CHAPTER FOUR

GENERAL - THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Resource Settlements in Canada

The bulk of Canada's population (90%) is concentrated in a narrow belt of arable land along the Unites States - Canadian border. However, the natural resources that provide the base of Canada's wealth and economy are mainly to be found north of the populated belt. Frequently there has been no local settlement on which to graft new primary resource extraction industries, and it has been necessary as a result to create wholly new townsites in isolated areas. The number and relative importance of such towns is a unique feature of Canada's development.

In the early stages of resource exploitation in Canada in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the settlements were generally regarded as temporary. That is, they were bachelor bunkhouses which were built quickly and later abandoned when the relevant resource was exhausted. They attracted unattached, and usually unskilled men from nearby farms, or distant cities for whom this was adequate accommodation since they had no expectation of permanent settlement.

Later, with the development of the industrial era, it became necessary to establish communities of a more permanent type and they were usually operated as "company towns", with all the local facilities being provided by the parent company. Workers were thus dependent on their employers for all social and practical amenities as well as wages. The parent company seldom gave prolonged thought to the possibility of systematically planning such early resource towns, and the Provincial Government3of that period did not involve themselws greatly in regulating them.

In the post World War II period the pattern of northern settlement has changed drastically. The type of enterprise which has become dominant in resource extraction is now the large and highly capitalized corporation, with a very large and long-term investment. These corporations want a stable work force, which means attracting and holding the wives and families of skilled workers who are usually recruited in southern cities. The large corporation in this era is thus faced with providing, on a competitive scale, quality educational, health, and recreational facilities, and has turned to both the Provincial and the Federal Governments for assistance in this task.

Attitudes about the creation and administration of such towns have changed also. Company towns have seldom proved popular. Also the major corporations have come to realize that to be the sole employer, the landlord, and the town council, has almost always resulted in poor company-worker relations at all levels. So the new towns of the post World War II period have been "planned" ones, often with the 'planning' involving considerable collaboration between industry and government.

With few exceptions, Canada's new resource towns are not created to serve idealistic or philanthropic ends. The American and Canadian industrialists who build them do so because they must. Their primary concerns are the construction of the relevant industrial structure near the exploitable resource, and the establishment and building of the townsite is considered to be an unavoidable but necessary secondary consideration.

Where possible, the corporations developing new resources today would prefer to use existing community facilities, and make appropriate additions. What they frequently underestimate, however, is the enormity of the changes which are wrought on the local coimmnities by the addition of large new economic and social impacts, and those who work for them. The history

of most permanent communities in the north is almost inevitably one of repeated impact usually on a "boom or bust" scale and cycle. In some situations communities are able to adjust creatively; in others, the existing community life, with whatever level of vitality it may have had, is effectively decimated. It is the reason for this iuyortant difference which we wish to explore.

The Northwest Region

The research venue chosen in Northern British Columbia has a beautiful and rugged mountainous terrain, and the winter in interior areas is formidable. Nevertheless, for more than 100 years, the rich primary resources of lumber, minerals and arable land, have attracted successive waves of White workers and settlers into this part of the country.

The geographical area of the study venue is very large, 58,000 square miles plus the Queen Charlotte Islands. It can best be visualized as a series of parallel mountain ranges; those on the Pacific Ocean have become partially submerged, creating a number of spectacular fiords and numerous islands and archipelagoes. In addition, two major river systems, those of the Bulkley-Skeena and the Naas, cut through the mountain ranges in their passage to the ocean. Remnants of the glaciers responsible for much of this geological shaping of the land still persist on many of the higher mountains. One is constantly aware of the reality that here nature is always a significant limiting factor on what it is possible for individuals and comurmities to create in the way of permanent and stable settlement.

The main permanent settlements in the area are found in the valleys of the Bulkley and Skeena rivers and their tributaries. The Bulkley-Skeena Valley is also the main transportation corridor and contains the Canadian National Railway line, and the Yellowhead Highway. A few isolated mining communities such as Cassiar, Granisle, and Atlin, exist at more remote locations.

Also part of the study area are the Queen Charlotte Islands, approximately 80 miles off the coast in the Pacific Ocean. The lack, to date, of a regular ferry connection with the mainland has made the approximately 5,500 people in the Queen Charlottes even more isolated than other northern settlers.

Differences between the climatic conditions of the Coastal and the Interior regions are pervasive and have affected the history and development of each sub-region. Steep granite mountains and numerous fiords characterize the coast, where rainfall is high, varying between 50" and 100". The forest cover is very dense and much of it is overmature for lumbering purposes. The climate is relatively mild, but under some conditions in the winter, the snowfalls are extremely heavy. This coastal climate extends about 100 miles inland but conditions become progressively drier as successive mountain ridges drain off the contents of incoming storms. Hazelton marks the most eastern limit of this coastal climate. The Queen Charlotte Islands also enjoy this mild, wet climate engendered by the circulation of the warm Japanese current.

More than three-quarters of the area's population live in this relatively temperate but rainy area, and particularly in the major urban centres of Terrace, Kitimat and Prince Rupert.

A lower rainfall of approximately 30" characterizes the Interior where winters are considerably colder as well as drier. The mountain ranges become progressively spread out as they are further removed from the river systems and lakes of all sizes abound. Forest cover here is thinner than on the coast, with trees growing much more slowly and reaching smaller diameters. However, despite this, almost twice as much of the Public Sustained Yield Units (PSYU's) are classified as productive compared to the coastal area.

The economic foundation for all who have lived in this region has been based on primary resources. However, the economic viability of almost all the modern industries developed has been severely affected by great fluctuations in world market conditions, for this is a resource hinterland whose products are sent out to the manufacturing metropoli for secondary processing and distribution. These fluctuations, and their effects on local life at all levels, are an integral part of the memories and attitudes of all those who live in the region. The "boom or bust" syndrome is an all too familiar way of life for many.

The major industry in the Northwest is forestry. There are two pulp mills at Port Edward and one at Kitimat. Saw mills of various sizes and scope exist in many of the towns and villages, and extensive logging is carried on throughout the area, including the Queen Charlottes.

The second major industry, and the one which until World War II was dominant, is fishing. Fishing fleets and processing plants are concentrated at Prince Rupert and Port Simpson, but individual exploitation of fishing resources, particularly among Natives is also important in the Skeena, Bulkley and Naas River Valleys.

Although the third major employer is the mining and smelting industry, only the aluminum smelter at Kitimat is a permanent industry and settlement. Other metals, and particularly copper, silver, and perhaps gold, are mined near Stewart, Granisle, and Houston (late 1980). Concentrates are shipped out of the area for smelting and refining.
In the past, the mining industry in the Northwest has been relatively unstable as ore bodies are developed and depleted or changes in world prices make a particular operation unprofitable. This inherent instability in the mining industry has had important consequences on the development of many communities.

The tertiary service sector in the Northwest has been oriented to the needs of these primary economic activities. The development of adequate transportation routes and facilities has been vital to the development of all economic sectors, as well as to the residents in the region. The first major modern transportation link across the mainland area was provided by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad just prior to World War I. Later bought out by Canadian National Railways, this northern route links eastern Canada via Edmonton and southern B.C. via Prince George with Prince Rupert (spur to Kitimat). In conjunction with the upgrading of the railroad bed, port facilities at Prince Rupert and Stewart are being improved to accoumiodate increases in bulk transportation shipments of grain from the Prairies and asbestos from Cassiar. Local needs for the development of transportation seem to receive less priority, however. The Prince Rupert facilities seem sure of major development, while the scale and reliability of port development at Stewart are less secure. Finally, recreation and tourism are a small but growing component of this service sector.

Although in terms of income generation agriculture now stands fifth on the list of economic activities, it was originally the main occupation of White settlers. Further, it is the sector that has provided the most long-term social stability to the region and has frequently been the base of the pattern of occupational pluralism which is characteristic of some parts of the Northwest. The major marketing operations in the agricultural sector are beef production and dairying. Many more residents maintain small vegetable gardens or mixed farming operations, however. Most of their produce is raised to meet their own needs, but some small-scale local marketing in many areas provides extra cash for residents. The practice of agriculture at this level and as one element in a plural occupational enterprise shows signs of increasing in the future, wherever soil types will permit.

Dominant Issues

The preceding description of the economy of the region emphasizes one permanent and universal aspect of life in the Pacific Northwest: the dependence on resource extraction and primary processing. However, this observation fails to take into account three other very important realities about the total social context. The first is the effect that technological change and increased capitalization of the resource industries has had upon the quality and number of jobs available in the occupational opportunity structure, and therefore on all aspects of community life. The second is the profound differences in the ways in which Whites and Native Indians have access to, and experience the nature of, that opportunity structure. The third is labour instability.

The Impact of Technological Change

The nature and impact of technological changes can best be understood in an historical context. There have been essentially two periods in the economic history of the region. The first, which can be labelled the "pioneering" period, extended from the earliest penetration by Whites in the mid 1850's until the 1950's a century later. During this stage, while the traditional economies of the Natives were severely modified, they were not made completely unviable. Some of the Whites who settled in the area adopted some of the traditional local skills of fishing, trapping and hunting, and exercised them alongside the skills which had been imported as part of early pioneering and small-scale capitalism. At the same time, initial development of the primary industrial activities such as mining and lumbering occurred. While their development was on a relatively small scale in modern, international terms, it was of considerable value and importance to the local economies. Indeed the traditional subsistence and the small-scale production economies of early independent entrepreneurs were frequently mutually supportive.

Occupational pluralism was thus a natural outcome. For example, both the traditional economies of fishing and agriculture peaked in their demand for labour in the summer when lumbering was usually restricted or forbidden because of fire hazards or adverse weather. Thus many independent farmers and fishermen found part-time employment in the numerous small-scale logging and saw-milling operations that proliferated throughout the region during this formative period. The personal skills which were required by the labour intensive technologies then employed within the logging and mining industries were also compatible with the skills required by farmers, fishermen, and pioneer transportation workers.

The second stage of regional economic development, which may be labelled the "modernization" period, began in the late 1950's. During this period world-wide technological advances of enormous magnitude were made in all industries, and not least in the prima--y extractive sector of the economy. The basic premise of this change was that capital, in the form of increasingly elaborate and expensive equipment, should be substituted for labour, thereby increasing the productiveness of the employed labourer. The consequences of this shift were generally enormous, but in the Northwest in particular, people who had previously had marketable skills found that they were no longer regarded as competent to function within the constraints or demands of the new technology. In addition, far fewer people were needed to operate the large and expensive new machines. Jobs, particularly in the primary sector of the economy, became both scarcer and more highly specific in their skill requirements. The other aspect of this shift was that small, independent operators (portable saw mills, fish boats, etc.) were unable to compete with the large-scale capital intensive and often corporately controlled economy which was growing up around them. In some cases (e.g. , forestry) dramatic changes in government policy also promoted the demise of small-scale operations. As a

consequence, many small, locally controlled businesses were then absorbed and consolidated into larger capital intensive units, with remote and sometimes foreign head-quarters.

There was thus a major and abrupt shift away from the range of skills and capital which lay within the reach of most of the local population. This created a mutual exclusion between the traditional (independent) and the modern (corporate) economic sectors, which in the past, had coexisted and collaborated. In the case of the larger-scale local industries that were changed or were founded upon the new corporate organization, workers tended increasingly to be imported from the major urban centres, **and to have industrial and urban skills and matching personal attitudes.**

The emergence of this "dual" economy has been observed almost universally in hinterland areas that are subjected to rapid economic changes and is usually described as "modernization". Many of the social effects widely attributed to these changes are ones which stable populations committed to the area view as undesirable. Newcomers who are associated with the more highly paid industrial economic activities often view their residency in the area as a temporary one while they make their stake (workers) or while they gain experience (managers). (See the B.C. Research Council, Labour Instability Study.) Another serious cause of local concern is that managers of large-scale and impersonal industries tend to emphasize formal certification rather than relevant experience as the proper basis for evaluating the work skills of the local population. This [p]laces the local population at a competitive disadvantage to workers hired in the cities in the South or the East. The managers of local branch plants and industries, because of their lack of sustained local connections, are often unaware of reservoirs of local skills, unless these are affirmed by

the formal certification which is difficult or impossible to acquire locally. In addition, because the scale and nature of the local productive process have been transformed by the technological revolution, much of the work to be performed has itself frequently become more repetitive and less personally gratifying. Further, there is little demand for,or expectation of, local and individual initiative. The pace of such industrial type production, which depends on the full-time use of expensive machinery, is relentless and tends to ignore and hence undercut the alternative traditional economic activities of locally recruited workers.

So far as the populations of settled and locally committed people are concerned, the existence of large supra-regional industries also undermines the recognition of local economic and political needs. There is, in many of our study communities, a strong desire to have an extensive range of viable jobs that could utilize the wide range of skills available locally. The futures of local children are also seen to be at stake, since if there are few jobs available to local residents, the younger members of the community are forced to leave, taking, in a sense, the future with them.

Finally, local populations who have already settled, or might like to settle more permanently in this scenic region, sense that there is a systematic destruction of formerly viable local economic opportunities, without any real chance of having access to many of the opportunities created by new impacts. Social tensions and problems develop, not least of which is the increasing destabilization of even the most stable populations because the children do indeed tend to leave the region for the lack of viable economic and social opportunities.

The Ethnic Gap

The place of Natives in the society of the Pacific North West is 'marginal' despite their relatively high numbers. In 1835, before large-scale White immigration began, the majority of the Natives in B.C. lived in the North West, and were then, as now, concentrated along the Bulkley and Skeena valleys, the Naas valley, and on the Queen Charlotte Islands.

The fur trade provided the first substantial contact between Natives and Whites in this area, as was the case in Eastern Canada. In due course the Hudson's Bay Company, the Northwest Company, and missionaries from the Anglican, Methodist, and Roman Catholic churches, all focussed their attention on the indigenous population as each sought to reap some material or spiritual rewards from the interaction. Some of the newcomers stayed as settlers, and each successive invasion tended to have the effect of reducing the territory and hence the economic base of the local Native population. By the beginning of the twentieth century most of the Natives in the area had lost much of their autonomy,

> As settlement was consolidated in the North Indians more and more became problems to be solved, subjects to be administered, and solutions to be imposed.
> (McCullum & McCullum, 1979:28.)

Today, the North West area still has a higher concentration of Natives than the remainder of B.C. The Naas valley is overwhelmingly Native while the Hazelton area and the Queen Charlottes are half Native. Precise estimates of the present numbers of the Native population are difficult to establish, partly because of problems in defining Native status, especially in inter-marriage situations between Whites and Natives. However, if the "status" and "non-status" criteria are combined, it would appear that in North West B.C. the Native population constitutes between 20% and 25% of the regional total.

The traditional social organization of the tribes of the area was based on an exogamous (out-marrying) matrilineal hierarchical political structure of ill defined chieftainships. Individuals and lineage segments were organized around an elaborate network of graduated statuses, with a small group of people of high status, a larger group of commoners and some slaves. Personal status was determined primarily through the accumulation of wealth as a result of individual prowess and manipulation, which was assisted but not assured by clan or lineage membership. The coastal tribes in particular, who were traditionally hunters, gatherers and fishermen, had access to considerable surplus wealth with which to conduct status competitions such as the potlatch.

When Whites first came to the coast they encountered a Native people who were vigorous and well-organized, and had established trading skills developed from centuries of inter-tribal commerce as well as from the fur trade. In the late nineteenth century Anglican and Methodist missionaries founded industrially competent and largely self-supported communities in the coastal areas, the most successful being that of Metlakatla, north of Prince Rupert. Even in these mission coumtunities, however, Natives were frequently looked upon as simple, heathen children. It is notable that unlike the situations between Whites and Natives in other parts of North America, very little blood was shed during this historical era of invasion and settlement. However, the latent hostility that was created then still persists, and can become explicit in social and work situations.

The one aspect of their lives which both Whites and Natives in the North have experienced in common is their hinterland and subordinate relationship to the rest of the industrial world. While this is perceived as a problem by all settlers in the North, the disadvantages of this relation-ship tend to affect the Natives even more adversely, and more profoundly, than the White population. For example, with

shifts to capital intensive primary extractive enterprises in the late 1950's, Whites could and did move either within the area, or leave for greener pastures elsewhere. Some had access to skills networks based within their community, and could retrain at a formal or informal level. This option was not objectively or subjectively open to Natives. Subjectively, if they were to become as geographically mobile as Whites, they would in consequence tend to lose their cultural connections, as well as that minimal economic support provided by the government in the form of Status Rights. Objectively, also, this mobility was not possible without the education, skills, or values demanded by industrial work. Education is one way of acquiring this background, but the school system has been, in the main, an institution to which Natives have had limited access.

As Table I indicates, the educational attainment of the whole region is lower than the B.C. average. Natives have, in general, even lower levels of educational attainment than the rest of the population.

In recent years, much attention has been focussed on the issue of how this situation can be changed. The most innovative attempt to improve the primary and secondary educational attainments of Natives has been the creation of a new school district for the Naas valley in which the Nishga have significant control over their own school. Not only are the physical facilities themselves impressive, but so, too, are the results. Conventional curricula and methods in combination with traditional cultural content have produced the extremely high retention rates by any standard. In other districts, such as Terrace and Smithers, Alternative Education Programs have also attempted to provide an improved educational environment for students, but with far less success.

TABLE I

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

		Less than Grade 5	Grades 5-8	Grades 9-10	Grades 11-13	University
North West Region	N	2,960	10,925	11,735	30,550	4,175
		4.5	18.2	19.5	50.9	6.9
Total B.C.	N	61,925	315,125	371,045	1,248,440	202,795
		2.8	14.3	16.9	56.8	9.2

Source: 1971 Census.

Labour Instability

Natives are widely excluded either directly or indirectly from many employment opportunities but Whites also experience some employment instability.

In the Phase One Labour Instability Study sponsored by the Skeena Manpower Development Committee, almost all labour in the area demonstrates extremely high turnover rates. The following tables 2 and 3 provide some of the relevant data for the study collimunities, in the significant industrial categories. The pattern underlying these statistics indicates high mobility and short-term employment. Neither traditional culture nor locally available education have enabled Natives in particular, to participate effectively in this type of occupational pattern. Whites do so more successfully but the costs to communities as well as industries are undoubtedly very high.

TABLE 2

LABOUR TURNOVER RATES

Location and Year

Location	1973	1974	1975	1976
Queen Charlottes	135%	121%	817	96%
Prince Rupert	50%	65%	37%	40%
Terrace	77%	74%	50%	46%
Kitimat	62%	59%	35%	37%
Smithers	17%	17%	18%	17%

Source: Skeena Manpower Development Committee, Report of Phase One Labour Instability, 1978:23.

TABLE 3

LABOUR TURNOVER RATES

Industry

Industry	1973	1974	1975	1976
Logging, Wood Products, Pulp	87%	92%	48%	56%
Mining and Smelter	92%	77%	- 34%	45%
Fishing and Packing	5%	10%	22%	19%
Utilities	41%	44%	36%	30%
Transportation and Equipment Services	33%	35%	24%	14%
Retail & Hotel	66%	60%	76%	77%
Municipal & Government Offices	34%	49%	45%	43%
Hospitals	64%	74%	49%	57%
Schools	32%	33%	31%	27%

Source: Skeena Manpower Development Committee, Report of Phase One Labour Instability, 1978:23.

The Community Profiles

It is important to remember, however, that neither economic nor social structures are static, and this region is no exception to the general rule. The communities which we describe in the following profiles are no longer remote or isolated in an absolute sense. Indeed, this is an important component of the problems currently being experienced in the North generally. The question is not whether the northern hinterland will be increasingly subject to metropolitan based and directed social and economic impacts, but how it will be impacted.

Although the individual areas of this Pacific North West region share many similarities in geography, history, economics, and life experiences, at the same time they also demonstrate important differences and paradoxes. It was this similar-but-different situation that initially attracted our attention to the area as a promising research venue. It was this same similar-but-different quality that also provided the fundamental understandings that have led to a re-conceptualization of the specific form taken by socio-economic impacts and reactions to them in northern hinterland areas. While the history of impacts in the Pacific North West may be short when it is compared to the south, it is longer than that of many other northern regions and it is rich in examples of both positive and negative effects, experiences and adaptations that illuminate the impacting process.

We move now to an examination of the selected communities themselves, the study of which has enabled us to formulate the components of a conceptual model that seems to reflect the conditions which appear to be special in the northern rural hinterlands when they are contrasted to the more fully documented and largely industrialized south.

We have grouped the eight communities we studied either by region, or by some commonly shared structural characteristic. Thus the Bulkley-Nechako valley communities of HOUSTON, SMITHERS, AND HAZELTON, share an agricultural base (Chapter Five); the communities of KITIMAT and STEWART are both company towns (Chapter Six); AIYANSH in the Naas valley is an almost totally Native community (Chapter Seven); and MASSET and SKIDEGATE in the Queen Charlotte Islands are the two Native communities on an island complex where all settlements share a notable degree of physical, economic and social separation from one another, despite their shared isolation from the rest of the region (Chapter Eight).