

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF IMPLEMENTING CAPITAL FACILITIES

ON INDIAN RESERVES IN NORTHERN MANITOBA:

A CASE STUDY OF THE SHAMATTAWA SCHOOL PROJECT

BY

© KEITH CLOETE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

MAY, 1986

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ISBN 0-315-33890-3

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KEITH CLOETE

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of

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ABSTRACT

AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF IMPLEMENTING CAPITAL FACILITIES ON INDIAN RESERVES IN NORTHERN MANITOBA: A CASE STUDY OF THE SHAMATTAWA SCHOOL PROJECT

Conditions for community life on the vast majority of Indian Reserves in Canada is deplorable. Indian communities are characterized by abject poverty, malnutrition, poor health, high infant mortality rates, minimal education and economic underdevelopment. The policies of the Government of Canada have done much to reinforce the dependent state of the Indian community.

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development which manages one of the largest capital construction programs within the federal government, is responsible for the placement of capital facilities on Indian reserves. Although the level of funding allocated to that program has been substantial its impact on improving the lot of the Indian has been insignificant.

This study proposes a method of implementing capital projects which would be conducive to self-development. It examines the process used by DIAND in putting a major project in place and the difficulties encountered in making the project serve the needs of the community. It attempts to show that a major project can go a long way in facilitating development on a remote community in Northern Manitoba. However, it also shows that the desire for self-determination must come from within the community, if the community wants to reduce its dependence on the Crown.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For initiating my interest in this thesis DIAND Manitoba Region, must be credited. Their appointment of me as project manager for the Shamattawa School Complex gave me the opportunity to undertake the required research for this project. Drs Barry Kaye and Thomas Henley are thanked for their valuable criticism in the development of the final draft of this study. Grateful acknowledgement is made to Deidre Sayer for the outstanding job she did in the layout and printing of this manuscript. I would also like to thank my wife Donna for the encouragement and patience she showed during the development of this project. It is however to Dr. Jacek Romanowski to whom I wish to express my greatest appreciation. Without his constant encouragement and criticism, this thesis would never have been completed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Indian communities in Northern Manitoba continue to exist in a state of underdevelopment in relation to their resource potential. Some 300 years of resource exploitation by outside interests and government policy have placed these communities in a state of perpetual dependency. The intent of this thesis is to propose a method of implementing capital facilities on Indian reserves in Northern Manitoba which would be conducive to self-development.

The objective of the study will be accomplished by first evaluating the implementation process now being used by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) in the delivery of large capital projects, and secondly by proposing a method of putting a major capital project in place which would facilitate local development. In pursuing that objective an attempt will be made to demonstrate that the dynamic convergence of resource use and community needs is a pre-condition specific to the requirements of overcoming underdevelopment, and that the Indian community of Shamattawa, a remote settlement in north-eastern Manitoba, has the human and physical resources to become less dependent on the federal government.

A. Methodology

The framework used in this study has been adopted from that put forward by D.M. Smith, in his Human Geography: A Welfare Approach. The scope of applied human geography based on the spatial welfare

perspective includes five tasks. Those tasks and their application to this study are listed below.

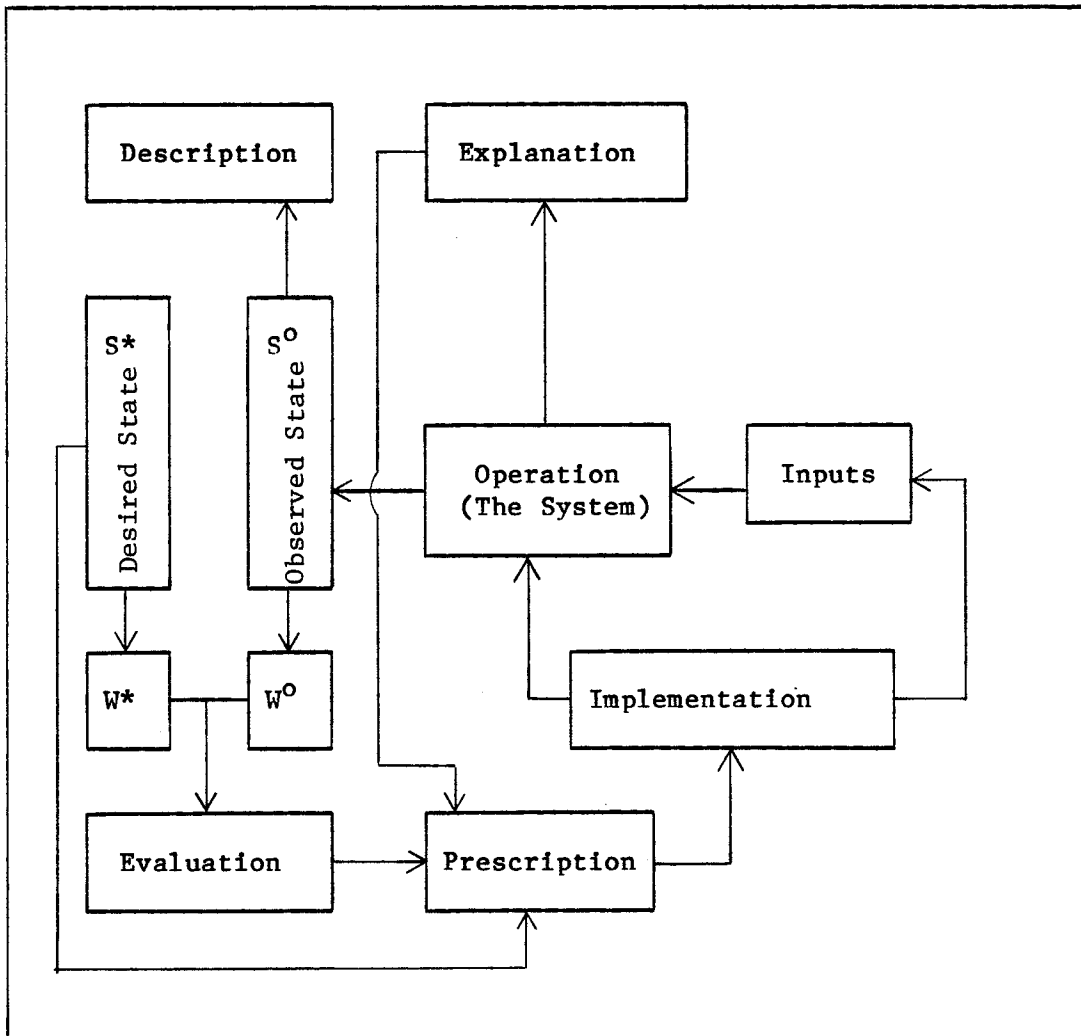
- (a) Description: To identify the territorial levels of the human condition: Statistical and field data compiled by DIAND, Department of Health and Welfare Canada (HWC) and Environment Canada will be used to define the state of the Indian community in Northern Manitoba and particularly that of Shamattawa. This will serve to determine how far Shamattawa's observed social state departs from that of other Canadians.
- (b) Explanation: The dependency and staple theories of development will be used as tools in tracing and explaining the origin and continuing state of underdevelopment in Northern Manitoba and in assessing the inequality in the level of development within the region. This will identify the cause and effect links among the various activities undertaken in society as they contribute to determining who gets what where.
- (c) Evaluation: The techniques of systems analysis will be used to evaluate the development process used by DIAND in the implementation of capital projects on Indian reserves and its impact in the community. Questions will be asked as to who benefits by the DIAND method, and whether there are conflicts between the goals of the community and those of the agents involved in the development process. This will determine the desirability of alternative geographical states and the social structures from which they arise.
- (d) Prescription: The concepts of a well-being oriented theory of self-reliance will be applied in proposing a method of

implementing capital activity that is conducive to community development. The specifications of an alternative geographical state and alternative societal structures required to produce them will be put forth. Our real duty is not to explain our reality but to improve it; if the pattern has been judged inadequate from a well-being perspective then change must be enacted (Losch, cited in Smith 1977 p. 23).

- (e) Implementation: To finalize the process of replacing a state deemed undesirable by something superior: The proposed \$10-11 million Shamattawa school project will be used as a case study in implementing the techniques appropriate to self-reliance.

Figure 1.1

THE SPATIAL WELFARE PERSPECTIVE:
A DIAGRAMMATICAL OUTLINE OF THE WELFARE THEME



Source: Smith 77p.11

B. Chapter Outline

The remainder of this thesis is organized into seven chapters. Chapter two provides a review of geographic input into the area of social relevance and spatial inequality. The plight of the underprivileged is becoming more of a concern to geographers. Many in the field are increasingly challenging the traditional remedies proposed to alleviate spatial inequality. In Chapter three the problem of the Indian in Canada is outlined. The Indian Act drafted to protect him, and DIAND, the bureaucracy established to implement that Act, have created a situation which has perpetuated the dependent state of the Indian. Chapter four provides an evaluation of the process used by DIAND in the delivery of capital projects. The Oxford House school project is used as a typical example of how irrelevant the community is to the vast sums of dollars spent to provide improved facilities. The argument is made for an approach which would be conducive to local improvement, an approach which would be appropriate to the socio-economic conditions of the community. Chapter five examines the impact that resource exploitation has had and is having on the Indian community in Northern Manitoba. The extraction of the staple from the Region has resulted in generous rewards to the "foreign" exploiter but hardship to the original inhabitants. Chapters six and seven are a case study of the Shamattawa school project. It details the attempt made to have the capital investment of a major school project serve the needs of the community. The problems encountered in implementing an approach which would result in a greater convergence of the community's needs with its resources is outlined in the latter chapter. Chapter eight, the conclusion, summarizes the problem of

making changes to the DIAND approach to "improve conditions" at the community level. It also highlights the fact that if there are to be improved conditions on Indian Reserves, the impetus for that change must come from the community.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW: SOCIAL RELEVANCE, SPATIAL INEQUALITY

A. Social Relevance

Geographers traditionally have tended to ignore the spatial dimensions of social inequality. Their preference has been to study the production of goods and services, the distribution of resources, the historical settling and the development of the land, rather than the conditions in which people live (Smith 71, Peet 77, Coates et al 77). The application of geographic skills to the practical problems of oppressed groups first came into focus in the early 1970's. At that time the condition of mankind began to emerge as a major concern of the profession.

A new kind of change is beginning to blow, in the form of the emerging radical geography and an embryonic revolution of social responsibility (Smith 71 p. 153).

The relevance movement called for greater professional involvement with matters of immediate social concern, focusing on the types of problems people faced in their everyday lives.

The geographer's neglect of social problems appears to have been rooted in academic inertia and a reluctance to become involved in issues which are both politically and morally sensitive. Resistance to pursue issues of social relevance is still prevalent (Coates et al 77 p. 6). There is more interest in "science" and scientific methodology than in social responsibility and the scientific

assessment of real problems (Anderson 73). As students we are still reminded that:

To be successful, geographers must acquire broad knowledge from many other disciplines and master a variety of regional analysis methods, for example, techniques to find the best location for stores, shopping centres, schools, factories and the like(Morrill & Dormitzer 79 p. 469).

To help the human species most directly, Bunge, in his treatise on the philosophy and priorities of geographical expeditions, compelled geographers to "go into a state of rationally controlled frenzy" in exploring the human condition (1977 p. 35). It is up to the geographers to study a region and determine from the point of view of the people who live there, "what is geographically out of whack" (Bunge 77 p. 37). This leads to a new paradigm for geography; it is not a "nice geography" or a "status quo geography". It is a "people geography" about real people, contributing to the enlargement of all human beings, especially the most deprived (Smith 77 p. 370).

The well-being of society and its individual members is a proper and necessary topic for geographic analysis. As a discipline it must stand or fall by its demonstrated capacity to enhance human well-being and not by virtue of its convenience to the organization of society and academia (Smith 77). Geographers have a special role to play, that of helping to reveal the spatial malfunctions and injustices, and contributing to the design of a spatial form of society in which people would be better able to satisfy their basic needs. The implementation of the proposed school complex for the Shamattawa community provides an excellent opportunity for the geographer, as project manager, to make a contribution to the well-being of the

people who live there:

.....because of the various facets of his knowledge and especially because of his perception of and concern for correlations of all kinds, the geographer seems to be ideally suited to take part in that modern form of induced development which is "aménagement du territoire"....(Beaujeu-Garnier 75 p. 276).

On a large scale capital development project, the geographer should take a more operative role, that of project manager. He can thus help to get a solution that is purely technocratic replaced by one that may not be ideal but is better suited to the whole situation, i.e., to the "environment", in the fullest sense of the term (Beaujeu-Garnier 75 p. 276).

The construction of the \$10-11 million school complex will be the major investment in Shamattawa, a remote Cree settlement with a population of about 570. The prime objective of that capital investment is the development of educational facilities for the community. However, in view of the deplorable economic and social conditions in the community it is imperative to maximize the amount of this investment that can remain in the community in the form of wages earned, tools and equipment acquired, small enterprises established and skill learned. The "solution" found in implementing the school should be one which enriches the people's technological knowledge so that they may use it constructively in improving their living standards, and possibly developing a basis for a local economy.

B. Spatial Inequality

Geographers have used a number of theories to explain the phenomena of underdevelopment or inequalities among regions or countries. Unfortunately, many of their studies have been characterized

by an uncritical and naive adoption of development models and ideologies which have seriously misrepresented the socio-economic process in underdeveloped regions (Soja 79 p. 28). These studies of spatial differentiation have tended to attach considerable weight to three concepts - the dual sector model, the modernization/diffusion process and Rostow's economic stage theory.

The economist W.A. Lewis is often credited with having originated the dual sector model. According to the model, two economic systems co-exist independently in an underdeveloped region. The modern sector being progressive and receptive to change, is tied through export, organization, capital support and the use of technology to the developed metropole. The traditional sector is considered to be stagnant, engaged in subsistence activities, unproductive and introverted. This model remains widely accepted by geographers as noted in a geography introductory text:

...poor nations have dual economies: a minority of the population is involved in the commercial sector which is often tied to exports and the majority remains in semi-subsistence sectors. The distribution between the two groups is profound. Thus a major problem of less developed nations is to commercialize the subsistence sector of their economies (Morrill & Dormitzer 79 p. 423).

Unfortunately it is not only geographers, but government policy makers who have adopted the dualistic concept to explain the existence and the perpetuation of spatial disparities in the development of a region. The dual sector model appears to be the basis of government policy in Northern Manitoba. The policy makers of the Canada-Manitoba Northlands Agreement, "Options and Opportunities for Development", identify two Norths: one traditional, and one made up

of predominantly white, non-Indian persons from a variety of cultures and countries who share an acceptance of the industrial way of life (DREE, undated).

Adoption of the dual sector model is unacceptable. It is a concept that is static and unhistorical, in which no history is given to the underdeveloped society. Nor is there any explanation of the spatial changes in the developed and underdeveloped areas. Thus, the structures of domination and exploitation of the traditional sector are ruled out (Regan 75 p. 29). Not only does the concept fail to examine the crucial inter-relationship between the two sectors, it neglects to analyze the origins and persistence of inequalities either in terms of economic and social policies of the colonial power, or in the context of the spatial expansion of the international capitalistic system. In the case of Northern Manitoba, the region under study, the Crown continues to play the role of the colonial power, assisting in perpetuating the dependent state of the native community.

In his studies of underdevelopment in Latin America, Frank (1967) found that not only were the "backward" areas bound by ties to the externally oriented national economy, but that the "most backward" areas were the ones which had the closest ties to the metropole in the past. That backwardness and underdevelopment may be more the effects of exploitation by the advanced sector rather than merely obstinate traditionalism. With reference to Northern Manitoba, the Shamattawa Band played a very active role in the fur trade and long maintained permanent residence at the York Factory Trading Post of the Hudson's Bay

Company on Hudson Bay up to the time of the demise of the trading post in the late 1940's. Today Shamattawa is considered to be one of the "more backward" communities in Northern Manitoba, a community in social disarray, virtually leaderless and totally dependent on government handouts for its existence.

The concept of modernization/diffusion follows directly from that of the dualistic model. Underdevelopment is seen as an original state and therefore the diffusion and integration of western values, ideas and technology is offered as a method of pulling out of a state of backwardness. The adoption of all things western is viewed as beneficial to the development of traditional societies and constitutes the achievement of modernity. Failure on the part of the underdeveloped societies to accept these injections of modernization leads to an identification of so called "barriers" and "obstacles" to the efficient transformation of a traditional society to a modern society.

Geographers who have adopted the modernization process have failed to point out that the diffusion of western technology does not necessarily have beneficial effects for the receiving regions. It is more likely to reinforce the ties of dependence and therefore helps to perpetuate underdevelopment instead of leading to development. Underdeveloped societies would be better off developing technical forms relevant to the contemporary level of their economies as a method of pulling out of a state of "backwardness" (Regan 75, de Souza & Porter 74, Frank 69).

Modernization theory is very much prevalent in the philosophy of development adopted by DIAND. The focus of DIAND's activities and expenditures currently are used to deal with the consequences

of underdevelopment such as welfare and new facilities. There is little evidence to indicate that the large amount of money spent on reserves has had any positive impact on the socio-economic conditions of Indian communities. DIAND should be concerned with the local resources available to meet locally defined needs for goods and services by means of technologies appropriate to the community (Beaver 79 p. 6), rather than delivering pre-packaged services and facilities.

Geographers subscribing to modernization theory believe that the history of the West will be repeated in the underdeveloped world. Thus, underdeveloped regions will change in a predictable way in the coming years (de Souza & Porter 74 p. 9). The work of the economist Rostow has been most influential in this area. His model suggests that all societies in the world pass through a series of comparable stages of development. The five stages are, the traditional, the transitional, the take-off to self-sustained growth, the drive to maturity and the stage of high mass consumption (Rostow 60). The underdeveloped country, which can be identified as lying within the five economic dimensions listed, is treated as a self-contained unit which generates its own transformation.

Rostow's notion of continuum conceals the fundamental contrasts that have existed and still do exist between societies in terms of the way in which they have achieved socio-economic transformation:

....neither the past nor the present of underdeveloped countries resembles in any important respect the past of the now developed countries (Frank, Cockcraft, Johnson 72 p. 3).

There is no common route to economic development or a unilinear evolution of societies. In addition, the concept falsifies history in that

it views the causes of growth as sui generis within each country, a fact which the colonial period negates (Regan 75 p. 26). Furthermore the traditional stage is viewed as a stage prior to development, an assumption easily discredited in viewing the history of the Indians in Canada. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the Indians were a self-sufficient people who had developed a diverse economy. This, and a century of nearly total government control, have moved the Indian from a self-sustaining society to a state of dependency and social disorganization (House of Commons, 1983 Indian Self-Government in Canada).

C. Challenging The Traditional Development Concepts

Assumptions of doubtful validity on the subject of underdevelopment continue to be expressed in the geographic literature. These concepts, borrowed primarily from other fields, have failed to penetrate the critical issue of spatial inequality (de Souza & Porter 74, Smith 77). The strong reliance by geographers on conventional development concepts to explain the problems of underdevelopment are being challenged not just within the profession, but increasingly by the impatient folk in the Third World. They have begun to pose the critical question, "development for whom". They have also begun to notice how the "magic medicine of development" has always and strangely enriched the developers and left them, the supposed beneficiaries of the process, impoverished (Buchanan 77 p. 363). Likewise the Indian community in Northern Manitoba sees and derives little benefit from the millions spent by DIAND in "modernizing" their community.

Alternative approaches to the established theories of development are beginning to emerge. Modified versions of the metro/hinterland

thesis of Frank have been used by a few geographers such as Santos 75, Brookfield 75, Soja 79. Rather than viewing underdevelopment as a state, underdevelopment is beginning to be accepted as a process, whereby certain forms of economic and spatial organization can be identified as being largely responsible for the condition of the poorer parts of the world.

Underdevelopment is a process of societal change associated with the creation of social, economic, political and spatial structures which inherently leads to a dependency upon outside interest and a powerful external influence over local decision making. These structures revolve around a system of unequal exchange between population groups and areas, and tend to promote the continuation of substantial poverty, social and spatial inequality, and subordination to outside interests. The centres of power maintain their dynamism by accentuating the depressed character of the weaker zones to which they are related. This situation is quite apparent within Canada, where there are regions such as Northern Manitoba, with Indian communities whose "backwardness" is increasing.

Geographers must recognize that the impact of western imperialism on its colonial dependencies resulted in the conversion of pre-developed societies into underdeveloped societies. Before the arrival of Europeans in Canada, and for many years after, the Indian people were self-reliant and had developed diverse economies based on hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering, crafts and commerce. Today the Indians of Canada are beginning to understand that they are not backward and dependent because they are poor, but that they are poor and backward because they are dependent and exploited. Many have

rejected the idea that they are "a resource to be tapped" and are beginning to move towards the idea that they themselves should be tapping the country's resources for their own benefit.

CHAPTER III

DIAND AND THE INDIAN COMMUNITY

A. Canada's Indian Problem

Canada's Indians emerged out of their "state of irrelevance" in the late 1960's: To quote George Manuel, "Indians were rediscovered", (cited in Weaver 81 p. 13). Unfortunately, the rediscovery has not been a particularly rewarding experience for Canada. The findings of the Hawthorn Report, A Survey of Contemporary Indians of Canada (1966-67), commissioned by DIAND, indicated that the economic deprivation of the Indian community was of major proportions. Their standard of living in comparison with other Canadians showed that they were unquestionably a disadvantaged and high-cost general-assistance group. The Report recommended that the thrust of government policy should emphasize development on a broad socio-economic scale in order to reverse Indian poverty and dependence on government.

In response to the Hawthorn Report, and to rid itself of the Indian problem, the government tabled its White Paper on Indian Policy in June 1969. It was a self-serving policy statement designed to free the federal government from criticism and to protect it from future accusations of discrimination, very much in tune with the contemporary tide of social change in North America during the late 1960's. The government proposed global termination of all special treatment of Indians. However, little attention was paid to the liabilities which

the Indians had accumulated from the inequalities of the past. Nor were there any provisions for the implementation of social development programs to alleviate their poverty. As a result, the White Paper was rejected by the Indian community and shelved by the government in 1971. The Indian problem remains with us.

A more recent study, Indian Conditions: A Survey 1980, undertaken by DIAND, indicates little evidence of any overall improvement in the condition of the Indian community. Most continue to exist in a state of underdevelopment in relation to their physical and human resources. The findings in fact reveal a general deterioration in the Indian's socio-economic state since the late 1960's. Fewer than 40 per cent of Indian houses have indoor plumbing facilities. The national level of properly serviced houses is over 90 per cent. Indian families continue to live in overcrowded conditions, with some 20 per cent of on-reserve houses having two or more families living in them. The infant mortality rate among Indian children is 60 per cent higher than the national rate. Their life expectancy, if the child survives its first year, is 10 years less than for a non-Indian Canadian. The proportion of Indian children in child-care has risen to more than 5 times the national rate. Only 20 per cent of Indian students remain in school to the end of secondary level; the comparable national rate is 75 per cent. The unemployment rate among working age Indians is as high as 90 per cent in some areas. In Manitoba and Saskatchewan, native people represent more than 40 per cent of the prison population, while their proportion of the general population is less than 10 per cent. The overall rate of violent deaths among Indian people is more than 3 times the national average.

In summary the attendant indices of sub-standard housing, illness, violence, anti-social behaviour and dependence on welfare, for Indian communities are all far above the rates for Canadian society as a whole. DIAND statistics indicate increasing expenditures and greater quantities of physical assets and services committed to Indian communities. However, the statistics also confirm the fact that Indian people have lost control over their future.

There is a crisis of social breakdown on many Indian Reserves in this country far more severe than that described by the word "underdeveloped". The tragedy is that there is no evidence of improvement in this intolerable condition in spite of increasing Government expenditures. (Beaver 79 p. 23)

B. The Indian Act

The Indian Act of 1876 delineated the responsibilities of the federal government that had been established by the British North America Act. It codifies certain rights and obligations of status Indians and lands reserved for Indians. The Act serves as it has for the past century as the central pillar of Indian-Government relationships, touching virtually every aspect of their lives and providing a comprehensive mechanism of social control. Up until the early 1960's, the Act was administered on reserves by the Indian Agent, the "white chief", whose job it was to care over the day-to-day lives of the Indian in order to bring their way of life into line with the policies that have been decreed in Ottawa (Manuel & Posluns 75 p. 54). Although the Agent is no longer a resident on the reserve the legislation governing Indian Bands today bears a close resemblance to the Act passed in 1876. It continues to serve the needs and

priorities of the federal government, and gives the bureaucrats in DIAND the power to administer programs to and for Indians with or without their approval, knowledge or consultation (Cardinal 69 p. 44). Instead of implementing the treaties and offering much needed protection to Indian rights, the Act subjugated to colonial rule the very people whose rights it was supposed to protect (Cardinal 69 p. 43).

The federal government responded with what it believed to be the "Final Solution" to the Indian problem, the White Paper of 1969 (Burke 76 p. 1). The government appeared convinced that its policy paper provided the framework within which the Indian community could participate fully in the Canadian way of life and would be able to share equally with others in the material satisfactions and rewards that an affluent economy has to offer. The government believed that special rights had been a major cause of the Indians problems, thus equality or non-discrimination was the key ingredient to the solution. The goal of equality was to be achieved by terminating the Indian Act and DIAND, and by transferring to the provinces the responsibility for administering services to Indians. Indians with Indian problems would become provincial citizens with regular citizens' problems (Weaver 81 p. 4).

The White Paper failed to offer reasonable solutions to the problems Indians were facing. Its only innovation was termination, a policy designed to eradicate all special Indian rights. It became a policy paper that was not only rejected by the Indian community but also served to intensify their distrust of the government. The White Paper became a powerful catalyst of the Indian movement, giving them

cause to organize against the government and reassert their separate-ness.

C. DIAND's Mandate

DIAND has become the administrative arm of that century old piece of legislation, the Indian Act. The Department's mandate is to provide for the delivery of services to status Indians and Inuit communities, assist them in acquiring employment and business skills, and ensure that lawful (including treaty) obligations, are met (DIAND, 1983. Annual Report 1982-83). Unfortunately, the Department has inherited, and itself contributed to, a legacy of distrust on the part of its clientele, distrust which undermines daily the efforts of its staff to achieve its mandate (Ponting & Gibbins 80 p. 133). It still perceives itself as the only agency that should or could develop policies, apply, administer and deliver programs and, in general regulate and control almost every aspect of Indian political, economic and social life (Beaver 79 p. 47). Its clientele are estimated to be 360,000 status Indians and some 28,000 Inuit. The majority of Indians are concentrated in north-western Ontario and the four western Provinces. The Inuit are located primarily along the Arctic and Labrador coast.

Government of Canada expenditures on Indians represent approximately 1.7% of the total federal budget. As a percentage of the federal budget, it has remained fairly constant since the early 1970's. Some 80% of the Indian budget is allocated through DIAND, with other federal departments such as HWC & DREE spending a major portion of the remaining 20%. The expenditures within DIAND can be broken down into five main activities, as identified in Table 3.1.