

NEGOTIATED SPACES: WORK, HOME AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DENE  
DIAMOND ECONOMY

by

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## Abstract

This thesis examines Dene engagement with the diamond mining economy in Canada's Northwest Territories. While historic treaties, policy and regulation create situations of powerlessness, the space for the negotiation of a bilateral relationship between Treaty mining companies and communities exists, formalized as Impact and Benefit Agreements. An initial emphasis on socio-cultural impacts and vulnerability of the communities in relation to the mines illuminated variable outcomes. This led to a central focus on how outcomes are negotiated, with the outcomes strongly related to forms of community and cultural resilience.

Surprisingly, the ability to bounce back, or be resilient (not vulnerable), as defined by the Tâîchô and Yellowknives Dene communities is central to community response and well being in this new economy. The possibility of self determination and the potential to be in relationships of reciprocity are found to be fundamental drivers of community health and thus resilience. Study of the Tâîchô Cosmology surfaces the centrality of reciprocity to cultural resilience wherein the quality and nature of the relationships as inscribed in past and present agreements themselves are of defining importance.

New relationships with mining companies are entered with the expectation of reciprocity by communities, so that the exchanges are economic, social, cultural, spiritual and symbolic. This thesis outlines this process as it plays out in the mining economy and as it is manifest in spaces of negotiation, each of which invokes social capital and reciprocity. These include negotiations between: diamond mining companies and the communities; government and communities; diamond mining companies and the workers, and miners and their families and communities.

Each of these negotiations is vital in creating the possibility of employment and business. However, relationships with the settler government and with Treaty mining companies are constrained. Many of the limitations identified relate to the assumption by settler society of the universality of their particular values, practices and culture. The thesis argues that Treaty mining companies can shift approaches, both in the orientation to relationship and in the implementation of agreements through the lifecycle of the mine.

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## Placenames, Acronyms and Definitions

Bechokö	Rae-Edzo
BHP	Broken Hill Proprietary Incorporated (Now BHP Billiton Inc.)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CMR	Canadian Mining Regulations
DCAB	Diavik Community Advisory Board
DDMI	Diavik Diamond Mines Incorporated
DMS	Dense media separation
Dogrib	The name used for the Tâîchô until 2005
Dè	Land
EA	Environmental assessment
Gamètî	Rae Lakes
GDP	Gross domestic product
GNWT	Government of the Northwest Territories
Harvester/miner	The individual when they are at the home site
IBA	Impact and Benefit Agreement
IMA	Interim Measures Agreement
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
MVEIRB	Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
MVRMA	<i>Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act</i>
Môwhî Gogha Dè Nîîtà'èe	The territory required by Tâîchô as described by Môwhî to the Federal Treaty Commission in 1921.
Miner/harvester	The individual when they are at the mine site
NSMA	North Slave Métis Alliance
NWT	Northwest Territories
Resilience	is an ability to become or remain strong drawn from the ability to be self determining and in relationships of reciprocity
PA	Participation Agreement
SEA	Socio-Economic Agreement
SEMA	Socio-Economic Monitoring Agreement
STIs	Sexually transmitted infections
TCSA	Tâîchô Community Services Agency
Tâîchô	The name for the people formerly known as Dogrib
Treaty mining company	Signals the prior and significant relationship of the federal government with aboriginal communities that affords the policy and legal framework for a mining company to operate
Whatî	Lac la Martre
Wekweètî	Snare Lake
WKSS	West Kitikmeot Slave Study
YKDFN	Yellowknives Dene First Nation



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## Dedication

To my carpintero poeta  
Alistair MacDonald

# 1 NEGOTIATING RELATIONSHIPS

This thesis centres on how the production of one commodity, the diamond, has shifted, transformed and mobilized new relationships in the Mackenzie Valley. A historical perspective of relationships of aboriginal people and newcomers to the NWT reveals unique vulnerabilities to change, and particular strategies of resilience. Relationships, old and new, are a constant theme. To survive, individuals share, exchange information and goods and depend on each other. While economic matters can be read literally and fiscally, the exchanges apparent as northern aboriginal peoples enter into relationship with transnational mining companies, described as Treaty mining companies in this thesis, are not only economic, but also social, cultural, spiritual and symbolic. Historically, Dene communities have rarely been employed in the extractive economy, so that there is employment, business opportunity, and agreement making in the present time signifies a practice of freedom. This new engagement represents a critical historical moment, yet it does not conform to the expectation Treaty mining companies hold of pure economic exchange. As mining companies produce diamonds in the Canadian north, they encounter the expectation of reciprocity, a norm deeply embedded in sub arctic society. This norm of reciprocity guides social relationships, indeed it has been the basis for survival in a harsh and unforgiving climate. It continues to give shape to rules, practices and values, emerging from past and current relationships, setting the foundation for the experience of the mining economy in the Mackenzie Valley. If this new relationship does not engage and re-engage past and current relationships, then Treaty mining companies run the risk of failing to build the necessary relationships and conditions that will ultimately determine the success of the industry, both commercially and socially, in the North. This central thesis is exemplified through study of the Tâîchô Cosmology, which describes history as a series of historic relationships, with each new relationship surfacing values, knowledge and practices. This Cosmology provides a media through which to understand the central importance of relationship building and how it impacts the ongoing process of negotiations and decision making.

The historical perspective reveals continuity of relationships with the practice of Impact and Benefit Agreements. The entry of the federal and Territorial government in this history is recent, and it sets the legal and political architecture for the entry of the Treaty mining company. The new relationships that have emerged between these Treaty mining companies and communities (Impact and Benefit Agreements) have transformed the ability of aboriginal

communities to engage in the economy. That the Treaty mining companies are less than reciprocal is due to cultural and structural restrictions. The gift of political will from the communities is received, but it is inadequately recognized and returned. Yet, aboriginal people of the Mackenzie Valley now work with and for Treaty mining companies managing the diamond mines: as miners/harvesters, as families, and as communities. Relationships with the family and community in the home and work domains allow the miner/harvester to acquire and retain employment, and the community to gain funds, scholarships and business opportunities. The relationships to the colonial governments tend to restrict groups, forcing them to mark geographic boundaries among kin in order to achieve land claims, as seen in the cases of the Tâîchô and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. They are differentially confined and enabled through the current political and legal policy of the colonial government.

The diamond has been carefully manufactured to represent a most precious gift, offered as a statement of love (Epstein 1982). The diamond economy can be analyzed in many ways, for its production has environmental, social, cultural, economic and spiritual implications. That the kimberlitic pipes were located in the barren lands of northern Canada provides a metaphor. The diamond is a commodity that can shine a light on what “relationship” has meant in the Mackenzie Valley and what it continues to mean. When Marcel Mauss describes a general theory of obligation, he writes of the gift and how it serves to create a bond between persons. This quality of exchange is perhaps most easily understood, by those unfamiliar with ideas of reciprocity, through the diamond. When the diamond is gifted to a lover, the person gives something of themselves: “one gives away what is in reality a part of one’s nature and substance, while to receive something is to receive a part of someone’s spiritual essence” (1954, 10). Mauss suggests that a gift can have a magical and religious hold—indeed this is what the diamond giver hopes for. In giving the diamond, the person offers something the human spirit yearns for: unconditional and long-term love. This magical emotion is offered in the hope of its return. Mauss further outlines, in his theory of exchange, that there are two further obligations: to receive the gift and to repay it. The giver of the diamond invokes the return of a gift or a pledge in a publicly witnessed ceremony of union. If the diamond is refused, the relationship is forever ended. The diamond, then, has been infused with great meaning. We unearth it because of its great value in exchange, in forging a central bond in our lives: that of lovers. How does this metaphor clarify the nature of relationships in the north?

The Tâîchô Cosmology, described in Chapter 3, is characterized by a series of changing relationships and exchanges.<sup>1</sup> Each era of history is defined by a specific agreement, one of reciprocity and mutuality. Each era, based on a series of stories, originates distinct values, rules, ethics and practices. These agreements are continually re-negotiated and ratified. “Paying the land” is a practice that provides a precise illustration of this. As a person moves into a new landscape, they make an offering to the land (of tobacco or a broken branch), requesting safe passage. The gift, the branch or tobacco, is given to the land and animals, and the giving of it obligates animals to return it in the form of safe passage (or in a case where the person is hunting, through the gift of the animal’s body as food). The individual is obliged to travel respectfully through the space (or to consume the body in a proper and ritual way) once the gift has been given. This reciprocity continues today, as when elders pay the land before the first earth moving machine traces a line into the earth marking the space for the open pit mine. The practice serves to continually ratify an agreement that was made hundreds of years ago between animals and humans. It “generates and regenerates the relationship between the giver and the recipient” (Carrier 1991, 125). In the modern economy, the aboriginal communities give their political will, essentially a license to operate from the community authority, in order that the settler society may seek their most precious of gifts: the diamond. This political will derives from an empowered (usually informal authority), based on traditional values, that gives voice to a collective will.

As this exchange is entered, unique risks emerge. To the Elders, daily exchange consistent with agreements of the past and present, proper relationships, and practice of language and culture are all components of living well. This is what mining, among many other forces, might impact. People are protected through the daily expressions of these relationships, the invocation of networks, and the constancy of exchange, consistent and responsive with the past. If the individuals of Treaty mining companies can recognize the deep meanings of exchange and reciprocity, there may well be hope for reciprocity to emerge.

Is the diamond really a gift, then? Is it an obligatory transfer, as Mauss classifies gifts in his theory of total prestation? Can the land be viewed as a gift? There are characteristics of the exchange that is entered between multinational mining companies and communities that cannot be explained through understanding this exchange simply as buying and selling. Yet that does

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<sup>1</sup> It is through close study of this one Cosmology, that of the Tâîchô, that the centrality of reciprocity emerged as a main theme in this thesis. I have learned of the Cosmology through participating in many meetings, listening to the telling and re-telling of it.

not mean that the land or the diamonds can be classified as gifts. Carrier's interpretation of Mauss clarifies this:

Transactions of buying and selling are formally free, while gift transactions are obligatory, albeit in a special way. In Mauss's classic formulation (1954, 10-11), parties to a gift relationship are under "the obligation to repay gift received...the obligation to give presents and the obligation to receive them." Denying these obligations denies the existence of a social relationship with the other party, and hence violates public expectation and private belief. Gifts are freely given only in the sense that there is no institution monitoring performance and enforcing conformity. (Carrier 1991, 123)

When the constitutional landscape was fundamentally altered in 1982 (with the addition of Section 35(1)) guaranteeing the rights of aboriginal people, the government was obligated to shift the political landscape of resource extraction. In the past, there was no economic, social or political relationship between aboriginal communities and mining companies, largely because the federal government required no obligation to engage in a social relationship. The new obligation arose with political, economic and social changes, forcing the large scale miner to engage in a relationship of exchange. It is the character of the social relationship that is entered, and the request of reciprocity that resembles the gift exchange theory depicted by Mauss. The diamond, unearthed, becomes a commodity, and in this sense people aim for a rough equivalence in commodity transaction. However, in no way is the land a "gift"; it is inalienable<sup>2</sup> to aboriginal people. Yet while the Treaty mining company enters into this exchange of commodities, seeking only to meet the standards required by regulations, and thereby discharging of obligations, the aboriginal communities enter this exchange with the expectation of reciprocity. Because the land is inalienable to the aboriginal people, and because they continually generate and regenerate historic agreements and relationships, they enter into the realm of agreement making with the Treaty mining company expecting reciprocity, but encountering less.

The Tâîchô Cosmology describes a continual history of agreement making—it is into this context that the Treaty mining companies enter, so that the agreements made in the past 10 years about resources, labour, culture and relationships are a practice continuous with past agreement making. Each agreement sets out a series of rules and practices and obligates the parties to be in a social relationship. Further, each agreement is guided by values and principles, such as respect, kindness, honesty and fairness (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000). The agreements also commit the parties to maintain a relationship of peace. Finally, and most importantly, each

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<sup>2</sup> "The objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them; the communion and alliance they establish are well-nigh indissoluble" (Mauss 1954, 31).

agreement initiates a perpetual familial relationship (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000). The Treaty mining companies are asked, in agreements made with the aboriginal communities, to enter the communities and to come to understand the context of the families of workers. In past agreements, the parties also undertook to guarantee each other's "survival and stability anchored on the principle of mutual sharing" (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 34). An example lies in the fur trade, where the English brought new goods to the region, while the aboriginal people guaranteed the safety of the traders in the new land, helping them to survive through long hard winters. Modern agreements rest on the foundations of these past agreements. These agreements are made in order to live well in the land with neighbours, inclusive of the need to make a living or livelihood. "When Elders describe the wealth of the land in terms of its capacity to provide a livelihood, they are referring not simply to its material capabilities but also the spiritual powers that are inherent in it" (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 43). The agreements seek to create and protect this livelihood for future generations, as well as to guarantee the peaceful relationship of newcomers, of which the Treaty mining company is the latest in a long path of settlers.

These mines operate in the northern barren lands, traditional territory of the Dene and Métis. Given that aboriginal people were rarely involved in the northern mining labour force in the past, this work seeks to understand the experiences of aboriginal people as they engage with this economy. There are multiple linguistic and cultural groups in the north, however, collectively people are known as the Dene and Métis. In the past, Dene people were engaged on the margins of mining economies, providing services such as firewood, slashing and cutting, or goods such as moccasins. The Métis were often much more involved in the economy, serving as prospectors and miners.<sup>3</sup> In the environmental impact assessments that were conducted to appraise these mines, the model of commute mining was often praised as affording the aboriginal miner/harvester<sup>4</sup> the time off to engage in "traditional" pursuits. As well, the harvester/miner is able to stay in their home place, as they are flown home directly to the small communities where they come from, rather than to the capital city: Yellowknife. These measures were designed to attract the aboriginal harvester/miner into this emerging economy, and mitigation measures (such as flying directly home) exists to encourage the miner to spend the income in the small communities, rather than in Yellowknife. This thesis follows the

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<sup>3</sup> Stevenson's (1999) work describes the experience of Metis in the region in the mining economy. Given that this research involved mostly Dene people, the experience of the Metis is not a subject of this work. Stevenson's *Can't Live Without Work* is an excellent description that was developed in Environmental Assessment for Ekati and is referred to and used extensively in environmental assessments.

<sup>4</sup> The term miner/harvester is used to signal involvement in the work domain, while the term harvester/miner will signal the location of the individual at home and in the community.



harvester/miner at home and in the mine, seeking to characterize the nature of engagement through the individual.

This is not a conventional thesis for a number of reasons. First, it straddles the disciplines of anthropology and mining engineering. In doing this, it seeks to understand the perspectives of the Operations Manager, the executives and the mine staff of the Treaty mining companies, detailing the obligations within the mine, to the shareholders and to communities. It also brings anthropological theories and concepts, such as Mauss' depiction of reciprocity, to bear as the miner/harvester works at the Treaty mining company and as the community engages in dialogue. The reliance on the pivotal theory of Mauss and Bourdieu might at once be viewed as neo-romanticism, but it is the clarity of these theorist's articulations of concepts of reciprocity (in the case of Mauss) and *habitus* and cultural capital (in the case of Bourdieu) that have stood the test of time. Certainly, a tradition of interpretation of "*The Gift*" continues in anthropological work (Strathern 2000; Kirsch 2006). Other masterful anthropological work has inspired this thesis, such as Helm's investigations of the life ways of the Dene (2000; 1994; 1972; 1965). Helm's work has served as a centerpiece in the post-colonial recovery of the Tâîchô Nation. Methodologically, anthropological perspectives inspire the careful investigation of the values underlying the language of ore bodies, extraction, and production, unearthing the connection of the seemingly technical and objective process of mining to the people of the region. As well, the thesis characterizes the Cosmology and history of the region and through this investigation surfaces the depth and meaning of relationships in the Mackenzie Valley.

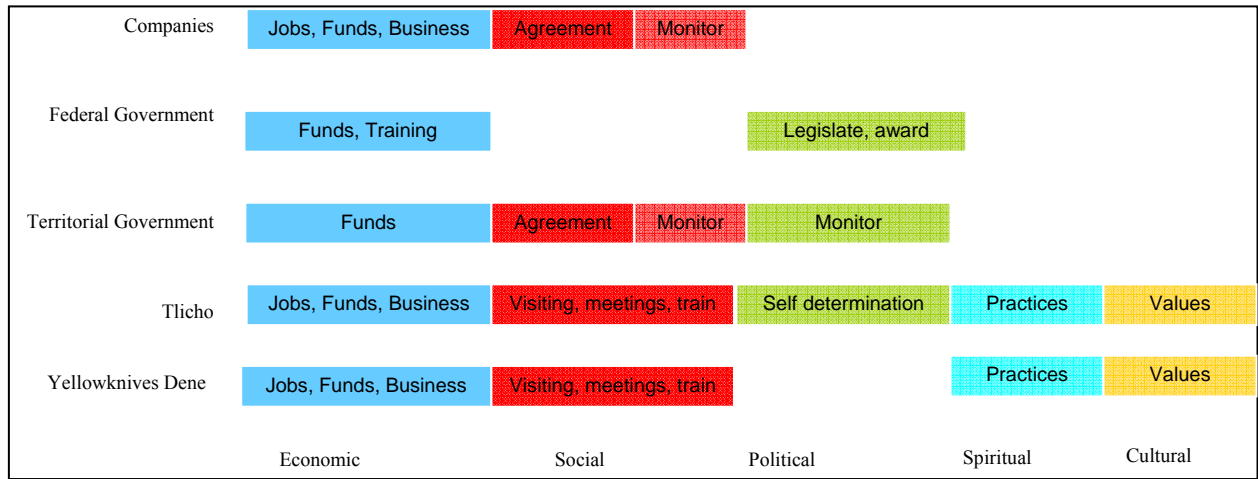
Second, the thesis does not describe a hypothesis and test it, but rather seeks to characterize and contribute to the nature of the engagement of Treaty mining companies with communities, so as to understand how the production of the commodity has shifted, transformed and mobilized new relationships in the Mackenzie Valley. As the relationships of these parties were characterized, it became clear that different perceptions of relationship have implications for the Impact and Benefit Agreements, for the retention of workers, for the outcomes and benefits to communities, and for the social relationships themselves. The thesis is not a systematic investigation of the impacts and benefits of the mines in the tradition of impact assessment (Department of Sustainable Development 2002). It is also not a conventional mining engineering thesis, in that it does not investigate, for example, how to shift production or process to more efficiently or safely extract ore. Nor is it a conventional anthropological investigation in that it makes recommendations on how relationships of mutuality can be established, in the tradition of applied anthropology. Yet it is conventional in that it follows a tradition of writing on reciprocity

(Mauss 1954; Carrier 1991; Kirsh 2006). It also considers how the nature of social relationships can influence production and argues that to be in reciprocal relationships will influence the efficient extraction of ore— for it is only through being *all* of the complex dimensions incorporated in the seemingly innocuous term ‘good neighbours’ or ‘good partners’ that the Treaty mining company can respectfully extract ore through lasting relationships.

The thesis hopefully shines new light on the meaning of relationships between and among communities and so allow engineers to plan mines collaboratively with communities, and rely more heavily on the valued professional expertise of social scientists. For example, Figure 1.1 displays five possible domains of relationships around an operating mine. Yet, this thesis suggests that companies and governments only or primarily pay attention to one of five possible relationships (the economic one) , to the detriment of other important elements. Long term collaborative planning might find engineers and communities discussing how to fulfill the remaining domains of relationship, so that the goal of co-existing in the barrenlands and operating in the traditional territory of the Dene is done according to the principle of respect.

This kind of hybrid approach to interdisciplinary research builds relationships among the professions which often operate as independent silos. Had this research been completed in the anthropology department, for instance, it is unlikely that the mining engineering department would ever have been informed of its findings. Nor would its author either have gained access to the minesite or been able to comprehend the reasons behind the corporate culture that drives the minesite. If it had been done in the mining department by an engineer, it is unlikely that the depth of research and relationship could have been achieved. As a result of this hybrid approach, there has been mutual education among professions (engineers training anthropologists and vice versa) that has benefited all.

Figure 1.1 Five domains of relationships



One distinct feature of the thesis lies in the breadth of what was studied. This is the first multi-sited ethnography of mines and communities, as called for by Ballard and Banks (2003) and even earlier by Godoy (1985). It traces the movement of people as they commute from work to home and back, but also seeks to understand the ecology of the mines and the communities through an historical perspective. The fieldwork involved following each worker into the mine and through the activities of their usual day. It also involved discussions, focus groups and interviews in the communities, with families, social service providers, teachers, priests and other folk. The theme of relationship surfaced through careful attention to the local Cosmology, as articulated by a Tâîchô theorist, John B. Zoe. While it is common for a thesis to investigate the communities surrounding a mine (Banks 1997; Bury 2002; Golub 2006), as well as the relationships of miners and communities (Doohan 2006), it is less common for a researcher to spend time equally in both locations, attempting to relate the home and work environment. Further, most studies of impact focus on how the project has changed the people and the environment. This study has addressed this aspect, asking not only what impact mining has on aboriginal people, but also what impact aboriginal people have on mining. Attention to this mutual relationship has revealed the expectation of reciprocity, founded on the agreements of the past. The thesis arrives at a crucial moment, as current relations of production shift to accommodate this new population into the material fold and in turn are changed through this accommodation. Implications for future mining operation include the nature of economic development, the design of mines and processes of accommodation, and the process of decision making and negotiation of agreements.

The key finding of this thesis is that aboriginal history in the Mackenzie Valley depends on reciprocity, and indeed creates and re-creates reciprocity in each agreement that is forged. The construction of steadily more elaborate lists and tables about the characteristics of the population (Agrawal 2005) since the diamond mines have opened have served the government's needs, creating a forensic audit that justifies the ever increasing control of the Territorial government. The social relations of the settler government and the communities are framed through this lens of counting and accounting, with real dialogue and reciprocity frustrated through the tendency of the government to deliver missives. Policy and regulation of the settler government create the architecture for the relationship of the Treaty mining company to the communities. Yet there is a "space of freedom" (Tully 2000) available—the Impact and Benefit Agreement—which the Dene has laid claim to in the spirit of past agreement making, so that they replicate the reciprocity of past agreements. The Treaty mining company has unfortunately failed to understand the depth and meaning of reciprocity implied in the agreements and thus failed to recognize the long-term opportunity so implied.

The IBAs have been seized as an opportunity to ensure employment, funds, and business opportunities. Through the daily negotiation and re-negotiation of these agreements, the spaces are made for Dene harvesters/miners to enter the mines. The family, the community and the miner all contribute to the well-being and longevity of the miner at the job, as does the Treaty mining company. However, it takes negotiation and transformation on the part of the miner and the family to become and remain employed. Much accommodation is thus in the hands of the aboriginal party.

With the majority of the employees in the diamond mines male, there are significant ramifications of the diamond mining economy for women and children. Given that the mines employ mostly men (84%), it is apparent that new and significant wealth in the diamond mining impacted communities is becoming concentrated in the hands of young and middle aged men. There has been a marked increase in single-parent families since the mines opened, with 50% of children living in these low income and single-parent families. At the same time, women are graduating at much higher levels than men, as well as taking up the scholarship opportunities. The implications of this income disparity for health and wellness ought to be considered further.

## 1.1 The NWT diamond economy

Since the first find of diamond indicators in 1991 by two Kelowna based geologists, the political economy of the Northwest Territories has changed dramatically. In recent times, the

north has lured independent souls in search of mythical gold and indeed the heart of this capital has always been the Con and Giant gold mines. Both of these gold mines are now being reclaimed—and the town has re-branded itself as “diamond row”. Three diamond mines are operating north of Yellowknife, with more to follow and they have brought a new era of industrialization and negotiation with them. The historical context of previous mines is significant as is the potential for future development, which may include a revisited Arctic gas pipeline.

Exploration for diamonds, metals and gold in the Northwest Territories peaked in the 1990s. A prospecting rush, afforded by the free entry system,<sup>5</sup> ensued in the area, by the end of which most of the available Crown Land had been registered to companies. Since then, three mines have opened in the region, and De Beers is applying for licenses for the Gahcho K’ue mine. These projects are owned by some of the largest mining companies in the world: Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton and De Beers. With their different home places, each corporation is skilled at thinking globally, and maneuvering in the industry, but they are now transferring their skills to this northern environment. In this thesis, they are named collectively “Treaty mining companies”<sup>6</sup> for they are able to extract diamonds in the NWT because of the bilateral agreements signed in 1900 and 1921: Treaty 8 and Treaty 11 respectively. In Treaty 11, it states:

...the said Indians do hereby cede, release, surrender and yield up to the Government of the Dominion of Canada, for His Majesty the King and His Successors forever, all their rights, titles, and privileges whatsoever to the lands...

AND ALSO, the said Indian rights, titles and privileges whatsoever to all other lands wherever situated in the Yukon Territory, the Northwest Territories or in any other portion of the Dominion of Canada. To have and to hold the same to His Majesty the King and His Successors forever.

PROVIDED, however, that His Majesty reserves the right to deal with any settlers within the boundaries of any lands reserved for any band as He may see fit; and also that the aforesaid reserves of land, or any interest therein, *may be sold or otherwise disposed of by His Majesty's Government for the use and benefit of the said Indians* entitled thereto, with their consent first had and obtained; but in no wise shall the said Indians, or any of them, be entitled to sell or otherwise alienate any of the lands allotted to them as reserves. (Use of capitals in original, emphasis added)

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<sup>5</sup> The free entry system encompasses “the right to enter lands in search of Crown minerals, the right to obtain a claim, and the right to go to lease and production” (Canadian Institute of Resources Law 1997: 8). Lands can be withdrawn from mineral entry that are set apart or appropriated, including settling Canada’s obligations under treaties with Aboriginal people.

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Carl Urion, Professor Emeritus, University of Alberta coined this term in discussions with me.

These former agreements have created the architecture for all mineral policy since. There is a sense that Impact and Benefit Agreements are somehow negotiated completely apart from the government, forgetting the foundational role of these Treaties. These Treaty mining companies are enabled to seek licenses from the Crown by the mineral policy that has followed since. They are able to prospect freely, stake mineral claims under the free entry system, and operate a mine, in accordance with the *Canada Mining Regulations*.<sup>7</sup> To suggest these companies ought to be known as Treaty mining companies reminds the reader of these prior relations.

The NWT has become increasingly dependent on the mining, oil and gas sector—economies that have their prices set and determined by global and continental demand. For example, gross revenues from the extractive industries sector grew 207 percent from 1999 to 2005, compared to 15 percent for Canada (Bureau of Statistics 2007). As a result of these operating mines, Canada now contributes six percent of world production by value to the diamond market and will contribute 14% of world production by value once Snap Lake is operating. The value of mineral production reached \$2.2 billion in 2005, with diamond production amounting to 75 per cent of this (GNWT Finance 2006). Fur sales, as a contrast, continued the trend of \$1 million or less over the past 10 years, with the value of fur sales at approximately \$812,000 in 2003 (Bureau of Statistics 2006b, 47).

With the status of a Territory, royalties and taxes from the diamond mines are all remitted to the federal government; funds for services and programs in the north settled through Transfer Agreements, which are not linked to resource agreements. The federal government retains 95% of resource royalties and federal income taxes, and 80% of territorial income tax. The GNWT receives 20% of territorial income tax, and 5% of resource royalties (Irlbacher Fox 2005). Over the life of these two diamond mines it has been estimated the GNWT will collect an estimated \$828 million in corporate tax. Total government tax revenues will include direct and secondary taxes in excess of \$5 billion (Ellis Consulting Services 2000); direct tax revenues from the two currently operating mines alone are estimated to be \$720 million from Ekati and \$540 million from Diavik (Ellis Consulting Services 2000). According to the GNWT Department of Finance, “federal royalties and other non-renewable resource revenues from fees and licenses from the NWT have grown 18 per cent annually from 1999 to 2005, from \$84 million to \$224 million.

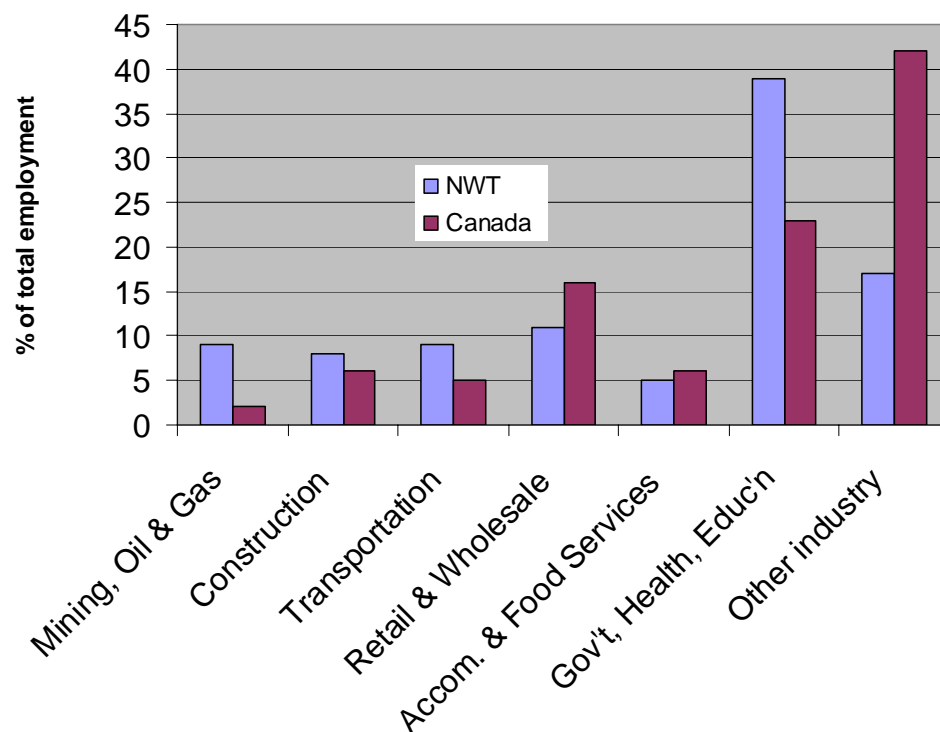
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<sup>7</sup> Mining companies can and do operate in parts of Canada where there is no Treaty. However, in the NWT, the diamond mines operate in regions covered by Treaties. By using the term “Treaty mining company”, the reader is constantly reminded of the significant and prior relationship of the federal government to the aboriginal authorities. It is a respectful signal of the constancy and enduring nature of the prior agreements that structure the political and legal opportunities for the multinational miners.

The federal mining royalties from the NWT over this period have increased 45 per cent from \$9 million to \$78 million” (2006, 13). Until a modern treaty agreement is made with the federal government or devolution of authority and powers is negotiated, aboriginal authorities do not receive any royalties or taxes. Rather, they are dependent on transfer payments for administration of political, social, health and education services.

The labour market in the NWT depends on the government as well as the mining industry; GDP, however, depends on continued growth in the non-renewable resource sector. “Even with the current boom in mining, oil and gas and in the construction industry, in 2005 the NWT labour market continued to be heavily reliant on government. Overall, some 38.8% of employment was in government administration, health or education services. Mining, oil and gas represented some 9.3% of total employment which is about five times the Canadian average” (GNWT Department of Finance 2006, 41). The GDP is heavily dependent on the extractive industries: “much of the GDP growth can be attributed to the non-renewable resource sector, where the share of territorial economic activity has increased from 28.8% in 1999 to 49.8% in 2005” (GNWT Finance 2006, 47). Clearly, the economy and the labour market (See Figure 1.1) is dependent on the extractive industries, as illustrated through the increase in production of diamonds and the continuing decrease in other renewable economies, such as the fur trade. Linkages of the NWT economy to the local economy are weak: “every \$100,000 worth of production in the NWT construction industry yields direct and indirect employment of 0.42 person years’ of employment in the NWT and 0.83 years’ of employment in Canada” (GNWT Finance 2006, 13).

Figure 1.2 Share of total employment by industry, Northwest Territories & Canada, 2005 (Bureau of Statistics 2006, 45)



While the employment rate has increased for the entire NWT, the diamond-affected communities (those with agreements with the Treaty mining companies) have experienced the largest increase in employment income (GNWT Finance 2006). Employment income and levels are projected to fall with the closures of Ekati in 2023 and Diavik after 2020. Extreme volatility in employment is expected, particularly if the Mackenzie Gas Project is permitted as there will more than 1000 construction workers needed for the construction period of this project (GNWT Finance 2006).

The model of commuter mining, rather than manufacturing ghost towns in remote areas, is now prevalent, leading to some significant changes in cost and opportunities. The Treaty mining companies have constructed occupational sites that are larger than 66% of the communities in the NWT. The mine sites now host occupational communities, including low skilled and semi-skilled workers who are on shift for two weeks and then off for two, while skilled workers (generally in management) are on shift for four days and then off for three. The remote mine site, or commute mine, allows workers to stay in their home place on their time off. It is currently the preferred industrial model, as it amounts to half the cost of establishing a



permanent community. With the transportation option of jet commuting, the model allows families to stay in their chosen community, as long as the miner can be freed of family roles and obligations for this length of time. In the past, families tended to follow the ore bodies, leading to constant changes of residence and community, with the result that many mining towns became manufactured ghost towns, or single industry towns that faded as the mineral commodity was depleted (Lucas 1971). Since remote mines use 12 hour schedules for workers, workforce needs are reduced, resulting in decreased capital costs, and decreased risk associated with commodity price changes. As a result, the remote mine site has become the industrial model for northern mining.

Remote mines are unique because they require the worker to be away for extended periods, a separation both physically and mentally of work and home, and the bridging of cultural values for the aboriginal miner/harvester. This work leads to many outcomes predicted in environmental assessments, such as surplus wealth, confidence, new skills and training, and new consumer goods. However, the experience of these benefits can be tempered by the ability to manage new income, the ability to cope with the stress of constant rotation, isolation from the community (Shrimpton and Storey 2001) and the health and strength of the family at home. The environment of home and work are strikingly different, so that the miner has to adjust from the worksite where all food and housekeeping are provided, to a situation where they are expected to contribute. Shrimpton and Storey (2001) have found off-shore oil workers are attracted to this complete separation of home and work, so that there is no discussion of family life at work, and intensive quality time with the family at home. Also, the mine site allows the miner 12 hours of free-time, free of responsibilities or demands of families. At the mine, there is possibility for inappropriate behaviour (Shrimpton and Storey 2001), which can travel home (e.g., swearing, among others). Commute workers tend not to understand or empathize with the challenges of their absence for the partners (Shrimpton and Storey 2001), who often are described as “commuting back and forth from a single to a married state” (Shrimpton and Storey 2001). Literature on remote mining predicts divorce and separation will be a common outcome of remote mining (Forsyth and Gramling 1987; BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. 1995), however recent studies suggest that divorced and separated individuals are attracted to this type of employment and that there is “little evidence in support of the common view that commute employment results in large numbers of separations and divorces” (Shrimpton and Storey 2001, 16).

The mine worker has been found to adjust best to the rotation schedule when the time away at the mine and at home is roughly equal, as is the case in the northern diamond mines.

Shrimpton and Storey (1989) found that the 28 day-on/28 day-off pattern was roughly sustainable for families, while Beach (1999) found that 28 day-on/7 days-off was not sustainable for the family over time. In a study of turnover in the Australian mining industry, employee turnover at mines using the 14/7 pattern varied from 13 to 28 percent (Beach and Cliff 2003), and the lowest turnover was found at a mine operating on a 9/5 pattern. In one mine with a 14/7 pattern, the authors attribute the surprisingly low level of turnover to financial incentives and a positive organizational culture (Beach and Cliff 2003). Survey findings from miners/harvesters similarly suggest a high level of satisfaction with the rotation schedule of two weeks on and two weeks off (DCAB 2006).

These commute diamond mines operate in a new business landscape, with obligations foreign to the metal and mineral mines of the past. Very few aboriginal miners were on the payrolls, and companies and unions alike paid scant attention to the aboriginal communities of the region, except as a curiosity. Taxes were paid to the federal government alone, as aboriginal communities were seen as the business of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Agreements, consent and consultation are now all seen as a business standard. While there is no legislation or policy guidance on consultation or agreements, mining companies view agreement making with local aboriginal groups as the “cost of doing business”. Employment, funds, business opportunities, culture and scholarships are all considered negotiable.

A co-management framework has been adopted since 1998 that gives a unique character to the regulatory environment of the NWT. While the Ekati mine was reviewed by the Federal Environmental Assessment Review process, new legislation deriving from the modern land claim agreements has provided a co-management framework for environmental assessment and management. With the passage of the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* (MVRMA), the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB) is responsible for environmental impact assessment. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Natural Resources Canada are still in charge of issuing permits for the mines. Another co-management board, the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board also plays a role as they issue land use permits and water licenses. However, the MVEIRB makes recommendations on whether developments should go ahead and under what conditions, after considering the environmental, social, cultural and economic well-being of residents of the Mackenzie Valley. Board members are appointed by the Minister, based on recommendations by aboriginal groups, the territorial and federal governments. Half of the Board is nominated by aboriginal groups, which allows perspectives and voices of communities to be heard and understood more

effectively. The recommendations by MVEIRB on projects are submitted to the federal minister of INAC for review so final power still rests with the federal government. The Review Board's guiding principles (from s. 115 of the MVRMA) are:

- (a) protection of the environment from the significant adverse impacts of proposed developments; and
- (b) protection of the social, cultural and economic well-being of residents and communities in the Mackenzie Valley.

If the Minister disagrees with MVEIRB's recommendations, the Minister can send a decision back for further consideration, ask for meetings with the Board ("Consult to Modify"), or order an Environmental Impact Review.

## 1.2 The diamond mining impacted communities

The Dene Nation includes regional groups: Gwich'in, Sahtu, Tâîchô (Dogrib), Akaitcho, and Deh Cho peoples (Irlbacher Fox 2005), many of whom have completed land claim agreements with the federal government. The Métis people are represented in multiple organizations, including North Slave Métis, NWT Métis Nation, the Northwest Métis Federation and community based Métis councils. The Treaty mining companies operate in the region of two land claims that have been accepted by the federal government: the Tâîchô Nation and Akaitcho Treaty 8 Tribal Corporation. The Tâîchô Nation completed a Self Government and Land Claim Agreement, the first to have these linked agreements in the north, concluded in 2005. The agreements were completed for citizens of the communities of Bechokö (Rae Edzo), Whatî (Lac la Martre), Gamètî (Rae Lakes), and Wekweètî (Snare Lake).<sup>8</sup> The Akaitcho Treaty 8 Tribal Association, representing the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Åutsel K'e First Nation and Deninu Kue, has 3100 Treaty status members with a claim to 480,000 km<sup>2</sup>. This thesis considers the members of the Tâîchô Nation (see Figure 1.2 and Table 1.1), and the smaller group of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, who negotiate with the Akaitcho Treaty 8 Tribal Association, but have also been aligned in the past with the Tâîchô.

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<sup>8</sup> For a full summary of NWT negotiations, see Irlbacher Fox (2005). Final agreements on lands and resources have been reached by the Inuvialuit (1984), Gwich'in (1992), Sahtu Dene and Metis (1993). Self government agreements have been concluded by the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in and Deline. Lands, resources, and governance processes are underway with the Tâîchô and Deh Cho. Treaty Entitlement Talks are being negotiated with the Akaitcho Dene and Land, Resource and Governance agreements are being negotiated by the NWT Métis Nation.

Table 1.1 Population of Tâîchô Nation communities

POPULATION OF TLÎCHÔ NATION	
Community	Population
Gamètî (Rae Lakes)	302
Whatî (Lac la Martre)	502
Wekweètî (Snare Lake)	138
Bechokö (Rae-Edzo)	1951

Table 1.2 Population of select Yellowknives Dene First Nation communities

YELLOWKNIVES DENE FIRST NATION	
N'dilo	250
Dettah	218

All Dene groups in the region are of the Athapascan language group, classified as such as early as 1850 (Helm 2000), with many language subgroups, including Tâîchô (Dogrib) and Dene Suline (Chipewyan), among others. Many Yellowknives Dene elders speak both Dene Suline and Dogrib; the uniqueness of spoken Dogrib of the Yellowknives Dene has been formalized by the group, known as Tâîchô Yatîi. Dogrib and Chipewyan are two languages within the Athapascan family, which includes anywhere from 13-15 languages and has more than 17,000 speakers in the culture area of the western sub arctic, plains and plateau (Darnell 1986).

The Dene and Métis now live almost exclusively in communities, settled as late as the 1960s, when Wekweètî was founded with a small group of families. Helm suggests group formation prior to settling in communities was organized by task groups. Helm's work identified the task group (a group of brief duration created for seasonally exploitative purposes) as the primary form of organization for Dene communities, followed by the bands, local or regional, as well as multiple family task groups. She writes that these groups "have a mode of alliance and recruitment based on principles of social linkage through bilateral primary kinship bonds from one conjugal pair to another" (Helm 2000, 11). For the male, the kin connection is through blood ties to one or more adults, or through affinal links through wife and married sisters. "By these modes of sponsorship, a couple may form a task group with others, join another camp group or local group, or move from one region to the next" (Helm 2000, 11). The small communities are

primarily aboriginal, while the larger centres are mixed in ethnicity. For example, Yellowknife's population is roughly half non-aboriginal.

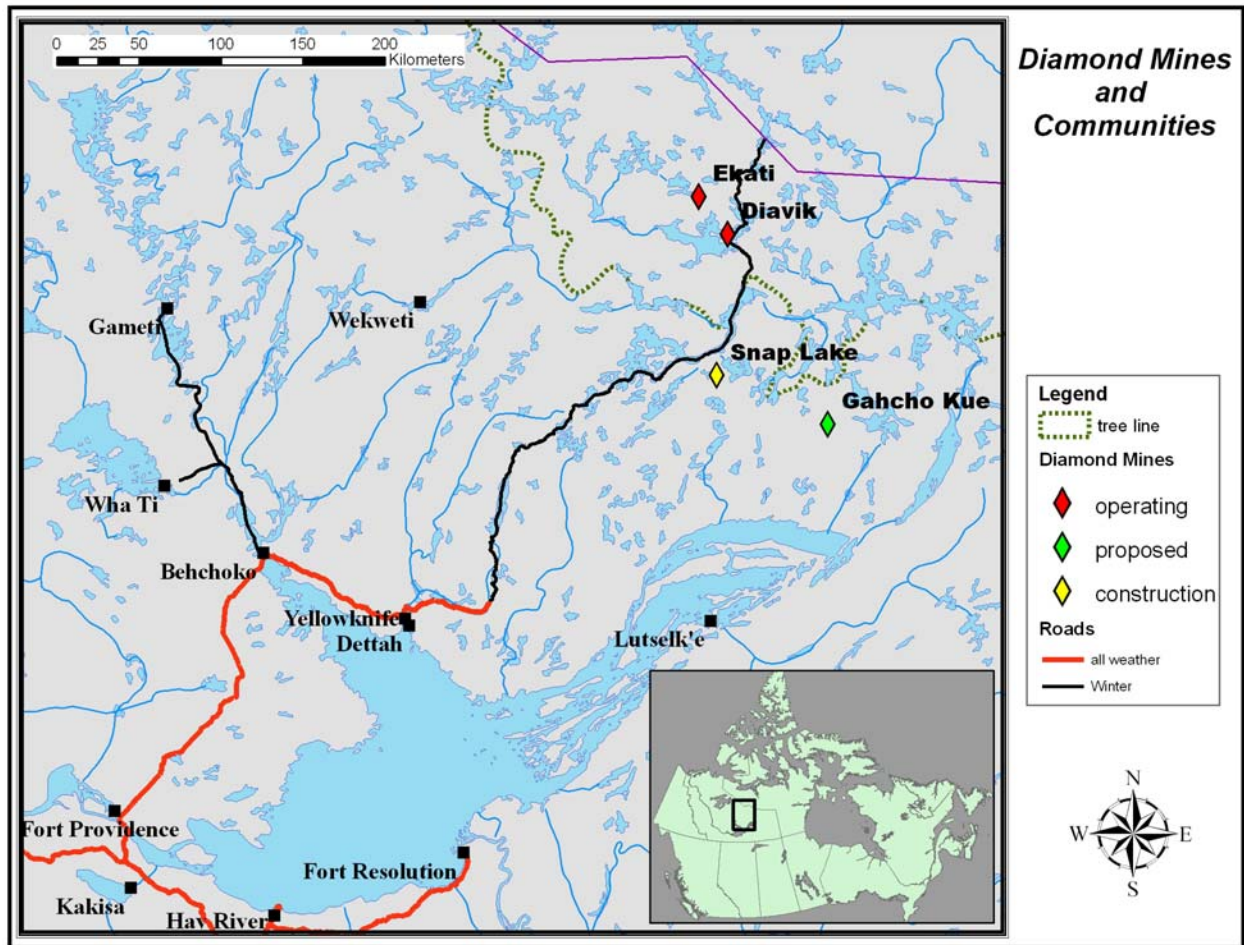
### 1.3 The mines

The first two mines opened at a fortuitous time, just as the operating gold mines in the region were gearing up for closure (See Figure 1.2): many mines have closed in the past few years, such as Giant, Con, Polaris, Nansivik and Colomac. Just 30 kilometres apart, the two diamond mine sites are completely independent of each other. Temperatures at the mines are commonly -40°C in the winter and 30°C in the short summer. The mines are connected to Yellowknife by a winter road that snakes its way through the barren lands over 568 km from Yellowknife.<sup>9</sup> Trucks leave Yellowknife in convoys of four every twenty minutes for the full 24 clock in order to get supplies in during the short window of time when the ice is strong and deep enough. The airstrip at the mine is as long as the one in the capital, accommodating the largest planes that arrive carrying passengers from as far west as Vancouver Island and as far east as Newfoundland.

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<sup>9</sup> The winter road opens up some time in January and closes at some point in March. The road is open for up to 67 days. It is a 17 hour drive, with 495 km over frozen lakes and 73 km over land. It was common talk at the trucker's take off in Yellowknife, the Tim Horton's coffee shop, that the road was open for such a short time in 2005 due to climate change.

Figure 1.3 Diamond mines and communities (circa 2008)

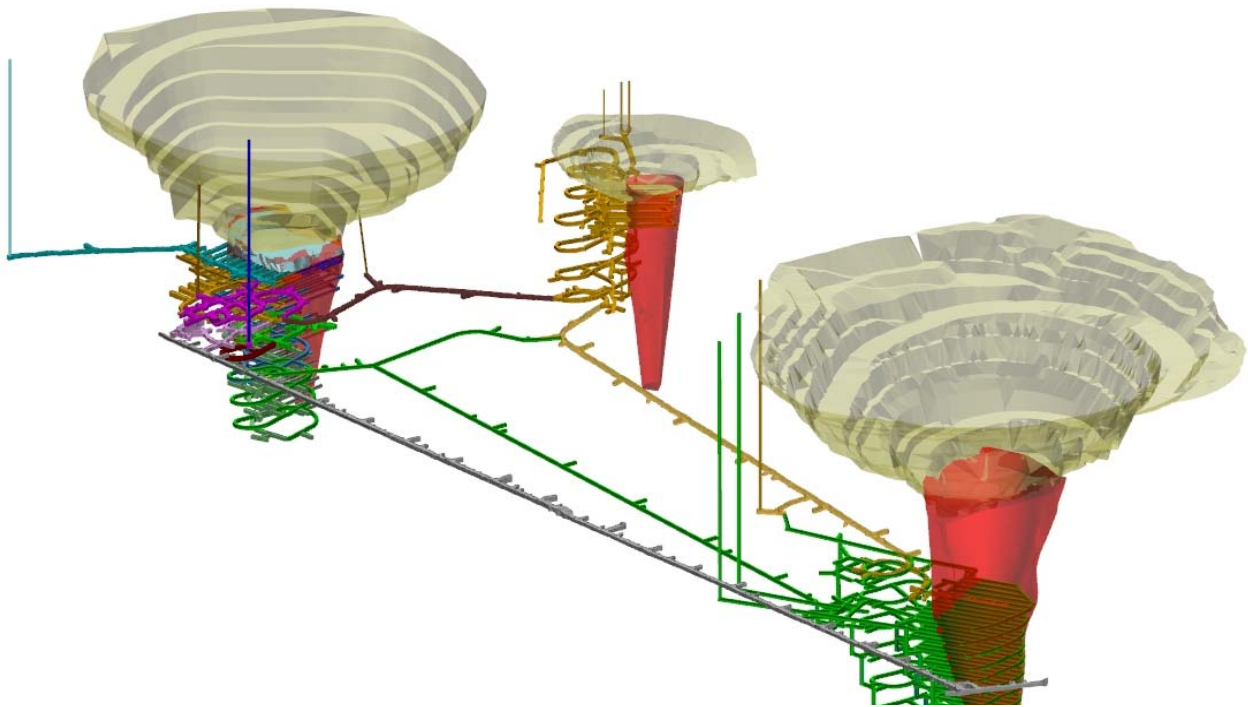


Barren land diamonds are found deep within the earth. After the first find by Chuck Fipke, the largest prospecting rush in Canada's history ensued, with everyone staking mineral claims as closely as possible to the first find. Diamonds are formed deep in the earth's crust at depths of more than 150 km at extremely high temperatures. They are stored in distinctive source rocks that make up part of the stable mantle root beneath Archean (> 2500 million years old) and Proterozoic (2500 to 570 million years old) cratons. The two most important diamond source rocks are peridotite and eclogite, and each rock type contains a characteristic suite of minerals that are key indicators for diamond exploration. Diamonds occur in pipes (as modeled in Figure 1.3), although glacial events can interrupt a pipe and spread diamonds far from the original source, similar to rivers.<sup>10</sup> With much of the region staked, the companies began the task of

<sup>10</sup> Sierra Leonean diamonds, for example, occur mostly as alluvial deposits. The pipes have been cut off and the diamonds spread far by fluvial action. This makes these deposits easily mined by artisanal miners. The diamonds of the NWT are deep within the earth, intact in kimberlite pipes and therefore are not easily accessed, except by conventional open pit and/or underground mining methods, which has implications for the feasibility of different mining methods.

prospecting, involving airborne and ground geophysics. Once an area is defined, sediment sampling of glaciofluvial can detect the kimberlite indicator grains. Other sampling of glacial till can define the dispersal train. Kimberlitic indicator minerals include garnet, chrome diopside, ilmenite and lesser chromite. Once indicator minerals are found, drilling and excavation is done throughout the area in order to determine the location and chemistry of the ore body. Resource modeling, based on the drilling results, will be completed in order to model the extent and nature of the resource. Once permitted, the pre-stripping of waste rock is completed, often so much as a year in advance of the first production of the ore.

Figure 1.4 Views of the Panda and Koala pipe model (BHP Billiton Inc. 2005)



Safety is a top priority at mines, as illustrated by the excellent safety records. The injury frequency rate has consistently decreased at Ekati (Figure 1.4). At Diavik, injury frequency rates are comparable (Roscoe and Postle 2005).

Figure 1.5 Ekati classified injury frequency rate for fiscal years 2001-2005 (Ekati 2005)

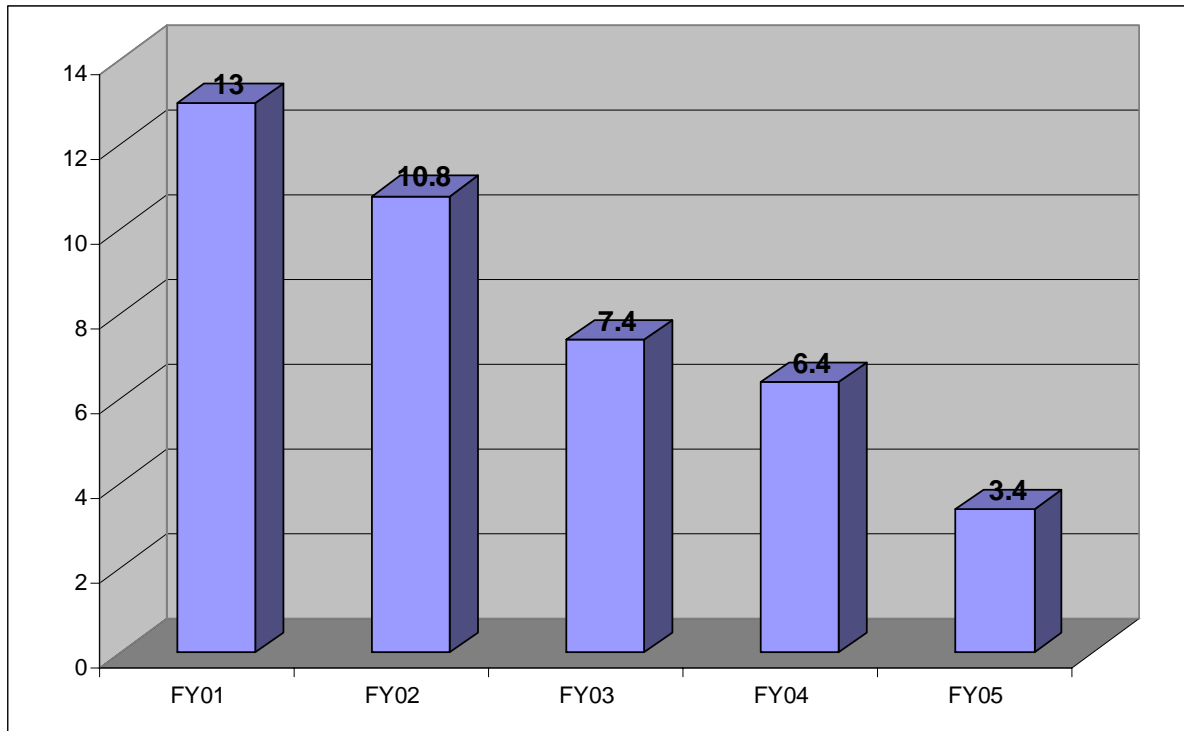


Table 1.3 reviews key characteristics of the Treaty mining companies, such as capital costs, resources, mine life, work force and annual ore production rates. Diavik and Ekati are both high tonnage mines with long mine life. They are also highly profitable mines, and even though Diavik has much higher capital costs, these costs were recouped in 2007. A main factor behind the high profitability of these mines is the value per carat of the diamonds mined. Diamonds vary in price per carat based on quality, and the Diavik and Ekati diamonds (and those found in the NWT in general) happen to be among the higher quality diamonds. The smaller number of carats at the Ekati mine, as illustrated below, is offset by the fact their average per carat value is approximately double that of Diavik (\$140 versus \$60-70).



Table 1.3 Proposed and operating diamond mines in NWT

MINE	OWNER- OPERATOR/ OTHERS	MINE LIFE	DIRECT WORK FORCE	RESOURCE	CAPITAL COSTS	OPERATION TYPE	ANNUAL ORE TONNAGE
Diavik Diamond Mines Inc.	Diavik 60% owned by Rio Tinto plc; Aber Diamond Mines Ltd. 40%	2003->2020	700	24.5 million tonnes containing approximately 82 million carats	\$1.3 billion	Open pit, transitioning to underground	2.5 million tonnes per year
Ekati Diamond Mine	BHP Billiton 80%; Charles Fipke and Stewart Blusson 10% each	1998-2023	800	53.5 million tonnes containing approximately 29 million carats	\$700 million	Open pit transitioning to underground	5.6 million tonnes per year
Snap Lake	De Beers (100%)	2007-2029	500	22.8 million tonnes containing approximately 30 million carats	\$975 million	Underground	1.1 million tonnes per year
Gahcho K'ue	De Beers 51%; Mntn. Province 44.1%; Camphor Ventures 4.9%	2012-2038	400	30 million tonnes containing approximately 49 million carats	\$825 million	Open pit with potential for future underground transition	2 million tonnes per year

Roughly 30% of the workers in Ekati and Diavik are drawn from diamond mine impacted communities. For some aboriginal miners, this experience is not new, as they have worked in northern mines of the past, such as Lupin, Colomac or in oil and gas operations in Norman Wells. For others, this marks a new engagement for them. These miners/harvesters spend half their time at the mine, and half at home. The transition to the mine happens every two weeks, and in the words of one harvester/miner: “you are up all night the night before you leave again. You don’t want to leave your family” (January 15 2005). To gain work at the mine, the miner/harvester must have no criminal record, not be debilitated by addictions, and be semi-literate. As they arrive on site, the miner is inducted into the site through a series of programs and lectures. The most noticeable rules are those surrounding security: as people enter and exit the mine, they and their bags are searched. People are told to view the landscape without touching it. The majority of employee time will be spent indoors, or in a machine as they become a part of the job of excavation or extraction of the diamonds.

Both mines are relatively similar in their layout. Over 1,000 workers are typically on site, and everyone works in one of two shifts: night or day. Indoors, people are assigned a bed in one of the 650 bedrooms located in six wings. These wings are long dark hallways with “*Do Not Disturb*” signs on half of the rooms, as the night shift sleeps through the day. Bedrooms are sparsely furnished, with one to two single beds, a desk and chair, and a television suspended at the end of the room. Each room has its own bathroom, if one is assigned to the new camp. A person can expect to have a roommate, and there is always someone occupying the space when the worker returns home. In the main complex, both the process plant and administrative wings are connected to the main social area by “arctic corridors” that are up to one kilometre long. The social space includes a large eating area, separated into a variety of sections, the kitchen area, a games area and a smoking room. The games area at one mine includes pool tables, a large screen television, and a variety of board games and cards tables. Also available on site is one of the better exercise facilities available in the north. One of the mines hosts racquet courts and a golf simulator.

The physical sites for work vary depending on the stage in extraction of the diamonds (See Figure 1.6). Work sites include the open pit or underground mine, the waste dumps, the roads in between connecting these sites, the tailings areas, also known as “processed kimberlite

containment facilities,”<sup>11</sup> the process plant, and the administrative wings. Depending on the mine, the kimberlite pipes are named either with Australian catchwords or by numbers. The Australian-owned mine hosts the Koala, Fox, Panda, Koala North, Beartooth, Sable and Pigeon, and Misery Pits, while the Rio Tinto owned mine has the A-418, A-154, and A-21 pits. Since there are two sites of extraction for the BHP mine, bags in Yellowknife must be tagged “Ekati” or “Misery”.

The mining cycle begins in the open pit, after which the ore is trucked to stockpiles (and the waste to the waste dump). From the stockpile, the ore enters into the processing plant, moving through a circuit aimed at liberating the ore from waste. By the time the ore reaches the recovery plant, it is cleaned, dried and sorted. All the waste material is sent to a tailings dam, called “processed kimberlite”.<sup>12</sup> Diamonds are concentrated in the material with the help of x-ray fluorescence after which the final sorting steps are done by hand in Yellowknife. Sorting occurs in the highest security buildings in northern Canada. Polishing follows diamond cutting, where the diamonds are classified by the “Four Cs”: cut, colour, clarity and carat weight. Typically diamonds are sold to diamond wholesalers or jewelry manufacturers.

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<sup>11</sup> This terminology reminds me of the linguistic cleansing that sewage sludge suffered in the 1990s in the United States. It became “biosolids” in an effort to alter public perception. Scientists refused to change their terminology, while the Environmental Protection Agency and growers representatives used this new euphemism.

<sup>12</sup> Use of the term “processed kimberlite containment facilities” seems to be an effort to distance public perceptions of waste material from those associated with tailings.

Figure 1.6 Aerial photo of Diavik mine with general infrastructure layout (courtesy of Diavik Diamond Mines)



Every worker is on shift for twelve hours, regardless of whether they are a manager or labourer. Labourers work for two weeks on and then have two weeks off. Workers will often take an extra shift (one week) to cover for another person or to make more money. A worker is on day shifts for one rotation, followed by night shift on the next. The time of work (day or night) can dramatically impact what the worker does, with many tasks allocated to days only, and others to nights. Night shifts tend to have a more relaxed pace.

With safety a top priority for all workers, every shift starts with a safety meeting. Workers are expected to assemble in a meeting room for the safety talk, which is usually structured by a master narrative from the parent company. Generally meetings open with a discussion of any incidents in the last shift, a review of the current section safety record, a reading by a volunteer of a safety tip and a discussion of what some people might do today to make it a “safe day”.<sup>13</sup> Meetings often close with a stretching session, most notably in the

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<sup>13</sup> I have seen people try to fade into the walls during these safety meetings, for fear that their illiteracy will be exposed. The safety book is generally tossed by the safety leader to different crew members to be read. Some employees purposefully miss the safety meeting, for fear of being asked to read, but risk the consequences of being late.

machine shop in one mine, where every person from young to old stands to stretch. The twelve hours are consistently structured, with two coffee breaks and a lunch break. Pit operations staff often take breaks in their machine, with lunch sometimes still on the machine or in the muster station. Every day is like any other, with operation constant. Rituals and holidays are marked by decorations, but not treated with any special regard unless a particular section takes that initiative.

After work, the potential for different networks to be mobilized occurs. Everyone on the same shift has the potential to meet with others from any site in the mess hall. Many workers eat meals with their work crew, but small pockets of exceptions are obvious, such as the table of women from various areas that eat together. After meals, people retire to the entertainment area, to their rooms, or off to exercise, and here mixing is observed across work crews. At this point, however, aboriginal workers claim to spend the majority of their time off with other aboriginal workers. Other activities that the resting worker participates in are working out, socializing, playing games, engaging in organized activities, and of course sleeping. Gambling on site happens through the sanctioned 50/50 draws, as well as in small smoking lounges in the dormitories, where cards are usually the gambling game of choice. There is also a huge smoking room where smokers spend their time, watching television and talking. There is a small chapel or quiet room at both mines.

Diamond mines have a strict code of conduct that is not apparent in other types of hard rock mines. Restrictions come into place wherever workers come into contact with kimberlitic material or diamonds. Since diamonds are small, easy to identify and transport, the rules for how workers must behave in the landscape and in facilities are strict. Out on the land, workers down in areas of potential kimberlite should not bend down to pick rock up, or even so much as tie their shoe. Cameras are trained on these areas, and any odd or inexplicable behaviour is investigated. Workers are never allowed out of the boundaries of one circular walk in their time off, which includes a prescribed route for walking around the facility.<sup>14</sup> Down in the pit, for reasons of safety and security, workers must communicate with dispatch before leaving their machine. If a worker drops something, such as kimberlitic material, off a truck, the material is simply left behind for another machine to recover. In the process plant, rules are similarly strict.

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<sup>14</sup> This control over the worker movement in the landscape is unique to these diamond mines. The comparable diamond mine in Australia, owned by the same parent company, negotiated different land access provisions with the aboriginal communities. In this case, non-aboriginal workers are restricted from spending time on the land, in order to decrease impact on land and wildlife, but aboriginal people can access the area (Argyle diamond mine agreement). In another gold mine in Australia, the aboriginal communities can even access the open pit, if they notify the mine manager in advance (O'Faircheallaigh, personal communication, December 14, 2006).

There is a “man trap” to enter the area, which allows one person through at a time, ensuring the entry of security cleared people only. The worker is aware that cameras are located throughout the football field by a football field process plant: “the shell was to be a monumental building 152 metres long, 40 metres wide, and 35 metres high” (DDMI 2003a, 41). As the diamonds become more apparent during processing, the security becomes more restrictive. In the recovery area, security is even tighter, with two workers and a security guard always witnessing movement of material. Diamonds leave the site in a variety of ways, and the key to security is the secrecy of transport. Sometimes they go off site with a randomly selected worker, sometimes in cases that are blank (or empty), and sometimes in cases that are carrying material. The method is random, ensuring that planning for thefts is highly impractical and improbable.

Security is in place for another reason: to keep alcohol, drugs, firearms, knives and any other prohibited material off site. Workers must pass a full RCMP criminal record check before ever entering a plane for site. On site, all people and luggage are screened both when they enter and exit the site. The site is alcohol and drug free. Any incident that does occur on site can trigger a drug and alcohol test of the individual.

Dress code during work hours is strict, according to the norms of safety. Steel toed boots must be worn, while hard helmets, hearing protection and eye glasses are worn in areas of high hazard. Workers become familiar with the rules of safety through training they receive as they join the mine, and are reminded daily of practices or new procedures at the outset of each shift. This program consists of many modules on safety that orient the worker to the site. There is voiceover reading for the non-literate, and each module closes with a test. The worker must pass all the tests in order to work on site.

Safety is the key message conveyed to the worker. From entry videos to poster boards in all areas, safety orients every relationship and opens most formal work shifts. At times, the discussion is serious, as incidents that occurred are reviewed, dissected and new systems put in place to avoid future problems. Sometimes incidents involved light vehicles being crushed by large trucks. Other incidents involved vehicles in the drill and blast area not being attended (e.g., leaving a blast pattern unattended), to rock fall, to slips and falls. Since every area must have a safety meeting, administrative workers sometimes covered rather macabre subjects, because of the relative lack of safety hazard posed by their job. In time off, people are encouraged to relax, while respecting others. Harassment and racism are discouraged through policies. There is no policy on sexual relations of workers. People spend time socializing in small groups, through sport and scheduled games, and at meal times.

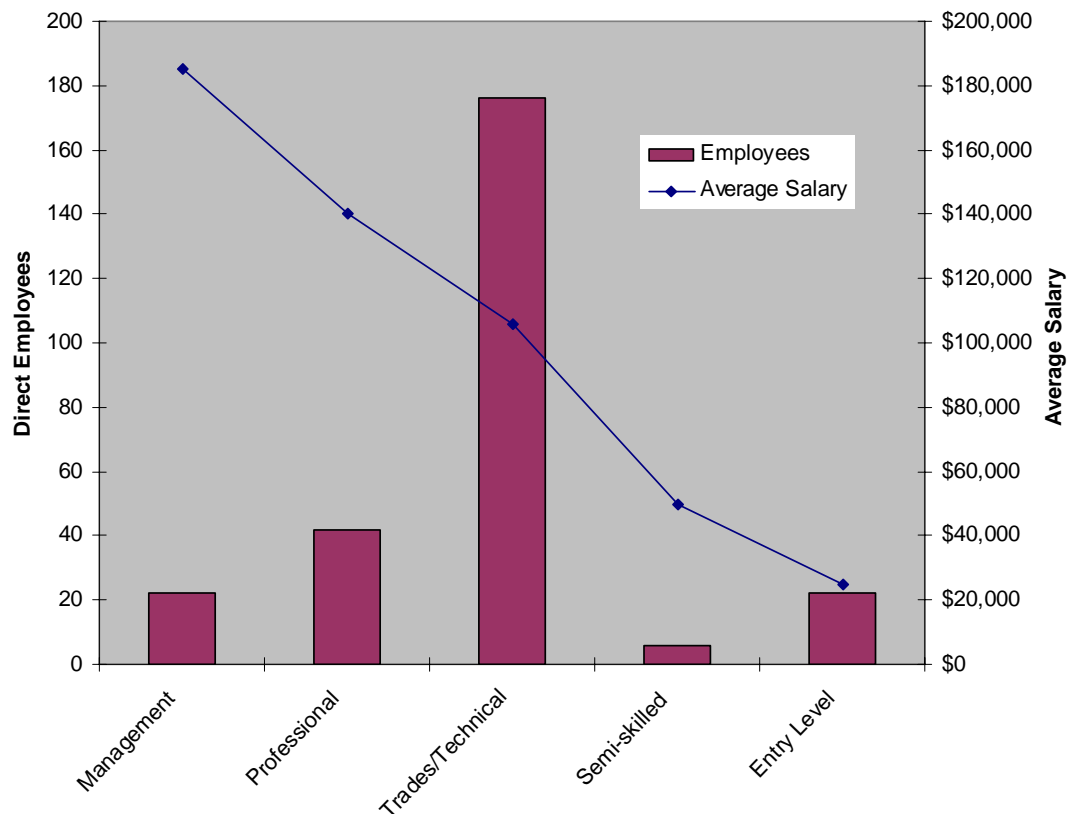
The language of work is English, but the language of conversations in free time is chosen by the worker. English is used during work hours, so that messages on safety are understood and communicated in agreed upon terms. For example, a “Code 1” is used to alert all workers to stop work and return to their muster stations. Trainers and supervisors ensure that a common language is spoken, but each inherits the language of safety from the global parent company. This serves to create a standardized global discourse of safety, so that while trainers participate in and create a language of safety within the workplace, they import globalized practices of training (Somerville and Abrahamsson 2003). Specific and special codes are used to convey safety messages. Other languages can be spoken on site, and one can pass by a dinner table to hear everyone speaking an aboriginal language. Tensions about language can arise, as those that do not speak a language often feel they are being talked about or that gossip is passing them by.

Every aspect of work shift time is organized by the mine, and people fall and stay within the hierarchies of machines in service of production. Table 1.4 illustrates the percentage of aboriginal people in unskilled and semi-skilled positions in one of the Treaty mining companies; very few aboriginal people are in skilled or professional positions. The average salary for each skill level is shown in Figure 1.5, illustrating that remuneration increases with higher skill levels, education, and experience or seniority.

Table 1.4 Employment profile of a Treaty mining company

JOB CATEGORIES	ALL POSITIONS %	ALL POSITIONS (NUMBER)	ABORIGINAL	NORTHERN	OTHER
Entry	12%	232	46%	37%	17%
Semi Skilled	32%	645	46%	24%	30%
Skilled/Trades	46%	912	14%	25%	61%
Professional	11%	210	6%	53%	41%

Figure 1.7 Employees and salary in a Treaty mining company (DDMI 2005)<sup>15</sup>



#### 1.4 Research questions

The research has focused on the experience for an aboriginal worker in a mine and the transformations of family and community life as the mine worker begins the bi-monthly rotation. While the research began with the theory of vulnerability, seeking to understand what influences the differential vulnerability and resilience of families, workers and communities, these questions were substantially reframed as part of the normal iterative process that constitutes social research. The lens of political ecology and vulnerability did not articulate closely with the themes that began to emerge in the field. Instead, cultural resilience, the ability to bounce back, is drawn from the ability to be in reciprocal relationships and achieve self determination. Central

<sup>15</sup> This graph indicates very few direct semi-skilled workers, such as heavy equipment operators, as well as low numbers of entry level positions, despite the fact these positions actually represent the majority of positions at this largely open-pit mine – some 63% of all workers, according to DDMI (2005). This is due to the fact that at Diavik, virtually all entry level and semi-skilled positions are contracted out to aboriginal corporations like I&D Management or other specialty contractors. Also the average Canadian CEO earns much higher figures than represented here. (Whittaker 2007).



to this notion of resilience is the ability to create and recreate social relationships of current and historic agreements. As this theme emerged, it became a central narrative of the thesis. The architecture for understanding the role of the government and the Treaty mining companies in the region was thus cast as relational and reflexive. The overarching research questions are:

- ◇ What is the nature of the relationship developed between mining companies and aboriginal communities in the Northwest Territories?
- ◇ What historical and modern relationships may influence the aboriginal experience of the mining economy?
- ◇ What constrains and enhances reciprocity in the ratification and implementation of agreements of the mining economy?

In order to understand these relationships, the culture of work at the mines was investigated. Through the miner/harvester, the factors at the mine and at home that influence aboriginal workers' recruitment, retention and advancement were investigated. Through the harvester/miner and the family, the experience and impact of a rotation mining schedule and all that it brings was illuminated.

## 1.5 Theoretical approaches

Even as new themes emerged from the field experience, the notion of vulnerability appeared to remain as a very useful theory for describing power relationships. However, vulnerability is a concept with many valences, including the risk of exposure to crisis, the risk of inadequate capacity to cope, and the risk of severe consequences or low resilience (Watts and Bohle 1993). Table 1.5 characterizes vulnerability as understood in this thesis, after reviewing the data.

Table 1.5 Applications of the vulnerability model to the mining context

CONCEPT	WATTS AND BOHLE (1993)	APPLICATION TO A MINING CONTEXT
Exposure	Risk of exposure to crises, stress and shock	Commodity price changes, economic change, wage decreases, closure of mines, loss of active family member, threat to land based economy, lack of access to land based economy or change in wildlife populations, time spent away from family, limited opportunity to speak the language
Resistance	Consequences of poor coping strategies	Poverty and starvation; loss of financial solubility and ability to manage debts; loss of culture and language
Resilience	Risk of severe consequences of and attendant risks of slow or limited poverty from crises, risk and shocks	Networks, social relationships of reciprocity  Public and private institutions that buffer individuals (e.g., healthcare, social services and education)

Watts and Bohle (1993) treat hunger or lack of entitlements as the core consequence of vulnerability; in their work, they ask: what are the consequences of poor coping? In the NWT, government models of social and cultural impact (as described in Chapter 4) define the consequences of poor coping as social dysfunction, as captured through crime rates, alcoholism, gambling, suicide, teen pregnancies, among others. It is as the rates for these social behaviours increase that communities become vulnerable. This model wrongly frames the symptoms as consequences, diagnosing dysfunction and its causes within communities, and then treating only these symptoms. Vulnerability, in this GNWT model, gets framed as high addictions, high risk behaviours, low availability of social housing, and other social outcomes.

This quantitative model does not resonate with communities; instead, as shown in Chapter 4 and 5, Elders have identified consequences of poor coping as fragmentation of identity, loss of language and culture: essentially the inability to live well. The cause of this change, rather than being located within the communities, has been the continued dispossession from lands, the lack of self determination, and the continual oppression under a system of internal colonialism (Tully 2000), among other causes. While Watts and Bohle tackle hunger (1993), this thesis views the consequences of poor coping as not only hunger (and poverty), but also loss of culture and language. While these may seem to be quite different problems to tackle with a theory of vulnerability, they are inextricably linked. Dene harvester/miners may be vulnerable if they lose their jobs in ten years and are unable to turn to the land, either because they lack the appropriate knowledge to hunt well or because the Bathurst caribou herd has all but

disappeared. If the miner/harvester has focused completely on mining skills and industrial training for the past 15 years, spending little time with elders who are able to teach the skills of living and hunting well in the barrenlands, then mine lay offs or an under-skilled workforce may well force the family into poverty, defaulting on newly acquired mortgages for trucks and homes. Their vulnerability will lie in their inability to feed their families. However, the rotation schedule of two weeks on and two weeks off protects against this, providing the harvester/miner with a long period of time off for harvesting. The slide back into poverty, which aboriginal Canadians have been prey to for all too long, may be obviated by cultural resilience.

With the NWT increasingly reliant on mining for the GDP and for labour, the question emerges of what constitutes the risk of exposure to crises, stress or shocks in the mining economy. Certain short term shocks or changes, such as commodity price downturns might be predicted. However, diamond prices have been remarkably steady. If current diamond prices hold, the region can be assured that mining companies will continue extraction until 2030.<sup>16</sup> This promises the communities a continuous stream of mines for a little over twenty years, although people are already reacting to the future closure of Ekati by moving to other mines. Other threats, articulated by elders, are the risk of job loss and of environmental pollution<sup>17</sup>, which can interrupt food security:

I am concerned thinking about if there is no mining going on; there would be no job for people in our community. I know there is getting to be a population around our community too. How we can make it better for safety and for the impact of the community. One thing, we should keep the land and water, and the animal and respect that. Some of the company, they don't really care about the land, even they pollute it. They pollute the water. (Yellowknives Dene elder, April 12, 2005)

Any threat to caribou herds or water might impact heavily on communities dependent on the land, as the remote Dene communities are in particular. In each of the remote communities, people report that from 60-80% of the populations consume half or more meat or fish (GNWT 2007a). Other risks are identified, such as the potential loss of language speakers, as many miner/harvesters are away in the mines for half of the year. As they are away, they may practice their own language less, and see less value in speaking, as indicated by this language teacher:

...reliable fluent speakers are being taken away to better jobs, better wages. We did have some few people who were learning how to read and write in their

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<sup>16</sup> There is increased price transparency ever since Martin Rapaport began to publish the Rapaport Diamond Index in the late 1970's. He accused De Beers, the main multinational producer of diamonds at the time, of price manipulation. Although he made a pitch to create a diamond commodity market in the past, he failed as the industry did not support a market.

<sup>17</sup> Kirsch (2006) refers to pollution as a kind of social relation in his ethnography of mining in New Guinea, as people are in a social relationship with the land and the mines. The pollution mediates the relations with the mines.

language, wanted to work in language area, but they got an offer which was better, way better wages than we were offering, that's what's happening. And one or both parents are away, they are not able to teach their children their language. And another thing is that they are not able to participate on committees or boards because the time that they have at home would rather be doing their own personal thing with kids or other things. And I think, the kids are not encouraged to use their language or they don't do as much cultural activities as they used to I think. Those kinds of things are being put on the back burner. (Focus group with Yellowknives Dene administration, February 7, 2005)

Elders link the risk of language loss to an associated loss of land based-knowledge, making a strong link between knowledge of the land (as transmitted through language and experience) to the ability to live well and take care of one's family. As an example, place names in Tâîchô often encode knowledge of the function and usefulness of particular locations, as described by John B. Zoe, a Tâîchô leader and cultural theorist:

So those places tell you that, it tells you how to harvest...anytime you hear the word "tsi k'a" it means that there's open water and the ice is very thin. Because it's a rich fishery and everybody can survive together and it's easier to fish because Cinqua over there is only about that deep, you jump in the water it's about that deep and so you stick your nets in there. (2006)

The decline in language speakers may lead to a corresponding shift in the knowledge critical to traveling safely and hunting or fishing successfully on the land. Elders refer to a continual decrease in this relevant knowledge central to identity, as characterized by elder Isadore Tsetta in a public meeting of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation:

We used to travel long distances by boat, come back by dog team. As you see, you teach yourself. If you are lazy, and can't teach yourself, you won't survive. You need to have this survival knowledge, because you won't live on the mine forever. (February 15, 2005)

Many factors have influenced the transmission of this knowledge: forced residential schooling has impacted heavily on intergenerational ties, severing the cord of learning. Economic factors, such as the collapse of the fur trade economy, combined with the heavy increases in costs for land based technologies, have deterred land based practices central to learning and identity. These risks are described in Table 1.5, including: commodity price changes, economic shifts of diamond prices, wage decreases, closure of mines, loss of active family members, lack of access or threat to land based economy, extended time away from the family, and decreased opportunity to speak the language. The most vulnerable individuals, groups or classes may be those exposed to these shocks, with the corresponding limited coping capability: those who suffer from crisis impact and are unable to recover (Watts and Bohle

1993), thereby suffering poverty, starvation or inability to manage debts, as well as the loss of culture and language.

Resilience is drawn from the maintenance of historic and current relationships as well as indigenously defined social security systems (public and private). Individuals hold relationships in and outside of the community that enable them to weather difficulty. This new relationship with the Treaty mining company is simply the newest relationship with an outsider. This is a different articulation of resilience than what appears in the literature. At the community level, the concept derives from three literatures, ecosystem health (Adger 2000; Bingeman *et al.* 2004), early childhood development (Clauss-Ehlers and Lopez Levi 2002; Kulig 2000) and the psychology of oppression or war (Khimhi and Shamaï 2004; Sonn and Fischer 1998). Components of resilience generally include: a response to a change and a shift to a new balance (Bingeman *et al.* 2004) and sometimes a new higher level of functioning (Kulig 2000), characteristics (Hernandez 2002), institutions (Adger 2000) or aspects that buffer people from threat, including either an ability to adapt and learn (Bingeman *et al.* 2004) or cultural aspects such as solidarity, respect for elders (Clauss-Ehlers and Lopez Levi 2002). This last articulation, solidarity and respect for elders, approximates some of the components of knowledge formation that are constitutive of identity.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus explains what underlies these two qualitative indicators identified by Clauss-Ehlers and Lopez Levi:

The habitus is precisely this immanent law, *lex insita*, laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing, which is the precondition not only for the co-ordination of practices but also for practices of coordination, since the corrections and adjustments the agents themselves consciously carry out presuppose their mastery of a common code and since undertakings of collective mobilization cannot succeed without a minimum of concordance between the habitus of the mobilizing agents (e.g., prophet, party leader, etc.) and the dispositions of those whose aspirations and world-view they express. (Bourdieu 1977, 81)

The miner/harvester may have mastered the "common code" of the aboriginal culture, since from the earliest upbringing, the stories, myths and legends were told as s/he was out in the land. S/he carries and uses the knowledge of ancestors, as s/he understands the use of the term "k'a" to mean thin ice, signifying a dangerous location as well as a good place to fish. Those two indicators, solidarity and respect for elders, are imprecise references to this transmission of knowledge that lead to "ordinary practices":

Automatic and impersonal, significant without intending to signify, ordinary practices lend themselves to an understanding no less automatic and impersonal: the picking up of the objective intention they express in no way implies

“reactivation” of the “lived” intention of the agent who performs them.  
“Communication of consciousness” presupposes community of “unconscious”  
(i.e., linguistic and cultural competences). (Bourdieu 1977, 80)

Thus “ordinary” practices—the knowledge of how to fish effectively, light a fire, hunt safely in the land—rely on constant transfer of knowledge rooted in linguistic and cultural competence. The community of “unconscious” is formed over so many years, yet perhaps may be destabilized as the miner/harvester moves fluidly from mine site to home site, shifting from one set of cultural practices to another without fail every two weeks. What may protect the harvester/miner is the constancy of the members of his/her own group at the mine, and the strength and support of the family and networks at home. Bourdieu argues habitus is maintained as it is brought into relation with the “system of dispositions (partially) common to all products of the same structures” (Bourdieu 1977, 85), so that as miners/harvesters exchange ideas and symbols, the habitus is re-engaged. However, for the aboriginal person the habitus is maintained in relation to others *and the land*, as discussed by Legat (2007):

Most Tâîchô elders think that if young people do not work and travel within Tâîchô nêêk’ê<sup>18</sup> then they may lose their Tâîchô character. This character is linked to the personal responsibility to listen, observe, and think about all that is occurring within the dè<sup>19</sup> so that when necessary, one can take action. (37)

Cultural resilience, then, may lie in the continued ability to engage this habitus in social groups and out in the land. For the social group, resilience resembles this but also invokes the continued practices of reciprocal exchange as enshrined in historic and current agreements.

The notion of resilience articulated by vulnerability theorists does not capture the complexity of what is described as essential to protect people from crisis. Acts that reinforce identity and relationships are witnessed constantly: in church, through song, in community meetings, in tea dances, in the practice of language, in schools, and in the practice of hand games<sup>20</sup> in the mines.

One of the fundamental effects of the orchestration of habitus is the production of a commonsense world endowed with the *objectivity* secured by consensus on the meaning (*sens*) of practices and the world, in other words the harmonization of agents experiences and the continuous reinforcement that each of them receives from the expression, individual or collective (in festivals, for example),

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<sup>18</sup> The place where you expect to find Tâîchô within the land dè) (Legat 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Includes “land, ground, dirt, earth” (DDBE 1996, 18), with “whom the Tâîchô have a relationship that is responsive to their attention, action and behaviour” (Legat 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Handgames are a Dene pastime, involving two teams that compete. Each member of Team A will hide an object (usually a rock) in their hand, while the drummers and singers on their team attempt to distract the other team from watching the movement of the object back and forth in their hands. When the drummers and singers stop, the caller from Team B will use hand signals to identify where the object is in the hand of every member of Team A.

improvised or programmed (commonplaces, sayings) of similar or identical experiences. (Bourdieu 1977, 80)

The harmonization of experience and continuous reinforcement (through communal celebration or common sayings) may be diminished as a miner/harvester constantly leaves the common community. However, symbols and expressions of the Dene worldview are present in the mines, as a Tâîchô social service worker suggests:

We know that many people want to work on spirituality (religion). They go to church and pray. In the past, when we went to church and listen to people pray, we didn't know what they were saying. We understood Dogrib and we sat with the elders but we didn't understand a single word they were saying when they prayed. So we translated the Dogrib prayers and many people learned them, including the hymns, we wrote a lot of them down and wrote them in Dogrib. So many people started to sing in Dogrib. (Interview, February 5, 2005)

The orchestration of habitus, then, may emerge each time a person sings hymns in their own language, particularly when the miner/harvester prays and sings at the mine, since the bible has been translated into Tâîchô. John B. Zoe refers to these places of freedom as those free of government control:

When you review the nàowo (knowledge) like this and review it for the past five years. We still use our ways a little bit but it's still decreasing, because we are not using it all the time. The ones who are supposed to be doing cultural programs don't have policies in place. They might think it is but it's still under government control. They probably want to do these things but they can't do it on their jobs. So they have to find some information and try to help our people with it. Maybe for the church, or feasts, meetings, addictions or music. These things are not under the government so we can probably help one another with these issues. (Interview, February 4, 2005)

This continued ability to mobilize habitus approximates what elders speak of as they discuss this knowledge and practice required to live well. This, in combination control through self determination over public and private institutions allows these services to be adapted to citizen needs (e.g., healthcare, education, etc.) . It is in these daily acts of resistance practiced on the rough terrain of colonialism (Tully 2000) that people can flourish.

## 1.6 The causal processes of vulnerability

Vulnerability is a multilayered and multidimensional social space defined by the determinate political, economic and institutional capabilities of people in specific places at specific times. In this sense a theory of vulnerability should be capable of mapping the historically and socially specific realms of choice and constraint—

the degrees of freedom as it were—which determine exposure, capacity and potentiality. (Watts and Bohle 1993, 46)

A key problem with vulnerability models has been the ability to explain change (Peet and Watts 1997), and the ability to account for the cumulative impacts wrought through policy, markets and colonial shifts. Yet the model articulated by Watts and Bohle (1993) is helpful for understanding differences between social groups, directing the gaze to three possible explanations of differential vulnerabilities. Watts and Bohle (1993) suggest the multidimensional space of vulnerability can be influenced by three factors: empowerment, entitlement and political economy. Fundamental to this model is the ability to invoke ecology and geography, as the model “links political economy to ecological and spatial processes” (52). They further suggest the three causal processes account for the “mass poverty associated with specific long-term (structural) changes...in ‘social production and distribution mechanisms’” (54).

### 1.6.1 Empowerment

Mining has continually undermined the resources and land base available to the aboriginal groups, because the ideology of development prevails over indigenous rights. The possibility of controlling land through agreement making with the federal government renews citizen hope, local government control, and affords the possibility of self determination. During land claims negotiations with the federal government, the Tâîchô were able to withdraw lands from potential mineral development. The Agreement in Principle of the Akaitcho Treaty 8 Government with the federal government has likewise achieved land withdrawals. However, mineral leases of both of the diamond mines were unavailable for negotiation, given that they were leased to the mines prior to land claims withdrawals. Yet, through land claim and self government agreements, there will be a measure of control, through the ability to issue surface leases, permit ancillary developments (such as roads or power), and through the requirement of consultation and consent. Since self determination has been shown to profoundly affect individual senses of control and have health outcomes (Chandler and Lalonde 2004) in other parts of the country, the same may be anticipated in the north. In addition, self determination may dramatically affect the relationships to the mining industry.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This analysis suggests that the administration of self government and land claims is or will be fair and just and will afford self determination. This is not necessarily the case, as some authors have argued that self government is simple “a municipality on steroids” (Irlbacher Fox 2005). However, along the lines of James Tully, I acknowledge the vast insufficiencies of this system of internal colonialism, but witness the acts of resistance and self determination within this system constantly.



Rights to lands are controlled through the federal government, and new access is afforded through the process of land claims and self government. The speed at which a claim is negotiated and the issues which it settles might very well influence ability to capture land rights, so that a Territorial wide agreement (the Dene-Métis Accord) collapsed just before the diamond staking rush provided a unique moment for corporate interests to acquire mineral rights throughout the NWT during the largest staking rush in Canadian history. The ensuing land claims process has locked the Tłı̨chǫ and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation into alternate processes; they have proceeded at different rates, which will have profound impacts on when citizens begin to enjoy the fruits of agreements and indeed what those fruits will be. Once ‘authenticity’ has been negotiated and agreed upon by the federal government, a group is able to negotiate collectively with mining companies. As a group is recognized, they are able to use benefits from these agreements to promote collective values and practices, through funding of programs. In turn, group identity is also reinforced through this recognition by the government and the mining company (West 2006).

### 1.6.2 Entitlements

Entitlements, read from an economic perspective, tend to cover access to food. For the aboriginal harvester/miner, food will be bought with wages gained in the diamond mines, as well as harvested from the land. More broadly, entitlements can include capability, rights and access to social security, and informal social security systems (Watts and Bohle 1993). Access to social security will be afforded by the Territorial government. The level of control over services and lands achieved through self government may help to explain access changes to these services.

Mining may impact on environmental entitlements (Leach *et al.* 1999) in the north in that the remote communities are largely dependent on country foods, and the near-urban aboriginal communities continue to use country foods as a strong staple. Environmental entitlements can be seen as the “sets of benefits derived from environmental goods and services over which people have legitimate effective command and which are instrumental in achieving well-being” (Leach *et al.* 1999, 9). Where non-renewable extraction may begin to collectively affect caribou herds or water sources, there may be a strong impact, both on food security and identity.

### 1.6.3 Political economy

Mining must be seen in the longer term ethno-history of the region. While mining now offers material well-being for the next thirty years, work in the non-renewable resource sector has the potential to further entrench a class-based system into a kin-based society (Asch 1986). Class, according to Asch, may act as a subtle change agent by exacerbating tension between people involved in the wage and bush economy. He suggests that wage labour is one of the undocumented problems that have created class divisions, and exacerbated alcoholism:

Purchasing power has become concentrated in the hands of those with the fewest economic responsibilities. As a result, much of the income is spent on personal luxury items or on socially useless activities such as drinking parties...In addition, that payment goes to individuals has helped to create a distinction between the rich young men who work for wages and the seemingly poor young men who collect bush resources for the family....In short, wage labour acts as a subtle influence to change values. It concentrates wealth in the hands of those who are least capable or willing to use it in socially productive ways. It can help to undermine respect for others who perform socially valuable labour. (Asch 1986: 289)

The effect of this concentration on the nuclear family, reinforced through government policy, would infuse the value of individualism, split local groups that were interdependent, and reinforce the nuclear family. This, Asch predicted, would devalue the work that young men did in the bush economy, “more socially valuable work”, while providing high funds to less responsible and socially integrated young men (1977).

Since Asch’s work in the 1970s, employment in the wage economy has continuously increased, but even markedly more so since the diamond mines opened. Employment levels are higher and income assistance lower since the diamond mines opened. Income assistance cases have decreased in the communities from more than 120 cases per 1,000 people in 1996 to 59 cases per 1,000 people in 2005 (GNWT 2006).<sup>22</sup> While the participation rate in the NWT has stayed fairly constant, the unemployment rate, defined as the people above the age of 15 looking for work but unable to attain it, has dropped from 45% in 1989 to 30% in 2004 (GNWT 2006). The employment rate in many of the small and local communities continues to be under 50% (GNWT 2006), but it has increased.

With the system of transfers to the north to administer programs and services, wage labour is constantly promoted and reinforced as the only economy of choice, which has

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<sup>22</sup> There may be many factors at play in the decrease of income support, such as policy changes, among others. Berger noted a relation between the increase of industrial wage employment and the increase of welfare payments in the 1970s.

implications for training and the value placed on “work”. The wage economy becomes an unquestioned certainty, as reflected by this federal employee’s statement:

They realized that resource development is one of the key mechanisms to change the paradigm in remote northern communities really. Because, if you look at the map of Canada, all of the major resource development is happening in the North, and within vicinity of the areas where aboriginals live. We are talking about isolated places with no hope of other economic activities, because communities are very small, the market is very small, distances are very great, and there is no hope in hell of any economic activities because of the way the communities are. You need an economic driver. (Interview, May 7, 2006)

Consultants to the federal government offer a similar analysis. Rattle argues “due to the specific characteristics of the north, these opportunities lie largely in the areas of non-renewable resources development - specifically mineral development” (2005, 2). These are what Tully (2005) has referred to as hinge propositions, or arguments that become invisible; because they are so frequently mentioned, they become ‘normal’ and self justifying. Wage labour may well become a source of tension within Dene society, consuming the time of harvesters and promoting values of individualism that serve to undermine Dene values (Nadasdy 2003). One concern may be that more involvement in governance will turn the “harvesters into bureaucrats” (Nadasdy 2003). With this new economy and the trappings of modernization has also come the transformation of daily work. Elders talk of changes in the daily workload for people—the nature of work at home has transformed with the modern household. Elders talk of the strict work schedule associated with gathering wood and water. This work, combined with the ethic of work in the bush economy, promotes a range of core values. When elders talk of specific activities, like chopping wood for others, they are speaking about the importance of the values and knowledge that are learned through this practice. These include reciprocity, care for others, collectivism, the value of daily hard work, and respect for and service to elders. These are many of the values that are promoted and reinforced through the bush economy.

## 1.7 Outline of the thesis

The argument made in this thesis is that relationships of reciprocity, and the rules, practices and values that emerge from past and current relationships set the foundation for the experience of the mining economy in the Mackenzie Valley. The methodology for undertaking the research is described in chapter two. The unique histories, interactions and relationships of one Dene group are documented through the lens of a Cosmology and with the aid of anthropological renderings (Chapter 3). Since the mining economy has emerged, a new

rendering of socio-economic data has emerged through the statistical lens. The communities are described through 14 discrete variables, and all intervention and mitigation is connected only to the dysfunction that can be connected directly to mining. Community based narratives of impact are also emerging, as described in chapter four, including a vision articulated in Åutsel K'e (which was later adapted by the Yellowknives Dene), and one from the Tâîchô. The structures for managing the relationships of corporations, communities and the state that have emerged, complete with the state's analytic tools for imagining them are also illustrated in chapter four. Government models have wrongly diagnosed vulnerability and detected causes in families and communities. New relationships have emerged between Treaty mining companies and communities, now managed through bilateral agreements, which have transformed the ability of aboriginal communities to engage in the economy. These "Impact and Benefit Agreements" are the modern tool for articulating these relationships. That the Treaty mining companies are not able to be reciprocal, as in the relationships of the past, is due to structural restrictions, as well as a limited conception of culture. The social relationships, as inscribed through the transactions involving land, labour and consent, are received but there is failed reciprocity (Chapter 6). Aboriginal people now work with and for Treaty mining companies managing the diamond mines: as miners/harvesters (Chapter 6), as families (Chapter 7), and as communities (Chapter 8). Relationships, both at the family and community level, in the family and work domain help the miner/harvester to get and keep employment. Two distinct groups, the Tâîchô and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, are described as is the context for the shifting, changing and fluid relationships and identities of groups. The constancy of rules, practices and values of past and present agreements are shown to be aids in mediating the experience of vulnerability to the mining economy in the Mackenzie Valley.

This study began long after the negotiation of Impact and Benefit Agreements for the first and second mines, but throughout the fieldwork, new agreements were being forged. The possibilities of each new agreement were always constrained by the boundaries of the past, yet new strategies were imagined and applied, and unique outcomes achieved. For example, the latest Tâîchô Agreement holds substantial funds to be made available to harvesters who will never become miners, at the same time as it holds the new Treaty mining company, De Beers Incorporated, to a new standard of engagement. The possibility for Treaty mining companies to honour this historic expectation is renewed daily.

An industry body, the Aboriginal Industry Human Resource Council, identified the aboriginal population as one of four key groups to target for mining labour shortfalls in the

coming years (AIHRC 2007). This thesis contributes to the discussion about how to equitably recruit, retain and advance aboriginal people within mining companies. It suggests that there are many layers—social, cultural, spiritual and economic—to the relationships that must be attended to. There are webs of relationships that are invoked to support one harvester/miner to work in the mines. Social pressure on the mines and support from leadership, social services and families are activated as each miner becomes employed. These harvester/miner draws on all of these relationships for support to be in the mines, yet unless more attention is paid to the experience of being in the mine, there will continue to be limited advancement in the Treaty mining companies. However, the continued lack of attention to cross-cultural engagement, microequities (small slights that can lead to large problems) (Aboriginal Human Resources Council 2007), training and education in the Treaty mining companies will continue to frustrate advancement.

## 2 APPROACH OF THE STUDY

This work began in December of 2003 and fieldwork was completed in September of 2006. Using the ethnographic approach, the thesis sought to understand the context of mining both in the mines and in the communities. A political economy approach has been utilized to guide questions and approaches, while the methods of anthropology have been used to investigate the case. A multi-method approach has been used to elicit data—this approach also serves to triangulate findings. The research began with early meetings in the field in December of 2003, with members of each of the research communities. In these early meetings, knowledge mapping and community research priorities were identified. These proved to be very different for specific communities of interest, as illustrated by Figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. Each research summary illustrates the issues identified by people in meetings focused on core research needs, with respect to community well-being and the extractive industries.

Figure 2.1 Bechokö community research issues

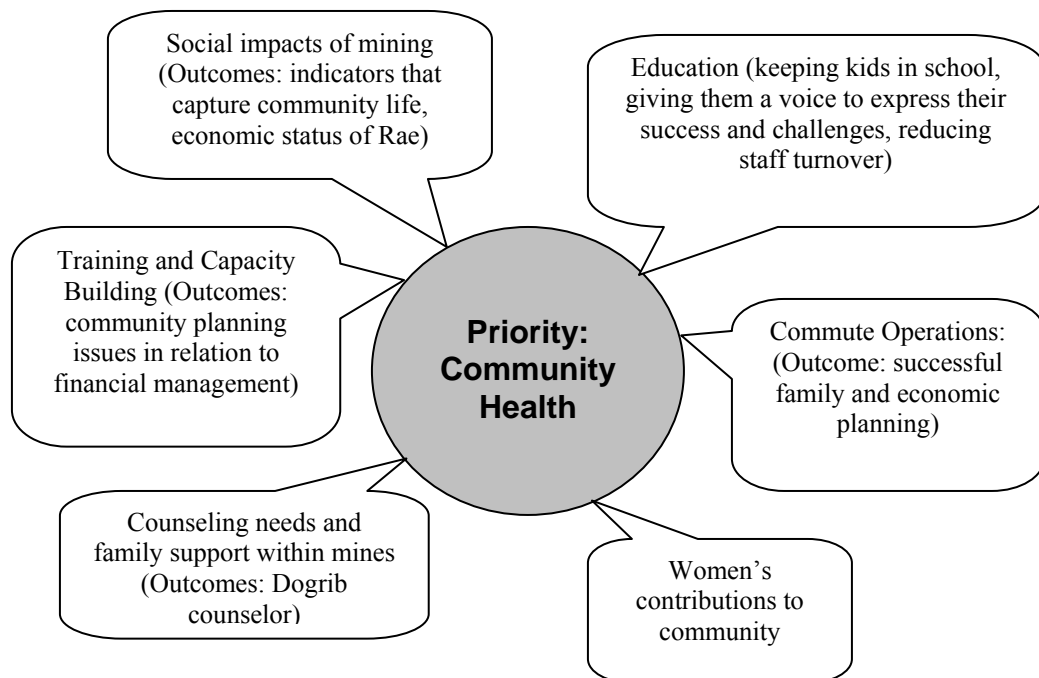


Figure 2.2 Yellowknives Dene First Nation research issues

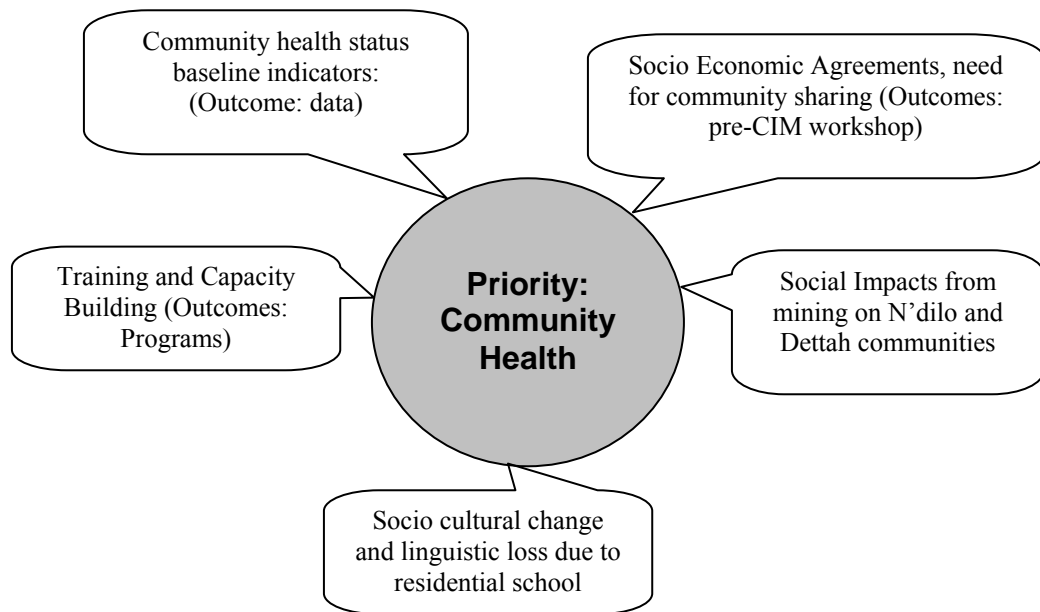
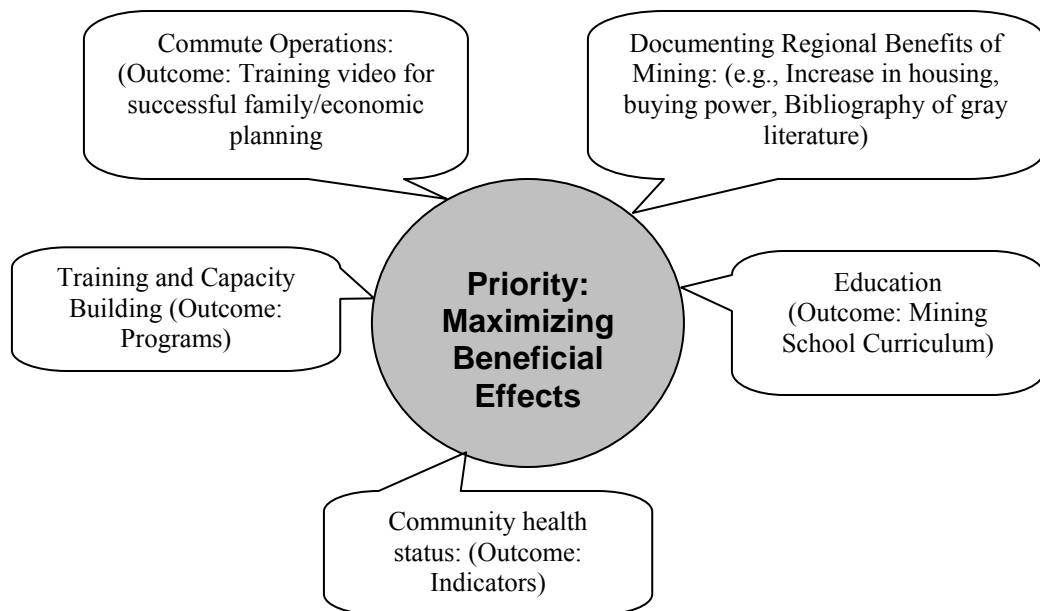


Figure 2.3 Chamber of Mines members research issues



The first meetings in December of 2003 included the CEO of Tâîchô Community Services Agency, Principal of Chief Jimmy Bruneau High School, Band Councilors and Director of Social Services. Meetings with the Yellowknives Dene included IBA Representatives and Chiefs. Meetings with the mines and Chamber of Mines were also held. Negotiating access to the mines occurred over a year, and involved discussions with many layers of staff. Ekati's relationships with communities are managed through the Environment, Human Resources and External Affairs Department, so relationships were required with Managers in each division. In Diavik, relationships were established through two subsequent Chief Executive Officers and with Community Relations. In the communities, relationships were negotiated with the leadership and contract work was done throughout the research (and continues) on these issues.

While I have not engaged substantively with the Métis population, there were times when Métis respondents were interviewed. Thus, when the thesis used the term "aboriginal", it refers primarily to the Dene experience. The Métis population is distinct, in that there has been a different co-existence of Métis with the settler population. In addition, this population is not a geographical community, as Métis are dispersed throughout the north. This population merits further research, although excellent ethnographic work was completed in advance of the first environmental assessment (Stevenson 1999).

This work has used the framework of action research to generate the research question. The research proposal was developed based on discussions, focusing on the common issue of the experience of the aboriginal worker in the diamond mines, and the impact on family and community. Throughout the research, other projects have been generated to attend to the multiple priorities identified in early meetings. Other issues, including training needs and community health, also were addressed through projects on community-based monitoring and the creation of a Trades and Technical School. One project involved a community-based monitoring program with staff of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, with funds from the Diavik Community Advisory Board. In another project, funds from the Mine Training Society and the Tâîchô Government were used to develop a Tâîchô Mine Training Centre, which has now successfully trained students at the Chief Jimmy Bruneau High School for the past two years. Even though early discussions were held with the mines, it took over a year to gain consent from both of the diamond mines to conduct the research. Before applying for institutional approval, the leaders of communities were invited to discuss the research. Groups have been informed about research progress throughout, as findings were periodically published or talks were made at local conferences (Gibson 2007a).



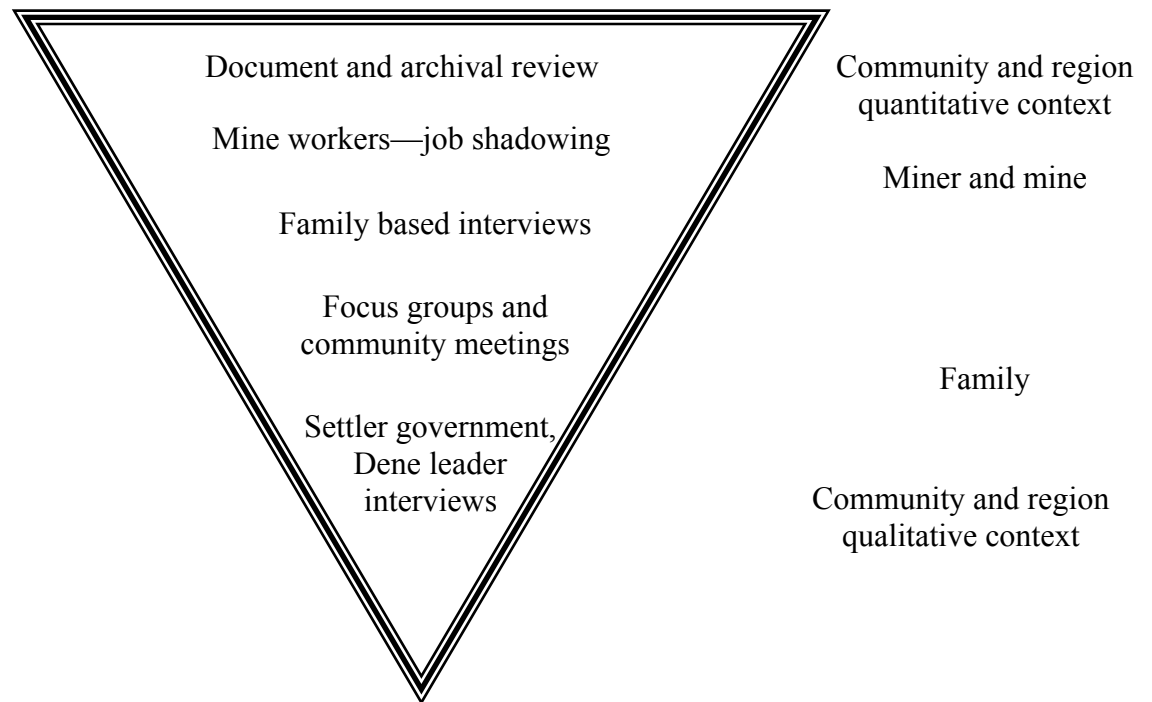
Dissertation research has a long life, often causing participants and observers to question the validity and usefulness of it. Early on in the research, questions about how the findings would emerge were asked. Since few of the people involved were likely to be readers of the dissertation, summaries of research were made available, as well as workshops based on findings. Two relevant publications have been published (Gibson and Klinck 2004; Gibson, Tsetta, McDevitt and Plotner 2004), and one workshop, summarized in a publication (Gibson 2007b), has been developed and run at one mine on the key findings from the mine based interviews. In addition, findings have been applied through serving as an advisor to the Tâîchô Government on non-renewable resource policy, as well as preparing for negotiations of new Impact and Benefit Agreements. It is through this ongoing provision of findings that the social license for research has been re-negotiated daily.

Consultation with aboriginal authorities and mines ensured relevancy of questions, as well as allowed the review of the methods, questions and approach of the study. The study was reviewed by the University Behavioural Research Board as well as the Aurora Research Institute, which licenses research in the NWT. The names of all people in the research have not been released, except with their permission or when they made statements in public meetings. Otherwise, the confidentiality and anonymity of participants has been maintained.

## 2.1 Methods

A multi-method research approach was chosen to describe the social, economic and political context of the region and the place of mining therein. Using the theoretical framework as a reference point, the study developed an ethnographic account of the integration of workers and their families into the mines. It investigated how people were involved in mines of the past as well as the present. The research included many methods aimed at different scales of analysis, as depicted in Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4 Methods of study



Corporate, government and community reports were continuously reviewed throughout the research. A Territorial Archive in Yellowknife at the Prince of Wales Museum held the records of previous mines, as well as the field notes, photos and papers of June Helm and Beryl Gillespie, both earlier anthropologists of the area. Only some areas of their files were open to the public. An archive of anthropological, social science and planning literature maintained by John B. Zoe, the Chief Negotiator of the Tâîchô Land Claim and Self Government Agreement, was also graciously made available. As well, the reports published by the mines to comply with their Socioeconomic Agreements and Environmental Agreements were reviewed. The GNWT publishes a *Communities and Diamonds* report (2007) summarizing trends in data on fourteen indicators related to community and regional well-being. These were all critical data sources, and the journey through many offices in the north surfaced other grey literature.

Workers from both the mines and spouses of workers were interviewed. The approach to interview access was different in each of the mines. In one mine, all the potential interviewees were identified, and letters were sent out requesting a meeting. Whoever responded to these letters was then interviewed and shadowed. In the other mine, two senior aboriginal staff helped to identify the interviews. These workers were then asked to identify other interviewees to generate new names (snowball sampling). Interviews were conducted on themes such as:

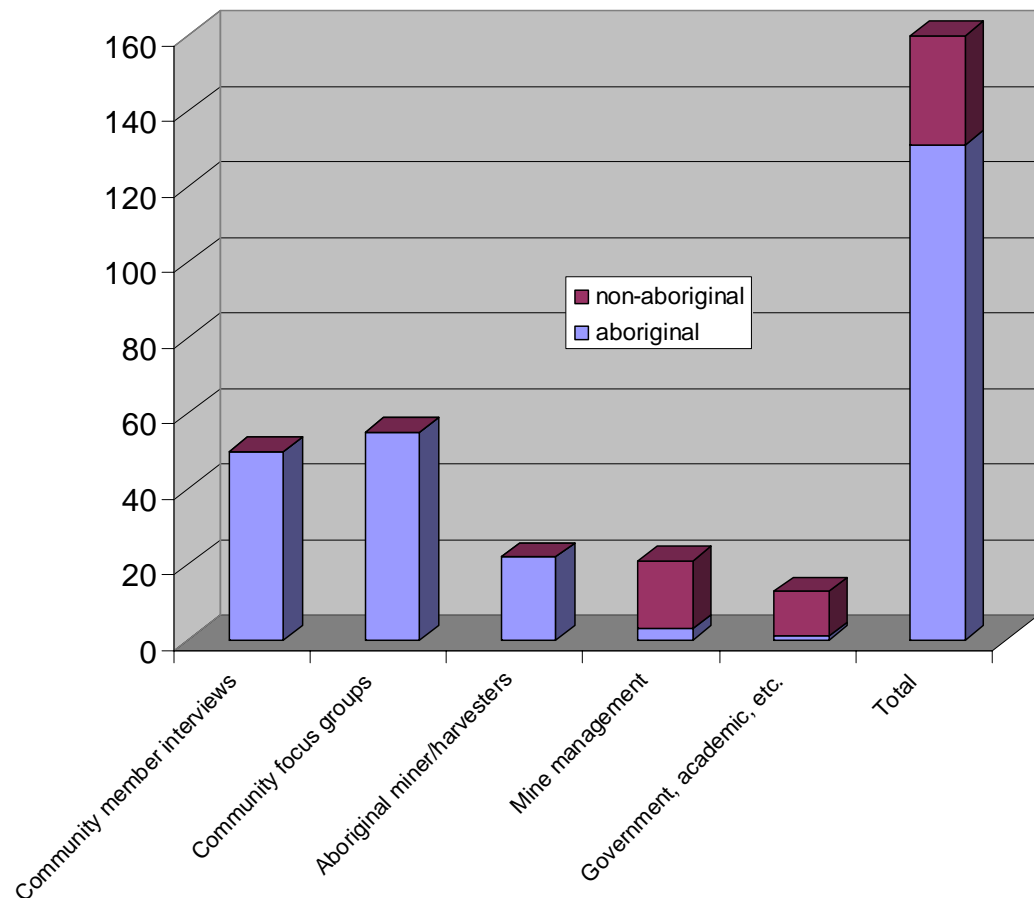
- ◇ How people succeed in the mines;
- ◇ Integration of the individual into the workforce;
- ◇ Support of the worker from home;
- ◇ Trust in leadership of the mines;
- ◇ Impact of changes on self, family and community;
- ◇ Experience of education both in and out of mine, and
- ◇ Training options and access.

Key informant interviews were also undertaken with government leaders and workers in aboriginal communities. Interviews at the mines also involved supervisors, senior level staff, CEOs and education providers. Table 2.1 and Figure 2.5 summarize some demographic and occupational details about the 161 interviews and focus group participants involved in the research. There are a few ways to represent the range of interviews that were conducted. In Table 2.1, the data is broken down by community or region and, for miner/harvesters, by gender. In Figure 2.5, the breakdown focuses on aboriginal status of participants.

Table 2.1 Interviews by community or region, N=161

	Male Miners	Female Miners	Interviews	Meetings	Government/academic	Mine management
Tâîc hô	6	3	31	32		
YKDFN	3	3	19	25		
Métis	3	4	1			
Other					12	19

Figure 2.5 Interviews by aboriginal status, N=161



Focus groups were held in each community with spouses, community leaders, and social service and education providers. These focus groups reviewed the impacts of the mines on individuals, families and services. In Bechokö, focus groups were held with spouses, miners, and social service and education providers. In Dettah and N'dilo, focus groups were held with spouses, social services providers, elders and education providers. A focus group was scheduled through the North Slave Métis, however there were no attendees.

By participating in and living at the mines for periods of time, workers were observed and interviewed in the workplace during the shift. Visits were made to Ekati four times in 2005 and 2006 and three visits were made to Diavik in 2005 and 2006. The interviews in the mines were conducted on shift with the worker in the site of work, as they were shadowed for at least four to eight hours, depending on their availability. This meant that interviews were often conducted in the machine shop with a worker, out in the haul truck going from the pit to the

waste dump continuously, in the shovel, or working in the sandwich line-up for hours on end. This approach proved to be very instructive. First, interviewees had hours during which the conversation could wind through many topics, as there was no pressure to complete the interview guide. Further, the duration allowed interviewees to get quite comfortable with me and open up about their personal realities at the mines and at home. Second, since they were not in a formal setting, but in a setting where they were the boss, they were at ease. Also, with no one listening, such as a supervisor or other employee, the employee was comfortable covering many subjects. Finally, it also gave a real feel for what work was like. The haul truck trip is made seventeen times in one day, without variation. The shovel operator stays within a block of twenty feet all day, continuously filling haul trucks. The sandwich line makes more than seven hundred sandwiches in one shift.

Surveys were originally anticipated in the communities, however at the time of research there were surveys on community wellness and mining being conducted by the GNWT Bureau of Statistics (2005b). The data set from this research proved to be very useful. A survey with YKDFN miners for a community based monitoring project was done (Gibson *et al.* 2003), but given that there are no comparable data sets, these data are not included here.

Throughout the research, data was collected in a wide variety of meetings, such as Chief and Council meetings, Annual Assembly, and health and social service meetings. Community meetings were also attended to identify the key community wellness criteria for both the Yellowknives Dene and the Tâîchô. These surfaced different expressions of what constitutes wellness, reflected on in chapter four.

## 2.2 Validating the research

The research findings have been verified in a number of ways. First, similar findings from the multiple data sets reinforced main themes. As the themes are encountered in the literature, the interviews and community meetings, they gain validity (Miles and Huberman 1994). Second, as ideas emerged from the research and were presented in workshops and conferences, feedback on the reliability of the findings was received. Presentations at northern conferences, radio interviews on CBC North (two occasions), and many meetings all served as opportunities to discuss the research findings in conferences and workshops. One of the radio interviews featured a call in show for half an hour, during which many miners/harvesters and spouses called in. Thirdly, by cross-referencing the empirical data with the theoretical framework, the findings were also confirmed.

To make sense of the research locally, key findings were applied in workshops in the mines. For example, the Ekati mine supported the revision of the core content and delivery of the Cross-Cultural workshop, something that is supposed to be delivered to all employees as they enter the mine (Gibson 2007a). Currently, training focuses outwards, typically giving a primer on the values and histories of Aboriginal communities, which helps individuals to understand the region they are working in but does not help to negotiate day-to-day interactions on the job site. Since the manager-employee relationship has been identified as the crucial interaction and negotiation that either promotes or hinders retention in the mine, the data was reviewed to find the top ten conflicts. Discussion of these top ten conflicts helped managers and workers to identify the core values, roles, and relationships at the root of conflict and discover alternative ways to manage difference. By carefully examining the values and beliefs that underlie interpersonal conflict through role playing and case studies, the manager and worker were able to identify strategies to solve daily conflict in the mines.

Another way in which findings were tested and communicated locally was through engagement in research and as a consultant. After the field work was completed, the Tâîchô requested consultation on the design of future Impact and Benefit Agreement negotiations. Analysis of an exploration firm (Fortune Minerals Inc.), inclusive of the feasibility study and its limitations, allowed for the development of a process and draft structure of an agreement. This practice through *praxis* forced the application of the most subtle and basic of findings emerging from this thesis. For example, models of Impact and Benefit Agreements were described as assimilating of aboriginal people, suggesting enculturation leads to strain in the relationship of the miner and the communities of the region (Gibson 2007b). In applying this thinking to a new agreement, new models or arrangements had to be suggested. This was probably the most difficult consultation based on the research—there were quite a few others, each of which required more than observation and criticism.

The effort to reduce researcher bias followed guidance of Miles and Huberman (1994), who suggest that someone who is in the field for too long can be taken over by the details and the case. This danger was averted with lengthy breaks from the field: for example a three month trip of analysis and writing in Griffith University, Australia was taken in 2006. A researcher can also sample non-representative informants, relying too heavily on elite informants. This source of bias was avoided with the length of stay in the field which led to the ability to reach an extremely varied group of informants. Also, the different sampling styles in the mines brought many different kinds of miners/harvesters into the research fold. A researcher can also draw

inference from non-representative events or processes, again leading to bias. The best guard against this was the extent of time in the field (now home) and exposure to many events. Thus, the change of guard in the mines was threefold in one mine, leading to observations about what did and didn't vary with successive CEOs. Another potential form of bias in this thesis is the close relationship with the communities. Work as a consultant was done with both communities as a consultant to the Yellowknives Dene, the Tâîchô Nation and Ekati diamond mine during the course of this fieldwork. Yet, a far greater time has been spent documenting the Tâîchô Cosmology, due to personal interest.

### 2.3 Analysis

Field notes, meeting notes, interviews and other data were reviewed and coded. As material was reviewed, a list of key emerging themes was developed. At the same time, another researcher read the same data, also coding independently (this process is known as inter-coder reliability). This served to generate two discrete coding sheets, which were then compared and discussed. A final list of codes was used to comb the data for trends and themes. After all the interviews were read, mapping of the relationships between variables on topics was done by both researchers. Within a month, four topic maps were generated, containing the main themes, impacts and benefits mentioned on a topic. From these topic maps, drafting of material for the central data chapters began.

### 3 HISTORY AND COSMOLOGY

Mining has had a powerful presence in the northern landscape and imagination since prospectors arrived in the north in the 1890s. Mining provided the central justification for the negotiation of Treaties 8 and 11 as the federal government laid claim to the region (Fumoleau 2004): the federal control devolved some services and programs to the Territories since 1967. The pressure for further transfer of rights and resources, often blind to the claims of self determination, has followed since on the heels of ten years of royalties from Treaty mining companies. Since the major diamond projects are located in areas that seem to be interstitial to different ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups, the arrival of the diamond mines provided new impetus to compete to mark territory and boundaries. Now, a geographic line has been drawn in the Mackenzie Valley circumscribing the impact of diamond mining to a number of communities with agreements. How did these particular communities gain the power to negotiate in a Territory where ten years previous there were no such opportunities? While this chapter explores this fluidity of identity and boundaries, it also seeks to locate regional groups in relationship to the mines, but most importantly to the history of the region: economic, social and political. It does this in the effort to understand how communities of the region responded to the processes of change: colonization, the changing modes of production and technologies, and the constant interaction and friction of groups.

Aboriginal history in the Mackenzie Valley is described as a series of key historic relationships between social groups, of which the present relationships of miners and communities are a part. Each relationship or new encounter generates the possibility of conflict, tension or friendship and requires the generation of codes, rules and agreements. The Tâîchô Cosmology, or history of the Tâîchô relationship to the earth and history, is separated into a series of eras, and finds movement in the initiation of relationships of newcomers, the negotiation of difference, and the resolution of difference through agreement-making. Upon encounter, for example, animals and humans warred until the culture hero Yamoozah traveled widely making agreements with predacious animals, and in some cases incorporated animals through marriage (as in a narrative of Yamôözha marrying a beaver). Although the Treaty mining companies expect a new relationship when they enter a region, they are often judged by the practices of previous prospector and mines. The possibility of radically new relationships of miners and communities, freed of some of the ghosts of the past, emerged in the 1990s to enter relationships with aboriginal neighbours.



While exchange literature often focuses on the nature of the gift and what it obliges, this history of exchanges described in this chapter focuses on the nature of social relations and how each set of relations is generative of practices and values. West's (2006) Melanesian work suggests "labour and services, as sets of actions, can (...) be seen in terms of exchange and social reproduction...(the Gimi) see their participation as being given in exchange for long-term social relationships that will bring them development" (47). The Tâîchô Cosmology reveals a series of social relations that continue to be engaged and re-engaged in each era. The Tâîchô pursue and honour historic relations within the context of the new relations with the Treaty mining companies: these historic relations are inclusive of their social relations with the land. These social relations are embedded in the land as history, through place names that refer to agreements made between animals and the Dene. Place naming, as practiced by the Tâîchô, establishes a relationship between culture and landscape. Each narrative of an era reflects the social, political, cosmological or economic history back to the Tâîchô citizen as they travel through the land. The place names of Môwhî Gogha Dê Nîîtâ'êe form the basis of a complex ethnogeography, where the physical world is transformed into a social geography in which culture and landscape are fused into a semiotic whole (Andrews 2004, 301). This chapter sets the context of historic mining and then reviews the history of the Tâîchô in the Mackenzie Valley.<sup>23</sup> The social relations of historic exchange and reciprocity must be understood in order to make sense of the social relations of the communities with the Treaty mining companies.

### 3.1 Of forts and mines

The fur trade was an economic force that triggered new relationships of reciprocity. These economic relationships of the fur trade were fundamentally different from those spurred by mining, as the former activity depended on constant hunting and intimate knowledge of the land and equitable relations of trade. Tâîchô elder Alexis Arrowmaker spoke to a Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples in 2004 of the nature of relations during the fur trade:

As an elder, I believe we do have to support one another. As Aboriginal people who live above the tree line where I come from, the community of Wekweètî, when the early explorers were out there, they survived with the help of our Aboriginal people. We gave them directions and, in return, they helped us with some equipment they brought along with them, and their expertise. In turn, we showed them where to go and how to survive on the land. That is how we

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<sup>23</sup> The history does not refer to the Yellowknives Dene or the Metis.

supported one another, and that is how we would like to see the senators support us — by giving some advice on how they think the future should go. (Canada 2004)

In this remark to the Senate, Arrowmaker suggests a reciprocity of goods for information critical to survival existed during the fur trade. He also invokes a reciprocal relationship with the Senators with the last phrase of his remark, suggesting the Senators will be able to offer critical information for the future.

Mining activity opened with prospectors moving north to surface northern metals and minerals for the colonial government. This economy had markedly less engagement with aboriginal people, except insofar as aboriginal people made lucky discoveries for prospectors or engaged in linked economies. Economic relationships, however, do not suffice to describe changing relationships of aboriginal people and new neighbours. A glance at a northern map reveals a land of water and rock. Given no arable land, the people of the region historically depended primarily on caribou and fish for diets and livelihoods, and with the rise of a commercial presence in the region in the 1800s, aboriginal groups transitioned into engagement with, and reliance on, the fur trade. A northern map of the ten forts established through the region reveals one constant: the Deh Cho (Mackenzie River) is the backbone of commerce and trade. Each of the forts, with the exception of Fort Rae, is located on this river or on the Slave, which flows into the NWT's Great Slave Lake. With the fur trade, most groups became involved in the provision of furs to the traders or as traders. Specific roles and relationships emerged as a result of proximity to trade points, and groups shifted into these new relationships with the outside economy. The Dogrib traded in four different forts over time, beginning with the opening of Fort Resolution (1786-1819), and contiguously at Fort Simpson (1803-1822) and Fort Norman (1810-1851) (Usher 1971). It was not until 1852 that Old Fort Rae was established, providing a wholly Dogrib point of trade (Helm 2000). The Chipewyan, on the other hand, traded at Fort Resolution (overlapping with the Dogrib) and at Fort Smith, which opened in 1874.

Mining has provided a main incentive for colonial movement to the north. The presumed abundance of metals and minerals prodded the colonial government to extend its reach “north of 60”, establishing a central economic force for the Northwest Territories. With its prominence in the economy, imagination and landscape, it has affected indigenous lifeworlds. The Indian Commissioner for the NWT in 1899 wrote “in view of the reported mining development in the Great Slave Lake Region it is important that a treaty should be extended to embrace that country

if at all possible” (in Fumoleau 2004, 53). In 1929-30, 640 mineral claims were staked at Pine Point on the south shore of Great Slave Lake (Fumoleau 2004, 353). Gilbert Labine flew to Great Bear Lake and discovered pitch-blende in 1931, and gold was discovered in Yellowknife in 1933 (Fumoleau 2004). Mining brought a new population north, increasing the population due to in-migration by 600% from 1941 to 1971 (Helm 2000). The value of fur production was exceeded by gold revenue for the first time in 1939. Jellies summarizes the rent from the six mining projects in the NWT between 1970 and 1974, suggesting the present value of rent in 1975 was \$195 million, and that of this total, the “mining companies retained \$102.5 million, or 52.6 per cent, in the form of excess profit, while the federal government received \$77.4 million, or 39.5 per cent, from taxes, and \$15.1 million, or 7.8 per cent, from royalties (1977, 64).

Mining has also been the primary reason for many areas being unavailable to land selection during land claims withdrawals negotiations; land withdrawals<sup>24</sup> in both the Tłı̨chǫ and Akaitcho land claims have had areas of land grandfathered out of the possible lands for withdrawal due to pre-existing mineral interests. For example, the claims of Diavik, Ekati, De Beers and Fortune Minerals were all made prior to the Tłı̨chǫ land withdrawal that was agreed to in the Agreement in Principle (signed in 2002), thereby removing these blocks of land from possible negotiations. Once lands are withdrawn, they are protected from any new mineral claims being entered.

The process of making a mineral claim has held great significance to aboriginal communities. Early images of mining are largely negative, with prospectors branded as a group of itinerant loners who sought minerals without consent of the communities, as revealed by this elder in an interview: “Before the mines opened, before nothing was done, they would just go ahead with the exploration and mines. But now it is going to be different” (April 5, 2005). Elders speak of how the first sign of a mine or a prospector has often been as a result of stumbling across tents and camps in the bush.

The mineral policy of the federal government has afforded a system that gives first land use priority to mineral claims (Bankes and Sharvit 1999). The free entry system is the system that prevails in the NWT, guided by the *Canada Mining Regulations*. These regulations apply to Crown lands and require individuals or companies laying mineral claims to have a valid

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<sup>24</sup> The effect of land withdrawals is to withdraw lands from disposition of surface and subsurface rights so that for the time they are withdrawn: no new sale or lease of land will be executed; no new mining claims are recorded, except where those claims were located prior to the date of withdrawal, and no new permits, licenses or leases are granted.

prospector's license.<sup>25</sup> Prospectors are able to stake an area, and then register a claim with the Mining Recorder in January of each year. The free miner has access to any and all private and public land except where the lands are not owned by the Crown, where lands have been withdrawn from land use (e.g., heritage areas, parks, etc.), or where there has been a withdrawal by ministerial order. Mineral claims can be registered with the Mining Recorder for a fee, and a lease can be issued for 21 years, with a yearly payment of \$1/acre. To register claims at the Yellowknife offices, people are often hired to stand as "place holders"; these individuals sit outside of the mining recorders offices for weeks in advance of the office opening simply to keep the prospector's priority in line.<sup>26</sup> A validly staked claim permits the prospector to enter the land and explore for minerals. Once a claim is staked and recorded, work has to be performed each year to maintain the claim, such as drilling, geological, geochemical or geophysical work and construction roads or airstrips to provide access to the claim. The claim must be renewed after a two-year period. If a significant mineral deposit is discovered, the proponent can seek a mineral lease, which offers greater long term stability to the proponent (Campbell 2004).

This system of prospecting created the architecture for what occurred when the first kimberlite pipes were found and the land was staked, spurring what was locally termed the "helicopter wars" of the 1990s. Modern signs of prospecting arrived with the first diamond find in the Lac de Gras region. The significance of the free entry system lies in the fact that aboriginal peoples with an existing aboriginal title may not refuse entry to prospectors or prevent them from carrying out mineral activities on aboriginal lands (Bankes and Sharvit 1999). At the time of the staking rush, which dwarfed even the gold rush in the Klondike, land claims by the Tâîchô and Akaitcho had not been launched, effectively allowing access to all traditional territory to prospectors. The resulting mineral claims were then given priority and unavailable to the Tâîchô or Akaitcho when land claims were subsequently re-entered.

Akaitcho and Tâîchô elders speak of a lack of engagement with the industry. The Colomac mine was one of the only mines to hire a significant number of Tâîchô people in the north, although the Port Radium uranium mine near Great Bear Lake hired ore carriers among the Sahtu Dene. Among the Dene, a common perspective is that mines of the mid-twentieth century have left nothing but scars on the land, with the Colomac mine leaving cyanide leaks

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<sup>25</sup> Section 7-10, CMR (1516) 2004 of the *Canada Mining Regulations*.

<sup>26</sup> The same individuals will be seen on the Yellowknife street in front of the mining recorder's office sitting in lawn chairs, bundled up to withstand the cold, and reading books or entertaining themselves with games. I once went by for one week and daily talked with a place holder who was reading *Guns, Germs and Steel* to find out what he thought of the book.

from the tailings ponds, and Giant Mine abandoning 270,000 tonnes of toxic arsenic trioxide dust underground. A Tâîchô elder reflected on runoff from the mines:

There was a mine site at Discovery Mine and another in Gordon lake area, and in those mine sites, and in the winter time it melts, and flows to Yellowknife, so that should be cleaned up right away. Something should be done about it right away, instead of abandoning it, like they have abandoned a lot of old mines. (Tâîchô elder interview, April 5, 2005)

A Yellowknives Dene elder reflected on the legacy of mines, arguing that the environmental and public health impacts continue, even as the aboriginal communities received no royalties and were rarely employed:

We know that ever since that prospector and other people came around working at that mine, I never recall that native people work at that site, it is only white people that have been working at that site. And they ruined that whole area around the mines, and not till today that we got a sense of the benefit or compensation from that mine. We know that the Giant mine shut down completely, but I don't know about the Con mine. I don't know about that. ... not once did we get royalty for a mine that is in just our backyard, next to our house that big operation. I don't know what some of the elders think, but from my point of view, it looks like they stole some money from us and all the money they made went down back south and it never went to us. That is how I feel. That arsenic that is being stored underground they say they are monitoring it right now, but what about if the money runs out from the government, and what will happen if there is no more money. (April 19, 2005)

In interviews with only eight Tâîchô and Yellowknives Dene elders, 27 closed or abandoned mine or exploration sites were named, most of which have not been reclaimed adequately or at all. These include: Rae Rock, Colomac, Giant, Discovery, Neegus, Ptarmigan, Pine Point, Canadian Zinc, Nanisivik and others. Legat reports that “between 1931 and 1947, twenty mines within Tâîchô nêêk'ê were producing gold, silver, uranium, copper, tungsten and tantalum, and another seven were in operation between 1950 and 1982” (Legat 2007, 177). The federal government now holds responsibility for reclamation for many abandoned properties. Of 190 properties listed on the federal contaminated sites inventory, 116 are located in the NWT. With a \$3.5 billion federal liability for federal contaminated sites, 60% of this fund is related to sites in the north (Keller 2005).

In interviews, elders describe multiple impacts of these mines on the land, raising concerns for animals, plants and water. They worried that animals will consume contaminated plants, drink poisonous water, or break a leg. A Tâîchô elder noted that waste dumps and rock birms are a hazard for caribou: “We have seen caribou limping; that is something we have never

seen before” (Interview, April 5, 2005). Elders engage frequently with Treaty mining companies, suggesting management options for animal protection include diversionary tactics and fencing, as well as smoothing waste rock piles. When it comes to vegetation, there is a range of opinions about what might be done, including using moss to re-vegetate, planting to bring trees back, and using moss and seeds together. Water is also of great concern to elders. In particular they observe run off from mines, noting that water and fish smell different. They are aware that contamination spreads in water—and suggest that it can travel far, into all the streams and rivers. Elders are also concerned for the spirits that live in the land, and one elder described how blasting can affect or change the location of the spirit altogether.

The elder says that there is a place ... There used to be some sort of a whirlpool there, there was some sort of a water creature ... People didn't use to go through that channel, because it is like a channel and people don't travel through there. But now since they have been blasting the rocks, they have driven that water creature away from that area. It is a sacred area; there are two places like that... The spirit it doesn't like the sound. So it is gone now. That is the spirit in the rock, but me I call it water creatures, but it is in the rock. (Interview, April 10, 2005)

Legat (2007, 106) reflects on this same issue: “from the perspective of these elders, rock and stones have spirit, but to maintain their spirit they require place. Similarly, water and wind beings have spirit and their own place within the *dè* [the land], and should be shown respect if life is to remain balanced and in harmony”. One management strategy elders suggest in areas where there is mining is to pay the land for safe passage of animals and humans.

Historic mining thus appears to have engaged very little with the Dene economy. Where the fur-based economy provided a livelihood, goods, and relationships of mutuality, the mining economy parachuted geologists in to make “finds” without ever acknowledging locals, visiting, engaging people in employment or agreements. The aboriginal “claims” to the land were subservient to prospectors “claims” to minerals, essentially allowing an ideology of development first, which is fiercely defended by the mining industry. The architecture of this ethic of non-engagement was birthed by a mineral policy that encouraged this itinerant geologist to stake, lay mineral claims and make way for the modern mine.

The framework continues to be the source of friction today. An environmental assessment decision of a uranium exploration development suggested:

To reduce the potential for conflict between the duty to consult when aboriginal rights are infringed by mineral exploration and development and the free-entry system set out in the Canada Mining Regulations, the Government of Canada should adapt and apply the prospecting permit process to areas in the Akaitcho Territory, particularly in the Thelon Basin, in order to provide notice and ensure

opportunities for consultation with aboriginal users of that area, before mineral interests are granted. (MVEIRB 2007, 42)

This suggestion was made due to the perception that communities can be completely unaware of a staking rush, due to the exemption of prospecting activities from the requirement of a land use permit by the Canada Mining Regulations framework (combined with the Mackenzie Valley Land Use Regulations). In this case, the community of Áutsel K'e was unaware of a 2002 staking rush in their territory, just as the Tâîchô and Akaitcho communities were unaware of the extent of the 1996 staking rush following the initial discovery of diamonds.

### 3.2 The Tâîchô Cosmology and Dene History in the Mackenzie Valley

While these two economies, the fur-trade and mining, provided the central justification for the settler economy, aboriginal histories surface narratives of history that offer distinct explorations of change and history. An aboriginal Cosmology (Tâîchô) describes history as a series of eras driven forward by the negotiation and resolution of conflict through incorporation of outsiders as kin or through agreement making. John B. Zoe, an indigenous Tâîchô specialist (as well as the Chief Negotiator for the land claims and self government agreement and the current Tâîchô Executive Officer), classifies history according to agreements and Treaties made over time. The “Tâîchô Cosmology” defines distinct eras, suggesting a pivotal relationship forms the backbone of each era. The reconciliation of the relationship, through agreement or Treaty, is the key driver of the era. The Tâîchô Cosmology, described by Zoe after long work with Tâîchô elders, is separated into distinct eras, with external relationships serving as the driving force of change. In 2005, as the Senate Subcommittee on Aboriginal Peoples reviewed Bill C-14, which was to give effect to a land claims and self government agreement among the Tâîchô, the GNWT and the federal government, John B. Zoe gave a speech to orient a Cabinet Committee members to the meaning of the current agreement. In the speech, Zoe signals the centrality of land as a repository of history as captured through place names and the continuing significance of agreements, of which a modern land claim agreement is only the latest:

In the Tâîchô world, we did not have a written language but we had an oral history that was documented on the lands. A past event has a marker in the form of a place name that describes the event of the time. We know from oral history and the place names that *the Tâîchô agreement is not the only agreement that we have had. It is an extension of earlier agreements.* From the place names and from what we are told and shown by the Elders, one of the first agreements that

we had was with the animals that we rely on in order to coexist. To neutralize our passing on those lands we make offerings to the land so that those animals will continue to sustain us in the environment to which we are accustomed. We rely on these principles to make our case for environmental assessments; we have the responsibility to protect the environment and to ensure that the animals are protected to sustain their continuance. It is those principles that we use in a modern world and in modern management. (Zoe 2005, emphasis added)

Each era of the Cosmology consists of a pivotal relationship that is stressed by some force: for example, in one era large animals began to predate on humans and in another a neighbouring aboriginal group warred with the Tâîchô. Pivotal relationships include those with animals, neighbours, settlers, and the self. The Cosmology illustrates how outsider histories can underestimate the influence of the time before the settlers: as a group origin narrative, it locates the emergence of social relations with the settlers only in the third era. The stories anchor the group to the landscape, placing them firmly in the land through historic placenames, and telling of the social relations that have emerged with animals, neighbours and outsiders (Andrews 2004). Akin to other oral traditions, these stories follow specific ancestors, documenting their travels through the land (West 2006). The Tâîchô Cosmology<sup>27</sup> is written of here to provide a synthesis of Tâîchô history, and to provide a counterpoint to the written history of anthropologists (Helm 2000), historians and missionaries (Fumoleau 2004). There are many stories and elements of the Cosmology that overlap with other groups (for example Yamôözha is also known as Yamoria in other regions (Andrews 2004), however this history is specific to the Tâîchô.

Each era is marked by the resolution of the conflict through agreement making, pledging the parties to co-existence and reciprocity. Conflicts are transformed as the newcomer (be they aboriginal neighbour, settler society or Treaty mining company) is incorporated, sometimes as kin and always through an agreement. For example, in one era, the warring of animals and humans is settled by a peacemaker in sites that remain spiritually significant. In this same era, the peacemaker himself incorporates a key animal, the beaver, through marriage. Old Fort Rae (called Nîhsîh Kô , ) was built by Yamôözha's beaver wife, as referred to in the Cosmology.<sup>28</sup> This pattern of resolution involves the movement from conflict to friendship (Levi-Strauss 1949).

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<sup>27</sup> John B. Zoe holds and shares the gift of this Cosmology after years of work with the elders. It is a special responsibility. I have been honoured to share in understanding and documenting the gift of this Cosmology.

<sup>28</sup> The Development Corporation office in Rae is now built in the shape of a beaver dam as a marker and memory of this story of the alliance of Yamoozah with the beaver.



Each agreement involves mutual exchange and is generative of distinctive values, principles and rules. As Yamôözha made peace with animals, new close relationships were established. This relationship generated the values of preservation, protection and respect among these groups. These values are acted on through practices, such as paying the land. An elder tells of how this practice enacts the values of respect and reciprocity between animals and humans: “we have to respect that place, even when we go to other places, we pay to the land. We have to respect that place. For us to go through that place to travel through the land, not only for us but for the animals to go through” (April 5, 2005). The act regenerates the spirit of past agreement.

This Cosmology is literally “written into the land” (Andrews, Zoe and Herter 1998). In his speech to the Cabinet Committee, Zoe signals the meaning of land as a repository for historical knowledge. Place names suggest the continuity of the people in the land, serve to anchor historical events to distinct locations, and signify use of the land. Zoe also refers to the continuity of agreement making: place names make reference to multiple agreements over centuries.

Each agreement continues to be ratified, as Zoe notes, and each agreement is extended through current time, suggesting old principles are incorporated into modern management. For example, the act of “paying the land” recognizes the mutuality of animals and people. With the offering, the people re-negotiate passage safely through the land, and the animals offer themselves for sustenance and relationship. Zoe’s Senate speech was forward looking, comparing the act of reciprocity of making an offering to the land to the act of participating in environmental assessment. That people continually make offerings, of their time and knowledge and through the symbolic act of “paying the land”, illustrates the continual faith to the agreement. Zoe comments that the new agreements are “extensions” of old agreements, signaling the continuity of cultural practice and values. One mine displays a photo of two elders paying the land when it was first broken to build a dike for the mine; however both mines infrequently engage elders in this practice.

The agreements set the tone and frame for the relationship of Tâîchô to others and to the land. The Tâîchô Cosmology emphasizes the transformation of relationships; other work documenting history concerns missionization, Treaties and disease (Fumoleau 2004; Petitot 1891), fur trade economies (Asch 1977; Russell 1898), treaty making, schooling and political consciousness (Helm 2000). The Cosmology describes the social relations with animals, the warriors of Akaitcho (a neighbouring aboriginal band), and the settler society. Principles generated in each agreement (as often captured in place names, songs, stories and dances)

continue to be practiced through the repetition of the story, song or in the event of a dance. A hybrid account of history is presented here, inclusive of the Tâîchô Cosmology, but also of the accounts of political economists, anthropologists, missionaries and explorers.

Anthropological work by June Helm with the Tâîchô classifies history into a series of stages, organized primarily by the nature of contact change due to European goods, governance and economies (2000).

### 3.2.1 Floating Time

Pre-contact time, for which there are no contemporaneous European records, teaches Tâîchô people of the sameness of humans and animals, reminding the listener that they once spoke the same language. With one language spoken among all, the animals shifted forms, met and danced.

So that we know that the names were the same and they had the same language and they told stories, a lot of them told stories and they also had songs and they also danced way back then. But you never heard anything about, we know they were using land, we just know that they were using land but they never mentioned any place names in those stories. None of those stories say well this story happened right there or it happened over there, it's just floating. We can't really put a time frame on it... So this is a floating time where you can't really put a timeframe on it. But this is also the period where the animals got together to determine what they would want to be. Then that's where the stories of the raven handing out the feathers so that whatever animal that wanted to be, talking to the wind, and then there's the hunter, the moose hunter that wanted to be a trout so he took all his tools and all his moose parts and put it into his head and went into the water. And then there are a lot of these other animal stories of the weasel. (Zoe 2006)

While there are no stories of conflict from this era, the ground was set for the battles of the next era. The story of the grebe, Nöhtâ, is pivotal to this era, as it marks the time when animals met to dance and choose their forms. As they waited for Nöhtâ to arrive, they danced until Nöhtâ arrived to end the dance with a song that is sung to this day. "We still sing that song at the tea dance to this day. And I'm sure our grandfathers danced to that song at Old Fort Rae. I'm talking about a long time ago when Nöhtâ came up with this song" (Black n.d.). Nöhtâ danced until he was tired, then lay down and everyone danced on his feet until they were flat. The song, 'My footprints will show and everyone will copy me' (Translated by Philip Rabesca 2006) is sung at tea dances. When this era is invoked, Tâîchô people are reminded of the reciprocity they have with animals, the need to understand the animal spirits, and the common community of people

and animals. Signifiers of this continuity lie in the family names that continue to be used (i.e., Marten, Blackduck, etc.), their recognition in rituals, repetition of stories, and practice of songs and dances about these key cosmological figures. Values are taught through these practices. For example, as a story of Raven is recounted, the Tâîchô listener learns about the depth and nature of grieving a death. The individual is instructed, through the story, that to grieve for too long will cause one to lose hope.

### 3.2.2 Coexistence (pre-contact)

During this time, relationships and rules of respect were established between people and animals (Zoe 2006). This period is marked by stories of animals and humans changing forms and a peace making effort with the animals after great conflict. As the animals chose forms, conflict arose as the large animals, such as eagles, became more aggressive towards humans. Harmony was restored by the great leader Yamôözha<sup>29</sup>, who is revered for delivering peace to human-animal relations. This time of conflict marks the first time animals and people separated:

Yamôözha came around to get rid of all the larger animals and made the younger ones promise not to eat people anymore, and he gave them something else to do. One of them, the eagle, will now go fishing and become a fisherman. So we know what is in our area because we were in a period where animals and people can still switch places. Yamôözha took a wife and that wife was really a beaver but she was a person until her feet got wet and then she turned back into a beaver. And so during the chase to get her back, there are some places that Yamôözha stopped at (Zoe 2006).

As Yamôözha made peace with different animals, including beavers, eagles, wolverines, owls and dinosaurs, rituals of mutual respect were generated. Through this era, the Dene learned about how to live well with animals, focusing on the rituals of life, death, relationships and celebration. Primary teachings from this time include the knowledge of: proper relations with animals; songs, rituals and medicines essential for healing; obedience to laws; the language, and knowing history through visiting the sites of historic events. The places that Yamôözha stopped are written on the land and to visit the site of the interaction with the right person is to know the history of this era. Each place this earliest Dene lawmaker stopped has since become a landmark to the peacemaking efforts, as noted through many cosmological stories of time. Many rules of co-existence are still practiced and observed today, such as the paying the land. Legat

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<sup>29</sup> Born from the cleft of a caribou hoof, this leader and his brother were raised by an adoptive grandfather. Yamôözha is known as one of the great leaders who drew on medicine power (Legat 2007).

(2007) quotes an Elder, Jean Wetrade, as he tells the story of this great leader and his motivations:

Yamôözha wanted order within the dè. There had been too much conflict and the people did not know how to act or who they were. It was Yamôözha who told the people and animals where they should live and what they could use. Yamôözha was a great yahbahti [leader]. He is responsible for order in the dè, and responsible for the laws and knowledge for cooperating in order to co-exist. All beings know these laws and knowledge; animals know when to make themselves available to humans and humans know how to treat what they use within the dè. Because the laws are clear everyone knows when laws are broken. Before the brothers gave all beings laws, all beings were the same, they were all like people, Yamôözha is the reason only some beings can still change into something else. (67)

For example, “muskeg rock mountain” (tso kwe) marks a historic location for young men who fast at puberty to seek visions and power. This practice is differently actualized now, as in the spring of 2007 when John B. Zoe suggested that troubled Tâîchô youth be taken together to “musket rock mountain” for healing and visions. The rules generated in this era of Coexistence also form the basis for social relationships. By “paying the land”, an individual asks permission of animals for safe passage, invoking this Agreement and noting the reciprocity of the animals and humans.

### 3.2.3 Respect/incipient contact (1800-1850)

Peace was made amongst the Tâîchô and Yellowknife Indians after years of hostilities, and a new relationship of solidarity and friendship was enacted in a three day dance that marked the settlement of this historic agreement. This era is characterized by first contact with white people (Franklin 1823). With the introduction of European goods and guns and the possibility of the fur trade economy, friction arose between aboriginal groups. Helm suggests that the Yellowknife Indians became traders as early as 1800, whereas the Tâîchô were geographically isolated from “the generally easy trade contact afforded the neighbouring peoples of the Upper Mackenzie drainage by 1820” (2000, 113). The retreat of the Tâîchô from the river northward and away from easy river access may explain this isolation, as the Tâîchô were displaced by Yellowknife aggression during the 1820s into the “area of refuge”, now a protected area under the Tâîchô land claim (Zoe 2006). Franklin (1828) documented his relationship with the Yellowknife Indians, suggesting they emerged as middlemen, guides and traders for Europeans. Akaitcho, the leader of the Yellowknife Indians, led 190 Chipewyan

speakers and guided Franklin and Back at various times and even saved the lives of Franklin and his men at their base in Fort Enterprise.<sup>30</sup> In 1821, when the Northwest Company and Hudson's Bay merged, Fort Providence was closed (1823), and Akaitcho's band had to travel further for trade to Fort Resolution.

The Tâîchô are first written of by Hearne, as he made note of the "Copper Indians" (Yellowknife Indians) and a few "Dogribs" (Hearne 1911). Franklin notes the adversarial relationship of the Dogribs and the Yellowknife Indians: "as the Copper (Yellowknife) Indians generally pillage them of their women and furs when they meet, they endeavour to avoid them, and visit their ancient quarters on the barren grounds only by stealth" (Franklin 1823, 2: 80-83, in Helm, 1972, 294). Helm and Gillespie write, "Dogrib tradition stresses that the Dogribs were 'friends to everyone,' (1981, 15). In 1825, the Dogrib and Yellowknife Indians made peace (Helm 1972). The story of the Peace Treaty between the two tribe leaders, Edzo and Akaitcho, is told here by John B. Zoe (2006).

After living under the threat of attack, Edzo who thought only of peace, finally decided to confront the warring tribe. When he got to the camp of the enemy, Edzo talked with his sister, who was married to K'âtehwhii. Together they made a plan for Edzo to enter the camp. The next day, Edzo and his brothers entered the camp. They used their power to control things, such as the enemies' minds, and the metal in the camp. It is said that when Edzo spoke of peace, his words were so strong that the trees started to shake and they cracked. Finally, Akaitcho agreed with Edzo and peace was made. The agreement was celebrated with a dance of three days. It is to this day that the Tâîchô people live under the nàowo of Edzo, which is to live peacefully with neighbours.

So here you have Edzo period (which is) about having respect for another, other aboriginal groups. We know that Edzo created the law of respect for other aboriginal groups.

This narrative is also documented by Helm, through the testimonies of four informants from 1967-1974.<sup>31</sup> Helm and Gillespie (1981) suggest this historic event is the second most popular historic narrative, next to the Slave Woman, a tale shared with the Chipewyan. Key to this narrative's endurance is the power of Edzo's oratory: it was the great speech of Edzo that sealed the peace, and in one rendering of the story, Edzo's words caused trees to bend and Akaitcho to cry (Naedzo in Helm and Gillespie 1981). Dance serves as the marker of

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<sup>30</sup> This illustrates the point that the fur trade involved reciprocity. The Yellowknife Indians received goods, guns and funds, while Franklin and his men were given knowledge of the place that kept them safe and allowed them to survive. This relationship is reflected on by Michael Asch (2007), who suggests that this reciprocity ought to be reinvented in modernity, as the relationship of Older Brother to Younger Brother. The Older Brother has knowledge systems about the land that are critical to living well in the land, knowledge that kept Franklin and his men alive.

<sup>31</sup> These people are Johnny Huskey, Pierre Mantla, Joseph Naedzo, and Vital Thomas.

reconciliation between the groups, as the peace treaty concluded with a three day dance. The marks from the dance in the “fragile moss and lichen carpet of the edge-of-the-woods country” (Helm and Gillespie 1981, 23) may still be seen there today, in the form of a great circle beaten by the dancers.<sup>32</sup> The circle, in much literature, symbolizes the “oneness of the First Nations people with the creator and the spiritual, social, and political institutions of the First Nations. It is at once a statement of allegiance, of loyalty, fidelity, and unity by both nations and its peoples” (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 14). The popularity of this narrative lives on, with Tâîchô informants throughout this research referring to the peace agreement, the abuse suffered at the hands of Akaitcho, and the present day ramifications of that relationship. Akaitcho and his warriors were greatly feared, causing the Tâîchô to leave their communities and retreat into the area of refuge. This area is now a protected area under the Tâîchô land claims agreement and has significant cultural importance as a sacred place. The legendary peace-making of these groups continues to be invoked in the land claims discussion with the federal government and in federal court. For example, in 2002 the Akaitcho Treaty 8 Government launched a court case against the Tâîchô and the federal government, in an attempt to defend the creation of a boundary amongst these neighbours. According to Tâîchô renditions of this peace agreement, the leaders agreed to share the land (Zoe 2002), without reference to boundaries.

### 3.2.4 Collective/contact traditional era (1850-1921)

Helm (2000) marks the opening of this period with the establishment of an enduring trading fort in Old Fort Rae, while Zoe marks this period as a time of Tâîchô unity (2005) in response to the need to trade; both note the “establishment of peaceable relations between Indian and white” (Helm 2000, 111). This achievement, Tâîchô unity, marks the beginning of a constant theme of Tâîchô history: unity of the population builds collective strength. This idea is reflected on by Zoe:

We have place names to describe how those agreements came to be. It is all written onto the landscape. We also know that the early fur trade enhanced this agreement. Right across Canada, early contact with the Aboriginal groups always involved the pillaging of the next group. That was taken care of when, after the peace treaties, the Tâîchô people organized themselves under trading chiefs whereby the trade was done on a collective basis. That gave far more bargaining clout to our group. In a sense, we approached early trade on a business basis such

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<sup>32</sup> According to Territorial Archaeologist, Tom Andrews, the circle can only be seen if the witness is there with a member of both groups. If a witness is there only with a Tâîchô person, then the circle will not reveal itself (Personal communication, April 5, 2005).

that we harvested, collected and traded on our own behalf. Our culture has adapted to that lifestyle of the time. (Zoe 2005)

Certainly, the trading post and the mission were the two new installations in the lands during this period. Some groups benefited from producing food for the posts, such as the Dogrib who provided caribou meat (Russell 1898). Helm suggested the “missionization of the Dogrib was essentially completed within a decade” after the first 139 children were baptized in 1859 (1972, 294)<sup>33</sup>, and she concludes that by 1900 all except the most isolated Athapaskan groups of the subarctic were Christian (2000). Further north, Asch (1984) suggests a period of 50 years as likely for missionization of the Slavey.

While exchange was completed at Fort Providence by the Dogrib until it closed in 1823, the Dogrib then hauled provisions and furs to Fort Simpson until Fort Rae was established in 1852 (Helm 1972). The fur trade, as noted earlier, was marked by exchange and mutuality of settlers and aboriginal populations: both populations gave and received quite different but invaluable things: task changing European goods were returned in the form of furs, and importantly, life saving information and skill. The site of this exchange, the fort, also became the location for a tribal rendezvous, which ensued for the Tãîchô at Fort Rae at Christmas, Easter time, and in June (Helm 1972). Families came together to bring caribou meat and fur to the Fort, which became a lead in the trade of musk-ox robes (Russell 1898). Helm (1972) refers to this period as un-traumatic. Zoe (2006) suggests:

So then you get into this fur trade era and that was the collective period. Collective means that we do it together, we do it as one. And we not only do it as one but we have a leader that does the same thing. The fur trade brought people together yearly at the forts to trade furs and meet with the ek’aàwi (the Hudson Bay traders). The ek’aàwi built their stone chimneys, still seen in the communities, where people would go into meet them. As we approached a fort, we would shoot bullets up into the air to announce our arrival. On arrival, a dance would always happen and tea would be drunk. This is the start of the tea dance. Through trade, we got good fishnets, bullets and knives. In this period, we began to explore the area more and names of people began to appear on the land.

As the fur trade was introduced, the regional economy was transformed from what Asch calls a “total economy”<sup>34</sup> to one reliant on subsistence and the use of externally produced goods exchanged for furs. Asch suggests this shift “appears to have created no major changes in the

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<sup>33</sup> Helm’s work is based on Petitot (1891).

<sup>34</sup> The regional economy of the Dene was “a total economy both in the sense of production and circulation of goods. The people of the region were themselves wholly responsible for their own survival. They achieved this end by organizing themselves into self-sufficient local groups within which production and distribution were collective activities” (Asch 1977, 49).

internal dynamics of production and circulation within the native economy” (Asch 1977, 52). Still, this new reliance on external goods created a dependency which was unmarked as long as fur trade prices were high (Cox 1987). This era is characterized by the unification of the Tâîchô, the arrival of the first missionaries (1859), and the establishment of Fort Rae. Tea dances<sup>35</sup> became so named during this era, although the dance has much longer history. While these forces of impact were primarily economic and religious, political change and increasing federal administration were the dominant forces marking the next era.

### 3.2.5 Representative/contact (1921-1990)

The name of this era, “Representative”, marks the first time that one individual was chosen to speak for the collective: this shift in political representation was made in response to federal requests of a single negotiator for Treaty. The date of Treaty signing for individual groups and federal policies of assimilation have since caused great dissension amongst groups, severing once peaceful relations made between Akaitcho and the Edzo. The forces of change from this period incurred increasing control over aboriginal lives by the federal government, with treaty signing, the continuing experience of disease, and forced residential schooling.

When Canada’s Treaty Commissioners requested a spokesperson for each of the areas where Treaties were to be negotiated, they spurred the first shift in governance for these hunting and trading economies. Helm (2000) shows the hunting task group, which mobilized direct kin, to be the primary organizing group of the “pre-Treaty” Tâîchô Dene. This task group joined together to complete an activity, and then dissolved upon the completion through a season. Membership was fluid and shifting. Helm argues that the Dogrib were bilateral and bilocal, allowing for great mobility. Decisions that had ramifications beyond a single task group were made by a group of elders in meetings, based on discussion and consensus agreement, with no one leader prevailing. Instead, different individuals were leaders at specific tasks for which they were known because of their skill and knowledge. One group of Dogrib near Yellowknife, the (tahga got’îî or Follow the Shore people) asked Susie Drygeese to act as a spokesperson for the

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<sup>35</sup> Helm and Lurie describe a tea dance on the annual symbolic day of exchange, called “Treaty Day”: “although the dancing began close to midnight and lasted about five hours, it was never darker than twilight. Dancing during the evening of the treaty feast was all of the type known as the tea dance. The name derives from the fact that traditionally the Hudson’s Bay Company provided the Chief, in earlier years the trading Chief, with tea and bannock to feed the assembled group when the people came into the fort with their winter’s fur take. The tea dance has no accompaniment other than the human voice, the dancers gathering into an ever widening circle, moving with mincing steps clockwise, crowding tightly, shoulder to shoulder, and facing into the centre of the circle” (Helm and Lurie 1966, 10). The practice was not invented during this time, only the name.



Treaty 8 Dogrib and Chipewayan signatories. Later, the Dogrib asked M̃nfw̃ to act as a spokesperson for Treaty 11 in 1921. Treaty 8 was signed on the shores of the Great Slave Lake in 1900, including members of the Dogrib, Yellowknife, Slavey and Chipewayan Bands. In an oral history to June Helm about the Dogrib signing, Joseph Abel of the Yellowknife Dene Band said:

So (the government) gave us treaty. And they picked up all the Chiefs and Councilors from all over. They put Drygeese as head Chief (that is, for the Dogrib Band), and next is Benaiwah and the next is Sek'ehlinan. These were the three Chiefs for Wuledeh (Yellowknife River Dogrib Band). (Helm 2000, 157).

An elder of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation similarly described how the Yellowknife B Band (Yellowknives Dene) chose a representative for the Treaty 8 meetings in 1900:

With Treaty, we told Susie Drygeese to talk, there was a lot of people talking, and then we said for him to talk for us. That is when he talked about sunshine, river and grass. They are still here. And after that M̃nfw̃ in 1921, we all worked together. M̃nfw̃ took Treaty over there (in Fort Rae). Everyone would talk about him, M̃nfw̃ saw it this way. M̃nfw̃, he has good stories, that is why he was Chief. He was poor, everyone would give him money and crops and furs. Every Treaty we would go to Fort Rae to get Treaty and after that Susie Drygeese, well in 1913 we started to get Treaty in Yellowknife.” (Interview, September 12, 2006)

Even as the Yellowknife Dogrib bands signed Treaty 8 in 1900, the alliances with Fort Rae leaders are clear from this quote. Treaty 11 followed in 1921 in Fort Rae by the Dogrib, with roughly 800 people represented, making it the largest settlement in the Northwest Territories (Fumoleau 2004). John B. Zoe speaks of how M̃nfw̃ was chosen as a leader for the Dogrib:

Close to 1921, people said, well the treaties are going to be here, we need somebody to talk for us. And so that was the first time they selected Yam̃eneeko. They said: you talk for us over here, so he took it and said well, I'm a little too old now, I'm not as young as I used to be but there's M̃nfw̃ who is a lot younger, he's a lot more outspoken and he knows everything about his history so I'm going to now give it to him. So the collective gave leadership to (...) M̃nfw̃ and M̃nfw̃ represented us. So now he's going to speak on behalf of everybody. A representative means that he is going to represent the collective. (2006)

M̃nfw̃ was considered a strong leader, and to this day the traditional territory of the T̃ẫch̃ô is named for him, M̃nfw̃ Gogha D̃e Ñî̃t̃l̃ễ. According to Zoe (2006), “M̃nfw̃ spoke with the white people and said that as long as the sun rises, the river flows, and the land does not move, that we would not be restricted from our way of life into the future. That is how the treaty of 1921 was made. There have been many changes that have occurred since then.”

The backdrop to this era is the continual experience of disease which sharply reduced the population, particularly in the 1920s. Disease impacted the population heavily; many epidemics of smallpox, influenza and tuberculosis plagued people:

Traditional Indian medicines were no defense against diseases unknown before the white man's arrival. The native people dropped before the epidemics, and in the absence of doctors, the Indian Agents could only count the dead... Two years later, a smallpox epidemic swept over the Treaty 8 area from Fort Chipewyan to Fort Resolution... The Indians had asked for medical care before signing the Treaty. It had been promised to them. Pitifully little was provided in the years that followed. (Fumoleau 2004, 139)

Scarlet fever and smallpox produced the heaviest mortality prior to 1900, and after that influenza and measles caused severe epidemics (Helm 2000). The influenza epidemic of 1928 was devastating—and many leaders were lost to the disease, including Susie Drygeese, the leader who signed Treaty 8 for the Dogrib bands in Yellowknife. Tuberculosis became the disease that was key in determining population levels: “during the five-year period 1937-41, tuberculosis took the lives of Northwest Territories Indians at a rate of 761.4 per 100,000 compared to a rate of 43.7 per 100,000 for whites and 314.6 per 100,000 for Eskimos for the same period (Wherrett 1947 in Helm 2000, 122). The opening of the Camsell Indian Hospital in the 1940s, along with a yearly x-ray program, marked the beginning of more adequate treatment for this disease. Until the onset of reliable medical care, several diseases dominated the population landscape: scarlet fever, smallpox and tuberculosis. Zoe refers to this time as the “Time of Darkness”, because disease wore people down at the same time as children were stolen from their families:

It was during this time that disease and sickness struck the Tâîchô people. New diseases came with the white people, diseases that no one was prepared for. At this time, children were also taken away and put into residential school. Children from the age of three on were often taken away from parents and sometimes not seen again, or seen only very rarely. This time period is sometimes called the Time of Darkness. As people became more dependent on the government, their spirits were worn away. Children were apprehended, and these children grew up without parents. A lot of sadness and despair was felt in this time—and people are still recovering from it. New and deeper dependence was created with the Territorial government.” (Zoe 2006)

This dependence Zoe refers to occurred as the settler government built an entirely different governance system, colonizing leaders under the Canadian system:

They also built a new system of governance. And the Tâîchô people fed the new system with their own people. You feed (the system) because you don't spend time there (in the Tâîchô system of governance) anymore, we're

spending all our time here, so we just do a little withdrawal and we give it to them, do a little withdrawal and we give it to them, because now Canada is responsible for lands and resources and water. And then they say, well, we're going to have to set up another organization here, we'll call it the Territorial Government and they'll be responsible for community governments, they'll have a mayor and they'll have an election for councilors to run the town. So they have the health, education and social services. (Zoe 2006)

A further loss of governance control, according to a Tâîchô Elder, Joe Migwi, was experienced as the federal government devolved administrative responsibilities to the Territorial government. This was accompanied by migration of the settler society to the north.

The Federal Government since then has taken away a lot of our nàowo (traditional knowledge) to a point where we have very little left. When we say we own the land, but at the same time we have no control over what goes on, we want to make sure that this does not continue, and I am sure that all the people think this way... Since 1967, when they created the GNWT, we were not consulted, they did this on their own, and they declared Governance by themselves. We did not tell them that they would be the Government here in the north, and they did not start that way, so why should we listen to them all the time. We recognize the Treaty that we made with the Federal Government and that's why we are working with them towards an agreement." (Migwi 1995)

At the same time, the non-aboriginal population of the NWT grew by 27% between 1941 and 1971 (Helm 2000), with in-migrants from the south being employed primarily in mining and government positions. Helm suggests a new daily presence of non-aboriginal people in the lives of the Dene, such as game and forest management personnel, welfare workers, health officers, school teachers, with a new intensity of instructional and regulatory roles, all with an aim to bring aboriginal accommodation to the settler system, which Helm felt far exceeded the regulatory or controlling roles that the trader and the missionary were able to achieve in the past (Helm 2000). As the price of fur fell, beginning at the end of the Second World War and lasting through the end of the Korean War (Asch 1977), the government introduced family allowance and old age pension payments, which partially helped to sustain families. New policy in education facilitated the construction of schools in many of the small towns (Asch 1977), and shortly families moved into the towns in order to keep family allowances which were contingent on children attending school. Asch marks this policy and time as pivotal for regional economies.

The movement of people away from residence at fish lake encampments and the introduction of direct family allowance payments, old age pensions, and other cash benefits directly to nuclear family heads and individuals, completely undermined the economic rationale of the local group. Thus, beginning no later than 1960, the nuclear family, typically composed of an older married couple and their adult and younger children became the primary self-sufficient economic unit. (1977, 54)

Federal policy was one of assimilation, particularly during the Trudeau administration, until a policy shift in 1982 with the repatriation of the Constitution. Section 35(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms affirmed existing aboriginal and treaty rights and has since served as the basis for the comprehensive claims policy. The federal policy of assimilation triggered a pan-Territorial consciousness. The National Indian Brotherhood formed in this time, and many of the students raised together in residential school became leaders, rejecting colonial systems and education and agitating for Dene unity and self determination:

There will be no assimilation, no assimilation, we should not assimilate because they are trying to turn us into what they are, or trying to turn us into Canadians. We are what we are: we want recognition for our lands, our rights, our heritage, our governance. And we don't want to assimilate. And we want no extinguishment. Because the more you assimilate, the less you have left and once you turn it all over to there you have nothing left and you are extinguishing what you had before. (Zoe 2006)

According to Helm, as she testified at the Berger Inquiry<sup>36</sup> in 1976, three forces transformed Dogrib lifeways in the 1960s: 1) the opening of an all-weather gravel road which brought Rae residents daily to Yellowknife, affording much easier access to goods and alcohol, increasing addiction problems as well as allowing Rae residents to head south easily. With the road, the first prophets<sup>37</sup> from the south were able to visit the north and Helm (1994) documents the prophet ceremonies and religious transformation; 2) the first exposure of Dene children to Euro-Canadian schooling, which increased sedentarization in communities, decreased men's ability to be in the bush, and decreased cultural transmission of bush information; and 3) a growing political consciousness, spurred in part due to the interest of multinational oil and gas firms in the region and the subsequent formation of pan-northern political organizations devoted to the pursuit of self determination (Helm 2000). On the growth of this pan-territorial consciousness, Helm (2000, 266) wrote:

The Dene Nation is itself an emergent polity construct conceived as a counterpoise to the forces of the national system. In the internal affairs of

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<sup>36</sup> The Berger Inquiry brought Justice Berger to the north, under federal direction, to investigate the impacts of a proposed gas pipeline in the north. Justice Berger traveled to many communities in the north to listen to the voices of elders, trappers, hunters and community members. On the basis of this witnessing, Justice Berger recommended that the pipeline be stalled until the people could settle land claims.

<sup>37</sup> Helm (1994) suggests the arrival of the prophets in the 1960s was when the "feeding the fire" practice began. Legat writes, "on each occasion (of feeding the fire), everyone kept a portion of their food, usually a favoured piece. If the fire was passed by or circled, people walked from east to west, and as one put the food in the fire prayers or words were spoken to the ancestor. Gratitude was expressed for all that had been shared, and for a successful trip or event. Conservation was key to all events: prayer, discussion on how to proceed, who should do what, and how it should be done" (2007, 143).

traditional life, there was no overarching Dene polity in the sense of coordinated political authority within the several major linguistic-territorial sectors.

A member of the Company of Young Canadians<sup>38</sup> who worked in solidarity with northern leaders to create the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories suggested, “we were all reading anti-colonial literature: *Soul on Ice* (and others) about what colonialism does to people’s psyche” (September 21, 2005). The Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories submitted a land claim to the Federal Government in 1976. Helm (2000) suggests the federal government was “back pedalling” on the policy of assimilation seen in the white paper on termination of aboriginal rights by funding native political organizations to develop relationships with the federal government. The fourteen Dene chiefs filed a caveat against “further land use or development by non-natives in the Indian region (450,000 square miles) on the grounds that aboriginal rights to the land remained, despite the Treaties of 1900 and 1921, which purported to “extinguish” those rights” (Helm 2000, 251). This was followed by a Métis Association claim and by 1983 the Dene/Métis Negotiations Secretariat was established to represent both groups to negotiate a comprehensive land claim. The Dene Declaration states:

What we the Dene are struggling for is the recognition of the Dene nation by the governments and peoples of the world... What we seek then is independence and self-determination within the country of Canada. This is what we mean when we call for a just land settlement for the Dene Nation. (quoted in Watkins 1977, 4)

While these groups developed a collective claim, the federal government established administrable governance systems within communities, systems accountable to a functionary of the federal administration: tribal councils and municipal bodies. This is a mark of colonial governments, involving “the attempt by company and government representatives to make an administrable clearly defined ‘entity’ out of social groupings that are in anthropological terms contingent and fluid” (Rumsey and Weiner 2001, 7). The Dogrib Tribal Council was a structure set up by the GNWT under the *Regional and Tribal Councils Act* and was used as a consultative body. It was made up of the chiefs of the six Dogrib communities—Lac La Martre (Whatì), Rae Lakes (Gamètì), Snare Lake (Wekweètì), Rae-Edzo (Behchoko) and the Yellowknife B Band in Dettah and Yellowknife B Band in Lot 500 (N’dilo) (Zoe 2002). There was tension between the newly developed colonial structures and the pan-Territorial movement, as referred to by this Tâîchô leader:

I mean especially after the regional tribal councils were developed and that’s an

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<sup>38</sup> Funded by Lester B. Pearson’s administration, this program sought to give young students with their first degree experience in communities and organizations.

animal of Indian Affairs, DIAND that created tribal councils. So funding was given to tribal councils and less funding was given to the Dene Nation and so the communities or the First Nations in tribal councils were being strengthened and the pan-territorial organizations within the Dene Nation were losing that influence, that power that they had. (Interview, September 25, 2005)

In 1990, the Dene-Métis claim collapsed, largely due to the pressure from government for aboriginal groups to extinguish rights (Irlbacher Fox 2005). Regional negotiations ensued, and the Gwich'in quickly settled a claim in 1992, followed by the Sahtu in 1994. The Dogrib chose to pursue a collective claim, into which they invited the communities surrounding Yellowknife. However, these two communities, N'dilo and Dettah, joined with other Treaty 8 representatives to pursue a different claims strategy, given they had taken Treaty with the southern neighbours. No land boundary had ever been discussed: "No group had sharply defined or exclusively claimed territory. Correspondingly, personnel were not fixed: residential movement from one group to another followed ties by blood or marriage" (Helm 1965). Outmarriage was documented by Helm in 40% of the marriages between 1911 and 1959 (Helm 1965); treaty taking of individuals also shifted between Treaty 8 to 11. In short, identity and group mobility was fluid and shifting.

The fluidity of group identity is apparent in the usage of the nomenclature of "Yellowknife Indians". The origin of the name "Yellowknife" may come from Franklin's journals (Helm and Gillespie 1981). Known in Franklin's time as Copper Indians, the Yellowknife Indians were the north-western division of the Chipewyan peoples (Helm and Gillespie 1981). Helm suggests the Yellowknife Indians that Samuel Hearne writes of, with Akaitcho as a leader, were Chipewyan in the region of Fort Providence. However, to administrate Treaty payments and programs, the federal government named Áutsel K'e as "Yellowknife A", Dettah as "Yellowknife B" and N'dilo as "Lot 500". Helm suggested the current name of "Yellowknives" has become associated with the Yellowknife Indians written of in the journals of Samuel Hearne (Helm 1972, 297):

These people have been commonly misidentified as Yellowknife Indians. Their more permanent camps and cabin sites were around Yellowknife Bay and on the adjoining shores of the North Arm of Great Slave Lake, to the north as far as the Enodah—Trout Rock area where they overlapped with the *tag ga hoti* (Follow the Shore People). For fall caribou hunting, their route to the barrens often followed the waterways along the Yellowknife River to Snare Lake and beyond. In 1900 these people and those of region 6a, represented by Drygeese as head chief for both groups, "signed" Treaty at Fort Resolution, where they were accustomed to trade. Their trading orientation to Fort Resolution, combined with some admixture by marriage with Chipewyans, gave them a degree of distinctiveness.

The groups used the federal nomenclature (Yellowknife B and Lot 500) in discussions with the government until after the collapse of the Dene-Métis Accord in 1990, at which point the name “Yellowknives Dene First Nation” was adopted for the two communities near Yellowknife: Dettah and N’dilo. As a negotiating group with other claimant groups who also share history and common kin, the Yellowknives Dene pursued a Treaty Land Entitlement Case with Áutsel K’e (Yellowknife A Band), and Deninu K’ue (Fort Resolution). The Specific Claim has been underway since 1992, and the Akaitcho Treaty 8 Government has now achieved an Interim Measures Agreement (IMA), as well as an Akaitcho Screening Board for environmental management. The group chose to use the common group name of “Akaitcho Treaty 8” to represent their regional claim to the government. The choice of this name was disputed, because of the past animosity of the Tâîchô and Akaitcho. Some Yellowknives elders report they preferred the usage of “Susie Drygeese” for the group (Interview September 12, 2006), since Akaitcho was an aggressive leader. The choice to negotiate a Treaty Entitlement Claim collectively with Áutsel K’e and Deninu K’ue, however, is strongly supported.

The pressure to negotiate land boundaries has fractured the traditionally peaceable relationships of the Tâîchô and the Yellowknives Dene, as has this identification under the namesake of “Akaitcho”. The quotation below is from an affidavit filed by Zoe in a court case filed by the Yellowknives Dene about land boundaries:

As noted above, we call ourselves *Tâîchô*. The plaintiffs are known to us as two different Aboriginal peoples with two different names. The plaintiffs who call themselves in English, the Yellowknives Dene First Nation – Dettah, and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation – N’dilo, are known to us as *Tâîchô* ... The shift now “appears to indicate an identity change from *Tâîchô* to *tedzont’in*”, with *tedzont’in* including the band from Áutsel K’e and Deninu K’ue (Zoe 2002).

To the north, the Tâîchô negotiated land boundaries in 2000 with the Deh Cho. A witness to the signing, Yellowknives Dene negotiator Fred Sangris (now Chief of N’dilo, 2003-ongoing) declined to participate in the celebration dance (Neary 2002) of the Deh Cho-Tâîchô Agreement, illustrating the new depth of animosity of the neighbours.

Even with this pressure and tension to define boundaries, the leaders and people of this region have common ground. People have negotiated together in the Dene-Métis Agreement, long visited each other’s communities (Gillespie 1975), and inter-marriage is frequent (Helm 2000). Visiting between the communities is constant, because of relations, as it is to Áutsel K’e and other south of the lake communities. While many of the Yellowknives consider themselves

Dogrib (Interview with Yellowknives Dene elder, September 21, 2006), there are Chipewayan influences and many relations to the south. Since Treaty 8 was signed 20 years earlier and in a different location than Treaty 11, these communities have also assembled annually in the southern communities. The distinct regional dialect of the Yellowknives confirms the closeness to both Dogrib and Chipewayan. The dialect of Dogrib has been formally marked at the 2006 Akaitcho Annual Assembly when a motion was passed to call the dialect of this region “Weledeh Dene”, however many elders speak both Weledeh Dene and Chipewayan.<sup>39</sup> While the federal government has introduced new administrative structures, there is overlap, closeness and common kin amongst the communities of the north.

Consultation by the Treaty mining companies tend to focus on IBA groups of the present agreement making era, making fixed and determinate groupings seem apparent, historically given, and apart from the economic, political and ideological context. The fluidity of association is commonly remarked upon, as in Wolf’s work:

To attempt to specify separate cultural wholes and distinct boundaries would create a false sample. These cases exemplify spatially and temporally shifting relationships, prompted in all instances by the effects of European expansion. (Wolf 1982, 18)

The social relations of exchange, inter-marriage, and past warfare have led to constant shifting, change and movement (West 2006). However, unlike Wolf’s analysis, these communities are fluid in their social relations with each other, prompted at times by each other and at times by the colonial government.

### 3.2.6 Recognition (1990-present)

In 1992, the Tâîchô entered into discourse to negotiate land claims and self government with the federal government. The Tâîchô chose the route of comprehensive claims and self governance. These agreements give the Tâîchô power over lands and the ability to be self-governing. This marks a new era for the Tâîchô, one where they are now recognized by the federal government and by neighbours:

So what’s happened is that because as long as the sun rises, the river flows,

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<sup>39</sup> The ethnographic record elaborates on identity: Gillespie, a companion anthropologist to Helm in the 1970s, suggested that Akaitcho’s band suffered territory changes, drastic mortality and loss of group identity due to epidemic disease and fur trade-induced relationships (Gillespie 1975). In a traditional knowledge study conducted as the Ekati mine opened, the authors suggest Gillespie’s analysis suffered from a lack of time depth, a failure to confirm findings, and the use of a Dogrib interpreter (Yellowknives Dene First Nation 1997). This ethnographic research, which has echoed through Athapaskan ethnology papers (Krech 1980) has been eliminated from the records of the northern Territorial archives.



because we know that this sun actually rose on August 4th and rose and as long as the sun rises, the river flows so that it doesn't go backwards to a different source. As long as the sun rises, the river flows and the land does not move, we will not be restricted from our way of life meaning we can go take the next step. And so when we are talking about taking the next step, we're talking about the recognition and we're talking about who will represent us at the next step. (Zoe 2006)

The Tâîchô now have control over many areas of governance: "We choose not to assimilate, so we now build our own government. We have now got control of our own health and social services. We have designed our own healing path, and we have ownership over our land and our businesses. We also have the responsibility to pass on our nàowo (knowledge)" (Zoe 2006). 60 Tâîchô people traveled to Ottawa to witness the Senate hearing of Bill C-14, which gave effect to the land claims and self government agreement. Upon the ratification, these people impulsively began a tea-dance in the House of Commons, celebrating the conclusion of 12 hard years of negotiations. This historic moment, and the practice of this celebratory dance to mark ratification, may well have left marks on the imaginations of the Senators and Members of Parliament in the government for years to come. Senator Leger commented on the presence of Tâîchô people as witnesses:

I have witnessed many individual Aboriginal role models here and this is the first time that I am meeting a whole community role model. The fact that so many of you traveled such a great distance speaks louder than words for me. The words are important but your presence here is almost sacred. (Canada 2005)

The key relationship of this era is of the Tâîchô to all others. The Tâîchô manage resources, design their own programs and deliver services.<sup>40</sup> The final agreement was ratified by 92% of the population and was initialed twice, meaning that the agreement was opened to public consultation two times, a precedent in agreement making in Canada, something not required by federal policy. The period of recognition emphasizes the centrality of unity, as expressed through Tâîchô language and culture. Before the Tâîchô Agreement was achieved, two high school students graduated each year; now 30 to 40 students graduate each year from the Tâîchô high school, Chief Jimmy Bruneau School, and more than one hundred students are in post-secondary institutions (Zoe 2005). The focus of Tâîchô programming is to be "strong like two people", so while students are taught from European models, they are also taught from the pages of the

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<sup>40</sup> A United Nations Public Service Award was awarded in 2007 to the Tâîchô Community Services Agency for combining health, education and social services in one department. Another award for innovative management was awarded by the Institute of Public Administration of Canada in 2006. Culture and language are central to TCSA programming and the Tâîchô Government.

land:

Since 1995, we have been doing what we call on-the-land canoe programs, where our youth are taken out onto the lake for 10 days or more, paddling, hunting and fishing along the way. They visit all the hunting, camping and grave sites along the way so that they understand their history better and are able to read those place names that I described. As the Elder would say, "*You turn the pages every time you dip your paddle.*" It has grown to such a point where, last summer, we had over 160 people in the canoes for up to two weeks. (Zoe 2005, emphasis added)

The continuity of history is remarked on in this quote, as Zoe teaches youth from the land of the narratives of cosmology. History continues to be seen as a series of key historic relationships, of which current events are only a part.

### 3.3 Processes of Change

Aboriginal narratives tell of significant leaders, moments of reconciliation and mutuality. History is organized by central relationships, rather than by economic forces or contact, which tend to be the main thematic narratives structuring the histories of political economy and anthropology. Co-existence is achieved with animals, aboriginal neighbours, colonists, and finally with the self in the case of the Tâîchô in the era of Recognition, with the achievement of land claims and self government. Each era is told of through a collection of narratives, and as these are narrated, listeners are informed of exchange, social relationships, rules, values and ethics. Each era is inscribed into the land as a living history, so that "you turn the pages every time you dip your paddle". Many of these rules and ethics are invoked continuously, as an elder pays the land to negotiate safe passage (a rule from the Coexistence era), or as a spontaneous tea dance is held in the House of Commons to mark the settlement of the Tâîchô Self Government and Land Claims Agreement.

In each of the eras, a different pivotal relationship was reconciled. The processes of change are the exchanges inherent in the relationship of settlers to indigenous people, of animals to humans, and of the Akaitcho to the Tâîchô. Each exchange and resolution of conflict generated new administrative structures, new economies, and shifting alliances, and each has been written into the land through place names. The agreements mark out key relationships, with each new agreement being generative of new principles. For example, the principle of reciprocity and mutual respect was generated through the Edzo-Akaitcho Agreement. So too did each agreement forge new values, practices and ideas that continue to inform people, providing

the signposts for behaviour of the individual with animals and with neighbours, new and old. Each agreement sets in motion a range of principles and practices that suggest the proper relationship of self to other. That unique rules and practices, such as feeding the fire, emerge in each era is suggestive of continually changing relationships, with people that form alliances and create agreements in response to new relationships, guided by the deep knowledge (or habitus) that is ingrained in them as they visit historic sites, or listen to the stories of Nohta, or dip their paddle in the pages of history. It is during the fourth era (the Representative) that degenerative forces are noted as the power of the colonizer was asserted through governance and control over children, people and knowledge. It is the low point in the history, the “Time of Darkness”, but an era from which people are emerging as they become self governing. We see also in the era of the Representative the rejection of the policy stance of assimilation, and the move to pursue collective strategies of self determination at a pan-Territorial level, which later fragmented into regional claims.

Two main relationships have caused friction, and are illustrative of what happens when there is “failed exchange” (Kirsch 2006), defined as exchange that is dehumanizing.<sup>41</sup> The federal government has exerted continual pressure to administrate regional bands and thereby attempted to replace indigenous forms of governance. The federal government also set the policy framework that has led to an ideology of development, so that all mineral development is given first precedent, and every other “claim” to land must be secondary. Even as the market for fur collapsed, the federal government emphasized social policy that undermined the collectivity and further promoted the nuclear family, through family based subsidies and enforced schooling. This policy of assimilation inspired pan-territorial agreements with the shared goal of self determination. The settler government has failed to be reciprocal in the way expected and enshrined in the Treaty Agreements, as illustrated through these assimilationist policy models. Mineral policy has allowed the explorer to have first priority in land use, and these people have always been figures of pity for the Tâîchô, as illustrated through term used for explorers, “kweetigi”, which translates to “white people who are bad”. The need to negotiate land boundaries has led to the conflict apparent in the relationship of the Akaitcho and the Tâîchô people. These two relationships (settler society to indigenous; and Akaitcho to the Tâîchô) have been generative of friction and tension. When a peace agreement had been established between groups, the colonizers’ need for settled authority created the call for boundaries in the

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<sup>41</sup> Kirsch (2006) suggests that failed exchange provides the motivation for sorcery. The spirit of the gift, according to Kirsch, humanizes participants in successful exchange relations by demonstrating their mutual recognition.

land, fostering new tension in previously peaceful relationship. Yet even in this tense relationship, the creativity and fluidity of identity is apparent. While political tension was overwhelming, personal relationships continue to be forged through marriage. Yellowknives Dene elders subvert the danger of allying themselves with the warring Akaitcho by adopting the banner of the peaceful Susie Drygeese. This is by no means intentional fictionalizing of identity, which some representatives of government and mining interests might maintain, but rather the intentional honouring of multiple agreements, and the attempt to maintain the spirit of respect brokered when Edzo and Akaitcho made peace. Over the years, alliances, strategies and identities have shifted, but the purpose for groups has been the same: the goal is self determination.

The last two hundred years has seen interactions and agreements that have been generative of rules, practices and values. The key focus of practice of these rituals is maintenance of historic relationships. The agreements that the multinational mining companies make with Dene communities do not gain mention in this Tâ'ichô Cosmology—the master narrative of the day is finalization of land claims and self government agreements. However, this history provides an ideology linking people together with their neighbours and the land. They are strong guides for future action, as is consistently seen in how inter-group conflict is resolved. O'Faircheallaigh argues the political economy of mineral development on Aboriginal land displays continuity with the past. “In this situation fundamental change will only result from the pursuit by Aboriginal people of political strategies that operate at every scale from the local politics of Aboriginal groups to the national arena” in Australia (2006, 3). This relational view of political change may well prove a model that is consistent with indigenous cosmologies. It is the creation and maintenance of relationships, not economies, and the practices of mutuality and reciprocity that are the core focus. The relational view of political change articulated by O'Faircheallaigh suggests that relationships will need to be made at the individual level through to the Prime Minister to achieve this goal of self determination. Indeed, this approximates what the Tâ'ichô achieved through the later agreement, and there is one agreement that is continuously forged: that with the next generation.

What underlies this Cosmology is the hope of the continuous replication of core values and principles. Given that history has been characterized as a series of key relationships, the arrival of the new mining multinational provides an opportunity that may be generative of fresh rules, values and principles. This is where the modern miner arrives, and while they may seek to enter the political geography of the north without acknowledging the past, this relational view of

history reveals they will arrive with the shadows of ghost-mines behind them. The potential to be incorporated into a new relationship is open, given the pattern of reflexive agreement making of the past. If the relationship with the Treaty mining companies is flexible, honouring and incorporating the social relations of the past, with the animals, land, neighbours, and settler government, then the potential for this set of relations to be generative will exist. Resilience will lie in the ability to embrace and make co-existent both past and current relationships in order to live well, as described in the next chapter.

## 4 DECONSTRUCTING THE DEFICIT MODEL

From the communities' perspective, we always had high expectations of the GNWT and Diavik to do more in terms of impacts on the communities: social, cultural and traditional impacts. We still have high expectations but they haven't been met. (Interview with YKDFN worker, September 10, 2006)

This quotation reveals a common sentiment among communities impacted by the diamonds mines: disappointment in the management of social and cultural impacts. However this chapter will argue there is also a profound disappointment in the settler government's ability to be in a reciprocal relation with the communities. This chapter reviews and exposes weaknesses in the theoretical underpinnings of quantitative models that underlie prediction of impacts on the social, economic and cultural environment and offer as an alternative a mixed model for measuring change at individual community and regional levels. Socio-economic agreements are designed to mitigate social impact and to create the implementation measures after an environmental assessment. Since 1996, agreements have been used to track, manage and respond to change instigated by the diamond mines in the NWT. These agreements establish commitments, mitigation, and monitoring measures between the Territorial government, the developer, and in the case of Diavik, with aboriginal signatories. The goal of the tool is to mitigate impacts and increase benefits, ensuring that no one who is vulnerable will become more so. Alternative models, built on community expressions of what ought to be monitored, are also reviewed. The tensions at play are: qualitative and quantitative expressions of quality of life, self reported or data-driven expressions of wellness, monitoring versus mitigation and regional and community-based scales.

Current conceptions of impact assessment, inclusive of the notion of vulnerability, adhere to a Eurocentric and quantitative model that may not be responsive to the impacts felt in the communities. Resilience, as described by Dene elders, is drawn from the ability to live well through the maintenance of past and present social relationships. If mining impacts on this ability to live well in social relations with others, the impact assessment model does not capture these details because of the resolution of data, the theme and scale of focus. The government model of impact assessment provides a forensic audit of discrete variables, providing protection of government interests. It also tends to diagnose dysfunction and then locate the source of deficits in the community itself. As Eric Wolf (1982, 9) writes, "since social disorder has been related to the quantity and quality of social relations, attention is diverted from consideration of economics, politics, or ideology as possible sources of social disorder, into a search for the

causes of disorder in family and community, and hence toward the engineering of a proper family and community life”. The location of the problem at the family and community level has consistently led to interventions aimed at these scales. The key danger in the use of this model is of wrongly focused interventions, continued focus on dysfunction, and the dismembering “of exceptionally complex and poorly understood sets of relations and processes in order to isolate a single element of instrumental value” (Scott 1998, 21). Scott further suggests that every act of measurement is an act marked by the play of power relations (1998, 27), an observation that resonates particularly in the north. To understand the practices of measurement, one must relate them to the interests of: the mining company, the government and the communities. These interests are understood through examination of the data that inform ideas of culture, both quantitative and qualitative. Following this, the three models of impact assessment are reviewed: 1) the GNWT model that is used for measurement, 2) a diamond mine impacted community model by Áutsel K’e, and 3) the Tâîchô model.

#### 4.1 Existing narratives of measurement

Consultation is the north’s new focus, one not attended to in previous government administrations or mines, and one driven by recent Supreme Court decisions (*Taku River Tlingit, Haida Nation*, and *Dene Tha*)<sup>42</sup>. Socio-Economic Agreements (SEMA) establish commitments for each Treaty mining company on consultation, employment and training, reporting, employment obligations and support, among others. Data collection, monitoring and mitigation are a central part of how change is observed and reacted to in the Territory. In the first agreement for Ekati, the government committed to use a “list of fourteen (14) indicators for health and wellness” (GNWT and BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. 1996a). In the second agreement for Diavik, the government committed to monitoring in four categories: (a) non-traditional economy; (b) cultural well-being, traditional economy, land and resource use; (c) social stability and community wellness; (d) net effects on Government; and (e) sustainable development and economic diversification (Diavik, GNWT and Aboriginal Signatories 1999). Both agreements

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<sup>42</sup> These three decisions have interpreted the government’s duty to consult on Crown land. There has been tremendous corporate interest in these decisions, given that consultation has to be reported on in environmental assessment, albeit in a very limited way. Companies simply provide a list of meeting times, locations and numbers of attendees, which may reveal very little in terms of substance of consultations. That the government has the duty to consult, and that this cannot be delegated, is one of the key findings of the court cases. Government and companies continue to grapple with interpretations of this. *Taku River Tlingit First Nation vs. British Columbia* (Project Assessment Director), 2004 SCC 74.; *Haida Nation vs. British Columbia* (Ministry of Forests), 2004 SCC 73.; *Dene Tha’ First Nation vs. Ministers’ of Environment, Fisheries and Oceans, Indian and Northern Affairs, and Transportation*, 2006 FC 1354.

commit to review the data and introduce “adaptive mitigation measures for achieving the purposes and commitments” of the Agreements (Diavik, GNWT and Aboriginal Signatories 1999, 3). Each mine has a unique model described for discussing and managing findings, and each mine is required to conduct yearly consultations in communities. As part of separate Environmental Agreements, there are also two independent environmental boards. The second Socio-Economic Monitoring Agreement established a board, the Diavik Community Advisory Board, to monitor change.

In response to these new Boards and Agreements, communities have developed structures for communicating with the mines. Often one set of people are charged with managing all communications on environmental issues, and they are supported by a group of elders, while another set is charged with communications on socio-economic issues. For example, the Tâîchô have a Lands and Environment Department that responds to environmental issues with the aid of three outside expert consultants, while a Tâîchô Mining Committee manages communication on socio-economic issues. The Yellowknives Dene appoints a Lands and Environment staff with an outside expert for review of materials, and an Agreement Implementation Coordinator manages all socio-economic materials.

With the government focus on the family and community, rather than on relationships, values and practices, programs and interventions may fail to enhance wellness. The government model also focuses on deficits in the families and communities, such as alcoholism, gambling and youth pregnancy, instead of the cultural activities that reinforce relationships. As a result, funds for programming are directed to these areas, rather than on reinforcing identity and culture. A community-based model originated in a diamond impacted community, Åutsel K’e, and has served as a model adopted and tested by the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (Gibson *et al.* 2003). The next model emerged through community meetings, interviews and focus groups with the Tâîchô. Each model is unique in the use of qualitative and quantitative data: while the government model relies primarily on quantitative data, the Åutsel K’e model employs both, and the Tâîchô model uses only qualitative data. Further, the government uses measures that are externally defined, while the Åutsel K’e model surfaces both externally and locally defined expressions of wellness. The Tâîchô model is entirely locally driven, and defines a model of living well that is relational. Scott (1998) argues that these relations and models are illegible to the state in their raw form, and so that the model by Åutsel K’e has managed to use community expressions while still utilizing state based expressions and methods, may allow some purchase



for these definitions of wellness in settler society. Finally, the scale for analysis for the government is regional, whereas the communities focus entirely at the community level. Each group classifies information, weighs significance, prioritizes certain issues, and accounts for change in culturally specific ways.

Below are two extracts comparing approaches to assessing cultural change due to industrial activity, selected to illustrate the way that narratives of change unfold in different contexts (Cruikshank 1990). The first (4.1.1) comes from the Socio-Economic Monitoring Annual Report completed by the GNWT on both of the diamond mines, summarizing data on a range of indicators and interpreting the trends observed. The second (4.1.2) is from a speech made by an elder at a Tâîchô regional wellness meeting in 2005 including the Grand Chief, the four community Chiefs, elders, social service providers, and community members. That one is entirely based on quantitative data, while the other is qualitative, illustrates the difference in what might be understood from these approaches.

#### 4.1.1 Government accounts

The first account, the GNWT's *Communities and Diamonds* report, is produced annually and submitted to the Minister of Health and Social Services, the diamond impacted communities, the Diavik Community Advisories Board, the mines and the general public. The report uses a series of agreed upon indicators to discern change over time, beginning in 1996. The report writers are from different branches of the territorial government, including: Health and Social Services; Education, Culture and Employment; Industry, Tourism and Investment; Justice; the Bureau of Statistics, and the Housing Corporation. Writers from each branch draft their materials, send them for approval, and then submit them to be published by the lead agency, Industry, Tourism and Investment. Much of the data for the report is based on information collected by the NWT Bureau of Statistics, as well as the census. There is a standard format for the report, although each year new elements were added to facilitate analysis. For each component (e.g., cultural wellbeing), the indicator predictions from impact assessments are reported (see Table 4.1), followed by a data table showing trends, and closing with observations and analysis. Indicators potentially related to cultural wellbeing, traditional economy and language retention are discussed here.

Table 4.1 Cultural Wellbeing and Traditional Economy (GNWT 2005: vii)

INDICATOR	COMPANY PREDICTED TREND			NWT OBSERVED TREND	
	BHP	Diavik	Snap L	Small Commun	Yellowknife
Cultural Wellbeing and Traditional Economy					
Workforce-aged Group Engaged in Traditional Activities	---	---	---	↑	---
Trapping	---	---	---	↑	↓
Hunting and Fishing	---	---	---	---	---
Consumption of Meat or Fish	---	---	---	---	---
Language: ratio of home-language use to mother tongue	---	↓	↓	---	↑

The GNWT uses this table to illustrate what the three diamond mining companies predicted on these variables, and then follow these with the observed trends in the data at two scales: small and local communities (and/or diamond-impacted communities) and Yellowknife. In the body of the 2005 report, data from 1988-2005 on each of these indicators is presented, along with the prediction made in the environmental impact assessment by each company. The companies predicted that wages would provide new means to secure traditional economy goods (e.g., snowmobiles, guns, boats, rifles, tents), that industrial work may interfere with traditional practice, that immigration could increase pressure on lands and resources, and that the family may have less time on the land (BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. 1995; DDMI *et al.* 1999; De Beers 2002).

The GNWT analysts make interpretations based on the trends they see, as illustrated below:

Traditional activities are hunting, trapping, fishing, harvesting, and eating country food, and other cultural activities such as sewing. Trapping gives harvesters cultural and social benefits by using traditional skills and knowledge...Trapping has been increasing in Small Local Communities for some time. The fact that it has continued to go up since 1996 may reflect higher incomes. This could be linked to diamond mine employment and the rotational work schedule.

The percent of Yellowknife's population aged 15 and older, who hunted or fished went down about 8% from 1998 to 2003. However, Small Local Communities saw a slight increase during that time...In-migration of people who are not used to hunting and fishing would affect the percent of people who do those activities.

More hunting and fishing in Small Local Communities could be due to higher incomes and the rotational work schedule. A continued rise in hunting and fishing in Small Local Communities could help strengthen cultural wellbeing and community vitality.

Trends in the percent of households where half or more of the meat or fish eaten is harvested, fall within the normal range of change. There seems to be no link between trends in this indicator and the diamond mines.

Language is the principal instrument by which culture is transmitted from one generation to another, by which members of a culture communicate meaning and make sense of their shared experience...The percent of people who speak an Aboriginal language is dropping in the NWT. Data show a dramatic decline in the number of young people who speak an Aboriginal language. In Small Local Communities, however, the percent has stayed high. (GNWT 2005, 46-49)

This account focused on practices: hunting, trapping, consuming country food, and language. Although there isn't much exploration of why these are the key cultural practices selected, one phrase captures the reasoning: "trapping gives harvesters cultural and social benefits by using traditional skills and knowledge" (GNWT 2005, 46). These indicators may obliquely refer to: inter-generational dialogue, continuing practice skill of hunting on the land, diet, bush skills, sharing, networks and physical exercise.

According to the GNWT analysts, hunting and trapping increases might be linked to mine employment, while food consumption and language retention are not commented on. In the Small Local Communities, there is no sense from this data that practices are being negatively impacted. However, they do suggest there is a positive impact on hunting and fishing. Here, the suggestion is made that increased income or the rotational schedule are the factors behind an increase.

To arrive at these conclusions, analysts review the data, compare the data with corporate predictions, and draw conclusions about the linkages to mining. These interpretations are not validated with communities; instead an internal governmental process of indicator design, review of data and release is followed. Increases in hunting and trapping might be due to new community hunts or programs, however the focus of this industrial monitoring program allows only one channel of change to be investigated: mining. The analyst is forced to look in one direction only for change, and may be over or under estimating the influence of this one pathway of change.

#### 4.1.2 Tâîchô Elder account

The following speech was made by elder Harry Simpson during a two day workshop in February 2-4, 2005 on Community Indicators held in one of the remote Tâîchô communities, Wekweètî. The purpose of the meeting was to identify indicators of wellness, and bring together Tâîchô leaders to evaluate how things had changed in the past fifteen years. The speech, made on the second day, brought together key themes, ideas and concepts. It was made to the leaders, social service workers, and the mining committee of all four communities. As he opened the meeting, John B. Zoe spoke of the elder sitting beside him (Harry Simpson), suggesting that government indicators might paint his elder as in poverty, uneducated, living in a house of logs without running water. However, in the Tâîchô culture, this elder is deeply respected, holding knowledge of immense value to the culture and youth.

In the speech, the elder analyses change, makes suggestions for policy, and affirms key practices and values. Speeches are highly formalized acts among the Dene, serving as a way to transmit information, ideas and values to a group. In the oral tradition, to speak and to be affirmed is to recognize the legitimacy of the knowledge, topics, and decisions of the elder. Elders play a key role in reminding people of the past, suggesting action, and orienting listeners for the future.<sup>43</sup> In this meeting, the elders, the Chiefs, the Grand Chief, the Chairman, a few of the women from the social services agencies and the land claims negotiators all sat around tables that had been formed into a large square, numbering 26. Four university observers<sup>44</sup>, the Catholic priest, the head of the Tâîchô Community Services Agency and other observers observed the meetings, conducted entirely in Dogrib.

Not everything that is said by each speaker is affirmed, and it is the lack of affirmation that reveals the importance or agreement. When a significant elder spoke at the meeting, other elders would remove their hats, fold their hands, and bow their heads. If the elder said something particularly important, a chorus of “heh heh” would be heard throughout the room, an affirmation of the elder’s words. In subsequent speeches, other elders affirmed topics and

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<sup>43</sup> Particular elders cause an entire room of people to fall silent, listening for up to an hour as the elder speaks. A less respected individual may be listened to for a short period of time, and then body language of elders (such as not removing a hat and not looking at the speaker) indicates disagreement with the topic or the speaker.

<sup>44</sup> The observers included myself, Dr. Malcolm Scoble, Dr. Nancy Gibson, and Karen Edwards. While these relationships are central to why this research team formed and is effective, the research team has collaborated for the past four years to respond to community based research needs. Together, the team held a Social Science and Humanities Research grant that supported, in part, this workshop as well as others. The research team was invited to the meeting as trusted observers, but invited to make only one intervention by the most senior of the team: a closing comment. The research team and the head of the TCSA were the only non-Dogrib people present.

decisions suggested by Mr. Harry Simpson, revealing the method and substance of consensus.

Two excerpts from this speech are offered here:

Thank you, it is always good to introduce yourself before you begin sharing, it's good to do that. This way everyone knows your name. So, my name is, Harry Simpson and I come from Gamètì. It's a good thing we are doing things this way. We came because we want to give you our support and advice. We're not thinking only about ourselves, but our grandchildren, our own children and our children's families. We're hoping to accomplish something good for them, for their future and that's why we're talking about these issues today. Today as we're meeting here, what the Chairman, Alphonse talked about is true. This work is before us as we are getting prepared for Self Government and we're grateful for that. But in regards to the Dogrib culture, language and traditional ways of the old timers, there's something I want to add. I remember things from a long time ago and back in 1937 when I was able to chop wood. My grandfather raised me and I remember how he used to talk to me constantly. He used to talk about the future and what might be happening. Today, that's what is taking place....

When we support one another, we are strong; it is the way of our old timers. There's something I want to talk about and I touched on it when I spoke a couple of times before. We're talking about the traditional ways of our old timers, whàèdôö nàowo – and we're happy to have the Chiefs listening to us. Our words are not strong when we're by ourselves. But they are here and giving us their support. By listening to us, they will talk on our behalf and they will be confident with the issue they are talking about. They will talk good for us. That's what I'm thinking about as I'm sitting here. I may be on my own (widow) but I am not discouraged at all. If we help our nephews (children) for as long as we live, they will depend on the information in the future. That's how people follow one another as they continue ahead. In the same way, the work your grandfathers have done in the past, we are using their ways and language whenever we talk. We don't make those ways and we don't make those words. As for the issue I want to say something about, I've been think about ways the youth can learn traditional skills. We have a job to do every summer but I didn't go on that trip<sup>45</sup> last year. That work is very important for us and because it, our culture is stronger and our language is stronger... (Speech by Harry Simpson, February 4, 2005).

This elder has affirmed the leadership initiative for the meeting, talked about roles and relationships, and discussed the importance of talk, action and key activities for transmission of values and practices. The leaders chose well, according to Mr. Simpson, to have the meeting in the remote community, entirely in Dogrib, and at that time, for the location allowed community members to attend, as well as important elders. The choice to speak in Dogrib allowed the traditional orators to practice their art and to talk in the language of comfort, expressing ideas that are lost in English. Also, the meeting helped to orient leaders as the mantle of Self

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<sup>45</sup> Each community sends as many people as can go on a canoe trip each summer that ends up at the Annual Assembly. The Annual Assembly is held in a different community each year.

Government was about to be assumed. As he affirmed the relationships that leaders maintain through attending these meetings, he also suggested they must spend more time with community members, bringing the elders' guidance to these spaces. Mr. Simpson suggests how to be a good Tâîchô leader, and he is known to hold this authority since he served as a Chief himself.

Throughout his speech are references to the roles of youth, elders, women and leaders. This talk emphasizes the constant structure and importance of social relations. Just as great value is placed on the relationship of the group to outsiders (animals, neighbours, colonizers, and self—see Chapter 3), there is also emphasis on the relationship of individuals within the group to one another. Every person has a role and a function, and a constant relationship to others. These roles have prescribed rules and boundaries. Also captured in this speech is a sense of the continuing relationship of the elder to his ancestors and to future generations. By invoking these relationships, the elder reminds everyone of cultural continuity, perseverance and responsibility. Harry Simpson also reflects on the importance of talk: his grandfather talked to him constantly, just as he talks to this group, and reminds them that power lies in their words, unified as a group: “our words are not strong when we’re by ourselves.” Through this act of talking, the group is brought together, the future is reflected on, and the past is remembered and invoked.

Action is just as critical to learning, as suggested when the elder says he remembers chopping wood. This activity teaches strength, service (by providing the wood to elders), perseverance, and it serves to reinforce relationships. It is through these sorts of practices that core values are understood. While an elder may speak of the importance of these values, only by practicing the skill can an individual truly understand the values and relate properly to other citizens.<sup>46</sup> Also captured in this speech is a tremendous sense of hopefulness: the group is about to be self-governing at the time of this speech and the elder is not “discouraged”. He sees talk and action as critical to survival, suggesting the persistence of values. While this elder constantly enacts his beliefs and values, through his talk and relation to others, he emphasizes the continuity of culture when he says, “We don’t make those ways and we don’t make those words” (Speech by Harry Simpson, February 4, 2005).

These speeches function on a number of levels: first, they are explicit statements of the importance of cooperation and unity (Lamphere 1977, 44); second, they publicly reinforce core

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<sup>46</sup> For example, a youth may only gain access to stories of an elder by proving himself through chopping wood for that elder. His proper relation to the elder is to provide service in order to earn the right to understand history through stories.

values and their continuity.<sup>47</sup> Oral narrative, as Cruikshank (1990, 340) has suggested, provides the core of an educational model, so that in Mr. Simpson's speech lies the guidance for how to live well, articulated in a way that makes sense locally. To the south, Rushforth (1985, 339) suggested that the narratives of the Dene Bearlake people given in the Berger Inquiry encoded the continuity with the past: "by historically situating their personal narratives, these individuals...established that the events of their own lives were part of an extended tradition." Harry Simpson follows this path, weaving his grandfather's words in with his own, at the same time as he provides instruction to the Seventh Generation.

#### 4.1.3 Sizing up the changes

These two selections have reflected on similar subjects in quite different ways. They treat the same practices, yet they weigh significance differently, prioritize certain issues, and account for change in culturally specific ways. Table 4.2 draws out the parallels and differences in these narratives.

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<sup>47</sup> Lamphere (1977) saw a common pattern in speeches given in Coppery Canyon; so too is there a pattern in Tâîchô speeches and oratory.

Table 4.2 Ways of characterizing socio-economic changes

	COMMUNITIES AND DIAMONDS	ELDER HARRY SIMPSON
Timing	Since onset of mine through mine closure	From grandfather's time through to the Seventh Generation
Issues and themes treated	Passage of time, money, work, hunting, trapping, food, language	Protocol, identity, affirmation of meeting topic, relationship of speaker to past and future, history, roles of Chiefs, elders and youth, significance of activities for understanding values and culture (e.g., wood chopping), importance of talk, key relationships, and hopefulness for the future
Ordering of information	Data points on four topics over a series of years	Introduction, statements of faith in the meeting and the auspicious timing for the meeting, invocation of the past and future, statement of unity, role of present leaders, evaluation of the persistence of relationships through talk and action
Sizing up change	If a change is noted in the numbers, comment is made. If there is no change, the situation is assumed to be stable. Change is the anomaly. It is unclear how the determination is made about what percentage of change is considered significant.	Change is noted implicitly, through statements about what must be done to teach youth skills and knowledge in new ways (e.g., canoe trips). Preventing or managing harmful change is prioritized over exact measurement.
Threat or condition of vulnerability	Any change induced by the mine is the sole focus. The hope is that wages will bring new goods to encourage hunting and trapping.	Change to relationships, threats to unity of the group and transmission of values and information
Forces of change	Increases in mine employment, wages for goods, change in practice because of time away, time off rotation for engaging in hunting and trapping, in-migration of people  These are all external forces of change.	Less time together reinforcing values, relationships and skills. Note the type of time is not noted, since time together in community meetings or talking may be as significant for reinforcing relationships as spending time out on the land

The *Community and Diamonds* selection, on cultural wellbeing and traditional economy, does not stray far in content from some of the elements discussed in the narrative of the elder. However, the elder treats a broader range of topics and more elusive concepts, all within the time



period of his own life, his elders' through to future generations. The speech refers to history, the roles of leaders, the proper relationships of people, and the passage of time. The *Communities and Diamonds* report treats quantified and reported data, elicited through surveys. The three quantified practices (hunting, trapping, food consumption) are frozen as proxies for what culture is, in addition to language, so that when one is not practicing this activity, one is not a "cultural" being. Harry Simpson's account illustrates that culture is much more than participation in "traditional" practices. He invokes values, roles and relationships as reinforced in talk, in meetings, at church, and in daily activities. These things cannot be reduced to numbers. They are complex concepts that are only reflected and reinforced through talk and practice. What holds the group together is more than participating in these activities and speaking the language: it is also engaging and re-engaging relationships to other people and animals, both past and present. As the elder reminds everyone of their relationship to others, he also reminds people that their survival depends on unity: "when we support one another, we are strong" (Speech by Harry Simpson, February 4, 2005). Forces that interfere with unity, relationships and the continuity of roles are what Harry Simpson defines as threats to survival or to self determination.

The *Communities and Diamonds* report uses the arrows, illustrated in Table 4.1, to indicate assessment of quantitative trends and the estimation in this report is that the Small and Local Communities are not changing with respect to traditional practices and language retention. In the community meeting, the elder says he is not "discouraged", an evaluative judgment based on a perception that information key to survival is being passed through generations. However, he gives much guidance on how to do this better, through meeting, talking, and practicing skills.

The analysts of the government indicators chosen in the *Communities and Diamonds* report make tenuous claims about the connection of the mining industry to these practices. They suggest that higher income and rotational work may be the reason why hunting and fishing has increased, without identifying any potential cause-effect reasoning, while rising fur prices and community based programs for hunters could just as easily explain this relationship. It is in the interpretation of these figures that the government analysts start to move from the realm of counting to the realm of hope (Miyazaki 2004).<sup>48</sup> They hope that the industry has provided good outcomes in these measured areas, but the linkages are far too difficult to assess, so they

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<sup>48</sup> This is an ironic twist on Miyazaki's (2004) method of hope, in that the government analysts are attempting to connect the occurrence of mining income to hunting and fishing. It is because they only describe this variable, and no other, that they make this hopeful connection. However, to suggest increased income (which is not relational, but is the inversion of the relationships that are expressed through hunting, fishing and sharing of the product) might cause this outcome is to not dig deeply into this relationship.

tentatively suggest that this is the case. What worries the analysts is if there is change from what was observed at the outset of the impact assessment, which implies that the state then was acceptable. Harry Simpson, presented with this data and embedded as he is within the local context, would probably provide a different analysis of these trends. In addition, he and other Dene might question whether the right information is being collected.

The elder suggests values, roles and relationships are reinforced through dialogue, in relation to the other, and through practice of skills. The GNWT indicators of cultural wellbeing and traditional economy threaten to circumscribe aboriginality to the times when people are engaged in these activities. In this light, as one participates in the mine wage economy, one is not hunting, trapping, consuming country food or speaking the language, and as a result the individual is not “being aboriginal”. West (2006) writes of how this reduction of what is perceived to be “traditional” can be used to wrest away rights. Since the elder has shown that culture is practiced in every act, relation and practice, this threat to identity is shown to be empty. What is clear is that these four indicators do hold the potential of further reinforcing stereotypes of culture as practice, instead of the much more fluid and elusive relational concept that Harry Simpson reveals.

## 4.2 Measuring up and diagnosing dysfunction

The Socio-Economic Agreements defined a set of indicators that were used for the industrial monitoring program to track the changes due to the mines. The “program combines objective and subjective indicators” (GNWT 2005, 3) and the resulting reporting reveals a perception that the mines are generally having a positive impact in the region. While this section does not review the findings of the *Communities and Diamonds* report, it will review the sensitivity of this tool to vulnerable populations, the way an analyst measures and analyses change, and the usefulness of this tool for mitigating impact. A number of critiques of this system of identifying and measuring impacts are made after a rough sketch of the trends presented in this report. Cultural and traditional economy indicators were reviewed earlier in the chapter, and the remaining indicator sets are outlined in Table 4.3. The government gathers data for multiple sources and provides annual reports, summarizing change on each metric.

Table 4.3 Indicators chosen for socio-economic monitoring for the Diavik SEMA

INDICATOR AREA	INDICATORS
Community, Family and Individual Wellbeing	Injury, suicide, communicable diseases, teen births, number of children in care, number of complaints of family violence, housing indicators, numbers of alcohol and drug related crimes and number of property crimes
Non-traditional Economy	Income, employment levels and participation, number of social assistance cases, high school completion
Net effects on government	Net effects on government
Sustainable development as seen through secondary industry and initiatives	Secondary industry

The first indicator area, community, family and individual wellbeing, would be more precisely named “lack of wellbeing”. It is with these variables that the government diagnoses dysfunction. While the analyst will hope that there is reduction in these numbers, it is a dystopic view of wellness, observing all the things that might be wrong in a community. With this scale of analysis, the connection of mining is then always sought. The biggest change since reporting began is in the levels of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), something not predicted by the mines:

There have been increases in the rate of STIs and in the rate of STIs for youth aged 15-24 in Small Local Communities. These communities saw dramatic increases after 1999. The STI problem is not restricted to Small Local Communities. In the five years before 2005, STI reports went up 30% for ages 15-24 across the NWT. (GNWT 2005, 9).

While this report seeks to contextualize the trends in the Small Local Communities, it neglects a 20% higher rate of increase in the Small Local Communities. While Yellowknife has had a 30% increase in STIs and other NWT communities have experienced a 27% increase, the Small Local communities saw increases of 52% since 1999. In Rae, during a relatively positive year, 4.5% of the population have a sexually transmitted disease. Also there are higher numbers of single parent families since 1991 in small communities, up by 258 families. Given that fifty percent of these children are likely to be living in low income families this data might trigger social questions and new programs.

Examples of the positive impact, as predicted in the environmental impact assessments, are apparent in the non-traditional economy indicators. The income assistance rate has gone

down dramatically, incomes are higher, there are fewer people living in poverty and more families with middle incomes, and the participation rate has increased. Education rates are increasing, essential in a region where more than 25% of the adult population have not finished grade nine.

The first critique of this government audit approach relates to the scale chosen for analysis which carves the NWT into three groups: small local communities (the impacted communities), Yellowknife, and remaining NWT communities. Since analysis is always concerned with the regional scale, the completely different socio-demographic contexts of these data groupings become invisible. Yellowknife is urban (and half aboriginal), and the second grouping includes three major centres, while the final grouping includes only small and remote communities. Ill-founded comparisons may lead to inaccurate conclusions, given the different economic and social conditions.

A second problem with the scale is that it can mask vulnerable populations, notably the populations in the Yellowknife region. Nothing unique happening at a community level can be commented on in reports, although an analyst can observe data tables available in Appendices. Vulnerability theory predicts that communities have different abilities to remain resilient, that is they are better able to respond to and absorb change, when faced with crisis. The same crisis may therefore affect communities quite differently. Áutsel K'e has much higher rates of nurse-diagnosed injuries, for example, than other communities of the region and has a high rate of core need for housing, at 46.4%, while Yellowknife's core housing need is at 9.1%. This may be due to attentive reporting, over reporting, or to other factors, however the question arises whether this trend is noticed and probed. Behchoko stands out, not only for the level of STIs, but also for the number of police reported crimes per 1,000: 477 crimes were reported in 2005 (GNWT 2005). Violent crime rates are similarly high. Gamètɛ also stands out for a few statistics: a low participation rate, high income support cases, and low levels achieving high school or greater. Since the communities are treated in aggregate, alarming statistics in one community are never drilled into. N'dilo in particular suffers from being categorized always as part of Yellowknife and Dettah often falls into this data reporting catchment. As a result, specific trends in N'dilo are likely to be masked by the large population of Yellowknife. The potential for N'dilo to be most vulnerable exists, because citizens may be exposed to more potentially traumatic and addictive options (e.g., through easier access to drug and alcohol) and because there is much less ability to be self-determining in responding to crisis. People have constant access to the Gold Range street (a local colourful pub that has launched a street of pubs), the lost souls in Yellowknife come to

N'dilo looking for trouble after the bars close, and the possibility of gambling, addictions and the vices of the city are ever present. To buffer this, N'dilo youth have access to the high schools of Yellowknife as well as the recreation facilities and programs. Yet, teachers speak of how “these kids get lost” when they enter into two Yellowknife high schools, as no one follows them and supports them in their learning. However, trends in N'dilo are condemned to be anecdotal.

Unique historical conditions or shocks are not contextualized or considered in the analysis, as reporting starts at the onset of the first mines, and no community is identified as more at risk or vulnerable. The previous chapter illustrated the significance of history for communities, illustrating the range of shocks, and how these have affected groups differently. Geography also impacts on vulnerability, as mentioned in the case of N'dilo. Tâîchô communities, three of which have winter roads for extremely limited periods of time in the winter, are isolated from the worst city trends. N'dilo, Dettah and Behchok'o are connected physically in the former case and by road in the latter two cases. Helm (2000) suggested the time of greatest change for Behchok'o came with the arrival of the road, bringing the arrival of the prophet movement and intensive alcoholism.

While Helm (2000) identifies three forces of social change as the road, Eurocanadian schooling, and political conscientization, the *Communities and Diamonds* reports take no such broad vision. Perhaps the rates of STIs are due to a significantly different understanding of sexuality in Tâîchô communities, but this report will seek only mining as the key cause. If industry isn't the key force, then the change is irrelevant to the boundaries of the industrial monitoring program. There is myopia to anything outside of economic value (Scott 1998). It may be that there is no connection to be made with industry on each and every one of these variables, and that quite different causal factors may be at work (such as residential school, colonialism, or different notions of sexuality). With these models, there is simply no way to account for this complexity (West 2006), and therefore the simplistic connection of industry to each and every social variable of dysfunction is drawn. For example,

Jumps in STIs may be due to a number of factors. Rotational parenting related to mine employment can reduce supervision by parents. Alcohol and drug abuse brought on by higher incomes can bring on high-risk behaviour. A general disregard for the practice of safe sex raises the risk of exposure. (GNWT 2005, 10)

The key forces, rotational parenting, higher incomes, a disregard for safe sex practice, are explored as the only possibilities for explaining this epidemic. The assessments separate themselves from the forces of the past, carving away the legacies of schooling, segregation from

the mining economy and the legacy of abandoned mines, and seek reasons only in the immediate present. This is not to imply that corporations ought to accept responsibility for the forces of social change, but that change should be located within a broader frame, seeking to understand long term trends. Irlbacher Fox (2005) writes of this limited temporality as a social silencing of injustice. Primary causes of change are located in the present, and connected only to the mines and the communities.

In the impact assessment model, mining-induced change is the threat that can trigger critical reflection that merits effects management. This yields another critique of the model, namely that cumulative effects over the long term are not considered. The approach tends to classify the pre-industry levels as normal. For example, for injury deaths, “levels between 1996 and 1999 were higher than in the past. Yellowknife deaths fall within past levels” (GNWT 2005, 7). This analysis suggests that the past levels are normal and “acceptable”. Another example is the discussion of trends in consumption of meat or fish: “trends in the percent of households where half of or more of the meat or fish eaten is harvested, fall within the normal rate of change” (GNWT 2005, 48). Given that all households in small aboriginal communities consumed the vast majority of their food from the land not forty years ago, the short time frame for analysis throws the “normality” of this change into question. This reflects a social assessment or judgment that these pre-industry levels are acceptable.

The judgment of the proper path often underlies the indicator itself. For example, crowding is seen as a key social problem for housing. The report suggests:

People have been demanding more ‘living space’ at home. They are forming more households, with fewer members. Values, expectations, availability and incomes shape both the demand and supply of housing...A drop in crowding should bring improved standards of living. It could also mean changes to family and social structure, and social interaction. (GNWT 2005, 19)

If this is the case, this suggests a tight linkage between cultural and social indicators, so that as housing changes so might the nature of family, moving more towards the nuclear family model.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The connection is probably much less direct than this. The house a family lives in is connected to many other variables. Elders speak of how the house they first lived in as a child was owned by the family, as they built it themselves. They brought water to it and heated it with wood they gathered. Now, housing is built by the government, and owned by a mortgage company. Water and heat are new expenses. All of these shifts in housing accompany the shift from great mobility as semi-nomadic people became centered in communities in order to put children in school. The chains of explanation are much more complex than this, and clearly are more complex than this simple association made by the government analysts.

The GNWT program does not track responses to identified social trends, revealing the last critique of this system: there is no measurement or reporting on responses to trends that are identified, and therefore no accountability or transparency. However, references in the text of the report suggest that there has been some effort to mitigate impact in a few cases. On crime: the “RCMP has asked for and received more resources from the GNWT. The NWT may need a strategic placement of protective service if crime rates keep rising. As resource development expands, the NWT will need broader community wellness and public safety strategies involving the private sector, to help the RCMP and GNWT address potential growth in crime” (GNWT 2005, 24-25). On employment rates: “The Department of Education, Culture and Employment, in partnership with industry, has developed and put in place mine-related training and apprenticeship programs. This may make it more likely that people will stay living in their communities” (GNWT 2005, 36).

Yet, it is unclear how the government reacts to the data and responds to trends that have been identified. What are the triggers for action and mitigation of impact? How is the knowledge acted upon? Is it only when the mining is the direct cause that action is taken? These agreements are all designed for monitoring, rather than any kind of project-related follow-up. Indeed the agreements provide the option to the government to excuse itself from committing new funds or take action if negative project effects are proven. The first intervention was to capture more funds for Yellowknife based RCMP, and the second aims to build the capacity to support the mining industry. There may well be more initiatives responding to the industrial indicators program, however reporting makes no link to these apparent. Further, the linkages between Territorial departments (e.g., Industry, Investment and Tourism and Health and Social Services) are unclear, making it difficult to determine whether information is shared and acted upon by departments. Even as industry monitoring may only react to mining caused change, it could be raising the flag to other departments on critical issues that analysts believe may have other causes.

From this portrait, the indicators show the region to be improving, but is this how the communities see themselves? On many of the chosen indicators, jobs, income support, businesses, and education, improvements have been noted. The social indicators point to some increases in single-parent families, children in care, and crime rates. However, as De Beers comments on this in the environmental impact assessment for the Snap Lake mine:

An examination by De Beers of the trends and conclusions presented in the 2001 (Communities and Diamonds) report suggests that the two existing diamond projects appear to have had little or no negative impacts on social stability and

community wellness. This appears to be particularly true in the smaller communities. Some social conditions, such as the incidence of residential overcrowding and the percentage of the population with less than a grade 9 education, have in fact improved considerably in these communities. Although there were negative trends in some of the indicators in Yellowknife, the report indicated that it was not clear that these were due to the mines. (MVEIRB 2003, 194)

Aside from these improvements, these are dark visions of a community: while they tell us about some of the agreed upon social issues and opportunities, they do not tell us much about community wellness. Communities are not the aggregate sum of discrete socio-cultural variables. The social lives of more than 3,000 people living in nine communities have been reduced to 14 variables (West 2006) and they are all evaluated in relation to the dependent variable: mining. The chosen variables for wellness focus on dystopic aspects of community life: children in care, violence, addictions, suicide, injury, years of life lost, and diseases. Even as a community might be beating some of these variables down, the focus remains squarely on community dysfunction rather than accentuating community strengths. The reason given for dysfunction in this model is generally located within the community itself (Irlbacher Fox 2005), instead of in historical injustice or relationships. The model also has an evolutionary edge to it, focused as it is on the minority culture adhering to the rules and conforming to the vision of the dominant society. Two examples of this search for conformity are apparent in contemporary impact assessment literature:

Aboriginal community well-being could justifiably be considered more complex, since these communities are characterized by emerging conventional western ideologies and institutions as well as traditional and mixed elements. (Rattle 2005, 3)

In their different ways the Innu and Inuit communities of northern Labrador are hybrids of the traditional and the modern. ... They are still close enough to the land to feel the interdependence of the social, ecological, economic and cultural aspects of their lives.” (Gibson 2005, 337)

Both of these authors obliquely suggest that western ideologies are blending with aboriginal culture, but the implicit thought is that this force will overwhelm the “traditional” (West 2006). Here we see the persistence of dualisms of traditional and modern: either the aboriginal person acts as the western observer believes she must to be consistent with her culture in a way frozen in the past or she becomes modern and behaves like the western observer. The Innu and Inuit are deemed still *close enough* to the land, suggesting they have lost connection and will continue to do so. Every indicator in the *Communities and Diamond* report also has a



notion of progress underlying it: people should be employed, ought to have higher Euro-Canadian educations, ought to be involved in business, and should reduce all the social ills at the same time. If cultural variables, such as trapping, hunting, fishing and speaking an aboriginal language, can be maintained, then the system is working well. Communities, when charged with articulating visions for what constitutes wellness, suggest some of these variables have value, but so too do other community values.

There is no recognition in any of this reporting of culture as something that is held in Yellowknife by non-aboriginal people. This blindness to the analyst's own values, history and relationship reveals something of the government analyst and mining company: they fear no change to their own selves through this industrial endeavour. For example, the complete and utter loss of public space in Yellowknife as a response to public drunkenness was never considered, discussed or acted on since the diamond mines have opened. Yet, the increase in crime in Yellowknife since the mines have opened has been significant.

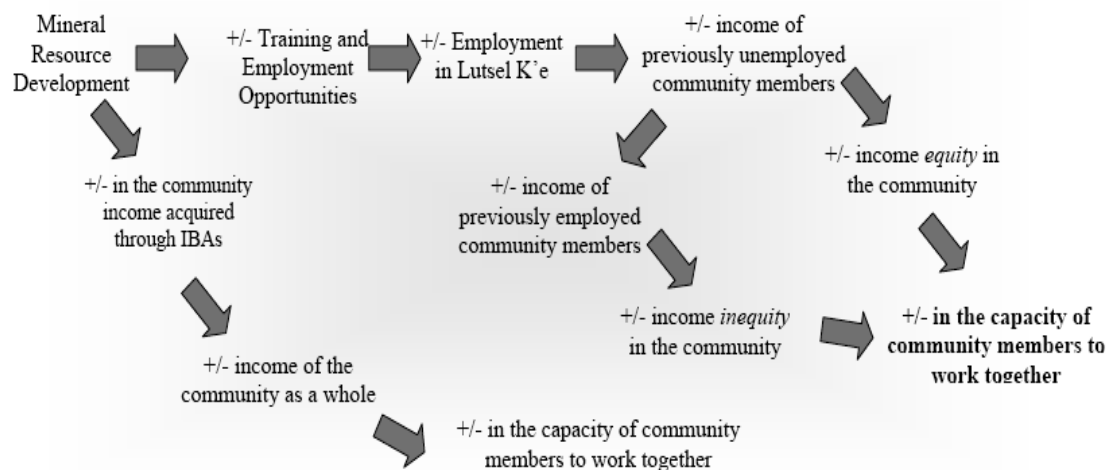
#### 4.3 Community visions

The system of impact assessment focuses first on quantitative expressions to understand change: social realities are reduced in order to count them and control them. As Scott (1998, 32) writes the aim is for "a rational system of measurement [...to...] promote a rational citizenry." With an oral tradition dependent on rich description and narrative as a base for cultural transmission, people in communities are conflicted as they engage with this new system of impact measurement. In order to make small gains or prove impact, impact must be spoken of and written about in the language of power. Not only must reports be rendered to the government in English, but they must quantify impact in order to count. Diavik Community Advisory Board members talk of the frustration they feel after speaking of impacts each year at meetings with government and the mine: until they quantify the impact, no action is taken. No amount of description is enough. They now produce their own accounts, written in the language that those in power can understand. Two alternative accounts of change are presented here: one based on Áutsel K'e community based monitoring and another based on Tâîchô community expressions. The first community based model is from Áutsel K'e.

#### 4.3.1 Áutsel K'e Dene First Nation community based monitoring

With funds from the West Kitikmeot/Slave Study,<sup>50</sup> Áutsel K'e Dene First Nation started research and monitoring community health in 1996, developing a set of indicators quite apart from those identified through the Socio-Economic Monitoring Agreements (Áutsel K'e Dene First Nation ND). Three key thematic areas were identified by people in Áutsel K'e, including self government, healing and cultural preservation. Figure 4.1 illustrates the impact pathways predicted by the Áutsel K'e study (economic ones only in this figure, although social, cultural and biophysical considerations were also included), while Figure 4.2 clusters the indicators around the three key themes. The approach of this research has yielded in depth information about perceptions of services, volunteerism, employment, concern for the environment, transmission of cultural knowledge, and perceptions of health. Research instruments sought both perceptions of topics (perceived wellness) as well as quantifiable actions (number of times youth were taken out on the land). The approach holds indicators in common with the GNWT model (employment, food consumption, trapping, fishing, hunting), as well as unique indicators (youth willingness to move, youth career goals, understanding of key cultural places).

Figure 4.1 “Togetherness” (Parlee *et al.* 2002, 79)

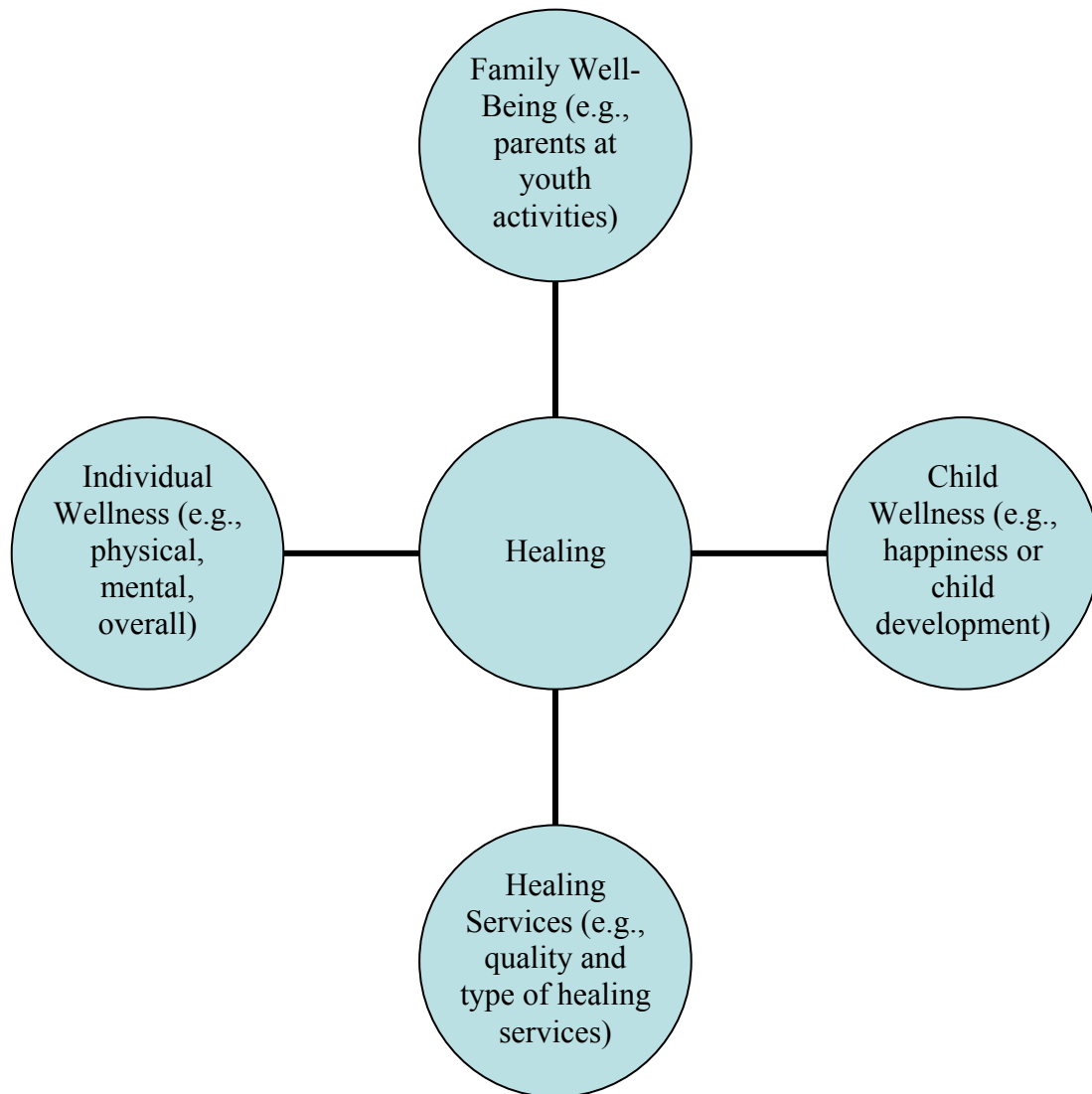


<sup>50</sup> The research is part of a federally funded cumulative effects study.

The community of approximately 250 people in Áutsel K'e is the focus: thus the potential for understanding vulnerabilities specific at this scale exists. The indicators are based on the articulated visions of the researchers and community members. Threats to values, such as self-government, healing and cultural preservation are core concerns. Just as in the *Communities and Diamonds* report, these indicators assume that participation in key areas will sustain these values. Many new indicators are included, such as participation in drum dancing, drumming, hand games, caribou use, and knowledge about spiritual sites. This last indicator, knowledge of spiritual sites, encodes transmission of knowledge as well as the knowledge of the site itself.

Embedded in development of these indicators is the question of whether industrial activity may threaten any of these key areas: culture, family, unity and control (termed in the report self-government). Authors that contributed to this approach use graphic displays to illustrate how mining might impact on these core areas, using impact hypotheses. Employment is seen as key to effective family and self governance, promoting the values of self respect and reliance. For example, the authors hypothesize training, employment and funds derived from Impact and Benefit Agreements might impact on togetherness (See Figure 4.1). These linear predictions are later evaluated.

Figure 4.2 Indicators for healing in the community health model by Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (not including self-government and cultural preservation (Parlee *et al.* 2002)



Main conclusions from the analysis were that not enough people were employed in the industry, people perceived a high environmental and social cost to mining, that adults rated themselves as having poor health and capacity to cope, and that there were many challenges to cultural well being. In this report, participation in cultural activities is seen as the key to continuity of culture. “For elders, living off the land is important for self respect and reflects a capacity for self reliance” (Parlee and Marlowe 2002, 97). With low levels of language use, and

low rates of participation in these skill areas, the researchers conclude that Áutsel K'e "faces a challenge in cultural preservation"<sup>51</sup> (Parlee and Marlowe 2002, 99).

Also unique to this approach is the methodology: methods of data collection are participatory, situationally relevant and involve locally situated researchers and community members. This method builds capacity at the same time as it ensures local interpretation of trends. For example when young people are found to be consuming caribou at levels higher than elders, the economical nature of country food is suggested as the reason for this rate difference. An elder advisory committee also directed the research and helped to interpret findings, which is likely why different rates in consumption is understood in this way. The inclusion of the elder, in combination with the local researcher, the outside researcher, and the cross-section of the generations is generative of a much more plausible analysis than was noted in *Communities and Diamonds* reports. The tendency to eliminate from view anything that interferes with the single commodity (Scott 1998) is also avoided by verifying the research with a locally grounded audience.

Monitoring has revealed a number of trends, and served as a basis for discussion and engagement. Information from monitoring has been used to develop Lands and Environment programs, and to serve as a baseline assessment for the opening Gahcho K'ue diamond mine project. Monitoring has tapered off in the past few years, given the departure of several highly involved researchers to academic posts. However, trained and capable researchers remain in the communities, but are left without funds to continue monitoring. This effort by Áutsel K'e has captured the imaginations of the communities in the region, who have used it as a model for determining impact through the Diavik Community Advisory Board. In 2004, each of the impacted communities was allocated funds through the Diavik Community Advisory Board to conduct self-monitoring. Oddly, these monitoring initiatives, however, are forced to focus on the impact of Diavik alone, due to the origin of the funds. When the Yellowknives Dene First Nation interviewed Ekati miners for their study, all data from these miners or their families had to be left out in reporting, in order to be consistent with the priorities of the funding agency. Many families have one miner at Diavik and another at Ekati, making this separation of mines completely inauthentic and arbitrary. While the government doesn't insist on this separation, and

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<sup>51</sup> This term, cultural preservation, implies that the communities will maintain something that existed in the past. A different concept, perhaps cultural development, might make sense to acknowledge how culture is flexible and adaptive.

in fact includes all three mines in the analysis, the companies continue to argue that communities have to separate impact by company.

These initiatives, because they lack core funding, are limited. Áutsel K'e had funds to conduct intensive monitoring for a few years and with DCAB funds was able to capture data again in 2006, but ongoing monitoring is not assured and requires use of scarce local resources. The other communities have conducted community based monitoring for the first time in 2006, but it is unclear how the government and industry is responding to these reports, or indeed how the communities themselves will use them.

While this model holds the potential to understand vulnerability of the community of Áutsel K'e, it does not probe sub-populations, such as the particular vulnerabilities of women, elders or youth. Neither does it hold the potential of comparison to other communities of a similar size, given that the indicators are situationally specific. However, with community members interpreting data, history is more likely to surface in explanations of change and complex reasons for trends may be identified. Cumulative impacts are also more likely to be suggested. And finally, since the system is developed locally, pressure for local mitigation can be applied.

The Áutsel K'e Dene has adopted the language of the impact assessors, using these reports based on quantitative measures, adapting it with some effort to the local context and employing qualitative expressions. At the same time, the crucial context and meaning behind these indicators has also been reported. This approach blends qualitative and quantitative data to provide the context for understanding how a community perceives mining may impact on wellness. Another indigenous approach to analyzing change is practiced through community meetings.

#### 4.3.2 Tâîchô Community indicators workshop

Another example of evaluation of change emerged through a community meeting. In this case, there was no intent to develop quantitative measures to define wellness. Rather, the meeting was held in a remote community, in the aboriginal language, and at the critical moment before the land claim and self government agreement was to be signed with the federal government. Tâîchô people were gathered together to discuss “community indicators”, however the local practices of measurement would have been entirely invisible to the state (Scott 1998). In the meeting, there was never discussion of metrics, indicators, or measurement.

Instead, the meeting was characterized by a series of formal speeches, each of which served to affirm some central themes, ideas and policies. The manner of travel to the meeting revealed that this was to be a unique meeting, a “practice of freedom” (Tully 2000) by Tâîchô people. For example, the central leader and the translator traveled together over the 220 km for 36 hours to come to the meeting, leaving meeting participants to wait for the arrival and speculate on reasons for their delay. When he arrived, the Grand Chief described the journey:

That’s what we mean by talking about being strong like two people. In example, that’s what I’ve been doing by traveling this way. I am not saying you’re not doing these things but it’s important for the future. And it’s always good to travel on the land. I am tired / exhausted but I’m not worried about it. I wanted to travel on the land by skidoo and no one asked me to do it. I just wanted to do it.  
(February 4, 2005)

This two day meeting (discussed at the outset of this chapter), conducted entirely in Dogrib, was about community wellness indicators and visioning. Harry Simpson’s account of change, at the outset of this chapter, was made on the second day of the meeting. Through the example of this journey, the leader encouraged a time of self reflection and visioning for the future. Although the four Tâîchô communities are closely related through kin, the last meeting of this scope, with leaders, elders, negotiators and senior social service providers, had been 15 years previous. In that meeting, elders had surfaced the guiding philosophy of “strong like two people” for education, social services and health.<sup>52</sup>

Threats to language and culture were the two key areas that were touched on throughout the two day meeting, neither of which can be easily measured. Instead of creating measurements, people at the meetings spoke about the meaning of them. Through the surfacing of the topic by one elder, and the following affirmation by another speaker, the weight of a topic was established:

So we follow whatever they think is best for us. We follow what they say and in the future when we have Self Government, we will take over the government’s place. But we’re not saying we will measure our people the same way. We have come this far with our culture and we cannot lose it. And we’ve come to here to discuss how can we continue to use our ways (culture)? (Speech by John B. Zoe, February 4, 2005).

Here, the self government negotiator reminds the group that one of the achievements of self determination is that measurement need not happen in the way of the dominant society. Elder

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<sup>52</sup> This concept, “strong like two people”, is credited to one elder, Chief Jimmy Bruneau. After he passed away, a group of elders met together to understand the meaning of Chief Bruneau’s words. This phrase was chosen as the way to describe the Chief’s meaning for how Tâîchô people must move forward. It has since become the guiding philosophy for the regional high school, and the phrase is used constantly to describe how people ought to be.

Harry Simpson suggested: “we must all one-minded and stick together” (Community meeting, February 4, 2005). Key values, emerging in every speech by an elder, were the importance of unity, working together and earning the right to practice skills and values.

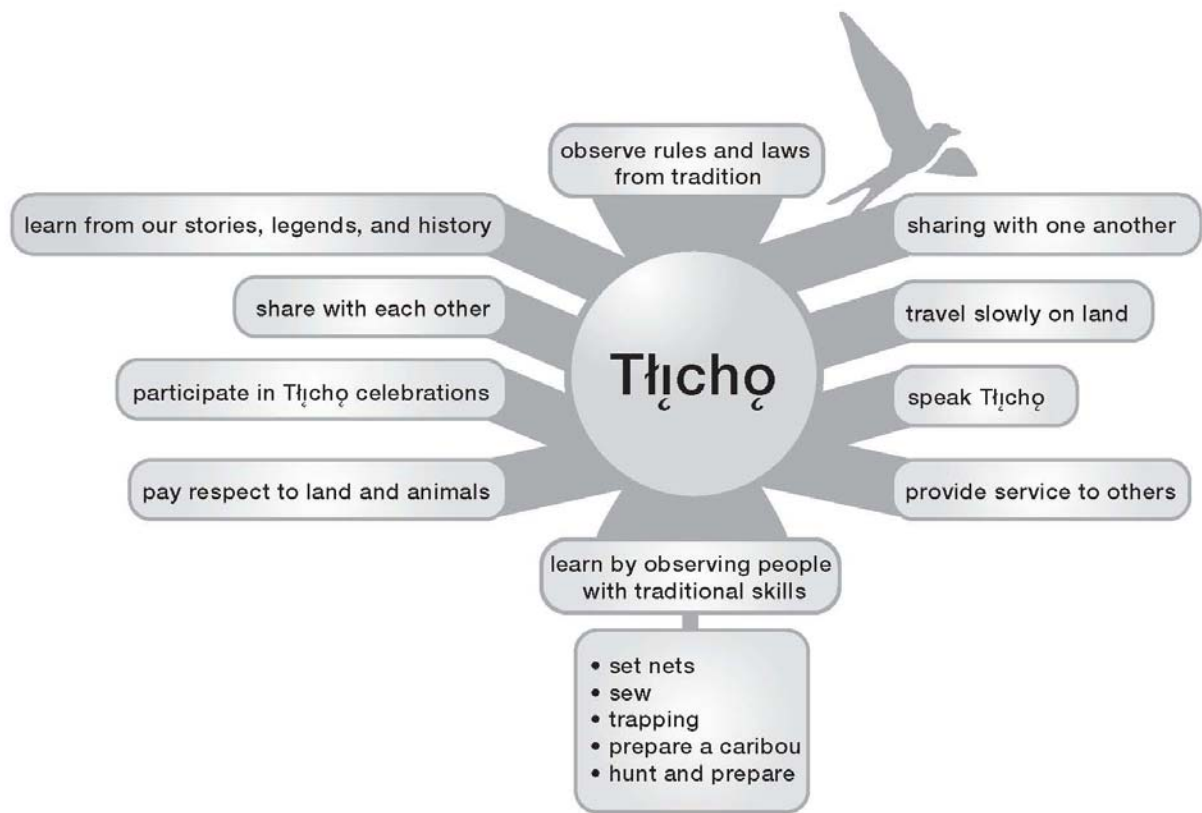
Elders serve in this role of teacher, passing knowledge about how to live well in the land down through the generations (Legat 2007). They have earned this knowledge through their life on the land, practicing critical skills such as hunting, trapping and fishing. Each Tâîchô person can earn the right to know about skills and values, if they are in right relation with elders and other people. One Tâîchô teacher suggested: “When we talk about values, we’re talking about living the right way and doing the right thing” (February 5, 2005). Elders most often speak of specific activities, like chopping wood for others, bringing water, bringing supplies for elders from Yellowknife, and sharing food harvested on the land. It is through activities such as these that the values of hard work, sharing, and serving others in relationships are learned. At the same time, skills are acquired, such as wood chopping, caribou harvesting, and surviving at extreme temperatures. Figure 4.3 illustrates elements of what it means to live daily practicing these values.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The two day meeting was transcribed, translated from Dogrib, and then analyzed, using thematic codes. The meeting summary was disseminated to the people who attended the meeting and follow-up interviews done to confirm codes and themes.



Figure 4.3 Living according to Tâîchô values



According to elders in the meeting, to live according to Tâîchô ways involves:

- ◇ listening to the legends and history told by elders about animals, people and the past. A Tâîchô wellness worker suggested, “We know people by the stories they tell us” (February 5, 2005);
- ◇ providing elders and families with help, by cutting wood, doing chores, and bringing elders’ material they need from Yellowknife. A person that practices these activities learns skills and values that are essential to a good life. For each one of these activities, there are values that are taught, such as strength, endurance, effort, patience and humility. Young people earn the right to learn about skills and practices by providing these services to their elders and families;
- ◇ observing the rules, practices and laws of the Tâîchô tradition. For example, many rituals must be observed to respect the land, animals and neighbours. A central practice is “paying

the land”, which involves the request of safe passage through the land, after a token has been given to the land and animals;

- ◇ sharing among the families and “drinking tea together” (Elder, February 5, 2005). This act involves both sharing and taking time for one another. Leaders and Chiefs, in particular, were called on to visit people in their homes and to visit high school students;
- ◇ Traveling slowly through the land together, learning the place names that guide people from one place to the next and visiting sacred sites. Elders speak of the land as a teacher, therefore they make the suggestion to young people to slow down, observe and travel by the land’s requirements rather than by their own personal schedule. John B. Zoe described the “Trails of Our Ancestors” canoe trips that are taken yearly by the Tâîchô:

Every summer we take canoe trips on the old trails with our people. The elders come along with us, the youth look at the elders and learn from them. They see all the different things we do and they learn from it. The place names, burial sites, old campsite of how people lived, location of fishing areas, location of good wood, how to make a fire and everything else. Sometimes we get lucky with a big game and they learn the skinning and butchering process. They learn how to cook meat on the open campfire. They learn how to set a fish net. They just observe at first, but eventually if they don’t do that work, they will not eat. (February 4, 2005);

- ◇ learning by observing people with traditional skills. Skills that are emphasized by elders are setting traps and nets, hunting, cleaning animals, and lighting a campfire that will burn properly;
- ◇ speaking the language as often as possible, in church, meetings, dances, songs, rituals. A language worker suggested, “We know our language is alive because we speak our language and we use it. We know our language is alive because yesterday when we were singing, we sang in our language. We’re all sitting here at this meeting and we are speaking our language” (February 5, 2005);
- ◇ raising children speaking the Dogrib language, practicing Tâîchô rituals, and learning about the land. A language worker suggested, “If we want the Tâîchô language and culture to be strong, we have to look back to see how our leaders used to help other as parents. How they used to raise children” (February 5, 2005).
- ◇ participating in Tâîchô celebrations, such as feasts, dances, and games;
- ◇ valuing each person for what they can do;
- ◇ eating together and sharing traditional foods, and

- ◇ listening yearly at the traditional feast for guidance for the group for the following year. John B. Zoe suggested:

A long time ago, when our people made agreements with each other and left messages for one another, they didn't sit around the table everyday and talk about one another. They had Treaty time once a year. They gathered in the summer and made plans with one another. They talked about the plans for the winter. How they will visit one another and what location. They make plans and follow that plan all winter and accomplish it. They do that until the next summer or until they gather again. That was really important. People listen and want to follow what is said. The traditional speech is made at a feast. (February 5, 2005)

At the meeting, people spoke about policy and action to implement self government. This evaluation of the status of wellness reveals a number of themes. First, it was clear that opportunities for transmitting knowledge are decreasing, as revealed by this statement by John B. Zoe:

As for the trails, there are no signs telling you the directions. Nowadays, when the skidoos breakdown, we don't know how we're suppose to help one another. If a person is sent out to help stranded travelers, we don't know how he's supposed to get assisted. We don't know how he's supposed to get help with fuel and oil. We don't know if he's supposed to get anything for it or what. We are not sure about this situation and so, we just look at one another. So if a person wants to go out on the land and do something, we are a little hesitant. (February 4, 2005)

The collective evaluation of this knowledge loss is in itself transformative. Together people established that a unique definition of wellness exists: living well, according to the Tâîchô people of this meeting, involves daily relationships with others, as achieved through speaking the language, eating food together, practicing skills, and learning through observation. Every aspect of how to live well together is about relationships: a person keeps well through social relationships with others, involving exchange of time, services and food. The meeting also rolls measurement, evaluation and action into one: at the same time as an assessment of collective wellness is asserted, affirmed, and evaluated, the guidance on how to move forward is made. For example, Harry Simpson gave guidance on language and culture:

So as we are getting ready again, we have to teach the young people, the traditional ways, our language, the place names, names of lakes / rivers and so on in Dogrib. If we do that it will be good. I want you to think about it carefully and do something about it. I have been involved with various boards / committees for many years. I have been on the school board in Gamètî for 14 years. And I've noticed there's always a lack of funding for cultural programs. So we used to take our children out on the land a little ways. (February 5, 2005)

Just as Scott has suggested, this kind of policy is illegible to the state (1998). While a government analyst might expect funds for addictions strategy to emerge from such a meeting, or crime prevention, this meeting and others that followed it (May 4-6, 2007) have led to funds being allocated for vision quests for people who are “lost”, so that the unemployable young men in the community can go attended to a sacred mountain by an elder to seek a dream and knowledge. The meeting therefore included measurement along with evaluation and identification of policy outcomes. Speeches in a collective setting continue to provide the guidance needed for self government, which suggests elder knowledge continues to be relevant (Cruikshank 1990). The speeches also reveal the educational strategies apparent in story telling and speeches (Cruikshank 1990, 340).

The persistence of stories and story telling suggests that oral narrative is central to an indigenous intellectual tradition and provides the core of an educational model.

Underlying these narratives, just as with the model by Áutsel K’e, is a classification of vulnerability as forces that threaten self determination and continuity of culture and language. The Áutsel K’e model viewed employment as the means to reinforce self reliance and service to others. However, in the Tâîchô account, there is no quantification of aspects of these practices or exchanges. Instead, there is critical reflection on the issues and practices and reinforcement of these through discussion. When the social context that matters to the community is understood and analyzed, it is not the variables of dysfunction and loss that are spoken of, nor are the solutions those that settler society generally prescribes.

Over the course of the meeting, the group evaluated progress, change and wellness through this structured dialogue. The Tâîchô system ties up many elements of assessment, with identification, measurement, effects management, and dissemination. Local, contextual answers to the challenge of shifting knowledge emerged (Scott 1998), such as the vision quest for young men. The meeting opened with speeches by leaders, followed by elders and the self government negotiator. On the second day, the social and educational service leaders provided their perspectives on service needs, strength and delivery. The meeting closed with reflections by the same elders and leaders again. Elders spoke of the skills, the knowledge, and the way life has been. Through the exchange of this information, the group collectively evaluated wellness. As core Dene values are group unity and relationships, the primary way of evaluating wellness is through discussion and exchange.

If a comparison were to be made to indicators, the topics and elements of speeches might themselves serve as the indicator. Magnitude of change is reflected in the range of occurrences

of the topic or element in subsequent speeches. For example, when values learned in practice of skills and exchange are mentioned by one elder, each time they are repeated in another speech, the importance and magnitude of this change is reinforced. Change is thus described in stylized narratives. A social fact is discussed, negotiated and agreed upon through constant expression. The information is then shared through the communities and families at appointed times, such as on Sundays or in church. Again, sharing of this information is achieved through dialogue. Harry Simpson said: “whenever I get back home from meetings, I usually talk about meetings until I am out of spit. I talk to them really good on Sundays and pray with them too” (February 4, 2005). Certainly there are moments of silence or taboo topics that seem not to arise, the most salient of which is child abuse. In a very close knit community with thick kinship ties, many elders have been quick to privately and publicly defend abusers, with little understanding of a case. Yet these kinds of tough topics tend not to emerge in these public settings.

Once a social fact has been established, such as the change in how people travel through and know the land, mitigation is proposed. By traveling to the meeting on skidoo and going through such hardship, the Grand Chief and the translator reinforced to others core values. Their progress was remarked on at points throughout the meeting until they arrived and it was the main topic of conversation at breaks. The elders talked of their responsibility for youth, to educate and raise them well. Workshops and meetings are recognized as a critical forum for making decisions collectively:

But when you listen to meetings, people teach you things about different issues. In other areas, people have many problems. If you listen to them, you notice that it's because of poor communication. They don't have meetings like this and no communication. So that's why people talk about more communication and the Chiefs should visit the schools and people more. That's what it is, there's no communication and that's what they're talking about. (Speech by Harry Simpson, February 4, 2005)

Actions to enhance community wellness are proposed, such as funding for cultural curriculum, education, and schools. The core actions are about re-establishing relationships and unity. However, because these narratives do not resemble the social facts known to the dominant society and within the system of impact assessment, they are not rendered a part of the system of accounting. Perhaps that is just as well, since these topics and discussions are one of the few places where a group can be free of the rules and structures of the dominant society. However there is much frustration expressed in socio-economic boards after these types of narratives are produced to be met by silence and neglect by the people who either do not understand them or consider them beyond their mandate.

#### 4.4 Analysis

Each system of data analysis and reporting is uniquely situated within a cultural framework, following rules, logics, and systems. The Åutsel K'e system sits in-between, communicating in the language of power, but using the core values and criteria identified locally. It straddles the systems, managing to supply data to the mines and the government, while at the same time communicating back to the people who supplied the data. The different ways of analyzing change are identified in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Comparison of community assessment methods

	GNWT (2006)	ÅUTSEL K'E DENE FIRST NATION (ND)	TÅÎCHÔ NATION (2005)
Indicators	Data that provides information about health	Data on wellness, as related to three core values: self-government, cultural preservation and healing	Discussion of changes or wellness
Form	Quantitative data	Quantitative and qualitative data	Elements or topics raised in a speech
Measurement	Statistical data gathered by analyst, aggregated, and displayed in graphic form over time period	Both statistical data and interview data gathered by local and non-local researchers over a short period of time; limited in ability to show trends over time because of lack of continuity in funding and researchers	Discussion and exchange during meetings; the range of occurrences a key to magnitude and severity of change
Interpretation	Specialized analysis connect data to pathway, analyzing relationship to mining, without local context	Analyzed through interviews, focus groups and with the help of local elders and researchers	Through joint discussion, the relevance and meaning of change is discussed
Mitigation	Recommendations are made to the NWT in writing; the Minister then responds in writing without discussing mitigation with communities	Recommendations locally defined, but often not taken up by government (either Chief and Council or territorial)	Ideas forwarded in meetings are agreed to and taken up locally; example of sending troubled youth on a vision quest
Outcomes	Reports; potentially-affected communities express frustration at lack of mitigation and discussion of results between parties	Reports have ripple effect as other communities adapt model (e.g., Yellowknives Dene) (Gibson <i>et al.</i> 2003)	New program funding for canoe trips; sense of urgency; vision questions and greater communication

Table 4.4 illustrates how the structure and form for narratives differs, depending on the forum. People provide narratives to understand change (Cruikshank 1990), select key pieces to highlight, and determine the significance of information in order to contextualize the importance of change, especially change that is linked to the mines. Where a trend is observed, the analyst of the *Communities and Diamonds* work seeks to link it to mining, but *only* to mining, illustrating how anything that interferes with the production of the single commodity, diamonds, is eliminated (Scott 1998). The system is, as Scott (1998) labels scientific forestry accounting, myopic, eliminating anything outside of economic value, such as the aesthetics, rituals or sentimental values. Judgments of what constitutes normal ranges of change are made, ignoring history. In the communities, links are made much more broadly, seeking changes in values through time and identifying a range of shocks and forces.

To understand the practices of measurement, they must be related to the interests of each party: the mining company, the government and the communities. Scott (1998, 27) suggested that every act of measurement is an act marked by the play of power relations. A core measure for the mining company is the size of the ore body: the company always hopes that the results of exploration activity will allow them to report higher reserves. Other measures, such as number of employees, gender of employees, and business dollars, are completed to satisfy regulatory audiences as well as aboriginal parties. These sorts of statistics are prized apart by community members, who wish to see companies complying with agreements, proving their commitments by providing the names of employees. Bound by the Privacy Act, the companies instead provide the number of man hours completed by aboriginal individuals. This hourly body count doesn't suffice to secure community trust. Yet it, and the other measures, comprises the extent of corporate reporting. The government is bound by multiple mandates: on the one hand, the need to summarize impact through this statistical portrait and mitigate impact, on the other the need to maximize economic benefits and spin-offs. The state is tasked with measuring, monitoring and while there is a mandate to mitigate, it appears little has been achieved to reduce impacts, once they are proven. The government account is a forensic audit, protecting state interests. The accounting never probes deeply enough to uncover unique vulnerabilities, nor does the mitigation ever truly engage the impacts raised by communities. When consensus was reached on key recommendations to make to the company and the GNWT by the communities, a summary report based on community narratives was created (DCAB 2005). Multiple recommendations were made, and some even highlighted the particular vulnerability of a community, as illustrated here: "Put more money towards language loss programs. Language



loss is an issue in Áutsel Ke and needs immediate attention before 100% of the younger generation lose its Chipewyan speaking ability” (DCAB 2005, 25). The government took more than a year to respond, even after DCAB sent letters requesting a reply. The government made no effort to engage the communities in discussion and released a report that used two criteria to assess whether to mitigate the change: 1) whether the change fell under the SEMA obligations, and 2) whether programs already existed to contend with the suggestion (GNWT-ITI *et al.* 2007). This bureaucratic behaviour illustrates two things. First, the government negated the social relations that exist, although the SEMA suggest dialogue ought to occur, the government issued this bureaucratic response without once negotiating or communicating with the communities. Second, the government aims to protect itself, conducting a distanced and cold audit that prepares the ground for minimal interventions. The social arenas that are analyzed continually increase in breadth, so that language and culture become within the reach of the state, rather than in the communities. This involves an ever stronger marriage of the state and the social (Agrawal 2005). Agrawal suggests that governmental actions target individuals: “it is changes in the practices of individual persons, with each member of society and all of them collectively constituting the social, that are the object of regulation” (Agrawal 2005, 219). The high STI rate requires changes in individual behaviour, so government regulation aims to reshape the individual in their own image. The behaviour of the GNWT conforms to what Agrawal calls “governmentality”: “The construction of steadily more elaborate lists and tables about the qualities of the population, the effort to know the rhythms and regularities of the social, the launching of the processes that “make up people” (Hacking as quoted in Agrawal 2005), and the governance of these people are all thus part of governmentality” (Agrawal 2005, 219).

These accounts might reinforce one another: perhaps the quantitative data can serve as a signal or canary in the mine and the qualitative data can explain the meaning, as well as bring new narratives to bear. Perhaps the analysts could analyze trends noted in the data gathered at the regional level with local input, so that grounded explanations might emerge, explanations that grasp past the mining induced change hypothesis. However, some narratives are in the realm of the sacred, meant to generate social exchange in a specific forum. The Tâîchô workshop was profoundly important to those citizens that attended, but it may not gain purchase in other contexts. Given that the workshop included many formal speeches about travel, history and the practices help people to live well, these narratives may have been discounted by non-aboriginal listeners who do not understand the context for these speeches. These narratives are suggestive of the practices of culture, as interpreted by some anthropologists as the key assumptions and

practices which inform everyday life (Trigger 2000). They are also suggestive of alternative methods for understanding social change that might direct environmental assessment. They may be mutually compatible accounts, given that each has limitations. The community driven reporting usually involves self-reported change, involves communally designed methods, and looks for causal links and relations with other chains of change, and holds the potential to understand cumulative and historical change. The impact assessment model is quantifiable, involves measures chosen and assessed by outsiders, is relatively lacking in local context and therefore is not sensitive to vulnerabilities, and has a narrow vision of pathways of change. While quantitative research illustrates trends, qualitative research finds impacts of greatest concern, and proposes appropriate mitigation. Together, these systems might avoid simplifying culture into practice, begin to characterize communities outside of the deficit model terms, rely on longer term histories and provide local explanations of change.

Ultimately, these narratives of change are designed to measure, monitor and mitigate. They involve a social judgment on the “facts” or about what bears witnessing, and hold out the promise of effects management if vulnerability is found. The *Communities and Diamonds* report seems bent on making people over in the image of the settlers, adapting to market forces, improving housing status, and reducing the dysfunctions of “transitions” that settler society deems inevitable in their narratives of change. It conforms to Scott’s assessment of forestry accounting, creating a “rational system of measurement aimed at promoting a rational citizenry” (Scott 1998, 32). These accounts show quite different narratives of wellness: one casts communities into fourteen discrete variables (West 2006) of dysfunction, while others consider wellness as a function of relationships, the strength of culture and identity. That the government system fails to respond to community based recommendations, and that government administrators often fail to listen well in meetings, tends to magnify distrust and alienation. The 2005 report with recommendations from the communities took until 2007 to elicit a GNWT response, generating further frustration in the tools and processes of power.

At the very least, this analysis points to the relevance of dialogue. Dialogue is not just an exercise. It is the practice of culture. While government and mining representatives may see public participation largely as a legally required step in the process of developing a mine, the Tâîchô, for example, see these dialogues as serving a much wider variety of functions. For them, they serve as a renewal of relations, strengthening of ties, and an opportunity to recap and reorient and make consensual decisions about future directions.

## 5 AGREEMENT MAKING IN THE ERA OF DIAMOND MINING

The diamond mines, though within the traditional territories of the Dene and Métis, were withdrawn from land claim negotiations with the federal governments. The only way to therefore negotiate any rights to this territory, since land title could never be achieved with the Crown, was to argue for bilateral agreements with the mining companies. This small space for negotiation was hard won—and represents both a huge loss and a small gain. The territory was claimed and so that it was withdrawn by the Crown means those mineral rights and the royalties they represent are lost. That they can negotiate this small space means that the mines will engage with the indigenous economy in a more substantive way than in the past. The agreements represent a new set of social relations in the extractive industries, bringing outcomes such as employment, funds and business. As the leadership of communities negotiated these agreements, they sought to gain new possibilities of livelihoods for citizens, developing the structures and opportunities of resilience. These relations are bilateral, consisting of a new partnership of communities and companies. Since agreement making occurs outside of the realm of the government, there are new possibilities of independence. However, there are structural limits on the boundaries of these social relations. Even though land claims negotiations are not prejudiced by what occurs in the course of environmental impact assessment, the relationship of the land claims process and federal policy combine to create an architecture that limits possibilities, with the government as a shadow presence to agreements.

The Tâîchô and Akaitcho continue the practice of agreement making, as evidenced in Treaties 8 and 11 and the peace agreement of Edzo and Akaitcho. In these previous agreements, relationships were formed, often settling a conflict, and ratification occurred through constant practice of ritual or exchange. Relationships continue to be a central focus—and the practice of good relations with neighbours is seen to be instrumental to achieving positive outcomes. This approach to agreement making is not matched by the Treaty mining companies, for a number of reasons: the lack of faith to central commitments, the high turnover in managerial staff who are critical to implementation, and the privileged relationship of managers to the parent corporation, rather than to communities.

There is tremendous academic interest in the agreement making that has taken form between aboriginal and corporate parties (Dreyer 2002; Galbraith and Bradshaw 2005; Galbraith 2003; Gibson 2005; Sosa and Keenan 2001). These new agreements have taken on a mystique, in part because they are confidential, but also because of the sense that they may be

emancipatory (Irlbacher Fox and Ellis 2007) or transformative. They represent a new social compact made between two groups (Sahlins 1965): they are new in that they prescribe social relations where there was none before (Helm 1966). These social relations, however, have to be proven to the mining companies and the government, just as with land claims. It is unclear how these tests of identity influence the outcomes of IBAs, given the agreements are confidential.<sup>54</sup>

The confidentiality of agreements opens up the possibility for the imagination to roam, given the exclusion of the government oversight, something that the groups that were able to argue their ways to the negotiating table have done. However confidentiality also holds great risks, given that it keeps communities from discussing agreements with each other (Bielawski 2004), the media or other political groups (O’Faircheallaigh 2007a). It can constrain a group from lobbying the government about the project and may even reduce capacity to influence government decision-makers (O’Faircheallaigh 2007a).

These agreements hold the potential to secure a new bundle of opportunities and allow new acts of freedom on the “rough terrain of colonialism” (Tully 2000), but they continue to represent partial and incomplete accommodation of aboriginal interests. The agreements secure a stable and compliant labour force (Wolf 1982), reduce social and political risks to land tenure/mineral rights, and create business partners for the company, while the communities provide their labour, their political will, and access to their land. However, three aspects of the agreements constrain the reciprocity of the agreements. First, the agreements are restricted in how reciprocity is understood and acted upon daily. Second, adaptation is largely in the hands of the communities to enter into the market. Third, the appeal is always made to the “politics of difference” (Tully 2000), leaving accommodation in the realm of the aboriginal parties. Culture, as it is articulated in these agreements, is always seen as something possessed by the “Other”. Government models held culture and language as something only in the realm of aboriginal communities, as shown in Chapter 4. The same approach to culture is taken in the new Agreements with the Treaty mining companies. This chapter opens with a description of the agreements, how they come to be negotiated, and then describes the nature of reciprocity and culture as they are understood by parties.

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<sup>54</sup> It is perhaps this confidentiality that causes these agreements to hold a mystique, so that academics try mightily to collect them as though they were hockey cards. Ciaran O’Faircheallaigh (2007a) made this comment at the Society for Applied Anthropology meetings in 2006, impishly suggesting academics have started to make trades in these “hockey cards”.

## 5.1 A negotiation story

As they negotiated an IBA with De Beers, the Tâîchô sent the Grand Chief to meet in “lock down” in Edmonton, with only a single technical advisor as back up for three days until the agreement was concluded. The Grand Chief was selected because he had the strongest personal relationship with the head negotiator of the company. The strength of this personal relationship was considered a guarantee of a good agreement. That they were almost “kin” would ensure that the company would bargain in good faith. This, the third agreement with a diamond mining company, secured funds, the promise of employment, business opportunities and the promise of consultation between the company and the political leadership.

Relationships of kin in this anecdote are portrayed as the critical way to secure the outcome of a good agreement. At a recent mining industry conference where the community presented alongside a mining company about a proposed mine, the Tâîchô leader opened the presentation speaking of how the co-presenter was like family. This focus on relationships is consistent with the past, where strangers, animals, neighbours have been made over into friends and family through agreement making. This new party to agreement making, the corporation, continues this past practice of sharing information and knowledge with neighbours, making strangers over into friends. Yet, throughout this chapter, the inability to reciprocate this relationship by the mining company will be described, because of the corporate structure, the failure to advance aboriginal people in employment, and a myopic view of the nature of the relationship.

## 5.2 Corporate-community agreements

Prior to the 1990s, mineral development occurred in the north with little consent or consultation with aboriginal people. The practice of agreement making has followed on legal decisions, as well as on the inclusion of Section 35 in the Canadian Constitution, which provides constitutional protection of aboriginal and Treaty rights. Since then, political, legal and regulatory decisions have followed suit, creating pressure for businesses to also conform. Court cases, in particular, have prompted the shift, such as the Australian High Court’s recognition of native title in *Mabo* (O’Fairchaeallaigh 2007a) and the consequent enactment of the Commonwealth Native Title Act in 1993. Some Canadian judgments in the 1990s suggested that jurisdiction over territory was dependent on the existence of political rights before contact (*Delgamuukw* 1991), with the suggestion from the Supreme Court of British Columbia that

indigenous people were not “sufficiently advanced to have collective political rights requiring recognition by the British Crown” (Asch 2005, 432). However, other court cases have affirmed rights to land and resources were not extinguished with Treaty (*Paulette* 1973) and reinforced the Crown’s duty to consult, suggesting that the duty cannot be delegated (*Taku River Tlingit* 2005). The practice and theory of corporate social responsibility has followed suit from these judgments with a promise to accommodate aboriginal interests through consultation. The first agreements began to arise in the late 1970s (O’Fairchaellaigh 2006a).

These agreements mark a departure in the history of the Canadian extractive industries. In the absence of federal or territorial policy guidance, these agreements are now seen as the cost of doing business, as mentioned by one federal employee:

The days are gone whereby a resource developer can come down and do whatever they want to do and bugger off. The communities have got sophisticated over time as well too, and what they are basically saying is just like the resource developer wants to maximize the wealth of the shareholders, they also want to maximize the standard of living and wealth of their people. (Federal employee, August 18, 2006)

The past relationship between the aboriginal people and settler society has been described as one of strangers:

Although neither Whites nor Indians would be at Rae except of the others’ presence, the areas and means of social interaction are for the most part narrowly defined, and they operate as largely separate social worlds, with only occasional individuals in the two groups entering into any kind of peer relationship. Treaty discussions made evident both the interdependence and the mutually unsatisfactory channels of communication on which such interdependence is based (Helm and Lurie 1966, 7)

Although Helm is not referring to the extractive industries, other economic scholarship illustrates the complete lack of engagement with the aboriginal population (Jellies 1977). Historically, Dene and Métis communities provided secondary services to the mines, such as cutting and slashing, wood provision and sewing services.

While a variety of agreements are negotiated to provide hiring and business targets for northern aboriginal parties, the IBAs hold the opportunity to achieve benefits for the particular group. Corporate-community agreements that have arisen, following on precedents in Australia (O’Faircheallaigh 2006a) and elsewhere in Canada (such as the 1995 Raglan Agreement), to manage social, cultural and environmental impacts of mineral development in the NWT. Following Shanks (2006), this thesis employs the term IBA, while noting the range of terms such as partnerships agreements, participation agreements, benefits agreements, accommodation

agreements and exploration agreements. The term “IBA” covers only the contractual agreement between companies and aboriginal authorities, but there are other bilateral and multilateral agreements (largely corporation-community-government) that have arisen to deal with environmental and social impact monitoring and mitigation. While IBAs are confidential, the categories of agreement are well known in the literature and often presented in meetings or in summary. Generally, the agreements cover:

- Provisions on training, employment and business, and funds through a variety of models as well as scholarships;
- Terms for how the community may be involved in the project;
- The intent of an effective working relationship;
- The goal of respecting the economy, culture and environment, and
- The intent of minimizing disruption and impact.

Galbraith (2005) terms these agreements, in combination with others that have arisen, *supraregulatory* agreements, which she defines as “legally binding, project-specific agreements that are not described in existing legislation” (Galbraith 2005, 43) arguing that these agreements arise in part as a result of deficiencies in the environmental assessment process (Galbraith and Bradshaw 2005). This analysis tends to under-emphasize the context of aboriginal rights and the assertions of claims over the land, by far a more significant trigger to such agreements. IBAs have been signed with Ekati and Participation Agreements with Diavik with the parties to each described in Table 5.1. IBAs are completed with political or geographic communities to identify a range of benefits and to mitigate impacts. Other agreements negotiated at the Territorial level, taking into account the interests of all citizens of the Territory, rather than the distinct interests only of the impacted groups are also reviewed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Summary of agreements with mines

	BHP BILLITON (1996-1998)	DIAVIK (2000-2001)
Impact and Benefit Agreement or Participation Agreement	Separate agreements with Tlicho; Akaitcho Treaty 8; North Slave Métis Alliance and Kitikmeot Inuit Association	Separate Participation Agreements with the Tâîchô Government; Yellowknives Dene First Nation; Åutsel K’e Dene First Nation; North Slave Métis Alliance and the Kitikmeot Inuit Association
Socio-economic Agreement	Ekati and GNWT are signatories	Ekati, GNWT and the impacted aboriginal authorities are signatories
Environmental Agreement	Ekati and GNWT are signatories	Ekati, GNWT and the impacted aboriginal authorities are signatories

O’Faircheallaigh (2007a) has suggested that the burden of research on agreements has focused on the “winning” of agreements themselves, rather than on their implementation. The bulk of IBA research implies the achievement of agreements will ensure impact equal and beneficial outcomes. However, O’Faircheallaigh and Corbett (2005) have clearly shown the variance in outcomes for communities even given the same company operating in different locations. Close analysis of 46 agreements revealed many benefits: changes in income, changes in economic assets, changes in cultural vitality, changes in personal satisfaction, changes in ability to influence government policy, changes in social cohesion and changes in incidence of social trauma (O’Faircheallaigh 2005). O’Faircheallaigh suggests a gap in the analysis of the daily lived experience of implementation of agreements (2003b). IBAs can serve to address concerns raised during the formal environmental impact assessment process, and also may buffer impacted groups from adverse change and promote beneficial outcomes, and are often seen as a potential mitigation tool.

Two types of government agreements have been generated. The first, Socio-Economic Agreements (SEA) (GNWT and BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. 1996a; DDMI, GNWT and Aboriginal Authorities 1999), cover the obligations of the mine and government and are negotiated to guarantee benefits to all citizens of the NWT, as well as to the impacted communities. Agreements include clauses about employment, employment supports and targets. For example, Ekati’s SEA includes:

- ◇ employment obligations and northern and aboriginal hiring preference targets of 72% northern at 18,000 tonnes per day and half of that as aboriginal;
- ◇ training commitments;
- ◇ employment supports such as counseling and cross-cultural training;
- ◇ point of hire free transport for impacted communities;
- ◇ social monitoring commitments, and and business development targets of 70% total annual value of goods and services from the north during operations.

Similarly, Diavik’s SEA, which is also signed by the aboriginal signatories and parties, establishes:

- ◇ a joint advisory board;
- ◇ employment targets of 66% northerners and 40% aboriginal in operations phases;
- ◇ point of hire free transport for impacted communities;



- ◇ training commitments such as apprenticeships;
- ◇ purchase of goods and services procured at a target of 70% from the north during operation;
- ◇ reporting commitments, and
- ◇ cultural and community wellbeing mitigation through a variety of measures, such as country food, language interpreters, and unaccounted leave, among others.

Socio-Economic Agreements make reference to employment, but not to retention or advancement within the corporation. Specific clauses within them give corporations the option of hiring managers from anywhere: “notwithstanding the hiring objectives and priorities, DDMI reserves the sole discretion to employ company officers and senior management and retain outside professional consultants who DDMI determines to have the necessary skills, training and experience to fulfill their duties and obligations” (DDMI, GNWT and Aboriginal Authorities 1999, 28).

The second type of agreement, environmental agreements (GNWT and BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. 1996b; DDMI, GNWT and Aboriginal Authorities 2000), establish independent monitoring boards, and are guided by the principles of adaptive management and sustainable development. They aim to blend traditional knowledge with scientific systems, and promote capacity in the Mackenzie Valley.

### 5.3 Negotiation of agreements

The range of issues and content of these agreements spans mineral rights, funds, consultation and employment, among other areas and while they are bilateral agreements, they hold implications for other parties (see Figure 5.2). Land claims tend to be a central lever, and agreements tend to recognize that the lands have been occupied since time immemorial; however federal control over mineral rights is affirmed. Precedence is always given to mineral rights, unless land claims are concluded and have provisions for protection (e.g., of parks or protected areas). As the agreements were negotiated, no land claims had been settled. This precedence continues to cause conflict in the Mackenzie Valley. In 2002, an area within the Akaitcho Treaty 8 government claim was subject to a “staking rush”, which took the communities by surprise:

The only real mechanism for protecting sensitive lands from activities such as prospecting, exploration or mining is withdrawal of those areas from disposition under Section 11 of the Canada Mining Regulations. If an area is open for prospecting it is not possible to prevent the allocation of mineral interests. Once

claims are staked or leases granted, the Crown faces the possibility of demands for compensation if development is foreclosed. (MVEIRB 2007, 41)

Since the federal government does not generally consult aboriginal rights holders until after an environmental assessment of an exploration project, communities are only alerted to exploration once an assessment begins. The MVEIRB Board reviewed this case and recommended against a license for the uranium exploration company, making the following suggestion to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada:

To reduce the potential for conflict between the duty to consult when aboriginal rights are infringed by mineral exploration and development and the free-entry system set out in the Canada Mining Regulations, the Government of Canada should adapt and apply the prospecting permit process to areas in the Akaitcho Territory, particularly in the Thelon Basin, in order to provide notice and ensure opportunities for consultation with aboriginal users of that area, before mineral interests are granted. (MVEIRB 2007, 42)

Another provision frequently negotiated in IBAs is revenues, which can either serve to compensate people for negative cultural, impact and social impacts of mining or represent a return to people as owners of the land (O’Faircheallaigh 1996). O’Faircheallaigh’s research reveals five possible financial models, each of which carries risks and benefits (2006a; 2003c). For example, the aboriginal communities affected by NWT diamond mines have negotiated fixed annual payments that are not on any sort of sliding scale in relation to mine activities, one of the options. Given it has been estimated that Diavik will earn approximately \$180 million a year from 2003-2022 (averaged resource profits – Ellis Consulting Services 2000), the roughly \$804,000 that each group stands to earn each year may begin to pale in comparison.<sup>55</sup> This percentage of roughly 0.46% of yearly profits per community (and 2.23% of profits for all five communities) can be compared to that which has been negotiated by Innu and Inuit communities for the now operating Voisey Bay mine: 1.36% of *revenues* (much higher than profits and not linked to the whims of operating costs or selective accounting procedures) will go to the communities once nickel prices reach a defined level (Interview with IBA expert, December 14, 2006). The fixed dollar amount decreases risk of loss of capital to communities, but is also likely to look more and more unfair as the profits accruing to the corporation become higher as initial capital costs are recouped (O’Faircheallaigh 2006a), which for Diavik likely occurred in 2007.

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<sup>55</sup> This figure is derived from Diavik (2003b, 18), which provides the total amount of annual direct payments provided to communities (\$4.02 million in 2002). Each group may get a different amount of funds and this information is confidential, so I have simply used the total figure and divided by the number of recipient IBA communities (five). It therefore provides an average proxy.

The promise of funds, preferential employment and business opportunities are all contingent on political consent for the development to occur being exchanged. However, the Treaty mining company and the community may have very different interpretations as to what this “agreement” implies. Treaty mining companies see IBAs as binding contractual agreements that lock in consent as written. Communities tend to see them more as the foundation for a living relationship that is open to alteration over time. A community leader discussed the subtlety of consent, suggesting consent is based on the underlying assumption by the community of an *ongoing* and *adaptive* relationship, proven and renegotiated constantly:

I think the most visible consent is the IBA. Once you have an IBA or discussions, that is probably the best indicator of consent. Because one fulfils the consultation required by the federal government for the regulatory process. And on our side, once we have an IBA, an IBA is like consent. So that is the biggest indicator. It is not necessarily ours, but it is the way regulatory agencies look at it. ...Ours (biggest indicator) would be training on site, more respect for cultures, and more cultural awareness at the mine site. (Interview with Tâîchô Leader, September 25, 2005)

The consent this leader describes is consistent with previous agreements, such as Treaty, the peace of Edzo and Akaitcho, and the agreement with animals. They were agreements affirming mutual respect, ongoing relationships, recognition of overlapping interests, and the ongoing and iterative nature of these relationships. They are agreements established between nations, but knowledge of them is passed from family to family by word of mouth. It is the spirit and intent of the agreement that is considered to be important—just as Treaty has been seen as a peace and friendship agreement (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000). This is one notion of consent: something daily re-negotiated on site through respect for cultures, cultural awareness, and training. This brings forward the idea of reciprocity, discussed later in this chapter.

Employment, education, training and scholarships are fairly consistently negotiated in agreements. Although there is a substantial literature on the barriers to aboriginal employment in Canada, none of this literature appears to be accessed and tied to the provisions of agreements (O’Faircheallaigh 2006a; Subcommittee of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Mineral Industry 1997-2005), such as the lack of skills and work experience, racism and stereotyping, a tendency of managers to prioritize production, lack of awareness of employment and training opportunities among aboriginal recruits, alienation and loneliness, the reluctance of aboriginal people to forgo land based activities, and a failure to address the specific needs of women (O’Faircheallaigh 2006a). Advancement is sometimes mentioned in these agreements, and O’Faircheallaigh has outlined a variety of measures that can be utilized to encourage this

(2006a). However, the agreements rarely tackle the barriers and offer strategies to overcome them. There are no mechanisms built in for evaluation of programs, target achievement or strategies.<sup>56</sup>

The contracts have proven fairly intractable, with little change or re-negotiation possible. None of the agreements has been re-negotiated, although one community is attempting to reopen negotiations (Interview with diamond mine manager, April 16, 2007). All agreements have, according to one company, been negotiated for the claim block, rather than based on the kimberlite pipes. Given that each kimberlite pipe within a claim block could be another mine, not an extension of an existing mine, there are significant profits associated with each new kimberlite pipe discovered through ongoing exploration. This is not the case with base metal and other mines. When new pipes were found in one claim block, the company argued that the first agreements covered these new discoveries, although communities argued that new IBAs ought to be triggered.

There are symbolic meanings to these agreements, in that even as they secure new outcomes, they hold implications for related policy areas and for other parties. From the mining company's perspective, the IBA represents decreased political risk. With communities on side, the likelihood of project failure or disruption through protest is eliminated. The shareholders will consider there to be little risk with the community onside through an agreement, and can also then count on a local labour force that is less likely to be as mobile as the professional class they employ. The agreement also provides a structured relationship for consultation, as noted by an industry leader:

Well the corporations have used them primarily as a way to try and encourage employment to try and drive business opportunities, to try and drive education through scholarships and as a way to try and talk to the aboriginal groups. This agreement should form the basis for doing the consultation that increasingly should happen, that they merit. (January 21, 2005)

Most literature suggests the corporation will attempt to use the greater power and resources available to them to co-opt the indigenous party (Bielawski 2004). However, O'Fairchaellaigh (1999, 76) asks, "is it not possible that developers can also be co-opted through the negotiation process, and drawn away from using more traditional methods of dealing with indigenous

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<sup>56</sup> Storey notes that after more than 25 years of uranium mining in Saskatchewan with considerable efforts from the industry there is evidence of progress. "For example, 'northern' mill operators at the uranium operations increased from 72% to 91% between 1990 and 2002, technical professionals from 26% to 38% and supervisory from 14% to 20%" (Storey, Personal Communication April 26, 2008).

people, which often involved ignoring them or mobilizing the state to protect developer interests?”

The government, though they are never party to these agreements, tends to be a shadow presence at the table, even participating as “an observer at the negotiations” (Interview with federal employee, June 15, 2005) of the Ekati diamond mining negotiations, often implementing supporting programs, such as training. Funds are provided through two governmental mechanisms in advance of negotiations to prepare communities for negotiations and to review licenses and permits. Funds are not triggered until a water license is applied for, which is often years after a company has had a presence in a region. O’Faircheallaigh (1996, 202) comments,

The state obviously plays a crucial role in determining the negotiating power of indigenous people and their capacity to harness that power. The state creates the basic legal framework within which resource development takes place, and so plays a major role both in determining whether negotiations will occur and, if they do, the parameters within which they will be conducted.

Table 5.2 Different perspectives on intent, terms and conditions of Impact and Benefit Agreements

	REPRESENTS FOR GOVERNMENT	REPRESENTS FOR THE DEVELOPER	REPRESENTS FOR THE COMMUNITY
Land claims	Affirmation that the Crown holds the mineral rights and recognition of rights granted by federal government	Recognition that the community has or has asserted land rights, or is impacted by the proposed development in a way that could be perceived to infringe upon aboriginal rights; also that any outstanding land claims will not interfere with existing mineral rights of the firm	Recognition that they have occupied the land and often the site since time immemorial and/or used the site for traditional purposes; although occupation is acknowledged, the communities affirm federal rights to mineral rights.
Funds	Provision of funds in advance to support negotiation of the agreements (for example through the Resources Access Negotiation Program; funds also available through Interim Resources Management Program for building capacity in unsettled claims areas. Enables communities to review license and permit applications	Provision of funds yearly	Payment of fixed dollar amounts or some other financial remuneration for use of land <sup>57</sup>
Consent	Recognition by the aboriginal group of federal and territorial right to issue permits and rights	Consent for project to proceed unhindered by community-led opposition	Consent to the project, often before environmental assessment is complete
Consultation	No federal guidance on this point to date; however IBAs may be seen in part to meet the need to ‘accommodate aboriginal interests’	Framework and structure for meetings and disagreement	Framework and structure for meetings and disagreement
Training	Necessity to provide training and education and funds for training support	Requirement to provide training; staff a position in the mine as a liaison or establish training centers at the site	Opportunities for training and apprenticeships; community better able to take advantage of development
Employment	Fewer income assistance cases in Territories; greater income taxes; economic development accruing among territorial residents	Promise of priority hiring; agreement to report on numbers and promise to fly employees to and from diamond impacted community	Agreement to hire locally, sometimes as a general principle and sometimes with actual targets; often commitments to move to managerial positions
Recruitment		Waive some requirements, such as grade 12 level for period of time and fluency in English	Possibility of less “qualified” applicants gaining jobs

<sup>57</sup> Other models that might have been used are single up front payments; royalties based on output; royalties based on the value of mineral output; profit based royalties, and equity or shareholding. Fixed payments, which have been typical of agreements in the NWT around diamond mining, are predictable, regardless of the mineral price and company profits, easy to administer, use of funds can shift over time from individual payouts to project based use. However, O’Faircheallaigh (2003a, 6) notes “for both parties...there is an increasing probability that as time passes the scale of payments will appear inappropriate given the manner in which the project has actually developed”.

	REPRESENTS FOR GOVERNMENT	REPRESENTS FOR THE DEVELOPER	REPRESENTS FOR THE COMMUNITY
Business	Increased local purchasing; increased GDP	Take steps to provide business opportunities to the community, provide information locally, unbundle contracts, consider all local business; structure contracting and bidding in accessible ways	Commitments to hire for specific contracts (e.g., pit, explosives, etc.); community is to provide data on businesses in region, plus the right to access information
Scholarships		Provision of scholarships and hiring of summer students	Increased opportunities for young people to access higher education
Environment		Minimize impacts on environment	Respect for the land based economy and culture
Project success		Certainty of project operation	A commitment of non-interference with project or agreement to pursue a set course of dispute resolution
Employment supports		Requirement to provide cross cultural training, cultural exchange programs, and community appreciation days, allow spousal visits, allow longer stays in times of crisis, provide communication options	Drug and alcohol training, counseling, technical education, and country food
Traditional Culture and Education		Awarding scholarships, potential for cultural leave	Often block funding for support of culture and language, or for areas designated by community
Implementation funds		Provide funds	Funds for implementation of agreements
Heritage sites		Follow legislation and consult locally	Provide data on heritage sites

For the community, these agreements secure new benefits at the group and individual level. Although the first agreement by the Tâîchô with Ekati has served as a benchmark for others, leadership focus on different ends each time. For the Tâîchô, the first agreement has been about securing jobs, the second about ensuring business and the third about protecting culture and language (Interview with Tâîchô leader, March 5, 2006). That each agreement pursues slightly different ends reveals the flexibility with which the communities approach them. A group can pursue quite different ends with passing years, learning from the past, shifting priorities and adapting to new circumstances. The Tâîchô IBA with De Beers illustrates some flexibility. De Beers opened negotiations with extremely low offers of financial mitigation so low that community leaders were hesitant to negotiate (Tâîchô leader, September 5, 2006). When they did negotiate, the Tâîchô negotiated a sum of money to be allocated to culture and language programs (Interview with Tâîchô leader, April 12, 2007). Given that Tâîchô staff had to apply for funds for culture and language programs from federal or territorial administrators, the Tâîchô now have new freedom to determine programs and activities.

Relationships to other parties shift substantially, as the agreements are signed. The indigenous group can be inhibited from pursuing judicial action against the mine, often agrees to support the mine through the project life, and may be proscribed from a number of possible strategies for influencing the way a mine operates in relation to the community's needs. In addition, the "broader legal and political framework may reduce the bargaining position of indigenous people, no matter how well they are organized for the negotiation effort" (O'Faircheallaigh 1999, 77). That the Tâîchô were well organized and unified to pursue a comprehensive claim with the federal government was certain at the time of the Ekati negotiations; this undoubtedly influenced their ability to negotiate a deal. However, O'Faircheallaigh (2007a) suggests there are risks to bilateral agreements: when an agreement is made, the aboriginal groups often lose access to the judicial and regulatory systems, and with dispute resolution processes agreed to, they may be unable to initiate legal proceedings. The gain most often made is the possibility of maximizing benefits of employment, funds and business opportunities.

The federal government has a complex relationship with aboriginal communities, and the presence of IBAs may shift this relationship in a few ways. First, the power of final approval of projects is still held by the federal government. If a mining company is slow to the negotiating



table as was the case in 1996 with the Ekati mine, the federal government held the power to give the conditional approval for the mine, pending satisfactory progress on agreements.

Communities often find their only leverage for an agreement to be reached is prior to a land use permit/water license being issued. Second, while in the past the government was the only party privy to royalty payments, the IBA makes a space for communities to capture some revenue, possibly shifting the federal relationship. This revenue might pose a problem for the federal-community relationship if the government were to decide to claw back funds for programming, a situation that has occurred in Australia (O’Faircheallaigh 2004). This is often cited as one of the main reasons for maintaining the confidentiality of the IBA (O’Faircheallaigh 2006a). Third, the duty to consult, recently the subject of high court decisions (*Taku River Tlingit* and *Haida Nation* 2004), may be seen to be in part fulfilled when an IBA is completed. While the government cannot delegate its duty, the IBA may be viewed as substantial progress toward consultation. The government does make funds available to facilitate the negotiation with the Resources Access Negotiation Program, which has been accessed by many communities in order to hire advisors, lawyers and negotiators in preparation for IBA negotiations. Sums of \$75,000 to \$150,000 are available to communities to negotiate and conduct research:

Technically we don’t participate in any aspects of those negotiations, we don’t even consider that – they are private negotiations between the two parties. Our job is to make sure that the First Nations have resources to bring them up to kind of a level playing field so they are able to meaningfully engage in a dialogue with the resource developer at some higher level. (Interview with federal employee, August 18, 2006)

Finally, the status of the land claim may be influenced by the IBAs. The thrust of rights negotiations in these IBAs surfaces in the linking of these agreements to land claims agreements. As the federal government hoped for speedy settlement of the corporate-community agreements, promises of expedited land claims or self government negotiations were made to Tâîchô communities (Tâîchô leader, September 25, 2005). O’Faircheallaigh suggests the implications of this “stronger state focus on resolving land tenure as a result of major mineral discoveries” (2007a, 9) needs to be further researched, arguing that indigenous groups may find themselves under major pressure to agree to less than fair or adequate land claim settlements. While they made promises of non-interference at one table, many win themselves a federal promise of attention to outstanding claims, all of which occurred in a time of great change.

### 5.3.1 Imagined partners and expectations of exchange

Before the parties begin to negotiate the conditions of these agreements, each group collectively creates an imaginary (Appadurai 1991; Taylor 2002) of the “Other” and of the possibilities that might be attained. Taylor (2002, 106) suggests the imaginary is “the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations”. Appadurai (1991) calls it the “staging ground for action”, and West (2006) suggests it is a set of collective ideas and aspirations that are tied to intentionality and intentional action. For the communities, the first agreements awakened both the fear of environmental impact but also the possibility of a different and radically new future. Tâîchô and Yellowknives leaders both report a participatory process was used to surface the imaginary of the communities. A Yellowknives Dene leader said:

We had a number of sessions in both communities, probably went over a year going back and forth, Dettah and N’dilo and back to Dettah, back to N’dilo, sometimes we would have four sessions a month and a lot of them were at the beginning, kind of brain storming sessions so we were having a lot of people, I would say anywhere from 10 to 20% of our population coming out, not all the same at every session, different people coming out, so overall I think we probably got close to maybe 40% of the adult population over that period of time, so we had a lot of good discussion on what it is that we wanted from Impact Benefits Agreement, what it really meant, I guess, because you know to some people are you selling something here? (Interview, November 8, 2005)

Collectively, these groups imagined what they might need, and how they might control this industrial future. The Yellowknives developed a negotiating strategy based on these collective discussions:

So at that time we said well, we have a list of stuff that we want to negotiate with Diavik, now we already have some stuff with BHP, are we going to go and do the same thing or there is something different, so we went through another round of community information and consultation, you know, asking what do we want from this. Part of it was we wanted capacity or capitalization for our community development corporation, we wanted dollars for a cultural centre, community hall type, if they didn’t put the dollars then maybe they can help build it. And some of the same issues came up. So we’re deciding well maybe we will do a matrix and say, okay, we have BHP, Diavik, what did we get from BHP and what can we get from Diavik so we can try and balance out the whole goals and objectives of negotiations. It turned out, after that second round, that we had 117 issues for negotiations versus 66 ... (Interview with Yellowknives leader, November 8, 2005).

There is a tremendous amount of work done prior to coming to the negotiating table. Before starting negotiations on the first agreement (on the Ekati mine), Tâîchô leaders commissioned a study of the diamond industry (Ellis 1995) that helped to understand ideal business opportunities, prior to engaging with the industry. Trips to comparable mines and diamond centres were made by leaders in order to understand the business and previous agreements made with aboriginal communities near BHP Billiton mines. Conversations with lawyers familiar with other agreements helped community leaders to understand the world of opportunities. Knowledge of the communities was brought to bear so that pressing training needs could be articulated:

We did a study in the mid-seventies that indicated to us that the population of the people in Rae-Edzo, 75% of our population was under the age of 25. That meant we had a huge workforce and most of them were untrained. That means we had to train them. (Interview with Tâîchô leader, September 25, 2005)

And finally, work at the community level helped leaders to create the social imaginary for these agreements. In the case of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, 117 issues were brought forth in community meetings. In the Tâîchô case, meetings at the community level also surfaced community aspirations.

BHP came to the communities we want to set up this mine, employ a lot of people and train a lot of people, business opportunities, on and on and on and as people started identifying concerns, we listed these concerns. People are very worried about caribou, we listed those. Young people came to us about jobs, that was a concern. Elders wanted to know what their role was because when you're talking about mining companies a lot of people they've hired and not the elders, so what was their role. The youth. So everybody listed these concerns and we addressed them. (Interview with Tâîchô leader, April 25, 2005)

That everything was put on the table for negotiations means that everything is considered negotiable, a point which O'Faircheallaigh (2007a) suggests may jeopardize some dearly loved places or values which are fundamentally non-negotiable. In addition, "in the absence of systematic criteria for assessing the outcomes of agreements, there is a danger that an 'ideology of agreement', with the achievement of agreements as such – rather than the achievement of substantive outcomes for indigenous peoples – taking central place" (O'Faircheallaigh 2004, 304). Certainly that was the case after the first agreement with the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council was concluded: every other community felt that the bar had been set by this agreement and that they must rush to also achieve agreement. The inability to compare agreements to others, even those

concluded elsewhere with the same mining company, left each community in an information vacuum (Bielawski 2003).

As preparations are made for intensive negotiations, each group defines an imaginary of the “Other”—collectively defining their own identity and that of their negotiating partner. The multinational company is imagined through brochures, corporate reports, stories from others who have negotiated with the company, and through the lens of all other corporations that have operated in the region in the past. To raise capital, the mining company has to create an imaginary of constant forward movement and excellent geological prospects for the investing public—as a result there is a seemingly constant stream of press releases, with no detail considered too small to report. Each of these press releases passes through the hands of the community leaders, painting a picture of the company. The mining company has to create an image of the capable company, hovering on the edge of the great geological find, in the remote “out-of-the-way” (Tsing 1995) location. The legacy of each mine that worked in the region is also at play in the imagination of the community leaders and the people who attend meetings to discuss what they might seek from negotiations.

Likewise, the community is imagined from stories told in mining conferences, water cooler discussions, meetings in boardrooms, the images from television and everyday discussion and the occasional meeting in the community. The mining company has also learned about negotiation through adversarial training, and has in mind the priority of obtaining consent for the project with the least possible financial cost.

It is only as they negotiate that they come to know each other differently, shifting and refining their imagined identities of the other. At the negotiating table, each person feeds this imaginary with new images and actively tries to shape it. The company may try to underplay the resource, the net profit, or the size of the corporation. On the other side, the community may try to stress how they are more impacted than another region:

So again I painted a picture for the company where the (community) have to be the group that they should be dealing with on benefit agreements, regulatory process, so in other words I painted a picture for them that the (community) was the group that (company) had to deal with and that if there were benefits the (community) had to be the group that benefited the most. (Interview with community leader, September 25, 2005)

Greater leverage at the table, according to O’Fairchaellaigh (2006b), can be achieved through a united leadership and a single vision, as well as the use of legislative, political and

negotiation tactics. In the case of these agreements, all political channels were certainly utilized by the Tâîchô:

We got in this business of land claims realizing that the Minister of Indian Affairs was a very important person. Then we began to look at the pipelines to the Minister, all the connections to the Minister. Who does he go to for advice? Number one he'll go to our MP. So we began the work to support our present MP and it's fortunate that she's now a cabinet minister that even adds more to it. And then we began looking at who else does he go to? He probably consults the grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations so we got involved with the Assembly of First Nations, began supporting certain candidates running for the Assembly of First Nations Grand Chief and we supported them. (Interview with Tâîchô leader, February 25, 2005)

The combination of a claim, political connections, and a unified leadership selected by the elders gave the Tâîchô what they felt to be a strong negotiation position. After an agreement was reached between the Tâîchô and Ekati, the other claimant groups quickly followed suit. However, the leverage of each community is limited by the inability to compare agreements, the tendency to be undercapitalized for negotiations with a multinational corporation, and extreme time pressures. For example, the federal minister set a 60 day deadline for the Ekati mine to show substantial progress in agreement making, something that led to a "circus" of meetings (Interview with Tâîchô leader, November 15, 2005).

Each subsequent agreement has negotiated slightly different deals, revealing the flexibility of the agreements. However it is clear that the first agreement set the standard for agreement making in the region (Interview with industry manager, April 26, 2007), and was made available to incoming mining companies to serve as a template. "BHP set some precedent for us: we knew how they had structured their agreements and didn't want to be pushed into doubling financial contributions unfoundedly" (Interview with industry manager, April 26, 2007). Indeed the agreements are strikingly similar in layout, content and approach. This may reflect the fact that the same lawyers were used in each agreement (by the Tâîchô), but also suggests the idea that ensuing diamond mining companies will not go further than the last agreement. Indeed, the proponent of a proposed cobalt, gold and bismuth mine has suggested that the new project economics are vastly lower than the diamond mines; as a result, the project lead has suggested an IBAs between the company and the community will never reach the bar the diamond mines set (Interview with Tâîchô leader, April 16, 2007).<sup>58</sup>

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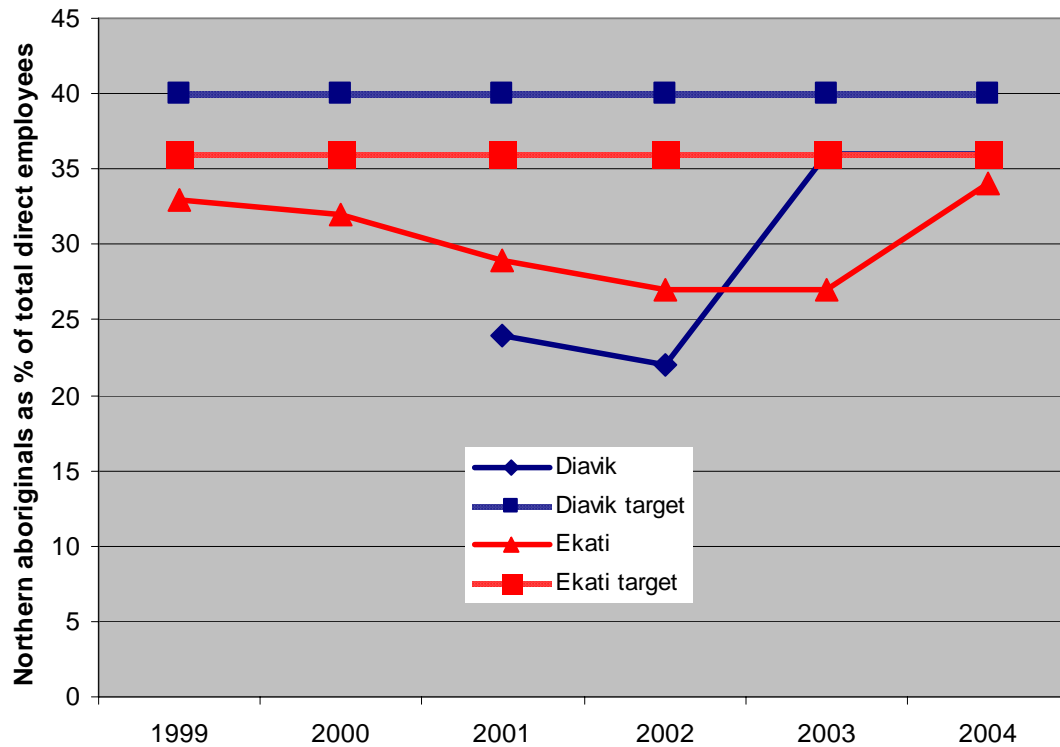
<sup>58</sup> The Treaty mining companies arrived in a north with little precedent for IBAs. Also, the economy at the time was sagging as gold deposits were mined out. It is likely these factors, combined with some lack of understanding of the

O’Faircheallaigh (2006b, 7) suggests four key factors impact on the approach a company takes to negotiations: the nature of corporate policy or corporate social responsibility, the prevailing legislative regime, the economics of the mining project, and the company’s “political assessment of what it ‘needs to pay’ to get the support or acquiescence of the Aboriginal group concerned, of the group’s expectations, and of the capacity of key individuals and organizations to insist that the company meet those expectations.”

### 5.3.2 Implementation

In order to ensure that people do not suffer the “fly-over effect” (Shrimpton and Storey 2001) the agreements all committed to northern aboriginal hiring. Now, with northern aboriginal employment levels at 30-35% and turnover the lowest among the aboriginal rotation workers, it is apparent that the mines have an opportunity to reward low turnover employees with advancement and training. A critical element to these agreements is the commitments on employment, business and funds—these are the places where people have been excluded in the past. The Giant and Con mines, for example, had little commitment to aboriginal employment. Employment is certainly an option for aboriginal community members, and the figures from the mines illustrate they are close to meeting their targets set out in the Socio-Economic Agreements, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. There are roughly 350 Dogrib people employed in the two mines (Interview with Tâîchô business leader, May 30, 2006) of a registered population of 2635. The Yellowknives Dene have roughly 60-70 people working. While the Tâîchô have 13% of the population working in the mines, the Yellowknives Dene have roughly 5% working.

Figure 5.1 Ekati and Diavik Northern Aboriginal employment, as percentage of total employment



The kind of consent described by the Tâîchô leader, something that is renegotiated and proven through respect and cultural awareness, is one that is proven through ongoing training, retention as well as advancement. Here, the data shows aboriginal employment is largely in low-skilled positions in both mines. Diavik has less than 3% of aboriginal signatories in managerial or professional roles (DDMI 2005). As it has taken more than ten years of uranium mining in Saskatchewan to achieve 14% of aboriginal people in senior positions, it may well take this time in the Canadian north. Both the IBA and SEMA agreements have no mechanism in place to penalize non-attainment of targets. Other agreements, notably in Australia, will cause new funds for training to be triggered when shortfalls are encountered (O’Faircheallaigh 2006a).

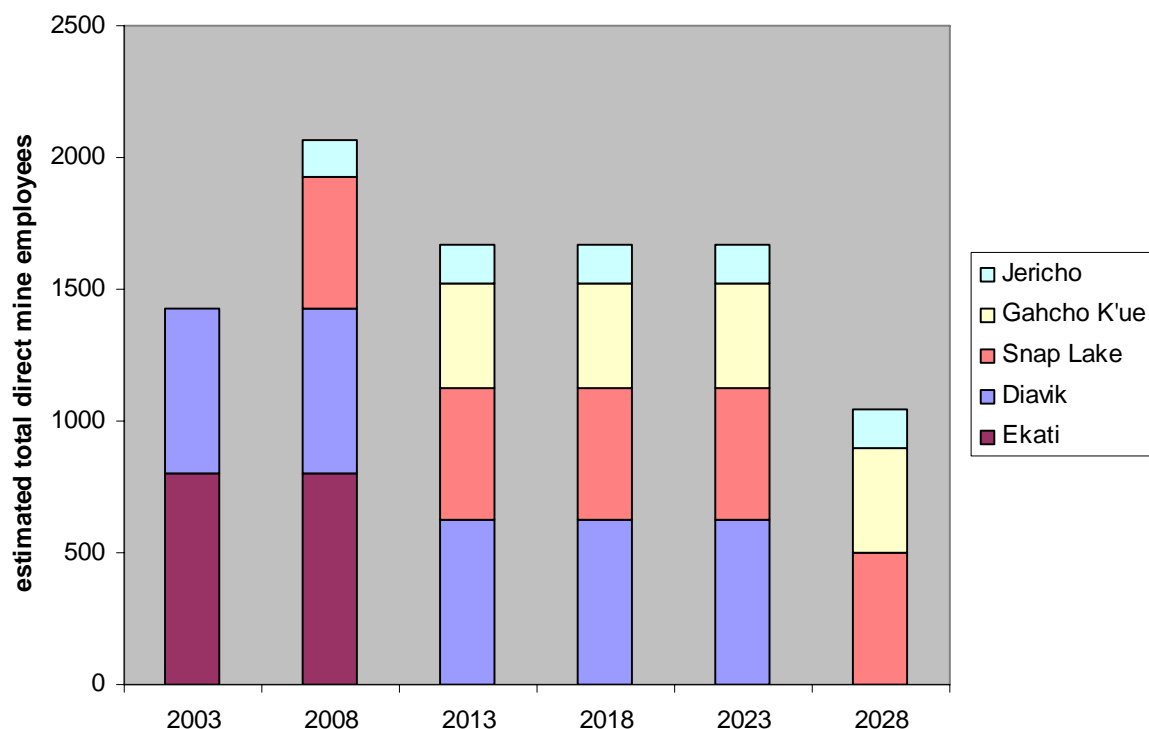
While the companies are close to meeting northern aboriginal employment targets (See Figure 5.1), they are not proving as effective at moving aboriginal people up in the organization, and these semi skilled and low-skilled populations will soon suffer the effects of the lack of training. Earlier northern mines, such as Nanisivik reported annual Inuit employee turnover from 30% to 88% (BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc., 1996, 4.176). In its environmental impact statement, BHP predicted, “as aboriginal people adjust to rotational mining jobs, turnover rates will likely decrease, though still continue to be above the mine’s average....Providing opportunity for advancement and a schedule that allows time for traditional pursuits would appear to help reduce

staff turnover” (BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc., 1996, 4.176). This prediction has not been borne out, in that the turnover rates for aboriginal people are lower than for non-aboriginal, yet the population with the lowest turnover is also the least skilled. The impact of being in this low and semi-skilled workforce will soon come into stark focus as labour demands for professional workers increase as mines specialize in underground methods. The labour force projections for the NWT show peak demand to be in 2008 (Bureau of Statistics 2005a), with the majority of demand for skilled and professional employees. The industry is building the case for non-compliance with targets, suggesting the GNWT data on labour force bear out this case:

The population is shrinking. There is very little available labour force. We are already dipping into the chronically unemployed. (Interview with diamond mine manager, April 15, 2007)

Figure 5.2 illustrates the estimated direct workforce requirements of current and proposed NWT and Nunavut diamond mines.

Figure 5.2 Mine project lives and total employment in the NWT and Nunavut



The projected labour force needs for these mines is great, and these figures do not include the labour demands of other potential northern developments such as the Mackenzie Gas Project, Tamerlane, Tyhee, and the NICO project, among others. In contrast to industry managers, community leaders suggest there are many more people who could be integrated into the mine



workforce. This is confirmed by data from the Bureau of Statistics (2006b), which shows that of the 329 people unemployed in the Tâîchô region, 86% of them would be willing to do rotational work.<sup>59</sup> That means that there are potentially 300 new people are willing to try rotational work at the mines. There may be other factors leading to them being excluded (e.g., criminal records). People who are unemployed in other geographic regions are much less likely to be willing to do rotational work (Bureau of Statistics 2006b). As mines move to underground methods to extract the ore body, the specialization of labour may well exclude aboriginal workers (Interview with diamond mine employee, September 24, 2006). Diavik will operate entirely underground by the end of 2011, as the open pit mining of A154 and A418 are scheduled to finish by 2009 and 2011 respectively. To date, underground training programs for the Ekati and Diavik mines respectively have suffered enormous turnover of aboriginal trainees (Interview with diamond mine manager, September 24, 2006). Yet the corporate data on turnover in surface operations suggests there is a loyal and strong core population of aboriginal workers.

Data from the mines reveals the highest turnover levels in the professional staff, which becomes a key barrier to implementing the IBAs. The workers with the highest turnover tend to be the professional southern workers who are on a rotation of four days on and three days off each week (BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. 2007)<sup>60</sup>. As these individuals are in charge of implementation of agreements, the burden of understanding agreements lies with them. However, each staff member has to enter the region, navigate the dynamics of the mine site and parent company, as well as understand the political geography of the north. A community leader commented on the loss of meaning of the agreements to people in an interview:

I think because of lack of clarity in the agreements because of how quickly we had to go through them, there's always different interpretation by the mining companies once they get into it. And because they change players so damn often, there's not that clear understanding of the spirit and intent when you got into it to where we are today. That's why there's always continual involvement with one another, relationships that have to be established to keep on top of them.  
(Interview with community leader, September 5, 2005)

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<sup>59</sup> 68% of these unemployed people are male; 98% of them are aboriginal, and 61% of them have less than a high school diploma.

<sup>60</sup> While this study did not focus on the reasons behind high turnover in northern mines by southern-based professional and managerial workers, anecdotal discussion with mine managers and experience with the mining industry indicate two likely reasons. First of all, distance from the "home place" at a remote northern mine may be a factor, especially if economic conditions that lead to greater demand for skilled workers nearer home occur during a mines life. Amongst mine management, it is often a corporate strategy to have relatively rapid turnover of high level managers in a company's mines (for example, changing subsidiary CEO's every two to three years), in order to make sure that all of the company's mines are being run in a similar, competent fashion, and because different eras of a mine's life may demand different skills from senior management.

Senior level managers during permitting and mine development (the time during which most agreements are signed) tend to move on to other projects before implementation really gets up to speed. This can lead to a lack of understanding of why certain central commitments in the agreements were negotiated, and the context which makes them so important. Indeed, mining managers rarely see the written version of agreements, but are informed of commitments as conflicts arise. For example, vacation time, hiring, northern travel, and scholarships for northerners are conflicts that frequently surface (Interview with diamond mine human resources staff, April 16, 2007). When these arise, discussion of the agreements will be held on a one-to-one basis with managers. In recognition of this lack of institutional knowledge and continuity, leaders in communities have taken the adaptive strategy of creating a paper trail on an issue of dispute as a record.

On business, the companies have committed to local purchasing where possible, in particular with aboriginal companies. Diavik reports spending over \$1 billion with northern aboriginal companies, and indeed the highest employment has been reached by subcontractors that are wholly owned by aboriginal joint-ventures (DDMI 2006). An example is I&D Management which sources the surface mine workers for Diavik, as well as underground workers for Procon.

In 2006, Diavik's combined operations and capital spending totaled \$492.4 million, of which \$379.4 million, or 77 per cent, was northern. Of the \$379.4 million, some \$223.0 million, or 45 per cent, was with northern aboriginal businesses and their joint ventures. (DDMI 2006)

In 2003, Ekati spent 34.5% of total spending with aboriginal owned northern businesses (BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. 2003). One Tâîchô business leader suggests if the mines closed, then \$40 million in contracts would be lost (Business leader, May 30, 2005). The joint ventures have brought together partnerships of the Akaitcho, Tâîchô and Kitikmeot Inuit for one company. These businesses are unique, in that often a business leader will support the training of people who are "unemployable", investing in them and changing their opportunities:

...and it was a kid [who] was the most down and out worse student in that high school for years and now I mean he's got through this and (this business leader) is giving him and he realizes he's only going to last for probably a year or two and then he's going to go off to the mines if he can. But the thing is he's paid for his way through the licensing process so he can drive these ... trucks and get that experience. (Interview with Tâîchô social services manager, February 5, 2005)

Early joint ventures, according to a business manager, used the communities as figureheads, bringing nothing more than a small monthly cheque. However, with time, the business leaders have acquired assets:

We are going to wind up with three, four big Kenworths. And we have three trailers, six trailers, nine trailers, we have a loader, a grader, so who knows what we can do with all that iron. So probably we could be building the bridge for example. We can take a new step forward where we have the equipment, we have the management and we have everything. (Interview with business leader, May 5, 2006)

The comparative success of the Tâîchô in business and employment is attributed partly to the earlier experience of mining at the Colomac mine.

We had Colomac, few people understand the beauty of Colomac, Colomac was a good thing, an entrance to get into the mining business. If we didn't have Colomac we would be maybe like Åutsel K'e, we would have had no people. The second phase was that because of Colomac and because we had maybe 75/80 people who had worked in mines and stuff, I had brothers and sisters here, they were on site, it was easier for, let's say, Johnny to go see his brother and his brother is going to watch over him, mentor him, so you had that core group that went, that they helped all the other cores that came. (Interview with business leader, May 5, 2006)

Once funds are negotiated with a mine, the use of them varies over time and by community. O'Faircheallaigh (2007b) describes a variety of fund management models, one of which embeds the distribution structure into the IBA itself. One model sees a substantial proportion going to individual payouts. The second model, with a trust fund, does not give individual payments, instead giving funds to long term investment funds, community development funds, and traditional owner groups. The third model combines three types of payments at varying levels of risk to be made to women's and men's funds, affected communities, and aboriginal owners of the land. Neither the Tâîchô nor the Yellowknives agreements embed models of revenue management into the IBAs, and as a result the leadership has been pressured to distribute funds in various ways over time. Each of the agreements has negotiated a fixed dollar amount, which has begun to appear increasingly small given the profits of the company and royalty due the federal government. Use of funds is also increasingly contentious, as they are often perceived as and used for individuals, so that once a year each member will receive a fixed amount. In both Tâîchô and Yellowknives communities, this has been a huge pressure on the elected Chiefs and Council, "to the point where we are being

attacked”, said one Council member. Managing the individual payout has proved stressful, as suggested by one administrator:

He went to Yellowknife to pick up all the funds for individual payouts (\$500,000) in his car, as instructed, then driving back out to Rae his eyes over his shoulder. In Rae, his offices were flooded with people, shouting, fighting for their money. Each person gets \$120, which means some families get more than \$1000. Calls flooded in from citizens all over the country asking for their money to be wired, to them, to their landlord, to their neighbour. It was a disaster for management, and the next day the town was a ghost town, as everyone used the quick cash injection to head off to Lac St. Anne for religious meetings. Other people report the money is spent in Walmart. (Field notes, February 2005)

The Tâîchô complied in early years with the demands to pay individual citizens during the early years, in order to keep people happy, and not split the population at a time when unity was essential for the negotiations with the federal government (Interview with Tâîchô leader, March 05, 2006). With less fear of political reprisal after the enactment of self government, the Tâîchô have ended the system of individual payouts and now use funds largely for culture and language projects, but also for business investments. “The funds are being used in the right way now. Now they are starting to focus on language, culture and way of life...we are still using an axe, but soon the strategy will be long term and consistent” (Interview with Tâîchô leader, April 12, 2007). The passage of a Tâîchô *IBA/PA Implementation Budget Law* in 2006-07 specifies that two thirds of the budget be spent on cultural activities.

The Yellowknives face more internal strife than ever due to the use of funds. Questions by one councilor in the fall of 2006 on the use of funds led to her being barred from Council. Another Councilor who questioned this process was also barred from Council, although other mitigating factors were also cited for her exclusion. Nonetheless, the lack of transparency in the use of funds has led to a maelstrom of questions, and very few answers.

Well, you still get some proposals but what’s happening is eventually when people should be doing proposals to a government department, they are finding it easier just to go to chief and council and getting some IBA dollars so there has been some discussions and that’s got to stop. You know we can top off from the IBA dollars but for budgeting purposes I think it is important that part of the objective of the negotiations was to look at the short term, medium term, and long term objectives of managing those dollars. One of the things, we did a little bit of a financial plan and said look maybe 30% of our annual income from IBA should be on short term initiatives. And 20% on medium term and the other 50% invested for the long term because you got some things that are needed now, some things are needed within the next five years but 50% should be for the future generations. (Interview with Yellowknives leader, November 5, 2005)

It is clear from these three areas—employment, business, and funds—that there is new possibility to mitigate the impacts of mining through agreements. Employment opportunities are available, even though the possibilities of advancement are limited. Business opportunities are being seized, and the funds are now being put towards cultural ends to mitigate impact. Enforcement of the agreements, especially in meeting employment targets in the future, may prove a critical issue in the future. Here, the notion of consent must be returned to: something daily re-negotiated on site through respect for cultures, cultural awareness, and training. This brings forward the idea of reciprocity.

#### 5.4 The principle of reciprocity

Analyzed as a total “social fact” (Mauss 1954), reciprocity entails an exchange not merely economic, but an event that is at once “social and religious, magic and economic, utilitarian and sentimental, jural and moral” (Levi-Strauss 1949, 52). To argue that the IBAs represent reciprocity may overstep the boundaries of the concept outlined by Mauss (1954), yet elements of the relationship apply. Mauss identifies three obligations in exchange: the duty to give, the duty to receive, and the duty to return the gift. Models of reciprocity are helpful for decoding the economic nature of exchange, as well as the symbolic and cultural aspects (Mauss 1954; Levi-Strauss 1949).<sup>61</sup> Levi-Strauss defines the intent and symbolism tied up in exchange, defining goods as:

not only economic commodities, but vehicles and instruments for realities of another order, such as power, influence, sympathy, status and emotion; and the skilful game of exchange ... consists in a complex totality of conscious or unconscious maneuvers in order to gain security and to guard oneself against risks brought about by alliances and by rivalries.” (1949, 54)

The concept of exchange is central to history, and indeed in the Tâîchô Cosmology it is the central organizing feature. Exchange, as practiced in agreements, has been noted with animals, settlers and mining companies. Early agreements are ratified constantly: as an animal

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<sup>61</sup> Sahlins (1965) also defines a model of reciprocity: a simple economic model invoking kinship to explain the relationship. Sahlins (1965, 147) suggests balanced reciprocity refers to “direct exchange. In precise balance, the reciprocation is the customary equivalent of the thing received and is without delay.” Sahlins (1965, 148) defines balanced reciprocity as less personal and more economic, in contrast to generalized reciprocity. “It is notable of the main run of generalized reciprocities that the material flow is sustained by prevailing social relations; whereas, for the main run of balanced exchange, social relations hinge on the material flow.” To disrupt Sahlins’ balanced notion of reciprocity would be to not provide the material on time, or to become one-way in the exchange. However, through the particular treatment of the economy alone in relation to kinship, Sahlins fails to account for the spiritual, social, magical and utilitarian properties of exchange (Levi-Strauss 1949). Further, Sahlins suggests that reciprocity fails to matter with increased kinship distance (1965), something neither Mauss nor Levi-Strauss would argue.

offers itself to a person, the person recognizes the offering through ritual that acknowledges the body and spirit of the animal. The peace agreement of Edzo and Akaitcho was ratified with a dance, and later through constant visiting of Chiefs. With the Treaty mining companies, ratification may be achieved through gifts that are made to the communities (e.g., such as in-kind donations of \$250,000 for a men's shelter in Yellowknife from DDMI) re-negotiated on site through respect for cultures, cultural awareness, and training (Interview with Tâîchô Leader, September 25, 2005).

While Mauss's seminal work focused on the nature of the gift, ensuing work has focused on the nature of the exchange itself (Kirsch 2006; West 2006). Kirsch argues that social relations are the basis for determining how an individual sees the world, making a case for a relational basis for environmental analysis. When focusing on the gift, Kirsch suggests that the spirit of the gift "humanizes participants in successful exchange relations by demonstrating their mutual recognition" (2006, 80). As in this thesis, Kirsch describes relationships in material and economic terms, but also in terms of moral responsibilities. For example, the agreements can be analyzed through different lenses for the mining companies. First, agreements are commonly characterized in economic terms: the employment, targets, training, scholarships, funds and businesses are all the topic of discussion. When cast in cultural terms, mitigation measures include training to understand culture, shifts to production schedules and the environment (e.g., country food) and sensitization of managers. Social aspects include how to build policies that support managers and workers when there is conflict (e.g., a bereavement policy that recognizes aboriginal family structures and custom adoption), and finally, symbolically, the agreements represent reduced uncertainty and political risk. When characterized for the communities, the agreements have fulfilled the leadership's duty to capture employment in the mining industry and support business in the region. Through a cultural lens, the agreements create funds (in some cases) for harvesters, funds for culture and language programs, and assure the use of the traditional territory for mining, while socially, they allow for the creation of new networks of relationships in the mines.

The IBA defines new social relations of exchange, inclusive of clauses that request the development of personal relationships. That the exchange is personal and individual on the part of the communities is revealed through requests of mine managers to visit families and to be out on the land. The choice by the Tâîchô to send the person most closely related to the corporate negotiator, as described in this chapter's opening (Section 5.1), suggests the belief that someone who is kin will always negotiate in good faith. This negotiation strategy, as Levi-Strauss might

see it, marks an attempt to incorporate and make kin of the staff of mining companies, thereby ensuring a solid outcome. For example, the IBA agreements request that the mine manager visit the communities and visit the land. Mine managers from External Relations report they try to attend ceremonies, such as Annual Gatherings, but that it is altogether infrequent because of time constraints (Interview with mine manager, April 16, 2007). One manager recognizes the importance of this kind of exchange, saying it is even more important to go to the communities for the “non-events” (Interview with mine manager, April 16, 2007), however he himself admits that no one goes for the non-events. It is often the Human Resources people that make the trips to the communities and always for symbolic events, making donations of lifejackets, delivering scholarships, and cheques. These people are the symbolic actors of the corporation, and are often seen in this light. They are not the Operations Managers, the individuals who most often manage or spark conflict, and eventually hold the responsibility for hiring, retaining and advancing aboriginal workers. These symbolic events can even get in the way of the simple transaction, as articulated by a community leader, as he waited for the annual payout for the mine to arrive:

They kept calling and asking for a dinner with the Chiefs. It is hard for people to come out to give us the yearly cheque, which is worth about 20,000 to 30,000 in interest. Last month, they called and said we should have a dinner to give you the cheque. It was too hard to get it together, so I said just bring it over. And they kept saying, what about the meal. It took me a whole day to convince them to bring it over. But they wanted this supper. Every day we didn't have the cheque was a day lost of interest. Over one month, that is a huge amount of interest! This happened with two companies! (Interview with community leader, April 12, 2007)

The act of withholding the cheque until a symbolic ceremony can occur long delays funds to accounts and local leaders interpret the delay as unequal treatment.

This request to have agreements be ratified through visiting is consistent with past practice of agreement making; that the visits are not made reveals a break in reciprocity. As a result, the mine manager from operations never comes to know the communities, the families and the people. They are never fully made into “kin”. Instead, the symbolic cultural events are the only moments of transaction and exchange, and by keeping them at this formal level run by the same Human Resources staff each time, the mining company refuses the gift that has been offered. The mine manager never comes to know the discomfort of leaving the mine, entering the community as a stranger, being in the situation of minority and moving past the fear of this uncomfortable position to become known, and to understand the context of the workers: as individuals in families. Symbolically, the mine manager unwittingly refuses friendship and

kinship, and thereby negates the conclusion of “an uninterrupted process of reciprocal gifts, which effects the transition from hostility to alliance, from anxiety to confidence, and from fear to friendship” (Levi-Strauss 1949, 408).<sup>62</sup> As a further result, the mine manager rarely recognizes the alienation or discomfort of the minority position, as suggested by this Tâîchô business manager:

And they might say to them, oh, I don’t discriminate, I don’t, but they do without realizing it, but it’s our fault, also our people’s fault. We don’t go, there’s a superintendent sitting down, we don’t go up to him and say, “hey, can I sit with you, I want to talk to you about something,” and they go ahead and they use their coffee break even as a discussional base. The Tâîchô won’t go sit on that table until he’s actually asked to sit at the table. But yet superintendent and coordinators and other people, they sit down, other workers sit down, they form their little group and they yak away about a lot of things while the Tâîchô is sitting there very quietly on another table. (Interview with Tâîchô business leader, May 30, 2006)

The request to visit and to send managers from operations is to move beyond these particular symbolic acts embedded in monitoring and agreements to daily exchanges of friendship. Agreements, understood differently, might afford a process of overcoming fear and moving to friendship (Levi-Strauss 1949)—here the relationship of kin may be invoked. Michael Asch (2005) has characterized this realigning of relationships as one of Older and Younger Brother, suggesting that settler and indigenous societies must come to live co-existing in the land—without a claim of priority, but instead one of mutuality. In this relationship, an older sibling may not have priority or higher status, but does have knowledge of a place and knowledge systems that will be critical to living well in this land. That these requests are not honoured reveals the failure of reciprocity.

Another rupture of the potential for reciprocity is apparent in the structure of accountability in the corporation. Again, the negotiator chosen for the third agreement with De Beers is illustrative. The diamond mine manager, while he has personal relationship with the Dene leader, also has the structural relationship to the “parent” corporation (note the quasi-familial language denoting the priority of the relationship), now given the status of an individual in contract law. Acting in the best interest of the corporation has been defined as maximizing share value (*Canada Business Corporations Act*). Thus the manager’s primary alliance is to the parent corporation, and this alliance and need to maximize profit in order to minimize his own

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<sup>62</sup> In 2007, the newest CEO at Diavik was asked to attend a community-based meeting for the quarterly Diavik Community Advisory Board. The CEO refused to attend the community-based meeting in Wekweti, suggesting instead that he would be happy to meet with the Board in Yellowknife.



potential loss is his primary motivator. He is constrained in his ability to be truly reciprocal with the Dene individual, because he has entered into a first relationship, based on the principle of fear of loss, with the corporation. As a result, he will almost always fail to have a reciprocal relation with the Dene. He is obligated by the relationship to the shareholders to give as little as possible, in order to secure the rights to the mineral commodity and the land. Mauss writes (1954, 63) in his moral conclusions on gift exchange, “We must always return more than we receive, the return is always bigger and more costly.” The individual negotiator of the mining company will generally fail to give more than they receive. The only way out of this trap is if the manager can show that profits are jeopardized if the reciprocal relationship is not entered.<sup>63</sup> There is no moral obligation to be reciprocal; it is only if the relationship is shown to be economically beneficial that the corporation will alter the terms of relationship. The community will be seen as a “risk” in financial terms, and it is only through this lens that greater leverage for a gain can be made.

## 5.5 Culture in agreements

A further limit on reciprocity is encountered in how “culture” is treated; appeals to culture are always made based on the “politics of difference” (Tully 2000), leaving accommodation in the realm of the aboriginal parties. There is a sense in both assessment and the implementation of agreements that only Aboriginal culture needs to be protected from the forces of dominant society in the mine, and the agreements offer the opportunity to manage social and cultural impacts. Table 5.3 illustrates the ways in which cultural impacts are conceptualized and managed in the Socio-Economic Monitoring Agreements.

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<sup>63</sup> Another escape hatch from this trap is open if the developer is not structured as a public corporation, but rather is a privately funded and owned entity, and not publicly traded. Ekati and Diavik are publicly traded.

Table 5.3 The role of culture in Socio-Economic Agreements

ELEMENT RELATED TO CULTURE	BHP SEMA 1996	DIAMIK SEMA 1999	DE BEERS SNAP LAKE SEMA 2004
Provision onsite of country foods	✓	✓	
On site cross-cultural training	✓	✓	✓
Guarantees of heritage sites protection			
Employee Relations Personnel to communicate in an Aboriginal language		✓	✓
Pay for aboriginal language interpreters at community meetings		✓	
Encourage Aboriginal language at the mine site		✓	
Encourage Aboriginal workers to reside in home communities		✓	
Provide Dene, Metis and Inuit reading and video materials on site		✓	
Address cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural awareness in orientation training		✓	
Make freezers available for Country Food		✓	✓
Provide employees with one week unaccountable leave		✓	
Discuss cross-cultural training programs with Advisory Board		✓	
Assist in drug and alcohol programs, money management and individual supports		✓	✓
Provide communication links home	✓	✓	✓
Permit periodic spousal tours		✓	✓
Maintain counseling services	✓	✓	
Facilitate design of proposals from NWT		✓	
Provide counseling services to assist NWT businesses through business development	✓	✓	
Support northern business community meetings or conferences		✓	
Develop a cultural exchange program to provide non-Aboriginal site employees with the opportunity to spend two to three days with Aboriginal employees while participation in traditional land practices			✓
Sponsor community appreciation days in Primary Communities			✓

In the three agreements, culture is commonly captured as country foods, cross-cultural courses, and provision of communication links home. How cultural impacts are managed seems to shift with each agreement, with very little written of in the Ekati agreement. Diavik's agreement includes new courses and practices to bridge language and culture at the site and at home. The third agreement introduces new notions, such as the cultural exchange program and community appreciation days.

Also in these agreements, culture is something held only by the aboriginal party; all mention of it is made in reference to distinct values and language. The aboriginal party must appeal to the differences to justify mitigation, rather than making an appeal to any universal principles. This appeal to uniqueness and particularity has implications—if uniqueness is shifted or lessened as one participates in the mining culture, perhaps the community will not have the right to appeal any longer to distinctiveness (West 2006). Also, as the light is shone on the 'aboriginality' of the communities, the culture of the mine is left in darkness. While many small adjustments are made in the mine to accommodate the aboriginal miner, the culture of the miner or the mining company remains unexamined. The rules of operation are handed down from the parent company or instilled by the managers, without consideration of the values or ethics that may underlie them. As a result, all accommodation has to be made by the aboriginal individual within the mine.

#### 5.5.1 Cross-cultural courses

The agreements state that the company will deliver courses to workers on culture. For example, the Ekati SEMA states, "BHP shall make reasonable efforts to promote inter-cultural dialogue and understanding at the Project. To this end, BHP shall provide cross-cultural orientation and training for all employees focusing on both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures and mining industry cultures" (GNWT and BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. 1996a, 10). While this language suggests the culture of the mining industry will be examined, review of past courses reveals a singular focus on aboriginal people.

Most "cross-cultural" training has been developed to offer a better understanding of the history, culture and human geography of the Aboriginal people in the region to workers and managers. These courses often considered "soft" and "touchy feely" by the participants – a required element or a momentary enlightenment, rather than a tool for developing better relationships with co-workers. The courses tend to review historical events, relationships of Aboriginal people with the settler society, and offer information on the cultural and linguistic

background of the people in the region. This approach objectifies culture as something that is held in the past, treating only the practices of ritual, skill or language, further reinforcing stereotypes and focusing on differences. The workshop tends to occur through lectures, with an Aboriginal person delivering historical and cultural information to the audience.

The content of teaching focuses on language, practice of skills out on the land, and history. The workshop allows people to focus outwards on the aboriginal 'Other'. It does not encourage the participant to carefully examine their own values, styles of interaction, and worldview, and how they might be similar to those of the 'Other'. As a result, the emphasis is squarely on the adaptation of the aboriginal person to the mine environment.

### 5.5.2 Country foods

The inclusion of this clause in the agreements has been significant to miners/harvesters, but the implementation of it at the mines has been inconsistent. The name of the first diamond mine is significant, not only because it is an aboriginal word, but because of what it describes. While many northern mine workers the literal meaning of the word, the context for it is crucial. Caribou health is determined by the amount of fat on the animal. The translation of "Ekati" as caribou fat will always remind the listener of the first question they will ask when a caribou is brought home for food: "how big was the fat?" This answer to this question reveals exactly how rich, tasty and healthy the meal will be, as well as give some indication of the wellness of the herd that this caribou arrives from (Interview with Tâîchô leader, April 12, 2007). The cooks at the mining camps are charged with providing food for up to 650 people three times a day, on a twenty four hour schedule. The menus vary widely, with the foods of many cultures presented. The agreements stipulate that country foods be available. The significance of the food is made clear in interviews at the mine, where one cleaning woman eats only the boiled eggs from the kitchen, making sure to have a store of dry meat she brings herself. If non-Dene cooks prepare the foods, aboriginal miners find the 'right taste' is not always achieved. Procuring bush meat has proven difficult for the mines, as the standards of the kitchens tend to exclude meat that is not packaged and maintained in a certain fashion.<sup>64</sup> Little else has been done to adapt to the aboriginal workforce. As one interviewee suggested: "if they can have activity like they play pool. They can go there and play video games, those are activities beyond the normal work.

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<sup>64</sup> Voisey Bay Nickel mine has accommodated the request for country foods by maintaining country food kitchens where Innu and Inuit workers may prepare meals themselves.

There is no normal northern activity there, that is somehow considered to be an extra cost” (February 14, 2008).

## 5.6 The politics of difference

These elements comprise the main accommodation of culture through agreement making; the definitions of culture all relate to how aboriginal culture is different, and only through this difference are they able to qualify for agreement making. The first two agreements capture culture as courses, food, language and communication, while the third agreement from De Beers does introduce this idea of ideas of exchange, yet to be implemented as the mine is not yet in production. These concepts neglect the power of the values and rules of the occupational site. The aboriginal worker must engage in the rules of the industrial environment, which is often portrayed as a culture-free zone. The culture and values of the industrial environment are hidden from view, because they are the underlying structures that guide interaction in the settler society. Their opaqueness to the manager makes them normal, universal, and unquestioned.

These agreements treat culture as particularly in the realm of the aboriginal. They incorporate the “Other” through these few partial and symbolic acts. The settler society, through Treaty mining companies, uses the agreements to extinguish rights (no right to the land or to the deposit) and through incorporation (through employment, monies, and business contracts). The incorporation is complete in that there is no recognition of the culture of the settler society in the mining company—these are the universalized and underlying rules that have become so normal to the settler society that they are opaque. They are the riverbed, not the river. By not recognizing these values, the miner seeks to incorporate the aboriginal person.

The relationships between mining companies and aboriginal people follow that of the federal government with aboriginal people: they are rooted in the politics of difference. Tully (2000, 47) has reflected on how past court decisions serve as the basis of this approach:

The Court has shown that a wide range of cultural, ceremonial and economic rights, including rights to the land, can be derived from the distinctiveness of Aboriginal peoples and that these rights need not be limited to the distinctive practices, customs and traditions they engaged in at the time of contact... This exclusive ground of Aboriginal rights in the politics of difference (without the universal demand for freedom that underlies and justifies it) has thus ushered in a higher degree of internal autonomy for indigenous people... nevertheless, it denies indigenous peoples the right to appeal to universal principles of freedom and equality in struggling against injustice.

According to Tully (2000), the onus to prove title and thereby gain the option to negotiate a land claim or Treaty agreement has rested firmly in the hands of the indigenous party, rather than with the federal government. The agreements of the extractive industries follow this pattern, with the corporation in charge of scoping, at times acting as an arbiter of what aboriginal groups can become party to an agreement. They continue to require that the aboriginal group appeal to the mining company for agreements and always based on the notion of distinctiveness. Traditional land use often provides leverage, as was suggested by this diamond mine manager:

Fort Resolution (Deninu K'ue) opted out as not being interested in environmental assessment, they only got interested a year and a half later when the IBAs were mentioned and they smelled money. Now (we have) gone around and around on who should be involved, but with De Beers, (the agency) was tempted to bring Fort Resolution in, and I said, "don't do that. Everyone else has kept them out." Well, they have traditional land use there..." and I said, "they don't have current land use to any significant degree." Yes a few people go up from Fort Resolution and go caribou hunting, yes I know there are people there that in the fifties were going across the lake and going up the Beaulieu family ties and the Mandevilles, but they aren't doing it now. The people who are currently using the land in some way shape or form, the primary land users, and I say that based on who do we see coming to our mine site? (Interview, January 21, 2005)

The manager suggests current land use levels ought to be the trigger for involvement in IBA negotiations, and that historic rights are not sufficient to prove right to an agreement with a mining company. Rather the aboriginal group has to demonstrate current use, and has to be seen *by the mining company* to be out there using the land.

The overarching theme is that people are only being "aboriginal" if they are practicing what the westerner imagines they ought to be, i.e., traditional land use. The diamond mine manager questions the rights simply because the people do not fit his imaginary. As West (2006, 168) writes, "this lack of essential traditional practice is used as one argument for wresting the control of land from people." At issue here is not the substance of the Deninu K'ue request for agreements, but rather the process of scoping groups as "impacted", which seems to rest on this need to prove historic and current use to the mining company in a way that confirms their imaginary of the "Other". The diamond mine manager also argues to protect the status quo of the parties to the first two diamond mine agreements, in effect protecting the company from any new claimants. The corporate intent is to avoid new precedents, for if Deninu K'ue were included, then the lever would be in place to argue for renegotiation with the previous two mines. De Beers has effectively kept Deninu K'ue from coming into the fold of agreement making. This manager also implies that Deninu K'ue only became interested once they "smelled the money",

suggesting that people invent land claims and shift traditional land use boundaries to take advantage of new development and generate income (West 2006).

A historical perspective illuminates this point: when agreements were considered with the first diamond mine, Ekati staff questioned the federal government about whom to contact. The federal answer was the Tâîchô. Working with this consultation strategy, the federal government and BHP Billiton consulted the Tâîchô alone. This served to put the Tâîchô first in line as the “most affected” aboriginal group, and created a backlash by other groups. A mining company manager said:

Now the original scoping was flawed because DIAND, when BHP first talked to them was DIAND said, “the only people you have to talk to are the Tâîchô.” And BHP went ahead and only talked to the Tâîchô and all hell broke loose. That is why we primarily do our own scoping in exploration. We talk to the organizations themselves. (January 21, 2005)

An independent review of the environmental assessment process made the same observation: there was a perceived “hierarchy (that) appeared to have been largely determined by progress achieved in settling the land claims and by physical proximity to the site. The Tâîchô, being recognized as the most directly affected group and being most advanced in their negotiations with the federal government on land claims, were seen to be in the strongest position and influenced greatly the final outcome of the process” (Canadian Institute for Resources Law 1997, 62). In addition, until title is proven to the Crown, the land is open to other interests. The collapse of the Dene-Metis Accord and the lapsing of the Interim Lands Agreement happened just as the diamond staking rush that followed Charles Fipke and Stu Blusson’s finds in 1991. The mineral interests were staked and subsequently withdrawn from land claims negotiations. The Crown was never in the position, at the time of the mineral rush, of needing to prove that communities did not have rights to the land.

This federal direction of BHP Billiton to the Tâîchô alone surfaces the connection of land claims and impact assessment. Political theory on land claims suggests the Crown forces aboriginal parties to prove they ought to have a claim, rather than placing the onus on the government to prove that they don’t (Tully 2000). With development, communities similarly have to argue impact based on land claims that may or may not be accepted or on downstream impact, not just with the federal government, but also with the Treaty mining companies. That the federal government selected only the Tâîchô as “likely impacted” for the impact assessment process, and that thereafter all other parties had to argue to be included on the basis of land claims, aboriginal rights and/or “likelihood of impact” put them in a position of needing

to prove yet another “claim”. It also created an artificial “ladder” of impacted groups. The geographic distance of Deninu K’ue from the mine sites and their association through the Akaitcho Treaty 8 claim, along with the geographic dispersion of the Métis, has resulted in outright exclusion or reduced leverage in IBA negotiation processes.

Yet, even with this federal approach, the environmental impact assessment process holds what Tully (2000) might term again “spaces of freedom.” While Deninu K’ue has been excluded from agreement making, the North Slave Metis (with no federally recognized claim) have been party to agreements. The managers of environmental impact assessment processes are not influenced by federal policy, and suggest that each impact assessment decision and the groups who are defined as “impacted” do not prejudice the land claims process (Interview with regulatory board manager, September 5, 2007).

#### 5.6.1 Deninu K’ue

Akaitcho Treaty 8, consisting of the four bands of Deninu Kue, Åutsel K’e and the two communities of Yellowknives Dene First Nation, has overlapping claims with the Tàîchô. Although three of the bands were included as “impacted” and thereby signed IBAs with the mining companies, the federal government did not define Deninu K’ue as an impacted group during the years when the first negotiated agreements with mining companies were made. Although they are located south of Great Slave Lake, Deninu K’ue is party to the land claims agreement with the Akaitcho Treaty 8, and makes claim in the regions. The question of geography and non-assertion has kept them from engaging in Impact and Benefit Agreements—with the effect of enormous tension among the Akaitcho Treaty 8 communities. At the time of the Ekati scoping, the people of Deninu K’ue never made a strong assertion to be involved; however they have made a request to be involved in the Snap Lake mine.

Without an IBA with the mines, Deninu K’ue still receives funds through sharing agreements with the three other groups of the Treaty Entitlement Claim. Although the federal government and mining companies will not recognize Deninu K’ue identity, the communities resolve the tension through a four way split of agreement funds, something Weitzner refers to as a creative solution to a seemingly intractable problem (Weitzner 2005). This dilutes the capital available to the three signatories, but serves to maintain solidarity in a negotiation block. These communities share funds with each other because of the political relationships, treating each other as kin.



### 5.6.2 North Slave Métis Association (NSMA)

The NSMA has been included in agreements, despite the fact that their specific claim has not been accepted by the federal government. The decision to scope NSMA into the assessment was done without prejudice to land claims. Still, the NSMA have consistently been underrepresented in environmental assessment (Stevenson 1999), and have argued that the environmental assessments failed to collect or present data on the NSMA historically. This neglect is apparent in the consultation structures designed in the implementation boards. For example, the Diavik Community Advisory Board gives one seat to each of the four Tâîchô communities, but only one to the NSMA, although this organization represents people in each Tâîchô community, as well as others, notably in Yellowknife. “Although Metis comprise roughly a third (>33%) of the aboriginal population in the NWT (and the directly affected communities, the NSMA was given only one of the eight aboriginal seats (12%) on the Board, representing a single *cultural* community” (Grieves, Personal Communication 2007). The NSMA suggest this treatment affects employment and business opportunities, as well as how data is gathered, since it is gathered based on geographic community. Cash funds to communities are based roughly on proven population numbers, as implied in an interview with a diamond mine manager (January 21, 2005). Further, more weight is given to communities geographically close to the mines, so distant and smaller communities may receive less funds. Given that there are multiple groups for Metis people to identify through (the Tâîchô, Akaitcho or the NSMA), this may also impact on a group’s ability to negotiate with any leverage, and indeed on allegiances of individuals. As a result, this group may be seen by the corporation as less of a threat, and therefore they may receive a lesser agreement.

### 5.6.3 Tension between groups about identity

The tension has been enormous among groups, as they consider negotiation strategies and options on many fronts, be they impact and benefit agreements, treaty negotiations, or socio-economic or environmental agreements. This tension was recognized early on:

Almost everyone agrees the mine has contributed to tensions between the Treaty 8 and Treaty 11 people due to problems in determining an agreeable boundary over the mine site area. In general, the workers do not want any part of what they consider a political argument. They consider themselves the same people. (BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. 1996, 4.47)

The remembrance of past agreements is embedded in this statement, particularly of the peace treaty of Edzo and Akaitcho. As the Yellowknives Dene First Nation made the decision to join Áutsel K'ue and Deninu K'ue to negotiate a Treaty Entitlement Claim, going under the banner of Akaitcho Dene, the Yellowknives became estranged from the Tâîchô, severing what had always been a relationship of reciprocity, defined by common kin, intermarriage and neighbours. The choice to move forward under the banner of Akaitcho, the warrior who battled with the Tâîchô historically, caused greater tension between the two groups, dismaying Tâîchô leaders and elders. A Yellowknives Dene elder commented that:

About six or seven years now we talk about the Akaitcho territory, but old timers don't care about Akaitcho. He died over four hundred years ago and was buried about five kilometers away. But Susie Drygeese, we should call this Susie Drygeese territory. Old timers want the Susie Drygeese name, but young leaders don't. (September 7, 2006)

This rupture, due to the need to establish boundaries for land claims forced the Tâîchô and Yellowknives Dene to break faith with the agreement of the past, made by Edzo and Akaitcho. As a result, Chiefs of the region stopped meeting and visiting. The elder suggests the group ought to use the name of Chief Susie Drygeese; this affiliation would not cause enmity between the groups, given that this Chief was closely allied to the Tâîchô. Formerly, this Chief and others of N'dilo and Dettah worked closely with a historic Tâîchô Chief, Jimmy Bruneau. Both Chiefs traveled from Dettah to Rae frequently to consult on issues of common concern. For example, anthropologist Beryl Gillespie writes of driving Chief Jimmy Bruneau to Dettah to meet with Chief Sangris to discuss the idea of forming reserves (Gillespie 1968). A Yellowknives Dene elder talked of how he felt about the old Chief of the Tâîchô, Chief Jimmy Bruneau: "We used to look up to him, and we used to share a lot in common, just like talk and communicate with each other. But today since all the young leaders came about, everything seems like it fell apart" (September 7, 2006). Leadership meetings are now in the courts, as when the Akaitcho challenged the Tâîchô Land Claims and Self Government Agreements in 2002. Yellowknives Dene staff members, who had previously been treated as close kin, were suddenly estranged (Interview with Tâîchô health leader, January 28, 2006).

This political context illustrates how all relationships shifted with the discovery of diamonds, moving groups from friendship to fear (Levi-Strauss 1949). Although they had always shared land, intermarried and visited, the Tâîchô and the Akaitcho Treaty 8 were forced to redefine boundaries, breaking faith with the peace agreement of Edzo and Akaitcho, as

evidenced by an affidavit by John B. Zoe in response to a lawsuit by the Akaitcho Treaty 8 government:

I wish to emphasize that this meeting between Edzo and Akaitcho was about peace between peoples. It was not about land. I say this because the Tâîchô understanding is that there was no boundary set at that meeting. In fact, in our oral history there are no historical agreements or treaties that have ever set out a boundary within the Tâîchô traditional use area....Aboriginal peoples in the north rely on the caribou and must access them for survival. There are not now and never have there been boundaries between our traditional use areas. Boundaries would have made life impossible for survival of all of the peoples. Flexibility has been the key to our survival because it allows us to share the riches of the land. (Zoe 2002)

The pressure to settle land claims with the federal government dramatically increased with the diamond mines in the region. The resulting years of tension over this agreement was resolved in a 2002 Boundary Agreement. This does not suggest that land claims serve as triggers to formation of new identity, but it is often only through appeal to recognized and federally accepted definitions that the social compact of land claims or IBAs can be negotiated. The pressure to form agreements can cause the Dene to negate aspects of past agreements, causing key values and characteristics to be lost, such as the flexibility that Zoe discussed.

## 5.7 Reframing relationships

When studied closely, the benefits that people attain through the IBAs are about engaging in business and employment opportunities, rather than about mitigating cultural and social impacts. These agreements raise all sorts of troubling issues: who is defined as impacted, how they are defined, how this identity test may cause inter-group and intra-group tensions, how clauses in the agreement serve to reduce impacts or simply compensate for them financially, and how the agreements are implemented.

Yet, the agreements have been used to increase employment, and in at least one of the groups, the funds from agreements are now being used in a transformative way, to fund work on culture, language and way of life. This echoes the “practice of freedom on the rough ground of daily colonization” (Tully, 2000, 59) that Tully (2000, 59) writes of:

it is these unnoticed contextual struggles of human freedom in the face of techniques of government and strategies of legitimation that have brought the internal colonization of indigenous peoples to the threshold of public attention and critical reflection in our time. And it is these which have the potential to lead in the long run to the same kind of freedom for indigenous peoples that western

political theorists and citizens already enjoy, but which is currently based on the un-freedom of indigenous peoples.

These agreements hold a potential for self determination, both symbolically in that they acknowledge perpetual use of the land, and materially, in that they award resources that do not have to be described or justified to the federal government or the Treaty mining company. Yet, the question of un-sustainability of the mineral funds has been raised (O’Faircheallaigh 1996) which may impact the communities in ten to fifteen years, especially if funds are used for central services and infrastructure.

Even now, there is movement to control this space through federal oversight (Shanks 2006) with recommendations that mix both intervention in aboriginal affairs (a policy framework, capacity building, public discussions), with non-interventionist elements (a policy framework with “expectations”). The pressure from industry is for clear regulatory rules and a sure process. Any forthcoming policy guidance and legislation may threaten the only space for creative negotiation and self determination that remains, other than through structures of self governance, once achieved.

Yet at the same time, these agreements have been entered from completely different places. While the aboriginal parties are seeking reciprocity, the corporation sees the attainment of the agreement as the conclusion of the negotiations. From this point on, the company seeks only to implement the agreement, and as a result there is little flexibility and a corresponding lack of attention to reciprocity. First, the mine manager is restricted to offer the least amount possible to secure consent by the financial imperative of the corporation. Second, the mine manager does not understand the request for reciprocity, and therefore refuses the gift that is offered. The offer to move from fear to friendship is made, but the company continues to operate as strangers in the land. The next troubling aspect of these agreements follows from the federal approach to land claims, one that allows free entry as a first condition of land rights. The onus is never on the federal government to prove that there are no relevant land claims in the region before mineral rights are granted. Rather, mineral rights are granted and sizeable chunks of land are then extracted from possible land withdrawals. The approach, according to Asch, derives from the concept of *terra nullius*:

The doctrine of *Terra nullius* justifies sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and their lands in Canadian law by erasing Indigenous historical-political discourse. It invokes racist evolutionary principles proffered by the British to justify Empire in the age of colonialism, principles that Canada strongly condemns abroad. It evokes an historical-political discourse so transparently fictional that it ought not be given serious consideration. (Asch 2007, 4)

According to Asch, this concept of *terra nullius* authorized the Canadian state to assume jurisdiction and authority based on the notion of previously unoccupied territory. This doctrine is premised on the assumption that indigenous peoples were primitive, in “that they did not have institutions or concepts of sovereignty or jurisdiction. They could not, therefore, legally occupy their own lands” (Asch 2005, 431). The federal government sets the architecture for mining companies by granting mineral rights under the free entry system. O’Faircheallaigh (1996, 185) comments that, any success in attaining benefits through agreements “will occur within certain limits, set by the fact that developers and the state usually retain the ultimate power to determine whether resource development proceeds and the broad conditions under which it will occur.” However, the environmental impact assessment process does not connect land claims and scoping, leaving small “spaces of freedom” to negotiate agreements with mining companies. In these agreements lie the possibilities of some small gains to be made. However, O’Faircheallaigh (2007a, 12) suggests that groups maximize “their gains from negotiated agreements where negotiations are *accompanied by* the strategic use of litigation, of direct action designed to attract media attention and political support, and building of alliances with other political interests such as environmental groups or trade unions,” something that the groups of the Mackenzie Valley have been limited from, due to the requirement in the agreements of support. Their ability to raise support among groups, or to litigate, is limited by the agreements after they are signed. They are also often limited in the environmental assessment process in that their right to refuse the mine (based on some description of impact that surfaces in the process), is foreclosed.

Asch (2007, 8) argues for relationships of settler society and aboriginal society to be reframed, so that “treaty is an on-going relationship that builds to a joining together in a political community that both accepts difference and acknowledges a common project.” While these agreements have ensured a host of new opportunities and options, they constitute partial and symbolic reciprocity, and therefore limited engagement with aboriginal rights. Much more could be done, much more could be achieved—however the industry is yet to understand the real meaning of reciprocity.

## 6 LIFE IN THE MINES

Mines have two operational goals: production and safety. Productivity eventually will recoup a mining company's investments and begin to create shareholder value, and safety on the site will service this first goal and decrease political risk. All systems in a mine site relate in some way to these two goals. With the priority of hiring aboriginal workers, mining companies now need to ensure that the aboriginal workers slips into the role of the miner without friction. The aboriginal harvester/miner moves into this new mining landscape, out of a former cultural landscape, essentially a space that has been made and remade through this mode of production (Harvey 1996), so that the landscape has been transformed into calculable resources that require extraction (Agrawal 2005). This move from the home to the mine requires shifts, negotiations and transformations. These transformations reveal a narrative of how difference is seen as natural, and of how the social relations that have gone into the making of the mine are not seen at all (West 2006). In ignoring these social relations, and the values and cultures underlying them, the mine site is portrayed as a culture-free zone. This approach of difference blindness to social relationships within the mine site renders advancement difficult.

As the aboriginal harvester/miner enters into the operational site of the diamond mine, the continuing importance of values, networks, and culture is apparent. They are evident in how that person negotiates relationships with co-workers, managers and family, and these values and networks that are mobilized at the outset of the mine in recruitment, are felt and described in what keeps a miner at the site, and equally may influence how a person advances in the organization. It takes these negotiations to get the worker to the mine: it is an organization that tends to be deeply conservative, and would prefer to host a labour force in agreement with the manager, rather than struggle with the necessary bridging of difference that occurs. As strong as values, culture and networks are, they contrast with the managerial styles of the occupational culture of an operating mine site. This, and the weight of recent history, combines to cause friction and tension in the mines, often impeding the recruitment, retention and advancement of the aboriginal miner.

### 6.1 Meeting the miners

There is no archetypal aboriginal miner. Each person arrives on site with unique experiences, history, and dreams. If there are any commonalities among them, they appear largely by gender and age. Women in their childbearing years are extremely rare at the mines,

leaving women before or after children rearing predominant at the mines. Men between the ages of 16 and 60 are working at the mines, although there are many factors that lead to their long term retention at the mines. A number of characters are presented here, with names changed and identifying characteristics altered.

#### 6.1.1 Anna

Anna reports that she is pleased with her emerging ability in her job, the training opportunities, and the skills she learns as she is on site. She is proud of what she has achieved in her work, considering that aboriginal women have rarely worked at the mines on heavy machinery in an open pit. In her interview, she attributed her success in the mines to the strict values she was raised with: “my parents are very traditional. Their words and wisdom keep my head on straight” (Interview with miner, March 14, 2006). She has yet to start a family of her own and when she does, she reports she is certain she will leave the mine. For now, she reports that the mine is a refuge for building new skills and independence and forming her own identity, outside and apart from the strong identity of her family. She is outspoken, fluent in Tâîchô and easily able to joke about gender issues that commonly arise, defusing conflict at the same time as she corrects the speaker. She reports that as men suggest she “drop by after work to take care of their laundry”, she replies: “that’s why you have a wife, call her in.” She said: “it feels really good to overcome all the difficulties, especially as an aboriginal girl.” On her time off, Anna reports she spends time with her family. The hardest part of being away, she said, “is hearing about death. I want to pay my respects. The community is my family” (Interview with miner, March 16, 2006). If someone in the community passes away, you want to be there, “for the survivors and as support” (Interview with miner, March 16, 2006). With a grade 10 education, this 31 year old woman earns roughly \$60,000 each year.

#### 6.1.2 John

The high salary of the mines often draws older workers to the mines. John reports he has worked on other mine sites, attracted by the high salary and due to his skill base in heavy machinery. He felt he was satisfied with his position as a haul truck driver, although he suggested it was a means to an end. He said he “really lives life back at home” (Interview with miner, January 16, 2006). Often, he reported, when he returns from site, his wife has the truck packed to leave for the south. With his son in college in Alberta, they travel to visit him

periodically, as well as travel to Grande Prairie. When he speaks of work, he says: “I turn my brain off and keep my head down” (Interview with miner, January 16, 2006). While he has worked at the mine for a long time, he suggests he is likely to stay until it closes. He says he feels fortunate, given that his formal education ended at grade three. He reports this job has given him the chance to work hard for excellent pay with very little education (Interview with miner, January 16, 2006). This 37 year old man earns \$80,000 each year.

### 6.1.3 Leon

The mine is a refuge for Leon, taking him away from a difficult home life. He said: “The people I know now are just like family at camp” (Interview with miner, March 17, 2006). He said he “keeps focused on the job, and can’t daydream....You have to do your two weeks” (Interview with miner, March 17, 2006). When he arrives at work, he reports he misses his family and has a hard time sleeping. “Then when you get back, you are up all night the night before you leave again. You don’t want to leave your family” (Interview with miner, March 17, 2006). Problems at home seem to constantly arise at home, he reports, because he is a single father. “The family is only supposed to call in the case of real emergencies. Not if the sink is plugged, they are supposed too call someone else” (Interview with miner, March 17, 2006). He told of his wife, who is in deep despair, in the grips of “bad medicine” (Interview with miner, March 17, 2006). With his wife gone, he reports his children are taken care of by extended family. A key problem, he suggested is the constant interruption on site by bad news from family. He feels his wife’s addictions, both to alcohol and gambling, set the family into a state of constant crisis. Leon, according to the statistics from the mines and interviews with managers, is the kind of worker who is most likely to leave the mine due to the demands from home. Ironically, the mine is a refuge but also the cause of the separation. With a grade ten education, this 40 year old man earns more than \$60,000 each year.

### 6.1.4 Ernie

Ernie is a leader onsite; someone both management and workers reported turning to when there is a conflict with an aboriginal worker (Interview with miner, September 8, 2006). He says he “lives for work” (Interview with miner, September 8, 2006). He reports he is turned to for resolution of most conflicts and problems and for ideas on how to manage conflict. He constantly intervenes in conflicts, problems and seeks to boost the numbers of aboriginal hires



(Interview with miner, September 8, 2006). With a leadership position in the mine, Ernie felt he has become the face of the mine in the community. “Families attack me when I am at home, they have heard one side of the story about someone who was fired, they want a job, they didn’t get a job—they all blame me” (Interview with miner, September 8, 2006). He says he is “yelled at when I go downtown. People want to beat me up. I never go downtown” (Interview with miner, September 8, 2006). It is at the mine that he reports being in control. He excels at explaining his culture to the manager at work, speaking constantly of stories, history, and legends. Everyone points to Ernie as the “authentic Indian”. It is clear he has great prestige there. During our interviews, he is constantly sought out by employees. However, when it comes to real power in the mine, he feels he is the “tiger that has been de-clawed” (Interview with miner, September 8, 2006). He suggests that while management listens to him, constantly seeking him out as the intermediary in the mine, he can never make final decisions (Interview with miner, September 8, 2006).

Each of these individuals is able to work at the mines for different reasons: Anna’s work is supported by her family, since she is young and still childless. However, once she considers childrearing, she will most likely leave and use her skills back in the community. John is able to work only because of his extended family that takes care of his children while he is gone. Leon escapes to the mine, leaving trauma behind him; however he is the sort of individual that most often loses the job within a few years (Interview with mine manager, March 20, 2007), due to the issues that arise at home with children and partners. Ernie holds his position in the mine because of his unique knowledge and ability to solve conflicts. However, Ernie has to be at odds with his family and networks in order to hold his position. While he must refuse most requests that come to him from community members, and endure the sting of constant rebuke and conflict while at home, he is a master of conflicts in the mine, even though he is unlikely to move up in the mine. He never leaves his work, as even in his time off he must answer to his peers and social network. At work he also has to violate relationships and break bonds in order to succeed in management.<sup>65</sup> He knows and understands the mine system well, but sacrifices relationships at home in order to solve problems and maintain a position at the mine site.

These individual portraits reveal some of the sacrifices and gains that people make as they engage in the mining economy. Of these four individuals, John and Ernie are most likely to still be there in ten years. John will continue, because he has mastered the rotation schedule, kept a strong and stable family, and continues to work for the sake of his children. Ernie will

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<sup>65</sup> This is the same pattern that was noted by Errington and Gewertz (2004) in *Yali’s Question*.

continue, because he has found a comfortable position that reinforces his identity within the mines; however, he is unlikely to gain the prerequisites of advancing in the mines. The only comfortable place for him is the mine; yet he is kept in positions of lower or middle level management, due in part to his educational level. He will be the specialist in both cultural and linguistic competencies of the aboriginal and occupational cultures, serving as a bridge, but denied full entry in both. However, Anna will likely move on when she chooses to have children and Leon will continue to be called home off of work shifts by his family, given that his wife is unable to cope due to addictions and “bad medicine”. Eventually, the pressures of home will cause three strikes to be rendered against Leon’s employment record.

Each of these negotiations is highly individual, and while we can analyze them at the level of the group, in the end it is the fragments (Tsing 2005) that are brought together that tell multiple stories of the experiences of miners/harvesters in the diamond mine. Apparent from each of these narratives is the series of transformations and negotiations needed for the miner to arrive at the occupational site. The agreements, and continual faith to them, are a critical lever for achieving and keeping employment with the Treaty mining companies.

## 6.2 The organizational culture of the mine site

The question arises of whether an institutional culture can be defined on site that each worker has to adapt to and understand in order to successfully maintain a job and resolve conflict (Heyman 2004); in an essay on institutional culture, Heyman suggests characterization of the division of labour, the indoctrination processes on site, the nature of how bureaucrats and their clients embody wider social relations, and the processes for organizing work (called “thought processes”) is critical to understanding bureaucracies. The mine site is quite distinct from the parent company, with particular managers, priorities and streams. A parent company may watch over many operating mines, concern itself with many fictional geological possibilities (Tsing 2005), and shepherd old mines out of existence. The remote mine is concerned with the ore bodies on site, the understanding of which changes frequently and often expands as the ore body is newly delineated and made real through development and extraction. While the parent company is run remotely by professionals skilled in managing finances and multiple sites, the remote site is often run by a professional class of engineers. The operating site indoctrinates workers upon entry, one of Heyman’s (2004) criteria for organizational culture, through training on a computer based system, videos and orientation presentations. Each worker must undergo several hours, even days, of training on safety, hazards, and rules of the worksite. Finally, the

work environment has strong work associations created in the particular sites, such as in the pit and process plant and these allegiances transfer over into a worker's free time while still on site.

One area of strong association is found in mine management, which relies on highly skilled professionals. Senior people tend to move continuously from mine to mine. According to one Vice President the turnover rate was highest in mine management. During the course of fieldwork for this thesis, three different Chief Executive Officers moved through one Treaty mining company, each one a slightly different skilled professional, starting with the geological engineer, to the lawyer to the professional accountant. Indeed the careers of mine management are reflected in the frequency of residence changes. Rhodes' dissertation revealed the lives of miner's wives who follow the career paths of their husbands through mines, and their efforts to create community in short periods (Rhodes 2001).<sup>66</sup> Lower level management also tends to move positions frequently, as revealed by turnover statistics from one mine which shows the turnover is highest among professional staff. This high turnover, according to a company Vice President, is associated with the following reasons:

First is location. Most of our 4 by 3's [weekly, four days in and three days out, commuters] come out of the south, from Kelowna, Calgary, etc., and this is not home. Second is demand for professional staff; in this job market there are so many opportunities. Third, we put a lot of responsibility on four by three people; for management it is more like 70-80 hours per week. Work load and crisis management is much higher for you. You are the only person in the role, and we have a 24 day operation. There is no one else doing your role, you are it. We have always been running a bit short-staffed, so there is weekend coverage requirement, to be on site manager, so there is extra responsibility. It does burn people out. We had a fatigue management course this week. (Interview with Vice President, August 24, 2007)

The operating mine is characterized by hierarchical relationships, strict lines of authority and communication, and prescribed policies for managerial and human resource systems. The highest position in the operating mine is the General Manager. A Rio Tinto manager reflects on how operational decisions are made by the General Manager about downsizing in tough economic times, reflecting the key priorities of a company:

You have a site where they need to cut down on people, and they (the managers) say, well we need a pit manager; we need a metals' processing manager; an administrative manager; and a maintenance manager. Then there is external affairs, community relations, and they give it to the person who can have a cup of tea with people best. They have no clue how to put together a socio-economic baseline study, but they are the nicest person on site. (Interview with Rio Tinto manager, November 30, 2006)

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<sup>66</sup> Rhodes is a miner's wife, and she relocated with her husband 21 times to follow the ore bodies (Rhodes 2001).

The preceding quote, from a man with a long tenure in the mining business, illustrates what appears to be the primary goal of the mine: maximized productivity. Cross-cultural leadership qualities, social science skills, and human relations are not necessarily valued prerequisites in a manager, as long as the individual has a track record of productivity. A General Manager once unwittingly revealed his ignorance of Dene human geography when he commented to Akaitcho workers that they must be excited about the upcoming conclusion of the Tăîchô self government and land claims agreement (Fieldnotes, December 2005). Sometimes a pit manager may have the happy coincidence of being a good leader and efficient technician, but these are not qualities he is chosen for. The mines report a new focus on leadership and communication, but these skills tend to be compartmentalized into community relations or human resources.

Distinctions on site tend to be made based on labour class, geography, ethnicity, and operational work site. These distinctions are: managers vs. workers, southern vs. northern, aboriginal vs. non-aboriginal, and pit vs. process plant. Each dichotomy occurs in different contexts and refers to unique tensions. The managers and worker dichotomy received the most attention and invoked the aboriginal vs. non-aboriginal tension in 2006 when a three month strike at the Ekati mine polarized relationships and kept workers from site for more than ten weeks. During the strike time, both union and management appealed to the aboriginal core of workers. While management sought to emphasize how the union might undermine existing IBAs, the union sought solidarity with aboriginal workers and leadership.<sup>67</sup> The northern and southern tension emerges constantly on site; southern workers remark they are there through skill, and accuse northern workers of being there solely to fill quotas. That relatively unskilled aboriginal miners are taken on, because of commitments made in agreements with communities and governments, represents a challenge to this industry that prides itself on skilling. The quotas serve as a constant source of friction on the jobsite, as they emerge in conversations and generate discussion.

Certain practices of diamond mines in general create a unique work environment, one of high security and low trust. The commute operation aims for a safe work environment, and a

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<sup>67</sup> This tension and debate would be fascinating to follow further. The mines release to aboriginal parties to agreements the numbers of northern aboriginal workers every year. Since the Privacy Act was passed, names are no longer released to the communities, a constant point of disagreement. The mines are bound by the Privacy Act, but the communities do not trust the corporate data without associated names. During the strike, the mine released worker names to the communities for the first time since the Act passed, illustrating which workers were with the union and which weren't, in an effort to urge the communities to speak with their members on behalf of the mine. The eleven week strike ended on June 30, 2006, with 400 signed Ekati workers voting 66% in favour of the one-year contract that contains a full grievance procedure to protect workers from arbitrary and unfair treatment, as well as wage increases, a signing benefit, more vacation days and other changes.

relaxed off-shift environment. Yet mine managers are responsible for people for 24 hours of the day, so no high risk behaviour is allowed. Employees are required to be tested for alcohol and drugs if there is “reasonable cause”, which is defined by one company as incidents, accidents or near misses. If there is cause to believe a worker is impaired, they are removed from site without pay, and if results are negative there is no loss of pay and they are returned to site as soon as possible. If results are positive for drugs or alcohol, the employee is referred to Employment and Family Services for counseling. When an employee refuses testing, they are immediately sent off of site.<sup>68</sup> Drug and alcohol testing are both undertaken, even though tests for drugs may only register past impairment. Out on the land, people are not allowed to walk freely, and are told not to pick up rocks. Any geological finds on a person’s body or luggage are considered theft. These measures are seen as necessary in light of the commodity that is sought. They also create a climate of distrust and suspicion of the individual.<sup>69</sup>

While hierarchy and chain of command have been described as the main features of the organization, the lack of a formal and written progression plan characterizes most departments, with the exception of the process plant. The skills and training necessary to advance in the department or enter new careers in the organization are rarely described. In an area such as the open pit, it takes constant shifting, training, and machine jumping in order to gain the skills necessary to understand the full range of machines in the area. People that move up in the mines have been afforded these opportunities by their pit managers, given the time to train, and often have a few characteristics that the manager sees as necessary. They may be aggressive and self promoting. With no clear progression plan in place, rumour and innuendo often chase the man who won a new position, questioning the fairness of this choice.

The key values, production and safety, drive the choices managers make and the spirit of work crews. A manager only advances if the team production figures are high; a team receives bonuses based on their high production levels and low injury statistics. On entry to the mine, production and safety figures are posted. Competitions are won weekly by work teams with the best safety statistics: prizes include cash or shopping trips and reward dinners. A manager spoke

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<sup>68</sup> Drug and alcohol dependence are defined as a disability in the *NWT Human Rights Act* inclusive of the perception of drug and alcohol dependence. If an employee makes a complaint to the Human Rights Commission, the burden of proof lies with them to prove that testing is necessary because it is a safety sensitive position (Human Rights Commission 2007). According to Guidelines from the Human Rights Commission, testing for drugs is rarely required, unless the person is showing obvious signs of impairment, and enforcing testing for drugs may discriminate based on the perception of disability.

<sup>69</sup> The northern mines report no suspicious activity; however in discussions with the Head of Security of one mine, he mentioned a conspiracy of 100 employees at the Argyle diamond mine in western Australia which was discovered in advance. Each year, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police northern diamond unit releases a report which invariably suggests the mines must be on constant alert for organized crime.

of this focus: “there is such a focus on bigger, harder, faster, and it is like an army, it is so hierarchical.” He adds: “it tends to wear people out” (Interview with manager, November 12, 2006).

The only shut-downs occur around the vagaries of weather, such as in white-outs, or when machines are “down”. Short-term losses in human resources are dealt with through contingency planning; people are just another input. The strike at one mine in 2006 was weathered with a large stockpile of ore, which are routinely built up to guarantee continuity of ore flow to the processing plant in case of any such slow-down at the extractive side of operations. Outside perceptions of mine rules and culture are of inflexibility: “we have a lot to offer, but with a world wide organization, they just want to keep things as they are” (Interview with Tâichô leader, July 31, 2005).

The space that these miners move into is one defined by a set of rules, inclinations, and practices (what Bourdieu terms *habitus*) (Bourdieu 1977). These are the “riverbed”, not the river (Tully 2000). Bourdieu describes the process of how these rules and practices become the riverbed for some:

The homogeneity of habitus is what – within the limits of the group of agents possessing the schemes (of production and interpretation) implied in their production – causes practices and works to be immediately intelligible and foreseeable, and hence taken for granted. (Bourdieu 1977, 80)

Corporate representatives, those who possess a common habitus, speak of the mine as a culture-free site, representing an “industrial bubble” (Harvey in Trigger, 2005) that the worker arrives at, participates in, and then leaves. When he is at home, the worker is welcome “to put on his kimono” (Interview with Rio Tinto manager, November 30, 2006), but at work he must engage in the rules of the industrial environment, portrayed as a culture-free zone. The values of the industrial environment are hidden from the manager’s view, because they are the underlying structures that guide interaction in his environments. Indeed they are often hidden from many of the worker’s views. Their opaqueness to the many makes them normal, universal, and unquestioned. The rules of the industrial bubble (Harvey in Trigger, 2005) often serve as a trigger for conflict, but the manager resorts to these same rules as the solution to conflict, not being unaware of possibilities of alternative rules or practices. The manager may be completely unaware of the cultural or linguistic competence acquired “in the course of a particular history” (Bourdieu 1977, 81), something

laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing, which is the precondition not only for the co-ordination of practices but also for practices of co-ordination,

since the corrections and adjustments the agents themselves consciously carry out presuppose their mastery of a common code and since undertakings of collective mobilization cannot succeed without a minimum of concordance between the *habitus* of the mobilizing agents (e.g., prophet, party leader, etc)<sup>70</sup> and the dispositions of those whose aspirations and world-view they express.

In situations of conflict, the mine continues in the one job deemed most critical: extracting and processing ore. Or, when the conflict overwhelms and the individual simply cannot make sense of the “practices of co-ordination” in the mine, then the obvious personal choice is to leave. Individual interactions and conciliatory managers often open small spaces for creative solutions to emerge. The daily living and interaction in common space often serves to build common ground, moving workers from a relationship of strangers to friends. However, a mine manager reflected:

I think there are still some colour bars, maybe it is just a natural instinct. It takes getting to know people, before the white folks that don't know anybody and the aboriginal folks that don't know anybody go and sit at the same table for dinner. Yet there is a bit of a longer process of getting to know one another, to bring that everybody is just a person as opposed to their groups separated by skin colour. I don't think it is intentional, but I think it is just human nature. (Interview, June 1, 2005)

Bourdieu (1972, 81) suggests that “interpersonal relations are never, except in appearance, *individual-to-individual* relationships and that the truth of interaction is never entirely contained in the interaction”. If the individuals who meet at a meal after a shift are not only two workers, but also “yesterday's man” taught by collective and individual practices (Bourdieu 1977), then the possibilities of distance wrought by much more than just skin colour (as the mine manager put it) are ever present. Yet since the mine manager, and a majority of the settler society miners, is aware only of their own *habitus*, or rules, inclinations and practices, these serve as the arbiter for all conflict. Recognizing and submitting to the rules, inclinations, and practices of this settler society may be required to move people up and through mining company hierarchies.

### 6.3 The physical site of the mine

Diamond mining in Canada's north is only possible because of capital-intensive technology, capable of moving millions of tonnes of rock while kilometres of dikes hold lakes back. On shift, relationships are no longer of brothers, sisters, friends, or kinsmen: instead everyone is embedded in a web of relationships of one machine to another. Each machine is

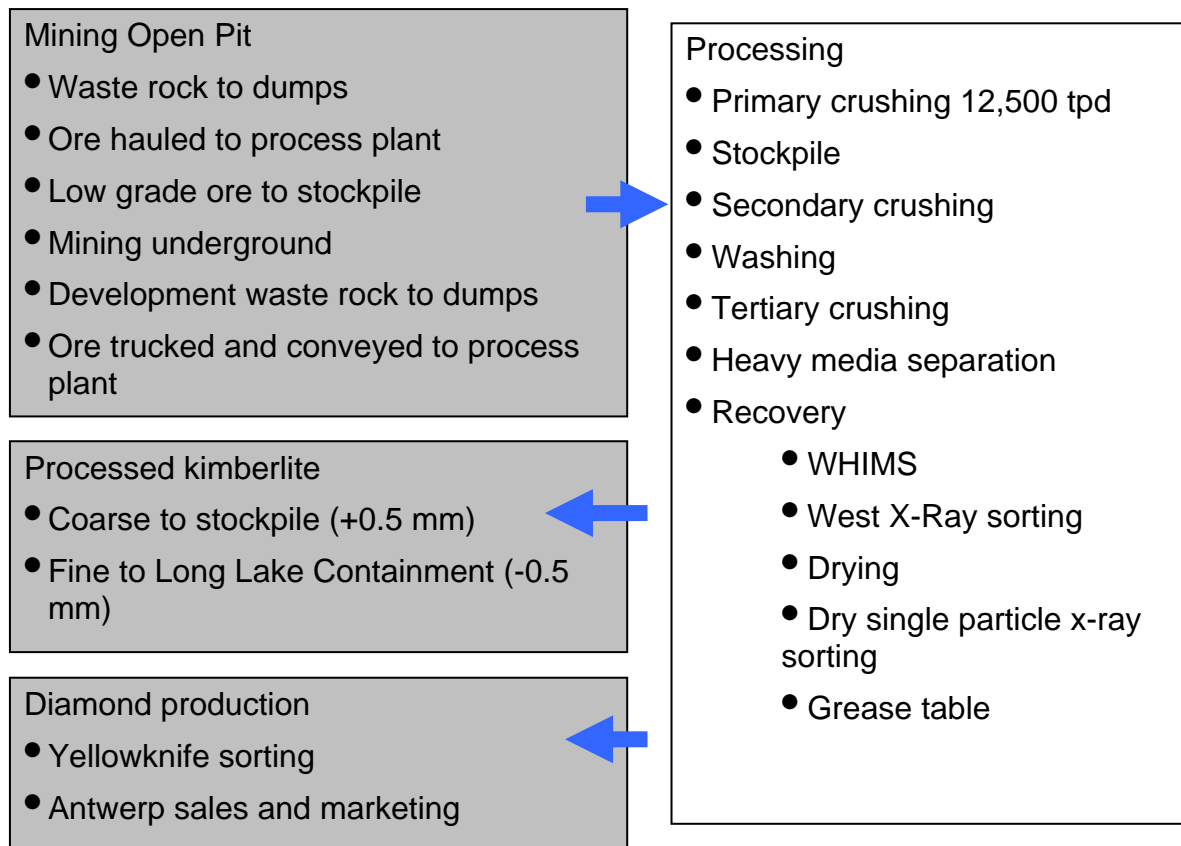
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<sup>70</sup> Read mine manager, team leader, or supervisor, etc.

connected to others in the quest for the two grails of mining: safe operation and high productivity. Each site of work is defined by its relationship to the ore. Even the sites of training are connected into this web of machine-based relationships, as the trainers will help an individual get through the computer assisted learning on a new machine. Kitchen workers are producing sandwiches, carrot sticks, and salads in service of productivity; their product ensures the pit worker can stay aboard his machine with an already packed lunch at break time. Each site of extraction and processing has a completely different set of machinery and technology in service of the two goals, but in each case, there is marked dependency between the stages of mining and the machines that work in service. Two sites are described here, the site of extraction and of processing. Figure 6.1 reviews the main phases of mining, processing and production for one Treaty mining company. The mine manager and the supervisors most frequently in contact with the aboriginal employees work in two sites: the open pit and the processing plant. While many aboriginal employees (particularly women) work in other domains (such as administration, housekeeping and the kitchen), the majority of male workers work in these two spaces.



Figure 6.1 Phases of mining, processing and production at the Ekati mine (BHP Billiton 2005)



### 6.3.1 The open pit

The open pit shows the tightest connection and dependency between machines. Mining starts with the drill and blast crew, who fragment the rock with a pattern of blastholes and explosives. Shovels work in areas after blasting to fill haul trucks. Trucks are dependent for safe conditions on graders and dozers. The dozers, graders and shovels are dependent on the fuel truck. Every machine is dependent on the dewatering crew, who ensure that pumps are running to send water out of the extraction zone into a recovery area. One worker described the experience of being in the open pit:

When I am in the pit, which is most of the day, I don't hardly see anything. I don't see animals. I keep on track. I am not worried about trucks. I have to be very careful of safety. I had never seen an open pit in my life, I was really interested. I wanted to see how far it would go down. Sometimes I look up; sometimes I just watch all those trucks go up and up. And it is like being in a cup. (Interview with grader operator, 16 January 2006)

Work in the open pit is highly individualized. A truck driver is physically separated from other workers, and in charge of the safe and efficient operation of the machinery for the full shift. While every machine is connected into the main control room through geographic position systems and radios, contact between machines is only encouraged for safety or operational communication. Joking or non-work related discussion is not tolerated. Workers are extremely sensitive to what can be said on the radio, and how team leaders talk, both in what words and tone are used. Up in the dispatch centre, the room where all machines are watched by one worker as they make their trips, every machine's trip time is recorded. The lead control room operator keeps track of whether shovels are being optimally used, and while haul trucks are fairly consistent in what shovel fills their load, the dispatch operator can guide haul trucks to the next waiting shovel. If a machine is "down", a worker will be shifted to another machine they are trained on or wait for their machine to be repaired. Mechanics are quick to respond to key losses, such as damage to the teeth from a critical shovel. The interdependency of machines is commented on by a grader:

When I am working, I don't think about anything, just about safety, and the work. I am thinking about the rain, or if it is snowing, that it might be slippery on the ramp. Just think about a vehicle coming down behind me, I only think about safety. In 99 or 2000, I was working in Panda, and a number of benches down, there were two haul trucks coming down and I was ripping down and there were two coming up and one light truck coming towards me. I was grading and ripping, and was nervous because if the blade hits a rock, it can push you into another vehicle, at the same time, I had three mirrors and I was looking at those two big trucks. And one of the trucks, the tires locked up. I turned around and all the tires were locked up. I tried to talk to the person, but he didn't know. Then he was going faster and faster. At that time there were lots of people on the radio, and I couldn't get to dispatch. I pulled up the blade and ripper and started to go as fast as I could. I tried to push as close to a birm as possible. I said to the driver: "don't go over the birm, try to hit a wall. (Interview with grader operator, January 16, 2006)

Mine designers aim to match the equipment type and size to the nature of the ore body, resulting in a distinct mix of machinery in every pit. For example, this summary of mining equipment at the Ekati mine was captured by Infomine, an online learning and contact database for the corporate mining sector:

Major mining equipment includes four Drilltech D90KS blasthole drills, two Demag H655SP diesel hydraulic shovels, ten Caterpillar D10R dozers, one Caterpillar 994 loader, one Caterpillar 5130 hydraulic excavator, four Caterpillar 992 loaders, two Komatsu PL 1800 hydraulic excavators and other support equipment. Carrying waste rock and ore from the open pits are thirteen 240-ton Caterpillar, three 170-ton Caterpillar 793 haul trucks and 11 x 100-ton Caterpillar

777D haul trucks. Well over 90 pieces of surface support equipment are used in mine operations. That includes mine production equipment from loaders and backhoes to buses and a fire truck. Also, approximately 100 diesel pickup trucks are used on site. (Infomine 2006)

While the names captured here are product and company based, workers develop a fondness and pride for the machine they work in and often nickname it. A range of nicknames are developed for the machines: the Demag hydraulic shovel is “Maggie” and the rubber tire dozers are “rubber ducks”. However in the muster station, where pit workers have safety meetings and breaks, the language of relationships is based on the company given name. At the end of a safety meeting, machinery assignments are given: “381: Sonny, 250: Anna.” Even this is product shorthand, using only a number. Out in the pit, the worker may evade this managerial tag and start to use a fond nickname.

Each machine has a physical range of operation, somewhere in the pit, the waste dump, the process plant or the roads that connect these three physical sites. When the driver of a fuel truck asks a waiting haul truck it’s “address”, the response is: “I am working on 310-42, A21 access road” (Interview with fuel truck driver, March 13, 2006). Fuel trucks are mobile, filling the stationary equipment and haul trucks at their work site. The pits are defined by ramps and benches, while the waste dumps are the new defining topographical feature. Speed limits are posted throughout the mine, and everyone knows that everything gives way to haul trucks. Mine operations hazards include things like rock fall, vehicle collisions, winter driving conditions, white outs, blasting in the pit, among others.

Skill level required for operation and difficulty of the job defines a hierarchy of the machinery in the pit. While there are many haul trucks, there are only a few hydraulic shovels and the job of extraction and loading is more complex than truck driving. However, every job is defined by the routine repetition of the same task: shovels dig and load, trucks drive, dozers rip, graders rib the roads. The driver of the Demag hydraulic shovel described his job:

He sits in a chair with controls in both hands, and shovel release controls at his feet. We are completely enclosed in this cab, with the occasional tinny sound of the radio making it through when he pauses. Somehow he hears me, even though he wears earplugs. “I am trying to guess whether to take it or not,” he says of the rock. “Should I dig it, or not? There is the straight face, that one is the hard part. I try to stay away from the straight face and get at the soft material.” As soon as the shovel is full, he rotates the body of the machine to the left where a truck is waiting. The truck is almost backed up, but when the shovel turns the truck driver has two markers, large steel cylinders painted in orange, to mark their progress. When he gets to his mark, the haul truck driver blasts their horn. The shovel

releases. And as soon as we are done, we turn back to the rock face. Today we are working only on waste rock.

As soon as he faces the rock again, the shovel digs in. Three shovels for a 120 tonne truck, with one in the middle and one for each side. Four shovels for a 240 tonne truck, with two in the middle and one to each side. Every now and then we are without a truck, because a number of them are in the shop today. When that happens, he digs around, cleaning up the working area that we roll around in. (Fieldnotes, January 2005)

Shovels are at the top of the hierarchy, while drill and blast crews are the “bottom feeders” (Interview with fuel truck driver, March 13, 2006), with fuel truck operators just above them. A haul truck can complete 17-23 loads in a day. One haul truck driver, according to one interviewee, completes an extra load over coffee: “that’s one guy committed to the company” (Interview with haul truck driver, March 17, 2005). Movement onto other and new machinery depends on training and team leader delegation. Training must be accomplished by the individual in their downtime or during their 12 hour workshift, but only when they are given permission or their machine is not operational. Training is initially completed on a computer based learning program, but also requires machine based training by a specialized trainer. Productivity is not rewarded at an individual machine based level, but on the tonnage of the crew and their safety record.

### 6.3.2 The process plant

In the process plant, workers are responsible for the smooth operation of a range of machine based systems, rather than concentrating solely on the operation of one piece of equipment. The building houses a mass of machines: “rotary scrubbers, degrit cyclones, high angle conveyors, and overhead cranes all surrounded by endless yellow handrails...” (DDMI 2003a, 48). The building is seven stories high, large enough to contain an overhead crane, moving equipment, forklifts, bobcats, welding trucks and pick up trucks. The process plant has the most complete progression plan: and while the material follows the stages of crushing, sizing, scrubbing, screening, material separation, concentrating and diamond recovery, the job tasks include primary sizer, feed preparation, Dense Media Separation (DMS) and tailings. Engineers use process flowsheets to convey the relationships that people as workers enter into here (See for example Figure 6.1). In the primary sizer, large frozen lumps of ore are broken before crushing. Crushed ore is treated in a rotary scrubber and a vibrating screen to remove minus 1 mm waste material (although oversize material is crushed separately), and then mixed

with ferrosilicon and water in a series of DMS circuits. Once the material flows by gravity to the cyclone, the diamonds will be recovered after treatment. The concentrate will be treated in a separate Recovery Plant, which is outside of the process plant with the final product being pure diamond concentrate. Each circuit of the process plant brings the material closer to its final form.

The plants can take up to one and a half million tonnes per year, with diamond production expected to be seven million carats per year. Workers can move through the stages and circuits, getting trained on one after another process until they have training and certification in all areas. Just as with mining, people are kept from the diamonds using the available technology: “Gravity flow is used wherever feasible in order to minimize diamond breakage and human contact with diamond rich streams is minimized to prevent diamond loss (Aber 2000, 26). In the Recovery Plant, security becomes even tighter: “The Sorthouse will have no human/diamond contact...functions will be carried out by robotic equipment similar to that used in the pharmaceutical industry” (Aber 2000: 26). Again, as in the pit, people are related to each other through their role in extracting the ore and ensuring productivity.

Everything is controlled through the process plant control room, which is a room with multiple video and computer displays. The controller keeps an eye out for any hazards coming onto belts, such as metal that may come off a machine in the pit. Metal like this has to be caught on the belts before it gets lodged in machinery. The control room operator needs to have high literacy, be functional with computers, as well as the “ability to speak clearly” (Interview with plant manager, September 5, 2005). The first impression of the plant is of conveyors leading in every direction, also of the huge scale of every part of the process. The dense media separation cyclones stretch from floor to ceiling. The primary crusher does the same, and is the noisiest part of the process. The loading yard hosts an enormous ore stockpile, enough to cover the mine in shutdowns, such as the Ekati strike of 2006.

### 6.3.3 Main complex

The majority of aboriginal workers are employed in the mine operations, site services and the process plant. Site services include water, fuel and lubricant handling, sewage and water treatment, airstrip and accommodation services. Yet, there are many other areas and sites of work in the mine, including: administration, kitchen and housekeeping services, security management, human resources and training, and recovery. All of these sites have some aboriginal employment, especially in kitchen and housekeeping services. These areas are most

often staffed by women, where low salaries and high turnover are noted. Some women have had their start at the mine in this area, but then moved into operations or the process plant.

#### 6.4 Networks, negotiations and transformations

While operating mines have created a network of interacting machines and departments in the quest for production, the individual Dene worker is embedded in a network of social relations at the mine. These networks enable the individual to work but can also provide cause for the person to leave the mine. The individual, as a strategic actor, has to negotiate a series of tough decisions and issues as he/she enters the mine, stays in it for a period of time, and either remains in a position or moves up. This move into the mine affects the transformation of networks, shaping the nature of what is achieved in networks and the cast of characters that is drawn in to the individuals' realm. New networks are created, such as the work group, while old networks of family, community and region are maintained and reinforced. In this split life, the patterns of responsibility at home are altered, and the landscapes of culture and environment are transformed.

##### 6.4.1 From task group to work group

Within the mine, the worker negotiates an interpersonal space, consisting of the relationship to other workers and to management. The defining character for the mine worker experience comes in the shape of the supervisor. This individual has control over the worker, dis/allowing him to take leave, pursue training, and move into new positions. A good supervisor, one with empathy for the worker while still managing to achieve production goals, is sought after by workers. A poor supervisor, one that is only after production and is unsympathetic to the worker, proves often to be the reason for miners leaving their jobs (Interview with miner, September 8, 2005). Supervisors perceived as difficult fuel discussions of favoritism and racism, with their lack of sensitivity, brusque leadership style and gravitation towards and support of non-aboriginal workers.

The miner also negotiates a range of relations with co-workers. In the pit, these may include a raft of people already known to the person, as the greatest number of aboriginal workers is found in mine operations, followed by the process plant. As a result, each worker is on site and at work with siblings, cousins, other extended kin and regional neighbours. New relationships are formed and old bonds strengthened and reinforced. Even as these bonds are

strengthened, the character of work and nature of time away from the family is changed fundamentally.

The mine rotation is often likened to time away on the land, and the suggestion is made of cultural continuity for men, since they always spent long periods of time away from their families for hunting. While the time away may not differ, there are qualitative differences apparent in task orientation, recruitment of kin into networks, and the nature of work. Helm (2000) suggested the primary organizing unit for Tâîchô was the task group mobilized to hunt caribou together, based on the kinship of direct siblings, and resulting in food for extended family and time spent together in conversation and practicing of skills. The nature of work at the mine consists of routine tasks focused on exposing minerals. People in the work group are not chosen by the individual, but by the mine manager or supervisor. If they happen to be kin, this serves to reinforce ties and bonds. However, the key point is that the corporation chooses the workers, not the individual. The relationship of siblings that do make it into the open pit together become not one of kin, but one of machine to machine: truck to grader. The surplus of these machine based interactions is captured in another country. There is no caribou to share widely at the end of the day, hence the phrase, “got any dry meat?” that one individual utters so often. What is reflected here is the transformation from task group (Helm, 2000), which has been shifting since the introduction of the welfare and wage economy, to work group in the mine. New relationships are also formed, often between individuals from different cultural groups, creating a northern solidarity.<sup>71</sup>

#### 6.4.2 From full time to part time parent and spouse

The most critical negotiation of all is completed with the family. There are multiple patterns and possibilities for these core relationships. Out in the communities, talk of divorce, jealousy, rumours of disenchantment and mistrust are common. In the mines, rumours and jealousy also make their way onto site from home. News of who a miner/harvester had lunch with can travel home before he/she does. It is because miners/harvesters are at work with their kin that the stories travel so fast from mine site to community. But even before a miner/harvester

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<sup>71</sup> I have never seen any comment on the networks of solidarity formed through residential school. The literature is, rightly, adamantly harsh on the institutions. However, I have observed strong generational bonds across the north, so while intergenerational bonds were largely devastated through the experience, the common years for youth in some residential school built pan-northern relationships and focused on growing leaders. This may also be the case for the creation and reinforcement of bonds through the north due to the common work site of the mines, as Inuit, Metis and Dene work together. In some literature on mines, remoteness has been a trigger for strong class consciousness and labour solidarity to emerge (Ballard and Banks 2003).

makes the decision to come to work, the negotiation of work, roles, and parenting must be broached. Those that do not negotiate this shift seem to fail. Kin often step in to fill the gap of the father, consistent with past practice of the task group to accomplish group tasks (Helm 2000). Conflict can erupt on the return of the partner over responsibilities or relationships, and has commonly led to separation. Finally, many women describe the husband as a “periodic house guest” (Forsyth and Gramling 1987) or “once a month Santa Claus” (Interview with homemaker, May 30, 2005).<sup>72</sup> A leader comments on two patterns for workers, those that manage to shape new roles in the family and those that do not:

Now does he like working at the mine? There are a lot of questions there. It is foreign to him. If there is a lot of Dogrib around, then it is livable. It is two weeks in and two weeks out so he can do the duration of it. He keeps his job basically because there is other Dogribs around him. Doesn't really like leaving Rae. He probably today, he is in good shape, not bad shape because he has finally trained his wife to take care of things for two weeks. There is a wife reversal there: where if the man is making all the income, the man is making all the decisions, and therefore the wife is the wife, that's it. Now he is gone so the wife has to jump in the truck, has to go to the Bay, has to negotiate things, has to pick up bills, go to the post office, read things, can't always wait till he is back. Otherwise your electricity gets cut off, your telephone gets cut off and so forth. So the wife's role, herself has changed some. Now if all of those combinations are there, they are successful. In other words, they can survive, the mine, the work, the income, the dollars. And they spread them out not bad.... Now there is the other type. They try very hard. They go to work every two weeks. They probably last about two years to three years, some of them. Then stress starts to come in, and it is usually stress at home. Because they have not trained their wife, nor have they trained their children. Nor have they switched authority: the role of the wife is not as defined as the first part. And therefore he is at the site, and he gets phone calls, they are going to cut off our electricity. I am over there and don't know what to do. Even though he is working, he still lacks a lot of skills that you would normally set up before you go to work. (Interview with business leader, May 30, 2006)

Many roles must shift with the transition to the mine, and while this leader's observations may not capture perspectives of domestic partners (the “trained wife”), the second pattern was certainly reinforced in discussions with male miners/harvesters. When alcohol or drugs complicated the female partner's life at home, the miner/harvester always described acute stress. Miners/harvesters who do not make new arrangements for children (such as accommodating the children with relatives while at the mine), lose their children to social services or have to leave the mine.

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<sup>72</sup> These issues are not unique to aboriginal people, but are common for anyone involved in rotation mining.



On site, the miner describes a range of ways of coping with distance and absence. Some describe how they “shut down”, trying not to think of the family at all, calling only infrequently to get basic news. Others call daily to discuss problems. Yet others do not want to hear any news, unless there is an emergency. Calls about plugged sinks and failing heating systems, one man wishes, should be dealt with by the partner at home. Some men work to engage a network of brothers and kin at home to step in on problems as they are gone, bringing wood and fixing heating systems (as in the “replacement father pattern”, named by Forsyth and Gramling 1987). Very few of the miners reflect much on how their absence might increase, alter or change the workload of their spouse or children. When they speak of children, the male miner makes statements of his commitment to their education or their wellbeing: seemingly reminding himself of the reason for his absence. Many miners are proud of their work, but when it comes to their children’s futures, they dream of other possibilities for their children. It is as though they work in the mines so that their children will not have to.

#### 6.4.3 From prison to refuge and back

The factors that lead a miner to the job are simple. Money is first and indeed the salaries are among the highest for the educational levels that some men have. Pride and enjoyment of camp is a second reason for their presence at the site, a factor mentioned not only by the miners but also by many community members. The lead grader is fierce about how well he does his job. The haul truck driver is excited by the skill she has developed in her job; she also tells of how she loves to drive (Interview, March 14, 2006). The pride and love of the job shine through at times: I “grew up to love driving. I love to be in control of a piece of equipment, I love it” (Interview with haul truck driver, March 14, 2006). As each miner feels pride of work, self esteem grows. A leader comments:

All those men, or they were young when I first knew them, they had marginal lives, they had marginal economic lives in the sense that had very little education, most of them might have grade five or six if that. Some of them speak English fairly well, they write almost not at all and they read with great difficulty and there is a whole generation (...) at this level, you know, and they are in each community and those guys were often on the boards, the traditional role of the men, and often their wives were the ones that were supporting the families, you know, because they would have some education and they would be the clerks in the stores or the breadwinner of some kind and what the mines have done is they’ve restored some self esteem, I think, to the men. Because they’ve got work and they’ve got money and they can buy what they want to buy, they can support their family, and I have no use for corporations and I have no use for big business and I hate mines but you can’t beat that, when it’s giving people a way to support

their families and I think that's been a major thing. (Interview with Tâîchô leader, February 5, 2005)

Thirdly, most miners in the job like the rotation schedule. Two weeks in can be hard, but two weeks out can allow them to be out on the land, long hours with the family, and plenty of time for travel and recreation. Many of the men get off the plane from the mine to find the truck packed for a trip south. Finally, the opportunity for training and development in the mines provides the final draw for Dene workers. For most workers, these are the factors that attract them, and in many cases, the mine is then a site of refuge for them as they gain these skills, adopt a new productive role, gain the capital, and look forward to their time off.

Yet, even as miners mention these benefits a range of negative impacts are also experienced in the mine. At the top of the list, for miners/harvesters, is the relationship to the manager, with favouritism and racism spoken about through concrete examples. Second, rotation work places stress on family relationships. Some men, particularly those with partners in trauma, experience tremendous conflict, and feel jealous or anxious on site. Others talk of their pain for their children, as they are cared for by a drug addicted mother and a half time father.

It is hard. It is hard to think of everything. I don't know where she is, what she is doing. She was a good woman, a good soul before this. We used to laugh, joke and now there is nothing but hate, lies, cheating, and stealing. (Interview with haul truck driver, March 18, 2006)

The flames of this conflict are fanned with the fire of rotation work, yet often the only family salary comes from the mine. With new liabilities and debts that are not a feature of previous life, the miner/harvesters reports feeling trapped in the job. Fathers report feeling the children's loneliness and also regretting their inability to discipline children consistently. The third concern of the miner at work is the difficulty in accessing training. When miners mention this, they are not always finger pointing at the mine and suggesting lack of access. With family relationships and many commitments at home, the miner has a hard time showing the individual initiative required of him off shift. After a twelve hour day at work, miners are exhausted and often feel unable to pursue new skills after hours. Literacy levels are often low, and the stigma and shame associated with learning to read and write can keep a miner from seeking support. Some employees will attempt to miss company safety meetings which often involve the reading of a safety tip by a crew member, for fear of being humiliated. For many contractors there is no emphasis on training, unlike with the parent company. And then, the final factor at site: the nature of life on the work site. Some people talk of the lack of mobility, the bureaucracy, the monotony of their jobs and of the prison like security.

Back at home, the worker also complains of impacts on the family and community. At the top of the list at home is the relationship to the family, where again separation anxiety, trust, and parenting skills are deeply challenged by the rotating absence. Money management is the next most mentioned issue; many wage earners lack any training in understanding loans, mortgages, and credit cards, and the result can be disastrous for families. Drinking and drug abuse can go hand in hand with the two concerns above, and levels have increased in the north, in particular for miners/harvesters. These are the issues most frequently named, but others emerge, such as out-migration from small communities, value shifts, loss of respect between generations, class creation, less time on the land, and inability to honour kin at death or attend cultural events.

An attentive reader will note the same factors are both bane and benefit: money, family relationships, time away, and training. When the negative overwhelms the positive, a miner tends to see the mine as a prison, a place of captivity that has caused high stress, pressure and physical strain. When the positive is emphasized, a miner is happy for the wages, time off away from the mine and training, and the mine may even be refuge from conflicted relationships at home. A few women miners preferred the mine to their homes, away from what had been violent relationships, but where they were still able to travel back and see children or family (Interview with cleaners, September 8, 2005). Finally, one woman reports she seized the opportunity of working in the kitchen as a way to reconnect with her roots. After attending residential school, she married and moved to Saskatchewan and had very little contact with her family or her parents (Interview with kitchen worker, March 13, 2006). Working in the mine has given her the reason she needed to get to know her family again; also, she reports she was happy to find many of her generation's residential school survivors working at the mine. She described a pivotal moment in her life in the south that caused her to seek work at the mine:

After my children were raised, an elder told me I needed to be nurtured. I didn't know what the elder meant. I feel nurtured already by my marriage and my children. I didn't understand until I finally came north. I started to visit, and to spend time up here, going to tea dances. I decided to try and connect with my family... That is when I began to understand what the elder meant by saying: "you need to get nurtured by your own people." I had to come here. Now here I was at 40 doing tea dances and acting like I was 14." (Interview with kitchen worker, March 13, 2006).

The work gives this 59 year old worker the freedom to live away from her family for part of the year, so that as she is off rotation, she lives in a small community, reconnecting with her family and community.

#### 6.4.4 From cultural landscape to mined landscape

For some of the miners, the physical site of the mine is a known place. In previous years, camp has been made on an esker while a group was out hunting for caribou with family. The environment is understood by place names, which reveal stories of the past, significant leaders and important areas for key historical activities. There is a moment that is mentioned by the lead grader, John: when the dozers began to trace the circle of the open pit on the ground. As they traced the circle, they began to transform the land both physically and in the imagination and history of this Dene mine worker. The land was remade from a known set of spaces linked together through history. Fall, summer and winter trips were made to the territory by people traveling in groups to work together. As the dozer traced its mark into the land, it was made over into a controlled terrain. Every site of significance was recorded and marked, and sacred objects removed and stored. Now, no new stories can be written onto the land. The mine worker can no longer travel in the 344,000 hectares of land claimed by the Ekati mine. 30 km away, at Diavik, the mine worker is kept from walking the 240,000 hectares. When the miner drops something on a break, he is advised to leave it. Otherwise, he is to pick the object up, then hold it out in his palm and turn in 360 degrees to show the nature of the object. He cannot go for a walk after work in any sense of the word – there is only one track and it simply encircles the main buildings.

When the miner talks of what it is like to be in this new controlled terrain, he is conflicted:

It is kind of funny, when I was young, I was dreaming and I had never seen this machine in my life. I was dreaming of a dozer. I asked my dad about it, “why did I never see this machine”, I asked him. He said: “sometimes dreams come true.” “My dad never worked on the mine site, but he taught me a lot. He taught me which area to hunt for food for caribou and moose. But here, you can’t use any guns. You can’t go out on the land, you can’t have more than a nine inch blade knife and you can’t have a rifle.

Sometimes it means I am just sitting around and sitting in a machine in the dump. I will park it at break time and go up to the top, to the roof, and stand up looking around, looking to Diavik. My dad sure knows medicine men. Now how come he doesn’t know diamonds? We are digging where we sleep. Our people say, that medicine men, they are really powerful before. How come they don’t know diamonds? They used to be strong and powerful. And when I am on my break, I am thinking about that.

Now BHP is here, we traveled on top of it, over top of it. In the old days, we were boating from Rae, and we would move out again. We were hunting in this area, how come these people don't know anything about diamonds? One person, Dad says, was searching around for caribou, with the medicine. He knew how many nights it was away to the caribou, and how long it would take. They would follow this person and three people went over there and shot the caribou.

For me, very few people have medicine power like that. It used to be that you used medicine power, but it has disappeared. One old guy was searching around with medicine, he would talk about it—it is just like he had a chopper or a plane to find the caribou.

“How does it feel that you know so much about the land but don't move around?” I ask.

How does it feel? I just want to walk over there. I see a mountain. I probably can't go: if I did I would get fired. I want to sit on a mountain and have a cigarette. (Fieldnotes, January 16, 2005)

The dream awakened the miner/harvester early to the potential of technology. As he dreams of a dozer, he asks his father why he has never known this machine. While his father suggests his dream may be fulfilled, he may also be cautioning his son on his wishes. The miner's dream seems to refer to the continuity of skill and knowledge from his father. He refers to knowledge from his father and how it orients him in the landscape. He talks of his connection to medicine men and how their knowledge was intimate, giving them the ability to find caribou in their known landscape. *Yet all* of these skills are unusable in this new landscape. Indeed, the very reliance on these valuable skills makes adapting to this controlled, industrial bureaucracy difficult. He is not allowed his tools at the mine site. On site at work time, he does not think of anything but the job and safety. Once break time arrives, the miner does what he would do if he were hunting in this land. In reflecting on this choice for a break site, a Tâîchô leader said, “(John) goes to the spot that is highest in the land, to where he can survey the land and see the movement of animals” (Interview, February 5, 2005). The highest spot, one that gets higher daily, is the waste dump. He moves to this spot and surveys the land. It is at this moment that he feels most trapped. “I just want to walk over there” he says. His landscape is transformed from one in which he is an active participant, learning from his father and elders, hunting and knowing his history. In the mine site, he is focused on safe operation and extraction, with production as his primary goal. He is trapped in this new landscape, unable to move about in this environment, but unable to reconcile the new work landscape with that of the old. The cultural landscape is now frozen in the past, held waiting until the mine closes.

Space is always being made and remade at the mine site, but the mine site is a confluence of two different modes of production. Lefebvre (1991, 46) suggests while “each mode of production has its own particular space, the shift from one mode to another must entail the production of a new space.” Doohan (2006) suggests that a Rio Tinto Australian diamond mine (Argyle) has been successfully co-located in a sacred site; however this harvester/miner’s dream reveals the feeling of dislocation of being on the land without the hunting tools, and without the option of being able to move in the landscape. The esker, the site of most archaeological finds because it is where most breaks occur as it is free from bugs and high up for spotting caribou, has been undone. A modern manmade esker, the waste dump, has arisen in its place. Further, even though legislation is in place on the protection of heritage sites, it seems to only guide the gathering of physical data, without the social and cultural context. As a result, although both currently operating Treaty mining companies are sited in an area heavily used for camping, hunting and observing the land, the context is neither established nor understood. New “eskers” are being developed, but they “don’t run like normal eskers, they are more like mountains, mountains of waste rock. We will definitely name these; they will have a new name, not the name from the past. But there is no name yet” (Interview with Tâîchô leader, April 12, 2007).

Other sites of culture have also been displaced from use for current and future generations. Legat (2007, 262) comments on an abandoned uranium mine, the Rayrock mine.

By listening and learning stories, and by traveling, one realizes that sometimes only parts of stories can be walked. Rayrock is the English name for the site of an abandoned uranium mine under production in the 1950s. The site is contaminated and seen as disrespected and uncared for. The place is also called Kwet’îîæâa, remembered through its name as where hunters used to walk to the top of the hill, sit and feel happy as they watched for moose...

Rayrock is considered a dead area. They can know this dead place if they care to walk it, but few – if any – wish to follow their parents’ and grandparents’ footprints to that place. Young people can never know the reality of Kwet’îîæâa, can never walk that place, nor can they know the changes that occurred. They will only know the story. Middle-aged people who played on the mine tailings as children vaguely remember Kwet’îîæâa, but are intimately aware of the reality of what happened there. Only the old have walked in both places and have personal knowledge of both. The narrative of Kwet’îîæâa and Rayrock is told as one story or as separate stories, depending on the context. Changing the name changes the story and the images.

These dual narratives, Legat suggests, are remembered and told, with the Rayrock narrative helping people to remember that the mine was considered “safe”, but that many people were unwittingly exposed to radiation.

The place names are consciously managed; the act of remembering the name of a place as it is spoken invokes a cultural past of non-reciprocity with mining companies (e.g., calling a location by the indigenous name or by the English mine name). The dual meanings of a site are rarely recorded in the inventories that are established by the companies. For example, heritage sites are the physical space of culture—a physical site that encapsulates knowledge, relationships, power and often myth and history. In Diavik’s heritage resources survey, a range of finds were made, such as artifact scatters, quarries, campsites, meat caches, burials, wooden poles and stone markers (DDMI 1998, 29). The majority of these sites are quarries, representing 76% of the sites documented in the environmental impact study. On the mine footprint itself, there are 40 quarry sites, two campsites, and artifact scatters (DDMI 1998). The mine footprint was altered to avoid campsites however the quarry sites were mapped and recorded, but destroyed in construction. The materials found in the region are summarized here:

In both inventory areas (Ekati and Diavik), a large proportion of the sites were found in association with eskers and kame features, particularly when these features overlook lakes. Eskers presented several advantages to the occupants as they represented dry, well drained features suitable for both localized activities such as tool manufacture, as well as travel; provided elevation conducive to extensive views of the surrounding countryside and provided some respite from annoying insects. (DDMI 1998, 39)

Eskers are well known as a source of fur, particularly for white foxes (Interview with community leader, April 12, 2007). Together, the two mines are estimated to directly affect 25% of the existing inventory of heritage resources sites in the Lac de Gras area (DDMI 1998, 40).

In the assessments completed for the mines, the data is overwhelmingly physical, giving no interpretation or understanding of these quarries, campsites or features, rarely stretching to comprehend the hidden narratives embedded in local memory. This interpretation is reinforced in a review of the BHP environmental assessment by the Yellowknives Dene, suggesting “archaeological investigations at Ek’ati do not attempt to use indigenous peoples’ perspective to provide reports of peoples’ use of their lands nor of ancestral evidence in the area” (YKDFN 1997, 56). The attempt in environmental assessment is made to keep archaeological finds, map their location and their context. Very little understanding of the meaning of the esker, the indigenous history, name or context is captured. This lack of interpretation on the part of the Treaty mining company leaves the space open to be named by the managers of this mode of production. This control leaves the miner/harvester feeling disjointed in the landscape. Perhaps as the communities begin to name spaces anew with tags other than “Koala” or “A-154”, the space might be reinvigorated with new cultural meaning at mine closure. Or perhaps the “waste

eskers” of the mines will become the known and popular hunting breaks sites upon the closure of the mine.

## 6.5 Negotiating access, retention and advancement

The way into the mines for the Dene worker is carved through a complex series of negotiations. These negotiations started long before the worker arrived on site, with the northern hiring quotas established in the mines. However, the negotiations also invoke the relationships of the individual to the community leadership, the mine management, and the family (See Table 6.1). The daily negotiations between these networks of actors to bring the Dene miner into the mines are enabled through a series of factors, some of which are unique through the progression from mine entrance through career advancement. Some of these factors are related to individual skill sets, while others are cultural and social. To be in the mine, the Dene worker often tries to be “strong like two people”, working efficiently within the rules of the corporate culture, while maintaining convictions and connections.



Table 6.1 Negotiations of recruitment, retention and advancement

	INDIVIDUAL	FAMILY	COMMUNITY	MINE
Recruitment	Pass criminal record check, interest in job, low vulnerability to drug and alcohol problems, past experience relevant such as bush skills	Family readiness, support while worker away	Constant negotiation with mines, providing knowledge of available pool of labour and relevant skills	Commitment to hiring, passing the torch to the community to surface labour force; emphasize skills and experience
Retention	Abide by industrial rules, timeliness, obedience of supervisors, ability to juggle mine and home demands	Family readiness, support while worker away, allowing worker to train in time off	Support of worker in the mine through networks, scolding workers who are off the rails, scolding mine for managers that are not empathetic	Supervisor-worker relationship key
Advancement	Personal drive, prior experience of education, self esteem, willingness to adapt new style of supervision	Allowing worker to train in time off	Help in training from networks of kin, tension of having to supervise kin	Supervisor key enabler of training, advancement and skill building (i.e., moving around on equipment, clear progression plan)

### 6.5.1 Negotiations of access

To be present working at the mine, the mine worker has already negotiated a range of complex interactions and factors and made a decision to engage in the economy. To get on site, the person must pass criminal record checks, or have pardonable offences forgiven. This first piece, the criminal record check, is the single biggest factor that keeps employable individuals from working at mine sites. While a process for achieving pardons has been developed and frequently used, anyone who is guilty of sexual assault will never be permitted to work at the mines (Interview with mine manager, March 12, 2007). The job must also be of interest to the potential worker, and any problems with drugs or alcohol must be manageable. Severely addicted individuals are simply too debilitated to apply. Dene miners have often worked at other sites, particularly the Tâîchô who had long experience in the Colomac mine. Akaitcho miners have commonly had industrial experience in fire slashing crews, though fewer had mine based experience, with no Colomac opportunity available. Both the Giant and Con mines are on the lands of the Akaitcho, but little effort was made to employ local aboriginal people. Bush skills from the land economy have prepared the majority of workers for mine work, something a Tâîchô leader and miner both commented on:

How the traditional activity minded people, they are best readers of machinery, because they come from using the dog team, they measure and gauge the dog team and its capabilities and stretch it to its limit. And from there they progressed to the skidoo where they can take it apart and make it run, and its limitations. It is just a natural progression to get into one of the heavy equipment. Those same principles, they are regimental in their work habits. It fits right into what they are doing. And it provides the same tradition of land base activity. (Interview with Tâîchô leader, January 15, 2005)

The miner was brought up on the land, mostly fishing. They fished for a long time, his parents and him. Mostly they fished out at Wool Bay and North Arm Point. His dad has passed away, but his mother lives with his sister. He was raised in the bush. He reported he is used to hard work. He was up daily at 5 am to go get ice for fish and then working the day through. He does not remember not working. (Fieldnotes, January 2005)

These are the individual factors that afford access to the mine. The bush skills clearly invoke networks of teaching through generations, connecting the miner back through the years. The ethic of hard work, combined with the strong machine based skill, transfer well to the skills needed in the mines.

The family also plays a part in a worker's ability to access mine work. Some family readiness, support and ability to manage the absence must be apparent. When it is not, there is a high price to pay for all and the worker loses the job with each passing crisis in two to three years, as illustrated by the data. Aboriginal miners are much more likely to be involuntarily terminated for reasons of absenteeism, needs of the family, or abandonment (BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. 2007).

Community leadership influenced from the outset aboriginal access to the mines. Giant and Con mines were not politically pressured to negotiate access, but with constant leadership pressure and the precedent agreements, the mines now have agreed to employment targets. Long term leaders, in particular local businessmen, can identify the employable community workers because of their in depth knowledge of each person. These leaders know who has poured concrete, driven truck, and kept a clean bush camp.

How a Treaty mining company capitalizes on this community based knowledge can differ and can impact on recruitment success: where one mine can encourage the community to come forward with lists of employable people, another might rely on mine based protocols to bring people forward. Certainly both mines have a commitment to northern hiring, yet this passing of the recruitment torch to the community can help to surface many unexpected workers. In the mine, managers with strong community links can also observe and surface these skills,

which may be lost on a standard job resume. Community based training programs have this focus, and in addition to leaving new structures after training, have brought unexpected workers into the new mines:

For example, a labourer in Whatì might just be classified as a labourer, but suddenly when questions were asked one found out he had been involved in building the arena. This meant he knew how to tie rebar, pour concrete, among other skills. This guy has talent and skill. When you drill down with these guys, it is amazing the skills this guy has. (Interview with diamond mine manager, November 30, 2005)

The mine that downplays literacy and focuses on skills also brings in new recruits. If assessment tools are used to screen at recruitment stages, workers are often driven away when low literacy levels emerge. Finally, when mine services are contracted out to other companies, priorities for northern hire can be lost. Diavik's northern aboriginal employee levels were at 33% in 2006; the subcontractors are encouraged but not bound to reach targets (DDMI 2006). The aboriginal hiring priority is only suggested, but there is no recourse if the quotas are not met. A mine that relies heavily on contractors can therefore suffer low aboriginal hiring, unless the contractors are themselves northern, and have a corporate philosophy and strategy supporting this priority. Aboriginal communities have partially shielded themselves from southern contractors by aggressively seeking business opportunities with the mines, therefore ensuring these companies hire locally.

### 6.5.2 Negotiations for retention

The factors that get a person to a mine are extremely different from what it takes to stay or advance at the mine. The individual must be able to negotiate the industrial environment and behave in accordance with corporate culture rules. These include: timeliness, obedience of supervisors, ability to negotiate for appropriate leaves, and ability to manage home demands successfully. Again, applicable skills and a hard work ethic serve an employee well, with an individual's bush skills surfacing:

All people that had good jobs, we're talking good jobs, were from people who had very strong bush skills only. Bus drivers, you know, you name it, that were typical jobs of a community came from people who had beautiful camps, well organized, good hunters, good skills, and that's what the father drove to them. So they were kids who were used to getting up early in the morning, limited education because of they live in the bush but were used to be chased up in the morning, do their chores, do their work, cut wood, get this, because a camp is

very time consuming. (These people) became the better workers of the community. (Interview with business leader, May 30, 2006)

Just as in negotiating access, family and community are widely invoked in this context as well. The family has a consistent role, in that as long as demands are not unsettling of the miner's work and the family is able to weather crisis, then the worker generally can continue to work. Workers are often able to leave site to respond to the needs of family; however, this is one of the first reasons for job loss due to absenteeism (Mine manager, January 31, 2006). This finding is also supported by the NWT Human Right Tribunal, which managed 31 complaints in 2006-2007, ten of which are from the two operating Treaty mining companies (GNWT Human Rights Commission 2007). The remote worksite complaints taken to the Tribunal have primarily alleged discrimination on the basis of race, family status and disability, as seen in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Basis for complaints at the GNWT Human Rights Commission, July 1, 2003- April 2007

All Complaints Alleged ground of discrimination	Type of employer		
	Remote worksite	Other	Total
Race, colour, ethnicity (Aboriginal) <sup>73</sup>	7	5	12
Race, colour, ethnicity (non-Aboriginal)	1	13	14
Family status or affiliation	6	9	15
Sex	3	13	16
Disability	7	16	23
Age		4	4
Religion or Creed		2	2
Political belief or association			0
Marital status	1	1	2
Sexual orientation		1	1
Gender identity			0
Social Condition		1	
Pardoned criminal conviction	3		3
Total <sup>74</sup>	28	65	92

In a case recently referred to adjudication by the Human Rights Tribunal, the complainant experienced personal illness (knee and eye injuries), family trauma (the sexual assault of a child by a relation), health complications of the partner (a high-risk pregnancy due to diabetes, and premature delivery), and unexpected eviction of the family from their housing all during the course of one year. The worker was demoted, after a return from a short term disability leave, and then fired after he left the process plant without informing his supervisor.

<sup>73</sup> This lists the complaints where Aboriginal ancestry is alleged as a ground. It does not list the number of Aboriginal people that file complaints. For example, an Aboriginal complainant can allege discrimination based on disability or family status.

<sup>74</sup> The total alleged complaints of discrimination are higher than the opened and closed complaints because one file can allege several grounds.

Though this case has not been heard yet, it and the statistics of the mine, point to the need to accommodate family. For example, daycare, social networks, social housing, and family support are heavily taxed and hardly available in small communities. Currently, family and miner support programs through the Treaty mining companies is available through telephone based counseling and limited face-to-face opportunities. Further, programs are never delivered in the communities to the families of these workers. Finally, there are workers who the mine should consider will need to be absent more frequently to meet the needs of the family in trauma. The expectation of human rights policy is that each worker's case is treated individually, rather than having a policy that guides this—giving discretion to managers.

Having a “community” onsite plays a huge part in helping an individual stay in the mine. A person is supported daily by kin in the mine. As a problem surfaces with a worker, a community leader can scold workers who are misbehaving or “going off the rails”, just as they can reign in the archetypal supervisor who is known for conflicts with aboriginal people in the site. At community-corporate meetings, scheduled for every six months to a year, the leaders can choose an “asshole of the month” (Interview with business leader, May 30, 2006) they complain about to the mine, often provoking mine response of removing the supervisor. And finally, the community in the mine provides the continuity of kin and networks to support the worker. Together they socialize, help each other in training, and support each other in the new environment.

Still, the tone of daily work is largely set by the supervisor and the co-workers. While family connections facilitate the miner's comfort at the mine or trigger the exit through a conflict or emergency, the supervisor can upset the balance. A supervisor is rewarded and promoted based on production levels and safety records, not on employee satisfaction, thus stories of conflict between supervisors and employees are constant. Workers are frustrated by how a person is spoken to, the authoritarian style of commands, the negative words used, the angry tone of voice, and public correction over the radio or in meetings. Where mine management becomes a part of the worker reality is through the channels established for complaints or difficulties. The most common problems to arise are: difficult supervisor managerial style, perceived favouritism of non-aboriginal workers, perceived racism, lack of accommodation of unique leaves (e.g., non-direct kin death, elder death, annual assembly, among others), and lack of sensitivity and knowledge of aboriginal culture. Table 6.3 itemizes the top ten conflicts in the mind, discovered through interviews and fieldwork at the mines, and illustrating the issue or values underlying the conflict.

In Table 6.3, the most frequently reported incidents of unfairness are revealed in the first column. The second column treats the underlying values, structures or behaviours that may influence the aboriginal perspective, while the third column reveals the perspective of the non-aboriginal manager in the mine.

There is a marked tendency to focus on objectified aspects of aboriginal culture in cross-cultural training, rather than on values or attitudes. Transformations that might be made in supervisor style or in schedules are unconsidered. The two week rotation was early negotiated, something that was discussed at length in the public hearings and studied in the impact assessments and many seem happy with this rotation. However, other adaptations must be in the realm of the aboriginal workers. A mine trainer recognizes the struggle for workers: “They struggle with retention, since this is a cultural change no matter what way you look at it. You can’t put them into a regimental industrial environment and not think they are not going to change” (Interview with trainer, November 30, 2005). Yet many of these variables are in the hands of the supervisor, and variance in treatment across departments is evident. With no guidance from the corporation, each supervisor uses their judgment to resolve the conflict.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> This variance in treatment was described by a group of ten different managers who took a course together on cross-cultural training. Policies in the Human Resources Department give guidance on these types of issues based on the values of settler society. For example, the policy on leave for death of kin suggests this is available for direct kin only.

Table 6.3 Top ten conflicts in the mines<sup>76</sup>

EMPLOYMENT ISSUE	COMMUNITY-BASED ISSUES	COMPANY ISSUES
Special leave for cultural event	IBA commitments	Fair treatment of all, need to have adequate people for shift
Leave for death of non-direct kin	Death, grieving process, extended family	Collective agreement, fair treatment of all, death leave for direct kin
Leave for Annual Assembly	Political structures, styles of leadership and governance	Representative democracy, need to plan labour force without surprises
Understanding of new procedures	Learning styles, transmission oral and observed	Learning and teaching styles; transmission written and oral
Dealing with employee incidents	Perception of racism and stereotypes	Unconscious associations, preferences, promotion tendencies
Disciplinary action after an incident	Face saving and values	Communication and supervision styles
Leave requests for hunting	Seasonal or event planning, understanding time management	Time based planning, need for long-term planning for labour
Leave requests for unacceptable reasons	Face saving and values	Production focus, direct communication
Protocols and rituals on the land	Out on the land activities, role of elders	Western rituals of environmental assessment
Retention and advancement	Lack of promotion because self effacing	Promotion of self promoting individual

The types of conflict that emerge at the mines often relate to different values, approaches to conflict, (mis)understandings of the job, and perceived racism. In one Treaty mining company, senior aboriginal staff identified many conflicts. The perception of unequal treatment is a constant in the mines, beginning with how salaries are allotted from the outset. One individual questioned why one southern individual started with a salary of \$50,000, while a northern aboriginal employee of equal skill only started with \$44,000. In reviewing starting salaries for aboriginal workers, the perception is held of unequal starting points. Aboriginal employees often hear iterations of: “you are lucky to even have a job, because you have a grade four education” (Interview with aboriginal supervisor, March 5, 2005). Connected to this is the inconsistency that people observe in who gets trained on equipment and advanced. Many aboriginal workers are kept in lower positions for longer periods, often because a supervisor may pass them over. An aboriginal manager suggests that the way people speak may influence the perceptions of the supervisor towards them: “One guy may not speak up ever, or may have

<sup>76</sup> This table is used in a training program delivered at one of the mines on culture. The top ten list of conflicts was developed after shadowing aboriginal workers, and working with aboriginal management in the mine. Together with these individuals, we developed this list. It was then tested with supervisors and with workers (Gibson 2007).



limited reading and writing, but some of these guys talk like a professor when they talk in Dogrib” (Interview with aboriginal supervisor, March 5, 2005). As the aboriginal worker may never speak up or request advancement, they may be looked over. The individual may also be on an industrial site for the first time, and unaware of how to deal with policies, standards and regulations, and unaware of how to negotiate for leave or changed duties if they are under stress. The mine counselor reflected:

I say – I know this is hard, but when a team leader gets a heads up, (they) will handle you a whole lot differently than if 3-4 years from now, you ran into another grader out there. That is going to cause a whole other set of problems. But if you can go to them right now and say “I am that stressed that I need to either go on light duties or something has to be done here. That sort of proactive approach is tough for some of them. (Interview with December 14, 2005)

The individual who does not communicate may unconsciously reinforce the supervisor’s perception that they are not capable (because of how the individual may speak or deals with conflict). This, and the miner’s experience of authority in the past, may affect the ability to request or negotiate with supervisors, as suggested by the mine counselor.

They have also been traumatized by the churches, the teachers, the nurse, the doctors, nurses, police, who are all Caucasian and have been put in positions of authority. So there is that part to that offers a historical layer there. (Interview with December 14, 2005)

These factors together combine to reinforce the impression that aboriginal people are much slower to be promoted in the mines. “There are simply too many opportunities for a team leader to make assumptions” (Interview with mine supervisor, March 5, 2005). Team leaders will fire someone after they have been reprimanded three times. While aboriginal managers may request that they become involved with an aboriginal worker’s case at the second strike, it is rare that team leaders will seek them out. “I don’t know how many times I have asked to know who is at strike two, but it never happens. If someone is sleeping in, then I will get a roommate (telling) the ... person to go to bed early. I will get some grips under his shoes. I will coach them, not to drink coffee, to have a friend call...” (Interview, March 5, 2005). The team leaders, according to this supervisor, think, “If I let this through, I will get a flood of requests. The team leader is looking for the more you get out of the ground, the better: faster, harder, sooner. There is pride in that” (Interview, March 5, 2005).

Literature on the conflicts between work and family responsibilities investigates the kinds of policies and benefits that can be mobilized to mitigate the conflict between the two domains of work and home (Greenhaus and Powell 2006). These most often include: flexibility

(as negotiated through the IBA for cultural leave or unexplained leave), and practices (such as managerial support for and career consequences of work-family balance). In one mine, the agreement between the community and the mine allows the aboriginal employee to take one week off from work without a reason. This is a provision to ensure that aboriginal employees can attend cultural events or political assemblies, and they won't be required to explain the need to a supervisor. When it comes to managers, aboriginal supervisors name a host of interventions that could serve to accommodate aboriginal miners to the industrial environment, decreasing the possibility of conflict in this domain. For example, one-on-one coaching from mentors on new procedures and tasks or in education could reduce anxiety of learning only through written instruction. Diversity training might be used to sensitize managers to the worker-family issues that might arise. On site, some supervisors tend to manage conflict much better than others:

So, those kinds of guys, that type of supervisor, ends up for the most part being respected. I also find that they end up being approached a bit more; and they have both told me that when they target someone who is not doing well, they will say to them "well, how about I get in the grader or truck with you and drive around with you while you are doing your duties today." Number one, they are one on one. They are not making direct eye contact, and he asks how things are going. There are two guys... no three... who do that. They are well respected. Makes the client make direct contact in a non-threatening way. Which I think goes a long way. On the other side, and I say this probably in a pejorative sense, you get young, cocky team leaders who are a bit "machismo" and their attitude is more "suck it up", and that is where all the problems... I find that those guys, we hear more about them in therapy, as far as being problematic, and people not wanting to approach them for obvious reasons. People don't feel they can get supported when their interchange has not been supportive in the past. (Interview with counselor, December 14, 2005)

Managerial support has been shown to be most forthcoming and understanding when the supervisor-subordinate are of the same gender and race (Foley *et al.* 2006). Diversity training may broach this, surfacing this tendency to not support employees who are dissimilar in race or gender (Foley *et al.* 2006). Finally, training could alert these supervisors of the dominant society to the cultural environment in which they operate in. One aboriginal supervisor suggested:

If you are going into someone's house, you ask whether to take your shoes off. When animals are killed on site, they should be blessed, and they should invite aboriginal people. There are two things about showing respect: pay the land and for elders who look at a mass of earth that has been moved, they will pray for the damage to the land. The elders know it is not right, that the rock is used (Interview, March 5, 2005).

These kinds of informal practices are rarely observed on site.

### 6.5.3 Negotiations for advancement

Advancement can depend on attitudinal disposition, literacy, skills, and cultural factors. In some cases, the worker may not seek promotion, feeling “not old enough to be a manager” or sufficiently skilled enough. One worker spoke of decreasing long term personal risk by practicing skills transferable out of the mine, again disqualifying himself from moving up,: “that way if management decides they don’t like me, I can still be a grader on the highways” (Interview with haul truck driver, March 17, 2006). For others, though, literacy, the prior experience of education and fear of paperwork combine to keep them from seeking to move up. These factors invoke the individual experience of schooling and education in the past. Sadness and intimidation are reflected in a young woman’s thoughts on her success at schooling: though she completed grade 10 and wanted to be a pilot, her experience of education frustrated this goal. When she transferred from her remote community school to Yellowknife, “I couldn’t understand a thing they were saying. To go to that school and not be able to do anything made me feel stupid” (Interview with haul truck driver, March 14, 2006). She was disappointed and sad, but still “owes a lot to school. The reason why I wanted to come to the mine was for money. I don’t know if school has anything to do with it. I am thankful I can read and write.” Lack of literacy or fear of learning has a tendency to impact the self esteem of an individual (Interview with haul truck driver, March 14, 2006). This, combined with pace of work and job site location, can deter an individual from gaining access to site learning required to move up. When someone is too busy at work, with a supervisor that is focused entirely on productivity, they may be unable to get to workplace learning. If the worker is in mine operations, where the majority of aboriginal workers are, then they are physically far from training every day on their shift. To leave their machine early or come late would be to miss a large chunk of a shift. These factors again combine to deter the individual from learning on site. Once again, the power of the supervisor emerges, as the miner can only pursue workplace learning with a supervisor’s support.

Often people do not seek to advance for a subtle reason, “I don’t want to tell people what to do” (Interview with process plant worker, January 15, 2005). Underneath this rather simple statement lie a deep wellspring of values and a code of conduct for how each person ought to be treated. First, there is a fierce individualism, so in fact people are taught to learn to do things themselves through observing others. Second, learning is completed through watching, not through telling, unless the telling is done indirectly (Rushforth 1992). When teaching is done directly, it is considered rude and hurtful. To be a supervisor in the style of the non-aboriginal goes against this code of learning. As they observe the style that supervisors seemingly must

adopt, many workers shy away from seeking to advance. Thirdly, individuals tend not to be self promoting. Added to this is the friendship factor: when someone moves up in a position, they have to take charge of people, tell them what to do, and possibly even fire them. They have to become a supervisor who says “no” to people. That intimidates some, because they are from tiny communities, where gossip travels easily and lights fires in relationships. Finally, as one person succeeds, his kin sometimes pull him back down, what one woman referred to as the crab bucket: “we live in a pail and as soon as one crab starts to climb up to get out, another crab just pulls it down. Our generation has a lot of that: the fear from residential school” (Interview with worker, March 13, 2006). Many of these factors, often combined with managerial tendencies to overlook aboriginal employees, lead to employees not seeking or being chosen for advancement.

Just as with retention, the community doesn’t seem to play a tremendous role in whether an individual advances or not. They can provide the disincentive of the “crab bucket”, ask too much of the promoted worker or expect treatment that may jeopardize the worker. The promoted worker will have to say “no” to kin, which may require breaking faith with how he was raised and taught to treat people in order to succeed within the corporate structure. The tensions from the overlap of the community with the mine site may overwhelm, causing the individual to actively seek to not be promoted. To support a worker who aims to move up, the entire family has to adapt, freeing up hours in the home rotation for learning, often moving to a new location (e.g., Yellowknife), and managing crisis or difficulties.

Clearly the supervisor has an enormous part to play in advancement. Their words, attitudes and nurturing can grow a leader, as suggested by this haul truck driver:

We work hard. But you see that a lot. It depends on the supervisor. The last supervisor had 26 people to choose from and even though I had just started, he picked me. He picked me and it made my year. I like that feeling. I am probably the only female in the north to run that machine. (Interview with haul truck driver, March 14, 2006)

The supervisor can just as easily build hope as destroy any growing confidence. Constant pressure for production can reinforce the potential of the supervisor-employee conflict:

Most labour problems are the result of a front line supervisor who has two to five people working for him who hasn’t built all the managerial skills up. And I think that a lot of the problems come up when: how do I deal with this guy who wants to go to a funeral? I am short people on trucks, and somebody else didn’t show up and maybe you need to blame generic aboriginal as opposed to looking at the specific problems of those individuals. And these supervisors have enough problems of their own that it is sometimes too ‘weighty’ to try and understand what is going on with these people that they don’t really understand. They feel like they are forced to hire. And I think that working with the front line

supervisors is where you are going to solve those problems. (Interview with mine manager, June 1, 2005)

Programs at the mine often focus on leadership skills. Even though the mine tends not to reward leadership, these are often the focus of corporate programs for the “skilling up” of aboriginal people. Also available on site are training centres with skilled adult educators that will work with the interested learner to build towards advancement. These adult educators often understand the barriers to learning, and are keen to broach them. The constraints to advancement and education relate to often to more complex factors than the willingness and skill of adult educators. For example, people are often too tired to train, are intimidated by their past experience of education, or are not freed up by their supervisor to train. A commitment to training is obvious in all interviews with the companies and the staff available for training is exceptional. Yet barriers still exist, as acknowledged by this senior manager:

We have done everything structurally possible to remove the barriers to employment, but it is still not enough. The barriers exist, but they are columns of smoke. (Interview with mine manager, November 30, 2006)

One trainer refers to barriers and strategies for the learner:

The Mine Act in section 6.04 requires provision be made for learners with less than perfect understanding of English. A lot of these folks end up on site, and (the trainer) feels that many approaches to learning ought to be taken: oral, visual and hands-on. (Contractors are) much less likely to give work release time to people for their learning. While, the process plant requires mostly hands-on training, moving up to become a supervisor requires a written exam. At six hours in writing time, this exam is arduous and puts most people off. While the workplace educators argue for other approaches to testing that do not reduce quality but allow required skills and qualities to be demonstrated, they are firmly rejected by the supervisor. The only route left for (them) to argue for clear and plain language on the exams, and skill development for people who want to take the exams. (Interview with trainer, November 28, 2005)

The barriers to a worker can include lack of a clear progression plan, difficult exams without plain language, and requirements that have no training or support for learning. For example, while there is no training available for understanding the Mine Act, it is a known requirement of a supervisor. Also, the supervisor in charge of progression may lack empathy with the reality of what may be a conflicted home environment, making home learning difficult for a worker and in-mine advancement impossible.

Every component of this discussion of how workers can access, retain and advance in mine work has focused on what the aboriginal worker has to do to succeed. Noticeable in the corporate approach is a blind spot to how programs or people can impact on advancement. The

key assumption seems to be that workers must assimilate, or become quickly literate in the habitus of settler society, in order to succeed. All leadership programs focus on up-skilling of the aboriginal person, rarely on the skills of the supervisor. Cross-cultural training programs tend to emphasize geography, history and difference, rather than effective management skills in an environment built on examined values. The focus is on complete adaptation of the worker to the “industrial bubble” (Interview with mine manager, November 30, 2006) but not on the adaptation of the corporation to the cultural and social geography of the region.

Still, even without this focus, individual people do accommodate and shift, revealing individual negotiations of value and difference. When a large annual assembly is upcoming, one manager reports calling the Grand Chief of the Tâîchô to suggest joint planning to manage leave requests, ensuring key drummers are available. Upon the sudden death of a Chief, a manager ensured non-direct kin were freed to participate in funeral rites. When elders pass on, senior community relations or external affairs staff of a mine is sure to attend. One aboriginal manager joked, “There will be more mine staff at the funeral than us!” (Interview, November 12, 2006) These accommodations are infrequent and depend on the personality and intent of the engaged manager.

## 6.6 Drivers of conflict

Underlying so many of these conflicts and differences is the weight of recent history. A miner’s personal experience of learning at residential school affects confidence, impacts on openness to training, and acts to reinforce a supervisor’s stereotypes of aboriginal people, causing the aboriginal worker to be overlooked. A miner’s use of drugs and alcohol to cope and pressure from peers affects timeliness to the plane, and lack of understanding of corporate rules of behaviour (i.e., the need to call the supervisor) reinforces the supervisor’s stereotypes. A miner lived through forty years as Con and Giant mines never hired an aboriginal person and now expects continued racism. The examples of these “chains of explanation” (Watts 2003) are endless. Yet, as institutions, mines and governments seek to contend with this day forward, ignoring history and silencing social suffering (Irlbacher Fox 2005). The corporation seeks to dissociate from the social and cultural legacies of the past, but the miner refuses to make this distinction, even as they choose to participate in the present occupational opportunity.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The only example I am aware of a corporation acknowledging social suffering comes from the Argyll mine. An individual empowered to negotiate agreement provided money as reconciliation. This individual was fired for this,

This weight of recent history is compounded at the site by an uneasy fit between occupational culture and aboriginal values. No shift in the rules of the ‘industrial bubble’ is made:

We can use all the normal channels to accommodate the differences. They can be catered for on all different arrangements on site. It has to be the same and it has never been an issue. There are times when “poisoned relationships are an issue”, but this is not often. When someone can’t work with another person. We can accommodate that. (Interview with mine manager, November 30, 2006)

While there is a focus on culture and engagement by the community relations staff at the head office, this thread is lost in operations. Corporate guidance and policy is certainly abundant, but as the mine manager said: “look we have policy on all of these things. I reckon you could commit genocide under [our] human rights policy” (Interview with mine manager, November 30, 2006). People do learn to live together, as evidenced by the sharing of meals and recreation, but structural and attitudinal barriers persist. With no acknowledgement of the dominance of the values of the occupational culture, the only space for negotiation of difference happens in an ad-hoc manner, whenever empathetic managers make an exception or new relationships are formed over the dinner table. Many of the programs on site are taken off the shelf of the parent corporation. For example, Six Sigma is “a system that helps us to achieve Operating Excellence. It includes strategic planning, leadership and goal setting, team building and employee motivation, that helps people to accomplish goals” (BHP Billiton 2004, 11). One diamond mine supervisor suggests:

I simply have incredible support for, my budget, I have a very healthy budget for work force development. We have I think 13 people in work force and training so between the trainers...it’s really because we have a supportive leadership, senior leadership group. (Interview with mine manager, November 12, 2006)

While these incremental steps towards relationships are the evidence of co-existence, there is the question of whether they are sufficient to overcome the weight of recent history and the difference of occupational and Dene culture.

The mine site hardly articulates with the region, having been made over into a landscape that is productive, civilized and familiar (Trigger 2005). This is most apparent in the use of Australian nicknames for open pits at Ekati. The occupational space is controlled and structured, and the work is repetitive. Foucauldian analysis might be made, of the mine as a prison. There is an element of this, as all people are embedded into the network of producing machines, repeating

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but the agreement still holds this clause. Doohan (2006) writes also of reconciliation the company undertook on her and another anthropologists’ advice, consisting of a re-negotiated agreement and public statements.

tasks in the common pursuit of unearthing and producing a litre of diamonds each day. The miner has to accommodate to a set of rules that are opaque to the corporation, as they are normalized. The managers are constantly moving from mine to mine, and their knowledge of the region is often gained in short courses or by a personal attention to history and geography. Yet, it is apparent that a number of transformations are made in order to work at the mines, moving from task group to work group, from full-time parent to part time parent and from cultural landscape to mined landscape. The four individuals that were described at the outset of this chapter give a flavour of the fragments of personal narratives, with each person being unique. Yet, just to win this possibility for each of these individual experiences to occur, many critical political and legal battles had to be fought and won. Once the opportunity of IBAs was on the horizon, each community had to negotiate commitments on employment, training and other areas. Through the constant attention of leadership and some committed members of the Treaty mining companies, and the daily transformations and sacrifices of families, the Dene harvester/miner is enabled to become the miner/harvester.



## 7 STRONG LIKE TWO PEOPLE: THE MINER/HARVESTER IN THE FAMILY

You need to understand what their thoughts are when they are in that environment, because a lot of it has to do with soul searching. Because they know what their activity was, but they end up spending half their lives in this other environment where there is no real end product. It is more of an individualistic activity. (Tâichô leader, January 25, 2005)

Men always spent time away. It is no different now. (Mine manager, January 22, 2005)

The network of ties and resources that kin and extended kin in a community represent are critical to resilience of a family as they engage in the mining economy. Social resources within the family and the community are mobilized to support each mine worker as they enter into the diamond mining economy. For example, extended families and partners are drawn into networks of support of the worker and the family. Local leaders, aware of the skills and education of the Dene workers, bring their knowledge to bear in helping people to get and keep jobs in a mine. These networks and resources are critical to helping a worker to attain work in the mines, and equally so in the support of families that are left at home during a rotation.

However, there is a paradox implicit in the deployment of social capital to engage in the industrial mode, for just as social capital is applied to engage in a diamond mine, cultural capital is exposed through this very integration. This paradox is revealed in the seemingly simple statement of continuity uttered constantly by people wishing to stress the sameness of this pattern of work with the past: “men have always spent time away”. The speaker implies the industrial pattern of employment is consistent with the past simply because men have always worked away. Yet a mine worker gives labour in exchange for money, permitting (or ensuring) capital accumulation to occur in the dominant society. In their time off, they are still able to secure food and goods within an exchange based economy. The nature of work and what it takes to perform it has profoundly changed. As the workers learn skills for diamond mining and become educated through the institutions of dominant society, the working class become imbued with and a part of the cultural practice of the dominant society.

There is a struggle, in this transition, to make new meaning of relationships, activities and practices in the industrial work site: the people are “soul searching”, as suggested by the

Tâîchô leader. The role of elders in the community is powerfully revealed in their collective efforts to make sense of this transition—they support the youth through recognition of what it takes to become involved in this economy: skills, training and education. They also consciously build new myths, metaphors, symbols and heroes that inspire each person to make sense of their changing realities. The stories they tell are aimed like an arrow (Basso 1996, 58) at each individual, providing guides for moral choice. Basso (1996, 58-59) writes of an elder, Thompson who said:

So someone stalks you and tells a story about what happened long ago. It doesn't matter if other people are around—you're going to know that he's aiming that story at you. All of a sudden it *hits* you! It's like an arrow, they say. Sometimes it just bounces off—it's too soft and you don't think about anything. But when it's strong it goes in deep and starts working on your mind right away. No one says anything to you, only that story is all, but now you know that people have been watching you and talking about you. They don't like how you've been acting. So you have to think about your life.

The elders make this new meaning, using new and old stories that are aimed to guide current and future generations, because they are aware of what is at stake: culture and language. They are also aware that as workers are trained in the rules and practices of the dominant society, the danger for these values and rules to be misrecognized as being the culture and values of the entire society (Lin 2001) exists.

This chapter outlines the concepts of social capital, applying the concept in the mines and family, understanding how investments in the homes allow the miner to gain and keep employment. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is also described, as the Dene culture is most exposed as people become educated through the pedagogy of the dominant society. The rewards of this culture, employment, income, and others, are all explored, as well as the hazards and hardships experienced in this transitional time. While other theorists have found social capital decreases due to engagement in mining (Bury 2002) and that the distance from the mine protects the communities (Brubacher 2002), the visions and stories of the elders are suggested to be the strongest mitigation for the Dene. Elders have consciously searched for new meaning and transitional stories and metaphors to aid people to be “strong like two people”, maintaining all that is good in social networks and all that is promising in dominant society.

## 7.1 Theories of capital

Social capital, the networks of relationships (in groups or kin) that are imbued with feelings of trust and dependence, are often described as providing a functional outcome for the

individual. These relationships can provide insurance in times of trouble, allow information to be communicated, and continue the norms and effective sanctions that facilitate action. Theories of social capital are seen in the work of Lin (2001), Bourdieu (1977) and others (e.g., Putnam 1993; Coleman 1988). The ‘social capital’ concept has been defined as “trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam, 1993, 167). Putnam (1993) suggested the single most important determinant of the performance of Italian municipal governments is civic involvement or civic tradition. Coleman’s (1988) model assumes individuals seek to maximize their interests, working together in markets to decrease transaction costs by providing valuable information and insurance. Bourdieu (1977) suggests that social networks of people with common *habitus* become institutionalized in the form of a common name, membership, and citizenship, or the establishment of group boundaries. Bourdieu’s theory is helpful in explaining how the common *habitus* of dominant society can be mistaken as universal, and thereby replicated through and in minority groups (1977).

Two studies have directly applied the concept to mining (Brubacher 2002; Bury 2002), suggesting that social capital is weakened through this economic engagement. Brubacher drew on Coleman’s tradition to analyze the Nanisivik mine in the Canadian north, defining social capital as sharing in networks of people. Brubacher suggested engagement in mining weakened social capital, after observing decreased sharing and increased individualism. However, he suggested this effect was partially mitigated through the physical separation of the non-aboriginal populations from the Inuit. He suggested that negative impacts on marriages tended to be temporary. While people from the community traveled to Nanisivik, the miners did not travel to the community, so the “physical and cultural separation between Nanisivik and Arctic Bay is recognized to have mitigated impacts in this area” (Brubacher 2002, v).

Bury, who completed a study of three communities near the Yanacocha mine in northern Peru, studied changing capital in four categories: produced, natural, social and human. Bury (2002) theorized that foreign direct investment would lead to changes to the available bundle of resources or capital at the household level. According to Bury, social capital facilitates action and fosters good governance (reminiscent of Putnam’s definition of social capital). At the household level this concept includes networks, relationships of trust, and membership in groups. Bury notes increases in produced capital near the mine, such as new roads into the region that have increased access to markets and decreased travel time, as well as an increase in seed banks, new potable water systems, and latrine systems. While 89% of the population closest to the mine has latrine systems, only 15% of the community farthest from the mine had latrines. He

suggested health prevention programs, literacy programs, and workshops have increased human capital. However, in the other two categories (natural and social) Bury documents plummeting levels of capital. Pressure on land resources, decreases in water quantity and quality have led to increases in diseases and crowding. While potable water supplies for the two communities close to mine are available, the water is not treated or tested, and communities had stopped boiling their water and thus have contracted water-borne diseases. Bury suggested networks have been weakened at the inter-household and community level; as well as supra-community and transnational linkages. Inter-household disruption leading to distrust and conflict was created through unequal hiring practices by the mine, social programs and land purchasing patterns favouring some people over others. Jobs were used to pacify the mine opposition, and as a political relations tool to impress or buy-out political leaders. At a community level, relations of paternalism and hiring vocal leaders to work at the mine have affected strength of organizations, and trust in them. Also communities had differential access to programs (due to their closeness to the mine) which eroded the trust that some citizens had in leaders, when their community was unable to secure the same benefits as the next community. Bury documented a host of new external organizations in communities, but found relationships with NGOs are unequal, temporary, and asymmetrical.

Lin (2001) suggests social capital is captured from embedded resources in social networks and also that social capital represents investments in social relations and the expected returns. Social outcomes are presumed to change due to social capital because: 1) information flows through these networks; 2) through these social ties influence may be exerted on an individual; 3) the people associated with an individual can attest to an individual's skills, and finally 4) because social relations reinforce identity and recognition. This mobilization of embedded resources in social networks is evident in the families and networks that support a miner/harvester in the mines.

## 7.2 Bringing social capital to bear in the mines

The concept of social capital, consistent with this notion of embedded resources (Lin 2001), is eloquently expressed by a Tâîchô business leader. In this discussion, this man suggests that his neighbour's troubles are his troubles, so that the sorrows and the joys of the community are deeply felt.

There's a lot of incidents where even when you live for a long time you'll have what you call closenesses that you don't pick up in a year; a certain child died in a

certain way and it really hurts you, you feel it and so you share that with the parents and it could be my child died and they felt it with me. You know you start having the full range of emotions of life you know that makes a person a part of a tribe. It's something that a lot of people don't comprehend, they are our tribe, so you pick one at the other end of the chain and it is felt all the way to the front of the chain. While even though you might live in communities like Yellowknife which is pretty small and there's a lot of people have a great love for Yellowknife and they feel it is their community, still go home individually every night, we don't. We never do and never will. We don't. Something happened to the neighbour, something good, something bad, we all feel it, we don't know sometimes what to do with it but we all feel it. And there's a reaction to it like sometimes hurt, sometimes frustration, sometimes something else. You don't have that in any other type of society. (Interview, May 30, 2006)

Out of this fellowship is borne trust and mutual obligation. The business leader will thus take on responsibilities which might not normally be in the realm of a corporate leader. Because of this "closeness" information travels quickly and can be acted upon immediately. This is most evident when a death occurs, as illustrated by this leader speaking of his father in law's death:

We were called when he was near death and a charter was sent for us. They arrived and people were flying in from all over, charters coming in from every direction, people eating together, caribou being chartered in to feed people. This flexibility in the face of death and the ability to collectively greet death and wish a person off is incredibly strong. (Interview, February 5, 2005)

In these moments of transformation, the social resources and networks become apparent and their influence reaches far into the mines. When a significant Chief died, a plane was chartered out of the mine after the leadership called mine management to suggest which individuals needed to be sent home on this charter. As each miner's abilities as a hunter, drummer, singer, relation or leader are known to organizers, they are summoned to be a part of this "greeting of death". The activity itself and this network of relationships reinforce the identity and recognize the individual's skill and role in the cultural practice.

At the mine, information about the individual critical to them attaining employment is surfaced through leaders who are aware of their technical skills (e.g., in a bush camp or in the community). Further, these leaders exert their influence on the organization, pressuring a mine to treat their people fairly, as discussed by this Tâîchô business leader:

My role in the community other than my own job is people who are desperate of many shapes and kind will come and see me for the purpose of, and you have to understand Dogrib (people) using my voice... They think my voice is pretty strong. Not really so. I think when I use my voice now, I am dealing probably with a bureaucrat in government who's middle, thought he could easily handle this little issue thing, and that would be the end of it. But when my voice comes

in all of a sudden he's saying to himself, holy \*\*%% [expletive deleted], this is going to go a little higher, hey, hey, my boss is going to be involved, maybe my top boss. Let's try to kill it right here. Let's make a deal. Let's compromise because I don't want this to go any further than where it is. Half of the time that's what happens. (Interview, May 30, 2006)

Workers rely heavily on their kin and friends while in the mine, in particular in learning situations. To advance, and move laterally in an area of operations (e.g., pit or mill), each miner/harvester had to take a series of modules on a computer based learning program. Miners/harvesters from the same region tended to support each other through these programs. At home, in order to fulfill the tasks expected of a male household member, a miner/harvester often engaged the help of extended family, asking a brother-in-law to bring wood or check in on the family. One single miner/harvester is able to work at the mine, even as his wife is chronically addicted to drugs and alcohol. While he has attempted to heal his wife "using medicine", he continues to raise his three children on his own while he works at the mine: "She is covered with bad medicine. The good medicine that I have asked for can't reach her" (Interview, January 15, 2005).<sup>78</sup> This man has three children, and he is now the primary caregiver for the children. When he is gone to the mine, they stay with his sister. He reported that his (children) are adjusted to the nature of his absences: "The (children), they are always playing outside. But I call my sister. The (children) seem adjusted to it" (Interview, January 15, 2005). This individual is able to work at the mine because of the expectation that family will support each other.

There is a collective wealth that accrues from the mobilization of these social resources in the networks. Trust and these relationships themselves are reinforced, as is the identity and role of each individual in the network. In addition, many of the workers share funds within a large kinship network, as one wife a miner suggested:

I am sharing it with sisters, I send them money once every two months, sometimes to other family members who get stuck in Rae. If I know they abuse, then I don't give it to them. If they want fuel, then I will just go and buy it for them. Once in a while it gets shared with friends, or someone will borrow money. Sometimes up to \$400, but we never get it back. People (like my sisters) think we are rich and make comments to the kids. We manage the money well. We don't have creditors, I take care of all the local bills. That hasn't changed. (Interview, March 8, 2006)

A Tâîchô leader explained this pattern, suggesting there is continuity in this economy with how people lived together in the past:

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<sup>78</sup> This individual sought treatment for his partner through a healer, aiming to cure her; while in one way of knowing, this woman was addicted to alcohol, in another way of knowing, she had been influenced by spirits.

We are a communal people. And there is always involvement of the whole family group. And at the end the rewards are shared with the family or shared with the community, it is like having a bank account so that when you are low somebody else does it for you. So it just means setting things aside for the future and things we can draw upon. Those kinds of general principles, what people were doing before is no different than what is going on today. We are just translating it in a way that makes sense. Because even though we might be living and working in the mines, we still have a traditional view of the world. And they might not see as a meaningful application, but in contrast it is something that has never been brought up to light. We are not doing anything different. We follow what we had before and there is a better chance. (Interview, January 15, 2005)

This sharing of funds is consistent with practices of sharing caribou, which is always shared with people in need at the time when it was brought home. Money is the new key component of “survival” and funds are shared to ensure the group’s survival, consistent with the past.<sup>79</sup>

### 7.3 Gaining the rewards of cultural capital

There is a paradox implicit in the deployment of social capital to engage in the industrial mode in that integration in this economy may weaken the cultural capital of the minority group.

Lin (2001, 15) explains Bourdieu’s notion of the reproduction of cultural capital:

Through pedagogic action, the culture and values of the dominant class are “misrecognized” as the culture and values of the entire society. Such pedagogic action occurs in the family, in informal groups and on informal occasions, and, most important, through education, especially schooling (institutionalized education). In the education system, not only do the agents (teachers and administrators) acquire and misrecognize the dominant culture and values as universal and objective, but they transmit “knowledge” by rewarding students who carry out the reproduction of the dominant culture and values in the next generation. The result is an internalized and durable training, *habitus*, in the production of the culture.”

Bourdieu particularly emphasizes that culture and values of the dominant society are deeply embedded in institutionalized education. In order to become employed in the diamond mines, workers often take training and educational skill building programs, often funded by the

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<sup>79</sup> This often means that those who are more “traditional” share with those that are in need, and can become over-extended, while those that are not “traditional” are spending more on themselves and not sharing. This has become a key tension in families. The money management courses which are designed by settler society would not anticipate or understand this kind of over-extension of one wage and would likely counsel the wage earner to disinvest from non-kin or extended kin. The counselor may even view these other people as “greedy”, rather than understanding the need for this wage earner to support these key relationships with the most current of survival goods: money. The inability to understand this context would likely cause the worker to be even more stressed, given the demands and the ineffective advice of the settler counselor. Money management strategies consistent with the need to share would be more likely to gain purchase with this individual. Collectively, the Tâîchô plan community IBA funds in this way. An allotment is always kept for funerals (which are always collectively managed), and “emergencies”.

government. For example, the federal government has created a Mine Training Society, which aims to employ each person trained in a mining related field. Lin (2001, 15-16) explains how the reward system in the labour market encourages the continued integration of individuals into dominant society (and thus the *habitus*):

Students who have acquired and misrecognized the culture and values as their own are rewarded in the labour market by being employed by the organizations controlled by the dominant class. Thus, misrecognition is reinforced in the education system so that other students continue the misrecognition of the need and the merit of acquiring the culture and values being transmitted.

As people gain purchase in this economy, they are rewarded for internalizing the rules and practices of the dominant society, which is done without awareness of these rules and practices, because these are misrecognized as being the culture and values of the entire society (Lin 2001). The rewards are multiple, inclusive of jobs, surplus capital to acquire goods, skills, education, the respect of a new social network and self esteem. These effects (what the impact assessment literature might term the positive “impacts”) have all come to pass in the northern economy.

There is much higher access to jobs in the communities, because of the negotiated agreements with the mining companies, and as a result there is increased employment. Unemployment rates before the opening of the diamond mines were high, at almost 50% in every community. These numbers, as predicted in the environmental impact assessments of both mines (BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. 1995; Diavik 1998) have fallen significantly, down to 33% in Dettah, 30% in Bechokö and 27% in Wekweètì (Bureau of Statistics 2005a). Incomes have increased in impacted communities, while the proportion of high income and low income families has not changed (Bureau of Statistics 2006a). A related figure, the number of people on income assistance, has dropped significantly in the small communities: “Most of the reductions in income support can be attributed to smaller NWT communities. The percentage of the population on income support has declined from 18.4% of the population of smaller communities in 1996 to 7.8% of the population in 2005” (Bureau of Statistics 2006a, 17). Men’s incomes have risen higher than women’s in the small diamond mine impacted communities (see Figure 7.1), and men are more likely to hold employment in the mines (see Figure 7.2).



Figure 7.1 Growth in employment income for men and women between 1998 and 2003 (Bureau of Statistics 2006a)

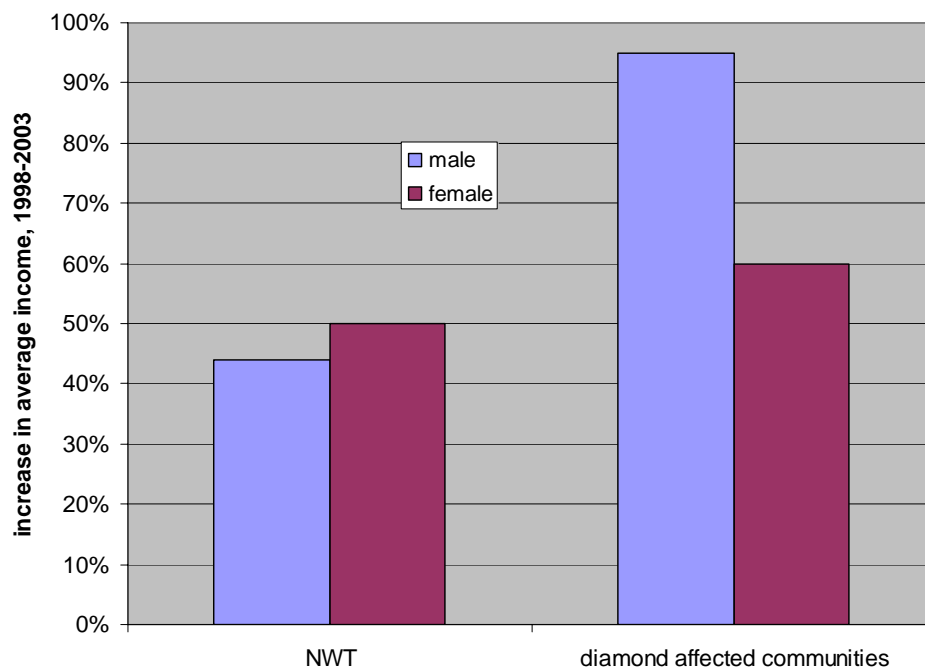
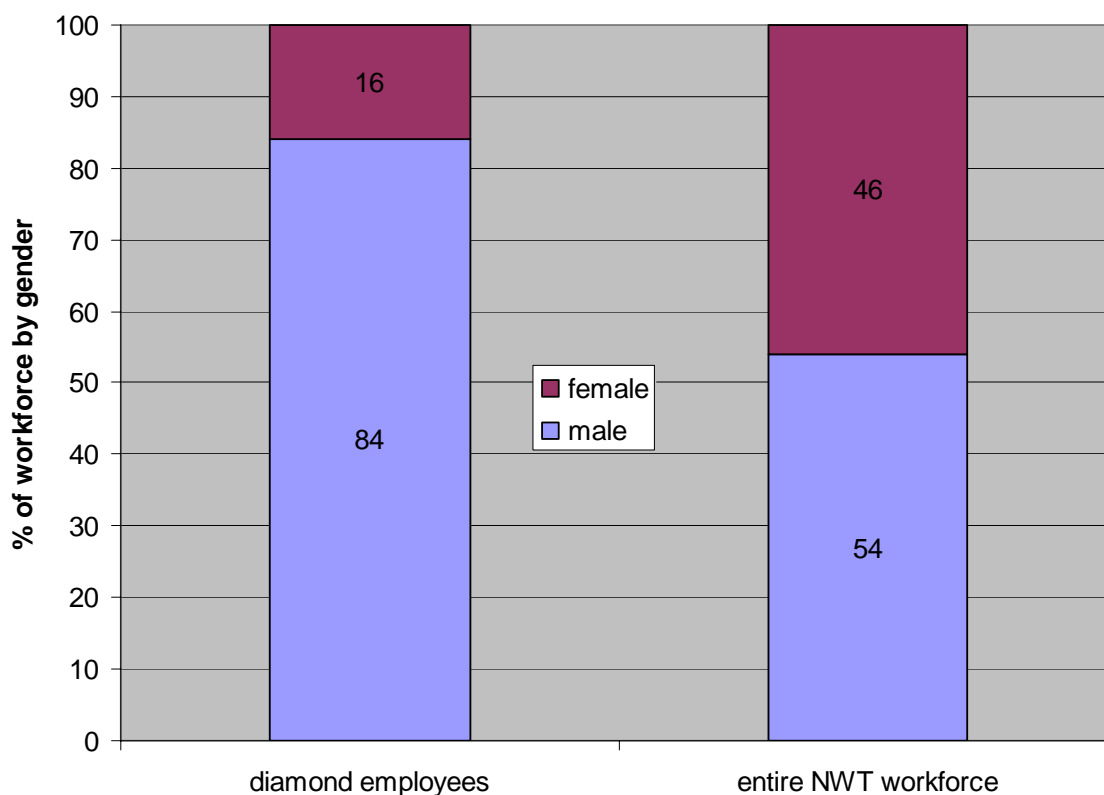


Figure 7.2 Diamond industry employment, by gender, compared to all NWT employment sectors (Bureau of Statistics 2006a)



The income from these positions has increased the purchasing power of families living with a worker employed in the mines. For example, one family member of a miner said: “For some of the young men and women that are going up to the diamond mines, they are able to be responsible with their money, and they help their families, they buy cars and ski-doo’s and boats and motors and stuff, so they are able to go out on the land and do things (Interview, July 7, 2005). One family proudly displayed the fruits of their new income, showing how mine wages of their two young sons, who still lived at home, have allowed them access to a range of new consumer goods for the family:

“They are good boys,” the mother said.

The two young men have pooled money to give their mother a bank card. “Spend it on anything, Mom,” they said. “It goes up to \$1,000 if you need it.”

“Look” said the father: “for mother’s day, a television, and for father’s day, a new \$400 shotgun. And this year a camera.”

The father brought out the new camera.

“No, no” says his son. “It is a phone.”

His “baby” as they refer to him, is a boy of at least 18. The “baby” took the cell phone from his dad.

“All together that is more than \$500!” says the father. (Field notes, July 5, 2005)

The most obvious symbol of surplus income in diamond mine impacted communities is the pick-up truck. Ten years ago, these pick up trucks were old, beaten down, weathered helpers. The truck of today is the newest four by four, costing well over \$30,000. Often a family living in a remote community has one truck in the community and another in Yellowknife. One business leader spoke of 48 new trucks in Rae (Interview, March 15, 2005). Many other new goods are secured: trucks, wages, snowmobiles, hunting equipment. In a survey of diamond mine impacted communities, diamond mining families were more likely to own two trucks, as well as two snowmobiles (Bureau of Statistics 2005b). The new pick-up truck has increased mobility, as workers report they travel south frequently on their time off. In a study on how pick-up trucks influenced Navajo residence patterns, Chisholm (1986) found the truck alters access to resources and ability to mobilize manpower, suggesting “any analysis of economic and social change on the reservation must consider the effects of so many Navajo people choosing to dispose of their income on pickups” (296). The pick-up holds just as central a role in Dene communities,

allowing community members secure travel out to Yellowknife and south to major centres in much higher numbers than ever before.

Families with a member employed in the diamond mines are also more likely to own their own houses: in the impacted communities in 2005, 67% of families with a worker in the mines owned their houses while only 52% of families owned houses in families with no diamond mine worker (Bureau of Statistics 2005b). However, overcrowding and lack of availability of new housing in the diamond mine impacted communities has led to an escalation of out-migration of diamond mine workers to urban centres, such as Fort Smith and Yellowknife (DCAB 2005). With little new housing available yearly in the communities (DCAB 2005)<sup>80</sup>, young couples must either live with their families, or move into public housing. The Public Housing Program rental structure creates disincentives for tenants in impacted communities, given that rent is calculated at 30% of a household's gross income. When they compare the housing condition of what is available for rent in public housing to what they can rent in Yellowknife for the same price, young couples often choose to migrate to urban centres (DCAB 2005).

People are often encouraged to gain new education and skills in order to participate in or move up in the mines. Both of the mine sites host full time educators, capable of training people into new positions on different kinds of machinery, as well as aiding people in upgrading their education. Diavik ran training programs locally in the communities, leaving collectively built structures behind after each program. For example, in a skills training program, Tâîchô workers renovated community arbours, later used in a Tâîchô Annual Assembly. A course in heavy construction skills led to people working on the church, a local bridge and the community airport in Bechokö, while in Åutsel K'e community members learned heavy equipment skills as they worked on a community road. Many individual miners have moved through multiple grade levels to become apprentices while working at the mines. One mine trainer spoke of the success of a miner: "He has been for three years in adult education, learning to read and write on his own nickel. He wants to be a welder and is in his last year" (Interview, November 30, 2005). In addition to providing access to education, Diavik delivers an Aboriginal Leadership Development Program, offering 160 hours of leadership training and mentoring: this marks an attempt to ensure Aboriginal people are employed at all levels throughout the organization.

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<sup>80</sup> The communities that have the lowest level of housing availability are Åutsel K'e, N'dilo and Dettah.

Communities also tend to put their own Impact and Benefit Agreement funds towards education opportunities, making scholarships available within the communities.

Education outcomes continue to be quite different for aboriginal and non-aboriginal residents in the NWT. For example, 45% of aboriginal persons 15 years of age and older hold a high school diploma, compared to 87% of non-aboriginal residents (Bureau of Statistics 2006b, 3), yet these figures are better now than they were ten years ago. The greatest barrier to employment in the NWT has been identified as education: “examining employment rates by education levels for 2005 shows the continuing pattern of increasing opportunities of employment as education levels increase. For 2005, some 36.8% of persons with less than Grade nine were employed compared with 92.7% of those with a university degree” (Bureau of Statistics 2006b, 3). A Tłı̨ch̓ leader commented:

We have got a couple (of young people) that are in apprenticeship programmes and are doing well and we’ve got some young women that are working out there. I mean this is a release or self escape for some of these people that really has a positive influence. (July 30, 2005)

The positive influence of this education and employment has been linked to an increase in self esteem.

A description of men’s historical roles helps to understand the nature of this increase in self esteem through employment. As settled communities became an enduring reality for families, the nature of men’s work shifted. During the “Time of Darkness” (from Treaty onwards), residential school and colonial administrations (two of many colonial interventions) fractured the ties across generations and introduced widespread individual and familial trauma. Many men seem to have suffered severely, becoming profoundly addicted, as evidenced by higher suicide rates among men (Isaacs *et al.* 1998). Instead of being intensively busy with activities associated with the land-based economy (such as chopping wood or hunting), under colonialism men had very little productive role in settled communities. They continued to hunt, but with central heating, men no longer had to gather as much wood. Their overall status diminished as did self esteem. This loss of self esteem and the productive role impacted on women, as increased rates of spousal abuse attest to (GNWT 2007b).

Mining has brought a sense of worth to many men. While women never quite lost their roles, as the caregivers and nurturers of the community, men have regained an important role. One person spoke of how a mine worker can “talk loud now”, because of his pride in his work. The restoration of self esteem is commented on by a leader, who has observed this change in self esteem as men became active in the mining economy:

I was here before the mining economy, I lived with (the Tâîchô) for years and years and all those men, or they were young when I first knew them, they had marginal lives, they had marginal economic lives in the sense that had very little education, most of them might have grade five or six if that. Some of them speak English fairly well, they write almost not at all and they read with great difficulty and there is a whole generation...at this level, you know, and they are in each community and those guys were often on the boards, the traditional role of the men, and often their wives were the ones that were supporting the families, you know, because they would have some education and they would be the clerks in the stores or the breadwinner of some kind and what the mines have done is they've restored some self esteem, I think, to the men. Because they've got work and they've got money and they can buy what they want to buy, they can support their families... (Interview, March 17, 2006)

While it is not certain they are linked, levels of family violence have dropped since 2002, when construction for the two mines was completed (GNWT 2007b). There is no direct proof that one causes the other, but it is reasonable to assume that there is some link in that domestic violence is often correlated with increased unemployment, especially as concerns resource communities. However, purchasing power is becoming increasingly centralized in the hands of men, at the same time as aboriginal women are surpassing the educational levels of men (Bureau of Statistics 2006a). This may begin to cause new tensions in families.

#### 7.4 Hardship in the experience of rewards of cultural capital

These rewards of the dominant society reinforce the reproduction of settler society ideas of progress, self, and identity. In these sites (at work and in the dominant society education system) the workers are subliminally told of the values, rules and practices, even as the teachers are unaware that they represent their values as neutral or non-existent. The worker travels in and out of the seemingly culture-less world of the mine every two weeks. Even as they gain these rewards and often share them among the network, there is hardship in the experience of this new wealth, sometimes complicated by the past and sometimes borne of the present.

Spending is spoken of as uncontrolled, often because disposable wealth is a new phenomenon to the communities. Elders talk about how youth need to learn to spend wisely, budget and plan. Yet many new miners/harvesters have never managed mortgages, payments and multiple commitments. Many social services providers speak of the "feast or famine" management of money. Some people open their first bank accounts, apply for credit cards, manage a mortgage, and pay for a truck for the first time. Demands on solo wage earners can be huge, as some families expect sharing to extend as it has always done with the goods of the land.

A counselor at one of the mines spoke of a young man who was in crisis because of this money management problem:

He was financially strapped – he had bought himself a house, his parents a house, his grandparents a house, and expectations from brothers and sisters who are not working in wage earning situations, to buy the amenities. ATVs, boats, whatever. So he is just way in over his head. (Interview, December 14, 2005)

The demands on the wage earner were enormous, and the ability to manage these multiple and conflicting demands caused the worker to need to leave site. This difficulty in managing money has been echoed consistently (DCAB 2005).

The reward system also centralizes the accumulation of surplus capital in the hands of men, given that the industry largely employs men (Bureau of Statistics 2006a), Asch predicted this tendency might centralize the greatest wealth in the hands of those who have the fewest economic responsibilities (1977). With the opportunity of high incomes and leisure time, the probability that this income will be spent on personal luxury items and “socially useless activities such as drinking parties” (Asch 1977, 56) has been consistently suggested in interviews and in community meetings (DCAB 2005). As suggested in one report, “there is more drug and alcohol abuse in communities, easier access to drugs and alcohol, and more harmful drugs being used” (e.g. crack cocaine and crystal methamphetamines). People working at the mines reported they tend to binge drink (defined as consuming five or more drinks in an evening) (DCAB 2005, 12).

Increased disposable income in the hands of young people has been cited as key factor in the increased addictions in the region (Interview with social service provider, November 15, 2005). Alcohol remains the largest source of concern and the first place most impact assessments begin with questions pertaining to impact. On the issue of drinking and drug use, there is a difference in what miners and their families believe the impact has been in the small and local communities. According the Bureau of Statistics(2005, 17), only 37% of the miners believe that there is increased usage of alcohol and drugs, while 61% of their families feel that way. More family members also believe that drug usage has increased rather than declined (See Table 7.1) since the opening of the diamond mines.

Table 7.1 Answer to suggestion that “diamond mines have led to increased alcohol and drug use” (Bureau of Statistics 2005b, 17)

	Diamond miner in small communities	Diamond miner family in small communities	Non-diamond miner family in small communities	Diamond miner in other communities	Diamond miner Family in other communities	Non-diamond miner family in other communities
Strongly agree (%)	7	4	9	21	7	14
Somewhat agree (%)	32	57	49	33	43	27
Somewhat disagree (%)	46	22	29	29	21	37
Strongly disagree (%)	0	3	1	6	0	4
Not stated (%)	15	14	12	10	30	18

Yet, when asking less directed questions about mining and the relationship to addictions, community leaders suggest there is a long history to addictions in the communities. They note a general improvement, with fewer people addicted to alcohol. A residing elder said while pointing out his window:

(I can point to) that house: no drinking, that house no drinking, that house no drinking, no drinking, no drinking...you’ve got a core of people who are alcoholic, okay and they are visible, they are noisy. .... You’ve got also lots of people (who have) quit drinking. Young and old. When I first came in 1986, on Christmas Day, I used to go up town and the whole town (was) drunk. Now, I go up town, the same thing, Christmas Day, what you’ve got (is) a big, huge dinner with the elders, extended family, the elders, kids playing on the floor with their Christmas toys. You might share a little wine but there’s no drinking there to get drunk. There’s been a big improvement. (Interview, February 26, 2005)

This leader provided a useful counterpoint, speaking of addictions as a consistent historical concern in the communities, not something newly triggered by the diamond mines:

Alcohol was such a big thing and people will say, oh and you hear it with the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, and I think they are just fooling themselves because they are saying (...) this is going to bring alcohol. Well those communities are devastated from alcohol now. They are not facing reality, you know, they are lying to themselves and people do that a lot and that’s part of the addictive profile anyway. (Interview, February 25, 2005)

Gambling is pointed to as a heavy addiction that affects women and men alike. Homes and bingo halls are the locus for gambling in all communities. In the mines, the miners often engage in games of chance, through both the 50/50 draw or in small rooms where the cost of game entry is \$20. A majority of diamond miners and especially their families in the small

communities believe that diamond mining has led to increased levels of gambling, while those in other communities are much less likely to feel this way (See Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Answer to suggestion that “diamond mines has led to increased levels of gambling (Bureau of Statistics 2005b, 18)

	Diamond miner	Diamond miner family	Non-diamond miner family	Diamond miner in other communities	Diamond miner family in other communities	Non-diamond miner family in other communities
Strongly agree (%)	8	10	8	0	4	5
Somewhat agree (%)	42	50	49	34	5	18
Somewhat disagree (%)	34	23	32	42	45	49
Strongly disagree (%)	1	1	0	2	3	5
Not stated (%)	15	17	12	23	43	22

An exchange with a leader in Bechokö speaks to the nature of gambling:

Yeah, it used to be that way but you know if things go wrong, you have to blame somebody, blame the mine...(There are) many social problems beside the mines. I mean dysfunctional families, you know, gambling is one. Gambling can be the worst curse, worse than drinking. (There are) bingos, every night, all your life. And drinking it was mostly men, not too many women; but gambling, women (are) just as strong as men. There was no gambling 20 years ago. (Now, with) money, you can afford it, and also nothing to do. In the bush, you know, you are busy all day. Women or men, women are to cook and make clothes and wash but here, workload is pretty limited. (Interview, February 26, 2005)

Increases in the levels of all type of crime were also predicted with the advent of the diamond mines (GNWT 2005). This increase has been validated. For example, Bechokö reported 477 crimes per 1,000 people in 2004, with the height of 671/1,000 in 2002 (GNWT 2007b), much higher than in Yellowknife. A corporal in the Bechokö RCMP office estimated that 90% of all calls received at the detachment were alcohol related (Interview, July 31, 2005).

Social mitigation measures to reduce this hardship associated with rapid influx of money have been implemented. For example, to ensure that income did not simply get spent in the bars of Yellowknife, such as the Gold Range, the mines fly all members of small communities back to their homes direct from the mines. People are also taught how to manage their earnings in courses available in the mines and counseling services in Yellowknife, however the courses rarely involve the partners or wives of families and they are not delivered in the remote



communities. Also, the mines have all adopted drug and alcohol free policies. One counselor suggested this has an enormous impact on people who have been addicted:

I find that it can be used to the advantage of the individual because during that two weeks on site, they have a chance to sober up. They get to experience themselves be not so mentally fogged out, and you will have people coming and saying “I want to think about my life. I am in here, I feel the healthiest, blah blah blah, but out there I am not doing so well. So, there is something very interesting about the routine, the expectations, the lack of access to substances, being around other people, being exposed to other peoples’ work ethics, all that kinda stuff. And other things I don’t even know about. All of them act as a kind of positive catalyst for some type of people to start reviewing their lives and saying “do I like how I am doing this”? (Interview, August 25, 2005)

Programs are available also for addictions, and local strategies for healing have been developed (Zoe-Martin 2007).

## 7.5 Decreasing social capital?

Social capital, or the relationships that provide insurance in times of trouble, allow information to be communicated, and continue the norms and effective sanctions that facilitate action, has been impacted through engagement in the mining economy, according to some theorists (Brubacher 2002; Bury 2002). One of the central claims levered against the rotation schedule of mining is that family breakup will ensue. The nature of work and distance of the mine site from home creates the possibility for conflict to surface. In the past, while men were physically apart from the community, they were still socially embedded with extended kin working together on a task that reinforced social networks. The worker now is amongst a new network of people, chosen by the corporation. The quality of time away is completely changed, as is the space in which the worker now lives. There is much greater exposure to outsiders, as much of the workforce is from the south, and the connection to elders is not maintained in the mines. As a result, the usual moral correctives (of a story aimed like an arrow) are not present in the worker’s lives daily. The result, according to the results from many of interviews, has been marital discord and break up.

Some partnerships do not withstand the continued absences and the rumours from mine sites, and family breakup occurs. The level of single parent families has increased in the NWT from 13% in 1981 to 21% in 2005 (Bureau of Statistics 2005b); the biggest change has occurred in the small diamond mine impacted communities between 1996 (when the first mine began construction) and 2001 with an increase of 10 percent (GNWT 2007b, 16). Families with one

parent are more likely to live in a low-income home; the percent of children living in low-income homes and single-parent families in small and local communities is 50 percent (GNWT 2007b, 16). This figure is dramatically higher than in other regions, with Yellowknife having 37% of children in low-income single-parent families (GNWT 2007b, 16).

Self reported data from miners and spouses paint a picture of less impact on relationships: 34% of the miners/harvesters suggest there are more problems in their relationships since they began to work at the mine, while 49% miners/harvesters disagree with this statement (Bureau of Statistics 2005b, 24). Only 41% of spouses of miners/harvesters suggest there are more problems in their relationships since the diamond mines opened, while 38% suggest that there are not more problems (Bureau of Statistics 2005b, 30). Given that miners are at work with many of their kin and friends from their communities, rumours often travel home before they arrive. Gossip and rumours have been one of the harder issues for some couples to deal with, often fueling existing conflict.

When a miner/harvester comes home from the mine, where they have been fed and had their room taken care of by a housekeeper, they are often slow to being to contribute in their household. A mother-in-law of one miner commented:

They are used to having everything done for them. I have two son-in-laws working there. One comes home and for the first two or three days, the mother looks after the children. As a grandmother, I get so angry. I don't now what to say. Everything is done for them, meals, bedding, etc. they are served and they come home and expect it. My other son comes home and strictly focuses on the family, sometimes I feel sorry for him because all they do is rebuild relationships. (Interview, December 14, 2005)

Most people suggest that a miner can stay in the mine working if the family is not in trauma from addictions or past history, and if there are strong social supports available to the family during the times while the miner/harvester is away. A counselor suggested that a range of emotional and interpersonal skills need to be developed for families:

There is a sense – this is not a great big piece – but there is also an ability to keep perspective, that stuff occurs in life, and you can call it a crisis, but somehow there is a kind of attitude that “yeah, we will be able to weather this one. And it doesn't mean you have to leave the camp. It can be that some of the individual workers are going to support friends that are at the mine. Or talking to the team leaders and/or somebody they respect – they might find that someone can tell them about a similar person in their community that has gone through a similar thing, and they will do their own setting up of a support system for themselves. (Interview, December 14, 2005)

Yet, many people in the communities argue that families that are in strong relationships are able to weather the difficult transitions of a rotation work schedule. In these cases, social resources are drawn on in order to support the partner at home and keep the worker in the mine. Families report many strategies for coping, but most talk of rebuilding when the miner returns. One man spoke of how the time away works well if the husband has “trained” the wife to manage the bills, take care of tasks, and manage crisis on her own (Business leader, May 30, 2006). Women, on the other hand, spoke of “training husbands”, and of a constant negotiation of the workload once the partner is home: “I sort of have to train him again, to not swear around the kids, to train him to take care of the kids” (Interview with Tâîchô miner’s wife, March 2005).

At home, women speak often of becoming both father and mother to the children in the sense that they have to assume both parenting roles for their children. A mother of five children said, “You act as both father and mother to kids. They are growing up without their father. The men miss out on family gatherings, birthdays, special events. When you want something done, they are so used to not doing anything. It is hard for them to do it” (Interview, December 14, 2005). Many women reported they have little or no formal support in the communities, given that there are only a few spots available in daycare and virtually no day homes (Interview with wife, February 5, 2005). For the most part, the partner’s absence leaves the home parent feeling lonely. She often has no support with children, and although she may have a large extended family, she may not draw on these members of their families to help care for the children. A few women report they managed on their own: “I feel like I have no life, there is just home and work, but there are some girls that invite me over. But mostly I can’t get childcare after work. That is the hardest part” (Interview, with Tâîchô wife, February 7, 2005). Many women, however, reported they rely upon their extended family for support, including for funds, information, and companionship.

Regardless of the strength of the partnership, a number of realities hold across each family: milestone events are frequently missed, such as birthdays, reunions, and anniversaries; the parent at the mine has to adjust to being at home on return and is often short of patience, and the home partner has to run things (or fail to) on their own. When the home partner does not manage, it can destabilize the family. A counselor who works with miners/harvesters discussed the complexity of conflict:

And there is certainly a trend about not knowing how to handle significant conflicts when they happen when the person is not physically present in the community. There are a whole lot of factors that factor into that: there is the whole thing about 12 hour shifts, people getting a hold of one another, how

information gets communicated back to the person at the mine, it could come through the community “news/rumour” mill and the individual. Not having enough direct contact with somebody in the family, and only finding something out from someone coming into the mine. So, that creates its own host of problems. Then, there are certain parent-child conflicts that are big ones. You see in partnerships with kids, one parent at home struggling with issues of whatever is going on with the kids, and the person at the mine site trying to figure out how they can be helpful. Sometimes, I find that there is a real sense of not knowing how to personally cope with the information of what is happening with kids, and secondly, how to be supportive from a long distance. Like, what can they do without ultimately leaving the minesite. (Interview, August 25, 2005)

This counselor speaks of a critical adaptation and negotiation that must occur if the miner/harvester is to remain in the mine: negotiate conflict and crisis that occurs from a distance. Conflict can transpire when a partner at home cannot manage a crisis that erupts. When the home partner is not “trained” or is unable to cope, the spouse sometimes calls the mine partner off of their shift.

For families that are not in trauma and who have built a relationship of trust, rotation work does not tend to fracture the family: “Families that stay at the mine, say it is because of the spouse that stays at home, she has to be strong emotionally to be at home, supportive and a strong person that is what really makes it work. Young single men: no they don’t stay” (Interview with Tâîchô wife, March 2005). If the family has adjusted well, and “you have a very stable family, the worker has no problem. He is sending his money home, the wife is ensuring that the bills are paid and stuff like that. But on the other hand, you have this other family which ends up with marriage breakup, like the husband is seeing someone up at the mine or elsewhere, that is a marriage breakdown” (Interview with YKDFN staff member, July 2006). The spouse at home often spoke of the difficulties of disciplining children alone; the heavy workload of managing the home and the loneliness of the constant shift work. Many of these women also worked outside of the home as well. Yet, these women reported there was no training, programs or support to help them.

Women speak of taking on both parenting roles, in addition to taking positions previously held by men (Bureau of Statistics 2006a). The administrative services of the government, health and social services, and other programming have been largely staffed by women, excluding the leadership roles of Chief, Council and CEOs.

When you look at the Tâîchô Government there (are) no women. You see I work with women (here in this agency), it is so present here, so I just hadn’t thought about it but out in the community it is still pretty dismal... (Interview with Tâîchô leader, February 26, 2005)

Opportunities available for secondary education are often taken up by women. A Tâîchô businessman stated:

We are truly blessed in the Dogrib region, for we have very strong Dogrib women. The head of the education is a Dogrib woman holding a degree. The head of Social Service is a Dogrib woman. The head of our Lands Administration is sitting right here, our Office Manager. In almost every department or every social or government group the head is a woman. The majority of young people getting an education are Dogrib women. Right now as we speak 56% of the total staff of our schools is Dogrib women. 100% of the administration of the band, hamlet and Treaty 11 are Dogrib women. It won't be long before the next move is to dispossess us old people. And it will happen. Right now as I speak we have 92 young aboriginal people attending post secondary education. Out of that 92 there are 64% of them are aboriginal women of the Dogrib region. (Interview, October 1, 2003)

The majority of high school graduates are women, and most scholarships from the mines go to women.

Many Dene families have now participated in the two week rotation schedule for ten years. Some children have lived their lives thus far with a parent commuting for half of the year. Many people point to one population in particular as vulnerable:

I think the most vulnerable part of the population in some of those situations is the kids. They come with the package. Where I see that is even where someone has a good consistent job at the mine, been there since the inception, but their attitude toward parenting is "Oh well, what happens when I am at the mine; who cares" and still continue on with a single life while in town. There is lots of money, lots of buying stuff, lots of going to Edmonton, but as far as real good attachment stuff, real good nurturing stuff ... And then you see someone who gets six weeks off to come out here and try to get their kid into the treatment centre, which is for kids with severely behavioral problems. And trying to problem solve with social services agencies about acting out kids, aggressive kids, and you can see where, in some ways, it is a direct result of how someone has organized their lives to do the two in and two out. (Interview with counselor, December 14, 2005)

When the parent returns, there is often a set of changing rules, and discipline can change dramatically from when a parent is home and away. Mothers tend to point to the teenagers as the most vulnerable to a parents' absence, suggesting they are in the most need of guidance. When asked if they felt that rotation schedules had a negative impact on children, 51% of miners/harvesters, 42% of families of miners, and 59% of non-miner families in the impacted communities felt that there was a negative impact (Bureau of Statistics 2005b, 30). While 55% of miners felt there was difficulty in securing childcare, only 33% of the families of miners felt this was the case (Bureau of Statistics 2005b, 30). It is in interviews with families that the

vulnerability of youth emerges; parents suggest that there are few activities for children in remote communities<sup>81</sup>, no attachment to other generations, and a lack of knowledge of their identity. One elder suggested that youth are “TV dependent” (Interview, February 5, 2005), while a leader spoke of commercials having more impact on children than elders and parents (Focus group with Yellowknives Dene, March 22, 2005). Teachers suggest that children in trauma, in family situations where parents are addicted or unable to parent effectively, are “two years behind the others” in school (Focus group with Yellowknives Dene, January 31, 2005). These children tend to desperately need attention. Those youth in Yellowknife who are in trauma run the risk of ending up on the Gold Range (the local bar), or getting lost and leaving high school. A school teacher spoke of the how change has impacted on youth:

All the boys started quitting (school) at that age from about the age of 14 kids would quit. And they were all skinny and strong and they were all, when they quit they weren't sitting at home watching TV, they were out in the bush with guns, shooting rabbits or snaring rabbits or chickens or setting nets, cutting wood, everybody had wood stoves in those days, so collecting wood was a huge task and a very important task and those kids, I often found those boys difficult to deal with. They were difficult in school but yet outside of school they were very respectful and really neat people. And if you ever met them on the land they were entirely different. Today they don't have that discipline that you know, you still have kids, that aren't successful in school and don't want to be there, so in many ways, it hasn't changed much, but the young men from 10 or 15 years ago had a real discipline that was imposed on them by hard work at home.” (Interview with Tâîchô social services provider, February 5, 2005)

The above quote depicts the long term change that has occurred in the past fifty years as the communities have settled. The youth often have few role models, are surrounded by peers who are addicted (Interview with Tâîchô leader, February 25, 2005), and many are in families in trauma. One leader reported that his family moved away from Bechokö because they “couldn't think of one person in my son's high school that wasn't addicted” (Interview with Tâîchô leader, February 1, 2005).

Elders feel a strong responsibility to talk with the young people to teach them about how to live well. An elder suggested that he worried about newly vulnerable youth, “those without anyone with authority over them, those that swagger about with newly earned money and get lost in the culture of drinking” (Interview, May 25, 2006). They report they are concerned for these young people who aren't receiving the proper knowledge to live well. Skills, roles and relationships, as described by elders, help “the mind stay strong”. The implication from the

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<sup>81</sup> One Tâîchô leader always responds to this complaint about community activities by simply looking out a window.

elders is that those with identity, who are able to navigate to two worlds, will remain strong in mind and health. These people will be strong like two people. The Tâîchô vision, articulated in the Addictions Strategy provides the long term view of change:

Finally, the vision of our people is a realistic one. They know that addictions are like powerful viruses that invade the body, weaken our families and communities, and sap our strength as a people. These viruses will not simply go away. They will have to be struggled against and overcome. And so, each community will have trained people and support groups to help those suffering from addictions. They will organize education programs, provide family counseling, take people out on the land for healing programs, and be there to greet and work with everyone returning from treatment centres. As a people, we will have our own regional treatment centres serving our own people in our own language.

It will not be easy for our people to make their vision a reality. But it is possible. For thousands of years we, as Dogrib people, have overcome problems and difficulties. This latest problem, the challenge of overcoming addictions in our families and communities, is our greatest challenge. But we will overcome them. We must overcome them – for the sake of our children. (Zoe-Martin 2007, 58)

This long term view reminds the reader of history, suggesting resilience will emerge for these youth.

## 7.6 From domination to self determination

This transitional time, involving a shift from a land based economy to a mixed economy with more dependence on wage labour, has been characterized as a move from a “Time of Darkness” to an era of greater autonomy (DDBE 1991). This transition is the subject of conscious reflection by elders and leaders, working together to reflect on history and modernity as they revisit old stories and create new ones. The elders have focused on making new paths, building bridging philosophies that orient young listeners in the transitional time. Bourdieu (1977) suggests the dominant society will seek to reproduce their *habitus* through pedagogy, so that the possibility for Dene people to maintain their own *habitus* in this industrialized society appears limited. The agency of workers who are educated through the dominant society might seem constrained in this model of cultural practice. However, there is more fluidity than this, as Lin explains: “Bourdieu (1977) does not seem to rule out purposive action or choices of behaviour either. In his analysis of social behaviour and interactions (practice), he clearly sees a calculation (strategizing) between opportunities and constraints, and between what is desirable (subjective expectation) and what is probable (objective probability)” (Lin 2001, 16). Brubacher (2002) found that the people of Arctic Bay were sheltered from negative effects on social capital

from the Nanisivik by virtue of their distance from the dominant society. This distance from Ekati and Diavik may also protect the Dene, so that the strength of social networks can protect people from full incorporation of the dominant society *habitus*. There is more to it than distance, though (for this would leave all urban aboriginal communities doomed to incorporation). Another factor that shields the communities from incorporation is distinct visions and strong leadership. This is perhaps most powerfully illustrated through the collective undertaking to understand one of the last speeches of the late and highly respected elder: Chief Jimmy Bruneau. This section characterizes the speech, as discussed in a book published after a community meeting specifically held to understand the speech (DDBE 1991).

Chief Jimmy Bruneau articulated this vision at a time when the communities regained control over the education of their children. He spoke at the opening of the first school in Rae-Edzo, at a time when the five communities<sup>82</sup> gained authority over education. The five “Dogrib communities of Dettah, Lac la Martre, Rae-Edzo, Rae Lakes and Snare Lake (were) recognized by the government as a Divisional Board of Education...Significant change was desired by the community councils and a process began to redefine the schools to truly serve the wishes of Dogrib parents for the future of their children and their future as a people” (DDBE 1991, 1). Seventeen years later, the mission for the Board of Education was the subject of discussion. Significantly, this meeting took place in the barren lands at the site where the historic leaders Edzo and Akaitcho made peace. The staff and elders met to “look critically where the Dogrib people had come from and where they were going” (Martin in DDBE 1991, 1). The words of Chief Jimmy Bruneau were replayed for the meeting and two days of discussion ensued to develop a mission for the first wholly aboriginal Board of Education in Canada. The following reflection precedes the speech as it is written in the transcription of the meeting:

Chief Jimmy Bruneau was very ill on the occasion of the school opening and did not speak for long. His words were related to other things he had said to his people in the past. To those who knew him, and heard him speak, his speech was meaningful because of the context in which they were able to place his words. This brief transcript is taken both from the video and from a note of the event written by Father Jean Pochat. (Editor’s note, DDBE 1991, 109).

Chief Jimmy Bruneau: I have asked for this school and this school has been built according to my words. I have listened to my elders, elders such as Mōnfwî. I have listened to the way they talked. I have listened to their ways and now I am speaking according to their ways. I have asked for this school to be built on my land, and that school will be run by my people, and my people will work at that

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<sup>82</sup> Dettah was included in the group of communities working together. This was during the time before the split of the Yellowknives Dene from the Tâîchô people.



school and our children will learn both ways, our ways and the whiteman's way.  
For now I have been sick and I am very weak so that I cannot talk for long.  
Nobody said I could not speak my own mind and make my own decisions.  
(DDBE 1991, 109)

This last phrase, “nobody said I could not speak my own mind” represents a key theme. In their discussion of Bruneau's speech, elders emphasized that their education and teaching occurs in stories, through meeting and in discussion. “We are all like teachers. We pick up some words from others who speak. If we think about it, we pick it up and learn it” (Tobie in DDBE 1991, 99). The Chief refers in the last phrase to a key value, which is the autonomy and independence: each person must think for themselves. Even as stories and discussions are powerful guides to each individual, the Chief reminded everyone that each person makes their own decision, just as he made his own. One elder, Louis Whane, reflected on the response of Chief Bruneau to the offer of retirement funds from the government, even after he had worked as a Chief for almost 30 years. According to Louis Whane, the Chief said: “if you fix-up the papers for me then as far as the government is concerned I will be nothing to them. They will talk ‘down’ to me” (DDBE 1991, 79). This autonomy is referred to in a few instances by the same elder, Louis Whane:

I live in Snare Lake and I haven't seen anybody go out by boat to check nets.  
Some of them, those who do think for themselves, maybe they do have nets set out there. What has occurred in Fort Rae, has also happened all over. Now it's all the whiteman's way. When our kids get up in the mornings, they open up cans, make toast and that's it... You should live like Chief Bruneau on this land. But you ridicule and tease each other and the government out there in Ottawa is really happy about it. You keep replacing each other and they are really happy about it. The government wants to change you around as if you're in your sleep and if that happens and it goes across the big river (Mackenzie River) and if it reaches Fort Rae, you will be poor. He told us not to place anybody who understood English ahead of us to represent us.” (DDBE 1991, 80)

This individual autonomy and respect for the right of other people to make their own decisions is also what has been sought in negotiation with the federal government. Strength, self determination, and independence is reflected on in stories of how people lived their lives in the past, most often discussed through the lens of on the land activities.

The other main theme in Chief Jimmy Bruneau's speech concerned education: “our children will learn both ways, our ways and the whiteman's way”. Many elders spoke on the meaning of this phrase.

We have to consider all these different ways. The government is not going to come and tell us what to do. We who are the elders now, have worked well with our relatives. We know the land, but if our culture is not there for the babies now growing up, and if there are just the whiteman's ways left for them, they will be

poor. I am thinking like this because my mind was strong concerning it.” (Harry Simpson in DDBE 1991, 44)

If we worked according to his word we would be like two groups of people. One person would be like two person. One, knowing everything of the white culture and one, knowing of our ancestors’ culture. That person would become very strong for if we know everything like two persons, though we are only one person, there may be no one greater than us. It seems it could be like that, but because we don’t believe in ourselves, it is not. (Elizabeth Mackenzie in DDBE 1991, 44)

So if the children were taught in both cultures equally, they would be strong like two people. We are the Dene, it is a shame to have to teach our children our language but we have to. That’s what I think. What the Old Chief talked about is for some good time in the future. Today he didn’t talk about everything, but it is good to reflect upon what he did say. He spoke as though we are only one person, we can be two persons. He looked far ahead for us, and we gain from it.” (Elizabeth Mackenzie in DDBE 1991, 44)

By listening to what was said at past school board meetings, and to what the Old Chief said, we realize our present situation. It’s like we have been asleep, and upon awakening, hearing the words again today. Take ourselves for example. We who are sitting here are not educated by books. If we are told to go to the Dene culture or the English culture, which one are we going to go with? We, the elders are going to go to the Dene culture, not the English culture, because we don’t understand it. We don’t want our children in the future to be like us. We want them to work the same in both cultures. If they do, they will work well towards the decision that was made long ago.” (Johnny Eyakfwo in DDBE 1991, 44)

This two day evaluation of the Chief’s speech built a bridge from the past to the future, providing a vision for the education of Tâîchô youth. As each elder mulled over the Chief’s words, a new meaning came of it. Harry Simpson suggested that without knowledge of their ancestors there would be a poverty of the spirit, while Elizabeth Mackenzie suggested the Chief’s vision for the future meant they had to be “strong like two people”, and Johnny Eyakfwo suggested that this path of understanding both cultures will help young people, and that it will make them even stronger than the elders have been. This phrase, “strong like two people” has since become a guiding metaphor for the Tâîchô people.

The phrase is often used in the context of mining to suggest the Dene harvester/miner has to be strong at home, with their values and principles intact, as well as competent in the rules and values of the occupational site. This work in mining restores a sense of self esteem for men, but the nature of the work is often characterized as hard, repetitive labour. While mining restores a productive role to an individual, it does not serve to continue the core skills and values that

elders speak of. When elders speak of being out on the land, they talk of how the mind is strong out on the land: hard work, discipline, and the practice of skill all reinforce this strength. Mining involves hard work, but elders worry that a miner neglects Dene skills and practices in the mine.

Elders give constant guidance on how to shift into this new economy, so that they young people can be strong. Many people speak of how there is no meaning to mining as an occupation, how it is mechanical and it makes you “lose your soul” (Interview with Tâîchô leader, January 21, 2005). As they reflect on mining as an occupation, the central concerns for elders are the attainment of education and skills, but they also remind youth to live well and practice on-the-land skills. Elizabeth Mackenzie, a Tâîchô elder, spoke of the skills every miner will need to live well after the mines close:

If they are out of job, they can catch fish and sell it and the wife can do a good job of making fish and drying fish. And men that can go hunting and trapping and (women can make) moccasins and sell caribou hide clothing. That is how they are going to live well. Mother and Dad, if they have no skill for it, there is no way they are going to make money or get by. They will be like in the old days how to make money, they have to have skills, like sew, and do hides and fishing and trapping in order to live well. (Interview, March 15, 2005)

The skills required for learning within these two cultures are distinct. Observation and practice on the land are expected of a harvester in order to understand and learn new skills; in the mining industry, one learns through verbal instruction or through reading. Out on the land, there are independent skills and roles for men and women which complement each other in the attainment of a goal. Third, these skills must be learned through and in relationship with others, in particular in relationship to the land itself (Ingold 2000; Legat 2007). When a miner/harvester is away from the family, s/he focuses on one set of skills and a different network of relationships. This life, lived in “two worlds”, lends itself to “soul searching”:

A lot of it has to do with soul searching. Because they know what their activity was, but they end up spending half their lives in this other environment where there is no real end product. It is more of an individualistic activity. (Interview with Tâîchô leader, July 10, 2005)

Elders reported they are worried that miners/harvesters may lose their land based skills, unless their ties, relationships, skills and values at home and out on the land are continually practiced. One leader spoke of this decade as the “soul searching decade” (Interview, July 10, 2005), because “life is getting too fast” and people are not out on the land. “There are no campfires out there”, was the concern of an elder (Interview, January 12, 2005). Language teachers note that there seems to be no initiative for people to learn Dogrib or Chipewyan

because the reliable fluent speakers are no longer in the communities; rather they are in the mines, where they primarily converse in English for 12 hours of their day. With fewer role models, there is little incentive for youth to learn the language, particularly when economic rewards are so high for anyone with a grade 12 education in the mines (Focus group with YKDFN social service providers, January 25, 2005). An elder, Elizabeth Mackenzie, spoke of how the wage economy can interfere with living well within the family:

Well how can they (youth) listen? Their parents don't take them out camping. They don't go out on the land, hunting or fishing or camping." Families when they go out on the land usually they take the whole family with them. You know, they will teach them bush life skills; that is not what their parents are doing these days. So how can a young person survive and live on the land, and how can they listen to the parents? They don't do that no more. It is like a different modern world. All they live for is job. If they are without it, they are just sitting home quiet as a mouse. (Interview, March 15, 2005)

Mrs. Mackenzie describes an individual who is "strong like one person", learning the skills and values of only culture. Further, she suggests that the relationship of youth to parents will only be strong if they are taught out on the land; they will not listen and understand their roles unless they are taught *by* and on the land.

Through this collective interpretation, the elders have made new meaning during a time of transition. When ever this phrase is used, the speaker invokes the memory of the visionary leader who saw into the future, reminds the listener of their responsibility to educate each other with their own words, and to use their own minds to make decisions. The phrase evokes the site of this now famous historic meeting (in such a surprisingly important space), reminds them of these leaders, and guides the actions and moral choices of the listener. When it is heard, it is a corrective to any weakness that is perceived. The message reinforces the need to learn through the education system of the dominant society and from the elders. The phrase affirms the choice of the harvester/miner to work in the mines and compels them to spend time within their family networks learning and reinforcing their own identity. It is a transformative phrase, as it urges each person to tread these two paths in order to be strong. Through this meeting and with the elaboration of this metaphor, the elders have created a mythical hero whom everyone can emulate. The phrase pierces deeply into the person, reminding them of their own identity even as they participate in the mining economy.

## 7.7 “A little bit of something in the darkness...”

Long before the white people came, our people used to teach each other. We taught the children by telling them stories and having them watch the adults work. Those ways are no longer visible and it is like a darkness has come over us. Our ways are no longer there, and our children learn the wrong way. When that old man (Chief Jimmy Bruneau) talked for us, maybe he knew this would happen and that is why he spoke the way he did. It is as if he put a little bit of something in that darkness. It is as if he put the foundation there for us. We have used his words to teach each other and now if we have a strong foundation, it will be good to help each other build on it. (Zoe in DDBE 1991, 44)

Other academics (Brubacher 2002; Bury 2002) have turned their attention to whether mining increases or decreases social capital, identifying how the onset of mining can influence these investments in human relationships that yield expected returns. Bury (2002) suggested unequal hiring practices caused inter-household tension, paternalism stole active leaders out to the mines, and differential access to programs and funds caused inter-community tension. Some of these practices are consistent in every mine: there is increased tension in Dene families as one person is employed (and another is not); many leaders have self-selected out of community leadership positions to gain the wages of the mines, and the communities have much conflict due to the divisions of the impacted from non-impacted communities. At the same time, members of each impacted community meet constantly in new forums of exchange (in environmental and socio-economic monitoring boards), greet each other at the mines, and new leaders emerge from surprising places, as the former leaders take up positions in the mines. This analysis sheds light on the audit or measurement of social capital (something not completed in this research). There is potential for the academic categories to direct the eye in the field, yielding documentation of net loss or net gain partially constructed by the observer. The finding of Brubacher (2002) that distance from the mine mitigated in part impact on social capital is consistent with this work. However, the vision of elders provides powerful reinforcement of identity, through the generation of meaning in a time of transition, as well.

The model of rotation mining provides a niche for Dene people in their territory to gain skills, education and knowledge. According to Bourdieu (1977), culture, values and language are at stake in this integration, as individuals become indoctrinated through the pedagogy of the dominant society. Yet these Tâîchô elders have collectively defined a vision that echoes through the years since it was first articulated in 1971. This phrase—“strong like two people”—just like the Apache’s stories (Basso 1996) is aimed at the listener. It is an invocation to move

from domination to self determination. Its utterance gives form to a path to transform feelings of anxiety and desperation borne out of the experience of colonization. The phrase gives form to a vision borne out of this time of transition, reminding a mine worker to speak their own language while they are in the mine, and encouraging spouses of mine workers to remember their networks of connections, allowing them to rely on extended kin as well as programs and services of the region. As the elders speak it, they imagine an archetype or a hero who is able to step lightly between these ways of learning. It is an expression of hope as these communities emerge from this self described “Time of Darkness”, guided by the “little bit of something” in the darkness put there by the elder. Every repetition of it opens the possibility of intentionality and agency in this transitional time.

## 8 RESILIENCE IN THE MINING ECONOMY

The expectation of reciprocal relations continues to give shape to rules, practices and values of the Dene, setting the foundation for the experience of the mining economy in the Mackenzie Valley. New relationships are built on the foundations of the old, many of which have created the conditions of greater vulnerability. The “Time of Darkness” arose because of the unequal relationships of settler society to the Dene, creating conditions of vulnerability. However, the relationships that individuals hold to neighbours, to kin, and to the land enable them to weather hardship and crises. New relationships to Treaty mining companies hold the possibility of providing funds and resources to strengthen networks and enhance social capital. Through the mining agreements, miners/harvesters are able to seek employment, funds are gained to support youth in the quest to become “strong like two people”, or harvesters are enabled to continue to work in the trapping economy through funds used from Impact and Benefit Agreements. The latest series of agreements with Treaty mining companies re-enact and revitalize past agreements, in particular by providing the funds that have been devoted to protect the well-being of the land-based economy. However, unique risks are engaged as the market economy, and in particular the mining economy, becomes a key source of family and community income.

While theories of vulnerability have generally been used to explain the impact of everything from natural disasters, to aggressive capital led development (such as mining), and climate change (Thompson 2005), a lens that people themselves prefer is of resilience. Cultural resilience, in the case of the Dene, also lies in the continued practice of reciprocal exchange as enshrined in historic and current agreements.<sup>83</sup> Agreements enshrine principles of respect, autonomy and co-existence; these principles, according to Bourdieu (1977, 81), are taught through the “earliest upbringing, and they are the precondition not only for the “co-ordination of practices but also for practices of coordination.” Through the continual enactment and teaching of these principles, the social group is able to protect members of the group. This chapter explores the struggles by the Tâîchô and the Yellowknives Dene to become and remain resilient in the face of great change. As they have chosen discrete paths to political self

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<sup>83</sup> The person teaching money management might see the young man written of in the last chapter who hyper-extended his credit to pay for a number of family mortgages and paid for vehicles for extended kin as the least resilient. The Dene might see this person as the most resilient because he continues to share in order to ensure the group’s survival in a way that is consistent with past agreements and practices.

determination, their struggles and successes are now differentiated, leaving the Yellowknives Dene uniquely vulnerable to crisis.

## 8.1 Defining vulnerability and resilience in the Mackenzie Valley

Vulnerability and resilience studies offer a lens that allows users to observe multiple scales of effects, seek institutional factors that affect inequity, and consider the factors that limit 'development' from equally benefiting all, such as poverty or gender. The theoretical framework has often been employed to analyze stark situations, such as the crisis of the Ogoni people in Nigeria (Watts and Bohle 1993) or extreme land degradation and hunger (Peet and Watts 1996). The situation in the Mackenzie Valley is not so dire, but this approach is helpful in disaggregating the unequal experience of the rewards of the mineral economy. Qualitative and quantitative approaches are employed in this multidisciplinary field that hosts publications on health, war, poverty, starvation, agriculture and global climate change, among others. To date, the application of this framework to the mining context has been limited, with disparate articles (Adger 2000; Kulig 2000). Vulnerability studies allow researchers investigate the impact of crisis on communities through the lens of political economy, asking questions such as: What can be done to reduce vulnerability to change? And, how can we build more resilient and adaptive communities? The framework of resilience is uniquely situated to apprehend strengths and assets in communities.

Unlike models based on biological assumptions of balance, work in vulnerability assumes that it is not the case that communities and systems tend towards balance. Oppression and dysfunction are too evident to lead one to believe there is a perfect balance toward which communities tend. This model allows the analyst to understand how communities can actively alter the way that benefits are distributed and risks are experienced. The framework of vulnerability and resilience help to identify how conditions of vulnerability can be so different in regions close to mines. This model, flawed as it is in the framing of weakness, should be preserved because of the forthright focus on threats and risks that a resilience framework neglects. Bound up together, these two concepts are helpful in explaining how some people thrive on the opportunities that mines afford, while others falter.

Three distinctive processes are hypothesized by Watts and Bohle (1993), two of the leading theorists in this area, to define the how vulnerability is experienced: empowerment, entitlements and the political economy. When these three processes are considered collectively, the reasons for why one group experiences greater vulnerability can be grasped. Watts and Bohle



(1993) argue that these causal powers can shed light on the experience and cause of famine as short-term changes occur. The processes—empowerment, entitlements, and political economy—are also helpful in explaining the unique situations of the Tâîchô and the Yellowknives Dene. However, these concepts must be described.

Empowerment is influenced through the control a group has over lands and services, the ability to control the social security systems (or the relationships that people invest in and expect returns from, known as social capital), and the collective ability to continue to express collective values as more people engage in the wage based economy (cultural capital). Entitlements, for the Dene, continue to be secured through wages and engagement in the land based economy. More broadly, entitlements can include capability, rights and access to social security, and informal social security systems (Watts and Bohle 1993), elements of which are controlled by the Territorial government. The political economy can impact on what resources are available to support one economy or way of life. For example, the Territorial government makes funds available to support diamond cutting and polishing and the federal government provides millions of dollars to support education and training for the mining industry. The economy of the extractive industries is a development priority to the settler government, far more so than the land-based economy. Thus, settler society promises resources and options to miners, rather than harvesters in the land based economy. Wage labour, and the values it promotes, can become a source of tension within Dene society (Asch 1986) (as described in the last chapter), consuming the time of miners/harvesters, decreasing the numbers of full-time harvesters and promoting values of individualism that undermine the collectivism of Dene values (Nadasdy 2003).

These three processes interact and have unique outcomes for the Tâîchô and Yellowknives Dene, given their specific histories. From the time of the “Representative” (identified in the Tâîchô Cosmology), northern aboriginal populations have had fairly limited engagement with the wage economy, as illustrated by high levels of unemployment, participation in seasonal jobs, or in administrative and service employment (GNWT 2005). The constitutional recognition of aboriginal rights, and ensuing agreements among mining companies and aboriginal parties, set the framework for people to have the political power to negotiate agreements guaranteeing group entitlements. The mines have opened the doors to northern aboriginal labour, providing high market exposure. The Tâîchô have many people working in the diamond mines and many businesses exclusively dependent on the mining industry, along with a situation of high empowerment (given the passage of Bill C-14). This control affords the Tâîchô a low level of vulnerability, as the Tâîchô now control lands in the region and the

TCSA has control over the delivery of social services, education and health. Even in a time of crisis, the Tâîchô control resources and services and promote the land based economy. The Yellowknives Dene continues to negotiate with the settler government through the Akaitcho Dene First Nation for control over lands and governance, and have limited access and control over services. With a slightly lower market exposure (given that fewer members employed at the mines), but no achievement of political rights, the Yellowknives are distinctively vulnerable.

Vulnerable to what? A number of crisis or shocks could impact on these two groups. At least 400 Dene people are directly employed by the diamond mines, and multiple local businesses are directly dependent for their business success on the mines. Increased market exposure also means increased risk if there are market fluctuations. Teck Cominco recently stalled the construction of the Galore Creek mine in British Columbia due to the increasing value of the Canadian dollar, and Tahera Diamond Corporation (in Nunavut) filed for protection from creditors and suspended mining operations because of start up problems and less robust resources. These types of economic factors can have dramatic impacts on individual employment. Other factors could trigger a crisis: climate change may soon force the relocation of the winter road. As well, the number of days that the road is open is decreasing, which may cause cost overruns as the mines are forced to airlift critical supplies to the mines.

These mines also operate in a region where communities are uniquely dependent on caribou herds. This new dependence on mining may interfere with the health of caribou herds through the cumulative impact of mining and oil and gas development in the region, among other factors (such as climate change). Each of the six Dene communities is highly dependent on the land: Bechokö is connected by road to Yellowknife and residents consume less country food than the remote communities. Households in Bechokö report that 38% of their food is from the land (GNWT 2006). In contrast, 62% of households in Wekweètî report consuming meat or fish from the land (GNWT 2006). Recently, the government released surveys showing the Bathurst caribou herd has been in steep decline, dropping more than 70 per cent over the last 20 years (GNWT-ENR 2006). These caribou, primarily in the Tâîchô region of Whatî and Gamètî in the winter months, are relied on for subsistence harvesting as well as for game hunting. All of the caribou herds in the NWT are estimated to generate a harvest value of \$17 million dollars (GNWT-ENR 2006). While harvesting certainly impacts on the size of a herd, cumulative impacts of industrial activity is also suspected to influence herd health:

The impact of mineral exploration on barren-ground caribou ranges has been a concern since the 1970s. Until the early 1990s, caribou protection measures were

implemented for two herds to reduce impacts to caribou during spring migration, calving and post-calving. Interest in the potential impacts of non-renewable resource development grew in the 1990s with a surge in mining activities on the Bathurst herd's range. Since then, two diamond mines have been built on spring migration and post calving/summer ranges and two diamond mines are under construction. The diamond mining companies monitor caribou abundance and behavior in the vicinity of the diamond mines, however uncertainties remain about the cumulative effects of the mines on the caribou. (GNWT-ENR 2006, 8)

Mitigation measures are in place by all of the diamond mining companies for caribou management—indeed there are multiple management boards developed to monitor the health and numbers of the herds. Still, the health and management of these herds has become a crucial policy issue, and the herds are arguably much more studied with the advent of the diamond mines. These two crises—either the closure of a mine or the decreased health or viability of caribou herds—could dramatically influence the well-being of both of these groups. Yet each group is differently able to respond a crisis, and the difference in their ability to respond can be explained through reference to these three processes that drive vulnerability.

## 8.2 Resilience of the Tâîchô

The Tâîchô have control over lands and resources since the 2005 passage of the land claim and self government agreement (*Bill C-14*). *Bill C-14* is designed to achieve the objective of Section 35 of the Constitution Act. The Tâîchô began to negotiate a comprehensive claim after the 1990 collapse of the Dene-Metis Accord and their Land Claim and Self Government Agreement came into force on August 4, 2005. Passage of a land freeze law (guaranteeing no new allocation of mineral or land rights until a land use plan is completed) guarantees no new mining operations will occur until a land use plan is achieved. The Tâîchô Agreement had strong support from the population, evidenced through the 90 percent of the population that voted in favour of it. It is now the first modern land claim agreement to be signed and reviewed twice in public forums, as discussed by Zoe (2005):

The Tâîchô agreement is the only agreement that was initialed twice in Canada. It has never been done before. Normally, you initial a final agreement for the purposes of ratification. In this case, we initialed the first time for the purposes of opening it up for public consultation. This gave us a real insight into the constructive comments that were made and we used that opportunity to clarify some of the grey areas that people thought required clarification. If anything, it has improved the understanding of the agreement ... We were the first to ratify the agreement in June 2003 with over 90 per cent of those who voted in favour of it.

The comprehensive claim now allows participation within a co-management structure to control permitting through an environmental management process, administer 39,000 km<sup>2</sup> (19% of their traditional territory) and manage health and social services delivery. The Tâîchô own the harvesting rights to the trees, forest and plants of this region, have the exclusive right to take and use waters flowing through the lands, and own the minerals under the lands (*Bill C-14*).

Unity of the population and the leadership has been cited two key factors behind the achievement of this agreement by the Tâîchô. Elders established a team of four visionaries to take the claim to Ottawa, and unlike in many other claim agreements, these four men were Tâîchô citizens. Supported by non-aboriginal lawyers, they and a strong advisory team of elders pursued their claim. These men were charged with achieving the final agreement and were continuously present through the process. The support for the agreement and solidarity behind the leadership may have been achieved in part through the continuous consultation that Tâîchô leadership practiced. Twice, the leadership took the agreement to the communities for ratification, and twice the agreement was supported. This common goal and vision united all Tâîchô behind their leadership.

One of the key components to achieve resolution of this agreement lay in the settlement of overlap issues with neighbours. As a speaker to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Minister Andy Scott commented:

To further clarify boundary issues, the Tâîchô negotiated separate accords with ... aboriginal neighbours prior to finalizing the agreement. These accords with the Sahtu, Dene and Métis, the Gwich'in, Dehcho and Akaitcho are further examples of the careful and collaborative approach adopted by the Tâîchô. I'm convinced that this approach can also deliver significant benefits to all Canadians.  
(November 16, 2004)

Although boundaries were set with neighbours on all sides of the claim, boundary development ran against the Tâîchô vision of coexistence established between people, as suggested by John B. Zoe.

Aboriginal peoples in the north rely on the caribou and must access them for survival. There are not now and never have there been boundaries between our traditional use areas. Boundaries would have made life impossible for survival of all of the peoples. Flexibility has been the key to our survival because it allows us to share the riches of the land. (Zoe 2002)

Conflict arose between the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and the Tâîchô over this boundary issue. Conflict and delays threatened to have three serious consequences for the Tâîchô: loss of faith and hopefulness, ongoing and increasing interest payments, and continued

loss of bargaining power with mining companies, all of which were discussed by the Chief Negotiator during the court case that ultimately served to resolve the conflict:

Many of our people have made recent commitments to obtaining their education, on the strength of their faith in a better future, and that faith has been generated by the land claims negotiation process. If the Agreement is disrupted, seriously delayed or undermined, we will have failed those people - and their faith in the future may be lost. We cannot risk the tragic consequences that would inevitably flow from a resurgence of despair among our people ... We also face economic losses if the process is delayed. For example, like other Aboriginal peoples, the Dogrib have had to borrow very large sums of money from the Government of Canada, to finance our land claims negotiations. Since the conclusion of our AIP (Agreement in Principle), interest on that loan has been accruing at the rate of 6% per year. Therefore, for every month that the Tâîchô Agreement is delayed, interest costs for the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council would be over \$50,000. A delay in completing the Tâîchô Agreement will have the consequence of keeping the Dogrib at risk from these projects, without any legal force to insist upon such negotiations, which would be aimed at limiting adverse impacts and obtaining economic and social benefits. (Zoe 2002)

Overlap issues were resolved, but not without great strife among the neighbours, with young men fighting when the issue was raised in the streets of Yellowknife and Rae-Edzo, and estrangement of people who worked together to deliver programs through a jointly defined service system (the Dogrib Divisional Board of Education). When the Tâîchô became self governing and finalized the agreements with the settler government, the responsibilities of self government were devolved, as summarized in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Tâîchô Comprehensive Land Claim and Self Government Agreement

AREA	RIGHTS
Land	Subsurface and surface rights to 39,000 km <sup>2</sup>
Economic benefits	\$152 million over 15 years; for the first seven years, compensation funds will be used to pay off negotiation loans (\$27 million)
Representation	Public government—all people living in the Tâîchô lands will be represented through the Tâîchô Government. Each Tâîchô community will establish a Tâîchô Community Government.
Health, social services and education	Through an intergovernmental services agreement, the Tâîchô will provide “the management, administration and delivery of health, education, welfare, family or other social programs and services” ( <i>Tâîchô Agreement</i> ). The Tâîchô Community Services Agency is responsible for delivery of all services to citizens under an integrated authority.
People represented	3500 Tâîchô and 250 non-aboriginal people. 50% of the seats on community councils will be open to non- Tâîchô candidates; chief and head of each community government must be Tâîchô.
Central government powers	The Tâîchô Government can enact laws on: the operation of the Tâîchô Government; the management of rights provided by the Agreement, including harvesting rights; the use and protection of Tâîchô lands and resources; the harvesting of fish, and which citizens can harvest fish; protection of language, cultural beliefs and practices; the Tâîchô Government’s use of Tâîchô language; the practice of traditional medicine; heritage resources and community lands; the training of citizens; social assistance; child and family services; guardianship; adoptions; primary education; pre-school and child development programs; wills; the certification of teachers of Tâîchô language and culture; marriages; alternative dispute resolution for Tâîchô citizens, and taxation of Tâîchô citizens on Tâîchô lands or in communities.
Community government	The Tâîchô community governments will have the power to enact laws on management of community lands; public order, peace and safety, housing, by-law enforcement, intoxicants, local transportation, business licensing and regulation, gaming and recreational contests, other matters, including taxation.
Ratification	84% of the Tâîchô eligible ratified the agreement of 93% of eligible voters who voted
Conflict of laws	In case of conflict NWT/ Tâîchô, Tâîchô laws apply. In case of federal/ Tâîchô conflict, federal laws apply.
Rights	Non-assertion of inherent rights, as opposed to treaty right extinguishment. Non-assertion means the Tâîchô won’t assert rights outside of this Agreement. May renegotiate agreements if new issues or rights options surface.
Boards	Resource co-management through the Wekeezhii Land and Water Board and Wekeezhii Renewable Resources Boards

The Tâîchô are now able to control resource development to a much greater degree, as a federal staff member suggests:

Now on their lands they've got total control, sub surface, and the other portions I think they maintain a significant, there's both provisions in the agreement I think and provisions in government policy that still lead to the potential for various types of arrangements in light of development proposals and I think they're stronger placed than ever to negotiate those because now they're fully recognized, fully up and running, government representing their people and will be able to represent their reasonable interests. (Interview, January 25, 2006)

The Tâîchô gives exclusive control over 19% of the traditional territory described by Mõnfwî in oral histories based on Treaty discussions. Lands and resources are now co-managed, which continues to allow the federal and territorial governments to assert control over key decisions.

A key driver of cultural resilience for the Tâîchô lies in their ability to define at a collective level the integrated delivery of systems of health, education and social services to the Tâîchô people. The social security systems derive from agreements with the Territorial government on the delivery of services to the communities. This unique model of service delivery was brought to fruition by the Tâîchô Intergovernmental Services Agreement (2005) signed by the Government of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Tâîchô Government. Established on the effective date of the new Tâîchô Government, August 4th, 2005, the new Agency is a transitional means of delivering public programs and services from the Government of the Northwest Territories as well as selected programs and services of the Tâîchô Government.

The Tâîchô Community Services Agency (TCSA) has been guided by elders through analysis of the Tâîchô Cosmology, as illustrated through the philosophy of "strong like two people" (DDBE 1991). This process of critical reflection with elders to guide service design and delivery has far reaching consequences for both the Tâîchô Government and the Tâîchô Community Services Agency. The method promises a tool that can be used to develop community programs and services that are true to the values of Tâîchô culture. The elaboration of core Tâîchô values from the cosmology has been completed with the goal of shaping modern policy, program and service delivery and organizational design.

The Tâîchô vision of culture and language permeates almost every area of governance and service delivery. A recent law, the 2006 *IBA/PA Implementation Budget Law*, provides an example of the potential of this Agreement to protect Tâîchô citizens in culturally meaningful

ways from stress or crisis. This law specifies that two thirds of the funds available from the three operating diamond mines be spent on cultural activities. Cultural activities so far include scholarships, cultural program development, coordinators, canoe trips, annual gatherings, graveyards, buildings, funerals, and heritage projects. Funds are available to harvesters who wish to work in the land based economy. That these funds are available suggests the possibility of renewal and continuity for harvesters in the land based economy. As long as these people continue to harvest, they will act as role models to the youth. This presence and livelihood possibility may buffer Tâîchô people from risk, reminding them constantly of skill and practice of the land based economy. With the IBA funds spent on culture and language programs, the potential to reinforce the “common code” of Tâîchô culture is afforded, so that new Tâîchô children are hearing stories of the Cosmology from their earliest upbringing. These young Tâîchô citizens may also be mastering the dialect, as the Tâîchô Government allocates funds to language programming, makes reading materials available in Tâîchô and develops a Tâîchô dictionary (DDBE 1996).

The Tâîchô are empowered to control the delivery of health, education and welfare services. While services in the past were a creation of the GNWT, the new agency is a creation of the land claim (Personal communication with CEO of TCSA, January 10, 2008). Programs designed locally tend to be quite different from the services delivered through Indian and Northern Affairs, as illustrated below:

At about this time of the year, at (Elizabeth Mackenzie Elementary School) in Rae-Edzo, the boys and girls are changing (puberty) and so, they are sent out on the land by themselves. They attend Puberty Camps. Things will change with them and so, they learn about the work that’s there for them. They learn about the work that will be there for the women and the men. So their minds will stay strong and they won’t be afraid, they are taught about the changes they will experience. One day, they will travel on the land alone, so they won’t be afraid of the land and so they won’t be afraid of the animals, we talk to them about these things. (Interview with Tâîchô elder, February 5, 2005)

This remark by the elder refers to the teaching that is done out on the land at critical junctures of a youth’s life. It is at puberty that a child is taught *out on the land* about the distinct domains and roles of women and men, and it is through this type of experience that the youth will have a strong mind, according to the elders. The TCSA has the funds, power and the leadership vision to develop local programs. The Tâîchô *Addictions Strategy* illustrates this possibility: after traveling to each of the Tâîchô communities, the words and impressions of Tâîchô youth set the tone for this strategy (Zoe-Martin 2007). The first 70 pages consist of the



carefully transcribed words of Tâîchô children as they reflect on the impacts of addictions. This respectful engagement with youth illustrates a capacity to listen to and define indigenous visions of recovery.

This agency continues to be financed through the GNWT, and thus budgetary approval must be sought, a measure that continues to constrain the agency. However, protection of language, culture and way of life are controlled through two clauses of the *Tâîchô Intergovernmental Services Agreement* (2003):

The Tâîchô Government, may, after consultation with government, establish the Tâîchô Plan to describe how Tâîchô language and culture and way of life of the Tâîchô First Nation are to be respected and promoted in relation to health, education, welfare, family and other social programs and services in Tâîchô communities or on Tâîchô lands.

If the Tâîchô Government is of the opinion that an action of government may pose a threat to the objectives described in the Tâîchô Plan, it shall notify government of its concerns and provide to government specific proposals as to how government can avoid the perceived threat. Government shall review with the Tâîchô Government its concerns and proposals.

The integrated delivery of services of health, education and social services through one agency has been recognized in 2007 by the United Nations with a Public Service Award. This award comes after the Tâîchô have managed the first aboriginal school board in Canada since 1989, and the third largest school board in the NWT.

This ability to control land use, develop indigenous services and influence education outcomes has had real impacts in the Tâîchô region. There are far more students attending the high schools, the participation rate is higher, and the graduation rates are much higher. As Tâîchô people take control of child welfare, the number of child apprehensions has dropped considerably (Personal communication with CEO of TCSA, January 10, 2008). There is a feeling of excitement and joy in the communities, as the outcomes of decisions that are made locally are felt personally. It is only through this ability to determine their own futures that the Tâîchô can make decisions that protect the land based economy and Tâîchô values, thereby protecting future generations.

### 8.3 Resilience for the Yellowknives Dene

Mining continues to undermine the resources and land base available to the Akaitcho Dene First Nation, because the ideology of development prevails over indigenous rights. There is

continued uncertainty and conflict in the region, and the speed at which this claim is negotiated and the issues which it settles will have outcomes for the group and each Akaitcho citizen. An elder suggested at a public meeting: “We have to get this land settled so we can go ahead. I know there is a lot of things happening on our land, but we can’t settle it because of our land claims and our Treaty” (Interview, July 23, 2005). In the meantime, progress towards an agreement is slow, with a Framework Agreement with Canada and the Northwest Territories signed in 2000, followed by an Interim Measures Agreement (2001). In 2005, a Protocol for land withdrawals<sup>84</sup> was signed.

Land that is critical to the Akaitcho Dene First Nation remains unprotected. However the communities show a remarkable ability to engage with the regulatory and co-management system. The Akaitcho Dene First Nation do not acknowledge the authority of the legal co-management structures that have been developed to manage the environment under federal law (*Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*) as a result of the Gwich’in and Sahtu Land Claims. However, even though they do not officially acknowledge this Board, this has not stopped the Yellowknives Dene from engaging successfully with the co-management organization: the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board. When diamond exploration was proposed in an area sacred to the Yellowknives Dene by New Shoshoni Ventures, active engagement with the Board led to the proposal being rejected by the Board, illustrated below:

Drybones Bay is a vitally important cultural and heritage area for the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN), North Slave Métis Alliance (NSMA), and Áutsel K’e Dene First Nation (LKDFN). It was the site of ongoing year round use by Aboriginal community, holds many burial sites and archaeological sites, and is used extensively today for hunting, trapping, and providing youth with cultural exposure to traditional activities and the land. (MVEIRB 2004, 1)

The federal Minister rejected the diamond exploration proposal on the grounds that the cultural impact could not be mitigated (MVEIRB 2004). In 2007, a proposal for uranium exploration in the Thelon basin was similarly opposed by the community of Áutsel K’e (a member of the Akaitcho Dene First Nation). The Review Board rejected this proposal for exploration on the grounds that the cultural impact of development could not be mitigated. These two rejected applications illustrate the remarkable ability of the Akaitcho Dene First Nation to engage in multiple forums, inclusive of Treaty Entitlement claims and co-management boards.

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<sup>84</sup> Land withdrawals ensure no further land dispositions are permitted in the areas identified by parties.

The Yellowknives Dene represents their interests and achieves protection of sacred areas at key times.

Yet proximity to Yellowknife complicates the co-existence of Yellowknives Dene citizens with settlers, as suggested by this miner/harvester:

A lot of our kids now have lost their bush skills and traditional skills. They can't survive in the bush without us. There are parents who try, (but they say): "we don't have lifejackets, not enough money. We can't do anything out on the land." There are so many people out there. Who are the squatters? They are GNWT people. They took our land from us. Now we can't even hunt and trap there. All of us want to go out still. You have to go away to get anywhere. I used to only have to go two portages. But now there are houses all over. (Interview with YKDFN leader, April 5, 2005)

This comment registers concern for the loss of critical skills that youth will need to live well, but also reflects on the ever increasing population pressure on resources. Each lake that is relatively close to the only two highways that travel away from town has many illegal squatters or weekenders from Yellowknife, as well as many legal cabins. Many of these weekenders live in the region respectfully, but members of the Yellowknives Dene often speak of poachers and the resulting pressure on caribou. Geographic proximity to a range of contaminated sites also leaves a mark on people's lands and imaginations, as evidenced by this intervention of a Yellowknives harvester/miner:

Giant mine, Con mine, lots of arsenic. Ptarmigan mine, Gordon Lake Came mine, Discovery mine, McKay Lake, Salomeda, Upper Roche mine, Rae rock mine, Tungsten, Narrow Island, Outpost Island mine, Beaulieu mine, Åutsel K'e mine: all these mines go into Great Slave Lake. Now the mines start again: BHP, Diavik, Snap Lake mine, Drybones Lake mine. Pretty soon we can't drink the water. We are scared. (Interview, July 23, 2005)

This harvester/miner named more than 15 mines that have impacted on the territory, many of which are historic and abandoned mines. The social pressure of living close to Yellowknife also causes impact, as people have easy access to addictive substances and activities.

The Yellowknives Dene has chosen to negotiate the relationship with the federal government, under the umbrella of the Akaitcho Dene First Nation, using the modified Treaty Entitlement approach which will allow the fulfillment of the terms of Treaty 8. According to one former Chief:

Our strong belief (is) in pursuing the treaty, our elders had given us the direction and we would pursue another process if it included the treaty and oral understanding of our people but our elders said no, we've got to keep that treaty, and when it was made, as long as the sun shines, the rivers flow, and the grass grows we have a treaty in place with the British Crown here. (Interview, November 8, 2005)

Strong statements are made of coexistence and the reasons for choosing Treaty Entitlement as a route are made clear, by this same leader:

I think there was a clear motion when Treaty 8 Tribal Council was formed that or the end of the Treaty 8 Tribal Council that the mandate was to go out and negotiate based on the oral understanding of our elders you know of the treaty that was negotiated in 1900 so on that basis it's implementing the Treaty as understood by the elders and it was kind of supported by a court case in 1973 called the Paulette Case where the elders made their testimony and eventually there was sufficient evidence saying that there wasn't giving up of any land. (Interview, November 8, 2005)

The Yellowknives Dene continue to live under a system of Territorial control of health, social services and education, and federal government control of access to land and mineral rights. The ability of the Yellowknives Dene to control outcomes in public health, education and social services is fractured into multiple domains. Budgets for social services are managed jointly for the urban community of Yellowknife and N'dilo, as well as for Dettah, Åutsel K'e and Deninu Kue. Dettah and N'dilo have access to the services of Yellowknife, affording excellent care possibilities, something remote communities do not have. However, only Dettah is recognized as a municipality, as N'dilo falls within the boundaries of Yellowknife. A Yellowknives Dene leader commented: "so Dettah has to split whatever pots of money they have with N'Dilo, and that leaves them short all the time" (Interview with Yellowknives manager, August 5, 2005). Still, spaces of freedom (Tully 2000) are found, as this Yellowknives Dene social service provider suggested:

They (adults who are miners) are in our ... language school. So it makes a difference in their life. It is called Dene Literacy. That is the most successful program so far that people like. They are able to read things, their Dogrib has increased because of knowing how to read and write. The other one is still in the future, but I think I would like to start it with teenagers. It will be a Dene Literacy, and actually it will be one of the highlights of teenagers' life. (Focus group, June 22, 2005)

The ability to develop Dene programs and initiatives exists, but every effort is piecemeal in the absence of integration of services and because of the stovepipe approach taken by the GNWT.

If people of the Yellowknives Dene become more entrenched in the mining wage economy, the possibility of stripping people of values of the past emerges. The implication for youth is reflected on by Yellowknives social service staff and elders:

Just the fact that there are a few people that have learned how to read and write (their own language)... You have to talk to these people yourself to get an understanding of how they feel inside now they know how to read and write their

language. Their language has improved and everything has improved in each area. And especially the communication with elders, and the knowledge they are getting from the elders. It is finally being passed down to the next generation. Right now it is stopping with the elders; it is not going any further. They are not able to talk to the young people. Even some people my age, they don't know the language at all, and they want to learn. But it is just not passed on. (Interview, June 22, 2005)

This leader reflects on communication between generations, and how it serves to pass on information critical to survival. The Yellowknives Dene encourage youth through use of IBA funds for scholarships for students, out on the land activities, and diversification of businesses. However, for the past few years there has been constant concern for the transparency of IBA fund usage.

#### 8.4 Crisis that may affect vulnerability

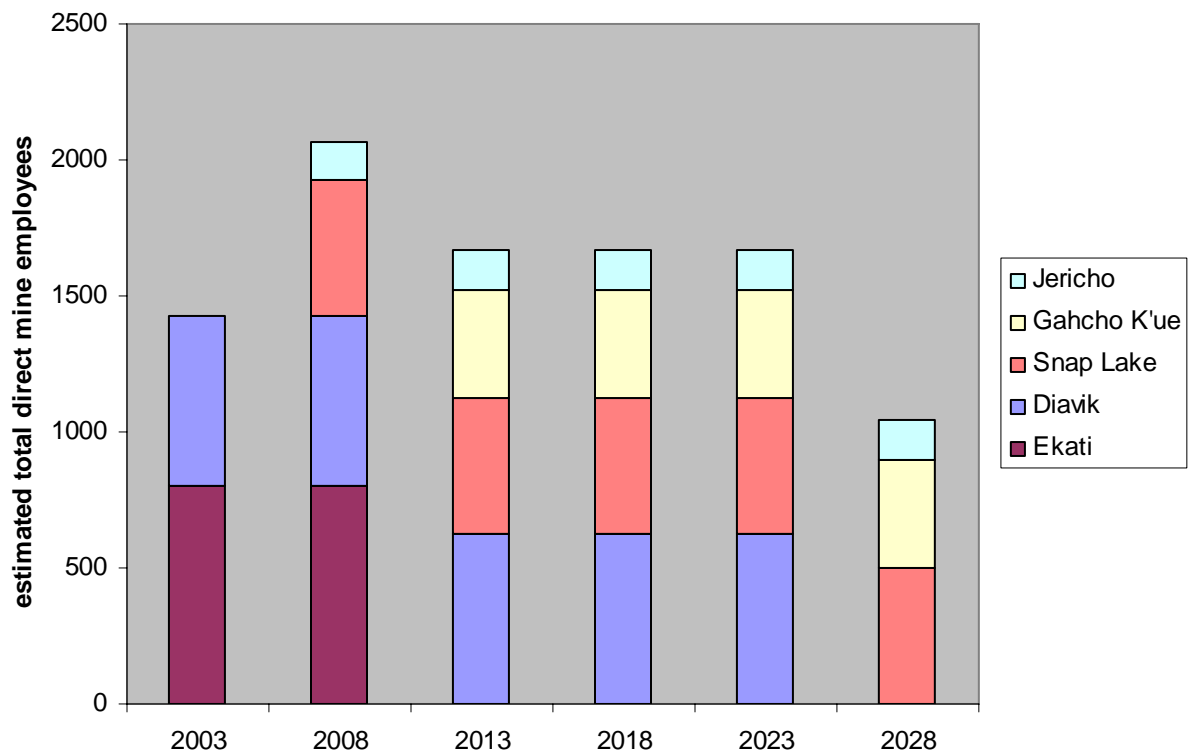
When labour forecasts for the future are considered, demand for key occupations in the minerals economy will continue until roughly 2028. Currently, mining is the largest industry in the Territory, “which despite a 19.7% decline in sales over 2005, accounted for \$1,835 million or 48.7% of total GDP. Public administration was the second largest industry, accounting for \$366 million, or 9.7% of total GDP” (GNWT 2005). Analysts from the Bureau of Statistics (2007, 13) suggest peak employment demand of all proposed developments will occur between 2004 and 2014, with the greatest demand for trades helpers and labourers, carpenters, managers in construction and transportation, heavy equipment operators, and motor vehicle and transit drivers. For the duration of the peak, other occupations will be in demand, including protective service workers, underground miners, machine operators in metal and mineral products processing, psychologists, and physical science professionals. With these projections, it seems employment is assured for the next five years for Dene labourers; however skilling of labour is increasingly an issue.

If total employment needs fall in 2008 and 2028 as dramatically as estimated in Figure 8.1, then both Dene groups will be impacted. This, along with a projected need for much higher skilled underground mine labour with Diavik, Ekati, Snap Lake and other foreseeable mines, may lead to high levels of unemployed aboriginal mine workers by 2013. At this point, one might predict that the continued low-skilling of aboriginal workers (i.e., the political economy) may interact with the possible insecurity of entitlements to cause a crisis. If a labour shortage occurs at the same time as caribou herds populations continue to decline (insecurity of

entitlements), as predicted by the continually decreasing number of the Bathurst caribou herd, the ability to secure food sources to supplement family diets (or completely sustain the family diet, as is the case in some of the more remote communities) may be jeopardized. In this case, the Tâîchô will have the political power to co-manage licensing and regulations that might affect access to the Bathurst caribou herd. They will also provide the social security that their citizens need, given the integrated control they exert over health, education and social services. The Yellowknives, without a completed land claim and governance agreement will continue to operate by the rules of the settler society.

This scenario, the lack of available jobs because of under-skilling as the economy begins to demand highly-skilled underground mine workers, may be quite realistic. The continued under-skilling of aboriginal workers for high skill positions has deep roots: training an underground miner requires an investment of \$50,000 for training and a commitment of a job from industry (Interview with mine manager, April 26, 2007). However, the government only commits training funds to programs that result in a job within months of training completion (Interview with mine manager, April 26, 2007). This means that there are few available dollars to invest in a long-range plan to develop a northern cadre of underground workers. This political economy of mining (a government focused on constantly accounting and proving worth for the short term), along with an availability of underground miners from southern regions, may combine to force aboriginal workers out of the mining economy. Given that the “bread basket” of the aboriginal economy has always been the land, the decline of a critical caribou herds may interact to create food and job insecurity.

Figure 8.1 Total projected direct labour needs from NWT/NT diamond mines (2003-2038)



## 8.5 Resilience in response to crisis

The combination of under-skilling of aboriginal workers, projected needs of the industry for underground mine workers, and the potential disruption of caribou herds, may interact to create conditions of crisis. Mine closures, anticipated in 2023, might bring the dramatic loss of jobs, save those involved in reclamation. What will workers who have been in the mines for twenty years, dependent on high salaries, turn to? Will they become like the mobile populations of the south, traveling on two week rotations as the miners of the north? Might they consider employment in De Beers' diamond mine in northern Ontario, where another aboriginal community is currently training to become employed? Will they travel to the mines of Newfoundland, making their way into Voisey Bay Nickel mine?

The answer to these questions has yet to emerge. However, history has shown these groups to be tremendously resilient—responding to external forces and relationships—the Tâîchô unified to work together as an economic block in the fur trade, the Indian Brotherhood unified through the threat of assimilation by the colonizer, and the Yellowknives Dene chose allegiance with the Akaitcho Dene First Nation, rather than with the Tâîchô. This and previous chapters have suggested that the processes of colonization and shifting relationships have left

distinct marks. Yet, there is tremendous resilience apparent to the crises of this past century: epidemics, Treaty, separation of the Tâîchô and Yellowknives Dene, and the collapse of regional negotiations. In the face of future crisis, the Tâîchô may be able to respond with the funds earmarked for land based and cultural activities. People in crisis may be provided culturally relevant support through a network of social ties. The Yellowknives Dene is more limited in their ability to affect outcomes in any of these areas, because of their relationship to the federal government. They live side-by-side with the non-aboriginal population of Yellowknife, subject to the services of the Territorial government. They may be uniquely vulnerable, because they have not wrested control from the federal government, and cannot control delivery of health, social services or education. However, neither the Tâîchô nor the Yellowknives Dene make plans for future generations with their IBA funds. Instead, funds are spent on present programs, people and opportunities, and while much of the funds are devoted to people (through scholarships and harvester funds), the sustainability for future generations of funds from these agreements are by no means assured, unlike in some IBA fund management models (O'Faircheallaigh 2007b).

It is in the ability to be self determining that resilience and hope lies. The dependency on the land is absolutely central to the diet, economy and culture of the north. Now, the mining economy, governmental, and service economies have firmly engaged families. Hope has grown (Miyazaki 2004) as the Tâîchô have become self governing, and as the Yellowknives Dene near an agreement, allowing each social group to honor past agreements and enliven new ones. As each group begins to exert greater control over daily decisions of governance, the ability to respond to each crisis that emerges grows.



## 9 RESILIENCE THROUGH SELF DETERMINATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

It is an intimidating thing to tell people of the land that this is what they will be doing for the next 25 years. (Mining company manager, February 2, 2005)

When the diamond leaves the mine and becomes incorporated into the economic market, it is no longer recognizably from the land of the Dene. The diamonds are branded with tiny inscriptions of polar bears (or other trademarks) to remind the consumer of the place of origin (Le Billon 2006). One Treaty mining company branded their diamonds on their website: “True north. True love. True Canadian diamonds” (Aurias Diamonds 2007). They follow this with: “In the world of diamonds there is one source that makes a statement of purity, brilliance and value. That place is Canada.”<sup>85</sup> The diamonds come with a certificate of origin, proving their origin and hinting of the process and place from which they were extracted. The Treaty mining company impresses the nationality of the diamond on the consumer, so that they are not only consuming a piece of jewelry, but also becoming party to this northern engagement.

Each diamond is extracted through the mobilization of a complex web of relationships. This thesis has shown that these relationships, in moments of struggle and conflict and in moments of cooperation and reciprocity, have outcomes that matter for the Dene. Some outcomes are easily documented and voiced by the government and the mining companies: they include jobs, contracts, scholarships, and jointly owned companies, and from these outcomes also derive personal sense of self, pride and control. New funds are available to families, and students are able to pursue education in the south at levels that were unheard of in the past. All of these outcomes are won through negotiation by leadership and commitments maintained through constant vigilance. There are variable outcomes in employment, financial remuneration and scholarships across the communities described in this thesis. The ability to secure these outcomes can depend on a mix of factors internal and external to the communities, such as leadership strength and unity, company perceptions of community influence, and perceptions of the extent of impact of the mine on the community. Just how these outcomes are negotiated and controlled has been a central focus of this thesis, wherein the outcomes themselves are shown to be related strongly to forms of community and cultural resilience. In this chapter, the meaning of

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<sup>85</sup> LeBillon (2006, 4) argues that the conflict diamonds campaign (by industry, activists and multinational institutions) connected violent “spaces of exploitation and ‘peaceful’ spaces of consumption to reform international diamond trade regulation.” He suggests that multinational corporations have benefited from this campaign; “redrawing the contours of ethical consumption via discourses of ‘terror’ and racialized images of Africa, [corporate interests] reproduced spaces and identities of (il)legitimacy [thereby] supporting (their) dominant corporate interests rather than challenging marginalization processes of Africa(ns) in the diamond industry.”

resilience is explored, as well as the concepts of landscape and culture that underlie conflict and daily interaction in the mines and at home. Possibilities for future research and policy implications of the work are also explored.

### 9.1 Resilience through self determination and relationships

Resilience is not a return to some prior order due to the inherent characteristics of the system or previously existing institutional forms (Bingeman *et al.* 2004; Kulig 2000; Sonn and Fischer 1998). Rather, cultural resilience, as defined by the Tâîchô and Yellowknives Dene communities, and as demonstrated through myriad social acts and public statements, is the ability to become or remain strong due to the possibility of self determination and the potential to be in relationships of reciprocity.

Resilience is enabled through self determination: at this point in time, political self determination is only achievable within Canada for aboriginal people through negotiation of modern land claims and governance agreements.<sup>86</sup> These agreements invoke the language of rights and resources:

“the pursuit of their ideals and goals is predicated not just on protecting their territories and resource base but also on controlling the education and socialization of their children, improving their health and social welfare, ensuring the continuity of their languages, and protecting and maintaining their cultural knowledge and institutions.” (Hodgson 2002, 1041)

Evidence of the connection of self determination to resilience is revealed through an examination of the outcomes involving new levels of control over policy development. For example, the Tâîchô control resources and territory, and also exercise as much power and influence as possible over maintenance of language, socialization of children and healthcare for citizens. Every program that is indigenously defined shifts outcomes, so that as the Tâîchô have taken control of child welfare, the number of children apprehended from their homes has decreased due to new strategies of intervention and options for support of families in crisis (Personal communication with CEO of TCSA, January 10, 2008). Also, the Tâîchô Agreement with the federal government ensures that IBAs will be negotiated with every new mining project, so that the disengaged practices of mining companies of the past will not be replicated.

Constraints on self determination also consistently emerge. Agreements, such as the Socio-Economic Agreements, have been designed, yet these act as monitoring programs that

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<sup>86</sup> This is a limited form self determination, as many political theorists have suggested (Tully 2000; Irlbacher Fox 2005).

protect the government from having to mitigate impacts. As well, the federal government argues that their responsibility ends once negotiations between new companies and the Tâîchô are initiated, isolating the federal relationship from settlement, outcomes or implementation. Finally, the federal government persists in a pattern of according priority to industrial development over aboriginal rights, a path cleared through the negotiation of Treaties 8 and 11, which continually erode the rights and resources that aboriginal people struggle to re-attain.

The other component of resilience, relationships of reciprocity, allows individuals and communities to forge their own particular bonds and agreements in ways that respectfully acknowledge the past and protect current and future generations. These relationships are what people have depended on across time and are recognized as a central ingredient of survival in difficult times. Agreements solidify relationships between groups, maintaining practices and reinforcing values of past agreements, with the history of these agreements written into the land through the footprints, paddle strokes and oral narratives of travelers and tea dancers. For example, the Tâîchô self government and land claims agreement is an affirmation of Treaty 11, in that it enlivens the approach Mōnfwî took to meeting and co-existing with the settlers in the land. Mining agreements also respect and re-enact past agreements, ensuring group survival through co-existence and exchange with new neighbours—the Treaty mining companies. Attention to the priority placed on relationships has revealed the expectation of reciprocity.

However, profoundly different approaches to relationships are apparent. While the aboriginal parties dwell on the relationship, trusting in the relationship to generate good agreements, settler society focuses on information, trusting that its use will generate good agreements. Faith in the relationship is fundamental to identity in many aboriginal communities. In the words of Asch (2005, 437):

For society to come into existence, the collective Self cannot be a subject who ‘always remains alone’; it must enter into a relationship with the collective Other. In that sense, society is built in the first instance on ‘Relation’ and ‘extends beyond the boundaries of the self’. Thus, as in the ‘I-Thou’, at society’s origins, ‘the relation is the very essence of the I’.

Returning to an example illustrates this difference in understanding of relationship. As they negotiated with De Beers over the Snap Lake diamond project, the Tâîchô sent the person with the strongest personal relationship with the De Beers negotiator to negotiate. Since these two individuals were friends, the values and principles of friends, such as honesty, mutual obligation, and tolerance, might be applied to the task of forging an agreement between community and company. The mining company, on the other hand, depends upon the control of information,

rather than the relationships of individuals, in order to secure an agreement. In order to know the community, the company would have collected past agreements from neighbouring mining companies, setting the bar for financial models in the corporate mind. As one Treaty mining company manager said, the other company “set some precedent for us. We knew how they had structured their agreements, and didn’t want to be pushed into doubling financial contributions unfoundedly” (Interview, April 25, 2007). With any previously negotiated agreements marked as confidential, the company would be assured that details of agreements would not be known, assuring the company that a good deal struck in one community would not have to be replicated in another. As the corporate representative would carefully control information issued to the communities in order to establish the relationship, the community leaders would observe and select the most appropriate individual, one with a kin-like relationship to the company. Once an agreement was concluded with the Treaty mining company, the community might expect the values and principles that guide kin to orient the relationship. The aboriginal group may expect these relationships to protect them in hard times, while the non-indigenous party expects these relationships to allow them to operate a mine.

Even with this fundamentally different approach to relationships, agreement making opens the “spaces of freedom” that Tully (2000) refers to and the “practices of freedom” that Asch writes of, both of which remind us that “there are limits to power and that people do resist the colonial positionings proffered for us, as citizens and academics, by the liberal state” (2007, 283). But disregard for a moment practices of Treaty mining companies, inclusive of strategies of limiting possibilities, of replicating the lowest possible benchmark of agreement, and of prioritizing fiduciary duty to the shareholders and parent company. Disregard for a moment the seizure of land by the colonial government and the prioritizing of industrial development rather than indigenous self determination. Indigenous agreement making preserves the networks and relationships of the social group, for it seeks to achieve at a political level an agreement to ensure livelihood and opportunity for individuals and for the group. Since the agreement making is confidential (which is a deceptive condition), a “space of freedom” is created, so that people can negotiate funds to secure the livelihood of harvesters outside of the rules set by the settler government, as has been done by the Tâîchô. Nonetheless, it is clear that Treaty mining companies will endeavour to make agreements with economic interests as the first consideration, and social relationships as the second. As a result of, and because of the clause of confidentiality which keeps communities in the dark about each other’s agreements, the possibility of non-reciprocal agreements becomes a reality. These agreements can be unsatisfactory because they

neither honour the reciprocity that is invoked through relationship building and exchange, and because they can secure aboriginal engagement for comparatively low amounts of remuneration (e.g., when compared to financial models achieved by the Innu or Inuit with the Voisey Bay mine). This is not to say that all agreements fall into this category, for as O’Faircheallaigh (2007a) points out, there are times when political unity, power and networks are strong for a community and the agreements that are forged can have breathtaking outcomes, in terms of financing and accommodation.

Once concluded, attention of parties to the agreements may shift with time. The agreements with Treaty mining companies have become less of a focus for mines as they move towards closure. Central commitments, such as running cross-cultural training, training aboriginal employees, and advancing aboriginal employees in the organization, seem to be less of a focus to the companies. The Treaty mining companies have also vastly reduced their presence in the communities, narrowing their community of interest to the mines.

It is useful to follow Kirsch’s lead to consider what occurs when relationships are non-reciprocal and the consequences this generates, a situation described by Kirsch (2006) as “failed reciprocity” (2006). Kirsch suggests that the outcome of failed reciprocity in New Guinea is that parties are dehumanized. In the Dene context, failed reciprocity can lead to the loss of respect and trust, apparent with the name used to describe a prospector: “kweetigi” meaning, succinctly and pointedly, “white people who are bad or crazy”. Dene people describe prospectors of the past as unsociable, dirty and lonely; one leader laughingly spoke of how they found a prospector huddled in a sleeping bag in a tent (with no woodstove) with little to eat but toast. The prospector has become an object of pity and derision for the lack of ability to live and eat well in the bush, but primarily because they failed to engage in a relationship with the Dene. Mining companies are quite literally named “k’we kalgide”, meaning “people who fight the rock”. A possible solution to this failed reciprocity, or the loss of trust and respect, for the aboriginal party may include an alternative approach to the Treaty mining companies: the community can appreciate the role information plays in the negotiating strategy of the company mining representatives and perhaps enter negotiations understanding that a strong relationship may not guarantee a good outcome. The Treaty mining companies can also shift approaches, both in the orientation to the relationship (although the structural limitations discussed in Chapter 5 limit options) but also in the implementation of agreements through the lifecycle of the mine. Figure 9.1 is suggestive of new approaches and alternative outcomes to economic, cultural, social and symbolic aspects of the relationships. For example, attention to retention and advancement in the

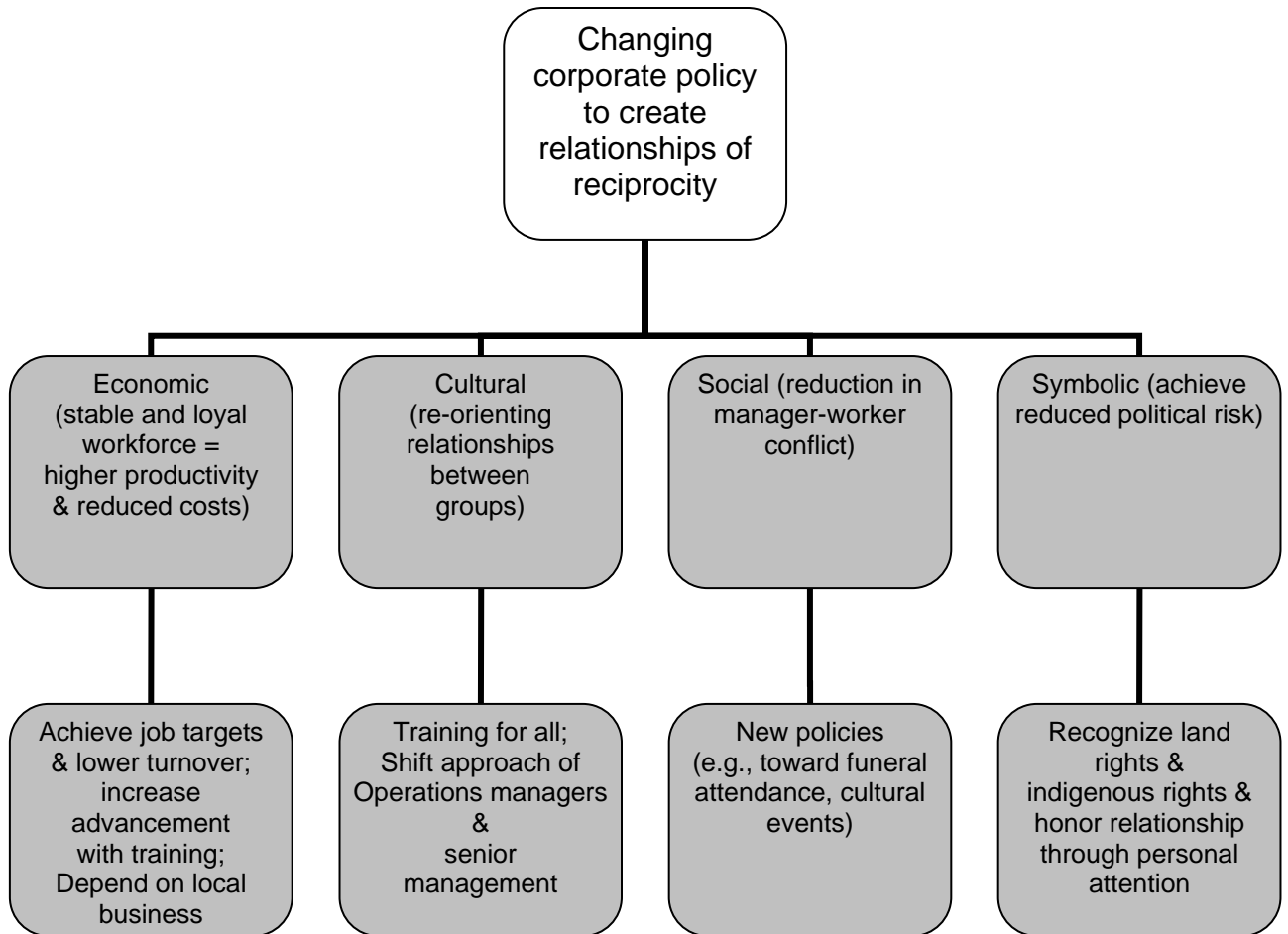
organization and greater dependence on local business can lead to stronger loyalty from the local workforce. Cultural training can be provided for everyone (especially for operation managers and senior management), and improved to focus on solving problems in the mines rather than explaining cultural geography and history, leading to better cross-cultural conflict resolution. The obligations of agreements must be understood by and taught to every level, so that vague innuendos are eliminated and the solid obligations of reciprocity are acted on daily. New human resource policies can be drafted that are based on the key issues that arise (cultural leave, non-kin death, etc.), providing culturally attentive ground rules for operation managers. Finally, the attempt to incorporate the operations manager into the community through visiting should be honoured. In another Rio Tinto diamond mine in Australia, every employee is incorporated into the mine through the performance of ceremonies of safety and respect, called “manthe” (Doohan 2007), a ceremony that protects individuals as they operate in a sacred space. Doohan (2007, 337) writes:

For Aboriginal people the giving and receiving of manthe at Argyle binds people in a reciprocal relationship. It is an act that entails both the symbolic and the actual commencement of relationships of exchange between the ‘land owners’ and the ‘land users.’

Perhaps a parallel act in the north is paying the land, which binds those in the ceremony with the land and to the people who perform it. The act requests safe passage and recognizes the power of the *dè* (land). Doohan (2007, 354) concludes that the ceremonies performed at the Argyle mine site are part of a “multi-faceted strategy of relationship affirmation, articulated engagement, and alterity maintenance which draw on, and reconstitute, the embedded and embodied relationships that (the aborigines) have to country, the landscape, the Dreaming, and their kin.” The act of paying the land similarly reinvigorates and respects past Dene agreements. It binds the Treaty mining companies to the land, in that as this act is practiced, the safe passage and permission of the *dè* (land) is invoked for mining, blasting or passage of individuals and animals.

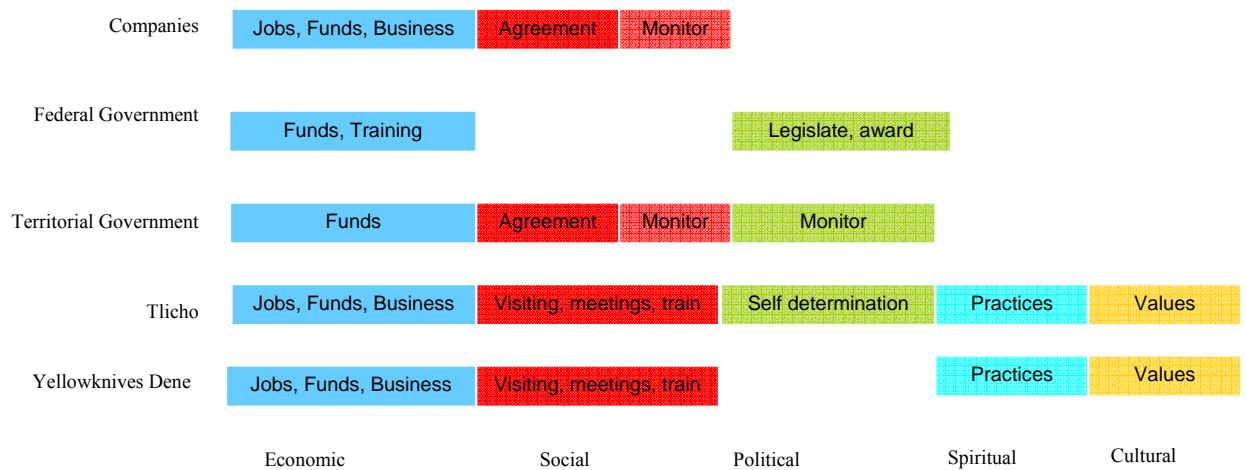
Even if the Treaty mining companies shift approaches to economic, cultural, social and symbolic aspects of the relationships, conflict daily erupts between settler society and Dene miners/harvesters. This comes in the form of disagreements between aboriginal workers and non-aboriginal managers. This is in part because the unrecognized power of the values, rules and inclination that form the bedrock for conflict resolution.

Figure 9.1 Adaptations in corporate policy for Treaty mining companies



Another way of conceptualizing this relationship is through defining each of the domains of relationship: inclusive of economic, social, political, spiritual and cultural. If attention is paid to each domain, and policies, programs, training and awareness are consciously collaboratively built by communities in consultation with the companies, the reality on site and at home might be very different. For example, if spirituality were considered, then the naming of the sites by Dene people might come to pass. Instead of naming pits “Koala”, they might be named in the indigenous language. Further, a chapel would be one site for meditation and prayer, but so too may a site out on the land be established. When people are in need of healing, they might be able to attend a sweatlodge or consult an elder. While counselors are the healing strategy of settler society, elders are able to “shoot their stories like arrows” (Basso 1996, 58) and invoke or shame the listener into making different choices. The companies might begin to honour the request to allocate time for managers to spend time in homes of miners in the communities. There might be countless more details, yet the key point is that communities themselves can define the ideal adaptations.

Figure 9.2 Five domains of relationships



## 9.2 Notions of landscape and culture

The “practices of ordinary living” (Ortner 1984, 154) that guide daily interaction in the mines derive from settler society, and they serve as unacknowledged arbiters for “normality” or “the rule”. None of these former approaches to relationship can shift these deep understandings that guide individuals in their daily lives. The harvesters/miners must adapt to these rules of daily interaction to maintain a job in the mines. Ortner (1984) describes how the system, in this case the ruled life within the mines, constrains practice: “there seems to be general agreement that action is constrained most deeply and systematically by the ways in which culture controls the definitions of the world for actors, limits their conceptual tools, and restricts their emotional repertoires” (153). The routines that Bourdieu acknowledges as important of working, sleeping, eating and relaxing, are “predicated upon, and embody within themselves, the fundamental notions of temporal, spatial, and social ordering that underlie and organize the system as a whole. In enacting these routines, actors not only continue to be shaped by the underlying organizational principles involved, but continually re-endorse those principles in the world of public observation and discourse” (Ortner 1984, 154). By participating in this world of work, the hunters/miners submit to the routines designed for productivity, all of which order temporal, spatial and social possibilities; these routines are misrecognized by the dominant society as universal.<sup>87</sup> “Agents (teachers and administrators) acquire and misrecognize the dominant culture and values as universal and objective, but they transmit “knowledge” by rewarding students who carry out the reproduction of the dominant culture and values in the next

<sup>87</sup> This leads to what Bourdieu (1977) terms “symbolic violence”.



generation” (Lin 2001, 15). Bourdieu refers to the result of training as *habitus*, which results in the reproduction of culture. The “misrecognition and the process of social reproduction carries over to the labor market (the social “field”), which serves to reinforce the pedagogic rewards” (Lin 2001, 15). The harvester/miner is trained into the system of values and meanings of the dominant society, requiring a complete reorientation of space, practice and relationships. The experience of this reorientation is eloquently expressed by the miners/harvesters of Chapter 6. To revisit this example:

My dad sure knows medicine men. Now how come he doesn't know diamonds? We are digging where we sleep. Our people say, that medicine men, they are really powerful before. How come they don't know diamonds? They used to be strong and powerful. And when I am on my break, I am thinking about that.

Now BHP is here, we traveled on top of it, over top of it. In the old days, we were boating from Rae, and we would move out again. We were hunting in this area, how come these people don't know anything about diamonds? One person, Dad says, was searching around for caribou, with the medicine. He knew how many nights it was away to the caribou, and how long it would take. They would follow this person and three people went over there and shot the caribou. (Field notes, January 16, 2005)

This harvester/miner speaks of the past, shocked that the awesome power displayed by his grandfather could fail to discover these diamonds below the surface. This speaks to a profound shift in meaning. What was valuable in the past was the location of the caribou, and skill and knowledge were gained and applied to this end. Now individual skill and knowledge are applied to large scale mining in the quest of a new good, one that still encompasses a web of relationships and meaning, however different from that of the past. Yet this miner/harvester struggles to make sense of the worldviews, values and meanings that are caught up in the production of this symbol: the diamond. In order to work, miners/harvesters must submit to the ruled environment and space of the diamond mines. He, as it is nearly always he, cannot carry his tools for harvesting (a gun or a knife); he cannot walk or escape into this known landscape, and he cannot listen for the caribou over the sounds of the operating mine. His reflections on his grandfather speak of a time passing and a new meaning to the landscape, to roles and relationships.

Miners also live for two weeks of every month in a landscape controlled by the Treaty mining corporations. The landscape is broken up by pits, waste dumps, tailings dams, and roads, none of which refer to local nature, history or biographies. In one mine, pits are named for the animal heroes of the Australian head office and in another they are named numerically. This

space, as in the mapping of Canadian geography, is colonized by the names of the foreigners, who tend to see the land as empty, wild, and natural (Tsing 2005). Tsing's (2005, 201) discussion of the treatment of Indonesian forests transfers: "these could not be forests that formed social "homes" because they would be available for neither profit nor protection. They learned to observe empty forests, spaces of a nonsocial nature." The diamonds come from the "barren lands" and it is significant that the further the diamonds are from the site of extraction, the more un-peopled the descriptions become. As the Treaty mining company begins the economic relationship with the consumer, they neglect mention of the previous and primary relationship with the Dene. Instead, they feature the relationship with the settler government for the consumer: the diamonds are marketed as "Canadian" diamonds, rather than Dene diamonds. Once the diamonds enter the economic sphere, the scientific and environmental context remains for the consumer. Yet social relationships are erased as the diamonds travels to become a part of the chain of production and consumption. This is how the social relations of exchange become opaque or not seen at all (West 2006). The diamond branders market the white and pure land that the diamond comes from, but are silent on the relationships of exchange that allowed their extraction.

However, the landscape holds the social history of the region, referring to social, historical, environmental and biographical events. For example, the Tâ'chô Cosmology can be understood through travel to precise locations with an elder who knows the place name and history. Thus, it is a social landscape, one in which the individual must be in relationship with the land and with the community in order to know the history. The social history is grounded in the landscape (Kirsch 2006), and as Kirsch suggests it can become an important register for loss, if it becomes degraded or inaccessible to the individual. The miner/harvester and non-aboriginal miner live in "different spaces within the same spatial production", understanding the history of the landscape differently (West 2006, 229). The duality to this space has left many miners/harvesters soul searching, as they pursue this new form of work. The manufactured landscape (Burtynsky 2005) contains those who work the mines in the land, foreclosing the possibility of traveling out onto the natural eskers, keeping them on the modern esker alone: the waste dump.

Even as miners are trapped in the landscape that is now "nonsocial", they reinvigorate their roles, principles and values every time they speak Dogrib, eat their mother's dry meat in the mine, support their brothers-in-law in the effort to wade through a new computer based learning program, and gain the right to leave site for an important drum dance or funeral of a significant

elder. Their “practices of ordinary living” gain some purchase, even in the ruled environment of the mines. The miners/harvesters gain a productive role through the job in the manufactured landscape, gaining status and re-engaging social relationships because of the increased ability to “talk in a loud voice”. In this cultural/mined space, the men have been enriched with a productive role, even as they are “soul searching”. The possibility of remaking and reclaiming this mined space into cultural space is engaged when elders travel to the mine to provide guidance on reclamation, and every time a leader considers assigning a new name to the modern esker. Continuity is also seen in the application of elder knowledge and will to solve problems for their communities. While elders have long conjured the caribou for people, in this modern economy, the elders give their political will to conjure the possibility of agreement with a Treaty mining company. The survival of the group through the engagement in mineral extraction as a livelihood is assured through this act. As this is done, grandfathers remind their grandsons, the miners/harvesters, of the primordial agreements with land and animals which must be remembered even as they enter a new relationship with the Treaty mining company. The grandchildren are reminded to respect historic and current relationships.

These relationships are central to the survival of harvesters/miners in the operational site. They are evident in how a person negotiates relationships with co-workers, managers and family, and in how these values and networks are mobilized at the outset of the mine in recruitment, are felt and described in what keeps a miner at the site, and equally may influence how a person advances in the organization. The family must adapt relationships, submitting to a rotational marriage and parenting; the miners/harvesters must adapt to the mined landscape from a former cultural landscape, and to an often dull and repetitive form of work. The miners/harvesters move into a space defined by a set of rules, inclinations, and practices (what Bourdieu terms *habitus*). These are invisible to all but those who are crossing the boundaries, engaging in this form of labour.

This invisibility is in part due to the limited notion of culture that invigorates dialogues about change. Culture is seen as something that can be apprehended in archaeological sites, through practices that are deemed “traditional”, and in language, as though through these mirrors (sites, hunting, and speaking) the nature of the society will be uncovered. In the business of environmental assessment, these practices or languages stand in for culture and have now been enumerated by the government in its new exuberant preoccupation with evaluation through indicators. These forensic audits extend the reach of the government into the home communities, as the government issues questionnaires to identify how many snowmobiles and televisions now

populate the homes of the Dene. Even the business of asking these questions is political. The questions are designed by statisticians who want to know if these people are being transformed by their new vocations into consumers, given that the bulk of the surveys deal with consumption (Strathern 2000).

. There is a firm distinction made between social and environmental issues, and it is only now that culture is being “discovered” by the practitioners of impact assessment. Social and environmental issues are segregated into different agreements, committees and departments, treated as wholly independent variables. In the realm of the environment, which is treated as outside of power, public speech, humanity and values (Latour 2004), there are thresholds defined, mitigation measures designed and the mining companies can be held accountable for their actions. In the social realm, which is seen as political, there are no thresholds or acceptability (e.g., how high is too high for addictions in a community; how much language loss is too much for a community?) Unlike environmental criteria and indicators embedded in a variety of assessment tools, there are no thresholds for which everyone agrees “beyond here there be dragons”. Rather than take action on change and discuss mitigations, the settler society government solicits variables of the agreements in the defense of inaction.

The government is protected from needing to act: they have focused on culture, as they were asked, yet their questions generate very little insightful data. Their questions and the audit approach lead to more information, but as Strathern (2000, 314) comments, “the language of indicators takes over the language of service. Or to return to the audit process, the language of accountability takes over the language of trust.” The auditors place all their trust in the measures and none of it in the outcomes of their collaborative exercises. This research masquerades as action, and saves the government from mitigating harms experienced through industrial development. Stories of the changes experienced in the communities in the form of oral reporting are repeated, but they are unrecognizable to the bureaucrats and thus silenced. Even when community reports are rendered in the written numerical form preferred by the government, inaction is the only outcome. Every request for mitigation is answered by an existing program, inappropriate or empty as it may be. With an audit system that gives weight to written analytical texts, oral narratives of change have been silenced and locally defined mitigation is “illegible to the state” (Scott 1998). Socio-Economic agreements protect the status quo for the state, so that even as mitigation of serious impact is consistently requested, the agreements are utilized to discharge responsibilities. As people reinterpret their oral experience

in a written form, they realize they are being changed, looking a little bit more like the bureaucrats themselves with every written report (Nadasdy 2003).

Culture is so firmly understood to be the realm of aboriginal people alone that there is no recognition of it as something that might be held in Yellowknife by non-aboriginal people. This blindness reveals something of the government bureaucrat and mining company manager: they either fearfully resist or anticipate no change to their own selves through this industrial endeavour. Fischer (2007, 21) writes of one phase of understanding the culture concept that closely resembles this thinking in the north: “so too language, art, and religion are tangible for us only in the monuments we create through these symbolic forms—the tokens, memorials, or reminders of the reciprocal processes of continuous reanimation of self, cultural object, and context (and of physical existence, objective representation, and personal expression).” In this understanding, the people who hold culture (the aboriginal people) are continuously reminded of their identity through reference to these symbolic forms (through sites, art, religion, or language). A shift in any of these forms or failure to practice or visit them might then provide the impetus for change. This is a limited and static understanding of culture that intimidates people into performing as caricatures. Through this understanding of culture, the observer eliminates every symbolic and relation based interaction as a possible site of cultural operation. Culture is seen as something practiced outside of the mines. Further, non-aboriginal society seems to anticipate no personal or cultural change as they come into contact with the aboriginal population. There is a conscious reflection on aboriginal culture: settler society enumerates it without any self reflection. There is no expectation on the part of the settlers/miners that they will ever adjust or be changed by their interaction with miners/harvesters.

What might it mean to take culture more seriously in the mines? Currently, the agreements and the mines circumscribe culture to language and practice of harvesting. A different understanding, of *habitus*, might acknowledge the deep knowledge that underlies how a person behaves, speaks and interacts (Bourdieu 1977). Ortner (1997, 11) suggests, “Culture,” if it is to continue to be understood as a vital part of the social process, must be located and examined in different ways: as the clash of meanings in borderlands; as public culture that has its own textual coherence but is always locally interpreted; as fragile webs of story and meaning woven by vulnerable actors in nightmarish situations; as the grounds of agency and intentionality in ongoing social practice.” If culture were to be taken seriously, training, education, and job preparation might be designed with local interpretations as guides. For example, financial management training designed by settler society is likely to frustrate those who share money

within a social network because the suggestion that money ought to be managed jointly by men and women in a family is often presumed. Similarly, the cross-cultural course focuses on the “Other”, removing any trace of the settler government and the impact of their values in the occupational site. If culture as a clash of meaning were to be taken seriously, then the mine manager would be trained to understand that death and dying is acted upon differently in Dene society, and that this is central to identity. The most subtle of requests for leave that is denied enacts this clash of meaning. It might mean that the operational site would be seen as a site of public culture, with people struggling daily to make sense of the industrial reality, indigenous and non-indigenous alike.

Outside of the mines, much of the action of the political groups is aimed at the real outcome of self determination. In the same essay on culture, Ortner (1997, 10) suggests, “Culture is not an aesthetic object but the grounds of action and the stakes of action, with real outcomes in the real world and with powerful representations in literature, drama, and art.” This “stake of action” is expressed constantly through the naming and renaming of sites within the north and of the groups themselves. “Fort Rae” was named for the set of trading relationships that were established on the arm of Great Slave Lake; people chose to settle there because of the abundance of fish. When the town became named “Rae-Edzo”, it was due to the government plan to relocate Rae to a new location 20 km away. Engineers<sup>88</sup> surveyed locations and selected one that would allow the town to pump potable water and absorb sewage. The high school and teachers’ housing, as well as many of the government funded municipal services, were then built in this location. Years later, the majority of the population continues to live in Rae (where their water is trucked in and their sewage is disposed of in “honey buckets”). Since the ratification of the land claim and self government agreement, the town is now known as Bechokö, meaning the place of the knife. At the ceremony in 2005 to mark the ratification of the agreement the collective symbol of the nation was unveiled. The artist, James Washee, was one of the Chief Negotiators of the Tâîchô Agreement:

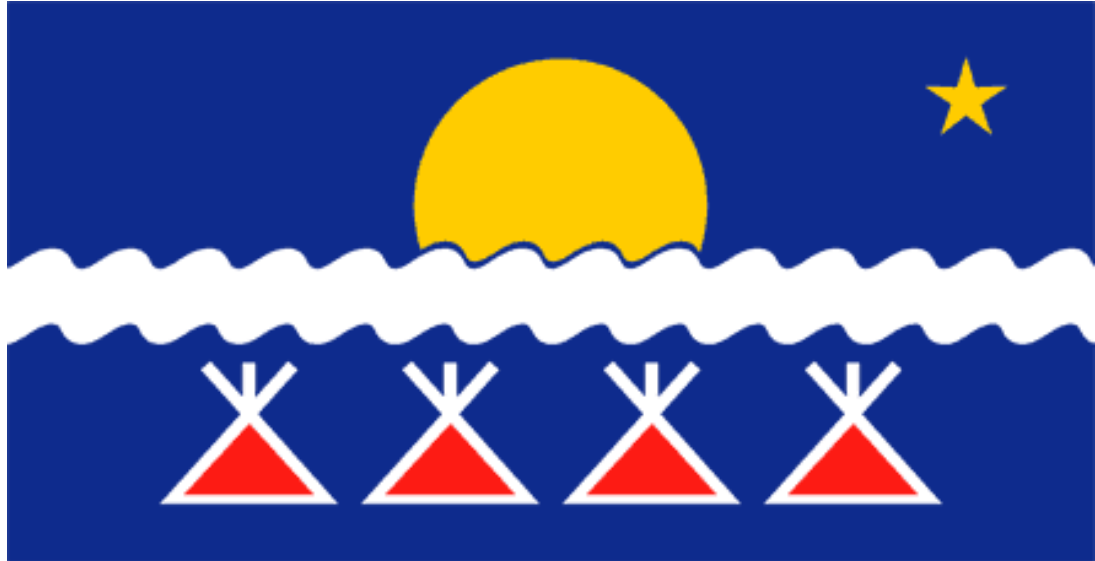
The Tâîchô flag embodies the strength and unity of our people. The tents represent the four Tâîchô Communities of Behchokö, Whatî, Gamètî and Wekweètî. The royal blue background reflects our broad Tâîchô territory. The sunrise and flowing river capture Chief MÔnfwî’s words, that as long as the sun rises, the river flows, and the land does not move, we will not be restricted from our way of life. Finally, the North Star represents a new era for the

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<sup>88</sup> Notably led by my grandfather, John Dean Whittaker.

Tâîchô, as we move united into the future committed to protecting our language, culture and way of life for future generations.<sup>89</sup>

Figure 9.3 The Tâîchô Flag



The Tâîchô flag symbolizes continuity and strength. As it was unveiled, the collective aspiration—self determination—was celebrated. This outcome, as Ortner suggests, is powerfully realized in these symbols.

Still, each agreement is founded on the Treaties of the past. Each of these agreements, along with the mineral policy and regulations that settler society has generated since, has prioritized industrial development, undermining the potential for self determination in the full area of the traditional territory of a group. For example, Chief Mōnfwî's descriptions of the territory encompass a much larger area (the brown line) than the area that is now controlled by the Tâîchô (the pink area). While a much larger area is co-managed, the Tâîchô have reduced the size of their claim substantially, largely due to mineral claims in the region and the pressure of the federal government.

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<sup>89</sup> <http://www.tlicho.ca/tlicho-government/TlichoFlag.htm>

Figure 9.4 Map of traditional lands and Tâîchô lands (Tlicho Agreement 2005)

## CHAPTER

## 1

# Definitions and Maps



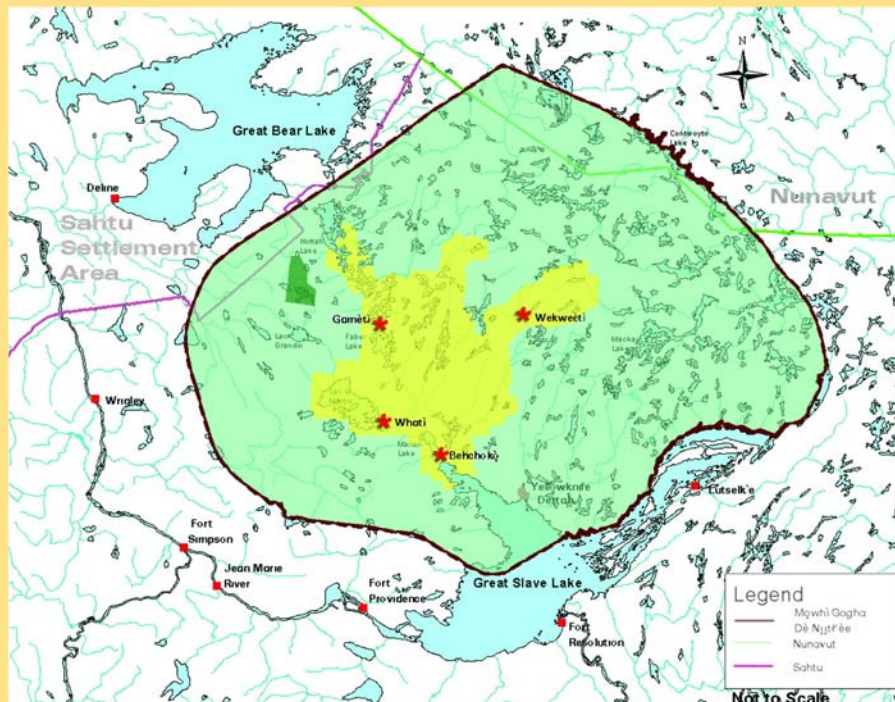
**Tlicho Lands** are lands owned by the Tlicho Government and include approximately 39,000 km<sup>2</sup>.



**Tlicho Community Lands** are lands owned by each Tlicho community government. These lands are large enough to provide for future expansion of the communities.



**Ezodzitì** is a heritage resource. It is protected from mineral exploration and development.





The result has been fracturing of resources and rights, and, as Hodgson (2002, 1043) suggests, people have been forced “to revise their political strategies to reposition themselves vis-à-vis issues of representation, citizenship, resources, and rights.” With aboriginal rights constantly interpreted through the Courts and the Constitution, aboriginal people have been forced to be the claimants to the Crown (rather than settler society making claims to the First Peoples), following legal arguments as they progressively develop. The logic of industrial development, and in particular mineral development, has followed this lead. Political strategies in the Mackenzie Valley have shifted constantly in the past fifty years, as groups coalesced to negotiate collectively, then devolved into political and geographic negotiating groups. The social movements for self determination that have emerged are built on the efforts of indigenous leaders and elders to make new meaning of old. These movements consciously reflect on the past, creating symbols and imagery to enliven each citizen’s imagination. The elders speak so that the Tâîchô people can dream of being strong like two people. They give new names to places so that people can make sense of change. John B. Zoe speaks of re-naming the modern eskers of the diamonds mines when the mines close; these sites will be Dene sites even as the mines operate. The Treaty mining company names (e.g., A-154 and Koala) may be replaced, as the modern eskers become recaptured when mines close, perhaps becoming the highest geological feature in the land on which harvesters can take a break.

### 9.3 Thesis approach and future research

This thesis cannot possibly claim to have represented the complexity of these relationships in all of their history and contemporary nuance, but it has covered the territory of two different groups, groups that at one time identified collectively and now are represented through different land claimant authorities. Members of these two groups engage simultaneously in the resource economy and land based economy. The Yellowknives Dene group has been misapprehended in the ethnographic record (Gillespie 1975), which led to them being struck from the pages of history; this record has since been reinterpreted locally (YKDFN 1997).

This thesis has also involved fieldwork at two diamond mines, as well as interviews in the boardrooms of one company’s head office in Australia. This multi-sited ethnography has sought interaction with many perspectives, as even within a social group there are many and diverse perspectives. Satterfield (2003, 162) suggests the need to listen to the “engaged dialogues *between* subordinate groups—dialogues about nature, cultural meaning, resource use,

and future practices.” Taking a cue from this, the research has followed two groups as well as their constituent partners in the corporate world.

This thesis has not investigated gender roles and household management, which may turn up new and interesting findings. A gendered impact of the mining economy is beginning to emerge. Women rarely gain access to the space of the mine, given the many barriers of commute mining and the roles of the home domain. As a result, there are a greater number of women that are marginalized in low-income and single-parent families since the advent of the mining economy, leaving many children in poverty. At the same time, women are becoming more educated than men, and taking many of the administrative posts vacated by men who left for the mines. This education may mitigate the impacts of economic marginalization. These women will undoubtedly surface a feminist movement that is profoundly Dene in approach and substance. Given that this aspect was not a central question in the thesis, the extent of marginalization is only hinted at here, and requires more study. Do women manage the household using the salary of the miner/harvester? Or do they manage it using their own funds? How are funds shared in households and families? What is the impact of mining on gender relations? The tendency in the literature (and indeed in this thesis) is for a double blind to operate for indigenous women. If indigenous women are noted, it is under either ‘women’ (read white women in the mines and the literature) or as ‘indigenous’ (read indigenous men).

A number of other research strands have emerged during the course of this thesis. Following the chain of exchange of the diamond through the market may reveal some unique insights, especially if done through a political economy perspective. More comparative research of mines in a cross-national context, especially if they were owned by the same parent company, could reveal new insights to the accommodations of culture. In policy, an understanding of how land claims policy and implementation approaches and mineral policy mutually influence the resilience of communities ought to be probed. Research tends to focus on discrete policy topics. More research also would be helpful to surface community-based models of sustainable development. Given that this research has shown Tâîchô policy to be completely unrecognizable to the settler government (e.g., puberty quests as policy programmes), respect for these visions will be central to the co-existence of settler society and aboriginal communities. After all, these communities will be in the north long after all the Treaty mining companies have reclaimed their mines.

## 9.4 Policy implications

By naming the companies, “Treaty mining companies”, this thesis signaled the primary relationship of aboriginal people to the settler government, something that has become less of a focus as the power and strength of corporations grows. Many agreements are now bilateral, yet the possibility of these agreements is established through Treaties and ensuing policy. This first relationship sets the architecture for the company, so that it can operate with little political risk in Crown lands. The settler government continues to colonize with processes, policies and programs that prioritize settler society choices. Asch (2007, 282) writes of settler-aboriginal relations: “governmentality is the process by which government as a way of life is transmitted to individuals and collectivities, and becomes the process through which ‘government’ imposes itself and ultimately acts to subordinate forms of culture based on historical-political principles. Ultimately ... governmentality can be likened to that aspect of cultural transmission we call ‘enculturation.’” As examples, the government bureaucrats analyze indigenous life using metrics that envision indigenous people to resemble the bureaucrats themselves, and programs of culture and money have assumed the values of settler society as a base for resolution of conflict. In mineral policy, the law prioritizes mining over other private property interests with the registration system of free entry (Campbell 2004), unless the lands are withdrawn. This approach is based on the “fiction” that the Crown holds all rights to the land, and that aboriginal people have to prove their claim to land to the Crown (Tully 2000). This system of registration of mineral claims, then, might be the first place that policy change could emerge. A system of free entry might be shifted towards a ground or map staking system so that communities have clearer knowledge of the disposition of rights in their lands. This presumes that the land claims and self government agreements are completed, which is certainly not the case in the Mackenzie Valley. Clearly effort to conclude fair agreements should be a first priority. Even when claims are concluded, land use plans are a priority, in order to have certainty on which lands withdrawn from mineral exploration.

Negotiations on land claims and reforms to the *Canada Mining Regulations* may well be feasible; however progress on these policy issues is happening at a time when there is also pressure for devolution in the NWT. The NWT is dependent on the federal government for annual transfers, during an era when there is a perception that resource royalties far outweigh what comes back to the Territory through the Territorial Formula Financing. Expectations of power sharing, resource revenue sharing and new intergovernmental arrangements have been

raised, but all during a time when some fledgling governments are emerging and many yet to emerge governments have still to negotiate their realities.

## 9.5 Qualifying impacts

One of the tasks this thesis has identified as crucial is the need for more accurate and local determination of impact. The common expression of community impact as discrete variables, such as consumption of country food or teen pregnancy has led to a poverty of reporting, analysis and reaction. The monitoring research simply doesn't get to the heart of the matter, and the reader is left with a cold report that feels like what it is: a report written by a bureaucrat in Yellowknife. Typically, the reports only offer those surveyed the option of discrete "declarative statements about values and preferred management options, to which the respondent then agrees or disagrees" (Satterfield 2003, 170). While the Bureau of Statistics and the GNWT are understandably interested in how disposable income is used, and ever more interested to identify the growing material wealth of harvesters/miners (e.g., the ownership of two snowmobiles and trucks), the statements used to elicit this information eviscerates this data from the "contextually, emotively, and morally rich stories and conversations through which we define ourselves and our actions" (Satterfield 2003, 170). Further, the questions that are asked elicit the values that settler society hopes to elicit, aiming to recognize their own idea of the good life in the data that they surface. The alternative: does this mean that all research on these issues be qualitative? Not necessarily, as not all research can or should involve in-depth fieldwork, but approaches could and should employ "value-elicitation opportunities, frames or contexts that resist the tendency to fit the articulation of values [impacts or benefits] into [solely] economic expressions, that seek alternatives to direct question-answer formats, and/or that denude value expressions of relevant or affective content" (Satterfield 2003, 170). Indeed, a frequent observation of this thesis work was that aboriginal participants in monitoring Boards wish to bring and do bring exactly this richness to their expressions of impact.

Qualitative expressions of what has come to pass in the communities since the mines opened are well documented (DCAB 2005) and the communities have used these oral and written reports to make recommendations to the government. The Tâîchô model, articulated in Chapter 5, is entirely locally defined, suggesting a model of living well that is relational. Yet these reports have been met by a complete silence. The static government reports serve to reinforce stereotypes and deficit models and one might imagine that if people become less like what the indicators suggest they ought to be, that funding will be decreased and programs

weakened, as the changes become “normal”. West (2006) writes of how this reduction of what is perceived to be “traditional” can be used to wrest away rights. Since elders have shown that culture is practiced in every act, relation and practice, this threat to identity is shown to be empty. However, since the “raw form” of data that Scott (1998) refers to in the north occurs in forums and dialogues, the government is likely to continue to fail to listen and comprehend these narratives.

It is the collective community evaluation of these knowledge shifts and changes that is in itself transformative for the Dene. Given that what is evaluated collectively is relational (e.g., knowledge transmission), the work of evaluation is done in relationship with others. An indigenous model of wellness reveals that government audits do not capture local realities, given that the community based vision is based on relationships. Living well involves the daily relationships with others as achieved through the expression of culture, language, and practice of skills and key activities together. The policy initiatives that emerge (e.g., canoe trips, spiritual quests, puberty camps) cannot be registered by the bureaucracy because their form is utterly unrecognizable. Indigenously defined effects management is about re-establishing relationships and unity. Community resilience may well be afforded through the nurturing of these relationships in the context of self determination. These spaces of freedom for indigenous people to respond to social change as self determining people need to be broken ever wider open.

## 9.6 Afterword

This thesis has been nurtured by the work of previous anthropologists, particularly through the inspiring work of the late June Helm. My many long conversations with John B. Zoe have provided much of the central data for the work, and even as the thesis was read by him, new ideas were forming and as yet undiscovered terms were uncovered. For example, as he read this thesis, John B. Zoe discussed the Tâîchô names for the Treaty mining companies.

- ◇ Ekati kwe kalgide—Ekati diamond mine
- ◇ Ekadi kwe kalgide—Diavik diamond mine
- ◇ Ink’we kwe ehk’aàdè—Snap Lake diamond mine

The significance of the location of the first two diamond mines cannot be overstated. They are constructed in the landscape where the fattest caribou are. Since caribou are the main

source of protein in the region, the first question is always posed when a caribou has been brought home: how fat was the meat? The amount of fat determines the richness and health of the caribou. It is in this region that the caribou have always had the most succulent fat, and this is the only place name that in the region that refers to the health and fat of caribou. The first word of the description locates the mine in the region, so that Ek'ati is the place name referring to caribou, while Diavik is on an island in the region known for healthy caribou. The two words that follow refer to the activity: the place where people fight the rocks. The name is another ironic understanding of the relationship that settler society has with the land. It is interesting to find these names out only as the thesis comes to a close, but even more so that the names are hardly known among the mining companies.

We also discussed the “Trails of Our Ancestors” which are the ancient canoe trails that were followed each year from settlements through to the barren lands. These trails are referred to as donekw'ôö, or the backbone of the people. Elders believe that prospectors simply followed the migration of the people on their annual migrations, so that the mines of the past and current century were found through this shadowing of those with knowledge. So too was the ice road safely located through the many kilometers of ice and islands because Tâîchô elder Harry Simpson traveled with those planning the ice road to show them where the ice was thick enough. Each one of these fragments reveals the continuing attentiveness to relationships of reciprocity, allowing coexistence of settlers in the land.

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