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PIZAANIZIWIN

"Living a Life in Balance and Moderation":

The Economy of the Obishikokaang (Lac Seul) Anishinaabeg

GIIGAAGAASHGITOOMIN KEHONJEBIMAACHI-ITIZOYUNG

"We Have the Ability to Make our Livelihood"

**Report presented to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples by:
The Lac Seul First Nation**

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Lac Seul First Nation Research Team

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RCAP NOTES

This paper was prepared as part of the research program of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Research carried out for the paper was conducted in accordance with the Commission's ethical guidelines for research, and the paper was reviewed under the Commission's peer review procedures.

The opinions expressed in the paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect opinions or positions of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

The following documentation, which was included in the final report submitted by the author, does not appear in this CD ROM version but is available through the National Archives of Canada:

Photographs (captions reproduced)

Map - Winnipeg and English River Watersheds

Map of Albert Quedent Family History of Manoomin Propagation

Map - The region southeast of Lac Seul including Watcomb, Ontario.

Map - The Seseganaga Lake country, including Vista Lake

Map - North America: Languages (from American Academic Encyclopedia, 1984, p.234)

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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a specific First Nation - based perspective on the economic problems and challenges faced by the Anishinaabe people of the Lac Seul First Nation. As the Lac Seul Research Team, we were commissioned by the Council of the First Nation to prepare this Community Economy Study report. The mandate given to us by the Council was to examine and document the economic challenges faced by our First Nation people from their perspective. Within the context of this mandate, we were also given the general task of looking at our economic lives from our Lac Seul Anishinaabe cultural perspective. Our mandate, therefore, was not only to give a description of our First Nation economy but to present an analysis of our economy **from the perspective of our Anishinaabe culture and as we describe it from within our culture**. We recognize the various challenges that exist in bridging the divide between our Anishinaabe language and English. With this awareness, we have prepared this report keeping as faithful as we could to what we were told by the people from our First Nation. They were the ones who generously gave so much of their time in the research that has led to the report.

This study, which sets out key themes relating to our practice of livelihood, focuses on our culturally distinctive ways of organizing our economic activity at this point in our history. What became clear in our "community-based" research, and this is reflected in the major themes of this report, is that distinctive ways of thinking about and organizing economic activity separate our practice of livelihood from the organization of the "non-aboriginal economy".

In Section C of this study we describe the methodology which the Lac Seul Research Team developed to carry out our research. This methodology is framed by a brief statement of the issues and objectives that were central to our First Nation Council in agreeing to allow this study to proceed. The key research tool we used to implement our community-based research involved the use of **Focus Group Discussions**. We wanted our research results concerning of the idea and meaning of economy, as well as the practice of livelihood, to come from our people. One of our tasks in this regard was to identify non-aboriginal categories and descriptions of "economic development" that our people are not comfortable with. We decided that **Focus**

Groups represented the best option for conducting our research to achieve the objectives that we established for the project.

Our goal, in other words, was not to gather outside information about our economic status and re-hash this from a non-aboriginal theoretical perspective. Rather, what we hope that we have achieved in this report is to bring forward our understanding of our economy. We have done this so that our results can be used as a "resource" by outside policy makers to be more sensitive and respectful of our need to control our economic destiny.

To demonstrate the implications of this in terms of the prospects of our people for recovering a satisfying economic life which has self-sufficiency as its basis, the Lac Seul Research Team has organized this report in a specific manner. Firstly, we set out the context of our study. We begin with a statement of what we want to say through this report and why we want to say it. In relation to this introduction, Section D sets this study in the context of an overview of our economic values and practice. We use our relationships to our Land as a means to explore this issue. This information was given to us with great interpretive power by the Lac Seul Elders who participated in our research. We should note here that there is a second source for the information in this section. The material in this section is also taken from information that was given by our Elders for a previous "community-based" research project on Lands issues that was carried out in the spring of 1993..

In Section D, we focus on our livelihood relationships to our Land as a "tool" for describing some of the most important normative principles which have governed our economic lives as Lac Seul Anishinaabeg. The participation of our Elders in the community-based research on this issue provided powerful insights and perspectives to younger Lac Seul research participants on the nature of many of our current economic difficulties. For example, this Elder participation also clarified for younger Lac Seul research participants important normative aspects of our economic behaviour and how they conflict with non-aboriginal norms of economic behaviour.

Our Elders not only helped us, as the Research Team members, understand much of why we as Lac Seul people do economic activity in a certain way today. In doing so they also provided an

invaluable perspective on the structural obstacles which prevent us from achieving economic self-sufficiency. There are long - standing and difficult obstacles in non-aboriginal law which prevent us from achieving our economic objectives. These must be dealt with if we, as Lac Seul people, are to be able to work in an economy in which our culture, in accordance with our hope, can survive.

In Section E of the study, we have organized the findings of the central themes of the discussions of the Focus Group research. This section, as well as the one after it, not only confirms the unique character of the economy of the Lac Seul people, but it does this in a special way. We use a comparative analysis to examine the most important normative features of our economy in relation to the dominant non-aboriginal values and practices relating to economic organization.

Part of undertaking this comparative analysis involved the organization of certain Focus Group discussions using a standard non-aboriginal **Business Plan** guide. This guide is used in an non-aboriginal government economic support program targeted specifically at First Nations.

In sections D, E and F of our report, readers will find many references to Anishinaabe terms and descriptions relating to our ways of organizing our economy. Often we have done this because there are no equivalent terms for the concepts in English that we could refer to. While we have tried as best we can to translate or explain these terms, we want to sound a **caution to the readers** of this report. Our work in this regard must be seen as necessarily preliminary. In order for any reader of this report to gain a deeper appreciation of our customary Anishinaabe economic worldview, a fluency in our language would be an invaluable asset.

What the findings of our research led to, and what we want to stress in this report, is that without the autonomy necessary for us to assume responsibility for our own livelihood affairs on our lands, we face a deepening crisis as First Nation people. This crisis is reflected not only in the severe economic difficulties that we face. It is a crisis which has put the survival of our livelihood customs at risk. As such it is both cultural and spiritual at the same time. The dangers that we face under an imposed non-aboriginal economic regime are reflected in the danger even to the very survival of our language itself.

Section F of this report demonstrates that our Anishinaabe culture in terms of economic activity has enduring features and strengths that we can use to promote the livelihood of our people. The study examines a set of specific livelihood projects, in this case mostly in the context of tourism, which testify to the persistence of our distinctive Lac Seul economic customs. Again, these initiatives demonstrate that our economy will not flourish to the extent that it meets our aspirations for economic self-sufficiency without a parallel autonomy within which it can be practiced. As such, the examples of economic "projects" described in Section F carry implicit lessons for renewing non-aboriginal official economic policy in terms of the economic needs of the Lac Seul First Nation. Furthermore, we believe that our experience may reflect that of other northern First Nations as well.

Part of our assessment of the case studies was to draw out information for recommendations for the protection of our Lac Seul economy. We show in this report what we, as Lac Seul people can do to create practical expressions of autonomy to nurture our economy. But we also show how a renewal of federal and provincial law and economic development policy concerning our northern First Nation is necessary for the achievement of the economic self-sufficiency Lac Seul people are seeking. In the final section of this report, we summarize a strategic approach that could form an effective basis for discussions on this issue.

The alternative to economic self-sufficiency for our people, based on an effective degree of autonomy, is assimilation or continued poverty. Lac Seul people are not willing to accept either of these options. Therefore, our summary in this report also asks the simple question that is relevant both in terms of the survival of our culture and in terms of financial constraints increasingly being felt by federal and provincial governments: Can we afford to stay with the First Nation economic status quo that aboriginal people right across northern Canada have to live every day?

B. GENERAL BACKGROUND

i) Gaawii dibaajimooyang - "What We Are Saying in This Report" - Description of the Project

The whole idea behind the Lac Seul first Nation agreeing to undertake this Community Economy Study lies in the commitment of our First Nation Council, and the sense of urgency expressed by our Elders, to make our understanding of our economic hardships known to the outside world. For generations now our people have felt themselves to be invisible to non-aboriginal governments. In ways that matter most to us, it is as if we have been forgotten by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.

The invisibility of the culture of our economy is embedded in the very language that is used by non-aboriginal people to talk about our economy. It is embedded in the way that our relationships to our lands are perceived and described by non-aboriginal people. It has been embedded in the ways that non-aboriginal people use to describe our society. This language is the language within which non-aboriginal governments have developed their formal legal relationships toward us.

Historically, non-aboriginal governments and non-aboriginal societies have, when they have been polite, referred to Anishinaabe people as belonging to a "**traditional**" society. We lived a "**traditional way of life**" as "**hunter gatherers**". We were organized as "**bands**". When the language was not so polite we were referred to as "**savages**" or "**primitives**". These are not descriptions of our making. While the not-so-polite language is not commonly used to refer to us any longer, many non-aboriginal people still mix polite language that reflects stereotypes about our culture with terms which aboriginal leaders now insist be used to describe our societies. These days, therefore, we hear courts for example, make rulings about "**First Nations**" whose members can exercise rights in "**the traditional ways of a band**".

To some non-aboriginal people in positions of power with respect to our societies, the use of this

language might not seem to be rooted in prejudice at all. But we ask that it be considered when our "**traditional**" economy is usually referred to as a "**subsistence**" economy. The term "**subsistence**" inevitably conjures up images of "natives" who have lived by hunting and gathering off of "pristine" "**wildlands**". These lands remained in an "**unspoiled**" state because we did not "**develop**" the "technology" to have an impact on them. Most non-aboriginal people have assumed, therefore, that aboriginal people did not have the power to "**develop**" the lands upon which we have lived.

Our lands are "**wilderness**" and the life in them is "**wild**". Thus, our lives as aboriginal people inhabiting these lands is often associated with that of "hunter gatherer" cultures that Europeans have evolved away from centuries ago if not millennia ago. In Europe, the time when people lived like us was a time when life was "nasty, brutish and short". The tragedy of this is that it has been all too easy for non-aboriginal people with much authority to apply these prejudices to us. After all, this is the exact same terminology that a judge used recently to refer to the culture of the Gitksan Wet' suwet'en First Nation people in British Columbia in their efforts to seek recognition of their land rights.

Who wouldn't want to escape from the kind of economy that non-aboriginal people have slotted us into? But the important question here is whether or not any of the language referred to above should be used to describe our historical economy let alone our current economy. Perhaps this language was used out of ignorance about our societies. However, it is a language that has conveniently suited the purposes of non-aboriginal governments toward our lands. Only two examples involving our Lac Seul First Nation need to be considered to show what the use of this language has meant to us.

In 1928, a dam was constructed where the English River leaves Lac Seul. Lac Seul constitutes the heartland of our customary territories. The water in Lac Seul was raised some five meters. The impacts of this impoundment devastated our lives at Lac Seul. The costs of this flooding to our people were not even considered in the planning for the dam which is located at Ear Falls. Our people were not even asked whether we approved of the dam or not. This was a



Cutbank shorelines continue to erode on Lac Seul providing ongoing testimony to the invisibility of our people and our culture to non-aboriginal governments. The melting of snows in the spring of 1993 revealed damages caused by high water levels in the Lac Seul "reservoir" the previous year. At Frenchman's Head human remains of Anishinaabe people were exposed as a result of the erosion of burial grounds. The effects of flooding in 1928 have continued to cause disruption to our lives right up to the present time. (Photo taken by Tom Chisel, Lac Seul First Nation member, July 13th, 1993.)

development that was seen as beneficial for the people of the Province of Ontario. Did this include us? Consider the fact that the Lac Seul First Nation received hydro-electricity in 1985. It took nearly six decades after the dam was built for our people to obtain electricity for our communities of Frenchman's Head, Kejick Bay, and Whitefish Bay!

Photo unavailable: [Cutbank shorelines continue to erode on Lac Seul providing ongoing testimony to the invisibility of our people and our culture to non-aboriginal governments. The melting of snows in the spring of 1993 revealed damages caused by high water levels in the Lac Seul "reservoir" the previous year. At Frenchman's Head human remains of Anishinaabe people were exposed as a result of the erosion of burial grounds. The effects of flooding in 1928 have continued to cause disruption to our lives right up to the present time. (Photo taken by Tom Chisel, Lac Seul First Nation member, July 13th, 1993.)]

Scholars have commented on the effects of hydro-electric development in the Treaty #3 region in which our territories lie:

In these early instances of impoundment and [water] regulation, **Anishinaabe rights and interests were completely and utterly disregarded** [emphasis added]. The adverse effects, though dramatic, were overlooked and ignored at the time, and for long after. These effects included the flooding of substantial portions of reserve lands and even the loss of islands so created, and the loss of rice beds, hay fields, timber lands, muskrats and waterfowl. The reserve properties and the means of livelihood on and off the reserves, were impaired and disrupted, although the Anishinaabe understood that they had secured both of these things in perpetuity by virtue of Treaty #3. Although the Anishinaabe sought to adjust to changed water levels where possible, for example by planting new rice beds, some of these adverse effects continue to the present day.... [T]he issues of liability and compensation remain unresolved, and remain the subject of outstanding claims. No compensation has been paid to date.¹

Lac Seul First Nation people continue to be largely invisible (or is it ignored?) in relation to the non-aboriginal society on the whole issue of economy. Our distinct ways of organizing and doing economy still largely remain to be "discovered" by non-First Nation people. This is true for Anishinaabe people across Northern Ontario. We can demonstrate this by reference to the

¹Peter J. Usher, Patricia Cobb, Martin Loney, Gordon Spafford. Hydro-Electric Development and the English River Anishinaabe: Ontario Hydro's Past Record and Present Approaches to Treaty and Aboriginal Rights, Social Assessment and Mitigation and Compensation (Report prepared for Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, Grand Council Treaty #3 and Temn-Augama Anishnabai, Ottawa, Ontario, December 9, 1992), at p. 16.

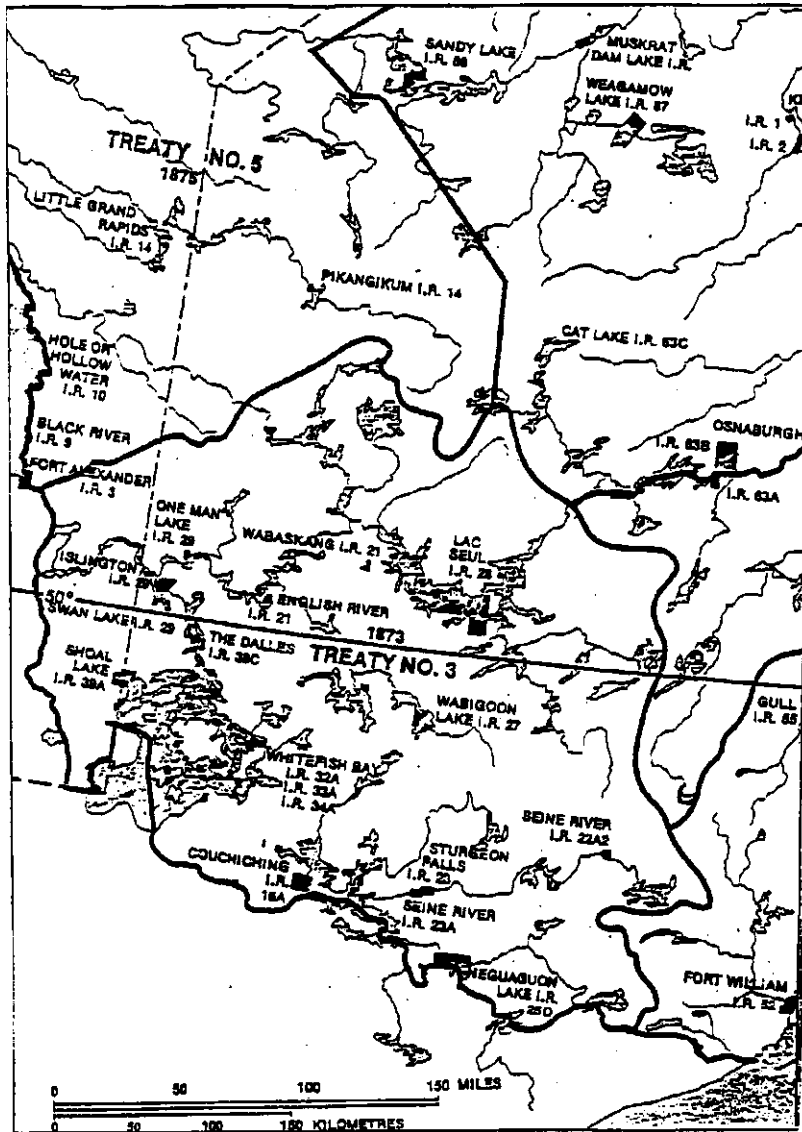
above passage we have quoted (one of the few outside sources that we have referred to in preparing this report).

The above passage states that Anishinaabe people sought to adjust to flooding caused by Ontario Hydro in our territories. The example of planting new rice beds was given. One example in reference to Manomin ("wild" rice) can be used to reveal the depth of the issues relating to our recovery of an economy which our people would prefer. The example reveals what is for many of our people, the likely futility of such a recovery in the context of our economic domination by non-aboriginal governments. The report cited above accurately acknowledges the efforts Lac Seul people put into replacing the Manoomin fields that we lost as a result of the flooding of Lac Seul. In a project we undertook to study lands issues from our perspective, we followed the efforts of one of our families to adjust to the devastating effects of flooding. Like many other Lac Seul families the Albert Quedent family expended considerable effort over several decades to propagate Manoomin into lakes in our customary lands where it was not grown by Lac Seul people before. During these decades, the Quedent family hauled Manoomin seed lots that averaged between one and two hundred kilograms, sometimes for hundreds of kilometres, into different areas of our Land and planted it where it had not been grown before. What were the results of their efforts in the waters where the Manoomin flourished? The results were that the Government of Ontario licensed these lakes to non-aboriginal "entrepreneurs"! In the case involving waters near Birch Lake where Manoomin was planted in the early 1970's by the Quedents, members of the family watched a plane land on the lake. The new "owner" of a wild rice harvesting licence for the lake got out and ordered them to get off the lake. To the Government of Ontario the presence of this family on these waters could not or would not be seen.

This was a lake that was planted with Manoomin by Anishinaabe people. It was their work which increased the "wealth" of this lake. But the Government of Ontario would not acknowledge. Why? Because for the Government of Ontario, Manoomin is a **"wild resource"** belonging to all of the people of Ontario. This is what government policy has expressly stated about Manoomin. Our relationships to Manoomin are not even conceptualized in this way. This

is because these non-aboriginal descriptions have as much to do with **property rights** over these kinds of "resources" as they do with strictly biological question about the "nature" of Manoomin. Our relationships to "resources" such as Manoomin, including our access arrangements to them, are profoundly different than those of non-aboriginal society. This is reflected in how we describe our relationships to Manoomin in our language. Therefore, by literally translating "wild rice" into our language, we could only come up with the term "Keeoshkwey Manoomin" - "crazy rice". The important question that this raises is why our relationships to Manoomin have not been recognized by non-aboriginal governments. It is important because the lack of this recognition has had the worst of economic consequences for us.

MAP OF TREATY #3 TERRITORY



Source: Royal Commission on the Northern Environment. *North of 50: An Atlas of Far Northern Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

The Quedent family was only one of many whose work to enrich our Land in this way has been denied by non-aboriginal governments. The result has been that this richness has been handed over to non-aboriginal economic interests. At the same time, when governments take First

Nation Lands to make them into a park they pay large amounts of compensation to companies who have "licence" to exploit resources on them. We need only to look at the Haida Gwa'ii Park in the Queen Charlotte Islands in British Columbia as one of the most recent examples of this. The company holding timber licence rights to forests that it did not plant was paid for not harvesting them. Yet when abundance on the land is the result of our work, it goes completely unrecognized. What is it that has prevented this recognition from occurring? Why cannot the laws of the white man see our relationships to our lands and affirm them as a matter fundamental to our cultural survival?

The example we have pointed to above is only one of a score of examples we could point to in terms of how our work to enrich the bounty of our Land has been denied and the benefits from this work taken from us. The flooding of Lac Seul, therefore, only provides a graphic example of what really has been the systematic suppression of our ways of livelihood. It has permeated every aspect of our economic lives. Whether one looks at forests or fur bearers, fish or waterfowl, the same is true. What are the implications of this? Because we remain relatively isolated with a strong attachment to our "traditional" culture, we face an immense challenge. In this context, this last question stands at the centre of what we are saying in this report.

Throughout our research, we were told again and again by the Lac Seul people who participated: Our ways of livelihood are different from those of the white man. We live on our Land in accordance with practices that are very different from those of the white man. Our economy reflects this. Without this being recognized we are left with a narrow range of choices: we can remain impoverished; we can decide to assimilate and work at it as hard as we can; we can resist non-aboriginal encroachment onto our lands by acts where non-aboriginal laws are broken. But there is another way out of our situation. Non-aboriginal governments can accept the uniqueness of our culture and recognize the authority we need to recover our economic health. In this report we will present the results of our research to demonstrate why this should be done.

ii) **Gaaonjeh Dibaajimooyang - "Why we are giving this report"**

In the course of our research, a statement was made which gives the best expression to why we are giving this report. During our largest **Focus Group** session, the discussion of non-aboriginal economic values was summarized by a member of our Research Team. She explained how this is a frequent topic of discussion amongst Lac Seul people. This summary was stated in our language and can be translated as follows:

We are afraid to go with the non-aboriginal way of economic development. Often we want to but our values are holding us back. Where will we go? Will we encourage our children to do it?

This is a discussion that is frequently heard amongst our people. Our Elders and many of our young people are afraid of the loss of values of livelihood which have sustained us for generations. Increasingly, however, our people are being pulled towards an acceptance of non-aboriginal values governing economic life. Tensions concerning economic issues amongst Lac Seul First Nation people are causing gaps to emerge between and sometimes even among generations in our communities. Our research discussions showed, however, that in spite of differences amongst our people on livelihood issues such as how we should be involved in forestry, for example, there is much more that we agree on than not. We have to come to terms with the implications of even our common values concerning economy. To what extent will we continue to practice unique ways of livelihood?

There is an acceptance among Lac Seul First Nation people that, given the realities of our interaction with non-aboriginal society, many of these issues that we must resolve are our own responsibility. But there is also an acknowledgement that much of the turmoil that Lac Seul people are going through regarding economic issues is caused by factors that we do not have the authority to control. Indeed, it is our lack of autonomy with respect to our economic lives that is the greatest cause of resentment amongst our people towards non-aboriginal society. Even a quick comparison of the most currently available census data on household and per capita income

between the Lac Seul First Nation and Sioux Lookout, the nearest off-reserve town, indicates why this resentment has persisted.

Lac Seul Reserve #28 -	Average Household Income 1985	\$19,310.00
	Average Per Capita Income 1985	\$ 4,465.00
Sioux Lookout, Ontario-	Average Household Income 1985	\$35,657.00
	Average Per Capita Income 1985	\$12,356.00²

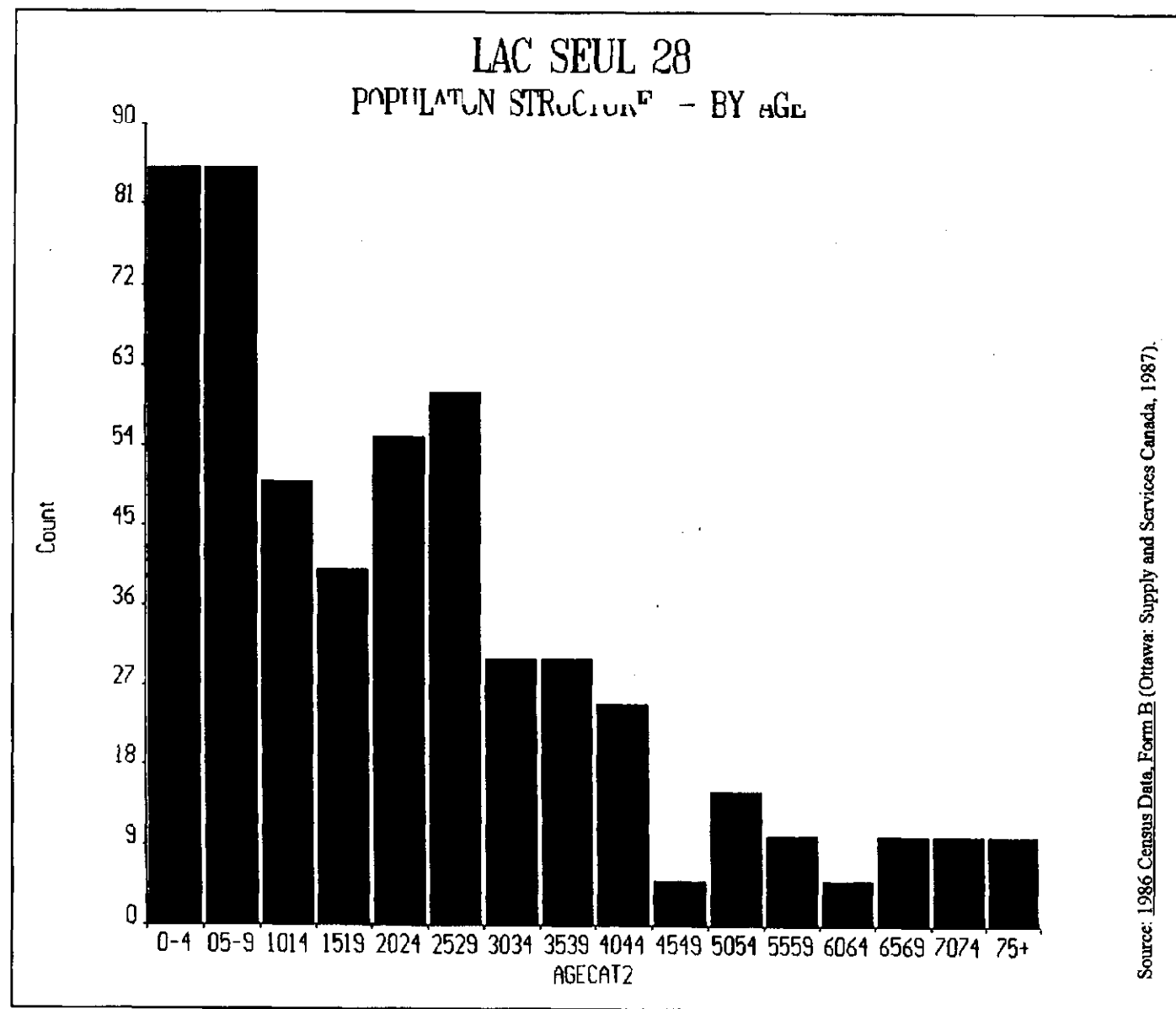
How can we be economically successful on our own terms in accordance with our Anishinaabe cultural values when we do not possess the autonomy that would allow us this possibility? This question is relevant not only in comparisons between our First Nation and non-reserve communities. It also has important implications for how we can live by commonly accepted values of equity within our communities. Even government funding programs, as they are currently structured, which are targeted solely for the benefit of First Nations like ours are economically disruptive when we cannot control them in accordance with our economic values. We do not get the opportunities we need to work out structures for economic programs that would build our own economic capacity and promote the full participation of our people in it.

This leads us to state why we are giving this report. The community-based research that was undertaken for this study resulted in findings which demonstrate how greater autonomy for Lac Seul people is key to our economic recovery. Our report, therefore, does not provide a blueprint that governments can use to establish a fair balance of economic power between our First Nation and the non-aboriginal society. Many First Nations, including ours, have presented numerous proposals to non-aboriginal governments to deal with this matter. We have, for example, submitted comprehensive proposals on lands issues related to our economy to the Government of Ontario. Having these proposals effectively dealt with will be essential for our economic

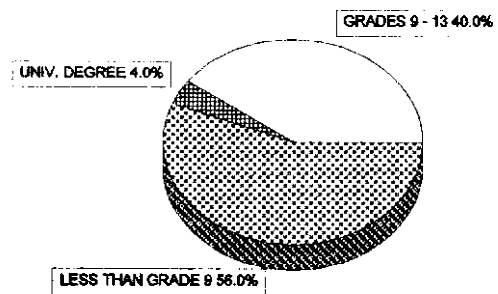
²Source: 1986 Census Data, Form B (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1987). More recent census data which is available for other First Nations in northern Ontario indicates the persistence of this income disparity. Data from the 1991 Canadian census confirm that the disparity between average household incomes, for example, between Sioux Lookout and First Nations in the region who participated in the 1991 census remains at approximately 2:1.

recovery. Yet until now, we have been unsuccessful at establishing substantive discussions that would open the possibility of economic recovery for us as First Nation people living in an isolated part of the country. One conclusion that we have reached as a result of this is that we must undertake whatever effort we can to explain our current political status in Canada. The ways our economy is different in its structure from that of the non-aboriginal society, and how this is still central to our livelihood, provide the most compelling reasons for dealing with the proposals we have brought forward to change the status quo.

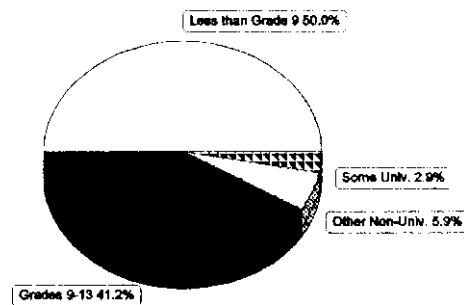
The current economic status quo that we face must change. Until now Lac Seul First Nation people have not had the necessary capacity to change it in a way that meets our needs. Rather, our people have had to cope with an imposed economic order which has placed tremendous stress on our cultural well-being. Given the extent of this imposition, it is not surprising that 1993 Indian and Northern Affairs Canada figures, for example, revealed only 629 people out of a total First Nation population of 1967 people were living "on-reserve".



LAC SEUL 28
EDUCATION - FEMALES



LAC SEUL 28
EDUCATION - MALE



Source: 1986 Census Data, Form B (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1987).

The movement of people away from Lac Seul is a reflection of the economic difficulties faced by a First Nation with a substantial membership whose customary access to their lands has been pulled out from under their feet. An imposed economic order on our lands has, for example, meant that there were approximately four dozen "main base" lodges (not including outpost camps or boat caches) whose patrons had direct boat access to Lac Seul waters before our First Nation was able to establish its first lodge in the 1980's. Further, since we established our first lodge, the fishermen who have stayed in our facilities have fished under the provincial fisheries management system for Lac Seul. Even though, as Anishinaabe people, we live on Lac Seul and ours are the only communities on the lake, to date only two of the tourist operations on the lake belong to our people. Furthermore, we have yet to achieve any regulatory authority over non-aboriginal people fishing in these ancestral waters whatsoever.

Our problems are compounded by the fact that the Lac Seul population is young by Canadian standards. Lac Seul parents wonder how our language can be preserved when we do not possess a viable local economy in which the Anishinaabe language has value. Further, our ties to our customary forms of livelihood activities, especially with respect to our relationships to land, have made it difficult for our people to pursue post-secondary education. Why must our ways of learning, our knowledge and our relationships to land be forsaken in order for our youth to obtain academic qualifications? Why, for example, would our youth feel comfortable becoming "conservation officers" when these people are known to us as "**wiiasskay ininiwuk**" - literally, "meat men", or those who control the meat - who have suppressed our practice of our customs on our lands? They have controlled our lives on the land to the point where they have driven the practice of many of our customs "underground". These relationships with non-aboriginal Canada cannot form the basis of any sort of realistic livelihood for our people. Thus, we must demonstrate why there is no way forward in terms of the recovery of our economy without resolving the issue of autonomy. There is no other way forward for us because the alternatives involve a loss of culture which is not acceptable to us.

C. THE STUDY

i) Study Objectives

a) The Issue of Culture and Economy

When the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples first gathered together representatives of the First Nation Community Economy Study research teams, certain articles were distributed to them. Amongst these materials was a report from a major study on aboriginal economies in the United States. The major findings of the study were that there were three factors which characterized successful aboriginal economic development efforts:

1. The exercise of a sufficient degree of sovereignty;
2. Capable institutions of First Nation government which separate politics from business;
3. Harmonizing economic efforts with cultural norms and practices.³

What became clear throughout the community-based research that was conducted for this report is how our cultural distinctiveness is at the core of our search for autonomy in which we can conduct our economic affairs in accordance with our own values and beliefs. The research also made clear how Land remains central to who we are at Lac Seul and, therefore, our future prosperity. In everything from the descriptions and categories of economic activity in our language (it might most appropriately be described in English as "livelihood" from our language to reflect our emphasis on the importance of autonomy and equity exercised and practiced locally), to specific practices of "resource management" on the land that support our livelihood,

³Stephen Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt, "Reloading the Dice: Improving the Chances for Economic Development on American Indian Reservations", in Stephen Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt (Editors). What Can Tribes Do? Strategies and Institutions in American Indian Economic Development (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, University of California, 1992), pp. 1 - 59.

we are distinct. This is what this report explains. The economic implications of who we are in relation to the non-aboriginal society, therefore, are always in our discussions that concern our future at Lac Seul. The manner in which our relationships with non-aboriginal governments evolve will determine the future shape of our economy. Every society uses political arrangements to regulate its economic activity. "Resource management", for example, is primarily concerned not with the conservation of Land but with the economic allocation and use of the wealth of Land. At the present time, our lack of political autonomy, especially with respect to our customary lands, is exerting tremendous pressure on Lac Seul people to assimilate non-aboriginal ways of doing economy.

What does this mean for us? Because imposed non-aboriginal political regulation of our economy on our Land is relatively recent, there are possible choices about our economic future that we could make if we possessed a sufficient degree of autonomy to do this. Our aboriginal presence on our Land is the most significant demographic presence. A simple reference to a map of the geographical distribution of languages in North America clearly demonstrates this. We live in a region where in the northerly part of our territories, much of the "resource management" mandate of the Government of Ontario is spent on regulating and administering our activities on them. Even to the south of Lac Seul in Northwestern Ontario, the bulk of the non-aboriginal population is concentrated in a few smaller regional centres like Dryden, Kenora and Fort Frances. Our aboriginal customs governing our livelihood activities on the northerly parts of our ancestral territories are not even recognized. The only rights that we can exercise in accordance with our customs are rights to hunt and fish for "subsistence" purposes. It is certainly not surprising, therefore, that there is no pluralism in terms of land use in our southerly ancestral Lands where we could openly practice our customs of livelihood.

Lac Seul people are now at a point where, unless this situation changes, aboriginal and non-aboriginal economic activity on our Lands will likely become ever less distinguishable. It will be seen as an achievement that brown faces are seen inside "conservation" officer suits. It will be seen as a significant achievement if we can reach an agreement with the Government of Ontario to "develop" and implement "resource management" "codes" or "laws" that mirror

provincial law. But what this will reflect is that our people have had to adopt ways of social organization regarding economic activity that we would not have otherwise chosen if different options were open to us. Our research for this report indicated clearly that our people want to be able to make choices concerning our economic future that reflect our cultural values and priorities. This is largely due to the persistence of our normative customary values of livelihood.

Source: American Academic Encyclopedia (Danbury, Conn: Grolier Inc., 1984) (Vol 14)), at p. 234.

As Anishinaabe people, we have refused to construct the same "economic fences" on our Lands

that non-aboriginal society accepts as given. Even on our "reserve land", we have made no use of the *Indian Act* Certificate of Possession system. Our organization of our livelihood pursuits, and the values upon which this organization is based is reflected in this reality. It is a reality which profoundly distinguishes our ways of livelihood from those of the non-aboriginal society. Can we make the decisions about what to keep and what to change in our ways of livelihood?

We show in this report that, given the distinctiveness of our ways of livelihood, making proper decisions on our livelihood issues calls for our ability to exercise a sufficient degree of political autonomy over our economic lives. The longer that this issue is not adequately dealt with, the fewer will be the effective choices that we can make on these matters.

b) Objectives

The issue of First Nation peoples and First Nation economies in contemporary Canada is very complex. As the four person Lac Seul Research Team, which was given responsibility to carry the "Community Economy Study" project forward, considered the issues a decision was made to narrow the focus of enquiry to the livelihood customs and values of our people. We set out the following research objectives in making this decision:

1. We would concentrate our efforts on documenting livelihood customs of Lac Seul First Nation people, paying particular attention to our economic values, as one means of demonstrating the importance of our aboriginal culture to our economy;
2. We would document the relationships of our livelihood customs and economic values paying particular attention to the difficulties concerning our participation - or lack of it - in the non-aboriginal economy;
3. We would focus this enquiry on people living at Lac Seul assuming that it would help give a useful perspective on the economic disparity between people living at Lac Seul and non-aboriginal communities in the region even though we live in

a region that is still blessed with a rich abundance on Land. We decided that this enquiry might also shed light on the issue of why so many Lac Seul people have had to leave our Lands to seek economic security elsewhere. (Had the financial resources been available to us, it would have been worthwhile to conduct a survey amongst people who have left Lac Seul on the economic factors that were involved in their decisions to leave. This could have provided valuable information against which we could have assessed the results of our Focus Group discussions.) ;

4. We would carry out our research paying special attention to issues concerning Land in relation to livelihood and the continuing importance of Land to the culture of our people. (In so doing we would also be able to build upon the results of previous work of our Research Team on Lands issues)

These became the formal objectives according to which we carried out our research for this Community Economy Study.

ii) Research Methodology

a) Community-Based and Directed Research

First Nation members who have lived at Lac Seul were the primary participants in this Community Economy Study. Our challenge was to understand economic concerns that our people felt were important in their efforts to nurture our economic recovery. We wanted to obtain information from them based on their cultural perspective. The Lac Seul Research Team decided to rely upon a qualitative research study process to deliberate these issues. We concluded that qualitative research conducted in the form of Focus Group Discussions was the best tool that we could use to assess our economy from a Lac Seul First Nation perspective. We decided that this process would yield information which could be used by our First Nation, as well as others, in the future to conduct quantitative research on the findings that emerged from

the Focus Group Discussions.

While we establish a framework for the Focus Group Discussions, the Lac Seul Research Team also took care to structure the discussion process in such a way that it remained flexible. We wanted to follow any valuable leads concerning Lac Seul people and our economy which would emerge in the discussions. Therefore, the Lac Seul Community Economy Study Research was community-based and community directed in two distinct ways. Firstly, all of the members of the Lac Seul Research Team except for a technical assistant were the Lac Seul First Nation. It was their knowledge of our First Nation that was relied upon in organizing participation in the Focus Group Discussions. Secondly, the Focus Group Discussions themselves were designed to be flexible enough to allow the participants to pursue discussion of economic issues as they wanted.

The Lac Seul Research Team believes that the results of this research process consist of findings that will stimulate much more discussion on economic issues amongst Lac Seul First Nation people. We believe that these findings will also speak to the experience of other First Nation people - especially northern First Nation people as well. They reveal the economic potential that can be freed up without First Nation people necessarily having to relinquish their culture. Recently, for example, an Anishinaabe man from Manitoba told the *Globe and Mail* that one factor in increasing "entrepreneur growth" was "learning not to feel guilty". He was quoted as saying: **"Culturally we are supposed to share things and sometimes we make bad business people because of that."**⁴ The example of abuse of credit at stores on First Nation territories is used in the context of the above statement. Our research, however, demonstrates that the concept of sharing as an English term applied to aboriginal culture is of limited value. What Lac Seul Focus Group discussion participants indicated is that our customary practice of economic reciprocity does not have to be a burden on our achieving economic self-sufficiency. Abuse of credit, for example, has more to do with lack of self-esteem resulting from economic dependency

⁴ Rudy Platiel, "Natives take to business with zeal" (Toronto: *Globe and Mail* (National Edition), July 4, 1994), at p. A4.

than anything else. We, as First Nation people, will make decisions concerning the value of our ways of economic reciprocity. However, the most crucial difficulties we face in making such decisions is making them without having the choices available to us that we would otherwise have if we were able to exercise a reasonable degree of autonomy. This is what we learned from our Focus Group Discussions. This is the value of this type of research.

b) The Focus Group Discussion Sessions
- The Research Sample

A total of seven Focus Group Discussions were held with Lac Seul First Nation members to gather information for the Community Economy Study:

- Focus Group #1 - Sioux Lookout, Ontario;
- Focus Group #2 - Lac Seul First Nation, Kejick Bay Band Office;
- Focus Group #3 - Lac Seul First Nation, Frenchman's Head Band Office;
- Focus Group #4 - Lac Seul First Nation, Frenchman's Head Band Office;
- Focus Group #5 - Lac Seul First Nation, Kejick Bay Band Office;
- Focus Group #6 - Lac Seul First Nation, Frenchman's Head;
- Focus Group #7 - Lac Seul First Nation, Kejick Bay.

Focus Groups #1, #6 and #7 involved the Lac Seul Research Team members working exclusively with Elders. These Focus Group Discussions were held in Elders' homes either because it was too difficult for the Elders to travel or because they felt more comfortable speaking about community economy issues in their home environments. Because of the preferences of the Elders, these Focus Groups involved small groups:

- Focus Group #1 - Two Elders (male);
- Focus Group #6 - Two Elders (male);
- Focus Group #7 - Two Elders (husband and wife).

The other Focus Groups involved a range of different people. Participants included people with responsibility for running businesses on our First Nation as well as staff and First Nation Councillors with responsibility for economic issues. Participation can be listed as follows:

Focus Group #2 - Ten participants (three First Nation Councillors (two male, one female), three community Ec-Dev workers (two male, one female), one First Nation staff worker involved in forestry enterprise development (male), one First Nation Community Resource worker (male), two "managers" from a tourist business located on Lac Seul (male));

Focus Group #3 - Five participants (two First Nation Ec-Dev workers (one male, one female), one First Nation Councillor (male), one First Nation administrative staff person (female), an aboriginal advisor to the First Nation on political and economic issues (male - member of another First Nation));

Focus Group #4 - Five participants (two First Nation Councillors (male), two First Nation Ec-Dev workers (one female, one male), First Nation staff person in charge of forestry enterprise development (male));

Focus Group #5 - Four participants (one First Nation Councillor (male), a First Nation Welfare Administrator (female), two First Nation members including a former First Nation Store Manager (both female)).

While considerable effort was exerted in attempting to get Lac Seul First Nation members generally involved in the Focus Group Discussions, participation in this regard was less than what we had originally planned to achieve. Some Lac Seul people expressed the view that studies such as these have not in the past resulted in changed policies that led to improved economic conditions for Lac Seul people.

- The Research Process

In all, twenty one Lac Seul First Nation members participated in the Lac Seul Community Economy Study Focus Group Discussions. The Focus Groups were held during a period running from August 8th, 1993 to September 9th, 1993. Each of the Focus Groups was scheduled to last for one working day. The Focus Groups with Lac Seul Elders ran for somewhat shorter periods of time during the day in accordance with the stamina of the Elders who were involved. The Lac Seul Research Team and the First Nation Councillor with responsibility for direction for the community economy study found that the information gathered from the Focus Group Discussions was more than adequate to demonstrate crucial challenges facing the Lac Seul people in terms of economy and culture.

The Focus Group Discussions on our Anishinaabe customs of livelihood and economy followed a particular approach. The only research tool, which served as a Focus Group discussion guide, consisted of the application guide form for business plan/application development used by the Government of Ontario for its Ontario Aboriginal Economic Development Program in 1993. The categories of business planning and business organization in this form were assessed from the perspective of our culture and, in particular, in relation to Lac Seul livelihood values. In other words, the contents of this form were assessed in Focus Group discussions. In this way, the discussions were used to compare and analyze our customs of economic organization, and the values which lie behind them, with those of the non-aboriginal society as they are reflected in an aboriginal economic support program targeted specifically for the benefit of First Nation people by a non-aboriginal government.

The form was distributed in the Focus Groups involving Lac Seul Elders. This is because they were not proficient enough in reading English for the form to be understandable to them. In these Focus Groups, we carried out the discussions so that the approach to business organization in the form could be discussed by our Elders in terms of their understanding of the normative features of our livelihood pursuits. The form was distributed to the participants in Focus Groups #2, # 3, and # 4. The form was not distributed in Focus Group #5 as this Focus Group centred on the impact of welfare on the economy of Lac Seul people.

- Data Management

The information acquired in each Focus Group was recorded on audio tape. Detailed notes were also taken of the discussions by each of the three members of the Research Team who organized and led the discussions. Key statements from Focus Group participants were referenced on the audio tapes in coded form marking the statements to the tape recorder position (counter #). The tapes were available to verify material from the written notes that were used to prepare this report.

iii) Limitations of the Study

It is important to note that this study must be treated as preliminary in nature. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, qualitative research methods involving Focus Groups, while being capable of yielding valuable results, are limited in several respects. In the case of our research, the Focus Group sample was relatively small. Twenty-one people participated out of an on-reserve population of approximately seven hundred people. Secondly, we restricted the scope of our enquiry to the issue of the relationships between culture, values and economy. The Lac Seul Research Team understood that this is a field of study that is difficult and complex. None the less, the goal of the Research Team was to attempt to make the process of enquiry in the study as accessible as possible to Lac Seul people who do not have the same levels of education as non-aboriginal experts. We should note, for example that no Lac Seul participant in the Focus Groups possessed a university degree. Given these limitations, however, the process of enquiry yielded results that the Research Team considered valuable and informative. The different Focus Groups revealed a commonality of thinking concerning economic issues that was quite remarkable across age groups and between the Focus Groups. This in itself indicated to the Lac

Seul Research Team members that the information that was acquired was worthwhile and could be profitably used in other more comprehensive enquiries.

At the same time, however, we believe that this study is best treated as providing results which are worthy of more intensive investigation. Such investigation could profit from the use of more extensive quantitative survey-based research as we have already noted. Furthermore, the results of our research point to the possibility of documenting economic issues from the cultural perspective of Lac Seul First Nation people to a much greater depth. This would take research far beyond what was possible within the context of the research process that has led to this report. Nevertheless, our research process has yielded results which describe the basic normative features of our livelihood pursuits. These are given a special perspective in relation to the question of lands.

D. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUES

i) **Gimiinigoowiziewnan Kilaabigibimaajiegoomen - "The Land and Everything on the Land, Which are the Gifts of the Creator, Still Give Us Life"**

There is no better way to demonstrate how our lack of autonomy acts as a brake on our economic recovery than by reference to "lands" issues. The experience of our Lac Seul First Nation people can be instructive from several different perspectives. Firstly, our economic situation places us at a provincial economic divide between south and north. As the map of North American languages presented in the previous pages highlights, our presence on our Lands - particularly to the north of Lac Seul - is the dominant human presence from a demographic perspective. Nevertheless, we cannot today exercise any significant economic autonomy on our Land. Our presence on our Land can be stated in the following way: while our resources have been "developed", we remain surrounded by provincial "unoccupied" Crown Land. Our Lands have not been developed; that is, they have not been turned into private property but their wealth has been developed and heavily **exploited** by non-aboriginal economic interests.

The white man's law gives us the "right" to live "subsistence" lifestyles on our Lands while at the same time controlling and permitting the non-aboriginal commercial exploitation of them. Before resource management came to Lac Seul Lands, we did not possess any greater economic rights in non-aboriginal law to them, but in a practical sense we were left alone on them. For example, in our research, our Elders told us that we were largely left alone to practice our customary fishery on Lac Seul, both commercial and domestic, right up until the last generation. We did this in accordance with our own system of "resource allocation" which bears virtually no resemblance to the provincial management system for Ontario fisheries. **Paradoxically, our customary fishery on Lac Seul began to be vigorously suppressed - in accordance with the stated purpose of conservation - at the same time as the 1966 General Welfare Agreement was put into place.** In our research, some participants wondered if Lac Seul people were responsible for the decline of the fishery which followed in these years. Lac Seul Elders,

however, were nearly unanimous in rejecting this assessment. One Elder who participated in our research was emphatic about this. He pointed to examples of destructive provincial disruption to our fishery. In one case, **one of the first Ministry of Natural Resources officials who explained the imposition of a drastic curtailment of our fishery to our leaders at the time, was also one of the first non-aboriginal people to obtain permission and build a lodge for sport fishermen to fish Lac Seul!**

Wherever possible, as Lac Seul First Nation people, we have clung to our customary relationships to Land. Where this has been very hard to do, however, the results have been destructive for our economic health. What has the response of our people been to the imposition of non-aboriginal resource management on our Land? The response is instructive for the consideration of the state of our economy generally. We have resisted the provincial administrative "fencing off" of our "resources" with respect to the household or domestic economy of our people. We have also resisted this encroachment by our virtual non-participation in commercial economic activity on our Land wherever this has conflicted with our customary ways of livelihood. But the price that has been paid is dramatic. Consider the fact, for example, that before the Government of Ontario tightened its grip over forest management on our Land, it would have been hard to find Lac Seul people who did not engage in logging. It is only necessary to go back forty years to see this. Our "commercial" forestry activity was organized within our system of Land tenure. (In our language, we would refer to this as livelihood activity in the same manner as we would describe hunting for the household. As a "commercial" activity, we would refer to it as involving aspects of "trade" whether for cash or for barter.) Now it is hard to find any Lac Seul people who do engage in logging.

What we say in this section of our report concerning Land and economy for our people, therefore, will provide a reference point for all of the discussion about economic issues that is presented throughout the report. The primary reason that we use Land as a reference point in explaining some of the most important normative features of our economic activity is that Land continues to represent perhaps the most important economic opportunity for Lac Seul people. Land and everything on Land have and still can give us life

The research results in this section have come from two sources. One is the Focus Group Discussions that were held specifically to discuss the "community economy" of Lac Seul. The other is the community-based research that was carried by the Lac Seul Research Team specifically in relation to Lands issues. The results of the lands research were originally compiled in a special Lands report which our First Nation wants to use in the negotiation of lands issues with the Government of Ontario. In the following pages of this section, these results are repeated and the perspective they originally offered is broadened with a consideration of the economic concerns of Lac Seul people that resulted from the Community Economy Study Focus Groups.

ii) **Gaa-ondaadiziying Akiing - "Our Livelihood From the Land"**

Before an alien system of resource management was imposed upon our people, we lived throughout our customary lands - **Miziweh aaki** - following our own system of "land use" and conservation. This was before regulations were imposed upon us dictating such things as where we could build housing (eg. "trapper's cabins") and what we could do on our Lands. Now we must obtain licences to build the smallest of dwellings in our customary Lands. But before this alien "land management" system was imposed on us, we were able to live in accordance with our own system of ethics and values with respect to "land use". Our ethics were reflected in the ways our people travelled and lived on Land, in the ways we regulated our own access to Land and the ways we interacted with each other on Land.

Our people have been the primary dwellers on and keepers of our customary Lands. This involves a very unique set of relationships with all other aboriginal people on our Lands. We have been the people with a fundamental reliance on "the land" within a region the centre of which is **Obishiikokahwsahigun** - Lac Seul. These Lands range from the Trout Lake region in the northwest, southeast through the Lac Seul region and easterly and northerly from Lac Seul towards Lake St. Joseph. In certain parts of our Lands, our people have secured their livelihood from them in close proximity to people from other First Nations. These "boundary" areas, for

example, between Lac Seul and Lake St. Joseph, where people from our First Nation and the Osnaburgh First Nation lived in proximity to each other, have been utilized in accordance with basic principles of "land use" that are shared amongst Anishinaabe people generally.

Right up to the present time, Lac Seul First Nation people have emphasized the importance of an ongoing connection to Land as the best means to support a sustainable relationship with it. Our aboriginal relationships to Land is central to this. It can be stated in the following way: Amongst our people, we believe that no one person can hold a body of information and apply it effectively and sustainably over all of the Lands that we have relied on as the primary source of our livelihood. Intimacy with Land in our culture has been customarily supported with different sets of "land use": arrangements. One of these we refer to as **Kaagiiizhitazhikaywaat** - our family territories used for livelihood purposes. These territories are sometimes also referred to as **Nandaawenjikeh aki** - family hunting territories. These terms refer to the basic units of a key component of our "land use system". During certain seasons these territories have been customarily used by our people in family groups for a wide range of livelihood activities.

When our Elders refer to these territories, they refer to them as the areas around which they were born or were raised. These were the territories that they relied upon in the pursuit of their livelihood on Land during much of the year. The configuration and customary use of these territories is often reflected in the "traplines" that our people use today. Only today, however, our people are subject to a vast number of non-aboriginal regulations in the use of these territories. This has suppressed our effective use of them in the way that was possible before the imposition of non-aboriginal "resource management" over our lives on our Land. This issue is dealt with later in this report. It is only necessary to note here, however, that wherever possible, our customary practices of "land use" have continued. Often they have continued in defiance of non-aboriginal law. Further, our people are determined to renew many of them where they have been suppressed.

We should also state here that the set of customary "land use" arrangements we call **Kaagiiizhitazhikaywaat** represent only one form of territorial use and allocation amongst our

people. Our people have, for example, also customarily gathered together in large groups to undertake activities such as **Manoominikewin** - the harvesting of "wild" "rice". The knowledge that each of our people possess of Land from our livelihood activities must be seen as part of a larger and more complex whole. The whole takes on a dynamic character in the ways that each of our people weave their knowledge together into a larger living system of "land use" and conservation.

Each Lac Seul person who spends time on Land possesses a particular concentration of knowledge for a particular area. We could describe an overall picture where the individuals of our First Nation possess chapters or volumes of a larger encyclopedia of knowledge of our Land. Our customary system of family territories, therefore, provides not only for an efficient use of the bounty of Land; it also provides the means through which we can collect and share with each other a vast amount of knowledge about Land. The specific knowledge carried by Lac Seul individuals who spend time on our Land is kept current from our ongoing presence on Land. In accordance with certain customs, specific areas of Land can be accessed by a number of Lac Seul people. The system of knowledge relating to our presence on Land is "coded" in a way that is coherent and **normative** within our culture. This body of knowledge reflects our economic organization on our Land. It has arisen from our normative economic relationships to each other on our Land. Thus, it constitutes a living body of distinct knowledge accompanied by a distinct system of economic relationships that we are certain is of value not only for our people, but for all people.

What we want to say here is that our customary access to Land is bound together into a larger system. Suppress one part and the ripples of this suppression are felt throughout the entire system. This is why our people have been so concerned when our presence on our customary Lands is changed in ways that do not respect the principles of autonomy and self-directed cultural change. This has the most serious of economic implications for our people. Our ecological knowledge of our Land, therefore, and the culture in which this knowledge is embedded should not be ignored when harvesting activities are undertaken in these Lands by outsiders.

For us, the tragedy of outside resource management regulation is that many of the decisions of non-aboriginal governments restrict the lives of our people on our lands in ways that conflict with our culture and place it at risk. In addition, ecological knowledge that we consider to be important in making "land use" decisions - knowledge of bear fishing locations, migratory waterfowl nesting and staging areas, key feeding areas and habitat for a variety of animals, etc. -

has most often not even been used when non-aboriginal governments have made decisions on land use in our customary territories. The Government of Ontario might have thought twice about approving the flooding of Lac Seul if its decision had been made from our cultural perspective concerning the wealth of our Lands. The same applies to many MNR land use decisions for our customary Lands that are being made at the present time.

Provincial conservation officers spend considerable time monitoring our people on our Land - and often harassing them. Our people continually cited examples throughout our research not only concerning lands issues but also for this community economic study. Some of these are listed later in this report. If this situation was different, we could perhaps respect this bureaucracy and the laws which govern it a little more. At the same time, many Lac Seul people are troubled that the very organizational model for the "management" of natural resources used by the Government of Ontario is the major contributing factor both to stress on our Lands and our economic marginalization.

The question of values and ethics of two different cultures is at the heart of this issue. In our activities on Land we are careful to always emphasize the teachings of our people concerning co-operation and respect. Our Elders have taught us that it is always important to exercise **Gikinawaadendaamin** - that is, to have knowledge of and respect for the customary livelihood territories of others. Values such as these are an integral part of our culture. As we live them, they are simply incompatible with the centralized system of land use that has been imposed on us by the Government of Ontario. Whether we talk of preserving our knowledge of our Land or our livelihood on Land we must talk of finding a way for two different cultures to co-exist with each other.

In this report, we are often using the phrase "land use" with quotations around it. We use this phrase to help bridge the cultural divide which separates our relationships to land and our economy on our land from the non-aboriginal society. In our language, we do not talk of **using the land** as the MNR does. We have no equivalent term for **land use** in our language. We do not use the expression "using our land" any more than our people would talk of "using my husband" or "using my wife". English phrases that might be more suitable to describe our experience of Land would include, for example: **We make our living on Land**. Or we can talk in English of activities that we do out on Land. For example, we can say **we hunt on Land** or **we work in Forest cutting living Trees**.

We can refer to generic terms such as **animals** or **fish** or **birds**. But our relationship to Land is one of intense partnership. Even using the word partnership must be considered in a particular way. Perhaps the best way of describing this is to use the language of family relationships. Saying that the animals, fish or birds of Land are in a special way our relatives would capture some of the character of our presence on our Land.

In the same way, we should clarify our relationship of our culture to the concept of **resources management**. Given what we have said above, it should not be surprising that the term **natural resources** does not have an equivalent in our language. Most non-aboriginal people think of natural resources as what is on the land that is non-domesticated. But, it is clear to us that the term **natural resources** refers more importantly to a specific set of relationships to Land. It describes a relationship of people to Land that is defined by a **fundamental division** between people and Land that has arisen in the context of their social organization in relation to "resource use". Non-aboriginal governments talk of **natural resources management**. This term defines specific non-aboriginal relationships to Land. The relationships are sustained by the practice of strict economic hierarchy in relation to "land use".

We were described as primitive by non-aboriginal courts and governments for centuries. This way of describing us is closely connected to how our presence on our Land has been viewed by provincial natural resources management agencies. When we practice our customary culture on

Land, we are seen as **subsisting** on the land. This thinking is the logic of bias applied to our people.

It is true that we have not practiced natural resources management in our culture as we have been able to understand its practice by non-aboriginal governments. However, our people fully understand the power, existing and potential, of human beings in relation. In our culture, we have always said that we have possessed the power to destroy or lay waste - **ooshaaonaajiton** - to the bounty of our Land or to disrupt the created integrity and order of things on Land - **oonaaajijgehin**. But we have avoided this by relying on a complex system of "land use" which we are only beginning to describe in this report. The character of this system is evident in our descriptions of our relationships to Land. It can be seen even in the names we have given places on Land. It is evident in the way we organize and conduct all of our activities on Land. Many of these practices could be called management functions. But they have arisen out of our unique culture. The best way we can describe it is to use the term **ndaawii-igo**. Rather than referring to the "management" of "natural resources" as things that are simple objects or commodities, it describes a way of living on the land with each other where the created order of Land - including the diversity of Land - and integrity are maintained.

Describing the character of "land use" of our Lac Seul First Nation people in English, therefore, is a complex task. Even the idea of boundaries amongst our people, for example, is markedly different from the concept and use of boundaries by non-aboriginal governments. Both in our customary relationships to Land and in non-aboriginal law, people possess authority to exercise designated activities on certain Lands. But this is where the differences between our cultures begin.

The non-aboriginal system of land use is based on a set of values and ethics of competition in relation to Land considered as normal - as normative. Under this system, a person's right to exclude others with the force of law - **Onaakonigewin** and possess land use rights exclusively are valued more than a system of "land use" based on co-operation and reciprocity. Because of this, Land can never be protected without the strong application of force, as mandated by the

law. This force is required to control destructive behaviour on Land where people emphasize competition with each other and want to maximize their short term individual gain against the rest of the members of the "community".

Amongst our people, we say that, before the coming of non-aboriginal land and resource management, we were free to travel throughout and make our livelihood from our Land in accordance with our way of life. By this we mean that our access to Land was not regulated in the way that it is now under non-aboriginal law. Our approach to Land emphasizes the exercise of locally-based authority and co-operation. This approach places a high degree of responsibility on the members of the community. Within our culture we have developed a variety of means to nurture this responsibility. Without nurturing this responsibility, we would not have the means to gather and make use of the knowledge of Land that we have been able to. Land makes this knowledge available to us in proportion to the respect we exercise in our livelihood pursuits.

Ganawendaamin N'daakiinaan describes our authority and responsibility to look after our Land. To carry out this responsibility, each of us must pay strict attention to everything that we do on Land so that Land will be taken care of - **Ogiinaanaagajitonaawa**. We are to follow and practice our customs - what could be called **Kinawaajijigaywinan** - of "land use". These customs include specific rules of conduct, ceremonial practices and other elements all of which flow from the spiritual teachings of our people in relation to Land.

For example, in the individual and group harvesting of game on Land (hunting and trapping) or fishing in our waters, the principle of conservation - **otishkoonan** - is paramount. In our culture, conserving game is not abiding by quotas that are set by an official who does not live from the bounty of Land. This is only an incentive for an Anishinaabe person to be lazy with respect to the responsibility to constantly acquire knowledge from working on Land as one person in a larger local social group and to develop harvesting techniques which maximize conservation efficiency. Every person who works on Land in our culture is responsible to undertake this learning. **In this way we say that the harvesting of fish and animals, for example, cannot be separated from the practice of conservation. Proper harvesting techniques themselves**

constitute an inseparable part of a larger system of conservation that is part and parcel of our culture. Using conservation practices to their full potential means that harvesting and the protection and enhancement of abundance of Land cannot be separated for our people. The maintenance of this approach to "land use" has been reinforced among our people. We have done this using "community-based" standards and practices that are based on the equitable allocation of access arrangements to land (this is explained shortly) and the continuous reciprocal distribution of the bounty that we obtain from Land.

When our people work on Land properly and this results in a good harvest, they are **jiikendam** - happy with the good harvest. When a person follows the teachings - **keenamatewin** - and customs of our people in livelihood activities on Land and becomes successful in these pursuits, that person gains the esteem - **gichiinenjigaday** - of the community and acquires authority. Therefore, when provincial resource management regulations suppress the ability of our people to exercise their conservation responsibilities and practices which enhance abundance on Land, our people - especially our Elders - continue to insist that they are spoiling this way of life.

We have said that, in our culture, the regulation of land use and the practice of conservation is not to be separated from the activity of harvesting. This is how our people assume responsibility to be sensitive to what they can learn on Land. Our values concerning the acquisition of ecological knowledge, as well as respect for Land, are part of a larger system of economic ethics that guide our lives in our ancestral territories. It is as important for our people to share in their lives on Land as it is for each of them as individuals to learn from and be sensitive to Land in the pursuit of their livelihood activities. An overarching cooperative strategy of "land use" has been the basis of our sustainable lives on Land. This is what lies at the base of our customary allocation and distribution of the harvest from Land. What we are talking of here is fundamentally related to technique and not tools. When our people used 40 foot diesel powered "put puts" in their fishery before it was suppressed by the Ministry of Natural Resources, the framework of our unique relationships to Land continued to reflect the economic values that have governed our lives on Lac Seul waters .

Our people hold the values of **wiidoogodaadiwin** - working together, **kiwiidoogawaa** - helping others, and **weechiwehwin** - helping one another in especially high esteem in our living on Land. These values are exercised through the practice of a system of land use practices and customs we call

ndaawii-igo - living on Land using the way of reciprocity and equity. **Ndaawii-igo** does not involve helping someone as an act of "charity". Rather **ndaawii-igo** means the systematic practice of a special form of equity amongst our people. It has profound economic and political consequences not only in terms of our lives with each other as First Nation people but also in terms of the suppression of our economy by the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada. This practice gives our people a special form of freedom in relation to living on our Land which has been supported throughout our culture. Its persistence can be measured by the stubborn refusal of our people to "fence off" the "resources" on our Land in accordance with the allocation and management system of the Province of Ontario.

The value of this form of equity and reciprocity in relation to Land has been held in such high esteem by our people that we can say we are of one mind - **maamaawendaamoowin** - with respect to it. The restriction of our ability to practice this way of living on the land is what is especially resented by our people. When our Elders recall the bitter history of our dispossession when the MNR imposed managements control over our Land, they speak of this in the context of the freedom we exercised to practice our own economy. This is what they mean when they say that before the MNR imposed this control they were free to travel and harvest on our Land and practice the reciprocity that has been customary in our culture.

Our practice of reciprocity and equity has important economic implications for our culture. It has been the primary means by which we have connected our knowledge of Land to each other. This is not only important in terms of conserving what is economically important to us; it is also important in terms of the economic efficiency that we practiced from within our culture in our livelihood activities on Land. Through our practice of reciprocity and equity, we have been able to circulate our knowledge of Land that makes its total value much more than the sum of its

individual parts. This way of living on Land and sharing ecological knowledge discourages "management" laziness. It is reciprocal sharing. When a "hunter" gives a portion of game to another "hunter", it is simply expected that the action will be reciprocated. It is the basis of esteem amongst our people. Good "harvesters" who follow this way of life on Land achieve great status in our community. They are seen as keepers and protectors of the land - **aki ganawenjikayininiwuk**. They gain their status by virtue of their harvesting and conservation abilities **and** their practice of **ndaawii-igo**. Lac Seul people continue look to them for advice and guidance when new issues and problems arise concerning "land use".

What is done on our Land must be acceptable to the people of our First nation in relation to our standards of conduct that guide our livelihood activities on Land. Esteemed harvesters and Elders play a vital leadership role in this regard. This state of affairs threatened by the imposition of provincial resource management. It is not so much that our people have come to accept an alien way of living on Land; rather, they are participating less in livelihood activities on Land because they do not feel comfortable with the non-aboriginal ways on Land or actively reject them. The result has been economic stagnation for those Lac Seul people who have refused to move away from their ancestral Lands. It also places our people at risk of losing what we hold as central to our culture. In our culture on Land learning is extremely experiential. The preservation of our knowledge of Land is also dependent on the practice of livelihood pursuits. Take away our way of life on Land and our knowledge is put at risk. "Compensate" this dispossession with welfare and we then become the residents of a forest ghetto.

In our culture, the practice of reciprocity is closely connected to the practice of a unique system of economic equity. No one can be denied the opportunity to undertake livelihood activities on Land in our culture. **Our access arrangements to Land emphasize inclusivity and not exclusivity.** This stands in contrast to provincial resource management policy which emphasizes exclusive property rights with respect to access to "natural resources" with a practice of competition that results in great disparities between economic winners and losers. This is not to say that there are no limits to what our people can do on our Land. Conservation of our Land is achieved by our people paying strict respect to a vast array of customs that we might call

kinawaajijigaywinan to indicate their importance as markers of our activities on Land. These customs reflect distinctive social arrangements governing our economic activity on Land and are unique to our culture.

Historically, it was not uncommon for a number of families to share the same "winter harvest" territories. One of the Elders who participated in lands research listed seven families who cooperated economically by sharing the same winter harvest territory before the MNR trapline system was imposed on our people. They made their livelihood together on this land. They shared their knowledge of the land and reaped the economic benefits made possible by weaving this knowledge together.

The importance of this system of land use and conservation can be demonstrated even further by referring to summer "land use" arrangements for Lac Seul. Before our people were restricted by MNR land use laws and regulations with respect to keeping residences on our customary lands, our people maintained residences in their winter "harvest" territories. (Our knowledge of the regulations is that now our people need a permit for a trapper's cabin. They can only use the cabin for trapping purposes. Outside of the trapping season they can only spend a limited amount of time at their cabin and some of our people have been told that even time must be spent doing repairs.) At the same time, a large number of these people also maintained summer residences on the reserve at Lac Seul. All of them at least visited Lac Seul during the summer time - especially around treaty days.

People gathered together by the hundreds on the shores of Lac Seul during the summer season. On and around the lake, our people were able to nurture and harvest a variety of plant foods such as Manoomin and Weezhaashkon. They would also harvest large quantities of fish and waterfowl from the lake as well as game from the lands around the lake (A word we use in our language to describe the setting of a fishing net - **pagiitaoo** - means putting a net gently in the water). Each of these harvesting activities had its own attendant set of customs and land tenure arrangements. They were all based on our values of conservation and cooperation. No one shot ducks when they were taking care of their young. No one killed female moose when they were

nursing their young. People fished in close proximity to each other without interfering with one another.

All arrangements on Land and the harvesting and conservation practices accompanying each of them have been woven together within our culture into a dynamic, interactive system. In this way, our people have been able to derive numerous economic benefits from the diversity of life inhabiting our Land. This diversity is what is called biological diversity. The livelihood activities of our people have been exercised in ways that this diversity of Land has been protected and preserved. Ecological knowledge for the whole system was applied in an integrated way. Whether it was a large number of people harvesting Manoomin in dozens of canoes or one person out hunting for moose, the dynamics of the system were the same. It has always been obvious to our people that what we harvest from the land has an effect on everything else.

Our people have always accepted the importance of taking care - **oginaanaagaajitownaawa** - in their work on our Land so that what they do in one part of this "ecosystem" is accounted for in terms of its effect on its other parts. For example, Manoomin fields were planted, tended (weeding, etc.) and harvested in a manner that maintained their value as spawning grounds for various species of fish and as nesting and staging grounds for various species of migratory waterfowl. During Lac Seul lands research, one of our Elders recollected that at certain places hundreds of Anishinaabe people would gather together for Manoomin harvests in our customary lands. Other Aboriginal people used to come to these harvests from as far away as the regions of Pikangikum. This harvesting activity was carefully regulated in accordance with a set of comprehensive customs by a recognized "harvest boss" - **Manoominigeh ogemah**. The Manoomin fields had to be protected not only for their future productivity but also for their value as feedings grounds for migratory waterfowl and spawning grounds for fish.

These customs were also important in relation to the preservation of our collective culture. Before Manoomin harvesting could begin, our people would celebrate the coming harvest with several days of thanksgiving ceremonies. The people who came to these harvests from the region around Pikangikum would return with hundreds of sacks of processed Manoomin. We were

informed in the course of our lands research that much of the Manoomin in the Pikangikum region originated from our Manoomin fields - **Gaazhi Manoomin naatigokaag** - and was planted by Anishinaabe people there. Now a provincial system of Manoomin licensing has been imposed on our lands. Individuals are the holders of exclusive harvesting rights. We have already written about how this system has ignored our work on our Land in relation to Manoomin. This is enough of an economic loss. It is difficult to underestimate the impact of imposed provincial management of this "natural" "resource" on the whole structure of our Manoomin culture/economy. Yet this is what has happened to the whole "resource base" of our ancestral lands. The results of this imposition have been to undercut the economic base that has sustained us since "time immemorial". How are we to recover from this disaster?

Our ways of gathering and applying ecological knowledge from our Land facilitated the collection of knowledge that helped us to protect the abundance that was crucial to our economic well-being. Often individual Lac Seul people were recognized for particular skills and knowledge that they demonstrated in their work on Land. This specialized expertise of these members of our community has customarily been available for the benefit of the entire community. Whether a person had knowledge of healing medicines and the ecological settings in which they grew or whether a person could effectively lead a large group in a Manoomin harvest, this expertise was respected. Those who are recognized as having this expertise have been central in keeping order and resolving difficulties - **Maameenojikewin** - in our pursuit of livelihood activities on Land whenever they arose. This system was in turn supported and nurtured by our Anishinaabe practice of economic reciprocity.

This is the way of life that our Elders refer to when they say a person should take only what is needed from the land. It does not mean that our people cannot make a living from the land. We have traded - **odahwaywin** - with other First Nation people and later also with the non-aboriginal society since "time immemorial". Our people have never made a distinction between "subsistence" and "commercial" activities on the land. Whether we trade products from the land (for cash or for barter) or whether we use them for domestic consumption, our people have always carried out these activities within the same culture of relationships to Land. In fact, the

maintenance of this system depends upon these artificial divisions being avoided. It often seems to us that they have been made in relation to our people in order to serve the agenda of non-aboriginal governments to control our lands. If we have different values regarding the acquisition and distribution of material wealth compared to those of the non-aboriginal society, this should have no bearing on whether or not we should have the authority to continue to secure our livelihood on our Land in accordance with our customs. What should matter is respect for our culture and our authority to preserve and practice it so that we might continue to survive and grow as aboriginal people.

It is an expectation amongst our people that we are to follow our customs in our livelihood activities on our land. Yet, this places us at a great economic disadvantage in that, if we are to have any chance of obtaining access to our Land to secure sufficient livelihood potential, we are forced to do this within the MNR land use system. Virtually every income generating activity undertaken by our people on our lands is tightly controlled within the MNR system of natural resources management. When we see the impact that the MNR resources management system has had both on our life and on the land, how can we avoid being resentful of this situation?

Things have changed dramatically on our Lands since natural resource "development" began in the 1920's. These changes have had a profound impact on our presence on our Land. Our Land has changed as much as anything else. In addition to the flooding of Lac Seul, massive tracts of forest throughout our customary lands are now being stripped of trees. The construction of logging roads has brought large numbers of hunters to these lands. They are subject to MNR management regulations, but the concerns of our people go unnoticed. It is difficult enough for us to bridge the cultural divide with non-aboriginal Canada when we enter into commercial relationships with the non-aboriginal society. To face the added difficulty of dealing with an alien system of natural resources management, which our people cannot find to be ethically acceptable to them, only compounds the problems we face in our efforts at recovering our economic health.

Yet, perhaps because our people have remained relatively isolated, our customary values of working together on the land, sharing knowledge of the land and equitably distributing the bounty that our Land provides to us is still central to our people. There is a general pattern of our people to hold on to values that are expressed in the practice of Anishinaabe economic reciprocity. This is primarily reflected in our refusal of our people to build resource access "fences" on our Land in the way that non-aboriginal society does. This includes our virtual non-participation in the provincial resources management system. The core values of the customary system of land use and conservation of the Lac Seul First Nation has persisted to the present day. As much as anything else, this is why most people from our First Nation community, including the Band Council, find it too difficult even to participate in MNR public information sessions. We think that this pattern is probably common right across northern Ontario. The system is simply too alien to our culture.

Historically, we have had little difficulty in adapting tools from non-aboriginal society into our own

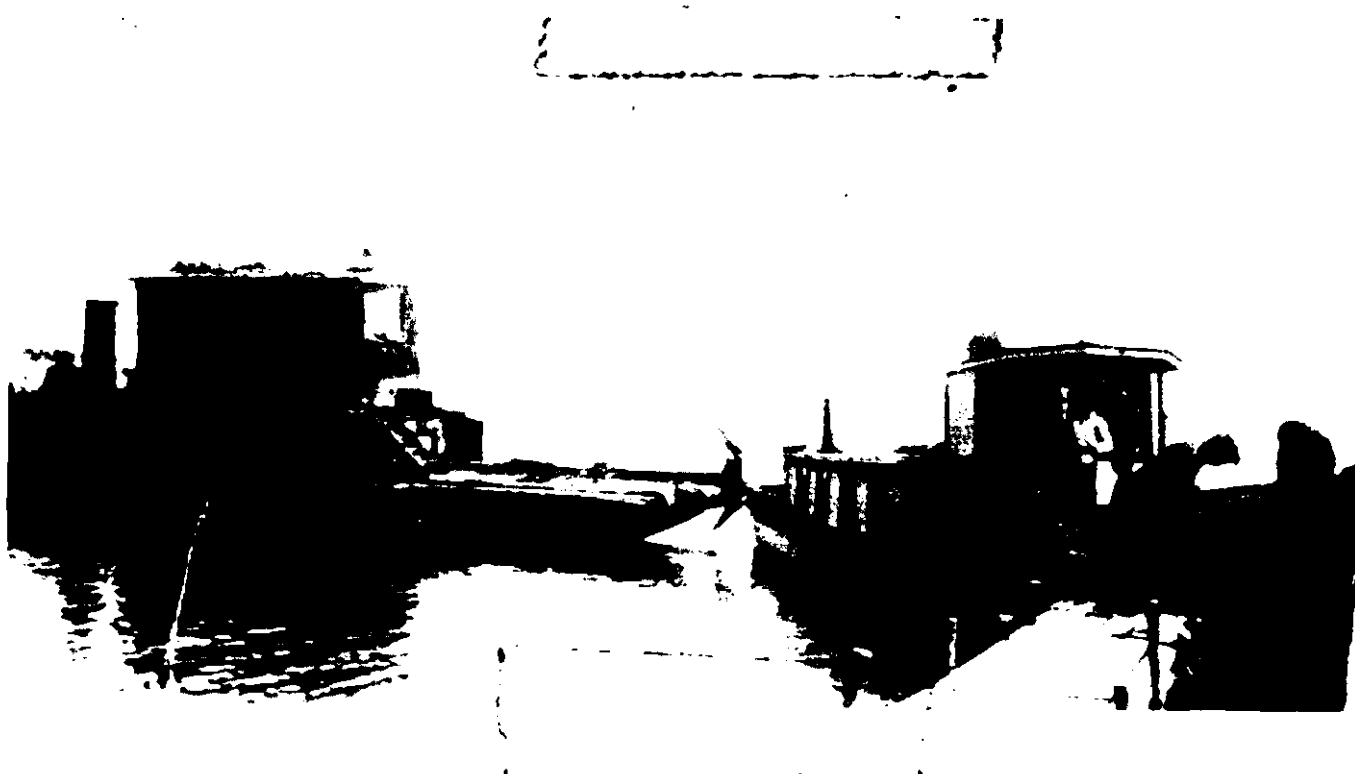
Photo unavailable: [Up until the 1960's when the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources began to impose severe constraints on the ability of Lac Seul people to practice their customary commercial fishery, it supported a lively local boat building industry for Lac Seul people. The larger of these boats, called "put puts" by Lac Seul First Nation people, were of considerable size and were "designed" and built entirely by them. The diesel motors that were used to power them were financed in large part by Lac Seul people from their income which they derived from their commercial fishery. In this photo, taken around 1960, Rupert Ningewance has a "put put" under construction at his outdoor "workshop" near his residence.]

system of livelihood activity on our Land. Our hunters have used firearms on the land for centuries. Yet migratory waterfowl, for example, is still hunted in accordance with the long-standing customs of our people. Most of our trappers now rely on snowmobiles to get out to their traplines. Our fisherman adopted the use of motorized boats into their seasonal fishing patterns. This adoption of different tools represents self-directed adaptations of our people based on borrowing from other societies. In the past, because of our relative isolation, we have managed to ensure that the use of these tools was appropriate to our culture in general and our own

conservation system on our Land in particular. These adaptations of our people have been consistent with our desire to maintain our customary ethics and practice of locally expressed authority on our Land.

At the same time, however, we cannot deny that our way of life on the land is under immense stress. There has been considerable erosion in our ability to practice our ways of protecting our Land. What is so distressing is that the bulk of this erosion (as our shorelines on Lac Seul continue to erode from the effects of flooding) of "land use" and conservation practice has directly arisen from the imposition of a non-aboriginal natural resources management system. Our trappers cannot go out to their traplines with "helpers" who are not marked on their licences. Our Manoomin bearing lakes are being licensed to non-aboriginals even though we are the ones who have planted and cared for them. None of our people can provide for their families any longer by commercial fishing because it is largely prohibited by the MNR. In terms of practicing this way of life, we are like the animals in a forest that is being cut down - the continued encroachment of non-aboriginal land use and management threatens our very culture. This is not progress. This is a threat to cultural diversity and the strengths of this diversity. This threat to us, as aboriginal people with a culture that emerged from our relationships to our Land, has grave potential consequences. This is what our Elders have told us.

This is why from the beginning, our people have described game wardens as people trying to control the use of meat by our people. It is why we usually refer to them as **Wiiassgehininiwuk** - "meat men". This description of "conservation" officers has remained standard amongst our people to this day. Some of our people called MNR officials who regulated their sale of fur **Odaawanezhimaaganiishuk** - "fur selling police". At no time have we ever used a description for any MNR official that included the idea of conservation. Nor have we ever used any terminology which would imply that MNR administrative offices have a conservation mandate. We simply call them **Wiiassgeh Ogamik** - "meat buildings". They are simply the offices where the control



This photograph shows a "put put" (the boat in the right of the picture) that has been completed and launched by Rupert Ningewance. He was regarded as a builder of excellent boats. It is interesting to note that he was an Anishinaabe man who spoke virtually no English. By 1970, the drastic reduction in income to Lac Seul First Nation people that resulted from the closure of the Lac Seul commercial fishery put an end to the innovative development of these types of "tools" by them. Instead, the wealth of the Lac Seul fishery was diverted to non-aboriginal interests. Working within the provincial resource management system, they came to control the entirety of the sport fishery on the lake to which the harvest of valuable fish species was re-allocated.

of our people on the land is coordinated. Is this why we could find no examples in our research for this community economy study of any of our young people who have gone on to post-secondary education to complete studies in natural resources management programs?

Photo unavailable: [This photograph shows a "put put" (the boat in the right of the picture) that has been completed and launched by Rupert Ningewance. He was regarded as a builder of excellent boats. It is interesting to note that he was an Anishinaabe man who spoke virtually no English. By 1970, the drastic reduction in income to Lac Seul First Nation people that resulted from the closure of the Lac Seul commercial fishery put an end to the innovative development of these types of "tools" by them. Instead, the wealth of the Lac Seul fishery was diverted to non-aboriginal interests. Working within the provincial resource management system, they came to control the entirety of the sport fishery on the lake to which the harvest of valuable fish species was re-allocated.]

The ongoing development and imposition of an increasing number of land use regulations and policies by the MNR in our customary Lands has only served to deepen the alienation of our people from the system and increase our economic marginalization. Our relationships to land have been all but ignored in the implementation of provincial natural resources management policies. A good example of this is the whole trapping issue. After World War II, the MNR imposed a trapline system on our people. According to MNR officials, this was to bring order to trapping in our customary lands. Before the trapline system was put in place, discussions had been held between our people and the MNR. Lac Seul leaders expressed their concern about the growing disorder that was developing with respect to trapping on our customary lands. This disorder was being caused by white people encroaching on our lands and poaching fur bearing animals from them. Sometimes these poachers would be prospectors grubstaked by non-aboriginal companies. They would increase their income by trapping on our lands without our permission.

When our people originally negotiated the issue of trapping with the MNR before the trapline system was established, we understood and were expressly told that our customary trapping system and Lands would be protected from non-aboriginal encroachment. The result was that the MNR created a provincially regulated trapline system. Rather than having our customary trapping system recognized and protected,

it became subject to intensive regulation and control. Our people developed terminology for the new form of trapline that was regulated by the MNR - **Onii-igeh Aki**. Our people adapted to it in as many ways as possible. But soon after this trapline system was established, quotas were imposed on our people. Even before this time, the MNR had attempted to set restrictions on the amount of fur bearers that our people could trap as well as on the time that these animals were allowed to be trapped. Yet in our lands research, some Elders recollected specific instances where non-aboriginal people were permitted to trap over a much longer period of time during the year than we were.

At one point during these years, the MNR even tried to impose quotas on the amount of moose we could kill and fish we could catch to feed our families when we were living on the land. On one occasion, the MNR pulled a fish net out of the water that was being used to catch fish for food and trapping bait. They told one of our Elders, who was younger at the time the incident happened, that he was not allowed to fish with the net. This was at a time when we were dependent on the land to provide for the largest part of the diets of Lac Seul people. Some Lac Seul Elders who have participated in our Lands research recalled expressing their anxiety to MNR officials at that time that they would not be able to provide enough food for their families if they were forced to abide by these quotas. This is the way in which the MNR respected even those treaty rights regarding our domestic economy that non-aboriginal courts have recognized for our people.

Soon after it was established, the trapline system became a tool that the MNR used to unilaterally shrink trapline boundaries and create new traplines for non-aboriginal people. These actions went directly against the commitments regarding the trapline system that were made to our people by provincial officials. Further MNR actions only compounded these problems when our traplines began to be sold. The MNR licensing system was arranged in a certain way to facilitate this. One person would usually be designated as the official licence holder for a trapline. But the trapline boundaries were drawn around areas where one or more families would trap. In accordance with our

customs, all members of the family had the authority to trap in these lands. Under the licensing system, however, the licence holder could sell a trapline without the written permission of any other aboriginal people using the line. This policy of the MNR only served to create conflict among our own people on this issue. During our Lands research, our Elders recollected instances of traplines being sold for drinking money by people who were suffering from addiction problems. Increased restrictions on the economic activity of our people in accordance with our culture meant increased poverty that put great pressure on many of our people to sell traplines.

These conflicts point out why we have so little faith in the whole MNR system of land use allocation and management. Rather than referring to a licence as being a document which is granted by an authority that our people could view as legitimate, we simply refer to a licence in our language as **Masanehganess** - "little piece of paper". In our community-based lands research, for example, we showed all of our people who participated a copy of the current MNR trapping regulations. Only three people remembered having seen the document and none of these people had read it. It was not something that could have any significant meaning for them. Is this any way to build the certainty that is required in relation to "land use" to support successful economic activity amongst our people?

These are the results that MNR resources management has had on our people. The conflicts that they have generated continue. Not only has our system of relationships to Land continued to go unrecognized by the Province of Ontario, but decisions have been made concerning the use of Land that, in any other setting, would be recognized as wrong. They have not been redressed often because our people were "invisible" in the processes in which the decisions were made. The logic of the MNR goes as follows: If Indian society has been "primitive" - a "subsistence" culture - why should MNR officials even bother to try and determine if there are relationships to Land and work carried out on Land that should "in all fairness" be recognized? Unilateral decisions can be made without any thought about the economic pain and moral offence they cause to

our people. It is not even thought that this pain and offence might be considerable if only for the reason that our people want the fruits of their efforts on our Land to be recognized.

This conflict is structural in nature. To overcome the economic disparities that have arisen as a result of this situation, we must seek and establish a consensus with the non-aboriginal society on how we can practice our economy on our Land based on principles of mutual respect and equity. In this sense, we are talking of the co-existence of two cultures in relation to the wise use of the bounty of our customary Lands. We are talking of the equitable distribution of its bounty between two peoples each with distinctive systems of "land use". Additionally, to overcome the economic disparities that we face as Lac Seul people in relation to our Land, we must take our own initiatives wherever possible to nurture our economic recovery. All Lac Seul people who participated in our community economy research recognized this. Economic power generates political power. The following sections of this report indicate both the normative basis of our efforts on this issue as well as specific examples that demonstrate how we are strengthening ourselves for the work that lies ahead.

**E. KAYZHAYWAABENDAMONG ANOKEEN KAYEH GAAONDAADIZIYANG
- "THE MEANING OF WORK AND LIVELIHOOD TO US"**

i) Kaa-apiitendaagook Anokeen: "The Importance and Value of Work" - The values and principles of a distinct economy

As the Lac Seul Research Team pursued the issue of values and the economy of Lac Seul people, the theme which connected the Focus Group discussions together was what we might best refer to as balance. In our culture, a primary value governing the engagement of our people in livelihood pursuits is that they should lead to a person living **pizaaniziwin** - a life in balance and moderation. Balance and moderation are two ways of referring to our collective sensibility of how fairness in our livelihood pursuits should be expressed by Lac Seul people. It is also expressed by our people in other ways. For example, although the phrase was not used in our Focus Groups on economy, during our previous Lands research Lac Seul Elders often referred to the value that Anishinaabe people should take from our Lands only "what they need". People should not go to excess. Therefore, in our Community Economy Study Focus Groups, when the Elders emphasized that our culture esteems moderation it should be understood in this broader sense.

What does the idea and practice of moderation mean? We tried to discuss this question in several ways. At one point, for example, a member of our Research Team came straight out and asked two of the most esteemed Elders from Lac Seul: Why were there no millionaires amongst Lac Seul people? He wondered if they thought that perhaps our history at the hands of the non-aboriginal society might have prevented individual Anishinaabe people from being very wealthy in the past. We had to take some time to translate the idea of a millionaire to the Elders. After first having found this question humorous, they chuckled and talked with each other in our language for a minute and then responded simply: "**Kaaweendaminosehsinoon**" - "It wouldn't work". Why was this so? They responded again that it would not be proper for a person to benefit so much from a business.

The responses that were given to these questions indicate the value and practice of equity as it has been customarily practiced amongst our people. Another respected Lac Seul Elder, who operated a tourist business that is the focus of one of the "case study" reports in this Community Economy Study, explained these values by linking them to our customary livelihood activities on our Lands. When Anishinaabe people practice their seasonal livelihood cycle or "seasonal round" - **pichiondaadiziwin** - on our Lands, it is self-sufficiency that has been prized. In this livelihood culture, our economic activity on our Lands whether for "commercial trade" (eg. selling furs or logging) or "domestic use" (eg. hunting moose for the family) objectives has not been carried out for the primary purpose of accumulation. The Elder emphasized that accumulation is not a value that has been prized in relation to any of our livelihood activities on our Lands. Rather, these activities are part of what the Elder called "providing", a term which has to be understood in a special sense in our culture.

Values such as these have to be also understood in our cultural context as it has evolved over time. Nevertheless, they describe enduring norms that Lac Seul First Nation people have considered important in terms of their relationships to each other. When our Elders say that it was important not to prize accumulation, they are essentially describing the practice of equity within and through a certain set of economic relationships. The relationships that are referred to are not only those between ourselves as Anishinaabe people but also between ourselves and our Lands and all of the abundance that they possess. One of our Elders spoke in English when trying to explain the implications of these norms. He emphasized it by stating that it is "important to share" and that "bad things" will happen if people do not. The negative consequences to our Lands of people not adhering to customary standards of economic behaviour was his primary reason for making this statement.

This is part of our cosmology - our spirituality. Our cultural/spiritual traditions reinforce Anishinaabe standards of economic mutuality and equity by reinforcing certain standards of reciprocity in our economic behaviour. The following way of expressing it would be readily understood by our people: **Kiminiigoo iziewonaan aaki, Kiisheh Manitou n'daaweh-ig chigii aan-goo miigiwehyung.**

We want to translate this as follows: "The gift of Land (in its totality - physical/spiritual) that is given to us in trust from the Creator, we are to reciprocate with each other freely."

Photo unavailable: *[When Lac Seul was flooded by Ontario Hydro in 1928, little of the timber that was flooded was removed prior to the impoundment of water in the lake. This photo, taken in the late 1960's indicates the extent of debris that persisted in Lac Seul long after our Lands were flooded. For decades this debris made water travel difficult for our people. It was also difficult to set fishing nets in many areas of the lake. Hanging ice, which is ice that hung on flooded trees and created when the level of water was drawn down over the winter on Lac Seul, resulted in dangerous conditions. Lac Seul people would fall through such ice and deaths from these accidents are still recollected by our people. Lac Seul Elders and even youth still carry bitter memories and stories of providers losing their lives from these dangerous conditions. The effects of these tragedies were compounded by non-aboriginal economic behaviour. This is especially reflected in the fact that Lac Seul people did not obtain electricity until the 1980's. Non-aboriginal governments did not act on this matter partly because they felt it was uneconomical to do so.]*

Again, we want to emphasize that there is a complex cultural context to what we are saying here. The practice of economic equity in our "community" context, that is in accordance with our cultural norms, is a practice where individual self-sufficiency is prized. The ideal that our Elders referred to is that an Anishinaabe person is economically astute when she or he never has to ask for money. A person should always have enough money to live but should not want to become rich. At the same time, if a person is practicing **kiisasagiziit** - the accumulation and hoarding of things, this is seen as a negative quality akin to greed.

One of our Elders talked of these values in a way where the translation could best be paraphrased as follows: "All Lac Seul people are my relatives - **Dinawehmaag**. I see them as my relations. One is not higher than the other. In this way, success is not to be above another." In our language, which best expresses the subtlety of our culture, it is not uncommon that discussions on this matter are extended to include all "living things". This is reflected in our spiritual/ceremonial lives. In this sense, our spiritual practices can be seen as being extended into our customs concerning economic reciprocity.

In saying the above, it is also important to affirm that, amongst Lac Seul people, there always has been such a thing as economic success which, in accordance with our customs, "has its own rewards". When a person demonstrates entrepreneurial initiative within our culture, success

opens up the possibility for achieving high social esteem. At Lac Seul, for example, the highest form of social affirmation we can give can be bestowed upon a person who demonstrates successful economic leadership. Such a person will be told: **Weenigoo giinaabandan**. It is an honour to be told this. It is an affirmation that leadership was exercised well from the authority that was given. It also implies an affirmation of the ability of a person who has accomplished something which brings benefit to the people. Finally, in terms of this analysis, it implies the idea of the ability of a person to accomplish something that the people value as well as benefit from. By achieving this success, the person who has demonstrated the leadership that brings benefits to the people - **Kakina jiminoosaywaat** - obtains social status that is both special and rare.

For, example, two Lac Seul Elders used this affirmation to describe the first full-time manager of the Kejick Bay Store - an enterprise project which is assessed later in this report. They saw the initiative and leadership skills that the manager possessed. The Elders saw this in terms of how the store was "managed". All that they had to say to the manager was: "You know." They liked her exercise of leadership. Their experience was that she went to the people to learn what they wanted from the store. They saw that the store had what they wanted in terms of inventory and service. They thought of their purchases from the store as an investment in its success. This is why they always paid their credit during the period when the first manager worked at the Kejick Bay Store.

After the first manager left the Kejick Bay Store, these Elders felt that the leadership which she provided was not replaced. When they experienced this change and the sense that the business was not being "taken care of well", they stopped paying their credit. They expected that their money was to be used in a way that the store was run well. In a way, the understanding of the Elders in terms of their obligations to the store went beyond those arising out of narrow purchase transactions. It included a sense of reciprocity which extended far enough to include a range of social considerations surrounding the exercise of leadership in the enterprise. In other words, economic leadership has its own rewards amongst our people beyond those which exist in the economy of a "mass society".

What we are trying to describe above is a sense of the meaning of specific norms and values regarding economic behaviour that can seem paradoxical to non-aboriginal people. What these values speak to is that, as Lac Seul Anishinaabe people, we developed in our culture an economy of individual initiative and self-sufficiency which, at the same time, bonds Lac Seul people closely together. It is hard to underestimate the value that our people have placed on self-initiative and self-sufficiency. For example, if a person is one who lacks in motivation to provide for himself or herself - **Kaakitimatisiit** - that person is basically seen as "lazy" and not requiring or even deserving of any special assistance. But if a person is one who has suffered a loss or misfortune - **Aagiitimagisiit** - (eg. the death of a spouse or an injury) and loses economic independence, that person should receive help - **weechitewin**.

Such social norms reflect an economic order which constantly nurtured the values of self-initiative and self-sufficiency. At the same time, the organization of our access to "economic resources", and the norms governing individual entitlement to these resources, have allowed us to maintain a high degree of economic equity amongst ourselves. Everyone has been expected to exhibit self-initiative and everyone doing so is able exercise "access to resources" necessary to provide for individual and family well-being.

These economic values have meant that each generation of our people has been able to renew what are essentially non-hierarchical economic relationships. In this context, we have not gained esteem by competing to accumulate wealth with the winners charitably "donating" some of their surplus, or having it "taxed" by some central authority, and then re-distributed to the "losers". When we reciprocate with each other in terms of economic abundance we are not "donating" at all. Rather, the emphasis is on reciprocity. Thus, in terms of the capacity to generate economic wealth, the norm is that one is to provide for oneself and one's family within a set of economic arrangements governing "access to resources" such that everyone else has the opportunity to do the same. This is what our people mean when they express the values of balance, moderation and sharing.

If we refer to the example of Land, we can say that our economic customs tend towards inclusive

access arrangements based on "respect" - ie. cooperation - rather than exclusive access arrangements based on competition. Using these tools, we have customarily regulated our conservation efforts through working more closely together than non-aboriginal people and emphasizing how much community members should harvest. In this sense, it is easier to understand how our Elders say, for example, that our people were and should be free to travel and "hunt" where they want. Our Land "tenure" systems should not be seen as "communal" in the sense that our people can do any economic activity wherever and whenever they want. It could be said that they reflect "common property" arrangements. The reality is that our economic relationships to our Lands are highly differentiated from the system of "property rights" of the non-aboriginal society in no small part because they reflect access arrangements that are ordered to emphasize cooperation rather than competition. They are a fundamental expression of our particular understanding of our Lands and their abundance as **Gimiinigosiiwinaan** - "Gifts from the Creator". At the same time, our economic activities on our Lands are highly complex and well ordered. This is reflected in a regulatory organisation that possesses its own distinct dynamics of authority and responsibility. We have already described those customary values of our people which are relevant to economic matters relating to this issue. We just want to emphasize here that every time the Government of Ontario "licences" our "resources" under its system of "exclusive" access arrangements, it results in a fundamental conflict with our basic principles of economic organization and behaviour. We are always the economic losers in this situation.

Our core First Nation economic values have been seen by our people as applying to all whether they work as "business people" involved in commercial trade - **chiondaawehan** - or as people who make their livelihood from our Lands - **pichiondaadiziwin**. They are associated with other values that, when we speak of them in English, we usually refer to the idea of non-interference. In our pursuit of livelihood, for example, it is improper to speak to people about their money. To paraphrase one of our Elders who spoke in our language on the practice of non-interference: "When people work, we do not ask them how much money they have, but nobody gets rich". Furthermore, the Elder noted how it is just as much if not more improper to tell people how they should exercise leadership in a business. It is not permissible to tell them how to conduct

business affairs. When we speak of this we say, for example: **Kaangibahbahmeasin** - "You do not tell her/him what to do". Or we say: **Kaangibahbahmiziwin** - "It is not for you to get involved. It does not involve you".

Good economic leadership by a person in the Anishinaabe culture of Lac Seul people, if it is exercised in accordance with our customs, is like a trust. Because our society has emphasized what are local expressions of authority, the effective exercise of leadership takes place within its own system of checks and balances. A good leader - **Niigaanitamaageh** - whether in political or economic affairs, is one who is willingly followed. These people do not order others. A good business leader is not one who prizes accumulation. The affirmation of the value of exercising authority locally - a value that our people remain strongly attached to - has reinforced our local interdependence. We call this supporting one another - **Siitoonitiwehwin**. Our practice of economic reciprocity or equity is the glue that our people have used to bind together a sustainable economics. It has allowed for a distinctive personal autonomy in economic affairs which has been possible because of the unique forms of social mutuality that it has involved. Put simply, an economics of cooperation - of local reciprocity - carries with it its own set of personal freedoms. The exercise of economic leadership in our culture should be seen in this light.

Can these core economic values be preserved? In our Focus Groups, the Research Team found that Lac Seul Elders had profound concerns regarding this question. Many of them were especially critical of the effects of the response of non-aboriginal governments to our economic dispossession. For them, the introduction of the "welfare system", like the flooding of Lac Seul before it, has seriously eroded our "way of life", including the practice of our economic customs.

Specifically, it is not a means by which our people can sustain our practice of economic interdependence. Rather than nurturing the self-esteem of our people, the welfare system has had the opposite effect. It is not a response to the dispossession we have suffered that our Elders considered appropriate. Transfers of funds, instead of acknowledgements and affirmations of autonomy for our people, have often led to social despair amongst our people. It is reflected, for example, in high rates of addiction to intoxicants.

According to our Elders, there have been other disempowering effects of our economic dispossession which have had gradual but perhaps even more insidious cumulative effects on our lives than problems of addiction. For them, economic dependency has led to problems that include an increasing tendency towards the misuse of money as well as the decline of initiative. These problems have in turn become exhibited in increasing expressions of jealousy and covetousness - **ayaahshehdamoowin**. Such destructive behaviours have increased in direct proportion to our economic dispossession and non-aboriginal government efforts to alleviate our economic disparity with welfare. Our Elders told us that attitudes such as jealousy amongst our people constitute significant obstacles to our economic recovery at Lac Seul. Some of our Elders went so far as to state that they do not believe enough of our people can be good business leaders at this time because of this erosion of our way of life.

In spite of this, this report demonstrates that there is no denying the persistence of our economic customs and the values and norms upon which they are based. In a way, the persistence of these customs in the context of our present economic dispossession has resulted in our economic stagnation. Often we cannot practice our customs and our economic status is the evidence of this. What this means is that we face a twofold challenge in building our economic recovery. We have to reverse the historical economic dispossession we have suffered, and we have to reverse the negative social consequences that have flowed from it. Both must be dealt with if our distinct economy is to recover and flourish. We must deal with the latter of these challenges by ourselves. But it cannot be resolved by us without the first challenge being resolved before it. The first challenge, that of reversing our economic dispossession, cannot be dealt with by us on our own. This challenge is the challenge of achieving autonomy. To fulfil it in a way that creates the possibility for our economic recovery requires action from both the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.

The problem of economic dispossession and the effects of dependency on Lac Seul First Nation people has to be seen in a special context. Essentially, the Lac Seul First Nation is coping with these problems in the context of enduring customary values and practices regarding our economy. What the results of our research indicate is that even though we live under conditions of dependency, whenever Lac Seul people do undertake economic activity, it invariably reflects our Anishinaabe customs. Thus, the cross-cultural conflict that arises out of this situation is not only about disparity; it is also fundamentally about ways of doing economic activity. The practice of our economic customs conflicts with the regulation and administration of a wide variety of "economic resources" by non-aboriginal governments with "land use" being only one of the more obvious among these. When our economic norms and values discussed above are considered in light of the practice of our economic customs - how we categorize and organize our economic activity - the full extent of the problem of our lack of autonomy can be better understood.

Before we present an analysis of these issues, we want to first add some additional perspective on how we have responded to the effects of dependency. By now, some of the difficulties faced by Lac Seul people in organizing our economic efforts should be clear. It is truly difficult to be successfully entrepreneurial in the economic/political circumstances we have to face as Anishinaabe people. Yet it would be wrong to think that all that Lac Seul people do is sit around all day as "lazy Indians" waiting for welfare cheques so that we can purchase alcohol in order to get drunk. This is a stereotype that has to be corrected.

In the early 1980's at Lac Seul, welfare rates were chronically in the ninety percent range. This was just before the Lac Seul First Nation began developing much of the physical infrastructure that is now in place at Frenchman's Head, Kejick Bay and Whitefish Bay. It was also a time when our First Nation was just beginning to establish much of the social service infrastructure that we have in place today. By 1993, the employment situation at Lac Seul had changed significantly. At the present time, our chronic unemployment rate has been reduced to the thirty-

five to forty percent range. We are concerned that not enough of our people are engaged in economic activity outside of government program service delivery. But progress has been made. For example, Lac Seul people were forced out of commercial fishing only about twenty years ago. This had a serious negative effect on the state of our economic independence. However, since that time Lac Seul First Nation people have steadily increased their efforts to build alternatives to commercial fishing, especially in the tourist sector. This is dealt with in detail in the next section of this study. What is just as interesting in terms of our discussion here is the response of Lac Seul people who still depend on the provision of social assistance.

In August of 1993, there were approximately forty households and twenty-eight single people who were considered by our First Nation administration to be permanently receiving social assistance. There were also about thirty families and eighteen individuals considered to be receiving casual or temporary social assistance. These are not numbers that are acceptable to our First Nation people. Nor can they be considered by any definition to be acceptable to non-aboriginal governments. Our First Nation administration has used programs such as STEP (the Support to Employment Program - an income supplement program designed to help people obtain gainful employment) to their maximum extent possible in efforts to reduce the welfare rates at Lac Seul. What is most remarkable, however, about the Lac Seul people who receive social assistance can be found in their own responses to being on welfare.

One set of responses include examples where the Lac Seul First Nation Administration has "stretched" the applicability of programs like STEP. For instance, social assistance recipients have become involved through these programs in the construction of playground sets and outdoor skating rinks. A substantial number of such worthwhile projects have been completed using this strategy. But what is most remarkable about Lac Seul welfare recipients has been their response to requests for volunteer assistance in relation to a variety of other worthwhile projects. The projects have, in recent years, amounted to a veritable seasonal round of work which has enhanced the value of our lives as First Nation people on our reserve.

Each of Frenchman's Head, Kejick Bay and Whitefish Bay organizes their own work projects.

The projects include the cutting of firewood for Elders, the cutting of brush in each of the three communities, the cleaning of grounds in the spring, the provision of homemaker assistance, volunteering of time at the Band Office, assisting in the construction of outdoor skating rinks, volunteering time to keep a fitness centre at Kejick Bay open, and others. Initially, our First Nation administration asked for eight hours per week on the part of social assistance recipients to carry out these projects. Some of our First Nation members are giving not eight hours of time per week but up to eight hours of time per day, five days a week, in these activities.

The benefits these volunteer work programs have brought to those who participate in them are significant. What Lac Seul members found to be the most heartening result of the programs is the enhanced levels of self-esteem they have brought to their welfare recipient participants. Of course, from a strictly legal point of view, none of the social assistance recipients at Lac Seul can be forced to become engaged in these works. Are our First Nation officials and general members breaking the law in organizing them? Perhaps. It should be noted, however, that in this sense, these programs are voluntary. Yet there is a high rate of participation in them. At Frenchman's Head, for example, where approximately 350 people live, only four people simply would not participate in the 1993 volunteer work program that was run there.

Why is there such a high rate of participation in these volunteer work programs? There has been immense pressure exhibited amongst social assistance recipients themselves to participate in them and do something that will "benefit the people". If people do not become involved in the programs, they find themselves in a very socially embarrassing situation compared to those who do. Most Lac Seul social assistance recipients, however, simply want to participate in the programs. While these programs demonstrate the desire of Lac Seul social assistance recipients to engage in productive work that is valued by our people, they should not by any means be seen as a solution to the economic dispossession we have suffered. We use them only to alleviate the worst of the effects that this dispossession has brought to us.

This is enough said about the willingness of Lac Seul "Indians" to work. The more important issue involves the relationship between our customary economic values and our practice of

economy in terms of its impact on our organization of businesses. Thus far, we have presented our findings on the relationships of our livelihood customs more in terms of the regulation of economic activity. What do they mean in a more strictly "business" sense? How do our livelihood customs and values impact on the structural organization and conduct of entrepreneurial activity? From issues such as the concept of capital to the ideas and practice of corporatism in a non-aboriginal business sense, our identity as Anishinaabe people throws up a special challenge in terms of our response to them.

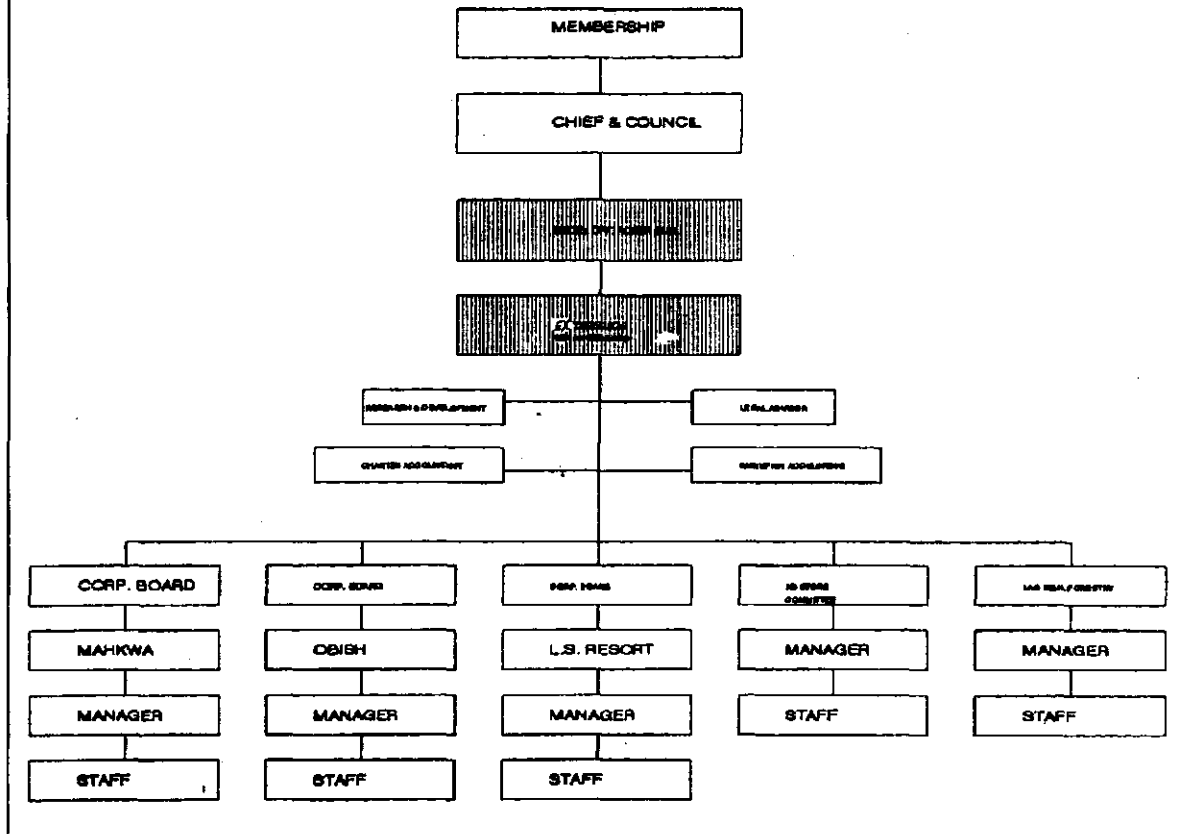
This is a double challenge given that the most accessible of potential providers of "ec-dev resources" (ie. federal and provincial programs and agencies) for the enterprise efforts of Lac Seul people, usually condition their support on certain criteria regarding the structure and management of businesses. Is the strict "western" model of enterprise organization all there is? We do not want to imply here that economic development assistance for First Nation enterprise initiatives should be made indiscriminately. But without a careful accommodation of our customs of livelihood practice, this is in effect precisely what happens far too often. Rather than building on the strengths of our economic values and livelihood customs, too often financial support comes in "packages" that only create conflict with these customs and values. To build success, some Lac Seul enterprise leaders have begun to just accept that they will say one thing on paper in their proposals to secure financial assistance and then apply the assistance within business arrangement settings that are culturally more appropriate. It is a rather sad state of affairs when this type of approach has to be accepted as the price for increasing the chances of Anishinaabe enterprise success.

When the Lac Seul Research Team carried out the particular Focus Group discussions on these issues, we began with an assessment of the current state of the "official" or "formal" economic organization at our First Nation under the auspices of the Lac Seul Band Office. At the Focus Group where two Lac Seul BEDO's (Band Economic Development Officers), another Ec Dev staffer and two Lac Seul Councillors were among those who participated collectively, we asked about their knowledge of this organization. Part of this review involved a discussion of a major Planning Report that had been prepared in early 1993 concerning the Mahkwa Development

Corporation. It had been prepared for the Department of Indian Affairs and was submitted to the local district office of the department. What we found interesting is that none of the staff had read the report in full (two had read very little of it). Nor had the Councillors who participated in the Focus Group discussion on this matter read the report to the extent that they understood its contents. The problem was not that any of them were disinterested in the issue. Rather, they found the report too "technical" and, therefore, foreign.

This was the first indication that enterprise organization at Lac Seul was not what was reflected in documents on "formal" structure prepared by outside agencies and technicians. The above-mentioned report, for example, contained a flow chart of Lac Seul First Nation Economic Development organization. This flow chart covered three different corporations that had been established under the sponsorship of the Lac Seul First Nation "Band Office". An examination of the flow chart reveals that each of the corporations are seen to formally possess their own board of directors, management and staff.

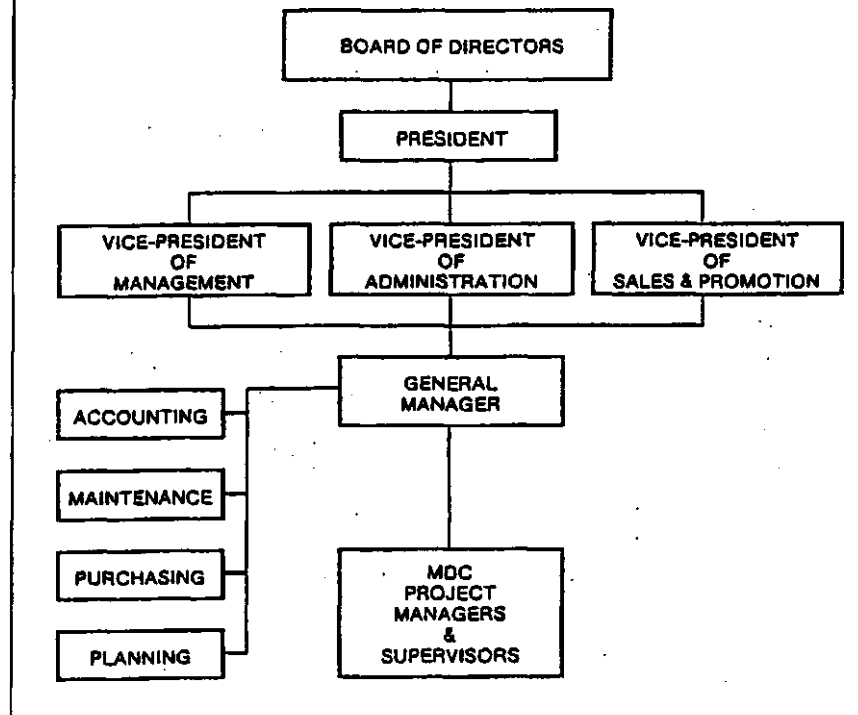
LAC SEUL FIRST NATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
ORGANIZATIONAL FLOW CHART (PRODUCED 1993)



Our Focus Group participants who discussed the issue of ec-dev organization, however, drew a revealing picture concerning the functioning of these "formal" structures. It revealed the following information. There used to be a Board of Directors for Mahkwa Development Corporation but no one knew when it last met. There was no knowledge that any Board of Directors for Obishikookang Resources Corporation (Obish) existed let alone functioned. Lac Seul Resort (L.S. Resort) was not a corporation but was a business of a corporation with another name which has a Board of Directors. The knowledge of Focus Group participants was that this board was not functioning. In terms of the two other non-corporate ec-dev structures noted in the flow chart, the Research Team learned that the Kejick Bay Store Committee (KB Store Committee) was functioning in the first half of 1993. However, the store subsequently ceased operations. There was no such entity as Lac Seul Forestry. The initiative had existed at one time and administered on-reserve reforestation contracts obtained from a regional organization, the Indian Forestry Development Program (IFDP). No one was aware whether or not even the IFDP still existed at the time of the Focus Group discussions. Yet there were tourist lodges, for example, being operated at Lac Seul by our people - one of them very successfully - the origins of which could be formally traced to these corporations. What was happening here?

At the same time, planning proposals were being made, for example, to "beef up" the organizational structure of Mahkwa Development Corporation. These were being made in honest efforts on the part of genuinely concerned consultants who were fully committed in their support of the efforts of the Lac Seul First Nation to initiate more and stronger economic development projects for our people. We found it somewhat of a paradox, therefore, that the most successful First Nation enterprise projects at Lac Seul were not operating within these types of structures. The Focus Group discussions then turned to why this seemed to be the case.

**MAHKWA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
MANAGEMENT FLOW CHART (1993 PROPOSAL)**



In an attempt to bring some perspective to this situation, the Research Team then turned our attention in the Focus Group discussions to the ideas of economic development and business organization as our Lac Seul ec-dev staff and First Nation Council representatives understood them. All of them usually or at least regularly speak to each other about livelihood issues in our aboriginal language. We asked them, therefore, how they described basic corporate governance and organizational terms, categories and concepts in "Ojibway". We asked for the Anishinaabe language equivalents for a variety of economic development concepts and business concept terms including: economic development, business, project, corporation, shares, capital, products, board of directors, manager, management, financing, credit, competition, and customers. We thought that, after generations of our Anishinaabe people conducting business with the non-aboriginal society, these terms and the categories they represented would find ready equivalents in our language.

What we found was quite surprising at first. Then, as we explored the patterns of our findings, we realized that they should not have been so surprising at all. Some of the above terms could be readily described in our language. For others, however, there were not even descriptions that we were able to find in our focus Group discussions that Lac Seul people might use in our language to refer to them. Even the descriptions of many of the terms revealed much about how Lac Seul people think about a variety of economic issues. We want to discuss each of the foregoing terms and categories in turn.

The descriptions we received which our people use for "economic development" did not contain any implied reference to development as "economic progress" from "primitive" (we do not have a word for "primitive" or a word for "civilized" in our language) hunting and gathering "bands" of people to "developed civilizations". Nor do we have a description of it referring to a movement of a society from poverty to wealth. Although our language does not possess a term that is equivalent to "economic development", usually we replace it with something like the following: "I'm (or "we are") going to start something to make a living". This is an apt description for us, as Lac Seul people, in that it refers to the economic objectives we agree upon

which apply as well when we seek assistance from government or private sector enterprise financing programs.

The same references would be used in our language to describe the terms "business" or a "project" related to enterprise activities. In our language, there is no general term for business. Instead, we refer to the general term **Ondaadiziwin** as "livelihood" whether we engage in commercial retail activities, for example, or the manufacture of lumber. Some of the reasons for this will become clear in the following pages of this report. There were few difficulties in finding words or easy descriptions in our Anishinaabe language concerning such concepts as financing, credit and customers/markets.

Descriptive difficulties and complexities intensified in our Focus Group discussions, however, when we turned our attention to corporate organization. Not only could the Research Team not find a term for "corporation"; we could not even find a description for the idea of a corporation as it might be normally understood. Nonetheless, our Lac Seul First Nation "owns" or "controls" several "for profit" and "not for profit" corporations. What was their meaning and function for our First Nation people who participated in them? Lac Seul ec-dev staff and councillors who participated in the Focus Group discussions on these issues gave a revealing response. When they speak in our language, they simply do not refer to "the corporation". They would speak of a livelihood project they are working on and then "use the corporation" to access funds to help them get the project off the ground. Unless they speak in English, "the corporation" is not referred to in any direct sense.

The Research Team could not find words in our language for "corporate shares" or "shareholders". However, we did find that our Focus Group participants could describe these categories in a way that they were satisfied with. They could say, for example, that a person could get a "vote" in the "the business activity" by "buying in". We could find no instance, however, where Focus Group participants knew of the issuance of any shares by any corporation "functioning" at Lac Seul. In a similar vein, they could come up with no equivalent terms or even comfortable descriptions for the "board of directors" of a corporation. Because our First Nation administration has organized groups of people to serve on "boards of directors", we

found that there is a reference to these groups in our language but it includes our word for a piece of milled lumber.

In and of themselves, the linguistic problems we faced in finding descriptions in our language for a variety of English economic and business concepts are not necessarily all that significant. But in terms of our Focus Group discussions on this issue, we found that "the medium is the message" in several crucial ways. The notion that business organization and enterprise governance reflect the cultures and values of the societies in which they are practiced was strongly affirmed in the discussions. For example, we found that throughout our Focus Group discussions people kept ending up asking questions such as: "Why do we need to use a corporation?" Some of the potential utility of this business structure can be found in non-aboriginal law and includes such "advantages" as the limitation of personal liability in a business. But many of our Focus Group participants saw few reasons that would serve as incentives for them to learn to conduct their enterprise affairs in accordance with the structures of these organizations. Indeed, we could not find any successful examples where this was the case.

Questions of values always threaded their way through these Focus Group discussions. As members of the Research Team, we would get questions like: "Everything is loaned to you from the Creator. How can you own things like Land?" As much as anything else, these questions were asked out of the cultural and social experience of our economic relationships with each other. They reflect the normative context of our organization of our livelihood activities. This is best explained by reference to the Focus Group discussions concerning ideas of management and economic competition.

When we turned our Focus Group discussion to the idea of economic competition, we set it in the context of a hypothetical enterprise example. We supposed that one of the ec-dev staff who participated in the discussion wanted to open a "gas bar". Then we set it in the context of another gas bar already operating in the community, for this was actually the case. The "competition" would have to be named as part of the business planning process. This is required as part of an application for financial support from the government economic development

support program whose 1993 application form we were actually referring to (the Ontario Aboriginal Economic Development Program). The reasons why customers would want to shop at the proposed gas bar in preference to the other would have to be stated. How would we describe this economic competition in our language? It would be fairly easy, for example, to use the term **Kaqwehaada aowehwin** - "trying to outdo the other person".

What was the response on the part of the ec-dev worker turned hypothetical "entrepreneur" to having to document the reasons why she believed that her new business would possess a "competitive edge"? Guilt, we were told. All other Focus Group affirmed that this was also their response. It would be "taking away part of another person's livelihood". As Lac Seul people, we would never use the term **Kaqwehaada aowehwin** as an affirmation of a positive value or trait in relation to business success. We do not even use this term in our discussions of economic activity generally. People are supposed to engage in livelihood activities to do "something good for the people". Where there is a need it can be filled by a business activity, but it is not a part of our culture to esteem rivalry and winners in a "cut throat" world of business. Therefore, in a sense it is strange to us when we hear politicians who say Canadians have to work together so that they can become more competitive.

Our emphasis on cooperation in our economics can also be explained within the context of our customary relationships to Land. We can best describe this by saying that these relationships are consciously reciprocal and not hierarchical. This is reflected in our rituals that express our relationships to the abundance of our Lands. Something must always be given back for the animals and plants, for example, that give of themselves to us. We do not, for example, call fish that we catch "products" in a business sense or in any other sense for that matter. We are not "over" fish in terms of our relationships to them. Rather, we are with them. Our primary relationships to fish are not "economic" or "business" relationships. We would be better to say in English that our "economic" relationships to fish are really part of a way of "livelihood". In this sense, competition and hierarchy are shunned in favour of reciprocity and cooperation. This is why there is a special nuance to our idea of a "product" - **ooshijigan** - as "something that is made". In a way, we emphasize the value of things in terms of the work that we do to make

them. It is hard to explain this in English, but we can say that our way of livelihood on Land is part of a larger whole which influences our economic relationships, as Anishinaabe people, with each other.

A "community" on Land that includes people, fish, animals, birds, trees, plants and even rocks - a community where people have ceremonial responsibilities and duties that they must carry out in order to fulfil certain culturally determined obligations of respect and mutuality has economic implications. This is especially so in terms of the idea of economic organization. In one way, the power of the model of the corporation can be summed up by the idea of distancing. The corporation is a valuable tool for controlling and profiting from resources at a distance. There are problems, however, with this idea when it is considered in terms of our value that power should be exercised locally. Most Lac Seul people, we learned, prefer a local expression of economic power in accordance with our customary cultural values and norms.

This is reflected in our descriptions of "management" and "managers" which are characterized by non-hierarchical values. Indeed, if we consider the idea of "management" as it is practiced in non-aboriginal businesses, we might be better to refer to the term "leadership". In our language, Lac Seul people refer to those who organize and "take care of" enterprises in a way that expresses leadership as it can be associated with non-hierarchical values. This practice is reflected, for example, in the fact that we could find no examples where any of the Lac Seul business leaders of the enterprises discussed in the next section of this study have been referred to as "bosses" - **ogemak** (those who give orders) - by Lac Seul people.

Does this mean that, unless we adopt the non-aboriginal way of economic organization fully, we can never have the "resources" at our disposal to achieve economic independence? Not necessarily, is how our Focus Group results would best be interpreted. As Anishinaabe people living at Lac Seul, we have immense knowledge of our Lands. We have livelihood customs which represent significant economic strengths that could be put to use in developing new economic pursuits as well as nurturing "traditional" ones. If we had security of access to our Lands we could develop appropriate financing mechanisms to take advantage of economic

opportunities. This is the "capital" that many Lac Seul people would use to nurture their economic recovery. Unfortunately, the knowledge, skills and the customary organizational strengths of our people which are expressed in our culture cannot be used by them in ways they would often prefer. This is because we are missing the one ingredient necessary to undertake livelihood projects as we would want: authority in relation to our Lands.

Thus, Lac Seul people are left with accommodating themselves to economic arrangements that they would often not otherwise choose. We are not able to self-direct our cultural change to the extent that we could if we were able to exercise autonomy over our economic lives. What does this mean? Lac Seul people fear the loss of their culture especially in terms of language. We see the slippage that is occurring right now on this issue. Our Elders expressed concerns to the Research Team about the tendency of our people to look towards non-aboriginal economic values. But can they be judged harshly for doing so when they do not see the opportunities that would allow them to follow livelihood pursuits more grounded in our customs? Will we lose a language of livelihood as well as a way of livelihood that will be mourned not only by us but by the human family generally? The next section of this study demonstrates clearly that our livelihood customs are still stronger than many might think. In ways that we are sometimes not even aware of, we are organizing for our cultural survival.

F. STRATEGIES FOR NURTURING THE LAC SEUL ECONOMY - THREE CASE STUDIES AND THEIR LESSONS

i) General Issues

During the course of the Lac Seul Community Economy Study Focus Groups, participants made frequent reference to specific business initiatives during their discussions about issues concerning livelihood. The discussions concerning business projects revealed a striking continuity of livelihood practice, as well as specific concerns about economic issues, across generations. By the end of the Focus Group discussion sessions, the Lac Seul Research Team had accumulated enough material on a number of business initiatives to allow for a sample of case study presentations as part of this report.

The three case studies that were chosen for case study presentation cover livelihood issues and the Lac Seul First Nation people from a variety of perspectives. Given the importance of Land to our people it is not surprising that two of the case studies involve enterprise initiatives related to Land. They concern tourist operations. The first case study on Sam's Lodge and Outposts provides valuable information from a historical as well as cross-cultural perspective. The couple that ran the operation were "non-status" Anishinaabe people though both of them lived their lives immersed in Anishinaabe culture (the language of the household was our Anishinaabe language). They ran Sam's Lodge and Outposts as a successful operation for fourteen years until they retired.

The values which governed the "management" of Sam's Lodge and Outposts resulted in the operation of a business strikingly similar to the operation of a successful new lodge run by our people today at the Lac Seul reserve, Mahkwa Outfitters. Both of these businesses demonstrate the importance of leadership skills and effective decision-making on business matters. The results of these case studies taken together reveal the persistence and importance of the customs that govern our livelihood pursuits, even when these pursuits are scaled up to larger initiatives. This is especially important in terms of our customs regarding economic leadership and business decision-making responsibilities. It is important to note that these businesses, while they operated

(the Mahkwa Outfitters initiative is still growing) with great deference to our livelihood customs and norms, were not destroyed by values such as our so-called value of "sharing", for example.

In the context of the case study on the fate of the Kejick Bay Community Store, the tourism case studies revealed particularly interesting findings. The Kejick store operated successfully in its initial phase until a management and oversight structure that was layered over the operation of the business finally resulted in problems for the business. Partly, this appears to reflect the fact that the Kejick Store was started by the "Band". Thus, the exercise of leadership, authority and responsibility in the business was, from the beginning, confused in the minds of Lac Seul people. In the end it proved too difficult to find and keep leadership that could have led the store to success. In this sense the store ultimately became a casualty of the "politics" of the "Band Office" as we have come to experience them. It appears that many Lac Seul people themselves were also confused about the benefits, such as credit, that the store was to provide. This seems to be related to the fact that it originated as an initiative out of the Band Office. To put it in another way, it is not the usual expectation of many Lac Seul people that the contribution of funds from non-aboriginal governments to the Band Office should be treated in the same way as financing for a "private" enterprise initiative.

These case studies, therefore, provide special insight as to how the separation of politics and business can be effectively exercised in the context of our culture. Interestingly, the case studies reveal that a balance of powers will, if we are to retain our livelihood customs, reflect our distinct culture. Thus, the case studies themselves confirm to the urgent necessity of resolving the whole issue of autonomy and cultural survival.

ii) **The Case studies and Their Implications**

a) **Knowledge and Respect - Sam's Lodge and Outpost**

Sam Anderson, **okitchitaa** - esteemed Elder, was born in 1918 into a life of immense difficulty

and challenge. In the end, it would be turned into a life of significant accomplishment with important lessons for all Lac Seul First Nation people.

Sam was born at a place called Watcomb, Ontario which was one a series of small "settlements" of aboriginal and some non-aboriginal people that were spread out along the CN railway line that ran from Sioux Lookout to Thunder Bay. The particular challenges that would be faced by Sam Anderson during his life relate to the fact that he was born of an Anishinaabe woman and a Swedish father. His father had come to Canada and had settled amongst Anishinaabe people. He worked as a fisherman. He learned to speak only a rudimentary English and because he settled down with an Anishinaabe woman, the Anishinaabe language became the language of their household. As the child of this "mixed marriage", Sam Anderson was to live most of his life without "Indian Status". The challenge that lay before him when he reached maturity and sought after his livelihood was reflected by his being trapped by Canadian law in one reality while he lived in a different cultural world. At the time, there was nothing that Anishinaabe people could have done to change this.

Sam Anderson spent his early childhood years speaking only the Anishinaabe language with an understanding of a few Swedish words. He was to learn English when he was sent off to residential school. He began to attend the residential school at MacIntosh in 1926. His attendance at residential school was such that it was possible for him to say that he was "raised" at the MacIntosh School. His experience of residential school carried with it the difficulties that had to be endured by Anishinaabe children from throughout the region. What it did give him, however, were also certain skills that were to be used to their best advantage when he reached maturity.

Residential schooling was not the only education that Sam Anderson learned. He acquired a wide range of Anishinaabe land-based livelihood skills including hunting, trapping and fishing. These skills he learned from his mother and from the time he spent on the land with her uncles. As he advanced in his teenage years, Sam Anderson acquired the capacities that would allow him to provide for his economic livelihood as a non-status Anishinaabe man.



Guiding tourists on their fishing vacations has been a pursuit practiced by Sam Anderson from when he was a young man up until the present time. This photo was taken sometime before Sam's Lodge and Outposts was built at Allanwater, Ontario (photo undated).

Sam Anderson began guiding tourist fisherman and nurturing a business interest in tourism before he was married. He started seriously pursuing this interest by guiding at Allanwater and then at various other tourist facilities at places including MacIntosh and Ignace. At the same time, he was able to purchase two commercial fishing licences which he was able to obtain by virtue of his residential school education. As a non-status aboriginal, these commercial fishing licences were the only means by which he could participate in this livelihood activity. Commercial fishing and guiding represented the commercial land-based livelihood activities that provided income for Sam and his wife Violet to raise their family. They also provided the means by which Sam Anderson was able to move to Allanwater, Ontario in 1963 to begin his own tourist operation with his wife.

Sam's Lodge was built on Seseganaga Lake by Sam Anderson and when it was finished it contained accommodations for twenty four people. It was the fruit of a combination of sufficient savings, using local materials, family labour in the construction and help from Anishinaabe relatives and friends.

Photo unavailable: [Sam and Violet Anderson, seen in this photograph, back row, third and fourth from the right with children and grandchildren at Sam's Lodge at a time when the lodge was successfully supporting not only them but a number of other Anishinaabe families as well (photo undated).]

The tourist initiative of Sam and Violet Anderson at Allanwater grew to include outpost camps at Harmon Lake, Vista Lake, Flint Lake and Southwest Bay in Seseganaga Lake. In busy seasons Sam's Lodge and Outposts had as many as seventeen Anishinaabe guides working in the business during the summer months. This was in addition to a core group of Anishinaabe guides which included Sam Anderson, four of his sons, and three other Anishinaabe men.

Photo unavailable: [Guiding tourists on their fishing vacations has been a pursuit practiced by Sam Anderson from when he was a young man up until the present time. This photo was taken sometime before Sam's Lodge and Outposts was built at Allanwater, Ontario (photo undated).]

How did an Anishinaabe couple who operated this business conduct their affairs? According to Sam Anderson the key to the success of Sam's Lodge and Outpost was that its affairs were conducted in accordance with the "Anishinaabe way". Sam and Violet Anderson were related

to many of the Anishinaabe people who worked in the business. This meant that leadership and responsibility for the business were carried out in accordance with certain social norms and standards. Firstly, leadership was never exercised by command. If something had to be done at the Lodge, people would have to be respectfully asked: "Would you do it?" or "Would you agree to ...?" - **Kiidaa inendaama**. Sam Anderson spoke with clarity that, in the years in which he operated Sam's Lodge and Outposts, he never gave an order to any of the Anishinaabe people who worked there. In terms of guiding work, it was a key to success that no favouritism be exercised amongst the guides. If a tourist wanted a certain guide which meant no work for an Anderson boy, this was accepted not only as good business but as an affirmation of the esteem for the guide whose services were requested.

Perhaps most significantly in terms of the operation of Sam's Lodge and Outposts from the perspective of Sam Anderson was the absence of a goal to accumulate wealth through the business. In its best season, Sam's Lodge and Outposts earned "\$7,000.00 clear" for the Anderson family. In terms of the operation of the business, a careful balance had to be achieved between maintaining the tourist facilities and the income of the Anishinaabe people who worked there. The normal course of affairs was for the Anderson family to use Sam's Lodge and Outposts to support their income during its operating season. After the Lodge was closed at the end of each summer, other livelihood pursuits such as commercial fishing provided income to the family.

Why was this so? Kinship seems to have been an important factor with respect to this matter. The answer given by Sam Anderson to the question of why there was no goal to use Sam's Lodge and Outposts to pursue individual accumulation was that he was related to many of the Anishinaabe people who worked at the lodge and, together as Anishinaabe people, they lived the Anishinaabe way. Many of the Anishinaabe people who worked at the Lodge nurtured their livelihoods from the lands in which it was located. A tourism initiative, to be acceptable to them, had to account for the fact that these were their ancestral lands from which they were entitled to derive their livelihoods. The benefits of new initiatives undertaken by members of their group were to be in accord with their customary interests in their lands.

In our society, it has been a principle that we say our members are free to travel and pursue our livelihood activities as our ancestors have. We do this on our Lands that are not closed by boundaries - whether as fences or lines on a map - as they are known in the non-aboriginal society. This is where our practice of equity takes on a special meaning. This practice is grounded in the value of respect as we have described our use of this term earlier in this study. It has been reflected in our customary practice of reciprocity. Sam's Lodge and Outposts was successful not only because its operation was prudently and effectively managed, but because its benefits flowed to the Anishinaabe people who worked there. These benefits flowed to them in a manner which gained their approval in accordance with an Anishinaabe cultural perspective. Their interests in Land on which the lodge was located were an integral part of the operation of this tourist business. This remained so until Sam Anderson and his wife retired in 1977.



Sam Anderson is seen in this photo (third from the right) with a group of tourist fishermen and an excellent catch of fish from Seseganaga Lake waters. The distribution of the benefits of this abundance, which had been nurtured by Anishinaabe people for generations, as income found broad acceptance amongst the Anishinaabe people who worked at the lodge. These arrangements were rooted in Anishinaabe livelihood norms that were part of Anishinaabe culture long before tourists started visiting to Northwestern Ontario.



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The business, therefore, represents a unique example, where the convergence of a rare set of circumstances allowed Anishinaabe people to cope with provincial natural resources management regulations and work them to their advantage. Sam's Lodge and Outposts can provide important lessons beyond matters relating to the allocation of the wealth of Land amongst Anishinaabe people. As such, it speaks to the origins and persistence of the disparities which exist between Lac Seul Anishinaabe people and non-aboriginals who operate tourist facilities throughout our customary Lands. But this business provides additional lessons on the importance of linking sound "resource management" or what we would call Land stewardship to our Anishinaabe culture.

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Sam's Lodge and Outposts provided excellent fishing opportunities for the tourists who were its patrons. In spite of the fact that this tourism operation operated under the authority of the laws of the Province of Ontario (otherwise Sam Anderson would have been prosecuted for initiating the business), it is just as important to note that it was located on Anishinaabe Lands. As such, the Anishinaabe people who live in the area (and worked at the lodge) had a stake, which they exercised in accordance with their customs, in conserving the fish abundance upon which the success of the lodge depended.

Before the imposition of provincial fisheries management over the commercial fishing activities of Lac Seul First Nation people, it was customary amongst our Anishinaabe people that they

harvested a variety of fish species in accordance with long-standing practice. These fishery practices were used to maintain a beneficial balance of species in our fishery. In 1967, Sam Anderson decided that Vista Lake, a smaller lake which lies between Sturgeon and Seseganaga Lakes, could serve as a valuable outpost camp addition to the tourist initiative he had started four years before. A permit was obtained to operate the outpost camp. From the start, Sam Anderson had been concerned to fish in Vista Lake in a way that maintained a good balance between its different species of fish. To this end, he requested that he be granted a commercial licence to fish "non-sport" species in Vista Lake. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources refused this request. From the perspective of Ministry officials, Vista Lake was too small to support commercial fishing. From the perspective of Sam Anderson, the MNR decision meant that he would not be able to maintain an optimal balance of fish species populations in the lake. The opportunity for Sam Anderson or other local Anishinaabe people to apply their knowledge and conservation practice in Vista Lake in a holistic manner was denied to them.

From an Anishinaabe perspective, the compartmentalization of resource management in terms of the allocation of harvesting rights and conservation responsibilities has serious potential economic implications. Sam Anderson recollected that in the Vista Lake case the Ministry of Natural resources went on to allocate two other outpost camps to non-aboriginal tourist operators. Within two years, "sport fish" populations in Vista Lake were seriously depleted. Populations of "coarse fish" species in the lake went out of balance with the fish that tourists preferred to catch. The opportunity to use Anishinaabe knowledge to nurture the "productivity" of these fish was lost and everyone involved in the Vista Lake fishery lost economically because of this. Sam Anderson had not sought a commercial fishery in Vista Lake that would have been self-supporting. Rather, based on his knowledge, he knew that a small commercial fishery could have provided direct economic benefits in terms of maintaining the productivity of tourist-based fishing in the lake. While we, as Anishinaabe people, have been able to mitigate the consequences of provincial control over our livelihood activities in our Lands to a degree, ultimately our lack of authority on our Lands has been our economic loss.

This is perhaps most telling in the disposition of Sam's Lodge and Outposts. Sam and Violet

Anderson sold the business in 1977. It was sold to non-aboriginal people for enough funds to purchase a small piece of property and a trailer (mobile home) next to Sioux Lookout, Ontario. In 1977, Sam Anderson and his wife were still not accorded status as First Nation people. They had to retire off-reserve. Their commitment to the value that Sam Anderson described as non-accumulation, a way of reciprocity and equity in relation to livelihood gained from Land, meant that the lodge was what was available to be exchanged for a home in Sioux Lookout.

Perhaps Sam's Lodge and Outposts business could have remained in Anishinaabe hands had the context of Sam Anderson's history been different. The business had to provide for Sam Anderson's home when he retired. Few Lac Seul people at the time would have had the savings to support the purchase of the business. Indeed, our research results in this study make it likely that many Lac Seul people would have felt comfortable in trying to acquire the necessary savings that would have been required to purchase the business. However, a particular culturally distinctive pattern of distribution of income amongst Anishinaabe people does not have to be taken to mean that it presents an inherent obstacle in the development and operation of businesses such as Sam's Lodge and Outposts.

Our research pointed to the conclusion that organizing and mobilizing what in English is called capital, including cash and the abundance that Land can provide, even now could well be most profitably done in a way that is in keeping with our culture. This means, for example, understanding the importance and function of **small savings** in our culture. In the case of tourism businesses, it involves Land. When we say we do not sell our Land, it means that we must organize our economic opportunities on Land in a way where the wealth that Land can give to us is brought forth in accordance with our customs. This inherently involves the exercise of authority in relation to Land because it involves people have to live their economic lives on Land in a way that is culturally distinct. At this point in time Lac Seul people cannot do this when it comes to income generating activities. Simply put, we do not have the jurisdiction in relation to our Land that would allow the opportunity to pursue this option. Is it any wonder that many of our youth find it hard to gather the energy to engage in livelihood pursuits such as tourism on Land in accordance with our customs at the present time?

Keeping the operation and leadership of the Sam's Lodge and Outposts in Anishinaabe hands would have been much more probable if we, as Lac Seul First Nation people, had possessed greater authority in relation to our Lands. This is the first issue that must be dealt with if we are to be able to determine our cultural future in terms of economic affairs.

b) Authority and Responsibility / Co-operation and Accountability - Mahkwa Outfitters

In 1988, a small group of Lac Seul First Nation people pooled their energies together and built four small log cabins in an effort to break into the tourist market in the Lac Seul watershed. This marked the beginning of what has become the most successful business enterprise to date at the Lac Seul First Nation - Mahkwa Outfitters. As a tourist operation, Mahkwa Outfitters, now ranks as a significant player in tourism on Lac Seul. From the initial four cabins, the facilities of the business have grown to include eleven cabins that are booked by hunters and fishermen from all over North America. From gross income receipts totalling approximately \$13,000.00 in 1989, its first year of operation, the income for the business grew to more than \$250,000.00 in 1993. The leaders of the business are projecting more than \$420,000.00 in income in 1994 based on confirmed bookings for the 1994 season.

Mahkwa outfitters rents housekeeping cabins to its tourist patrons. The tourists can fish on their own in Lac Seul waters or they can employ guides to improve their chances of catching trophy size fish. Hunters are guided by First Nation people who are recognized for their own proficiency in the bush. During the course of a six month season, these tourists are supported by a First Nation staff which consists of two "managers" who work on two daily eight hour shifts. Three staff work one daily eight hour shift each taking care of the cabins. Two camp workers work one daily eight hour shift each taking care of camp facilities other than the cabins. Mahkwa Outfitters maintains a pool of ten guides who provide expert guiding services for those tourist parties that request them. The managers provide leadership not only in the daily operation of the business during the tourist season but are responsible for guiding its growth in everything

who provide expert guiding services for those tourist parties that request them. The managers provide leadership not only in the daily operation of the business during the tourist season but are responsible for guiding its growth in everything from bringing in the tourists to the expansion of its facilities. Mahkwa Outfitters is self-managed and the First Nation Council is not involved in its operations.



The first cabins built for the Mahkwa Outfitters initiative bore no resemblance to the facilities proposed in the concept drawings that were prepared by consultants in the business planning phase for the project. Once the leaders of the initiative secured a modest start-up grant for the project, they organized the building of cabins that capitalized on their construction knowledge, techniques and preferences of Lac Seul people. Thus, the cabins in this photo are remarkably similar to those that were constructed for Sam's Lodge and Outposts by Anishinaabe people.

The Mahkwa Outfitters project is not particularly significant for the lessons it can provide concerning the sound management of aboriginal enterprises. It is true that the operation has been prudently managed since its inception. It is somewhat significant that none of the people involved in the leadership of the business possess post-secondary education qualifications let alone qualifications in business administration. This indicates that sound business leadership skills can be acquired other than through formal educational institutions. It also indicates that effective business leadership depends as much on commitment and vision as it does on qualifications. But an examination of the

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If the Mahkwa Outfitters project was examined from the perspective of formal structure, it would be possible to say that it is a business operation of Mahkwa Development Corporation. The corporation was established with the support of the Lac Seul First Nation Council. It was organized as a "for profit" corporation in 1985. Its purpose was to serve as a tool to support the establishment of business enterprises involving Lac Seul First Nation people living at Lac Seul.

Mahkwa Development Corporation was used as the formal structure through which financial support for the Mahkwa Outfitters project was obtained. This, however, turned out to be only a small part of the story of the development of the project. In the Focus Group discussion where the operation of Mahkwa Outfitters was assessed, a portrait of the business emerged that is remarkably divergent from the one which might be derived from examining formal documents. During this Focus Group discussion, the Research Team explored the issues of ownership,

accountability and authority at Mahkwa Outfitters. What follows is the understanding of these issues from the perspective of Mahkwa Outfitters staff.

The Mahkwa Outfitters project was begun by a small group of talented Lac Seul First Nation people who shared the same clan affiliation. As younger people at Lac Seul, they were concerned to establish enterprise projects that they would feel comfortable working in. From the beginning, the organizational structure of the project bore little resemblance to any corporate model. Indeed, the Lac Seul Research Team was informed that: no one involved in the Mahkwa Outfitters project participated in any corporate organizational structure to manage the business; no one knew the last time that any "board of directors" for the Mahkwa Development Corporation had met; a board of directors for the corporation had met for a couple of times immediately after the organization was incorporated but this process was quickly abandoned as being too awkward and "rigid"; there was uncertainty about the exercise of authority and responsibility in its functioning; ultimately, no one directly involved in the project was interested in organizing the ongoing management and leadership of the Mahkwa Outfitters within this or any other corporate structure; finally, the Mahkwa Outfitters staff were not particularly interested or comfortable in learning about corporate governance or ownership. Much of the language of non-aboriginal corporate governance and ownership does not have a parallel in our language. When our people use this language, they invariably switch to speaking in English. This is one reason why the staff at Mahkwa Outfitters have not decided to run their affairs using this approach to business organization. They question why Anishinaabe people should necessarily have to adopt this language and organization to conduct our livelihood affairs in all cases.

When the Lac Seul Research Team attempted to develop a perspective on the ownership of Mahkwa Outfitters, we found the information which we received particularly interesting. When the question of ownership was raised, we were told that it had arisen in terms of securing funding for the project. The government agencies involved required information on who was to own the business before they would approve funding for it.

Photo unavailable: [The newer cabins at Mahkwa Outfitters have been built by Mahkwa Outfitters staff using



The newer cabins at Mahkwa Outfitters have been built by Mahkwa Outfitters staff using building techniques and materials that reflect their acquisition of new skills in construction. Like the original log cabins the new frame construction buildings have been constructed in accordance with the knowledge of the Lac Seul First Nation people who have built them. No outside designs were used to construct the cabins in this photograph.

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]

The Focus Group discussion on this matter was at the same time often serious as well as humorous. Roger Bull, a councillor for the Lac Seul First Nation and a strong supporter of Mahkwa Outfitters (he was one of the initial organizing core group), said with humour that the business should be called "Percy's Camp". Mostly, this was an affirmation of the leadership of Percy Ningewance who, as one of the "managers" of the business, was instrumental in its start-up and continues to lead its ongoing successful growth. But it was also much more than this. This is because while the statement brought humorous responses, it provided an opportunity for the Focus Group participants to clarify their values of ownership in the context of the Mahkwa Outfitters project as a venture through which Lac Seul people secure livelihood from Land.

Who owns Mahkwa Outfitters? It turned out that this was not an adequate perspective from which to assess the issues of authority, responsibility and participation in the business. Percy Ningewance clarified this. Mahkwa Outfitters is now a part of who Lac Seul people are. The materials out of which it has been built as well as the reserve Land on which it is located are not seen as part of a value that can be divided up amongst Lac Seul people. The critical value of the business lies in the work that it can provide to Lac Seul people who work there. "Jobs" are not a benefit of the business. The business is fundamentally the work that it provides to those who work in it. Indeed, our description for having a "job" in our Anishinaabe language is that we use such phrases as - **Anokeewin d'aan** - I am working.

The Lac Seul First Nation people who work at Mahkwa Outfitters operate the business in a manner where they have organized themselves to ensure that it runs well. Who controls the business? We could say, for example, that there are two "managers" at Mahkwa Outfitters. But it is crucial to distinguish what English terms such as these mean to us in the context of our culture. This is because when the question regarding exercise of authority at Mahkwa Outfitters was asked in the context of salaries, for example, the Research Team was told that no one at

Mahkwa Outfitters sets down salaries for the staff. Salaries are established out of discussions amongst camp staff wherein they reach an agreement on what is fair in terms of pay. Leadership plays an important role here but in the context of the manner in which it is exercised amongst our people. Additionally, such factors as camp income are also important in the determination of questions such as these. That is, an issue such as salaries is a contextual issue which is resolved by the interplay of many factors including camp income as well as general standards of equity on these issues held amongst Lac Seul First Nation people.

The exercise of leadership in business such as Mahkwa Outfitters takes on a more nuanced meaning when we consider that the Research Team was told that no one has ever given a command at Mahkwa Outfitters. Nor has anyone ever been disciplined in their work at the camp. What does it mean, therefore, to manage the camp? If Lac Seul people are asked to speak to the role of the managers at Mahkwa Outfitters, they might use a phrase such as **Koshkwe pitchegheh ogamik kaanaawehandang** - "the one who looks after the camp". What does this refer to? The manager is a leader who, for example, organizes the bookings for the camp, orders supplies, gets the bills paid, helps staff to work together, and organize the expansion of the business. At the beginning of each work day, camp staff meet together and distribute tasks amongst themselves. As a leader, a manager like Percy Ningewance has to possess skills not only to carry out daily administrative chores but also the ability to perceive potential opportunities and seize them. Major decisions such as the expansion of camp facilities begin as ideas circulating amongst staff. How do they become decisions that have staff support? An outsider might look at this process and wonder when and how an actual decision has been made. But the Lac Seul people who work at Mahkwa Outfitters know when there is support for an idea amongst themselves, and the managers know when the time is ready to proceed with it.

The exercise of entrepreneurial leadership, even though it might seem intangible to outsiders looking in at a business like Mahkwa Outfitters, is critical to the success of such projects. The people must be able to know and feel it. All of the participants at the Focus Group where Mahkwa Outfitters was discussed were in consensus on certain management values. There may be jealousy about a good business leader but people know good leadership when they see it. To

be most effectively exercised, leadership in an enterprise project like Mahkwa Outfitters cannot be focused on providing individual gain. Business leaders are given great freedom to take and follow up on initiatives that people feel will be beneficial for their livelihood. There are no shareholders or shareholder representatives policing the managers of Mahkwa Outfitters. No one who works at the camp appeared to be interested in either learning about or holding shares in the business.

At the same time, leadership at the camp is to be exercised for the benefit of the group in a way that is acceptable to them. What are the sanctions that Lac Seul people could apply against unacceptable leadership in a business such as Mahkwa Outfitters? The most powerful is the loss of respect and esteem that could result from the exercise of unacceptable leadership. Such esteem is sought by aspiring to follow a way you hope will benefit the people - **Inaatiziwin**. The Research Team was told in the Focus Group that leadership is successful and esteemed when it is not exercised "for personal gain". One Focus Group participant said that unbiased leadership is accorded the highest respect amongst Lac Seul people. This accorded with what Lac Seul Elders told the Research Team in other Focus Groups. Lac Seul Elders referred this norm as the practice of avoiding "favouratism" along kinship lines. Interestingly, by following a customary approach in organizing its operations, it seems that these norms have achieved a potency at Mahkwas Outfitters by virtue of the context in which they are expressed. Even gossip alone can be a powerful sanction against greedy behaviour in a business like Mahkwa Outfitters. While, for example, Mahkwa Outfitters was largely established pursuant to the vision of the members of one clan, the even distribution of its economic benefits to all who work there has been key to their approval and support of the business. The business has built its success by being leaders who are diligent in their efforts to abide by these norms.

The adherence to these norms in a business which is not institutionally bounded by non-aboriginal arrangements reflects that fact that there are powerful informal social norms and attitudes concerning economic behaviour that have deep cultural roots amongst our people. They act as constraints on the exercise of leadership at the local level generally. The use of the term "local" is key here. At the local level these norms serve to provide strong incentives for people

to conform to community standards of leadership. In a business like Mahkwa Outfitters, these norms of behaviour are influential. This is because the influence of cultural factors which helped make Mahkwa a success in the first place have been nurtured by the very structure of the business. These values have their culturally determined modes of expression, and these have been replicated in structure by which Mahkwa Outfitters operates.

It is important to put the term "local" into a cultural context here. As the Lac Seul "Band" has evolved under the imposition of the Indian Act, we have faced immense difficulties. Experts talk of "community development" as a new approach for understanding possibilities of economic self-sufficiency at the local level. But community development as Lac Seul people might understand it should be qualified from our cultural perspective. If you ask Lac Seul people where they live, that is, what is their "community", they might respond "**Niin doonjit Lac Seul**" - "I live at Lac Seul". Is Lac Seul a "community"? We do not refer to Lac Seul as a "village" or "town" - **odenah** - but rather as "reserve" - **shkonegan** - Land that is "leftover". Indeed, in our language, Lac Seul people usually describe themselves as living in one of three places or "communities" on Lac Seul reserve Lands: Frenchman's Head, Kejick Bay or Whitefish Bay. We do not refer to these places as towns or villages. We say that we live together at Kejick Bay or at Whitefish Bay or at Frenchman's Head - **Maamowindaawin** - but we usually use this term in reference to the orders and promises from the Department of Indian Affairs when it was implementing its settlement policies in relation to our people. We do not have a specific word for "community" in our language.

There is no easy description of "community" that we could refer to in our language which could be equated with how non-aboriginal people usually conceive of it. Perhaps this is because historically we gathered ourselves together in different groups of different sizes at different times of the year for economic as well as cultural and political purposes. Whatever the case, our people continue to identify their sense of "community" primarily in terms of our customary relationships to Land. This has special significance in terms of economy and how we have organized our economic relationships with each other on our Lands. This is what is reflected in the "sense of ownership" and in the structure of "participation" of the Lac Seul people who work

at Mahkwa Outfitters.

If we are to talk of local economic control, therefore, it must be placed in terms of our customary economic relationships to each other on our Lands. This has real implications for the meaning of the term "local control" as it pertains to our customs. The exercise of authority at Mahkwa Outfitters, which is at Whitefish Bay, could never be asserted in relation to the operation of Lac Seul Resort which is at Frenchman's Head. The exercise of local authority in our culture puts what is "local" at a level of intimacy or immediacy that makes it hard for us to find a parallel in non-aboriginal society that could be described in English. Our economic experience and practice is not compatible with the distancing of power that is part and parcel of the non-aboriginal Canadian economic experience. In part we can describe what this means in terms of our culture by the reference to the term "non-interference". It means, for example, that the people who work at Mahkwa Outfitters could not use our culture to justify either controlling or "owning" Lac Seul Resort. This does not mean that Lac Seul people cannot leave their work at the former and go to work at the latter. What it does mean is that they cannot control one while working at the other.

Roger Bull, a Councillor for the Lac Seul First Nation, was a member of the original core group of people who initiated the Mahkwa Outfitters Initiative. He still guides for the business when additional people are required for this purpose.

The success of Mahkwa Outfitters is in no small way due to the fact that its operation is not mediated by imposed outside institutional arrangements nearly as much as so much else in our lives at our First Nation. Thus, the business has been able to use "traditional" Anishinaabe values to its advantage. Statements made to the Research Team indicate that the practice of deep equity in the business is one of the prerequisites of this success. This equity and the social arrangements which sustain its practice are indicators of a truly local economy from our cultural perspective.

The whole idea of business organization is important in the context of this discussion. The vision of Mahkwa Outfitters was the vision of a group of people who conducted their affairs in accordance with Lac Seul First Nation customs of economic organization. Their aspiration to achieve an acceptable degree of economic independence is the same aspiration that lay behind the establishment of the Lac Seul Resort initiative. There is one crucial difference between these two initiatives, however. The Lac Seul Resort project was established and has continued to be operated primarily as a "Band Office" initiative. Many of the important affairs of the business have continued to be officially directed and carried out under a development corporation structure that functions out of the Band Office at Frenchman's Head (each of the three Lac Seul First Nation communities has its own "Band Office"). Lac Seul Resort has experienced difficulties in terms of achieving the business goals that were established for the project. In part, this experience is reflected in the turnover of management in the business. Certainty in terms of leadership responsibilities for the business seem ambiguous within the structure that supports the enterprise. At the same time, everyone involved with the Lac Seul Resort project wants it to succeed. How will they develop a leadership and organizational capacity for Lac Seul Resort so that it can fulfil its economic potential? that remains to be seen. However, with the proper

support, there is every chance that leadership for the business can be established in a way which capitalizes on the strengths of our Anishinaabe livelihood culture.

We should, however, also explain the idea and practice of equity further in terms of our economic lives in the present. Our values of equity are contextual. No one today at Lac Seul has to regularly "give away" what they earn from their work. However, in accordance with our cultural norms there is much strength to be gained from the practice of a living equity in harmony with our cultural values. This is particularly true when it comes to the financial rewards that people can expect from a business. It is reflected in Mahkwa Outfitters in the relatively even distribution of income amongst the employees in the business.

This Anishinaabe economic reality is especially challenging in the economic world of today. To build economic power, for example, by extending ownership outward and controlling the Lands of others. This would be an unfamiliar experience for Lac Seul people from the perspective of our cultural norms. Of course, to change this would require a substantial change and adoption of non-aboriginal cultural norms in how we view the world. Perhaps this change is already happening amongst our people. But the resistance of our people to this change is in no small way reflected by our lack of participation in the non-aboriginal normative business world.

At any rate, in the economic world of today, we face a challenge in adapting our economic customs to new business circumstances. If we are to keep our economic customs, Lac Seul people must strengthen ways of doing business where we integrate ourselves with business "partners" using cooperative arrangements rather than the accumulation of centralized control. The results of our Focus Group sessions suggest, for example, that it would be difficult to find a Lac Seul member who would be interested in "owning" and "developing" Lands that are the heritage of other First Nations. Yet it is the case that First Nations can cooperate with each other to establish business initiatives where we all receive equitable benefits in accordance with our customary economic values. What Lac Seul people need more than anything is the economic "space" to be able to do this.

In our Focus Groups, Lac Seul Elders kept linking the local practice of equity to the way Lac

Seel people relate to our Land from which they have historically secured their livelihood. This in itself provides special challenges with respect to promoting livelihood activities amongst our people. When Land is not seen as something to be fenced or sold, when people see themselves as being able to travel and provide for themselves throughout their Lands, when it is customary that everyone has to be able to find a place on Land to engage in livelihood pursuits, when the allocation of the abundance of Land, while orderly and certain, is structured to sustain reciprocity and not competition, we are faced with an immense challenge in securing the means to initiate and sustain livelihood activities on our Land.



Even people who have worked as consultants on various matters for the Lac Seul First Nation have lodged at Mahkwa Outfitters and Lac Seul Resort when cabin space has been available.

We are faced with this challenge because the dominant economic order reflects, in many ways, the mirror opposite of our ways of livelihood. How are Lac Seul people to get financing when we resist the idea of dividing our Land into "property" which can be put up as collateral? We

believe that this would be possible if we had jurisdiction in relation to our Lands so that we could pursue alternative arrangements. Would it be possible to establish arrangements for an Anishinaabe business to secure financial support using the abundance that Land provides other than having to use Land "itself" as a commodity? We think that there are possibilities here but we have to repeat again that they cannot be explored until our authority in relation to our Lands is accepted. Will we have to accept losing our historical relationships to Land and a whole system of livelihood that is reflected in these relationships? Certainly, we will make decisions that have a great bearing on how this issue is resolved. But non-aboriginal governments, because they hold an iron grip of jurisdiction over our lives and our Lands, will affect our livelihood even more than we will. Can this predicament we find ourselves in not be changed?

c) Leadership, Shared Benefits, and Participation - The Kejick Bay Community Store

The foregoing case studies demonstrate the role that Anishinaabe custom has and continues to play in our economic relationships with each other and our Land. Mahkwa Outfitters demonstrates how, even in contemporary settings, the businesses of our First Nation people can profit from a suitable independence from the everyday affairs of the "Band Office". While the Band Office is now an important part of the lives of Lac Seul people, it continues to reflect the legacy of an imposed institutional form of political administration on our people. We are still struggling to come to terms with this political legacy and transform our political affairs into something that reflects our own culture. This process is part of the daily struggle in our efforts to change our relationships with the Government of Canada to one which accounts for our full identity as First Nation people. It is part of the struggle of all First Nation people across Canada who have had the structure of "Band Office" politics imposed on their affairs under the terms of the Indian Act.

The research for this study revealed, for example, that although the term "Band" still retains a legal (in federal law) and cultural meaning in non-aboriginal society (in anthropology, for

example), it is something that is deeply ambiguous for Lac Seul people. We know what it means in terms of the administrative affairs of the Department of Indian Affairs at Lac Seul as established by the Government of Canada, but this does not lessen its ambiguity for us in terms of our culture. Even the Band Office building is referred to in our language simply as **ozhibeegehogamik** - the building where people write. The origins of this description are reflected in our reference to what used to be Indian agent clerks - **ozhibeegehiniwuk**. Indian Agents themselves were known amongst our people as **Anishinaabe ogemak** - Indian bosses. At no time has our "Band Office" been referred to in our language as a place with which Anishinaabe authority has been associated. These descriptions continue to be reflected in the ambiguous ways in which our people, including many of our Chiefs and Councillors, speak of their frustrations with the Band Office system at the present time. As we continue to assert our First Nation authority more and more, it is inevitable that this will change. It may well change to more customary forms of exercising leadership which are still known amongst our people. Already it is reflected in the existence of three "Band Offices" at Lac Seul and our usual practice of electing First Nation councillors so that Frenchman's Head, Whitefish Bay and Kejick Bay people are represented on our Council.

A political legacy that we would not have chosen regarding our relationships with the Government of Canada, therefore, remains to be overcome. A consequence of this history is that many Lac Seul people remain concerned about the future of our livelihood customs given that they are unavoidably intertwined with the current state of our political affairs as they have evolved in our relationship with non-aboriginal Canada. The resolution of the problems that our history has left us with respect to this issue will depend upon our achieving greater autonomy over our lives. Further, it will depend as much on what and how we achieve this autonomy. The historical balance of authority and responsibility practiced by Lac Seul people in our livelihood practices offers important lessons in our struggle to achieve this autonomy and the economic recovery on which its success will depend. The recent enterprise initiative involving the Kejick Bay Store which was established by the Lac Seul First Nation offers important lessons on this matter.

For generations, the Hudson Bay Company maintained a trading post presence on Lac Seul. More recently, this presence had existed under new corporate ownership . The "Hudson Bay post", or the "Northern Store" as it came to be called, which served Kejick Bay was maintained over all these years next to the Anglican Church mission on the north shore of Lac Seul. This was only a short distance from Kejick Bay.

Lac Seul First Nation people had always had a mixed experience with the post as it concerned the terms of their trade with it. Thus, when the time came in the late 1980's for the owners of the Northern Store to consider whether or not they might re-locate it in Kejick Bay to change what was a declining trade at the business, many Lac Seul people were of the conviction that the time had come for them to commit themselves to a different approach. At prior community meetings and at meetings of the First Nation Council, it was decided that the issue of whether or not to allow a "Northern Store" to be located at Kejick Bay should be decided by the people as a whole. This was to be done in the form of a proposition to be voted on at the same time as the First Nation Council elections were held in 1990. The vote affirmed the decision to pursue a First Nation-owned store to serve the people of Kejick Bay. This decision essentially affirmed support of Lac Seul people for the First Nation to continue with a store at Kejick Bay which had already been opened in the fall of 1989.

What happened with the Kejick Bay Store after this, based on the experience of its first manager, is worthwhile to consider. When the Kejick Bay store opened in the fall of 1989, an advertisement for the position of store manager was posted at the Band Office. A dynamic younger woman from Kejick Bay, Margaret Ningewance, was hired by a committee that had been set up for this purpose as well as to provide direction in the ongoing operations of the store. Margaret had demonstrated her interest in business by completing a one year college level small business management course. The Kejick Bay Store had begun operations one month prior to her being hired and other staff were already working at the store.

The new manager of the store remained with the business for a period of one year beginning in the fall of 1989. During her tenure in the business, the Kejick Bay ran an operating profit. An extensive selection of inventory was built up and maintained at the store which attracted

increasing customer loyalty from Kejick Bay and Whitefish Bay people. The expansion of store inventory was customer driven. Margaret Ningewance maintained a regular practice of informally surveying customers in different age groups regarding what they wanted to be able to buy at the store. These preferences were reflected in the inventory. As well, a customer service for cashing social assistance cheques was put in place as part of the business and operated efficiently under the direction of the manager.

While the Kejick Bay Store committee hired Margaret Ningewance as a manager, essentially the staff operated on a team approach basis. By this we mean to say that the two full-time staff who worked in the business cooperated together to agree upon operating policies and procedures. Regular meetings were an everyday part of store operations. As the "Manager", Margaret Ningewance exercised a primary responsibility for "paperwork" functions including those related to purchasing, bills and documentation relating to the credit system, etc. In her mind, her primary responsibility was to carefully track and steward the monies flowing through the business. When she needed administrative support she sought it out and obtained it from sources that included a local "tribal council" to which the Lac Seul First Nation belongs. The other full-time staffer at the store, also a woman, assumed primary responsibility for the "till" or cash register. A "stock boy" worked part time at shelving inventory when it arrived at the store.

Significantly, a system of shopping on credit was established at the Kejick Bay Store. In the normal course of events, some of the Lac Seul people who patronized the store attempted to abuse this credit system. But this did not emerge as a threat to the operation of the store. The manager stuck by a credit policy, which the staff agreed upon and supported, where strict limits were placed on the credit that was made available to customers. A credit limit was uniformly applied to all customers and it was strict store policy that it could not be exceeded. If customers reached this credit limit, additional purchases at the store had to be made with cash.

Under this management system, the business of the Kejick Bay Store and the support it received from the community continued to grow. This was affirmed in several of the Focus Group discussions organized by the Lac Seul Research Team for our Community Economy Study.

According to Margaret Ningewance, getting the Kejick Bay Store up and running involved a lot of growing pains. These problems were overcome with persistence and a firm commitment to effective management.

However, a year after she began working as manager the Kejick Bay Store, Margaret Ningewance resigned from her position for personal reasons. She resigned leaving all of the books for the business up to date and balanced. Additionally, the initial debts that the store had incurred in commencing operations had been paid off in full during her short tenure as manager.

By the time that the research was being conducted three years later for this study, however, the Kejick Bay Store was suffering from financial difficulties. Credit problems at the store were accumulating and the business was suffering from a lack of effective management direction. By the time the Lac Seul Research Team was writing this report the store had closed. Three small stores were being operated out of the homes of Kejick Bay residents and these businesses filled some of the market demand that was created as a result of the decline of the Kejick Bay Store.

What is perhaps most interesting about her involvement with the Kejick Bay Store is that Margaret Ningewance left her position having never learned much about the committee that had been initially set up to provide direction for the business. The ultimate responsibility for the operations of the Kejick Bay Store were held by the "Band". The Band had financed its start-up. The store committee had been set up by the Band to provide support and direction for its ongoing development and operation. Interestingly, as the Manager of the Kejick Bay Store, Margaret Ningewance never learned how the committee operated. She never knew how often the committee met and never attended any of its meetings. She was never requested to do so. Her knowledge of the committee was that its membership frequently changed, especially after she left, though she never learned how the members were appointed.

At the same time, the committee exercised an authority that included hiring of staff for the store as well as setting salaries for the staff. The salary for the Kejick Bay Store Manager was first set at \$6.00 per hour on a fixed time work week and the salary of the second staff worker was

set at less than this. At the end of one year the salary of the manager was \$6.50 per hour. No provisions were made for paying for overtime work that staff performed at the store.

In relation to her work-related responsibilities, Margaret Ningewance found her salary to be inadequate. Paradoxically, the store committee did not seem to be a structure through which this issue could be resolved. It was not that the members of the committee did not want the store to succeed. However, the exercise of leadership and responsibility in the context of our culture was not adequately addressed by the structure of governance that was used to run the Kejick Bay Store. By saying this, we do not want to imply that best efforts were not made in the Band Office to structure the store so that it would be successful. From the beginning, public participation from Lac Seul people was envisaged by the Lac Seul First Nation Council as an important part of the process of establishing the Kejick Bay Store as a successful "community" business.

At the same time, the experience of our people with the Kejick Bay Store reflects our process of cultural adaptation, as Anishinaabe people, to new economic, social and political circumstances. In some ways, this has made the social context of doing business at our First Nation uniquely difficult. As one of our Focus Group participants noted, there are some community-based problems that we alone must work through in order to nurture our economic recovery. Indeed, most Focus Group participants affirmed that the economic dispossession of our people - the loss of our capacity to control our livelihood activities on our Lands - has resulted in economic "survival behaviour". The Research Team was told, for example, that our Anishinaabe experience of economic dependency has increasingly manifested itself in economic behaviours based on suspicion and jealousy. Sometimes we are jealous of entrepreneurial success because we are resentful of an increased tendency to associate it with an emphasis on the individual accumulation of wealth. One Focus Group participant drew attention to a memorable "Band meeting" where the increasing loss of respect for the practice of cooperative reciprocity amongst our people was painfully discussed. His point was to wonder whether these values will even survive amongst our people.

The conflicts over "scarce resources", including financial resources, that have resulted from our economic circumstances has often made it more difficult to express economic leadership as **niiganiitamaagehwin** - where favouritism is censured in deference to a stricter practice of equity. As one Focus Group participant put it, we have to overcome various "denial" behaviours, such as the manifestation of jealousy as we have come to experience it in the context of our culture, that lead to enterprise failures. Lac Seul people are waiting for committed and talented members to acquire the knowledge and the ability to step forward - **Keenootamaageh** - and effectively respond to these problems.

Additionally, our history with the Department of Indian Affairs is reflected in the statement that was made to the Research Team that Lac Seul people have "too much dependence on the Band Office". The political and economic dispossession of our people was in no small way administered by Indian Agents in their control of Band Office affairs which endured until relatively recently times. This has left us with a legacy where the expectations of Lac Seul people of the Band Office are often reflected in terms of what people can get out of it.

For the Research Team, however, the most important lessons from the Focus Groups on the case studies relate not to the specific dependency behaviours noted above. The results of our Focus Group discussions concerning the Kejick Bay Store, from the perspective of both management and consumers, were particularly revealing on this matter. In relation to the Kejick Bay Store, for example, the Research Team learned that everyone who discussed was in agreement that Margaret Ningewance "managed" the store for the benefit of the people as they expected it. Her primary satisfaction came from "having done something for the people - help to get them what they want".

The store was run in a highly participatory manner. In particular, its operation was characterized by the absence of a command-based business sub-culture. We often call this non-interference when we refer to it in English. These factors made for success in the operations of the store because they were joined to strong leadership abilities and skills and the practice of a high degree of equity among those working in the business. Our customary values concerning livelihood activities were alive and well only in a new mode of expression. After all, it would be difficult

to practice equity by reciprocity or "sharing the harvest" when we speak of the operation of the store by its staff. Rather, equity was achieved in practical ways, such as workplace participation and shared standards concerning fair wages, that fit the circumstances of the business.

But it was the very practice of non-interference which made for structural problems in terms of the relationship of the Kejick Bay Store to the "Band Office". When we refer to the term "non-interference" with all of its subtle meanings in terms of our culture, it would be better if we used the term "self-management" when we speak of livelihood activities. In relation to the norms that govern our livelihood customs, the practice of self-management is not only normative, it is crucial. It would, for example, be extremely rare for any Lac Seul adult to tell another adult how they should conduct specific livelihood practices on our Lands. In terms of our customs, even our learning is very experiential and our Elders "teach" our young people using teachings and learning techniques that are highly symbolic.

It is just not proper in our culture to go around giving orders to any person on any livelihood task. In this way, Margaret Ningewance would not have felt comfortable in communicating with the Kejick Bay Store Committee on most issues with anything near like the directness that characterizes the conduct of business affairs amongst non-aboriginal people. In terms of the operation of the Kejick Bay Store, therefore, the left hand (store staff) often did not know what the right hand (the committee) was doing. This was because our cultural norms governing our economic behaviour did not fit the structure under which the store operated given that it was a "Band initiative" .

The Band Council connected its efforts to start a store to benefit Kejick Bay people in the best way it could think of at the time. In this sense, it would not be right to blame the Council for the difficulties that ultimately befell the Kejick Bay Store; it simply reflects the challenges we face in reconciling our cultural values regarding economy with the effects of our historical relationships with the non-aboriginal society. While our people are experiencing change like never before and must adapt to new economic circumstances, the cultural line connecting our present to our past is clearly evident in how our business affairs have been conducted in projects

like the Kejick Bay Store. How can our livelihood customs be increasingly affirmed in new enterprise initiatives like these? This question was at the heart of discussions concerning the role of the "Band Office" in business.

This is what was meant when the Research Team heard quite frequently in the Focus Group sessions that economic success will come from our people without "interference" from the Band Office. Perhaps the expectations of our people of the "Band Office" are such that they make it too difficult for the "Band Council" to sponsor economic projects and spin off a degree of self-management authority that will allow them to be successful in the context of our culture. If this is so, a different approach will have to be tried in seeding out new business initiatives at our First Nation.

In the end, what we learned in our research for our case studies is that Lac Seul people are "hungry for learning". They are actively engaged in the search to find business "models" that are successful because they "fit" our culture. The results acquired by the Research Team suggest that greater awareness concerning the persistence and continuing influence of our livelihood customs cannot help but benefit our enterprise efforts. What has often remained as unconscious culturally coded behaviour can, with serious reflection, be put to our economic advantage. It will strengthen our resolve to persevere in our efforts to achieve autonomy concerning our economic affairs.

G. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS - Wemtigoozhi Jigiinisitaawinaang Aniin Anishinaabe Kaazhidebung Anokeewin Kayeh Kaaondaadizit - "The White Man Needs to Recognize Our Authority to Keep Our Way of Work and our Livelihood" - The issue of sovereignty and the economic health of the Lac Seul First Nation

When we speak to the economic future of Lac Seul First Nation people, perhaps the question that our people most often consider is how to balance the local concerns and priorities with the larger economic forces that surround us. What can the meaning of a local economy mean at the end of the twentieth century? Is it perhaps even naive to think that we can preserve certain basic elements of an approach to livelihood that is part of an historical heritage that has come from a very different time than the one we are living in now. Is it even possible to think that the normative conditions of our customary ways of livelihood can be preserved in an economic world that is becoming transformed in a way that even national governments are finding hard to control.

One way that we have thought about our place in the larger economic world during our research process for this study has been the acknowledgement of the extent to which our economic customs have survived through the history of profound change that Lac Seul people have already witnessed. The fact is that up until the present time, as Lac Seul people, we have organized our economic pursuits in distinct ways. We have already demonstrated this in our report through reference to the persistence of our distinct ways of organizing the sustainable allocation and utilization of the economic potential of our Lands.

Our people have held to a system of "resource" allocation where interdependency organized at the local scale remains its defining feature. Lac Seul people still largely accept the principle of nurturing economic arrangements in relation to Land by nurturing reciprocal cooperation in terms of "land use". This is reflected both in the local organization and in the local regulation of what are often numerous sets of overlapping integrated access and stewardship arrangements for single small landscape settings. These arrangements extend to the norms of harvesting and distributing the economic wealth from these settings. Manoomin "management" and harvesting, duck

hunting, tourist guiding for hunting and fishing, trapping, moose hunting, fishing for the household represent only a few of the economic activities that can be carried out by many people in a single setting.

Our economic and Land stewardship norms in relation to our Lands, which are part of a tightly integrated whole, is where Lac Seul First Nation people are most comfortable in pursuing their livelihoods. This is the economic system that we have adapted to fit a whole range of changing circumstances. The core values of this system represent a continuity in terms of our economy from before the "era of the fur trade", through the years when our people experienced the imposition of the discriminatory *Indian Act*, and up to the present time. This achievement must be seen in the context of a history in which we have not been treated with the respect that any society should be shown. The results of this history are reflected in the persistence of our economic customs in the form of our non-participation in the northern Ontario system of "land use" that is being imposed upon us more and more each year.

This places us at an economic watershed. If we divide our economic history into divisions reflecting our ability to practice our economic customs, we can show the challenge that lays ahead of us. Three of these take us to the present and one represents the future. Our economic customs were distinct from those of a comprehensively hierarchical order that characterized what we could call "European civilization" from before we encountered it. We were able to maintain a continuity in terms of our economic customs until relatively recently in spite of a history that has not been kind to us. Beginning near the turn of the century, but especially in the last two generations, we have endured an increasing suppression of our economic customs especially in terms of our livelihood activities on our Lands. In the last thirty years we have been virtually dispossessed of a practical capacity to exercise our economic customs on our Lands. This period of our history has been as difficult for us as any of the others which have preceded it. Lac Seul people have had to go on welfare while non-aboriginals have gone on to reap most of the benefits of the economic potential of our Lands.

In our study, we found that our Elders were especially bitter about this. They are the Lac Seul

people who, as a group, have thought most carefully about the requirements for economic recovery in a way that allows us to make the decisions about what to preserve of our economic customs. The watershed that we have reached in relation to our economy can be stated as follows. Lac Seul people have to be able to provide for themselves economically one way or the other. If we cannot achieve greater authority over our economic lives, especially in relation to our Lands, greater numbers of Lac Seul people will have no choice but to abandon our economic customs and conform to non-aboriginal ways. In terms of the effects of this process on everything from the loss of language to the loss of our capacity to practice our economic customs to the loss of ecological knowledge, it cannot by any measure be said to represent self-directed cultural change.

Even if Lac Seul people do secure greater authority in relation to economic issues, we still face immense economic challenges. No one in the Focus Group discussions that were held for this study denied the implications of the economically disadvantaged position that we now find ourselves in. This applies even to how we feel about ourselves in terms of our economic status. We have to rebuild confidence amongst ourselves in the value of self-initiative in economic affairs. We have to nurture leadership and responsibility amongst our youth in matters of business. We have to overcome the psychological effects of dependency that has accompanied the marginalization of our economic authority.

At the present time, it is almost as if many Lac Seul people are waiting to see what will happen in terms of our economic future. In some ways, we have to accept our culture as a given; we think the way we do about economic issues because it reflects who we are. Some Lac Seul people say that we should just accept the new way of doing things. Change, however, is the result of the interplay of the decisions, efforts and activities of all of our First Nation members as well as the result of the impact of events that occur outside of our lives at Lac Seul. It is easier to change circumstances which determine what we can do economically than to "change our culture" to fit what we have not agreed to and are not comfortable with. The question is what can we do to change the circumstances that prevent us from nurturing the potential that exists within our Anishinaabe culture as we now live it?

The research for this project has indicated that the best potential for Lac Seul people to improve their economic lives is not to abandon cultural norms that are part and parcel of our lives and which we are comfortable with. Rather, the best potential for us is to do something about the circumstances that prevent us from pursuing our livelihood activities in accordance with our culture.

Invariably, this leads to the issues of authority and jurisdiction. Some of the Lac Seul Elders were constantly emphatic about this in our research. At times they went so far as to use terms such as "That's bullshit" when they heard of the positions of non-aboriginal officials that the decisions of their governments regarding the "management" of our Lands were not responsible for our economic loss on them. They would go on to cite example after example of government actions which had direct negative impacts on our economic lives. Their view that the politics of suppression must be ended so that the energy which can lead to our economic recovery can be released was shared by all Lac Seul members who participated in our research.

What is to be done on this matter? The easy answer is to state that non-aboriginal governments in Canada must recognize that we, as First Nation people must be able to exercise a reasonable degree of autonomy over our economic lives. The more difficult question relates to how this is to be done. The most significant economic potential at the present time for Lac Seul First Nation people lies in the economic potential of the abundance of our Lands and releasing the energy of our livelihood customs relating to Land. The abundance of our Lands and our knowledge of them represent opportunities that could be transformed into economic benefits for Lac Seul people. This is especially true given our relative geographical isolation. This abundance could provide the basis for generating wealth that could then replace social transfer payments in providing for a range of service oriented economic opportunities.

It was not our intention, in preparing this report, to set out detailed proposals on the matter of Lands and jurisdiction. As we noted earlier, the Lac Seul First Nation has already submitted comprehensive proposals on the issue to the Government of Ontario. We are still awaiting a response even with respect to establishing preliminary discussions regarding the merits of our

proposals. We can, however, set out some ideas which we believe could be effectively used to frame federal and provincial approaches aimed at achieving practical results on equitably distributing the potential economic abundance of our Lands.

Before we do this, we want to first note that lofty statements of principles on the part of non-aboriginal governments on the matter of First Nation authority will not, at the end of the day, result in economic improvement for us. Consider the Statement of Political Relationship entered into between the Government of Ontario and representatives of First Nations organizations that was signed in 1990. This statement recognized the inherent First Nation right of self-government. Yet, it has made no difference with respect to substantive jurisdictional problems relating to the issue that concerns us most - Land. Lac Seul First Nation people now usually look back on the impact of the Statement of Political Relationship with little else but cynicism.

It is also worth noting that, in the second half of the 1980's, the Government of Ontario gave brief consideration to the idea of geographical economic buffer zones for First Nations in the northern regions of the province. This type of approach may not be the best way to achieve a living economic pluralism in Northern Ontario.

The best way to approach achieving a more equitable sharing of the abundance of our Lands might be to consider negotiating practical "without prejudice" access arrangements to Lands on the following basis:

1. There are certain economic opportunities regarding our Lands where Lac Seul people have both the aspiration and the expertise to establish economic projects immediately;
2. These economic opportunities, such as the establishment of new Manoomin fields and the revitalization of existing ones stand the best chance of success over the long term if they are pursued in accordance with our economic customs. This is because the maintenance of abundance of these "resources" is knowledge intensive. Lac Seul people possess this knowledge and the capacity to apply it

effectively in accordance with our "resource management" customs. This requires long term security of access that reflects our customs. This is because, if we are to build on the economic potential of Manoomin for example, it requires that different Lac Seul members who have the knowledge, ability and commitment to contribute to creating economic successes with "the resource" are able to balance their customary economic interests with each other. That their economic interests do not conform to the economic values that lie behind MNR wild rice development regulations was confirmed in numerous statements made during the Focus Group Discussions for this research. The fact that not a single instance of a Lac Seul First Nation member acquiring a wild rice harvest licence from the MNR was brought to the attention of the Lac Seul Research Team. The only data we were able to obtain on this matter consisted of instances of customary access to Manoomin being lost when the MNR issued wild rice harvest licences to non-aboriginal people;

- 3 In all fairness, our historical relationships to these resources and our long term historical contribution in relation to nurturing their abundance calls for the recognition not only of our specialized knowledge of them but also of our customary access arrangements that govern our livelihood activities in relation to them;
4. Entering into these practical arrangements would mean affirming the effectiveness of establishing a workable pluralism in terms of access to resources and stewardship responsibility in relation to them. It would mean that we, as Lac Seul people, could renew customary access arrangements with respect to creating wealth throughout our customary Lands. We would not be limited to operating within a "buffer zone" on a small portion of our Lands. Instead, securing equitable access to the wealth of our Lands would mean us having the ability to nurture their economic potential in livelihood pursuits that we are comfortable with. This would involve balancing economic interests for different "resources"

amongst different "users" on the same Lands. It would, however, give Lac Seul people the practical capacity to pursue economic projects that are feasible in terms of our economic customs;

5. The foregoing does not mean that, as Lac Seul First Nation people, we would forsake our claim as the primary stewards and keepers of our ancestral Lands. The recognition of this authority and responsibility cannot be separated from an interpretation of our treaty relationship with the Government of Canada as our people have always understood its spirit and intent. The negotiation of practical - even if interim - arrangements affirming customary access arrangements of our people to Land in areas with significant economic potential could be complementary to a treaty renewal process. In effect, they would provide opportunities for our people to act now to provide for their livelihoods in a northern region in a manner that is culturally appropriate.

With enough determination, non-aboriginal governments could work with the Lac Seul First Nation people to establish a framework that would provide for equitable economic opportunities for us. Clearly, there is more than enough evidence that the status quo is not working for us. In this study, we have demonstrated why the status quo is not working from the perspective of our culture. It is also becoming increasingly clear that the current system of social assistance transfers cannot be expanded further to any significant degree. Non-aboriginal governments themselves now have a serious stake in supporting economically healthy First Nation communities. Resolving the issues involved will not be accomplished without these governments coming to grips with the cultural realities that they embody together with us as the first peoples of Canada.

Finally, there are our responsibilities, as First Nation people, regarding the issue of economy. We realize that we cannot wait around for other governments to act for us. We have to be totally confident in our responsibilities to assert our economic interests and act on them. No one else will do this for us. Whether it relates to mobilizing the small savings of our people in ways that

promote responsibility, leadership and initiative or staking our economic claims on our Lands, we have to act with increasing determination and confidence. Whether it relates to preserving our intellectual heritage and its economic potential or overcoming political problems in our First Nation that inhibit our economic recovery, we have to persist in our convictions of the value of our cultural heritage. In the past, people from outside our First Nation were not even aware when our economic heritage was stripped from us by unilateral legislative, regulatory or even administrative action and handed over to others for their economic benefit. We cannot allow this to happen any longer. There are pressing issues of great economic significance that we must deal with by our sole initiative. Our research revealed that Lac Seul people are increasingly committed to this work.

Lac Seul people also know that they are living in a world where change must be accepted as a given. Some have wondered whether we can ever "catch up". Perhaps it is not even worthwhile to frame the economic problems we face in this way. Perhaps our real task now is to stand our economic ground.

APPENDIX A:

A Copy of the First Brochure for Sam's Lodge and Outposts

APPENDIX B:

Brochure: Mahkwa Outfitters Resort

APPENDIX C:
Ontario Aboriginal Economic Development Program -
Business Plan Application Guide (1993)

APPENDIX D
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November 15, 1994

Roger Bull
Councillor
Lac Seul First Nation #28
General Delivery
LAC SEUL, Ontario
POV 2A0

Dear Mr. Bull:

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your community economy study, and to thank you very much for completing it.

We are very pleased to have it in hand now, for it makes an important contribution to our understanding of the issues with respect to economic development in communities such as yours.

I expect to be sending the document out to three external reviewers, and when we have their comments, I will write again with respect to any final revisions. In the meantime, I will make arrangements to have some money sent your way under the terms of the research contract.

Yours sincerely,

Fred Wien

Fred Wien
Deputy Director of Research

c.c. Ms. Rena Southwind
Mr. Andrew Chapeskie