

A Background Paper submitted to

**The National Aboriginal Roundtable
on Lifelong Learning:
Post-secondary Education and Labour Force
Development**

by
**The Government of Nunavut
and
Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated**

October 22, 2004



Introduction

This paper is in response to an invitation received from the Prime Minister of Canada in May, 2004 to participate in the follow-up processes associated with the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable. Six sectoral planning committees have been established. One of these sectoral groups will focus on Lifelong Learning, from Early Childhood to Post-secondary/Adult Training.

The purpose of this paper is to briefly address some of the critical issues affecting Nunavut and the ability of Nunavummiut to participate actively in Canadian society through involvement in the work force. In particular this paper addresses the following areas:

- Addressing Issues of Jurisdiction Control
- Improving Access/Increasing Integration
- Sustainability/Capacity Building
- Curriculum & Research

Some Nunavut facts

Nunavut is Canada's newest territory, covering approximately 20% of Canada's land mass. There are 26 communities located as far north as Grise Fiord on Ellesmere Island, and as far south as Sanikiluaq in James Bay, as far west as Kugluktuk and Iqaluit in the East. The population of Nunavut is approximately 29,000, spread amongst the 26 communities, with 85% of this population being Inuit, who speak Inuktitut as their first language. None of these communities are connected by road and, consequently, the mobility of labour and resources are limited.

The population is increasing rapidly and by 2020, it will be nearly 44,000. Unlike the rest of Canada, Nunavut's under 15 cohort makes up 40% of the population – more than double the under 15 cohort for the rest of Canada. The youth of the population will place significant pressure on education, daycare and alternative working arrangements.

Nunavut's per capita income is 27% lower than the national average. More than 55% of Inuit receive income, fuel and utility support at a cost in excess of \$23 million per year. Given the current level of population growth, demand for these support programs will grow.

There is an acute shortage of housing in Nunavut. The average number of occupants per dwelling in Nunavut is 3.27, while the Canadian average is 2.39. There are 14,225 Inuit in public housing and another 1,000 families on the waiting list, which is increasing by 250 annually. The Government of Nunavut (GN) estimates that 3,000 homes will be needed over the next five years, merely to arrest the growth of the shortage. The health of people is tied inextricably to the conditions in which they live and life expectancy in Nunavut is more than ten years below the national average.

Unemployment is severe among Inuit with a rate of 22%. Using a "no jobs available" criteria, the unemployment rate among Inuit is 29%. Unemployment is particularly high among youth, the 54 to 64 age group, and in the decentralized communities.

Discussion Paper for the National Roundtable on Lifelong Learning: Postsecondary Education and Labour Force Development

Addressing Issues of Jurisdiction Control

The Nunavut Land Claim Agreement (NLCA) provides much of the framework within which the issues of Inuit in Nunavut are addressed, and structures and approaches to programs and services applied. This situation is unlike any other jurisdiction in Canada in which the requirements of a constitutionally protected land claim closely parallel the evolution and development of a public government and its services.

The NLCA was negotiated with the Government of Canada (GoC) and signed in May of 1993. From the outset of land claims negotiations in the 1970s, Inuit insisted that any settlement of land rights issues in Nunavut had to be accompanied, by the creation of a new Nunavut territory and the establishment of a Nunavut government created out of the eastern and central Arctic portions of the Northwest Territories. Inuit insisted that the machinery of government and associated programs should be fundamentally re-shaped to be more representative of the people of Nunavut and this was not confined to matters of who would sit in the Nunavut Legislative Assembly. Inuit understood that modern representative government must extend to the make-up of the administrative arm of government as well as its legislative one. Inuit were equally aware of the importance of public sector employment and payrolls to any drive to enhance economic well-being.

Two Articles of the NLCA are, therefore, tightly linked. Article 4 requires the creation of a Nunavut territory and government. Article 23 requires the evolution of a predominantly Inuit public service. Together, these companion articles underscore that the goal of “representative government” is one of the founding principles of the NLCA.

The NLCA defines "representative level" as a level of Inuit employment within Government in every occupational group and at every grade level reflecting the proportion of Inuit within the total population in the Nunavut Settlement Area. Currently, the representative level is 85%. In addition to the achievement of a representative level it must also be “maintained.”

Article 23 is intended to ensure that:

- i) Inuit have the power to develop and administer government policies in a manner consistent with Inuit values and culture, in direct proportion to the percentage of the population that they represent.
- ii) Inuit receive a sufficient share of government funding resources, as required to achieve a representative level in all occupational groups and at all grade levels.

To date, the representative level of Inuit within the Government of Nunavut (GN) has been static at 45% since 1999 when the GN was formed. Within the federal public service in the Nunavut region, Inuit representation has declined from a peak of approximately 61% in 1999 to the current 33%.

In addition to the failure to achieve any progress on the representative levels in absolute terms the concentration of Inuit in a narrow band of lower skilled occupational groups and at the lower grade levels has placed the average salary rate of Inuit at 78.5% of that of non-Inuit.

Discussion Paper for the National Roundtable on Lifelong Learning: Postsecondary Education and Labour Force Development

The NLCA is a two party agreement between the Inuit of Nunavut and the Crown in right of Canada. The Territorial Government signed as a member of the federal caucus. Accordingly, the Government of Canada has a comprehensive and ongoing responsibility to ensure that all governmental obligations under the NLCA are met. The inclusion of the Territorial Government in the subsequent Implementation Contract may mean that some of the Crown's implementation responsibilities are expected to be delivered through the GN, but the overall and backstopping responsibilities of the Government of Canada to Inuit are in no way diminished. This point is firmly anchored in both the Agreement (section 37.2.6) and the Implementation Contract (section 1.5). Further, recent case law indicates that the Government of Canada's broader fiduciary obligations owed to aboriginal peoples cannot be offloaded onto a second party.

The Government of Canada can, therefore, be properly said to have two sets of legal responsibilities for employment and training arising out of Article 23 of the NLCA:

- a direct set of responsibilities to implement Article 23 staffing levels in the federal public sector in Nunavut, and
- an indirect, but more significant, responsibility to ensure that the global obligations of the Crown are adequately discharged with respect to the staffing of the entire public sector in Nunavut (Government of Canada and Government of Nunavut, including municipal, work forces combined).

Factors Affecting the Nunavut Labour Force

The static nature of Inuit participation in the work force, including government, can be attributed to a number of factors. These factors must be addressed to allow improved access and to encourage increased integration. Qualitative factors affecting the supply of Inuit labour in Nunavut include;

- training and education of the labour force;
- experience of the labour force;
- health of the labour force;
- productivity of labour;
- effects of social legislation and social transfers (eg. social assistance, EI, housing subsidies, etc.) on incentives to work.

There is no large reserve of skilled labour (e.g. only 231 Inuit occupy 1087 post-secondary level positions in GN largely because the labour market for Inuit with post secondary training and education is exhausted.) At least 51% of the available positions require, at least, three years of university.¹

Many people, including Government officials and members of the public, have argued that formal education and training requirements have been unnecessary for the performance of jobs, and therefore have constituted an inappropriate barrier to employment. The GN has acknowledged this, and has taken steps to address the problem where possible. While this is reasonable, it is not a substitute for formal education and training. Nevertheless, the basic and specialized skills that education imparts, are vital for

¹ Nunavut Economic Outlook: Conference Board of Canada, May 2001
Discussion Paper for the National Roundtable on Lifelong Learning: Postsecondary Education and Labour Force Development

successful performance on most jobs and the prevalence of low levels of education among Inuit, and the lack of educational opportunities within Nunavut represent systemic barriers to employment. For example, today 75% of the Inuit labour force does not have a high school diploma. Many are functioning in the workplace based on experience, rather than educational credentials.

The shortage of educated and skilled workers in the territorial labour market makes it necessary for employers, particularly the federal government and GN, to hire from the South. Accordingly, because many of the new jobs that get created demand high levels of education, unemployment levels among Nunavummiut remain high even when the economy creates more jobs. Upgrading the education levels of the current Inuit labour force is central to achieving Article 23 obligations.

In addition to education, there are a number of other qualitative factors such as the lack of on-the-job training, lack of experience and the health of the labour force.² Productivity factors also have an impact. For example, Nunavut's electronic infrastructure, i.e. Internet access, is below national standards. This has an impact on the ability of government to decentralize to communities of higher unemployment.

The most far-reaching qualitative factor is the self-perpetuating cycle of innovation and growth induced by increasing knowledge and skills. Increasing education, and removing barriers to education are therefore, key to laying the foundation for innovative capacity in Nunavut.

Quantitative factors, such as the highest population growth in Canada, low labour mobility, low participation rates due to the perception of few jobs available, and the trade off between work in the labour market and other traditional and non-traditional activities, further complicate the supply problem.

In as much as Inuit cannot be compelled to work in government or remain in government, the initiatives to implement Article 23 must be directed at the labour market as a whole. While Article 23, and this document, focus on the supply side factors it is recognized that these cannot be treated in isolation of the demand for labour. It will take action on both fronts, demand-side policies that encourage employers to hire more people and supply-side policies that encourage the growth of human capital and enable employers to find the skills they need in the Nunavut labour pool. Employers must hire more Inuit, and more Inuit must have access to the necessary education and training to do the work available.

Systemic barriers

As the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism established, language is a systemic barrier to recruitment, retention and advancement in government, and indeed the workforce as a whole.

While Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun are the languages spoken in homes and community meeting places across Nunavut, English is the language spoken most often in the

² Ibid

Discussion Paper for the National Roundtable on Lifelong Learning: Postsecondary Education and Labour Force Development

workplace. According to 2002 data from Statistics Canada, at least 60% of Nunavummiut speak Inuktitut as a first language but most have poor second language skills in English.

A large number of employees are currently being hired from southern Canada. As English speakers, they are able to obtain employment with the GN and perform their duties with minimal training in the language spoken by the majority of Nunavummiut. Close to three-quarters of Inuit, meanwhile, are expected to acquire the skills needed for employment, *and* to acquire the second language skills needed to work effectively in an English speaking environment. This places Inuktitut-speaking Inuit at a disadvantage in opportunities both for employment and advancement within the public service. Establishing Inuktitut as a working language of the GN and in other work places will go far to creating conditions that are conducive to the hiring and retention of a larger number of Inuit employees.

The GN is a new government confronted by some extraordinary demands on its limited resources. In areas of skill development and training, the funding available for pre-employment training is minimal at best. Nunavummiut interested in becoming involved in apprenticeship and trades must travel outside of the territory as there are no facilities, and few programs to promote the development of a Nunavut-based trades capacity. No other jurisdiction in Canada must contend with the same issue.

Another systemic barrier is a workforce culture that fails to recognize the cultural environment in which most Inuit employees are rooted and the domestic demands imposed on people who are part of a traditional extended family system. This is in contrast to the transient southern employee with little or no extended family in Nunavut.

NTI and the GN were pleased to note the Government of Canada's intention to invest in people, as expressed in the recent Speech from the Throne (October, 2004):

We must invest in helping workers to continuously enhance their skills to keep pace with constantly evolving workplace requirements. To that end, the Government will develop a new Workplace Skills Strategy, including steps to enhance apprenticeship systems, and to boost literacy and other essential job skills. This will be complemented by up-to-date training facilities and labour market agreements to be developed in collaboration with the provinces and territories, unions and sector councils.

NTI and the GN were also pleased to note in the same Speech that ...*the Government is working together with Aboriginal Canadians and provincial and territorial governments to create the conditions for long-term development—learning, economic opportunity, and modern institutions of Aboriginal governance—while respecting historical rights and agreements. And that ... the Government and Aboriginal people will together develop specific quality-of-life indicators and a “Report Card” to hold all to account and to drive progress* (Speech from the Throne, October, 2004).

Sustainability and Capacity Building

A key step in addressing issues of access and capacity building is the 20 year Adult Learning Strategy currently being developed by the Government of Nunavut. Much of the labour market information in Nunavut is suspect and fragmented. Accordingly,

Discussion Paper for the National Roundtable on Lifelong Learning: Postsecondary Education and Labour Force Development

in partnership with other stakeholders, the Learning Strategy will promote mutually agreed areas of research based upon a common baseline, which will use consistent measurement indicators to identify areas of need and priorities for strategic investment.

The Learning Strategy will be inclusive and represent the needs of Nunavummiut and Nunavut's industries and organizations. It will also provide a framework, and a range of strategic actions with which Nunavummiut can identify The strategy will direct funding priorities and program development. A critical objective of the strategy is to bring a high degree of coordination and coherence to the many varied agency roles, programs and services currently being offered by government and other organizations.

One of the over-riding aims of the predominantly Inuit population of Nunavut in negotiating the NLCA was that the new government would evolve along uniquely Inuit lines. This Inuit way of doing things is expressed in the philosophy of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ). IQ is, consequently, one of the great pillars on which Nunavut has been founded and which must inform all the government's initiatives. Nowhere is this more important than in the development and delivery of education and training. Cultural learning and knowledge transfer, self-reliance, and the informality of existing learning structures is something, therefore, which must be reflected in the development of an overarching, coordinating strategy for learning.

In addition to IQ, the development of Nunavut's Adult Learning Strategy must work around scarce of resources. While this is a problem faced by all jurisdictions, in Nunavut the scarcity of resources is especially acute. It follows that in Nunavut partnerships are vital and their formation is a hallmark of the Learning Strategy.

The current state of career development services in Nunavut reflects the nascent state of the development of the territory. Services are fragmented at best as federal, territorial and other agencies, staff and train new employees and define how to effectively deliver programs and services in Nunavut. Many of the federal programs to which Nunavut has access are merely reproductions of conditions seen in southern Canada in major metropolitan areas, or that reflect the needs of First Nations rather than the needs of the territory. Inuit are not First Nations and these programs do not necessarily cover them or, if they do, the restrictions are such that the program dollars are difficult to make use of. For example, the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) between the federal government and all provinces and territories is designed for a population of workers and a labour market vastly different from Nunavut's. As a consequence, funding opportunities cannot be utilized and monies lapse. In many communities of 1500 to 2000 persons, only 12-15 residents are what are classed as LMDA eligible. The same is true for other programs.

Curriculum and Research

The paucity of accurate information on labour needs, training and other factors on which to develop and plan programs clearly affects Nunavut's ability to make best use of available resources. Research, should, first and foremost be directed to dealing with these large gaps in order that needs can be effectively defined and communicated, and

Discussion Paper for the National Roundtable on Lifelong Learning: Postsecondary Education and Labour Force Development

programs and services developed and delivered. In order that long term planning is informed the following significant information and data gaps, at the very least must be filled.

- Completion and maintenance of Labour Force Analysis (Required under Article 23 but never implemented by the Federal Government)
- Research in Support of Prior Learning Needs Assessment
- Development of Community Skills Inventory
- Inuktitut Language Use Assessment

Recommended Strategic Actions:

As Nunavut develops, the territory must be supported by:

- An understanding that although Nunavut has many challenges, including geography, these have allowed for the development of many strengths at the community and territorial level.
- A willingness to develop national programs, policies and services which reflect the needs of the Canadian population resident outside of major centres, and in the North in particular.
- A willingness to develop funding programs which allow Inuit to participate as full partners and not in some diminished capacity due to restrictive rules or southern focus of programs developed.
- The development of a national centre for information which can provide an effective source of expertise.
- The need for demographic information used in national planning processes to be reflective of the existing realities, and not simply a presumption that all northern regions are the same.
- A less competitive environment between various agencies developing, funding and delivering programs.
- A move to integrate community-based adult education programs with career, labour market and skills development services.
- Programs that link lifelong learning, and workforce development to the social, economic, and political goals of the communities in Nunavut.
- Language training program for Inuktitut speakers directed at Inuktitut use in workplace
- Expanded training for interpreters/translators

Three priority areas for training investment have been identified:

- Investment in pre-employment training and support including literacy and adult upgrading and basic education.
- Investment in Trades and Apprenticeship Training with specific emphasis on the following areas: heavy equipment operators, electricians, heavy duty mechanics, carpenters, and welders.
- Training of professionals, particularly teachers, adult educators and healthcare, and in the areas of legal, policy, and finance.

Conclusions

Since May 2001, NTI and GN have been negotiating with the Government of Canada for renewed funding to continue the implementation of NLCA for the second ten year planning period from 2003 to 2013. The Government of Nunavut views these negotiations as an opportunity to address key areas in the implementation of the NLCA and the GN included in its proposals for the second planning period, a specific proposal to enhance the use of Inuktitut in the territorial public service to the point where it may be a working language of the government. The strategy is designed to eliminate language as a systemic barrier to Inuit employment.

The failure of the federal government to provide the resources to ensure that the obligation of Article 23 is implemented has created an absurd economic arrangement, which has government maintaining, at great expense and incalculable social costs, a large, untrained, unemployed pool of Inuit labour while recruiting and relocating a southern workforce. These primary costs alone, calculated by PricewaterhouseCoopers³ with precision and a high degree of confidence, amount to \$65 million annually. These costs, inherited by the new Nunavut government, will continue into the future and projected over the period since the Nunavut Territory was founded, they amount to in excess of \$325 million lost. If the representative level remains static over the next ten year planning period then, other things being equal, the cost to government will exceed \$650 million.

The evolution of Government implicit in the NLCA will require not only the intellectual courage and the capacity to think unconventionally on the part of senior management in the Government of Canada and the GN, it will also require the aid of significant resources. It is clear that the need for these resources is directly attributable to the existence of the NLCA.

There can be no doubt that measurable progress towards building a representative public sector in Nunavut will, in itself, be a crucial determinant of public confidence among the Inuit of Nunavut as to the success of the NLCA as whole and the new governmental institutions and arrangements that it created. In the event that Inuit in Nunavut come to the conclusion that an Inuit public stands to be served indefinitely by a largely “fly in” labour force, there will be predictable, and potentially heavy, costs to be paid in the form of citizen/voter frustration, cynicism, alienation, and intercultural disharmony.

³ *The Cost of Not Successfully Implementing Article 23: Representative Employment for Inuit within the Government* (2003) PricewaterhouseCoopers
Discussion Paper for the National Roundtable on Lifelong Learning: Postsecondary Education and Labour Force Development