

Background Summary of JBNQA and NEQA Implementation

The process of implementing the JBNQA and the NEQA has taken longer and has become more complex than anticipated.

In 1981, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development urged the federal government to address outstanding issues related to the JBNQA. After a departmental report, the Tait Report, was submitted in 1982, the federal government introduced a series of measures to address JBNQA implementation-related problems.

In June 1986, the federal Cabinet approved a process for fulfilling government obligations under the JBNQA and the NEQA. A federal negotiator, Mr. Andrew Croll, was appointed in order to direct this process.

In September 1990, the federal government signed the JBNQA Implementation Agreement with the Inuit and the NEQA Implementation Agreement with the Naskapi Band of Quebec. These agreements released the federal government from certain obligations under the JBNQA and NEQA. In return, the federal government paid a one-time grant of \$22.8 million to the Inuit and \$1.7 million to the Naskapi. The government made other commitments to these communities. Many activities have been launched within the framework of the agreements. Various working groups and procedures have been established, including procedures for settling disputes and the establishment of a JBNQA Implementation Forum with the Inuit. In 1990, the Department established the James Bay Implementation Office.

Discussions between the federal government and the James Bay Cree Nation regarding JBNQA implementation continued. In May 1992, the federal government signed an agreement providing for the

building of a village for the Oujé-Bougoumou Cree and the setting up of a fund for the community's economic and social development. Having agreed that the Cree-Canada relationship was in need of rejuvenation and reform, the Government of Canada and the Cree Nation entered into a set of discussions and negotiations to renew and define this relationship and pursue the process of meeting their respective responsibilities under the JBNQA, the Constitution and the laws of Canada. To facilitate discussions between the federal ministers and the leaders of the James Bay Cree Nation in the context of these shared objectives, the parties agreed to establish a Round Table, bringing together the federal ministers concerned and the leaders of the James Bay Cree Nation. The Cree-Canada Round Table came into existence in 1998. Chief negotiator for the Crees was then Dr. Ted Moses. In 1999-2000, Dr. Moses was elected Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees (of Quebec), and his former responsibilities as chief negotiator were assumed by Bill Namagoose.

Since the signing of the JBNQA and the NEQA, several federal departments and agencies have undertaken to meet the federal government's obligations under the agreements. Most of them also provide, within their respective mandates, funding for government programs to which the beneficiaries have continued access.

The signing of the agreements has brought about many changes in the role and jurisdiction of the federal government and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development with respect to the Cree, Inuit and Naskapi.