

# **ON THE RAIL-LINE IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO: NON-RESERVE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY CHANGE**

EDWARD J. HEDICAN  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
University of Guelph  
Guelph, Ontario  
Canada, N1G 2W1

## **ABSTRACT/RESUME**

This paper focusses on housing and economic structure in a non-reserve Aboriginal community on the railway in northern Ontario. Household surveys in 1975 and 1985 are compared. The author reviews the potential for incorporating communities such as this into the provincial municipal system, in order to provide basic services not currently available.

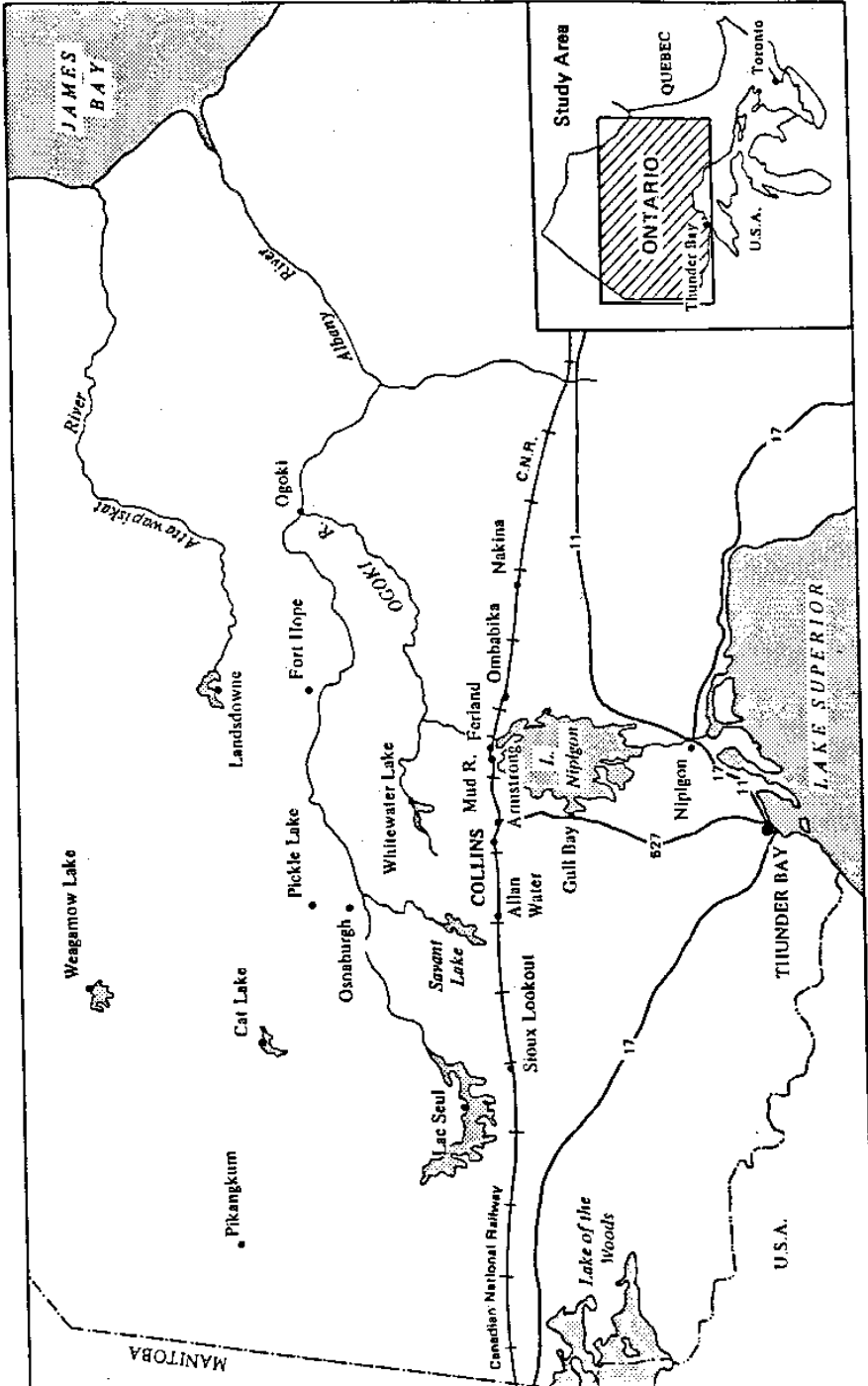
Cet article étudie le logement et la structure économique dans une communauté autochtone non-réserve sur le chemin de fer en Ontario du nord. On a comparé les enquêtes de ménage de 1975 et 1985. L'auteur examine la possibilité d'incorporer les communautés comme celle-là dans le système municipal provincial, afin d'offrir des services de base qui manquent actuellement.

## INTRODUCTION

The housing conditions of Native populations in Canada continue to remain a matter of considerable concern.<sup>1</sup> Statistical data on housing quality collected by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development demonstrate that housing in Indian communities remains at a generally poor standard, and that there is a pressing need for major repairs and upgrading. Electricity, indoor plumbing, and running water are taken for granted by most Canadians, but these amenities are not frequently found in Native homes. Living conditions are cramped, as many houses are inhabited by several families. For conditions in the 1960's it is indicated in government reports that: "Housing was generally over-crowded and in poor condition. Many were without services. In 1965, less than half had electricity and only one in six had a safe water supply." By the mid-1970's the following changes are noted, "The quality and availability of serviced housing has improved, but Indian housing lasts about 15 years compared to 35 years for non-Indians. On the average, 50 to 60 per cent of Indian housing has running water and sewage disposal, up from 25 per cent 15 years ago, but in some areas [such as Manitoba and Saskatchewan] as little as 10 per cent of housing is serviced" (DIAND, 1980:8-9).

If these are the housing conditions of the reserve Indian population, we are left to wonder what the conditions might be like for non-reserve people for whom statistical details are not available from government sources. In northwestern Ontario there are numerous non-reserve Native settlements strung out along the Canadian Nation Rail-line between Long Lac and Sioux Lookout (see Map 1). These are mostly small communities of 150 inhabitants or less, with names such as Mud River, Allenwater Bridge, Ferland and Ombabika. The populations are comprised of various proportions of status and non-status Indians, Métis and a few non-Native people, mainly teachers and store-keepers. These non-reserve settlements are little known outside the area as conditions in these communities remain absent from government reports. The provision of basic services is a problem because these communities are caught in the middle of federal and provincial responsibilities (Young, 1988:74-80). Since these are not reserve populations, the Indian Affairs Department has not regarded these people as a responsibility of the federal government, even though substantial numbers of status Indians are represented in non-reserve populations. On the other hand, provincial governments have been reluctant to intrude into what they regard as federal jurisdiction, although some, as with Ontario's Native Affairs Directorate, provide remedial services when there are especially pressing needs in the areas of health, welfare and employment.

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of a study of one such non-reserve Native community, Collins, Ontario, and thereby to contribute to our understanding of this prominent lacuna in Native Studies concerning the characteristics of non-reserve settle-



ments. The focus of this report is on a ten year study conducted at two intervals between 1975 and 1985 on demographic change in Collins, with a special emphasis on conditions of residential patterning during this period.<sup>2</sup>

## **THE RAIL-LINE NATIVE COMMUNITY**

The Canadian National Railway (CNR) was completed through northern Ontario in 1911 and soon after a series of stores and trading posts were established at various rail-line locations. The line stores were for the most part successful operations because of a competitive edge in reducing transportation costs over the more northerly, remote Hudson's Bay Company posts along the Albany River. By the 1940's Indian trappers from such places as Fort Hope, Ogoki, and Landsdowne were bringing their furs down to trade at rail-line stores in increasingly large numbers (Baldwin, 1957). Many of these trappers also brought their families and set up their tents around these stores for the summer months. Catechists began to offer religious and educational instruction to the children before their parents returned to the trap line up north.

Churches were constructed at a number of these rail-line locations which, along with the store and railway crews, provided a nexus for the incipient non-reserve settlement. Schools were eventually built in the early 1960's and many families constructed log cabins along the line, moving back and forth between these cabins and their trap lines. One such location, called Collins, became a major focus of this demographic shift (Hedican, 1986). It is populated mainly by people from the Fort Hope area, but other families from the White Sand and Nipigon House Bands from Lake Nipigon have also taken up residence in Collins.

The major portion of the village is compressed between the rail-line and Collins Lake. There is a large clearing comprising the trading store and school, tall jack pines waving in the wind, a series of wide foot paths, and log cabins scattered along the lake shore. Houses in the village are interconnected by a maze of sandy paths and are clustered together in neighbourhoods along lines of kinship and band affiliation. Except for the teacherage, a store keepers adjoining residence, and several CNR houses, all of the thirty houses in the village during the initial field work period of 1975 were constructed of horizontal logs and heated by wood stoves.

An initial census of the Collins population (in 1975) revealed a total community membership of 148 people, of whom over half were under twenty-one years of age, a third between twenty-one and fifty, and the remainder over fifty. However, as not all of these people were in the village at any given time, as some were attending school or working outside, only 123 people (69 adults and 54 children) were considered to be permanent residents for the purposes of this survey. As forty-three per cent of Collins people were under sixteen

years of age, it could be anticipated that there would be a continuing stress on existing facilities, such as schooling, health care and housing. About sixty per cent of the people had retained their Indian status, while many had lost their status as a result of their marriage, or their parent's, to non-status individuals. It is not known how many of the non-status group, however, might have regained their status as a result of the provisions contained in the recent passage of Bill C-31 which amended the *Indian Act* so that status was no longer lost as a result of marriage to those without status. In any case, in Collins, the status and non-status distinction is not nearly as important in local reckoning as one's kinship affiliation and band membership, which are the two over-riding factors of group identity in the village.

Overall there were thirty occupied houses in Collins, yielding an average of about four persons per dwelling. It would therefore appear that Collins had a somewhat smaller household size than that found in other Native settlements in the area (cf. Bishop, 1974:56-57), although precise figures on household size are lacking. There were thirty-two households overall, as in two cases dwellings were partitioned in half, with each half occupied by separate families. There was in all a considerable variation in household composition, ranging from households with only one individual to those with as many as four adult members resident at the same time. The most prominent household type was that of nuclear families, that is a couple with dependent children, although there were a considerable number of extended families consisting of nuclear units with other relatives. Another category of household had a varied composition consisting of the remnants of former nuclear families, such as three households with father-son combination, or two of elderly couples living with unmarried adult sons.

The Canadian National Railway was the only full-time source of employment for the community. In 1975 a section crew of five men earned just over \$50,000. The railway also hired some additional men during the summer months for track repair or other projects. A village corporation, called the Ogoki River Guides Ltd., had initiated several work projects, the largest of which was the construction of a tourist lodge at Whitewater Lake 50 miles north of the community. All of these endeavours were government sponsored projects using funds from various federal and provincial agencies; earnings from these sources amounted to \$85,000. Seasonal employment in the form of trapping, guiding and handicrafts sales amounted to another \$20,000. In addition, transfer payments such as Old Age pensions, Family Allowance or Unemployment Insurance benefits contributed \$50,000 to the local economy. A "hidden" source of employment takes place in the form of country food production, estimated at approximately 20,000 lbs. In all, for both full-time and part-time workers, the average annual income per worker amounted to \$3,500.

In terms of housing, all 30 occupied houses in the village were of horizontal log construction, with the exception of four frame houses, two of which were CNR section houses. The houses were

kept in good repair for the most part, and usually consisted of a large room with a small wood stove in the centre for heating and cooking. In the summer months many families moved the stove outside, which helped to keep the cabin cool and the flies outdoors. For the winter time the use of few windows and a low roof served to conserve heat. One usually found a small table propped up under a main window. Depending upon the size of the family, one or two beds lined the walls. The beds were often covered with home-made quilts or sleeping bags and were commonly used as couches. Coal oil lamps and candles were used for lighting. Cardboard was often nailed to the inside walls for added insulation.

None of the houses had indoor plumbing, except for the teahouse. Water was hauled from two wells, dug in 1972, although a number of families were known to use lake water. Outdoor privies served the sanitation needs. None of the houses were wired for electricity, although several had small generators for running washing machines or other appliances. The costs of repairs could be relatively high when one considers the need for manufactured materials, such as plywood, windows, and doors. By southern standards the houses did not last very long as fifteen years seemed to be about the upper limit. As the houses were made of jack pine logs, which tended to be highly flammable when dry because of their resin content, the houses were prone to burn down in a rather shocking fashion. Death by fire was rarely seen, but a house could burn down in a matter of minutes, leaving a family utterly destitute.

## **A DECADE LATER: 1985**

A household survey was again conducted a decade later in 1985. The purpose was to discover what sorts of demographic changes had occurred in the community. To my knowledge such longitudinal studies of northern Native communities have not been conducted, or at least only rarely so. First, a detailed list was made of each house in the village and its occupants. Second, a comparison was then made of the household composition between the two surveys conducted in the two decades. I wanted to find out the answer to the following sorts of questions: who had remained in the community and who had left? Who were the new members, and where had they come from? Which houses in the initial survey were still standing, and who occupied them? What were the characteristics of the new houses that had been built over this period? Overall I sought to determine in a rather precise way how the population and housing needs of the village had changed over the ensuing decade, and then to attempt to account for whatever factors lay behind these changes.

Table 1 presents in an encapsulated fashion the main highlights of these changes. Over the decade between 1975 and 1985 the village population had dropped from 123 people to 89, representing a change of nearly 30 per cent. In addition, the later population was

composed of 67 original people, so only about one-half of the 1975 population still remained in the community over the decade. The 32 new members were composed of 21 children born since 1975 and 11 people who had moved into the village. The new arrivals included 7 women, 5 married and 2 unmarried, and 4 men. With a ratio of 49 adult to 39 children (those under 16 years of age) the 1985 population was similar to that of a decade earlier (69 adults and 54 children)

**TABLE 1: ASPECTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE  
IN COLLINS, 1975-1985.**

	Adults	Children	Total	Dwellings	Ratio (persons/dwelling)
1975	69	54	123	30	4.1
1985	49	39	89	21	4.1

in that children continue to comprise about one-half of the community membership.

In terms of the housing situation, of the original 30 dwellings all but 15 of these were still occupied, but only 3 houses by the same family, with 12 dwellings having new occupants. Seven new buildings had been constructed for a total of 21 occupied houses in 1985. What had been the fate of the original 15 houses no longer occupied? Four were vacant in 1985 although still standing, 3 had burnt and 8 had been torn down. As a cabin that I had at one time occupied was one of the ones torn down, I was led to enquire about the reasons why cabins were torn down. Reasons varied. Some said that the cabins were no longer structurally safe, while in other cases the houses were used as building material in the construction of new houses. As far as the house that I had live in was concerned, one person indicated that it was destroyed because the original owner had died in a boating accident and people in the village did not want his cheebuy or ghost, hanging around the cabin. In fact even when I actually lived in the house people sometimes asked me if I had seen the ghost of one of the previous occupants who, I was assured, was easily recognized because he had only one arm. I was also told that one of the houses had been burnt down intentionally by a man who had moved away from Collins and who did not want anyone else living in his house.

## **DISCUSSION**

What is indicated by the surveys conducted a decade apart is a rather dramatic change in one northern Native community. Overall the population declined to a significant degree. The most important factor which could be seen to account for this change was the availability of employment. The CNR still had the same labour needs,

and this provided a small but reliable core of full-time employment. The biggest change had been in the area of government-sponsored work projects. In the 1975 period government grants such as LIP (Local Initiatives Program), or OFY (Opportunities for Youth), were more readily available than in the 1980's. Also, in the earlier period the construction of the tourist lodge provided employment for virtually everyone in Collins who wanted it. When construction was completed, labour demand dropped considerably, leaving only a small core group of workers as guides and maintainers. Additional construction projects in the community over the decade consisted of a new school, teacherage, and community hall, but no additional, more permanent sources of employment.

There are other factors that should be taken into consideration. One of these concerns the fact that stability of residence in Collins is restricted because none of the land is privately owned. With the exception of the store-keeper's several acres and the CNR land along the tracks, all of the Collins community is situated on Crown Land. This means that Collins people are technically squatters, and if the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources should so wish, all of the houses in Collins could be destroyed with no legal recourse on the part of the local residents. It is true that in this case the people pay no land taxes, but it also means that people are surely going to be reluctant to make significant improvements to property that they do not own themselves.

There are dozens of places like Collins strung out along the rail-line in northwestern Ontario. Most of the inhabitants of these places are Native residents whose parents or grandparents had moved away from their original reserves. For the most part the people in the rail-line community find themselves in an untenable situation. Movement back to the original reserve would not appear to be a feasible alternative for various reasons, the most important of which is that these reserves themselves are already overcrowded. Life in the rail-line community itself has become a precarious venture because more traditional forms of employment such as hunting, trapping and fishing remain uncertain. The CNR provides steady employment for a small section crew, but over the long run labour needs have actually declined because of automation so that future prospects in this case are not bright. Government sponsored work projects which were fairly prevalent in the Trudeau era have become conspicuously absent.

The government is certainly aware of the housing needs of the reserve Indian population as indicated in their own survey. What is left out of such government reports as *Indian Conditions* (DIAND, 1980) is the plight of non-reserve Native people. As we approach the twenty-first century many such places still lack the most basic of services such as running water, indoor plumbing, and electricity. As Native people along the rail-line in northwestern Ontario are not going to disappear, it is contingent upon some level of government, either federal or provincial, to make some basic recognition of the

needs of these people.

This recognition could conceivably begin with the granting of some sort of municipal or township status to the rail-line villages such that the site could be surveyed and individual lots allocated to the various families. With title to the land, the village would then be in a position to participate in the services and improvements available from the provincial government. In addition, the Ontario Housing Corporation, for example, might be persuaded to participate in a housing program that utilized local skills and resources in the construction of log houses up-graded with new insulation, heating, and plumbing requirements. If local development groups existed, such as the Ogoki River Guides in Collins, their administrative structure could be expanded to function as a settlement council capable of coordinating changes as a whole.

These are some preliminary ideas, and more could certainly be added. At the centre of the non-reserve problem is the issue of whether villages are to receive some form of official recognition which would allow them to be incorporated into the provincial municipal structure of services, or whether these villages are to be kept in limbo, facing the day-to-day uncertainties of health and sanitation, work, and food that squatter communities in the Third World face. There would appear to be little point in moving non-reserve people to other communities, either to their original reserves or other larger centres along the rail-line, because these places face their own difficult advantages, which argues for keeping the communities where they are. The most obvious of these is that they are situated directly on a major transportation system, thus allowing them to import and export materials and products less expensively than the more isolated settlements farther north. The rail-line village also has a relatively stable core of full-time work positions in the section crews, with the possibility of seasonal expansion. Other seasonal work such as guiding can be expected to continue. The relative isolation of the rail-line village, with its small population base, also means that local resources such as wood, fish and game supplies should not be overly taxed in the immediate future.

What is needed in addition to these existing advantages is a supplementary economic base which has the potential to generate more earned income. A railway site would certainly have some advantages in the manufacturing sector, which would however require start-up funding for capital equipment and supplies. The construction of much needed local housing would be the most obvious application of this initiative. We cannot pretend that there are easy solutions, but nothing will change without the ideas and effort of all parties concerned, both Native and non-Native.

## **MUNICIPAL INCORPORATION: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

In northwestern Ontario today there are fifty-three Native re-

serves and settlements. Nineteen, or twenty-five percent, of these communities are designated by the Ontario government as Native settlements have a resident population of about two hundred people. In addition, there are about a dozen small towns and villages in the area with a high Native population, such as Sioux Lookout, Armstrong, Savant Lake, and Nakina.

Native non-reserve settlements are usually situated on Crown land, which technically places them under the purview of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. These settlements do not have any formal procedures or guidelines for forming councils or electing local officials, except by what is sometimes referred to as "Band Custom". In some instances the federal Department of Indian Affairs holds title to several acres of land on which the local school is built, probably because many non-reserve settlements have a large status Indian population. For the northwestern Ontario population as a whole, it is estimated (Ontario, 1974a) that about ten percent of the residents live in what are called "unorganized centers". As such, the people in these places usually lack the benefits of local government, the capacity to finance basic services, and the means to plan orderly debt. It also means that there is a multiplicity of government agencies, both federal and provincial, that have some form of jurisdiction or influence over such settlements. The Ontario government was apparently aware of these difficulties, and prepared legislation (Bill 102) in an attempt to overcome the problems of unorganized settlements.

## **BILL 102: AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE INCORPORATION OF COMMUNITIES IN TERRITORY WITHOUT MUNICIPAL ORGANIZATION**

In 1974 the Ontario government introduced a bill, commonly referred to as "The Northern Communities Act", as a measure to incorporate a form of municipal organization into the so-called unorganized communities of northwestern Ontario. This bill was based upon the idea that "It is a generally accepted principal of government operation that the provincial government will contract to provide essential or basic social and physical services only to those communities which have some form of legally recognized municipal organization" (Ontario, 1974b:1).

It indicated that the Local Roads Board was the only form of legally recognized self-government in unincorporated communities, and that there were well over a hundred such communities in the rural areas of northwestern Ontario.

Overall it would appear that the Ontario government was reluctant to provide permanent services with long term financing arrangements to communities which possessed little or no economic base. In Ontario, hundreds of social and physical service programmes were scattered over fifteen to twenty government departments.

There was little effort to develop a co-ordinated application of these programmes and their numerous criteria, regulations and guidelines. The lack of a co-ordinated inter-ministerial policy to deal with the problems of social and physical services in the unincorporated community was partially to blame for the rather drastic plight of some isolated settlements.

## **SOME REACTIONS AND COMMENTS**

At one level the intent of Bill 102 would appear to be misdirected because it attempted to propose one structural solution, namely the creation of community councils, to the problem of local self-government. Perhaps a number of local municipal government arrangements could be adopted, allowing the communities to select that one which appears most responsive to the particular needs of a community. In its uniformity, Bill 102 also failed to respond to the degree and diversity of required services in unorganized communities. Save for some exceptions, such as special rural housing projects, local community associations or development councils were not permitted to contract directly with government to acquire services. However, elections to a community council could be controlled according to the regulations of the Ontario Municipal Elections Act. In this case, by acting on his own initiative, the Minister was completely empowered to override the decisions of local residents.

The only local government form unique to the north is the Improvement District which is not really local government at all, but an extension of the administrative apparatus of the provincial government.<sup>3</sup> The key to the community council idea is to create a structure which can deliver as much as possible in services at the lowest possible administrative cost and, at the same time, exploit the democratic advantage of very small size. It might also be suggested, whether by design or not, the Bill 102 attempted to impose 'metropolitan formality' in the informal setting of the northern rural community.

A related difficulty hindering the implementation of basic services in the northern settlements has to do with an inter-ministerial conflict over planning. One reason for the Ontario government's failure to undertake any systematic planning for land use in the north is the necessity of resolving a bureaucratic conflict. Both the Ministries of Natural Resources and Treasury have planning powers; Natural Resources under the Public Lands Act, and Treasury under the Planning Act. Natural Resources is hesitant to exercise its own powers because of resource-industry opposition, and it is not willing to let Treasury use its own powers. The result is a compromise that allows Treasury to do only minimal planning.

## THE ISSUE OF ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL

The people of Collins, as residents of an unincorporated community, expressed concern over the administrative implications of Bill 102. They wondered, for example, if there would be an increase in administrative control in areas where the government then exercised minimal influence by promising services which local residents would have to pay for in the long term? And, would this be accomplished by the creation of bureaucratic links through elective community councils which the government would ultimately control through provincial statutes? The additional concern was that the provincial government, through incorporating unorganized communities, might burden those settlements with providing for themselves those essential services which they had been demanding of government for so long. In fact, local autonomy was provided for only in those matters of responsibility which the government had chosen, for economic reasons, not to assume.<sup>4</sup>

The important question, from the view of the local residents, had to do with the extent to which the implementation of municipal organization would hinder, or enhance, whatever local autonomy then existed. In fact the Hawthorn Report, which still contains one of the most in-depth discussions of the implications of Indian communities adopting a municipal form of government, makes special mention of the autonomy issue. For example, "The policy-making discretion of local government officials is further reduced by the proliferation of conditional grants. These grants tend in effect to turn local governments into agencies for the fulfillment of provincial purposes. The growing importance of municipal governments in providing services and amenities for their citizens is thus coupled with a decline in local autonomy" (Hawthorn, 1966:289). It should be concluded, then, "that the complete movement of Indian communities into provincial frameworks of municipal organization might only provide limited gains in self-government" (Ibid: 299).

The residents of Collins were also concerned about the probable new tax structure that would appear in the event of municipal incorporation. As one leader expressed it, "we would never have the tax base for such grand schemes. You can't expect the government to give us these services for nothing." He also went on to ask, "What does the government mean that it needs 'official mechanisms' to implement basic services. The Ministry of the Environment built our wells didn't they, and without 'official' channels?" The implication is that the powers granted community councils under municipal organization would be mostly illusory ones, as the decision-making abilities of local residents would not necessarily be enhanced in any significant manner. Eventually, however, Bill 102 was passed, but mainly because of the strong backing of people in the Euro-Canadian unorganized community for whom issues of control and autonomy were less significant than they were in similar Native settlements.<sup>5</sup>

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In the intervening years since 1974 the Collins people, mindful of the autonomy issue, have attempted to pursue a course of action independent of the local government provisions of Bill 102. The Northern Communities Act, for example, called for the formation of elected community councils in the unorganized settlements. In the Collins case the people formed what might be termed a local development board, called the Ogoki River Guides Ltd., consisting of a small executive committee whose purpose is to co-ordinate various community endeavours. This board solicits outside grants, hires workers, and generally handles the paperwork involved in the processing of the incoming funds. It also delegates a certain amount of authority to various foremen and construction bosses who are charged with implementing the 'on-the-ground' activity. One might call this the corporate approach to community development.

In recent years the Ogoki River Guides committee has been especially active in a revamping of the local educational system. In 1960 the Department of Indian Affairs built a small, one-room school in the village, even though this is not an official Indian reserve. The record keeping was complex: beside each student's name a notation was made indicating a Band number, if he or she had status, or "n.s." indicating non-status. Indian Affairs paid for the status children, and a provincial agency for the non-status ones. Teachers were hired by Indian Affairs without community consultation. In one year when the school was overcrowded, Indian Affairs indicated that, as the school was a federal installation, only status Indian students could attend; the others could be sent to Thunder Bay, 150 miles to the south.

The Ogoki River Guides group, because of this incident, spearheaded an effort to have the school removed from the federal jurisdiction of the Indian Affairs Department and turn over to the Ontario Ministry of Education. The Collins people have since gone on to form their own school board, build a new modern school, hire their own teachers, and establish certain curriculum requirements. At present they are negotiating with various Ontario ministries in an attempt to obtain title to the land occupied by their village so that they might no longer be squatters on crown land, but property holders with collateral and inheritable estates. The future outcome of these ambitious endeavours remains uncertain, but the people in this one non-reserve Native community are trying to chart their own future in spite of considerable political and socio-economic difficulties.

## THE SECHELT CASE

The Sechelt Indian Band of British Columbia (cf. Etkin, 1988) in 1984 became the first Band in Canada to develop its own constitution and to withdraw the lands of the reserve from the Indian Act. In effect the Sechelt Band has set a precedent by creating a new level of

government for Native communities. The implications of this case are important. Rather than have reserve lands that are held by the Crown "in trust", Indians now apparently have the opportunity to move beyond usufructuary title only, to "fee simple" ownership. In such a case Indian people on a reserve would have the opportunity to mortgage, transfer and inherit property. On the surface at least, clear title to Indian land would help to overcome some of the incumbrances to economic development imposed by the Indian Act.

It is important to indicate though that Sechelt lands are still reserves under the meaning of the Constitution Act (1867), and the land continues to be registered under the Reserve Land Register. As such the Sechelt people have achieved a governmental format that is not just a municipality. The Sechelt district is the creation of the Federal government, so that provincial laws apply to a limited degree. In fact because of its unique position the Band Council has significant powers (Etkin, 1988:88-89) beyond those of conventional municipalities.<sup>6</sup>

As far as the non-reserve Native settlements in northwestern Ontario are concerned, the Sechelt formula offers hope that a greater degree of local self-government might be achieved through the legislative process, something that Collins in particular would like to see developed further. However, unlike the Sechelt case, the non-reserve Native settlement is continually caught in a jurisdictional bind. The population includes many status Indians, and therefore has some claim on Federal government responsibility, but there are also non-status Indians and Métis people as well, which would suggest that provincial involvement would be appropriate. In reality what has happened is that neither level of government has been an active participant in alleviating the plight of Native squatter settlements in northern areas. The Sechelt Indian Band is situated in close proximity to the large urban center of Vancouver, while the squatters of northern Ontario are hidden away in the bush, out of sight and beyond close scrutiny.

## **CONCLUSION**

The essential argument of this paper is that governments, both federal and provincial, should be accountable for the well-being of people living in small, isolated settlements. In particular, the non-reserve Native settlements of northwestern Ontario lack access to adequate housing, sanitation facilities, running water and electricity. The people are working to solve these problems, but existing jurisdictional difficulties tends to hinder their efforts. Even though the people in the non-reserve settlements are technically squatters, it is not reasonable to suggest that they return to their home reserves which are already overcrowded in any event. In addition, such settlements also have non-status and Métis occupants who have nowhere else to go anyway. A start in the right direction would be for

the federal and provincial governments to work possibilities for providing much needed services in the face of a minimal tax base. In such a way the non-reserve people would be given a sense of permanency in their lives, and a hope that their children's future will be worth living.

## NOTES

1. The fieldwork into rail-line Native settlements on which this paper is based was conducted over a twelve year period from 1974 to 1986. The community of Collins (Map 1) was the principal focus for most of this work, although three months were also spent with the Whitesand Band in the village of Armstrong during 1980. In addition, trips of several days each were also made to the communities of Sioux Lookout, Savant Lake, Ombabika, Nakina, and Long Lac. I am indebted to McGill University and the University of Guelph for providing the financial assistance which made this work possible.
2. A more extensive discussion of the Collins community can be found in my book entitled *The Ogoki River Guides: Emergent Leadership Among the Northern Ojibwa* (Hedican, 1986). The policy implications of non-reserve Native settlements are considered in Hedican, 1982a, economic problems in Hedican, 1985; 1987; and 1990, and leadership problems in a forthcoming article in *Ethnic Groups* (Hedican, in press). A discussion of the research into the Whitesand Band from Armstrong, mentioned in Note 1 above, is reported in Hedican, 1982b.
3. Dacks (1981:105-109) also discusses the role of the "improvement district" as a basis of local government in the Northwest Territories. In particular he notes that "In the Fall of 1980, the Yukon Legislative Assembly passed a Municipal Ordinance ending the five local improvement districts and permitting smaller communities to become either hamlets or unincorporated settlements. This Ordinance resembles the system used in the N.W.T. during the 1970s, in that the unincorporated settlements have councils with only advisory status and the powers of the hamlets are largely restricted to the provision of hard services" (1981:109).
4. Weaver (1984) also considered the fiscal restraints on self-government proposals in a wider perspective, suggesting that "what has happened in the federal government is that the system of financing, rather than the needs and aspirations of people, has become the driving force in policy formulation. From this flows a system of rules and regulations whose values are based on cost-benefit analysis, on conformity to regulations—basically technocratic notions" (1984:67).

5. Local resistance to the imposition of outside political structures is a common phenomenon in northern areas. Commenting on the Inuit, for example, Dacks notes that "The structure of the local councils was an imposed southern structure that was alien to the existing political practices in the communities...the structures imposed were too rigid to accommodate Inuit approaches to politics and often produced confusion and alienation among the Native residents of the smaller communities" (1981:106-107).
6. This so-called 'municipal model' of Indian government exemplified by the Sechelt case has become the subject of some criticism and debate. See, for example, the interesting discussion by Boldt and Long (1988:49). Tennant's (1985) examination of Indian self-government proposals in the context of the Penner Report is also highly relevant in this regard.

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