

**UNIVERSITY OF REGINA  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS  
SEMINAR**

**SPEAKER:** Frances Widdowson  
York University

**DATE:** Monday, February 23, 2004

**TIME:** 3:30 p.m.

**PLACE:** CL 410 (Classroom Building)

**TOPIC:** Separate But Unequal: The Political Economy of Aboriginal  
Dependency

**ABSTRACT**

The dependency of Canada's aboriginal population is one of the most distressing political problems in the country today. This continuing deprivation and marginalization generally has been explained under the rubric of "colonization", where it is argued that the expropriation of aboriginal lands by European settlers, the Canadian state's destruction of aboriginal traditions, and a prevalence of racist attitudes have excluded aboriginal peoples from equal participation in the Canadian federation. A neglected explanation, which will be explored in this paper, is how the historical and material requirements of capitalism have influenced these circumstances. It will be argued that when the fur trade dominated development, aboriginal peoples became integral participants. Their involvement did not continue with agricultural development and industrialization, however, because these required much more productive, disciplined and organized forms of labour. Aboriginal participation would have necessitated a radical cultural transformation, but relatively late industrial development in Canada made it more profitable to import surplus European skilled labour than to actively integrate the native population. The analysis in this paper has important implications for the development of public policy in Canada, since it indicates that aboriginal dependency cannot be addressed through the revitalization of native traditions proposed in current land claims and self-government initiatives. Instead, the economic and political changes brought about by capitalism require transitional programs to facilitate aboriginal participation in a much larger, more productive and complex economy and society.

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!**