

INVENTORY OF TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF
ABORIGINAL SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH

BY

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1. Introduction

I have been developing my research program in Aboriginal Social Policy Research for the past twenty-five years. The quarter-of-a-century point seems appropriate to do an inventory, which is the purpose of this paper.

My most recent research topics have involved a set of related research issues: forecasting the future of Aboriginal people, the processes whereby Aboriginal people are becoming further integrated into the economic mainstream, and the individual economic incentives they face in so doing. The research issues associated with the processes of economic integration are distinct from the issues associated with the incentives: in fact, the incentives would be irrelevant without the processes but the processes would be irrelevant without the incentives. Processes and incentives are both crucial for forecasting the future of Aboriginal people as well as the future of our province.

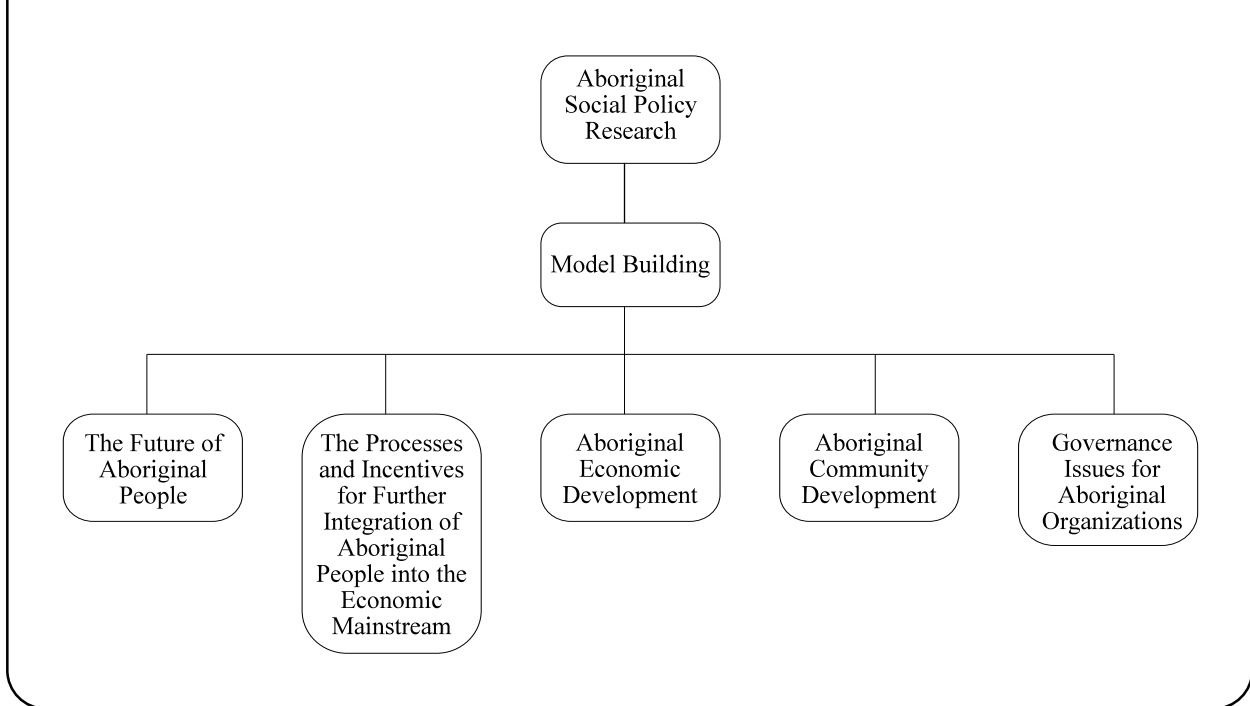
Although much of my Aboriginal social policy research has focused on Saskatchewan, it has extended to the remainder of the Canadian prairies as well as the Arctic—where the relative size of the Aboriginal population is the largest in Canada.

My approach to Aboriginal social policy research is shown schematically in Figure 1. I have had thirty publications thus far in my career, and over a quarter of them—seven—have been in Aboriginal Social Policy Research. In addition, I have done thirty technical reports and over half—seventeen—are in this area. The remainder of this section will refer to the categories of research shown in Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 1, my analytic methodology proceeds by building a macroeconometric model of the economy being studied. Utilizing this methodology, in Canada I have constructed macroeconometric models of:

- Saskatchewan—the major revisions are documented in Howe (1995, 1985 and 1982), but the model is maintained on an ongoing basis;
- Nunavut—the major revisions are documented in Stabler and Howe (2000a and 1998b) though another major revision is underway;
- Alberta—documented in Howe and Lendsay (1999); and

Figure 1. The Aboriginal Social Policy Research of Professor Eric Howe



- The Northwest Territories—documented in Howe and Stabler (1990) and Stabler, Howe and Tolley (1988).

After building a macroeconometric model, part of my research program involves forecasting the future of Aboriginal People. That has been done in Lendsay, Painter and Howe (2000, 1997a and 1997b), Lendsay, Howe and Hansellman (1999), and Stabler and Howe (1991 and 1990). Most recently, it was done in Howe (2006a and 2006b).

Another research area is the analysis of the processes whereby Aboriginal people are further integrated into the economic mainstream, and the incentives they face in doing so. There are two principal processes: education and entrepreneurship. Although only one paper—Howe (2004)—is focused on this single issue, many of the others cited in this report are related. For example, Howe (2006a) assesses both processes and incentives in forecasting the future of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan and the future of our province.

The process of Aboriginal economic development can focus on particular industries or particular projects. The analysis in Stabler, Tolley and Howe (1990) analyzes Aboriginal participation in the fur industry in the Northwest Territories. At the project level, I have done several papers on the economics of the proposed deep-water port to be built at the end of Bathurst Inlet together with roads out from the port and the mining projects which this transportation infrastructure would allow, Howe (2002) and Stabler and Howe (2000b and 1998a).

The analysis of Aboriginal community development must take account of the myriad of factors which influence the life and health of communities. I have done two papers analyzing the future of Aboriginal people in Prince Albert, Howe (2006c and 2005).

Finally Howe (2003) considers issues in Aboriginal governance. Much further work in that area is anticipated in the future, as Aboriginal organizations are becoming increasingly accountable for their activities and expenditures.

2. The Use of Technical Reports

Many of the papers discussed in this report are technical reports, done for particular governments, NGO's and businesses. Partly my use of technical reports reflects the nature of Aboriginal social policy research which sometimes necessarily has a very tight focus. For example, the project for a deep-water port in Bathurst Inlet, discussed above, is important in the process of Aboriginal economic development because of the training, employment, economic activity, and government revenue it will provide. (The importance of the work for Aboriginal economic development is reflected in the fact that much of the work is done for the Kitikmeot Inuit Association.) Although my analyses of the Bathurst project is being extensively used in the various assessments of that project, it is unlikely to ever be publishable in a peer-reviewed journal because the focus is too tightly on the one project. Another reason for my use of technical reports is due to the nature of my conclusions. In my research, I tend to conclude that appropriate, modestly funded government policies will bring about fairly positive outcomes in the medium-to-long run. Thus my conclusions tend to annoy neoconservative referees because of my stress on the importance of government policies. But my conclusions also tend to annoy those at the other

end of the political spectrum because I tend to reach positive conclusions without extravagantly expensive government programs.

My use of technical reports will become more pronounced if I succeed in becoming more involved in governance issues applied to Aboriginal organizations. The only paper I have done in the area thus far is Howe (2003), which is an analysis of the funding formulae used by Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations in allocations to Saskatchewan's bands. It is extraordinary that they brought in an academic to assess their allocation formulae. They would not have done so if they thought that there was the slightest chance that the academic analysis would provide ammunition for their critics.

Another use of technical reports—and example of their importance—is illustrated by Howe (2006b). It was part of supporting documentation for an application to the CRTC for a license for an aboriginal radio station for Saskatoon. With that station, Saskatoon would become the first CMA in Canada to have a radio station with an Aboriginal demographic target.

3. Presentations at Conferences

Because of the social significance of Aboriginal issues, I continue to have more opportunities to make presentations at conferences on Aboriginal issues than either time or my travel budget permits. In the past twelve months, my public lectures in the area of Aboriginal Social Policy have included: the plenary session of the annual meeting of the Aboriginal Government Employees Network; the annual meeting of the Community Foundations of Canada; the annual meeting of the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists; and a public forum of the Saskatchewan Institute on Public Policy which was convened to specifically consider the issues addressed in Howe (2006a).

4. Influence on Public Policy

The nature of the political process can make it extremely difficult to document influence on public policy. However, I have had ongoing discussions of Aboriginal public policy issues with a number of policy makers. Lendsay, Painter and Howe (1997a) was published by the

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations at a time when Aboriginal labour market conditions were particularly bleak and provincial Aboriginal policies were in particular flux. FSIN picked a red binding for publication. The analysis was referred to so frequently in public policy discussions, that it was simply referred to as the “Red Book.”

Some of my confidence in the political impact of my Aboriginal social policy research is due to my involvement in a variety of other social policy questions in Saskatchewan and Canada. It has been my privilege to make contributions to the determination of social policy in Saskatchewan for the Blakney, Devine, Romanow, and Calvert governments on a variety of issues including potash (Blakney), oil upgrading (Devine), education (Romanow) and the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility agreement (Calvert), in addition to Aboriginal social policy. At the provincial level, I make contributions to different sides of the political spectrum: for example, my work is discussed in the current policy paper of the Saskatchewan Party, *Pride with Purpose* released in February of 2007.¹ At the national level, I have been involved in a number of social policy issues for several governments and for several federal departments, especially involving the arctic.

When the Honourable Mary Ellen Turpel-Laffond presented the Law Foundation of Saskatchewan lecture in September of 2006, my research conclusions made up a significant proportion of her talk.²

5. Teaching and Research Supervision

The Department of Economics at the University of Saskatchewan—due to resource constraints—does not have a course in Aboriginal Social Policy Research; neither at the graduate or the undergraduate levels. That is unfortunate due to the importance of Aboriginal issues. However, almost half of my graduate research supervision is in the area. For example, I was on

¹*Pride with Purpose* can be found on the web at
www.saskparty.com/assets/pdf/SaskatchewanPartyPolicyBook.pdf

²That talk can be found on the web at
http://www.uregina.ca/sipp/documents/pdf/BN16_Lafond_2.pdf

the committee of Cook (2003), which analyzed the policy implications of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. I supervised Vanstone (2005) in her analysis of Aboriginal education, Ceaser (2006) and Bly (2003) in their analyses of the Aboriginal labour market. I supervised Sarkar (2006) in his analysis of Aboriginal entrepreneurship. I set up a special Ph.D. program for a student in Aboriginal economic development, only to have her find it impossible to manage the logistics of the program. (Unfortunately, due to departmental resource constraints, she had to go elsewhere for some of her courses, which family responsibilities did not permit.)

Cumulatively, these graduate students' analyses are becoming an important store of knowledge focused on the situation of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan. And many are finding the conclusions to be counter to their initial beliefs. For example, in Saskatchewan as well as elsewhere in North America, Aboriginal women receive the highest financial rate of return to postsecondary education for any sex and ethnic group. (Contributing to an explanation of why Aboriginal females outnumber Aboriginal males in the student body at the University of Saskatchewan.) Discovering that this is true—and exploring the reasons why—is both fascinating and extraordinarily important for the future of our province. Or discovering that there is an inverse U relationship between education and entrepreneurship among Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan (so increased education increases entrepreneurship up to a point but decreases thereafter) though probably not elsewhere in Canada. Again, the reasons are fascinating and have important implications for the future of our province.

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Vanstone, J.: *Returns to Education in Canada*. Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirement for a Masters Degree, University of Saskatchewan, 2005.

Appendix:
***Curriculum Vitae* for Eric Howe**

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FIELDS OF INTEREST

Aboriginal Social Policy Research
Individual Charitable Giving
Economic Forecasting
Economic Modeling
Microeconomic Theory

PUBLICATIONS

Articles in Refereed Journals

E.C. Howe: "Saskatchewan with an Aboriginal Majority: Education and Entrepreneurship," *Public Policy Paper # 44*, Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy, September 2006, ISBN 0-7731-0582-4.

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E. C. Howe: *Measuring the Macroeconomic Impacts of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan*. Prepared for the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, 1981.

POSITIONS HELD

Professor, 1991-present
University of Saskatchewan

Associate Professor, 1984-1991
University of Saskatchewan

Visiting Assistant Professor, 1982-1983
University of Maryland

Assistant Professor, 1979-1984
University of Saskatchewan

Mathematical Economist, 1978
Applied Mathematics Division, U.S. National Bureau of Standards

Economist, 1974-1976
Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

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TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Undergraduate

Advanced Microeconomic Theory
Econometrics
Economic Forecasting
Game Theory
General Equilibrium and Welfare Economics
Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory
Intermediate Microeconomic Theory
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Mathematical Economics
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Graduate

Economic Forecasting
Microeconomic Theory

TEACHING AWARDS

Excellence in Teaching Economics

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