

A POLICY PROPOSAL TO THE NUNATSIAVUT GOVERNMENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LABRADOR INUIT-SPECIFIC TOOLKIT FOR POTENTIAL ENTREPRENEURS

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Jane Glassco Northern Fellow

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WALTER & DUNCAN
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JANE GLASSCO
NORTHERN FELLOWSHIP

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The Jane Glassco Northern Fellowship is a policy and leadership development program that recognizes leadership potential among young northern Canadians who want to address the emerging policy challenges facing the North. The two year long program is built around four regional gatherings and offers skills training, mentorship and networking opportunities. Through self-directed learning, group work and the collective sharing of knowledge, Fellows will foster a deeper understanding of important contemporary northern issues, and develop the skills and confidence to better articulate and share their ideas and policy research publicly. The Fellowship is intended for young northerners between 25 and 35 years of age, who want to build a strong North that benefits all northerners. Through the Fellowship, we hope to foster a bond among the Fellows that will endure throughout their professional lives and support a pan-northern network.

Mitchell White

Jane Glassco Northern Fellow

A beneficiary of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims agreement, Mitchell White was born and raised in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador. It wasn't until he moved to Nain, Labrador, now the administrative capital of Nunatsiavut, for high school that Mitchell would discover his passion for his Inuit roots and journalism. Mitchell began working as a radio assistant with the OKâlaKatiget Society, an organization dedicated to producing quality Radio and Television programming in the Labrador Inuktitut dialect, the summer after graduating from high school. He was eventually hired as a full-time radio producer when the summer student position ended. In order to sharpen his journalistic skills, Mitchell decided to attend the College of the North Atlantic's journalism program in Stephenville, Newfoundland and eventually returned to the OKâlaKatiget Society as program director. He filled that post for two years before deciding to continue his education at Carleton University where he is currently completing his second year of a double major in communications and political science while working part-time as a junior communications officer with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

Apart from his professional endeavours, Mitchell has also been very active in volunteering in his community and beyond. Notably, he served as the acting president of the Rising Youth Council of Nunatsiavut; a councilor for the Nain Inuit Community Government (the youngest to do so in the municipal government's



history); and sat on the Aboriginal People's Television Network's board of directors.

Mitchell has also traveled extensively including entering both the Arctic and Antarctic Circles. A Students on Ice Expedition saw him travel to the bottom of the globe, while a summer spent as a Zodiac driver with Cruise North Expeditions allowed Mitchell to travel to all corners of the Arctic. The 26-year-old is now excited to be given the opportunity to address some of the issues in the north that he proudly calls home.

Fellow Focus

During his time with the fellowship, Mitchell will examine the obstacles faced by northern entrepreneurs in starting and maintaining small businesses. Having lived in Nain for most of his life, he has witnessed firsthand the lack of basic consumer services that exist in his community. Mitchell hopes to address some of the issues potential and current entrepreneurs face both within Nain and across the North.

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Nain, Labrador

Rita-Ann Dicker

Nain serves as the administrative capital of the Nunatsiavut Government, a body established through the signing of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement in 2005. The historic signing returned a substantial amount of governing power to the Inuit of Labrador while offering limitless potential and opportunities.

Located on Labrador's north coast, Nain is not only the most northern community in Nunatsiavut, it is also the most northern in all of Labrador. This position allows it to serve as the gateway to the Torngat Mountains National Park, established in 2008 as Canada's

42nd national park. Each summer sees the park and its seasonal base camp and research station host hordes of tourists and researchers, all eager to explore and learn more about the land and wildlife that make up what has been referred to as one of the world's last frontiers.

To the south of the community you have the Voisey's Bay nickel mine, one of the largest producers of the mineral on the planet and a modest source of employment for Nain and the other Nunatsiavut communities, both through the operation of the mine and the other support services required to successfully carry out production. Benefits to the

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mine's surrounding communities come not only in the form of employment, but also through the Voisey's Bay Impacts and Benefits Agreement, a document that provides many benefits, including direct financial and preferential hiring, to Labrador Inuit. A percentage of the site's profits is provided to the Tassiujatsoak Trust, a body responsible for distributing the funds to individuals and community groups with projects aimed at benefiting Nunatsiavut communities and their residents.

As the administrative centre for the Nunatsiavut Government, the community houses the majority of the government's staff, including, but not limited to, the Torngasok Cultural Centre, which serves as, among other things, the leading archive and production centre for Labrador Inuit culture, important work that will be more easily conducted and facilitated once the construction of the centre's new state-of-the-art facility is completed.

Apart from those provided by the mine, the local fish processing plant and the administration of the Nunatsiavut Government, employment opportunities, much like those in the rest of Nunatsiavut, are very scarce. According to Statistics Canada,¹ Nunatsiavut has the lowest employment rate of any of the four Inuit regions at 45.8 per cent. The unemployment rate is also the highest of any of the regions at 33.6 per cent, much

higher than the 2006 national average of 19 per cent. Nunatsiavut's median income was the second lowest, above only Nunavut, of the four Inuit regions in 2000 at \$16,576, significantly lower than the Canadian average of \$60,047. On a positive note, the region had experienced the highest growth in median incomes of any of the regions, \$3,000, between 2000 and 2006.

Other sources of limited employment include the OKalaKatiget Society, a registered charity stationed in the community, which also plays a role in the preservation and production of Labrador Inuit culture through television and radio production.

The Nain research centre is leading the way in carrying out meaningful research for both the community and the region and also serves as a state-of-the-art facility for researchers, both local and those from outside.

Nain's airport receives flights six days a week and their wharf serves as a docking point for ferries, cargo ships, recreational vessels and the occasional cruise ship. The community of around 1200 people also houses two schools, an arena with an ice hockey rink, and a multi-purpose centre that is set to open its doors in the near future. Another testament to the community's continued growth is the recent relocation of the community's fresh water supply, a measure required to address the

¹ Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 97-558-XIE (Ottawa: Minister of Industry, 2008), 19.

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community's continued expansion. For everything the community has to offer, both to its own residents and to visitors, there is one thing you cannot get in Nain: a haircut.

A hairdressing service is just one among many of the basic consumer services lacking in the growing community. With all of the potential Nain has to offer, a prospect that continues to increase, it is not difficult to question why these services do not exist. The problem is not only isolated to Nain, but can be found in varying levels within all of the Nunatsiavut communities. Why are residents of these communities forced to meet their basic consumer needs through outside sources? The answer is simple: nobody in the community has taken it upon themselves to address these gaps and provide these services. This answer naturally leads to another question: why haven't people seized the opportunity to provide these services through the creation of small businesses and enterprises, an action that would provide numerous benefits to the community and its residents through contributions to the local economy, the provision of basic consumer services, employment, and all of the benefits that stem from these results, such as a higher quality of life and increase in the community's leisure and recreational activities? The provision of such services would also address the levels of isolation felt in the communities

and reduce the dependence on outside service providers while keeping profits and revenue in the communities. The answer to that last question is a little more difficult.

A January 2014 *Globe and Mail* article reports that "independent companies are crucial to the North's economy. While almost 3,300 small businesses are active across the three territories, Statistics Canada says, there are only about 60 medium-sized and large ones."²

Molly Shiwak has devoted a large part of her career to assisting in the creation of entrepreneurs and the development of small businesses in her community. Her involvement in the area began as the community development officer with the Town of Nain, the community's municipal government that became the Nain Inuit Community Government when it came under the jurisdiction of the Nunatsiavut Government in 2005. Among Shiwak's duties in that position were assisting potential entrepreneurs in the community with writing business plans, helping them identify and access funding opportunities and providing other general information related to the creation of small businesses. Although those duties were included in her job, they did not take up much of Shiwak's workday:

Trying to start a small business along the north coast was really challenging. So basically what would happen is an

² Richard Blackwell, "Arctic angst: Meet five small businesses striving for success in the Far North," *The Globe and Mail*. January 17, 2014.

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individual might come into my office and just have an idea, but it would be up to that person to continue on with that idea. I would try to help them as much as I could in regards to the funding agencies, how it works, what you need to do.³

These services were delivered by Shiwak on a case-by-case basis and without an established process. She, like other community development officers throughout Northern Labrador, would receive training each year through a partnership from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Newfoundland and Labrador government. The training would include learning about the different funding opportunities available to potential entrepreneurs and how to access them.

Shiwak began offering her expertise on a regional level in 2008 when she took a position within the Nunatsiavut Government as the Economic Development Officer. Working in this capacity allowed Shiwak to gain a better understanding of this issues faced by potential entrepreneurs not only in Nain, but across the region:

It's an isolated community, Nain is, as well as the other four Inuit communities on the NC, so the challenge of transportation and it's just seasonal transportation. If you had a standalone building in Nain,

it would be a high cost for electricity or diesel. You have that incurring every month. There's a challenge of land in the community as well, there's not a lot of commercial land available. It's mostly residential. If you start a business today, you would run into that challenge and then most likely it would have to be started from your home.⁴

Even with those challenges, Shiwak does believe there is potential for the creation of small businesses:

There are probably enough people in the community to provide those services, but who out of that group of people is willing to start up that small business and take the risk of starting it and then maybe a year down the road or two years down the road say 'the cost of letting is too high,' 'the transportation cost is too extreme.' There's always that forecast in that individual's mind as to 'can I get this established? Will it work? Will the community always want to be involved in my business?' You do have to do your homework in order to realize the amount of work that goes into starting up a small business. You have to make sure the community wants to be involved in that business.⁵

Nain resident Tracy Denniston can attest to the challenges involved in starting and maintaining a business in her community.

³ Molly Shiwak (Economic Development Officer, Nunatsiavut Government), interview by the author, October 29, 2014.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

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The seasoned entrepreneur is in the process of starting up her second business venture in the community. Having previously operated a gift shop and salon out of her home before leaving the community to pursue her education, Denniston is now in the process of starting up her own electronics business. She has been approaching her second business venture with a number of lessons gathered from her first foray into the business world:

You learn from what you've done from the past and I really learned that you have to put a lot of time into your business, which I know is going to happen in this one. But at the same time, if it's something that you really enjoy doing, you can do well with it if you want to. I was working full time at the time, so everything that I made, I would put back into the business.⁶

Although she has a lot more confidence going into her second business venture, both with the process and the products and services she will offer, Denniston still has a number of insecurities as she enters the local market for a second time, notions she believe are common in the community and may contribute to the low number of new entrepreneurs:

I think fear of not knowing how to do stuff. When I had my first business, I

had a lot of help doing my business plan because it takes a lot of time and you have to be able to know how to access the services that can help doing this stuff. Now that I've gone to school and received my education, the majority of my business plan I'm doing myself. There are things I feel more comfortable doing myself and some people aren't at that point where they feel they're comfortable. You have to have the confidence, you have to have a positive attitude and believe this is going to work. You have to do a lot of market research and check to see if there is a need.⁷

Denniston, like her fellow resident and Economic Development Officer, Molly Shiwak, believes there are many opportunities in the community for the creation of small businesses. They both believe it is just a matter of people taking it upon themselves to address and fill those gaps.

Given her increased proficiency in business startup, Denniston has not sought outside resources in the development of her business plan or in her search for potential funders. But she is aware of the resources that do exist through organizations such as the Nunatsiavut Business Development Centre, an entity she believes could serve as an invaluable resource for those who seek it.

⁶ Tracy Denniston (Nain entrepreneur), interview by the author, October 30, 2014.

⁷ Ibid.

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Molly Shiwak's latest position sees her operating the Nunatsiavut Business Development Centre, a division of the regional government that "provides advice to Inuit businesses operating in Labrador, as well as new entrepreneurs wishing to access opportunities related to new business ideas or existing business owners who wish to expand on their already established business"⁸. The centre also "provides opportunities for companies listed on the Inuit Business Registry with prospects from the Voisey's Bay project; Nunatsiavut Government projects, and other developments."⁹

The centre is somewhat of a revival of the Nunatsiavut Business Centre Incorporated. That entity opened its doors in 2003 with a mandate to "to provide training, loan funding, and advice to LIA members who wish to start or expand a business." It "administer[ed] a \$5 million repayable loan fund for Inuit businesses seeking work related to Voisey's Bay, provide[ed] information and technology to Inuit entrepreneurs and help[ed] them access other agencies and programs."¹⁰ Created through an impacts and benefits agreement with what was then the Voisey's Bay Nickel Company, the centre had several homes before eventually falling under the jurisdiction of the Nunatsiavut Government's Department of Lands and Natural Resources. The Nunatsiavut Assembly dissolved the centre in the 2011-

12 budget. The centre has since found new life as the Nunatsiavut Business Development Centre and is now operated by the Nunatsiavut Government's Department of Education and Economic Development without a mandate to only serve businesses with a direct focus on servicing the Voisey's Bay mine site.

The Business Development Manager for the Nunatsiavut Government, Brent Denniston, says another difference between the two incarnations of the centre is that the Nunatsiavut Business Development Centre does not offer loans to potential entrepreneurs, but only advice and counselling services to people looking to start their own businesses. The centre does, although, provide grants to cover 75 per cent (up to \$5,000) of the costs associated with creating a business plan, a requirement of potential entrepreneurs he believes serves as the main obstacle in the creation of their new businesses.

We refer them to...agencies. They usually need a business plan to avail of funding. We'll work with them to create the business plan. We won't do it all for them; that will just defeat the purpose. Otherwise they won't learn how to run the business.¹¹

Molly Shiwak, as the Economic Development Officer, is responsible for the delivery of these services. As when she

⁸ Nunatsiavut Government, Nunatsiavut Business Development Centre, accessed February 28, 2015, <http://www.nunatsiavut.com/business/nunatsiavut-business-development-centre/>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Kelly Vodden, *Municipal Service Sharing Case Studies* (Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities, 2005).

¹¹ Brent Denniston (Business Development Manager, Nunatsiavut Government), interview by the author, December 11, 2014.

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delivered similar services on a community level as the community development officer, there is no clearly defined process as to how they are delivered.

Given the absence of a concrete process for advising and assisting potential entrepreneurs in the Nunatsiavut region, I am proposing the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1:

The Nunatsiavut Government design a Labrador Inuit-specific toolkit for potential entrepreneurs that clearly defines the process of creating a business in the unique Nunatsiavut region.

Recommendation 2:

Identify the creation of the toolkit as a goal and objective of the Department of Education and Economic Development's Strategic Economic Plan.

Recommendation 3:

Use the toolkit as the basis for the delivery of the Nunatsiavut Business Development Centre's programs and services to potential entrepreneurs.

Recommendation 4:

Update the toolkit as needed to reflect changes such as changing market conditions and the development of new government and funding agency policies.

Toolkits are “collections of flexible and adaptable educational program resources that target one issue or one audience.”¹² They are created by a wide range of organizations and address an even wider variety of topics.

An excellent example of a toolkit aimed specifically at an aboriginal population is the The Gordon Foundation's *IBA Community Toolkit*, a document “designed for communities negotiating [impacts and benefits] agreements with mining companies. It is written for community negotiators, members of community negotiating teams, and consultants working with Aboriginal communities and organizations.”¹³ The toolkit's goal is “to provide materials tools and resources for communities to help them address the process and content issues relevant to negotiating agreements in Canada.”¹⁴

The document has been widely distributed across Canada and has helped guide aboriginal groups and industry and in negotiating meaningful and fair Impacts and Benefits Agreements. The document was recently updated to reflect “changes in legislation and court decisions which may impact negotiations,”¹⁵ a process that ensures the toolkit reflects the most current reality and one I recommend is carried out with the proposed toolkit as needed.

Another example of a toolkit more closely related to the one being proposed is Government of Ontario's *Aboriginal*

12 Martha C. Monroe, “The Value of a Toolkit,” *Journal of Extension* 38.6 (2000), accessed June 11, 2015, <http://www.joe.org/joe/2000december/tt5.php>.

13 Ginger Gibson and Ciaran O'Faircheallaigh, *IBA Community Toolkit: Negotiation and Implementation of Impact and Benefit Agreements* (Toronto: The Gordon Foundation, 2011).

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

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Business Development Toolkit. This document is “designed to help [aboriginal entrepreneurs] explore the many things you need to think about, research and undertake when starting a business.”¹⁶ In the creation process, the authors state that “if you’re an Aboriginal person thinking about starting or expanding a business, this toolkit has been developed with you in mind. While many helpful guides exist, this document includes considerations that may be of particular interest to you, your family and your community.”¹⁷

As is outlined in the Ontario document, there are many toolkits designed to assist a wide range of audiences. The goal of the toolkit recommended in this proposal would be to tailor it to address the unique challenges and circumstances faced by potential Labrador Inuit entrepreneurs. The toolkits outlined here, and others produced by similar organizations, can serve as excellent resources and reference points in the creation of a Labrador Inuit-specific document. The authors of the aforementioned toolkits could also serve as partners in the creation of the recommended document.

There are many organizations and small business success stories from across the North that can serve as references and examples in the creation of the proposed toolkit. *The Globe and Mail* recently featured an article as part of “The North”, an “investigation of unprecedented

change to the climate, culture and politics of Canada’s last frontier.”¹⁸ The article examines how “The pressures and angst of entrepreneurship run deep in Canada’s Far North, where a host of unique challenges complicate life for small-business operators.”¹⁹ The reporters detail how “logistics are cumbersome, energy costs are sky high, and rents often exceed those in the biggest cities of southern Canada” and “at the same time, the local market is small because of the sparse population, and any attempts to sell goods and services to customers in southern Canada can mean onerous shipping costs.”²⁰

The details contained in this story could have just as well been used for an article about the north coast of Labrador. The region bears many similarities to others across the north and programs and case studies of successful businesses, such as Atuqtuarvik Corp., an investment firm that supports ventures in Nunavut and “ensures that Inuit entrepreneurs are able to get involved in the development of the mineral industry, fisheries and real estate, as well as other small-business ventures – while ensuring that the profits stay in the territory”²¹ and Leelie Enterprises, a company based in Qikiqtarjuaq, Nunavut that “owns a retail store in town, handles fuel delivery, and provides guiding and outfitting services”²² can provide great insight into what has and hasn’t worked in those similar environments.

16 Government of Ontario. Aboriginal Business Development Toolkit, c2011, 5, accessed June 11, 2015, <http://docs.files.ontario.ca/documents/218/2-maa-aboriginal-business-development-toolkit.pdf>

17 Ibid., 5.

18 Blackwell.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

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A rough estimate of the costs associated with producing a Labrador Inuit-specific toolkit was compiled by conducting some brief research into the production costs of similar documents. A startup cost of around \$100,000 is projected, with ongoing costs required for the updating of the document estimated to be around \$20,000. A breakdown of the initial costs is found in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1:
Breakdown of Production Costs

REQUIREMENT	COST (\$)
Author	\$40,000
Graphic Design	\$10,000
Translation	\$30,000
Printing/Materials/ Promotion	\$20,000

This budget was drafted with the expectation that the author would be hired for a six-month period to conduct the research and draft the document itself. Assuming a month-long period for graphic design and translation and then an additional month for the printing of the document, the project is projected to be completed in about seven months.

The costs associated with the project

have been identified as a potential source of opposition to its creation. There may potentially be members of the Nunatsiavut Government who believe the monies required from their limited budget could be better used elsewhere. This opposition could also be found within the government bureaucracy.

I believe that some of this potential opposition can be addressed by developing partnerships and receiving contributions from other levels of government and private industry in order to develop the toolkit. Potential partners within the private industry include the Bank of Montreal, an institution that has developed a close relationship with the Nunatsiavut Government, specifically through the operation of the Aboriginal Banking Centre in Nain. The creation of small businesses provides many financial opportunities for the Bank of Montreal and the community alike. Another potential source of funding in the private industry is Vale, the owner and operator of the Voisey's Bay Mine site, an organization that has partnered with the Nunatsiavut Government on economic development in the past.

Outside of private industry, there are opportunities to approach organizations such as the Tasiujatsoak Trust, a trust created through the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement that provides funds to projects that will have a positive impact on Nunatsiavut communities.

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Nain, Labrador

Rita-Ann Dicker

The Nunatsiavut Government identified economic and resource development as a key issue to be addressed in its Strategic Plan 2012-2015. As a key priority area, the government believes that:

In order to secure the future of Nunatsiavut and Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, plans must be developed to take full advantage of economic and resource-based activities. The development of strong, well-financed, resource-based companies,

with a highly-trained labor force, will be necessary to operate in a climate of strong economic activity. This will ensure Nunatsiavut is able to create wealth for itself and Beneficiaries, as well as create long-term economic and social stability.²³

In order to address this priority, the government has set the goal that “by March 31, 2015, a plan will be established to position Nunatsiavut and Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement to take full advantage of economic and

²³ Nunatsiavut Government, Strategic Plan 2012-2015.(Nain: Nunatsiavut Government, 2012)

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resource development opportunities.”²⁴

The development of a strategic economic development plan is currently underway and a first draft is expected to be completed by the date laid out on the Nunatsiavut Government’s 2012-2015 strategic plan. As part of this process, representatives from the Department of Education and Economic Development will be visiting each of the Nunatsiavut communities with a consultant to meet with beneficiaries and other stakeholders to determine what issues they feel should be addressed and what goals should be contained in the plan.

I believe the information gathered through these consultations will benefit my proposal for the creation of a Labrador Inuit-specific toolkit for potential entrepreneurs by strengthening the need for such a document and providing valuable information that could be incorporated into and addressed by the document itself.

A finding that could very well be gathered through these consultations is that existing business owners in these communities want to ensure the strategic development plan does nothing to impede on their operations and profits. This hypothetical concern is also one identified as another source of opposition to the creation of an Inuit-specific toolkit for potential entrepreneurs.

New enterprises are often viewed as competition by the existing operations in a

free market economy. Although there may be opposition from within the existing business community, the Nunatsiavut Government can educate their constituents on the benefits of increased competition, such as the delivery of better and more diversified services, results that will lead to a better economy and region overall.

24 Ibid.



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