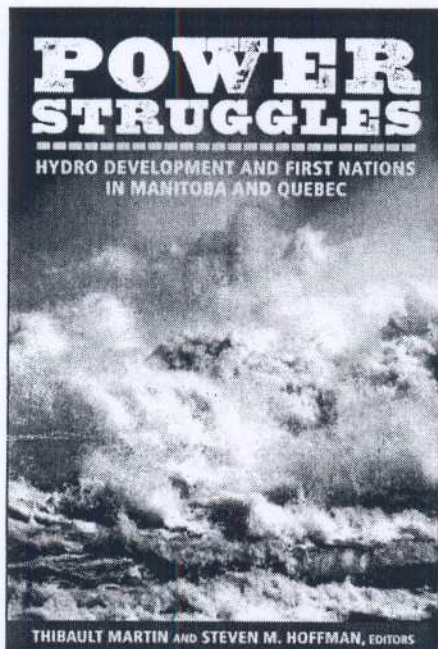


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## Power Struggles

HYDRO DEVELOPMENT AND FIRST NATIONS  
IN MANITOBA AND QUEBEC

THIBAUT MARTIN and STEVEN M. HOFFMAN, eds.

*Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* examines the evolution of new agreements between First Nations and Inuit and the hydro corporations in Quebec and Manitoba, including the Wuskwatim Dam Project, *Paix des Braves*, and the Great Whale Project. In the 1970s, both provinces signed so-called "modern treaties" with First Nations for the development of large hydro projects in Aboriginal territories. In recent times, however, the two provinces have diverged in their implementation, and public opinion of these agreements has ranged from celebratory to outrage. *Power Struggles* brings together perspectives on these issues from both scholars and activists.

In debating the relative merits and limits of these agreements, *Power Struggles* raises a crucial question: Is Canada on the eve of a new relationship with First Nations, or do the same colonial attitudes that have long characterized Canadian-Aboriginal relations still prevail?

**Thibault Martin** is a professor of Sociology at the Université du Québec en Outaouais and is the author of *De la banquise au congélateur: mondialisation et culture au Nunavik*.

**Steven M. Hoffman** is a professor of Political Science at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. He has published several books on energy and environmental policy and has served as a director for several state-wide environmental policy and advocacy organizations.

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# 10

## THE END OF AN ERA IN QUEBEC: THE GREAT WHALE PROJECT AND THE INUIT OF KUJUARAPIK AND THE UMIUJAQ

*Thibault Martin*

HYDRO-QUÉBEC'S GREAT WHALE HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT, also known as James Bay Phase II, was never realized despite several years of preparatory studies and negotiations. Though little has been researched or published on the project to date, its preliminary stages did produce a number of significant social impacts on populations settled within the project area. In these pages, the legacy of the Great Whale Project will be examined through its social and other human impacts on the Inuit population, such as the partial resettlement of the Kuujuarapik community.<sup>1</sup> The most significant aspect of the Great Whale Project is that it marked a turning point in the historical relationship between Hydro-Québec and Aboriginal groups in Quebec. Indeed, at a moment when Hydro-Québec had achieved a measure of success in imposing its prescription for development on Aboriginal peoples in the North, a campaign of concerted opposition from Cree and Inuit leaders contributed to the postponement of the project. In addition, this episode gave rise to a large-scale mobilization of Inuit and Crees to negotiate an equal partnership with the modern state.

## A MODERN PATH TO DEVELOPMENT

Robert Bourassa, premier of Quebec, launched the James Bay Project in the belief that hydroelectric development would provide a means to secure Quebec's economic independence. For the premier, it was necessary to "uproot" the wealth of the North for the benefit of all Quebec (Bourassa 1985, 27). The symbolic intent of the James Bay projects was to show the world, and Québécois themselves, the capacity of Quebec to achieve great things. As indicated in the following comment from Bourassa, this sentiment was at play during the very first phases of hydroelectric development on James Bay:

First, it was necessary to motivate and inspire a deep sense of commitment. We had to convince ourselves that we had the knowledge, technical skills and managerial proficiency to construct the world's most advanced and efficient production facilities. We had to firmly believe in the future of the project if we were to succeed in dispatching the required materials and expertise to such a remote wilderness area and harsh climate. We had to divert rivers by constructing kilometres and kilometres of dams [and] we had to locate the millions of dollars necessary to finance the project and respond to the needs of the Aboriginal peoples of the region with fairness and compassion. (21; author's translation)

These remarks reveal several of the ideas underlying the development of the James Bay Project, and to a certain extent the Quiet Revolution itself. First, a need felt by Québécois to create a national identity was channelled into a project that could unite and engage the entire population. Also, the project itself would support a shift away from the rurality characteristic of traditional French Canadian society, in favour of a technological and technocratic vision of a modern society overseen by managers, executives, and planners of megaprojects. As indicated in the final lines of the above-cited excerpt, also behind the project was the desire to occupy, vis-à-vis the Aboriginal population, the role of colonial protector so familiar to the modern state.

The way in which the project was conceived reflects a typically modern vision of development, in the sense that the words “modern” and “development” would have carried during the Industrial Revolution. As Bourassa wrote, following the completion of Phase I of the James Bay Project:

In fact, because of its climate and unique terrain conditions, we could almost say that Quebec is an immense hydroelectric plant that is only being partially utilized. Every day, millions of potential kilowatt-hours are flushed out to sea. What a waste! (18; author’s translation)

In order to minimize this waste, Hydro-Québec’s engineers undertook a systematic plan of development for the region’s hydroelectric resources. Their preliminary studies led to the conception of three distinct hydroelectric complexes. The first complex, the La Grande Complex, was constructed on the river of the same name, immediately following the signing of the *James Bay Agreement*. This complex included eight reservoirs: Caniapiscou (4275 km<sup>2</sup>), Robert Bourassa (2835 km<sup>2</sup>), La Grande-3 (2420 km<sup>2</sup>), Laforge 1 (1288 km<sup>2</sup>), Opinaca (1040 km<sup>2</sup>), La Grande-4 (765 km<sup>2</sup>), Laforge 2 (260 km<sup>2</sup>), and La Grande-1 (70 km<sup>2</sup>). Many of these reservoirs are classed among the most significant dams in the world. The accumulated surface of all these reservoirs totals 12,285 km<sup>2</sup>, which corresponds to 40 percent of the area of Belgium, a country with a population of ten million. In fact, La Grande Complex necessitated the flooding of a territory larger than the Akosombo Reservoir, which was at the time the largest constructed water retainer in the world.

With the La Grande project realized, Hydro-Québec next envisioned the development of the Great Whale Complex, which would exploit the electric potential of the Great Whale River and its tributaries. A third complex, Nottaway–Broadback–Ruppert (NBR), was also in the pipeline, and would cover the southernmost rivers of the James Bay basin. This latter project, suspended for several years, was relaunched at the beginning of 2002 with construction to begin shortly thereafter. Once construction on all three complexes was completed, Bourassa intended to incorporate these structures into an even more grandiose plan for the exploitation of Quebec’s

water resources. This plan would have transformed the James Bay into an immense lake, effectively separating it, via a system of dikes, from the Hudson Bay. The waters from this lake, once desalinated, would have been redirected toward large metropolitan areas in the south of the country or toward agricultural lands in the US and Canada. The following quote from Premier Bourassa illustrates the hyperbolic nature of the project, as well as the definition of development espoused, at that time, by the government of Quebec.

This new and entirely man-made Canadian body of water will harness the streams of the James Bay basin, which totals an average volume approximately twice that of all the Great Lakes basins. Plans for this first step are for the recycling (and not the diversion) of one part of this enormous volume of new waters, to control the volume of the international hydrographical system of the Great Lakes and Saint Lawrence River. This will allow us to provide aid to agricultural regions most under threat of drought in the Canadian West and the United States. . . . We are talking here of a "recycling" plan. This project does not entail the diversion of Canadian waters. Exported water would be only that which had served its purpose in Canada and would be otherwise flushed out to sea unutilized. Once accumulated in a new artificial lake . . . these 'used' waters could be recycled to be used for new purposes in the south of Quebec, in Ontario, as part of the hydrographical system of the Great Lakes and Saint Lawrence River and, finally, in Central/Western Canada and the United States. (182-83; author's translation)

Although this final recycling scheme was never realized, it illustrates the profound desire on the part of the Quebec government to control the forces of nature for its own benefit. Not surprisingly, perhaps, all these projects were devised without having consulted the First Nations and Inuit peoples who would have been affected.

However, a concerted campaign of resistance mounted by First Nations, Inuit, and environmental groups, combined with significant fluctuations in demand for hydroelectricity, obligated Hydro-Québec to re-evaluate its priorities so thoroughly that the Great Whale and NBR projects were postponed. Though the La Grande Project was never realized, preliminary

studies, which would form the basis of construction plans, required significant research and the mobilization of hundreds of people, and led to social and environmental impacts on Inuit communities. In fact, the scale of the preliminary studies on the Great Whale Project carried impacts comparable to medium-sized projects realized elsewhere. The following section briefly recalls the nature of this preliminary work, and attempts to estimate its larger impacts on the affected communities. The position of the Inuit communities toward the project is then analyzed with particular attention being paid to the strategies developed by these communities. Finally, it is argued that the Great Whale Project was an important step, at least symbolically, in the redefinition of relations between Quebec and Aboriginal peoples.

#### THE GREAT WHALE PROJECT

As shown in Table 10.1, work on the Great Whale Project began in two distinct phases between 1971 and 1992. Studies on Phase I of the project were undertaken from 1975 and 1981, and those for Phase II from 1989 to 1992. The goal of these studies was to outline possible work plans and establish their economic and technical feasibility; they would also allow for evaluation of the impacts of the project on the biophysical and human environment in order to propose future mitigating measures.

This research led to a significant increase in activity on Inuit land—the construction of camps to serve as accommodations for employees of Hydro-Québec and its consultants. The provincial utility constructed, at Kuujjuarapik, a winterized camp with a 150- to 200-person capacity. This camp remained open until 1981; though consisting mainly of tents, several buildings (housing for executives, canteen, washhouse, games room, workshops, etc.) were also built. The settlement, which served as the project's base camp, was located within a ten-minute walking distance from the village. Another camp with a 250- to 300-person capacity was constructed thirty kilometres north of Kuujjuarapik. Smaller camps were also erected at various locations within the study area. During the summer months, up to 500 technicians and specialists stayed in the study area (a number roughly equivalent to the population of the Inuit residents of the community.) In addition to these camps, Hydro-Québec maintained several other sites for storing materials,

TABLE 10.1

**Great Whale Project Main Events****Preliminary Studies and Feasibility Study, Phase I (1964–1981)**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>EVENTS</b>
1971	Quebec announces a project to harness the hydroelectric potential of the James Bay area.
1972	Cree and Inuit representatives file a motion for interlocutory injunction.
1973	The Quebec Superior Court orders suspension of the work in the James Bay area. One week later, the Court of Appeal suspends the injunction. Work resumes. Quebec and Ottawa begin negotiations with Aboriginal peoples.
1974	A base plan is developed for construction of three separate complexes: the La Grande, Great Whale, and Nottaway–Broadback–Rupert.
1975	The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement is signed.
1976	A series of exploration camps are built, including one in Kuujjuarapik and several inland camps.
1978–81	During the summer peak of research activities, there are as many as 500 employees of Hydro-Québec and its consultants in the study area.
1981	The final report on the feasibility study is published.
1982	The Great Whale project is put on hold.

**Feasibility Study, Phase II (1989–1992) and Later Events**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>EVENTS</b>
1988	The Great Whale project is relaunched.
1989	Field research begins.
1992	Public hearings on the environmental impact assessment directive and public consultation. End of phase II research.
1993	The feasibility study report is published.
1994	The Great Whale project is suspended.
1995	The project exploration camps are dismantled.

mainly barrels of oil. Some of these sites were located within Kuujjuarapik, one at the mouth of the Great Whale River, and another on the grounds of the airport. In addition, between 1975 and 1982, Hydro-Québec established a helicopter base at Kuujjuarapik.

The Great Whale Project also gave rise to a series of public relations exercises, which took place at Kuujjuarapik and other localities affected by the project. Officially, Hydro-Québec maintained that these activities were intended to inform the public of the project. Though not addressed publicly, Hydro-Québec was also keen to sell the project to audiences at the local, national, and even international levels. As an employee of Hydro-Québec commented to us in private, "[W]e have learned through scientific studies that people are most afraid of the unknown. We therefore had the idea to educate the Inuit on hydroelectric dams. We thought this would lessen their anxiety and opposition to the project."

Hydro-Québec organized a number of workshops to allow First Nations members to voice their perspectives, concerns, and hopes for the project. The corporation also organized visits to the La Grande reservoir, including surveys of the region by helicopter. Most of the tours at La Grande were aimed to seduce the Inuit, especially the Elders. The corporation always paid for the travel of all the participants. The people we interviewed in Kuujjuarapik commented that it was only people chosen by Hydro-Québec who were invited to take part in the "trips" to La Grande, and that "only the leaders were invited to this sort of thing." It would therefore appear that Hydro-Québec did attempt to leave an impression on certain community members, especially on Inuit leaders who would be more likely involved in subsequent project negotiations.

Another important element at this stage of the project was the government-run public consultation on the Great Whale Project, which took place in January 1992. Public hearings were held, from January to March 1992, at Val D'Or, Montréal, and at five northern locations, including Umiujaq and Kuujjuarapik. The Inuit participated in the public hearings and in the environmental assessment process; in addition, several working groups and negotiating groups were established. An Inuit representative was appointed to each of these groups, whose responsibilities were to study the pre-project



reports published by Hydro-Québec and assess the project's potential to generate a variety of environmental and social impacts. In this way the Inuit people, from community and regional leaders to the population at large, were deeply involved, in very diverse ways, in the preparatory phase of the Great Whale Project.

Concurrent with the participation of certain Inuit leaders in the preparatory process, other Inuit formed with the Crees a common front of resistance to the project. These two groups mounted joint public actions, most notably the Odeyak tour of the northeastern United States, which involved forty or so Crees and Inuit. The word "Odeyak" is a contraction of two words, one Cree and one Inuit, one meaning "canoe" and the other "kayak." From March to April 1990, the expedition traversed Quebec and a corner of the United States, stopping in several cities to rally opposition and challenge elected officials to boycott electricity from Hydro-Québec. This action received significant media attention, and several Canadian and American newspapers published, in feature articles, the photo of the Odeyak gliding at the feet of the Statue of Liberty. A second tour was organized for the autumn of the same year. Though it took place only in Quebec, the tour did achieve a comparable level of media attention, and culminated with the delivery of a petition signed by several hundred Québécois to the National Assembly. The Inuit people were participants in other protests organized or supported by environmental pressure groups (National Audubon Society, Greenpeace, Earth First, Sierra Club, etc.) that took place in large cities across Canada and the UK, as well as the northern communities of Chisasibi, Kuujjuarapik, and Inukjuak. In addition to its media activism, the Makivik Society supported legal challenges mounted by representatives of the Crees. The aim of such legal actions was to delay or indeed inhibit the Great Whale Project by forcing Hydro-Québec to revise its environmental assessment procedures (Massot 1993, 22).

Inuit employed throughout this period a remarkable dual strategy. When acting in partnership with the Crees, the community was openly and forcefully opposed to the project, while consistently maintaining a measure of dialogue with Hydro-Québec. This strategy of engagement and resistance differed from the approach of the Crees, who, from 1988, had cut ties with the public corporation. The Inuit leaders, on the other hand, chose to negotiate

with Hydro-Québec because it was felt that, were the project to go ahead, the Inuit should at least be at the table to participate in pre-project studies or negotiate favourable terms to any subsequent agreement. On April 14, 1994, the Inuit signed with Hydro-Québec the *Kuujuarapik Agreement-in-Principle*. As part of this agreement, Inuit and Hydro-Québec representatives articulated the basics for the negotiation of a convention on the construction of the Great Whale Complex. The agreement also specified the terms of several development funds and the amounts Hydro-Québec would contribute. However, once the project preparations were completed, the government of Quebec announced, at the end of 1994, that the project had been suspended, and to date it has not been resurrected.

Studies undertaken by Hydro-Québec and its consultants had three main impacts: economic, environmental (including effects on Inuit hunting practices), and social. First, with respect to its economic impacts, it should be noted that the project stimulated significant economic activity, notably at Kuujuarapik. The figures that would allow an evaluation of the expenditures of Hydro-Québec and its consultants, during Phase I, are no longer available, and thus it is not possible to make precise economic estimates for that period. However, existing information and documents collected on Phase II of the project would allow for a fair assessment of Phase I economic returns. Hydro-Québec's expenditures, in the region and toward Inuit organizations, total some \$7.5 million (in 1995 dollars). This amount represents funds injected directly into the Nunavik economy. Not included in this total are Hydro-Québec's expenditures outside the region that covered the salaries of engineers, executives, and technicians working to research plans. Hydro-Québec's total injection of funds represented 4.7 percent of the regional GDP of Nunavik for the year 1995. Of this amount, \$820,000 was spent on salaries and \$6.7 million went toward the purchase of goods and services. However, among these expenditures, \$1.25 million was used to purchase products from outside the region. Expenditures on imported products, notably fuel, cannot be said to have contributed directly to the local economy.

A team of researchers from Laval University (Duhaime et al. 1998) calculated, from these data, the economic returns generated by this injection

of funds. According to their estimates, it stimulated direct, indirect, and inferred returns equivalent to \$4.5 million in the production of goods and services (GDP at 1995 market price). Minus taxes and imports, the value added to the region by the Phase II studies is estimated at \$3.6 million. On this amount, \$2.6 million represent salaries paid within Nunavik.

Expenditures related to the Great Whale Project were therefore significant, representing an estimated injection of funds roughly equivalent to the potential investment in a winter Olympic Games for the region of Quebec City. However, following such a significant investment in the local economies of Kuujjuarapik or Umiujaq, the two villages most affected by the project, did not experience any real economic sustainable growth during or after the project. The reason for this result stems from the type of expenditures made by Hydro-Québec: the largest portion of funds was spent to transport materials or personnel, buy fuel, or erect temporary settlements, which had very little permanent effect on the local economy. More troubling still was the "boom and bust" cycle engendered by the significant but ephemeral injections of funds to the local community. Witnesses have estimated that uncertainties in the planning stages of the project, together with two suspensions of work in 1982 and 1994, may have had a detrimental effect on many local businesses. For instance, one entrepreneur in Kuujjuarapik, owner of a local hotel that significantly expanded its operations to meet with seasonal demand, was forced to close down once the project was postponed as its business became too expensive to maintain.

In contrast to the organization of an event like the Olympic games, this project did not endow the region with any new infrastructure. Hence, Hydro-Québec did transfer to the Inuit community a small number of prefabricated buildings, which for the most part have not been utilized. In fact, several residents consider these to be dangerous structures in need of demolition. According to municipal officials in Kuujjuarapik, the Great Whale Project may have, in fact, hindered the development of infrastructure in the village. The public bodies responsible for Aboriginal and northern community development actually pushed back certain necessary infrastructure work in the village of Kuujjuarapik (such as improvements to the airport, installation of an aqueduct and sewer system, construction of a generating station,

etc.) in anticipation of Hydro-Québec's investment in the region. According to those community members surveyed, the suspension of the project had the effect of unduly prolonging this anticipation and hindered the development of much needed and overdue investments in infrastructure in the community of Kuujjuarapik.

In terms of employment, the impacts of the project were less negative. New income generated by the pre-project studies totalled \$2.6 million. This represents approximately \$370,000 in salaries, per year, for seven years (the duration of the feasibility studies), the equivalent to forty-eight full-time jobs. As the project was in existence for a period of seven years, about seven full-time jobs were therefore created during the pre-project study period. Since the majority of economic after-effects were generated in the community of Kuujjuarapik, where the number of full-time jobs hovered at around 165 at this time, it is possible to say that the project stimulated a 4 percent increase in the number of jobs in the community. Considering the community's high rate of unemployment, it could be said that any new jobs created by the project would constitute a positive effect. However, according to those community members surveyed, the jobs on offer were seasonal, of little interest to applicants, and did not include any professional training. Excepting those jobs related to project negotiations, employment was offered mainly in the service sector as guides, interpreters, cooks, security guards, and camp maintenance workers, none of which afforded the Inuit people much opportunity to gain new skills.

However, the project did also allow for the creation of a certain number of quality jobs, such as those on negotiating committees or advisory boards. Hydro-Québec was itself responsible for absorbing the cost of running and paying out the salaries or honoraria to participants. Several Inuit people were engaged on these committees as negotiators or experts on the regional environment. Those who occupied such positions gained important political knowledge, or were able to hone their negotiating skills. Some became veritable experts on the text of the *James Bay Agreement*, thoroughly employing and integrating the logic of the Canadian bureaucracy. Involvement in these committees also undoubtedly affected the careers of these individuals, who were afforded the opportunity to leverage their experience to obtain

employment or to get involved in the local administration or community politics. As articulated by the mayor of Kuujjuarapik in 1996:

Because of this job on the Inuit Task Force, I learned to speak (English) better, and I learned a lot about the environment. It gave me experience. I learned to know people and to negotiate. And because of this experience, I learned to do my job as mayor better and more quickly.

It is also quite possible that, after a bit of time, committee members had acquired enough experience to negotiate better compensatory measures for the benefit of their community or to increase the number of obstacles to the project in order to slow down its progress.

Generally, the experience gained allowed committee members to feel a measure of control when negotiating face-to-face with Hydro-Québec. Instead of feeling obligated to submit silently to the state's will, some Inuit people gained the sense that they could influence decisions and outcomes on the project. This sense of power led to defiance not in evidence at the time the *James Bay Agreement* was signed. As indicated, with irony, by a leader in Kuujjuarapik involved in the negotiations after the signing of the *James Bay Agreement*, "[A]t that time, we didn't know how to negotiate with Whites. We were nomads, living in the bush. That's why we signed the JBNQA . . . but since then we've learned how to make better deals."

Inuit representatives have thus been able to boost their confidence as leaders and negotiators through this process. When the project was suspended in 1994, Inuit leaders demanded that Hydro-Québec complete a study to evaluate the impact of the project's cessation on their communities. This request might appear ironic, given that the Inuit supported the suspension of the project, but this stance shows to what extent they had become staunch negotiators, willing to fire all their guns even when involved in a situation deemed favourable to their interests.

On the other hand, according to those Inuit residents surveyed, it would seem that the pre-project studies had significant and direct adverse impacts on life in their communities. The pre-project research activities brought with it diverse frustrations: noise, pollution, and increased movement on

the land. These activities would have affected traditional migration routes of certain animal species, especially geese. These stresses on the land and environment would undoubtedly have led to a loss for hunters, who would be forced to compensate for their losses by buying food in the marketplace. They would have also obligated the Inuit, for whom hunting is the principal economic activity, to displace their routes in order to maintain their yields. Research activities also brought about the displacement of Crees' hunting routes toward the coast. The Crees of the neighbouring community of Whapmagoostui, who hunt traditionally inland in an area not used by the Inuit, were forced to change their regular hunting practices in order to avoid the problems caused by project-related work. This state of affairs was reported by all the hunters in the village; even non-Aboriginal residents observed the change, to the point where many such non-Aboriginal people in the community spoke of an "invasion" of Inuit territory by the Crees.

The Great Whale Project also generated significant social impacts on the community. First, tensions were heightened between the Crees and Inuit communities. According to certain community insiders, the Cree population disapproved of Inuit engagement in the pre-project studies. This provoked a number of disputes, on both institutional and individual levels. Above all, the presence of Hydro-Québec employees in the community, whose numbers, as non-Aboriginal temporary residents, in Kuujjuarapik at times almost surpassed the Inuit population, led to certain social stresses such as an increase in consumption of alcohol and drugs brought into the community by workers from the south, either for personal use or for trafficking within the community. Secondary effects were also felt, including an increase in violence within the community or the incidence of parental neglect. In addition, during Phase I of the project, workers housed in the camp at Kuujjuarapik were in the practice of luring young Inuit women by offering them drugs, alcohol, or money. It should not be overlooked that the majority of residents in this camp were young men, living far away from their spouses or companions, and several young local women became pregnant. Children born of extramarital relations were then left without fathers or means of material support, which came to represent a significant strain on the community.

The presence of this camp and the interest it held for many Inuit people contributed to tensions within the community, notably between young people and Elders. All those surveyed in the community had observed this tension. The project appeared to have triggered the spread of both positive and negative aspects of modern life within the community, distracting attention from traditional practices and leading to an increase in social problems. As remarked by one Inuk of Kuujjuarapik:

We learned to sell alcohol under the table. We learned to smoke dope. Because of all this, people have begun to eat less and to eat food of poorer quality. This has led to other problems. New illnesses have appeared. Our community is falling apart, physically and socially.

The list of impacts related to the Great Whale Project would not be complete without the matter of the Inuit relocation to Umiujaq. The issues surrounding this affair are vastly more complex than can receive proper treatment here, and the reader is invited to refer to other works that examine the subject in detail (Martin 2002). In brief, in 1986, at the height of work on the Great Whale Project, 286 Inuit people moved from Kuujjuarapik to establish the new village of Umiujaq. While these members of the community moved for historical reasons, resettling an area their ancestors had once occupied, it would appear that the Great Whale Project contributed indirectly to the decision to relocate the community. Social problems, resulting from the presence of Hydro-Québec workers in the community, together with the project's negative effects on the traditional hunt, convinced a number of Inuit that a relocation of the community would be necessary in order to preserve any semblance of a traditional way of life on their ancestral lands.

This return to traditional lands and lifestyle was made possible under the *James Bay Agreement*, which anticipated the construction of a new village in the Lac Guillaume-Delisle area (where Umiujaq is now located) to resettle the Inuit people of Kuujjuarapik in case the community members chose to distance themselves from the Great Whale Project and its impacts. Therefore, while the Great Whale Project was not the sole cause of this

community schism, it did provide an institutional and material basis for the creation of a new village (Martin 2002). In triggering the realization that this type of modern development could endanger the community's traditional ways of life, the project was, to an extent, responsible for the separation of the community of Kuujjuarapik into two geographically separate and distinct entities. This did not come without significant consequences for the community. Most of the residents of Kuujjuarapik lost at least one family member to the new community, which brought about a palpable sense of frustration among those who felt abandoned by those who chose to settle in Umiujaq. Residents of Umiujaq, in turn, were disappointed that their cousins, brothers, and sisters had not followed their lead in moving to the new village to escape the effects of the Great Whale Project.

#### ANALYSIS: A MIXED BAG

*Conflicting visions of traditional and modern development.* The Great Whale Project illustrates the dichotomy that exists between locally and globally defined notions of development. For the state, Québec in this case, development would be held synonymous with "growth"; for local actors, notably the Inuit, it signifies the development of tools necessary to ensure the preservation of their ways of life. These fundamentally diverging perspectives lead to ever more conflicts as the phenomenon of globalization progresses. To respond to the growing demand for energy and resources by industrialized regions of the globe, states—both in industrialized and industrializing countries—have put more and more pressure on regions yet untouched by the process of industrial development. This is not a completely new state of affairs for the Inuit people, who have dealt with global influences since the first European whale hunters scoured the Arctic waters. Beginning in the twenty-first century, however, these pressures arose not only from private interests, but from the state as well. By its authority over the society at large, the state therefore legitimizes the development of Aboriginal lands for the profit of external or foreign interests.

In studies examining the subject of development projects, this dichotomy is well known and recalls a very simple concept: the interests of the collective whole versus those of the individual. The whole, or at least the majority,



can exercise virtually unrestricted authority over the assets of minorities. In the same way, industrialized regions, in the name of globalization, can exercise jurisdiction over local actors in order to further their own vision of development. The Quebec Court of Appeals expressed this idea when it overturned the *Malouf* injunction, which had temporarily halted construction of the La Grande Complex.

The interests of the public, and of the Quebec population at large, are therefore pitted against those of about two thousand of its residents. We are of the opinion that there is no comparison between these two sets of interests; at this stage in the process the needs of these populations are not similar. (cited by Malouf 1973, 205)

Following this decision from the Court of Appeals, the federal and provincial governments, lawfully representing the interests of the majority, negotiated the *James Bay Agreement* along with the Crees, Inuit, and Naskapis. This had the effect of institutionalizing the rights of the majority to use sovereign lands to service their own interests. Hence, the agreement did include compensatory provisions that addressed the rights of Inuit and First Nations to follow their own model for development and recognized the need to afford them the necessary tools to preserve their ways of life. Without fundamentally reshaping the Western perspective on development, the *James Bay Agreement* did, however, represent a breach in the hitherto unshakeable faith of the West in its vision of progress and "modern" development. In a way, the *James Bay Agreement* served as a milestone for later deals such as the Nunavut Accord and the recently signed Nunavik Accord. Indeed, both agreements devolved a certain degree of legislative power to the Inuit in order that they might decide, for themselves, on the type of development to pursue.

The *James Bay Agreement* itself carries a measure of ambiguity, as it simultaneously created the legal conditions for a modern approach to development whilst affirming the legitimacy of the Aboriginal perspective and alternative to growth-led development. It is precisely this ambiguity that Cree and Inuit protesters exploited to mount a guerrilla campaign in the media and the courts, which was ultimately successful in halting further

work for the Great Whale project. Since the project was never constructed as planned, one could almost say that the Great Whale saga ended in a victory for the Aboriginal perspective on development. Of course, the official version of this episode is that Hydro-Québec abandoned the project as a result of decreases in international demand for hydroelectricity, and not that the utility had bowed to pressure mounted by Quebec's Inuit and Crees. This version might hold as long as international demand for hydroelectricity remained weak. The resumption of energy-intensive policies in the United States completely changed the landscape and would have given Hydro-Québec every justification to relaunch those hydroelectric projects it held on standby (Great Whale and NBR). However, though the design and pre-project studies had already been completed and refined, the Great Whale Project was never resurrected. Instead, Hydro-Québec preferred to canvass other areas and start other projects, such as that on the Sainte-Marguerite River in Innu territory. This would indicate that the demand-driven argument does not hold, but rather that Hydro-Québec preferred to opt for a new series of projects and negotiations with Cree and Inuit peoples.

In the context of these new negotiations Aboriginal peoples are treated as equals and partners, not as adversaries to be manipulated or co-opted. The symbolic victory of the Crees and Inuit peoples, evidenced by the suspension of the project and their capacity to bear upon the execution of projects in exploiting international opinion, is certainly the origin of the *Paix des Braves*, a veritable alliance between Quebec and First Peoples. Further, one could suggest that if the Crees and Inuit are from this point forward treated as equals by Quebec, this would not be the unique result of a provincial government decision to anoint them with this status, but rather because they had fought for this status through their guerrilla campaign against the Great Whale Project.

*The quiet skill of the Crees and Inuit.* This victory for the Crees and Inuit lies first with their capacity to win over public sympathies by orchestrating actions that stress the importance of environmental protection and cultural diversity. To this it should be added that they were able to assemble in

support of their cause a collection of pressure groups with diverse and at times opposing agendas. Supporters of the Crees and Inuit constituted quite a diverse patchwork of civil society. Among these were ecologists fiercely opposed to the commercialization of animal furs, who may not have been natural allies with traditional hunters and trappers, as well as students of both sovereigntist and federalist camps. The coalition also included American politicians opposed to the Great Whale Project: moderates such as Robert Kennedy Jr. who opposed the project for environmental reasons and conservatives from various states in New England (notably New Hampshire and Massachusetts) who were not motivated by environmental imperatives so much as the desire to support their own energy-producing sectors, namely the coal industry. It should also be noted that while the Inuit took pains to present a common front with the Crees throughout their campaign, their strategies did often diverge. For example, the Inuit did participate in the Phase II pre-project studies, while the Crees refused all forms of engagement with Hydro-Québec. Nevertheless, on the national and international scenes, the Inuit always gave the impression of working hand in hand with the Crees.

Another success for the Crees and Inuit in this conflict was in having succeeded in attracting the attention of the media, intellectuals, and leaders of Western countries. Their approach, which included not only the Odeyak expedition but also delegations of representatives to The Hague, Washington, and Geneva, as well as advertisements in influential American dailies, effectively spread their message and rallied international support for their cause. Above all, by exposing to the world the colonial will of the modern Quebec state, they offered to Quebec civil society a mirror reflection of itself. The image revealed was not that of the society that Québécois dreamed of creating. Even leaders of the sovereigntist movement, for whom the quest for economic self-sufficiency was closely aligned with the goal of political autonomy, were not prepared to see their emancipatory agenda transformed to suit an obsolete colonial regime. In addition, the heavy-handed treatment to which the Crees and Inuit were subjected tarnished the image of the Quebec government, and threatened to detract from the sovereigntist cause. It is, therefore, not surprising that Premier Jacques

Parizeau, as a gesture of goodwill toward the Inuit and First Nations of Quebec, announced the postponement of the Great Whale Project. Moreover, to begin a new era in relations between Quebec and Aboriginal peoples, he further specified that this suspension would be "forever."

This decision was as well received by the Quebec population as had been news of the *Malouf* injunction. Indeed, whatever the feelings held by the majority of Québécois toward First Nations and Inuit peoples, a number of influential intellectuals, artists, and politicians held that the emancipation of Quebec could not be to the detriment of its Aboriginal citizens. It is quite possible that this attitude was in part the result of the actions of the Crees and Inuit who were able to show the importance, both for themselves and for the cause of cultural diversity, of maintaining their traditional ways of life. The Crees and Inuit also developed greater connections with other Aboriginal nations of the Americas, a strategy that helped to show that Quebec's goal was not a simple error in judgment, but rather part of a paradigm for development with negative implications for Aboriginal peoples.

*Local democracy over colonial elitism.* It is important to note that the Great Whale Project highlighted a particularity of the Inuit mode of governance. The issue of governance here is central, since the heart of the dilemma faced by colonized societies rests in the destruction of their traditional political structures and their replacement with foreign institutions. These new structures, often proven ineffective in their inability to adapt to the new social context in which they operate, contribute to the alienation of the subordinated group. Nunavik, however, is an example that diverges from the classic colonial experience. In the colonial model, as described by Albert Memmi (1972), the central power aids the emergence of a new local elite comprised of young natives of the region, educated in the mores and at the institutions of the colonial society, and primed to occupy important positions in the local administration. Once in place, the local elite acts as a direct link to the central administration; having obtained power, prestige, and economic advancement, this new elite eventually sides with the interests of the colonial power and adopts its values and customs. Members of this elite end up increasingly resembling the non-natives with whom

they most often associate, distancing themselves from their native countrymen. In the case of Nunavik, it is clear that the *James Bay Agreement* did contribute to the establishment of new institutions, which in turn formed a basis for a new technocratic elite whose actions would support the central power. For example, the Makivik Society—the corporation that manages the indemnities paid out to the Inuit—was for a long time located in Montréal. Among those Inuit community members surveyed, several remarked that the directors of Makivik, surrounded by lawyers and consultants, seemed by outward appearances to have been controlled by their handlers. This would also hold for the majority of other institutions, such as Kativik School Board, Kativik Regional Social Services, and Cree Regional Health, Regional Development Council, and the regional police corps whose mandates are to enforce laws and regulations or to administer local programs set out by the provincial and federal governments.

In this context, the Great Whale Project negotiation process should have served to consolidate ties between the new elite—servicing in these new institutions—and the provincial government. Well-paying jobs on negotiating committees or advisory boards, travel, expense accounts given to a handful of Inuit interlocutors, in addition to the personal linkages made over the years of negotiations, should have led to the harmonization between the views of Inuit leaders and representatives of the modern state. Actually, Hydro-Québec tried to seduce the members of this new elite by always maintaining decorum and by sending high-ranking officials to negotiate with them. We have had the opportunity to participate at several meetings between representatives of the Inuit communities of Kuujjuarapik and Umiujaq and Hydro-Québec, and have observed at each meeting the service of a private plane to transport participants between villages. Inuit interlocutors were invited to travel this way freely from one village to another. Inside the plane, a certain camaraderie could develop, aided by consumption of aperitifs. Relations between the two groups were certainly unequal, however, as evidenced by Hydro-Québec's choice to travel by private plane rather than charter flights around the region. This type of behaviour would serve to show their Inuit hosts Hydro-Québec's economic superiority and largesse.

It is quite remarkable that this strategy, so clearly aimed at co-opting a new elite to serve the ambitions of the state, did not work in Nunavik. This holds true even though the comments of several witnesses, including the following quote from an Inuk involved in the Great Whale Project, reveal that Western ideas had insinuated themselves into the outlook of many Inuit people:

I wouldn't say go ahead, build it, because I love the land too much. But as a man, you have to adapt to your environment and climate. For thousands of years, men, Inuit as well as Whites, have proved they can adapt. I have confidence we will continue to adapt. We'll adapt to the dam. I don't think the environment can change so quickly that man can't adapt to it. Our mother, the Earth, watches over us. I said to myself, if Hydro-Québec wants to go ahead with this project, I don't have the power to stop them, but I know that as human beings the members of this community are going to be able to adapt. . . . We are not as threatened as we sometimes think. We can always adapt to a new situation. If the compensation and the mitigation measures are acceptable, we can agree to the project.

This is not an isolated attitude; among those Inuit surveyed, several in fact blamed their leaders for having been unduly influenced by Hydro-Québec.

The leaders did not defend our interests. . . . In my opinion, they were only thinking about what they were going to get out of it. . . . Money is what got the Inuit to agree to participate in the studies. But it wasn't the people who wanted it, it was the leaders.

Just as revealing is the following testimonial, which shows that a number of residents of Kuujjuarapik believe that the negotiators may have taken the negotiations as ends unto themselves.

I know some who must be disappointed the project has been suspended. I think the members of the Inuit Task Force didn't like the suspension of the project because they lost their jobs. I bet they're hoping the project will be resumed.

The preceding testimonials should be taken in context in order not to be misunderstood. They are, of course, reflections of the pressure the community exerts on its leaders as a way of ensuring they continue to act for the public good, more than they are an indication of any hidden agenda on the part of Inuit leaders. In reality, there is no evidence to show that Inuit leaders involved in the negotiations supported the project; their actions would indicate quite the contrary. That they were tempted to personally profit from their involvement in the project is not impossible, nor that a prolongation of negotiations would not be seen to be personally favourable, but we did not collect any evidence indicating that these considerations actually influenced the behaviour of these actors and, on the contrary, it appeared that these leaders were indeed consistently working for the collective interest.

Public pressure was exerted not only on negotiators from the community, but on regional negotiators based in Montréal. Testimonials, both from community leaders and the population at large, demonstrate some form of dissatisfaction with the actions of the Makivik Society in the context of the Great Whale Project. One community member after another vocalized complaints about how Inuit funds were managed to serve priorities that did not correspond with the wishes of the community but, rather, the corporation and its directors. Some believe that Makivik did not support the activities of protestors enough, preferring instead to support the negotiations with Hydro-Québec. According to many of those surveyed, it was in response to its critics that Makivik became associated, at the last minute, with the Odeyak project. One is left to wonder how the population became so informed and tuned into the process of negotiations, to the point of sensing that their leaders were at risk of being influenced by Hydro-Québec. The answer lies in the Inuit model of democracy, rooted in a type of "agora," where debates and decision making take place simultaneously.

*The Inuit Agora: between traditional and modern forms of governance.* This public forum, the home of Inuit democracy, takes place not in the physical environment but rather over the airwaves. Each village in Nunavik maintains a community radio station that broadcasts music, news, and messages among local residents. Hunters phone the station to report the capture of game; the

town hall makes announcements on matters of interest to the public, such as employment vacancies and community projects. The radio also serves to maintain personal ties within the community. Those wishing to make contact with a friend or relative have only to phone the radio station and broadcast this fact over the airwaves, as virtually the entire community is connected via this medium. The radio bridges distances created by modern life and makes it possible to maintain close ties characteristic of traditional societies. This interchange over the airwaves allows community members to stay connected to one another, which creates a forum for public exchanges and debate on important issues.

According to those community members surveyed, the Great Whale Project sparked intense debate on the radio, which became the main forum for expression of dissent or discontent with Inuit leadership in their handling of the project. The interchange on the subject of the Great Whale Project had a wide reach and thus gave rise to structured debate on the issue. According to those surveyed, the populations of both Kuujjuarapik and Umiujaq seem to have belonged to one of two camps. Some citizens supported a compromise with Hydro-Québec and participation in the pre-project studies, and others supported a more radical strategy of non-engagement with the corporation. Both camps confronted each other in this way throughout the lifespan of the project; every decision made by the community leadership was thoroughly debated over the airwaves. The strategy employed by the Inuit community—which saw them participate in both negotiations for the project and protests against it—was a reflection of the often contradictory wishes of the community. It would appear that the Inuit leadership, instead of favouring one option over another, chose to simultaneously pursue the different options put forth by different segments of the community. This would indicate the extent to which the radio, as a public forum for expression, contributed to the creation of a unique form of governance that values consensus and compromise over the will of the majority.

If we dig deeper into the issue of Inuit governance, we would see that the Western democratic model employed in Nunavik has integrated traditional forms of governance. While Inuit communities in Nunavik are governed by officials elected by universal suffrage, it should be noted that Western



methods of governance have not totally supplanted traditional governance structures. Local elites tend to belong to "grand" traditional families (grand both in number and prestige, due to the charisma of a number of their members). In this way a certain family will control the town hall, just as another may control the local cooperative or community clinic. According to several Inuit community members surveyed, elections were won based on candidates' successful mobilization of friends and family members, and thus social ties were more important than 'political ideas' in affecting electoral outcomes. One respondent in Kuujjuarapik suggested that candidates had only to hand out jobs or housing for their family members in order to be re-elected. When asked if this troubled her, she answered with laughter:

A bit, because my family is small. That means I probably will never have better housing. But, people who belong to a large family have many relatives who ask for a lot of services. They need to have important jobs so they can help their family. Me, I don't have a lot of people counting on me. In a way, it's easier.

Democracy, therefore, is in part subjugated to traditional ways of thinking founded on ideas of reciprocity. This co-optation of democracy seems acceptable to the Inuit people, not because they do not value democracy as such, but because they see in their system a built-in mechanism for compromise between the demands of their society and the rational mode of governance imposed on their community from the outside. One could also hypothesize (and several insiders surveyed would agree) that the public agora, where democratic debates free from familial influences are held, serves to balance traditional influences over politics. This is made all the more effective by leaders who are willing to act according to the opinions expressed by the community. Inuit leaders and negotiators who, for personal or economic reasons (as some have indicated), might have favoured the continuation of the project, chose despite this to adopt the community's stance in opposition to the project.

The effectiveness of such a model can be appreciated through the results it has achieved. In the case of the Great Whale Project, the existence of a public forum most certainly helped leaders avoid undue influence from

Hydro-Québec. The Inuit model does not necessarily translate into victory for the ruling party, as is often the case in the Canadian parliamentary system. In the latter model, the voice of the opposition—even if acknowledged—has little chance of influencing real outcomes. In the Inuit model of governance, democratically held debate is able to influence those in power. Hence, there are limits to this phenomenon and the sheer diversity in public opinion might place constraints on leaders' efforts. Representatives of government or its agencies, in the context of negotiations with the Inuit, have attempted to discount this and encourage the adoption of one monolithic approach. The state expects that the stance of the community represents the voice of the majority and that this majority acts as a one undifferentiated mass. While this might work well for societies of millions, the Inuit still live within a relatively small community. In this context, to impose the will of the majority would be perceived as tantamount to an abuse of power. This is indicated in the following comment from one Inuk:

For us, the Aboriginal people, when we talk about issues, the most important opinions are those of the smallest group of people. The opinion of the majority of people, everybody knows that already. It is more important to discuss the opinion of those who don't think like everyone else. White people only think the majority is important, but if we only listen to the majority, who will address the issues of the minority?

This idea, characteristic of the traditional consensual form of governance, would appear to have survived modern influences such as those brought in by the Great Whale Project. The public debates throughout this period served to help institutionalize the agora as a forum where differing perspectives on the world's issues are reconciled. Unfortunately, the growth of modern institutions, increasingly complex bureaucracies within Nunavik, and assorted external pressures threaten to transform the Inuit leadership into administrative technocrats over public representatives. Nevertheless, despite the burden of change, the Inuit continually value a system of governance that remains directly linked to its constituency. In this vein, the Makivik Society recently moved its operations from Montreal to Kuujjuaq

in a significant and symbolic attempt to affect a rapprochement between elected officials and public administrators.

The stance adopted by Hydro-Québec vis-à-vis the Inuit and First Nations has greatly evolved since the launch of the James Bay Project. A number of factors would help explain this evolution; notably, as indicated in this chapter, sovereigntist leaders hoped that a new relationship with Quebec's First Peoples would serve to reduce their resistance to the idea of Quebec's independence. The study of the Great Whale Project presented in this chapter reveals, by contrast, that the tenacity and resistance of the Inuit and Crees forced the provincial government to treat First Peoples as equals. This resistance also contributed to a redefinition of relationship between Hydro-Québec and the province's Inuit and Cree populations. In short, the *Paix des Braves* would never have materialized without the resistance of the Braves.

Opposition to the Great Whale Project served to strengthen the legitimacy of Inuit leadership, as well as develop within the affected communities a mode of governance incorporating both modern and traditional methods of consultation and decision making. While the economic benefits derived from the Great Whale Project are minimal compared to the social impacts that resulted from its pre-project phase, the one positive impact of the project—and it is a major one—was that it allowed the Inuit to exert their demand to be treated as equals by Quebecers, and no longer as colonial subjects in need of protection by the state.

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1 This paper was derived from my doctoral research (Martin 2001a) and from Martin (2002 and 2003), from which I extracted the raw materials for this work. For the purposes of simplicity and clarity, I have chosen not to burden the existing text with detailed descriptions of methodology. For more on this I would suggest the reader seek out the above-cited works. I will note here that research was conducted during two field studies in 1996 and 1998 at Kuujuarapik and Umiujaq (Nunavik, Québec). Background information was collected during a series of semi-structured interviews of Inuit residents in these two communities. The first field study took place as part of research, funded by Hydro-Québec, which sought to measure the impacts of the Great Whale hydroelectric project on both communities (see Duhaime et al. 1998).