctic are able to integrate a traditional way of life and a market economy (with salaried work). This mixed economy provides a clear picture of the reality of Northern Québec, in its modern form.

⁶² DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 97. (Our translation)

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 99. (Our translation)

⁶⁴ MARTIN, Thibault, *op. cit.*, p. 116. (Our translation)

2. Brief history of the evolution of community governance

The style of Native community governance in Northern regions has undergone significant change from the period of initial contact until now. Throughout the centuries, two types of change occurred: endogenous changes, and exogenous changes. The changes which occurred in Native governance structures must be explained according to the influences which inspired them. This brief history will present the evolution of governances and will thereby help us to understand a large number of elements guiding Amerindians and Inuit in their daily struggle for self-determination.

2.1 Pre-contact

Governance practices were relatively similar in the two First Nations. The Crees recognized the authority of a chief. "This leader is a man of wisdom whose qualities are able to attract a certain number of hunters who wish to place themselves under his 'direction'."⁶⁵ This man generally had a good knowledge of the territory through which he moved, and of the resources available there. The role of chief, however, was not a fixed position; the members of a hunting group could successively assume the role of authority. The activities of the community were dominated by a division of labour by gender, in which "The roles between [Cree] men and women were not as strictly defined."⁶⁶ In Cree society, women were recognized as having equal rights to those of men. "Politically and religiously the men were the leaders, although the women could and did take positions, depending on their ability and personality, since neither religion nor political leadership were institutionalized."⁶⁷ As has been mentioned previously, the roles of men and women were equally important in the social structure. Women supplied food to the company, by accomplishing the tasks which were assigned to them.

The Inuit of the Ungava peninsula maintained roughly the same characteristics which defined their political structure and the qualities necessary for a potential leader. That "leader", is designated by his effectiveness—skill in the hunt, strength, sense of command—and by his ability to assume authority if necessary during the collective hunt."⁶⁸ The division of labour along gender lines, however, was more prominent with the Inuit than with sub-Arctic Amerindians. "Men and women divided tasks in a systematic fashion. For the male hunter, the responsibility of transportation, construction of shelter and for various tools. To the woman the responsibilities of the childcaring, sewing, cooking, and gathering."⁶⁹ If a couple had not produced a boy and girl to ensure the continuity of division of labour, one of the children would learn the tasks of the opposite sex. In addition to this division of labour on gender, some activities depended as well on the personal qualities and competencies of different members of the

⁶⁵ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 54. (Our translation)

⁶⁶ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁶⁸ MALAURIE, Jean and Jacques ROUSSEAU, *op. cit.*, p. 83. (Our translation)

⁶⁹ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 99. (Our translation)

community. Elders and shamans played an important role in decisions made by the community.

In fact, for these two egalitarian societies, “[the] mandate of the chiefs was to represent the public will; force was not only denied them as a prerogative, but they would have lost their positions if they had tried to exercise it.”⁷⁰ Authority corresponded to the competence of individuals, and this, according to the different domains in which they worked. It corresponded as well to their ability to communicate, which encouraged, above all, co-operation between the sexes, unanimous decision-making and the maintenance of harmony with the natural and supernatural universe.

2.2 Evolution of governance until the signing of the JBNQA

The period of first contact with new arrivals did not cause any significant changes in the governance arrangements of the Crees and Inuit in Northern Québec. However, the fur trade did modify several aspects of material and organizational culture among Native peoples: “during the fur trade period, the Crees still had the means and the power to define themselves”⁷¹ while preserving their traditional economic and political strategies. This statement applies equally to the Inuit nation which began late to trade with the HBC. The pursuit of a traditional way of life, including its political aspects, might have been seriously shaken by the arrival of the HBC to James Bay and Hudson’s Bay. In 1680, the authority for the trading posts received:

[an] order to take possession of the territories, making the necessary arrangements with the Amerindians to be sure that they fully understood that the English were becoming “absolute masters” of the territory. [However the company] concluded “agreements” with the captains or Kings of the Rivers and Territories⁷² wherever they possessed establishments, in order to obtain the right to trade, excluding all others; thereby preventing the Amerindians from protesting about an intrusion on their lands.⁷³

It is therefore important to note that in spite of the introduction of the HBC on Northern territories, “Native societies maintained a certain autonomy for a long time, and resisted engaging too intensively in the fur trade, to the extent and as long as they were able to assure the pursuit of their traditional way of life.”⁷⁴

⁷⁰ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 63-65. (Our translation)

⁷¹ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁷² This quotation: “The captains or Kings of the Rivers and Territories” is referring to the captains of the hunt named by the Hudson’s Bay Company. A band would have several captains or “leaders”, who worked in small groups in a given territory. Each group took control of a territory generally located in a particular water basin (near a river), so that they could carry out the necessary activities for the subsistence of families.

⁷³ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 136. (Our translation)

⁷⁴ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 152. (Our translation)

Nearly a century after the establishment of the HBC in Rupert's Land, France had to cede the territory of *Nouvelle-France*, following its defeat by England. Several years later, Great Britain wrote and promulgated the Royal Proclamation of 1763. This document was intended to install British governance over the territory and its objective was to organize the colonization of the Empire, as well as to bring peace to relations with Native people. "The British, concerned about the fears of Amerindians facing the loss of their territory, decided in the end to reassure them by recognizing at least in part their territorial rights"⁷⁵ over the regions considered essential to the continuity of their way of life. Britain considered, then, that they were the only ones who could administer or cede Native territories.

This meant that all rental or sale of Native lands had to be handled through the intermediary of the Crown. The responsibility and control in this matter rested in the hands of administrators of the Crown and not in the hands of Amerindians, which implied a hierarchical rather than egalitarian relationship.⁷⁶

Whatever may be, this document remains:

[very] important for whoever wishes to understand relations between Natives and the government, and to interpret treaties arising from the Proclamation or oriented by it. The proof of its enormous importance for our documentary history resides in the fact that it has been nicknamed the "Declaration of Indian Rights" or the "Magna Carta" of Native affairs.⁷⁷

It must be noted that treaties were signed in other provinces, excluding the territory of Québec and Rupert's Land, which belonged to the HBC. The Crees and Inuit of Northern Québec were not signatories of a treaty with the Crown so they have today the power to demand their ancestral rights from the Crown thanks to this document. The geographical distance of these Native societies from centres of colonization has been, in this regard, somewhat advantageous. The territories accorded to the HBC remained under their authority until 1869, when the British Crown bought them. The following year, they were sold to the Canadian Confederation.

Even before this event, the British Crown required the Governor General of the time, Charles Bagot, to initiate a commission to examine the encroachment of colonists on Native lands, as well as their living conditions in their communities. This inquiry "occurred in a period marked by the disinterest of England in regards to the Indian question, and by accelerated development of land, which thus marginalized the Indians more and more in their way of life and in the possession of their lands."⁷⁸ This

⁷⁵ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 177. (Our translation)

⁷⁶ HENRY, Jackie (2006). *La Proclamation royale de 1763*, Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, L'Archiviste, n° 16, www.lac-bac.gc.ca/publications/002/015002-2010-f.html, p. 1. (Our translation)

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2. (Our translation)

⁷⁸ BOIVIN, Richard and René MORIN (2007). « La commission royale sur les peuples autochtones (1991-1996) ou la longue marche des peuples autochtones du Canada vers la reconnaissance de leurs droits », *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec*, vol. XXXVII, n°1, p. 26. (Our translation)

disinterest of the British Crown in regard to Native peoples, with whom they had signed agreements of responsibility, took place not only within a context in which Native people were being dispossessed of their territories to make way for colonization, but also in a context of social, political and economic evolution.

On the brink of the creation of Canada, the demographic weight of Native people diminished significantly and the colonizing people took on more and more significance, from their own point of view. In addition, the colony's economy had changed, leaving behind the fur trade in favour of other economic sectors, stimulated by the development of means and systems of transport. The full range of these factors produced the outcome that the Native population on Crown lands was no longer considered as a strategic or military force for the colony. The conclusions reached by the Commission laid out the objectives of reducing the number of Native people on Crown territory by accelerating the process of dispossession of lands, and also by keeping the power to decide who was an Indian. In this context, "the Governor General Charles Bagot, proposed the creation of residential schools to counter the influence of their parents' traditional values on young people"⁷⁹ and thus, to set up the first policies of assimilation in order that Native people might benefit from all the "advantages" of white civilization.

In 1857, these government objectives took legal form in the British North American Act, to encourage the "Civilization of the Indian Tribes", presenting itself as a guide towards emancipation through education and morality. Certainly, this commission was only applied later to Native people in Northern Québec, but it marked a politically important passage for all Natives in the country through the foundation it provided later for the Indian Act.

In 1867, Canada entered a new era with the founding of the Canadian Confederation and the creation of a new country, without either the consultation or presence of the Native population. Further, the British North American Act, "which gave birth to modern Canada recognized the exclusive legislative authority of the federal government—without any legal or moral obligation—over the Indians and the lands reserved for the Indians."⁸⁰ Since the beginning of the Confederation, numerous laws have been written in order to better define existing laws and the social, cultural and political life of Native people. In 1869, the Law of 1857 was modified and named the Law of Emancipation. One addition to the definition of an Indian obliged them to have a blood connection to a Native community. This law "introduced as well a triennial election system for the bands. The powers of the chiefs were extended somewhat, and the band councils now had the power to establish regulations on minor questions of order"⁸¹ and all this, under the supervision of the authorities. The latter believed sincerely that these new arrangements would lead Native people to take a step towards Canadian citizenship. In fact, the

⁷⁹ MYLES, Brian (2007). « Une révolution inachevée : Dix ans après la Commission Erasmus-Dussault les autochtones se cherchent une voie politique », *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec*, vol XXXVII, n° 1, p. 86. (Our translation)

⁸⁰ GÉLINAS, Claude, *op. cit.*, p. 17. (Our translation)

⁸¹ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 256. (Our translation)

Amerindians demonstrated no interest in the new structure which was offered them. "The bands [...] resisted by refusing to exercise the limited powers which had been accorded them."⁸²

In 1875, a change occurred in the structure of Indian Affairs when the Confederation abolished the councils to replace them with a new intermediary, the superintendant. The following year, the Indian Act was modified. It:

consolidated and reorganized the complex of legislation of the two Canadas, dating from before Confederation, within a national framework which is still essentially in place today, in spite of amendments which began to modify it almost as soon as it was adopted (nine amendments between 1914 and 1930 and a major modification in 1951.⁸³

This new law outlined the chief system which had to be adopted by the inhabitants of reserves, and intruded now in all spheres of Native life, to administer them and lead them to emancipation. It accorded the First Nations a minor child status and was the basis for a discriminatory process which took as its objective the cultural genocide of Natives through emancipation. Each band of thirty or more people was required to have a chief, elected by male band members. "The responsibilities of the chief and the council include, among others, public health, maintenance of roads, bridges, ditches and fences, the construction and maintenance of schools and other public buildings, and the concession of lots on the reserve as well as their registration."⁸⁴ However, the band chief and his councillors had no right to dispose of band funds, because it was the Indian Affairs agents who were named the authorities in this regard. The law of 1876 provoked, again, much resistance on the part of Native people. Seeing that this resistance was gathering strength, "in 1880, the position of superintendant general had to be reinforced, confirming his power to impose the electoral system on any band he judged ready to adopt it, voluntarily or not."⁸⁵

Directly after the Second World War, governments changed their attitude towards First Nations. When they returned home, Native veterans were shocked to return to the reality of the reserves. The surprise was so great "that the veteran associations and religious organizations organized a campaign which ended with a mixed committee from the Senate and the House of Commons, charged with the mandate to study the *Indian Act*."⁸⁶ For the first time, this type of combined committee would listen and consult with some Native people for guidance in their revision. In 1951, the modified law offered new possibilities to inhabitants of reservations. It reduces the power of Indian Affairs agents, but still precludes:

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 257. (Our translation)

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 283. (Our translation)

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 284. (Our translation)

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 284. (Our translation)

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 327. (Our translation)

bands to establish their own forms of government. It does increase their autonomy, by permitting their constitution as municipalities. A secret ballot is introduced, and women are authorized to participate in band council elections.⁸⁷

Furthermore, the law gives provinces the obligation to organize health services, education and social welfare for Native populations:

The easing of restrictions on commercial activities, on cultural practices and on the consumption of alcohol; in addition, the abolition of the arbitrary power to declare emancipation; the lifting of the prohibition to sue the federal government-- all were part of this desire for a broader recognition of political and cultural integrity, and of the fundamental liberties of Native persons and communities.⁸⁸

After this legislative change, the federal government accorded them the right to vote, followed nine years later by the Québec government. It would be necessary, however, to wait for the repatriation of the Canadian constitution in 1982, before gender discrimination would be eliminated, and gender equality would be enshrined in Canadian law.

From a regional viewpoint, the evolution of the Crees and Inuit of Northern Québec was somewhat different, and it took place in a different era. In spite of that, the weight of Canadian legislation referring to Native people was felt from the time that borders were expanded and the state began to intervene in Northern territories. Although the laws were principally designed to regulate Native populations in ecumene area of Québec⁸⁹, they would later apply as well to the Amerindians and Inuit in the rest of Canada.

As has been previously mentioned, James Bay and Hudson's Bay were annexed to the Northwest Territories in 1870. In 1898, Québec made a demand to the federal government that its borders be extended north. Its northern border had last been set in 1774 in the Québec Act, and it enclosed, for the most part, densely inhabited areas. "An Act Concerning the Delimitation of North-west and North-east Borders of the Province of Québec 1898 was adopted and the border of Québec was extended to the Eastmain River."⁹⁰ It would be necessary to wait another 14 years before the borders of Québec would be defined as we know them today, with the *Law to Extend the Borders of Québec* in 1912.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the coastal islands would not be added to the package for political and strategic reasons, therefore dividing the Québec entity as well as the cultural and hunting territory of the Inuit. At that time:

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 328. (Our translation)

⁸⁸ GÉLINAS, Claude, *op. cit.*, p. 50. (Our translation)

⁸⁹ The expression "ecumene area" is a geographical notion which designates the inhabited region of Québec.

⁹⁰ DUHAIME, Gérard and others, *op. cit.*, p. 120. (Our translation)

⁹¹ MARTIN, Thibault and Steven M. HOFFMAN (2008). *Power Struggles: Hydro development and First Nations in Manitoba and Québec*, University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg, 334 p.

The province took control of immense territory, which was called New Québec, with moderate interest, fearing the possibility of having to take responsibility for its Native population. While First Nations would normally fall under federal jurisdiction, as the Indian Act made them wards of the federal government, the Inuit did not have Indian status and therefore fell under provincial jurisdiction.⁹²

The Depression of the 1930s forced the Amerindians of the sub-Arctic and the Inuit of the Arctic to return to a subsistence economy because of the fluctuations of the fur market, and a reduction in game. When the missionaries saw the collapse of living conditions among Native people, they demanded government intervention. Unsuccessfully, they repeated their demand in concert with the trading post managers:

Thus, the desire of the government to limit its emergency spending, that of the provincial government to protect endangered animal species—by placing Natives into a kind of service to manage local animal populations—along with the Hudson’s Bay Company’s desire to continue its own activities, led jointly to the creation of protected zones where only Natives, on their respective trap lines, would have the authorization to trap, in the hope that species would be preserved.⁹³

The creation of beaver reserves took place between 1932 and 1948, marking in itself the beginning of government intervention.

A new structure of political relations was then put in place with the establishment of band councils which, by virtue of the Indian Act, were expected to define their rights and duties based on the model of the government’s concepts. Even if, at the beginning of the 1940s, the role of the band council was only to identify individuals in need to the government, and to act as a spokesperson to the government, this new political structure marks the beginning of a completely new framework of relations.⁹⁴

Still in the 1940s, the provincial government entered the region to offer priority services in health and education to the Crees. The federal government offered social assistance to Native people starting in 1944. Northern populations received “mostly payments in kind, namely food and clothing which they could usually procure at the trading posts.”⁹⁵ But the territory and its population “fell under Canadian control in reality only after the Second World War.”⁹⁶ As for Québec, it first took control of the territory during the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁹³ GÉLINAS, Claude, *op. cit.*, p. 209. (Our translation)

⁹⁴ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 63. (Our translation)

⁹⁵ GÉLINAS, Claude, *op. cit.*, p. 211. (Our translation)

⁹⁶ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

The Inuit reality was a little different, and the modernisation of their lifestyle more brutal than what the Crees experienced. Directly after the Second World War:

[the] government undertook, in 1953, a relocation of Inuit living in Inukjuak (formerly Port Harrison), in Northern Québec, where the population had become too numerous to live off the surrounding resources, to Ellesmere Island, situated 3,200 km north, where the game resources are still intact.⁹⁷

This intentional displacement was a political strategy intended to ensure the country's sovereignty in Arctic territory. The Inuit felt themselves to be wounded by this brutal displacement, and had the impression that they were victims "of a social and political experiment."⁹⁸ In this account, the importance of the family and social system to the Inuit must not be forgotten. Consequently, these traumatizing relocations represented a rupture in primordial relationships within Inuit society. The 1950s marked the time that the Inuit began to want to construct wooden houses. At the end of the decade, the government became aware that the Inuit were constructing houses without sanitary installations and decided to institute:

a programme intended to encourage private construction of small prefabricated houses for the Inuit, "match boxes", accompanied by the gradual installation of infrastructure networks (potable water supply, generator stations, for example) intended to relieve social health problems.⁹⁹

Because they were under Québec's jurisdiction, the Inuit were not subject to the Indian Act. By the command of the federal government, they were given a new political structure: the village council. "These were for the most part consultative councils, but they will gradually be given the responsibility of municipal services."¹⁰⁰

In addition, the federal government encouraged the Canadian Arctic Inuit, in the mid-1950s, to develop their economy on the model of cooperatives, which was supposed to initiate them to market economy and free enterprise. For the Inuit, the cooperative corresponded perfectly to the values transmitted by their society, because it was designed to redistribute profits to all members. First of all, these cooperatives permitted the Inuit to recuperate the profits from the sale of their crafts, which formerly had not been given to them:

[The] Inuit cooperative movement is not only a true economic success, it was also the cradle of the Inuit autonomy movement. In fact, since 1969, the Federation has demanded the creation of a regional government from Québec. However, before the Inuit could really develop their political project, the creation of hydroelectric

⁹⁷ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 398. (Our translation)

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 399. (Our translation)

⁹⁹ DUHAIME, Gérard, and others, *op. cit.*, p. 190. (Our translation)

¹⁰⁰ LACHANCE, Denis (1979). *Perspectives anthropologiques, Les Inuit du Québec*, Les Éditions du Renouveau pédagogique, Montréal, 289-303 p. (Our translation)

projects in James Bay would change the political landscape in the North of Québec and draw the Inuit into a completely different struggle.¹⁰¹

Until the 1950s:

[The] bands, functioning as social units, had never been more than essentially summer entities, with no political structure any more complex than the artificial expectations of the Indian Act. Also, these social units were very fluid in their composition, since the movement of families from one band to another was common [when the population was still nomadic].¹⁰²

It was really in the second half of the twentieth century that the governments asserted themselves in the Northern territories. In 1961, 50 years after the extension of the borders of Québec in 1912, the government of Québec established the *Direction Générale du Nouveau-Québec* to administer the lands north of the Eastmain River. "The goal of the agency was to aid communities, providing a range of services, from education to welfare to town zoning and policing."¹⁰³ The French education delivered by the Oblates was not much appreciated by the Crees, and the Anglicans sent a petition to the federal government. "These early beginnings of the Québec presence in its unsettled northern territories provided the footing the province needed for the developments that sprang up in the early 1970s, in particular the James Bay hydroelectric project."¹⁰⁴

In the case of the Crees, the chiefs under the authority of the Ministry of Indian Affairs "were not necessarily the traditional chiefs; they served different functions."¹⁰⁵ The function of chief required distinct qualities to respond to the needs of cohabiting with modern and traditional political instances. Across the decades, and towards the end of the 1960s, this distinction became more and more pronounced, and the political and social organization of the Crees had evolved far from its traditional form. During the 1960s, the Crees learned to respond to the bureaucracy imposed by Indian Affairs. In the course of that decade, regional chiefs were appointed within the existing political structure in order to facilitate exchanges between the offices situated in Val-d'Or and James Bay. "More contact with the southern community, schooling, and improved communication helped the Crees to better understand the responsibilities of the Department of Indian Affairs and to see their situation in the Canadian context."¹⁰⁶ The end of the 1960s was therefore characterized by a considerable evolution in the Crees and Inuit communities of Northern Québec. The two societies put in place the apparatus necessary to take control of their operation within political infrastructures, both Québec and Canadian.

¹⁰¹ MALAURIE, Jean and Jacques ROUSSEAU, *op. cit.*, p. 478. (Our translation)

¹⁰² GÉLINAS, Claude, *op. cit.*, p. 214. (Our translation)

¹⁰³ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

On April 30, 1971, the Prime Minister of Québec, Robert Bourassa, announced the beginning of construction of hydroelectric installations in the Northern part of the province. The huge project “was launched without preparatory or advance consultation with the Amerindians and Inuit who would be affected by the work,”¹⁰⁷ under the assumption that they represented only an insignificant number in the total Québec population. The same year, the Inuit organized themselves into the Northern Quebec Inuit Association and the Crees organized their representation under the Indian Association of Québec. In 1972, in spite of their lack of knowledge of the judicial system, the Crees and Inuit arrived in Montreal to demand their territorial rights and the halt of construction work on the hydroelectric complex. The First Nations and the Inuit:

[successfully] pressed their claims in court, the result being the November 15, 1973, ruling in Québec Superior Court by Judge Albert Malouf. Even though the decision was overruled seven days later, the legal requirement that Québec negotiate a treaty covering the territory stood, forcing the Québec government to provide monetary compensation and the recognition of specific Native rights in exchange for the development of the vast resources of the territory.¹⁰⁸

The Malouf judgment had a huge impact and forced the Québec Government to improve its relations with Native societies in Northern Québec. A first proposal was made in 1973, but it was refused by the Native nations, in spite of the pressure exerted by the Canadian government.¹⁰⁹ Parallel to the judicial process, the Supreme Court of Canada gave its 1973 judgment on the ancestral rights of the First Nations and the Inuit. Judge Calder:

[established] that Native people had legal title on Canadian territory due to the sole fact of their previous occupation and use, a title that survives in Canadian law unless it has been surrendered by the Native people or extinguished by successive governments. In aftermath of this ruling, the federal government adopted in the same year a policy that consisted in settling, through negotiation, Native territorial claims.¹¹⁰

The Crees, the Inuit and the Naskapi announced their wishes, which consisted of a demand for:

[modifications] to the existing project to minimize its damages to the land and resources; environmental protection; land and territorial (Native) rights and community development; programs and assistance for [First Nations and Inuit]

¹⁰⁷ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 404. (Our translation)

¹⁰⁸ MARTIN, Thibault and Steven M. HOFFMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹⁰⁹ MERCIER, Guy and Gilles RITCHOT (1997). *La Baie James. Les dessous d'une rencontre que la bureaucratie n'avait pas prévue*, Cahiers de géographie du Québec, vol. 41, n° 113, p. 137-169.

¹¹⁰ MARTIN, Thibault and Steven M. HOFFMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

hunters; local self-government to include economic and social development, and control over health and education; and monetary compensation.¹¹¹

In the course of 1974, the Crees dissociated themselves from the Indian Association of Québec who had represented them, creating their own institution, the Grand Council of the Crees. From that point, negotiations continued until November 1974, when the different parties arrived at a compromise and signed an agreement in principle. The James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement was ratified on November 11, 1975, by “the government of Québec, the government of Canada, the Grand Council of the Crees, Northern Quebec Inuit Association, Hydro-Québec, la *Société de développement de la Baie-James* and the *Société d’énergie de la Baie-James*.”¹¹² Moreover, it was the first treaty signed under the new law on territorial demands adopted by the Canadian government, and for this reason, it can be considered the first treaty of the modern era.

2.3 Since the signature of the JBNQA

During the period of first contact, and up to the signature of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, changes in governance produced by outside institutions seemed, at first, subtle. As time goes by, most of the changes were demanded by these institutions, but also by Crees and Inuit societies which were attempting to adapt and find their place in the new political framework. Be that as it may, adaptation was not carried out by abandoning the traditional governance philosophies and a way of life which, following the ratification of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement seemed to reassert itself. The results obtained through negotiations however were not unanimously accepted. Three Inuit collectives,¹¹³ with Povungnituk at their head, refused to sign the Agreement for a long time, objecting among other things to matters referring to the education of children.¹¹⁴ It wasn’t until 1989 that the village of Povungnituk ratified the accord and decided to harmonize its relations with the Québec Government and other villages of Nunavik.

The Agreement foresaw, for Crees and Inuit societies, three different categories of territory. The lands in category 1 are for their exclusive use; they represent the extension of their villages, and are managed by provincial law. The lands of territory 2, in areas surrounding communities, are also reserved for the villages where the population can practice their traditional activities, and they are managed under federal law. They must be replaced if they are subjected to development for other ends. Finally,

¹¹¹ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 253.

¹¹² MARTIN, Thibault, *op. cit.*, p. 39. (Our translation)

¹¹³ Dissident villages were Salluit, Ivujivik and Povungnituk. The latter was at the turn of the 1970s “not only the most populated place in Nunavik, but also one of the most dynamic communities, both politically and economically, because the cooperative movement was developed there”, (MARTIN, 2003: 48). This fact certainly helps us to understand the position of the villagers on the ratification of the JBNQA, because this was the village which proposed the creation of an autonomous regional entity.

¹¹⁴ MCKENZIE, Gérald (1983). *Les Inuit dissidents de Povungnituk et de Ivukivik : En attendant la solution finale*, Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec, vol. XIII, n° 4, 319 p. (Our translation)

the lands in category 3 are public lands which are not reserved for the exclusive use of Native people, but they may practice their traditional activities there without constraint.¹¹⁵ However, this territorial structure does not reflect their traditional perception of the territory. According to the Native vision, there are no defined borders in this territory and it cannot be the subject of possession. The Native people travel within it and use to harvest resources, where only the right of usufruct is considered. This vision has modified slightly over the centuries and the Crees and Inuit have integrated and adjusted their understanding of territory in this Convention.

Above and beyond this territorial system, the Convention:

[accords] considerable authority to Québec Inuit and Cree communities, over their political, economic and social affairs, even if the government continues to have the last word. In addition, a sum of 232.5 millions of dollars paid in 21 years, and special aid with economic development.¹¹⁶

The Agreement is divided into 31 chapters and describes the new set of structures put into place by the different parties. The governance mechanisms laid out and funded by the Agreement give the Native people new administrative and parapublic structures for the management of their territory and of their communities, such as school boards, regional health and social service councils, regional administrations, etc. The structural changes are more radical for the Crees than for the Inuit, because the latter was no longer subject to the Indian Act but had been transferred to provincial jurisdiction and in 1984, with the adoption of the Cree-Naskapi (of Quebec) Act. The institutions and public services were now identical in the North and South of the province of Québec, affirming thus the totality of Québec territory:

The structures created by the agreement confirmed the role Québec expected to play in this part of the province. For Québec, Native communities were expected to arrange their local administration in the same manner as Québec municipalities, while regional organizations [would] exercise municipal functions in regions located outside of communities that have been long established.¹¹⁷

Nevertheless, the Agreement does not confer political autonomy on the Inuit and Crees, and “it is still far from the entrenchment of Native rights, and, insofar as it concerns them, it does not fulfill the promise they expected.”¹¹⁸ The promise had more to do with “a wonderful economic expansion [but...] northern development of the Crown Corporation was stymied. This disappointment can be explained by pointing to the slowdown—contrary to predictions—of the demand for electricity.”¹¹⁹ The effects of the

¹¹⁵ LEPAGE, Pierre (2005). *Mythes et réalités sur les peuples autochtones*, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, Québec, 88 p.

¹¹⁶ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 405. (Our translation)

¹¹⁷ MARTIN, Thibault and Steven M. HOFFMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

¹¹⁸ DICKASON, Olive Patricia, *op. cit.*, p. 405. (Our translation)

¹¹⁹ MERCIER, Guy and Gilles RITCHOT, *op. cit.*, p. 159. (Our translation)

economic crisis of the 1980s were felt by Native populations through the inflation which reduced the value of reparations they had been accorded. Furthermore, the Crees and the Inuit had to organize themselves with insufficient cooperation from both levels of government.

At the end of the 1980s, phase 2 of the project, aiming to harness the Great Whale River, was launched by Hydro-Québec. In order to demonstrate their discontent, the Crees and the Inuit projected the debate onto the international scene. Their cause won sympathy from people, and was also supported by many environmental groups. In April 1991, “[starting] in Ottawa, they paddled down into the Hudson River, via Albany, in a specially combined canoe and kayak, arriving in New York City on Easter weekend of 1991.”¹²⁰ A second expedition took place on Québec territory in the fall of 1991, and ended with the deposit of a petition in the *Assemblée nationale*:

Parallel to these media actions, the Makivik Society associated itself with legal procedures undertaken by the representatives of the Crees. These procedures had the effect of slowing, even stopping, the Great Whale project, notably by forcing Hydro-Québec to reconsider its environmental review process.¹²¹

Unlike the Crees who did not want to reach an agreement with Hydro-Québec, the Inuit strategy consisted of ongoing dialogue with the Crown Corporation, all the while strongly opposing the project. Therefore, although they did not succeed in nipping the project in the bud, they were able to launch a negotiation “[and] this episode gave rise to a large-scale mobilization of Inuit and Crees to negotiate an equal partnership with the modern state.”¹²²

Filled with dissatisfaction, pushed by the lack of respect of promises made by the government in the JBNQA, Native people decided to take up again their battle for a greater political autonomy. In 1983, the Inuit restarted the idea of obtaining a greater autonomy and met with the premier of that time, René Lévesque. The response from the premier was positive, but only to the extent that the autonomy of the Inuit would be framed by Québec borders.

This green light from the Québec government gave rise to a consultative structure, the Ujjituijiiit committee, charged with the task of establishing proposals and procedures leading to the creation of the Nunavik Regional Government. Then, on April 10 1989, the residents of Nunavik elected a representative assembly, the Nunavik Constitutional Committee.¹²³

This committee developed the constitution of Nunavik and presented it to a referendum in 1991, in which the constitutional project was accepted by the Nunavimmiuts.

¹²⁰ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

¹²¹ MARTIN, Thibault, *op. cit.*, p. 69. (Our translation)

¹²² MARTIN, Thibault and Steven M. HOFFMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

¹²³ MALAURIE, Jean and Jacques ROUSSEAU, *op. cit.*, p. 480. (Our translation)

Negotiations began in earnest six years later between the Makivik Corporation and Prime Minister Lucien Bouchard. "The creation of the Nunavik Commission in 1999 and the deposit of its report in 2001 constituted significant steps. [...] In July 2003, the two governments and representatives of Nunavik signed an Agreement in Principle on the negotiation process."¹²⁴ The project for regional governmental autonomy has to be agreed through consensus by all parties. It will be necessary to wait until December 5, 2007, before the Agreement in Principle Concerning the Amalgamation of Certain Public Institutions and Creation of the Nunavik Regional Government would be ratified. According to the calendar established by the Nunavik Regional Government, the process would have to take several more years before the Inuit can enjoy a government "which permits them to control the decisions which will influence their way of life and their development."¹²⁵ The creation of this regional government is foreseen for the month of April 2013 (see Appendix 1).

The innovative character of this agreement is that it accords to the Inuit an autonomous regional government within the boundaries of a province, a structure which was introduced for the first time in the Canadian confederation.

The structures, powers and resources of the Kativik Regional Government (KRG), of the Kativik School Board (KSB) and of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) will become the foundation on which the government will rest. The government will be made up of an elected assembly, *Uqarvimarik*, of at least 21 members. Each village will elect a representative and the villages where the population exceeds 2000 inhabitants will benefit from an additional representative. The five members of the executive council, which will also sit with the assembly, will be elected on a regional basis by all citizens.¹²⁶

The autonomous regional government is, for the Inuit, a means to preserve and to perpetuate their culture within a framework of modern government, where all institutions will be mandated to ensure the survival of their traditional way of life.

It is indeed remarkable that this quest for autonomy remained at the centre of political relations, although the Inuit did not attempt to separate physically from Canada or Québec, but to redefine the conditions of a partnership which would permit them to flourish within the boundaries of Nunavik, and with other Native people.¹²⁷

Parallel to the Inuit, the Crees of James Bay also continued their battle to win a larger self-determination. The Crees believed that the application of the objectives of the JBNQA had not been achieved:

¹²⁴ BOUCHARD, Jérôme (2008). *Élaboration du gouvernement du Nunavik et construction de l'identité collective inuit*, Études/Inuit/Studies, vol. 32, n 1, p. 142. (Our translation)

¹²⁵ MARTIN, Thibault, *op. cit.*, p. 176. (Our translation)

¹²⁶ BOUCHARD, Jérôme, *op. cit.*, p. 142-143. (Our translation)

¹²⁷ MARTIN, Thibault, *op. cit.*, p. 176. (Our translation)

Québec wanted to develop the rich natural resources in Eeyou Istchee and the Cree Nation wanted to escape the cycle of dependency and poverty created by Canada and Québec's failure to respect the treaty rights contained in the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, which is, after all, a social and economic development agreement.¹²⁸

For nearly thirty years, the Grand Council of the Crees battled for recognition of their rights as a nation to be guaranteed in the Canadian constitution, using the court system and public relations. To put an end to the discord arising from the JBNQA, the Grand Council of the Crees and the government of Québec signed, on February 7, 2002, an Agreement Concerning a New Relationship Between le Gouvernement du Québec and the Crees of Québec. This new Agreement:

[suggests] that both governments are attempting to establish a new relationship of cooperation. In this extension to the original 1975 agreement, as reported in the national newspapers, the Crees have addressed some of their key concerns omitted previously. In exchange for permitting further hydroelectric development on the Rupert and Eastmain rivers, the Crees are ensuring their own management of their natural resources and greater environmental protection, substantially increased training and employment opportunities, and a measure of full political autonomy.¹²⁹

With this ratification, the Crees will be compensated with 4.5 billion dollars and will now be partners in the development of Northern Québec.¹³⁰

Through a similar formula, the Crees signed July 16th 2007, the Agreement Concerning a New Relation Between the Government of Canada and the Cree of Eeyou Istchee. Just as with the Québec government, this Agreement is intended to put an end to the conflicts which were being fought in court between the two parties. When the agreement was accepted on October 12, 2007 through a referendum, the Crees qualified to receive a compensation of 1.4 billion dollars, and as well:

federal responsibilities, principally in the domains of the administration of justice and of social and economic development. The ratification also will permit the Grand Council of the Crees and the government of Canada to launch a second phase of negotiation which will look at the modernisation of the governance regime of the Crees.¹³¹

¹²⁸ MARTIN, Thibault and Steven M. HOFFMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

¹²⁹ MORANTZ, Toby, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

¹³⁰ OTIS, Ghislain and Geneviève MOTARD (2009). « De Westphalie à Waswanipi : la personnalité des lois dans la nouvelle gouvernance crie », *Les Cahiers du droit*, vol. 50, n° 1, 121-152 p.

¹³¹ AFFAIRES INDIENNES ET DU NORD CANADA (2007). *Le nouveau gouvernement du Canada et le Grand Conseil des Cris concluent une entente et amorce de nouvelles relations*, communiqué de presse, July 15, <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/mr/nr/m-a2007/2-2909-fra.asp>. (Our translation)

These two new Agreements will permit the Crees to take part, with the rest of Canadian society, in the coming wave of globalization, more in control of their identity and culture.

3. The concept of time

Before examining the sense, value and connection to work among Native people of Northern Québec, it is interesting to consider their concept of time, which is quite different than that of Westerners. In order to understand the nuanced differences between the Western and Native time concept, both will be briefly delineated. Westerners see time in a linear way. It is:

measurable, and serves as a reservoir of deployment for all human existence. It is this universal and progressive notion of time which allows Western observers to conceive of cultural differences as many different moments in the historical evolution of humanity and to present their encounter with the Other as “a voyage in time.”¹³²

This conception integrates our manner of perceiving and constructing History, so that events are seen as consecutive, always taking “into careful consideration the qualities of precision and consistency, two criteria which are essential for the mathematical calculation of time.”¹³³ On the other hand, contrary to the Western concept, Native people perceive time “as a form of rhythm and cycles.”¹³⁴ This construct of time is much better adapted for observers of nature and the environment, “that is to say, by the attention focused on the alternation between day and night, or of the seasons, which result directly from planetary movements.”¹³⁵ The alternation of day and night doesn’t serve to measure time, but to count it. Therefore, the Native people “count the days by the nights, the months by moons and the years by seasons.”¹³⁶

In an article published in 1975, Dorais put forth his analysis of time-related vocabulary used by the Inuit of Québec and Labrador. The vocabulary used to designate years, months, weeks and days arise from a traditional lexicon of the notion of time. An interesting point is that the vocabulary used to designate the days of the week arises from two factors: “religion and remuneration.”¹³⁷ As shown in the figure 1 below who is inspired from Louis-Jacques Dorais.

¹³² PIRON, Florence et Daniel ARSENAULT (1996). *Construction sociale du temps*, Septentrion, Sillery, p. 193. (Our translation)

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 195. (Our translation)

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 197. (Our translation)

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 197. (Our translation)

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 199. (Our translation)

¹³⁷ DORAIS, Louis-Jacques (1975). *Le vocabulaire du calcul du temps chez les Inuit du Québec-Labrador*, Recherches amérindiennes au Québec, vol. 5, n° 3, p. 71. (Our translation)

Day of the week	Day of the week in inuktitut	Définition
Sunday	Alluit, allituqaq, allituni	The taboo is observed
Monday	Not available	Observation of taboo is ended
Tuesday	Aippanganni, aippiput	The second (day of work)
Wednesday	Pingajuanni, pingassiput	Le third (day of work)
Thursday	Sitamanganni, sitammivut	Le fourth (day of work)
Friday	Nirissivik ou nirissivut	One is given food to eat; The fifth; The fifth (day of work)
Saturday	Not available	Taboo is unobserved for the last time

The vision of time is cyclical. It is based on lunar movements and the seasons. The vocabulary used by the James Bay Crees and the Inuit of Nunavik today has been influenced by the church. The Crees have kept the vocabulary of the English language, which was taught to them during the stay of the missionaries, in order to designate days, months, seasons and years. As for the Inuit, they have transferred this vocabulary into Inuktitut and make specific reference to the instruction that was given them in this matter, also by the missionaries. As was mentioned above, the vocabulary used by the Inuit refer to religion and remunerated work. But one thing is certain: the Inuit and Crees of the Northern regions have hybridized the Western notion of time and their own cyclical view, facilitating the co-existence of a modern and traditional way of life.

3.1 Relationship of Native people to work

This brief cultural history of the evolution of governance and the concept of time permits us to contextualize the work environment within the way of life of the Crees and Inuit of Ungava Bay, while conceptualizing their perceptions of it. As was mentioned earlier, Native people wish to perpetuate their traditional philosophy and incorporate it into all spheres of their daily life, while shaping it to fit with modern socioeconomic realities. For the Crees and the Inuit of Northern Québec, salaried work was integrated into their culture only recently, around the middle of the 19th century. The arrival of government services and the intensification of their presence in Northern communities have led to corresponding changes in the social structure of the Crees and Inuit. Although many socioeconomic conditions have improved, many Crees and Inuit have not had access to work in part because of their lack of qualifications, but also because of a lack of jobs.¹³⁸ Without access to salaried work, Native people must turn to social assistance programs such as employment insurance and welfare, to which they began to have access in the 1990s. These programs, by their very nature, reinforce the dependence of Native people on the state.

¹³⁸ CHABOT, Mélanie (2008). Dossier : La Terre où vivre, *Développement social*, vol. 9, n° 1, 36 p.

Jobs presently available in James Bay and Nunavik are mostly related to public administration and public service. Candidacy for these jobs requires a specific education, which the majority of the population does not have:

Most of these jobs are occupied by young Inuit who have achieved a certain level of education. Some also occupy highly responsible posts (mayor, school principal, etc.); the salaries associated with these tasks, and prestige which arises from them, are proportional to the work. Nevertheless, the majority of the Inuit population continues to work in low-wage jobs requiring few qualifications.¹³⁹

Disparity of income is important for members of a community. Although the notion of community is at the heart of Native values, the individualism which has developed with arrival of salaried work has had the effect, both for the Crees and the Inuit, of creating a gap which has given rise to the notion of social classes. This gap, created by salary differences, separates some Native people from members of the same community, and also from non-Native inhabitants. For example, in 2001, the average income of an Inuit male of 15 and more was 19 555\$, compared to the income of non-Inuit males, which was 50 047 \$.¹⁴⁰ The same disparity of income is a phenomenon with the Crees of James Bay. However, it is noteworthy that the socioeconomic situation of the Crees was 10% better than the Inuit during the 1990s.¹⁴¹

In addition to salary differences, the Crees and Inuit encountered other obstacles related to the world of work. The majority of available jobs are found in the public and parapublic sector. Just like the instruction offered to children from the third grade, the work place uses a second language, either French or English. In fact, only 10% of the inhabitants of Northern Québec have one of these languages as their mother tongue. Native people therefore must establish work relations, for the most part, in a language they master less well. "But in addition to difficulty in communication related to language, the coexistence of two different world visions and manner of thinking pose equal problems."¹⁴² The direction of organisms and enterprises is generally in the hands of a non-Native top management who do not share the same temporal or traditional values as the Crees and Inuit, giving rise to cultural misunderstandings on one side or other. The rigidity of work hours is another aspect which cannot be ignored, and to which Native people are not accustomed.

Native work was traditionally periodic, guided by their concept of time. Hunting, fishing and trapping by Arctic and sub-Arctic hunter-gatherers were performed according to the seasons and to the migration patterns of the animals they hunted. These activities gave occasion to accumulate food reserves for the survival of the group, and were then followed by a period of rest and celebration. "It is possible to see in this heritage the foundation of the present situation in the work place. What we will draw from it,

¹³⁹ MARTIN, Thibault, *op. cit.*, p. 49. (Our translation)

¹⁴⁰ CHABOT, Mélanie, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁴¹ MALAURIE, Jean and Jacques ROUSSEAU, *op. cit.*, p. 520.

¹⁴² BOUCHARD, Jérôme, *op. cit.*, p. 144. (Our translation)

however, what seems to be the most important to understand in the question under debate, is the interdependence of social structures, of resources and of these activities.¹⁴³ Originally, the first salaried contracts carried out by members of the First Nations and Inuit were offered on a part time basis. Be that as it may, this does not explain why some Crees and Inuit succeed in adopting permanent, full time work. The explanation might, however, be found in the desire to conserve societal structure and traditional life, based on a multitude of possibilities to achieve the well-being and income required to support family needs within the very mixed economy always present in Northern communities.

Finally, the writings focusing on what is needed to understand the relationship of Native people to work suggest there is a significant lack of preparation and education on the part of non-Native people working in Northern Québec. Their weak knowledge of the culture in which they are living and working leads, at times, to frictions and frustrations within Native communities. This has been emphasized repeatedly in reference to non-Native teachers living in Cree and Inuit communities. The work method of non-Native people is different than those of Inuit colleagues. The latter emphasize cooperation and the responsibility of the group, while the non-Native colleagues emphasize individual effort and competition.¹⁴⁴

3.2 Mixed economy and validation of traditional work

As has been previously mentioned, the mixed economy remains a very important notion among the Crees and Inuit of James Bay and Nunavik, existing throughout their modern reality. History shows us that the Crees and Inuit of Northern Québec were able to adapt their traditional economy to the trade economy which came into being with the arrival of Europeans. This mixed economy continues to exist today and is evidence, once again, of the tenacity of Native people in conserving their traditional practices. This connection to traditional values underpins the range of Native demands. The ratification of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, the Agreement in Principle Concerning the Amalgamation of Certain Public Institutions and Creation of the Nunavik Regional Government, of the Agreement Concerning a New Relationship Between le Gouvernement du Québec and the Crees of Québec have given Native people the opportunity to preserve the economic multiplicity developed across the centuries while embedding in these agreements the structures appropriate to the integration of traditional activities and the validation of their culture. The last two agreements will permit Native people to pursue their traditional activities, while developing their market economy, and assuring the protection of the fauna around them, in the spirit of sustainable development.

¹⁴³ DUHAIME, Gérard (1991). *Le pluriel de l'Arctique. Travail salarié et rapports sociaux en zone périphérique*, Sociologie et société, vol. 23, n° 2, p. 116. (Our translation)

¹⁴⁴ MONTPETIT, David (2009). *Essai-article, Diriger une école inuite : une étude de cas au Québec*, Université Laval, Québec, p. 28.

In the present Cree and Inuit societies, a varied economy is ongoing and active in each community. Traditional subsistence activities and varied sources of income coexist in the Native reality. Their perception of work differs from the Western perception, and the Crees and Inuit perform different tasks to earn their necessary income. To achieve this, they juxtapose their earnings obtained through diverse activities such as crafts, salaried work, transfer payments from the state (employment insurance, welfare, etc.) with food from the hunt, and clothing and accessories obtained through domestic labour. The solidarity system still at the heart of communities and families is embedded in salaried work as well. "The sharing of resources affects not only incomes and expenses, but also products and the jobs themselves [...] The same job could be shared by three or four people in the same year."¹⁴⁵ Workers help each other, therefore, and replace each other at work, permitting several villagers to have temporary access to a remunerated position. The replacements are sometimes sent directly by the former worker, or are requested by the employer who is prepared to accept the cultural differences of Native people.

Given the continuous mixed economy of Native societies, this reveals that the traditional subsistence activities are profoundly anchored and validated still. Although certain techniques have undergone some modernisation (tools, weapons, etc), traditional work still takes a central place in the lives of the Crees and Inuit of Ungava Bay. Contemporary life does not permit all the Native people of Northern Québec to practice traditional activities. Nevertheless, these activities are greatly valued by the population for whom "the territory, the hunt and traditional food occupy a disproportionate place in conversation, in comparison to the real time, weekly or monthly, which is allocated to these activities."¹⁴⁶ In the process of validation of these activities and of the traditional way of life, we can also add the discourse of the Native elite, which exalts the ancestral uniqueness of this way of life to support their territorial demands against the federal and provincial government. The arts, such as sculpture, support this elite Cree and Inuit discourse on the provincial, canadian and even international scene, by reminding us of the particularities and uniqueness of the Native nations.

4. Relationship of Native people to the labor union

There exists to date very little documentation on the relationship of Native people to the labor union. The analysis just completed helps us to better understand the relationship of each nation to the union, taking into account their unique features and sociocultural similarities. Family connections are at the heart of Northern Native societies, and social realities will certainly have an effect on the participation of Native people in the union. School Boards managed by local instances may inhibit the participation of Native personnel in the labor union, because the employer is made up of people close to them, making it difficult for Native teachers to negotiate with a management originating from

¹⁴⁵ DUHAIME, Gérard, *op. cit.*, p. 121. (Our translation)

¹⁴⁶ BOUCHARD, Jérôme (2007). *L'épreuve de la modernité : Les représentations de l'identité inuit contemporaine et l'élaboration du gouvernement régional du Nunavik*, mémoire, Université Laval, p. 72. (Our translation)

his or her own community. Union history and union solidarity are developing bit by bit, but doesn't always sit well with family and community relations, placing Native teachers, at times, in an uncomfortable position. Under such conditions, would it not be possible to believe that Native people could consider their adherence to a union as a form of disloyalty to their community?"¹⁴⁷

To that must be added the difficulties encountered at work, such as the fact of being obliged to communicate with other members of the personnel in a second language. The fact that Native people work in a milieu which does not use their mother tongue for communication may cause comprehension problems and complex work relations with non-Native people. The union delegate of the instructional institution may also play a role in the participation and quality of rapport between Native people and the union; perhaps he or she does not correspond to the traditional selection criteria of a chief or representative. For the Crees and Inuit, facility and clarity of expression as well as knowledge of the milieu and resources are important characteristics for accepting a representative. The Native people do not necessarily perceive the union in a negative way, even if they do not employ the syndical process to reach agreements with management. Natives prefer instead communication which leads to consensus. Natives of the northern regions of Québec have an unclear picture of what a union represents and of their involvement in it. In their study, Jacob and Forcier explained that cultural agents wish to understand the advantages emanating from their unionization and the rights which are implied. Native professionals point out also the difficulty of communication experienced with teachers from outside who participate very little, or not at all, in the life of the community. The lack of training on the social realities of the North is noted, and this training should be essential upon hiring teachers.¹⁴⁸

Coming from egalitarian societies, the Crees and Inuit of the Ungava peninsula also find it hard to understand the value of a salary scale. Native people who are devoted to the sharing of resources must ask themselves about the deeper meaning of the salary differences which exist for teachers from the South, who receive financial compensation, distance allowances and their own salary. Another fact to note is that the connection of Native people to the labor union might also be influenced by geographical location of communities. The inlanders Crees, living close to the non-Native majority, may find it much easier to accept and join the union than the Crees and Inuit of the coast, who are located farther from the non-Native majority.

4.1 Geographical influence

The connection of Native people to the labor union is influenced by various sociocultural factors, but also by geographical realities. The northerly location of communities under study is an important point to consider. In comparison to non-Native people living in the southern portion of the province of Québec, the Crees and Inuit are not living in a

¹⁴⁷ JACOB, André and Louise FORCIER (1991). *La dynamique syndicale dans le Nord québécois, deux situations : Nemaska et Chisasibi*, Université du Québec à Montréal, p. 23. (Our translation)

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

heterogeneous society. Certainly, they meet and live with outsiders who have settled with them in order to work, or who are passing through, but it is nevertheless true that the majority of the population is ethnically homogeneous. The brief sociocultural history permits us to highlight this significant geographic aspect. In comparison with other Native nations of Québec, the Crees and Inuit experienced the fixation of their habitat somewhat late, which safeguarded somewhat their cultural specificity. History shows us, moreover, that the Native people of the North moved from territorial isolation to the integration of their living space into a province, through the Law to Extend the Borders of Québec in 1912. Québec claimed the North to confirm its territorial integrity and to take control of the resources within its borders. In the 1970s, a road was constructed between the region of *Abitibi-Témiscamingue* and the North of Québec, connecting Native people by its existence to the rest of the province. This signified the linking of the North to the South of Québec, opening to Native people a new communication channel. With the JBNQA, the Crees and Inuit founded airline companies, to service the Northern populations which until then had been isolated.

The distant location and the lack of passable roads between the communities have various repercussions on the daily life of the Crees and Inuit. The cost of transportation plays an essential role in the fixing of prices of imported products, raising the cost of living to a high price. Furthermore, the northerly location of the communities is a disadvantage for sustained economic development. For outsiders, the elevated cost of living, of transportation and of real estate does not encourage investors to place their enterprises in these regions. For the Crees and Inuit, the place where they live does not lend itself to the creation of businesses, for the same reasons, and also because the potential market is so small.

To counter the effects of distance, the Inuit bought an airplane at the beginning of the 1970s, to ensure the transport of negotiators during the talks leading to the signature of the James Bay Northern Québec Agreement. Thus, Air Inuit (1978) and Air Creebec (1979) were founded at the ratification of the JBNQA, to ensure continued connection between the North and South. The Inuit were also innovative in their means of communication during the negotiations. Radio occupied a central role and was used like a public meeting so that all the communities could express themselves on the discussion underway. Even today, radio is used to overcome the geographic distance between the Inuit communities.

In the Canadian context, it is worth noting that the phenomenon of unionization is much more significant in the West than in the East of the country. Several phenomena explain this situation. First, the proportion of Native people living in an urban community or close to an urban community is much greater in Western than in Eastern Canada. The proximity of communities to the non-Native majority and the old phenomenon of Native migration to the cities, which began in the 1950s-1960s, are transmuted into the unionization of Native people. In the Eastern regions of the country, including Québec, the appearance of Native people in an urban community is a much more recent phenomenon, dating from the 1980s. Add to this the large size of Québec territory and

the uniqueness of northern communities, and it's clear that the unionization of the Native people of Northern Québec will be more slow and delicate. Finally, in the years which followed the signature of the JBNQA, the Crees and Inuit experienced the development of many public and parapublic institutions on their territory. These new structures, culturally different than Native society, including the union presence, arrived in an era of change and influence for these communities

Conclusion

To summarize, the Crees and Inuit nations have, over the course of the last century, experienced many social, economic, cultural and political changes, orchestrated by agents of the Church, Europe and government. These external influences turned the way of life of Native people in the Ungava Peninsula head over heels, leading them to a Westernized, sedentary lifestyle. Until the creation of the Canadian confederation in 1867, the Crees and Inuit were able to pursue their traditional way of life. After the intervention of government in Rupert's Land in 1870, the prime objective of Canadian policy was to "civilize the savages" with the ultimate goal of limiting the financial obligation which politicians had accorded to Native people in exchange for the ceding of their lands and ancestral rights, in order to make way for non-Native colonists.

Be that as it may, the Crees and Inuit of Québec entered the modern era with the imposition of a settling process in aimed at enabling the rationalization of government services. After the Second World War, Native people experienced increasingly restrictive policies aiming for cultural genocide, although they sometimes had the opposite effect. The geographical location of the Crees and Inuit played a positive role in the application of these policies. Thus, they were able to preserve the essentials of their values and their culture, still enjoying today these values as the foundation of their society. Thanks to the safeguarding of these social principles and the maintenance of their ancestral modes of governance, they have been able to sidestep this intervention from the South.

The Québec state, which had previously had no desire to take any responsibility for the wellbeing of the Inuit changed his mind and, several years later, asserted its territorial authority and proclaimed it as a national symbol. At this point, the Crees and Inuit have for several decades attended school, worked at salaried jobs and learned to manage their communities as required by the provincial and federal governments. In 1971, the construction projects of the century began without consulting local populations. At this point the Native peoples realized the importance of events and launched themselves into a battle for the recognition of their rights. The James Bay Northern Québec Agreement marked an important passage for the Native people of Northern Québec, but also for the First Nations, the Inuit and the Métis in the rest of Canada.

Finally, although the First Nations and the Inuit of Québec have long been the forgotten ones of history, they are in position today within a process leading to their political autonomy and are continuing their integration into modern instances in order to improve

their condition, and this, although they have been frustrated in some situations. Union's members of the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* can guide their decision-making process by supporting and accepting them in their unique cultural voyage. During this period of significant demographic growth due to their elevated birth rate, it is even more important to work in concert with all the categories of employees of education from the Crees and Inuit communities, to help them in the schooling and educational continuity of their children, who represent the foundation of their traditional values, and also the future of their society.

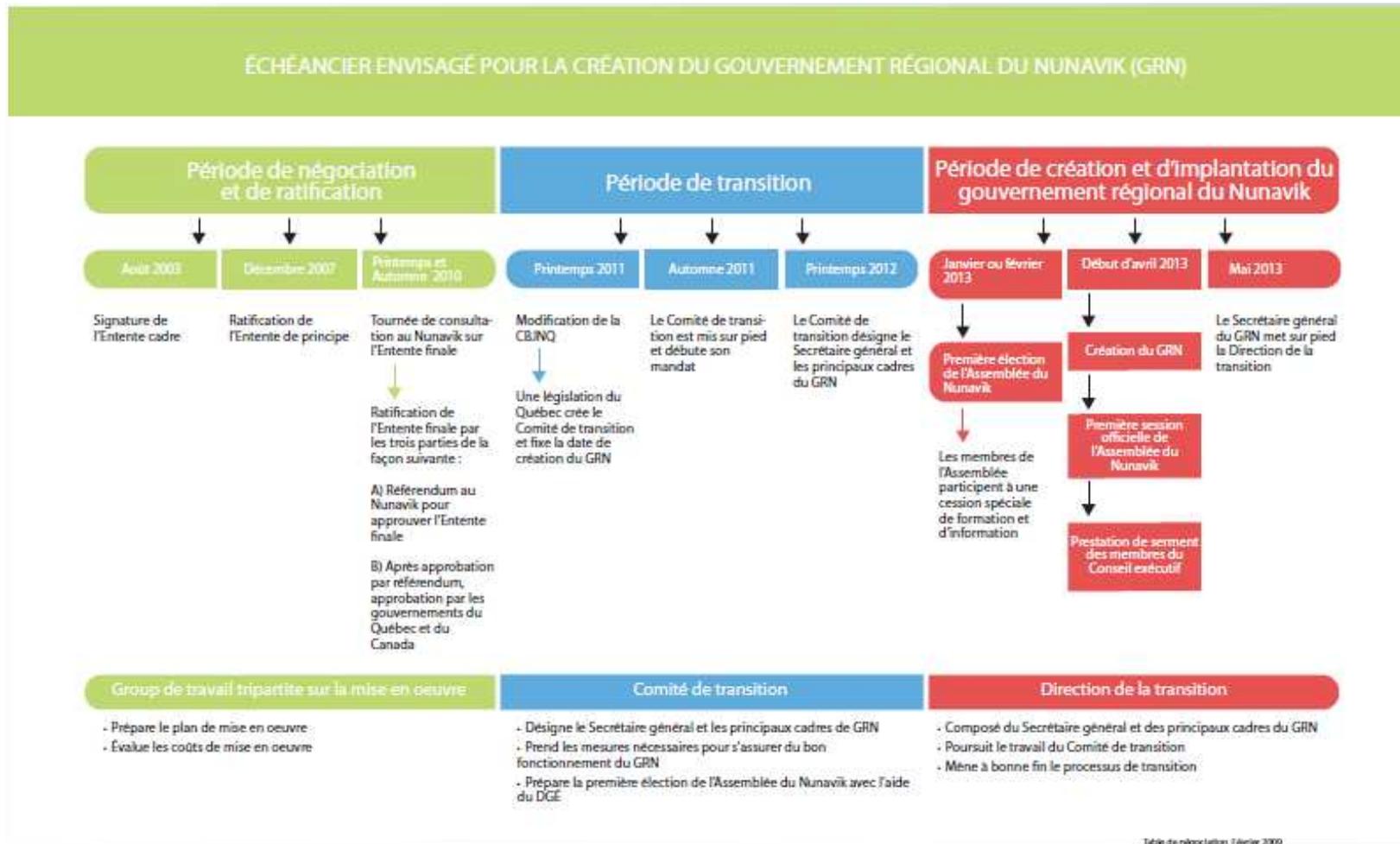


Figure 1: Bulletin du Nunavik, Regards vers l'avenir, http://nunavikgovernment.ca/en/documents/Nunavik_13.pdf, page 9.

Appendix 2

Crees Communities	Year of officialization	Name of the fur trade post
Oujé-Bougoumou	1993	
Mistissini	1992	Mistassini
Waswanipi	1978	
Nemiscau	1979	
Waskaganish	1986	Rupert House (Fort Rupert 1978)
Eastmain	1986	
Wemindji	1978	Paint Hills
Chisasibi	1979	Fort Georges
Whapmagoostui	1986	Poste-de-la-Baleine, Great Whale River

Inuit Communities	Year of officialization	Name of the fur trade post
Chisasibi	1979	Fort Georges
Kuujuarapik	1980	Poste-de-la-Baleine, Great Whale River
Umijuaq	1986	
Inukjuak	1979	Port Harrison
Puvirnituk	1995	
Akulivik	1979	
Ivujivik	1986	
Salluit	1979	Sugluk, Notre-dame-de-Sugluk
Kangiqsujuaq	1980	
Quaqtaq	1980	
Kangirsuk	1986	Payne River
Aupaluk	1980	
Tasiujaq	1979	
Kuujjuaq	1979	Fort Chimo
Kangiqsualujjuaq	1979	Fort Siveright

Figure 2: Commission de toponymie du Québec (2009). *Banque Topos*, [En ligne], <http://www.toponymie.gouv.qc.ca/ct/accueil.html>.

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