**Chapter Outline**

to accompany

*Indigenous Peoples within Canada: A Concise History*, Fifth Edition

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**Chapter 16: Development Heads North**

Development in Canada’s North took place at a slower pace than in the rest of the country. This was partly because the area was not considered suitable for non-Indigenous settlement. However, that did not mean zero involvement in the North by southerners. For example, with the greater ease of transportation after the development of railway, the appearance of trappers and prospectors began to grow. In the western Arctic, the whaling industry also brought hundreds of newcomers. At first, the impact on the Inuit was not significant and there were benefits to the trade that took place with the trappers and non-Indigenous whalers. However, as the natural resources became over-exploited, the Inuit suffered destruction to their way of life. One of the ways the government responded to this situation was to implement Inuit relocations. At first, these were coordinated with the fur trade; however, the selections were made by the government and typically resulted in failure, with the Inuit suffering starvation, disease and death in the process of being shuttled back and forth.

A government presence was established with the arrival of the North-West Mounted Police in 1895, and that same year, the Yukon was organized into a district, and later into a territory. However, the government refused to sign treaties until the Klondike Gold Rush first brought large numbers of Whites to the North, which caused Indigenous Peoples to act and refuse passage to anyone through their territory. In negotiating Treaty Eight, Indigenous Peoples’ greatest concern was the protection of their hunting and fishing rights. The government’s position on the treaty was that it had extinguished Aboriginal title and could regulate other rights considered to be “usufructuary”. However, Indigenous Peoples disagreed with the idea of transferring land ownership or any infringement on their rights to hunt and trap. To clear railway right-of-way in northern Ontario, Treaty Nine (sometimes called the James Bay Treaty) was finally negotiated from 1905 to 1906, and to clear land title for the province of Saskatchewan, Treaty Ten was signed in 1906. Like Treaty Eight, First Nations and Métis agreed to sign Treaty Eleven in 1921 only after being assured of their freedom to hunt, trap and fish.

The relative isolation of the Inuit was most greatly affected by the completion of the Alaska highway in 1945. However, the Inuit continued to live mostly as they had in the past until the issue of jurisdiction between the federal government and the provinces came to the forefront in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Quebec took the federal government to court to determine who was responsible both administratively and financially for the Inuit. In 1939, the Supreme Court of Canada determined that the Inuit were a federal responsibility. This decision would have lasting effects.

After the close of World War II, the strategic importance of the Arctic, especially the role of the weather stations and the Distance Early Warning (DEW) system radar line built above the Arctic Circle, caused the government to re-evaluate the land and its people. As a strategy to try to demonstrate Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, the decision was made to relocate a number of Quebec Inuit to the High Arctic where game resources were untouched. The game resources were not what the Inuit were used to and as they saw it, they were subjects of a social and political experiment that was destined to fail.

The 1990s saw the creation of a third Canadian territory called Nunavut, created from the eastern portion of the Northwest Territories. This new territory was the result of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act and provides the Inuit with a form of self-government and fee simple title to some 350,000 km2 in lands. There were initial challenges, such as the training of lawyers and administrators as well as housing shortages, poverty, unemployment, and high rates of suicide. However, it now appears that the Nunavut Economic Development Strategy is bringing greater benefits. The plan has been updated and there are now several new partnerships involved. Additionally, visits by luxury cruise ships passing through the Northwest Passage have created thousands of dollars in business for Indigenous artists throughout Nunavut and surrounding territories.