

# opinions

## An outsider on the inside

Do you wonder what it feels like to live in Davis Inlet as a non-native? Do you feel sorry for the teachers who have recently returned to the Labrador island village? Do you fear for the court party that must, eventually, return to the Innu community?

As a non-native who has just finished a three year term as Recreation Director in a small Inuit community in the Northwest Territories, I can offer you some clues towards obtaining the answers to these questions.

Firstly, if you are an "outsider" working in the community, presumably you are needed, and (if you're fortunate) wanted. Otherwise, you would be somewhere else. I have nothing against remote indigenous settlements, (in fact I was proud to call Gjoa Haven my home and most of my closest friends are so-called "locals") but they are not known to be rendezvous sites for the consumer

or traveller at large. Whatever the case may be that sends you off to work in a community such as this (i.e., need the job, want cross-cultural experiences like snowmobiling or covet large fish), you are there for a purpose.

If your presence has been requested by the municipality or band, you can pretty much do your job without worry. If that purpose or "need" is dictated by the province (or territory), you will have to walk—and sometimes create—a fine line between what is fulfilling your role, and what is that which the settlement truly requires or wants.

The "question" of main concern is then how much can the province impose of their legislations and laws on the daily lives of First Nations people. How far can they push the justice, education and social norms of "white Canada" into a populace of

great cultural and societal distinction?

To some, the answer to the above questions is "all the way". After all, the community residents are extensive recipients of both provincial and federal social programs, which are funded by all taxpayers. But clearly, even the least sympathetic non-native Canadian understands that the indigenous people demand and deserve lifestyles and opinions that differ from convention. To cut off financial assistance because people want to play an active role in their lives is not only prejudiced, but alludes to shirking an obligation.

Let us not forget the wrongs that the Canadian government committed decades ago. They are presently attempting to rectify the abominable acts of past governments (i.e.,

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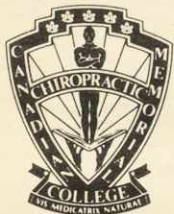
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