

**BUILDING NUNAVUT THROUGH DECENTRALIZATION
OR
CARPET-BOMBING IT INTO NEAR-TOTAL DYSFUNCTION?
A CASE STUDY IN ORGANIZATIONAL ENGINEERING**

Jack Hicks*
Ilisimatusarfik (The University of Greenland)
jack@jackhicks.com

Graham White
University of Toronto
gwhite@chass.utoronto.ca

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Nunavut, Canada's newest territory, has attracted academic and popular attention far out of proportion to its minuscule population. To some extent, this is a function both in Canada and abroad of fascination with the Arctic – for Canadians, the North looms large in the national imagination, even though precious few have actually seen it first hand. In addition, though, interest in Nunavut reflects the importance of the political and administrative challenges and opportunities facing the country's largest jurisdiction with a majority Aboriginal population.

The creation of Nunavut was not simply about according the people of the Eastern Arctic what other Canadians had long enjoyed – their own government attuned to their distinctive situation. The Inuit vision for a Nunavut homeland also entailed establishing an Inuit government.¹ This was not to be an Inuit government in the sense of an Aboriginal self-government, with the exclusionary elements of the self-government regimes emerging elsewhere across the country. Rather, the goal was to create a 'public' government structured and operating according to Inuit ways and values, a government whose organization and culture would reflect Nunavut's unique demographics, geography and culture rather than simply replicating the conventional governance institutions of the provinces and other territories.

Most of the academic attention devoted to the attempts at realizing innovative governance structures and processes in Nunavut has focused on the efforts to imbue the Government of Nunavut (GN) and associated institutions with Inuit values – officially known as *Inuit qaujimaqatuqangit* (IQ; roughly 'that which has been long known by Inuit').² Interesting and important – and problematic – as that may be, it is by no means the only facet of the GN which distinguishes it from more conventional governments in Canada. To take but one example, the remarkable and wholly unique relationship between the Government of Nunavut and the Inuit land claim organization, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), which represents in a direct, active way the 85 per cent of Nunavummiut who are Inuit beneficiaries of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, has yet to be explored.

This paper examines another unusual element of the GN which stands as perhaps its most distinctive design principle: a far-reaching plan for decentralizing the operations of the government itself. All modern governments are to some degree decentralized, in the form of networks of regional and field offices; with few exceptions, though, these offices are engaged solely in service delivery. Decentralization in Nunavut was to be fundamentally different. Not only were substantial numbers of government jobs to be located in small communities throughout the territory, but many of the governmental functions to be spread across the territory were to be 'headquarters' activities.

A Note on Definitions and Terminology

Decentralization of administrative systems has taken many different forms in many different countries, and the terminology used to describe different types of decentralization

varies widely across the literature. The same terms are often employed inconsistently. “Decentralization” is a term frequently encountered in the context of Canadian federalism, but even here different meanings reflect varying conceptual approaches.³

The World Bank defines decentralization as “a multi-dimensional process that involves the transfer of political, fiscal and administrative responsibilities and powers from the central government to intermediate and local governments,” and differentiates between *political* decentralization, *administrative* decentralization, *fiscal* decentralization, and *market* decentralization.⁴ Rondinelli and Cheema’s typology of decentralization distinguishes between deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatization – in order of increasing dispersion of power.⁵

The process of relocating and geographically dispersing units of the same level of government (i.e. without giving autonomy or power to a lower level of government) is often referred to as **deconcentration**, and is viewed as the least intensive form of *administrative* decentralization.

A clear distinction between decentralization (“the transfer of powers and authority from the central government to provincial governing bodies”) and deconcentration (“whereby centrally located authorities and entities are re-located to government structures in the provinces, physically “deconcentrating” the centre”) has been usefully employed by Bizet in his recent analysis of centre-periphery tensions in France.⁶

Using these definitions, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have seen far more deconcentration than decentralization – but the deconcentration that has taken place is usually *referred to* as ‘decentralization.’ While the authors feel that distinguishing between the two is important, in this paper we will use the term ‘decentralization’ as it is in common usage in the North.

Overview

When Nunavut came into being in 1999 it inherited from the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) both community-level and regional offices throughout Nunavut.⁷ The GN thus began life with a substantial governmental presence in all 25 communities, totalling 2,253 territorial government employees in addition to the 1,008 people employed by community governments and community housing associations.⁸ But GNWT decision-making authority as well as central government functions – policy development, coordination and the like – were almost entirely concentrated in Yellowknife, the territorial capital. Nunavut was to be different: a government spread across a vast territory, not only in terms of routine service delivery, but also in terms of essential corporate governance functions.

The decentralization initiative had several interrelated purposes. In a jurisdiction where government is the mainstay of the economy, stable, well-paid white-collar jobs are of critical importance. Spreading the economic benefits of government employment beyond the capital, Iqaluit, into communities where private sector jobs are scarce was a prime consideration driving decentralization. Communities would realize economic benefits not only from the jobs but also from the construction of the infrastructure necessary to accommodate the decentralized units (primarily offices and staff housing).

Yet decentralization was not simply about economics. A central objective underlying the creation of Nunavut (indeed, explicitly enshrined in Article 23 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement) was the realization of a public service with a ‘representative’ level of Inuit employment.⁹ The hope for decentralization was that with jobs (and not just entry-level positions), located in the communities, a significant barrier to recruitment and retention of Inuit in the public service – the reluctance of many Inuit to accept employment or promotion if it took them away from their home communities – might be overcome.

Last, but by no means least, decentralization had a very political edge to it, for the idea was to decentralize not just jobs and offices, but power. In the GNWT, power – both political and bureaucratic – had been highly concentrated in Yellowknife. The framers of Nunavut envisaged a government close to the people not just physically but also in terms of power and influence. Accordingly, the units of the GN located in the communities were to do more than forward ideas and information to Iqaluit where decisions would be made; they were to exercise substantial decision-making authority themselves.

Opinion in Nunavut is divided on how well these ambitious goals have been met (and how realistic they were to begin with). Criticism is not in short supply, though not all critics would go so far as the editorialist who proclaimed that broad swaths of the GN “have been carpet-bombed into near-total dysfunction by the GN’s badly-implemented decentralization policy”.¹⁰

Certainly, at the most elemental level, decentralization has been achieved, though it is important to recognize that (as had been planned from the outset), only about half of Nunavut’s communities – those with a population of 1,000 or more – received decentralized jobs. Large numbers of GN positions have been established in the communities (some having been transferred out of the capital, others created afresh), offices and staff housing have been built, staff have been hired or relocated, high-tech communications links have been developed. Save perhaps some minor adjustments, no further decentralization initiatives – or reversals – are likely. Beyond the raw numbers, though, has decentralization succeeded?

This paper examines decentralization as a case study in organizational engineering. Three principal themes inform the paper: the capacity of apparently mundane organizational features to further fundamental political objectives; the difficulty of devising a truly distinctive, Aboriginal-centred government, even under relatively favourable conditions; and the success of the GN and its precursors in realizing a very ambitious, highly unusual if not unique, project.

The paper begins with an account of how the decentralized design for the GN came to be, prefaced by a brief summary of the institutions and processes involved in the realization of the GN in the years following the signing of the Nunavut land claim in 1993. This is followed by an examination of how the commitment to decentralization was implemented by the GN (and in the run-up to 1999 by the proto-GN, the Office of the Interim Commissioner). The paper then moves to an assessment of various facets of decentralization. Throughout the analysis, we pay special attention to the success or failure of the decentralization initiative (understanding that anything like a definitive judgement will not be possible for another decade or more) and the contribution of decentralization to rendering the GN as a distinctive, Inuit government.

Background – The Land Claim and the Design of the Nunavut Government

After more than a decade of often difficult negotiations, in 1993 the Inuit of the Eastern Arctic, the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories ratified the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Article 4 of the claim committed the federal government to bringing forward a government bill to create a Nunavut territory; details of the territory, its government and the process for designing the government were set out in a companion “Nunavut Political Accord” and in the *Nunavut Act*.

As noted above, the GN was to be a ‘public’ government, meaning that all residents are entitled to vote and hold office (provided they meet standard age and residency requirements) and services are delivered to all residents irrespective of whether they are ‘beneficiaries’ of the claim (i.e. Inuit). On the political side, the *Act* established for the territory a government based on a standard Westminster cabinet-parliamentary framework, but on the administrative side left open most key organizational issues about the government’s design and operation.

These issues were addressed by two critical institutions, the Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC) and the Office of the Interim Commissioner (OIC). NIC was a 10-person board, with a small research and administrative staff, charged with advising the three parties to the Nunavut Political Accord – the federal government, the GNWT and NTI – on the design of the government. Most commissioners were male Inuit resident in Nunavut. In addition to research and reflection on various models of governance, NIC conducted extensive consultations in all Nunavut communities through public meetings, radio phone-in shows, meetings with targeted groups and so on. Whereas NIC, which began work within months of the passage of the *Nunavut Act* in June 1993, had substantial influence but no decision-making authority, the OIC, which only took form in 1997, inherited the work of the NIC and then effectively acted as the GN-in waiting, hiring staff, leasing offices and equipment, drafting a first GN budget, and taking key decisions about the form and nature of the government.

Deciding on Decentralization

The Nunavut Political Accord had provided the NIC with general direction with respect to decentralization, directing it to “work toward ... an equitable distribution of government activities among Nunavut communities; appropriate utilization of information management systems and supporting technology to support a decentralized and efficient government delivery system; and, employment of local residents in new government positions through strong emphasis on training and work support programs.”¹¹

This admonition only served to reinforce the NIC’s natural inclination. Though extensive discussions subsequently took place as to the form decentralization would take, the basic commitment to a decentralized government was very much a given for NIC commissioners.

The NIC made its preference for a decentralized form of government clear from the outset. Initial discussions after its inaugural meeting in January 1994 resulted in the release of a 22-page *Discussion Paper Concerning the Development of Principles to Govern the Design and Operation of the Nunavut Government* on June 23, 1994. Among the principles advanced were:

- E1. Without detracting from the need for a capital, the NTG¹² should be a decentralized government, with conscious efforts made to distribute government functions and activities across the regions and communities of Nunavut.
- E2. The extent of the NTG's decentralization should not be constrained by the way in which the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is now organized, but should take into account existing administrative capacity that has been built up in the regions and communities of Nunavut.
- E3. The unity of Nunavut would be promoted by organizing departments of the NTG along functional (e.g. renewable resources, housing) rather than geographic lines (e.g. departments for Baffin, Keewatin, Kitikmeot [the GNWT's administrative regions within Nunavut, which were to be continued in the new government]).
- E4. The organization of departments along functional lines should be accompanied by delegating as much authority as possible to NTG officials working at the regional and community levels.
- E7. The reality of regional diversities and identities in Nunavut should be translated into a design for the NTG that results in the government offices of the NTG being allocated fairly among the regions.
- E9. For the purpose For the purpose of a fair allocation of the government offices of the NTG, it might be desirable to seek to locate approximately equal proportions of the offices in each region, with some special consideration for Sanikiluaq¹³
- E10. "Central agency" type functions (such as the offices of the Commissioner, Clerk of the Assembly, Cabinet secretariats, and the departments of justice and finance) should be concentrated in the capital.
- E11. Apart from central agency functions, it could be desirable to combine government headquarters operations into a number of thematic groups (for example, "people ministries" such as health, education and social services, "land and resource departments such as renewable resources, energy and economic development, and "services departments" such as housing and transportation). Each grouping could be situated in a different region.

These ambitious objectives were very much dependent on plans for state-of-the-art electronic communications facilities linking the far-flung offices of the Nunavut government. NIC had significant expectations as to the contributions that modern high-speed communications media could make not just to governance but to society in Nunavut generally. Without good, reliable electronic communications, though, a decentralized government simply could not function.

The NIC's community consultations in December 1994 and January 1995, which were summarized in Appendix A-9 of the NIC's first comprehensive report, *Footprints in New Snow* (released in March 1995), revealed that few Nunavummiut had a working knowledge of how the headquarters of a modern government operates. This came as no surprise, as Yellowknife was half a continent away geographically – and even farther away culturally – and few Inuit had ever risen (or had particularly wanted to rise) to the upper levels of the GNWT administration other than as a minister.¹⁴ One message that the commissioners and their staff heard repeatedly, in community after community, was that Nunavut “should not recreate Yellowknife.” That

expression spoke volumes about the magnitude of the social and economic distance between the territorial capital and the communities it governed that had developed as Yellowknife grew increasingly powerful, wealthy, large and well-serviced during the 1970s and 1980s. Many Nunavummiut had visited Yellowknife at some point and had seen with their own eyes the economic benefits that result from the operation of government, and they wanted those benefits distributed more equitably across the new territory. ‘Spreading the jobs around’ – and also the spin-off economic benefits that result from having good-paying government jobs in a community – was therefore the most important element of the NIC’s internal deliberations on decentralization.

Other appendices to *Footprints in New Snow* demonstrate that the NIC quickly achieved consensus on fundamental design matters. Appendix A-10 provided draft organization charts for four ‘core’ departments and six ‘program’ departments, which together were to require 555 full-time equivalents (FTEs) of ‘headquarters’ positions. The model also envisioned 72 positions which would have been considered ‘headquarters’ positions in the GNWT being “decentralized to the regional level” in the GN, and a savings of 27 positions at the regional level due to a reduction in the number of departments – for a net change of 600 FTEs. Appendices A-11, A-12 and A-13 showed the possible distribution of headquarters positions around the territory in the event of Cambridge Bay, Iqaluit and Rankin Inlet respectively being selected to be Nunavut’s capital.

What *Footprints* did not reveal was perhaps the most vigorous – and divisive – debate that occurred among the NIC staff: the question of whether entire departments could be located outside whichever community was chosen to be the capital. Most of the staff felt strongly that it would be preferable to have the entire headquarters of some departments located outside the capital. For example, in one ‘Iqaluit-as-capital’ model the headquarters of the ‘people’ departments – CLEY (Culture, Language, Elders and Youth), Education, and Health & Social Services – would all have been located in Rankin Inlet. Supporters of this model believed that it would:

1. allow for the greatest possible number of headquarters positions to be located outside the capital;
2. result in the departmental headquarters being more coherent and efficient because all headquarters staff would be located in the same community;
3. encourage Inuit from the Keewatin and Kitkmeot regions to aspire to the most senior positions in the bureaucracy without having to move to Iqaluit if they didn’t want to;
4. encourage higher rates of Inuit employment in the higher echelons of the GN;
5. result in more Inuktitut being spoken in the higher echelons of the GN; and,
6. lessen the chances of possible future regional alienation from the capital by ensuring that the two other regions has substantive, prestigious elements of the bureaucracy – up to and including deputy ministers – in their regional centres.

Opposition to this model came from the one member of the NIC staff who had spent his career in the senior ranks of the GNWT, including many years as a deputy minister. In his opinion the first approach was entirely unworkable and doomed to fail, as it was imperative that all the deputy ministers and their most senior staff be located in the some community. When it was pointed out that some governments (including those of California, New York and Ontario)

already had entire departments located outside the capital, and that they seemed to be functioning adequately even without the help of the sophisticated information technology that Nunavut could reasonably expect to have available for videoconferencing etc., he responded that they were not governments in start-up mode – and that to attempt such a model in the infancy of the GN was a recipe for disaster.

Unable to reach consensus, the staff proposed that the two competing models be put to the commissioners for their consideration. Both models were presented, and the perceived pros and cons of each were discussed. The former GNWT deputy minister stressed his years of senior management experience to buttress his arguments and – crucially – promised the commissioners that as many jobs could be located outside the capital under his model and under the competing model. Dire predictions about the first model and promises of equal numbers of jobs being located outside Iqaluit under the second model resulted in the commissioners agreeing that all Deputy Ministers – and by extension much of the headquarters of each department – would be located in the capital.

The Iqaluit and Ottawa-based staff, disappointed and demoralized by this decision, turned their attention to the details of which functions would be located where. Some of the department-level plans seemed like a recipe for having senior officials spending all their time travelling: the Department of Sustainable Development was to have 32 headquarters positions in the capital but also a 4-person Environmental Protection division located in Cambridge Bay, a 12-person Fisheries and Wildlife division located in Igloolik, an 11-person Minerals, Oil and Gas division located in Kugluktuk, and a 5-person Parks and Tourism division located in Pangnirtung – in addition to regional offices located in Pangnirtung, Arviat and Kugluktuk. Perhaps the logical absurdity of this approach was most evident in the proposal to locate Nunavut's second liquor warehouse (Iqaluit already having one) and liquor management headquarters in Gjoa Haven, a 'dry' and rather remote community not on the main airline routes – which would have made the shipping of cases of beer, wine and liquor around Nunavut rather problematic and unbelievably expensive.

Footprints therefore proposed an approach to decentralization which began not by locating entire departments outside the capital but instead “the location of some headquarters functions of the Government in communities throughout the regions.” Other elements of the recommended approach were:

- the location of various semi-autonomous boards, agencies, commissions and corporations in communities throughout the regions;
- the location of some territorial and regional facilities, both existing and as required in future years, in communities throughout the regions;
- the establishment of both regional government offices and regional auxiliary offices in each administrative region of Nunavut (Baffin, Keewatin and Kitikmeot);
- the further decentralization of some headquarters positions to regional and auxiliary regional offices;
- the stipulation that the community that is selected to be the capital should not be a regional centre as well; regional offices currently located in that community should move out to other communities in that region;¹⁵

- a commitment to confine the headquarters functions of the Government mainly to:
 - legislation, policy and program development;
 - long-range planning;
 - overall budget development and management;
 - policy and program evaluation;
 - allocation of resources among programs, services, regions, and communities;
 - monitoring of policy, program and service implementation in the regions;
 - management support to ministers, Cabinet, and the various committees of cabinet; and,
 - professional and technical support for regional staff;
- the delegation of a high level of program, financial and personnel authority and accountability to managers and officers at the regional and community levels;
- the delegation of a high level of program, financial and personnel authority and accountability to ministers, deputy ministers, and other senior headquarters staff; and,
- the establishment of a Cabinet committee structure and a legislative Assembly structure which are primarily focussed on major legislative and policy and program matters, and not the day-to-day delivery of programs and services to communities and individual residents.¹⁶

Following the release of *Footprints in New Snow*, its contents were carefully analysed by the parties to the claim, Canada, the GNWT and NTI and to considerable discussion between them. Contrary to NIC's recommendation, a plebiscite was held on December 11, 1995 to decide between Rankin Inlet and Iqaluit as the capital. Partly on the strength of a campaign which argued that the choice of Iqaluit would maximize the number of jobs decentralized to the communities, Iqaluit was selected to be Nunavut's capital.

The three parties' responses to the NIC's design model were generally supportive and contained no substantive critique of the decentralization strategy. As a result, the Minister of DIAND included decentralization as a major feature in the cabinet submission which was approved by the federal cabinet in April, 1996. From this point on, decentralization was no longer a proposal, it was accepted as an integral feature of the emerging design of the GN.

NIC's second comprehensive report, *Footprints II*, released in October 1996 called for minor adjustments to the organizational design from *Footprints in New Snow* as a result of comments made by the three parties. These comments also resulted in the number of headquarters positions increasing slightly to 624 FTEs – of which 374 were to be located in Iqaluit and 250 were to be located in what have come to be known as the 'decentralized communities.'

Implementing Decentralization

While both the political elites and ordinary Nunavummiut clearly favoured decentralization, some disquiet was evident at the community level as to possible social consequences. Most of the concerns reflected the potential impact the influx of civil servants and their families might have on small communities (of the ten communities tabbed for decentralized jobs, the projected 1999 population of all but two was between 1,000 and 1,500; Rankin Inlet was expected to number about 2,200 and Arviat 1,700¹⁷). Skepticism was rife as to whether the promised decentralization would actually occur and, even if it did, how many jobs would be filled by local hiring. If, as many expected, the lion's share of decentralized staff came from outside the community, this would add to the already severe pressure on public services and facilities from burgeoning populations. Even more worrisome was the prospect that a substantial proportion of decentralized jobs would be filled not just by people without roots in the community, but by non-Inuit from southern Canada. This concern was not based in xenophobic or racist attitudes, but in a very real apprehension about possible social divisions and about possible changes to the communities. Social cohesion could only suffer, for example, if local Inuit facing poverty, desperately overcrowded and often substandard housing, as well as other social ills, saw *Qallunaat* (white) outsiders getting the well-paid jobs and living in new, top-quality, government-provided housing. Would the outsiders keep to themselves and not be integrated into the community? So too, how would communities respond to what some saw as the inevitable demands for change from the outsiders? A telling example was concern that white southerners moving to a 'dry' community would aggressively push for access to alcohol.

Aware of these concerns, the OIC commissioned local consultants to assess community sentiment and propose recommendations. Their report, summarizing the views of some 120 residents of Iqaluit and the ten decentralized communities, was presented to the OIC in January 1999 – effectively too late for the OIC to respond.¹⁸ Most of the recommendations, few of which entailed much expenditure, were thus left for the GN, which largely lacked the capacity to pursue them. The report found “a remarkable consistency [across communities] in how people feel about decentralization”¹⁹: a mixture of positive expectations about decentralization (including an appreciation of the skills and perspectives newcomers could bring to communities) and apprehension about potential social disruptions.

The report detailed a widespread lack of knowledge at the community level about just what decentralization entailed: how many jobs were coming, how they would be filled, whether sufficient housing, office space and other facilities were in place to handle the additional government presence. To some extent this knowledge gap had been addressed in a high-profile tour of the decentralized communities in November 1998 (after the research for the report had been completed) by officials of the OIC and deputy ministers-designate of the GN. To some extent, the tour was an exercise in political damage control as it sought to explain the changes in the decentralization plan agreed to in late 1996, changes somewhat scaling back the extent and pace of decentralization. A newsletter put out by the OIC explained:

After extensive consultation with hamlet mayors, current GNWT staff, and others, the designated Nunavut Deputy Ministers concluded that major relocations throughout Nunavut could cause significant disruptions to government services and programs. Since continuity of service after April 1, 1999, has always been a priority, the Deputy Ministers

began looking at ways of maintaining the principles of decentralization while minimizing relocations and costs.

Slight changes to the original plan were made and, as a result, the number of people expected to relocate was decreased by about 40 per cent.²⁰

(This did not mean 40 per cent fewer decentralized jobs, but that more of the transferred positions would come in the form of unstaffed or understaffed units.)

From the outset, decentralization was intensely political, but never more than in the few months before and after Nunavut came into existence on April 1, 1999. Decentralization ranked as a top issue in the first Nunavut election, held in February 1999. Not of course that candidates in any given riding disagreed as to the basic thrust of the policy. Rather, they emphasized how hard they would fight for decentralized jobs, protecting them in the case of communities slated to receive them, seeking them in the case of passed-over communities. These electoral commitments ensured that decentralization would feature front and centre in the early days of Nunavut politics. They also signaled that, while questions of government efficiency, Inuit hiring, social impacts of decentralization and the like would not entirely disappear, for most MLAs, decentralization was first and foremost about jobs. As well, they meant that even the slightest hint of backtracking on decentralization was politically impossible for the new government. Decentralization would proceed, Premier Okalik vowed early in the government's mandate, "come hell or high water".²¹

Prospects for any significant reallocation of decentralized jobs among communities, never strong, evaporated once the first Nunavut cabinet was selected. Holding Iqaluit seats, the premier and one minister were acutely aware of intense scrutiny across Nunavut preventing the capital from renegeing on its commitment to decentralization, not least because Iqaluit had become the capital via a plebiscite campaign highlighting it as the best choice for maximum decentralization. The ridings of five of the other six ministers were in decentralized communities; only one minister represented communities which were not to receive decentralized jobs. They were also mindful of the political agreement that had blessed the essence of the NIC's decentralization proposal – what had been proposed in *Footprints II* had been explicitly endorsed by the Government of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

Highlighting decentralization's status as a top political priority were the pointed questions put to the premier and his ministers seeking confirmation of the government's overall commitment to the policy and to specific communities during the first few days of the Nunavut Legislative Assembly. The pressure from MLAs led the premier to make a major statement in the House on May 25, 1999 reaffirming the GN's resolve and detailing the progress of decentralization in each of the decentralized communities.²²

Not surprisingly, decentralization figured prominently in a two-day cabinet retreat on reorganizing government a few weeks later. Coming out of this retreat held in Apex, a satellite community of Iqaluit, was a strong reaffirmation of the government's commitment to decentralization, backed by the creation of a small Decentralization Secretariat. Signifying the personal responsibility he was taking for the success of the initiative, the premier located the five-person secretariat in his own department, Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs. The premier's admonition that "the sole mandate of this Secretariat is to make decentralization

happen in a timely and organized manner”²³ left little doubt that its role was not to raise questions as to the advisability of decentralization but to implement it.

Numbers released with the announcement of the secretariat affirmed that decentralization was indeed to proceed much as advertised. A comparison of the jobs promised in the revised plan announced via the OIC/deputies tour late in 1998 with those “confirmed” as of July 1999 (though not necessarily transferred or established) showed that in eight of ten communities, job targets were being met. For the other two communities, sufficient jobs for transfer had yet to be identified, the premier left little doubt that they would be found.²⁴

Advised by a steering committee of deputy ministers from the departments most critically involved in decentralization (Finance, Human Resources, Public Works and Executive), the Decentralization Secretariat was headed by an Assistant Deputy Minister (and not just any ADM, but by one of the rising stars of the GN, Leona Aglukkaq, who went on to serve as a deputy minister before winning a seat in the Legislature and being named Nunavut’s Finance Minister).²⁵ Beset by the capacity problems which continue to affect the entire GN – understaffing, cramped facilities, staff turnover, and the like – the secretariat had to limit itself to the most crucial tasks. These included the first reasonably comprehensive costing of decentralization, including infrastructure construction, severance and moving expenses, training, computer facilities, and so on; liaison with MLAs and with officials of community governments; advising GN departments in the preparation of decentralization plans, though only in fairly general terms since the secretariat’s lack of resources meant that only the departments had the wherewithal for detailed analyses; and review of the formula for municipal funding in light of service and infrastructure demands on communities arising from decentralization. Both in terms of decentralization’s ticklish politics and the secretariat’s limited capacity, it was not possible to rethink decisions as to which units and which jobs went to which communities; any department seeking a variance of projected moves had to go directly to cabinet.

In February 2000, the GN provided letters to mayors of the ten decentralized communities indicating the number of government positions which would be located in their community. A few weeks later the premier announced plans for a three-year project to decentralize headquarters jobs then situated in Iqaluit, beginning with 72 positions in the 2000-01 fiscal year designated for Pond Inlet, Pangnirtung and Cape Dorset. Year II (2001-02) saw a commitment for another 62 positions to be transferred from the capital to Igloolik, Pangnirtung, Arviat and Pond Inlet, while in Year III (2002-03), 72 more positions were identified for relocation from Iqaluit to seven communities. (For detailed figures on positions decentralized in each year, see Appendix A).

The first two years were implemented without major obstacles, with Inuit employment numbers for decentralized operations significantly higher than those in most Iqaluit offices. In Year III housing shortages in six communities (Arviat, Cape Dorset, Igloolik, Kugluktuk, Pangnirtung and Pond Inlet) affected the pace of decentralization.

Many of the decentralized jobs were created *de novo* in the decentralized communities as part of the capacity building necessary for the new government. A good many others, however, involved jobs which either existed in April 1999 (and were located in one of the GNWT’s three administrative centres, Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay) or were created as Nunavut came into being but were initially placed in one of the administrative centres. Establishing such a job in a decentralized community involved not just creating and filling a position, but the

prospect of moving an actual GN employee, and his or her family, to a new community.

Relocation is costly in Nunavut but more than financial issues were in play. Also crucial were the responses of GN employees to having their jobs decentralized. Those affected were given several months to consider three options: keep their current jobs and transfer to decentralized communities; decline to move and hope suitable GN jobs would open up in their home communities; resign from the GN, with a substantial financial settlement. These were weighty and difficult decisions for many employees (not least those whose partners also worked for the GN) and of course had far-reaching implications for the whole decentralization project. If employees chose to relocate along with their jobs, the opportunities for would-be employees in the decentralized communities would lessen. Yet if few employees chose to relocate, the capacity of the GN to perform key functions could be seriously impaired.

These issues are highlighted in one especially problematic decentralization. Plans for Phase III hit a roadblock when the Workers' Compensation Board of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut refused to move its Nunavut headquarters from Iqaluit to Pangnirtung, causing a shortfall of 17 positions in that community. The result was one of the GN's less considered – or rational – decentralization decisions.

When Nunavut was created, an interim agreement was signed between the GNWT and GN ministers responsible for workers' compensation to continue with a shared board to service both territories. The agreement contained a sunset clause of December 2002, but a new intergovernmental agreement was signed in November 2001 to extend the shared agency indefinitely. The WCB had moved aggressively to establish its Nunavut headquarters in Iqaluit, and by early 2003 had filled 16 of the 17 positions located there.

The GN Minister responsible for WCB wrote the Chair of the WCB Board conveying the GN's request that the WCB relocate its Nunavut headquarters to Pangnirtung. The WCB agreed to consider the request once the results of an evaluation of possible impacts on client services, staff, operations, and costs had been digested. The Board of Directors visited Pangnirtung with the premier and the minister responsible for the WCB to inspect office and housing facilities as well as to meet with municipal officials. A consultant's report concluded that moving the WCB's main office to Pangnirtung was viable, but would result in operations less efficient than were in place in Iqaluit. The report pointed out that in addition to the likely staff turnover and general disruptions, leaving the capital would result in considerable additional staff travel, reduced access to banking and other services available in the capital, and slower access to the computer information systems, electronic mail and internet connections on which the WCB relies heavily.

On April 10, 2003 the WCB board (made up of members appointed by both governments) decided to refuse to decentralize. The Chair of the WCB wrote the GN Minister responsible for the WCB stating that “while viable, decentralization would pose some significant operational and strategic challenges to the WCB, and risk a certain short-term and possible longer-term, loss in the level of client service. The WCB will also risk losing highly trained, dedicated staff, which we have worked hard to recruit and retain in Iqaluit. ... We [are] not convinced that service levels to clients could be maintained, in either the short or long term, without significant risk.”²⁶

Suddenly short 17 positions, the Premier's Office decided to relocate other parts of the system – EIA's Evaluation and Statistics division (six positions), six positions from the Sustainable Development (including those responsible for fisheries and sealing), and eight positions (to be identified) from Education. The announcement was made at a community feast

in Pangnirtung on Canada Day.

The decision to decentralize what some would see as one of the government's key central agencies was made without any discussion with the staff who had been doing the work, leaving them no opportunity to offer thoughts on the nature of their jobs, the role that the division played within the GN and the possible downsides of moving it out of the capital. Tellingly, across the Davis Strait the Greenland Home Rule Government has twice contemplated moving Statistics Greenland out of Nuuk, the capital. It became apparent that doing so would result in a complete turnover of the existing staff (and all the investments that had been made in them), minimal local hire in the new location unless people without the usual formal qualifications were hired, staff from outside Greenland coming for a few years rather than staying for much of their career (and therefore not developing detailed knowledge of the country or the statistical data about it), and the new staff spending a lot of time and money travelling to and from the capital for meetings. Both times it was decided that moving Statistics Greenland out of the capital made no operational sense, and both times the plan was abandoned.²⁷

None of the staff in Nunavut's Evaluation and Statistics division agreed to move to Pangnirtung. The unit thus suffered a complete turnover of staff, with resulting loss of experience and corporate memory (critical, among other things, to the effective representation of Nunavut's interests in the national statistical system, led by Statistics Canada) and disruption of service within the GN, but the positions were indeed decentralized to Pangnirtung.²⁸

Evaluating Decentralization

Decentralization was taking up substantial energy and resources during Nunavut's critical startup phase. But was it succeeding? Opinion and speculation were plentiful but hard evidence was in short supply. Accordingly, decentralization was an obvious target for the first major program evaluation carried out by the GN's Statistics and Evaluation Division.

This section reviews the results of the only systematic evaluation of the decentralization initiative made public to date. Although it was carried out roughly half-way into the projected time frame for decentralization, its analysis of the strong and weak points of the enterprise remain current.

Terms of reference for the evaluation were finalized in the Summer of 2001, a small GN working group was established by EIA's Evaluation and Statistics Division, and a consultant hired to produce the report (Ken Lovely, a former GNWT deputy minister with extensive Nunavut experience). In addition to various financial, human resource and logistical data provided by the GN, the report, *Building Nunavut through Decentralization: Evaluation Report*, included information and opinion gathered through interviews with all GN deputy ministers and structured surveys of 107 residents of three decentralized communities including GN employees, business owners and community leaders.

Significantly, the report, published early in 2002, had to hedge its findings somewhat because of information gaps. Two in particular stood out: first, neither the central agencies of the GN nor its individual departments were able to provide comprehensive human resource or financial information on decentralization, largely due to lack of staff resources and appropriate data-management systems (the unavailable financial data related to startup and transitional costs, since, as the report noted, it would be premature to attempt to cost out operational expenses).

Second, an attempt to survey GN employees who had refused transfers to decentralized communities failed to elicit any responses.²⁹

Decentralization was GN policy; accordingly, the study was not designed to address its advisability. Rather, its purpose was to determine how well the GN was faring in implementing decentralization and to offer recommendations for improving phases of the initiative still to be completed.

Overall, the report was positive about the GN's success in realizing decentralization:

Taking into consideration the challenges of building a new government from the ground up, the Government of Nunavut has made excellent progress in decentralizing both headquarters and regional operations to ten communities across the territory.³⁰

At the same time, even allowing for the extremely challenging conditions involved in establishing the GN, the report did not shy away from tough criticism and far-reaching recommendations regarding the future of decentralization.

Among the report's most positive assessments was its analysis of the raw numbers, noting "the GN has done extremely well in staffing a relatively high proportion of decentralized jobs in a short time period".³¹ Of the long-term target of 418 jobs, some 340 had been approved for creation or transfer as of the end of 2001 and 209 of them filled; the remaining 78 positions were set to be transferred in the 2002-3 fiscal year. The number of vacant positions (37 per cent) was not surprisingly, higher than the overall proportion of unfilled positions across the GN (22 per cent) but not alarmingly so. In terms of Inuit hire – a critical decentralization rationale – the numbers were notably better; indeed the proportion of decentralized jobs filled by Inuit (59 per cent) was higher than in the balance of the GN (42 per cent).³²

Analysis of another set of numbers led to a less salutary conclusion. While some 250 units of staff housing had been or were being built in the ten receptor communities to accommodate new GN employees, this still left a shortfall of between 130 and 140 units. Given the high cost of construction in Nunavut and the extremely limited stock of private sector housing (not to mention the over-crowded, often substandard public housing) in most Nunavut communities, decent staff housing is quite simply essential for recruiting employees into GN. The upshot, the report concluded, was that "in the absence of adequate affordable housing, this may make it almost impossible for the GN to meet its decentralization goals within the life of this Legislative Assembly" – i.e. before 2004.³³

Primary responsibility for the shortfall in staff housing was laid at the federal government's door, for providing insufficient funding and for wrongly assuming that the private sector would fill the gap.³⁴

Nor were staff housing problems limited to numbers. As some had feared, resentment had arisen over the divide between those fortunate enough to acquire new, high-quality GN staff housing and those living in decidedly inferior conditions. This was linked to another concern: in some communities both the new GN offices and the staff housing were located on the outskirts of town, physically and socially distant from the community. While the placement of the new facilities had been decided through community consultations and generally reflected either sheer necessity or intentional planning (to extend services and development beyond the existing community core), in the absence of a concerted GN effort at communications aimed at integrating newcomers into the communities, the result was division and discontent.

Though some short-term startup difficulties were noted with new and renovated office space, no serious problems were noted with this element of decentralization – save in one critical area. Decentralization had been premised on state-of-the-art electronic communications links, but the GN’s information technology capacity was proving seriously inadequate, primarily on account of bandwidth limitations (financial as well as technical).³⁵

Communications failures were not simply a question of computer technology. Rather more fundamental were the patterns already evident in internal GN communications. Information largely flowed in one direction: from the regions to Iqaluit, with decentralized offices feeling isolated and ‘out of the loop’. Similarly, regional staff were expected to go to Iqaluit for meetings (sometimes on Monday mornings, requiring weekend travel); GN staff in Iqaluit did not face the reverse situation. “This ‘distancing’ of relationships between the capital and the field,” noted the report, “ultimately results in departments losing touch with their reason for being.”³⁶

Not surprisingly, in this context, the critical objective of devolving power and authority to the communities was not being met. In terms of even relatively minor human resources and financial matters, let alone major policy issues, decision-making authority remained in the capital. One Inuk GN employee was quoted as saying “This is decentralization, but major decisions are still made in Iqaluit.”³⁷

Though systematic data on staff turnover rates – a critical litmus test for decentralization – and on employee morale were not available, the survey conducted for the study turned up evidence of low staff morale.³⁸ It was not clear to what extent decentralization was the root cause; the report cited poor staff training and all-but-nonexistent orientation for new staff as key contributors to morale problems, but these deficiencies were evident across the GN and were by no means limited to decentralized staff.

The study came too early in the process and lacked the requisite hard data to be able to comment definitively on the effect of decentralization on the social and economic life of the affected communities. Still, some preliminary observations were ventured. As noted above, an untoward physical and social distance separated ‘newcomers’ and long-time community residents. On the overall economic impact of decentralization, it was simply too early to tell, though “local employment has been disappointing for many community residents”.³⁹ The \$34 million earmarked by the federal government for infrastructure improvements in decentralized communities (school expansions, enhanced water and sewage facilities and the like) were found to be just adequate to keep pace with normal population growth and were not helping communities cope with the influx of new residents.⁴⁰ Those living in decentralized communities were, by and large, not getting improved access to the GN or its services, but this was only to be expected since decentralization was mostly about corporate, ‘headquarters’ functions rather than programme or service delivery (only about 15 per cent of the jobs targeted for decentralization were of this nature).⁴¹

As this point illustrates, the report attempted to balance achievements or shortcomings against realistic expectations. Moreover, it did more than identify problems, highlighting success stories where warranted. It reviewed in some detail the highly positive decentralization experience of the Nunavut Power head office to Baker Lake, contrasting it with the abject failure of a Health and Social Services move to Kugluktuk.⁴² Various factors were at play in these cases, but of central importance was the nature of the decentralized jobs. It was critical to identify and transfer or establish jobs for which current community residents (primarily Inuit beneficiaries)

were already qualified or for which they could be trained within a short period. Jobs requiring specialized skills acquired through long years of formal education were much less suitable for decentralization. On this basis, the report explicitly warned against going ahead with the planned decentralization to Igloolik of the Department of Sustainable Development's Wildlife Division, since the local labour force could not supply workers with the required technical skills.⁴³

Although the report did not use this language, it effectively concluded that the 'easy part' of decentralization was largely done – and had been done creditably well – but that much more serious thought and attention was needed as to the more fundamental and much more problematic objective of making a decentralized government work. Decentralization, after all, had been about creating a very different sort of government. However, while jobs had indeed been decentralized, the GN's "organizational structure and work processes differ only marginally from a centralized model".⁴⁴

Decentralization – The End of the Beginning?

At a cabinet meeting at the end of July 2003, what were described as "the final services" to be decentralized during the mandate of the first Nunavut government were identified.⁴⁵ While work continued on various aspects of specific job transfers, for most practical purposes the decentralized organization was in place by the Summer of 2003. Minor adjustments were made, but the only change to the plan or its realization of any significance was the decision to reverse the nonsensical commitment to locate a liquor warehouse in Gjoa Haven (in January 2005, the GN announced that purchasing, storage and distribution of liquor – and the six associated jobs – would be done in Rankin Inlet). The much-criticized decentralization of wildlife positions to Igloolik, of Health and Service jobs to Kugluktuk and of Statistics and Evaluation to Pangnirtung went ahead.

The Decentralization Secretariat was wound up at the end of the 2002-03 fiscal with responsibility for on-going monitoring of decentralization shifted to EIA. In December 2004 an Assistant Deputy Ministers Committee on Decentralization was formed to work on improvements of program delivery and implementation in decentralized communities. That the GN saw decentralization as essentially complete is evidenced in the all-but-total absence of references to it in its *2003-04 Public Service Annual Report* (previous reports included separate sections on the progress of decentralization).

Politically, by the end of Phase III, decentralization was widely viewed as 'a done deal', no longer ranking as a main priority. A survey conducted for the Nunavut Employees Union during the election for Nunavut's second Legislative Assembly in the spring of 2004 revealed that while most candidates expressed concerns about way in which the GN had implemented decentralization they remained positive about decentralization as a concept. In the Second Assembly decentralization has thus far been a non-issue. One MLA commented that "decentralization ... is causing a shortage of public housing."⁴⁶ And the Legislature's Standing Committee on Government Operations and Accountability included some critical commentary about decentralization in its review of EIA's Estimates and Business Plan, for example that "the Committee has noted that although the department last year announced the decentralization of a number of its positions to Pangnirtung, these positions have not yet been filled. These include, ironically, the positions which are supposed to evaluate the success of the decentralization

initiative itself. [One area] where the Committee could see value in the Government's engaging a truly independent review are the costs and success of the decentralization initiative..."

Nor has delay in shifting positions or backsliding been evident. The GN's basic strategy has been to do whatever required to actually create headquarters positions in the communities, with 'making it work better' to follow. At the political level a hard-nosed approach has thus far ensured that the bureaucracy doesn't slip 'person-years' back to Iqaluit: cabinet approval is required for such changes. Cabinet's resolve is strengthened by the careful monitoring of GN employment by communities. By way of illustration, when the President of Nunavut Arctic College was "requested by the minister" to temporarily relocate to Iqaluit the local MLA raised community concerns in the Assembly – for a single (albeit high-profile) position.

A moderately complete statistical account of the implementation of decentralization was provided in a written answer from the GN's Department of Human Resources to a series of questions posed by the MLA for Cambridge Bay.⁴⁷ By the end of the exercise, cabinet had authorized decentralization of 459 positions (for details see Appendix A). As of the end of 2004, 312 (68 per cent) of these positions had been filled; this is a substantially lower rate than for the GN as a whole, which stood at 82 per cent as of March 2004.⁴⁸ Some 56 per cent of the 'indeterminate' (non-term) positions were held by Inuit beneficiaries, a higher rate than the GN has attained – 45 per cent as of March 2004.⁴⁹

Human Resources was unable to answer a question as to how many of the decentralized positions were filled by persons who were long-term residents of the decentralized communities; the department did produce data on whether employees were living in the decentralized communities when they took the jobs. As of December 31, 2004, some positions may have turned over several times, but the data for that date are nonetheless of interest: 216 positions were held by employees whose most recent residence had been in the decentralized communities where the position were located, 21 employees had moved from Iqaluit, 20 from other Nunavut communities and 59 came directly from Southern Canada.

The minister's answer also estimated the total cost of decentralization to the GN at \$28.8 million (\$11.9 million in operation and maintenance costs – which included relocation and severance payments – and \$16.9 million in capital costs), emphasizing that many of these costs would have been incurred regardless of where the position was located. These figures do not include costs incurred prior to April 1, 1999 by the GNWT or the federal government, nor do they include ongoing costs, such as travel expenses, of operating a decentralized government, which would not arise in a centralized government.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that GN staff in decentralized positions are happy to have their jobs located outside the capital, and feel that they 'get more done' because they spend so much less time engaged in the departmental 'process' that consumes so many GN staff working in Iqaluit. As well, in addition to higher rates of Inuit employment and higher levels of Inuktitut spoken in decentralized offices, long-term cultural differences in management style may be emerging in decentralized offices which have Inuit managers able to run their shops outside the often 'pressure cooker' atmosphere of GN offices in Iqaluit.

Conclusion

No one at all familiar with the Arctic and its governance would have underestimated the difficulty in realizing the objective of a decentralized government in Nunavut. At the same time, few probably appreciated just how ambitious an undertaking it would be. Accordingly, an appropriate place to begin some concluding thoughts is the recognition that in important ways the goal has been realized: a substantial proportion of the GN's corporate functions and its 'headquarters' jobs have been established in ten communities across the territory. Given the level of skepticism in the communities as the decentralized model was developed, this is significant; simply put many believed that talk of decentralization was just that – talk – and that decentralization of jobs would not occur.

So too, while key figures in the GN, from the premier down, bear responsibility for important shortcomings in the implementation of decentralization, the oft-heard criticism of decentralization as 'Paul's folly' are misplaced. The commitment to decentralization long predated Paul Okalik's election as Nunavut's first premier. Indeed, the desire to fundamentally recast government through deconcentration of jobs, power and authority away from the capital has been a prominent theme in the politics of the territorial north for decades. Moreover, decentralization was not a policy imposed by the premier on the GN or on Nunavummiut; very much the reverse. The entire cabinet and the private ('ordinary') members of the Legislative Assembly, in turn reflecting the views of their constituents, were unshakeable in their support for decentralization. As the *Nunatsiaq News* – no fan of decentralization – noted early in the government's mandate. "Politically, the government of Nunavut has no choice but to continue with decentralization, because the pressure to do so is enormous ... if Okalik were to delay or suspend decentralization until a better time, he runs the risk of being censured or removed from cabinet by those angry MLAs who represent the small communities."⁵⁰

Should any reminder be needed, this point brings home that, however much it may have seemed an administrative or technical exercise, decentralization was from the outset suffused with politics. At root, it was about those most political functions, the distribution of power and influence and the allocation of scarce resources.

But has the very political nature of the exercise – marked by a steely-eyed determination on the part of the premier and the cabinet to see decentralization through – amounted to 'carpet-bombing' of essential elements of the GN? To be sure, mistakes have been made (and, perhaps more significantly, obvious mistakes have not been acknowledged or rectified) and problems directly attributable to decentralization are readily identifiable. It would be difficult, however, to build a convincing case that the troubles experienced by the GN resulting from decentralization are in quality or quantity any more substantial than those besetting Canada's newest government which having nothing to do with decentralization. The GN continues to encounter serious problems in capacity building, service delivery, imbuing Euro-Canadian organizational forms with Inuit values, Inuktitut competence, staff recruitment, retention and training, and a host of other fields. These are serious matters, which call into question the success of the Nunavut project, but they affect the entire GN and are by no means solely attributable to decentralization. Indeed, the departments which said to have 'decentralization issues', such as Education, and

Sustainable Development (now two departments, Economic Development & Transportation and Environment) may be better thought of as having more broad ‘management issues’ of which decentralization was just a part. In this regard, it is worth observing that one hears far more complaining about decentralization in Iqaluit than in the rest of Nunavut.

Major exercises in organizational engineering, such as creating a decentralized government in Nunavut, involve far more than bricks and mortar – or in Nunavut’s case, steel pilings and R-40 insulation.

The piles, insulation, jobs and work stations being in place, the time may have come for the GN to stop treating the decentralized positions as special and instead focus more on issues that impact on *all* positions located outside the capital. The designation of ‘decentralized offices’ has always been somewhat arbitrary: the Department of Education’s Baffin School Operations division is considered to be a decentralized office because it was relocated from Iqaluit to Pond Inlet after Iqaluit was named the capital but the same department’s Keewatin and Kitikmeot School Operations divisions are not considered ‘decentralized’ because when they were inherited from the GNWT they were already located in Baker Lake and Kugluktuk. The operational challenges facing those three divisions are essentially the same, and it is both unnecessary and unwise to treat one as special much longer solely because of the circumstances and timing of its establishment in the community.

One analyst of decentralization has noted that “policies and opportunities for local input vary: deconcentration can merely shift responsibilities from central government officials in the capital city to those working in the regions, provinces or districts, or it can create strong field administration or local administrative capacity under the supervision of central government ministries”.⁵¹ In the Nunavut context, this perspective suggests a key question about the next phase of decentralization: will it settle into a comfortable pattern whereby substantial numbers of GN employees perform routine jobs in communities across the territory with power concentrated in the capital, or will the decentralized governmental units (and the people in the communities) have a real say in the Government of Nunavut? When a second evaluation of decentralization is mounted, a worthy topic of enquiry might be how the GN looks from the perspective of employees working in the GN’s decentralized offices – or, better yet, in GN offices outside Iqaluit.

NOTES

1. The Inuit negotiators gave notice in 1980 that no final Nunavut land claim agreement would be concluded without an enforceable commitment to create a Nunavut territory, even though such an undertaking fell well outside the federal government's comprehensive claims policy. It was only after the rest of the land claim had been negotiated that a political agreement was reached which resulted in a federal commitment to divide the Northwest Territories and create a Nunavut territory and government. This agreement, known as the Nunavut Political Accord, resulted in Article 4 – 'Nunavut Political Development' – being added to the land claim. For a comprehensive review of the creation of Nunavut see Jack Hicks and Graham White, "Nunavut: Inuit self-determination through a land claim and public government?" in: *The Provincial State in Canada: Politics in the Provinces and Territories* (eds.) Keith Brownsey and Michael Howlett (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2001), 389-439.
2. Jaypeetee Arnakak, "Northern IQ," *Public Sector Management* Vol 12, No 1 (2001), 17-19; Mary Ekho Wilman, "Governance through *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*: Changing the paradigm for the future of Inuit society," in Murielle Nagy, ed., *The Power of Traditions: Identities, Politics and Social Sciences* (Quebec City: International Arctic Social Sciences Association, 2002), 33-8; Annis May Timpson, "Stretching the concept of representative bureaucracy: The case of Nunavut." paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, June 2002; Catherine McCready, "*Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*: 'Living policy' and the development of responsible governance in Nunavut", MA thesis, Trent University, May 2003; Ailsa Henderson, "*Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*," in Mark Nuttall, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Arctic* (London: Routledge, 2004); Graham White, "Traditional Aboriginal values in a third millennium legislature: The Legislative Assembly of Nunavut," paper presented at the International Political Science Association Research Committee of Legislative Specialists' Conference on Sub-national Legislatures, Quebec City, October, 2004; Graham White, "Culture clash: Traditional knowledge and Euro-Canadian governance processes in Northern claims boards," paper presented at the First Nations, First Thoughts Conference, University of Edinburgh, May 2005.
3. Jennifer Wallner, "Disentangling decentralization," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, University of Western Ontario, June 2005.
4. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/EXTSAREGTOPPRISECDEV/EXTSAREGTOPDECENTRALIZATION/0,,menuPK:496908~pagePK:51065911~piPK:64171006~theSitePK:496900,00.html>
5. G. Shabbir Cheema and Dennis A. Rondinelli (eds.) *Decentralization and Development: Policy Implementation in Developing Countries* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1983).
6. Bernard Bizet, "Deconcentration versus decentralization of administration in France: A centre-periphery dilemma," *Canadian Journal of Regional Science* 25:3 (2002).
7. The GNWT had, over time, developed regional management structures in the Baffin (headquartered in Iqaluit), Keewatin (headquartered in Rankin Inlet) and Kitikmeot

- (headquartered in Cambridge Bay) regions. In part this came in response to the rising chorus of demands for self-government by the NWT several Aboriginal peoples, but also in response to the demands by non-Aboriginal businessmen outside Yellowknife – some of whom entered territorial politics – for a bigger ‘piece of the action’ for their communities.
8. Estimates employed in Nunavut Implementation Commission, *Footprints in New Snow: A Comprehensive Report from the Nunavut Implementation Commission to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Government of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Concerning the Establishment of the Nunavut Government* (Iqaluit, March 1995).
 9. Article 23.1.1 of the land claim defines “representative level” as “a level of Inuit employment within Government reflecting the ration of Inuit to the total population in the Nunavut Settlement Area; this definition will apply within all occupational groupings and grade levels”. Using data from the most recent (2001) Census, then, all three levels of government in Nunavut are to achieve 84.6 per cent Inuit representation in all occupational groupings and grade levels. Note that the figure does not reflect the proportion of Inuit in the *working age* population, and that the ‘representative level’ will increase or decrease as the overall percentage of Inuit in the territory’s population rises or falls in the future. Note also that while the GN and others have established target dates for reaching various levels of Inuit employment, Article 23 itself stipulates no dates for reaching representative levels.
 10. Jim Bell, “The GN: A haven of racism and incompetence?” *Nunatsiaq News* November 5, 2004.
 11. Section 7.3, Appendix A-5, *Footprints in New Snow* (1995).
 12. At this point in time the NIC used the term Nunavut Territorial Government (NTG) to refer to what we today refer to as the Government of Nunavut (GN).
 13. Sanikiluaq is in many ways the most isolated, distinctive community in Nunavut; it is the only community in the Belcher Islands, in southern Hudson Bay, with poor communications links to other Nunavut communities.
 14. It is also worth noting that no significant discussion of the organizational design of the Nunavut government took place during the many years of public information sessions and widespread discussion and debate during the negotiation of the Nunavut land claim. The focus was understandably on the myriad complex details of the claim itself given that the federal commitment to create a Nunavut territory and government did not come until the very end of the process. There was simply no need to discuss what a Nunavut government might look like, as for almost all of the process of negotiating the Nunavut land claim the federal government maintained that a Nunavut government was ‘off the table’ as far as the negotiations to settle the land claim were concerned.
 15. Accordingly, when Iqaluit was chosen as the capital, plans were drawn up to decentralize the ‘regional’ offices located there to other communities in the Baffin region.
 16. *Footprints in New Snow*, pp. 25-6.
 17. Projected population data from Nunavut Implementation Commission, *Footprints in New Snow*, Appendix 6.
 18. Nunavut Consulting and Ekho Inuit Originals, “Report on the Social Impact Study of the Decentralization in Nunavut,” January, 1999.

19. *Ibid.*, 1.
20. “Decentralization Update”, *Nunavut Notes* (Office of the Interim Commissioner, February 1999), 1.
21. “MLAs attack government over decentralization,” *Nunatsiaq News* January 31, 2000.
22. Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, *Hansard*, May 25, 1999, 278-80.
23. Nunavut, Office of the Premier, “Decentralization Secretariat announced as part of overall government reorganization,” news release, July 5, 1999.
24. Nunavut, Office of the Premier, “Speaking Notes: Responding to Nunavut Priorities Press Conference,” July 5, 1999.
25. After Aklukkaq was promoted to deputy minister, the position was given to another rising star in the GN, David Akeeagok, who has since also been named a deputy minister.
26. Andrew Wong to Hon. Kelvin Ng, April 11, 2003.
27. Birger Poppel, former Chief Statistician, Statistics Greenland, personal communication.
28. “Nunavut bureaucrats would rather quit than move,” CBC North News, webposted October 16, 2003
<http://north.cbc.ca/regional/servlet/View?filename=oct16nundecentr16102003>.
29. Millenium Partners, *Building Nunavut Through Decentralization: Evaluation Report* (February, 2002), 4-6.
30. *Ibid.*, Executive Summary, 2; the assessment in the body of the report was less fulsome: “The GN has made acceptable progress in achieving its basic decentralization objectives.” 9.
31. *Ibid.*, 13.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, 22.
34. *Ibid.*, 21-2.
35. *Ibid.*, 17-8.
36. *Ibid.*, 17.
37. *Ibid.*, 19.
38. *Ibid.*, 14.
39. *Ibid.*, 25.
40. *Ibid.*, 21.
41. *Ibid.*, 24-5.
42. *Ibid.*, 10-12.
43. *Ibid.*, 26.
44. *Ibid.*, 29.
45. “Baker Lake and Rankin Inlet Benefit from Decentralization”, GN Press Release, July 31, 2003.
46. *Hansard*, May 28, 2004.
47. Unless otherwise indicated, all data in the following three paragraphs are taken from Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, Return to Question No 26-2 (2), asked by Mr Peterson on March 2005 to the Honourable Louis Tapardjuk, Minister of Human Resources.

48. Government of Nunavut, *2003-04 Public Service Annual Report*, 8.
49. *Ibid.*, 3; only 16 of the 312 decentralized positions were held by term employees.
50. “No choice but to decentralize,” *Nunatsiaq News*, August 11, 2000.
51. Dennis A. Rondinelli, “What is decentralization?” Briefing note prepared for the World Bank Institute, Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations and Local Financial Management Program, n.d.

* Jack Hicks was Director of Research for the Nunavut Implementation Commission, and was later the GN’s Director of Evaluation and Statistics at the time that the division was decentralized from Iqaluit to Pangnirtung.

APPENDIX A: STATISTICAL DATA ON DECENTRALIZATION

Table 1
Positions Announced for Decentralization in Year I (2000/01)

Department	Community	Positions
Public Works & Services	Pond Inlet	24
Sustainable Development	Pond Inlet	8
Community Government & Transportation	Cape Dorset	25
Education	Pangnirtung	15
Total Positions		72

Table 2
Positions Announced for Decentralization in Year II (2001/02)

Department	Community	Positions
Finance	Igloolik	17
Health & Social Services	Pangnirtung	25
Nunavut Arctic College (Headquarters)	Arviat	13
Public Works & Services	Pond Inlet	7
Total Positions		62

Table 3
Positions Announced for Decentralization in Year III (2002/03)

Department	Community	Positions
Education Qikiqtani School Service	Pond Inlet	17
Nunavut Housing Corporation District Office	Cape Dorset	14
Sustainable Development – Wildlife Division	Igloolik	21
Sustainable Development –Economic Develop. Division	Pangnirtung	7
Sustainable Development –Mineral, Oil and Gas Division	Arviat	2
Total Positions – Original plan		61
Nunavut Housing Corporation- District Office Force growth and update mandate	Cape Dorset	5
Sustainable Development- Wildlife Division Modified plan	Igloolik	1
Sustainable Development Envir. Prot. Div. Operation plan	Pond Inlet	3
Sustainable Development Economic Develop. Operation plan	Rankin Inlet	1
Sustainable Development Mining Division Operation plan	Kugluktuk	1
Overall Position Total		72

Table 4
Total GN ‘Headquarters and Regional Positions at Various Stages of Decentralization

The figures reflect the total number of GN ‘headquarters’ and ‘regional’ positions , but exclude such ‘community-specific’ jobs such as nurses, social workers and teachers, as well as employees of the municipal governments and community housing associations.

Community	F II	OIC	Existing	Apex	Feb 2000	GN 2003
Arviat	71	72	10	75.5	72	76
Baker Lake	59	65	15	30	34	52
Cambridge Bay	106	114	107	113	120	119
Cape Dorset	57	56	2	52	53	51
Gjoa Haven	22	23	1	23	19	20
Igloolik	75	72.5	2	70	70	71
Kugluktuk	56	56	28	57	57	61
Pangnirtung	69	78	0	51	41	48
Pond Inlet	72	65	1	61	55	58
Rankin Inlet	135	168	136	173	185	183
Total	722	769.5	302	705.5	706	739

Where:

- **F II** is the model proposed in the NIC’s Footprints II;
- **OIC** are the figures from the Office of the Interim Commissioner, and the numbers the GN was committed to deliver;
- **Existing** is the number Headquarters and Regional positions (i.e. not Community-specific jobs such as nurses, social workers, teachers, etc. in the communities as of the time of the Apex retreat;
- **Apex** are the figures used as the “target” coming out of the Cabinet retreat in Apex in early 1999 -- these are the numbers the GN itself felt were do-able – and thus committed to deliver;
- **Feb 2000** are the figures that were used to reaffirm the goal of decentralization was still in place and that the GN was starting to deliver on some of the commitments that had been made; and,
- **GN 2003** is what the GN expected to have delivered as of March 31, 2003.

Table 5
Final Allocation of Decentralized Positions
By Community and Governmental Unit
December 31, 2004

Community	CGS	CLEY	EIA	ED	FIN	HSS	HR	JUS	EDT	ENV	NAC	NHC	NDC	QEC	Total
Arviat	1			32					2		13	18			66
Baker Lake	8	11												31	50
Cambridge Bay	7						5								12
Cape Dorset	22	2							7			19			50
Gjoa Haven	1				4			5	8						18
Igloolik	1	24			17		5			22					69
Kugluktuk	10	10				14									34
Pangnirtung	1		6	23		25			10	6					71
Pond Inlet	31			17				1	8						57
Rankin Inlet	7						5		15	1			4		32
Total	89	47	6	72	21	39	15	6	50	29	13	37	4	31	459

Table 6
Vacant Decentralized Positions
By Community and Governmental Unit
December 31, 2004

Community	CGS	CLEY	EIA	ED	FIN	HSS	HR	JUS	EDT	ENV	NAC	NHC	NDC	QEC	Total
Arviat				12							2	5			19
Baker Lake	2	4												7	13
Cambridge Bay	1														1
Cape Dorset	13	1										3			17
Gjoa Haven	1				4				3						8
Igloolik		11			4					13					28
Kugluktuk	3	1				10									14
Pangnirtung			4	9		10			1	4					28
Pond Inlet	12			2					2						16
Rankin Inlet									3						3
Total	32	17	4	23	8	20	0	0	9	17	2	8	0	7	147

CGS: Community and Government Services

CLEY: Culture, Language, Elders and Youth

EIA: Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs

ED: Education

FIN: Finance (includes Nunavut Liquor Commission and Nunavut Liquor Licensing Board)

HSS: Health and Social Services

HR: Human Resources
JUS: Justice
EDT: Economic Development and Transportation (includes Nunavut Business Credit Corporation)
ENV: Environment
NAC: Nunavut Arctic College
NHC: Nunavut Housing Corporation
NDC: Nunavut Development Corporation
QEC: Qulliq Energy Corporation

Sources: Tables 1-3, Government of Nunavut Press Releases;
Tables 5 and 6, Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, Return to Written
Question No. 26-2 (2), asked by Mr Peterson on March 2005 to the
Honourable Louis Tapardjuk, Minister of Human Resources